

STILL THE BEST TWOPENNYWORTH OBTAINABLE!

No. 1,129. Vol. XXXVI. Week Ending October 5th, 1929.

# The MAGNET

EVERY SATURDAY.

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## COKER COMES A CROPPER!

A cheery incident from the exciting long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars—in this issue.



# Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:  
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,  
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to  
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).

**I** TOLD you last week that I would return to the subject of caves, so let's start off with that. In some parts of the world, especially in mountainous districts, the earth seems to be honeycombed, and now caves are being discovered nearly every day. Just recently a whole chain of caves were discovered in the Dolomites, and these have not yet been explored thoroughly. When they have been, it is assumed that they will prove to be the largest caves in the world, larger, even, than the famous Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, which is ten miles in length.

**THE MAMMOTH CAVE,** incidentally, is one of the wonders of the world, for it contains grottos, rivers, cataracts, and avenues, and the latter are covered with the most beautiful crystals. In the Pyrenees, between France and Spain, there are also many wonderful caves, only few of which have been explored, and Belgium and Switzerland are other countries which possess caves of great magnificence. In our own country the finest caves are found in Cornwall, Devon, Yorkshire, and Derbyshire, and some of these were only discovered fairly recently. In Kent's Hole, near Torquay, a quantity of bones of extinct animals were discovered, and, in fact, the idea of exploring caves is to discover evidence of the kind of animals which roamed the world in prehistoric days. So here is a chance for any budding scientist—go cave-hunting!

Here they come again!

## MORE LEG PULLS

for your poor old Editor. Well, I don't mind. Go ahead—and I'll try to give as much as I take. Here's a selection from this week's post-bag!

J. B., of Margate, tells me that I must have held over a joke which he sent in to me. Yes, after due consideration I hold it over the wastepaper-basket—and dropped it in!

Harry D., of Plymouth, asks me whether snake skins or lizard skins make the best shoes. I should say that banana skins make the best slippers!

Bert Walters, of Croydon, says he stands six feet in his socks. He'll catch cold if he stands about in his socks!

C. S. extends an invitation to me. "If you come down this way, will you drop in?" he asks. As his address is Mousehole, I don't think I can!

Occasionally some of you fellows take me to task when it isn't really my fault. One of my chums this week asks me why I took several weeks to answer a query which he sent in to me. The reason is that the MAGNET goes to press several weeks before you fellows get it from your newsagent, so I would like to point out to you that if you want an answer immediately, this can only be done if you give your full name and address, and enclose a stamped, addressed envelope. I'm always ready to help my chums out of difficulties, so don't be afraid to write and ask for my advice or assistance.

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Here is a question which has puzzled thousands of people. Ben Croft, of Leamington, wants to know the identity of

## THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK.

He was a mysterious prisoner who was closely confined in various French prisons from 1679 until 1703, when he died in the famous Bastille. He was a nobleman, and was always treated with great respect, but his keepers had orders to kill him immediately if he took off his mask. Various conjectures have been made as to whom he really was, but the truth has never been definitely established, and his identity remains one of the greatest secrets of history. The mask which he was condemned always to wear was not entirely made of iron, but was of black velvet, strengthened with whalebone, and fastened behind his head with a padlock.

Now let's see what sort of yarns you fellows have sent in this week. Here's one that well deserves a penknife, as Wilfred Jackson, of 11, Fothergill Street, Warrington, Lancs, gets one for his effort:

## TIT FOR TAT!

Bank Clerk: "Now you've got a job in a theatre, will you send me some tickets occasionally?"

Theatre Clerk: "Certainly, old chap, if you'll send me some banknotes occasionally!"

It's up to you now, chum, to follow in Wilfred's footsteps and carry off one of these useful prizes.

Some time ago I promised you fellows to give you what advice I could on the choice of a career, and one of my chums has written to me telling me that

**HE WANTS TO BECOME AN ARTIST** and asking me for advice on the subject. As there may be other "Magnetites" who have the same ambition, I am giving a few hints herewith.

To begin with, it is essential that a boy who wants to become a professional artist should have expert instruction, which can be obtained at the schools of art which exist in most big towns. After a few years' training at the school, he should endeavour to get into touch with one of the private studios which do work for advertisers, for the Press, and for book and magazine publishing houses. There he will have his chance to make good, and if he shows definite talent, he will soon be given an opportunity of advancing.

If he decides to become a freelance, he must submit specimen sketches to various Editors, and if his style suits them, he will soon find plenty of work placed in his way. But he should always remember that, while artistic work is well paid for, there are thousands of artists already working hard to meet the demands of the various magazines and periodicals. Consequently, no boy should embark upon an artistic career until he has had a thorough grounding at an art school, and his masters

has told him that his work is good enough to ensure a competent income.

Well, that brings me nearly to the end of my space again, so let us have a limerick that ought to bring a smile to your countenances. Here is one for which a pocket wallet goes to R. A. Cooper, of 17, Goring Road, Bowes Park, N.

Old Coker is a wonderful chap,  
Of the "footer" team he should be "cap."

After each game he swore  
He had scored goals galore,  
But he'd scored the wrong end, the poor sap!

Now comes a question which needs a fuller answer, for it deals with

## THE APPRENTICES OF OLD LONDON,

which is a subject that generally interests boys. The first reference to these apprentices is in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when they were obliged to wear blue cloaks in summer and blue gowns in winter. Life in those days must have been very exciting for the apprentices, for they banded themselves into parties and waged war on the apprentices who lived and worked in other neighbourhoods. At various times they became very riotous, and on one occasion they banded themselves together and rose in revolt because of the number of foreigners in London. Unfortunately for them, they were suppressed, and sixteen of them were hanged. In those days an apprentice was bound to his master until he was 24 years old, and he had to serve for seven years.

## BEST BOOKS!

Yes, "Harry," of Bedford, the Annuals are now on sale at all newsagents. The "Holiday," "Hobby," "Nature" appear again in brighter form than ever, and a newcomer with the title of "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories," at the popular price of half-a-crown, makes its first appearance. You need look no farther for bargain books, for these world famous volumes will give unlimited pleasure to the most critical. Have a look at them to-day.

Do you like our present Greyfriars yarns? Of course you do! You'll like them a lot better, too, when you read next week's fine yarn. In

## "A ROGUE IN THE REMOVE!"

Frank Richards lets himself go, and gives you a yarn which will keep you enthralled until the very last line. Take my tip and don't commence to read it unless you have plenty of spare time—because once you commence it you won't want to leave off until you have finished.

You'll find plenty of excitement, too, in Dicky Nugent's funny yarn, the second in the "Jipsy" series, which is entitled:

## "JOLLY'S WONDERFUL WEEZE!"

and then when you've finished that, you can be sure of another first-rate, gripping instalment of

## "THE SHADOW OF THE GUILLOTINE!"

which is undoubtedly one of the finest French Revolution yarns which have ever been published. Not a bad programme, is it? And when you realise that there will also be an interesting article on flying together with your Editor's usual weekly Chat, I think you'll agree that next week's issue will take a lot of beating!

Cheerio, chums!

**Your Editor.**

# Coker

# Comes

# A Cropper!



A Sparkling New Long Complete  
Yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.,  
of Greyfriars, "Starring" Horace  
Coker, the Fool of the Fifth.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Coker—As Usual!

**C**OKER asked for it, in the first place.

In fact, Coker begged for it. According to Bob Cherry, Coker of the Fifth fairly sat up on his hind legs and begged for it, and the other Remove fellows agreed with Bob. So it was no wonder that Coker got it.

The rain came down that afternoon in torrents. It rained as if it had never rained before, and wanted to make up for lost time. Games practice had been fixed for the Remove, but the hardest Remove at Greyfriars did not think of playing football in that downpour. Passage football was strictly forbidden. For some reason, inexplicable to the Lower School, masters frowned on football indoors. It was great fun—but Form masters did not see the fun.

Quelch, the Remove master, was the least likely of all Greyfriars masters to let it go on. But Quelch, fortunately, was out. Half a dozen fellows had seen him go. So the inevitable happened. It is well known what the mice will do when the cat is away.

Heavy rain splashed in the quadrangle and poured down from the old red roofs and pattered on the window-panes. But the Remove men forgot the rain when a game of football got going in the Remove passage. In a study passage many of the rules of Soccer had to be relaxed. But what was wanting in precision was made up for in vim. A stranger, looking into the Remove passage, might not have guessed that a game of Soccer was going on. He might have fancied it was a Rugby scrum, mixed up with a dog fight. There was a lot of kick and rush, plenty of tackling, any amount of charging, and sometimes as many as

seven or eight fellows were mingled on the floor. But as Bob Cherry remarked, what was the odds, so long as they were happy?

The juniors were happy—which was something, on a rainy day. Everyone within earshot of the Remove passage did not share their satisfaction. But in an imperfect universe it was impossible to please everyone. Fourth-Formers and Shell fellows yelled to the Remove not to kick up such a row, and were unheeded. Fifth Form men came to the end of the passage and roared. They might as well have whispered. The Removites turned deaf ears. Sixth Form prefects should have come up and put a stop to it. But the first eleven was away that afternoon, having started

having passed unheeded, Coker proceeded from words to actions.

Had a master or a prefect intervened, the football would have been taken away. Coker was neither a master nor a prefect, but he was, in his own eyes, quite as important a person as either.

He decided to take the ball away. That, he considered, would put an end to this uproarious rumpus.

It was easy enough for Coker of the Fifth to decide to take the ball away from the uproarious juniors. It was getting it done that presented difficulties.

Coker, with his usual disregard for consequences, proceeded to encounter these difficulties.

The ball came whizzing along the passage, and rolled on the Remove landing, near the head of the Remove staircase. A dozen juniors rushed for it—and Coker, from another direction, rushed for it. Coker got there first and grabbed the ball. The crowd of Removites got there the next moment, and grabbed Coker. Coker fell on the ball, and the juniors fell on Coker.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "You can play if you like, Coker, but we're playing Soccer, not Rugger. Let go that ball!"

Coker really gave the impression that he thought he was playing Rugby. He clasped the ball to his manly chest and squirmed under the swarm of juniors.

"Get up, you fathead!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Let go that ball, ass!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Give us that ball, idiot!"

"Scrag him!"

"Bump him!"

"Roll him downstairs!"

Collared on all sides by the indignant Removites, Coker staggered to his feet, still clasping the ball. He looked

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**Coker, the great man of the Fifth, made to "bend over" and receive "six" like a Second Form fag! Really, it's time for the skies to fall—in the opinion of Horace Coker. What's he done to deserve this?**

before the downpour commenced, and many of the prefects were gone with it. Those who were indoors either did not hear or did not heed the shindy in the Remove passage, which was at a considerable distance from the august quarters of the Sixth. So the shindy went on; and, naturally, it did not decrease in noise. Rather, it intensified.

Fifth Form men who heard the uproar from the games-study were annoyed. But Fifth Form men were not prefects, and if they had chipped in they would only have turned the football match into a battle. So the Fifth minded their own business.

Coker tramped along to the Remove passage and roared, as other Fifth Form men had done before him. Other Fifth Form men had contented themselves with that. Not so Coker! Coker's roar

rather untidy by this time, his collar being torn out, his tie gone, his hair rumpled, and his coat split up the back. But he held on to the footer. Coker was a sticker, and he stuck to the ball.

"Stop it!" he gasped. "Stop it, you fags! You're not going to kick up this row. I'm taking this ball away!"

"What?"

"My hat!"

"Scrag him!"

"Spificate him!"

Coker's announcement of his lofty intentions fairly roused the Remove. They had not been quite clear as to Horace Coker's object in hurling himself into the midst of the fray. Now they knew—and they waxed wroth.

"Give us that ball!"

"Roll him over!"

"Scrag him!"

A roaring mob of juniors encircled Coker. It became clear, even to Horace, that he never would succeed in getting away with that ball. But he held on to it. It was still possible to fling it over the staircase. Coker struggled towards the stairs, with Removites grabbing him and clutching him on all sides, amid a din and uproar that might have awakened the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. It was then that Billy Bunter came toddling up the stairs—Bunter having stood out of the game in the passage, having an ancient and deep-rooted dislike for exertion in any shape or form.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter. "Cave! Prout's coming!"

It was a timely warning. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form, had long listened to the uproar in the distance with growing annoyance. At Greyfriars it was an unwritten but well-recognised law that no master interfered with another master's Form. But there was a limit, and in Mr. Prout's opinion that limit was now reached. Quelch, evidently, was out of the House, or the din would not have gone on so long. Prout kindly undertook to do his duties for him. Frowning and majestic, Prout ascended the stairs and approached the Remove staircase, Bunter, who had spotted him, cutting on ahead to give warning.

Timely as the warning was, it fell on unheeding ears. In fact, in the terrific din, Bunter's squeak could not be heard.

On the Remove landing a swarm of juniors struggled with Coker, and Coker resisted manfully, and held on to the ball. Carrying it off to his study in the Fifth was impossible, as Coker realised now. But if he hurled it down the stairs it was out of reach of the juniors. It was the best thing he could do in the circumstances—or so it seemed to Horace Coker. Coker raised the captured ball with both hands above his head, and before the enraged Removites could grab it he hurled it away with all his force.

The ball should have flown down the stairs, and rolled and bounced far. No doubt it would have done so had not Mr. Prout arrived, by that time, at the Remove landing and inserted his plump and florid visage exactly in the line of fire. Mr. Prout's plump face, being in the way of the whizzing footer, naturally stopped it.

The next instant Coker saw what he had done. Instant silence fell where, a second before, all had been wildest uproar. Mr. Prout saw what Coker had done—and he felt it more distinctly than he saw it.

Bump!

Crash!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Mr. Prout disappeared from view.

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Something heavy was heard rolling down the Remove staircase. It roared as it rolled. It was Mr. Prout!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Vials of Wrath!

**H**ORACE COKER stood spell-bound. The Removites stood paralysed.

Some of them, with more presence of mind than the others, faded away out of the passage into the studies, realising that this was a time when a modest retirement from public view was judicious. But most of the fellows remained where they were—staring.

"Mum-mum-mum—" gasped Coker.

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

"Oh, crikey!" said Bob Cherry.

"Was—was—was that Prout?" stuttered Coker. He knew that it was, but it was too awful to be true.

Coker was a reckless fellow, and an unthinking fellow. But even Coker understood the frightful seriousness of biffing a Form master with a footer.

The bumping on the stairs ceased, as Mr. Prout reached the next landing. But the voice of Prout did not cease. His remarks, like those of Truthful James' partner, were frequent and painful and free. That Prout was not seriously injured was proved by the powerful volume of his voice; his vocal chords, at least, had suffered no damage. But he was hurt, if not seriously; it was impossible for a stout gentleman who had completed his half-century, and a little over, to roll down a staircase without getting hurt. The voice of Prout, like the voice of the turtle, was heard in the land—and it was heard far and wide!

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Coker.

"Well, you've done it now!" said Johnny Bull.

"The donefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ridiculous Prout seems to be infuriated."

Coker recovered himself, and glared at the juniors.

"Now you see what you have done!" he exclaimed.

"Us!" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"You!" said Coker severely. "If you hadn't kicked up such a shindy, I shouldn't have come along to stop you, and this accident wouldn't have happened! Prout will report you to Quelch for this, and you'll jolly well be licked all round—and serve you right!"

The juniors gazed at Coker.

Coker was startled and shocked by the occurrence, horrified and dismayed, but he did not see that he was to blame in any way. It was all the fault of these cheeky fags. This was quite clear to Coker, and he hoped that it would be equally clear to Mr. Prout.

There was a sound of ascending footsteps on the Remove staircase. Mr. Prout was coming up again.

More of the Removites faded away. Those who remained in the passage retired to a respectful distance.

But Coker had to face the music. It was useless for Coker to retire, when Prout had seen him hurl the footer. Besides, Coker was not the fellow to back out of trouble. He was always ready to stand up to anybody. In addition, Coker was certain that he was not to blame, and he hoped to make that clear to Prout. Prout was bound to see it, if he was reasonable.

Unfortunately for Coker, Mr. Prout did not look in the least reasonable when he arrived once more at the Remove landing. He looked in a towering passion.

"Coker!" he gasped.

"Here, sir!" said Coker. "I'm sorry, sir—"

"Coker! You dared—"

"An accident, sir—"

"An accident!" hooted Mr. Prout. "You dare to say that it was an accident, when I saw you, with my own eyes, hurl that missile at me?"

"At you, sir?" gasped Coker. "Oh, sir! Not at all! I—I—I was simply chucking it down the stairs—"

"Nonsense!"

"I assure you, sir—"

"Silence! You have always been the most unruly boy in my Form, Coker! You have never had a sense of dignity proper to a senior boy. I find you mingling in a rough game with juniors—a game forbidden indoors—"

"I—I—I—"

"I find you," roared Mr. Prout, "playing football in a passage, with a crowd of Lower School boys—"

"I—I—I—I—"

"And you crown your offences by hurling a football at me—at your Form master—"

"I—I didn't!" stuttered Coker. "Not at all, sir! I—I was just—"

"Do you ask me to believe, Coker, that you are so incredibly stupid as to hurl a heavy missile down a staircase, without ascertaining whether anyone was ascending the staircase at the time?"

"You—you see, sir—"

"I have been knocked down!" roared Mr. Prout. "I have been bumped—bruised! I am injured! Coker, this is too much—"

"I—I assure you, sir, I—I never saw you!" gasped Coker. "I mean, I saw you too late! I never meant—"

"Follow me, Coker!"

"If you'll listen to me, sir—"

"I will not listen to one syllable, Coker! I am going to take you to the headmaster. I shall place this matter in the hands of Dr. Locke! I have no doubt that he will expel you from the school."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Such insolence—such ruffianly, disorderly, mutinous hooliganism—"

"I—I—I—I—"

"Come!" hooted Mr. Prout.

"Look here, sir—"

"Come! I repeat, come!"

And as Coker did not come, Mr. Prout shook him by the shoulder.

"Will you listen to a chap?" shrieked Coker.

"I decline to listen to one word, Coker! You may make any statement you please to your headmaster! I wash my hands of you!"

"But I never—"

"Enough! Come!"

Coker had to come, with Mr. Prout hooking at his shoulder, or else knock Prout's hand away. Even Coker did not think of doing that. He was angry and indignant, but with great self-restraint, he refrained from treating Prout as he deserved. He went down the Remove staircase with Prout.

Puffing and blowing, bristling with indignation, Mr. Prout led him away, the Removites staring after him as he went. Potter and Greene of the Fifth came along to look over the banisters, to see their chum led like a lamb to the slaughter.

"Poor old Coker!" said Potter.

"He's done it now!" remarked Greene.

"It will be the sack!" observed Potter reflectively. "Coker's had a lot of narrow escapes—but fool's luck is bound to peter out in the long run. It's Coker for the long jump this time."

"And it's nearly tea-time!" said Greene regretfully.



A dozen juniors rushed for the ball—and Coker, from another direction, rushed for it. Coker got there first, and grabbed the ball; the next moment the Removites got there, and grabbed Coker. "Let go that ball, you ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "You're not playing Rugger!" (See Chapter 1.)

Potter and Greene walked back to the Fifth Form games-study, with thoughtful faces. If Coker was sacked, they were going to miss Coker, especially at tea-time. Tea in the study was generally stood by Coker, and stood lavishly. Coker was not, perhaps, prized for his manners and customs, or for his intellectual gifts, but there was no doubt that he was a valuable acquaintance at tea-time. Potter and Greene could not help feeling annoyed. If Coker was going to get himself bunked, he might, at least, have left it till after tea. But he hadn't! It was inconsiderate, to say the least, but it was just like Coker!

"Well, Coker's got it now!" said Bob Cherry, as the Fifth Form master and the hapless Horace disappeared below. "He can't say that he didn't ask for it!"

"The askfulness was terrific!"

"Begged for it," said Monty Newland. "He can't be surprised at getting it when he begs so hard."

"Fairly sat up on his hind legs and begged!" said Bob. "Still, I'm sorry for old Coker. He's amusing on a rainy day."

"We shall miss him," remarked the Bounder. "Pity he didn't miss Prout."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Coker!"

"That ass Prout has taken the ball away," said Peter Todd. "Are we going on with the game? I've got a footer in my study."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We're jolly well not," he said. "There will be a row anyway when Quelch comes in—after this! From now on we're going to be as quiet as lambs—a model Form that would do credit to a girls' school!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites dispersed to their studies, realising the judiciousness of keeping quiet after that painful episode. When Mr. Quelch came in out of the rain there was not a sound, not even a whisper, to be heard from the Remove passage, and Mr. Quelch was naturally gratified to observe that his Form could be trusted to keep order, even when shut up in the House on a rainy half-holiday. It was naturally gratifying to the Form master; and he attributed it to the firmness, mingled with kindness, with which he treated his Form.

which was the Head's idea of enjoyment.

He came back from Thebes with quite a jump, as the Fifth Form master presented himself in the study doorway.

"Sir!" said Mr. Prout.

"Pray come in," said the Head courteously, his eyes resting rather curiously on a football that Prout carried under his arm, and then on Horace Coker, who followed his Form master in, very untidy and flushed.

Mr. Prout rolled in ponderously. Greyfriars had been built in the days when builders were builders; but the study floor creaked a little under Mr. Prout's tread.

Time had been when Mr. Prout had weighed only twelve stone, and could have been measured round the waist with an ordinary yard measure. In those far-off days Prout had been an active man, and, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter. He told stories in Common-room—over and over again, unfortunately—of his exploits in those ancient days. Horns and antlers, bear-skins and buffalo skins, adorned Prout's study; and to each one hung a tale, told and re-told by Prout with great satisfaction to himself.

But those days were long past. Since those days Prout had found, with every passing year, more and more difficulty in buttoning his waistcoat. Perpendicularly, Prout was not impressive; but his diameter and circumference were imposing. His Form—not in his hearing, of course—likened him to the "huge

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### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

"Bend Over!"

"SIR!"

Prout's voice trembled in spite of himself.

Dr. Locke suppressed a sigh.

The Head's study looked very cheery and cosy. Rain pattered on the windows outside, and a sea-mist rolled over the quadrangle of Greyfriars. But within a bright log fire burned with a ruddy glow; a shaded electric lamp cast illumination upon the pages of a ponderous volume, and the Head was enjoying a quiet hour with Sophocles—

earth-shaking beast" mentioned by Macaulay.

Certainly, Mr. Prout was not of an age, or a physique, to roll down the Remove staircase with impunity.

All over Mr. Prout were distributed aches and pains, too numerous to count; he had been severely shaken up, from head to foot—and the damage, therefore, was extensive, for there was an enormous amount of Prout between his head and his feet.

He rolled in ponderously, and sank with a gasp into the chair indicated by the Head.

"What has happened?" asked the Head.

It was obvious that something had happened.

Prout pointed to Coker. Apparently he meant to imply that Coker had happened.

The Head glanced at Coker.

"An accident, sir—" began Horace.

"This boy, sir," said Mr. Prout—"this—this unruly, this disrespectful and rebellious boy, sir, has caused me to fall downstairs—"

"Mr Prout!"

"By hurling a football at me, sir—"

"Bless my soul!"

"This football, sir!" said Mr. Prout.

"I have brought it here, sir."

"I never—" began Coker.

"I place the matter in your hands, sir," said Mr. Prout. "I confess that this boy is beyond me!"

Dr. Locke bent a severe glance upon Horace Coker.

"Explain yourself!" he said.

"It was an accident, sir!" said Coker.

"A sheer accident! Some juniors were kicking up a shindy—"

"What?"

"I mean, making a disturbance, sir, and I went to stop them. I took away their footer, and threw it down the stairs. I hadn't the faintest idea that Mr. Prout was coming nosing—"

"What?"

"I mean, that Mr. Prout was coming to see what was up, sir! I saw him the moment I had chucked the footer! I couldn't help it, sir."

The Head's glance travelled to Prout.

"You do not suppose, sir, that Coker

made this—this assault upon you deliberately and intentionally?" he asked.

"At first, sir, I had no doubt of it," said Mr. Prout. "But on reflection, sir, I think it probable that Coker, as he says, was only acting with his usual incredible stupidity and obtuseness!"

"Such an action, if intentional, would cause the offender to be immediately expelled from Greyfriars!" said the Head, in a deep voice. "But it appears that it was an accident, caused by Coker having taken it upon himself to interfere with Lower boys, and by his unthinking stupidity in hurling a football down a staircase."

"Really, sir—" began Coker.

"Were you requested by a master to intervene among the juniors, Coker?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Or by a prefect?"

"Not at all, sir. I did it quite on my own," explained Coker. "I'm not satisfied with the way the prefects keep the fags in order, sir."

"Indeed!" said the Head.

"I've a short way with fags myself," added Coker. "I think they need a strong hand. I hope you agree with me, sir."

Dr. Locke rose to his feet.

"Coker, you need say no more! It is against all my inclinations, and against the traditions of the school, for a senior boy to be caned. But—"

"Of course, you will not cane me, sir?" said Coker, in astonishment. "The Fifth are never caned."

"I shall leave that to Mr. Prout to decide. I shall inflict whatever punishment Mr. Prout may demand."

"But, sir—" gasped Coker.

"It is for you to speak, Mr. Prout," said the Head. "As you appear convinced that Coker had no actual intention of assaulting you, no doubt you will not demand his expulsion. If you think that detention and a heavy imposition will meet the case—"

"I do not, sir!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Coker has frequently been detained, and frequently given impositions, but it has made no difference to his obstreperous unruliness or to his unspeakable stupidity. I think, sir, that chastisement is the only course."

"I agree with you," said the Head.

He glanced about the room. Coker realised that he was looking for his cane.

Coker backed away a pace, breathing hard and deep.

"Dr. Locke! You—"

"You need not speak, Coker! Mr. Prout demands that your punishment should be exemplary, and I fully endorse Mr. Prout's view."

"You're not going to cane me, sir!" stuttered Coker.

"I most certainly am!" said the Head, with emphasis.

"But it isn't done, sir!" gasped Coker.

"The Fifth ain't caned, sir! Why, I shall be chipped by all the fags in the school if it comes out that I've been caned! It—it's really impossible, sir!"

"That will do, Coker."

"But I'm bound to point out, sir, that it won't do!" insisted Coker. "Seniors can't be caned! It isn't done."

"Silence!"

Dr. Locke found his cane and picked it up. Coker eyed it with something like horror. It was not the licking he cared about—Coker was tough. It was the indignity! He could picture how the Fifth Form men would chip him in the games study. He could envisage the merriment of the juniors. The Fifth never were caned! Mr. Prout himself would have been the first to point out that such a mode of punishment impaired the dignity of both the Form master and the Form; That strict rule was to be departed from, in the case of Coker—positively for one occasion only, as it were! Coker understood quite clearly that it would not do. Unfortunately, the Head did not seem to understand.

The Head pointed to a chair with the cane. Coker glanced at the chair, but did not approach it.

"Bend over that chair, Coker!" said the Head.

"It's impossible, sir—"

"Coker!"

"The Fifth ain't caned, sir!" almost wailed Coker.

"When the Fifth act like unruly juniors they must expect the punishment of unruly juniors," said the Head. "Fortunately, you are the only boy in the Fifth Form ever likely to call for such punishment. Bend over that chair!"

Coker turned despairingly to his Form master.

"Mr. Prout—"

"You need not address me, sir!" boomed Prout. "Your punishment is light! You deserve a flogging with a birch."

"If you'd put in a word for me, sir—" gasped Coker.

"Silence!"

"A fellow expects his Form master to stand by him, sir!" exclaimed Coker indignantly. "I'm bound to say, sir, that you ought not to let me down because of a little accident—"

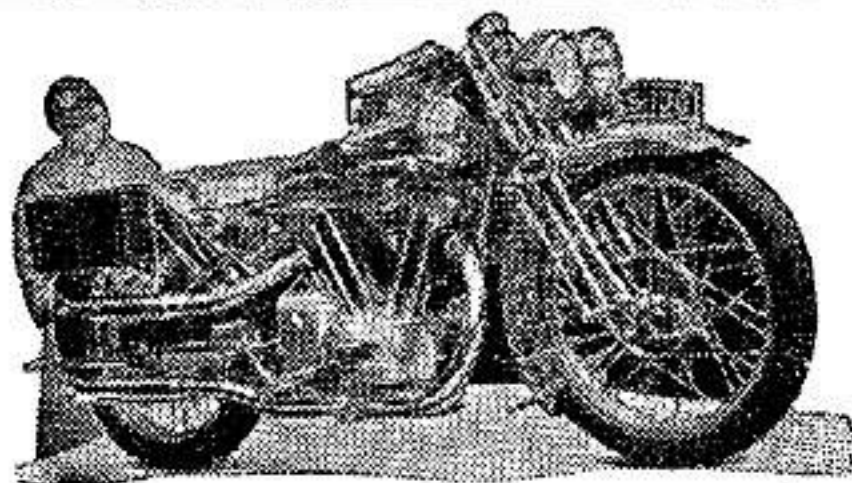
"I repeat, silence!"

"But, sir—"

"I have told you, Coker," said the Head in an ominous voice, "to bend over that chair! If you do not immediately obey my command I shall expel you from the school, and you will leave Greyfriars to-day."

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

He gave Mr. Prout one more despairing glance. Prout's face was like adamant. At any other time, no doubt, Prout would have realised that the dignity of his Form and of his important self were involved in this matter. He might have remembered that there would be smiles—sly smiles—in Masters' Common-room, when it came out that a Fifth Form man had been caned like a Lower boy. But Prout was not in the mood to reflect on



## SOME BIKE!

Something like a motor-cycle, isn't it? It's the famous Brough Superior, 100 m.p.h. If you are interested in motor-cycles you will revel in the 1930 HOBBY ANNUAL, from which the above illustration is taken. Motor-cycling, wood-work, railways, model-making, fretwork, aeroplanes, wireless, these are just a few subjects chosen at random from this better book for boys.

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that. Aches and pains covered him like a garment; and "six" was the very lightest punishment that would have satisfied him in Coker's case. Indeed, he would have demanded a flogging had he been sure that the Head would not have jibbed, so to speak.

So he fixed a ruthless stare on Coker; and the hapless Horace, realising that all was up, turned to the chair, at which the Head's cane was still pointing like the finger of Fate.

Slowly, slowly but surely, Coker bent over the chair!

He reached, at last, the attitude suitable for the punishment that was to be handed out.

Then the Head weighed in.

Whack!

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

Whack, whack, whack!

It seemed like a horrid dream to Coker. He was bending over, he was being whacked, like some fag of the Third Form! He told himself that it couldn't be real!

But it was real—horribly real. The Head was an old gentleman, and his athletic days were over. But there was a lot of punch left in his right arm. Some of it, no doubt, was due to practice. At all events, the whacks came down with a vim that convinced Coker that this was real.

Whack, whack!

Six was the number. The Head laid down the cane.

Coker staggered up.

"You may go!" said the Head majestically. "If there should be any recurrence of your foolish and disorderly conduct, Coker, I shall have to consider whether you may be permitted to remain at Greyfriars. For the present, you may go!"

And Coker went!

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Not Nice for Quelch!

**H**ENRY SAMUEL QUELCH, the master of the Remove, had never so much desired to say "No!" in his life. He desired to say "No," and he desired to say it with unmistakable emphasis. Instead of which, like so many persons who desire to say "No," he said "Yes."

Mr. Quelch had only had time to change his damp garments and his wet shoes, when Trotter came to inform him that Mr. Prout would be glad to see him in his study. Prout was glad to see anybody in his study. Prout almost laid in wait for other masters, to get them into his study. Members of the staff would sometimes go quite a long way round in order to keep out of peril of a hearty, hospitable invitation into Prout's study. Every man on the staff had seen, many times, every article in Prout's collection of trophies of ancient hunting days; and had heard, many times, the special story attached to each special article, and had yawned deeply and dismally over it.

Henry Samuel Quelch was a man of few words, and those were not always pleasant words. Chatting was not much in his line. Prout, on the other hand, was a chatty gentleman. Prout would take a colleague by the arm and walk him from Common-room to his study for a chat; and the expression on the victim's face at such a time might have moved a heart of stone.

Prout would drop into the games-study to chat with members of his Form. He believed in keeping up a spirit of free and friendly confidence between master and pupil. What the Fifth Form men felt like on these occasions Prout never knew, and never suspected. Sometimes, in a chatty mood, he had found the games-study deserted at an hour

when it was usually full of the Fifth; but he never guessed that that was because he had been espied from afar, and warning given in time that Prout was coming for one of his talks.

He did not know that Fitzgerald of the Fifth had suggested having a fire-escape fixed to the window of the games-study, so that fellows could escape by the window when Prout got to the door. Prout valued those free and friendly chats with his Form in leisure hours. He had no doubt that his Form valued them; and he often spoke of them in Common-room.

"My boys trust me," Prout would tell the other masters. "They like me to come among them in a purely informal way."

It was quite a blessing, to Prout, that he did not know that he was a most portentous bore.

But other masters sometimes wished that the obvious fact would dawn upon him; and his Form wished it most fervently.

But nobody ever thought of telling Prout. It was one of those things you

## HATS OFF TO Highbury

and Miss Mabel Reason, who carries off one of this week's "Magnet" pocket knives for sending in the following clever storyette:—

A young boy was giving an imitation of his teacher to a crowd of his friends when, unfortunately, the teacher in question came along.

"Ah, Smith," he said, "I'll see you after school in my study."

Smith, in anticipation of his fate, put some exercise-books in his trousers, and made for his master's study to receive his punishment.

"Now, Smith," said the learned one, "you've had your entertainment, now I'll have mine. You understand it's to be my entertainment?"

"Yes, sir," replied Smith. "I've booked my seat in advance!"

Miss Mabel Reason, of 23, Legard, Highbury, N., is now the happy recipient of a useful penknife.

couldn't tell a man. Hints were given; but Prout was blind and deaf to hints. Self-satisfaction armoured Prout like triple steel. Even when some unhappy man, being chatted to by Prout, shifted miserably from one leg to the other, and back from the other leg to the one, and looked at his watch twice a minute, Prout would not let him off if he could help it. When a man said he had a class and had to rush off, and did rush off, Prout only felt sorry for the man who had missed the rest of a good story.

In the Fifth they speculated sometimes whether Prout talked in his sleep. Blundell declared that he did not believe that Prout was physically capable of keeping his jaw still. He believed that Prout, so far as his chin was concerned, had solved the problem of perpetual motion.

So when Henry Samuel Quelch received the message that Prout would be glad to see him in his study, he longed to answer with an emphatic negative; but weakly he answered with a reluctant affirmative.

Suppressing his feelings, Quelch walked along Masters' passage to Prout's study,

He mentally resolved, however, that if it was a chat he would cut it short. If it was a hunting story he would not listen to all. Gently but firmly he would decline to hear for the umpteenth time how Prout had shot that grizzly in the Rockies. While if Prout, as was one of his happy customs, had advice to give him on the conduct of his Form, Quelch was in a mood to be nasty. Only if Prout really had something to say would the Remove master listen to him. Which meant that he was not going to listen, for Prout never had anything to say that he had not said at least a dozen times before.

But Prout, for once, lacked his usual manner of benevolent patronage mingled with bonhomie as Quelch came in. He was seated in his armchair, and seemed not to be quite his usual bonnie self. His expression was not chatty or anecdotic. It was grim, glum, and gloomy. Mr. Quelch realised that something had happened to Prout while he, Quelch, was out in the rain.

If Prout was seedy, Quelch was prepared to be sympathetic. He was prepared for anything but one of Prout's interminable chats. That, he felt, he could not stand on a rainy day.

"Pray be seated, Quelch," said Prout, in his deep, rich, fruity voice. "Be seated, please."

"I regret that I can remain but a few moments," said Mr. Quelch, standing. "I have a number of papers to correct—"

"You have been cut, I think," said Prout.

"Yes."

"For some considerable time, I think."

"Quite."

"No doubt you were surprised, when you returned, by the behaviour of your Form."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows. In point of fact he had been a little surprised at not hearing a sound from the Remove. It was not like his Form to keep so quiet when a rainy half-holiday shut them up in the House. He had been surprised and pleased. His manner became genial. If Prout was going to compliment him on the good conduct of his Form it was rather a change in Prout, and a change for the better. Generally Prout's comments were aversé.

"I cannot say that I was surprised, Prout," answered the Remove master. "I may say that I was gratified."

It was Prout's turn to raise his eyebrows.

"Gratified, sir?" he repeated.

"Distinctly," replied Mr. Quelch. "It is, after all, a rainy day, a very rainy day, and the boys are confined to the House! Boys will be boys—and a little noise or horseplay would be excusable in the circumstances. But the conduct of my Form this afternoon appears to have been exemplary."

"Exemplary?" repeated Prout.

"Quite."

Prout stared at him.

"Are you aware, Quelch, of the manner in which your Form has conducted itself this afternoon?" he inquired stiffly.

"I believe so," answered Quelch.

"And you are gratified?"

"Perfectly."

"You regard it as exemplary?"

"Without doubt."

"Then I can only say, my dear Quelch," said Prout, raising his voice a little, "that I do not agree with you! I can only say that no other member of the staff will agree with you."

Geniality dropped from Quelch like a discarded cloak.

"Indeed?" he said.

"Indeed!" said Prout.

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"Am I to understand sir, that you have some complaint to make with regard to the conduct of my Form during my absence this afternoon?" inquired Quelch, in a voice that seemed to proceed from the depths of a refrigerator.

"Precisely," said Prout.

"I am prepared, sir, to listen to any reasonable complaint," said Mr. Quelch, stressing the adjective.

"You behold me," said Prout, impressively, "suffering from a variety of contusions. I have had a fall on the Remove staircase."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir," said Quelch, "but I am extremely interested to learn what could possibly have taken the master of a senior Form to the Remove staircase."

"The unparalleled disturbance created by the boys of your Form, sir!" boomed Prout.

"When I came in, sir, there was no sound from the studies occupied by my boys."

"It had ceased, sir, owing to my intervention."

Quelch breathed hard through his nose. Intervention in his Form from another master was gall and wormwood to him—especially from Prout. He was by no means convinced that it had been called for. The butting-in propensities of Prout were well known to his colleagues.

"A football was hurled at me!" said Prout. "It caused me to lose my footing and fall! A variety of contusions was the result."

"Sir! I shall require the most impeccable evidence to convince me that any boy in my Form would hurl a football at any member of Dr. Locke's staff!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with heat.

"I did not say it was hurled at me by a member of your Form, sir! It was hurled, as a matter of fact, by a member of my own Form—by a stupid boy named Coker."

Quelch stared.

"Then in what does your complaint consist?" he demanded. "You enter a part of the House where you have no concern, and a boy of your own Form hurls a football at you—"

"Coker had intervened to stop the disturbance—"

"An act of impertinence on the part of a Fifth Form boy, sir!"

Prout brushed that aside with a wave of his hand.

"He took a football away from the boys, sir, and threw it down the stairs to keep it out of their hands, apparently. Unfortunately, as I was coming to the spot it struck me."

"I should recommend a severe punishment for this member of your Form, sir," said Quelch satirically. "Such an obtuse action on the part of any boy calls for condign punishment."

"Coker has been caned by the Head!" said Prout, with dignity. "And the punishment of your own Form, sir, whose uproarious conduct caused the catastrophe, I leave in your hands."

"I presume so, sir!" said Quelch. "I certainly presume so! Undoubtedly, sir, I presume so."

"Only requesting that it may not err on the side of leniency," added Prout, as he felt several twinges all at once from his variety of contusions.

"Of that I must be the judge, sir!"

"You will bear in mind, Quelch, that the conduct of your Form has been unparalleled—"

"I have little doubt that the boy of your Form whom you have named, sir, was the cause of it."

"That it has been ruffianly—"

"Mr. Prout!"

"Disgraceful—"

"Sir!"

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"Brutal—"

The door of Mr. Prout's study closed behind Mr. Quelch as he retired. It appeared that he had heard enough.

Prout rose to his feet, pink with wrath. He was not accustomed to having his remarks cut short in this way. Twinges from his variety of contusions caught him as he jumped up—and he gasped and sat down again. For the present Prout was hors de combat.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Execution!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Form-room at once!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"Quelch's orders."

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent together.

Billy Bunter blinked at them rather anxiously from the doorway of Study No. 1 through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, you'll tell Quelch that I had nothing to do with it?" he asked. "I wasn't in it, you know."

"Tell him yourself, fatty," grunted Wharton.

"He mightn't believe me," said Bunter, in distress. "Quelch has doubted my word more than once. I say, you fellows, he looks ferocious."

"Br-r-r-r-r!" growled Nugent.

"He's been to see Prout," said Bunter. "Prout's told him, of course. He told me to tell you fellows—Form-room at once. He's going to have the whole Form on the carpet. You'll be licked. Lucky I didn't have anything to do with it, ain't it?"

"Fathead!"

"Don't forget to mention that to Quelch. That's important," added Bunter impressively.

"Go and eat coke."

Wharton and Nugent left their study. The word passed along the Remove passage. There were apprehensive faces in that passage. In the absence of the Remove master that afternoon the Removites had hoped that their little game would not result in trouble. But Coker had knocked that on the head. Coker had butted in, and the outcome had been the biffing of Prout with a footer. Prout was not a man to be biffed with impunity. No doubt he had taken it out of Coker; and the juniors considered that he might have been satisfied with that. It was not, after all, Prout's business what happened in the Lower Fourth. Evidently Prout had not been satisfied. He had complained to their Form master. It was all Coker's fault, of course. But for Coker's butting it there would have been no catastrophe and no complaint. Fellows who had felt rather sorry for Coker now hoped that the Head had given him the time of his life.

The Remove did not look happy as they assembled in the Form-room after tea.

Mr. Quelch stood by his desk and surveyed the Form with a gimlet eye.

Nobody was anxious to catch that gimlet eye. With unaccustomed diffidence the juniors cast down their eyes.

"I have received a very serious complaint concerning the conduct of this Form during my absence this afternoon," Mr. Quelch told the Remove. "It appears that, in defiance of the strict rules of the House, a game of football was played in the Remove passage."

Silence.

"You will answer, Wharton, as head boy of the Form—is this the case?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Every boy concerned in it will stand out," said Mr. Quelch.

Most of the Remove filed out. Billy Bunter remained where he was, and Skinner and Snoop. The two latter, as a matter of fact, had been in the game; but they did not see any reason for confiding that circumstance to Henry Samuel Quelch.

But the gimlet eye fixed on the three who remained behind.

"Skinner! Had you nothing to do with the disturbance?"

"Very little, sir," murmured Skinner.

"Stand out! You, Snoop—"

Snoop hesitated at a direct untruth, and slowly followed Skinner out. The gimlet eye fastened on Bunter.

"Bunter!"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bunter. "Nothing at all, sir. The fact is, sir, I warned the fellows not to play football in the passage, sir! I told them some beastly beak would drop on them, sir—"

"You told them what?"

"I—I mean I—I told them it—it was not respectful to disobey the order of a nice man like you, sir—"

"Do not be absurd, Bunter! Did you join in this disturbance, or did you not join in this disturbance?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I require a categorical answer."

"No, sir!" gasped Bunter. "All the fellows can tell you that I kept cave on the staircase, and came up to tell them when old Prout butted in—I mean when Mr. Prout came along, sir—"

"If you kept cave on the staircase, Bunter, you are as much concerned as the others. Step out!"

"I—I mean I didn't, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't keeping watch on the stairs, sir."

"You have just said that you were."

"That—that was only a figure of speech, sir!" gasped Bunter. "What I really meant was that—that I wasn't, sir."

"Stand out with the rest."

"Oh dear!"

The whole Remove were "for" it! Henry Samuel Quelch picked up his stoutest cane.

"I am ashamed of my Form," he said. "It appears that my boys cannot be trusted to behave themselves when I turn my back. Have you anything to say in excuse for your outrageous conduct?"

"It—it was a rainy day, sir!" stammered Bob.

"Is that an excuse, Cherry?"

"Well, sir, a fellow has to do something on a rainy day," mumbled Bob. "We had to stay in."

"You did not think of improving your knowledge by a little extra study?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Bob.

Certainly he had not thought of that as a resource for a rainy day; neither had anybody else in the Form.

"We—we didn't mean to kick up a row, sir," said Squiff. "It got rather noisy somehow."

"You have no excuse to offer, it appears," rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Esteemed and absurd sahib—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"If you have anything to say, Hurree Singh, kindly say it in English!" snapped the Remove master.

"Certainly, esteemed sir," answered the nabob. "I will seek to express my absurd meaning in well of English pure and undefiled, and trust to make it clear to your ridiculous self. The excusefulness for our excellent and pernicious conduct lies in the proverb—"

"The proverb?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"The esteemed English proverb, sir," said Hurree Singh: "While the ridiculous cat is absent, the absurd mice will disport themselves."

That English proverb did not have

the effect of placating Mr. Quelch. He swished his cane.

"You will pass my desk in turn," he said.

The Remove passed the master's desk in turn. Each received two swishes in passing.

From Mr. Quelch's looks they had expected six each at least. But two were enough. Possibly Mr. Quelch, having a whole Form to cane, limited the number out of consideration for the muscles of his right arm. But the swishes were well laid on. There is knack as well as beef in these things, and Mr. Quelch undoubtedly had the knack. Each junior, after getting his swishes, left the Form-room, and most of them were quite curled up as they went out.

A long and dismal procession of wriggling, squirming juniors left the Form-room, and sounds of woe burdened the air as they faded away down the passage.

By the time he had finished Quelch was a little tired. Bunter, who came last, had merely a couple of flicks; though he made as much noise about them as any three other fellows.

The execution was over at last.

Quelch was left alone in the Form-room, and he laid down his cane, and

"That chump Coker!" said Johnny Bull. "Form masters will butt in—it's their nature to! But that fathead Coker——"

"That unspeakable idiot Coker!" said Harry Wharton. "Why couldn't he keep clear?"

"The whyfulness is terrific."

"If Coker hadn't biffed Prout," said the captain of the Remove, "Prout wouldn't have been damaged. If he hadn't been damaged he wouldn't have worried Quelch—and Quelch wouldn't have——"

"It sounds like the 'House that Jack Built,'" remarked Bob Cherry, with a

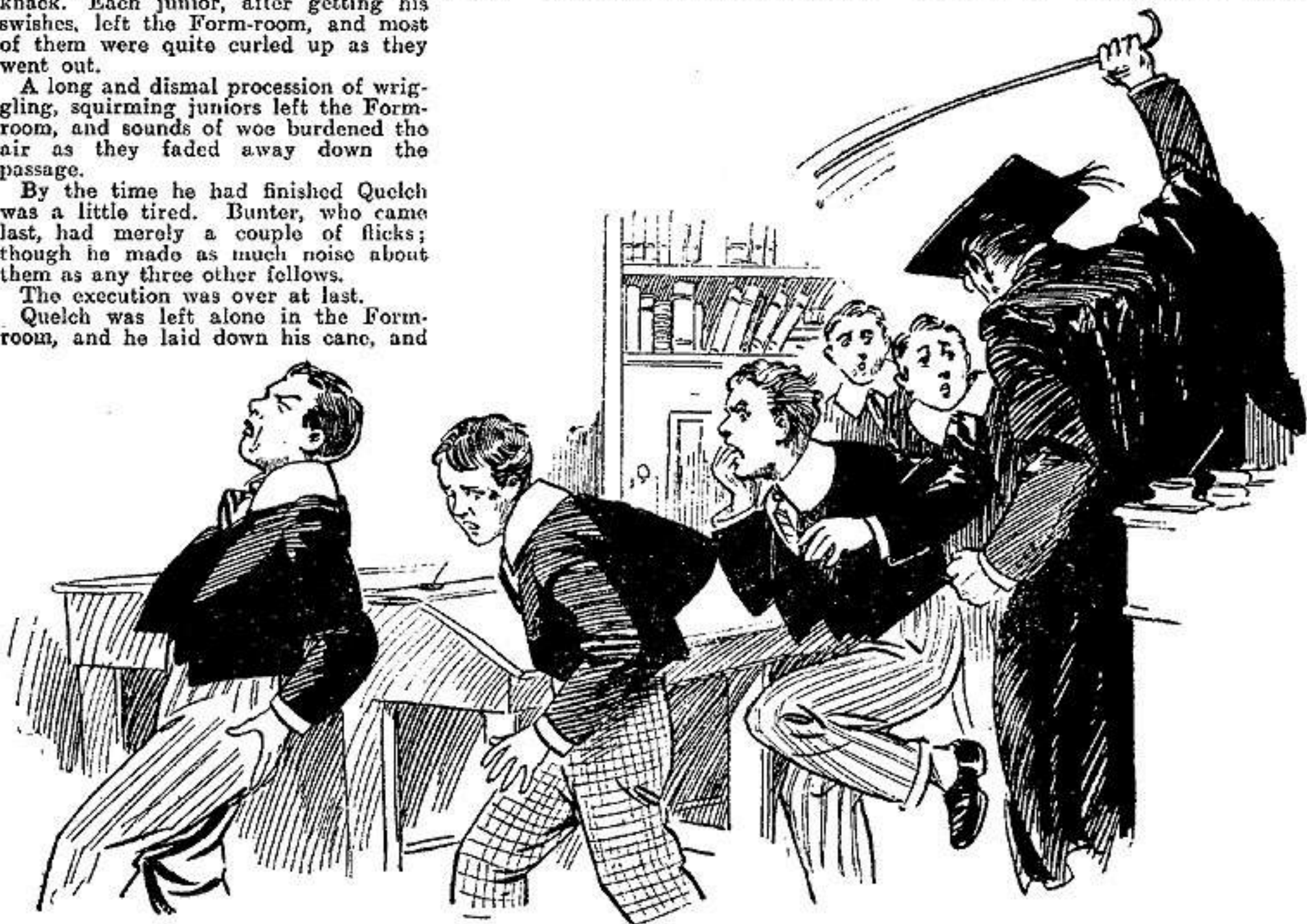
There were a dozen Removites in the party that approached the Fifth Form passage, Frank Nugent carrying the fives bat that was destined for Horace Coker.

They passed the games-study at the end of the passage, where there were a lot of the Fifth; the door, fortunately, was shut. They reached Coker's study without incident.

Harry Wharton threw the door open. Coker was there!

He was alone; Potter and Greene were not present. That was all to the good. It was Coker that was wanted.

In ordinary circumstances, Horace



"You will pass my desk in turn," said Mr. Quelch. The Removites passed the master's desk in turn, and a long and dismal procession of wriggling, squirming juniors left the Form-room. Sounds of woe burdened the air as they faded away down the passage. (See Chapter 5.)

breathed hard and deep after his uncommon exertions. In the Remove passage, where the juniors foregathered, there was gasping and groaning, mumbling and grumbling. The Removites had quite enjoyed their afternoon; but after the feast came the reckoning, and the way of the transgressor, as usual, was hard.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Crisis!

"O W!"

"Wow!"

"Ooooooooo-errrr!"

In Study No. 1 the Famous Five gave expression to their feelings. Their feelings were deep.

"Where does Quelch pack all that muscle?" groaned Bob Cherry. "Looking at him, you'd call him a bag of bones! But he's got muscle."

"The esteemed muscle is terrific!" mumbled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That ass Prout!" growled Frank Nugent. "If he'd minded his own business Quelch would never have known."

dismal grin. "This is the fathead that biffed the buffer. This is the buffer that complained to Quelch. This is the Quelch that whacked the Remove. This is the Remove that got it in the neck!"

"Well, it was all Coker's fault!"

"Passed nem. con."

"We've had a licking. I don't say we didn't ask for it; but it was all Coker's fault. And I vote that we pass it on to Coker."

"Hear, hear!"

The chums of the Remove brightened up at once at the idea of passing it on to Coker. There was still balm in Gilead, so to speak.

Frank Nugent sorted out a fives bat. "Let's go and see Coker," he said.

"We shall find him in his study; it's only just past tea-time. Better take a few more fellows in case his pals are there."

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

A few more fellows were easy to enlist. Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Peter Todd and Tom Brown, Bolsover major and Squiff, and Mark Linley and Monty Newland joined up eagerly.

Coker would have risen in wrath at this invasion of his study by a mob of juniors. But it appeared that the circumstances were not ordinary.

Coker glanced at them. That was all. He did not rise. He did not stir. He gazed listlessly at the Removites, with the expression of a fellow in the depths of despondency.

The Removites had come there for vengeance. But that unusual attitude on the part of Coker made them pause.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Coker did not speak.

He seemed past speech.

He gazed on the juniors with lack-lustre eyes, and that was all. It was obvious that Coker of the Fifth had had some sort of a shock.

"Collar him!" said Bolsover major.

"Hold on!" said Harry. "What's the matter, Coker? Ill?"

Coker shook his head.

"Sacked?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! Is that it, Coker?"

"Bunked?"

Thoughts of vengeance faded away immediately at the idea that the Fifth

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Form man had been "bunked." The juniors remembered the wild and wrathful words of Prout. If poor old Coker had been bunked they were prepared to give him sympathy, instead of the lives bat.

But Coker shook his head again.

"Not sacked?" asked Squiff.

Another shake of the head. Coker seemed to have forgotten that the Lower Fourth were his natural foes. In the deep gloom that enveloped him he was thinking of only one thing—the awful catastrophe that had happened in the Head's study. The caning of a Fifth Form man—and that Fifth Form man Coker! Nothing else that was going on in the universe mattered.

"Well, give it a name!" said Harry Wharton, perplexed. "What's up, Coker?"

Coker did not answer.

He was not likely to confide his woes to the Lower Fourth. He only gazed at them, with the gaze of a man under irreparable misfortune.

"Did the Head lick you?" asked Frank Nugent.

Coker's pallid face crimsoned.

"Oh! That's it, is it?" asked Harry Wharton. "Prout must have been waxy to have a Fifth Form man licked! After all, you gave him a fearful biff with that footer, Coker!"

"You asked for it, you know," Bob Cherry pointed out. "Fairly begged and prayed for it!"

"Well, let's give him some more!" said Bolsover major. "I don't suppose the Head gave him enough. The Head never does!"

"A few more——" suggested Smithy.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"If Coker's licked he's licked," he said. "We can let him off with that. Come on!"

The juniors left the study. Coker's state of collapse was disarming. Never had the obstreperous Horace been seen in so crushed a state.

Coker hardly seemed to observe them go. He sat where he was, crushed and dismal. He was still sitting there when Potter and Greene came into the study.

They eyed him. Twice they had visited the study already to hint to Coker that it was past tea-time. Coker had turned a deaf ear. What was tea to him now?

To Potter and Greene it was rather an important matter. Had Coker been bunked, they would have gone to tea in Hall. But learning that Coker had not, after all, been bunked, they had expected tea in the study as usual. Now it was too late for tea in Hall, and it looked as if, relying on Coker, they had been let down.

They eyed him—as sympathetically as they could, but rather impatiently. If there was going to be no tea in Coker's study, they had to scrounge a tea somewhere along the passage, and the sooner they set about it the better. No doubt Coker felt his position keenly; but, after all, a hungry fellow wanted his tea.

"Well, old chap?" said Potter briskly.

"Well, old bean?" said Greene.

Coker did not answer, but his look indicated that it was far from well.

"What about tea?" asked Potter, coming to the point.

"I've been caned!" said Coker in a hollow voice.

"Yes, we know that, old chap."

"Caned!" repeated Coker.

"Rotten—wasn't it?" said Potter. "But, after all, the Head never lays it on very hard."

"It will pass off!" said Greene encouragingly.

Coker gave his study-mates a glance of ineffable scorn.

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"Do you think I care about the licking?" he asked.

"Well, if you don't, what's the trouble?" asked Potter.

"I've been caned!"

"Yes, but——"

"Caned!" said Coker.

"Um—yes. But what about tea?"

Coker brushed the suggestion aside with the contempt it deserved. Tea in Coker's study, in those catastrophic circumstances, was like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, only more so.

"The Fifth," said Coker, "are never caned! I've stood a lot from Prout! I've put up with his hectoring in the Form-room—his making out that I make mistakes even in such simple matters as spelling when he's only displaying his own ignorance. I've stood a lot from him, but this is the limit! A fellow can't stand this!"

"But——"

"There's a limit!" explained Coker. "A fellow has to consider his own sense of dignity. I've been caned! If Prout himself had tried it on I should not, of course, have stood it. I should have hit him!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"With low cunning, he landed it on the Head," said Coker. "A fellow can't hit his headmaster! It isn't done."

"Nunno!" gasped Potter. "N-n-not quite! No!"

"So it comes to this," said Coker gloomily. "I've been caned—I, a Fifth Form man! Caned like a fag! Told to bend over like a Remove kid! The question is—what's going to be done about it?"

"Nothing, old bean!"

"Something's got to be done—and something's going to be done!" said Coker, unheeding. "The question is—what? We might discuss it—if you can forget for a few minutes that you haven't had your tea!" added Coker, with biting sarcasm.

Sarcasm was wasted on Potter and Greene. Apparently they were unable to forget that they hadn't had their tea. Instead of discussing with Coker what was to be done at this catastrophic crisis in the history of Greyfriars, they faded out of the study, bent only on scrounging a tea somewhere along the passage.

Coker was left alone once more, with his offended dignity and his gloomy reflections.

Something had to be done! Coker had been caned—the impossible, the incredible had happened! Coker had been caned! All Greyfriars should have been throbbing with the sensation. Greyfriars was not throbbing. Nobody seemed to take any particular heed of the catastrophe. Nobody seemed, indeed, to know that a catastrophe had happened. But there it was—Horace Coker had been caned; and the matter could not possibly rest where it was. Something had to be done. And the question was—what?

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Up to Coker!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. smiled when they saw Coker of the Fifth the next day.

The heroes of the Remove had long ago recovered from their own licking, and could afford to smile.

Coker had not recovered.

He did not smile.

Indeed, Coker seemed to have taken a leaf out of the book of that ancient monarch who never smiled again.

The licking in the Head's study, considered merely as a licking, did not worry Coker. Coker was tough.

But, considered as an affront to his

dignity, it was an incurable hurt. Had Coker been disposed to dismiss it from his mind—which, however, was impossible—he would have been continually reminded of it.

The Fifth Form did not think much of Coker; but he was a Fifth Form man, after all, and he had let the Form down by getting caned. The Fifth hated the idea of one of their own lofty number being caned like a fag. They considered that Coker had degraded the Form—and they told Coker so, at great length, and with great emphasis. Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, had been very bitter about it in the games-study. He said that nobody blamed Coker for being a fool, because fools were, like poets, born, and not made. Nobody blamed him for being a silly ass, because that was not a matter of choice. Nobody blamed him for being a clumsy idiot, because he was so designed by Nature. But a fellow who could not help being a fool, a silly ass, and a clumsy idiot could help being caned. That was a matter of choice. What had Coker gone and got himself caned for? Just to let down the Fifth!

The Fifth slanged Coker. The Sixth smiled. There were men in the Sixth—prefects, too—who avoided trouble with Horace Coker. Coker was so big, so hefty, and so reckless that even a Sixth Form prefect had to be wary in dealing with him. So all through the Sixth there was smiling satisfaction when it came out that Coker had been caned by the Head.

The juniors fastened on to the incident as a topic. It was so unusual for a senior to be caned that the episode had interest. Probably it would have been forgotten in a few hours but for the attitude of Coker himself. Coker took it so tragically that the other fellows had to take it comically. Had Coker gone on the even tenor of his way and made no sign another topic would very soon have replaced the caning of Coker. But the sight of Horace striding in the quad with knitted brows and gloomy frown kept the topic alive.

Naturally, Harry Wharton & Co. smiled when they saw him. They saw him after school, walking under the elms, and from his looks and manner Coker might have been studying for the part of "Hamlet."

Like the celebrated Alpine climber in the poem, his brow was set, his eyes beneath, flashed like a falchion from its sheath.

And the Famous Five smiled.

"Poor old Coker!" said Bob Cherry. "He feels it!"

"I should have thought it would have worn off before this," said Johnny Bull. "The Head's no athlete."

"Mentally, old bean, not physically," chuckled Bob. "Coker feels that the most important man at Greyfriars has been made to look an ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The esteemed iron has entered into his absurd soul!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Coker, buried in gloomy thought, strode on unheeding. Bob Cherry, walking quietly behind him, suddenly called out:

"Bend over, Coker!"

Coker started, and stared round.

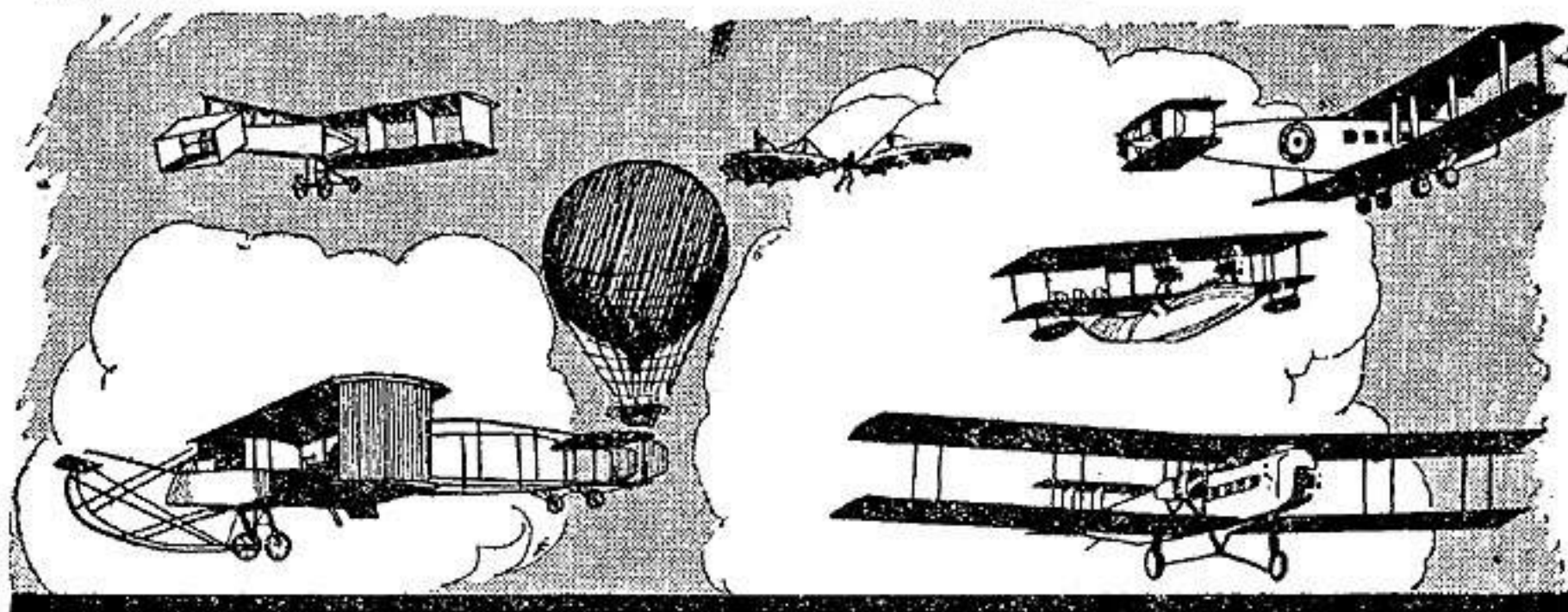
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.

"You cheeky fags——"

"Bend over, Coker!" chuckled Frank Nugent.

Coker's rugged face was crimson with wrath. The Famous Five retired from the spot before he could charge. They felt quite kindly towards Coker, and did not want to have to strew him under the elms.

(Continued on page 12.)



# LEARNING to FLY!

*To the Brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright the world of aviation owes its success of to-day, for these intrepid pioneers were the first to build and pilot successfully a power-driven plane!*

## Battling to Success!

**A** THOUSAND miles an hour! They're working up to it, these amazing, daredevil airmen. And that almost unbelievable speed that is even now being talked about may be a matter-of-fact reality in a very few years.

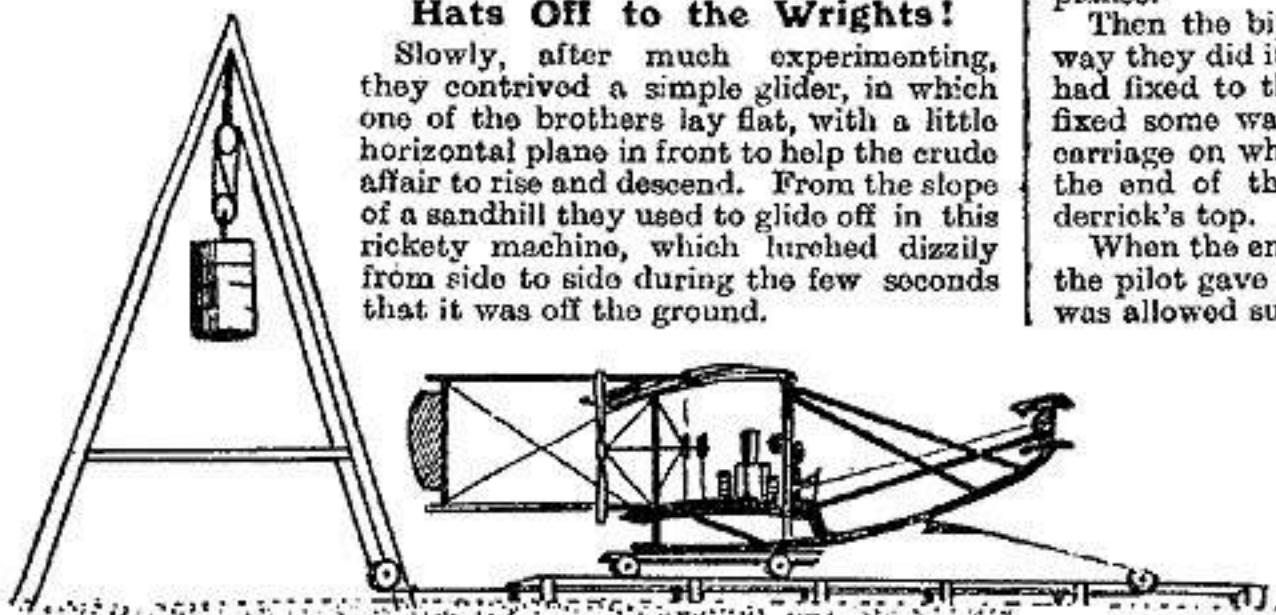
At nearly 370 miles an hour the winner of the Schneider Trophy Race hurtled through the air a week or two ago—faster than any other human being had ever moved before. An enormous Zeppelin has recently flown 7,500 miles in a little over four days—there are marvellous seaplanes equipped with engines that give 2,500 horse-power.

And it is only twenty-six years ago that the very first aeroplane got off the ground, carried a man as pilot, and settled again, without mishap. The flight was over in fifty-nine seconds. But it was as wonderful an accomplishment as those recent ones mentioned above.

For it was the dawn of flight. And the men who managed the "miracle" were obscure cycle repairers and general engineers! They were brothers—Wilbur and Orville Wright—who were bitten with the craze for flying: for doing something that no one in the world had ever done before.

## Hats Off to the Wrights!

Slowly, after much experimenting, they contrived a simple glider, in which one of the brothers lay flat, with a little horizontal plane in front to help the crude affair to rise and descend. From the slope of a sandhill they used to glide off in this rickety machine, which lurched dizzily from side to side during the few seconds that it was off the ground.



The Wright Brothers' weird and wonderful-looking launching apparatus.

Next they contrived an arrangement whereby the wings could be warped up or down, thus preventing the sickening lurching. This was a very big step forward, and when the brothers patented the idea they had to go to law to prevent others robbing them of the fruits of their brains.

For it was a very big thing they were on. They were nearer to success than even they themselves thought! Presently, when the control of the glider came to be better understood, they got two assistants to help launch the machine, raising it off the ground, whilst one of the brothers lay on his stomach inside as pilot.

They fitted it with landing skids, so that when it struck the ground again—as it did after a few seconds—the machine was not injured. That was in 1900. The next year they built a bigger one—the largest biplane that had ever been constructed. And with this they managed short glides in winds blowing at 27 miles an hour. A pilot would laugh at a breeze like that to-day. But the Wrights were absolute pioneers, remember!

## Difficulties Conquered!

Another they built in 1902, and achieved greater success still. But they had yet to fit their machine with some motive-power. They wanted an engine. So they set to work to make one in their own workshop—a petrol engine developing 25 horse-power. Now glance back at the second paragraph and see what has been said about present-day seaplane engines of 2,500 horse-power!

Well, they built their engine at last. Then they had to devise a way of getting the engine to drive their biplane glider. They fitted two propellers, which were driven by means of chains from the engine.

The two propellers made 450 revolutions a minute, and in this new machine the pilot had no longer to lie flat. There was a seat for him, with a lever to operate the rising and falling planes.

Then the biplane had to be launched. It was a very crude way they did it, but it worked. Standing on a rail, the machine had fixed to the front of it a rope which went round a pulley fixed some way ahead, and then went back below the undercarriage on which the biplane rested—back to a derrick, where the end of the rope was attached to a heavy weight at the derrick's top.

When the engine was started and the propellers were whirling, the pilot gave a signal, and the weight at the top of the derrick was allowed suddenly to fall. That, of course, dragged the biplane forward. It shot along the rail at thirty miles an hour, and as it came to the end of the rail the pilot freed his biplane of the trolley on which it was mounted—and up it went!

Then came the day of the real test. The biplane flew, with one of the brothers aboard, came down fifty-nine seconds later—and the first power-driven plane was a proven success.

Month after month the brothers practised, until in 1908 their machine was capable of a flight of 61 miles, and of rising to the unprecedented height of 377 feet! At the end of that same year, their machine flew 76½ miles, and was in the air for just over two hours.

The brothers by this time had serious rivals. Already Henri Farman had won a £2,000 prize for flying across a line marked out on the ground, flying straight ahead for 540 yards, circling a flagstaff and flying back again. But it was the two brothers who had shown the way!

Even then the "man in the street" was not even beginning to realize what all this meant. And now the sight of bullet-swift aeroplanes in the air is a commonplace, and inventors are working on runabout machines that will be like taxis of the sky!

It was the Great War that 'bucked up' flying, as perhaps nothing short of such a world catastrophe would have done. The vast German 'sausages'—the Zeppelins—brought stark terror to the people in their very homes.

And so veritable hordes of small fighting planes came to be manufactured by the British—to carry fear and devastation bang into the enemy's country, and to worry the colossal Zep. like flies worry a carthorse in hot weather.

## COKER COMES A CROPPER!

(Continued from page 10)

Coker, breathing deep, strode away. He came on a group of fags of the Second Form, who grinned as he passed with knitted brows. Dicky Nugent called out cheerily:

"Did it hurt, Coker?"

And there was a chortle from the fags. Coker strode on regardless. He headed for the House. Quite a lot of fellows smiled as he passed. Coker, as a rule, loved the limelight. But he did not like the attention he was getting now.

Tubb of the Third was in the doorway as Coker came in. Tubb of the Third remembered many a cuff from Coker, who had a short way with fags.

"I say, Coker!" yelled Tubb.

Coker glanced round.

"Who had to bend over in the Head's study?" yelled Tubb. "Who got six from the Beak? Yah!"

And Tubb of the Third hastily departed for parts unknown before Coker could get at him.

Horace Coker strode into the House. He passed Loder and Carne and Walker of the Sixth, and saw them smile. He paused a second; but even Coker could not charge like a bull at a group of the Sixth simply because they smiled. He went on his gloomy way.

In his study, he threw himself into a chair.

Blacker grew his brow.

Coker was, as a rule, a placable fellow. When he had his own way, without dispute, he was a good-tempered fellow. He could be tolerant to any man who did not argue with him; forbearing towards fags who did not kick when they were cuffed. But there was a limit to Coker's powers of endurance. The finger of scorn was pointed at Coker now. In the Fifth he was slugged, in the Sixth he was regarded with ironical smiles, among the juniors he was a mock. Nobody would have supposed Coker to be a revengeful fellow. But now his thoughts were turning to vengeance.

It was Prout who had brought him so low—Prout, a Form master with whom Coker had, on the whole, been patient and considerate. Coker, certainly, had told other fellows in the games-study what he thought of Prout; but he had never told Prout himself. In the Form-room he had treated Prout with respect, even when the man was exposing his own ignorance by finding fault with Coker's spelling, for instance. When Prout found fault with Coker's construe, Coker gave him his head, though he flattered himself that he knew a bit more about it than Prout did. And what had Coker received, in return for all this? Six!

Gloomy thoughts of vengeance filled Coker's mind. That pompous old ass—Coker actually regarded his Form master as a pompous old ass—had to learn that he couldn't treat Coker like this.

When Potter and Greene came in to tea there was no sign of tea, only of Coker's offended dignity and deep gloom. Potter and Greene felt a little fed-up.

Coker nodded to them.

"Squat down, you men!" he said. "Shut the door, Greene! I want to speak to you. I shall want your help."

To hear was to obey, in Coker's study. Potter and Greene did as they were bidden, wondering what was coming.

"I've thought it out," said Coker.

"About tea—"

"Don't be an idiot, Potter."

"Oh!"

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"Well, it's tea-time," remarked Greene.

"Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"Oh!"

"I've thought it out," resumed Coker, having reduced his study-mates to a gloom almost as deep as his own. "Of course, you fellows realise that I couldn't possibly take this lying down."

"Which?" asked Potter.

"That caning, fathead."

"But you didn't take that lying down," said Potter flippantly. "You took that bending over."

Coker's eyes glinted.

"If you think this is a joking matter, Potter—" he began.

"Well, what about it?" asked Potter resignedly. "It's over now, you know. You're not thinking of punching Prout's nose, I suppose?"

"I'd thought of it—"

"Oh, crikey!"

"But what's a fellow to do?" said Coker moodily. "I don't want to be sacked from the school. If I hit Prout, I shall be sacked."

"No doubt about that," agreed Potter. "You'd travel so fast it would make your head swim."

"My people wouldn't like it," said Coker, "and I've got to think of the school, too. And you fellows! What on earth would become of you? You've learned to depend on me, for advice, and so on; and I can't very well let you down. That's one of the drawbacks of being a strong, sensible, capable character. You lead weak-minded people to depend on you, and it becomes a responsibility."

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene together.

"Look at the fags, too!" said Coker. "I keep order among them to a large extent. The prefects aren't equal to their job. I do a lot of their work for them. I don't complain—but there it is."

"There it is, is it?" stuttered Potter.

"Yes. I hardly know what Greyfriars would come to, if I left," said Coker. "Just a straight rush to the dogs, I fancy."

"Oh!"

"Besides," added Coker, with great frankness, "personally, I don't want to be sacked. Apart from Greyfriars needing me, I don't want to go."

He paused.

"You see how it is. I'm going to get my own back on Prout—that's a settled thing. But I've got to manage it without being expelled. Punching the man means the sack. All the same, he's got to have it."

Potter and Greene could only stare.

"I got six!" said Coker gloomily.

"Well, Prout is going to have six."

"Prout's going to have six?" repeated Potter, like a fellow in a dream.

"Yes!"

"Ye gods!" said Greene.

"That is the least I can be satisfied with," said Coker calmly. "I've been caned! Prout's going to be caned! It's up to me!"

"Help!" murmured Potter.

"That being settled—" went on Coker.

"Settled?" said Greene dazedly.

"Yes, that being settled, the only question is, how is a fellow going to give Prout what he's asked for, without being sacked by the Head?"

Potter and Greene did not attempt to solve that problem. It beat, in their opinion, anything in Euclid. They only gazed at Coker in a fascinated sort of way. They had fancied that they knew every kind of an ass Coker was. But Coker was a fellow full of surprises.

Perhaps Coker took the silence for

consent or approval. He proceeded more briskly.

"It's a question of ways and means. Of course, personally, I could handle Prout. But that means the sack. I decline, in any circumstances, to be sacked. So I shall have to use strategy. A fellow who sets out to cane his Form master must use strategy."

"Oh!" gasped Potter. "Yes! I—I—I fancy he would have to use strategy. Quite a lot of strategy! Oh, yes."

"Heaps!" said Greene. "Tons!"

"I shall require the help of my friends," said Coker. "You fellows will back me up all along the line. I've roughed out the idea. I'm going to cane Prout—give him six! That's due to my own dignity. But I mustn't be recognised doing it. That means disguise."

"Disguise!" said Potter faintly.

"Exactly. Fortunately, I'm the best actor in the Fifth Form Stage Club—the only good actor in it, I might say. So that will come rather easy. We disguise ourselves—"

"We dud-dud-dud-disguise ourselves!" babbled Greene.

"And collar Prout—"

"Kik-kik-collar Prout!"

"You fellows hold him—"

"We—we—we hold him—"

"While I give him six!" concluded Coker.

Potter and Greene could only gaze at Horace. Words failed them. They gazed.

"Now to settle the details—" said Horace briskly.

Potter looked at Greene. Greene looked at Potter. They made a simultaneous movement towards the door.

"Don't go," said Coker, in surprise. "As I've said, I shall want your help. We've got to discuss the details—"

"Is there lunacy in your family, Coker?" asked Potter, finding his voice at last.

"Look here—" roared Coker.

"Well, you look here," said Potter. "Are you trying to pull our leg, or are you really thinking of pitching into Prout?"

"I'm going to give him six."

"Then you'd better see a doctor!" said Potter.

"What?"

"A mental specialist."

Coker jumped up. He looked round the study for a fives bat. Fortunately, Potter and Greene had departed before he found it.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Mysterious!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Coker's coming!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry Wharton.

It was the following day, and the Famous Five had gathered in Study No. 1 for tea. Tea was over, when Billy Bunter put a grinning fat face into the study to announce that Coker was coming.

"This is really getting too thick," said Frank Nugent. "Even that ass Coker ought to be satisfied with the trouble he's landed already."

"The thickfulness is terrifico."

"The silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Why the thump can't he keep from butting into the Remove?"

"If he wants another lesson, we can give him one," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Let's bag him as he comes in, and scrag him."

"Good egg!"

Billy Bunter departed grinning. Already the heavy tread of Horace Coker

"A fellow who sets out to cane his Form master must use strategy," said Coker briskly. "Heaps!" said Greene. "Tons!" answered Potter. "I shall require the help of my friends," continued Coker. "You fellows will back me up. I'm going to cane Prout—give him six! But I mustn't be recognised doing it!" (See Chapter 7.)



could be heard, coming along from the Remove staircase.

The Famous Five had little time to prepare, but they did not need much time. The study door was placed open—behind it, the five juniors crowded together in ambush, ready to jump on Coker as he came in.

That he was coming with hostile intent, they had no doubt. They were not likely to suppose that Coker was paying a friendly call in the Remove.

As it was now a couple of days since Coker had been licked by the Head, they supposed that he was hunting for more trouble. No lesson was likely to last Horace Coker longer than that.

If Coker was in want of further instruction, the chums of the Remove were ready, and willing, to supply the same. So they crowded in ambush behind the study door, and waited for Coker to materialise.

The heavy tread arrived at Study No. 1 and paused. There was an anxious moment for the waiting quintet. Possibly Coker was going to pass on up the passage. That would have been a disappointment.

But it was all right! The heavy tread paused at the door, and Coker swung in.

He stared round, for a moment, at an empty study. The next moment he became suddenly aware that the study was not empty. Five active forms leaped on Coker.

Crash!  
Coker, strewn suddenly on the floor of Study No. 1, spluttered wildly under the five juniors who sprawled over him. "Got him!" gasped Johnny Bull. "The gotfulness is terrific."

"Scrag him!"  
"Bump him!"  
"You cheeky fags!" roared Coker. "I came here—I came to say—yooooop!" Coker roared and struggled as the Famous Five got busy.

He spluttered and stuttered, and howled and yelled, as he was rolled and rumbled and hustled and bumbled.

"Sit on him!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Keep him there while I get the ink!"

"Go it!"  
"Leggo!" shrieked Coker. "Gerrup! Ow!"

He struggled wildly.  
"Buck up with that ink, Bob!" gasped Wharton. "He's as strong as a horse. But we've got him!"

"Grooogh! Yarooogh! You silly asses!" raved Coker. "I didn't come here for a row—Yarooop! Gerroff my neck—"

"What?" ejaculated Wharton.  
"You didn't?" gasped Nugent.  
"Ow! No! I'll smash you! No!" roared Coker. "I came here to—wow!—speak to you—Wow-wow!"  
"Oh, my hat!"

It dawned on the chums of the Remove that they had been a little too previous, so to speak. Coker, it seemed, had not come there for a row. Still, how could they have guessed that?

"Honest Injun?" demanded Wharton doubtfully.

"Ow! Yes! Lemme gerrup! Wow!" spluttered Coker. "Keep that ink-bottle away, you young scoundrel!"

"Hold on, Bob! He says he didn't come for a row."

"Better let him have the ink—"  
"Gerroff!"  
"Hold on!" gasped Wharton.

Bob Cherry unwillingly withdrew the ink-bottle. Coker was allowed to resume the perpendicular.

He staggered to his feet, gasping for breath. He glared at the chums of the Remove. Although he had not, as he stated, come there for a row, he looked powerfully inclined to charge at the Famous Five now that he was on his legs.

But he restrained himself. As he had come there to demand a service from the juniors, even Coker realised that it was not tactful to begin by scrapping with them.

The Famous Five regarded him with surprised inquiry. It was natural enough for Coker to come there for a row; but it was surprising for him to come for any other reason. Still, they were willing to give him a hearing.

"Take your time, old bean!" said Harry Wharton kindly. "Get your second wind and fire away!"

"You cheeky little beasts!" gasped Coker.

"Is that what you came to say?"  
"It's Coker's chatty style!" remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"You—you—" gasped Coker.

But he restrained himself again. It was useless to tell these cheeky fags what he thought of them. They were impervious to it. Besides, it would have taken too long.

Coker looked round for a chair, and sat down. He kicked the door shut. This proceeding made the Famous Five eye him with still more curiosity.

Apparently Coker had come to make  
(Continued on page 16)



(Continued  
from page 13.)

some communication of a private nature, which the rest of the Remove were not to hear.

Having set his collar and tie straight, brushed his hair back, and recovered his wind, Coker calmed down a little, and proceeded to explain.

"I suppose you kids can keep a secret?" he began.

"Us what?" asked Wharton politely.

Coker seemed to swallow something with difficulty.

"You fellows," he said.

"That's better! Yes, we can keep a secret; though I can't say we're specially keen on it. But what's the jolly old trouble?"

"I can trust you?" said Coker impressively.

"The trustfulness is terrific, my esteemed and absurd Coker!"

"You're cheeky," resumed Coker. "You don't know your place, and I have a lot of trouble teaching you. But you're straight. You're horrid little beasts in a general way; but honourable."

This exordium made the juniors stare harder. Coker evidently was in an unusual mood. What he was driving at was a mystery.

"Have you come here to pay us compliments, Coker?" asked the captain of the Remove. "If so, we'll take the speech as read."

"I want your help," said Coker.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The question is, can I rely on you?" said Coker.

"That depends," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "If you're thinking of learning to play football, we're your men. We'll give you some lessons."

Coker glared at Bob. This kind offer seemed to render him speechless for the moment.

"Don't you be in a hurry, Bob," said Johnny Bull. "I fancy Coker couldn't learn. Look at the way he plays football! That shows pretty well that he couldn't possibly learn the game."

Coker breathed hard and deep.

"I didn't come here for cheek!" he said. "Shut up and listen to me. You kids—I mean, fellows—you fellows go in for amateur theatricals, a sort of fag imitation of the Fifth Form Stage Club—"

"Draw it mild!" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly. "You jolly well know that your rotten Stage Club in the Fifth is a rotten imitation of the Remove Dramatic Society!"

"Well, never mind that," said Coker, with unexpected and amazing meekness. "The thing is, you go in for amateur theatricals, and you're not bad at it. I've seen you, and you're not bad."

"Praise from Coker is praise indeed!" murmured Bob. "Do you mind if we blush, Coker?"

"You want our help in amateur theatricals?" asked Wharton, puzzled. "I know you need it, when you do your acting stunts; but I'm blessed if I ever thought you'd own up to it!"

"Not exactly that," said Coker. "The fact is, I want to be disguised."

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"Disguised!"

"As a sort of ruffian," said Coker.

"But you don't need any disguise for that!" said Bob innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's eyes gleamed, but he controlled himself. Coker was displaying a self-control now that was really wonderful.

"I needn't go into details," he said. "I've got a certain thing to do, and if I'm recognised I may be sacked from Greyfriars. I can tell you that much. You'd hardly care to see me sacked!"

"Hardly," agreed Bob. "Life at Greyfriars would lose its comic relief!"

"But what—" stuttered Wharton.

"Better for you not to know the details," said Coker. "If there's trouble, I don't want to drag you fags into it. I've got something on—a certain thing that it's up to me to do. It's going to be done. But if I'm recognised, it's bunking. Well, I'm going to adopt a disguise. Like they do in Edgar Wallace, you know."

"Oh!"

"Of course, I could disguise myself," said Coker. Coker never could admit that there was anything he couldn't do. "But—but I'd rather have some help. You kids have had some experience in that line. I've got all the stuff—heaps of it! You see, I shall have to do it rather in secret. A fellow can't see behind the back of his head, and I don't want to leave any clue to my identity. I want to be made up as a sort of hooligan—a ruffianly sort of fellow—as ugly as you like—"

"That won't be difficult," assented Bob. "But if you wanted to be made good-looking, I'm afraid it would be rather beyond our powers."

"The beyondfulness would be terrific!"

Coker seemed on the verge of an outbreak. But his wonderful self-control came to the rescue again.

"Well, will you do it?" he asked.

"But," said Harry, staring at the Fifth-Former in amazement and doubt—"but—"

"Keep it dark," said Coker. "I can't give you any further information—only it may save me from the sack. My own pals have let me down. That's why I've come to you. I've done a lot of things for you kids—ordered you about, and cuffed you when you were cheeky, and all that. I'm not talking about gratitude; but you might do this for me!"

"Oh dear!"

"Well, is it a go?" asked Coker. "I'm not in the habit of asking favours, especially of fags. I'm asking one now."

The Famous Five stared at Coker. His request took them utterly by surprise, and his unaccustomed civility disarmed them. They were quite willing to do Coker a favour, if he asked them civilly; and he was asking as civilly as he knew how.

But what it all meant was a deep mystery to the chums of the Remove. They did not even begin to understand what Coker's mysterious game might possibly be.

"Well?" said Coker.

"I—I hope you're not heading for trouble, Coker?" said Wharton.

"That's all right," said Coker. "I've got something to do—something that's up to me. I'm going to do it, anyhow. That's settled. This stunt will make it safe. That's all."

"Blessed if I understand," said Harry. "But if that's how it is, I suppose we can do as you want."

"That's all right, then," said Coker briskly, as he rose from the chair. "After prep this evening, then. I've bagged the key to Class-room No. 10—you know, that little room at the end

of Masters' passage. I'll get all the stuff there. You kids turn up there, say, at a quarter to nine. What?"

"Right!" said Harry.

"Thanks!" said Coker graciously.

And he left Study No. 1, evidently satisfied.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at one another. For a long minute there was silence in the study.

"What the thump does it mean?" asked Wharton at last. "Is Coker potty, or is he pulling our leg, or what on earth is he up to?"

"Ask me another," said Bob.

Wharton wrinkled his brows.

"I suppose he's going to play some jape and doesn't want to be recognised," he said. "That must be it! No reason why we shouldn't lend a hand as he's so jolly civil all of a sudden. But of all the born idiots—"

"Of all the fatheaded chumps—" said Bob.

"Of all the burbling jossers—" said Johnny Bull.

"Of all the terrific and preposterous duffers—"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter put an inquisitive face into the study, and blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "I say, what did Coker want?"

"A strait jacket," answered Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That was all the information Billy Bunter received. But really, the Famous Five were little wiser. What Coker's game was was a mystery to them, and they could only hope that Horace Coker had not taken leave of his senses, such as they were.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### In Deep Disguise!

**H**ORACE COKER toyed with his prep that evening.

He had more important matters than prep to think of.

Besides, Mr. Prout was not likely to be exacting in the Form-room next morning. After what was going to happen to Mr. Prout this evening he was likely to be a subdued Prout in the Form-room, even if he appeared there at all.

Coker had thought out his plans, and was satisfied with them. He was, he flattered himself, the fellow to make plans.

Every detail had been settled. Coker, personally, was quite able to handle a fat Form master; indeed, he was hefty enough to have handled a Prout with either hand. There was no difficulty about that. He would have preferred the help of Potter and Greene to hold Prout in the posture necessary for taking six from his own cane. But he could do without them. All he really needed was a good disguise to save him from recognition, which even Coker realised would be followed by the "sack," short and sharp.

Coker was an original fellow in many ways. He prided himself on being out of the common run. Even his spelling was on original lines; his football was a kind of football that was never played by any other footballer; his very features were cast in an uncommon mould, and were said in the Fifth to resemble a Guy Fawkes' mask that had been trodden on.

In the matter of ideas, Coker's originality was quite startling. He flattered himself that he was the first fellow in the history of all Public schools to think of caning his Form master! Undoubtedly Coker was right there. The idea was startlingly original—almost unnervingly so.

It was original enough to scare Potter and Greene away from the study. Tea

—Coker's lavish tea—had no temptations for them now. Supper—Coker's generous supper—did not appeal to them. If Coker's study had been a land flowing with milk and honey Potter and Greene would not have entered it now. Not for all the fleshpots of Egypt would they have risked being associated with Coker in this latest and greatest of his original wheezes.

They could not at first believe that Coker was serious about it; they could not credit that even Coker could be such a wild, howling, unmitigated ass. But on discussion and reflection they had to admit that Coker, as they knew him, was ass enough for anything—even for this! And having come to that conclusion, Potter and Greene gave Coker a wide berth. They did their prep in another study—they kept away from Coker as if Coker had the plague.

Coker did not care.

As these faint-hearted fellows had let him down, the less he saw of them the better he liked it. He had no use for slackers and funks.

Having toyed with his prep, Coker threw school books aside. He had little estimation for school books, anyhow.

Coker's favourite reading was the kind of fiction that is found in such abundance on railway bookstalls. Coker's study overflowed with best-sellers. Coker revelled in the "Mystery Of The Millionaire Murderer," and the "Clue Of The Twisted Tie-pin."

From these valuable volumes Coker derived all sorts of wonderful information. In one he read of legal documents in Brazil being drawn up in Spanish. In another he read of people who talked in the Austrian language—truly a wonderful feat, only to be performed in a popular novel. But what took Coker's fancy most was the disguises in which the people in these novels lived, and moved, and had their being. Greatly did he admire the deftness of the gentleman who set out to make a fortune by fair means or foul—foul preferred—and disguised himself every half-hour or so as anything from a coal-porter to a Cabinet minister.

Other fellows read this stuff in idle moments, but certainly never thought of giving it any serious heed. But that was where Coker's originality came in. No other fellow at Greyfriars would ever have dreamed—even after a lobster supper—of disguising himself. But the idea was quite familiar to Coker owing to his extensive perusal of bookstall literature. From the volumes in coloured jackets Coker knew all about it. A faithful reader of Freddem Black and Chollops Puppenheim had nothing to learn in this department.

So Coker was in quite a cheery and self-assured mood as he left his study and proceeded to the rendezvous.

By a side passage he reached the class-room, No. 10, at the end of Masters' passage.

This spot was cunningly chosen, for thence it was but a step to Prout's study. And, once he was disguised, Coker did not want to walk all over Greyfriars. An enterprise like Coker's was one of the things which, if done at all, had to be done quickly.

The class-room was generally locked at night, but Coker had bagged the key, so that was all right. Astutely he had conveyed to the room, and concealed there in a cupboard, a considerable portion of the stage properties belonging to the Fifth Form Stage Club.

'It was ready for Coker.

He stepped into the class-room, and turned on the light. He was early; and the chums of the Remove were not yet there. But he had only a few minutes to wait.

Harry Wharton & Co. came in, quietly

and cautiously. They were, so far as they knew, up to no harm; but so close to Masters' studies it was necessary to walk warily.

"Oh, here you are!" grunted Coker.

"Here we are again!" assented Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Shut the door, and don't make a row."

"Better keep your own head shut, old bean, if you don't want a row," suggested Bob pleasantly. "There's a frightful row every time you open it."

Coker suppressed his feelings. Obviously, in the present circumstances, he could not deal with Robert Cherry as he deserved.

He took a bag from the cupboard.

"Now get going, and don't lose time," he said. "No need to jaw! You fags are too fond of jawing. You hold that glass, Nugent—hold it so that I can see myself in it, you young ass!"

"Not afraid of cracking it?" asked Nugent.

Coker passed the question unheeded. The amount of cheek he was taking quietly from these fags was really amazing.

However, the chums of the Remove were there to help Coker, as agreed upon; and help him they did.

All sorts of garments, disguises, and grease-paints were turned out of the big bag Coker had produced from the class-room cupboard.

Coker attired himself in "loud check" jacket, waistcoat, and breeches. He kept his own clothes on underneath for two astute reasons; one, to add to his apparent bulk; the other, to make a change-back as swiftly as possible when that time came. It was quite probable that Coker would be pressed for time when that happened.

Large boots replaced his shoes, and a belt was buckled round him. From his feet to his neck Horace now looked quite a different and much larger person. But the face of Coker of the Fifth still surmounted the figure of a man who looked like a cross between a bookmaker and a gamekeeper. Harry Wharton set to work on Coker's countenance.

Make-up changed his complexion to a ruddy hue. His eyebrows were thickened and darkened. An artificial moustache was gummed on his upper lip. A thick beard was wired to his rugged chin. Coker jumped over twenty years at once. He now looked like a mixture of bookmaker and gamekeeper approaching middle life.

He surveyed the result in the glass held by Nugent, and grinned with satisfaction.

He was in disguise—in deep disguise. There was no doubt about that. He would not have known himself—Potter and Greene would not have known him—his own Aunt Judy would not have known him; indeed, had she met Horace in that outfit in a lonely lane, Aunt Judy would probably have screamed for a policeman.

Coker had to admit that the members of the Remove Dramatic Society could do these things well. Coker had asked them to turn him into a rufianly-looking fellow, and they had done so. He had said that they could make him ugly, and they had done it. Had he asked them to disguise him as a handsome fellow, there would have been a different tale to tell. Clever as they were, the juniors could not work miracles.

Coker was satisfied.

"Think any fellow would know me now?" he asked, turning round so that the Famous Five could survey him from all points of the compass.

"No fear!"

"The knowfulness would not be terrific."

"But what's the game, Coker?" asked Wharton, with a lingering doubt. "Breaking bounds?"

"Certainly not, you young ass!"

"But what do you want to hide yourself in that rig for, inside the school?"

Coker did not answer that question. He opened the door a few inches and peered out.

"All serene," he said. "No time could be better. Most of the old jossers will be jawing in Common-room; but Prout is always in his study at nine."

"Prout?" repeated Wharton.

"You kids had better clear off now," said Coker. "I don't think anything will go wrong; I don't see how it can, as I laid all my plans personally. Still, you'd be safer off the scene."

"But what—"

"No time to waste—cut!"

Coker held the door open, and the juniors filed out. They lost no time in getting out of the neighbourhood of Masters' passage. Some jape on Prout, they concluded, must be Coker's object; and that Coker would bring it off successfully they did not, of course, suppose for a moment. Had they suspected Coker's true purpose, they would not have left so quietly. Rather would they have hurled themselves on Coker and held him down by main force, and, if necessary, have tied him to one of the desks. But they did not suspect. They were keen enough; but they could not follow the workings of a mind so original as Horace Coker's.

So they departed; and when they were gone, Horace Coker also made a move—in the direction of Mr. Prout's study. Coker had been caned! Now it was Prout's turn! Coker of the Fifth was on the trail of vengeance.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Not as Per Programme!

**P**ROUT sat in his armchair, in his study, taking his ease.

It was a large easy-chair, but Prout's ample bulk filled it almost to overflowing.

The poet has told us that where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise. Prout was blissfully ignorant of what was about to happen. Had he been wise to it, certainly he would never have stretched his massive form so comfortably in that armchair, or smoked his big black cigar with so much satisfaction.

Prout, from his armchair, surveyed his study walls, which were adorned with trophies of the chase and trophies of weapons. With a placid smile, Prout recalled the adventures that gave these trophies such an interest to his retrospective mind.

There were fellows at Greyfriars, and even masters, who fancied that Prout had bagged most of those trophies at second-hand shops—who even doubted whether he had ever really tracked the ferocious grizzly in the Rocky Mountains, or massacred his four-footed fellow-creatures with the big rifle that hung on his wall. These doubting Thomases suspected that Mr. Prout's yarns came, not from his memory, but from his imagination.

Possibly there was something in it. Seen through the mellowing medium of a long lapse of time, probably Mr. Prout's youthful adventures had gradually assumed larger and larger proportions, unknown to himself. An artistic touch here, a picturesque detail there, had doubtless crept in from time to time.

But Prout had a firm believer in himself, at any rate. Others might doubt whether he had shot that grizzly in the Rockies, but Prout never doubted. If

he had fancied it, the fancy was now fixed in belief.

In those days, Prout had been a dead shot with the rifle. At least, he said so. On the rifle-range at Greyfriars his old skill certainly had deserted him. Still, that was no proof that he had not been a crack marksman once upon a time. He kept that old rifle well cleaned and oiled. He was not without hope that there might be another war some day, when he might have a chance of potting a few with that trusty weapon.

Contemplating these relics of an heroic past, Prout was cheery and happy; only needing someone to drop in for a chat. He had asked Monsieur Charpentier to drop in for a chat that evening; but it appeared that the French master had important letters to write to la belle France. He had asked Hacker, but the master of the Shell had a pile of papers to correct. He had asked Capper; but the Fourth Form master was booked to play chess with Lascelles in Common-room—or so he said. He would have asked Quelch; but there was a certain stiffness about Quelch since the time Prout had complained about the Remove. He asked Wiggins, of the Third; and the Third Form master had said he would look in; but he did not seem in a hurry to do so. It was fortunate that Prout was not a suspicious gentleman. He might have wondered how it was that other members of the staff always seemed to have some engagement when he was in a chatty mood.

However, someone was about to drop in.

A Fifth Form man, whose outward aspect was more remarkable than any Greyfriars Fifth-Former's aspect had ever been before, had arrived at Prout's study door.

He entered without knocking.

Prout turned his head doorward, with a hospitable smile lighting up his plump features, in expectation of seeing Mr. Wiggins.

The smile died away.

Prout stared.

He jumped.

A bearded, moustached, bushy-browed ruffian in "loud check" jacket and breeches had entered his study, and closed the door behind him.

"Good gad!" said Prout.

He stared at his unexpected visitor, dumbfounded.

Coker stood with his back to the door, staring at Prout.

The hour had come!

As it would have been put in the yellow-jacketed novels that formed Coker's chief reading, the hour of vengeance had struck.

A disguised desperado at such a moment would, as Coker knew, gaze at his victim with grim triumph.

So Coker gazed at him with grim triumph.

"Good gad!" repeated Prout. He did not recognise Coker's gaze as one of triumph. He fancied the man was intoxicated.

He rose from his chair—slowly, for he had a great deal of weight to lift.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

Coker did not answer.

It was not his cue to speak. Prout might recognise his voice. Besides, he had not come there for words, but for action.

He strode to the study table.

On the table lay a cane.

Prout never used a cane for punishment purposes, but the cane was there. Now it was going to be used.

Coker grasped it.

Prout stared at him with distended eyes. Who this truculent-looking ruffian

might possibly be, and how on earth he had got into the school, Prout could not guess. But he was naturally alarmed, especially as this strange visitor's actions hinted of intoxication.

"Who are you?" he repeated. "How did you come here? Leave this room at once."

Coker swished the cane in the air.

"If you have called to see someone in the stables," said Prout, "I cannot imagine how you have got here. But you must leave this study at once, whoever you are."

Coker opened his lips—and closed them again. It was necessary to tell Prout to bend over. That could be done without speaking, as Coker realised.

After all, he could disguise his voice. Coker flattered himself that he was equal to any emergency.

"Bend over!" he said, in a deep, hoarse, husky tone, the hoarsest and huskiest he could call up from the depths of his chest.

Prout jumped again.

"Wha-a-a-t?" he ejaculated.

"Bend over!"

"Are you mad?"

Coker pointed with the cane to the chair from which Prout had risen. Prout backed away.

He realised that this dreadful apparition was not intoxicated. He was a lunatic! To Prout's mind there was no doubt about that.

Prout felt his ample flesh quiver and creep.

He thought of shouting for help, but the fearful figure was between him and the door. Escape was cut off. At any moment the madman might spring on him.

"Bend over!" growled Coker.

"Mum-mum-my gog-good man!" stuttered Prout.

Coker strode at him.

Prout jumped back.

Coker grasped at him, with the intention of bending him over forcibly.

Prout backed to the wall.

On that wall hung the celebrated rifle that was featured in so many of the thrilling tales told by Prout in Common-room. Prout was reminded of it by his back jamming against it.

Usually Prout moved with the leisurely grace of a tortoise. On this occasion he moved like a teetotum. He spun round, grabbed the rifle from the wall, and clamped it to his fat shoulder, the muzzle aimed at the ruffian in the "loud check."

"Stand back!" gasped Prout.

"Ruffian! Stand back, or I fire!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker, forgetting to speak in the tones of the Great Huge Bear.

This move of Prout's took Coker quite by surprise. It was not what he would have called sporting.

It was said in the Fifth that Prout kept that rifle loaded. If it was loaded—

Horace Coker jumped back faster than Prout had jumped.

"Here, chuck that!" he gasped.

Prout did not chuck it.

He was not likely to chuck it when he was threatened by what appeared to him a dangerous lunatic.

Prout had presence of mind. His idea was to keep the madman at bay with the rifle while help came to secure him.

"Help!" shouted Prout. "Help! Help!"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Coker.

"Help! Help! Help!"

Prout had a powerful voice. Even in conversation it was rich and fruity and booming. When he roared the celebrated Bull of Bashan had nothing on Prout!

Prout's voice woke every echo of Masters' passage.

Coker stood dismayed.

His plans were cut and dried: to collar Prout, give him six with his own cane, and scud before trouble accrued.

But the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley. Prout's rifle put a wholly different complexion on the matter. If it was loaded—

Probably it wasn't! But it was not a chance that a fellow wanted to take!

Besides, delays were dangerous in an enterprise like Coker's. He had known that he would have to be rapid if he was to get clear after caning Prout. And moments fled.

He was held at bay, and Prout's roars for help awoke the echoes of Greyfriars. Already doors were opening and voices calling.

There was only one thing for Horace Coker to do unless he was to be cornered and collared in Prout's study, stripped of his disguise, and marched to the Head to be sacked. And he did it! He executed a strategic retreat doorward—tore open the door, and ran for it.

Vengeance on Prout had to wait! Coker himself could not afford to wait!

He fled.

"Help! Help!" roared Prout. "Stop him! Help!"

There was already a master running along the passage towards Prout's study. Fortunately it was only Monsieur Charpentier. The French master was brave as a lion, but physically he was not up to Coker's weight. Coker met him in full career, and Monsieur Charpentier was distributed along the passage.

Coker rushed on, gained Class-room No. 10, dodged in, slammed the door, and locked it. A minute more and Masters' passage was in an uproar from end to end.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Prout on the Warpath!

**B**ILLY BUNTER burst into the Rag, gasping with excitement.

"I say, you fellows!" spluttered Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I—I say—I say—oh, crikey—I say, you fellows, Prout's been murdered—"

"What?"

"Old Prout—attacked—murdered—oh, crikey!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five were in the Rag, and they were not in an easy frame of mind. They had helped Coker of the Fifth in his remarkable enterprise, without understanding what Coker's game was, not regarding it, anyhow, as a matter of importance. But somehow it worried them afterwards. They could not help wondering what Coker was up to, and whether he was making a bigger ass of himself than usual.

It was something to do with Prout, they knew that. Some jape, they imagined—though further than that they could guess nothing. But they were rather wishing that they had had nothing to do with it. It was not as if Coker was an ordinary ass. He was an extraordinary ass, and one never knew what he might be up to.

They were rather expecting to hear that something had happened, after Coker got going. Now they heard!

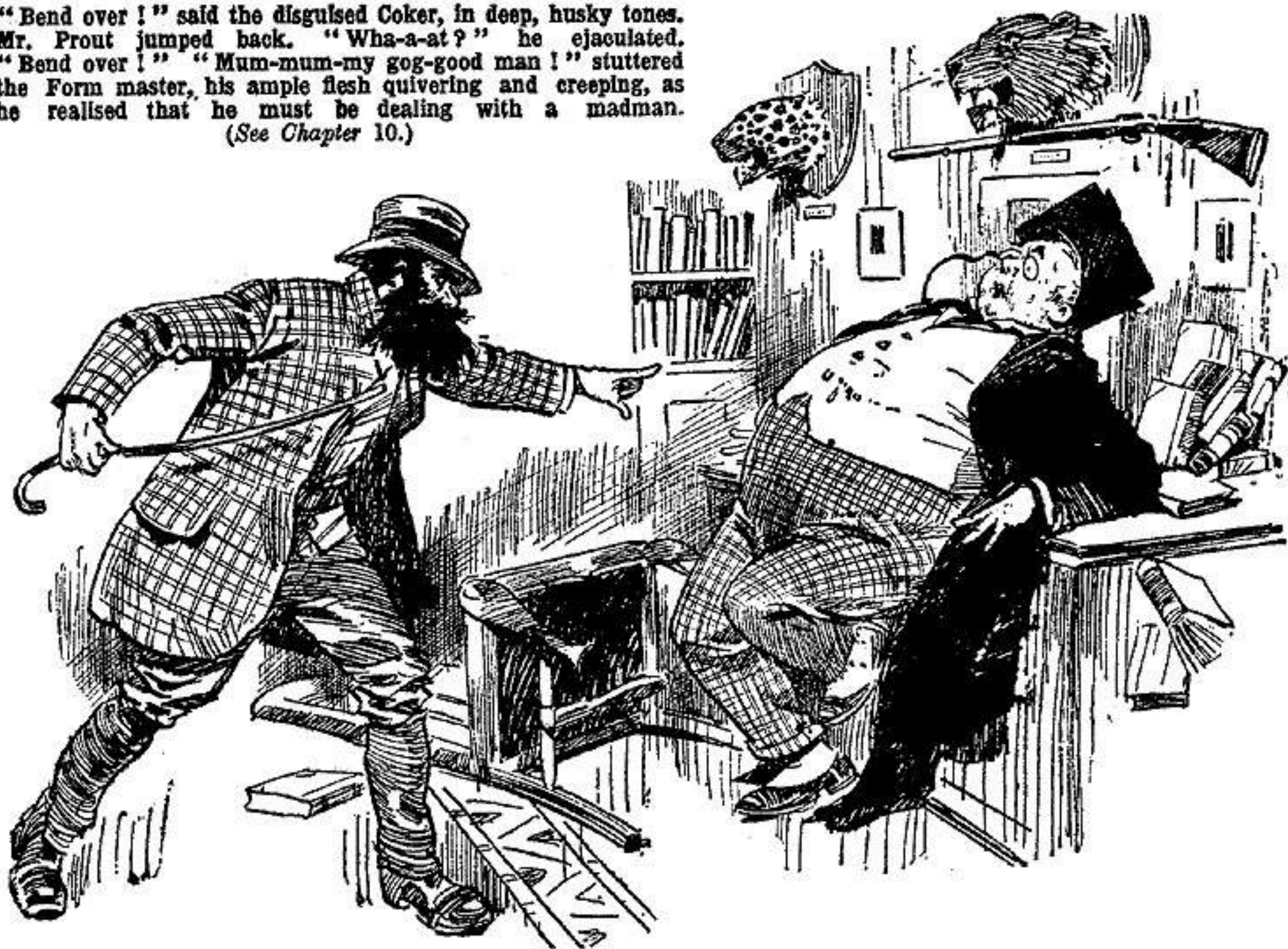
Bob Cherry took Bunter by the collar and shook him, as the crowd of fellows in the Rag gathered round for the exciting news.

"Now, you fat idiot—"

"Groogh!"

"Has anything happened, you burbling bloater?"

"Bend over!" said the disguised Coker, in deep, husky tones. Mr. Prout jumped back. "Wha-a-at?" he ejaculated. "Bend over!" "Mum-mum-my gog-good man!" stuttered the Form master, his ample flesh quivering and creeping, as he realised that he must be dealing with a madman. (See Chapter 10.)



"Oooooch! Leggo!"

"Let him get it out!" exclaimed Skinner.

"Ow! Leggo! I say, you fellows, Prout's been attacked in his study! There's a terrific row—not exactly murdered. I think——"

"The exactfulness is probably not terrific."

"But nearly," said Bunter breathlessly. "Very nearly! A frightful ruffian with a revolver——"

"A what?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Or an automatic," said Bunter. "Fired at Prout——"

"You fat villain! We should have heard it——"

"Going to fire at him, I mean——"

"Let's go and see," said Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows——"

But there was a rush out of the Rag, and Bunter was left to tell his tale to the desert air.

Undoubtedly something had happened.

Masters' passage was thronged. Nearly all the prefects were there, and all the masters, excepting the Head, who was in his own house. Excited seniors and juniors swarmed. Everybody was asking everybody else what had happened, and nobody seemed to know precisely.

But the Famous Five had an inkling. "Coker, of course!" Wharton whispered to his comrades. "But what the thump has he been up to?"

"Japing Prout——" muttered Bob.

"Something more than a jape, I fancy. But what——"

"Goodness knows."

"Something fatheaded, anyhow," said Johnny Bull; and the chums of the Remove agreed to that. On that point, no doubt was likely to exist.

"Viz my own eye, I see him!" It was the voice of Monsieur Charpentier rising in an excited shriek over a loud buzz. "Viz my own eye! Yes! Mais

oui! He rush into me like one bull! I am knock over—I am flat on ze floor. Mon dieu! I zink I am keel—but I am not keel! Non! But all ze bref he knock out of me!"

"But who——"

"What——"

"A fearful, dreadful homme!" gasped mossos. "He have one beard on ze chin, I see him—he have a face of ze most ferocious! He hurl himself on me like one bull——"

"But what——"

Mr. Prout appeared in the doorway of his study. He was panting and perspiring. In his plump hands he held the trusty rifle that had scared off his assailant.

There was a backward surge of the crowd. It looked as if Prout's rifle had a generally scaring effect.

"Is he gone?" gasped Prout. "Have you seen him? Has he escaped? He must be seized! A dreadful villain—a madman——"

"My dear Prout——" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I have telephoned to the police!" gasped Prout. "A constable is coming on a motor-cycle. He will be here in a few minutes."

"But what——"

"It is extraordinary that he has not been seen. He must be still in the house."

"I see him viz my own eye."

"I had a glimpse of the man," said Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Third. "I was coming round the corner, on my way to Prout's study—I had a glimpse of the man. A burly, ruffianly-looking fellow, dressed in 'loud check,' bearded, and with bushy brows."

The Famous Five exchanged glances as they heard that. Undoubtedly it was Coker.

"He attacked me," said Prout. "He entered my study suddenly and seized the cane from my table. That he is mad admits of no doubt, for he uttered

two extraordinary words—'bend over.' Such words, addressed to a schoolmaster, can only imply that the wretched man's brain was unhinged."

"Amazing!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "My dear Prout, are you sure that he uttered those words?"

"He uttered them and repeated them, Quelch. He was about to attack me with my own cane when I seized this rifle. Presence of mind saved me from assault—perhaps murder! I clapped the rifle to my shoulder and faced him—like this!"

Prout demonstrated how he had levelled the rifle at the miscreant. His action had an extraordinary effect on the swarming crowd in Masters' passage. The rearward part of the crowd melted round corners—the rest dodged with looks of wild alarm.

"Like this!" said Prout, the rifle levelled at the alarmed crowd and his fat finger on the trigger.

"Put that weapon down!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Like this——"

"Point it some other way!" screamed Mr. Wiggins.

"I am merely showing you——"

"Mon Dieu! We shall all be keel——"

"Is that rifle loaded?" roared Hacker, the master of the Shell. "If it is loaded I insist upon your lowering it immediately—immediately!"

Mr. Prout started.

"Bless my soul!" he said. "It is not loaded. I had quite forgotten that it was not loaded! I will load it at once!"

"Do nothing of the kind!" hooted Quelch.

"My dear Quelch——"

"I refuse, sir, to have my life, and the lives of others here, endangered by that firearm!"

"Pooh! Pooh! You are needlessly alarmed, my dear Quelch. I will load the rifle immediately."

There was a further backing out of THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,129.

Masters' passage. The crowd thinned rapidly.

Even the presence of an unknown, and presumably insane, ruffian in the house did not seem to cause so much alarm as Mr. Prout's intention to load the rifle.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter came panting up. "I say—"

"Prout's loading his rifle," said Bob. "Yaroooh!"

Bunter disappeared like a ghost at cock-crow.

Mr. Quelch, with a determined air, marched resolutely to Prout's door. He stared in at Prout, who was fumbling with cartridges.

"Prout! I insist upon that firearm remaining unloaded!"

"Nonsense! I am about to search the house for that desperate villain! I must be armed!"

Prout turned towards the Remove master as he spoke, the rifle swinging round in his hands, the muzzle pointing at Quelch. The activity with which Henry Samuel Quelch jumped back out of the doorway would have done credit to a kangaroo.

"Put that rifle down!" shrieked Mr. Quelch, keeping in cover.

"My dear Quelch. There is no danger—"

"I insist—"

"Moreover, unfortunately, I have only blank cartridges," said Prout. "By an oversight—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. He reappeared in the doorway, apparently seeing nothing unfortunate in the fact that Mr. Prout had only blank cartridges. "In that case, if you are sure—"

"The rifle will, however, have the effect of terrifying the ruffian into submission," said Prout. "He will not know that the cartridges are blank, and a shot or two—"

"It would be wiser, perhaps, to leave the rifle here—"

"Absurd, my dear Quelch! Should he resist I shall stun him with the butt. One crushing blow—"

Prout grasped the rifle by the barrel, to illustrate. Quelch dodged out of the doorway again. He appeared to be under the impression that distance lends enchantment to the view. There was a crash as a jar was swept from the mantelpiece.

"Dear me!" said Prout.

"For goodness' sake put that dreadful implement down!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Nonsense, my dear fellow! Follow me!"

Prout marched out of the study, on the warpath. Quelch followed. He did not want to take precedence of the Fifth Form master; there was a possibility of Prout being mistaken about those cartridges being blank. There was a shout from Wingate of the Sixth in the distance.

"He's in the quad—"

"What?"

"I've seen him—this way!" roared Wingate.

There was a rush.

"Follow me!" boomed Prout, and, rifle in hand, he rushed out into the starlit quad. The hunt was up!

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### A Hot Chase!

**B**ANG!

Coker jumped. Coker of the Fifth, in these thrilling moments, was having the time of his life.

He had fled into Class-room No. 10, locked the door after him, hurled open the window, and dropped out.

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This was rather masterly. Inside the House, Coker had no chance of getting rid of his fearsome disguise undiscovered. The locked door delayed pursuit, but would not delay it long.

Outside the House, all was serene—or, at least, Coker hoped it was.

To rush away to some secluded spot, to strip off the weird disguise, and wash off the make-up in the fountain—that was the idea. After which, Coker would stroll back to the House calmly, just as if he had been walking in the quad all the time.

Coker was the man for strategy.

The strategy was all right. It was not the fault of Coker, or of the strategy, that other circumstances did not play up as they should have done.

Outside, it was a bright, starry evening. Coker, miscalculating the distance in dropping from the window, stumbled, rolled over, and roared. He picked himself up to flee. He fled. Behind him, the whole House was flashing with lights and buzzing with voices.

A backward glance showed Coker the wide-open doorway, crowded with excited figures. It showed him also more than a dozen fellows outside the House.

It did more than that; for Coker was still running as he took the backward glance. That was how it was that he did not see Gosling trotting from his lodge.

Gosling was coming to see what the

### THIS GREYFRIARS LIMERICK

earns for W. Cairns, of 28, West Street, Horbury Road, Wakefield, Yorks, one of our useful pocket wallets.

There's a certain young chap named Wharton,  
Whose temper is rather a short 'un,  
But it must be admitted  
That the Remove's well-fitted  
With a captain who's voted  
"tres bon."

I've got plenty more wallets, so don't be afraid to send in your attempts, chums!

row was about. At the sight of a truculent-looking ruffian dashing towards him, the porter stopped. But it was too late! The next moment they established contact.

Gosling went over with a roar and a bump. Coker sprawled over him.

"Ow! 'Elp!" roared Gosling.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

He scrambled wildly up. Gosling clutched at him, and caught him by the beard.

"'Elp! I got 'im!" roared Gosling.

Coker tore himself away. Gosling was left in possession of the beard. Fortunately, it came off; had it not done so, Coker would have been a prisoner.

Coker sprinted.

Gosling was left sitting with the beard in his hand, staring at it blankly.

"My heye!" gasped Gosling. "My heye!"

Five or six fellows came running up.

"Seen him?" shouted Wingate.

"Look 'ere!" gasped Gosling. "I got this orf of 'im! Look 'ere! It's a blooming beard! It come off! My heye!"

"After him!"

"Run him down!"

Coker dodged desperately under shadowy trees. A dozen fellows were hunting him hard. This was not what Coker had looked for; his strategy had not made allowance for this. Wingate

cut towards the House and shouted into the doorway that the ruffian had been seen in the quad. That brought half Greyfriars out of the House, yelling in pursuit.

Foremost was Mr. Prout with his celebrated rifle. The other pursuers kept one eye open for the fugitive, and the other warily on Prout. There might be danger from the hunted ruffian; but in Prout's case there was no "might" about it. Prout with a loaded rifle was dangerous up to a thousand yards in any direction.

"He's under the elms!" yelled Blundell of the Fifth.

"After him!"

"Look—there he is!" roared Loder.

There was a shout and a rush as a hunted figure was seen to dodge out of the trees—a ruffian-looking figure in "loud check" and heavy boots, with dark, bushy brows and moustache, but beardless now. Fifty fellows at least headed for the ruffian; and Coker dodged back into the trees.

"Zat is ze villain!" shrieked Monsieur Charpentier. "Zat is he who knock me over and knock out ze bref from me!"

"After him!"

"Follow me!" boomed Prout. "Follow me! Leave him to me! He is a desperate villain—he was in disguise! Gosling has wrenched off a false beard! Leave this desperado to me!"

Prout advanced gallantly under the shadowy elms, rifle to shoulder. A shadowy figure dodged before him.

It was then that the rifle banged, and Coker jumped.

Though it was only a blank cartridge that roared, the detonation was a joyous sound to the ears of Prout. It made him feel young again, it brought back his palmy days as a hunter of big game, to hear the rifle roar. His fat face beamed as he fired.

The effect on Coker was quite different. He did not know that the cartridge was blank; and he did know that Prout was a dangerous ass with firearms.

A bullet from a rifle is one of those things which it is more blessed to give than to receive. Coker did not like the bang of the rifle the least little bit.

"Yaroooh!"

"After him!"

Bang!

Prout fired again.

There was a yell of terror from Coker, and he dodged away in frantic desperation.

Prout rushed after him with clubbed rifle.

After Prout rushed a wild and whirling swarm.

Crash!

Prout delivered a blow at a shifting shadow. Fortunately, it was only a shadow, and not Coker. The rifle-butt landed on the trunk of a tree, with a concussion that jerked it out of Prout's hands.

"Ow!" gasped Prout.

"There he is!" roared Wingate.

Coker broke from the elms and fairly ran for it, clear in the starlight, with the whole mob whooping in pursuit.

In the doorway of the House stood the Head, drawn to the spot by the wild sounds of alarm. The report of Prout's rifle, rolling across the quad, made Dr. Locke jump. He jumped again at the sight of a wild figure in "loud checks" rushing towards the House with a mob at his heels.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head faintly.

It was getting warm for Coker! He had not counted on anything like this! This was too much of a good thing.

He swerved from the doorway of the House—much to the relief of the

petrified Head—and ran along the wall under the windows.

"We'll get him now!" panted Wingate. "Spread out and cut him off from the open."

"We've got him!"

"Bag him!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Harry Wharton. "What on earth will happen when they bag him? Poor old Coker!"

Coker, cut off from escape in the open, had one resource left. His brain, under the stress of excitement and danger, worked rapidly. It was supposed, in the Fifth, that Coker's brain did not work at all; but it could work, though there was no doubt that it moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. Coker, hemmed in by a shouting mob, remembered the class-room window he had left open.

He rushed for it, and jumped. He caught the sill and dragged himself up.

But pursuit was too close. Wingate of the Sixth was at his heels, and he grabbed as Coker jumped.

Bob Cherry rushed in. Knowing that the desperado really was Coker, the Famous Five, of course, did not want to see him captured. They knew now what Coker's object had been in calling on his Form master in disguise; the words that had so perplexed Prout did not perplex the chums of the Remove. It was the sack for Coker if he was caught; there could be no shadow of doubt about that. And Bob rushed in, collided with Wingate at the psychological moment, and hurled him off Coker just as he was grabbing at flying legs.

Wingate staggered back, and Coker vanished in at the window of Class-room No. 10.

"Ow! You young ass!" gasped Wingate.

Slam! The window closed behind Coker! Click! The window was fastened! Coker had a breathing-space.

For a moment or two he stood panting, streams of perspiration mingling with the grease-paint on his face.

But he had no time to lose.

A crowd was shouting under the window, and already fellows were cutting round to the door, to cut off escape from the House.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker. "Oh crumbs!"

In those wild and whirling moments no doubt Coker repented him of his masterly scheme of vengeance. The caning of Prout had seemed simply a splendid idea, when Coker had thought it out. Now it was shorn of its splendour.

The caning had not come off. The vengeance had not come off. Coker's strategy had not come off. Nothing, in fact, had come off, except Coker's beard!

He tottered across the class-room to the door.

There was one hope! The chase in the quad had drawn everybody, or nearly everybody, out of the House. Possibly the passage was clear.

Coker opened the class-room door and peered out. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and there was no man.

With a gasp of relief Coker emerged from Class-room No. 10, ran along Masters' passage, and headed for the stairs. Once in his study he would be able to get off that wretched disguise undisturbed. There was a shout as he crossed the hall.

"There he is!"

"Collar him!"

Coker flew up the stairs.

Fortunately, the Fifth Form passage was deserted. Every man in the Fifth was joining in the hunt.

Coker raced to his study.

He dashed in, threw the door shut, and turned the key. Then he sank down into his study armchair, gasping.

He was saved!

Pursuing footsteps passed the study door. Coker did not heed them.

Sprawled in the armchair, in a state of collapse, he gasped and gasped and gasped, as if he would never finish gasping.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Remarkable Disappearance!

"NOW, then!"

It was the voice of authority.

The constable, summoned on the telephone by Prout, had arrived from Courtfield.

"Now, then!" said the voice of authority. "What's this? What's all this?"

Under the window of Class-room No. 10 a wild mob surged.

Everybody knew that the hunted ruffian had bolted into the House. Prout, rifle in hand, had reached the spot, panting, puffing, and perspiring.

The hunt for the desperado reminded Prout of ancient days as a big-game hunter. But it also reminded him that much water had passed under the bridges since those days.

Prout's heart was as stout as ever. The rest of him was much stouter. His wind was short, and he had taxed it rather severely in the hot chase. He puffed and he blew, and perspiration clothed him.

The Greyfriars fellows made way for the constable. The officer immediately dropped a hand on Prout's shoulder.

The rifle did it. The sight of an

armed man in the midst of an excited crowd was enough for the officer.

"Better go quietly, my man!" said the policeman.

"What?" stuttered Prout. "What?"

"You come alonger me!" retorted the constable. "I got you! Better go quietly. If I 'ave to use my truncheon—"

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Prout. "What—what—what—"

"Oh, my hat, the bobby's got Prout!" shrieked a voice from the back of the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is not the man, officer!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch hastily. "That is Mr. Prout—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Where is he, then?" demanded the Courtfield policeman. "I've been called here to take into custody a disturber of the peace. Where's the man?"

"In that class-room!" gasped Prout. "He jumped in at the window—"

"A desperate-looking ruffian—" exclaimed Mr. Wiggins.

"A rough fellow in 'loud checks'—" said Wingate.

"A villain of the most ferocious!" gasped Monsieur Charpentier. "I see him viz my own eye—"

"No doubt a burglar—" said Mr. Quelch.

"An escaped lunatic, I think," said Mr. Prout. "He attacked me in my study, officer. He seized a cane, and addressed extraordinary words to me. The words were 'Bend over!'—a phrase used to junior boys about to be chastised with the cane! Addressed to a Form master, most extraordinary!"

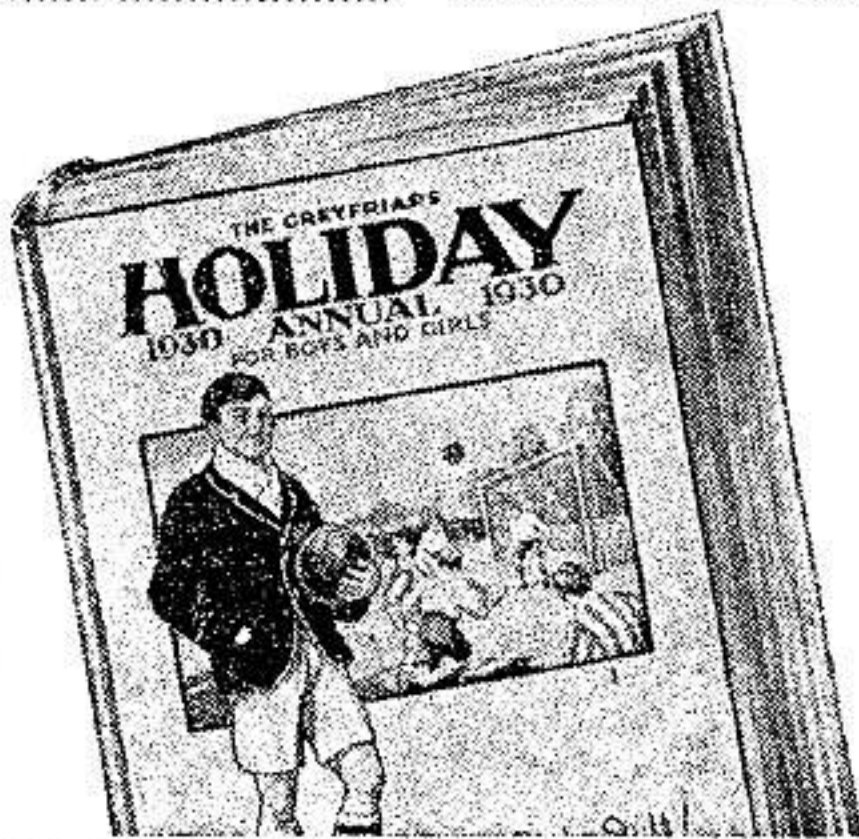
"The man must be in the House now," said Mr. Quelch. "Wingate, kindly remain guarding the window."

(Continued on next page.)

# If You Like School Stories

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Officer, please follow me into the House."

The constable grasped his truncheon and followed the Remove master in, a crowd at his heels. The description of the disturber of the peace warned him that the truncheon might be needed.

Wingate and half a dozen more of the Sixth remained guarding the window. There was no escape for the malefactor that way.

With a heavy tread, the constable followed Mr. Quelch into the House. They were met by an excited shout.

"We've seen him——"

"He dodged upstairs——"

"He's upstairs now——"

"Somewhere in the Fifth——"

"This way!"

"We'll 'ave him!" said the Courtfield constable grimly. "If he's upstairs he won't jump out of another window! We've got 'im!"

Up the stairs went the official tread. The Fifth Form passage was thronged.

"He must have dodged into one of the studies!" shouted Blundell. "We were right after him, and he vanished——"

"There's one door locked!" called out Price of the Fifth. "Coker's study is locked."

"Doubtless he is there!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Let us search that study first——"

Potter and Greene, who were in the crowd, gave one another almost ghastly looks. They, like the Famous Five, had no doubt of the identity of the ruffian who had attacked Prout in his study. This was the scheme in which Coker had expected them to back him up! This!

The constable halted at the locked door in the Fifth Form passage, and tried it, and then knocked.

"Who's in there?" he demanded.

Coker dragged himself out of the armchair. He had had no time yet to remove his disguise. But the door was locked! He tried to steady his voice as he answered:

"What's wanted?"

"Open this 'ere door!"

"Stay!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "I recognise the voice—it is a boy of my Form in that room. We are wasting time. Is that you, Coker?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Coker.

"No one is with you?"

"No, sir."

"What's the door locked for?" demanded the constable suspiciously. "You in there, you unlock this 'ere door—see?"

"Unlock the door, Coker!" called out Mr. Prout.

Coker was not likely to unlock the door. The door open, all Greyfriars would have known where the hunted ruffian was!

"I—I can't find the key, sir!" gasped Coker. "I—I've dropped it. But there's nobody here, sir, but me. Has—has—has anything happened, sir?"

"It is Coker, of my Form, speaking," said Mr. Prout. "We are wasting time, and the miscreant is escaping! Come!"

To Coker's intense relief, the crowd passed on.

The hunt for the miscreant went farther afield. The miscreant, in Coker's study, hurriedly stripped off the "loud checks," and restored himself as much as possible to his usual aspect. Clothes and boots were bundled out of sight into a cupboard, and Coker rubbed desperately at grease-paint.

There was a tap at the door.

"Who's there?" hissed Coker.

"Only us!" came Potter's whisper through the keyhole.

Coker picked up the key and unlocked the door. Potter and Greene came in.

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They stared at Coker. The smudges on his rugged countenance would have told them all, had they not guessed already.

"It—it—it was you!" breathed Potter.

Coker nodded calmly. He was calm now.

"You—you—you went for Prout?" articulated Greene.

"I told you I was going to."

"If they'd caught you——"

"They didn't."

"You'd better get a wash, or they'll spot you yet. You—you—you born idiot!"

"Look here, Greene——"

"You frabjous fathead!" hissed Potter.

"Look here, Potter——"

"You—you—you—— Oh, there ain't a word for you!" gasped Greene.

Coker eyed him disdainfully.

"I had it all mapped out," he said.

"Prout would have got his six if I'd had my pals there to help me. He needed holding, that was all. It went wrong. All your fault. Next time——"

"Next time?" stuttered Potter.

"Yes, next time I shall expect you to back me up."

They gazed at him. That Coker, as a silly ass, went the whole giddy unicorn, they, of course, knew. But even yet Coker was able to surprise them. There was to be, according to Coker, a "next time." He was not through yet.

"Next time?" said Greene dazedly.

"You're not done yet?"

"Not at all!"

"You—you—you——"

"I shall expect my pals to back me up," said Coker. "I shall expect—— Here! Leggo! Yaroooh! Whoop!"

Potter and Greene had borne much from Coker. Now their patience seemed to give out all of a sudden. Coker, collared by his two comrades, smote the floor of the study with a mighty smite.

Potter and Greene walked away, and left Coker to sort himself out. They were feeling better.

Meanwhile, the search was going on, up and down and round about Greyfriars. Inside the House and outside the House, the search went on. But nothing was discovered. The miscreant had disappeared utterly, as if he had vanished into thin air. Fellows retired to their studies, or their dormitories, excitedly discussing the thrilling episode. The Courtfield constable, like Mr. Prout's rifle, went off with a report, and Greyfriars settled down at last—to an unsolved mystery.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Curing Coker!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. chuckled loud and long over the episode. But they chuckled over it in private. They were glad that Coker had escaped detection, and they hoped that his narrow escape would be a lesson to him. They knew now, of course, with what object Coker had disguised himself on that historic occasion. The extraordinary words the ruffianly visitor had uttered in Mr. Prout's study let in a flood of light on that matter—though not to Prout. And the discovery that it had been Coker's intention to cane his Form master made the chums of the Remove shriek. Well as they thought they knew Horace Coker, they had not expected that of him. It was too rich, even for Coker. It was the limit—it was the outermost rim.

Naturally, they supposed that it was all over. But even yet they did not know their Coker. Having laughed over the affair, they were prepared to dismiss it from their minds. But it was

not to be dismissed yet. After school the next day Coker met them in the quad. His manner was mysterious, and they wondered what was coming. Coker proceeded to unfold.

"I failed yesterday," he said. "I mean, being let down by my pals, the thing did not come off. Next time I'm doing better."

"Next time?" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Yes. I dare say you've guessed by this time what I was after——"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Nothing to cackle at," said Coker, staring. "This is a serious matter."

"It would be—for you—if the Head spotted you," chuckled Bob Cherry. "If we'd had the faintest idea what you were up to——"

"Don't jaw," said Coker. "You fags are much too fond of jawing. I've told you that before."

"Look here, Coker——"

"Shut up, and listen! I've got it all mapped out, and there's no time for silly jaw," explained Coker. "Now, I——"

"But look here——"

"For goodness sake shut up!" said Coker testily. "Now, I'm not going for Prout again in his study. The old ass is too jolly dangerous there. But he's walking in the Head's garden after tea—I heard him tell Capper so. He asked Capper to walk with him, but you can bet Capper will forget. He won't stand Prout's chin, if he can help it."

"But——"

"Don't jaw! Prout will be alone," said Coker. "That's a safe place to catch him. I've got that bag of disguises and things in the summer-house in the garden. I want your help."

"Oh, crumbs! But——"

"You fix me up, same as before," said Coker. "Only, this time you lend me a hand, as well."

"L-l-lend you a hand!" stuttered Nugent.

"Yes. You collar Prout——"

"We—we—we collar Prout!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"And hold him down——"

"Hold him down!" said Johnny Bull dazedly.

"While I give him six——"

"While you give him six!" stuttered Bob.

"That will prevent any rumpus—Prout bolting, or anything like that," explained Coker. "Easy as falling off a form. You see, a couple of you can hold Prout down—he's too fat to put up a scrap. Besides, I shall floor him first."

"You'll floor him first, and we shall hold him down!" ejaculated Wharton, gazing at Coker.

"Exactly!"

"The exactfulness is not terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"Don't jaw! Two of you can do it, and those two, of course, will be disguised," said Coker. "It wouldn't do for Prout to recognise you."

"Nunno!" gasped Wharton. "It wouldn't—quite."

"That will be three of us in disguise," said Coker. "Rather like a thing out of Edgar Wallace—what?"

"Too jolly like!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, come on," said Coker. "I'll cut into the place first; you follow on. Better not be seen, of course."

Without waiting for a reply—in conversational matters Horace Coker had little use for replies—he strode away and disappeared into the Head's garden.

The Famous Five gazed at one another. Coker, evidently, had taken

their assistance for granted. Coker had a way of taking things for granted.

"Well, my hat!" said Wharton, at last.

"Of all the potty chumps!" said Johnny Bull.

"I can see us holding down Prout!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I can just see us doing it—I don't think!"

"The hold-downfulness of the esteemed Prout will not be terrific," chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"If we'd had the faintest idea what that born idiot was up to yesterday, of course, we'd have stopped him," he said.

"This time we know—and we're going to stop him. I think it's about time that Coker got fed-up with this wheeze, and we'll help him. Come on!"

"But what—"

"Come on!"

And Harry Wharton explained as they went, and it was a party of five grinning juniors that dodged into the Head's garden and made their way to the secluded summer-house.

They ceased to grin as they entered the summer-house. Coker was there, and Coker was very grave. So the Famous Five assumed a corresponding gravity.

"No time to lose," said Coker. "Prout will be along in ten minutes, very likely. Here's the stuff!"

Coker opened the bag containing the properties of the Fifth Form Stage Club. The juniors set to work. They set to work, however, in a manner totally unexpected by Horace Coker.

With one accord, at a signal from Wharton, they laid violent hands on the happy Horace, and bore him to the earth.

Coker went down with a roar.

"Ow! Wow! You cheeky fags! What—"

He struggled desperately. But three of the juniors sat on him, while the others tied his wrists together behind him. Then his legs were loosely shackled, so that Coker could walk but not kick. This was a necessary precaution. He looked like kicking.

"You cheeky little beasts!" roared Coker. "Wharrer you up to? I'll smash you—I'll spifficate you! I'll—I'll—"

"You'll bring Prout here if you let off steam like that, old bean," said Bob Cherry soothingly. "Better take it calmly."

Coker showed no signs whatever of taking it calmly. But he ceased to yell. He did not want Prout on the scene just then.

Having got Coker where they wanted him, so to speak, the juniors proceeded to disguise him. There were a number of false beards and moustaches and wigs to select from. But the juniors did not bother about selection. They wired or gummed the whole lot on Coker. He had a very hairy look when that was done.

Then they started with the grease-paints and pencils. Coker was given a crimson nose, shining brightly, a blue cheek on one side, and a yellow cheek on the other. Black circles were drawn round his eyes, and the tip of his crimson nose adorned with a black spot. His aspect was now remarkable. No man in a yellow-jacketed novel had ever been so thoroughly disguised as Coker was now. Coker, in his present outfit, was calculated to cause even a greater sensation than before.

Wharton surveyed him critically.

"I think that will do!" he remarked. "We've disguised you, Coker—look in the glass!"

Coker looked in the glass and raved.

"You see," explained the captain of the Remove, "we're doing this for your own good. When all Greyfriars has seen you in this rig, I fancy you'll be fed up with disguising stunts. What?"

"I—I—I—" Coker gurgled. "I—I—I'll smash you! I—I—I'll pulverise you! I—I—I—" Words failed Coker.

"Bring him along!" said Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the grasp of the Famous Five Coker was marched out of the Head's



"I insist upon that firearm remaining unloaded, Prout!" said Mr. Quelch. "Nonsense!" said the Fifth-Form master. "I am about to search the house for that desperate villain. I must be armed!" Prout turned towards the Remove master as he spoke, the rifle pointing at Quelch. "Put that rifle down!" shrieked Mr. Quelch, covering his face with his hands. (See Chapter 11.)

garden by the gate into the quad. He wriggled and writhed and struggled as he went. But he went.

Once in the quad he was released from his bonds. The chums of the Remove retired prudently, and hastily, out of reach.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Walk up, gents! Walk up and see Coker doing his funny turn! No charge! Walk up!"

Greyfriars fellows did not walk up. They ran up—they raced up! A buzzing crowd surrounded Coker.

Coker glared round him, then fled and vanished into space.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked cheerily back to the House. They smiled as they went. They felt that they had done Coker a good turn. He might not acknowledge it—he might never testify gratitude. But there it was, all the same. Coker had been in need of a lesson. They had given him one. They could only hope that he would derive instruction therefrom.

Perhaps he did! It was a very subdued Coker that came back, after a long interval—without a trace of the disguise the juniors had plastered over him. A very subdued Coker!

Prout never knew that he had had a narrow escape from a caning.

He never discovered the identity of the truculent ruffian who had attacked him in his study.

He had a theory that it was some old enemy of his younger days who had tracked him out—some gunman or bandit whom he had defeated in those long-past days.

But he never knew; and certainly the ruffian never tracked him out a second time!

Coker gave up the idea of caning Prout. His own caning—much to his surprise—was no longer a topic. Fellows seemed to forget it, ignoring even that it was a catastrophic and epoch-marking occurrence. They forgot about it just as if it had been a matter of no importance whatever. That was annoying in one way, but comforting in another. Perhaps it helped to eliminate ideas of vengeance from Coker's mind.

Or perhaps Coker had been thinking. Fellows who knew him would not have considered that likely, it is true. Perhaps the fact was that he was fed-up with disguises, as Harry Wharton & Co. had hoped; and, undisguised, of course, it was impossible to think of caning Prout.

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's MAGNET and another rattling fine story of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards, entitled: "A ROGUE IN THE REMOVE!" Once you commence it, you won't leave it until you've finished!)  
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HAVE YOU EVER? WHAT? READ A MORE THRILLING SERIAL THAN THIS?



By  
GEO. E. ROCHESTER.

(Introduction on  
next page.)

#### Malliard's Vow!

**"F**ORWARD! Forward!" was then the cry, and with heads bent to the blinding rain the posse swept onwards into the darkness, taking the road which was leading them ever nearer towards the coast. But no horse that ever was foaled could keep up the cruel pace which Malliard was forcing, and more than once he felt his mount falter beneath him.

The gallant animal had borne him well, but no thought of that was in his mind as snarlingly he cursed it and plied savage whip on already bleeding quarters.

Once a wild shout behind him and a spatter of loose stones told him that one of his men was down. But not for an instant did he check his madly-galloping horse—did not even turn in the saddle. The clumsy fool, whoever he was, could fend for himself. And if he was hurt—well, so much the worse for him.

On and on they rode, forced now and then, however, to slacken their weary mounts lest worse befall. And at length, without having come up with the fugitives, they clattered into the village of Chartres and drew up with a slither of hoofs and creaking of harness in front of the inn.

In response to Malliard's harsh inquiry the innkeeper shook his head.

"No, none has ridden through here," he said. "None at all!"

"Are you sure, you dog?" shouted Malliard. "If you're lying I'll slit your throat for you!"

"I am not lying," quavered the innkeeper in affright. "None has passed this way—I swear it!"

For confirmation he wheeled on the peasants who crowded the doorway behind him. And readily they gave it, gaping the while at the white-faced Malliard and his soaking, mud-splashed soldiers. No—none had passed that way—none at all. They were sure of that—would swear to it if necessary!

With an oath Malliard flung himself from the saddle and turned to his waiting men.

"They've given us the slip," he said gratingly. "They must have turned off the road somewhere back yonder. We'll never find them now in this cursed darkness! Dismount!"

He swung on the innkeeper as the soldiers slid stiffly from their saddles.

"Accommodation for my men and horses!" he said harshly. "We sleep here to-night!"

An hour later he was pacing the floor of the squalid private room which had been assigned to him. On the plain deal table stood the remnants of a greasy meal and a half-empty bottle of wine. His riding-boots and outer garments were drying in front of a blazing, crackling fire on the hearth.

Backwards and forwards he paced,

**Somewhere ahead of Malliard and his soldiers flies Will-o'-the-wisp, the most hated man in France. The chase is a stern one and a long one; then comes the shadows of night, and into them is swallowed—Will-o'-the-wisp!**

hands clasped behind his back, his pale, sharp features puckered in scowling thought. Suddenly, as though he had come to some decision, he straightened up, and, crossing to the wall, tugged on the frayed bellrope.

In response to the summons the innkeeper presented himself in the doorway, fat and abject. From the soldiers carousing downstairs he had learned much—had learned the identity of Malliard and the reason for his present vile temper.

"Pens and paper!" snapped Malliard. "And see that the former will write and the latter is clean!"

The innkeeper hastened away, to return with the writing materials, which he placed on the table.

"Tell Corporal Levin to attend me

here in half an hour," said Malliard curtly. "And in the meantime see that I am not disturbed. Now get out!"

"Yes, monsieur!" quavered the innkeeper; and retired with a celerity remarkable in one so stout.

Waiting until the door had closed, Malliard seated himself at the table and dipped quill pen into ink. Long minutes dragged by, and nothing disturbed the stillness of the room save the scratching of his rapidly-moving pen and the fall of some glowing coal on the hearth.

The letter he wrote was addressed to the Citizen-deputy Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety. In it he dealt faithfully with the events of the night, and in conclusion wrote:

"Even had fresh horses been available here, which I doubt, it would have been useless to have continued the pursuit."

"But could we discover the identity of this Will-o'-the-wisp then we would be more than half-way towards effecting his capture. And I am convinced that only in England can the secret of his identity be discovered."

"Therefore, I leave for England with the dawn, and shall spare no effort to find out who this man really is. Once we learn that, it should be a matter of no great difficulty to set a trap for him into which, sooner or later, he will walk."

"But one thing I swear on my honour and my sacred oath: If Paul Darc has fled to England, as I suspect, then I shall not return to Paris without him. His life is forfeit to the people, and he shall find that the shadow of the guillotine stretches even beyond the frontiers of France."

"MALLIARD."

Throwing down his pen he leaned back in his chair, staring before him with sombre eyes. Yes, he would go to England. Relentlessly he would follow the trail to the bitter end. And if he failed to find that cursed Will-o'-the-wisp he certainly would not fail to find Paul Darc. The traitor would learn to his cost that even in England he

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could not escape the vengeance of the people.

A knock at the door cut in on Malliard's thoughts, and in response to his curt "Enter!" Corporal Levin strode into the room.

"You and your men will return to Paris with the dawn," said Malliard harshly. "You will take this letter and deliver it to the Citizen-deputy Robespierre in the Rue St. Denis. You understand?"

"Yes, monsieur!" replied the corporal, taking the missive which Malliard sealed and handed to him.

"Very good!" said Malliard, rising. "I am turning in now. See to it that you are gone before I am astir in the morning!"

Saluting, the corporal withdrew. Malliard crossed to the hearth, and with shoulders bent stood a few moments gazing down into the reddening embers, his thoughts on what the morrow and the immediate future might hold in store for him. Then, turning away, he blew out the oil-lamp and, clad as he was, threw himself on to the bed, to sink almost at once into uneasy, restless slumber.

It was his deadly, implacable hatred, his cold, calculating cunning, which had given him the power which now was his. Men, women, and little children had mounted to the guillotine, sent there by his hand. And who can say that as he lay there in the stillness, the ghostly shades of those whom he had slain did not come creeping with soft tread from out the flickering shadows to haunt the troubled dreams of Malliard, murderer and master-spy.

The fire had died out, and the room was in inky darkness when suddenly he awoke with a start. From the yard below his window came the clatter of hoofs, the jingle of harness, and an occasional hoarse command. It was the soldiers preparing to depart for Paris, and he knew by that that the dawn must be almost at hand.

At that same hour two men and a boy were leading their weary, stumbling horses over a desolate stretch of sand dune which fringed the beach some twenty kilometres to the north of Dieppe.

The boy was the "plague-stricken" youth who had lain in "drunken slumber" in the cart which had been driven through the Western Gate at sunset the evening before. One of the men was the drink-sodden fellow who had been driving. But in the other man none would have recognised the vile old hag who had completed the trio. For ragged kirtle, filthy blouse, and long, lank hair had been discarded to disclose the lithe figure and lean, tanned features of Will-o'-the-wisp.

Unerringly he led his two companions on through the darkness to a lonely hut which nestled in a sheltered sandy hollow of the dunes. A chink of yellow light filtered through the crude shutters of its solitary window. As they approached the door was thrown open and a burly, bearded, seafaring fellow stood silhouetted on the threshold.

"Who comes?" he demanded gruffly, peering towards them through the blackness.

"It is I, Silas!" replied Will-o'-the-wisp. "I bring two friends."

A few moments later, when horses had been tethered, they followed the bearded Silas into the hut, which was void of all furniture save a rickety table and a broken-backed chair.

"The Firefly is lying offshore?" asked Will-o'-the-wisp.

"Yes, sir," nodded Silas; "and the boat is waiting on the beach. We'd best hurry, for it will soon be dawn."

"You will get off at once," replied

Will-o'-the-wisp. Turning to his companions, he went on: "This is Captain Silas Weatherby, master of the schooner Firefly, which will take you to England. Silas, this is the Comte d'Espany. And this is Paul Hungerford, an English lad!"

"Pleased to meet you, gentlemen," said Silas, taking first D'Espany's hand and then Paul's in honest grip. "You won't be the first I've taken across to England, and you won't be the last, I'm thinking."

He looked curiously at Paul, but turned to Will-o'-the-wisp without further comment.

"To-night week, sir?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, Silas," replied Will-o'-the-wisp, "we will meet here again a week to-night."

Turning to Paul and D'Espany, he held out his hand.

"Farewell, then, gentlemen," he said. "I wish you a good voyage and a safe landing in England."

"But are you not also for England?" cried Paul.

Will-o'-the-wisp shook his head.

"No, lad," he replied. "My work lies back yonder in Paris, and here we must part. Go now, for the dawn is near, and the Firefly must be well out to sea when daylight comes."

"Monsieur," said the Comte d'Espany earnestly, taking the outstretched hand, "I can find no words with which to express the gratitude I feel to you, and I know that none are needed. But from the bottom of my heart I pray that God will guard you well and aid you in the noble work which you are doing for my unhappy countrymen."

Thus farewell was said, and Will-o'-the-wisp stood alone outside the hut staring into the darkness which had swallowed up Paul Hungerford and D'Espany as they followed Silas to the near-by beach and the waiting boat.

Suddenly from out of the darkness there loomed up the running figure of the boy.

"Monsieur," he panted, clutching Will-o'-the-wisp by the arm, "I cannot leave you like this. Let me stay with you and help you in what you are doing. There must be some way in which I can be useful to you and your comrades."

Gently Will-o'-the-wisp disengaged the boy's fingers.

"No, lad," he said quietly. "You must go home."

"But are we never to meet again?"

# INTRODUCTION.

*It is the year 1792, when the long-threatened revolution in France has burst into flame. Paul Dare, a peasant lad, is made Commissioner of the Revolutionary Tribunal, but for saving his boyhood friend, Armande de St. Clair, from the fate which has befallen so many of the hated aristocrats, he is himself sentenced to the guillotine. In the condemned cell, Paul learns from his friend Sansarge that he is not French but English. His real name is Paul Hungerford, and his father, Sir Crispin Hungerford, from whom he was kidnapped when only a few months old, mourns him as dead. The lad despairs of ever seeing his father again, but Fate decrees otherwise. Together with the Count D'Espany, Paul is rescued almost from the very tumbrel itself by the mysterious Will-o'-the-wisp and his companions. With the aid of this daring, resourceful Englishman, many aristocrats have reached safety, and now, by a clever ruse, he and the two fugitives escape from Paris under the very noses of the guard. With his usual coolness, however, Will-o'-the-wisp informs Malliard, the spy, of his plans, and, with a posse of soldiers at his back, Malliard gives chase along the road to the coast. An hour's furious riding brings the pursuers to a small village, where they learn that three men, riding like the wind, have passed through only ten minutes before. "We're gaining, men!" cries Malliard. "A hundred francs for each of you if we overtake them!"*

(Now read on.)

cried the boy despairingly. "I owe my very life to you, and do not even know your name."

"My name is known to none save my comrades," replied Will-o'-the-wisp. "But I promise you, Paul Hungerford, that some day it will be known to you, and that some day, if I live, we will meet again in peaceful England. Go, lad, for Silas will be waiting for you!"

Slowly Paul turned away, then swung round again.

"Listen!" he cried, with a passionate earnestness. "If ever you have need of me I will come back to France, no matter where I am. Just send me word and I will come. Will you promise?"

"Yes," replied Will-o'-the-wisp quietly. "If ever I have need of you, Paul Hungerford, I will send for you!"

They parted then, and with the dawn the Firefly stood away from the coast of France with all sails set. Aboard her were Paul Hungerford and D'Espany. Worn out by the events of the past twenty-four hours, both turned in long before the French coast had faded from view.

It was mid-afternoon when next Paul awakened, to find Captain Weatherby standing by his bunk.

"Come on deck, boy," said the captain gruffly.

Wonderingly Paul scrambled into his clothes and went up on deck.

"Pretty sight, isn't it?" said Captain Weatherby.

Paul did not reply. For, conscious of a strange lump in his throat, he was staring at the white cliffs of Dover—his first sight of the England which was his home.

## The Inn at Dover!

**A**FTERNOON of that same day was drawing to a close, and the windows of the Sloop and Frigate, a tavern off the Dover waterfront, were beginning to glow warm and golden through the deepening dusk.

In his snug little parlour, situated between the spotlessly clean kitchen and the oak-beamed coffee-room, Tobias Merriell, the plump and jovial landlord, sat puffing at a long churchwarden clay pipe, with his slippered toes toasting in front of the cheery blaze on the hearth.

There came a sudden knock at the door, and a young gentleman thrust his head into the room—a young gentleman clad in elegant but mud-stained riding-garb.

"I say, Toby," he drawled.

"Why, my lord!" began the landlord, rising in a flutter.

"Nay, sit still, man," cut in the other, sauntering forward into the room. "I would not have disturbed you were I not a martyr to my insufferable curiosity."

Tobias laughed rumblingly.

"You do not disturb me, my lord," he said heartily. "There is none more welcome here than you, if I may say so without offence."

And indeed he meant it. For if there was one man whom Tobias admired it was this young and languid Lord Percy Woolerton, who had thus invaded upon his privacy.

"Well, see here, Toby," went on Lord Percy, lounging against the heavy polished table which gleamed in the fire-light, "there is a boy sitting over the coffee-room fire whom I'm prepared to wager is a French emigre."

"Yes," nodded the landlord. "I know the boy you mean, my lord—he is a French refugee."

"And his name, Toby?"

"Is St. Clair—the Chevalier Armande de St. Clair."

Lord Percy pondered on this in silence for a few moments.

"If," he said slowly, "the haggardness of his face, and the look in his eyes are any criterion, then he has emerged from the nethermost pit."

"He has told me nothing," replied the landlord, "except that on the eve of his execution he escaped from the Luxembourg Prison." Then, with a sorrowful shake of his head, he added: "But is that not enough to bring such a look to his eyes—is that not enough, my lord?"

"It is indeed," assented Lord Percy gravely. "How long has he been here?"

"Three days."

"And he escaped from the Luxembourg, you say?"

Tobias nodded.

"So he has given me to understand, my lord," he replied.

Reflectively and in silence Lord Percy caressed his chin.

"It could not have been Will who got him away," he said slowly, "for I have received no instructions concerning any of the name of St. Clair. Has he friends in England, do you know?"

The landlord shook his head.

"I cannot say," he replied, "but I think not, judging by the way he mopes about here, poor lad."

Lord Percy straightened up and turned towards the door.

"I will have a word with him," he said. "Maybe he will become more communicative. Send me in a tankard of ale, Toby."

Quitting the parlour he sauntered along the narrow corridor to the coffee-room, where Armande de St. Clair was seated, staring into the fire with a dull and hopeless misery in his eyes.

Seating himself on the other side of the fire, Lord Percy stretched out his booted legs to the blaze and bent curious gaze upon the boy. It was not his way to beat about the bush in anything, nor did he now waste time in wondering how best to engage Armande de St. Clair in conversation.

Within a few moments he was conversing, lazily and with a certain bored casualness, upon the weather, and upon the vile state of the roads for travelling. From that he proceeded lightly to various topics of the day, commenting at length upon the English Government's policy of non-interference in certain foreign affairs—particularly in those of France.

And then it was that Armande de St. Clair swung on him with blazing eyes.

"And why is England content only to stand idly by and watch the perpetration of the foulest crime in history?" cried the boy passionately. "Why does she not step in and bring to an end the carnage which is sweeping France? Is that her policy—to let innocent men, women, and children go daily to the guillotine to be butchered by a maddened mob? God has given England a power second to none. Why, then, in the very name of humanity, does she not use it to right this terrible wrong?"

"Nay, lad," interposed Lord Percy gently. "England has not the right to interfere with France, or any country, unless she be given cause. France, unaided, must work out her own destiny."

"Then Heaven help her!" said Armande de St. Clair bitterly.

Long moments passed as he sat with head buried in his hands, then suddenly he looked up at the man seated watching him.

"Monsieur," he said—and his voice was dead and toneless, "I pray you forgive my outburst. My apology must be that I am late from Paris, where I have seen sights which sicken the very soul."

Then, hungry for friendship, hungry for someone in whom to confide, he found himself pouring out to the kindly-faced man who listened with such rapt attention the whole unhappy story of his arrest, trial, and sojourn in the dread Luxembourg.

"And on the eve of my execution, monsieur," he concluded, "when I was resigned to death, there came an order for my release. It was signed by Robespierre."

"Robespierre?" exclaimed Lord Percy sharply.

"Yes," replied the boy. "You are surprised, monsieur, and so indeed was I. But it is said in Paris that he is not so vengeful as are the others. And, indeed, that must be so, for with the order of release was a small purse of gold. It contained sufficient to enable me to reach the coast and purchase passage for England—"

He broke off as there came a clump of booted feet along the corridor, and a great bearded seafaring fellow strode into the room, followed by a grey-haired man and a shabbily-dressed boy.

"Why, Silas," exclaimed Lord Percy, springing to his feet, "'tis good to see you again, man!"

"And to see you, sir," replied Captain Silas Weatherby heartily as he advanced with hand outstretched. "I have two gentlemen from Paris with me—the Comte d'Espany and Paul Hungerford, an English lad."

With sudden movement Armande de St. Clair thrust back his chair and leapt to his feet.

"D'Espany!" he shouted hoarsely, his face deathly white in the firelight. "How come you here with that murderer, Paul Darc?"

Lord Percy and Silas Weatherby wheeled in amaze to stare at the white-faced boy towards whom Paul Hungerford was slowly advancing. As for D'Espany, he stood silent, watching the scene with narrowed eyes. He, and he alone, knew the truth concerning these two boys.

Step by step Paul advanced until he was confronting his one-time friend.

"Have you no word for me, Armande?" he said pleadingly.

St. Clair drew hissing breath through clenched teeth.

"Yes, that—you animal!" he snarled.

With the words he snatched a brimming wineglass from the table by his elbow and hurled the contents full in the face of Paul Hungerford.

#### Reconciliation.

WITH an oath D'Espany sprang forward. His arm brushed Paul aside, and his clenched fist drove into the face of Armande de St. Clair, sending him crashing heavily to the floor.

"You ungrateful, black-hearted whelp!" he roared, his face convulsed with a fury totally foreign to his nature. "Thank your Maker that I have no sword with me else you would have paid dearly for that filthy act of yours, you cowardly cur!"

Half-dazed, St. Clair raised himself on his elbow, staring up with frightened eyes at the old aristocrat who towered over him.

"Do you know that Paul Darc was sentenced to death by the rabble because

you went free?" thundered D'Espany. "Do you know, you puppy, that it was he and not Robespierre who was responsible for the order of release which saved your miserable life? Do you know that Paul Darc deliberately sacrificed himself for you, and went to the tumbrils in your stead? Do you know these things, I say?"

"No—no!" cried the boy wildly. "I did not know—I swear I did not—"

"Then you know now!" thundered D'Espany. "And if you have one spark of manhood in you, one drop of honest blood within your veins, on your bended knees you will crave pardon of Paul Darc, who has shown you a friendship of which you are utterly unworthy."

Unsteadily, Armande de St. Clair rose to his feet and slumped heavily into a near-by chair.

"D'Espany," he said—and his voice was shaking—"I do not understand. If you will explain—"

"Yes, I will explain," replied D'Espany harshly; then, turning to Lord Percy and Silas, he added: "Messieurs, my apologies for this unseemly scene. But I venture to think that when you have heard what I have to say you will understand how deeply I was moved."

And there and then from the lips of D'Espany, Armande de St. Clair learned for the first time the truth concerning his escape from the guillotine.

He listened in silence, his burning eyes fixed on old D'Espany with a fierce intensity, his face a deathly white save for the discoloured bruise where he had been struck. And in silence, save for some occasional soft ejaculation from the former, listened Lord Percy Woolerton and Silas Weatherby.

There were none in the room but those four. Paul, seeing the inevitable tread of events, had withdrawn.

"And it has been found," concluded D'Espany, "that the Paul Darc who made this noble and supreme sacrifice on behalf of Armande de St. Clair is none other than a son of Sir Crispin Hungerford of Dorset."

"Of whom?" exclaimed Lord Percy, in amazement.

"Of Sir Crispin Hungerford!" repeated D'Espany. "It is possible that you are acquainted with Sir Crispin, monsieur."

"Yes, by gad, I am!" ejaculated Lord Percy. "And so is Will—"

He broke off sharply as the warning fingers of Silas Weatherby pressed suddenly on his arm.

"And so is Silas, here, and many more of us," he concluded hastily. "Are you not, Silas?"

"Yes," responded Silas stoutly. "I know Sir Crispin well."

D'Espany nodded. It seemed as though he had scarce heard the words nor noticed the by-play, for his eyes were on Armande de St. Clair, who was rising to his feet.

"D'Espany," said the boy dully, "I did not know. I swear I did not! I thought—have always thought—that it was Robespierre who ordered my release. You were right to strike me down—to have killed me—for the foul thing I did a few moments ago. But I did not know—I never guessed—"

The words trailed miserably away, and he stood silent, bowed of head.

"We understand, Armande," replied D'Espany gruffly. "But go now to Paul Hungerford and make your peace with him."

The boy shook his head.

"He will never have word for me again," he muttered brokenly.

"He will, Armande," replied D'Espany. "Go and find him!"

The boy hesitated a moment, then, with shoulders bent in abject misery and despondency, he walked slowly towards the door. Waiting until he had gone, Lord Percy turned to D'Espany.

"A strange affair, monsieur," he said softly. "By gad, I have never heard of a stranger!"

"Nor of one more noble," responded D'Espany soberly. "Sir Crispin Hungerford will be very proud of his son!"

"Indeed he will," assented Lord Percy earnestly. Then, after a moment of silence: "And that brings us to our business here, monsieur. As Silas has probably informed you, I am a humble colleague of Will-o'-the-wisp, and it is both my duty and my pleasure to place myself entirely at the disposal of gentlemen such as yourself who cross from France aboard the Firefly. If you have made no other plans, monsieur, and if you will permit, I shall be most happy to escort you to London, where you will find friends and such hospitality as our homes can offer."

"Monsieur," replied D'Espany, with deep feeling, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness. Willingly will I travel with you to London, and some day I hope, with the coming of a brighter dawn for France, I shall be able in some little way to repay all that you and your brave comrades have done for me—a penniless fugitive."

"Nay, now," said Lord Percy uncomfortably; "no thanks are needed, monsieur." Then, with an obvious wish to have done with such talk of thanks, he went on quickly: "And what of Armande de St. Clair? I gather that you have had previous acquaintance with him?"

D'Espany nodded.

"I have known him since his childhood," he replied.

"He has no friends in England, so far as you are aware?" questioned Lord Percy.

"None, monsieur."

"Then he had best journey to London with us," announced Lord Percy, "where I will see that he is well cared for."

He was silent a moment, plunged in thought.

"As for Paul Hungerford," he went on, "he will doubtless wish to join his father as soon as possible. I know that Tobias has a Dorset man in his employ here, who will act as guide and servant to the boy, and there are plenty of horses in the stables. Gad, what a homecoming it will be!"

Meanwhile, by the low sea wall outside the inn, Armande de St. Clair had come upon Paul Hungerford, alone in the dusk.

"Paul!" he said pleadingly.

Paul, staring out across the darkening waters, turned at the sound of that low voice.

"Yes, Armande?" he said quietly.

It was the very gentleness of his tone which unmanned Armande de St. Clair to the full. Anger or reproach, the unhappy boy could have understood and had expected. But now, the agony of remorse accentuated by the attitude of the friend whom he had so cruelly wronged, he fell on his knees, pressing the hand of Paul Hungerford to his lips and moaning through great choking sobs:

"Paul—Paul! I did not know! Say you understand—old friend! Ah, by Heaven, I am not fit to live. But I did not know—I never guessed—"

"Nay, Armande," said Paul, in distress, drawing away his hand and rais-

"Have you no word for me, Armande?" said Paul pleadingly. "Yes! That, you animal!" snarled Armande. And with the words he snatched a brimming wineglass from the table and hurled the contents full in Paul's face. (See page 26.)



### The Homecoming!

**P**AUL was up betimes the next morning, and, scrambling into his clothes, descended to the stable yard, where already little wizened Dick Kenton was grooming the two horses which he and Paul were to ride on their journey to Dorset.

Dick was the Dorset man of whom Lord Percy had spoken, and he had jumped at the change of acting as servant and guide to Master Paul Hungerford, who was thus strangely returning home. Well he remembered the kidnapping of Paul many years before; and the sequel, related to him in the coffee-room the previous night by Lord Percy, had reduced him to a state of gaping and gasping amazement from which he had scarcely yet recovered.

"To think," he had held forth later in the servants' quarters below stairs, "young Master Paul still alive. And nearly gillytined by them Frenchies. Lord luv us, what times these be. And I'm going home with him. Not for a hun'erd pounds would I have refused. No, not for a hun'erd pounds. There'll be great doings at Hungerford Manor when he gets there. And I'm taking him, like. Mercy on us, it seems like—like a— Oh, I dunno!"

And being at a loss for a suitable simile he had quaffed his fourth tankard of ale at a single draught.

And now with much sibilant hissing and "Whoa, 'oss!" and "Steady, 'oss!" he was bringing a sheen to the coats of the well-conditioned mounts which he and Paul were to use.

Suddenly, becoming aware of Paul's

ing the wretched, quivering boy, "do not reproach yourself thus, nor take this thing to heart. See now," he went on, slipping his arm round the other's shoulders, "let us walk a little way till you are more composed."

"But Paul—Paul—can you ever forgive—"

"Forgive?" repeated Paul cheerily. "Why, surely, Armande, for there is nothing to forgive. Your words were those which might have been used by any had they been placed as were you. There, you are in peaceful England now, Armande, and you must forget these things and all the unhappy past."

"But—but you could never call me friend again."

"Could I not?" laughed Paul. "Then you are wrong, old friend. See, let us walk as far as the end of the wall and back. Then we will rejoin D'Espany and the others, for I am mortal hungry, and the sooner we sup the better."

Thus he eased the other's misery of mind and arm-in-arm they strolled slowly through the dusk. It almost seemed as though the fateful years had rolled away, and they were once again the friends of those distant, carefree, Fontncy days. But in the heart of Armande de St. Clair had been born a deep and lasting humility, and a knowledge that with him dwelt memories which time could never efface.

## THE SHADOW OF THE GUILLOTINE!

(Continued from previous page.)

proximity, he paused in his labours to straighten up, and touch damp forelock with respectful forefinger.

"Morning, young sir!" he said. "I'm just gettin' 'em ready for the road. We've got a fair long ride in front of us."

"How long will it take us?" asked Paul.

"Three days, sir," replied Dick. "That is unless we press the horses, and even then I doubt if we'll get on much quicker in the long run, for roads be powerful bad this time o' the year, and days be short."

"We'll make a good start then, Dick," replied Paul, "and set off immediately after breakfast."

After he had breakfasted, Paul bade farewell to his companions, and then, with promises of future meetings if all went well, he mounted and rode out of the yard with their "Godspeeds" and good wishes ringing in his ears.

He felt a strange thrill at his heart as, having ascended the long, upward winding road which led out of Dover, he and Dick turned their horses' heads westwards towards Dorset. For at long last he was going home—home to the father whom he had never known.

There is little need to dwell on the details of that journey through Sussex and Hampshire into Dorset. In copses and woods and rolling downs, Paul saw the England which had given him birth and its beauty was unmarred for him by the brown tints of autumn.

Not once did he grow weary of being in the saddle, for the unending panorama of countryside was all so fresh and dear to him. Nor did Dick weary of answering the endless questions with which he was plied; now of this, now of that, but always harking back to Hungerford Manor, its inmates, and its surroundings.

For on this latter subject Dick proved a veritable fountain of information. Before transferring himself to Dover and the Sloop and Frigate, he had been in service as a groom with Sir Giles Loder, whose estate bordered that of Sir Crispin Hungerford.

"A fine upstanding gentleman, your father, young sir," said Dick, "and with a kind word for everyone. Often he used to ride over to see Sir Giles, and often I attended Sir Giles to Hungerford Manor, where there was always warm welcome and warm lying for man, servant, and horse."

And once in reply to a question of Paul's:

"Do I remember when you were kidnapped? That I do, young sir. It was shortly after two rascals called Flynn and Callaghan had been hanged at Dorchester for robbery and murder, on the King's highway. They were tried at Dorchester instead of being sent to Lunnon, and it was your father who sentenced them to a death what they had earned a dozen times over. Then you vanished, and although it was never really known who took you, and for why, it was thought to be one of their scoundrelly friends acting out of revenge. Your father was nigh frantic with grief,

and did everything in his power to find you. But at last he had to come to the same mind as other folks, which was that you'd either been taken out of the country, or else murdered."

Then, after a ruminative pause, he added:

"And what he will say when he sees you again, young sir, I dunno. But it be wunnerful for me to be riding home with you like this, and I wouldn't change places with any man in Dorset. No, nor in the whole of England, neither."

It was towards late afternoon of the third day when, topping a rise in the narrow coast road which they had been following, Dick reined in his horse and said quietly:

"There is Hungerford Manor yonder, sir!"

Paul caught his breath and sat staring down at the scene which had unfolded itself before him. Standing some half-mile inland from the calm waters of a small bay was a large red-brick house surrounded by fine trees. Its mullioned windows were glittering in the golden rays of the setting sun, and from its tall chimneys thin wreaths of smoke rose high into the still air.

And this was home. Viewed even from a distance, the red-tiled roof and mellow red brick spoke of warmth and welcome.

(To enter Hungerford Manor and meet his father, whom he has never known before, seems to Paul Dave like embarking into a new world. What fate awaits him there? Wait until you read next week's gripping instalment, and you'll be surprised!)

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"Cross the gipsy's palm with silver or something terrible will happen to you!" This threat fails to unnerve Dr. Birchmell. But the Head of St. Sam's is soon to learn that the gipsy's warning is something not to be unheeded.

"PARE a copper, young jonts?"

Jack Jolly & Co. of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, started as these words fell on their ears. Our heroes had just been punting a football about in the quad, and were feeling full of beans, although dinner had not yet been served. The cringing, whining words mentioned above brought them to a fool's top immediately.

Looking round, they saw a site rarely seen in the classic precincts of St. Sam's. A jipsy was standing near them—a dark-skinned jipsy of evil countenance, who loomed at them as they looked round. He grasped a hatchet in one hand, a stout cudgel in the other, and a dagger in the third. From the look of the man the juniors had no doubt that he also carried numerous other deadly weapons concealed about his person.

"Spare a copper?" he repeated, as the heroes of the Fourth stared at him. "Why, it's a jipsy!" exclaimed Jack Jolly, looking very suspicious. "Are you one of the jipsy gang that's suspected of kidnapping children and robbing local residents, or settlers?"

"Not me, young jont! I'm an honest jipsy. I am," answered the fellow, with another leer.

"Then all I can say is, you don't look it!" retorted the captain of the Fourth. "I think your best plan is to hop it!"

The jipsy picked up his cudgel as though he intended to give Jack Jolly a crack on the nut with it. Then something caused him to change his mind, and he shuffled off across the quad again.

"That 'something' was Miss Molly Birchmell, the pretty daughter of the headmaster of St. Sam's. At that moment she was tripping across to the tuck-shop to buy herself some chocolate.

she could give anything to the fellow, a sudden interruption came in the form of a venerable and majestic figure, clad in skollastic cap and gown.

It was Molly's father, Dr. Alfred Birchmell, the headmaster of St. Sam's. Judging by the expression on his face, he was feeling rather annoyed.

"Stop!" he yelled, as he came on the scene. "Molly, my dear, I forbid you to give this low fellow arms!"

"But I want to give him arms!" I was going to give him arms, pop!" cried the Head's daughter, with a spiteful pout. "Seeing that he has a hatchet and a dagger and a cudgel, I should think he has quite enough arms already!"

"Tut-tut, my child! I mean 'arms' in the sense of money, not in the sense of weapons of war!" said the Head. "This fellow is a jipsy, and I do not believe in encouraging jipsies. I forbid you to give anything to him!"

The jipsy's face changed to an ugly skew, as he listened to the Head's words, but he didn't do anything except for a moment. Before going further, he decided to try to soften the Head's hard old heart.

"You've got a lucky face, kind gentleman!" he remarked, in cringing accents. Dr. Birchmell glared at him. Even the majestic Head of St. Sam's liked a little flattery now and again.

"Well, that's true enough!" he said with a slight cough. "I should imagine that a handsome fellow like mine ought to bring good luck to anybody!"

"Well, then, cross the jipsy's palm with silver!" leered the introductor. Dr. Birchmell looked a little surprised. "What the thump do you mean, my man?" he asked.

"Cross the jipsy's palm with silver!" "Grate pip! Do you mean you want me to play trumps and crosses on the palm of my hand with a silver pencil?" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Jolly & Co., who had just come on the scene.

the jipsy languidly, sir!"

grinned Jack Jolly. "What he wants you to do is to give him a silver coin of the realm—a threepenny-bit or half-a-crown or something—see?"

"My giddy aunt! Is that really what he wants?" asked Dr. Birchmell, his frown deepening.

"Yes, rather!" concurred Jack Jolly & Co.

"Well, of all the cheeky rotters—!" The Head paused, almost at a loss for words. "Mean to say he expects me to make him a gift, free, gratis, and for nothing, of some of the wealth I earn in this outfit by the sweat of my brow?"

"Just that, sir!" Dr. Birchmell turned to the jipsy and pointed a forefinger to the gates.

"I'll give you three seconds to buzz off you low, common vagrant!" he said indignantly. "Cross your scabby palm with silver, indeed! Why, I've never heard the like! Buzz! Vanooose! Absolutely!"

And never let your shadow darken the doors of St. Sam's again!" "Look 'ere—!" said the jipsy, with another ugly skew.

"One!" "I warn you, mister, that if you don't cross the jipsy's palm with silver—!" "Two!"

"Something terrible will happen to you!" hissed the fellow, a fearful expression on his ugly face. "Something that you won't like, mister—!" "Three! Collar him, boys!" yelled the Head.

"Yaroooo!" "Chuck him out on his neck, boys!" cried the Head, rubbing his bony hands together with glee. "What-he!" Molly Birchmell, unable to endure the site of such a fearful affray, turned away and tripped daintily off to the tuckshop for her chocolate. And as she vanished from the scene, our heroes yanked the yelling jipsy off his feet and rushed him down to the gates.

"Plank you, my boys!" said Dr. Birchmell, as Jack Jolly & Co. returned from their task, breathless and triumphant. "I don't think we shall hear any more from that miserable vagrant!"

"You're not scared of his threat, sir?" asked Frank Fearless. "You remember he warned you that something terrible would happen to you?"

Dr. Birchmell laughed scornfully. "If you think I care twopenny for the warning of a common, well! I will trot down and see her there under the circumstances."

And Dr. Birchmell centered out of the House and made his way across the twilight quad, to the old school tuck-shop.

The only customers in the shop when he poked his head round the door, however, were Jack Jolly & Co., of the Fourth. Of his two daughters there was no sign. Dr. Birchmell gave a frown of annoyance, and walked in.

"Thank you, Fearless, I will!" he said, calmly helping himself to a jam-tart from the plate in front of Frank Fearless. "But that wasn't what I came for. What I want to know is: where is my daughter?"

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron!" sneezed Bright humbly. The Head frowned.

"I trust you are not treating my remarks in a jesting spirit, Bright?" "Well, isn't that the answer, sir?" asked Bright, in surprise. "Oh, I see! You mean Miss Molly? Sorry, sir! I thought you were asking us a riddle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bright's pals. "Silence!" bellowed the Head fiercely. "How dare you laugh when I ask a serious question! I have been told that my daughter was in the tuck-shop, and I have come to find her. Have any of you juniors seen her?"

"No, sir!" answered Jack Jolly & Co., becoming serious again. "Funny!" murmured the Head. "Lickham told me distinctly that he had seen her here. I must ask him how long ago it was."

Dr. Birchmell knitted the tuck-shop again. Jack Jolly, & Co. followed. Miss Molly was a particular chum of theirs, and if she was missing, they wanted to know all about it.

The Head went back to the Skool House again, and ran into Mr. Lickham in the hall. The master of the Fourth was grinning all over his face for reasons best known to himself. "Find her, sir!" he asked.

"No, Lickham, I did not!" said the Head. "Mite I ask how long ago it was when you saw my daughter in the tuck-shop?"

Mr. Lickham reflected. "Fearless, you're greatly mistaken!" he said. "Before he was much older, however, Dr. Birchmell was going to learn that the jipsy's warning was not a thing to be treated so lightly after all."

II. "Seen my daughter, Lickham?" Dr. Birchmell asked that question of Mr. Lickham as he ran into him outside the jimmy-nest that evening.

"The master of the Fourth pondered. 'Lemme see: I believe I have, now you come to mention it, sir!'"

"The Head breathed a sigh of relief. 'Good egg!' he murmured to himself. 'To Mr. Lickham, he said: "Where did you see her, prey, my dear Lickham?"

"In the tuck-shop, sir." The Head smiled indulgently. "Dear me! What a girl Molly is for feeding her face!" he remarked. "Well,

By that time, Mr. Lickham, after regretted his little jape. "So much for that idiot!" remarked the Head, flicking a speck of dust from his trowsers. "And now, boys, I want you to help me in searching for my daughter. I am feeling worried about her, for I haven't seen her for hours. Will you have a scout round?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" concurred our heroes. And they set forth to see if they could find the fair Miss Molly.

But in spite of their excellent training in scoutcraft, Jack Jolly & Co. couldn't find a trace of the missing girl. They searched deserted passages and lock-rooms, they explored every corner of the coal-sceller, climbed up chimneys and made perilous journeys over the roofs. But without success.

Having exhausted every possibility indoors, they went outdoors. Half an hour was spent in skulking the tree-trunks and branches in the quad, but Miss Molly did not fall at their feet. Undaunted, they visited the woodshed, and turned it upside down in an effort to find the girl they sought. But though they sawdust, they saw nothing of Miss Molly.

Frank Fearless remembered having heard Molly Birchmell say that she was fond of cabbage, so the searchers adjourned to the cabbage-beds in the Head's garden. But even there they drew a blank.

After that they had to admit themselves beaten. "There was nothing for it, but to report to the Head that Miss Molly was not within the precincts of the Skool. They found Dr. Birchmell pacing the floor of his study, clavering his beard and scratching his nose in an agony of apprehension.

"You have found my daughter, boys?" he asked feverishly, as Jack Jolly knickered open the door of the study and led the way in.

"Sorry, sir. Nothing doing!" he said reluctantly. The Head groaned.

"Oh, crickey! And I had fairly relied on you boys finding her! Woe is me!" Suddenly, Frank Fearless started.

"My hat! I wonder if this is the work of that dastardly jipsy!" he exclaimed. The Head stared at Fearless, his eyes almost bulging out of his head.

"Surely, Fearless, you are not suggesting—I am!" said Fearless calmly. "Remember what that swartly shrouded said?"

"I remember, right enough!" murmured the Head. "He said that something terrible would happen to me—something that I shouldn't like—"

"My hat! Then this is it!" cried Jack Jolly eagerly. "This awful villain has kidnapped Miss Molly, so as to get his own back!"

"Grate pip!" The Head and the juniors stared at each other in horror, their lizzies the picture of dismay.

Suddenly, the Head woke to life. Rushing to the telephone, he picked up the receiver.

"Put me through to the police-station—Inspector Shoatround!" he barked. Within five minutes, burly, pebble-nosed were rushing up and down the country-side, bludgeoned were chasing all over the place, and in short, every effort was being made to trace the missing daughter of the Head of St. Sam's.

But nite came, with fell no news to report. And it was with a heavy heart, that nite, that Dr. Birchmell sat down to his light supper of steak-and-eggs and fried onions and bread-and-butter.

(There'll be another hair-raising yarn by Dicky Nugent next Saturday's MAGNET, chums, entitled: "JOLLY'S WONDERFUL WEEZE!" You can't afford to miss it, so order your copy early!)