

"COKER TAKES CONTROL!" SUPER COVER-TO-COVER SCHOOL YARN of WORLD-WIDE FAVOURITES . . . HARRY WHARTON & Co.

The Magnet 2^d

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



*The
NIGHT
PROWLER!*

COKER, the CHAMPION CHUMP of GREYFRIARS, CAUSES ANOTHER SENSATION!

COKER TAKES CONTROL!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

Lively School-Adventure Yarn of **HARRY WHARTON & CO.**, the Cheery Chums of **GREYFRIARS**.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hanging on to a Hamper!

"COKER hasn't come!"
"Hasn't he?"
"No."

"Well, who cares?"

"I do!" said Billy Bunter.

On the first day of the new term, Greyfriars fellows had plenty to do. True, there were no classes, for which relief everybody was duly thankful. But with reporting to masters, attending roll, bagging studies, unpacking boxes and bags and hampers, greeting old acquaintances, scanning the notice-board and commenting thereon, and a thousand and one other things, it was a busy day.

No fellow was likely to know, or care, whether a fellow in another Form had arrived, or hadn't.

So Harry Wharton & Co. were rather surprised when Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 1 in the Remove, told them that Coker of the Fifth had not yet come, and blinked at them very seriously through his big spectacles—as if it mattered two hoots whether Coker of the Fifth had come or not.

The Famous Five were as busy as everybody else on the first day of term, but at the moment they were sitting in Wharton's study, refreshing themselves with ginger-pop, when Bunter rolled in with his uninteresting news.

Plenty of fellows came late, and if Coker of the Fifth was one of the late-comers, it might possibly concern his friends in that Form; but to no Remove man was it a matter of the slightest interest.

Except, apparently, to Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, he hasn't turned up!" continued Bunter. "Potter and Greene of the Fifth have been asking

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fellows if they've seen him. They're rather keen for him to blow in."

"Blessed if I see why!" remarked Bob Cherry. "I should think that any pal of Coker's would like him all the better the less he saw of him."

"Well, yes; but there's the hamper," explained Bunter.

"The hamper?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes. Coker's hamper has come on all right, though Coker hasn't. It's in the lobby now."

The Famous Five chuckled. The mention of the hamper explained, of course, why Potter and Greene were anxious for their old pal to blow in. But it did not explain Bunter's interest in the matter.

Coker, an open-handed fellow, was sure to whack out that hamper among his friends in his own Form, and his friends in the Fifth were likely to be unusually numerous, so long as the hamper lasted. But Coker was not in the least likely to ask a Remove junior to the feast. Any Lower Fourth fellow hanging about Coker's study was more likely to get a boot than a bun.

"Now, I fancy I know why Coker hasn't come," went on Bunter. "You fellows ragged him at Lantham Junction. He looked fearfully wrecked, and I dare say he hasn't got over it yet."

"That was hours ago," said Frank Nugent, laughing. "Coker can't be still lying about on the platform at Lantham."

"Well, anyhow, he hasn't come," said Bunter, "and there's his hamper in the lobby, going begging. Now, of course, as a rule I'm not the fellow to think about another fellow's tuck, let alone bag it—"

"Eh?"

"What?"

But considering what Coker did to-

day at Lantham, you know, I think it would serve him jolly well right if that hamper was gone when he came in!" said the fat Owl of the Remove. "You know what he did—suddenly rushed at us and punched us right and left when we were collaring that pickpocket, and we had a scrap with him—"

"I didn't notice you doing any scrap-ping!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, I was just going to knock him down when you fellows collared him. Swanking ass, you know, throwing his weight about. What he really wants is a jolly good lesson."

"We gave him one," remarked Johnny Bull. "He looked like a scarecrow the last I saw of him."

"The lesson was terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yes, that's all very well," said Bunter. "But he hasn't had enough. My idea is to bag that hamper as he hasn't come in. It's too heavy for me to shift, but if you fellows come and lend a hand—"

"You fat, frabjous, footling, goozling frump!" said Johnny Bull, in measured tones. "Do you think we're going to help you pinch Coker's tuck? Let me catch you near Coker's hamper!"

"If you're funky, Bull—"

"What?" roared Johnny.

"If you're funky you needn't come. What about you other fellows?" asked Bunter, blinking round at the Co. through his big spectacles. "Two of you could carry that hamper easily. I'll keep watch in the passage."

"Kick him!" said Nugent.

"If you're funky like Bull, Nugent, you can stand out; but you jolly well ain't going to have a whack in the hamper if you do!" said Bunter. "I say, Bob, old man, you ain't afraid of the Fifth; you've got lots of pluck. You come?"

"Let's have it clear," said Bob, with a cheery twinkle in his eyes. "You want to hang on to Coker's hamper?"

"Yes, old chap!" said Bunter eagerly. "You know what Coker's hampers are like. That old sketch, Aunt Judy, packs them for him. She thinks a lot of him—goodness knows why! I'd have shifted it myself, only it's too jolly heavy for me to move. I tell you, it's a whacker! Look here, I'll help!"

Bob rose to his feet. His comrades stared at him. "You're not going—" began Harry Wharton.

"Why not?" said Bob. "I'm not going to scoff Coker's tuck myself, but if Bunter wants to hang on to that hamper, why shouldn't he?"

"Yes, why not, I'd like to know?" said Bunter warmly. "You shut up, Wharton! Bob can do as he likes, I suppose."

"Look here, Bob Cherry—" roared Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed Bob—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Nuff said!" interrupted Bob Cherry. "Bunter wants to hang on to that hamper, and I'm jolly well going to help him do it! You fellows come and lend a hand."

"Think I'm going tuck pinching?" bawled Johnny Bull.

"We're not going to touch the tuck," urged Bob. "Just come on, and give your chin a rest, old man!"

Harry Wharton laughed. It dawned on him that the playful Bob was pulling Bunter's fat leg.

"Oh, all right," he said, "let's!"

"Let's!" agreed Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, come on!" said Bunter, and he rolled out of the study. Bob Cherry followed him, picking up, as he went, a coil of cord recently untied from a box, and slipping it under his jacket.

Bunter did not see that action; but the Co. did, and Johnny Bull's frown changed into a grin. All the Famous Five followed Billy Bunter with smiling faces.

Billy Bunter rolled down to the lobby with a happy grin of anticipation on his fat face.

Plenty of baggage had been stacked there, but by that time most of it had been sorted out and claimed. But Horace Coker's big hamper was still there, owing to Coker having failed to arrive at school. It caught the eye at once. It was not merely a big hamper; it was immense!

Coker's Aunt Judy no doubt knew that dear Horace had plenty of friends to help him dispose of the contents. Coker alone would hardly have travelled through it in a term. No wonder Bunter had wanted assistance in shifting it. The fat junior by himself could not have shifted it an inch.

"I say, you fellows, there it is!" exclaimed Bunter eagerly. "And nobody about!"

There was only one fellow in the lobby at the moment—Peter Todd of the Remove. He glanced at the newcomers.

"That Coker's hamper?" said Peter, in surprise. "There's his name on the label."

"Yes; but Bunter wants to hang on to it, and we're going to help him," explained Bob.

"You're going to help Bunter hang on to a Fifth-Former's hamper!" yelled Toddy.

"That's the big idea."

"I say, Toddy, you mind your own bizney!" yapped Bunter. "Don't you get barging in. I say, you fellows, get hold of it!"

"You take hold of that handle,

Bunter!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Put your paws there—that's right."

"I can't shift it!"

"Who's talking about shifting it? Didn't you say you wanted to hang on to it? Don't change your mind at the last minute. Two of you fellows hold his paws there, will you?"

"Certainly!" said Harry Wharton.

"Like a bird!" grinned Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—" gasped

Bunter, as his fat hands were held in a grasp on the handle of the hamper.

"I say, wharrer you up to? Wha-a-a-t

are you going to do with that cord, Bob; you fathead?"

"Help you to hang on to Coker's

hamper."

"You silly ass!" yelled Bunter. "I

didn't mean—"

"I did!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo!" yelled the fat Owl, as Bob

proceeded to wind the cord round his

fat wrists and knot it securely to the

handle. "Wharrer you up to? Wharrer

you tying me to that beastly hamper

for? I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter Todd.

"Hang on, Bunter!"

"Beast! I say—"

"There, that's all right!" said Bob

cheerily, as he knotted the last knot.

"Hang on, Bunter. You can hang on

to Coker's hamper as long as you like.

Coker will be quite amused when he

comes in!"

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

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**To Horace James Coker, it seems a simple matter to take a dishonest young rascal in hand and teach him to be honest. But the chump of the Greyfriars Fifth very soon learns otherwise when he tries to reform "Skip," the pickpocket!**

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"Owl! Beast!" roared Bunter, wriggling and wrenching. "Pulling a fellow's leg! I—I say, I—I don't want to hang on to this hamper—"

"Blessed if Bunter seems to know what he wants, from one minute to another," said Bob. "Never saw such a fellow for changing his mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five, yelling, walked out of the lobby.

Billy Bunter glared after them with a glare that nearly cracked his spectacles.

"I say, Toddy, come and let me loose!" he gasped. "I say, I can't stick here, you know, till Coker comes in—"

"I fancy you can!" grinned Toddy.

"Didn't you tell me, a few minutes ago, to mind my own business, and not barge in? I'm going to do it!"

"I say, old fellow— Don't go away and leave me like this, Toddy! Yah! Beast! Rotter! Cad!" yelled Bunter.

Peter, chuckling, followed the Famous Five, leaving Billy Bunter hanging on to Coker's hamper!

Bunter was the fellow to hang on to any fellow's tuck; but for the first time in his fat career Bunter was hanging on to a magnificent supply of tuck without wanting to!

From the bottom of his fat heart Billy Bunter wished that he had not entertained those nefarious designs on Coker's tuck—which, no doubt, was exactly what the playful Bob wanted him to wish. Anyhow, there he was,

and there he stayed—hanging on to Coker's hamper!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Where is Coker?

QUELCH!" Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, repressed a snort of impatience. He had had a busy day—and he was still busy. He wanted no interruption—least of all from Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form.

But it was Mr. Prout who rolled majestically into his study; and the portly brow of Prout was corrugated in a frown.

Prout looked cross—which indicated that he had not dropped in for a chat. That was so much to the good. Still, he had dropped in; and Quelch could not very well request him to drop out again. So, suppressing his impatience, the Remove master gave him a look of inquiry.

"Coker, of my Form, has not yet arrived!" said Mr. Prout.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, quite astonished that the Fifth Form master had come in to tell him this, which did not concern him in the least. Quelch had enough boys in his own Form to bother about, without bothering about seniors.

"Indeed!" assented Mr. Prout. "I am somewhat uneasy about Coker, Mr. Quelch."

"Really, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am somewhat occupied at the present moment with matters concerning my own Form—"

"Quite!" agreed Prout. "But as it appears to be due to certain members of your Form that a Fifth Form boy is still absent, I am bound to acquaint you with the matter."

"I fail to see—"

"If you have a few minutes to spare," said Mr. Prout sarcastically, "I will explain. I have been inquiring for Coker, and have received some information from a Sixth Form prefect—Loder! Loder states that he was in a train from Lantham Junction, and saw Coker engaged in a struggle with certain boys of your Form—"

"Well?"

"It appeared to be what Remove boys, I think, call a ragging!" said Mr. Prout, still sarcastic. "That was three or four hours ago. As Coker certainly could have reached the school under the hour, from Lantham, his continued absence is inexplicable. According to Loder, Coker was being very roughly handled when he saw him—extremely roughly—and had he not been in a train he would have intervened, as a prefect. If Coker, as a result of this rough handling, has been unable to resume his journey—"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch decisively.

Prout started.

"What? What did you say, Quelch?" he ejaculated.

"I said nonsense!" answered the Remove master grimly. "No doubt some of the juniors are a—little exuberant, on the first day of term. But—"

"Coker has not arrived, Mr. Quelch, though he was seen three or four hours ago at Lantham. How do you explain that?"

"I do not undertake to explain it, sir. I am concerned only with matters relating to my own Form. But, since you ask me, I will remark that I have noticed Coker, of the Fifth Form; and

noticed that he is an uncommonly stupid boy—a very unusually stupid and obtuse boy. Probably he has taken a wrong train."

"Such may be your opinion, Mr. Quelch! I desire to question the boys concerned in the outrageous proceedings at the railway station. They may be able to let some light in on the matter and—"

"If you know their names—"

"One was Wharton—"

"I will send for Wharton!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Prout, with dignity. "Very good, sir!"

Mr. Quelch touched a bell and Trotter was sent for the head boy of the Remove.

Harry Wharton arrived quite promptly. The House page had met him coming away from the lobby with his friends.

"You sent for me, sir?" asked Harry, addressing his Form-master, but with the corner of a watchful eye on Prout.

"Yes, Wharton. It appears that you were concerned in some—some disturbance at Lantham Junction to-day, of which Mr. Prout complains. Kindly tell me at once what occurred."

"Hem! It—it was a bit of a rag, sir—" stammered Harry. As Coker had not yet arrived at Greyfriars School he wondered how "Old Pompous" had got on the track. Moreover, Coker was certainly not the fellow to complain to a beak.

"You and a mob of other Remove boys handled Coker of my Form very roughly, I understand from Loder of the Sixth!" boomed Prout. "Loder saw part of what occurred."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. The Famous Five's old enemy, Gerald Loder, was not losing time in making himself unpleasant that term.

"If Loder saw what occurred, sir, he saw that we were not to blame in the matter, in any way," he answered.

"Please tell me what happened, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch tartly.

"There was a chap—I mean a boy—on the platform there," said Harry. "We recognised him as a young pickpocket, who had picked our pockets in the holidays. We collared him—I mean we got hold of the young rascal—"

"Quite a proper proceeding," said Mr. Quelch. "Such a character should have been given into custody. But what had Coker to do with this?"

"He barged in, sir—"

"He what?"

"I meant he chipped in—"

"You mean what?"

"I—I—I mean, he rushed at us, and punched us right and left, and the pickpocket got away," said the captain of the Remove. "So—so we collared Coker, and jolly well ragged him!"

"Absurd!" boomed Prout. "You dare to state, Wharton, that a boy of my Form deliberately prevented the arrest of a pickpocket—"

"Of course not!" snapped Wharton. "I don't suppose Coker had ever seen the kid before, or knew anything about him. We couldn't imagine why the fat-head—I—I mean, why Coker butted in at all, but I've thought since that he fancied we were ragging some stranger, and, being a fool—"

"What?"

"Being a fool, he barged in without asking questions. Anyhow, the result was that the pickpocket got away, and we ragged him for barging in."

"It appears, then, that the trouble, such as it was, was begun by that boy of your Form, Mr. Prout!" said the Remove master. "Such a trivial occurrence is hardly worth notice."

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"Not, sir, if Coker had reached the school!" said Mr. Prout. "If Coker had the impression that Greyfriars juniors were ill-using a stranger he was justified in intervening. Wharton should have explained to him—"

"How could I explain to a fellow who rushed at me like a mad bull and punched me in the eye?" inquired Wharton.

"Do not be impertinent, Wharton!" boomed Prout. "I require to know what has become of Coker. Where did you leave him?"

"On Lantham platform."

"What was he doing?"

"Gurgling!"

"Wha-at? What did you say?"

"Gurgling!" answered Harry calmly.

"Mr. Quelch, if this boy persists in being impertinent—"

"Kindly answer Mr. Prout more respectfully, Wharton!"

"Mr. Prout asked me, sir. When we left Coker he was sitting up on the platform, gurgling! I can't say he was doing anything else. He was gurgling."

Mr. Quelch passed his hand over his mouth to hide a smile.

Mr. Prout had no smile to hide. He frowned portentously.

"Wharton, why has not Coker arrived at Greyfriars?" he boomed.

"I really don't know, sir. He may have taken the train to Canterbury or Dover—he's ass enough!"

"Silence, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "You did not leave Coker in such a state that he was unable to resume his journey?"

"Oh, my hat—I mean, oh, no, sir! He was all right—only rather winded and dusty. We rather mopped him up, after knocking us over like a lot of skittles! But there was no harm done."

"He has not reached the school!" boomed Prout. "It will be necessary for me to go to Lantham and make inquiries. If it should prove, Quelch, that Coker was so roughly handled by boys of your Form as to be unable to travel—"

"Nothing of the kind, sir," said Harry.

"I can account for his absence in no other way," said Mr. Prout. "If you have anything more to confess, Wharton, you—"

"I've nothing at all to confess, sir. I've said that we ragged Coker for barging into what didn't concern him, that's all."

"You may leave my study, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch hastily.

"Very well, sir."

Harry Wharton left the study, followed by a glare from the Fifth Form master. He rejoined his friends on the staircase.

"What's the trouble?" asked Bob.

"That old ass Prout!" grunted the captain of the Remove. "He's heard about Coker, and thinks the silly owl is still out because we've nearly slaughtered him or something of the kind. That worm, Loder of the Sixth, seems to have seen us, and he's been pulling Prout's leg!"

Bob Cherry whistled.

"I say, though, it's jolly queer that he hasn't turned up!" he remarked. "He's the man to take a wrong train if there's one handy, but that wouldn't account for all this time."

"Listen to the band!" murmured Nugent.

Prout's boom floated up over the banisters. He was talking to Hacker, the master of the Shell.

"Very inconvenient, pushed for time as I am, Hacker, on the first day of term! But if a boy of my Form has been injured—actually injured—by those young hooligans in Quelch's Form—"

"Really, I think they are capable of it, Mr. Prout!" came Hacker's acid voice.

"I must proceed to Lantham—very awkward and inconvenient! Such reckless ruffianism on the part of Greyfriars boys—witnessed, too, by a prefect—"

"Scandalous, sir!" said Hacker.

The Famous Five looked at one another. Prout was an old ass; Hacker was an acid drop. But Loder—Loder of the Sixth, evidently, had piled it on to start Prout on the warpath.

"Dear old Loder!" murmured Bob. "He can't give us a rest, even on first day! Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen, I think we'd better give Loder of the Sixth a little special attention, as a tip to behave himself this term!"—which suggestion was passed unanimously.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Up to Coker!

HORACE COKER stared. His eyes fairly bulged as he stared.

Standing in Lantham High Street, near the station, Coker of the Fifth had been thinking—an unusual proceeding on Coker's part, and not very effective, to judge by the puzzled and perplexed expression on his rugged brow.

Coker of the Fifth was not lost; he had not embarked on wrong trains, as the juniors considered likely. He had not been left too seriously damaged to travel farther as Loder of the Sixth had artfully hinted to Prout. Coker of the Fifth had reasons of his own for delaying joining up at Greyfriars—reasons that seemed good to the great Horace.

Coker was on a search. He was looking for somebody, and that somebody was the young pickpocket who had so narrowly escaped from the Famous Five.

The Famous Five knew nothing of him, except that he was a young rascal who picked pockets. Coker knew that, and he knew, in addition, that he was called Skip. And ever since the Famous Five had left him for dead, and he had got his second wind, Coker had been hunting for Skip.

Up and down and round about he hunted for that elusive youth.

His intentions were not hostile; his intentions were friendly. But he was, nevertheless, feeling a strong desire to kick Skip for giving him all this trouble.

He had commanded Skip to wait for him at a certain spot on the platform. Skip had waited there as commanded till the Famous Five collared him. Then—only saved by Coker's rescue—he had vanished, and ever since Coker had been hunting for him, and hunting in vain.

Coker was determined to find him if he could be found. Skip had saved Coker from having his nut cracked by a rascally footpad—his own associate, Jimmy the Rat. Coker was not likely to forget that eminent service.

Somehow—he did not yet know how—he was going to take that dishonest young scoundrel in hand and teach him to be honest. He was prepared to thrash him as much as might be necessary for that good object. But, ready as Coker was to get on with the good work, it was impossible even to begin till he found Skip—and Skip seemed unfindable.

Almost all over Lantham Coker wandered, hunting. He asked dozens of people if they had seen a kid about fourteen or fifteen, with a chubby face and a tie-pin as big as a wood-chopper.

Nobody had, apparently. Anyhow, Coker got no information.

He wandered back to the railway station at last. Standing there, with a puzzled, puckered brow, he noted people coming out of the station from a train just in.

Among them was a portly gentleman, whom Coker recognised as his Form-master at Greyfriars, Mr. Prout.

It did not occur to Coker that Mr. Prout's visit to Lantham had any connection with himself. He did not know that he was supposed, by Prout, to be tottering about somewhere in a

with bulging eyes—breathless, amazed, enraged, dismayed; quite a startling and upsetting mixture of emotions.

For Skip, sidling along by Prout, slipped on the pavement and pushed against him, and, under Coker's staring eyes, extracted a fat pocket-book from Prout's pocket.

Then it dawned on Coker how it had come to pass that he had spotted Skip at last. The light-fingered young rascal was haunting the railway station to pick passengers' pockets as they came out! This fellow was the boy Coker was going to take in hand—this fellow

Skip twisted round, and blinked at him. It was an immense relief to see Horace Coker, instead of a policeman.

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" said Skip. "I thought it was a bobby got me!"

"Serve you right, if it had been!" growled Coker. "I've a jolly good mind to walk you straight off to the police station this blessed minute!"

"You wouldn't do that, sir, arter I stopped Jimmy the Rat cracking your 'ead with a gas-pipe, sir!" gasped Skip.

"No," said Coker, "I won't. Giv



Billy Bunter hurled the tomato at Bob Cherry's face. The whizzing missile missed Bob by a few inches and landed in the ear of Potter of the Fifth. George Potter jumped clear of the quad in his astonishment. "Wha-a-t——" he gasped.

seriously damaged state. He was surprised to see Prout coming out of Lantham Station, when undoubtedly he had plenty to do at the school on the first day of term. But he was not interested in Prout.

He knew, however, that if his Form-master spotted him, he would direct him to go on to the school at once.

It would be quite useless to tell Prout that he had urgent business in Lantham; still more useless to tell him that that business was finding a young scoundrel of a pickpocket whom he was going to take in hand. Now that Prout was in the offing, Coker's best guess was to keep out of sight—which he did, dodging behind a trolley-load of luggage as the portly Prout rolled out.

Among other passengers that emerged from the station entrance was a boy, with very sharp eyes in a chubby, good-looking face, and a tie-pin that glared in the September sunset rather like a lighthouse.

It was Skip!

He was so close to Prout that Coker, glad as he was to spot him at last by happy chance, did not venture to approach him till Prout was gone.

He kept an eye on him, to follow him where he went.

And it was then that he stared

who had pinched his Form-master's pocket-book under Coker's eyes!

"Oh, sorry, sir!" said Skip, as Prout glared. "I jest slipped, sir——"

"Be more careful!" boomed Prout.

And he rolled majestically on, without the faintest suspicion that his pocket-book had now changed ownership.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker. "The putrid little tick! The horrid little swab! Oh, my hat!"

Skip was left grinning as the portly Prout rolled on.

But he did not grin for long. He was looking about him, doubtless for another prosperous-looking victim, when a sudden grip fastened on the back of his neck.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Skip. "Pinched, by gum! Orlright, Robert! I'll come quiet!"

Skip, for the moment, had no doubt that he had been grabbed by a policeman, who had seen him pick the portly schoolmaster's pocket. Coker's grip on the back of his neck was like a steel vice.

"You young rascal!" hissed Coker. "I saw you!"

"Oh!" gasped Skip.

"What do you mean by calling me Robert, you little idiot? I've told you my name!"

me that pocket-book you've just pinched!"

Skip eyed him.

"You wouldn't touch it, sir, surely?" he exclaimed incredulously. "You don't mean I'm to give it to you?"

"Eh? Yes, of course."

"Well, my eye!" said Skip. "Wot about 'alves, sir?"

"Halves!" repeated Coker blankly.

"Well, fair's fair," urged Skip. "I got it off the old bloke, didn't I? You only see me do it. 'Alves is fair."

Coker gazed at him dumbfounded.

Horace Coker was not quick on the uptake. It took about a minute for it to sink into the rather stolid brain that this young scoundrel fancied that he wanted the plunder, and was offering him half.

The look that came over Coker's face, as he realised that, alarmed Skip. He shrank away, and would certainly have bolted on the spot, but for the vice-like grip on his neck.

"Look 'ere, don't you 'it a bloke!" he remonstrated. "You wouldn't be 'itting a bloke if I'd let Jimmy crack your 'ead like he was going to."

"You—you—you iniquitous little beast!" gasped Coker. "Did you think I wanted to keep the pocket-book?"

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"You didn't want to chuck it away, I s'pose?" asked Skip, staring.

"That man you robbed is my Form-master at school," gasped Coker. "I'm going to give him back his pocket-book. Now do you understand, you putrid little reptile?"

"Oh, you know the bloke?" said Skip. "Orlright!"

He handed over the purloined pocket-book, which Coker slipped into his pocket—very glad to keep it safe for Prout.

"Now come with me!" snapped Coker. "I've been hunting for you for hours. You never stayed where I told you."

"Ow could I, with a lot of coveys a-grabbing me?"

"Well, never mind that! Come on now!"

"Where are you going, sir?" asked Skip, as Coker, shifting his grasp from a neck to an arm, led him into the station.

"School, of course!" rapped Coker. "I expect there'll be a row about my getting in so late, anyhow. I've got to decide what's going to be done with you."

"S'pose I 'op it?" suggested Skip.

"You're not going on picking pockets, you little scoundrel! I'd rather hand you over to the police than that. I can talk to you in the train. Mind, I shall have my eye on you, and you touch anybody's pocket again, and I'll give you a wallop! I've taken control now! Get that into your head!"

"Jest as you like, sir," said Skip.

There was a shifty, furtive look in his eye. Coker was bent on befriending Skip. Skip was not so sure that he wanted to be befriended. He was

rather more inclined to "hop" it, taking with him the fat pocket-book he had annexed from the old covey who looked like a schoolmaster.

However, there was no help for it, for the present; and Skip entered Coker's train with him, and rolled away to Courtfield. And as they went both were thinking.

Coker was thinking what he could possibly do for this young scoundrel to save him from a crooked life, in gratitude for services rendered. Skip was thinking whether, when he got that fat pocket-book back, he should also pinch Coker's possessions along with it.

Fortunately, Coker did not guess the young rascal's thoughts, or it was probable that the threatened "walloping" would have been administered on the spot.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Loder Follows the Trail!

GERALD LODER of the Sixth Form breathed hard and deep.

He went into his study, feeling the need of a smoke, or fancying that he did.

In the "hols" Loder smoked cigarettes galore. At Greyfriars no fellow was supposed to smoke and it was the duty of a Sixth Form prefect to "whop" any fellow who did.

Nevertheless, Loder of the Sixth had brought back to school with him a box of nice, fat Turkish cigarettes, and placed the same in the table drawer of his study.

He shut his study door, pulled open the drawer of the table, and found the cardboard box with its gilt lettering,

just where he had left it. But when he lifted the lid thereof he stared blankly into an empty box.

There had been at least twenty cigarettes left in that box. Now it was empty!

Loder of the Sixth breathed hard and deep, his eyes glittering. Somebody had gone into his study evidently while he was in Hall, and burgled those cigarettes.

It was intensely annoying—all the more so because he could not possibly inquire after missing cigarettes, which no Greyfriars fellow was supposed to possess.

Some fellow who knew Loder's manners and customs had done this. Loder would have given much to discover who that fellow was. And he was going to discover him, if he could.

He put his official ashplant under his arm. If he tracked down those cigarettes, he could not, of course, claim them as his own. He would, indeed, have to deny the imputation, if anybody suspected that they were his. But if he found any fellow with cigarettes in his possession, he could, and would, whop him for that offence against the rules. Which would be a satisfaction, at least.

As it happened, Loder was not long in getting on the track of the missing smokes. A minute after leaving his study, he was attracted by several voices, speaking together, at the foot of the staircase.

"Whose fag?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Somebody dropping cigarettes about," said Harry Wharton.

"I wonder who—" remarked Frank Nugent.

Loder came quietly up. The three juniors were staring at a fat Turkish cigarette, which lay at the foot of the stairs, as if carelessly dropped by some fellow going up. Loder knew his own brand, and, without being a Sherlock Holmes, he could deduce that the unknown purloiner of the cigarettes had gone upstairs with them. No doubt he had been in haste, and it was very easy for a fellow in haste to drop one or two out of a fistful.

Loder, scowling, passed the three juniors, affecting not to notice them. They exchanged smiles as he tramped up the stairs.

"On the track—what?" murmured Nugent.

And the three chuckled.

Loder reached the next landing, where Johnny Bull's voice caught his ear.

"What ass has been dropping cigarettes about on the stairs?"

"What's that, Bull?" snapped Loder. Johnny looked round innocently.

"Oh, is that you, Loder? Somebody's been dropping fags about. Look!"

The Remove fellow pointed to a fat Turkish cigarette on a stair in the second flight.

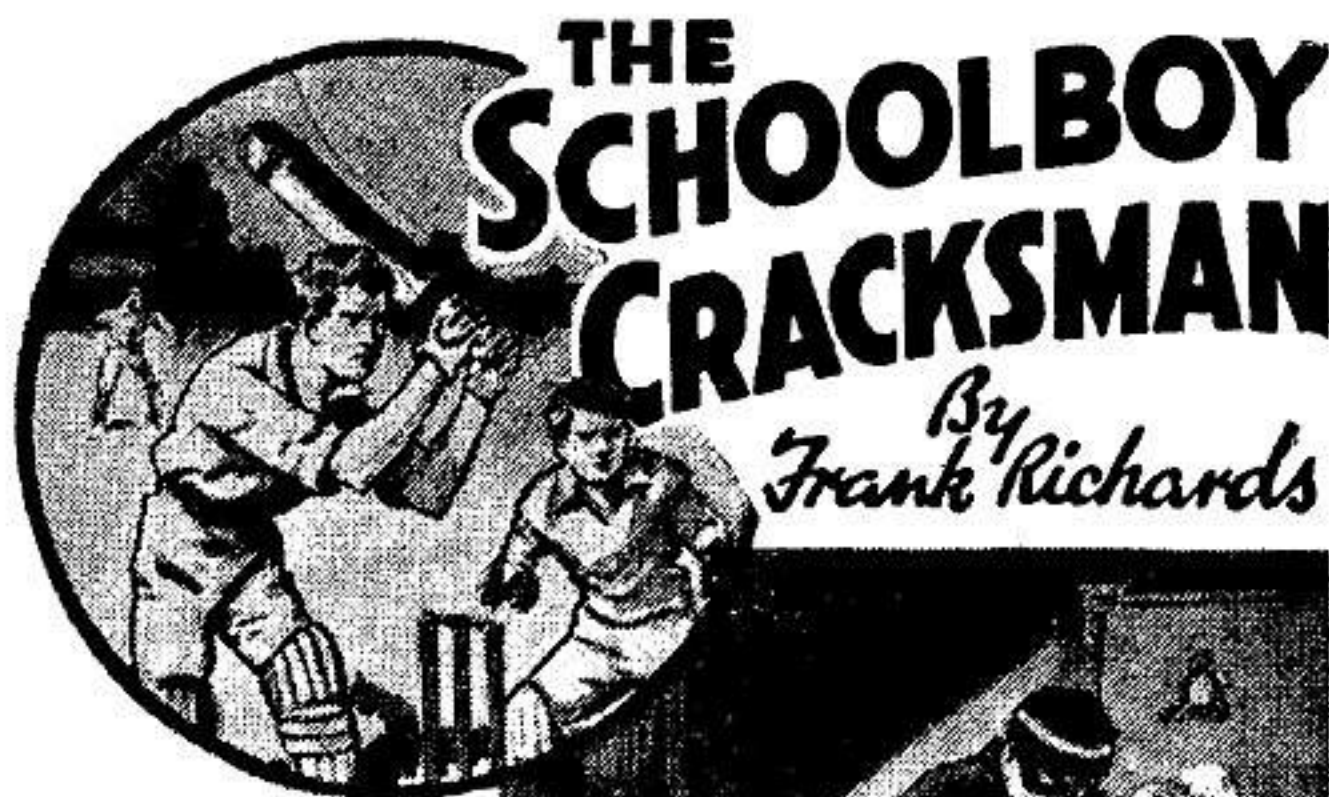
Loder went on up the stairs.

Evidently he was on the track. This was the second clue. And Johnny, looking down over the banisters, winked at three juniors below.

On the next landing Loder paused. He was on the track, certainly, but at that floor he had several passages to choose from, as well as an extensive landing. But his luck evidently was in, for the voice of Hurree Jansen Ram Singh reached his ears from the Remove staircase.

"What ridiculous ass has been dropping cigarettes about?"

Loder was on the Remove staircase the next moment. A squashed cigarette lay there—squashed, but recognis-



To Greyfriars, the new Sixth Former, Dick Lancaster, is a great fellow and a fine sportsman. But the school little know that in the underworld he is known as the "Wizard," expert cracksmen! You cannot fail to be enthralled by this gripping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.



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able as his particular brand. The fellow who had bagged his smokes had clearly gone up to the Remove studies, leaving clue after clue behind him.

The prefect walked into the Remove passage.

Six or seven fellows were there, and a voice reached him as soon as he appeared:

"Hallo! Who's been dropping fags about? Yours, Smithy?"

"Not guilty," drawled the Bounder. "You fellows know jolly well I don't smoke."

"Well, somebody does," said Peter Todd. "Look at that fag! I've just trodden on it."

"I trod on one myself, coming down from the box-room," said Vernon-Smith. "Some goat seems to have been chucking them about."

Loder's eyes gleamed.

A dropped cigarette on the box-room stair told plainly enough where the young rascal had gone with those smokes. The Remove box-room was rather secluded—up a short stair, at the end of the Remove passage. Just the spot that some smoky young rascal, like Skinner or Snoop would choose, to smoke a cigarette, after bagging same from Loder's study.

Loder cut up the passage.

The Removites glanced at him, but did not grin till he was gone.

"Asking for it—what?" murmured the Bounder.

"Sort of!" grinned Toddy.

Loder of the Sixth did the passage quickly, and tramped up the box-room stair.

A squashed cigarette on the stair met his eye—doubtless the one Vernon-Smith had trodden on! Another caught his eye on the little landing outside the box-room!

He had his man now! He had fairly tracked him down! The young ass had dropped about half a dozen of those cigarettes, from a crammed handful—and Loder had followed clue after clue, and run him down! In the box-room, he could hardly fail to catch him—he had not the slightest doubt that the young rascal was smoking cigarettes there!

Loder gripped his ashplant hard, with a glitter in his eyes! It was his duty, as a prefect, to "whop" any junior caught smoking—and he was going to perform that duty, and put all his beef into it!

He strode into the box-room!

To his surprise no one met his view there. But there were many boxes and trunks, and plenty of cover for a fellow to dodge out of sight at the sound of footsteps.

Loder, ash in hand, proceeded to search among the boxes and trunks.

Slam!

He jumped, and stared at the door.

He had left it half-open. Now it had suddenly slammed. It was not the wind—the window was shut. Somebody had pulled it shut from outside, unseen.

Loder made a swift step towards the door.

Click!

He was yards away from it when the key turned outside. There was a faint chuckle and a sound of retreating footsteps, following the click of the key.

And Loder of the Sixth glared at the door, realising that he was locked-in in that remote box-room—and it dawned upon him, further, that it was for that precise reason that the cigarette-trail had been left—to draw him into the trap!

No doubt, downstairs, the young

scoundrel who had fooled him, was chuckling over it. Had Loder only known, quite a collection of young scoundrels were chuckling over it—chuckling, chortling, and grinning with great enjoyment. In the Remove passage, the Famous Five had gathered, with Smithy, Toddy, Hazeldene, and several other fellows—and all of them were chuckling.

"Caught!" said Bob Cherry.

"The catchfulness was terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Dear old Loder!" said the Bounder. "Following the trail like a giddy bloodhound—and never guessing that it was left for him to follow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Listen!" said Tom Redwing, laughing, holding up his hand.

Faint from the distance—came the sound of banging—on the inner side of the box-room door. It was heard in the Remove passage—it was not likely to be heard farther down.

"Mind nobody goes up to the box-room!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Nobody's to find Loder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a bit rough on him, if he's got some more tales to tell Prout," chortled Bob Cherry. "This may be a lesson to Loder, my beloved 'earers, to give the Remove a rest this term."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Loder of the Sixth, in a state of intensifying fury, was left to bang unheeded.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

"STOP!" said Coker of the Fifth. The taxi stopped.

The driver looked inquiringly at Coker. So did Skip.

Coker had taken that taxi from Court-field Station to Greyfriars School. As Greyfriars was still a quarter of a mile ahead, the driver was naturally rather surprised at being told to stop. However, he drew to the roadside, and halted.

"Get out!" said Coker to Skip.

Skip obediently got out. Coker followed him. Suitcases, rugs, and other impedimenta belonging to Coker remained in the vehicle.

"I'm walking the rest," said Coker. "Get on to the school and hand my things over to the porter, see?"

"Yessir!"

Coker paid the taximan, adding his usual liberal tip, and the man drove on again and disappeared.

Coker looked thoughtfully at Skip. Skip looked furtively at Coker.

Skip had been getting more and more restive during the journey. He did not quite know what to make of Coker, and had a very hazy idea of what Coker's intentions might be. So had Coker, for that matter!

But Horace had been thinking it out. He was determined to take Skip in hand, inflexibly resolved that the young rascal should not go back to his criminal associations. That necessitated keeping an eye on him. As Coker had to turn up at Greyfriars—and was, in fact, already late in turning up—he had decided on the only possible course—to take Skip there!

Even Coker realised that this was an unusual sort of proceeding—not to say an extraordinary one!

Still, he did not see what else was to be done, if he were going to keep the young sweep under his eye, as he had resolved to do.

On the morrow he would be able to consider the matter further, and decide

on Skip's ultimate fate. In the meantime the boy would have a lodging for the night and would be under Coker's eye.

"Come on!" said Coker when the taxi had disappeared.

Skip came on—more and more restive.

Young rascal as he was, Skip had his good points. He had decided not to snaffle any of Coker's possessions when he got that fat pocket-book away from him again. Coker seemed to him rather a fool, but a good-natured sort of bloke—and Skip had not, so far, experienced much in the way of kindness. But he had quite made up his mind to have Prout's pocket-book back from Coker, and to vanish over the horizon with the same.

To Coker's simple mind it seemed that any fellow brought-up to dishonest ways must naturally be glad to jump at a chance of mending those ways! Skip's point of view was different.

Not that it mattered very much to Coker whether Skip was willing or not. Coker having decided, the matter was settled; and it had not occurred to him to inquire whether Skip was willing.

The grey old tower of the school was visible now over the trees against the September sunset. Walking beside Coker, Skip contrived to stumble against him, and the pocket-book passed out of Coker's possession at the same moment. It was easier than getting it off Prout!

"Clumsy young ass!" said Coker.

"I jest slipped, sir—" murmured Skip.

"Well, don't!"

Coker tramped on, and Skip dropped a little behind.

The Greyfriars Fifth-Former stared round irritably.

"Don't lag behind!" he rapped. "Do you want to get lost?"

That was exactly what Skip did want. But he did not venture to say so. He hurried on again.

"Keep up!" grunted Coker. "I don't want to have to hunt for you again as I did in Lantham this afternoon. I shall get a jaw for being late as it is, most likely. Luckily, though, Prout's gone out, and mayn't notice when I get in."

"Oo's Prout sir?" asked Skip.

"My Form-master. The plump old chap you robbed in Lantham, you young rascal!" said Coker, sternly. "Lucky I was on the spot and got his pocket-book back for him!"

Skip grinned.

But he ceased to grin as Coker slipped his hand into the pocket where he had bestowed Prout's pocket-book. Coker had no idea that it had left his possession; he was simply feeling to make sure that it was still safe.

An extraordinary expression came over his face as he groped in an empty pocket.

"Why—what—what—" gasped Coker.

"Anything the matter, sir?"

"That pocket-book's gone!" exclaimed Coker.

"Is it reely, sir? P'r'aps you dropped it in the train!" suggested Skip.

"I don't see how it could drop out of an inside pocket," said Coker, puzzled.

"But—it's gone! Some putrid pick-pocket—my hat! Did you notice anybody shove against me, or anything?"

"Nunno, sir—"

"Why, you did yourself, a few minutes ago!" exclaimed Coker. "You thundering young scoundrel, have you pinched that pocket-book off me?"

Skip did not answer that question.

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He turned and flew. Coker stared after him, blankly. "Stop!" he roared. Skip flew on. Coker was far from being a suspicious fellow. But, in the peculiar circumstances, it had occurred to him that Skip had re-taken possession of Prout's pocket-book. Now that the young rascal took to his heels, he could hardly have any doubt.

He rushed in pursuit. Skip was swift, he was active, and he dodged like a weasel. But Coker's long legs covered the ground at a great rate—he did a yard to Skip's foot. In three minutes Coker's grasp was on the boy's shoulder, and Skip was jerked to a halt.

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

"You young villain!" panted Coker. "Hand over that pocket-book at once!"

"Ere you are, sir!" mumbled Skip. Prout's pocket-book dropped into Coker's pocket again. Then, with his left hand, Coker grasped Skip by the collar. With his right, he swished a light walking cane he carried.

Whack, whack, whack! "Ow!" roared Skip, wriggling wildly in Coker's resistless grip. "Ow! Old on, sir! Ow! Ow!"

Whack, whack! "Yoo-hooop!" yelled Skip. "Oh, my eye! 'Ere you leave a bloke alone, see! You leago a bloke's neck!"

Whack! "Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" howled Skip, fairly dancing.

"That's six!" said Coker, grimly. "Now listen to me, you young rotter! Every time I catch you pinching, I'm going to thrash you, like that. See?"

"Ow!" gasped Skip. "Wow! Look 'ere, you mind your own business, blow yer! You lea' a bloke alone! You lot a covey cut!"

"Don't be a young ass!" said Coker, reprovingly. "Haven't I told you that I'm going to take you in hand, and make an honest kid of you. It's up to me, after what you did for me, you little fool! Come on!"

Coker tucked the walking-cane under his arm again, and walked towards the school—Skip wriggling as he accompanied him.

If Skip had doubted before that he did not want to be befriended by Coker, he had no doubts now. Gladly he would have seen the last of Horace and his good intentions and his heavy-handed methods. But there was, at present, no escape for Skip; neither did the young rascal want to go empty-handed. So he submitted to his fate—wriggling.

Quite close to the school, Coker turned into a little lane by a fir plantation that bordered the old wall of the Cloisters.

"You can climb that wall?" he asked.

Skip wriggled—but he grinned. He had climbed much more difficult walls in his time, and crept in at high windows. Coker was far from guessing the full history of the young rascal he was befriending.

"Easy, sir!" said Skip. "You see, I can't walk you into my school!" explained Coker. "Everybody would ask questions at once, if you were seen, of course."

Skip did not know much about Public schools. But he hardly needed telling that.

"You'd get into a row, sir!" he remarked. "P'raps I hadn't better go in."

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"Do you want another whopping?"

"Eh? Oh, no."

"Then don't argue!" said Coker. "Get over that wall, and wait for me inside. I'm going to get you into the House for the night. But I shall have to be a bit careful."

Skip eyed him. Coker was going to take him into that big school and leave him somewhere for the night. It looked to Skip as if this might be a more paying proposition than Prout's fat pocket-book! His eyes danced.

"Just as you say, sir!" he murmured meekly. "Course, I'll do anything that you tell me, you being so kind."

"That's right!" said Coker, approvingly. "All you've got to do is to do exactly as I say and never argue, and we shall get on all right. I hope I shan't have to thrash you again. Still, I'm ready to do it if necessary. Better bear that in mind. Now cut over that wall and wait for me where you drop."

"Orlright, sir." Skip disappeared over the Cloister wall. And Horace Coker, satisfied that he had, so far, done the very best that could possibly be done in the peculiar circumstances, walked round to the school gates and went in.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Address!

"BEAST!" "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" "Cad!" "Dear old barrel——"

"Rotter!" "Anything the matter?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

Billy Bunter looked as if something was the matter. He looked as if something was very much the matter!

He fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on Bob Cherry, with a glare of scorn, contempt, disdain, and deadly wrath.

Bob grinned. So did the other members of the Co.

Walking out into the quad, after seeing Loder of the Sixth locked in the Remove box-room, the Famous Five came on Billy Bunter. The last time they had seen Bunter, he had been hanging on to Coker's hamper, in the lobby. That was some time ago; and had they thought about him, no doubt they would have guessed that he had got away from the hamper by that time. But they hadn't. Actually they had forgotten the fat existence of William George Bunter.

"Rotten beast!" went on Bunter, his eyes gleaming scorn at Bob's cheery face. "I daresay you thought it funny to tie a chap on to that beastly hamper."

"You asked me to!" said Bob, mildly. "You said distinctly that you wanted to hang on to Coker's hamper——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Beast!" roared Bunter.

The fat Owl of the Remove had his right hand behind him as he stopped in the path of the Famous Five. Had they been able to see through Bunter's extremely solid person, the chums of the Remove would have noticed that his hidden hand grasped a large tomato.

But they could not, of course, see through Bunter, and they never even suspected the existence of the tomato. Moreover, had they known that Bunter was in possession of a tomato, they would only have supposed that he intended to eat the same. It would never have occurred to them that it was intended as a missile.

But the fact was, that that tomato had seen its best days. It was large and over-ripe—and had been over-ripe for a considerable time. It had, in fact, been thrown away—and Billy Bunter had annexed it for a particular purpose.

"I was hanging on to that hamper for half an hour!" went on Bunter, breathing wrath. "Then Greene came in—for the hamper, and he kicked me!"

"Hard?" asked Bob. "Yes!" howled Bunter.

"Good!" said Bob heartily. "Greene of the Fifth is a bit of an ass, but he does sensible things sometimes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You can cackle!" roared Bunter. "Perhaps you won't cackle when I've done with you."

"Help!" gasped Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Greene let me go," said Bunter. "I don't believe he would have, only he wanted the hamper. Now, you beast——"

Potter of the Fifth came along. "You kids seen anything of Coker yet?" he asked.

"No: hasn't he come in?" asked Harry Wharton. "He seems to be making a day of it."

The Famous Five looked round at Potter as Harry answered him. This was Bunter's opportunity.

His fat hand came out from behind him.

Up it went, and the tomato was hurled at Bob Cherry's face.

Had it landed there, it certainly would have made Bob feel very clammy and discomfited. That was the fat Owl's deadly intention.

As Bob was not more than five or six feet from him, really even Billy Bunter might have been expected to bring off that shot. But the fat Owl was what the Remove fellows described as cack-handed in such matters.

The whizzing tomato missed Bob by six or seven inches. But it was not wasted. Every bullet has its billet! Missing Bob, it landed in the ear of Potter of the Fifth!

George Potter jumped clear of the Greyfriars quad in his astonishment.

"Wha-a-t——" he gasped.

His hand went to his ear and became clammy with tomato. Tomato oozed down Potter's neck. Potter, for a moment or two, was transfixed. He was a Fifth Form man, a senior—and a fag of the Remove had suddenly hurled a tomato at his ear, for no reason at all except sheer cheek, so far as Potter could see. It was really an amazing occurrence.

Harry Wharton & Co. were as astonished as Potter. They gazed at the fat Owl of the Remove, dumb-founded.

"You potty ass!" gasped Wharton. "What the thump——"

"Cut!" gasped Bob Cherry, as Potter got into motion. "Hook it, you fat chump!"

Bunter hardly needed telling to hook it. For a second he gazed in utter horror at what he had done. Then he flew.

After him flew Potter of the Fifth. He ran with one hand to his ear—both the hand and the ear full of squashy tomato. But he ran hard.

Why Bunter had done this, Potter did not know, any more than the Famous Five did—but he knew he was going to strew him all over Greyfriars for having done it.

"Well, of all the balmy chumps!" gasped Nugent. "What the dickens did he buzz that tomato at Potter for?"

"Goodness knows! Must be off his



With a sudden twist, Skip wriggled out of his jacket, leaving it in Mr. Prout's hands, and cut up the passage in his shirt-sleeves. "Stop him!" boomed the Fifth Form master. "Monsieur Charpentier, seize that boy! Stop him!" But Skip was desperate, and he charged. "Mon Dieu!" gasped the French master, as he went flying.

rocker!" said Bob in wonder. "He says that Greeno kicked him—but that's no reason for buzzing tomatoes at Potter. That Fifth Form man will slaughter him!"

Such was Potter's intention, and it would infallibly have been carried out, had not Bunter passed Smithy and Redwing, in the quad, in his wild flight. At the sight of a Fifth Form senior in pursuit of a Remove man, Herbert Vernon-Smith promptly put a foot in Potter's way.

Potter did a nose-dive over that foot and landed on the quad, with a bump and a roar.

Smithy departed hastily—grinning. Billy Bunter departed still more hastily—far from grinning.

By the time Potter resumed the perpendicular, Bunter had vanished. He disappeared into the old Cloisters—sagely deciding to keep in cover till Potter of the Fifth gave up the hunt.

Potter, clammy with tomato, and breathing fury, hunted high and low for Bunter—what time Bunter, leaning on the old ivied wall at the end of the Cloisters, pumped in breath and mopped a perspiring brow—and hoped, from the bottom of his fat heart, that the enraged Fifth-Former would not track him to his hiding-place.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skip in the School!

"OOOOOGH!" gasped Bunter. The fat Owl almost wondered whether he was dreaming.

As he leaned on the old Cloister wall, half-hidden by the thick ivy, Billy Bunter was keeping his eyes, and his spectacles, on the alert for Potter of the Fifth. But he was not on the alert for anyone else; and had he been, he certainly would not have expected any-

one to arrive from above. Any fellow might have been astonished by a foot suddenly clumping on his head—and Billy Bunter was absolutely amazed.

Another foot followed, clumping against Bunter's fat ear. Then the owner of both feet dropped—on Bunter!

Bunter gave one anguished gasp and collapsed.

And Skip, who had naturally expected to drop to the ground when he dropped over a wall, sprawled over Bunter, as surprised as the fat Owl.

"What the smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

"Urrrgh!" moaned Bunter.

"My eye!" spluttered Skip.

He rose quickly to his knee—on a fat waistcoat—and jumped to his feet. He stared down at Bunter.

"You!" he ejaculated. "That fat covey! My eye!"

Billy Bunter blinked up at him dizzily through his spectacles.

"Urgh! Beast! Groooogh! You've squish-squish-squashed me!" gurgled the fat Owl. "Oooooogh!"

Then, as he recognised Skip, the fat junior almost forgot that he was winded. He sat up, his eyes popping through his spectacles.

"You!" he gasped. "That young pickpocket! Oh crikey!"

He blinked in utter amazement at Skip. He had last seen him at Lantham Junction that day when the Famous Five had collared him, and Coker had rushed into the fray. He had never expected to see him again—and seeing him at Greyfriars was really amazing.

"You!" gasped Bunter.

"You fat idjit!" growled Skip. "You 'ad to be in the way, like you was before, you blooming bloated hoyster!"

"I—I say— Urrrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "What are you doing here—

urrgh—you young scoundrel! Urrrgh!"

"Wot are you doin' 'ere, if you come to that?" grunted Skip. "Blow yer! 'Old your row, afore I kick you!"

"Look here—" gasped Bunter.

"I said 'old your row!" snapped Skip. "You asking for it, face?"

Billy Bunter decided to hold his "row." He had not, in point of fact, much breath left to expend on speech.

He sat and gurgled for breath, blinking at the stranger within the gates. What the young rascal was doing there, unless he was looking for a chance to pinch something, was a mystery to Bunter.

Bunter could see that he was listening—apparently for a footstep.

In a few minutes there was a sound of a heavy tread on the old stone flags.

Billy Bunter jumped up. Approaching footsteps made him think of Potter. But it was Horace Coker who appeared in the offing. Evidently Coker, at long last, had turned up at Greyfriars.

"You're here—" began Coker; then, as his eyes fell on Billy Bunter, he gave a start. "You fat young ass, what are you doing here?"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Butting in where you're not wanted, as usual!" yapped Coker. "Get out of it—see? Cut off, Bunter!"

"I—I say, I—I'd rather stay here— Yaropoh! You kick me again, you beast, and I'll— Yarooop!" yelled Bunter.

Coker kicked him again, and yet again.

Billy Bunter beat a prompt retreat. This was worse than Potter!

Yelling, the fat Owl vanished, Coker landing one more to accelerate him as he flew.

"Now come on!" said Coker. "It's rather unfortunate that a Greyfriars kid

has seen you here—the sooner you get out of sight, the better. Come on!”

“Yessir!” said Skip.

He followed Coker.

By that time the September dusk was falling, and most fellows were heading for the House. Roll-call was soon due.

Earlier in the day, Coker would hardly have got through unnoticed. Now, time and circumstances favoured him.

With great caution, he cut round the school buildings and stopped by the kitchen gardens, where, fortunately, Mr. Mumble, the gardener, had ceased work and quitted his cabbages and lettuces. No eye was on Coker as he halted with Skip under the wall of an outbuilding.

“There’s a rain-pipe here,” said Coker. “You can climb a rain-pipe!”

“Easy, sir!” grinned Skip.

“You’ll find leads up there and a window,” said Coker. “It’s the Remove box-room, and nobody will be there at this time of day. It’s pretty easy to get in and out there—I know some of the young sweeps in the Remove have broken bounds that way more than once. The window may be unfastened—if it is, you’ll get into the room, see?”

“Yessir.”

“And wait for me there,” said Coker. “I’ll come as soon as I can and fix you up. But I’ve got to see my beak first—and other things. If you have to wait, never mind.”

“Yessir.”

“If the window’s fastened, you can wait outside till I come and let you in,” added Coker.

“I can open a winder from outside, sir!” said Skip.

Coker frowned at him.

“You young rascal! That’s no credit to you! Still, if you can, you’d better get inside.”

“Yessir.”

“Now I’ll give you a bunk up!” said Coker.

He heaved Skip up the rain-pipe, and the little rascal disappeared above as nimbly as a monkey. Coker waited to see him safe on the leads, and then walked away, feeling satisfied. Even Coker realised that it was high time that he allowed his headmaster to learn that he had arrived at school.

“Oh, here you are!” Greene met him as he entered the House. Coker’s other pal, Potter, was busy just then washing off tomato. “Where on earth have you been all this time? You’re jolly late getting in.”

“Better late than never!” said Coker cheerily.

“Prout’s gone to Lantham to look for you—”

“Wha-a-t?”

“We heard that you had a row with some fags at the station, and Loder told Prout. He fancies you’ve been fearfully damaged—”

“What utter rot!” snapped Coker. “I thrashed some Remove fags at Lantham to-day—I caught them ragging, and thrashed them. Prout’s an old ass!”

“I fancy Loder was pulling his leg a little—”

“Loder’s a cad! If he makes out that Remove fags could damage me, I shall jolly well tell him what I think of his rot! It was young Wharton and his mob—and I thrashed the lot of them. What are you grinning at, Greene? I don’t see anything to grin at in that.”

“Oh! No! Quit!” gasped Greene. “I’ve heard that they left you on the

platform in a rather rumped state—”

“They got off in a train before I could finish thrashing them, if that’s what you mean, Greene. Don’t talk silly rot, if you can help it! Has my hamper come?”

“Yes; we’ve got it up to the study—”

“I’d better go and see the Head, I suppose!” grunted Coker.

And he went!

Coker, really, had little time to waste on headmasters; still, he went.

He tapped at Dr. Locke’s door and entered.

The headmaster of Greyfriars was at the telephone.

“So far, I have heard nothing, Mr. Prout!” he was saying. “I presume that Coker, if he had arrived, would report his arrival, though he is undoubtedly a very thoughtless and stupid boy—”

“Hem!” said Coker loudly.

“Bless my soul!” said Dr. Locke, and he stared round at Coker. Then he spoke into the transmitter again. “Coker is here, Mr. Prout.”

Evidently the Fifth Form master had failed to find Coker at Lantham—which was not really surprising, as Coker was at Greyfriars—and had rung up to ask if there was any news of him.

Dr. Locke replaced the receiver.

Coker was rather in dread of being questioned as to why he was so late. Certainly he had no intention of mentioning Skip to the Head.

But if Coker had little time to waste on headmasters, his headmaster had still less to waste on Coker on the first day of term. Coker was dismissed under the minute.

Glad to get away, Coker repaired to the Remove box-room, where he had no doubt of finding the light-fingered youth to whom he was—entirely on his own responsibility—extending the hospitality of Greyfriars School.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Slight Mistake!

LODER, of the Sixth, was raging.

He had banged and banged on the door of the Remove box-room. He had kicked and kicked at it. But though he made a terrific din, it was in vain. That that din must have reached a good many ears in the Remove passage, Loder could not doubt; but no Removite heeded it. Loud as it was, it was not likely to be heard farther off, as, of course, those young scamps had been well aware when they trapped Loder.

Loder was extremely unwilling to attempt escape by the window. He had his dignity as a Sixth Form prefect to consider; likewise, it was ruinous to a fellow’s clothes to scramble over roofs and down rainpipes.

But unwilling as he was, Loder made up his mind to it at last—only to discover that he could not open the window.

It was a small window, but Loder could have got out of it easily enough if it had opened. But it did not—and it would not. The sash seemed stuck somehow—and it was only after several minutes of vain wrenching that Loder discovered that a nail had been driven in right up to the head.

He breathed fury.

Evidently preparations had been made for his reception before the cigarette trail was laid.

Even an undignified retreat over roofs and rainpipes was denied him. He was a prisoner—and had to remain a

prisoner till the juniors chose to let him out, or until he was found there by chance.

It was getting dusk out of doors, and it was quite dark in the box-room. Loder moved about rather like a tiger in a cage.

He had to turn up in Hall for roll before very long, and he could hardly believe that the young villains would dare to leave him there after that. But there was no sound of anyone coming up the box-room stair.

True, Sixth Form prefects had the privilege of cutting call-over, if it seemed to them good. Perhaps they were going to leave him there till bedtime—leave him till he was missed and searched for. And he could not even guess who had played that trick on him. Some of the Remove, he had no doubt—but which?

Suddenly Loder gave a start, and spun towards the window, as a face was pressed to the glass from outside.

The panes were small, and the head outside filled one. Loder made a fierce stride towards the window.

In the deep dusk he could not make out the face—only its dim outline. But he had no doubt that one of the young villains who had trapped him had climbed up to the leads outside, to enjoy the sight of him doing his tiger-in-the-cage act.

“You young villain!” roared Loder, brandishing his ashplant. “Come and unlock the door, do you hear? Is that Cherry? Or Wharton? Or Todd?”

Skip blinked at him blankly through the glass.

He could not see Loder clearly, but he could hear him plainly enough. He knew that this was not Coker. He just stared.

“Do you hear me?” bawled Loder. “Is that Bull? Or Vernon-Smith? I know it’s one of you! Come up and unlock the door immediately!”

“My eye!” murmured Skip.

He backed away from the window and ducked out of sight.

Coker, for his own good reasons, and Skip, also for good reasons, desired to keep deeply secret the fact that there was a stranger within the gates. Already that fat covey had seen him. Now another “bloke” had spotted him. This bloke, however, apparently took him for somebody he knew; and Skip was glad to leave him in the error. He ducked and disappeared.

Loder raved! That young villain—no doubt a Removite—had given him a look-in, and gone!

The bully of the Sixth resumed pacing the box-room like a caged tiger!

It was about a quarter of an hour later that he heard, to his infinite relief, a footstep ascending the box-room stairs.

They had not dared, after all, to leave him there till calling-over. One of the young villains was coming up to turn back the key in the lock.

Loder had no doubt of that.

Certainly he was not likely to guess that Coker of the Fifth was coming up to the Remove box-room. He was not thinking of Coker—nor could he have imagined any Fifth Form man having business in that quarter.

With gleaming eyes, he posted himself close by the door, his ashplant gripped almost convulsively in his hand.

Probably—it seemed to Loder—the young scamp intended to unlock the door and cut away swiftly before the imprisoned prefect could get at him. If that was the idea, it was not going to work. Loder was ready to drag the door open and rush out instantly the key was turned.

Footsteps crossed the little landing to the box-room door.

Loder heard a hand grope over the lock outside.

Then he heard a grunt.

Coker was surprised and annoyed to find the door locked. So he expressed his feelings by a grunt. However, the key was there, in the outside of the lock, and Coker gripped it and turned it.

He heard a sound within the box-room, which left him in no doubt that Skip was there. He was no more thinking of Loder of the Sixth than Loder was thinking of Coker of the Fifth.

Having unlocked the door, Coker's next proceeding would have been to turn the handle. But he was saved that trouble. The door-handle was turned from within, and the door flew open.

Forth from the box-room, like a lion from his lair, rushed Loder, with brandished ashplant!

Whack, whack!

On the dark landing outside, Loder merely glimpsed a figure—and he whacked at it, hard and fast! Neither did Loder care much where the whacks landed! So long as they landed on the young scamp who had locked him in the box-room, Loder was satisfied—he did not mind where!

Coker got the first on his shoulder, and the second on his neck. He jumped clear of the floor, with a roar of pain and amazement.

Whack, whack!

Loder lashed fast! For more than an hour he had been looking forward to this! Now he let himself go!

Whack, whack!

"Oh! Ow! Ooogh! Wooooh! Oool!" roared Coker, staggering back, taken utterly by surprise. "Stoppit! You mad young fool, wharrer you at? I'll smash you! Have you gone mad, or what?"

Supposing that it was Skip in the box-room, Coker's first startled impression was that it was Skip who was pitching into him.

But whoever it was, Coker was not the man to take it quietly. Loder was putting in some quick work, and he got in half a dozen before Coker rallied. Then Coker hit—and a fist like a leg of mutton fairly knocked Loder through the doorway.

"Who—who's that?" spluttered Coker. Dim as it was in the room, he could see that the fellow there was much bigger than Skip—and certainly was not Skip. "Who the dickens—"

"Ow!" gasped Loder. He stumbled over a box and sat down. "Oh! Ow! Who—who's that?" Loder, on his side, realised that it could not be a junior who had delivered that terrific punch.

"Is—is that Loder?" stuttered Coker. The voice seemed familiar.

"Is that Coker?" gasped Loder. He recognised Horace's dulcet tones.

"Yes, you silly ass! Wharrer you mean by pitching into me?" roared Coker. "Think you can pitch into a Fifth Form man like that?"

"I—I thought you were the young scoundrel who locked me in here!" gasped Loder. "Did—did you come to let me out?"

"How the thump should I know that anybody had locked you in here?" yapped Coker. "Don't be an ass!"

He rubbed the places where the cane had landed, and glared at Loder.

Loder rubbed the place where Coker's hefty fist had landed, and glared at Coker.

"I've a jolly good mind—" hissed Loder, gripping his ash.

"I've a jolly good mind—" hissed Coker, clenching his fists.

Loder, glaring, tramped out of the box-room. He was glad, at all events, to get out.

Coker glared after him as he went.

Then he went to the window, and discovered, as Loder had done earlier, that it would not open. Coker breathed hard and deep.

"Those dashed fags—" he muttered. Evidently some of the juniors had been japing Loder of the Sixth—quite disconcerting Coker's carefully laid plans. There was no admittance for Skip by way of the Remove box-room.

Coker, with deep feelings, tramped down the stair after Loder.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

"Collar Him!"

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag. He blinked round through his big spectacles, spotted the Famous Five, and squeaked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Potter still after you?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, blow Potter!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I've seen him—" "You've seen Potter?"

"No, you ass!" exclaimed Bunter excitedly. "That young scoundrel!"

"You've seen a young scoundrel?" asked Bob.

"Yes, I jolly well have!"

"You were looking in a looking-glass?"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you I've seen him. That young villain who was picking pockets at Lantham Station."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"He's here!" announced Bunter.

"Here!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Where, fathead?"

"In this school!" declared Bunter.

"I've seen him!"

The Famous Five stared blankly at the fat Owl of the Remove. In the rush of the first day at school, they had almost forgotten the affair at Lantham, and they had not expected to see the young pick-pocket again, or to hear of him. Certainly they had never dreamed of hearing of him at Greyfriars.

"You've seen him here!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "How could he be here, you silly ass?"

"He jolly well is!" said Bunter.

"He got in over the Cloister wall, and dropped on my napper. I'd have collared him, too, only that fool Coker

barged in, and—and I didn't want to argue with Coker. But I say, you fellows, he's hero; he's got into the school!"

"What utter rot!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Why should he come hero?"

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"You dreamed it, fathead!" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I say, you fellows, think I'd better go to Quelch about it?" asked Bunter. "He must have got in here to pinch something, of course; he couldn't have come for anything else. I don't want to wake up in the morning and find my watch gone."

"It's impossible," said Harry, "or jolly nearly impossible. Look here, you fat duffer, if you're gammoning, as usual—"

"I tell you I saw him!" hooted

(Continued on next page.)



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Bunter. "I knew him at once, and he jolly well knew me, too. Coker saw him, too. He came into the Cloisters and saw him there, and kicked me."

"Has Coker turned up at last?"

"He jolly well has, as he came into the Cloisters when that young villain was there. He saw him, same as I did. You can ask Coker!" yapped Bunter.

"I think I will," said Harry. "If that young rascal has really got into the school, the sooner he's nabbed, the better. But you're such a fat-headed fibber, old fat man!"

"Yah! You jolly well ask Coker!"

"Let's!" said Bob.

And the Famous Five left the Rag to look for Coker of the Fifth.

Billy Bunter's statement that he had seen the young pickpocket in the school was altogether too startling to be easily believed. Still, if Coker of the Fifth had seen him, that settled the point. Certainly, if such a character had got into Greyfriars, he had to be collared without delay.

The chums of the Remove looked for Coker.

But Coker was not easy to find. They looked in his study and drew it blank; they looked in the Fifth Form games study, and learned from Potter and Greene that Coker actually had arrived at last, and gone to report himself to the Head some time ago. He could not still be with the Head, but where he was seemed rather a mystery. He was not to be seen in Hall, or in the passages.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes jolly old Loder!" murmured Bob Cherry, sighting the bully of the Sixth on the staircase.

Loder, as he came down, glanced at the Famous Five, sharply and suspiciously. But those cheery youths looked as if butter would not melt in their mouths, and after that suspicious glare, Loder passed on.

"Some ass must have gone to the box-room and let him out!" murmured Bob. "We tipped all the Remove to keep clear. What silly ass—"

"Here's Coker!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, here he is!"

Coker of the Fifth came downstairs a minute or two after Loder. He gave the five a glare, no doubt remembering his painful experiences on the platform at Lantham.

"I say, Coker—" began Harry.

"Shut up, you cheeky fag!" snapped Coker, and he walked on.

"I want to ask you—"

"I said shut up!" Coker pointed out.

And he walked out of the House, disdainfully regardless of such inconsiderable microbes as Remove juniors.

"The silly, cheeky ass!" said Bob. "Look here, we've got to ask him. That fat ass was most likely only gammoning, but we've got to know."

"Come on!" said Harry.

The juniors followed Coker out of the House.

The dusk was thickening in the quad, and the bell for lock-up due to ring almost any minute. Hardly anybody was out of the House now, and it was rather puzzling why Coker had gone out. But he had, and the Remove fellows followed him.

To their surprise, Coker was already at a distance, walking very quickly. They had to put on speed to avoid losing him in the dusk.

Coker, in fact, had no time to lose. As Skip had not been able to get into the Remove box-room, Coker had to find him before lock-up, and give him fresh instructions. He had no doubt of finding him where he had been told to wait.

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and he hurried round the buildings in search of him.

Harry Wharton & Co. hurried after him, quite surprised by the direction Coker was taking.

Quite unaware of his interest in the Remove box-room window, they simply could not guess why he was heading for the kitchen gardens which that window overlooked.

"What is the blithering ass up to?" asked Nugent.

"Can't be going to sneak some of old Mimble's cabbages, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors chuckled. That really was improbable, but it was difficult to guess what other object Coker might have.

They hurried after him, and saw him come to a halt by the outbuilding under the box-room window. Then they heard his voice.

"Skip!"

The Famous Five exchanged startled glances.

"Is he off his rocker?" breathed Bob.

"Is he ever quite on it?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Skip!" called Coker again.

It was really amazing. The juniors knew nothing of Coker's acquaintance with the young pickpocket; neither had they any knowledge of the fact that the young rascal was called by the peculiar name of "Skip." So Coker's proceedings were utterly inexplicable to them.

Why a fellow should walk in haste to a lonely dusky spot, and stand there and call out "Skip!" was a deep mystery—unless, indeed, Coker of the Fifth was wandering in his mind.

But in another moment the juniors forgot the mystery of Coker's remarkable proceedings, as they saw a slim, nimble figure emerge from the shadow of a corner of the outbuilding.

Dusky as it was, they knew the young pickpocket again.

They did not know that he was Skip, and that he was showing up in answer to Coker's call. But they knew that he was the young rascal who had picked their pockets in the holidays, and whom they had collared at Lantham Junction.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There he is!"

"By gum! Then Bunter—"

"Collar him!"

Taking no further heed of Coker, the Famous Five made a rush. Their only business with Coker was to ask him whether he had seen that very fellow, as Bunter had stated, inside the school. Now they saw him themselves, so there was no need to ask Coker.

They rushed at him.

Skip gave a startled look round. He would have joined Coker in another moment, but at the sight of the school-boys who had collared him at Lantham, he made a rush to escape. It was clear that they were going to collar him again, and Skip hit the open spaces without delay.

"After him!" roared Bob.

"Bag him!"

Coker stared round.

"Look here—" he roared.

Unheeding Coker, the Remove fellows tore after the vanishing pickpocket. Skip was cutting across the kitchen garden, with a reckless disregard for damage to Mr. Mimble's cabbages.

Equally regardless of the cabbages, the Famous Five tore on his track.

Coker, after staring blankly for a moment or two, started in pursuit. The cabbages suffered still more severely under Coker's heavy tread.

Skip ran as if for his life. He did not doubt that "chokey" awaited him if he were collared. Had it been lighter,

some of the juniors would have run him down, fast as he went; but the thickening darkness favoured him. He dodged among sheds, and disappeared from sight.

Up and down and round about, the Famous Five hunted for him, but the elusive young rascal had given them the slip. No doubt he was crouching in some dark corner, but rooting him out of it was no easy matter.

As they rooted round one of Mr. Mimble's potting-sheds, Coker came panting up. He announced his arrival by grabbing two of the juniors by their collars and banging their heads together.

"Ow!" roared Harry Wharton.

"Wow!" yelled Bob Cherry.

They turned on Coker and grabbed him.

Why Horace had banged their heads they did not know; neither did they stop to inquire. They grabbed Horace and up-ended him with a crash. Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh rushed in to help. Coker was rolled among cabbages, wildly spluttering.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the bell!" exclaimed Bob, as there was a clang from the direction of the House.

"Come on!" gasped Wharton.

Skip had vanished—and Coker was left rolling in cabbages, gurgling.

The Famous Five cut off to the House, just in time to join up with the Remove going into Hall for calling-over.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

In Prout's Study!

"SKIP!"

"Ere, sir!"

"Oh, here you are!" grunted Coker.

"Yessir!"

The Famous Five were gone. Roll was being called in Hall, which Coker, of course, ought to have attended like the rest of Greyfriars. But Coker, with more important affairs of his own on hand, dismissed roll from his mind.

He stood in the cabbage-patch, set his collar and tie straight, smoothed his rumpled hair, and called Skip. And Skip, as soon as he was sure that the coast was clear, emerged from cover.

There was a faint grin on Skip's face. His first impression of Coker, at their first meeting, had been that Coker was a fool. Coker's subsequent proceedings had strengthened that impression. In fact, had Skip ventured to tell Coker what he thought of him, he would have called him a "blooming idjit."

Coker, quite unaware that he was either a fool or an idiot, had no idea what Skip thought of him.

"Now, look here, kid," said Coker. "I've got to get you into the House for the night. To-morrow I'm going to decide what's going to be done with you. What are you grinning at, you little ass?"

"Oh, nothing, sir!" stammered Skip. He was not likely to tell Coker that he intended to be a dozen miles away by the dawn, with his pockets crammed with all the valuables he could lay his dishonest hands on.

"Well, don't grin for nothing!" grunted Coker.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Skip obediently.

"All the fellows will be at roll now," went on Coker.

"Will they, sir?" murmured Skip. He did not know what "roll" was; but he did not want to know, so that was all right.

"It's a chance for getting you in, without any nosey parkers spotting you," explained Coker. "I can't walk



Having secured Skip's hands, Bob Cherry tied the end of the rope, as an additional precaution, to a bar of the grate. With cheerful resignation, the pickpocket threw himself on the camping blankets. "You can sleep all right with your paws tied," grinned Bob, "and if you want anything to think about, you can turn it over in your mind that honesty is the best policy!"

you in at the door, of course. But I can let you in at a window, see?"

"Yessir!"

"My beak isn't in the House now," went on Coker.

"No; I s'pose it ain't, sir!" said Skip, staring. Coker's "beak" was there present, in the middle of his face, so far as Skip could see.

"It!" repeated Coker, staring in his turn. He did not always speak with proper respect of Prout; but he had never alluded to that majestic gentleman as "it." "What do you mean, you young ass?"

"Oh, nothing, sir!" said Skip. He was wondering what Coker meant, if Coker meant anything.

"Well, don't talk like a fool and waste time," said Coker. "My beak went to Lantham to look for me, so I've heard—you haven't forgotten picking his pocket, you young rascal, have you?"

"Oh!" gasped Skip. He realised that Coker's Form-master was the beak.

"Most of the masters will be in Hall for roll, but some of them may be in their studies," said Coker. "But Prout won't be, as he's over at Lantham. See? I can nip you in at the window, safe as houses, and then get you off to a box-room, or somewhere. Come on!"

"Yessir!"

Lights were gleaming from the high windows of Hall. The school had gone in, and the big doors were closed. No eye fell on Coker as he led Skip round the buildings, and posted him under Mr. Prout's study window, with orders to wait there.

Then Coker went into the House.

In Masters' Passage, he found Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, who was going into his study.

Mossoo was reading a letter as he walked, and moving slowly. Coker waited impatiently till he was out of

sight, before he went along to Prout's study. He had to get through, if he could, before roll was over, and the school came streaming out of Hall. But he did not want to be seen going into his beak's study; so he had to waste a few precious minutes until Mossoo's door closed.

Then he hurried along to Prout's door, opened it, stepped in, and shut it after him.

It was quite dark in the study, save for a glimmer from the fireplace.

Coker bumped into a chair, and knocked some books off the corner of the table, and upset a jar of flowers, as he progressed across to the window.

He lifted the lower sash, and spotted a grinning face staring up from the gloom outside.

He frowned at it.

Coker's aims and intentions towards Skip were very benevolent, in his own masterful way; but he was not the fellow to stand any nonsense, and especially any cheek. He saw no reason whatever for Skip to be perpetually on the grin, as if there were something comic in these proceedings. Coker was happily unconscious of anything comic either in his proceedings or himself.

"Grinning again, you little monkey!" he grunted. "Do you want me to smack your head?"

"No, sir!" murmured Skip.

"Get in!"

"Yessir!"

Skip climbed in at the window as nimbly as a monkey.

Coker gave him a helping hand, which caused him to stumble against a chair, and utter a howl as he knocked his shin.

"For goodness' sake, be quiet!" said Coker irritably.

"Ow!" gasped Skip. "I mean, yessir!"

"If you're spotted here, it means a

fearful row! Keep quiet, see? Don't make a sound!" said Coker.

He closed the sash—inadvertently banging it, with a report almost like a pistol-shot. Fortunately, it was too dark in the room for him to perceive that Skip was grinning again.

"Now," said Coker, as he turned from the window, "you're in the House, anyhow. All right so far. Lucky Prout's out. The old ass may barge in any minute, of course, so the sooner you're out of his quarters, the better. There's a back staircase at the end of this passage, and you can get away by that. I'll stick you in the Fifth Form box-room for the present. See?"

"Yessir!"

"Now, you go first, and I'll follow," explained Coker. "You can nip up the passage, and wait on the staircase—I'll come after you. Don't go the wrong way and run into a lot of people. Make straight for the back staircase!"

"Which way, sir?" asked Skip.

"Eh? Oh, up the passage—turn to the right out of this room!" Coker had overlooked that necessary information. "Go as quick as you can—but quietly! Froggy's in his study."

Skip wondered what a froggy might possibly be; but he did not ask. Coker was rather impatient under questioning.

"I'll make sure the coast's clear," added Coker.

He stepped to the door, opened it, and looked into the passage.

He was rewarded by the view of Mr. Prout, his Form-master, rolling majestically up the passage towards the study.

Coker gazed at him, in startled dismay and horror.

Prout had come in!

Really, there was nothing surprising in that. Having learned from the Head, over the phone, that Coker had

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COKER TAKES CONTROL!



(Continued from page 13.)

turned up, it was natural for Mr. Prout to return to the school. It rather disconcerted Coker's careful plans; but even Coker could not reasonably expect Mr. Prout to remain a permanent fixture at Lantham. Prout had come back; and, from his look, had not come back in a good temper.

His temper did not matter very much, but his arrival mattered an awful lot. It was impossible to get Skip out of the study unseen. It was equally impossible for him to remain there. It was, in fact, awful! It might almost have led Coker to doubt whether he really was such a perfect planner as he believed.

"Oh, gum!" breathed Coker.

He stopped back, and closed the door.

Skip peered at him in the dark.

"Anything up, sir?" he asked.

"Quiet! Prout's coming! The old idiot's come back. He'll be here in a tick! Jump out of the window—no—don't—there's no time—get behind something—" stuttered the dismayed Coker.

Skip disappeared under the study table.

He was only just in time.

In a matter of seconds the door opened under Prout's portly hand, and the Fifth Form master switched on the light and rolled in; and in great surprise he stared at Coker, of his Form, suddenly revealed to view.

Why Coker was waiting there in the dark was a puzzle to Prout; he could see no reason for it—the reason being safely hidden out of sight under the study table.

He stared—or, rather, glared—at the hapless Horace and rapped out like a bullet:

"Well?"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Placating Prout!

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

He blinked at his Form-master.

It was an immense relief that Skip had dodged so promptly out of sight, and that Prout had no suspicion of his presence in the study. But Coker, never quick on the uptake, was totally at a loss to know what to do or say; he could only blink at Prout, gasping like a newly landed fish.

Fortunately, Prout was prepared to do most of the talking; Prout could always be relied on never to let a pause last long.

"Why are you here, Coker? Why are you not in Hall?"

"I—I—" stammered Coker.

"If you came here to report to me you should not have missed calling-over for that purpose," said Mr. Prout. "Even you, Coker, should have sufficient common sense to be aware of that."

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Coker.

"However, as you are here, I will hear your explanation of your very

extraordinary proceedings to-day," snapped Prout. "I was informed, Coker, that you were seen at Lantham Junction many hours ago, but as you did not come on with the other boys I concluded that something had happened to you—"

"Oh, I—"

"You need not interrupt me, Coker! I learned from Loder of the Sixth Form that you had been engaged in a disgraceful scuffle with some Remove boys, and supposed that the effects prevented you from resuming your journey—"

"Oh, sir, I—"

"I told you not to interrupt me, Coker. I have taken the trouble," boomed Prout, "to visit Lantham specially to ascertain the circumstances. I have suffered a very severe loss in consequence. I find that there is, after all, no reason why you should not have come on to Greyfriars with the rest of the school. You have given me this enormous amount of trouble for nothing, Coker—for no reason, apparently, but a desire to play truant like a small boy in the Second Form."

Coker reddened. This was altogether too thick!

"Look here, sir—" he exclaimed indignantly.

"Then why," boomed Prout, "did you remain behind? Why did you remain in Lantham four hours and more after the rest of the school had arrived here?"

"I—I—I—"

"Playing truant!" said Prout with ineffable scorn. "A Fifth Form boy—a senior—playing truant! Pah!"

"I wasn't!" roared Coker.

"Then what were you doing in Lantham hours after Loder of the Sixth saw you at the station?"

"I—I—I—"

"I shall report this to Dr. Locke," said Prout. "I will allow no such conduct in my Form! I have been unnecessarily alarmed; I have wasted time and money to no purpose; and I have suffered a heavy loss. All this is due to your insensate, unthinking folly, Coker."

"But I—I—"

"You need say no more, Coker, unless you give me an adequate explanation of what you were doing for hours in Lantham. No doubt you lost your train after your undignified scuffle with the juniors, but—"

"I—I lost the next, too, sir," stammered Coker, "and—and the next!"

This was strictly true; Coker had lost train after train while he was hunting for Skip up and down Lantham.

"Pah!" snorted Prout. "I refuse to admit such a statement—either as an explanation, or an excuse. Your insensate folly has caused me a loss—a very heavy loss—"

"I'm sorry for that, sir, but—"

"Your sorrow will not restore the pocket-book that was stolen from me in Lantham!" said Mr. Prout, with savage sarcasm.

Coker started. His leisurely intellectual processes had not connected up Prout's reference to a "heavy loss" with the pinched pocket-book, but it dawned on him now. Things did dawn on Coker, given time.

"Your—your pocket-book, sir," stammered Coker. He groped inside his jacket.

"Yes, Coker, my pocket-book!" boomed Prout. "As I sat in the train, returning here, I discovered that my pocket-book was missing. Some rascally pickpocket in Lantham must have taken it. That pocket-book, Coker, contained banknotes to the value of thirty pounds and upwards."

It was no wonder that Mr. Prout had returned in a bad temper. Form-masters at Greyfriars had good salaries, but thirty pounds was a large sum for any man to lose. Prout was, in fact, in almost a dangerous state of fury.

"I have little hope," went on Prout, "of ever recovering it. It must have been taken from my pocket by some skilful thief. I had no suspicion of what had occurred till I was in the train returning. I lay this heavy loss at your door, Coker."

"But, sir—"

"The fault is yours—entirely yours!" said Mr. Prout. "Had you arrived here, as you should have done, I should never have gone to Lantham, and this would not have occurred."

"But I—"

"I shall report the matter to the police, but I have little hope—very little—of ever seeing my property again. There were important papers in the pocket-book as well as a large sum of money; there were letters, some of them as yet unanswered. You have caused me a heavy loss and put me to the greatest inconvenience. I shall take you to your headmaster, Coker—"

"But, sir—"

"I shall request Dr. Locke to deal with you with the greatest severity!" roared Prout. "My pocket-book is gone—"

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

"What? Are you out of your senses, Coker? Do you dare to contradict me?" thundered Mr. Prout.

"Oh, no, sir! But—"

"Then what do you mean, Coker? If you have, as I doubt, sufficient intelligence to have a meaning at all—what do you mean?"

"I—I mean I—I got it back, sir!" gasped Coker.

"What?"

"Here it is, sir!"

Coker laid the fat pocket-book on the study table.

Mr. Prout gazed at it like a man in a dream.

The ghost of his pocket-book could hardly have startled him more.

"Bub-bub-bless my soul!" he said faintly at last.

He picked it up and examined it. Thunder faded out of his brow as he ascertained that the contents were intact.

He ceased to frown; he smiled; he almost beamed.

"Upon my word!" he said.

He gazed at Coker.

"How did you obtain possession of this, Coker?" he asked very mildly. "It is extraordinary that you should have recovered my property for me. It is very extraordinary! I am very much obliged to you, Coker. But how—"

"I spotted the—the rascal, sir, who picked your pocket in Lantham," explained Coker. "I got after him and made him hand it over."

"Then you saw me in Lantham?" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"Yes, sir—coming out of the station."

"I did not see you, Coker. Why did you not report yourself to me at once if you saw me?"

Coker could not explain that he had been dodging his beak's observation. Fortunately, Mr. Prout did not suspect it.

"I—I got after the pickpocket, sir," said Coker. "I—I never saw you afterwards." He did not add that he had been very careful not to see Prout afterwards.

"I see," said Mr. Prout. "Really,

Coker, I must compliment you! You have certainly acted very unthinkingly to-day, but in this matter you appear to have shown a presence of mind and a promptness of action that do you the greatest credit."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Coker modestly. Evidently the recovery of his pocket-book had had a very mollifying effect on Prout.

"My dear boy," said Prout genially, "I understand now why you waited for me to come in; though certainly you should not have missed calling-over. I quite understand your anxiety to restore my property. I need not say, Coker, that nothing further will be said of your somewhat thoughtless proceedings to-day. The matter ends here. I thank you, Coker!"

Prout, benign and beaming, made a gesture to the door.

"You may go, Coker."

"Oh, yes, sir!" stammered Coker.

He went—as far as the door. There he lingered. The recovered pocket-book had, fortunately, turned aside the vials of wrath; but Skip was still under the table. Coker hardly dared to leave the study, and leave him there.

He had hoped that Prout might roll off to Hall; but Prout was tired, and he was not thinking of Hall. He plumped into his armchair with a grunt of satisfaction and proceeded to give the recovered pocket-book another look through.

He glanced up at Coker, lingering by the door, genial, but surprised.

"Is there anything else you wished to say, my boy?" he asked.

"Oh! No, sir!" stammered Coker.

"Please shut the door after you."

Coker could linger no longer. He left the study and shut the door after him.

In the passage, he stared at the door and rubbed his nose.

"Oh crumbs!" said Coker.

And he went slowly away.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Touch and Go!

MR. PROUT closed his pocket-book with a snap, and leaned back in his armchair with a sigh of satisfaction.

He was tired. He had been peevish in fact, he had been exasperated; but the recovery of that pocket-book had soothed him. Coker had given him a great deal of trouble that day, but he was feeling quite kindly towards Coker. Soothed and comfortable, Prout leaned back—and then, in sudden amazement, he gave a start.

His eyes fixed on a foot!

A foot, in itself, was not a startling object. Prout had two of his own, though, owing to an increase of circumference, it was some years since he had seen them. There were some hundreds of inhabitants at Greyfriars School, every one provided with the usual allowance of feet. So it was not the foot itself that amazed Prout. It was the fact that he saw it under his study table!

Prout gazed at it.

But for the fact that he was leaning back in the armchair, he would not have seen it. While he was sitting upright it was below his range of vision.

Now he saw it—gazed at it—and stared at it!

As the sight of the footprint in the sand startled Robinson Crusoe, so the sight of that foot under the table

startled the Fifth Form master of Greyfriars.

It was clear, of course, that that foot belonged to somebody. It could not possibly be there on its own. It was attached to some person, crouching there out of sight.

Prout wanted to know who that person was. After a long minute of petrified astonishment he heaved his weight out of the armchair.

He could see that it was a boy's foot. But he could see, also, that it was not a Greyfriars boy's foot. It would have been surprising enough for some Greyfriars fag to have hidden himself under Prout's table. But this was still more surprising. The shoe in which the foot was encased was of a bright yellow tan, altogether too bright and smart for a Greyfriars fellow, when it was new. But it was not new; it was down-at-heel, discoloured, and shabby. It was, in fact, the shoe of some person who did not belong to the school—some extraneous person!

Prout wondered whether he had better pick up the poker before he rooted that extraneous person out.

However, he decided on his cane, and picked that up instead.

Cane in hand, he leaned his portly form by the table.

"Come forth!" said Prout, in a deep voice.

Skip did not stir.

He was unaware, so far, that he had been spotted. He sat tight, and hardly breathed.

"Emerge!" boomed Prout.

Skip still sat tight, unaware that he was being addressed. Prout's language was not his variety of English. Had Prout said "Op out!" he would have caught on at once. But Prout never dreamed of saying "Op out!" Skip's English was as strange to him as his was to Skip.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Will you, or will you not, emerge?"

Silence!

Prout breathed hard—partly with wrath, partly because he was bending.

He wasted no more words on the hidden owner of the foot. He reached under the table with the cane, and swiped it round.

Skip broke silence at that!

The swipe of the cane landed on his ear, and the startled yell he gave rang through the study.

"Wurrooop!"

"Emerge!" roared Prout.

He swiped again.

Skip emerged.

He emerged like a bullet from a rifle!

He bounded out from under the table, on the opposite side from Prout. The Fifth Form master glared at him across the table.

"Who are you?" he thundered.

"What are you doing here?" Skip answered neither question. He bolted for the door.

"Stop!" roared Prout.

Skip grabbed the door-handle.

Prout reached him just as he got the door open. He grasped him by the collar of his jacket.

"Stop!" gasped Prout. "I shall give you into custody! Do not dare to resist, you young rascal!"

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

He wriggled wildly in Prout's grasp. But that grasp was on his collar like a vice.

Prout did not recognise Skip as the boy who had pushed against him in Lantham that afternoon. He had seen the boy only for a moment, and forgotten him. But he could only con-

clude that this was some young rascal who had penetrated into the school for dishonest purposes—as indeed he was! Prout was not the man to let him go.

Skip barged desperately through the doorway. The grip on his collar dragged him back. He wriggled and struggled.

"Leago!" he gasped. "Look 'ere, you let a bloke go—see!"

From a study doorway farther up, a face with a little, pointed, black beard looked out.

Monsieur Charpentier stared along the passageway in astonishment.

"Mais, qu'est-ce-que c'est!" ejaculated Mossoo. "Vat is zat?"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Skip.

He gave a desperate wrench; but Prout had him, and had him fast. He wrenched in vain.

But with a sudden twist, he wriggled out of the jacket, leaving it in Prout's hands, and cut up the passage in his shirt-sleeves.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout.

Left in his study doorway, with Skip's jacket in his hand, the Fifth Form master blinked at the jacket and blinked after Skip. Then he boomed:

"Stop him! Monsieur Charpentier, seize that boy! Stop him!"

"Mais oui!" exclaimed Mossoo.

He jumped out of his study, right into Skip's way.

But Skip did not stop. With Mossoo in front and Prout behind, he was desperate. He charged.

That charge would hardly have shaken the ponderous Prout, but it fairly up-ended the dapper little French master.

"Mon Dieu!" gasped Mossoo, and he flew, as if a cannon-ball had hit him.

Skip stumbled over him as he sprawled, but only for a second. He recovered himself at once, and tore on.

He remembered Coker's directions, and headed for the back staircase up the passage. His feet hardly touched the floor as he ran, and he disappeared up the staircase at breathless speed.

"Upon my word!" came Prout's boom behind. "Who—what can the young rascal be? Some sneak-thief, who—"

"Mon Dieu! Je suis assomme! I have no breff! Oooogh!"

"Are you hurt, Monsieur Charpentier?"

"Ow! Wow! Urrgh! Ze vind he is gone! I am bang in ze vaistcoat—ze breff manque—urrgh!"

"The young rascal! I will find him! I—"

Prout boomed up the passageway, leaving Mossoo sitting up, with both hands pressed to his waistcoat, under which he appeared to have a pain.

Meanwhile, Skip had done the back staircase at top speed. What might lie ahead of him, he did not know; but he knew what lay behind, and was in a hurry to get away from it.

He emerged into a lighted passage and cut along it, turning a corner into another, going strong.

Bump!

"Here, what the thump—" roared the voice of Horace Coker. He staggered against the wall and gasped, and stared at Skip.

Skip, without being aware of it, had reached the Fifth Form passage. Horace Coker was there, trying to think out the problem of extracting his protegee from Prout's study. Luckily, the other fellows had not yet come up from Hall, and Coker was alone there.

Coker stared at Skip, his problem suddenly solved.

"You!" he gasped.
 "Oh crikey!" gurgled Skip. "I say, that fat old covey is arter me, sir!"
 "You young ass, did you let him spot you?" snapped Coker.

"I couldn't 'elp it!" gasped Skip.
 "Silly young ass! Didn't I tell you to keep out of sight!" snapped Coker. "You seem to be an utter fool! Oh, my hat! That's Prout!" added Coker, as a boom reached his ears.

"He came this way—up these stairs! I am assured of that! Wingate, kindly hurry on—I am a little short of breath!" Coker grasped Skip by the arm, and rushed him away.

At the upper end of the Fifth Form study passage was a box-room, which Coker had already decided upon for Skip's temporary refuge. He rushed him into that box-room at a speed that made his head swim.

"Stick there, and keep quiet!" he breathed.

He closed the door on Skip, and leaned against it, with his hands in his pockets, and an air of assumed carelessness.

He was only just in time.

In a few seconds, Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, appeared in the passage. Behind him, as though yet out of sight, Prout could be heard booming.

"That you, Coker? Seen a kid come this way?" called out Wingate.

"A kid?" repeated Coker. "A fag, do you mean?"

"Oh, no! Prout says that some boy who does not belong hero was hidden in his study—some young thief, I suppose."

"Not really?" ejaculated Coker.

"Yes, yes—have you seen anything of him?"

"Well, if he came up here, he could hardly get by without my seeing him, I should think," answered Coker. "I've been up here ten minutes or more. Think he went the other way—Fourth Form studies, perhaps?"

"Well, I suppose he must have, if he isn't here."

"Have you seen him?" Prout arrived, puffing and blowing. "Wingate, have you seen that young rascal?"

"He doesn't seem to be here, sir. Coker says he's been up here ten minutes—and it was not so long ago as that—"

"It was only a few minutes ago. He must have turned the other corner—come—come—we are wasting time!"

Prout puffed and blew away, followed by Wingate. And Horace Coker was deeply thankful to see the last of both of them.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Watchers of the Night!

HARRY WHARTON sat up in bed, in the Remove dormitory, as ten o'clock tolled out from the old tower.

There had been a buzz of talk in the dormitory after lights out, but it had died away at last, and all, or nearly all, the fellows had dropped off to sleep.

But, the captain of the Remove had not closed his eyes.

He was tired and sleepy enough, after a busy day. Nevertheless, he was not disposed to go to sleep.

"Any of you fellows awake?" he called out in a low voice.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came from Bob Cherry's bed.

"Oh, you're awake, Bob?"

"Sort of!" yawned Bob.

"Why haven't you gone to sleep?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

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"Same reason that you haven't, I expect!" he answered.

"That young rascal of a pick-pocket—"

"Exactly."

"Well, I can't help thinking that something's going to happen to-night," said Harry. "I suppose he didn't sneak into the school for fun?"

"Business, more likely!" chuckled Bob.

"I thought that perhaps he'd cleared off, after we chased him," said Harry.

"But—you heard about that row in Prout's study. There can't be any doubt that it was the same chap."

"Hardly!" agreed Bob.

"That means that he got into the House—which must have been his object all along. Well, they hunted for him and couldn't find him, and seem to suppose that he dodged out and hooked it, but—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" came another voice. Hurree Janset Ram Singh had awakened.

"You don't think so, Inky?" asked Harry.

"Not quitefully."

"Just what I was thinking," said Bob. "Ten to one he's parked himself in some corner to wait till the House is asleep. Lots of places where he could keep doggo. He must have barged in to pinch, and there's nothing to stop him."

"Unless we do!" said Harry.

"Well, yes! But—"

"It means breaking dorm bounds—and worse still, losing our beauty sleep. But if he's going to pinch right and left, and clear off before dawn—"

"That's his game, of course."

"Well, look here, if that's his game, I don't see letting him get away with it. He seems to be a thorough young rascal, the way he went through our pockets in the holidays. I suppose he can't be up to cracking safes—but there are lots of things in the studies. He's learned his way about Masters' Studies already. I suppose there's no doubt what would have happened if Prout hadn't spotted him in his quarters."

"Not much!"

"Well, what about keeping an eye open for him to-night?" asked the captain of the Remove. "We needn't turn out before half-past eleven—he could hardly get going before then. But I've no doubt at all that by midnight he will be prowling about the House, pinching everything he can lay his hands on. I don't believe for a moment that he's gone."

"Same here."

"The samefulness is terrific."

"Well, what about it?" asked Harry.

"Let's!" said Bob. "I was thinking of it when you spoke. You like the idea, Inky?"

"Not terrifically," answered the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But the playfulness up will be enormous."

"It's a go, then," said Harry. "Whichever fellow is awake at eleven-thirty, or so, call the others."

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors settled down to sleep. It was Hurree Janset Ram Singh who was awake when half-past eleven chimed out, and he called Wharton and Cherry.

Neither was very keen to turn out, but they turned out, all the same, and hurriedly donned jackets over their pyjamas.

The other members of the Co. were fast asleep, like the rest of the Remove, and they were left undisturbed. Three fellows were more than enough to deal with the light-fingered youth, if he was spotted prowling the House in the small hours.

Quietly Harry Wharton opened the dormitory door, and closed it again after they were in the passage.

At that hour of the night, all Greyfriars was buried in silence and slumber. Save for the murmur of the wind from the sea, in the old elms, and the crackling of ancient wainscots, all was silent and still.

The three juniors crept down the passage with hardly a sound.

Harry Wharton had a flashlight in his pocket, but he did not turn it on. The juniors knew every inch of the way, and did not need a light. But a light would be needed if there were a night-prowler about. And they were almost convinced that there was. They could imagine no other reason why the young pickpocket had penetrated surreptitiously into the school.

Of Coker's hand in the matter, they never even dreamed.

But had they known, it would have made no difference—indeed, it would have made them all the more determined to keep an eye open for the young rascal.

Horace Coker was the only fellow at Greyfriars who was capable of letting a professional pincher into the school, and leaving him to his own devices for the night. If Horace were sleeping contentedly, in the belief that Skip was carrying out his lofty directions to the very letter, it showed that Coker had a trustful nature which was much to be envied—but it certainly did not show that his trust was well placed.

"Masters' Studies?" whispered Bob, as they tiptoed softly down the stairs.

"That's it! That's the most likely place. I dare say he will root all over the House—but he won't miss the beaks' studies—especially as he knows his way about there."

Masters' Passage was dark, save for a glimmer of starlight from a window here and there. The three juniors stopped near the door of Prout's study. If the young rascal were really in the House, and if he were stirring, they could hear nothing of him; but they would hear him, fast enough, in the deep silence, if he came in that direction. And there could be little doubt that he would.

But once they had reached the spot selected for their vigil, they found the minutes hang heavy on their hands.

Keeping watch, in the middle of the night, for something that might possibly not happen at all, was weary work.

After ten minutes of it, it seemed to them that whole hours had passed. Something, apparently, had happened to the clock in the tower, for it was not chiming out the hours as usual!

It was quite a surprise, when midnight chimed out, at last—it seemed to them nearer one in the morning!

"My hat!" murmured Bob. "Only twelve!"

"No good chucking it now?"

"Oh, no! Stick it out!"

"The stickfulness is the proper caper!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Suppressing dismal yawns, they waited.

All three of them, as they grew sleepier and sleepier, began to wonder whether they were not, after all, rather asses to be out of bed—and whether, after all, there was anything to be up for.

But dubiousness and sleepiness were banished together, at the sound of a soft and stealthy footfall in the gloom.

Harry Wharton caught his breath.

He did not speak—but he pressed Bob's arm.

Someone was up, as well as them—



"Catch!" said Coker, heaving up the bag of tuck. It missed Skip's outstretched hands and came down again, quite unexpectedly, to land on Coker's upturned face, nearly pushing his rugged features into his fat head. "Wow!" gasped the Fifth Former. "My boko! Why did you let it fall, you mad idiot? Wow!"

selves. Not someone belonging to Greyfriars, as he was creeping softly without a light!

The matter was settled now! They knew that their vigil was not for nothing! The night-prowler was at hand!

Harry Wharton's hand closed on the flashlamp. With the lamp in his hand, ready to switch on, he waited—and his comrades waited, with baited breath, while that stealthy footfall drew nearer and nearer in the darkness.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Act!

SKIP grinned.

He could not help grinning.

In the course of his nefarious career, Skip had struck both hard and soft jobs; but this, he considered, was the very softest job he had ever struck.

That that burly, fatheaded fellow Coker really would leave him in the House, unwatched, for the night, seemed almost incredible to Skip. He had noted already that Coker was a fool—that, indeed, was a fact that leaped to the eye at a casual glance. But that any fellow could be fool enough for this, wanted some believing!

But there it was—Coker had done it!

During the evening, with no prep on the first night of term, and most of the fellows in Hall, Coker had easily found opportunities for looking after his extraordinary protegee.

He had paid several quiet visits to that box-room, with blankets from a camping outfit, good things from Aunt Judy's hamper, soap, and towels, and

such things, which seemed necessary to Coker, though not to Skip!

Finally, he had left him for the night, with strict injunctions not to stir from the room on any account whatever, till Coker came in the morning—but to take cover in a corner behind a heap of boxes if he heard anyone coming.

To all of which Skip, keeping his face serious with difficulty, promised implicit obedience.

He slept quite comfortably for a couple of hours in Coker's camping blankets—grinning himself to sleep.

But he was wide awake and very alert at midnight.

Much of Skip's peculiar professional work had been done between sunset and sunrise. He was quite accustomed to nightwork. He grinned almost from ear to ear as he opened the box-room door, and stood listening intently before he ventured out.

It amazed Skip that Coker should leave him there at all. It amazed him still more that Coker should expect to find him there in the morning—as evidently Coker did. He could only conclude that Greyfriars School had produced the biggest idiot that ever was. Anyhow, Coker was not going to find him there!

From midnight, till about two in the morning, Skip was going to be quietly busy. Then he was going to drop from a window and disappear over the horizon.

To do the young rascal justice, he felt a twing of remorse at repaying thus Coker's child-like faith.

But that twinge made no difference to his intentions. Coker had a happy belief that a dishonest person, given a chance to turn honest, would jump at that chance with both feet! Any hesi-

tation, Coker was prepared to deal with, with a heavy hand—as he had shown.

Skip did not resent the thrashing Coker had given him for his own good; he had had too many thrashings to bother much about one more. In fact, he rather liked Coker, and he was not wholly unconscious of gratitude. But the idea of missing a chance like this never crossed his mind—neither had he any desire to wait for the morrow, for Coker to follow up his present idiocy with more idiocies.

Having listened for two or three minutes, the young rascal crept out of the room, and made his way silently to the back staircase, which he knew would lead him to the Masters' Studies.

There, on a spot already familiar, he was going to begin!

Locked doors and locked drawers were not likely to stop him. If that fat old bloke that Coker called a beak had left his pocket-book in his study, it was fated to pass for a third time into Skip's keeping; third and last! And if the other old blokes were as well off as that particular old bloke, quite a harvest was to be reaped. And then there was the rest of the great building to ransack! He had most of the night before him—and he was a quick worker!

To "pinch" everything he could lay his hands on, clear out of the school and scuttle to a safe distance—and after that to keep out of the way of Jimmy the Rat—that was Skip's simple programme! Now he was going to carry it out—certainly without any intervention from Coker, who was sleeping like a healthy horse in the Fifth Form dormitory. To the

young "coveys" who had chased him among the cabbages, he gave no thought at all—certainly, never dreaming that they were out of bed at that hour. But it was, in point of fact, those very "coveys" who were going to put paid to Skip's programme!

Dim and dark, the passage stretched before him, as he crept from the staircase. He stopped lightly, making hardly a sound.

But the lightest footfall was loud enough to reach three pairs of ears on the strain.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh knew that he was coming—and waited in silence. Knowing well how elusive that young rascal was, they were not going to let him take the alarm and dodge away among dark passages and staircases.

In a group by Prout's door they waited, listening intently.

Had the stealthy footfalls stopped, they would have moved—but the footfalls did not stop; they came steadily on to Prout's door.

Even Skip's keen eyes did not spot the three figures blotted in the deep shadow.

A sudden flash of light came from the darkness.

It blazed into Skip's face, and he started back, with a sudden gasp of affright.

But before he could even think, Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh had grasped him by either arm and he was pinioned.

"Hold him!" said Harry, keeping the light steady.

"You bet!" grinned Bob. "We've got the young sweep!"

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

He wriggled and wrenched. But he had no chance with the Remove fellows as he had had with Prout. He had left his jacket in Prout's hands; but he could not leave his limbs—and his limbs were pinned in an iron grip.

"Chuck it!" said Harry. "We've got you this time!"

"The gotfulness is preposterous!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, my eye!" said Skip.

He realised that he was powerless, and ceased to resist. But his eyes were watchful as a cat's, and the Removes did not need telling that he was watching for the first chance to wriggle loose and bolt.

"It's a fair cop!" said Skip. "Fancy you young coveys bein' outer bed this time o' night! What'd your schoolmaster say, I'd like to know!"

"Never mind that," said Harry, smiling in spite of himself at the young rascal's coolness. "You were coming back to this study, where you were caught this evening, to pinch?"

"Oh, no!" said Skip, cheerfully. "Jest walking round for exercise."

"What?" exclaimed Harry.

"I generally takes exercise this time of night. Nice and quiet, and very 'calthy!" said Skip.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"He's got a nerve on him!" he remarked. "Well, we've caught you at it, you young sweep!"

"Looks as if you 'ave, sir!" agreed Skip. "P'r'aps you'll be so kind as to open a door and let a bloke walk out? I got an appointment to keep in the morning."

"The nervofulness of the esteemed sweep is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, we've got him," said the captain of the Remove. "I dare say

his pockets are crammed already——"

"You lose!" said Skip.

"What?"

"I mean, they ain't! I ain't touched a thing! I was goin' to begin 'ere—in that fat old bloke's room! You let me go, and I'll 'ook it empty-handed!"

"We can't let you go," said Harry.

"If we did, I've no doubt that you would get in at a window and rob the House before you hooked it."

"You ain't all fools 'ere, I see that!" admitted Skip coolly.

"Better call Quelch, and hand him over and have done with him!" said Bob.

"Can't do anything else."

Skip breathed hard. He had no chance whatever of escape, and, once he was handed over to persons in authority, Coker could not help him again. It looked as if the game was up and himself booked for the reformatory, which he certainly needed, but did not want.

But he had a card to play yet.

"I say, won't that get Mr. Coker into a row?" he asked.

"Coker!" repeated Wharton blankly. "What about Coker? You don't know Coker."

"Don't I just?" grinned Skip.

"Well, suppose you do, why should it hurt Coker, if we hand you over to our Form-master?"

"Well, mobbo his schoolmaster mightn't like 'im bringing me into the 'Ouse," said Skip. "I s'pose it ain't allowed, is it?"

The three juniors gazed at him, dumb.

"Coker let you into the House!" gasped Bob.

"Ow'd you think I got in?" asked Skip coolly. "Mister Coker let me in by that fat old bloke's window—that was 'ow he copped me in the room."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Harry.

"Well, you can ask 'im, if you like!" suggested Skip. "I tell you Mister Coker will be wild if he 'ears they got me!"

"We're not likely to root into the Fifth Form dorm to ask Coker whether he let a pincher into the House!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Hold on, though," said Harry quietly. "this is jolly queer. He seems to know Coker's name, at any rate. Coker's fool enough for anything, too."

"You know him?" assented Skip.

"If Coker let you in, why did he do it?" asked Harry.

"Looking arter a bloke!" said Skip. "He's going to make a bloke honest, he says, and take me in 'and. He stuck me in a room with blankets and grub for the night."

"You don't seem to have stayed there!"

"'Ardly!" agreed Skip. "I wish I 'ad now, though, all the same. I never knowed you coveys would be up watchin'."

"It can't be true!" said Bob. "Even Coker isn't such an idiot! Besides, why should he, even if he were fool enough?"

"Blessed if I know what to think," confessed Harry. "We don't want to get Coker into a fearful row, and he might be sacked for this. Anyway, we can soon see whether this young scoundrel is telling the truth about the room. Where is the room?"

"Up them stairs," said Skip.

"Well, take us there, and we'll see!" said the captain of the Remove. "Keep hold of him—very likely it's only a yarn to get a chance of dodging away."

"Straight!" said Skip. "I'll take you there in a jiffy!"

"Well, get on with it!"

Skip led the way, Bob and Hurree Singh still gripping his arms, and guarding against an attempt to escape. Harry Wharton following. That Coker of the Fifth had given this young rascal a lodging for the night, inside Greyfriars, seemed almost incredible to the juniors—champion ass as they knew old Horace to be. But if he had, they certainly did not want to land Coker with the consequences. They felt more concern for old Horace than he felt for himself.

Their doubts were dissipated as Skip led them into the Fifth Form study passage, and along to the box-room at the end.

They followed him into the box-room, where Bob turned on the light, after carefully shutting the door.

Then they stared at the camping blankets, the food supplies, and other things that Coker had smuggled into the box-room for his protege. Someone, evidently, had fixed up this retreat for the light-fingered youth—and they could hardly doubt that it was, as he stated, Coker! They gazed round the room, and then gazed at one another—dumb! And Skip watched them with a cheery grin.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

What's To Be Done?

"CAN you beat it?" murmured Bob Cherry, at last.

Wharton shook his head. He felt that he couldn't.

"Coker must be right off his chump!" said Bob. "What on earth would happen to him if this came out?"

"Goodness knows."

"Why, that young scoundrel might have robbed the whole House, and the police would have had to be called in, in the morning!" said Bob, with a deep breath. "And if it came out that Coker had let him in——"

"Poor old Coker!" said Harry.

"But what a blithering idiot——"

"What a terrific ass!"

Skip listened with some satisfaction. He realised that he had played a trump card in mentioning Coker. These coveys clearly did not want to get Coker into a row. And, little as he knew of schools, Skip could not fail to know that a tremendous row awaited Coker, if it came out that he had let a thief into the House.

If they wanted to save Mister Coker from the consequences of his egregious folly, they had to go easy with their prisoner—that was certain. Hope of escape, and keeping clear of Borstal, burned more brightly now.

"But why?" said Harry, hopelessly puzzled. "Coker's every kind of an idiot—but why should he play the idiot in this way?"

"Perhaps the kid knows!" said Bob. "Look here, young shaver—what's your name?"

"Skip!"

"Skip!" repeated Bob.

"Jest Skip, sir!"

The three exchanged glances. They remembered that Coker had been calling "Skip!" when they found this young rascal in the cabbage-garden.

They had not seen any sense in it; but as they never expected any sense from Coker of the Fifth, they had not thought about it.

But if this young sweep's name were Skip, that explained it. It meant, not that Coker was wandering in his mind, but that he was calling this young sweep.

It banished their last doubt. They

(Continued on page 22.)

SEE THE SIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL WITH—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE

A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL. (The Quadrangle.)

(1)

There is always something doing in the quad,
There is often trouble brewing in the quad;
There's the flagstones we have jumped on,
Which old Coker's often thumped on,
And occasionally bumped on
With a devastating noise,
While the quad is full of happy-hearted boys.



AFTER SCHOOL HOURS Bunter's Tea-time Tour

Toddy's having tea with Brown,
Dutton's teasing in the town,
Poor old Bunter teas in Hall,
Then goes out to pay a call.
First at Study Number One,
Wharton says: "It can't be done!
There is nothing here for you!"
On he goes to Study Two.
Toddy, Brown's visitor,
Kicks him out and slams the door;
Robert Donald Ogilvy
Kicks him out of Study Three.
After tapping at the door,
In he goes to Study Four;
Smithy, with a loaf of bread,
Gets him squarely on the head!
Exit Bunter once again,
Still with nothing but a pain!
Out he jumps from Study Five,
Thankful to get out alive.
Kipps, the conjurer, was there;
Seizing Bunter by the hair,
Rapidly he pulled his ear,
Which made Bunter disappear!
Next, in Study Number Six,
Wib and Desmond get in kicks!
Missing Seven, on to Eight,
Nothing left! Too late—too late!
Then to Study Number Nine,
Which, as you may know, is mine;
When I seized a carving-knife,
Bunter ran to save his life!
Bolsover, in Number Ten,
Hoofed him quickly from his den.
Skinner, in Eleven, chased
Bunter out with breathless haste.
Then, in Number Twelve, at last,
Bunter finds a grand repast;
And although old Mauly's there,
He is far too tired to care!

(2)

There are always fellows lounging in the quad,
There is borrowing and scrounging in the quad;
There's the fountain Bunter's chucked in,
When our foodstuffs he has tucked in,
And most mercilessly ducked in,
And our study teas are gone,
While the quad is full of laughing lookers-on.

(3)

There's the sound of Prouty talking in the quad
To the masters who are walking in the quad;
There's the seats the masters gaze on,
Which they hoped to sit and laze on,
But old Prouty's chinwag plays on
As they wander to and fro,
While the quad is full of suffering and woe.

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET

WILLIAM WALTER DABNEY,
Temple's Chum in the Upper Fourth

D is for DABNEY—Upper Fourth,
He's Temple's follower, of courthe!
(I'm sorry—that's the only rhyme
That I can find for Fourth this time.
There's "north," but I've no use for it
Because the senso won't seem to fit.
Not that there's really any sense
In this at all, but some pretence
Of meaning something must be made,
Or else I'm very much afraid
The Editor would turn me down
And stop my weekly half-a-crown!)



Cee-whiz! My space is nearly gone,
And poor old Dab not touched upon!
Well, never mind, it's quite O.K.
He's not important, anyway!

ANSWER TO PUZZLE

The geography paper. Bunter's answer gave four English rivers—Dee, Wye, Severn and Exe.



A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER

GREYFRIARS GRINS

Billy Bunter says he doesn't give a hoot for Quelchy. Strange language for an Owl!

When Prouty collided with force,
One day with a runaway horse,
The animal snapped
In two, and was scrapped:
But Prout was undamaged, of course!

When Fisher T. Fish found Bunter's famous gold watch, which had been lost, he claimed a reward of a tenth part of the value. Bunter couldn't pay it because he had nothing smaller than a halfpenny.

PUZZLE PAR

On one of Bunter's exam papers appeared the remarkable answer, D.Y.7.X. The subject of the paper wasn't Maths. Can you guess what it was?

(Answer at foot of column 2.)

Skinner's latest was to write an impot of 100 lines in invisible ink, which could only be seen if Quelchy warmed the paper at the fire. Quelch, however, decided to warm Skinner instead.

Bolsover major's writing is so bad that last week Hoskins of the Shell played one of his French exercises on the piano in mistake for a sonata. It sounded even worse than usual.

Why should Alonzo have tea?—Because Todd is odd without 'T' (tea).

Why are the Rocky Mountains like Prout's head?—Because they are both "bear" spots.

Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Third, is a "camera fiend." The Third say bitterly that they've never noticed the "camera."

Another Interesting Jaunt with the Greyfriars Guide Next Saturday!

knew now that Coker knew him by name; and that when he had led them to the young rascal in the cabbage-patch, it was not by chance, but because he knew that he was there, and was going to see him. Coker, beyond the shadow of a doubt, was responsible for the light-fingered lad's presence in the school.

"How did you come to meet Coker at all, Skip—if that's your name?" asked Harry.

"Met 'im on a train, sir! Bloke was going to bash in his 'ead, and I stopped 'im!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

"Is that why Coker brought you here?" asked Bob.

"That's it, sir! Kind-hearted bloke he is," said Skip. "He ain't got much sense, but he's got a kind 'eart!"

"And this is how you show your gratitude?" asked Bob. "Setting out to rob the place while Coker's fast asleep!"

Skip had the grace to hang his head a little.

"Well, a bloke's got to live!" he argued. "I can't stop on 'ere long. I s'pose. Soon's I'm found, I get the boot, even if I ain't 'anded over to the coppers. I don't know what Mister Coker means to do, but his school-master won't let 'im keep me 'ere, will he?"

"Hardly!" grinned Bob.

"Well, I got to go, then!" said Skip. "I was going to 'elp myself before I went; but if you young coveys will let me 'op it, I'll go jest as I am—and glad!"

The three juniors looked at one another.

"Blessed if I know what to do!" said Harry. "We can't let it come out about Coker—the Head would scalp him. We can't let this young rotter go! And we can't let him stay here."

"And we can't shove him into the biggest trunk and sit on the lid!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Even that fool Coker must have some sort of an idea in his head," said Harry. "He may be going to put it up to his people to take the young villain in hand. His Aunt Judy would do anything for him. Look here, if we could leave him safe here, and speak to Coker in the morning—"

"I'll stick here, sir, if you leave me," said Skip meekly, but with a glimmer in his eyes.

"I shall see that you do, if we leave you!" said the captain of the Remove dryly. "What about it, you fellows? We can lock him in—"

"How long would a lock stop you, Skip?" inquired Bob Cherry.

Skip grinned.

"Well, there's plenty of box-ropes here—we can tie his paws," said Harry. "We can't run the slightest risk of his getting out and pinching, of course; and we can't trust him. But we could make him safe enough. I suppose we really ought to hand him over, and let Coker take his chance, but—"

"But we can't do that!" said Bob.

"No, we can't!"

"The tiefulness of his absurd paws is the proper caper!" declared Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh. "Then the esteemed and idiotic Coker can find him in the morning, this side up with care."

"I say—" began Skip, dismayed.

"You can shut up," said Harry. "You're getting off cheap, and you know it. Get a rope, you fellows."

Whether it was the best thing to be done, in the peculiar circumstances, the juniors hardly knew. But they could think of nothing better; and it was decided on.

Skip made no objection or resistance, as it was clear that neither would have availed him. Meekly he allowed his wrists to be tied together; and as he observed the scientific way in which Bob Cherry tied the knots, he gave up all hope of getting loose again without assistance.

Having made his hands quite secure, Bob tied the end of the rope, as an additional precaution, to a bar of the grate.

Skip, with cheerful resignation, threw himself on the camping blankets. He had to remain till the morning now, and he made the best of it.

"Good-night, young gents!" he said, as the juniors turned to the door.

"Good-night, Skip!" grinned Bob. "You can sleep all right, with your paws tied—and if you want something to think about, you can turn it over in your mind that honesty is the best policy."

"Oh, my eye!" said Skip.

They shut off the light and left the room, Wharton carefully locking the door on the outside; then they trod away quietly to the Remove dormitory, glad that they had turned out and put "paid" to Skip—but extremely glad to get back to bed again.

Skip was left to his reflections. Perhaps, as Bob had advised him, he turned over in his mind the proposition that honesty was the best policy, and realised that there might be something in it; but in ten minutes or less he was asleep, and sleeping as soundly as Harry Wharton & Co. in the Remove dormitory.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Putting it Plain to Coker!

THE next morning Horace Coker walked in the Greyfriars quad after breakfast with a thoughtful wrinkle in his rugged brow.

The problem of Skip was on his mind. It had to be thought out.

Coker was a fellow rather for action than for thought; indeed, his actions often looked as if he never thought at all.

Even easy problems puzzled Coker's powerful intellect, and this was not an easy one; it was a very tough one.

He was going to save Skip from bad ways and set his feet on the straight and narrow path; Coker felt that that was up to him, and he was going to do it.

That was settled. But how he was going to do it remained unsettled—very unsettled indeed.

He had the kid safe under his eye, out of mischief; that was so much to the good. But what next? Obviously Skip could not continue to inhabit the Fifth Form box-room permanently. He could not remain long in the House undiscovered. As soon as he was discovered he would be booted out. How was Coker going to get on with the good work?

He had to confess that he did not as yet see how. He wrinkled his forehead like a sheet of corrugated zinc in the effort of reflection, but in vain. No doubt there was a way; but if there were, it did not occur readily to Coker.

In this mood of deep and painful cogitation Coker waved off Potter and Greene of the Fifth when they came his way. They were not unwilling to be waved off, having no deep yearning for Coker's company or conversation. But five juniors who spotted him in the quad and bore down on him were not to be waved off like troublesome flies; they settled on Coker.

That morning the three members of the Co. who had been up had told the two members who hadn't, and the Famous Five decided unanimously to speak to Coker on the subject. They rather liked old Horace for his generous idea of standing by a young rascal and snatching him like a brand from the burning, as it were; but they were quite decided that, from whatever motive, Coker was not going to be allowed to keep a professional pincher in a box-room like a canary in a cage. Only Coker could ever have fancied that he could do such a thing—and Coker had to be made to understand that he couldn't.

"Oh, here you are, Coker!" said Harry Wharton, as the Famous Five came up.

Coker waved an impatient hand.

"Cut off!" he snapped.

"Fathead! We've got to speak to you—"

"Well, don't!" snapped Coker. "I've no use for jaw from cheeky fags! Just cut off before I smack your heads!"

"The smackfulness might be a boot on the other leg, my esteemed idiotic Coker!" grinned Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"If you ask for it—" said Coker darkly.

"Shut up, fathead—and listen!" said Harry Wharton impatiently. "Look here, we know about that kid in the Fifth Form box-room."

Coker jumped.

"You—you—you what?" he stuttered.

"We caught him last night prowling the House, looking for a chance to pinch from the beaks' studies."

"Rubbish!" said Coker.

"We copped him, you ass!" hooted Bob Cherry.

"Rot! I told him distinctly not to leave that box-room," said Coker. "I don't know how you fags have got on to this; but all you've got to do is to mind your own business and hold your silly tongues. Now cut off! I've got some thinking to do."

"Got anything to do it with?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've said that I don't want any cheek!" said Coker. "And I don't want fags barging into my affairs! Get out!"

"You think it's your affair, and nobody else's?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Eh? Yes."

"Do you think the Head would think so?"

"The Head knows nothing about it," said Coker. "I'm not going to tell him, either; he mightn't understand. School-masters are rather dense."

"You born idiot," said Harry Wharton, "that kid was rooting over the House last night to pinch—"

"Nonsense!"

"We caught him at it—"

"Rubbish!"

"And left him tied up—"

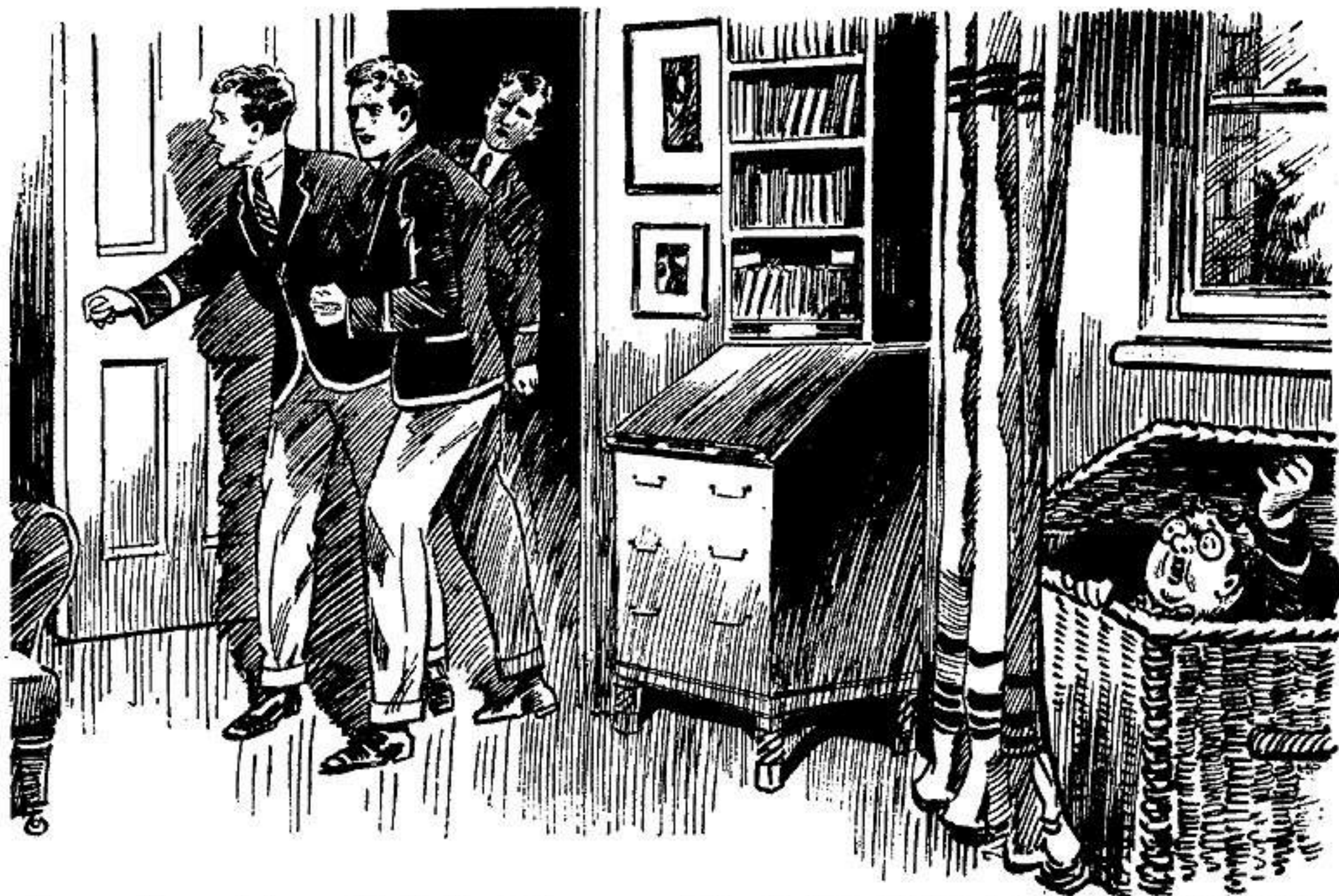
"Wha-a-at?"

"So that he couldn't get on with it again," said Harry. "Now do you understand, fathead? That kid Skip's in the box-room now with his paws tied; and if he's to scoff any brekker, you'd better go and see to it."

"You cheeky young ass!" gasped Coker. "You've had the neck to barge in and handl a kid that I've taken under my protection?"

"Did you want a row this morning, and the police called in to look for a thief?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, don't be a fool, Cherry! I've a jolly good mind to whop you all round



There was the sound of approaching footsteps in the passage outside. Terrified out of his fat wits, Billy Bunter plumped into the huge hamper. Then he held up the lid a little and listened. Next moment the door was thrown open and some fellows looked in. Bunter was deeply thankful that he was out of sight.

for your dashed cheek in butting in!" exclaimed Coker wrathfully.

"Do you think you can keep that young rascal in the school?" exclaimed Harry.

"For the present there's nothing else to be done," Coker condescended to explain. "Now shut up and clear off, and don't meddle in what doesn't concern you. You may remember from last term that I've got a short way with fags when they're cheeky."

"But what do you think you're going to do with him?" exclaimed Bob.

"That wants thinking out. No bizney of yours. Just shut up!"

"He can't stay here," said Harry.

"I said shut up!"

"If the kid did you a good turn, as he told us, it's all right to do something for him," said Harry. "But he can't stay in the House, Coker. We can't get out of dorm every night to see that your pal doesn't pinch."

"Will you shut up?" asked Coker.

"No! We've got to get this settled. We don't want to land you in trouble with the beaks, but this can't go on for even a single day," said the captain of the Remove. "If you had the sense of a bunny rabbit you'd know that it couldn't."

"As you don't know, we're telling you!" explained Bob.

"That's enough!" snapped Coker. "Cut!"

"Look here, you blithering fat-head—"

"That does it!" said Coker, and he smacked out with a large hand, interrupting the captain of the Remove.

"Yaroooh!" roared Wharton, as he caught that hefty smack with his ear and staggered.

"Now shut up and buzz off!" said Coker, and he turned away, apparently regarding the matter as closed.

But it was not closed; it was far from closed!

Properly speaking, that smack should have warned the juniors to shut up, as Coker bade them, and retire to a respectful distance; leaving the great Horace to his meditations. But it did not produce that effect.

It did not cause the Famous Five to retire meekly from the spot; it caused them to leap on Coker of the Fifth like five wolves.

Coker had not expected that. He really might have, but he hadn't! He was up-ended in the quad before he knew what was happening.

There was what a novelist would describe as a dull sickening thud as Coker's bullet head hit the hard, unsympathetic earth.

Bang!

Coker's roar woke most of the echoes. "Yoo-hoop!" roared Coker. "Why, I—I—I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! I'll spificato you! I'll—Yaroooh!"

Bang!

Coker struggled wildly. His idea was to mop up those five cheeky juniors so thoroughly that their nearest and dearest relations would not have known them when Coker was through. But this programme, attractive as it was, proved difficult to carry out. With Bob Cherry sitting on his chest, Hurree Janset Ram Singh grasping his ears, and the other three fellows standing on his legs, Coker was in no position to mop up anybody. He was, so to speak, the moppee, instead of the mopper.

"Now, you burbling jabberwock—" gasped Wharton.

"I'll smash you!" roared Coker.

"Bang his head again, luky!"

Bang!

"Yaroooh!"

"Is that enough, Coker?"

"I'll spificato you!"

"Give him another!"

Bang!

"Yurrooop!"

"We'll keep this up as long as you do, old man!" said Bob. "The damage to the quad may go down in your bill under 'extras,' though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Coker.

"You—you—urgh—you—"

"Now, listen to me, fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll give you till tea-time to clear that young pickpocket out of Greyfriars. He can't prowl round in the daytime, I suppose, pinching from studies. But he's not sticking here over another night. If he's gone after tea, all right! If he's still here, we bag him and walk him in to Quelch! Got that?"

"You cheeky young rotter—"

"Do you understand?" roared Wharton.

"I'll smash you!"

"Better tap his napper again!" said Bob.

Bang!

"Yow-ow-yurrooop!"

"What have you got to say now, Coker?"

"Yaroooh!"

"Is that Dutch or Esperanto?"

"I'll—gurrh! I'll—yarooogh—I'll smash you! Lemme gerrup, and I'll mop you all over the quad!" gurgled Coker.

"That sounds to me," said Bob, "as if Coker wants another tap."

Bang!

"Whoo-hoop!"

"What about it now, Coker?"

"Wooo-hooog-oggh!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, leave it at that," he said.

"The silly ass knows what to expect."

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new. May as well shove his cap down his back, though."

Coker's cap was duly rammed down his wriggling back, and the Famous Five left him to it.

Coker sat up, spluttering—and staggered to his feet. His fixed intention was to trail down those five cheeky juniors and slaughter them without mercy, as soon as he got his wind. But the bell for school rang before he had got his wind—and he was still gurgling as he tottered into class with a prout.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Good for Skip!

SKIP looked round uneasily.

The key turned in the box-room door, and it opened.

It was a relief to him to see that it was Coker who entered. But Coker's look was not very encouraging. He had a frown on his face, and a stick under his arm. He shut the door, and stood staring at Skip.

It was morning break—Coker's first chance of getting to the peculiar guest at Greyfriars. Skip was more than tired by that time of sitting with his hands tied. Only the fact that they were tied had kept those hands from picking and stealing; but it was very uncomfortable, all the same.

"So that's how they left you!" said Coker grimly.

"Yessir!" murmured Skip.

"You went out of this room last night, prowling about?" growled Coker.

He had told the juniors that it was rot, nonsense, and rubbish; but hours had passed since then, so the facts had had time to sink into Coker's stolid brain.

"I jest went for a walk round, sir," mumbled Skip.

"Not looking for a chance to pinch?" asked Coker.

"Oh, no sir!"

"Just walking about the house, because you like taking walks in dark

passages, instead of staying in bed?" asked Coker.

Skip did not answer that. There was, he perceived, a limit even to Coker's fatheadedness. The hapless Skip was as ready to tell untruths as to steal—but he could see that it was useless.

Coker cut through the box-ropes and released him. Then he gripped his stick in his hand.

"I'm going to thrash you now," he announced. "Six for trying to pinch, after all I've said to you—and six more for telling lies!"

"Oh!" gasped Skip.

He had a longing eye on the door. But the burly form of Horace Coker was between him and the door. Skip had no chance of dodging out and taking to his heels.

"I've told you," went on Coker, "that I'm going to take you in hand and make an honest kid of you. It's just as important to be truthful as to be honest. You've got to learn both. If thrashing can do it, I'm your man. Bend over that box!"

"Look 'ere—" mumbled Skip.

"I said bend over that box!" Coker pointed out. "I can't stay here long—I've got to get in to third school pretty soon. No time to waste in jaw. Bend over that box—do you hear?"

"I ain't going to!" snapped Skip. "I ain't asked to stay 'ere, 'ave I? Who are you to pitch into a bloke?"

Coker stared at him.

"Is that meant for cheek?" he asked. "I'd better tip you, Skip, that I've no use for cheek! I never stand cheek!"

"Well, you leave a covey alone," said Skip.

"Only this morning," said Coker, "I thrashed five kids in the Remove for cheek. Cut it out, if you know what's good for you!" He pointed to the box with his stick. "I'm going to whop you for your own good, Skip. I think you ought to have sense enough to see that. I won't say that it hurts me as much as it does you, because it doesn't. Still, I'm sorry. But there it is—you've got to have it, to teach you to behave. Bend over that box!"

Skip dodged round the box instead of bending over it.

Although the whopping he was going to get was for his own good, Skip seemed quite indifferent to his own welfare on that point. Even for his own good, he did not want the whopping.

Coker frowned grimly, strode after him, and gripped him in a mighty hand. The powerful hand bent Skip over the box.

Then the stick was laid on.

Skip wriggled and yelped under six hefty swipes.

"That's six for going out to pinch!" said Coker, pausing. "The rest is for telling lies—see?"

Six more hefty swipes landed, one after another.

Skip wriggled and yelped and gasped; but he suppressed his yells. He did not want to bring anyone else on the scene.

The execution over, Coker tucked his stick under his arm again.

"Now, listen to me—" he said.

"Ow! Yow!" Skip wriggled. "Wow! You silly idjit you! Wow!"

"Do you want a few more?" hooted Coker.

"Ow! No!"

"Don't be cheeky, then! Can't you understand that you've got into good hands for the first time in your sneaking life?" asked Coker. "You seem to be a bit of a fool; but surely you've got sense enough to see that you've got a good friend in me, the very man you need?"

Skip, wriggling, blinked at him.

"You idjit!" he hissed. "You born idjit! Ow!"

"That's enough," said Coker. "Now—"

"Look 'ere, you lemme out of this!" howled Skip. "Ain't I told you I don't want to stick 'ere? Kidnapping a bloke, that's what it is!"

"Will you shut up and listen?" yapped Coker. "I tell you time's short. Now, you can't stick in this room. Somebody's sure to come along during the day, and you'd be spotted. You can't get out now, with a crowd of fellows about—but as soon as you hear a bell ring, that means that the school's going in. Then the coast will be clear—see?"

"Oh!" said Skip. His eyes gleamed. "I see."

"You can scuttle out—drop from a window, or something, while all the fellows are in class," went on Coker. "You've got sense enough for that?"

"Oh! Yessir!"

"You can find your way back to the kitchen garden, where those young asses chased you last evening?"

"Easy, sir."

"Well, you'll see a shed there—the gardener uses it for tools and things," said Coker. "There's a loft over it. I dare say you noticed it—"

"Yessir."

"It's kept locked," went on Coker. "But that makes it all the safer, as nobody would think of looking for anybody in a locked shed. Old Mimble keeps the key in his pocket. But it's a common lock, and almost any key will open it, if it's big enough. I've found one that will—see?"

"Yessir."

"Here is it," said Coker. He handed Skip a heavy iron key. "Now, with that, you can let yourself into the gardener's shed and lock the door again after you. You'll get up into the loft. Later on, I'll get you some things. What are you grinning at, you silly little idiot?"

"Oh, nothing, sir!"

"You seem to be an absolute idiot—always grinning for nothing," said Coker crossly. "Do try to have a little sense! You can stick it out there for a day or two while I'm making arrangements for you. I'm going to consult my aunt about getting you looked after—but it will want some thinking out. The important thing now is to keep you from getting to pinching again."

"Is it?" murmured Skip.

"Can't you see that it is, you young ass?" asked Coker impatiently.

"Oh! Yessir, if you say so."

"That's better!" said Coker. "Listen to everything I say, carefully, and do exactly as I tell you, and it will be all right! I'm bound to look after you, but, apart from that, I've always thought it was up to a brainy chap to help silly fools out of trouble. There you go, grinning again, like a silly monkey!"

A bell began to ring.

"There's the bell," said Coker. "I shall have to cut now! Sure you understand what you've got to do?"

"Yessir."

"Right, then! I'll scrounge you some grub in that shed later. I shall find you there when I come, all right!" said Coker. "Mind, do exactly as I've told you—and no more prowling about. I've had to thrash you twice already, and I don't want to have to keep on thrashing you."

And Coker left the box-room—leaving Skip grinning once more.

Coker went in to the third school with

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the Fifth, feeling satisfied. He disdained the idea of being dictated to by cheeky young rotters in the Remove; but he realised that he had to get Skip out of the House, all the same. His new arrangement seemed quite satisfactory to Coker.

His instructions to Skip were explicit. The boy had only to carry them out. He seemed to Coker a bit of a fool—keeping on grinning, for instance, while Coker was uttering words of wisdom! Still, he surely had sense enough to carry out such simple instructions. Coker of the Fifth had no doubt that he would find Skip safely parked in the gardener's loft, when he looked for him there. Skip himself had strong doubts!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Escape!

"KETCH me!" murmured Skip derisively.

With his hands in his pockets, a cheery grin on his face, Skip lounged along the old ivied Cloister wall—looking for the spot where he climbed in, the previous day, and landed on Billy Bunter's head. That was an easy spot for climbing out.

It had been easy enough for a wary fellow like Skip to dodge out of the House after Coker had left him, and scuttle away unseen.

But he did not scuttle in the direction of the gardener's shed. He had no idea whatever of carrying out Coker's carefully explicit instructions.

Thrashings for his own good had little appeal for Skip. Neither did he see any sense in Coker's earnest, though fathomed, efforts on his behalf.

He was not ungrateful to Coker for his good intentions. He thought him a kind-hearted bloke, though uncommonly dense. But he had had enough of Coker and his good intentions; and his chief regret in leaving Greyfriars was that he had, after all, to leave empty-handed!

But he was going—even if he had to leave other people's property untouched behind him. He was going to get out and cut at the earliest possible moment; and he hoped to be twenty miles away by the time Coker looked for him in the gardener's loft. All he had to take with him, to remember Greyfriars by, was an old jacket Coker had given him to replace the one left in Prout's hands. He thought of that fat old covey's pocket-book with a sigh. But that game was up in the school, and he had to go as he had come. But, at least, he was going to see the last of Coker—which was something!

He found the spot he was looking for, clambered up the ivy, and looked over the wall. Outside was a little shady lane that separated the old Cloister wall from a fir plantation. He had only to drop from the wall, and cut. But he watched and listened—to ascertain that the coast was clear.

Anyone seeing him drop from the wall would certainly have stopped him, to inquire what he was doing there. Skip's queer life had made him as wary as a fox. And as he heard footfalls in the little lane, he crouched back in the ivy, and waited for them to pass.

The footsteps passed the spot and died away. Then, to Skip's surprise, they became audible again, coming back.

Somebody, it seemed, was walking up and down that little lane in the sunny morning, which was disconcerting for Skip. He could only wait.

He waited impatiently.

Knowing nothing of the manners and

customs of Greyfriars School, or any school, for that matter, Skip did not know that Coker was safe in his Form-room for another hour. He dreaded to hear the loud-voiced, heavy footed Horace in search of him. Neither did he know that the "young coveys" who had collared him in the night were safely booked in the Remove-room. He would not have been surprised to hear them any minute.

He was anxious to be gone; and when the pacing footsteps passed him a third time he repressed a grunt of angry impatience.

What the thump was some bloke walking up and down there for, just when Skip did not want him?

When the footsteps came along again he peered from the ivy, without revealing himself, to see who it was.

He glimpsed a man with a sharp nose, and eyes like a rat's; and sank back promptly and dropped from the wall, his face white as chalk.

"Jimmy!" breathed Skip hoarsely. "Jimmy the Rat!"

He leaned on the wall, shaking.

It was his old associate in rascality, on whom he had turned to save Coker from a murderous attack in a railway train.

That act of Skip's had earned him Coker's earnest friendship and protection, and caused Coker's fixed determination to see him through into a better way of life. It had also earned him the undying malevolence of Jimmy the Rat.

The mere sight of the slinking rascal banished every vestige of colour from Skip's face.

Only too well he knew that the length of gas-piping was hidden under the Rat's coat; and only too well he knew what the Rat would do with it if he caught sight of him.

The rascal was spying round the school. Skip's first impression was that the old associate whom he had thrown over was looking for him.

But a moment's reflection showed him that Jimmy could not possibly know that he was at Greyfriars. He was not likely to have the faintest idea of Coker's remarkable proceedings since the affair in the railway train.

More likely he was looking for another chance at Coker, knowing that Coker belonged to the school.

Anyhow, there he was—and Skip had had the narrowest of escapes of falling into his hands. Whether the Rat was looking for him or not, he would be glad to find him.

The sound of voices floated over the wall to Skip. There was a gate to the kitchen garden from that lane, and Mr. Mimble, the gardener, had come out. Skip heard his voice:

"Here, what do you want here?"

"Can't a man walk about 'ere, if he likes?" came the answer, in the well-known surly tones of Jimmy the Rat.

"This lane don't lead nowhere," said Mr. Mimble. "It's a private lane, this is! If you want to go across the medder, you can go by the gate at the end."

"Well, I don't!"

"You better clear off!" said Mr. Mimble. "You ain't allowed to 'ang about here, and I'll see you back to the road."

Footsteps died away towards the high-road. Jimmy the Rat had gone, Mr. Mimble seeing him off.

But Skip did not climb the wall again.

With Jimmy the Rat in the offing he dared not. Greyfriars, from which he had been only anxious to escape, was

now his refuge from that slinking, rat-eyed rascal.

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" muttered Skip.

He moved slowly along the Cloisters. He dared not venture out, and he could not remain where he was. There was only one thing for it—and he made his way to the kitchen gardens, to carry out Coker's instructions.

The coast was clear, and he reached the gardener's shed, and found that the key fitted the lock. He breathed more freely when he was inside the shed, with the door locked after him. The mere sight of Jimmy the Rat and the sound of his snarling voice had given him a chill.

At the back of the shed was a ladder fixed to the wall, giving access to the loft by a trap-door.

Skip mounted the ladder, pushed up the trap, and stepped into the loft. A strong scent of apples greeted him. Mr. Mimble kept various things in that loft, and, among other things, apples were packed there.

It was a small loft, with a slanting roof, so low that even Skip, boy as he was, could hardly stand upright in it. There was a tiny window, from which he had a view of the kitchen gardens and part of the buildings of the school. As he had nothing else to do, Skip posted himself at that window, looking out.

Half an hour later he had a view of Mr. Mimble, who came to the shed to wheel out a hose, with which he disappeared.

Skip made no sound while the gardener was below, and Mr. Mimble departed with the hose, without the slightest suspicion that the upper story of his shed now had a tenant.

It was another half-hour before the sight of another figure brought a grin to Skip's face.

This time it was Horace Coker.

Coker arrived cautiously. Like Moses of old, he looked this way, and that way, as he came, with very alert eyes.

Coker was so extremely and excessively cautious, that had an eye fallen on him; it would have been plain at once that Coker was up to something!

Fortunately, only Skip's eye fell on him.

Coker had a bag in his hand. As he reached the shed, Skip tapped on the window, and Coker glanced up. Skip pulled the little window open.

Coker gave him a nod and a grin.

He had expected to find Skip there, and he found him. He was quite unaware that it was the sight of Jimmy the Rat that caused Skip to be there. So far as Coker could see, his instructions had been carefully carried out: and he was satisfied.

"Oh, here you are!" said Coker genially.

"Ere I am, sir!" said Skip.

"Don't let anyone see you at that window," said Coker. "I've got some grub for you, and a few other things, in this bag. Look here, don't come down to the door—old Mimble's about somewhere. If you let down a string you can pull this bag up, see?"

"Yessir; but—"

"Don't jaw; do as I tell you!"

"But I ain't got a string, sir!"

"You little idiot! I'll chuck the bag up—catch it!"

"Orlright, sir!"

Skip leaned out of the window.

Standing below, Coker heaved up the bag. The distance was short, and it was an easy catch—if the bag had reached Skip's ready outstretched

hands. It passed within a foot of them—which was pretty good aim, for Horace Coker.

But it might as well have been twenty yards for all the chance Skip had of grasping an object out of his reach.

As the bag was not caught, it naturally fell back again. Even Coker would have expected that for he knew that there was a law of gravitation, and that all unsupported objects had a fixed habit of heading for the centre of the earth as fast as possible!

But Coker had expected the bag to be caught, so he did not expect its prompt return. The law of gravitation, therefore, took him by surprise.

The bag landed, quite unexpectedly, on Coker's upturned face, nearly pushing his rugged features into his fat head.

"Oh!" roared Coker.

Bump!

He sat down quite suddenly. The bag came to rest on his knees. Coker did not heed it. He sat with his hands pressed to his nose.

"Wow! Oh! Ah! Ow!" gasped Coker. "My boko! Wow! You mad little idiot, what did you let that bag fall on my face for? Wow!"

"I couldn't 'elp it, sir!" gasped Skip.

"Wow! You potty little sweep! Yow-ow!"

"It wasn't in my reach, sir—"

"Yow-ow-ow! Shut up, you blithering young blockhead! Ow!" Coker dabbed his nose with his handkerchief, which came away red-spotted, and glared up at Skip. "You mad little dummy—wow! Look at my nose! Yow-ow!"

Skip carefully suppressed a grin as he looked. Coker staggered to his feet.

"Try again, sir?" asked Skip.

"Think I'm going to let you brain me?" hissed Coker. "Come down and unlock the door, you dangerous idiot!"

Skip cut down the ladder, and unlocked the door. Coker passed the bag in—and rubbed his damaged nose.

"I've a jolly good mind—" he began, clenching a leg of mutton fist.

"Is that somebody coming, sir?" asked Skip hastily.

"Oh, shut that door—quick! Don't jaw—shut up, and get that door locked!" hissed Coker.

Skip, grinning, locked the door, and retreated up to the loft with the bag.

Coker assumed an air of elaborate casual carelessness, to meet the eye of the somebody who was coming!

But nobody was coming—which was fortunate, for Coker's air of casual carelessness would not have deceived a baby. It would, in fact, have fixed the eye of suspicion on Coker at once.

"Silly little ass—there's nobody coming!" snorted Coker. "I'd have punched his silly head for dropping that bag on my face—ow! There's nobody coming! That kid seems to be an utter fool! I don't expect everybody to have my brains—but, dash it all, there ought to be a limit! An utter little idiot!"

And Coker departed—leaving Skip to the enjoyment of a very good lunch—rubbing his nose as he went!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON looked out for Coker, when the Greyfriars fellows came out of class that afternoon.

Coker, seeing him coming, turned a shoulder to him and walked away.

Undeterred by Coker's infinite disdain, the captain of the Remove cut after him.

"Hold on a minute, Coker!" he called out.

Coker kept walking.

"Deaf?" roared Wharton.

Apparently deaf, Coker stalked on. If Wharton wanted to speak to him he had to speak to the back of his head. So he proceeded to speak to the back of Coker's head!

"Look here, you ass, I don't know whether you've cleared that young pick-pocket out yet," he said, "but I mean what I said this morning. Do you hear?"

No answer from the back of Coker's head!

"I don't want to get you into a row with the beaks," went on Harry, "and I don't want to be rough on that young rotter, either, if he goes—but he's got to go! Has he gone?"

Wharton paused for a reply—in vain. He went on again, in tones of exasperation:

"Well, we'll leave it till after tea. Then we shall look for that young rascal, and if we find him in the House, he goes to Queleh to be dealt with. If that's not what you want, better get shut of him in the next hour!"

Coker, still disdaining to answer, stalked on, and Wharton left him to it. Horace understood what to expect now, if he had the brains to understand anything—which was, perhaps, doubtful. Anyhow, Wharton's mind was firmly made up, and after tea there was going to be a search for Skip, to root him out if he were still in the House.

It was miles beneath Coker's dignity to explain anything to a fag in the Remove, or he might have told Wharton that Skip was no longer in the House. As it was, the captain of the Remove was left in doubt—which doubt he intended to clear up after tea. To allow the young rascal to remain in the House another night, was impossible, whether Coker understood that or not.

Horace, supremely regardless of Wharton and all other such Lower School microbes, walked on his lofty way. He was thinking out how to put the affair of Skip to his Aunt Judy, and obtain that kind-hearted old lady's help in fixing him up somehow in an honest way of life.

The call of the inner man, however, interrupted Coker's reflections, and he went in to tea.

Potter and Greene joined him on the way up to the study, with affable smiles. Coker's magnificent hamper was still there, and far from exhausted.

"Oh, blow!" ejaculated Coker, as he stalked into the study and banged an unwary leg against the hamper.

It was a huge hamper. It was big enough for a fellow to get into, and turn round inside. It took up a lot of space in the Fifth Form study. Any fellow moving about that study had to pass within a few feet of it. A few feet distance, certainly, sufficed to keep clear of it; but Coker was the man to bang on anything that was not yards off. So he banged his knee, and snorted.

"I think," said Coker bitterly, "that it's about time that hamper was put in the box-room. I've been too busy to think of it—a fellow can't do everything. Of course, you fellows couldn't think of it."

"It's not finished unpacking yet," said Greene mildly.

"You couldn't finish unpacking it, of course?"

"You told us to leave it alone yesterday!" remarked Potter.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on arguing, Potter! Look here, lend me a hand to unpack it, and I'll tip Trotter to walk it off to the box-room before prep."

Potter and Greene lent willing hands. Aunt Judy's vast hamper was cleared out at last, and the contents put on the table, or packed away in the study cupboard, where they filled most of the shelves.

Coker banged the lid back on the hamper, and pushed it into a corner.

Then the three sat down to tea.

Over tea, Coker told his friends what he was going to do in the football line that term, if Wingate had sense enough to play him in the first eleven.

Potter and Greene listened with polite attention. It was only fair to let old Horace run on, while they were scoffing the good things from the hamper. As soon as tea was over, however, they remembered sudden engagements, and cleared—actually leaving Coker in the middle of an unfinished sentence. Still, if they were to leave Coker at all, they had to leave while he was talking, so there was no help for that.

Coker, left to himself, made a selection of good things, disposed them in his pockets, and went out in his turn—to visit Skip in his new quarters with a supply for tea.

He passed a fat junior on the landing without noticing him.

That fat junior, however, noticed Coker.

Billy Bunter's eyes and spectacles followed Coker down the stairs till he disappeared.

Then the fat Owl of the Remove turned in the direction of the Fifth Form passage.

Billy Bunter's designs on Coker's hamper were far from forgotten. He was as keen as ever to hang on to that hamper, though not in the way Bob Cherry had helped him to hang on to it. Bunter had had only two teas, so far, so he was more than prepared to deal with that hamper if he could get at it.

Unluckily, Price and Hilton of the Fifth were lounging in the passage. The fat Owl had to wait till they went out. When they were gone, Blundell of the Fifth came up, and stood for some minutes talking to Fitzgerald in the doorway of the games study. In dread every moment of Coker coming in, Billy Bunter waited on tenterhooks.

But at last the great men of the Fifth went into the games study and shut the door. Then, at long last, the coast was clear!

Like a fat rabbit, Billy Bunter scuttled up the Fifth Form passage and bolted into Coker's study.

He shut the door, blinked round through his big spectacles for the hamper, spotted it in the corner, and jumped at it.

With an ecstatic grin of anticipation he raised the lid—and blinked into an empty hamper!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

But it was only for a moment that the fat grub-raider of Greyfriars was dismayed. The hamper was empty, but the contents must be in the study—except, of course, such as had been packed away in Coker and Potter and Greene.

Bunter jumped to the study cupboard.

Then the ecstatic grin returned to his fat face. Almost every shelf groaned under good things.

Bunter did not trouble to lift them out. He could feed like a horse—standing. He stood before the cupboard and scoffed.

Jam tarts and cream puffs, cakes and jellies vanished one after another, like the brief visions of a dream.

Lost to time and space, Bunter almost forgot where he was. He ate and ate and ate, and was sticky and happy.

But he was reminded of the fact that he was in the danger zone by the sound of footsteps in the passage.

He ceased suddenly to scoff.

The bare idea of Coker coming in and finding him there, thus occupied, made the fat Owl turn cold all over.

Bitterly now he regretted that he had not bagged all that he could carry and gone while the going was good. But it was too late to think of that now. If it were Coker coming, he was fairly caught!

Wildly he blinked round the study for a place of concealment. Coker—perhaps Potter and Greene with him; perhaps a lot of the Fifth. Boots innumerable would be planted on Bunter if he were found.

It was not easy to hide in a study. Under the table he might be seen by a fellow coming in. There was nowhere else.

Then his terrified blink fell on the hamper.

He did not stop to think. There was no time for thinking, even if it had been one of Bunter's resources.

He jumped at the hamper. It was big enough for a fellow to get into. A bit of a squeeze for a fellow with Bunter's uncommon circumference, certainly; but it was a case of any port in a storm.

To step on a chair, plump into the huge hamper, and draw the lid shut after him, was quick work.

He held on to the lid from inside to keep it safe. Coker was not likely to look into the hamper, as he had unpacked it and left it empty. Still, if he thought of doing so, Bunter preferred him to think that the lid had jammed somehow. Tightly packed in the hamper, the fat Owl tried to suppress his breathing and listen.

Was it Coker coming?

He had no doubt of it a few moments later, when he heard the door open and footsteps in the room. Several fellows—three or four, at least—had come in, and Billy Bunter was deeply, deeply thankful that he was out of sight. It was close and warm in that hamper, but it was safe, and "safety first" was Bunter's motto. Squashed in the hamper, he suppressed his stertorous breathing, and waited in the hope of hearing the beasts go.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Only Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Gone!"

"Gone!"

"The gonefulness is terrific!"

Five Remove fellows stood looking into the Fifth Form box-room. The Famous Five had arrived to bag Skip if he were still there. But he was not there.

Coker, with all his lofty disdain, seemed to have taken heed of the warning. At all events, the Fifth Form box-room no longer had a tenant.

"After all, I suppose the silly ass got it into his silly head that the fellow couldn't stick here," remarked Nugent. "Perhaps banging his head this morning knocked some sense into it."

"Anyhow, he's gone!" said Johnny Bull.

(Continued on page 28.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

SORRY our little pow-wow was crowded out last week, chums. Space not being available, I had no other alternative. Anyway, here we are again, all merry and bright.

I take it that you've read this week's school yarn and enjoyed every line of it. I did! Frank Richards has certainly introduced a most amazing character in Skip. You'll read a lot more about him in next week's yarn:

"COKER'S BIG IDEA!"

Saved from a rough handling, thanks to Skip, it is only natural that Horace Coker is ready to reciprocate and do something for the wail in his turn. And what he does is astonishing, to say the least. Not wishing Skip to go back to his pocket-picking ways, Coker appeals to his Aunt Judy in an effort to obtain that kind-hearted old lady's help in fixing the bad lad up somehow in an honest way of life.

The result is—well, wait until next Saturday and you will find out for yourself. That this particular yarn will meet with your approval, I have not the slightest doubt. Frank Richards can always be depended upon to turn out good yarns, but this great series promises to be the best that has ever come from his pen.

Has it occurred to you to introduce Harry Wharton & Co. to your pals? Well, now's the time! After reading this week's yarn I feel sure they would become regular readers of the MAGNET. Try them and see!

The "Greyfriars Herald" is still very popular with readers, according to the letters I receive. Next week's edition is well up to standard. The St. Sam's yarn is a real corker! Dicky Nugent may be very backward in the spelling line, but his yarns are enough to make a cat laugh! The Greyfriars Guide will be on parade again next week to tell you more about the history of Greyfriars. Take my tip, then, and place an order for next week's MAGNET right now!

A reader living in Birmingham, who signs himself "Batling Bolsover," in a very interesting letter he has written to me, asks me to give him a few hints on

TRAINING FOR A BOXING MATCH!

My friend should exercise every morning and evening, with his dumb-bells, being careful not to unduly fatigue himself. The most important exercise for a boxer is undoubtedly the punching-ball, as it hardens the necessary muscles,

and at the same time keeps the wind in good condition and sharpens the sight. Great attention should be paid to the wind and every opportunity taken to improve it. For this reason it would be advisable for my chum to go for short sprints now and again and, if his wind is in a very poor condition, make a special point of breathing exercises. These should be carried out by an open window immediately after rising in the morning. One need not be over particular about dieting when in training, eating, for choice, the foods which are most digestible, and avoiding greasy and fatty dishes. On the day of the match, however, care should be taken to diet more strictly, lessening slightly the quantity of food generally taken. Rest as much as possible—not by lounging about, however, but rather by doing your normal duties in a leisurely manner. Having said so much, I wish my chum every success.

My thanks and acknowledgments are due to the following readers who have written me within the last few days: Leslie Norman, Ealing; N. Ward, Walthamstow; B. Bail, Bucks; H. Lambshine, Plumstead; Percy Jones, Gloucester; Miss K. Stock, Notts; Arthur Leeds, Kentish Town; Gordon Bennett, Birkdale; Dudley Shooter, Exeter; James Burke, Middlesbrough; Miss D. Griffiths, Huddersfield; H. Stewart, Belfast; Vasco Alves, Shanghai; Miss N. Cockburn, Edinburgh; S. H. Clarke, Kent; Miss V. Ransom, Cowes; Miss W. Dongworth, London; J. Crawford, Glasgow; and Miss I. Purvis, Western Australia. Your letters were most interesting and helpful, chums.

BIG PACKET OF STAMPS GIVEN FREE IN "MODERN BOY"!

Once again "Modern Boy" readers are in luck, for inside every copy of this week's issue is a grand free packet of stamps—the second to be given away—and there are three more packets to come, making fifty-eight free stamps in all.

This week's issue also contains a great offer of a Stamp Collector's Outfit. It includes a "Sterling" Stamp Album to hold six thousand, four hundred stamps, a packet of five hundred stamp hinges, magnifying glass, pair of aluminium tweezers, and a Duplicate Book for "swaps"—all for 2s. 6d. Full particulars of how you can get one of these grand outfits will be found in the great Free Gift Issue of "Modern Boy"—on sale now, price 2d.

YOUR EDITOR.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,546.

"Well, is he?" said Harry Wharton slowly. "He's not in this room, but has that blithering chump parked him somewhere else?"

"I suppose he's idiot enough!" remarked Bob.

"He's idiot enough for anything. He might stick him somewhere to let him come back here after dorm. The fact is, I can't understand an obstinate mule like Coker giving in, unless he has to, and I don't quite believe that that young pickpocket has cleared out of the school."

On that point the captain of the Remove was right. Skip was out of the House, but he certainly was not out of the school, and Coker had no intention of clearing him out.

"Better scout round," said Harry.

The Famous Five went down the passageway to Coker's study. They knew that Potter and Greene were not there, as they had seen them go out. Whether Coker was, they did not know, or care. They were going to see whether Skip was, quite regardless of Coker.

Harry Wharton threw open the door and they walked in.

Coker was not there. An empty study met their gaze.

Harry Wharton crossed to the big hamper in the corner. If it had been unpacked there was more than ample room for a slim fellow like Skip inside.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "Better look in that."

"I'm going to."

Wharton grasped the lid of the hamper to raise it. It did not stir. As it was not fastened outside there seemed no reason, but one, why it did not lift at a pull.

That reason was obvious, not only from the fact that the lid did not lift, but from the additional fact that the hamper creaked as something stirred inside.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Got him!" he said.

"Oh, my hat! In that hamper!" gasped Nugent.

"He's holding the lid inside with a cord on it, or something," said Harry.

"He's there all right."

The Famous Five gathered round the hamper.

That it was occupied there was no doubt, for now that they were close to it, and giving it special attention, they could hear the sound of suppressed breathing. Somebody was parked in that hamper. They could hardly doubt that it was Skip.

Inside that hamper, a fat, perspiring junior quaked.

Bunter could hear voices, but could not recognise them through the thickness of the hamper, and in his firm belief that Coker & Co. had arrived, he had no doubt whatever that the hamper was surrounded by Fifth Form men. He hung desperately on to the interior of the lid, still nourishing a faint hope of escaping discovery, and happily unaware that his stertorous gasping reached five pairs of ears.

"Well, he's there!" grinned Bob. "We've run the little brute down. Roll the hamper over and bump him out!"

"Hold on!" said Harry. "If that young rascal's seen here he will be nabbed. It's not really his fault that he's in the House, as that fool Coker brought him in. So long as he clears we don't want to do him any harm."

"Thieves ought to go to chokey!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, yes, I know; but we're not policemen, and I dare say the poor little beast never had a decent chance. Look here, if he clears out of the school we can let it go at that. But if he's seen he will be nabbed: Prout would know him again at once. As he's chosen to park himself in the hamper, let's walk him off in it, and let him out where he can out."

"Good egg!" agreed Bob.

Johnny Bull grunted, but he nodded assent. Skip had to get out of Greyfriars, but so long as he went, no one wished him harm. And that was an easy way out of the difficulty.

It was, at least, easy to decide—but not so easy to carry out. For when they came to lift that big hamper, the Famous Five found Skip unexpectedly heavy.

They were all sturdy fellows, but they had to exert all their strength to get going with that hamper. It was at least twice the weight that they would have expected it to be, with Skip in it.

However, they got going.

Luckily, no Fifth Form men were about, and they got it as far as the landing, where they set it down to take a rest.

From inside came a gurgling gasp.

Billy Bunter hardly knew what was happening to him. So far as he could make out, Coker & Co. were carrying the hamper out of the study. If they were taking it to the box-room, that was all right for Bunter. But, after a brief rest on the landing, he felt himself bumping downstairs.

From stair to stair the hamper bumped, and at every bump, the hapless fat Owl barely suppressed a yell.

"By gum! It's heavy!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Who'd have thought that that kid weighed so much!"

"The weightfulness is terrific!" panted Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Go it!" said Harry.

They went it—putting all their beef into it. Dozens of fellows glanced at them, when they got downstairs, but no one, certainly, thought of guessing what was in the hamper. They passed Mr. Prout, who glanced at them disapprovingly—and they were glad to get safe past the Fifth Form master. The hamper was out of the House at last.

"Buzz it into the Cloisters," said Harry. "The young sweep can nip out over the wall there without being seen."

"Come on!"

The hamper was "buzzed" into the Cloisters. With great relief, the chums of the Remove dumped it down at the foot of the old ivied wall.

Harry Wharton jerked at the lid! But Bunter, though he hardly knew by that time whether he was on his head or his heels, clung to that lid inside.

"Roll him out!" said Bob.

"Heave ahead!"

The hamper was tipped over on its side. It landed bumping, and there was a startled howl from within. The lid flew open.

"Now get out, you young sweep!" exclaimed Harry. "I suppose you know we know you're there."

"Owl! Beast! Owl! I ain't here!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't in the study, and I never ate anything! I—I got into this hamper for a—a lark! Look here, Coker, you beast, you keep off! Owl! I never touched your grub!"

At those dulcet tones proceeding from the hamper, the Famous Five stood transfixed. They could hardly believe their ears.

Right up to that moment, they had believed, without the shadow of a doubt, that it was Skip who was parked in that hamper!

Evidently, however, it was not Skip! "Bib-bub-bib-bub-Bunter!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton.

They gazed, as if mesmerised, at a fat head, a fat face, and a large pair of spectacles, emerged from the hamper.

Billy Bunter blinked round, in terror for Coker. His eyes nearly popped through his spectacles at the sight of the Famous Five.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

"Bunter!" said Harry, like a fellow in a dream. "It's not Skip—it's Bunter! It's that foozling, footling, frabjous fathead, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I say, where's Coker? I say, I was jolly nearly copped in his study, and got into the hamper—I say, they seem to have brought me here, goodness knows why, and cleared! Have you seen them?"

"You—you—you—" gasped Wharton.

"Bunter!" moaned Bob Cherry. "We've fagged here with that putrid hamper, and it's only Bunter in it! Might have guessed it from the weight! Slaughter him!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Boot him!"

"But I say—yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you kicking me for, you beasts? I haven't done anything, have I? Look here, you kick me again, and I'll—yarooooop! Oh crumbs! Beasts! Wow!"

The fat Owl wriggled away, and fled for his fat life, yelling as he fled.

Harry Wharton & Co. were left with the hamper. Whether Skip was still within the walls of Greyfriars School, they did not know—but it was clear that he had not been parked in that hamper. It was Billy Bunter's tremendous weight under which they had panted and perspired. There was only one consolation—which was to boot Bunter. So they left the hamper where it was, and rushed after Bunter, and booted him. Which was some satisfaction to them—though none whatever to Bunter!

THE END.

(The next yarn in this splendid series is entitled: "COKER'S BIG IDEA!" Don't miss it, chums, or you'll miss the treat of the week!)

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REFORMING YAWNINGTON!

By DICKY NUGENT

An Amazing School Story of Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's.



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 260.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

October 2nd, 1937.



SCRUM ENDS SOCCER v. RUGGER DEBATE!

Our Plea For Tolerance

We have always maintained that public debates in the Rag should be conducted with dignity and decorum. For this reason we deeply deplore the disorderly scenes that occurred this week during the Soccer v. Rugger debate.

By an unfortunate mischance, the Upper Fourth decided to support Rugger en masse and the Removos decided to support Soccer en bloc. Excitement increased as the speeches became more and more heated and personal, and a lining up as if in readiness for battle became discernible among the crowd. Open hostilities began with a tomato, which landed in Dabney's mouth just as he was speaking for the Ruggerites. Within a few seconds of that incident the rival factions were at grips and a battle royal was soon in progress and continued in progress till prefects stopped it with the aid of ashplants!

It is very regrettable that a debate worthy of being conducted according to the best parliamentary traditions should have ended in an unsocial brawl. "The Greyfriars Herald" earnestly asks all supporters of the debating society movement in the Lower School to exercise more tolerance in the future.

We realise, of course, that the Fourth supported Rugger for the sole reason that they're utter duds at Soccer. We know they talked like moulted parrots.

We quite agree that the only argument these Upper Fourth nitwits understand is a ripe tomato in the face or a butt in the bread-basket!

But all the same, you claps, do please cut out scrapping from the august atmosphere of the debating-room.

IF THERE'S NO OTHER WAY OF DOING IT, PUT THE BAR UP TO ALL THOSE WHO DISAGREE WITH YOU!

Only in this way can you retain that reputation for fairness and impartiality for which Greyfriars is famous!

We sincerely hope that all those affected will take careful note of this, our plea for tolerance!

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

"FANCIFUL FAG" (Third).—"I long to be the driver of a great locomotive. I'm tough, I am!" Sounds to us as if you're rather a "tender" kind of fellow!

CONKERS WILL CONQUER GREYFRIARS!

Forecasts PETER TODD

The game of conkers is rather a hole-in-the-corner business at Greyfriars at present. Chaps who think table-tennis topping and feel proud to play ping-

infra dig to know the word—let alone know what it meant.

But in spite of all that, I'm an advocate of the game, and I think it's time it was adopted by sportsmen of all ages.

Next time you happen to watch a couple of kids indulging in a conker duel stop and give the game the once-over, and you'll probably agree with me.

I stopped to watch Dicky Nugent and Sammy Bunter having a round or two yesterday. It was a thrilling match. First Sammy dangled his conker on the end of its length of string, and Dicky had a smack at it with his. Then Dicky did the dangling, and it was Sammy's turn to strike. They were both "king" conkers and neither seemed in the least danger of cracking under the other's onslaught. It was a great treat to watch 'em and hear the cheerful "click" as they collided!

Which would have triumphed in the end will never be known. The game ended inconclusively, you see. Dicky misused and hit Sammy on the knuckles. Sammy



pong look down the nose at the mere mention of the ancient pastime of conkers.

It's looked on as juvenile even in Removos circles. An Upper Fourth man would rather die than be found playing it. A Fifth man would consider it

jerked his hand up to his mouth. His conker flew off at a tangent. And Mr. Wiggins, who was passing, stopped it with his somewhat prominent nose!

The result was that both conkers were confiscated and the match ended in a verdict of "No contest." But it was great while it lasted!

Conkers always is great, anyway! I'd back it against marbles any day. In my opinion it's high time it was dragged out of its present obscurity and given a little publicity. What has been done for darts can be done for conkers!

Who knows? One of these days we may see stately seniors solemnly playing the game in the gym to the frenzied cheers of hosts of fans! We may even see the Head and Mr. Quelch stopping for a friendly match in the School House!

Conkers will conquer Greyfriars! The winner of the annual Conkers Championship will be looked on as the leader of the sporting world. And the greatest moment of his career will be the moment when he is taken shoulder-high to receive his proud reward—to the appropriate tune, of course, of "See, the CONKERING Hero Comes!"

See if I'm not right!
(SEZ YOU I—ED.)

"Yawnington! Yawny!"

Doctor Birchmall's refined voice fairly thundered across the old quadrangle at St. Sam's, causing passers-by to look up at the winder of his study in astonishment.

"Sounds as if the Head's feeling mad, you fellows!" remarked Jack Jolly, who was punting a footer about with half a dozen other Fourth Formers. "Surely Yawnington hasn't been doing anything wrong?"

"Yawnington never does anything—right or wrong!" larfed Frank Fearless. "The only thing that interests that old boulder is sleep!"

"Yawnington! Buck up, you lazy yung welp!" Doctor Birchmall sounded as if he was nearing the end of his patience. He leaned out of the winder, looking somewhat like an irate Buff Orpington and addressed his appeal to the grinning fellows in the quad. "Has anybody here seen Yawnington?" he barked.

"Yes, sir!" spoke up Tubby Barrell of the Fourth. "I've seen him!"

"Where?" The question rang out like a pistol-shot.

"Please, sir, he was in the Form-room!"

"In the Form-room?" Doctor Birchmall stared down at the fat junior in sheer amazement. "What the dickens is he doing in the Form-room after skool hours, Barrell?"

"Oh, he's not there now, sir!" said Tubby innersently. "It was a couple of hours ago when I saw him, sir—just when I was leaving the afternoon class!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The fellows roared. But the Head evidently failed to see the yewmerous side of it. He glared instead.

"You—you yung idjut, Barrell," he hooted. "I'm not interested in knowing where he was two hours ago. I want to know where he is now!"

"Sorry, sir!" said Tubby, with a shake of his head. "I've no idea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Silence!" yelled the Head, seriously. "This is no larking matter, you yung fatheads! I sent Yawnington to the tuckshop over half an hour ago to get me some doennuts for tea. I haven't seen him since. Where is he?"

"Give it up, sir!"

"That's eggactly what I'm not going to do!" declared the Head. "The yung raakal took half-a-crown with him belonging to me with which to buy my doennuts. And I'm famished, waiting for them! Get bizzzy at once, all of you, and see if you can find out where he is!"

"All screen, sir!" The fellows scattered to search for the missing Yawnington. But they had not taken many steps from Doctor Birchmall's winder before a shout from Jolly told them that the slacker of the Fourth was found.

"I can see him, sir!" yelled Jolly. "He's sitting on the seat

under that tree over there. And he's fast asleep!"

"Has he got the doennuts?" wrapped out Doctor Birchmall.

"Can't see them, sir!"

That reply seemed to infewriate the Head. With a fierce growl he disappeared from his winder. A few seconds later he dashed out of the Skool House and made a B-line for the sleeping Yawnington.

"You lazy yung jackanapes!" he roared, as he seized the slacker of the Fourth by the scruff of the neck. "How dare you fall asleep in the middle of an important errand for your headmaster? And where are my doennuts?"

"Ow! Yooooop! Lemme g-g-g-go!" gasped Yawnington. "S-s-s-sorry, sir! I felt tired on my way to the tuckshop and I thought I'd have forty winks!"

Doctor Birchmall snatched from Yawnington the silver coin which still reposed in his languid hand and gave it to Merry.

"Run across to the tuckshop and get me half-a-crown's-worth of best doennuts, Merry!" he wrapped out. Then, as Merry darted off, the Head's grim gaze returned to the slacker of the Fourth.

"Something will have to be done about you, Yawnington!" he said. "I'm just about fed up with this everlasting sleeping stunt of yours."

"Yaw-aw-aw! I mean, are you, sir?" yawned Yawnington.

"Morning, noon and nite, you do nothing but sleep, sleep, sleep!" said the Head. "If you don't chango, Yawnington, you'll remain just as you are—that is to say, you'll get into very serious trouble!"

"Yes, sir. Mind if I sit down?" asked Yawny sleepily, as he collapsed into the seat under the tree again.

"I would remind you, Yawnington, that you belong to a very distinguished family who eggspoct great things of you," said Doctor Birchmall, wagging a solemn finger at the slacker of the Fourth.

"Your grate-grate-grandfather is Sir Frederick Funguss, the honored chairman of our skool Board of Guvvernors. What do you think he'll say if you grow up into a kind of modern Rip van Winkle?"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Bless my sole! He has had the ordassity to go to sleep again!" gasped the Head. "Why, I'll spidicate him!"

Bending forward, Doctor Birchmall once more grasped the slacker of the Fourth by the scruff of the neck and bent him over. The next moment, Yawnington woke up with

a vengenz, as the Head's birch started raising clouds of dust from the seat of his trousers.

"Yarooooo! Yow-ow! Help! Perlice! Mercy!"

"You'll get no mercy from me unless you wake up your ideas, Yawnington!" cried the Head sternly, as he wacked away at Yawny. "I have made up my mind to reform you and I am going to start now! Jolly!"

"Yes, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly. "I am going to make you responsible for Yawnington's reform. In future, whenever I catch Yawning-



ton sleeping I shall birch you black and blow!"

"Oh, crums! Chuck it, sir!" gasped the kaptin of the Fourth, his grin fading rapidly at that unexpected announcement.

"I shall, of course, birch Yawnington as well," said the Head, with a leer. "But I feel that there will be more chance of Yawnington reforming if I give you an interest in the matter. There! That will do for the present, I fancy!"

Doctor Birchmall tucked his birchrod under his arm and mopped his perspiring brow.

"Remember, Jolly!" he cried, as he grabbed the bag of doennuts which Merry had just brought on the scene. "A birching for both of you every time I catch Yawnington napping!"

With these words, Doctor Birchmall marched away to feed his face with doennuts. He left Yawnington dozing off again—and Jack Jolly gazing after him in sheer dismay!

II.

"Reforming Yawnington! Ye gods! What a task!"

"It's the giddy limmit, old chap—there's no doubt about that!" said Fearless, with a shake of his head.

And Merry and Bright, who completed the quartette who had just had tea in Jolly's study, nodded simpertetically.

"What are you going to do, old fellow?" asked Merry.

"There's only one thing—to reform Yawny in deadly earnest.

That's what I intend to do. I ever impossibal it may sound."

"We'll back you up," cried Fearless. "When are you going to start?"

"Right now!" was Jack Jolly's reply.

A few minutes later Jack Jolly & Co. presented themselves at Yawnington's study. The sound of deep and regular snoring greeted them when they opened the door, but it was quickly replaced by faddish yells, as Jack Jolly seized the slacker by his feet and yanked him off the sofa.

"Yarooooo! Lemme come! Tain't rising-bell!"

"Up you get, Yawny!" said Jolly, grimly. "I'm going to reform you and I'm starting this minnit! No more rooting in a stuffy study; you're coming down to the Jim with us instead!"

And, grabbing the protesting Yawny by the shoulders, the kaptin of the Fourth ran him out of the study—to crash, with a fearful bump, into someone who was just sneaking up to the door!

Wallop!

"Ow-ow-ow! My me!" shrieked the newcomer, as he reeled back against the opposite wall of the passidge, and there was a startled gasp from the Co.

"The Head!" they gasped. Doctor Birchmall—for it was he—leaned back against the wall, nursing his damaged nasal organ, and glared at them. He started slightly as he recognised Yawny.

"Yawnington! You are awake, then! I eggspected to find you snoozing, as usual!"

"That eggplains why you were sneaking up the passidge so stoltihly, I suppose, sir!" chuckled Jack Jolly.

Doctor Birchmall blushed scarlet. It was easy to see that the shot had gone home, let of course, he could hardly admit it.

"I'm not disappointed at all, Jolly!" he eggclaimed. "On the contrary, I am delited to see that you are taking steps to reform Yawnington. Keep up the good work by all means! You know what you'll get if you don't!"

And the Head tramped off again, nursing his nose with gratefaderness and muttering into his beard.

During the next twenty-four hours, Jack Jolly worked like a hero at reforming Yawnington.

Yawnington had never had such an active time in all his matedrol.

He simply longed for something to happen to give him back his old-time peace.

And it wasn't long before something did happen. When it happened, it was just as much a surprize to the Head as to the Fourth-Formers. But the Head rose to the occasion for better than they did—and, in doing so, showed himself up in his true colors!

What happened was the unexpected arrival of Sir Frederick Funguss, the chairman of the St. Sam's guvernors. Sir Frederick was Yawnington's grate-grate-grandfather. He happened to dodder up from the gates just at the time when Jolly was giving Yawny a run round the quad.

Jack Jolly was not sparing the slacker of the Fourth. He was chasing him round the quad and prodding him at frequent intervals with an ebony ruler. And when Sir Frederick spotted that ruler, his face turned purple and he nearly had a blue fit!

"Stop!" he cried, and his aristocratic voice fairly trembled with rage. "How dare you strike my grate-grate-grandson, you beastly yung booly? Where's the Head?"

"Here I am, Sir Frederick!" answered the Head's voice, and Doctor Birchmall appeared behind a bush, from which he had been watching Yawny's antics.

He galloped up to Sir Frederick and eagerly dropped him a curtsy. Then he turned to Jolly and gave him a glare.

"You raskally yung booly!" he cried. "How dare you treat Yawnington in this brootal fashion? A thousand apologies. Sir Frederick, that your yung relative should have had to suffer at the hands of this barbarous youth! I will flog the yung villan here and now!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Jack Jolly.

He fairly blinked at Doctor Birchmall. Many times in the past he had seen eggssamples of the Head's dubble-dealing ways, but this simply took his breath away! Less than two days before, the Head had promised him a wacking if he failed to reform Yawny, and now he was going to give him one for doing it!

"Bond over!" roared the Head, and he swished the air with his birch.

Jack Jolly bent over. His pals looked on helplessly from a distance. The triumf of injustice seemed assured!

But it was not. Just as the Head raised his birch, Yawny stepped fourth.

"Stop!" he cried, in wringing tones. "Grate-grate-grandpop, you're mistaken! Jolly wasn't boolying me. He was only doing what the Head said he was to do!"

Then Yawny spilled the beans. Sir Frederick listened in amazement, while the Head simply nashed his teeth with rage.

"Hah! This puts a different complexion on things!" remarked Sir Frederick, when Yawny had finished. "Seemingly it has put a different complexion on you, too, Birchmall. Your face is the culler

of a ripe tomato! I suggest that we adjorn to your study to discuss this mattah!"

He led the way to the Skool House and Doctor Birchmall crawled after him, looking as if he badly wanted the earth to open and swallow him up!

A loud cheer went up from Fearless and Merry and Bright as the pair of old fogeys vanished into the House.

"Hip, hip, hooray!" "Good old Yawny!" "Come to the tuckshop and solybrate with us, old sport!" said Frank Fearless. "My treat, you know!"

But Yawnington didn't seem to want Frank's treat. He was already treating himself—to a deep sleep on the nearest garden seat!

"Shall we wake him?" asked Merry.

But Jack Jolly grinned and shook his head.

"Let him sleep on," he said. "After old Funguss has finished with the Head we shall hear no more about reforming Yawnington!"

And Jolly proved correct. And everybody was happy again—eggst the Head, and he didn't matter!

(Watch out for another sparkling yarn of St. Sam's next week.)