

SCHOOLBOY v. MASTER! ASTOUNDING REVELATIONS!

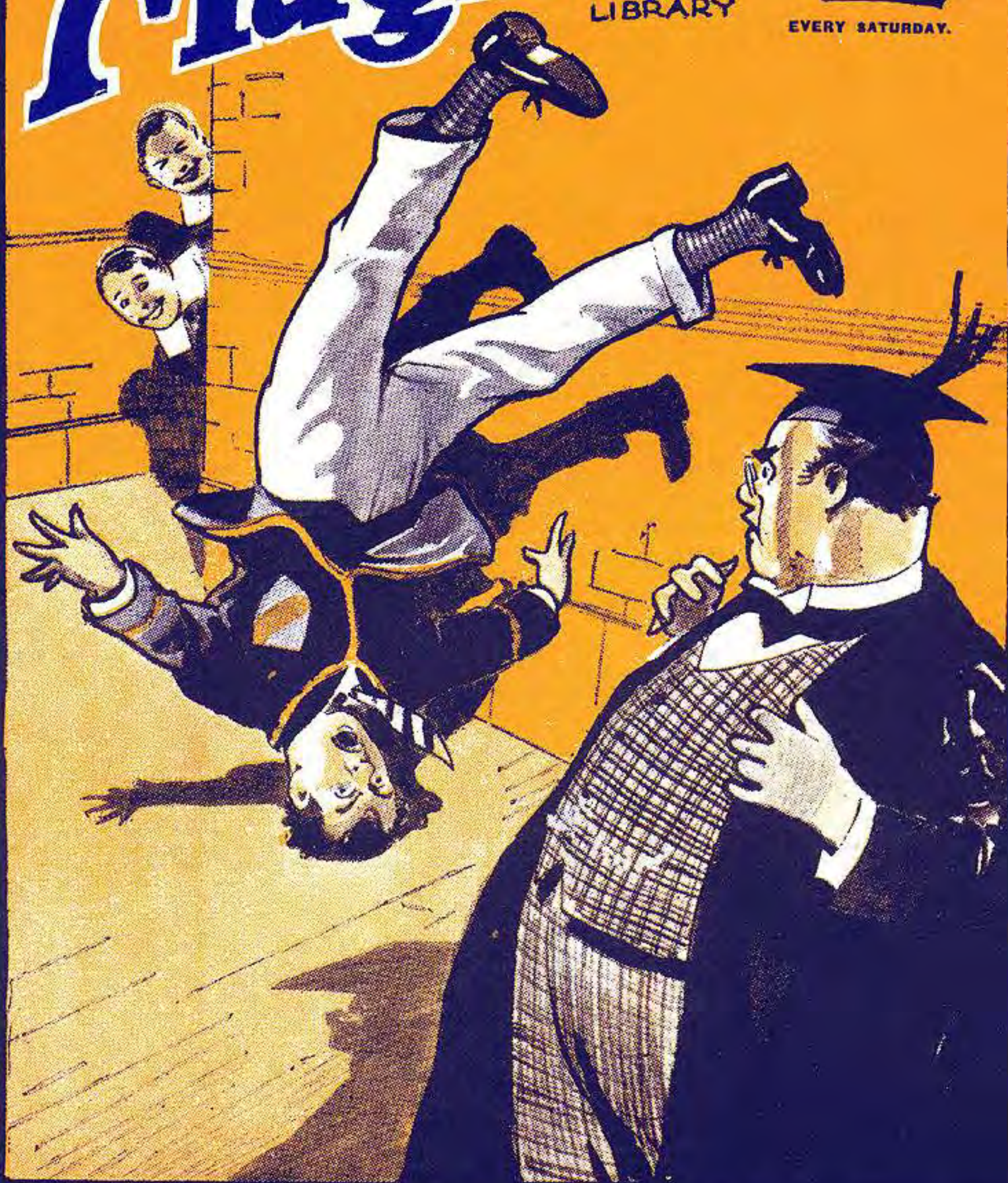
(See full story inside)

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The Magnet 2^d

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EVERY SATURDAY.



COKER, THE CONTORTIONIST!

(An amusing incident from "THE REBEL OF THE FIFTH!" this week's grand yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.,—the Chums of Greyfriars.)

Our Special Football Feature!



STARS AND THEIR METHODS!

This week "Referee" runs the rule over Roy Goodall, the famous English International full-back of Huddersfield Town.



IT has often been suggested that big football would be all the better if there were a birth or residential qualification rule similar to that obtaining in County cricket. You probably know that a cricketer cannot play for any county unless he was born in that county or had lived three years within its borders.

The big football clubs, as you know, are recruited from all parts of the country, and the suggestion is that a man should only play for the club in, or nearest to, his native town, or the town in which he has lived for three years at least.

I am not going to drag readers of the **MAGNET** into a long discussion on the merits or demerits of this proposal. You can think it out in your spare moments if you like. But what I do want to say, however, is that if there had been such a rule in force in football many of the most tragic stories would never have been told; tragic stories, that is, from one point of view or another.

A Gem Passed Unnoticed!

The history of the game is simply full of stories of lads who have been overlooked by the big club of their native town, and have left home to find football fame elsewhere. A case in point is that of Roy Goodall, the present full-back of Huddersfield Town, and as bonnie a player as you would find anywhere.

Roy was born in Sheffield, and, as you know, there are two first-class football clubs in this centre of cutlery. But the officials there are not quite as sharp as they might be, or, at any rate, they have sometimes allowed other clubs to cut the ground from under their feet. As a boy growing into a man, Roy played for Dronfield Woodhouse, a works side in Sheffield. This was in 1921, and he told me that he had then little or no idea of doing anything else except working for his living in the ordinary way.

He loved the game, of course, and played it for love. One day it so happened that a man connected with Huddersfield Town saw Dronfield Woodhouse play a match, and was much struck with the play of the right-back.

"Wouldn't you like to play for Huddersfield as a professional?" was the question put to Goodall after the game was over.

"I hadn't thought of playing as a professional for any club," said Roy; "but if I did I should like to play for one of the Sheffield teams."

When the boy—he was then only eighteen years of age—was asked whether the Sheffield clubs had wanted him to play for them he had to reply in the negative. The upshot of it was that Roy signed on as a "pro" for Huddersfield.

field Town. And the gem which the Sheffield clubs had passed unnoticed, not only got into the Huddersfield Town first team in a couple of years, but in three years he played for England as a full-back.

That sort of experience—and it can be told of many players—makes me think sometimes that the managers of the big clubs go wandering up and down the country looking everywhere for players except on their own doorstep.

A Cool Head in Emergency!

Fair of complexion, and still wearing the same boyish smile which he had when I first saw him, Goodall comes as near being the ideal full-back as any defender of the present day. He is ideally built for the job, for he just touches the bar at six feet when he is in his socks, and if you set the scales for him he can just make them bump at eleven stone. Actually, he doesn't look as heavy as that, but this merely means that he isn't carrying an ounce of superfluous weight.



ROY GOODALL,
who, in the intervals of training for football, indulges in the royal and ancient game of golf.

Let us imagine we are watching him in a typical game, and trying to learn some lessons from his play. He is the sort who can safely be taken as an example.

When he has time in which to make his clearance kick he doesn't just bang the ball up the field as hard as he possibly can. Watch him pick out the forward to whom he intends it to go, and watch also how he makes sure of the right direction, not by kicking with his toe, but by using his instep to the ball. He drives that ball low, too, which is better than sending it up in the air where the wind may catch it and send it to any old place. All my young readers who play at full-back should follow Goodall with that low-driven ball. The wind isn't always strong, but if you drive the ball low when there isn't a wind you will



drive it low automatically when there is a wind.

Then watch him as he goes to tackle. There is none of the wild lunge about the way he goes for an opponent. He tackles while trying to keep his balance. There is no full-back easier to dodge than the one who just throws himself at an opponent. The opponent draws the ball back, steps aside, and the flying full-back goes full length on the ground, while the player with the ball continues his career down the field. But though Roy doesn't throw himself at an opponent, he makes up his mind to get the ball when he goes for it, and that's the way—the only way—to get it.

Not Worth the Risk!

There are full-backs who still think that it pays to play the offside game. Goodall doesn't. I have seen many a match in which Huddersfield Town have been concerned recently, and in some of

(Continued on page 28.)

A BOAST AND WHAT CAME OF IT! Never in all the history of Greyfriars School has a Formmaster's "claret" been tapped by a pupil, and none but a fool like Horace Coker, who must have got left somehow when brains were served out, would ever boast of doing such a thing. Anyway, the dirty deed is done and, as is only to be expected, the blame falls on the shoulders of the boaster. But, alack and alas, Coker didn't do it!

THE REBEL OF THE FIFTH!



A magnificent long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, with Horace Coker, the Fool of the Fifth, well in the limelight. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Difficult Position!

THE question is—ought a fellow to stand it?" said Horace Coker thoughtfully.

Potter and Greene of the Fifth smiled.

Five juniors of the Remove smiled also.

Coker of the Fifth spoke seriously. He spoke, indeed, with almost awful seriousness. He had no intention, in making that remark, of evoking merriment.

But it often happened that Coker's most serious remarks evoked merriment.

It is said that an accepted wit has but to say "Pass the salt!" to set the table in a roar. Coker was not by any means an accepted wit. But he had only to cogitate deeply, and to state the result of this intellectual exertion, in order to illumine all faces with smiles.

Coker was standing by the House steps. It was morning break, and all the Greyfriars fellows were out of the Form-rooms. Coker had come away from the Fifth Form-room with a frowning brow. He was not Mr. Prout's most promising pupil. It was said that the Fifth Form master had been known to tear his hair in dealing with Coker; that Coker's original views on English orthography, and still more original views on Latin syntax, had often reduced Prout to a state of nervous wreckage. There was no doubt that at times Coker received from his Form master what he regarded as a bitter personal persecution. On occasions when Coker knew perfectly well that he was in the right, Prout would persist that he was in the wrong. If Coker, as he felt bound to do, persisted that he really was in the right,

Prout would look on this as impertinence, and treat Coker accordingly.

On this particular morning Coker's frowning brow showed that there had been a breeze in the Fifth Form-room.

The acid edge of Mr. Prout's tongue had been turned on Coker. It was not much use for a fellow to be in the right, when his Form master had all the power in his hands, and could slang him before all the fellows as much as he liked. A sense of injustice rankled in Coker's breast.

Coker, standing by the House steps, confided the result of his cogitations on the subject to Potter and Greene.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove were close at hand, but these juniors Coker did not regard in the least. Whether they heard his remarks or not did not matter. Coker was as heedless of mere Remove juniors as of the pigeons in the quad. In his lofty view, they were trifles light as air.

Trifles as they were, the Famous Five took the liberty of smiling. Horace Coker had the same effect on the Lower Fourth as on the Fifth. Nobody could listen to Coker without a certain amount of hilarity.

Coker did not observe the general smile. He was following his own train of thought—a very serious train of thought.

It was not, indeed, a laughing matter. At all events, Coker would have been very much surprised to learn that it was. A matter that concerned the personal feelings and dignity of Horace James Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth could scarcely be a laughing matter.

"Ought a fellow to stand it?" pursued Coker, serious and ruminative. "That's the question, as Milton says."

"Milton?" murmured Potter.

"Yes."

"Oh!"

Coker looked irritable for a moment. "Really, old chap, you are dense!" he said. "A fellow can't quote the simplest quotation without flooring you!"

"I thought it was Shakespeare," murmured Potter meekly. "'To be or not to be, that is the question'—in Hamlet."

Grunt—from Coker.

"Well, you're wrong," he said. "It's Milton—in the 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard.'"

"Isn't that jolly old 'Elegy' by a merchant named Gray?" asked Potter.

"No, it isn't!"

"Oh!"

"Don't argue about it," said Coker. "You're rather dense in these things, Potter. But, as I was saying, the question is—ought a fellow to stand it?"

Whereat Potter and Greene smiled again; and Harry Wharton & Co. smiled again; only Coker's face remaining awfully serious.

Coker might say that the question was whether a fellow ought to stand it; to anybody but Coker there did not seem much choice in the matter.

Every other fellow at Greyfriars knew that a Form master had to be given his head, like a wilful horse.

If Mr. Prout, in the Fifth Form-room, saw fit to slang a Fifth Form man, that Fifth Form man had to possess his soul in patience, and endure the slanging as best he could. To any fellow but Coker this was not only inevitable, but unquestionable. But Coker questioned it.

"There's a fellow's dignity to consider," he went on. "You heard Prout this morning! Slanging a man before all the Form! Making out that I can't construe easy stuff like Suetonius."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,084.

Making mistakes, mind you; Making mistakes, and putting them down to me!"

"Oh!" said Potter.

"Um!" said Greene.

These remarks were non-committal.

In fact, it was not easy to know what to say to Coker. Naturally, his friends did not want to row with him. Coker was a very nice fellow when he was nice. He was an uncommonly unpleasant fellow when he was nasty. Potter and Greene preferred him in the nice state. But the only way to keep Coker nice was to agree with everything he said as heartily as possible. Contradiction always irritated Coker.

A fellow who knew that he was right could not be expected to be very patient with obstinate, carping fellows who disagreed. Coker was always in the happy and satisfactory state of knowing that he was right. Contradiction, therefore, naturally had an irritating effect on him.

"He called me," went on Coker in a thrilling voice, "a blockhead!"

"I heard him!" assented Potter.

"Actually lost his temper," said Coker. "Got red in the face! Frightfully undignified in a Form master! And he was wrong all the time!"

"Oh!"

"Of course, Form masters don't know much," said Coker. "I jolly well know that Prout often has to mug it up just before class. I don't mind that. I'm a reasonable fellow. I never expect a Form master to be anything but an ass. Of course, I haven't told Prout that because—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Potter. "I—I suppose not."

"But there's a limit," said Coker. "A fellow has to consider his personal dignity and his standing in the Form and all that. The question is—ought I to stand it? On the other hand, what can a fellow do?"

"Echo answers—what," murmured Greene.

Coker stared at him.

"My dear chap, you're off your rocker," he said. "There's no echo here; but if there was, it would answer 'do.' Echo always repeats the last word. You don't know much about acoustics, Greeney."

"Oh!" gasped Greene.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Harry Wharton & Co., breaking out all of a sudden involuntarily.

They did not intend to do so, but they could not help it.

Coker was too rich, in fact.

They were deriving so much entertainment from Coker's observations that they had fully intended to keep quiet and continue to enjoy it. But that last observation was too much for them, and they yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared round. For the first time, he seemed to become aware that these insignificant insects were in existence.

"You cheeky fags!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker turned on the cheeky fags. He was not a fellow to be laughed at with impunity.

Potter and Greene hastily retired into the House. They stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once. Coker could mix himself up in a shindy with a mob of fags if he liked. Potter and Greene did not like. Potter and Greene saw the storm about to break, and they vanished from the scene like ghosts at cock-crow!

Fortunately, Coker did not need

assistance in dealing with cheeky fags. At least, he thought that he didn't.

As a matter of fact, Coker was in error. He did!

Making a stride at the Famous Five, Coker smote, with promptness and despatch, intending to strew the earth with five howling juniors, as they deserved.

Instead of which, Harry Wharton & Co. dodged Coker's mighty smites, and jumped at Coker all at once, as if moved by the same spring.

Five pairs of hands grasped Coker almost in the twinkling of an eye.

What happened next was a horrid dream.

The whole scheme of the universe became unfixed for the moment. Earth and sky changed places. At least, it seemed so to Coker as he was swept off the ground and whirled in the air.

Coker was a bulky fellow. He was heavy, especially at one end. There was, perhaps, not much in his head, but there was an enormous amount of him in his boots. Heavy as he was, five sturdy juniors handled him easily enough. Coker had been standing firmly on his extensive feet. Now he was completely reversed. His feet flew skyward, the top of his head tapped on the quadrangle.

Harry Wharton & Co. then released him.

For the millionth part of a second Horace Coker stood on his head, his long legs stretching skyward. Harry Wharton & Co. departed and left him to it.

Bump!

Coker assumed a horizontal attitude.

"Ow!"

Coker sat up dizzily. His brain, such as it was, was in a whirl. He sat and stared dizzily and spluttered.

It was just Coker's ill-luck that Mr. Prout came out of the House at that moment to take his usual trot in the quad during break.

He stared at Coker dumbfounded.

To all sorts of obtuseness and crass density of intellect on Coker's part Mr. Prout was accustomed in the Form-room. But it seemed to Mr. Prout that this was the limit, even for Coker. A fag of the Second might play such tricks, but a Fifth-Form man and a senior, standing on his head in the open quad in sight of half Greyfriars, was incredible, if Mr. Prout had not seen it with his own eyes.

"Coker!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Wow!"

"Coker!" thundered Mr. Prout.

"Ooooh!"

"Coker, get up! Stand up! Upon my word! Are you out of your senses, Coker? Stand up! How dare you play these childish tricks in the quadrangle? Goodness gracious me! A senior—a Fifth Form boy—playing such antics! Are you not ashamed of yourself?" boomed Mr. Prout.

Coker blinked at him.

"I—I—" he stuttered.

"Not a word! Go into the House!"

Coker scrambled up.

"I—" he spluttered.

"Disgraceful! Insensate! Go into the Form-room. Remain there. You are detained during break! Not a word! Go!"

"I—" gurgled Coker.

"Go!" thundered Mr. Prout.

Coker went. Indeed the Fifth Form master looked as if he would grip Coker by the collar and march him into the House like a fag in the grasp of a prefect if he did not obey immediately. For the second time that morning Prout had lost his temper with Coker.

Coker tottered into the House.

Mr. Prout snorted and continued his walk into the quad. Coker went into the Fifth Form room. Wrath and indignation unutterable filled his breast. He raged in the Form-room like a tiger in a cage. It was too thick—it was intolerable—it was not to be stood. Injustice after injustice came Coker's way like Pelion piled on Ossa. Could a fellow stand it? Ought a fellow to stand it?

That question, whether a fellow ought to stand it, was now growing to be a very pressing question.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Asked to Tea!

"O W!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Wow!"

"Go it!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly.

"Beast! Yow-ow!"

Billy Bunter did not need encouragement. He was going it, anyhow.

The Owl of the Remove came up the stairs to the Remove passage with sounds of woe preceding him.

He limped across the Remove landing, the sounds of woe accompanying him; he limped into the Remove passage, still sounding the note of woe.

Apparently Bunter was hurt.

To judge by his sounds of woe he was very much hurt indeed. But it was not quite safe to judge Bunter's damages by the amount of noise he made about them. The noise was often out of all proportion to the damage.

He stopped at the doorway of Study No. 1, and blinked in dolefully. Harry Wharton & Co. were there. It was tea-time, and the chums of the Remove were considering ways and means.

More correctly speaking, they were considering the absence of ways and means. As happens sometimes in the best regulated studies, there was a shortage of cash.

Riches, it is well said, take unto themselves wings and fly away. And from no place is their flight more rapid than from a schoolboy's pocket.

Wharton and Nugent, in Study No. 1, were penniless; in fact, they were half-penniless. Bob Cherry and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had come along from No. 13 in the same unhappy state. Johnny Bull had looked in, and his comrades indulged a brief hope that he had looked in to ask the whole Co. to tea in No. 14. But that hope was brief. He hadn't. He had looked in to confide to his sympathetic friends the fact that he was stony.

It was, as Bob Cherry remarked with lugubrious humour, a case of "I am stony, thou art stony, he is stony! We are stony—you are stony—they are stony!" And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sadly observed that the stonefulness was terrific.

In such circumstances there was but one thing to be done. Tea in Hall was the last resource.

The tea provided by the school authorities was always left to the school authorities to do what they liked with when the fellows were in funds.

But when fellows weren't in funds they patronised the school tea. Then it was a case of any port in a storm.

Having decided, nem-con, that there was nothing for it but tea in Hall, the pow-wow in the study broke up, and the Famous Five were about to make a move for the stairs when Bunter presented himself, preceded, as aforesaid, by sounds of woe.

No doubt the desire for sympathy in his present limping and damaged state



Having finished the impot, Wharton picked it up, but fortunately remembered in time that if there were no blots on it Mr. Prout might be suspicious as to whether Coker had written it or not. Wharton dropped three or four blots on the sheet and then smeared it to give it a finishing touch. Then he surveyed it with admiration. (See Chapter 7.)

had brought the fat junior there. Possibly an added motive was that it was tea-time. Had Bunter known the stony state of the study he would probably have gone elsewhere for sympathy. But he did not know—yet.

He stood in the doorway and groaned deeply.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Got a pain?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes, awful!"

"Well, it's your own fault, old fat bean. If you will stuff your inside with everything you can lay your hands on you——"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "It isn't that sort of pain! I've been kicked." He groaned again. "I say, you fellows, I'm frightfully hurt. My opinion is that my spine's injured. That beast Coker——"

"My hat! It's no joke to bag one of Coker's feet," remarked Frank Nugent. "How he carries them about with him is a mystery. What on earth did Coker kick you for?"

"Just bullying," groaned Bunter. "I hear that Prout's been ragging him in class, and he was in a savage temper. Finding me in his study, the beast jumped to the conclusion that I was after his tuck——"

"And you weren't?" grinned Bob.

"How could I be after his tuck when there wasn't any there?" demanded Bunter. "Absolutely nothing! Not that I should have touched it if there had been, you know. I hope I'm not that sort of chap."

"What a hopeful nature!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! There was nothing in the cupboard—the cake hadn't come——"

"Eh? What cake?"

"Coker's expecting a cake from his Aunt Judy," explained Bunter. "I happened to hear him mention it to Potter this morning. Of course, I never

went to his study after that cake. But you know Coker—suspicious beast! He grabbed me by the back of the neck——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! He slewed me round to the door, and jammed his hoof on me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! I went head-over-heels into the passage," groaned Bunter. "Those other beasts, Potter and Greene, were coming in. They both kicked me before I got away."

"The sympathise is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But should you not learn to keep your absurd paws from the pickfulness and the stealfulness?"

"I tell you I wasn't after Coker's cake!" roared Bunter. "It wasn't there, blow it! I say, you fellows, you ought to back up a fellow in your own Form! I'd like to know what Greyfriars is coming to, when Fifth Form cads kick Remove men just as they like. Look here, if you fellows think of going to Coker's study and ragging him, I'll keep watch in the passage——"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled. They were not thinking of ragging Coker of the Fifth for kicking a tuck-raider out of his study. It was seldom that they approved of Horace Coker's proceedings. On this occasion they did approve.

"Well, I don't think you fellows ought to let a Fifth Form beast bully the Remove," said Bunter. "The worst of it is the cake wasn't there——"

"And so the poor dog had none!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And there's nothing in my study," said Bunter. "Toddy's teeing out, and you know what Toddy is. When he's teeing out he never thinks of another fellow. And my postal-order hasn't come."

"You don't say so, old bean!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"I do," said Bunter sorrowfully. "I think I mentioned to you chaps that I was expecting a postal-order——"

"I think so!" chuckled Bob. "Yes, I seem to remember something of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I've been disappointed about it; it hasn't come. I say, you fellows, I'm going to stand you a study spread all round when it does come."

"Thanks!"

"The thankfulness is terrific."

"Not at all," said Bunter. "When a fellow gets lots of money, why shouldn't he spend it on his friends? Easy come, easy go, you know. But to-day I happen to be stony. If you'd like me to tea with you——"

Bunter paused.

He filled in the pause with a deep groan, to show how injured he was after the application of Horace Coker's boot to his fat person.

Between sympathy for Bunter's injuries, and the expectation of a study spread when the postal-order came, it was reasonable to expect that the Famous Five would play up, and ask Bunter to tea.

Still, you never could tell. There was doubt on the subject. Fellows, somehow, never seemed to enjoy Bunter's company at tea-time so much as they ought to have done. Bunter was a pleasant, agreeable, fascinating sort of fellow—at all events, he had a fixed belief that he was. But fellows did not seem to see it, somehow. Bunter was, so to speak, an acquired taste—which the Removites had not yet acquired.

But on the present occasion Billy Bunter need not have been troubled with doubts. The whole Co. smiled at once, and answered with one voice:

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,084.

"Do!"

Bunter brightened up.

He ceased immediately to wriggle and groan, perhaps forgetting the fearful injuries inflicted by Coker of the Fifth. Perhaps those injuries were not so very fearful, after all. At all events, Bunter smiled cheerily; in fact, he beamed on the chums of the Remove.

"Right-ho, old fellows, I will!" he said. "Of course, I didn't come along here because it was tea-time—"

"Oh!"

"Still, as it happens to be tea-time, I'll tea with you, with pleasure," said Bunter. "Enough said—I'll come."

"Oh, do!" said Bob Cherry.

"Quite a pleasure!" said Nugent.

"The pleasurefulness will be terrific."

"We'll be jolly glad to have you," said Johnny Bull solemnly.

"Welcome as the flowers in May!" said Harry Wharton heartily.

Bunter blinked at them, a little surprised. Enthusiastic welcome like this, at tea-time, was rather a new experience for him. It was very agreeable, but it was surprising.

It really looked as if William George Bunter was being appraised at his true value at last—as if these fellows had recognised, after quite a long time during which they had misjudged him, what a charming fellow he really was.

Bunter's fat face beamed, and he rolled into the study.

"I suppose you're going to have tea now, old chaps?" he asked.

"Only a few minutes."

"Good! I'll help you get it ready. If you want any shopping done, I'll cut down to the tuckshop."

"That's all right. The shopping's done long ago," answered Bob Cherry solemnly.

"Good!" Bunter blinked into the study cupboard. "I don't see it here. In your study, I suppose, Bob? Not teaing here?"

"No; we're not teaing here."

"Well, come on, then," said Bunter;

and he rolled out of Study No. 1 and started up the Remove passage.

Five smiling juniors followed him out. But instead of following Bunter up the passage, they turned in the opposite direction, towards the stairs.

Bunter turned his head and blinked after them.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Aren't you going to have tea now?"

"Yes, rather! Come along, or you'll be late."

"Buck up, old fat bean!" called out Johnny Bull. "We want you to have tea with us, you know. Don't fail us!"

Bunter fixed his big spectacles on the grinning five.

"Where—where—where are you going to tea?" he gasped.

"In Hall!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"In Hall, old bean! Come on!"

"You—you—you beasts!" gasped Bunter. "You asked me to tea with you—"

"Oh, quite! Come on!"

"You silly chumps!" shrieked Bunter. "You spoofing beasts! I could go to tea in Hall, if I liked, without you asking me."

"Of course you could," agreed Bob Cherry. "I wonder you didn't! Come on, old fat bean, or we shall be late for the doorsteps and the dishwater!"

And the Famous Five, chuckling, went down the Remove staircase.

Billy Bunter blinked after them with a blink that bade fair to crack his spectacles. He comprehended, at last, why he had been so warmly and enthusiastically asked to tea with the Famous Five.

"Beasts!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Rotters!"

Cheery laughter floated up the Remove staircase as the Famous Five disappeared. Bunter did not follow them. It was not an invitation to tea in Hall that he wanted.

Harry Wharton & Co. tea'd in Hall; while William George Bunter tried his

luck in the other studies, roaming up the Remove passage with a hungry eye, like a lion seeking what he might devour.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Coker Talks Too Much!

COKER of the Fifth came into the games study, the room where the Fifth Form of Greyfriars most did congregate. There was a general smile in that room as Coker came in. Coker saw nothing to smile at. The other Fifth Form fellows did. They saw Coker.

Coker's brow was deep in gloom.

His persecution at the hands of Mr. Prout, his Form master, was growing well-nigh intolerable. Coker was a much-enduring fellow, but there was a limit to his endurance. He was fed-up with Prout, and made no secret of the fact. As it happened, Mr. Prout was fed-up with him to an equal extent. This mutually fed-up state was bound to lead to friction, and undoubtedly it did.

Mr. Prout's opinion was that Coker should never have got his remove from the Shell. A big fellow like Coker might seem out of place in the Shell. But a crass ass like Coker was still more out of place in Mr. Prout's Form.

It was rumoured at Greyfriars that Coker never would have got his remove had not his Aunt Judy come down specially to see the Head about it, and ragged him into it. Bunter of the Lower Fourth declared that Miss Coker had threatened the Head with her umbrella—indeed, he went so far as to assert that the umbrella had been actually brandished over Dr. Locke's head. Bunter knew many things that went on behind closed doors; he was a great man at keyhole work. It was probable that Bunter exaggerated in this case.

Still, the Fifth Form master, at least, did not profess to know why Coker had been placed in his Form. Mr. Hacker of the Shell had once been equally puzzled to know why Coker was in that Form, the Fourth or the Third being more suitable for him, in Hacker's opinion. Hacker undoubtedly had been pleased when Coker got his unexpected remove. He had not congratulated Coker, but he had congratulated himself most heartily.

But the good-fortune of one man is often the ill-fortune of another in this troublous universe. Hacker was said, in the Snell, to have danced with glee when he got shut of Coker—another exaggeration, in all probability. Prout, if he danced, must have danced with fury.

Mr. Prout had a sense of duty and responsibility towards a backward member of his Form. That would have been all very well had Coker known that he was a backward member.

He did not know it.

Friends and foes alike were willing to enlighten him on the subject. But Coker was not willing to be enlightened.

Clad in self-satisfaction as in armour of triple steel, Horace Coker went his own left way regardless of the opinion of lesser mortals.

He was used to carping criticism. It was a thing to which any really superior fellow had to get used.

In Form, Coker's construe generally added to the gaiety of existence in the Fifth. Mr. Prout might tear his hair over it, but the Fifth would not have missed it for worlds. Dusty and dreary old classical authors became bright and entertaining when Coker construed their works. In Coker's hands, even Cicero ceased to be a bore; he could make Livy live.



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It was futile for Prout to point out where he was wrong, when Coker knew that he was right.

Coker was prepared to back his own opinion against that of any fat-headed Form master at Greyfriars or any other school.

Having to give in, when he was in the right, was naturally annoying. Even in such elementary matters as English spelling, the same sort of thing went on. Only that day Mr. Prout had nearly shrieked when Coker spelt "topic" with a "k" at the end. He had persisted that there was no "k." What could Coker do but smile contemptuously?

The incident had cost Coker dear. He had an impot to write out, and the impot consisted of the word "topic" written a hundred times. The sort of impot that was given to a Second-Form fag—an insult to a Fifth-Form man! Prout meant to be insulting, that was all there was to it. And he insisted that Coker should write the word a hundred times without a "k" at the end. No doubt that would save Coker a certain amount of labour, which was so much to the good. But the thing was ridiculous and insulting. Coker felt it deeply.

In the games study, they smiled when Coker came in; all the more because of the fixed gloom in his manly brow. The situation was serious to Coker—verging on the tragic. To the other fellows it was not serious at all, and it appealed to them as comic.

Coker gave a grim glance round at many smiling faces. Price winked at Blundell, who laughed.

"Let's see. What topic were we discussing?" said Hilton.

And there was a laugh—a senseless cackle, as Coker considered it; a childish allusion to his row in the Form-room over Prout's bad spelling.

"Done your impot, Coker?" asked Fitzgerald.

"No. I rather think I shan't do it," said Coker.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I shall think over it," said Coker.

"What on earth with?" asked Fitzgerald, in astonishment.

And there was another senseless cackle!

"Funny, ain't it?" said Coker bitterly. "But I can tell you fellows that I'm getting fed-up. I've had about enough of Prout."

"He won't last long," said Fitzgerald comfortingly. "I'm absolutely certain that your construe will be the death of him some day."

It astonished Coker to observe at what feeble witticisms the Fifth-Form fellows would cackle. They cackled at this!

Coker sometimes made his little joke, but when he did the fellows never laughed. But they laughed at these feeble witticisms of Fitzgerald's.

"But you'd better do that impot, old bean," said Potter, with friendly concern. "No good getting old Prout's rag out any more than it is already. He looked quite wild in Form to-day."

"I've thought of appealing to the Head," said Coker.

The Fifth-Form men exchanged glances.

Every Greyfriars man was allowed an appeal to the Head, if he liked, and if he fancied that justice couldn't be got by any less dramatic method.

But what Coker had to appeal about was rather a mystery. It would be rather extraordinary for a fellow to appeal to the Head because his Form master insisted upon correct spelling in simple words. Still, there never was any telling what Coker might do, or why.

"An appeal to the Head might put Prout in his place!" remarked Coker.

"You think of appealing to the Head to allow you to spell topic with a 'k'?" asked Fitzgerald blandly.

"Not only that. Persecution generally," said Coker. "Prout's got a down on me. Doesn't he rag me nearly every day in class?"

"Well, old chap—" murmured Greene. But he paused. It was useless to explain to Coker that he asked for it.

That Coker was a silly ass, and that he made ludicrous mistakes, and stuck to them with the obstinacy of a mule, all the Fifth knew. But it was useless to tell Coker so. He would never have believed it.

"Do I ever get off without a jaw?" said Coker.

"Hardly ever!" grinned Price.

"It's rank persecution. The fact is, Prout's getting past his work," said Coker. "He's old."

"He's aged a lot since you got into the Fifth," remarked Fitzgerald. Once more there was that senseless cackle in the games study.

"Of course, Form masters generally are duds," said Coker. "Nobody expects anything else. But a Form master who spells incorrectly—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And can't construe Suetonius correctly—"

"Phew!"

"You heard him only this morning making out that I was wrong in Suetonius," said Coker. "He'll make out next that I couldn't translate Eutropius."

The Fifth-Formers grinned cheerily. They fancied that Prout would be able to make out a case, even if he went so far as that.

"It's persecution," said Coker, rather pleased at getting the attention of a lot of the Fifth as he expatiated on his wrongs and quite unconscious that he was providing the games study with a free entertainment. "Prout's down on me. He likes picking faults in me. He makes them up. Makes out I'm wrong, when he jolly well knows I'm right. I mean, he can't be so ignorant as he makes out. He's a dud all right—but he's not such a dud as all that! He dislikes me for some reason. I even suspect that he doesn't like having me in his Form at all."

The Fifth-Formers gazed at Coker. That suspicion of his was well-founded. There were good reasons why any Form master should have disliked having Horace Coker in his Form, had Coker only known.

But it was not given unto Coker to see himself as others saw him. Perhaps that was fortunate for him. He would have lost all his self-esteem at one fell swoop.

"I'm fed-up, I can tell you!" resumed Coker. "It's my independent character that does it, of course. Form masters dislike that sort of thing. You fellows kow-tow to Prout. You give in to him all along the line. If he says you've made a blunder, you let it go at that. Of course, in your case he may be right. Still, I don't believe in kow-towing. Who's Prout?"

"Go on, Coker, dear man!" said Fitzgerald, as the great man of the Fifth paused. "Sure, I love listening to you entirely!"

"I only hope," said Coker darkly, "that I shall be able to keep my temper with Prout. I'm going to try hard. I know it would be bad form to punch a Form master—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Great pip!"

"But there's a limit," said Coker.

"Prout rags me every day nearly. I can't kow-tow like you fellows do. I've got spirit."

"And we haven't, old bean?" asked Fitz sweetly.

"Exactly. You get my meaning exactly," assented Coker.

"Oh!"

"I'm not blaming you," explained Coker considerably. "You're for a quiet life. There may be something in it. Still, what you fellows don't seem to see is, that there's something due to a fellow's own dignity."

"Oh!" gasped Blundell.

"That's where the shoo pinches," said Coker. "I've got some self-respect. That's what you fellows lack. See?"

The seniors only gazed at Coker. Even Fitzgerald seemed at a loss for a rejoinder. They just gazed.

"I'm going to do my best," said Coker. "I'm going to try to keep my temper. If I fail, the fault will be at Prout's door. I know it's bad form to punch a master, what ever sort of a footling ass and irritating old donkey he may be. But I feel, sometimes, that it will come to it. One of these days I may lose my temper and hit him."

"Hush!" gasped Potter.

A plump and ample figure had appeared in the open doorway of the games study. It was the rotund form of Mr. Prout.

Prout was one of those Form-masters who believed in being on friendly and cheery terms with the Form. Nothing stiff or stand-offish about him, like there was about Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, for instance. Quite informally, Prout would drop into the games study occasionally in the evening, and chat for a few minutes with the Fifth-Form men there.

As Prout liked the sound of his own voice, and laboured under the delusion that it was equally musical in the ears of others, the few minutes sometimes prolonged themselves into half an hour.

On such occasions, the Fifth-Form men played up, as was their duty. It was all in the day's work. Prout, anyhow, meant well.

But Mr. Prout could not have dropped in at a more unfortunate moment than the present. Obviously, he had heard what Coker said. That was proved by the fact that he stood rooted there, with his mouth open and his eyes fixed on Coker's back like the eyes of a basilisk.

Potter's agonised gasp passed unheeded by Coker.

He did not know that Prout was at the doorway. Coker had no eyes in the back of his head. Neither was he quick on the uptake.

"Hush?" he repeated sardonically. "I'm not going to hush, Potter! I'm the man to say what I think. I never was afraid to speak out. And I can tell you fellows, plainly, that the day may come when Prout will go too far in class, ragging a man who knows better than himself, and then I may lose my temper and punch him."

The Fifth-Formers sat paralysed.

Mr. Prout, in the doorway, seemed to be suffering under an attack of paralysis also. He stood motionless, as if overcome.

The silence was awful.

Even Coker became aware, at long last, that something unusual must be in the wind. He was puzzled. He glanced from horrified face to another horrified face, and finally looked round behind him. Then he saw Prout, and understood.

"Oh!" said Coker.

Mr. Prout advanced into the room. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,084.

The silence could almost have been cut with a knife.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fool's Luck!

MR. PROUT looked at Coker. Coker looked at him. Dead silence reigned in the Fifth-Form games study.

Even Coker was abashed. His words—uttered in his usual powerful tones—had only been intended for Fifth-Form ears. Obviously, Prout's ears had taken them in. Coker had a hefty voice, which Fitzgerald had described as warranted to kill at forty rods. If Coker stated an opinion in the games study, anybody at the end of the corridor could not fail to learn what that opinion was, even with the door shut. Now the door was open—and Prout on the spot! Coker was celebrated for the high frequency with which he put his foot in it. He had put his foot in it now, with a vengeance.

Mr. Prout found his voice at last.

"Coker!" he rumbled.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Yes! Yes, sir!"

"I heard your remarks."

"D-d-d-did you, sir?"

"I did, Coker."

Another silence. Mr. Prout seemed at a loss. He had had many troubles with Coker. He had generally found him rather difficult to deal with. But this situation was extraordinary; and Prout hardly knew how to act. How was a Form-master to act when he heard a member of his Form threatening to punch him? The situation was unheard of. Only Horace James Coker could ever have created such a situation.

"I heard you threaten your Form master, Coker!" uttered Mr. Prout, at last.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Coker.

"What? What?"

"I did not mean it as a threat, sir! I had no idea that you were listening at the door, sir," said Coker.

Mr. Prout's rubicund face became like unto a beetroot in hue. The Fifth-Form men could only gasp.

It was, of course, only Coker's unfortunate way of putting it. He did not mean to accuse Prout of eavesdropping. It was not uncommon for Coker to express himself unfortunately.

"What? What?" gasped Mr. Prout.

"I was stating an opinion, sir," said Coker, recovering himself a little. "I was not stating an intention, sir! I certainly have no intention whatever of punching you, sir."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Prout. "I hope not! I trust not! Goodness gracious! I—I trust not, Coker."

"I was merely saying, sir, that if I don't get justice, I might lose my temper, and do it," said Coker. "That's quite different from a threat. I hope sincerely, sir, that it will never come to that."

"Upon my word!"

"For goodness' sake, Coker, shut up!" breathed Potter, in agony.

Coker did not heed. Shutting up was not in his line at all.

"I was merely mentioning a possibility, sir—a painful possibility," went on Coker. "It may never come to that. I hope it won't."

"This boy," said Mr. Prout, addressing space, "must be out of his senses. He must be absolutely out of his senses."

"Coker doesn't mean, sir—" ventured Potter. He felt impelled to put in a word, if he could, for his friend. But he stopped short. What could a fellow say for Coker?

"Coker!" boomed Mr. Prout. "I shall take you to your headmaster! I shall repeat your words to Dr. Locke! I shall leave him to deal with you! I can hold out little hope that you will be allowed to remain at Greyfriars, after the words you have uttered in my hearing."

Coker breathed hard.

All the Fifth-Form men in the room took it for granted that the game was up for Coker. A fellow who threatened to punch his Form master, in his Form master's hearing, was asking for the "sack." That was indubitable. It was Coker for the long jump! That was a cert.

"Come!" said Mr. Prout.

"Hold on, sir," said Coker. "I should like to point out, sir—" "Follow me!"

"To point out that I was speaking to my friends, here, and had no idea that you were there. It's not the thing to take official notice of anything overheard by chance, sir. It isn't done."

The Fifth-Formers thought, for a moment, that Prout was going to fall down. He really staggered.

"Coker!" he breathed.

"It isn't done, sir," said Coker cheerfully. "I'm sure you will see that, sir, if you think it over."

The silence that followed was painful. Varying expressions worked in the plump countenance of Mr. Paul Prout.

But the fact was, that Coker had, for once, hit the nail on the head. The brightest insight and the deepest wisdom could not have served Coker better in this emergency than his cheerful obtuseness.

It was an unwritten law that masters turned a deaf ear to remarks that were not intended for their ears. With Mr. Prout, this was especially the case. What would become of those cheery, friendly chats in the games study with the men in his Form if he took official cognizance of any careless remark he happened to hear when he came along?

That familiar trust and confidence between boy and master, which Mr. Prout fondly believed to exist between his Form and himself, would be knocked completely on the head. They would lose faith in him—they would watch for his coming as for that of an enemy—they would sink their voices when he came nigh—all faith and trust would be gone. The happy state of confidence and mutual trust that now existed—in Mr. Prout's happy imagination at least—would be shattered.

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. That was always Coker's method. But for once he had got away with it.

Mr. Prout realised that it would not do.

"Coker!" he stuttered at last. "Your words are disrespectful—as disrespectful as the threat I heard you utter. Your impudence is—is almost unnerving. But there is a grain of truth in what you say. There is a— a glimmering of reason behind your unexampled stupidity. I shall take no notice of what you have said."

"Quite so, sir!" assented Coker.

"I came here," said Mr. Prout, glancing at the silent Fifth-Formers, "as a friend. Not as a Form master, but as a friend. I have cherished the belief that my boys look on me as a friend."

"Oh, yes, sir!" chorused the Fifth.

"I have cherished the belief," said Mr. Prout, "that my boys trust me."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"I have believed—I believe now—that confidence exists between us," said Mr. Prout. "That, when I come to this

room, the boys I find here know that whatever they say will fall upon friendly ears; that I am incapable of using to their detriment any careless observation that may be made, by chance, in my hearing."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"This being the case," said Mr. Prout, "I am bound to pass over Coker's words as if they had never been uttered. They were not intended for my ears. I must act as if I had never heard them. That is what, I think, my boys would expect of me."

He paused a moment.

"I shall say nothing more! I am shocked—I am deeply pained! But the matter ends here."

With dignity, Mr. Prout retired, amid a murmur that, no doubt, expressed respectful sympathy and admiration.

There was silence, till the ample form of Mr. Prout had completely disappeared. Then Hilton quietly closed the door.

The Fifth-Formers looked at Coker. Coker's happy face expressed nothing but complete self-satisfaction. But the looks of the Fifth-Form men were grim.

"Prout's let him off," said Blundell.

"He was bound to, keeping up that game of his. But I think we ought to give Coker a tip about blowing off his silly mouth. We might all have got ragged. If Prout happened to have his rheumatism on, there'd be no telling what might have happened. Collar that silly chump and rag him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Why, you cheeky fathead—" began Coker.

"Hold on!" said Potter. "If that hadn't happened, you men, Prout would have stayed half an hour as usual. Now he's gone—and we owe that to Coker, really."

"That's so," said Greene. "It's rather fortunate, in a way."

"Well, there's something in that," said Blundell, with a nod. "We might have had to listen to Prout for half an hour—perhaps longer—if he'd got on to his reminiscences. Still, he's not a bad old ass, in his way, and Coker's not going to insult him. Besides, we might all have got a ragging—you never know, with a Form master. They're funny merchants. Coker talks too much. Collar him!"

"Look here—" roared Coker.

Only Potter and Greene stood out of what followed. They were merely lookers-on. But there were eight or nine other fellows present, more than sufficient to make it clear to Coker what his Form thought of him.

Coker, of course, resisted. He resisted manfully, in wrath and righteous indignation. Some of the seniors were a little damaged.

But Coker was dreadfully damaged. He was rolled, he was bumped, he was banged, he was ruffled, and rumped, and tousled. There was a din in the games study as if several earthquakes were happening there at once. Price opened the door at last, and a wild and dishevelled figure shot into the corridor.

It was Coker—what was left of him!

What was left of Coker tottered away, spluttering for breath. It tottered into Coker's study.

There was a sudden squeak of alarm as it tottered in. A fat figure turned from Coker's study cupboard, with alarmed eyes blinking behind big spectacles. It turned, empty handed, for the cake from Aunt Judy had not yet come. But Coker was in no state to deal with the grub-raider of the Remove. Billy Bunter made a leap for



"You get up again, you fat burglar," said Harry Wharton, "and you'll get kicked!" Billy Bunter sat in the corner, as if understudying Little Jack Horner. He sat there till the chums of the Remove finished their tea. (See Chapter 9.)

the door and escaped a feeble kick and fled.

Coker collapsed into his armchair.

He was dusty and dishevelled, he was damaged and breathless. But what hurt Coker most was the injustice of it. Without undue conceit, Coker felt that he had handled the situation with Prout in an effective manner. He had expected admiration. Instead, he had got—this! Not only the Fifth-Form master, but the Fifth Form itself, misunderstood and misjudged Coker. It was, of course, the penalty a superior fellow had to pay for being superior to his surroundings—too far above the common minds to be comprehended by them. But it was very painful.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

To Punch or Not to Punch?

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Scat!"

"But, I say—"

"Buzz off!"

"I say—Coker, you know—"

"Oh! What about Coker?" asked Wharton and Nugent together. And they smiled.

There was no doubt that Horace Coker's presence at Greyfriars added a sort of exhilaration to life there. The mere mention of Coker was enough to bring a smile to the most serious face.

Wharton and Nugent were at prep in Study No. 1. Billy Bunter, of course, should have been at prep in Study No. 7. But Bunter often gave prep rather a miss for the sake of a chat along the passage. The exercise of his fat brain did not appeal to him nearly so much as the exercise of his podgy chin. Perhaps he was right. His chin was by far the more powerful of the two.

Wharton and Nugent, hard at work, had waved away the fat face that had blinked into Study No. 1. But at the mention of Coker they relented. If there was news of Coker, they were willing to hear it.

Bunter grinned.

"Haven't you fellows heard?" he asked.

"We heard a row in the games study," said Frank. "Some of the fellows said the Fifth were ragging Coker."

"They jolly well did. I was in his study when he got there afterwards and—"

"What on earth were you doing in Coker's study?"

"Oh! Nothing. I wasn't after his cake!"

"Oh!"

"And it hadn't come, anyhow. I say, Coker looked a wreck. But—what do you think"—Bunter chuckled—"Coker said in the games study—He, he, he!" Billy Bunter went off in a breathless cackling. Apparently, the recollection of what Coker had said in the games study was too much for him.

"Well, fathead?"

"I heard a Fifth-Form man telling Hobson of the Shell," said Bunter. "He was killing himself with laughing. So was Hobby. He, he, he!"

"Well, what was it, ass?" asked Wharton.

"Coker said—He, he, he!" shrieked Bunter. "He said—Ha, ha, ha! He said before half the Fifth that—He, he, he!"

"Cough it up!" said Nugent.

"That he would—He, he, he—"

"Go it!"

"—punch Prout!" gasped Bunter.

"What?" roared Wharton and Nugent together.

"He, he, he! He did! Half the Fifth heard him! And—and—He, he, he! —Prout heard him!"

"Prout!" gasped the juniors.

"He, he, he! Prout was coming along and, of course, Coker never saw him coming—Coker never sees anything. He said it right out, and Prout heard him. He, he, he!"

"My only hat!" said Wharton.

"Poor old Coker!" grinned Nugent.

"The fellows say that Prout let it drop, for some reason," said Bunter. "I should have thought he would have scalped Coker. But it's true—Coker was threatening to punch Prout—punch his

Form master, you know—He, na, he! I suppose Coker thinks a fellow can punch a master. He would, with a brain like his, you know. He, he, he!"

"He must have gone right off his rocker," said the captain of the Remove, with a whistle.

"He hadn't far to go," chuckled Nugent.

"He, he, he! That's why the Fifth ragged him," said Bunter. "It's a bit unfair, because it's as plain as anything that Prout came along for a chat, and he went off offended after he heard Coker. You know how those fellows feel when old Prout nobbles them for a chat. Same as we should, if Quelch got chatty. Thank goodness he never does! Still, they ragged Coker. Fairly wrecked him! Jolly nearly left him for dead! He, he, he!"

"Poor old Coker!" sighed Nugent. "He will get something more than a ragging, if he ever does punch Prout."

"He, he, he! Prout would burst if anybody punched him!" giggled Bunter. "He's fat, you know. Podgy."

And Bunter glanced down at his own ample figure with admiring satisfaction. It was rather nice to have a well-filled-out figure, without being fat like Prout. Bunter thought so, at all events. Wharton and Nugent grinned. Undoubtedly Mr. Prout would have had to perform painful contortions had he ever had a fancy to see his knees. But he was not so broad as he was long; and Bunter very nearly was!

"I say, you fellows, it's going all over the House," said Bunter. "I thought I'd tell you chaps. You never hear anything for yourselves. I say, I happened to be near Prout's door this afternoon, and I heard him say—"

"Cheese it, you fat villain!" said Wharton. "You can keep your keyhole news for Skinner."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hook it, old fat bean—prep!" said the captain of the Remove.

And Bunter sniffed, and rolled away to tell the exciting news further along the Remove passage.

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All the Remove were interested. Even the fags of the Third and Second chuckled over the tale.

Trouble sometimes transpired at Greyfriars as at other schools. But it was quite a new thing for a fellow to utter aloud the intention of punching his Form master.

The idea of such a thing, perhaps, had occurred to other minds—as a sort of happy dream, impossible of realisation.

But the utterance of such a thought was remarkably unusual. The declaration of such an intention was incredible—in anybody but Coker of the Fifth.

It was certain that any fellow who so far forgot himself, and the fitness of things, as to punch a Form master, would be expelled from Greyfriars on the spot. Kicked out so quickly that it would make his head swim.

Even Coker must have been aware of that.

It was impossible that even Coker could have entertained any serious idea of punching Prout. He might have felt driven to it; but when it came to the point, and the punch, it was surely certain that Coker never would punch Prout.

Yet, with a fellow like Coker, you never could tell.

Coker's powerful intellect moved in mysterious ways, producing remarkable results.

The way he played football, for instance, proved that Coker was no ordinary fellow. A fellow who saw Coker on the football-field could not help thinking that Coker was capable of practically anything.

Incredible as such a happening seemed, therefore, many fellows considered it barely possible, after all, that Coker might punch Prout.

It was a blissful idea. Nobody, of course, wanted Mr. Prout to be damaged; and a punch from a hefty fellow like Coker could not fail to cause damage to a plump, podgy, short-winded gentleman like Prout. Nobody wanted to see Coker sacked; and it was a dead cert that he would be sacked if he punched Prout. Nevertheless, the idea was a blissful one. Never, in all the history of Greyfriars School, had a Form master been punched by one of his pupils. If Coker was going to make history, it would be thrilling. It would cause such a sensation as had never been known at Greyfriars before. All the Lower School, at least, would have enjoyed such a thrilling sensation.

In the Rag that evening there was only one topic, and that was Coker and his threat to punch Prout. Wild rumours were afloat by this time. Some fellows said that Coker actually had punched Prout. Fry of the Fourth had heard that several masters had been called suddenly from Common-room to carry Prout to his study, after he had been knocked down by Coker. Wilkinson of the Fourth had heard that Prout had a black eye. Tubbs of the Third declared as a positive fact that Prout was in the school hospital with two broken ribs. When Wharton came into the Rag he was in time to hear Billy Bunter telling the tale, which had improved immensely since he had told it in No. 1 Study.

"It was like this," Bunter was saying. "Coker was in the games study, as I hear, when Prout butted in. Coker ordered him out. 'Get out, Prout!' he said. Just like that!"

"And what did Prout do?" gasped Russell.

"It's not quite clear whether he struck Coker first, or whether Coker struck the

first blow," said Bunter. "But all the Fifth had to pile in and separate them."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gammon!" said Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"A fellow told me he saw Prout coming away from the games study, black as thunder," remarked Ogilvy.

"His eye was blacked," said Bunter. "I know that for a fact. Coker got one right in his eye."

By bed-time the story had been further embellished. It appeared, from Bunter, that after knocking Prout down and jumping on him, Coker had been seized by other masters, and had put up a terrific fight, flooring Wiggins and Capper, and blacking Twigg's eye. He was now locked in the punishment-room, raging, and the Head dared not go near him. Thus Bunter!

The next morning, however, Coker of the Fifth was seen at breakfast, and the masters were seen pursuing the normal tenor of their way. The wild rumours had to be discounted. It became clear, to the most vivid imagination, that Coker had not yet punched Prout.

But would he punch Prout?

Was he going to punch Prout?

What would happen if Prout was punched?

Once or twice before it had happened to Coker of the Fifth to get into the limelight. But never had he enjoyed so much limelight as now. That morning Horace Coker fairly filled the public eye at Greyfriars.

Was he going to punch Prout that morning? If he only did——

Mr. Quelch, in the Remove room, was irritated by considerable inattention on the part of his Form. Henry Samuel Quelch was in blissful ignorance of the rumours in the school, and the glorious anticipation of a sensation such as the history of Greyfriars afforded no example of. He was annoyed and puzzled, therefore to observe that the Remove fellows appeared to be listening—but not to him. It was just as if they were listening for something that might happen outside the Remove-room.

They were!

They were straining their ears for sounds of war and alarm in the Fifth-Form room.

But there was no alarm.

.....

The morning classes passed as morning classes generally did. At break the Lower School came out with a feeling of disappointment. That morning, at least, Coker of the Fifth had not punched Prout. And the Lower School felt, rather disgustedly, that after all Coker very likely never would punch Prout.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Matter of Principle!

"EVER seen a jolly old basilisk?" grinned Bob Cherry.

And the Co. smiled.

Classes were over that day, and the chums of the Remove were sauntering in the quad when Mr. Prout appeared in the offing.

Mr. Prout's plump face had a set, fixed expression; his eyes gleamed. If he did not look exactly like a basilisk, at least, the glint in his eye boded trouble for somebody. He was glancing round, evidently in search of someone. The juniors wondered whether that someone was Coker.

Naturally, they decided not to lose sight of Prout. If the punching was to come off in open quad, the Famous Five wanted front seats.

Mr. Prout rolled on.

Under the old elms Coker of the Fifth was standing, his hands in his pockets, a gloomy frown on his brow. Potter and Greene were with him, speaking in low, earnest tones. They were urging Coker to write out his impot.

That impot was overdue. Prout had mentioned it in Form. It had to be done.

Any other fellow at Greyfriars who had an impot did not need urging to write it out. He knew that he had to do it, and he did it. Not so Coker.

"It's only a hundred words—not even lines," urged Potter. "You can knock it off in a few minutes, old chap."

"Look here, we'll help," said Greene. Coker shook his head.

Coker was adamant.

"It's not the impot," he said. "If Prout had given me five hundred of Virgil, I'd do them. It's not that. It's the insult of the thing!"

"But——" said Potter.

"But——" murmured Greene.

"Prout can spell 'topic' without a K if he likes!" said Coker bitterly. "I'm not here to enlighten the ignorance of a Form master in simple matters of spelling. I prefer to spell it correctly."

"But, old chap, there really isn't a K," murmured Potter.

"Don't be a silly ass, Potter!"

"Oh!"

"Give Prout his head, old chap!" persuaded Greene. "You know what Form masters are! Give 'em their head!"

"Not in a matter of principle," said Coker. "Principle comes first! Let Prout spell 'topic' without a K if he likes. I won't! I know that he spells 'huge' with a G instead of a J. So he may as well spell 'topic' without a K. Let him! But I'm not going to. He's told me to write out that word a hundred times. I'll write it if he likes—correctly. Not his way. It's a matter of principle with me."

"Look in the dictionary, old chap," groaned Potter.

"I don't believe in dictionaries, Potter. I've often found them wrong."

"Oh dear!"

"As a matter of fact, Potter, I can show you the word in print, if you like," said Coker loftily. "I came on it in a book I was looking at—a good eighteenth century author."

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"I dare say they put a K on in the eighteenth century, old chap. They tacked K's on to lots of words. But now—"

"Don't be an ass! That is, if you can help it."

"But Prout will be frightfully waxy," urged Greene. "He's bound to take you to the Head if you refuse, Coker."

"That's what I want."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The Head knows how to spell—at least, I suppose so," said Coker.

"Schoolmasters are awfully ignorant in such matters, I've found; but I suppose the headmaster can spell. He will slate Prout, and serve him right."

"Oh dear!" murmured Potter.

"Here comes Prouty!" said Greene. "Now, old chap, do the sensible thing—"

Greene did not finish that appeal. What was the use of asking Coker to do a sensible thing? Greene realised that it was no use.

Potter and Greene sidled away as Mr. Prout came up. Coker did not sidle away. It was not his custom to avoid hostile encounters. Coker feared no foe in shining armour, or in a Master of Arts gown, or anything else. He faced Prout with calmness.

In the offing the Famous Five stood with an air of casualness, admiring the scenery. They admired the scenery, however, with one eye each on Coker and his Form master. Other fellows strolled in the same direction with bated breath. If the punching was coming off now—

"Coker!" said the Fifth Form master, in a deep voice.

"Sir!" said Coker cheerfully.

"Have you written your imposition?"

"No, sir."

"I thought not," said Mr. Prout, "I thought not, Coker!" His eyes gleamed at Coker. Mr. Prout had dropped the incident in the games study, and it was at an end, as he had said. But there was no doubt that it rankled sorely in Mr. Prout's breast. There was no doubt that, although he felt impelled to let that matter drop, he was rather anxious to catch Coker out on some other matter.

"You see, sir—" began Coker.

"It is now one hour to tea-time," said Mr. Prout. "You will hand in that imposition by tea-time, Coker."

"The fact is, sir—"

"I have ordered you, Coker, to write out the word topic one hundred times, in order to impress the correct spelling on your obtuse mind," said Mr. Prout.

"You see, sir—"

"I shall return to my study, Coker, after tea in the Common-room," said Mr. Prout. "If I do not then find your imposition, fully written out, lying on my table, I shall take you to your headmaster, and leave the matter in his hands."

"Very well, sir," said Coker cheerfully.

Mr. Prout gave him a long, grim look, and turned away. His face was grim as he rolled back to the House. Mr. Prout meant every word he said. And in all probability Mr. Prout would be glad to hand Coker over to the Head to be dealt with. The result was likely to be excessively painful for Coker, and the wild and reckless words in the games study would be avenged—indirectly.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. No punching had taken place. Fellows who had gathered to look on, dispersed again in disgust.

Potter and Greene sidled back. They had remained within hearing of Mr. Prout's booming voice.

"Now, old chap—" said Potter, in his most persuasive tone.

"Coming out?" asked Coker.

"Eh?"

"I'm going down to Courtfield. Come and have tea with me at the bunshop there?" said Coker.

"But the impot—"

"That's all right! I'm not doing it!"

"You can't refuse!" gasped Greene.

"Can't I? You'll see."

"But—but Prout means it! He'll take you to the Head!" gasped Potter. "Old chap, it may mean a flogging."

"They don't flog the Fifth!" answered Coker contemptuously.

"I know; but I fancy the Head would stretch a point. Anyhow, he can't let a man disobey a Form master. If he doesn't flog you he'll sack you!"

"Rot! He'll slate Prout!"

"Old chap, I assure you—" said Potter earnestly.

"Bosh! My idea is that Prout will let the matter drop," said Coker calmly.

"Seeing that he can't bully or browbeat me, he will most likely let it drop. If he doesn't, let him rip! I'm prepared to go before the Head, and show up his ignorance if he likes. Look here, I'm going down to Courtfield. You fellows coming?"

Coker started for the gates.

Potter and Greene exchanged a hopeless glance, and followed him. A wilful man had to have his way. Potter and Greene went with Coker to tea at the Courtfield bunshop, with a very strong feeling that it was the last tea they ever would have with Coker as a Greyfriars man.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Pouring Oil on Troubled Waters!

HARRY WHARTON had a thoughtful look.

There were times—many times—when the chums of the Remove had trouble with Horace Coker. At such times they did not stand upon ceremony with the egregious Horace. At other times—most times—they found Coker entertaining. But, taken all in all, they had no dislike for Coker. You couldn't dislike a fellow who made life brighter in the way Coker did. One touch of Nature, according to Shakespeare, makes the whole world kin. It was certain that one touch of Coker made the whole school grin. Coker really was nobody's enemy but his own. Any fellow might have been sorry to see Coker asking for serious trouble in this reckless way.

"Well, he's for it," said Johnny Bull. "Prout will yank him before the Beak, and he will get it where the chicken got the chopper."

"The esteemed and ludicrous Coker will certainly get it neckfully," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It will be a sad and sorrowful day for Greyfriars when the absurd Coker is bunkfully sacked."

"I was thinking," said Harry slowly, "Coker isn't a bad sort! Of course, he's a born idiot, and a frabjous chump."

"And a burbling bandersnatch," said Nugent.

"And a howling fathead!" observed Bob Cherry.

"All that, and more," agreed Wharton. "But, in his own way—well, he's not a bad sort. He wouldn't be such a fool if he had any sense; and he wouldn't swank so much if he knew what a guy he looked doing it. He must have got left out somehow when brains were served round. Now he's asking for the sack. The Head will either flog or sack him, and he can't very well flog the Fifth. It's never done. We don't want Coker sacked."

Bob Cherry stared.

"No; but we can't help it, I suppose. Potter and Greene have been talking sense to him, but it's no good. You're not suggesting that we should try to persuade Coker to act like a rational human being?"

"Naturally, I'm not suggesting impossibilities," answered the captain of the Remove. "But there are other ways. Coker's gone down to Courtfield, and Prout will soon be at tea in Common-room with the other beaks. If that impot isn't on his table when he meanders into his study, Coker will be jerked up to the Head!"

"Well," asked the Co., "what about it?"

"Suppose the impot's handed in?" suggested Harry.

"You've heard Coker say he won't do it. Besides, he's gone out of gates now. What are you driving at?"

"You've heard the story about the mountain and Mahomet—"

"What on earth has Mahomet to do with this?"

"Lots! The mountain was commanded to come to Mahomet; and it did not shift! So Mahomet hiked off to the mountain. Which means that there's more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. If Coker won't do his impot, and he won't—why, then, suppose the impot's done while he's gone out?"

"How on earth—"

"If Coker knew how to write, it would be different," explained Wharton. "But the stuff Coker puts on paper, and calls writing, might be done by anybody or anything. A fly getting into the ink-pot, and walking over the paper, would get much the same effect. It can't be called handwriting. So it's not a question of imitating a fellow's fist, as we do when we help one another with lines. Scrawling anyhow will answer the purpose."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"It won't take long—a hundred words. We shouldn't mind spelling 'topic' without a 'k' at the end, just to please Prout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker doesn't understand what he's asking for—but he will get it, all the same," said Harry. "It would do him a good turn. It will save Prout from a lot of trouble—if that matters. He will think Coker's done the impot, and he will be satisfied. Coker will think Prout has dropped it, and he will be satisfied. I can do the job in ten minutes, and the consciousness of having done a good and kind action, my beloved 'earers', will satisfy me. Satisfaction all round; and instead of Coker being bunked for disobedience, we keep him at Greyfriars, to cheer us up on dull days—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton, leaving the Co. chuckling, walked away to the House, with the laudable intention of pouring oil on the troubled waters by doing that impot for Coker.

The coast was clear. Coker and Potter and Greene being out of gates, the study was vacant. Wharton strolled down the Fifth Form passage and turned into Coker's study.

He closed the door, and set to work at once.

Samples of Coker's fist, if they were needed, abounded. There were untidy scrawls on the study table without number.

But really they were not needed. Coker's hand was a sort of large, sprawling round-hand, with no distinctive characteristics of its own. His spelling, certainly, was characteristic, and not

easy to pick up without considerable application. Had it been a question of spelling, Wharton would have been at a loss; he could never have guessed whether Coker spelt "topic"—toppic, or toppick, or topick, or even thoppick, or toppique; all he could have been certain of was that Coker wouldn't spell it "topic." But it was Prout's spelling that had to be written out, so all was plain sailing. Prout had more faith in dictionaries than Coker had.

Wharton started cheerfully with Coker's pen, on a sheet of Coker's paper. Topic, topic, topic ran actively from the pen.

The same word had to be repeated a hundred times, to satisfy Prout; it was not a hard task.

But Wharton tore up the first sheet, half done. He felt that it would not do. From force of habit, in spite of himself, he had written in something that at least resembled handwriting. As it was necessary for Prout to suppose that Coker had written the impot, this, of course, would not do.

He started again, and succeeded in producing a scrawl for which a Second Form fag would have been severely reprimanded by Mr. Twigg. This was satisfactory; Coker might have seen it with his own eyes and taken it for his own fist.

Having finished, Wharton picked it up to leave the study, but fortunately remembered in time that if there were no blots on it Prout might be suspicious. Three or four blots dropped on the sheet made it look absolutely like Coker's own work. A smear gave it the finishing touch.

Wharton surveyed it with admiration. It looked almost as much like a Cubist picture as an impot. That showed that it was all right. It was impossible for Prout to doubt. On the subject of Coker's fist Prout had waxed sardonic in the Fifth Form room, many a time and oft. It was a regular part of the persecution under which Coker suffered. Prout could not possibly suspect that any other Greyfriars man had written that impot. No other Greyfriars man was capable of it, except, as in this instance, for the sake of pouring oil on the troubled waters.

The masters were at tea in Common-room when Wharton strolled, with a casual air, along Masters passage. He whipped into Mr. Prout's study, and laid the impot in a prominent position on Prout's writing-table. There it was bound to catch Prout's eyes as soon as he came in after tea.

Wharton retired hurriedly from the study and the passage. He rejoined his chums, and they went to the Remove passage to tea.

Twenty minutes later there was a ponderous tread in Masters passage. Prout was coming to his study. When Prout was coming his approach was known from afar; the footsteps of an elephant could not have been more distinctive. Indeed, fellows in the Fifth likened Prout unto that fearsome beast in Macaulay, described as the "huge earth-shaking beast." With elephantine tread, Prout rolled along Masters passage, and rolled into his study.

He arrived there in a good-humour. He had had quite a pleasant chat in Common-room over tea. He had told the other masters some stories of his early days, when he had been, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter. Thrilling stories, well worth the telling; their only drawback being that Prout had told them many times before. One by one the masters had edged out and escaped.

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till only little Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second, remained. Little Mr. Twigg, over-awed by the ponderous Prout, dared not cut and run. He sat it out. Twigg was a small man and nothing of an athlete; but there were great powers of endurance in him. He bore it to the end.

After that pleasant talk in Common-room Mr. Prout was in a good temper, and looked quite amiable as he rolled into his study.

Then he remembered Coker, and frowned. Then he saw the impot lying on his writing-table, and smiled.

Of course, the impot, regarded as an impot, was a disgrace to a fag in the Second. The writing was a fearful scrawl, the blots and the smear characteristic of Coker. But such as it was, it was there! That impudent, rebellious boy had, after all, toed the line! He had come to a sense of the fitness of things. He had, at long last, obeyed his Form master.

Mr. Prout had many ways of his own, but at heart he was a kind and good-natured gentleman. He was relieved to find that the rebel of his Form had not, after all, pushed matters to an extremity. He did not want a Fifth Form man sacked from the school. Had the impot not been there, Prout undoubtedly, would have taken Coker to the headmaster for judgment. He would really have had no choice in the matter. But it was there, and he was glad to be relieved of such a painful necessity.

So far as Mr. Prout was concerned all was calm and bright!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Getting Away With It!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. saw Coker when he came in for calling-over, and smiled. Coker came into Hall with his bullet head held as high as usual; Potter and Greene, who were with him, had a rather worried look. Coker did not look worried, because he did not feel worried. Why should a fellow feel worried over standing firm on a matter of principle? Coker saw nothing to worry about, and, naturally, did not worry.

He answered cheerfully to his name when Mr. Quelch called the roll. He walked out of Hall with his friends, undismayed. If Prout was seeking trouble, Coker wasn't the man to dodge it. Rather, indeed, was he the man to hunt for it wherever it was to be found.

But in the study that evening Potter and Greene had apprehensive feelings. Prout couldn't let the matter drop! He simply couldn't! He had let the episode in the games study drop, for special reasons. But an open act of defiance and rebellion he could not let drop. At every moment the Fifth-Formers expected to hear the tread of the "huge earth-shaking beast" coming to the study.

But the floor in the Fifth-Form passage did not shake to the tread of Mr. Prout. He did not come.

Potter and Greene could not understand it.

Coker could. At least, he thought he could.

"You fellows are silly asses, as I've told you before!" he remarked complacently. "Prout's chucked it! What else could he do?"

"What else?" murmured Potter.

"Yes; what else? I dare say he's found out by this time that he was in the wrong."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Most likely it's dawned on him that

I'm not a fellow to be browbeaten. I've tried to make that clear to him, anyhow."

"Oh!"

"I never really expected him to take the matter any further," said Coker victoriously. "He's an ass, I admit, but not such an ass as all that. He's chucked it, because he hadn't a leg to stand on. You'll see!"

Coker had no doubts.

Potter and Greene had strong doubts. Yet Prout did not come to the study; neither did a message reach Coker from his Form master.

After prep the three went along to the games study. Some of the Fifth asked Coker whether he had done his impot, and he replied calmly that he hadn't, and didn't intend to. They predicted trouble, at which Horace shrugged his shoulders and smiled scornfully.

That Coker could get away with it, as Price expressed it, was impossible. Prout couldn't possibly let him.

Coker was serenely confident, but the other fellows in the Fifth were waiting to hear something drop, as it were.

But they waited in vain.

The evening passed without alarms or excursions. Prout was apparently taking it like a lamb.

It was not unknown for Prout to forget an impot. But it was impossible that he could have forgotten this one. This impot was a sort of test case—a tug-of-war between a Form master and a rebellious member of his Form. It could not have been forgotten. If Prout was bottling up his wrath it was certain to improve, like wine, with keeping. When bed-time came without Coker having been called on the carpet the Fifth decided that Prout was giving Coker plenty of rope. In the morning he would be brought to book.

They had, of course, no suspicion how a good Samaritan in the Remove had poured oil on the troubled waters. Nobody was likely to guess that.

The next morning, when Mr. Prout appeared at breakfast—he generally breakfasted with his Form—the Fifth-Form men expected to hear the thunder-clap.

But Prout took no special notice of Coker.

In the Form-room the Fifth looked for the outbreak. Prout did not break out.

Indeed, that morning he was more patient than usual with Coker. He seemed to be bent on giving Coker a chance.

Then the Fifth-Formers gave it up. Prout, after all, must have forgotten that impot, impossible as it seemed.

Coker was serenely satisfied.

He did not think for a moment that Prout had forgotten the impot. His view was that Prout had discreetly retired from an untenable position. He was glad of it. Having put Prout in his place, as he considered, Coker was satisfied. Nothing would have induced him to write that insulting impot. Prout knew better than to ask him for it. So it was all right.

"I'm not the fellow to say 'I told you so,'" Coker remarked to his friends in break, "but I did tell you so, you chaps. In your usual pig-headed way, you thought differently. Now you know I was right."

"I can't understand it," said Potter.

"Beats me," said Greene.

"Precious few things you fellows do understand, if you ask me," remarked Coker. "I told you it would be all right. It is all right! What is there to be surprised at in that?"

Potter and Greene saw a lot to be



Crash! Bump! A fat fist, with Bunter's weight behind it, caught Mr. Prout fairly on his plump nose, and he sat down on the floor of Coker's study with a concussion that made the study almost rock. Realising that he was free Bunter fled, with the speed of a hare. (See Chapter 13.)

surprised at in Coker proving to be right. But it was useless to tell Coker so. They could not understand, and they gave the problem up.

Undoubtedly, they were glad that the matter had ended so well. They did not want Coker sacked. He was their pal, and his study was a land flowing with milk and honey. Extensive feeds took place in Coker's study; Coker, well supplied by his excellent Aunt Judy, never counted the cost. Coker was a generous fellow, and a good fellow, in his way.

So long as he was allowed to have his own way in every single thing and to have the last and victorious word on all imaginable subjects, Coker was easy to get on with. Undoubtedly the years of plenty, in Coker's study, would have been followed by years of famine had Horace Coker been sacked from Greyfriars. Potter and Greene would not, perhaps, have missed his conversation, or the instruction on countless subjects that he often gave them. But they would have missed him at tea and supper. That did not admit of doubt.

They were glad that he was not going to be sacked. They hoped that, after this inexplicable narrow escape, when Coker had so unexpectedly got away with it, he would take warning and steer clear of Prout.

Potter and Greene hoped sincerely that, under the intensest provocation, Coker would never punch Prout. They were almost the only fellows at Greyfriars who hoped so.

Harry Wharton & Co., beholding Coker of the Fifth walking in the quad with a cheery and self-satisfied countenance, smiled to one another. Coker had got away with it, and never dreamed that he owed his escape to an unknown rescuer in the Remove.

The incident was closed, and had Coker steered clear of trouble with Prout, as his friends hoped he would,

all would have been well. But Horace Coker was not the man to steer clear of trouble. Horace Coker was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Harry Wharton's kind intervention had saved him—till the next time.

And next time was destined to come with a crash!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Detention for Two!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Sorry, old fat bean!" said Harry Wharton politely. "We can't ask you to tea to-day. We're not teing in Hall this time."

And the Co. chuckled. "If you think I've come to tea—" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"My hat! Haven't you?" "No!" roared Bunter.

"Wonders will never cease!" said Bob Cherry. "Who was it said that the age of miracles was past? Whoever he was, he was off-side."

"I say, you fellows, the cake's come!" "What cake?"

"Coker's cake."

"Is Coker getting a cake?" yawned Bob.

"I told you so the other day. I told you I heard him mention it to Potter and Greene," hooted Bunter. "His Aunt Judy's sending him a cake. I've been keeping an eye on his study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's come," said Bunter. "It's a parcel, and it's been put in Coker's study. I'm certain it's the cake. I say, Coker's detained in the Fifth Form-room. Prout has been at him again. Coker's detained till six. Mind, I'm certain of it. I've made sure."

"Well, what about it?" asked Harry Wharton, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "Nothing to do with us, I suppose?"

"What I mean is, as Coker's detained the coast is clear," explained Bunter. "Coker, being in the Form-room, he can't be in his study. See?"

"Yes, I think I see that," admitted the captain of the Remove. "That's fairly clear. Coker can't be in two places at once. I believe I could have thought that out for myself."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, you know," said Bunter. "Potter and Greene are in the quad."

"What the merry thump does it matter to us where Potter and Greene are?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Can't you see?" exclaimed Bunter. "The coast being clear and the cake in the study, why shouldn't one of you fellows nip into the Fifth Form passage and bag it?"

"Oh!" said the Famous Five all together.

"Of course, I'm not the chap to raid a fellow's grub, or to suggest anything of the sort—"

"Not!" ejaculated Wharton.

"No," hooted Bunter. "But Coker's a beast! He kicked me the other day, thinking I was after his cake, the suspicious beast. Bagging the cake would be a proper punishment, you know—making the punishment fit the crime, and all that. I'm not thinking of the cake. You fellows know I don't care much for tuck—"

"Ye gods!"

"But Coker ought to be punished," explained Bunter. "Kicking a Remove man is altogether too thick. It's an insult to the whole Form. My idea is to punish him as he deserves. Besides, the cake will be a ripper—his aunt always sends him ripping cakes. We'll whack out the cake, and punish Coker at the same time. See the point?"

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,084.



(Continued from page 13.)

And William George Bunter blinked anxiously at the chums of the Remove. He was very anxious for them to see that point, which he had worked out to his own fat satisfaction.

They did not see it, however. Between the views of Billy Bunter and those of the Famous Five there was a great gulf fixed. The five juniors answered William George Bunter with one voice.

"You fat sweep!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"If you want to punish Coker, why can't you nip into his study and bag the cake on your own?" grinned Bob.

"Well, Potter or Greene might come in—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, of course, I'm not afraid of Potter and Greene. What I mean is it's up to you, Wharton, as captain of the Remove."

"Up to me as captain of the Remove to pinch Coker's cake?" roared Wharton.

"Nunno! To—to punish Coker for his insult to the Form! He kicked me hard! I'd jolly well knock him down only—"

"Knock Coker down?" gasped Bob.

"Yes—only I don't care to enter into any vulgar shindy with the fellow—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I say, you fellows, I think you ought to play up!" urged Billy Bunter. "It's a ripping cake, I can tell you that. Topping! I'll whack it out with you—fair whacks all round. I never was mean. What do you say?"

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific."

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five. They were sitting round the table in Study No. 1 at tea. Bunter had had tea in Study No. 7 with Peter Todd. He had had another tea with Ogilvy and Russell in Study No. 3. Other studies that he had visited had either finished tea or declined his company. So Bunter was still hungry.

The thought of that large and luscious cake in Coker's study—going begging, as it were—made his mouth water. Only the less pleasant thought of Potter and Greene kept Bunter from making an immediate frontal attack on that cake. Either or both of those beasts might come in and find him bagging the cake; and if they did, they were certain to be brutal. Bunter might get the cake and a hiding; he might get a hiding without the cake. On the other hand, if Harry Wharton & Co. raided the cake, all would be well. If they got the cake, they would whack it out with Bunter. If they got the hiding, it would not matter. Bunter would be no worse off than he was before.

It was just like those beasts not to play up when Bunter had worked it all out to his own satisfaction.

They did not want the hiding. They did not even seem to want the cake—which was much more surprising. He had put it tactfully, too—emphasising

the just punishment of Coker, touching lightly on the cake.

But it booted not.

There was nothing doing in Study No. 1. William George Bunter had to look farther for a catspaw to pull his chestnuts out of the fire.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Rats!"

"Well, if you let me down, don't think you're going to get a whack in the cake," said Bunter warmly. "After I've bagged that cake and taken all the risk, I can jolly well tell you I shan't whack it out in this study!"

"You certainly won't whack out stolen goods in this study, you fat fraud!" said the captain of the Remove. He rose from his chair. "You say Coker's detained till six o'clock?"

"Yes. I know it for a fact. I heard—"

"Then after six his cake will be safe," said Wharton. "It's half-past five now. Come in."

Harry Wharton took hold of Bunter's collar and hooked him into the study. Bunter whirled across the room and sat down in a farther corner with a bump and a howl.

"Yarooogh!"

Wharton closed the door.

"You silly chump!" roared Bunter.

"What's this game?"

"You're staying here till six," answered the captain of the Remove cheerfully. "You're not bagging Coker's cake, old fat man. One of these days you'll get flogged, or sacked, for your grub-raiding. Not that that would matter—"

"Beast!"

"But it's a disgrace to the Remove. Keep where you are."

Bunter was scrambling wrathfully to his feet. His fat face was red and infuriated.

"Sit down!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter.

Whiz!

A well-aimed cushion smote William George Bunter on the spot where he had hoped to stow away Coker's cake.

Bump!

Bunter sat down.

"Keep there!" said the captain of the Remove. "You get up again, you fat burglar, and you get the loaf next!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"You see, you were labouring under a misapprehension, as Quelch would put it," explained Wharton. "It's not up to me as captain of the Remove to pinch Coker's cake; it's up to me as captain of the Remove to see that you don't pinch it."

"Yah! Beast!"

Billy Bunter glared at the captain of the Remove, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath. This was worse than he could possibly have anticipated. Not only were these unspeakable beasts refusing to bag Coker's cake for him, but they were actually preventing him from bagging it himself. It was insult added to injury. Coker was detained in his Form-room till six. Bunter was detained in Study No. 1 so long as Coker was detained in his Form-room. By the time Bunter escaped Coker would be free—and the cake inaccessible. It would be gone like a beautiful dream.

Bunter spluttered with wrath. Such a state of affairs was not to be borne. Bunter jumped up again.

Whiz!

The loaf landed on the spot where the cushion had struck. It rolled on the floor of the study. So did Bunter.

"Yaroooooo!"

"Better sit it out, old fat bean!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yah! Rotters!"

"You're nearest, Johnny! Kick him!"

"Certainly!"

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter shut up. He sat in his corner, as if understudying Little Jack Horner. He sat there till the chums of the Remove finished tea, after which they chatted cheerily till six o'clock rang out from the clock-tower. By that time Coker's detention was up—and so was Bunter's.

"You can cut, old fat man!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled to the door. There he turned to glare back at five cheery, grinning faces.

"You cheeky rotters—"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"You—you—"

Wharton picked up a cushion. William George Bunter withdrew his fat person from the doorway hurriedly and retired from the spot.

"Beast!" floated back from the Remove staircase.

And the chums of the Remove chuckled.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Up Against It!

HORACE COKER sat in the Fifth Form-room in solitary state. The rugged brow of Coker was worn and weary.

The weary ploughman who homeward plodded his way was not so weary as Coker of the Fifth.

There was Latin prose before Coker. He had been set a translation by his Form master. It was such a translation as any fellow in the Shell could have done with his eyes shut. To Coker of the Fifth it presented difficulties almost insuperable.

The fact was that, as Coker sometimes told his friends, he couldn't bring his mind down to such stuff. A classical education, according to Coker, was all "bunk." And, indeed, it was not easy to guess what use a classical education was likely to be to Horace Coker—if he ever got it in. One of those fatheaded ancient things that ought to have been abolished long ago, Coker told his friends. Who, Coker would inquire, wanted to load up his memory with hic and haec and hoc? Few fellows at Greyfriars wanted to, that was certain. And what was the use of the stuff when they got out of school into the wide world? To whom were they going to talk Latin? Nobody! Who was going to talk Latin to them? Again, nobody. Were they going to read Latin authors for pleasure—once they escaped from the painful necessity of doing so? No jolly fear! Then what was the use of the whole game? None! It was all bunk!

Holding these views on the value of a classical education, Coker was not likely to shine at the classics. His views were backed up by a natural obtuseness, a difficulty in learning and remembering, and a deep, powerful disinclination to mental exertion. In these circumstances, any master who undertook to drive the tongue of Virgil and Cicero into Coker's head was taking on a task which might very well have made a thirteenth labour for Hercules as hefty as any of the other twelve.

Coker had a section of Suetonius to translate. There were fellows in the Remove who could have strolled through Suetonius, so to speak. Harry Wharton,

who had done Coker one good turn in the matter of the impot, could easily have done him another, had he been present now. Alone, unaided, Coker was stumped. He could not say, like Coriolanus, "Alone I did it!" Alone he couldn't do it.

The sentence that had brought Coker to a full stop was "aquae autem tepidae aliquantum bibit." How was Mr. Prout to understand that Coker really was floored by this? If he was floored by it, what was he doing in the Fifth Form at all? What Coker described as being unable to bring his mind down to such stuff, Mr. Prout ascribed to laziness and want of application.

Had Coker succeeded in worrying out what Suetonius meant by that, to him, mysterious statement, he would only have felt contemptuous derision. For what did it matter to anybody? What good was this going to do Coker, at Soccer, for instance, what was an important matter? Was it going to help him with running repairs to his motor-bike?

Coker undoubtedly had much to learn at Soccer, and his motor-bike required more running repairs than any other motor-bike that ever was or would be. But this sort of stuff wasn't going to help him. Suppose he got it down—suppose he absorbed it as Prout wanted him to do—then presumably he would be in the same mental state as a school-master who knew all these things. Coker shuddered at the thought. If there was anything he didn't want to resemble in the remotest degree it was a school-master.

In this frame of mind, Coker was not likely to make much progress with a classical education.

When six struck, Coker was sitting at his desk in the dusky Form-room, like the sempstress in the poem, with fingers weary and worn, with eyelids heavy and red.

There was bitterness in his breast.

His time was of value. Coker knew that, if nobody else did. His valuable time was being wasted on this tosh.

It was fortunate for Suetonius that he was not a contemporary of Coker's and a Greyfriars man. Coker had resisted the temptation to punch Suetonius.

Indeed, Coker would have been a happy man could he have had the gloves on, for a quarter of an hour, with Suetonius, Virgil, Cicero, Tacitus, and the whole gang of them. Coker's Latin undoubtedly would have made Quintilian stare and gasp; but Coker would have undertaken to make Quintilian, and the whole crew, stare and gasp, with the gloves on.

Mr. Prout entered the Form-room.

He came, on the stroke of time, to release Coker from detention, naturally expecting that the translation had been done.

"Well, Coker, I hope that we have been successful," said Mr. Prout, in his most genial tone—that tone of bonhomie he often adopted in the Fifth, keeping up that friendly and trustful understanding which should always exist between master and pupil. This genial manner was described by Fitzgerald of the Fifth as "Prout's blarney."

"We have been successful—what?" said Mr. Prout.

He really wanted to be kind to Coker. Since Coker's—supposed—surrender on the subject of the impot, Prout had relaxed a good deal, and tried his hardest to be patient with this most troublesome member of his Form.

But his geniality faded as he looked at Coker's paper. Coker had done something, unfortunately missing Suetonius' meaning with the same deadly accuracy with which he was accustomed to miss

the goal area when he kicked a footer. But he had come to a stop at a sentence that would not have bottled a fag of the Third.

"Coker," said Mr. Prout, "this will not do."

Grunt from Coker.

Even Coker understood that it was useless to tell Prout his opinion of this miserable stuff. Prout would never have understood.

So Coker was silent, save for an expressive grunt.

"I shall detain you no longer," said Mr. Prout. "But this translation must and shall be done, Coker. You will take it with you, and work it out this evening in your study. I shall expect it before bed-time."

Without waiting for a reply, Mr. Prout retired.

Coker gathered up the wretched thing. It had to be done somehow. Had it been a matter of principle, like the matter of the impot, Coker was quite capable of resistance and defiance. But Prout was within his rights here. He had to knock this stuff into a fellow's head—in fact, that was what he was paid for. Coker was capable of seeing reason, to that extent. He carried off the trash to his study, with the intention of worrying the detestable thing out somehow.

There was a parcel on Coker's study table. He noticed it, but did not heed it. He knew what it contained, and he had a grateful thought for his kind Aunt Judith. But he was in no humour for cakes. Potter and Greene had not waited tea for him. Finding that Coker would not be in the study at tea-time, Potter and Greene had gone to tea with Fitzgerald. They never cared for tea in the study when Coker wasn't there. This was not so much because they missed Coker's bright company, and his unending flow of conversation. They missed the spread that Coker stood when he was there.

Coker and Suetonius had the study to themselves.

But Coker, for the present, did not bother about Suetonius. He sat down to take a rest, which he needed, after his mental exertions in the Form-room.

A few minutes later the study door opened softly.

Coker stared.

A fat face and a pair of glimmering spectacles appeared in the doorway.

Coker glared.

Billy Bunter blinked cautiously into the study. But for those unspeakable beasts, Harry Wharton & Co., Bunter would have come, and gone, before Coker. Now he had found Coker at home.

Coker jumped up.

"Ow!"

One startled gasp, and William George Bunter fled.

Coker made a spring like a tiger. Thud!

"Yaroooooh!"

William George Bunter caught the boot before he got out of reach. There was a heavy bump in the passage and a fearful yell; then a pattering of rapid footsteps.

Coker turned back into his study, feeling a little better.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sticking to It!

"GETTING on all right, old man?"

Potter asked that question cheerily as he came into the study with Greene for prep.

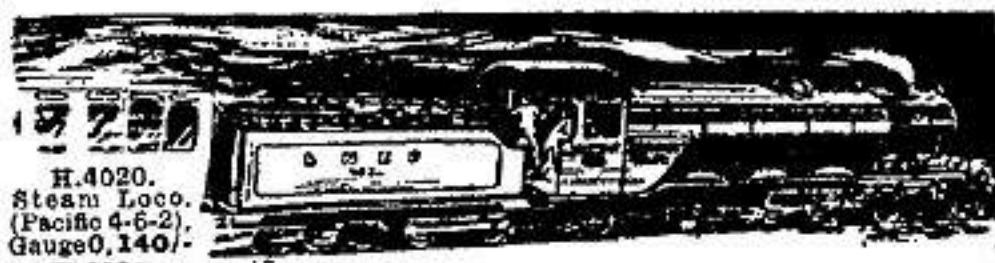
Not that he supposed that Coker was getting on all right. Coker, in fact, was not getting on at all, except with the cake. He had unpacked the parcel now, and was disposing of large slices from an immense cake. Coker had almost forgotten that he hadn't had his tea till inward warnings reminded him of it. With that disgusting translation to wrestle out, Coker had no time for tea; but the cake came in handy.

Potter and Greene glanced appreciatively at the cake. Coker had his faults and his drawbacks, but there were some good things about Coker, and the best of the lot was his Aunt Judith. A fellow with an aunt like that was undoubtedly a fellow to be cultivated. Much could be borne from a fellow with Miss Judith Coker for an aunt, whose admiring affection kept the chap supplied with a steady stream of good things, so that he resembled a horn of plenty that never ran dry.

"Finished that translation, old bean?" asked Greene.

"No. I'm giving it rather a rest," said Coker carelessly. "Have some cake?"

(Continued on next page.)



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Potter and Greene had some cake. Immense as Aunt Judy's cake was, it had considerably diminished in size by the time the three Fifth-Formers had done with it. But there was still a considerable remainder, which was transferred to the study cupboard. Prep was now the order of the day, or, rather, of the evening.

After prep, Potter and Greene had another slice or two of that luscious cake, while Coker sorted out Suetonius once more. Potter finished his slice of cake rather hurriedly and retired. It was not exactly that he was unwilling to help Coker with his task. But Coker was a difficult fellow to help. His contempt for classical knowledge did not prevent him from believing that he knew more about the matter than his study-mates.

To help Coker, you had to admit, first of all, that Coker knew best; then to make your suggestions in a humble and contrite spirit; then to listen to Coker's sarcastic rejection of your suggestions. If Coker finally adopted them, he would do so in a lofty and patronising and rather contemptuous way, which was a little exasperating to a fellow who was doing his work for him. Potter had been there before, so to speak. So he discreetly retired.

Greene remained a little longer, moved either by an impulse of friendship, or Aunt Judith's cake, or perhaps both.

"Like a little help, old chap?" he asked, as Coker wrinkled his manly brow over "aquae autem tepidae aliquantum bibit."

"I hardly need help with this stuff, thanks," answered Coker stiffly. "I'll just knock it off."

That was just like Coker!

But Coker, of course, had his prestige in the study to consider. It would never do to admit that he was bottled by muck like Suetonius. Fellows might take advantage of such an admission; might make out that Coker wasn't the brainy man of the study, as, of course, he was. For, after all, if this stuff gave him trouble, it was only because he couldn't bring his mind down to it. Other minds, such as Potter's and Greene's, being on a lower level than Coker's, came down to it with more facility.

"Well, I'm going along to the games study," said Greene, taking another slice of cake.

"Well, you might look out a word in the dic for me," said Coker, in a careless way.

That, again, was just like Coker! A fellow who helped him had to do the work while Coker kept up an air that the fellow was just about intellectually equal to looking out words in a dictionary.

"I think I can manage that stuff without a dic, old chap," answered Greene, with a smile.

Coker gave him a cold stare. This, of course, was cheek. Coker found it hard enough to manage the stuff even with a dictionary. This cheeky ass made out that he could manage it without. In that remark William Greene had displayed less tact than was required in dealing with Coker.

"Don't be an ass, Greeney!" said Coker.

"But—"

"Don't be a cheeky ass, anyhow. I suppose you can't help being an ass, being born one. But no fellow need be a cheeky ass."

Greene coughed, and wished that he had accompanied Potter from the study. However, the cake was agreeable, if Coker wasn't.

"If you want to look out some words for me, you can look them out," said Coker, with a manner implying that it was a rare treat to look out words in the dictionary for him, as no doubt Coker thought it was. "Otherwise, don't jaw, old chap. Can't work while you're chattering."

"Coming, old bean!" called out Greene, in response to an imaginary call in the passage, and he hurriedly departed.

Left on his own, Coker reflected for a few moments bitterly on the hollowness of friendship. Then he applied himself to Suetonius.

The baffling sentence still baffled him. So far as Coker could make out, Suetonius was making the remarkable statement that Nero had got drunk on warm water. That Nero was a monarch given to intoxication Coker knew; but this, of course, was absurd. Coker did not expect to find any horse-sense in a Latin author, but he expected more sense than this. Finally, he compromised to the effect that Nero, being drunk, took some warm water. If Prout did not like this, he could lump it. Obviously Prout was going to lump it. It was absolutely certain that he would not like it.

"Tunc uno quoque," went on Coker, having mastered the difficulty that had stopped him so long.

It was weary work.

Hardly another man in the Fifth was in his study now; but from the games study at the end of the passage came a cheery buzz of voices.

Again and again Coker was tempted to chuck it. But he had made up his dogged mind to it now; he was going to translate that stuff, or perish in the attempt. Nine o'clock rang out—half-past nine. Ten was bed-time for the Fifth. Prout had to get that rot before bed-time.

If Coker did not take it to Prout's study, Prout would come to Coker's study for it. He would come in wrath. Probably it would mean detention for the next half-holiday, and more translation.

Coker, with inky fingers and an inky smear on his nose where he had rubbed it in an effort of thought, worried Suetonius like a dog worrying a bone.

It is said that the constant drop of water wears away the largest stone; the constant gnaw of Towser masticates the

toughest bone; but, to Coker, Suetonius was tougher than either of these.

Coker leaned back in his chair to think out the beastly thing. His eyelids drooped.

Suetonius and the study floated before his tired eyes. They closed. Coker slept.

He slept soundly. His brain was tired out. Coker was a poor hand at many things, but when it came to sleeping Coker could keep his end up with anybody. In the Fifth Form dorm Coker generally slept as soon as his head touched the pillow, and never opened his eyes again till the rising-bell clanged out. That was in ordinary times, when he had not been worn out by the mental stress that he had now gone through. On the present occasion Coker slept like a top.

With his eyes closed and his mouth open, Coker slept—and snored. The insuperable difficulties of Suetonius, the majestic wrath of Mr. Prout, vanished from his mind. The scratching of Coker's pen was replaced by the steady rumble of Coker's snore; and he slept and was comforted.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Neck or Nothing!

BILLY BUNTER wore a worried look when the Remove trooped off to their dormitory at half-past nine.

Bunter had a poor memory for many things; but there were some things that he remembered well; indeed, that he could not possibly forget. Coker's cake was one of them.

Though lost to sight, it was to memory dear.

Bunter had worked it out, to his own fat satisfaction, that he would be fully justified in raiding that magnificent cake. All he needed was an opportunity. Indeed, he gave more thought to the opportunity than to the justification. And it was the opportunity, unfortunately, that had been lacking. He could have done, at a pinch, without the justification.

Bed-time seemed to knock Bunter's last hope on the head. But it is well said that hope springs eternal in the human breast.

Bunter simply could not forget that cake. Had some friendly fellow stood Bunter a handsome study supper he might have forgotten it. But no friendly fellow did.

Bunter was hungry. The school supper was a mere jest to Bunter. A bag of tarts he had found in Smithy's study, while Smithy was down in the Rag, had only whetted his keen appetite. He knew the kind of cake that Miss Judith Coker sent to her beloved nephew Horace. He had been there before! The mere thought of it made his mouth water.

After all, a fellow could get out of dorm. Certainly Bunter, even in a famished state, would not have cared to venture to go rooting among the studies in the dark after everybody had gone to bed. Neither could he possibly have remained awake long enough for the purpose, hungry as he was. But the Fifth did not go to bed till ten—half an hour later than the juniors. There would be lights in the Fifth Form passage till that hour, at least. On the other hand, few Fifth Form men were likely to be in their studies. Most of them would be in the games study, which was used as a Common-room by the Fifth. Coker was least likely of all to be in his study—being the last fellow at

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"Come!" gasped Mr. Prout, pressing his handkerchief to his nose. "Coker must be taken to the punishment-room and locked up for the night." Still dabbing his nose the Fifth Form master led the way, with Coker, in the grip of two hefty seniors, following like a man in a dream. (See Chapter 14.)

Greyfriars to "swot" at anything, and being also a gregarious fellow, fond of company.

Bunter thought it out going to bed.

Coker wasn't at all likely to be in his study unless he was standing a study supper, as he sometimes did. But this was improbable, Bunter considered, just now. That ragging he had had from the Fifth made it improbable. Coker would have to get over that ruffling of his lofty dignity before he stood any more study suppers in the Fifth. Bunter was exercising unusual intellectual powers in thinking out this important matter; in fact, he worked it out like a problem at maths.

His final decision was that most likely Coker's study would be vacant. The cake would be there. That greedy beast Coker might have wolfed some of it. Potter and Greens might have scoffed some. But the size of the parcel lingered in Bunter's memory, and he knew Aunt Judy's cakes. There would be a lot left. Even if only three or four pounds were left that would make a snack for Bunter. Even a snack was welcome.

Bunter only half-undressed when he turned into bed. He did not intend to sleep.

After Wingate of the Sixth had put out the lights and gone, there was the usual chatter from bed to bed.

As a rule Bunter dropped off to sleep at once, and did not hear the chat. Now it annoyed him. He wished the fellows would shut up and go to sleep.

Ten minutes passed and the voices died away. Bunter sat up in bed.

He did not want to leave it later. It was a quarter to ten. At ten the lights were turned out in Fifth-Form passage. Bunter had no hope of being able to grope his way to Coker's study in the

dark, even if he had had the nerve to root about in dark passages. And taking a candle or a flash-lamp, of course, was impossible; he would be spotted. In the night all cats are grey; and in the dark all studies much of a muchness. Bunter might have rooted up and down the Fifth-Form passage a long time without finding the right room. It was now or never.

"I say, you fellows, are you asleep?" asked Bunter cautiously.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"

"You awake, you beast? I'm not going to get up!" said Bunter hastily.

"What on earth are you going to get up for, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton drowsily.

"You silly ass! I've just said I'm not!"

"Yes. That's why I know you are!"

"Beast!"

"Shut up, Bunter!" grunted Bolsover major. "Let a fellow go to sleep."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Do dry up, old fat man!" said Peter Todd.

"Beast!"

"Somebody shy a boot at him!" yawned Squiff.

Bunter was silent. He sat and waited, angrily and impatiently. He did not want the Remove to be apprised of his intended expedition. Leaving the dormitory after lights out was a serious matter, and the less said about it the better. But that was not all. If Bunter succeeded in lifting that cake and carrying it off to his lair to devour, he desired the devouring thereof to be a solo performance. He did not want to whack that cake out with a lot of greedy fellows. Fellows like Bolsover major and Skinner and Snoop and Fishy would have insisted upon "whacks." Bunter had wanted other fellows to bag

the cake for his benefit; but bagging the cake for the benefit of other fellows was a very different proposition.

Bunter gave them another five minutes.

Then he crept quietly out of bed, without asking the fellows whether they were asleep this time. He crept as silently as he could.

In trousers and shirt and socks Bunter crept cautiously to the door of the Remove dormitory.

There he paused to listen with bated breath.

He heard no voice; no sound of alarm. Either the fellows were all asleep, or they had not heard his stealthy movements if they were awake.

Softly he opened the big door, stepped into the dark passage outside, and closed the door again, softly and silently.

He grinned a fat grin of satisfaction. All was serene, so far. He had time to nip down to the studies and nip away again before the light was turned out in the Fifth-Form passage.

He groped his way by a dark passage and stairs, and then tip-toed by a dimly-lighted corridor, and crept like a fat ghost into the Fifth Form passage, at the opposite end from the games study. The light was still burning there, as he had expected.

Bunter blinked along the passage. Not a fellow was to be seen. The sound of a distant buzz of voices reached him from the games study; but the door of that apartment was closed.

Bunter scudded along to Coker's door. Bunter had worked it out meticulously and mathematically that Horace Coker was quite unlikely to be in his study up to bed-time. But Bunter knew nothing about Coker's translation task.

And had no idea whatever that Coker had fallen asleep over it.

The light in the study might mean that somebody was there, or it might mean that Coker, who was quite as enough, had left the light burning when he left the study. The point was too doubtful for Bunter to venture to open the door. It was not merely the kick-out that had to be risked, but should it come to his Form-Master's knowledge that he was out of his dormitory after lights out, it meant a caning from Mr. Quelch as well.

Bunter's huge round eyes gleamed with wrath behind his big spectacles.

This was what he had stayed awake for. It was for this that he had taken the risk of breaking dormitory bounds—to be bitterly disappointed at the finish.

Then a sound from the study caught his listening ears. He started, and listened again.

It was a snore.

Bunter chuckled softly. The beast was there; but he had fallen asleep. A fellow who snored was obviously asleep. If he was asleep a fellow could nip in quietly.

It was risky. A sleeper might awake. And if the sleeper was Coker, and he woke to find Bunter bagging his cake, the outcome was certain to be horribly painful for Bunter. But nothing venture, nothing win. At least, he could venture to open the door softly and peep inside the study and see how matters stood. Softly he turned the door knob; the door opened a few inches. Bunter blinked in.

There was Horace Coker, leaning back in his chair, his eyes shut, and his mouth open, and from his nose a steady rumbling snore proceeding.

Bunter blinked at him searchingly. He was fast asleep and snoring. Bunter tiptoed into the study. Softly he closed the door. As if treading on thin ice he crept along to the study cupboard, which was behind Coker as he sat. The door of the cupboard had been left half open by Greene, after his last attack on the cake. Bunter pulled it wide open. On the shelf lay the cake in the midst of its unfastened wrappings—a good part gone, but a good part remaining—and Bunter feasted his eyes on it for a second.

Then—

A minute more would have been enough for Bunter to collar the cake, tiptoe out of the study, scud away to the corner and vanish, cake and all. But as the poet has remarked, "the little more, and how much it is." Only a minute—only sixty miserable seconds did Bunter need. And of those sixty seconds not one was granted him.

Outside the study sounded a ponderous tread.

It did not awaken Coker; he was too fast asleep for that. But it sent Billy Bunter's heart throbbing into his mouth.

He knew the tread of the "huge, earth-shaking beast." Mr. Prout was coming along the Fifth Form passage.

Was he coming to Coker's study? He was not going to the games study; he must have passed that coming from the stairs. He was evidently bound for some study—very likely Coker's. Bunter shivered. Being caught out by Coker would have been bad enough, but being caught by a Form-master—In his mind's eye Bunter saw himself grasped by the collar by the indignant Prout, and whisked away to Mr. Quelch's study for judgment.

He turned from the cake. Even the cake had lost its attractions now. He made a rush for the door.

But he stopped again. The passage

outside was lighted. He could not leave, the study without being instantly seen and recognised. There was no escape.

Bunter stood palpitating.

In horror he listened to the heavy tread coming nearer and nearer. Seconds passed—centuries to Bunter. If only that earth-shaking tread passed the study and proceeded onward! It stopped!

In that awful moment as the heavy tread stopped and a hand touched the door-knob Bunter knew that Prout was coming into this very study. In a fraction of time more they would be face to face. With a presence of mind born of terror Bunter clutched at the switch and turned off the light. Darkness fell, and in the deep darkness Prout opened the study door and stepped in.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Punched!

MR. PROUT stopped dead.

Wrath was in his face, invisible in the darkness—wrath was in his breast.

Until close on the bed-time of his Form he had expected Coker to come along with that unhappy translation. Coker had not come. It was, Prout felt, one more example of the recalcitrant rebelliousness of this troublesome and unruly boy. Nevertheless, Prout had come to Coker's study prepared to be kind. If this was rebellious defiance he was ready to deal with it with a heavy hand. But if the obtuse Coker was still wrestling with Suetonius, if he was doing his best, Prout meant to be considerate.

And now as he was stepping into Coker's study the light was turned out in his very face.

That the light had been on Mr. Prout was well aware. It had vanished into darkness even as he opened the door.

Wrath majestic rose in Mr. Prout's ample breast. This was rebelliousness, there was no doubt of it—it was unexampled impudence—it was insolence that amounted to truculence. Turning out the light as he entered the study—practically hurling defiance in his face!

Not being a cat, Mr. Prout could not see in the dark. He was, therefore, in complete ignorance of the fact that a Remove junior was in the study, and that that junior had turned out the light. As the Remove had been in bed nearly half an hour, Mr. Prout was not likely to guess that one of that Form was in Coker's study.

He stood breathing wrath; too overcome by that insulting reception to be able to speak, for the moment.

Within two feet of him Billy Bunter stood rooted to the floor, trembling.

He dared not move—to advance or to retreat. He longed wildly for Prout to move, so that he could dart past and flee into the passage. There was no room to dart past Prout unless he shifted. In the matter of stature, Nature had not been generous to Mr. Prout. But she had compensated him sideways. His ample form filled the doorway.

"Upon my word!"

Mr. Prout found his voice at last.

"Goodness gracious! This is—is—is unexampled. Coker, how dare you?" Prout gasped out the words. "Is that you, Coker? Speak!"

Something like a shadowy form dawned on Mr. Prout's eyes in the darkness. The shadowy form did not speak. It gasped.

"Coker—what—"

Mr. Prout groped for the light switch; he knew it was somewhere near the door.

Bunter suppressed a squeal of terror. There was not a second to lose.

He made a desperate rush for it.

Crash!

Bunter tried to circle round Prout as he rushed. But Prout's circumference was against the success of the manoeuvre. Besides, Bunter could not see in the dark, any more than Prout could. What he intended was to rush past Prout and flee for his life. What he actually did was to crash into Prout like a battering-ram.

"Ooooh!" spluttered Prout.

He reeled under the shock. His hands were flung out wildly, grasping Bunter, whom he had no doubt to be Coker.

Whether Mr. Prout was collaring the aggressor, or merely seeking support as he staggered, was not clear. Not that it mattered. He had somebody in his grip—one hand grasped a shoulder and the other hand a bunch of hair. Bunter gave a howl.

Be it said in excuse for William George Bunter, in that wild and thrilling moment, that he had no idea whatever of hitting Prout. Such a thought never entered his mind at all. Coker of the Fifth might think of such things as punching Form masters; Bunter was the last fellow at Greyfriars, or in the world, to think of anything of the kind. Unfortunately, he did not think at all. The mere instinct of self-preservation accounted for what Bunter did in those frantic moments. Collared, captured, about to be recognised and hauled away for condign punishment, Bunter acted on instinct—he landed out wildly with both fat fists, hardly knowing what he was doing.

Crash! Bump!

A fat fist, with Bunter's weight behind it, caught Paul Prout fairly on the plump nose that adorned his majestic countenance.

He went over as if he had been clean bowled.

He sat down on the floor of Coker's study, with a concussion that made the study almost rock.

He gasped as he sat down; a gasp of amazed horror.

He had been knocked down!

He, Paul Prout, Master of Arts, Form master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars School, had been knocked down! Bunter did not realise it.

Had he realised what he had done Bunter might have fainted on the spot. Fortunately, he didn't.

All he knew was that he was no longer held; that he was free to out and run. He cut, he ran, with a celerity which showed that Bunter, in certain circumstances, might have had a good chance for the school quarter-mile. As a rule, Billy Bunter emulated the tortoise in his rate of progress. Now he oustripped the hare.

He did the Fifth Form passage almost in a bound. He vanished round the corner at the upper end, before Mr. Prout, sitting on the floor of Coker's study, had fully realised that he had been knocked down.

Bunter disappeared into space.

Mr. Prout, dazed, dizzy, overcome with amazement and horror, sat on the carpet that had been presented to Coker by his affectionate Aunt Judy. His dazed hand went to his dazed nose, and came away streaming. That hefty bang on the nose had, to put it coarsely, tapped the claret.

"Goodness gracious me!" said Mr. Prout faintly.

He picked himself up. That threat uttered in the games study, and accidentally overheard by Prout, had been carried out! He had been punched—hard! Amazement and rage boiled up in Paul Prout. With some difficulty—for he was dizzy, and he had a considerable weight to lift—Mr. Prout picked himself up, glaring.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. Awful for Coker!

COKER had been sleeping soundly. But the soundest sleeper on record would have awakened instantly had the avoirdupois of Paul Prout bumped suddenly down on the floor near him. Rip Van Winkle would have awakened; Epeminiades would have started out of his long nap; the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus would have opened seven pairs of startled eyes at that terrific concussion. Coker woke up at once.

Coker had been dreaming pleasantly. He dreamed that he had Suetonius by the neck in one hand, and Prout by the neck in the other, and was knocking their heads together. Coker smiled in his sleep.

But he ceased to smile, and ceased to sleep, as Paul Prout and the study floor established contact.

He opened his eyes, stared, rubbed his eyes, gasped, and blinked in the darkness, amazed, and startled, and confused. There are people who awaken from slumber with all their faculties clear on the instant. Coker was not one of these people. Indeed, in broad wakefulness, his faculties were by no means of the clearest.

Coker, awakening startled and confused, rubbing his eyes, had a vague impression that the universe was falling to pieces, and large portions of the solar system crashing round him.

That, of course, was only Coker's first confused impression. A few seconds sufficed to reassure him; the universe was still in one piece. But something of enormous weight had crashed down in his study; something that gasped and spluttered and gurgled and gulped.

Coker's second impression was that it was some sort of a rag. His light had been turned off; some fellow must have done that.

Coker, wide awake now, scrambled out of his chair. Something shadowy was scrambling up from the floor.

The Fifth Form passage was dimly lit; a glimmer of light came in at the half-open door. But the shadowy figure that scrambled up grunting on the floor was out of the radius of that dim glimmer. Coker saw something vaguely, and came into contact with it without knowing what it was. It was somebody; he could guess that much. Who, he had no idea.

But as he started forward he bumped into it, whatever and whoever it was; and two hands suddenly grasped at him in the gloom and held him.

"Here, leggo!" roared Coker. "No larks, you silly ass! By gad! I'll jolly well—"

"Boy!"

"Prout!" gasped Coker.

"Boy!"

"Oh, leggo, sir! It's only me—Coker."

"Rascal!"

"Eh?"

"Ruffian!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Dare to lift your hand again?"

Here's a Tip-Topper for Next Week, Boys!

Who punched Prout?

Aha! You fellows know, of course, but poor old Prouty doesn't. He thinks it was Horace Coker's large fist that landed on his boko. And poor old Coker's for it.

But does he give in tamely? You bet he doesn't. If there's any obstinacy wanted, Horace James Coker's the merchant to supply it. In next week's grand yarn, entitled:—

"WHO PUNCHED PROUT?"

Frank Richards has given you a rare treat. Order your copy early—and see that your non-reader pal asks for the MAGNET Library, too!



shrieked Mr. Prout, "and I shall use violence! I shall not hesitate to use violence! Take care, Coker!"

Coker wondered if he was still dreaming.

"Look here, sir, leggo!" he exclaimed belligerently. "What are you grabbing me for, I'd like to know. What's this game? Leggo!"

"Do not dare to resist, Coker!" shrieked Mr. Prout.

"Oh, crikey! What—"

"Resist, and I shall strike you to the floor!"

"I—I say, sir, what—what's up?" gasped the astounded Coker. "What have you turned my light out for? What are you up to?"

"Do not add insolence to your ruffianism, Coker!" roared Mr. Prout.

"Silence! You will answer for this! You will answer for it dearly."

"B-b-but wh-w-what—" babbled Coker.

Mr. Prout was grasping him tenaciously. In point of fact, the Fifth-Form master was afraid of getting another drive in the dark. His nose was not in a state to suffer more damage. Already it was streaming crimson.

Coker did not quite know whether he was on his head or his heels.

He could surmise that Prout had come to the study for that translation. He realised that he had fallen asleep over it.

But why Prout had turned out the light, why he had seized him like a tiger, what he was burbling about, were inexplicable mysteries to Coker. Unless Prout had gone mad, how was a fellow to account for it?

"Blundell!" shouted Mr. Prout.

The noise had passed unheeded in the games study at the end of the passage. They were winding up the evening with a sing-song there, and making a rather considerable noise themselves. Prout, still grasping Coker, still

fearful of another smashing blow, shouted for the head boy of the Fifth.

"Blundell! Come here."

"But—but what—" stuttered Coker.

"Silence! Keep still! Do not dare to strike me again, Coker—"

"Strike you again!" babbled Coker.

"I—I—I haven't struck you, sir! I haven't struck anybody."

"Wretched boy, be silent! Blundell!" bawled Mr. Prout.

He dared not let go Coker while he turned on the light. One more blow like the one he had had would have wrecked his nose. But every instant Prout expected this savage and rebellious fellow to hit out. It was an awful ordeal for the Fifth-Form master.

"But, sir—" gasped Coker.

"Blundell!" shrieked Mr. Prout.

"I haven't—"

"Silence! Do not dare to strike me again! Blundell!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Coker. It was obvious now to Coker that Prout was mad, and he struggled to tear himself away.

Physically, Coker was worth two or three of Mr. Prout. Prout tried hard to hold him, but he tried in vain. Coker tore loose and jumped back.

"Hands off!" shrieked Mr. Prout.

"Ruffian! Do not dare to strike me again! Help! Blundell! Help!"

He backed to the door in alarm.

They had heard him in the games study by this time. The door of that apartment flew open, and four or five seniors came out, wondering.

"It was Prout—tooting at the top of his voice," said Potter. "But what—"

"Well, here is he, then?" asked Blundell.

"Blundell! Help!" roared Mr. Prout.

"Coker's study!" exclaimed Price.

"Great Scott! Has Coker—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blundell.

He raced down the passageway.

If Coker had carried out his celebrated threat of punching Prout, it

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,084.

was clear that the Form master was in need of help.

After Blundell went a crowd of the Fifth, at top speed, wildly excited.

Blundell reached Coker's study. Mr. Prout was standing inside the doorway, waving his hands at something unseen, as if warding off an attack. Blundell reached in, found the switch, and turned on the light.

Coker's study was suddenly flooded with illumination. Coker and Prout both blinked in the sudden light.

The Fifth-Formers, swarming round the doorway, stared in. Mr. Prout turned to them, and there was an exclamation of horror at the sight of his swollen and streaming nose. Obviously, Prout had been punched! Obviously, he had been punched hard. The seniors gazed at him spell-bound.

Never before, in the history of Greyfriars, had a Form master's claret been tapped! It was unnerving to see it.

"Oh!" gasped Blundell, horror-stricken.

"Oh, holy Moses!" stuttered Fitzgerald. "Coker, you mad spalpeen—"

"You potty chump, Coker!" articulated Potter.

"He's done it!" murmured Greene, hopelessly. "He said he would do it—and he's done it."

Mr. Prout leaned against the wall. He was feeling quite faint after the stress and strain.

"Blundell! Secure that—that ruffian!"

"Yes, sir!" Blundell promptly placed himself in front of the Form master, to defend him if necessary.

"He has struck me," said Mr. Prout. "You are aware that he threatened to strike me! He has struck me! In all my years as a Form master, I have never known or heard of such an—an—outrage! I have been struck—by a boy in my Form."

"You born idiot, Coker!" hissed Potter.

Coker gazed at them wildly.

That Prout had been struck was clear: only a very hefty tap would have tapped Prout's claret in that generous stream. But why the fellows supposed that he had struck Prout, Coker could not understand.

"Secure him!" said Mr. Prout. "The boy is probably out of his senses! Secure him, Blundell! Bland, Fitzgerald, Hilton, help him secure that ruffian."

Coker still stared like a fellow in a dream.

"I—I—I say—" he bumbled.

"Secure him—"

"I—I never touched him," gasped Coker. "I was asleep—"

"Don't be an ass," said Blundell.

"I tell you I never touched him," shrieked Coker. "I woke up and found him here! He collared me in the dark—"

Four stalwart Fifth-Formers advanced on Coker. Prout had told them to secure Coker, and they were ready to carry out that order. Undoubtedly, a fellow who had struck his Form master had to be secured.

Coker backed away, dazed, almost stupefied.

"I never did!" he stuttered. "I tell you he turned my light out and then grabbed me in the dark. I thought he was mad. But I never touched him—only got away from him—"

"Cheese it!" said Hilton. "What's the good of telling fatheaded whoppers, you ass, when we can see that Prout's nose has been smashed?"

"I never touched his nose—"

"Rascal! Cease these childish falsehoods," thundered Mr. Prout. "Ruffian!"

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You will be expelled for this outrage. Wretch! Secure him!"

Coker was too dazed to resist. Blundell grasped his right arm, Fitzgerald grasped his left, and he was pinioned. Other fellows were ready to help if he showed fight. But Coker, for once, did not show fight. He was feeling like the victim of some awful dream.

"I swear I never touched him," he babbled feebly.

"You silly ass, you were saying you were going to punch him, the other day," grunted Blundell. "Nobody thought you would be mad enough to do it."

"But I never did—"

"Don't talk rot."

"I never did!" shrieked Coker wildly.

"I woke up—"

"Chuck it!"

"I tell you—"

"We've got him safe, sir," said Blundell. "What shall we do with him?"

"At this late hour," said Mr. Prout, "I will not disturb Dr. Locke with the news of this unparalleled outrage. To-night this wretched boy cannot be sent away from the school. He will leave by an early train in the morning. For the present, take him to the punishment-room. He shall be locked in for the night."

Mr. Prout pressed his handkerchief to his nose. It came away blotted with crimson.

"Come!" he gasped.

Mr. Prout led the way, his handkerchief to his nose. Coker, in the grip of two hefty seniors, followed like a man in a dream.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Up with Coker!

GREYFRIARS was in a buzz.

The junior Forms were all in their dormitories, most of the juniors fast asleep: though there certainly was one, in the Remove, who was not asleep. But the news spread like wildfire among the Fifth and the Sixth.

Coker had done it!

Coker had said that he would do it: and now he had done it! The wild news thrilled through the senior Forms.

"The awful idiot!" said Gwynne of the Sixth. "Who'd have thought it? Even of Coker!"

"It's the sack for him," said Loder, and there was a tone of satisfaction in Loder's voice. He did not like Coker.

"Poor old Coker!" said Wingate.

"It's the sack, right enough! But what on earth can have made him break out like this?"

"It seems that Prout set him a translation, and went to his study for it, as Coker didn't show up," said Walker. "Coker turned out the light, and, as Prout came in, got him fair and square on the boko!"

"The awful ass!"

"He said he would do it!" grinned Loder. "Coker's a man of his word. He prides himself on it."

"The born idiot!" said Wingate. The Greyfriars captain was feeling rather sorry for Coker. Considering what was certain to happen now, any fellow might have felt sorry for him.

"Well, it's the finish for him," said Loder. "He cheeked the Sixth often enough. Now he's punched Prout! His game's up here!"

There was no doubt about that.

In every Sixth-Form study the incident was breathlessly discussed. In the Fifth, the usual bed-time was for-

gotten. The Fifth Form of Greyfriars thrilled from end to end.

Coker had done it! He said that he would do it, in the hearing of half the Fifth, and of Prout himself! It had seemed incredible that Coker would do it! But he had!

Meanwhile, Coker had been marched into the punishment-room, still in a dazed state. Everything seemed to be turning round and round to Horace Coker. His brain, never very bright, was now in a state of hopeless confusion. On his rugged face was an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment.

He stood in the punishment-room, Blundell and Fitzgerald still holding his arms, lest he should break out again. Mr. Prout stood in the doorway—even while Coker was securely held. Prout did not want to be too near him. His nose felt as if it had been pushed through the back of his head. It hadn't, of course. It was still in its usual place. Prout could feel it there when he caressed it tenderly or mopped it with his handkerchief. But that was what it felt like. Prout did not want any more.

The punishment-room at Greyfriars was seldom used. Anything was good enough for a fellow who had punched Prout. Still, some arrangements had to be made for the night. Trotter, the House page, was making them, with blank wonder on his chubby face. Trotter had seen many things at Greyfriars, but never a Form master with tapped claret, and a Fifth-Former held to keep him from further violence. Trotter made the bed, with wondering face, and a happy consciousness of having amazing news to impart below stairs, when he got back to his own quarters.

In the unusual—indeed, unprecedented—circumstances, Mr. Prout was endeavouring to assume as much dignity as possible. It was difficult to be dignified, with a red and swollen nose that persisted in oozing claret, which had to be mopped away every other minute. But Mr. Prout did his best. He inwardly hoped that no other masters would come on the scene. Well he knew that, by this time, the news would have reached Common-room; that the whole staff would be thrilling with it. Only the Head, who was in his own House, was likely to be unaware that history had been made at Greyfriars that night.

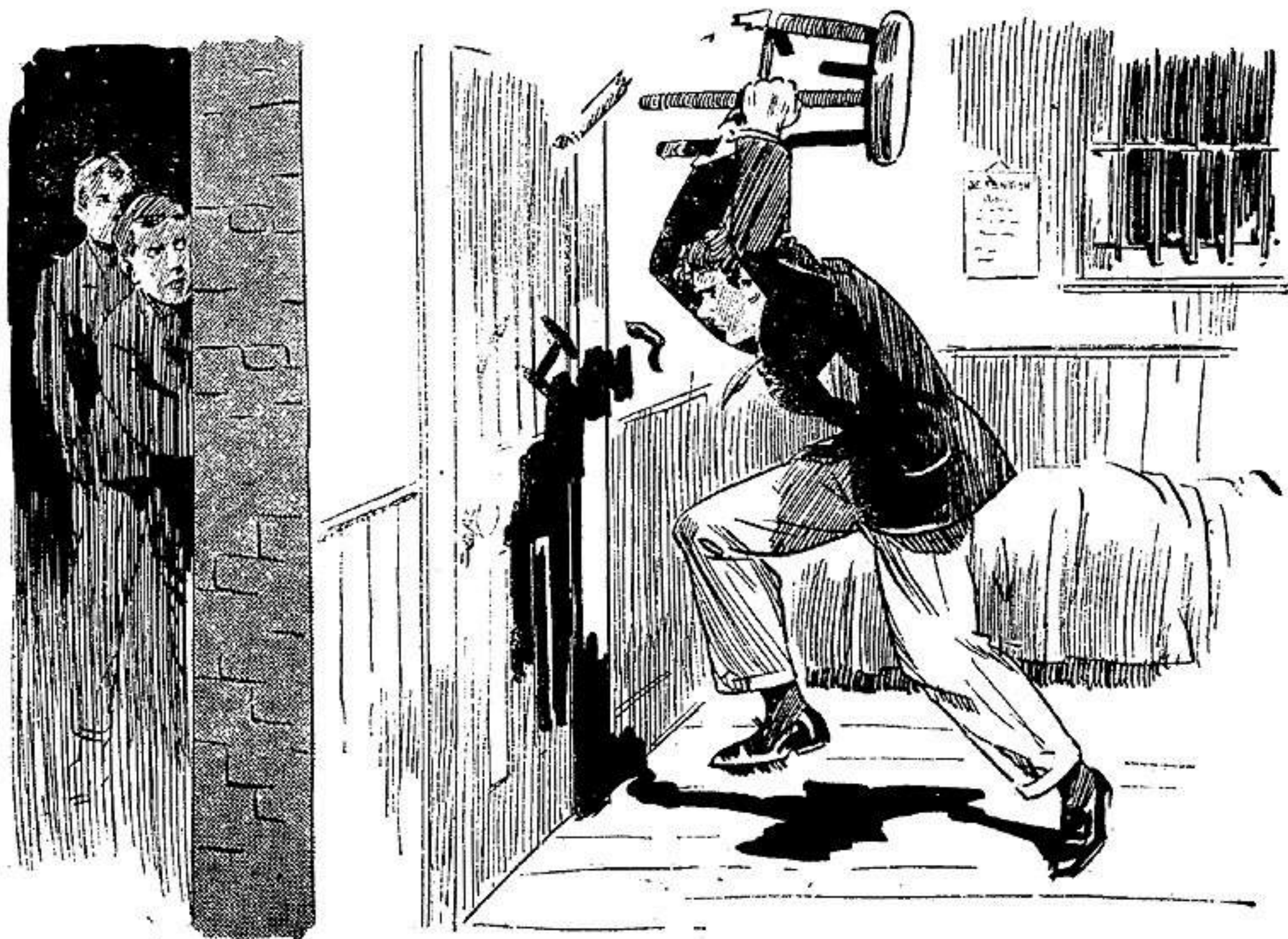
Sympathy and indignation, of course, would be felt by all the staff. But Mr. Prout suspected that there might be some lurking amusement also.

The ponderous Prout carried things with a high hand in Common-room. He was just a little dictatorial. Often and often he advised other masters—unasked—about the management of their Forms. Once when there had been trouble in the Remove, he had driven Mr. Quelch to the verge of a nervous breakdown, with his ponderous sympathy and advice, and his self-satisfied assurance that nothing of that kind ever happened in the Fifth.

In the Fifth, Mr. Prout often told the rest of the staff, there was a friendly understanding and mutual esteem established between boys and master. His boys looked on him as a friend, almost as a sort of elder brother—a very elder brother, no doubt. They respected him all the more for it.

And now—

It really was dismaying. Now Mr. Prout had to figure as the only master at Greyfriars, or probably at any school, who had been punched by a member of his own Form!



Horace Coker picked up a stool, and lifting it in both hands, crashed it on the door of the punishment-room. Crash, crash, crash! The door was of stout oak and would not give way. But the stool did. A last hefty crash knocked it to pieces, and the fragments flew over the room. (See Chapter 15.)

Undoubtedly, there would be lurking smiles in Common-room!

There was only one consolation. Coker would be expelled first thing in the morning. Greyfriars would be purged of this ruffian!

"Make haste, Trotter!" said Mr. Prout. He was anxious to get away before any members of Common-room could arrive on the scene.

"Yessir!" said Trotter.

The room was ready at last. Trotter departed, bursting with news for the staff below stairs.

Mr. Prout fixed his eyes on the dazed and dizzy Coker.

"Coker! You will be locked in this room for the night. In the morning you will be taken before Dr. Locke, to be expelled from the school! That is all!"

Coker gurgled.

"I—I—I say, sir—"

"You need say nothing," Mr. Prout mopped his nose. "What you have done is sufficient, Coker. Add no insolence to it."

"But I haven't done anything!" howled Coker, goaded. "I never touched you, sir! You grabbed me and—"

"Silence! I repeat—"

"I woke up, and—"

"Enough!" Mr. Prout stepped out of the room. "Blundell, you may release him now! I am ready to turn the key."

Coker was released. The Fifth-Formers followed Mr. Prout into the corridor.

Coker stood and stared after them. But as the door closed on him, and the key turned in the lock, Coker awoke to new life. For the first time, the

realisation of his position burst clearly on his dazed mind.

He sprang to the door, grasped the handle, and dragged at it.

"Let me out!" he roared.

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Prout, from the corridor. He was glad that a locked door stood between him and Coker. The ruffian was evidently breaking out again.

"I won't be silent!" roared Coker. "Think I'm going to be locked up here like a fag, when I haven't done anything! I never touched your dashed nose. I expect you banged it on something when you tumbled over."

"How dare you, Coker!"

"I tell you I don't know anything about your nose!" roared Coker. "Blow your nose, if you come to that!"

Mr. Prout's footsteps were heard retreating. An altercation of this sort was too utterly undignified.

Coker glared round the room. He picked up a stool, and, lifting it in both hands, crashed it on the door.

Crash, crash, crash!

"Now let me out!" he bawled.

"You potty chump!" came Blundell's voice through the door. "Do you want to wake the whole House?"

"Hang the whole House!" roared Coker. "Let me out of this! I haven't done anything! I don't know anything about Prout's silly old nose! Expelled! My hat! I'd like to see them expel me! Prout's mad—that's what's the matter with him!"

"Shut up!"

"Shan't! I'll give you the hiding of your life, Blundell, when I get out of this! Open that door!"

"You potty ass!" breathed Blundell. "Shut up!"

"Rats! Will you open that door?"

"No, you chump!"

"Then I'll jolly well smash it open!" shrieked Coker.

Injustice had reached its climax now. Coker was mastered by his righteous indignation. He had done nothing—nothing! There had been some awful and idiotic mistake somehow—and he was not going to be locked up in the punishment-room like a naughty fag; and most certainly he was not going to be sacked!

Coker crashed the stool on the door with all the strength of his powerful arms.

Crash, crash, crash!

The door was of stout old oak. It did not give way. But the stool did. The last hefty crash knocked it to pieces, and the fragments flew over the room. Coker stood blinking, with the leg of a stool in his hand.

More retreating footsteps. The Fifth-Formers, breathlessly discussing the fate of Coker, and the way Coker was taking it, retired. Coker yelled wildly through the keyhole; but there was no answer.

He was left to it.

Left in the punishment-room; locked in; a prisoner; to be taken before the Head and sacked in the morning. It was incredible, or would have been if it hadn't happened.

"My hat!" gasped Coker. "My only hat! Do they think I'm going to stand it! I'll show 'em! Sacked! I'd like to see 'em sack me! I'll knock the whole blinking show to smithereens if they don't let me out!"

Coker looked round wildly for another weapon.

He found a chair.

(Continued on page 28.)

PIRATES—BURIED TREASURE—ADVENTURE!—A crude chart holds the key to this buried treasure, and for the possession of the chart men would give their very lives. Yet, with a laugh on his lips, Roger Bartlett walks hand in hand with death—the chart lying snugly hidden 'gainst his stout heart!



Discovered!

DOWN this Roger went, to find himself in some sort of hold.

The only light he was vouchsafed was the pale glimmer from the lanthorn on the gun deck, and the rays from this did not straggle far 'gainst the overpowering darkness of the hold.

Roger made his way deeper into the depths of the ship, feeling his steps carefully, skirting around bales and cases and great coils of rope which littered the deck of the hold.

At last, when he deemed himself safe for the time being, he threw himself down upon a coil of rope, making himself as comfortable as the circumstances would allow.

Roger was weary, and his experiences of the past few hours had sapped the strength away from him. Small wonder, then was it that his eyes should close and that a sleep of utter exhaustion should swoop upon him. How long he slept he knew not; but it was many, many hours later when he awoke.

He sat up, forgetting what had happened to him, and striving to account for his presence here in the darkened place which smelled so strongly of tar, old rope, grease, and the thousand-and-one odours of a ship. Then, as recollection came back to him, he gazed over in the direction of the ladder which led to the gun deck above. A shaft of light came down from the open hatch, and Roger saw, with surprise, that it was not the yellow light of a lanthorn. It was a brighter, whiter light—the light of day!

Furthermore, he now became aware that the motion of the vessel had altered somewhat. Previously she had dipped gracefully to the swelling waters of the harbour. Now she was rolling and pitching in a confused manner. That could only mean one thing. The vessel had set out to sea; and he, Roger Bartlett, was a stowaway aboard her! A feeling of nausea came over him, and he dropped back weakly upon the coil of rope. There he lay, powerless to move; for Roger had never set foot upon a ship before, and small wonder was it that he should succumb to sickness.

Eternities, it seemed to him, passed by; and never was a lad so miserable as Roger was then, cramped in the

stifling, stinking hold, unable to walk upon the heaving deck, which pitched and rolled incessantly, and seemed to slip away from his feet whenever he essayed to stand upon them. Again and again did he fall full length upon the foul deck of the hold, and ever and anon was he soaked by the filthy bilgewater which washed backwards and forwards across the hold.

He had lost count of time. His only method of reckoning was by the colour of the rays of light which streamed down from the gun deck above. When they were yellow he knew that it was night, and that the horn lanthorn had been lighted; when they were white he knew that daylight was percolating into his noisome prison.

In time he grew more used to the motion of the vessel, and it was evident that the schooner had run into calmer weather, for she was no longer buffeted and tossed about so furiously by the waves. Now, as he recovered from his sickness, hunger assailed him and drove him on desperately.

He must find food!

The craving became greater and greater, and at last he essayed to crawl from the hold and make his way to the gun deck above.

It was night, and the pale rays of the lanthorn shone on the deck, deserted save for the sleeping men in the hammocks in the waist of the vessel.

Roger, emerging from his hold, skirted along the gun deck, wondering where he could find food. His chance steps took him to the after part of the vessel, but he found nothing there to stay the cravings of hunger.

Suddenly he halted and stood stock-still, his ears strained; for the sound of footsteps had carried to him.

Fearful of being discovered, he dodged quickly behind a pile of cases which littered the deck and peered out cautiously. A swinging lanthorn, carried by a man, showed him that the person who was making his way aft was a burly, swarthy scoundrel. His face was carved into a grin of fury; but it was his ears which rivetted Roger's attention.

They hung low, like the ears of an animal; and Roger realised, with a start, that they had been slit at some time or other. Great gold rings hung suspended from the lobes of them, and swung backwards and forwards as the

man walked, lending him an air of indescribable evilness.

The man put down the lanthorn and set to work on a closed gun-port. Swiftly and silently did he work, until at last the port swung open; and Roger, watching from his place of concealment, saw the man pick up the lanthorn and swing it to and fro.

Three times did he swing it; and then watched for a little while, his eyes gazing out into the blackness astern of the schooner.

Roger, too, could see through the open port, and he caught his breath as, far astern, he saw the sudden twinkle of an answering light.

The slit-eared man seemed satisfied. He swung the lanthorn once more; and then, placing it on the deck, closed and made fast the gun-port.

Greatly mystified, Roger sought to draw back farther into his place of concealment, lest the man should see him when he turned.

The movement was the lad's undoing; for he barked his shins against a case, and the noise was instantly heard by the man.

"Ha! What ha' we here?" he snarled. "A spy!"

Roger was cornered, for there was no way of escape from the opening into which he had backed. The lop-eared man lifted his lanthorn high and sent its rays into the darkness, revealing Roger crouching back, afraid to move.

"Who be ye?" demanded the lop-eared one. "Come out o' it, ye rat!"

He did not wait for Roger to obey his command, but, setting down his lanthorn, dashed in quickly, seizing Roger by the throat.

The lad, weakened with his sickness and his hunger, could make no resistance. He felt the man's hands clutch round his throat, and then he was shaken as a terrier shakes a rat. His brain reeled, his senses swam, and the lop-eared one, with a vicious chuckle, dragged him out of his hiding-place.

Half choked into unconsciousness, Roger could do nothing to prevent himself being dragged along the gun deck, up the companion-way to the deck above, and then along for'ard. He was sent spinning at last into a long, low-roofed apartment, lined with bunks—the forecabin of the schooner. Two men,

who were dicing, looked up from their game as Roger, impelled by the savage push of his captor, went sprawling on the deck.

"What ha' ye there, Lop-ear?" grunted one of the men.

"A rat o' a stowaway!" replied the man. "A spy, methinks. Ay, but I'll knock his spying out o' him, sink me! He'll spy no more on Lop-ear!"

Roger, who was then endeavouring, weakly, to scramble to his feet, felt a blow across the side of his face—a blow hard enough to knock the senses out of him. Before he could recover, he was seized again by Lop-ear, his hands were wound about with cord and hauled above his head. Then they were made fast to a stanchion and Lop-ear stood back and surveyed his handiwork with a cruel chuckle.

"The rope's-end! 'Twill knock the spying out o' him the whelp!" he said, and then, with a rip of his talon-like hands, he tore the shirt from Roger's back, leaving the lad stripped to the waist.

So far gone was Roger that he could but sway limply against the stanchion to which he was triced. He saw the lop-eared one search around for a rope's-end; saw him send it swishing through the air once or twice, and then come to him.

"Ye crafty cub, I'll larn ye!" grunted Lop-ear. "Squirm, ye rat! Squirm! Or, sink me, I'll flay the skin from ye in pieces!"

The rope's-end cut through the air, and fell with a sickening swish upon the lad's bare back. The pain was terrible, and Roger, though he bit his lip to restrain the cry of agony that threatened to escape him, felt his senses reeling with the shock.

"Yell, ye whelp!" cried Lop-ear. "Rip me, but I'll make ye sing!"

The rope's-end swished through the air again. But, ere it could fall a second time, Lop-ear went reeling into the scuppers, sent there by a mighty blow from the clenched fist of one who had but entered the fore-castle at that moment.

"Ye gallows rat, what manner o' thing is this aboard my ship?"

The newcomer, his eyes flaming with indignation, his set face turned upon Lop-ear, whipped out a rapier from his side.

"Sink me, but I've a mind to slit you through the vile heart!" he cried. "Get up, scum, lest my blade slips through your gizzard and robs the hangman o' his job!"

Roger, hardly able to believe his ears, so strange did this interruption seem, twisted himself round, striving to catch a glimpse of the newcomer. He felt that he was dreaming, for his senses surely were playing tricks with him!

But he could not see the man who stood behind him.

The rapier slashed through the air, and the cords which triced up Roger to the stanchion fell apart, almost dropping the helpless lad to the deck. With a mighty effort, Roger saved himself from falling, and then, as he wheeled round, a glad cry came to his lips.

"The Chevalier!" he gasped.

"Ay!" answered the Chevalier. "An' right glad to meet ye, Master Bartlett." He turned to the grovelling Lop-ear. "Quick, ye scum! Pick up the lad and carry him aft to my cabin!"

Roger, almost fainting with his weakness and the cruelty he had undergone, felt Lop-ear's arms around him, and he was carried like a babe along the deck into the great after cabin of the schooner.

An Encounter with a Pirate:

"**B**Y my truth, Roger lad, but it does my heart good to see ye again."

The Chevalier leaned over the table where Roger had just finished the excellent food which had been provided for him. He looked now mightily different from the half-starved rat he had been in the hold. His filthy clothes had been thrown overboard, and he had sluiced himself with water, and dressed again in clothes provided by the Chevalier.

A white silken shirt hid the great weal upon Roger's back, a pair of scarlet velvet breeches, with yellow silk hose, and silver-buckled shoes clad his nether limbs. From the jewelled belt around his waist a fine rapier hung.

"I searched for ye long in Fotheringham," continued the Chevalier. "But it seemed that ye had vanished, and time was so pressing, that four days ago I set sail on this venture."

"Four days!" gasped Roger. "Then for four days I ha' been below in that stinking hold?"

"Ay, lad. And from what ye tell me 'tis a great pity that ye had not known this was my vessel. 'Tis true that she carries the most scoundrelly crew that e'er was shipped, but needs must when haste is necessary, and I had to ship what scoundrels I could get."

"Ye sail for the Spanish Main, sir?" asked Roger.

"Ay, so be it we reach there!"

There was a grim expression on the Chevalier's face as he spoke the words; and Roger divined that here was something wrong.

"So be it we reach there?" he repeated. "Is there, then danger o' not doing so?"

"Great danger, lad," answered the Chevalier. "We are four days out from Fotheringham, and sink me if a great four-masted barque has not dogged our heels ever since. She is a faster vessel, Roger lad—and yet she ever hangs behind. At dawn we see her, and catch glimpses o' her through the day. At night we sail wi' no lights, an' I ha' twisted and turned and altered my course fit to baffle Satan himself. Yet every dawn is she here again, ever at our heels; ever dogging us. 'Tis a miracle how she does it, lad."

"'Tis no miracle!" Roger leaped to his feet. "What ye have told me, sir, explains what I saw 'ere that rascal seized me and dragged me from my hiding-place. Ye ha' a traitor aboard, sir—a traitor who betrays your change

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

Spurred on by the call of the sea and tales of treasure on the Spanish Main, young Roger Bartlett sets out for the seaport of Fotheringham. He is nearing his destination when he overhears two ruffians named Abednigo One-Eye and Slim plotting the death of the owner of a nearby house. Roger warns the man before the scoundrels can carry out their murderous design. Mortally wounded in the fight that follows, the stranger hands over to Roger a sealed packet, charging him to take it to a man known as "The Chevalier." The latter proves to be a fashionably-dressed gallant who makes the discovery that the packet contains the chart of an island on which great treasure lies buried. The chart is stolen by One-Eye, and in attempting to recover it Roger is stunned. He regains consciousness to find himself in a small rowing-boat manned by One-Eye and Slim. Leaping overboard under cover of darkness Roger swims for a schooner anchored nearby and succeeds in hauling himself up to the deck. He has scarcely done so when he hears the voice of Abednigo One-Eye. Escape is impossible, and Roger is seeking a hiding-place when he chances upon a ladder leading into the very bowels of the ship.

(Now read on.)

o' course every time 'tis made. Lop-ear, sir, is the traitor, and 'twas myself who saw him signal to something astern o' us."

"What say ye, lad?"

The Chevalier, too, was on his feet now, his hand flying to the hilt of the jewelled rapier that hung by his side.

"'Tis true. List!" And quickly Roger told his tale of the signals he had seen, and of the answering flash from the darkness behind.

The Chevalier listened in silence, and when Roger finished his story his face clouded over, and the hand that rested on his rapier clenched itself about the hilt until the knuckles stood out, white and gleaming.

"Lad, 'tis well, indeed, for me that ye stowed away aboard this vessel!" he cried. "Sink me, but Lop-ear shall pay for this. Come, there is no moment to waste."

He dashed for the companionway which led to the quarterdeck above, Roger hard on his heels. They emerged into the darkness of the deck above, a darkness that was broken only by the faint gleam that came from the binnacle, and which played fantastically on the set face of the man who stood at the helm.

The silence was broken only by the splash of the waters as they fell away from the prow of the schooner and the murmur of the breeze as it whistled through the shrouds and bellied out the sails. There came another splash—a bigger one, which sent the Chevalier racing to the rails to gaze astern to where the yellow light of a lantern tossed about on the waters.

"Lop-ear!" he gasped. "We are too late, Roger lad! The gallows rat has cheated us! That splash was the splash o' the dinghy taking the water. Lop-ear has gone!"

"Can we not run him down sir?" asked Roger.

"Nay! Every moment is precious to



ROGER BARTLETT,
the hero of this yarn.

us now!" The Chevalier turned and called out an order to the man at the helm. The order was repeated, the helm went hard over, and the schooner heeled and settled itself upon another course. "The barque can o'erhaul us, lad, when'er she will, and 'tis imperative that we strive to throw her off!"

"This barque, sir?" Roger asked. "What manner o' craft is she?"

The Chevalier's reply, uttered through half-closed lips, sent a thrill racing down the lad's spine, and made him clutch, too, at the hilt of the rapier he wore.

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"I make no doubt, lad, but she is a pirate," was the answer.

"A pirate!" Roger gasped the words.

"Ay lad! An' sink me if I am not right in saying that she bears aboard her two scum that ye know well—Abednigo One-Eye and his slinking rat Slim!" He paced the quarterdeck, his eyes striving to pierce the darkness astern, and then, as a pale flush of yellow light diffused the eastern horizon, he made a gesture of defiance. "Dawn!" he muttered through his teeth. "We cannot escape, lad! Sink me, but the scuppers will run wi' blood ere many hours ha' passed!"

The dawn came up rapidly, and, with its coming, the Chevalier and Roger saw, astern of them, but rapidly overhauling them, the lines of the great black barque—the pirate craft! No longer was she biding her time, but crowding on sail, intent only upon her nefarious business.

Even as Roger gazed at the black vessel a flag fluttered to her mizzen and broke on the breeze, and Roger caught his breath. For the flag was jet black, but in its centre it bore a device that was the device of the wolves of the sea—a gleaming white skull and crossbones, which seemed to mock them mightily!

And at that very moment a small white cloud of smoke broke from the bulwarks of the pirate, and the scream of a cannon ball was heard ere a fountain of spray leaped from the water some little distance from the schooner.

The pirate had opened fire.

"To your guns, lads!" yelled the Chevalier; and instantly the schooner's decks were echoing and re-echoing with the sound of running footsteps, the creak of tackles as the gun ports were flung open and the cannon run into position.

There came a crash like thunder, and a line of flame spurted from the schooner's side, while great black clouds of smoke wreathed the decks.

But the pirate was firing rapidly now, and the noise was deafening.

Crash!

A ball had hit the mizzen mast, and it cracked and tumbled, sending the schooner heeling over dangerously, and bringing down yards and shrouds in a tangled mess.

"Cut her free, lads, cut her free!" yelled the Chevalier, and axes were plied with vigour, while the crash of guns and the scream of the cannon-balls made the air hideous.

Men worked with a will, yet nearer and nearer came the grim attacker. So near now was she that those aboard the schooner could see the ugly faces of the pirates, peering over the bulwarks, their cutlasses and pikes ready and gleaming in the morning sun.

The Chevalier swung round, and his voice roared loudly above the din of the combat:

"Stand by to repel boarders!"

Roger and The Chevalier Fight—and Fail!

SMALL wonder was it that as Roger stood there, his rapier fast gripped in his hand, his eyes turned to where the evil faces of the oncoming pirates peered from over the bulwarks of that grim, black barque, he should experience a slight tremor of apprehension. Now had

come his testing time; now must he prove his mettle!

It needed but a glance to warn him that death was near at hand for those who waited, sword in hand, for the coming fray! Would death be his lot? If it must be, he would die fighting, yielding not to these bloodthirsty raiders who awaited the scrape and rattle of the grappling hooks.

Still the mighty cannonades of the opposing ships roared, and the crash of wood rang out as the balls plunged through the planks of the vessels. The clouds of black smoke hung heavily in the air, like a funeral pall. Then, as a puff of wind sent the air clearing for a moment, Roger heard a mighty hail in a voice he knew only too well!

"So-ho! There be my little turkey-cock, and mighty fashionably dressed! So-ho, my bully-boy—an' think ye to test your steel 'gainst Abednigo One-Eye? Mark him, Slim! Mark my blustering little whelp, wi' rapier in his hand, Slim!"

Roger wheeled, and there, grinning like a demon, stood One-Eye on the poop of the pirate. His face was wreathed in a cunning grin, and his henchman, Slim, stood by him, chuckling as he ran his thumb along the keen edge of his blade. His face, bad enough at the best of times, was now distorted with rage and cruelty, and, to lend it an air of greater ferocity, he had clenched a great, curved dagger between his teeth.

Came a mighty crash, and the vessels shivered and shook as they collided. Roger found himself high pitched from his footing, yet he recovered himself, and brought his rapier to a defensive position as the hooks of the pirate grappled the side of the schooner. Then, like a mighty wave, came the pirates, surging over the bulwarks, their hungry blades, thirsting for the blood of victims, circling in the air.

One mighty rogue dashed forward and engaged Roger's blade. The lad, springing back quickly, avoided the cut which the scoundrel aimed at his blade, and which, had it struck, would have shivered the steel as though it had been glass. The rogue stumbled, and before he could recover himself, Roger had lunged quickly, bringing a squeal of pain to the lips of the man as the rapier sank deep into his breast. He clawed at the air, his cutlass falling from his hand, and Roger, with a quick wrench of his blade, drew it from the pirate's carcase, and sprang to defend himself from the onrush of others.

The clang of steel against steel rang out on the air, deafening all other sounds. The cannons had ceased their shattering crashes. It was now cold steel to cold steel—yet what hopes had those aboard the schooner of beating off their attackers? The pirates greatly outnumbered the crew of the schooner, and now, even while the fight was at its hottest, Roger could see the cut-throat crew of the schooner fling down their arms.

"Treachery!" he cried. "We ha' traitors aboard!"

"Ay, lad, 'tis as I expected."

Roger cast a glance over his shoulder and saw the Chevalier, his rapier running scarlet with the blood of the scoundrels who had beset him, fighting by his side. Again and again the pirates surged forward—yet only to be faced by a rapier that cut in and out with amazing skill, drinking deep of their blood.

"To the poop, lad!" whispered the

Chevalier in Roger's ear. "I would fain talk wi' ye, ere these scoundrels make shark's meat o' me."

He lunged with his rapier as he spoke, and the pirates fell back. Then, with a mocking laugh, the Chevalier seized Roger's arm and guided him to the ladder which led upward to the poop. They scrambled quickly up this, half hidden by the curling wreaths of powder smoke, and halted at the top, their blades fending off those who sought to follow.

Came a momentarily lull in the battle, and the Chevalier quickly slipped a hand in the folds of his ruffled shirt. Roger started as he saw the papers which the Chevalier withdrew—for he recognised them as those which One-Eye had sought to obtain!

"Take these, lad!" said the Chevalier. "Guard them well, an' if it be that I fall i' the fray, then take upon yourself the duty which should ha' been mine!"

"'Tis the chart—and the papers!" gasped Roger incredulously. "But how come they in your possession when they were snatched by th' hand of One-Eye?"

"They were not snatched by him," replied the Chevalier. "That ye would ha' discovered if your haste had not made ye leap out o' the window and pursue the rogue. True One-Eye almost had them, but my hand was quicker, and I secreted them ere I gave chase—only to find that your hurrying footsteps had led ye into the power of the rogues."

He broke off quickly, and wheeled round.

"But guard ye, lad—for here come the scum!" he cried.

Hastily Roger thrust the packet inside his shirt and, blade ready, turned.

The pirates, after their momentary set-back, had rallied again, and now pressed forward with renewed vigour. Yet, from their place of vantage at the top of the ladder, the Chevalier and Roger fought grimly, beating down the blades of the attackers, and, when the rogues would have sought to scale the ladder, sent them back with bleeding pates and ripped sword-arms.

The decks of the schooner were now wet with blood, but it was only a matter of time ere the Chevalier and Roger fell victims to the attackers, for the few of the schooner's crew who had remained loyal had been despatched by the hungry blades of the attackers, and the traitors whom One-Eye and Slim had placed aboard the schooner, had joined forces with the pirates.

It was a noble fight that these two put up against terrible odds; yet was it doomed to be a failing fight?

A sound made Roger turn quickly—to see that full half a score of the scoundrels had gained the poop by means of the starboard ladder, and were bearing down upon them from behind. He swung around, and engaged the blade of the first ruffian, but before he could run the rat through something whizzed through the air and caught him on the temple. It was an iron belaying-pin, hurled by a giant negro, and it sent the lad crashing to the deck senseless.

The Chevalier alone was left to ward off the attacks of foes from front and behind. Right wonderfully did he fight, and man after man of the pirates went down before his crimson-stained rapier, till one, more crafty than the rest, dropped to the deck and wriggled forward, like some loathsome serpent, to catch at the ankles of the Chevalier as he lunged forward to pink one of the attackers.

The Chevalier fell heavily, and the scoundrel who had wriggled forward was upon him before he could rise. It was Slim, and his countenance was alight with triumph as he gave vent to a croaking chuckle.

"On him, lads!" he croaked. "Bind him well, and ye shall see sport, indeed! The Chevalier—ha! He shall dance on the plank, lads, ere his carcase feeds the hungry sharks! Quick, bring ye ropes, for, by my troth, he be as slippery as an eel!"

Slim, rising to his feet, kicked the helpless Chevalier mercilessly.

"To the barque wi' them!" he cried. "Ay, lads, but we shall ha' sport and enough wi' them, ere long!"

The helpless Chevalier was seized by many hands, and, with a heave, was thrown over the bulwarks, to crash heavily on the deck of the pirate. Roger, too, unconscious though he was, fared no better. He, too, was pitched aboard the pirate, and then, springing aboard his own craft, One-Eye ordered the grappling-irons to be cast off from the schooner's bulwarks.

"Take ye charge o' her, Slim!" he roared. "Follow ye in our tracks, for treasure lies ahead, Slim! Bright, red gold, Slim—ay, an' enough o' it to suffice for all!"

The hooks were cast off from the schooner, which heeled and righted herself, and then One-Eye's pirate barque, the Swordfish, swerved away and set her course to the Southward for the seas of adventure, bearing with her two unwilling passengers, Roger and the Chevalier, firm prisoners in the power of Abednigo One-Eye!

One-Eye Makes an Offer!

ROGER stirred and opened his eyes. Nothing but blackness was revealed to him, and for the time being he was entirely puzzled to account for it himself.

With the clearing of his befuddled brain, came memory—recollection of that fight aboard the schooner. He had turned to see the rogues of One-Eye swooping down on him from behind. He had essayed to join the issue against them—and then had come a crashing darkness that had lasted until this minute. The bare board upon which he lay heaved and rolled. He must still be aboard ship, then!

There came a noise in the darkness, a noise of heavy footfalls, and the banging of a door. Then a shaft of light shot through his prison, almost blinding him after the darkness of the past few minutes. He blinked like an owl, and as his eyes became accustomed to the light he saw that it streamed from a lanthorn, held by a man who gazed down at him with sneering mockery writ large upon his face. The man was Abednigo One-Eye!

"So-ho, my fighting whelp!" snarled One-Eye. "So your long sleep is o'er! Sink me if I did not begin to think that ye had slept your last sleep! 'Twould ha' hurt me, lad, to know that such was the case, for I ha' other plans regarding ye. How like ye the pretty bracelets and anklets I ha' given ye, eh?"

One-Eye chuckled as he pointed to the gyves which were locked around Roger's wrists and the fetters which held his ankles in their safe embrace.

"We'll make ye comfortable aboard the Swordfish, lad!" he went on. "Ay, ye shall ha' no reason to complain—an' ye tell me what I would learn."

"What can I tell thee that ye know not?" asked Roger.

"This," said One-Eye, leaning for-

ward. "Where be the plan that this man they call the Chevalier carried wi' him? Sink me, but I ha' searched him thoroughly and cannot find it. And, curses be on him, the fool will not part his lips and tell me where he has hidden it—nay, e'en though I ha' told him that the plank waits for him an' he refuses."

Roger's heart began to beat faster. He could still feel the sealed packet within his shirt. The pirates had not thought of searching him. Doubtless, they had picked up Lop-ear, and Lop-ear had told them of how Roger had but recently been discovered aboard the schooner. None, therefore, had seen the Chevalier hand the papers to him; and Roger vowed to himself that they should not drag the truth from him!

"Look 'e, lad!" continued One-Eye. "Ye be aboard my ship, and, fool that I was, I ha' handed the schooner to Slim. I thought the Chevalier would carry the chart wi' him, and so I brought him and ye aboard here. Now, sink me if I ha' not been the biggest fool that e'er sailed the main, for Slim will search the schooner from truck to keelson till he finds the chart. List ye, lad. I ha' no doubt that ye know where the plan is hidden, an' if ye but tell me, I'll gi' ye your freedom, ay, an' fishings o' red gold, lad! So out wi' it! Tell me where the plan is, and sink me if I do not make a rich man o' ye!"

Roger was silent. The ruffian had said enough to tell him the lie of the



Before the rope's end could swish down across Roger's shoulders a second time, Lop-ear went reeling into the scuppers—sent there by a mighty blow from the clenched fist of one who entered the fore-castle at that moment. "Ye gallows rat!" roared the newcomer. "What manner o' thing is this aboard my ship?" (See Page 25.)

land. One-Eye wanted the chart, the Chevalier had kept silence, and the pirate judged that the chart was aboard the schooner. That, no doubt, was why One-Eye had not fired the vessel after the Chevalier had fallen into his clutches. One-Eye was avaricious, and did not trust Slim. Now he was afraid that Slim would discover the chart and steal a march on him, such as he had planned to steal upon Slim.

"I will tell ye nothing of what I know," Roger answered. And a scowl of rage darkened the face of One-Eye.

"See ye, lad, I'll rip the heart out o' ye and feed it to the sharks an' ye open not your lips!" he cried. "Come, be not foolish, for there is gold enough an' to spare for both on us, an' ye but tell me where the chart be hidden."

"And the Chevalier?" asked Roger. "What o' him?"

"Rat him! He shall feed the sharks," was the rogue's answer. "O' that I am sworn!"

"Then ye may rip me, or feed me to the sharks, an' ye be so disposed," replied Roger, "but ere my tongue shall tell ye aught I would rather tear it out!"

(Next week's instalment of this stirring yarn of perilous adventure on the Spanish Main is the best yet—and that's saying a lot, chums. Make sure you read it, by ordering your MAGNET WELL IN ADVANCE.)

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THE REBEL OF THE FIFTH!

(Continued from page 23.)

Crash, crash, crash!

Far and wide rang the sound of the crashing chair. The punishment-room was at the end of a long corridor, well away from the occupied apartments. But the crashing of the chair in Coker's hefty hands reached the rest of the House.

"Coker's going it!" murmured Potter of the Fifth. Potter and Greene were finishing the cake in Coker's study. They felt that Coker would not want it now.

Crash, crash, crash!

It went on till the chair flew to pieces in Coker's hand.

Coker sat on the bed, gasping.

He was still a prisoner.

It was late before Coker slept that night. For long hours Coker paced the punishment-room like a tiger in a cage, breathing fury. The injustice of it infuriated him. Just because he had said, in a thoughtless moment, that he might punch Prout, every silly ass supposed that he had done it. It might have been more judicious not to say, even in a thoughtless moment, that he would punch Prout. Still, he had only said it; he had not done it. That howling old ass, Prout, had damaged his silly boko somehow, and fancied that Coker had done it. Prout, evidently, was ass enough for that, or anything.

But Coker laughed with sardonic satisfaction at the idea. If they thought they were going to sack him, they were making a jolly big mistake! For he would not go! The fellows could think what they liked. Prout could fancy what he liked; the Head could say what he liked. But one thing was fixed and

certain, as immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians—Coker was n't going to be sacked! If he had to stand up to the whole school in single combat, he wasn't going to be sacked.

Somewhat comforted by that grim resolution, Horace Coker threw himself on the bed at last, and slept the sleep of the just.

Coker was not the only fellow awake late that night.

A fat junior had crept stealthily into the Remove dormitory, his little round eyes blinking with terror behind his big spectacles.

He had crept silently into bed.

There he lay palpitating.

Bunter was a hefty sleeper, as a rule; but this wild night sleep deserted him.

Of what happened to Coker, he knew nothing; he did not even surmise how Prout had jumped to a wrong, though natural, conclusion.

All Billy Bunter knew was that he had punched a Form master, and the bare recollection of it filled him with fear and trembling.

What would happen to him if he was found out?

In the haste and excitement of the moment Bunter had not realised what he had done. But in the silent watches of the night he had ample time for the clearest realisation. He had knocked down a Form master. It made him shudder. It was long, long before William George Bunter was able to forget his terrors in slumber. It was late, very late before the snore of the boy of the Remove awoke the echoes of the dormitory.

THE END.

(Don't miss the next ripping yarn in this series—**WHO PUNCHED PROUT?**—Told in 6 real gem!)
Told in 6 real gem!

Stars and their Methods!

(Continued from page 2.)

them the whistle has not gone once against an opponent for offside. "It's not worth the risk," says Roy, and he is right. Trying the offside dodge isn't worth the risk.

He just loves to give boys instruction on the game, and has more than once lectured to lads at schools. He tells a good story in this connection. After having answered a lot of questions which the boys put to him, he put one to them—what he thought was a regular teaser.

"Suppose a forward shot from twenty yards out. The ball struck the bar, and as it did so burst, the bladder coming out of the case and going into the net, while the case fell in front of the posts. What would it be?"

The lads thought for a moment or two, and then, when Goodall was expecting them to say "Give it up," a bright lad gave this reply: "It would be a miracle."

Might I finish by saying that it will be a miracle if Goodall doesn't play for England many more times yet before his career is finished.

Roy cannot understand why, as recently happened, any club should discourage its players from taking up golf and playing golf during the week. He himself is very keen on the "game with the stationary ball," and he considers that a day on the golf links is entirely beneficial as a means of keeping fit. An ordinary five-mile walk across country doesn't appeal to everyone, but a five-mile walk round a golf course has exactly the same effect. You get the fresh air, you are with your pals, and for a little while the game of football is forgotten—not at all a bad thing.



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Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cell.
So Birchmall pulls up his stake
And bunks—we wish him well.

"ROT in, fathead!" yelled Mr. Lickham, as a thunderous crash sounded on the door.

He was sitting at the head-master's desk in the study where, until a few days previously, Dr. Birchmall had reigned supreme. But Dr. Birchmall had gone now. For the crime of cruelty to a junior, he had been sent to choker for six long, weary months. And Mr. Lickham, by order of the Governors now occupied his seat.

It was doubtful whether Mr. Lickham enjoyed raining in the late Head's place. The Dr. Birchmall had always been a truant and a booby, he had displayed a remarkable jealousy for keeping school affairs running smoothly, and Mr. Lickham unfortunately lacked that gift. When the Horn masters were in doubt or difficulties, Dr. Birchmall could always be relied upon to put matters right, for what he didn't know wasn't worth knowing, and what he couldn't do wasn't worth doing. But Mr. Lickham wasn't the tower of strength that his predecessor had been, and the other masters were already beginning to find it out.

In response to Mr. Lickham's invitation, Mr. Chas. Tysler, the master of the Third, centered in, leading Stedfast minor by the ear.

"Good-morning, Licky—" he began. "Good-morning, sir! I presume you mean" interrupted Mr. Lickham, with a frown. "Kindly be more respectful to your headmaster, Tysler!"

"I beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure," said Mr. Chas. Tysler humbly. "Any way, sir, I've brought this junior to you to be flogged, as he's beyond my powers of control."

"What has the boy been doing?" asked Mr. Lickham, with a severe glare at Stedfast minor.

"He's been cheating me right and left, sir. To begin with, he poked his tongue out at me. Then he chucked an ink pellet at me, hitting me right in the fizzo. Finally, he had the amazing impudence to give me a swipe on the boko when I was about to punish him."

"Dear me!" ejaculated the new Head, greatly shocked. "What have you to say to all this, Stedfast minor?"

"Rats!" was the feg's surprising report.

"What?"

"Rats!" said Stedfast minor cheerfully. "And many of 'em!"

Mr. Lickham gazed in perplexity at the cheeky junior. If Dr. Birchmall had been there, of course, he wouldn't have hesitated to make mince-meat of Stedfast minor. But Mr. Lickham was rather a tender-hearted man. The he had broken many a cane over the backs of his pupils, that sort of thing only occurred when he was suffering from grate egotism, and it took a lot to work him up to such a pitch. At the present moment he didn't know quite what to do.

"Now, look here, Stedfast minor—" "I can't!" said Stedfast, shaking his eyes.

"Why not?"

"Your face pains me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Chas. Tysler, highly amused at the idea of a Third-Former addressing the Head in such a way.

"Shut up, Tysler!" snapped Mr. Lickham fiercely. "Now, Stedfast, I want you to be a good boy in future. Go and eat coke!"

"Go and eat coke!" grinned Stedfast minor.

"How dare you speak to your head-master like that?" fumed Mr. Lickham. "Go and chop chips!"

"Any more disrespectful talk from you, and I warn you that you'll be flogged!"

"Who's going to do it? You?" jeered Stedfast. "Everybody knows you can't use the birch for nuts. Dr. Birchmall was the only one who could do that, and he's gone! So now we can all do as we jolly well like! Yah!"

So saying, Stedfast calmly poked out his tongue at the new headmaster, and helped himself to a piece of toffy that was lying on the desk.

Mr. Lickham scratched his head. He obviously didn't know quite how to deal with the rebellious feg.

"Perhaps you'd better wallop this boy, Tysler," he said, turning to the master of the Third.

Mr. Chas. Tysler snorted.

"Thanks for nothing, sir!" he sneered. "Didn't I tell you I'd brought him to you because he was out of my control?"

"Well, offer him sixpence if he'll behave himself," suggested Mr. Lickham despitely. "How does that strike you, Stedfast minor?"

"Make it a bob," replied Stedfast minor, "and I'll think it over!"

"A bob? Nearly half my weekly salary? Why, you must think I'm off my nut!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "Take this sixpence, and be satisfied, my ladd. And if I have any more complaints about you, I'll write home and inform your parents!"

Stedfast minor accepted the little silver coin readily enough, and strolled serenely out of the study, leaving Mr. Chas. Tysler looking far from grateful to his new headmaster.

"A fat lot of good you've done, sir!" he snorted. "As soon as that sinner has been dissipated in riotous living down at the tuckshop, that boy will be as bad as ever—worse, in fact. It's a pity Dr. Birchmall ever left us, if you ask me."

Having made this remark, the master of the Third tramped out of the study, and slammed the door with a slam that shook the skool.

Mr. Lickham sighed, and shook his head reflectively.

"Perhaps he's right!" he muttered to himself. "I don't think I was ever cut out to be the Head of a grate institution like this. However, as the Governors have seen fit to appoint me, I'd better carry on, I suppose."

Gathering his books together, the new Head went down to the Sixth Form-room to take the Sixth.

Taking the Sixth was no joke to a man like Mr. Lickham. To a distinguished skoller like Dr. Birchmall, of course, it was as easy as playing marbles. But Mr. Lickham could by no stretch of imagination be called a skoller. He was awkward, haphazardly, with the rudiments of history, geography, set seters, but he didn't possess the deep, all-round nollidge of a Birchmall. Consequently, he entered the Sixth Form-room in fear and trembling.

"Good-morning, boys! What's the first lesson?" he asked, trying to disguise his real feelings by grinning all over his face.

"Latin, sir," answered Burleigh, the kaplin of the Skool. "We were studying the works of Julius Sneezer before Dr. Birchmall was sent to choker, sir."

"Julius Sneezer! Grate pip!" That's very advanced stuff for meek boys! remarked Dr. Lickham, realising at once that he had quite forgotten the works of that celebrated orther. "Suppose you do something easier for a change? Translating simple sentences, like, 'The cat is on the mat,' for instance?"

The Sixth grinned, and Burleigh shook his head.

"I'm afraid that's a bit too easy for us, sir," he said. "It's all right for the Fourth, I eggspose, but we've grown out of it!"

There was a painful silence for a minute, then Mr. Lickham had a bright idea.

"Well, let's do joggraty instead," he suggested. "I'm rather a dab at the joggraty of England."

But we've been doing China just lately, objected Burleigh.

"Prey do not jest, Burleigh. I am talking about joggraty, not cups and saucers!" said Mr. Lickham sternly, absent-mindedly forgetting that there was such a country as China.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Sixth. Mr. Lickham didn't seem to be making a very good beginning. How ever, he was not one to give in without a struggle. One thing he did know something about was arithmetic, and he decided then and there to plunge into a lesson on that subject.

"What do two and two make, Talboy?" he asked.

"Five, sir!" answered Talboy. "Rats!" retorted Mr. Lickham, feeling sure of himself at last. "The correct answer, Talboy, is three."

"But Dr. Birchmall always taught us that the answer was five," said Talboy warmly.

"Tut-tut! I cannot believe that the late Head would be so ignorant of mathematics as that."

"But he did, sir," insisted Talboy. "Ask the rest, and you'll see."

Mr. Lickham began to feel rather uncomfortable.

"Surely there is no trooth in Talboy's statement?" he asked, appealing to Burleigh.

"It's quite troo, sir," answered Burleigh. "I always thought five was the correct answer, myself."

"So did I!" roared practically all the rest of the Sixth.

Mr. Lickham was fairly flummoxed. He had been under the impression that everybody knew two and two made three. Yet here was an entire Form of seniors under the impression that they made five. Obviously, Dr. Birchmall belonged to a different Skool of thought from the one Mr. Lickham had been brought up in. Arithmetic, under the circumstances, was impossible.

"Perhaps you had better peroo your studies on your own for the present," he said, after a pause. "I've just remembered I wanted to go along, and see how the Fourth are getting on."

With that the new headmaster fled, leaving the Sixth grinning delightedly.

Mr. Lickham made his way towards the Fourth Form room. He was amazed, as he drew near, to observe that the Fourth were all streaming out, in spite of the fact that morning lessons had only just begun.

"Jolly! Merry! Bright! What o'er are you doing of?" he cried sternly, as the three heroes of the Fourth passed him.

"Mr. Swishingham's dismissed the class for the rest of the morning, sir," replied Jack Jolly cheerfully.

"What on earth for?"

"He found he couldn't teach us like you did, sir. He told us that it was King Canute who burned the cakes, for instance, and we eggspained that you always taught us it was Peter the Grate."

"So it was!" snorted Mr. Lickham. "Very well, boys. You may buzz off!"

The Fourth, feeling very pleased at their unexpected holiday, obeyed, and Mr. Lickham, roofully shaking his head, returned to his study.

"EW!"

II.

Dr. Birchmall, ex-head-master of St. Sam's, puffed and panted and perspired as he toiled away on the treadmill in the grim prison where he was now serving his sentence.

It was a terrible come-down for the Head of a grate collidge to have to spend six months turning a treadmill and breaking stones. It was the biggest blow Dr. Birchmall had received since the days of his youth when he had been expelled from Borsal and sent down from Oxbridge.

Work, work, from morning till night! It was the first time Dr. Birchmall had ever done any real work, and his frame reeled every time he thought of it.

As headmaster of St. Sam's he had been master of all he surveyed. Form masters grovelled and cringed before him, boys cowered in his presence, and even the governors treated him with deference.

But as Convict 99 he was a meek huer of wood and drawer of water, or, rather, a breaker of stones and a treader of mills, and Dr. Birchmall felt the contrast akutely.

Instead of wearing a nice comfortable suit from Ikey Moss's secondhand shop in Muggleton, he was now forced to wear a coarse suit marked with broad arrows. The feather-bed on which he had passed his tranquil nites at the old skool was now replaced by a wooden plank. The terrific feeds in which he had formerly indulged were now a thing of the past—bread-and-water was the order of the day. To the refined and skollery old pedagogue it all seemed like some garstly nightmare.

"Grate pip! If they don't give me a rest from this treadmill soon I shall be a fizical wreck!" he gasped, as he looted away.

"Put some beef into it, Number 99, or you'll get a taste of the cat's-paw!" roared the harsh voice of the wander behind him; and Dr. Birchmall, with a groan, redoubled his efforts.

After working like a Trojan all the morning, the ex-headmaster of St. Sam's marched back to his cell to partake of a slice of bread and a mug of water. Five minutes only was allowed for this humble meal, after which he had to turn out with the rest of the prisoners until sunset.

"No sleeping, Number 99!" yelled the warder, as Dr. Birchmall started hitting the stones in a half-hearted sort of way. "Swing your hammer over your head as tho you meant it!"

"He, ha, ha!" roared the warder. Dr. Birchmall, with a terrific effort, had another try, and this time succeeded in catching the warder himself a fearful smack on the forehead.

There was a wild, aggrised yell from the warder, then his fazz turned deathly pale, and he fell to the ground in a deep swoon.

"Oh crickey! Now you've done it!" chuckled a hardened criminal who was standing nearby. "It's the cat's-paw, Number 99, and an extra twelve months for you after this, Number 99!"

As he spoke other warders came racing to the scene, levelling their guns at Convict 99 as they ran.

For eggactly one second Dr. Birchmall hesitated. Then, the thought of what he would have to face when he got back to the prison spurred him on to action.

"Anything's better than a life in prison!" he shouted; and, to the astonishment of his fellow-convicts, he flung away his hammer and ran for dear life.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The deadly rifles spoke, and the bullets whistled past the ears of Convict 99. But not for a minute did Dr. Birchmall slacken speed.

Like champions on the cinder-track, like unleashed hounds, like thoroughbreds racing to win, the warders hurried after him. But Dr. Birchmall had been a wonderful sprinter in his Oxbridge days, and some of his old speed still survived, for he managed to outdistance his pursuers.

From the distance came the hollow sound of the prison bell. Dr. Birchmall shuddered at the thought of the hoards of policemen who would soon be on his trail.

Yet on, on he went, wading neck-deep through rushing torrents, sneaking stealthily through dark woods, and running like the wind across bleak moors, until at last the scenery began to remind him of home again, and a sound came to his ears that struck a familiar cord in his heart.

Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle! Who could it be? Yes, it was! Who could mistake the chiming of the old skool clock at St. Sam's? By the strangest possible coincidence Dr. Birchmall had arrived back at the old familiar collidge over which he had formerly reined!

Like a thief in the nite, he made his way to a seavtable part of the skool wall, and, climbing it with the agility of a catburglar, dropped lightly into the quad. There, in the shado of the elms, he rested his weary limbs until dusk fell, and the lights from the Skool House glittered in the darkness.

THE END.

(There will be another amusing yarn of St. Sam's in next week's MAGNET, BIRCHEMALL, and prepare yourself for a real long laugh.)