


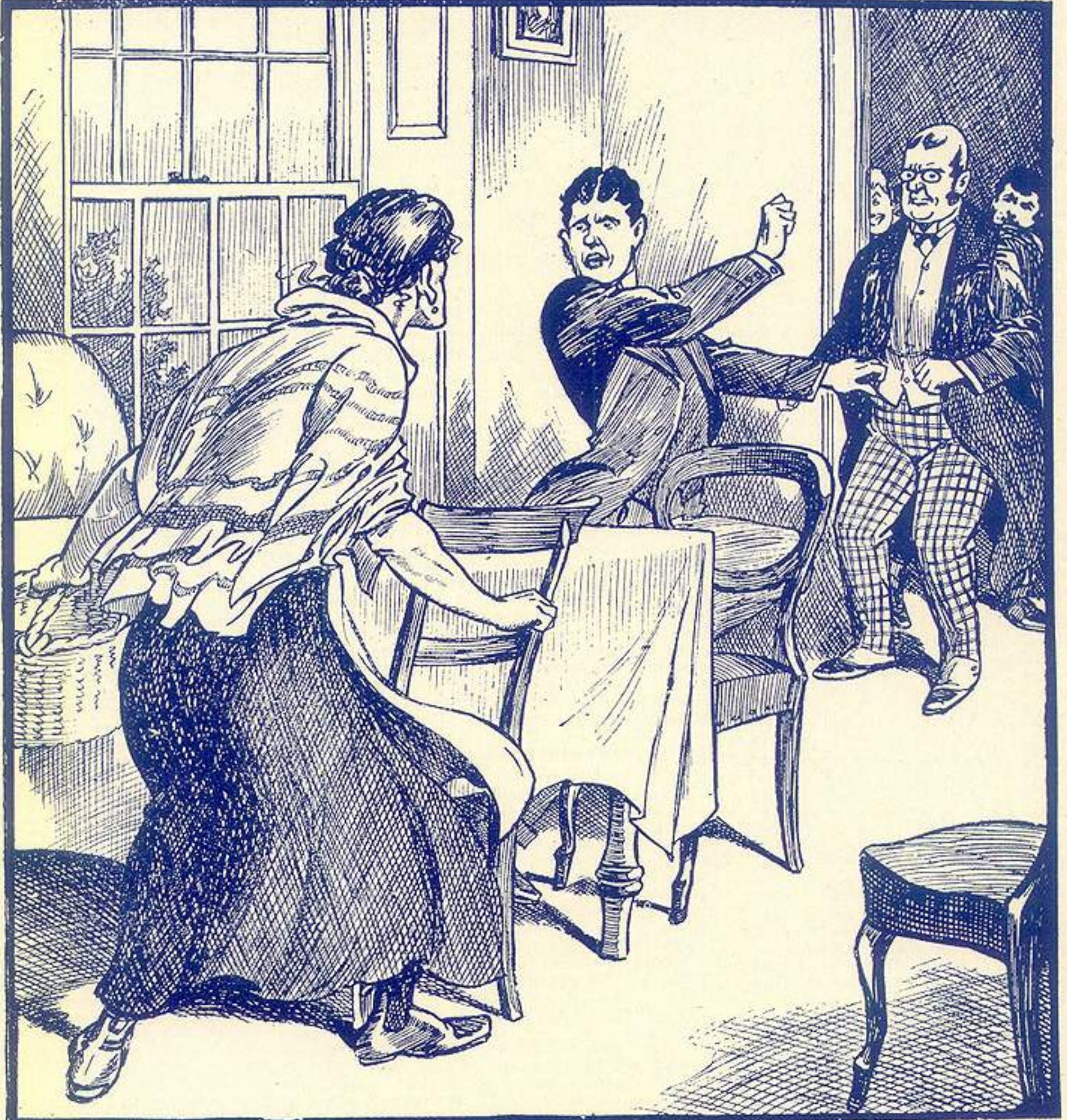

THE GREYFRIARS ORGANISER!



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COKER IN TROUBLE!

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THE GREYFRIARS ORGANISER!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Very Important!

"COKER again!"
"Good old Coker!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove, coming in from cricket practice, found quite a crowd gathered before the notice-board in the hall.

The crowd seemed to be in a merry mood. There was evidently something on the notice-board that excited their merriment. And the Famous Five bore down on them at once.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's on?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Coker again!" chuckled Squiff.

"Well, let a chap see!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Do you mind if I biff you with my bat, Bunter?"

"Yaroooh!"

"Well, you're in the way! That your foot, Skinner?"

"You clumsy ass!" howled Skinner, as Johnny Bull's bat clumped on his foot. "Mind where you're going!"

The Famous Five, with sweet smiles, pushed their way through the crowd, and obtained a view of the board.

There were a good many notices there. Most of them possessed very little interest for the juniors. But there was one, prominent above all others, that was very entertaining.

It was written in the large, sprawling hand of Coker of the Fifth, and displayed Coker's own original spelling to great advantage.

The Famous Five grinned gleefully as they read it. Coker of the Fifth was always entertaining, in one way or another. When he played cricket, for instance, he would have brought a smile to the face of the sourest Hun in Hundland. When he played a leading part in a drama produced by the Fifth Form Stage Club, he would have tickled the sense of humour of a hippopotamus. Now he was a little more entertaining than usual. For the notice ran:

"ATTENSHUN!

"Horace Coker, Vth Form, has the honour of calling a Meeting of all Greyfriars, to discuss Work of Nashional Importance. The Meeting will be held in the Rag at half-past six preacisely. All seniors are ekspected to attend, and juniors will be frealy admitted. Horace Coker will take the chare, and preside over the meeting. Every Greyfriars chap who refuses to back up Horace Coker, Vth Form, in his Skeme of Nashional Importance, will be denounced as a slacker and an unpatriotic pro-Jerman.

"(Sined) HORACE COKER,
"Vth Form.

"P.S.—Role up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Coker's getting funnier than ever in his old age!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I can see all Greyfriars rolling up to his meeting—I don't think!"

"Just like Coker!" growled Temple of the Fourth. "Why, it's my idea over again. I started National Service at Greyfriars!"

"You mean, we did it in the Remove!" said Bob warmly. "We've grown better potatoes than you have, and chance it!"

"And cabbages, too!" said Nugent.

"And carrots!"

"The growfulness of our esteemed potatoes was terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Indian member of the Co. "The excellent Temple is talking out of his ludicrous hat!"

"Oh, rats!" said Temple crossly.

"I'm not going to Coker's silly meeting, for one. If he wants to do work of national importance, he can help us with our 'tatoes."

"And us with our cabbages," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth came along the passage with a lordly stride. There was an almost exalted expression upon Coker's rugged face. Evidently Horace Coker was very pleased with his "skeme" of enlisting all Greyfriars for work of national importance. Potter and Greene, his study-mates, were with him, walking one on either side of the great Coker. Potter and Greene wore rather peculiar expressions. Potter was grinning with the side of his face turned away from Coker, and trying to keep the side turned towards Coker very serious. Greene was doing the same. The result was odd.

"Ah! Reading my notice—what?" said Coker, quite affably.

Coker did not generally waste much affability on juniors. He prided himself upon having a heavy hand with fags. He said it was his system. His system had caused many rubs with the Remove fellows. But just now Coker was all geniality.

"Yes, we're reading it," said Vernon-Smith of the Remove. "Don't let your Form-master see it, Coker."

"Eh? Why not? Why shouldn't Mr. Prout see it?" demanded Coker.

"He mightn't be satisfied with the spelling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The spellfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker!"

Coker frowned.

"None of your cheek!" he snapped. "I didn't come here for Remove cheek! You kids can come to the meeting!"

"Thanks, great chief!" said Bob Cherry humbly. "Will you give us some work of national importance, if we do?"

"I'm arranging for the whole of Greyfriars to take up work of national importance," explained Coker.

"You're arranging?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. I've taken the whole matter into my own hands."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Under my guidance, the whole school will line up as one man," said Coker, beaming. "I've thought the idea thoroughly out—"

"You've borrowed my idea, you mean!" hooted Temple. "I was the first—"

"Shut up, Temple! My idea is something a bit bigger than amateur gardening, such as you kids go in for. All of you come to the meeting—mind, all of you! I shall be able to find something for even silly fags to do!"

"Who are you calling silly fags?" roared Bolsover major.

"I may as well mention that any fag shirking will be whopped," said Coker. "I shall not stand any nonsense. Mind, I shall expect every scrubby little rascal of you in the Rag at half-past six!"

And Coker strode on, with his chin well up.

He left the juniors gasping.

Coker's way of putting things was not flattering. His manner of speaking was not calculated to rouse wild enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, it roused great wrath.

Nearly every fellow in the school was ready and willing to help in the great cause of beating the Huns, if there was anything he could do. But they weren't willing to roll up under the guidance of the biggest duffer at Greyfriars—not quite!

"Scrubby little rascals!" ejaculated Johnny Bull, pink with wrath. "My hat! I'll go to that dashed meeting after all, and take my squirt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll all go, and take something to chuck," said Nugent.

"The chuckfulness will be terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Suppose we borrow Gosling's big gardenful squirt?"

"Good egg! Ha, ha, ha!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's suggestion caught on at once. A bucket of water and Gosling's garden-squirt would be most effective at Coker's meeting—that was certain. And, as Vernon-Smith remarked, it was all he could expect of scrubby little rascals.

Coker, quite unsuspecting of the Remove's disrespectful intentions, strode on with Potter and Greene. He strode into the Rag—a big room on the ground floor used for meetings and debates and rehearsals. The room was deserted now, and Coker glanced round it, and nodded with satisfaction.

"All serene!" he remarked. "I thought there might be some fag rot going on here, and we should have to turn them out."

"Aahm!" murmured Potter.

"I fancy it will be a successful meeting," said Coker. "Some of the fellows might think that Wingate, as captain of Greyfriars, ought to take the lead. But Wingate's an ass—not a bad chap in his way, but an ass, you know. A thing of this kind requires a fellow with brains—a fellow like myself!"

"So you're really going to hold the meeting?" murmured Greene.

Coker stared at him.

"Of course!"

"Do you think the Sixth will come?"

"Certainly. I've put it plain enough on the notice, haven't I? All seniors expected."

"Ahem!"

"I fancy the fags will come," remarked Potter.

"Of course they will. I've told 'em to!"

"Ahem! I fancy they'll rag the meeting, too."

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"Eh?"

"I'd like to see fags rag my meeting, that's all!"

"Well, I fancy you'll see it, then."

"You're an ass, George Potter! Let's go and have tea, and don't talk rot!"

Coker strode out of the Rag. Potter and Greene lingered behind to exchange a remark.

"I rather think I shall have another engagement after tea," murmured Potter.

"Same here!"

"No good mentioning it to Coker."

"No good at all."

And having reached that decision, Coker's chums followed him to his study for tea.



"Yah! Pro-Huns!" roared Coker. (See Chapter 2.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Meeting!

"THE liveliness will be terrific!"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's remark was just.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not spend much time over tea. As a matter of fact, there wasn't much tea to spend time over. They were very keen on Coker's meeting—and their own preparations for the great occasion.

Immediately after tea was disposed of Harry Wharton departed for the woodshed, where Gosling's big garden-syringe was kept. Bob Cherry raided a pail, which was filled with water at the tap in the lower passage. Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh sorted out missiles of various kinds to fill their pockets. Every member of the famous Co. was "doing his bit."

The five chums went into the Rag together long before the time for the meeting. Coker was still at tea in his study. The pail of water was screened behind two or three chairs, with the garden-syringe ready. The five were the first on the scene, and their preparations were soon complete.

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott came in next, with several eggs apiece. They had purchased the eggs at Mrs. Mumble's shop—cheap, on account of their age. Vernon-Smith was the next to arrive, and he also brought ancient eggs in a bag. Then the rest of the Remove streamed in, in twos or threes, and nearly every fellow had something to throw.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth turned up in great force; and they also seemed under the impression that the great Coker's object was to set himself up as a cockshy. Hobson came in with a crowd of Shell fellows, to hoot.

The junior portion of Greyfriars was well represented. The news of an intended rag had got abroad, and Bolsover minor led in a contingent of the Third, and half the Second Form came in with Dicky Nugent.

So far as the Lower School was concerned, Horace Coker had reason to feel proud of the stir his announcement had made.

But it was noticeable that the seniors were giving the Rag a wide berth. None of the great and respected Sixth Form had turned up. Even Coker's own Form, the Fifth, kept away from the meeting-place.

Towards half-past six Potter and Greene might have been seen leaving the school gates in a hurried manner. Their chum was not to have their support at the meeting, it was clear. Perhaps Potter and Greene did not like the idea of appearing in public as amateur cockshies.

As the half-hour struck, the great Coker appeared in the doorway of the Rag.

He was frowning. He had just missed Potter and Greene. He glanced over the swarming crowd in the Rag, and seemed pleased to see so many fellows present; but he could not discern his study-mates among them. And he was somewhat annoyed by the prominent absence of the Sixth.

"Here he is!"

"Three cheers for Coker!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

It was a hearty greeting, and it caused the great Horace to unbend considerably. It did not yet dawn upon him that the juniors had attended the meeting for the purpose of pulling his egregious leg.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm glad to see so many of you present. But the seniors don't seem to have come, so the meeting will have to wait a little."

"Won't we do?" asked Peter Todd sweetly.

"Sure, we're waitin' for yez, Coker darling," said Micky Desmond.

"Yearnin' to hear you begin!" grinned Cecil Reginald Temple.

"Go it, Coker!"

"You see, you'll have to wait. I can't waste my time talking simply to fags!" explained Coker.

The meeting chortled. Coker had such a tactful way of putting things.

Coker strode away, and looked up and down Greyfriars for Potter and Greene. As those youths were just then consuming ices in Friardale, he naturally did not find them.

He looked into the Fifth Form studies for other supporters, but the Fifth were all out of doors. They were at cricket practice on Big Side. And perhaps some of them had gone there to avoid argument with Coker. Coker was quite likely to fight any fellow who refused to come to his meeting.

"Slackers!" said Coker witheringly.

He headed for the Sixth Form passage, and looked into Wingate's study. He found Wingate, Gwynne, and Valence of the Sixth at tea there.

"Aren't you coming to the meeting?" demanded Coker.

George Wingate looked up.

"What meeting?" he asked.

"My meeting!"

"Are you holding a meeting?" asked Gwynne.

Coker snorted.

"Haven't you seen the notice on the board?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha! Was that yours?"

"Didn't you see my name on it, fat-head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gwynne. "I thought it was some fag joke, from the spelling!"

Coker gave him a glare.

"Well, are you coming?" he demanded. "I expect a lot of support from the Sixth. I am going to line up all Greyfriars for work of national importance!"

"Great Scott!"

"I suppose," said Coker, with crushing sarcasm—"I suppose the Sixth Form have heard that we're at war?"

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"I believe I've heard it mentioned, bedad!" said Gwynne, with an air of reflection. "A man told me."

"You silly chump—"

"There's the door, Coker," hinted Wingate.

"I want you at the meeting, Wingate!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to want, then," said the captain of Greyfriars, laughing.

"I'm too busy for these games."

"Games!" ejaculated Coker. "This isn't a game!"

"My mistake. I thought it was."

"It's a serious matter of enormous importance," explained Coker. "My idea is to organise Greyfriars!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Organisation is the thing. It makes you efficient," explained Coker. "I'm going to organise Greyfriars from top to bottom, root and branch. Every fellow is expected to roll up. I suppose you chaps in the Sixth don't want to be denounced as slackers?"

"We don't particularly mind."

"Eh?"

"Go ahead—and shut the door after you!"

"Look here, you unpatriotic rotters—"

The three Sixth-Formers rose from the table, took Coker by the shoulders, and pushed him into the passage, and closed the door after him.

Coker stood breathless with rage and indignation for some moments. Then he opened the study door, glared in, and roared:

"Yah! Pro-Huns!"

And having delivered that masterly retort, Coker slammed the door, and went his way. He left the great men of the Sixth chuckling. Coker's idea was that Greyfriars needed organising for war-work and that he—Horace Coker—was the fellow to do it. Opinions seemed to differ on that point.

Coker stared out of the School House doorway towards the cricket-field. He could see the Fifth Form fellows at the nets. He frowned darkly as he saw. Cricket! When the organisation of Greyfriars for war service was trembling in the balance! When he—Horace Coker—was prepared to devote his great brain powers to work of national importance! Fiddling while Rome was burning was really nothing to it. Coker, in great wrath, strode down to Big Side to comb out the slackers.

"Chuck that!" he roared, as he arrived on the ground.

Fitzgerald of the Fifth, who was about to bowl to Smith major, stared at him.

"Chuck it!" commanded Coker.

"You want me to chuck it?"

"Yes, at once!"

"Well, it's a quare idea intirely, but here you are."

And Fitzgerald chucked the cricket-ball at Coker, and Coker uttered a terrific roar as it smote him on the chest. He staggered back, and sat down in the grass.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"—came in a roar from the cricketers.

"That all right?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Yow-ow! You silly, dotty Irish chump, wharrer you up to? What did you chuck that ball at me for?" howled Coker, staggering up.

"Faith, you asked me to. You distinctly said 'chuck it'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I meant the cricket, not the ball, you howling ass!"

"But we can't chuck the cricket at you, Coker," said Fitzgerald, looking astonished. "If you mean the bat, Smith major will—"

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"Certainly," said Smith major, taking aim with the bat.

Coker dodged.

"Chuck it—I mean stop it!" he roared.

"If you chuck that bat at me, I'll— Stop it, you dangerous ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want you to come to the meeting!" howled Coker. "Didn't you see my notice on the board? I'm going to organise you—"

"Phwat?"

"All the Fifth have got to turn up," said Coker. "Chuck this rot at once! This isn't time for cricket. Come on! Hallo, what do you want, Blundell?"

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, strode up to Coker.

"You're interrupting the practice," he snapped.

"Yes. That's what I came here for. I'm going—"

"You are!" assented Blundell.

"You're going at once. If you're more than two seconds going I'll begin on you with this bat!"

"Look here, you cheeky ass—keep that bat away. If you touch me with that stump, Blund—yaroooh!—why, I'll smash you! I'll—Yah! Oh!"

Horace Coker retired from Big Side. A bat and a stump at close quarters were not to be argued with. Like the gentleman in "Macbeth," he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. The Fifth-Formers grinned and went on with their cricket—fiddling while Rome was burning in the most unfeeling way—and Coker tramped off furiously to preside at the meeting, such as it was!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Woes of an Organiser!

"HAIL!"

"All hail!"

That very respectful greeting met Horace Coker of the Fifth as he strode into the Rag with frowning brow.

The juniors were glad to see him. They were getting tired of waiting, and the Bouncer had remarked that the eggs he had brought with him would not keep much longer.

Coker tramped through the swarm of juniors, and reached the table. There he stood in a commanding attitude, with one hand resting on the table and his eagle eye sweeping the assembly. His glance was somewhat disparaging. A fag meeting did not please him at all. He had expected to see the Fifth and Sixth listening spellbound to his fiery eloquence. He would not have been surprised if the masters had dropped in to lend him their ears. The reality was disappointing. Only juniors had come. Coker did not yet know what the juniors had come for, or he would have been still more disappointed.

However, it was necessary to make the best of it. Indeed, on second thoughts, Coker reflected that his great powers of organising would probably find freer scope among juniors than among seniors. Juniors could be "whopped" into toeing the line—at least, Coker thought they could.

"Gentlemen—" began Coker.

"Bravo!"

Bob Cherry dipped the garden-syringe into the pail, and filled it ready. Vernon-Smith & Co. sorted out eggs ready. Other fellows groped in their pockets for various missiles ready! As Hurree Jamset Ram Singh might have remarked, the readiness was terrific!

"Gentlemen, this meeting has been called by me for a great object." Coker referred to some written notes. "Gentlemen, the war with Germany has now reached a critical stage."

"Dear old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He thinks we've come here to listen to war-jaw! Give him a few minutes before we squash him."

"Looking around us," continued Coker, "what do we see? I repeat, gentlemen, what do we see? Incompetence and incapacity rear their cloven hoof on all sides."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"The cloven hoof of official incompetence is floating in the air around us," continued Coker eloquently. "It is our duty to grasp the nettle and nip it in the bud."

"Oh!"

"What this country needs is organisation—"

"With a capital O," commented Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

"And efficiency—"

"With a capital E," added Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Organisation and efficiency are the watchwords," resumed Coker. "Chaps with tremendous organising abilities are left out in the cold. If I offered my services to the Director of National Service, he would refuse them."

"Go hon!"

"If I offered to take charge of the War Office, and remodel it on efficient lines, I should be laughed to scorn."

"Not really?"

"But, gentlemen, there is scope for real organising ability closer at hand. In this school there is great latent force only waiting to be directed." Coker glanced at his notes again. Evidently he had prepared this speech with great care.

"This latent force can be directed into the proper channels by a chap with organising ability—me, for instance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! I didn't come here to be cackled at by fags!" roared Coker.

"Yas, you did, begad!" remarked Lord Mauleverer of the Remove. And there was another chortle.

"Silence! The next cheeky young ass who cackles will get his ear pulled!"

"Oh!"

"I intend," resumed Coker loftily, "to organise this school for work of national importance. Too much time is wasted on cricket and rowing and things. I intend to take supreme charge—"

"Great pip!"

"My orders will have to be obeyed promptly and without question—"

"I don't think!"

"And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are backing up your country against the sneaking Huns. Every fellow is expected to sign his name as a recruit for work of national importance—the said work to be decided on by me. I may add that any junior who declines will be licked!"

The juniors stared hard at Coker. The great Horace had evidently thought the matter out to his own satisfaction. There was only one point he had left out of consideration—the fact that Greyfriars mightn't care to rally round Coker as a leader, that they really might lack faith in his remarkable organising abilities. But Coker wasn't likely to think of a detail like that.

"I am going to organise you," continued Coker, "into labour battalions. Wherever work of national importance is to be done, I shall despatch you to do it. All half-holidays and all leisure hours will be consecrated to this great task. Under my guidance as supreme director! There's no end of things waiting to be done—waiting for an organiser to take the matter in hand. Well, I'm the organiser!"

"Where's your organ, then?" demanded Peter Todd.

"Wha-at?"
"Doesn't an organiser have an organ?" asked Peter innocently.

"Of course he doesn't, you young ass!" shouted Coker, who never could see when his leg was being pulled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the meeting.
"Silence!" shouted Coker.
Bob Cherry jumped on a chair.
"Gentlemen, now Coker has finished—"

"Get down, Cherry! I haven't finished—"

"Your mistake, Coker! You have. Gentlemen—"

"Cherry, you cheeky young villain—"
"Gentlemen, now Coker has finished, I will say a few words in reply. We are all ready for work of national importance, and we're doing it in growing merry potatoes on Greyfriars allotments. The war will be won on the Greyfriars cabbage-patches—"

"Hear, hear!"
"When we want to be further organised, we'll select an organiser who isn't the fatheadedst duffer that ever duffed—"

"Hear, hear!"
"There are too many organisers going about loose at the present time. The country is suffering from an over-dose of organisers. Every chap with a swelled head has started out to organise somebody or something. The Prussians are the most organised people in the world, and the Prussians are getting licked—"

"Hear hear!"
"Silence!" roared Coker. "Gentlemen—"

"It is every Briton's duty," continued Bob cheerfully, "to look out for organisers, and squash 'em as fast as they rise up. Whenever you see an organiser, sit on him! Now, gentlemen, I move that this meeting expresses its opinion of Coker as a merry organiser, and signifies the same in the usual manner."

"Bravo!"
"Fire!" roared Wharton.
"Gentlemen— Silence— Yaroooh! Ooooooch!"

Whiz, whiz! Biff! Smack! Bash! Horace Coker's burly form offered a splendid target. And there seemed to be a good many dead shots among the meeting.

Eggs and cabbage-stumps and all kinds of missiles whizzed on Coker from all directions, and fairly smothered him.

It was a surprise to the amateur organiser. He had not expected that.

Things often happened that Coker did not expect.

Doubtless he had seen—in his mind's eye—all Greyfriars rising in enthusiasm at the word of command. What he saw with the eye of the body, however, was very different.

He saw a swarm of yelling juniors pelting him from all sides.

He roared, and stamped, and raved. He charged desperately at the audience, and Cherry met him with the garden-syringe.

Swooooooh!
"Gr-r-r-r-r-rp!"

Coker staggered back under the sudden jet. Bob promptly refilled the syringe, and delivered a second volley. The Bouncer expended the last of his aged eggs, and Skinner, greatly daring, approached Coker and burst the bag of his equally ancient eggs on the august head of the organiser.

Coker, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, staggered wildly, gouging all kinds of things from his face, and blinking dizzily round him through a mist of egg. And all the time the garden-squirt played on him, till the supply of water was exhausted.

"Yurr! Gurr! Yow-ow! Groogh! Oooooch!"

Such were the remarks of the Greyfriars organiser.

All the missiles having been expended, the meeting streamed out of the Rag, roaring with laughter, and Horace Coker was left on his own. He was left gasping feebly, almost overcome by the aroma of the eggs, and wondering dizzily whether an earthquake or a Zeppelin attack had happened.

It was ten minutes before Coker of the Fifth crawled out of the Rag. The organisation of Greyfriars was indefinitely postponed, and Coker of the Fifth limped away to the dormitory for a much-needed change.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Wrathful!

POTTER and Greene wore deprecating looks when they came into the study later. They had returned to Greyfriars just in time for late calling-over, and they had heard of the result of the meeting.

They expected to find Horace Coker rather on edge that evening. And they were not disappointed.

Coker of the Fifth was decidedly on edge.

He glared at his chums as they entered the study. Coker had spent an hour at least cleaning himself, but there was still a faint aroma of ancient eggs clinging to him.

"So you've come back!" growled Coker.

"Ahem! Yes. Got on all right with the meeting?" asked Potter blandly.

"Did they rise as one man, with wild enthusiasm?" asked Greene. "I can just imagine how your eloquence stirred 'em up, Coker, old man. I suppose practically the whole school's signed on?"

The soft answer turneth away wrath. Coker's frowning brow cleared a little.

"As a matter of fact, nobody's signed on," he said.

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Potter.

"The seniors entirely boycotted the meeting," said Coker darkly. "Jealousy, of course. Wingate didn't like me taking the lead, I suppose. That's the difficulty of a chap with organising ability. There are so many jealous duffers who try to block the way. It's sickening!"

"Revolting!" said Greene.

"You fellows didn't turn up, either," said Coker aggressively.

"We couldn't get back in time," said Potter, coughing. "We—we tried—ahem!—hard, but we were late, somehow."

"But surely the meeting was a success?" said Greene, changing the subject hastily.

"Well, it wasn't! I was pelted with eggs!"

"N-n-not really?"
"I never saw such a gang of slackers and wasters and shirkers!" said Coker bitterly. "Look at the country now! Incompetence and incapacity are floating in the air around us, and when a chap stretches out his hand to nip them in the bud— What are you cackling at, you silly chumps?"

"I—I was coughing. Go on."

"Look at this school. Chaps playing cricket, and growing 'tatoes on the dashed allotments! You can't beat the Germans simply by growing potatoes. What is wanted is organisation! Look at the Prussians—they're organised to the last bootlace—"

"But that 'don't seem to help them much," said Potter. "They're getting it in the neck, all the same."

"Yes, if you take Prussia as an example, it really does seem that the

more you're organised the more you get it in the neck!" remarked Greene. "I'll back British brains against Prussian machines any day in the week!"

Coker snorted.

"I tell you what is wanted is organisation, and you needn't jaw!" he said. "Some chaps have organising ability; some haven't. I happen to have it. I don't brag of it; but there you are! Under my guidance, all Greyfriars could be organised, from the head of the Sixth down to the youngest fag, and ready for war-work. Think of that!"

"What war-work?"

"Oh, any war-work!" said Coker irritably. "What a fellow you are for talking, Potter! You'd argue the hind leg off a mule!"

"I see—you've got it all mapped out," said Potter admiringly. "You've planned war-work for the fags of the Second Form? It's splendid, Coker! What are the fags to do?"

"I—I haven't thought that bit out yet," said Coker, after a pause. "Of course, details will be filled in later. The thing is to get the school organised. The whole country ought to be organised. That means efficiency."

"What is efficiency, exactly?" asked Greene.

"Efficiency is—is—is being efficient, you know. Ready for anything. Prepared."

"Prepared for what?"

"For—for anything," said Coker.

"What a lot of questions you fellows ask! For instance, suppose the German aeroplanes raided us. There'll be a lot of that, most likely, now they've found their silly Zepps are no good. Well, if we're organised, we're ready, ain't we? When they begin dropping their bombs on Greyfriars, I speak the word of command, and everybody rolls up at once to his place, and we're ready for the rotters—see?"

"And we capture their aeroplanes?" asked Potter, winking at Greene with the eye that was farthest from Coker.

"Nunno! I don't quite see how we can do that," admitted Coker. "Still, we could be organised. Then there's war-work. Suppose the men went on strike at the Courtfield factory—men do go on strike, you know, what with agitators and high prices and things. Well, I call out the whole school, and we go to work in their places at once—see?"

"Ripping!" gasped Potter. "You know all about making big guns, and shells, and things, Coker?"

"Of course I don't, ass! I've never seen a big gun!"

"Then, do you think they'd let you into the factory?"

"Look here, Potter, if you're going to jaw like a silly ass, you can ring off! I've had enough silly jaw. Then there's the congestion at the docks," resumed Coker, who had evidently given the matter a great deal of thought. "Ship comes in loaded with something, and can't be unloaded for want of labour. They give me a telephone-call. I call up a number of chaps. We bike over to the port if it's a half-holiday, you see, and—and take the job in hand. We could devote every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon to that."

"Topping! I suppose the Board of Trade would arrange to have all ships unloaded on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons?"

"If you make any more asinine remarks, George Potter, you'll get a thick ear!" roared Coker, exasperated.

"Oh! Then I'll get on with my prep," said Potter.

"Prep!" said Coker bitterly. "That's it—prep! Never mind about the British Empire!"

"You've taken charge of the British Empire?" asked Greene innocently. "Lot of responsibility for you, Coker."

Horace Coker did not answer that. He glared at his study-mates, snorted, and strode out.

"Poor old Coker!" murmured Potter. "He never knows how funny he is! Jolly queer that it's always the biggest idiots who want to take the command in everything, isn't it?"

"Jolly queer!" agreed Greene. "Twas ever thus!"

And Potter and Greene settled down to work. They had to face Mr. Prout in the morning, and prep had to be done. It was no use whatever telling Mr. Prout that they were helping Coker to look after the British Empire.

Coker, in an indignant and dissatisfied mood, staled away with knitted brows. The reception his "skemo" had had did not make Coker think of "chucking" it—not at all. Coker might be an ass, but he was a stickler. His eagle eye had seen the necessity for organisation at Greyfriars, and he was going to manage it somehow. He walked out into the quadrangle, and a chuckle from a group of Removites greeted him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Still organising?" called out Bob Cherry.

Coker scowled.

"Like some more eggs?" yelled Skinner, and fled as the Fifth-Former made a stride towards him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker strode on, his hands driven deep into his pockets, thinking it out. It was a deep problem for Coker. He paced the old Cloisters, a secluded spot, while he dealt with that problem. He started as a whiff of tobacco-smoke came to his nostrils from among the stone pillars.

That secluded spot was not wholly untenanted. Some young rascal had withdrawn there to smoke a cigarette in safety.

Coker's eyes gleamed with wrath.

The whole school was slack—according to Coker—and slackness was bad enough in war-time. But petty vices were still worse, and Coker was exasperated by that whiff of tobacco.

He strode in among the stone pillars in search of the culprit. Coker often took a prefect's duties upon himself unasked.

"You young rotter!"

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was seated on a bench among the pillars, reading a paper and carelessly smoking a cigarette. He gave a yell as Coker's grasp fastened on his collar.

"Oh! Ah!"

Coker yanked him off the bench. The Bounder yelled again as the cigarette slipped into his mouth. The hot end came in contact with his lips, and it hurt.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Serve you right!" growled Coker. "You smoky, rotten young rascal!"

"Let go!" yelled the Bounder furiously.

Shake, shake, shake!

Coker of the Fifth shook the junior with a heavy hand. But the Bounder, young rascal as he was, was not exactly the fellow to be shaken by a Fifth-Former. He drove out his clenched fist and caught Coker under the chin, and the senior went over backwards as if he had been shot.

"Yah!" gasped Coker, as he collapsed on the ground.

The Bounder grinned breathlessly, and beat a retreat. He was gone by the time Coker was on his feet again. Coker rubbed his chin, and grunted.

"My hat! The cheeky young rotter! Why, I'll—I'll skin him! I'll—I'll—"

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Words failed Coker, and he started for the School House after Vernon-Smith. It was a time for deeds, not words.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot!

"NOW, you young rotter!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Skinner, jumping up.

Coker of the Fifth strode into Study No. 4 in the Remove with a face crimson with wrath. He did not look at Skinner. He made directly for Herbert Vernon-Smith, who had started work at the table. The Bounder rose coolly.

"Now, you sweep—"

Vernon-Smith caught up the inkstand. "Better clear!" he suggested.

Coker did not heed. He rushed right at the Bounder. He gave a yell as the junior, with utter recklessness, crashed the inkstand at him. Ink smothered Coker, and he was hurt; but he was not so much hurt as Vernon-Smith was the next moment.

Whack, whack, whack!

Coker had thoughtfully provided himself with a cricket-stump for that visit to the Bounder's study. Vernon-Smith struggled in his muscular grasp as the stump made rapid play.

Skinner rushed to the door and yelled.

"Rescue! Remove!"

There was an answering shout at once. "Rescue! Fifth Form rotters! Rescue!" bellowed Skinner.

Harry Wharton and Nugent were out of Study No. 1 in a twinkling; Bob Cherry and Mark Linley and Hurree Singh tore along from No. 13; Johnny Bull and Squiff came speeding from the end study; Tom Brown and Bulstrode and Hazeldene were the next; and then came Rake and Penfold, Peter Todd and Delarey, and a crowd of others. They fairly swarmed into No. 4.

They did not stop for explanations. The fact that a Fifth Form fellow had invaded a Remove study was enough for them. It was an affront to the whole Remove—an insult that had to be wiped out at once.

"Collar him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Scrag him!"

"Lynch him!"

"Give him socks!"

"Hands off!" roared Coker. "I tell you—I say—Yoooop!"

Bob's hands were on him first, and then Wharton's. Then there were so many hands on Coker that he almost disappeared from view.

The Bounder staggered away, gasping for breath. The rescue had been swift, but not swift enough to save him from a licking. Coker struggled wildly in the grasp of the incensed Removites. In the midst of a whirling crowd, he was yanked to the door and out into the passage.

"Frog's march!" shouted Wharton.

"Hurrah!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Coker, in a dizzy state, went down the passage to the stairs, bumping on the floor every yard or so.

He was in a decidedly dishevelled state by the time he reached the staircase.

"Roll him down!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yaroooh! Help! Oh, oh! Ah! Ow!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Coker of the Fifth went rolling down, followed by a derisive howl from the Remove.

He pulled up on the next landing, and sat there, pumping in breath, hardly knowing what had happened.

"Grooh-hooh-hooh-hoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" roared Bob Cherry. "Help him down!"

He led a rush down the stairs after Coker.

But Horace Coker did not wait. He had had enough of the Remove. He picked himself up and fled.

In the lower passage Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was hastening towards the scene of the uproar. Coker did not see him in time, and there was a crash as he met the Form-master in full career.

Mr. Prout staggered against the banisters.

"Oh, oh! Ooch!" he stuttered.

"Coker! How dare you, Coker!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "I—I—"

"How dare you!" shouted Mr. Prout wrathfully. "Coker, as a Fifth Form boy, you should have more common-sense, sir, than to play these foolish games with juniors on the stairs!"

"I—I—I—"

"I am ashamed of you, Coker! Have you no sense of the ridiculous?" thundered Mr. Prout. "I am shocked, Coker, to see a senior of the Fifth Form joining in this thoughtless horse-play!"

"I—I—"

The Remove fellows had fled back to their quarters, suffocating with laughter. Mr. Prout was under a slight misapprehension, but he did not give the unfortunate Coker time to explain.

"You will be detained to-morrow afternoon, Coker, in the Form-room, and I shall set you a detention task. You foolish, unreflecting—"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker.

"Not a word! You have caused me considerable pain by rushing into me, and I repeat that I will not allow boys of my Form to join in horse-play with the juniors on the staircase. You are a disgrace to the Fifth Form, Coker! Go at once!"

"I—I—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Prout.

And Coker went. The Fifth Form master returned to his study fuming. Horace Coker went to his quarters in a Hunnish frame of mind. He had aches all over him, and he had been supposed—he, the lofty Coker—to have been joining in "kids' games" on the stairs! It was insult added to injury. And he was detained for the morrow's half-holiday—detained, to work at an uncongenial task, while the task of organising Greyfriars for war-work was practically untouched.

It was too bitter! No wonder Coker, in bitterness of spirit, was almost tempted to throw up his self-imposed task, and leave the war to get on the best it could without his assistance.

But in the Remove quarters there was endless chortling. The honour of the Remove passage had been vindicated by the prompt expulsion of the invader, and Mr. Prout's curious mistake put the lid on, as Bob Cherry expressed it,

*Eat less
Bread*

"Coker—playing kids' games on the stairs! Coker—horse-play with fags!" gasped Bob. "Coker the Great, you know—Coker the Lofty—detained for playing kids' games on the staircase! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites yelled. It really seemed as if Coker, the only born organiser in the school, was destined to furnish nothing but merriment to Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Tip-top!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were playing cricket on the following afternoon, which was a Wednesday and a half-holiday. Wingate and the First Eleven were also playing on Big Side against a visiting team from Redclyffe. Fellows who were not playing, and were not looking on, had plenty to do, for there was work to be done on the school allotments. Everybody seemed cheerful that sunny summer afternoon, with one exception. The exception was Horace Coker of the Fifth Form, who had the Form-room entirely to himself, with only a detention task to keep him company.

It was hard cheese! Potter and Greene had been very sympathetic. They nobly concealed the fact that they were glad Coker had to give them a rest that afternoon. Coker was a good fellow, and they liked him; but since he had taken up the wheeze of organising Greyfriars for work of national importance they could not help feeling that Coker had become a greater bore even than usual. It was, as Potter pathetically remarked to Greene, worse than hearing him talk cricket. Potter was playing that afternoon in the First Eleven, and Greene had work to do on the potato-ground, which he regarded as important even from a national point of view, though Coker sniffed. Coker's soaring ambition rose far above potatoes.

As he sat at his desk in the Form-room Coker could hear the shouts from the playing-fields. They made him snort. The fellows were playing cricket—playing games—instead of rolling up to be organised by Coker! It was almost incredible, but there it was! Coker wondered bitterly what our Allies would have thought of it. Dozens of fellows were hoeing up potatoes when they might have been getting thoroughly organised—by Coker—ready to unload ships on half-holidays! No wonder Coker's look was bitter and sardonic as he devoted his attention to deponent verbs. Coker was very weak in deponent verbs, and Mr. Prout had kindly provided him with those interesting verbs as a detention task. Deponent verbs while the Huns were at the gate, as Coker bitterly reflected! As if it mattered a dot or a dash whether deponent verbs were passive in form and active in meaning in such an hour of crisis! And the worst of it was that Coker was the only fellow at Greyfriars who appeared to realise that there was a crisis at all.

Coker's attention soon wandered from deponent verbs.

Instead of taking the opportunity to master that entertaining branch of knowledge, Coker meditated upon his "skeme."

Apparently his meditations had some result, for he suddenly exclaimed:

"By gad! Ripping!"

His face brightened up, and he pitched his Latin grammar across the Form-room. He was done with that, anyhow.

"Splendid!" said Coker. "I wonder I never thought of it before! The very thing! Ripping!"

"Hallo!" Greene looked in at the Form door with a friendly nod. "How

are you getting on, Coker? I thought I'd give you a look in."

"Thanks, old chap. I've got it!"

"Eh? What have you got?"

"The scheme!"

"Ain't you learning verbs?"

"Blow verbs!"

"Prouty will want to see something done, you know."

"Blow Prouty!"

"Oh!"

"I've got it," said Coker. "I'll tell you about it, Greene—oh? Where are you going?"

Greene was already repenting him that he had given Coker that friendly look-in. He felt that a chap could be too good-natured.

"Fitz is waiting for me on the allotment, Coker—"

"Let him wait! Stop here," said Coker. "I've got it at last. I'm going to let the organisation of Greyfriars stand over for a bit, Greene."

"Oh, good!"

"I haven't received proper support," said Coker bitterly. "The school hasn't rallied round me as I fully expected. Rotten jealousy and envy have been at work, and slackness and shirking. A lot of the fellows seem to see something funny in it, too. I don't know why."

"I—I wonder why?" stammered Greene.

"Well, I'm going to set an example," continued Coker. "I'm going to prove my organising ability. When they see me organising workers for work of national importance perhaps they will line up. I'm going to advertise."

"Advertise!" said Greene faintly.

"That's it," said Coker, evidently much taken with his idea. "You get at everybody by advertising, you know. I'm going to issue an appeal for war-workers to follow my lead."

"Oh, my only aunt Sempronia!"

"That surprises you!" smiled Coker. "Well, that's the idea. Later on I may put my appeal in the 'Times' and the 'Nation,' and big papers like that. At present, I shall keep to local work. My idea is to put the call to national duty in the Friardale paper, and organise the local people. See?"

Greene gazed at him blankly.

"You—you think the local people will want to be organised by—by you?" he stammered.

"Why not?" demanded Coker.

"Oh!"

"I'll draw up the advertisement now. Look here!" Coker rapidly sketched out the appeal, and Greene seemed to be suffering from internal pains as he looked at it over Coker's shoulder.

"ATTENTION!"

"PATRIOTS, RALLY!"

"All patriotic Cityzens are rekwested to kommunicate with the under-sined, for the purpose of being organised for work of Nashional Importance. Age no ob-jeckshun. Anybody can sine on."

"Rite or call pursonally on Saturday afternoon. H. Coker, Greyfriars School, Organiser."

"All patriots sining on will be organised in the most effisient way for war work and beeting the Huns."

"Noter beany.—No consheienshuf ob-jeckters nead apply."

Coker surveyed his handiwork with considerable pride. He felt that that stirring appeal must cause a throb in the breast of every reader, young or old. It was causing William Greene some emotion, that was evident, for he seemed to be in a state of internal convulsion.

"What do you think of that?" demanded Coker. "Make 'em roll up—what? I shall want the study to myself on Saturday to interview the callers."

"You—you think there will be callers?" stammered Greene.

"Lots!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, everybody's welcome—schoolboys, and chaps in work, and old johnnies; everybody, in fact," said Coker, glowing with enthusiasm. "I'm perfectly certain that there's any amount of patriotic devotion in this country only waiting to be organised. It's simply waiting for somebody to take the lead and organise it. Well, I'm going to take the lead. Perfectly simple."

"Oh!" gasped Greene.

"Don't go to that silly allotment, Greene. I shall want somebody to take this advertisement down to Friardale—"

"Eh?"

"It's the last day for advertisements, if they're to appear this week, so I shall want you—I say, Greene, you silly ass! Are you deaf? Come back, Greene!" roared Coker.

But William Greene was gone.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Coker in utter disgust.

Greene, apparently unconscious of the crisis in the country's history, had gone to the allotment to hoe up potatoes, instead of taking the advertisement down to Friardale. Coker was greatly inclined to rush after him, and bring him back by the scruff of the neck. But he might have met Mr. Prout in the passage.

With an angry snort, Coker sat down again to write a letter to accompany the advertisement. After all, he could hail a fag from the Form-room window, and give him the letter to take to the "Friardale Gazette" office. He wrote the letter, folded it up with the advertisement, and placed a half-crown in it.

Then he went to the window and looked out. Dicky Nugent of the Second was chatting with Gatty and Myers near at hand, and Coker hailed him.

"Come here, Nugent minor!"

The fag looked round.

"Hallo, Coker! Where did you get that face?"

"What?"

"Did you dig it up somewhere, or find it in a dustbin?" further inquired Nugent minor.

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared Coker. "Oh, my hat!"

Nugent minor & Co. had been sharing an apple. Dicky now bestowed the core upon Coker, and it caught him in the eye. The fags strolled away, chortling, while Coker rubbed his eye and roared. Like the rest of Greyfriars, Dicky Nugent and his chums seemed unaware that the British Empire was at a critical stage of its existence, and that Coker was the strong, silent man required to pull it out of the fire, so to speak.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Coker. "I'll skin 'em! If I wasn't detained! Blow it, I'm going to hook it! Blow detention!"

But blowing detention was not a simple matter. Coker declared that he would hook it, but he hesitated. He glared from the window, in the hope of finding someone to carry his letter. And he felt relieved when Vernon-Smith of the Remove sauntered by. He had licked Vernon-Smith only the day before, so that particular junior would have sense enough to do as he was told—at least, Coker thought so.

"Smith!" he rapped out. "Come here!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Obliges!

VERNON-SMITH was looking dissatisfied that sunny afternoon.

He was not in the Remove Eleven, and he did not care to look on at the match. He might have

seen taking a hand on the junior allotments, but that did not appeal to him. Neither did he care to join Snoop and Stott in a smoke in the old chapel. He had thought of a run down to Friardale for a game of billiards with Jerry Hawke, but dismissed the idea. The dingy billiard-room, the greasy marker, the bery and smoky Mr. Hawke, somehow did not appeal to the black sheep of the Remove on that bright afternoon.

He was sauntering along by himself, with his hands in his pockets and a deep line in his brow, wondering how he should kill time that afternoon, when he passed the windows of the Fifth Form room, and Coker's voice hailed him.

The Bounder glanced round carelessly. Coker was evidently in the imperative mood, from the tone of his voice. He beckoned to Vernon-Smith as he caught his glance.

"Come here!"

The junior laughed. Coker never seemed to be able to learn that he couldn't give orders to juniors like a prefect. Coker's importance, in his own eyes, was greater than that of many prefects.

"Do you hear me?" demanded Coker.

"I hear you," assented the Bounder, looking round him for something to throw at Coker.

"I want you to go down to Friardale for me, Smith."

"Eh?"

"To the office of the 'Friardale Gazette,' before they close."

"My hat!"

"I'll give you a bob for your trouble," said Coker loftily.

The millionaire's son, with fivers in his pocket-book, was not likely to care much for Coker's bob.

He roared with laughter.

"What are you cackling at?" exclaimed Coker impatiently. "If you come a bit nearer here, Smith, I'll give you something to stop your cackling!"

"You want me to fag for you?" grinned the Bounder. "I'm likely to—I don't think! Got anything else funny to say?"

"You young ass! Look here! Come back, Smith! I—I ask it as a favour!" called out Coker, coming down suddenly off his high horse, as the Bounder turned to walk away.

Vernon-Smith stopped.

"Oh, you ask it as a favour?" he said.

"Of course, I specially want to do you favours, Coker, after the row in my study yesterday!"

"Exactly. I licked you for your own good," assented Coker. "Do stop cackling, you young ass! Look here, I want this advertisement taken to the 'Friardale Gazette' office before they close. It won't go in this week's issue unless it's taken this afternoon. Will you go?"

It cost Coker an eort to say "Will you go?" instead of "Go!" But he was inside the window, and Vernon-Smith was outside, and evidently drastic measures were out of the question. That had dawned upon even Coker.

Vernon-Smith chuckled. It amused him to bring the lofty Coker down off his perch, but he had not the slightest intention of fagging down to the village on a hot afternoon to please Coker. Coker was not exactly a fellow whom juniors cared to exert themselves to please.

But the Bounder held up his hand for the letter. His intention was to take it, and pin it on the wall of Coker's study. It might amuse Coker to find it there, when it was too late to take it down to Friardale, perhaps.

Coker handed down the letter.

"There's the letter, with the advertisc-

ment inside, and half-a-crown," he said. "Get an envelope and put it in. I haven't one here. You can get an envelope in my study. Take it down to the 'Friardale Gazette,' and tell them it's to come out in this week's number, without fail."

"Any more orders?"

"No, that's all," said Coker. "Go at once, and make sure of finding them open. Don't hang about with it!"

"To hear is to obey!" said the Bounder gravely.

"Well, cut off," said Coker.

"Right-ho!"

Coker, in a relieved frame of mind, disappeared from the Form-room window. He sat down more contentedly to deponent verbs. The letter was despatched now, and the advertisement would appear on Saturday morning, and on Saturday afternoon, Coker hoped, the results would begin to come in. If there was any patriotism in Friardale and the neighbourhood—and Coker believed there was lots—the readers of the "Gazette" would not fail to seize that chance of getting organised.

There was, Coker was assured, any amount of patriotic energy lying around loose, as it were, simply waiting for an efficient organiser to come along. All that was needed was to bring the two together—the patriotic energy, as yet unused, and the able organiser. And there you were!

Coker pictured himself organising people right and left, with brilliant results; and when success had crowned his efforts, Greyfriars could scarcely fail to come into line.

While Coker was dreaming these rosy dreams, and making a very occasional dab at deponent verbs, Vernon-Smith was also busy.

The Bounder sauntered away to the Fifth Form passage, to Coker's study. But he was not seeking an envelope in which to enclose the letter. He sat down in Coker's own armchair, and unfolded the advertisement. He was rather curious to know what kind of advertising Coker was going in for. Coker had not told him not to read the advertisement; and probably it would have made no difference to the Bounder if Coker had done so.

Vernon-Smith's eyes opened wide as he read the advertisement. It was not only the spelling that struck him. Certainly that was striking. But that Coker, disappointed at Greyfriars, was seeking to impose his organising energy upon the country at large, was amazing. That Coker could be quite such a duffer as this was really astonishing. Even Coker ought to have his limits.

"My only hat!" gasped the Bounder, staring blankly at the advertisement.

He read it again, and chuckled over it. But he no longer thought merely of pinning it on the wall, and leaving it there for Coker to find later. Other thoughts were working in the Bounder's fertile brain.

He had a score against Coker for that high-handed youth's recent dealings with him, and he thought he saw an opportunity for getting even. Certainly, only Coker would have been innocent enough to trust his business in the hands of a junior whom he had recently licked with a cricket-stump.

Vernon-Smith took a fresh sheet of paper from Coker's desk, and dipped Coker's pen in the ink, and proceeded to draw up a new advertisement for Coker. And when Smithy had finished, the advertisement ran:

"FREE POTATOES!!!

"POTATOES FOR ALL!!!

"A large quantity of Potatoes to be Given Away!

"HORACE COKER, at Greyfriars School, having a large portion of his Potato-crop left on hand, is willing to give them, free of charge, in lots of not more than 7lbs., to anyone in need of same.

"Apply personally to Horace Coker, Esquire, Saturday afternoon. Applicants must remove the potatoes assigned to them. Anyone desiring a portion of the Potatoes to be reserved, may inform Mr. Coker by telephone—No. 106, Courtfield—between the hours of two and three on Saturday."

The Bounder of Greyfriars read that alluring advertisement over, and grinned. He thought it was a good deal more likely to bring applicants than Coker's own advertisement.

Having finished it to his satisfaction, he folded it up in Coker's letter, and slipped Coker's own advertisement into his pocket. Letter and enclosure were sealed up in one of Coker's envelopes, and then the Bounder strolled out of Coker's study.

He left the School House feeling quite cheered up. He had found something to amuse him on that half-holiday, after all.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry met him as he walked round to the bike-shed, Bob's wicket being down.

"Wherefore that sweet smile, Smithy?"

"Jolly afternoon, isn't it?" said the Bounder. "Beating the Shell—what?"

"I think so," said Bob. "What are you up to?"

"Oh, I'm fagging for Coker!"

"Fagging for Coker?" ejaculated Bob. Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Well, you must be in want of something to do on a half-holiday if you're fagging for a Fifth Form chump!" said Bob, in astonishment.

"You see, Coker's ordered me to take this letter down to Friardale for him," the Bounder explained. "It's an advertisement for the 'Gazette.'"

"Ordered you!"

"Yes."

"And you're going?"

"Certainly. Coker's will is law, isn't it?"

Bob looked at him suspiciously.

"You've got some jape on, Smithy," he said.

"Do you think so?" asked the Bounder blandly.

"Yes; I jolly well do, or you wouldn't be obeying Coker's fatheaded orders!"

"Well, don't mention it to Coker, then. Coker doesn't think so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith wheeled out his bike, and pedalled away to Friardale. Coker's letter was duly handed in at the "Gazette" office. The gentleman in charge there grinned as he read it. It ran:

"Please insert the enclosed advertisement in the 'Gazette' this week without fail. 2/6 also enclosed.—Yours truly,
"HORACE COKER."

"It will go in this week?" asked Smith.

"Yes, sir. I'll pass it through at once."

"Thanks!"

The Bounder of Greyfriars pedalled home in a contented mood. His afternoon had not been wasted.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Great Expectations!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were still at cricket when Vernon-Smith returned, and the Bounder put up his machine, and strolled down to Little Side to see the finish of the match. The Shell were playing a good game, and as they were

an older team than the Remove, the latter had plenty to do to keep their end up. As a matter of fact, the Removites missed the Bounder from their ranks—he would have been very useful in that game. A long Shell innings was spinning the game out into the summer dusk. Vernon-Smith was looking on when he was clapped on the shoulder, and he looked round and saw Coker—freed at last from detention and deponent verbs. "You've done as I've told you?" asked Coker.

"I've been to Friardale."

"The advertisement's coming out this week?"

"The man said so."

"Good! I'm obliged to you, Smith!" Coker condescended to add.

"Not at all," said Vernon-Smith blandly. "It's a pleasure to do anything for you, Coker. You have such a nice way of asking!"

Coker gave him a suspicious look, suspecting cheek.

"You can have the bob if you like," he said.

"Keep it towards paying for a strait-jacket," said Vernon-Smith.

"Eh?"

"You'll need one sooner or later, you know," the Bounder explained pleasantly.

Coker grunted, and walked away. He was very cheery at tea in the study that evening. Potter and Greene learned that the advertisement had been duly sent, and they gazed at Coker in wonder.

"You—you've really put it in the paper?" stammered Greene at last.

"Of course! I told you I was going to, didn't I?"

"Ye-e-s; but—but—"

"What are you stuttering about?"

"N-n-nothing. Pass the jam."

"You think you'll get some answers, Coker?" asked Potter.

"Naturally!"

"Oh dear!"

"You fellows haven't much brains," said Coker witheringly. "You're rather lacking in patriotism, too. There's a very surprising lack of patriotism all through this school."

"We do our whack on the allotments, and that's more than you do!" said Greene warmly.

Coker sniffed.

"I've no time for that. Potato-growing is all very well for fellows like you, I admit. But a fellow with ideas—"

"Oh, you've got ideas?"

"That's it. Some fellows have ideas. Some fellows are born organisers. All they want is a chance. If this school were patriotic, and had any sense above potato-growing, they'd rally round, and back me up and let me organise 'em. Organisation is the growing need of the day," said Coker, apparently quoting from some newspaper article. "Slackness, incompetence, incapacity everywhere, and born organisers treated with contempt and neglect. Look what I could do in the Foreign Office, for example. I'd wake 'em up!"

"Oh!"

"Look at the rot they talk. Nobody can make any meaning out of it," said Coker. "I'd put things plain, so that anybody could understand 'em."

"But that wouldn't do for diplomacy," grinned Potter. "Diplomatists have to word things so that they can mean anything, according to events."

"Well, I'd put a stop to it," said Coker. "I'd wake 'em up! But this country is fast asleep and snoring. If I asked for a job in the Foreign Office, I should be refused. They'd laugh at me, very likely."

"I think — ahem! — perhaps they would."

"I've noticed that chaps do laugh at you, Coker," said Greene, with an air of great reflection. "Now you speak of it, I have noticed it."

"Don't be a silly ass, William Greene!"

"Oh!"

"And—and you think people are going to answer your advertisement, and come to you to be organised?" asked Potter.

"Why not?" demanded Coker.

"Ye-e-s, why not? Pass the giddy war bread."

Potter and Greene did not argue with Coker. Argument was useless. They reflected that, after all, there was no harm done, as it was quite certain that nobody would answer Coker's egregious advertisement. The country might be swarming with eager patriots waiting to be organised, but they were not likely to come to Coker of the Fifth to be organised. Potter and Greene were of opinion that Coker would spend Saturday afternoon waiting in the study for applicants who would not materialise. They might have held a different opinion

"Great pip!"

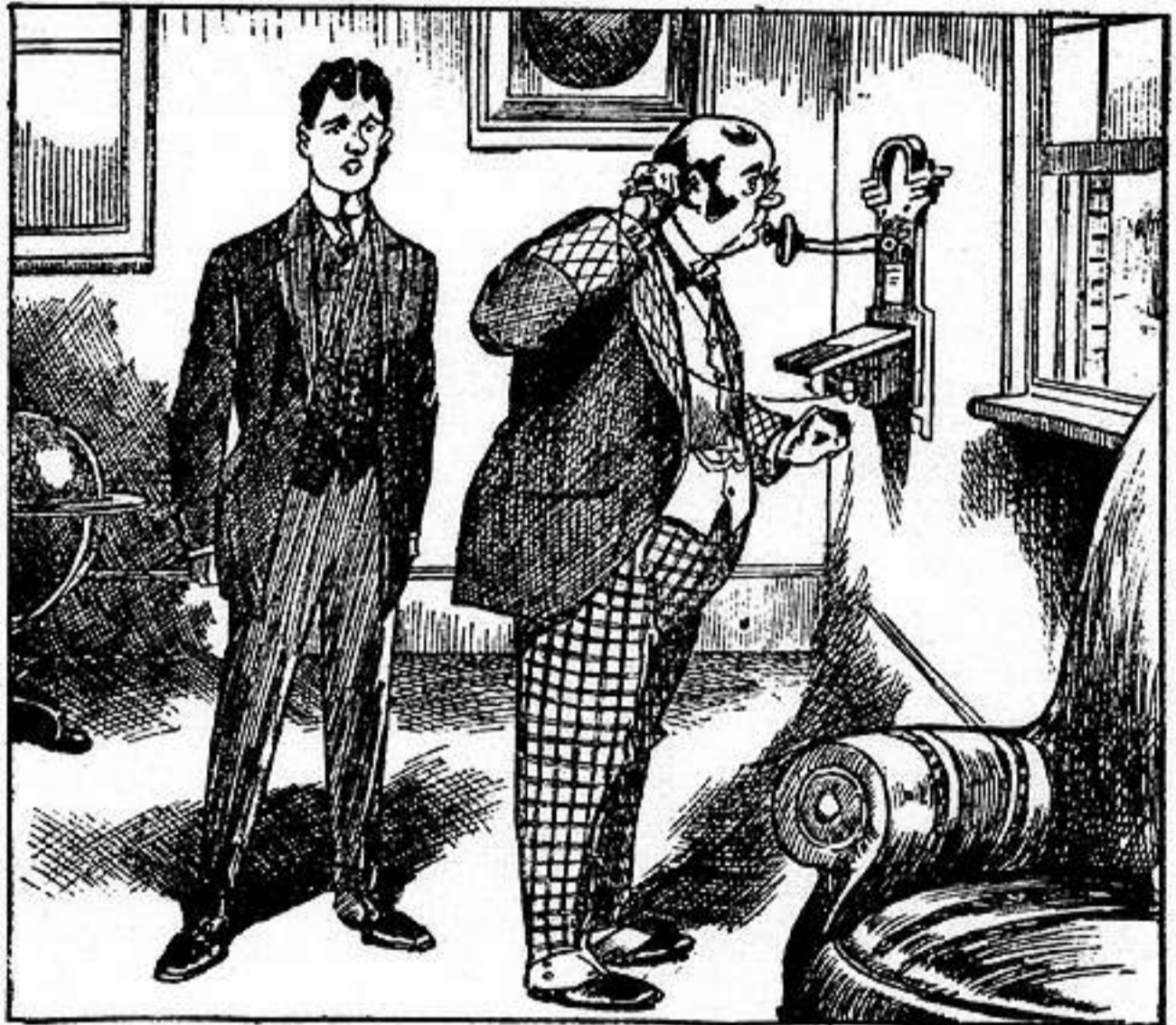
"And I don't see anything to cackle at!" roared Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker snorted, and turned his back on the Sixth-Formers. Let them wait and see!

But he was very eager for Saturday to come. The "Friardale Gazette" was out on Friday evening; on Saturday morning it would be in the hands of its readers. Every unattached patriot in the neighbourhood would learn from its advertisement columns that an able organiser was waiting to organise him, and there could not fail to be a rush. Young and old and middle-aged, the long and the short, the fat and the thin, all would roll up—at least, Coker hoped so. And when the Fifth Form passage was crowded with people yearning to be organised for work of "nashional" importance, then the fellows would open their eyes. Coker felt sure of that!

Fellows who had laughed or jeered would have to sing small, and hide their diminished heads. But in the hour of



Mr. Prout is much annoyed! (See Chapter 9.)

if they had known of Vernon-Smith's improvement in Coker's advertisement. But they did not know.

Coker of the Fifth had a lofty look when he showed up in the senior Common-room that evening. He was thinking of his coming triumph. He did not doubt that it was going to be a triumph. Coker was one of those fortunate fellows who are never troubled with doubts.

"Bedad, and how are you getting on with the organising, Coker?" Gwynne of the Sixth inquired, with a grin, when the great Horace came in. And there was a chuckle from some of the seniors.

Coker gave them a disdainful look.

"Topping!" he said, with emphasis.

"The school rallying round—what?" asked Wingate.

"The school will rally round fast enough in time," said Coker. "I defy jealousy and envy and the detraction of unpatriotic slackers."

"Oh, my hat!"

"At present," said Coker, with dignity, "I am at work on organisation outside Greyfriars."

triumph Coker meant to be generous. He would forgive and forget, and condescend to enrol his repentant school-fellows under his banner. And—organised by Coker—Greyfriars would set a shining example to the whole country—indeed, to the whole British Empire. It was perhaps fortunate that Coker did not know that his advertisement had been used in the Bounder's study as a pipelight, and that quite a different advertisement was going to appear in its place. Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise, and Coker reposed happily in a state of blissful ignorance.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Simply Astounding!

"**B**LESS my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, in tones of annoyance.

It was Saturday afternoon.

After lunch the Fifth Form-master had retired to his study to enjoy a smoke and a book by his open window, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 498.

which gave a very pleasant view of the green old quad.

And the stout Form-master had only settled down about ten minutes when the telephone-bell rang.

A telephone was a great convenience in the study; but sometimes it was a doubtful blessing. Sometimes Mr. Prout had been called from a nap in his armchair to find that someone had given the wrong number. Sometimes he had been roused from a mathematical problem to discover that the cheery young lady at the exchange had rung him up by mistake, and was "sorry you've been troubled."

More than once he had been rung up by Coker's Aunt Judy, who wanted to know whether her dear Horace was quite, quite well.

Mr. Prout laid down his book, and carefully removed the meerschaum from his mouth, rose from his armchair, and trundled across to the telephone. He took the receiver off the hooks, and snapped into the transmitter. "Hallo!"

"Are you there?"

"I am here."

"Is that Mr. Coker?" came the inquiring voice over the wires.

"What?"

"Mr. Coker, Greyfriars School."

"It is Mr. Prout. There is a boy named Coker in my Form," said the Fifth Form-master acidly. "He is not allowed to use the telephone."

"Eh?"

"Boys at this school do not use the telephones!" rapped Mr. Prout.

"I don't understand. Isn't that Courtfield 106?"

"Yes, this is Courtfield 106."

"That's the right number, then. I want to speak to Mr. Coker."

"Do you mean Master Coker—Horace Coker or Reginald Coker? There are two boys of that name here."

"I mean the Coker who is giving away potatoes."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Potatoes."

"Potatoes!" ejaculated Mr. Prout.

"P-o-t-a-t-o-e-s—potatoes!"

"Bless my soul! Kindly hold on for a moment, and I will call Coker. Is it Horace or Reginald Coker?"

"Horace Coker."

"Very well; hold on!"

Mr. Prout put down the receiver on the desk, and went to the door of his study. Vernon-Smith of the Remove was looking out of the window at the end of the passage, and Mr. Prout called to him.

"Vernon-Smith, kindly ask Coker of the Fifth Form to come here at once."

"Yes, sir!"

The junior hurried away. He found Coker in his study in the Fifth Form passage. The study seemed to have been undergoing alterations.

Coker had told his study-mates that he would want the room to himself that afternoon, on account of the expected callers, and Potter and Greene had gone out, grinning.

Coker had stacked the furniture back, and crowded the study with chairs, borrowed up and down the passage. It was clear that Coker expected a good many callers, and foresaw that a lot of them might arrive at the same time.

"You're wanted, Coker!" said the Bounder, looking in.

Coker made an impatient gesture.

"Cut off!"

"Mr. Prout wants you in his study."

"Oh, blow!"

Form-masters' wishes had to be respected, even in war-time, and with the Empire at the crisis of its fate!

Coker impatiently strode away to Mr. Prout's study. Interruptions just then were entirely out of place.

He had tipped Trotter, the page, to

look out for his visitors, and take them directly to his study when they began to arrive. It was extremely exasperating to be called away by his Form-master when eager applicants for organisation might begin to swarm in at any moment.

"You sent for me, sir?" granted Coker, as he presented himself before Mr. Prout.

"Yes, Coker. Someone has called you up on my telephone," said Mr. Prout severely. "You are aware, Coker, that boys are not allowed to use the telephone, excepting on special occasions, after asking permission. Do not let this occur again. You may, however, answer the call."

"Yes, sir," said Coker. He took up the receiver, and spoke. "Hallo! Are you there? I'm Coker."

"Is that Horace Coker?"

"Yes. Who's speaking?"

"Bill Wilcox. Reserve seven pounds of potatoes for me, please."

Coker almost dropped the receiver.

He had thought it possible that some reader of his advertisement had looked out a Greyfriars number, to ring him up. But evidently this was not a seeker of organisation or work of national importance.

"Eh? Potatoes?" said Coker.

"Yes. I hope I am one of the first."

"What do you mean?"

"Put my name down. I'll come along later with a bag."

"With—with a—a—a bag?" stuttered Coker.

"Yes. The potatoes have to be fetched, I understand."

"P-p-p-potatoes?"

"Yes. Don't forget the name—Bill Wilcox. I'll be along during the afternoon with a bag for the spuds!"

"Are you dotty?" roared Coker.

"What the— My hat, he's rung off! Well, this beats it!"

Mr. Prout looked at him severely.

"The potatoes, I presume, are those you have grown on your allotment, Coker," he said. "If you are giving them away I have no objection to make, but you must find some means of communication on the subject other than my telephone."

"I—I'm not, sir!" stammered Coker.

"I haven't grown any potatoes—I haven't had time. That sort of thing is for chaps like Potter and Greene. I don't know what this man means. I haven't any potatoes."

"Then, why has the man telephoned to you?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sir."

"It is very remarkable! You may go, Coker."

Coker went, in a state of wonder. Mr. Prout grunted, and settled down to his book and pipe again.

He had been settled for about five minutes when the telephone-bell restarted after the interval, so to speak.

Buzzzzzzzzzz!

"Dear me!" Down went book and pipe, and up went Mr. Prout, and he grabbed the receiver off the hooks. Well—well? Hallo! What is it?"

"Is that Courtfield 106?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Mr. Coker?"

"Coker!" growled Mr. Prout. "No, it is not Mr. Coker. It is Mr. Prout."

"Is Mr. Coker there? It's about the potatoes."

"The what?"

"Potatoes!"

"Bless my soul! This is most extraordinary! Did you say potatoes?"

"P-o-t-a-t-o-e-s—potatoes!"

"Kindly hold on a moment!" Mr. Prout rose with a grim brow, and fairly rushed into the passage. "Coker! Someone fetch Coker at once! Cherry, go and tell Coker to come here instantly!"

Curiously enough, several Remove

fellows had joined the Bounder in the passage window. True, there was a good view from that window of the tops of the elms in the quad, and a grey old tower beyond. But it was rather unusual for juniors to congregate there. But there they were, and they were all smiling. Bob Cherry rushed off at once to Coker's study.

"Come in!" called out Coker, as Bob knocked. "Very pleased to meet you—Why, hang it, only a dashed fag! What do you want, you young sweep?"

"Mr. Prout wants you in his study!"

"Oh, crumbs! Blow Prout!"

Coker fairly stamped away to his Form-master's study. He was getting fed-up with this kind of thing. So was the Fifth Form-master, and his look showed as much when Coker entered.

"Coker, someone has rung up again to ask you about potatoes. If this is some absurd practical joke on your part, Coker—"

"It—it isn't, sir!" stuttered Coker. "I don't understand it. Must be the wrong number, sir."

"Answer the call, and kindly see that the matter ends here!" snapped Mr. Prout.

Coker went to the telephone.

"Hallo! Who is it? What's wanted?"

"Is that Horace Coker?"

"Yes."

"Put my name down for seven pounds of potatoes."

"What?" shrieked Coker.

"Seven pounds of potatoes. John Jones. Got that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Potatoes."

"Is this a silly jape?" roared Coker.

"What do you mean by babbling about potatoes, you chump?"

"Eh? Seven pounds of potatoes—name, John Jones. I'm passing the school with my donkey-cart later, and I'll call in for them."

Coker fairly blinked at the receiver. He wondered whether he was dreaming. In the name of all that was idiotic, why should a man who was passing Greyfriars in a donkey-cart call upon him for seven pounds of potatoes?

"Well, Coker?" said Mr. Prout, in a grinding voice.

"It—it's some lunatic, sir," said Coker dazedly. "He—he says he's calling here in a donkey-cart for—for potatoes!"

"Have you asked him to do so, Coker?"

"I, sir? I—I haven't any potatoes. I've never heard of the man!"

"It is very extraordinary," said Mr. Prout suspiciously. "Coker, I cannot be incessantly worried by nonsense of this kind."

Coker dazedly replaced the receiver. Mr. Prout pointed to the door, and the astounded Horace had just reached it when the telephone-bell rang again. Mr. Prout jumped up like a jack-in-the-box.

"Stay, Coker! This may be another of your extraordinary acquaintances!" he said savagely. He jerked at the receiver.

"What is it?"

Along the wires came the question he knew well by this time.

"Is that Mr. Coker?"

"No!" roared Mr. Prout. "It is not!"

"Blow my buttons—wrong number, I suppose! Isn't that Courtfield 106?"

"Yes. But—"

"Well, that's the number, then. Isn't Mr. Coker there?"

"Coker, this is for you. Take the receiver!"

"Oh, my hat!" mumbled Coker. He took the receiver—Mr. Prout very nearly pitched it at him. "Hallo! I'm Coker! What's wanted?"

"Put my name down, please—James Snooks."

"I don't know your name!" howled Coker. "What do you want?"

"Potatoes."

"What?"

"Seven pounds of potatoes."

"Oh, crumbs! I believe everybody's gone mad this afternoon!" muttered Coker. "Look here, you silly idiot—"

"Eh?"

"What do you mean by seven pounds of potatoes?" hissed Coker. "Do you think I've got seven pounds of dashed potatoes for you, Mr. Snooks?"

"My eye! Am I too late?" came the anxious inquiry. "I couldn't get through before—another bloke was using the blooming telephone. I 'ope you'll be able to 'and them out, Mr. Coker—we ain't tasted 'tatoes for weeks."

"I haven't any potatoes!" howled Coker.

"D'ye mean they're all gone?"

"Oh, my hat! I tell you, I haven't any!"

"Look 'ere, sir, that's all werry well, but if there was a large quantity, they can't all be gone by this time. 'Tain't much past two."

"There wasn't a large quantity!" howled Coker.

"Then why did you say there was?" demanded Mr. Snooks, from the other end of the wire, in tones of deep indignation.

"I?" Coker stuttered. "I—I said there was?"

"Cert'nly you did! Large quantity of 'taters! Look 'ere, I've blued thrippence on this 'ere call, to make sure of them spuds, and I ain't going to be done, I can tell you that! If you ain't got potatoes to give away, you shouldn't say you 'ave!"

"I—I—I—"

"Think a bloke 'as got thrippences to chuck away in these 'ere times?" Mr. Snooks went on.

"I—I tell you—"

"If you can't make it seven pounds, make it three or four—every little 'elps, and the missus will be glad of 'em for to-morrer's dinner."

"Oh, dear!"

"I'll tell you wot, Mister Coker—"

The voice suddenly stopped, as Coker rang off. He felt that it was his only resource, under the amazing circumstances. He looked quite dazed as he rose from the telephone, and he found Mr. Prout's eye fixed on him like the eye of a hawk.

"It—it's some lunatic, sir!" gasped Coker.

Buzzzzzz!

Mr. Prout gave Coker a Hunnish glare, and dragged up the receiver. His voice went into the transmitter like a bullet.

"Well?"

"About them spuds!" It was Mr. Snooks again. "I seem to 'ave been cut orf some'ow. Will it be convenient if my missus comes along about four?"

Mr. Prout breathed hard through his nose.

"There are no potatoes!" he said, in a grinding voice. "It is a silly practical joke of a foolish schoolboy!"

"Oh, my hat!" mumbled Coker. "Mr. Prout was not far from right, as a matter of fact, though it happened that the unfortunate Coker was not the practical joker."

"Wot?" Mr. Snooks' voice was deep and savage. "Practical joke—wot? My eye! Tell Mister Coker I'll be calling all the same, then, and I'll bring a pal or two with me, to tork to 'im!"

Mr. Prout jammed the receiver on the hooks with a jam that very nearly burst it. Then he gave Coker a basilisk look.

"Coker, this astounding impertinence—"

"I—I—I—sit—"

"This is a practical joke on your part, Coker! You have dared to lay this scheme for worrying your Form-master, sir, during one of his brief periods of rest and leisure. Such a trick in a junior boy would be unpardonable. In a senior of the Fifth Form—"

"I—I haven't—I didn't—I never—"

"Then why, Coker, does person after person ring on my telephone to ask ridiculous questions about potatoes?" thundered Mr. Prout.

"I—I don't know, sir, unless they're all potty," said Coker helplessly.

"Take five hundred lines, Coker, and remain indoors this afternoon and write them out!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Coker limped out of the study. He had scarcely gone, when the bell rang again, and Mr. Prout sprang to the telephone with the spring of a tiger.

"What—"

"Is that Mr. Coker?" came the familiar query.

Mr. Prout ground his teeth.

"About them potatoes—"

The latest applicant for potatoes had no time to finish. The receiver was jammed down, and he was nipped in the bud, probably very much to his surprise. Mr. Prout, with a brow like thunder, proceeded to disconnect the telephone, and after that sweet silence and repose settled on the study. At Friardale post-office that afternoon there was an unusual run on the telephone-box—but everyone who wanted Courtfield 106 found that he could not get through.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Potatoes Wanted!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! You look happy, Coker!"

"The happiffulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were a dozen Remove fellows at the passage window now with the Bounder. They greeted Coker with chortles as he came out of Mr. Prout's study, looking like a fellow in a nightmare.

Coker blinked at them.

"It—it's extraordinary!" he gasped. "People keep on ringing me up on Prout's telephone to ask me for potatoes. I haven't any potatoes. Everybody in Friardale seems to think that I've got potatoes to give away. It's amazing!"

"The amazefulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "How do you account for it, my esteemed Coker?"

"I can't account for it—it must be sunstroke or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker fairly limped away to his study. The cheery Removites chortled after him.

"Poor old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I wonder when he will begin to suspect that you altered his advertisement, Smithy?"

"In about ten years!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "That's the rate Coker's brain works at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The 'phone seems to have chucked it," said Harry Whurton.

"I dare say Prout's cut off by this time. He was bound to get fed-up in the long run."

The Removites chortled gleefully. The Bounder had taken about half the Remove into the secret, and those cheery young gentlemen were highly entertained. They waited some time to hear the telephone-bell again, but it did not buzz. It was clear that Mr. Prout had put a stop to it.

"Pröttv nearly time they began to

arrive for the potatoes, the Bounder remarked. "Ksouldn't wonder if there's a rush! After all, Coker's expecting a rush!"

"The rushfulness will be terrific! Let us be on the spotfulness, my esteemed chums."

The merry Removites took their way to the lower hall to wait for arrivals. It was quite certain that there would be something like a rush. An offer of seven pound of potatoes, free of charge, could not pass unheeded. The early calls on the telephone proved that the readers of the "Friardale Gazette" were keen on that generous offer.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the merry first-comer!" chortled Bob Cherry, looking out of the big doorway.

A man with a sack over his shoulder was crossing from the gates. He was a roughly-dressed man in hobnailed boots, and looked as if a walk in the hot sun had not improved him temper. He came into the porch, and paused to mop his perspiring brow with a red handkerchief. Vernon-Smith came up to him politely.

"Gentleman of the name of Coker 'ere?" asked the caller. "I've called for them spuds. Name of Wilcox."

"Horace Coker?" asked the Bounder pleasantly.

"That's it!"

"This way!" said the Bounder politely.

Quite a little army watched Mr. Wilcox in. He was escorted in great state to the Fifth Form passage. Whurton threw open Coker's door.

"Gentleman to see you, Coker!" he announced.

"Oh, good!"

Coker was beginning on the lines Mr. Prout had given him. He rose from that task to greet his caller. Mr. Wilcox entered the study with a heavy tread, and mopped his brow again. The juniors remained in the passage. Coker gave them a frown. But he had no time to attend to them.

He was was somewhat disappointed in this first applicant for organisation and work of national importance. Mr. Wilcox did not look as if he had ever done much work, certainly. He had a beery and a tired look. Still, if he was bursting with patriotic energy, and anxious to be organised for work of national importance, Coker was the fellow to organise him. Coker was no snob. He would have preferred the caller to be a bank-manager, or a land-owner, or a justice of the peace; but, after all, there was work of national importance for everybody.

"Come in, sir!" said Coker, very politely. "Pray take a seat!"

Mr. Wilcox sank upon the chair Coker offered him.

"Ot walk 'ere!" he remarked.

"Yes, the weather is warm," assented Coker, glancing at the sack, and wondering why the applicant had brought that. "You are not engaged at present, I presume?"

"No, I ain't engaged," said Mr. Wilcox, with a stare. "I'm married!"

"Ahem! I don't mean that. I mean you are not at present engaged in work?"

"I'm out of a job, if that's wot you mean."

"Exactly. You are prepared to give your whole time?"

"Hey?"

"Are you prepared to give your whole time to work of national importance, when found for you?"

"My eye! No, I ain't."

"Ah! Part-time!" said Coker thoughtfully. "Well, well! No doubt work can be found for part-timers. It is only a

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question of organisation! What work do you usually do?"

"Wot does that matter?"

"It is necessary for me to know what kind of work you are usually engaged in, of course."

"Blow me if I see why!" growled Mr. Wilcox. "Arever, I 'elp work on the barges on the river, if you want'er know."

"Good! Then you will be useful at the docks," said Coker. "I shall take down your name and qualifications."

"My eye!"

"You will be called up as soon as your services are required—when my arrangements are complete," explained Coker. "I am sure you will be very useful. I hope to organise shortly a very considerable body of labour to be placed at the disposal of the authorities."

"Mad!" murmured Mr. Wilcox. "Mad as a 'atter!"

"I congratulate you upon having answered the call so promptly," said Coker genially. "You saw my advertisement—"

"The missus pointed it hout to me. I says to 'er, 'It's a blessed long walk,' but she says, 'Go, and don't 'ang about,' " said Mr. Wilcox. "And 'ere I am!"

"I will take down your name and address," said Coker, opening a memorandum-book, and dipping a pen in the ink. "Now—"

"Look 'ere!" exclaimed the visitor, who had been growing very restive. "I don't see wot this 'ere is for. You ain't sending the 'taters 'ome, I s'pose?"

Coker jumped.

"The—the what?"

"'Taters!" growled Mr. Wilcox.

Coker gazed at him blankly. He thought he had heard the last of the potatoes when Mr. Prout's telephone-bell ceased to ring. Evidently he was mistaken.

"Potatoes?" he stuttered at last.

"Yes. Where are they?"

"I—I don't catch on. I—"

"I've brought this 'ere sack for them," said Mr. Wilcox, rising. "By your leave, I'll take 'em and go. Where are the spuds?" He looked round aggressively at the astounded Coker. "Got 'em 'ere?"

"Nunno!" gasped Coker.

"Well, 'and them over, and let a bloke get about his business."

"I—I don't understand. I—I haven't any potatoes," stammered Coker.

"Wot?"

"Have you come here to sign on for work of national importance?" demanded Coker, beginning to realise that there was a mistake somewhere.

"Oh, my eye! No, I ain't! I come 'ere for seven pounds of spuds. Didn't I tell you to reserve 'em for me, on the 'phone?" demanded Mr. Wilcox. "I give you my name—Bill Wilcox."

"You—you're the first silly idiot who rang me up!" shouted Coker. "What do you mean by it? I've got no potatoes for you, you silly ass!"

"You ain't got any potatoes?" roared Mr. Wilcox.

"No, I haven't!"

"You brought me 'ere a mile, in a 'ot sun, for nothink! You mean to say you've given 'em all away, arter I spent threepence on the telephone to 'ave 'em 'eld back for me?"

"I think you must be drunk!" howled Coker. "I haven't any potatoes. I never had any! And if I had any I shouldn't be giving them away!"

Mr. Wilcox looked at him with feelings too deep for words. It was no wonder that he was indignant.

"Then it was a blooming 'oax?" he gasped at length. "A blessed 'oax, and

you give me a walk in the 'ot sun—a blessed mile—for a 'oax! 'Ere I've spent three d. on a telephone-call, and carried that there sack a mile, and you tell me it's a blinking 'oax! Why, I'll smash yer! I'll spificate yer! I'll pulverise yer!" Mr. Wilcox's indignant voice rose to a roar, and he charged at Horace Coker like a maddened bull.

Coker dodged wildly round the table. "Hands off!" he shouted. "You tipsy ruffian! Oh, my hat! Yarooop!"

The sack in Mr. Wilcox's hands smote Coker violently, and Coker rolled over on his own carpet. Mr. Wilcox stood over him, snorting with fury, and pounding away with the sack.

"Yaroooh! Help! He's mad! Dragim-off!" raved Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He mustn't kill Coker! He's got to leave a bit of him for the next visitor!"

Harry Wharton & Co. rushed into the study. Mr. Wilcox was collared and dragged away from Coker, who sprawled and roared.

"'Ands off!" bellowed Mr. Wilcox. "I'm going to smash 'im! I'm goin' to spificate him! I'll give him 'oax!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"'Ands off, I tell yer—"

With a combined effort the juniors swept Mr. Wilcox into the passage. The Bouncer squeezed a half-crown into his hand, which had a very mollifying effect upon the irate gentleman. He shook a knuckly fist into the study at the gasping Coker, and consented to depart without further vengeance. The juniors were glad to see him go. Mr. Wilcox was a rather large handful.

"Ow-ow-ow!" came from Coker. "I believe everybody's gone mad! He—he—he came here for potatoes! Potatoes, you know! Why should anybody come to me for potatoes?"

"The whyfulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Coker!"

"Has he gone?" gasped Coker.

"He's gone!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "If you're going to have any more callers, Coker, you'd better call in the police, or the Territorials!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's somebody! Buck up, Coker! it's a lady!"

Trotter, the page, was showing a lady along the passage, and they arrived at the door of Coker's study. The lady wore a shawl on her head, and a big basket on her arm. The lady was a very powerful-looking lady, and she had a very square jaw and a fiery eye; and the chums of the Remove, when they looked at her, were very glad that it was Coker, and not themselves, that the lady had called upon.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Nice Afternoon for Coker!

COKER of the Fifth had picked himself up, and made a wild dab at his collar and his hair to get them tidy. But he was still looking rather wild when Trotter announced "Mrs. Snawkins!"

"C-c-come in!" stuttered Coker.

He had not expected lady callers for organisation work of national importance or potatoes.

Certainly, so far as Coker could see, there was no reason why people should call upon him for potatoes. But people in Friardale evidently had the idea in their heads that Coker's study was the proper place to come to for that necessary and almost unobtainable vegetable.

"G-g-good-afternoon, ma'am!" stammered Coker.

"Arternoon! Where are they?"

"They?"

Coker's heart sank. Evidently it was potatoes, and not organisation, that the determined-looking lady wanted.

"Werry kind of you to give 'taters away to pore folks, Mister Coker!" said the lady. "I've walked 'ere to get them. Seven pounds."

"You—you haven't come here for seven pounds of potatoes, surely?" groaned the unhappy Coker.

"Yes, I have!" said the lady, with emphasis. "And don't you tell me I'm too late, neither. I ain't 'ad that long walk for nothing. Where are the murphies?"

"I—I haven't any—"

"That won't do for me!"

"Look here!" shouted Coker desperately. "I haven't any potatoes! What's put the idea into your head that I've got potatoes?"

"You're 'Orace Coker?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then you're the bloke. Where are them spuds?"

"I—I—I—"

"I arsk you," said Mrs. Snawkins, fixing a deadly eye on Coker, "I arsk you, Mister Coker, where are them spuds, what I've walked a mile for?"

"I—I—I—"

"'Ave you got spuds to give away, or 'ave you not?"

"No, I haven't!"

"Then wot did you bring me 'ere for with a barskit?"

"I—I didn't! I didn't want you! I—"

"Me, a 'ard-working woman! Think I've got arfternoons to spend trapesing about for nothing? I ain't going out without seven pounds of potatoes, and the sooner you 'and them over the better!" The lady raised her voice till it rang along the Fifth Form passage. "Where are them spuds? Playing jokes on a pore woman, eh? Where are them spuds?"

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" groaned Coker helplessly. It seemed to Coker as if the whole world had gone insane that afternoon. "I—I— Good-afternoon!"

"What?"

"Trotter! Where's Trotter? Show this lady out, Trotter!"

"Not without the 'taters!" said the lady. "Where are the 'taters! Seven pounds of 'taters, free of charge, is what I've come for! 'Ere's the barskit. Now, then, you young villain, where are them spuds?"

"This way, mum," murmured Trotter. "Oh! Ah! Yah!"

Mrs. Snawkins' basket swung round, and Trotter went through the doorway like a stone from a catapult. He did not come back.

"Now, Mister Coker—"

Coker backed wildly round the table as the angry lady came towards him.

"Where are them spuds?"

"Keep off!" panted Coker. "I—I—I— Leggo! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Help! Leggo! Yaroooh! Oh, dear! Yooop!" roared Coker, as the powerful lady boxed his ears right and left.

"My hat! Here comes Prouty!" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Prout strode up with a brow like thunder. He seemed petrified, as he stared into Coker's study, and saw the Fifth-Former struggling in the grasp of a muscular female.

"Bless my soul, madam!" gasped Mr. Prout.

Mrs. Snawkins spun round at him. "'Ave you got them?" she demanded.

"Goodness gracious!"

"A mile I've walked for seven pounds of potatoes!" shrieked the lady. "Now,

it seems, there ain't any! That won't do for me. I arsk you, where are them spuds?"

"Coker! Coker! You—you have dared to—to—Coker, is this another of your practical jokes?" gasped Mr. Prout.

"I—I—I— Help! Yah!"

"Madam, calm yourself, I beg. The—the boy shall be severely punished for this unfeeling prank——"

"I've come 'ere for potatoes!"

"I—I regret that—that there are no potatoes, madam; but I beg you— Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Prout, as the visitor made a stride at him.

"Madam, I—I beg you, calm yourself! Bless my soul——"

"You're as bad as he is! Where are them spuds? That's what I arsk you."

"I—I regret— Oh, dear!" Mr. Prout backed into the passage. "Restrain yourself, my dear madam, I beg! I—I will—will order the—the potatoes to be brought to you at once!" shrieked Mr. Prout, just in time to save his head from the basket.

Mrs. Snawkins placed her arms akimbo and glared at him. She was angry, as was natural, under the circumstances.

"Produce them spuds, then!" she said.

"I ain't going without them!"

"I—I will see what can be done."

"Are you going to produce them spuds?"

"Yes, yes! Decidedly, yes!"

"Then 'and 'em over without so much jore, old gent!"

"Bless my soul! Coker, you rascal! Oh, dear! Bless my soul! Who—who is this?" almost wailed Mr. Prout, as a woman with a bag came along the passage. A man with a sack followed her, and behind him appeared another man with another sack.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "The merry plot thickens!"

"Please, I've called for the potatoes!"

"Same 'ere, sir!"

"I 'ope I'm not too late for my seven pounds, sir. I tried to get through on the telephone——"

"Where are the potatoes, please?"

Mr. Prout pressed his hands to his forehead. From a window in the passage he could see a dozen figures crossing the quad towards the house, all with baskets or bags or sacks. There were more on the stairs—and more appearing in the passage. Like the oysters in the story, "Thick and fast they came at last, and more and more and more."

"Bless my soul! I—I—I will see—at once! Pray let me pass. I will certainly see at once! Pray have a little patience!"

Mr. Prout backed away, and fled. He retreated to his study and locked the door. The Fifth Form-master did not feel equal to dealing with that crowd.

Harry Wharton & Co. were shoved back from Coker's doorway by the crowd of new arrivals. Mrs. Snawkins' shrill voice was heard incessantly demanding spuds.

And as the news spread that there were no spuds, other voices were raised in indignation. Coker's study was swarming, and the passage was getting blocked.

Then came a deep voice from the stairs.

"Where's Mr. Coker? Where's that limb? Tell him James Snooks 'as come to tork to 'im about his blinking practical jokes! Where is he?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Somebody had better call the Head! There'll be a riot next!"

"Smithy, you ass!" gasped Wharton.

"Go away!" Coker was shrieking hysterically. "Go away! Please go away! There aren't any potatoes! It's all a mistake! Leggo my hair! Go

away. Please, go away! Leggo by dose, you beast! Grooh! Go away! Help! Fire! Police!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Bounder wiped his eyes. "Coker will be fed-up with advertising after this! Oh, my hat!"

"It's a shame, though," said Wharton. "They're poor people, and they've walked here for potatoes. We'd better whack out our lot."

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry. The captain of the Remove pushed his way forward.

"Ladies and gentlemen——"

"Yah!"

"Shame!"

"Where are them spuds?"

"Ladies and gentlemen, follow me, and the spuds will be distributed at once!"

"Bravo!"

Harry Wharton led the way, and the seekers of potatoes followed him. They were got out of the house at last. In the wood-shed, where the crop from the Remove allotments was stored, Harry Wharton & Co. were busy for the next hour handing out potatoes. It had been their intention to hand over the surplus to the poor of the neighbourhood, but as it turned out it was a good deal more than the surplus that was handed over. But it could not be helped. Certainly there would have been trouble if that crowd had been sent empty away.

When the distribution was over and the applicants were gone, the Removites looked at one another grimly.

"I rather think we'd better look for Smithy, and give him a jolly good bumping for being such a funny merchant!" said Bob Cherry.

And they did!

Horace Coker was marched into the Head's presence afterwards by his angry Form-master for judgment. But Coker asseverated, almost with tears in his eyes, that he hadn't played any practical joke, and couldn't understand why anybody had come to him for potatoes. And the Head was fain to believe him. It was evident that there was a practical joke somewhere, and that the unfortunate Coker was one of its victims.

The joker did not come to light, and the matter had to drop. What surprised Coker, when he calmed down, was the fact that there had not been among that numerous crowd a single applicant for work of national importance! But he understood, when he obtained a copy of the "Friardale Gazette," and read the advertisement therein: Potter and Greene roared over that advertisement. Coker did not roar. He did not see anything funny in it. He took a cricket-stump and went to look for the Bounder. Ten minutes later he departed from the Remove passage in a series of bumps down the stairs.

But Coker was not beaten. He took his next advertisement down to the office with his own hands; and then, as he told Potter and Greene, they would see what they would see. On the following Saturday Coker sat in state in his study waiting once more for callers. This time there were no applicants for potatoes. But—much to Coker's astonishment—there were no applicants for anything else! Coker could not understand it. But there it was! When Potter and Greene came in to tea, they found Coker alone, in a state of great perplexity. The British Empire was still at the crisis of its fate; but there was no demand, no demand at all, for the services of the Greyfriars Organiser!

(Don't miss "ON THE MAKE!"

—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"ON THE MAKE!"

By Frank Richards.

Coker, the central figure of this week's story, also comes with some prominence into next week's. But Billy Bunter is the chief actor, and it is that egregious member of the Remove who is "on the make"—no new role for him!

Harry Wharton makes a proposition which the majority of the Remove and Upper Fourth think quite a good one. It entails a petition to the Head, and also its acceptance by the school generally. But Wharton and his chums and Temple & Co. are naturally keen on having the fact that they originated the scheme recognised, and they prefer to go to the Head before mentioning the matter to the seniors. Bunter, however, scenting profit, gives the secret away—to Loder and Coker, among others; and the consequence is a mix-up.

But Bunter does not stop there. He hits upon a plan which would seem utterly absurd to anyone of real intelligence, but strikes him as being all right—and profitable, if it can be carried out. So he tries it—with what result you will learn next week!

A QUEER PROPOSITION!

A reader, who signs himself "Copies Ordered," asks that his suggestion should be published in the MAGNET, and I comply with his request, though I must say that I am not in agreement with the notion, and should not think of carrying it out.

Briefly, he would like the story run straight on, without any division into paragraphs—"not stop in the middle of a line and go on to the next line to begin a fresh sentence," as he puts it.

This would undoubtedly allow me to give a longer story in the same number of pages, and for that reason, I suppose, a fair number of my readers may think the suggestion a good one.

But it is not. The stories would be longer, but they would lose immensely in brightness. The effect of very long paragraphs is to make a story seem heavy, whatever it may really be.

Paragraphing is almost an art in itself. It is one which some authors never learn. But editors learn it—they have to!

Emphasis is lost by improper paragraphing. This method of division is not the unimportant thing it may appear.

Some may imagine that breaking-up of the yarn into paragraphs of about equal length would serve the purpose. But it would not.

With dialogue, again. In books of a hundred years old or so you will find a conversation printed without paragraphing. It looks odd, and I think it would muddle most of you. I do not mind admitting that it has muddled me before now. This would be the kind of thing we should get:

"D'Arroy minor and Frank Levison wouldn't play the low, rotten blackguard as you're doing, Reggie!" "Oh, cheese it! I've had enough of that!" "Will you come away?" "I've said I won't!" "Then I shall take you!"

Do you like it? I don't. I think a dozen pages of it would be about enough to reduce one to imbecility.

LOOK OUT FOR IT!

In a week or two I shall be starting a new serial in the "Gem." None of you can afford to miss it, for it will deal with Highcliffe and Cliff House, and, of course, Greyfriars will come into it. The title I have chosen for it is:

"The Twins from Tasmania!"

One of the twins is a girl, and she comes to Cliff House at the same time that her brother comes to Highcliffe. Both are the right sort, but the girl is the stronger character of the two.

You will have a chance in this story to hear more of Marjorie Hazeldene, Phyllis Howell, and Clara Trevlyn—all most popular characters with MAGNET readers. And, of course, Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar will play their parts.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 498.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 34.—TUBB AND PAGET.

THIS is the first time that two characters have been taken together, and two portraits given. It will not be the last, however.

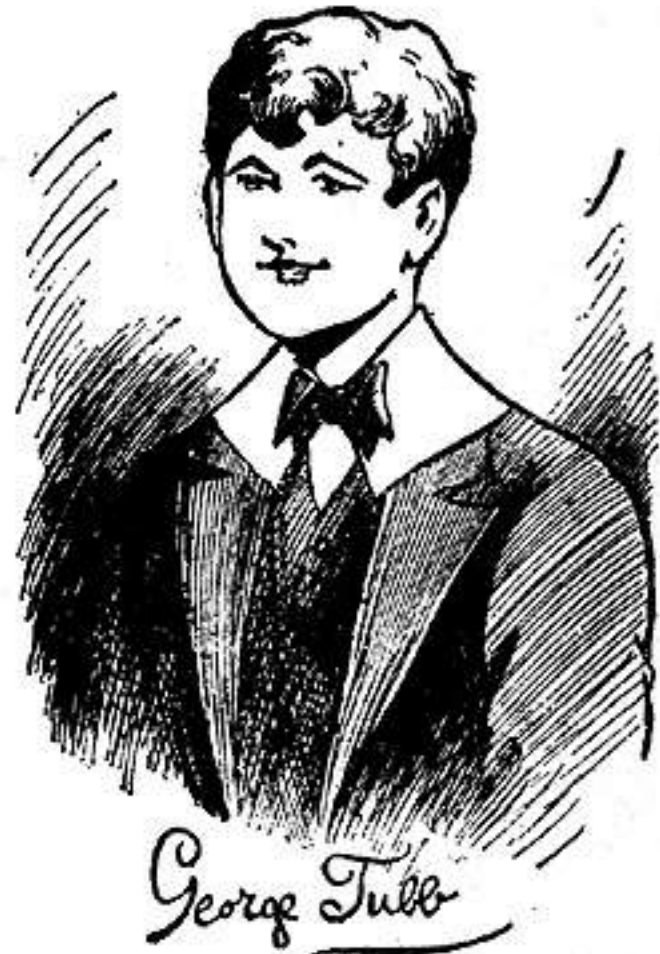
Dabney and Fry, Potter and Greene, Gatty and Myers, Hobson and Hoskins, are other cases which lend themselves to such treatment. One article was hardly enough for the mighty Coker; the great Cecil Reginald must surely be allowed one to himself; and Dicky Nugent could scarcely be bracketed with anyone else. But when we hear of George Potter we never fail to hear of William Greene also. Dabney and Fry are ever to be found together at the heels of the illustrious Temple. Hobson and Hoskins, Gatty and Myers, hunt in couples.

Tubb and Paget are of the Third, and on the whole we have had somewhat less about the Third than about the Second in the stories. The Third have chiefly been concerned in the yarns dealing with Bolsover minor and Wingate minor. But these two will come in later; and it will only be necessary to refer to them in passing now.

George Tubb, leader of the fag tribe, is a sound, decent, good-hearted youngster, a little bit rough and ready in his methods, no doubt, but with no harm in him.

Percival Spencer Paget, his chum, is a budding Temple. A little dandy is Paget, with a particularity as to his clothes, his hair, the back of his neck, and the region behind his ears that is by no means shared by every member of the fag tribe. But he, too, is sound and straightforward, and it is not on record that he disdains herrings cooked on penholders—a very junior delicacy not popular in the higher Forms.

Tubb fags for Loder. It is not a doubtful privilege—though a writer with less regard for the exact truth, and a stronger bent to cheap sarcasm than the present one, might call it so. But it is not a privilege at all, and there is nothing doubtful about it. It is simply a beastly nuisance—ask Tubb!



George Tubb

Sometimes the Third and the Second act in concert. More often they do not, but are at feud. One remembers an occasion upon which Tubb was concerned with Gatty and Nugent minor in raiding a parcel of grub belonging to Temple. At least, they raided it under the belief that it was a parcel of grub; and it was not their fault that it was a spoof package kindly fixed up by the Remove. But it was rather rough on them that the issue was a caning for all three.

When Fishy started his Fag Agency, and

wanted eight fags for the lazy and luxurious Mauly, Tubb was engaged as secretary, as he claimed to write the best hand in the Third—a claim hotly contested by others. Paget got a job as general help—a job which just suited him—in prospect, at least, as he fancied it would mean looking on while the rest worked. But he was told off to brush the carpet, and that did not suit him. He was grovelling on the floor with a clothes-brush when Mr. Quelch looked in. Tubb was at work on an imposition for his lordship—which, as it would have been an imposition upon Mr. Quelch, was hastily covered with a sheet of blank paper. It was Paget's idea to put Mauly into a bath-chair which was eating its head off, so to speak, round at the back; but before they got to Friardale both he and Tubb had ceased to act as chairmen, and the upshot of the scheme was that, after bowling over P. c. Tozer, Mauly finished up a downhill course in a muddy ditch.

Then the fags discovered that Fishy was drawing one shilling per week for each of them, and paying them only fourpence, while he charged them a penny stamp for "insurance." And they very naturally ragged Fishy.

One must confess that neither Tubb nor Paget came too well out of the matter of Bolsover minor. But when they found what a sterling youngster the lad who had sold papers in the streets of London really was they were ready to chum with him.

Wingate minor gave them lots of trouble. They were determined not to put up with his spoiled-child ways. He expected special treatment because he was the skipper's brother. He got special treatment, but not of the kind desired. The Form barred him. Out of regard for Wingate major the Famous Five tried to make matters smooth. They asked Tubb and Paget to tea, and the pair found Jack Wingate a fellow-guest. But the attempt at conciliation was a most complete failure.

The day came, however, when Wingate minor had learned his lesson; and he had only to show that he had learned it to find that the Third in general, and Tubb and Paget in particular, were by no means the rotters he had been minded to count them.

During the tiger-scare at Greyfriars, Tubb was one of those who got very badly fed-up with "confinement to barracks." He was caught by Loder, who never misses a chance to get at him, trying to get out through a back window. The prefect shut down the sash on his back, and proceeded to apply a cane with great vigour to his writhing trousers. Tubb told Paget after it that he had no longer any wish to break bounds; all he wanted was to break Loder's neck!

Tubb has tried his hand as an author. He wrote a story for Editor Fish. Editor Fish turned it down, and Tubb avenged himself by shouting derisive remarks through the editorial keyhole.

As a footballer, Tubb leads his Form Eleven with plenty of noise and no lack of hard work. Paget is less noisy, not being skipper, but quite useful, though he does not, as Tubb does, play everywhere at once. Centre-forward does not give Tubb scope for all the activity in him; he can also and simultaneously play on the wings, in the half-back line, and, at a pinch, at back.

It was a great day for Tubb & Co. when they beat the Remove by 11 goals to nil. Alonzo's marvellous mixture—which the Remove had been dosed with, though they knew it not—was the real cause of this seeming miracle; but it is doubtful whether Tubb & Co. ever believed the explanation. They entered for the Coker Cup, of course; and Tubb had high hopes of winning the Colonel's Cup. But the Remove proved a stumbling-block, and the heroes of the Third were beaten 5-1. They fought hard, though.

Tubb and Paget between them made all the runs scored—10 was the grand total—by Mr. Prout's weird eleven against the Old



Percival Spencer Paget

Boys' team Colonel Wharton had brought down. Lately we have seen Tubb do the hat-trick—on Skinner, Snoop, and Bunter. A cheap hat-trick, at best—but still a hat-trick!

Those two spoke up with no uncertain voices when Sergeant Sharp bullied Jack Wingate so grossly. There is the right instinct. They may not have quite so much judgment as they fancy themselves to possess; but to the best of their judgment they do the square thing. No doubt they are the better chums for that, though alike in being straight and plucky, they are very different in other ways.

Most of us would be glad to hear of them again before long!

GEMS OF WISDOM—PERHAPS!

[NOTE.—The spelling has been—well, modernised!]

Henry I.'s son William (called the Rufus) was drowned on the white ship, and never smiled again. (W. G. B.)

After being defeated at Stamford Bridge, Lambert Simnel was sent to roast in the King's kitchen. (H. C.)

Joan of Arc lived in the French Revolution, and one day she fell into the arms of the English and got burnt. (H. C.)

By eating slowly food is digested before it is swallowed, and thus enriches the blood, which goes down one leg and up the other. (H. C.)

Things which are impossible are equal to one another. (W. G. B.)

The Daylight Saving Act shortens the day by one hour. (H. C.)

If you wish to live long you should not die young. (W. G. B.)

The Doomsday Book was used to keep a record of Henry VIII.'s wives when they died. (W. G. B.)

It is quite right to say "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves," because there aren't any pounds to take care of. (W. G. B.)

Never attempt to do impossibilities. They can't be done. (H. C.)

N.B.—It will be noted that all the above have initials after them. This denotes that they are copyright, and cannot be used in any way whatever without the permission of the holder of the copyright.

Extracts from "The Greyfriars Herald."

THE MYSTERY OF THE DUSTBIN!

An Adventure of Herlock Holmes.

By PETER TODD.

I.

S HOLMES and I were at lunch in our room at Shaker Street when the door was suddenly thrown open, and a young man rushed excitedly into the room.

"Herlock Holmes!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

Sholmes, who was about to cut the war-bread, laid down his pickaxe.

"At your service!" he drawled.

"Save me, Mr. Sholmes!"

I gazed at the young man. From the fact that he was gasping for breath, that he had forgotten his hat, and that his eyes were staring wildly, I deduced that he was in a state of excitement. I had not studied the methods of Herlock Holmes in vain.

"Even now the police are on my track!" he panted. "Inspector Pinkeye is following me as fast as the size of his feet allows. Any moment I may be dragged off to prison, and I am innocent—I swear it!"

"Quite so," said Herlock Holmes.

"Mr. Sholmes! You believe that I am innocent?"

"I know it," said Sholmes calmly.

"Bless you, Mr. Sholmes! But how did you know it, may I ask?"

"Because the police are on your track," explained Herlock Holmes. "If you were guilty, that would be an extremely unlikely contingency!"

"True!"

"Kindly give me a few details," said Sholmes reassuringly. "You may speak quite freely before my friend Dr. Jotson!"

"My good name has been threatened by a fearful accusation!" groaned the young man, as he sank into a chair. "Mr. Sholmes, my name is Horatio Smiff, and I live in Peckham! Beloved by my dear Amelia Ann, provided with potatoes from my own allotment, exempted from service because my services are indispensable in the Unanswered Letters Department, my life has been one dream of happiness. The only cloud on the horizon was the enmity of my next-door neighbour, the envious and iniquitous Montgomery Smuggins. He hated me, Mr. Sholmes; he envied my happiness; and Mrs. Smuggins entertained a deadly animosity towards my dear Amelia Ann, whose bonnets were always more fashionable than her own. Now that this terrible blow has fallen, the Smugginses gloat over my misery. I am accused—his voice faltered—"Mr. Sholmes, I am accused of wasting a winkle, in direct contravention of the fifteenth-millionth regulation of the Preservation-of-Foodstuffs-during-the-Duration-of-the-War-and-the-Prevention-of-Waste-and-Extravagance-in-all-Articles-of-Diet-on-the-part-of-the-Public Act!"

He gasped for breath.

Sholmes' face was very serious now.

"You know the penalty, Mr. Sholmes—imprisonment for a hundred and twenty-five years, without the option of a fine!" resumed Mr. Smiff, in agitated tones. "I am innocent! I swear it! Even in peace-time I have never wasted a winkle! And in war-time, Mr. Sholmes, when the victory of the Allies may depend in the long run on the supply of winkles, only the most degraded criminal could dream of such an act! But the local dustman has discovered a winkle in my sanitary dustbin, and I am lost!"

He covered his face with his hands.

"Courage!" said Herlock Holmes tranquilly. "The winkle was actually discovered in your dustbin?"

"I cannot deny it. The winkle was there." Mr. Smiff looked at my amazing friend with haggard eyes. "It was there, Mr. Sholmes. As you are aware, the dustmen have now been invested with the powers of the Spanish Inquisition, and it is their chief business to track down those who infringe the regulations of the Preservation-of-Foodstuffs-during-the-Duration-of-the-War-and-the-Prevention-of-Waste-and-Extravagance-on-all-Articles-of-Diet-on-the-part-of-the-Public Act. The removal of refuse is a secondary consideration. Every dustman is now provided with a microscope, with which he examines the premises in search of cabbage-leaves, cherry-stones, or

cheese-mites that may have been recklessly thrown away by extravagant householders. And—I cannot deny it—the winkle was in the dustbin! Imagine my feelings, Mr. Sholmes! I was about to start for the office, and had kissed Amelia Ann good-bye at the door, when the dustman, in a voice of thunder, called my attention to the winkle. Distracted with terror, I fled. I thought of you, Mr. Sholmes; you were my only hope. The police were at once on the track! Inspector Pinkeye is close behind me! You alone can save me, Mr. Sholmes, by clearing up the mystery of the winkle!"

There was a heavy step on the stairs. From the fact that the building shook as if in the throes of an earthquake, I deduced that the footsteps were those of a policeman. Inspector Pinkeye strode in.

"Aha! Run to earth!" he ejaculated, as his glance fell upon the shrinking form of Horatio Smiff. "Nothing for you to do here, Mr. Sholmes—what? A clear case—direct contravention of the fifteenth-millionth regulation of the—"

"Exactly!" interrupted Sholmes. "You need not recite the name of the Act, inspector; life is too short. You are sure of your case?"

The inspector smiled.

"Quite clear, Mr. Sholmes! The winkle found in this man's dustbin is now in the possession of the police. The matter is all the more serious because I have discovered that Mr. Smiff has made no purchases of winkles for a month, which looks as if the winkle has been hoarded. By the recklessly wasteful act of consigning it to the dustbin he has endangered the cause of the Allies, and perhaps rendered vain our efforts to defeat Prussian militarism. If the sun sets on the British Empire, it may be directly due to this man's heinous act in deliberately wasting a winkle!"

The handcuffs clinked on the wrists of Horatio Smiff.

"Herlock Holmes," said the accused man hoarsely, "I rely upon you! The winkle was not mine; I never wasted it!"

"A likely story!" said the inspector. "Come, my man! You can tell that yarn to the magistrate!"

And the unhappy culprit was led away.

II.

HERLOCK SHOLMES was silent and thoughtful for some time. In an absent-minded way he chopped at the war-bread, causing splinters to fly off in various directions. At last he rose.

"Come, Jotson!" he said. "We must see into this! Horatio Smiff is innocent, and while he is detained by the unthinking police the national cause suffers. You heard him remark that he is employed in the Unanswered Letters Department. In his absence from his post letters may be recklessly answered by someone new to the work. Heaven knows what the result might be!"

"Let us not lose a moment, Sholmes!" I exclaimed anxiously.

We lost no time. In an hour we were at Laburnum Villa. We found Mrs. Smiff in tears. The prospect of being separated from her beloved Horatio for a period of a hundred and twenty-five years had completely overcome her. Sholmes comforted the poor woman as best he could, and then we proceeded to make an examination of the sanitary dustbin.

I watched Sholmes' actions with keen interest. Deeply as I had studied his wonderful methods, there was always something new to be learned from Herlock Holmes.

His eyes gleamed under his knitted brows as he sounded the dustbin with a stethoscope. He then produced a microscope, and examined the fence which separated Mr. Smiff's garden from that of his neighbour, Mr. Smuggins.

"Sholmes!" I exclaimed at last.

He yawned.

"Come, Jotson!"

We left the garden.

"Where are we going, Sholmes?"

"To call upon Mr. Smuggins, Jotson!"

"You desire to see Montgomery Smuggins?"

"Not at all. The whole case hangs, Jotson, upon Mr. Smuggins' trousers. If he wears grey trousers, Horatio Smiff will be restored to the bosom of his family. If his trousers are of any other colour, Jotson, the unhappy Smiff will be consigned to the company of Suffragettes and conscientious objectors for a period not exceeding a hundred and twenty-five years!"

"Good heavens, Sholmes!"

My amazing friend knocked at Mr. Smuggins' door.

It was opened by that gentleman himself.

"Mr. Smuggins?" asked Herlock Holmes genially.

"Yes."

"Thank you! Good-afternoon!"

Sholmes walked away, possibly leaving Mr. Smuggins in a state of some surprise. He smiled as we stepped into the taxi.

"You noticed his trousers, Jotson?"

"They were grey, Sholmes."

"Exactly. Justice will be done!"

We stopped at a post-office, where Herlock Holmes used the telephone. Then we returned to Shaker Street.

An hour later I was surprised to see Horatio Smiff enter. He grasped Herlock Holmes' hand with deep emotion.

"Mr. Sholmes, you have saved me! How can I thank you?"

Sholmes smiled.

"By returning at once, Mr. Smiff, to your duties at the Unanswered Letters Department!" he replied. "Lose no time! In your absence important letters may be answered!"

"True!"

And Horatio Smiff dashed away.

III.

"S HOLMES!" I exclaimed, in amazement.

"Well, Jotson?"

"I am astounded—"

"Naturally," said Herlock Holmes, with a smile. "But it was very simple, Jotson. Having ascertained the facts during our visit to Laburnum Villa, I telephoned the result to Inspector Pinkeye. Mr. Smiff was accordingly released, and Montgomery Smuggins has taken his place, on the charge of conspiracy!"

"Montgomery Smuggins?"

"Precisely!"

"Then he was guilty?"

"Evidently, Jotson!"

"You astound me, Sholmes! How did you discover—"

"My dear Jotson, the matter was simple—elementary, in fact. The winkle was placed in Mr. Smiff's sanitary dustbin by a felon hand. It was placed there to be discovered by the dustman when making his round. You observed me making an examination of the garden fence?"

"True!"

"Upon the palings, Jotson, was a fragment of grey rag, evidently torn from a pair of trousers worn by a person engaged in surreptitiously climbing over the garden fence. The case was clear. In the dead of night Horatio Smiff's enemy had climbed the fence, and deposited the winkle in the dustbin. It only remained to interview Montgomery Smuggins, and ascertain the colour of his trousers. Had this clue failed me, there were seventy-seven other details, Jotson, which I need not enumerate, which would have provided me with fresh clues. But, as a matter of fact, the matter was settled at once. Mr. Smuggins wore grey trousers!"

"Marvellous!"

"Not at all, Jotson. Elementary!"

"But suppose, Sholmes," I remarked, after some thought—"suppose—what if Mr. Smuggins had changed his trousers?"

But Herlock Holmes was busy sharpening a saw, preparatory to an attack on the war-bread, and he did not reply.

THE END.

HOW TO MAKE A BICYCLE FOR 6½d.

By LORD MAULEVERER.

(Dictated—in spasms between snoozes—to Piet Delarey.)

IT'S a beastly fag making anything. I don't do much of it. But I think it should be quite easy for an intelligent chap to make a bicycle after reading these directions.

First, you want to have a look at a bicycle. You will see then that it consists of a number of pieces of pipe put together and called a frame. On this you fix two wheels. The object of these is to make the thing run smoothly. If you had no wheels the bicycle would scrape on the ground, and probably only work well down hills.

There are a few other things you will need. These are pedals and chain, brakes and bell. The pump you can borrow.

The pedals are to save you the bother of turning the back wheel by hand, which might be troublesome at high speed and up steep hills.

If you do not have brakes on your bike you may get a break in your neck, so I advise them. If you have not got them, and you want to stop in a hurry, you have either to jump off or run into a tree. The latter is the easier, but possesses the following disadvantages: (1) There may be no tree handy at the moment; (2) you may knock the tree over, and have to pay for it; or (3) you may damage the machine.

I will therefore assume that you decide to have brakes. All that you want now is a bell. This is not really necessary, but it saves you the beastly fag of singing out "Fore!" to everyone.

I forgot to mention mudguards. These are sometimes considered to be ornaments, but, lacking them, you will have to spend the money on a clothes-brush.

Well, now that you really understand what you are building, you can commence. First, have a look round the house, and get a few lengths of gas-piping. With these you make the frame. (Plug the open ends you leave!)

Cut the pipes into the proper lengths and lay them on the table. Now you are faced with the task of putting them together.

I think that some strong twine and sealing-wax will do this best. This will cost 1½d.

Now you can start work, and very soon you will see that you are getting the frame to look as it should. Make the joins carefully and well, because the machine will not really run well if they go scot.

I forgot to mention that the parts should be well cleaned first, so I am afraid that you will have to take it to pieces again and clean it. But this will not take long. Then you will put the frame on the table again.

Now for the wheels. These are made of insides, outsides, and things across—any cycle-man will tell you the right names. Very likely you will find all the materials you want in the tool-shed. All you have to do is to put them together.

Having made the wheels, stand them on the floor, and then take the frame off the table, and put it round your neck to be out of the way. Now put the wheels on the table, so that you will not forget them in finishing your bicycle.

Next get the brakes. It seems to me that a good idea would be to tie a piece of string on to each wheel, and then, when you wanted to stop, you could pull the string and prevent the wheel going round. Therefore, tie a piece of string on to each wheel.

Now for the bell. I cannot describe how to make this. If you cannot find one in the tool-shed, borrow the one from the cat's neck, and secure it firmly to the handlebars.

(But you haven't made them, yet!—Ed. I know that. But you can't expect a chap to make everything at once.—M.)

If you are in doubt as to how to go on, have a look at another bicycle and see how it is done. You will then see exactly what you want. Anyway, it would be a good plan here to go out and buy twopennyworth of assorted screws, nuts, and other little jiggers. They will come in useful for putting into any holes you may have in the piping, and will also make the machine look more businesslike.

If you cannot find the handlebars in the tool-shed, construct them from some of the piping you have left over.

The making of the pedals and chain is difficult, and, if you want your bicycle in a

hurry, I should not stop to make them now. It is best to take the frame off your shoulders, lay it on the floor, and go out and borrow these from a neighbour.

You are now nearly ready for your spin. All that you have to do is to make the saddle and mudguards. I think it would be simpler to buy the clothes-brush I mentioned, and save making mudguards. But you must have a saddle to rest on when you are not pedalling.

This requires leather, springs, and pipes. First cut three pipes nine inches in length. Then cut a piece of leather out measuring twelve inches by nine by seven. If you make a lot of natty little dents in this it will look more artistic, and will not hurt much. Then get the springs, and start putting it together.

I should have said that it is easier to stick the springs into wood than tubing, and I think that, on second thoughts, you will not have to use the pipes which you cut up. Put these to one side of the table, however, as they will come in useful for making the beehive which I may describe another time.

Having made the saddle by the above directions, fix it on the top of the frame where the bend comes, and see that it is firm. Now stand the wheels on the ground the correct distance apart, and pop the frame quickly over the top of them. Tie the pieces of string, which are to be used for brakes, on the handlebars, so that if the wheels do not look like stopping in position the string will hold them there until you are ready to start.

You have now made your first bicycle.

If you have followed the directions carefully it will be a first-rate machine, and your friends will all be asking you to make them one.

[EDITORIAL NOTE.—Mauly thought this all out himself—no end of a fag! But he could not be induced to write it out, so Delarey did that for him. Mauly says he never saw Delarey grin so much. He does not know why, as there was nothing funny about the article. Well, it's funny—or else, as they say up North, it's "Nowt"!—H. W.]

THE KISS OF KONTEMT.

By Horace Coker.

[FORENOTE.—Coker first of all forwarded this remarkable contribution to a weekly called "Fluttering Hearts," or something like that. But by some mistake on the part of the editor it was returned to Coker, instead of being sent to the British Museum. And the chap has had the cheek to pop it into Study No. 1. I'll publish it just to show him up!—H. W.]

LITELY she tript along the streat in the direction of home and bliss and brekfast, carrying an eg in won and and a slab of baykon in the uther, when the villan of this romans slipt out of a derway and nearly tript her-up.

"Rotter!" she cried.

"Will yew be mine?" he snarled.

"No! Go home!"

"To the casule ward? Bah! Will yew marry me?"

"Whot! A rotter like you! Puff!"

"Ah!" he sied, skweezing her and. "'Ow design!"

Partly becose she loathed the man, and partly because the and he skweezed contained the eg, and did it no good, the bewtyus made agane cald him a rotter.

"I feel as if I am tredding on air!" he sed.

"Villan!" she hft. "Yew are tredding on my fat!"

"Kiss me!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Kiss me, wumon, or yew die!"

"Then I suppose I must die wether or not," she sed desparingly. "Here goes!"

She kist him; but—

Twoz the Kiss of Kontent!

(Annuther fine romans next weak!—Author.)

[Per-haps!—Editor.]

NOTICES.

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED BY:

F. Stratford, 56, Redhill Street, Regent's Park, London, N.W., with boy readers of 17-18 in the Colonies.

B. Fry, Box 31, Wolfville, N.S., Canada, with a British boy reader.

T. J. Hardman, 23, Kirkstall Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool, with a student of French.

Miss Ellen Hawkins, Stirling, 14, Passfield Street, Brunswick West, Melbourne, Australia, with a girl reader of 15 or 16 in Scotland.

Miss Marjorie Grassick, Glenkindie, Melalucca Street, Mosman, Sydney, Australia, with girl readers of 17-20 in England, Jersey, or America.

Miss Grace Horne, 263, Childers Road, Gisborne, New Zealand, in Pitman's shorthand, with a reader.

R. M. Gray, Nottage Terrace, Medindie, Adelaide, South Australia, with boy readers in United Kingdom, Canada, or South Africa, 16-17.

Miss Kathlyn Megson, 26, Pietersen Street, Hospital Hill, Johannesburg, South Africa, with readers of "Gem" and MAGNET, with object of forming a correspondence club.

H. B. Muskett, 104, Bree Street, Johannesburg, South Africa, with English and Colonial readers interested in stamps, with a view to exchange. Also wanted back numbers of "Gem" and MAGNET, 50-300.

A. Morton, 26, Cambridge Road, Dublin, with a boy reader of 12. Also wants back numbers of MAGNET.

Miss Nellie Falkingham, 6, Playfair Street, Hunslet Carr, Leeds, with a girl in India or New Zealand, 16-18.

Miss Lily Higgins, 4, Playfair Street, Hunslet Carr, Leeds, with a girl in United States or Canada, 16-18.

LEAGUES, Etc.

Will readers giving up stamp-collecting write to P. J. Clerico, P.O., Box 3518, Johannesburg, South Africa, who is open to buy?

Wm. McNally, Glenview, Glenluce, Wig-townshire, has hectographed amateur magazine. Will send copy for 2d. in stamps.

Wanted members for "Gem" and MAGNET League.—Wm. Badloose, 16, Queen Elizabeth Road, Walthamstow.

C. Willis, 91, F Block, Ossington Buildings, Paddington Street, W., wants members for League. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

R. J. Marsh, 3, Frayne Road, Ashton Gate, Bristol, wants members for "Gem" and MAGNET Club. Open to all readers in United Kingdom.

G. Ratcliffe, 6, Oddy Row, Moor Road, Headingley, Leeds, wants to start a "Gem" and MAGNET Club, open to readers anywhere.

Members wanted for Correspondence and Exchange Club, Hobbies branch.—Irish readers should write E. Niell, 58, Derwent Street, Belfast; others, C. Poole, 10, Crowstones, Buxton, Derbyshire.

G. Oliver, 5, Barry Avenue, Stamford Hill, London, N. 15, would be glad to hear from readers in any part of the world who would like to join a "Gem" and MAGNET Club.

FOOTBALL.

P. A. Milborrow, 18, Bognor Street, New Road, Battersea, S.W. 8, would like to join a working-lads' "Gem" and MAGNET footer and cricket club.

Matches Wanted By:

QUEEN'S CADETS HEADQUARTERS CO.—16—Saturdays, in London. L.C.C. permits.—Sergeant J. Morton, Orderly Room, Queen's House, 31, Union Street, Southwark, S.E.

UBIQUE.—16—S. Bates, 3, Hawthorn Grove, Dorothy Street, Edge Lane, Liverpool.

DARNALL.—14—8 mile radius.—L. Sykes, 14, Hazel Road, Darnall, Sheffield.

ASHBURNHAM.—17.—W. Quinell, 32, College Road, Kensal Rise, N.W.