

THE
MAGNET

FUN ON THE HOME FRONT WITH HARRY WHARTON & CO.!

RUN OUT *of* GREYFRIARS!

by FRANK RICHARDS



The
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*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*

2^D



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THE ST. SAM'S ANTI-WASTE LEAGUE!

Re-introducing Jack Jolly & Co.,
of St. Sam's, and Their Rascally
Headmaster—Dr. Birchmall.

By DICKY NUGENT.

"Barrell!"

"Ow! Yes, sir!" gasped Tubby Barrell, of the St. Sam's Fourth, jumping up from his chair on the veranda of the footer pavilion, as Dr. Birchmall's voice fell on his ears.

"Barrell! You are eating!" wrapped out the Head, standing before Tubby, wearing a stern look on his classical face. "How dare you?"

Tubby Barrell blinked.

"W-w-why shouldn't I eat, sir?" he phaltered. "It's—it's only a chunk of toffy—"

"If you think you are at liberty to eat chunks of toffy at any hour you please, Barrell, you are making a very big mistake!" said the Head grimly. "Economy is now the order of the day, not to mention the nite, and any boy who scoffs toffy eggsept during mealtimes is guilty of a crime in the eyes of the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League!"

Tubby Barrell jumped. Jack Jolly & Co., who had strolled out of the pavilion in footer togs just in time to hear the Head's last remark, stared blankly.

"The—the whatter?" gasped Jack Jolly.

"The St. Sam's Anti-Waste League, Jolly!" answered the Head calmly. "Founded by myself for the purpuss of preventing waste at St. Sam's!"

"Grato pip!"

"The league is holding its first meating later in the day in Big Hall," went on Dr. Birchmall, grinning slitley at the serprized eggsspressions on the Fourth Formers' faces. "In the meantime, the league is getting down to bizziness. Kindly hand over the rest of those toffies at once, Barrell!"

"But look here, sir, I paid for them myself, and—I—I mean, here you are, sir!" gasped Tubby hastily, as the Head reached for the birch that was tucked under his arm. "You can have them, sir!"

"Thanks, Barrell. The toffies are hereby konfiscated," grinned Dr. Birchmall, cramming a handful of toffy into his mouth and chewing away at it with grate satisfaction. "Console yourself with the thought that you are the first St. Sam's boy to help the grate cause of anti-waste. Jolly!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped the kaptin of the Fourth.

"You are carrying a brand new football, evidently intending to play with it. Give it to me!"

"What for, sir?" cried Jolly indignantly. "I bought it myself with my own money!"

"Sheer waste, Jolly!" said Dr. Birchmall, with a shrug of his sholders. "You should have used an old ball—or, failing that, a bundle of rags tied together with string! The football is hereby konfiscated!"

"Your mistake, sir—it isn't!" retorted Jolly, tossing the ball across to Fearless, as the Head made a dive.

"Bless my sole! Why, you mew-tinous young raskal—"

Dr. Birchmall made a rush at Fearless, who promptly headed the ball to Merry.

Merry, seeing the Head bearing down on him, quickly tapped it across to Bright, who lobbed it back to Jolly, who punted it on to the footer pitch. The chums of the Fourth then made a rush out of the pavilion.

The Head, who had become rather dizzy from the quick eggsschanges,



slipped and sat down with a bump and a yell.

"Yarooooo!"

While he sat on the hard, unsim-perthettick boards, trying to collect his scattered senses, Tubby Barrell pounced on his bag of toffies, which had fallen, seazed it, and rolled after the Co. at top speed. The Head was left to sort himself out, and nash his teeth at the unpromising start he had made with his new movement.

The St. Sam's Anti-Waste League's first efforts had certainly not been a suxxess. But Dr. Birchmall was not the man to be discourridged by a single failure, and later in the day the school bell duly rang out to summon the boys to Big Hall to hear all about his weerd new stunt.

When the fellows had all assem-bulled in their places, Dr. Birchmall russed on to the platform and lifted a mallet, intending to strike his desk for silence. By a bit of bad luck, Mr. Lickham happened to be

standing behind him, and the master of the Fourth caught the mallet right on the tip of his somewhat prominent nose.

Klonk!

"Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" shrieked Mr. Lickham.

"Bless my sole!" eggssclaimed the Head. "What is the cause of this peculiar mew-sick?"

"You've tapped Mr. Lickham on the nasal organ, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly, and there was a roar from the assem-bulled school.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry and all that, Lickham!" said Dr. Birchmall. "You shouldn't stand so near, you know. I haven't got eyes at the back of my head!"

"No, sir," groaned Mr. Lickham. "But that's the place into which I feet you've biffed my boko!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys!" wrapped the Head. "Let's get on with the giddy washing—or, as the vulgar mite put in, let us proceed with our conclave!"

"Go it, sir!" encurridged the school.

"On the bawl!"

"Jentelmen, chaps, and fellows! This meating is called for a very special purpuss—namely, to bring to your notiss a topping new society I've started. The society in question is called the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League!"

"Oh crums!"

"Beg pardon, sir, but is it a league for practising fizzical jerks?" called out Mr. Lickham, from the safer place to which he had retreated at the back of the platform.

Dr. Birchmall frowned.

"Fizzical jerks, Lickham? Certainly not! Whatever makes you think my Anti-Waste League is connected with fizzical jerks?"

"I was going on the title, sir," eggssplained the master of the Fourth. "I've been trying fizzical jerks for months to achceve the desired result—but I must say that I haven't yet reduced my waist!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lickham, you'll be the deth of me!" sighed Dr. Birchmall. "I mean 'waste'—not 'waist.' Being wasteful, you know—not being over-developed in the tuppenny!"

"Ah! Now I follow you, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "You mean not chucking things about too lavishly?"

"Eggsactly! In the past, boys," resumed the Head, wagging a sollem fourfinger at the school, "there has

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THEY DON'T WANT COKER AT GREYFRIARS! BUT IS THE GREAT HORACE DOWNHEARTED? NOT A BIT—HE'S GOT OTHER IRONS IN THE FIRE!

RUN OUT of GREYFRIARS!



BUNTER KNOWS HOW!

"WILL you fellows lend me—"
"Stony!"

"A hand?"

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove, were quite surprised.

They were on the Remove landing, discussing ways and means, when Billy Bunter rolled up.

Finances among the Famous Five were at a low ebb. Groping hands searched through pockets after forgotten coins—without finding any.

It was tea-time—and the chums of the Remove generally tea'd in the study. Tea in the study was now off—definitely off. Tea in Hall—the last resort of the stony—seemed the only prospect.

So they answered in unison: "Stony!" without waiting for Billy Bunter to finish his sentence.

But when he finished it they gaped at him in surprise.

Bunter generally wanted somebody to lend him something. Sometimes it was a half-crown—sometimes the humble bob—sometimes the humbler tanner.

This time, it seemed, he only wanted somebody to lend him a hand.

If that was all, the Famous Five were ready to oblige. They had ten hands among them, but, like Peter of old, silver and gold they had none.

"Only a hand?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That's all, old chap!" said the

With one prefect taking his shoulders and another his legs, Horace Coker was "run out" of Greyfriars!

fat Owl of the Remove. "Just lend me a hand!"

"Well, I don't mind lending you a hand," agreed Bob. "In fact, I'd lend you a foot—with pleasure!"

"No larks, you know!" said Bunter, backing away a step or two, as Bob swung back his foot. "Don't play the goat! I'm going to make that beast Coker cringe! I want you to help me!"

"Coker?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"What has Coker done now?"

"Pulled my ear!" said Bunter.

"Oh!"

The Famous Five of the Remove took notice at once.

Billy Bunter, personally, was nobody in particular—his unimportance was unlimited. But he was a Remove man. If Coker of the Fifth had pulled a Remove man's ear, Harry Wharton & Co. were prepared

to postpone the problem of tea while they slew Coker of the Fifth.

"The cheeky beast never can mind his own business!" went on the indignant Owl. "I was only showing a flashlamp in the quad!"

"You fat ass!" said Johnny Bull. "You shouldn't show a flashlamp in the quad after black-out! It's against orders!"

"Tain't Coker's business, I suppose!" snorted Bunter. "Coker ain't a prefect, though he seems to fancy he is! Who's Coker, I'd like to know?"

"Well," said Harry Wharton, "Coker's a meddling ass! But you shouldn't—"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Bunter. "I'm going to pay him out! I'm going to get him a whopping from Prout!"

"Oh, my hat! How are you going to manage that?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I know how!" declared Bunter. "I want you fellows to lend me a hand! Coker's downstairs now—but he might come up, and if he copped me in his study, I'd rather have you fellows with me there!"

At which the Famous Five chuckled. There was no doubt that if Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, discovered the fat Owl on the

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warpath in his study, Billy Bunter would be in need of first aid!

"But what's the game?" asked Bob. "How the dickens are you going to get Coker whopped by his beak?"

The Famous Five were quite puzzled.

Fifth Form fellows were never whopped, except in very extreme circumstances. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was often at the limit of his patience in dealing with Horace Coker, but only in a state of the greatest exasperation was he likely to handle the cane on a member of his Form.

Billy Bunter favoured the surprised juniors with a fat wink.

"Don't I know how?" he grinned. "You remember what happened last week? Coker went meddling along the Fifth Form studies to see if they were all blacked out, and left his own light on full glare. Prout saw it from the quad, and gave him five hundred lines!"

The Famous Five chuckled again. That was Coker all over, of course!

"And he said that if it happened again he would whop Coker!" went on Bunter. "Lots of fellows heard him!"

"Well?"

"Well, now it's going to happen again!" grinned Bunter.

"What?"

"It's past black-out now!" said Bunter. "There's prefects prowling round to see that the lights are all out! Well, we're going to Coker's study to yank down the blind!"

"Yank down the blind!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"And turn the light full on!"

"Turn the light full on!" roared Johnny Bull.

"And jolly well light up the whole place!" grinned Bunter.

"Light up the whole place!" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"That's the big idea!" assented Bunter, grinning from one fat ear to the other, evidently greatly taken with that wonderful scheme for avenging his wrongs on Horace Coker. "Prout will go raging after him. He said he would whop him next time—and you can bet he will! See?"

"Oh, my esteemed hat!" ejaculated Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "You terrific idiot!"

"You howling ass!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, don't waste time jawing—Coker may come up! The beast pulled my ear for showing a flashlamp—we'll jolly well see what he will get for having his light full on without a blind! Making the punishment fit the crime—what?" chuckled Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat junior. They had fancied that they knew every kind of ass William George Bunter was. But he was still able to surprise them. They had never supposed that even W. G. Bunter was such an ass as this!

"You—you—you—" gasped Harry Wharton. "And suppose an enemy plane was snooping round just when you left Coker's light on full glare?"

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"Eh?" Bunter blinked at him.

Bunter had not apparently thought of that. The processes of Billy Bunter's fat intellect were all its own.

"Don't you know what a black-out's for?" hooted Bob Cherry. "Think it's a parlour game just to amuse fellows of an evening?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Let me catch you putting a light on in the black-out!" growled Johnny Bull. "You dangerous maniac!"

"Look here, I wish you fellows wouldn't jaw when Coker may come up any minute!" urged Bunter. "Come and lend me a hand!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Forget it!"

"Chuck it!"

"Mean to say you ain't going to lend me a hand to get Coker a whopping, after he's pulled my ear?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"Chump!"

"Keep away from Coker's study!"

"I'll watch it!" hooted Bunter.

"If you fellows won't lend me a hand, I can manage it all right. I can stand on a chair to get at the blind. I tell you I'm going to make Coker cringe!"

"Look here, you footling ass—"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter, with a scornful snort, turned away. He headed for the study landing, from which the Fifth Form passage opened—evidently to carry on with that bright idea—unassisted, as the Famous Five declined to lend a hand.

"Bag him!" said Bob.

Five fellows jumped after Bunter as if moved by the same spring. Five pairs of hands clutched the fat Owl.

Bunter had asked them to lend him a hand—now they were lending him ten, all at once!

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"Bump him!"

"I say, you fellows—yarrooh!" roared Bunter.

Bump!

"I say—"

Bump!

"Oh crumbs! Ow! Leggo! I say—"

Bump!

"Yurrrroooooop!"

Bump!

"Ooooooooooooo!"

"There!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"You're a bit weighty to bump, old fat man, but we'll give you some more if you want it! Are you going to chuck up that stunt?"

"Ow! No—"

Bump!

"Ow! I mean, yes!" yelled Bunter.

"Leggo! I ain't going to—wow!—I ain't going to Coker's study—yarrooh! I ain't going to turn his light on! I ain't going to—wow! Yow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stick to that!" said Harry Wharton. "If we hear that Coker's light has been on, we'll burst you all over the Remove. We'll scrag you bald-headed! Got that?"

"Yarrooh!"

Billy Bunter sat on the Remove landing and roared.

The Famous Five went down to tea in Hall, and left him to sit and roar.

It was hefty work, bumping Bunter—his weight was not easy to negotiate. But a fellow who proposed to turn a fellow's light on, full glare, in a black-out, obviously required drastic treatment—and the Famous Five had dealt faithfully with the fat and fatuous Owl.

Billy Bunter felt that they had dealt with him a little too faithfully! The Bull of Bashan, famed for his roaring, had nothing on Billy Bunter as he sat on the Remove landing and roared!

COKER ALL OVER!

"LOOK!" said Coker.

Potter and Greene looked. It was past black-out time, but it was not yet look-up, and Coker & Co. were ambling in the quadrangle in the thickening November dusk.

Coker was talking—his usual state!

Coker was annoyed.

The order had gone forth that, owing to the war, there were to be no November 5th celebrations after dusk.

But for this, the bonfire celebrations would have been celebrated on Monday evening.

Now they were off.

It annoyed Coker! It was true that a bonfire in the school field, after dark, would have been rather attractive to any enemy planes that happened to be roaming about. Still, it would show the enemy that Groyfriars men did not care a boiled bean for them.

That was Coker's opinion! He had it to himself! Wiser heads than Horace's had decided the matter—to Coker's annoyance.

Coker, who had heaps of money, and who liked making a row on all and any occasions, had laid in a big supply of fireworks. There was a huge package of them in Coker's study. Coker wanted to hear his fireworks going bang round a roaring bonfire.

So far from that being possible, Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had forbidden boys of his Form to purchase fireworks at all. Other Form-masters could act according to their own judgment—that was Prout's judgment—and he acted on it!

Unluckily, this order came after Coker had expended a couple of pounds or so on explosives.

"Rot!" said Coker, not once, but many times. "Rot, I call it! It's a bit thick, when we can't have our bonfire because somebody's started a war! I think—"

Coker broke off and said:

"Look!"

Something had caught his eye.

Under the dusky old elms, deep and dark with shadow in the November gloom, a light suddenly shone.

Someone had struck a match there! Coker of the Fifth was on the alert at once.

"A match!" he said. "Some ass striking matches in the black-out!"

Potter and Greene looked at him! A fellow who proposed to have a bonfire roaring red to the sky during the black-out might have been expected to pass over such a trivial matter as the striking of a match! But no one who knew Coker would have expected it!

Coker did not exactly think that he was a sort of super-man, above the laws that bound common mortals! But he acted as if he thought so!

Coker thought it a jolly good idea to have the biggest bonfire ever, just to show the enemy where they got off! At the same time he pulled Billy Bunter's fat ear for lighting his way across the quad with a flashlamp. That was the way Coker's brain worked.

The idea seemed to be that Coker was to give orders to everybody, and that nobody was to give orders to Coker!

Coker did not in the least realise that he was an unthinking, unreasonable, self-opinionated, obstinate ass! But his friends realised it only too clearly!

Forgetting bonfires, Coker concentrated on that match.

"I'll jolly well stop this!" said Coker.

"Dash it all, it's only a match, Coker," said Greene. "People are allowed to strike matches—"

"Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"Might be old Prout lighting his cigar!" said Potter.

"Don't be a fathead!"

Coker strode towards the dark and shady spot under the elms where the match flickered.

Potter and Greene followed him. They suspected, as a matter of fact, that the match was struck by some fellow who had selected that dark and solitary spot for a quiet smoke!

If that was so, it was a matter of which a Sixth Form prefect should have taken note, if he happened to spot it! But it did not concern Coker of the Fifth in the very least! It was not Coker's mission in life to bring up Greyfriars fellows in the way they should go—though Coker often seemed to fancy that it was!

"Who's that?" hooted Coker, as the match went out.

There was a distinct scent of tobacco.

"Oh!" came a startled ejaculation.

"Price!" murmured Potter.

It was Price of the Fifth, though he was only visible as a dim shadow—with a red spot where a cigarette-end glowed!

There was a sudden blaze of light as Coker turned on a flashlamp!

The light blazed full in Stephen Price's rather pasty face, and he blinked in it.

"Coker!" gasped Greene. "Turn that light off!"

"Shut up, Greene!"

"Oh, my hat! You pulled that Remove fag's ear for turning on a flashlamp—" howled Potter.

"I'll pull it again!" said Coker.

Coker, evidently, was a law unto himself!

Keeping the bright light full on Price's face, Coker glared contemptuously and scornfully at the bad hat of the Fifth.

"You worm!" he ejaculated.

"Look here—" snarled Price.

"You smoky snipe!"

"Can't you mind your own business, Coker?" said Price, between his teeth. "Turn that light off, you fool!"

"Throw that cigarette away, you smoky rotter!"

"Wha-at!"

"Coker, old man—" breathed Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

Price of the Fifth glared at Coker, with deep feelings.

He often had trouble with Coker. Old Horace had a profound contempt for Price's dingy ways—his secret cigarettes, his sneaking out of bounds, his dingy backing of horses. In that, Coker was right enough—if only he could have realised that he was not in control of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars School. Price was a dingy and rather disreputable sweep; but really and truly it was no concern of Coker.

As Price made no move to throw the cigarette away, Horace Coker grabbed it from his mouth and hurled it afar.

"There!" he snapped. "There goes your rotten smoke—and if you strike a match again in the black-out, I'll punch your head!"

Price was hardly half Coker's weight, and he was no fighting-man! He could not handle the hefty Horace as he would dearly have liked to handle him. He gave him a deadly look of malice, and slouched away under the dim elms, without a word.

"Rotter!" grunted Coker.

Potter and Greene said nothing. Price was a rotter, and they did not like him. But Coker's high-handed methods pleased nobody but Coker.

From the dark shadows came a sudden voice—a booming voice that the Fifth Form men knew only too well.

"What—what? What is this? Who is showing a flashlamp here? Who is carrying that light? Is that Coker?"

The portly form of Mr. Prout loomed up.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. He turned towards Prout, catching him in the eye with the dazzling beam of the lamp. "Oh, I—"

Prout blinked frantically.

"Shut that light off, Coker! Shut it off at once, you utterly stupid boy! How dare you show that glare of light?"

Coker shut off the flashlamp. He was annoyed at old Prout barging in like this, but he did as Prout directed.

"You utterly obtuse and stupid boy, Coker!" boomed Prout. "Go to the House at once! Take a hundred lines, Coker!"

"I—"

"Do not answer me, Coker! Go indoors this instant, and remain

there! Take your flashlamp to my study, and leave it on the table! You will not be allowed to have one! Not a word! Go!"

"But—"

"Go!" roared Prout.

Coker, with deep feelings, went.

Potter and Greene, behind Coker's brawny shoulders, grinned as they went with him.

Coker did not speak as he tramped away to the House. His feelings seemed too deep for speech.

But in the House he found his voice.

"That," said Coker, with a deep breath, "is the sort of thing I have to stand from Prout. I shall hit that man some day!"

And Coker, in inexpressible indignation, tramped off to Prout's study, to leave his flashlamp there.

DESPERATE MEASURES!

"WORK!" said Billy Bunter.

"Eh?"

"What?"

It was a surprising word to hear from Bunter. If there was anything that Bunter disliked more than washing, it was work.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, often tried to make Bunter work. But he never quite got away with it.

On Tuesday morning, after third school, a shower of rain drove the fellows indoors. Some of the Removites were playing leap-frog round the big table in the Rag. Others were discussing football prospects. Some were indulging in war-jaw. Much more important matters occupied the fat mind of William George Bunter.

Mr. Bunter, at home, was going in for war-time economy. There was less prospect than ever of Billy Bunter receiving any of the postal orders he was always expecting. Bunter, always hard-up, was harder-up than ever. The most generous allowance of rations was not much use to a fellow who was in a perpetually stony state. And what was the use of unrationed grub to a fellow who could not buy any?

Bunter, really, was faced by the awful prospect of slimming. It was not a prospect that the fat Owl of the Remove could face with equanimity.

According to Shakespeare, desperate diseases require desperate remedies. But if Billy Bunter had thought of work as a remedy, it was a desperate remedy indeed—for Bunter.

"After all," said Bunter, blinking at surprised faces through his big spectacles, "why shouldn't a fellow work?"

"The whyfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

"I mean to say, there's a war on," said Bunter. "Every hand to the mill, you know. Every chap ought to do his bit. I'm going to work."

"Help!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"A chap might make a lot of money working," went on Bunter.

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It seemed that he had been giving a great deal of thought to this subject. "Wages go up in war-time. Everything goes up. And why shouldn't a fellow work? Besides, if a fellow got a job—a useful job, you know—Quelch would have to let him off classes. That stands to reason."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! A chap working at a job couldn't stick in class, of course," said Bunter. "And even if he made only a few pounds a week, it would come in useful in these times."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

Bunter seemed quite modest about his value in the labour market. He was only thinking of a few pounds a week.

But if Bunter's services, in any imaginable line, were worth a few farthings a week, it was news to the Remove.

"And what are you going to do, old fat man?" asked Peter Todd. "Getting a job as commander-in-chief of the Rhine?"

"Food controller would suit Bunter," remarked Skinner. "He would see that all food supplies were safely parked where they couldn't be got at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" said Bunter. "But that's what I'm jolly well going to do. There's jobs going these days. A chap can't be too particular. Old Clegg, in the village, has lost his boy. The chap's gone on munitions. Well, he can't get another boy to deliver his goods. Why shouldn't I?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"It may be a bit of a come-down for a Public school man to carry a basket on his arm," said Bunter. "But there's a war on, you know. Nobody who sees me with old Clegg's basket would take me for an ordinary grocer's boy."

"No fear!" agreed Bob. "They'd take you for an extraordinary one—double width, to begin with."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A gentleman's a gentleman in any walk of life," said Bunter. "I'm no snob, I hope. Fellows of really good family never are. A man named Carlyle said once that there was an endless dignity in labour."

"Lookers-on see most of the game," remarked Skinner. "He never did any."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I mean it," said Bunter. "I'm jolly well going down to Friar-dale to see old Clegg. If fellows choose to turn up their noses at me when they see me delivering groceries in a basket, they can. I don't care! I'm above such things."

"Oh scissors!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We shan't turn up our noses if we see you working, old fat man! We shall turn up our toes. The shock will be too great!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can guess where Bunter will deliver the groceries," remarked Vernon-Smith. "If Uncle Clegg trusts him with pots of jam—"

"Oh, really, Smithy! If a pot of

jam or anything happened to get lost when I was delivering groceries, I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites. They had an inkling now of the fat Owl's idea in getting a job as grocer's boy.

Pots of jam in Bunter's basket would not be likely to remain long in that basket. Neither would they be likely to reach Mr. Clegg's customers. They would be only too likely to be lost in transit.

Heedless of ribald merriment, Billy Bunter rose from the armchair, and blinked out of the window of the Rag.

The rain was drizzling. It was a drizzly November. Billy Bunter did not like rain, neither did he like walking. But Bunter had made up his fat mind to this.

What Mr. Quelch would say if a member of his Form took on a job at the village grocer's, Bunter did not know. He was going to settle that by not letting Quelch know till he had got the job. Then Quelch, he considered, would have to stand for it. He would have to let Bunter off classes while he made himself useful in war-time.

Other fellows could grind Latin verbs in the Form-room. Bunter was going to draw handsome wages, at war-time rates. And his fat mouth watered at the prospect of being entrusted with the delivery of pots of jam, sugary biscuits, and cakes.

"I say, you fellows, I'm going!" said Bunter, turning from the window. "If I start now, I can get back in time for dinner—that's important."

"It's raining!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"That's all right! I'll take your raincoat."

"Oh!"

"And I dare say I shall find an umbrella in the lobby. Next time you see me," added Bunter impressively, "I shall be earning money—a thing you fellows couldn't do to save your lives!"

And the fat Owl rolled out of the Rag, leaving the juniors in a roar.

Ten minutes later they spotted the fat Owl from the window of the Rag.

Clad in Wharton's raincoat, with somebody else's umbrella over his fat head, the Owl of the Remove plugged down to the gates.

Evidently he was in earnest.

The Removites chuckled.

Uncle Clegg, in the village, was hard-up for a grocer's boy; but that he would fill that vacant place with William George Bunter of the Remove they did not consider likely.

Billy Bunter, as he plugged down the muddy lane to Friar-dale, was the only fellow who considered it likely that he would next be seen with a basket over his arm as a full-fledged grocer's boy.

village street when a fat figure rolled in and stumbled clumsily down the step from the street into the shop.

"Blow!" said Bunter.

Mr. Clegg did not seem pleased to see Bunter.

That was rather ungrateful, for Billy Bunter would willingly have been the very best customer at the village tuckshop. Had Mr. Clegg adopted a system of unlimited tick Bunter would never have failed him as a constant customer. But Mr. Clegg's terms being cash, he had no use for Bunter.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Clegg!" said Bunter, having recovered from his stumble, shut the umbrella, and shaken a shower of raindrops from Harry Wharton's raincoat over Mr. Clegg's stock.

Mr. Clegg gave another grunt, which might have been interpreted as an answer to Bunter's polite greeting.

The fact was that old Uncle Clegg was worried. Delivery of goods presented difficulties now that the grocer's boy was gone. A few short weeks ago Uncle Clegg could have had his choice of dozens. Now there did not seem to be one to be had. Certainly it did not occur to him that that fat schoolboy had come to apply for the vacant job.

"Got a new boy yet, Mr. Clegg?" asked Bunter, blinking at him.

"No," grunted Mr. Clegg.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter.

Uncle Clegg glared at him. He did not see anything good in it.

"I mean to say, I can find you a boy," explained Bunter.

"Oh!" said Mr. Clegg, looking a little less crusty. "Thank you, Master Bunter. If you know of a sootable lad I'd be obliged if you'd send him along 'ere to see me. Getting the things out is a sore trouble."

"You want a keen, intelligent fellow, businesslike, apt, nice manners, and pretty strong and athletic—what?" asked Bunter.

"That's wot I'd like, certainly," said Mr. Clegg, staring. "I ain't likely to get one like that these 'ere days."

"That's where you make a mistake," said Billy Bunter cheerfully.

"The fact is, Mr. Clegg, I've seen that notice in your window, 'Boy Wanted,' and I've come for the job."

"You!" stuttered Mr. Clegg.

Billy Bunter leaned the umbrella on the counter, and then leaned his plump person on the same, regarding the astonished Mr. Clegg with an amicable blink.

"I mean it," he said. "Being war-time, I'm going to do some work. I shan't ask much in the way of salary—only a few pounds a week!"

"Eh?"

"Say three pounds," said Bunter. "You can give me a rise later if you think I'm worth it. That's fair."

"Three pounds a week!" said Mr. Clegg dazedly.

It was probable that the village shop did not produce that sum for its proprietor. But Billy Bunter was not well up in the village grocery business.

"I should not be able to work full time, so I won't ask more than that."

NO JOB FOR BUNTER!

MR. CLEGG—generally called Uncle Clegg—grunted.

He was leaning on his little counter in his little shop in the



Pitched out of the shop, Billy Bunter sat on the wet pavement, blinking dizzily at Mr. Clegg, the grocer, in the shop doorway!

went on Bunter. "I'd put in all the time I could. I can't say more than that. A lot depends on how much time I can get off from classes at school. My Form-master may be unreasonable about it—I shouldn't wonder! I can only promise to put in all the time I can."

"My eye!" said Mr. Clegg.

"You may think I shouldn't like to carry a grocer's basket, or to take orders from a little tuppenny-ha'penny village grocer like you," went on Bunter agreeably. "But don't you make any mistake about that. I should expect you, of course, to treat me with proper respect, considering my position and yours."

"My eye!" repeated Mr. Clegg.

He stood blinking at Bunter as if the fat Owl were taking his breath away.

"I'm prepared to carry the grocer's basket and deliver the goods—especially jam!" said Bunter. "Being new to the business, I should expect you not to make a fuss if anything got lost."

"My eye!" said Mr. Clegg for the third time.

"At times I should be able to take charge of the shop while you went out for a walk, or anything," went on Bunter. "Everything would be perfectly safe with me, of course—I shouldn't eat the sugar."

"Eh?"

"Or the biscuits——"

"My eye!"

"As for cake or toffee or doughnuts or anything of that kind, I don't

really care for them," said Bunter. "I certainly shouldn't start scoffing them as soon as you were gone out, Mr. Clegg."

"Oh!" said Mr. Clegg.

"I shouldn't be able to call you 'sir' like an ordinary grocer's boy," added Bunter thoughtfully. "There's a limit! In fact, I think it would be better for you to call me 'sir.' More suitable, you know."

"Oh gosh!" said Mr. Clegg.

"And, in the—the circumstances, I should like a week's pay in advance, owing to being disappointed about a postal order."

"Blow me tight!" said Mr. Clegg.

"And now," said Bunter briskly, "you can consider it a go if you like. Don't thank me, I'm doing this for patriotic reasons. This is a time for every fellow to do what he can, however humble. My aristocratic friends would be surprised if they saw me at it, my titled relations would stare—but I don't care! I'm no snob, Mr. Clegg! I intend to treat you with perfect civility—so long as you know your place, of course, and don't do or say anything cheeky. I'm sure you'll have tact enough to remember the difference in our positions."

Mr. Clegg seemed to find some difficulty in breathing.

He did not answer; he seemed to have lost the power of speech.

Bunter apparently took silence for consent. No doubt he supposed that Mr. Clegg was overwhelmed a little by the dazzling prospect of securing such a grocer's boy as Bunter!

"Now, if you've got anything to deliver at the school I'll take it back with me," said Bunter briskly. "Don't think I mind carrying the basket. Nobody who sees me will suppose that I'm your class, Mr. Clegg; you needn't worry about that!"

Mr. Clegg, who seemed in a dazed and dizzy state, came to life at last. He opened the flap of the counter and stepped through.

Bunter blinked at him in anticipation. He concluded that there were goods for the school and that Mr. Clegg was going to hand them over for delivery. He hoped that there was jam among them.

But that was not Mr. Clegg's intention.

Mr. Clegg did not speak. He stepped towards Billy Bunter, and, to the fat Owl's great astonishment, grasped him by the back of the neck.

"Here, I say——" ejaculated the startled Owl.

With a swing of his arm Mr. Clegg hooked Bunter to the doorway.

Bunter wriggled and roared in angry astonishment.

"I say, wharrer you up to?" he howled. "Gone mad? Leggo my neck, you cheeky old ass! Will you leggo?"

Mr. Clegg swung Bunter into the doorway, and then, as requested, he let go—pitching the astonished fat Owl out of the shop!

Bunter spun.

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Bump!

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

He sat on the wet pavement, blinking dizzily at Mr. Clegg in the shop doorway.

Then Mr. Clegg at last spoke.

"Ook it!" he said.

"Ow! I say—Wow!" gasped Bunter.

"Ook it, afore I come out to yer!" said Mr. Clegg. "You cheeky, impudent young barrel o' lard, I'll teach you! I says 'ook it!'"

"You—you—you silly idiot!" howled Bunter. "What's the matter with you? Have you gone potty? Give me my umbrella, you beast! Ow!"

Mr. Clegg clutched up the umbrella from the counter and came back to the door with it. He hurled it at Bunter.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter as he got it.

"Now 'ook it!" roared Mr. Clegg.

"Ook it, sharp!"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"You 'ooking it?" demanded Mr. Clegg. He picked up an egg from a box. "You 'ooking it, or—"

Bunter decided to hook it! He did not want that egg, and it was clear that the egg was coming if he did not hook it!

The fat Owl scrambled up and departed in haste, opening the umbrella as he went!

Mr. Clegg, grunting, went back to his counter. His problem of getting a new boy for deliveries was still unsolved. But it was clear that he did not want to solve it by engaging William George Bunter.

That was quite clear to Bunter as he plugged wearily homeward in the rain. Bunter did not know why, but he knew that Mr. Clegg did not want his services. Uncle Clegg had made that quite plain.

It was an annoyed, irritated, disappointed, and disgruntled Owl that plugged in at the school gates as the bell was ringing for dinner.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, as he spotted him. "Got that job, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not answer. But the Remove fellows could guess that he had not captured that job! Willing as he was to do his bit, there was no war-time job for Bunter!

PRICE'S WAY!

"HERE, you two!"

Coker of the Fifth called out of his study doorway.

Hilton and Price, of his Form, were leaving their study and about to pass Coker's, and Coker hailed them as they appeared.

It was tea-time, and Potter and Greene, in Coker's study, were heaving away a large package that stood on the table. It was the package containing those fireworks of Coker's which he had not been able to let off round a roaring bonfire—owing to the war.

Coker did not heed Potter or Greene or the package of fireworks. His

stern eyes were fixed on Hilton and Price. He addressed Cedric Hilton and Stephen Price in gruff tones. Horace Coker was never polished—no one would ever have mistaken him for a descendant of Lord Chesterfield! But he was rather more unpolished than usual in addressing the two bad hats of the Fifth Form. Coker despised the pair of them, and he made no secret of that fact.

They looked in at him—Hilton with a faint amused smile, Price with a glitter of intense dislike in his narrow, sharp eyes.

Price had not forgotten the incident of the cigarette of the previous evening—or a dozen other such high-handed proceedings of the obstreperous Horace. Coker rather amused Hilton—but he excited the deadliest dislike of Hilton's pal.

"Hold on a minute!" went on Coker. "Better step in, I think."

"Thanks!" said Hilton politely.

"We've had tea, Coker."

Coker stared at him.

"I'm not asking you to tea!" he sported. "I don't want slacking tailor's dummies and smoky snipes putting their legs under my table."

"Look here, Coker—" began Potter and Greene together.

"Shut up!" said Coker, without even looking at them. "Now, you two," he went on, addressing Hilton and Price, "I dare say you've heard that there's a war on—"

This was sarcastic!

"Is there?" asked Hilton, raising his eyebrows.

"Mean to say you haven't heard of it?" roared Coker.

Hilton looked very thoughtful.

"Come to think of it, I believe I have!" he admitted. "Somethin' of the kind was mentioned on the radio, I believe! Know anythin' about it, Steve?"

Price grinned! Potter and Greene grinned! Coker, who had not the slightest idea that the dandy of the Fifth was pulling his leg, frowned.

"Well, that takes it!" he said.

"Look here, Hilton—"

"Mind puttin' your gas-mask on first?" asked Hilton.

"Eh? Why?"

"I'd rather not look at your features!" explained Hilton.

Coker drew a deep, deep breath.

"I've got something to say to you two, and you'd better listen!" he said. "You're a pair of slacking, smoky, disreputable blighters! I've told you that before—now I tell you again! Well, now there's a war on, I'm telling you this, too—chuck it! This isn't a time for fellows to loaf about, smoking cigarettes, nosing into racing papers, creeping in at the back doors of pubs! I've been going to speak to you for some time—"

"You generally do speak for some time, when you begin!" assented Hilton.

There was a snigger from Potter and Greene.

"I don't want any cheek from you, Hilton!" roared Coker. "What I'm telling you is this—you and that smoky pal of yours are a disgrace to the Form and to the school, and if

you don't chuck it at a time like this, you'll find yourself in Queer Street. I grabbed a smoke away from Price last evening. I'll do the same again—and if I catch you with a racing paper, I'll ram it down the back of your neck. Got that?"

"You meddling fool—" began Price.

Coker held up a large hand.

"Stop that!" he said. "I don't want any back chat! I'd chuck you along the passage, Pricey, as soon as look at you!"

Price did not answer that, but he breathed hard and deep. Price was a weedy fellow—slacking at games, and smoking cigarettes in his study, and sneaking out of bounds after lights out, did not make for fitness. The burly Horace could have handled him with one hand—and he looked very much inclined to do it. Price did not want trouble with Coker—in the fistical line. At the same time, he did not like being browbeaten. His eyes gleamed like a cat's at Coker.

"Is that the lot, Coker?" asked Hilton.

"No—I've not finished yet!" said Coker. "I'm going to say—"

"Sorry!" said Hilton politely. "I can't wait till you've finished, Coker. Life's too short!"

And the dandy of the Fifth walked on down the passage, and Price followed him, leaving Horace Coker to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Hilton smiled as he went down the staircase with Price. But Price's brow was black.

Hilton, slacking dandy as he was, had heaps of pluck; and Coker's loud voice and overbearing manners and customs only amused him. Price, who had little in the way of pluck, funk'd Coker, and loathed him as much as he funk'd him.

That incident of the cigarette rankled bitterly with Price. Certainly, he ought not to have been smoking, but it was no business of Coker's. Hilton, he knew, would have knocked Coker down, had Coker treated him in the same way—utterly regardless of what Coker might do when he got up again. Price had taken the action tamely—but his own tameness made him all the more bitterly and maliciously resentful.

"Did that fathead really bag a smoke from you, Steve?" asked Hilton, as they went out into the quad.

"Yes!" grunted Price savagely.

"You should have smacked his cheeky head, old man!"

Price made no reply to that. Smacking Coker's cheeky head was not a thing that Stephen Price was likely to venture to do. But the cad of the Fifth had other ways of getting his own back.

His glance fell on Mr. Prout, walking in the quad with Hacker, the master of the Shell. In a casual sort of way, he steered Hilton in Mr. Prout's direction, so as to pass within hearing of his beak.

"I hope there won't be any accident in Coker's study!" remarked Price, as they came within hearing of the two Form-masters.

"Any accident?" repeated Hilton, glancing at him. "Why should there be any accident in Coker's study, Pricey?"

"Well, I mean, it's pretty dangerous to keep a stack of fireworks like that in a study!" answered Price.

Hilton set his lips. He saw Mr. Prout give a jerk of his portly head as he caught the words.

Cedric Hilton did not speak till the two Fifth Formers were out of Prout's hearing. Then he fixed his eyes on Price.

"That's pretty thick, Steve!" he said quietly.

"Eh? What is?"

"You meant Prout to hear that?"

"Think he heard?" drawled Price.

"I know he did! So do you!" said Hilton sharply. "It's a pretty dirty trick to give a man away to a beak."

"Worse than grabbing a cigarette out of his mouth?" asked Price.

"Coker's fearfully keen on keeping the rules, ain't he? Prout's given orders that there are to be no fireworks in the Fifth Form. Coker can't have it both ways! If he's so particular about cigarettes, he can be particular about fireworks, too!"

"He never told Prout about your smoking!" snapped Hilton. "You've told Prout about his dashed fireworks!"

Price shrugged his shoulders.

Glancing round, he noted that Prout had left Mr. Hacker and was rolling off towards the House. He smiled.

"It's a dirty trick!" repeated Hilton.

"Dear me!" said Price.

"Well, look here——"

"Are you comin' out? We've time to cut out and see Lodgey before lock-up, unless you're too interested in Coker!" said Price.

Hilton gave an angry grunt, but he walked out of gates with his pal.

He was frowning as he went—this time it was Price who was smiling. Prout, evidently, was heading for Coker's study to inquire about those fireworks, and it seemed probable, to Price, that Horace Coker would be sorry for himself before long!

CONFISCATED!

"CHEEKY cads!" said Coker. Coker frowned as he sat down to tea.

"Marching off when I was speaking to them!" he said.

"And you were putting it so nicely!" murmured Potter.

"They'll find that I mean what I say!" said Coker darkly. "Let me catch them at their games! If I were a prefect, I'd jolly well run them in. The Head hasn't sense enough to make me a prefect—can't expect much sense from a headmaster. But——"

"Hallo! What does Prout want?" asked Greene.

There was a heavy sound coming up the passage.

It sounded rather like a coalman delivering coal in bulk. But the Fifth Form men knew what it was

—the majestic tread of Mr. Prout, their Form-master.

Prout was coming!

"Old ass!" grunted Coker. "If he's coming here to jaw me, I shan't stand much of his old buck! I'm getting fed up with Prout!"

"Shut up, you ass!" hissed Greene. "He'll hear you!"

"I don't care if he does!" retorted Coker.

In spite of that valorous statement, however, Coker did shut up as the majestic tread came nearer.

The three rose to their feet as the portly form of Old Pompous appeared in the doorway. His plump but majestic brow frowned into the study.

Potter and Greene gave him glances of respectful inquiry. Coker gazed at him a little like a bulldog. Coker, as he declared, was getting fed up with Prout!

"Coker!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir!" grunted Coker.

Prout was after him, of course—not Potter or Greene! Prout never seemed to let Coker rest! He had, it seemed to Coker, a hobby for finding fault with him.

"You are aware, Coker, that, under the present circumstances, I have forbidden Fifth Form boys to bring fireworks into the school!" boomed Prout.

"Oh!" ejaculated Coker.

He had wondered what the dickens Prout wanted! But he had not thought of the fireworks. How on earth Prout knew anything about those fireworks was a mystery to Coker. They had been in his study for days—and this was the first he had heard about them from Prout.

"By chance," said Prout, "I caught some words spoken in the quadrangle, Coker, which caused me to come here and make an inquiry. I trust—I believe—that no boy in my Form has disregarded my commands. Coker, answer me! Have you any fireworks in this study?"

"Yes, sir," answered Coker.

"What?" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir—lots!" said Coker cheerfully.

That huge packet of fireworks was parked under the table now, out of sight. Prout could not discern it. But it would never have occurred to Coker to tell an untruth about it.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Prout, staring at him. "Coker, you have disregarded—defied—my orders on this subject?"

"You see, sir——"

"Produce those fireworks at once!" boomed Prout.

"I was going to say——"

"Produce these fireworks instantly!"

Coker, breathing hard, stopped and dragged the big bundle out from under the table.

Prout stared at it. He glared at it.

Coker had a heavy hand with everything. His stock of fireworks was large—indeed, it was immense! He had laid in enough not merely to make a big bang on Bonfire Night—but almost enough to blow up Greyfriars School.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout.

"Coker, give me that package at once! Hand it to me! These fireworks will be confiscated, Coker!"

Prout grasped the bundle by the string. It was quite a heavy bundle.

"Look here, sir——" said Coker.

"You will take a book, Coker!" roared Prout.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

A book was awful! It meant a whole book of the *Aeneid*! Hundreds and hundreds of lines! It was a terrific impot.

"But look here, sir——" spluttered Coker.

"Enough!" boomed Prout.

He turned to the doorway, the big bundle swinging in his plump hand.

But Coker was not to be put upon to that extent. Coker roared:

"Look here, I had those fireworks before you told us we weren't to have any!" he roared. "I've had them nearly a week!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Prout.

Prout was angry. He was incensed with Coker! But Prout was a just man! If Coker's supply of fireworks dated from before his order had been given, plainly Coker could not be condemned for having disobeyed that order.

"How was I to know——" went on Coker.

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Prout. "In that case, Coker, you need not take a book! You should, however, have reported your possession of these fireworks to me. For not having done so, you will take a hundred lines!"

And Prout rolled out of the study with the fireworks.

Coker breathed wrath.

"The old ass!" he hissed. "Bagging a fellow's fireworks—why, they cost me pounds!"

"You've got off the book!" said Potter consolingly.

"Blow the book! I've a jolly good mind to go to Prout's study and set those fireworks off there!" hissed Coker. "I've a jolly good mind to bang the whole lot off in Prout's study——"

"Quiet!" breathed Greene, while Potter gave Horace an agonised look.

Prout was looking in at the door again! He had not gone!

"Coker!" roared Prout.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

"I heard what you said, Coker!"

"Oh!"

"You utterly stupid, reckless, headstrong, self-willed boy!" roared Prout. "How dare you utter such a remark! I turned back, Coker, to tell you that, in the circumstances, you need not do the hundred lines I mentioned. And this is what I hear!"

Coker stood dumb.

His wild words, uttered in the excitement of the moment, had been, of course, sheer gas. Not the remotest intention had Coker of setting off those fireworks with a big bang in Prout's study!

But Prout did not know that! And, really, Coker was ass enough for almost anything!

Prout purpled with wrath.

"Coker, you will, after all, take a

book!" he boomed. "I shall expect that book from you by the end of this week. And——"

"I——" stammered Coker.

"Silence! Listen to me! I am about to take these confiscated fireworks to my study. They will remain there till I have decided how to dispose of them. And if you should venture—if you should dare—to carry out the disrespectful threat I have heard you utter, you will be expelled the same hour! I shall take you to Dr. Locke and request him to expel you from Greyfriars School! Take warning, Coker! I warn you, take warning!"

And Prout, fairly fuming, sailed out of Coker's study with his cargo of fireworks. This time he did not come back.

"A book!" said Coker at last. "The old ass! Just because a fellow had a few crackers in his study! I've a jolly good mind not to do it!"

Potter and Greene made no reply to that.

"All my fireworks gone!" said Coker gloomily as he sat down. "This is what comes of taking too much notice of the enemy and stopping the bonfire. They'd have been set off yesterday, but for that! That old ass Prout——"

Potter and Greene gave their attention to tea.

During tea in the study, Coker was untiringly eloquent on the subject of that old ass Prout!

That old ass Prout being now safely out of hearing, Coker repeated several times that he had a jolly good mind to set off those fireworks with a big bang in Prout's study—just to show him!

Potter and Greene hoped that it was only gas. After what Prout had said on the subject, even the fat-head of the Fifth could not, they thought, be quite as fatheaded as that!

But, really, with a fellow like Coker, you never could tell!

HIGH-HANDED HORACE!

"I SAY, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Bunter was grinning. From one fat ear to the other extended Billy Bunter's grin. Billy Bunter was fearfully amused.

It was the following day—Wednesday and a half-holiday. But the November drizzle was falling and football was off—and the Famous Five and other Remove fellows were on the Remove landing, debating what they were going to do with a wet afternoon. Then Bunter happened.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the jolly old joke, fatty?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Coker?" gasped Bunter.

"Oh! Coker! Has he banged old Prout out of house and home yet?" asked Bob, with a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's wild threat to bang off those fireworks in his Form-master's study had been heard by many ears, since it had first been uttered.

Old Horace had repeated it in the

games study, where the Fifth Form most did congregate. He had repeated it elsewhere. Coker was, as he announced, fed up with Prout—fed up to the back teeth with the man's cheek.

Prout was always picking on him. He even found fault with Coker's spelling—grousing at a chap for putting a "k" in "expect"—and that sort of thing. He found fault with Coker all along the line. He had confiscated Coker's flashlamp—merely for blazing it off in a black-out. Now he had confiscated Coker's fireworks. Coker toyed with the idea of setting off the whole lot in Prout's study.

The general impression, however, was that Coker would never get further than a "jolly good mind" on the subject!

His well-wishers certainly hoped so.

And, in fact, by the following day Coker uttered no more wild words on the subject. Perhaps he was getting over it—or perhaps common sense had accrued. Anyhow, he hadn't done it—and nobody supposed really that he ever would!

But when Billy Bunter came grinning to the Remove landing, with news of Coker, some of the fellows wondered whether, after all, Coker had!

"We should have heard it!" said Harry Wharton, shaking his head. "From what I hear, Coker had a regular cargo—it would be heard all over Greyfriars, if it went off!"

"Even Coker isn't idiot enough!" said Nugent.

"Well, he's idiot enough for almost anything!" said Bob. "But if it isn't that, what is it? What's happened, Bunter?"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Coker—he, he, he!—he's kicking up a shindy in the Fifth—he, he, he!"

"But what——"

"He's after Price and Hilton!" chortled Bunter. "He's wrecking their study——"

"What!"

"What on earth for?"

"He, he, he! Coker don't like the way they carry on! Coker's set up to teach them better! He, he, he! Half the Fifth are watching him! He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he's chucking things all over their study!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Are Price and Hilton letting him do it?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"They're gone out!" grinned Bunter. "They'll find their study shipped when they get back! He, he, he!"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen!" said Bob Cherry. "We're on this! Frightfully kind of Coker to provide an entertainment for a rainy day! Come on!"

There was a rush from the Remove landing across the study landing to the Fifth Form passage. The Famous Five led, and a dozen more Remove fellows followed. Coker's extraordinary proceedings in the Fifth were very welcome on a wet half-holiday.

They found a good many fellows already on the spot. The news, it seemed, had already spread.

Six or seven of the Fifth were there. Hobson and some fellows of the Shell. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth. Coker already had an audience—swelled by the arrival of a Remove crowd.

There was a sound of laughter in the crowded passage.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, was there—laughing! He did not seem disposed to interfere with the proceedings of Horace Coker. The Fifth Form captain had, in fact, a rather unfavourable eye on that study. And if the captain of the Form did not butt in, nobody else was disposed to do so! If Hilton and Price did not like their study being shipped, it was for them to take what measures seemed to them suitable when they came in and found it shipped!

Crash! came from the study.

The heavy-handed Horace was not, it seemed, handling things gently.

Harry Wharton & Co. pushed for front places and looked in.

Potter and Greene were gazing in at the doorway, with resigned expressions on their faces. There was, of course, no arguing with Coker. Coker was satisfied with his own proceedings, and he did not care a boiled bean whether anybody else was, or not.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Harry Wharton as he looked in.

A desk had, apparently, been locked! Coker had opened it by the simple process of banging the study poker on it with sufficient force. Coker was no man for half measures.

From that desk Coker had dragged a number of papers—sporting papers and racing lists, and other such dingy literature.

This literature Coker crammed into the study fireplace, stirring it into a cheerful blaze.

As the Famous Five looked in, he had extracted a large box of cigarettes from the table drawer.

That drawer had also been locked! Coker had opened it by overturning the table and booting the drawer till it rolled out.

All sorts of things spread over Cedric Hilton's rather expensive study carpet!

Coker heeded only the cigarettes.

These he was pitching into the fire, by the handful.

"Good old Coker!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheeky ass!" said Vernon-Smith. Bob chuckled.

"Lucky for you Coker ain't in the Remove, Smithy! Your study would get a turn like this, what?"

"I'd like to see him ship my study like this!" grunted the Bounder.

"Go it, Coker!" chortled Hobson of the Shell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Coker's a cheeky, meddling ass!" remarked Johnny Bull. "But it's time those blackguards Hilton and Price had a lesson. They'd get into a pretty row if their beak saw all these things that Coker's rooting out."

"No bizney of Coker's!" said Nugent.

"No; but it serves them right!"

"Coker, old man, don't you think that will do?" asked Potter. "For goodness' sake, come out of that study!"

Coker looked round at him.

"Don't be an idiot, Potter! Those two dingy sweeps aren't going to carry on their rotten games in these times! I've told them so, haven't I?"

"Come out, old man!" urged Greene.

"I haven't finished yet! Not so long as there's a spot of their putrid blackguardism left in this study!" answered Coker cheerfully. "When I've finished all their smokes and racing muck, I'm going to ship the study as a lesson to them!"

"You've pretty well shipped it already!" groaned Potter.

"That's nothing to what I'm going to do!" retorted Coker.

"They'll be fearfully wild!" urged Greene.

"Sort of—you bet!" grinned Blundell.

"What do I care?" asked Coker, staring. "I'm doing my duty here! The beaks don't spot them—and the prefects give them a miss—so I've taken it on! You fellows can come in and help, if you like!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nobody seemed to want to go in and help Coker. Plenty of fellows shared Coker's opinion of the bad hats of the Fifth, but only Coker felt that he was entitled to deal with them for their shortcomings.

"I say, you fellows!" came a fat squeak from down the passage. "I say, here comes Price!"

"Oh!"

There was a general exclamation as Price of the Fifth, one of the owners of the shipped study, was spotted coming up the passage.

What Price would do, when he saw what was going on, was an interesting question. And the crowd in the passage surged apart, with grinning faces, to make room for Price of the Fifth to reach his study.

PAINFUL FOR PRICE!

STEPHEN PRICE stared round him in surprise as he came up the Fifth Form passage to his study.

Why that crowd had collected he did not know—neither did he know why they were all grinning.

"Anything up here?" asked Price, puzzled.

"Sort of!" grinned Hobson of the Shell.

Crash! came from Price's study, and he jumped.

Coker was opening some receptacle that he fancied might contain smokes. He was not opening it gently.

"What the dooce—" ejaculated Price.

He ran on to his study, the grinning crowd closing in after him. At the open doorway Price stared in as if dumbfounded.

He had had more than one sample of Horace Coker's high-handed methods. But he had never dreamed



"Disgraceful!" boomed Mr. Prout. Both he and Mr. Quelch gazed, with expressive looks, at the Removites playing indoor football on the staircase.

of this! He gazed into the harrowed study as if he could hardly believe his eyes.

"What—" gasped Price. "What—has that hooligan gone mad?"

"About the same as usual!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker!" yelled Price. He stamped into the study. "What do you fancy you are up to, you mad idiot?"

Coker looked at him calmly. A fellow who was doing his duty—as Coker seemed to fancy he was—was not likely to care a bean for the objections of a fellow like Price.

Coker, certainly, did not care a bean! If Price did not like it, he could lump it. Coker was prepared, if necessary, to chuck him out of his own study; and Hilton, too, if Hilton happened to come in while the good work was going on. Or, if Price cared

to look on, he was welcome to do so, so long as he did not interfere.

"Can't you see?" asked Coker. "I'm shipping your study!"

"You mad dummy—"

"Cut that out!" said Coker. "Any cheek, and you go out on your neck! I'd biff you over as soon as look at you!"

"You ruffian!" roared Price. "I'll go straight down to Prout and call him up to see this!"

And Price stamped out of the study.

Price could not handle Coker! He was going to call up his beak to deal with this.

"I wouldn't, Pricey!" exclaimed Potter.

"Think I'm going to let that mad rhinoceros wreck my study?" yelled Price.

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"Better keep Prout off the scene! He might find out too much if he came up here!" answered Potter.

Price stared at him, and then turned back to the study doorway! He realised that Potter was right.

A whole stack of cigarettes was burning in the grate, on the smouldering heap of racing literature. Fragments of "Racing Tips" and smokes lay about the fender.

Price had not noticed this at first—but he noticed it now!

He did not want Prout on the scene—with such things to meet Prout's shocked gaze! In the circumstances, he would almost as soon have had an air-raid as Prout!

He stood glaring at Coker, his hands clenched, his face furious.

Coker, disregarding him, kicked a box to pieces, in search of further smokes.

All eyes were on Price.

He dared not call up his beak! He could only hope that no Sixth Form prefect would come up! His dingy secrets were too much in evidence. Coker had no idea of giving him away to the masters—but he would have been given away, with a vengeance, had any beak looked into the study just then.

He could not stop Coker, personally. On the other hand, he could not let this go on! Faces round him were contemptuous, as well as grinning, as he stood there inactive. No fellow could stand inactive and let another fellow carry on as he liked in his study. Price had little pluck—but even Price could not stand this, and bitter rage and fury supplied, to some extent, the place of courage.

"Get out of my study, you ruffian!" hissed Price at last.

Coker laughed.

"Put me out!" he said.

Price wished that Hilton had come in with him. Together they could have handled even the hefty Horace. But Cedric Hilton was not coming in till later.

Price had to handle this on his own, or leave it where it was! That he could not possibly do.

"You bullying rotter, get out!" he breathed.

Coker stared at him.

"What did you call me?" he ejaculated.

It never occurred to Coker that there was anything like bullying in his high-handed proceedings.

"Get out!"

"That's enough!" said Coker, frowning. "You can stand there, if you like! But don't jaw!"

He turned from Price and opened the lid of an ottoman that stood under the study window. There were a good many things packed in it. Whether there were any smokes, or racing papers, or other guilty secrets, Coker did not know—he proceeded to investigate, by whirling the ottoman over, upside-down, and streaming out all its contents in bulk.

He was interrupted at that point.

Price, mad with rage, rushed in at THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,656.

him, and his fist crashed on the side of Coker's bullet head!

Coker gave a roar and went over, sprawling among the streaming contents of the ottoman-box.

"Man down!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Give him some more, Pricey!" exclaimed the Bounder.

Coker staggered up!

Price gave him some more, before he quite gained his feet. He landed his right on Coker's nose and his left in Coker's eye!

There was a buzz of excited interest in the crowded passage. Price of the Fifth had never shown fighting qualities like this before.

But this success was brief!

Coker, with a roar like an enraged bull, charged at him.

Price was immediately strewn on the floor of the study.

Coker pranced round him.

"Get up!" he roared. "I'll thrash you before I go on! Hitting a chap when he's not looking, by gum! I'll smash you! Get up and take it!"

Price lay gasping! His brief courage had evaporated! He gasped for breath on the floor, his eyes burning at Coker.

"Pricey ain't greedy!" said Peter Todd. "Pricey knows when he's had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you getting up?" roared Coker.

"Get out of my study, you lout!" gasped Price.

"Lout, eh? I'll give you lout!"

Coker stooped and grasped the gasping Price, in mighty hands. He grabbed the study wastepaper-basket. He jammed Price's head into it. He jammed it hard! He banged it down.

The wastepaper-basket fitted over Price's hapless head like a bonnet. It fitted tight. Price's enraged face disappeared within.

He gurgled inside it.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the passage.

"Now stick there!" roared Coker. "Lout, eh? By gum! Stick there, you smoky rotter! Stick there till I'm finished."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Price sat up, wrenching at the basket.

Coker, disdainful to heed him further, carried on with the good work.

A laughing crowd watched him.

So far as smokes and racing literature were concerned, Coker had done what he had come to do. But he was going to ship that study—as a warning to its owners to mend their ways! It was highly desirable, no doubt, that the bad hats of the Fifth should mend their ways—Coker was right in that, at least. The fact that it was not his business did not worry Coker! He was making it his business; and that was that!

Coker shipped that study!

He shipped it effectually! While Price sat and gurgled and struggled with the wastepaper-basket, Coker made that study look as if an earthquake had struck it.

Then he marched out!

He walked off, satisfied with his proceedings, amid a yelling crowd—

leaving Price still sitting and struggling with the wastepaper-basket! The crowd broke up in great hilarity—much obliged to Coker of the Fifth for having provided a free entertainment on a rainy afternoon.

Price at last got that wastepaper-basket off! Then he looked round his study! His feelings, as he looked round, could not have been expressed in words. But if a chance came Stephen Price's way of expressing them in deeds, Price of the Fifth was not the fellow to lose that chance!

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HARD LINES FOR HORACE!

"**B**LOW!" said Coker crossly.

He banged Virgil down on the table in his study.

"You fellows can come in!" he added, to Potter and Greene.

Potter and Greene, at the doorway, did not seem keen on coming in! They seemed to want to walk on.

Coker had his book on hand! Potter and Greene sympathised—it was simply awful to have a book. In the first book of Virgil there were seven hundred and fifty-six lines! It was an imposition that was simply staggering.

Still, if Coker did not like books, Coker should not ask for the same—that was how his friends looked at it.

They suspected that Coker was planning to inveigle them into helping him out with that book. It was a rotten afternoon—but Potter and Greene had no desire to make it rottener by sticking in the study grinding out lines for Prout. There was a sing-song going on in the games study, and they preferred the company there to the company of Coker and his book.

"I've a jolly good mind," said Coker, "not to do this book! I've a jolly good mind to go down to Prout's study instead, and bang off those fireworks! That would teach the old ass! He's just gone out, too!"

"I—I wouldn't!" murmured Potter.

"You wouldn't!" agreed Coker.

"You haven't the nerve!"

Potter refrained from replying to that. As a matter of fact, Coker hadn't the nerve, either! His friends were not quite sure of what an ass like old Horace might or might not do; but they had little doubt that Coker's threats were only hot air. However, Potter did not argue the point.

"But if I'm going to do these lines," went on Coker, "I think my pals might lend a hand! Suppose you fellows do a couple of hundred each."

"Um!"

"You can't get out, on an afternoon like this," said Coker. "You can't foolle about with what you call footer. Make yourselves useful! You can't be ornamental, you know!" added Coker sarcastically. "Look in the glass, and you'll see that there's nothing doing in that line."

This was Coker's tactful way of asking fellows to stick in a study and grind out lines for him!

"I'd have got through a chunk of

the rubbish if I hadn't been shipping that study!" added Coker. "That's taken up a lot of time! It was up to me, and I've done it—still, it's taken up half the afternoon."

"Better make use of what's left," said Greene.

"I'm going to, if I'm going to do this rotten book! You fellows squat down and help—and don't jaw, either. Just pile in!"

Potter and Greene looked at him.

Coker would never have been landed with that book had he not cheeked Prout. He shouldn't have cheeked Prout! He could have got a lot done had he not wasted half the afternoon meddling in Price's study. He shouldn't have meddled in Price's study. Really, his friends did not feel called upon to grind lines because Coker chose to be a cheeky ass and never could mind his own business. Neither did Coker's tactful way of putting it spur them on.

"The fact is," said Potter, "I've told Blundell I'm going along to the games study."

"Never mind Blundell!"

"They're expecting us!" said Greene.

"Let them expect!" said Coker. "Look here, I'll mark out the places where you're to begin. Prout will never notice your list—I'll say that for him! He never looks at a fellow's lines. So long as he gets the right number, he's satisfied. Not a spying sweep like that man Hacker—nosing over them! That will be all right!"

Coker opened his volume of Virgil to select the spots where Potter and Greene were to begin, taking it in sections. Coker was going to begin at the beginning: "Arma virumque cano."

Potter was to begin at Line 250: "Nos, tua progenies," etc. Greene was to begin at Line 500: "Nino atque hinc," etc.

Thus the first book of Virgil would be divided, like ancient Gaul, into three parts, and they would take one each.

Having sorted this out, Coker glanced round at the door again.

"Get out your Virgil," he said. "I've fixed where you start. And just—"

Coker broke off, as he found that he was addressing empty space.

Potter and Greene had vanished.

While Coker was sorting out those sections where they were to begin, Potter and Greene, like the fabled Boojum, had suddenly, silently vanished away!

"Potter!" bawled Coker. "Greene!"

But answer there came none.

Coker stepped to the door and looked out.

At the end of the passage, by the landing, the door of the games study was closing.

Coker breathed hard.

His pals had let him down! They weren't going to grind out a third part each of that book. They were going to join in the sing-song in the games study.

"Well!" said Coker, with a deep breath.

From the next study as he stood there Price of the Fifth emerged.

Price looked rather dusty and untidy, his hair was tousled, and his face was red.

At the sight of Coker, a look that was absolutely tigerish came over Price's face.

Coker gave him a careless glance. "Got it off?" he grinned. He was alluding to the wastepaper-basket.

Price did not answer. If looks could have slain, Coker would have been in more danger from Price's glare than from all the air-raids ever raided by the enemy. Luckily for Coker, looks had no more effect on him than water on a duck.

"You won't be smoking this afternoon, Pricey!" grinned Coker. "And I haven't left you any swindling racing papers to read. If you want something to do, you can come in here and do a whack in my book."

"I've heard you brag that you weren't going to do that book!" sneered Price. He could get that one back, at least.

Coker knitted his brows at him.

"I've a jolly good mind not to!" he said. "I've a jolly good mind to bang off those fireworks in Old Pompous' study instead! I haven't made up my mind yet, either, so don't you jaw, Price!"

Price gave him a rather peculiar look and, without answering, went on down the passage.

Coker turned back into his study and banged the door shut.

He stood looking gloomily at Virgil on the table. That book was a fearful task—especially now that his pals had let him down and refused to make themselves useful, though Coker had taken the trouble to point out that they couldn't possibly be ornamental.

But he had to do that book—or take the consequences! Even Coker realised that he actually couldn't back up against the authority of his Form-master—if Prout persisted in being an ass!

A book—after bagging his fireworks! Strongly was Coker tempted to carry out his deadly threat.

It was easy enough.

Prout, in spite of the November drizzle, had gone out for his usual half-holiday walk with Quelch. What a come-back at Prout to bang off that cargo of fireworks in his study, filling the place with smoke and the whiff of gunpowder, blowing papers and things all over the shop!

That would teach Old Pompous to bag a fellow's fireworks and give him a book over and above! Obviously—to Coker—it would serve him right!

But there was, perhaps, a small spot of common sense somewhere in Horace Coker's bullet head. Prout, of course, would know that he had done it—and Prout would walk him off to the Head to be sacked! That was the rub!

Coker decided—with unusual wisdom—not to bang off those fireworks in Prout's study. It was all the harder so to decide because he had opened his large mouth so wide on the subject in the Fifth. Even the juniors had heard of what he was—perhaps—going to do! Not for the first time, Coker realised that he

had opened his large mouth too wide! For, when it came to the pinch, Coker realised that he wasn't going to bang off those fireworks in Prout's study. He wasn't even going to decline to do that book!

Coker, at length, sat down, dismissed Prout and fireworks from his mind, and started on the book.

He started on it crustily, grumpily, rebelliously—but he started on it, and stuck to it, grinding out line after line, while the drizzle dashed on the window-panes and the sing-song went on in the games study. He began to wish that he hadn't, after all, lost so much time shipping Price's study.

Later on, he was destined to have still more reason to wish that he hadn't.

BELOW THE BELT!

PRICE of the Fifth paused at the end of Masters' Passage and loitered there, with a casual air—his eyes well about him.

Nobody was about.

Some of the masters were in their studies. But the doors were shut. Few fellows were out of doors; but Prout, as he knew, was.

Probably Mr. Prout's walk that afternoon would not last so long as usual, but Old Pompous was still out.

From upstairs, in the direction of the Remove studies, a distant din indicated that Remove fellows were playing passage football—taking happy advantage of the fact that their Form-master had gone out. Nobody was near at hand when Stephen Price strolled into Masters' Passage.

Having made sure of that, Price walked quickly, but quietly, down the passage and whipped into Mr. Prout's study.

Once inside, with the door shut, he was safe—till Prout came in! On that side there was no danger, for from the window he would see Prout coming if he came, with ample time to clear before Prout's majestic roll brought him to the House.

Price breathed quickly as he glanced round his Form-master's study.

On a chair in the corner lay a large package.

Prout, probably, had not yet decided what he was going to do with Coker's confiscated fireworks; but that anything could happen to them while they remained in his study he was not likely to suppose. Certainly, he had overheard Coker's wild and reckless words on the subject—and rewarded him with a book—but in view of his dire threat of what would follow such an act, he was not likely to suppose that even the fathcad of the Fifth would rush so recklessly on his fate.

Anyhow, there was the package where Prout had left it the day before. And Stephen Price's eyes fixed on it.

Price was not the man for japes. He was not given to practical joking—the faults in his character were of

a darker kind than that. But it was in his mind now to play the wildest and most reckless trick that ever had been played at Greyfriars School.

Coker was going to get the benefit of it.

Coker had grabbed a cigarette from his mouth, and he had not dared to resent that high-handed action. Coker had shipped his study and rammed his head into the waste-paper-basket—and he had to take it lying down. But Coker's reckless bragging had given him his chance.

If those fireworks went off in Prout's study, who was going to be supposed to have done it?

Certainly not Price—nobody would even think of Price in such a connection. Who but Coker—who had told the world at the top of his voice that he had a jolly good mind to do that very thing.

Coker would not grab any more cigarettes from the dingy black sheep of the Fifth and would never ship his study again when he was sacked.

Price was nervous and uneasy; but he was determined, and he was ruthless. Coker was getting this back, and he could make the best of it.

Softly Price turned the key in the door to make sure that he would not be interrupted or spotted by a chance caller.

Then he lifted the package of fireworks from the chair in the corner to the hearthrug before the fireplace.

He was not, of course, going to bang off those fireworks while he was in the study. The terrific roar of the explosion would bring half Greyfriars rushing to the spot.

Price knew a trick better than that.

He unwrapped the thick brown-paper of the package, and turned out all sorts of cardboard boxes and packets crammed with fireworks—rockets, jumping crackers, squibs, Roman candles, catherine wheels—all sorts and conditions of fireworks. The quantity really was enormous.

Prout's fire was not burning. It was laid in readiness for Prout to put a match to it when it was wanted, as was the usual custom.

It was fairly certain that Prout would want it, when he came in from his walk on a cold, drizzly November afternoon. Anyhow, he would want it sooner or later. When he did, he would get the big bang!

Stephen Price, making hardly a sound, removed knobs of coal and sticks of wood from the grate.

In their place he stacked Coker's fireworks.

It was a large, roomy, old-fashioned grate; but so great was the quantity that it was nearly filled.

Having packed in the whole lot, Price carefully replaced and rearranged sticks and coal over the stack.

With great care he concealed every trace of the fireworks from view, leaving the grate looking as it had looked before.

Satisfied on that point, he wrapped up the empty boxes and packages again in the brown paper, tied the

package, and replaced it on the chair in the corner—no longer containing a single cracker.

If Prout noticed it when he came in, he would fancy, of course, that it still contained its former contents. Not a suspicion could possibly cross his mind that the contents were now hidden in the fireplace.

Price smiled—a venomous smile. All was ready now for Prout to come in. The big bang was booked to occur as soon as the Fifth Form master put a match to the fire laid in the grate.

All that remained was for the vengeful black sheep of the Fifth to get off the scene unsuspected.

He unlocked the door without a sound, opened it an inch, and listened. His heart was beating rather unpleasantly. There was a spot of risk in what he was doing, and Price did not like risks. But he was careful and cautious.

He heard a door close down the passage. One of the masters had gone out of his study.

Silence followed, and Price ventured to peer out. The corridor was empty, and he stepped quickly out of Prout's study, and shut the door noiselessly after him.

Quietly, with fast-beating heart, he trod along the passage, turned the corner, and, a minute later, was standing at a window, looking out into the quadrangle, and at the weeping, leafless elms.

There was no sign of Prout yet. He had had plenty of time. He stood at the window for a few minutes, and any fellow who passed him there certainly had no reason to suspect that he had been anywhere near a master's study.

He turned away at length, and went up the stairs.

Passage football was still going on in the Remove quarters, and on the Remove landing.

Price gave the barging juniors a careless glance, and went into the games study.

The sing-song there was still proceeding. Potter was thumping out a tune on the ancient piano, the Fifth Form fellows joining in a chorus.

Price slipped into the room quite unnoticed. Nobody ever gave Price very much attention.

Price joined cheerfully in a chorus. He was feeling quite bucked now.

He sat by the window, which gave a view of the rainy quad. And when he noted a plump figure rolling from the gates, by the side of the angular form of the Remove master, he smiled.

Prout was coming in.

Horace Coker, grinding weary lines in his study, did not think of looking from his window, and he did not know, or care, that Prout was coming in. He was soon to know, and to care.

Price of the Fifth, in the games study, smiled.

Coker, in his profound contempt for the weedy slacker and bad hat, probably did not dream for a moment that Price would think of hitting back.

Price was hitting back, in his own way, below the belt. He smiled cheerfully as he waited for a big bang that would be heard from one end of Greyfriars School to the other.

PROUT IS NOT PLEASED!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"On the ball!" roared Bob Cherry.
"I say—"



Bang! Fizz! Whiz! BANG! Taken utterly from the fireplace, Mr. Prout rolled over

"Back up!" shouted Harry Wharton.

Passage football in the Remove was going hot and strong. Passage football was, of course, strictly forbidden. But on a rainy, drizzly afternoon, what were fellows to do? Mr. Quelch had gone out, and while the cat was away the mice would play.

Skinner & Co. could find occupation in smoking cigarettes; Fisher T. Fish in counting his money; Billy Bunter in devouring toffee he had scrounged from somebody's study. More strenuous fellows wanted something more strenuous. Passage football filled the bill.

Bunter, sitting at the landing window, sticky with toffee, squeaked unheeded. But the Removites would have done well to heed him, for the fat Owl, from the window, had spotted Quelch coming in with Prout, and was going to give the alarm.

Fifteen or sixteen Remove fellows were mixed up in the game.

Vernon-Smith captained one end of the Remove passage, Harry Wharton the other. Few rules were observed in that game. It was mostly kick and rush, bang and bump; but it was strenuous, and it was exciting.

And when the ball escaped across the Remove landing, and rolled down the steps to the study landing, an excited crowd tore after it, heedless of the fact that the game was now getting out of the Remove quarters, and that the din could be heard far and wide.

The ball banged on the door of the games study where the Fifth Form sing-song was going on, unheeded by

"Disgraceful!"

It was a booming voice, and it caused the indoor footballers to stop all of a sudden.

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Hold on!"

"Hook it!"

Two figures were standing below, staring up. One was Prout's, and the other was Quelch's. Both of them gazed, with expressive looks, at the scramble on the staircase.

It was Prout who boomed.

The Remove men did not care a whole lot for Prout's boom, but they cared quite a lot for the expressive look on the face of their own Form-master.

Quelch looked very grim.

He could make allowance for a lot of strenuous fellows shut up indoors on a rainy half-holiday. But this sort of thing, of course, was far beyond the limit.

Quelch was about to begin.

Fortunately for the dismayed Removites, Prout began first. And as soon as Prout said that it was disgraceful, Quelch was immediately more annoyed with Prout than with the Remove.

Mr. Prout was not in the best of tempers. He had been determined not to miss his usual amble that afternoon because of the rain. But it had been wet and uncomfortable. Prout was feeling damp and sticky, and his old enemy, rheumatism, was nipping at his elderly joints. And Quelch had walked him nearly off his plump legs, and had displayed signs of impatience at Prout's slow pace—not intentionally, but inadvertently, nevertheless, offending Prout.

Annoyed with the weather, annoyed with his creaking joints, annoyed with Quelch, Mr. Prout was probably not sorry to find fault with somebody—especially Quelch's boys.

This is absolutely disgraceful!" repeated Prout. "Football, not merely in the passages, but on the staircase! I have never heard of such a thing! In all my career as a schoolmaster, in more than twenty-five years, I have never heard of such a thing as this, Mr. Quelch!"

"Indeed!" barked Mr. Quelch.

"Never!" said Prout. "Such a din—such an uproar—such an orgy of horseplay! This outrageous uproar, Quelch, must be heard all over the House. Such a general nuisance and annoyance—"

"It can scarcely have annoyed you, Mr. Prout, as you have been out of doors until the last few minutes," pointed out Mr. Quelch.

"I trust, Mr. Quelch, that you do not uphold these junior boys in making such a disturbance!" exclaimed Prout.

"Not at all!" said Mr. Quelch. "Nevertheless, one must make allowances for boys shut up indoors on a rainy day."

The Removites, silent on the staircase, exchanged glances. Quelch, they knew, had been about to bark when Prout began to boom! Prout's boom had saved them from Quelch's bark!

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch quite mildly, "cease this at once! You must not make this noise, as you know very well. Let there be no more of it."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Happy to escape so cheaply—which they owed to Prout and his booming—the Remove fellows trod softly up the stairs again, Bob taking the footer under his arm.

Mr. Prout snorted with angry indignation. Perhaps he realised that it was on his account that the Remove master had let the juniors off so lightly.

"Really, Mr. Quelch!" he boomed. "Really! After such a din—such a disgraceful disturbance—"

"I see nothing disgraceful, sir, in thoughtless juniors forgetting themselves a little in the circumstances!" said Mr. Quelch coldly.

"Opinions, sir, differ on that point!" boomed Prout. "I am thankful that I am master of a Form that can be relied upon not to forget all seemliness—all propriety. The Fifth Form, I am thankful to say—Really, Mr. Quelch, I should be glad if you would be kind enough to listen to me when I am speaking!"

Prout addressed that remark to the back of Quelch's head.

Quelch was going to his study—evidently not being kind enough to listen to Mr. Prout when he was speaking!

Prout breathed hard.

Prout himself hated criticisms of his Form. He would never listen to such criticisms patiently. At the same time, he criticised every other Form at Greyfriars and expected the Form-masters to listen with respect, and benefit by his stores of wisdom. Often he was disappointed.

"Upon my word!" said Prout, apparently addressing the banisters. "Upon my word!"

And he rolled away to his study, deeply annoyed.

However, he was, as he had said, thankful that no member of the Fifth Form was ever guilty of such indiscreet conduct as Quelch's Form. The Fifth knew how to behave themselves.

That, at least, was a satisfaction to Mr. Prout, as he groped for a match-box, struck a match, and stooped to put it to the fire in his study.

He had come in damp and cold, and there was comfort in a cheerful fire—when he got it.

Stooping before the fireplace, Mr. Prout applied the match, and the flame ran through the fuel in the wide old grate.

Prout spread his plump hands to the cheerful blaze!

And then—

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by surprise at the sudden, terrific roar of explosion backwards and bumped on the study carpet!

the seniors, who were making enough noise themselves in that apartment.

Smithy captured it and kicked, sending the footer spinning over the banisters, down the staircase.

There was a wild scramble down the stairs after it.

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter, "Quelch—"

But Bunter's fat voice was lost in the din.

A dozen fellows were on the stairs, after the ball.

Some of them rolled down, losing their footing in the rush, and others stumbled over them. On the middle landing Bob Cherry got the ball, and kicked it up the stairs again.

Herbert Vernon-Smith met it with his head, and it dropped on the landing again, and rolled down the lower stairs, Bob and three or four other fellows scrambling after it.

THE BIG BANG!

BANG! Bang! Fizz! Whizz Bang! Prout went over backwards. The sudden, terrific roar of explosion from the fireplace up-ended him. He was taken utterly by surprise. He was dumbfounded. He rolled over backwards and bumped on his study carpet.

Bang, bang, bang!

Prout had groused about the noise the Remove were making—nothing like which was ever heard from the Fifth! But the noise of the Remove footballers on the stairs was a mere whisper compared with the tremendous roar in Prout's study.

Bang! Fizz! Bang! Whoosh! Fizz! Bang!

It rang and it roared!

One firework caught from another. They caught in bundles—in dozens—in scores! They banged and they fizzed, they whizzed and they squibbed!

Perhaps it was as well for Mr. Prout that he was extended on his back, gasping like a fish out of water. Fragments of coal, smouldering sticks, jumping crackers, and squibbing squibs shot out of the grate. Catherine-wheels whirled. Smoke rolled and sparks flew. A regular barrage played over Prout as he lay dizzily and gasped.

Bang, bang, bang!

Singly, or in twos or threes, in dozens and in scores, the fireworks banged off with roar on roar.

To every corner of the school, to every study across the quad, to Gosling's lodge at the gates, to Mrs. Mimble in the tuckshop, went that tremendous roar, waking wild echoes.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

It was the biggest bang ever heard at Greyfriars School.

Coker's ample supply of fireworks, let off at a reasonable rate, would have made plenty of noise. Let off all together they were simply deafening—appalling!

Prout lay gasping—stunned by the uproar, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels—whether he was in the middle of an air raid or whether he was in the grip of a nightmare.

There was a rush of footsteps—a roar of voices.

Prout's study door flew open. Quelch stared in, Hacker stared in, Monsieur Charpentier stared in.

Bang, bang! Fizz! Bang!

"C'est ici!" squealed Monsieur Charpentier. "It is here!"

"Prout!" gasped Hacker.

"Fireworks!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Fireworks in Prout's study!"

"In the name of all that is absurd, why is Prout letting off fireworks in his study?" gasped Hacker.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What's up?"

"I say, you fellows, is it an air raid? I say, where's my gas-mask? I say, you fellows, help!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!"

"Help me to the air-raid gas-mask—I mean, the air-raid shelter! I say, The Magnet Library.—No. 1.656.

you fellows, keep round me in case something goes off!"

"That ass Coker!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, my hat!"

Bang, bang, bang, bang! roared from Prout's study. The fireworks seemed inexhaustible.

Crowds of fellows swarmed into Masters' Passage; they swarmed, they crowded, they pushed and jammed. Really, Bunter was not much to blame for fancying that it might be bombs that were kicking up that awful row! The House fairly rang with the din.

Mr. Quelch strode into the study. Headless of whizzing fragments from the explosive fireplace, he went to Prout's aid.

He forgot that he was annoyed with Prout and Prout with him!

He grasped Prout, and—not without difficulty, for Prout was a heavy-weight—propped him up into a sitting position.

"Prout—what—" he articulated.

"Ooogh!" gurgled Prout dizzily.

Bang, bang!

"That mad idiot Coker!" breathed Potter of the Fifth, staring into the study, reeking with smoke and smell, in utter dismay.

"He's done it now!" muttered Greene hopelessly.

They could have no doubt of it, of course!

It was Coker's fireworks going off that caused this awful din. They knew that—everybody knew it. Coker had threatened, not once but many times, to set off those fireworks in Prout's study just to show him! Now he had done it! How could anybody doubt it?

Prout staggered to his feet at last.

Quelch on one side, Hacker on the other, heaved, and the Fifth Form master resumed the perpendicular.

Bang, bang! Fizz! came the last of the fireworks from the grate.

Coker's stock was exhausted at last.

Prout gazed round his study. A crammed crowd at the doorway gazed into it. Smoke was everywhere, and the smell of gunpowder. Fragments of exploded fireworks lay all over the place, mixed with sticks and coal.

Prout slowly grasped it. It was not an air raid—it was not a nightmare. It was an explosion of fireworks!

They had been packed in his grate. He, all unknowingly, had set them off when he lighted the fire.

His gaze turned on the big package on the chair in the corner. It looked the same as before.

Prout, silent, stepped to it—wrenched it open. It contained only empty boxes—no fireworks!

Prout's face grew more and more expressive. He almost choked with wrath.

Coker had done it!

Those wild and reckless words, which Prout had dismissed from his mind, had been fulfilled to the very letter.

Coker had threatened to bang off those fireworks. He had banged them off! Cunningly he had planted them in the grate so that Prout himself

would be the man to put the match to them!

"That boy!" breathed Prout. "That—that Coker—"

"This is amazing, Mr. Prout!" said Quelch. "Is it possible that some boy can have had the audacity to place fireworks in your fireplace—"

"Astounding!" said Mr. Hacker.

"But who—" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. A faintly ironic smile glimmered on Quelch's face. "No Fifth Form boy, surely, would so forget all seemliness, all propriety all—"

Prout gurgled.

"Coker!" he articulated. "That insensate boy Coker! But this is his last act of stupid and fatuous disrespect in this school!"

"Coker!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master was not very much surprised when he heard that name! Somebody, it was certain, had done it—and in all Greyfriars only Coker was fool enough to have done it!

"I found those fireworks," gurgled Prout, "in Coker's study. I confiscated them! In my hearing—actually in my hearing—he threatened to explode them in my study! He has done so! Where is Coker? Where is that wretched boy? I shall take him immediately to the headmaster, to be expelled from this school! Potter—Greene—fetch Coker here at once!"

COKER DOESN'T CATCH ON!

HORACE COKER gave a dismal groan.

He was still grinding lines. He had done about two hundred and fifty, so far—a bare third of that awful book.

While the sing-song went on in the games study, while the Removites played passage football, while Prout went to his study and—inadvertently—caused the biggest bang ever heard at Greyfriars—Coker laboured at lines.

Coker heard the big bang, of course! Every inhabitant of Greyfriars heard it! But the Fifth Form studies were a good distance from the masters' quarters and Coker did not get the full force of the bang.

But he heard it, and jumped when he heard it, and wondered for a moment whether it was a bomb. But he guessed—correctly—that it was only fireworks, and went on writing Latin lines.

He was going to get through half that book at least before he chucked it—that would leave him well over three hundred lines on hand.

But he groaned dismally as he laboured with lines. This was a rotten way of spending a half-holiday.

Coker expected a row with Hilton when Hilton came in. The dandy of the Fifth, with all his slacking ways, was made of sterner stuff than Price. He rather wished that Hilton would come in and barge into his study on the war-path. A scrap would make a welcome break in the monotony.

There was a tramp of feet in the

passage and the study door was hurled open.

Coker looked round, expecting to see Cedric Hilton on the war-path! He was more than ready for him.

But it was not Hilton who came in. Potter and Greene came in with such dismayed faces that Coker stared at them in surprise. Behind Potter and Greene was a whole mob of fellows.

"Oh! You're here!" said Potter. "We've been looking for you."

"Didn't you know I was here?" grunted Coker. "You knew I'd got this rotten book to do—and you backed out of helping me—"

"You needn't worry about that now!" muttered Greene.

"Prout said this week!" snorted Coker. "I'm going to get half of it done to-day! I've a jolly good mind not to do it at all, though!"

"Prout wants you!" said Potter.

"Blow Prout!"

"You've blown him pretty effectually!" said Blundell of the Fifth, from the doorway. "Jolly nearly blown him up!"

Coker stared at him.

"What are you gabbling about?" he asked irritably. "Look here, Potter, you go back and tell Old Pompous that I'm doing his rotten book! Does the old ass think I can do his rotten book and traipse up and down stairs at the same time? What does he want me for, anyhow?"

Potter and Greene blinked at him. So did the fellows in the doorway. They supposed that Coker could guess what Prout wanted him for, after what had happened!

"Don't you know?" grinned Hobson of the Shell, from the passage.

"How should I know, you young ass?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Didn't you hear the bang, Coker?"

"Eh? Yes! Somebody letting off fireworks, wasn't it?" said Coker. "Thumping row! What about it?"

"Coker, old man," said Potter, almost tearfully, "what did you do it for?"

"We never believed for a minute that you meant it!" moaned Greene. "I mean, how could we believe you were such a fool—even you?"

"I say, you fellows, Prout's coming up!"

"Here comes Prout!"

"Look out, Coker!"

There was a buzz in the Fifth Form passage.

Mr. Prout, evidently tired of waiting for Coker to be brought to him, was coming up for Coker.

Dozens of fellows gave Coker commiserating looks. It was, of course, the finish for Coker.

He did not seem to understand it—but it was! No fellow could do what Coker had done and remain at Greyfriars—even if Prout had not specially warned him what to expect if he did it! Up-ending a beak with terrific explosions in his study was not the sort of thing a fellow could do twice!

"Is that Prout coming?" asked Coker, with astonishing calmness. "Well, why the thump should I care?"

"Don't you?" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"Oh dear!" moaned Potter.

"What the dickens are you getting at?" exclaimed Coker testily. "What have you all barged in here for? If Prout wants me, I'm here! He can't have come for this beastly book, I suppose—he said this week, and it's only Wednesday—and if he's forgotten, I shall jolly well remind him."

"It's about the fireworks!" gasped Bob Cherry.

It seemed impossible that Coker did not know; still, as it seemed that he didn't, Bob told him.

"What fireworks?" asked Coker.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Your fireworks, in Prout's study, old man!" groaned Potter.

"Is the old ass going to jaw me about those footling fireworks again?" exclaimed Coker, in great exasperation. "Why? He's bagged them, hasn't he? What's wrong with the old ass now?"

"Quiet!" breathed Greene.

The elephantine tread of Prout, coming from the stairs, drew near.

Breathing hard—stairs agreed with Prout no more than with Billy Bunter—the Fifth Form master stepped into the doorway of Coker's study.

His eyes fixed balefully on Coker.

"Ah! I find you here!" boomed Prout.

"I'm here," answered the wondering Coker. He was quite at a loss to know what all this fuss was about.

"Wretched boy!" boomed Prout.

"What?" gasped Coker.

"Follow me!"

"Eh? What? Where?" stuttered Coker.

"Where?" boomed Prout. "To your headmaster's study, Coker! To receive your immediate sentence of expulsion from Dr. Locke, Coker! To hear your headmaster's sentence before you leave this school, wretched boy!"

Coker blinked at him. He did not look alarmed. He looked astounded. He was wondering whether Prout was wandering in his mind!

"But I say, what's the matter?" asked Coker.

"The matter!" gasped Prout.

"Yes. Is anything the matter?"

"Upon my word! Boy!" roared Prout. "Cease this impudence! Cease this insolence! Follow me to your headmaster! I warned you—in the presence of two other Fifth Form boys, Potter and Greene, I warned you of what would follow if you dared to carry out your insensate threat of exploding those confiscated fireworks in my study, Coker—"

"I know that, sir!" assented the puzzled Coker. "But I haven't—"

"What?"

"I haven't, have I?" exclaimed Coker in bewilderment.

"You have not?" boomed Prout, purple with wrath and indignation. "You dare to say that you have not, because, with cunning trickery, you caused me to put the match to the fireworks, by hiding them in the grate—"

"I—I—I—what?" gurgled Coker.

This was the first Coker had heard of fireworks in Prout's grate. Nobody

who heard him, of course, supposed that that was so—but it was so!

"Do you hope," boomed Prout, "to escape the consequences of your action by your cunning trickery in causing me to set the match to the fireworks? Abandon any such hope, Coker! Such trickery makes the matter worse—ininitely worse, than if you had set the match to them yourself!"

"But I never—" gasped Coker.

"Follow me!"

"I don't understand. I—I don't catch on, sir—what—"

"Follow me!"

"I haven't been out of this study—"

"Will you follow me, Coker, or do you desire me to take you by the collar?" roared Prout. "You will be expelled, Coker—you will leave the school by a morning train—but do you desire me to put you, and myself, to the indignity of taking you into the Head's presence by your collar?"

"I—I—I'll come to the Head if you like, sir!" gasped the bewildered Coker. "But I don't understand what it's all about. I—"

"Follow me!"

Prout rolled from the study!

Coker, looking quite dizzy, not understanding yet what it was all about, followed him. He followed him down the passage and down the stairs—leaving a buzzing crowd behind him.

SACKED!

DR. LOCKE listened, with a knitted brow, to Mr. Prout—and Coker listened in dizzy astonishment, but with his bewildered brain slowly clearing.

Coker was catching on at last.

Dr. Locke's brow grew sterner and sterner.

Prout spoke in gasping tones. He was still feeling the shock of that tremendous explosion in his study, which had tipped him over on his portly back. He was breathing wrath and indignation. Prout was a kind-hearted man—placable, as a rule—but his kindness had vanished now—he was implacable!

Coker had over-stepped the limit—Coker had to go! Prout demanded his immediate expulsion from the school! Obviously, the Head was going to grant that demand without the slightest hesitation.

Horace Coker stood silent—his powerful brain slowly assimilating what had happened.

Even old Horace realised that it was a difficult position that he stood in! He hadn't exploded those fireworks in Prout's study—he had not the faintest idea who had—some young sweep of a junior, he expected! But having opened his mouth so wide on the subject, having told half the school that he was going to do that very thing, even Coker realised what it looked like.

He did not interrupt Prout! By the time Prout finished speaking, Coker knew, at length, how the matter stood.

The headmaster's glance turned on him coldly.

"I have but a few words to say to you, Coker!" he said. "I shall write to your parents this evening. You will take the ten-thirty train from Courtfield in the morning. You are expelled from Greyfriars, Coker—I trust that, at some other school, or in some other sphere, you may benefit from this severe lesson, following your headstrong folly. That is all! You may leave my study, Coker."

That, the Head thought, was all. He waited for Coker to leave his study.

But it was not all! Coker did not leave his study! This was not, as the Head supposed, the end of the interview. It was the beginning.

"Do you mean that I'm sacked, sir?" asked Coker, blinking.

"I mean that you are expelled, as I have said!" answered Dr. Locke. "You must have known that such an outrage would be followed by expulsion, Coker—indeed, your Form-master specifically warned you."

"I did!" boomed Prout. "My warning fell on deaf ears! This insensate boy—"

"I never did it, sir!" said Coker.

"What?"

"I never set off those fireworks in Mr. Prout's study, sir!" explained Coker. "I don't know anything about it—not a thing!"

"If you mean, Coker, that yours was not the actual hand to apply the match, I am already aware of that, from what your Form-master has told me! That makes no difference whatever."

"I mean that I never did it at all!" exclaimed Coker, showing signs of excitement. "I never went into Mr. Prout's study while he was out! That's what I mean."

The Head blinked a little.

Mr. Prout gazed at Coker blankly.

Both masters were astonished by this unexpected denial.

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke. "There is, I presume, no doubt on the subject, Mr. Prout?"

"None whatever!" said Mr. Prout. "With my own ears, sir, I heard this boy threaten to perform that very act! With my own ears, sir!" repeated Mr. Prout, really as if he were anxious to make it clear that he had not heard it with anybody else's ears!

"That decides the matter," said Dr. Locke.

"It jolly well doesn't!" exclaimed Coker warmly. "I own up I said something of the sort—at least, I said that I had a jolly good mind to! But that doesn't make out that I did it."

"You admit," said the Head sternly, "that when Mr. Prout confiscated the fireworks, which you were keeping in your study against his strict orders, you stated your intention of exploding them in his study?"

"I—I said I'd a jolly good mind to bang the whole lot off in his study, sir!" stammered Coker.

Even Coker realised how very unfortunate it was that he had said that—as it had turned out!

"You have no suspicion of any other person, Mr. Prout?" asked the Head.

"None, sir! The act, indeed, speaks for itself!" said Mr. Prout. "No other boy at Greyfriars, so far as my knowledge extends, is so utterly stupid, so utterly insensate, as to be capable—"

"I never—!" spluttered Coker.

Dr. Locke held up his hand.

"The fireworks," he said, "were yours! They had been confiscated by your Form-master. Your Form-master heard you utter a threat to explode them in his study. They have been exploded in his study. The matter admits of no argument. Go!"

"But I never—"

"Go!" rapped the Head.

"I never—!" gasped the hapless Coker.

"I am shocked!" said Mr. Prout.

"I am shocked, and I am pained! Amid all this boy's faults, too numerous to enumerate, I have hitherto discerned at least one good quality—a regard for the truth! I am shocked, and I am pained, to see you, Coker, descend to subterfuge—to false statements."

"I never—"

"Say no more, Coker. Do not degrade yourself by untruthfulness," said Mr. Prout. "It cannot help you, and it is unworthy—it is contemptible—"

"Are you calling me a liar?" howled Coker. "I can jolly well tell you that I'm no liar, Mr. Prout!"

"Silence!" rapped the Head.

"I never did it!" bawled Coker. "I may have said that I was going to—but I never did. I expect it was some cheeky fag. Anyhow, I never went to Prout's study at all. I can prove it."

"You can prove it?" exclaimed the Head, with a start. "Coker, if you can adduce any credible evidence to account for the whole of your time while Mr. Prout was absent this afternoon—"

"I was in my study, all the time!" hooted Coker. "I was grinding at that rotten book Mr. Prout gave me—I've done over two hundred lines. I know when Mr. Prout went out! I was in my study all the time. I never left it till he came and fetched me, being hard at work on those lines—"

"Who was with you?"

"Eh? Nobody!"

"Then what is the proof you speak of?" exclaimed the Head.

"I've told you!" said poor Coker. "I was in my study writing lines all the time. Ain't that proof?"

"Your statement that you were in your study all the time, Coker, carries no weight whatever, unless you can produce credible witnesses that you were there," said the Head sternly.

"Well, Potter and Greene knew I was there," said Coker. "At least, they left me there, to do my lines, when they went to the games study. Price saw me there, too, just before I started the lines. Nobody came to the study for the next hour or two!"

"It appears, then, that you were alone almost the whole time that Mr. Prout was absent this afternoon?"

"Yes—doing those lines," stammered Coker.

It dawned on Coker's solid brain that his bare and unsupported statement that he had been in his study all the time was not acceptable as evidence that he hadn't left the study.

Dr. Locke held up his hand.

"You need say no more, Coker! It may be possible—barely possible—that the threat you uttered was carried out by some other boy—it may be barely possible, but it is too highly improbable to be considered. But in that case, Coker, you have only your own headstrong folly to thank—your impertinent folly in uttering the threat heard by your Form-master. Such a disrespectful threat is, in itself, almost a sufficient cause for expulsion. But there can be no doubt that you carried out that threat—as it has been carried out—"

"I never—"

"You are expelled from this school, Coker! You will not go into Form to-morrow morning—you will pack your box, and be ready to leave the school to take your train. Now leave my study!"

"I tell you I never—"

Dr. Locke rose to his feet. His eyes glinted.

"Leave my study this instant!" he thundered.

Coker blinked at him. Then he went to the door. He opened the door, and stood with the door-handle in his hand, looking back at the Head.

"All the same, I never!" he bawled. "And I jolly well ain't going to be sacked!"

"Mr. Prout," gasped the Head, "there is a cane on that desk—will you kindly hand it to me?"

Coker of the Fifth hastily stepped out of the study, and shut the door after him. He departed without waiting for Prout to hand that cane to the Head!

COKER IS WRATHY!

"I SAY, you fellows, there's Coker!"

"Poor old Coker!" sighed Bob Cherry.

"It's rough luck!" said Harry Wharton. "After all, the poor old bean can't help being a born idiot!"

"But it was awfully thick, what he did!" remarked Nugent.

"The thickfulness was terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head. "The esteemed beak could do nothing but pronounce the bunkfulness."

It was in the quad, in the morning. After brekker the Famous Five sighted Coker of the Fifth in the quadrangle.

Billy Bunter drew their attention to him—grinning!

Billy Bunter was mindful of that pull at his fat ear, bestowed by Coker of the Fifth!

A fellow who pulled Bunter's fat ear jolly well deserved to be sacked, in Billy Bunter's opinion.

But the Famous Five could not help feeling sorry for old Horace. They had had plenty of rows with him—Coker of the Fifth had a short way

with fags, and that led to a lot of trouble between Coker and the Lower School. But all rows and offences were forgotten now—now that poor old Horace had got it, right in his brawny neck!

Still, nobody could doubt that it was inevitable! Still less could anybody doubt that Coker had done it.

"Sorry, old man!" said Bob Cherry.

Coker was with Potter and Greene—and the Famous Five bore down on them, to give old Horace a few words of sympathy before he went! They felt that it was the least they could do!

"Sorry, old chap!" said Harry Wharton.

Coker stared at them.

"Whom are you calling old man and old chap?" he asked. "Want me to knock all your cheeky heads together?"

"Eh?"

"Think you can cheek me, because I'm in a bit of a row with the beaks?" demanded Coker warmly. "I'll jolly soon show you—"

"O.K., old fellow!" murmured Potter, while the Famous Five gazed at Horace Coker very expressively. "The kids only mean to be sympathetic, now you're down on your luck, old chap."

Snort from Coker.

"Let me catch them being sympathetic!" he said. "I'll jolly well smack their cheeky heads all round."

"I think, you men," remarked Bob Cherry, with a grin, "that we may as well keep our sympathy parked."

"The parkfulness is the proper caper!" grinned Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

Coker, about to be turfed out of the Fifth Form, was evidently as Fifth-Formy as ever! He had no use for sympathy from fags!

In his last hour at Greyfriars School he was ready to smack a Removite's head for addressing him as "old man" or "old chap." The sentence of the sack had not made any difference to that—Coker was always Coker.

Hilton of the Fifth came loinging over from the House, with his hands in his pockets.

Price was with him—a cat-like gleam in his eyes as he looked at Horace Coker!

Cedric Hilton had come in the previous day to hear two items of news at the same time: that Coker had shipped his study, and that Coker was sacked! One item had been set off against the other, as it were—he had said nothing about the shipping of his study, in view of poor old Coker's overwhelming disaster.

Now he gave Horace a friendly nod. "Frightfully sorry, Coker!" he said.

It was sincere enough—Hilton was rather a bad hat, but he was all good-nature. Price would never have dared to tell his pal what he had done! Price's treachery was his own deep and carefully guarded secret.

"What are you sorry about, I'd like to know!" said Coker gruffly. He had never thought much of the dandy of the Fifth—he did not think much of

him now—and it never occurred to Coker to conceal what he thought.

Hilton raised his eyebrows a little.

"Aren't you sacked?" he asked. "I've heard so."

"You may have heard so," said Coker disagreeably. "But I'm not gone yet. And if it interests you, I'm not going."

"You're not going!" ejaculated Price. He stared at Coker.

"I've done nothing to be bunked for!" said Coker. "I'm not going to be bunked for nothing! Don't you worry, Pricey—I shall be here to ship your study and bung your head into your wastepaper-basket, if you ask for it—as I dare say you will! Yours, too, Hilton, if you come to that!"

"Thanks!" said Hilton politely. "You know how to console a fellow for losing your company, Coker."

And he strolled away with Price.

Potter and Greene looked at Coker, and at one another.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him and smiled. They were still sorry for poor old Coker—but they did not express any more sorrow. They did not want to have to collar Coker and bung his head into a puddle, on his last morning at Greyfriars School.

"Well, there's the bell!" said Potter, as the clang started for lessons. "I'm awfully sorry, Coker! Good-bye, old bean!"

"What are you saying good-bye for?" asked Coker.

"Well, you'll be gone before we come out in break—" said Greene.

"Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"Well, won't you?" asked Potter.

"It's the ten-thirty train, and—"

"Don't be a fool, Potter!"

"Oh!"

"I'm going into Form, of course!" said Coker. "The Head talked some rot about my not going into Form—all rot, of course! Naturally I'm going into Form."

Potter and Greene gave one another helpless looks.

Coker was sacked—he had been ordered to pack his box and get ready to catch his train! Instead of which, it seemed he was going into Form, as usual, as if nothing had happened!

"I'm not going, of course!" said Coker. "If I were some sort of a rotter, like Hilton or Price, I'd go—and be glad to get out of sight, too—if I were sacked. But as I happen to have done nothing to be sacked for, I'm not going! The Head will have to think again—and the sooner, the better!"

"But—but those fireworks, old chap—" gasped Greene.

"I've told you I never parked those fireworks in Prout's grate, Greene!"

"Oh, yes! But—"

"If you don't believe me," said Coker, "say so. I shall hit you in the eye, William Greene! Say so if you think so!"

William Greene did not say so. He did not, it seemed, want Coker to hit him in the eye as a last pally act before he left.

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at Coker. Like the rest of Greyfriars, they had taken it for granted that Coker had done it—after fairly shouting out, for everybody to hear,

that he was going to do it. It was news to them that Coker had denied having done it.

"Mean to say you never banged off those fireworks on Prout, Coker?" gasped Bob Cherry, in great astonishment. "Who did, then?"

"You, very likely!" answered Coker.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Some cheeky fag, at any rate!" said Coker. "You, or some other scrubby little cheeky scug!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If it was one of you, the best thing you can do is to go to the Head and own up, before this goes further!" said Coker, with a grim look at the astonished chums of the Remove. "I fancy it was one of you—you're cheeky enough, at any rate!"

"You burbling blitherer!" roared Johnny Bull. "It was you, and all the school knows it was!"

Smack!

"Yarooooh!" roared Johnny, as a large hand established contact with his ear, with a crack that rang like a pistol shot.

"Now, if the rest of you want the same—" hooted Coker. "Here—keep off—let go—you cheeky young sweeps—yarooooooop!"

The Famous Five had approached Coker that morning to sympathise! But they forgot that they were sympathetic, for the moment.

Johnny Bull jumped at him like a tiger, and Johnny's chums backed up Johnny! They grabbed Horace Coker, tipped him over, and sat him down in the quad with a bump!

Bump!

"Oh!" roared Coker. "By gum! I'll—"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Harry Wharton. "We don't want to slaughter poor old Coker, as he's sacked!"

"The cheeky ass—" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yes; come on!"

Johnny snorted; but he departed with his chums.

They were gone before Coker struggled, gasping, to his feet.

Potter and Greene were already starting for the Form-room.

Coker glared round for the juniors who had bumped him; but decided to follow his friends to the Form-room. Coker did not want to be late for class!

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter to the Remove gathering at their Form-room door. "Coker's going into Form!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker!"

It was a serious matter for Coker getting sacked. But the way Coker was taking it rather deprived it of its seriousness in the eyes of the other fellows.

For a fellow who had been expelled and told to pack his box and catch his train to walk into Form as if nothing had happened was really weird.

But that was what Horace Coker was doing!

Coker was an original sort of
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fellow. Now he was displaying his originality in a really remarkable manner. Serious as the matter was, old Horace seemed bent on providing Greyfriars with a last laugh before he went.

GOING!

MR. PROUT gazed. He gazed at Coker—in his usual place in the Fifth Form Room.

Prout had supposed that he had finished with Coker.

Apparently, he hadn't.

There was Coker—with his school books, all ready for class. The Fifth Form men gazed at him, as well as the Fifth Form master.

Coker was calm. His face was determined, but calm. It seemed that he had decided to disregard such a frivolous thing as a sentence from his headmaster. Anyhow, there he was.

"Is that—is that Coker?" asked Prout, finding his astonished voice.

"Yes, sir," answered Coker.

"What are you doing here, Coker?"

"I'm in class, sir," answered Coker.

"You are not in class, Coker! You are an unwarranted intruder here! You no longer belong to this school! Leave this Form-room at once!"

Coker did not stir.

"Go to your dormitory and pack your box, if you have not already done so!" said Mr. Prout. "A taxicab will be here at ten o'clock to take you to the station at Courtfield. Be ready for it. Now go!"

"I'm not going, sir!" explained Coker.

"Eh?"

"I never banged off those fireworks in your study, sir! A fellow can't be sacked for nothing!" said Coker patiently. "In the circumstances, I decline to leave the school!"

"You decline to leave the school?" repeated Mr. Prout, like a man in a dream.

"Yes, sir; I feel bound to do so."

"Upon my word!"

"I dare say you'll be glad later, sir, when you catch the cheeky fag who banged off those fireworks," said Coker. "So far as I'm concerned, I'm willing to let the matter drop for the present."

Prout gazed at him.

"Coker! If you do not immediately leave this Form-room, I shall remove you with my own hands!" he said, in a deep voice. "Now go!"

"I hope you won't try it on, sir!" said Coker. "I'm not going! I am bound to stand up for my rights!"

Prout left his desk and advanced towards his Form.

The Fifth looked on breathlessly.

They could hardly suppose that Coker—even Coker—would resist by force when the Fifth Form beak turned him out. But Coker looked as if he were going to. His rugged jaw set like a bulldog's—and like a bulldog he watched Prout advancing on him.

"Go!" boomed Prout.

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"Coker, old man——" whispered Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

"You can't do this, you know!" moaned Greene.

"Shut up, Greene!"

"Will you go at once, Coker?" roared Prout.

"No, sir!"

Prout's plump hands were upon Coker the next moment. Prout lost his temper—which, in the circumstances, was not surprising. Prout gripped Coker and jerked him out before the Form.

The next step was to lead him doorward. But it was not easy for Prout to lead Coker where Coker did not want to go.

Prout, majestic as he was, had more lateral than vertical development. He was tall sideways. He was not, in fact, so tall as Coker, though a good deal wider. Coker was at least twice as strong as Prout.

Had Coker chosen to knock out Prout, there was nothing to stop him. Fortunately, even Coker refrained from that drastic step.

But he did not go.

Prout jerked him out from the form—but it was a case of thus far and no farther.

Coker stood like a rock, his large feet firmly planted on the Form-room floor.

Prout dragged at him. He tugged at him. He grew crimson with exertion as he tugged. But he could not shift Coker. He dragged, and tugged, and wrenched, in vain—he hardly rocked Coker.

Prout gurgled.

He had not a very ample supply of breath. What he had was soon exhausted. He gurgled, he gasped—and he let go Coker and charged at his desk for a cane.

He came back at Coker with the cane.

Whop, whop, whop, whop!

"Yarooooop!" roared Coker.

Prout cut and cut, careless where the whops fell. So long as they landed on Coker, he seemed satisfied.

Coker shifted then. He jumped, and bounded, and dodged. Prout was putting beef into those whops. Coker was going to be driven out of the Form-room, under incessant whops from Prout's cane till he disappeared.

But was he?

Coker thought not.

He dodged round the desks.

After him flew Prout, gurgling, gasping, crimson, and whopping as if for a wager.

Coker dashed across the Form-room and cut round Prout's desk.

Prout dashed after him.

Whop, whop! rang on Coker's brawny shoulders.

"Go!" roared Prout.

"Yurroooh!"

"Go!"

"Oh crikey!" moaned Potter.

The Fifth Form gazed spellbound. Never had such a scene been witnessed in any Form-room at Greyfriars. Coker was making history!

Whop, whop!

"Stop it!" roared Coker, red with wrath. "You hear that—stop it! I

don't want to handle you—but stop it, see?"

Whop, whop, whop!

"Get out of it, Coker!" gasped Greene.

"Don't be a fool, Greene!"

Whop, whop!

"Oh crumbs! Stop it!" roared Coker.

Whop!

It was too much for Coker. Either he had to get out of the Form-room, or he had to stop Prout handling that cane. He decided on the latter course.

He grabbed the cane.

Coker got one end of the cane. Prout held on to the other. They tugged. Prout tugged. Coker tugged.

"Pull devil, pull baker!" murmured Hilton.

Price chuckled.

Prout gave another terrific wrench at the cane. So did Coker.

Coker's wrench did it! He got possession of the cane.

Prout stood gasping. He looked round at his staring Form.

"Boys! Remove that—that ruffian from the Form-room! Blundell—Bland—Fitzgerald—Hilton—Potter—remove that boy!"

"You fellows stick where you are!" said Coker. "Don't you barge into this!"

"You blithering dummy!" said Blundell. "Think you're going to handle our Form-master? Chuck him out, you men!"

What Coker was doing was right in his own eyes, if in nobody else's. So far as he bothered about the other fellows, he rather expected sympathy and support. He did not get either. Plenty of men in the Greyfriars Fifth were ready to support their Form-master's authority, if called upon—it was only necessary for Prout to say the word. Now he had said it.

Blundell, the captain of the Form, fairly swooped on Coker. Bland and Fitzgerald followed him up. And as three hefty men of the Fifth collared Coker, Price followed on, eager to give Coker one or two in return for that wastepaper-basket in his study.

"Hands off!" roared Coker, struggling valiantly. "Leggo! Potter—Greene—back up!"

Potter and Greene were not likely to back Coker up in his present wild proceedings. They sat tight and looked on. They did not want to be sacked along with Coker.

Horace, struggling, and disputing every inch of the way, was hooked headlong to the door.

"Throw that young ruffian out!" gasped Prout. He stood pumping in breath.

In the doorway Coker put up a last struggle. But, hefty as Coker was, he had no chance against the numbers.

He went whirling out of the doorway and crashed in the passage.

Price landed a kick as he went.

Blundell closed the door.

"He's gone, sir!" said Blundell very respectfully.

All the Fifth were concerned for



"Don't you fellows barge in!" roared Coker. "You blithering dummy!" said Blundell. "Think you're going to handle our Form-master? Chuck him out, you men!"

Prout in such harrowing circumstances. Dignity was Prout's most precious possession, and his dignity had been flung to the winds in that tussle with Coker.

"Take your places!" gasped Mr. Prout. "We shall now—groogh!—commence!"

Many fellows looked at the door. They half expected to see it fly open and Coker come hurtling in again.

But it did not open. Even Horace seemed to realise that he could not scrap with the whole Fifth Form. To his surprise, his disgust, they were backing up Prout. It was borne in on Coker's mind, apparently, that he was not going to stay in that Form-room!

The door remained shut.

Lessons started in the Fifth Form Room in a tense atmosphere. The Fifth Form men wondered whether Coker was gone—whether he was going. They wondered whether they would see him still at Greyfriars when they came out in break. Prout got little attention from his Form that morning—it was a case of Coker first and nobody else anywhere!

GONE!

"I SAY, you fellows, he's still here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Horace!"

The Remove came out with a rush in break. They were anxious for the latest news of Coker.

There he was!

Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form, expelled by his headmaster, bidden to take the taxicab at ten o'clock to catch the ten-thirty train at Courtfield, was still in the Greyfriars quad at ten-forty-five.

It seemed that he had not succeeded in remaining in Form. But he had remained in the school—there he was!

"Not gone yet, Coker?" chortled Skinner.

"Don't be cheeky!" said Coker.

"Aren't you going?" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Certainly not!"

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

Fifth Form men came out and stared at Coker. Potter and Greene stared at him, and then went back into the House.

They were sorry for old Horace. But they did not want to cultivate him just then. Coker was growing to be a rather dangerous acquaintance.

But other fellows, of all Forms, gathered round Coker. Serious as the situation was for Coker, they were all laughing. Really and truly a fellow could not disregard his headmaster's sentence and remain in a school from which he had been expelled. Coker seemed to fancy that he could.

"Don't he take the cake!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Don't he prance off with all the biscuits!"

"I say, you fellows, there's Prout!" giggled Billy Bunter.

Mr. Prout was seen looking out of the House. His expression was extraordinary as he saw Coker still there.

Prout seemed to be booked to find as much difficulty in getting rid of

Coker as Sindbad the Sailor found in getting rid of the Old Man of the Sea!

"Coker!" boomed Prout.

Coker looked at him belligerently. He did not say "Yes, sir!" He glared at Prout.

Prout had got by with it in the Form-room—Coker had been turned out of Form. Coker's temper was rising fast.

"You are not gone!" thundered Prout.

"I told you I wasn't going!" retorted Coker. "If you fancy I'm leaving the school for nothing, you've got another guess coming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Coker, you—you—you did not take the taxicab that was sent for you?" Prout stuttered.

"I sent it away when it came, sir," said Coker coolly. "I told the man he wouldn't be wanted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You sent it away!" gasped Prout. "Upon my word! In that case, Coker, you will walk to the station, and I will see that your box is conveyed there! Now go!"

"Rubbish!" said Coker.

"What? What did you say, Coker?"

"Rubbish!"

Prout gave him a look—a long look—and disappeared into the House.

There was a buzz of excitement in the quad.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, "Prout's gone to the Head."

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All the fellows guessed that one. Prout, unable to deal with that remarkable member of his Form, had gone to Dr. Locke. It was up to the Head now!

Excitement was growing to fever heat. If Dr. Locke came out personally to deal with Coker, what was going to happen?

Coker seemed prepared to abide the issue. His rugged face was set in grim determination. Coker—though nobody believed it—hadn't done that for which he had been sacked, and he was not going if he could help it.

"Here come the prefects," said Vernon-Smith, with a chuckle, when, after a brief but breathless wait, things began to move.

Wingate and Sykes of the Sixth Form came out of the House. Clearly they had been dispatched with instructions from the headmaster.

They came directly towards Coker. The Fifth Former eyed them like a bulldog.

"Sorry, old man!" said Wingate amicably. "Head's orders to see you as far as Courtfield Station."

"Come on, old bean!" said Sykes.

"Don't talk rot!" said Coker tersely. "I dare say you've heard that I'm not going. If you haven't, I'll tell you now! I'm not going! Got that?"

"What's the good of playing the goat?" urged the Greyfriars captain.

"Come on, old bean!"

"Yes, come on!" urged Sykes.

They wanted to do it amicably if they could. They were, like every-

body else, sorry for poor old Coker, whose fathcadness had landed him in such an awful scrape. But he had to go. They had the Head's orders, and were going to carry them out—amicably if they could, forcefully if nothing else would do.

Wingate slipped an arm through Coker's.

Coker gave it a rap with a leg-of-mutton fist that caused the Greyfriars captain to utter a howl of pain.

"Hands off, please!" said Coker.

"You burbling ass!" roared Wingate, losing patience. "Will you come, or not?"

"Not!" answered Coker.

"Grab him, Sykes!"

They grabbed him.

Coker was a burly fellow and a mighty man of his hands. And his blood was up; he was not going if he could help it! As the two prefects grabbed him, Coker hit out, and he hit hard.

Hitting a Sixth Form prefect was an awful offence. But Coker was past caring about that now. Coker hit hard and he hit often.

For two or three minutes there was a tussle in the quad.

Prout was seen looking on from the door; other masters from their study windows. Nearly all Greyfriars thronged round in the quad.

But Coker, hefty as he was, and determined as he was, had no chance in the grasp of two powerful Sixth Form men. He fought hard, and he fought valiantly, but the struggle ended with Coker going towards the

gates, carried like a piece of furniture—Wingate holding him round the shoulders, and Sykes gripping his legs.

Coker still struggled and wriggled as he went. But he went—he had to go!

The whole crowd followed, roaring with laughter. Fellows were rarely sacked, but it had happened before. It had never happened like this, though. No sacked fellow had ever departed with one prefect taking his shoulders and another his legs. That was how Coker went!

They reached the gates.

Gosling stared, open-eyed, from his lodge as they passed. Gosling's ancient eyes had never beheld such a scene before.

"My eye!" gasped Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—my eye!"

They surged out of gates with a swarming mob at their heels.

In the road Coker was set on his feet. Wingate had one arm, Sykes the other, in a grip of iron.

"Now will you walk?" snapped Wingate.

"No!" roared Coker.

"Come on, Sykes!"

The two prefects marched on, taking the road for Courtfield.

Coker wrenched at his arms in vain. He had to walk—and he walked! From the packed gateway the mob of Greyfriars fellows watched them disappear in the distance.

"Gone!" said Bob Cherry.

"The gonefulness is terrific!"

"Poor old Coker!" said Harry Wharton. "But you can't blow up a beak with fireworks and nothing said. Coker must have done it."

"Didn't he say he would?"

"And isn't it like him?"

"Poor old Coker!"

"Going—going—gone!" said the Bounder, as Coker disappeared from sight. "Poor old Coker! What a man to ask for it!"

Coker was gone!

Wingate and Sykes came back in time for dinner.

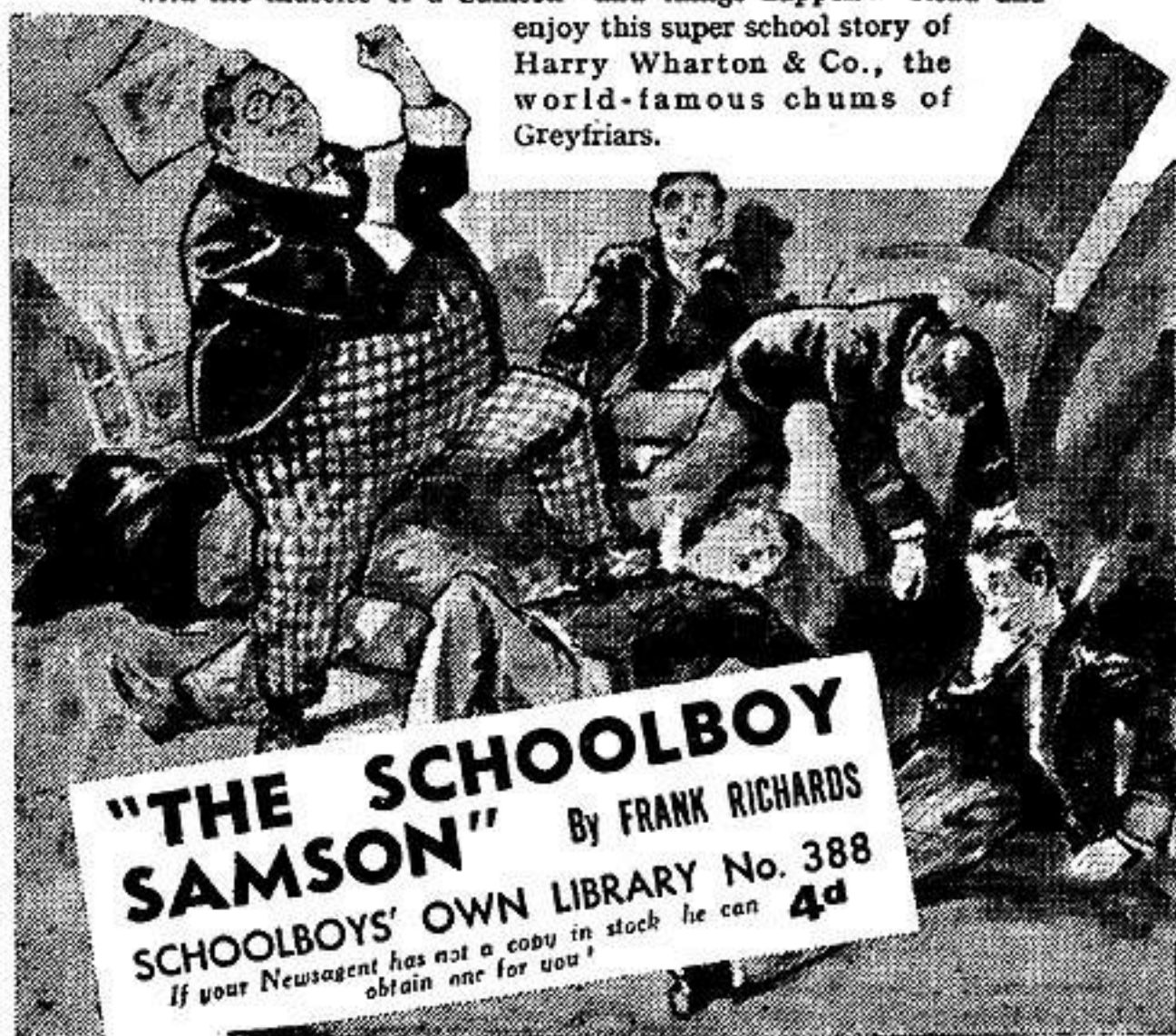
Coker was not seen at dinner. Coker was at last gone!

Greyfriars School had no doubt that it had seen the last of Coker of the Fifth. But on that point Greyfriars School was mistaken!

Bunny-Rabbit becomes Lion!

In the ordinary course of events, Billy Bunter, the fat and fatuous Owl of the Greyfriars Remove, hasn't the strength of a bunny-rabbit. Suddenly he blossoms out as STRONG BUNTER, with the muscles of a Samson—and things happen! Read and

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NOT FAR AWAY!

BUZZZZ! Dr. Locke, seated in his study after lunch, picked up the receiver as the telephone bell rang.

The Head had been thinking of Coker of the Fifth. He was sorry that Coker had had to go. The boy was troublesome—foolish—headstrong—a constant worry to his Form-master—but he had many sterling qualities. It was a pity that his headstrong obtuseness had left his headmaster at last no choice but to send him away from the school. But the happenings of that morning had made the Head feel glad, at least, that Coker was safely gone and happily done with.

Certainly, he did not expect to hear from him again. His letter to Coker's home, explaining the matter, had preceded Coker—the Head had put it kindly, gently, considerately, but very firmly. The gates of Greyfriars were closed to Horace Coker, once of the Fifth. That the bull voice of Horace Coker would ever fall upon his ears again the Head did not consider likely! He never dreamed that he was about to hear it as he picked up the receiver.

"Is that Dr. Locke?" came through.

The Head started.

Was that Coker's voice? It was!

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Is—is—is that Coker?"

"Yes, sir!"

It occurred to Dr. Locke that Coker might have rung up to state that he had arrived home safely. He could imagine no other reason, at all events, why Coker should have telephoned.

"Oh! Very well, Coker! I am glad to hear that you have reached home——"

"I haven't!"

"What?"

"I'm not going home!"

"Coker!"

"I'm phoning from Friardale," said Coker. "I'm not going to take any train at Courtfield. I'm in Friardale now—Mr. Clegg is letting me use his telephone."

"Bless my soul!"

"You will remember, sir, that I told you that I never——"

"I decline to hear one word on that subject, Coker! That subject is closed! I command you to proceed at once to your home!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"Am I still sacked, sir?"

"What? Yes! Of course!"

"Then I'll trouble you not to give me any orders till I come back to Greyfriars again!" said Coker. "If I'm sacked, you're not my headmaster now, and you can't give me orders!"

"Oh!" gasped Dr. Locke.

It was true! If Coker was no longer a Greyfriars fellow, he was out of the headmaster's jurisdiction. He was a free and independent subject of his gracious Majesty King George the Sixth—and the Head had no more right to give orders to him than to any other of his Majesty's subjects!

"Oh!" repeated the Head.

"Mind, I'm ready to come back," said Coker—"ready at a minute's notice! I'd come straight back now if the fellows would stand by me."

"What?"

"But they won't!" added Coker sadly.

"Bless my soul!"

"But I'm not going home. If Prout fancies that I'm going to sneak home and tell them I'm bunked, you can tell him he's got another guess coming! I'm doing nothing of the kind!"

"Coker," gasped the Head, "this obstinacy—this stupidity—this crass obtuseness——"

"Are you speaking as my headmaster?" asked Coker.

"What? Certainly not!"

"Then you can pack it up!"

"What?"

"If you're my headmaster you can say what you like, of course. A fellow has to let his headmaster run on. But if you're not, don't call me names—I don't like it!"

"Bless my soul!"

"I hope I make that clear," said Coker. "I don't mind saying that I don't expect much sense from a schoolmaster. But I hope you've got that clear!"

Dr. Locke gasped.

"Coker, you foolish boy——"

"You foolish man!" retorted the voice over the wires.

"Wha-a-a-at?" gurgled the Head.

"If you call me names, I shall jolly well call you names!" said Coker. "That's only fair play!"

Dr. Locke seemed to find some difficulty in breathing for a moment. At that moment he rather regretted that he had not flogged Coker before sacking him!

"Listen to me, Coker," he said at last.

"I'll listen if you're civil, of course!" said Coker.

Civility nearly deserted the Head at that. But he contrived to control his wrath and spoke calmly into the transmitter.

"Listen to me, Coker! Your parents have been informed by me that you leave the school this morning. If you do not arrive home they will be alarmed for your safety. Have you thought of that?"

"Of course I have!" answered Coker. "I've phoned home already and told them it is all a mistake, and they're not to expect me!"

"Oh!" gasped the Head.

"I've phoned to my Aunt Judy, too, and told her it's all a silly mistake, in case she hears about it!" continued Coker. "That's all right—nobody's going to be alarmed!"

Coker, evidently, had been busy on long-distance calls since the prefects had walked him out of Greyfriars.

"Then why," said the Head in a deep voice, "have you had the impertinence, the impudence, to telephone to me, Coker?"

"Just to tell you how the matter stands, sir," said Coker, in quite a cheerful voice. "The whole thing being a silly mistake——"

"Enough!"

"Prout's made a mistake——"

"Say no more!"

"I dare say you've noticed, sir, being his Chief, that he's not very bright——"

"What?"

"Not very bright! A bit of a fool, sir, if you ask me! I shouldn't say this if I were still at Greyfriars, of course—a fellow can't say what he thinks of his beak at school. But, as the matter stands, I think it best to speak plainly. The old ass has blundered, as usual——"

"Silence, you impertinent boy!"

"I'm prepared to overlook the whole matter and come back!" said Coker. "I can't say fairer than that!"

"Bless my soul!"

"If you decide on that, sir, I'm always to be found at Friardale," continued Coker. "Uncle Clegg's got a spare room here and I've taken it——"

"Goodness gracious!"

"... to be as near the school as possible. I shall not go home till the end of the term, as usual. That's settled! That," added Coker, "is just as fixed as the laws of the Swedes and Nasturtiums!"

Dr. Locke had never heard of the laws of the Swedes and Nasturtiums. But perhaps he guessed that Coker meant the Medes and Persians.

"I dare say," went on Coker, "that even Prout, dense as he is, will get it into his head some time that I never did it—and——"

"Coker, go home by the next train!" rapped the Head.

"I'll watch it!" said Coker.

"I will not allow you, an expelled boy, to remain in the village so close to the school!" exclaimed the Head.

"Oh!" said Coker. "Won't you?"

"Certainly not!"

"And how are you going to stop me?" asked Coker.

Dr. Locke blinked at the telephone. He did not answer Coker's question. It was, in fact, a difficult one to answer.

"That's all!" said Coker. "I thought I'd let you know how the matter stands. I'm ready to come back when you say the word. And——"

(Continued on next page.)

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Dr. Locke jammed the receiver back, suddenly cutting Coker short. He seemed to have had enough of Horace's bright and interesting conversation over the wires!

"Bless my soul!" said the Head of Greyfriars.

He rose from his chair and paced the study in quite an agitated way.

He was not, after all, done with Coker! Coker had gone—but he had not gone far! The Head could only hope that, on reflection, Coker would give up this extraordinary and exasperating scheme.

But reflection was not old Horace's long suit. Coker was every kind of an ass—but he was a stickler! And Coker was going to stick! Horace Coker's determination was, in fact, as fixed and immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians—or, as Coker preferred to put it, the Swedes and Nasturtiums!

UNCLE CLEGG'S NEW BOY!

"WHY not?" asked Coker. Coker of the Fifth—no longer of the Fifth—was, apparently, addressing the shop window of Uncle Clegg's little establishment in the old High Street of Friardale.

It was a windy November morning, with a gleam of sunshine in a steely sky. Coker had emerged from the shop, to stroll down the village street. But he did not stroll far. He stopped, staring in at the shop window. In that window a notice was displayed, for the edification of the inhabitants of Friardale and the vicinity:

"BOY WANTED!"

That notice had been displayed in Mr. Clegg's window for a week or two.

Billy Bunter had seen it there, and applied for the job—unsuccessfully. Now Coker stood staring at it.

"Why not?" repeated Coker.

Thoughtfully, Coker gazed at that notice. Then, instead of going down the street, as he had intended, he stepped back into the shop.

Uncle Clegg, leaning on his counter, gazed at him.

Old Mr. Clegg was rather puzzled by his new lodger. Coker had explained that he had left school—temporarily. Mr. Clegg had been quite willing to let him his spare room. Coker had been one of his best customers, and never counted what he paid—the sort of customer that Mr. Clegg liked.

Neither did Mr. Clegg find Coker so obstreperous and overbearing as Greyfriars fellows found him.

Coker had a proper respect for age, and he was very considerate to old Mr. Clegg.

Several times during his brief residence there, Coker had grabbed heavy articles out of the old man's hands and carried them for him. Coker wasn't going to see an old man labouring with boxes and sacks when he was on the spot to lend a helping hand. This kind of thing made old Horace more popular in the village shop than he had been in the Greyfriars Fifth.

"Look here, Mr. Clegg," said Coker—"you want a boy!"

"Don't I!" agreed Mr. Clegg.

"What about me?"

"Eh?"

"Me!" said Coker.

Uncle Clegg blinked at him.

Really, it seemed to be raining Greyfriars fellows after that job that nobody else seemed to want! First Bunter of the Remove, now Coker of the Fifth.

"You're joking, sir!" gasped old Clegg at last

Coker, in point of fact, was just the helper old Clegg would have liked—big, strong, hefty, tireless, and willing to do anything that came to hand. He would not have taken William George Bunter as a gift—but Coker was quite a different proposition.

"I mean it," said Coker. "Mind, it wouldn't be permanent. I'm expecting to go back to Greyfriars as soon as a little trouble with my headmaster has blown over. See?"

Uncle Clegg nodded. He did not see, but he assented politely.

"My Form-master, Prout, has made one of his silly mistakes," explained Coker. "I dare say it will turn out all right; but, as the matter stands, I'm away from the school, and I'm here. See?"

Uncle Clegg nodded again. Certainly he saw that Coker was there—Coker was big enough to be seen.

"Well, I'm not the man to loaf around doing nothing," continued Coker. "And I'm not going to write home for money in the circumstances. You've got a job going. I want a job! What?"

"Oh, my eye!" said Uncle Clegg.

"What's the wages?" asked Coker, with a business-like air.

"Ten shillings a week!" gasped Uncle Clegg.

"Fine!" said Coker heartily. "That's the rent you're charging me for the room. Well, the wages will pay the rent! See?"

"But," gasped Mr. Clegg—"but—"

"I can work," said Coker. "Fill up that basket of yours as full as you like, and it will be a joke to me! I'm fairly strong!"

"But—" gurgled Uncle Clegg.

"Take me for a week on trial," said Coker. "It mayn't last longer than a week! Even old Prout, I think, may come to his senses in a week! What about it, Mr. Clegg?"

Uncle Clegg blinked at him.

"If you mean it, sir—" he gasped.

"Every word," said Coker. "Look here, apart from wanting a job, I'd be glad to help you through. You can't carry on here without help. Take me on for a week, and see. What?"

"But your headmaster—what'd he say?" gasped old Clegg.

"He's not my headmaster till I go back to school. That's all right."

"But—but your people, sir—"

"My people!" repeated Coker, puzzled. "Why should they mind?"

"You, a grocer's boy, Master Coker—"

"Oh," said Coker, "don't be an ass! What's the matter with being a grocer's boy? Nothing to be ashamed of in being a grocer's boy, is there?"

"I 'ope not," said Mr. Clegg. "But—but—oh, my eye!—what will the other young gentlemen say, seeing you with a grocer's basket?"

"Fat lot I care what they say," answered Coker. "But don't you worry. Mr. Clegg—we ain't silly snobs at Greyfriars. I dare say they'll laugh! Well, let 'em laugh. Is it a go?"

"I'd be glad enough, sir—if you really mean it!"

THE WAR THAT NEVER CEASES!

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"Done!" said Coker. "Now, don't you call me 'sir' any more. I call you 'sir' now, Mr. Clegg, being your grocer's boy."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Mr. Clegg.

"I dare say you can lend me an apron," said Coker. "P'raps you'll show me how they fix 'em on—I haven't had any practice yet—sir!"

"But—" stuttered Uncle Clegg.

"Got an apron?"

"Oh, yes! But—"

"Bring it out, then," said Coker briskly. "May as well start at once. You'll have to put me wise about prices and things when I mind the shop—"

"Mind the shop! Oh, my eye!"

"But I shall pick it up fast enough—I'm fairly bright," said Coker.

Coker really thought that he was pretty bright. He was the only Greyfriars fellow who thought so.

Uncle Clegg blinked at him. He seemed a little dazed by finding himself the employer of Horace Coker.

In a dizzy sort of way, he sorted out an apron for his new boy, and Horace Coker donned it, feeling quite professional when he had got it on.

That morning Coker was busy.

Uncle Clegg, still feeling rather dizzy, gave him instructions, most of which, entering at one of Coker's ears, passed out at the other. But if Coker was not so bright as he fancied, at least he was strong and muscular. He shifted boxes and sacks as if they were featherweights. And he was willing—and willingness went a long way!

After dinner, Mr. Clegg—very glad to have somebody to mind the shop for once—departed for the Red Cow, there to discuss pale ale and the latest war news.

Coker was left in charge of the shop.

Two or three village urchins came in one after another, for sweets. They departed happy. Coker was an open-handed fellow at all times. Exactly how much he ought to give a small boy for a penny, Coker did not know; but if he erred, he was going to err on the liberal side. Never had the small boys of Friardale secured such splendid bargains.

They were satisfied, and Coker was satisfied as he clinked the pennies into the till. Possibly, Mr. Clegg would not have been so satisfied if he had been there.

When Mr. Clegg came in, the basket was packed, for the delivery of goods. Mr. Clegg blinked at Coker as he walked away with that basket, heavy-laden, but making light of his heavy burden.

"My eye!" said Mr. Clegg.

The "Boy Wanted" notice was no longer displayed in Mr. Clegg's shop window. Mr. Clegg had the boy he wanted—certainly the most remarkable boy Uncle Clegg had ever employed.

Coker, basket on arm, tramped off cheerfully.

Among the other goods Mr. Clegg's new boy had to deliver was a bottle of refreshing fluid booked to Gosling, the porter at Greyfriars School!

Twenty-four hours ago, Coker had
(Continued on next page.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS—AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BY almost every mail I receive letters referring to Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove. This week, Joe Bland, of Grays, Essex, writes to the effect that the MAGNET has too much Bunter; but in a footnote he says the porpoise makes him laugh.

So what's the odds? Actually, I feel that we cannot have an overdose of anything that produces harmless mirth, for it's laughter the world wants—especially nowadays. A laugh drives away the blues and leaves one feeling all merry and bright again. Boys and girls of to-day want all the fun and laughter they can get. Otherwise, they get liverish and depressed. Does our Billy Bunter ever get liverish? Not he! Not even when he's parked away enough grub for six at one sitting! If in trouble, the fat ornament of the Remove laughs it off.

No, Joe Bland, we can't possibly have too much of Bunter—he's a better tonic than any doctor can prescribe. Good luck to Billy Bunter! May his shadow never grow less!

The first request—this time from Ben Salter, of Woking—is to publish a list of all the titles of the Greyfriars yarns since the very first number of the MAGNET. "You can publish as many titles each week as space will allow," says my Woking chum. The idea might please some readers, but it raises objections. To begin with, the list of titles is enormous. I doubt if my correspondent realises the amount of space it would take to publish one thousand, six hundred and fifty-six titles!

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"

THE winter season is now upon us, so it will be just as well to make sure of a copy of this world-famous Annual now, if you have not already done so. The evenings are well suited to a comfortable read in a cosy chair in front of the fire. And what better feast of fun and fiction could you get than what appears in the pages of this grand five-shillingworth. Tales of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, and many other fine features go towards making this year's Annual the finest ever placed on the market. Let me whisper a word in your ears, chums. This year's Annual is proving the best-seller, and very soon all copies will be sold. Don't be disappointed by leaving your order too late!

And now for another warning—a warning that cannot be too often repeated. You want to make sure of obtaining your MAGNET every week, don't you? Well, there's one way, and one way only, to make sure your MAGNET is delivered regularly to you every week. War-time restrictions ban newsagents from ordering more copies of the MAGNET than they can sell. You can guard against disappointment—and help the newsagent at the same time—by filling in the Order Form on page 23 of this issue and handing it to him to-day!

Although the circulation of the MAGNET increases week by week, I feel that there are still some homes in which the Old Paper has not yet found its way. I would, therefore, deem it a favour if my loyal chums would hand this copy of the MAGNET to a non-reader when they have finished with it. Think of the good turn you will be doing the next fellow—or, maybe, girl-chum! There is no need to go to great pains to praise the high standard of the stories to be found in this your favourite story-paper. All you need do is to point out the fact that the Old Paper has stood the test for over thirty years and is to-day still the best school-story paper on the market. If that doesn't prove its popularity, then nothing will. I'll wager that your chums will—after reading this issue—become regular readers right away!

"THE REMOVE DETECTIVES!"

By Frank Richards

is the title of next week's yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars. This magnificent story is worthy of a high place in the long list of successes to the credit of the good old MAGNET. I shall not divulge the names of the Remove Detectives or tell you what they have undertaken to do—that would be spoiling a treat all the better for the keeping. Take it from me, chums, there's excitement in plenty and loads of laughs in this sparkling fine tale. As regards the "Greyfriars Herald," next week's issue calls for high praise. Harry Wharton and his journalistic staff have tackled their job in expert fashion, and their contributions are very much "alive." Avoid disappointment by giving your newsagent an order for the MAGNET to-day.

Best wishes and lots of luck,

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,656.

been walked out of Greyfriars between two prefects! Now he was going to walk in again—with a basket on his arm. And Coker grinned cheerfully at the idea!

A SURPRISE FOR THE SCHOOL!

"I SAY, you fellows!" shrieked Billy Bunter.

Bunter fairly yelled!

Bunter was blinking out of the school gates when a strange and startling vision made him doubt the evidence of his big spectacles.

Bunter blinked—and blinked—and blinked again. Then he rolled back into the quad and yelled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up?"

"What—"

"Coker!" shrieked Bunter.

"Coker!" repeated a dozen voices.

Greyfriars fellows had not yet forgotten Coker. Nothing had been heard of him since the day before; and nobody expected to hear anything. But his dramatic exit from the school was still an interesting topic.

"What about Coker?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"He—he—he—" stuttered the breathless fat Owl. "He's coming!"

"Coker's coming!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Coming up the road!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he's got a basket on his arm. I say—Oh crikey!"

There was a rush to the gates. Dozens of fellows rushed! If Coker, sacked from the school, was coming back, everybody wanted to see Coker! Coker's name was on every tongue.

"Oh! Look!" yelled the Bounder.

A figure appeared in the gateway! It was a burly, brawny figure—that of Horace Coker, late of the Fifth Form! On his arm was a grocer's basket! He marched in.

Under a sea of eyes he knocked at the door of Gosling's lodge.

Gosling opened that door. He almost fell down at the sight of Coker with the basket.

"Wot—" began the school porter.

"Goods from Mr. Clegg, sir!" said Coker.

"Eh?"

"Are we dreaming this?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Coker, what's that game?"

"What are you up to, Coker?" yelled Potter of the Fifth.

"Gone potty?" howled Greene.

Coker did not heed! Mr. Clegg's new boy was handing over the goods to a dizzy Gosling!

Gosling almost dropped the bottle in his amazement! Perhaps it was rather unfortunate that he didn't! What that bottle contained was much healthier outside than inside.

"Oh gosh!" said Gosling. "Wot I says, Master Coker, is this 'ere—wot does this mean, Master Coker?"

"I say, you fellows, he's bagged my job!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, he's bagged that job I went after!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Prout!"

"Look out, Coker!"

The roar in the quad, and Coker's name echoing far and wide, had naturally drawn Prout. The sight of Horace Coker, standing in full view, almost made Prout's eyes pop from his portly face.

Prout could hardly believe his eyes!

Coker was sacked—Coker was gone—Coker was a back number—he was done with! Yet here was Coker, as large as life—the centre of a yelling mob of Greyfriars fellows!

There was thunder in Prout's portly brow as he bore down on Coker. The famous wrath of Achilles was a mere passing breeze to the terrific wrath of Mr. Prout! He breathed fury as he came.

"Coker!" gasped Prout. "Is—is—is that you, Coker? Impertinent boy, how dare you enter this school—this school from which you have been expelled in ignominy!"

Horace Coker glanced round at him calmly.

"Hallo, Prout!" he said.

"Wha-at!" gurgled Prout.

"Found out yet who banged those fireworks off in your study, old bean?" asked Coker.

Prout's expression, as that late member of his Form addressed him as old bean, made the Greyfriars fellows yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout.

"Impertinent young rascal—you have dared to return here—you shall be ejected—where are the prefects? Gosling, eject that impertinent boy!"

"Oh, come off!" said Coker. "I'm bound to come here to deliver goods for my employer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What?" roared Prout. "What do you mean, Coker? What are you doing with that basket? What masquerade is this?"

"I'm working for the village grocer now!" explained Coker, amid shrieks of laughter. "I'm Mr. Clegg's new grocer's boy!"

Prout gazed at him.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh scissors! Oh jiminy! Don't he waltz off with the cake—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go!" Prout seemed on the verge of frenzy. "Boy! Go! Go instantly! You will not be permitted to enter the school under this—this hollow pretence! Go! Depart!"

"I'm waiting to be paid!" answered Coker coolly. "Our terms are cash!"

"What?"

"Strictly cash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you depart at once?" shrieked Prout. "How dare you make a scene here, Coker! How dare you make a disturbance! Go!"

"Not till I'm paid for the goods!" said Coker. "Don't be an ass, Prout!"

"I—I—I—" Prout gurgled.

"Think you can interfere with a grocer's boy delivering his master's goods?" hooted Coker. "Don't play the goat! I'm waiting, Mr. Gosling! Here's the bill, sir."

Mr. Gosling, almost overcome at being addressed as "sir" by Coker of the Fifth, dizzily sorted out the cash.

Mr. Prout was almost gibbering by this time! He advanced on Coker!

"Go!" he thundered.

"I've got to give Mr. Gosling his receipt!" explained Coker. "Don't butt in, old gentleman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout grabbed at Coker.

Coker, with pencil and book in hand to give Mr. Gosling his receipt, had slung his basket over his arm by the handle. But as Prout grabbed at him, Mr. Clegg's new boy gripped that basket and swung it round.

What a grocer's boy ought to have done, when an excited Form-master grabbed at him before he had time to make out a receipt for cash paid, Coker did not know—being new to the grocery business. What Coker did was to swing round the grocery basket, catching Mr. Prout on the widest part of his circumference, where he had recently parked an ample lunch.

Bang!

"Whooooooooooh!"

Prout sat down.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Greyfriars mob.

Coker, disregarding Prout, who sat and spluttered, made out that receipt and handed it to the dizzy Gosling.

"Any further orders, sir?" he asked.

"Oh gosh!" said Gosling.

"I can take back any further orders, sir!" said Coker cheerfully. "I can recommend our eggs—best fresh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And our home-made jam!" said Coker. "In the home-made jam line, we defy competition!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gosling, it seemed, had no more orders to give Mr. Clegg's new boy. He only blinked at him dizzily.

"Anything for you, Prout?" asked Coker.

"Urrgh!" gasped Prout.

"Coker, you fathead!" gasped Potter.

"Coker, you mad ass!" stuttered Greene.

"Nothing I can do for you, Prout?" asked Coker. "Anything you may want, give us a ring—Friardale Two—and depend upon us for prompt delivery of goods."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout staggered up.

Horace Coker, bright and cheerful, walked off, with his basket on his arm. He left Prout gazing after him—and the Greyfriars crowd howling with merriment.

Prout tottered back to the House—leaving the mob still yelling.

Coker was not gone! Coker was not going! But if Horace Coker hoped that his present remarkable proceedings were likely to reinstate him at Greyfriars, it showed that Coker had a very hopeful nature!

THE END.

(Look out for another laughable yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, chums, entitled: "THE REMOVE DETECTIVES!" Sign the Order Form on page 23 of this issue, hand it to your newsagent, and thus make sure of reading this spanking fine story!)

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

been too much squander-mania at St. Sam's. All that must stop now. The St. Sam's Anti-Waste League is going to stop it! Boys! I invite you all here and now to join the Anti-Waste League and make it a grate success. The entrance fee is a meere trifle—one shilling only! Roll up in your thousands and swell the ranks of the St. Sam's Anti-Wasters!"

"My hat!"

"I will now stand at the door as you file out, and take the names of all new members," grinned the Head. "Have your bobs ready, boys! You are free to join or not, just as you please, of course; but every boy who duzzent join will receive a duzzen with the birch."

"Oh, grate pip!"

There was a buzz of sheer dismay from the fellows. Up to that moment, not one of them had intended to join; but the Head's calm announcement that those who didn't join would be whopped, properly took the wind out of their sails. Most fellows preferred parting up with a bob to having their trowsis dusted with the Head's birchrod.

The result was that when Dr. Birchmall stood at the receipt of custom by the door to take subscriptions, bizziness was brisk, and shillings pored into the till in an unending stream. Even fellows who were without the needful boblet managed to borrow one from somebody else, and the Head's grin grew wider and wider as he found how well the league was progressing.

Big Hall was emptied of the boys at last. Dr. Birchmall was beaming joyfully as he joined the masters, with his pockets bulging with cash.

"Gentlemen!" he cried. "I think I may claim with justice that the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League is a howling success!"

"If you mean your new members are howling with rage just now, sir, you're probably right," sniffed Mr. Swishingham, who seemed to disapprove of the Head's now mezzures. "It wouldn't serprize me if they kicked up a dickens of a row about it!"

"Nonsense, my dear fellow!" retorted Dr. Birchmall lightly. "If I were a betting man, I wouldn't mind wagering ten to one in doughnuts that this anti-waste stunt of mine is going to score all along the line. You wait and see!"

With these words, the Head sat down to count his ill-gotten gains; and the masters left Big Hall at top speed before the old fogey could remember that he had forgotten to rope them in as members of the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League!

(Look out for "Dr. Birchmall Wields the Axel"—the rib-tickling sequel to this yarn in next week's number!)

STRANGE SOUNDS IN MASTERS' PASSAGE!

Earthquake that Became MIRTHQUAKE

One of the last things you expect to hear in Masters' Passage is an express train puffing along at top speed. So when this sound was distinctly heard coming from that direction the other evening, fellows were puzzled.

Vernon-Smith suggested that it was a railway drama, coming through a wireless set from one of the beaks' studies. Russell opined that something had gone wrong with the hot-water system. Bob Cherry thought it might be Larry Lascelles doing a spot of sand-dancing to keep himself fit in the winter months.

Quite a crowd ventured up as far as the beginning of the passage to see what was doing. The passage was clear, and there was nothing to see, but you could hear the train puffing along inside one of the studies.

"Comes from Prout's room," remarked Skinner, after a spot of reconnoitring work. "Wonder what the old boy's up to?"

"Inventing a new kind of tank, perhaps," said Hazel-dene hopefully. "You know how keen he is on guns and things."

Hazel's speculative effort made the chaps very curious to find out just what was going on inside Prout's study; but nobody felt at first like barging in without an excuse. Prout is rather a formidable sort of person to keep tabs on.

Then the noise increased, the puffing accelerated, and finally there was a terrific bump that shook the School House to its foundations. That bump did it. Without further argument, the crowd made a rush for the Fourth Form master's study. They burst open the door and gazed through the doorway, expecting to find the debris of some marvellous new machine scattered all over the room.

But instead of that, all they saw was Prout flat out on the hearthrug, yelping!

Willing hands hoisted the old sport up on his pins again, and anxious inquirers asked if he was all right. Prout managed to convey by a palsied nod that he was. The fellows set him down in an armchair.

Then they looked round for the cause of that puffing locomotive sound.

But nothing in the way of machinery

or sound-producing apparatus was to be seen.

It was Vernon-Smith who solved the mystery. The Bounder noticed that although the sound of an express in motion had stopped, it had been replaced by a series of long drawn-out gasps such as you hear a locomotive make in the station at the end of its journey. He looked for the explanation. He found it came from Prout. Then it dawned on him.

"Oh, my hat!" he murmured. "That train we thought we heard puffing along in this room——"

"Yes; where is it?" asked Hazel-dene.

"In the armchair!" grinned the Bounder. "It wasn't a train puffing—it was Prout gasping!"

"Eh?"

"Feel all right now, sir?" went on Smithy to Prout. "We heard you gasping rather painfully before you fell over. What happened?"

"Uh! All right now, thank you, Vernon-Smith," panted Prout. "Hah! Yes, I was gasping a little, I suppose. Ugh! I found it rather a bigger task than I had anticipated. You see, I was touching my toes."

"T-t-touching your toes?"

"Yes. In these days, when all should aim at achieving the maximum of physical efficiency, I feel it is up to every man to be able to touch his toes," boomed Prout.

"I did my best. It made me rather breathless. It caused me to fall before I had done the trick. But I shall do it one of these days, mark my words!"

"Oh crumbs!" sobbed Bob Cherry. "Then—then it was only Prout's efforts to touch his toes! And we thought it was an express train puffing along. Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob saw the funny side of it and yelled. So did a dozen other fellows. To Prout's surprise and indignation, his crowded study suddenly started ringing with hilarious laughter from the invading mob.

The Fifth Form master staggered to his feet and turned out the crowd. He has not stopped frowning since. And his Removite visitors have not stopped chuckling.



SO SAYS THE EDITOR!

"Variety is the spice of life." I have dug out this old maxim from my quotations die to explain why I recently gave young Dicky Nugent a rest and allowed other budding Greyfriars authors a look-in.

That the newcomers are immensely popular, is proved by the lavish tributes I receive from all quarters. That Dicky Nugent's popularity has not waned is equally clear; the correspondents who acclaim our new ventures most loudly, are loudest in their demands that Nugent mi's weird and wonderful fiction should reappear in the "Herald" at frequent intervals!

As I indicated when I first made this sensational change of omitting young Nugent, it is far from my intention to cut out altogether the inky-fingered creator of Dr. Birchmall and his amazing school. And this week, as you see, Master Dicky is back again—spelling, grammar, and all! Everybody satisfied? Good!

The kid is so bucked himself at being back to our distinguished pages that he has invited me to a herring-toasting jamboree round the Second Form fire this evening. I feel almost overcome by the honour!

If I can bring myself to face the atmosphere in the fags' domain, I don't doubt that I shall be overcome completely!

Cheerio, chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

THE OPTIMIST AND THE PESSIMIST!

Two Points of View About Everything

One man's meat is another man's poison. Likewise, there are two points of view about everything. Listen to Stott, professional pessimist, talking to Rake, cheery optimist, in the Rag the other afternoon!

Stott: Huh! Look at the rain!

Rake: That's great! Just what the farmers have been asking for!

S.: Now I can't go out this afternoon!

R.: Fine! You'll be able to play chess with me instead.

S.: Pah! Chess makes me tired.

R.: Games that make you tired are the very thing doctors recommend. Good for the nerves!

S.: I can't be bothered.

R.: Lucky man! I always feel sorry for chaps who can be bothered about every little thing that crops up. Give me the man who can't be bothered about anything.

S.: I feel beastly. Must have been that wretched dinner they served up to-day.

R.: You mean that scrumptious roast beef and Yorkshire, and those topping apple-dumplings? Best dinner we've had this week.

S.: I hate apple-dumplings.

R.: You're jolly sensible to hate such things. Where chaps go wrong is when they start hating useful things like games and lessons.

S.: Lessons! My hat! I can't stand 'em at any price!

R.: Then it's a jolly lucky thing you're allowed to take them sitting down, old sport!

S.: Old Quelch is an absolute outsider.

R.: One of the very best is Quelch.

S.: Oh, go and chop chips!

R.: Jolly good idea! We're short of firewood in our study. Thanks for the tip. Like a tip in return? Here you are, then. It's the tip of my boot!

S.: Yaroooh! You've busted me!

R.: Boosted you, you mean! Nothing like a good kick in the pants for a tonic. Cheerio!

"MAGNET" and "GEM" PEN PALS

Miss J. Levy, 68, Upper Mill Street, Capetown, South Africa; girl correspondents, age 16-20; music, films, reading, and general topics; Rumania, Belgium, France, and U.S.A.

A. Thomson, 62, Cecil Road, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex; age 16-18; films, pets; anywhere except England; all letters answered.

R. Wood, 15, St. Chad's View, Leeds, 6, Yorks; age 14-16; art, general topics; anywhere except British Isles; all letters answered.

K. Gutmann, 74, Stanfield Road, Winton, Bournemouth, Hants; age 13-17; films, stamps, and general topics; anywhere in the world except British Isles.

W. Curran, 69, Orrell Lane, Orrell Park, Liverpool, 9; age 12-13; cricket, soccer, running; Yorkshire, Scotland, Australia, and Gold Coast; all letters answered.

Miss J. Philp, Haddon House, Washway Road, Sale, Cheshire; girl correspondents, age 16-18; anywhere.

P. Fitzwilliam, 11, Gray Street, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, British West Indies; age 15; stamps and French literature; France, England, and Canada.

S. Smith, 2, Oliver Street, Mascot, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wants these numbers of the MAGNET: 1286, 1290, 1382, 1361, 1365, 1371, 1332, 1340, 1246, 1142, 1123, 1124.

F. Walker, 20, Surrey Street, Batley, Yorks; aviation, general topics, sports; Switzerland, Spain, and South America.

M. Armstrong, 29, Elms Drive, Morecambe, Lancs; pen pal, age 10-16; British Empire or U.S.A.; all letters answered.

FAG FOOTER FANS NEED STEEL SUITS!

Says BOB CHERRY

If you go to watch footer on the Fag Sports Ground, take my tip and dress for the occasion in a tin hat and a suit of armour!

In my innocence, I rolled up to watch a game between the Second and Third Forms in my ordinary everyday clobber. I stood behind the Third Form goalpost near a group of inky Second Form kids who were manhandling each other and barging all over the show with excitement.

Before I knew where I was, I had got all mixed up with them.

One of the kids yelled: "Back up, the Second!" and gave me a biff on the back of the neck. Another shrilled: "Jump to it, Nugent mi!" and jumped on my foot. A third howled: "Get into them, chaps!" and dug his elbow well into my ribs.

It was worse still when the Second Form advanced on their opponents' goal. With shrieks of: "Go it!" and "Biff 'em!" they charged me from all sides. Then they all yelled: "Foul!" and punched me. Finally, forgetting the alleged foul as Dicky Nugent drew near goal, they bawled "Shoot!"

Half a dozen separate and distinct kicks landed on my trousers.

Dizzily, I saw that Nugent minor was taking a shot. Next moment, there was a roar of "Goal!"

A moment after that, my cap went up in the air to land in the branches of a tree, my collar and tie were wrenched off, and both feet jumped on. I finished up on my back with excited fags trampling over me.

Now you can understand why I advise prospective fans at fag footer to wear something extra-strong in the way of clobber.

Better still, make friends with some of the troops at Wapshot Camp and invite them to the game with their service equipment. You should be almost safe if you watch the game from the interior of a tank!

SHORTS

The Fourth Form claim to have won three successive pillow fights with the Remove. If this is true, they certainly used other weapons than pillows to "bolster" up their cause!

"Is Billy Bunter a hoarder?" asks a correspondent.

Well, he is certainly fond of "putting things away!"

"I've heard Bolsover major compared with a carthorse and a bullock," writes "Jester" (Remove), "but can anybody tell me why he's like Mrs. Kebble's cat?"

Because he's so fond of "scraps!" Temple, who is said to be able to trace his ancestry back farther than any man at Greyfriars, is always boasting about his family tree.

Sounds like further evidence in support of the theory that men come from monkeys!

HAVE YOU A RED NOSE?

Send a stamp and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge.

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