

## A JOLLY CHRISTMAS YARN IN SHORT SPASMS

By PETER TODD (*of the Greyfriars Remove*)

### THE FIRST CHAPTER THE ROAD TO CHUNKLEY'S

**C**HRISTMAS! That's a magic word to everyone, and we at Greyfriars are no exception. Christmas finds us all excited and keenly looking forward to the good things in store. Especially Bunter! When Bunter thinks of turkeys, mince pies, cakes, hams, etc., he wonders why we don't hold Christmas all the year round.

On the last half-holiday before we break up we nearly all visit Chunkley's Stores in Courtfield, where Christmas always sets in with unusual severity. They hold what they call a Stupefying Christmas Bazaar. There, surrounded with coloured lights, Christmas trees and giant crackers, you can buy

your presents from Father Christmas himself, complete with good quality sledge and real live reindeer!

There's only one drawback. Chunkley's prices make fellows turn faint. They don't faint, of course—because Chunkley's would charge a bob for a glass of water to revive them—but they feel like it. Still, at Christmas we all have plenty of tips from aunts and uncles, so we can afford to shop at Chunkley's—just for once!

On our last "halfer" we all made our way by bus, bike or Shanks's Pony to Courtfield. There was a light powdering of snow on the road and a slate-coloured sky overhead. Harry Wharton & Co., the Famous Five, made their way across Courtfield

Common by "leap-frogging" in high spirits Billy Bunter toiled behind, trying to borrow fourpence for bus fare.

"I say, you fellows," he wailed, "I'm going to meet my Uncle George. He's in Courtfield this afternoon on business, and he wants to buy me a Christmas present. It's bound to be a whacking feed in Chunkley's tea lounge."

"Uncle George will need to be a millionaire to feed you in Chunkley's," snorted Johnny Bull.

"I believe he is," replied Bunter carelessly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I haven't seen the old codger for years and years, because he's been living in Egypt, but all the family are millionaires, of course."

"Ha, ha! Of course!"

Well, look here, you fellows! If you lend me fourpence for the bus, I'll invite you to my spread at Chunkley's. Uncle George is bound to do the thing handsomely, and you chaps can't afford to tea in Chunkley's. Only well-to-do people like Bunters can do that."

"Oh jiminy!"

"What do you say, old fellows?" asked Bunter.

"Rats!" replied the five with one voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Out of the way, you fags!" came the crisp commanding tone of Horace Coker, the fathead of the Fifth. He was striding by with his pals, Potter and Greene.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Race you to Courtfield, Coker!"

Coker disdained to heed. He was deep in conversation with Potter, and treated mere Remove fags as the snow beneath his feet.

"Yes," he was saying, "I want

to buy a new football in the Sports Department——"

"Eh?" gasped Wharton. "Why do you want a football, Coker? Do you know somebody who plays the game?"

Potter and Greene suppressed a chuckle. Coker's idea was that he was the star footballer of Greyfriars. That idea was unique in the school. Everyone else regarded Coker's footer as the funniest thing out.

"You cheeky fag!" bawled Coker, stung to retort. "My hat! I—I'll——"

The Remove juniors passed on, grinning. Coker's eyes gleamed at them. There were drifts of snow in the ridges of Courtfield Common. Coker bent over and began to knead a large snowball.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Follow your leader!" he said.

He dashed up to Coker, put his hands on Coker's back and neatly leap-frogged him. One after the other, Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh followed. Coker was petrified. His face wore an extraordinary expression. Remove fags had actually dared to treat him as the "frog" in leap-frog. Coker wondered dizzily why the skies didn't fall.

But, though bad began, worse remained behind. Loder of the Sixth was striding along the Courtfield Road. Loder was an ill-natured fellow at the best of times, and he had an especial "down" on Coker, who had often made him look a funk—perfect though he was. He treated Coker to a heavy frown.

"Dash it all, Coker," he snapped, "haven't you any better sense than to play leap-frog in public with a gang of scrubby little fags? You, a Fifth Form man——"

"I—I—I——" Coker stuttered with fury, trying to say eleven things at once.

"That's enough!" replied Loder sharply. "Behave yourself in future. I shall keep an eye on you, Coker!"

Loder swung on his way. The Famous Five and Bunter had also vanished. Coker stood quite still, speechless with rage. The idea that he, Horace James Coker, the most Fifth Formy of all Fifth Formers, had condescended to play leap-frog with fags nearly drove Coker out of his mind.

For a long moment he stood there while rage deprived him of the power of movement. Then Skinner, Snoop, and Stott, the three black sheep of the Remove, came along.

"I hear Chunkley's have a sale in their Tobacco Department," Skinner was saying. "Cigarettes goin' cheap, you know. We might buy enough to last us over Christmas. Why, what—what—— Yaroooooh!"

Coker jumped at them like a tiger. Skinner & Co. had absolutely nothing whatever to do with Coker's misfortunes, but that didn't worry Coker. They were Remove fags, and that was good enough! He landed on't fiercely, and the three gay dogs were distributed over the hard earth, roaring.

"There!" panted Coker, as he rolled them in the snow. "That's for belonging to the Remove. And if you don't like it, you can pass it on to Wharton's lot when you see them. Come on, Potter! Come on, Greene! Let's go and look for Loder!"

The three Fifth-Formers went on, leaving Skinner & Co. to sort themselves out dizzily and vow the most terrible vengeance. Fisher T. Fish,



Bob Cherry dashed up to Coker, put his hands on Coker's back, and neatly leap-frogged him.

the Transatlantic junior of the Remove, came jerking along in his hustling fashion. He grinned at Skinner & Co.

"Say, you guys look sorta used up!" he chuckled. "Been in 'a rookus with Coker? I'll tell a man, you came out at the little end. Hear me smile!"

Skinner and his pals exchanged glances. They couldn't pass Coker's gift on to the Famous Five, but Fishy was there, and Fishy was asking for it. They could pass it on to Fishy, and they did!

Fisher T. Fish stopped smiling as Skinner up-ended him, and Snoop and Stott crashed their boots on his bony form.

"Yarooooh! Thunder! Wake snakes!" howled Fishy, as he smote the County of Kent with a sickening thud. "Let up, you jays! I guess I'll make potato-scrapings of you—Whooop!"

"Now smile again, you bony freak!" growled Skinner. "Come on, you men!"

Skinner & Co. went on their way feeling a little better. They left Fisher T. Fish feeling a lot worse. But nobody really cares how Fishy feels, anyway.

Now, as it happened, the fellows who took part in this little scene on Courtfield Common were all actors in various dramas which were played in Chunkley's Stores that afternoon. So let's go into Chunkley's and see what happened to them.

And, first of all, we'll take the lift to the Sports Department.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### SPORTS DEPARTMENT

"THERE they are!" breathed Horace James Coker, in accents of pure hatred.

Coker was looking over a large stock of footballs. Potter and Greene were waiting patiently for him to select the ball with which he would not play for Greyfriars or anyone else next term.

Potter and Greene, as a matter of fact, were not at all keen on shopping with Coker. Chunkley's was a select establishment, and Coker had been known to kick up shindies in such places, regardless of staring eyes.

But Potter and Greene bore it manfully. After his shopping expedition



"There!" panted Coker, as he rolled Skinner & Co. in the snow. "That's for belonging to the Remove!"

Coker was going to stand them tea in Chunkley's lounge, and Potter and Greene were deeply interested in that part of the proceedings.

They exchanged a resigned look as Harry Wharton & Co. trooped into the big Sports Department. Bob Cherry wanted to buy a pair of ice skates, and his chums were ready to help him to choose. Coker's eye glittered at

them. After the deep and inexpiable insult offered him on Courtfield Common, Coker was really ripe for anything.

"I—I say, Coker," murmured Potter, as the Famous Five went along to the other end of the department, "I say, don't start a row in here."

"No, for goodness' sake, Coker!" implored Greene. "Leave 'em till we get back to Greyfriars."

"So I can't play football, eh?" hissed Coker, glaring at Harry Wharton's back. "By Jove, I'll show that cheeky young sweep if I can play football. When I land this football on his ear, he'll think again!"

Watched in petrified amazement by his chums, Coker placed the football on the floor, ready for a free kick. The idea that anyone—even Coker—could kick footballs about Chunkley's Stores chained Potter and Greene to the floor in horror. Too late, they awoke to movement. Before they

could interfere, Coker had landed a terrific kick on that football.

Plonk!

The football flew.

To Coker's astonishment, it did not fly at Harry Wharton. There was really no chance of that, because Coker was aiming at him. The ball never went where Coker aimed it.

Instead, it flew diagonally across the room and landed squarely on the head of a man who had just bustled out of the jewellery department.

"Whoooooop!" roared the man.

He sat down, dazed.

The Famous Five stared blankly at Coker, while Potter and Greene, gasping, slid out of the room and disappeared. Tea or no tea, Potter and Greene were through.

"You silly ass, Coker——"

"You shrieking dummy, Coker——"

"The fatheadedness of the ridiculous Coker is terrific——"

"What did you do it for?" howled Bob Cherry.

Coker was rooted to the floor in horror. Even Coker would not have kicked that football if he hadn't been quite, quite sure of landing it where he wanted it. He had been quite, quite sure—and this was the result.

"Oh, corks!" he gasped.

The manager rushed up to Coker, who stared

at him, now red-faced with dismay.

"My dear sir——" chattered the manager. "My dear sir, a thousand thanks!"

"Eh?" gurgled Coker.

"Such presence of mind!" beamed the manager. "Naturally our house-detectives cannot watch everyone in such a crowd as this. I suppose you spotted him putting those rings in his pocket, and immediately kicked a football at him to prevent him getting away with the plunder."

Coker gasped and gurgled.

"You have saved us from a heavy loss," went on the manager. "Pray allow me to present you with the football, free of charge. You deserve it for your great presence of mind."

He bustled away to escort the ring-remover to the arms of the police. Coker stared after him with an expression almost of stupefaction

on his face. While from the Famous Five came a hilarious yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

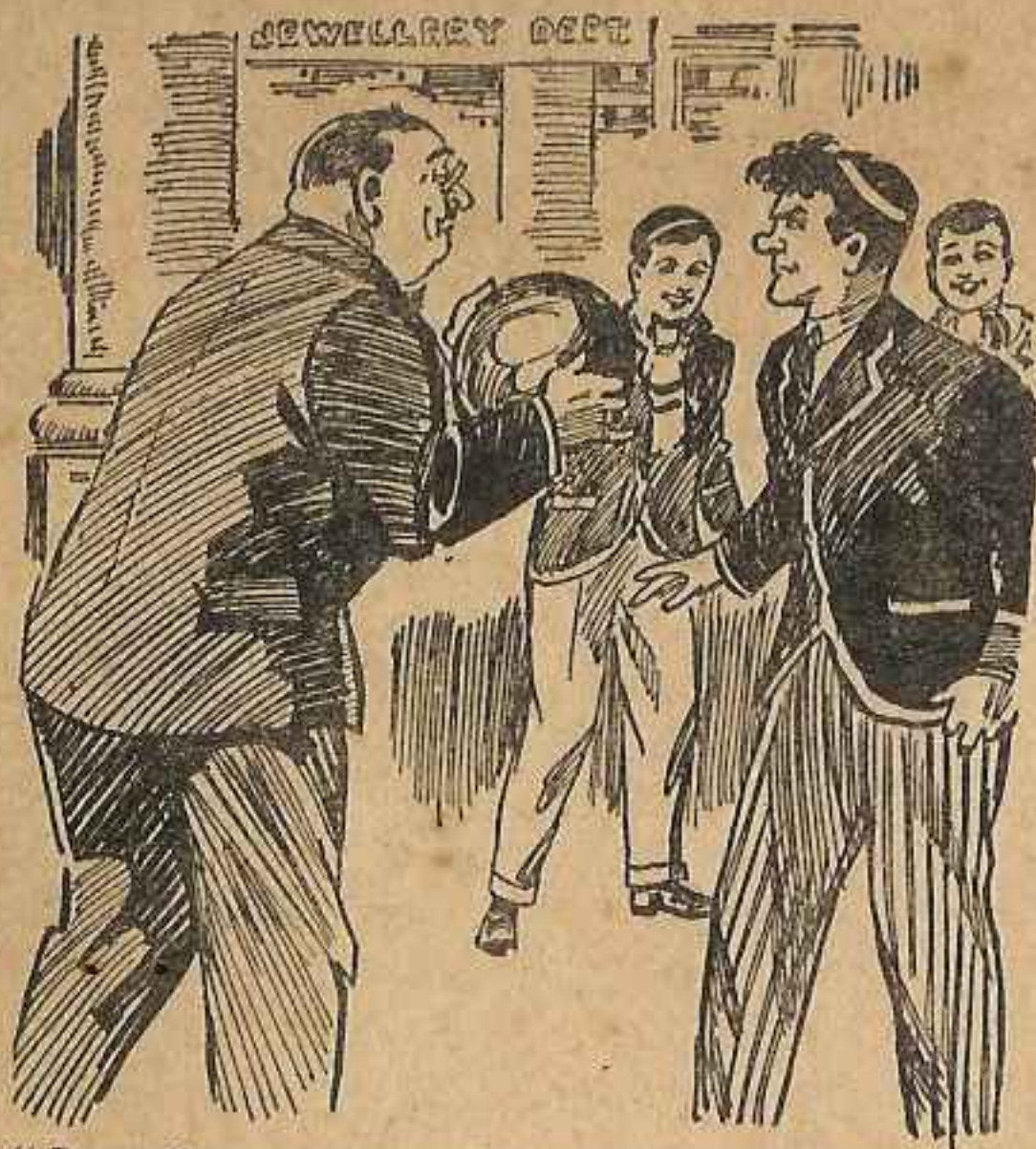
### THE THIRD CHAPTER STATIONERY DEPARTMENT

FISHER T. FISH was hoarse with wrath and anxiety. He held a Christmas card in a trembling hand, and pointed a bony finger at a small pencilled price in one corner.

"Can't you read, doggone you?" he howled.



Plonk! The football flew. But it never went where Coker aimed it. Instead, it landed squarely on the head of a man who had just bustled out of the jewellery department.



"Pray allow me to present you with the football, free of charge," said the manager to Coker. "You deserve it for your great presence of mind."

"I guess it's marked here three-ha'pence, and you've charged me two-pence for it. You figure I'm gonna let you cinch that extra ha'penny? Not so's you'd notice it. I'll mention that I'm waiting right here for a ha'penny change. You hear me yawp?"

It was impossible to avoid hearing Fishy yawp. His agitated voice rang through the room and attracted the attention of a crowd of shoppers. Fishy cared nothing for that. He had been done—he, a spry galoot raised in Noo Yark, had been cheated out of a ha'penny. But if Chunkley's thought they were getting away with that, Fishy would like to be there to see them do it.

"The pencilled price is an error, sir," replied the assistant smoothly. "We have no cards at three-halfpence. Twopence is the cheapest."

"Come off the roof!" snapped Fishy. "Hyer it is, in black and white—three-ha'pence. I guess that

goes. Come across with that ha'penny and I'll scam."

The assistant bowed and went away. She did not go away to get Fishy's halfpenny. She went away because she had had enough of Fishy.

Fisher T. Fish waited with grim determination.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER

### TEA LOUNGE

"Oh, lor'!"

William George Bunter spoke those words from the bottom of his fat heart. He had reason to groan—lots of reason.

Uncle George, whom he had not seen since a child, proved to be a brown-skinned, wrinkled, crusty old gentleman, armed to the teeth with a thick rattan walking-stick. His long residence in Egypt had given Uncle George a liver. He glared at his nephew Billy in a very disturbing way.

"I desire to buy you a small Christmas gift, William," rapped Uncle George. "A very small Christmas gift. Nothing too expensive—I am not made of money. I suggest a book—a cheap book—of adventure."

Billy Bunter repressed a snort. He could not eat books of adventure. His rosy dreams of a grand spread in Chunkley's tea lounge fell to earth with a thud. He had pictured Uncle George as a jolly red-faced Uncle, bulging with banknotes. The grim reality almost overcame Bunter.

"Wh-what about a new bike, Uncle?" he ventured. "I could do with a new bike—"

"Nonsense!" yapped Uncle George. "I am not a millionaire. I saw in the window some fountain pens at two-and-sixpence each—quite good enough for school use. Would you like a fountain pen, William?"

Bunter wouldn't. He steered Uncle George past the fountain pens and landed him in the Camera Department. Chunkley's had a grand display of cameras, from mere toys at five guineas to cine-cameras at one hundred and fifty pounds. Bunter blinked at them. He did not want a camera, but he could sell such a thing to Fisher T. Fish for a tenth of its value.

"I—I say, Uncle—I'd rather like a camera——"

It was a tentative shot, but it told.

"Certainly, William, if you prefer it." Uncle George marched to the counter. "I wish to buy a camera. You have some small pin-hole cameras in the window at two-and-sixpence each. One of those will be suitable."

Evidently two-and-sixpence was Uncle George's top price.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter under his breath.

He accepted the camera with a grunt of thanks. Then he steered Uncle George into the tea lounge in a last despairing effort.

"Would—would you like a feed after your journey, uncle?" he ventured hopelessly.

Uncle George glanced at his watch.

"I cannot stop, William. I have an appointment with a lawyer at four-thirty. I will leave you here until I return——"

"Eh?"

"You may make a light meal while I am gone—a very light meal. A cup of tea and a mince pie should be ample. I will pay the bill when I come back."

"Oh, crikey!"

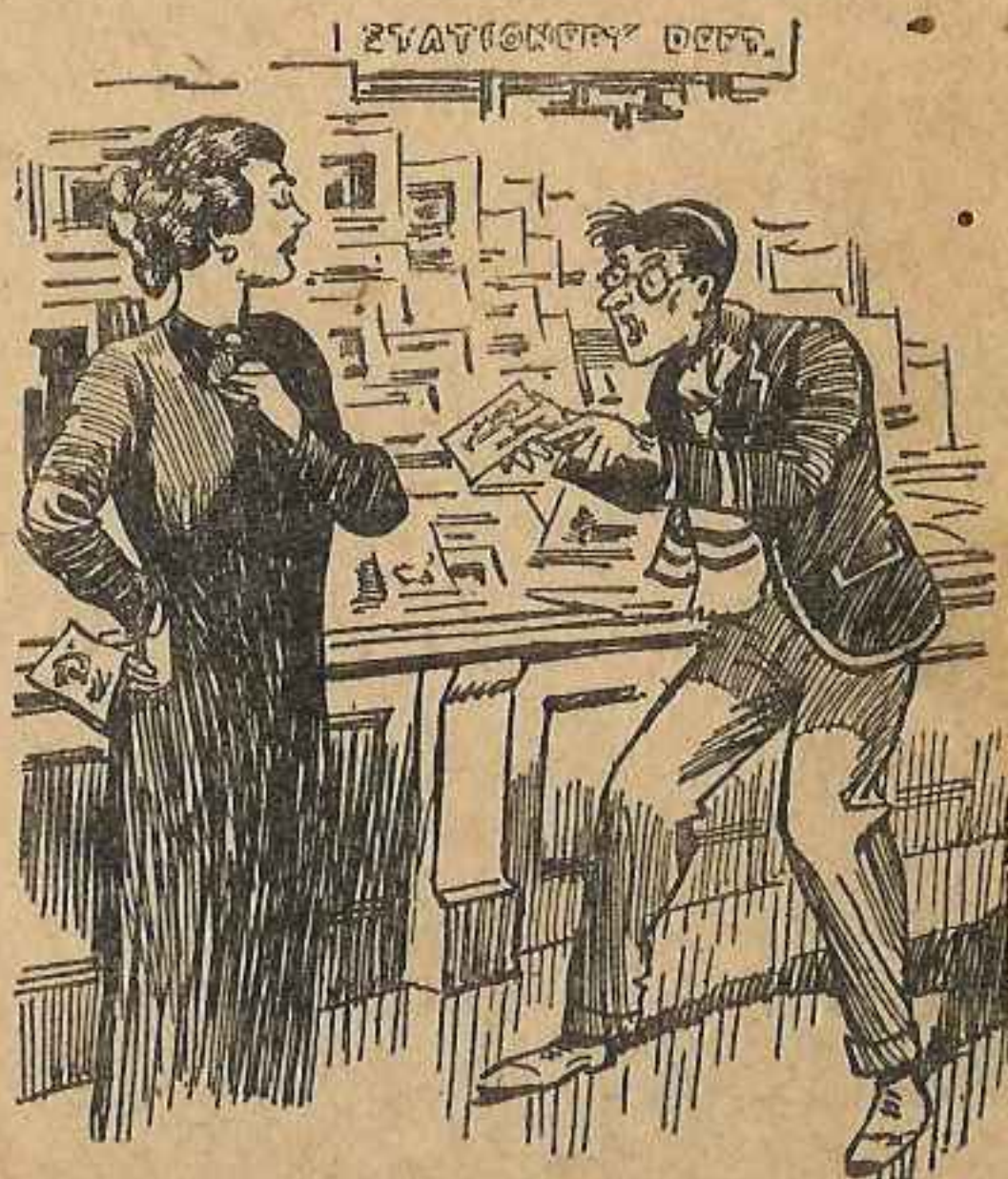
Leaving Bunter alone in Chunkley's lounge was like leaving a tiger in charge of an infants' school. The cup of tea and mince pie vanished almost

before Bunter knew they had arrived. Strictly speaking, Bunter had now only to wait for his uncle's return, but he considered that Uncle George could not object to just one more mince pie.

They were very nice mince pies. They were, in fact, delicious. Bunter could not quite say how it was he came to devour seven of them. The plain fact was that he did!

While thinking over this problem, he ordered some chocolate eclairs. He realised that he dared not run up a big bill for his uncle to meet, so he ordered some stuffed dates. He couldn't bear the thought of Uncle George getting busy with that walking-stick, so he ordered some Christmas cake.

When Bunter came to the surface again, he had accounted for not less than twenty-shillingworth of food, and his appetite was as keen as ever.



"Can't you read, doggone you!" howled Fishy. "I guess this Christmas card's marked three-ha'pence, and you've charged me twopence for it!"

Twenty shillings! One pound!  
Bunter shuddered.

He eyed the good things on the counter with anguish, but he dared not go any farther. He had already gone too far.

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He sat shuddering, waiting for Uncle George.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER

### TOBACCO DEPARTMENT

"A TEN-SHILLING box of cigarettes, please."

Harold Skinner gave his order boldly. Chunkley's cigarettes were going at a bargain price—or what Chunkley's called a bargain price. Skinner, Snoop and Stott thought it a happy idea to take advantage of this fact to lay in their Christmas supply.

The assistant glanced inquiringly at Skinner.

"Are you over sixteen years of age?"

"Yes, all three of us."

This was deep of Skinner. Individually, none of them was sixteen, but collectively their ages certainly made a total of a lot more than sixteen. Snoop and Stott grinned as they heard their leader's reply.

The cigarettes were made into a parcel.

"Here, you fags!" Skinner & Co. turned to see Horace Coker come in. "Seen Potter and Greene anywhere?"

Coker was searching for his faithless chums, who had vanished since the football incident.

"No," growled Skinner, glaring at Coker vengefully.

Coker gave them a stern look.

"What are you in here for, you young sweeps?" he demanded. "Been buying cigarettes, eh?"

"Go and eat coke!" snarled Skinner.

That was enough for Coker. He charged across the room as the three Removites nipped out of the door. Coker hurtled after them.

Outside the door there was a grinding collision, as Coker met Loder of the Sixth amidships. Loder, as a matter of fact, was just dodging into the Tobacco Department to pick up some of that brilliant line of cigarettes himself. He sat down suddenly as Coker crashed.

"Yooooop!"

"Whooooop!"

"You—you dangerous idiot!" yelled Loder furiously. "You—hare-brained lunatic!"

"What did you get in the way for?" raved Coker.

Loder picked himself up, gasping, and gave Coker a fiendish glare.

"What are you doing in the Tobacco Department?" he rapped. "I warn you, Coker—come back! Coker!"

But Coker, after a fiery glare at Loder, had rushed away to find Skinner.

Loder was left gasping.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER

### TEA LOUNGE

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Bunter squeaked joyfully as Harry Wharton & Co. came into the tea lounge. The fat Owl of the Remove was racking his brains to find some way out of his terrible situation. He dared not let a bill of twenty shillings meet his Uncle George's eye.

Now he saw his way out. He would invite the Famous Five to a spread and then slide off, leaving them to pay the bill. Bunter had skill in such matters. He knew Wharton's lot would pay rather than face a row.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" boomed Bob



Cherry. "Going strong, old fat man?"

"Come and sit down, you chaps!" called Bunter cheerily. "Have tea with me. My treat, you know!"

"Can't afford it," replied Bob regretfully. "Only well-to-do people like Bunters can feed here."

"Ha, ha ha!"

"It's all right, you know," urged Bunter, fairly pulling Bob into a chair. "My Uncle George is paying the bill. He told me to invite any friends I liked."

"Where is your uncle, you fat spoofer?"

"Gone out to see some beastly lawyer. He's coming back to pay the bill. Sit down, old beans!"

Harry Wharton hesitated.

"Well, if you mean it, Bunter——"

"My dear chap, jolly glad to have you. That's all right."

"Well, then—thanks. My hat! Your Uncle George is a life-saver."

The Famous Five dumped a mound of parcels on the floor and waded in. Billy Bunter joined them. Since he was going to let them pay the bill, he saw no reason for not having a good feed.

Good things flowed to Bunter's table in a delicious stream. The bill went up by leaps and bounds, like a mountain goat. The Famous Five enjoyed that spread.

"I must say, this is corn in Egypt—seeing that we're all stony," grinned Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter jumped—and choked.

"Groohoop!" he swallowed frantically. "S-s-stony! Did—did you say you were stony?"

"Busted to the wide!" sighed Bob Cherry. "We've spent all our tin on Christmas presents."

"The bustfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Singh sadly. "The esteemed

money takes unto itself the wingfulness."

Bunter sat dumbfounded, glaring at the mound of parcels. It had not occurred to him that the Famous Five had spent all their money and were only passing through the tea lounge on their way out. Harry Wharton rose cheerily.

"Jolly decent of your Uncle George," he said. "Give him our thanks, old man—and tell him we'll give him a feed in the study if he likes to call at Greyfriars."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Johnny Bull.



"I cannot stop, William," said Uncle George. "I have an appointment with a lawyer at four-thirty. I will leave you here until I return. You may make a light meal while I'm gone."

The Famous Five moved away. Bunter said nothing. He couldn't. The power of speech was denied him. The idea that he had fed five fellows, as well as himself, at Uncle George's expense made the room swim before Bunter's eyes.

The position was growing desperate.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

### STATIONERY DEPARTMENT

"Now then, what is the matter here?"

The manager had been sent for. He came bustling into the crowd around the stationery counter. Fisher T. Fish thrust a Christmas card under his nose.

"You see that card?" hooted Fishy.

"Certainly, sir. What is wrong with it?"

"See the price on it?" demanded Fishy. "Is that, or is that not, three-ha'pence? This dame allows that you ain't got cards hyer under twopence. I'm telling you, big boy, that this card sure is marked three-ha'pence, and



Good things flowed to Bunter's table in a delicious stream, and the bill went up by leaps and bounds. The Famous Five enjoyed that spread.

I'll mention I'm waiting for a ha'-penny change. Got that?"

"This is a twopenny card, sir."

"Can it!" howled Fishy. "Pack it up and sit on the lid! I'm waiting

right hyer till I get my just doos. Get that into your cabeza, will you?"

The manager bowed and went away. He also had had enough of Fishy.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

### TEA LOUNGE

"Look here, we've got lots of money left. Let's have tea."

Harold Skinner was the speaker. Snoop and Stott looked doubtful.

"They charge you such a frightful lot in here," objected Snoop. "Let's go along to the Bunshop."

They were standing by a large palm-tree in Chunkley's tea lounge. A pair of big glasses gleamed round the palm-tree. Bunter had heard their words and they were music to his fat ears.

Bunter, in fact, was going to try it on again. If Skinner had lots of money he was the man to pay the bill.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo! There's a stray porpoise in here," remarked Skinner. "Get back to the Zoo Department before they miss you."

"Oh, really, Skinner! I say, you chaps, sit down! My treat!"

"Gammon!"

"Honour bright!" gasped Bunter eagerly. "I've had a whacking tip from my Uncle George—I told you I was meeting him. Sit down and have tea, old beans."

Skinner & Co. met each other's eyes. Everyone at Greyfriars had heard of Uncle George, the Egyptian millionaire—or so Bunter called him. It seemed a safe thing to Skinner.

"Let's," he said, and they sat down.

Bunter beamed. At last that troublesome matter of the bill would be settled. He would slide off in a

few moments and leave Skinner to pay. But first he took the chance to have a little more food.

The quartet, in happy spirits, wrought great havoc among Chunkley's delicacies, while the bill soared up like a rocket. But that happy meal was destined to have a sudden ending.

Coker of the Fifth strode into the tea lounge, still in search of Potter and Greene. His eye pierced through the room and rested on Skinner, Snoop and Stott. He strode across.

"So you're here, you cheeky young sweeps!" bawled Coker. "Well, I'm going to knock your heads together—see? That'll teach you to cheek a Fifth-form man."

"Look here—yarooooop!" yelled Skinner fiendishly, as Coker banged his head against Snoop's.

By way of rounding the thing off, Coker jammed Stott's head against Bunter's, and two more fearful yells rang through the lounge.

"Now," said Coker grimly, taking up Skinner's package, "I'm going to examine this."

"Leave that alone, you crass idiot!" howled Skinner.

Coker gave him a shove and he collapsed.

"I suspect you of buying cigarettes," he snapped, wrenching off the brown paper. "I intend to look into the matter."

"Can't you mind your own business?" grated Snoop. "You're not a prefect, you cad!"

Coker's brow darkened as he surveyed Skinner's cigarette bargain.

"Disgraceful!" he said. "My hat! You young sweeps want a jolly good thrashing. Well, I shall confiscate these cigarettes. I hope it'll teach you a lesson."

He put the package under his arm



Coker jammed Stott's head against Bunter's, and two fearful yells rang through the lounge.

and marched off. Skinner & Co. exchanged dazed looks.

"Ten bob's worth of cigarettes—and he pinches them!" raved Skinner. "He's not getting away with this. After him!"

Bunter jumped.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"After him!" agreed Snoop, and the three rushed away, leaving Bunter quite pallid with anxiety.

Again his scheme had failed. Nine fellows had now fed at Uncle George's expense. At this rate, he would soon have stood treat to the entire school.

"Oh scissors!" moaned Bunter.

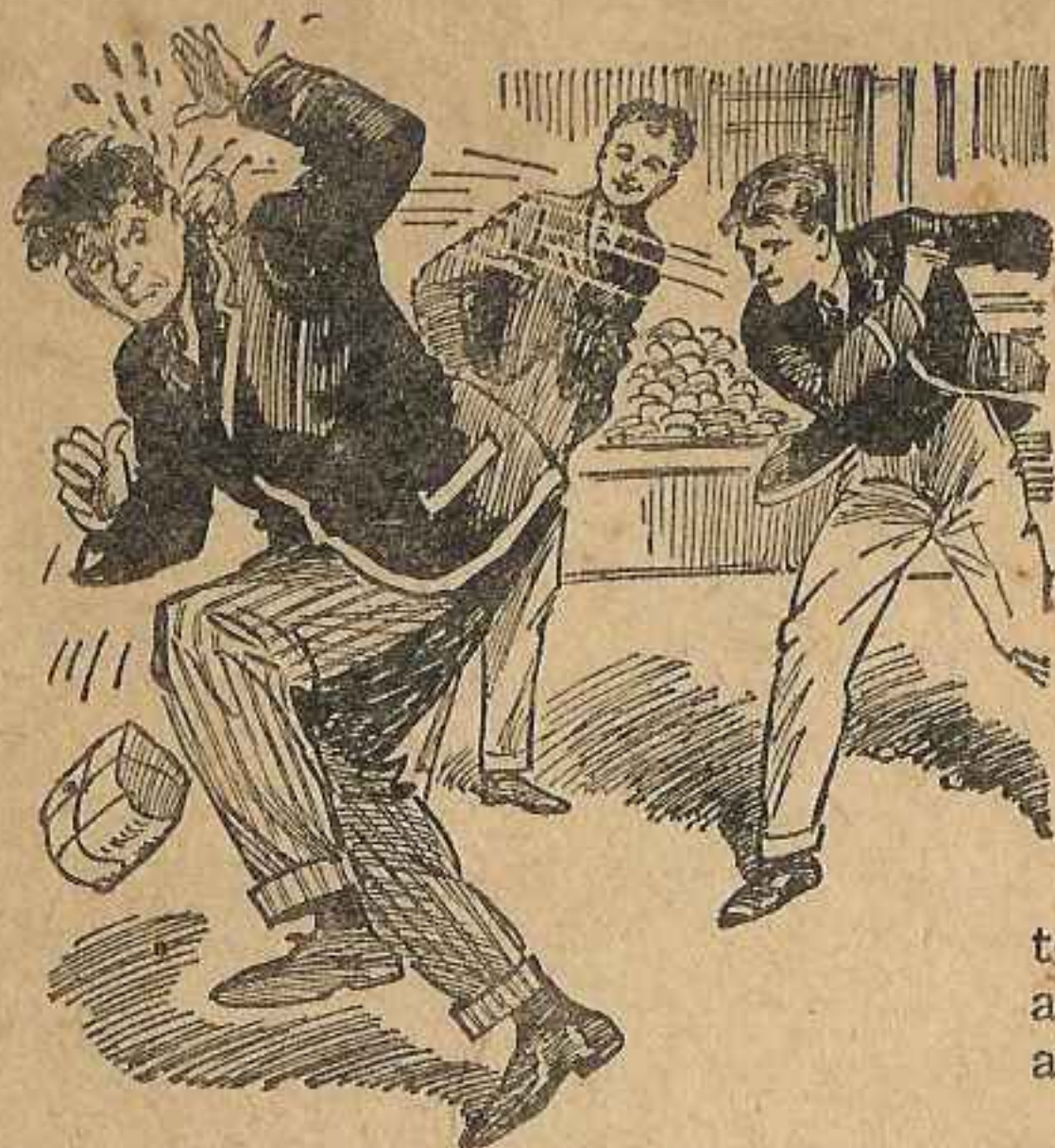
He almost collapsed into his chair.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER

### FRUIT DEPARTMENT

"COKER!" rapped Loder of the Sixth.

Loder was in the Fruit Department when Coker bustled in, still seeking Potter and Greene.



Skinner raised the orange and let fly. Squelch! Right on the back of Coker's neck it burst.

"Don't bother!" yapped Coker peevishly. "Unless you've seen Potter and Greene. Have you?"

Loder's eyes gleamed at him.

"I spoke to you just now outside the Tobacco Department," he snapped. "I asked what you had been buying there. Are you going to answer me?"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" roared Coker, turning away.

Loder trembled with wrath. He would have loved to grasp Coker by the collar and force him to reply. Theoretically he was entitled to do so, as a prefect; but the trouble was that Coker might hit out. And no amount of punishment to Coker would mend Loder's broken nose.

Skinner peered round a mountain of ripe oranges. His eyes gleamed at Coker. Stealthily he took out sixpence and bought a couple of oranges from the assistant. Then, as Coker turned away from Loder, Skinner

raised an orange and let it fly. Squelch!

Right on the back of Coker's neck burst the orange.

"Bunk!" gasped Skinner. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The three young rascals, revenged at last, bunked.

Coker hardly knew what had happened. He felt something squash on the back of his neck and he clasped the place with both hands, letting out a yell of rage.

"Yaroooooh!"

Since Coker raised both hands to his neck, the package under his arm dropped to the floor. It dropped at Loder's feet and burst.

Loder had been grinning widely at the sight of an orange bursting on Coker's neck, but the grin faded when he saw a regular rain of cigarettes sprinkled over the floor from Coker's package. His eyes gleamed with triumph. Here was proof positive.

"Coker!" he gasped. "Cigarettes, by Jove! I knew it!"

"Who was it?" yelled Coker, as he clawed orange off his neck. "Who threw that orange? My hat! I—I'll——"

"Never mind the orange," grinned Loder. "I've got you on the hop! Look at those cigarettes! You can explain to the Head when you get back what you were doing with them, Coker."

And Loder marched away, leaving Coker to stutter and stutter with fury, as though he would never leave off stuttering.

Then Coker proceeded to wipe the remains of the orange from his neck.

It was really not a happy Christmas for the fool of the Fifth Form

## THE TENTH CHAPTER

### TEA LOUNGE.

"**A**H, William! You may ask for the bill, my boy!"

Uncle George had returned.

Billy Bunter dared not look at him. The wretched Owl, slumped in his chair, yearned for the floor to open and swallow him.

Uncle George signed to the waiter, and the bill was produced. He glanced at it. Then he looked hard at it. Then he glared at it in utter stupefaction.

For two long minutes Uncle George's eyes were riveted to the bill as though it were the greatest natural curiosity in the world. Then he looked at Bunter.

"Thirteen pounds three shillings and tenpence!" breathed Uncle George.

Bunter shuddered. He tried to speak, but words failed him. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"Two hundred and sixty-three shillings and tenpence—for tea!" breathed Uncle George. "William—is it—is it remotely possible that you have consumed this amount of provender at my expense? Is it within the remotest bounds of possibility that you have run up this enormous account for food? Answer me!" shrieked Uncle George.

Bunter tried to answer him, but his tongue wouldn't move. For ten seconds he gazed in horror at Uncle George. Then he spun round and fled for his life.

"Upon my word! William!"

But Bunter was not. He had stood not upon the order of his going, but had gone—like the wind!

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

### THE ROAD HOME

**A**LL good things come to an end. Through the darkness the school tramped back cheerily—or wearily—to call-over at Greyfriars.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Coker again!" chortled Bob Cherry gaily. "Merry Christmas, Coker! What about a game of leap-frog?"

Coker did not heed—did not even hear. He was treating Potter and Greene to words of burning eloquence.

"Me, you know!" he was roaring. "That rotten toad thinks I was buying cigarettes. Me, you know!"

"Too bad!" murmured Potter.

"I'm to be reported to the Head!" breathed Coker sulphurously. "Of course, I shall tell him I took them away from a fag—that's all right. But will all the fellows believe it?"

"Hardly," murmured Greene.

"If any chap mentions the words cigarettes to me," ground out Coker, "I—I'll scrag him!"

The three Fifth-formers faded away into the darkness of the Common. Harry Wharton & Co. grinned after them.



Roaring through the night like a Scotch express came Bunter, with Uncle George just behind, raining blows with a thick walking-stick on Bunter's ample frame.

"Poor old Coker!" chuckled Wharton. "I hear he made a dozen fearful shindies in Chunkley's this afternoon. Well, if a fellow will ask for it——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"Look out — here's Loder!" growled Johnny Bull. "The rotter looks pleased with himself. Let's dodge into the bushes and land a snowball on him!"

"Good egg!"

Which was duly done, and Loder, who had been smirking in a pleasant temper, went on his way scowling—in a very unpleasant temper indeed.

"Hallo, my esteemed Skinner!" greeted Hurree Singh, as the three black sheep passed. "Wherefore that wrinkled browfulness?"

Skinner slouched on without replying.

"I hear that brute Loder spotted the cigarettes," he was mumbling to Snoop. "That means Coker will be hauled on the carpet, and he'll have to say he took them from us. Ten to one we'll bag a licking from the Head."

Snoop and Stott nodded gloomily. Their only consolation was that, anyway, Coker had had the orange.

"Yaroooop! Whooooop! Moooh!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, startled.

Roaring through the night like a Scotch express came the fat figure of Billy Bunter. He was putting on a speed that was really amazing, and his yells echoed far and wide over Courtfield Common.

Just behind him raced the figure of Uncle George. A thick rattan walking-stick was raining blows on Bunter's

ample frame. Uncle George's stay in Egypt had evidently given him terrific energy, for he was racing like a greyhound and whacking like an automatic carpet-beater.

They vanished swiftly into the night, Bunter's ear-splitting yells growing fainter in the distance.

"Great pip!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Looks like trouble in the Bunter family circle. What's that fat frog been doing?"

"Whatever he's been doing, he's sorry for it now," chortled Johnny Bull.

In great spirits, the Remove chums went back to Greyfriars, and meeting Temple & Co., of the Upper Fourth, in Friardale Lane, a snow-fight was the order of the day. Then, loaded with parcels, they went into school, quite satisfied with their merry Christmas shopping expedition to Chunkley's.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

### CONCLUSION.

CHUNKLEY'S was dark and deserted. "The lights were fled, the garlands dead," as the poet puts it. The cheery shopping crowd had departed. The staff had gone home. One solitary light was left burning. One solitary assistant was still arguing with one solitary customer.

"I'm telling you for the fiftieth time," bawled Fisher T. Fish, "that I ain't going without my rightful doos. I allow I'm waiting for a ha'penny change. Aw, come on—a ha'penny won't break you! Gimme my change and let me scam!"

Fisher T. Fish was evidently going to spend Christmastime at Chunkley's!