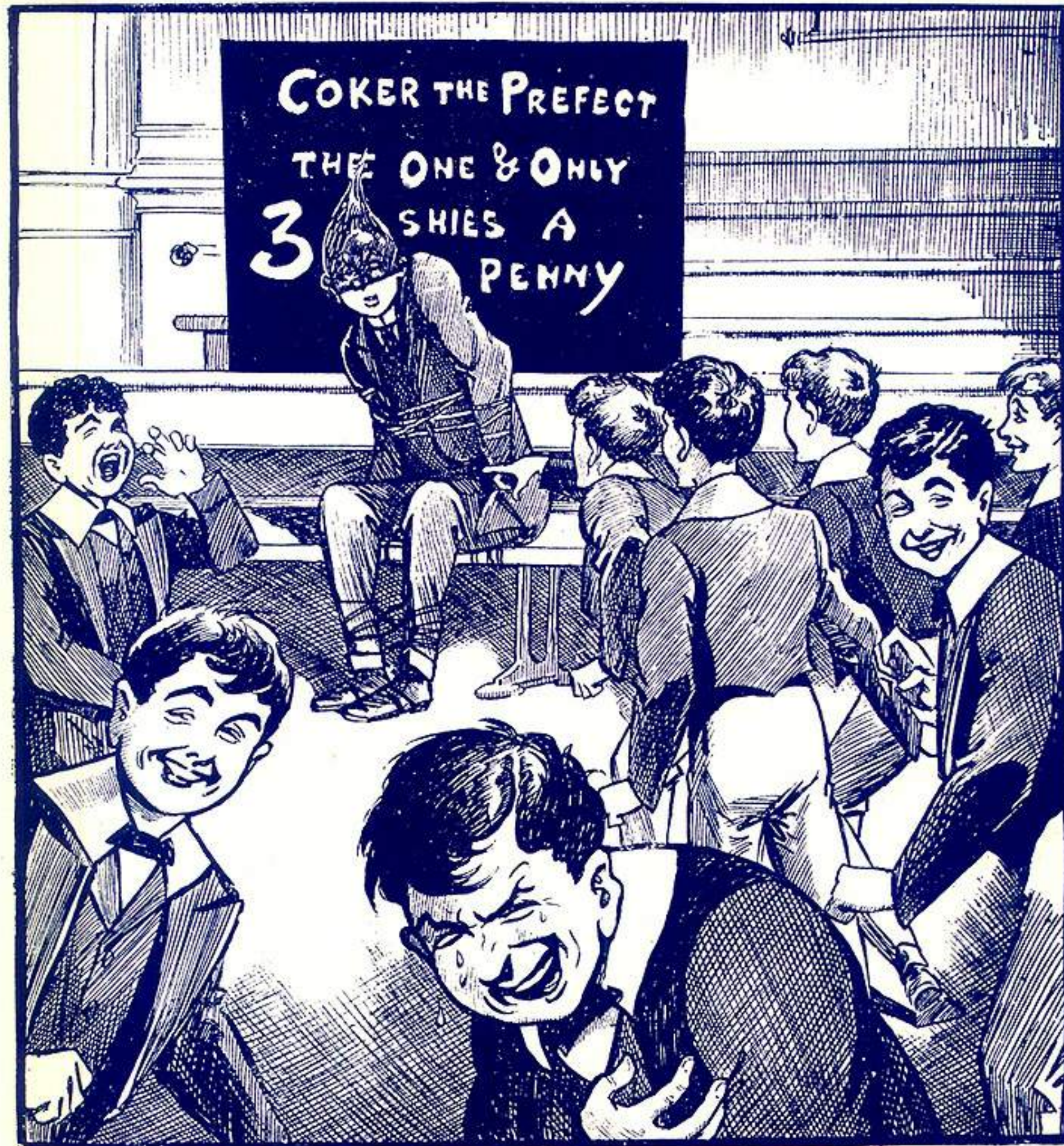


COKER THE REBEL!



The Magnet 1st
Library

No. 508. Vol. 11.



BLISS FOR THE FAGS!

Copyright in the United States of America.

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

COKER THE REBEL!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Hour and the Man!

"NOW'S the time!"
Coker of the Fourth made that statement.

Coker had been silent for several minutes, a rather unusual thing for Coker. His knitted brows seemed to indicate that he was thinking.

The other fellows in Coker's study, however, had not noticed it. Perhaps they were too busy with the good things on the tea-table, or perhaps they never suspected Coker of thinking.

There was a buzz of cheery talk in the study. Potter and Greene, Coker's study-mates, were there, of course. Fitzgerald and Smith major had dropped in to tea. Coker had had a handsome remittance that day from his celebrated Aunt Judy. In war-time, as in peace-time, money makes the mare to go.

In spite of food regulations, there was a bountiful spread on Coker's table. Not that Horace Coker would have transgressed the rules. He would have "whopped" any fellow who had suggested it.

But there were yet some articles of diet upon which the eagle eye of the Food Controller had not fallen. Those articles were well represented on Coker's tea-table. And prawns and dried fruits and preserved ginger and luxuries of that kind were a pleasant change from war-bread. At such times Coker was almost popular.

Potter and Greene and the rest were talking footer. It was quite a relief to them that Coker should have shut up for a bit. Generally, Coker would shove his personal views into a footer discussion; and, as Potter neatly put it, on such subjects the height of his absurdity was only equalled by the depth of his ignorance.

Coker ruthlessly interrupted the talk with his sudden remark. But Potter went on regardless of it.

"Wingate's told me I shall be wanted for the First Eleven. I'm glad you're going to be in the team, too, Fitz. With us two, and Blundell and Bland and Greeney, the Fifth will have a pretty good show."

"I spoke!" said Coker majestically.

"Oh, did you?" said Potter. "Now, with the five of us in the Eleven, I don't see why Greyfriars shouldn't beat Rookwood right off the field!"

"Thru' for you!" said Fitzgerald heartily. "Now, my opinion is—"

"Will you fellows shut up for a minute?" said Coker. "I was speaking. Now's the time!"

Coker spoke emphatically, and the Fifth-Formers had to listen. After all, it was Coker's spread; and a fellow who expended a half-quid on a spread in the lean years was entitled to a hearing.

"Oh, go ahead, Coker, darling!" said Fitzgerald resignedly. "Anything in the wide woruld but your views on the off-side rule! What is it?"

"I repeat, you fellows, that now's the time!" said Coker firmly.

"Time?" repeated Potter.

"Yes."

"I suppose you mean something, Coker?" remarked Greene, in a thoughtful way.

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

"Ahem!"

"You fellows have read some history," resumed Coker. "I dare say you've noticed in history that every emergency brings to light a man capable of dealing with it—the hour and the man, you know, come together."

"Do they?" yawned Potter. "Pass the prawns. These prawns are good!"

"The hour and the man!" repeated Coker. "For instance, in this war, you know, think of the number of strong, silent men who have come to the top—chucked up into public view by the war, you know, just as rubbish is chucked up by the sea. Given an emergency or a crisis, or anything in that line, the strong, silent man always crops up!"

"Sure, and you know him by the amount of gassing he does!" remarked Fitzgerald. "I've always noticed that about the strong, silent man!"

"Don't be an ass, Fitz!"

"Ahem!"

"In the present crisis," resumed Coker victoriously, "I feel that it's my duty to come to the top, like—like—"

"Like rubbish chucked up by the sea?"

"No, you ass!" roared Coker.

"Oh! What's the crisis, by the way?" yawned Fitzgerald. "I haven't noticed it myself. What merry crisis have you spotted with your eagle eye, Coker?"

"I suppose you know that things are not going on as usual at Greyfriars," said Coker sarcastically. "Dr. Locke is away ill—"

"Well, he's been gone quite a time, and we're getting used to that!" Smith major remarked.

"There was trouble when the new headmaster came, and a barring-out among the juniors—like their cheek, of course!" said Coker. "But there you are! The new headmaster's bunked out, and our Form-master, old Prout, is made temporary Head till Dr. Locke comes home."

"Oh, yes! What about it?"

Coker was speaking very impressively. But as he was only stating what all Greyfriars had known for a long time now, his audience was not very much impressed.

They only wondered what Coker was driving at, and wished he would conclude in the shortest possible time.

"Well," continued Coker, "our Form-master's Head for the present. Now's the time—I think I said that before. I'll say it again—now's the time! My opinion is that the Fifth have never had a proper show in this school. The Sixth take all the limelight. I don't think much of the Sixth myself!"

"Hear, hear!" said Coker's guests, with some heartiness.

It was a point of honour with the Fifth Form not to think much of the Sixth.

When, in the fulness of time, they should pass up into the Sixth, doubtless their views would change. At present,

however, they were unanimous in not thinking much of the Sixth.

"Prefects are always appointed from the Sixth Form," continued Coker. "I think that's a rotten idea!"

"Ahem!"

"Some time ago I got old Prout to recommend me to the Head as a prefect—you fellows remember—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ahem! Nothing!"

"Go on, Coker!"

"It didn't last long. Dr. Locke is conservative in his ideas, and he didn't see what a magnificent improvement it was," said Coker. "It was only an experiment, and it was dropped. The Sixth cut up rusty, too. But, don't you see, now our Form-master is Head of Greyfriars, now's the time to claim our rights in full. My belief is that things would go much better with, say, four prefects appointed from the Fifth Form. We could keep the Sixth in order—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And the juniors, too; they want keeping in order. Look at Wharton and his set in the Remove, for instance! Do they treat a Fifth-Form chap with proper respect? Why, Cherry biffed my hat off with a footer only this morning!"

"Awful!" said Fitzgerald solemnly.

"Well, not exactly awful," said Coker, who never could see when his leg was being pulled, "but very disrespectful to a senior Form. Now, my view is that while old Prout is headmaster we ought to claim our rights, and get in as prefects, and then, when old Locke comes home, he won't care to make alterations; it would be rather a slight to Prouty. Besides, by then we shall have shown our value as prefects, and the Head will see what a splendid improvement it is on the old system."

"H'm!"

"Nothing to 'h'm' about, George Potter! I've thought it out, and you can take my word for it. Now's the time—the hour has struck, you know, and I'm the man—the strong, silent man who takes the helm, you know!"

"Oh!"

"I'm going to head a deputation to Prouty," said Coker. "You fellows are the deputation."

"Oh!"

"We're going to point out to him that we claim our undoubted rights. Prout's a sensible man. He will see it."

"Suppose he doesn't?" suggested Greene.

"Then I shall insist."

"You'll whatter?"

"Insist!"

Coker's guests stared at Coker. "You'll insist—with Prout!" said Smith major.

"Oh, certainly!"

"Great pip!"

That was all Smith major could say.

"You know how the Lower School dealt with the new headmaster, who was a bit of a Hun," said Coker. "They barred him out. Well, of course, I'm not the chap to borrow a wheeze from junior

kids. Still, it's a good stunt. If Prout doesn't see reason, when we've given him a chance, we'll bar him out."

"What!" roared Potter & Co.

"Why not?" demanded Coker. "That man Jeffreys was brought to reason by a barring-out. Why not Prout?"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Fifth-Formers simply blinked at Coker. Evidently the successful junior barring-out had got into Coker's head, so to speak. He felt himself impelled to go and do likewise.

"But we'll give Prout a chance first," said Coker generously. "I believe in giving a man a chance. We'll talk to him kindly, and put it to him. If he don't see the point, we mention the barring-out—that's our trump card, you know."

"Our—our trump card?" said Potter faintly.

"Exactly."

"Oh, my only Uncle Sam!"

Coker rose from the table.

"Come on!" he said. "Strike the iron while it's hot! This idea may occur to Blundell, and then he'd rush in and get all the credit of it. You fellows follow me. Leave the talking to me—you'd put your foot into it, I'm afraid, if you had much to say! Come on!"

Coker threw open the study door and marched out.

The rest looked at one another in sheer consternation.

"He can't mean it!" muttered Smith major, aghast.

Potter gave a hopeless shrug.

"He's equal to that—or anything!" he said. "I hope he'll only get licked, and not sacked! He's not a bad sort—when he's sane!"

"Come on, you fellows!" shouted Coker from the passage. "I'm waiting for you."

There was a hurried whisper in the study, and then Potter & Co. followed Coker. The great Horace led the way with big strides to Mr. Prout's study. He tapped at the door with calm assurance.

"Come in!" called out Mr. Prout.

Coker opened the door and walked in, as bold as brass. At the same moment his followers melted away down the passage and vanished. The deputation that waited on Mr. Prout was a deputation of one; and that one was Horace James Coker.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major on the War-path!

"RATS!" said Bolsover major.

"Bosh!" said Skinner.

"Yep, I guess rats and bosh about fill the bill!" remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Ring off the chin-wag, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton frowned impatiently.

There was rain out of doors, and the junior Common-room was pretty well crowded after tea.

The Famous Five of the Remove were there, chatting about the prospects of the weather and the footer, when Bolsover major began. Bolsover major was fed up to the chin with the rain, as he declared, and he was not in a good temper. Bolsover had brought a footer into the Common-room. He proposed a game indoors, with the firegrate to serve as one goal, and the opposite window recess as the other. And a good many of the fellows concurred.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, objected.

Footer in the Common-room might be a lark; but it was pretty certain to bring down the prefects. And if Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, came on the scene, there would be trouble.

In quite normal times Bolsover major would never have dreamed of it. But things were not quite normal now.

The recent barring-out by the Lower School had not been forgotten. The new Head who had taken Dr. Locke's place had been a tyrant, and there had been a rebellion among the juniors, and it had been successful.

Wharton, who had a level head, was of opinion that it was up to the fellows to keep order with more than usual care after such an outbreak. They had been successful. But disorder in itself was not an admirable thing. But many of the fellows were restive; and hot-headed fellows like Bolsover had an idea that after a successful barring-out they could do as they liked.

It was, in fact, hard for the juniors to settle down to law and order again. One successful defiance of authority was likely to lead to more.

Harry Wharton pointed out that a resistance against tyranny, with right on their side, was very different from sheer lawlessness. But Bolsover major either could not, or would not, see it.

The more sensible fellows backed up Wharton. But Bolsover major had his following, too. There was restlessness in the lower Forms, especially in the Remove, which had led the recent rebellion. It was known, too, that Mr. Prout was far from being a resolute man; and Mr. Prout was headmaster for the time being.

Bolsover major & Co. were already clearing back the furniture, to leave a clear space for the football. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth seemed inclined to join in, too.

"Look here!" exclaimed Wharton sharply. "This won't do! You know jolly well that the prefects will hear the row, and come here!"

"Let 'em come!" said Bolsover truculently. "We'll jolly soon deal with prefects! We've dealt with them before, haven't we?"

"Hear, hear!" said Trevor.

"And how will you deal with them, fathead?" demanded Frank Nugent.

"Kick 'em out!"

"I'd like to see you kicking out Wingate or Gwynne!" said Johnny Bull, with a grunt. "Gas!"

"I expect all the fellows to back me up!" said Bolsover major. "We've shown that they can't handle the Remove. My opinion is that we ought to buck up, and stick it out. I'm done with 'Yes, sir,' and 'No, sir,' and 'Please, sir,' and 'Oh, sir,' for one. Easy enough to have another barring-out if they get rusty!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry. "Do you think the school will back up against the Head for the sake of playing footer indoors? Ass!"

"For the sake of freedom and independence," said Bolsover major loftily. "You can take the lead, Wharton, if you like. I don't want to take it out of your hands."

"Rats!" said Wharton.

"You're afraid of the prefects!" sneered Bolsover major. "You want to toe the line again, after we've only lately downed them."

"The esteemed Bolsover is a silly ass!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is necessary to toe the honourable line."

"You're another funk!" said Bolsover scornfully. "Clear off, if you're afraid of the prefects. Blow the prefects! Now, then, sides!"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders and was silent. It was not much use to argue with Bolsover major; but Wharton was annoyed and exasperated. Stand-

ing up for one's rights was very different from reckless defiance of proper authority; but Percy Bolsover did not seem able to see it. Wharton knew, too, that if Mr. Quelch came down like a wolf on the fold, Bolsover major would find his backers in a revolt remarkably few—if any. Mr. Quelch was not a man it was easy to defy.

"By gad, you're gettin' rather soft, Wharton, I must say!" remarked Temple of the Fourth. "Haven't we dished the masters once?"

"There's a difference. There was a reason for that."

"There's a reason for this. I'm bored stiff with the dashed weather!" said Temple. "Let's have a game, for goodness' sake. If we break any of the windows we can pay for them!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Line up, Smithy!" called out Bolsover major. "You're not funky, anyway."

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, looked up from his book with a grin.

"Count me out!" he said. "What's the good of playing the fool? You know that footer in the Common-room isn't allowed!"

"We allow it ourselves, fathead!"

"Rats! We beat Jeffreys & Co. because he was in the wrong. Even then it was a risky bizney, though it turned out well. This is only playing the giddy ox! Don't do it!"

"Oh, go and eat coke! Lend a hand with this table, you chaps."

The big table was rushed to the wall. Chairs were piled on it, and the sofa stood on end. The fender was stacked on the piled chairs. The long room was left free for the footer. Bolsover major chalked out the goal areas and the half-way line.

A good many fellows were on, and two elevens were made up of Fourth and Remove. The Famous Five looked on grimly. It was not like the Five to be left out of any fun, especially of a risky sort. And it was very exasperating to have their common-sense attributed to funk. There was nothing funky in refusing to play the reckless fool. Bolsover major gave them a sneering grin, and waved his hand towards the door.

"Clear out, if you're nervous!" he said.

"The nervousfulness is not terrific, my esteemed Bolsover," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, why don't you join in, then?"

"Yes, join in, dear boys!" said Cecil Reginald Temple. "I don't suppose either masters or prefects will come in. They know we're not going to stand any more rot. We've proved that!"

"Fathead!" growled Wharton.

"Any more playing?" bawled Bolsover. "Needn't stick to the exact number. Remove against Fourth. Line up there, every man who's going to play."

A number of the Remove, who generally backed up Wharton, gathered round him—Squiff, and Peter Tod, Tom Brown, Penfold, Mark Linley, Delarcy, Vivian, Bulstrode, and some others. The Bounder joined them. But they looked dubious now. There was a crowd of the Fourth, and they had all lined up with Cecil Reginald Temple. Some Removites were up in their studies, and the Fourth were in a majority. Skinner and Snoop and Stott backed up Bolsover, chiefly from opposition to Wharton, but they were not much use in the footer game.

"Back up, Remove!" roared Bolsover. "Are you going to stand there like a lot of moulting fowls, and let the Fourth walk over us?"

That appeal was not in vain.

Ogilvy and Russell, Kipps and Hazeldene joined him, and a good many others.

Squiff and Tom Brown followed. They were not going to see the Remove beaten, even in an informal game indoors.

"That's better," said Bolsover major. "This game won't count in the school record—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we're going to beat the Fourth, all the same."

"Rats!" said Temple.

"Sixteen a-side!" said Bolsover, counting. "We want one more man to make it even. You'll do, Toddy."

"Bow-wow!" said Peter Todd.

"Cherry, then. Come on, Bob!"

Bob glanced rather hesitatingly at Wharton.

As a matter of fact, the uproarious game in the Common-room rather appealed to Bob Cherry, who was seldom in a subdued mood.

"May as well, Harry!" he murmured.

"Do as you like," said Harry shortly.

Bob joined the footballers.

"Who's going to ref?" asked Russell.

"I say, you fellows, I'll referee," said Billy Bunter, coming forward. "You want a chap who knows the game inside-out—"

"Get out, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover— Yaroo!" roared Bunter, as Bolsover major helped him out of the way with his boot.

"Wharton, will you ref?"

"No, I won't!"

"Go and eat coke, then! You'll do, Browney. Don't be a rotter!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom Brown.

The ball was placed on the chalked line, and Bolsover major tossed with Temple. The kick-off fell to Temple.

"Play up!"

Tom Brown was not provided with a whistle. He banged the poker on the tongs as a signal.

Temple kicked off, and that remarkable game of footer began.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Revolt!

"BACK up, Remove!"

"Go it, Fourth!"

"On the ball!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove players rushed the ball into the Fourth-Form half, and Temple & Co. were driven back. The window-recess behind them was the goal, and Dabney was keeping goal.

Yells sounded as some of the players slipped on the floor and sprawled. Bolsover major fell over Temple, who yelled vigorously. The Remove was up again in a moment, leaving Cecil Reginald gasping. The attack swept up to the window-recess. But Dabney in goal cleared—very fortunately, or the window would certainly have been smashed. The ball went back to mid-field, and Fry of the Fourth rushed it on and kicked for goal. Hazeldene was on guard at the fireplace. The ball whizzed past him, and crashed on the clock.

Crash!

"Oh, crumbs!"

"My hat! Look at the clock!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass! Why didn't you save?" bellowed Bolsover major.

The clock-face was in fragments, and the hands twisted. The clock, naturally, had stopped.

"Send out that ball!" shouted Fry.

"That's a goal!"

"Tain't a goal!" shouted Bolsover major. "The grate's the goal!"

"Look here—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 508.

"Rats! Play up!"

Morgan cleared the ball, and Bolsover sent it on again. There was another rush of the Remove. The Fourth closed up, and a terrific struggle for the ball followed. It went under the table, and had to be fetched out and thrown in. Then there was a scramble round the table, which ended in the pile of chairs and the fender coming down with terrific crashes.

Heedless of the din and the damage, Bolsover captured the ball and rushed it on. The Fourth Form forwards were struggling among the crashing chairs, and Bolsover had his chance. He rushed right on and kicked for goal, and Dabney clutched at the leather and missed.

Crash! Smash!

"Oh, my hat!"

Right through a window-pane went the whizzing footer, dropping in the quadrangle outside with a shower of glass.

"Phew!"

"Goal!" roared Bolsover major.

"Hurrah!"

"Buzz off and fetch in that ball, Bunter!"

"Bravo! Goal!"

Billy Bunter started for the door. But he did not go out to fetch the ball. As he reached the doorway the door opened, and an awe-inspiring figure appeared there. It was that of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, and his face was like a thundercloud.

*Eat less
Bread*

Bunter dodged back, and scuttled behind Wharton.

The roar of voices died away suddenly.

Mr. Quelch strode into the Common-room. He looked round him—at the scattered chairs, the smashed clock, the broken window, and the other signs of havoc and disorder.

The Remove-master seemed scarcely able to believe his eyes. The Common-room looked as if a horde of Huns had passed through it.

"What—what—what does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, at last.

Silence.

Now was the time for Bolsover major to stand forth and proclaim the independence of the Remove, and its lofty disregard for masters and prefects and all their works.

But he didn't.

Somehow, Bolsover major felt a strong disinclination even to meet Mr. Quelch's steely eye.

The Form-master took no note of him. He fixed his eyes on Wharton.

"Wharton, you are head boy of the Remove, and captain of your Form! You, I suppose, are responsible for this?"

Harry Wharton bit his lip, and was silent. He had been against the reckless outbreak, but he did not feel inclined to say so.

"Is this a school, or a bear-garden?" said Mr. Quelch, with cutting sarcasm.

"Are you Greyfriars boys, or hooligans? What does this mean? Who is the leader of this riot?"

Silence.

There were expressive glances cast at Bolsover major. He was the leader. But the bully of the Remove did not speak. It was not much use to think of backing up against the Form-master. Mr. Quelch's authority was unquestioned even by Bolsover himself now that it had come to the test.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, as there was no reply. "Every boy present who has taken part in this riot will be severely punished—the Remove boys by me, the Fourth by their own master."

"I—I—I wasn't—I never—I—I—" began Billy Bunter.

"Bunter wasn't in it, sir!" said Wharton.

"Very good. You may go, Bunter."

The Owl of the Remove gladly scuttled out of the Common-room.

"Every Remove boy will take five hundred lines, and will go to his study immediately to write them out," said Mr. Quelch. "You, Wharton, as the ringleader, will be caned!"

Wharton set his lips grimly, and did not speak.

But the looks that fell on Bolsover major from all sides were too much for him. He spoke up haltingly.

"If you please, sir—I—I was the leader!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very good! You will come to my study, Bolsover. The rest of you, go to your studies at once. I shall ask Mr. Capper to come here and deal with the Fourth."

The Remove-master rustled out, signing to Bolsover major to follow.

The Remove bully hesitated.

"Don't go!" whispered Skinner.

Bolsover major gave him a fierce look. It was easy enough for Skinner to advise him not to go. Skinner hadn't the consequences of a refusal to face.

The Bunder burst into a chuckle.

"What about the merry rebellion?" he queried. "Aren't you going to buck up, Bolsover, an' declare the independence of the Remove, and down with everybody and everything?"

Bolsover major looked round dubiously. "Who'll back me up if I do?" he asked.

There was a unanimous silence.

"What about you, Temple?"

"Oh, rot!" said Cecil Reginald uneasily. "What's the good of playin' the giddy ox? I don't want a floggin'."

"No good playing the fool," said Hazeldene. "Better get after Quelch before he comes back for you, Bolsover."

That advice was too good not to be taken. Bolsover major tramped away in a subdued mood to the Remove-master's study. The rest of the Form dispersed to their quarters, with lines to write. Bolsover major came up to the Remove passage a little later squeezing his hands and scowling. He looked as if he had been through it.

There was a chuckle from some fellows in the passage.

"Well, did you defy him to his merry beard?" grinned Russell.

"Did you take his cane away and whack him with it?" chortled Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen and chaps," said Harry Wharton, from the doorway of Study No. 1. "I said at the time that it was a fool's game. I say it again! Bolsover major's got us five hundred lines each. Bucking against the masters is all rot, and silly gas! If there's any more of it, the chap who starts it will get into trouble. I don't want any more lines!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "Nuff's as good as a feast, and Bolsover hasn't barred out Quelchy after all, or caned the Head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover major stamped into his study, and slammed the door with a terrific slam. The Removites settled down wearily to their impositions. Long before the lines were half written every fellow in the Remove was feeling inclined to scalp Bolsover major. It was safe to say that if Bolsover sought to start another rebellion his life would not be worth living in the Greyfriars Remove.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Ultimatum!

"COME in, you chaps!" said Coker of the Fifth, as he opened Mr. Prout's door.

He glanced round, and observed with surprise that he was alone. Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald and Smith major had vanished.

Coker frowned.

"Well, what is it, Coker?" asked Mr. Prout, somewhat testily.

"They—they're gone!"

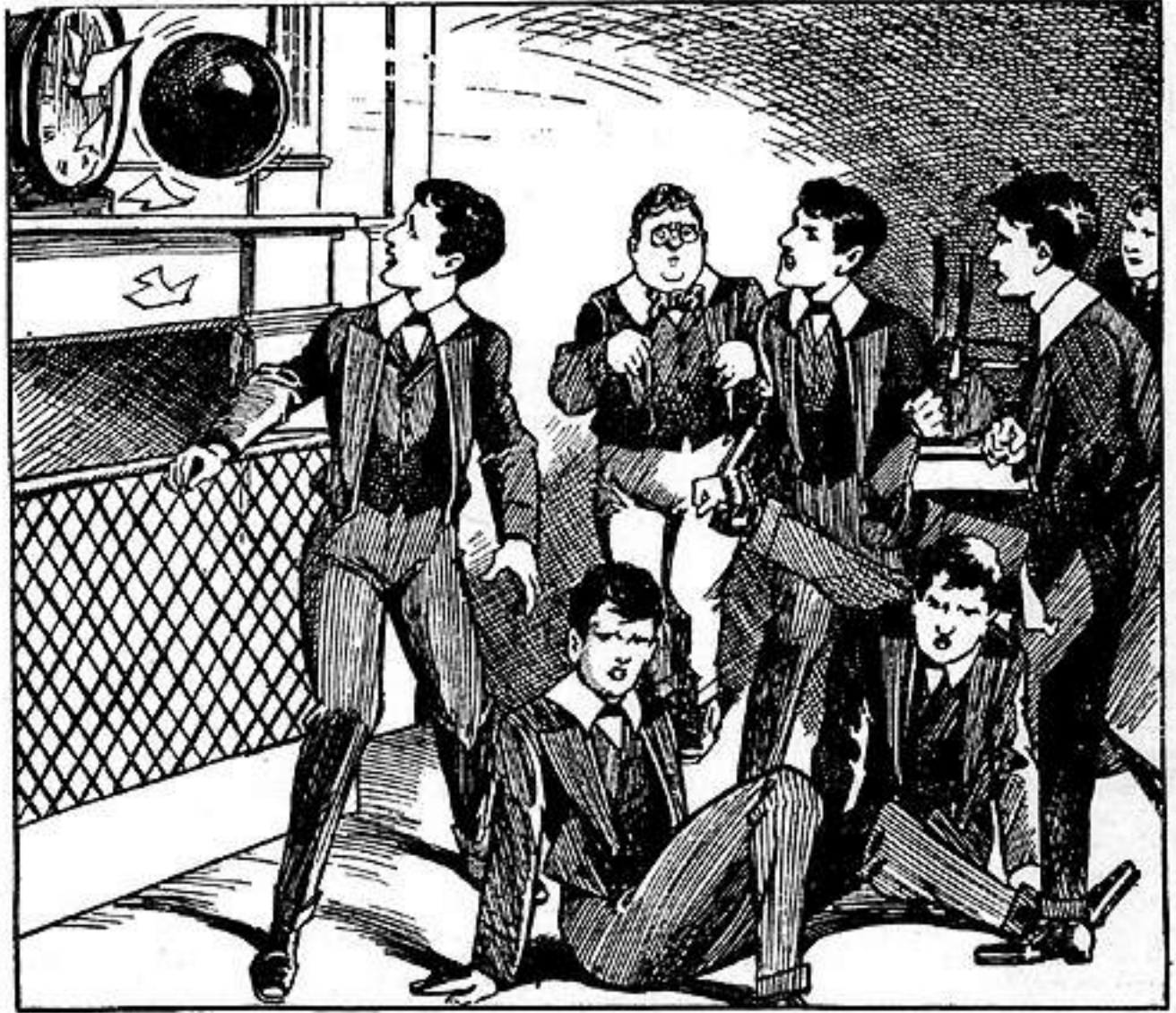
"What?"

Coker was exasperated. It was too bad to be deserted by the whole deputation at the critical moment! But Coker was a stickler, and he did not think of retreat. He faced Mr. Prout on his own. After all, Coker was the spokesman. His Form-fellows had only been brought there to play the part of admiring chorus. Coker had to do without his chorus, that was all.

Mr. Prout was looking annoyed. Mr. Prout had twinges of rheumatism, and it affected his temper a little. He had other causes of annoyance. Mr. Prout had been a mighty hunter in his youth, and his study was adorned with guns and antlers and a bearskin rug and a buffalo-robe, and all sorts of weird and fearsome weapons arranged as trophies on the walls. Ever since July, 1914, Mr. Prout had been restive because he couldn't place his valuable services at the disposal of his country—rheumatism and all. Since the voluntary age for enlistment had been raised to fifty, Mr. Prout had joyfully taken the opportunity, and rushed to join up. To his amazement, his services had been declined. It was a fiasco for Mr. Prout. He was a dead shot—at least, he believed he was. He had more brains than all the General Staff combined—in his own estimation at least. And if he was a little fat, and a little bald, and a little short-winded, and rather given to rheumatism, that counted for very little—in fact, nothing—according to Mr. Prout. He had pictured himself in the trenches mowing down Huns; but it was not to be! He was thinking over his disappointment, and mournfully eyeing the guns on his walls—which would never be used to diminish the number of the German armies—when Coker came in. He was not in a mood for Coker. His face showed as much. But Coker was blind to any consideration of that sort. When Coker had an idea in his head he was bound to carry it out. Heedless of the frown on Mr. Prout's face, and the gleam in his eye, Coker went ahead.

"I hope I'm not interrupting you, sir? I have thought of an excellent idea which I want to discuss with you, sir! While Dr. Locke's away, sir, there's an opportunity for you to improve the arrangements in the school, and I've thought of the way. While the cat's away, you know, sir!" added Coker agreeably.

Mr. Prout glared at him.



Footer in the Common-room! (See Chapter 3.)

"What?" he ejaculated.

"Hitherto, sir," said Coker, who had thought out a little speech in advance—"hitherto, the discipline of the school has suffered considerably from the fact that prefects are appointed only from the Sixth Form. The Fifth Form are not satisfied with this. They claim their right to have at least four of the prefects appointed from the Fifth. I beg to submit that idea to you, sir. I suggest myself, Potter, Greene, and Smith major as prefects."

"Coker!"

"Four of the best, sir—especially myself, if I may say so. I have rather a way of dealing with juniors. And the juniors have been unruly of late. I don't exactly blame them for bucking up against old Jeffreys. He was a rotter! He caned me! Still, it's a bad state of affairs. There's a row going on in the junior Common-room at this very minute. I should jolly soon stop that if I were a prefect!"

Mr. Prout opened his lips to roar; but a twinge in his leg caught him at that moment, and he gasped instead, and rubbed the painful place. Coker took his advantage, and went on:

"You see what a splendid idea it is, sir. I thought I should only have to point it out to you. What a prefect needs to uphold authority is a commanding personality—like mine, for instance. He ought to be a fellow whom the whole school respects—me, for example. It's necessary for him to be a good all-round sportsman—footballer and cricketer. Well, I'm all that. I've no doubt, sir, that I shall be able to save you no end of trouble—in fact, I'm convinced that I shall be able to take the management of the Lower School quite out of your hands. What do you think, sir?"

"You utterly absurd boy!" shouted Mr. Prout.

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"On a previous occasion, Coker, I recommended Dr. Locke to give you a trial as a prefect. You were an abject failure as a prefect, and the Head very rightly deprived you of the position. You may leave my study, Coker!"

Coker did not move.

"I may mention, sir, that I am only voicing the view of the whole of the Fifth Form," he said firmly.

"I do not think so, Coker! I do not believe that my Form contains any boy of such utter stupidity as yourself!"

"Mr. Prout!"

"You will take a hundred lines, Coker, for interrupting me with this nonsense! Now leave my study!"

Coker drew a deep breath.

Whether it was the rheumatism, or his military disappointment, evidently Mr. Prout was not in a reasonable frame of mind. It was time for Coker to be firm; and Coker was prepared to be firm—very firm!

"I'm afraid that won't do, sir!" he said.

"What?"

"The Fifth Form—through me—insists upon its rights!"

"Insists!" spluttered Mr. Prout.

"Insists!" repeated Coker. "I'm afraid, sir, that if you persist in injustice to the Fifth there will be trouble."

"Injustice! Trouble!"

"Yes, sir. You haven't forgotten, sir, how Mr. Jeffreys was dealt with when he was unjust? Let it be a warning to you, sir!"

Mr. Prout tried to speak, but no words came. He sat dumbfounded.

"May I take it, sir, that you will reconsider your decision?" asked Coker, under the impression that he had awed Mr. Prout at last. "I am prepared to act as prefect, and to recommend others for the post. Will you put the announcement on the board, sir?"

"Bless my soul! I—I have never heard such impertinence!" gasped Mr. Prout at last. "This, I presume, is a result of the late unhappy disturbances in the school. You, a Fifth Form senior, deem that you are able to follow the lawless example of the junior boys! Bless my soul! I shall disabuse your mind of that idea, Coker!"

Mr. Prout rose, and looked round for his cane.

"Really, sir——" said Coker.

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Prout, catching up the cane.

"I'm afraid, sir, that I cannot do anything of the kind!" said Coker firmly.

"What! Are you insane, boy?"

"Not at all, sir! In fact, I may as well give you my ultimatum," said Coker. "Either four prefects are appointed from the Fifth Form, or there will be trouble—serious trouble! I shall call a meeting of the Fifth Form, and direct them to begin a barring-out!"

"The boy must be out of his senses!" murmured Mr. Prout. "Coker, for the last time, will you hold out your hand?"

"Impossible, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Kindly reply to my ultimatum, sir!" said Coker. "I may as well say that I—we—we are in deadly earnest. I—Why—what—wharrer you at? Yaroooh!"

Mr. Prout did not explain what he was at. He left Coker to guess.

His left hand grasped Coker's collar, and swung him round. His right wielded the cane. And the cane rose and fell on Coker's shoulders and back with terrific vim.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, crumbs! Yah! Oh! Leave off! By Jove, I'll punch you— Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Mr. Prout was putting his beef into it.

Coker struggled and roared, wild with wrath and indignation. This was a pretty return for an ultimatum!

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh! Rescue, Fifth!" yelled Coker.

Horace Coker's powerful voice rang far and wide. Probably some of the Fifth heard it. But, like the gladiator of old, they heard it but they heeded not.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, crumbs! Rescue! Look here— Yaroooh! Yooooop!"

Mr. Prout opened the door, and bundled Coker into the passage. A last lash of the cane sent Horace Coker scudding away, roaring.

The Fifth Form-master turned back into his study, somewhat comforted.

Horace Coker was not feeling either grateful or comforted. For a good half-hour Coker was busy, in his study, rubbing his shoulders and groaning; and—for some reason Coker could not understand—there were sounds of loud laughter all along the Fifth Form passage.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Means Business!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry looked in at Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were grinding out their lines. It was hard on Wharton and Nugent, who had not taken part in the riot in the common-room. They had shared the punishment, however.

The fellows who had stood out did not feel inclined to explain that to Mr. Quelch. It would have looked too much like "being good." So they took the impots with the rest, and grouched over them.

"Not finished yet?" asked Bob.

"Nearly!" growled Nugent.

"Cheerio, old scout! All in the day's work," said Bob. "I've had a go at some of mine, and left the rest over. Five hundred in a lump is rather too steep for one sitting. Quelch is a bit of a Tartar. But I've got news, my sons—gorgeous news—news that will chase away that stern frown from your noble brows!"

"Fathead!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 508.

"Coker!" said Bob, with a chuckle.

"Eh? What about Coker?"

"Coker!" repeated Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton and Nugent joined in the laugh.

Seriously as Horace Coker took himself, it was enough for his name to be mentioned, to start a smile anywhere in Greyfriars.

"Coker's a philanthropist!" said Bob.

"He does these things on a rainy day to cheer fellows up; at least, I suppose he does. He's done it, anyway!"

"What on earth has he done now?" asked Harry, laying down his pen. He was glad of a rest.

"Do you remember that some time ago Coker persuaded old Prout to ask the Head to give him a trial as a prefect?" grinned Bob. "The Head didn't like to refuse old Prout, I fancy—anyway, he consented, and Coker was a prefect for a day or two—and you know how it ended. Ha, ha! If it had gone on for a day longer there would have been bloodshed. Well, now Coker— Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull, coming up behind Bob. "Coker's at it again!"

"The Cokerfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh, grinning over Bob's other shoulder.

Wharton and Nugent jumped up. "What is it, fathead?" demanded Frank.

"The Fifth are cackling themselves blue and pink over it!" chortled Bob Cherry. "Coker sprung it on them suddenly. While Dr. Locke's away, he wants Prouty to appoint prefects from the Fifth Form. He's been to see Prout, to threaten him with a barring-out if he refuses—I heard Potter say so—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all through our row with old Jeffreys," grinned Johnny Bull. "A lot of the fellows seem to have got it into their heads. There was Bolsover major this afternoon—and now Coker—ha, ha!"

"Old Prout pitched him out of his study, and whacked him," said Bob. "Hobson of the Shell met him coming away, roaring—simply roaring. He spotted old Prout's chivvy at the door, and says he looked like a Hun who had been under a Tank. The Fifth are yelling over it. But that isn't all. Coker is sticking to it!"

"The stickfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "There is an esteemed notice on the board—"

"In Coker's fist!" gurgled Bob.

"Come down and see it!" shouted Johnny Bull. "It's too good to miss. Bother the lines! Come and see it before the prefects take it down!"

"Righto!"

Wharton and Nugent hurried from the study after their chums. They found a good many other fellows heading for the notice-board in the Hall.

Coker's paper on the board seemed to be an object of general interest.

There was a crowd before the board when the Famous Five arrived. Fellows of the Remove, the Fourth, the Shell, were there, chuckling. Fags of the Second and the Third were howling with mirth over it—which was very disrespectful to Coker of the Fifth. The Co. shoved their way through the crowd, and read the famous announcement. It ran—in Coker's hand and Coker's spelling:

"Notice to the Fifth!

"WHEREAS it has been decided that it is the rite and duty of the Fifth Form of Greyfriars to furnish a certain number of prefects for the school.

"And whereas Mr. Prout, now acting

in the place of the Head, has refused to appoint prefects from the above-mentioned Form,

"A MEETING is called in the Fifth Form-room for 8 p.m., to consider the matter, and the measures to be taken.

"All the Fifth-form are expected to attend. The Chare will be taken at eight o'clock by Horace Coker.

"ROLE UP FOR RITE AND LIBERTY!

"Sined,

"HORACE J. COKER."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five, in chorus.

"He's going to take measures!" sobbed Nugent. "Is he going to cane old Prout, or expel him from Greyfriars?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bolsover major over again!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Bolsover's chucked it, but Coker is waiting to be chucked!"

"The chuckfulness will be terrific!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Wingate!"

The roars of laughter had drawn Wingate of the Sixth to the spot. The captain of Greyfriars came up inquiringly.

"What's all this thumping row about?" he demanded.

"The joke of the season!" said Bob.

"Hallo! What's that?"

George Wingate stared at the paper on the board. His face was a study for a moment or two.

"What cheeky ass put that there?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha! Coker!"

Wingate grunted, and jerked down the paper, and strode away to the Fifth Form passage.

Like an army the crowd marched after him. They wanted to see the interview between the captain of Greyfriars and Horace J. Coker.

Wingate hurled open Coker's door and strode in.

Coker and Potter and Greene were there. Coker was talking, Potter and Greene were smiling.

Wingate held up the paper.

"Did you put this on the board, Coker?" he asked.

"Certainly I did! What the thump do you mean by taking it down?" demanded Coker warmly.

"That kind of rot isn't allowed," said Wingate. "What on earth do you mean by 'measures to be taken'?"

"Don't you understand English? It means that the Fifth Form are going to take measures, under my guidance!"

"You utter ass!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd in the passage.

Coker cast a majestic glance towards the door.

"Cut off, you fags! You'll be kept in a bit better order when I'm a prefect!"

"When!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The whenfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Coker!"

"Clear off!" roared Coker,

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Coker," said Wingate quietly. "There's been some trouble lately in the school. Things have settled down now. Some young idiots among the fags began again this afternoon, and they've had a rather severe lesson. I should think the Fifth Form would have more sense."

"They have!" murmured Potter.

"I suppose you can't help being a silly ass, Coker!" continued Wingate. "Silly asses are born, not made, I believe. But don't let there be any more of this rot. Insubordination will be put down with a strong hand. Take a tip from me, and don't play the fool!"

Wingate crumpled the paper in his

hand and tossed it into the grate, and strode out of the study.

Coker stood almost petrified for a moment.

"Why, the cheeky ass!" he gasped, at last. "He's chucked my notice away! My notice, you know! I'll jolly soon show him! Give me that pen, Greeney!"

"I say, Coker—"

"Give me that pen, you ass! I've got to draw up a new notice to put on the board. I'll show him!"

"Coker, old man—"

"Oh, dry up! You talk too much, Greene!"

Greene gave a hopeless shrug, and dried up. Potter winked at the ceiling. Coker, with a wrathful brow, wrote the notice out again on a sheet of foolscap, and marched down to the hall with it. The juniors marched after him, in great spirits. Certainly Coker of the Fifth was a regular windfall on a dull day.

"Bravo, Coker!" yelled Bob Cherry, as the great Horace pinned up the new notice in a very determined way.

"Let anybody touch that paper again, that's all!" said Coker truculently. "I don't allow the Sixth to interfere with me! I don't think much of the Sixth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Coker strode away. And the fellows wondered what would happen if Wingate came by and saw the notice replaced. So did Fitzgerald of the Fifth, and as soon as Coker disappeared Fitz took the notice down and put it in his pocket. He felt that that was only friendly towards Coker.

Coker half expected another visit from Wingate. He was ready for it—he pushed back his cuffs in readiness. But the visit did not come. And Coker, quite unaware of Fitzgerald's thoughtful act of friendship, felt that he had scored.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Merry Meeting!

JUST before eight o'clock Horace Coker strode into the Fifth Form-room.

Coker was in deadly earnest.

Like the young man who had so peculiar a taste for Alpine climbing in bad weather: "His brow was set, his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath."

As Mr. Prout had refused Coker's reasonable request, and had replied to a respectful ultimatum by laying his cane about Coker, measures had to be taken, or else the whole scheme had to be given up. The latter alternative was impossible, from Coker's point of view. Coker was the strong, silent man called forth by an emergency. And evidently it was not the business of a strong, silent man to give way at the first reverse.

Coker had told his study-mates so. Potter had replied frivolously that it was not the business of a strong, silent man to go on making an ass of himself. Perhaps Coker thought it was. At all events, he was going on.

It was understood in Coker's study that there would be a row if his study-mates did not support him. Potter and Greene did not want a row. Coker's remittance was not all spent yet; besides, they rather liked old Coker, and he was amusing in wet weather. So they agreed to attend the meeting in the Form-room. They doubted very much whether anyone else would come, however.

Coker was rather surprised to find the Form-room empty. Outside, in the passage, there were plenty of fellows—mostly Removites. Those cheery juniors seemed very much interested in Coker and his new departure. Somehow, the Fifth did not seem to share their interest.

"Slackers!" growled Coker. He supposed that the Fifth were late.

The Fifth had howled with merriment over Coker's scheme, and now they had probably forgotten it.

Coker would have been the last fellow to admit it, but as a matter of fact his scheme was really the outcome of the recent barring-out. The bonds of discipline had been loosened, with deplorable results. Bolsover major's outbreak had been one result, but Bolsover major had been very speedily called to order. Coker was made of sterner stuff, and perhaps he had just a little less brains than Bolsover of the Remove. If the Lower School had been able to defeat a headmaster, surely the Fifth could put up a successful fight for their "rites"—that was how Coker looked at it. They had Coker's leadership, too—a very valuable asset!

Yet they did not seem keen to avail themselves of it. Potter and Greene came into the Form-room. Nobody else came.

"Where are the other fellows?" asked Coker, puzzled.

"Ahem! In their studies, I fancy!" murmured Potter.

"They know the time of meeting. Why haven't they come, the duffers?"

Potter winked at Greene, but did not reply.

Coker paced to and fro in the Form-room. The quarter-past struck, but still the Fifth Form did not arrive.

"Dash it all, this won't do!" exclaimed Coker. "Cut off, and tell the fellows they're late, Potter!"

"Ahem!"

"Do you hear?" rapped out Coker irritably.

"Oh, all right!"

Potter left the Form-room, and walked away through a grinning crowd of juniors. He did not return.

Coker waited ten minutes, Greene eyeing the door longingly.

"That blessed ass is a long time," said Coker at last. "For goodness' sake, go and see what's become of him, Greeney!"

"Right you are!" said Greene with alacrity. And he quitted the Form-room.

Strange to say, he did not return either.

Coker waited in vain.

It was really perplexing. Everybody in the Fifth knew that the "meeting" was called for eight, and now it was half-past eight, and nobody had arrived. And Coker had his speech all ready on the important subject of the "rites and liberties" of the Fifth, and the "measures" to be taken for bringing Mr. Prout to his senses.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry looked in. "Meeting off, Coker?"

"Certainly not!" snapped Coker. "Clear out! I don't want any fags hanging round here! I'll teach you rather better manners when I'm a prefect!"

"But the Fifth doesn't seem to be coming," said Squiff. "How would you like us for an audience, Coker?"

"Cut off!" roared Coker. "If I come out, I'll warm you!"

"Cheeky ass!" snorted Bolsover major. Bolsover was quite indignant at Coker's projected resistance to proper authority, a little forgetful of his own intended rebellion of that afternoon. "Cheeky chump! If Prout made you a prefect, Coker, we'd scalp him!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific, my idiotic Coker!"

"But Prouty knows better!"

Coker went to the Form-master's desk and picked up a cane.

"Now, are you clearing off?" he demanded.

"Not quite!" grinned Bob. "Come in, you fellows. There's going to be a meeting, and we're the meeting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove fellows crowded in. There were over a dozen of them, and Coker might have considered the odds too great, if he had been anybody but Horace Coker. But Coker never counted odds. Perhaps he felt so sure of success in his scheme that he considered himself a prefect already. He rushed at the juniors, and laid about-him with the cane.

There was a chorus of yells

"Yaroooh! You silly ass, stoppit!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Yarooop! Collar him!"

"Clear out!" roared Coker, laying about him. "I'll keep you in order, you cheeky fags, or I'll know the reason why! Out you go!"

"Down him!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton led the rush, and Coker was fairly bowled over. He came down on the floor with a crash, and Bob Cherry sat on his chest. Squiff and Peter Todd seated themselves on his outstretched arms, and Nugent and Johnny Bull stood on his thrashing legs.

The mighty had fallen! Coker wriggled in vain under the merry juniors.

"Gerroff!" he roared. "I'll smash you!"

"Sit on him!"

"Keep quiet, Coker!"

"Bang his head on the floor if he doesn't—like that!"

"Yarooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker was helpless. And still the Fifth Form showed no sign of arriving, and Potter and Greene had unaccountably disappeared.

Harry Wharton mounted upon a form.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"This meeting has been called to consider the serious case of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form. On a late occasion it was the painful duty of the Remove to back up against a tyrant, and there was a barring-out. Coker, who never has any ideas of his own—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Has borrowed that wheeze," continued Wharton. "But whereas the Remove were standing up for their rights, Coker is only playing the giddy ox. I put it to the meeting that order is going to be kept in this school, and that the Remove hereby appoint themselves prefects for the purpose of keeping order!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Bravo!"

"Coker claims four prefects for the Fifth. The Remove wouldn't stand Fifth Form prefects at any price. Sixth Form prefects are bad enough!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Our respected temporary headmaster, Mr. Prout, is a good sort, though he may be a bit of an ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker is not going to be allowed to cheek him. For the purpose of keeping Coker in order, a dozen prefects will be appointed from the Remove—us! If the Fifth can be made prefects, the Remove can. You hear that, Coker?"

"Yaroooh! Gerroff!" roared Coker. "I'll smash you!"

"You are not allowed to talk to prefects like that, Coker!"

"I'll 'prefect' you! I'll smash you! I'll skin you! I'll—I'll—"

"Tap his head on the floor!"

Bang!

"Oh, crumbs! I'll—I'll— Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Coker, this meeting of prefects considers that you have been lacking in respect to Mr. Prout, that your conduct is subversive of all discipline—"

"Bravo!"

"And that you must be kept in order! You will give your promise to go back

your study quietly, and behave yourself like a good little boy—"

"I'll—I'll—"

"Otherwise, you will be given the frog's-march home. Now, then!"

"I'll smash you!"

"Gentlemen, Coker of the Fifth is intractable. In a few years Coker will be a conscript, and it will be very bad for him if he has never learned discipline. He will turn his sergeant's hair grey. Coker, for your own sake, this meeting of Remove prefects has decided that corporal punishment must be administered."

"Oh, won't I wallop you!" howled Coker. "I'll—I'll—"

"March!" ordered Wharton.

"Hurrah!"

Coker was seized on all sides. Every limb was held by two pairs of hands, and other hands fastened upon his ears and his hair. He was swept up from the floor, wriggling and yelling.

"Ha, ha! Take him home!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Leggo! Yarooop! Oh, crumbs! I'll smash you!" bellowed Coker.

"Quick march!"

Out of the Fifth Form-room the mob of juniors streamed, with Coker in their midst. Coker was enjoying—or otherwise—the frog's-march. Down the passage and up the stairs they went, in wild array, amid a terrific din. Coker was bumped on every step. With a rush, they brought him into the Fifth Form passage.

Potter and Greene were beginning prep in their study when something heavy bumped on the door and hurled it open. It was Coker!

"My hat!" ejaculated Potter.

"We've brought him home!" roared Johnny Bull. "Don't let him loose again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash!

Horace Coker was landed on the study table. One of his boots caught Greene under the chin, and Greene yelled. His fists lashed out as he was released, and Potter caught one of them with his chin. The voice of Potter was like unto the voice of a bull of Bashan.

Harry Wharton & Co. streamed out of the study roaring with laughter. Coker sat up, in the upset ink on the table, and gasped.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Backers!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. sighted Coker the next morning when the Greyfriars fellows were going to the Form-rooms.

The great Horace wore a majestic frown—besides other things, of course.

The happenings of the previous day had not, apparently, pleased Coker. The plentiful lack of enthusiasm in the Fifth Form was even worse than the disrespectful hilarity of the juniors.

Coker felt that he was misunderstood; but he was not discouraged. He had his faults; but he was a sticker.

He frowned loftily at the grinning Removites, and stalked into the Fifth Form-room. The other Fifth-Formers smiled as they saw him. Really, Horace Coker was a first-rate antidote for war-worry.

Mr. Prout had not arrived yet.

The Fifth Form-master had stopped in the passage to chat with Herr Gans, the German master, who was disengaged that morning. Mr. Prout was confiding his military ambitions to the Gander. It was his favourite topic. He confided to Herr Gans how he would have potted Prussians if he had been allowed to take to the front the famous rifle with which

he had wrought destruction among the buffaloes in the Wild West, in the dear, dead days beyond recall. As the Gander was a Hun, it was not exactly tactful of Mr. Prout; but the Form-master was too pleased at getting a listener to think about that. But it did not matter, for Herr Gans was a Saxon, and hated Prussians even more than Mr. Prout did.

The Fifth Form had to wait. They did not mind. In fact, they preferred to wait and talk footer in the time usually devoted to first lesson. Horace Coker, like the strong, silent man he was, seized the opportunity. The Fifth were all there now, and could not avoid listening to his eloquence, if Coker chose to switch it on. So Coker mounted on his form to address the Fifth.

"Faith, is it an acrobatic trick ye're after?" asked Fitzgerald, staring at him.

"Gentlemen—"

"Sit down, Coker, you ass!" said Potter. "Suppose Prout comes in?"

"Blow Prout!"

"You can't blow a Form-master," remonstrated Greene. "Prout's rather waxy with you already, Coker."

"Bother, Prout! Gentlemen, I have a few words to say—"

"The fewer the better!" remarked Blundell, the captain of the Fifth.

"Hear, hear!"

"Shut up, Blundell!" shouted Coker.

"What?"

"I know you're captain of the Form," said Coker sarcastically. "But a captain who doesn't lead can keep his head shut. It's fallen to me to take the lead in this crisis, and you can dry up. If the Fifth knew what was what, I know who'd be Form-captain!"

"You silly chump!" roared Blundell.

"Silence!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gentlemen, I have a few words to say," repeated Coker, while Blundell glared at him as if he could eat him.

"You are aware that I have delivered an ultimatum to Mr. Prout on the subject of the rights of the Fifth Form—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to laugh at, you silly asses! This isn't a joke!"

"Faith, I thought it was!"

"If you want a thick ear, Fitz, you've only got to go on interrupting me in that idiotic way! Gentlemen, Mr. Prout refused to consider my ultimatum, and, indeed, treated me in a ruffianly manner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are aware how the juniors bucked against that man Jeffreys when he was here, and beat him all along the line. I suppose the Fifth can do what juniors can do—especially with a first-rate leader. Me, you know!"

"Do you think there's going to be fag barrings-out in the Fifth?" roared Blundell. "You unspeakable idiot!"

"And what is there to bar-out for?" demanded Bland.

"Our rights!" said Coker firmly. "We demand that prefects be appointed from the Fifth Form as well as the Sixth—"

"Oh, rats!"

"And suppose the Shell demand prefects from the Shell?" grinned Smith major. "What about that?"

"That would be cheek, of course!" said Coker at once. "I should be down on that, heavy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you can't leave off cackling—"

"Sure, how can a chap lave off cackling while ye're talking, Coker? Be raysonable!"

"Silence! Gentlemen, I am prepared to place myself at your head, and lead you to victory. Prout will have to give way if we stand firm, and he will have to concede our rights. Then, when Dr. Locke returns, we shall be established in

our rights, same as the Sixth—see? I hear that Dr. Locke is returning pretty soon, so there's no time to waste. Are you prepared to back me up? I may as well state that I am going ahead, in any case."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Chump!"

Judging by their replies, there did not seem to be much backing for Coker among the Fifth.

"My plan," continued Coker, "is quite simple. When Prout comes in, we collar him—"

"C-c-c-collar Prout?" stuttered Greene.

"Certainly!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Then we put it to him plainly. Unless he agrees, we give him a taste of his own cane!"

"Ye gods!"

"Cane Prout!" said Blundell dazedly.

"Cane a Form-master?"

"The juniors licked Jeffreys when he was here—"

"Jeffreys was a rotter, and the school governors wouldn't back him up when they knew about his goings on," said Potter. "Can't you see it's quite different, Coker?"

"No, I can't!"

"Then you're a burbling ass!"

"Gentlemen, Prout will be here in a minute or two. Will you back me up and collar him, and bring him to reason?"

"Fathead!"

"Do you know you'll be sacked if you touch Prout?" roared Blundell.

"Rats!"

The captain of the Fifth strode towards Coker.

"Get down off that form!" he said.

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Coker politely. "I shall stand on this form as long as I like. I've got some more to say, too!"

"Get down!"

"Rats!"

"We're fed up. You're going to ring off now," said Blundell. "As head of the Fifth, I tell you to dry up!"

"I don't acknowledge you as head of the Fifth," said Coker disdainfully.

"You're rather a white-livered fellow, Blundell. You're afraid to strike for the rights of the Form. I despise you!"

"By gad!"

It was a little too much for the captain of the Fifth. He made a jump at Coker, grabbed him, and yanked him off the form.

There was a terrific crash as they went to the floor together among the desks.

"Yaroo!" roared Coker. "Oh, my napper! Yah!"

"Cave!" gasped Potter.

Mr. Prout, his little talk with Herr Gans being finished, came into the Form-room. There was a sound of a terrific struggle going on among the desks, and Mr. Prout started, and whisked towards the spot.

"Bless my soul! What is this?"

"Yaroo! You rotter! I'll smash you!"

"You silly ass, I'll pulverise you!"

"Coker! Blundell!" thundered Mr. Prout, hardly able to believe his eyes and his ears. "Cease this instantly! How dare you fight in the Form-room! Cease, I tell you!"

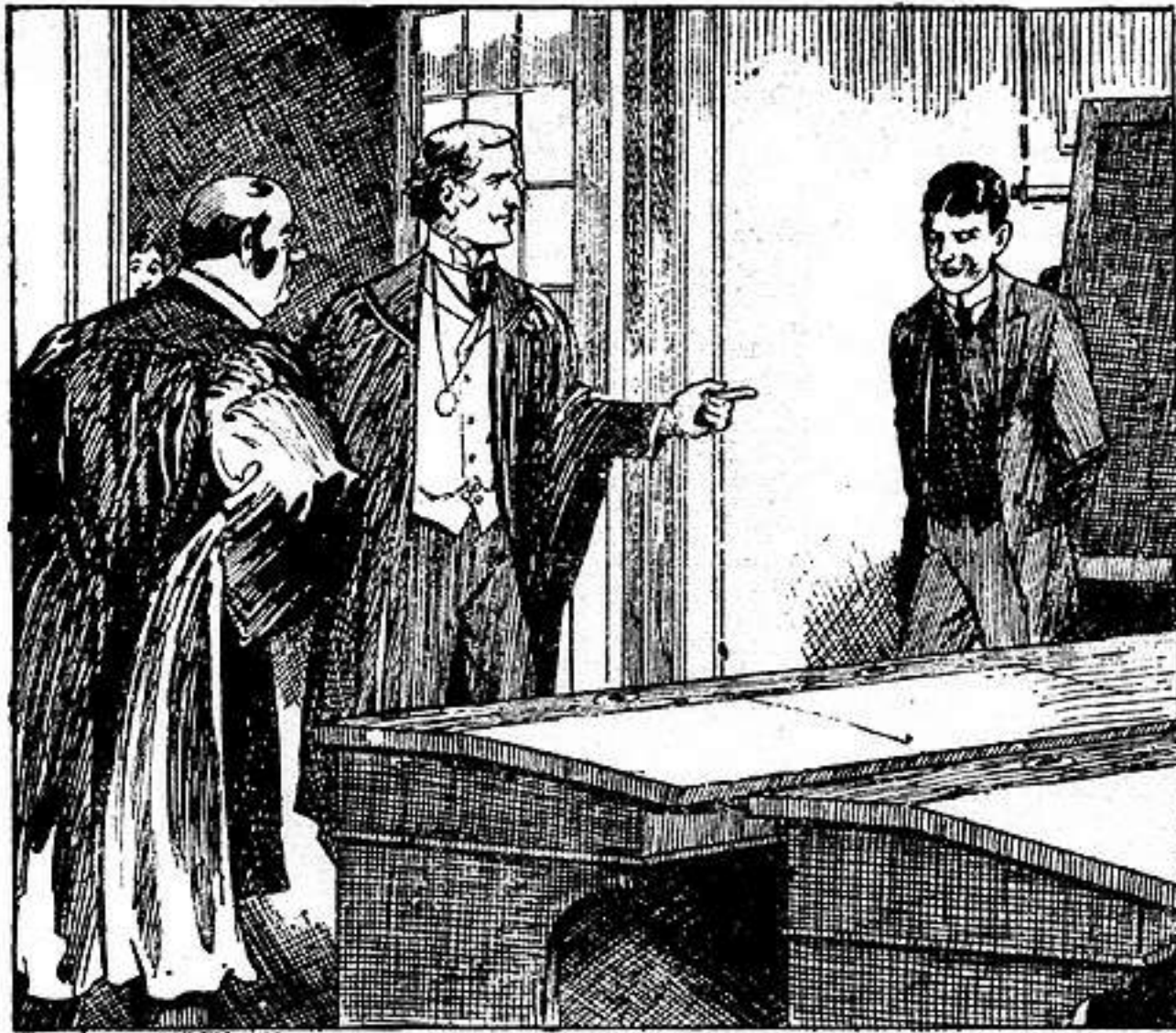
Blundell disengaged himself, and struggled up. Coker sat up dazedly, rubbing his dusty head.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"Blundell! I am surprised at you—the head boy of the Form! This is disgraceful! You will take five hundred lines!"

Blundell grunted.

"As for you, Coker—"



The rebel tamed! (See Chapter 11.)

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Get up immediately!"

Coker scrambled up. He was hurt, and he was dusty. He glowered at Mr. Prout, not at all respectfully. Mr. Prout glowered at him.

"Coker, you unruly, obstreperous boy!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Coker.

Mr. Prout staggered. Never in all his experience as a Form-master had a boy told him to draw it mild before.

"What?" he gasped. "What—what did you say, Coker? Did my ears deceive me?"

Potter made a terrific face at Coker. But Coker was past reasoning with.

"I said draw it mild!" he repeated. "The fact is, Mr. Prout—"

"You must positively be out of your senses, Coker!" gasped Mr. Prout. "I really think you need medical attention."

"Look here, Prout—"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Potter. "That's done it!"

It had!

Mr. Prout laid an iron grasp on Coker's collar, and dragged him out from the desks. His face was like a thundercloud. Coker wriggled in his grasp.

"Back up, you fellows!" he shouted.

The Fifth Form did not back up. They were much more inclined to bump Coker than to back him up.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Prout. "Are you actually attempting, Coker, to incite my Form to insubordination? Are you insane?"

"Leggo, blow you!" howled Coker.

"Potter, kindly hand me my cane!"

"Don't!" shouted Coker.

But Potter did.

The cane whirled in the air, and came down across Coker's shoulders. He roared and struggled. The burly Fifth-Former was rather a handful for the Form-master; and Mr. Prout was far too pompous a personage to enter into a struggle. He shouted to Blundell.

"Blundell—Bland—Smith! Come here! Hold that boy over a desk!"

"Certainly, sir!"

The three seniors ran to the Form-master's aid. Coker was whirled over a desk, and held in a convenient position for flogging.

As Coker wriggled spasmodically in the grip of his ungrateful Form-fellows, Mr. Prout laid on the cane.

Whack, whack, whack!

Coker's roars rang through the Form-room, and into the outer Form-rooms, and the Fourth and the Remove heard him quite plainly. But Mr. Prout did not spare him. He could not understand Coker's extraordinary conduct in the least; but he was quite sure that Coker needed severe correction. That correction he was prepared to administer.

And he did, with terrific vim. He flogged Coker with the cane till his arm ached. Coker was aching more than Mr. Prout's arm by the time he had finished.

"There!" panted Mr. Prout at last. "There, you stupid, wicked, unruly boy! There, I trust that that will bring you to your senses! Let him go."

"Yow-ow-ow-wooop!"

"Cease that ridiculous noise, Coker, and go to your place!"

And Coker went! Even Coker was subdued, for the time, by that tremendous licking. He fairly crawled to his place, and sat down. The next instant he jumped up again, as if the seat was red-hot, and yelled.

"Coker! Sit down at once!"

"Yow-ow! I—I c-can't!" stuttered Coker.

Mr. Prout glared for a moment, and then he smiled.

"Ahem! You may remain standing at present, if you prefer, Coker!"

Coker remained standing all the morning. Mr. Prout took no further notice of him. Coker was very glad to be taken no further notice of. The war-path had no more attractions for him just then. He had resolved that morning to stand up for the rights of the Fifth Form. He was standing up undoubtedly; but it was for quite a different reason. And Coker did not want any more just then.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Fed Up!

MR. QUELCH, in the Remove-room, had some difficulty in keeping his pupils' attention upon lessons. The Removites had heard Coker's mighty roaring, and they knew that there was trouble in the Fifth. They were keenly interested in Coker's progress—much more than they were in Form work. Mr. Quelch had to use his pointer several times.

Bolsover major was somewhat inclined to understudy Coker. He could not forget how the Remove had defied authority once. But there was no spirit of revolt in the rest of the Remove—and neither did Bolsover, when he met Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes, feel quite equal to defying the Remove-master. He ventured upon one impertinent reply; but it was his last. Mr. Quelch caned him on the spot, and Bolsover major took the caning with exemplary meekness. As Vernon-Smith humorously remarked, after roaring like a lion in the Common-room, he cooed like a dove in the Form-room.

When the Remove were dismissed, most of them congregated in the Form-room passage to see the Fifth come out. They wanted to see Coker.

It was a very subdued Coker who came out with the Fifth. He gave the juniors a dispirited glare.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have they made you a prefect yet?" asked Bob Cherry.

Coker did not even answer.

He limped away down the passage.

"Poor old Coker!" murmured Squiff.

"Prouty seems to have laid it on this time! He hasn't risked spoiling the child by sparing the rod."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and as the weather had mended a little, the Remove fellows mostly went down to footer practice. The St. Jim's match was coming along, and they had to be in form. Harry Wharton had had a letter from Tom Merry that morning, in which was mentioned a circumstance of some interest to the Removites. Levison, who had once belonged to Greyfriars, and was now a St. Jim's fellow, was coming over with Tom Merry's Eleven when they came.

Harry Wharton & Co. remembered Levison well, chiefly as a "smoky bounder" of the "blade" type. They were curious to see him as a member of the St. Jim's Junior Football Eleven.

Coker of the Fifth was observed mooching about the playing-fields while the Remove were at practice.

He did not join the Fifth at footer, however.

Greater matters than footer were occupying the mighty brain of Horace Coker.

He was recovering from the licking he had received in the morning, and as he got over it his ambitious schemes revived. Undoubtedly Coker was a sticker!

Potter and Greene were at practice, and it was in vain that Coker called to them to come off. He wanted them, and he considered that it was like their cheek to be playing footer when he wanted them.

But his study-mates were deaf to the voice of the charmer. Potter and Greene did not leave the field until the practice was over, and then they came in hungry to tea. They found Coker in the study. He met them with a lofty and gloomy stare.

"Finished your game?" he asked sarcastically.

"It wasn't a game—only practice," said Potter. "You might have had the

kettle on, Coker, as you were slacking about."

"Blow the kettle! This fairly beats me," said Coker. "Here am I, prepared to take the lead in fighting for the rights of the Fifth, and all you fellows can think of is kicking a ball about a field. Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while Rome was burning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, George Potter?"

"Was it Pontius Pilate?" grinned Potter, as he sorted out the kettle.

"Well, Alexander the Great, then," said Coker hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make it Pericles," said Potter, "or Xerxes, or Archimedes. Any old thing will do! Get that fire going, Greeney, while I fill the kettle, as Coker couldn't keep it in."

Coker glowered. Potter and Greene were hungry, and wanted their tea, and they were less careful than usual with Coker. The great Horace glowered at them as they made their preparations.

"So that's all you think of—tea!" he sneered.

"Well, it's the thing a chap usually thinks of at tea-time, isn't it?" said Greene. "You'd be hungry if you'd been doing something, instead of slacking!"

"Never mind tea now," said Coker. "The question is, what's to be done?"

"The eggs are, I hope."

"I didn't ask for a fat-headed joke, Greene!" said Coker. "The Fifth have refused to back me up, like rotten funks! I suppose I can depend on my own study-mates and pals for support?"

"Oh, yes!" yawned Potter. "Certainly; anything you like. Don't overdo it with those eggs, Greeney. Is there any sugar, Coker?"

"I don't know, and don't care, either! The Fifth have refused to back me up—"

"Give it a rest, old chap!" implored Potter. "Can't you put on a new record? That one's getting old!"

Coker stared at his study-mates. This was rather a new tone. But the fact was that Coker's pals were getting fed up. There was, as Potter had remarked to Greene, a limit to a chap's capacity for being bored, and they were getting near the limit.

"Well, I'll tell you what I've decided on," said Coker, after a pause. "Prout licked me this morning. You chaps stood by and never made a sound."

"You were making row enough, old scout!"

"I'm willing to overlook it," said Coker magnanimously. "But I expect you to back me up. I throw over the Fifth. They're all funks! But I keep up my claim to a prefectship. That's only just. I've written Prout a note."

"Oh!"

"Here it is! I'm going to send it to him by a fag. Look at it."

"After tea, old chap."

"Look at it now!" roared Coker.

Peter and Greene resigned themselves to their fate, and looked at the note. They grinned as they read it. It ran:

"Sir,—I, the under-sined, insist upon my rite to be made prefect. I am willing to moddify my claim, and will be satisfied if I am made prefect, and never mind the uthers. If this reasonable claim is not aksceded to, I hereby inform you that there will be a barring-out. I deffy injustis. Kindly send your answer by the fag who brings this noat.
Sined, HORACE J. COKER."

"You—you—you're going to send that to Prout?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 508.

"Certainly!"

"After what happened this morning?"

"That only makes me more determined!" said Coker calmly.

"But how are you going to manage a barring-out when the Fifth won't have anything to do with it, or with you?" asked Potter, with great patience.

"That's what I'm going to tell you. It's going to be a study barring-out."

"A—a whatter?"

"We're going to have a barring-out in this study. Us three against old Prout, you know, till he gives in."

"Us—us three?" gasped Greene.

"That's it!"

"You howling idiot!" roared Greene, losing all patience.

"Mind what you say, Greene! I don't want to have to punch you!" said Coker.

"Now, I'll call a fag, and send Prouty that note, and if his answer's in the negative, as those burbling asses say in the House of Commons, then we start in. See?"

"Nunno, I—I don't quite see! I know I'm not doing any barring-out in this study," said Greene. "I know Potter isn't, either. We're not asking for the sack!"

"It's a question of justice—"

"Oh, rats!"

"The rights of the Fifth Form—"

"The rights of your grandmother! Don't be an ass!"

Coker glared.

"I shall be sorry to handle my pals," he said. "But I may as well say out plainly that if I'm not backed up in this study there will be trouble. Best to speak plainly. Are you going to back me up, or have I got to hammer you?"

Potter picked up the note from the table, and pitched it into the fire. Potter considered that the fire was the safest place for it. Coker watched him with almost incredulous amazement. The heel was being raised against him in his own study! Even his faithful followers were falling away!

"What does that mean, Potter?" he gasped, at last.

"It means that we're fed up with your silly rot!" said Potter deliberately. "As we're speaking plainly, Coker, I'll let you have it in plain English. We're fed up! I suppose you understand what that means, even with a brain like yours?"

"Wha-a-at!"

"There's not going to be any barring-out in this study, and you're not going to check Prout. Understand?"

"M-m-my hat!"

"If you cheek Prout, we're done with you! We're fed up. And you're not going to bring trouble on this study. Unless you stop playing the giddy ox, we shall turn you out!"

"Turn me out?" repeated Coker dazedly. "Me!"

"Yes, you, and sharp, too! Now shut up!"

Coker was rooted to the floor. He could not find his voice again for a full minute. Then he burst out:

"Why, you—you—you—you—"

"Shut up!" roared Potter.

"Yes, shut up!" said Greene. "'Nuff said! Put on a new record or else dry up! You are getting too big a bore, Coker. There's a limit!"

"Why, I'll wallop you till—till you can't howl!" roared Coker. "You—you talk to me! Who's head of this study, I'd like to know? Why, you cheeky rotters— You—you—you—"

Words failed Coker. He rushed at Potter. It was a time for action, not words. Mutiny in his own study had to be nipped in the bud.

"Lend me a hand, Greeney!" panted Potter.

"What-ho!"

"I'll lick the pair of you!" roared Coker truculently. "Come on!"

Potter and Greene were coming on fast enough. Even Coker, burly as he was, was not quite a match for the two. Struggling furiously, he was yanked towards the door.

"Out with him!" panted Greene.

Crash! Potter went down, yelling, and Coker turned on Greene. But Potter was up again in a twinkling.

Coker's study-mates were as exasperated as Coker himself, and they were in deadly earnest. Potter's arm went round Coker's neck, and he was dragged over.

With a final effort Potter and Greene hurled him into the passage. He landed there with a terrific bump.

Then the door closed, and the key was turned in the lock.

Coker picked himself up, and charged at the door like a bull. He grabbed the handle and rattled it. He thumped on the panels. He roared blood-curdling threats through the keyhole.

Potter and Greene went on with their tea, and let him roar.

Coker went on his way at last. He had to go down to Hall to tea, in a state of amazement and wrath quite indescribable. He, Horace James Coker, monarch of all he surveyed, had been turned out of his study—pitched out on his neck, in fact! It was astounding—incredible; but there it was! It was time for the skies to fall! Coker munched war-bread in Hall in utter amazement.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Coker Asks For It!

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

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the Rag when the great man came in. It was a meeting of the Remove gardeners to discuss work on the school allotments—a matter that was miles beneath Coker's lofty notice. Certainly, Coker hadn't come there to discuss such subjects as trenching the ground preparatory to sowing in the spring.

The Removites smiled at him. They found Coker more entertaining even than usual of late; and he was a great resource in rainy weather. All Greyfriars knew that Coker had been ejected from his own study, and had howled over it.

"Come on, Coker!" said Harry Wharton politely. "Are you going to give us a hand with the trenching on the allotments?"

"Eh? Don't be an ass, Wharton!"

"Certainly not! I won't poach on your ground, Coker!"

"I haven't come here to listen to fag cheek, Wharton, I warn you!"

"Well, what have you come for?" inquired Frank Nugent. "You're interrupting the merry meeting, Coker!"

"Listen to me!" said Coker. "I've got something to say rather important!"

"About potato-growing?"

"No!" roared Coker. "Bother potatoes!"

"Cabbages?" asked Johnny Bull. "Do you know a dodge for keeping caterpillars off our winter cabbages?"

"You silly young idiot! I don't know anything about cabbages, or caterpillars either. Do you think I've got time to bother about such rot? Now, listen to me! You kids bucked against that man Jeffreys when he was here, and you got rather the best of it, though you hadn't anything in the way of a leader. Well, I'm going to let you hack me up!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Which?"

"The Fifth have left me in the lurch—they've got no pluck. You fags are unruly young scoundrels, but you've shown

that you've got some pluck. Well, I'm up against Prout—you know that. He won't give us justice. I've demanded Fifth-Form prefects, and he's refused. I stand up for my rights; but I've dropped the claim for the other chaps. They can go and eat coke! But I am bound to insist on my own rights; you see, my personal dignity is concerned in the matter!" Coker explained.

"And your personal dignity is important?" asked Bob, with great seriousness.

"Of course, you young idiot!"

"Oh! All serene! Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, Coker's personal dignity is concerned in the matter, and Coker's personal dignity is important. I am sorry to see you fellows grinning. This is a serious matter. Isn't it, Coker?"

"Yes, it is!" snapped Coker. "Now, as I insist upon being made a prefect, and Prout refuses, I'm going to bar him out. The Fifth won't back me up, and I'm going to let you fags do it!"

"Great Scott!"

"You barred out Jeffreys," said Coker. "You did it well—I admit that! Under my leadership, you could do better. We shall soon bring Prout to his senses. As soon as he makes me a prefect the matter drops."

"And when you are made a prefect you will be awfully nice to the Remove, of course?" asked Peter Todd, with a wink at his comrades.

"I shall jolly well do my duty!" said Coker warmly. "And I shall keep fags in their place, never you fear!"

"What an inducement for us to back him up!" murmured Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind, it's understood that I'm leader, and that I allow no arguing from fags," said Coker. He seemed quite anxious to make that point clear. "I'm going to start the barring-out in the Form-room. You'll take a note from me to Prout, Wharton. And if he refuses my just demand, we go ahead! See?"

"I see," said Wharton demurely.

The juniors gazed at Coker in wonder. It never seemed to dawn upon the great Horace that he was taking too much for granted.

Probably he considered that the honour of backing him up was quite enough to delight the fags and render them enthusiastic.

Wharton closed one eye at his chums. He was quite willing to lead Horace Coker on, and pull his sublime leg.

"I've got it all out and dried!" said Coker briskly. "I fancy the Fifth will be a bit ashamed of themselves when they find that I've had to call in the fags to help. It's a come-down, of course. I can't say I'm proud of it. But a chap must use what materials he can get, however rotten they are, if he can't get better. I've thought that out."

"You're so flattering, Coker," murmured Bob Cherry, "I don't see how anybody could refuse you anything when you ask it so nicely!"

"If that's meant for cheek, Cherry, I warn you to chuck it! I'm not standing any cheek from you scrubby little scoundrels!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob, almost overcome.

"The Cokerfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "What are the esteemed orders, my worthy and ludicrous Coker?"

"Shut up while I write the note!"

"Oh!"

Coker sat down at the table, and drew ink and paper towards him. He wrote out a fresh copy of the ultimatum Potter had impertinently destroyed in his study.

"There!" he said. "Take that to Prout, Wharton!"

Wharton rose. He had been whisper-

ing to his companions while Coker was writing, and they were all looking very meek and very serious. The discussion on the allotment question was postponed. Coker was much more entertaining.

"Wait for an answer?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. Bring me the answer here."

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton took the note, and left the Rag.

Coker paced to and fro majestically while he waited for his return. The juniors waited in solemn silence.

Harry Wharton did not present himself in Mr. Prout's study. He had no intention whatever of presenting Coker's final ultimatum.

It was only too probable that both the bearer and the sender of that note would be made examples of if it reached Mr. Prout's hands.

Wharton tore it into several pieces, and dropped the pieces into a gutter outside a window. Then he returned to the Rag.

Coker eyed him inquiringly as he came in.

"Well, what did Prout say?" he asked.

"He didn't say a word," said Harry.

That reply was in exact accordance with the facts. Certainly Mr. Prout had said nothing to Wharton, as he had not even seen him.

"Not a word?" exclaimed Coker.

"Not a syllable."

"That's rather queer. He didn't say I was to come to him?"

"No."

"He didn't say I was to be a prefect?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Did he send the note back?"

"No."

"Rude old hunks!" said Coker wrathfully. "Treating me with contempt! Me, you know! I'll jolly soon show him whether I'm to be treated with contempt! The barring-out goes ahead now! When Prout finds us barred in the Form-room he may come to his senses."

"When!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Hurree Singh murmured that the "whenfulness was terrific!"

"Follow me!" exclaimed Coker loftily.

He strode from the Rag. The juniors, suppressing their smiles, followed him.

Vernon-Smith and Skinner met them in the passage.

"Hallo! What's this game?" asked Smithy.

"We're following in father's footsteps," explained Bob Cherry. "We're following the dear old dad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not so much jaw!" rapped out Coker. "Come on!"

"It's a barring-out, Smithy!"

"Another barring-out!" ejaculated the Bounder.

"Yes; Coker's! We're backing him up. We're going to defy everybody and everything, and never sheathe the sword, which we have not lightly drawn, till Prussian militarism—I mean, until Prout is foiled, diddled, dished, and done!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Join up, Smithy! The more the merrier! Mind you treat Coker with respect. Coker's rather ashamed of having to fall back on fags to back him up, and he's a bit touchy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith and Skinner joined up. So did some more fellows when they learned what was on. Nearly half the Remove arrived at the Fifth Form-room with Coker. Fitzgerald was coming out, with a book in his hand as they arrived, and he stared blankly at Coker and his army.

"Phwat's on?" he inquired.

"Barring-out!" said Coker loftily.

"As you fellows refuse to back me up, I've called up the fags!"

Fitzgerald blinked at him. Coker strode past into the Form-room, and the juniors followed him in, some of them winking at Fitzgerald as they passed. Fitzgerald, almost suffocating, tottered away to tell the Fifth of Coker's latest. In the Form-room Coker was giving orders in a loud voice. Horace Coker meant business; and so did his followers, though the business they meant was quite different from the business Coker meant!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

And Gets It!

HORACE COKER was quite himself now. He felt that he bore a striking resemblance to Ajax defying the lightning.

Mr. Prout had refused to come to reason. Mr. Prout was to be brought to reason.

It was a little annoying to be backed up by Remove fags instead of seniors—it was less dignified, and Coker attached considerable importance to his personal dignity. But there was no help for that, and the fault was not his. Certainly, he had done his best to rouse the Fifth Form to revolt for their "rites."

Coker was a little excited, but he made it a point to be calm. All Greyfriars was to see that he was the "strong, silent man" required in an emergency.

"Take up all the forms and desks. They're to be stacked against the door! All the windows to be fastened. Half a dozen of you buzz off to the tuckshop to and get in grub—we may have to be here for days, perhaps. Some of you scoot off and get in some brooms, mops, and things—we might have to fight for it. And—"

"Anything else?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You wouldn't like us to fetch old Prout's head on a charger?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Shut up, Smith!"

"Gentlemen," said Harry Wharton, "you see the idea! Coker's going to bar out Prout—and get sacked! We can't afford to let old Coker be kicked out of Greyfriars! There would be nothing left to entertain us in dull times!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, Wharton!" roared Coker.

"We're not exactly going to bar out Prout!" continued Wharton. "Coker's little joke has gone far enough in that direction—"

"It's not a joke, you young ass!"

"Your mistake, Coker—it is! But if Coker wants to hold the fort in this Form-room he can—and he's going to! Collar him!"

"Why, you young rotters!" shouted Coker, as the grinning Removites closed in on him. "Wharrer you at?"

"Saving you from getting sacked, old chap!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Hands off! Why, I'll— Oh, my hat!"

Bump!

Coker came down on the floor. He was swept off the floor, however, and whirled along to a form. On that form he was plumped down hard.

His struggles were not much use. He was firmly held on the form by the chuckling juniors while Wharton produced a cord and bound him there.

The cord wound about Coker's legs and body, and was knotted round him and round the form, keeping him sitting. Then his hands were tied down to his sides. Then he was released, and the juniors crowded back, with roars of laughter.

Coker glared at them, spluttering with rage. Only Coker could have been duffer

enough to suppose for a moment that the juniors would have backed him up in a barring-out. Even Coker supposed it no longer.

"You young villains!" he roared. "Let me loose—let me loose, at once! Do you hear?"

"Don't you want to hold the fort?" chuckled Wharton. "My dear chap, we haven't done with you yet."

The Removites were far from finished with Coker. Bob Cherry took a chalk from the cupboard and chalked the lower half of his face, from his nose to his chin, a dead white. Wharton scooped soot from the chimney, and sooted the upper half. It gave Coker a peculiar, zebra-like look when they had done.

Then a bottle of gum was forthcoming, and the gum was worked into Coker's hair, in spite of his frantic threats.

The hair, thickened with gum, was wound up to a point on Coker's head, and left like a pyramid.

Coker's aspect was so extraordinary by this time that the juniors were almost in hysterics. So was Coker, though for different reasons.

"My hat!" gasped Squiff. "If Prout sees him now he'll have a fit!"

"The fitfulness will be terrific!" purred Hurree Singh. "How do you feel thusly, my esteemed and fatheaded Coker?"

"Groggh! I'll smash you! I'll spifficate you! Yow-ow!"

A blackboard was dragged round behind Coker, and set up among the desks. On it Wharton chalked in large letters:

COKER THE PREFECT!

THE ONE AND ONLY!

THREE SHIES A PENNY!

"There, I think that will do!" remarked Wharton. "Are you going to thank us before we go, Coker? We're saving you from the order of the boot, you know!"

"I—I—I'll smash you!"

The juniors crowded towards the door. They had done with Coker. The infuriated Fifth-Former roared after them.

"Come back! Let me loose! You young rotters, you're not going to leave me like this! I'll smash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors streamed out of the Form-room, and Coker was left alone—alone in his glory!

The unhappy rebel of Greyfriars gasped with fury.

He was about to shout for help, when it occurred to him that he did not want to be found in that peculiar position. He fumed and gasped and muttered dire threats, hoping that the merry Removites would come back and release him.

But the Removites did not come back. The allotment meeting was resumed in the Rag, and they had no more time to waste on Coker. Their idea was that Horace wanted a lesson, and that he was going to have one. After this experience it was highly improbable that Coker would seek to raise another rebellion in the school. That would be for Coker's good. The way he was going led to the sack, little as he seemed to realise it.

Coker remained for half an hour, twisting in his bonds and fuming. After that he could stand it no longer, and he shouted for help. Even at the cost of furnishing merriment to all Greyfriars, he had to be released.

Fitzgerald looked in at the doorway. He went almost into convulsions at the sight of Coker's black-and-white countenance and conical topknot, and staggered away, unheeding Coker's yells.

Potter and Greene were the next to

arrive. They stared at Coker from the doorway, and howled.

"You silly idiots!" shouted Coker. "What are you laughing at? There's nothing to laugh at! Come and cut me loose, you blithering burlers!"

Potter and Greene shrieked. "Will you come and loose me, you villains?" bellowed Coker. "This is a piece of fag cheek, that's all! I thought the young scoundrels were going to back me up in a barring-out, and this is what they meant all the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll smash you, Potter! I'll pulverise you, Greene! Come and get me loose, can't you, you gurgling dummies?"

"Ha, ha! We don't want to be smashed or pulverised, thanks!" gasped Potter. "You'll do very well as you are, Coker! Good-bye!"

"Potter! Greene! I say, come back! Look here—"

But Potter and Greene were gone. Their howls of mirth died away down the Form-room passage.

Coker gasped with wrath.

There were footsteps in the passage—many footsteps. The news was spreading. Dicky Nugent of the Second Form came in, with a crowd of fags. They roared at the sight of Coker. Bolsover minor led a party of the Third. And the notice on the blackboard behind Coker seemed to be taken quite seriously by the fags.

"Three shies a penny!" yelled Nugent minor. "Go it!"

And the fags went it.

Crumpled dusters and fragments of chalk and paper pellets were the missiles, and they rained on Coker.

The unhappy Horace dodged his head from side to side frantically, but as fast as he dodged one missile he got another.

The fags were enjoying the game immensely. The same could not be said for Coker.

In the passage a crowd gathered—Fourth and Shell and Remove came along to look on. There were cheers for every hit by the fags.

Coker roared for help.

But the Fifth, though they certainly must have heard him, did not heed. They were fed up with Coker. He had asked for it, and now he had got it—that was how Coker's ungrateful Form-fellows looked at it.

But Wingate of the Sixth came along at last, aroused by the uproar from the Form-rooms. Wingate almost fell down at the sight of Coker.

"What—what—what—" he stuttered.

"What's that?"

"Ha, ha! It's Coker!"

"Coker the Prefect!"

"Coker the Great! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me loose, Wingate!" shrieked Coker. "You silly fool, what are you standing there staring for? Let me loose, or I'll punch your silly head! Call yourself a prefect? Yah!"

Wingate stared at him, and walked out of the room. Coker's way of asking a favour did not seem to please him, somehow.

"M-my hat!" gasped Coker. "Wingate, you idiot! He's gone! You young scoundrels, if you shy anything at me again—Yaroo! Oh, my nose! I'll spifficate the lot of you! Yoooop!"

"Cave!" yelled someone in the passage. "Form-master!"

The crowd melted away like butter in the sunshine.

As Mr. Prout, with stately stride, approached the Form-room, the last of the juniors disappeared in the opposite direction at top speed.

A sudden silence followed the uproar as Mr. Prout came up to the doorway.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Prout. "I am sure I heard a noise—in fact, I am positive I heard a very considerable din! Why—what—Upon my word!"

Mr. Prout blinked in at Coker.

Coker blinked back at him.

"What—what is that dreadful object?" said Mr. Prout faintly.

Coker spluttered.

"I'm Coker! I'm tied up! I—I—"

"Coker! You are causing further disturbances, Coker!" thundered Mr. Prout, recovering himself. "Are you mad, Coker? How dare you engage in such a childish frolic—you, a member of a senior Form! Are you utterly out of your senses?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker.

"Leave this room at once, and wash your face!" shouted Mr. Prout.

"I—I—"

"Will you obey me, Coker?"

"I—I can't! I—"

"I order you to rise from that form at once, Coker!"

"I can't!" shrieked Coker. "I'm tied!"

"Tied? Bless my soul, you are tied! Yes, I perceive it now. You have gone to this length of absurdity, Coker, in a childish game with boys of the lower Forms—you, a senior! I am ashamed of you! You are a disgrace to the school, Coker!"

"I—I haven't—I didn't—I wasn't!" babbled Coker.

"Silence! I seriously suspect that you are not in your right mind, Coker! I will send someone to release you, and you will clean yourself, and take a thousand lines! I have never heard of a Greyfriars senior behaving with such an utter want of dignity! Pah!"

Mr. Prout flounced out of the room, leaving Coker fairly foaming. It was the last drop in the cup that he should be supposed to have entered into that game of his own free will. He, Coker, playing a fag game with fags, having his face blacked! It was too much!

Coker was in a frame of mind that a wild Hun might have envied when Trotter, the page, came in, grinning, to release him. Having been released, he rewarded Trotter with a shove that made him sit down suddenly, and stamped out of the Form-room. Yells of laughter greeted him in the passages at the sight of his face and his hair, as he streaked for the nearest bath-room. Coker was very busy in the bath-room, with soap and steaming water, for a long time, but when he appeared in public again he was still rather chalky and sooty and gummy, and his temper was positively homicidal!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Squashed!

HARRY WHARTON & CO felt that they had done Coker a real kindness. They did not expect any gratitude, and certainly they did not get any. Coker eyed them like a savage Prussian when he saw them again. But it was pretty certain that Coker would not seek to induce any part of Greyfriars to arise in its might against authority any more. If Coker wanted a barring-out, it was clear now, even to Coker, that he would have to hold it entirely on his own.

Even Coker could hardly go to that length, the fellows supposed. But they didn't quite know Coker. True, Coker spent most of that evening in gouging gum out of his hair. But on the following morning Coker was ready for business again. At breakfast he was seen to wear a very determined look. After breakfast he disappeared.

Where he had disappeared to was

discovered as soon as the Fifth went to their Form-room. The Form-room door was locked.

Blundell tried it, and found that it would not open. As the handle rattled Coker's voice was heard from within.

"Clear off!"

"Coker!" ejaculated Blundell. "Open the door, you ass! What the merry thunder have you locked the door for?"

"It's a barring-out!"

"What?" yelled Blundell.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Potter. "He's fairly off his onion! This means Colney Hatch for Coker!"

"You thundering idiot!" shouted Greene. "Open the door at once!"

"Rats!"

"A—a—a barring-out!" stuttered Fitzgerald. "Oh, it's too rich intirely! Coker, you are too funny! Chuck it!"

"I'm going to chuck it when I've secured my rights!" said Coker. "You can go and tell Prout so! Tell him I defy him!"

"Sure, I'm likely to tell him that!" chortled Fitzgerald. "I don't think!"

"Coker," howled Blundell through the keyhole, "don't be such a silly idiot! Open the door before Prout comes!"

"I'm not afraid of Prout, if you are!"

"He may be here any minute, you mad duffer! He's gone out into the quad for something. There's a visitor come. But he may be here in a tick!"

"Let him come, then!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" A crowd of Removites came along the passage.

"What's the row? Coker again?"

"A barring-out!" wept Fitzgerald.

"Coker's barring everybody out! Oh dear!"

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

"Good old Coker!"

"Go it, Coker!" shrieked the Removites.

The passage echoed with laughter. Inside the Form-room Coker snorted with angry indignation. He could see nothing whatever to laugh at. It was a decidedly serious business, from Coker's point of view.

"Dear me! What is all this crowd?" exclaimed Mr. Prout, coming along the passage.

"Ahem!"

"Why are you boys not in your Form-rooms? Do you wish to greet Dr. Locke with an uproar on the morning of his return?" exclaimed Mr. Prout severely.

"Oh! Has—was that the Head, sir?" stammered Wharton.

"Yes, Wharton, Dr. Locke has returned. Pray be quiet! Allow me to pass!"

Mr. Prout turned the handle of the Form-room door.

"Bless my soul! It is locked!"

"Hallo! Is that Mr. Prout?" boomed Coker's voice from within. "You can't come in, sir!"

"What? What?"

"I'm barring you out, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Unless I have my rights, sir, and am appointed a prefect, I consider it my duty to bar you out!"

Mr. Prout looked dazed.

"Blundell," he said faintly, "kindly go to Dr. Locke and request him to step here. Tell him I fear that Coker is not in his right senses!"

"Yes, sir!" gurgled Blundell.

He hurried away. In a few minutes he returned with Dr. Locke. The Head of Greyfriars was looking very fit and well, evidently quite recovered from the illness which had kept him away from the school so long. The fellows saluted him respectfully as he came up, and Dr. Locke gave them a kind smile. He stopped outside the Form-room door.

"It—it—it is Coker, sir!" muttered Mr. Prout. "He—he has locked himself in the Form-room! His conduct for some days has been strange—very strange indeed, and I fear that his brain is giving way."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

He tapped at the door.

"Coker!"

"You're not coming in!" came Coker's voice. "I'm standing up for the rights of the Fifth, and—"

"Coker!"

"Oh, crumbs!" Horace Coker recognised the voice. "Is—is—is that the Head?"

"Yes, Coker," said Dr. Locke quietly. "Open the door at once!"

There was a breathless pause, and then

the key turned back in the lock. The big door of the Form-room swung open.

Dr. Locke stepped in.

Coker, with a crimson face and a hanging head, stood before him. The sudden appearance of the Head fairly dumb-founded Coker.

"Well, Coker, what does this mean?" asked the Head.

"M-m-m-m-mean, sir!" stammered Coker.

"Are you out of your senses, or is this an extraordinary piece of impertinence?" demanded the Head sternly.

"I—I—I—"

"Well!"

"I—I—I—I—"

"I fear, Coker, that you have been taking advantage of my absence to be impertinent to your Form-master. I am very disinclined to inflict severe punishment on the day of my return, Coker, or I should administer a flogging. You will apologise to Mr. Prout at once, and perhaps he will overlook your extraordinary conduct."

"I—I—I—"

"Otherwise," said the Head, in a deep voice, "I shall send you away from Greyfriars by the next train, Coker!"

"You—you see, sir—" stuttered Coker.

"I am waiting to hear you apologise to Mr. Prout, Coker!" said the Head, in an ominous voice.

Coker gulped.

"I—I—I apologise, sir!" he gasped.

"Very well," said Mr. Prout, "the matter is closed. Go to your place, and pray be more careful in future, Coker."

Coker went to his place without another word.

Harry Wharton & Co. moved off to the Remove Form-room, chuckling. Coker's barring-out had come to a sudden end—which was very fortunate for Coker. The great Horace had not secured a prefectship. But, at least, he was no longer Coker the Rebel!

(Don't miss "A GENTLEMAN RANKER!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

EDITORIAL CHAT.

For Next Monday:

"A GENTLEMAN RANKER!"

By Frank Richards.

The gentleman ranker is one Brown, who comes as a boot-boy to Greyfriars. His education, manners, and appearance mark him out as one worthy of occupying a higher place; and a mystery grows up around him.

The Famous Five take to Brown, who is a plucky fellow and a rare good footballer. But Skinner and others of the cad brigade are down upon him, and Bunter tries to blackmail him; and altogether, though he has found friends there, life at Greyfriars is not a bed of roses for Brown.

How the mystery was cleared up you will learn next week. There is a good moral to the story, though it is not presented obtrusively. Brown is capable of better things—all who read the yarn will feel that. But the knowledge of it does not make him an inefficient boot-boy. Whatever lessons he has to learn, he has at least learned one good one—to get on with the work that falls to him as well as he knows how; not to turn up his nose at it, and slack while dreaming of higher things. Showing that one feels above one's work is no proof of any ability to do better work. But if one can do well the thing

given one to do, there is a fair presumption that one might do well other and more difficult things. See? I don't often preach to you, but I could not let this chance go by.

WEEK AFTER NEXT!

The Great Special Christmas Number of the "Gem"! No better number has ever been published, I am certain.

It will contain a splendid long—extra long—complete story by your old friend Martin Clifford. Many of you will remember two stories some time ago which dealt with the coming and going of a boy named George Outram—a tremendously strong fellow for his age. You will meet him again in the Christmas Number story.

By the way, are you reading "THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA"? And if not, why not?

A GRUMBLE.

H. F. Wood Green, writes that he was under the impression that I had announced the discontinuation of the Portrait Gallery. Now, this is the sort of statement that people who want to argue often make, failing to see that it carries no weight. The facts of the case matter. H. F.'s wrong impressions con-

cerning them do not matter at all. I made no such announcement. As a matter of fact, I am no longer accepting photos, but I have few in hand—not more than a couple of pages at the outside, I think.

H. F. asks that I shall put to the vote of the readers generally the question whether any more shall appear. I am not going to do anything of the kind. The photos in hand were accepted for appearance, and I decline to break faith with their senders, although conditions have altered since the promises were made. It is seldom that a page is taken up thus now—not once in a month on average; I quite recognise the fact that I cannot spare a page weekly. But, while I like to have my readers' opinions, any proposal to do the editing of the paper by plebiscite leaves me cold. I cannot imagine a successful or well-balanced paper being run on a voting system.

Your Editor

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

THE FUN OF THE FAIR!

By R. D. OGILVY.

"A H, young gentlemen, things ain't what they used to be, what with prices up and the Army collaring Old Barney, my Fat Boy, which he wasn't for the manner of speaking a boy at all, though the public thought he was, and it was near enough."

Bob Cherry, Harry Wharton, and Frank Nugent had paused by a booth as they left the fair where they had spent the half-holiday. Their attention had been attracted by a large-sized man with a blue chin, blue as the tie he was wearing, who was seated on the step of a yellow-painted van.

"Ah," said Harry Wharton, "I missed the Fat Boy!"

Bob Cherry gave a grunt. Nugent appeared to be lost in deep, deep thought.

"It's precious hard on me, gents," said Blue Chin, who was no other than Mr. Josiah Bridger, the proprietor of the travelling fair. "I laid great store by Old Barney. Been with me, he had, for ten years and a bit over, though I'm bad at reckoning. There's one thing—he is fat, and if he happens to drop on a Hun it will be the death of him."

"What, of Barney?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No," said Mr. Josiah. "Barney's weight would make any German look silly. But there it is—he's gone, and the fair has to get on as well as it can."

"Why don't you get another Fat Boy?" asked Bob Cherry.

Blue Chin shook his head sadly, and tapped the ash off the long, sad-looking cigar he was smoking.

"Can't!" he said mournfully. "Aren't none now. They are all looking for the Keeser in France; and I hope they'll eat the blinking blighter when they lay their hands on 'im!"

"It's rough luck!" said Harry Wharton thoughtfully; and he looked at Nugent as if something had crossed his mind.

"It is rough luck," replied Mr. Bridger. "I'd give a chap good pay and his grub and a cosy van to sleep in if I could find the right sort. But it's past hopin' for, I s'pose!"

"Just the job for Bunter!" said Nugent, nudging Harry Wharton.

"Not it!" said Wharton, with a laugh.

Mr. Bridger leaned forward. It almost looked as though he intended to get up from his seat; but he spared himself that extreme trouble.

"What are you young gents whispering about?" he asked. "You don't happen to know of a chap what wants a berth, do you?"

"No-o," said Nugent slowly.

"But we jolly well do!" cried Bob Cherry.

"Don't be an ass, Bob!"

"You were thinking of Bunter yourself. I twigged it," said Bob, with a grin. "Here's a chance for the porpoise to get some free grub, and we should be doing this merchant a good turn."

Mr. Bridger rose slowly and majestically, a gleam of interest in his eye. He was by no means a light-weight, and furious exertion obviously told on him. He wriggled the cigar he was smoking into the corner of his large mouth, and smiled down at the three juniors.

"If you know of a chap what would fit the job," he said, "I—I tell you straight I'd make it worth your while to bring him along. 'Tain't a hard life, as things go these days; and all the feller has to do is to sit and look pretty while the audience gapes at him. He needn't do no cross-talk or no patter unless he likes; and the pay's good, likewise the victuals."

"Wouldn't it just suit Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

"He wouldn't come," replied Harry Wharton.

"He would, because he would not know till he was fairly in the job!" grinned Nugent.

Mr. Bridger gazed at the three through half-closed eyes.

"I can see you gents do know of a chap who'd do," he said weightily. "If you'd bring him along I'd make it worth his while, and no questions asked. You see, there's all the kids coming day after to-morrow, and they'll be rare disappointed if there's no fat specimen as we've always had, just because Sir Douglas Haig couldn't be happy without sneaking Old Barney. Mebbe Old Barney will win the war, same as Bill Adams won Waterloo. But I miss him, and the show suffers a goodish bit."

Harry Wharton moved away, and the others followed without stopping to indulge in further parley with the owner of the double blue chin.

"He said he'd make it worth our while," said Bob Cherry, with a laugh. "We don't want it made worth our while, but it would be a jape to trundle Bunter up one afternoon and make him sit and amuse the kids. He'd only think they were taking his portrait or something. It'd be doing that old bird a good turn, too."

"Nobody in his senses would want to take Bunter's portrait," said Nugent. "He'd break the camera."

"Anyhow, I am not going to have the kids disappointed!" said Bob Cherry nobly.

"You couldn't get Bunter to the fair without telling him what it all meant," said Harry doubtfully.

But that was just where Harry Wharton made a mistake.

Bob Cherry said it would do Bunter good to do something for someone else for once in a way; and things would have gone without a hitch if it had not been for a certain over-eagerness on the part of Nugent, who acted as emissary to the Owl.

Bunter was rolling across the quad next day but one, when Nugent approached him.

"Going out, Bunter?" he asked affably.

"Yes," said the Owl. "I have—er—private business at the post-office."

"That will wait," said Nugent, with a glance towards where Harry Wharton stood with Inky, Nugent, and Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Nugent, what do you know about it?" inquired Bunter, blinking suspiciously.

"It can," answered Nugent. "We were thinking of asking you to come along to the fair, Bunter, old scout, if you'd care to."

"I am afraid I can't this afternoon," said Bunter importantly, shifting his spectacles, and wondering why Frank was so amiable all of a sudden.

"Oh, but you must!" replied Nugent.

"Eh?" murmured Bunter.

"I mean," said Nugent hastily, "it would be a pity for you to lose a jolly afternoon, with plenty of grub."

"Grub!" returned the Owl. "There's no grub at a fair, except a lot of mouldy old gingerbread and stuff! I am thinking of looking in at Mrs. Mumble's after I have been to the post-office."

"The Postmaster-General will forgive you if you put it off," said Nugent quickly, linking his arm in the Owl's.

Bob Cherry hurried up, followed by the others.

"It's all serene, Bunter," he said. "You had better come with us and have a jolly afternoon. All sorts of giddy spees at the fair."

Bunter surrendered at discretion. He felt he was wanted. It was a proud moment.

"All right, old chaps!" he said loftily. "Of course I don't mind coming along and having a feed with you at the fair if you really want me."

There was no doubt that the others did want him. It was something of a new experience to the Owl.

Bob Cherry surrendered Bunter's arm to Inky, and dropped behind to speak to Harry Wharton.

"Bunter would scoot like a frightened bunny if he knew what was going to happen," he said. "But he isn't going to know. I saw Uncle Josh yesterday, and he has had a portrait of the porpoise painted. Rather like Bunter, too."

"Uncle Josh?" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes. Josiah Bridger, you know. He was delighted no end, and wanted to pay me; but I told him to hand the cash over to the hospital, as we only did it for the sake of Bunter and the kids who want to see him."

Bunter was conducted through the turnstiles. Nugent paid. Somehow the porpoise did not think it as extraordinary as he might have done had he been quicker in the intelligence department. He considered it was only right that he should be regaled handsomely on all the delicacies which the Food Controller's rules permitted.

He stared open-mouthed at a huge poster of a boy in an Eton suit, which was giving a nice, decorative air to the entrance of a booth.

"Why—why, it's me!" he roared out, drawing back, while Inky hung on one arm and Nugent on the other.

"Got it in once!" said Bob Cherry.

"But what's it mean?" asked Bunter uneasily, reading the writing beneath the likeness of the goggle-eyed celebrity. "It says I am going to appear this afternoon. I'm not jolly well going to do anything of the sort! Here, I've had enough of this rotten fair! Lemme go!"

"We can't," said Bob Cherry, who had cut off retreat behind. "You are appearing before the nobility and gentry and the kids and the populace in general, and half the proceeds are going to war charities."

"Blow the war charities!" cried Bunter, in real alarm now. He was probably thinking of the horrible insult to himself as descendant of the famous De Bunter who, by a forced march, seized the Brighton Aquarium in the interests of his boss, William the Conqueror, who had just brought off the Battle of Hastings, and was naturally anxious about the other coast towns.

"You couldn't refuse to do a noble deed, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"I jolly well could," said the porpoise;

"and I jolly well do!"

"That's not like you," said Bob Cherry pathetically.

"I'm not going inside that blessed booth, I tell you!" shouted Bunter, struggling furiously. "Catch me!"

"There is not the slightest need to catch you, Bunter," said Nugent solemnly, "seeing that we already hold you. It is for your good. You have been selected as the prize porker of this neighbourhood, and—"

Bunter had got free. It was clear as mud, or anything you like, that Bunter did not want fame. He flew from it in the noblest spirit of modesty—or something.

"After him!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Mr. Bridger and two of his men appeared from a side door in the long booth.

Bunter ran. Bunter is not precisely a gazelle, but at a pinch he can run.

Bob Cherry came to grief over a rope, and Harry Wharton fell on top of him.

"Hallo! He's gone!" cried Bob, freeing himself and springing up.

Bunter was fleeing from the fame to come. Nugent ran, but he could not catch Bunter.

Bunter's fat little legs were going like machinery.

"Bill," roared Mr. Bridger, "just catch that little toad! He's my new Fat Boy!"

Bill was a vast arrangement on two legs, with arms as long as coincidence.

"Nah, then!" he shouted, as Bunter sprinted past him. "Nah then, you don't come any of them fancy games here!"

"Yow! Yaroo!" cried Bunter, as he felt

himself seized and held fast like a long-lost brother of Bill.

As Bill yanked him into the booth, Bob Cherry and the others followed, laughing.

"You beasts!" yelled Bunter, as he found himself sitting on Bill's knee as helpless as a baby. "I'll pay you out for this!"

"No, no!" said Bob. "It's all for your good, Bunter, you know. We knew you would like to help the war."

"I jolly well wouldn't!" roared Bunter wrathfully. "I don't care a scrap about the mouldy old war! Here, keep him off me!"

Mr. Bridger came up behind, and tweaked his ear lightly.

"I won't have it! I tell you, I won't!" roared Bunter.

"It's all right, me little dear," said Mr. Bridger benevolently. "We ain't going to eat you, only to show you to the kids this afternoon."

"I won't be shown!" roared Bunter. "I want to go home!"

"Bless his heart!" grinned Josiah.

"You ought to be grateful for the chance, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "It means no end of money for the war charities."

"The thankfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter is not excessful," chimed in the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Bunter blinked. When Mr. Bridger assured him that all he had to do was to sit in a chair, look pretty, and have a square meal while the show was on, and another when the show was over, he thought a little better of it. Anyway, argument was lost on Bill, who had a grip like a gorilla.

Bunter glowered at the Famous Five, and then began to propose terms.

"You've made me a show," he said, "and, of course, I am not going to stand it; but if you will order this hulking brute to let me go, perhaps I will look over it this once."

"Nobody made you a show, porpoise! You

are a ready-made one," said Nugent. "It would have been a rotten shame to do the kids out of their treat."

"Ere, come on!" said Bill, rising, and dragging the prize up the booth.

From the other side of the curtain came the sound of stamping. The crowd waxed impatient.

"I've changed my mind!" shouted Bunter. "I'm not going to have it!"

But there he made a mistake. In Bill's hands he was powerless, and he had to go. He was conducted to the stage, and what he saw there caused a smile to spread across his extensive features. A table laden with provender stood in the middle of the platform. There was a chair beside it. Bunter was pushed into the chair.

"Do I have those?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Yuss; you can wolf the lot if you like," replied Bill pleasantly.

The music struck up; the curtain rose, and the famous Bunter was revealed eating like a dozen or so. Bill, with an impressive wave of his hand, which reduced the orchestra to respectful silence, began to orate.

"You see 'ere, ladies and gentlemen," he said, "the champion Fat Boy of Yurrupe. He has eaten tarts afore hall the Crowned 'Eads of the universe. He gits fatter every day. Weighs eighteen stone, ten ounces, an' a bit!"

"Bless my soul!" sounded in a deep voice behind the five.

"Quelch!" exclaimed Bob.

It was Mr. Quelch, sure enough, though what he was doing at the fair they none of them knew till afterwards. The truth was that Mr. Quelch had heard that the menagerie was worth inspecting, and he had strolled into the wrong booth in error.

"Bunter, come down at once!" he commanded angrily.

Ears had been provided Bunter, but he did not choose to hear the voice of the

master. The audience was delighted with him, and cheered enthusiastically as Bunter gobbled up the good things on the table; that is, most of the crowd cheered, but there were in the mob certain disgruntled, envious wights who glared at the reckless behaviour of the fat champion.

"Shame, and in war-time, too!" yelled a rough-looking individual, who was evidently going easy on the water, for he was unwashed.

Big! Bang! Something hard hit Bunter on the cheek.

"Give the hog another!" sang out a voice.

Bunter got another missile, and the aim was unerring. The Owl rolled out of his chair, and Mr. Quelch strode angrily through the booth in an attempt to reach the stage. He did not succeed. There was a rush from the back, fierce cries of "Food-hog!" rent the air, and Bunter would have been badly mauled had it not been for the Famous Five.

"Come on!" roared Bob. A joke was a joke, but there were limits. "Pile in!"

The roughs were invading the stage, but they met a stout resistance, and Bunter did not come off so badly after all. For while Nugent and Inky bundled him outside, the attackers were routed, even Mr. Quelch lending a hand.

Outside the booth Bunter picked himself up from the grass.

"It was a most disgraceful exhibition, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch angrily.

"Bu-bu-but," began Bunter, "I—I—"

"Bunter was doing it for the war charities, sir," said Bob Cherry.

Because of that Bunter escaped punishment. But, though Mr. Bridger offered him quite handsome terms to join his staff, the Owl refused. He has realised the danger of food-hogging in public!

THE END.

THE LOTTERY-TICKET!

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes.

:: :: ::

By PETER TODD.

"ANOTHER case, Jotson!" remarked Herlock Sholmes.

We were looking out of window at our rooms in Shaker Street when my amazing friend made that remark.

"A case, Sholmes?" I inquired.

He pointed carelessly with the stem of his pipe to a man who was coming along, scanning each door as he passed.

"You think he is coming here, Sholmes?"

"I do not think, Jotson. I never think. I know."

"True! But your reasons?"

Sholmes smiled.

"The man is evidently in a very disturbed frame of mind, Jotson. From the fact that he is wearing only one boot, and that he has put on a bath-towel instead of a hat, I deduce that he left home in a hurry!"

"True!"

"From the further fact that his eyes are rolling like those of a mechanical doll, Jotson, and that he is foaming at the mouth, I deduce that he is in a state of considerable excitement!"

"Marvellous!"

"Not at all, my dear fellow! Deduction, that is all! As he is looking at the number on each door, Jotson, I deduce that he is searching for a particular house—"

"Sholmes, you amaze me more and more!"

"My dear Jotson, these deductions are child's play to a brain like mine!"

"But how do you deduce, Sholmes, that he intends to visit this building?" I could not help inquiring.

Sholmes smiled again, in rather a bored way.

"I deduce it from the fact that he has stopped at our door and rung the bell, Jotson. It is quite simple—elementary, in fact. Had you trained your intellect to the observation of detail, Jotson, you would be able to deduce from such an act a desire on the part of the individual under discussion to enter the house!"

I could only gaze at my amazing friend in speechless admiration.

I was still doing so, and presenting somewhat of the appearance of a newly-landed fish, when our visitor was shown in—thus triumphantly proving the correctness of Herlock Sholmes' marvellous deductions.

"Mr. Sholmes?" he exclaimed.

"Good-morning!" said Herlock Sholmes calmly. "What can I do for you? You may speak quite freely before my friend Dr. Jotson, as I have had several occasions to remark before!"

"Mr. Sholmes, I have lost it!" He struggled for breath. "A fortune is at stake, Mr. Sholmes! You must save me! I have heard of your reputation, Mr. Sholmes; I have heard how you tracked down the missing margarine, and followed the scent of the hoarded Gorgonzola. You—and you alone—can help me!"

"Kindly give me a few details," yawned Herlock Sholmes, as he motioned the visitor to a seat.

"My name is Aubrey Baggs," faltered our visitor. "My life, Mr. Sholmes, has been one of humble usefulness. I am billiard-marker at the Pink Pigeon. A month ago I was induced to invest the sum of five shillings in a ticket in the Grand Continental Lottery, held at Spooferdam, in Holland. It was in a careless moment that I made the investment, and I attached little importance to it, Mr. Sholmes—till yesterday—"

"Till yesterday?" said Sholmes.

"Then I learned, Mr. Sholmes, that I held the winning number," said Mr. Baggs, in tones of great agitation. "Ticket No. 100001 was the winner, Mr. Sholmes, and I held ticket No. 100001. I was entitled to the first prize in the Grand Continental Lottery!"

"I congratulate you, Mr. Baggs!" said Herlock Sholmes drily.

Mr. Baggs made a gesture of despair.

"I have lost the ticket, Mr. Sholmes! Without the ticket I cannot claim the prize! Mr. Sholmes, find the missing ticket for me, and name your own reward—one half of the prize if you like!"

Sholmes shook his head.

"I cannot work on those terms, Mr. Baggs! Even if the ticket is recovered, by the time you receive your prize from a Continental lottery I shall be getting my Old Age Pension!"

"True!" I remarked.

"Shut up, Jotson! Now, Mr. Baggs, when was the lottery-ticket in your possession?"

"Yesterday afternoon!" groaned Mr. Baggs.

"I kept it in the pocket where I keep my chalk, safe as houses. When I heard the great news I took it out and looked at it.

to make sure. There it was, Mr. Sholmes—No. 100001!"

"You replaced it in your pocket?"

"Yes."

"Your next proceeding?"

"I thought, as I was going to get the first prize, Mr. Sholmes, I would go to Houndsditch and see Mr. Montague Isaacs. That gentleman had kindly taken charge of my Sunday trousers a short time before, handing me a ticket and the sum of two shillings and ninepence in exchange."

Sholmes smiled.

"I deduce from this that Mr. Montague Isaacs is a pawnbroker?" he remarked.

"That is correct! I see that you merit your marvellous reputation, Mr. Sholmes!"

"You withdrew your Sunday trousers from the spout, Mr. Baggs?"

"I did, Mr. Sholmes!"

"And then?"

"On the 'bus home I missed the ticket—No. 100001. I may have given it to the conductress in mistake for a tram-ticket," groaned Mr. Baggs. "I may have dropped it. Find it, Mr. Sholmes, and name your own reward!"

"You visited no one but Mr. Isaacs before you missed the ticket?"

"No one."

Sholmes looked very thoughtful.

I gazed silently at my amazing friend. I could not imagine how he would deal with this baffling case. A lottery-ticket, lost in the wide spaces of the London streets, was not easily to be found—unless by Herlock Sholmes. But I remembered his marvellous gifts, and my confidence returned. Only recently Herlock Sholmes had succeeded in solving the long-standing mystery of who killed Cock Robin, and had proved that A. Sparrow was not guilty of the crime, as was generally supposed until Sholmes took the case in hand. After that amazing example of my friend's perspicacity, nothing could shake my faith in him.

I was quite prepared for the inscrutable smile that crossed his features.

"You will find the ticket, Sholmes?" I exclaimed.

"I trust so, Jotson."

"Bless you, Mr. Sholmes!" said Mr. Baggs brokenly.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE LOTTERY-TICKET

(Continued from page 15.)

"Call again this evening, Mr. Baggs, and I may have news for you," said Herlock Sholmes reassuringly.

And our visitor took his leave.

II.

I WAS alone when Mr. Baggs was shown in that evening. Sholmes had been absent, and had not returned. Whether he was busily engaged on the case of the lottery-ticket, or whether he desired to leave me to interview the gentleman who called concerning the instalment due on the furniture, I could not determine.

Sholmes came in in a few minutes, however, and I augured success from the playful manner in which he hooked his umbrella upon my left ear.

Mr. Baggs regarded him anxiously.

"The ticket, Mr. Sholmes?" he exclaimed.

Herlock Sholmes smiled.

He slipped his fingers into his waistcoat-pocket and drew out a slip of pasteboard.

"No. 100001!" gasped Mr. Baggs.

"The lottery-ticket," said Sholmes negligently.

Mr. Baggs gazed at the recovered lottery-ticket in amazement and elation.

"Mr. Sholmes, you have saved me! Name your own reward!"

"Two shillings and sixpence, with the addition of twopence for the 'bus fare,'" said Sholmes, in his staccato, businesslike tones.

He clinked the coins pleasantly in the pocket of his dressing-gown when Mr. Baggs had taken his leave.

"Sprats for supper this evening, Jotson!" he remarked, with one of his rare digs in the ribs.

"As you will, Sholmes. But—"

"Let us defer the usual explanation, my dear Jotson, until the sprats have been purchased."

"You are right, Sholmes."

It was not till the sprats were sizzling in Mrs. Spudson's frying-pan that Herlock Sholmes consented to enlighten my devouring curiosity.

"It was simple enough, Jotson. Mr. Baggs, on hearing that he had won the first prize in the Grand Continental Lottery, rushed off to Mr. Isaacs' establishment to redeem his Sunday garments, reposing there up the spout. In the excitement of the moment, Jotson, he handed Mr. Isaacs the lottery-ticket instead of the pawnticket. This I deduced immediately. From the fact that Mr. Montague Isaacs did not return the lottery-ticket to him, I deduced that Mr. Isaacs had kept it."

"Sholmes!"

"A simple deduction, Jotson; simple, I mean, to a detective's trained intellect."

"Simple to you, Sholmes," I remarked. "It would not have occurred to me. But pray continue."

"Mr. Isaacs must have had a reason for keeping it," resumed Sholmes. "My long acquaintance with the habits and customs of pawnbrokers, Jotson, made it quite well known to me that these gentry do not, as a rule, retain lottery-tickets which are handed to them in mistake for pawntickets. It could only be, Jotson, that Mr. Isaacs knew that the ticket held the winning number in the Grand Continental Lottery. It was his intention to diddle the unsuspecting Baggs."

"It is quite clear, Sholmes—but to recover the ticket—"

"That was easy, Jotson."

"I confess I do not see—"

"Naturally," said Sholmes calmly.

"True!" I exclaimed. "But how, Sholmes, did you recover the lottery-ticket?"

"By a simple method. Disguised as an official of the Pop-Shop Controller's Department, I entered Mr. Isaac's establishment and searched for it. Voila foot!" said Sholmes, dropping carelessly into French, as he often did.

"Amazing!" I exclaimed.

"Not at all, Jotson. But here are the sprats."

And Sholmes' active jaws were soon busy, to such an extent that he could not hear my exclamations of admiration. Once more my amazing friend's efforts had been crowned with success; and Aubrey Baggs, in his humble abode at the Pink Pigeon, waited in joyful anticipation of receiving the handsome prize from the Grand Continental Lottery. He is still waiting!

THE END.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 44.—GEORGE BLUNDELL.

LIKE Arthur Courtney, who was dealt with a week or two ago, Blundell, captain of the Fifth, is not one of the most prominent characters of the stories. Only on one occasion has he played the leading part in a story—"Blundell's Prize." Nevertheless, he stands out clearly enough from the ruck—a fellow of the right sort, with faults and weaknesses, of course, but worthy of the place he holds.

The leading members of the Fifth at a public school are something like lance-corporals in the Army. They have a measure of responsibility. They are expected to show a good example to those under them. But they have precious little authority beyond what they can exert by force of individuality. Not for them is it to say "Come!"—and he cometh; "Go!"—and he goeth.

Our first meeting with Blundell scarcely shows him at his best. If memory can be trusted, it was when Bunter was believed to have come into quite a whack of money. Blundell and his chum Bland were hard up. They stood Bunter a feed by way of casting bread upon the waters. Here is Bunter's own inventory of that feed: "Six pies, a plate of new pastries, four sausages, a bag of biscuits, and three bottles of pop." Bunter deserved to have suffered an explosion.



George Blundell

Blundell and Bland deserved just what they got out of it—which was nothing at all!

Blundell was the victim of two tricks on a certain famous First of April. Bob Cherry caused him and the rest of the Fifth to go and play footer instead of putting in an appearance in their Form-room by a notice which made them believe that Mr. Prout was too unwell to take his Form. Then Temple caused him to think that the Remove were using his new ball. The Remove were not; and, of course, they objected in a very practical manner when Blundell tried to take their ball from them.

The Fifth condescend to ragging at times. Blundell & Co. helped the Upper Fourth to rot up the Remove performance of "Hamlet." But in general they are inclined to hold themselves above this sort of thing.

When Coker was translated to the Fifth through the very urgent representations of his Aunt Judith, Blundell and Bland gave him a hearty welcome into their study. Aunt Judy had come down very handsomely indeed, and the great men of the Fifth were full of kindness to Aunt Judy's nephew. Coker was even allowed to captain the Fifth footer team! But, of course, that lasted but a very short time. Coker's airs became quite insufferable when the tip had gone into the ewigkeit, and the skipper's study knew Coker no longer.

Blundell was art and part in the crushing defeat sustained by the Fifth in their "Julius Cæsar" fiasco. But, of course, he put

all the blame on Coker; and really a good deal of it belonged there.

The captain of the Fifth is one of the shining lights of the senior cricket and footer teams. He accompanied the deputation which went to tell Wingate that the licking the footer team had sustained from Redclyffe was due to his mistake in leaving out Carne and Loder. But he saw his error when Coker became for a brief space skipper of Greyfriars; and he resigned from the team when he learned that Coker meant to captain it. Later on Blundell made the mistake of letting Coker play in a match against the Remove on a day when Aunt Judy was visiting the school. Victory was a certainty, Blundell held. But the Fifth were beaten! They were not powerful enough to carry a meddling passenger like Coker.

When Fish started his swindling tuckshop scheme, and roped in a number of other fellows as shareholders, Blundell & Co., furious at his methods, started smashing things. But the other shareholders intervened, and the indignant Fifth-Formers were driven out.

It was Blundell who refereed the extraordinary match in which Southgate, led by Dhoolah Pertab Ramajee Das, played the Rugger game while their opponents, the Remove, played Soccer, and gave the decision that both sides had won—each under its own rules. Solomon could have done no better!

Blundell had been trying to win prize competitions in "Weekly Jottings," and had come to the conclusion that the competition was a swindle. Down in the village he saw a motor-bike priced at £18, and there was nothing on earth Blundell wanted quite as badly as he wanted a motor-bike. Then he won a prize from "Jottings," and Snoop, who had lately had Blundell's hand heavy upon him for bullying a village kid, got hold of the letter announcing the win, and changed the £1 to £100.

The cheque was to follow, and Blundell naturally suspected nothing. Wild with excitement, he took Bland's tip to secure the motor-bike at once, as it might be gone if he waited for the cheque.

He tried Coker for a loan, but Coker was not flush. Fish offered the sum if Blundell would pay £5 interest—on £18 for a few days! It seemed quite a reasonable proposition to Fish; but Blundell did not see eye to eye with him. Mauleverer was able to lend £12, and Blundell, without a thought of harm, borrowed the balance from the Fifth Form Games Fund. It was a mistake, of course; but there was no dishonesty in it.

The bike was bought, and Blundell made a triumphal entry into the quad upon it. Everyone expected to see it wrecked in the wild rush; but it was not, and its rider seemed quite cool. He was not so cool when the cheque for £1 turned up. The situation was a distinctly unpleasant one, and a wire to "Weekly Jottings" did not relieve it.

Bunter got wind of it, and tried blackmail. The open-handed Maully was ready to lend again, but could not get the cash at once. Desperately Blundell tried to sell the bike. In vain! Then he came to smash with it!

But out of the accident came salvation, for it had chanced in the course of a really brave rescue of an old gentleman who was being run away with. And the old gentleman insisted upon buying the heap of scrap-iron at his own price—which was £30 at least. So Blundell got clear, and learned a lesson. And Snoop's mean trick was found out, and Snoop learned a lesson, too—but lessons are useless to Snoop!

It might be guessed that Blundell and Coker would scarcely agree about the rules of the Coker Cup. But it was for the sake of the Sixth—for whom Coker insisted upon playing after the Fifth had been knocked out—that Blundell locked up the great Horace in the old tower.

Blundell played the man when Coker was sentenced to expulsion for rebellion against Sergeant Sharp. It was not the Head's sentence; Sir Hilton Popper was at the bottom of it. Blundell led the whole Form out to back up Coker. But a little later one finds Blundell and Bland pitching Horace out of their study when he comes to offer to captain the Fifth in a cricket match on the occasion of his Canadian cousin's visit!