

HARRY WHARTON & Co. in another exciting school adventure... "COKER'S BIG IDEA!"

# The Magnet

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Billy Bunter's  
Own Paper

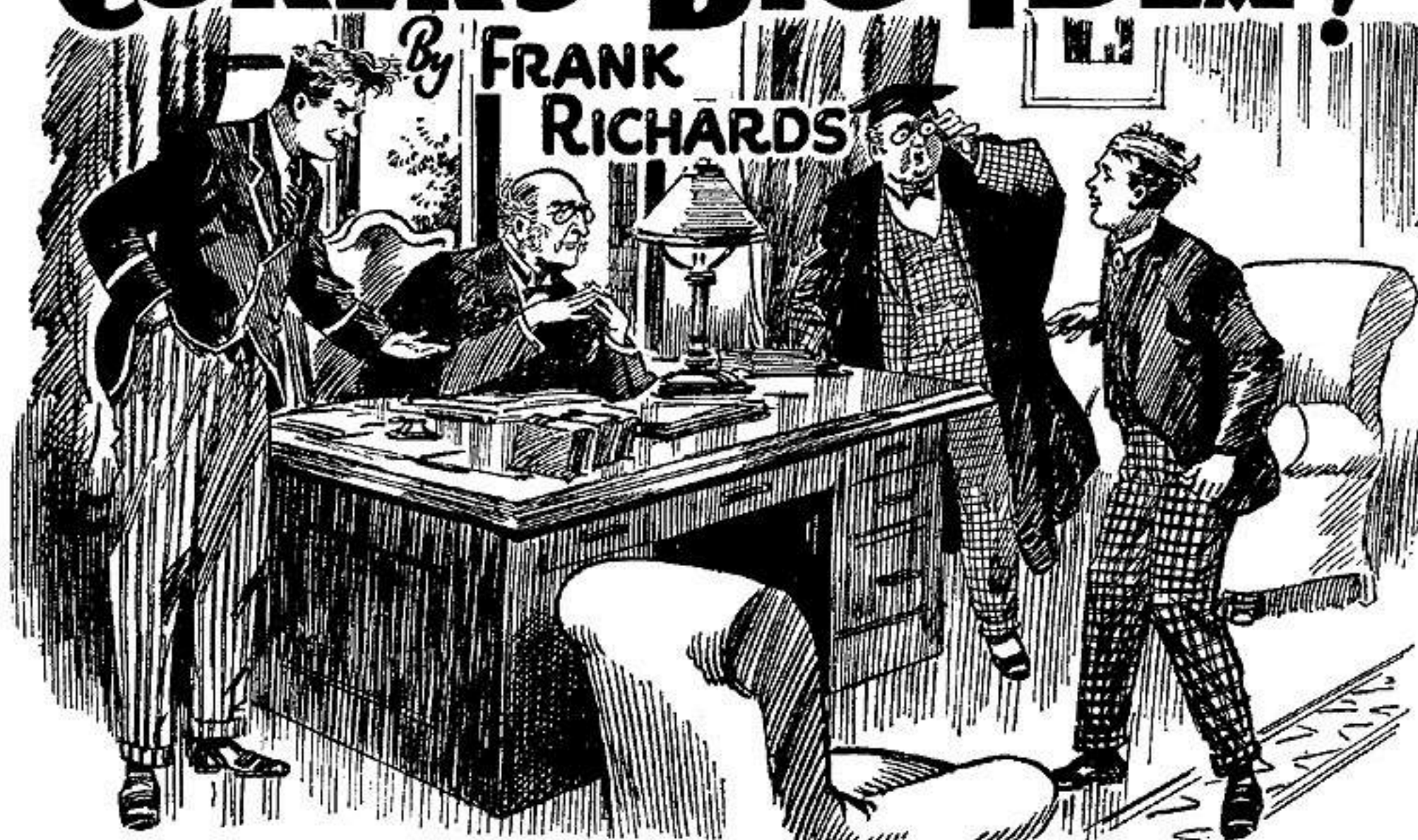


THE RAT'S  
REVENGE!

ANOTHER STUNNING SCHOOL STORY STARRING HARRY WHARTON & CO.!

# COKER'S BIG IDEA!

By FRANK RICHARDS



Skip, his head bandaged and his eyes roaming about him furtively, entered Dr. Locke's study.  
"Don't be afraid, kid," said Coker, "this is my headmaster."

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Whose Apples?

**M**UNCH, munch, munch!  
Grunt!  
Munch, munch!  
Grunt!

It sounded something like a horse at fodder, and something like a porker at the trough. But as it proceeded from Study No. 1, in the Greyfriars Remove, clearly it could be neither.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, arriving at the door of their study, were quite surprised to hear it.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Wharton.

"Who the thump—" ejaculated Nugent.

They pushed open the door and looked in.

Munching and grunting suddenly ceased. There was a startled squeak in the study.

"Look here, Toddy, you beast, I never—"

Billy Bunter, the fat ornament of the Greyfriars Remove, had been seated in the armchair. In his fat right hand was a big, ripe, red apple. In the side of the big apple there was a big gap. In his left hand was another apple all ready to begin on when the first was finished. But as the door opened, Billy Bunter bounded suddenly from the armchair, and put both fat hands behind him—thus concealing the apples from sight. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles in alarm.

"You—you fat ass!" said Harry. "I thought that a pig had got into the House."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Bunter's fat face registered relief as he blinked at the newcomers. Evidently he had feared that it was Peter Todd

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at the door; and for some reason did not want Toddy to find him in that study.

He sat down again, and his fat hands came into view, with the apples in them. He took another bite.

"I say, you fellows, it's all right," said Bunter. "I thought it was that beast Toddy for a minute! I say, come in. Have some of my apples."

"Why the dickens have you come here to scoff your apples?" demanded Nugent. "Can't you feed in your own study?"

"Eh? Oh, yes! But—but the fact is, I wanted you fellows to have some of my apples," explained Bunter. "They're prime, I can tell you. A fresh lot from Bunter Court! I've told you about our vast orchards at Bunter Court—I dare say you remember—"

"You don't really expect a chap to remember all your whoppers?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—" Bunter took another extensive bite. "I say, you fellows, shut that door—there's a draught! Have some apples! I've got the bag here—and I can tell you they're ripping!"

The fat Owl of the Remove threw away the wreck of an apple and reached down to a bag that lay beside the armchair.

He lifted it to the study table and apples rolled out. They were large, and rich, and red, and ripe, and looked very tempting. And there were six of them.

"Tuck in, you chaps!" said Bunter. "Take one each! Look here, you stood me tea in this study yesterday, so why shouldn't you have a whack in my apples? They're scrumptious!"

Munch, munch! Grunt!

Bunter was going on, hard and fast.

His next remarks came rather muffled, through a large mouthful of apple.

"I mean it, you fellows! Do have one each! I want to sit here till I've finished them! I came here specially to whack them out with you fellows. Help yourselves. Do!"

"Oh, all right!" said Harry Wharton, smiling. "Thanks, old fat bean!"

"They look topping, and no mistake!" agreed Nugent.

And the chums of the Remove took an apple each, and proceeded to dispose of the same, though not with musical effects like Bunter.

Those apples were nice! They were, in fact, delicious. They were ripe, and sweet, and beautifully flavoured, and almost melted in the mouth.

If Bunter had come specially to that study to share his apples with the dwellers therein, it would have been rather ungracious to decline. And there are few schoolboys to whom a ripe red apple is unwelcome!

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent disposed of one each, with cheery satisfaction.

While they were doing so, Billy Bunter disposed of the rest. Bunter was a quick worker in that line.

Only half an apple remained in his fat hand, uneaten, when there was a thump at the study door.

It opened, and Peter Todd of the Remove looked in.

Bunter's hand disappeared behind him instantly. He blinked at his studymate.

"Hallo, Toddy!" Harry Wharton glanced round. "Trot in, old bean! Anything up?" he added, as he noted signs of wrath and excitement in Toddy's face.

"You fellows been larking in my study?" demanded Peter.

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Frank Nugent, with a grin.

"Oh, Bunter's here!" Peter spotted the fat figure in the armchair. "Have you been in the study, Bunter?"

"Oh, no! I've been here all the time—I mean, I've been in this chair ever since I sat down in it!" stammered Bunter.

"Anything happened in your study?" asked Harry.

"My apples——"

"Your what?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Your which?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Apples!" snorted Peter. "I had a bag of apples——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I left them on the study table not a quarter of an hour ago, and then Smithy called me, and I went to his study!" yapped Peter. "I want to know what's become of those apples!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent exchanged a glance. They had no doubt that they could have given Toddy the information he required.

"If it was you, Bunter——" went on Toddy, with a ferocious glare.

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"I was going to whack them out, you fat villain! But if you've scoffed the lot——"

"I hope I'm not the fellow to scoff a fellow's apples," said Billy Bunter, with dignity, and with his right hand still carefully behind him. "I don't care much for apples. Even if I did, I shouldn't be likely to touch another fellow's apples, I hope. I've been in this study ever since I entered it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. It was a good hour ago," said Bunter. "I've been here all the time. But I'll tell you what, Toddy. I saw Coker of the Fifth in the passage, and I—I rather wondered what he was up to——"

"Coker of the Fifth!" gasped Peter.

The suggestion that a Fifth Form senior had come up to the Remove to raid apples was worthy of Billy Bunter's brilliant intellect. Coker of the Fifth had many faults—but pinching tuck from junior studies certainly was not numbered among them.

"Yes—Coker!" said Bunter. "I noticed at the time that he had a rather syrupstigious look about him——"

"A—a—a whatter?" stuttered Peter.

"A syrupstigious look——"

"Do you mean surreptitious, you blithering bloater?"

"I mean what I say—syrupstigious," answered Bunter. "I fancy he had your apples, Toddy! I'd go after him, if I were you!"

Wharton and Nugent grinned, and were silent.

Peter Todd fixed his eyes on his fat study-mate.

"Where are my apples?" he demanded.

"Eh? How should I know? Coker——"

"Do you think I'm going to believe that a Fifth Form man came pinching my apples?" shrieked Peter.

"Oh, well, perhaps it was Temple of the Fourth——"

"Temple of the Fourth?"

"Yes, I saw him in the passage, too, and—and I thought he had rather a syrupstigious look——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "Didn't you see anybody else in the passage, Bunter? Wingate of the Sixth—or Quelch—or the Head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want those apples, Bunter!" roared Peter Todd.

"It's no good asking me about your

apples, Toddy, when I know nothing whatever about them. I haven't eaten an apple this term! I haven't been eating apples in this study! You can ask Wharton and Nugent—they saw me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd breathed hard.

"You haven't eaten the apples?" he demanded.

"Certainly not! I dislike apples!"

"Very well," said Peter, in measured tones, "if those apples are back in Study No. 7 by tea-time—all right! If not, I'm going to lay into the sweep that pinched them with a cricket stump—a dozen of the best! Every one a swipe!"

"Oh crikey! I—I mean, it wasn't me, Peter——"

"If it wasn't you you're all right. If it was, I advise you to stick that bag of apples back where you found it!"

With which, Peter Todd withdrew from Study No. 1, slamming the door after him with a mighty slam.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter, blinking in dismay at Wharton and Nugent. "I—I say, you fellows, do you think Peter was jig-jig-joking?"

"Hardly!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"But I—I say, I—I never had the apples!" gasped Bunter. "I say, those apples weren't Toddy's, you know! I told you fellows that I had them from our orchards at Bunter Court——"

"We ought to have guessed, from

## WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT IT?

**Horace Coker, the champion chump of the Greyfriars Fifth, introduces a professional pickpocket to the Remove! But there's method in his madness!**

that, that you'd pinched them!" assented the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I can't put them back now!" groaned Bunter.

"How can I? I say, I can get another bag like that at the tuck-shop—only four shillings! Lend me four bob. After all, you had some of the apples!" argued Bunter. "You lend me four bob and—and I'll say nothing about it."

"Wha-a-t?"

"I mean to say, Toddy would get wild if he knew you'd scoffed his apples. He might punch your head."

"If he knew that we—we—we——" gasped Wharton. "Why, you fat scoundrel, you said they were your apples, and you came here specially to whack them out!"

"Well, that was only—only a figure of speech, old chap. Besides, what I may have said isn't evidence. The fact is that you had the apples——"

"Kill him!" said Nugent.

"Kill him—quick!" agreed Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—here, stoppit! Wharrer you up to?" yelled Bunter, as the captain of the Remove grasped the back of the armchair and tilted it.

Burp!

With half an apple still clutched in a fat hand, Billy Bunter rolled out on the rug, and roared.

"Ow! Beast! Ow! Yow! I say, gimme my apple!" yelled Bunter, as the remnant was grabbed from his fat hand. "You're not going to have my last apple! Look here, you gimmo

that apple—grooogh! Beast! If you stick that apple down the back of my neck, I'll—ooooooooogh!"

"Now roll him out!" said Harry, when the last remnant of the last apple was rammed down a fat neck.

And Billy Bunter, roaring, rolled into the Remove passage, and the door of Study No. 1 slammed on him.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Ordered Off!

"OUT of it!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"I said out of it!" snapped Coker of the Fifth. "Sharp!"

Half a dozen Remove fellows stared at Horace Coker in great astonishment.

It was not surprising that Coker fancied that he could give orders to Remove men. Coker was the man to fancy such things! But why even a fatheaded, overbearing, dictatorial ass like Coker wanted to barge in at all was quite a mystery to Bob Cherry and his comrades.

True, those juniors were where they were not supposed to be. Kicking a football over the kitchen gardens was not according to the rules. But if the juniors had no business there, neither had Coker of the Fifth. And certainly it did not matter to Coker if Mr. Mimble's cabbages suffered a little.

On that fine October afternoon, after class, the juniors were punting a footer. Bob Cherry, with a mighty lift from the biggest foot in the Lower School at Greyfriars, had sent it travelling a tremendous distance. Bob, and Johnny Bull, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and Herbert Vernon-Smith, Tom Redwing and Hazeldene, had chased after it—and there they were.

And there, too, was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form.

Coker was strolling down a path towards one of the gardener's sheds when the juniors came whooping on the scene.

Why he was there, nobody knew, or cared. Apples were stored in the loft over that shed; but Coker could hardly be suspected of designs on Mr. Mimble's stores of apples. Anyhow, he was there—and, so far as the Removites were concerned, he might have remained there for the rest of his life. But Coker, turning his back on the shed, came striding towards them, with a frowning brow and an upraised hand—and ordered them off!

"They forgot the footer, for the moment, as they gazed at Coker. He waved an impatient hand.

Not only did Coker want his orders obeyed, but he wanted them obeyed at once. He had neither time nor patience to waste on fags.

"Do you hear me?" hooted Coker. "Cut off! Get out! You fags are not allowed here, as you jolly well know! Out of it!"

"Has the Head made you a prefect this term, Coker?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Eh? No. What do you mean?"

"The governors haven't appointed you headmaster, in the place of Dr. Locke?" inquired Vernon-Smith.

"Don't be a young ass! Get out!"

"And why?" asked Redwing.

"Because I tell you!" said Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

Coker stared at him.

"What are you laughing at, you silly young ass?" he snapped.

"Your little joke," explained Bob.

"I'm not joking!" hooted Coker.

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"You are, old man, you are!" assured Bob. "Biggest joke going! You're a standing joke, old bean—except when you're sitting down, of course. Then you're a sitting joke! But you're always a joke!"

"The jokefulness is terrific, my esteemed, fathcaded Coker!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I said out of it!" roared Coker. "Are you going?"

"I think not!" smiled Bob. "Not even because you tell us, Horace, old man! But I'll tell you what we will do. You don't want us to kick this footer here—"

"No!" snorted Coker.

"Then we'll kick you, instead!"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Pile in!" chuckled the Bounder.

And the six juniors, grinning, rushed at Horace Coker and booted him, instead of the footer.

Coker tottered, and spluttered.

He made a fierce grab, and grabbed Bob and Smithy.

At the same moment the other four grabbed Coker.

Coker went over in Mr. Mimble's cabbages.

Cabbages squashed right and left under Coker as he struggled, and wriggled, and roared.

"Take his other hoof!" said Bob, grasping the end of a long, threshing leg.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith grabbed the other hoof. Coker heaved wildly. But he could not get on his feet while his feet were held up in the air.

All that Coker could do was to recline more or less gracefully on the back of his neck, spluttering for breath.

"Come on!" said Bob. "Pick up that footer, Inky! Let's get back—and take Coker with us! Coker's not allowed here, and we can't have these Fifth Form fatheads trespassing on Mimble's cabbage patches. You're simply ruining those cabbages, Coker."

"I'll smash you!" shrieked Coker.

"Lend a hand here, you fellows!" said Bob. "He's rather heavy! Now, then, a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether! Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's legs were long. Each of them were grasped by two juniors, like the shafts of a cart, to pull Coker along.

He had to go. There was no help for it! He roared, he raved, and he struggled and wriggled, but he went. Travelling on his back, with the back of his head tapping the earth and the back of his neck scraping it up, Coker went—frantic with rage.

He strove to drag his long legs free. He strove to curl up and grab at the merry Removites. But he had no chance. His jacket crumpled up round him, buttons flew in all directions! Breathless and enraged, Coker of the Fifth travelled along on his neck.

By that time, perhaps, Horace Coker repented him that he had ordered the Removites off.

Why he had done so they did not know, unless he was simply throwing his weight about, as usual. That he had any particular reason for not desiring eyes to fall on him in that particular spot, the juniors naturally did not guess. Neither would they have cared if they had guessed. Coker had to be made to understand that he could not order Remove men about—and they were making this painfully clear unto Coker.

"Oh! Ow! Urrgh! Crrrrgh!" spluttered Coker as he travelled. "I'll

smash the lot of you! I'll—urrgh!—I'll—gurrgh! Oh crikey! Leggo! Oogh!"

"Sing on, sweet bird!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young villains— Urrgh! You cheeky little—groogh!—rotters— Oh crumbs! Oooooogh!"

Coker's hat was left among the cabbages. His collar was left on the path, his tie a little farther on. A handkerchief and several other articles were distributed from his pockets at intervals.

Coker's trail was plainly marked—he left "sign" enough for a blind man to follow.

His face, always ruddy, was crimson. Perspiration poured down it. His hair was like a mop—a very disorderly mop. He collected dust in great quantities. It was plain that Coker was not enjoying this in the very least.

The Removites, on the other hand, seemed to be enjoying themselves. They roared with laughter as they travelled along with Coker.

"Take him right up to the House—what?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Like us to take you into your study, Coker?"

"Urrrrgh!"

Coker travelled into the quad. There, the sight of a tall, angular figure in the distance, caused the merry Removites to drop Coker suddenly, like a hot potato. This was, in their view, no end of a joke—but they did not expect Mr. Quelch, their Form-master, to take the same view.

So, at the sight of Quelch in the distance, they dropped Coker, and scampered away.

Coker was left strewn on the earth in a dismal, dusty, dismantled state, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels.

It was full five minutes before Coker was able to pick himself up, gather himself together, and limp away.

As he tottered to the House, he passed a little crowd of Removites punting a footer. They smiled at Coker—but he did not smile at them!

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Stump for Bunter!

**B**ILLY BUNTER opened the door of Study No. 7, in the Remove, and blinked in cautiously.

It was tea-time, and at tea-time, naturally, Billy Bunter headed for the study like a homing pigeon.

But on this occasion, the fat Owl of the Remove came in fear and trembling. He hoped that Toddy had got over his bad temper by this time—but he dreaded very much that Toddy hadn't!

To his relief, Toddy was not, at the moment, in the study. Tom Dutton was there, making a pile of toast for tea. There was already a stack on the table, and Tom was industriously adding to it.

"I say, Dutton, where's Toddy?" asked Bunter.

Tom Dutton glanced round at him. Dutton had the misfortune to be deaf—if deafness could be considered a misfortune for a fellow who shared a study with Billy Bunter.

"Eh?" he asked. "Did you speak?"

"Where's Toddy?" asked Bunter.

"Has Toddy gone out?"

Tom Dutton frowned.

"You'd better let him hear you calling him a lout!" he said. "What are you calling Toddy names for?"

"Oh crikey! I say, I'll butter the

toast, if you like," said Bunter. "Where's the butter?"

"Eh?"

"Butter!" howled Bunter.

"Don't be a cheeky ass, Bunter! I may be a trifle deaf, but you know perfectly well that I don't stutter!"

"I didn't say you did!" shrieked Bunter. "I said butter! Butter! Got that? Butter!"

"Toddy's gone to get some butter. He'll be back in a minute, and if he hears you calling him a lout—"

"Oh, shut up, you deaf ass!" yapped Bunter. "I say, Dutton, is Toddy still shirty?"

"Nobody is dirty in this study, except you! You never wash!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I don't call it a joke to say a chap's dirty! What about yourself? Quelch sent you out of the Form-room to wash yesterday. You've made it last over to-day, by the look of you!"

There were footsteps in the passage.

Peter Todd came cheerily into the study, and slammed down a packet of butter on the table.

"Here you are, old bean!" he said.

"Hallo! Is that you, Bunter? Have you brought those apples back?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Hand me that cricket stump off the shelf."

"Wh-a-a-t do you want that stump for, Toddy?"

"You!"

"Look here, you beast, don't play the goat!" said Bunter, backing round the table. "I never had the apples! If you think I took them to Wharton's study to eat, while you were jawing to Smithy, you're mistaken. I fancy it was Hobson of the Shell who had them. I saw him in the passage—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I noticed at the time that he had a sly look—"

"Are you going to hand me that cricket stump?"

"No, you beast! I never had the apples, but if you make a point of it, I'll buy you a fresh lot! What about that?"

"Good! Get on with it!"

"I mean, of course, when my postal order comes! I'm stony at the moment, but I've told you I'm expecting a postal order. You remember my mentioning it, Toddy?"

"Sort of!" agreed Peter. "You mentioned it the day I came to Greyfriars, and you've mentioned it every day since, except in the hols."

"Oh, really, Toddy! The fact is, I should have come back to school with lots of money, only I had my pockets picked in the hols," said Bunter. "All my banknotes and currency notes, Peter! I was staying with Wharton at his little place, and there was a pick-pocket about—"

"You don't mean to say you've taken to picking pockets, as well as pinching tuck?"

"No, you idiot!" yelled Bunter. "There really was a pick-pocket, and he cleared all the fellows out. They thought at first it was that Chinese image, Wun Lung, playing tricks—but I spotted the pincher—"

"Spotted him in the looking-glass?"

"Beast! I say, old chap, it's true—I spotted him again, at Lantham, the first day of term, and they collared him, and that fool Coker batted in, and he got away! I saw him here, in the school, after that, too! Well, Peter, that young villain picked all their pockets! All my money went—"

"All that French penny you had last term?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" yapped Bunter. "He cleared all the fellows out—and if I'd been with them at the time, he'd have cleared me out, too! I—I mean, he did clear me out—all my bank-notes and currency notes! I don't know how much it was—I think it was rather less than twenty pounds—"

"I think it was!" agreed Peter. "Quite a lot less!"

"I had nothing left, but my watch, Peter—"

"That's worth twopence, any day!"

"Beast! I mean, that's how I came to turn up stony this term!" said

in the Remove passage for days, and nobody noticing him—waiting for a chance to bag a bag of apples! Sounds sort of probable, doesn't it?"

"Well, after all, if there's a dishonest person about, that's the person to suspect if you miss anything!" argued Bunter.

"Quite! That's why I know it was you!"

"Why, you cheeky beast—"

Peter Todd stepped across to the shelf and picked up the cricket stump.

Billy Bunter dodged across to the door.

"Of course, you can!" agreed Toddy. "Come right in! I can't reach you where you are! Roll in!"

"If you're going to be a fearful beast, you beast—"

"I am! An absolute beast, until those apples turn up. Every time I see you in this study, I'm going to stomp you."

"You—you—you beast!" groaned Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to come in and take that stump away from you and whop you with it, Peter Todd."

"Oh, do!" gasped Peter.



Coker's legs were grasped and he was dragged over the cabbage-patch, travelling on his back. "Oh! Ow! Urrgh! Gurrgh!" he spluttered, as he travelled. "I'll smash the lot of you! I'll—gurrgh! Leggo! Ooogh!"

Bunter. "It's not a thing that often happens to me, as you know—"

"Oh crikey!"

"It will be all right when my postal order comes! I'm expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations! The minute it comes, Peter, I'm going to buy you a bag of apples."

"Do!" said Peter. "When I'm an old, old man, and have lost all my teeth, I dare say I may be able to chew an apple still. In my venerable old age, I shall be glad of those apples."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

Tom Dutton rose, with a red face, from the fire, with the last round of toast. He proceeded to butter the same.

"Is that all you've got for tea, Peter?" asked Bunter.

"That's all."

"It's a bit measly, old chap—"

"That needn't worry you! You're not going to have any. You're going to have the cricket stump, unless you cough up those apples!"

"I tell you I never had the apples!" roared Bunter. "I say, Peter, now I come to think of it, it may have been that young pickpocket. I know I saw him in the school, the first day of term, and Wharton and his gang got after him. He may be still about, Peter."

"So likely!" agreed Peter. "Sitting

"I say, Peter, can't you take a chap's word?" he pleaded. "I never had the apples. Those apples I ate in Wharton's study weren't yours, old chap—they came from Bunter Court! Besides, I never ate any. I suppose you can take a pal's word, Toddy?"

Toddy, apparently, couldn't! He crossed the study after Bunter, stump in hand. Bunter jerked the door open in a hurry.

Whack!

"Yarrop!"

Bunter bounded out of the study.

Whack!

The stump landed again, on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School, as he bounded.

A roar floated back as Bunter departed.

Peter Todd sat down to tea with the stump on the table.

Two minutes later, the door opened, and a fat face and a big pair of spectacles blinked cautiously in.

"I—I—I say, Toddy, I—I'm coming in!" mumbled Bunter.

"Do!" said Toddy. "I've got the stump here ready."

"Do you think I'm going to miss my tea, you beast?" howled Bunter. "I can come into my own study if I like, I suppose."

"Look here, I'm coming in!" howled Bunter.

And he rolled in defiantly.

Peter jumped up from the table, catching up the stump as he jumped. Then he jumped for Bunter!

Billy Bunter rolled out faster than he had rolled in. But he did not roll quite fast enough. There was a report like a pistol-shot, as the stump landed.

A terrific yell awoke the echoes of the Remove passage as Bunter departed in haste!

This time he departed not to return! Even tea in the study had lost its attraction. There was no tea in Study No. 7 for Bunter—only a cricket stump, and he was fed-up with that stump.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Coker's Problem!

"DON'T go!" said Coker of the Fifth.

Coker broke a long silence to make that remark—he had been silent for three minutes, which was a long silence for Horace Coker.

Sitting at the tea-table in his study in the Fifth, Coker regarded his friends  
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Potter and Greene with a thoughtful frown.

After tea, they were naturally going. Tea in Coker's study was attractive—but being over, there remained no attraction, but Coker's conversation—which had long since palled on his friends.

However, as Coker said suddenly: "Don't go!" Potter and Greene lingered. Apparently Coker had something more to say—his silence had been deceptive.

They could only hope that it was not going to be about football. Coker's views on Soccer gave them a very tired feeling.

"I'm going to consult you fellows!" announced Coker. "The fact is, I'm up against a bit of a difficulty. I don't suppose your advice will be worth anything, of course, considering what fatheads you are—"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Considering what fatheads you are! But out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know!" said Coker. "You may be able to help—like the mouse and the lion over again, you know."

Potter winked at Greene with the eye farthest from Coker. Greene changed a chuckle into a cough, just in time.

Playing mice to Coker's lion did not seem to appeal to them as a serious proposition.

But they wondered what old Horace had been up to now. If there was any trouble lying about loose, Coker was the man to collect it. Coker was born to rows and scrapes, as the sparks fly upward.

"I dare say you noticed how late I came, on the first day of term," went on Coker. "Well, I was jolly busy that day. I'll tell you what happened."

"I'll tell you what, Coker, old man," said Potter, as if struck by a sudden bright idea. "Tell us after dorm. Plenty of time for a good, long talk, after lights out."

"Yes, that's rather a good idea," agreed Greene. "As it happens, the fellows are expecting us in the games study now."

Neither Potter nor Greene objected to Coker telling them a long story, after lights out in the dorm. They were then able to go to sleep while he told it.

But Coker did not heed. He did not even seem to hear. He went on:

"I had a row in the hols—a cheeky scoundrel tried to rob me, in a wood in Surrey, and I knocked him out. I gave him rather a thrashing. In fact, I left him jolly nearly dead. I thought he deserved that. Well, you fellows would hardly believe it, perhaps, but that cheeky rat owed me a grudge for it—"

"Not really?" gasped Potter.

"Yes, really!" affirmed Coker. "I bunged up his eyes, and smashed his nose, and knocked his jaw sideways, and I dare say he felt pretty sore. I never expected to see him again—but I jolly well did! Would you fellows believe that he had the neck to spy out my name and my school, and to look for me the day I came back here, and try to bash my head in? He got me in the train, coming to Lantham, and floored me with a length of gas-pipe! I had to report it at the police station, of course—but I've said nothing about it here—for certain reasons."

Potter and Greene, perhaps, wished that those reasons still held good! They wanted to get to the games study. However, they listened.

"He had a kid with him," went on Coker, "a kid who, I found, was called Skip. Well, this young scoundrel was a pickpocket, and hand-in-glove with

the brute he called Jimmy the Rat. But he grabbed the brute's arm and stopped him from caving in my head! That was sort of decent, wasn't it?"

"Oh, quite!" agreed Potter.

"Well, in the circumstances, what would you fellows have done?" asked Coker.

"Tipped him half-a-crown," said Potter.

"Five bob!" said Greene.

Coker looked at them.

"I suppose I was a bit of an ass to expect any sense from you fellows!" he remarked. "Well, I didn't tip him half-a-crown, or five bob! I told him I would take him in hand, and make an honest kid of him somehow."

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene.

"As there was nothing else to be done," went on Coker, "I brought him here—"

"Here!" yelled Potter.

"I couldn't leave him on his own, you see. I had no end of trouble getting him into the House. But I got him in at Prout's window at last."

"Oh, great Scott!" gasped Potter. "That sneak-thief that old Pompous found in his study and made such a row about—"

"That's the chap!" assented Coker. "Luckily he got away from Prout, and I got him into the box-room and fixed him up for the night."

"You fixed a pickpocket up for the night in the school!" stuttered Potter.

"I've said that there was nothing else to be done, in the circumstances. The rotten part of it is that the young sweep's been brought up to pinch, and he got out of the box-room in the middle of the night, and started prowling round to pinch things."

"You didn't expect that?" gasped Greene.

"No! You see, I told him distinctly to do nothing of the sort!" explained Coker. "Now, as it happens, that crew in the Remove—Wharton and his gang—had had their things pinched by that very kid in the hols, and they knew him, and spotted him here, and they grabbed him that night. So he never did any damage, after all. It was like their sag cheek to butt in, of course—still, on the whole, I'm not sorry they did."

"My only summer hat!" murmured Potter. "You can't mean that that young rascal's still about the school, Coker?"

"Eh? Of course!"

"Oh crikey!"

"That cheeky young cad, Wharton, told me he had to be got out of the House, or else he'd root him out," said Coker. "Of course, I shouldn't take any notice of a cheeky fag. Still, I thought he'd better get out of the House. I've parked him in the apple-loft over old Mimble's shed."

Potter and Greene could only gaze at Coker. They had fancied that they knew every kind of ass Coker was! But Horace, evidently, still had a surprise or two for his pals!

That even Coker had been capable of bringing a professional pickpocket into the school, was almost unbelievable. That the young rascal was still there, after the lapse of days, was more incredible still. In all Greyfriars School, only Horace Coker was capable of doing these things. But it really was amazing that even Horace was capable of it.

"I got a key to fit the shed," explained Coker. "As it's always kept locked, nobody would think of looking for anybody there. I've fixed the kid up all right in the loft—and he's able to get out for a walk now and then when the coast's clear. That's all right

—so far! But—” Coker shook his head seriously. “He can’t stay parked in an apple-loft for ever! You fellows see that?”

“Oh!” gasped Greene. “Sort of!”

“What on earth will happen if he’s found there?” gasped Potter. “Do you know that you might be sacked for this, Coker?”

“Don’t be an ass!” said Coker testily. “If it comes out, I shall explain to the Head, and I hope he’ll see that I couldn’t very well do anything else, in the circumstances. Still, schoolmasters are rather dense, and I’d rather keep the Head out of it, if possible.”

“I should!” gurgled Potter.

“I’ve been thinking it over and over for days,” went on Coker. “But you fellows can see that it’s a bit of a difficulty. It’s absolutely settled that I’m not going to let that kid go back to his rotten pocket-picking ways, after what he did for me. He can learn to be honest, all right! I’ve given him three thrashings already—”

“Oh crikey!”

“I’m ready to keep on with that, so far as it’s any use,” went on Coker. “But that won’t meet all the difficulties. He may be spotted there, for one thing. Only this afternoon, I caught a mob of Remove kids with a football, quite near the shed, when I was there. Luckily I’d shoved in a bag of stuff I’d brought for him, before they came along. I had to order them off, and there was a row. Old Mimble might go up into that loft for his dashed apples. The fact is that something’s got to be done. But what?”

Coker wrinkled his rugged brow in thought as he gazed at Potter and Greene.

“That’s why I’ve told you,” he said. “I want your advice! I don’t suppose it will be any use, as I’ve said; still, such as it is, cough it up!”

“Well,” said Potter with a deep breath. “I think I can give you some pretty good advice, Coker! Go and let that kid out, and tell him to cut, without losing a single minute about it.”

“This very second!” agreed Greene.

“Get him out of the school before anything happens,” said Potter, “and for goodness’ sake, lose no time about it.”

“Not a tick!” said Greene.

“We’ll come with you, if you like, and help boot him off the premises!” offered Potter.

“The important thing is to get rid of him this very minute!” said Greene.

Coker gave them an icy look.

“And what about reforming him, and giving him a chance in life?” he asked.

“Oh crumbs!” groaned Potter. “My dear chap, a fellow at school doesn’t take on jobs like that—he really doesn’t! And Greyfriars isn’t Borstal, you know. Borstal’s his right address. Take a ticket for him to Borstal, and put him in the train.”

“Get shut of him at once, anyhow,” said Greene.

“Yes—that’s the really urgent thing!” said Potter. “Get him out of the school, and see that he doesn’t butt in again.”

“I suppose,” said Coker slowly, “that that’s the sort of idiocy I might have expected from you fellows. I suppose I was an ass to think that you might talk sense for once in your lives. You’d better shut up—”

“But look here, Coker—”

“I said shut up!”

“My dear chap—”

“Shut up!” roared Coker.

Potter and Greene shut up, and left the study.

As they went down the passage they exchanged glances, and Potter tapped his forehead significantly.

Coker was left to wrestle with his knotty problem on his own—having no use whatever for the advice he had received from his pals.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Knows How!

“L END me—”

“Scat!”

“Twopence!” said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

“Oh!”

It was the following morning, in break, when Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five and made that modest request.

They smiled.

Twopence was not a large sum—it was, indeed, worth that, any day, to lose Bunter’s company.

Bob Cherry produced a penny, and Harry Wharton produced another. Seldom were Bunter’s requests for cash on so modest a scale. They felt that he deserved to be encouraged!

Bunter was a borrower of dreaded skill. There was a legend in the Remove that he had even succeeded, once, in borrowing a “bob” from Fisher T. Fish, the American junior! Lending Bunter twopence was getting off cheap!

“I’ll let you have this back out of my postal order!” said the fat Owl, as he tucked the two pennies into his pocket.

“Oh, do!” said Bob Cherry gravely.

“I fancy it will be here this afternoon—”

“What a fertile fancy!” murmured Nugent.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“That cad, Toddy, is still keeping it up that I had his apples yesterday,” said Bunter. “He can’t take my word! You fellows know that I never touched them, as you saw me with them—”

“Oh crikey!”

“But will Toddy believe me?” asked Bunter, bitterly. “Not he! The fact is, his people are solicitors, you know, so he thinks everybody tells lies. But I think he might take my word—knowing me as he does.”

“That’s why, old fat man.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!” snapped Bunter. “Well, Toddy’s going to have his rotten apples—I disdain to argue the point! He won’t let me into the study, he says, till he has those apples back. Only for prep—and I’d really rather cut prep than cut tea, you know.”

“Would you really?” gasped Johnny Bull.

“I would really, old chap! There were only eight or nine apples—and I’ll let him have a dozen back. Perhaps he’ll be satisfied then.”

“Getting a cargo from the tremendous orchards at Bunter Court?” grinned Bob.

“Exactly, old chap! I’ve only got to phone, you know.”

“Lucky man!” said Bob. “While you’re on the phone, tell them to send me a pineapple from the pinery, will you?”

“A bunch of grapes, for me, from the vinery!” said Nugent.

“A box of oranges for me, from the orangerie!” said Johnny Bull.

“Pears for me, from the magnificent pear orchard!” said Harry Wharton.

“Say a couple of dozen juicy ones.”

“And do not forget my humble self,” said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. “While you are talking phonefully, mention that I should like a cucumber from the cucumbery.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Yah!” retorted Bunter; and he rolled away; certainly without any intention of phoning Bunter Court for all those nice things.

He rolled into the House, and went up to the Remove studies.

In Study No. 14 he found Fisher T. Fish.

Hardly a fellow was indoors, in break, on a fine, sunny October morning. But Fisher T. Fish, the business man of the Remove, had little use for sunshine or fresh air. There was, so far as Fishy could see, no money in either.

Fishy was sitting on the study table, with accounts before him, revelling in figures. In break, he was sure of getting the study to himself, and could revel undisturbed in dollars and cents. He glanced up with annoyance at a footstep, dreading that Johnny Bull or Squiff had come in to interrupt him. But it was only Bunter.

“I say, Fishy, I want you to lend me—”

“Forget it!” said Fishy, briefly.

“Your bunch of keys—”

“Oh!” said Fishy. “Tuppence!”

“I want a rather big key—sort that would fit a shed!” explained Bunter.

“You can hire that bunch of keys for tuppence!” said Fisher T. Fish, curtly. “I guess you’ll find the key you want on it. But you take the risk.”

Fisher T. Fish sorted an enormous bunch of old keys from his desk. Fishy never came across a disused key without adding it to that bunch.

Fellows who lost keys to boxes, doors, or lockers, were often glad to borrow that bunch. Sometimes a fellow hearing that Fishy of the Remove had a big bunch of keys, would come along to borrow it, expecting it to be lent for nothing! He soon found out his mistake! The business-man of the Remove charged tuppence for the loan of that bunch. He did not, as he would have explained, collect old keys for his health.

Billy Bunter took the bunch, and rolled out of the study—leaving Fisher T. Fish happy in entering another tuppence in his accounts.

It was rather a hefty bunch, some of the keys being very large; and it made a perceptible bulge in Bunter’s pocket.

The fat Owl rolled out of the House, and took the direction of Mr. Mimble’s kitchen-garden.

He blinked round very cautiously as he approached the shed, over which was the loft in which the gardener packed apples.

This was Bunter’s solution of the apple-problem. He had no doubt that one of Fishy’s keys would open that shed. He knew that innumerable apples were in the loft.

It was, certainly, a rather risky proceeding. But Bunter felt that he had to take the risk.

Peter was going to be a beast till his apples were restored. Restoring the actual apples was an impossibility. But apples just as good were to be had—with a little risk! Bunter did not like risks—but still less did he like being stumped whenever he put his fat little nose into his own study. As for the unpleasant fact that bagging the gardener’s apples amounted to pilfering, Bunter did not think of that. A fellow couldn’t think of everything!

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He approached the shed very cautiously. It would have been extremely awkward had Mr. Mimble caught him there.

But the gardener was not about; and Billy Bunter had almost reached the shed when there was a heavy tread behind him.

He spun round in alarm.

To his amazement, it was Coker of the Fifth Form, who was striding towards him—with a wrathful brow.

What Coker was doing there, Bunter could not guess. He could hardly be after Mr. Mimble's apples!

But there he was—and he came straight at the alarmed Owl.

"What are you doing here, you frowsy young frump?" demanded Coker.

"Oh, really, Coker! What are you doing here, if you come to that?" retorted Bunter. "I can walk round if I like, I suppose."

"You're not allowed here!" rapped Coker.

"You ain't, either!" said Bunter.

"That's cheek!" said Coker. "Out of it! Get going! Let me catch you mooching about here again! Jump for it!"

"Look here, you beast— Yaroo!" roared Bunter, as Coker of the Fifth grasped him by a fat neck, slewed him round, and planted a heavy boot.

"Going?" grinned Coker.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter. "Ow! Beast!"

"Have another—"

"Yaroo!"

Bunter started, at a run, as Coker delivered another.

Coker, grinning, followed him, letting out his foot again.

The fat Owl yelled, and put on speed. He forgot all about apples now, and all about Peter Todd and the cricket stump. Coker's heavy boot, landing on his tight trousers, gave Bunter quite enough to think about, at the moment.

He raced!

After him charged Coker, still booting.

The previous day Coker had collected quite a spot of trouble in clearing Remove juniors away from that spot. But he had no trouble now. Bunter collected the trouble.

How many times Coker's boot landed on him before he got clear, Bunter never knew. But he knew that it landed often, and that it landed hard.

He got away at last, gurgling for breath, and crimson with indignation.

The bell rang for third school, and Bunter had to postpone his designs on the apple-loft, till after class. He wriggled very uncomfortably on his form during third school. Coker had booted not wisely but too well.

But his designs on the apple-loft were only postponed; and Coker of the Fifth, had he only known it, was not likely to keep his extraordinary secret much longer!

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Quelch Takes a Hand!

**M**R. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, raised his eyebrows in surprise—till they almost reached the brim of his hat.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon.

The Remove were getting a rest from Mr. Quelch—and Mr. Quelch was getting a rest from the Remove; probably needing it more than they did.

Golden October weather tempted Mr. Quelch to walk along the towpath by

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the Sark. He walked with vigorous strides, swinging his walking-stick—till presently he stopped to take breath, and to admire the beauty of the rippling river, the deep brown woods, and the wooded hills in the distance.

Thus it was that he saw Coker.

Coker of the Fifth was seated by a tree, leaning his back against the same, with a writing-pad open on his knee, a stump of pencil in his hand, and a deep wrinkle in his manly brow.

Quelch, observing him, smiled faintly.

He had little to do with the Fifth Form; but he had noticed Coker—nobody in the same school could quite help noticing Coker.

He was aware that Coker was the despair of his Form-master, and was popularly supposed to be the real cause why Mr. Prout's hair was thinning so rapidly on top.

Seeing Coker thus engaged, Mr. Quelch concluded that he was having a shot at some problem that puzzled him—something simple in maths that would not have bothered Tubb of the Third, or something in the way of a Latin conjugation that Sammy Bunter of the Second could have dealt with.

Regarding Coker from a distance, Mr. Quelch even considered stopping, when he reached the spot where Coker sat under the tree, and lending him a little aid.

For it was clear that Coker had a pretty knotty problem in hand!

Quelch, certainly, had not the remotest idea that that problem was named Skip, and that Coker was at his wits' end what to do with a young pickpocket whom he had taken in hand and resolved to reform!

Coker was, in fact, drafting a letter to be written to his Aunt Judy on the subject. It was no easy matter—and had it been an easy matter to anyone else, it would probably have been difficult to Coker. Any problem that could be settled by brawn and muscle, Coker could have taken in his stride. But in the intellectual line, Nature had been stingy to Coker.

Having watched Coker for a minute or two, with a faintly amused smile, Mr. Quelch was thinking of resuming his way. And it was then that his eyebrows rose, in sudden surprise, to such an extent that they threatened to disappear into his hat. For a sudden, startling sight met the Remove master's eyes—a startling, astonishing sight.

From behind the big oak-tree against which Coker sat, a face appeared.

It was a sharp, rat-like face, with a pair of eyes just like a wary rat's—small, sharp, glittering, watchful.

Those rat-like eyes fixed on the back of Coker's head.

The man's hand slid under his coat, and came out with what looked like a short stick in it. Mr. Quelch could not see that it was a length of cut gas-pipe wrapped in a sock. But he could see that it was a deadly weapon—and intended to be used as such.

Dumbfounded, Quelch gazed.

It was a rather lonely spot, and it would not have been very surprising had a tramp or a footpad made an attempt to relieve Coker of some of his superfluous wealth, unseen by other eyes. Such things had happened, and might happen again.

But this was nothing of that kind! It was not an attempt at robbery. It was an intended attack that Mr. Quelch saw—a savage assault for no reason whatever that he could see!

That rat-eyed rascal was creeping from behind the oak, with the obvious

intention of knocking Coker of the Fifth on the head.

It was so amazing that Mr. Quelch was spellbound for a moment or two. But he woke quickly to action.

Coker was quite unconscious of his danger. His brows were wrinkled over that writing-pad, and he looked neither to the right nor to the left.

But for the presence of the Remove master, there was not the slightest doubt that Jimmy the Rat would have knocked out the schoolboy who had thrashed him in the holidays.

But Quelch was there—and, middle-aged gentleman as he was, he was active, and he was prompt, once he realised what was going on.

Grasping his walking-stick—fortunately a thick and heavy one—he rushed forward, with stick uplifted.

He could hardly have reached the spot in time; but Jimmy the Rat, his keen ears catching the sound of footsteps on the grassy path, turned his head in sudden alarm to see who was coming.

"Coker!" shouted Mr. Quelch. "Look out, boy! Be on your guard!"

He rushed on.

Coker stared round.

He jumped, and the writing-pad went in one direction, the pencil in another, as he saw the rat-like face hardly a yard from him.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker. "You!"

He bounded up.

The rat-faced man gritting his teeth, bounded back into the wood.

Coker alone he would have tackled, even if he failed to take him by stealth—but the angular gentleman charging at him with uplifted walking-stick was another proposition. The Rat was thinking now only of escape.

But as he leaped back into the wood, Coker's foot shot out, landed on his coat-tails, and sent him staggering forward.

He recovered swiftly, but not swiftly enough to escape Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master reached him, and the walking-stick came down with a terrific crack.

Jimmy the Rat gave a fearful yell. His hat cracked under the swipe, and he felt as if his head had done the same.

"Scoundrel!" panted Mr. Quelch. "Take that—and that—"

Another hefty swipe landed on the Rat, and he tottered. He turned on Mr. Quelch, grasping his weapon, a rat's ferocity blazing in his eyes. But he had not the courage to face the grim, angry face and the lashing stick.

He jumped back, out of reach of another swipe, and plunged into the trees.

Mr. Quelch rushed after him.

Unfortunately, Coker did the same at the same moment. Coker, of course, caught his foot in a trailing root, and stumbled into the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch staggered against a tree. Coker sat down at his feet.

A moment's respite was enough for the wary Rat. He tore away through the wood, and vanished.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch testily. "Really, Coker, you are very clumsy!"

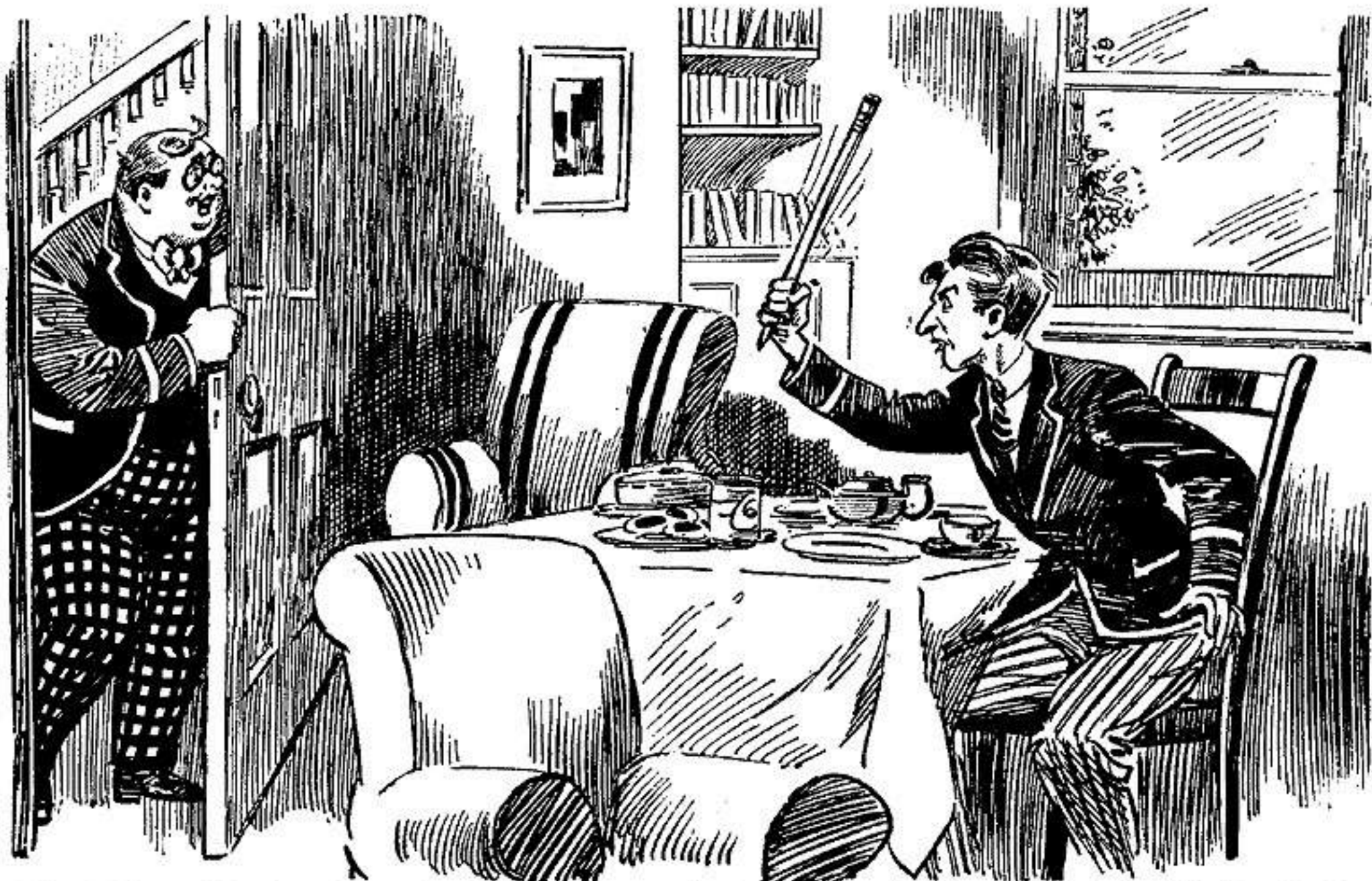
"Eh?" Coker scrambled up. "You pushed me over, sir!"

"I did nothing of the sort!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You ran into me in the most clumsy manner, Coker!"

"Really, sir!" protested Coker.

Coker was the only man at Greyfriars who did not know that Coker of the Fifth was a clumsy ass.

"He is gone now!" said Mr. Quelch crossly. "I should have liked to give



Peter Todd was sitting down to tea when the study door opened and a fat face and a big pair of spectacles blinked cautiously in. "I can come in, I suppose?" said Bunter. "Of course you can!" agreed Toddy, picking up the stump. "I can't reach you where you are!"

him into custody. It is very unfortunate—"

"Yes, I'd have liked to cop the brute," said Coker. "It was rather unfortunate that you pushed me over—"

"Be silent, you foolish boy!"

Coker looked at him. He had to take this sort of thing from Prout, his Form-master. He wondered indignantly whether he was expected to take it also from the master of a junior Form. He came very near telling Mr. Quelch what he thought of him.

"The man was about to attack you when I perceived him," said Mr. Quelch. "It is most extraordinary. Have you seen the man before, Coker?"

"Oh, yes, sir! He's a footpad who tried to rob me in the hols, and I jolly well thrashed him. He got after me the day I came back to school."

"Oh! That accounts for his action, no doubt!" said Mr. Quelch. "I will walk on to Courtfield and speak to Inspector Grimes on the subject. You had better go back to the school, Coker."

"Eh?"

"It will be safer for you to remain in the school."

"I'm not afraid of that rat, sir!" said Coker disdainfully. "Catch me taking any notice of him."

"He was about to attack you from behind, Coker, when my arrival fortunately interrupted him."

"Yes—that's his sort!" said Coker. "But I expect I'd have handled him all right!—Don't you worry, sir! I can take care of myself."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep. "Coker," he said, "you are not in my Form, or I should cane you for impertinence. I have no authority over Mr. Prout's boys; but for this occasion I shall assume it, to the length of directing you to return to Greyfriars at once. Go!"

"But, sir—"

"Go back to the school this instant!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"But—"

"If you utter another word, Coker, I shall thrash you with this walking-stick, and explain the matter to Mr. Prout afterwards! Now go!"

Coker stared at him. Quelch seemed shirty about something—Coker did not know why, but he could see that Quelch was shirty. He actually meant what he said—he was going to whop Coker, a Fifth Form man, if he argued any more!

Coker did not utter another word. Indignation, in fact, kept him dumb. He gave Quelch a look—a look which, he hoped, would make Quelch realise what a cheeky ass he was—and stalked away down the tow-path in the direction of Greyfriars.

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## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Entrance—But No Exit!

**B**ILLY BUNTER blinked round him cautiously.

The coast was clear.

Mr. Mumble had been at work in the kitchen-garden, but he had gone in to tea. That meddling ass, Coker of the Fifth, was out of gates. There was nobody else to bother Bunter. He arrived at the door of the shed under the apple-loft, and began experimenting with Fishy's bunch of keys.

Happily unaware that that shed had a tenant, Bunter had not the slightest idea that a pair of keen eyes had watched his approach, from the little dormer window of the loft.

Billy Bunter had almost forgotten the existence of Skip, by this time. He knew that the light-fingered youth had been within the walls of Greyfriars, on the first day of the term; but he knew that Harry Wharton & Co. had hunted

for him, and had not doubted that the young rascal had cleared off.

He did not know, what the Famous Five knew, that Coker had brought Skip into the school. And the Famous Five had no idea that Coker was still keeping him there. Having seen and heard nothing of Skip, since the first day, they naturally concluded that he was gone.

But, so far from being gone, Skip was now standing at the little window in the loft, watching the top of Billy Bunter's fat head, as he tried key after key on the door.

Skip knew the "fat covey" again at once, and wondered what Bunter wanted there. He heard the clinking from below, as the fat Owl handled Fishy's extensive bunch of keys.

Bunter found one to fit at last.

He unlocked the door and rolled in. Carefully he closed the door after him, and locked it again on the inside. He did not want to risk being caught bagging the apples; and had the gardener come along and found that door unlocked, certainly he would have investigated.

Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction.

It was risky—but there was, after all, reward for risk. He had a bag under his arm, which he was going to fill with apples, to satisfy Peter Todd, and get a much-needed rest from the cricket-stump. But, once among the ripe apples, Bunter was not likely to carry off merely a bagful. He was going to carry off as many more as he could pack within the limits of his wide circumference. His mouth watered at the thought. Really, it was worth the risk.

He crossed the shed to the ladder clamped in the corner, which led up to the trapdoor in the loft.

The ladder was almost vertical, and not easy for Bunter to climb. He had  
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a great deal of weight to carry up that ladder.

But he clambered up, puffing and perspiring, and reached the trapdoor above. Holding on with one hand, he pushed at the trap with the other.

As there was no fastening on the trap, Bunter naturally expected it to rise when pushed from below.

But it did not rise. It did not stir an inch. He pushed, and shoved, and it remained immovable.

He did not, of course, know that a pickpocket, in dread of being discovered in his hidden refuge, was standing on it.

He was puzzled and perplexed and annoyed.

"Blow!" growled Bunter. "What's the matter with the beastly thing, I'd like to know. Blow it! Bother it! Bless it! Br-r-r!"

He shoved and shoved.

It was mystifying, as well as irritating. How could a trapdoor remain shut, when there was no fastening on it, and a fat Owl shoving with all his strength from below?

There was, in fact, only one possible explanation—which dawned on Billy Bunter, as he ceased his exhausting efforts, somebody was in the loft, holding the trapdoor down.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter, as that obvious fact dawned in his fat brain. "Is that you, Skinner, you cad? I know you pinched apples here once, you rotter! Think you're going to have the lot, you greedy pig?"

There was no reply from above.

"Do you hear me, you cad?" yelled Bunter. "Look here, you let me come up, see? Will you get off that trap, you rotter?"

The fat Owl breathed fury.

It could not be Mr. Mimble in the loft—he would not have held the trap down; he would have collared Bunter and marched him off for judgment. It was evidently somebody who had no right there—somebody, Bunter had no doubt, who was after the apples, like himself.

Skinner of the Remove very likely; he was, as Bunter knew, just the kind of unscrupulous fellow to go pinching apples. Whoever he was, he was not going to keep Bunter out, not if Bunter knew it!

"Will you let me in?" yelled Bunter.

He gave another shove at the trap, but it did not stir.

He snorted with rage. After all his risks, and all his exertions, it was altogether too bad to be wrecked in sight of land, like this.

"Oh, all right!" hissed Bunter. "You stick there, you cad, and keep a fellow out! I'll jolly well go straight to Mimble and tell him there's somebody pinching apples in his loft. See?"

He heard a sound of movement above.

That threat seemed to have had its effect. The fellow in the loft did not want the gardener called to the spot, to find him there!

Bunter gave another shove at the trap. This time it lifted and fell back. The orifice was open over Billy Bunter's head.

With a gasp of relief, he clambered into the little dusky loft, and leaned against a case of apples, panting for breath after his exertions.

Bang!

The trapdoor dropped suddenly into place again.

Bunter blinked through his big spectacles at a figure in the dusk. The boy in the loft had closed down the trap promptly.

"Who are you, you rotter?" yapped Bunter, peering at him in the dim light.

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of the loft. "You—oh crikey! You!"

He gave a yell of astonishment, as he recognised Skip.

Up to that moment, he had not doubted that it was a Greyfriars junior in the loft, after the apples. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles, at the sight of Skip.

"You!" he gasped. "Oh crikey! You! Pinching apples! Oh crumbs! You here! Oh jiminy!"

"You blooming bloater!" said Skip, in measured tones. "It's you for poking in where you ain't wanted, ain't it? You fat hoyster, what you want to come poking your silly nose in 'ere for?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

He was strongly inclined to knock the fellow down for his cheek. But Skip was flourishing a clenched fist under his fat little nose—and instead of knocking him down, Bunter backed away. It was, after all, beneath a fellow's dignity to scrap with a rank outsider like this young scoundrel of a pickpocket!

"And now, I suppose," said Skip, glowering, "you're going to 'owl out all over the shop that you've seen me 'ere, you himage you?"

"I suppose you don't expect me to keep it dark!" said Bunter, with lofty disdain. "You ought to be jolly well run in, and you know it! And the sooner you're run in, the better, too!"

"Putting the coppers on a covey, what?" asked Skip.

"Certainly!" said Bunter.

"Well p'r'aps you will, and p'r'aps you won't!" said Skip darkly. He dragged a heavy box to the trapdoor, and landed it there. "That fixes that! You try to shift that there, and see what you'll get."

Billy Bunter blinked at him, in amazement, and alarm.

He had got into the loft. It had not been easy, but he had got in. Now it dawned on him that it would be still less easy to get out again.

"You—you—you rotter!" he gasped. "Think you're going to keep me here?"

"Well, I don't want you," said Skip. "I don't s'pose anybody wants your ugly mug about! But you ain't going to give a bloke away, that's a cert."

"Why, you fathead, I've got to get in to tea!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Ave you?" said Skip, derisively. "Well, you try it on, that's all! I'll give you a bang on the weskit that'll burst you!"

"You cheeky cad!" howled Bunter, "I'll jolly well shout from the window, if you keep that trap shut."

"Go it!" said Skip. "You 'owl from that winder, and I'll give you something to 'owl for, you can lay to that!"

Billy Bunter did not approach the window. He sank down feebly on a box, and sat blinking at Skip.

He was in the apple-loft, heavy with the scent of ripe apples—surrounded by apples—but he forgot apples! He just sat and blinked, and wondered dizzily and dismally what on earth he was going to do.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Big Idea!

"WHY not?" asked Horace Coker. He gazed straight at Potter and Greene, in his study.

It was a little difficult for them to answer; as they had not the faintest idea what Coker was talking about.

Potter and Greene had come in to tea. After football practice, they were hungry. Much remained of the vast hamper that Coker had brought back with him to school—Coker's study, at present, was a land flowing with milk and honey. But when Potter and Greene came in, sharp set, they saw no signs of tea, though it was past tea-time.

Coker sat at the study table, pen in his hand, paper before him, ink on his fingers, a spot or two on his nose, and half-written letters strewn all round him.

Coker, clearly, was in the throes of composition! He had a difficult letter to write, and had started it, and re-started it, a dozen times, at least; and still he had not got fairly going. He had used quite a lot of ink, chiefly on his fingers, without effect so far.

He took absolutely no notice of Potter and Greene when they came in. They wandered uneasily about the study, wondering whether Coker was ever going to stop spilling ink, and let them have tea. Coker, evidently, did not want to be interrupted; and as Coker was going to stand the tea, it was necessary to be tactful with Coker.

Suddenly, however, Coker sat up, as if struck by the biggest brain-wave ever, stared at them, and demanded, "Why not?"

He rose from the table, throwing down the pen.

"I wonder," remarked Coker, "that I didn't think of it before. You see it solves the difficulty."

"So glad!" said Potter. "What about tea, old chap?"

"Clears up the whole thing!" said Coker.

"Fine!" said Greene. "Shall I clear the table?"

"I'm blessed," went on Coker, unheeding, "if I knew how to put it to Aunt Judy. She's a dear old soul, and she's got tons of money—but how the dickens could I ask her to take a pickpocket into the house?"

"Oh, crikey! Hardly, I should think."

"Besides the young scoundrel needs my eye on him!" said Coker. "Keeping him under my eye, and whopping him when he kicks over the traces—that's the idea. What do you think?"

"Oh! Yes! I'll stick the kettle on, shall I?"

"Never mind the kettle! It may seem a bit thick in some ways, to land a kid like that at Greyfriars!" said Coker, thoughtfully. "Still, Aunt Judy would pay his fees, like a shot, if I asked her—"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"I don't see why the Head should object. He's a bit dense, but we all know that he's a good old bean."

Potter and Greene gazed at the happy Horace. They even forgot tea!

"He's about the age to go into the Remove," continued Coker. "They're a grubby lot of young scoundrels in Quelch's Form, and I dare say Skip would pass with the rest."

"Oh!" gasped Potter.

"Oh!" gurgled Greene.

They realised that they were not dreaming this!

Coker, who had landed a pickpocket in the school, guided only by his own supreme wisdom, was now thinking of solving the problem, by keeping him there—as a Greyfriars junior!

It was unbelievable—but there it was! Coker was thinking of exactly that! That was the kind of brain he had!

He did not see why the Head should object. Potter and Greene did!

"I believe my aunt would take him,

if I asked her," went on Coker. "But look what a trouble and responsibility it would be, to an old lady! I've got to see the kid through—but I can't land it on her like that! Besides, he needs my eye on him! Here, I could keep him under my eye!"

"You think the Head would let a pickpocket into a Form at Greyfriars?" asked Potter, quite faintly.

"Why not—in the circumstances! If he hadn't saved me from getting my head cracked in the train that day, I shouldn't be here myself, this term. The Head would have lost me!" said Coker. "Well, I suppose you know that there are certain fellows, in every school, that can't possibly be spared—they give the place its tone, and help to keep up the right tradition, and all that. It would be a bit of a disaster for Greyfriars if I had to be away a whole term!"

"Oh!"  
"Ah!"  
"The Head's bound to take that into consideration, when it's put to him!" said Coker. "Don't you think so?"

Potter and Greene did not say what they thought. They could not! They just gazed spellbound at old Horace.

"I don't see why Quelch should grouse at having him in his Form!" went on Coker. "Look what a crew he's got already! Besides, I should be prepared to help him with advice at any time."

"Oh!"  
"It's the big idea!" said Coker. "I wonder I never thought of it before. But a chap can't think of everything at once. It's a bit of a difficulty his being called Skip—he doesn't seem to have a name, or any people, or anything. I might find a name for him—let's see—not a silly name like Potter—"

"Eh?"  
"Or a commonplace name like Greene—"

"What?"  
"Something a bit better than that—as good as my own—why not?" asked Coker. "Still, that's only a detail, and can be thought out afterwards. I'd better drop Aunt Judy a line about this at once."

Coker plumped into his chair again, and resumed the pen.

"What about tea?" asked Potter, in despair.

Coker looked up.  
"Did you say tea, George Potter?" he inquired.

"Yes, I jolly well did!"  
"Well, don't! That's all—don't!"

Coker dipped his pen into the ink, and bent his brows over his writing-pad. The problem was, he considered, solved at last.

Any problem could be solved by a really brainy fellow, given time. Coker, a brainy fellow, had solved this one! He was not likely to think of tea, at such a moment! Striking the iron while it was hot, was Coker's idea.

Potter and Greene faded out of the study. They went down to tea in Hall, unheeded by Coker.

Coker got on with his epistle to Miss Judith Coker. It was an epistle worthy of the ornament of Mr. Prout's Form.

"Dear Aunt Judy,  
"I toled you in my last letter about the kid who chipt in and stopped a beestly brewt from cracking my knut. Well, old deer, I brort this kid to the skool, as there was nothing else to be dun with him; and I've been very puzzled since to know what's to be dun. Now I've thort of what seems to me a pretty brite idea. Why shoodn't he

enter at Greyfriars as a joonier, where I cood keep an eye on him? I think it can be managed, if you are willing to pay the pheeze. He's a bit backward, of course, for a Greyfriars kid, but I shood give him sum coaching, and help him on in such matters as spelling and sow on. It seems to me a verry brite idea, so will you rite and let me know what you think about it. I've got him stikking in an apple-loft at pressent, but, of corse, he can't stay thair for evver.

"Your loving newew,  
"HORACE."

Horace Coker read that letter over and was satisfied with it. He put it into an envelope and walked out of the House to post it.

His rugged face was quite bright and cheery.

For several days the problem of Skip had been a weight on Coker's mind; now he had solved that worrying problem—at least, he was sure that he had. So, as far as Coker could see, all was calm and bright.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Where is Bunter?  
PETER TODD laid a cricket-stump beside his plate on the tea-table in Study No. 7.

It was ready for Bunter—if he blew in.

But it turned out to be unnecessary; Bunter did not blow in.

Peter concluded that the fat Owl was tea-ing up the passage, probably with Lord Mauleverer. Anyhow, he was giving Study No. 7 a wide offing: so Toddy dismissed him from his mind, and did not think of him again till prep.

Probably he would not have thought of him then, but for the fact that Bunter belonged to Study No. 7, and had to do his preparation there.

But a slacker like Bunter was often late for prep. He was quite likely to hang about the passages, so long as he could escape the eye of authority.

Still, even Bunter was not likely to cut prep altogether, and Peter was rather surprised not to see him at all.

"Seen Bunter about?" he asked Tom Dutton, when prep was over.

"Eh?"

"Bunter—seen him about?" bawled Peter.

"First time you've noticed it?" asked Dutton, staring.

"Eh? Noticed what?"

"That Bunter's stout."

"Oh crikey!"

"More than stout—podgy, if you ask me," said Dutton. "But what about it? He's no stouter this term than he was last."

"Have you seen him?" yelled Peter.

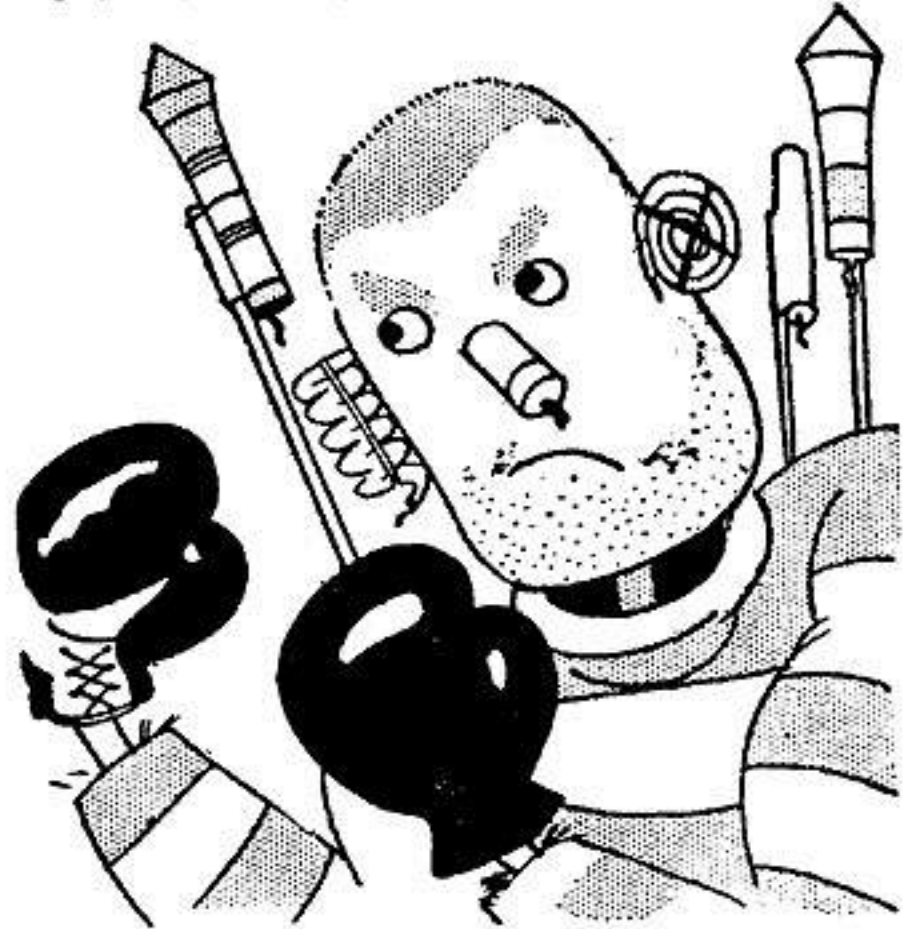
"I'll watch it!" said Dutton. "He wants cleaning, all right—but I'm not going to clean him. Wharrer you mean?"

"Help!" gasped Peter.

"I dare say he would yelp if you started cleaning him. I remember the

(Continued on next page.)

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fellows gave him a bath in the Remove dorm once. He made a fearful row. I shouldn't wonder if it was the first he'd ever had—and the last, too! If they're going to give Bunter another bath, I don't mind lending a hand."

"Oh dear!" moaned Peter.

"But, I say, Peter, Bunter hasn't come up to prep," added Dutton. "Do you know what's become of him?"

Peter shook his head. He left Study No. 7 to inquire along the passage. Fellows were coming out of their studies, but Bunter was not to be seen among the Removites.

"Anybody seen Bunter?" called out Toddy.

"Lost your prize porker?" asked Skinner. "Well, I can tell you how to find him."

"How?" demanded Toddy.

"Make a noise like a jam tart, and he will run up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you men, Bunter's cut prep!" said Peter. "Does anybody know where the fat frump is?"

"May have had enough of your cricket-stump, old man!" grinned the Bounder. "I've heard you laying it on once or twice."

"But I haven't seen him since dinner," said Toddy. "Did he tea with you, Mauly?"

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"No. Haven't seen him," he answered.

"Must have tea'd with somebody," said Skinner. "If he's missed a meal, you will find his pale remains lying about somewhere."

"Well, Bunter can't have missed a meal," said Harry Wharton. "That's impossible. Who had him to tea?"

Nobody had had Bunter to tea.

"Must have tea'd in Hall," said Bob Cherry.

"He jolly well didn't!" declared Bolsover major. "I tea'd in Hall, and Bunter wasn't there."

"So did I, and I never saw Bunter," remarked Hazeldene.

"Hasn't anybody seen him this afternoon?" asked Peter. He was beginning to feel a little worried about his fat studymate.

It was very unusual for Billy Bunter to remain out of sight for long. Generally enough was seen of him—in fact, too much. But when the Removites compared notes it was ascertained that he had last been seen in the quad, between three and four o'clock.

Since then no eye seemed to have fallen on Bunter.

As it had been a half-holiday, Bunter, of course, might have gone out of gates. Some of the fellows remembered that he had missed calling-over; but it was not very unusual for one or two fellows to be late for roll on a half-holiday, and so far as they had thought about it at all they had supposed that he had rolled in later.

Now it looked as if he hadn't.

Cutting prep was a rather serious matter. Bunter had cut prep. It looked as if he had missed his tea.

Something must have happened to Bunter!

The Removites went down from the studies discussing the surprising absence of the fat ornament of the Form.

What Bunter fancied that he was up to was a rather interesting mystery.

As the Famous Five went along to the Rag, Trotter came up with a message for the head boy of the Remove. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,547.

He was wanted in his Form-master's study.

He found Mr. Quelch frowning there. "Wharton," rapped the Remove master, "you are aware that Bunter missed calling-over this evening?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"You are well aware, Wharton, that a boy who misses calling-over should report himself immediately he comes in. As head boy of the Form, you should have seen that Bunter did so if he was so careless as to omit doing so."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"The rules of this school," said Mr. Quelch crossly, "are made for a special purpose, Wharton. You should be aware of that."

"Oh, yes, sir, but—"

"Now go and send Bunter to me at once, Wharton!"

"But—"

"I have no time to waste, Wharton."

"But I can't, sir. I don't know where he is," said Wharton. "Nobody seems to have seen him since the middle of the afternoon."

"What! Do you mean that he is still out of gates?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I don't know where he is, sir. He wasn't with us at football practice this afternoon; that's all I know."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch. "He must surely have come in long ago. I will go and speak to Gosling. You may go, Wharton."

Mr. Quelch walked rather hastily down to the porter's lodge.

It was Gosling's duty to take the names of late-comers, to be reported to their Form-masters—a duty Gosling generally performed with relish.

On this occasion, however, Gosling had had no opportunity of performing that agreeable duty. Bunter had not come in late. If he had gone out, he had not come in at all.

Mr. Quelch returned to the House much perturbed.

Not only had Gosling not seen Bunter come in, but he had not, so far as he recollected, seen him go out. Still, it seemed that he must have gone out, as he could hardly have dissolved into thin air in the quad.

In the Rag there was excited discussion on the subject, especially as bedtime drew near.

It was amazing for Bunter to cut tea. It was wildly reckless for him to cut prep. But it seemed impossible that he was going to cut dorm. That meant the "sack," unless the delinquent had a remarkably good explanation to offer.

So there was quite a lot of excitement as half-past nine drew near.

Some of the fellows stood at the window of the Rag, looking out into the moonlit October night. But there was no sound of a distant bell at the gates, no sign of a fat figure rolling tired and breathless to the House.

Bunter did not come.

When Wingate of the Sixth saw lights-out for the Remove there was a bed vacant in the dormitory. Wingate's face was grave as he turned out the light and went.

There was a buzz of voices from bed to bed when he was gone.

"Where on earth's Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The wherefulness is terrific."

"O where and O where can he be?" sighed Skinner. "I wonder if the poor old porpoise has burst somewhere! Might happen to him any minute."

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

"Must have lost his way somewhere," said Harry Wharton. "Might have gone by rail somewhere, and taken the wrong train."

"Might have bilked the railway, and got run in!" suggested Skinner. "Quelch will have to go and bail him out in the morning, in that case!"

"But nobody seems to have seen him go out," said Vernon-Smith. "It's jolly odd! Where the dickens can he be?"

"May roll in any minute!" said Squiff.

But Bunter did not roll in!

When the Removites went to sleep at last, there was still a vacant bed in the dormitory; and for once the rumble of Bunter's snore did not awaken the echoes of the night.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### At Midnight!

#### SNORE!

Skip grinned. Billy Bunter was snoring—though not in his usual place in the Remove dormitory.

That deep and resonant rumble echoed through the apple-loft.

Skip, standing at the little dormer window, was looking out into the glimmering moonlight.

He was not thinking of sleep.

Billy Bunter had spent an evening that seemed to him rather like a nightmare. Having made the astonishing discovery that the young pickpocket was still within the walls of Greyfriars School, Bunter would undoubtedly have spread that startling news all over the school—had he been able!

But Skip had taken care of that!

Coker of the Fifth had befriended him; but Skip knew well enough what to expect if he was caught there by anyone else.

There was little doubt that he would be handed over to the police—to be transferred to some institution on Borstal lines—the idea of which Skip disliked extremely.

That was not going to happen if Skip could help it. And he could help it, by the simple method of keeping Bunter where he was, and preventing him from spreading the news.

It was easy enough for him to see why Bunter had come to the apple-loft. He was after the apples. So it was not likely that he had mentioned to anyone where he was going and he would not be looked for there.

Bunter had to stay!

His only comfort was that Skip had an ample supply of grub, which he was quite willing to share.

Coker, of course, could only pay his protegee visits at cautious intervals; and having already seen Skip once that day, he was not coming again till the morrow. But he had left plentiful supplies.

Where that ample supply of provisions came from, Bunter did not know; but he was glad that it was there. He made several deep inroads on it, and found consolation therein.

Twenty times, at least, he explained to Skip that he had to get out. He had to go in for tea. He had to go in for prep. He had to go in for dorm. All of which fell on deaf ears.

Finally, Bunter rolled himself in the rugs that Coker had left for Skip, and went to sleep.

Now he was sleeping and snoring; rather to Skip's relief. His snore was not musical, but, at least, he was no further trouble while he was asleep.

Whether Bunter got into a "row" for staying out of the House like this, as he had told Skip a dozen times that he would, the little waif did not care very much. The fat covey should not have butted in where he was not



Potter and Greene entered the study, sharp set after football practice, expecting to see signs of tea. All they saw, however, was their study-mate, Horace Coker, sitting at the table, a pen in his hand, paper before him, ink on his fingers and nose, and half-written letters strewn all round him.

wanted. He had to keep his mouth shut till Skip was gone.

And Skip was going that night.

Coker, in his high-handed way, was going to be Skip's benefactor, whether he liked it or not! Skip had decided that he wasn't!

In fact, he would have cleared out of the school already, but for a glimpse of Jimmy the Rat lurking about Greyfriars, which had scared him back to his hiding-place like a frightened rabbit to a burrow.

Jimmy, he had no doubt, was hanging about the place looking for a chance at Coker. The malicious Rat had not forgotten or forgiven the terrific thrashing Coker had given him in the holidays. The mere thought of falling in with the associate he had turned down, gave Skip a cold chill.

For some days, therefore, he had played up to Coker; camping in the apple-loft, creeping out to get the air every now and then when the coast was clear, especially by night, when all was safe.

He would have been willing to keep it up longer—not, as Coker supposed, because he was ready to jump to Horace's orders, but to give Jimmy the Rat plenty of time to clear off before he ventured out.

But Bunter's discovery put paid to that.

He had kept the "fat covey" there, and kept him quiet, for his own security, but only till the hour was late enough for him to dodge out of the place unseen—either by anyone belonging to the school, or by Jimmy the Rat, if he was still lurking about.

While Bunter snored, Skip stood looking from the window, waiting for the night to grow older.

Not till midnight did Skip intend to make a move. Then he was going—and Horace Coker would have been horrified, if not petrified, had he been

aware that Skip was not only going, but that he was not going empty-handed.

Young rascal as he was, Skip had his limits. His light fingers could have cleared out Coker's ample wealth any time he saw Coker. But he had not picked Coker's pockets.

Coker never dreamed that he thought of doing so. Skip thought of it more than once, but he resisted the temptation.

Deep down somewhere in the young rascal, brought up among thieves, and hardly knowing right from wrong, there was a spot of right feeling.

He hardly knew why he spared Coker's cash; but he did spare it! Coker seemed to him every sort of a fool and an idiot; but there was a rugged, breezy honesty and straightforwardness about old Horace, that had made its impression on Skip.

But if he had scruples of conscience about Horace Coker, he had none whatever in regard to others.

Greyfriars School was, to his mind, a sort of gold-mine! He had been in the House, and knew what was to be picked up by a filching hand. Without a second thought, without even realising that it was rascality, he was going to "pinch" what he could before he went. The idea of leaving that gold-mine untapped would have made him stare.

It would have been difficult for any Greyfriars fellow to understand the workings of a mind like Skip's. Certainly Horace Coker had not the slightest understanding of the extraordinary character he had so cheerfully and confidently taken in hand.

Midnight sounded at last from the clock-tower of Greyfriars.

Then Skip turned from the window.

Bunter, in the rugs, snored, unconscious of his surroundings. Skip gave him an amused and contemptuous glance, but no other notice, as he crept towards the trapdoor.

Silently he removed the box he had placed on it, and lifted the trap.

He swung himself down to the ladder below, and silently closed the trap over his head.

The way was now open for Bunter to escape, if he had been awake! But he was fast asleep, and quite unlikely to awaken.

Skip gave him no further thought.

He slipped quickly down the ladder, crossed to the door of the shed, and unlocked it. He stepped out and locked the door after him.

For a minute he stood there in the dim moonlight listening. To his own surprise, he was feeling a twinge of hesitation.

Ever since Horace Coker had landed him at Greyfriars, Skip's chief desire had been to get away, and see the last of Coker and his blundering benevolence. Now, oddly enough, he was not so sure that he was keen to go.

A few days ago he would have grinned at the idea of Coker coming along, expecting to find him there, and finding him gone. Now the thought of Coker's surprise and dismay gave him an unexpected twinge.

That fatheaded bloke meant well by him—he was a fool, but he was a kind-hearted covey—and he was the first human being that had ever shown the wretched waif kindness. True, his kindness was of a rather heavy-handed variety; but there it was—he meant Skip well, and never before had anybody meant him well. Somehow, Coker's rugged, obtuse face rose before Skip's mind, compared with the shifty, cunning, rat-like face of his old associate, Jimmy. The bloke was a fool, there was no mistake about that—but how infinitely different from Jimmy the Rat—and it was to associations like the Rat's that Skip was going back!

(Continued on page 16.)

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## COKER'S BIG IDEA!



(Continued from page 13.)

Skip gave an angry grunt.

He realised that, fed up as he was with his peculiar refuge in the school, and with Coker's fatheaded dictatorial ways, he would, after all, have remained where he was, had it been possible.

But it was no longer possible—owing to Bunter. Bunter could hardly be kept a prisoner much longer—besides, Coker would come along in the morning, and discover that he was there! Once Skip's presence was made known, Coker could not protect him—and it would be the "coppers" next! He had to go while the going was good!

For a long minute he stood there; then, with an impatient shake of the shoulders, he moved.

Softly, like a thief in the night—as, indeed, he was—he crept away towards the House.

Billy Bunter, still snoring in the apple-loft, was left to snore alone.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Rat's Revenge!

"PIE!" murmured Skip.

He grinned cheerfully.

It was "pie"—just pie!

For a quarter of an hour Skip had been exploring the exterior of the House, seeking an entrance, rather like a fox outside a hen-roost. He decided on a little window that gave access to a lobby. It was in the shadow of a tree, and hardly a gleam of moonlight reached it. That little window suited Skip admirably, and, to his surprise and satisfaction, as he ran his light fingers over it, he found that it was unfastened.

He pushed it open.

If this was not pie, Skip did not know what pie was. Somebody had left that window unfastened, as if to make his way easy. The casement was not even quite closed; he found it an inch ajar.

Silently he clambered in. Without a sound, he dropped into the dark lobby. On tiptoe, he crept across to a door that was wide open.

A dim, dark passage lay before him.

Exactly where he was he did not know; he only knew that it was not the Masters' Passage, which he had already visited. But it was his way into the House, and he trod into it silently.

All was dark and silent.

Faint sounds from behind closed doors warned him that sleepers were at hand. He was, in fact, in the Sixth Form passage, where the studies were bedrooms at night. He trod softly past the doors. Coker, he knew, would not be there; Coker had a bed in a dormitory upstairs. But some blokes were there, and he was very careful to make no sound to awaken any of those blokes.

He turned from the passage into a wide hall, where he had a dim glimpse of a great staircase in the dark.

Then he stopped dead, his heart beating.

It seemed unlikely, if not impossible, that anyone could be up and awake in

the silent, sleeping House at that hour. But he had heard a sound—a faint sound from the dark—the sound of a stealthy movement.

He listened intently.

From above, over the great oak banisters of the staircase, came a glimmer of sudden light.

It gleamed before Skip's staring eyes only for a second, and then went out again.

But he knew what it was. A flash-lamp had been turned on in that brief second by someone picking his way in the dark.

Skip's heart thumped.

He was not alone in the sleeping House. And the other—the unseen other—was, he knew—someone of the same kidney—a thief in the night like himself.

He knew it. It was not some master returning home late and moving quietly to avoid waking sleepers. Skip knew that no one had entered the House while he had been prowling outside for the last quarter of an hour. Besides, in such a case, the flashlamp would have been kept on; it would not have been flashed on for that surreptitious second, and been turned off again instantly.

It was some stranger in the place who chose to move in the dark, but who needed a glimmer of light at intervals to pick his way in strange surroundings. Skip knew that at once.

Another pincher was on the same "lay." That, Skip knew now, was why he had found the lobby window open. It had not been left unfastened, as he had supposed. It had been opened from without, and left ajar as a ready way of retreat.

Skip crept to the foot of the staircase and stared up. The faintest of footfalls told him that the unseen one was on the landing above.

Then there was deep silence, and Skip, who could see nothing, knew as well as if he had seen the man that he was standing listening, with intent ears, on the big landing.

Skip listened, too—excited, interested, and puzzled. The unseen intruder could only be a thief, yet valuables were more likely to be found downstairs than up. Skip had planned to root through the studies, giving the sleeping quarters a safe, wide berth. But this unknown prowler seemed to be heading for the bed-rooms and dormitories.

It was an odd enough coincidence for two thieves to be on the same lay the same night. But so long as the other rascal kept out of his way, Skip did not care. He was prepared to divide the prey, as it were, leaving the other rascal what he could find upstairs, while he rooted about himself downstairs. But he did not want to risk an encounter. The fact that he was on the same lay would not save him from a knock on the head if he interrupted a burglar at his nefarious work.

The light glimmered again.

This time it described a circle, glimmering all round the landing, evidently to pick out a passage or staircase that the man wanted.

It glimmered for a moment on the face of the man who held it. Skip's eyes fastened on that face.

It was only for a brief second. But the sight of the sharp features and the rat eyes was enough for him.

He leaned heavily against the newel-post at the foot of the banisters. The sight of Jimmy the Rat sent a qualm to his very heart.

The light vanished again.

Skip stood hardly breathing, his face white in the darkness.

Jimmy the Rat—with the lead pipe in his pocket—the Rat, whom he had prevented from cracking Coker's nut in

the railway train, whom he had thrown over, and who was his bitterest enemy! If the Rat found him there—

Only too well he knew the Rat's revengeful nature. The Rat had not forgotten him—any more than he had forgotten Coker.

Coker!

At the thought of Coker, Skip knew why the Rat was there.

It was not as a thief that he came, rascally thief as he was. It was for revenge that he came—revenge on Coker.

He had hung about the school, watching for a chance; Skip did not know how near he had come to success that very afternoon. But it was not safe for the Rat to linger too long; and, as no chance had come his way, he had penetrated into the school to carry out his savage purpose, and then disappear for ever from the vicinity.

Skip knew, as well as if he had been told, that what the malicious ruffian was seeking now was Coker's sleeping quarters, and he knew that he would find Coker, sooner or later. And he knew what would happen when the Rat found him.

His first thought, after recognising the Rat, had been to flee, even without the plunder for which he had come. But Skip abandoned that thought now.

He could not go and leave Coker to this. It was to prevent that savage revenge that he had turned on Jimmy the Rat and provoked his deadly enmity. The mere proximity of the wretch gave him a cold chill of terror, but he set his teeth and kept his terror down.

Silently he stepped up the stairs.

He reached the landing above, and from a dusky passage came a brief twinkle of light.

The Rat was there, seeking.

Was Coker there? Skip did not know. He did not know where the Fifth Form dormitory was. For all he knew, the vengeful Rat might now be within a few yards of the sleeping Fifth Former.

The light glimmered again—this time on a door.

From the end of the passage Skip watched, almost choking.

The light vanished; but he knew that the Rat had opened the door and passed into a room.

Was it the room where Coker slept?

In point of fact, it was, for it was the Fifth Form dormitory that the Rat had entered.

Skip dragged himself along the passage.

The door was half-open. He stared in.

All was dark save for the glimmer of moonlight from a high window. In that glimmer he caught a moving shadow.

It stopped by a bed.

The flashlamp glimmered—on a sleeping face. But it was not the face that the Rat wanted, and he passed on to the next bed.

Skip set his teeth.

If Coker was in that room, the Rat was going to find him in a matter of moments. Then—Skip sickened at the thought of what was going to happen then!

He stepped quietly into the room.

The light twinkled again—on another face. Skip, as well as Jimmy the Rat, saw the rugged features of Horace Coker, the eyes closed in slumber. He saw the ruffian's hand slide under his coat—he knew for what—and he made a desperate spring.

The gas-pipe was in the murderous hand when Skip dashed into Jimmy the Rat and sent him sprawling headlong across Coker's bed.

"Elp!" shrieked Skip.

He had forgotten himself; he was thinking only of saving Coker from that desperate rascal. His frantic yell rang through the Fifth Form dormitory, and awakened every fellow there.

There was a snarling howl from Jimmy the Rat, taken utterly by surprise and sprawling headlong over Coker's long legs.

But the rat-like rascal twisted round instantly and struck. Who had hurled him over, he had no idea or knowledge; certainly he was not thinking of Skip, of whose presence at Greyfriars he knew nothing. He twisted back and struck, like the savage brute he was, and the gas-pipe caught Skip on the side of the head and hurled him to the floor.

He gave one gasping cry as he went down—but he did not give another. With the blood running down his cheek, the hapless waif lay on the floor, stunned and senseless.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Rat-Catching!

**L**IGHTS flashed on in the Fifth Form dormitory.

Every fellow there was awake and the room was in an uproar of voices. One of the seniors cut across to the switch and flashed on the light.

There was a roar as Jimmy the Rat was seen.

Coker, sitting up in bed, was staring at him blankly. The Rat, after striking down Skip, started to run. In the dark he bumped into a bed, and staggered, gritting curses through his teeth. Then, as the light flashed on, he was revealed, crouching, weapon in hand, with glittering, rat-like eyes.

"That villain!" gasped Coker.

"Who the thump—"

"What—"

"Burglars—"

The Rat made a spring towards the open door and ran.

It was Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, who caught up a chair from beside his bed and hurled it at the rascal's legs as he ran.

He fell headlong over it, crashing on the floor.

"Collar him!" roared Blundell.

He tore after the rascal and grabbed him as he was regaining his feet. The lead pipe slashed at him, but Blundell dodged the hasty blow and delivered a punch—which caught the Rat on the jaw and stretched him out on his back.

Potter and Greene were on the spot the next moment. Potter grabbed the weapon in the ruffian's hand and wrenched it away. Greene got a grip on his collar as he struggled to rise.

Blundell, Bland, and Fitzgerald had hold of him the next moment, then Hilton and Tomlinson. The Rat struggled and twisted in their grasp, but he had no chance now. He was held on all sides and could not break loose.

Coker was out of bed—but he was not giving attention to the Rat. He was kneeling beside poor Skip, his face white with horror as he saw the crimson streaking down the colourless cheek.

"Skip!" gasped Coker. "That kid here! What the thump—"

The light flashed on in the passage outside. Mr. Prout, in a voluminous dressing-gown, appeared in the doorway. Behind him appeared Mr. Quelch and two or three of the Sixth.

"What," boomed Prout—"what is all this—what is this disturbance at this

hour of the night? The House is alarmed—what—what—"

"A burglar, I think, sir," said Blundell.

"What—what— Goodness gracious—what—"

"We've got him, whoever he is, sir!" said Potter.

Prout stared in amazement at the rat-featured rascal, wriggling in the grasp of half a dozen hefty Fifth Form men.

"Who—who—what—" gurgled Prout.

There was a sharp exclamation from Mr. Quelch.

"I have seen that man before! I saw him this afternoon! He was making an attack on a boy of your Form, Mr. Prout—Coker—"

"He had this in his hand, sir!" said Potter, holding up the wrapped length of gaspipe.

"The wretch!" gasped Prout. "The villain! Hold him securely!"

"We've got him, sir! He won't get away in a hurry!"

"Villain!" boomed Prout. "Why are you here? What was your object in coming here, you scoundrel?"

The Rat gave him a venomous look.

"That young 'ound Coker could tell you, if you want to know!" he snarled.

"I'd have had him this time if somebody hadn't pushed me over. I'd have had him all right! And I'll get him yet if I get three years for it!"

"Coker! Do you know this man, Coker?"

Coker had lifted Skip and placed him on his own bed. The boy lay there like a log, senseless. Coker strode across to the group by the door, his eyes gleaming at the scowling Rat.

"Yes, I know him, sir," he answered. "I thrashed him in the hols for trying to rob me, and he's been after me since. He went for me this afternoon by the river, and I should have caught him, only Mr. Quelch happened to push me just as I was going to collar him—"

"You utterly stupid boy!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "You got into my way in the most clumsy manner possible when I was about to seize the scoundrel—"

"Oh, look here, sir—"

"Then you know the rascal?" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Is it possible that he came here with revengeful intentions—"

"He jolly well came to bash my head in, with that gaspipe that Potter's got in his hand," said Coker.

"Bless my soul!"

"I'd 'ave done it, too, if some covey hadn't been awake, and pushed me over!" snarled the Rat. "I've given him something for it, anyhow."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout.

"How very fortunate that the scoundrel was interrupted. Blundell—Greene—tie the villain's hands—make him secure—he must be kept safe till a constable can be sent for, to take him into custody. Tie the wretch's hands behind him!"

"Yes, sir!"

The Rat's hands were dragged behind him and tied together with a towel. Then, still in the grasp of several hands, he was marched out of the dormitory, to be locked in a room to await the arrival of a constable from Courtfield.

Mr. Quelch hurried away to the telephone.

Mr. Prout, excited and flustered, remained.

"How very, very fortunate that someone awakened and interrupted that dastardly villain!" he exclaimed. "You appear to have had a very narrow escape, Coker! Who would have

dreamed of such a thing? But which boy was it that awakened and found him here?"

Coker opened his mouth—and shut it again.

He knew that it was Skip who had interrupted the Rat, though how Skip had got there was an utter mystery to him. Skip lay in Coker's bed, stunned and silent. Prout had not seen him yet—the Rat had not even glanced in his direction—some of the Fifth had not yet noticed that he was in the dormitory at all, in the excitement of securing the Rat.

But his presence had to be made known. He was in need of medical care after that knock on the head, and even Coker realised that the secret could be no longer kept.

"Who was it?" repeated Prout.

"Not one of us, sir!" said Greene. "I think it was that kid—"

"Eh?"

"I mean that boy—"

"What boy?" ejaculated Prout.

"Is there someone here who does not belong to my Form?"

"Yes, sir—there he is."

Greene pointed to Coker's bed.

Mr. Prout strode towards that bed and stared down at the boy in astonishment. Skip lay motionless, his face half-hidden in the pillow, which was stained with red. Prout gazed at him in amazement and horror.

"Who—who—who is this boy?" he exclaimed.

Coker did not speak. Potter and Greene, who remembered what Coker had told them in the study, guessed—but they did not speak, either.

"Can't make it out, sir!" said Hilton of the Fifth. "Goodness knows how he got here! He doesn't belong to Greyfriars."

"Upon my word!"

Mr. Prout stooped and scanned the colourless face. There was something familiar in it to his eyes, and now he recognised Skip.

"I have seen this boy!" he exclaimed.

"It is the boy I found hidden in my study a few days ago, and took for some prowling thief. How, in the name of all that is extraordinary does he come here?"

"Lucky for Coker that he did come, sir!" ventured Potter.

"Yes, yes, certainly; the boy appears to have prevented a terrible act, and to have suffered in consequence!" said Mr. Prout. "He must be seen by a doctor—he has had a terrible blow. Coker, do you know anything of this boy?"

Coker breathed hard.

"Yes, sir," he mumbled.

"Who is he?"

"He's called Skip, sir!"

"Skip! Do not be absurd, Coker! Do you mean to say seriously that this boy is named Skip?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Extraordinary!" said Prout. "Who is he? What is he?"

"He—he—he's a boy, sir—" stammered Coker. "I—I mean, he—he's a kid—he—he—"

The fact is, sir, he was on the train the day I came back to school, and that villain went for me in the train, and this kid stopped him, sir—grabbed his arm when he was going to crack my head—"

"That does not account for his presence here, Coker."

"Nunno, sir! I—I—I—" Coker spluttered. "I—I—I brought him to the school, sir—"

"You brought him to the school?"

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"I—I thought I—I ought to stand by him, sir, after what he did——"

"Goodness gracious! Am I to understand, Coker, that you were responsible for this boy being in my study the day I found him there?"

"I—I—I let him in at your study window, sir!"

"Are you in your right senses, Coker?"

"Eh? Oh, yes, sir!"

"Are you telling me, Coker, that this—this boy has been in the school, unknown, since the first day of the term?" gasped Prout.

"Yes, sir. I—I parked him in Mimble's apple-loft——" stammered Coker. "I—I can't imagine how he got into the House to-night, though it's jolly lucky for me that he did——"

Mr. Prout gazed at Coker. He seemed bereft of speech.

"Shall I go down and telephone to the doctor, sir?" Potter ventured to interrupt. "That kid, sir——"

"Yes," gasped Mr. Prout. "Certainly, Potter! The boy, whoever he is, whatever he is, must be cared for. Do so at once! Coker, I will speak to you to-morrow about what you have told me—possibly you may have some explanation to offer of your amazing and incredible conduct. At the present moment, this unfortunate boy, who appears to have acted very bravely, must be cared for."

"Yes, sir; that's the chief thing now," agreed Coker. "The fact is——"

"You need say no more, Coker."

"I was going to say——"

"That is enough!"

"But, sir, I——"

"Will you be silent, Coker, or do you desire me to cane you?"

Coker decided to be silent.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Blows In!

**B**ILLY BUNTER awoke.

He blinked round him, groped for his spectacles, set them on his fat little nose, and blinked round again.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

Morning sunshine was streaming in at the little window of the apple-loft. Bunter had not heard the rising-bell, or the chapel bell. But as breakfast-time approached, an inward monitor warned Bunter that it was time to wake—and he woke!

"Oh crikey!" he repeated.

He had not opened his eyes during the night. He had quite a comfortable bed, in Skip's rugs; but Bunter could have slept anywhere. For a minute or two he blinked round him in astonishment, and then he remembered what had happened, and where he was.

He had been out of the House all night. But, to his immense relief, that beast, the young pickpocket, was not present, and there was nothing to keep him a prisoner in the apple-loft any longer. He had no doubt that the young rascal had cleared off during the night. Anyhow, he was gone, and Bunter was free to go in his turn.

He rolled across to the trapdoor and lifted it.

There was no doubt that he was booked for a row for having got into Mr. Mimble's apple-loft. Quelch was sure to suspect that he had gone there for apples; he was a suspicious beast, and never would take a fellow's word—not Bunter's, at all events. If he was going to be whopped for going after apples, it seemed to Bunter only fair

that he should bag the apples. He did not want to be whopped for nothing.

So he sorted out his bag and filled it with apples. Thus laden, he clambered down the ladder and let himself out of the shed with Fishy's key.

Greatly relieved to be out again, though in considerable dread of what was going to happen to him, the fat Owl of the Remove rolled away to the House.

A yell greeted him as he appeared in the quad.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

"Bunter!"

"It's Bunter!"

"The esteemed and absurd Bunter, turning up like a bad penny!"

There was a rush of fellows to meet Bunter. A crowd of Removites surrounded him at once.

The Remove had turned out that morning quite alarmed about Bunter when they found his bed in the dormitory still empty. It seemed certain that some accident must have happened to him. And here he was, rolling towards the House in the morning sunshine, looking rather dusty and untidy, but evidently not damaged in any way.

"You fat chump!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Where have you been?"

"I say, you fellows, I've had an awful time!" gasped Bunter. "I've been kept a prisoner——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Stuck in old Mimble's apple-loft all night! What do you fellows think of that?" gasped the fat Owl. "Of course, I never went there after the apples! I wouldn't, you know. I haven't got any in this bag——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've been sitting in that loft all night eating apples?" asked Skinner.

"No, you beast!" roared Bunter. "I tell you I was kept there! I say, you fellows, you remember that young scoundrel of a pickpocket that we saw in the school, first day of term? Well, he was there——"

"He was there?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes, and when I got in he wouldn't let me get out again!" said Bunter. "He knew I'd jolly well get him copped, of course!"

The Famous Five stared at Bunter. They had almost forgotten the existence of Skip. Certainly, they were not likely to believe that he had remained in the school, unseen and unsuspected, all this time without a lot of proof.

"So that's why you stayed out all night, is it?" gasped Nugent.

"That's it, old chap."

"Are you going to tell Quelch that?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Pack your bags first," advised Johnny Bull. "Quelch doesn't seem like having his leg pulled."

"It's true!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, think of a better one than that!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Quelch will scalp you!"

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"What did you stay out all night for, fathead?" asked the Bounder.

"I've told you. I was kept a prisoner and——"

"Yes, you've told us that; and now tell us what you stayed out all night for."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"You utter ass!" said Harry Wharton. "You may get sacked for this! For goodness' sake, tell Quelch the truth, whatever it is."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Have you ever known me tell anybody anything that wasn't true?" demanded Bunter warmly.

"Eh?"

"I ask you!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Help!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As for those apples you've made such a fuss about, Toddy, here they are!" added Bunter. "Mind, I never got these apples out of old Mimble's loft. If there's any of Mimble's apples missing, that young villain had them!"

"Oh crikey!"

"He would, you know!" said Bunter. "He's absolutely dishonest, and would think nothing of pinching apples. He would tell lies about it, too. An absolute young rotter in every way!"

"Fan me!" murmured Peter.

"He's gone now," added Bunter. "He wasn't there when I woke up. I dare say I frightened him away——"

"That part sounds true!" remarked Skinner. "Bunter's face would do that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that Bunter?" Wingate of the Sixth came up. "You young rascal, go to your Form-master's study at once!"

"Just going, Wingate!" answered the fat Owl. "I say, I've been kept a prisoner all night——"

"What?" yelled the Greyfriars captain.

"A prisoner, by a desperate villain who——"

"You young ass! You'd better not tell Quelch that!"

Wingate walked away laughing.

"I say, you fellows, think Quelch won't believe me?" asked Bunter, with an anxious blink round at the grinning juniors.

"Oh crumbs! Not quite!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"But it's true——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Here, Toddy, you take these apples—I don't want to take them to Quelch's study. He might think I'd pinched them from the apple-loft, when he knows I've been there. He's suspicious."

"He might!" gasped Peter Todd.

"The mightfulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose he's really been to the apple-loft, as he's come back loaded with pinched apples!" said Peter Todd, in wonder. "But he can't have been there all night——"

"I tell you I was kept a prisoner——" howled Bunter. "Look here, are you going to take these apples, or not?"

"Not!" said Peter. "I've no use for pinched property, thanks!"

"Then don't you jolly well make a fuss about your rotten apples any more!" yapped Bunter. "I paid Fishy twopence to borrow his keys to get into that shed, to get them for you, after the fuss you made about those I had—I mean, those I never had, as you know jolly well. Stumping a fellow over a few beasily apples! Mind, I've offered you your apples back, and if you don't choose to take them, that's your look out!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the House, to report himself to his Form-master—taking care, however, not to convey the bag of apples as far as Quelch's study. There was no doubt whatever that, if Quelch had seen them, he would have suspected that they belonged to Mr. Mimble's store, after he heard where Bunter spent the night.

The Remove fellows gazed after him as he went.

"Is he really going to spin that idiotic yarn to Quelch?" gasped Bob Cherry.



Billy Bunter, in the rugs, snored, unconscious of his surroundings. Skip gave the fat junior an amused and contemptuous glance as he stepped towards the trapdoor. Silently he lifted the trap and then swung himself down to the ladder below.

"Is even Bunter idiot enough?" asked Nugent.

"Isn't he idiot enough for anything?" sighed Peter Todd.

"But where the dickens can he have been all night?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Goodness knows!"

It was quite a mystery!

As Billy Bunter's statements made no difference, one way or the other, the juniors were quite in the dark as to the cause of Bunter's night out!

As yet, the Remove fellows had not heard of the happenings in the Fifth Form dormitory during the night, and nothing was known of Skip's presence in the school. So they could only wonder whether the fat and fatuous Owl really would have the nerve to spin such a yarn to his Form-master, to account for his unaccountable absence.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Whops for Bunter!

**M**R. QUELCH'S look was not encouraging, as he listened to the tale told by the missing member of his Form, who had now turned up.

He was greatly relieved to see Bunter safe and sound again. Like the Remove fellows, he had been driven to conclude that some accident had happened to him, and he had been on the telephone several times on Bunter's account. It lifted a weight from his mind to see the missing junior safe and sound.

But he was wrathful.

Bunter could see that he was wrathful, and he could not help feeling indignant. He expected sympathy.

A fellow who had been kept out all night by a lawless young rascal who refused to let him out of an apple-loft, was surely entitled to sympathy.

But there was nothing whatever sympathetic in Quelch's grim countenance. Bunter could read, in his eyes, that he was going to cane him. It was altogether too thick, in Bunter's opinion—as if he was to blame, in any way!

"Bunter," said Mr. Quelch at last, "I believe part of your statement, as it

has transpired that a certain boy, who had no right in the school, was in fact an occupant of Mr. Mumble's apple-loft until last night. I believe, therefore, that you found him there, and have no doubt that he prevented you from leaving, in order to keep his presence a secret."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Can I go now, sir?"

"You may not, Bunter."

"Oh lor'!"

"I require to know, Bunter, for what reason you went to the apple-loft at all, and thus caused all this anxiety and trouble!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"I—I went there, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"I am aware that you went there, Bunter, as you have stated that you remained there all night. I am asking you why you went."

"It—it wasn't to prig the apples, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I don't like apples, sir! They—they disagree with me! Besides, I never knew that Mumble kept apples in that loft, sir! The—the fact is—" Bunter cudgelled his fat brain for a fact.

"Well?"

"I—I went to—to—to see whether that young rascal was hanging about, sir!" stammered Bunter. "You see, sir, I—I saw him hanging about, first day of term, and—and I—I thought—"

"You did not take any apples, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, sir! I—I hope you don't think I'm the kind of fellow to prig apples!" protested Bunter.

"I trust not, Bunter! I am very reluctant to believe that any boy in my Form is capable of petty pilfering!" said Mr. Quelch. "Kindly tell me, at once, what was in the bag you were carrying?"

Bunter jumped.

"The—the bag, sir!" he stammered.

"When I saw you from my study window, and asked Wingate to send you in at once, you had a bag in your hand!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'!"

It had not occurred to Billy Bunter that Quelch had seen him from his study window, when a whooping crowd of juniors surrounded him in the quad. As he was in full view of the study windows, and a dozen fellows had yelled his name, he might really have guessed it. But he hadn't!

He blinked at his Form-master in dismay.

"I am waiting for your answer, Bunter!"

"I—I—I—that—that bag, sir—" stammered Bunter. "It—it was just a—a bag, sir! There was—was nothing in it!"

"You were carrying about an empty bag, after visiting Mr. Mumble's apple-loft?"

"Ye-e-es, sir! C-c-c-can I go now?"

"Where is the bag at this moment, Bunter?"

"Oh lor'!"

"I shall examine that bag!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "If it is indeed empty, as you state, Bunter, I shall make an effort to believe your statement. But I must see that bag at once. Where is it?"

"I—I've lost it, sir!"

"What?"

"I—I was in such a hurry to come in, sir, after Wingate told me you wanted me, that I—I dropped it, and—and never noticed where it went—"

"Do you expect me to believe that statement, Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes, sir! Can I go now?"

Mr. Quelch rose from his chair and picked up his cane.

Billy Bunter eyed him in anguished anticipation as he swished it.

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"I—I—I say, sir," he gasped. "I—I remember now, sir—I—I left the bag in the lobby, sir, as—as I came in! I—I quite forgot—"

"I am glad you have remembered, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch with almost ferocious sarcasm. "I will now go with you to the lobby and examine the bag."

"Pip-pip-please don't trouble, sir! I—I'll run and fetch it here, sir," said Bunter hopefully.

"You will do nothing of the kind, Bunter! Come with me!"

"Oh crikey!" A dismal fat Owl rolled after his Form-master.

They arrived in the lobby, where a scent of ripe apples guided Mr. Quelch to the bag. He picked it up.

"Is this the bag, Bunter?"

"It—it looks like it, sir!" groaned Bunter.

Mr. Quelch opened the bag. It was crammed with rich red apples. Generally, the sight of a rich red apple caused Billy Bunter's face to brighten. Now it failed to produce that effect. He blinked at those apples in dismal dismay.

"This bag is full of apples, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch in a deep voice.

"Is—is—is it, sir?" groaned Bunter. "I—I—I wonder how they got there, sir!"

"You wonder how they got there, Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! I—I've never seen them before! It—it—it's quite surprising, sir."

Mr. Quelch gazed at that hopeful member of his Form. Plainly, he did not believe Bunter. Why, Bunter did not know; but it was clear that Quelch didn't.

Mr. Quelch drew a deep, deep breath. "These apples, Bunter, will be returned to Mr. Mumble," he said. "I shall cane you with the utmost severity for having pilfered them."

"Oh lor'!" "Follow me to my study!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter quaked after his Form-master back to the study.

Mr. Quelch pointed to a chair with his cane.

"Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

Six lamentable howls rang through the study, one after another, as the cane whacked six times on Bunter's tight trousers.

"That," said Mr. Quelch pausing, "is your very lenient punishment for pilfering, Bunter!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"I shall now punish you for telling untruths."

"Oh crikey!"

Six more whacks, accompanied by six fiendish yells, woke the echoes of Masters' Passage. Then Mr. Quelch laid down his cane.

"You may go, Bunter!" he said.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter wriggled away down the passage like a fat eel. He wriggled, squeaking, into the quad.

"Had it bad, old fat man?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Ow, wow, ow, wow!" moaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows—ow, wow! Oh crikey! I shan't be able to sit down in Form! Ow, wow! This is the sort of justice we get here! Ow! That beast Quelch made out that I'd been pilfering apples—ow! I told him there weren't any apples in that bag—ow!—and he made out that I was telling whoppers, just because he saw them there! That's the sort of justice a fellow gets at school! Ow!"

And Billy Bunter wriggled, and wriggled, and could not be comforted.

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He was still wriggling when the Remove went into Form, and had not quite finished wriggling when they came out in break.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Before the Beak!

DR. LOCKE took off his glasses, wiped them, replaced them, and stared at Coker of the Fifth.

Sitting in his study after morning school, the headmaster of Greyfriars had Coker on the carpet. He gazed, and gazed, and gazed, at Horace Coker, as if he found it difficult to believe in him.

Coker, who always gave Prout the feeling that he was rather too much for him, now gave his headmaster the same feeling. In more than twenty years' experience as a headmaster, Dr. Locke had come across all sorts and conditions of boys—but never in all his long and wide experience had there been a fellow like Horace Coker before. Almost he looked as if he found it hard to believe that Coker existed at all!

Mr. Prout was in the study. He made gestures, indicative of his despair in dealing with a fellow like Coker. A fellow who did things that were not done, and really could not possibly be done, was beyond Prout.

"Let me understand you clearly, Coker!" said the Head, at last, in a sort of gasping voice. "You brought this—this boy—this—this Skip—into the school, on the first day of term! You—you concealed him in the school, supplied him with food, and kept him here, unknown to anyone. You—you—you actually tell me that you—you—you did this?"

"Yes, sir!" said Coker cheerfully. "You see, what else could I do?"

The Head gazed at him.

"The kid saved me from getting my nut cracked in that train, just as he did again last night," explained Coker. "I felt bound to stand by him, sir."

"You brought a boy into this school, without permission, knowing him to be a thief!" gasped the Head.

"That was why, chiefly, sir!" said Coker. "You see, sir, the kid took a lot of risk, turning on that brute as he did. Well, that showed there was some decency in him. I wasn't going to leave him to carry on as a crook and a pickpocket, after that. How could I?"

Dr. Locke could only gaze at him. Then he turned to Mr. Prout.

"I presume that this boy, of your Form, is in his right senses, Mr. Prout," he said.

"He is incorrigibly and inexpressibly stupid, sir!" said Prout. "He has some very sterling qualities, but his stupidity is beyond description."

Coker looked at Prout!

He had never had much respect for Prout's judgment. But what was he to think of this? This was how Prout described the one brainy man in his Form.

"Look here, sir—" began Coker warmly.

"Be silent, Coker! If your headmaster should decide to expel you for what you have done, I could not utter a word in your favour."

"Oh crumbs!"

"I must take into account," said Dr. Locke, "that this obtuse and senseless boy's intentions were good. Otherwise, I should send him away from the school this morning."

Coker blinked at him. He wondered whether his headmaster was as big an ass as his Form-master. It looked like it, to Coker.

"Fortunately, no harm has come of

Coker's extraordinary conduct," went on the Head. "Indeed, as it has transpired, it was fortunate that the boy was in the school last night, as he prevented a wicked and dastardly act."

"That is certainly true, sir!" said Mr. Prout. "That wretch who entered the House, and who is now fortunately in a prison cell, would undoubtedly have done Coker serious injury, had not the boy intervened."

"I must see the boy," said Dr. Locke. "Coker, incredibly stupid as he appears to be, was right, at least, in thinking that something should be done to save such a lad from a life of crime. If there is any possibility of his reform, there are institutions to deal with such characters."

Coker opened his lips. But he shut them again.

Even Coker could see that this was not a favourable moment for expounding his wonderful idea of making a Greyfriars fellow of Skip!

"Where is the boy now?" asked the Head.

"In the House-dame's room at present, sir!" answered Mr. Prout. "He appears to have recovered to a great extent from the injury he received last night—he is quite able to answer your questions."

"I will send for him, then!" said Dr. Locke.

He touched a bell, and Trotter was sent to fetch Skip.

Coker stole an uneasy glance at his headmaster.

"You're not going to send him away, sir?" he ventured.

"I shall consider, Coker, what can be done for him," said Dr. Locke. "But only a boy of your unexampled stupidity could suppose, for one moment, that such a character could be allowed to remain in this school one hour longer than is absolutely necessary."

"But, sir—"

"Silence!"

Trotter tapped at the door and admitted Skip.

Skip stepped in, his head bandaged, his eyes roaming about him furtively, rather like those of a wild animal recently caught.

Prout he knew again as the "fat old bloke" who had found him in his study. The Head was new to him—and the majestic old gentleman, with his silver hair, had an almost overwhelming effect on Skip.

He gave a longing glance at the door, which Trotter had closed as he went.

Coker gave him an encouraging look.

"Don't be afraid, kid," he said.

"This is my headmaster—you've nothing to be afraid of."

"Yessir!" mumbled Skip.

"Be silent, Coker!"

"Oh! Very well, sir!"

"Now, my boy," said Dr. Locke, fixing his eyes on Skip with a benign and reassuring expression. "You need have no fear. I desire you to answer my questions truthfully and frankly."

"Yessir!"

"What is your name?"

"Skip, sir."

"You have some other name?"

"No, sir."

"Who were your parents?"

"I dunno, sir."

"Bless my soul! Where have you lived?"

"Slummock's Alley, mostly, sir! But I been all over the shop, especially since I joined up with Jimmy the Rat."

"Who?" gasped the Head.

"That, sir," said Mr. Prout, "appears to be the name, or nickname, of the

(Continued on page 22.)

**FALL IN AND FOLLOW—**

# The GREYFRIARS GUIDE



## A TOUR OF GREYFRIARS.

### The Head's House.

(1)  
Old red bricks in a quaint design,  
An old tiled roof with a chimney-pot,  
An old front door with a trailing vine  
In a garden plot—  
And it's oh, how we gazo from the  
garden wall  
On the trees hung thick  
With apples and pears, and plums and  
all,  
The juicy fruits we should love to  
pick.

(2)  
But a guardian gardener Mumble waits  
And watches us all with hard-boiled  
eye,  
To collar the youthful reprobates  
Who venture to try!  
And it's oh, how we long to behold him  
stewed  
In boiling oil,  
While we are enjoying in solitude  
The juicy "fruits" of the gardener's  
toil!

(3)  
The Head could pick them the whole  
day long,  
And Mumble would have to let them  
go,  
And yet, what seems to us strange and  
wrong,  
He doesn't, you know!  
And it's oh, how we wish we were  
Dr. Locke,  
We Greyfriars men,  
For just two hours by the old school  
clock—  
The juicy fruits would be gone by  
then!

## AFTER SCHOOL HOURS The Moneylender



If you want a little loan  
On your note of hand alone,  
Fishy's just the very guy to put you  
right!  
There's a paper you must sign  
Neatly on the dotted line,  
And it's difficult to read the thing at  
sight  
For the blunders and the blots  
And the smudges and the spots  
Aren't inserted there by any accident,  
They conceal with pleasant tact  
A most interesting fact—  
That the interest is twenty-five per cent!  
And if that is not enough  
To turn anybody rough,  
There's a further little statement tucked  
away,  
Which appears to make it clear  
That this doesn't mean per year,  
It is really twenty-five per cent per day!  
If a shilling you should borrow,  
There'd be threepence due to-morrow,  
Which is hardly quite as simple as it  
sounds,  
As when Bunter, long ago,  
Borrowed half-a-crown or so  
And now he owes Fishy thirty-seven  
pounds!  
All these payments, I expect,  
Aren't so easy to collect,  
For the victims of old Fishy's fishy wiles  
Do not seem to recognise  
What their signature implies,  
And they greet his angry menaces with  
smiles.  
Then they take their note of hand,  
Tear it into pieces and  
Stuff them down poor Fishy's back and  
walk away,  
While that Transatlantic guy  
Realises with a sigh  
That in Britain business methods never  
pay!

## THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET PIET DELAREY

### The South African Junior of the Remove.

D is for DELAREY—he who came  
From out the country of big game!  
An African who (so he says)  
Has won a deal of fame and praise  
At shooting lions on the wing  
And bagging leopards as they spring!  
One day he shot (so he relates)  
A savage rhino (so he states),  
And on his native jungle slopes  
He's slaughtered herds of antelopes



Without the aid of modern guns  
And bullets (so his story runs).  
But he's a really decent chap  
And very hefty in a scrap,  
So if I'm rather too polite,  
Remember—he'll read what I write!

### ANSWER TO PUZZLE

It's one of Toddy's fatheaded jokes.  
The missing words are 'T' (tease), BB  
(bees), CC (seize) and EE (ease).

## A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By  
**THE GREYFRIARS  
RHYMESTER**

### GREYFRIARS GRINS

When Wibley tried to make Micky  
Desmond up for a play, he told Micky  
to wear a special wig to conceal his  
prominent ears. Micky turned up with-  
out it and replied to Wibley's wrath:  
"I tell yez I've put an earwig on mo  
head, and I can feel the crayture  
runnin' about now." Micky would put  
a rattlesnake on his head for the sake  
of a joke!

After Tubb of the Third had been  
caught walloping little Hop Ki of the  
Second, it was curious to see Coker  
laying into him and shouting: "I'll  
teach you to hit a fellow smaller than  
yourself!" Coker evidently knows  
how!

Why is Bob Cherry a pleasant boxer?  
Because he has such a winning way.

### PUZZLE PAR

This one comes from Toddy,  
who thinks he's a poet! (Ha,  
ha!) Can you complete this  
verse, putting in the rhyme-  
words at the end of the lines?  
(There is only one rhyme  
throughout.) You must not add  
more than two letters to the end  
of each line!

Be careful not to . .  
Such touchy things as . .  
And then they'll let you . .  
Their honey at your . .

Answer at foot of column 2.

Why is Quelehy like a stubborn horse?  
Because when he once starts, he doesn't  
stop at the sound of woo (whoa!)

Aubrey Angel fainted in the quad the  
other day. It is believed that he had  
backed a winner.

Tom Brown's wireless set has  
developed atmospherics. It seems silly  
to us to pay ten bob a year to hear the  
sort of noises you can hear in Big Hall  
at a public flogging for nothing.

*The Greyfriars Guide will be on Parade Again Next Saturday, Boys!*

ruffian who was taken away by the police last night."

"Oh!" said the Head. "I understand. Have you been to school, my boy?"

"I've 'ad some schooling, on and off, sir," said Skip. "Couldn't always dodge that there, you see, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"But I ain't going to no blooming school now, sir!" added Skip anxiously. "They can't make me, now. I ain't got no use for no schools, I ain't! Not 'arf, sir."

"Shut up, you young ass!" breathed Coker.

"Kindly be silent, Coker!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"It appears," said Dr. Locke, "that you have been living, the past few days, in an apple-loft, where Coker placed you."

"Yes, sir! Kind-hearted bloke he is, sir."

"Hem! I have learned, from a member of my staff, that a boy who was missing last night, was detained by you, in that loft, because he had found you there."

"You mean that fat covey in the specs, sir?"

"Oh! Ah! Hem! Yes."

"He come butting in, sir," said Skip. "I wasn't going to let him yell all over the shop that I was there, and bring the coppers after me. No fear! I never 'urt the bloke. Jest kep' him there with his silly mouth shut!"

"Was that the reason why you left the place, where Coker had told you to remain?"

"Yessir! I knowed I couldn't stick on, arter that fat covey had spotted me! I 'looked it while he was snoring."

"Oh! Then you had intended to go?"

"Yessir."

"Why, you young sweep—" began Coker hotly.

"If you are not silent, Coker, I shall cane you!" said the Head.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"And now," said Dr. Locke, "explain to me how it happened that you were present when that ruffian made his attack on Coker in the Fifth Form dormitory."

Skip gave him a quick and penetrating glance.

It had not occurred to Coker why Skip had been in the House that night. Skip wondered whether the silver-haired old gent suspected.

He breathed hard.

"I come arter Jimmy, sir!" he muttered.

"You mean that you saw the man and guessed his intentions?" asked the Head.

"I knowed he was after Mr. Coker, sir, as soon as I see him!" said Skip. "So I follered on to stop him."

"I understand!" said the Head.

His impression was that Skip had spotted Jimmy the Rat outside the House, and followed him in. Skip had not exactly said so—but he was glad to leave it at that.

Somehow or other he felt a queer repugnance to telling falsehoods to this old gentleman. Had he been questioned more closely, no doubt he would have done so, but he was glad to avoid it—though he hardly realised that his conscience was beginning to stir.

Dr. Locke drummed on the table with his slim fingers, for a moment or two, deep in thought.

Skip watched him anxiously. His chief fear was that the old gent was going to send for the "coppers."

Nothing, certainly, was farther from the Head's thoughts.

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"You appear to have acted very courageously, and indeed very gratefully and devotedly, my boy," he said at last. "Please tell me what was your intention, in leaving this place, as you had intended to do?"

"I was going to 'ook it, sir!"

"To—to what? Oh, yes! But where were you going?"

"Nowhere special, sir—only I was going to keep out of the way of Jimmy the Rat. He's got it in for me, same as for Mr. Coker." Skip grinned. "That's all right now—the coppers 'ave got him, and they won't let 'im go agin in a 'urry, not 'arf! They wanted Jimmy the Rat for a long time. Now they got 'im in the stone jug, O.K. You let me go, sir, and I won't never trouble nobody 'ere agin."

"Let you go!" repeated the Head blankly. "You are, of course, free to go if you choose."

"Oh!" said Skip. "That's prime! Then I'll 'ook it, sir, and thank you kindly."

"But where are you going?" asked Dr. Locke.

"Anywhere, sir! It's all right, now they got Jimmy the Rat."

"Look here—" began Coker.

"Will you be silent, Coker?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"And how, my boy, do you intend to live, when you go away from here?" asked Dr. Locke.

Skip made no reply to that. Dr. Locke was not a man to whom he could explain that he was going to live by "pinching."

"Have you any resources?" asked the Head.

"Any what, sir?" It was a new word to Skip.

"I mean have you any honest way of making a living—any home among honest and respectable people?"

"Oh smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

"Wh-a-t?"

"I'll be orlright, sir—don't you worry!" said Skip. "You jest let me 'op it, and I can look arter myself."

"An institution," said Mr. Prout. "Such as Borstal—"

Skip jumped.

"Look 'ere, you let a bloke go!" he exclaimed in alarm. "I ain't done no 'arm 'ere 'ave I? I could 'ave 'ad Mr. Coker's money off 'im, any day, and I ain't touched it. I ain't touched nothing. You let a bloke go! I could 'ave 'ooked it last night if I 'adn't stopped to grab Jimmy."

"You need not be alarmed, my boy," said the Head, soothingly. "I cannot, in conscience, allow you to go back to a life of law-breaking—even that foolish boy Coker was right on that point. I must consider the matter—and in the meantime, be assured that you have nothing to fear."

"Yessir!" mumbled Skip.

"Coker, you may go! I will deal with you some other time. Mr. Prout, you may leave this boy to me. You may sit down, my lad."

Coker, and Coker's Form-master quitted the study.

Skip, sitting very uncomfortably on the extreme edge of a chair, was left to a heart-to-heart talk with the headmaster of Greyfriars.

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Face at the Window!

"I SAY, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "He's here!"

"Who, fathead?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Him!" gasped Bunter. "That young pick-pocket! I've just seen him!"

"Gammon!"

"I tell you he's here!" roared Bunter. "I say, he's still in the school! I thought he had cleared, when I woke up this morning and he was gone. But he hasn't! He's jolly well here!"

"Got him in your pocket?" asked Bob.

"You silly ass! I tell you he's here!" howled Bunter. "You come along with me and I'll point him out to you."

The Famous Five grinned. They had not the slightest belief that Skip was still at Greyfriars, or that Billy Bunter had seen him since the first day of term.

"Does that fat ass really think that he can pull our leg?" asked Bob.

"I've just seen him!" howled Bunter. "Come this way—"

"Which way?"

"To the tuck-shop!"

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

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! What are you cackling at, you silly dummies?" demanded Bunter.

"Try again!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"If you want somebody to stand you jam tarts, old fat man, look for Mauly! He's softer than we are!"

"Beast! I tell you he's there!" hooted Bunter. "Will you come and see, or not, you silly asses?"

"Well, we'll come!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But we won't stand you so much as a penny bun! Got that?"

"Yah!"

The Famous Five followed Bunter, grinning. They did not suppose for a moment that Skip was to be seen at Greyfriars; but they did suppose that Billy Bunter had his own good reasons for inveigling them into the tuck-shop.

But the fat Owl did not enter the school shop. He came to a halt outside and pointed with a fat finger to an upper window.

Then the five juniors jumped, all together.

A chubby, grinning face was looking out of that window. It was bandaged above, but below it was cheerfully grinning. And it was the face of Skip!

"Ain't that him?" demanded Bunter, with his usual reckless disregard of grammar. "It's him, ain't it?"

"Great pip!"

"My only and esteemed hat!"

"Skip!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed up blankly at the face at the window. They were astounded to see Skip in the school. They were still more astounded to see him sitting at the window of Mrs. Mumble's upper front room, in full view of anyone who came by, evidently regardless of how many eyes fell on him.

The window was open.

Skip grinned down at the juniors, and waved his hand to them in greeting.

"It—it—it's Skip!" gasped Harry Wharton. "What in the name of wonder is he doing there?"

"I say, you fellows, I told you—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Is that you, Skip, or your jolly old ghost?"

"Me, sir!" grinned Skip. "I'm a blooming boarder 'ere!"

"What?" yelled Bob.

"Don't you worry—I ain't arter your watches!" said Skip cheerfully. "I'm a guest of your blooming 'eadmaster, I am!"

"I say, you fellows, we'd better tell Quelch and get him to telephone for the police!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Shut it, face!" said Skip.  
"Why, you cheeky young pickpocket—"

"Pack it up!" said Skip. "Who cares for you, you himage! Talk about pinching! Who was pinching apples yesterday?"

"Got you there, Bunter!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"  
"But what are you doing there, you young sweep?" called out the captain of the Remove.

"Sitting at the winder, admiring the blinking scenery!" answered Skip. "The old bloke with the white whiskers brought me 'ere."

"Oh my hat! Do you mean the Head?" gasped Wharton. "You mean to say that Dr. Locke knows you're there?"

"What do you think?" answered Skip. "He knows all right! Ain't I told you that I'm a blooming boarder 'ere?"

And Skip chuckled, evidently amused by his new position.

The Famous Five could only stare. Herbert Vernon-Smith came out of the school shop, and, seeing the juniors looking up, looked up also.

"Hallo! Who's that?" he asked.

"That's the pickpocket!" gasped Bunter. "That's the young villain I've told you about, who was hiding in the apple-loft. I wonder he's got the nerve to let fellows see him at that window."

"What rot!" said the Bounder. "You fellows know that kid?"

"Oh, yes, we know him!" said Harry Wharton. "It's the young sweep who picked our pockets in the hols. He's called Skip! I can't make out what he's doing here—but he says the Head knows!"

"Oh, my hat! That pickpocket!" exclaimed Smithy, staring up at the chubby, grinning face at the window. "Here, young shaver, aren't you afraid of being run in?"

"No, I ain't!" retorted Skip. "The old covey with the white whiskers says it's all right, he says, and I'm to 'ave a room 'ere, and grub, and stick 'ere, he says, for the present, he says! Why not? I ain't in no 'urry to get back to my West End mansion, I ain't."

"Well," said the Bounder, "this beats it!"

"The beatfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, he ought to be run in! That's the beast who kept me sticking in the apple-loft all night!"

"It wasn't because I liked your company, face!" said Skip. "I don't want to 'ear you snoring again in a 'urry, I can tell you!"

"Did you really park Bunter in the apple-loft last night?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"I wasn't going to let him 'owl out that I was there," answered Skip. "He shouldn't come butting in where he wasn't wanted—pinching apples, too!"

"But everybody can see that you're here now!" exclaimed Harry.

Skip chuckled.

"It's different now," he answered. "Don't I keep on telling you I'm a blooming guest of your 'eadmaster? Board and lodging, and all found!"

"You're staying there?" yelled the Bounder.

"Sort of!" assented Skip.

"I think I'll lock up my cash to-night," grinned the Bounder, "with the Head taking in this sort of guest."

"Oh, don't you worry!" said Skip. "I ain't doing no pinching 'ere. I wouldn't arter the old bloke was so



Harry Wharton & Co. gazed up, blankly, at the grinning face at the window over the tuckshop. "It—it—it's Skip!" gasped Harry Wharton. "What in the name of wonder is he doing there?" "I ain't arter your watches!" said Skip cheerfully. "I'm a guest of your bloomin' 'eadmaster, I am!"

kind. Nice old bloke, he is, and chance it!"

"Who the dickens is that?" asked Skinner, coming up.

"That's the pickpocket!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!"

More and more fellows came up, joining the group outside the tuckshop, and staring up at the face at the window.

Skip did not seem to mind—in fact, he seemed to be rather enjoying the sensation he was creating.

Billy Bunter had told every fellow in the Remove about that pickpocket, not once, but many times; and every fellow seemed curious to see him, and very soon Skip had quite a large audience.

The bell for third school called the juniors away at last, and they went, in a buzzing, astonished crowd—leaving Skip sitting at the window, calmly and cheerfully looking out at Greyfriars.

There was a big bruise on Skip's head, under the bandage, and an ache in it;

but he was feeling quite pleased with himself and things generally.

Jimmy the Rat was safe out of harm's way for some years to come; the "coppers," as Skip sagely opined, were not likely to let him go, once they had got their hands on him—and there was no other cloud on his horizon. He was content to remain where he was till the "old bloke with the white whiskers" told him that he could go—and his quarters in Mrs. Minble's house were a great improvement on the apple-loft.

Altogether he felt that he hadn't done so badly. Never before had he lived in such luxury, or been sure where his next meal was coming from. It was a holiday for Skip—the first he had ever had.

So, while the Greyfriars fellows went in to class, Skip sat at the window and surveyed the green old quad, the venerable elms, and the ancient buildings, with a cheerful and contented eye!

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## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

## Cane for Coker!

**H**ORACE COKER lifted his hand to tap at the Head's study door and lowered it again. Coker hesitated.

He was not, as a rule, the fellow to hesitate. Generally, his methods were those of a bull at a gate.

But even Coker hesitated now.

He had thought this matter out—bringing all his vast intellectual powers to bear on it. He was satisfied that he had come to the right solution. But he felt that he could not depend on his headmaster to see eye to eye with him.

Schoolmasters, Coker had found, were rather dense. Headmasters, Formmasters, maths masters, French masters—the whole lot of them, often and often, failed to understand Coker, and to realise how right he was, and how wrong they were. It was annoying to a fellow, but there it was.

And the present case was, as even Coker realised, a bit unusual. Coker's intelligence was equal to it. But he doubted whether his headmaster's intelligence was. He hoped that it was—but he could not help remembering, with a feeling of misgiving, how dense schoolmasters were.

However, he had to put it to the Head. He was prepared to explain the matter patiently, in simple language suitable to a headmaster's intelligence. He could do no more!

He tapped at the door at last.

"Come in!"

Coker came in.

The Head was in his study, after school. He was sitting at his writing-table, his head leaning on his hand, in an attitude of deep thought.

He was, as a matter of fact, thinking out what was to be done with that odd boy, Skip. For the present, he had disposed him in Mrs. Mumble's house, under the care of that good lady, who was going to lodge and board him for a few days, while the Head considered the matter.

That was satisfactory, for the present moment; but the Head had to think out what was to be done; and he was not pleased to be interrupted by Coker of the Fifth. He was unaware, so far, that Coker had brought him a solution of the problem ready-made.

"What is it, Coker?" he rapped.

"About that kid Skip, sir!" said Coker.

"Have you anything to tell me about the boy?"

"About what's to be done with him, sir! I've thought it out," said Coker modestly, "and I think I know."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Locke. "If you have any suggestion to make, Coker, I am willing to hear it."

"I've written to my aunt about him, sir, and I got on the phone to her after class," said Coker. "She's willing, in fact, eager, to stand by the kid, after what he did for me."

"To give him a home, do you mean?" asked Dr. Locke, with some interest.

Coker coughed.

"That isn't quite the idea, sir! I couldn't land a young scallywag like that on her. But she's willing to stand all the exes."

"The what?"

"I mean the expenses, sir."

"If you mean expenses, Coker, say expenses!" rapped out Dr. Locke. "I am acquainted with Miss Coker, and I know her to be a very kind-hearted lady. If she is willing to assist the boy, it may be a great help. Obviously, he

must be found some home in honest surroundings, where he may have a chance of mending his ways."

"Yes, sir! And if he could be kept under my eye—"

"Under your eye?" repeated the Head.

"That's the idea, sir! Look how he's improved already, since I've had him in hand," said Coker. "A few days ago he would have pinched anything he could lay his hands on! Now look at him! I've only thrashed him three times! I've only thrashed him three

"Wha-a-at!"

"But it's done him a lot of good. Why, sir, last night he could have pinched things right and left—but did he? Not he! I've made him understand that he's got to turn over a new leaf! If I could keep him in hand, sir, I feel sure that I could make a decent chap of him! I think, sir, that I'm the fellow to do it! I'm a bit brighter, in most ways, than most of the chaps here, sir."

The Head gazed at Coker.

"If you'd let him stay on, sir—"

"He is remaining for the present, Coker, in Mrs. Mumble's house, till I have decided what can be done with him."

"I mean as a Greyfriars fellow, sir."

"A—a—a what?" stuttered the Head.

Coker had got it out at last. But he could see that his misgivings were well-founded.

Dr. Locke was not going to jump at this brilliant suggestion. He looked, indeed, for a moment, as if he was going to jump at Coker.

"Upon my word!" gasped the Head. "You cannot be serious, of course, Coker! But how dare you come here and waste my time with such nonsense!"

"I'm quite serious, sir!" urged Coker. "I don't see why he shouldn't go into Mr. Quelch's Form—"

"You do not see why this waif, this pickpocket, should not go into Mr. Quelch's Form!" repeated the Head, like a man in a dream.

"No, sir! It would be the making of him!" urged Coker. "My aunt will stand the fees, and all that. No difficulty there. I shall keep an eye on him, and see that he behaves himself. He may be a bit backward in class—but I'm prepared to give him some coaching. I'm pretty good at most subjects, sir. I know Mr. Prout doesn't think so; but, after all, facts are facts. They're rather a scrubby lot in the Remove, but a chap in Skip's position can't expect too much. It seems to me a good idea, sir. What do you think?"

The Head did not tell Coker what he thought; he just glared at him.

His expression was distinctly discouraging.

"Of course, I know it's a bit unusual for a fellow like Skip to be admitted here," said Coker; "and, of course, everything's against him. He may find it a bit tough at first, but—"

"You are actually suggesting that a boy who has been a pickpocket should be admitted to this school?" The Head found his voice at last. "Is that the suggestion you are making, Coker?"

"Yes, sir, that's it. You see—"

"Are you so incredibly stupid, Coker, as to suppose for one moment that such a thing is possible?" gasped the Head.

"Well, sir, I think it would be a jolly good thing for the kid, and—and, though there's difficulties in the way, I thought you might look on it as a matter of duty—"

"Of—of what?"

"Duty, sir!" said Coker. "Things

may be jolly unpleasant to do, and awkward, and all that. But a man has to do his duty all the same, hasn't he?"

The Head uttered a sound like a gurgle.

"That's how I look at it, sir," said Horace. "What do you think, sir?"

"Have you—have you come here, Coker, to teach your headmaster his duty?" gasped Dr. Locke.

"Well, not exactly that, sir; but I'm willing to point it out if you don't happen to see it, sir," explained Coker.

Dr. Locke rose from his writing-table. To Coker's surprise, he picked up a cane. Coker could not see what the cane was wanted for.

He was, however, soon to discover.

"Senior boys," said the Head, "are not usually caned at Greyfriars, but there are exceptional cases that can be dealt with in no other way. Bend over that table, Coker!"

"Eh?"

"Bend over that table!"

"Wha-a-at for, sir?" gasped Coker, bewildered.

"I am going to cane you, Coker!"

"Kik-kik-cane me, sir! Have I done anything?" gasped Coker. "Wha-a-a-at are you going to cane me for, sir?"

"If you do not bend over that table instantly, Coker, I shall expel you from this school!"

"Oh crikey!"

Coker—bewildered and dismayed, and wondering what on earth could have got the Head's rag out like this—bent over the table.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

It seemed like a horrid dream to Coker of the Fifth. But it was no dream; it was painful reality—very painful! The Head was a venerable gentleman, but he seemed to have a lot of beef in his right arm. He put it all into that whacking.

Coker fairly squirmed.

"Now," said the Head, breathing hard, "you may go, Coker! Not another word, or I shall cane you again! Go!"

Coker went. He went in silence. It was impossible for any fellow, even Coker, to tell his headmaster what he thought of him. So Coker went in silence, his feelings really too deep for words.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

## Coker's Latest!

**H**E, he, he!" Billy Bunter seemed amused.

He rolled into the Rag, his fat face wreathed with grins.

"I say, you fellows, heard the latest?" gurgled Bunter. "I say—He, he, he! I say, Coker—He, he, he!"

"What about Coker?" asked Bob Cherry; and there was general interest in "the latest."

Most of the fellows, in fact, were talking about Coker.

By that time all Greyfriars had heard of the happenings of the night—which explained to some extent Skip's amazing presence in the school with the knowledge and permission of the Head. There was no secret about the matter now; Skip was there for every fellow in the school to see if he desired so to do. And now that it was known that Coker of the Fifth had brought him there in the first place fellows discussed Coker's amazing nerve, and wondered whether he would be flogged or sacked. Any news of Coker was of interest in

the circumstances, so the fat Owl was the centre of attention at once when he rolled into the Rag with "the latest."

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "You fellows know what an idiot Coker is—what an absolute ass—what a blithering, blethering blockhead—what a footling, frabjous fathead—"

"Speech taken as read!" said Peter Todd. "We all know Coker! What's the jolly old latest?"

"He, he, he! You won't believe it!" gurgled Bunter. "They're talking about it in the Fifth—He, he, he! Coker—He, he, he!" Bunter gasped with merriment. "He's been to the Head—He, he, he! He went to him and said—He, he, he!"

"He went to the Head and said he, he, he?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? No! He went to him and said he wanted that pickpocket to be let in at—He, he, he! I mean Greyfriars! He, he, he!"

"Well, he's been let in at Greyfriars, hasn't he?" asked Vernon-Smith. "From what I hear, Coker landed him here—"

"Yes; but I mean as a Greyfriars man!" roared Bunter. "He's asked the Head to stick him in the Remove! He, he, he!"

"What?" yelled Bob.

"Gammon!"

"The gammonfulness is terrific."

"Even Coker isn't idiot enough—"

"What rot!"

"They're all talking about it in the Fifth!" yelled Bunter. "I say, the Head caned Coker. I heard him telling Potter and Greene. He said he didn't know why the Head caned him; thinks he's getting nervy, or something—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He must be off his chump," said Harry Wharton blankly. "Why, he knows that that young rogue is a pickpocket—"

"A pincher in the Remove!" gurgled Bunter. "That's Coker's latest! Fancy having a fellow in the Form who pinches!"

"Quite a new experience—what?" said the Bounder sarcastically. "Anybody missed a cake from his study lately? Did you ever find out what became of your apples, Toddy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Poor old Coker!" chuckled Bob. "Fancy going to the Head and asking for it like that! Skip in the Remove! He can have his pickpockets in the Fifth if he likes!"

"I shouldn't stand it!" said Bunter. "The Head couldn't do it, of course; but if he did, I should object, I can jolly well tell you!"

"You don't want any rivals about—what?" asked Skinner.

"Beast!"

"Well, this is the limit," remarked the Bounder. "Very flattering of Coker to pick out our Form to stick his pickpockets in!"

"The cheeky ass!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!" said Bob Cherry, glancing from the window of the Rag. Horace Coker had just come out of the House.

He stood looking towards the gates. A taxicab from Courtfield had turned in, and was coming up to the House.

Coker went to meet it; and the juniors, following him with their glances, discerned an ancient lady in a very ancient bonnet in the taxi.

The Bounder gave a yell.

"That's Coker's Aunt Judy!"

"It's Miss Coker!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I suppose Coker's told her about Skip. If she's come to take him away—"

"After all, it's up to him to look after the kid a bit, considering what he did," remarked Bob. "If Coker's aunt will take him in hand, that will be a jolly good thing for him."

"Um!" said Harry rather doubtfully.

Considering that the chums of the Remove had caught Skip only a few days ago prowling the House at night, looking for a chance to "pinch," he could not help thinking that old Miss Coker would find rather a prize-packet in Horace's protege if she took charge of him.

The juniors watched Coker rather curiously as Aunt Judy alighted and he led her to the House.

Coker's powerful voice floated in at the open window.

"I'm jolly glad you're going to back me up! The Head seemed annoyed about something when I put it to him; but he's not a bad old bean, really. I think if you could make him understand—"

"I will certainly speak to him, dear Horace," said Miss Coker. "That dear, dear boy saved you from injury. I am sure that he is a very, very good boy. I feel sure that he would be a credit to the school."

"Well, under my supervision, of course," said Horace. "I hope the Head will see it, aunty. This way."

Coker piloted Aunt Judith into the House.

The Removites at the window of the Rag looked at one another.

Miss Coker had not come to take Skip away! She had come to lend her support to dear Horace, in his amazing scheme of landing Skip at Greyfriars as a junior in the Remove. Coker had, so to speak, sent for reinforcements!

"Well, my only hat!" said Bob blankly.

"The ass!" said Smithy. "The cheeky, blithering ass! Does he think that we'll stand his pickpockets in the Remove, even if old Judy talks the Head over?"

"The fathead!"

"The chump!"

"The cheeky ass!"

Every fellow in the Rag had something to say about Coker. Everything that every fellow said was uncomplimentary. But no fellow fancied for a moment that Coker would get away with it.

The Head couldn't, and wouldn't, let a character like Skip into the school—it was wildly impossible. On that point there was not, in the opinion of the Remove, a shadow of doubt—not a possible, probable shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever!

A surprise was coming for the Greyfriars Remove.

## THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

### Aunt Judy Works the Oracle!

**D**R. LOCKE rose courteously to greet Miss Coker, when she was announced.

His courtly manner gave no indication of the fact that he wished, deeply and sincerely, that Miss Coker had stayed at Coker Lodge.

The headmaster of Greyfriars had a deep respect for Miss Coker. But all parents and relatives were rather a trial to a headmaster—and Aunt Judy was the severest trial of all. Her deep and affectionate concern for everything appertaining to her dear Horace was a credit to her kind and affectionate heart—but rather a worry to Coker's headmaster.

"Pray be seated, Miss Coker," said the Head, with the urbane politeness never disturbed even by parents and relations of Greyfriars boys.

Miss Coker sat down.

"Horace—" she began.

The Head expected that, of course. Miss Coker had only one topic—Horace;

No doubt Prout's latest report of Horace's intellectual exploits worried her. She was quite capable of requesting the Head to put Horace under another Form-master who would understand him better. Possibly it was some satisfaction to the Head at that moment to recollect that he had recently caned Horace!

"Horace has told me of the dear, good, brave boy who saved him from the attack of a dreadful man!" said Miss Coker.

"Oh! Yes! Quite!" The Head was relieved to find that it was not Prout's  
(Continued on next page.)

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latest report that had brought Miss Coker to Greyfriars, and that she was not going to ask him, for the umpteenth time, why so clever a boy was not head of his class, and whether he was quite satisfied with Mr. Prout, who did not seem to understand Horace in the least.

"Dear Horace has thought of such a wonderful way of rewarding that dear boy, and saving him from falling again into bad associations," said Miss Coker. "We owe him a debt of gratitude that it would be very difficult to repay, do we not, dear Dr. Locke?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! If you desire to give the boy a home, Miss Coker, or to place him in respectable surroundings—" said the Head cordially.

"What surroundings could be more respectable than Greyfriars?" asked Miss Coker.

"Eh?"

"I understand from Horace that the poor boy's education has been neglected," said Miss Coker. "Of course, he must be sent to school. That is essential. Gladly I will meet all expenses, after what he has done for my dear Horace. It only remains for you to consent, Dr. Locke."

"I—I—I certainly approve of the boy being sent to school, Miss Coker! Most—most decidedly! Some suitable school that—"

"What school could be more suitable than Greyfriars, Dr. Locke?"

"Oh! Ah! Hem! I am sorry to say—"

"All the boys in this school are honest, are they not?" asked Miss Coker.

"Eh! Oh! Yes! Certainly!"

"Then they are the associates that such a forlorn lad requires!" said Miss

Coker. "Horace assures me that the boy is quite a nice boy, except that he has been brought up to steal—"

"That is a rather important exception, madam!" gasped the Head.

"Yes, no doubt; but you will see, I am sure, that what such a boy chiefly needs is honest and high-minded surroundings. These, I am sure, he will obtain at Greyfriars. I have every confidence in you, Dr. Locke."

"Thank you, madam!" gasped the Head.

"Under your guidance, sir, I am sure that the boy will benefit in every way!" said Miss Coker. "He will also have the advantage of guidance from dear Horace, who has, I believe a very good influence in the school—as how, indeed, could he fail to have? Horace tells me that the boy is suitable to enter the Lower Fourth Form—I think it is called the Removal, or some such name—"

"The Remove!" gasped the Head.

"Yes, yes, quite! I have met several of the boys in that Form, and they are very, very nice boys, whose influence would be very beneficial to that unfortunate lad," said Miss Coker. "Mr. Squelch—"

"Mr. Quelch—"

"I mean Mr. Quelch—Mr. Quelch, I am sure, would be glad to undertake such a duty! No doubt he would find the boy troublesome at first—"

"My dear madam—"

"But the boy's sterling qualities—"

"You have seen him, madam?"

"No, I have not seen him yet."

"Then may I ask how you are acquainted with his qualities?"

"Horace has told me!" answered Miss Coker simply. "I have very great faith in Horace's judgment, Dr. Locke—very

great faith indeed! As his headmaster, you have, of course, noticed what an uncommonly clever boy he is."

"Oh! Ah!"

"Horace," said Miss Coker, "is fully satisfied with the boy Skip."

Dr. Locke blinked at Aunt Judy.

Any utterance of Horace Coker's was the last word in wisdom to Aunt Judy. It was not so to his headmaster! Far from it!

"I should take, of course, every responsibility," said Miss Coker. "The boy will turn out well. On that point there can be no doubt."

"My dear madam, how can you possibly know—"

"Horace thinks so!"

"Oh!"

"He has told me so!" added Miss Coker, apparently as a clincher.

"My dear madam—"

"I have visited the school specially to arrange this matter, dear Dr. Locke," said Miss Coker. "Everything may be settled while I am here. But, first of all, let me thank you—thank you from my heart, dear Dr. Locke, for your kindness and benevolence in allowing this unfortunate boy to have a chance in a school like Greyfriars."

"But—but I—" stuttered the Head.

"You have doubts as to the result?" asked Miss Coker. "I have none, as I rely wholly on Horace's judgment. But, after all, it would be easy to send the boy away, later, if he proved unsuitable."

"But—"

"Let it be arranged for him to remain at Greyfriars for the rest of this term, and I shall be satisfied, and Horace, I feel sure, will be satisfied," said Miss Coker.

It did not occur to Aunt Judy that she was the only person in the wide world who cared two hoots whether Horace was satisfied or not.

"It will be a great happiness to me," continued Miss Coker, "to see this boy and assure him that his future is taken care of, in the care of such a man as yourself, Dr. Locke."

"My dear madam," stuttered Dr. Locke, "I—"

"You are busy?" asked Miss Coker. "I will not waste your time, Dr. Locke. I know that headmasters are very busy men. And I must see Mr. Squelch—as this lad Skip is to enter his Form—"

"But—"

"Horace will show me to his study—pray do not trouble, Dr. Locke! Horace is waiting for me in the passage."

"But, madam, I have not—I mean—I do not—I cannot—I—I—" stuttered the bewildered Head. "I really cannot ask Mr. Quelch—"

"Pray leave that to me, sir!" said Miss Coker. "I will explain the matter to Mr. Quelch, and inform him that you have decided to place the boy in his Form—"

"But, madam—"

"Thank you so much, Dr. Locke! I am sure that your kindness of heart will be rewarded! Thank you so much, Dr. Locke!"

"But—" gurgled the Head helplessly.

Miss Coker sailed out of the study, leaving him gurgling.

Dr. Locke blinked after her—almost wondering whether he really had consented to allow Skip to be placed in a junior Form at Greyfriars.

Miss Coker joined Horace, who was waiting hopefully in the passage. She

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gave him a kind of reassuring smile.

"Is it all right, aunty?" asked Coker eagerly.

"Quite, dear Horace! Dr. Locke consented at once, as I fully expected from so kind-hearted and benevolent a man!" said Miss Coker. "Now pray take me to Mr. Squelch's study. I must see him before I go."

"Oh, good!" said Coker.

He piloted Miss Coker away to Mr. Quelch's study.

The Remove master regarded her with polite astonishment as she was shown in.

Miss Coker gave him a beaming smile.

"Please excuse my intrusion, Mr. Squelch—I know you are a very busy man," she said sweetly. "I will take only a moment of your time. Dr. Locke has decided to place that dear, good, brave boy, Skip, in your Form—"

"WHAT?" Mr. Quelch's expression of dumbfounded amazement seemed to escape Aunt Judy.

"Is it not kind of him, Mr. Squelch? Is it not like his kind and benevolent heart?" said Miss Coker. "And you, I am assured, will be glad of the opportunity in assisting in so good a work! Is it not so?"

Mr. Quelch gazed at her, speechless.

"Perhaps you, sir, as the boy's Form-master—"

"The bub-bub-boy's Fuf-fuf-Form-master—" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes; as the boy's Form-master perhaps you will give the necessary orders at the school outfitter's, all accounts to be placed to my charge!" said Miss Coker. "Thank you so much, Mr. Squelch! Horace, you may now take me to the boy. I am very anxious to see him, to inform him that everything has been arranged for him to become a Greyfriars boy."

"This way, aunty!" said the jubilant Horace.

Mr. Quelch gazed after Miss Coker like a man in a dream, as Horace led her away. He stood as if petrified, rooted to the floor. A minute later, from his study window, he had a view of Miss Coker, led off towards Mrs. Mimble's shop by the dutiful Horace.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He rushed out of the room and made for the Head's study. Generally, Mr. Quelch's motions were slow and stately. Now he fairly ran. Fellows who saw him whiz along the passages wondered what on earth was up!

## THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

### Taking It Out Of Coker!

HARRY WHARTON tapped at his Form-master's door and entered.

It was nearly time for prep when he received a message from Mr. Quelch. He was wondering what Quelch wanted—but certainly he never dreamed of guessing.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Harry.

Mr. Quelch was not seated at his table. He was standing by the fireplace, obviously not in his usual mood of icy calmness. At a glance Harry could see that something had deeply disturbed his Form-master.

He did not connect it, in his mind, with Skip. No more than the other Remove fellows did he fancy for a moment that Coker would get by with his egregious idea of shoving Skip into a Form at Greyfriars.

Miss Coker had left the school, but

whether she had taken Horace's protege with her or not, Harry did not know. He was soon to know, however.

"Yes, Wharton! I—I have something to say to you!" said Mr. Quelch, with a hesitation very new to him.

What he had to say he did not say immediately. He took a turn across the study, and returned to the fireplace. Only too clearly he was disturbed.

Wharton waited, wondering more and more. Something was amiss, he could not guess what—apparently something that concerned him as head boy and captain of the Form, as Mr. Quelch had sent for him. He could only wait.

"Wharton," said Mr. Quelch at last, "you will no doubt be surprised by what I am going to tell you. You are, I think, acquainted with the boy called

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Skip, now boarding in Mrs. Mimble's house?"

Harry Wharton smiled a little.

"I'm acquainted with him to the extent that he picked my pockets in the holidays, sir," he answered. "That's all."

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"The boy has certain good qualities," he said. "He acted very bravely, I think, in intervening, when a Fifth Form boy was attacked by a desperate rascal."

"Yes, sir, from what I hear, he is a plucky kid!" said Harry.

Apart from his dishonesty, Wharton, which is indeed dreadful, what do you think of the boy?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I am asking you as head boy of my Form."

"Oh!" said Harry. "Well, sir, I don't think he's a bad kid, apart from the awful way he's been brought up. I think very likely he might turn out well, sir, if he got into good hands."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Wharton. I have seen the boy and talked to him, and have the impression that he might have been very different, had his training been different. I had better tell you, Wharton, that it has been decided to place this boy at Greyfriars for the remainder of the present term as—as a sort of experiment, to ascertain whether he can be trained in better ways."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

He realised the awful truth at once. Coker, somehow, had got by with it!

"He will be placed in the Remove," added Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" repeated Harry.

"I will not conceal from you, Wharton, that I am very much disturbed by this," said Mr. Quelch. "But the headmaster has requested me to take the boy in hand, and give him a chance in my Form for a certain period. Dr. Locke has kindly left it to me to decide; but I am naturally desirous of obliging him if possible. It is a very extraordinary state of affairs and in dealing with it I rely on the aid of my head boy."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"I shall place this boy Skip in your study, Wharton—"

"Oh!"

"I have every confidence in your strength of character, and am assured that you are not the boy to fall under a bad influence," said Mr. Quelch. "If anything can be done here for this unhappy boy, it is rather from the boys than the masters that he will derive instruction and benefit. I cannot believe that his influence will be bad for a boy of your strong character—but I have very hope that your influence may be good for him."

"Oh!"

"In such a matter, Wharton, I cannot give you a command—but I ask you to do your best to support me in this very peculiar matter."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Harry at once. "I'll do anything I can, sir. I—I'm afraid he may have rather a rough time with the fellows—as they all know that he has been a pickpocket. If he keeps it up—"

"The boy has promised amendment in that respect, Wharton, and I have an impression that he is in earnest. He will, of course, be sent away instantly if he should lapse into his old ways. If, however, his faults are those of a bad training, a better training may amend them. It has, at all events, been decided to try the experiment, and I should like you to use your influence in the Form to make it a success, if possible."

"I'll do all I can, sir."

"Very well, Wharton! The boy will be provided with all he needs, by the kindness of Miss Coker, and to-morrow he will take his place in the Remove. I rely upon you to make matters as smooth for him as possible."

"Yes, sir."

Harry Wharton left his Form-master's study with a rather grim face. It was clear to him that Aunt Judy had somehow talked the Head over, and that the Head had put it up to Quelch, who naturally hesitated to disoblige his respected chief. The outcome was, that a pickpocket was landed on the Greyfriars Remove.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,547.

Harry Wharton could feel plenty of sympathy for a fellow down on his luck, and he would always have helped a lame dog over a stile; but the idea of a "pincher" being put in his Form was the reverse of agreeable.

He was ready to back up Mr. Quelch in his difficult position, both from a sense of duty as head boy, and from respect for his Form-master; but he had never been set a more unpalatable task.

That was how Wharton felt about it; and from his own feelings, he could guess what the rest of the Remove would feel like. He knew what to expect when he told them.

His face was grave and grim when he came up to the Remove passage. His chums met him on the landing, where a crowd of the Remove had gathered before prep. Every fellow could see, from Wharton's look, that something was "up."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's the jolly old trouble?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Skip!" answered Harry.

"Isn't that kid gone?" asked Nugent.

"Hardly!"

"I say, you fellows, I can't make out why that young scoundrel hasn't been run in," said Billy Bunter. "Is he going to be run in, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He's coming into the Remove!" he said.

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull.

"The rotfulness is terrific."

"I've just had it from Quelch!" said Harry. "He's going to be stuck in our study, Frank, old man, and Quelch wants us to make the best of him. I've said that I'll do all I can."

"Is Quelch potty?" exclaimed the Bouncer.

"Better ask him!" said Wharton, shrugging his shoulders.

"The Remove won't stand it!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"I say, you fellows, I shall write to my people!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in breathless indignation. "I wonder what my titled relations will think of this!"

"That fool Coker has worked this!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, savagely. "I wonder if he would like pickpockets in his own Form? That old sketch Judy has jawed the Head, and the Head's jawed Quelch—and we're landed with Coker's pickpocket! It's too thick!"

"The thickfulness is terrific!"

"We'll make it warm for the pinching cad" said Skinner.

"We'll boot him out of the Remove, if he has the neck to shove in!" roared Bolsover major. "Let him show his cheeky nose in the passage, that's all!"

"The Head must be batty!" said Peter Todd. "And Quelch is as batty as the Head, if he thinks we're going to stand it!"

"I say, you fellows, a pincher, you know—"

"Don't you worry, Bunter, old fat man!" said Lord Mauleverer. "He pinches watches and things, not tuck. He won't poach on your preserves!"

"Why, you cheeky beast, Mauly—"

"Look here," roared Bolsover major. "Coker's done this! That blithering fathead in the Fifth has landed that pinching cad on us! Let him keep his pickpockets in the Fifth, if he's fond of pickpockets! We don't want them in the Remove! Who's coming to see Coker about it? We'll take it out of Coker!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on!"

"Let's!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We've got to stand it—and we can't scrag Quelch, and it wouldn't be fair to scrag the kid, but we can scrag Coker, and we jolly well will! Come on!"

There was a general move across the landing to the Fifth-form passage. Feeling ran very high in the Remove. It was all very well to declare that they would not stand it; but there was no doubt that it had to be stood, all the same. Coker had done it—and there was satisfaction in the idea of dealing with Horace Coker as he deserved for having done it!

An army of excited Removites marched up the Fifth-form passage.

"Here, what do you fags want here?" called out Blundell of the Fifth, from the door of his study. "Clear off, see?"

Blundell was barged backwards into his study, and left spluttering.

"Get out of this!" called out Hilton of the Fifth, who was in the passage with Price.

He did not repeat the injunction. Hilton and Price were strewn on the floor, and the mob of juniors walked over them, to Coker's study.

Bob Cherry announced their arrival, by hurling that study door open, with a terrific crash.

Coker and Potter and Greene were in the study. Coker had a pleased and satisfied smile on his face. He had, he considered, reason to feel pleased and satisfied.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here he is!" roared Bob. "Bag him!"

Coker's smile changed to a frown.

"What the thump do you fags want here?" he rapped. "Get out!"

"You've landed your pickpocket on us!" roared Johnny Bull. "Do you think we're going to stand it, you dunderheaded dummy?"

"Don't be cheeky, Bull! If you kids begin any ragging, or anything, of that kind, when young Skip joins up, look out for trouble," said Coker, sternly. "I shall be keeping an eye on you. I shall—yarooop!"

There was a rush and Coker of the Fifth disappeared under the indignant Removites.

Potter and Greene jumped to his help. They were promptly collared, and hurled out of the study. Wisely, they stayed out. Coker, in the study, was going through a wild time.

He was bumped, he was rolled, and rustled, and hustled, and bustled. He struggled, and he yelled, he wriggled and he roared. His coat was split up the back—his collar and tie disappeared—ink was poured over his head—ashes from the grate added to it—and in a few minutes Coker did not know what was happening to him, only that it was awful.

Not till Coker of the Fifth had been reduced to a state of complete wreckage, did the indignant Removites desist, and march out of the study—leaving Coker for dead, as it were.

Coker, in an unrecognisable state, sprawled amid overturned furniture, ink and ashes, papers and books, and gurgled. Which was some satisfaction to the Remove, if not to Coker.

When Potter and Greene looked in, again, Coker was still sitting in the midst of the wreckage, like Marius in the ruins of Carthage. He sat and gurgled.

"Well," said Potter. "That was some rag!"

"Urrgh!"

"You fairly asked for that, old man!" said Greene.

"Gurrrgh!"

Coker could only gurgle. And Potter and Greene, smiling, left him to gurgle.

THE END.

(Coker has got his way, and Skip is as good as a Greyfriars fellow already. But for how long? There are exciting times ahead for the Remove, for Skip, and certainly for Coker. Don't miss them!)

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# FOSSIL'S FOOTBALL FORTUNE!

Another Rib-Tickling Story of  
Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's  
By DICKY NUGENT

I.  
"Beg pardon, sir, but—"  
"Buzz off, Fossil!"  
"Beggin' your pardon, sir,  
but—"

Doctor Birchmell snorted  
angrily, as he glanced down at the  
skool porter from the horizontal  
bar from which he was suspended  
in the St. Sam's jimmynasium.

"Is there nowhere in the skool  
where I can obtain a few minnits'  
peace?" he cried. "Know you  
not, Fossil, that this is Saturday  
evening, just after tea—a time  
when, by the unwritten law of St.  
Sam's, I am allowed the use of the  
jimmynasium entirely on my  
own?"

Fossil touched his four lock  
respectively.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but  
that was the verry reason I came  
—so as to get you on your own!"

"Oh, it was, was it?" panted  
the Head, as he painfully drew  
himself up on the bar by his  
creaking arms. "Well, all I can  
say is, it's like your cheek! Why are  
you not on dewty at the gates?"

"'Cawse I'm up 'ere in the  
jimmynasium!" flashed back  
Fossil. "An' if there's any com-  
plaints that I'm not in my lodge  
—it's because I'm up 'ere, sir, to  
lodge some complaints!"

"Complaints?" Doctor Birch-  
mell dropped to the ground with a  
rattling and creaking of his old  
bones and regarded the porter with  
nitted brows. "What on earth can  
you have to complain of, Fossil?"

"Why, it's black ingratitude! Your  
job is one to be envied, I can tell  
you! Free lodging—half-a-crown a  
week to spend—no worries or  
troubles—"

"Ho! No worries or troubles,  
eh?" grunted Fossil. "That's jest  
where you're wrong, sir! The  
fact is, I lead a dog's life!"

"Nonsense!" barked the Head.  
"Yours, Fossil, is a life of luxury  
and ease!"

"It hain't, sir!"  
Doctor Birchmell shuddered  
slightly.

"Don't say 'hain't,' Fossil—it  
sounds vulgar. Say 'ain't.'"

"Well, it ain't, then, sir!"  
growled Fossil. "From heary  
morn till late at nite, it's work,  
work, work for me. Which I'm  
just about fed up with it!"

"Have a care, Fossil, or St.  
Sam's may get fed up with you!"  
said the Head darkly. "Surely  
you have plenty of recreation?"

"Haw, haw, haw! Which I'm  
lucky to get ten minnits to till up  
my football coupon, sir!" re-  
torted Fossil, with a burst of ironical  
larfter. "Look at to-day! Mr.  
Lickham wants a 'evvy bag taken  
up to an attic box-room. Master  
Fearless wants a 'evvy trunk  
brought down from a box-room to  
the gates! Master Burleigh wants  
his study winder repaired. 'Air  
Guggenheimer wants some sossidges  
fetched up from the station—"

Doctor Birchmell shrugged, as  
he prepared to take a run at the  
vaulting horse.

"Really, Fossil, I fail to see what

you're grumbling  
at. I suppose  
you get a tip  
now and again?"

"Ho, yuss—  
the tip of some-  
body's boot if I don't do wot I'm  
told!" snorted the rebellious skool  
porter. "It's all kicks an' no  
'apence, sir, an'—"

"Stand aside!" ordered the  
Head, hawtily, as he made ready  
for his run.

Fossil grunted and stood aside.

Doctor Birchmell broke into a  
run and made a grate spring as he  
reached the vaulting horse.

The next moment there was a  
fearful crash and a feendish yell.  
The Head failed to clear the horse

and came down with a bump that

shook the Jim, bringing the horse  
down on top of himself.

Bang! Crash! Wallop!  
"Yarooooo! Help! Woocooop!"  
Fossil blinked. Then he grined.

"Haw, haw, haw! Beggin' your  
pardon, sir, but you don't 'arf  
look commical!" Haw, haw, haw!"

"You—you—"  
"Haw, haw, haw!" roared  
Fossil, as his sense of yewmer com-  
pletely got the better of him.

Doctor Birchmell jumped to his  
feet. He was not in the best of  
moods, anyway, and the sound of  
that disrespectful larfter from a  
meer menial just did it!

With an angry growl, he made a  
rush at the historical porter.

Fossil soon stopped larfter then.  
One glance at the Head's foam-  
flecked mouth and bludshot eyes  
was sufficient to send him dashing  
out of the Jim at top speed. He  
fairly raced through the open  
doorway and once through it he  
slammed the door behind him. It  
was a jolly good move for Fossil,  
but a somewhat unforhunit one  
for the Head, for the door flew  
back at the very moment when the  
Head reached the doorway. It gave  
the Head a bliff on his nose that  
nocked him flat on his back and  
fairly made him see stars.

"Woocoooop! Yarooooo!"  
shrieked Doctor Birchmell.

He gave up the chase and lay  
on his back to recover, moaning  
and groaning as he did so.

It was while he was doing this  
that Fossil's football coupon  
fluttered to his face.

In his wild flight to escape the  
Head's vengeance, Fossil had dropped  
a football coupon from his pocket  
on to the floor, and as the Head lay

back, caressing his nose, the draft  
from under the door blew the  
coupon to him. It was evidently  
a copy of the coupon Fossil had  
sent in earlier in the week.

Doctor Birchmell snorted as he  
saw it, and was about to screw it  
up and throw it away when from  
the distance he heard a wireless  
giving out the news and he pawsed.

"To-day's football results!"  
announced the announcer on the  
wireless; and in spite of himself,  
Doctor Birchmell strained his ears  
to listen in  
and check off  
Fossil's coupon.

"I bet he's  
got them all  
wrong!" he  
muttered to  
himself. "I'll  
just listen in  
and hear for  
myself. It will  
serve the beestly  
cadd right!"

The football  
results floated  
across the ether.

Doctor Birchmell listened eagerly,  
waiting to scoff and chortle as  
Fossil's forecast proved wrong.

But the Head received a serprize.  
Result after result came through;  
but instead of proving wrong, they  
seemed to be proving right.

As he drew near the end of the  
list, Doctor Birchmell sat up and  
listened, fascinated—his greenish  
eyes gleaming with eggstement.

The last result came through at  
last. It was another winner for  
Fossil! The Head scrambled swiftly  
to his feet.

"Few!" he wissled. "Of all  
the luck! Fossil's gone nap! He  
fairly scoops the pool this time, by  
Jove! Why, this may mean  
hundreds to him—thousands!"

Holding the precious coupon in  
his trembling fingers, Doctor Birch-  
mell rushed out in search of  
Fossil—but for reasons quite  
different from those that had sent  
him rushing after Fossil five minnits  
earlier.

II.

"Fossil, you old blighter, you  
haven't brought down my trunk!"

Frank Fearless frowned severely,  
as he spoke to the skool  
porter a few minnits after his re-  
appearance at the lodge. Others  
who followed at his heels did more  
than frown severely. They glared  
balefully.

"Yes, and what about my bag?"  
demanded Mr. Lickham warmly.

"You have not carried out my  
orders—and you have not carried  
up my bag!"

"My study winder is still not  
mended, Fossil!" wrapped out  
Burleigh, the kaplin of St. Sam's.

"If I don't get a new pane of glass  
very soon I shall be getting a pane  
in the neck."

It was an amazing site. Fellows

came crowding to the door of the  
lodge by the score to see it. Tall-  
boy headed a group of seniors,  
Jack Jolly brought along a con-  
tingent of Fourth Formers, and  
fags turned up in full force.

They simply couldn't believe  
their eyes at first. But when  
Fearless explained that Fossil  
had won a football pool, they saw  
method in the Head's madness.

"It's a shame!" declared Jack  
Jolly, indignantly. "He'll rook  
Fossil of every penny of his  
winnings!"

"Hoar, hear!"  
That loud "Hoar, hear!"  
brought Doctor Birchmell's dance  
to a stop. He turned as red as a  
polony and glared fowriously at the  
kaplin of the Fourth.

"How dare you suggest that  
I'm only palling up with Fossil  
for his munny?" he cried. "I'd  
skorn to do such a thing! My  
sole reason for being so friendly  
with Fossil is that he's a grate and  
noble fellow in whose company  
I simply delite. That's so, Fossil,  
isn't it?"

"Yuss!" said Fossil.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Treat their larfter with kon-  
tempt, Fossil!" said the Head,  
linking arms with the grinning  
skool porter. "And come across  
to my house and have supper with  
me!"

"But we're all waiting for  
Fossil to do some jobs for us,  
sir!" protested Mr. Lickham.

"Do the jobs yourselves, my  
dear fellows!" grinned the Head.  
"That's the best advice I can give  
you! This way, Fossil!"

Doctor Birchmell walked off  
arm-in-arm with Fossil, leaving  
Mr. Lickham gazing after him with  
feelings that were too deep for  
words!

The Head's new affeekshun for  
Fossil was the talk of St. Sam's  
over the week-end. He had never  
previously shown much regard for  
the old porter. But now that he  
had started, he seemed to be  
making up for lost time. Fossil  
had both dinner and tea with the  
Head on Sunday. His various  
dewties were given over to fags  
to perform for him. Never before  
had Fossil had such a time!

The fellows all felt awfully  
curious to know how much Fossil's  
prize was going to be. The result  
was dew to be announced in the  
"Daily Screech" on Monday  
morning and long before the news-  
paper-man arrived a grate crowd  
had assenbulated at the gates.

Fossil was the first to grab the  
paper when it arrived; but the  
Head, who dashed up at the last  
moment, fairly snatched it from  
him and made a dive for the pools'  
announcements.

"Aha! Here it is, Fossil, my  
dear old friend!" he beamed.  
"Result of our grate pools!"

"Mein sossidges, Vossil—where  
are they?" chimed in the guttural  
voice of Hair Guggenheimer. "Wain  
pewtiful sossidges go pad for want  
of eating, don't it?"

Fossil mopped his perspiring  
brow.

"Which I'm sorry, jents,  
but—"

"That won't bring my trunk  
down!"

"No, and it won't take my bag  
up!"

"As for my winder—"

"Mein powtiful sossidges—"

Fossil retreated round the table  
in his little sitting-room, looking  
rather alarmed. And when a  
bearded figger loomed up behind  
the others, Fossil's alarm charged  
to sheer terror.

"That's done it! The 'Ead!"  
he muttered; and he fell on his  
hands and neeze and fairly  
grovelled. "Mersy, jents! I'll do  
wot you want! I'll work 'arder  
if you'll only lemme go—ow-ow!"

Fossil broke off with a yelp of  
fear. Doctor Birchmell had  
stroled to the front and Fossil  
natcherally thought he was bent  
on obtaining vengenz.

But he wasn't! Much to Fossil's  
serprize he made no attempt what-  
ever to tear Fossil lim from him.  
Instead of that, he turned round  
feerely on the others and started  
defending Fossil against them!

"Stand back, you ruffians!" he  
cried. "How dare you attempt  
to assawlt the sacred person of  
Mr. Fossil? How dare you attack  
this horny-handed son of toil that  
I am proud to call my friend!"

"Grate pip!"

Lickham and Guggenheimer and  
Burleigh and Fearless stared at the  
Head in utter amazement. But  
even they were not so serprized as  
Fossil himself. The old skool  
porter had to pinch himself to  
make sure he wasn't dreaming.

"Heggeuse me, sir, but did I  
'ear you say as you're my friend?"  
he gasped.

"Of course I'm your friend,  
Fossil!" said Doctor Birchmell,  
patting him fondly on the back.

"Always have been, in fact—and  
if anyone says it's only because  
you've won the football pool this  
week it's because they're jellus  
and—"

"Wot? Me won the foot-  
pool?" roared Fossil.

The Head grinned and nodded.

"I almost forgot to tell you,  
Fossil. Here's your coupon. You  
dropped it when you left me  
Jim!"

Fossil grabbed his football  
coupon and glanced at his selec-  
tions—all neatly ticked in the  
Head's spidery scrawl. The next  
moment, he flung his arms round  
Doctor Birchmell and started  
waltzing him round the room out  
of sheer joy of spirits!

It was an amazing site. Fellows

came crowding to the door of the  
lodge by the score to see it. Tall-  
boy headed a group of seniors,  
Jack Jolly brought along a con-  
tingent of Fourth Formers, and  
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paper-man arrived a grate crowd  
had assenbulated at the gates.

Fossil was the first to grab the  
paper when it arrived; but the  
Head, who dashed up at the last  
moment, fairly snatched it from  
him and made a dive for the pools'  
announcements.

"Aha! Here it is, Fossil, my  
dear old friend!" he beamed.  
"Result of our grate pools!"

"Mein sossidges, Vossil—where  
are they?" chimed in the guttural  
voice of Hair Guggenheimer. "Wain  
pewtiful sossidges go pad for want  
of eating, don't it?"

Fossil mopped his perspiring  
brow.

"Which I'm sorry, jents,  
but—"

"That won't bring my trunk  
down!"

"No, and it won't take my bag  
up!"

"As for my winder—"

"Mein powtiful sossidges—"

Fossil retreated round the table  
in his little sitting-room, looking  
rather alarmed. And when a  
bearded figger loomed up behind  
the others, Fossil's alarm charged  
to sheer terror.

"That's done it! The 'Ead!"  
he muttered; and he fell on his  
hands and neeze and fairly  
grovelled. "Mersy, jents! I'll do  
wot you want! I'll work 'arder  
if you'll only lemme go—ow-ow!"

Fossil broke off with a yelp of  
fear. Doctor Birchmell had  
stroled to the front and Fossil  
natcherally thought he was bent  
on obtaining vengenz.

But he wasn't! Much to Fossil's  
serprize he made no attempt what-  
ever to tear Fossil lim from him.  
Instead of that, he turned round  
feerely on the others and started  
defending Fossil against them!

"Stand back, you ruffians!" he  
cried. "How dare you attempt  
to assawlt the sacred person of  
Mr. Fossil? How dare you attack  
this horny-handed son of toil that  
I am proud to call my friend!"

"Grate pip!"

Lickham and Guggenheimer and  
Burleigh and Fearless stared at the  
Head in utter amazement. But  
even they were not so serprized as  
Fossil himself. The old skool  
porter had to pinch himself to  
make sure he wasn't dreaming.

"Heggeuse me, sir, but did I  
'ear you say as you're my friend?"  
he gasped.

"Of course I'm your friend,  
Fossil!" said Doctor Birchmell,  
patting him fondly on the back.

"Always have been, in fact—and  
if anyone says it's only because  
you've won the football pool this  
week it's because they're jellus  
and—"

"Wot? Me won the foot-  
pool?" roared Fossil.

The Head grinned and nodded.

"I almost forgot to tell you,  
Fossil. Here's your coupon. You  
dropped it when you left me  
Jim!"

Fossil grabbed his football  
coupon and glanced at his selec-  
tions—all neatly ticked in the  
Head's spidery scrawl. The next  
moment, he flung his arms round  
Doctor Birchmell and started  
waltzing him round the room out  
of sheer joy of spirits!

It was an amazing site. Fellows

came crowding to the door of the  
lodge by the score to see it. Tall-  
boy headed a group of seniors,  
Jack Jolly brought along a con-  
tingent of Fourth Formers, and  
fags turned up in full force.

They simply couldn't believe  
their eyes at first. But when  
Fearless explained that Fossil  
had won a football pool, they saw  
method in the Head's madness.

"It's a shame!" declared Jack  
Jolly, indignantly. "He'll rook  
Fossil of every penny of his  
winnings!"

"Hoar, hear!"  
That loud "Hoar, hear!"  
brought Doctor Birchmell's dance  
to a stop. He turned as red as a  
polony and glared fowriously at the  
kaplin of the Fourth.

"How dare you suggest that  
I'm only palling up with Fossil  
for his munny?" he cried. "I'd  
skorn to do such a thing! My  
sole reason for being so friendly  
with Fossil is that he's a grate and  
noble fellow in whose company  
I simply delite. That's so, Fossil,  
isn't it?"

"Yuss!" said Fossil.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Treat their larfter with kon-  
tempt, Fossil!" said the Head,  
linking arms with the grinning  
skool porter. "And come across  
to my house and have supper with  
me!"

"But we're all waiting for  
Fossil to do some jobs for us,  
sir!" protested Mr. Lickham.

"Do the jobs yourselves, my  
dear fellows!" grinned the Head.  
"That's the best advice I can give  
you! This way, Fossil!"

Doctor Birchmell walked off  
arm-in-arm with Fossil, leaving  
Mr. Lickham gazing after him with  
feelings that were too deep for  
words!

The Head's new affeekshun for  
Fossil was the talk of St. Sam's  
over the week-end. He had never  
previously shown much regard for  
the old porter. But now that he  
had started, he seemed to be  
making up for lost time. Fossil  
had both dinner and tea with the  
Head on Sunday. His various  
dewties were given over to fags  
to perform for him. Never before  
had Fossil had such a time!

The fellows all felt awfully  
curious to know how much Fossil's  
prize was going to be. The result  
was dew to be announced in the  
"Daily Screech" on Monday  
morning and long before the news-  
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