

The Magnet

2^d

"The SEA SPIDER"

Amazing New Story by
George E. Rochester,

STARTS TO-DAY!



The SCHEMER of the REMOVE!

By
FRANK RICHARDS



Dear Aunt Judy,
I am badly in want
of a sum of munny,
as much as twenty-
five pounds I know
it is a bit thick

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Snipe Asks For It!

CLATTER! Snort! Clatter!
"What on earth," said Bob Cherry, "is the matter with that geegee?"

Harry Wharton stared.

"Goodness knows!" he answered.

Snort! Clatter! Snort!

"Can't be a wasp!" said Bob.

"Hardly, in February—"

"Then what—"

It was really surprising.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, of the Greyfriars Remove, were coming up Friardale Lane from the village, heading for the school.

From a distance they sighted the horse and cart of old Coote, the village carrier, tied up by the hedge.

Old Coote himself was not to be seen; no doubt he had gone across the meadow to one of the cottages that lay far back from the lane.

Between the lane and the wood that bordered it on that side was a belt of grass, and the carrier's horse had been cropping the grass within reach.

Suddenly, as the juniors sighted it, the horse gave a sudden bound, snorted and clattered, and jerked violently at the halter that tethered it to a branch.

Had it been suddenly stung by a wasp its action would have been accountable, but at that time of the year a wasp was, to say the least, improbable. And it was not a restive horse by any means. It was nearly as old as old Coote himself, and quiet—very quiet—in its ways. Indeed, old Coote sometimes had trouble in making it move at all.

Now it was bounding and snorting almost like a warhorse.

"It's weird!" said Bob, stopping and staring at the animal. "Just weird!"

The horse settled down again. It gave a sort of suspicious stare round, then lowered its head and began cropping.

But that peaceful state lasted only a moment or two.

"There he goes again!" ejaculated Bob.

The carrier's horse gave a wild jump! A long, shrill whinny came from it. The cart rocked, and the various goods stacked in it rattled. The hoofs clattered on the grass, the harness jingled and tinkled as the animal made a wild effort to drag itself loose from the halter. But for the fact that old Coote had tied it, it would certainly have gone careering down the lane, with the cart clattering behind.

Wharton and Bob gazed in astonishment. What could be causing those acrobatic feats on the part of that quiet old steed was an absolute mystery to them.

But Bob suddenly grasped his companion's arm and pointed.

"Look!" he breathed.

The mystery was elucidated!

From the tree on the high bank above the lane a face looked out—a grinning face, surmounted by a Greyfriars cap.

It was a face the juniors knew—that of Caffyn, the new boy in the Remove at Greyfriars School.

Caffyn had a catapult in his hand.

Evidently he had been catapulting the horse from the cover of the wood. Now he was coming nearer, to get a better shot.

He did not see the two juniors, at a little distance up the lane, as he fitted another stone to his weapon.

"That rotter!" breathed Wharton.

"That worm!" grunted Bob.

The two juniors broke into a run. Now that they saw Caffyn at his work they were not surprised. This was the kind of thing that amused the "Snipe" of the Remove. They had heard that his cousin, Coker of the Fifth, had kicked him for tying crackers to the tail of his Aunt Judy's cat. There was a yellow streak in the Snipe that caused him to find entertainment in tormenting any helpless creature.

"Stop that!" roared Bob Cherry, as he started running.

"Stop it!" shouted Wharton.

Caffyn gave a jump at the sudden sound of their voices. He was not aware that he was observed.

Possibly for the moment he feared that the carrier was coming back, and had seen him at his peculiar game.

But as he saw that the newcomers were only Greyfriars fellows, he gave a sneering grin and took aim at the tethered horse.

Wharton and Bob Cherry were putting on speed, but they had no time to reach the Snipe before he let fly.

Heedless of their shouting and their angry looks, the Snipe coolly took aim at the horse's flank, drew back his elastic to its fullest extent, and shot the stone.

Old Tom, the horse, gave a fearful squeal and fairly bounded. At such close quarters a sharp stone crashing on his ribs with terrific force hurt him badly. He squealed and snorted and reared and plunged, and the cart looked like going over.

There was a shout from the other side of the lane. Old Coote, coming back across the meadow, had spotted Caffyn.

But he was still far off, and the Snipe was in no danger from him. He grinned at the plunging, squealing horse, slipped the catapult in his pocket, and backed into the trees.

Bob Cherry, turning from the lane before he reached the spot where the cart stood, leaped up the bank and rushed into the wood. Wharton scrambled swiftly after him.

The Snipe was already clearing off, but the two Removites, cutting among the trees, got ahead of him.

Caffyn, threading his way among the old oaks and beeches, stopped suddenly, as he found his retreat cut off.

He backed again quickly.

"Collar the cad!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Scrag him!" gasped Wharton.
"Hands off, you fools!" exclaimed Caffyn, backing farther away, back towards the lane. "Look here—"

Wharton and Bob Cherry jumped at him, and the Snipe fairly turned and ran. His escape into the wood was cut off, and he had to run towards the lane.

He was not yet aware that old Coote, panting across the meadow, had emerged into Friardale Lane. He was in a hurry to get away from the two angry and excited juniors behind him.

He tore through the trees, plunged down the bank, and scrambled into the lane before they could get near him.

But it was a case of getting out of the frying-pan into the fire! As he picked himself up, breathlessly, in the lane, a few yards from the horse and cart, old Coote pounced on him.

"Gotcher!" roared the carrier.

"Ow! Leggo!" shrieked the Snipe.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Old Coote did not let go! Instead of letting go, he grasped the Snipe hard and fast, and thumped and thumped and thumped.

And old as Mr. Coote was, there was plenty of energy in him. He beat Caffyn as if he were beating a carpet.

Thump, thump, thump!

"Ow! Oh! Leggo, you old ruffian!" yelled Caffyn.

"Oh! Help! Ow! Wow! Help!"

Wharton and Bob came scrambling down the bank. Caffyn yelled to them frantically.

"Help! Drag him off! Help!"

"No fear!" answered Bob coolly.

"We're going to kick you as far as the school when the old bean's done with you. Go it, Coote!"

"Yaroooh! Ow! Help!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Old Coote did not leave off thumping till he was tired. By that time Edgar Caffyn was more than tired.

"That'll larn yer!" gasped old Coote. "Catapulting a 'orse, you young raskil, you! That'll larn yer!"

Caffyn, gasping and groaning for breath, collapsed on the grass as the carrier unhitched his horse and, touching his hat to Wharton and Bob, drove away to the village.

The chums of the Remove stood watching Caffyn with smiling faces.

He lay gasping and groaning. Old Coote had thumped hard, and he had thumped often.

"How long are you going to stick there, Caffyn?" asked Bob, at last.

Caffyn sat up, and scowled at him savagely.

"No business of yours!" he snarled.

"Lots!" answered Bob cheerily.

"We're waiting to kick you to Greyfriars."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Buck up, Caffyn!" he said. "We shall be late for tea, at this rate."

"Can't you fellows ever mind your own business?" snarled Caffyn.

"My dear man," answered Bob, "if you find it amusing to worry animals, why shouldn't we? You're the animal we're going to worry."

"If you touch me, I'll complain to Mr. Quelch."

"Please yourself about that. Are you getting up?"

"No!" snarled Caffyn.

"Take his other ear!" said Bob.

"Yaroooh!"

With a grasp on either ear, Caffyn got up quite quickly.

"We'll give you six yards' start!" said Bob. "Get going! If you don't beat us to Greyfriars, you'll feel like a Soccer ball shortly."

Caffyn started. Six yards' start was not much use to the weedy Snipe, whose wind was sapped by cigarettes.

But he ran his hardest as he heard the pattering footsteps in pursuit. Either of the pursuers could have run him down in twenty yards; but they contented themselves with keeping pace, and keeping the Snipe on the run. With grinning faces they trotted behind Caffyn, making no effort to reach him. But the Snipe, in terror every moment of feeling a boot behind him, ran desperately, panting and puffing and perspiring as he flew.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Horace, as Per Usual!

COKER of the Fifth gave a snort. It was a snort of contempt and disgust.

Coker of the Fifth held emphatic opinions on many subjects, and never hesitated to let them be known.

Coming out of a field path into Friardale Lane, at a short distance from Greyfriars, Coker spotted three hats.

One was a curly brimmed bowler, worn slightly on one side of the bullet head of Mr. Joe Lodgey. The other two hats were disappearing through the opposite hedge, and Coker did not see their wearers.

But he knew that they were Greyfriars hats, and guessed who the wearers

A fellow who sets out to mind everybody else's business but his own is bound to find his path a thorny one. Such is the case this week with Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, who is ass enough to place himself under grave suspicion, from sheer inability to mind his own business!

were—Hilton and Price of his own Form at Greyfriars.

They vanished quickly.

Greyfriars fellows who met a character like Mr. Lodgey could not afford to risk being seen speaking to him.

It was only Coker who came tramping out of the field path; but it might have been a master—even Prout himself, or the Head.

So two hats vanished as if in a conjuring trick, leaving Mr. Lodgey standing by himself, staring round at Coker.

Wherefore did Coker snort?

Mr. Lodgey was a rather well-known character in the neighbourhood. He was a horse-dealer by profession; but he did more business taking bets on horses than in buying and selling those quadrupeds. Probably he made more money as an unprofessional bookie than as a professional horse-dealer. And there were sporting men at Greyfriars who found Mr. Lodgey very useful when they wanted to back their fancy, and get rid of the greatest quantity of cash in the shortest space of time.

Mr. Lodgey touched his tilted bowler to Coker quite politely. In return for his politeness, Horace Coker gave him a glare.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Jest walking, sir," answered Mr. Lodgey cheerfully. "No law agin walking on the King's 'ighway, as I knows on."

Coker waved a hand towards the

hedge beyond which two hats had disappeared like spectres at cock-crow.

"I know jolly well that they were Greyfriars men talking to you here," he said. "That's why they bunked when they heard me coming."

"You know a lot, don't you, sir?" said Mr. Lodgey. "Surprising what a lot a covey knows what goes to a big school like yours, sir."

This was sarcasm, and Coker knew it. He frowned, and came a stride nearer to Mr. Lodgey.

That gentleman backed away a few paces into the middle of the lane.

He was a man, and Coker was a boy, though rather a large size in school-boys. But he was a man who had looked so often on the wine when it was red, and the beer when it was brown, that he would have had simply no chance in a row with a hefty Greyfriars senior like Coker.

"I don't want any cheek from you, my man!" said Coker. "For two pins, I'd mop up the lane with you!"

Mr. Lodgey eyed him rather evilly.

Really it was no business of Coker's. If Hilton and Price had been in conversation with the sharper, it was against all the rules of the school. It would have roused the wrath of their Form-master, Prout. It would have awakened the deepest ire of Dr. Locke, their headmaster. But Coker was not a Form-master, or even a prefect—not even in the Sixth at all. The management of Greyfriars School had not been confided to Coker's hands, though he often acted as though he thought it had. It was absolutely no business of Coker's.

But minding his own business was a thing that had never appealed to Coker of the Fifth.

Price was a dingy blighter; Hilton was a soft ass whom he led into his own shady ways. Coker had an overpowering contempt for both of them, and an equally strong scorn and disgust for Mr. Lodgey. Having these thoughts and feelings, Coker made them known. He seldom kept his opinion a secret. It was, Coker thought, worth knowing.

"Clear off!" said Coker. "You've no business hanging about here, talking to Greyfriars men—see? Clear off!"

"I'll suit myself about that!" said Mr. Lodgey.

"You'll suit me!" said Coker. He made a swinging movement with his right foot. "Are you going, or are you waiting for me to hit you?"

Now Mr. Lodgey would have been quite pleased to turn and walk away, and have done with Coker. Coker's company and conversation had already palled on him.

But he disliked that motion of Coker's foot. He had a strong suspicion that if he turned his back on Coker that foot was going to shoot out, and land on his trousers.

That was not an attractive prospect. Coker wore a large size in boots. He had large feet in them. Probably Mr. Lodgey had been kicked more than once in the course of his unsavoury career. But it was not the sort of thing he liked.

So, though anxious to go, Mr. Lodgey stood facing Coker in the middle of Friardale Lane. He felt safer facing him.

"Are you going?" repeated Coker.

He came a little nearer to Mr. Lodgey, with his big fists doubled. His eyes glinted. He was quite prepared to mop up Friardale Lane with the loafer of the Cross Keys.

Mr. Lodgey backed away. Coker followed him up.

Lodgey was backing towards the village. But Friardale was half a mile away, the Cross Keys only a little nearer. It was rather a difficult business for Mr. Lodgey to back all that distance to safety.

Yet he hated the thought of turning his back on Coker. That glint in Coker's eye hinted only too clearly what he had to expect if he did.

Coker tramped nearer. Lodgey backed and backed. Coker followed him up.

How long that peculiar performance would have gone on it is impossible to say; for it was suddenly interrupted.

Round a bend of the lane from the direction of the village came a fleeing figure.

It was Edgar Caffyn going all out.

He flew.

Caffyn was in too great a hurry to see Lodgey and Coker in time as he came round the bend. And a fellow, of course, could not see round corners. Neither could a fellow have expected people to be standing in the middle of the lane—especially progressing backwards.

Caffyn did not know that Mr. Lodgey was in front of him till he cannoned into Mr. Lodgey's back. And Lodgey did not know that the Snipe was coming till he crashed. Then, of course, it was too late.

It was a fearful crash. Caffyn, in the full belief that Wharton and Bob were close behind, about to kick, was putting every ounce into it. He crashed into Lodgey's back like a runaway car.

Lodgey gave a gasping howl as he was hurled forward. The shock hurled him right at Coker. He crashed into Coker, threw both his arms round Horace's neck in a wild attempt to save himself, and dragged him over as he went down.

They rolled together in the dust of Friardale Lane.

Caffyn sprawled over them.

They were still mixed when two running figures came shooting round the bend, and Wharton and Bob Cherry stumbled and sprawled over three sprawling figures.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob.

"What the thump!" spluttered Wharton.

"Oooooogh!"

"Gerroff!"

"Ow! Whooooop!"

It was quite a mix-up!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

HARRY WHARTON was the first on his feet. He disengaged his elbow from Lodgey's eye, and his knee from Coker's ribs, and scrambled up.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped.

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Bob. "What's this—"

Something was wriggling and squirming under him. In the confusion of the moment, Bob did not know what it was.

It was Caffyn.

"Ow! Oooooogh! Gerroff!" yelled Caffyn. "Oooooogh!"

"Oh! You!" gasped Bob.

He got off breathlessly.

Caffyn sat up and gurgled. Coker sat up and spluttered. Mr. Lodgey, the worst winded of the whole party, lay where he was and moaned.

Wharton and Bob Cherry gazed at them. They knew Lodgey by sight and by reputation. They were not surprised to see him in Friardale Lane,

where he was often seen. But they were amazed to see him in company with Coker of the Fifth Form.

That was really amazing.

Yet there was no doubt that Lodgey and Coker had been together, when the sudden arrival of the juniors floored them. There was no possible doubt on that point.

"Ooogh!" spluttered Coker. "You cheeky fags—barging a man over! You wait till I gerrup! I'll smash you!"

"You silly ass!" retorted Bob Cherry. "Jolly lucky for you it was us, and not your beak, or a prefect, that barged into you! I'd like to know what Prout would think of the company you're keeping. I know that man—it's Joe Lodgey."

"What?" gasped Coker.

"Have you gone off your dot, Coker?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You might get sacked if you were seen with that shady outsider!"

Coker glared at him, speechless.

When Coker of the Fifth took Mr. Lodgey in hand it was with the best of motives. Everything Coker did was done from the best of motives, but he was often misunderstood.

It had not occurred to Coker's mighty brain that he might be misunderstood if he was seen with the racing man!

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Coker. "I—I—I—I—" He scrambled breathlessly to his feet. "I'll smash you! I'll—"

He hurled himself at the two Removeites. He was already annoyed by his tumble. The hint that he was supposed to be associating with Mr. Lodgey gave the finishing touch to his wrath. He came at the two juniors like a cannon-ball.

He looked like doing a lot of damage. He might have done quite a lot, too, had not Bob Cherry hooked his leg!

But Bob did—and Coker sprawled again in Friardale Lane, bumping on the county of Kent with a terrific bump.

"Time we got in to tea," remarked Bob.

"Quite!" agreed Wharton.

And they trotted on towards Greyfriars, leaving Horace Coker still extended on Kent, and feeling as if that county had suddenly got up and hit him.

Caffyn wriggled to his feet.

Mr. Lodgey was sitting up, dizzily, by this time. Coker was sprawling and spluttering.

The Snipe stood panting, but while he panted he scanned Mr. Lodgey with a keen and searching eye.

He was as surprised as the chums of the Remove to see the company that Coker was—apparently—keeping.

He had been at Greyfriars only that term, but he had seen Mr. Lodgey about, and knew that Skinner of the Remove sometimes had sporting dealings with him.

Nobody could have disliked a fellow more intensely than Caffyn disliked his Cousin Horace, whom he regarded as his rival for the money-bags of Aunt Judy. But Caffyn was too keen, and too wary, a fellow to be blinded by dislike, and he had never fancied for a moment that Coker was this sort of fellow—that there was such a chink as this in Coker's armour!

But seeing was believing!

They had been standing together facing one another in the lane when Caffyn crashed into Lodgey's back.

There was absolutely no room for mistake—so far as the Snipe could see! He had noted the surprise of Wharton and Bob. He felt the same surprise himself! But there was no mistake about it!

The Snipe's sharp eyes glistened. He had found Coker out! He had found out what he had never dreamed of suspecting! This—this was his chance, at last, of disgracing Coker with Aunt Judy, if he played his cards carefully!

He got into motion as Coker began to scramble up. So did Mr. Lodgey. Neither of them wanted to be on the spot when Horace Coker got on his feet. The expression on Coker's face was quite enough for them.

The Snipe ran on towards Greyfriars School. Mr. Lodgey plunged through a hedge, taking a short cut across the meadows towards the Cross Keys.

By the time Coker was up, both had faded out of the picture. Coker leaned on a tree and gasped for breath.

"I'll smash 'em!" he gurgled.

He tramped on towards Greyfriars. He was feeling very breathless, very winded, and very angry. He had collected a number of bumps.

A fellow who sets out to mind everybody's business but his own is bound to find his path a thorny one—and Coker often found it so. As he tramped on, Coker made up his mind to kick Caffyn and whop Wharton and Cherry at the first opportunity, and to tell Hilton and Price what he thought of them, as soon as ever he saw them. They were the cause of the whole trouble—meeting that blackguardly racing man out of gates! They had done it before, as Coker well knew, and now they had done it again—at least, Coker had no doubt that they had!

Certainly he had seen only two vanishing hats! He had taken it for granted that they were worn by Hilton and Price of the Fifth, whose ways he knew.

It did not even occur to Coker that those vanishing hats had been worn by Loder and Walker of the Sixth! How could it?

He never even thought of Loder and Walker of the Sixth!

Wharton and Bob and Caffyn had vanished long before Coker reached the school. But when he came tramping up to the Fifth Form passage he beheld the two Fifth Formers he wanted to see standing in the doorway of the games-study at the end of that passage.

They were looking into the games-study, attentive to something that was going on there.

It did not occur to Coker that what was going on in the games-study was a visit that Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was paying to his Form.

Prout often dropped into the games-study for a chat with the Fifth Form men. He believed in those straightforward, manly talks between master and boys. He was quite unaware that, in the Fifth, these straightforward talks were called "Prout's gas."

It did not occur to Coker that Prout was there. Nothing ever occurred to Coker's mighty brain till it was too late.

"So you've got back!" he snorted at Hilton and Price.

They glanced at him. So did his pals Potter and Greene, who were just within the doorway.

"Eh? What?" drawled Hilton.

"I said you've got back!" snorted Coker.

"Haven't been out!" said Price with a stare.

Snort from Coker.

"Fat lot of good telling me that!" he jeered. "I saw you dodging through the hedge—at least, I saw your hats as you went. And I said to Lodgey—"

An almost agonised expression on the faces staring at him made Coker pause. He seldom paused when his powerful

chin once got going. But he paused now, realising that something was amiss.

"What—" he began.

He knew the next moment. A portly figure and purple face appeared in the doorway from the interior of the games-study. Coker's jaw dropped as he stared at Mr. Prout, his Form-master.

He understood now.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

He had not meant, of course, to give Hilton and Price away to a beak. He had only intended to tell them what he thought of them.

"Coker!" boomed Prout.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Coker.

"You mentioned a name!" said Prout sternly. "It was the name of a well-known bad character in this neighbourhood, with whom no Greyfriars boy is

he was aware, if Coker was not, that they had been in the games-study for the last half-hour. Then he fixed his eyes on Coker's flushed face again.

"I trust, Coker, that your statement is correct," he said. "I shall accept your word. But if you have added questionable conduct, Coker, to obstinacy, unruliness, and disrespect, I warn you that Greyfriars is no place for such a boy! I warn you very seriously!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker. "I only said—"

Prout raised a plump finger.

"You should have said nothing! You should not have entered into any kind of conversation with such a character! I shall accept your word! But you will take two hundred lines, Coker! Say no more! But take care, sir—take care!"

"Quite!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The quietfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And Johnny Bull and Frank nodded with cheery anticipation.

Wharton and Bob thought it very probable that they would hear from Coker about that mix-up in Friardale Lane. They were prepared to deal with the obstreperous Horace if he came seeking war, and the other members of the Co. were prepared to back them up.

"I say, you fellows, he's going to be sacked!" gasped Bunter.

There was a general jump.

"Sacked!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, rather—bunked!" grinned Bunter.

"Coker!" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Coker bunked?"



The carrier's horse gave a wild jump, the cart rocked, and various articles in it were jolted out on to the road. Wharton and Bob Cherry gazed in astonishment, while from the tree on the bank a face looked out—a grinning face surmounted by a Greyfriars cap. It was the face of Caffyn, the new boy in the Remove!

allowed to hold any communication whatever, or even to speak a word."

"I—I—I—"

"Am I to understand, Coker, that you have communications with this disreputable man, Lodgey?" thundered Prout.

"Oh crikey! I—I mean no, sir!" gurgled Coker. "Nothing of the sort. I only said to him—"

"Then you have spoken to him?"

"I—I—I only said—" stuttered Coker.

"Are you aware, or are you not aware, Coker, that you should not have spoken to such a man at all?"

"Well, yes, sir. But I only said—"

"On your own confession, Coker, you have talked with this man—a disreputable man who has been in trouble with the police for street betting—"

"I haven't!" shrieked Coker wildly. "I only told him that I'd mop up the lane with him if he hung about speaking to Greyfriars fellows."

Mr. Prout stared at him hard. Then he glanced at Hilton and Price. But

With that Prout rolled away. He left Coker blinking with speechless indignation. He left most of the other Fifth Form men grinning. They knew, better than Prout, that Coker was exactly the ass to place himself in suspicious circumstances, from sheer inability to mind his own business. Anyhow, the incident had cut short Prout's visit and the straightforward, manly talk from master to boys—otherwise "Prout's gas"! And that, in the opinion of all the Fifth, was so much to the good.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Something for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled, grinning, into the Rag after tea.

Bunter, as usual, had the news!

"I say—" squeaked Bunter. "I say, you men heard about Coker?"

"What about Coker?" asked Harry Wharton. "Is the jolly old bean on the giddy warpath again? We're ready!"

"Yes, rather! He, he, he!"

Edgar Caffyn, who was loafing in the window seat, chatting in low tones with Skinner and Snoop, started up and stared at Bunter, his eyes glistening.

This news, if true, was glad news for Caffyn, at least!

Since the affair in Friardale Lane Caffyn had been trying to pick up information regarding the newly discovered manners and customs of Horace Coker.

Seeing a chance in this, Caffyn had pounced on it like a hawk on a pigeon. But he had learned little so far.

Skinner of the Remove, who knew most of what was to be known about the shady side of Greyfriars life, knew absolutely nothing against Coker in that line. Neither did Snoop.

They knew, as everybody else knew, that Coker was an ass, a fathead, an overbearing duffer; a fellow who fancied he could play football, and couldn't; and who never could mind his

own business, or realise that he was not the only pebble on the beach. But Caffyn knew all this already.

But in the shady sportsman line Skinner knew nothing at all about Coker; indeed, he laughed at the idea, and told Caffyn that he was dreaming. The name of Coker's faults and weaknesses was legion. But that, at least, was not counted among them.

So Bunter's news came gladly to Caffyn's ears. Bunter had the news—in fact, he had more than the news, as he generally had. Billy Bunter liked to make the fellows sit up and take notice. If his news, as it stood, was not sufficiently thrilling, Bunter would add a few details of his own. A very little in the way of facts sufficed for Bunter. His fat imagination was always ready to supply the rest.

Quite a crowd of fellows surrounded the fat Owl of the Remove now, eager to hear. Coker, so far, had chiefly supplied comic relief. But if he was going to be bunked, comedy was turning to tragedy.

"Cough it up!" said Bolsover major.

"Really bunked? Actually sacked?"

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The gammonfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Spill it, you fat guy!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "Uncork it, you pesky gink! Let it loose!"

"I say, you fellows, the Fifth are jawing over it like—like anything! From what I hear, Coker's been spotted pub-haunting—"

"Coker pub-haunting!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Rot!"

"Have they really caught him?" exclaimed Caffyn breathlessly.

And Skinner stared. He had just been telling Caffyn that there was, and could be, nothing in it. Now it looked as if there was!

"You shut up, you snipe!" snapped Vernon-Smith, with a dark look at Caffyn. "The man's your cousin, even if you bar him! You precious rotter! Are you glad your relation's got the chopper—if he's got it?"

"I fancy he'd be glad if I got it!" sneered Caffyn.

"Well, you're a worm, and Coker isn't!" said the Bounder. "He's only a silly fathead!"

"I say, you fellows, do let a fellow speak!" urged Billy Bunter.

"Fire away, fatty!"

"It's true, you know!" declared Billy Bunter. "I can't say that Coker was actually caught at a pub; but he was spotted hobnobbing with that man Lodgey—you all know Lodgey! I heard Price of the Fifth say that Coker was talking to him in Friardale Lane, quite near the school, you know; and he let it out, and Prout heard him—"

"Rot!" said the Bounder tersely. "Coker wouldn't touch that man Lodgey with a barge-pole! It's all rot!"

"Well, Price said—"

"Price is a worm!"

"Hilton said—"

"Hilton's an ass!"

"Look here, shut up, Smithy, and let's hear the news!" exclaimed Hazel-dene. "If Coker is really mixed up with that fearful bounder Lodgey—"

"He met him in the lane—"

"Rats! He didn't!" said Tom Redwing.

"He jolly well did," sneered Caffyn, "for I saw them together!"

A dozen fellows looked round at the Snipe as he made that statement. Not a fellow looked as if he believed him.

The Snipe had been in the Remove only that term, but it was generally known that he had spent a great deal of his time in making all the trouble he could for his burly cousin in the Fifth.

Indeed, Billy Bunter had told a tale of actually having overheard Caffyn discussing with his guardian, Mr. Sarle, some scheme for disgracing Coker with his wealthy aunt, Miss Judith Coker.

Bunter's tales were taken with many grains of salt. But the Snipe's inveterate animosity towards his senior cousin gave some colour to this.

"You saw him, did you?" sneered the Bounder.

"Yes, I did!" snarled Caffyn.

"Do you fancy anybody is going to believe you?"

"Wharton and Cherry saw him, too!" said Caffyn maliciously. "It happened this afternoon, and they were there."

All eyes turned on Wharton and Bob, who coloured uncomfortably. It was true; they had seen Coker with Lodgey, though they had had no intention of mentioning it to anyone.

"That's not true is it, Wharton?" asked Peter Todd.

The captain of the Remove hesitated. "Well, they were both in Friardale Lane," he said. "We barged into them, chasing that rat Caffyn! That's all I know."

"Anybody might be in Friardale Lane," said Squiff. "I've passed Lodgey in the lane myself more than once."

"They were together, talking," said Caffyn, "and these fellows know it as well as I do!"

"We never heard them talking," said Bob.

"I say, you fellows, Coker let out before Prout that he was talking to Lodgey!" said Bunter. "Prout's given him lines."

"Lines!" said Harry. "You fat villain, you said he was going to be sacked!"

"Well, so he is!" said Bunter. "Fellows are sacked for pub-haunting, ain't they? Smithy would be sacked if the Head found him out—"

"You silly fathead!" yelled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So would Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And so will Coker, now they've spotted him!" said Bunter. "Now that they know he mixes up with that awful crew at the Cross Keys he's certain to be bunked. I say, you fellows, I never thought it of Coker! We all know about Price and Hilton, but—"

"So it boils down to this," said Johnny Bull. "Coker's supposed to have spoken to Lodgey, and Prout's given him lines—and you come here and squeak out that a man's going to be sacked! Kick him!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Bump him!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter dodged out of the Rag. Bunter's news had proved, as usual, like a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing!

Two or three books and a cushion or two whizzed after him from the indignant Removites as he dodged out.

Caffyn followed him out. His face was bitter. Bunter's dramatic announcement had made him hope, and believe for the moment, that Horace Coker had actually been "lagged" and sacked, and

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that his game was won. The disappointment was cruel!

He overtook the Owl of the Remove in the passage.

Bunter gave him a wary blink. He did not like Caffyn, or trust him.

"Come up to the study, Bunter!" said Caffyn.

"What for?" asked Bunter warily.

"I've got a cake!"

"Oh, good!"

Bunter rolled up to the Remove with the Snipe! They went into Study No. 1 together.

"Where's the cake?" asked Bunter.

"In the cupboard! And it's staying there!" added Caffyn. "I've got something else for you, Bunter."

Bunter was about to ask what it was when Caffyn picked up a fives bat from the bookcase! On which Bunter, without stopping to ask questions, made a bound for the door!

Swipe!

"Yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter frantically. The bat landed on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars as he bounded.

Swipe! came the bat again.

"Whooooop!"

Bunter raced for the stairs.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rubbing It In!

"IT'S too bad!" said Hilton of the Fifth, with a laugh.

"Is it?" said Price viciously.

"I'll make that meddlin' ass sorry for meddlin' with us! He's started Lodgey as a topic! I'll make him sick of it before we've done."

Coker of the Fifth was already "sick" of Lodgey as a topic!

During several days, after that unfortunate encounter in Friardale Lane, Coker of the Fifth heard of hardly anything but Joe Lodgey!

It was Lodgey to right of him, Lodgey to left of him, Lodgey everywhere and all the time!

Coker told them in the games-study, with great earnestness, almost with tears in his eyes, how it really was.

Most of the fellows, of course, believed him.

Indeed, Coker's explanation really amounted to this: that he had acted like a meddling ass who could not mind his own business. That was in keeping with his character as known to all Greyfriars.

Anything of a shady or disreputable nature was not in keeping with his known character.

Still, if sufficient mud is thrown some of it will stick! And Price of the Fifth threw all he could.

Often and often had Coker told Stephen Price what he thought of him and his ways. Coker's views certainly were right and just, but Price was not interested in hearing them; and, really and truly, Price's ways were no concern of Coker. Coker was not, as he seemed to fancy, at Greyfriars to bring up the whole school in the way it should go.

Price saw his chance now for getting a little of his own back! And he did not neglect that chance.

Moreover, Price had been alarmed. His own reputation was not of the best, and he could not afford to have Coker blurting out awkward things in the hearing of Mr. Prout.

True, he had not seen Mr. Lodgey on that especial afternoon. Neither had Hilton! Some other seniors, it seemed, had; but Price and Hilton hadn't!

But they might have! They frequently did! Lodgey did a great deal of business in the sporting line for those

two sportsmen. It was really fortunate that Hilton and Price had been in Prout's actual presence that afternoon when Coker had fancied they had been dealing with Lodgey. But suppose they hadn't been! Prout might have been suspicious then—and Price could not afford to have Prout more suspicious than he was already!

There might have been danger—and Price had no taste for danger. His view was that Coker should mind his own business. After an extensive dose of Lodgey for himself he might learn to leave other fellows' affairs alone.

So Price "rubbed it in" as hard as he could!

The facts were on his side!

It was known that Coker had talked to Lodgey in the lane! He had admitted it to Prout! Juniors had seen him—one of them, his own cousin in the Remove—had told a lot of fellows about it! Indeed, Caffyn's description of the affair gave an impression that Coker and Lodgey had been deep in a very friendly conversation when they had been interrupted!

What could Coker say in his defence?

That he had barged in, because Lodgey was there carrying on some underhand blackguardly business with Greyfriars Fifth Formers—Hilton and Price, as he supposed.

But all the Fifth knew that Hilton and Price had been in the games-study under Prout's very eyes in those very moments.

Coker had to admit that he had been mistaken there! After all, he had only seen two vanishing hats behind a hedge!

Price averred that the vanishing hats existed only in Coker's imagination. When a fellow was spotted breaking the rules a fellow had to say something!

Price declared that this was the thinnest, weakest yarn he had ever heard! Even an ass like Coker ought to have been able to think of something a bit more convincing than that, according to Price!

Price kept the subject alive in the Fifth—rather surprised to find that he was ably seconded by Caffyn in the Remove!

Some of the fellows began to believe that there was something in it! Others regarded it as a great jest on Coker.

Coker had a short way with fags, and prided himself on it. Naturally, a good many fags were delighted with this.

Tubb of the Third, or Nugent minor of the Second, would yell round a corner: "Put a bob on for me, Coker!" and vanish before the enraged Horace could get to close quarters.

Potter and Greene, in Coker's own study, were rather dubious. They knew better than anyone what a howling ass Coker was! True, they had never supposed that he was this kind of ass—but with Coker, really, you never could tell!

"I'd keep clear of that man if I were you, Coker!" Potter said in an unfortunate moment.

Coker began to glare.

"What man?" he roared.

"Lodgey—" said Greene.

They got no further. Coker seized an Indian club and drove them from the study!

Then Sixth Form prefects weighed in. Wingate, the head prefect, simply laughed over the matter. Gwynno and Sykes laughed. But Loder and Walker took the matter more seriously!

They had reason to do so as they had been wearing the famous hats that Coker had seen vanishing on that famous occasion!

Loder and Walker came up to Coker

in the quad a few days after the affair, taking care that plenty of fellows were on hand to hear what they said.

"This sort of thing won't do, Coker!" said Gerald Loder with owl-like gravity. "You can see for yourself that it won't do."

"What sort of thing?" hissed Coker.

"Well, dash it all, meeting disreputable bookies, so near the school, too!" said Walker. "Mind, if I spot you at it you go straight to the Head!" Coker almost foamed.

"I never met—" he shrieked.

"You talked to him without meeting him?" asked Loder sarcastically.

"I never talked to him! I only said—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you cheeky fags!" bawled Coker, with a glare at the gathering crowd. "Look here, Loder—look here, Walker—"

"We're speaking for your own good!" said Loder. "I should hate to see a man sacked from Greyfriars. But this kind of thing leads to the sack, and you know it as well as we do!"

"I never—" raved Coker.

"Well, it's no good saying that," argued Walker. "I'd take your word personally; but it seems that a whole crowd of fags saw you in conversation with the man—half the Remove, from what I hear."

"Nothing of the kind! I never—"

"It's no good telling us that your Form-master gave you lines for nothing, Coker!" said Loder severely. "You were lined for having dealings with bookies, and I must say I think Prout let you off very easily."

"I didn't—I wasn't—I never—" Coker became incoherent.

"Well, don't let it happen again, that's all!" said Loder. "For your own sake, I'm pointing out that the prefects have got an eye on you now. I should hate to run a man in for the sack, but if I catch you with Lodgey, I warn you fair and square that you're for the long jump!"

"Take a tip in time, Coker," said Walker.

And the two prefects walked away, leaving Horace Coker very nearly at bursting-point. In a state of fury and bewilderment, the hapless Horace glared round at a circle of grinning faces.

"I say, Coker," yelled Hobson of the Shell, "next time you see Lodgey, put a bob on for me!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"Put a bob on for me, Coker!" chortled Temple of the Fourth.

"I—I—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, something woke me up last night," said Fry of the Fourth. "I believe it was Coker coming in late!"

"Did you go down to the Cross Keys last night, Coker?" asked Peter Todd.

"Did you come back at twelve?" inquired Hazel.

"With vine-leaves in your hair?" grinned the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars fellows yelled at the idea of Coker of the Fifth coming in at midnight with vine-leaves in his hair.

Coker exploded. He charged. There was only one thing to be done, so far as Coker could see—and that was to whop these cheeky fags who were laughing at him. The juniors scattered, still laughing. Coker was in hot chase, when Prout's head appeared at his study window.

"Coker!" boomed Prout.

"Oh! Yes, sir?"

"Why are you rushing about the quadrangle in that absurd and undignified manner? A Fifth Form boy, Coker, should not enter into this helter-skelter horseplay with Lower boys! Go into the House at once and remain there till next lesson."

Coker barely restrained himself from telling Prout what he thought of him. He was very nearly foaming at the mouth as he went into the House.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Snipe's Vengeance!

EDGAR CAFFYN quickened his pace a little.

It was Saturday afternoon.

Harry Wharton & Co. were playing football at St. Jude's that afternoon, oblivious of the existence of the Snipe of the Remove. A crowd of Remove fellows had gone over to see the game. Caffyn had not thought of going.

Football had no interest for him. Only on compulsory days did Caffyn turn up for games practice, and then reluctantly. As for the Remove matches, he did not even know the dates—and did not want to.

He was slouching down Friardale Lane by himself, his hands in his pockets, when he saw a gipsy sitting on the fence. The gipsy was not a pleasant-looking man. He was tattered and greatly in need of a wash, and he was eating cold meat with his fingers from his hat, in which, apparently, he carried his provender. As Caffyn came by, the man on the fence looked at him keenly, and Caffyn, who was keen enough himself, knew that the rough-looking fellow was considering the risk of stopping him and demanding money. But Friardale Lane in the daytime was not a good spot for a spot of highway robbery, and the gipsy gave up that idea—if, indeed, it was in his mind—and his attention returned to the edible contents of his battered old hat.

Caffyn, however, quickened his pace. He did not like the man's looks—and, though the risk was little, Caffyn did not like any risk at all—so he broke into a trot to get to the village as soon as possible.

But he slowed down again at the sight of the carrier's cart, and a glitter came into his narrow, foxy eyes.

Old Coote was tethering his horse to a wayside stump to leave him on the grass by the road while he carried one of his packages to a cottage across the fields. Old Coote might have been seen doing precisely the same thing every day in the week.

Caffyn dodged behind a tree and watched him.

The old carrier, grunting, disappeared by a hedge gate, with a package on his shoulder, across the meadows in the direction of a distant curl of smoke from a chimney.

Caffyn waited till he was gone, and then ran on and reached the horse and cart. It was not the cat-like amusement of tormenting an animal that the Snipe was thinking of now, however; he was thinking of that hefty thumping that old Coote had given him for his previous performance. The thought in his mind was of loosening the horse, and setting horse and cart wandering in the lanes. That, the Snipe considered, would be a complete retaliation for old Coote's thumping.

Quickly he unfastened the old halter that Coote used for tethering the horse. Old Tom looked at him with a sleepy eye. It dawned on Caffyn that, though

the horse certainly would wander along the lane, he would wander neither fast nor far with the heavy cart behind him. Old Coote would have a trot, but he would recapture him easily enough.

That was not what the Snipe wanted.

He cast a swift, uneasy glance up and down the lane. No one was in sight. Even the gipsy he had passed was hidden by the bend of the winding lane.

He had time. Swiftly he unbuckled the old worn, mended harness that held the horse in the shafts; then he took hold of the reins, mounted the horse, and trotted it down the lane.

The cart was left on the grass. Caffyn guided the horse quickly back the way he had come. He had not forgotten the gipsy, and he had thought of a use for that frowzy gentleman now.

In a few minutes he reached the spot.

The gipsy was still feeding when Caffyn reappeared sitting astride the horse. And it was as much as the Greyfriars junior could do to hold the animal in as it nosed into the hat, almost unseating the gipsy as he did so.

The gipsy looked at the Greyfriars junior, recognising him as the fellow who had passed a short time since.

Caffyn dismounted and came up to him.

"Will you hold this horse for me for about ten minutes?" he asked. "I'll give you a shilling."

The tramp almost gaped.

Caffyn, on his looks, was not the fellow to trust a disreputable tramp with a horse to hold; he looked much too sharp for that. The gipsy could only conclude that he was a bigger fool than he looked.

"Ay, sir, I'll hold him," said the man quite civilly. He took the halter from Caffyn.

"I'll be back in about ten minutes," said Caffyn.

"All right, sir."

Caffyn crossed the lane, went through a gap in the opposite hedge, and walked away across the fields. In a couple of minutes he was lost to the gipsy's sight.

In one minute more the gipsy would have been lost to Caffyn's sight had he come back.

Mr. Petulengro, indeed, could hardly believe in his good luck. He had done a good deal in the way of stealing chickens and dogs, but he had seldom had the luck to steal a horse. Now the chance was fairly thrust into his hands.

He waited only for Caffyn to disappear, then he opened a gate in the fence and led the carrier's horse through. By several field paths he led him, and when he came to an open stretch of pastureland mounted him and rode.

It was very improbable that either the gipsy or the carrier's horse would ever be seen in that part of Kent again.

Meanwhile, the Snipe had climbed a distant tree to watch. From that tree he witnessed the departure of the gipsy and grinned.

He had read the man's looks easily enough, and guessed what would happen to a horse left in his charge.

Old Coote, the Snipe fancied, would be sorry for that thumping. At all events, it would cost him dear.

Mr. Coote made his daily bread with that horse and cart, and the loss of the horse would be an overwhelming blow to him. It was extremely unlikely that he possessed the means of purchasing another.

Caffyn slithered down the tree, grinning. He sauntered cheerily across the fields back to the lane, chuckling as he sighted the gnarled figure of old Coote going back to the spot where he had left horse and cart.

He followed the village carrier into the lane; he found Mr. Coote staring blankly at the shafts of his cart resting on the earth.

"Where's that 'orse?" Mr. Coote was saying. "Dang my buttons! Where's that 'orse? That there 'orse is gorn! Where's that 'orse?"

He stared round at Caffyn.

"Lost your horse?" asked the Snipe cheerily.

"No, I ain't lost him!" answered Mr. Coote, "that 'orse has been took out of the shafts, and took away, and I want to know where that 'orse is! Is this some more of your tricks, you young raskil?"

"What do you mean?" snapped Caffyn. "I know nothing of your horse! You saw me come up, after you did—"

"Ave you let loose that 'orse?" demanded old Coote suspiciously. "Some covey has let loose that 'orse."

Caffyn had come up to enjoy the dismay and discomfiture of the old carrier. But he rather wished that he had not shown himself now.

"You old fool, what should I know about your horse?" he snarled, and he turned and walked away, leaving old Coote still staring at the empty shafts, and scratching his ancient head.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Coote Pays a Morning Call!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quad in break on Monday morning, when Bob Cherry uttered that greeting, addressing a rather gnarled old gentleman who came in at the gates.

Old Coote touched his hat.

"Mornin', sir!" he said. "P'r'aps you'd be so kind as to tell me where I can see the 'eadmaster?"

"The Head!" repeated Bob. "If you've got a parcel for the Head, Mr. Coote, you'd better leave it with Gosling."

"I want to see the 'eadmaster, sir!" said old Coote stolidly. "My 'orse is gorn, and I want to see the 'eadmaster about it."

"Lost your horse?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He's been took!" explained old Coote. "Took on Saturday. I seed Mr. Tozer about it, and I seed Inspector Grimes, along to Courtfield. But neither of them ain't found that 'orse."

The Famous Five regarded the old carrier in astonishment. They were sorry to hear that he had lost his horse, but they could not begin to imagine why he had come up to the school about it.

"He's been took!" went on old Coote. "If he was left on his own he would come 'ome; he knows his way 'ome, no 'orse better. He's been took! I got to see the 'eadmaster about it."

"But why?" gasped Nugent.

Really, from old Coote's words, it might have been supposed that he fancied that Dr. Locke had "took" the horse.

"It was a Greyfriars covey!" said old Coote.

"A Greyfriars fellow took your horse!" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly.

"Sure of it, sir!" answered old Coote. "I don't know his name, but I know his looks, and don't like them, neither. That young covey what was a catapulting the 'orse last week, sir—"

"Caffyn!" exclaimed all the Co. together.

"Is that his name, sir? Well, my belief is that he took the 'orse! Cause why, I



Thump, thump, thump! Mr. Coote beat Caffyn as if he were beating a carpet. "Ow! Oh! Leggo, you old fool!" yelled Caffyn. "Oh! Help! Ow! Wow! Help!" Wharton and Bob Cherry appeared upon the scene, and Caffyn yelled to them for help. "No fear!" said Cherry. "We're going to klick you as far as the school when the old bean's done with you!"

seed him 'anging about and the 'orse was took."

"My dear chap!" exclaimed Harry. "You can't imagine that your horse is at the school!"

"N-no, sir!" admitted old Coote, scratching his head. "He can't be 'ere, nohow. But that young raskil knows where he is. I'll lay to that."

"Hold on!" said the captain of the Remove. "Caffyn's about somewhere—better speak to him before you see the Head."

"I can't afford to lose that 'orse, sir!" said old Coote, in great distress. "I make my living with that 'orse and cart, sir! I don't want to get nobody into trouble, but I got to 'ave that 'orse back."

"Call Caffyn, you men!" said Harry hastily.

The Co. scudded off to look for Caffyn. Wharton remained with the old carrier, soothing him as well as he could.

The Famous Five were prepared to believe almost anything of Caffyn, knowing him as they did; but it was scarcely possible to believe that even the Snipe of the Remove had taken to horse-stealing! Certainly, he was just the fellow to set a horse lose to wander, careless of what might happen to it. But that was not, it seemed, the trouble; old Tom would have wandered home before this, if he had been wandering since Saturday. A horse that had been missing for two days must have been stolen; and it was ludicrous to imagine even the Snipe as a horse-thief.

Caffyn, across the quad, had spotted the old man near the gates. The sight of Mr. Coote gave him a rather unpleasant sinking feeling. He was moving off quietly to the House to get out of sight, when Bob Cherry came sprinting up to him.

"You're wanted, Caffyn," grinned Bob. "Jolly old Coote fancies you've pinched his geegee, and he's come here about it."

"The old fool!" said Caffyn, between his teeth. "I know nothing about it; and I refuse to speak to him, either."

"Well, you can please yourself about that, of course," said Bob. "But he's going to see the Head, if you don't!"

"Let him!" snarled Caffyn.

"Well, look here, Caffyn, it would be better to see the man, and get him to go away quietly, if you can. If he sees the Head, it may come out about your catapulting the horse the other day. It would serve you right to get a whopping, but—"

"I'll speak to the old fool, if you like."

"Come on, then."

Caffyn, scowling, walked back with Bob towards the gates. The rest of the Co. gathered round him, and a good many other fellows. Billy Bunter had already spotted that something was on, and rolled up, eager for news. Most of the fellows were out of the House, in break, and many glances were turned on Mr. Coote, as he stood with the captain of the Remove.

"Ere he is!" said Mr. Coote, as Caffyn came scowling up. "Now, young gentleman, you tell me what you've done with that 'orse."

"I've done nothing with your horse!" said Caffyn between his teeth. "Do you think I've got your horse in my study here?"

"You took him out of the cart!" said Mr. Coote.

"I never even saw him."

"That won't do for me," said Mr. Coote. "I know yer! You come up grinning like a 'iyena when I was wondering what had become of my 'orse. I know yer! I'm going to see your 'ead-master."

"You old fool!" hissed Caffyn. "Do you think Dr. Locke will believe that a fellow's stolen a horse? What could I do with a horse, you idiot?"

"Sold 'im, p'raps!" said old Coote stolidly. "He was old, but he was a good 'orse—he'd fetch fifteen pun. Anyhow, you took him."

"Draw it mild, old bean!" said Vernon-Smith. "This chap Caffyn is a bit of a worm; but stealing a horse and selling it—draw it mild!"

"That's libel!" said Skinner.

"You could be run in for it!" said Snoop.

"You make out that you don't know what's become of that 'orse?" demanded the old carrier, his eyes fixed on Caffyn's face.

"Of course, I don't know!" snarled Caffyn.

"That won't do for me! I'm a poor man, and I get my living with that 'orse and cart! I'm going to see your 'ead-master about it."

"Go easy, Mr. Coote!" said Harry Wharton. "It's really not reasonable. Caffyn can't possibly have taken your horse. It's not sense."

"The sensefulness is not terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Coote!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I shouldn't wonder if Caffyn stole that horse!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "He would tell lies about it, of course. Look at what he did the other day—telling me he had a cake in his study, and when I went there, pitching into a fellow with a fives bat—"

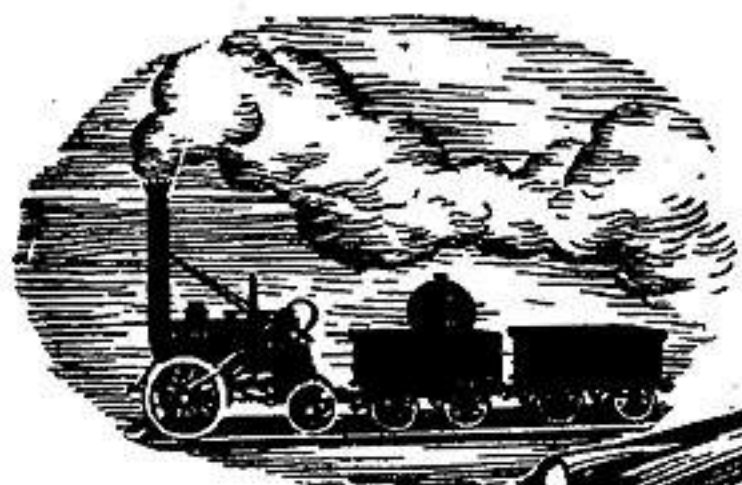
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Bunter, you fat ass!"

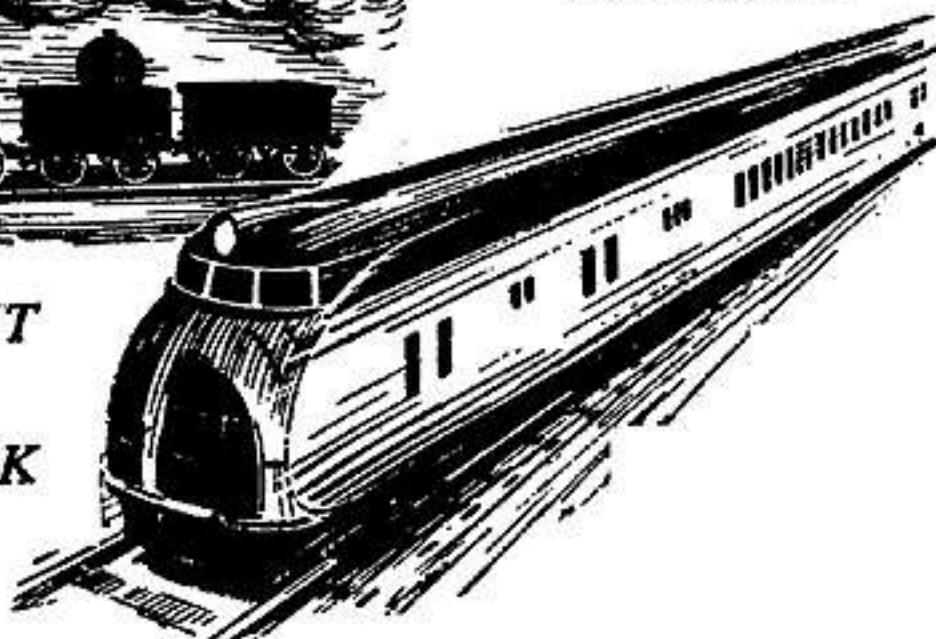
"Well, he's none too good for it," said Bunter. "He might have sold him to a catsmeat man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you fat duffer!"



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and Bookstalls.*

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Here, what's all this?" It was the powerful voice of Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form.

Coker had spotted the gathering crowd, and spotted his cousin in the midst of it, facing the angry carrier. Coker, of course, had to barge in.

He came up with all the authority of a prefect and as Coker was not a prefect, and, in fact, was nobody in particular at all, his intervention was greeted with defiant hoots and howls.

"Shut up, Coker!"

"Don't barge!"

"Mind your own business, Coker!"

"Keep off the grass!"

"Oh, let Coker rip!" grinned the Bounder. "Coker knows all about horses, don't you, Coker? His friend Lodgey may have pinched that horse—he's been accused of such things before."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Does your pal Lodgey know about Coote's horse, Coker?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's rugged face crimsoned with wrath. He made a jump at the Bounder, and Tom Redwing put out a foot in time, and Coker stumbled over it and came a cropper.

Mr. Coote did not join in the general merriment. He was there on business—very serious business to him. There was absolutely no evidence against Caffyn, in the matter of the missing horse; yet Mr. Coote had no doubts that Caffyn knew what had happened to the vanished quadruped. He knew it, as it were, instinctively.

Mr. Coote pushed through the laughing crowd and headed for the House. By that time Mr. Quelch had observed the extraordinary scene, and was coming down from the House to inquire into it. He knew the old carrier well, and politely acknowledged his respectful salute.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Quelch. "Coker, will you kindly be quiet? Mr. Coote, for what reason—"

"My 'orse has been took, sir!" Mr. Coote pointed a gnarled forefinger at Caffyn. "That young covey took him, Saturday arternoon, sir."

"Bless my soul! Caffyn, have you—"

"No!" almost shrieked Caffyn. "I don't know anything about the horse! I never even saw it."

"We'll see what your 'eadmaster says, you young rip, you!" said Mr. Coote. "Taking away an old man's living—"

"You young snipe!" said Coker. "What have you done with the man's horse?"

In all the Greyfriars crowd Coker of the Fifth was the only man who judged Caffyn guilty.

He judged him guilty as a matter of course!

He loathed Caffyn.

Had the Snipe been accused of a Gunpowder Plot probably Coker would have judged him guilty.

Coker did not want to hear any evidence. His deep distrust of the Snipe's treacherous, tortuous nature was enough for him.

He grabbed his cousin by the shoulder.

"This is the limit, even for you!" said Horace. "Tell the man at once what you've done with his horse."

"I haven't—" howled Caffyn.

"Coker!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Release Caffyn at once! How dare you lay hands on a boy of my Form, in my presence?"

Coker released Caffyn reluctantly.

"Well, sir, he ought to be made to say what he's done with the horse!" he objected.

"Silence, Coker! This is not an occasion for you to display your impenetrable stupidity!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Coote, come with me! You shall see Dr. Locke, and place the matter before him. Caffyn, follow me!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Caffyn.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" said old Coote.

And both of them followed the Remove master into the House, leaving the quad in a buzz—or, rather, in a roar.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not Guilty!

DR. LOCKE sat in his chair, pressing together the fingertips of his slim, old, white hands—a way he had when he was perplexed.

He gazed at Mr. Coote, who stood respectfully, hat in hand. He gazed at Caffyn of the Remove, who stood with a mingling of fear and rage in his face that he vainly strove to conceal.

Caffyn had little to fear, and he realised it; but a guilty conscience was a bad comforter. He had no scruple whatever about lying, but it was not an easy task to lie, under the calm, penetrating eyes of the headmaster.

He rather wished that he had left old Coote's horse alone—or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he had kept out of old Coote's sight, instead of allowing himself the added enjoyment of watching the old carrier's dismay when he found the horse missing.

But it was too late to wish all that, and Caffyn could only repeat to himself that there was no evidence against him, stick to his lying, and hope for the best.

As the missing horse had not been found, it was clear that the gipsy tramp had not been found. Indeed, his existence did not seem to be suspected at all. So there was nothing to fear from that quarter.

Caffyn collected himself, as well as he could, but he wished that Dr. Locke's gaze was not so disconcertingly penetrating.

Mr. Quelch stood silent. He did not like Caffyn, or trust him, but, naturally, he took the side of a boy in his Form who was accused of misdeeds without a particle of evidence to support the accusation.

Old Coote had stumbled out his story, Caffyn had made his denials, and the perplexed headmaster had to give judgment.

There was only one judgment that he could give. Old Coote's instinctive certainty that Caffyn knew what had become of the missing horse could not weigh in the headmaster's judgment.

"You repeat that you know nothing about this matter, Caffyn?"

"Yes, sir."

"The 'orse was took, sir!" said old Coote.

"I have no doubt that the horse was taken, Mr. Coote!" said the Head courteously. "But if it was taken for purposes of theft, obviously, no school-boy can be the guilty party. An ill-disposed or malicious boy might, no doubt, have released it from its harness, in which case, it may have been found wandering and taken away by some dishonest person. But I fail to see anything to connect this boy, Caffyn, with the matter."

"He was a-catapulting that very 'orse, sir, when some young gents of this 'ere school stopped 'im—"

"An act of cruelty, Mr. Coote, for which he will be punished by his Form-master," said the Head, with a glance at Mr. Quelch.

"Most certainly, sir!" said the Remove master.

"But that, I understand, occurred several days earlier," said the Head.

"Let us keep to what happened on Saturday. Did you see Caffyn near the spot before the animal was missing?"

"I can't say I did, sir."

"It appears that he came up after you returned to the spot, when you had completed some delivery at an adjacent cottage?"

"I dunno about a jacent cottage, sir," said old Coote, to whom the word "adjacent" was a new one. "I know I went to George Brown's with a box of higgs—"

The Head coughed.

"Precisely! And you returned to the spot where you had left your horse and cart and found that the horse was missing!"

"Took—"

"And Caffyn came up after that?"

"Yessir, a minute or two arter."

"I was passing, sir, and stopped to see what was wrong," said Caffyn.

"You knowed what was wrong, seeing as you took the 'orse!" said old Coote, staring at him.

Another cough from the Head.

"I fail to see, Mr. Coote, any evidence whatever to connect Caffyn with the matter at all!" he said.

"Only he took the 'orse, sir!" said old Coote.

"My good man," said the Head, betraying some signs of impatience with all his urbane courtesy.

"Any fellow might 'ave gone down the lane and passed him, sir," said Caffyn. "He might have said it was anybody he saw."

"Nor I wouldn't, neither!" said old Coote. "I says it was you, you young raskil, 'cause why, I knows it was."

"You can know nothing of the kind, Mr. Coote," said the Head. "Can you give me any evidence, or any proof whatever, that this boy was anywhere near the place before the horse was missing?"

Old Coote scratched his head.

"Well, he was 'anging round!" he said.

"Did you see him?" rapped the Head.

"No, I never see him; he took care of that."

"Then how do you know he was 'hanging round,' as you express it?"

"'Cause as soon as my back was turned he took the 'orse out of the shafts!" explained old Coote.

Dr. Locke breathed rather hard.

"Unless you can produce some evidence against this boy, Mr. Coote, you can scarcely expect me to condemn him," he said.

"All I want is the 'orse, sir!" said old Coote. "I can't do without that 'orse. You see, sir, it's my living!"

"This boy knows nothing about your horse!"

"Well, sir, saving your presence, that's ridiklus, as he took him!" said old Coote. "He knows what he did."

Dr. Locke looked at Mr. Quelch. Mr. Quelch looked at Dr. Locke. Old Coote stood fumbling with his hat.

"Caffyn," said the Head, "you may go."

"Yes, sir!"

"Wait for me in my study, Caffyn," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Caffyn went.

"Well, sir, about the 'orse," said old Coote, looking from Form-master to headmaster.

Dr. Locke rose.

"I am afraid I can do nothing for you, Mr. Coote. I trust that the police will be able to recover your property. I understand that you have consulted them. I cannot adjudge a Greyfriars boy guilty of a wicked and malicious act

without an atom of evidence. You must see that."

"That 'orse, sir, was my living!" said old Coote simply. "'Ow's a man to carry on a carrier's business, sir, without a 'orse?"

"I am sorry—very sorry—for your loss, Mr. Coote! I repeat that I trust that your horse will be recovered. Good-morning, Mr. Coote."

"Please come this way!" said Mr. Quelch.

Old Coote blinked at Dr. Locke. Slowly he followed Mr. Quelch from the study. The Remove master politely showed him out of the House. Then he went to his own study to deal with Caffyn on the subject of the use and misuse of catapults.

A crowd of fellows watched old Coote tramp down to the gates with a sort of lost and forlorn look about him. Most of them felt sorry for the old fellow—a few were laughing. Even the most sympathetic could not help feeling that the old carrier had made a fool of himself in coming up to the school. His fixed belief on the subject was not evidence, though poor old Coote seemed to think it was as good!

One fellow, however, walked after old Coote down to the gates and tapped him on the shoulder as he was going out. That fellow was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form.

"Did that snipe squirm out of it?" asked Coker.

"The 'eadmaster don't believe he took the 'orse, sir!" said old Coote. "He took it right enough!"

"I've not the slightest doubt of that! I know his rotten tricks," said Coker. "Don't I know him? He set that horse loose and some tramp snaffled him—that's about how it was! Don't I know him? Look here, Coote, you leave this in my hands! I'll make that rotten little snipe own up somehow, and his guardian will have to pay for the horse if it's not found, see?"

"Thank you kindly, sir," said old Coote gratefully. "'Ow I'm to make a living without a 'orse, I don't know."

"Leave it to me!" said Coker encouragingly. "I'll see you get justice!"

And old Coote went on his way with that grain of comfort, such as it was.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The High Hand!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were in the Rag after tea when the rugged features of Horace Coker looked in at the doorway.

"I say, you fellows, here's Coker!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Inimical glances turned on Coker of the Fifth. The Rag was a room used only by juniors, and seniors were not wanted there. Even prefects of the Sixth Form had cold looks when they walked into the Rag. Fifth Form men who barged in were more likely to leave on their necks than on their feet. Especially Coker! For no one, of course, could doubt that Coker had come to hunt for trouble. Most of his leisure time was spent in hunting trouble.

"Is that snipe here?" demanded Coker, from the doorway.

"Called to see your dear relation?" asked Bob Cherry. "Well, he's here. Caffyn, you're wanted."

Caffyn looked round from his chair, and scowled at Coker. In the presence of a crowd of warlike Removites he felt safe from the hefty Horace, and could afford to be cheeky.

"Oh, get out, Coker!" he said. "If

you want me, I don't want you! Take your face away—if it is a face!"

"It doesn't look much like one, does it?" remarked Vernon-Smith thoughtfully.

"The likefulness is not terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And there was a chortle.

Horace Coker breathed hard, but, amazing to relate, he kept his temper. He had come there not, for once, to hunt trouble. Breathing hard, he advanced into the Rag and stood before Caffyn, who lounged in his chair.

Remove fellows gathered round.

No fellow could have been more unpopular than the Snipe. But if a Fifth Form man had come there to rag the Snipe, all the Remove were prepared to stand by him.

Coker, however, was calm.

"It's about that horse, Caffyn!" he said.

Caffyn raised his eyebrows.

"The horse you were backing the other day with Lodgey?" he asked. "I'd rather not hear anything about it. I don't want to be sacked along with you."

Coker clenched his fists. Very nearly he hurled himself at the Snipe. But he restrained his wrath. A dozen fellows were all ready to hurl themselves on Coker—in fact, rather eager to do so.

"About old Coote's horse!" he said. "You know perfectly well that I've nothing to do with Lodgey, you snipe!"

"I don't!"

"Well, never mind that!" said Coker, with wonderful self-restraint. "It's about old Coote's horse. It's not been found, and it's pretty clear by this time that it never will be found. Whoever's got it has cleared right off with it—sold it in the next county, very likely."

Caffyn yawned in Coker's face.

With so many fellows on hand, all ready and eager to handle Coker, he was rather keen for the great Horace to disturb the peace. But still the great man of the Fifth preserved his temper.

"That horse," he said, "has got to be paid for! You seem to have got clear with the Head and with your beak! Never mind that! But the horse must be paid for, so that Coote can get another to carry on his business. You'll have to write to your guardian about it."

Caffyn laughed.

"I don't think much of Mr. Sarle, as you know," went on Coker. "As he's my Aunt Judith's solicitor, I've seen a good bit of him, and know what a tick he is. But as a lawyer he will know that the horse has to be paid for. You're going to write to him and explain."

"Is that all?" asked Caffyn.

"Yes, only you're to write at once!"

"I can see myself doing it!" said Caffyn, grinning. "I can see Sarle's face if I asked him to pay twenty or thirty pounds for a horse for charitable reasons. He's not frightfully gone on charity."

"It's not a matter of charity, it's a matter of compensating a man you've practically robbed. You should have let the horse alone."

"I've said that I never touched it."

"I know you have! That makes no difference! You don't expect anybody to take your word, I suppose?"

"The Head's taken it."

"The Head let you off because there's no evidence. I dare say he couldn't do anything else. But you're not going to ruin a poor man just out of spite because he thrashed you for catapulting his horse. I'd have thrashed you myself if I'd been there. When are you going to write to Sarle?"

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Caffyn laughed loudly.

"I'm waiting for an answer!" said Coker.

"Go on waiting!" said Caffyn.

Coker's rugged face, already red, grew redder. Still he forced himself to speak with calmness.

"You're a relation of mine, Caffyn! I'm ashamed of it, but there it is. I can't have a relation of mine at the same school swindling a poor man. That horse has got to be paid for."

"Pay for it, then!" suggested Caffyn cheerfully. "If you feel so keen about it, what's stopping you?"

"Don't be a young ass! It might be thirty pounds. I've not got thirty pounds, or anything like it."

"Neither have I!"

"Your guardian will have to pay. It's up to him. He's responsible for you, and the damage you do."

"But I haven't done any."

"What's the good of keeping up those lies?" roared Coker. "I tell you, the man's got to be paid. No relation of mine is getting away with a swindle."

"Dear me!" said Caffyn.

Coker glanced round at the grinning Removites.

"Look here, Wharton!" he said.

"You're head boy of the Remove, and captain of the Form! You're a cheeky young scoundrel, but you're honest, I hope."

"I hope so, Coker!" assented Harry, laughing.

"Well, then, I suppose you're not standing for this sort of thing. You're not helping that cur to swindle a poor working man?"

"No fear! If there was any proof that Caffyn had set old Coote's horse wandering, we'd rag him bald-headed," answered Wharton. "But there isn't. I know he's a snipe, and I don't like him any more than you do, but even a snipe is entitled to justice."

"You see, Coker, old fatheaded bean," said Bob Cherry. "You can't give a dog a bad name and then hang him. 'Tain't cricket!"

"Coker thinks that Caffyn's got old Coote's horse in his waistcoat pocket," said Skinner. "Search him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose Coker knows what his relations are like!" remarked Snoop. "Have you got a lot of horse-thieves in the family, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Coker clenched his big fists convulsively. He was trying to keep his temper. But he was not used to it, and it was getting harder and harder.

"You dashed young rascals!" he said. "Standing by a young rotter who's practically stolen a horse!"

"Bump him!" said the Bounder.

"Boot him out!" roared Bolsover major.

"Hold on!" said the captain of the Remove. "Now, look here, Coker! It's as likely as not that Caffyn let old Coote's horse loose, and that some tramp snapped it up and got off with it. It's just one of the sneaking, rotten tricks that he would play. But there's no evidence whatever that he did it. He's a worm, but he's got to have fair play. It's not fair play to say that he did a thing, simply because he's the kind of chap that might have done it. Old Coote himself admitted that he never saw Caffyn near the place till after the horse was missing. We're all sorry for Coote, but fair play's a jewel."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"I know he did it!" roared Coker.

"Well, if you know he did it, that alters the case, of course. Tell us how you know he did it."

"He's a snipe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm satisfied, and so is old Coote, and you kids can take my word for it!" said Coker.

"We'd take your word like a shot if you knew what you were talking about. But you don't, old bean."

"So you're backing up that snipe in his sneaking swindling!" roared Coker. "Now I know the sort of young rotters you are! Well, clear off, and leave me to deal with him. I'll make him own up fast enough."

Coker made a jump at Caffyn.

There was a fearful yell from the Snipe, as the big Fifth Former grabbed him by the collar and dragged him headlong out of the chair.

"Ow! Help! I say—help! Rescue!" shrieked Caffyn.

The Removites rushed on Coker as one man! Unpopular as the Snipe was, they were not standing for this! Coker was grasped on all sides and dragged forcibly from his victim.

"Let go, you young rotters!" roared Coker, struggling. "I tell you, I'm going to make him own up! I'm going to bang his head on the table till he owns up! You'll see that he will own up all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was little doubt that Caffyn would have owned up to pinching Coote's horse, or to anything else, if Coker had banged his head on the table long enough! The ancient method of putting prisoners on the rack till they said what they were wanted to say, was no doubt efficacious! But sixteenth century methods were not quite good enough for Greyfriars.

Caffyn's head was not banged on the table.

Coker's was!

It was banged hard!

Then Coker was escorted to the door in the grasp of about two dozen hands, his arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

At the door he was hurled forth. He crashed in the passage.

"Now run away and play, old bean!" advised Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker sat up! He glared at a crowd of grinning faces in the doorway of the Rag. He scrambled to his feet.

For a moment, he looked like charging like a bull into the crowded doorway! But he had already collected sufficient aches and pains to go on with. On second thoughts—proverbially the best—he turned and limped away—and a roar of laughter from the Rag followed him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Path of Duty!

MR. PROUT, in the Fifth Form Room, had rather a doubting and suspicious eye on Coker during the following days.

Coker wore a worried look.

Every man in the Fifth noticed it. Lots of other fellows noticed it. Potter and Greene were quite troubled about it.

Caffyn of the Remove, whose sharp eyes were very frequently on his brawny, burly cousin in the Fifth, did not fail to see that Coker was deeply worried and to draw his own conclusions.

Price, who had started the Lodgey story as "one up" on Coker, began to wonder whether, after all, there was something in it, and whether he had unwittingly hit the right nail on the head.

For there was no doubt that Coker had some worry on his mind.

Prout doubted, and feared that he



In the full belief that Wharton and Cherry were close behind him, about to kick, Caffyn rounded the bend at a great speed. Bliff! He crashed into Lodgey's back like a runaway car. "Ow!" Lodgey gave a gasping howl as he was hurled forward, and he threw his arms round Coker's neck to save himself!

knew the cause! This boy—the stupidest fellow in the Form, the most likely to land into trouble—had been seen in talk with a bad character, who was fairly well known to make a living by illegal street betting, under cover of his ostensible trade of horse-dealer.

He had given a very lame explanation.

Eyer since then there had been chatter and gossip, connecting Coker's name with Lodgey's and with backing horses, and so forth. Some of it had reached Prout's majestic ears, as it was bound to do.

Now the boy was looking worried and troubled.

Prout feared, he could not help fearing, that the reason was obvious. Coker was falling into bad ways, and getting the worry and trouble that naturally followed from bad ways.

Otherwise what was the matter with him?

Certainly he was not worrying over his work in class! On that point there was not a shadow of doubt. Coker was quite satisfied with his work in class, though it made Prout almost tear his hair.

Some trouble was on his mind, and what could it be, if not some unhappy result of his dealings with Mr. Lodgey? Debt—some debt that he could not acknowledge! It looked like it.

Prout shook his head solemnly over it.

He was concerned.

Prout was a kind-hearted man. He hated the thought of an expulsion in his Form. If Coker was taking to ways that disgraced himself, and disgraced his school he would have to go. Perhaps the thought of his going gave Prout a feeling of relief. Such an absolute ass in his Form could please no Form-master. Coker was not only a fathead, but a self-willed, obstinate and argumentative fathead. Life in

the Fifth would be an easier proposition minus Coker.

But Prout refused to entertain that thought. He was a dutiful man, as well as a kind-hearted one. It was his duty to save the boy if he could.

It was, in fact, an occasion for one of those straightforward, manly talks, in which Prout's plump heart delighted.

Coker was not bad. He was everything else perhaps, but he was not bad. If he went to the bad, of course he would have to be sacked. But the first step on the downward path might be retrieved.

Prout did not want to be hard. He wanted to be kind, helpful. He thought this matter over very carefully. More and more he realised that the matter might be set right, and Coker jerked back like a brand from the burning, by one of those heart-to-heart talks.

He decided to look thoroughly into the matter. Coker had a cousin in the Remove—one Caffyn. This was one of the junior boys who had seen Coker with Lodgey that day, so Prout had heard.

Prout decided to question him. He had noticed the boy, and did not much like his looks; still, being Coker's relation, he would speak as favourably of Coker as he could! And Prout wanted to look on the best side of the matter.

So Mr. Prout sent for Caffyn of the Remove to come to his study.

What he learned from Caffyn, however, was discouraging.

Caffyn's impression of that interview in the lane, it appeared, was that Coker had been in deep and earnest conversation with Lodgey. His impression was that they were old acquaintances! He was sorry, but he could not help thinking that they had met there by appointment!

Moreover, he had noticed that Coker had fallen into the habit of walking

down to Friardale every day. A fellow walking to the village had to pass the Cross Keys, where Lodgey lived. Caffyn confessed that he was afraid—very much afraid—that that meant further meetings with Lodgey, and admitted that he had been very worried about it, Coker being his cousin!

Prout dismissed the Snipe and remained in deep thought.

This daily walk of Coker's past the Cross Keys was news to him; he had not noticed that new habit of Coker's.

Certainly it looked suspicious, and it was no wonder that Caffyn was getting worried about his cousin in the Fifth!

He was quite unaware that Caffyn, when he closed the study door after that interview, winked at the door and grinned as he went down the passage.

Prout knew nothing of the rivalry for Aunt Judy's money-bags!

After tea that day he sent for Coker! The matter had taken definite shape in his mind now, and it was evidently time to speak. A frank and manly confession, a promise of amendment, was all Prout wanted. Then he would give Coker sound advice, help him out of his trouble, and trust him in future. Prout believed in trusting boys—a belief that was very useful to Price of the Fifth.

Coker arrived in the study wondering what was wanted. He had no lines on hand at the moment. He supposed it was going to be a "jaw." He did not foresee that it was going to be a "pi-jaw." His worst anticipations were not so bad as that.

"Coker! Come in, my boy," said Prout with the hearty manner that was the inevitable prelude to one of those manly talks. "You may sit down, Coker! Take that chair, my boy."

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Coker.

He sat down.

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE SCHEMER OF THE REMOVE!

By

FRANK RICHARDS

(Continued from page 13.)

This sort of geniality from Prout was often handed out to Blundell of the Fifth. But it was rather new to Coker. He wondered whether Prout was beginning to realise at long last his value in the Form! It was certainly time he did! Perhaps Prout was going to make him head boy!

"Now, Coker," said Prout, "I have sent for you, my boy, to speak to you—not as a master; as a friend! As you know, I desire the boys of my Form to look on me as their friend—their friend and helper in times of difficulty! What? What?"

"Yes, sir!" said Coker.

"Confide in me, my boy!" said Prout, "Although I can make no promises—you will not expect that—you may rely upon me to give every possible help. I ask you to trust me."

"Eh?" said Coker.

"I am sure," said Prout, "that the matter cannot have gone very far—not irretrievably far! I am convinced of it! If it must come before the Head, you will have a friend at court, Coker—your Form-master! But this, of course, depends upon your dealing with me with absolute frankness."

Coker blinked.

"I expect absolute frankness!" said Prout, with firmness. "Without that, I can do nothing! Make a clean breast of it, Coker! Tell me the whole thing, from beginning to end, and rely upon my help, my advice, and my—yes, my sympathy!"

Prout beamed on Coker.

Coker did not beam on Prout.

He just gazed at him.

He was wondering whether Prout had gone mad!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Merely a Misunderstanding!

THERE was a brief silence in Prout's study.

Prout, with an encouraging smile, waited for Coker to make a clean breast of it.

Coker, having nothing to make a clean breast of, naturally didn't.

He only cast an eye uneasily towards the door.

He would have been glad to go. If Prout had gone off his rocker, Coker was not keen on being the fellow to render first-aid.

"Come, come, my boy!" said Prout, breaking the silence. "I am prepared to listen—to give you a hearing; a fair hearing, and I trust a sympathetic one. You have done wrong—"

"I have!" ejaculated Coker.

"Open confession is good for the soul!" said Prout. "Make a clean breast of it! Remember that I am your friend, as well as your Form-master! To my boys, while they are at school, I stand in loco parentis! Speak to me freely! Frankly! Tell me all."

"All what?" asked the amazed Coker. Prout's geniality was damped! He had

expected—he had a right to expect—frankness. If the fellow was going to pretend not to understand—to beat about the bush—to deny— It looked like it!

"Come, Coker, let us be serious!" said Prout, with a touch of tartness, "I repeat that you have nothing to fear from frankness. You have, in fact, everything to hope. Your dealings with Lodgey—"

"Lodgey!" stuttered Coker.

"I am aware," said Prout, "of the unscrupulous character of the man! It is only too well known. No doubt he has inveigled you into his clutches. Your simplicity has been no match for his cunning. If you owe him money—"

"Owe him money!" repeated Coker, like a fellow in a dream. "Owe Lodgey money!"

"Is not that the case?" asked Prout.

"Eh? No! What could I owe him money for?" asked the perplexed Coker, "I haven't bought anything from him."

Prout looked hard at Coker. Either this was simplicity or an affectation of simplicity.

"I will speak plainly, Coker, as I expect you to do," said Prout. "A senior boy was expelled from this school on a certain occasion for gambling transactions, carried out, it was suspected, through this very man, Lodgey. Your acquaintance with the man—"

"I'm not acquainted with him!" bawled Coker.

"Do not raise your voice in my study, Coker." Prout's geniality was wearing very thin.

Those straightforward, manly talks, were only practicable if both sides played the game, so to speak. Prout had started fair; but Coker was not playing up!

Prout was growing less and less of a friend, more and more of a Form-master! And a rather irritated Form-master, too!

"Your acquaintance with the man, Coker, has been proved beyond doubt. If you do not choose to confide your troubles, your difficulties, to me, and trust to me, I cannot compel you to do so. But, in that case, I have no alternative but to question you, as your Form-master!" boomed Prout.

"Well, I don't mind," answered the bewildered Coker, "you can ask me anything you like, of course, sir."

"How often have you seen this man Lodgey, during the past week?" demanded Prout. He was pure beak, now; genial friendship quite gone.

"Three—no, four times," answered Coker, thinking before he answered, to make sure.

Prout almost gasped.

"Yet you pretend that you have nothing to confess!" he ejaculated.

"Eh? No!"

"You have seen this man four times!"

"How could I help it?" asked Coker, more and more bewildered, and more and more worried by the fear that Prout was wandering in his mind.

"You could not help it!" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"I don't see how I could, sir."

"Do you mean, Coker, that the man has some hold over you—that you have been so foolish, so reckless, as to fall into his power?" exclaimed Prout. "For your own sake, my boy, be frank with me. I will help you, if I can! I will explain to your headmaster that you are unthinking, stupid, obtuse—scarcely capable, indeed, of taking care of yourself. I will do everything in my power—"

"Look here!" bawled Coker.

"Once and for all, Coker, I insist

upon a plain answer. You have stated that you have seen this man Lodgey four times in the last week, and that you could not help it. You adhere to that statement?"

"Yes, that's right!" said Coker.

"You will explain to me, and at once, why you could not help it!" said Prout sternly. "No prevarication, please—a direct answer."

"I'm not blind!" said Coker.

"What?"

"Lots of fellows have seen him, as well as me," said Coker. "How could a fellow help it? He lives at that pub this side of the village, and he's always mooching about the place. A fellow can hardly walk down to Friardale without seeing him."

Prout breathed hard.

"Is it possible, Coker, that you mean that you have seen him by chance—merely passed him on the road?"

"Of course," said Coker blankly. "What else did you think I meant?"

"Bless my soul!" said Prout.

He sat silent for several moments. Coker pushed his chair a little farther back.

Unless Prout was potty, Coker could not understand this. He got excited, simply because Coker mentioned that he had seen Lodgey, in passing, going down to the village. What was there to get excited about in that? Any fellow who was not blind must have seen Lodgey, passing him in the road!

"Whether you are inconceivably stupid, Coker, or whether you are seeking to delude me, I cannot quite decide!" said Prout, at last. "When I asked you if you had seen the man Lodgey, I meant have you met him intentionally? I was not inquiring whether you had passed him in the street."

"Oh! I—I see! Of course not," said Coker. "What should I want to meet him for? That cad Price makes out I know him, but he knows jolly well it's only bunkum."

"Have you spoken to him since the occasion when I gave you two hundred lines for doing so?"

"No fear! I—I mean no, sir."

"Then why," said Prout in a deep voice, "why have you taken to passing the place where he lives every day?"

"A fellow has to pass the Cross Keys to get into Friardale," said Coker, staring. He wondered if Prout was potty enough to have forgotten that well-known fact in the local geography.

"Do you mean to say, Coker, that your daily walks have been for the purpose of going into the village, irrespective of Lodgey?"

"Of course, sir."

"In that case," said Prout, with grim sarcasm, "I am interested to know how the village of Friardale has suddenly become so very attractive to you, Coker. For what reason, Coker, do you take these daily walks to the village?"

"It's about a horse, sir."

"A—a—a horse?"

"Yes, sir."

Prout almost fell out of his chair. Was this obtuseness, or impudence? Coker made the statement with perfect calmness, as if it was quite an ordinary thing for a Greyfriars fellow to be concerned about a horse.

"A—a—a horse!" Prout almost gabbled. "You confess, then, Coker, that you have been engaged in betting transactions—"

"Betting transactions?" repeated Coker. "No fear! What on earth—" He backed his chair a little more. Prout surely must be crazy to ask this astounding question.

"Coker, have you no sense, sir, of the meaning of words? You state that you

have visited the village constantly about a horse—"

"That's right, sir! Old Coote's horse."

"Old Coote! Who is Coote?"

"The village carrier, sir."

Prout gazed at Coker. He remembered the existence of Mr. Coote, the village carrier, now that it was recalled to him. He had some vague recollection of having heard that Coote had come up to the school with some complaint. So far as Prout knew, Mr. Coote was a most respectable man—not at all the kind of man to act as go-between for schoolboys disposed to back their fancy!

Still, you never could tell! It appeared to Prout that he was on the verge of a shocking discovery!

"I remember the man you speak of, Coker," he said. "I have noticed him, in fact, with a horse and cart, on some occasions. This, then, is the man you have had dealings with, about a horse?"

"Hardly dealings, sir," said Coker. "I've seen him about it."

"Has he taken your bets?"

"Eh?"

"Or acted as a bookmaker's agent?"

"Old Coote!" gasped Coker. "Oh crikey! No fear!" He rose from the chair. It was plain now that Prout was mad! Old Coote—taking bets from a schoolboy, or acting as a bookmaker's agent!

"Then what was your business with the man, Coker, in connection with a horse?" snapped Prout.

"I hadn't any business with him exactly," said Coker. "But I'm sorry for the poor old chap, and I'm rather anxious about the horse. It was my cousin's fault that the horse was pinched, so it naturally worries me."

Prout gazed at him.

"You see, sir, it's a week since the horse was pinched," said Coker. "It's not been seen since, so it's pretty clear by this time that old Coote will never see it again. The poor old chap—"

"Do you mean," gasped Prout, "that Coote, the village carrier, has lost his horse?"

"Yes, sir! Somebody let it out of his cart in the lane, and—"

"Bless my soul! Do you wish me to believe, Coker, that your frequent visits to Friardale of late have been dictated only by the circumstance that the village carrier has lost his horse?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"And how," almost roared Prout, "does the matter concern you, Coker? No doubt anyone might sympathise with a poor man who lost his means of livelihood. But do you dare to tell me that for this reason alone you have taken the trouble to visit the village every day?"

"I'm anxious about news of the horse, sir," explained Coker. "I believe it was young Caffyn, my cousin in the Remove, who did it, and I've tried to make him own up, and make his guardian pay for the horse. He won't! That puts me in rather a rotten position, as I told Coote I'd see that he had justice. So, naturally, I should be very glad to hear if the horse had been found."

(Continued on next page.)



"Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, is at your service, chums. If you've a Soccer query you want solving, send it along to "Linesman," and then watch for his reply in this weekly feature.

AMATEURS AND PROFESSIONALS!

SEVERAL letters in my post-bag just recently have proved to me beyond all shadow of doubt that MAGNET readers do not forget the advice so often given them at school—to keep their eyes open. These letters show that the football fans are "watching points."

For instance, one of my London readers writes to say that he has noticed that in these days very few amateur footballers get anything like a regular place in the leading League sides, and he wants to know if the ban is deliberately put up by the officials of many clubs which prevent the amateurs being mixed with professional players.

It is a fact that there are very few amateurs playing regularly in the "pro" sides. J. C. Burns is in the Brentford team whenever he is fit, and from his position at half-back he is materially helping the side in their effort to win a place in the First Division. He is a schoolmaster, and, apart from a little training in the evenings, he goes out on to the football field two or three times a week with the boys of his school.

That is perhaps the explanation of why he is always fit to go through the most gruelling games with professionals who make preparation for football their sole mid-week occupation.

Not long ago A. H. Fabian played quite regularly for Derby County, and this season he has turned out occasionally for the Fulham first team. W. H. Webster, an amateur who has played for England, has signed forms for Arsenal, and he can be found in the gymnasium at Highbury two or three evenings a week thumping the punch-ball right heartily. Whether he will play in the Arsenal first team before the end of the season remains to be

seen. The number of amateurs who appear regularly in the League sides in England can be numbered on the fingers of one hand, though in Scotland, of course, they have an amateur side competing week by week in the Scottish League.

AN AMUSING STORY!

I DON'T think my London friend need worry about a ban against amateurs, however. Managers of big clubs are not so foolish as all that. Their sole concern is to find players good enough for the team, and when these are found they play in the team—whether they are amateurs or "pros."

It is obvious, however, that the amateur, doing other work during the week, is handicapped in his efforts to compete with professional players. He can't train with them: he can't be there when they discuss the tactics to be pursued, and there are in addition difficulties when the team goes away for special training, or when long railway journeys have to be made the day before the big match.

While on this subject of amateurs, it must be said that these amateur clubs are nothing if not ingenious at times. Here is an amusing story of the Uxbridge Town club which has just come to my knowledge. Not long ago they had a match to play against Barnet, another amateur side, of course. Now it so happened that the Barnet team could not be chosen in time to let the Uxbridge people have the names to print on the club programme. Uxbridge got over the difficulty, however, by printing a team of former Barnet players. So the programme read on these lines: P. Jones, long since retired; T. Deeks, finished five years ago; A. Chandler, who went to Leicester City as a professional.

And so on right through the various positions of the team.

If other amateur clubs adopted this idea from time to time, we should get a much clearer idea of the part the amateur clubs play in providing the professional teams with players. Believe me, the amateur clubs are closely watched, but when a good amateur is discovered the first question put to him is this: "Would you be prepared to turn professional?"

AN OLD PROFESSIONAL CUSTOM!

NOW we pass on to another question which shows that my readers don't forget to observe things which happen. "I have always understood," writes "Puzzled," from Barnsley, "that the League and the Cup competitions were two separate affairs, but I have noticed that when a player is suspended for something he does in a League match, he is not allowed to play in a big Cup-tie during his period of suspension. Is this so?"

The answer is in the affirmative.

The Football Association is the body which always sits in judgment when a player belonging to a club affiliated to the F.A. is reported as having done things he should not have done. And when the F.A. suspend a player it means that he must not play in any type of match during the suspension period.

There is just one historic case which I recall. One of the Huddersfield Town players was adjudged to have done things near the end of the 1919-20 season. A few days before the Cup Final was played, this player was suspended, despite the fact that Huddersfield Town were directly concerned in that final tie.

While on this suspension subject, I can reply to another reader, and tell him that it is quite true that a professional footballer has his wages stopped automatically when he is suspended by the F.A. for misconduct on the field. So that when you hear of a professional being suspended for a month, it may be said that the real punishment is a fine of thirty-two pounds—that is four weeks' wages at eight pounds per week. I may add, however, that in many cases the player does not suffer, financially, quite so much as that. There is a custom among footballers that when a player is suspended, and has his wages stopped, the other members of the side each contribute a bit from their own wages each week to "soften the blow" financially—for the player.

"LINESMAN."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,408.

"And—and—and is that all, Coker?" articulated Prout.

"That's all, sir!" said Coker. "What else could there be?"

Prout rose to his feet. His eyes, as he fixed them on Coker, were positively baleful.

"It is possible, Coker, that you are telling me the truth," he said. "From my experience of you, I know the stupidity, the obtuseness, the fatuity, that is to be expected of you. I admit the possibility, and give you the benefit of the doubt. But listen to me, Coker! I shall keep you under observation. If it should transpire, Coker, that you are deceiving me——"

"I——"

"Silence! If it should transpire that you have dealings with the man Lodgey, if it should transpire that you are engaged in questionable actions, the time for confession, the time for mercy, will be past. You will be taken before your headmaster to be expelled from the school, Coker!"

Coker blinked at him.

"Now go!" boomed Prout.

Coker went. He was glad to go. If Prout was not potty, he was, in Coker's opinion, perilously near it, and Coker was quite glad to get away from his study.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Many Hands Make Light Work!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! It's jolly old Coote!"

"He doesn't look very jolly!"

"The jolliffulness does not seem terrific!"

"Poor old bean!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were sauntering along Friardale Lane when they sighted Mr. Coote. And they gave him sympathetic glances.

Old Coote did not look jolly, by any means. Generally he was a cheerful old fellow. But now all the joy of life seemed to have left Mr. Coote.

He was pushing a handcart up the hill in Friardale Lane. Evidently his horse had not been found, and, without a horse, Mr. Coote's cart was useless. But a man had to live, and it seemed that old Coote was trying to carry on by means of a handcart.

The handcart was piled with various packages. It was a good weight. The hill was not steep, still it was a hill. Cold as the afternoon was, Mr. Coote perspired at his task. Every now and then he stopped to rest, lodging a stone under the wheels.

He had stopped for one of these much-needed rests, when the juniors, coming on behind, overtook him. They paused to exchange a word of greeting.

"You've not got your geegee back yet?" asked Bob, a sympathetic but rather superfluous question, as it was obvious that Mr. Coote hadn't.

"No, sir!" Mr. Coote removed his ancient hat to wipe his damp brow. "I'll never see that 'orse again, sir, arter all this time!"

"Hard lines!" said Bob.

"Very hard lines, sir, on an old man, jest because of a young raskil!" said Mr. Coote. "I've spoke to Inspector Grimes about it, along to Courtfield, but he says, says he, 'You ain't got a thing to go on,' he says."

"Well, you haven't, you know," said Harry Wharton. "If there was any evidence that a Greyfriars man did the damage, the Head would see that it was made good by his people. But——"

"I knows what I knows, sir!" said Mr. Coote. "And so does Master Coker, sir—a kind-hearted young gentleman, if you like."

"Well, Coker doesn't know anything about it, except that he bars Caffyn!" said Frank Nugent. "I don't think a judge would call that evidence."

And the juniors smiled.

"What about getting a new horse?" asked Bob.

Old Coote sighed.

"'Orses cost money, sir!" he answered. "I seen Mr. Lodgey about it——"

"Lodgey?" repeated Bob. "You're getting into bad company, Mr. Coote."

Mr. Coote grinned.

"Lodgey's a 'orse-dealer, sir," he said. "I dessay he does more on the side; but he does business in 'orses, and you'll always find him at Lantham 'Orse Fair. He's got a 'orse now that would suit me down to the ground—jest like my old Tom, he is, but younger—a good 'orse, and I been round looking at him, I 'ave, more'n once. But what's the use, when Lodgey wants twenty-five pound, and I ain't got two?"

The old carrier sighed.

"If right was right, and that young raskil Caffyn was made to pay up, I'd buy that 'orse of Lodgey," he said. "Mind, he's a good 'orse, and cheap at the price! I knows something about 'orses! Lodgey won't sell me the sort of

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'orse he sells to a farmer at the fair arter the farmer's 'ad one or two! That 'orse is sound in wind and limb. If right was right——" The old carrier sighed again. "Well, it ain't any use talking, and I got to get this barrer up the 'ill!"

And old Coote spat on his hands, took the handles of the heavy handcart, and trundled.

Harry Wharton glanced at his friends. They read his unspoken thought, and nodded.

"Let's!" said Bob.

And they did! Wharton and Bob took a handle each, pushing old Coote out of the way, and Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Johnny Bull pushed at the rear of the laden handcart. Heavy as it was, it went quite quickly up the hill with five sturdy schoolboys pushing and pulling.

"My eye!" said old Coote. "You'd better leave it alone, young gentlemen! 'Spose your schoolmaster was to see you at this here game!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"That's all right! Going to the top of the hill?"

"Yessir! Green's cottage, right at the top!"

"Up she goes!" said Bob.

The Famous Five got going. Old Coote followed, glad of the relief, and mopping his brow. Temple, Dabney, and Fry, of the Greyfriars Fourth, came along from the school, and stared at that unusual occupation of the chums of the Remove.

"Oh, gad!" said Cecil Reginald Temple. "You fellows been looking for

work? What's Coote payin' you for the job?"

"Bob an hour?" asked Fry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Dabney.

"Oh, clear off, fatheads!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Keep your barrow boys in order, Mr. Coote!" said Cecil Reginald Temple. "You shouldn't allow your hands to cheek the public."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Dabney and Fry.

Bump!

The hand-cart collided with the knees of Cecil Reginald Temple's elegant trousers. The dandy of the Fourth sat down suddenly—in a puddle.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the turn of the barrow boys to laugh, and they did. They shoved the hand-cart on, leaving Temple picking himself out of the puddle with an expression on his face that showed conclusively that he no longer regarded the matter as humorous.

Farther up the hill two Removites happened. One was Lord Mauleverer, walking quickly, the other was Billy Bunter, trotting.

Mauly was walking quickly because Bunter was after him. Bunter was trotting, because Mauly was walking quickly.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five through his big spectacles in astonishment and disgust. "I say! What's the game?"

"Not a game—work!" answered Bob.

"You might think of the school," said Bunter, with ineffable dignity. "What would anybody think, seeing Greyfriars fellows pushing a truck about like that? Low, I call it. I say, Mauly, come on! Let's get away before anyone passes and sees us with that lot."

"Yaas, you get away, Bunter, old fat bean!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Roll off, while I lend a hand with the barrow."

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles as Lord Mauleverer joined up with the handcart pushers, and shoved with the rest.

"Shove away, Mauly!" grinned Bob. "Get out of it, Bunter, you bloated aristocrat, or you aristocratic bloater, whichever you are!"

Onward went the handcart, swiftly and easily now, leaving Billy Bunter blinking scorn.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the Snipe!" said Bob, a little later.

Caffyn stared at the truck pushers. Old Coote gave him a grim look.

"You'd look pretty sick if Quelch caught you at that!" sneered Caffyn.

"Oh crumbs! Here's another aristocrat like Bunter," said Bob. "Why not lend a hand, Snipey? It would be the first decent thing you've done since you came to Greyfriars."

"I'll watch it!" sneered the Snipe.

"Kick him!" said Nugent.

The Snipe walked on hastily without waiting to be kicked. At a little distance, however, he stopped to look back. He was aware that Mr. Quelch was taking a walk up the lane that afternoon, and that in a few minutes, at the most, he would come in sight of the handcart and its convoy. In the happy anticipation of seeing the Famous Five called over the coals by their beak, the Snipe followed on behind them at a distance.

With a last united shove the Removites brought the truck to the top of the hill. There a tall and angular form



Pushing old Coote out of the way, Wharton and Cherry each took hold of a handle of the handcart and pulled, while Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Johnny Bull pushed in the rear. "Up she goes!" said Bob. "We'll pull it to the top of the hill!" The Famous Five got going, and old Coote was glad of the relief.

dawned on them, and two gimlet eyes fixed on them in surprise.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wharton. Mr. Quelch came towards the juniors as they halted. There was no doubt that he was surprised.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood with rather pink faces.

"What are you doing, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Hem! Helping Mr. Coote with his truck, sir," said the captain of the Remove. "You may remember, sir, that Mr. Coote has lost his horse."

"Oh, yes, quite!" said the Remove master, with a curious look at the juniors.

They waited, not at all certain what view Quelch would take of truck-shoving as an occupation for members of his Form.

"I am very glad, my boys, to see you performing an act of help and kindness to an old man," said Mr. Quelch.

With that, and a kind nod to Mr. Coote, he walked on.

"Good old Quelch!" murmured Bob. "Lucky he ain't so fearfully aristocratic as Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Having landed the handcart at the top of the hill, the juniors left Mr. Coote to deliver his goods at Green's cottage, and walked on to the school. And Caffyn, in utter disgust and disappointment, slouched away.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Bright Idea!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Roll off!"

"I say, it's rather important!" said Billy Bunter, coming into Study No. 1. "You've got nothing for tea."

"Then why the dickens have you barged in, if you know that?" asked Harry Wharton, naturally surprised.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Barge out again!" suggested Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I heard you mention that you would be teeing in Hall," said Bunter. "That means that you've got nothing in the study. Well, look here! I can put you on to a good thing. I can speak to you fellows now that cad, Caffyn, isn't here. What are you grinning at?"

Wharton and Nugent grinned, because Edgar Caffyn was sitting in the armchair, a few feet from them, toasting his toes at the study fire. But the high back of the chair hid the Snipe from Bunter. Bunter's eyes, and even his spectacles, could not penetrate the back of an armchair, so the fat Owl did not know that Caffyn was there.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter crossly. "Do listen to a chap! That snipe, Caffyn, may come barging in any minute. There you go again, grinning like hyenas! Not that Caffyn would be likely to tip Coker that we're on the warpath. He loathes him, you know. Still, it's safest to keep a thing like this dark."

Caffyn, in the armchair, had stretched out a hand towards the study poker in the fender. Now he withdrew it. If anything was going on up against his Cousin Coker, Caffyn had no desire to stop it, by any means. So he sat quiet, and let Bunter run on.

"How would you fellows like a splendid spread?" asked Bunter, blinking at Wharton and Nugent through his big spectacles. "Cold chickens and pies and cakes, and all sorts of splendid stuff?"

"Fresh from Bunter Court?" grinned Nugent.

"Well, not exactly," admitted Bunter. "The fact is, the hamper's in Coker's study. You know that old sketch, his Aunt Judy, is always sending him hampers. You've heard of Coker's study suppers. She doesn't send hampers like that to her other nephew. He, he, he! I dare say the Snipe would like 'em. But he never gets them—what!"

Wharton and Nugent laughed. Bunter was rattling on in happy unconsciousness of the Snipe's presence. If Caffyn chose to sit there and listen to it, it was his own affair.

"It's weird, you know," went on Bunter. "The Snipe is trying his hardest to cut Coker out with the old sketch, and his guardian, that solicitor johnny, old Sarle, is helping him all he can. I heard 'em once jawing it over. But they don't seem to be getting on with it a lot. Coker's still getting the hampers. Luckily, he's taken up betting on horses."

"Luckily!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Well, what I mean is he's gone down to Friardale again," explained Bunter. "He goes down every day now to see Lodgey."

"How do you know he goes to see Lodgey, you fat villain?" asked Nugent.

"Well, I heard Price of the Fifth say so."

"Price is a worm!"

"Oh, rot; everybody knows it!" said Bunter. "Why, you fellows yourselves caught him in the lane with Lodgey one afternoon. But never mind what he's gone for. The point is, he's gone!"

"What about it, fathead?"

"Well, as a rule, I'm not the fellow

to snaffle a fellow's tuck, as you fellows know," said Bunter.

"Ye gods!"

"Not the sort of thing I'd do," said the fat Owl. "But circumstances alter cases, you know. I don't think Coker ought to carry on like this—getting into shady company, backing horses, and disgracing his school, and all that. It'll be a slur on everybody when he gets sacked. Well, my idea is to give him a lesson."

"By pinching his hamper while he's gone?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"Well, bagging it, you know," said Bunter, with a nod. "It's in his study now. I saw Trotter taking it there from the house dame's room. A fellow who goes out regularly every day, blagging, ought to have a lesson, I think. It would serve him right to miss that hamper when he came back. Of course, I'm not thinking of the grub that's—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! Remembering that you fellows have nothing for tea, I thought of Coker's hamper," explained Bunter. "Pure friendship, you know! And—and a warning to Coker! Dash it all, it's a decent chap's duty to—to butt in when a fellow's going on the downward path, and all that! Coker's fooling the Head, fooling his beak, and fooling that old sketch Judy. You can bet that that prim old stick wouldn't be sending him hampers if she knew that he was going out every day playing billiards at the Cross Keys, and backing horses and all that! More likely to cut him off with a shilling!"

Caffyn, in the high-backed chair, grinned.

This was quite agreeable hearing to the Snipe.

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He had no doubt that Bunter was right.

If Miss Judith Coker discovered that her favourite nephew was an arrant blackguard—as she could not fail to do if Coker was turned out of Greyfriars in disgrace—it would be all up with Horace in that direction.

Bunter was not the only fellow who believed that Horace Coker was going to the dogs and heading straight for the sack. Plenty of fellows had the same belief, and most undoubting of all was the belief of the Snipe.

Caffyn had not the slightest doubt. He admitted that he had not suspected this sort of thing on Coker's part till quite lately. Coker had taken him in, as he had taken everybody else in. But he had found him out now—and that was that!

Coker's present line of conduct, indeed, seemed to hint that he had grown tired of humbugging and keeping up appearances at all. He seemed to be growing absolutely reckless about it.

Wharton and Nugent, who could see Caffyn in the armchair, caught that malicious grin on his foxy face and frowned. Bunter rattled on.

"Disgraceful, I call it! Rotten! Quite outside! I know Potter and Greene are worried about his awful goings-on. They've had more than one row in the study about it, and Coker hardly speaks to them now. I fancy they're giving him the marble eye. Of course, fellows don't want to be mixed up with a fellow who's booked for the sack!"

"Rubbish!" said Harry. "It's all rot! Coker explained how he came to be talking to Lodgey that day; he was only being a fool, as usual."

"Well, he had to say something when it came out," said Bunter. "And he hasn't explained why he keeps on going down to see him nearly every day."

"Perhaps he doesn't."

"Oh, don't be as ass! You know; everybody knows he does! Even old Prout—I saw him looking after Coker this afternoon when he went out of gates, and you should have seen the look on his face!"

"Prout's an ass!"

"Well, look here, you fellows know what Coker's up to as well as I do!" said Bunter warmly. "Are you going to back me up in giving him a lesson? I'll keep cave at the end of the passage while you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackling again!" roared Bunter. "What is there to cackle at, I'd like to know? Most of the Fifth are out of the House—it's quite safe. Still, I'll keep watch at the corner—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You men coming down?" roared Bob Cherry, in the doorway of the study. "All the dishwater and doorsteps will be gone!"

"Coming!" answered Harry.

"I say, you fellows—" howled Bunter.

"Fathead!"

Wharton and Nugent joined the Co. in the passage. Even if Coker of the Fifth was plunging head-over-ears in trouble and disgrace, it did not seem to be their idea to punish him by snaffling Aunt Judy's hamper while he was hunting for trouble.

"Look here," roared Bunter, "if you haven't the pluck to back a fellow up—" He rolled out of the study after the Famous Five as they headed for the Remove staircase. "I say, you fellows—"

"What's the big idea?" asked Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Bunter thinks that Coker's gone out on the merry razzle, and the idea is to pinch his hamper while he's gone," he answered.

"That's a rotten way to put it, Wharton!" said the fat Owl indignantly. "My idea is to punish a fellow who's— Leggo my ear, Bull, you beast! Wharrer you grabbing my ear for? Yow-ow!"

Johnny Bull, holding a fat ear between a finger and thumb that felt like a pair of pincers, led Bunter down the stairs.

"Will you leggo?" howled Bunter.

"No," said Johnny cheerfully, "I won't! You're coming down to tea with us, old fat bean!"

"I don't want tea in Hall!"

"It's not a question of what you want, but of what you're going to have!" explained Johnny.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky beast— Look here, Coker will be back!"

"Exactly! You're going to honour us with your company until Coker's back!" said Johnny. "You're not pinching his tuck, you fat frog! You're coming down to tea in Hall!"

"Good egg!" grinned Bob Cherry, taking Bunter's other fat ear. "Come on, old barrel!"

"Leggo! I say— Yaroooooh!"

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Come on, Bunter!"

"I won't!" yapped Bunter.

"I think you will!"

"The thinkfulness is terrific!"

And Bunter did! All the fat Owl's excellent reasons for snaffling Coker's hamper had failed to convince the Famous Five that that hamper ought to be snaffled. They were only convinced that Billy Bunter had better be kept under their eyes until it was too late to snaffle the hamper—which was not what Bunter had wanted or expected. It was only what he got!

In the midst of the grinning five, he was led down to Hall.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped, in the doorway of Hall. "I say, leggo! I'm not going after Coker's hamper!"

"You're not!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"I mean, I've got to see Wingate in his study—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I—I mean, the—the Head! I can't keep the Head waiting! I say, you fellows, leggo—so that I can go and see the hamper—I mean, the Head—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was led into Hall!

Generally Bunter's company was not fearfully sought after. But during tea in Hall that day the chums, of the Remove hung round him as if they loved him like a brother. The fat Owl, deriving what comfort he could from the provender which the juniors described as "dishwater and doorsteps," had to abandon the idea of that hamper. That well-merited punishment was not going to be inflicted on Coker of the Fifth—and Billy Bunter was not going to devour the contents of Aunt Judy's hamper!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Caffyn in Cover!

CAFFYN, with his usual quiet and stealthy tread, moved quickly along the Fifth Form passage.

Nobody was about. As Bunter had said, most of the Fifth were out of the House. Coker had gone down to the village—on his usual excursion. The coast was clear, and Edgar

Caffyn slipped quietly into his Fifth Form cousin's study and shut the door after him.

How long Coker had been gone, and when he would come in, Caffyn, of course, did not know. He had to chance that. The idea of the heavy-handed Horace catching him in the study was not agreeable. Coker hardly needed an excuse for handling the disagreeable Snipe when he came across him. If he found him in his study, where certainly the Snipe had no business, there was no doubt that Horace would jump at the chance—and at Caffyn!

Still, Bunter, who was an experienced grub-raider, had thought it safe. The Snipe hoped that Bunter was right.

The hamper lay by the screen in the corner of the study. Caffyn stooped over it.

It was a fact, as Bunter had stated, that these gorgeous hampers came only to Aunt Judy's elder nephew. She was fond of Horace, and she was not fond of Caffyn. Though not a particularly intelligent old lady, some instinct helped Aunt Judy in judging her two nephews. She felt, rather than knew, that Horace had never given a thought to her money. She did not feel like that at all about Caffyn.

So, though Miss Coker was a kind relative to her younger nephew, and paid his school fees, and made him an allowance, it was Horace who had possession of her affectionate old heart.

All Caffyn's cunning had never been able to change that. Cunning, in fact, was not the quality required, though the Snipe could not understand it.

Quickly Caffyn began to unfasten the hamper.

This favouring of Horace, Caffyn chose to regard as an injustice to himself. Often had his envious and malicious eyes lingered on those hampers.

Now, for once, he had a chance of helping himself.

What he had heard from Bunter in Study No. 1 made it quite safe. Coker was off the scene, blagging down at Friardale. There would be a row about it, of course; Coker was the fellow to kick up no end of a row when he came in and found his hamper raided. But if anyone was suspected it would be Bunter.

That suited the Snipe.

He lifted the lid of the hamper.

The sight of the good, ample, and excellent things packed within brought a scowl to his face. All this for Horace; nothing for him. He was going to see about that!

He sorted out articles of a convenient size for packing in his pockets; on the remainder he was going to spill ink and ashes and soot. Billy Bunter would have thought only of snooping tuck, but the Snipe thought less of the tuck than of his malice.

Coker was not going to enjoy that hamper, at all events!

But the best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley. Caffyn moved quickly, but he was still packing his pockets when there came a heavy tread along the Fifth Form passage.

He started up, his heart thumping.

That heavy tread sounded like Horace's. A fellow always knew when Horace Coker was coming; he had hefty footsteps.

Caffyn, for a second, was shaking with terror. If Coker caught him in the study, the hamper open at his feet—

Hardly stopping to think, the Snipe closed the lid of the hamper and darted behind the screen.

He stood there palpitating.

From the bottom of his heart he wished that he had never heard about

that hamper from Bunter and that he had never acted on the information. But it was rather too late to wish that now.

The study door swung open and Horace Coker tramped in.

Caffyn hardly breathed.

Slam!

The door shut. Coker of the Fifth had never closed a door quietly in his life.

He had come to stay. Caffyn wondered savagely why he had come back so soon.

Had he been less suspicious and less willing to believe evil of a fellow he disliked he would not have been caught like this; for Coker had not, as Caffyn believed, gone down to Friardale to play billiards at the Cross Keys, or to discuss the backing of horses with Mr. Lodgey. He had gone down to see old Coote and ask him once more if the police had succeeded in tracing the "pinched" horse. Happening to meet Mr. Coote on his round, he had not gone on to the old carrier's cottage. That was the simple reason why he had come back earlier than was his wont.

Coker did not sit down.

He moved restlessly about the study, his hands in his pockets, giving an occasional grunt.

Caffyn wondered whether he had noticed that the hamper had been opened. But he was soon assured that Horace was not thinking about hampers.

There was a rent in the screen—more than one, in fact—and Caffyn applied his eye to a slit and peered at Coker.

He was tramping aimlessly about the room with a deep wrinkle of troubled thought on his brow.

Obviously, Coker had come back with a weight on his mind. Obviously—to the Snipe—his gambling transactions with Lodgey were turning out unlucky.

It was clear that Coker had not the remotest suspicion that anyone was in the study with him. The Snipe drew comfort from that. If only the hulking brute would go, and give him a chance of getting clear—

But Horace showed no sign of going. He was thinking worried thoughts. Caffyn had no doubt that his thoughts were on the subject of losses at banker, or billiards, or delusive geegees.

Caffyn had never wasted a thought on anyone else, and he was not likely to guess that that was precisely what Coker was doing.

Coker was worried, not about banker, or billiards, or geegees, but about poor old Coote. He had met him pushing a heavy-laden handcart—a task far beyond an old man's strength. Convinced that it was his cousin who had caused the loss of the carrier's horse, Coker had told old Coote that he would see that he had justice. He had not been able to keep his word.

Caffyn had refused to own up; refused to ask his guardian to pay for the damage. Coker's drastic methods of "making him" had been a failure. So Coker had been very anxious to hear whether that missing animal had been traced and recovered by the police.

Had it been found it would have been all right; but it had not been found, and Coker realised that there was little

hope now that it ever would be. And old Coote was pushing a heavy handcart about—all through Coker's cousin.

Little as the Snipe guessed it, that was the worry on Coker's mind.

The carrier had to be paid for his loss, so that he could purchase the new horse he had his eye on. Could Coker let a poor old man be swindled by a relation of his? Coker couldn't!

Besides, he had told Coote that he should have justice; that the stolen animal should be paid for. He had to keep his word.

The Snipe wouldn't own up, or pay; very likely the little beast had forgotten the whole matter long ago. That left it up to Coker.

But Coker, though well off in the way of cash, had no such sum as twenty-five pounds at his disposal; neither was he keen to ask even his indulgent Aunt Judy for such a sum.

Moreover, it was difficult to explain. The Snipe was keen to report anything in his disfavour to Aunt Judith; but Coker would have perished before acting like the Snipe. He could not—and would not—tell Aunt Judy of the Snipe's dirty trick on the carrier; he was no sneak and informer.

That made it very hard. For without telling Aunt Judy about the Snipe's rotten trickery he could hardly make her understand that he was concerned in the matter at all.

It would look as if he was barging into something that didn't concern him—to the tune of twenty-five pounds.

Undoubtedly that was rather awkward.

But there was no help for it. The sight of poor old Coote sweating over that handcart had been too much for Coker. He had told the old carrier that he would see about it at once. He was going to. But it was a difficult matter, and a fearful worry, and it was no wonder that Coker's rugged brow was corrugated with painful thought.

He threw himself into a chair at the table at last.

There was a bump on the study door, and it opened. Potter and Greene looked in.

Coker gave them an unfriendly stare.

"Want anything?" he asked.

Potter and Greene coloured a little. It was tea-time, and they were aware of the hamper. There had been coldness in that study of late; Potter and Greene had given Coker good advice about Lodgey, and the incensed Horace had repaid it with swipes from an Indian club. Still, it was tea-time—and there was the hamper.

"We saw you come in, old chap—" murmured Potter.

"If you want anything," said Coker frigidly, "I suppose you can come in, as it's your study; if you don't, you might give a fellow a little peace when he's got a difficult letter to write."

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. The atmosphere of the study seemed well below zero. They closed the door and walked away.

Coker dipped his pen in the ink; he gave a weary grunt.

"I've got to ask Aunt Judy for the money. How the dickens can I put it? Well, it's got to be done!" grunted Coker aloud.

He began to scrawl. And from the slit in the screen in the corner of the study the Snipe's eyes watched him,

(Continued on next page.)

Q



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glittering. The Snipe now was glad that he was there. At long, long last the hour of the Snipe's triumph was at hand.

At all events, he believed that it was.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

In His Own Hand!

"BLOW it!"

Coker uttered that forcible ejaculation.

Behind the screen the Snipe grinned. He had no doubt that Horace found it hard to put the matter diplomatically to Aunt Judith—to ask her for money without mentioning what it was for. She would never guess that it was for a gambling debt; but she would want to know what it was for, surely, if it was a large sum. And Coker's deep worry seemed to indicate that a large sum was involved.

Coker wrote and re-wrote and re-re-wrote. He spoiled about a dozen sheets of paper, crumpled them, and threw them into the fender. Finally, he seemed fairly satisfied.

The watching Snipe saw him read over a completed letter; then he took up his pen again, scratched out a word here and there, and put in an improvement or two. The Snipe watched. Every now and then he had a glimpse of the letter itself as Coker moved his head, but he was not near enough to read it—though he would have given a term's pocket-money to read what was written there!

"Oh blow! That will have to do!" said Coker at last. "That's that!"

His latest edition was considerably scratched, smeared, smudged, and blotted by the additions and improvements Coker had made.

He proceeded to write out a fresh copy, having now got the epistle to his satisfaction, or as near as possible. It was impossible, no doubt, for such a very unusual epistle to be quite satisfactory. But Coker had done his best—and that, as he had stated, was that!

He wrote the new copy, with only a few smears and blots, and folded it and slipped it into an envelope, which he addressed to Miss Judith Coker.

Caffyn wondered what he was going to do with the rough draft. A dozen spoiled sheets or so lay littering the fender. The fire, like Coker, had gone out that afternoon. He had not relit it since coming into the study. Was Coker idiot enough to leave those incriminating documents where he had chucked them?

Why not? Coker was idiot enough for anything in the first place. In the second place, he had no idea that there was a spy in the study; and certainly Potter and Greene would never have spied into crumpled old scribbles in the fender. Caffyn's heart beat faster.

Coker stamped his envelope and looked at his watch.

"Just about time!" he murmured. Caffyn guessed that he was thinking of the postman's collection at the school letter-box.

By chance, as it seemed, Coker's eye fell on the rough draft of the letter, still lying on the table. He picked it up carelessly, crumpled it, and threw it into the fender.

Then, taking up the letter addressed to Miss Judith Coker, he left the study, slamming the door after him as usual.

Caffyn panted.

Coker would be at least three or four minutes gone to post the letter. It was his chance of escape at last.

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But he was not thinking wholly of escape! He was not thinking at all of the hamper! Hampers did not matter now.

He was thinking of that last sheet, that Coker had crumpled and tossed carelessly away—word for word what he had written to Aunt Judy!

Coker's heavy footsteps died away down the passage. Edgar Caffyn whipped from behind the screen and jumped to the fender.

He snatched up the crumpled sheet. Coker's earlier, uncompleted literary works he left where they lay! It was the draft of the letter to Aunt Judy that he wanted.

He did not remain in the study to look at it; or even to uncrumple it. He thrust it into his pocket and ran out of the study.

Potter and Greene, talking to Fitzgerald in his doorway, saw him, and stared at him. But he was gone at a run. He cared little whether he was seen—now that he had in his hands, as he firmly believed, a document that meant disaster and ruin to Coker of the Fifth!

For whatever old Miss Judith might think of Coker's letter, there was no doubt what Prout and the Head would think of it—if they saw it, and if it was anything like Caffyn supposed!

And when they had seen it, and acted on it, even Aunt Judy's fond old eyes would be opened to the true character of the elder nephew whom she had trusted!

With beating heart, Caffyn sped away to the Remove. By the time Coker dropped his letter to Aunt Judy into the letter-box, Caffyn had got back to Study No. 1 in the Remove passage.

He ran in, shut the door, and turned on the light. He had the study to himself; Wharton and Nugent had not come up after tea.

Panting with haste, the Snipe threw himself into a chair, took Coker's letter from his pocket, and scanned it. Smears, smudges, erasures, and blots did not make it easy reading; but the Snipe read it quickly enough. Having read it, he sat staring at it with dilated eyes.

It was better—or worse—than he had dared to dream! It was Coker's utter condemnation, written in his own hand! He had been fool enough to leave this lying in his study fender! This!

"Dear Aunt Judy,—I am badly in want of a sum of munny, as much as twenty-five pounds. I know it is a bit thick to ask you to lett me have it, old dear; but you've often toled me to ask you if I want munny, so Ime taking you at your word. I can't tell you what it's four, becawse that wood be letting something out that I think I had better kepe dark. But its not to spend in ekstravagance or annything of that soart. If you can lett me have it, will you send me a check for the summ named, payable to J. Lodgey, Esq.? I wood rather have it as a check, as munny might get lost, also it's safer to use checks in deeling with doutful soart of peeple.

"Your affectionate nephew,

"HORACE."

Caffyn gazed and gazed and gazed at that extraordinary letter. He had never dared to hope for such luck as this!

Coker's association with Lodgey hardly needed proving now! His gambling transactions with him were clear as daylight—from that letter!

He owed Lodgey the stupendous sum—stupendous for a schoolboy—of twenty-five pounds!

What else could the letter mean? The sharper, of course, had diddled him—Coker was born to be diddled! But he had to pay—or take the consequences—Lodgey was the kind of man to show him up at the school if he did not pay! He had, of course, no such sum at his command—so he was asking Aunt Judy for it—actually mentioning Lodgey's name in the letter.

Miss Judith knew nothing of Lodgey! But Prout did—and the Head did! If they saw this—Miss Judith, likely enough, was sufficiently silly, and sufficiently fond of Horace to take his word that it was all right, and send him a cheque for twenty-five pounds, payable to J. Lodgey. But the Head was not likely to think it all right! Hardly!

Caffyn chuckled breathlessly.

He had Cousin Coker in the hollow of his hand now! The rivalry was at an end! Shocked, pained, indignant, Miss Judith would undoubtedly turn against the nephew who had deceived her, deluded her, taken advantage of her fond confidence to get money from her to pay rascally gambling debts. Caffyn laughed aloud.

Before reading that letter, the Snipe had not been sure how he was going to use it—except that it was going to be used somehow for Coker's detriment. But he knew now!

That letter—Coker's sentence of the sack written in his own hand—was going to Prout! Coker, by this time, had posted a letter to Aunt Judy word for word like this, only minus the erasures, corrections, and smears. So he would not be able to deny it! He was caught in a cleft stick.

Caffyn left Study No. 1 and went down to Masters' Studies. He tapped at the door of Mr. Prout's study.

Prout was there, after tea. There was a frown on his portly brow. He was thinking of Coker. He had seen that youth leaving the school after class, going in the direction of Friar-dale. Prout disdained the thought of watching a fellow. Yet he could have little doubt of what Coker was "up to"—and he was worried, incensed, irritated, perplexed to know what to do. Then Caffyn came in.

"What is it, Caffyn?" grunted Prout. He did not like this junior.

"If you please, sir, I've come to you, as my cousin's Form-master," said the Snipe smoothly. "I'm so terribly afraid that Horace is getting into some bad trouble with that man Lodgey, his friend—"

Prout cut in sharply.

"Very well, very well; if you have anything definite to say—"

"I picked up this letter in his study, sir, when I went to speak to him!" said the Snipe, holding it out. "I thought—"

Prout glared at it and at him.

"You had no right to look at a letter you picked up in a Fifth Form boy's study, Caffyn! You have no right to bring it to me! Take it back to Coker."

Caffyn breathed hard.

"Yes, sir, if you tell me to. But as he mentions his debts to Lodgey in this letter, sir—"

Prout almost bounded from his chair.

"He what—what—what—" stuttered Prout. "If—if that is the case, it is my duty to examine the letter. Hand it to me."

Caffyn watched his face as he scanned Coker's scrawl. The expression on it was satisfactory to the Snipe—it might have been terrifying to anyone else. Prout's face grew purple; his eyes



"As my cousin, Coker, mentions his debts to Lodgey in this letter, sir," said the Snipe, "I thought—" "He what—what—what—" stuttered Prout. "If—if that is the case, it is my duty to examine the letter. Hand it to me!"

bulged; he gasped for breath. He read that scrawl once—he read it twice—then, apparently forgetful of the Snipe's presence, Prout rushed from the study, letter in hand.

Caffyn grinned. He knew that Prout had rushed away to the Head. He knew what result must follow! He had cause to grin. He strolled cheerfully out of Prout's study.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER. A Row On!

"I SAY, you fellows, there's a row on!"

Billy Bunter's excited squeak was not heeded. The Greyfriars fellows did not need Bunter to inform them that there was a row on.

Everybody knew!

A dozen fellows, at least, had seen Prout rushing to the Head's study like a thunderstorm, his gown blowing out behind him in his hurry.

Prout's deportment, as a rule, was slow and majestic. Prout had utterly and totally forgotten majestic deportment.

That alone would have excited interest and attention. But there was more—much more!

Loder of the Sixth had been with the Head when Prout hurtled in. He had left at once, of course. But his ears had been open as he left, and he had distinctly caught the words "Coker—Lodgey—expulsion!"

Loder told a dozen other fellows, each of whom told half a dozen or so.

"But it can't be true!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What can Coker have done to be sacked for?"

"Lodgey, of course!" said Bob

"I'd swear he never had anything to do with Lodgey! I was a bit startled that day finding him with the rotter! But— Well, he explained it."

"Too thin!" said Skinner, shaking his head. "Even Coker ought to have thought of a better one!"

"Have they sent for Coker?" asked Nugent.

"No; he's in the games-study," said Temple of the Fourth. "Coker's the only man who doesn't know he's going to be sacked."

"Do you know anything about it, Caffyn?" asked Harry Wharton, as he spotted a lurking grin on the foxy face of the Snipe.

"Not a thing," answered Caffyn cheerfully. "What on earth could I know about it? Horace is found out, that's all."

"I don't believe there was anything to find out," said the captain of the Remove. "Coker's a fool—but that didn't need finding out! I don't believe he's done anything but play the fool."

"You'll see in Hall!" grinned Caffyn. "I don't know anything about it, of course, but I've got an idea that he owes that man Lodgey a lot of money, and it's come out somehow."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth came down, with his hands in his pockets and quite a cheery expression on his face. Having got a troublesome matter off his mind, Coker was naturally feeling a little bucked. And—that matter off his mind—he had found comfort in Aunt Judy's hamper. Now he was coming down for Roll, unconscious of the wild excitement reigning downstairs.

But as a myriad eyes fixed on him he glanced round in some surprise. He realised that something was up. He recalled now that some of the fellows had looked at him rather queerly in the games-study.

Coker reddened. If it was some more of their rot about that Lodgey story, Coker was prepared to fly off the deep end.

"Doesn't he really know what's up?"

asked the Bounder, puzzled.

If Coker had been "copped" he must have known. It looked as if he had not actually been "copped." For evidently he did not know!

"What's this crowd for?" asked Coker. "What are you all gabbling about? Never saw such a lot to gabble!"

"Doesn't he really know he's up for the sack?" asked Price, in wonder.

Coker jumped.

"Who's up for the sack, you ass?"

"Aren't you?" shouted a dozen fellows.

"Not that I know of, you silly fat-heads! What have I done, I'd like to know?" roared Coker.

"We'd all like to know!" chuckled Temple of the Fourth. "And I fancy the Head's going to tell us in Hall!"

"If you want a thick ear, young Temple—"

The bell rang for calling-over. Coker, with a contemptuous snort, tramped away to Hall. Whatever it was that was on the cards, it was plain that Coker feared nothing. By the time the Greyfriars fellows were packed in Hall excitement and curiosity were at fever-heat.

Coker took his place calmly in the ranks of the Fifth. Every fellow in that Form eyed him. Fellows in other Forms craned their necks to look at him.

When Prout came in he was seen to bestow a grim glare on Coker. Then the Head entered by the upper door, the prefects called for silence, and there was a hush.

It was only on special occasions that the headmaster took Roll. This, clearly, was a special occasion. It was plain that calling-over was not the serious business in hand; it was merely a preliminary canter, so to speak.

Everyone was anxious to get it over and get down to brass tacks—and

Coker! Fellows noticed that when Coker's powerful voice answered: "Adsum!" to his name, the Head gave him a quick glance before he went on with the roll.

The roll was called! But the usual signal for dismissal did not come. Instead of that, Prout boomed:

"Coker!"

"Eh! Yes, sir!" said Coker.

"You will go to your headmaster."

The Greyfriars crowd, hushed, breathed hard and deep as Horace Coker, still showing no signs of alarm, walked up the Hall to his headmaster.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

DR. LOCKE fixed his eyes on Coker.

Mr. Prout eyed him grimly.

Coker stood before them undismayed. His rugged face pictured perplexity; a touch of bewilderment. That was all.

The whole school stood gazing.

"Coker!" The Head's quiet voice broke a tense silence. "Doubtless you are aware why you stand before me now."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Prout told me to!" said Coker innocently.

Dr. Locke coughed.

"I mean, Coker, you know the offence with which you are charged?"

"Eh! No, sir! Am I charged with anything?" asked Coker.

"You are charged, Coker," said the Head, his voice deepening, "with conduct unworthy of a Greyfriars boy, disgraceful to yourself and to your school. You stand before me to be expelled from Greyfriars, in the presence of your schoolfellows, who, I am sure, will be as shocked and disgusted with you as I, your headmaster, can be!"

There was a deep-drawn breath in Hall! They were getting down to the brass tacks now!

Coker looked a little dazed.

"Have I done anything, sir?" he asked blankly.

"Do you deny, Coker, having had dealings with a man of disreputable character, of the name of Lodgey?"

"Certainly, sir! I spoke to him only once, and I've explained that to Mr. Prout!"

"You deny having had dealings with him since?"

"Of course, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "I have never heard of such effrontery! If you have had no dealings with the man, Coker, how comes it that you owe him a large sum of money?"

"I don't, sir!"

"You—you—you do not?"

"Not at all, sir! I don't owe him anything. How could I?"

"This boy's impudence, sir!" breathed Prout. "His—his audacious impudence and—nerve!"

"Neither will help him now, Mr. Prout!" said the Head grimly. "Coker, listen to me! A letter, written by you, has come into my hands. I desire the whole school to know the just grounds on which you are condemned, Coker. For that reason I have decided to expel you in public. In this letter, Coker, you have written to a relative, a Miss Judith Coker, asking for the sum of twenty-five pounds."

The Head held up the letter. Coker blinked at it. He recognised it as the rough draft of the letter he had posted to Aunt Judy. But it conveyed nothing to his bewildered mind.

"You do not deny this, Coker?"

"Eh! No, sir; that's right."

There was a buzz in Hall. It was instantly suppressed by the prefects. All Greyfriars hung on the Head's next words.

"You have requested Miss Judith Coker to send you the money in the form of a cheque," said the Head. "You have requested her to make the cheque payable to J. Lodgey! Have you anything further to say?"

"Only I don't see what you're driving at, sir," said the perplexed and puzzled Coker. "Is there anything wrong in that letter to my aunt?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I know it's rather a big sum for a chap to ask for," said Coker. "That's worried me rather a lot. Still, she can decide for herself. If she doesn't let me have it, I can sell my motor-bike to pay Lodgey."

"To—to—to—pip-pip-pay Lodgey!" The Head of Greyfriars actually stuttered.

"Yes, sir!"

"Is this boy in his right senses, Mr. Prout?" asked the Head.

"I doubt it, sir!" gasped Prout. "I am driven to doubt it."

"Coker! Have you still the effrontery, the stupidity, the absurdity, to deny that you owe the man Lodgey a large sum of money, when you admit that you have asked a relative for a cheque payable to him for twenty-five pounds?"

Greyfriars hung on Coker's answer.

"Eh? Oh, yes, sir!" said Coker.

Fellows wondered if they were dreaming.

"You deny that you owe him money, but you admit asking your aunt for a large cheque payable to him," almost gurgled the Head.

"Certainly, sir. Cheques are safer in dealing with doubtful characters, as I told my aunt in my letter. Besides, old Coote might lose the money. I don't suppose he's ever handled twenty-five pounds before—or five, if you come to that. Ever so much safer to have a cheque, sir!" said Coker.

The Head gazed at him.

"Coote!" he said. "What—who is Coote?"

"The carrier, sir!" said Coker. "I never intended to say anything about it, and I can't imagine how you got hold of that letter that I chucked away in my study, but it's quite simple, sir. But if you want me to explain, sir—"

"Speak!" gasped Dr. Locke.

"You see, sir, old Coote believes, and I believe, that my cousin pinched his horse," explained Coker. "I told him I'd see he had justice; but that sneaking little snipe—"

"What?"

"I—I mean Caffyn—but Caffyn wouldn't own up, and so it was up to me, I couldn't let the man down. That's why I've asked my aunt for the money. Of course, I couldn't tell her the details—I don't want to get Caffyn into a row with Aunt Judy. But that's how it was, sir."

The Snipe, in the ranks of the Remove, stood transfixed.

"Coker!" almost roared the Head. "In this letter you have asked Miss Judith Coker for a cheque, not for Mr. Coote, the carrier, but for the man Lodgey—"

"He's buying the horse from Lodgey, sir," said Coker. "Lodgey's a horse-dealer, and he's got a horse to sell that will just suit Coote—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Of course, I've had nothing to do with it, except telling old Coote I'd get him the cheque for Lodgey," said Coker.

"Mr. Prout! Is—is—is it possible—"

There was a stir in Hall, as Harry Wharton jumped forward.

"May I speak, sir?" exclaimed the

captain of the Remove. "It's true that old Coote wanted to buy a horse from Lodgey for twenty-five pounds; he told some of us so the other day in the lane—"

"The truthfulness is terrific."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry.

"Anyhow, you can ask old Coote, sir!" said Coker. "He will tell you all about it, sir, if you ask him."

Dr. Locke looked at Coker. He looked at Prout. He looked at the crowded Hall, and he saw that grins were dawning on many faces. The solemn proceedings were losing their solemnity. Coker's explanation, utterly unlooked-for as it was, was clear enough. He had not been a blackguard. He had not been a rotter. He had only been, as per usual, a fathead. Everybody in Hall—even Caffyn—believed him. It was all so exactly Coker. The Snipe bit his lips with rage and disappointment; but he knew that it was true, and he knew that Coker had escaped his snares once more. The scheming Snipe had built confidently—with no foundation, and now his house of cards had some crashing down.

"I—I—I—" For once the Head was at a loss. "I—I—I— In view of—of your explanation, Coker, further inquiry will be made. Dismiss!"

"Good old Coker!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

The Head disappeared hastily. Masters and prefects hurried the fellows out of Hall. Everybody was laughing. Tragedy had ended in comedy.

Further inquiry, promised by the Head, only elicited, the following day, that Coker's statements were perfectly correct.

Certainly he had taken a lot of trouble to make things black against himself.

Whether he was right in believing that Caffyn had "pinched" the carrier's horse, nobody could say; but his shouldering the responsibility, and standing so generously by a poor old fellow who was terribly down on his luck, showed that Horace was a brick—a genuine brick, with all his little foibles and weaknesses.

And when Aunt Judy's cheque came—for that dear old soul's faith and trust in her beloved Horace were founded as on a rock, and the cheque duly came—it was handed over to old Coote, and duly exchanged with Mr. Lodgey for the new horse for the Friardale carrier. And all was calm and bright—except for Caffyn!

Prout, in Form, told Coker that he was a kind-hearted and thoughtful lad. He felt that that was up to him, after his groundless suspicions—now for ever dismissed! But he told Coker's cousin, Caffyn, quite other things. He told Caffyn that he was a spy, a tale-bearer, a mischief-maker; and took him to Mr. Quelch to lay a formal complaint of a Remove boy abstracting letters from a Fifth Form study. For which offence the Remove master gave Caffyn six of the very best!

"Fool's luck" seemed to befriend Horace Coker all along the line. But to the wriggling and dolorous Snipe it seemed that there was no such thing as rogue's luck.

THE END.

The next story in this grand new series featuring Edgar Caffyn, the schemer of the Remove, is entitled: "THE REMOVE'S REMARKABLE RECRUIT!" Look out for it in next Saturday's bumper issue of the MAGNET, chums. An early order will avoid disappointment!



Grand Opening Chapters of an Amazing New Story of Piracy on the High Seas and Under Seas.

CHAPTER 1.

A Dish-Washer Leaves!

FOR three nights now he has come here, that one. Strange, yes. But it is good for trade to have such as him come here."

Fat Otto Kraus, proprietor of the small and dirty Bratrost Restaurant, situated in the Falkenstrasse, one of Berlin's poorest quarters, spoke in wheezy undertones as he lounged against the pay-desk over which his wife was presiding.

"And I could wish, mein frau," he went on, mournfully flicking with his napkin at a grease spot on the desk, "that we had more customers like him. For times are bad. Never since the War have I known times so bad."

"Pays well, does he?" questioned Frau Kraus, her shrewd little eyes taking curious and covert stock of the bronzed, clear-cut features and immaculate evening dress of the diner to whom her husband was referring.

"Pays well?" repeated the fat Otto. "Ja, indeed he pays well. Last night he ordered nothing but a savoury and a small bottle of wine, both of which he left. But he paid for them with a note of large denomination and handsomely—so handsomely—waved his change aside. Ah, we get few here like him, mein frau."

The proprietor sighed deeply and, having failed to remove the grease spot from the desk with his napkin, commenced stabbing at it with a dirty and broken finger-nail.

"Your affluent one is beckoning you," whispered his wife.

Straightening up, Otto turned and shuffled hastily towards the little corner table at which the diner in evening dress was seated.

"Mein herr?" he breathed, his podgy hands clasped and his flabby bulk bent cringingly.

"You have a man named Wesel working here?" said his customer.

Otto stared. "Yes," he answered. "There is a Kaspar Wesel here—a dish-washer. He works in my kitchen."

"That is the man!" nodded the other. "I wish to speak with him, please!"

"But, mein herr," expostulated Otto, in stupid astonishment, "this Wesel is, as I have said, a dish-washer—"

"And is, as I have said, the man whom I wish to see!" cut in the other brusquely. "You will send for him at once. And bring me my hat and coat. I will speak with him outside!"

"But you can speak with him in here," offered Otto eagerly, for he was mighty curious to know what business

this well-groomed and obviously wealthy customer could have with a miserable dish-washer whom he, Otto, had taken from out the very gutter. "No, wait!" he went on hastily. "Perhaps it is too public here. You may use my room—my private room. See, it lies behind that curtain there!"

"I thank you!" responded his customer curtly. "But you will tell Wesel to join me outside. My hat and coat, please!"

Rising, he laid a note on the table in payment of his score.

Pausing only long enough to clutch the note with fat fingers, Otto waddled away, to reappear a moment later with hat and coat.

"Mein herr," he wheezed, "if you will reconsider. My private room—"

"I have told you that I will speak with the man outside!" cut in the customer coldly. "I do not require the use of your room. You have sent for Wesel?"

"Yes, yes, my wife already hastens down to the kitchen with your message!"

"Thank you!"

With that the man in evening dress turned and quitted the restaurant, bowed out by the fat, fawning, and vastly intrigued Otto.

Outside, with the collar of his great-coat turned up, and his black felt hat pulled down well over his eyes, the man waited, hands plunged in pockets.

A few moments later, through the creaking swing-door of the restaurant, came a short and stocky man, close-cropped of hair, bluish of chin, aproned, and with shirtsleeves rolled up about thick and muscular elbows.

As the door swung shut behind him the man advanced a pace forward on to the pavement, glanced up and down the dark and almost deserted street, and then peered inquiringly at the man in evening dress.

"Wesel!" said the latter softly.

The short and stocky Wesel, dish-washer at the Bratrost Restaurant, became rigid. Then, with an inarticulate cry, he sprang forward, his calloused hands gripping at the other's arms.

"Herr Hauptmann!" he gasped. "Herr Hauptmann—is it you?"

"Yes, Wesel, it is I!" answered the man in evening dress.

"But—but what has brought you here?" asked the bewildered Wesel.

"You!" was the quiet response. "I have come to take you away. No, say nothing now. We cannot talk here. Come round to my rooms in the Gartenstrasse in an hour's time. Here is my address. You may tell that fat fool in

the restaurant that you are leaving him."

"But, Herr Hauptmann," stammered the stocky Wesel, "I do not understand. I have not seen you since—since we took our boat to Harwick. And you come here now. Is it—is it that you have work for me, Herr Hauptmann?"

The man in evening dress laughed softly.

"Yes, I have work for you, Wesel," he responded. "Work such as a man has never dreamt of in his wildest dreams. But I will see you at my rooms."

Wesel stepped back, and, rigid as a ramrod, answered, with a quiver in his voice:

"I shall be there, Herr Hauptmann!"

The other nodded, and, turning, moved away along the darkened street.

For a moment Wesel stood staring after him, then, with a rasping and triumphant laugh, he turned and dashed into the restaurant.

The fat Otto, waiting in a fever of curiosity just inside the door, pounced on Wesel as he entered the swing door, grabbing him with podgy hands.

"Who was that?" he wheezed excitedly. "Tell me, who is he?"

"He is the Hauptmann Ludwig von Ulm!" shouted Wesel, wrenching himself free from his employer's grasp. "The Hauptmann von Ulm—the greatest U-boat commander Germany ever had!"

Otto gaped at him dumbly.

"But—how comes such a one as you to know him?" he articulated.

"Because I was his chief petty-officer when we sailed westwards against the Englishers!" shouted Wesel, tearing his apron from about his waist. "D'you hear that, you bladder? I was his chief petty-officer! There was no dish-washing for me then, you fat toad!"

Savagely he crumpled the dirty apron in his hands.

"And there's not going to be any more of it!" he roared. "I'm going back to him. He's asked me. D'you hear that? There's your apron—and you can keep your job!"

With the words Wesel hurled the crumpled apron full into the wrathful and empurpled visage of the fat Otto, and, pushing roughly past that outraged individual, went clattering downstairs to the kitchen in search of his jacket.

A few minutes later he was gone, jaunty, both of gesture and of gait.

"The schweinhund has gone without his wages!" remarked the simmering Otto to his wife. "That is something to be thankful for."

Picking up an ink-scrawled card—
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board notice from the desk, he shuffled morosely away and hung it up in the window.

Passers-by in the Falkenstrasse that night casually noted that in the Bratrost Restaurant there was a

DISH-WASHER WANTED!

Ulverst!

LIKE a man in a dream, Wesel traversed street after street and crossing after crossing as he made his way to Von Ulm's rooms in the Gartenstrasse.

He was a man who was living again in the past, a man who was living again those days of war when, aboard the submarine U 500, he and his comrades, under the command of Ludwig von Ulm, had slipped away from the submarine pier at Wilhelmshaven to harry the shipping of England on the western coasts of that island kingdom.

Great days, they had been. Days of high adventure and great endeavour, days when death had ridden over close in the roaring surge of the storm-tossed seas.

Always the long, slim grey hull of U 500 had crept safely back to her home on the Ems. Yes, always she had returned, until at length there had come that black and bitter day when, at the order of the German high command, U 500, together with the rest of the German submarine fleet, had sailed for the British port of Harwich, where she was to surrender herself to victorious England.

Vividly the final parting with Von Ulm came back again to Wesel. For Wesel, probably more than any other member of the crew, had realised the passionate devotion which was Von Ulm's for the boat which he had commanded so brilliantly and with so magnificent a courage.

Grey and haggard of face, that day at Harwich, yet with shoulders erect, Von Ulm, on the deck of the submarine, had shaken hands with each member of the crew, then he had gone below to pay a last and silent farewell to the boat which throughout long and perilous months had been more—far more—to him than home.

From that day until this very night Wesel had never seen Von Ulm, nor heard of him.

He was going to see him now, though, and it was with a defiant swagger that he strode into the building in which Von Ulm had his rooms and ordered the liftman to take him up to the third floor.

The liftman eyed him somewhat suspiciously.

"Don't look at me like that, my man!" said Wesel sharply, acutely conscious of his shabby attire. "My business is with the Hauptmann von Ulm!"

It was Von Ulm himself who welcomed the late dish-washer and ushered him into a luxuriously furnished room—a room of shaded lights, thick pile carpets, soft hangings, and priceless pieces.

Sinking into a sumptuously upholstered armchair in front of the wide, open hearth, on which a fire glowed red, Wesel took a cigar from the gold box which Von Ulm proffered.

"And now, my friend," said Von Ulm, seating himself in an armchair on the opposite side of the hearth, "how have you found the aftermath of war?"

Wesel laughed shortly.

"None too good, Herr Hauptmann," he answered, "as you can very plainly see."

"Tell me something about it," said Von Ulm.

Wesel was silent for a time, and when he did speak there was a bitterness in his voice.

"Indeed, there is little to tell," he said. "There was small chance of a German getting a job on the high seas after the War—not even in the merchant vessels of neutral countries. I tried. I tramped from port to port, but everywhere the supply of hands was far greater than the demand."

Von Ulm nodded. Save for a reading-lamp on an adjacent table, he had turned out the lights; and his cigar glowed red in the shadows amidst which he was seated.

"I tried the Ruhr," went on Wesel, hunched forward in his chair, "and got work there in the coal mines. But even that petered out. It finished when the strikes came. Since then, well," Wesel gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders, "I have just drifted and drifted, sinking lower and lower until, a few weeks ago, I dropped despairing anchor at where you found me to-night. But tell me, Herr Hauptmann, how did you come to find me there? Was it by chance, or—were you looking for me?"

"Both!" answered Von Ulm. "I was looking for you, but," he emitted a low laugh which puzzled Wesel, "it was a chance remark by a prospective employee of mine which put me on your track. A certain submarine petty officer of the name of Wesel, I learned, might be glad of employment. However, we need not dwell on that at the moment."

He broke off, and only the slow, monotonous beat of a clock standing against the wall and the fall of a burnt-out coal into the hearth disturbed the stillness of the room.

It was Wesel who next spoke, and it almost seemed as though he did so to break a silence which he was finding embarrassing.

"You," he said awkwardly, with a glance round the shadowy room, "seem not to have suffered much through the defeat of Germany, Herr Hauptmann."

"No?" drawled Von Ulm. "And yet, I sit here to-night a poorer man by far than you, Wesel."

Wesel stared.

"You joke, Herr Hauptmann," he stammered.

"No, I do not!" responded Von Ulm grimly. "You, obviously have money. But, knowing you as I did, I think I can safely say that you have no debts."

"No, I owe nothing," assented Wesel.

"Yet I," said Von Ulm, "owe more, much more than I can pay. I'm head over heels in debt!"

Idly, he flicked the ash of his cigar into a tray by his elbow.

"You think, Wesel," he went on conversationally, "that I am a German, do you not?"

Wesel started.

"Why, yes, of course, Herr Hauptmann!" he answered in surprise.

Von Ulm shook his head.

"I am no German!" he said. "Nor is my name Von Ulm!"

With a quick movement he flung his cigar into the fire and rose to his feet.

"I am going to tell you something, Wesel," he said. "Something which I have told no one else. I will tell you so that you might more easily understand what is to follow."

He paused a moment, then went on rapidly:

"My name is Ulverst. I was in this

country of yours when war broke out. At once I sank my identity and adopted the name of Von Ulm, and offered my services in defence of Germany. I had not the slightest desire to be put away behind the barbed wire of an internment camp. Soon came the frenzied building of the German U-boats to combat the English blockade of your coasts. The thought of them—the thought of the game they would play—fascinated me. I was at that time torpedo officer on board the Luxembourg. I applied for a transfer to the U-boats, was accepted, and given a command!"

He took a turn up and down the room, then halted to confront Wesel again.

"Do not misunderstand me!" he went on harshly. "Neither you nor my crew ever knew, but it was not love for Germany which sent me out there to fight for her under the seas. Whether her cause was right or wrong mattered nothing to me. It was love of the sea—love of adventure—which sent me out there against the English. And those four years, Wesel. Four years of war—but, for me, four glorious years of free and untrammelled life!"

His voice rose vibrantly.

"The sea is in my blood, Wesel, as it is in yours, too. Will you ever forget those days when, drenched, frozen, and lashed to the conning tower, we drove on through the sweeping, mountainous seas off the Irish coast; those nights when we lay rocking gently on the bottom of the grey North Sea, or slipped quietly between the enemy's patrol lines, running only with our electric motors in case they should hear us? Ah, what games we played—with Death for the loser. Do you never in your dreams see again the cold and creeping fog of the lonely Hebrides, or hear again the dull booming of the surf against the black and rocky coasts of those northern isles? You do—you know you do. For the sea is in your blood, and you can never forget!"

White of face, Wesel blundered to his feet.

"Why talk of that?" he cried hoarsely, his hands clenched. "You know I have not forgotten. None of us ever can forget. But those days are dead. We can never go back to them!"

"We can go back!" said Ulverst, clutching Wesel's arm, his eyes blazing. "We can go back, I tell you! Back to the underseas, Wesel—back to the depths we know so well!"

Appalled by those blazing eyes, Wesel shrank away.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"I mean piracy!" fairly snarled Ulverst, his lips livid. "Piracy—and by means of the strangest craft that ever lay on an ocean bottom!"

He gripped Wesel's arm tighter, then, dropping his hand, he turned away.

"Forgive me!" he muttered. "I—I was not myself. Please be seated!"

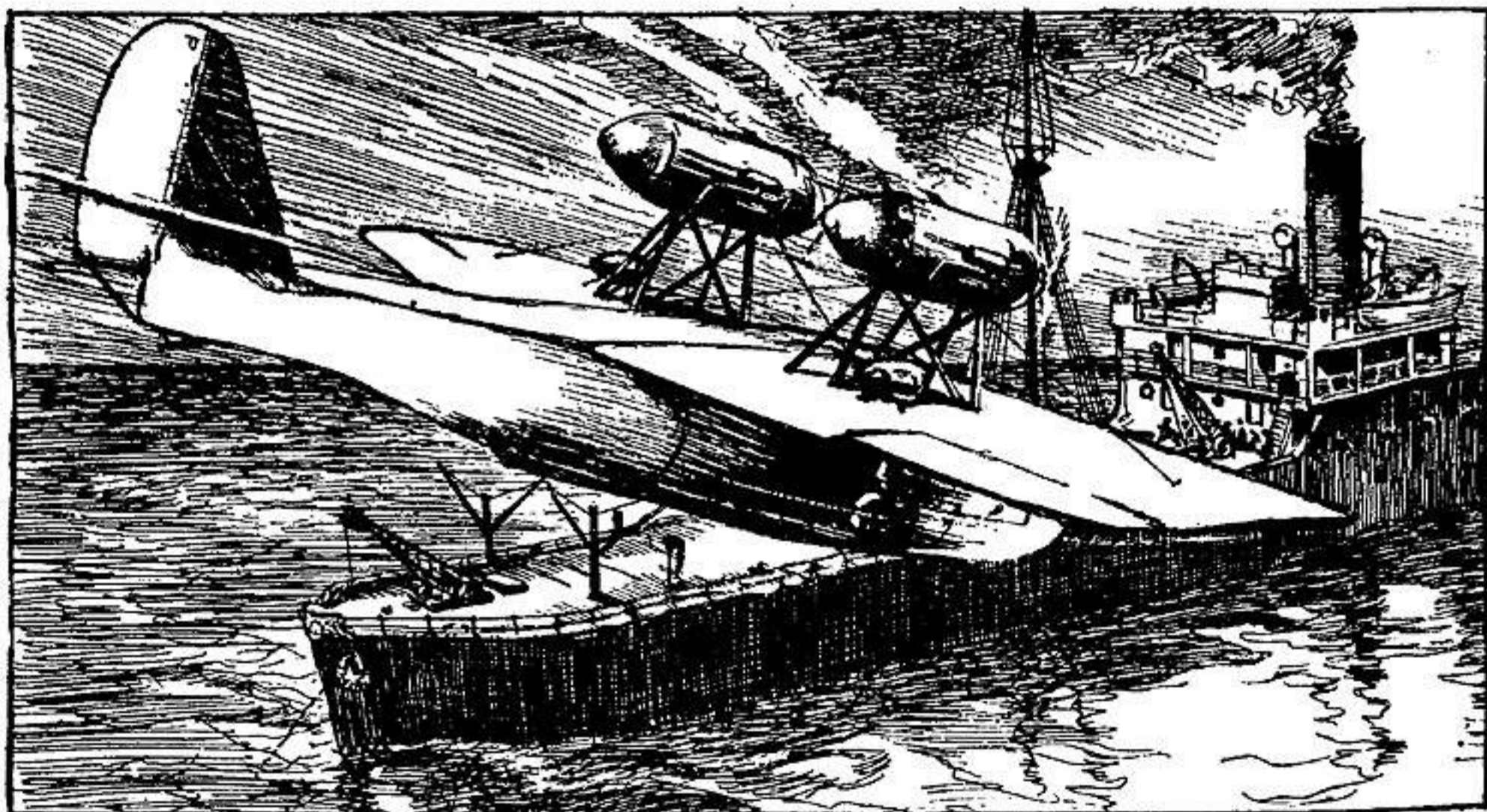
Wesel slumped back into his chair heavily.

"Your cigar!" said Ulverst quietly.

Wesel bent forward obediently and picked up the cigar from the carpet to which it had fallen.

He did not speak.

Only once before had he seen Ulverst—this man whom he had always known as Von Ulm—so roused. And that was one night off the Tyne when, badly holed by a torpedo from U 500 and sinking fast, a British destroyer had come at the U-boat with a sudden and bull-like rush in a desperate endeavour



At three hundred feet, Ulverst roared over the masthead of the tanker and, circling down for a landing on the water, brought the monoplane surging in towards the vessel!

to ram the German craft before she, herself, plunged beneath the waves.

Neither Ulverst, on the conning-tower, nor any of the watch had anticipated such a manoeuvre as this; and had it not been for the swiftness of Chief Stoker Schwelf in clutching up the 2,000 h.p. Diesels and revving them to full speed astern, U 500 would certainly never have lived to return to her base at Wilhelmshaven.

As it was, she escaped being rammed by feet only. And, undoubtedly shaken by the nearness of their escape, Ulverst had lost all self-control. Raising clenched fist, he had shouted jeering curses at that British destroyer as, with a deafening roar of bursting boilers and the shriek of tortured steam, she had reared her stern high into the air and slid beneath the troubled waters.

Not long had Ulverst's outburst lasted. Indeed, it had been but momentary. But somehow his crew had never forgotten it.

Wesel, in the hopeless whirl of his thoughts, was thinking of it now.

"I have told you that I am hopelessly in debt!" Ulverst spoke, his voice harsh and metallic. "There are two things only which appeal to me in life. One is money, which I must have; the other is adventure. I know where I can find both—money beyond the wildest dreams of avarice; adventure beyond the wildest imaginings of any romancer!"

He paused, looking down on the man seated hunched in the chair.

"Purposely I sought you out to-night at the Bratrost," he resumed. "I told you that I would give you work—"

"But you speak of piracy!" burst out Wesel.

"Yes," returned Ulverst. "I speak of piracy. But piracy is merely a part of the venture in which I am asking you to join."

He laughed gratingly.

"Talking of piracy," he went on, "has the world been so kind to you that you should hesitate to wrest from it something for yourself? Have you lost the courage which was so much a part of you in those great days when we sailed the seas, ruthlessly sinking the ships of England?"

"That was war!" mumbled Wesel.

"And this is war, too!" returned Ulverst harshly. "War against the world which has done little for me and nothing for you! Look at me, Wesel!"

Slowly Wesel raised his head and looked up into the eyes of Ulverst.

"To-morrow," said Ulverst, speaking with slow deliberation, "I leave for northern waters. Do you come with me?"

"But I must know more!" said Wesel hoarsely. "You must tell me more!"

"I can tell you nothing more—now!" replied Ulverst roughly. "Those who have already taken service with me are sworn to secrecy. And I, for our safety's sake, am bound by that same oath. You must make your choice, Wesel. Do you sail the seas and the underseas with me again, living the life of a man with the tang of the sea in your lungs and the smart of the salt in your eyes, or do you return to your dish-washing?"

Wesel lowered his head. Dumbly he stared into the fire, seeing there, in the glowing coals, the long, weary panorama of the hopeless years which had passed since the War ended; the despairing and unsuccessful tramps from port to port in search of a seaman's job; the body-destroying life in the black galleries of the Ruhr coal-fields; the soul-destroying life of the drifter which he had now become.

"The sea, Wesel—the sea!"

Softly, almost a whisper, came the voice of Ulverst.

Wesel hesitated no longer. Leaping to his feet, he faced Ulverst, head thrown back and shoulders squared.

"I'll sail with you, mein herr!" he cried.

"And no questions asked—yet?" pressed Ulverst.

"No questions asked!" answered Wesel vibrantly.

Lair of the Spider!

WESSEL slept that night at Ulverst's rooms; and when he awoke next morning it was to find that a neat suit of navy blue serge had been laid out

for him, together with new linen, razors, and other toilet accessories.

By the time he joined Ulverst at breakfast he was already beginning to feel a new man. What the future held in store for him he did not know. But he found an infinite satisfaction in the knowledge that whatever came his way would be faced in company with the man who had been his leader in many a perilous venture on the high seas.

"I do not wish to hurry you," said Ulverst, glancing at his watch as breakfast drew to a close; "but my car is waiting, and we must get off as soon as possible. We have a long journey in front of us."

Pushing back his chair, he rose.

"There are many surprises in store for you, Wesel," he said, the shadow of a smile on his lips. "And the first one will, I think, come very shortly."

It did!

It came after Ulverst's car had borne him and Wesel sixty kilometres out into the country and swung in through the iron gates of a wide, tree-lined avenue, to come to a stop in front of the massive portico of a large house.

Vacating the driving-seat, Ulverst led the way round to the rear of the house, where, standing on a wide stretch of flat ground, was a white-winged, twin-engined amphibian monoplane, with engines ticking over.

"Do you like her, Wesel?" inquired Ulverst.

"Is she yours?" exclaimed Wesel, in astonishment.

Ulverst laughed.

"Yes, she is mine," he answered. "This plane is mine, and I keep her here in my private hangar. You will find her a different craft to the U-boat."

"You mean we are going up in her?" demanded Wesel. "I did not know you were a pilot, Herr Ulverst."

"There are many things you do not know," returned Ulverst dryly.

That, felt Wesel grimly, was perfectly true. But he had promised to refrain from questioning, and it was in silence that he followed Ulverst to the machine, and in silence that he struggled into the heavy, one-piece flying-suit which

one of the mechanics brought for him from the hangar.

A few minutes later, with Ulverst at the controls in the enclosed cockpit and Wesel seated behind him, the machine was in the air, thundering towards the north-west, climbing as she flew.

Never before had Wesel been in the air, and intensely interesting did he find the flat panorama of land spread out far below.

At a height of four thousand feet the monoplane passed over Kiel, the headquarters and base of the German Imperial Navy during the war.

Less than an hour later the rugged, north-west coast of Denmark was sliding away behind the tail as the machine roared out over the grey waters of the North Sea.

Ulverst, his eyes on the compass needle, pressed slightly on the rudder bar, inching the machine a point more northerly.

Away to starboard the murky shadow of the coast of Norway merged into view, was held for some twenty minutes, then vanished again in the mists of the horizon.

Still holding a height of four thousand feet, the monoplane passed the lonely Faroe Islands lying far to port; then nothing lay ahead but open and desolate sea.

Where were they heading? How much longer would their fuel last? What would be the end of this strange journey?

Time and again these questions rose to the lips of Wesel, but resolutely he left them unuttered.

Another hour passed, and nothing broke the monotony of the grey sea and leaden sky save the muffled, pulsating thunder of the engines. But Wesel noted that Ulverst was beginning to scan the waters to port and starboard with searching and earnest gaze.

Suddenly, stirring in his seat, Ulverst pulled back the glass panel of the port window. Then, taking powerful Zeiss glasses from the rack by his elbow, he raised his goggles and pressed the glasses to his eyes.

For long moments he gazed steadily through the powerful glasses, then returning the glasses to their rack, he closed down the throttle to three quarters and pushed forward the control-stick to take the machine seawards in a thundering dive.

From the rear seat Wesel's range of forward vision had been necessarily limited. But now, as the monoplane dropped her nose, he saw that they were roaring down towards a distant speck upon the waters which, as they lost height, resolved itself into the long, iron hull of a large oil tanker.

At three hundred feet Ulverst roared over the masthead of the tanker and,

circling down for a landing on the water, brought the monoplane surging in towards the vessel.

Turning in his seat, he spoke one laconic word to Wesel.

"Refuelling!" he said.

Wesel jerked an inquiring head towards the tanker.

"Yours?" he grunted.

"Yes," answered Ulverst, turning to watch the seamen, who were swinging out a boat to bring a fuel feed-line to the monoplane.

So the tanker belonged to Ulverst as well, did it?

And it was only last night that the man had said he was deeply in debt.

This looked like debt—rooms in the Gartenstrasse, a big house in the country, a super-powered touring car, an aeroplane, and now—an oil tanker!

Who and what was this man he had known as Von Ulm?

With sudden, vivid force another word which Ulverst had used in his rooms last night came back to Wesel.

Piracy!

It was not that he, Wesel, had forgotten that word, for such a word is not easy to forget. But in the rapid move of events since he had awakened that morning, he had had little time in which to dwell seriously upon it.

All it stood for, all it meant, was with him now; and intently he listened to the desultory conversation which was going on between Ulverst and the engineer who was fuelling the machine.

The fuelling completed, Ulverst waited until the ship's boat had drawn clear of any possible backwash from the monoplane's floats, then, opening up the throttle, he took the machine tearing across the water to rise into the air in a long, upward climb.

Circling once, he waved a gloved hand in farewell to those aboard the vessel below, then, settling himself more comfortably in his seat, he roared on towards the north.

Steadily the sea grew darker, and soon the machine was flying over great, drifting fields of snow moving imperceptibly in a sluggish and oily sea.

Ahead, as though to enhance the utter desolation of that dreary waste of water, a pall of solid greyness extended up from the sea into the murk of the Arctic skies, and a bitter and deathly chill crept into the enclosed cabin.

Wesel, peering past Ulverst, touched him on the shoulder.

"Fog!" he said.

Ulverst nodded.

"We must go through," he said. "We could never get above it!"

Wraith-like wisps of the fog into which they were running began to eddy and swirl past the cabin windows, then next moment the machine was thunder-

ing its way through a thick and impenetrable blanket of greyness which blotted out the wings and deadened the roar of the engines.

Switching on the cabin lights, Ulverst let go his wireless aerial, then, adjusting his headphones, pressed the switch of his transmission set.

"We are in fog! We are in fog!"

Wesel, sitting back in his seat, stirred uneasily. There was something indescribably eerie about that voice of Ulverst speaking out into space.

"We are in fog! We are in fog!"

To whom was Ulverst speaking? What ears, in these dreary and desolate Arctic wastes, were receiving his message?

Through Ulverst's headphones, and audible to Wesel in the enclosed cabin, came a faint, whispering voice.

The unknown, away out there in the murk, was speaking.

Ulverst turned to Wesel.

"It is fog all the way," he said.

"I am leaving everything to you!" grunted Wesel, shrugging his shoulders.

Turning again to his transmission, Ulverst spoke:

"Bearing—three fifty-five degrees—correct three."

His foot moved on the rudder-bar, and again he spoke into space.

"Bearing—three fifty-two degrees—hold it."

On and on through the grey blanket of fog thundered the monoplane, and incessantly Ulverst gave out into space his compass reading. Invariably when there came a faint, whispering reply, he would swing the machine a degree or more to either port or starboard.

Wesel, huddled in the seat behind and shivering with the bitter chill which was pervading the cabin, saw Ulverst suddenly raise his head and peer forward into the impenetrable murk.

Long minutes passed, and still Ulverst sat crouched forward in his seat, tense and rigid. Then suddenly he turned, pointing with gloved hand.

"Look!" he shouted.

Wesel half rose in his seat. Ahead the fog was glowing with a weird rudeness.

"The Neon Beacon!" cried Ulverst. "Our flight is ended, Wesel!"

The ruddy glow was every moment increasing in brilliancy, and, without warning, there rushed from out of the fog a sudden vision of black and glistening cliffs rising sheer and stark from out of the shrouded waters somewhere below.

(Here's an intriguing start to one of the most amazing stories of piracy ever told. Mind you read next week's sensational chapters, chums!)



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LOST—ONE HUNDRED JUNIORS

I fully expected this number to attend my lecture on "The Art of Music"—and not one turned up. What happened to them? News anxiously awaited by CLAUDE HOSKINS, Shell Form.



No. 123 (New Series).

THE NEW Greyfriars Herald

EDITED BY MARY WHARTON.

February 9th, 1935.

EXTRA
GOOD
EDITION

WILL THE YOUNG SPORTSMEN

Who dropped cigarettes and matches when running away from me yesterday drop into my study and ask for them back? I can promise them a hearty welcome if they do so. THEY'LL BE TICKLED TO DEATH!—GEO. WINGATE, Sixth Form.

MORGAN'S COLLECTING MANIA

By Dick Rake

Morgan's mania for collecting souvenirs, always rather pronounced, has lately become a regular menace to the peace of our study. It's all very well for a chap to trot round collecting autographs at a footer match or a church bazaar. Even when he helps himself to famous people's discarded matchboxes or to a loose bit of goal-netting at a big footer game, there's not a lot of harm in it. But Morgan isn't content with this nowadays. When it's a footer game he wants the football itself. When it's a big fight he wants the gloves. A film star recently visited Courtfield and had the misfortune to lose his hat in a gale. Morgan caught it and returned it—but he calmly nipped off the hatband first!

A famous speedway rider ran into a wall at Friardale the other day and smashed it up. Morgan promptly selected half a dozen bricks out of the wreck and brought them back with him!

There are no limits to the souvenirs this collecting crank will take. I quite expect him to roll up one day with a helmet and length of hose secured at a fire or a pneu-

matic-drill acquired on the scene of a road-excavating job.

There's only one end I can see to it. One of these fine days Desmond and Wibley and I are going to rebel and hold a sale of souvenirs in Study No. 6.

Then, perhaps, we'll be able to move about the study without knocking our shins against the lifelabels, paving-stones, door knockers and other odds and ends that fill up the study at present!

SPOOKS SUSPECTED—REMOVITE RUMBLE!

Weird Sounds in Night

A wail went up one still night last week somewhere around the mystic midnight hour. It was a peculiarly melancholy wail, with a weird, uncanny, unearthly quality in it that made you think at once of spooks and spectres.

Fellows in dorms. all over the School House stirred uneasily in their sleep as the ghostly sound penetrated their ears. When it was repeated a good many of them awoke, and many a brave heart stood still for a tick or two when several more wails followed—each, it seemed, more hideously sinister than the one before it!

"It—it sounds awful!" muttered Scott, who's a bit of a specialist in spooks. "It must be the Ghost of Greyfriars—the spectre of all the old Greyfriars legends. Keep in your beds, chaps—that's my advice!"

"Rats! I'm going to look into this!" said Johnny Bull, and there was a chorus of "Same here!"

"Please yourselves, of course," said Stott. "But if a genuine ghost does happen to get you, the chances are you'll never be seen again. Come to think of it, Ogilvy doesn't seem to be here!"

"Bosh!" snorted Johnny Bull. "We'll soon find Ogilvy. It's not so sure about the ghost, though, but if we do see a ghost I'm prepared to give him a punch on the nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ghost hunters set out and were quickly joined outside the dorm. by other parties similarly bent on solving the mystery of the midnight wailing.

They didn't take long to solve it—and incidentally, in solving it, they solved the mystery of Ogilvy's disappearance at the same time.

It wasn't the Ghost of Greyfriars after all! It was only Ogilvy practising on the bagpipes!

He'd found what he thought was a sound-proof box-room, and was putting in a bit of extra swot on them in preparation for some jamboree or something that's going to be held in the Highlands later in the year!

If he has any consideration whatever for the feelings of others, Ogilvy will do the rest of his bag pipe-playing on the top of Black Pike!

Dr. BIRCHEMALL—DETECTIVE

By Dicky Nugent

Dr. Alfred Birchermall, the admired and respected headmaster of St. Sam's, bust into the Fourth Form dormitory with a ringing war-whoop.

"Poare! Poare! Where the merry dickens are you?" he bawled in his refined and skollery voice.

"Hyam Knott Poare, the million-dollar skollar of St. Sam's, shoved his head out of the bedclothes and stared at the Head in surprise.

"Look hyer, sir, I guess it ain't rising-bell yet—" he began; and then he broke off with a gasp.

What he saw was enough to make any fellow gasp. Instead of being dressed in his usual neatly patched suit and skollastick gown and mortar-board, Dr. Birchermall was wearing a most eggstraordinary costume. It consisted of a pair of tight-fitting trowsis of old-fashioned desine, an excoctrick Norfolk jacket and an ancient cap with ear-flaps. Altogether he looked remarkably like a bearded imitation of the sellybrated detective, Herlock Sholmes!

Hyam Knott Poare gasped again; then he grinned, and finally he larfed. His larf woke up the rest of the Fourth, and when they saw the Head's weird costume they, too, joined in with a roar that fairly made the welkin ring.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dr. Birchermall frowned.

"Shut-uppy voo, everybody!" he cried, lapsing into French with the skollary ease for which he was famous. "This is no larling matter, boys, I can assure you. I am up with the lark—"

"You mean you are up for a lark, don't you, sir?" suggested Jack Jolly, and there was another larf—which the Head quickly subdued by picking up a wet sponge and holding it before them.

"I am up with the lark," he repeated firmly, "for the purpuss of doing a little detective werk and getting on the track of the kidnapped skoolboy, Tubby Barrell of this Form. I want your help, Poare, because you happen to be the one who saw that suspicious carriekter in the quad, just before the kidnapping. Twiggy-vo?"

"O.K., sir!" grinned Hyam Knott Poare. "I'll come down and show you where I saw him if it will help you."

"I am hoap-ful that it will help a lot," said Dr. Birchermall, hurriedly replacing the sponge in the wash-basin as its contents began to trickle down his arm.

"I have brought along my magnifying-glass and I hoap to discover conclusive evvidence in the way of fingerprints, et settora."

"But the man Poare saw was walking on his feet, sir—not his hands!" pointed out Jack Jolly.

The Head stroked his beard rather thoughtfully.

"Um! I didn't think of that," he confessed. "However, if that is so, I ought to find plenty of footprints—and they'll do equally well, no doubt. Hurry up, Poare, and get into your clobber!"

"You bet I will!" grinned the boy from the You Knighted States, as he jumped out of bed.

Five minnits later early strollers in the quad, witnessed the strange spectacle of the Head crawling on his hands and neeze, egg-samining the ground intently through a tremenjus magnifying-glass.

"A clew, a clew!" he cried, after a long and feverish search. "Here is a footprint, Poare, without a shaddo of doubt!"

"Troo, sir!" said Poare, with a critical glarnse at the ground. "But don't you think it looks more like the hoofmark of a horse than the track of a hewman being?"

Dr. Birchermall larfed grimly.

"Perhaps it does, Poare, but you must remember that there's no telling what trix a criminal will get up to to throw his pursuers off the scent. If, as we suspect, the kidnapper was Slick Hooligan, I can beleeve him capable of anything—even of disguising his feet to resemble horses' hoofs."

"Gee-wizz!" mormored Hyam Knott Poare quite faintly.

"Let us follow this clew, anyway," said



H VERNON-SMITH on—

OUR MODEST LEAP-FROG CHAMP

Of all the fellows who've attained fame, Tom Brown strikes me as the most modest. Here is a chap who, by winning the Leap-frog Championship of the Lower School, has reached the dizziest heights a junior can very well hope to reach. Awe-stricken crowds surround him wherever he goes, cameras click at his approach, and a staff of secretaries is needed to handle his "fan" mail. Yet with it all Brown remains simple and unspoiled—almost unconscious, it seems, of his own greatness!

When I went to see him on behalf of the "Herald" I naturally expected to see him surrounded by almost Oriental splendour and opulence. Instead of that I found him sitting in an ordinary study at an ordinary table just like an ordinary chap!

"Great heavens!" I cried, aghast. "Don't you realise what has happened? Aren't you aware that you're our leap-frog champ., and that the world is at your feet?"

Tom Brown blushed.

"Yes, I know I've done a wonderful thing," he said. "But I realise, too, that I won with little to spare. The issue was in doubt right up to the last 'Tuck in your tuppenny'!"

"I daresay some fellows' heads would be turned by success like mine. But I try to keep my sense of proportion."

"The way I look at it is this: although I'm a champion of a sort, I'm not so important as other champions—Bastin, in footer, and Hobbs in cricket, and Dempsey in boxing, for instance."

"Admittedly, by winning this leap-frog competition, I've become almost as important as they are. But not quite—and when I feel my head swelling a bit I reduce it again by reminding myself of this fact!"

Tom Brown hopped reflectively over the study table, turned several thoughtful hand-springs, and then leaped philosophically back on to the hearthrug.

"As to my life-story—well, there's little to tell," he said. "Even though I'm leap-frog champ., I'm just an ordinary chap at heart."



"And regarding the way I smashed through to victory, I can only say that for a long time I made leap-frog my sole exercise—with the idea that one day it would land me on my feet."

And that's Tom Brown—simple, unspoiled and unaffected, despite his success.

I asked him for a message to "Herald" readers. I expected him, as leap-frog champion, to tell them never to stoop to a low trick, to look before they leaped or something of that kind.

But he didn't. Brown's far too modest. All he said was: "A message to 'Herald' readers? Certainly! Here it is: 'Whoopie!'"

Sidney James Snoop wishes to deny the allegation that he's a funk. He says that ever since he fell off his bike and swallowed a mouthful of dirt he feels simply full of grit!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



A junior long-distance walking race was won by Peter Todd, whose long legs—the longest in the Remove—enabled him to develop a terrific pace. Wharton was second, and Bob Cherry third. Bunter didn't finish—the first mile "finished" him!



Peroy Bolsover thinks knuckle fighting should be revived. Bolsover's enthusiasm is possibly due to the possession of immense knuckles. He has constructed a scale model of the Gunarder, Queen Mary—which he launched in the school swimming bath, amid the cheers of the Removites!



Asked to write an essay on any popular hero, Lord Mauleveret chose Rip Van Winkle, who was reputed to have slept forty years. Judging by his frequent "innozes" before, after, and during classes, "Mauly's" ambition is to sleep forty terms!



Napoleon Dupont, the French junior, is giving quite a good account of himself on the football field. When he scored a brace of goals for the Remove Second XI, the "Entente Cordiale" was cemented in foaming ginger pop in the school tuck shop!



Fisher T. Fish fixed up an electrically-run typewriter—but he got a "shock" when he touched the keys. Fishy's "current" wheezes, like all the rest, proved only a "flash" in the pan. It's time he showed a "spark" of sense!

Dr. Birchermall, briskly. "Then we shall see what we shall see."

The clew of the hoof-marks led the amatcher slooths a merry chase—first, out of the gates, then down the lane and then over hill and dale, till at last they came to Muggleton.

Outside a tellyphone booth in the High Street, the trail finally vanished, and the Head rose to his feet again and looked around him suspiciously.

"The problem is, where did he go?" he mormored. "To that there can be but one answer—into the tellyphone booth!"

"But do you think a horse could get into such a confined space, sir?" asked Poare, dewbiously.

Dr. Birchermall smiled indulgently.

"I am by no means certain that it was a horse, my dear Watson—I mean, my dear Poare!" he corrected. "Let me investigate!"

He led the way in and started egg-samining the tellyphone booth minutely through his magnifying-glass.

While he was doing so Hyam Knott Poare uttered a sudden egg-sclamation.

"I've got an idea, sir!" he cried. "As we suspect the kidnapper to be Slick Hooligan, why not look him up in the tellyphone directory and see if we can find out where he lives?"

The Head pondered deeply for a minnit; then he nodded.

"You are proving a worthy assistant to a grate slooth, Poare," he said. "Your suggestion is an egg-sellent one and shows unusual powers of logic and detective ability. Pass the directory!"

Poare handed it over and Dr. Birchermall studied it through his glass. At the end of his egg-samination he gave a mermer of satisfaction.

"Here it is!" he said. "'Hooligan, Slick, 13, Crook Terrace, Muggleton 1234.' Come, Poare! The climax of the drama is at hand!"

With a triumphant grin already lurking on his face, Dr. Birchermall hurried off to Crook Terrace.

He didn't trubble to nook at the door of No. 13. He just walked in, trotted up the stairs and opened the first door he came to.

"Barrell!" ejaculated Hyam Knott Poare.

There, as large as life and twice as natcheral, was the kidnapped skoolboy. Tubby Barrell was chained to a wall and looked hungry and fed up at the same time, but he brightened up considerably as he saw the newcomers.

"I say, Poare, it was all a mistake," he egg-sclaimed. "I told that rotter, Slick Hooligan, that I was you and he kidnapped me, thinking I was telling the trooth, and—"

"So that's it, hur?" broke in a crool, feendish voice behind them. "Waal, I guess we've got the right bird now, anyway. Stick 'em up, before I drill you so full of holes they'll be able to use you for wire netting!"

"Dear me! How uncomfortable that would be!" egg-sclaimed the Head. And on consideration he decided to put up his hands.

Within five minnits two more prisoners were chained to the wall alongside the junior they had come to reskow.

Slick Hooligan, for the time being at any rate, had triumphed—despite the magnificent efforts of the detective of St. Sam's!

(Will Birchy win? For the answer read next week's "egg-siting" yarn, "Gainst Desprits Odds"!)