

A Cliff House Comedy



*A Clever Complete Story, Written in
Three Parts, by Miss Phyllis Howell,
Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh.*

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

By Phyllis
Howell.

WHEN
I saw
myself

addressed on the envelope as "Fillis," I knew the letter had come from Coker of Greyfriars.

Among the many things that Coker can't do, his best achievement is spelling.

I must confess I felt rather annoyed when Marjorie Hazeldene brought Coker's letter along.

It isn't nice to be addressed as "Miss Fillis Howl." No wonder Marjorie was smiling.

"Oh, dear!" I exclaimed. "That boy Coker will be the death of me! He seems to devote all his spare time to writing me letters. Why doesn't he give me a rest, and start on you or Clara?"

"Because," said Marjorie, "he knows we wouldn't be soft enough to reply."

I fired up at this.

"Do you suggest that I'm soft?" I demanded heatedly.

"Oh, no! Not at all! But you seem to give Coker a trifle too much rope, Phyllis, dear."

"Coker's a nuisance!" I said.

(I might not have said the same of Bob Cherry, had he written. But then, Bob's a far too sensible fellow to keep pestering a girl with letters.)

As it happened, however, this wasn't a letter. It was something a thousand times worse—a poem.

Now, there are poets—and poets. Coker comes under the latter heading. His prose is awful enough; his poetry is a sight for gods and men and little fishes.

"Read it out," said Marjorie, laughing.

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I shall have to get it translated first."

Marjorie chuckled, and looked over my shoulder. This is what we saw:

"O Fillis, you are charming,

O Fillis, you are IT;

Your bewty is alarming,

It gives a chap a fit."

"Why, the fellow is being quite rude!" I said indignantly.

"Nonsense!" said Marjorie. "He means well."

"But he says that my beauty gives him a fit—"

"That's Coker's way of being complimentary. He had to say 'fit,' because it was the only rhyme he could think of for 'IT.'"

We continued to read:

"The freshness of a daisy

Your lovely chivvy has!

It sends a fello crazy,

It makes him dance the Jazz!"

Marjorie began to sob—with laughter.

"Don't!" I implored. "Don't hit me when I'm down!"

"Oh, dear! I really can't help it! That boy is too funny for words! How does it go on?"

"Fare Fillis, I am yerning
To see you wunce agane;
My manly cheeks are burning
As if with sudden pane."

"Oh!" gasped Marjorie, pressing her hands to her sides. "It's I who have got the sudden pain!"

And she rocked with laughter.
I rocked, too—with anger.

I would have destroyed Coker's silly piffle there and then, but Marjorie shot out a restraining hand.

"It would be such a pity to miss the rest of this masterpiece," she said.
So we read on.

"I've raised a team to meat you
In a big crikit match;
We'll guarantee to beat you
If you'll come up to skcratch."

"What awful nerve!" murmured Marjorie.

"Just tell the girls to dress up
In their best toggs, you see,
To gaze at G. L. Jessop—
In other words—at ME!"

"We'll meat you and defeat you,
But if perchance you win,
We'll take you out and treet you
To a divine tuck-in!"

"A very sporting offer!" I said.
Marjorie stared.

"You're surely not going to accept it?" she exclaimed.

"Indeed I am!"

"Phyllis!"

"I don't know a mighty lot about cricket," I said. "But I've seen Coker play, and I'm convinced that we could easily beat a team of Cokers."

"Hear, hear!" said Clara Trevlyn, coming into the room. "I don't know whether you are talking about cricket or hopscotch, but we could beat a team of Cokers at either!"

Marjorie looked doubtful.

"Coker is a big boy——"

"And a very silly one!" I cut in. "It's

like his cheek to want to play a girls' school at cricket. The sooner he's put in his place the better."

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" said Clara approvingly.

"I shall write to Coker," I said, "and accept his challenge."

"I don't think——" began Marjorie.

"No," said Clara crushingly, "you never do! That's why Cliff House marks time instead of doing big things."

"Really——" said Marjorie, flushing.

I hastened to pour oil on the troubled waters. And then, taking up a pen, I wrote a brief but emphatic reply to Coker's challenge. It ran as follows:

"Dear Coker,—Your poem (?) has been duly translated, and, on behalf of the Cliff House girls I accept your challenge to a cricket match.

"We shall be pleased to meet your eleven in our playing field on Saturday afternoon at two.—Yours sincerely,

"PHYLLIS HOWELL."

Marjorie insisted that I was impulsive and hot-headed. To which Clara, in her slangy way, replied "Rats!" And Flap Derwent, when she heard of my letter to Coker, heartily backed it up. So Marjorie was in the minority.

For two days after the despatch of the letter nothing happened.

Then, whilst we were chatting in the gateway of Cliff House, in the cool of the evening, a cyclist rode up.

It was Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars.

I couldn't help feeling a certain amount of resentment towards him for not bringing Bob Cherry along.

"Wherefore this late call?" I asked.

Wharton was looking serious. He usually is.

"It's about that letter you sent to Coker," he said.

"Well?"

"I thought I'd bike over and warn you not to play his eleven at cricket."

"Sorry!" I said, "but it's all cut and dried."

"You're going to play Coker's lot?"

"Yes!"

"Every time!" chimed in Clara.

Wharton flushed.

"You'll be whacked to the wide!" he declared. "Coker will show you up in front of everybody!"

"That remains to be seen," I said warmly. "I suppose you've got the stupid idea into your noddle that girls are no good at anything—bar needlework. You think we can't play cricket?"

"Ahem! Not exactly."

"We shall make rings round Coker's prize comedians," said Clara.

Wharton shook his head.

"Sorry to disagree," he said, "but Coker's not quite such an ass as you think. He can't play cricket for toffee—but the other fellows in his team can! You ought to see the eleven he's getting up. He's persuaded Blundell and Bland and Hilton and Fitzgerald, of the Fifth, to turn out—and they're all good men. They're joining in mainly for the fun of the thing; but they mean to give you a fearful licking!"

"We'll chance that!" I said stiffly.

"Look here, Phyllis, I don't want to see you whacked——"

"You won't!" I said confidently.

"But there's Blundell and Bland and Hilton——"

"Don't let us have that chorus all over again!" said Clara. "What do those fellows know about cricket, anyway?"

"They know enough to give the Remove a close game."

"The Remove? Why, we could lick the Remove gagged and bound and blindfolded!"

Wharton burst into a laugh.

"I can see it's no use arguing with you!" he said.

"Not a scrap!" said Clara. "Good-evening!"

"I really think Harry is right," said Marjorie.

"Rats!"

"Well, I've warned you," said Wharton, mounting his machine. "I hope you'll think the matter over, and decide to withdraw. Cheeroh!"

And the Greyfriars fellow rode away in the gathering dusk.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

By Bob Cherry.

"WHEREFORE that worried brow?"

Johnny Bull put the question to Wharton, who came into No. 1 Study with a frown.

"It's no good," said Harry, throwing his cap into the corner and himself into the arm-chair.

"Do you mean to say the girls won't withdraw?" said Nugent.

"Right on the wicket!"

"My hat!" I exclaimed. "They'll be booked for a fearful licking."

And Inky remarked that the lickfulness would be terrific.

Wharton grunted.

"I warned them that Coker was raising a strong team," he said, "but they didn't seem to care a rap—except Marjorie. And now they'll be licked."

"And Coker will crow for the rest of the term!" groaned Nugent. "It's nothing to crow about really—licking a team of girls. But you know what Coker is."

"Can't we do something to help the girls?" said Johnny Bull, desperately.

"We've done everything possible," said Wharton. "They've had a fair warning."

At that moment Peter Todd looked in.

"Well, you're a bright lot!" said Peter, glancing round at us. "You look about as cheerful as a set of boiled owls! What's wrong?"

Wharton explained the situation.

"The girls will be beaten all ends up," he concluded dolefully. "I'd do anything to prevent it—but there's no way out."

"Isn't there, though?"

Toddy's eyes were sparkling, and we could see that a wheeze was working in his mighty brain.

"Can you suggest anything, old scout?" asked Wharton, at once.

Peter nodded.

"There's only one thing for it," he said.

"You're thinking of kidnapping Coker's team?" I hazarded.

"Wrong, as usual!" grinned Peter. "I know a dodge worth two of that."

"Out with it!" we exclaimed.

Peter chuckled.

"I propose that seven of us—Smithy, Tom Redwing, myself, and everybody here barring Inky—whose dusky complexion would give the show away—turn ourselves into members of the fair sex—for one afternoon only!"

"What!"

We stared blankly at Toddy.

"It's been done before," said that cheerful youth, "and it can be done again. The girls, of course, would not stand an earthly against fellows of Blundell's weight. But if we are on the spot, and join forces with Marjorie, Clara, Phyllis, and Flap Derwent, we shall succeed in trouncing Coker's gang."

"My hat!"

"Can't be done!" said Nugent, after a pause.

"Why not?"

"Coker & Co. would know we weren't Cliff House girls."

"Rats! Phyllis could introduce us as new girls. We shall be rather a crowd, but that can't be helped. It's not impossible for seven new girls to be at Cliff House."

"No," agreed Wharton. "But what about the clobber?"

"Moses, in Courtfield, can do the needful.

We shall want plenty of grease-paint, and all the rest of it, of course. But, as I say, it won't be the first time we've togged up as girls."

"It's risky," said Johnny Bull.

"What of that? You don't funk taking a few risks, surely?"

"Toddy's right," said Wharton at length.

"We must persuade the girls to let us join in. I think they will. The jape will appeal to them."

"Bed-time, you kids!" came the cheery voice of Wingate of the Sixth.

We trooped up to the dormitory, and discussed Toddy's scheme in detail.

Next day I biked over to Cliff House myself, and told the girls what was in the wind.

They were awfully bucked, and were quite willing to own us as schoolmates for the space of an afternoon.

We became quite excited as the time drew near.

So did Coker.

The great Horace had drawn up a very strong eleven—with two exceptions.

The exceptions were Coker himself and Mr. Prout.



"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Prout. "Thank goodness that was merely a trial ball!"

We couldn't believe our ears at first when Coker told us that Prout had volunteered to play in his team. But it was so.

It happened that Prout had nothing to do on Saturday afternoon. Quelchy had broken off a golfing appointment, and left him stranded.

Prout fancies himself as being a bit of a cricketer—he played umpteen years ago at college—and when he heard of the fixture he requested that he might play. The request amounted to a command.

We revelled at the prospect of playing against Prout.

This would not be the first occasion on which Prout would give a comic turn in public. Once upon a time he skipped an eleven to play against the Old Boys—and a very pretty mess he made of it. He wasn't likely to fare much better this time.

Coker didn't want to play Prout, of course. But he could hardly say no to a form-master. And, even with such an obstruction as Prout in the team, Coker thought that they would lick the girls to a frazzle.

Needless to say, we thought differently.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

By Hurree Singh.

SATURDAY turned up arrivefully. The sun blazefully streamed down upon the esteemed playful field of Cliff House.

The other members of the Famous Five, together with the worthy Todd, and Smithy and Redwing, had disguisefully attired themselves in the girlful garb. They asked me to come over and performfully undertake the umpireful duties.

We had not been longfully waiting on the ground when the ludicrous Coker appeared with his teamfulness.

The sahib Prout was there, dressed up killfully.

The charming Phyllis introducefully presented her eleven to Coker, who did not smell the ratfulness.

Then the game commencefully started.

Phyllis Howell won the tossfulness, and she and the fair Marjorie opened the innings.

Girls cannot play the cricketful game;

and Phyllis and Marjorie would have been bowlfully got out but for one reason.

Coker insisted on bowling at one end, and the sahib Prout at the other.

Phyllis and Marjorie made the esteemed fur fly.

The score rose with the boundful leapfulness.

Prout mopped his learned brow.

"Oh, dear!" said he gaspfully. "Really, this is too bad! I had no idea that girls knew how to make runs."

"They wouldn't do it if I were bowling, sir!" said Blundell, throwing out the esteemed hint, as it were.

"Nonsense, Blundell! Do you dare to suggest that you are a better bowler than your Form-master?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"When I get into my stride," said Prout, "the wickets will fall like ninepins—like chaff before the reaper, Blundell!"

"Rats!"

"Did you speak, Blundell?"

"I—I was just muttering to myself, sir!"

"That is an extremely bad habit, Blundell. Are you quite right in the head?"

"Eh?"

"Is the sun too warm for you?"

"My hat! I—I'm quite all right, sir."

"Then do not behave like a demented creature!"

So saying, the worthy Prout proceedfully continued to bowl.

The girls smote hitfully. The score rose mountfully. The spectators chuckled grinfully.

The bowlfulness of Prout was awful; the bowlfulness of Coker was more so.

Presentfully Blundell took a hand, and it was a change betterfully.

Phyllis was bowled, and Marjorie shared the same fatefulness.

Then Clara and Flap Derwent came in to perform batfully. They knocked the Proutful stuff all over the shopfulness. But Blundell settled their esteemed hash.

But the score had reached bigful proportions, and it got bigger when Harry Wharton, in the disguise of a fair maiden, came to the wicket.

Prout was whackfully exhausted. He threw himself down in the grassfulness and groaned.

"Bless my soul! Who ever would have thought these girls had the strength to hit like this? You had better take my place at this end, Bland."

Bland obeyed with promptfulness.

He and Blundell performed manfully; but they could not shiftfully get rid of Wharton.

Coker's jaw fell dropfully.

He had expectedly anticipated to win; but the girls had already scorefully knocked up 150.

Wharton was catchfully disposed of at last. But our Cherryful chum took up the esteemed running, and the fieldsmen perspired pantfully.

Runs came fast and thickfully.

After an hour's smitefulness, the girls' team declared, with the scorefulness at 270.

Prout gave the gaspfulness.

"It is a tremendous score," he said. "I should feel very dubious about our chances of beating it, but for the fact that I am in great form. There is no wielder of the willow who can hold a candle to me--Paul Prout!"

"And there's me, too!" said Coker. "Between us, sir, we ought to knock off the necessary number of runs. I've put you down first on the batting list, sir."

"That was a very right and proper thing to do, Coker!"

They put on the padfulness and walked strollfully to the wicket.

Harry Wharton was bowling, and his first ball swervefully curled round Prout's bat, and crashfully shattered his wicket.

"Dear me!" murmured Prout. "Thank goodness that was merely a trial ball!"

"A--a what, sir?" gasped Wharton.

"A trial ball. The first ball, of course, does not count!"

"Oh!"

"We live and learn!" murmured Nugent.

I told Prout he was out, but he glared at me fiercely.

"Do not be absurd, Hurree Singh! You know as well as I do that the first ball is merely a preliminary. It does not matter whether one hits or misses it. I shall certainly not dream of going out!"

"As you rule it, my honoured sahib," I said resignedly.

Prout ran out at the next ball, with the purposeful object of smiting it to the esteemed horizon.

But the ball glidefully whizzed between his legs, and again wreckfully damaged his wicket.

"How's that?"

"Out!" I said, with distinctful emphasis. Prout swung round upon me sharply.



"Under the arrangement we made," said Phyllis, "you're to treat us to a tip-top tea." Coker was in a tight corner, but he was a fellow of his word.

"You appear to gloat over my downfall—which was purely accidental!" he barkfully rapped out. "I happened to be looking somewhere else when the ball came. However, I will retire. I have no doubt that Coker will be able to get the necessary runs."

But Coker was despatchfully sent back to the pavilion shortly afterwards. Vernon-Smith, although his skirts got in the way, managefully contrived to send Coker packing.

"Fluke!" said Coker growlfully.

"Strikes me there will be a few more flukes by the time we've finished," murmured our Cherryful chum.

Blundell came in, and he played with the esteemed desperation.

But the goodfulness of the bowling was terrific.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith were at the topful height of their form.

Blundell went back, and Bland and Hilton and Fitzgerald did the trotful caper. They could not defendfully keep up their wickets for long.

Coker's face worked with the convulsiveness. He had imagined it would be easy to lickfully defeat a team of girls.

He could not understandfully make it out. Neither could Prout. Coker tore the hairfulness, and Prout would have done likewise, but for the baldfulness of his pate.

"We've made six runs!" growled Coker. "A mouldy six!"

"And there are five wickets down!" said Prout snapfully. "Really, Coker, I wish you had taken more care in the selection of your team!"

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

"I should certainly not have played, had I known you were fielding a set of incompetent boobies!" said Prout.

"But—but you didn't do any scoring yourself, sir!"

"Ahem! I allowed myself to be bowled out, in order to give the girls some encouragement."

"Oh!"

"There goes another wicket!" said Blundell. "It's awful!"

"Faith, an' it's too bad, entirely!" groaned Fitzgerald.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith bagfully took the remainder of the wickets, and Coker's eleven were all out for 14!

In the ranks of Coker there was weeping and grinding of teeth gnashfully.

Phyllis Howell came up to Coker with a sweetful smile.

"I rather fancy we've won!" she said.

Coker grunted.

"Under the arrangement we made," said Phyllis, "you're to take us out and treat us."

"Oh, my hat!"

Coker was in a tightful corner, but he was a fellow of his esteemed word. He had expressfully promised to stand treat to the girls if they won; and he did not attemptfully try to back out. His Judyful aunt had sent him a remittance, and he was able to foot the billfulness.

"All serene," he said. "Come along to the bunshop in Friardale."

So Marjorie and Clara, Phyllis and Flap Derwent followed in the wakefulness of Coker. And Mary Wharton and the others, whose identity Coker did not suspectfully guess, followed.

Coker stood the handsome spreadfulness. And he never knew how it was that the lickfulness had been imparted to his team by the girls.

As for Prout, he tramped back to Greyfriars with a scowful brow. And he vowed that he would never again enlist under the Cokerful banner in the esteemed cricketful game.

THE END