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The Magnet 2^d

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U.J.E., 1923.

HI, LOOK AT THIS TOPPING PROGRAMME!
Doesn't it make your mouth water?



"THE SCHOOLBOY HERMIT!"

Next week there is a surprise. Most likely you have never heard of a schoolboy hermit before. You will get some strange particulars concerning such a personage on Monday, and I venture to think you will be more than satisfied with the yarn. It just shows Mr. Frank Richards at his raciest and best. As a rule, a schoolboy is not the sort of a chap to be content with his own society. Naturally, there is a good deal behind the mystery.

JIM LEE, THE LONELY!

Jim Lee seems to prefer solitude. Naturally, when this kind of trait is noticed, fellows talk. You can't be surprised if sarcastic things are said. People always feel suspicious of the individual who appears to think he is too good and superfine for the rest of the company. Greyfriars has never seen anything like it before. It isn't any too pleased with the airs and dignities of the new-comer. Will Jim Lee play footer? No, he will not—not until things get altogether too hot, and then, under the stress of circumstances, he has to give way.

CUTTING THE MATCH!

It's the juniors who egg Lee on. They are not taking any refusal. A fellow at Greyfriars must play football, or explain the reason why not. So in Jim Lee goes. The new boy gets into football rig, and the match gets going. The juniors seem to have won, but there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, as we all know. Right in the beginning of the match Lee is missing. What's happened to the absentee? Well, he's just drawn off—thought he wouldn't go on—all that—nothing else—and that's that, except that he has entirely overlooked the cheery little fact that a footer match must not be abandoned. It simply isn't done, not in the best circles—no sneaking off to sulk or have a quiet think a la Achilles, who kept a tent for the purpose.

PROVING HIS METTLE!

We go on to see an exceedingly interesting development, or, rather, revelation of character. There is grim, firm, hard stuff in Jim Lee's mental make-up. There is a general belief that he is one of those dreary freaks who suffer from cerulean funk. Not at all. Lee stands up to Harry Wharton, and that wants a bit of doing, for the Remove skipper is an all-round good fighter. There is a fight between the new fellow and Wharton, and in the result it is made abundantly clear that Lee and funk have nothing in common with each other. But still the mystery goes on, and the interest gets keener. For why should a fellow, who is obviously a fine sportsman, shrink from the society of his fellows? It is not reasonable. It goes against the grain somehow.

CLEAR-SIGHTED FRANK RICHARDS.

Excuse me rubbing all this in. There are reasons. Apart from the undercurrent of this powerful series of yarns, there is something else, something which goes right to the heart of things. I mean, of course, the over-readiness to misjudge people. This goes on in school, and in the bigger school of the world as well. Life is made up of graduation, more and still more training right away on. Now, it stands like this. There are plenty of fellows who find themselves in the position of Jim Lee. Sometimes a chap just likes to be alone to think out some scientific or literary stunt. Sometimes he has a most engrossing hobby; sometimes, again, it is through a sense of false modesty—a fellow may feel that he is too poor to mix with others, or some nonsense of that kind. But Frank Richards never misses a point in a character. He is a fair marvel at the game, as you will discover upon reading

"THE SCHOOLBOY HERMIT!"

EXTRA SPECIAL!

This applies to the new Supplement. The "Greyfriars Herald" is an inordinately good number next week.

"THE ROOF-GARDEN MYSTERY!"

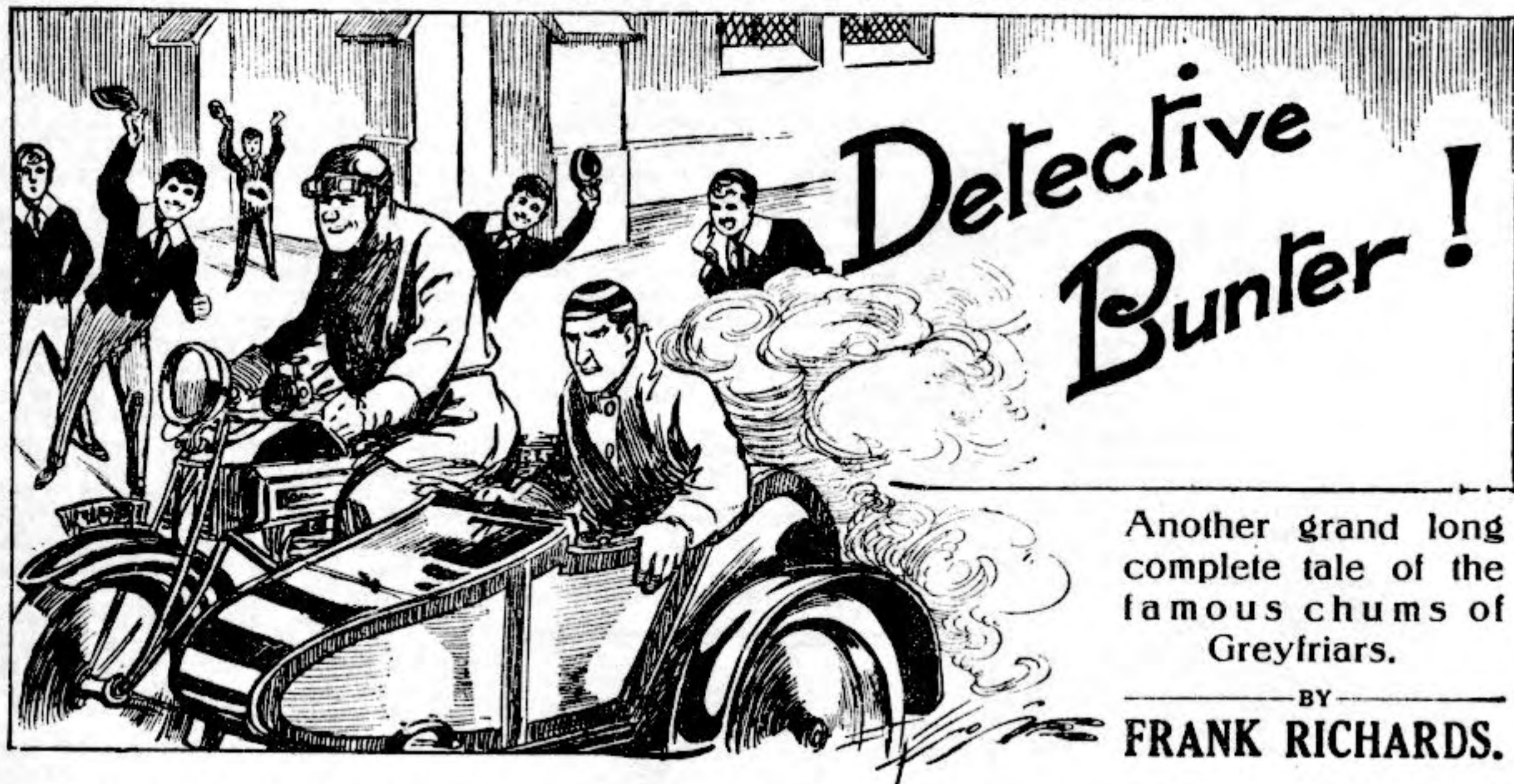
Ferrers Locke is up to his neck in it next week. The story in which the celebrated detective figures is dramatic in the extreme, and the scene is laid in America. The roof garden is a bit of a novelty this side, though it pops up here and there. The yarn next Monday is distinguished by many a thrill. Locke is confronted with a problem of the most amazing kind. He wins through, thanks to his quiet pertinacity and wonderful knack of fitting unlooked-for bits of evidence together.

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Your Editor.

WHO DID IT? Gooling, the school porter, is knocked down by a motor-cycle. Coker of the Fifth is accused of the "crime." But did he do it? Billy Bunter sets to work to clear up the mystery!



Another grand long complete tale of the famous chums of Greyfriars.

—BY—
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Passenger Wanted!

"WELL, my hat!" Horace Coker gave vent to that disgusted exclamation as he kicked open the door of Study No. 4 in the Fifth Form passage at Greyfriars, and glanced inside.

The great man of the Fifth—great in his own estimation, that is—was dressed for out-of-doors. A short, thick motoring coat covered his burly figure, his legs were encased in stout gaiters, and a thick muffler was wound round his throat, and he carried in his hands a pair of fur-lined gauntlets and a leather motoring helmet.

Potter and Greene, Coker's study-mates, glanced up as their leader looked into the study. Potter was seated on the edge of the table, busily engaged in oiling a pair of skates. Greene was seated on a chair by the table doing likewise. As they noted the frown on the rugged features of Coker, they exchanged glances a trifle uneasily.

"Wha-what's the matter, Coker, old man?" asked Potter.

Horace Coker gave a wrathful snort. "Matter?" he echoed warmly. "I like that! Matter—eh? Didn't I tell you I should be ready to start in half an hour? Didn't I warn you I wouldn't wait longer? And here you are, playing about with kid's toys. Skates—bah! I've a jolly good mind not to take either of you, after all."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Potter and Greene eagerly, and almost together. "Then—then we'll call it off, old man!"

"And I jolly well wouldn't," went on Coker, unheeding, "if it wasn't for the fact that I detest yanking a blessed empty sidecar about. As it stands—well, I'll give you just five minutes to get your things on. No longer, mind you, so buck up! You'll have to toss up as to who's to go in the sidecar and who's to ride on the pillion."

"Will we?"

"Of course. Now, no arguing about it. You know what I've told you—"

"Yes; but you seem to have forgotten what we told you, Coker," said Potter, sliding from the table, his eyes fixed on Coker's massive fists. "We told you we

weren't coming, and we aren't! We're going skating this—"

"Eh? What's that—skating? Mean to say you're not coming?"

"No; we're not!"

"But—but why?"

"We'd sooner risk death on the ice," explained Greene, in an unusual burst of courage. "You'd better ask someone else, Coker—someone who contemplates suicide. Anyway, we're not having any."

Coker was staggered. He couldn't understand it; he never could understand why fellows who had taken a trip with him on his famous motor-cycle never went a second time. It was really surprising. But Coker was more wrathful than surprised now. That his own loyal henchmen should turn his kind offer of a ride down, should thus openly defy him, was too much. It wasn't often Potter and Greene openly defied their leader thus; they had too much respect for Coker's hefty fists for that. But the worms had turned at last.

"So that's it," breathed Coker, at length. "You think I can't drive a blessed motor-bike—eh? Afraid to risk your skins—what? Not coming, are you? We'll see about that." He squared his jaw, and glared at his study-mates threateningly. "I'll give you just two minutes," he went on grimly. "If you aren't out of here to get your caps and coats by then I'm going to mop up the study with you—understand?"

Potter and Greene did understand. They eyed each other helplessly for a moment. Then Potter gave Greene a sly wink, and turned to Coker with a sigh of resignation.

"Very well, Coker," he said grumblingly. "I suppose we'd better do it. We'll get our coats and caps. You'll wait for us, won't you?"

Coker nodded in a lordly manner.

"Buck up, then," he ordered briefly.

Potter and Greene left the study, taking their skates with them. But Coker did not notice that fact. The door slammed after them, and the slam was followed by a sharp click. But Coker failed to notice that either.

Smiling at his bloodless victory over the would-be mutineers, he strolled over to the window to await their return. He

was still waiting five minutes later when he saw Potter and Greene crossing the quad towards the gates, with their skates slung over their shoulders.

Coker could scarcely believe his eyes. But it was only too apparent that Potter and Greene were going skating, after all.

Evidently they had decided that trouble with Coker and the risk of death on the ice was to be preferred to the risk of coming to a sudden untimely end on Coker's motor-bike.

It took several seconds for Horace Coker's mighty brain to grasp the truth. But when he did realise the situation his wrath was a sight to behold.

He gave a howl of fury, and, dashing to the door, wrenched madly at the knob. It was then he discovered that the door was locked.

"The—the howling rotters!" stuttered Coker, grinding his teeth with baffled rage. "I'll—I'll smash 'em for this. I'll—I'll—"

Spitting with fury, Coker commenced a bombardment on the door with fists and feet. Presently a fat figure came rolling along the passage outside. It was Billy Bunter of the Remove. He stopped as he heard the terrific din proceeding from the study.

"That you, Coker, old man?" he called through the keyhole. "What's the matter?"

"Matter! Can't you see what's the matter, you fat clam?" roared Coker, recognising Bunter's voice. "Open this dashed door, you fat toad!"

It was a queer way of asking a favour, but Bunter only chuckled.

"He, he, he!" he cackled. "I say, Horace, old man, I've been disappointed again about a postal-order. Can you lend—that is, what'll you give me if I let you—"

"You—you—I'll give you the biggest hiding—"

Bunter chuckled and passed on along the passage. Apparently the inducement Coker held out wasn't good enough for Bunter. Several other fellows came along and stopped outside the door. But evidently Coker's manner of asking a favour did not appeal to them, for, like Bunter, they passed on again, chuckling.

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Five cheery-faced juniors came along the passage, and they, too, stopped on hearing the commotion from within the locked study. The five were Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh of the Remove. They wore thick coats and scarves, and carried skates over their shoulders.

"That ass Coker again," remarked Harry Wharton. "Whopping his poor old pals, Potter and Greene, I expect."

"Sounds more like Coker himself in trouble this time," said Bob Cherry, chuckling. "Hark at him. What—hallo! Someone's locked the ass in."

Harry Wharton, also, had just noticed the key in the lock, and he stepped forward with a laugh. Turning it, he flung the door open. Next instant Coker, his face flushed with fury, dashed out like a mad bull, scattering the startled juniors to right and left.

He pulled up suddenly before he had gone six paces, however. It dawned upon him that Potter and Greene would be on the ice-bound Sark by this time, and it would be useless to go after them.

By this time Harry Wharton & Co. had recovered somewhat from the shock of Coker's headlong charge. As Coker turned to re-enter his study, the five surrounded him in a wrathful crowd.

"You—you clumsy chump!" howled Bob Cherry, who had been flung with a crash against the passage wall. "What the thump do you mean by barging—"

"Eh? What the—here, none of that—I want none of your cheek!" ordered Coker, eyeing the wrathful five grimly. "Clear off, you kids, or I'll jolly well—Half a minute, though."

As if a sudden idea had struck him, he looked at Harry Wharton and nodded.

"You'll do, Wharton," he said with sudden geniality. "Chuck those silly skates away. I shall want you this afternoon. Rest of you kids can clear."

Forgetting their hurts for the moment, the Famous Five blinked incomprehendingly at Coker.

"It's like this," explained the Fifth-Former, "I offered to take those idiots, Potter and Greene, for a motor-trip this afternoon—a blessed free ride, mind you! But—you'd hardly believe it—they turned it down. Actually refused to come; said they were going skating, or some such rot. Well, they can both go to pot now. I'm taking you, Wharton!"

Coker said that last as if he were conferring the greatest honour in the world upon the lucky junior. Wharton, however, did not appear to be duly impressed.

"Oh, are you?" he breathed in measured accents. "You seem to take a jolly lot for granted, Coker!"

"Of course!" went on Coker. "You've got to understand this is an exceptional case. I don't usually lower myself by taking Lower School youngsters with me. I won't promise to take you again!"

"I'll jolly well see you don't take me once!" said Wharton grimly. "You barbling ass! I wouldn't risk my neck in your dashed sidecar for a king's ransom, Coker!"

"Then—then you won't come?" gasped Coker.

"No jolly fear!"

"I'm surprised at you asking Wharton!" said Bob Cherry, shaking his head gravely. "I always thought you reserved motor rides for your bitterest enemies, Coker?"

But Cherry's brand of humour was quite wasted on Horace Coker. His mentality wasn't equal to it. But he saw the grins on the juniors' faces, and

that was enough for him. He grabbed Wharton's collar in a hefty fist, and snorted angrily.

"You won't come, eh? We'll see about that. I've said you're coming, and what I say goes—get me?"

They "got" the burly Horace all right—but in a manner he scarcely expected. What happened next Coker least of all had a clear idea. The mighty Horace was a match for any ordinary five juniors. But the Famous Five were not ordinary juniors.

A fist like a leg of mutton sent Harry Wharton crashing against the wall; but that was all Coker got the chance to do. There followed a few sultry seconds of whirling scrimmaging, and then Coker was flat on the linoleum, with five juniors piling over him.

"Now, up with him!" gasped Harry. "There's been too much Coker already."

"Here, leggo! I'll smash you, you young sweeps! Leggo! Yow-ow-ow!"

Bump! Slam!

Coker went whirling back into his own

The Boy With A Secret!



JIM LEE.

"I will not make friends with my Form-fellows and become a treacherous comrade!" said Jim Lee, when he first came to Greyfriars. What is the dark secret which prevents him from making chums? See "THE SCHOOL-BOY HERMIT!" next week.

study and the door slammed upon him. Then the juniors streamed away, laughing uproariously.

Inside the study the luckless Coker staggered to his feet with feelings too deep—and painful—for words. He rubbed himself down, groaning and growling, and then he looked up as a newcomer appeared suddenly in the doorway.

It was a senior this time—Loder of the Sixth. Loder was anything but a friend of Coker's, and the latter glared at him furiously.

"Well, what do you want, Loder?" he asked snappily.

Loder smiled genially, seeming not to notice Coker's dishevelled appearance.

"I'm wondering if you'll do me a favour, Coker," said Loder. "The—the fact is I've got to get out to Marlow—the other side of Courtfield, you know—before three. And—and I was wondering—"

"Oh, I see, Loder, old man!" said Coker. His face cleared with astonishing swiftness, and he fairly beamed on Loder. "You want me to run you over in the sidecar—what? Jolly good idea!"

"Well, not—not exactly!" said Loder hastily. "I'm not contemplating sui—"

that is, I wouldn't dream of taking up your valuable time like that. I was wondering if you'd—ahem!—lend me the motor-bike?"

Coker shook his head firmly.

"Imposs, Loder!" he said. "Utterly imposs. I never allow anyone but myself to handle her. It isn't safe. I don't want to brag, old chap, but there isn't a fellow at Greyfriars could handle that jigger as I do!"

"That's true!" agreed Loder. "Everybody knows that. That's why—ahem!—look here, Coker! Just for once! You know I can drive. It's like this. My uncle and cousin are staying at Marlow—at the Gables—and I promised my cousin I'd take her skating this afternoon. I started out on my bike and got as far as Friardale when my dashed front tyre burst. I can't possibly get there by three now unless you'll lend me your—"

"Nothing doing!" declared Coker promptly. "I'll take you in the sidecar—like a shot. There's my offer—take it or leave it. But nobody's driving that motor-bike but me! See?"

Loder did see. He bit his lip savagely. He knew Coker's reputation as a motor-cyclist—everybody did. Whoever went in Coker's sidecar—with Coker driving—took his life in his hands.

But the prefect was anxious, for more reasons than one, to keep his appointment. And—there seemed no other way.

"All right, Coker, I'll come!" he said, at length. "But, I say, there's no need for—for breaking records, you know. Just take it easy!"

Coker smiled loftily.

"My dear man, you'll be as safe as houses with me!" he assured the senior patronisingly. "No need to be afraid when I'm driving, Loder. Be ready to start in five minutes, then!"

Loder nodded and left the study, gritting his teeth. The suggestion in Coker's candid remarks that he was afraid had not pleased him, to say the least of it. Nor had Coker's patronising assurance eased his mind. He remembered the hair-raising stories concerning Coker's reckless driving, and he felt anything but happy. But there seemed no help for it.

Horace Coker, however, was not worrying. He left his study and made his way briskly to the cycle-shed in high good humour. He had got a passenger, or, as Bob Cherry would have put it, a victim, at last!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Coker, the Hero!

WHEN Gerald Loder made his way to the gates five minutes later he found Coker already waiting there. Indeed, quite a crowd of fellows were waiting there. They had seen the mighty Horace waiting patiently with his bike and sidecar, and they were very curious, indeed, to see who the daring individual could be who intended to accompany him.

Coker was looking red and just a bit annoyed. He was getting rather tired of the running comments and queries of the grinning crowd. What they saw to grin at in the situation Coker could not imagine.

He brightened up, however, when Loder of the Sixth came up.

Loder carried a pair of skates, and he was looking very pale. He was already half-regretting his rashness; he regretted it more now as he saw the crowd of hilarious sight-seers. But he couldn't

"The Schoolboy Hermit!" is about the strange new boy!

very well draw back now—indeed, Coker gave him little chance.

"Here you are, old man!" cried Coker cheerfully. "She's in fine fettle, and I might tell you I'm going to make her hum. In you get!"

Loder clambered apprehensively into the sidecar. He looked like a fellow who only had a few hours to live. Coker tucked him in comfortably and climbed into the saddle. Then he glared round at the grinning juniors.

"Now, you footling kids, out of the way!" he ordered briefly. "What the thump are you grinning about; never seen a chap on a motor-bike before?"

"Not a chap like you, Coker," responded Vernon-Smith blandly.

But they got out of the way for all that. They scuttled back behind the comparative safety of the gates. There was no knowing which way the machine would take—with Coker in the saddle.

Next moment they felt thankful they had done so. Coker started off with a jerk which nearly threw Loder from his seat; then the machine leaped forward, missed one gate-post by a matter of inches, and dived for the ditch across the road.

Only by a miracle did Coker avoid disaster, and then, followed by an ironical cheer and a chorus of cat-calls from the onlookers, the motor-cycle shot away, bumping and lurching over the frosty road.

To anyone who enjoyed personal encounters with hairbreadth escapes and breathless thrills, that ride would have been delightful. To Loder it was a ghastly nightmare. He clung to the sides of the car, heartily wishing he had not been such a fool as to accept Coker's offer, and expecting every second a frightful smash-up.

It certainly wasn't Coker's fault that they didn't come a cropper. He took risks that made Loder's hair stand on end, and his steering resembled the mad antics of an intoxicated monkey.

But his luck was stupendous. At least a dozen times before they reached Courtfield, Coker had narrow escapes of running people down, while Loder lost count of the number of times they avoided collisions. By the time they drew up at last before the Gables, at Marlow, Loder was reduced to a nervous wreck.

But Coker's red face was beaming. There had been nothing unusual about the journey to him. He had thoroughly enjoyed the exhilarating rush through the keen, frosty air.

"Fine run, wasn't it?" he remarked, helping the tottering Loder to alight. "What do you think of my handling of a bike—eh? If you're not staying here too long I'll run you back, Loder. How's that?"

Loder shuddered.

"You—you mad fool!" he gasped. "Run me back! I wouldn't ride again with a crazy madman like you for a million. You—you dangerous maniac! A brainless, reckless fool like you oughtn't to be allowed to wheel a blessed pram. I—I hope you break your blessed neck going back."

Coker was staggered. The base ingratitude of it took his breath away.

"Eh? What's that?" he roared at last. "Why, I've a jolly good mind to punch your nose, prefect or no prefect, you ungrateful cad! But I might have expected this. Just like you, Loder. You can go and eat coke! But I'll watch you don't ride with me again."

Loder vowed he would watch that, too. He picked up his skates and, with a last



The girl lost her grip on the crumbling ice and vanished. Coker had reached the edge of the gap, and he went in with a splash, and the black water closed over his head. Loder stared with terrified eyes at the bubbling water. (See Chapter 2.)

savage glare at Coker, tottered shakily up the drive of the Gables.

Coker snorted disgustedly and climbed into the saddle again. It was too early yet to return to Greyfriars, and next moment he was cranking and roaring on again along the Courtfield road. The next hour was quite uneventful—to Coker, at all events. To the people he met en route—motorists, carters, pedestrians, and the like—that hour possessed moments of breathless excitement that remained in their memories for years. That was when they were met or passed by Coker.

But to Coker they were everyday incidents.

The end of the hour found Coker back at the Gables again. He slowed down a little as he was passing the house. His red, rugged face was glowing with health, but he still looked and felt wrathful and resentful at the amazing ingratitude of Loder.

"I'd like to tell the beggar what I think of him," mused Coker, trying to get a glimpse of the house through the leafless trees. "And, by Jove, I will, too, when I get back to Greyfriars. Brainless, reckless fool, am I? Me! My hat, I'll just tell him a few—"

He broke off abruptly.

From somewhere beyond the trees came a sudden ominous cracking, a terrified scream, a cry for help.

It rang out clear on the frosty air, and Coker stiffened in the saddle as he heard it.

The next instant, as he swept past the trees and house, he saw the reason for it.

To his right a stretch of meadowland,

covered with the white hoar of frost, shelved down gently to an ice-bound pool. In the centre of the white ice showed a ragged and sinister black patch. And two figures were struggling for life there—a girl's figure and a young man's.

Who they were Coker did not stop to guess. Again came an appealing cry for help, and, as he usually did, Horace Coker went into action like a bull at a gate.

Without a second's hesitation he swung the handle-bars round and charged to the rescue. That an old wooden fence was between himself and the pond didn't trouble the mighty Horace in the least.

Halfway down he saw the young fellow clamber out and, without a glance back at the drowning girl, make for the shore.

"Well, the—the cowardly hound!" gasped Coker, hardly able to believe his own eyes.

There was a tremendous jolt, a splintering crash, and next instant he was through the fence like a knife through butter. And before the flying fragments of the rotten fence had reached the ground the machine was swung round almost at right angles.

Coker was out of the saddle almost before the machine stopped at the pool's edge. Then, without a glance at the shivering form on the bank, he dashed on to the ice, his eyes gleaming, his features set and determined.

At the same instant the girl, whose back was towards him, lost her grip on the crumbling ice and vanished.

Coker had reached the crumbling edge of the gap now, and he went in with a resounding splash; and the black waters closed over his head.

Who is Jim Lee, the boy with the secret? See next week!

The shivering coward on the bank stared with terrified eyes at the bubbling gap. Several seconds passed. Then a gasping cry of relief escaped his lips.

From the bubbling gap a dark head appeared, a hand shot up and grasped blindly, desperately at the treacherous ice. It was Coker, and his face was deadly white and drawn.

But next instant another head appeared—a bedraggled mass of auburn hair—then an upturned face, white, with closed eyes.

The girl was unconscious, but Coker's strong arm supported her.

"Help!" cried Coker faintly. "Help us, Loder, you fool! The rugs—from the car. Quick, you fool!"

Loder—Coker had recognised him now—stared uncomprehendingly for a moment. Then he grasped Coker's meaning, and dashed to the sidecar for the rugs.

But the rugs were not needed. At that moment came a shout:

"Hold on there—hold on!"

There was a thudding of heavy feet on the frozen grass. Two men were dashing down the hill to the rescue. They had evidently seen what had happened from the road, for they carried a hurdle between them.

"Hold on, lad! We'll soon have you out of that!" called one encouragingly.

He was as good as his word. The hurdle was rushed out on to the ice. Cautiously, yet swiftly, it was slid towards the gap. Loder looked on helplessly.

Coker grasped the end of the hurdle and held on.

One of the men crawled along the hurdle. He took the insensible form of the girl from Coker and passed it on to the second man. Then he helped Coker himself out.

In less than a minute all were safely ashore.

Coker turned to Loder as he touched dry land.

"Better get her to the house at once, Loder," he said curtly. "Can you manage her?"

Loder nodded dumbly. His face was ashen; but it flooded crimson with shame as he met the look of scorn in Coker's honest gaze. He had played the coward, and he knew it. He hesitated strangely, and Coker shook him angrily.

"Quick, man! Are you mad? Wake up! Get her away to the house, or let me—"

He broke off. At that moment there came an alarmed cry. From the direction of the house a man was hurrying. He was a tall man, with a military look about him. As his startled eyes fell upon the burden Loder carried, his face whitened.

"Good heavens! What—what has happened, Gerald?" he cried in an agonised voice. "Molly—she's not—"

"Only unconscious, sir," one of the men answered him. "Get her to bed quick, and she'll be all right."

Without a word the middle-aged gentleman snatched the girl from Loder's arms. Then he sped away, carrying the girl with surprising ease, and calling over his shoulder to Loder to follow him.

Coker stood flogging his chilled body vigorously with his arms, and then he turned to the men.

"Jolly good of you chaps to come to the rescue like that," he gasped, through chattering teeth. "You came

just in time. I couldn't have stuck it a second longer. Thanks!"

"If you'll take my tip," said one, seriously, "you'll trot off home as hard as you can pelt. Leave that bike here—you'll get no exercise out of that."

Coker grinned feebly, but just a trifle loftily.

"My dear man, a little dip like that won't hurt me. Few chaps have got the constitution I have. Don't worry about me."

The man shook his head, and strode after his companion up the hill. It was then that Coker became aware that Gerald Loder had made no move as yet to follow his uncle.

"You silly fool, Loder!" he rapped out. "Why don't you get a move on? You will catch your death of cold! Are you potty? You'll— Oh, I see! You want to come back to Greyfriars with me, eh?"

"No, it's not that, Coker. The fact is—" He paused and came stamping over to where Coker was examining his precious motor-bike. That mad smash through the fence had not improved the look of his machine in any way. The front mudguard was buckled up, the front lamp was smashed beyond repair, and several inches of paint had gone from the front forks.

The sight of this havoc did not improve Coker's feelings.

"Well?" he snapped.

"It—it's like this, Coker," said Loder. He shivered violently as he eyed Coker nervously. "You—you saw what happened? You—you thought I—I left my cousin because—"

THE RESULT OF THE "LIVERPOOL" COMPETITION.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

JOHN HOGBEN.

35, Bournemouth Road,
Folkestone.

The second prize of £2 10s. and the ten prizes of 5s. each have been added together and divided among the following thirteen competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

Percy Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; James Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; Maud Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; A. M. Duffin, 67, West Banks, Sleaford; Frances H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland; Mrs. A. F. Climie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Ronald Pagan, 14, Firwood Grove, Bolton, Lancs; Edwin Jesty, 2, Douglas Street, Birkenhead; John James, Bull Hotel, Rochester, Kent; W. Newbery, Needles Golf Club, Alum Bay, Isle of Wight; William Dounes, 45, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, near Stourbridge; Henry Sidwell, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; Norman Willis, Whelford, Leckhampton, Cheltenham Spa.

SOLUTION.

Liverpool, in a sense, was born with a silver spoon in its mouth: a tremendous asset to any football club. Since the club commenced it has always had a magnificent set of players, and although periods of bad luck have come its way, Liverpool has always come up smiling at the finish.

"Because you're a cowardly sweep? Yes, I did!"

"That's not true!" stammered Loder. "I—I knew I couldn't lift her out. I left her to—to get a hurdle or something."

"You're a thundering liar, Loder!" said Coker frankly.

"It's the truth!" said Loder, licking his dry lips. "Look here, Coker, you—you won't say anything about this at Greyfriars? You won't—"

"So that's it, is it?" Coker's lip curled with scorn and his eyes blazed. "Why, you cowardly rotter! What do you take me for? Think I'm the chap to go gassing about this; think I'm the sort of fellow to go bragging about what I've done? You make me sick, Loder! Of course I won't!"

"Oh, good!"

Loder took a deep breath of relief.

"It's like this, Coker," he stammered, his eyes falling before Coker's frank gaze. "My—my uncle's rich; and—and if he heard all about it he might think—what you think. And he'd never forgive me. He'd have nothing more to do—"

"Shut up!" roared Coker, in hearty disgust. "I want to hear no more, you howling cad! If you say much more I'll jolly well punch your nose, big as you are! Prefect—bah! You're a disgrace to—"

He snorted, and, turning his back on the Sixth-Formers, jumped into the saddle. For a moment Loder's eyes glittered with rage; then the look vanished, to be replaced by fear. He stepped forward and gripped Coker's arm appealingly.

"You—you promise me that, Coker? You—you won't breathe a word of this? You won't even say you've been here?" he panted hoarsely.

"Haven't I told you I won't?" roared Coker angrily. "I've given you my word—isn't that enough? Dash it all! For goodness' sake, clear, you cad!"

And bending forward, Coker started his engine. After bucking a moment, the machine leaped forward and went bounding and lurching up the slight rise.

Loder watched it, white-faced, until it passed through the gap in the broken fence. Then, as it turned and went roaring along the Courtfield road towards Greyfriars, he gave a gasping breath of relief and started at a run for the Gables.

He knew that Horace Coker, for all his faults—which were legion—was as open and honest as the day; he knew, also, that Coker's word was his bond. Loder's cousin Molly could hardly have seen what really happened—she had not witnessed his act of cowardice. Only Coker knew, and nobody else was likely to know now. He was safe.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

HALF Greyfriars seemed to be disporting themselves on the Sark that bright, frosty afternoon.

The ice was thick, hard, and fast on the river, and the frozen banks rang with merry voices and the clashing of skates. Wingate, the skipper of Greyfriars, was there, with many of the Sixth. The Fifth were well represented, as were the Upper Fourth, under the leadership of the redoubtable Temple, Dabney & Co. Harry Wharton & Co., with a swarm of fellow Removites, were in evidence—very much in evidence.

The fellow who wouldn't make friends—Jim Lee!

There was one Removite who went as far as the ice—and then went back again. He was Jim Lee, the new boy at Greyfriars—the boy with a secret. Ever since he had arrived at the old school he had kept to himself, refusing to join in in anything—refusing even to make friends.

No one saw him going back; and perhaps no one would have asked his reason for so doing even if he had been observed.

Billy Bunter had selected a patch of ice near the edge, where the water was a few inches deep, and with the aid of his brother Sammy, and Alonzo Todd, of the Remove, he had constructed a slide. And on this the three redoubtable disported themselves with reckless abandon, regardless of possible danger.

In ones and twos and threes, the other fellows drifted away, some going upstream and some down. Very soon Bunter and his companions had that part of the river to themselves. Rushes and willows were thick hereabouts, and the spot was anything but ideal for skating.

But it was shallow and safe; and therefore it suited Bunter and his companions admirably.

They were still getting a terrific amount of excitement and enjoyment out of the slide, when three figures appeared round the bend, skating leisurely from the direction of Highcliffe School.

Young Sammy Bunter saw them first, and without troubling to warn his companions, he scudded ashore and took to his heels.

Billy Bunter stared after him in amazement. Then, hearing the rasp and clang of skates behind him, he swung round and saw the reason for Sammy's abrupt departure.

But it was too late then.

Before either Alonzo or Billy could move there was a rush of skates, and the three newcomers had surrounded them. They were Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson minor—three Highcliffe nuts, and deadly enemies of the Greyfriars juniors. They were also three of the biggest cads at Highcliffe School.

Poor Alonzo Todd eyed the three apprehensively; Billy Bunter fairly shook at the knees. He knew what to expect from experience. The nuts would not have dared to tackle any ordinary Greyfriars juniors—even at odds of three to one. But they were remarkably brave and resourceful when dealing with duffers like Billy Bunter and Alonzo Todd.

They regarded the shivering two now with bland and anticipatory grins. Gadsby chuckled.

"What an unexpected pleasure!" he remarked. "The one and only Alonzo, and the one and only Bunter! Without their keepers, too! We're in luck, chaps!"

"Oh, absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"We really must make the most of this happy meeting," added Monson. "Now, what shall we do with them—make 'em climb that 'danger' board yonder? Pity old Pon isn't with us! He's the man for ideas!"

"Blow Ponsonby!" snapped Gadsby. "We can go to pot since he got that new jigger! I bet he's buzzing up and down the Courtfield road on it now—hang him! We can manage a little affair like this without his help."

Evidently Gadsby was a trifle jealous of Ponsonby's new "jigger." Billy Bunter felt thankful that Ponsonby wasn't on the spot. Despite Gadsby's confidence, there seemed to be a plentiful lack of ideas among the three nuts.

"Hanged if I can think of anything!" grunted Monson after a pause. "What about rolling 'em in the mud an' stuffing ice down their necks, though?"

There was nothing brilliantly original in the suggestion, but the three nuts greeted it with enthusiasm. Only Bunter and Alonzo were not enthusiastic.

After making sure no Greyfriars fellows were at hand, Gadsby and Monson removed their skates. Then, while Vavasour held the hapless Bunter, they rolled the mildly remonstrating Alonzo over and over in the slush and frozen grass at the water's edge. After which they carefully shoved chunks of ice down inside the back and front of Alonzo's collar.

Bunter watched the proceedings with goggling eyes. But he did not intend to wait for his turn.

He gave a sudden wrench at the arm Vavasour held, and jumped to escape. But at the critical moment his foot slipped on the slide, and he went down, dragging Vavasour with him.

Crash!

Amid a clatter of skates and wild yells, Bunter and Vavasour crashed to the ice. Fortunately, Bunter was underneath, so that the Highcliffe junior was not much hurt. But Bunter was.

He yelled fiendishly, and he yelled still more when Monson and Gadsby, releasing Alonzo, came rushing to Vavasour's help.

In a trice the luckless Billy was grabbed and hauled ashore. Bunter was making a fearful din, so they set about the business briskly, fearing that Bunter's yells would bring his schoolfellows on the scene.

Unlike the guileless Alonzo, Billy Bunter did not take his gruelling with stoical resignation. He kicked and struggled and yelled frantically. But in less than a minute the Highcliffe cads had done all they wanted to do to Bunter. Then, laughing uproariously, they donned their skates and departed towards Highcliffe.

But Billy Bunter was a wreck. His clothes were muddy, his face likewise. He was gasping and spluttering like a stranded fish, and he felt cold and wet and dismal.

Almost weeping with rage and pain, he staggered to his feet at last, and, bending as near double as his fat figure would allow, he strove frantically to get rid of the lumps of ice and tufts of frosted grass that had been stuffed down his neck.

It was almost an impossible task. After squirming and shaking and wriggling his fat body for some moments Bunter gave it up with a groan, and turned his face towards Greyfriars. He had had quite enough of the river for one afternoon.

Barely had he taken a dozen steps, however, when again he heard the ringing note of skates on ice, and he stopped. This time the sounds came from downstream, and as he blinked that way he saw five juniors racing over the ice abreast.

Bunter recognised them, and his eyes gleamed. They were the Famous Five of the Remove. Seeing the dismal figure of Billy Bunter standing on the bank, they slowed down and approached Bunter.

"My hat! It's Bunter, you fellows!"



Almost weeping with rage and pain, Billy Bunter staggered to his feet and frantically strove to get rid of the lumps of ice and tufts of frozen grass that had been stuffed down his neck. Laughing uproariously, the Highcliffe cads donned their skates and departed. (See Chapter 3.)

gasped Harry Wharton, as he came to a stop near the edge of the ice. "What on earth's the matter, porpoise? What's happened? You look a wreck!"

"It—it's those Highcliffe rotters!" stuttered Bunter tearfully. "I've had an awful time, Wharton! They collared old Lonzy and me and rolled us in the mud and stuffed ice and grass down our backs! I say, you fellows, you'll just catch 'em if you hurry."

"We'll go after the rotters all right!" said Wharton with a frown. "Who was it, Billy—Pon and his pals?"

Bunter told him what had happened, and Wharton snorted.

"Just like those cads to tackle poor old Lonzy and you!" he remarked in disgust. "Never mind, Billy, we'll settle with them. How long have they been gone?"

"About two minutes! If you hurry up—"

"We'll hurry all right. Come on, you chaps! Half a mo', though! I've got a better wheeze. Off with your skates—quick! We'll take to Friardale Lane and nab them at the bridge!"

"What-ho!" grinned Bob Cherry.

In a moment they were wrenching at the straps of their skates. They saw Harry's idea at once. The Sark took a winding turn higher up, and by taking the short cut along Friardale Lane they hoped to cut off the Highcliffe cads before they reached their school.

In less than a minute all were ready, and, with Billy Bunter—grinning now vengeance was in sight—trotting behind, Harry Wharton & Co. dived amid the bare trees.

It was only a minute's run through the thin wood, and on reaching the lane the party turned to the left. They had been running some moments when Bob Cherry gave a warning shout.

"Look out! Here's a mad motorist coming!"

But his chums had also seen the motorcycle and sidecar approaching, and they skipped to the side of the road.

And certainly there was some justification for Bob's words. The motorcyclist was roaring along at a terrific speed, and he seemed to be trying to cover every inch of the roadway.

"By the speed and the way he's steering," remarked Johnny Bull, "I'd say that's old Coker."

"It is Coker!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Behind the hedge for your lives!"

But though the juniors did not seek the shelter of the hedge, they took good care to give Coker plenty of room. As he came roaring and crackling up, Harry Wharton shouted at him angrily:

"Coker, you mad idiot—"

But beyond a shake of the head Coker ignored the shout. He went on without relaxing speed, and soon disappeared from sight in the direction of Greyfriars.

"The mad fool!" snapped Frank Nugent. "He'll be coming a fearful cropper one of these days!"

Harry Wharton nodded, his face puzzled. There had seemed to him to be something strange in Coker's appearance.

"The silly ass looked as though he had already been in some sort of trouble," he said, frowning. "Did you notice his white face?"

"Looked wet through, too," commented Bob Cherry with a grin. "I suspect he's had a bit of a smash-up, and gone head-first into a duck-pond. It would be just like Coker!"

The juniors grinned, and dismissed the mighty Horace from their minds. But before they had been trotting on for five minutes they were reminded of the meeting in a startling and disturbing manner.

On turning a bend in the lane, Harry, who was leading, suddenly gave a cry and darted to the side of the roadway. Something lay there on the frozen grass—something that at first glance resembled a bundle of clothes.

It was a man, though, as Harry's chums saw, as they ran to his side. He lay there silent and still, and as they glanced at his face they recognised him.

"Gosling!" breathed Bob Cherry, his good-humoured face grave. "It's poor old Gosling! Good heavens! Is—is he—"

"No; only unconscious," said Harry quietly.

He lifted the old man's head on his knees. There was a nasty wound on the back of Gosling's head, and, taking his handkerchief from his pocket, Harry wiped away the mud gently.

Then he looked up quickly.

"Run for a horse and trap from the farm yonder, Bob," he said. "We must get him to Greyfriars at once. Franky, you cut along to the school. Tell them what's wrong, and see that the doctor's waiting for us when we get in."

Bob and Frank dashed away at once. Harry made the old man as comfortable as possible, and waited. The rest stood around in a silent, awe-stricken group. Not a word was spoken until Johnny Bull pointed silently to the road.

The frost was thawing a little now, and in the muddy road were marks that clearly indicated an accident of some sort. The ice-covered surface of the ditch nearby was broken, as though a heavy body had smashed through thereabouts.

"It—it couldn't have been Coker?" almost whispered Johnny Bull at last. "He wouldn't be such a cad as to—"

"It almost looks like it," answered Harry Wharton hesitatingly. "But, no, I can't think that. He might have done it, but— He's not the chap to run away and leave him like this. Perhaps he's gone to fetch help. That's why he wouldn't stop. And—and yet—"

He broke off, and silence fell. All were busy with their own thoughts—and they were not pleasant thoughts.

Was it possible that Coker had run the old man down—and, far worse, had run away like a heartless coward? Knowing the big-hearted Coker as they did, it seemed incredible. And yet—why had he left Gosling lying there? Why hadn't he taken him at once to Greyfriars in his sidecar? Certainly it was quite possible that Coker was innocent, and had flashed past without seeing the old man lying there. But—

Billy Bunter broke the silence. In his own fat mind he had already reached a decision.

"I—I say, you fellows," he stuttered, breathless with excitement. "Of course, it must have been Coker. But we saw him, didn't we, dodging all over the road like a madman? Member how jolly sick he looked when he spotted us? That's why he wouldn't stop. He was wet through, too. Must have come a cropper when he knocked Gossy down, and took a header into the ditch. Jolly plain, I think!"

"Shut up!" snapped Harry Wharton in a low tone. "We—we don't even know if Gossy was knocked down by a motor-bike yet."

But Bunter had only put into words the thoughts in the minds of the other three. But they said nothing more, nor did Bunter, until at last a horse and trap came bowling up from the farm. In the driving-seat was the farmer himself, and by his side sat Bob Cherry.

Bob had already explained all he knew to the farmer, and, after a brief examination, the farmer helped the juniors to lift the injured school porter into the trap.

Then Harry Wharton climbed up by the farmer, and the trap dashed away towards Greyfriars, leaving the other juniors to follow on foot.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Stubborn!

FRANK NUGENT was waiting by the porter's lodge when the trap drove up. Mr. Quelch was there also, in cap and gown, looking very grave. Quite a number of fellows were there, too, having seen that something unusual was afoot.

They were soon to know what it was. The trap came to a halt just inside the school gates, and Harry Wharton sprang to the ground. In a moment willing hands were carrying the unconscious porter into the lodge, where they laid him gently on the couch in the stuffy living-room.

As they laid him down, Gosling gave a sigh, and his eyes flickered. Then he opened them and gazed dazedly round him.

Mr. Quelch leaned over him.

"Quiet, Gosling!" he ordered gently. "You have been injured. The doctor will be here presently, and then—"

Gosling strove to raise his head.

"What—what's 'appened, sir?" he murmured faintly. "I—I seems to remember—"

"Don't try to talk, Gosling," advised the Remove master. "You were apparently knocked down while walking along the lane. But you'll—"

"I remember now," whispered the old man. "It—it was one of them motor-bike things. I 'eard it come roarin' up behind me, and—and—"

His words tailed off; his eyes closed. He was unconscious again.

At that moment the school doctor came bustling into the room, and Mr. Quelch dismissed Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. They joined the curious crowd outside, answering the eager questions as best they could, but taking care not to mention Coker's name, or their suspicions.

"We'll have to tell what we know soon enough, I expect," Harry Wharton whispered to his chum. "This looks like being a bad business, Franky. By the way, I was forgetting. I suppose Coker hadn't reported the matter when you landed here?"

Nugent shook his head.

"Then either Coker knew nothing about it, or else—"

Wharton paused significantly, and Nugent nodded silently. A moment later Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Billy Bunter came trooping through the gates, and Harry explained the position to them.

He had scarcely done so when the doctor came out of the lodge, and from him they learned the full extent of Gosling's injuries. They were not dangerous, but sufficiently serious to a man of Gosling's age.

In addition to the nasty gash on the head, he had sustained a broken rib, and several bruises of a minor nature. But in the doctor's opinion a few weeks' careful nursing would put him right again.

The boys dispersed, greatly relieved at the news. Billy Bunter had already gone indoors. He was very curious indeed

Faithful to his school—or a traitor! Which shall it be?

about the affair, but he was more hungry than curious. In his view, the matter could wait until he had fortified his inner man.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed him indoors, discussing the matter in grave tones.

"I'm blessed if I know what we ought to do about Coker!" said Harry Wharton. "If he is guilty, then he's an utter cad, and deserves to be punished. But until we are certain, I think we'd better keep our suspicions to ourselves."

"Too late for that," said Bob Cherry. "What about Bunter?"

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton frowned; he had forgotten Bunter.

Whether they kept their suspicions to themselves or not, it was certain Bunter wouldn't. He was the biggest busybody and tattler in Greyfriars, and he would take a delight in airing his views far and wide, Wharton knew.

And in that Wharton was soon proved to be right. Barely had the Famous Five finished tea that evening when Bunter entered Study No. 1, where the chums had forgathered.

The fat junior's face was ablaze with excitement; but his first glance was at the tea-table.

"I say, you fellows!" he began eagerly. "I've got some news for you—news that will make you jump!"

"And you want to trade the news for some tea, do you, Billy?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

As a matter of fact, that was exactly what Bunter intended doing, but he assumed a look of injured innocence.

"Oh, really, Cherry—that's just like you!" he grumbled. "Always suspecting a chap's motives. As a matter of fact, though, I do happen to be a trifle hungry; so I'll stay as you ask me."

"But we don't ask you—"

"In fact," ran on Bunter hastily, "I've scarcely had any tea. My study-mates are such selfish, mingy rotters! Old Toddy wouldn't let me have more than three pieces of cake, and that fat-head, Dutton, kicked me out just because I'd eaten five of the sardines—"

"And how many sardines were there?" interrupted Cherry gravely.

"Eh? Oh, six, I think—mingy things, too! Dutton always buys cheap stuff. Anyway, as I say, I don't mind if I do stay—"

"Then you're unlucky, Billy!" laughed Harry Wharton. "We've just finished, and there's nothing left—"

"Only this loaf of bread," added Bob Cherry. "But you're welcome to that, Bunter. Here you are!"

Bob Cherry raised his arm, holding the loaf of bread. Bunter ducked and jumped for the door. There he stopped, however, as Cherry lowered the loaf with a chuckle.

"I—I say, you fellows, stop rotting!" he urged, eyeing Bob's hand cautiously. "I haven't told you the news yet. It's about old Coker, you know. It was Coker who knocked poor old Gossy down—fact! Just as we thought."

Harry Wharton gave a start.

"Is that true, Bunter—has he owned up?"

"No. But it's proved he did it—I've proved it!"

"Rats!"

"Stuff!"

"Fact!" said Bunter. "I've proved it! I've been doing a bit of detective work since I got back. I've—"

"Nosy-Parkering, you mean!" sniffed Nugent.

"You shut up, Nugent! I tell you I've fairly brought the guilt home to



"Loder! Coker! Are you out of your senses? Stop this fighting instantly!" cried the Fifth Form master. Even as Mr. Prout shouted, the pair crashed to the floor locked in each other's arms. (See Chapter 7.)

him! If you want clues and proof, look in the cycle-shed!"

"Cycle-shed? What for?"

"In the cycle-shed," repeated Bunter mysteriously. "It was the first place I went to. And my theory proved correct. I've examined Coker's bike. You fellows saw those marks in the road. You yourself, Wharton, said it looked as if someone had come a cropper. Well, it was Coker. He did it. His bike proves it. His front lamp's smashed, and his front mudguard's buckled up. There's inches of enamel chipped off the forks, too."

"My hat!"

"And that ain't all," pursued Detective Bunter. "I've found out that Coker was wet through when he came in—drenched to the skin. He went to the bath-room, had a hot bath, and changed every stitch of his clothing. What about that?"

"Ass!" snapped Wharton, though his tone was uneasy. "He may have come a cropper miles from where poor old Gossy was found."

"Likely, isn't it?" jeered Bunter.

"Likely—"

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Wharton. "Have you tackled Coker about this, Bunter?"

"No. But I'm jolly well going to! I'll charge him with it face to face—that's me!"

"You'll be an ass if you do!" warned Johnny Bull. "He'll scalp you, you idiot! If you'll take my advice—"

"When I want advice," said Bunter loftily, "I'll ask for it!"

"Don't be a fool, Bunter!" said Wharton quietly. "You leave Coker alone—keep his name out of this, too. I suppose you haven't mentioned your suspicions to anyone yet?"

"Ahem! Er—yes! I did mention the

matter to a few chaps. And why not?" demanded Bunter.

Wharton frowned darkly; it was what he had expected.

"You're a mischief-making, inquisitive fool, Bunter!" he said angrily. "Get out of here, for goodness' sake! Scat! Take your fat, face away before I lose patience and punch it!"

"But—but look here—"

"Will you clear?"

"Oh, really, Whar—"

Bunter did not finish. Bob Cherry's hand had closed on the loaf again, and he leaped wildly for the doorway. He went through it like lightning—Johnny Bull's boot helping him considerably.

"That's done it!" commented Frank Nugent. "It'll be all over the school now. But—but if that fat toad's speaking the truth, it's beginning to look black for Coker."

Harry Wharton nodded, his face clouded. Unless Coker could prove that he had met with an accident somewhere else, it seemed certain now that he would be charged with the crime—for it was a crime. And he felt sorry for Coker. Despite the mighty Horace's annoying little ways, the fact that he and the Remove chums were always at daggers drawn, he was really friendly with the burly, blundering, soft-hearted Fifth-Former.

And even now he could not believe Coker had done it. Coker might possibly have ridden the old man down by accident; indeed, remembering Coker's reckless handling of a machine, it was extremely likely that he had. But to play the coward and poltroon—to run away and leave the old man lying there unconscious—no! It was not like Coker at all.

The Greyfriars Chums—the greatest schoolboy characters ever created!

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And yet—

Harry Wharton turned a troubled glance on his chums.

"Look here, you fellows, we'd better see Coker about this," he said gravely. "That fat ass will be setting it all over the school, and the beaks are sure to hear it sooner or later. We'd better warn him what to expect."

"Better go armed with cricket-stumps, then," said Bob Cherry with grim humour. "If we as much as hint such a charge to old Horace he'll go off at the deep end, and there'll be trouble."

Though Bob's chums did not take the suggestion seriously, they felt no little trepidation as they followed Harry to Coker's study a minute later. Coker was a mighty fighting man, and there was no knowing what might happen, or how he would take their interference—well-meant as it was.

But as they approached Coker's study they were soon made aware that the mighty Horace had already gone "off at the deep end," as Bob put it.

From behind the closed door came sounds of strife, and the deep booming of Coker's voice unmistakably raised in wrath.

"Sounds hopeful," remarked Johnny Bull with a chuckle. "I wonder if— Oh, look out!"

Coker's door flew open suddenly, and something whirled out into the passage. It struck the passage wall with a tremendous concussion, and slid to the linoleum.

It was a human form—a round, fat figure from whom came howls of pain and wrath.

It was Billy Bunter.

"So you've visited Coker, after all, Bunter?" snapped Wharton, too angry to laugh.

"Do you need our advice now, Billy?" asked Bob Cherry blandly. "You said you'd ask when you wanted it, you know."

Bunter tottered to his feet, breathing heavily and stuttering with wrath.

"The—the howling beast!" he spluttered, his eyes glittering with rage behind his big glasses. "I merely charged him with having run Gossy down. I simply told him what a howling outsider he was, and—and he flew at me like a madman. That's proof of his guilt if you like. I'll—I'll—"

Spluttering incoherent threats, Billy Bunter tottered away, rubbing himself woefully. Truly the path of a detective is hard at times.

Harry Wharton knocked on the door, and opened it. With his chums behind him he entered the study.

Coker of the Fifth was alone in the study. Evidently the crafty Potter and Greene were giving their leader a wide berth after their desertion that afternoon. He was standing on the hearth-rug with his burly back to a roaring fire. His homely, irregular features were red with anger, and he was still breathing heavily.

"Well?" he demanded, eyeing the Remove juniors suspiciously. "What do you kids want—eh? If it's about Bunter—"

"It is, and it isn't," answered Harry Wharton. "We saw Bunter go out on his neck, and the sight gave us more pleasure than pain, Coker. What was the trouble, though?"

"Trouble?" roared Coker. "I'll give him trouble! The fat toad actually charged me with having knocked down poor old Gossy with my motor-bike! Me, mind you! As if I didn't know how to handle a blessed jigger without knocking folks down! The cheek of it! Why,

I didn't know anything about it until half an hour ago. And as for me doing a dirty trick like that—leaving the poor old chap lying there, why"—he clenched his huge fists fiercely—"if I had the brute who did do it, here, Wharton, I'd—I'd smash him to bits—I'd break every bone in his cowardly body! That's me!"

Harry Wharton eyed Coker's wrathful face keenly.

Somehow, he felt sure that Coker's wrath was genuine, that his indignant words rang true. If Horace Coker was guilty, then he was undoubtedly a very fine actor.

***** * NEXT WEEK'S * * STAR FEATURES! * *****



***** * Keep Your Eyes Open * * For This Bumper * * Issue! * *****

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Up Against It!

HARRY WHARTON walked to the door and closed it. Then he turned to Coker, his face grave.

"Look here, Coker, old man," he began, "listen to me. What Bunter has just said is only what all Greyfriars will be saying soon."

"Eh? What d'you mean?" howled Coker. "Why—"

"Keep cool, for goodness' sake," pleaded Wharton; "and don't make such a thundering row. It's like this. You know that poor old Gossy was found lying unconscious in Friardale Lane, don't you? He says he was knocked down by a motor-bike. Well, it's known that you passed that way on your bike just before he was found. We saw you, so did Bunter; and everybody knows what a mad, reckless fool you are on a bike—"

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Coker explosively. "D'you mean to say you— you think—"

"We think nothing yet," said Harry

quietly. "But that's not all. Is it true what Bunter says—that you were wet through when you came in, that your bike was damaged, too?"

Coker gave a sudden start.

"What—what do you mean? Why, yes, of course it's true!" he stammered blankly. "But—but I can easily explain that, you idiot!"

"Then I should explain it without delay!" said Harry. "If you don't—well, you can guess what the fellows will think. They'll think—"

"Blow the fellows!" snorted Coker, with sudden heat. "Think I care what they think? I'll jolly soon explain that, though. Why didn't I damage my bike when—when—when—"

He paused. His face whitened, and his clenched fists fell. A sudden flood of recollection came to him. Hadn't he promised that cad Loder he wouldn't mention the affair at the Gables, hadn't he given his word not to breathe a word that would hint he had ever been there? Coker's jaw set obstinately.

There was a silence. The juniors exchanged meaning glances.

"Well?" asked Harry Wharton uneasily. "How did you get wet through, Coker? Where did you damage your bike?"

"I can't explain!" snapped Coker. "And, what's more, I jolly well won't! Why should I explain to kids like you—eh? Cheek, I call it! Go and eat coke! Now clear—get out of here!"

"You ass! Don't you see what this means? Won't everybody think—"

"Rot! Utter rot!"

"Very well; but you're a fool, Coker," said Harry, his face hardening. "It only leaves us one thing to think. I'm blessed if I ever dreamed you could possibly have done such a cowardly, dastardly trick. But now—"

"What?" howled Coker, in a sudden burst of rage. "You mean to—to say you think I did it. Why, I'll—I'll smash you! I'll give you what I gave that toad Bunter. I'll—I'll—"

He made a sudden rush at Harry, his face crimson with rage. Next second the two had closed and were fighting furiously.

"Back up, you fellows!" panted Harry Wharton.

They backed up willingly enough. Coker was a rough handful to tackle at any time; but just now he was like a raving madman. In a moment a wild, whirling scrimmage was in progress. The struggling figures crashed into the table, and it went over. And as the tea-things had not yet been removed, there was a most fearful crash. Over all could be heard Horace Coker's bellowing voice. Fellows came crowding to the doorway, staring in at the scene in startled amazement. Coker's study was often the scene of strife and commotion; but this was unusually alarming.

Then a sudden interruption occurred. A stern voice sounded in the passage outside, and the crowd in the doorway parted. Into the room strode Mr. Quelch. He stared aghast at the scene of disorder.

"Coker!" he thundered. "Boys!"

The strife ceased as if by magic. Harry Wharton & Co. stood up, looking very sheepish. Coker staggered to his feet, red and dishvelled.

For a moment there was silence. Then Mr. Quelch spoke.

"I won't ask the meaning of this—this disgraceful tumult now," he said quietly. "That can wait. Coker, you will proceed to Dr. Locke's study at once. He

A super-thriller that will grip you from end to end!

wishes to speak to you on a very serious matter."

Coker hesitated. Then his face paled, and, turning slowly, he left the room.

The master turned to the quaking Removites. But to their astonishment he did not demand an explanation of the commotion. He did not even refer to it.

"Wharton," he began grimly, "I understand that you and your chums saw Coker passing along Friardale Lane immediately before the finding of Gosling's unconscious body in the lane. I may add that I have already interviewed Bunter, who seems to know more about this affair than anyone else, and he states that he was with you at the time. Is that so?"

Wharton looked very unhappy. It was what he had feared. Bunter's chattering had obviously reached the ears of the authorities.

"Ye-es, sir," he stammered at last.

"Very well. You will follow me at once to Dr. Locke's study."

Mr. Quelch rustled from the study. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at each other gloomily and followed. As they made their way to the headmaster's study, they met curious glances on every side. Everyone knew what was "on"; Billy Bunter had made sure of that.

As they reached Dr. Locke's study Billy Bunter himself emerged, looking very self-important. He grinned and winked at the Famous Five, who gave him black looks. They followed Mr. Quelch inside, and the door was closed.

Coker was there, standing before Dr. Locke's desk. He was looking dazed and more than a little frightened now.

The Head motioned to Coker to stand to one side. He turned a grave look on the juniors.

"Wharton," he began, addressing the captain of the Remove. "I understand that you, with your friends and Bunter, were the boys who found Gosling, the porter, lying in the road unconscious this afternoon. He states that he was knocked down by a motor-cyclist—a dastardly coward who had not the decency to stop to investigate the damage he had done. Who that villain is we don't know, but"—the Head's voice became harsh—"we have good reason to believe from information learned this evening, that a Greyfriars boy is the culprit."

Here Coker stepped forward indignantly and was about to speak, but the Head motioned him to be silent.

"I therefore wish to ask you several questions, Wharton, which I desire you to answer very carefully," went on the Head. "I have already interviewed Bunter, who has made several statements. I wish you to substantiate those statements, Wharton. First of all, did you meet Coker on his motor-cycle in Friardale Lane just before you found Gosling?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Was he travelling very fast, Wharton?"

"He—he was travelling fairly fast, sir," stammered Harry.

"Ah! And was he at all upset—I mean to say," exclaimed Dr. Locke, "did it strike you that there was anything unusual about his appearance, Wharton?"

"I—I—I—" Wharton stammered hesitatingly.

"Answer me, Wharton!"

"Well," faltered Harry, glancing uneasily at Coker. "He—he did seem to be a bit strange."

"One more question, Wharton. Have you any reason to believe that Coker was the boy who knocked Gosling down?" demanded the Head.

Wharton was silent. He hardly knew how to answer that question.

"It—it looks funny, sir," he said slowly, at last. "But—but I can't believe Coker did it, sir. He's a bit of an—I mean he's a bit awkward at times; but he'd never do a thing like that, sir!"

The Head nodded. He was about to turn to Coker when a knock sounded on the door. It opened to reveal Wingate, the skipper of Greyfriars.

"Well, Wingate?" asked Dr. Locke.

"I've been to the cycle-shed," said Wingate, glancing curiously at Coker, "and what Bunter stated is quite true. Coker's bike is damaged just as Bunter said it was; and I've found out that Coker was wet through when he came in this afternoon, sir."

"Ah! Thank you, Wingate."

Wingate left the room, having given his report. The Head turned to Coker, his face set and stern.

"Now, Coker," he said quietly. "You have heard what these boys state. You understand why I have sent for you. It has been suggested that you were the motor-cyclist who—"

"It's a lie!" burst out Coker indignantly. "I—I—"

"Silence, Coker!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Do you realise you are speaking to your headmaster?"

"I don't care!" cried Coker wildly. "I didn't do it! I swear I didn't! You—you can't believe I did it, sir?" he asked the Head huskily.

"I did not say I believed you had done

it, Coker," said Dr. Locke quietly. "Please be silent until you have heard what I have to say. It is suggested that you knocked Gosling down, Coker, that your machine was upset, and that you yourself were flung into the ditch. This would account for the present state of your machine, and for the fact that you were wet through on arrival at Greyfriars."

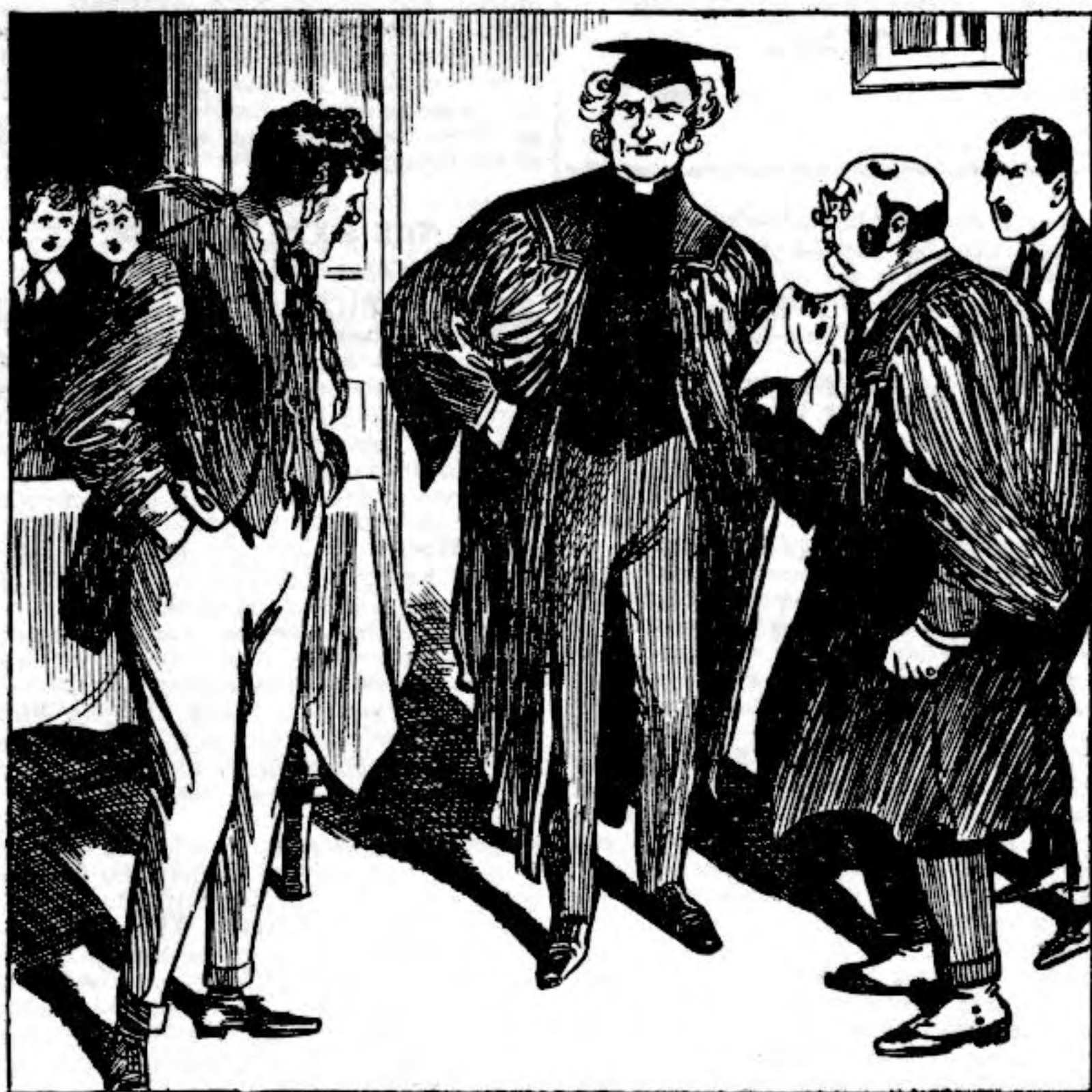
"I—I didn't do it," said Coker doggedly. "I don't care what—"

"You must admit yourself," went on the Head, as if Coker had not spoken, "that everything points to such a suspicion. You have the reputation of being a careless and utterly reckless rider; indeed, I have long considered the advisability of forbidding you to keep such a machine at the school. You are also the only person known to have passed that way on a motor-cycle at about the time the accident must have happened."

"I didn't do it, sir!" again denied Coker fiercely.

"Then the matter is very simple, my boy. The main evidence against you is the state of your clothes when you returned, and the damage to your machine. You can refute that by explaining how you yourself and your machine came to be in such a state. I shall be glad to hear that, Coker."

Coker's heart sank, and he gazed dazedly around him. He had not taken the matter very seriously at first, but he did so now. He knew he could have explained easily enough—have cleared himself with a word. But Coker didn't choose. He had given his word to Loder. That settled the matter to



"You deliberately ignored Mr. Prout's order!" thundered the Head. "And you will suffer for the consequences of your action! You are the most troublesome boy in the school, Coker! I am determined to get rid of you! Tomorrow you will be publicly expelled!" (See Chapter 7.)

All about the popular Chums of Greyfriars next week!

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Coker. His face set in the old obstinate way.

"I can't explain, sir," he muttered at length.

"You—you can't explain!" gasped the Head. His brow darkened, and for the first time a hard look came to his kindly eyes. He exchanged a significant glance with Mr. Quelch. "You mean you have no explanation to offer, Coker?"

"I can't explain," repeated Coker doggedly, licking his dry lips.

"Very well." The Head's voice was stern and like ice. "You understand what this means, Coker? Your silence condemns you. You leave us no other course than to believe you guilty. Is that your last answer?"

Coker nodded. His face was pale, but his eyes gleamed and his massive jaw was set squarely. Harry Wharton & Co., who knew the signs, saw that the matter ended there so far as Coker himself was concerned. Coker could be as stubborn as a mule; he was stubborn now. He had given his word to Loder, and he intended to keep it, come what might. Coker's code of honour was as rigid as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He prided himself as being a man of his word. Some fellows might have considered it time to tell the truth; and perhaps the circumstances justified such

"Coker, old man," he said earnestly, "I'm—I'm sorry about this. I'd like you to believe that—that—"

Coker shook Harry's arm off roughly. His eyes were glistening, and his lips trembled.

"Shut up!" he said hoarsely. "If anyone says two words to me about this to-night, I'll—I'll—"

He broke off and turned away abruptly. Harry Wharton & Co. followed him along the passage silently. When they reached Study No. 1, however, Harry spoke.

"Poor old Coker," he said. "This is a rotten business, you chaps."

"What do you make of it, Harry?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I don't know what to think," muttered Harry Wharton. "Everything is against Coker, but—but—"

There was a "but." Harry's chums agreed with him there. Horace Coker of the Fifth might be an ass. He was several sorts of an ass, in fact. But he was straight as a die, and he always played the game. They simply couldn't believe him to be guilty.

But if the chums of the Remove had their doubts about that, the rest of Greyfriars hadn't when they heard the story. Even Potter and Greene, Coker's bosom chums, shook their heads seriously. They knew from experience what Coker was like on a motor-bike. And the others, though their knowledge was not from experience, honestly believed him guilty. The Head's decision was good enough for them. And they felt anything but kindly disposed towards Coker; quite the reverse. The crusty old porter was never a general favourite; indeed, the juniors were invariably "up against him." But the old chap was in the school infirmary—injured. They felt only sympathy for him now, and deep bitterness and scorn for the fellow whom, as they believed, had been the cause of his injuries.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker Runs Amok!

BILLY BUNTER was very pleased with himself.

He had always fancied himself as a detective, and at last he had proved his abilities in that line. A crime had been committed—old Gosling had been injured by an unknown motorist. And he—Billy Bunter—had been the means of bringing the miscreant—otherwise Horace Coker—to justice. Billy Bunter had good reason to be proud of himself—in his own opinion.

True, he had not received any credit for it yet—quite the reverse. The fellows had called him a crawling sneak—a Nosy Parker—and bluff Johnny Bull of the Remove had kicked him out of the junior Common-room for airing his views on the subject. It was amazing.

But it was a triumph, nevertheless; they couldn't deny it. And Billy Bunter grinned cheerfully as he left the Head's study after his interview with Dr. Locke. The black looks of Harry Wharton & Co. didn't worry Bunter in the least.

As he was passing Coker's study in the Fifth Form passage he stopped suddenly. The door was still open, and as his eyes fell on the scene of disorder inside he fairly jumped.

Bunter, of course, knew nothing of Coker's encounter with Harry Wharton & Co., and the sight of the upturned table, and the array of smashed crockery, made him open his eyes wide.

Quite suddenly he chuckled. His eyes

had fallen upon nearly a whole plum-cake lying on the floor where it had fallen. It was a large cake, and Bunter's eyes glistened as he saw it.

There seemed to be nobody about; most of the fellows by now were at prep. It was the chance of a lifetime.

Bunter took the chance. He slipped inside the deserted study, and closed the door softly. Then Bunter got busy.

"Hardly damaged a bit," was his mumbled comment on the cake. "Jolly good cake, too! Wonder what the thump's been happening here? That ass Coker, I expect!"

Bunter did not ponder on that problem; he was too busy. He finished the cake to the last morsel, and looked round for more to eat. There was a glass dish of jam on the floor; but the glass was broken, and the jam full of bits of glass.

Bunter had just decided not to risk tackling the jam when he heard voices and footsteps in the passage outside. He stood a moment undecided, and then he dived behind the large easy-chair in the corner.

The footsteps paused outside; then came a voice—Potter's voice.

"All serene, Greery," he said. "He's not here. I wonder— Oh, great Scott! What a mess!"

COMING SOON!

Watch Out for Full Particulars Next Week!

"My hat!" gasped Greene, staring round the room. "The ass must have been scrapping with someone! Good job we didn't risk it, and come in—eh, Pott? Poor old Coker! I'm sorry for the ass, but it was a beastly trick to treat old Gossy like that."

"Better clear this mess up, and clear out before he comes," grunted Potter. "I don't fancy a row with him to-night."

Greene agreed, and they set to work clearing up in great haste. Fortunately, the chair behind which Bunter was hiding was in the shadows, nor did the two even glance towards it.

They finished at last, and, after righting the table, left the room hurriedly. Bunter waited for fully three minutes before deciding to venture from cover. Before he had time to act, however, there came the sound of approaching footsteps once again—heavy, lumbering footsteps. Bunter quaked inwardly as he heard them.

The door flew open suddenly, and this time it was Coker himself. He closed the door with a slam, and, striding to a chair, sat down, with his head in his hands and muttering to himself.

Bunter watched him cautiously from his hiding-place. Somewhere beneath his rolls of fat Bunter possessed a heart of sorts, and the look of misery and dejection on Coker's face quite upset Bunter.

But he did not move, for all that. He had been used as a football by Coker

(Continued on page 17.)

FREE REAL PHOTOS OF FAMOUS FOOTBALL TEAMS



a course now. The schoolboy code of honour can be carried too far. But Horace Coker was not an ordinary chap; he prided himself on that.

There was a silence. Dr. Locke broke it.

"Coker," he said gravely, "even now I can scarcely believe that you can possibly be guilty of this—this thing. And I do not think you understand the grave view we take of it. I can forgive a liar—I can even forgive a thief. But to leave that poor old man lying unconscious in the roadway—a bitterly cold day like this—was the act of a coward, a heartless villain. Running Gosling down was an accident possibly. There was no crime in that—unless it was the crime of carelessness and recklessness. The crime—the sin—was in leaving him. I can never condone nor forgive that. The boy who did that cannot be allowed to remain at Greyfriars. This school is no place for such a heartless villain. I will give you one more chance to speak, Coker."

Coker remained silent, though he was shivering.

"Very well," said the Head quietly. "For the present I will withhold sentence until I have conferred with Mr. Quelch, and with Mr. Prout, who is in Court-field. You may go, Coker."

Coker left the room slowly. The Famous Five, looking much more upset than Coker himself, followed him at a nod from Mr. Quelch. The door closed upon them.

Out in the passage Harry Wharton laid his hand on Coker's arm.

There is something strange about the new boy! Watch for startling developments!



HOW TO FACE A FLOGGING!

By BILLY BUNTER.

THERE are several ways in which you can face a flogging.

You can walk to the scaffold with a firm gate, so to speak; or you can be dragged there, shrilly protesting, by a couple of prefects. You can go to your fate with a cheery grin, or a face as long as a fiddle. You can squeel for mercy, or you can take your grool with a stiff upper lip.

Whichever of these courses you adopt the rezzult is the same. You've got to take the flogging!

Now, I am a fellow of very wide eggsperience, so far as floggings are konserned.

On konsulting my diary I find that in the corse of my skool career I have been publicly flogged seventy times, and privately flogged eighty-four times. (I am not inklooding any odd lickings I might reseeve in the Remove Form room.)

Let me say at once that a flogging has no terrors for me. I am what you might call a stow-ick. That is to say, I face all floggings with iron fortytude.

Let others squirm and squeel! Let others ball and bello! Let others howl and holler! W. G. Bunter will always walk to his doom with an upright kar-ridge, and croon to Gosling, the porter, in dulcitt toans:

"Take me on your sholder, daddy, dear!"

Some fellows in the Remove Form are fizzical cowherds. They have no cur-ridge.

Take Skinner, for instance. If Skinner is called upon to face a publick flogging his face wil turn pail as death, and his neeze will nock together with frite. And when the birch comes down he fairly raises the roof with his screams.

Now, if any of my readers happen to be nervuss of floggings, let them take their cue from me! Let them see how boldly I walk towards the platform where the Head and his birch are waiting for me. Let them mark my steady gate, and my fearless eyes.

A little will-power is all you need. Say to yourself, just before the birch comes down, "Not a mermer of pane shall escape my lips! I will be brave. I will be a Bunter!"

When the ordeal is over, you can flick your fingers in the Head's face as a sign of kontempt. (I've never done this myself, by the way; but I should like sumboddy else to do it, just to see how the eggsperiment works!)

EDITORIAL!



By HARRY WHARTON.

HERE is something to thrill the hearts and please the palates of my great army of readers! A Special Flogging Number!

I can picture some of you giving a sort of delicious shudder. For there is something sinister, yet strangely fascinating, about the word "flogging."

A flogging is really quite exciting—except when one happens to be the victim!

There is scarcely a fellow in the Greyfriars Remove who has not been flogged at some time or other. Some fellows take it stoically, others raise the roof with their screams. Vernon-Smith belongs to the former category, and Billy Bunter to the latter. The mere sight of a birch or a cane is sufficient to make Billy start squalling!

Many people are of the opinion that flogging should be abolished. I cannot entirely agree with them.

Just as the cat-o-nine tails is a powerful deterrent to crimes of violence, so flogging is a very effective check to schoolboy misdemeanours. Burn your birch-rod and throw away your cane, and where would you be? (I speak now from a master's point of view.) You would have fellows running wild, and committing all manner of offences, with the comfortable assurance that they could not possibly be flogged.

There are lots of fellows who snap their fingers at "impots," and who do not mind detention; but the mere suggestion of a flogging makes them shake and quake in their shoes.

Of course, there is a certain type of boy whom it is not wise to flog. A weakling, or a fellow of very acute sensibilities, should be given some other form of punishment. But it can safely be left to the headmaster to decide whom to flog and whom not to flog. So long as he gives the writer of this editorial a wide berth, I shall be happy!

Although practically the whole of this number deals with flogging, the subject has been treated in a variety of ways, so that you will not find it wearisome or monotonous.

As you peruse some of the articles in this issue you will almost be able to hear the swish of the birch and the hiss of the cane!

I can safely assert that this is one of the most novel numbers of the "Herald" which has yet appeared.

HARRY WHARTON.

MR. QUELCH'S DREAM!

(Adapted from Shakespeare.)

Is this an ashplant which I see before me, Floating toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee!

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible To feeling as to sight; or art thou but An ashplant of the mind, a false creation, Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

I see thee yet, in form as palpable As that upon my desk.

Thou floatest to me in the silent watches, And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,

Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still!

It is that heavy supper which hath caused

This apparition. Now over Greyfriars School

Nature seems dead, and horrid dreams abuse

My nightly sleep.

Art thou the ashplant that I used to-day

Upon the trembling pupils in my Form? Did I not send thee hissing through the air,

To fall anon upon the fleshy back Of Bunter? Yea, I know it!

Thou art the same grim ashplant, haunting me

In these my slumbers. Raising thee aloft,

I castigated many hands this day, Causing wild howls of anguish to escape

The lips of my poor victims. Skinner and Snoop and Stott thou didst chastise;

Trevor, Treluce—yea, and a dozen more! Their startled screams even now doth haunt

My mind sub-conscious. Oh, go forth! Come not to mock my midnight misery!

Back to the Form-room dark, from whence thou came!

Remain upon my desk the long night through,

Until I snatch thee up to-morrow morn And do great execution. Ah, it goes!

The wailings of my victims die away. The hideous nightmare is at end; and so,

Resting serene upon my feathered bed, I shall remain, until the rising-bell

Clangs forth its summons to another day.

(Let us hope that Mr. Quelch will profit by this nightmare, and not be so fond of bringing his ashplant into play in future!—Ed.)

That's right, you chappies, have a jolly good roar! Laughing's good for you!



A BAD BOY'S DIARY!

By DICKY NUGENT

(of the Third Form).

Form-room, and set it going in the middle of lessens," I replide.

"But twigg will twigg!"

"Let him!" I said carelessly.

So we took the grammarphone into the Form-room, and the histery lessen was enlivened by the stranes of "Who Were You With Last Nite?"

Old Twigg had severall sorts of a fit. The grammarphone was konsealed under one of the desks, so he didn't see it for a minnit.

"Who is responsibul for this unseemly mellerdy?" asked twigg. Then he broke off in astonishment. "Why—bless my sole!—it is a grammarphone! Who brought this discordent instrument into the Form-room? Anser me at once!"

"Gilty, sir!" I said, in a low toan.

"You again, Nugent!" says twigg. "I am sick and tired of asking you to mend your ways. I will take you before the head-master!"

He did, too. And I got it in the neck good and proper.

FRIDAY.

I was feeling too soar after yesterday's flogging to play any praux to-day.

The Head laid on the berch with creol sevverity, and I doubt if I shall be able to sit down for a weak.

"Your kondukt is very bass, Nugent," said the Head, "and I shall give you treble the number of strokes you had before. That alto be a lessen to you."

Sounds very mewsical, duzzent it? So did my yells of angwish!

SATTERDAY.

"What's the programme for to-day, Dicky?" asks yung Myers.

"A snowfite," says I.



Snowed under!

"Who with?" says he.

"With the Third, of corse!" says I.

So we all marched out into the Close, and slung snowballs until our arms aked.

Unforchunittly, my aim was rather errattick, and in the corse of the proseedings I nocked the Head's morter-board off.

"Sorry, sir!" I stammers.

"Boy!" he thunders. "You are konstantly getting into mischeef, and this is the last stor! You will be gated for a weak, awarded a thowsand lines, and made to four-feet the next half-hollerday. I cannot flog you any more, bekawse you have already been flogged neerly every day this weak."

"On that prinsiple, sir," says I, "you can't give me a thowsand lines, bekawse I've already been given an impot every day this weak!"

And then I turned and skuttled away, without waiting to here the Head's reply!

THE MUSICAL SIDE OF FLOGGING!

By CLAUDE HOSKINS

(The Mad Musician of the Shell).

YOU never know whether a fellow possesses musical talent or not until you see him flogged. You can then tell what sort of a singer he is—treble, bass, baritone, and so forth.

Many a great singer has been "discovered" in this way. I have no doubt that Signor Caruso, when he was a small boy, was ordered by his schoolmaster to touch his toes. On hearing his yelps of anguish when the cane came down, the master probably remarked: "My boy, you will be a famous tenor when you grow up!"

At Greyfriars we have many fine singers who hide their lights under a bushel.

Billy Bunter received a public flogging the other day, and during the castigation he rendered the following ditty, in a beautiful treble:—

"Mercy, sir! It's dreadful pain!

Please, I'll never do it again.

Give me no more strokes—yarooooo!

I'll tell my pater, if you do!"

Billy Bunter's vocal efforts were truly delightful. Yet he isn't even in the school choir!

Another talented singer whose great gifts were brought to light during a flogging is Bolsover major.

Bolsover has a deep bass voice, and he sang splendidly on this occasion. I should love to hear him sing "Asleep in the Deep" or "Drake Goes West." I'm sure he would make a sensation.

Yet another brilliant singer is Skinner of the Remove. Whilst being birched a short time back, he went up the scale, as if taking part in a music lesson.

It is impossible in cold print to convey an idea of what it sounded like; but the refrain was as follows:—

"Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!

Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!

Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!

Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh! Oh! Oh!"

Some fellows haven't got a note of music in them. Vernon-Smith, for instance. In his wild days, when he was flogged six times a week, on an average, I often expected him to burst into song. But no! The Bounder never used to make a murmur.

The same remark applies to Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and a host of other fellows. They receive their floggings in silence, and one may listen in vain for a note of music.

When Napoleon Dupont is flogged, he sings the "Marseillaise." When David Morgan gets a dose he renders "Men of Harlech." Micky Desmond sings something to the effect that "over the dim blue hills strays a wild river." And Ogilvy, the Scot, always gives a delightful rendering of "Annie Laurie."

I suppose some of you had never connected flogging with music until you read this article. But now you know that flogging and music are allies!

Supplies the world with laughter every week!



Famous Floggings!

By GEORGE WINGATE

(Captain of Greyfriars.)

THE subject of floggings is a grim one. It sends shivers down the spines of the weaker spirits.

Yet those who possess a sense of humour can derive amusement even from so painful a scene as a public flogging.

Just as there were men in the trenches who faced the most appalling situations with a smile, so there are schoolboys who can face floggings with a grin. Call it bravado, if you like; but to my mind, there is something admirable about it.

I have witnessed a good many floggings in my time. And as a fag, I received my fair share. I am no stranger to the swishing of the birch-rod.

But it is not of myself that I am going to write.

I have been engaged in burrowing through the old defaulters' books of Greyfriars. These books were compiled by the headmasters of bygone days, and they are now kept—the books, not the headmasters—in the school tower. So tyrannical were some of these Heads that they ought to have been shut up in the tower themselves!

The year 1866 was the worst on record, so far as public floggings are concerned.

I find that upwards of a thousand floggings were administered during that black year. This works out at three per day. How the headmaster's arm must have ached!

It is possible, however, that the Head had the assistance of the school-sergeant, who in those days used to act as a sort of Public Executioner. Why did all these floggings take place in 1866? Are we to suppose that the boys of that day were more perverse than the youngsters of to-day? Personally, I hardly think so.

The real explanation is that floggings were the fashion in those days. Impositions, gatings, and other forms of punishment were rarely resorted to. The birch-rod was relied upon as being the best agent for preserving law and order.

Let us look at some of the entries in this defaulters' book for the year 1866.

"Brown, John Robert. Orchard-raiding. Twelve strokes with birch."

That is the first entry; and we can weave quite a romantic story around those terse statements.

We are not told which Form John Robert Brown belonged to, but I expect it was the Remove, which has long been the most unruly Form at Greyfriars. (Oh! Oh!—Ed.)

We can picture Master Brown getting up in the middle of the night, borrowing a sack from the woodshed, and setting forth to plunder the orchard of one of the highly-respectable gentry residing in the neighbourhood. We can see him staggering back to the school, like a sort of Santa Claus, with his sack bulging with apples, pears, plums, and other delectable fruit. With difficulty he heaves his sack over the school wall. Then he clambers over himself. He hopes to convey the spoils to his dormitory without detection; but alas for Master Brown! A master is lurking in the shadows of the Close. He pounces upon the dismayed orchard-raider, and bids him appear before the Head in the morning.

After passing a sleepless night—probably in the punishment-room—John Robert Brown is arraigned before the Head in Big Hall; and, in the presence of the whole school, he receives a dozen strokes with the birch.

Judging by what Old Boys have told me, the birchings in those days were terribly severe.

With all respect to the muscular strength of Dr. Locke's right arm, I should say that one stroke of the birch in those days was equivalent to a couple of to-day.

Was Brown's punishment too severe? Possibly. But we must remember that orchard-raiding was, and still is, a very serious offence. Brown had committed the dual offence of sacking an orchard and breaking bounds, and he was fortunate not to be expelled.

The second entry in the book will make you gasp. Here is, indeed, a case of undue severity:

"Archer, William Egbert. Talking in the dormitory. Six strokes with birch."

It is almost incredible that a boy should have been so heavily punished for so trivial an offence, which to-day would be rewarded with a hundred laces.

Yet we do not know the full facts of the case. We are merely told that Archer was talking. What was he saying? There lies the whole crux of the matter. If he had been bidding his best chum good-night, or telling somebody to stop snoring, it is unlikely that he would have been birched. Per-



The Great Rebellion of 1866.

sonally, I imagine he was saying uncomplimentary things about a master, and the master came in and overheard him. He was probably saying, "Old So-and-so is a bald-headed old buffer!" or words to that effect.

If my surmise is correct, the offence ought to have been entered in the defaulters' book as "Impertinence to a master."

It would be very interesting if Archer—now an old man, if he is still alive—came down to Greyfriars and enlightened us as to the true facts of the case. But I expect Archer, like many another, has drifted far away from the old school wherein he worked and played.

The next entry in the book concerns quite a number of fellows. But it is of sufficient interest for me to quote the extract in full:

"Loring, Richard Henry.
Melville, James.
Grant, Percival.
Kendrick, Arthur.
Weston, Rowland.
Whitfield, Ernest.
Jones, Stanley Raymond.
Peters, Hector.
Pryor, James Edmund.
O'Connor, Desmond Terence.
"Loring and Melville expelled.
"Remainder—twelve strokes each with birch."

Inciting their school-fellows to rebel against authority, and conducting a "barraging-out."

Here we have, in a nutshell, the sequel to the Great Rebellion of 1866.

The ten ringleaders of this rebellion were all members of the Fifth, and Loring was the captain of that Form.

The trouble arose through the appointment of a brutal master named Hardwick, who ruled the Fifth Form with a rod of iron. Loring and Melville, two spirited youths, sowed the seeds of a big rebellion, which lasted five days. At the end of that time, the rebels, owing to shortage of supplies, were compelled to surrender.

I am not going to start an argument on the rights and wrongs of the case, as I am not in possession of all the facts. Suffice it to say that on that grim morning in January, 1866, two fellows were expelled and eight were relentlessly flogged.

We now come to a more amusing entry:

"Stokes, Robert. Repeatedly sneezing in chapel during the headmaster's sermon. One stroke with birch."

Poor Bobby Stokes! We can picture him sitting in his pew, struggling hard to bottle his sneezing, only to break out again with renewed vigour.

Of course, he may have been sneezing deliberately—with malice aforethought, so to speak. In which event, he richly merited his solitary stroke with the birch.

Here is another amusing entry:

"Banks, Bertram. Impersonating the headmaster, by donning the latter's apparel. Six strokes with birch."

It is easy to picture Master Banks strutting about in gown and motor-board, wielding a formidable birch-rod. The record of his "crime" does not reveal whether he was a senior or a junior; but I have no doubt he was a mischievous young monkey in the Remove. (Go easy, Wingate, or I shall bring an action for libel against you!—Ed.)

This dusty, dog-eared defaulters' book is chock full of interesting facts.

I find that the sternest punishment awarded in 1866 was twenty strokes with the birch. This terrific dose was administered to a boy named Bartlett, for stealing money from the Games Fund Box and allowing another fellow to take the blame. In the end the truth came to light, and Bartlett got his just deserts. His was a particularly despicable offence, and I wonder he was not expelled.

Floggings have become less frequent of recent years; but the birch-rod is still brought into action on occasion. Every now and again we have a General Assembly, and a public flogging is witnessed.

Generally speaking, however, headmasters are more humane than they used to be. And the old "Reign of Terror," with its three public floggings per day, has gone, never to return. At least, we fervently hope so!

In conclusion, I should like to point out that I always keep an ashplant in my study, for the purpose of correcting certain cheeky young cubs in the Remove.

(Spare us, Wingate! You may take it from me that our future behaviour will be exemplary!—Ed.)

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Supplement iii.]

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 780.



By DICK PENFOLD

Rank by rank, and file by file,
Grim of face, with never a smile,
Greyfriars boys invade Big Hall,
Fags and seniors, great and small.

On the platform stands the Head
With the instrument of dread.
Very stern and set his face is
As the fellows take their places.

Solemn hush! I think a pin,
If it dropped, would cause a din.
There you stand, just like a statue,
With the stern Head frowning at you!

Presently he starts to speak:
(Culprit gives a timid squeak!)
"William Bunter, stand out here!
Take your punishment severe."

"Me, sir? Why, sir?" Bunter cries
In accents of professed surprise.
"Sir, you're making a mistake;
'Twasn't me who stole the cake!"

"Falsehoods will not help you now!"
Cries the Head, with thunderous brow.
"I shall flog you all the harder.
Late last night you robbed the larder!"

"Mr. Hacker went downstairs,
Came upon you unawares,
Caught you in the very act,
Whilst the larder was ransacked!"

"Really, sir, it wasn't me!
Mr. Hacker couldn't see.
It was dark, and so he made
A mistake, sir, I'm afraid."

"Stand out here at once, base youth!
You can never tell the truth.
Full of falsehood and deceit,
A baser boy I've yet to meet!"

Down the gangway Bunter lurches,
Glance directed where the birch is.
Bunter wobbles at the knees,
He is pale and ill at ease.

William Gosling then is beckoned,
Shuffles forward in a second.
"Take this boy upon your back!"
Gossy stoops—his muscles crack!



"The way of the transgressor is hard!"

Hark! What is that noise? The "Herald" again!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 730.

FIFTY FLOGGINGS A TERM!

By HAROLD SKINNER.

THE question has often been asked:
Who holds the record at Greyfriars for having been flogged the most times?

With becoming modesty, I place my hand on my chest and bow.

I am the record holder!

Billy Bunter runs me very close, I admit. But even Bunter, wayward lad though he is, has not received the number of floggings that I have.

In one term alone I was flogged fifty times, and if that does not constitute a record I shall be glad to hear from the fellow who can beat it!

Were all these floggings deserved? Well, I must confess that the great majority of them were.

You see, I am by way of being a practical joker, and practical jokers are constantly being sent to the scaffold, as it were.

One of the worst floggings I ever received was after I had prevailed upon Alonzo Todd—who was a new boy at the time—to go and eat the Head's dinner. Alonzo meekly obeyed; but, unfortunately for me, the Head got to know that I had put the silly duffer up to it, and I received a fearful flogging.

In my record of "previous convictions" you will find such offences as these:

Breaking bounds.
Erecting booby-traps.
Turning the fire-hose on Mr. Quelch.
Roof-climbing.
Playing pranks on Gosling.
Drawing caricatures on the blackboard.
Cribbing.
Sneaking.
Sending bogus telegrams.

I should not like to try to count the number of strokes with the birch that I have received. It must run into four figures!

You would think I was hardened to floggings by this time, wouldn't you? And yet each flogging is as acutely painful as the preceding one.

I have tried plenty of dodges with a view to ensuring painless floggings, and some of them have been successful. But the Head is wise to all my little schemes now, and he always makes Gosling search me, to see if I have got a cushion concealed under my coat!

But I must hurry up and finish this article. Trotter, the page, has just looked in to say that I am wanted by the Head. I suppose he has found out that I dressed up in his gown and mortar-board yesterday.

Woe is me! Another public flogging is in prospect, and my knees are knocking together with fright.

Verily, the path of the practical joker is not strewn with roses!

(Skinner is something worse than a practical joker. I would inform him that cribbing, sneaking, and sending bogus telegrams are offences which come under the heading of caddishness.—Ed.)

Billy Bunter's fourteen stone
Makes the porter gasp and groan.
Bunter wriggles, starts to bellow:
"Remember I'm a frail young fellow!"

"Flog me gently, if you can, sir!"
"Silence, boy!" the Head makes answer.
Then he pulls aside his gown,
And the birch comes swishing down!

Bunter shouts, and Bunter shrieks,
Bunter sobs, and Bunter squeaks.
See him wriggle, writhe, and squirm,
Like a lacerated worm!

Lo, the strokes fall fast and faster,
Till there comes a dire disaster.
Gosling's knees give way at last,
Down he goes! School stares aghast.

Bunter crashes to the floor,
Head delivers one cut more.
Though he tumbled from his perch,
Bunter did not miss the birch!

"There! Your punishment is finished,"
Cries the Head, his breath diminished.
"Yes, I know you feel the pain;
Do not dare transgress again!"

Rank by rank, with solemn faces,
Boys go filing from their places.
Bunter, feeling far from gay,
To the tuckshop wends his way!

IMAGINARY EPITAPHS.

Specially Contributed to the "Greyfriars Herald" by Monty Lowther.

BENEATH THIS WEEPING WILLOW

repose the remains
of

TOM MERRY,

sometime Skipper of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, and Editor of the weakly Weekly which bears his name.

He was known in the School House
as the

**RULER OF THE ROOST,
COCK OF THE WALK,
and
KING OF THE CASTLE.**

He was the "soul" of energy; that is why he failed to "last," and was brought to "heel." In other words, the silly ass overdid it, and now he has paid the penalty.

He was the dearly-cherished ward of

MISS PRISCILLA FAWCETT,

who lavished him with fivers, and with kisses on the brow. Tommy decreed in his will that all future fivers should go to the writer of this epitaph.

"Weep, weep, ye willow! Weep and wail,

And be despondent—very!

Tell passers-by the tragic tale

That Tom's no longer Merry!"

DETECTIVE BUNTER!

(Continued from page 12.)

once that evening, and once was enough for Bunter.

For fully five minutes Bunter watched, his heart thumping against his ribs, hardly daring to breathe. Then Coker sprang suddenly to his feet as a knock sounded on the door and a tall senior entered.

It was Loder of the Sixth. He closed the door behind him, and advanced into the study, a trifle nervously, Bunter thought. Coker eyed him ferociously.

"I—I say, Coker, old man," began Loder hesitatingly, "I—I thought I'd better come and remind you about—about your promise to me this afternoon. You—you intend to stick to it, don't you?"

Coker glared at Loder in blank amazement and growing rage. That Loder should come to him now, asking him to stick to his promise after what had happened, was too much. For his part, Loder was just as amazed at the look of fury on Coker's face. As a matter of fact, Loder had only just that minute returned from Marlow, and he had not heard a word as yet of what had happened. Not that it would have made much difference to Loder if he had heard.

"You—you howling cad, Loder!" said Coker through his teeth. "I should have thought you'd have kept clear of me after all this. You've got me into a nice hole with your dashed finking. Not that I'd expect you to own up as to why I came back wet through and that; I jolly well know you won't. And I'm thumped if I'm going to beg you to let me off my promise, either, you cad! Now get out, before I go for you!"

"I—I don't know what on earth you're talking about!" gasped Loder, mystified. "I only came to remind you because—well, my uncle is coming over to Greyfriars to-morrow afternoon. The—the fact is he thinks that—that it was I who saved Molly from going under the ice this afternoon, and he insists on coming to tell the Head about it to-morrow."

"Oh, that's it, is it, Loder?" choked Coker. "You—you're posing as a hero—eh? Making capital out of my misfortunes—that's it. And you've the thump-in' cheek to come to me—you, who left your cousin to drown, and made me promise not to say anything! You—you—"

"Shut up, Coker, you fool!" hissed Loder. "Not so loud." His thin face was white, but his eyes were glittering with rage. That a fool like Horace Coker should talk to him—a prefect—like that, made him squirm inwardly with helpless fury. "Look here," he went on, biting his thin lips savagely. "You're wrong, Coker. The old chap saw you, and knows you dived in, but—"

"Think I care whether he knows it or not?" snorted Coker. "For goodness' sake, clear out!"

"But just a minute. It—it's like this, Coker," said Loder desperately. "My—my uncle thinks you dived in after—I'd saved my cousin, to help us both out. He doesn't know you're a Greyfriars chap. I—I forgot to tell him. When he comes to-morrow he'll talk to you about it, if he spots you. And—and I was wondering if you'd play up to me—tell him some yarn—"

Loder broke off, startled at the strange look on Coker's face. Coker's face was a study. He saw what Loder was driving

at now. Not content with binding him to his promise, Loder wanted him to lie about it, too! It left Coker speechless. Loder quite mistook that look.

"You see," he went on eagerly, "it doesn't matter to you a bit; but it does to me. The old chap's got tons of tin, and I'm playing up to him for all I'm worth. It makes no difference to you whether—"

"No—no difference!" stuttered Coker. "Oh, no; of course not! It doesn't matter if I'm sacked, does it? You don't know about Gosling, do you? You don't know that when I smashed through that fence to go to your rescue my bike was damaged, and because of that, and because I got back wet through, they all think I ran old Gosling down. Why, you—"

"What in thunder are you talking about?" gasped Loder. "I don't—"

"But you needn't be afraid I'll break my promise!" roared Coker with sudden fury. "That's not me. But I'll do one last thing before I'm sacked. I'll give you the biggest thundering hiding of your life, you cowardly cad! Put your dirty hands up!"

"Are you mad, Coker? What— Oh! Yooop!"

Loder yelled fiendishly as Coker's brawny fist took him full on his prominent nose. Evidently Coker's hard-trying patience was exhausted. But that blow was too much for Loder. He grappled wildly with Coker, and the next moment the two were fighting furiously.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.**Detective Bunter!**

FROM his hiding-place behind the big chair, Billy Bunter had listened to the conversation with wide-open ears.

He was astounded.

There was a good deal about it that Bunter did not understand at all. He had not been present in the Head's study when Coker was cross-examined, and he did not know that the stubborn Coker had refused to explain how he came to be wet and how his machine came to be

damaged. But though Bunter's mental faculties were none too clear he realised now that Coker had not done so, and he guessed why.

One thing was clear, however.

Coker had not come to grief by knocking Gosling down, nor had he become wet through by taking a header into the ditch.

His bike had been damaged and he himself had been drenched while going to the rescue of Loder and his cousin at some place unknown.

But that was not all.

Coker's indignation at the charge brought against him had been genuine. His words rang true—Bunter was certain of that. In his own fat mind Billy Bunter was convinced now that Coker was not the culprit.

It was a great disappointment to Bunter. He had carefully built up his theory—he had taken a lot of trouble in his investigations. And now he knew he had been wrong. It wasn't Coker.

These thoughts passed through Bunter's mind quickly as he crouched, breathless with excitement, behind the easy-chair, watching the struggling, tramping seniors.

Both of them now showed signs of wear and tear. One of Coker's eyes was closing, his jacket was ripped up the back, his collar was torn loose. Loder's nose was bleeding, likewise his lip. His clothes were torn and dusty, and his collar was like a rag round his neck.

Both were panting hoarsely, and still fighting with maniacal fury. Coker was no friend of Bunter's, but the bullying Sixth-Former was much less a friend. And it was with great joy that Bunter saw Coker was getting the best of the struggle.

But it could not last. Quite suddenly, a hefty blow from Coker's huge fist sent Loder crashing into the easy-chair. The chair slid back on its castors under Loder's weight, and there came a wild howl from Billy Bunter as he was sent, with a thud, against the wall behind.

"Ow! Oh, crumbs! Ow, my napper! Help!" wailed Bunter, rubbing his head woefully.

But he did not stay long to rub his head. He decided it safer to do that in the passage. He scuttled for the door, wrenched it open and fled, leaving the door open.

The sudden appearance of Bunter must have surprised Loder and Coker not a little—if they noticed him. At all events they ignored him. They continued the struggle with renewed energy, and the sounds of strife rang far and wide.

Doors opened in the passage, and in less than a minute a crowd of startled juniors and seniors were round the doorway.

"Great Scott!"

"It's old Coker again!"

"Whopping a prefect, too! My hat!"

"Go it, Coker!"

This last was by far the most popular remark. Whatever their views of Coker were, they had no half-views about Loder. The bullying prefect was detested by all and sundry, and they enjoyed the sight of Coker "whopping" him.

There came a sudden interruption, however.

Someone gave a sudden cry of "cave," and the crowd melted like magic.

It was Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form master. He looked a very astonished gentleman indeed, as he blinked into Coker's study.

"G-good gracious!" he ejaculated. "Coker? What—"



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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 780.

As he realised what was afoot, he gasped aloud with amazement, and trotted into the study.

"Loder—Coker! Are you out of your senses? Stop fighting, this instant! Stop, I say!"

But Coker, at least, had no ears for Mr. Prout. He was too busy. Coker had had a lot to put up with that day, and he was now taking it out of Loder. Even as Mr. Prout shouted, the pair crashed to the floor locked in each other's arms. Loder would have given up gladly enough. But Coker wouldn't let him.

"Coker!" thundered Mr. Prout. "Do you hear me, boy? Stop this disgraceful disturbance at once. I command you. I—I—"

Mr. Prout paused, and stepping grimly over the struggling pair, grabbed at Coker's shoulder. It was a very unwise act, as the master discovered next second.

A brawny fist shot out, and Mr. Prout staggered back, clasping his hands to his face.

It was an accident, of course—everyone realised that, including poor Mr. Prout himself. Coker had scarcely been aware that the master was present. He had aimed the blow at Loder. But there it was.

From the doorway came murmurs of horror. Coker had done it now with a vengeance! Wingate, who had arrived on the scene just in time to witness this last mad act of Coker's, dashed into the room and gripped Coker in a grip of iron.

"Are you mad, Coker, you fool!" he hissed. "Don't you see what you've done?"

Coker did see now. The fighting gleam left his eyes, and he went limp in Wingate's strong grasp. Loder staggered to his feet shakily. He had received a severe drubbing at Coker's hands, and he scarcely knew what had happened. Mr. Prout had his handkerchief to his mouth. He was looking dazed and bewildered.

"I—I—it was an accident!" stammered Coker. "I—I—"

"Accident or no accident," cried Mr. Prout angrily, his voice muffled through his handkerchief, "you deliberately refused to obey my orders to desist fighting. You are an utterly wicked boy, Coker—a hooligan. I shall—"

He broke off abruptly. In the open doorway had appeared an awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown. It was Dr. Locke. His keen eyes took in the disordered room and the battered faces of Coker and Loder in a single glance.

He entered the study, closing the door after him—greatly to the disgust of those without.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded sternly. "Prout—Mr. Prout, what has happened—Bless my soul, Prout; you are hurt—injured?"

"You may well ask that question, sir," answered Mr. Prout, from behind his handkerchief. "Never during my career as a master have I met with such a—a humiliating experience; never have

I met with such gross disobedience and insubordination. When I entered this study some moments ago, Dr. Locke, I discovered Coker and Loder engaged upon a disgusting exhibition of fist-cuffs; they were fighting like savages, sir!"

"So I should imagine," said the Head grimly.

"But that, sir, is not all," resumed Mr. Prout impressively. "I at once ordered them to desist and—and Coker refused, sir—utterly ignored my order. He continued to fight. I then stepped forward in order to stop the fight by physical force, when—when—when—"

"Yes, yes; pray proceed, Mr. Prout," said the Head a trifle testily.

"He—Coker—that wicked youth—struck me, sir—struck me a blow with his fist!"

"What?" Dr. Locke fairly jumped.

"You can imagine my feelings—my utter amazement and dismay," mumbled Mr. Prout. "I am, however, fully prepared to believe that the blow was struck by accident, or under the influence of passion."

Mr. Prout paused, rather startled by the look on the headmaster's face. If Dr. Locke's brow was dark before, it was thunderous now. The look he gave Coker was hard and ominous. It made Coker shiver a little.

"You—you astound me, Mr. Prout!" gasped the Head at last. "This is far more serious than I could have imagined."

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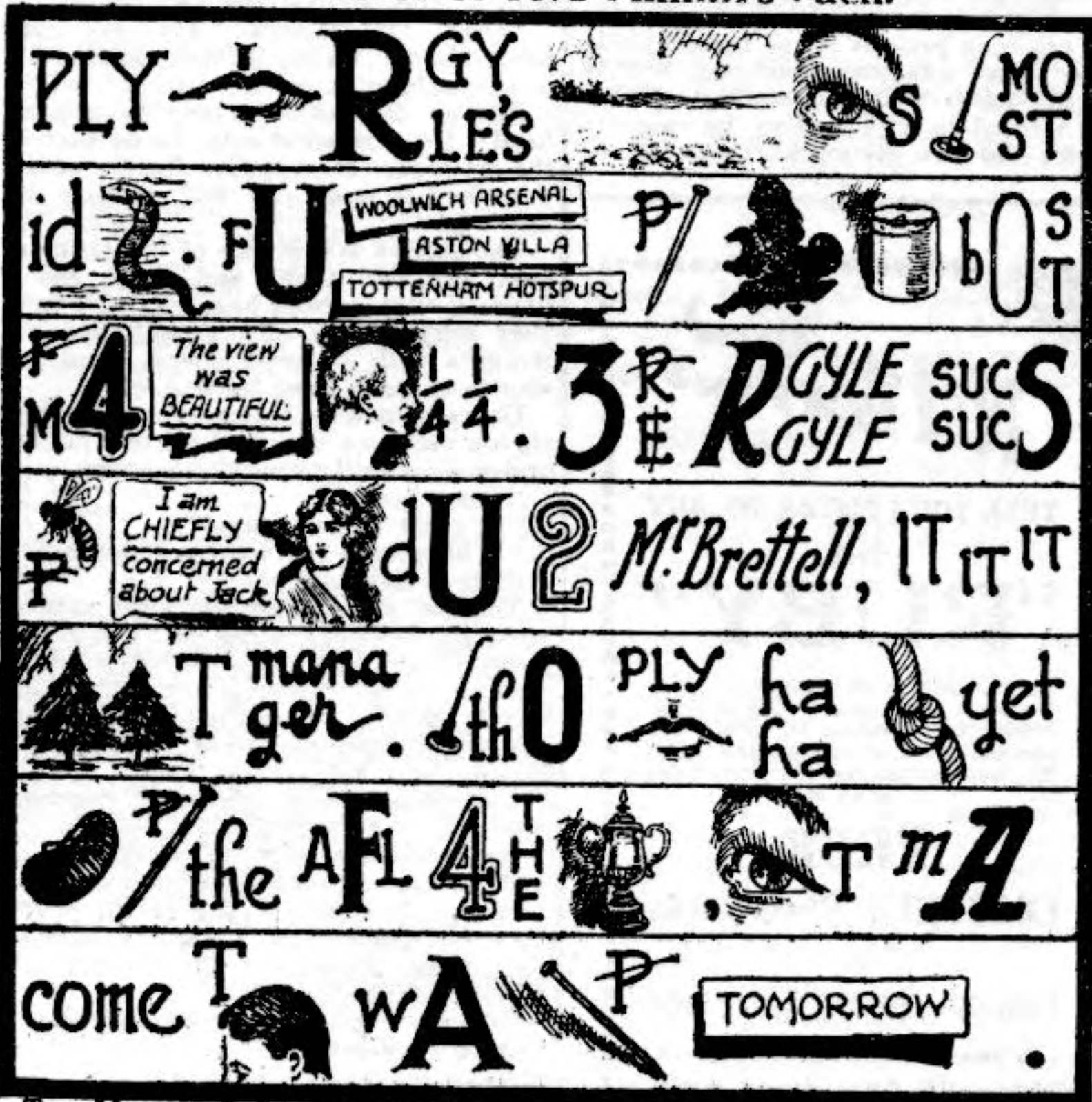
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I enter "Plymouth Argyle" Competition, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

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N

Rest assured that this wretched boy will be suitably punished." He turned suddenly to the quaking Loder. "Loder," he demanded icily, "will you kindly tell me why you were fighting with Coker?"

Loder licked his lips. He had already determined in his mind to deny anything Coker might say. He knew that his word as a prefect would outweigh Coker's.

"I—I—that is, it wasn't my fault, sir! The fight was not of my seeking, I can assure you, sir," he stammered. "We—we were just arguing about—about something, and—and he struck me. He attacked me like a madman, sir!"

"Coker struck the first blow, then, Loder?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Very well, Loder; that will do for the present," said the Head grimly. "You may go."

Loder went, glancing somewhat apprehensively at Coker. The Head turned a steely glance on Coker.

"Coker," he began, his voice low with anger, "it hardly seems possible that while the shadow of disgrace and expulsion already hangs over you, you should have committed yet other unpardonable crimes. But I will not refer here to that other matter. There is, indeed, little necessity to do so now. Not only have you attacked a prefect—a serious matter in itself—but you have treated your Form master with disgraceful contempt and disobedience. You have actually struck him."

"It—it was an accident, sir," muttered Coker sullenly. "I—"

"Accident or not," thundered Dr. Locke, "you deliberately ignored his order, and you will suffer for the consequences of your action. For my part knowing your reckless, quarrelsome nature, I believe it was no accident. You are the most troublesome boy in the school, Coker. I am determined to be rid of you. To-morrow you will be publicly expelled!"

It was out! Coker went white to the lips. Wingate was frankly startled. Mr. Prout lowered his handkerchief. He had been angry before; he was very distressed now. He was a kindly man at heart, and he honestly felt that the Head's sentence was too severe.

He stepped forward determinedly.

"Dr. Locke," he exclaimed excitedly. "pray allow me to plead with you for that wretched boy! I do not believe—indeed, I am convinced, that Coker struck me by accident. To expel him for that alone, would, in my opinion, be an injustice!"

The well-intentioned master saw he had blundered, even as he spoke. In his own way, Dr. Locke was as obstinate as Coker himself. He hated his method of delivering justice to be questioned. At Mr. Prout's words his face became pink.

"That will do, Mr. Prout," he said coldly. "You may safely leave the justice of the matter in my hands. Wingate, will you kindly escort Coker to the detention-room?"

He rustled from the room. Looking more distressed than ever, Mr. Prout followed him, giving Coker a deeply-sympathetic glance as he departed.

"Come along, Coker," said Wingate gently.

They left the room. From various corners curious eyes watched them go. They saw Wingate escort his prisoner along the dark passage leading to the

punishment-room, and their owners guessed what had happened.

Coker was to be expelled!

That evening Greyfriars fairly buzzed with the news. In Common-rooms and studies the matter was discussed endlessly. Everyone knew now what had taken place in Coker's study, but few believed that the fight had much to do with the Head's decision. That Coker was being expelled for knocking Gosling down was the general opinion.

Strangely enough, Bunter was one of the few fellows who did not discuss the subject. Billy Bunter, in fact, was too busy thinking.

Though still disappointed, Billy Bunter was not dismayed. His theory had been proved to be wrong, but he had no intention of dropping the trail. Not that Bunter was particularly keen to clear Coker. It was sheer vanity on Bunter's part. To pose as a successful detective before his schoolfellows was one of Bunter's dearest ambitions.

He had pondered long on the question as to whether he should tell what he had heard; but he had decided at last not to do so. He had proved—to his own satisfaction—that Coker was innocent. He had yet to prove who was guilty.

After much thought he determined to get into touch with Coker. It was a risky proceeding; but Bunter had good reasons—or bad reasons—of his own for doing that.

He waited until nearly bed-time, and then went cautiously along the passage to the detention-room. There was nobody about, and Bunter knocked gently on the locked door.

"That you, Coker?" he whispered through the keyhole.

There was a movement within the room; then came Coker's husky voice:

"Yes. Who is that?"

"It's me—Bunter," said the amateur detective. "I—I say, Coker, old man, I've come to tell you not to worry about this. You won't be sacked to-morrow—I'll see to that!"

"What—what do you mean, Bunter?" said Coker in a low voice.

"I mean what I say. I'm going to clear you, Coker. I know you didn't do it, and I'm going to find out who did."

At any other time Coker would have laughed at Bunter—or punched his head for cheek. But his spirit was broken. He clutched at the hope as a drowning man clutches a straw.

"You? What can you do, Bunter?" he whispered.

"You'll see!" chuckled Bunter. "I know something. I know, for instance, how you got wet, and how you got your bike damaged. It was when you went under the ice after Loder's cousin. And I know why you wouldn't tell. It was because you'd promised that beast Loder not to. How's that?"

From within the room came a muttered exclamation. Bunter chuckled as he heard it.

"Of course," he proceeded ingenuously. "taking this case up will mean a lot of trouble for me, Coker. I shall expect a fee, just like other detectives get. You understand that, don't you, Coker?"

Coker did. He saw Billy Bunter's game now. But how on earth had Bunter got to know what he did know? And how much did he know? A curious feeling of hope came to Coker then.

"Look here, Bunter," he whispered, his voice trembling with eagerness, "I can see you know something. If—if you can get to know the truth—if you can

clear me—I'll not forget, I'll promise you! I'll come down handsomely—you've got my word for that!"

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, grinning. "I—I say, though, Coker, how much is it worth to you? Look here, I—I happened to hear you telling Potter this morning that—that you were expecting a fiver from your Aunt Judy. What about it?"

"It's yours, Bunter!" whispered Coker eagerly. "If you do it, that fiver's yours, Bunter. I mean it!"

"Right!" Bunter got to his feet. "I undertake the case, Coker. Leave me now—I mean I'll leave you now. Buck up, old man! I'll soon have you out of that!"

And Bunter strode away. He had got his first case, and he felt very professional and very bucked. How on earth he was going to earn that five pounds, though, he hadn't the faintest idea yet. But he was ever an optimist, and he did not give the question a thought for the rest of that evening. He was too busy deciding what he would do with the five pounds from Coker—when he got it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

On the Trail!

"SNOW!"

Bob Cherry made that exclamation the following morning on jumping out of bed and glancing through the window. Bob was usually the first to get up in the Remove dormitory, and he generally announced the state of the weather to the rest.

At any other time such an announcement as that would have been received with cheers. The Remove liked snow. It meant fun, and lots of it.

But though it was good news enough, the Remove were not exuberant in their enthusiasm. The Gosling affair and the fate which had overtaken Coker of the Fifth had cast a gloom even on their high spirits. Jim Lee, who knew very little about Coker, was gloomier than ever, and kept even more to himself.

Somehow, the feelings of the school as a whole had changed completely towards the hapless Coker. They remembered only his good points now. Of course, he was an ass—but a straight, good-hearted ass! It was a case now of "poor old Coker!"

They dressed and went downstairs unusually silent and gloomy. Harry Wharton & Co. went out into the quad before breakfast, but after a few minutes' desultory snowballing even that fell flat, and they went indoors again.

The only fellow who did not seem to be worrying was Billy Bunter. Instead of worrying, the fat junior was thinking. He had come to the conclusion that if he intended to earn Coker's fiver he would have to get busy. But it was not until morning lessons were over that an idea occurred to him. It was so simple that he wondered why it had not struck him before.

Of course, the obvious thing was to discover who else owned a motor-bike in the district besides Coker. There were at least four fellows at Greyfriars. But he knew all these had been on the ice that afternoon. Then he knew several fellows who owned bikes at Highcliffe School. But how on earth could he find out—

Then Bunter had a brainwave. It was clear from the marks on the road where the accident had occurred that the motor-cyclist, whoever he was, had come a cropper. Why not ascertain, then, by

Billy Bunter is well to the front next week! He'll make you laugh!

visiting the motor repairers in the district, if a damaged machine had been taken there?

The idea seemed sound to Billy Bunter, and he determined to follow it up.

Directly after dinner he started out for Friardale, full of his scheme.

There was a small motor repairing shop just outside Friardale, and he determined to commence his investigations there.

The snow was not deep, but it was none too easy walking for all that. By the time Bunter reached the shop he was panting and wheezing like a broken-winded cabhorse.

Bunter rolled up the opening and into the shed at the back. There was nobody in the shed, but a couple of cars were there and a motor-bike. As Bunter's eyes fell upon this he gave a jump.

The machine looked new, but it was damaged. The front mudguard was smashed, one rest was bent, and there were several minor injuries. Bunter fairly blinked at it.

He was about to move nearer when there came voices from outside the shed. Bunter dashed behind the nearest car—why, he could not have told.

He was glad he had done so the next instant, however.

Into the shed stamped three youths wearing Highcliffe caps. Bunter recognised them at a glance. They were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour. Ponsonby wore his arm in a sling. As he noted this Bunter's eyes gleamed.

Ponsonby walked over to the motor-bike. Then he scowled.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he grunted. "Why, the fellow's not touched the dashed machine yet! What the—"

He broke off. A door had opened at the rear of the shed, and a youth in overalls entered. He saw Billy Bunter, but evidently concluded he was with Ponsonby & Co.

"Look here!" began Ponsonby blusteringly. "Dash it all! What about my bike? You promised you'd—"

"Sorry, sir!" was the apologetic answer. "I haven't had the chance to touch it yet. It won't take me long; though that there pedal'll want some puttin' right. You must 'ave come a tidy cropper, sir!"

"I did!" snapped Ponsonby shortly, glancing down at his arm.

The mechanic followed his glance and nodded.

"Hope the arm's better, sir?" he remarked conversationally. "Nasty knock you got, too! But, considering the damage to your bike, it's lucky you got off with only that, I reckon!"

"Only that—eh? But you got more than that, didn't you, Pon?" grinned Gadsby. "Got a duckin' as well—took a header into the dashed ditch, didn't you, Pon?"

Billy Bunter gasped aloud as he heard that—he couldn't help it.

Pon heard the gasp, and, stepping to the car, glanced curiously behind. Then he gave a howl.

"Bunter!" he yelled. "It's that fat Greyfriars cad! Collar him!"

But Bunter did not wait to be collared. He fled for the door, and dashed outside and down the entry into the lane. As he did so there was a sudden, astonished exclamation:

"Bunter!"

The exclamation came from five juniors who were at that moment plodding past the opening. The five were Harry Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Bull, and Inky. They were on their way to the Friardale post-office, and the sight of Bunter astonished them.

But they had no time to voice their astonishment. On the heels of Bunter came the Highcliffe trio. They fairly ran into the arms of their enemies. There came a wild yell from Bob Cherry. "Pelt 'em, chaps! Give the rotters socks!"

In a moment the air was full of flying snowballs. Ponsonby & Co. broke and fled in wild disorder, followed by a volley of snowballs.

The victorious Greyfriars juniors gathered round Bunter, laughing heartily. But it was Bunter who spoke first. His eyes were blazing with excitement and triumph. There was no need for secrecy now. He had not the slightest doubt now that his first case was ended.

"I—I say, you fellows," he panted, "I've got news for you. I—I know who ran old Gosling down! It wasn't Coker. It was that beast Ponsonby. I can prove it!"

The juniors fairly blinked at him. But as Bunter told what he had discovered, they were amazed. When he went on to tell of what he had overheard in Coker's study between the

sour were concerned. But with Ponsonby it was different. He was limping badly, and in a very few seconds the Greyfriars juniors had surrounded him. He eyed them apprehensively.

"Ponsonby," began Wharton sternly. "we want a word with you. We want to know how you came to have that smash-up yesterday—with your motor-bike, I mean?"

Ponsonby went white as a sheet. "I—I—I ran into a wall; in Courtfield, it was," stammered Ponsonby. "You can ask—"

"That's the yarn you've told your pals, and everyone else, I expect," snapped Harry. "But we want the truth, Ponsonby."

"It is the truth!" muttered Ponsonby desperately. "If you think I had anything to do with your old porter being run down—"

"How did you know he had been run down?" demanded Wharton quickly. "Nobody outside Greyfriars—excepting the doctor and a farmer—knows about it. Tell me that?"

Ponsonby was floored. He stared wildly into the juniors' faces, wondering how much they knew. Before he could answer, Bob Cherry chipped in. Ponsonby's guilt was written in his face.

"I'd advise you to tell the truth, Ponsonby," he said grimly. "If you won't own up, the police will jolly soon make you. We're trying to keep it from them if we can, but—"

Cherry paused significantly. In matters such as this, Bob was not quite so squeamish as Wharton. He was drawing the long bow a bit; but he felt the circumstances justified it.

The result on Ponsonby astonished them.

"The—the police!" he stammered. "Are they— Look here, Wharton, I—I own up! I knocked Gosling down; but—but it was an accident. The old fool was walking in the middle—"

"That's enough, you cad!" said Wharton grimly. "Leaving him lying unconscious wasn't an accident, though. You cowardly sweep!"

"When—when I saw him lying there, I was badly frightened," muttered Ponsonby. "I was drenched, too, and I ran through the woods home."

"What about your bike?" asked Nugent.

"I hid it behind the hedge, and fetched it last night," muttered Ponsonby.

There was a silence.

"The best thing you can do, if you want to avoid serious trouble," said Wharton at last, "is to write to our Head, explaining the full circumstances, and saying how sorry you are. Understand?"

"I—I'll do it!" muttered Ponsonby, his face white.

Harry Wharton turned on his heel, and they left the cowardly Highcliffe junior standing there.

"So that's that!" commented Harry grimly. "We played a bit of bluff, but it came off. He's frightened out of his wits. He'll write all serene. Good for you, Bunter!"

Even in his moment of triumph, Bunter never lost sight of the main chance.

"I say, Harry," he said eagerly. "You'll see I get my—my fee from old Coker, won't you? You're witnesses, you know."

"I'll see you get it all right, Bunter," said Harry; "and a thumping good feed in the bargain, from us."

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Fifth-Former and Loder, their indignation knew no bounds.

"What a howling cad Loder is!" gasped Harry Wharton, when Bunter's amazing story had finished. "No wonder Coker went for him."

"Poor old Coker!" grunted Bob Cherry. "What a jolly shame! And he's going to be expelled. My hat—"

"Not if we know it!" snapped Wharton quickly. "Look here, you fellows, there's no time to be lost. We've got to get hold of that brute Ponsonby. It may not be him, of course—his smash-up may be just a coincidence, like Coker's was. But it's jolly fishy—just the sort of thing Pon would do. Come on!"

He led the way along the lane at top speed. The others followed, with Bunter panting and puffing behind. The Highcliffe cads were still in sight; nor did they glance round until the Greyfriars juniors were almost upon them. Then Gadsby looked round suddenly, and the next moment they took to their heels.

It soon became clear that the chase was hopeless where Gadsby and Vava-

A great surprise for the school! See next week's thriller!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Clearing Coker!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. almost ran back to Greyfriars. Coker was booked to be expelled at two o'clock, and they wanted to have their little say in the matter before that happened.

On arrival there, Harry led the way without delay to Mr. Quelch's study. That gentleman was just on the point of proceeding to Big Hall, which was to be the scene of Coker's expulsion.

Harry lost no time in coming to the point. In short, clear sentences, he told of Ponsonby's confession, afterwards repeating Bunter's story of the affair between Loder and Coker. That the master of the Remove was astounded would be putting it very mildly.

"This is amazing, Wharton!" he exclaimed at last. "Between you, you have undoubtedly saved Coker from expulsion. You will accompany me to Dr. Locke's study at once. The rest of you had better come also, to substantiate Wharton's statements."

They followed Mr. Quelch gladly enough. They arrived at the headmaster's study to find Dr. Locke closeted with Mr. Prout, who was making an eleventh-hour appeal on Coker's behalf for clemency.

As the juniors filed into the room at Mr. Quelch's heels, the Head frowned his annoyance and amazement.

"Mr. Quelch," he said testily, "what is the matter now? Why—"

"I have brought these boys on a matter of extreme importance, sir," said Mr. Quelch gravely. "It is in connection with Coker. Wharton, you will kindly repeat to Dr. Locke the story you have told me."

Wharton did so, a trifle more nervously now. Both the Head and Mr. Prout listened with growing amazement. Not until the junior had finished his recital did the Head speak. Then it was a few curt words.

"Thank you, Wharton," he said quietly. "You have expressed yourself extremely clearly and concisely. No one could fail to grasp the significance of your story. You will now be good enough to send Loder to me. Afterwards you will ask Wingate to bring Coker here."

He nodded, and Harry left the room. There was silence in the study. Not a word was spoken until Loder entered. And two minutes later Wingate brought Coker in, and Wharton followed them.

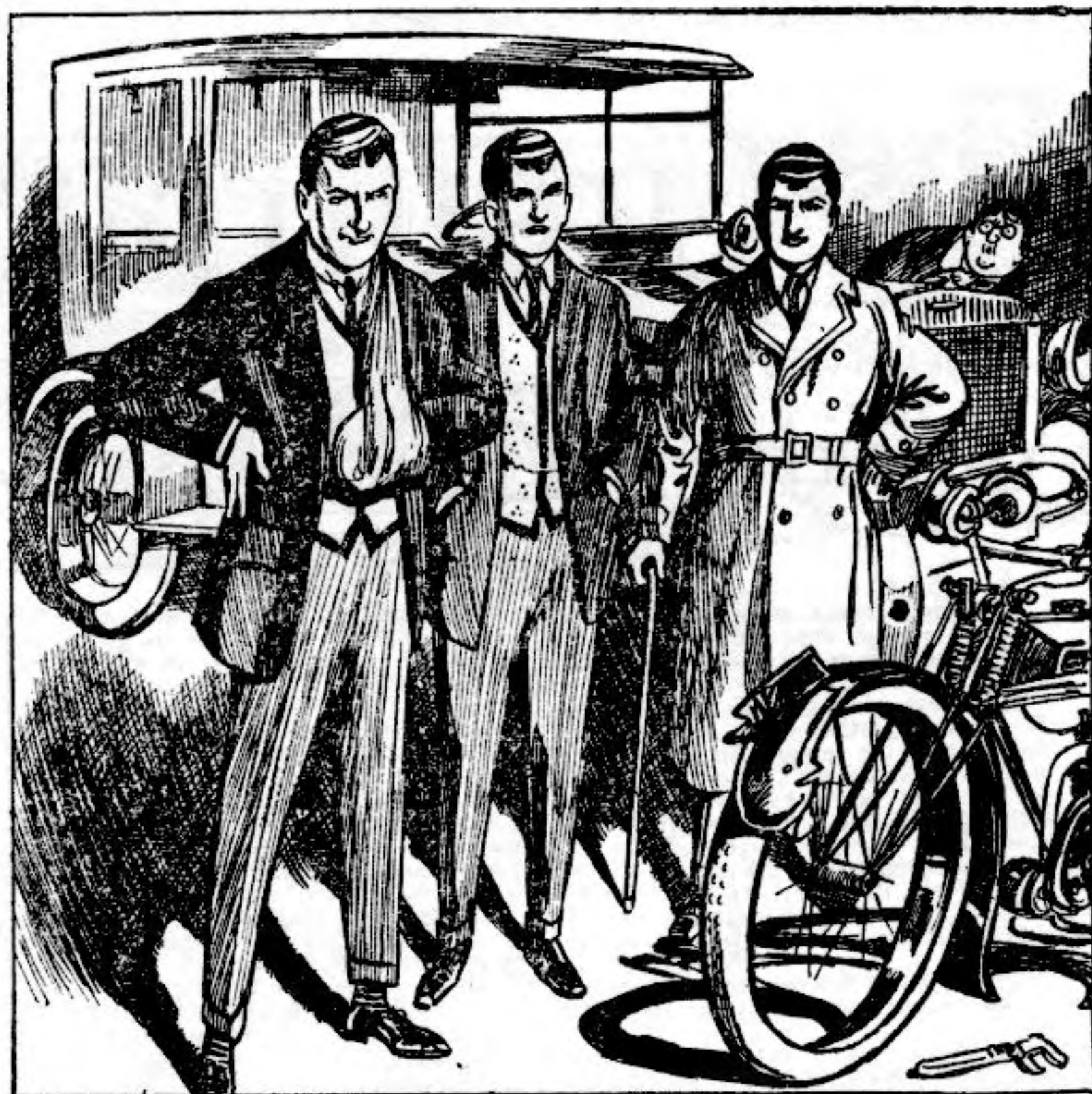
Loder was looking very uneasy. He looked still more uneasy when Dr. Locke turned his glance upon him. It was like steel.

"Loder," he began with ominous quietness, "I wish you to tell me in as few words as possible how Coker came to be wet through yesterday, also, how his motor-bicycle came to be damaged. I may add that I am already fully acquainted with the facts of the case. If I discover that you have deviated from those facts in any particular, I shall expel you!"

Loder was staggered. He went white to the lips. He was hopelessly trapped, and he knew it. Harry Wharton almost felt sorry for him.

Loder did not hesitate long. He told the truth, he had no other course. Haltingly, almost in a whisper, he blurted out the story of the motor-ride, the rescue of his cousin, and of his compact with Coker.

When he had finished at last Dr. Locke asked one question.



Into the shed stamped three youths wearing Highcliffe caps. Bunter recognised them at once. They were Ponsonby & Co.; and Pon wore his arm in a sling. The nuts walked over to the damaged motor-cycle. "Why, the fellow's not touched the dashed machine yet!" exclaimed Ponsonby. (See Chapter 8.)

"I suppose this explains why Coker struck you yesterday, Loder?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Very well. I need hardly say how your story has disgusted and disillusioned me, Loder. You have acted throughout, in your dealings with Coker, in a thoroughly selfish and cowardly manner," said the Head, his voice trembling with scorn. "I do not, however, see how I can punish you. I shall explain the full circumstances to the school this afternoon. Your punishment will be your own conscience and the scorn and contempt of your school-fellows. You may go."

Loder left the room slowly, his head bowed. The Head turned to Coker, who stood dumbfounded with astonishment.

"Coker, my boy," he said, all the hardness gone from his voice, "I can now understand why you acted as you did towards Loder yesterday. And I believe that the unfortunate blow you struck Mr. Prout was an accident. As Mr. Prout has already forgiven you for that, I do not see how I can possibly fail to forgive you. That matter is ended so far as I am concerned. With regard to Gosling, it has now been established beyond all doubt that you were innocent. I will, however, explain everything to the assembled school shortly. Had it not been for your obstinacy and absurd sense of schoolboy honour, you would never have been charged with the crime. Yet I must admit that I fully admire you for having stuck so stoutly to your principles—misguided though they were. You may go."

Dr. Locke was as good as his word. Before the assembled school that afternoon he related the full story. Loder was not there, and before the Head had finished, Coker wished himself anywhere but there. For not only did the Head completely exonerate him, but he also referred in glowing terms to Coker's rescue of Loder's cousin. And when at the end he called for three cheers for Horace Coker, that blushing hero would have bolted had not his chums, Potter and Greene, held him fast.

The Head did not mention Bunter's part in the affair. Perhaps he had a fairly clear idea that Bunter's motives had not been as disinterested as they might have been. Bunter felt he had been grossly neglected. He brightened up, however, after afternoon lessons, when Coker handed him a five-pound note, with a request for his company at an extra special celebration. And as Bunter had already accepted an invitation to tea in Study No. 1 for an hour earlier, Bunter came to the conclusion that a detective has his pleasant times after all.

THE END.

(Next week's magnificent, complete story of Greyfriars tells, in glowing style, of the further eccentricities of the peculiar new boy, Jim Lee. The secret surrounding his hermit-like existence, in part becomes revealed. What that secret is will be discovered from reading "The Schoolboy Hermit!" By Frank Richards. One of the finest yarns this popular author has ever penned. Make a point of reading it, chums!)

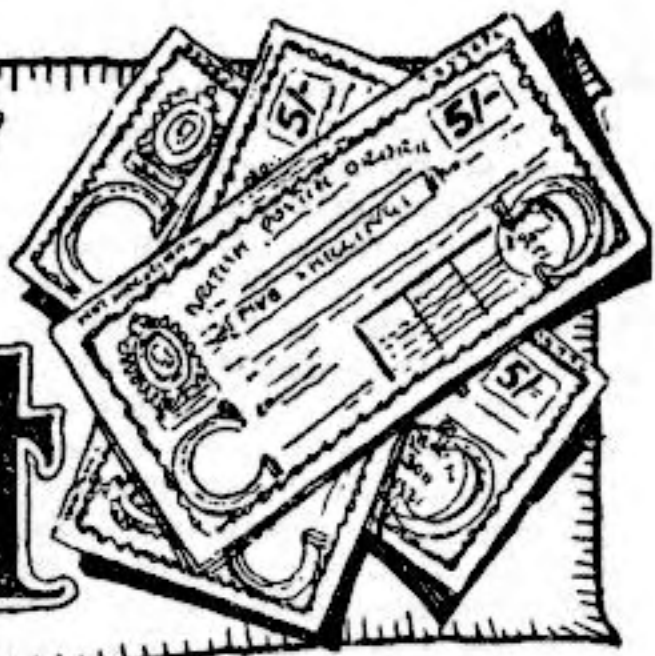
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The Greyfriars Parliament

Grand Money Prizes for "SPEECHES"



A GOOD many subjects of general interest were set down for discussion at the usual weekly meeting on Monday.

The Speaker: "I have to lay before the House a suggestion which is interesting, though I do not suppose for a moment it will be received with universal favour. It is about work—housework. Reader ANNIE TAYLOR, 17, Molyneux Road, Kensington, Liverpool, urges the fact that boys should do housework."

Mr. Percy Bolsover: "Is this serious?"

The Speaker: "Most serious."

Mr. Bolsover: "Then all I can say is—"

Mr. Bunter: "Fellows have quite plenty to do without wasting their time over trifles."

Mr. Peter Todd: "I fail to see where the trifles come in. I should have thought that Mr. Bunter would have been most partial to them, anyway. A trifle, if well made—"

Mr. Bunter: "What are you talking about?"

Mr. Peter Todd: "Trifles."

Mr. Bunter: "Well, I for one can't be bothered with them."

Mr. Todd: "But a trifle is a tipsy-cake—a dish which has a rare appeal of its own. It consists of sponge-cakes, jam, lemonade, and a crowd of other delicacies."

Mr. Bunter: "I wasn't talking about trifles of that sort."

Frank Nugent: "Bunter means that he won't go round with a mop."

The Nabob of Bhanipur: "The Bunter bird refuses dustfully to regard the legs of the uncleanful parlour chairs."

Mr. Bunter: "I call it an insult to the House."

Mr. Bob Cherry: "You ought to go camping with the porpoise. He won't do anything but eat. I don't see why a fellow should not help light the fires, or carry coals, if it is going to be a help. He does that sort of thing when he is scouting."

Mr. Tom Dutton: "He'd do it much better if he was not shouting all the time. To my mind, there is far too much shouting."

The Speaker: "I had better read the speech from Reader Annie Taylor. It runs: 'We had a debate at school on Should Boys Do Housework? All the girls said "Yes," and I quite agree with them. Boys have a very easy time if they have sisters. Boys pride themselves on being stronger than girls, so they should do the harder work. It does not make them any less manly to help their mothers and sisters. If a servant is not kept they should carry coal and clean the boots. I think the "Magnet" a fine paper for girls as well as boys. I hope the Greyfriars Parliament will be an even greater success.'"

Mr. Bunter: "What sauce!"

The Speaker: "Sauce to suggest that this Parliament and the "Magnet" are going great guns?"

Mr. Bunter: "I did not mean that part, but the other. Expect me to go round cleaning boots and shoes? It will be the knives next!"

Mr. Wibley: "Suppose we leave the knives to the merry blades?" (Laughter.)

Mr. Bunter: "I shall fight this matter to the last gasp."

Mr. Johnny Bull: "Go it, Diehard!"

Mr. Bunter: "I regard Mr. Bull's remark as a simply monstrous nasturtium."

Mr. Bull: "Regard it as a cauliflower, if you like—all the same to me."

Mr. Bunter: "Mr. Bull knows jolly well what I am driving at. This is a question of the liberty of the subject. Is a fellow to spend his holidays beating carpets and scrubbing floors? Friends, fellow-countrymen, members of this House, lend me—"

Mr. Coker: "Not a halfpenny! Your postal-order—"

Mr. Bunter (with heat): "It is nothing to do with a postal-order. I wasn't going to ask for money. I don't want your money. What is money? Mere dross! You do not find me harping on money; I spurn it! Lucra means nothing to a fellow of my intellectual attainments. I was going to ask you to lend me your ears."

Mr. Coker: "You will have a thick one directly."

Mr. Bunter: "I feel this insinuation pretty interconsiderably. Beating carpets! No—emphatically no! Records, yes. As I was saying, it is too much. When I have a holiday from the hard work I do at Greyfriars—"

Mr. Cherry: "The what—the which?"

Mr. Bunter: "I said the hard work. My brain is always at it."

Mr. Peter Hazeldene: "Always busy doing fellows for a dollar. We know!"

Mr. Bunter: "If the House will listen to me, the members will be grateful afterwards. They will think of me, and tears will spring to their giddy eyes. They will say: 'That's Bunter, the great Bunter, massive, far-seeing, and humane. He saved us from a vile tyranny. It was he who drew his sword and declared he would never sheathe it until this business of beating the drawing-room carpets was scotched like a snake in the emerald grass.' Yes, gentlemen, that is what you will say."

Mr. Kipps: "But your mother, the duchess, would never trust you out in the backyard with her drawing-room carpet. You would either kill it dead, or else steal the pile."

Mr. Bunter: "I rise like that chap—oh, yes, to be sure, the Phoenix—from the ashes, let us say, of this dismal controversy. My contention is not to be sneezed at."

Mr. James Hobson: "You would sneeze if you walloped a carpet."

Mr. Bunter: "I appeal to all members to take this matter with grim seriousness. Personally, I am prepared to fight in the last ditch. I will not clean boots. I will not wash up. I will not make the beds, nor will I carry coals."

Lord Mauleverer: "Well, somebody has got to do the business."

Mr. Bunter: "I must say the remark comes well from the noble lord, who at one time had a dozen valets to run his errands and make his tea."

Mr. George Tubb: "As king of the fags, I don't see what all the bother is about. We fags have to do all that sort of thing."

Mr. Bunter: "I am not talking to fags."

Mr. Tubb: "But I am talking to you, Bunter, you ancient nutmeg!" (Order!) "If a fag can do it, why not the other chumps? That's what I say! Look at Coker there. He can't spell for toffee!"

Mr. Coker: "You young monkey!"

Mr. Tubb: "Same to you, and many of 'em, old fruit! You can't come it on me now!"

There was a regrettable scene. Mr. Coker made a rush at Mr. Tubb. The two members were parted with some difficulty.

The Speaker: "If Mr. Coker cannot restrain himself, I shall be under the painful necessity of—"

Mr. Coker: "I apologise."

The debate was resumed.

Mr. Bunter: "My feelings have been worked on sadly."

Mr. Peter Todd: "Cheer up, old top!"

Mr. Bunter: "I am afraid that Todd does not understand. This suggestion from Liverpool attacks us in a vital part. When we seek relief from the arduous work of this establishment; when, as it were, we dash out to fresh fields and pastures new, where—"

The Quelchies cease from troubling,

And the Paul Prout is at rest—

When, I repeat, this agreeable time comes, are we to knuckle under to a baneful domestic tyranny? Do we become hewers of wood and sawers of water? No—a thousand times, no! Here am I learning Latin—"

Mr. Todd: "Not much!"

Mr. Bunter (ignoring the remark): "And it is hinted that I should undertake the work of a Gosling or a Trotter?"

Mr. Peter Todd: "Seems to me, Bunter has worked himself into a rage for nothing—not that I mind. It makes the porpoise more interesting." (Mr. Bunter was heard to give a groan as his manly head sank into his waistcoat.) "I think that any fellow worth his salt should lend a hand at his home, if and when wanted, though he would most likely be far more trouble than he is worth."

The Speaker: "I am in entire agreement with the remarks of Mr. Todd. The Liverpool Magnetite has spoken very fairly."

On a division, the voting was 79 in favour of household work if required; 54 against.

The result had the effect of sending the Hon Member, Mr. Bunter, into a fit. The House adjourned and left him to it!

What others have done you can do! Glance above!

THE TWIN DIAMOND THEFT! In which Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, comes up against a baffling mystery and a master-criminal, on his way to America!



A stunning long complete tale, being the further amazing exploits of the master-investigator, FERRERS LOCKE. The most thrilling tale ever written.

By **OWEN CONQUEST.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Twin Duprez Diamonds!



"GOOD-MORNING, sir!"
"Good-morning, Drake, my boy! What's the news?"

Ferrers Locke, his keen face glowing with health, strode briskly across the sitting-room. His assistant, Jack Drake, who had been scanning the "Daily Courier" before the fire, rose and made way for his chief.

"There's been another big jewel robbery in Hatton Garden, sir," he said, in answer to the great detective's question—"at Lunn & Furber's place this time."

Locke, stooping with hands outstretched to the genial warmth in the grate, glanced up at the boy.

"Lunn & Furber!" he murmured. "That was the firm which purchased the famous twin diamonds from the Comte Duprez, if my memory serves me."

"That's right, sir. And the Duprez diamonds were among the gems taken by the thieves."

Rising to his feet, Ferrers Locke took the newspaper from Drake's hand.

But before Locke had quite finished reading the account of the robbery, Sing-Sing, the Chinese servant, arrived, bearing the breakfast eggs and bacon.

The matter of the Duprez diamonds was temporarily relegated into the background.

It was while the detective and his assistant were engaged upon their correspondence after breakfast that Sing-Sing announced a caller.

"A 'Melican gen'leman to see you, Missa Locke."

Ferrers Locke looked up with a frown. "An American!" he said. And he took the card the Chinese proffered to him.

"By Jove, Drake!" he exclaimed, as he glanced at the pasteboard. "the Duprez diamonds case has cropped up again rather suddenly! Our caller is Mr. Dana Lunn, of Furber & Lunn, Hatton Garden and New York. Show him to the consulting-room, Sing-Sing."

"Velly good, Missa Locke."

"Come, Drake," said the detective, rising to his feet, "leave that writing for the time being. We'll adjourn to the consulting-room ourselves. Last night's robbery may hold some interesting possibilities for us."

When, two minutes later, the diamond merchant was shown into the consulting-

room, Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were there to receive him.

The visitor proved to be a broad-shouldered, square-jawed individual on the sunny side of sixty. His clothes and a pair of tortoiseshell spectacles clearly proclaimed him a citizen from the United States. When he spoke his guttural voice revealed a pronounced American accent.

"Good-morning, Mr. Locke! I'd sure be greatly obliged if you would spare me a few minutes of your valuable time."

"With pleasure, Mr. Lunn. Take the arm-chair. You may speak quite freely before my assistant Drake."

The diamond merchant nodded, and sank into the chair.

"Doubtless, Mr. Locke, you saw in the papers this morning an account of the robbery in Hatton Garden?" began Mr. Lunn. "It was reported that the Duprez diamonds and some inferior stones were stolen."

Ferrers Locke inclined his head.

"Wal, Mr. Locke, up to half an hour ago the police had made no arrests. I must frankly admit that my faith in your British Scotland Yard isn't sufficient for me to anticipate that they will find the cracksmen. It's a lead-pipe cinch that if they do, they won't recover the Duprez diamonds."

"Indeed?" said Locke. "And why are you so positive?"

Mr. Lunn removed his spectacles, and began wiping them with a spotless linen handkerchief.

"Because," he said slowly, "the famous twin diamonds were never stolen!"

Ferrers Locke raised himself in his chair.

"Egad!" he said. "This is interesting! According to a statement made by your partner, and reported in the papers, the Duprez diamonds were removed by the thieves from an inner drawer of the safe."

"My partner, Furber, is a very astute man, Mr. Locke," said Mr. Lunn. "I fear he deliberately misled the police. That he may have some slight trouble over the fact later he quite expects. When I saw him first thing this morning I was under the impression myself that the gems had been stolen. But Furber assured me that they had not. Indeed, he showed them to me. He had them at his own home in Kensington."

"I see," said Locke, "and his reason for allowing it to be noised abroad that the Duprez diamonds have been stolen was to render them safe from other crooks."

"That's Furber's idea," said Lunn. "He had imitations of the Duprez stones made. These he put in the safe."

"His little deception certainly saved the

firm from a serious loss, then," said Locke dryly.

Lunn waited until Jack Drake had stoked up the fire, and then resumed.

"As you may know, Mr. Locke, our firm has offices both in London and New York. My partner, Oscar Furber, is at the head of the Hatton Garden office. I live in New York, and only came over here a week ago. While on the Continent last summer Furber himself purchased the famous twin diamonds from the Duprez family. The deal got into the papers. In fact, there was a mighty lot of printers' ink spilled about the Duprez diamonds at the time. You may remember that?"

"I do," said Ferrers Locke, as Mr. Lunn paused. "But pray proceed."

"Wal, our American papers got hold of the 'story,' too. As head of the firm in the States, I received several offers for the gems. At last a wealthy pork packer named Ezra B. Calver offered no less a sum than three hundred thousand dollars for the two stones."

Both Locke and Drake gave a faint whistle.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the detective. "Nearly eighty thousand pounds!"

"That's so. It was a real good offer—too good to be missed. I cabled across to my partner. The deal was fixed up, and I received a ten per cent deposit from my client. Then I came over here personally to fetch the gems."

"Just before I left New York a high police official, who is a friend of mine, gave me a warning. He said that the police had lost track of two of the most expert cracksmen on the American continent—Slick Walker and Denver Galer. They were reputed to have crossed to Europe, but the authorities did not know for certain. I only mention this fact because of the possibility of their having been mixed up in last night's affair."

"You mentioned that suspicion to the Scotland Yard men, I suppose?" said Ferrers Locke.

"Sure I did."

"It was the correct thing to do," said the detective. "By the way, have you any reason for suspecting that your movements have been shadowed at all?"

The diamond merchant hesitated.

"Wal—er—not exactly!" he said. "There was a deckhand on the liner on which I crossed from the States who used to eye me rather curiously. However, I may have unwittingly offended the fellow in some way."

"H'm!" grunted Locke. Then he asked: "But what exactly do you want me to do, Mr. Lunn?"

"I want you—and your assistant, if possible—to take an ocean voyage. It's like this. I

All supporters of the great Ferrers Locke will enjoy next week's yarn!

am leaving Southampton for New York on the Blue Star liner, Harminian, in three days' time. That is the same ship I crossed on last week. She has been in dock for repairs, I understand. My partner, Oscar Furber, insists on coming, too."

"For business or pleasure?"

"Both. He has never seen New York, and he welcomes the opportunity of travelling there with me. But I guess, after this robbery of last night, Furber has got the wind up, too. Indeed, he now insists on keeping the Duprez diamonds in his personal possession until we reach New York."

"So you want Drake and I to act as a bodyguard?" murmured Locke.

"Not for me," replied Mr. Lunn, smiling. "For my obstinate partner. I will pay you the sum of four hundred pounds inclusive when the diamonds have been handed over to Ezra B. Calver. Though, if you like, you can have one hundred pounds on account."

"An extremely generous offer, Mr. Lunn," was the comment of Ferrers Locke.

"Wal," said the diamond merchant in a more confidential tone, "we are making a profit of thirty thousand on the stones. It's worth my while to pay a bit to have a bodyguard for Furber, who will have personal charge of them."

"He doesn't know that you have come to me, I suppose?"

"Gee, I should say not! Furber, who is my senior by a couple of years, is of an extremely obstinate and self-reliant disposition. Despite the fact that he is a cripple, he wouldn't hear of having a bodyguard. Indeed, he won't even obtain a licence for carrying a firearm. Personally, I always travel armed. So I can take care of myself."

Ferrers Locke rose and knocked his pipe out against the fire-grate.

"Of course, your offer is too good for me to refuse, Mr. Lunn," he said. "I have to consider the business side of my profession, you see. But, from your point of view, I think it is a pity that any protection for Mr. Furber should be necessary. It would have been far better to have stated openly in the first place that the Duprez stones had not been stolen. The police, if necessary, would then have afforded personal protection on the liner. Once on board, the jewels could be safely deposited in the ship's strong-room."

Mr. Dana Lunn made an impatient gesture.

"It is no good, Mr. Locke," he said. "I talked to Furber till I was hoarse before coming to you this morning. He won't hear of any suggestion of strong-rooms. To his idea, all safes can be cracked—even one on a ship. He blankly states he's going to see the gems to New York himself, and an earthquake wouldn't turn him from his purpose. I'm right glad, of course, I shall be on the ship. But I've heard of your reputation even in the States, Mr. Locke, and I should feel easier to know that you will always be near at hand."

"Then it is settled, Mr. Lunn," said the detective. "I'll accept the commission, and do my best to help you get the gems safely over to the States."

The diamond merchant showed his intense appreciation by then and there drawing a cheque-book from his pocket. Despite Locke's protest, he insisted on handing the detective the sum of one hundred pounds "for initial expenses."

"You and your assistant will travel on the Harminian as you think fit, Mr. Locke," he said. "Furber and I travel first-class, and probably you will find it best to do the same."

"I will think the matter over," replied Ferrers Locke. "When I've decided on the most suitable course to pursue, I'll get into communication with you. Where are you staying in town?"

"At the Waldorf—Room No. 33."

After conversing with his client for a few minutes more, Locke tactfully brought the interview to a close.

When the diamond merchant had departed, Jack Drake, who had kept a respectful silence during the interview, leaped to his feet. Then he gave vent to his exuberance of spirits in a wild war-dance round the room.

"My aunt, this is great—a visit to the States! Whoop-ee!"

Ferrers Locke laughed and touched the bell. A few moments elapsed, and Sing-Sing inserted himself into the room. Locke proceeded to give the Chinese a number of instructions with regard to the clothes at the

laundry and other matters of a domestic nature.

"Drake and I shall be leaving Baker Street on Saturday," he concluded. "We shall be away for three weeks, possibly a month. That's all, Sing-Sing."

And, without batting an eyelid, Sing-Sing answered:

"Velly good, Missa Locke."

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Aboard the Blue Star Boat!



WITH characteristic energy the great detective set to work to perfect his plans for the voyage to the United States.

Directly he had finished his correspondence he set off for the office of the Blue Star line in Gracechurch Street. There he secured an interview with a director of the company with whom he was

very well acquainted.

Without going into any details, he gave the shipping man to understand the possibility of a serious robbery being attempted on the next voyage of the Harminian.

The news, coming as it did from Locke, caused the Blue Star director to experience an inward qualm. It is a bad advertisement for a shipping line for any sort of theft to occur on one of its boats.

Therefore, when Locke propounded his plans, the director promised to render him every assistance.

Ferrers Locke returned to Baker Street at four o'clock. Over a delicious cup of tea brewed by Sing-Sing, he told Drake of the arrangements he had made.

"I'm afraid, my boy," he said, "that it will be necessary for you to have rather a thin time until we reach New York. To-morrow you will journey down to Southampton with a letter of introduction to the chief officer of the Harminian. He will sign you on as an ordinary seaman."

Jack Drake gave a satisfied grin.

"Before you go down to-morrow I will arrange a number of secret signs with you. By means of them I will convey to you information as to which is the seaman mentioned by Mr. Lunn. On no account must you speak to me on the Harminian, unless I approach you first. That is, unless there is a definite emergency. Your duty will be to mingle among the crew. Should anything of

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 X DENVER GALER, CROOK X
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XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 X FERRERS LOCKE'S most X
 X dangerous enemy in X
 X "THE ROOF-GARDEN MYSTERY!" X
 X in next week's issue. X
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a suspicious nature come to your knowledge, you will let me know in the manner I shall describe later. Your name from to-morrow will be Jack Reddick."

"Right, sir! And you?"

"I shall be Melville Dansey, a theatrical agent. My director friend of the Blue Star line has promised to secure a cabin for me as close to Furber's as possible. My endeavour will be to strike up a close acquaintanceship with Oscar Furber himself. In this Lunn will assist me. And, needless to say, I shall be on the qui vive lest there should be any crooks among the passengers who might desire to part Furber from the twin Duprez diamonds."

On the following day, after receiving further instructions, Jack Drake journeyed down to Southampton. There he duly signed on as one of the crew of the liner Harminian.

That day, too, Locke himself, in a fur-collared coat, trilby hat, and wearing a dark beard and moustache, paid Mr. Dana Lunn a visit at the Waldorf Hotel. He sent up a card inscribed "Melville Dansey, theatrical agent." Upon being shown up to the diamond merchant's room he indulged in a little superb play-acting, professing to have come to obtain financial assistance in putting a new revue "on the road." The dumb-founded amazement of Lunn when Locke revealed his true identity was so ludicrous that the detective burst into a hearty laugh.

"Perhaps, Mr. Lunn," he suggested, "you could induce your partner to attend a theatre to-night. There you could introduce me. I should like to arrange to travel down to Southampton with you on Saturday morning."

This programme was carried out.

Locke proved himself such good company that Oscar Furber was delighted to learn that "Melville Dansey" was travelling to America by the same ship as himself and his partner.

In a second private interview with Lunn, Ferrers Locke learned that Furber was carrying the Duprez diamonds in a secret pocket in a specially-made vest which he wore next to his skin.

On the Saturday morning Locke and the two partners of Lunn & Furber met on the boat-train at Waterloo Station. On the journey down to Southampton the detective had more time to study the man whom he was being paid so handsomely to guard.

Oscar Furber was sixty years of age, and of about the same build as Lunn. He spoke slowly and deliberately, and with a very slight foreign accent. He was, as Lunn had said, a cripple, inasmuch as he had a club foot which caused him to walk with a very pronounced limp. To assist him he invariably used a thick, solid-looking stick, surmounted by a large, plain silver knob.

On the train journey Ferrers Locke regaled his companions with fictitious tales of various theatrical adventures. By the time Southampton was reached, he and Oscar Furber were on the most friendly footing.

Arriving on board the Blue Star liner, Locke was disappointed in one particular. He had hoped that his friend, the company director, would arrange for him to have a state-room next to Oscar Furber's. But it had not been possible to induce any other traveller to exchange cabins.

The state-rooms of Lunn and Furber were on the starboard side of the promenade-deck. The former had No. 13; the latter No. 14. Ferrers Locke found that he had been allotted No. 16, a corner state-room. He would have preferred No. 12. But this was occupied by an American named Mitchell, who made about half a dozen trips a year in the Blue Star boats. The state-rooms Nos. 17 to 20, which were situated on the opposite side of the alley-way, were double-berth cabins. The doors of the Rooms Nos. 11 to 16 faced on to the alley-way which bordered the staircase leading down to the dining-saloon. The large square windows of the rooms looked out on to the promenade-deck.

Locke followed a steward to Room No. 16. Then, after unpacking some of his luggage, he stepped out on deck.

A youth in seafaring rig and wearing the cap of the Blue Star company passed him carrying a pail of water. Some water splashed from the pail, and the detective rounded on the seaman fiercely.

"Careless lout!"

Another amazing tale—"THE ROOF-GARDEN MYSTERY!"

"Sorry, sir!" And the fellow regarded the splashes of water on Locke's spats with a rueful shake of the head.

In this way did Jack Drake, ordinary seaman of the steamship *Harminian*, convey to his chief that he had nothing to report.

When later the ship was making her stately way down the Channel, Ferrers Locke asked Lunn to point out the seaman he had mentioned during the first interview at Baker Street. Obtaining a favourable opportunity, Lunn did so. The man was a small, wiry, and unpleasant-looking individual who went under the name of Smithers. He had obviously been in some scrapping ashore, for he now wore a black patch over one eye. That evening Locke, by a secret sign, put Jack Drake on to the man. The great detective saw little reason in Lunn's suspicions of the fellow, but he considered it his duty to take every precaution. And now he knew that Drake would keep a watchful eye on the seaman.

For three days Ferrers Locke had an easy task. The weather was rough, and Oscar Furber proved to be a bad sailor. Acting well to his role of Melville Dansey, theatrical agent, the detective spent much of his time in the diamond merchant's state-room. Frequently, too, he arose in the night and strolled quietly about the promenade-deck. He let it be known that he suffered from insomnia, but, nevertheless, he gained a reputation for being a trifle eccentric.

On the fourth day, when the ship was but two days from New York, the sea abated considerably. In the afternoon Furber, who had completely recovered from his seasickness, joined Locke, Lunn, and two or three others, in a game of shuffle-board on the promenade-deck.

The detective accepted a cigar, and, having lighted it, leaned on the rail next to the diamond merchant. His eyes watched dreamily the yellow lights of the ports reflected on the dark, rushing waters as the great liner ploughed her way through the ocean towards the distant American continent.

"Well, Mr. Lo-Dansey," murmured Lunn, "half the voyage is over. I feel as easy as a schoolboy in my mind now. I don't think there's a crook on board."

"If there is," replied Locke, in the same low tone, "he's lying as low as old Brer Rabbit."

"It's you yourself who is getting the unsavoury reputation," returned Lunn with a chuckle. "You've spent more time out of your bunk than in it during the night." Then he added, in a scarcely audible whisper: "Furber insists that he's got the stones in his vest and he wears the vest by night and day. Apparently, I foresaw danger where none existed. It is my personal wish that you should get between the sheets early, and have a good rest to-night."

A seaman passing along the promenade-deck stooped down suddenly behind the detective. There was nothing lying on the deck, but the youth rose with a snow-white handkerchief in his hand.

"Yours, sir?" he inquired.

Ferrers Locke took the article.

"Ah, thanks, laddie!" he said. "I didn't notice that I'd dropped that!"

For a few minutes more he conversed with

Mr. Lunn. Then, as seven bells struck—eleven p.m.—he bade the diamond merchant good-night.

Leaving Mr. Lunn still leaning on the starboard-rail of the promenade-deck to finish his cigar, Ferrers Locke went in by the saloon entrance. He paused momentarily to listen outside the door of Oscar Furber's cabin. The light was out, and he heard deep breathing.

Walking along the alley-way to his own state-room, No. 16, he entered and closed the door.

Seating himself on a chair, he unwrapped the handkerchief handed to him by the young seaman. Inside was a crumpled piece of paper. This the detective straightened out to read the message indited on it in lead pencil.

"Believe seaman with patch over eye you pointed out to me was concerned in London jewel robbery. Have wangled it so as to sleep in next hammock to his. Noticed an exaggerated care on his part for his cap.

of Oscar Furber in keeping the gems in his possession, Locke was convinced that the twin Duprez diamonds were safe.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Crime in the Night!



ORDINARY SEAMAN JACK REDDICK, otherwise Jack Drake, the clever assistant of Ferrers Locke, stood in the lee of a ventilator shaft on the promenade-deck.

It was after eleven o'clock at night. The deck was deserted save for himself and a figure at the after end. This figure he knew to be that of Dana Lunn, the diamond merchant.

But Drake was not concerned with Lunn.



Ferrers Locke placed a bowl on a stool and requested the whole party to stand in a semicircle, and extend their hands over the bowl. "Now kindly avert your heads and close your eyes," said the detective. As they obeyed he drew something from his pocket under cover of the large handkerchief. (See Chapter 4.)

Had it yesterday for fun. Smithers acted like a fiend until he found it. During night I felt under his pillow where he keeps his cap while asleep. Think some small stones are hidden in it. Will keep him under strict observation."

Having re-read the communication from Jack Drake, the detective struck a match and carefully burned the paper.

"Good lad!" was his muttered commendation of his assistant.

He divested himself of some of his clothes and put on a dressing-gown. The time was nearly twenty past eleven, and he felt dog-tired. Glancing out of his window, he saw the dark form of Dana Lunn against the rail of the ship. Then, taking his toothbrush, he made his way to the bath-room.

Drake's discovery had eased his mind completely. If Smithers was a clever crook he would be well watched by the boy. Of that, Locke had no doubt. Despite the obstinacy

His gaze ever and anon wandered forward to the bridge. For on the bridge was the Seaman Smithers, who was reading temperatures for the officer of the watch.

The watches on the ship for the crew were four hours on and four off. Drake had managed to get himself into the port watch, which was the one in which Smithers worked.

As he waited he saw the man in question descend from the bridge. He watched the fellow make his way to the port side of the ship and walk aft. Drake started to follow. But as he emerged from under the bridge a quartermaster stopped him.

"Here, my boy," said he, "go down to the saloon and ask the night steward to give you a cup of cocoa for the second officer. Bring it to the bridge."

As soon as possible Drake continued on his way. He was just in time to see Smithers disappear down a companion leading to the main deck.

Ferrers Locke in deadly peril—next week!

"My aunt, I wonder where the chap's going?" Jack muttered to himself. "Why, he's going aft!"

The matter of the cocoa he put entirely from his mind. His one determination was to make sure that Smithers was not up to anything shady.

But, reaching the main deck, he could see no sign whatever of the seaman. Passing outside the smoking-room, he glimpsed some passengers playing cards. But he saw no other soul until he emerged on to the after well-deck. Stepping to the centre of the deck, he gazed about him uncertainly.

As he thus stood there one bell struck, indicating half-past eleven. Drake started. For the tone of the bell seemed to contain in it something human—a note of terror or of pain.

"Crumbs!" said the boy to himself. "My nerves must be pretty groggy to-night!"

But a moment later he was galvanised into activity as a dull splash sounded on the starboard side of the vessel above the noise of the rushing sea.

In a bound he was across the deck. He peered over the side. There, slightly astern of the fast-moving vessel, he saw for one brief moment an agonised face look up from the void of waters into his. Next instant it had been buried in the foam from the racing screws.

Jack Drake sprang on to the rail. He heard a cry from the bridge: "Man overboard!" and the clanging of the engine-room telegraph-bell. Then he dived headlong into the sea.

The plucky lad dived well clear of the ship, striking full into the crest of a sweeping sea. Down, down, he went, while a thunderous, steady beat pounded in his ears. This he knew was caused by the great propellers of the liner thrashing the water. But he was well clear of the terrible suction which might have dragged him to his doom.

Twisting upwards he struck out for the surface. And just as his lungs seemed as though they would burst, he emerged on the crest of another giant roller. Around him the sea was boiling like a cauldron. He glimpsed the towering stern of the Harminian as she raced on her way. Then he was spun like a cork in the snow-white, seething wake of the liner.

Blinded with the foam that bubbled over him and half-drowned him, he had all his work cut out for a few seconds to keep near the surface. In those tense moments he felt an utter idiot for ever giving way to the impulse to attempt a rescue in such a sea.

But even as the thought struck him, he found himself gazing down into a long valley of milky water from the very crest of a mountainous roller. He was facing away from the steamship, and at first nothing but a wild waste of tumbling waters met his eye. Not fear, but an awful sense of loneliness possessed him.

Then out of the waste of waters some yards from him appeared the dark form of a human being. For a brief instant it spun round like a teetotum in the churned-up sea, and disappeared.

Drake struck out fiercely in the direction of the spot where the form had disappeared. Now his whole mind was set on performing that work for which he had risked so much.

It was hopeless to dive below the surface. His one chance—a very faint one—was that the swirling wash of the liner should send the form within his reach.

A mighty billow swung him high again and almost simultaneously brought the lifeless-looking object he was seeking into view. Drake tried to clutch at the matted hair, but the form eluded his grip. Then an eddy hurled the form right into his hands.

Drake gripped the figure by the coat-collar and hung grimly on.

That it was a man he held in his grasp he knew. But the face was turned from him, and he did not know the identity of the fellow. Having obtained a hold on the man, Drake found all his work cut out to prevent his grasp from relaxing.

The victim of this strange mid-ocean mishap was plainly unconscious, and the boy strove to keep the fellow's head above water. In his struggle with the sea Jack Drake swallowed pints of bitterly salt water, until his eyes swam with a dull red light.

But gradually the water became less boisterous, and he and the man he clutched

merely rose and fell rhythmically to the sweep of the great Atlantic rollers.

In the distance the boy caught sight of the dark form of the liner, with the lights from her ports showing like strings of yellow beads along her side. To him it appeared as though she were swinging round. Once her siren gave a gruff bark.

But what brought hope into the boy's breast was the sight of a small blue light which bobbed on the waters. This he knew was the calcium light of a patent night life-buoy which someone had thrown from the ship. Towards this light Jack Drake struck out, swimming on his back, and dragging the unconscious man face upwards with him.

But before he could reach the buoy another light—white this time—came bobbing towards him. Now and again he lost sight of it. But each time it appeared it was a bit nearer. A voice hailed him, and Drake raised a weak shout in response.

Almost as his reeling senses were leaving him altogether, strong hands gripped him. He felt his burden taken from his grasp. Then he himself was hauled from the water and laid in the bottom of a boat.

A kindly face looked down into his. It was that of the surgeon of the Harminian.

"We'll soon have you to rights, sonny," said the surgeon.

The boy choked and struggled in an attempt to speak.

"Look—look after the—the other chap," said Drake. And he sank back into a black void of unconsciousness.

When, some twenty minutes later, Jack Drake came to again, he felt ill and as weak as a puppy. The crew of the boat were rowing hard back to the liner, which could be seen towering, a couple of cable-lengths' distant. He himself was being tended by the rough but good-hearted bo'sun of the Harminian. The ship's surgeon was stooping over the unconscious form of the other victim of the sea.

"How—how is he?" were Drake's first words on regaining his senses. He caught a glimpse of the white face of the man lying in the bottom of the boat. "Great pip! It's Mr. Lunn, the diamond merchant! Is—is he dead?"

The doctor looked round.

"No, thanks to you, my boy," he said. "But he's in a very serious condition."

Drake struggled to his knees.

"No wonder," he said. "I felt nearly drowned myself. I—I wonder how the accident occurred?"

"Accident!" said the doctor. "This was no accident! It was a foul attempt at murder. Mr. Lunn has been stabbed in the back!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Mystery Solved!



FERRERS LOCKE, in a bath-room amidships of the Harminian, heard the faint clang of the engine-room telegraph-bell. Gradually the ship ceased to vibrate, but she rolled more smoothly and heavily in the seas.

"Hallo!" muttered the detective. "Something's wrong!"

Well he knew that the great mailboats do not stop in mid-ocean but for something serious. Normally, only for a burial at sea do the screws cease to revolve, and then only as the body is launched into the deep.

Rushing from the bath-room in his dressing-gown, Locke heard excited voices raised. Members of the crew were hastening on deck. The chief officer, with a bridge-coat buttoned over his pyjamas, hurried on deck and superintended the lowering of the boat which was kept ready for use in an emergency.

Passengers gathered, and the dread news went round that there was a "Man overboard!"

As the boat left the ship, with the doctor among the crew, Ferrers Locke darted along the alley-way, and knocked at the door of the state-room occupied by Oscar Furber.

There was a shuffling sound inside. Then Furber, wearing trousers, shirt, and a dressing-gown emerged.

"Hallo, Dansey!" he said. "There's been

an accident of some sort. I heard them shouting there was a man overboard."

From the door of State-room No. 12 there came the American named Mitchell.

"Say, who's fallen overboard?" he demanded.

"Can't say," replied Furber. "I heard the row, and slipped into a few things to find out. I'll just go and seek out Lunn."

Locke accompanied the cripple to Cabin No. 14. But there was no response to their knocks.

"He's still on deck, probably," said the detective. "He was finishing his cigar when I left him."

But Lunn was nowhere to be found. Gradually, the rumour began to circulate that it was Lunn himself who was the victim of the accident, and that a young sailor had dived in after him. An agony of apprehension possessed Locke's mind.

Seeking his own state-room, he discarded his dressing-gown, and hastily garbed himself in a heavy woollen cardigan and overcoat. In the deck entrance to the saloon he saw Oscar Furber, surrounded by several other passengers who had been roused by the untoward noise.

The cripple, leaning heavily on his thick walking-stick, showed marked concern.

"They—they say it's Lunn, Dansey!" he said in a hoarse voice as Locke approached. "How could it have happened? I—I won't believe that my old friend and partner is—is dead!"

He shivered, and covered his eyes, while Locke put a hand gently upon the cripple's shoulder.

"Come, come, Mr. Furber," said he: "It may not be as bad as that!" He turned to the other passengers present. "Gentlemen, if you will escort Mr. Furber to the smoking-room, I will bring you news as soon as the lifeboat returns."

Oscar Furber allowed himself to be led away to the first-class smoking-room. Then Ferrers Locke stepped out on deck. A throng of passengers were gathered farther aft, while above, on the boat-deck, a number of the crew were waiting to hoist the boat on the davits on its return. Now and again he could catch a glimpse of the light of the boat itself on the starboard quarter.

Fearful lest it was indeed Dana Lunn who was the victim of this strange night episode, the detective took up a position at the ship's rail as near to the spot where he had last seen the man. The place was almost opposite Cabin No. 14—the one occupied by Lunn himself.

All the deck-lights had been switched on, and by the illumination they afforded, Ferrers Locke examined the flat, wooden hand-rail.

"It seems impossible that Lunn should have attempted suicide," he murmured to himself. "He was perfectly normal when I left him. If he did leap overboard from this deck, the rail would assuredly show some slight scratches from the boots he was wearing."

No scratches showed on the rail, and Locke allowed his eyes to drop to the deck itself. Suddenly his gaze became more intent. He took a sixpence from his pocket, and dropped it into the scupper. Then taking out an electric torch, he switched it on, and got down on his hands and knees. His eyes became riveted on a scratch four inches in length in one of the planks of the deck. It was crimson in colour, with a darker smear along one edge of it.

"Blood!" muttered Locke.

A steward came towards him, and Locke switched his light away from the scratch in the deck-planking.

"Lost anything, sir?" asked the man politely.

"I dropped a sixpence, laddie," replied Locke. "Ah, here it is—in the scupper!"

A minute or two later he was among the crowd to welcome the return of the lifeboat. The story of Drake's heroism got about, and a hearty cheer greeted the youngster. Locke, in his role of Melville Dansey, the theatrical agent, was among the loudest in praise of the lad's gallant deed. There was general relief that Lunn was not dead, but ugly rumours circulated that he had been deliberately stabbed in the back and thrown overboard.

Directly the boat had been hoisted, the liner resumed her voyage. Drake, without seeing Locke, went to the fo'c'sle, to change his wet things. Lunn was conveyed to the hospital on the boat-deck, where the surgeon remained with him.

As Ferrers Locke made his way back to the saloon-entrance he paused more than once to examine the deck-rails and bulkheads of the state-rooms. When, afterwards, he made his way to the smoking-room, he found Oscar Furber lying back in an armchair, with sightless, glazed eyes. A couple of the passengers were bending over him.

"Hallo!" said Locke in astonishment. "What's the matter with him?"

"We gave him a drink," said one of the men. "I think he must have put some dope into it himself. He'd complained about not having had much sleep of late, and said he wanted to calm his nerves."

"I guess you're right," murmured the detective. "The worry about his friend evidently preyed on his mind. He's taken some drug. Help him along to his state-room."

The two passengers assisted the almost unconscious Furber to his feet, and escorted him from the smoking-room. Ferrers Locke himself picked up the cripple's silver-knobbed stick, and brought up the rear. Outside his own cabin he paused, while the others got Furber into State-room No. 13. Then Locke followed them in, and assisted in getting the cripple to bed. The walking-stick he leaned up against the side of Furber's bunk.

Then, assured that Oscar Furber was safely wrapped in his drug-induced sleep, the detective followed his fellow-passengers from the state-room.

Long before most of the passengers aboard the Harminian were astir on the following morning, Ferrers Locke was taking a constitutional on deck. After a time he saw Drake go to the ladder leading to the bridge and commence polishing the brass edges of the steps. Approaching the boy, he congratulated him on the gallant rescue he had performed the previous night.

No one was within earshot, and Drake, in return, hastily informed his chief how he had attempted to keep the seaman, Smithers, under observation.

"He's a crook, I'm certain, sir," said Drake. "He might have been concerned in last night's affair, for he was prowling somewhere about the decks at that time. Perhaps he thought that it was Lunn who had the Duprez diamonds on him."

"Thanks, my boy," quietly returned Locke.

Leaving his assistant, Ferrers Locke sought out an interview with the bearded captain of the Harminian. The captain, who had just risen, received him in his cabin.

"I've come about that attempted murder, sir," said Ferrers Locke.

The skipper looked surprised.

"Be seated, please, Mr. Dansey."

Ferrers Locke took a chair, and leaned forward towards the captain.

"My name is not Dansey," he said in a low voice. "I am Ferrers Locke."

"Ferrers Locke, the great detective!"

"Apparently you have heard of me," smiled Locke. "Here are my bona fides—in the form of a letter from a director of the Blue Star Company, who arranged my passage. Doubtless you would like to have the mystery of this—er—unfortunate affair, of which Mr. Lunn was the victim, cleared up as quietly and speedily as possible."

"Good heavens, yes, Mr. Locke! The affair so preyed on my mind that I hardly obtained a wink of sleep. In all my forty years' experience at sea I've never known such an amazing thing. Luckily the knife, or whatever it was used against Mr. Lunn, only penetrated the muscles of his back. The surgeon told me last night that had the wound been another half an inch to the left it would have pierced the poor fellow's lung."

"I had intended seeing the surgeon before breakfast, if possible," said Locke. "I should have done so last night, but I knew he was fully occupied with his patient. What type of instrument does he think caused the wound?"

"He can't quite make that out—a long, thin-bladed knife, perhaps."

"Well, anyway," said Ferrers Locke, "I should like you to summon one or two people to your cabin immediately after breakfast—the purser, Mr. Mitchell, the American who has State-room No. 12, a seaman with a patch over his eye, who goes by the name of Smithers, and the steward who attended Mr. Lunn's cabin."

"I don't quite understand, Mr. Locke," said the captain, looking puzzled. "Still, I will do as you wish."

"And also," added Ferrers Locke, "while we have these people in here, I should like your master-at-arms to run through the sea-chest owned by Smithers. My assistant, Jack Drake, is among the crew under the name of Jack Reddick. He has given me information to the effect that there are stolen jewels hidden in Smithers' box."

Leaving the captain of the liner to make these arrangements, Locke went direct to the cabin of Mr. Oscar Furber. The diamond merchant appeared heavy-eyed and worried, but he seemed to brighten up considerably when Locke informed him that Lunn was out of danger.

"Thank goodness for that, Dansey!" he said. "I must go and see him after breakfast, if it is permitted. The steward informed me, when he brought tea in, that Lunn had not been able to make a statement yet. Let's trust he had time to recognise his assailant."

"I hardly think he did," said Locke. "You see, he was stabbed in the back, and presumably hurled overboard immediately."

"But who could have done such a foul act?" said Furber with a weary gesture.

"Ah, that's just it!" said Locke, lowering his voice. "I was chatting to the captain this morning. He has reason for believing there is a dangerous crook among the crew of the ship."

"Indeed!" cried the cripple.

Locke stroked his false beard thoughtfully.

"It's true, and the captain wants to test whether this fellow had anything to do with last night's affair or not. In addition to him, the skipper is also requiring the presence of the steward of these state-rooms, your next-door neighbour, Mitchell, and the purser."

(Continued on page 28.)

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A MID-OCEAN MYSTERY!

(Continued from page 27.)

"The captain suspects one of these of being concerned in last night's affair?"

"I believe he does."

"Well," said Furber thoughtfully, as he pulled his coat on, "I shouldn't myself be surprised that it was the steward. I didn't like the look of that chap from the start."

"The fellow seemed all right to me," said Locke. "But, anyway, the captain has desired me to assist him with a simple test. What it is I am not at liberty to state just at this moment. I wish, however, that you would come along to the skipper's cabin with me after breakfast. If when we are there you will carry out the simple orders I shall give, the others will be more inclined to follow suit."

Oscar Furber gave a smile.

"You ought to have been a detective instead of a theatrical agent, Dansey," he said. "Still, I am as anxious as the captain that the would-be assassin of my friend Lunn should be discovered. I'll assist as far as I can."

The two men went to breakfast together. Directly after the meal they adjourned to the captain's cabin. The purser, the steward who attended State-rooms Nos. 12 to 16, and the American, Mitchell, and the seaman Smithers, were all present. The last-named, who still wore a patch over his eye, looked sullen and suspicious.

After a brief word to the captain, Ferrers Locke filled a small bowl with water from a carafe and set it on a stool. This done, Locke requested that the whole party, with the exception of the captain, should stand round in a semicircle and extend their hands, palms downward, over the bowl.

"Say, what darn tomfoolery is this?" snorted the American, Mitchell.

But Oscar Furber set the example, and the others followed suit.

"Now kindly avert your heads and close your eyes," said Ferrers Locke. As they obeyed the detective drew something from his jacket-pocket under cover of a large lined handkerchief. Next instant there was a sharp, snapping sound and a roar of anger. And Oscar Furber, the cripple, staggered back, his face livid and his wrists encircled by a pair of handcuffs!

"Good heavens!" gasped the captain of

the liner. "What is the meaning of this, Mr. Locke?"

A volley of abuse left the lips of the cripple.

"You see, sir," said Locke, turning to the captain of the Harminian, "by a little ruse I have effected the capture with the least possible fuss to yourself or the other passengers. Furber, like many other cripples, is extremely powerful in the arms and chest. Therefore I adopted the easiest possible method that occurred to me of getting the bracelets on him."

Furber made a step forward, but the steward and the purser held him firmly by the shoulders.

"But, perhaps, Mr. Locke," said the captain, "you will explain your reason for accusing Mr. Furber of this dreadful crime?"

"With pleasure!" replied the detective. "Last night I noticed a small scratch bedaubed with blood near where Mr. Lunn had been standing on the promenade-deck. It struck me as curious that this should be there if a knife had been used. A further examination showed me a small square mark on the white paintwork of the bulkhead outside of the cabin occupied by Furber. It was just about the height to which Furber could raise his deformed foot. And in the smoking-room a few minutes afterwards I noted that a trace of white could be detected on his enlarged boot."

Locke paused, and the captain said:

"But even yet I don't see how Furber could have stabbed Mr. Lunn. What did he use for the deed?"

To the accompaniment of a snarl from the cripple, Ferrers Locke took up the silver-knocked walking-stick. He removed the ferrule, and for a few seconds his fingers wandered about the upper-part of the stick. There was a slight clicking sound, and a blade of steel about six inches in length shot out from the ferrule end.

"You see," said the detective, "this is a most ingenious kind of sword-stick. Last night Furber, whose nerves were more shaken up than he cared to acknowledge, took a drug to induce a heavy sleep. Two passengers assisted him to his cabin. I brought up the rear, carrying this stick. My suspicions had been aroused. I remembered how annoyed Furber was once when I attempted to hold the stick. The weight of the thing led me to try and discover whether any sort of weapon was concealed within it. Getting my opportunity on the way to Furber's cabin, I discovered the

secret of the stick. You see, it will take to pieces."

Locke unscrewed the silver knob, took out the steel blade from the bottom end, and laid them together with the stick itself and the ferrule on the table.

"The way that the crime was committed is clear," resumed Locke. "Lunn is rather hard of hearing. The deck was deserted, save for himself. Furber saw his opportunity. He got out of the square window of his cabin and gave a swift stab at Lunn with the sword-stick. Then, stooping down, he caught Lunn by the ankles and heaved him overboard. By using this deadly stick Furber thought he had made certain of his partner's death. But before he caused the sword to spring back into its place, it fell and made the scratch on the deck which first aroused my suspicions. Then Furber dropped his sword-stick through the window into his cabin and clambered in himself, his deformed foot striking the white paintwork and making the curious square mark."

The captain of the liner looked at the sullen prisoner in bewilderment, whilst Locke related the motive of the crime.

"Then he has still got the gems in his possession?" said the captain at length.

"Yes; but I will soon relieve him of them," said Ferrers Locke. And he suited the action to the word.

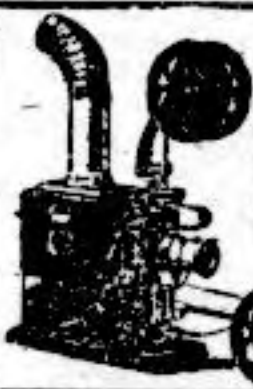
"I will now," resumed the detective, "hand them over to the purser to keep in the ship's strong-room for the remainder of the voyage. They can be delivered to Mr. Lunn at New York."

But there was yet one more sensation for the captain of the Harminian. As the seaman Smithers left the cabin, the master-at-arms placed him under close arrest. An examination of the man's cap proved that Drake was right. There were a few small diamonds concealed in it, and these were afterwards identified by Lunn as part of the proceeds of the Hatton Garden robbery.

Upon arrival at New York, Smithers was proved to be Slick Walker, a notorious cracksmen. But he refused to reveal the name of his accomplice in the robbery. During the ship's stay in port, he was kept in irons, for he was to be taken back to England to stand his trial.

THE END.

(Be sure and read next week's thrilling tale of Ferrers Locke and his able assistant. It is entitled "The Roof-Garden Mystery!" A thrill from beginning to end!)



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