

924 WEEKS OLD—AND ALWAYS NEW!

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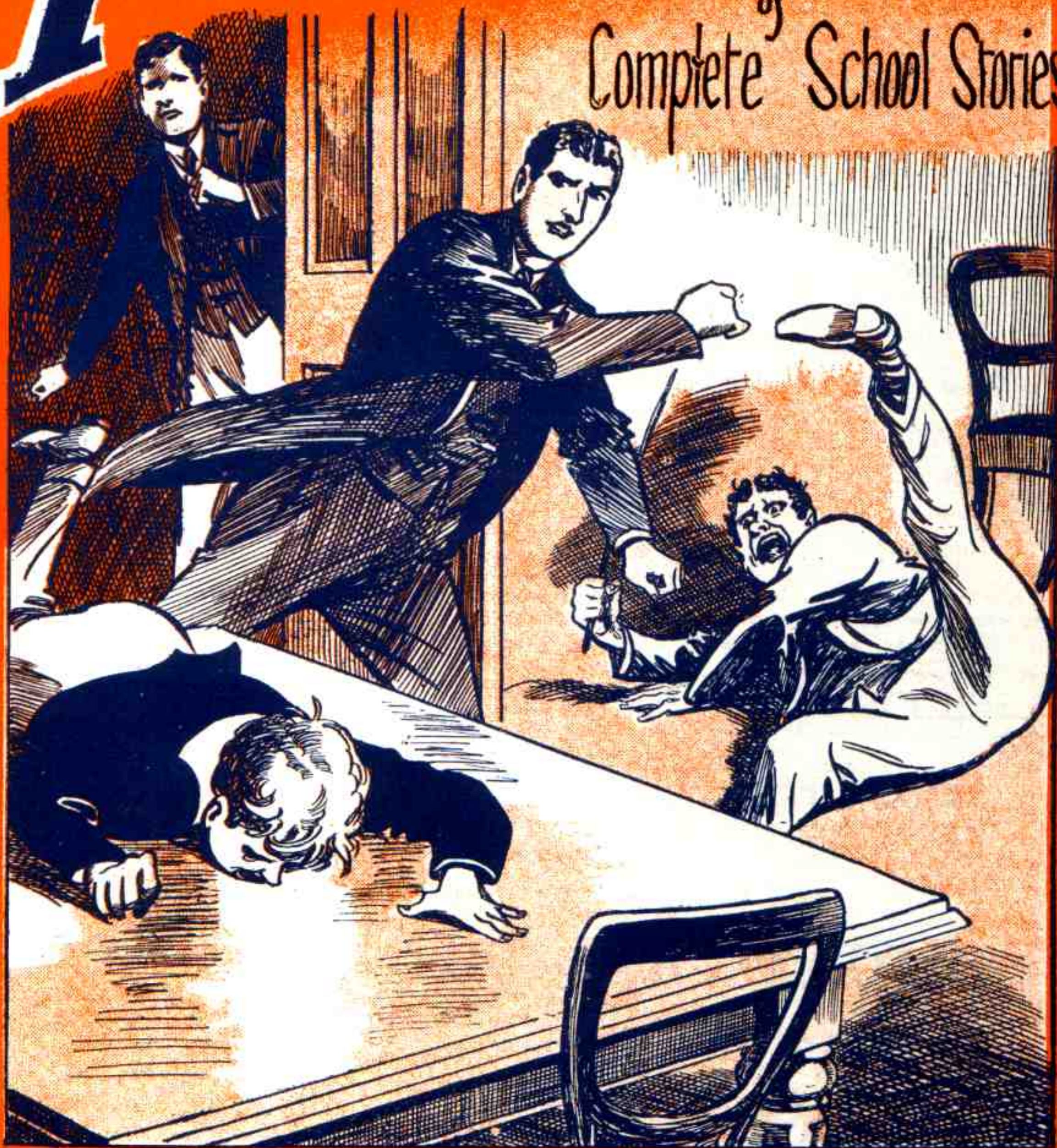
Week Ending October 24th, 1925.

The Magnet 2^d

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WINGATE INTERVENES ON HIS YOUNG BROTHER'S BEHALF!

When Horace Ooker starts to "correct" a fag of the Third Form, it's time a prefect corrected the great Horace! Read the magnificent school story, inside.



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THE R.A.F.

JOSEPH PIGGOTT, of Ranelagh, writes for information on the subject of joining the Royal Air Force. This loyal Magnetite is as keen as mustard to enlist in the youngest branch of the Army. That it offers unlimited prospects to the right sort of fellow goes without saying. He can obtain full information on how to join, etc., by writing to The Air Ministry, Kingsway, London, W.C., or The Civil Service Commissioners, Burlington Gardens, W. Good luck, my chum!

AGES!

A loyal reader from Shipley asks for the average age of the fellows in the following Forms at Greyfriars: Second, Third, and Remove. I will reply to them in the order given. Ten years, twelve years, and fifteen years. My correspondent also raises a query that is constantly cropping up, namely, "Who was captain of the Remove before Harry Wharton?" The answer is Bulstrode, and he was at that time, a bully of the worst order.

PORTRAITS!

A newcomer to the vast MAGNET circle can't say enough in praise of his "find."

He wishes he had started reading the MAGNET years before. I refer to Geoffrey James Trevitt, of Norfolk, and he wants to know if Gosling, the porter, and the Greyfriars masters will be included in our Portrait Gallery. As our American cousins would say—"Sure thing, bo!"

SUPERSTITION!

"Do you believe it is unlucky to walk under a ladder?" That's an extract from a reader's letter that made me sit up this morning as I went through my mail. Well, personally, I don't think it is unlucky to walk under a ladder. Of course, if the painter up above is careless or clumsy enough to drop his can of paint and you happen to be passing UNDER the ladder it is rather unlucky. That's how this age-old superstition started, I believe. But rest easy, chums, the painters of to-day are more careful. While we are on this subject, I would like to advise my chums not to be guided by superstitions. They do far more harm than good. The trouble is that when something untoward does happen after disregarding a superstition, there are always hundreds of people ready to shout—"I told you so. I told you it was unlucky." They seem to forget that there are millions of people on this earth of ours, and accidents must happen to some of us at some time or another.

"HE'S BANDY!"

I received a rather plaintive letter from an old Magnetite who bemoans the shape of his legs. According to his letter, my correspondent suffers from bow legs, and several unkind people take a delight in yelling after him—"He's bandy?" Well, what if he is? It's not his fault, anyway, and it's not such a terrible fault, after all. Some of our cleverest men have been "Bandy!" My correspondent might not have straight legs, but he's got a straight mind, and seems a thorough good sort. There is a lot to be learnt from that celebrated passage by Robert Burns: "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us to see oursels as others see us." We might not be "bandy" in the legs, but I've no doubt we could all show kinks and faults somewhere or other. And we shouldn't like everyone to shout them out from the roof-tops, I wager!

CONCENTRATION!

"I can't seem to stick it." Here's another extract from a reader's letter. This MAGNET chum is trying to study medicine. I say trying, because he's not getting along very swiftly with it. As soon as he sits down to "swot" he starts to analyse his own abilities, and very soon has convinced himself that he'll "never do it." Of course, when that depressing mental stage is reached concentration is a terrific strain, and usually the victim caves in. I don't say concentration is always affected in this way; I'm dealing with my correspondent's particular weakness. If he piles in with enthusiasm and fixes his mind solely on the job in hand, he'll have no time to start analysing his abilities. Of course, he'll find the first few attempts a trifle difficult, but he'll score in the end if he perseveres. It's all a matter of mental drill and discipline. He'll find, too, when the results of his labours begin to show that he has, right from the start, been underestimating his abilities. A good saying to remember when concentrative powers are to be mustered is "A job worth doing is worth doing well." You can't do any job well without concentrating.

Next Monday's Programme.

"HIS BROTHER'S BURDEN!"

By Frank Richards.

Don't miss this grand story of Wingate major and Wingate minor. It shows Mr. Frank Richards at his best.

"PAPER-CHASING!"

Harry Wharton & Co. have concentrated on the fascinating sport of paper-chasing as the subject for their next supplement. You'll enjoy it, chums.

"THE PHANTOM BAT!"

Look out for another powerful instalment of this topping mystery serial. Ferrers Locke is getting "warm," and the end of the trail is in sight.

"INKY!"

Magnetites will be able to add the distinguished face of Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, to their Portrait Gallery next week.

Cheerio, chums!

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ADVENTURE

COKER TRIES HIS HAND! Wingate minor thinks it "the thing" to break bounds and play the goat generally. Horace Coker thinks it's "the thing" for him to interfere and to save Wingate minor from himself! But Horace Coker, despite his good intentions, has an unhappy knack of putting his foot in it!



The Scapegrace of the Third!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, with Wingate minor playing a leading role.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Coker Butts In!

YOUNG rotter!" Horace Coker, of the Greyfriars Fifth, spoke in wrathful and disgusted tones.

He was, in fact, both disgusted and wrathful.

Potter and Greene, who were walking with the great Coker, grinned. They did not seem specially affected by the sight that had called forth Coker's wrath and disgust.

Horace Coker stopped.

He was sauntering in the old cloisters with his chums, in morning break, and they had been discussing the approaching football match with Redclyffe. At least, Coker had been discussing it. When Coker of the Fifth took a share in a discussion, it was generally the lion's share, and there was little left for anyone else.

Coker of the Fifth halted, and fixed his eyes upon a fag of the Third Form, who was leaning against one of the old stone pillars. The fag was Jack Wingate, younger brother of the captain of Greyfriars. Wingate minor had a cigarette in his fingers, in one hand—the other hand was groping through his pockets, apparently in quest of a match.

Hence the wrath and disgust of Horace Coker.

"Young rotter!" he repeated.

For the moment the topic of the Redclyffe match was dismissed, rather to the relief of Potter and Greene.

Coker talked a great deal about football; but his comrades naturally preferred him to talk about things he could understand.

"This won't do!" went on Coker. "Look at that young blackguard!"

Potter and Greene looked, but did not seem impressed.

"No bizney of ours!" remarked Potter. "We're not prefects."

Grunt from Coker.

It was true that he wasn't a prefect; prefects at Greyfriars were all appointed from the Sixth Form. But Coker's opinion was that the Head ought to

have stretched a point, and appointed at least one prefect from the Fifth.

Coker's belief was that the Head should make use of a good man wherever he found him. He had no doubt that he was a good man!

"That makes no difference," grunted Coker; "I suppose we're not allowing this sort of thing among the fags!"

"I suppose we're not doing the prefects' work for them," answered Greene.

"Wait till we're in the Sixth."

"That's rot, Greene!"

"Oh!"

"You talk a lot of rot, Greeney. I've told you so before."

"Hem!"

"Wingate major ought to keep an eye on that young rotter," said Coker. "I'll save him the trouble this time."

"Better not butt in," urged Potter, as Horace Coker moved on towards the scapegrace of the Third. "Wingate major won't like it."

"That doesn't matter to me, Potter."

"But—" murmured Greene.

"Wingate major is an ass. He's refused me a place in the First Eleven to play Redclyffe."

"Oh!"

Jack Wingate glanced at the three Fifth-Formers. He did not take the trouble to put the cigarette out of sight. Apparently he did not suppose that he had anything to fear from the Fifth. Coker stopped before him with a lofty frown.

"Smoking—hay?" he snapped.

"Just going to," said Wingate minor coolly. "Got a match, Coker?"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Got a match?"

Potter and Greene chuckled. Jack Wingate was a cheeky young rascal; but they found something entertaining in his coolness, and especially in the expression of Coker's face.

Coker glared at them.

"This isn't a laughing matter!" he bawled.

"Hem! No. Not our bizney at all," said Potter. "Let's get along!"

"I'm dealing with this young rascal!"

"But you can't!" urged Potter. "It's

nothing to do with us. For goodness-sake, Coker, don't keep on butting in!"

"That's enough, Potter! Hand me that cigarette, Wingate minor!"

"Rats!"

"Wha-a-at? What did you say?"

"Rats!" repeated Wingate minor cheerfully. "Who the thump are you, Coker?"

"Who am I?" repeated Coker, almost dazedly.

"Yes, who the merry dickens are you?" said Wingate minor. "Mind your own business! If you've got a match hand it over. If you haven't, shut up and clear!"

"By gum!" gasped Coker.

Words failed the great man of the Fifth. It was true that he was not a prefect, and had no more right to interfere with the Third than a Shell fellow had, or a Fourth-Former. But trifle-like that did not matter to Coker of the Fifth. As the great Julius remarked, "Always I am Cæsar!"—so Coker of the Fifth might have said, "Always I am Coker!" To be Coker was to be important and authoritative; at all events, so it seemed to Coker.

Coker made a grasp at the fag, and Wingate minor yelled in Coker's hefty grasp.

The cigarette dropped to the ground as the fag struggled and yelled in Coker's powerful hands.

"Leggo, you bully!" he howled.

"I'll jolly well—"

"I'll hack your shins!" yelled Wingate minor.

"I gave you six the other day!" gasped Coker. "I caught you coming out of the Cross Keys, and gave you six. If I had a stick with me, I'd give you six now!"

"Leggo, you fool!"

Whack!

Coker had no stick with him, unfortunately. But he had a large and heavy hand.

That hand descended on Wingate minor, somewhat in the manner of a flail. There was a roar from the fag.

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It was followed by a roar from Coker, as the fag hacked his shins.

"Yaroooh!"

Coker had not expected it. Really, he might have expected it, but he hadn't. Coker of the Fifth prided himself on having a short way with fags; and he never seemed to expect resistance—though he seldom met with anything else in applying his short way to Greyfriars fags.

He released Jack Wingate quite suddenly, and hopped on one leg, roaring.

"Oh! Ow! Ow! Oh! You young hooligan! Ow!"

Wingate minor darted away. It was not a time to linger. After him went Coker, in a furious rush.

"Oh, my hat!" said Potter, staring after pursued and pursuer, as they vanished along the grey old cloisters.

"Odd thing that Coker is always asking for it!" yawned Greene.

"And always getting it!" said Potter. "Well, it's stopped him talking football, anyhow; that's so much to the good!"

And Potter and Greene strolled on, quite relieved not to hear any more of Horace Coker's views on the Redclyffe match, and quite indifferent to the outcome of his frantic chase after Wingate minor of the Third.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Asking for It!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"Wingate minor——"
"And Coker——"
"Go it!"

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove were sauntering into the cloisters that sunny autumn morning after second lessons in the Remove room with Mr. Quelch.

Wingate minor and Horace Coker burst suddenly on their view, the former streaking out of the cloisters at top speed, the latter racing on his track with a red and furious face.

Wingate minor was putting on all he knew; he was a reckless young rascal, but he was not reckless enough to let Coker overtake him, if he could help it, after hacking the Fifth-Former's shins.

But Coker was gaining.

His long legs were going like lightning, and at every stride he drew nearer to the fleeing fag.

"Stop him, you chaps!" panted Wingate minor, as he came on the Famous Five. "Stop him!"

"What's the row?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Bullying, as usual!" gasped Wingate minor.

And he streaked on into the quadrangle.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged a glance. Wingate minor they knew as a cheeky and unruly young sweep, rather given to fancying himself because he was brother to the captain of the school. But Coker they knew as an overbearing, overwhelming Fifth Form man, with a totally unjustified opinion of his own consequence. They knew all about his "short way" with fags. They had been there, so to speak.

So they had very little doubt, if any, that Coker of the Fifth had been butting in again for no reason except that unjustified belief in his own consequence.

"This is where we chip in!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"The chipfulness is the proper caper!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Line up!"

The Famous Five lined up directly in Coker's path.

They grinned at him cheerfully as he came on, charging like a bull. With five sturdy juniors in his path, any other fellow might have stopped, or at least paused. Not so Coker! Many and many painful experiences had not convinced him of the inefficiency of his short way with fags. If these cheeky juniors chose to bar his path, they could take the consequences—that was how Coker looked at it. It did not occur to his powerful brain that the consequences might fall upon himself.

He charged on, regardless.

Crash!

Bump!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Collar him!"

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were fairly swept away under Coker's powerful charge. They staggered right and left. But three other fellows grasped Coker at the same moment, and he went spinning over.

Coker, to his surprise, went down.

He went down hard; and Johnny Bull sprawled over his face, and Harry Wharton dropped on his chest, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh sat on his legs.

It was a sudden and complete collapse of Coker.

Bob and Nugent were up the next second, and piling on Coker. The Fifth-Former almost disappeared under five juniors.

"Got him!" panted Bob.

"Sit on him!"

"Squash him!"

Coker struggled frantically.

"You cheeky young villains! Gerroff! Lemme gerrup! I'll smash you! Lemme gerrup, and I'll spifficate you!"

"Not good enough!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You're not the spifficator this time, Coker—you're the spifficatee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'll—" spluttered Coker.

He wriggled and struggled wildly. But he had simply no chance. Hefty as he was, Horace Coker could not deal with five Remove fellows all at once.

The Famous Five sat on him. There was just about room enough on Coker for five fellows to sit, and they sat.

"Will you gerroff?" roared Coker.

"Say 'please' pretty!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker was not in a mood to say

"please" pretty. He struggled and roared like a bull.

"Now, tell us what it's all about," said Bob encouragingly. "What's the matter with Wingate minor?"

"I'll smash you!"

"What's he done?"

"I'll pulverise you!"

"What are you after him for?"

"I—I—I'll scrag you!"

"You wander from the point, old scout," said Bob Cherry gently. "My hat, how he wriggles—like a blessed eel! You might keep a bit more quiet, Coker, when a fellow's taking a rest of your chest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—I'll— Oh, my hat! I'll slaughter you!" panted Coker. "That young cad is getting away all the time!"

"He's got!" said Bob cheerily, as he glanced round. Wingate minor had vanished from sight in the direction of the House.

"The gotfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker."

"Can't you tell us what's the matter old scout?" asked Harry Wharton. "If Wingate minor has done anything—"

"I'll smash you!"

"Did he come between the wind and your nobility, Coker?" chuckled Nugent.

"I—I—I—"

"Coker's above explaining," grinned Johnny Bull. "Great men like Coker don't explain themselves to common mortals. They just get sat on—like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll thrash you all round!" roared Coker. "I'll make an example of every one of you! I—I—I—"

"Go ahead with the jolly old example!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, are you killing Coker?" Billy Bunter rolled up, and blinked at the scene through his big spectacles. "You can hear him right across the quad! I say, the beast kicked me the other day. Hold him while I kick him, will you?"

"Sheer off," said Bob. "You can kick Coker after we let him get up—if you want to."

"Oh, really, Cherry—" Bunter was not likely to attempt kicking Coker when he was no longer held.

"Now, are you going to be good, Coker?" asked Harry Wharton. "We don't mind sitting on you till you calm down; it's for you to say when. Do you feel better tempered now?"

"I—I—I—I'll smash you!" raved Coker.

"That doesn't sound better-tempered," remarked Johnny Bull. "It sounds to me quite cross."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we'll sit here till the bell goes," said Harry. "If Coker doesn't mind, we don't."

"Not at all."

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you might make room for me to kick him. Look here, he kicked me the other day, and I'm jolly well going to kick him—see?"

"Keep off, you fat frog! Oh, my hat!" roared Bob Cherry, as Billy Bunter kicked.

There was not much room for kicking Coker, with five juniors sitting on him. Perhaps that was the reason why Bob got the kick instead of Coker. At all events, he got it.

"Oh!" roared Bob, as Bunter's foot clumped in his ribs.

"I say, I wish you wouldn't get in the way, Cherry!" said Billy Bunter irritably.

"Why, you—you—" gasped Bob.

Bob Cherry jumped up, as Bunter drew back his foot for another kick. He



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caught the lifted foot in time, and Bunter sat down with startling suddenness.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Coker made a frantic effort, and there was a wild scramble. In the midst of a sudden sharp voice was heard.

"Bless my soul! What—what is this?"

"Oh, my hat! Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had arrived on the scene. He was staring at the scrambling mob of juniors, mixed up with Coker, in great astonishment.

The Famous Five leaped up.

They did not explain to Mr. Quelch; they departed, and vanished into the Cloisters like ghosts at cock-crow.

Mr. Quelch stared after them.

"Bless my soul! Bunter—"

Bunter was vanishing also.

Mr. Quelch turned his severe glance upon Horace Coker, sprawling on the ground, gasping for breath, in a shockingly untidy state.

"Coker!" he rapped out.

"Ow! Oh! Grooogh!" spluttered Coker.

"I am surprised at you, Coker! Such horse-play on the part of juniors of the Lower School is bad enough; but you are a Fifth-Form boy—a senior! You should know better, Coker."

"What!" gasped Coker, sitting up dazedly. "I—"

"Get up, sir!" said the Remove master sternly. "If you were in my form, Coker, I should deal severely with you. Have you no sense of the dignity that should appertain to a senior boy?"

"I—I—I—" spluttered Coker, scrambling to his feet.

"This is outrageous!" said the Remove master. "Such horse-play—"

"Horse-play!" gasped Coker.

"Yes, sir, horse-play!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Such disorderly conduct on the part of a Fifth Form boy—I am shocked Coker—I am surprised and shocked! Such conduct is quite out of place in a member of the Fifth Form! You are untidy, sir—you are dusty—you are a disgrace to the school in your present state! Go into the House, sir, and make yourself respectable at once!"

"I—I—I—"

"And do not let me find you scrambling on the ground with junior boys again, Coker, or I shall report you to the Head."

"I—I—I—" stammered the unhappy Coker.

"Enough!"

Mr. Quelch resumed his dignified walk. Coker blinked after him; and then, with feelings too deep for words, limped away to the House.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Head Wants to Know!

GEORGE WINGATE, captain of Greyfriars, moved slowly along the Head's corridor. The door of Dr. Locke's study was half-open; in that compartment, the headmaster was expecting Wingate; but the slowness of the Sixth-Former's movements showed how reluctant he was to reach his destination.

He had to see the Head—and he guessed why. In the Sixth Form-room that morning, Dr. Locke had glanced at him sharply, scrutinisingly. When the morning break came, Dr. Locke told Wingate quietly that he would like to speak to him in his study.

Requests from the Head amounted to commands; and the captain of Greyfriars was now making his way to the study, slowly and reluctantly. There was



"Stop him, you chaps!" panted Wingate minor, as he came dashing past the Famous Five, with Coker hot on his track. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. "Line up!" said Harry Wharton. The Famous Five lined up directly in Coker's path. With five sturdy juniors in his path, any other fellow might have stopped. But not so with Coker; he charged on regardless. (See Chapter 2.)

nothing in the incident to excite attention among the other Sixth Form fellows; it was not uncommon for the Head to consult with the captain of the school.

But Wingate knew that it was no usual affair, no ordinary detail of Greyfriars life, upon which Dr. Locke wished to speak to him now. Only Gerald Loder of the Sixth specially noted the Head's remark to the captain of Greyfriars, and his eyes gleamed as he heard it. Loder, perhaps, knew that something was "up," and that Wingate was not, as usual, in the headmaster's good graces.

Wingate reached the Head's study at last, and tapped at the half-open door.

"Come in, Wingate!" said Dr. Locke's deep, kindly voice.

The Greyfriars captain entered, and closed the door after him.

Dr. Locke's eyes dwelt on him searchingly.

"Possibly you guess why I wish to speak to you, Wingate," he said.

"I think so, sir."

"I have received a report from Mr. Quelch that has quite surprised and shocked me. I am convinced, however, that you have a full explanation to offer. I have every confidence in you, Wingate."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Mr. Quelch was bound to mention the matter to me, of course, as you declined to explain to him."

"Quite so, sir."

"It seems that yesterday afternoon, while returning from a walk, he passed the place called the Cross Keys—a disreputable place out of school bounds. He was surprised to see you engaged in a melee with a number of men belonging to the place—in fact, being ejected."

"It is true, sir."

Wingate's face crimsoned, and his eyes were on the floor. He had never felt so utterly discomfited in the presence of his headmaster.

"You explained, so far, to Mr. Quelch, that you had reason to believe that a Greyfriars boy had visited that disreputable place, and you had gone there to take him away."

"That is so, sir."

"Such a proceeding was, perhaps, a little thoughtless, Wingate; but you were doing your duty as you saw it. I do not blame you, my boy, though the outcome was unfortunate. Mr. Quelch would have been fully satisfied, and would not have referred the matter to me, had you given him the name of the boy you supposed to be at the inn. He could conceive no reason why you should not give him the name; and I confess that I can conceive no reason either."

"I told Mr. Quelch that it was not a boy in his Form, sir," muttered the prefect.

"Quite so; nevertheless, you should have given the name. If it was your view that the name should only be given

to the boy's own Form-master, there is something to be said for it. Have you reported the boy in question to his own Form-master?"

"No, sir," said Wingate, in a low voice.

Dr. Locke raised his eyebrows.

"Then you have done nothing in the matter?"

"No, sir."

"Then, Wingate," said the Head, with very evident displeasure, "if I had not raised the subject, nothing would have been done?"

Wingate did not answer.

There was a brief silence, during which the Head's gaze at George Wingate's downcast face grew keener and sharper.

"You will give me the name of the boy whom you suspected of visiting that place, Wingate," said the Head, at last.

The Greyfriars captain stood silent.

"This will not do, Wingate," said the Head, very gravely. "Are you aware, my boy, that you are laying yourself open to very grave suspicion? You were found in that disreputable inn, which is strictly out of bounds for all Greyfriars boys, prefects as well as the others. If you hesitate to explain yourself frankly, what am I to suspect?"

The Head's look had grown sterner, and the colour deepened in Wingate's rugged face. He raised his head.

"I hope, sir, that I personally am above suspicion," he said proudly.

"No one is above suspicion, Wingate, who places himself in suspicious circumstances, and declines to make a frank explanation. I do not doubt your statement that you went to the Cross Keys in search of some foolish Lower boy. But what am I to think, if you decline to give the boy's name, for no reason whatever?"

Wingate cleared his throat.

"The truth is, sir, I acted hastily," he said. "From the talk, or rather tattle, of a silly junior—Bunter of the Remove—I was led to believe that a Greyfriars junior was at the Cross Keys. I did not find him there—I saw no sign of him there—and when I came back to the school I saw him playing football with his friends in the most unsuspecting way. I have thought over the matter very carefully, sir, and come to the conclusion that I made a mistake."

"I am glad to hear it, Wingate—glad, at all events, to hear that no Greyfriars boy was guilty of such a transgression as you supposed. But surely you should have thought the matter over with great care before visiting the inn, instead of afterwards!"

"I—I suppose, so, sir."

"And the boy's name?"

No answer.

"Come, Wingate!" said the Head, kindly but firmly. "Remember that you are speaking to your headmaster. You do not wish to shake my faith in you?"

"The matter is over, sir," said Wingate. "I repeat that I am convinced now that Bunter was mistaken—that the boy in question did not go to the Cross Keys yesterday. Is it necessary to mention his name?"

"I command you to do so!"

Wingate drew a hard breath.

"It was my minor, sir."

"Your brother—Wingate minor of the Third Form!" exclaimed the Head.

"Yes, sir. And—and I was anxious about him," stammered Wingate. "I acted hastily, I know that now. I was foolish to listen to Bunter's silly tattle at all."

"I quite understand," said Dr. Locke very kindly. "Certainly, I did not think of your brother, Wingate. I quite

understand now your reluctance to mention the name. Nevertheless, it is better to be quite frank. You are assured now that your suspicions were groundless?"

"Quite, sir!" said Wingate honestly. "I went into the place. I saw nothing of Jack there. I—I was rather upset by what Bunter told me, or I should not have believed him at all. When I came back and saw my brother at football, I was ashamed to think that I had been led to doubt him at all."

"I understand. The matter ends here, of course," said Dr. Locke. "I shall mention to Mr. Quelch that you have satisfied me fully. Bunter, I think, should be punished for having misled you. He is, as I know, a mischievous and tattling boy. But that matter can safely be left in your hands as a prefect. I am quite satisfied, Wingate—quite."

And, with a kind nod, Dr. Locke dismissed the Sixth-Former.

Wingate of the Sixth went down the corridor, feeling relieved, but with a vague uneasiness lurking in his breast.

He was sure—he was sure that he was sure—that he had misjudged his minor, led away by Bunter's tattling tongue. The fag was wild and reckless and wilful, but he was not a blackguard. Yet somehow, believing in Jack as he did now, he had desired not to mention his name. It might draw the Head's attention to the scapegrace of the Third. Yet, if the boy was innocent, why not? What could it matter? Did he not, after all, feel so sure of Jack's innocence?

It was a troubling thought to the honest, straightforward captain of Greyfriars.

He had spoken frankly to the Head, reluctant as he had been to do so. He had practically given his word that Jack Wingate had not been out of bounds the previous day. He had believed so, and yet he was conscious now of a lingering uneasiness.

Why had he not punished Bunter for telling him that false tale? For he had not punished Bunter. He did not intend to punish him.

Was there at the bottom of his heart a lingering doubt that Bunter had, after all told him the truth; that Jack Wingate had, after all, been at the Cross Keys, and had dodged away while Wingate was in conflict with Mr. Cobb and his rowdy crew.

He almost ran into Loder of the Sixth at the corner of the corridor. Loder eyed him curiously.

"Trouble with the Head?" he asked.

"No!" said Wingate curtly.

"I thought he looked a bit grim."

"Did you?"

"There's a story going about of your being mixed in in a row at the Cross Keys yesterday," said Loder. "Nothing in it, of course?"

"Nobody's business but mine, anyway," said Wingate, and he walked on quickly before Gerald Loder could speak again.

The black sheep of the Sixth looked after him with a sardonic grin.

Gwynne and North of the Sixth were waiting about the doorway of the House for Wingate. But he was not in a mood for company just then, and he went to his study.

Gwynne looked in a few minutes later.

He found Wingate staring from the window with a black brow.

"Thinking it out?" asked Gwynne genially.

"Eh? Yes. What?"

"The team for Redclyffe."

"Oh, no! I wasn't thinking about football," said Wingate. "Besides, it's

practically settled about the Redclyffe match."

"About Loder—"

"Loder's dropped," said Wingate with a frown. "He chucked away the game in the Highcliffe match last week and fouled a Highcliffe man. I suppose he doesn't expect to repeat his performance on the Redclyffe ground?"

Gwynne laughed.

"He seems to."

"Then he'll be disappointed," said Wingate curtly. "He may get a look-in later in the season. I know he's a good man when he chooses and when he keeps himself fit."

"He seemed pretty fit in practice yesterday."

"He's wanted to be fit in matches, if he plays for Greyfriars. Look here, Gwynne, I suppose you're not backing up his claims?" snapped the captain of Greyfriars.

"Go easy, old man. I wouldn't touch Loder with a barge-pole," said Gwynne, laughing. "Leave him out all the season. I agree with you all along the line. But I think he means to make trouble."

"Let him!" said Wingate, dismissing Gerald Loder with a scornful shrug of the shoulders.

Gwynne nodded, and sauntered out of the study. It seemed to him that his chum Wingate, generally one of the best-tempered fellows at Greyfriars, was growing a little snappy. Wingate, as he turned back to the window and stared out gloomily into the quadrangle, did not look good-tempered, that was certain. He was worried about his minor, and he was doubtful about him, and at the same time a little ashamed of his doubts, and that was not a pleasant frame of mind for any fellow to be in, and no doubt it had its effect on George Wingate's usually sunny temper.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

On Big Side!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! There goes the giddy lemon!"

"Loder, too!"

"Wonders will never cease!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had walked down to Big Side after classes that day to give the Sixth a look-in, as Bob Cherry expressed it. The Redclyffe match was coming along on Saturday, and it was an affair of some importance to the Greyfriars fellows.

There was a junior fixture with Redclyffe, and this, of course, loomed more largely in the views of the heroes of the Remove. But they admitted that five eleven matches mattered.

So they loftily decided to see how the Seniors were getting on, and strolled down to see the senior practice for that reason.

Loder of the Sixth was there, now. Loder was doing remarkably well. It was little more than a week since Loder had cracked up hopelessly in the Highcliffe match, being little more than a passenger in his team, and had crowned his offences by palpably fouling a Highcliffe man. Every fellow at Greyfriars had approved of Wingate's action in dropping him out of the first eleven. Even Loder's only pals—Walker and Carne of the Sixth—could scarcely disapprove of it.

But it was evidently that Loder had improved wonderfully since then. In practice, at least, he was showing up remarkably well. He was fit—at the top of his form—and Tom North, in goal, had been unable to keep the leather out

when Loder sent it in. Judging by his form that day—and that day alone—Gerald Loder was well worthy of a place in the team that was going over to Redcliffe on Saturday.

Perhaps he still nourished a hope that Wingate would relent at the last moment.

If so, most of the fellows could have told him that such a hope was delusive. Wingate was not a man to make up his mind in a hurry, or to change it in a hurry when once made up.

"Goal!" chirruped Bob Cherry. "Good old Loder! He must have been going off the smokes lately!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looks a bit more fit than he did on Highcliffe day," remarked Harry Wharton.

"The dear man is minding his p's and q's now," said Johnny Bull. "He doesn't like being dropped out of first eleven footer. I wouldn't trust him again, if I were Wingate."

"Wingate won't," said Harry. "It wasn't only that he crooked up. He fouled a Highcliffe man, and that kind of thing isn't good for Greyfriars."

"No fear!"

"Still, he's jolly good," said Frank Nugent, with his eyes on Loder in the field. "He can play when he likes."

"But the likefulness is not always terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Coker! 'Ware the Fifth!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Horace Coker was limping a little as he came along through the crowd of fellows on Big Side. It seemed that he had not quite recovered from the exciting happenings of the morning.

He gave the Famous Five a lofty frown; but they did not seem to be the special object of his wrath just now. Coker was looking for somebody; but not the heroes of the Lower Fourth.

"You've come to see the practice, Coker?" called out Bob Cherry. "It will do you good, old man. Stand here, and I'll explain the whole thing to you. It's time you picked up some knowledge of football."

"I don't want any Remove cheek!" snorted Coker. "Have you seen that young cad, Wingate minor?"

"Not since this morning. Still looking for him?" grinned Bob.

"Yes," snapped Coker. "He's dodging me. He hacked my shin in the cloisters. I've got a bump as big as an egg."

"I dare say you asked for it," remarked Nugent. "You asked for what we gave you, didn't you, old scout?"

Coker glared at the Famous Five. Coker of the Fifth was very slow to learn from experience; but his last experience at the hands of the merry Removites was very recent. He checked his desire to visit his lofty wrath upon their cheeky heads.

"Has Wingate put you down for the Redcliffe match on Saturday, Coker?" asked Bob Cherry, with a wink at his comrades. Coker's claim to play in all important matches was well known, and furnished considerable entertainment at Greyfriars.

"No," said Coker, with a frown. "He hasn't had sense enough! I see he's got Potter and Greene down. Of course, they know something about the game—I've given them a lot of tips."

"Oh, my hat! But why has he left Coker out, you fellows?" said Bob. "It's really a mystery."

"Sheer fatheadedness," said Coker.

"No; there's another reason," said Bob. "I think I've got it. He wants to beat Redcliffe; that must be the reason."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker breathed hard. Again he was tempted to give the cheeky Removites what they deserved; and again he paused. The five sturdy juniors were quite ready; in fact, they were quite eager to fill up ten minutes or so with rolling Coker over and sitting on his head. This time Horace did not give them the opportunity.

He turned away from the Famous Five, to resume looking for Jack Wingate. He limped as he went. Coker was feeling very cross that afternoon. A bump the size of an egg on his leg did not, of course, conduce to sunny

temper; and Wingate minor had not yet been properly chastised for his unexampled cheek in venturing to lift his heel against so great a man.

The cheeky fag had been dodging Coker—giving Coker all the trouble of looking for him. Potter and Greene had declined to help look for him; they had preferred joining in the senior football practice, giving as a reason the fact that they were down to play for Greyfriars on Saturday; a reason which Coker could only regard as frivolous.

The most important thing in the universe, just then, was the punishment of Wingate minor for raising a bruise as big as an egg on Coker's shin. That, at least, was Coker's opinion. But Coker had many opinions which other fellows did not share.

Wingate minor, however, was not to be seen among the fellows who were watching the footer. Quite a crowd had been drawn by the news that Loder, dropped from the first eleven, was going strong and showing magnificent form. But Jack Wingate was not amongst them.

Obviously, he was keeping out of Coker's way; adding to the sum of his offences by giving the great Horace more trouble! Well, it would be all the worse for him when Coker found him, as Horace darkly resolved. Up and down, and to and fro, Horace Coker went limping; and—quite unknown to him for some time—up and down, and to and fro, five juniors went after him, also limping.

Bob Cherry was the first. As Coker limped away, Bob Cherry limped on his track in playful imitation. And the whole Co. caught on to the little joke, and limped after him in file.

The sight of Coker of the Fifth, lofty and frowning, limping along, with a "tail" of five limping juniors, made fellows turn their heads and stare and chuckle.

Coker noticed that he was getting a lot of attention, but the reason did not dawn on him.

He limped on, looking for Wingate minor among the crowd, and after him



"I say, you fellows, are you killing Coker?" Billy Bunter rolled up and blinked at the scene through his big spectacles. "You can hear him roaring right across the quad. I say, the beast kicked me the other day—hold him while I kick him, will you?" "Sheer off!" said Bob Cherry. "You can kick Coker after we let him get up—if you want to." (See Chapter 2.)

limped Bob Cherry, then Nugent, then Johnny Bull, then Wharton, and Hurree Jamsel Ram Singh brought up the rear.

"Seen young Wingate anywhere?" asked Coker, stopping to speak to Hobson of the Shell.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hobson.

"If you think it's funny to see a fellow limping, Hobson, when he's had a hack on the shin—"

"Is it catching?" asked Hobson.

"Catching! No. What do you mean?"

"Oh, I thought it might be!" said Hobson genially.

Coker gave him a frown, and limped on. The Famous Five resumed their limping pursuit; and by this time they were getting more attention than the footballers, and the whole crowd of Greyfriars fellows were yelling with laughter.

Coker looked round at last.

"What the thump—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I limp, thou limpest, he limps!" chortled Bob Cherry. "Nous limpons, vous limpez, ils limpaient."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared at the Removites. They were mimicking him—actually mocking him, Horace James Coker, of the Fifth Form!

It was too much! Even Wingate minor's offences were scarcely so serious as this; the fag had hacked his shins, but these fellows were actually making fun of him—of Coker, of the Fifth! Really, it was time for the skies to fall when such things happened!

The skies did not fall, but Horace Coker fell—on the Famous Five, and he fell on them in fury, smiting right and left.

"Oh, my hat! Look out!"

"Stop him!"

"Collar him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker found himself strewn on the hard, unsympathetic earth. Harry Wharton & Co. walked away and left him there, after thoughtfully jamming his hat over his eyes.

"Oh gad!" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker staggered up, and extracted his head from his hat with some difficulty. He was limping more severely than ever when he departed from Big Side, and for a time he forgot to look any further for Wingate of the Third.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

CARNE of the Sixth looked up with an angry stare. Carne was lounging in the window-seat in the prefects' room, reading a paper, when the door suddenly opened and Wingate minor stepped in. The fag stepped in very quickly and shut the door after him.

"What the thump do you want?" snapped Carne.

Wingate minor looked round quickly. Carne was alone in the prefects' room; and the fag had supposed the room to be empty, until he heard the Sixth-Former's voice.

Before Wingate minor could reply, however, there came the heavy tramp of feet in the passage outside.

Disregarding Carne, the fag listened to that heavy tramp, and, to his relief, it passed the door.

Carne understood then. Somebody was in pursuit of the scapegrace of the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 924.

Third, and Jack Wingate had dodged into the prefects' room for safety. Probably, any other fag would have hesitated to do so, the prefects' room being a spot sacred to prefects, which fags only entered in fear and trembling if they were sent for. Even Fifth Form fellows would scarcely have had the nerve to walk into that room without leave. But it was in keeping with Jack Wingate's cheeky character that he dodged into the prefects' room as coolly as he might have dodged into a Form-room or into Gosling's lodge.

The captain's minor, in fact, was rather given to presuming on his relationship to the captain of the school, which was not likely to recommend him to the favour of other prefects.

Carne stared angrily across the room at the fag.

"I asked you a question, Wingate minor!" he snapped.

"It's all right," said Jack Wingate. "That idiot Coker's after me, and I dodged in."

"And you think you can dodge into this room if you choose, do you?" asked Carne unpleasantly.

Wingate minor eyed him warily. Carne was a good deal of a bully, though not quite so bad in that line as his pal Loder. But even "six" from Carne was better than falling into the hands of Horace Coker until the great Coker's wrath had been appeased by time. Coker, fortunately, had not a long memory for offences, and it was only a question of keeping out of his way till the little matter had time to blow over.

"You fancy yourself a little too much, I think, because you happen to be Wingate's minor," said Carne. "I, for one, don't intend to take any more cheek from you than from any other scrubby little rotter in the Third. See?"

"I thought there was nobody in here," said Jack Wingate. "Most of the Sixth are at football practice."

"That's nothing to do with it. Fetch the cane from my study."

Wingate minor did not move.

"Do you hear?"

"I tell you I thought the room was empty," said the fag sullenly. "I didn't know you were slacking about."

"What!" roared Carne.

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"If you'd been on Big Side with the rest you wouldn't have seen me here," said Jack Wingate.

Carne breathed hard and deep. Even a good-tempered prefect could scarcely have been expected to take this sort of talk from a fag patiently; and Carne was neither good-tempered nor patient.

But before he could pursue the matter further the heavy footsteps came back along the passage outside.

They stopped at the door.

Coker of the Fifth, apparently, had guessed that Wingate minor had taken refuge in the prefects' room.

The door was hurled open.

"Are you there, you young cad?" shouted Coker.

Wingate minor backed across the room. Although he had himself violated the sanctity of the prefects' room, he had expected Coker to respect it; but Coker of the Fifth rather prided himself on not thinking much of the Sixth. If a Lower Form fellow checked Coker, it was a very serious matter, but if Coker checked the Sixth that was exactly how it should be, in Coker's view. Nature had denied him the valuable gift that enables us to "see ourselves as others see us."

He strode into the room.

"Keep off, you silly fathead!" exclaimed Wingate minor.

"Here, Coker, this won't do!" exclaimed Carne.

Coker stared at Carne.

"What won't do?" he demanded.

"You can't butt into this room."

"Can't I?" said Coker truculently.

Arthur Carne looked at him. He was a Sixth-Former and a prefect. In theory, he had great authority over Coker—indeed, he had the power to order Coker to appear before a Prefects' Meeting, and to take a beating if adjudged deserving of it. That was in theory. In actual practice, Carne did not want trouble with Coker. The hot-headed Horace was only too likely to knock him spinning, prefect as he was, and all the prefects' beating administered afterwards would not have mended Carne's nose.

Wingate of the Sixth, certainly, would not have stood any nonsense from Coker. But Carne was not made of the same stuff as the Greyfriars captain.

"I've told you!" said Carne, as loftily as he could, in the circumstances. "Get out of it, Coker!"

And Carne put his newspaper under his arm and walked out of the prefects' room, in order not to be a witness of Coker's disregard of his order!

Coker sniffed, and turned to the fag again.

"You hacked my shin in the cloisters this morning," he said.

"I wish I'd hacked 'em both!" said Jack Wingate.

"I've got a lump as big as an egg!"

"I wish it were as big as a duck's egg!"

"I caught you smoking—"

"Mind your own business!"

Wingate minor was cornered in the prefects' room, but he was as cheeky as ever.

"Well, I'm going to give you a jolly good hiding!" said Coker. "You can't cheek the Fifth, my boy, or hack their shins, even if you are the captain's minor."

"Blow the Fifth!"

"Bend over that chair!" said Coker, slipping a stick from under his arm into his hand, in the manner of a prefect.

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Jack Wingate.

"Will you do as you're told?" roared Coker, in great wrath.

"No jolly fear! Who the dickens are you?" said the fag.

"I'll jolly soon show you!"

Coker of the Fifth strode at the fag in towering wrath. Wingate minor caught up a chair.

"Keep off, you ass, or I'll jolly well biff you with this!" he shouted.

"Will you, by gum?" gasped Coker. He fairly jumped at the fag.

Wingate minor kept his word, and the chair was "biffed" at Coker. The great Horace warded with his left arm, and gave a howl as the chair crashed on it.

The next moment the chair went crashing to the floor, and the fag was in Coker's grasp.

Wingate minor yelled and struggled.

But Coker's grasp was too hefty for him. He was whirled to the table and slammed on it face down, pinned there by Coker's heavy hand, and then the stick rose and fell.

Whack, whack, whack!

Jack Wingate's furious yells rang through the prefects' room, and far beyond, as Coker laid on the stick.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage. Football had finished on Big Sals some time ago, and some of the Sixth were coming along from the changing-room. Wingate, Gwynne, North, and several other seniors, started as they heard the frantic yelling from the prefects' room.

"Loder, I suppose," muttered Wingate, with a frown. His impression was that the bully of the Sixth was administering punishment to some hapless fag in his usual heavy-handed style.

The next moment he arrived at the open door, and almost jumped at the sight of Horace Coker of the Fifth whacking his minor.

"Coker!" he ejaculated.

"Well, of all the neck!" exclaimed Gwynne, in great indignation.

"Cheeky cad!" said North.

Coker of the Fifth had no right to whack fags of the Third; he had no right in the Prefects' room. This time he had to deal with a prefect of a quality very different from Carne's.

He did not heed the arrival of the prefects; he was too busy in laying on the stick. But he had to heed it the next moment.

Wingate major ran into the room, grasped Coker by the collar, and fairly tore him away from the fag.

Crash!

Coker of the Fifth went sprawling along the floor. One swing of George Wingate's powerful arm had hurled him there.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Ow!"

Wingate minor slid from the table, and stood, flushed and panting. Horace Coker sat up, gasping for breath, and blinked at the captain of Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker Talks Too Much!

WINGATE fixed a grim look on Coker.

"What do you mean by this?" he demanded.

"Ow!" spluttered Coker.

"Are you hurt, Jack?"

"Yes," panted Wingate minor. "The beast has been pitching into me with that stick! Look here, who's Coker to pitch into a fellow?"

"I'm going to settle that matter with Coker now!" said the Greyfriars captain grimly. "Get up, Coker!"

Horace Coker scrambled to his feet. He was not daunted even by the presence of three or four Sixth Form prefects; he was quite as angry as Wingate. And though Coker was not blessed with much in the way of sense, he had



"If you won't cut, Coker," said Gwynne, "then we shall have to make you. Dribble him along the passage, you fellows. It's time Coker had some of the cheek knocked out of him." "Good!" said North. "Look here!" roared Coker. "I—oh—ow—you cheeky rotters—yaroooooh—oh, my hat!" Horace Coker was not willing to go. But with the two Sixth-formers dribbling him, he had to go. And he went! (See Chapter 6.)

boundless pluck, and he had never feared a foe.

"Stand aside, Wingate!" he shouted.

"What?"

"Stand aside! I haven't finished thrashing that cheeky young cad yet!" bawled Coker.

"I think you have!" said Wingate.

"I think your own thrashing isn't very far off, Coker. That's the next item on the programme."

"Don't talk rot!" hooted Coker. "I'd like to see anybody thrash me! I'll stand up to anybody in the Sixth, with or without gloves!"

"What are you doing in this room?"

"I came here after that young cad."

"Bullying a Third Form fag—what?"

"He hacked my shins this morning!"

said Coker. "I'd have thrashed him then, only some cheeky Remove kids butted in! I'm going to thrash him now! Think I'm going to have my shins hacked by a fag, simply because he happens to be your brother?"

"If my brother hacked your shins, Coker, we'll go into that matter first."

said Wingate major quietly. "My brother has no more rights and privileges than any other kid in the Third."

"He seems to think he has, anyhow!"

jeered Coker. "He cheeks the Fifth and the Sixth, too, for that matter! Your own pals would cuff him right and left, but for you!"

Gwynne and Tom North tried to look unconscious. It was a fact that they "went easy" with Jack Wingate on account of his brother. On his own account, it was very probable that he would have booked a good many lickings.

Wingate knitted his brows.

"I don't want any Greyfriars prefect to make distinctions in my brother's favour," he said. "But never mind that now; you say my minor hacked your shins?"

"Look at that!" bawled Coker.

He jerked up his trouser-leg, and showed the bruise. It was a large bruise, black-and-blue, and evidently the result of a cruel and reckless hack.

Wingate major frowned as he looked at it.

"You did that, Jack?" he asked.

"Yes, I did!" muttered the fag sullenly.

"And why?"

"Coker was bullying me!"

"Coker's always meddling with the fags, and putting on the airs of a Sixth Form man," said North. "I dare say your minor was quite in the right, Wingate."

"Oh, of course he was!" jeered Coker. "Quite the thing for Third Form fags to smoke cigarettes in the cloisters."

Wingate started.

"Do you mean to say that you found my minor smoking?"

"Yes, I jolly well do!"

"No business of yours, if he was," said Gwynne. "The Head hasn't made you a prefect yet, Coker."

"Rats!" said Coker.

"So you've been smoking again, Jack!" said Wingate, with a troubled look at his minor.

"I wasn't smoking."

"Oh!"

"Well, of all the young rotters!" said THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 924.

Coker, in disgust. "I never expected even that young blackguard to lie about it!"

Wingate looked more and more troubled. Coker was an interfering and overbearing ass, no doubt; but Wingate knew that his word was good enough. Unfortunately, he was not so sure about his minor.

"Jack!" he muttered uneasily.

Wingate minor sneered.

"I wasn't smoking," he repeated. "I had a cigarette, and asked Coker for a match."

"Oh, my hat!" said Gwynne, almost overcome by the idea of a Third Form fag, with a cigarette, asking a Fifth Form man for a match.

"That's true," said Coker. "It comes to the same thing, doesn't it?"

"It does!" said Wingate.

"Well, I never smoked the cigarette," said Wingate minor. "That bully pitched into me, and I hacked his shins; and I'd jolly well do the same again, too!"

"Would you?" gasped Coker. He made a forward movement; but George Wingate's stalwart figure barred his path.

"Stop that!" snapped the Greyfriars captain.

"Look here, do you think I'm going to have my shins hacked?" roared Coker furiously.

"You shouldn't have taken it on yourself to meddle," said the captain of Greyfriars. "You've no authority over the Third, and you know it, or ought to know it. You could have mentioned the matter to me."

"I preferred to deal with the young rascal myself!" said Coker of the Fifth loftily.

"That was pure cheek," said Wingate. "You don't quite know your place, Coker, and if you don't look out you'll get a prefects' beating to make you understand that you're nobody in particular."

"Why, you—you cheeky ass—" gasped Coker, quite confounded at the suggestion that he was nobody in particular.

"That's enough! Mind your own business, and don't interfere with the fags!"

"Let 'em do as they like—what?" hooted Coker. "I can tell you, Wingate, that if you don't look after your minor I shall jolly well keep him in order if he's going to disgrace the school. I gave him six yesterday for pub-haunting, and I'll do it again if I catch him at the Cross Keys, so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Wingate started violently.

"The Cross Keys! What do you mean? How dare you say that my minor was at such a place?"

"Didn't you know?" jeered Coker. "I've heard that you went there after somebody yesterday, and got chucked out. I know I jolly well saw your minor sneaking out of the back gate, and gave him six for it!"

Wingate's face was quite pale, as he looked at his minor.

All his doubts were resolved now; he knew that Bunter's tattle, after all, had been well-founded; that his minor had been at the public-house, and had

escaped by the back gate on the towing-path, while he, Wingate, was being "chucked out" by Mr. Cobb and his myrmidons.

It was a stunning discovery for Wingate, after he had persuaded himself that a mistake had been made, and had practically given the Head his word that Jack Wingate was innocent.

He stood quite still; and Gwynne and North, exchanging a glance, came over to Coker.

"Time you went!" said North briefly.

"I'm not going without licking that young cad—"

"Aren't you! Bear a hand, Gwynne."

Coker resisted. But even the hefty Coker was not of much use against two big Sixth-Formers.

Gwynne and North pinioned his arms, and walked him to the door, resisting unavailingly; and they walked him out into the passage.

Coker gasped with wrath.

"Now cut!" said Gwynne.

"Sha'n't! I—"

There was a roar from Coker as Gwynne introduced his boot into the argument. He introduced it with vigour, and Horace Coker tottered.

"Dribble him along the passage, North," said Gwynne. "It's time Coker had some of the cheek taken out of him."

"Good!" said North.

"Look here—" roared Coker.

"I— Oh! Ow! You cheeky rotters! Yaroooooh! Oh, my hat!"

Coker was not willing to go. But with two Sixth-Formers dribbling him, he had to go. And he went!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

His Brother's Keeper!

JACK WINGATE stood with a downcast face, silent and sullen, as he was left alone in the prefects' room with the Greyfriars captain.

There was a long silence.

Wingate's eyes were fixed on his young brother, and his rugged face was full of trouble.

He realised now—now that the facts were brought clearly home to his mind—that in his belief in his minor's innocence, the wish had been father to the thought. At the bottom of his heart, he had known that Jack Wingate had been at the Cross Keys that day; unconsciously, he had deceived himself. He had spoken to the Head quite honestly; he had believed what he had said. But that belief had been founded upon his own strong desire to believe. There had been no proof against the fag, and he had let it go at that.

Now there was proof; he knew that Coker's statement was to be relied upon. He was in a different position.

As head-prefect of Greyfriars, he could not refuse to take official notice of what he knew now for a certainty. He wished passionately that the truth had never come to his knowledge; but it was useless to wish that; he had the knowledge now, and had to act upon it.

"Well?" he said at last.

"Well?" muttered the fag.

"You heard what Coker said?"

"Yes."

"You don't deny it?"

No answer.

"Coker found you sneaking out of the Cross Keys by the back way yesterday," said Wingate.

"I wasn't sneaking out. I was leaving," said Jack Wingate, with a touch of arrogance. "It was like his cheek to interfere with me. I'd lick him for it if I were big enough."

"Coker's a meddling fool," said the

Greyfriars captain. "But I should not blame any senior of Greyfriars for interfering with a fag who was pub-haunting. You were escaping by the back way while I was trying to find you there."

Wingate minor grinned faintly.

"You shouldn't have gone," he said. "It wasn't my fault you got into a shindy with those rotters."

"I shouldn't have gone?" repeated Wingate. "You're my brother, and a Third Form fag—and you think I should have left you there."

Jack Wingate did not answer that.

Wingate major moved to and fro restlessly, his hands driven deep into his pockets. He did not know how to deal with the perverse, wilful fag. If Jack Wingate had not been his brother—And yet, what right had he to treat his brother differently from any other fag in the Third Form? Wingate had a strong sense of duty, and anything like favouritism was despicable in his eyes. And yet—blood is thicker than water. And at the back of his mind was a belief, a hope, that the reckless fag had been acting under the evil influence of someone else—that it was not of his own accord that he had acted as he had done.

"I don't see how you knew I was there," said Jack Wingate, at last.

"Bunter knew, and he tattled."

"That Remove cad? I don't see how he knew," said the fag, biting his lip. He wondered whether Bunter knew also, that it was Loder of the Sixth who had sent him to the Cross Keys, and whether Wingate major knew that.

"It doesn't matter much how he knew that I can see," said Wingate. "Look here, Jack, you can see this won't do."

No reply.

"I don't believe you're the shady little blackguard you make yourself out to be," went on Wingate. "Somebody else is behind this."

Wingate minor drew a deep breath. His brother suspected something; but evidently did not suspect Loder.

"You've been getting in tow with some fellow older than yourself, who's put this kind of thing into your silly head," went on the Greyfriars captain shrewdly. "Isn't that it?"

Silence.

"I've been keeping an eye on you—and I haven't spotted the fellow," said Wingate. "I thought of Skinner of the Remove, and Angel of the Fourth—but I can't see that you've had anything to do with them."

"I haven't."

"They've both been in trouble for blagging; and if you had been taken up by either of them, I could understand it. But—"

"I've hardly spoken to Skinner this term, and I never speak to Angel of the Fourth. Too jolly swanky for me."

"Then there's somebody else?"

Wingate minor set his lips. He dared not betray Loder, if he had desired to do so. But he did not desire to do that; in his own way, he was loyal. Neither did he regard Loder of the Sixth as having led him into evil. His view was that Gerald Loder was a good-natured, sporting kind of fellow, for whose condescending notice he was grateful.

"Who is it, Jack?"

The fag made a restless movement. "What rot you're talking, George! As if I couldn't drop in at the Cross Keys to speak to a man, without being put up to it by somebody else."

"How long were you there?"

"Only a few minutes."

"You went to speak to a man?"

"Yes."

"What man?"

"Cobb, the landlord," said the fag reluctantly.

ANSWERS
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“Did you take a message for anyone?” Wingate minor’s lips closed obstinately.

“You’d better speak, kid,” said the prefect patiently. “I’m trying to do my best for you. You know I can’t pass over a thing like this. If I favoured you because you’re my brother, I shouldn’t be fit to keep the captaincy of the school in my hands. I’ve got to report you to the Head.”

Jack Wingate started violently. “That—that might mean the sack!” he breathed.

“If you were in a higher Form, it would. But the Head isn’t likely to sack a kid in the Third, if he can help. It means a Head’s flogging.”

“I—I don’t care. If you want to see me flogged, you can have your way,” muttered Wingate minor sullenly. “I can’t stop you.”

“You know I don’t want it. If you were sent to that pub by some older fellow, give me his name, and I’ll deal with him, and let you off as lightly as I can.”

The fag gave a scoffing laugh.

“You think there’s somebody, and you want me to round on him and give him away to save my own skin! That’s not good enough for me, if it is for you!”

The Greyfriars captain flushed crimson.

“If you’ve been led into this by some fellow older than yourself—” he began.

“I haven’t been led.”

“Very well,” said Wingate quietly. “I must take it as you say. You’ve broken bounds, and disgraced yourself and your school, and you must take the consequences. If you’ve nothing to tell me I’ll ask you no more questions; the matter will be dealt with exactly as if you were no relation of mine.”

“Then you’re going to report me to the Head?” breathed Jack Wingate.

There was a long pause.

“No!” said Wingate at last. “Gwynne is a prefect, and he heard what Coker said. I shall ask him to deal with the matter without considering me—”

“Gwynne dislikes me,” muttered the fag. “He will make it as bad for me as he can.”

“If you’ve made yourself disliked by your cheek and impudence you can take the consequences,” said the Greyfriars captain gruffly. “Anyhow, Gwynne will treat you as he’d treat any other fag. I shall leave it at that. Now you can go.”

Wingate minor moved to the door and hesitated. It was on his lips to make an appeal to his brother; but Wingate major walked over to the window and turned his back on the fag and stood staring out into the quadrangle.

The fag gritted his teeth.

“Leave it at that, then, if you like!” he snapped. “I don’t care! If I’m sacked they’ll have something to say to you at home, at any rate.”

And he stamped out of the prefects’ room and slammed the door after him. Gwynne and North were lounging in the passage, not caring to enter the room again till the interview between the two brothers was over. Both of them looked very grimly at Wingate minor as he slammed the door—a proceeding that was absolutely unheard-of in its insolence.

“You cheeky little sweep—” began North, reaching out a hand towards the fag.

Gwynne murmured something, and North frowned and drew back the grasp that had nearly closed on Wingate minor’s ear.

“Cut!” he snapped. And the fag, with a look of sulky defiance, scudded down the passage.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Wanted!

“I SAY, you fellows!” “How did Bunter know we had a cake for tea?” asked Bob Cherry. And the Famous Five chuckled.

The chums of the Remove had gathered to tea in Study No. 1, and Billy Bunter’s fat face and big spectacles glimmered in at the door. The Owl of the Remove rolled into the study.

“Oh, really, Cherry!” he said. “I didn’t know you had a cake for tea! I don’t mind sampling it as you’re so pressing, though. But the fact is—”

“You’ve been disappointed about a postal-order?” asked Frank Nugent very sympathetically.

“Exactly! But that isn’t what I was going to say,” said Bunter, as he helped himself to a huge chunk of cake. “I say, this is a good cake! Not like the whacking cakes I got from home, of course; but, still, quite good. That cad Gwynne wants me, and I’ve dropped in to see you fellows to keep out of his way.”

“You’ve been raiding Gwynne’s study?” asked Johnny Bull.

“Oh, really, Bull—”

“You fat duffer!” said Harry Wharton. “If a Sixth Form prefect wants you you’d better go and see what he wants.”

Bunter shook his head.

“Gwynne’s a beast!” he said. “All prefects are beasts, you know—in fact, all the Sixth! Only yesterday I had a lot of lines to do for Wingate, and now Gwynne has been asking after me. The Bouncer told me Gwynne had asked him where I was, so I came here. He won’t look for me in this study, I hope.”

“If he knows we’ve got a cake for tea he will look for you here,” said Nugent.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I tell you I didn’t come after your measly cake!” hooted Bunter. “Pass it this way, all the same. I may as well have some while I’m here. I’m missing tea in my study; Gwynne will most likely look in Study No. 7 for me.”

“But what does Gwynne want?”

“Blessed if I know! You can’t be too careful in dealing with prefects—keep out of their way,” said Bunter sagely. “I dare say Gwynne wants to lick me for something. As if I’d done anything, you know! Give him time to forget about it, that’s my idea.”

“We shall soon forget that we had a cake for tea!” remarked Bob Cherry. The cake undoubtedly was disappearing at a wonderful rate.

“Oh, really, Cherry, if you’re going to be mean about a cake after the



Gwynne of the Sixth, looking a little cross, glanced into Study No. 1. “Is that fat scoundrel, Bunter, here?” he asked. “I was told he’d come up here. It’s jolly odd how that fat chump has got out of sight—he’s fat enough to be seen.” The Famous Five said nothing, for Bunter, crouching under the table, was in good cover. The Sixth-former frowned round the study, but he did not see Bunter.

(See Chapter 8.)

splendid holiday I stood you at Bunter Court in the vic—"

"Can it!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"He's canning the cake, anyhow!" said Nugent, with a laugh. "Hallo! That sounds like a Sixth-Former's fairy footstep."

There was a heavy tread in the passage.

Bunter jumped.

"I—I say, you fellows, that's Gwynne! Don't tell him I'm here!"

"But, you fat duffer—" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as the Owl of the Remove made a sudden dive under the table.

Bunter vanished from sight as the door opened. Gwynne of the Sixth, looking a little cross, glanced into the study.

"Is that fat scoundrel here?" he asked.

"Hem! Which?" asked Bob.

"Bunter!" snapped Gwynne.

"Looking for Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton politely.

"Yes. And I was told he'd come up here, but I can't find him in his study," growled Gwynne. "It's jolly odd how that fat chump has got out of sight; he's fat enough to be seen."

The Famous Five said nothing.

Bunter, crouching under the table, was hidden by five chairs and five pairs of legs and was in good cover. It was not the business of Harry Wharton & Co. to give him away.

Gwynne frowned round the study; but he did not see Bunter, and he stepped back into the passage.

His voice was heard inquiring for Billy Bunter, and Skinner's voice was heard in reply.

"He went into Study No. 1, Gwynne, a few minutes ago."

"He's not there now!" growled Gwynne.

And the annoyed prefect went tramping along the passage in search of William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove peered out from under the table.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Better keep quiet!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Gwynne may look in again as he comes back."

"I'm going to. But hand down the cake, will you?"

"What?"

"Shove the cake down here," said Bunter. "I'm hungry, you know. I can eat all right here."

"You can eat anywhere, I know," remarked Bob Cherry. "But half the cake is enough for you, Bunter! We're so frightfully selfish that we want a little bit ourselves."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The esteemed Gwynne is coming backfully!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and Bunter popped back instantly out of sight under the table.

Gwynne of the Sixth glanced in at the door again. But he saw only five juniors sitting sedately round the tea-table. The prefect seemed puzzled. From several quarters he had learned that Billy Bunter was not far away, but he had been unable to find him in the Remove passage.

He turned back into the passage again, and stood thinking for a moment or two. As he did so, he suddenly heard a fat voice in the study.

"I say, you fellows, has that beast Gwynne gone?"

Gwynne spun round into the doorway again.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

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The Sixth-Former strode into the study.

"You young rascals! You're hiding Bunter here!" he exclaimed. "Where is he—under the table?" Bunter, you rascal—"

"I—I'm not here—"

"What?" roared the prefect.

"I—I mean—"

"Roll out, you fat duffer!" growled Johnny Bull. "You've given yourself away now, you chump! Here, I'll help you with my boot!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter rolled out into view and picked himself up, keeping the table between him and Gwynne of the Sixth.

"I—I say, Gwynne, it wasn't me—" he gasped.

"What wasn't, you young ass?"

"I—I mean, I—I didn't—"

"You didn't what?"

"Whatever it is you're after me for!" gasped Bunter.

Gwynne stared at him blankly for a moment, then burst into a laugh.

"You fat duffer! Did you think I was after you to lick you?" he exclaimed.

"Eh! Weren't you?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Ha, ha! No."

"Oh!" Bunter gasped with relief.

"I—I thought, of course, when I heard that a Sixth Form beast was after me—"

"A what?" ejaculated Gwynne.

"I—I mean—"

"I've a jolly good mind to lick you for giving me all this trouble!" growled Gwynne. "I suppose you've been up to something, and jolly well know that you deserve a licking!"

"Nothing of the kind," said Bunter promptly. "I haven't been anywhere near your study, Gwynne. If you've missed that bottle of ginger-pop you've no right to put it down to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"So you've bagged a bottle of ginger-pop from my study!" exclaimed Gwynne.

"No!" gasped Bunter. "Don't I keep on telling you I haven't?"

"Faith, I don't know why they sent you to Greyfriars, Bunter—a house for idiots would be nearer your mark!" said Gwynne, laughing. "But never mind the ginger-pop. Shut up."

"C-c-can I go now?" asked Bunter.

The Famous Five had already finished the cake, so Bunter had no desire to linger.

"No. I've been looking for you to ask you something," said Gwynne. "It seems that you reported to Wingate that his minor went to the Cross Keys yesterday. At least, you mentioned it to him and sent him there on a wild-goose chase. I want to know the truth of the matter; Wingate's asked me to deal with it. Now, I want the facts. If it's true, I want to know the truth. Out with it!"

Harry Wharton & Co. fixed very expressive looks on the Owl of the Remove. With Wingate minor in his shady escapades they had no sympathy whatever; but it was an unwritten but unbroken law that no Lower fellow ever gave information about another.

Billy Bunter was not a bright youth; but he was bright enough to guess from the looks of the Famous Five that if he "sneaked" he would have to answer for it when the prefect was gone. At the same time, Gwynne of the Sixth had an ashplant under his arm; and Bunter had a deep disinclination to come into contact with that ashplant.

Under the influence of the ashplant he opened his lips to speak. Then under the influence of the expressive looks on five faces, he closed them again. And there was a pause in Study No. 1.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Gwynne's Way!

G WYNNNE of the Sixth stared impatiently at Bunter. He was quite unaware of the painful and troublesome thoughts that were working in the fat brain of the Owl of the Remove.

"Well?" he snapped. "Can't you speak?"

"Oh! Yes! Certainly!" gasped Bunter.

"Go ahead, then."

"I—I—"

"Do you know whether Wingate minor went to the Cross Keys yesterday?" exclaimed Gwynne impatiently.

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

Bob Cherry, at that moment, picked up a fives bat, and twirled it in his hand. Bunter guessed what that implied.

"I mean, no!" he stuttered.

"You mean yes and no?" asked Gwynne.

"Exactly?" stammered Bunter. "C-c-can I go now?"

"Not just yet," said Gwynne. "Yes and no won't quite do for me; one or the other will be enough. Did you see Wingate minor going to that pub?"

"Oh! No!"

"Then how do you know he went?"

"I—I heard him—"

"He told you he was going?"

"Oh, no!"

"Do you mean that you were listening, playing the prying eavesdropper, while he was speaking to somebody else?" demanded Gwynne.

"Yes—that is, no! Certainly not! I—I hope I'm above anything of that kind!" stammered Bunter.

Gwynne looked at him sharply. The Famous Five listened in silence; but the thought came into their minds that Gwynne was not specially anxious to collect evidence against the captain's minor.

He had taken up the matter because the captain of Greyfriars had asked him to do so, and he was going through with it; but, as a matter of fact, he was rather keen to discover that the evidence against Wingate minor was not conclusive.

"Where were you when the kid went out of gates?" asked Gwynne.

"I was doing lines for Wingate."

"Then you can't possibly know where he went?"

"Nunno; only—"

"Only what?" snapped Gwynne.

"Nothing!" gasped Bunter.

"You thought he had gone to the Cross Keys on some sort of hearsay—is that it?" asked the prefect.

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"And you had the cheek to tell Wingate on no better evidence than that—what?"

"I—I didn't exactly tell him!" stammered Bunter. "I—I wouldn't, you know. I—I thought he ought to let me off my lines if I kept it dark about his brother—see? One good turn deserves another."

Gwynne stared at the fat junior.

"Oh, my hat! You had the neck to say that to Wingate! What on earth did he do?"

"The beast pitched into me—"

"If I'd been in his place I'd not have left a whole bone under all your fat!" said Gwynne. "You hear some silly talk, and make a mountain out of a molehill, all to get out of an impot. You young rascal!"

"I—I—" "I thought there was nothing in it, and I find there isn't. On your own showing, if you heard anything, you were playing the spy. A fellow who would listen, would tell lies!" said Gwynne, in disgust. "You are a shady young rascal, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Gwynne—" "I've a jolly good mind to lick you! You'd better be careful another time how you spread yarns like this without any evidence. If I hear any more of it, I'll give you a licking you'll remember over the Christmas holidays!"

"I—I say—" "That's enough!" Gwynne walked out of Study No. 1, and his heavy footsteps were heard going down the stairs.

The Famous Five grinned at one another. Gwynne was a Sixth Form prefect, and had his duty to do; but it certainly seemed to the Co. that he was allowing his friendship for Wingate to blunt the keen edge of his sense of duty.

Bunter gasped with relief when he was gone.

"I—I say, you fellows, I didn't give young Wingate away, you know!" he exclaimed, with his eye on the lives-bat.

"You'd have got a jolly good ragging if you had!" growled Bob Cherry. "Why couldn't you hold your fat tongue in the first place?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—" "Young Wingate wants a hiding, if ever a young rotter did," said Harry Wharton. "But it's not a fellow's bizney to give the kid away. I hope, for old Wingate's sake, it won't all come out."

"Better for him if it did," granted Johnny Bull. "It might save him from something worse later. He's going the way to get bunked from the school."

"Yes; but it's not a Remove fellow's business to sneak," said the captain of the Remove.

"No; that's right enough." "It's the jolly old principle of the thing," said Bob Cherry. "Anyhow, I don't think there'll be much evidence against young Wingate, the way Gwynne is going to work collecting it."

Wharton frowned a little. "That's all very well," he said. "It's up to the Lower School not to sneak about one another; but it's up to a prefect to get to the facts in a serious matter like this. Gwynne's a good-natured fellow, but I can't say I think much of him as a prefect."

"I say, you fellows, I pulled the wool over his eyes a treat," said Billy Bunter.

"You fat ass, he wanted you to," granted Johnny Bull. "Lucky for young Wingate it wasn't Carne or Walker on the job. Anyhow, there wouldn't have been any trouble at all if Bunter hadn't eavesdropped and tattled. Let's kick Bunter."

"Good egg! Let's!" "The kickfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Let us kick him hardfully and painfully."

"I say, you fellows—" "No good saying anything, old fat bean; this is for your own good, you know," said Bob Cherry.

Bob set the door wide open. "Now, you stand in the doorway, Bunter, and we'll all kick together," he said. "You can tell us afterwards who kicked hardest. Ready?"



Tea was just commencing in Study No. 1 when Coker of the Fifth burst in. All was calm and bright—till Coker burst in. After that, all was pandemonium. "Oh, you're here, are you?" said Coker, dropping his hand on Jack Wingate's shoulder and jerking him out of the chair. "I've come here to talk to you, my little man!" (See Chapter 13.)

"Oh, really Cherry—"

"We're waiting for you, Bunter."

"Look here, you beasts—" howled Bunter, in alarm.

"Roll him over here," said Bob.

"Leggo!" roared Bunter, as Johnny Bull grasped him, and propelled him towards the door. "I'm not going to be kicked! I don't want to be kicked—Yarooooooh!"

"That isn't the point," explained Bob patiently. "The point is that a jolly good kicking will do you good, for making trouble between old Wingate and his minor."

"Leggo!" yelled Bunter.

"Now, all of you get ready," said Johnny Bull, propelling Bunter into the doorway. "Kick hard and kick often when I let him go."

"Right ho!"

Johnny Bull stood Bunter into the doorway, and stepped back. Like an arrow from a bow, Bunter flew into the passage long before a boot could reach him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hold on!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Come back, Bunter! You haven't been kicked yet!"

"Yah!"

Bunter flew along the Remove passage.

"After him!" roared Bob.

Bunter flew into Study No. 7, and slammed the door. He locked the door, and dragged the study table and the armchair against it for additional security. Then he sat down, gasping, and it was several minutes before he

realised that there was no pursuit, and that the playful juniors in Study No. 1 had only been pulling his fat leg.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Triumph!

HORACE COKER granted.

Potter and Greene exchanged a private wink.

The three chums of the Fifth were at tea in their study, and Potter and Greene were in a very cheerful mood. Football practice had made them hungry, and both of them were down to play in the Redclyffe match on Saturday, and the tea was ample and good, so Potter and Greene saw no reason why they should not take a cheerful view of things.

Coker, however, seemed to be surveying the universe with a jaundiced eye that day.

Matters were not going as, according to Coker, they ought to have gone.

It was often thus. There were many things in the universe that did not meet with Coker's approval at the best of times.

But now it really seemed that the limit had been reached. Coker's important shin had been hacked by a Third Form fag, and it bore a bruise which, if not actually as large as an egg, was quite large enough—much too large for Coker's comfort. But it was not merely the physical discomfort that troubled Coker; his lofty dignity had been im-

(Continued on page 17.)



THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 245.

HARRY WHARTON, EDITOR

Week Ending Oct. 24th.



ENGLISH AS SHE IS SPOKE!

An amusing little dialogue by TOM BROWN.

MR. QUELCH (bumping into Billy Bunter in the passage): Bunter, you appear to be in a most precipitate hurry! Where are you going?

BUNTER (breathlessly): Rag, sir!

MR. QUELCH: Answer my question, Bunter! I did not ask you for the name of a soiled piece of cloth in three letters. I repeat, where are you going?

BUNTER: To the Rag, sir—the Junior Common-room!

MR. QUELCH: Oh, I wish you would confine yourself to King's English, Bunter! What are you going to do in the Common-room?

BUNTER: Chew the fat, sir!

MR. QUELCH: Good gracious! Is it possible, Bunter, that you are about to participate in a disgusting and gluttonous orgy?

BUNTER: Nuddo, sir—

MR. QUELCH: But you distinctly said that you were going to chew the fat—

BUNTER: Ahem! That was merely a—figure of speech, sir. I'm going to do some chinwagging—in other words, sir, some "spouting"—

MR. QUELCH: You are not a whale, Bunter! What, pray, do you mean by "spouting"?

BUNTER: Jawing, sir—letting off steam—having a good old gas—

MR. QUELCH: Really, Bunter, I am more bewildered and befogged than ever! Unless you explain yourself at once, I shall—

BUNTER: But—but I've already explained, sir—

MR. QUELCH: Then I wish you would explain your explanation! You have referred to chewing the fat, chinwagging, spouting, jawing, letting off steam, and having a good old gas! Do you expect me to understand the meaning and portent of such an opprobrious jargon of expressions, Bunter?

BUNTER (desperately): We're going to argue the toss, sir, on the burning question of "Should Tuck Be Taxed?"

MR. QUELCH: Oh, at last I get a glimmer of enlightenment! Is it your intention, Bunter, to take part in a debate?

BUNTER: Yessir! That's it, sir!

MR. QUELCH: Then why did you not say so in the first instance? Take a hundred lues, Bunter, for wasting my valuable time!

(Billy Bunter rolls away disconsolately, breathing a malison on Form masters who don't understand plain English.)

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EDITORIAL!

DEBATING is the dignified name for "chinwagging." And now that winter is with us again there is "a certain liveliness" amongst the various debating societies at Greyfriars.

The Sixth Form Debating Society is a staid and solemn affair. The high-and-mighty seniors assemble in the prefects' room, and proceed to discuss, with owl-like gravity, such an urgent question as "Should Fags Be Bobbed or Shingled?" Certainly, some of the little beggars want a hair-cut. Dicky Nugent is going about like a poet or a Paderewski. He says he can't afford to get his locks shorn in these hard times. And this reminds me that Billy Bunter has allowed his hair to grow till it's overlapping his ears. He says he's going to get it cut as soon as his postal-order comes. My hat! Billy's hair will be down to his toes and trailing along the ground by that time.

Sixth Form debates are conducted with dignity and decorum. In fact, the prefects' room on debate nights has been compared to the House of Lords, and the Junior Common-room to the House of Commons. Wingate allows no wrangling, and any debater who loses his head or becomes at all heated is promptly called to order.

So far as the Fifth are concerned, there is a little more liveliness about their debates. You see, Coker's in the Fifth, and old Coker has a rather crude and downright way of expressing himself. Like Mark Antony of old, he is "a plain, blunt man." Unlike Antony, however, he can't make a speech for toffee. He indulges freely in personal abuse, and the Fifth Form debates invariably end in Coker being forcibly ejected on his neck!

The Upper Fourth also have their debates, but these are tame affairs. In the Remove, however, a debate is a lively business indeed. More often than not it ends in a free fight, especially when the subject of the debate happens to be one on which opinions are sharply divided. The only Remove debate I can recall which passed off perfectly pleasantly and peacefully was a discussion on "Should the Birch be Abolished?" Everyone was for abolition, and there was no dissentient voice!

The fags' debates are even more boisterous than our own. The fags have their own peculiar way of conducting a debate. They scrap first, and jaw afterwards! To be a successful fag debater you need to have a ready pair of fists, and a hide that will stand plenty of punishment. Whenever the babes of the Second or Third appear at "breakker" with black eyes and bulbous noses, you can safely assume that they've had a "debate" overnight!

I'm not much of an orator myself, but debating is good fun, and I feel confident that this week's issue will worthily fill the bill.

HARRY WHARTON.

TURNING THE TABLES!

The school inspector began to question the pupils on punctuation, when the local mayor, a pompous individual, who was visiting the establishment, interrupted him. "It is foolish," he said, "to bother about commas and suchlike." This made the inspector angry. He turned to the class and told a boy to write on the blackboard: "The Mayor of Cheesington says the inspector is a fool." That was done. "Now," said the inspector, "put a comma after Cheesington and another after inspector." The mayor blushed and said no more.



COKER, THE DEBATER!

By DICK PENFOLD.

Silence, all ye cheeky fags!

Coker is debating!

How his deep voice drones and drags—

Most exasperating!

Listen to his tiresome patter,

He's as mad as any hatter;

Mind you don't create a clatter—

Coker is debating!

Arms awheel like windmill sails—

Coker is debating!

"Did all humans once have tails?"

That's the case he's stating.

Coker takes the Darwin view,

Says it simply must be true;

We're gorillas, me and you,

Coker says, debating!

Dry up, Potter! Silence, Greene!

Coker is debating!

Listen to the foolish bean

Asininely prating!

Coker's like a gramophone,

How his hearers moan and groan!

How they hate his dreary tone—

Coker is debating!

Get your missiles ready, chaps!

Coker is debating!

You are bored with him, perhaps?

Find him aggravating?

Let your aim be true and straight,

Smash your eggs upon his pate,

Swift and sudden be his fate!

Coker is debating!

How the merry missiles fly—

Coker is debating!

Eggy stains on cheek and eye

Are accumulating!

Volley after volley comes,

Keep the pot a-boiling, chums!

Eggs and cabbages and plums!

Coker STOPS debating!



DICKY NUGENT

The Story of a lively debate at St. Sam's and a painful sequel

A Storm in the Sixth!

"ARE we all hear?" asked Burleigh of the Sixth, glancing round the prefects' room at St. Sam's.

"All present!" said Swotter.

"Then we will commence our debate, gentlemen. Our subject for this evening is a very interesting one, 'SHOULD THE HEAD BE ABOLISHED?' I say he should, and I will proceed to give you plenty of reasons. Toadey, the leader of the Opposition, declares that the Head should not be abolished. I can't for the life of me understand why Toadey takes that view; still, it wouldn't be a debate if everybody thought alike. You've got to have for and against. We will now kick-off."

"Go ahead, Burleigh!"

"Pile in!"

Burleigh was in the act of clearing his throat, pryer to making the first speech, when the door of the prefects' room was thrown open, and the Head swept in with rustling gown.

Some of the seniors turned red and looked jolly uncomfortable. It was an awkward moment. But Burleigh, the skipper of St. Sam's, who feared no foe in shining armor, glanced coolly at the begowned and bearded figger of Dr. Birchmell.

"Good-evening, sir!" he said frijgidly.

"Evening, Burleigh! Am I introodding?"

"Yes, you are!"

The Head frowned.

"You are very rood, Burleigh. When a headmaster asks if he is introodding you should always say, 'Of corse not, sir! Take a chair and join in our jolly little debate.'"

Burleigh grinned.

"You can stay if you like, sir," he said. "But I should advise you not to, for your own sake. If you stay you'll hear some painful trooths. You see, the subject of our debate is, 'SHOULD THE HEAD BE ABOLISHED?'"

"Well, that's a very interesting toppick, Burleigh. It has a peculiar interest for me, bekawse, you see, I happen to be the Head. I shall have grate plezzure in joining your debate, and making the opening speech."

And then, before anybody could stop him, the Head skipped up on to the platform and started spouting.

It was a fiery and dramattick speech. The Head said it was high treason, sedition, and criminal libel to suggest that he should be abolished. How would St. Sam's continue to eggstist without a Head? Why, it would be like "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark! It was absurd, it was preposterous, it was all tommy-rot, and all my eye to talk of abolishing the Head.

"Gentlemen," concluded the doctor, "some of you may think I am a trifle biassed, and have an axe to grind in sticking up for the Head. But I can assure you that my sentiments are quite impartial. I've said my say, and I've made it perfectly clear to you that St. Sam's can't do without its Head, any more than an army can do without

a general. We will now hear what the other side has got to say."

Burleigh jumped to his feet.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I am no orator, as the Head is, but, as you know me all, a plain, blunt man—"

"Plain as the booby-prize winner in a beauty contest!" said Bounder.

"Blunt as an Army razor!" said Swotter.

"And he's cribbed the first part of his speech from 'Julius Seizer!'" said Toadey.

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "Give the speaker fair play. Hear all sides, you know. It's fearfully bad form to interrupt."

"Thank you, sir," said Burleigh gratefully. "This is a very painful ordeal for me, but I will not shirk it. I will stick to my guns, and show that I have the curridge of my convictions. I consider that the Head ought to be abolished, for the following reasons. First, he's far too old for the job. We want young blud at St. Sam's—not a doddering old buffer with one foot in the grave and the other in bandages bekawse of the gout! Second, the Head is much too ignnerent to be entrusted with the education of boys. Instead of having the wisdom of Solomon in his upper storey, it's full of sawdust! A more ignnerent man than our present Head it has not been my misfortune to meet!"

The Head nearly choked. He had gone purple in the face, and it really looked as if he was going into revulsions.

"You—you—" he spluttered, fixing Burleigh with a deadly glare. "How dare you insult me to my face! I—I'll jolly well—"

"Don't interrupt, please," said Burleigh. "It's fearfully bad form to interrupt. I'm quoting your own words, you know!"

The Head continued to glare. He was in a boiling rage. His hands were

CHIN-WAG!

It is said that every time Horace Coker opens his mouth he puts his foot in it. Well, there's plenty of room, anyway.

"A rolling stone gathers no moss." Agreed! But a rolling barrel can gather a lot of kicks. Ask Bunter!

Harold Skinner was a little premature when he commenced his speech the other day with—"Lend me your ears." Five minutes afterwards it would have been most appropriate, for a certain Sixth Form prefect boxed Skinner's auricular appendages soundly.

Alonzo Todd always begins his speeches with "My Uncle Benjamin—" And he always concludes them with "Ow! Yow! Yaroooooh!" Strange!

Bunter is expecting a postal-order. I'm expecting half-a-crown for these pars. We're both optimists without cause.

clenched till the knuckles stood out sharp and white. The vane in his forehead stood out like mottled whipeord.

Burleigh went on calmly with his speech.

"There are many other reasons why the Head should be abolished without delay," he said. "Not only is he old and ignnerent, but he's a man with a dark and shady past. The other day I came across an old copy of the 'Police Gazette'—"

The Head blanched.

"And there was a report of a man named Birchmell doing twelve months' hard labour for burglary. That's the sort of man, gentlemen, who rules the roost at St. Sam's—a one-time felon, a looter of plunder, a cracker of cribbs."

"I deny it!" The Head's voice was horse with rage. "That man Birchmell was my young brother—not me! My brother was always a ferribul scamp, but I have always been the good boy of the family."

Burleigh shrugged his shoulders.

"Some may beleieve you, but I don't," he said.

And then he went on with his speech, giving ninety-nine powerful reasons in all why the Head should be abolished.

The Head could endure it no longer. He jumped to his feet, tore at his hair like a maniac, and then rushed out of the prefects' room. He returned shortly afterwards, with a birch in one hand and a cane in the other. Then he made a blind and feroshus rush at the members of the Sixth Form Debating Sossiety.

Swish! Whack! Swish! Whack!

Cane and birch did tremendous execution as they lashed and crashed upon the shoulders of the seniors.

Pannick broke out among the debaters. They fled in all directions, yelling with angwish.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Toadey, as the Head gave him a "tuppenny" with the cane. "What are you lamming me for, sir? I'm sticking up for you—I'm the leader of the Opposition! I don't think you ought to be abolished—at least, I didn't think so. But I do now! Ow-ow-ow!"

There was a wild stampede for the door. The infuriated Head, charging and barging among the seniors, cleared the prefects' room in record time. Then he paused, pumping in breth.

"That'll learn them—the young rascals!" he panted. "I'll teach them to take my name in vane, and to rake up my shady past!"

And he stalked angrily out of the prefects' room.

That evening the following announcement appeared on the notiss-board in the hall:

"NOTISS!"

"The Sixth Form Debating Sossiety will be cancelled until further notiss. Until the senior boys can learn to debate without indulging in personalities they will not be aloud to debate at all. Burleigh, the President of the Sossiety, will report to me for a birching every morning after breakfast until the end of the term. He will also be gated for the same period. That'll learn him!"

"(Signed) I. BIRCHEMELL,
"Headmaster."

THE END.

Don't Miss Next Week's
Topping
"PAPER-CHASING"
Supplement, Ohums!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 924.

BILLY BUNTER'S GOOD TURN!

A Special Contribution.

By TOM BROWN.

"THIS SIDE UP.—WITH CARE."

Billy Bunter stopped short, and stood blinking at a large packing-case which had been dumped outside the porter's lodge at Greyfriars. It had just been delivered by the carrier, and Gosling, the porter, having signed the receipt for it, had shuffled back into his parlour, to indulge in an afternoon nap.

Gosling was in no hurry to deliver the packing-case to the person to whom it was addressed—namely, Mr. Prout.

"It's a typewriter, by the look of it," murmured Bunter. "I heard Prout telling Quelch the other day that he was thinking of investing in a typewriter. Wonder what sort of machine it is!"

Filled with a consuming curiosity, Bunter continued to blink at the packing-case.

"Now, if I take this up to the school and open it, I shall be saving Prout a lot of trouble," he mused. "He doesn't want the bother of opening a blessed packing-case!"

Having decided to do Mr. Prout a good turn, Billy Bunter fetched a trolley, and with some difficulty he conveyed the packing-case to Study No. 7 in the Remove passage. He performed this task unseen, for all the fellows were on the football-field.

Pausing from his exertions, Bunter tilted the trolley, and shot the packing-case on to the floor of his study. Then he proceeded to prise open the lid with a poker. He backed at it with all his force, and succeeded in removing the lid bit by bit.

The strip of wood which bore Mr. Prout's name and address was broken up and put on the fire. Billy Bunter considered this a wise precaution. If one of his study-mates came in and found him opening a packing-case belonging to Mr. Prout there might be trouble. It was true that Bunter was doing Mr. Prout a good turn, but his study-mates might not regard the matter in that light.

Having removed the lid, Bunter stooped down and examined the typewriter.

"It's a beauty!" he exclaimed. "The latest model of the Express Typewriter Company! It must have cost a heap of money. I think I'll test the machine just to see how it works."

So saying, Bunter lifted the typewriter out of the case and set it on the table. The keys had been tied together with string to ensure safety in transit, but it was only the work of a moment to sever the strings.

Billy Bunter pushed the trolley into the passage. Then he stepped back into the study and closed the door. He gazed admiringly at the brand-new typewriter on the table. It was certainly a far superior machine to Mr. Quelch's, which was quite an ancient affair.

Bunter's knowledge of typewriting was extremely limited. He knew how to insert the paper. Beyond that he knew very little.

Having inserted a sheet of impot paper in the machine, Bunter started to type.

"I'll write a letter to my pater," he murmured. "Better than scribbling it by hand."

Bunter's typewriting was even worse than his handwriting—if that were possible. He frequently struck the wrong key. The letter to his sire was almost unreadable, and it took Bunter about half an hour to type. The epistle ran as follows:

"Myde@pater. Just @ few M?; lines hupping you @re quite we!; @s it le@ves me@t@present. I @m just showing you wh@t @ clever Typist I @m. I h@ve been egg-specting @ remitt@nce from you for-s@metime but it h@nt @rrived yet. I suppose there h@s been @ del@y in the post. ple@se send it soon @lso @ ll@mp@r of Tuck. @ fellow never gets enuff to e@t int@l@place.—With love to M@ter @nd yourself.
Your loving son?;?&%%!!
bliYy."

Bunter was quite proud of that letter.

"The pater will be no end bucked to see that I can use a typewriter," he muttered.

There was a tramping of feet in the passage, and Harry Wharton & Co. looked into the study. They had just come in from the footer, and the tick-tacking noise which proceeded from No. 7 had aroused their curiosity.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's going on in here?"

"A typewriter, by Jove!" gasped Nugent. "Whose is it, Bunter?"

"Mine, of course! She's a beauty, isn't she?" said Bunter. "I've always wanted a typewriter to do my literary work, you know, and I meant to buy one as soon as my pater sent me the money."

Harry Wharton looked incredulous.

"You mean to say your pater's sent you enough cash to buy a typewriter?"

Bunter nodded.

"Thirty quid this typewriter cost," he said. "Not a penny less. She's the finest machine I've ever seen! Beats Quelch's old bus into fits! Run away now, you fellows! I want to write a story!"

"I don't know about writing stories, but you're a masterpiece at telling 'em!" said Bob Cherry. "That machine can't be yours!"

"I tell you it is!"

"Where did you buy it?"

"Chunkley's, in Courtfield. It was the best machine they had in stock. There's a two-colour ribbon, and a self-starter, and a gadget that registers the number of words you type."

"And it adds up sums, I suppose, and writes stories on its own?" said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton did not join in the laughter. He was looking anxious.

"Look here, Bunter," he said, "you'd better tell the truth about this typewriter. Have you raided it from somewhere?"

"Eh? Of course not! I bought it in Burchester this afternoon! It cost every penny of fifty pounds!"

"But you said just now that you bought it at Chunkley's, and that it cost thirty pounds!"

"Ahem! Well, the—the fact is, I bought two," explained Bunter. "One at Burchester, and one at Chunkley's! The Bur-

chester one was fifty pounds, and this one was thirty. The one I bought in Burchester will arrive to-morrow. Do run away now, there's good chaps! I've got crowds of work to do!"

Harry Wharton & Co. withdrew, looking very puzzled. They could not understand how Bunter had come into possession of a brand-new typewriter. It was quite obvious that he had not bought it. His father was not the sort of man to send him thirty pounds to expend in that way.

In order to make certain that Bunter had not bought the machine, Harry Wharton obtained permission to use the telephone in the prefects' room. He rang up Chunkley's Stores, and inquired if they had had any transactions with Bunter of Greyfriars that afternoon. The answer was in the negative.

The Famous Five strolled out into the Close, discussing the extraordinary affair.

"We shall have to bump the truth out of Bunter, and find out who the typewriter really belongs to," said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

"It's not his own property, that's certain," said Johnny Bull. "He's raided it from somewhere, and he'll get himself into serious trouble, the fat ass!"

The juniors halted in the school gateway, still discussing the matter, when Mr. Prout came striding on the scene.

The master of the Fifth was looking very annoyed. As he approached the porter's lodge, he lifted up his voice, and thundered:

"Gosling!"

That stentorian shout disturbed the slumbers of the Greyfriars porter. He came shuffling, sleepy-eyed, out of his parlour.

"Has a packing-case arrived for me, Gosling?" demanded Mr. Prout. "I have been expecting one all the afternoon. I have purchased a typewriter, and delivery was promised by four o'clock without fail. It is now past five."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged significant glances. The ownership of the typewriter was no longer a mystery.

As for Gosling, he stared about him in perplexity.

"Yessir!" he said. "A packin'-case arrove for you not long ago. I left it jest outside my lodge, but it's been an' took wings!"

Mr. Prout frowned.

"What! Do you mean to tell me it has disappeared?"

"Well, sir, seein' as 'ow it ain't 'ere, I can only conclude that it's gorn!"

Mr. Prout stamped wrathfully on the flagstones.

"Why did you not deliver the packing-case to me immediately on its arrival?" he demanded.

"I—I—"

"If that typewriter is not recovered, I shall hold you responsible!" snapped Mr. Prout.

And he stamped away, leaving the school porter scratching his head in blank bewilderment.

It was while passing the open window of Study No. 7 that a tick-tacking noise greeted Mr. Prout's ear.

The master of the Fifth looked up, and beheld Billy Bunter seated at a typewriter.

"Bunter!"

The tick-tacking ceased as if by magic. Billy Bunter jumped up with a guilty start.

"Whose typewriter is that, Bunter?" demanded Mr. Prout sternly. "I have reason to believe that it is mine!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "I—I— Don't glare at me like that, sir! It makes me feel all of a tremble! The fact is, sir, I was just doing you a good turn!"

"A—A good turn?"

"Yessir! I saw a packing-case addressed to you outside Gosling's lodge, and I thought I'd save you the bother of opening it. Then I thought I'd just test your typewriter to make sure it was in working order. It runs beautifully sir! I—I was just going to bring it along to you!"

The expression on Mr. Prout's face was truly terrifying.

"Wretched boy!" he thundered. "Take that typewriter to my study at once! You will then proceed to Mr. Quelch's study! I will acquaint him with your outrageous conduct!"

A few moments later a steady swishing sound fell upon the ears of Harry Wharton & Co. There were other sounds, too—sounds of wild human anguish.

William George Bunter was going through the mill, and already he bitterly regretted having done Mr. Prout that good turn!

THE END.

WHO IS THE MAN IN THE RED MASK?



Read all about him in the amazing mystery story featuring the Hon. John Scarlett, the millionaire detective, and his boy assistant, Jimmy West, in the

BOYS' FRIEND!

OUT TO-DAY!



(Continued from page 13.)

aired. If the fag had hacked any other Fifth Form shin, the act would have been inexcusably cheeky. But Coker's shin was, of course, more important than any other shin at Greyfriars, in the Fifth or out of it. Coker had no doubt about that.

And the culprit had not been properly chastised. A few whacks—a mere nothing! Boiling in oil would scarcely have been too severe a punishment for such an act, and a set of cheeky Sixth Form prefects had prevented Coker from even thrashing the fag who had hacked him. No wonder Horace Coker's brow bore the frown of wrath and indignation; no wonder he grunted. When things reached the limit—the actual outside edge—it was time to frown and grunt.

Potter and Greene, obviously, did not realise how serious the matter was. In their view, Coker's shin was of no greater consequence than any other shin. They did not venture to tell the great Horace so; but he more than suspected that that was how they looked at it. It was said of the young man in the poem, that a primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more. And to Potter and Greene, in the same way, Horace Coker's shin was just like any other old shin, and it was nothing more—nothing more at all. Coker even suspected them of finding something of an entertaining nature in the incident. Several times he had spotted them grinning, for no apparent cause.

So when Gwynne of the Sixth blew into Coker's study, he found Coker in a jolly humour for him, so to speak.

Coker had had enough swank from the Sixth. He did not mean to take any more. He grunted contemptuously and ostentatiously went on with his tea, in order to show, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Sixth-Form prefects were very small beer in his estimation.

"Interrupting you—what?" asked Gwynne genially.

"Yes!" said Coker.

"Sorry, and all that!" Gwynne did not seem to think that it mattered whether he interrupted Coker or not. "I've got a question or two to ask you, Coker."

"You can ask!" said Coker grimly.

"And I want you to answer them, of course."

"That depends."

Potter and Greene looked a little uneasy. Gwynne of the Sixth was a very easy-going fellow; but, after all, he was a prefect, and Fifth Form fellows really couldn't talk to prefects like this. Coker was under the impression that he could.

But Gwynne did not seem to mind. He smiled blandly.

"Wingate's asked me to take up the affair of his minor," he said. "It's a rather serious matter, and if it comes to a report to the Head, naturally, he'd rather not figure in it. I've got to know the truth about what young Wingate did yesterday."

"Better ask him," said Coker, with a grunt.

"I'm asking you," said Gwynne.

"Naturally, you will do exactly what a prefect tells you, Coker, without putting forward any of your own wishes or opinions on the subject."

Coker turned from the tea-table, and stared blankly at Gwynne. If the prefect had specially desired to rouse resistance on Coker's part, he could not have done it more effectually.

"Shall I?" Coker almost gasped.

"Of course."

"Do as I'm told—what?" articulated Coker.

"Just that!"

"We'll see about that!" bawled Coker. "I can just see myself doing as I'm told—Oh, just!"

Potter and Greene eyed Gwynne rather curiously. They were rather surprised at his patience with Coker, and they were surprised at the way he presented the matter. Really, they might have suspected that the prefect deliberately wished to provoke Coker into refusing to answer his questions.

"Now you mentioned that you saw young Wingate sneaking out of the Cross Keys by the back way yesterday," said Gwynne.

"Did I?" sneered Coker.

"You gave information—"

"I did nothing of the kind!"

"Why, I heard you!"

"You may have heard me mentioning something," said Coker. "But I was not giving information, as you know jolly well; and I refuse to give any information now! Ask me, and see!"

"You said—"

"Never mind what I said. Ask me your jolly old questions, and see whether I'll give you any information!" snorted Horace Coker, in great indignation.

"That's what I'm going to do. Now, listen to me carefully, Coker!"

"Rats!"

"Yesterday you saw Wingate minor leaving the Cross Keys by the back gate. Yes, or no?"

"Find out!"

"That's what I'm trying to do. Did you see him, or did you not see him?" asked Gwynne placidly.

"Ask me another!" jeered Coker.

"Do you mean to say that you've forgotten?"

"I don't mean to say anything," said Coker coolly. "Go to some other study for information!"

"That isn't respectful, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker. He seemed greatly tickled at the bare idea of anyone expecting respect from him.

"If you've any evidence to give against Wingate minor—"

"I haven't!"

"We're not getting on very fast at this rate," said Gwynne. "If you can't say out plainly what you know, Coker—"

"If I can't do as I'm told, like a good little boy—what?" said Coker banteringly. "Well, I can't! I haven't a word to say about Wingate minor. Not a syllable."

"You've nothing to tell me?"

"Nothing at all."

"If you've nothing to tell me, Coker, sure it's no use my asking you any more questions," said Gwynne.

"Just found that out?" jeered Coker.

"For the last time, Coker, can you tell me, in plain English, that you saw Wingate minor sneaking out of the Cross Keys yesterday?"

"For the last time, in plain English," mimicked Coker. "I haven't anything at all to say about Wingate minor."

"Very well; I'm bound to accept that," said Gwynne, and, with a nod to Potter and Greene, he quitted the study.

Coker grinned in a satisfied way. He had upheld his personal dignity in an interview with a Sixth Form prefect; more than upheld it.

"That's the way to take them down," he told his study-mates. "Fancy that ass thinking he could come here swanking over me! As if I'd tell him a single word, after he'd ordered me to! I can see myself taking orders from the Sixth—I don't think!"

Potter and Greene chuckled.

"Shut him up fairly well—what?" grinned Coker.

"Oh, quite!" said Greene. "I wonder why he didn't want you to tell him what you knew about the matter."

"Eh! He did want me to tell him—he asked me," said Coker. "I refused to tell him anything. And he stood it—you see how he stood it. You only want to stand up to these swanking Sixth Form men, to make them put their ears down! Take my word for it!"

And Horace Coker went on with his tea in a much happier frame of mind, under the pleasant impression that he had upheld his lofty dignity, and made a Sixth Form man put his ears down.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

GEORGE WINGATE moved restlessly about his study.

He was too deeply troubled in mind to keep still. At any moment now he expected a summons to the Head. Dr. Locke was certain to send for him when the case of his minor came up for judgment. And by this time he had no doubt that Gwynne of the Sixth had made his report, and that the Head of Greyfriars was cognisant of Wingate minor's offences.

What would the Head do? He was unlikely to expel a fag of the Third Form, especially for a first offence, serious as that offence was. Still, it was possible. At the very best, it would be a Head's flogging; and Jack Wingate exposed to the scorn of his Form, of all the school, as a shady young rascal, a "pub-haunter," a fellow whom it was better not to know.

Wingate winced with pain at the thought.

Could he have helped his brother? The matter had been in his hands, if he had chosen to keep it there. He could have hushed it up—thrashed the fag for his transgression, and let the affair end with that. Only—

Only he could not. So long as he was a prefect—head prefect of Greyfriars and captain of the school—he was bound to hold the scales of justice even. In his official capacity he was bound to regard Wingate minor as a member of the Third Form, nothing more and nothing less.

He could not have done otherwise than as he had done. He knew that. But it hurt him deeply.

Gwynne had taken up the matter, as a prefect, at Wingate's request. He had taken it up officially, and the result rested with him. The result could be nothing but a report to the Head that Jack Wingate had broken the strictest rule of the school; that he had gone out of bounds to visit a disreputable resort. There was no help for it, and no hope; and George Wingate had to make up his mind to it.

The Head was certain to send for him, as he was the culprit's elder brother. Yet the summons did not come.

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The evening was growing old; it seemed impossible that Gwynne had not finished making his inquiry and his report to the Head. The Greyfriars captain wondered whether the matter was already settled; whether the Head, after all, had judged and sentenced the culprit without having sent for the captain of the school. Yet that was unlikely; the Headmaster was not likely to pass him over in a matter where his brother was concerned.

There was a tap at his door, and Gerald Loder looked in. Wingate gave him a quick glance. It would be like his old enemy to come in and triumph over him, if his name was already disgraced in the school.

"Well?" he snapped.

Loder raised his eyebrows.

"Have I looked in at an awkward moment?" he drawled.

"What do you want? Is my brother expelled?" broke out Wingate savagely. "Is that what you have come to tell me?"

Loder stared at him.

"Your brother! Is he in trouble?" he asked.

"Oh!" muttered Wingate.

It was clear that Loder knew nothing of the matter, and Wingate could almost have bitten out his tongue for his hasty words.

"I hope the kid isn't up against it," said Loder. "He's not a bad little chap, only a bit cheeky."

"Oh!" said Wingate again. "The— the fact is," he stammered—"the fact is, he's rather in trouble. I—I thought perhaps—"

He broke off.

"You thought I knew, and that I'd come here to rub it in?" asked Loder unpleasantly.

Wingate coloured, and did not answer. It was exactly what he had thought, though he felt a little ashamed now of the suspicion.

Loder gave him a bitter look.

"Well, I didn't come here to speak about your brother," he said. "If he's in trouble, I'm sorry. It's about the Redclyffe match."

"That's settled," said Wingate.

"You've seen me at practice since the Highcliffe match," said Loder. "I think even you must admit that I've shown pretty good form."

"The team's made up for Redclyffe, and I can't trust you, Loder. I'll see what I can do later."

"Then I'm left out?"

"I've told you so."

"I thought perhaps you'd changed your mind," said Loder quietly.

"Well, I haven't."

There was a pause. Loder stood looking at the Greyfriars captain with a dark brow; but Wingate's thoughts had returned to his brother. He was not thinking of Loder and his claims, and he only wished that the Sixth-Former would go. But Gerald Loder did not go.

"I'm not an unreasonable fellow, I hope," said Loder, at last. "I admit I let down the side on Highcliffe day. You had reason to complain. But I'm in great form now."

"And how long will that last?" grunted Wingate.

"If I'm left out at Redclyffe, I may admit that I've asked for as much as that. But the St. Jim's match follows pretty soon afterwards—shall I be playing St. Jim's?"

"No."

"Then I'm definitely dropped?"

"For the present, yes. When we play St. Jim's I can't run the risk of you fouling Kildare, as you did Roper of Highcliffe."

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Loder gritted his teeth.

"Am I never going to hear the end of that?" he asked.

"You can't expect to hear the end of it yet," answered Wingate. "You disgraced us on the football field, and that's a more serious thing than you seem to think."

"Well, I didn't come here for a sermon!" sneered Loder. "I only want to know where I stand. I'm dropped out of first-eleven football—that's what you mean; for making one mistake."

"If you call deliberately kicking a fellow a mistake, yes."

"Well, we know where we stand," said Loder. "I've got friends who will stand by me, and if you mean to treat me like this, I warn you to look out for trouble!"

Wingate made a contemptuous gesture.

Loder turned to the door and quitted the study. Wingate forgot his existence the next moment; Loder's threats passed him by like the idle wind. He was thinking of his brother, and of the sword of Damocles that hung over Jack Wingate. Suppose the fag should be "bunked" from the school—what would they say at home? Suppose it was only a flogging and a bad report—even then, what would they say at home? That the elder brother should have taken better care of the younger? That a fellow holding the position of captain of the school should have contrived, somehow, to see that a foolish fag in the Third Form did not come to grief in this way? Yet what could he have done?

Wingate left the study at last, and went along to Gwynne's room. He had to know what had happened; what to expect. He could bear the suspense no longer.

He found Gwynne of the Sixth in his study. Gwynne coloured a little uncomfortably under his inquiring gaze.

"I—I suppose you knew I was anxious, Gwynne?" said Wingate, a little reproachfully.

"Well, yes," said Gwynne. "I was coming along to tell you about it, but—I was just thinking it over."

"You've made your report?"

"No. There's nothing to report."

"What?"

Gwynne toyed with a Greek lexicon on the table. He did not seem to want to meet George Wingate's eyes.

"The fact is," he said, "it turns out that the whole thing is moonshine."

"I don't understand."

"I've questioned Banter, and, from what he says, it seems that his story of your minor going to the Cross Keys yesterday was just tattle—idle blather."

"Oh!" said Wingate.

"Really, I wouldn't hang a dog on Banter's evidence," said Gwynne. "The fat fool contradicted himself right and left."

"But Coker," said Wingate—"Coker saw my brother coming away from the place. What do you mean, Gwynne?"

"I've asked Coker."

Wingate stared at him.

"You don't mean to say that Coker took back what he had said?"

"He told me that he had nothing whatever to say against your minor—told me definitely," said Gwynne. "I can't go further after that. The whole thing drops for want of evidence."

"My minor confessed to me," said Wingate, very quietly.

"Oh, my hat!"

There was a long silence in the study. "I left this to you, Gwynne, as a prefect," said Wingate, at last. "I had a right to do that. I didn't expect—" He broke off.

"Every fellow's innocent till he's found guilty," said Gwynne. "I'd rather find a fellow innocent than guilty. From my inquiry, there's no evidence against your minor, and I can't make a report to the Head. That ends it."

"I'm afraid it doesn't," said Wingate. "I'm bound to act on Jack's confession to me."

Gwynne shook his head.

"You can't!" he said. "If Wingate's minor comes to me with a confession, well and good. But he hasn't. You left the matter in my hands, Wingate, and I've dealt with it. It can't be reopened now."

"Look here, Gwynne—"

"Oh, let it drop!" exclaimed Gwynne irritably. "You've done your duty, and if I've gone a little easy, I'm answerable for it, and not you. You can't take the matter out of my hands, after assigning it to me. And I've settled it."

"But—"

"Let it drop! Do you want your name to become a byword in the school? For that's what it amounts to. Do you want Loder and Carne and that crew gloating over it? If you do, I don't! I tell you the matter's settled. Give your minor a warning not to play the goat again, and let it drop."

"It's not fair play, Gwynne. I never dreamed of this when I asked you to deal with the matter."

"I know you didn't. But we've been pals ever since we were in the Remove together," said Gwynne.

"Friendship doesn't count in a matter like this. It's a question of duty."

Gwynne did not answer.

"It's not right, Gwynne. I know you meant to make things easy for me, and to do me a good turn. But it's not right, and I can't allow it."

"You must!" said Gwynne coolly. "I tell you the matter's settled—settled by me at your own request. I made a full inquiry. Banter lied and contradicted himself; Coker refused to repeat what he had said—refused to say a word. There was no evidence whatever for a report to the Head, and the matter drops. You can't take the matter up again personally without reporting me to the Head for dereliction of duty, and I don't expect that at your hands, George."

"Oh!" muttered Wingate.

He moved about the study with a knitted brow. Gwynne gave a shrug of the shoulders and settled down to work.

Wingate's heart was lighter; he could not help that. Gwynne had not done his strict duty as a prefect—that could not be denied; but—but he had a right to manage the affair in his own way, once it was placed in his hands, and this was how he had chosen to manage it. Jack Wingate was saved from the consequences of his own folly, and that one fact outweighed all else.

"And yet—and yet—"

Wingate could not be satisfied. Yet in spite of himself his heart was light, with a load of anxiety taken from it. Justice had not been done; Gwynne had, in plain English, spared the fag because he was Wingate's brother. It was not cricket—it was not right. And yet it was an immense relief.

"Well, I suppose you—you meant well, old man," muttered the Greyfriars captain, at last.

"Thanks!" murmured Gwynne.

"But—but—"

"Cut out the buts," said Gwynne. "The matter's settled, right or wrong, and there's an end. Forget it."

"But—"

"The fact is, old man, I've got to hang up this Greek," said Gwynne. "The Head's been nagging me in Form about it."

Wingate felt that it was useless to discuss the matter further. He left the study—and left Gwynne to his Greek. He was enormously relieved; yet it was a shock to him to find that his best chum would be lax in a matter of principle, even for friendship's sake. But the matter was at an end; if only he could have taken Gwynne's advice, to "forget it." But it was not so easy to forget it.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Means Well!

"COALS of fire!" said Coker of the Fifth.

Coker spoke in a thoughtful sort of way.

It was a cryptic remark. Potter and Greene did not know in the very least what Coker was driving at, or to what he was alluding. But they did not inquire. What Coker might be driving at was not a matter of importance, in the opinion of his chums.

"Coals of fire!" repeated Coker.

It was the following day, and the chums of the Fifth were walking in the quad after class. Coker came to a halt at an old oaken bench which surrounded one of the ancient elms, and sat down on it. Potter and Greene seemed inclined to continue their walk; all the more because Coker had sat down. But the great Horace called to them.

"Sit down, you chaps."

Potter and Greene sat down.

"Coals of fire!" said Coker, for the third time. "That's the idea."

"Is it?" yawned Potter. "Well, the weather's getting rather cold."

"What's the weather got to do with it?"

"Eh? Coal fires—"

"I didn't say coal fires—I said coals of fire," said Coker. "I'm going to heap coals of fire on Wingate's head."

"My hat! Isn't that rather thick?" said Potter, with a wink at Greene. "I know Wingate's left you out of the first eleven; but singeing his napper like that is a bit thick. Reminds one of the Spanish Inquisition, and all that."

"Don't be an ass, Potter. Coals of fire is a metaphysical expression," explained Coker.

"Do you mean metaphorical?" murmured Potter.

"No, I don't; I mean metaphysical: I say metaphysical, and I mean metaphysical," said Coker positively. Horace Coker never did like contradiction.

"All serene; make it metaphysical, if you like," assented Potter. Really, he did not mind. Coker could make it anything he liked for all George Potter cared.

"It's a metaphysical expression, meaning to return good for evil," said Coker. "That's what I mean by heaping coals of fire on Wingate's head. You're ignorant, Potter."

"Thanks."

"I speak as I find," said Coker. "Well, to come to the point—"

"Oh! You're coming to a point?" asked Potter, in surprise, and Greene gave a chuckle.

"Yes!" roared Coker.

"Right-ho! Come to it, then," said Potter soothingly. "If you mean anything, give a fellow a tip as to what you mean."

"Wingate's treated me badly," said Coker. "He's left me out of the football—wasted his best man, by Jove! He's never treated me with the respect a fellow in my position has a right to expect. But he's not a bad chap. He



With the juniors clinging to him, Coker surged across the study to the door. But at the doorway he rallied, and came plunging back, fighting strenuously. Crash! Coker went over, and the tea-table went spinning as he crashed into it. There was a terrific crashing and smashing of crockery, and into the wreck of the tea-things Coker sprawled, with the juniors sprawling over him. (See Chapter 13.)

means well. The trouble really is, that he's a fool. But we can't all be bright."

"Some of us can't, that's a cert," agreed Potter.

"His minor cheeked me, and backed my shin," said Coker. "Wingate major has treated me rather badly, and his minor's done worse. But I'm not a fellow to bear malice. It's beneath a fellow like me. I'm going to heap coals of fire on Wingate's head, by stopping his minor from playing the goat and disgracing the captain of the school. See?"

"Nunno; not quite."

"You wouldn't," said Coker. "I'll explain. Day before yesterday we saw that young cad sneaking out of the Cross Keys. He ought to have been reported to the Head, but he hasn't been. It's a bit thick, Wingate favouring his young brother like this—not doing his duty as prefect, you know. Still, I admit the position was unpleasant for him. I believe in a chap standing by his brother; blood's thicker than water. I've often got into rows for punching fellows who cheeked my brother Reggie. Well, to come to the point, as I said, I'm going to keep an eye on young Wingate, and stop his silly games—stop them with a heavy hand. I think it's up to me."

"You do?" asked Greene.

"Yes, I do!" roared Coker.

"Oh, all right! Wingate major mayn't like your butting in."

"I hope I'm not the fellow to care what Wingate major may or may not like."

"Hem!"

"You fellows are going to help me," went on Coker.

"Oh!"

Potter and Greene exchanged glances. They were not in the remotest degree disposed to take the slightest notice of Wingate minor's unimportant existence, and had no desire whatever to heap coals of fire either metaphorically or metaphysically on Wingate major's head. But they knew of old that it was useless to argue with Coker.

"That's the programme," said Coker. "It's the Redelyffe match to-morrow, and Wingate and most of the prefects will be away. Just the time that young ragamuffin will choose to play the goat again, if he's not stopped. But that's where I come in."

"And how—" inquired Potter.

"I believe in dealing with fags in a short and sharp way," said Coker. "When a kid's made up his silly mind to go wrong, is it any good talking to him? Nothing of the kind. What he wants is a jolly good hiding to keep him straight."

"Oh!"

"That's the idea—a jolly good thrashing," said Coker. "I shall explain to Wingate minor that the way he's going on is a disgrace to the school; that he's risking disgracing himself and his brother, and getting bunked. I shall put it to him quite nicely, of course; and ran home the lesson with the biggest licking he's ever had in his life. I shall explain that I'm keeping an eye on him,

and that the first time I find him kicking over the traces again he will get another of the same. Now, he might forget the good advice—but he won't forget the thrashing. He's bound to remember that. See?"

"Oh!"

Coker rose from the bench.

"Come on, then," he said. "It's tea-time now—"

"Oh, good!" said Potter. "Let's go and have tea."

"I mean, being teatime, I know where to find him. I heard young Wharton ask him to tea to-day. You see, this is a bit of strategy," said Coker complacently. "We shall find him in the Remove passage, which is a good way from the prefects' quarters, and there's generally a row going on there, more or less. A bit of yelling won't attract any attention. And I fancy Wingate minor will be yelling like a scalded cat before I've done with him. Come on. You fellows may be wanted, in case the Remove kids should give any trouble."

"Let's have tea first—"

"Never mind tea—come on."

Horace Coker, having explained his programme, walked his chums away to the House.

Potter and Greene walked rather slowly.

It was quite useless to argue with Coker; in fact, argument never had any result but to make him more determined. But if Coker wanted to wake up a hornet's nest in the Remove passage, Potter and Greene did not share his desire in the very least.

Coker was taking them along to the Remove passage, in case their assistance should be needed in carrying out his programme. It was very probable that assistance would be needed.

But, in point of fact, wild horses would not have dragged Coker's chums to the Remove passage on such an expedition. Coker was welcome to his hornet's nest all to himself.

They entered the House; and Coker strode away towards the stairs. He had a cane under his arm, all ready. Potter and Greene exchanged a quick glance, and Potter darted away and vanished into the changing-room. Greene whipped into the Form-room passage.

Horace Coker tramped up the stairs, and it was not till he reached the first landing that he glanced round for his comrades.

"Don't lag behind, you fellows," he said. "I never saw such chaps for lagging! Why—what—where—"

Coker found himself on his lonesome.

"Potter!" he bawled. "Greene!"

But answer there came none.

"Potter!" roared Coker. "Greene! You silly asses, where are you? Potter! Greene!"

Mr. Quelch looked out of his study doorway.

"What is all this shouting? Coker, kindly do not make a disturbance on the staircase. This is the second time I have had to speak to you, Coker! If you cannot behave yourself better, Coker, I shall have to speak to your Form master!"

Coker suppressed his feelings and tramped on up the stairs. He realised that his faithless followers had deserted him.

But Coker did not think of giving up his purpose.

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He strode on up the Remove staircase, and arrived at the door of Study No. 1.

He did not tap on the door, as a less important fellow might have done. It was beneath Coker's dignity to show so much consideration as that to Lower Fourth fags.

He jammed his heavy foot against the door, and it flew open with a crash. Coker marched in.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rival Reformers!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
 "What the thump—"
 "Coker!"
 "The Cokerfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh. Harry Wharton & Co. had sat down

the dish; there was another dish tarts, and a plate of currant buns; and there were two kinds of jam and jelly. The fag realised that he was going to be "done well," and he was pleased.

The Famous Five of the Remove had their best manners on, so to speak, was Wharton's own idea to ask the fags there, and the Co. had played up manfully; though they did not, in point of fact, yearn for Third Form company.

Wharton's idea was to feed the brood so to speak; and when the young brood was well fed and in a good humour, speak to him a little seriously. It was very probable that Wingate minor, while sullen and rebellious to those in authority over him, might take a friendly tip from a Lower fellow who felt kindly towards him. Anyhow, he could be given a warning to keep clear of Loder of the Sixth—a warning put in a tactful manner, so as not to rouse his obstinate opposition.

Needless to say, the heroes of the Remove would scarcely have wasted all this tact on a cheeky fag of the Third on his own account. It was Wingate major they were really considering; they were the faithful admirers of the captain of Greyfriars, and they knew how his minor's reckless folly was troubling him. If they could do any good by taking a little trouble, they were willing to do it.

Wingate major would never know anything about it, of course—but the chums of the Remove were prepared to do good by stealth.

It really was unfortunate that Coker of the Fifth had chosen the very same occasion to heap coals of fire on Wingate major's head by taking his minor in hand, especially by the remarkable method of thrashing Wingate minor for his own good.

Very likely Harry Wharton & Co., in a kind and friendly way, might have influenced the reckless lad to better things. But with Horace Coker butting in, in his elephantine style, they had no chance of putting their method to the test.

Five Remove fellows and the Third Form fag had sat down round the tea table, in good humour, and were just beginning, when Coker of the Fifth burst in. All was calm and bright—till Coker butted in. After that, all was pandemonium.

"Oh, you're here, are you?" said Coker, dropping his hand on Jack Wingate's shoulder, and jerking him out of his chair. "I've come here to talk to you, my little man!"

"Let go, you fool!" shouted the fag.

The Famous Five were all on their feet at once.

"Coker, you ass!" shouted Wharton. "Get out of this study! What the thump do you want, you dummy?"

"I don't want any cheek, Wharton!"

"Outside!" exclaimed Nugent indignantly.

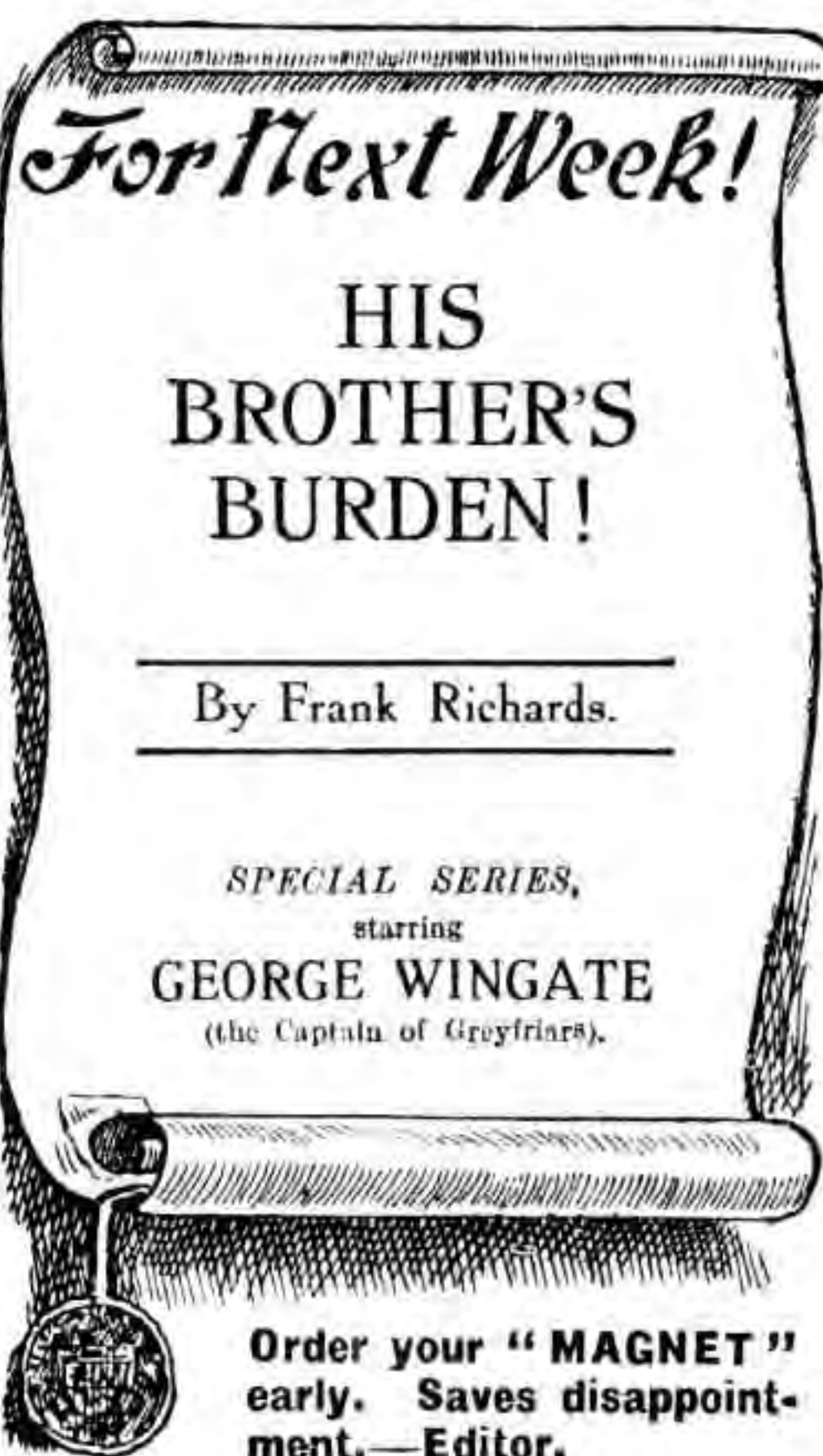
"Silence!" rapped out Coker.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Silence! I've come here to deal with Wingate minor, and you Remove kids are to keep quiet!" explained Coker. "Shut up! Now, young Wingate, I've overlooked what you did the other day—I'm not going to say anything more about hacking my shins."

"Let go my shoulder!"

Coker tightened his grip.



to tea in Study No. 1. With them, at the tea-table, was Jack Wingate of the Third.

Wingate minor felt a little like a fish out of water, in a Remove study at tea. It was quite unusual for a Third Form fag to be asked to tea in the Remove. Still, he had come, and it was a good tea that graced the table of Study No. 1. Wingate minor had been all the more pleased to accept Wharton's invitation because he was on rather doubtful terms with his friends in the Third, Tubb and Paget, owing to his late adventures as an amateur blackguard. Tubb and Paget were having tea in their Form-room, and they had given Wingate minor the "marble eye," while Harry Wharton & Co., on the other hand, were quite nice and affable.

Wingate minor wondered why. Still, that did not matter much, so long as there was a good tea. And it was good. A large plum cake was on

"I'm going to speak to you about your goings-on, Wingate minor. You've been blagging—smoking in the Cloisters, dodging in at the Cross Keys, and so on. You're in a fair way to getting bunked from the school, as well as disgracing yourself and your brother. You've got to chuck it, see?"

"You cheeky ass!"

"Look here, Coker, get out!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "I dare say you mean well; but you're not wanted here, Travel!"

"Silence!" Coker slid his cane into his hand. "Now, Wingate minor, as a warning of what to expect if you keep on as you've started, I'm going to lick you!"

"Hands off!" yelled Wingate minor. "I'm going to give you a round dozen with this cane, well laid on. Bend over that chair!"

"Fathead!"

"Get out, Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Chuck him out!" growled Johnny Bell.

Coker did not heed. As Wingate minor refused to bend over a chair Coker exerted his strength and bent him over. Then he lifted the cane.

At that point the Famous Five took a sensible hand in the proceedings.

They rushed on Coker. Somehow or other, Coker had not seemed to expect it. Things often happened that Horace Coker did not expect. Crash!

Coker reeled against the wall, in the grasp of the chums of the Remove. He roared.

"You cheeky young scoundrels —"

"Chuck him out!"

"Outside, Coker!"

Five Removites and the Third Form lag grasped Horace Coker all at once, and propelled him doorward.

But Coker was a tough proposition, even for six adversaries. He had no chance of victory against such odds. But he was able to put up a terrific fight.

Coker surged across the study to the door. But at the doorway he rallied, and came plunging back, fighting strenuously.

Crash!

Coker went over, and hurled the tea-table spinning as he crashed into it.

There was a terrific crashing and smashing of crockery.

Into the wreck of the tea-things Coker sprawled, with the juniors sprawling over him.

Smash! Crash! Bump!

It was a terrific combat.

Remove fellows crowded along the passage, and stared into Study No. 1, and roared with laughter. Peter Todd and Smithy and one or two more fellows came in to help.

Still Coker struggled. Breathless and untidy and dishevelled, he struggled on. Study No. 1, lately so calm and bright, was a wreck; by the time Coker was rolled out the room looked as if a whirlwind had struck it.

Coker went at last.

He rolled out among the Removites in the passage, and then he rolled towards the stairs, helped on his way by innumerable feet. With a last gasping yell he rolled down the Remove staircase, picked himself up on the landing, and fled for his life.

"Well, he's gone!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! Look at the study!"

"Look at the tea!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" mumbled Wingate

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 8.—Frank Nugent (of the Remove).



The most sensitive member of the Famous Five and undoubtedly the best-looking fellow in the Remove. Frank Nugent, on account of his girlish features and slim build, has been regarded by some as a milksop. But Franky is nothing of the kind, as his detractors have found to their cost. Just above the average at footer and cricket, Nugent, as study-mate of Harry Wharton, is undoubtedly in a position to influence Wharton to give him a "regular" show in the Remove team; but it must be recorded in Nugent's favour that he never exploits the close friendship existing between him and Wharton for self-aggrandisement. When Nugent plays for the Remove he is given his place solely on his merits. When, as is often the case, he is left out, Nugent takes it in the right sporting spirit. This alone is sufficient proof, if proof were needed, of the high character of Frank Nugent. Has a young brother in the Third Form of whom he is intensely proud and fond. A good actor, a good scholar, and, above all, a good fellow, Frank Nugent is the type of boy that public schools are proud to have.

minor. He dabbed a streaming nose with a handkerchief, which was crimsoned. "Ow! Oh! My hat! Ow!"

"Some tea-party!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The tea-party was over. The crockery lay in fragments—cakes and tarts and buns, jams and jellies were trodden and trampled into a sticky mass among fragments of pottery. Coker of the Fifth had come and gone like a cyclone.

Wingate minor limped out of the study.

"Another time!" gasped Wharton.

"To-morrow!" said Nugent.

"Awfully sorry, kid!"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Wingate minor. And he limped away with his crimson handkerchief to his streaming nose.

Harry Wharton & Co.'s well-intentioned essay in the reform of Wingate minor had not been a success—though not, perhaps, such a ghastly failure as Coker's effort in the same direction.

Coker had crawled to his study in a state of collapse; when Potter and Greene came in, an hour later, Coker was still collapsed; extended feebly in the armchair, he gasped, he groaned, and he grunted. He gazed at Potter and Greene with a lacklustre eye as they came in.

"Did it go all right?" asked Potter blandly.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!"

"You've dealt with Wingate minor—what?" smiled Greene.

Coker gasped painfully.

"I'm done with that young cad! Wingate can look after his own dashed minor! I'm not going to take the job off his hands! Let him get bunked from the school, if he likes—in fact, the sooner the better—much better. Oh dear! Ow! What are you silly owls grinning at?"

Horace Coker, collapsed as he was, found just strength enough to hurl a cushion at Potter and Greene, and they retired from the study, still grinning. Coker had apparently forgotten his benevolent scheme of heaping coals of fire on Wingate's head; he was done with Wingate minor. And Harry Wharton & Co., as a matter of fact, were almost as fed-up as Coker with the Scapegrace of the Third.

THE END.

(Don't miss the next story in this fine series, entitled: "HIS BROTHER'S BURDEN!" It's a yarn that will be remembered for many a day.)

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CANNY! No matter how secretive are Ferrers Locke's plans, by some extraordinary means they leak out. In consequence the controlling power behind the evil work of the Bat is ever able to forestall the great detective's every move. But Ferrers Locke is a stickler!



A full-of-thrills detective story featuring Ferrers Locke, the private investigator, and his clever boy assistant, Jack Drake.

A Tight Corner!

ACCUSTOMED to act with promptitude, Ferrers Locke had no sooner caught sight of the curl of smoke trailing upwards from the aeroplane, than he leaped round. Almost subconsciously he had noticed as he darted into the tent, a pile of sand that had been dislodged when the poles supporting the structure had been placed in position.

Fortunately, beside the pile still rested a spade and bucket, and with feverish energy Locke began to fill the bucket with sand. Then he pitched the contents of the bucket on what seemed to be a pile of oil waste that was blazing fiercely.

Only too well the detective knew that possibly in seconds the petrol in the tanks might become ignited, and then all hope of saving the machine, that was of such vital importance to the success of the enterprise upon which he had embarked, would be gone for ever.

Equally swift to recognise the urgency of acting without delay, Jack, too, had dashed outside.

That the criminologist had secured the only bucket mattered little, for, wrenching off his jacket, Drake flung it on the ground, and began to fill it with sand. Then, dashing back with the garment converted into a kind of sack, he emptied the contents on the blaze.

Another bucketful from the detective, and then, without so much as a thought of the risk he was running, Jack had leaped into the cockpit of the burning plane, and was stamping out the flames.

Half blinded by the smoke, and almost cooked by the noxious fumes that rose, he stamped vigorously, shouting as he did so:

"More sand, guv'nor! More sand!"

The lad had anticipated the investigator's intentions by but a few seconds. Still, there was no time to argue, and though Locke would willingly have exchanged places with his plucky young assistant, to have attempted to do so would have been but to waste valuable time, and court disaster.

Fortunately, there was no need for

this, for in a very few moments, aided by the liberal supply of sand that Harry Dimsdale as well as the detective were heaping in, Jack had succeeded in stamping out the flames, and all danger was past.

Dripping with perspiration, blackened with smoke, and with many portions of the ragged garments he was wearing already smouldering, Jack Drake scrambled out.

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous private detective of Baker Street.

JACK DRAKE, his clever boy assistant.

INSPECTOR PYECROFT, a leading light of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard.

"THE CHIEF," a mysterious personage, who directs the coups of the Phantom Bat, the name given to the weird, inhuman-looking object, capable of flying like an aeroplane, about which, so far, very little is known by Scotland Yard.

HUSKY and the **SNARK**, two prominent members of the Chief's gang.

HARRY DIMSDALE, a friend of Ferrers Locke, who has invented an aeroplane that is noiseless in flight.

With every fresh appearance of the mysterious Bat comes news of a daring robbery. Ferrers Locke, who has taken the case in hand, is convinced that the headquarters of the gang known to be working behind the Bat is somewhere in the direction of the Chiltern Hills. The detective enlists the help of Dimsdale, who, with his noiseless aeroplane, sets out on the trail, and is later joined by Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake. The detective's plan is to visit all the likely haunts in the vicinity of Chesham for news of the Bat gang, and to that end the sleuth and his two colleagues adopt a gipsy disguise and travel around the countryside in caravans.

An improvised hangar is rigged up for the purpose of assembling the aeroplane which has been taken along in parts. Suddenly, from the direction of this hangar, comes the sound of a scuffle, and Locke and his friends, darting forward, find Tom, the driver of the caravan, at grips with a stranger. The latter makes good his escape, however, but not before he has set fire to the aeroplane.

(Now read on.)

"It's all right, guv'nor!" he panted. "It's—"

His words trailed off, and, placing his hand to his head, Drake reeled, and would have fallen, had not Ferrers Locke's outstretched arms encircled him.

A liberal supply of water with which his face was bathed, soon revived the plucky lad.

"Awfully sorry, guv'nor! Didn't mean to be such an ass as to go off like that!" he muttered, with an attempt at a grin.

"Wonder you were able to stick it as long as you did, my lad," came the encouraging response. "The fumes were enough to choke a black! Thanks to you, all danger is over. Come along back to the caravan, and I'll find you something in the medicine-chest that'll put you on your legs again before you can say 'Jack Robinson.'"

"Suppose you'll leave the plane to cool down before you attempt to ascertain what damage has been done?" Locke asked, turning to Dimsdale.

"You bet. Fortunately, I've got my first-aid case with me, so while you're looking after Jack, I'll see about strapping up our man's head, for he has had a nasty crack; then I'll join you."

"Better not," interrupted Locke hastily. "You two stay with the plane, in case of a second attempt. Meanwhile, I'll have the nag harnessed and draw the old painted tub up alongside the tent."

"My yes; sorry I didn't have that done to start with," Dimsdale grunted, as he moved to where their driver, who, too dazed to have been of any assistance, lay huddled up on the ground just as he had fallen.

In a remarkably short space of time, Jack, invigorated by the draught the criminologist had obtained from his medicine-chest, was, as he expressed it, "as fit as a fiddle," and expostulated loudly because his chief refused to allow him to assist in harnessing the horse to the caravan, preparatory to moving it alongside the tent containing the plane.

Ferrers Locke, however, was adamant on that point.

"You just rest a bit, my lad," he ordered, and, knowing that it would be

less to attempt to argue the point, Jack was forced, though very much against the grain, to submit.

A short search, and the wanted animal was discovered contentedly browsing some hundred yards or so away, with the result that in less than half an hour the gaily painted vehicle with its superstructure of baskets and brooms, was safely planted alongside the tent, where Harry Dimsdale and the man Tom, with his head neatly bound up, were awaiting his arrival.

"Able to learn anything from Tom?" Locke asked eagerly, as he dismounted from the shaft on which he had been sitting.

"Not much," Dimsdale replied. "But he's quite able now to tell you himself all there is to tell."

"Which isn't much, after all, sir," the driver added, as the airman paused. "Y'see, as I 'adn't much to do, I'd just pitched myself down in the shade, when I 'eats a sort of scrapin' noise. Didn't take much notice at first, but when it goes on, I ups and goes inter the tent ter see what's 'up, and then I seed the bloke skulkin' on the other side o' the plane."

"Well?"
"Thinkin' most likely he was a chap who'd nosed in out o' curiosity like, I 'eats at 'im, an' tells 'im to shift, which 'e did sharp. Then, just as 'e's shanting, I spots a wisp of smoke curling up, an' you bet I were on 'im like a load of bricks, an' 'e wouldn't 'a' got away neither, only 'e must 'a' 'ad something in 'is 'and when 'e landed me."

"Something in his hand?" Jack queried.

"Must 'a' 'ad, bless you! I've stopped a few punches in my time, but I never stopped one like that afore; fair knocked 'ars out of me."

"Shouldn't be surprised," Ferrers Locke commented. "Knuckle-duster most likely. What sort of man was he?"

"Oh, a bit of a stumpy bloke, sir—though I 'spose you spotted that when you comed up—with a great big bull-neck

that 'ad a dirty yellow scarf knotted round it."

"A dirty yellow scarf!" Jack blurted out. "Say, had he rather a flat nose and prominent eyes, and with two of his front teeth missing?"

"Got 'im to the life, mister," the man agreed, whilst Ferrers Locke, whipping round, shot a swift glance at his assistant.

"That's the man, guv'nor—that's the man!" shouted Drake excitedly. "My hat, we're right in the middle of the pack now, and no mistake!"

"Then you may as well let me know what man you refer to," said Locke.

"Oh, I'd forgotten for the moment I hadn't told you, guv'nor!" said Drake. "Why, I'd bet my boots this bull-necked fellow who's lost some of his teeth is the shorter of the two men I shadowed from the shop in Westminster Bridge Road."

"I can quite believe it," the investigator remarked, after a moment's pause. "And it only goes to prove that the crook we're up against has an unhappy knack of forestalling us."

"Then you don't mean to say—"

Ferrers Locke laughed grimly.

"My dear Jack, surely the smoke fumes haven't clouded your brain? You can't possibly imagine that the aeroplane catching fire was an accident?"

"Of course not, guv'nor. A pile of burning oil-waste couldn't get in it by accident. But, oh, dash it, it seems impossible that they could have found out already!"

"Then you think the merchants we are out to corner know that you are here, and for what purpose the plane is intended?" asked Harry Dimsdale.

"There's no other solution to the problem. That they've got spies everywhere has been proved. All the same, there's a bad leakage of news on our side somewhere."

"But how could that happen?" asked Drake, his brows contracted in a puzzled frown. "Every precaution was taken, and beyond the four of us here—"

"Not forgetting Pyecroft!" Locke interrupted.

"Pyecroft! Why he is, or was, in Paris."

"Yes, I know; but I wrote him before we set out telling him where he could come across me."

"Didn't know you knew his address, guv'nor."

"I didn't. I sent the letter on to the Yard, to be forwarded."

"To the Yard! Well, it couldn't have been tampered with there, surely?"

The detective pursed his lips thoughtfully; then, after granting something inaudible, abruptly turned the conversation.

"Well, whatever's happened, we're not getting any nearer the end of the trail by sitting here talking; so if you're feeling fit, Jack, we'll sling on our packs and make a start."

"Right-ho, guv'nor!" Drake responded cheerily.

It was at once arranged that Dimsdale and Tom should at once set to work to get the aircraft again in working order. Meanwhile, the Baker Street detective and his assistant, each with a basketful of odds-and-ends, started on their tour of investigation. Ferrers Locke had already consulted a local map and directory, so that it was not long before he struck into a long, winding lane, on each side of which, and at some considerable distance apart from each other, were some old-fashioned houses.

With varying success, so far as the sale of their wares went, some dozen were in turn visited, though at not one of them could the criminologist obtain anything in the nature of a clue that would in any way assist to unravel the baffling mystery.

"Things aren't panning out great, guv'nor," Jack grunted, with a grimace, as, after their last call, they had been ordered to leave in terms that were more forcible than polite.

"In a stunt like this, Jack, one never knows one's luck," was Locke's cryptic reply. "Anyhow, we'll have a shot at the next house; and then, if there's nothing doing, we'll sample the contents of our luncheon-basket, which I



Before the detective could disentangle himself the hound had borne Jack Drake to the ground. But ere its sharp fangs could do any damage, Ferrers Locke's gun spoke. (See page 24.)

promise you contains something better than the dry crust and rind of cheese that is supposed to constitute the tramp's midday meal."

"And I certainly sha'n't be sorry to see it," the youngster laughed. "Though I guess I'll have to wait, as I don't see anything in the shape of a building in sight, except those rusty iron gates half off their hinges on the opposite side."

"Which we're going over to have a look at, for I noticed between the trees, as I passed, a building of some considerable size not so very far back from the road."

Ferrers Locke glanced round as he approached the huge rusted gates, with eyes that did not fail to take in every detail; then, arriving before them, he slung down his pack and seated himself on one of those old-time stone mounting-blocks that are even now to be occasionally met with.

Knowing that his chief had good reasons for acting as he did, Jack instantly followed his example, when the detective, drawing a filthy-looking clay pipe from his pocket, stuffed it with tobacco, and then, producing a match, looked round as though to find some sheltered spot in which to obtain a light.

Slowly rising, he approached one of the stone pillars supporting the gates, beyond which stretched a long, winding drive, bordered by masses of undergrowth and weeds that seemed as though untouched by the hand of man for years.

Striking his match on the stonework, he lighted his pipe; and then, puffing at it contentedly, rejoined his companion. Picking up his load, he gave the order to move on.

For some ten or fifteen yards the two sleuths slouched on in silence, till at length, speaking softly, Locke said:

"Going to have a look inside those gates, lad."

"Guessed so, guv'nor!"

"Why?"

"Well, for the last mile we've been following the track of a motor-car, and now that we've passed the gates, although they look as though they hadn't been opened for years, the track ends, which shows that the car must have passed through—and not so very long ago. Then, again, you evidently spotted something, or you wouldn't have been so long lighting your pipe."

"Right both times," the detective said approvingly. "What I spotted was simply this. As we neared the gate I was certain someone dodged back amongst the bushes to avoid being seen. Nor was I wrong; for, although screened from view, the individual, who had been using a rake, had incautiously left part of the instrument protruding through the grass."

"Using a rake in that wilderness?"

"Just so. You noticed that the motor tracks ended at the gate; and I can now tell you why there were not any signs of traffic on the drive, for the simple reason that the loose stones of which it is composed had been raked over so as to keep up the appearance of utter desolation."

"Gee! What a wheeze! Sets one thinking, doesn't it?"

"And, what's more, although those gates at first glance look as though they hadn't been opened for ages, the hinges have been well oiled. So that now that we're out of sight we'll find a place to get through, as I'm a bit curious to have a closer look at the building itself."

It was not long before a spot was discovered where the weather-stained

boards forming the fencing round the grounds could be moved on one side; and, this done, Locke and Jack, after depositing their loads amidst the bracken on the bank, slipped through.

It was, indeed, a wilderness in which they found themselves—one tangled mass of greenery, through which progress, however slow, was difficult.

"Make for that opening on the right," Locke whispered, pointing to a spot where the vegetation was less dense. "I'll keep straight ahead. Get as near a view of the house itself as you can without being seen, and then return to the opening in the fence."

A silent nod, and the lad glided off, being almost instantly lost to view, whilst Locke with equal caution proceeded in the direction he had indicated.

For several moments he forced his way through the undergrowth, then suddenly paused and stiffened as the deep baying of a large hound caught his ear.

Whether the animal had been purposely loosed, or whether by instinct it had detected the presence of strangers, he neither knew nor cared; but he must get in touch with Jack at once, for that deep baying boded no good for anyone who should cross the creature's path.

Swerving round, he began, at the risk of detection, forcing his way in the direction in which he expected to find his young assistant, the ominous sounds each second growing plainer and plainer. Then, as he literally hurled himself through a tangled mass of entwined creepers, what was almost a roar greeted his ears—a roar followed by a shout in a voice he knew well.

Bursting through the creepers, it was to see Jack, with his back against a tree, making a desperate attempt, with a broken branch that he had evidently snatched up, to keep at bay a huge boarhound, which, with distended jaws, was making frantic efforts to tear him down.

The Watcher!

THROWING caution to the winds, the detective uttered a wild shout; for before he could disentangle his coat from the brambles that still clung to him the hound, with a terrific spring and by sheer weight, had borne the youngster to the ground.

Another second and its sharp fangs would have met in his throat, but before that second sped Locke's automatic had barked.

A wild, canine yell mingled with the report, and, leaping upwards, the huge beast crashed sideways amongst the trodden leaves, to roll over, and, after one or two spasmodic jerks, lie still.

"Thank goodness I was in time, my lad!" Locke breathed, dashing up in time to see Jack scrambling to his feet.

"Bit hot while it lasted, guv'nor!" the lad panted. "Made sure the brute had got me—and he's as big as a young lion, too!" he added, glancing at the dead animal. "If it hadn't been for you I'd—"

Ferrers Locke laid his hand affectionately on his assistant's shoulder.

"Tut-tut!" he replied. "But come, my lad, we'd better make ourselves scarce, for the shot and the row the brute made couldn't possibly have passed unnoticed; and at the present moment publicity is the last thing I desire."

"Wonder we haven't had a crowd along before this," Jack said thoughtfully, as he turned to make his way

back to the space through which he had entered. "As far as I can hear, there isn't a sound."

Ferrers Locke paused and listened intently. The lad had spoken correctly. Beyond the rustling of the leaves, the light breeze and the distant low of cattle, not a sound penetrated the clump of trees which screened them from view.

"Strange!" he muttered. "The place certainly isn't deserted, for I caught sight of that fellow with the rake. Can't make it out," he at length remarked to the lad at his side. "No sound except the wind in the trees, and, though—'Sh! 'Sh!'"

Bending forward, Locke again listened intently. Surely the light wind that was blowing could not account for the rustling amidst the boughs?

True, he had heard a similar sound before; but then leagues of ocean had separated him from England, and the sound had been created by the passing from bough to bough of some ferocious denizens of the forest. But here, but a few miles from the great metropolis, such an idea was absurd, and yet—

With eyes that were narrowed into mere slits Locke stepped on one side with the intention of peering upwards, where the tracery of foliage above him was less dense; and well was it for him that he made the movement, for even as he did so some bright object streaked past him like a flash of light, and quivering in the sapling against which it had struck was a long, keen-bladed knife.

One glance in the direction from whence the missile had come, and the investigator caught a fleeting glimpse of a squat body, and a pair of piercing eyes that seemed to glower at him from the setting of foliage. And then swinging itself from branch to branch, with incredible speed, the hideous object had vanished almost before the detective had been aware of its presence.

"My gosh, guv'nor, that was a near thing!" Jack shouted, as he sprang forward. "Where on earth did it come from?"

Ferrers Locke silently pointed upwards.

"We're in the land of mystery, my lad," he said at length, "and the surroundings are decidedly unhealthy. I would be foolhardy to stay any longer."

Snatching the blade from the bark at which it was buried, he gingerly wrapped it in his handkerchief, and thrusting it into his pocket, turned on his heel, motioning Jack to follow.

Without further interruption they gained the opening in the fence through which they had entered, and passing through, turned their faces toward where their temporary camp was pitched.

Burning as he was with curiosity, Jack Drake refrained from asking any questions, for the detective was striding along with compressed lips and knut brows, though with eyes and ears that were on the alert. Nor was it till half the distance had been traversed, that, jerking up his head, he laughed softly.

"And what d'you make of it all, guv'nor?" the lad asked eagerly, feeling that he was at liberty to speak.

"That we are nearer the solution of this mystery than I anticipated, Jack. I am convinced that the key that will unlock the secret is to be found in that half-ruined house, the grounds of which we have just quitted."

"Then you saw who threw the knife, guv'nor?"

"I certainly saw a form swinging itself from branch to branch; but so grotesque that it could hardly be described as human."



As the two watchers resting in the shade of the caravan—each buried in his own thoughts—puffed at their pipes, a human head rose from amidst a tangle of bracken and coarse grasses. The triangular scar on the face proved its owner to be the Shinto Priest whom Ferrers Locke had encountered in the secret temple at Lambeth. (See page 26.)

"You—you don't mean the Bat?"

Ferrers Locke shrugged his shoulder.

"Speculation is idle, my lad," he answered. "That you were set upon by the dog, might be but chance, for we were trespassers; but the knife—well, that's another matter. It was a deliberate attempt to take my life, which again convinces me that despite every precaution, my identity is known. And it was a Japanese knife—"

"Japanese!"

"Yes, a single glance at the weapon told me that and— Ah, there's a small stream of water! Soak your handkerchief in it, and bring it here."

Wondering what was coming, Jack darted to where a thin stream of water trickled down the bank bordering the road, before losing itself in the slime-encrusted ditch below. In a couple of seconds he had returned with his handkerchief dripping wet.

"Now, we'll see," Locke remarked, producing the weapon that had been launched at him, and with great care removing the folds of linen in which it had been wrapped. "See," he added, holding it out for inspection, "the blade is as bright as if freshly burnished. Now give me the wet handkerchief." And taking it from his assistant's hand, the investigator laid the blade on the wet material.

He removed it again almost on the instant, when to Jack's intense surprise the steel which had previously shone with lustre was now of a deep copper hue.

"What—what's the—" he commenced, then broke off with: "By jingo, guv'nor, I've got you, it—it's—"

"Poisoned," Locke supplied the missing word. "The faintest scratch with its keen edge would mean instant death, for it has been steeped in a decoction far more deadly than the wourali poison,

used by natives for the points of their arrows and darts."

The lad scratched his ear reflectively.

"My word, but it's rummy how things pan out! I little guessed that night when I went on the roof at Baker Street to overhaul our aerial that it would bring us into a network of devilment—like this."

"Perhaps it's just as well that we can't see into the future," Locke remarked sagely. "Anyhow, here we are, and, as you say, surrounded by as neat a network of devilment as I've ever yet come across. A network that we're going to split to pieces, or—"

Glancing up, the speaker broke off abruptly, whilst Jack, following the direction of his chief's gaze, emitted a whistle of surprise.

"See!" the lad stammered. "See who it is, guv'nor?"

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"Not much chance of mistaking that fairy-like form, even at this distance," he remarked, for striding towards them, mopping his brow as he advanced, was Inspector Pyecroft.

"Hallo, Pyecroft, old chap, glad to see you!" exclaimed Locke heartily, as he gripped the police official's hand on meeting. "Little expected to see you!"

"Oh, I got your letter, Locke, so thought I'd come straight along directly. I—I'd—"

"Got back from Paris," Locke suggested, with a sly smile. "Well, what luck over there?"

The inspector reddened slightly.

"Cut it out, Locke; there's a good fellow," he jerked out. "I admit, between ourselves, you know, that I was drawn over there on a fool's errand, though even now, how it was worked I'm hanged if I can see."

"What was worked?"

"Why, the finger-prints on the glass case at the count's place. They were genuine enough."

"Were they? Now, look here, old man; if I had access to your collection of finger-prints up at the Yard, and had a pocket camera, it would be a very simple thing for me to get a photo of any prints I wanted, wouldn't it?"

"Most certainly; but what on earth are you driving at?"

"Ever see the 'Daily Mirror'?" Locke asked, apparently irrelevantly.

The inspector glared.

"Look here, don't try to be funny!" he snapped.

"Nothing further from my thoughts; only making a suggestion," Locke replied calmly. "Anyhow, the pictures in the 'Mirror' are reproduced on the paper from photos, are they not? Well, what is to prevent anyone with a knowledge of photogravure, from reproducing a photo of finger-prints on to a sheet of glass? However, Pyecroft, that's not in my province. Simply bear it in mind, old man, and, by the way, when you've time, ascertain for sure, how many hands my letter to you passed through before you received it."

"Eh?" spluttered Pyecroft. "You surely don't imagine that there's anything wrong up at headquarters, it's too absurd!"

"Absurd or not, I'm convinced of it. Beyond writing you to say where you could find us, there was not a soul in the world who had the least intimation of what my plans were. Yet, on arrival here, we find members of the gang we are up against, waiting for us. So there is only one inference to be drawn as to where their information was obtained. But, anyhow, that's a thing of the past,

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and we've plenty to do, without bothering over what's done with. So come along back to camp, and we'll talk things over there."

A sharp walk brought the trio to the caravan, where, to Locke's inward satisfaction, he learned that the aeroplane was again in working order, and ready for use at any moment, and where some much-needed refreshment was awaiting them.

During the meal the investigator narrated in detail to his companions, the various incidents of the day, leaving Harry Dimsdale to enlighten the inspector regarding the attempt made to wreck the plane.

"And what do you propose doing?" Pycroft queried at the conclusion of explanations. "I should say our best plan would be to see the inspector in charge at Chesham, and arrange for him to bring over a posse of plain-clothes men, and raid that house in the lane."

"On what grounds?" Locke asked.

"Why—or the attempt on your life." "Yes, with the certainty of finding the birds flown. No, Pycroft, with the means of obtaining information that the gang undoubtedly has, our proposed raid would be known before your men were half-way here. In this case it's a matter of diamond cut diamond."

"Then what's your idea?" the police official asked.

"My idea's this. The moon doesn't rise to-night till close on midnight. Now, as soon as it's dark enough to suit our purpose, Dimsdale will fly the plane to a meadow opposite the building. You can guarantee that this invention of yours effectually silences the engine, can't you?" he asked, turning to the airman. "For unless such is the case, we shall have to hit on some other idea."

"She'll fly with no more sound than a moth would make flapping its wings," Dimsdale assured them proudly.

"Good! That's one point settled. Now, leaving Dimsdale and myself out of it, there's three of you—you, Pycroft, Jack, and our man Tom. Now, you three can easily get under cover somewhere outside the grounds, so as to be ready for any emergency."

"Oh, we can do that right enough, guv'nor," Jack agreed. "But what's going to be your stunt?"

"Simply this. As soon as you're in position, I shall go up with Dimsdale. We'll circle the place first, so as to make sure of our bearings; and then I've every hope of his being able to land me on the roof."

"On the roof!" And Inspector Pycroft fairly goggled, as he repeated the words. "Why, man alive, it—it's—"

"Not so impossible as you imagine. I had a good look at the building from a distance, and I'm practically certain that a large portion of the roof is flat. Anyhow, I'm going to have a shot at it."

"And suppose you do gain the roof?" the police official remarked hesitatingly.

"Be guided by circumstances," came the cool reply. "You see, it's not the least use our lounging round here indefinitely. Unfortunately, the gang became aware of my original intentions, namely, to lie low till the mysterious Bat appeared, and then going up in the plane, to hang on its trail till we'd tracked it to its lair. Otherwise, they wouldn't have attempted to wreck the machine. No, our only course is to strike the first blow, and, with luck, we may be able to do that to-night."

As may be imagined, some considerable time was occupied in discussing the

various minor details in connection with the Baker Street detective's daring exploit. Details that were, however, at length settled to everyone's satisfaction.

Then, as Pycroft and the man Tom emerged from the caravan, to take the first spell of mounting guard, the others settled down for a rest, to prepare themselves for the arduous duties of the coming night.

Some ten minutes passed in silence as the two watchers, resting in the shade of the vehicle, each buried in his own thoughts, puffed at their pipes. Then, with an almost imperceptible movement, a human head rose from amidst a tangle of bracken and coarse grasses growing on the bank against which the caravan had been backed. And in the face of the watcher was a triangular scar that marked the man as the Shinto priest whom Locke had encountered in the secret temple at Lambeth.

And the unseen watcher, by means of the position he occupied, had been enabled, through the open door and windows of the caravan, to hear practically everything that had passed.

His thin lips parted in a mocking smile, as, finding the coast clear, he again dropped amongst the covering of undergrowth, to worm his way through it as swiftly and silently as a snake.

The Chief Acts!

FOR many yards the man with the scarred cheek wriggled his way amongst the covering of giant weeds and grasses before attempting to resume an upright position, a feat that to a European would have proved of no little difficulty. But to the sinewy native, with his forest training, it was a matter of comparative ease.

At length, gaining a spot where he had hidden the outer garments he had temporarily discarded, he rose to his feet.

A harsh, guttural laugh escaped his lips as he glanced back at the caravan; then, forcing his way through a hedge, he sprinted across the open with the speed of a hare.

In like manner, several fields were traversed, till, bounding over a fence, he landed almost opposite the rusted iron gates that earlier in the day had attracted Jack's attention.

Swinging them open, he passed within, to close them carefully behind him. Placing his fingers on his lips, he then emitted a long-drawn-out, plaintive cry, three times repeated, and followed this up by rapidly plunging amidst the undergrowth.

A few seconds later, and he had gained a small side door in the moss-encrusted wall of what had—at one time—been a magnificent mansion.

As he approached the door was cautiously opened a few inches. Then the custodian of the portal, apparently satisfied as to the identity of his visitor, opened it sufficiently wide to permit the fellow to slip through.

Passing along a narrow, stone-flagged passage the priest arrived at a low-ceilinged, oak-panelled room, the windows of which, shuttered and curtained, necessitated the place being lighted by an oil lamp suspended from a beam.

Two men, seated at a table, on which were scattered some greasy cards and bottles, glowered up sharply as he strode in.

"Hullo, Loa Haing!" greeted him then, an individual wearing a particularly pronounced check suit. "Who up? Didn't expect to see you yet."

"Will the chief be here to-night?" the man asked, ignoring the remark.

"Not that I know. Wish he was. I'm sick of sticking in this dog's hole only we've got orders not to leave."

"No wuss off than the rest of Husky," the second man, a thick fellow, with a yellow scarf twisted around his throat, chimed in.

"But what the dickens d'you want the chief for?" he asked, addressing Loa Haing.

"But of news that will interest him the Jap said sharply. "Fero Locke's going to try and land on the roof of this place to-night from his aeroplane."

"Going to do what?"

"Didn't say he was going to do but he means to have a try."

With an oath, Husky swept cards from the table as he sprang to his feet.

"Here, you image! Did you hear? What d'you think of that?" he shouted.

A cackling laugh from a corner of the room came as an answer, emerging from the shade, the dwarf to whom the words had been addressed entered the circle of light from the lamp.

"He, he, he!" laughed the diminutive creature. "You're all of you scared of this Ferrers Locke!"

"Scared be hanged! But he ain't a man; he's a devil, that's what he is. And you ain't got no call to shaver. Even you missed him with your knife. I tell you the man isn't human—no Bonsor!"

"Quiet, both of you!" the thick-set man growled. "We've got to let the chief know, that's certain. Husky reckon you'd better get up in the tower and do the trick, an' I'll have a squint at the dynamo, 'case it's wanted though I'm thinkin' it isn't likely."

"He, he, he!" Again the dwarf chuckled, swaying his ungainly head from side to side. "If you three had been here this morning, instead of gad-ding about, 'gainst orders, he wouldn't have got away, let alone have shot the dog!" Then, suddenly altering his tone to one of authority, he rasped out: "Get up aloft at once, you fool, and send the message!"

"Yes, I know. But where is the chief?"

"Station No. 4 is sure to find him. And you, Bonsor, get down amongst your cranks and piston-rods, an'—an' see there's no fear of a hitch anywhere!"

With muttered growls and angry glances, the two men moved off to execute these orders, well knowing that even should they wish to do so, it would be folly to attempt to disobey, for, with the temper of an incarnate fiend, and of herculean strength, the dwarf was no one whom it was advisable to thwart.

So while Bonsor slouched off to some lower regions, Husky, passing to a small door at the end of the passage, swiftly mounted a time-worn spiral staircase, terminating in a small upper-chamber by a narrow window. Here he seated himself before a strange conglomeration of valves, ivory dials, and ebony knobs affixed to the wall, and gazed at them reflectively.

"Let's see! Station No. 4!" he muttered. Then slipping on a pair of headphones, he commenced to tap rapidly at

a leading-key that would transmit the wireless call-sign crackling and spitting into space.

Several times this operation was repeated without result, till at length an answering call came back; when Husky, finding he was in touch with his chief, explained as rapidly as possible the information that had been brought in by Loa Haing.

A few moments more, and, dashing down the stairs, the operator burst into the room where his rascally comrades were assembled.

"Got on with the chief, and he's coming along at once!" he exclaimed.

"He, he, he!" Again the dwarf chuckled as he rubbed his hands together. "Now we'll see some sport. Now, Mr. Ferrers Locke, we've got you! Try to get on the roof, would you? If the chief's coming along, you'll find a surprise waiting you, if you make the attempt."

"Anything fresh come through from the Snark while I was out?" Husky suddenly demanded. "That'll be one of the first things the chief'll want to know."

"No, nothing!" growled the man known as Bonsor. "Last we heard from him was when 'e got 'old of the letter 'ere Locke sent to Pyecroft."

"Pity Locke isn't as easily foiled as the cop," grunted Husky. "Thought he might have bitten at those finger-prints."

"Which 'e didn't, hang 'im, though it was a smart stunt! Anyhow, now I know for cert that the chief's comin' along, I'll 'ave another squint at my things, s'elp me! I'd be in for a rough time if they wer'n't in order! 'Ow long'll it be afore 'e gets 'ere—eh?"

"Can't say. He's at Station No. 4, and, as far as I know, that's not more than ten or twelve miles off; so that if he hops in his car at once, he may be here any minute."

Husky's prediction was not far wrong, for scarcely half an hour had passed before a magnificent limousine, swinging into the lane, pulled up with a jerk before the old mansion.

Barely waiting for it to stop, a tall, well-dressed man sprang out, and, after a swift glance round, entered the gates and strode swiftly up the drive; the vehicle instantly continuing its journey and vanishing down the winding road.

Passing through the midst of his subordinates with a curt nod, the master-criminal instantly mounted the same stairs that Husky had done on his way to dispatch the wireless message. But on arriving at the top he turned in the opposite direction, and, producing a key from his pocket, unlocked a door.

At first glance the room which he entered appeared empty, but on touching a particular spot in the wainscoting a large portion of the wall slid on one side. This revealed a deep recess beyond, an arrangement of levers, not unlike those to be seen in any railway signal-box, whilst above was an assortment of wheels of various sizes, and what appeared to be gauges.

For several minutes the crook busied himself with the various levers and handles before him, and then, apparently satisfied that the complicated mechanism was in order, touched a bell-push—a summons that was almost instantly responded to by the appearance of Husky.

"Tell Bonsor to go to his post at

once, and remain there to await instructions!" he snapped. "Stay! You said this cursed detective was going to make the attempt from the field facing the building?"

"That's what Loa Haing reported."

"And his report is to be trusted. Tell him to take up his position in the hedge. He's keen eyes, and he's to signal directly anything appears; and you—yes, you and the dwarf—can remain in the room below, in case you're wanted. Now go, and see that everything's done as I've ordered. This time Ferrers Locke is playing into my hands, and he'll find that I can strike—and the blow will not be a pleasant one," the speaker added, with a cruel laugh.

Little dreaming that once again his plans had become known to his enemy, Ferrers Locke, as soon as he deemed it dark enough to risk a move, started Harry Dimsdale with the aeroplane to await him at the meadow, as arranged.

He noted how, with some satisfaction, the graceful aircraft left the ground, and circled overhead without the faintest sound.

Having seen his comrade depart, the next move was for Locke to see his allies posted, and then, accompanied by Jack, Inspector Pyecroft, and Tom, he cautiously made his way towards the grounds commanding the building that was his objective.

Apparently unobserved, the little party, as silently as shadows, passed the great iron gates, and then secreting his

(Continued on back page.)

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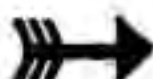
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THE PHANTOM BAT!

(Continued from previous page.)

colleagues at the spot he had discovered in the morning, where the fencing could be easily moved. Locke, after a few whispered words, stole away.

To gain Dimsdale, who was awaiting him in the field, occupied but little time, and Locke soon clambered into his seat.

A noiseless movement with the levers, the propeller began to revolve, then, after gliding forward, in a few seconds the aeroplane rose gracefully from the ground: though even as it did so the hoarse croak of a raven rang out, causing Locke to glance round sharply,

for there seemed something sinister in those croaking notes at such an unusual hour.

But Ferrers Locke's ears were not the only ones that had caught those harsh sounds. The dark-haired man, silently waiting in the tower, had heard them as well. With one stride he was beside a tube leading up through the roof, and after thrusting some object through an opening in its base, he found a candle.

For the space of a couple of seconds nothing happened, and then from far up in the sky came a faint report, and instantly the country for miles around was lighted up in a brilliant glare of white light—a glare that not only plainly showed up the graceful aeroplane, soar-

ing upwards, but the two forms seen within it.

With a bound, the watcher in tower had gained the recess. A movement of his fingers, and a couple of wheels were partially revolved.

And then, with a wild, triumphant laugh echoing from his lips, he set one of the levers and wrenched it down, causing the very tower itself to vibrate with the invisible forces of destruction—that the super-crook had loosed upon a dreaded enemy.

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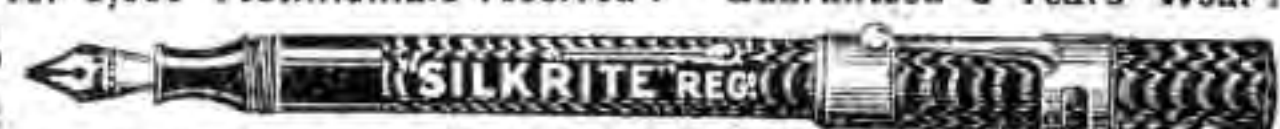
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