

"COKER'S LEAGUE OF FRIENDS!"

Extra-long school story of Harry Wharton & Co.—Inside.

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The Magnet 2^d

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EVERY SATURDAY.



THE FEED THAT WENT WEST!

A "smashing" incident in this week's extra-long school story of the Chums of Greyfriars.

COKER AGAIN! One of Horace Coker's many little failings is that he never profits by experience. Time and again, he has sprung his weird and wonderful wheezes upon the school, wheezes that have always resulted in trouble for their inventor. The Duffer of the Fifth's latest is no exception, and Greyfriars laughs loud and long over—



A Magnificent New Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co. with Horace Coker, the Duffer of the Fifth, in the Limelight. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Coker's Latest!

"IT'S up to me!" Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars looked across at his study-mates challengingly as he made that remark.

William Greene smiled back in return.

George Potter beamed.

"It's up to me!"

Horace Coker's rugged face wore a frown. The great man of the Fifth was not given much to thinking. Indeed, some unkind people, including Potter and Greene, openly declared that it was impossible for Coker to think, Nature not having fitted him with the wherewithal for such a purpose. Still, there was no doubt about it, something was occupying the mighty intellect of Horace James Coker at that moment. In the ignorance of their hearts, Coker's study-mates put it down to the fact that it was tea-time. Perhaps that was why Potter and Greene had indulged Horace Coker for twenty minutes without telling him exactly what they thought of him. The expression of such opinions naturally would not have opened Coker's heart, nor his purse. And as Potter and Greene were hungry and stony, and as it was well past tea-time, Coker's study-mates thought it only judicious to indulge Coker. If Coker stood the tea, they were prepared to stand Coker, so to speak.

"It's up to me!"

As Coker made that remark for the third time, Potter and Greene exchanged a covert wink.

"Good man!" said Potter warmly.

"Good old Coker!" added Greene cordially.

Horace Coker relaxed into deep thought.

"Hem!"

Potter broke the silence with a discreet cough.

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Coker looked up irritably.

"If you've got a cough, George Potter," he growled, "why don't you go to the matron and get something for it?"

George Potter crimsoned.

"Hem! You see, old man—"

"There you go again!" grunted Coker. "How can a fellow think with you barking about the place?"

George Potter swallowed something and subsided. It was only the fact that Potter was hungry, and that he expected Coker's purse to assuage that hunger, as it were, that saved Coker from a bumping.

Greene cast an anxious eye on the clock. It was too late now, even for tea in Hall. Really, it was very inconsiderate of Coker to keep his study-mates in such suspense.

"Who'll go and get it?"

Horace Coker came out of his reverie with that booming request. Immediately Potter and Greene jumped to their feet.

"I'll get it, old chap!"

"Pleasure, old man!"

Coker grunted.

"Tisn't as heavy as all that. You go, Potter! Give Gosling a tip for me, will you?"

Potter and Greene started. The same thought had sprung into their minds. They had fondly imagined that the "it" referred to was a supply of tuck from Mrs. Mimble at the school tuckshop. But if the said "it" was to be collected from Gosling, the porter, that suggested a hamper.

Potter and Greene radiated smiles. A hamper! That was something like.

"Don't stand there all day, George Potter!" exclaimed Coker testily.

"Nunno, old chap! I'll go now."

And Potter hurried out of the study, what time Greene started laying the table. Coker watched him abstractedly. Evidently it was a weighty matter to which he had given his attention.

Greene, in the cheerfulness of his heart, began to hum softly the strain of "For he's a jolly good fellow." The great Horace came out of his reverie at that, and told William Greene not to make such a beastly row.

Greene coughed and went on laying the table.

"Here we are!"

George Potter threw open the study door and grinned. In his arms he carried a fairly large parcel. Certainly it was heavy, but Potter had hardly noticed that.

"Put it on the table," commanded Coker.

Potter put the parcel on the table, and Greene eyed it almost wolfishly. He wondered a little as he heard a slight clicking sound from within the parcel, but he soon dismissed the matter from his mind.

Coker rose to his feet and cut the string of the parcel. The brown-paper wrapping was tossed carelessly aside, leaving exposed a fairly large cardboard box.

Greene and Potter, peering over Coker's shoulders, expected to see an appetising quantity of tuck. But all they could see was straw—evidently used as packing—and a large cotton bag.

Coker grabbed the straw in his big hands and carelessly threw it on the table. Then he lifted out the cotton bag.

Chink, chink!

This time there was no mistaking that metallic chink.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Potter in dismay.

"Not a feed!" almost choked Greene. Snort from Coker.

It was evident that Horace Coker had held no illusions as to what the parcel contained. Regardless of his study-mate's discomfiture, Coker cut the string that was fastened round the neck of the bag and emptied its contents on the table.

Potter and Greene watched as if mesmerised. True, they had experienced the worst shock on discovering that it was not a parcel of tuck. But they had never expected to see about two hundred medals, for that was what the parcel contained.

"Medals!" gasped Potter.

"M-medals!" stuttered Greene.

Coker smiled.

"The Coker Medal!" he said.

Potter and Greene nearly fainted.

"The what?"

"The w-which?"

Coker drew himself up to his full height.

"The Coker Medal!" he said proudly.

Potter and Greene blinked at each other, and wondered if their study-mate had taken leave of his senses.

"I—I—I— Oh, great Christopher!" gurgled Potter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Greene.

Coker frowned.

"Now look here, George Potter, and you, William Greene, I'm relying on you chaps to back me up."

"Back you up?"

Coker nodded firmly.

"It's up to me," he ejaculated. "What this school wants is a fellow of strong personality and good character to pull things together. I've been thinking—"

"What with?" ventured Potter softly.

"What did you say, George Potter?" demanded Coker suspiciously.

"Hem! Get on, old chap."

Coker drew a deep breath.

"I've been thinking over a scheme for months past now," he remarked. "You've heard of the Ancient Order of Frothblowers?"

"Of course," said Potter. "But what—"

"Don't chinwag so much, George Potter," remonstrated Coker. "You've heard of the Gugnuncs—"

"And the Portuguese and the Greeks," said Greene, with a sniff.

"Also, that Queen Anne's dead, and that Good Friday didn't fall on a Wednesday this year," added Potter.

"If you fellows are trying to be funny!" roared Coker, pushing back his cuffs.

Potter and Greene exchanged a wink. Doubtless they considered it advisable to humour their study-mate still further, if there was to be any tea in the study that day.

"Go on, old chap," said Potter, with an effort.

"All these societies seem to get members," went on Coker; "so there's no reason why I shouldn't get members for my society—"

"Y-your society?"

Coker nodded.

"My society. To give it its full title, 'Coker's League of Friends.'"

Potter and Greene seemed in danger of having a fit.

"Coker's League of F-Friends!" gasped Potter.

"C-C-Coker's League of— Oh, this is rich!" stuttered Greene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Greene and Potter got over their first surprise and yelled, and the expression on Coker's rugged face added to their mirth.

"When you cackling idiots have finished I'll get on!" roared Coker.

Greene and Potter controlled their mirth.

"It's a thumping good idea, although I say it myself," said Coker modestly. "All the fellows will flock to my—ahem!—banner. We'll set the rest of the school a good example."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Potter could not restrain himself any longer. The idea

of Coker setting anyone an example was too rich.

"But what's the idea of these medals?" asked Greene, examining one of them.

"Every member of my League gets a medal, fathead!" returned Coker. "The Frothblowers have their links, don't they? Then why shouldn't Coker's League of Friends have their medals? Medals will be worn on all state—I mean, important occasions. See!"

"I can see the fellows walking about with these blessed medals on them—I don't think!" exclaimed Greene.

"Look here, Greene—" began Coker wrathfully.

"What are they made of?" asked Potter diplomatically.

Coker examined one of the medals. It looked uncommonly like silver. He shook his head.

"Blessed if I know," he answered. "I wrote and told Aunt Judy about my great scheme and asked her if she would get two gross of medals made for me—"

"Two gross?"

"Yes!" said Coker.

"But what the thump do you want with two gross?" demanded Potter. "Do you think every chap in the school will join your footling—ahem!—I mean your League of F-friends?"

"Of course!" retorted Coker. "Coker's League is going to make history. All Greyfriars will want to belong to it, mark my words, George Potter."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Potter.

"But what's the object of this silly—I mean this league?" asked Greene.

Coker glared.

"You always were a particularly dense chap, William Greene," he said. "The object of this league is to better Greyfriars; to set an example of manliness, integrity, and all that sort of rot—ahem!—I mean all that sort of stuff—to the world at—large," added Coker, with a magnificent gesture.

"And who's going to run this—this league?" inquired Potter.

Horace Coker snorted.

"Don't be a bigger ass than you can help, Potter!" he exclaimed testily. "You waste half your time asking fat-headed questions. I'm going to run the league, of course. I'm president, treasurer, secretary—"

"Committee and general head cook and bottle-washer," added Greene innocently.

"You're right, William Greene!" said Coker grandly. "Of course, I couldn't let anyone fill those jobs. It wants brain and initiative."

"Does it really?" asked Greene sweetly.

"In time I may be able to give you chaps a responsible job in the league," said Coker thoughtfully. "You're a bit dense, George Potter, and you're a footling ass at times, William Greene, if you don't mind my saying so. Still, in time, you'll improve, I dare say."

William Greene and George Potter looked as if they were about to fall upon Coker and smite him hip and thigh as they listened to his refreshing candour, but they stifled the impulse.

"I shall want you chaps to give me a hand with one or two things," said Coker, after a pause.

"Right ho!" exclaimed Potter, with a forced show of enthusiasm. "Let's have tea first!"

"That's a good idea," ventured Greene, as if thinking of tea for the first time that afternoon.

Coker snorted.

"Tea!" he exclaimed. "That's all you chaps think about!"

Potter and Greene paused.

"Clear that table!" continued Coker. "I've got to draw up a notice about the league."

"We can do that after tea," said Potter obstinately. "It won't take me a minute to cut down to the tuckshop, old chap."

"And I'll put the kettle on while you're gone," added Greene.

"Tea!" hooted Coker. "Blow tea! Bless tea! Can't you think of something else?"

"But we're hungry!" exclaimed Coker's study-mates.

"Hungry!" roared Coker. "Fancy talking about eating at a time like this. I tell you this League is going to knock the Frothblowers and the Gugnuncs into a cocked hat. Besides," he added carelessly, "I've had my tea!"

"You've what?"

Potter and Greene almost shouted.

"I've had my tea," said Coker. "Now clear that table, George Potter. Get the ink, William Greene. I'll— Yarooooop! Ow!"

Potter and Greene, breathing deeply, made a concerted rush.

Bump!

Horace Coker descended to the study carpet with a bump and a roar.

"Yaroooooh!" howled Coker. "I'll smash you for this, George Potter—"

Bump!

Potter and Greene did not speak. They were too busy. All their pent-up wrath was finding an outlet. There was no tea for them that day, but there was some consolation in bumping Coker, whom they chose to regard as being the cause of everything.

Bump!

The great man of the Fifth hit the carpet with a resounding thud.

"Whooooop!" roared Coker. "Let up! I'll smash you, William Greene! Yoooooop!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

Horace Coker gasped and howled and threatened and gasped, but all to no avail. Potter and Greene treated him as if he had been a fag in the Second Form. Finally they dumped him in the corner of the study in a breathless, gasping heap.

"You silly dummy!" panted Greene.

"You fatheaded noodle!" exclaimed Potter.

"Wow! You rotters!" gasped Coker. "I'll smash you for this— Groooooogh!"

He made an effort to rise, and Potter and Greene withdrew from the study in great haste, not being particularly anxious to come within reach of Coker's massive fists. As Potter wisely put it, Coker on his feet was a different fellow from Coker on the floor.

And as Potter and Greene scudded out of the study and along the passage Coker's roars followed them, but the great man himself was unable to follow them, which was perhaps fortunate for those tea-less youths.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Presents for Coker!

"O H my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker's latest!"

A group of Removites stood in front of the notice-board laughing uproariously. And every fresh burst of laughter drew more juniors to the scene.

"What's the giddy joke?" asked Bob Cherry, as he came along the passage with the rest of the Famous Five.

"Behold!" said Harold Skinner, with

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a dramatic gesture; and he indicated a notice bearing the well-known orthography and caligraphy of Horace James Coker of the Fifth, which ran as follows:

"COKER'S LEAGUE OF FRIENDS!"

All those members of the skool who would like to set an eggsample to their fellow men are cordially invited to join the above society. There is no subscription, but each member will be presented FREE with a handsom meddle which he will be eggspected to wear on special occasions.

Unity is Strength! Join Coker's League of Friends At Once!

Interested Greyfriars men are earnestly requested to attend the President's Meeting in the Rag to-night at seven o'clock.

(Signed) HORACE JAMES COKER.
(President.)

"Oh, great Scott!" chuckled Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is old Coker potty, or what?" asked Nugent.

"No more than usual," said Johnny Bull, with a grin.

"The pottifulness of the esteemed and ridiculous Coker is terrific," added Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in his weird and wonderful English.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's notice was certainly attracting attention. Soon a regular crowd was surging round the notice-board.

"Good old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I like the idea of a handsom meddle," said Wharton, quoting from the extraordinary notice. "What's the silly chump up to, anyway?"

"Blessed if I know," said Bob Cherry, with a grin, "unless it is a rival Frothblowers' affair. Instead of links the members wear their meddles, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think we'll attend that meeting," said Wharton thoughtfully.

"Eh?"

"What?"

The captain of the Remove smiled. "Coker asks the interested chaps to turn up at the meeting in the Rag," he said. "That's plain enough, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Johnny Bull. "But who's going to turn up to listen to Coker's silly jaw?"

"We are!" said Wharton calmly.

"Don't be an ass, old chap," said Bob Cherry. "You know we've got a meeting of the Amateur Dramatic Society on for to-night."

"Oh, that can wait!" said Wharton. "You have another squint at that notice. It says plainly that members of Coker's league will be presented with 'meddles' free, gratis, and for nothing. Now, that's generous, you'll admit. I don't see why we shouldn't present old Coker with something free, gratis, and for nothing. It's a pity to let such an opportunity slip by. Besides, fair's fair, you know!"

"But—" began Bob Cherry.

"We've got half a dozen eggs in the study cupboard that even Bunter won't touch with a barge pole," went on Wharton, unheeding. "But there's no reason why we shouldn't give 'em to Coker. And—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the Famous Five caught on to Wharton's idea, and they roared.

"Good wheeze, Harry!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, giving the captain of the Remove a hearty slap on the back. "We've got some squashy tomatoes in the cupboard. Coker's welcome to them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It really looked as if there was a surprise in store for Horace Coker that night. A similar notice had been posted up in the Fifth Form Common-room, and encouraged by the sensation it had caused, Coker had been tempted to post up notices in the Third and Second Form-rooms.

The great men of the Fifth had merely laughed, and Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, had torn the notice down. It was highly improbable that any Fifth Form man would attend Coker's meeting excepting Coker himself. But the Upper and Lower Fourth Forms had decided to go to the meeting en masse, not with the idea of taking Coker's league seriously, but with the idea of creating a little diversion from prep. It was surprising how many articles of food that had long since been shelved as doubtful in quality and ancient in age, were raked out of study cupboards for Coker's especial benefit.

And in the Third, George Tubb marshalled his forces.

"It's like that ass Coker's silly cheek to think he can run a league," said George Tubb. "But we'll turn up at the meeting and give the burbling chump a ragging."

Tubb's short speech was hailed with a chorus of cheers, and soon afterwards the Third-Formers were busy dipping tightly-rolled-up paper pellets in the ink-wells.

In the Second Form-room Dicky Nugent was holding forth on the subject of Coker's "cheek."

"We'll rag the silly buffer bald-headed!" declared Dicky. "You men collect any old eggs and stuff you can and we'll go along sharp at seven."

And with a cheer the Second Form dispersed to carry out its leader's wishes.

Really, if all the juniors who had declared their intention of turning up, turned up, Horace Coker was booked for a warm time.

News reached the Fifth-Former that his notices had created quite a stir in the school, and he was promised a record attendance at the meeting, whereat Horace Coker was seen to strut around with a new air of importance. But had he known the general intention

of the meeting, Coker's strut might have given place to apprehension. Still, we are told that ignorance is bliss; certainly in the case of Horace Coker it was bliss.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

"ROLL up!" Horace Coker's booming voice rang the length of the corridor as the first of the "interested men" arrived at the door of the Rag, at seven o'clock sharp.

"Are we too early, Coker?" asked Harry Wharton meekly.

Horace Coker smiled genially. "Not a bit. By the way, you Remove fags are rather apt to get a bit noisy at meetings, I'm told. Well, I don't want any rumpus at my meeting, you understand?" he said.

"Yes, Coker!" The Famous Five restrained their impulse to jump on Coker and bump him soundly, and trooped into the Rag. There were suspicious bulges in their pockets that passed Horace Coker's powers of observation.

Next minute the passage rang to the tread of many feet as other interested parties arrived.

Even the lordly Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth had arrived with his "men," and it was noticeable, too, that their pockets bulged suspiciously.

Then George Tubb and Dicky Nugent of the Third and Second Forms respectively arrived at one and the same moment. It was rather unfortunate that Dicky Nugent should refer to George Tubb as a "swanking idiot" in the presence of George Tubb himself, for that great man rather revelled in trouble.

"Swanking idiot yourself!" he retorted.

"If you call me a swanking idiot," began Dicky Nugent wrathfully, "I'll dot you on the nose, George Tubb!"

"I'd like to see you do it, young Nugent," said Tubb, sparring up into a fighting attitude.

"Yah! Take that!"

"That" was a vicious jab from Dicky Nugent that took the leader of the Third Form full on the nose. There was a startled howl from Tubb, and next moment he and Dicky Nugent were locked in each other's arms, struggling furiously. It was the signal for a general scrap between the rival Forms.

In a couple of minutes the passage resembled a battlefield. There were cries and howls from the Second-Formers, mixed with moans and gasps from the belligerent Third, and punctuated, so to speak, with bellowing commands from Horace Coker.

"Stop it!" he roared. "Stop it, you young rascals! Ow!"

It was rather unfortunate that Dicky Nugent shut his eyes at that moment and swung a clenched fist at George Tubb's head, for George Tubb happened to dodge that fist. But Horace Coker, who had leaped in to separate the rival leaders, had not been quite so successful. The fist caught him full in the eye, and Coker staggered back with a howl.

"You young hooligans!" he roared. "Why, I'll smash you!"

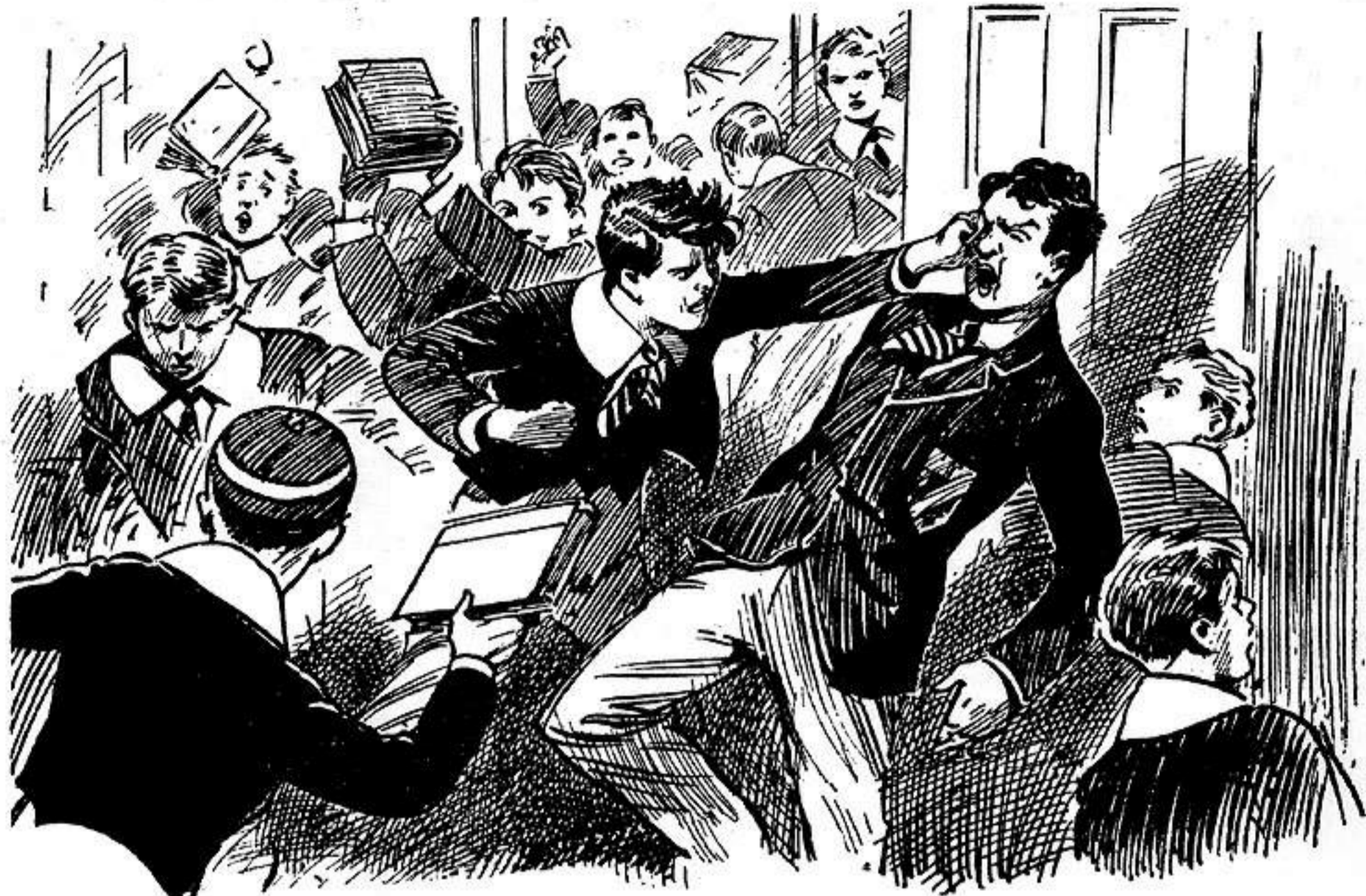
Regardless of the fact that these fags of the Third and Second had turned up to hear him speak at the meeting; regardless that these fags were prospective members of his great league, Coker would have waded in with great effect just then. But, fortunately for him, and perhaps for the fags, George

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As Horace Coker leaped in to separate the leaders of the wildly struggling fags, Dicky Nugent swung a clenched fist at George Tubb's head. Tubb dodged, and Coker staggered back with a yell, as the fist caught him full in the eye. "Ow!" he roared. (See Chapter 3.)

Wingate, the captain of the school, came along at that moment to see what all the rumpus was about.

He didn't ask any questions. His ashplant slipped down into his hand, and he strode in amongst the youthful fighting men and did great execution. Really, it was surprising how quickly the passage cleared. There was a series of howls and grunts as Wingate's ashplant found billets, and then a general rush for the doors of the Rag.

Next minute the passage was deserted save for Horace Coker, who was caressing a rapidly darkening eye, and Wingate.

"What's all the noise about, Coker?" asked Wingate sharply.

"Wow! I'm holding a meeting in the Rag," explained Coker. "These silly fags started fighting amongst themselves. And—"

"Well, if there's any more noise, Coker, your meeting will be cancelled," said Wingate, and he passed on, doing his utmost to keep his mouth from twitching. Even the Sixth had heard of Coker's latest venture, and Wingate was well aware that anyone who spared the time to attend a meeting presided over by Horace Coker, the Duffer of the Fifth, simply did so for a rag. That being so, noise was to be expected, and Wingate, who had not forgotten that he had been a junior himself once, wisely decided to turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to what went on in the Rag.

Blinking painfully, Horace Coker entered the Rag and closed the door.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Coker!"

The meeting broke into derisive cheering, but Coker did not seem to note the tone of derision in it. He mounted the small platform at the end of the Rag and beamed upon his audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen—" he began.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Coker!"

"Ahem! Gentlemen—"

Coker started afresh.

"Hurrah!"

"On the ball!"

Horace Coker frowned, and then smiled again, realising just in time that it was the duty of a speaker to humour his audience. But the most professional of speakers would have been hard put to it to humour that mixed assembly of Greyfriars fellows.

"Gentlemen," roared Coker, and he almost choked himself in the process, "I have called this meeting—"

"We know that, fathead!"

Horace Coker's jaw was thrust out aggressively.

"If somebody's looking for a thick ear—" he began truculently.

"Get on with the washing!"

"Cut the cackle and get to the horses!"

"Hear, hear!"

The expression that came over Horace Coker's face was indescribable. At the best of times he was a very impatient youth. For one moment it looked as if he were going to commit assault and battery on the meeting. But he conquered the impulse, and forced a smile again.

"I have called this meeting," he bellowed, "to acquaint you chaps with the movement I am inaugurating—"

"You're whatter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" bellowed Coker. "This movement is to foster a spirit of good will and comradeship between mankind—"

"Hurrah!"

"This movement is to foster a spirit of—"

"Faith, an' I didn't know it was a spiritualist meeting!" said Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you want chucking out on your neck, young Desmond," said Coker, clenching his big fists, "I'll soon satisfy you!"

Which remark, coming as it did upon Coker's references to comradeship and good will, was typically Cokerish.

"This movement is to foster—" continued Coker.

"We've heard that before, dear man!" chimed in Cecil Reginald Temple, with a yawn.

"Look here, Temple," said Coker, his face as red as a lobster, "I'm not standing any cheek from you!"

"Get on with the meeting!" roared a score of voices.

And Coker, breathing hard, got on.

"Friendship is a wonderful thing!" bellowed the Fifth-Former, glancing at some notes he had prepared. "True friendship demands sacrifices—"

"Oh, ring off that guff!" exclaimed George Tubb of the Third. "Is this a blessed lecturo?"

"Order, order!"

"Shut up, Tubb!" roared Dicky Nugent.

"You keep your mouth shut, young Nugent!"

"Order!" shrieked Coker.

"Let's hear about the medals for a change!" suggested Bob Cherry.

Horace Coker seized on that suggestion with avidity. He had read somewhere that a public will always listen to a speaker if there's something free being given away with the speech, as it were.

"With reference to the medals," he shouted, holding one up for inspection, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,055.

"these are given away to every member who joins my movement. The inscription on them reads 'Coker's League of Friends,' and each medal bears my portrait."

"Hurrah!"

"I'm afraid the merchant who did the printing of these medals couldn't spell," continued Coker. "For instance, he put an 'i' in Friends, and a 'u' in League. Still, I suppose he's an ignorant chap, and we mustn't blame him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker!"

Coker looked a little puzzled as those remarks floated up to him. But he did not divine the real meaning of them.

"To qualify for membership," he resumed, "each fellow has to swear——"

"Great Scott!"

"Naughty, naughty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it's a swearing league," drawled Cecil Reginald Temple, "I'm off!"

"I don't mean swear!" roared Coker confusedly. "I mean swear——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The meeting broke into a roar of laughter at Coker's lucidity, and the burly Fifth-Former, his face the colour of a beetroot, stood there helplessly trying to explain that when he said "swear" he didn't mean "swear"—he meant "swear."

"Ain't he rich!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"The richness of the esteemed and ludicrous Coker is terrific!" said Inky, with a dusky grin.

"I've had about enough of this!" gasped Wharton, wiping his eyes. "It's time we gave Coker those eggs!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"

That seemed to be the general idea. Cecil Reginald Temple was seen to glance meaningfully at the Upper Fourth juniors. Harry Wharton winked at the Remove men, what time George Tubb and Dicky Nugent conveyed their agreed-upon signals to the fags.

"Order!" bellowed Coker, thumping a massive fist on the table.

But no one seemed to take any notice of the Fifth-Former. And as that fact was borne in on Coker's weighty intellect his previous remarks on the subject of good will and comradeship were forgotten.

"If you noisy fags can't keep order," he bellowed, "I'll chuck you outside!"

"Yah!" roared the Second.

"Rats!" yelled the Third.

"Go and eat coke!" jeered the Remove.

"Rag the silly dummy!" bellowed the Upper Fourth.

Next minute the air was thick with flying missiles.

Splosh! Swoosh! Smack!

Eggs, oranges, tomatoes descended on Horace Coker in a shower. Between them, sprinkled generously, were dozens of inky pellets.

"Oh crikey! Yooooop!" roared Coker, trying in vain to dodge that terrific barrage. "Yow! Groooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rag was like pandemonium let loose.

Horace Coker, with egg-yolk and tomato and orange clinging to various portions of his anatomy, stampeded for the door of the Rag. Missiles followed him all the way, not a few of them landing on other victims.

"Go it, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooogh! You little sweeps!" panted Coker. "I'll smash you! Yooooop!"

"Stop him!"

Temple & Co. and Harry Wharton & Co. made a dash for Coker as he headed for the door. Behind them the Second and Third Formers kept up a constant fire of ink-pellets, happily regardless now of whether the pellets found Coker or anyone else.

Coker's big fists whirled about him like flails as he tried to clear a passage to the door. He reached the door at last and dragged at the handle.

Another moment, and he would have been fleeing along the passage to the sanctuary of his study, but as he made to dash through the doorway a portly figure in cap and gown barred his way.

Crash!

Coker and the portly figure collided and collapsed.

"Bless my soul! Groooooogh!"

"Wow! Oh crumbs! Yooooop!"

And the mixed assembly of juniors in the Rag stood back in awe and no little apprehension as they recognised the portly figure of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Prout is Wrathful!

"BOY!"

Mr. Prout sat and gasped and panted in the doorway of the Rag like a newly-landed fish. He was smothered in a terrifying mixture of egg-yolk, tomato-juice, ink, and orange, which had been transferred from the person of Horace Coker at the moment of collision.

"Boy!"

Mr. Prout, pumping in breath, managed to gasp out that word.

"Groooooogh! Oh dear!" groaned Coker.

"Wretched boy!" thundered Mr. Prout, getting his second wind, so to speak. "Hooligan! How dare you!"

"Groooooogh!" gasped Coker, pumping in breath.

Harry Wharton darted forward.

"Let me help you up, sir," he said meekly.

The captain of the Remove had the greatest difficulty to keep a straight face, for Mr. Prout looked a peculiar figure, sitting there on the floor.

Mr. Prout glared at Wharton, and then, seeming to realise the ridiculous figure he cut, he stretched out a plump hand, which Wharton took.

The master of the Fifth was no lightweight, but the captain of the Remove brought him to his feet at last.

Horace Coker, coughing egg, and tomato, and ink, and orange from his eyes, still pumped in breath. Events had happened so fast that the burly Fifth-Former hardly knew if he were on his head or his heels.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Prout, turning a ferocious glance on the hapless Coker. "How dare you? How dare you, sir?"

"Groooooogh! I'm s-s-sorry, sir!" gasped Coker wretchedly. "Ow!"

"Cease those ridiculous noises, Coker!" thundered Mr. Prout. "Get up, wretched boy!"

Bob Cherry moved forward and gave Coker a hand up.

The duffer of the Fifth tottered unsteadily and blinked woefully at the indignant Form master. And as Mr. Prout became aware of the extraordinary sight Coker presented, and the dreadful effluvia of bad eggs that clung to him like a garment, his eyes dilated in horror.

"Kindly keep at a distance, sir," rumbled Mr. Prout, pulling out a handkerchief. "You are in a positively disgusting state. A most obnoxious odour comes from you, Coker!"

"Groooooogh!"

"I can hardly believe my own eyes, Coker!" continued Mr. Prout, in his portly fashion. "You, a member of my Form—a Fifth Form boy—actually engaged in this disgusting horseplay! It's monstrous, sir! Conduct hardly expected from a boy in the Second Form."

"Wow!"

"Added to your childish conduct, sir," went on the master of the Fifth, "is the heinous offence of assaulting me. I am strongly tempted to take you to Dr. Locke and recommend your removal to the Second Form."

"That—that was an accident, sir," ventured Harry Wharton. "Coker did not know that you were coming in at the door, sir!"

Mr. Prout eyed the captain of the Remove with disfavour.

"And may I ask what you boys are doing here?" he asked. "I believe you belong to the Remove?"

"Yes, sir," answered Wharton. "You see, sir, Coker was—hem!—holding a meeting, and we——"

"And we came along," said Bob Cherry helpfully. "And——"

"Came along, sir," added Nugent, helpfully, as Mr. Prout fixed a grim glance on him, "to——"

"Listen, sir!" volunteered Temple, of the Upper Fourth.

Mr. Prout then became aware, for the first time, of the mixed assembly.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Is this a meeting of the entire school? Do I not see boys of the Second and Third Forms, in addition to members of the Upper and Lower Fourth Forms here?"

"Yes, sir," said Wharton meekly.

"Disgusting!" snapped Mr. Prout, noting the inky fingers and faces of the fags and the dishevelled appearance of the Remove and Upper Fourth juniors. "Really abominable! I have had occasion before to remonstrate with Mr. Quelch on the unruliness of his Form, but this is beyond all limits."

The master of the Fifth had had occasion to remonstrate with Mr. Quelch on the unruliness of the Remove, Mr. Prout being the sort of person who never could keep to his own business. But he realised now that it was a member of his own Form who was to blame, and that rather altered the complexion of things. He turned a frowning glance on Horace Coker.

"Have you anything to say in extenuation of your disgraceful conduct, sir?" he demanded. "Have you no sense of shame? Have you no sense of the dignity expected in a senior boy? Speak up, boy!"

Really, it was a trifle unfair to hurl a series of quickfire questions at a fellow who felt as if he had been under a steam roller, and to expect an answer. So it was not surprising that Coker, still gouging the awful mixture of eggs, and tomatoes, and oranges from his face, merely mumbled:

"Mmmmmmm!"

Mr. Prout pranced about like a war-horse in his indignation and anger.

"Go and clean yourself, you dolt!" he commanded. "And then present yourself in my study!"

"Groooooogh! Yes, sir!"

Horace Coker crawled away and made tracks for the bath-room.

Then Mr. Prout turned to Harry Wharton and Cecil Reginald Temple.

"You will clear up this room," he commanded, "and then retire to your own quarters. I will speak to your Form masters about this disgusting behaviour."

"Very good, sir!"

And, with his head held high in the air, Mr. Prout sailed majestically from

the Rag, unconscious of the fact that behind him, attached to his gown, trailed a very ancient egg, that had broken in two, the white of which dangled behind him like a piece of elastic.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Despite the gravity of the situation the juniors burst into a roar of laughter as Mr. Prout's back, also the trailing egg, disappeared from view. The master of the Fifth heard that outburst and his brows knit angrily. Really, he considered it showed great inefficiency on the part of the Form masters of the Upper and Lower Fourth, Third, and Second Forms that their pupils should be so wanting in respect as to laugh at a master of the Fifth. That such disrespect was rife in his own Form Mr. Prout would not have admitted for one moment. Never had he heard Blundell, the captain of the Form, refer to him as that "silly old codger," or Fitzgerald as that "old fool, Prout." Such references, however, were often made by members of Mr. Prout's Form when he had been unduly long-winded and tiresome in class.

Full of the thoughts of what he would do to such unruly boys if they were under his full jurisdiction, Mr. Prout, sailing majestically along Masters passage, did not notice that Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, was waiting for him, until he almost trod on that august gentleman's foot.

And as Dr. Locke caught a faint whiff of the odour of stale eggs that clung to Mr. Prout, he pulled out a handkerchief and coughed.

"Hem! Mr. Prout—"

"My dear Dr. Locke!" beamed Mr. Prout.

"Hem! This odour— Your gown, sir!" stuttered Dr. Locke, running a critical eye over the garments of the master of the Fifth.

"Wha-a-at? I mean, I beg your pardon, sir!" gasped Mr. Prout, still forgetful of the fact that in his encounter with Coker certain quantities of the missiles that had originally clung to the Fifth-Former had been transferred to his own person.

"Your gown, Mr. Prout," said the Head icily, "is in a disgusting state. Really, Mr. Prout, I must say that I am surprised."

"But—"

"I do not approve of my colleagues appearing in public in the—hem!—condition that you are in, sir!" said Dr. Locke.

Mr. Prout nearly exploded. Then, and only then, he remembered that Coker had cannoned into him, and that Coker had been in a disgusting state.

Dr. Locke eyed Mr. Prout shrewdly, and noted his embarrassment and apparent speechlessness.

"You have not been drinking, Mr. Prout?" he hazarded.

"Drinking, sir?"

"It looks uncommonly like it, Mr. Prout," said Dr. Locke frigidly.

"Dr. Locke—" gasped Mr. Prout, with a poor attempt at dignity.

"Mr. Prout—" said the Head grimly.

"I certainly have not been indulging in any alcoholic liquor," retorted Mr. Prout, with a typical outburst of long-windedness. "I must say, Dr. Locke, that I am surprised at the insinuation and—"

"But your appearance, my dear Prout—"

"That is the result of an unfortunate encounter with a boy who had been—er—covering himself with obnoxious articles of diet that should, by all the laws of Nature, have been confined to a waste receptacle long ago, sir," explained Mr. Prout, with dignity.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Dr. Locke, amazed that Greyfriars could contain a boy with such extraordinary and disgusting habits. "Who, Mr. Prout, is this disgusting character?"

Mr. Prout crimsoned.

"I regret to say, Dr. Locke," he said stiffly, "that the wretched boy in question is a member of my Form."

"Indeed, Mr. Prout!"

Mr. Prout could cheerfully have slain Horace James Coker at that moment. It was a bitter pill for the rather pompous and arrogant master of the Fifth to swallow to have to admit that the boy responsible for his present state was a member of the Fifth Form. Most willingly would Mr. Prout have relegated Coker to the Remove Form, or any other Form at that moment.

as he walked away with more speed than majesty now to his own study.

Coker was at the bottom of the whole affair. It was Coker who had written that illiterate notice; it was Coker who had assaulted him; it was Coker who had covered him with egg yolk and other fearsome things; it was Coker who had earned him a censure from Dr. Locke.

Thus it was no wonder that when Horace Coker put in an appearance at his Form-master's study an hour later he was surprised to see Mr. Prout swishing a cane in the air. He was more surprised a few moments later, for the master of the Fifth did something that perhaps hadn't occurred in Fifth Form history for a very long while. In short, Mr. Prout caned Horace James Coker. And the pompous, although rather easy-going master of the Fifth did not spare the rod.

When Horace James Coker eventually crawled away from his Form-master's study he was feeling sore in every limb. And his state was so pitiful and so entirely free from aggressiveness that Potter and Greene, venturing to put their heads round the door, had the courage to enter the study as if nothing untoward had occurred between them.

In the whirl of painful events that had followed the bumping Coker had received in the study earlier in the evening, Potter and Greene's heinous offence of laying hands on their study leader was forgotten. Certainly, Coker himself made no reference to it. Indeed, for a long time all the burly Fifth-Former could do was to groan and fidget uncomfortably in the armchair. And Potter and Greene, growing rather bored with such depressing surroundings, made some excuse to leave the study.

"He's had it hot," murmured Greene to Potter as they went along to Fitzgerald's study for a game of chess. "I believe old Prout's walloped him."

"Serve him right!" said George Potter unsympathetically. "The silly ass is always asking for trouble."

With which William Greene agreed with more heartiness than Horace James Coker would have given him credit for.

THE COKER MEDAL.



Dr. Locke's lips tightened.

"Really, Mr. Prout, I am surprised. Such behaviour from a senior boy—from a member of your Form—is deplorable. I must ask you, Mr. Prout, to give me his name."

"Coker, sir!" said Mr. Prout coldly.

"Ah!" Dr. Locke's eyes glittered. "I had occasion to see a notice on the notice board, Mr. Prout, which appeared above this boy Coker's signature. Not only was the handwriting disgraceful for a senior boy but the spelling was abominable."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, indeed," said Dr. Locke with some warmth. "I wish you to pay extra-special attention to the education of this boy Coker, Mr. Prout. Really, such ignorance in a boy of his years is lamentable and—hem—reflects discredit on his mentors."

Which Mr. Prout rightly interpreted as being intended in the singular and not the plural.

And before Mr. Prout could make any suitable answer to that direct shaft Dr. Locke stepped into his study and closed the door.

"That wretched boy, Coker, will be the death of me!" growled Mr. Prout

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

American Methods!

"JERUSALEM crickets!"

Fisher T. Fish's eyes glittered. The keen American junior stood by the window in Study No. 14 in the Remove, examining a piece of shining metal that looked uncommonly like one of Horace Coker's League of Friends' medals.

"Gee! I wonder!"

As Fisher T. Fish made that remark he performed a singularly strange action, for he shoved the glittering piece of metal between his teeth and bit hard on it. What the American junior expected to discover from that operation is very doubtful.

"I believe it's silver," he muttered. "Great gophers!"

As if to satisfy himself on this point Fisher T. Fish bit hard on the metal once again, and then dropped it on the wooden table and listened to its metallic ring.

"Silver for a dollar!" he grunted cagerly.

Silver was a magic word to Fisher T. Fish. Perhaps there was only one other

word that attracted him so much and that was gold, but with a business mind like Fishy's, there was no great distance between one and the other. Turning silver into gold was a simple matter once one had the silver, of course.

"Silver!"
Fisher T. Fish could hardly believe his eyes. But he knew for all that, that he had made no mistake. The medal which bore the inscription, "Coker's League of Friends" was made of silver!

Fisher T. Fish dragged out a pocket knife. Next minute he was cutting the medal across. It was particularly soft, and although Fishy's knife suffered in the process, the medal finally fell into two pieces. Fisher T. Fish scanned these two pieces critically.

"Silver!" he muttered. "I guess it's solid silver throughout!"

A sharp expression settled on the American junior's hatchet face. He pocketed the two pieces of silver and plumped his lean frame into the study armchair. Then he began to think. Thinking was a hobby of Fisher T. Fish's when the subject that required thinking about was "Dollars." Indeed, the keen Transatlantic junior spent the major portion of his leisure time—and not a little of the time that should have been spent in other pursuits—in evolving wheezes which had at the end of them, so to speak, the transference of his Form-fellows' pocket money to his own pockets.

Most of the Remove fellows paid little attention to such sordid matters as finance, being content to live for life as it came along. But with the American junior life meant a certain allotted span in which to accumulate dollars. Certainly Fisher T. Fish had started early in life in this direction, doubtless fired to ambition by the extreme cuteness and dollar wealth of his "pop" in New York.

His business wheezes at first had taken the Remove by storm, but it soon became apparent thereafter that any wheeze or stunt promoted by Fisher T. Fish was certain to be a "catch." Really, it was a deplorable state of affairs for a sharp, keen, business-like youth to be greeted with suspicion the moment he put up a "wheeze" for making money. Fisher T. Fish was a sticker, however. Perhaps he believed in the scientific gentlemen's assertion that there was a "fool born every second of the day."

"Silver!" he grunted at last, rubbing his bony hands. "This is where I jump in I guess."

He rose to his feet and walked out of the study. A few moments later there was a tap at Horace Coker's study door.

"Come in!" Horace James Coker's deep voice growled an invitation.

Fisher T. Fish poked his lean face round the door and smiled genially.

"How do, Coker?"

Horace Coker's rugged face broke into a ferocious scowl.

"Outside!" he roared.

But Fisher T. Fish was not an American for nothing. He possessed a hide that a hippopotamus might have envied. He had been taught by his "pop" that when a fellow said "outside" or "git" he really meant "come in." Doubtless Fish senior had instilled that peculiar notion into the memory of his young hopeful with the idea of turning him into the ideal commercial traveller: the man who got his order whatever the circumstances.

"I've just looked in," said Fisher T. Fish, advancing further into the study.

Horace Coker rose to his feet and reached for a cricket-stump.

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"Like your dashed cheek!" he roared. "You Remove fags want putting in your place. Bend over!"

"What?"

Coker waved the stump prefectorially.

"Bend over!" he commanded.

Fisher T. Fish backed a step. He was well aware that Horace Coker held fond illusions that he would have made a better prefect than even George Wingate, the captain of the school. He was well aware, too, that occasionally Coker, in his overwhelming desire to emulate these prefects, took upon himself certain liberties and vested himself with certain authority. He had for instance been known to call "Fag" when he was feeling particularly lazy; he had even had the audacity to "cuff" a junior for alleged cheek. But to command a Removite to "bend over" just like Wingate would do was the outside edge.

Fisher T. Fish's smile faded.

"Bend over!" commanded Coker magisterially. "Who told you to come butting into a senior's study?"

"But I came to speak to you about the league, I guess," blurted out Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh!" Horace Coker lowered the cricket-stump, and a lot of the anger faded from his rugged face.

Despite his painful experiences of the previous day, Horace Coker had not by any means abandoned his idea of forming a League of Friends. In fact, his determination to "get it going" was greater than ever, due doubtless to that obstinate strain in his character for which he was so noted.

"If it's about the league, young Fish," he said, "you can come in."

"I guess I will!" said Fisher T. Fish, with a deep breath of relief.

"Have you come to join?" asked Coker, with unaccustomed geniality.

Fisher T. Fish's lean face twitched.

"Sure! I kinder guess and calculate that you can't do better than have a real live American in your outfit," he said.

Horace Coker bit his lip.

It had been his original intention to confine his "league" to Britishers. Yet he hated the idea of losing an early recruit simply because he was an American. Besides, when inducing other people to join the league there was nothing like being able to say truthfully that so and so's name was "down." So having pondered over this point Coker decided to rule out that clause which affected the nationalities of members.

"You'd better read the form of membership, young Fish," said Coker at length, "before I swear you in."

"Oh, that's all right, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish hastily. "Can't I take it as read?"

But Horace Coker shook his head. He had spent the whole of an afternoon drawing up the rules of his league, and such labour was not to be so lightly dismissed.

He strode to the bookcase and drew out a sheaf of papers.

"Just read these rules," he commanded.

"Great snakes!" murmured Fisher T. Fish, as he caught sight of Coker's original orthography and childish caligraphy. "Have I got to read this piffle?"

"Eh?"

"I mean—I guess these are dandy rules," said Fisher T. Fish hastily. "I reckon I'll shove my monica—"

"Your what?" demanded Coker.

"My monica—handle—label—" explained the American junior.

Horace Coker stared.

"What the dickens do you mean?"

Fisher T. Fish made an impatient gesture.

"I guess you call it name in your sleepy old island. There's my monica—name. Now hand out the durocks—I mean, the medal."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!"

Fisher T. Fish's brisk methods left Coker floundering, so to speak. He crossed to the bookcase and drew to light the cotton bag which contained the medals.

Fisher T. Fish's eyes gleamed as he saw it. It had been a lucky chance that the medal Coker had exhibited at the meeting the previous evening had fallen into the American junior's hand, for Fishy saw great financial prospects ahead.

"Here's your medal, young Fish," said Coker, with an air of a monarch bestowing a knighthood. "I hope you will live up to the code embodied in my membership form. May this medal remind you that you are a member of what will, I know, develop into a world-wide affair—"

Fisher T. Fish grimaced.

"Oh, stow it!" he muttered, pocketing the medal. "I reckon—"

"Fish!" roared Coker. "How dare you interrupt your president?"

"Eh?"

"Doesn't it say in rule one, Fish," boomed Coker, "that proper respect and civility should be paid to the president at all times?"

"Oh crumbs! Does it?"

Coker wagged an admonitory finger at the Removite.

"Doesn't it say that rudeness will be put down with a firm hand—"

"D-does it?" gasped Fish, whose mind was fully occupied with the problem of how he could obtain possession of those silver medals.

"It does!" thundered Coker; and he took a deep breath as a preliminary to continuing his discourse on the league. But Fishy saw it coming, so to speak, and he decided to take the bull by the horns.

"Look byer, Coker," he said, "I guess I'll do a trade with you."

"You'll do what?"

"I guess I'll buy those medals off you, sirree! What do you say?"

Coker gasped.

"You'll buy these medals off me?"

Fisher T. Fish nodded in business-like fashion.

Horace James Coker took a deep breath.

"You cheeky Remove fag!" he roared. "You'll buy these medals so that you can start a league on your own—is that it?"

"That" was not "it," but it was the only solution Coker could arrive at. That Fisher T. Fish wanted those medals simply because they were made of solid silver never occurred to Coker for one moment, for the simple reason that Coker did not know that they were made of silver. He had simply written to his Aunt Judy, and explained that he was forming a league, and that he wanted every member to wear a medal, and Aunt Judy had obliged. The good dame had omitted to mention in her letter what the two gross of medals she had sent to her darling Horace were made of—certainly, Coker had no suspicion that they were made of silver.

Fisher T. Fish backed to the door. There was a warlike gleam in Horace Coker's eyes that gave the lie, so to speak, to the goodwill and spirit of



"If you fags can't keep order," bellowed Coker, "I'll chuck you outside!" "Yah!" "Rats!" "Go and eat coke!" The next minute the air was thick with flying missiles. Splosh! Swoosh! Smack! Horace Coker tried in vain to dodge the shower of eggs, oranges, tomatoes, and inky pellets that descended upon him. "Oh, crikey! Yoooop!" (See Chapter 3.)

comradeship he bore to his fellow-member of the league.

"You young rotter!" he roared, catching up the cricket-stump.

"I guess—"
Fisher T. Fish struggled frantically, but he was no match for the burly Fifth-Former. In a trice he was flung over the table, face downwards. Then the cricket-stump began to rise and fall.

Whack!
"Yooop! Oh crikey!" howled Fish. "Let up, you jay!"

"I'll teach you to try those American tricks on me, young Fish!" panted Horace Coker between the swipes of the stump.

Whack! Whack!
The spirit of goodwill and comradeship had disappeared entirely. Coker seemed to take a great delight in proving to his first member of the league that such charming qualities were all humbug, for he whacked away lustily.

Whack!
"Oh dear! Whooop! Oh crikey!" roared Fisher T. Fish.

But even the president of Coker's League of Friends grew tired at last. Perhaps it was due to the sudden return of that spirit of goodwill and comradeship. At any rate, Coker pitched the stump in the corner and released the squirming Removite.

"There!" panted the Fifth-Former. "Let that be a lesson to you, young Fish! Now get out of my study before I boot you!"

"Wow! Ow!"
Fisher T. Fish crawled painfully to the door. He was aching in every limb, for the castigation had been severe. But he paused at the door for all that, in a last desperate attempt to bargain with Coker over the sale of those silver medals.

"Yow! Look hyer, Coker! Groooough! I'll give you ten bob for those medals! Groooough!"

Horace Coker nearly collapsed. Then, recovering from his astonishment, he uttered a bellow of rage and made a grab at the cricket-stump. But Fisher T. Fish was even quicker.

Slam!
He shut the door and retreated along the Fifth Form passage at a pace that would have done credit to a first class sprinter. Evidently there was no "trade" with Horace Coker of the Fifth. But that didn't mean Fisher T. Fish had abandoned all hope of effecting a "trade," and it remained to be seen what method the cute American junior would employ.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Remove Methods!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
Bob Cherry's stentorian tones rang through the Remove passage as Fisher T. Fish hove in sight.

"Groooough!"
Fisher T. Fish was still feeling the effects of the cricket-stump.

"Been under a steam-roller, Fishy?" inquired Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Wow!"
"The wowfulness of the esteemed and ridiculous Fishy is pathetically cheerful," said Inky, in his weird and wonderful English.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Fisher T. Fish groaned again.

"I guess I'll make potato scrapings of that galoot Coker one of these days!" he said darkly.

"One of these days," said Bob Cherry expressively.

"What's the Coker bird been doing?" asked Wharton.

"He walloped me with a stump," said Fisher T. Fish, with a grimace.

"Oh!"
The Famous Five looked grim. It was high time, they considered, that Horace James Coker was made to understand that he couldn't ride the high horse with the Remove. Really, it was a bit thick for a Fifth Form chap to lick a Removite with a stump, and it aroused their indignation, even though the victim was Fisher Tarleton Fish.

"We'll look into this," said Wharton grimly. "You leave it to us, Fishy."
The captain of the Remove did not ask any particulars. Fisher T. Fish had been licked—licked by a Fifth-Former. That was sufficient. That Fisher T. Fish may have deserved a licking did not enter into the matter at all.

"I say, you fellows—"
The Famous Five spun round as the voice of William George Bunter smote their ears.

"Hallo, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry. "What's the news? Postal-order arrived at last?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
"And has it got whiskers on it?" added the cheery Bob.

"He, ho, ho!" cackled Bunter. "I can take your little joke, Bob, old man. As a matter of fact, I am expecting a postal-order. But you know what the postal service is like these days—all topsy-turvy. If you could advance me a small loan—say, a pound—until my postal-order arrives—"

"You want a pound?" asked Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter brightened up. "Yes, old chap," he said eagerly. "You can make it two, if you like."

"I'll make it ten, if you like," said Bob Cherry gravely. "Always ready to THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,055.

oblige a charming chap like you, Bunter."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "M-make it ten, old chap!"

The idea of ten pounds fairly made the fat junior's mouth water.

"You're sure you want ten?" asked Bob.

Billy Bunter was quite sure on that point.

"Yes, Bob, old man. I'll—I'll settle up when my postal-order arrives, you know. Yoooooop! Wharrer you at?"

"Giving you ten pounds," chuckled Bob Cherry, playfully punching Bunter's podgy ribs. "That's the first one!"

"Yoooooop! Stoppit, you beast! Whooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry cheerfully and generously completed the full "payment." Bunter squirmed and roared as if he were being slaughtered.

"Yah! Leggo! Storpit, you rotter! Yow! Wow! Oh, crikey!"

"That's the lot," said Bob, with a grin. "If you want any more, old fat man, you've only got to say the word."

"Yah! Rotter!" gasped Bunter. "I shan't tell you now that Coker's coming along—see! You're a beast, Bob Cherry! I despise you, and I won't give you the tip that that beast Coker's coming here."

"So Coker's coming here, is he?" said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter blinked.

"How did you know? How did you know that he's coming here to get the chaps to join his silly old league?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expression on Billy Bunter's fat face sent the Famous Five into roars of laughter.

"A little bird told me, old fat barrel," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yah!" yelled Bunter, rolling off. "You're a beast, Bob Cherry. I despise you!"

And the porpoise of the Remove rolled off in what he fondly imagined was a dignified manner, but which was more aptly described by Johnny Bull's reference to a ship rolling in a heavy sea.

The Famous Five watched the fat junior until he was out of sight. Then their thoughts turned to Horace Coker.

"If that silly ass is coming here, he'll find a packet of trouble," said Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

The Famous Five had not forgotten the treatment Fisher T. Fisher had suffered at the hands of the Fifth-Former.

"Get the fellows," said Wharton at length. "We'll give Coker a champion ragging. Fishy, you cut along and get a cricket-stump."

"I guess I shan't be half a jiffy," said Fisher T. Fish, moving off with alacrity.

Bob Cherry soon broadcast the news that Horace Coker was expected in the Remove quarters at any moment, and the Removites made preparations to receive him.

"When I give the word, rush him," said Wharton, "and cart him into the Common-room."

"Good egg!"

The Removites concealed themselves in the studies near the corner of the passage, and waited for the signal. Wharton was leaning carelessly against the wall, keeping a sharp look-out for the approach of Horace Coker.

There was the sound of heavy footsteps, and the great man himself came into view.

Usually the Fifth-Former wore a lofty expression of superiority when he condescended to enter the Remove quarters.

Coker had a short way with fags, into which category he was pleased to place the Remove, and he believed in upholding the dignity of a senior Form such as the Fifth. But there was a noticeable lack of that superiority as he caught sight of Harry Wharton. Horace Coker actually smiled—a friendly smile.

True, his manner returned to the dignity of the Fifth when he addressed the captain of the Remove.

"I want to talk to you fags about my league," said Coker, coming to a halt.

"The Third and Second Forms are straight on," said Wharton, "then down the staircase. You can't mistake the way, Coker; it's only a little while since you left there, you know."

Coker's brow wrinkled in perplexity. "Eh?" he ejaculated. "I don't understand."

"You said something about fags just now," said Wharton gravely. "I'm directing you to the fag quarters—see?"

"You cheeky ass!" snorted Coker. "You jolly well know that I meant the Remove."

"But I thought you said something about fags?" said Wharton.

"So I did!" snapped Coker. "The Remove's a fag crowd, anyway."

"Oh, is it?" inquired the captain of the Remove, with icy calmness.

"Yes," said Coker impatiently. "I had occasion to lam one of your cheeky crowd not so very long ago."

"So I understand," said Wharton.

"And now we've occasion to lam a silly, fatheaded idiot who will persist in looking for trouble. Collar him, Remove!"

It was the signal. As the words rang out the passage seemed to become alive with Removites. They swarmed over Horace Coker like a lot of flies, and the burly Fifth-Former disappeared under a swarm of arms and legs.

"Yaroooooooh! Ow! Mummmmm!"

Coker's howls ended in a gurgle as Squiff's hand was jammed over his mouth. Next minute, struggling feebly, the burly Fifth-Former was lifted up and carted into the Common-room.

"Lay him over the desk!" commanded Wharton.

"I'll smash you young rotters for this!" howled Coker. "I'll—Yoooooop!"

The half-dozen juniors who were carrying out the skipper of the Remove's orders acted with more zeal than gentleness, with the result that Coker's nose came into painful contact with the wooden desk.

"Hold him down," said Wharton.

A dozen hands fastened on Coker's person, and he was held in position.

"Horace James Coker," said the captain of the Remove, "you are accused and found guilty of having laid hands on a member of this Form—"

"Grooooooough! I'll spiflicate you young rotters for this!" gasped Coker.

The captain of the Remove wagged an admonitory finger at the Fifth-Former.

"We have warned you before, Horace James Coker, that if a Fifth-Former wallops a Removite he must suffer the penalty."

"Hear, hear!" said the juniors solemnly.

"And the penalty," continued Harry Wharton, "is—"

"Death!" said the Remove, as one man.

"You little sweeps!" roared Coker.

"Lemme gerrup! I'll smash the lot of you!"

Needless to say that request was not acceded to, and only a fellow like Coker would have made it.

"The sentence is that you receive two dozen swipes with a cricket stump, the first dozen of which will be administered

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by your late victim Fisher Tarleton Fish."

"Hurrah!" cheered the Remove.

"The second dozen will be administered by twelve other members of this respected Form; the administrators, so to speak, being earnestly requested to keep in mind the old saying which refers to sparing the rod and spoiling the child."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rotters!" gasped Coker, struggling afresh; but his struggles availed him nothing except a nasty jar on the nose as Squiff jammed his bullet head against the desk again. "Yooooop!"

"Get busy with that stump, Fishy!" said Wharton.

The American junior grinned and picked up a cricket stump with a businesslike air.

Whack!

"Yoooooh! Leggo! Wow!" roared Coker.

Whack, whack, whack!

Fisher T. Fish put great vim into his work, doubtless remembering what vim Coker had employed in a similar occupation not very long ago. And Coker's howls and threats and threats and howls rang through the Common-room. Fisher T. Fish, having administered the requisite number of strokes, gave place to Bob Cherry.

By the time it came to Wharton's turn to deliver the last stroke Coker was writhing like an eel.

"This is the last stroke, prisoner at the bar," said Wharton solemnly. "But I hope the lesson will remain."

"I'll smash you for this!" gasped Coker.

"Silence!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

He raised the stump aloft, and was about to bring it down when the peculiar expressions on the faces of several Removites directly in front of him made him wheel round.

Then he jumped, and the stump clattered to the floor.

Standing behind him was Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

"Very entertaining, I am sure!" said the Remove master coldly.

The Removites holding Coker released him as if he were red hot. Coker shamefacedly scrambled into an upright position.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes seemed to bore holes through the group of juniors. Harry Wharton crimsoned and fidgeted and stammered.

"We—we—we—that is I—I—Coker and—"

"Your diction is almost as entertaining as the scene I have just witnessed," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "Kindly fetch my cane, Wharton!"

Wharton gulped something in his throat and departed. Mr. Quelch's eyes turned on Coker.

"I am surprised to see a senior boy involved in such childish horse-play," said Mr. Quelch severely. "Kindly leave this room, Coker, and return to your own quarters. I will speak to Mr. Prout about your shocking behaviour at the first opportunity."

"But, sir—" began Coker.

Mr. Quelch pointed imperiously towards the door.

"Go!"

And Horace Coker, not liking the war-like gleam in Mr. Quelch's eyes, went.

Harry Wharton came into the Common-room a moment after the Fifth-Former had vacated it. He handed the cane to Mr. Quelch.

"Since the members of my Form seem so interested in corporal punishment,"

said Mr. Quelch acidly, "let them line up in single file!"

Wondering greatly, the Removites lined up in single file.

Wharton, who was at the extreme right, was handed the cane.

"You will deal Cherry one stroke of the cane, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, "and then hand the cane to him. Cherry, in his turn, will cane the boy next to him, and so on, until the whole Form has been punished. And if any boy is foolish enough to treat this as a joke he will be caned by me most severely."

The Remove had never seen Mr. Quelch in this mood before, but they realised that their job was to wield the cane with a certain amount of vigour.

"You will commence, Wharton!"

Whack!

Wharton brought the cane down on Bob Cherry's trousers with more force than Bob expected from a pal, with the result that when it came to Bob's turn to wield the cane his "victim" got a little more than he expected. Thus the "quality" of the punishment was maintained from first to last, and the only one who had escaped was Wharton who had set the ball rolling. But if Wharton had hopes of escaping the fate of his Form-fellows Mr. Quelch soon disillusioned him.

"Bend down, Wharton," said the master of the Remove. "As head boy of the Form you should set a good example."

Whack, whack!

Much to his surprise—and not a little discomfort—Wharton received two strokes.

"Now you boys will dismiss," said Mr. Quelch. "And if there's any recurrence of this hooliganism the whole Form will be placed under detention for a month."

And, a little less rowdy and more chastened in spirit than when they had entered the Common-room, the Removites departed for their studies.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Free Feed!

"I WON'T be beaten!"

Coker made that remark to Potter and Greene after tea the next day. Potter and Greene were feeling particularly friendly towards their burly study-mate, for Coker had provided them with a rare spread.

"I shouldn't give in, old chap," said Potter encouragingly, not knowing for one moment to what Coker referred.

"Stick it, old chap," said Greene firmly, who was as much in the dark as George Potter.

"I'm going to," answered Coker thoughtfully. "I feel certain the fellows will rally round in time. I wonder if a feed will do it?"

Potter and Greene pricked up their ears.

Being particularly swayed in favour of Coker and all his works, so to speak, when that great man provided the tea they saw a lot of wisdom in his latest remark.

"A feed would do it," muttered Coker. Still in the dark as to what Coker referred to, Potter and Greene nodded in cheerful agreement.

"Sure to!" they said.

"Of course, it seems a sordid way of forming a league," reflected Coker, at which Potter and Greene exchanged sly glances. Evidently the league was still an obsession with Coker, and Potter and Greene had hoped that it had died a

natural death. "A very sordid way," added Coker. "Still, didn't some general or other once say that the battle of the Nile was won by an army marching on its stomach?"

"Did somebody say that?" gasped Potter.

Coker sniffed.

"I don't expect you to know anything about your history, George Potter," he said scornfully. "Still, that general won his battle. I think I can win mine."

"By an army marching on its stomach?" asked Greene innocently.

"Idiot!" snapped Coker. "That's only a figure of speech—"

"Oh, is it?"

"By standing the chaps a first-class feed I reckon I could persuade them to join my league," said Coker. "The thing is to get them interested in the first place; that's where the feed will do the trick."

"The chaps will be interested in a free feed," said Potter. "And that's about all."

Coker snorted.

"Lot you know about it, George Potter. You keep to things you understand. See!"

Potter did see. He saw a rugged, crimson face which he simply yearned to punch, but wisdom came to him at the critical moment and he turned his eyes from that tempting face.

Coker, unaware of the brief battle that had waged in the breast of his study-mate, drew out a pen and started to indite one of his original notices.

"I'll start with the fags first, I think," he muttered. "The Third and Second Forms. The Remove rotters handled me yesterday. I don't want them in my league. Besides, there's nothing like encouraging the younger members of the school."

While Coker rambled on, Potter and Greene slipped quietly out of the study. They saw no reason, having finished Coker's lavish spread, why they should endure the fascinating society of Horace James any longer.

Having bitten the handle of his pen, and scattered sundry blots over the sheet of paper in front of him, Horace Coker finally produced the following:

JOIN MY LEAGE, FRIENDS!

Whereas the President (Horace James Coker) of the Coker Leago of Friends is desirous of enroleing members as speedily as possible, he appeals to the Third and Second Forms to attend a

GRAND INORGRAL BANQWET

to be held in the Third Form-room tomorrow at four-thirty punctule.

The only stipulashun governing admittance is that each gest joins

THE COKER LEAGE OF FRIENDS

and swares to obey the rules and conditions layed down in the Form of Membership.

To each member a handsom

MEDDLE

will be prezented

FREE!

Everyone is cordially invited. Let the spirit of good will and comradeship pervade all.

HORACE COKER.
(Signed) THE PRESIDENT.

N.b.—Mind you fags tern up in clean collers.

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Horace Coker read and re-read that wonderful notice and seemed highly satisfied with it. Certainly it was bound to attract notice amongst the Third and Second-Formers.

"I'll post it up now," said Coker, glancing at his watch. "Nothing like striking while the iron's hot."

And with the smile of a fellow who has achieved something really brilliant, Horace Coker strode out of the study and made his way to the Third and Second Form notice-board.

His advent amongst the fags was regarded with hostility, for Coker's short way with fags was resented strongly by the followers of George Tubb and Dicky Nugent.

"If you've come for trouble, Coker—" began Tubb darkly.

But Coker did not deign to answer. Even that spirit of good will and comradeship to which his notice referred, did not induce the great man of the Fifth to explain to a common fag of the Third that he had come on a peaceful mission. Indeed, Coker nearly forgot himself to the extent of boxing Tubb's ears.

The notice was pinned up, and Coker strode away, his head high in the air, a smug complacency in his features that made young Tubb wish he was tall enough to buff Horace James Coker on the nose.

But in the excitement that followed Coker's departure, his complacency, or, as Tubb regarded it "swank," was forgotten.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" ejaculated Tubb.

"Great Scott!" chuckled Paget.

"A free feed!" gurgled Samuel Bunter, with glistening eyes. "I say, that's jolly good!"

Tubb read out aloud the terms governing admittance to the free feed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Third and Second-Formers.

"We'll accept that feed, my infants," chirruped Tubb. "Blow his silly league. But the idea of the feed's topping!"

"Oh, rather!"

That seemed to be the general idea. No one was prepared to take Coker's League of Friends seriously. Coker's feed was a different proposition, however. It was well known that Coker was unusually well supplied with cash—a commodity noted more perhaps for its scarceness than its abundance in the Third and Second Forms. And the feed was sure to be on a lavish scale.

That each 'gest,' as Coker put it, had to agree to join his 'leage' before he could participate in the feed was only a small consideration to Tubb & Co., and Dicky Nugent & Co. A hungry fag felt that he did right not to entertain any scruples in such a matter. If Coker wanted them to join his "leage"—if Coker wanted to "present" them with a free medal—they didn't mind obliging him, providing Coker kept his word in regard to the "Inorgral Banqwet."

"We're on to this, you kids!" said George Tubb, smacking his lips.

"And so are we," added Dicky Nugent, rubbing his hands. "I know old Coker does a feed jolly well. He's got pots of money."

"If this league is run on free feeds," said Sammy Bunter, "I don't mind becoming a life member."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Certainly Coker's brainwave had caught on. That the fags of the Third and Second were only interested in his league to the extent of partaking of a free feed never occurred to Coker's mighty intellect.

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It was about half an hour before bedtime that Dicky Nugent and George Tubb presented themselves at Coker's study. The great man invited them to enter.

"Hallo, Coker, old scout!"

"How goes it, old bean?"

Coker frowned as the two fags greeted him so familiarly. Really, it was surprising that Greyfriars men were wanting in such respect towards a Fifth-Former. Still, it was not a propitious moment to take Nugent and Tubb by their collars and bang their heads together. That was a little pleasure it would be better to defer.

Coker forced a smile.

"You've come to see me about the league, I suppose?" he said.

"About the feed—I mean, the league," said George Tubb. "That's it, old bean."

Coker frowned again at the "old bean," but he restrained himself manfully.

"And we're all coming to the feed," chimed in Dicky Nugent. "I mean, we're all ready to join your league, Coker, old scout!"

"Very well," said Coker, with a return to his usual lofty manner. "I am pleased and gratified to learn that you fags are prepared to mend your ways. I've always noticed, young Tubb, that you never wash your face—"

"Eh?" hooted Tubb, crimsoning.

"That will not be tolerated in the league, of course," went on Coker in his charming way. "And you, young Nugent—I've had occasion to cuff you for cheek. That sort of thing must stop. In the league character will have to be moulded to my example—"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Tubb.

"My sainted aunt!" gurgled Dicky Nugent, trying to keep a straight face.

"Manliness, and straightforwardness, sportsmanship esprit de corps, and all that sort of thing," said Coker vaguely, "will be encouraged. You understand?"

"And what time's the feed?" asked Dicky Nugent impatiently. "You sure it's for four-thirty—"

Coker treated the Second-Former to a frown of disapproval.

"I am sorry to see that your mind will run on the subject of food. That's rather a pity, young Nugent, for I had hopes of making a man of you. Still, I suppose considerations of the stomach will always come before considerations of the mind amongst fags—"

"You awful idiot!" muttered Tubb.

"What did you say, young Tubb?"

"Jove! I must get back to my prep!" said the leader of the Third hastily.

"That's another point," said Coker. "Prep and all school work must not be scamped by members of my league. I say, where are you going—"

But Nugent and Tubb had had enough of Coker's chinwag on the subject of his precious league. They fled down the passage, and once back in their own quarters, gave themselves up to uncontrollable mirth, which, like the feed that was expected on the morrow, was at Horace Coker's expense.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Willing Recruits!

"WHERE'S the feed?"

George Tubb of the Third asked that question aggressively.

The entire Third and Second Forms were assembled in the Third Form-room the next day punctually at four-thirty.

The desks had been cleared out of the way. Down the centre of the Form-room were trestle tables. Snowy white tablecloths and borrowed crockery gave a very pleasant aspect to the scene, added to which the fags had washed themselves as befitted guests and prospective members of Coker's League of Friends.

Coker himself looked very satisfied with life. The assembly numbered eighty all told—truly a cheery beginning to Coker's league.

But George Tubb was suspicious. True, the trestle-tables were laid. True, Coker had put in an appearance. But there was no sign of any tuck. And a feed without any tuck, so to speak, was the sort of thing that would dismay the most polite of guests.

"Where's the feed?" he demanded, a second time.

Coker frowned.

"Don't be so cheeky, young Tubb!" he remarked severely. "The feed will be along in a moment. The thing to be done first is to swear you fellows in and to present the medals."

"Oh!"

The faces of the fags lengthened. If the initiation ceremony were to come before the feed, that meant a lot of jaw from Coker, and none of the fags was keen to listen to Coker exercising his vocal chords.

"Lock the door, young Nugent!" commanded Coker.

And, thinking of the feed, Nugent minor actually obeyed Coker's order.

Coker rose to his feet.

"You chaps have all seen my notice, and—"

"Yes!"

It was a regular bawl.

"Where's the feed?" piped Sammy Bunter.

"You are all prepared to join my League of Friends?" roared Coker.

Again came the unanimous answer:

"Yes!"

"You promise to fulfil the obligations and follow the rules laid down in the membership forms—"

"Yes!" answered the fags, not having read the forms, contenting themselves merely with scrawling their signatures over them.

"You acknowledge the rights and privileges of the president?" asked Coker.

"Yes!" howled the fags.

"You will endeavour to introduce recruits to this splendid movement?"

"Yes, yes!"

The fags were getting more impatient than ever.

Coker drew a deep breath.

"Then all that remains before we commence our inaugural banquet is the presentation of the medals."

"Hurrah!" The fags didn't care two-pence about the medals. "Good old Coker!"

"If each member will file past me and hand in his membership form, duly signed," said Coker, "I will be pleased to hand him a medal in return."

"Hurrah!"

Immediately there was a wild stampede towards the master's desk at the end of the room, at which Horace James Coker, President of his League of Friends, sat in solemn, if a trifle overdone, majesty.

Membership forms were handed in, duly signed. Whether any one single member of the community had taken the trouble to peruse more than the opening paragraph of them was a matter of extreme doubt.

As each fag filed past him Coker presented him with a medal, complete with a small safety-pin. A representation of

Blissfully unconscious of the ancient eggs clinging to his gown, Mr. Prout sailed majestically along the passage. Dr. Locke pulled out his handkerchief and coughed. "Really, Mr. Prout," he said icily. "This odour—your gown, sir! I must say, I am surprised!" "Wh-a-at?" gasped Mr. Prout. (See Chapter 4.)



the rugged features of their president that had been stamped on every medal seemed to afford Coker's League of Friends much amusement, for Coker's features, never exactly beautiful at ordinary times, did not improve in medallion form.

The medals were donned, and the fags trooped back to their places in a chattering noisy throng. And at last the presentation was over.

The feed—

The Third and Second Formers' mouths began to water. The critical moment was drawing near. But what puzzled George Tubb was the whereabouts of the feed. It was impossible, for instance, for Coker to produce a feed enough for eighty hungry fellows out of his pockets like the conjurer producing rabbits out of a hat. Even the cleverest of conjurers would have found himself up against it there.

Yet Coker seemed extremely confident.

"Where's the feed?" reiterated George Tubb, for the third time.

"I expect it any moment now," said Horace James Coker, with a beaming smile. "I sent Potter and Greene in a taxi to Courtfield to get the stuff. Just like them to be late! Shall we pass the time in a little community singing?"

Really, that was a brain-wave on Coker's part. If there was one thing the Greyfriars fags liked next to eating it was making a noise.

Coker's suggestion was hailed with cheering, especially in view of the fact that the feed, coming from Courtfield as it was, was certain to be of tip-top quality.

"I have composed a song for the league," said Coker modestly, at which certain disrespectful members of Coker's League of Friends groaned, "but I have

not yet had an opportunity of getting copies printed—"

The fags breathed their relief.

"So we'll open the ball with 'John Peel'—"

"Hurrah!"

The fags broke into song—at least, that was their intention. But to fellows outside the Form-room it seemed as if a menagerie had been set loose. Certainly the composer of "John Peel" would have turned in his grave if he could have heard the awful din that proceeded from the lusty-lunged fags of Greyfriars.

And while Coker's League of Friends filled in the time with community singing, Potter and Greene were staggering into a taxi, loaded up with tuck of every sort and description, outside the bunshop at Courtfield.

"We shan't be able to sit in the blessed cab if there's much more to shove in it!" grunted Potter at length.

"Phew! Old Coker knows how to order a feed when he starts!" said Greene. "Those fags of the Second and Third will have the tuck-in of their lives!"

"Grubby little beasts!" said Potter. "Still, we mustn't grumble. Coker's been quite tolerable since he's got some support for his silly league!"

"He'll only get the support as long as he feeds the young rascals!" grinned Greene. "Still, that's his look-out!"

They re-entered the bunshop and brought out further supplies of tuck. And then the beaming proprietor informed them that they had collected the lot. The bill was settled, the magnitude of it making Potter and Greene open their eyes wide with astonishment, although Coker had given them a substantial sum to buy the league its first feed.

Then the cab started off, Potter and Greene being surrounded by boxes of tarts, eclairs, buns, fancy cakes, potted paste, cold chicken, veal and ham—everything dear to the heart of youth.

"We're a bit late, old man," said Potter, looking at his watch. "I hope old Coker doesn't upset his guests. Fags are impatient little beasts, you know, and don't forget there are about eighty of 'em. Tell the driver to get a move on!"

The driver accelerated, and all went well until Friardale was reached. Then suddenly, from a side turning close to the village pond, a large dray drawn by three horses dashed out. The horses were mettlesome beasts, and the driver was obviously hard put to it to keep them in hand. He yelled a warning to the taxi-driver, but it came too late.

There was no room for the two vehicles to pass abreast.

Something had to give way, and the taximan, realising that a collision was imminent, preferred to take a wetting in the pond instead.

Crash!

The taxi lurched over the shallow embankment that bordered the pond, and a shower of cases of confectionery the two Greyfriars seniors had purchased at the bunshop flew overboard.

"Look out!" yelled Potter.

"You awful idiot!" roared Greene. "All the stuff's gone into the pond!"

Eclairs and buns, dainty pastries, cold chicken, jars of jam, and tins of sardines sailed through space, and then came to rest in the rather stagnant village pool. To make matters worse, water was welling into the cab, and those boxes of tuck that had been placed

(Continued on page 16.)

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Dr. Birchemall's Come-Back!

by
Dicky Nugent.

Here's another jolly story of those famous school-boys at St. Sam's—Jack Jolly, Merry and Bright—and of their amazing headmaster, Dr. Alfred Birchemall.

I.

"G RATE pip! A sharrybang!"

Dr. Birchemall, the former Headmaster of St. Sam's, but now occupying the humble position of School Porter at that selly-brated institution, glanced up in surprise as the vehicle drew up outside the gates.

It was now a fortnite since the Guvvners had taken the amazing step of reducing Dr. Birchemall to the rank of School Porter, and appointing Fossil, the old porter, to be Headmaster. It seemed like years to Dr. Birchemall, for Fossil had treated him with even more croolty and tierry than he had treated Fossil in the old days.

But despair was at last giving way to hope. For Jack Jolly, kaptin of the Fourth, in the kindness of his hart, had been coaching his old Head in school work, with the idea of helping him to win back his lorrels, and regain his old position. And Dr. Birchemall had by this time freshened himself up to such an eggstent that, two days before, he had plucked up curridge to write to Sir Frederick Funguss and ask to be reinstated. He was now awaiting a reply with feverish eggspettation.

Dr. Birchemall, seeing that the sharrybang which had pulled up was waiting for him to open the gates, scampered down the gravel path, and did the needful, and the grato vehicle rolled majestickally in, and pulled up outside the porter's lodge.

It was only then that Dr. Birchemall recognised the occupants.

"Good egg!" he merinered delitedly. "The Guvvners of St. Sam's!" He chucked his broom aside, and advanced to meet the honnered visitors. "My letter to Sir Frederick has evidently borne frute! Good mourning, gentlemen!"

"Good mourning, Alf!" shouted the Guvvners, as they hobbled out of the sharrybang. They seemed to be in a much more cheery mood this time, than on the occasion of their previous visit.

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"You received my letter, sir?" inkwired Dr. Birchemall, addressing Sir Frederick Funguss.

"Rather!" chuckled Sir Frederick, taking an enormous bite off the chunk of toffee he was holding in his hand. "So you've been improving the shining hour by burning the giddy midnite oil, eh?"

"Eggsactly!" said Dr. Birchemall, eyeing the Chairman rather nervously. "After you rellegated me to the position of School Porter, sir, I came to the conclusion that it was time I won back my lorrels in the realm of skollership."

"Jolly glad to hear it, Birchy!" remarked Sir Frederick, giving Dr. Birchemall a harty slap on the back. "Somehow, you know, I thought that if we gave you the push, it would pull you up a bit! Come across to the tuckshop, and we'll talk things over."

"With the gratest plezzure, Sir Frederick!" agreed Dr. Birchemall promptly, delited beyond all mezzure at the affable way in which he was being treated.

"You chaps coming over?" called out the Chairman of the Guvvners. "My treat, you know!"

"What-ho!"

The old sports crowded after Sir Frederick in the direction of the tuckshop.

Arriving there, Sir Frederick recklessly ordered ginger-pop and jam-puffs for the entire company, and the little tuckshop soon ekkoed to the cheerful sounds of popping corks and merry larfter.

"My hat! These puffs are prime, and no mistake!" said Dr. Birchemall. "Have another!" said Colonel Fiery Sparks jennerously. "Funguss is paying, I believe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now to bizness!" cried Sir Frederick, sitting down at one of the marble-topped tables. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows! We haven't come to St. Sam's to-day meerly to discuss jam-puffs and ginger-pop, excellent as they undoubtedly are."

"Hear, hear!" gurgled the other

guvvners, between mouthfuls of jam-puff.

"The prinsipal object of our visit is to deside weather any change is warranted in the position we created a short time ago. I refer, of course, to the appointment of Mr. Fossil as Headmaster and Dr. Birchemall as School Porter."

Sir Frederick Funguss pawsed for a few moments, while he reflectively polished off a cupple of docnuts.

"I don't mind telling you," he went on frankly, "that my chief reason for chucking out Dr. Birchemall, was my desire to put the wind up him. In the last few months he has aloud himself to dejennerate, until he was unable to do the simplest sums, or spell the simplest words."

"Shame!" yelled the Guvvners, while Dr. Birchemall callered slightly.

"In his plaice we appointed Mr. Fossil," continued Sir Frederick. "Quite a good man, I believe, but I eggspett most of us realised that it was not eggsactly a permanent appointment."

"I am pleased to say that my little roos has had the desired effect. Yesterday, I received a letter from Dr. Birchemall informing me that since our last visit he has been studying hard, and thinks that he has now reached the stage where we ought to consider reinstating him. Is that so, Alf?"

"That is so, Sir Frederick!" assented the ex-Headmaster, with a bough.

"So hear we are," concluded Sir Frederick, reaching for another docnut. "And the problem now, is: What about it?"

The Guvvners applawded Sir Frederick's speech enthusiastically, then looked at each other rather blankly. They hardly knew what to put forward as the next step.

"Why not test Birchy's nollidge, and see if he is now fit to occupy the Headmaster's desk?" asked Colonel Fiery Sparkes.

"Good egg!" yelled the other Guvvners, only too glad to be relieved of the responsibility of making suggestions themselves.

"Not a bad wheeze!" said Sir Frederick. "Just a cupple of simple questions, eh, Birchemall?"

"I am ready for the ordeal, Sir Frederick!" said Dr. Birchemall, bracing himself up.

"Good! Well, in the first plaice, we'll try you in mathymatics. What's twice three?"

"Oh, that's easy!" said Dr. Birchemall. "Nothing!"

"Wha-at?" yelled the Guvvners, in surprise.

"Nothing!" repeated the ex-Headmaster. "They say that two's company, but three's none. Well, if three's none, then twice three is still nix! Savvy?"

"Oh crikey!"

"Blessed if I ever thought of that answer," grinned Sir Frederick Funguss. "Still, I must say it's a pretty clever one! We'll pass that. Now for spelling! How do you spell 'trowsis'?"

"T-r-o-w-s-i-s!" replied Dr. Birchemall promptly.

"H'm! Is that correct?" asked Sir Frederick, appealing to his confrairs.

"Rather!" shouted the Guvvners, trying to look as if they really know how to spell the word themselves.

"Well, that's all right, then!" said Sir Frederick. "You have passed your eggssamination with honners, Birchemall, and we are very pleased to reinstate you in your old position as Headmaster of St. Sam's!"

"Hooray!" yelled Dr. Birchemall, dancing a Charleston round the tuckshop in his delite.

"And now that we have finished our bizness, gentlemen," said Sir Frederick. "I suggest we get back into the jolly old sharrybang, and take advantage of the fine day to run down to Winklesea, and have a look at the briny!"

"Oh, rather!"

"What-ho!"

Leaving Sir Frederick to square up with the tuckshop dame, the Guvvners trotted out, and hobbled down to the gates again. And Dr. Birchemall, stopping only to finish his ginger-pop, raced back to the School House, his beard flowing behind him in the breeze, and a triumphant grin spread all over his dile.

II.

"**W**HAT the thump—" Jack Jolly & Co., who were just coming out of the House, after mourning lessons, stared at the apparition that was flying towards them.

"Well, I'm dashed; it's Dr. Birchemall!" said Jack Jolly. "Wonder what he's so eggssited about?"

Jack Jolly didn't wonder for long. With a cupple of shakes, Dr. Birchemall had reached them. He stopped at the foot of the steps to speak to them.

"Congratulate me, boys!" he cried breathlessly. "I have just been appointed to my old position as Headmaster of St. Sam's!"

"Oh, gratfers, sir!" said Jack Jolly, very cheerfully.

"Same here!" chorussed Merry and Bright.

"I've got some work for you boys to do now," said Dr. Birchemall, quickly. "At the present moment, Fossil, I presoom, is occupying my study. I want

you to come along and chuck him out on his neck."

"Certainly, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly & Co. The opportunity of chucking anybody out of a Headmaster's study on his neck did not occur every day, and Jack Jolly & Co. were quite willing to perform such a plezzant task.

"After that," said the reinstated Head, his eyes gleaming. "I want you to assist me in birching the masters. Follow me, lads!"

"What-ho!" said Jack Jolly & Co., feeling very cheery indeed at the prospect of assisting with the work of birching the masters.

Followed by the grinning Fourth-Formers, Dr. Alfred Birchemall hopped into the School House, and flew up the stairs. The House was crowded with fellows just out of their classes, and they eyed the newcomers with grate astonishment.

"Follow us, you chaps," panted Jack Jolly, "and you'll see what you'll see!"

Thus encurriged, a large number of juniors, with a sprinkling of seniors, joined in the chase, and before the Head had reached the passage where his old study was situated, half the school was trailing after him.

They halted as they reached the Head's study. Not so Dr. Birchemall, however. He, with Jack Jolly & Co. at his heels, dashed right in to the sanktum which Fossil had occupied for the past fortnite, and came to a halt only when he reached the desk inside.



Sir Frederick recklessly ordered ginger-pop and jam-puffs for the entire company, and the little tuckshop soon ekkoed with the cheering sound of popping corks and merry larfter.

At the desk, the interloper was savidely puffing away at his clay pipe.

"Ho! And wot do you think you're a-playin' at?" demanded Fossil foercely. "Now that you're honly the porter and I'm the 'Ead, I'll 'ave you hunderstand that—"

"Stop!" The command came in a wringing tone from Dr. Birchemall. The nervous, appollogettick manner which he had adopted during his career as School Porter had dropped from him like a cloke; the old severe, awe-inspiring note had returned to his voice, and the old sinnical grin had reappeared on his dile.

"Fossil!" said the reinstated Head, with a triumphant leer. "Prepare yourself for a giddy shock, my friend!"

"You mean?" said the temporary Head of St. Sam's, turning suddenly pale.

"I mean that the Guvvners, in their wisdom, have seen fit to give me back my old job, and send you back to the Porter's Lodge to which you belong!" wrapped out Dr. Birchemall. "That's

all I want to say to you for the present! Seeze him, boys, and chuck him out of the window!"

"What-ho, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly & Co., closing in on the dismayed Fossil.

"Look 'ere, you young rips!" roared Fossil. "Wot I says is this 'cre-whooooop! Yarooooooo!"

"Now then, you fellows!" cried the kaptin of the Fourth, opening the window. "One, two, three! Out with him!"

With a garstly yell Fossil flew out of the window. Leaning out, Jack Jolly & Co., saw him land with a terrific crash on the flagstones thirty feet beneath. Then he picked himself up, and after shaking his fist up at them, crawled off in the direction of the porter's lodge. In this undignified manner, ended Fossil's career as Headmaster of St. Sam's!

"And now for the masters!" said Dr. Birchemall, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Bring 'em in, every one of 'em! Where are they?"

"We're coming!" cried Mr. Lickham, as, together with Mr. Justiss, Mr. Tyzer, and Herr Guggenheimer he pushed his way into view. "Now then, what's all this about, my man?"

"Stow it, Licky!" interrupted the Head. "The time has come when you can no longer address me in the disrepective tones you have assumed towards me in the last fortnite. To get down to brass tax, gentlemen, I have to inform you that Fossil has been booted out, bunked, given the push, or as the vulgar would put it, dismissed. And the Guvvners have appointed me as Headmaster again!"

"Oh grate pip!"

"M-m-my giddy aunt!"

"Donner und blitzen!"

There was a weeping and walin and nashing of teeth among the masters as they herd that announcement.

They looked at each other in utter dismay. Ever since Dr. Birchemall had been made School Porter, they had taken a delite in bullying him, and ragging him, until his life had been a burden to him. It hadn't occurred to them that he mite one day be reinstated. If it had, they would probably have been a bit more careful. But it was too late to think of that, now.

"Oh dear! C-c-c-congratulations, sir!" stuttered Mr. Lickham, with a feeble grin.

"So p-p-pleased to see you back!" gasped Mr. Justiss, his nees beginning to neck together.

The other masters gurgled similar remarks. But the Head was not to be placated so easily. He glared at them with a glare that almost shrivelled them up.

"Too late!" he barked, with a feendish grin. "If you think you can soften my hart with congratulations, you're jolly well mistaken! During the past fortnite, you have treated me with croolty and derision. Now you're going to get it back—with interest! With the help of these juniors, I am going to birch you all black and blew, before you leave this room!"

And the Head was troo to his word. For the rest of that day, the continual sound of swishing and thwacking, mixed with the angwished yells of the masters, rang throo St. Sam's. Dr. Alfred Birchemall had indeed come back!

"And now, sir," said Jack Jolly, when the last of the masters had crawled away, "I presoom I reap my reward."

"What do you meen, Jolly?" asked the Head, with a frown.

(Continued on page 28.)



(Continued from page 13.)

on the floor of the taxi were ruined at once.

"Oh dear!" groaned Potter.

"This has torn it!" gasped Greene, as the dirty water of the pond came over his ankles. "Everything's ruined!"

The taxi-driver bellowed something to the driver of the dray, and that individual pulled up.

A crowd of villagers soon began to gather, and they stared in amazement at the sight of a taxi half submerged in the village pond and the amazing quantity of foodstuffs that floated—or sunk, as the case may be—in its stagnant waters.

The driver of the taxi turned round in his seat.

"I'm sorry, young gentlemen!" he apologised. "But it was either a wetting or a nasty smash!"

"We're not thinking of the wetting," said Potter, "but there's close on twenty quids' worth of food gone west!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The taximan's face fell as he realised then the fate of the greater portion of the "luggage" he had carried, but it was only momentary. The proprietors of the dray were almost certain to have insured their vehicle against third-party risk, and, as the cause of the trouble lay at their door, the claim would have to be met by their insurance company. That thought consoled the taxi-driver, but it did not console Potter and Greene. They sat there in the half-flooded taxi looking very helpless and sheepish, and their air of dejection raised a laugh amongst the villagers.

"Let's get out of this!" groaned Potter.

The taxi-driver clambered from his seat and waded knee-deep to the door of the cab.

"If you'll get on my back, sir," he said to Potter, "I'll carry you ashore."

George Potter was only too ready to agree with that arrangement. He collected the few parcels that were unsoiled, strung them round his waist, and clambered on the back of the taxi-driver. A few moments later he was on dry ground.

"Hurrah!"

The villagers raised a cheer as Potter was brought to land.

They raised another when William Greene joined his chum, and the Greyfriars seniors, with crimson faces and trousers that were drenched up to the knee, wished Coker and the taximan and the driver of the dray, and the whole of Friardale village for that matter, under the sea.

But the two Greyfriars seniors were not to escape yet. P.-c. Crump, notebook in hand, demanded, in his pompous, long-winded fashion, a description of what had happened.

When Potter and Greene mentioned that approximately twenty pounds' worth of food had been lost P.-c. Crump eyed them suspiciously.

"Look here, young feller-me-lads!" he said grimly. "Which I wasn't born

yesterday. You tell that story to the marines!"

Potter and Greene swallowed their wrath, and the former produced the bunshop bill, which verified his statement, added to which there was the evidence of the taxi-driver.

Another precious twenty minutes was wasted while P.-c. Crump took down the evidence of the driver of the dray; and then at last Potter and Greene were told that they could go.

"Hurrah!"

Another cheer followed them as they departed, and, with burning cheeks and a keen sense of humiliation, the two Greyfriars seniors hailed the first taxi that came their way, and instructed him to drive like fury to Greyfriars.

That Coker would doubtless, in due course, receive compensation from the insurance company for the loss he had sustained was all Potter and Greene—with the exception of the few parcels salvaged—had to show, so to speak, for the greater part of the twenty pounds he had given them. Whether that would satisfy Horace James Coker was extremely problematical. That it would not satisfy his newly-enrolled members of the League was one of those rare things that can be labelled a certainty.

And with feelings too deep for words Potter and Greene, arriving at Greyfriars, dismissed the driver and walked up to the School House to tell Horace Coker the dreadful tidings.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A "Trade!"

HORACE COKER looked anxious. The members of Coker's League of Friends looked savage.

Half an hour of community singing had tired the fags' enthusiasm for noise. It had also given an additional edge to their appetites.

But the promised feed seemed as far off as ever.

Certainly Potter and Greene had not put in an appearance.

"What about the feed, Coker?" roared Tubb.

Horace Coker pulled out his watch. What had happened to Potter and Greene he did not know. What he did know, however, was that his guests were growing more than suspicious, and it came home to the great Horace that he was at their mercy.

Burly as he was, and handy as he knew himself to be with his fists, it would go hardly with him if the fags got out of hand. That they had promised to treat him, as their president, with respect, would carry no weight once they got out of hand. And there is no quicker way, perhaps, of rousing animosity than to ask a number of people to a feed and then fail to produce the feed.

If Coker could have had his two henchmen at his mercy just then, Potter and Greene would have suffered great damage, for Coker was growing as savage as his hungry guests.

"What about the feed?" It was a regular chorus now, and Coker trembled.

"I—I—" he stammered.

George Tubb jumped on to the table. "I believe it's a jape, you chaps!" he exclaimed. "I don't believe there was any intention of giving us a feed! It's a jape!"

"We'll give him jape!"

"Go for him!"

"Collar the cheeky rotter!"

Horace Coker jumped to his feet.

"Order!" he bawled. "Order for your president!"

"Yah!"

"President be blowed!"

"Lemme get at him!"

In an excited throng the fags surged round their president. And just when Coker was making up his mind to try a bolt for the door there was a great clamour in the passage outside, and the voices of Potter and Greene, raised in unison, reached every fellow in the Third Form room.

"Hold on!" bawled out Coker. "That's Potter and Greene. The feed's arrived!"

It was extraordinary the power that one word "feed" had over Dicky Nugent & Co. and George Tubb & Co. Instead of laying violent hands on their president as had been their amiable intention a few moments back, they now raised a cheer.

"Good old Coker!"

"Bravo, the president!"

"Open the door!"

Coker descended from the master's platform, and, with the crowd of fags hanging round him, stalked to the door of the Form-room.

Dicky Nugent produced the key, and the door was swung open.

Potter and Greene stood on the threshold. But the only sign of any tuck was represented by the three rather battered cardboard cartons they carried—all that was left of that magnificent spread.

Horace Coker gaped when he saw his faithful henchmen and the meagre supplies they brought with them.

"Where's the grub?" he demanded.

Potter and Greene attempted to explain. Their combined efforts did not tend to make their narrative a lucid one, but it was lucid enough for the hungry fags of the Third and Second Forms to know that the feed was off—very much off!

"You burbling chumps!" hooted Coker unreasonably. "You footling owls!"

But that was too much for the long-suffering Potter and Greene. They exchanged a glance, and then they fell upon Coker and smote him.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Coker. "I'll smash you!"

But Potter and Greene did not stay to be smashed. They rushed out of the Form-room and slammed the door in the face of their wrathful studymate, leaving him to the tender mercies of his precious luggage.

It would be a merciful act to draw a veil over the subsequent events, in so far as they affected Horace Coker. Sufficient to say that he looked more dead than alive when he eventually reached the safety of his own study.

But there was one fellow in Greyfriars who rejoiced in secret at the turn events had taken, and that was Fisher Tarleton Fish. For two days now he had taxed his brain for a wheeze that would succeed in obtaining possession of those silver medals.

And the moment he heard of the feed fiasco the keen American junior made tracks for the Third Form room.

George Tubb and Dicky Nugent were holding indignation meetings at each end of the room when Fisher T. Fish's lean features came round the door. Immediately the business of the respective meetings stopped and a general howl went up.

"Remove rotter!"

"Chuck him out!"

Having tasted blood, so to speak, the fags were in a dangerous mood, and Fish's advent would hardly have seemed well advised. But although the business man of the Remove quaked in his shoes he knew that if he could "gain

the floor" for two minutes, as it were, all would be well.

"Rag the rotter!"
The fags swarmed to the doorway, and Fisher T. Fish held up his hand.

"Pax!" he bawled. "I guess I've come to help you galoots out!"

"Eh?"
The fags paused. Indeed, Fishy's words would have been enough to have made any Greyfriars fellow pause. It being known throughout the school that "helping anyone out" was a thing that Fisher Tarleton Fish never practised.

But Fishy drew confidence from that initial advantage. He had "got the floor."

"I guess you galoots have been bamboozled out of a feed," he drawled, "and I reckon I'm durned sorry to hear it!"

"Yah!"
The fags did not believe their visitor. In any case, it was not verbal sympathy they wanted just then. Not one of the company possessed more than a few coppers to his name, and it was now too late even for tea in Hall. Really, the prospect of going to bed tealess, so to speak, was enough to make the meekest of fags savage.

"Hold up!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, as the fags advanced upon him again. "I guess I've come to help you galoots out of a mess."

"We've heard that before, you Remove rotter!" roared George Tubb belligerently.

Fisher T. Fish pulled a ten-shilling note out of his pocket and waved it aloft.

"You guys see this greenback?" he inquired. "I guess Fisher T. Fish is prepared to hand this over to help you out—on conditions!"

The sight of the "greenback," otherwise a ten-shilling note, was like a magnet to the stony fags. Ten shillings wouldn't go far between eighty hungry fellows, but it would certainly help matters.

"What are the conditions?" bawled Tubb, in a more conciliatory manner.

Fisher T. Fish smiled.

"Nothing very difficult," he replied. "I guess you chaps have had enough of Coker's League of Friends—"

"We have!"

There was no mistaking the general feeling on that point.

"I reckon that that galoot, Coker, gave you a tin medal apiece," said Fisher T. Fish, in a casual manner. "Waal, I'm apen to trade. You guys give me the medals, and I reckon this greenback is yours!"

"Oh, my hat!"

No one in the Form-room understood that "trade." To the fags the Coker medals were worthless pieces of metal, which served as a constant reminder of the feed they hadn't had. Not one of them but would have parted with his medal for the asking. And here was Fisher Tarleton Fish, recognised as being the meanest junior in the Greyfriars Remove, offering to buy these useless medals for ten shillings.

George Tubb put his thinking cap on. Tubb was not particularly noted for his brilliance at arithmetic, but even Tubb could work out how much per medal ten shillings for eighty of them represented.

"Three halfpence each—"

As George Tubb made that lightning calculation his face lighted up. Three halfpence for nothing was what that offer represented to him, for the medals were useless, bearing as they did Coker's picture on their surface and the inscription: "Coker's League of Friends."

"Let's make it a deal," Tubb whispered to his fellows, and receiving a nod

from Dicky Nugent, who had also made a lightning calculation, George Tubb advanced on Fisher Tarleton Fish with a genial smile.

"I guess you won't get an offer like it," remarked the Transatlantic junior easily.

Tubb had no doubt on that point.

"We're on, Fishy!" he declared.

"Give us the note!"
But Fisher T. Fish was essentially a business man. He did not believe in parting with money until he had "seen the goods," as he elegantly put it.

"I'll guess I'll nose up with the ten bob when you galoots have collected the durned medals," he remarked.

"Just as you like," said Tubb indifferently. Then he turned to the fags: "Shove those blessed medals in a cap, somebody, and bring 'em here!"

Immediately the fags unpinned the medals with which Coker had so generously presented them and dumped them in a cap Dicky Nugent took round.

"Here they are!" said Tubb, handing the loaded cap to Fisher T. Fish.

But the American junior was not satisfied yet. He counted them slowly, tantalisingly slow, until he had satisfied himself that there were indeed eighty of the silver pieces, and then reluctantly—for Fisher T. Fish hated parting with money, even when he had made a good deal—he handed George Tubb the ten-shilling note.

George Tubb had been brought up in a good school, for he examined that note as if he fully expected to discover that it was counterfeit. But he was satisfied at last, and the bargain was struck.

"All satisfied?" asked Fisher T. Fish genially.

"You're an ass!" said Tubb candidly, now that he was in possession of the ten-shilling note. "Those blessed medals aren't worth a bob. Still, it's your funeral. Ta-ta!"

And he turned his back on Fisher T. Fish, signifying that "trade relations," so to speak, were concluded, and Fisher T. Fish could take himself back to the Remove quarters.

Nothing loth, the business man of the Remove, nursing the cap of medals as if they were diamonds, stole back to his study.

It was empty, and, with a chuckle of satisfaction, Fisher T. Fish

turned the key in the lock and drew a chair up to the table. Then he spread the medals over the table.

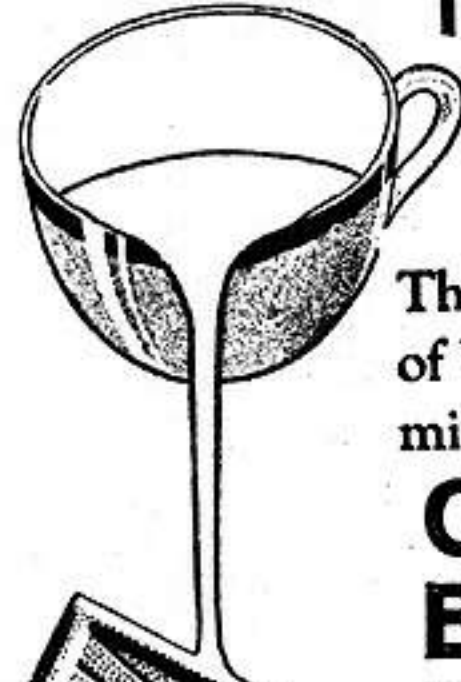
"Gee! Reckon I've made a handsome profit over this deal!" he muttered, running his fingers through the gleaming medals. "Silver—solid silver, or I'm a Dutchman!"

A momentary thought that he might have made a mistake sent a shiver down his spine, but another inspection of the medals told him that there was no mistake. He held in his possession eighty medals of solid silver, worth at least four or five pounds, and he had paid ten shillings for them.

Fisher T. Fish rubbed his bony hands with satisfaction. This was a deal after his own heart. That it was distinctly sharp practice never entered his Transatlantic head. He argued that the fags had made a profit on the deal, for none of them would ever have tumbled to the

(Continued on next page.)

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fact that the medals were made of silver. And as for Horace Coker, it was obvious that the dull-witted fifth-former had never suspected their true worth. That perhaps Aunt Judy would, at some future date, make some reference to the quality of the medals in question never troubled Fisher T. Fish. That was Aunt Judy's look out.

Bang!

Fisher T. Fish came back to earth as that loud crash sounded on the study door.

"Open this door!"

It was Johnny Bull's voice, and it was wrathful. Not surprising in the circumstances, for it was Johnny Bull's study, and he naturally resented being locked out.

"Open this blessed door!"

"Keep your wool on!" drawled Fishy, and, scooping up the medals, he placed them in his desk and turned the key in the lock. Next he crossed to the study door and unlocked it.

"What the thump do you mean by locking a fellow out of his study?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Sorry!" smiled Fish. "I guess I had some private business to attend to."

"Brrrr!"

Johnny Bull drew out his books and settled down to prep, and Fisher T. Fish, with a parting glance at his desk, in which reposed the products of his latest deal, sauntered off to the Common-room, well satisfied with life in general and himself in particular.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Easy Money!

BOOM! The last stroke of midnight rang out from the old clock tower at Greyfriars.

Fisher T. Fish sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"Anyone awake?" he called out softly.

But there was no answer. The Remove, with the exception of Fishy himself, of course, were sleeping the sleep of the just. Save for the sound of steady breathing and Billy Bunter's rumbling snore, all was quiet.

With hardly a sound Fisher T. Fish slipped from his bed. It was the work of a moment to slip on his jacket over his pyjamas. Then, with infinite caution, he crossed to the door of the dormitory and turned the handle. It creaked a little, but the noise was not sufficient to disturb any of the sleeping juniors. Next minute Fishy was standing in the passage, and his heart was beating fast.

"Groooough!"

He shivered a little as the chill night air struck him, and then he descended the staircase and made tracks for his study. Without troubling to turn on the light, he opened his desk and drew out the precious medals.

Holding them to him closely, he vacated the study and moved silently down the passage. He halted at length outside the door of the laboratory. From his jacket pocket he drew a bunch of keys. One of them, he knew, would fit the door of the lab. And his surmise proved correct.

"Good!" he muttered, as the lock turned.

Another moment, and Fisher T. Fish was in the lab, and the door was closed.

He felt for the electric-light switch and turned it on. Then he crossed to the window and drew the blind.

His next move was to light up a little

Bunsen stove, over which was suspended a crucible. And into the crucible Fisher T. Fish emptied the eighty medals.

Selling a solid lump of silver, he had reflected, would be far easier than trying to sell a number of medals. Besides, awkward questions might be asked about those medals when he came to dispose of them to a jeweller, and naturally Fisher T. Fish desired to avoid such questioning. Melting them down was a far more practical method.

To do so openly in the special hours set aside by the school authorities for "stinks" classes would have aroused suspicion, even if it had been permitted by the master in charge. To melt down at night was a "safety first" notion upon which Fisher T. Fish congratulated himself.

He settled down in a chair to await the melting process, and censured himself for not having dressed in warmer clothing. But as the medals slowly began to melt Fisher T. Fish forgot even the coldness of the night air in his excitement.

Billy Bunter awoke with a start.

He had been dreaming of a savage Chinese executioner who had pursued him half-way over the world and caught him up at Greyfriars. Bunter had seen the executioner's long, gleaming double-handed sword. It had been poised aloft. Bunter had watched the beginning of its descent with terrified eyes. And then he had awakened.

"Groooough!"

The fat junior sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes, and blinked into the semi-darkness.

Dreams were not uncommon with Billy Bunter, for he overtaxed his powers of digestion alarmingly. Still, they were disconcerting at a quarter of an hour after midnight.

"Yah!"

Bunter's courage returned when he awoke to full consciousness, and discovered that the Chinese executioner had his existence in a dream. Then his blinking eyes settled on the bed next to his.

It was Fisher T. Fish's.

But there was no sign of Fisher T. Fish himself, whereat Bunter waxed exceedingly curious.

"Where's that rotter gone to?" mumbled the Owl of the Remove.

He was wide awake now, and his fat, suspicious brain was working at full pressure.

"The awful rotter is out blagging!" he muttered.

But he dismissed that theory in a few seconds, for Fisher T. Fish liked his precious dollars too much to risk them in any blagging escapade. The next thought that came to Bunter was a more probable theory. Fisher T. Fish, the meanest junior in the Remove, had received a parcel from home that day, and it was customary for the American junior to consume the contents of his parcels in seclusion. Fishy never had any objection to sharing another chap's parcel or feed, but he had a rooted objection to anyone sharing in his.

That was it, Bunter reflected. The stingy beast had gone downstairs for a feed in secret. At the thought Bunter's mouth watered. He was feeling hungry. At supper he had only eaten enough for six fellows, which really was an alarming state of affairs for a fellow with Bunter's frail and delicate constitution.

"If it's a feed—" Bunter's fat lips smacked together. "The mean rotter!"

Indignation, and perhaps a reflection that if he got a move on some of that feed would find its way into his own capacious jaws, stirred the fat junior

into activity. He rolled from the bed and stood shivering while he jerked on his jacket.

"Yah! I'll bowl the rotter out!" he muttered. "Mean, I call it!"

Mumbling to himself, he crossed the dormitory floor on tiptoe and opened the door. Then, like Fisher T. Fish, he descended the staircase.

He reached Study No. 1 and pushed open the door.

"You awful rotter—"

Bunter did not finish his denunciation of Fisher T. Fish and his meanness, for the simple reason that the study was unlighted and deserted. For a few moments the fat junior stood there in silent contemplation. Then his eyes blinked along the darkened passage, and he jumped as he saw a narrow beam of light that shot out from beneath a door.

"The lab," grunted Bunter, noting the geography of that tell-tale light at once. "What's the beast doing there?"

Curiosity was Billy Bunter's besetting sin, and it was only to be expected that he rolled along to the door of the lab, and stood outside listening with one fat ear to the keyhole. From within came certain sounds of activity, and Fisher T. Fish's subdued voice.

"Gee! This is great," Bunter heard the American junior say. "They're silver all right—solid silver! And I bought the whole shebang for ten bob!"

Billy Bunter jumped. He was a particularly obtuse fellow; but he knew—as he knew most things that went on at Greyfriars—that Fisher T. Fish had for some unknown reason bought Coker's League of Friends' medals from the fags of the Third and Second Forms for ten shillings. Obviously, thought Bunter, it was to these medals that Fisher T. Fish now referred.

To make sure of that point, Bunter pushed open the door of the lab.

There was a startled gasp from Fisher T. Fish.

"Bunter, you fat frog, what are you doing here?" he hissed.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

His eyes took in the sight of the crucible and the mass of molten metal in it. It needed very little imagination on his part to work things out.

"He, he, he!" he chuckled softly.

"You awful villain, Fishy!"

Fisher T. Fish looked as if he contemplated falling on the fat junior and slaughtering him. He had been surprised in the act of melting down the medals by the last fellow in the school he would have preferred to see him thus. Really, it was bad luck, and Fisher T. Fish ground his teeth with rage.

"What are you doing here, you fat clam?" he hissed, at an attempt at bluff.

William George Bunter drew himself up with dignity.

"What are you doing here, anyway?" he demanded.

"Ahem! I'm experimenting," said Fishy, unconvincingly, however.

"Gammon!" said Bunter, with refreshing candour. "I know your little game, you awful swindler!"

"What do you mean?"

"Think I don't know what that stuff is in the pot?" asked Bunter, with a fat chuckle. "It's silver; it's the medals you bought of young Tubb & Co. this evening."

It was on the tip of Fisher T. Fish's tongue to give the lie direct to that statement, but he realised that Bunter knew more than he had at first credited him with knowing. Perhaps it would be better to conciliate him.

"You're quite right, I guess," he said, with a certain show of affability.

Bunter winked a fat wink.

"He, he, he! Fancy buying up a heap of silver medals for ten bob!"



"This is the last stroke, prisoner at the bar," said Harry Wharton solemnly. He raised the cricket-stump aloft, and was about to bring it down on the wriggling form of Horace Coker, when the peculiar expressions on the faces of the Removites made him wheel round. Then he jumped. Standing behind him was Mr. Quelch, the Master of the Remove! (See Chapter 6.)

Why, they must be worth a fiver, at least!"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head. He wished whole-heartedly at that moment that the silver would fetch five pounds, for he knew what to expect from Billy Bunter.

"Not so much as that, I guess," he remarked. "Might fetch thirty bob!"

Billy Bunter sniffed. "Thirty bob! Tell that to the marines, Fishy," he said. "I say—halves, you know!"

"Eh!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish. "Halves!" repeated Bunter, with one eye on the mass of molten metal.

"You fat clam!" hooted Fish. "I guess you're not on in this act!"

"Then I shall have to consider whether it's my duty to tell Coker the facts," said the Owl of the Remove virtuously. "It's pretty obvious that Coker doesn't know the medals are made of silver. In fact, being an honourable chap, I think I'll tell him how you've swindled him!"

"You pesky galoot!" hissed Fisher T. Fish. "You blackmailing jay!"

Bunter held up a fat hand. "That's enough!" he said. "I bar being spoken to by swindlers. You're a rascal, Fish, and you ought to be kicked out of Greyfriars!"

Fisher T. Fish breathed hard through his nose. He was not a fighting man, but at that moment the thought of having to come to terms with the fat junior transformed him into a raging lion. But Bunter was not afraid. He knew that he held the whip-hand; he knew that Fisher T. Fish would not sacrifice his chances of making a profit on his dollars through a momentary whim to damage the chap who had discovered his sharp methods. And Billy Bunter was right.

Fisher T. Fish's savagery passed almost as swiftly as it had come. His lean features worked spasmodically.

"You blackmailing guy!" he growled. "Let's come to terms!"

Bunter chuckled. "Now you're talking," he said.

"Waal, you cackling image, what are your terms?"

"Halves!" said Bunter promptly. "Nope!" said Fisher T. Fish, shaking his head. "You're talking hot air, I guess!"

"Halves!" repeated Bunter firmly. "I reckon that silver will fetch five pounds. I want two pounds ten of it."

At which Fisher T. Fish nearly flew into a warlike rage again. He knew that the silver would not fetch the sum of five pounds. Added to which, Bunter's claim to half the amount realised was made regardless of the capital expenditure of ten shillings.

"I guess I'll give you five bob and not a red cent more, you galoot!" growled Fishy.

It was on the tip of Bunter's tongue to turn down that offer. But he was wise in his generation. Five bob in hand was better than nothing. Besides, he could always put the screw on the American junior. That five shillings would materialise into something far more handsome if Bunter played his cards correctly.

"I'll take the five bob now on account," he said, with a fat grin. "Hand it over!"

Fisher T. Fish snorted. "Do you think I carry five bob about in my pyjamas pocket?" he demanded wrathfully. "I'll give it to you to-morrow!"

"I'll have it to-night," said Bunter firmly.

The American junior snorted and turned his attention to the crucible. The medals had now resolved themselves into a pool of molten silver, and Fishy's next job was to cool the white-hot metal off so that he could take it away with him. This task occupied the greater

portion of an hour, during which Bunter sank into a fitful slumber in a chair. But it was finished at last, and Fisher T. Fish pocketed the ball of silver and made to leave the lab. Bunter woke up from his doze with a start.

"Finished?" he asked. "Let's have a look, Fishy!"

But Fisher T. Fish had had enough of Bunter for one night. Without a word he crossed to the door of the lab.

Bunter rolled after him. The light was put out, the key turned in the lock, and the two juniors stole up to the Remove dormitory on tiptoe.

Without a word Fisher T. Fish turned in, but that didn't seem to satisfy William George Bunter.

"What about my five bob?" he demanded shrilly.

"You fat galoot!" hissed Fishy. "I guess I'll give it to you in the morning."

"I want it now, you beast!" said Bunter, raising his voice.

And fearful lest the fat junior should wake anyone in the dormitory Fisher T. Fish reached for his purse—which he kept underneath his pillow—and counted out two sixpences and two florins.

"There, you fat, blackmailing slug!" he snarled. "Now shut up!"

Bunter's fat hand closed over the five shillings, and, with a fat wink which passed unnoticed in the darkness, he rolled to his bed and was soon fast asleep.

But the loss of that five shillings, and the prospect of having to keep Billy Bunter from tattling the story of the medals all over the school, kept Fisher Tarleton Fish awake for half an hour. Really, it was hard lines on a keen business man to be balked at the moment of his success by such a contemptible, greedy person as William George Bunter.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Limit!

"COKER!"

Mr. Prout's sonorous voice rumbled through the Fifth Form-room next morning.

The Fifth were, with one exception, listening to the pearls of wisdom that fell from Mr. Prout's lips. The one exception was Horace Coker. That burly Fifth-Former wore a frown on his rugged brow. In front of him was a piece of notepaper, upon which he wrote at intervals the results of his deep cogitations. That Coker's occupation had nothing to do with English history was obvious; there was a far-away look in his eyes which suggested that Horace Coker was, figuratively speaking, miles away. Certainly he paid no heed to the booming voice of his Form master.

"Coker!"

Potter gave his study-mate a surreptitious nudge. It had the effect of bringing Coker back to earth, so to speak. It also had the effect of scattering a choice number of blots over the piece of notepaper.

"You clumsy idiot!" growled Coker.

Mr. Prout's brow grew thunderous. He made one stride towards Horace Coker and jerked him to his feet.

"Ow!" gasped Coker.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Prout. "You are not paying attention to the lesson! I have called you by name on two occasions!"

"Have—have you, sir?"

"May I ask," resumed Mr. Prout, with biting sarcasm, "what important matter it is that occupies your attention to the exclusion of English history?"

"I—I was thinking about my league, sir," replied Coker.

The Fifth sat up and took notice at that, and grins settled on many faces. Coker and his League of Friends had been a much discussed topic in the Fifth of late. Mr. Prout, however, had not yet heard of his hopeful pupil's endeavour in the matter of forming a league. He eyed Coker in great astonishment.

"You were thinking about what?" he rumbled.

"My league, sir," said Coker, with some interest. "I'm sure I shall get it going if I stick to it."

Mr. Prout jumped. His expression indicated that he regarded Coker as being on the borders of insanity.

"Your—your league?" he stuttered.

Coker nodded.

"Coker's League of Friends," he explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Fifth could restrain their laughter no longer.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Prout. "Boy," he added, returning his attention to Coker, "explain yourself."

Horace Coker hastened to explain. For five minutes he waxed quite eloquent on the subject of his League of Friends, what time a peculiar expression settled on Mr. Prout's fleshy features.

"Are you out of your senses, boy?" thundered the master of the Fifth. "Is there no limit to your idiocy?"

"I don't understand you, sir," said Coker in surprise. "I was about to ask you to join my league, and—"

"What—what—" stuttered Mr. Prout, hardly able to believe his ears.

"You were contemplating such impertinence as to ask me to become a member of your ridiculous league!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fifth, thoroughly enjoying this diversion from English history.

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Coker's brow furrowed in thought.

"Of course, sir, if you join my league," he said; "you'll have to obey the orders of the president. It's a bit awkward your being a master. Still, I can't alter the rules. If you join up you'll have to toe the line with the other chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fifth exploded. The idea of Mr. Prout joining the league was funny in itself; but the idea of the pompous Mr. Prout coming under the orders of such a duffer as Horace Coker was a scream. The Fifth chortled loud and long.

Mr. Prout, however, did not chortle. He stared at the cheerful Coker incredulously. Coker returned that stare without flinching.

"If you'll join, sir," he went on, quite oblivious to the war-clouds that were gathering on the Fifth Form master's face, "I'll be delighted to present you with the Coker medal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But that offer was too much for Mr. Prout. He jumped forward and grabbed Coker by the collar. Next minute the great Horace found himself in front of the class.

"Boy," rumbled Mr. Prout, "I am greatly tempted to take you before your headmaster and request him to flog you for your impertinence—"

"Eh?"

"On second thoughts," thundered the master of the Fifth, "I will deal with you myself! Blundell, kindly hand me my cane!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Coker backed a pace. He realised now, if he hadn't realised before, that he had, vulgarly speaking, "put his foot in it."

"Here, I say, sir—" he expostulated.

And that was all he had time to say, for Mr. Prout, armed with the cane, forsook words and resorted to action.

Swish!

Coker yelped as the cane came in contact with his nether garments. He yelped again as Mr. Prout, waxing energetic, found the same spot again. It was a whirlwind three minutes for Coker, and at the end of it he felt decidedly limp. The Fifth watched that castigation with some enjoyment. They were of the unanimous opinion that Horace Coker had asked for it. Undoubtedly he had got it!

"Groooough!" gasped Coker. "Wow! Oh dear!"

Mr. Prout laid down the cane.

"Cease that ridiculous noise, Coker!" he said sternly. "Now go back to your place. Any further inattention will be visited with severe punishment."

"Wow!" gasped Coker. "Then—then you won't join my league, sir!"

Really, it was not surprising that Mr. Prout jumped for his cane. Neither was it surprising that Horace Coker jumped to his place. There was a deadly expression on Mr. Prout's plump features which told even Coker that it was positively dangerous to mention his league to the irate Form master. And for the remainder of that morning Horace Coker had the good sense to give his undivided attention to Mr. Pontifex Prout.

After morning lessons Potter and Greene sauntered away to their study, accompanied by Horace Coker.

"I should drop the idea of forming a league, if I were you, old chap," said Potter, with a wink at Greene.

"The chaps aren't worth it, you know," said Greene, playing up.

Coker snorted.

"That's a fat lot you know," he said. "I'm not the sort of chap to turn back once I've set my hand to the plough."

"Oh!"

Potter and Greene wisely changed the subject.

"It's a half to-day," said the former. "What about a picnic up the river?"

"Jolly good idea," said Greene with enthusiasm.

But Coker merely snorted. It was obvious that his mind still ran on the subject of his league.

"I think I'll put in an afternoon at working out a few more rules for the league," he said slowly. "If you hadn't been a clumsy ass and swamped that ink over my paper this morning, George Potter, you'd have saved me a lot of extra trouble."

"Oh!"

"I'd spent a lot of time working out some more rules," went on Coker. "But I can't read a word on that piece on account of the blessed blots."

"Oh!"

Now that Coker had stated that he wasn't interested in a picnic up the Sark, Potter and Greene did not seem to exhibit any interest in him. At a sign from Potter, Greene halted at the door of the study.

"I've just remembered that I've got to go and see Blundell about the cricket," he said.

"So have I," said Potter.

With that, Coker's study-mates turned abruptly on their heels and vanished.

"Cheeky idiots," snorted Coker when they had gone. "Just as if I'm going to drop the idea of the league on account of a few paltry set-backs. I'll carry on alone; I'll show 'em!"

And with a deep frown on his rugged brow Horace James Coker entered his study and sat down at the table. In a few moments he was deeply engrossed in the task of drawing up fresh rules for the Coker League, although whether any of them were destined to be observed was a matter that remained to be seen.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Partners!

"I SAY, Fishy—"

It was Billy Bunter who spoke. "Scat!"

It was Fisher T Fish who replied.

But William George Bunter was not to be put off so easily. Ever since the previous evening the Owl of the Remove had tried his hardest to "shadow" the Transatlantic junior and he had succeeded fairly well. At the back of Bunter's mind was the suspicion that Fisher T. Fish would sell the silver without his knowing it. That would mean Bunter's share in the proceeds would be left to the generosity of Fisher T. Fish. And Bunter, knowing just how generous the Transatlantic junior was, had made up his mind to keep the business man of the Remove well under observation.

Fisher T. Fish found the company of William George Bunter irksome in the extreme. At all costs he was determined to shake the fat junior off. But that was easier said than done.

The moment Fisher T. Fish had left the Form-room that morning Bunter had trailed him. He had even sacrificed his fourth helping of pudding at dinner so as to leave the Dining Hall when Fisher T. Fish left.

"I say, Fishy, old chap," said Bunter, "don't forget our arrangement. Halves, you know."

Fisher T. Fish halted. There was a ferocious expression on his lean features, but it held no terrors for William George Bunter.

"You pesky galoot," hooted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess this is equal to black-mail."

"Oh, really, Fishy," said Bunter with dignity. "If you put it like that I shall feel it my duty to tell Coker about the whole business."

"You fat clam," growled Fishy. "I guess you'll find yourself behind iron bars one of these days."

Bunter grinned.

"But not before you, old chap."

"Grrrrrrr!"

Fisher T. Fish ground his teeth with rage. Willingly would he have fallen on Bunter and smitten him hip and thigh. But although the Owl of the Remove was not a fighting man, Fisher T. Fish was even less of a fighting man. Besides, Bunter held the whip hand. A word to Coker and Fish's whole plot would fall to the ground. There would of a certainty follow a record licking. And equally certain Fish's visions of a substantial profit on his deal would vanish like a beautiful dream.

"You going out this afternoon, old chap?" said Bunter affably.

"I guess you can mind your own pesky business," retorted Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter sniggered.

"I'm not letting you out of my sight," he said. "I've got an idea that you're going down to the jewellers to sell that silver. As a partner I'm coming with you, old chap."

"Oh, are you?"

Fisher T. Fish said that in tones that implied the contrary, but for all that he did not succeed in shaking off his fat companion.

When Fisher T. Fish walked out of gates that afternoon Billy Bunter accompanied him. In the Transatlantic junior's hand was a parcel. In Bunter's was a similar package.

"What have you got in that parcel, you pesky galoot?" demanded Fish, after the two juniors had traversed most of the road to Friardale.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "What have you got in that parcel?"

Fisher T. Fish stopped.

"You jolly well know that it's the silver," he replied.

"Listen to this!"

As he spoke Bunter moved his parcel up and down. A jingling sound emanated from it.

Fisher T. Fish's eyes lit up.

"The medals!" he exclaimed.

Bunter grinned.

"Right first time," he said. "Old Coker wants to get rid of 'em, so I'm obliging him. He, he, he!"

Fisher T. Fish's eyes narrowed.

"You mean to say you've sneaked those medals from Coker's study?" he asked. "You awful rotter!"

"I like that!" exclaimed Bunter, indignantly. "You've practically pinched your lot. But, look here, old chap," he added in a low voice. "We're partners, ain't we?"

"Are we?" said Fisher T. Fish cautiously.

"Of course we are," said Bunter.

"Now, my idea is that you shove your silver with mine, sell it to old Lazarus, and whack out the cash between us. See?"

The Transatlantic junior looked thoughtful. It was a tempting offer. If Bunter had "collected" the entire remains of Coker's two gross of medals it meant that he had now in his possession twice as many again as Fisher T. Fish had. The business man of the Remove was not slow to work out that simple sum. Neither was he slow to see that he would benefit enormously by the transaction when it came to sharing the proceeds into two equal

BILLY BUNTER'S BIKE!

William George Bunter, the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove, reckons that he's struck a fine bargain when he buys an expensive "Moonbeam" bike for a few pounds. But there's a history behind that bike which, when revealed, brings back pounds to Bunter—pounds, a lack, of an entirely different nature!

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divisions. That Bunter had more or less stolen the silver medals from Coker did not cause Fisher T. Fish any great uneasiness. In his opinion, that was Bunter's business.

"Let's have a look at that parcel, you fat clam!" said Fish suddenly.

Bunter snorted, but he began to unfasten the string that held the parcel. The sight of the medals revealed brought a satisfied expression to Fisher T. Fish's lean face.

"Guess we'll be pardners in this deal, you galoot!" he said briefly.

"Good!" said Bunter. "I'll tell you what. You give me ten bob on account. While you're selling the silver to Lazarus I'll be having a snack at the bunshop. No need for two of us to see old Lazarus. He might get suspicious."

It was on the tip of Fisher T. Fish's tongue to refuse, but a sudden idea struck him. If Bunter were out of the way when he made the deal with Mr. Lazarus the fat junior would be in total ignorance of what sum the silver fetched. Worked out like that, an advance of ten shillings might prove a very profitable investment.

That it was roguery or very sharp practice never troubled the business mind of Fisher T. Fish. Conscience with him was a very elastic commodity, so to speak, where dollars were concerned.

"That's a go, Bunter," said Fish at last. "You lie doggo in the bunshop while I do the deal with Lazarus."

"Good!" said Bunter. "Hand over the ten bob, old chap."

"You've had five already," said Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter waved a podgy hand disdainfully.

"Oh, that's nothing!" he said. "Give me another ten. You can deduct that from my full share."

It gave Fisher T. Fish many a pang to part with that ten shillings. Parting with money at any time was worse than having teeth extracted to the business man of the Remove. Still, there was no hope for it. Reluctantly he handed over the money.

"Good man!" said Bunter, pocketing the Treasury note with great alacrity. "You cut along to old Lazarus', and I'll wait for you in the bunshop."

And, without waiting for Fisher T. Fish to make any further remark, Bunter rolled towards the bunshop as fast as his fat little legs would carry him. Inside two minutes an astonished waitress was placing before the fat junior an assortment of tuck to the value of ten shillings, which Bunter proceeded to demolish at a great rate.

Meantime, Fisher T. Fish, with the two parcels in his hand, was making his way to Mr. Lazarus' establishment. That gentleman carried on an extensive business, if range of subjects were to be taken into account. He sold and bought furniture, old clothes, old gold and silver—in fact, anything that was negotiable to a public prepared to allow him a profit.

His Semitic features broke into a smile as Fisher T. Fish walked into his shop.

"Goot afternoon, young shentleman!" he said.

And Fisher T. Fish nodded briskly, and placed his parcels on the counter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. The Reckoning!

"A H!" That ejaculation escaped Mr. Lazarus as he heard the clinking of the medals. Then the old dealer eyed Fisher T. Fish questioningly.

"I guess I've got a pile of silver I want to sell," said Fisher T. Fish, coming to the point.

Mr. Lazarus' eyebrows arched.

"Silver?" he remarked, looking at the two parcels. "Vell, Master Fish, I am open to buy old silver."

Fisher T. Fish nodded.

"What's the price of silver?" he drawled.

"It's quoted at two-and-two-pence an ounce to-day," Mr. Lazarus replied. "But I don't pay that price for old silver, young sgentleman."

Fisher T. Fish waved a bony hand.

"I'm not expecting full price," he said. "I guess I'm open to trade with a real live business man like yourself, Mr. Lazarus?"

The old dealer rubbed his hands together in great satisfaction.

Fisher T. Fish picked up the two parcels and tried to gauge the weight of them. Not for one moment did he expect to "trade" his silver at the rate of two shillings and two-pence an ounce. Still, he was certain of a very handsome profit—certainly a sum far in excess of twenty-five shillings, which amount had been expended on the fags of the Second and William George Bunter of the Remove.

"I guess we'll talk business when we've weighed the silver," said the transatlantic junior cautiously.

Mr. Lazarus smiled.

"Very well, Master Fish," he said. "But would it not better be if I saw the silver first?"

"Just as you like, I guess!"

Fisher T. Fish opened the parcel containing the ball of silver and exhibited it. Mr. Lazarus' shrewd features wrinkled in astonishment. What a ball of silver was doing in the possession of a schoolboy evidently puzzled him.

"Vere did you get it?"

"Up at the school," said Fisher T. Fish. "You can take my word for it that it's all above board, I guess. I paid—"

It was on the tip of the Greyfriars junior's tongue to say exactly what he had paid for that ball of metal, but he pulled himself up in time. If Mr. Lazarus knew the cost price, so to speak, it would certainly affect his offer. At all costs that had to be kept dark.

"You came by it honestly?" asked Mr. Lazarus suspiciously.

"I guess you can take my word for it," replied Fisher T. Fish, although whether he was prepared to say the same of the other parcel was another matter.

He bounced the ball of silver in his palm temptingly, and then handed it to Mr. Lazarus. The old dealer carefully fixed his spectacles, tried the weight of the metal, and then examined it closely.

Fisher T. Fish looked on with a faint smile. Already he was calculating just how much profit the deal would show him, and just how much of the proceeds would go to William George Bunter.

For quite three minutes Mr. Lazarus pored over that ball of metal. Then he looked up.

"Waal?" drawled Fisher T. Fish.

"What's your offer?"

"Five shillings!"

"What?" Fisher T. Fish almost jumped off the floor of the shop. "Five shillings for a ball of silver, with silver fetching over two bob an ounce?"

Mr. Lazarus shook his head.

"This isn't silver!"

"Eh?" Fisher T. Fish recoiled as if he had been stung by a wasp.

"This is a white metal, Master Fish, very common in Shermans and—"

"A w-white metal?" muttered Fisher

T. Fish, turning hot and cold by turns.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

Mr. Lazarus regarded the anxious face of his customer with a faint smile.

"Did you think it was real silver?"

"It is real silver!" hooted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I know silver when I see it."

"Vell, Master Fish, I repeat this is not silver," said Mr. Lazarus. "I admit that it looks very like the real thing at first sight, but it is no more silver than that coal-scuttle is."

Fisher T. Fish's face was a study. The expression on it made the old dealer feel quite concerned.

"You are not ill, Master Fish?" he asked.

But the Remove business man did not hear him. He sank on to a stool by the counter and mopped his brow. Agonising thoughts pursued their way through his business brain. Not silver! And he had paid twenty-five shillings for the two parcels! Fisher T. Fish almost expired on the spot.

"I—I guess you've made a mistake, sirree," he said faintly, in a last effort to prove to himself that he hadn't made a bad bargain.

But Mr. Lazarus only shook his head pityingly. This was not the first time he had come into contact with the business man of the Greyfriars Remove, and he knew his keenness for bargain-dealing.

"You can ask any jeweller you like, Master Fish," he said. "I don't suppose they would offer you five shillings for that ball."

"Five—five shillings!" groaned Fish.

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

He realised then that in his zeal to make a profit he had over-reached himself. The thought made him squirm. And Bunter—his partner—was eating up tuck to the value of ten shillings—ten shillings that had once belonged to Fisher T. Fish! That last thought served to bring the Remove business man to his senses. There was a chance—a slight chance—that he could recover some of that ten shillings.

"Oh dear, the fat clam!"

Fisher T. Fish rose to his feet.

"You say you'll trade five bob for that ball of silver—hem!—white metal, Mr. Lazarus?"

But the pawnbroker shook his head.

"Four shillings," he answered. "The stuff is really no use to me."

Fisher T. Fish almost tore his hair.

"But you said five shillings, I guess?" he exclaimed.

"That was in a generous moment, Master Fish," answered the dealer. "But four shillings is my limit."

Fisher T. Fish groaned aloud in anguish of spirit. But he hastened to clinch the deal. Four shillings was better than nothing at all.

"I guess—I guess I'll trade!"

Mr. Lazarus dived a hand into his pocket, drew out four shillings, and passed them with a certain air of reluctance to Fisher T. Fish. That luck-

less junior took the money like a fellow in a dream. Even now, he found it hard to realise that he had "done" himself. Then his eyes wandered to the parcel containing the medals that Bunter had given him. A gleam shot into Fish's eyes. If Mr. Lazarus would "trade" the medals at the same rate as he had bought the ball of white metal Fisher T. Fish's loss would not be so great. In his opinion the loose medals would fetch another eight shillings. That would mean out of an outlay of twenty-five shillings he had saved twelve, which, in the circumstances, was not a bad recovery. But Fisher T. Fish, in thinking these things was reckoning without Mr. Lazarus. When the Greyfriars junior tried to sell the loose medals to the old dealer Mr. Lazarus shook his head, and intimated that he wouldn't give them house room, so to speak.

Really it was too bad. Fisher T. Fish tried all his powers of eloquence and persuasiveness but all to no effect.

"It's no good, Master Fish," declared Mr. Lazarus. "The medals are no use to me. I wish you good-day."

And before the Greyfriars junior could make any further appeal, Mr. Lazarus retired to his room behind the shop.

"Oh, crikey!" moaned Fisher T. Fish. "And that fat clam, Bunter, is scoffing my ten shillings!"

With a bellow of rage, Fish snatched up the parcel of medals and dashed out of the shop. As he raced towards the bunshop a fat figure came into view. It was Billy Bunter. There was a smear of jam on his face and a noticeable bulge under his waistcoat. Evidently William George Bunter had expended the ten shillings. No one realised that better than Fisher T. Fish. His face wore an extraordinary expression of ferocity as he panted up.

"You fat clam!"

Billy Bunter jumped back a pace.

"You swindling barrel!"

"Oh, really, Fishy!" said Bunter. "I say, where's my share of the silver? I want— Yoooop!"

Bunter's words trailed off into a roar as the maddened Fisher T. Fish threw the parcel of medals at his "partner's" head.

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down on the cold, hard, unsympathetic pavement with a yell, and the parcel bursting open, a rain of medals went streaming out into the road.

"You pesky, all-fired mugwump!" hooted Fisher T. Fish, dancing round Bunter like a dervish. "Gimme my ten shillings, or I'll burst you!"

"Wow!" roared Bunter. "You dangerous maniac! Keep off!"

"Gimme my ten shillings!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "It's a swindle! Those blessed medals aren't silver at all! They're not worth five bob!"

Bunter's roar of anguish changed at that information. In his heart of hearts he was not surprised to learn that the medals were practically worthless, and he congratulated himself on having "subbed" his share of the proceeds before the sale.

"He, he, he!" Bunter began to cackle in his unpleasant way.

That was too much for Fisher T. Fish. He lunged out at the fat junior with a hefty boot. It was unfortunate that Fish was excited, for he completely misjudged the distance, with the result that he sat down on the pavement with a bump.

"Yaroooooooh!" It was Fish's turn to roar.

It was Bunter's opportunity to escape. He took it with remarkable promptness.

A PAGEANT OF EMPIRE.

Those of you who are interested in acting will like to hear of a topping little playlet, "A PAGEANT OF EMPIRE," with a stirring song, which can be obtained from Samuel French, Ltd., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W., price one shilling per copy, postage one penny.

There are parts for sixteen to twenty-four characters, and no elaborate scenery is needed.

It is especially suitable for acting on Empire Day, but it can be played at any other time as well.



There was a startled gasp from Fisher T. Fish, as Billy Bunter appeared in the doorway of the lab. "Bunter! What are you doing here?" he hissed. Billy Bunter chuckled at the sight of the crucible and the mass of molten metal. "You awful villain, Fishy!" he said. (See Chapter 10.)

Scrambling to his feet, he rolled off down the road towards Greyfriars at a pace that would have done credit to a crack sprinter.

"Stop!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "Stop, you fat swindler!"

But Bunter did not stop. He ran for dear life. Behind him pounded the business man of the Remove. Fish was fully aware that he had parted with the ten shillings for keeps, but he was yearning to take it out of Bunter's fat hide by way of compensation.

"Oh, dear!" panted Bunter as he raced along.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry's voice that greeted Bunter's ears as he raced towards the gates. The Famous Five were just emerging. Bunter saw them and pulled up just in time.

"Keep him off!"

"Eh?"

"Keep him off!" panted Bunter, dodging behind the Famous Five. "He's mad!"

"Stop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked round as that fresh voice fell on their ears. Then they saw Fisher T. Fish. That bony junior was pelting towards them at a terrific speed.

"Stop that fat swindler!"

"Keep him off!" howled Bunter. "He's mad, and— Oh, crumbs!"

Bunter's jaw dropped as he saw Horace Coker striding towards him. There was a truly ferocious expression on the Fifth-Former's face, which intensified when he saw William George Bunter.

"Stop!" roared Coker, and he broke

into a run. "Stop that fat rotter, Wharton!"

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter looked to the left, and then looked to the right. On one side was Fisher T. Fish thirsting for his blood, so to speak; on the other was Horace Coker. Really, it seemed that the Owl of the Remove was between the devil and the deep sea. And while he stood hesitating his two pursuers closed in on him.

"Got you!" roared Coker, dropping a heavy hand on Bunter's shoulders.

"Groooooogh!" wailed Bunter.

"Got you!" hooted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'll make potato shavings of you!"

Horace Coker jumped when he saw Fisher T. Fish within arm's length of him. The Fifth-Former's disengaged hand shot out and closed on Fish's collar.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on interestedly. They did not know what it was all about, but they were prepared to chip in if necessary. But it wasn't necessary. In a loud voice Horace Coker informed them that he had missed a gross and a half of medals from his study. Inquiries had elicited the fact that Bunter had been seen in the Fifth Form passage carrying a parcel under his jacket. Further inquiries had brought to light Fisher T. Fish's transactions with the fags. In great wrath Coker had set out to find those two juniors.

Now he had found them. Wharton & Co. listened to Bunter and Fish, each trying to throw the blame of the affair

on the other's shoulders, with feelings that were for once in a way sympathetic towards Coker. Undoubtedly the Fifth-Former, like the prophet of old, did well to be angry.

"You rotter!" said Wharton to Fisher T. Fish. "I hope Coker makes you sit up!"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the Co. No one had any sympathy to waste on either Bunter or Fisher T. Fish just then.

"We'll leave you to it, Coker," said Wharton, with a grin. "Come on, you men!"

Wharton & Co. sauntered off, leaving Coker with his victims.

"Now you're going through it!" hooted the Fifth-Former.

And the "partners" did go through it with a vengeance. Ten minutes later two dismal, moaning juniors, aching in every limb, limped into their respective studies. Both of them were sorry that they had meddled with Horace Coker's medals. But from their meddling one good thing sprang. Nothing more was heard of Horace Coker's League of Friends. Doubtless the great Horace, after due consideration, had realised that forming such a league was beyond his powers, or that the fellows at Greyfriars were not worthy of his attentions in this direction.

THE END.

("Billy Bunter's Bike!"—that's the title of next Saturday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., boys! If you miss it you'll miss one of Frank Richard's best yarns.)

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THE BIG NOISE! The most obstinate mule alive is a tractable being compared with Tiny Scannan, the new "boss" of the Storrydene F.C. Meet this amazing giant in the thrilling story told below.

The Man of IRON

By WALTER EDWARDS



A rousing story dealing with the adventures and misadventures of the Storrydene Villa F.C., introducing "Tiny" Scannan, who turns the scale at eighteen stone, and packs a punch that a world-beater would envy!

Warned by the Referee!

IT was a difficult shot that Tiny Scannan was called upon to save, but he made no mistake when he doubled his mighty fist and sent the ball soaring over the roof of the grand-stand.

It was a magnificent clearance, although it was not without its element of risk; but no shout of praise came from the Storrydene fans. The vast crowd just looked on—stony-eyed and dumb. It was an extraordinary situation, something unprecedented in the history of the Midland club—or any other club, for that matter. Loud abuse is not unknown when a player is a flagrant transgressor, but a cold, inimical silence is the greater punishment.

Quick to take likes and dislikes, the Midland folk had been unanimous in their verdict of "Thumbs down!" in the case of Sir Aubrey Ailen's mysterious "find," and it was quite on the cards that Tiny Scannan would never be able to live down the bad impression he had made in the first minute of the game against Bosworth United.

The Storrydene folk were like that. Folding his great arms, Tiny Scannan lounged against an upright and grinned round at the fans upon the embankment, and there was something in the taunting, insolent grimace that was as a spark to tinder.

A low, rumbling snarl welled up from the crowd, and a dangerous swaying movement started, but still Scannan grinned.

"We'll give you something to laugh at in a minute, mister!" shouted a grimy-faced "coalie," shaking his fist.

"Go home and have a wash!" taunted Scannan.

The words brought forth another howl.

Ripping out a roar of anger, the burly coalie thrust his way through the tightly-packed fans, and eventually reached the railings. He was in the act of climbing over them when the whistle shrilled, and the little referee came trotting across the turf.

"You will stay where you are, sir!" said the latter preemptorily, addressing the fuming coalie, and he then swung round upon the grinning Scannan. "I know exactly what happened," he said, "and if I have any more trouble with you I shall order you off the field! You've had one warning already!"

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Tiny glowered, taking a threatening step across the turf.

"Have I got to stand here and be shot at by an ugly, half-witted coal-heaver——" began the big fellow.

"You'll kindly hold your tongue," snapped the official, shouting in order to make his voice heard above the uproar. "Attend to your job, or else I shall attend to you!"

Nodding briefly, the official strutted away, whilst the coal-heaver's pals did their best to pacify a very angry man. It was obvious that the incident was not closed.

The ball had been swung across to the left wing, and bow-legged Battle, having snapped up a pass from Thirl-boy, set off on his own. All went well with him until he came up against Braid, the Bosworth right-back. There was nothing pretty about Braid's play, for he was resolute and absolute, and the charge with which he sent Battle reeling, was robust without being actually unfair.

Boomph!

Wasting not a second, the back sent the leather winging across to Garter, his outside-left, and the forward quickly carried play into the home side's territory.

And so the game went on, play being first in one half and then in the other; and all the while the battle raged with ever-increasing fury, Bosworth straining every nerve and sinew to get on equal terms, and Terry Carson and his forwards doing everything in their power to increase their lead.

Neither goalkeeper was called upon to do much, but both did everything

INTRODUCTION.

After a sequence of wins the boys of Storrydene Villa F.C. strike a bad patch and lose nine matches right off the reel. Dissatisfied with the state of affairs Sir Aubrey Ailen, a purse-proud baronet and chairman of the club, engages "Tiny" Scannan to stop the rot which has set in. "Tiny"—a giant of a man—proves beyond doubt that he's a bullying tyrant of the worst type. Maddened by Scannan's conduct, the Villa's supporters take matters into their own hands and give Scannan the ragging of his life. Even that, however, has little effect upon "Tiny," for in the Villa's match with Bosworth he again falls foul of the Storrydene fans. Not even when he scores a goal—a penalty kick—does he re-instate himself in the crowd's good graces. But, later, as Bosworth's centre-forward is seen to be racing for the home goal the fans wonder what sort of show "Tiny" will put up.

(Now read on.)

that was required of them in masterly fashion, Tiny Scannan being particularly effective, although inclined to play to an unappreciative gallery.

It wanted four minutes to long whistle when a sudden breakaway by Terry Carson brought a deafening outburst from the home "fans."

"Up, Terry!"

"One more, lad!"

"Right through, boy!"

Having taken the ball off Jollyboy's toe, the youngster slipped past Cork and quickly came up against Braid, and the back gave no thought to finesse as he lowered his square head and rushed straight at his man. The bull-like rush did not frighten Terry, however, and he seemed to have not the slightest difficulty in evading Braid, who, unable to pull up, went floundering forward upon his hands and knees.

A sharp, involuntary shout broke from all sides of the enclosure.

"Now then, lad!"

"In with it!"

"First time!"

Getting to his knees, Braid turned swiftly just as Terry was about to try a shot from the edge of the penalty area, and, losing his head for the second time that day, he hurled himself forward and caught the youngster's ankle in a grip of steel. Taken completely by surprise—he thought he had been bitten by a mad dog—Terry came to earth with a crash and rolled over on to his side, and at that moment the referee blew his whistle.

"Penalty!"

"Play the game, Braid!"

"Dirty, sir!"

"What about it, ref?"

The tight-lipped little official was already pointing dramatically to the whitewash blob within the penalty area, and Terry, looking anything but amiable, rose slowly and painfully to his feet and fixed a hard gaze upon the burly Braid.

Two Goals Up!

THE coal-heaver behind the Storrydene goal had been silent for a while, but now he took a deep breath.

"Now then, Greedy!" he shouted, glaring across at Tiny Scannan. "There's another buckshee kick for you!"

The Man of Iron had been following events closely, and he was on the point

of running down the field when the deep-throated words fell upon his ears. Turning angrily, he shook a big fist at the grimy-faced "coalie."

"I'll deal with you later, you swab!" he roared, his little eyes glinting. "And the same remark applies to your pals!"

The words were scarcely tactful, and a wild, vituperative outburst followed the giant as he pounded across the turf. And then came his surprise, for he saw that Terry Carson was preparing to take the penalty kick. He let out a mighty shout as the referee placed the whistle to his lips.

"Hi! Hold on a bit! I'm going to take that kick!"

Neither the referee nor Terry appeared to hear the words, but the other players turned their heads and grinned at the big fellow, who was tearing down the field with a thunder of hoofs, and Scannan looked positively dangerous as the whistle shrilled and the brown-haired youngster swung a sturdy leg.

Boomph!

"Hi, Carson!" shouted the Man of Iron, his strange collection of features going purple. "Hi——"

But it was too late, for the ball was already twirling in the back of the net. And scarcely had Terry taken his kick than he was seized violently by the shoulder and swung round.

"What d'you mean by it, eh?" demanded Scannan fiercely, thrusting his ugly jaw forward and shaking the youngster.

"Mean by what?" asked Terry, a picture of cherubic innocence. "I merely took the kick——"

"I know you merely did," snapped Scannan, "and I advise you to wait for my permission before you take another penalty, otherwise, there's likely to be some kicking of a different kind! I'm boss——"

"Get back to your goal, Scannan!" snapped the referee testily. "The crowd——"

"Confound the crowd!" snarled the giant.

Then, turning upon his heel, he strode back to his citadel, threats and abuse being showered upon him from all sides.

Scarcely did Jollyboy pass the ball to Cramp than the whistle brought the game to a close, and Tiny Scannan came in for a further bombardment as he hunched his great shoulders and strode defiantly towards his dressing-room.

He was still scowling as he walked along the corridor and joined the other players, and the fact that his men took not the slightest notice of him did nothing to assuage his injured feelings. The Man of Iron was treated as though he were nothing, and this did not suit him at all, so, as usual, he looked round for a butt on whom to vent his ill-humour.

His choice fell upon Terry.

"I haven't forgotten that soft soap, y' know," he growled.

"What a memory!" murmured the youngster admiringly. "But don't mention the painful incident, Mr. Pelman. It leaves a nasty taste in the mouth!"

A chuckle broke from the other players, and Scannan's mighty limbs trembled as he glared across at the youth he could not subdue, and he was about to make a heated remark when the door opened and the referee strutted into the room and addressed the scowling giant.

"You are new to Storrydene, Scannan," he said, in his hurried, testy way, "so perhaps you don't know that you're asking for trouble when you go out of your way to aggravate the local crowd just because it happens to take

a dislike to your methods. Take my tip, Scannan, and keep your tongue between your teeth. You'll find that it will pay!"

Placing his matted hands upon his hips, Tiny Scannan grinned down at the well-meaning little official, and there was something singularly offensive about the taunting smirk.

"It's very kind of you to give me the tip, little man," said Tiny, "but you seem to forget that I'm not an infant in arms. I'm a man—and a man-size man, at that, and there's not a man in Storrydene whom I couldn't lick with one hand. You don't breed my sort in this part of the country. Don't worry, I can look after myself! And now run away and play with your whistle!"

The giant patted the official's head as he spoke, and the little man snorted with indignation, his moustache bristling fiercely.

"How dare you, sir?" he thundered, looking very warlike. "Never, in all my life——"

"Outside, little man!" grinned Scannan, and he lifted the official bodily and placed him outside the door. "Thanks for calling!"

On Dangerous Ground!

THE Man of Iron was obviously greatly amused by the warning, and he was still laughing as he slouched across the dressing-room and sent his men reeling to right and left.

It was plain that a blow would follow a word if any of the players should be impudent enough to rub Mr. Scannan up the wrong way.

Tiny was on the warpath, looking for trouble, and the footballers exchanged meaning glances as, having tubbed, they slipped into their outdoor clothes and prepared to make a hasty departure.

Tiny read the signs, and scowled.

"You're all in a blessed hurry, aren't you?" he growled.

"And I advise you to be in a blessed hurry as well," said Terry quietly.

Tiny Scannan grunted, his little eyes narrowing until they were slits.

"And who the heck are you to advise me?" he demanded truculently.

"Listen to me for a moment," said Terry. "You've succeeded in getting on the wrong side of a certain section of the club's supporters, so don't be surprised if the gentlemen are waiting to have a word with you when you get outside. They're all good sportsmen, according to their own lights, and they think they own a bit of all of us because they part with a shilling at the turnstiles; incidentally, Scannan, they consider that the bob gives them a right to criticise. You, Scannan, lose sight of the fact that you are a servant of the crowd, and you even went so far as to insult an honest 'coalie' and his mates! That was very naughty, you know. You were asking for it!"

Terry shook a reproving finger at his flushed skipper.

"Asking for it, was I?" growled Tiny, reaching for his brown bowler, and tilting it over his right eye. "And they want to have a word with me, do they? Huh!" The Man of Iron doubled his mighty fists and regarded them with an ugly grin. "There's not one of 'em who'd have pluck enough to say a word to me if I met him in the street! They're brave enough in a crowd, and they'll threaten to do all sorts of things. But, get 'em alone, the skunks! I'm ready for 'em! And as for your advice, you can keep it!"

Still grinning unpleasantly, he strode

across to the door and snarled with his muscular hand upon the handle.

"Anybody else got anything to say?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Terry earnestly, for he knew that Scannan's peril was very real. "Why not let one or two of us see you home? Hefty and I go your way!"

The unexpected suggestion made Tiny Scannan grin anew, for the mere idea of the slim youngster acting in the capacity of bodyguard struck him as being a prime joke.

"You—a bit of a kid!" he taunted, showing his yellow teeth. "And what good would you be if it came to a 'rough house'? You could yell for help, I suppose? I can look after myself, you cheeky young pup, for it means sudden death for any idiot who gets in the way of one of my punches! You've got a fine nerve, and no mistake, thinking that you could protect me!"

The big fellow threw his head back and roared with laughter at the mere idea, and his throaty chuckle floated along the corridor after he had turned abruptly and left his men without even grunting "Good-night!"

Tiny Scannan lived near Little Smith Street, a narrow thoroughfare that runs through the most unsavoury quarter of Storrydene; and on this misty afternoon Little Smith Street looked at its worst. The shabby houses huddled together as though for warmth and companionship, and occasionally a sickly shaft of yellow light struggled through a vent in a blind. But of human beings there was no sign; even the hordes of unwashed, shrill-voiced urchins having crept away from the mist that seemed to eat into one's very marrow.

Everything was still—ominously still.

Tiny Scannan was grinning to himself as he strode along the narrow pavement, and it was not until he came within sight of the Marquis of Gandy that he heard the sound of low voices. His eyes narrowed as he saw a knot of men lounging beneath a street lamp.

"Evenin', Mr. Scannan!" said a gruff voice as the footballer loomed up through the mist; but there was nothing friendly in the tone.

Tiny Scannan stopped abruptly, his face ugly and threatening in the gaslight.

"If any of you fellers try to get fresh with——" he began.

"At 'im, boys!"

Scarcely did the cry ring out than a dozen figures threw themselves upon Tiny Scannan; and Tiny, taken by surprise though he was, met the attack by accounting for four of the enemy with as many blows.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

Skipping nimbly away, and getting his broad back to the wall, the Man of Iron gave a scornful laugh and hit out with all the power of his mighty arms; then, pressure becoming too hot, he stepped forward and grasped one of his assailants, swinging the fellow high above his head.

"Back, you rats!" he roared, a terrible figure of menace. "Back, I tell you!"

And then the human missile went flying through space, sending men sprawling like ninepins.

Low, snarling cries came from the hooligans as they closed in upon the footballer, and sticks and bottles were brought into play; and it was a heavy metal tankard that whizzed through the air and struck Tiny Scannan a glancing blow upon the temple.

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But the glancing blow was enough, for the Man of Iron uttered a loud groan, sagged at the knees, and pitched to the cobbled pavement a huddled heap.

The Rescue!

WHAT are we going to do about it, ye muddled oafs?"

It was Terry Carson who put the question, and the other players ceased dressing operations and looked at him in surprise. Five minutes had slipped away since the departure of Tiny Scannan, and very little had been said in the interim. Scannan, as a matter of fact, was not strictly popular at that moment.

"Do about what?" growled "Hefty" Hebble, who appeared to be in anything but an amiable mood.

"What are we going to do about our tame Man of Iron?" asked Terry. "What's going to happen to him?"

Low, growling noises came from the other fellows, and the general atmosphere of the dressing-room suggested that no one was particularly interested in what was likely to happen to the square-headed martinet.

"What do you think is going to happen to the bullying rotter?" asked little Battle, the outside-left.

"Can't say for certain," smiled Terry, knotting his tie, "but I know he's booked for a rough journey if the Smith Street gang start on him!"

"Was that 'coalie' one of 'em?" asked Thirlboy.

"Sure thing," nodded Terry. "Most of the gang are racecourse toughs, and they aren't very gentle in their methods once they get to work. Scannan went out of his way to insult the 'coalie,' who seemed to be a pal of theirs, so—"

"Then he's asked for everything that's coming to him," growled Hefty Hebble. "A proper beating up may do him a world of good!"

"I agree with you, old man," smiled Terry; "for Tiny goes out of his way to look for trouble; yet he's the Storrydene skipper, all the same, and it doesn't seem very sporting on our part if we stand by and allow a team-mate to be beaten up by a gang of hooligans. At least, that's how I feel about it." There was an earnest expression in the youngster's hazel eyes as he looked round at the others. "And you mustn't forget that a beating up by the Smith Street gang is not an ordinary thrashing. Usually," he added, "they leave their victim more dead than alive!"

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded the diminutive Battle. "I'm not what you'd call bloodthirsty, y'know, but I can't work up any sympathy for our tripe-faced man-eater! Anyway, what's the idea?" he asked. "Are you suggesting that we should totter along and sweep up the pieces?"

"I certainly think that it's up to us to do something," said Terry, reaching for his cap.

A gentle grunt came from Hefty Hebble.

"You wanted to walk home with him," he growled, "and all he did was to laugh in your face! That's Scannan all over! The best thing you can do, young 'un, is to leave him severely alone!"

"Maybe," said Terry quietly; "but I'm going to follow him up, all the same! There's a mist creeping up from the docks, and Little Smith Street won't be a very healthy spot this even-

ing! Particularly if the gang is on the warpath!" he added. He looked round at the grim-faced players. "Anyone feel like coming along with me?" he asked, with a smile.

Hefty Hebble tilted his bowler hat to an aggressive angle.

"So you mean to look after the Man of Iron?"

"That's about it!"

"Then you'll need someone to look after you!" grunted the big fellow. "I'll make one, son!"

"I'm going your way, Terry," declared Thirlboy and Craye in unison.

"Wait a tick!" put in Grace. "I'm coming!"

"Same here!" broke from the rest.

"We'll have to get a move on," declared Terry, as they passed through the players' entrance and reached the street.

It was already dusk, and there was a hint of rain in the air, and the street lamps were glowing dully by the time they entered the slum area.

"Seems peaceful enough," remarked Hefty Hebble, as they came within sight of Little Smith Street. "It's early, yet there's not a soul about, and if I wanted a rest cure—"

"Listen!" broke in Terry, gripping his arm. "Hear anything, boy?"

The little party pulled up at once, and faintly through the mist came the sound of a scuffle; the thud of blows, the scraping of studded boots, the low, snarling cries that were scarcely human. The sound of bone meeting bone reached them; the sound of a heavy fall; a deep groan of agony. Then came wild shouts, a bellow of rage, the smashing of glass.

"This way, boys!" cried Terry, breaking into a run.

Guided by the sound of conflict, the footballers swung round a corner and made for the dim lights of the Marquis of Gandy. A stifled shout broke from Terry Carson's lips as he saw a gigantic figure sway forward and crash to the cobbled pavement in a huddled heap.

"You cowardly rotters!" he cried, racing ahead, and leaping at the husky young hooligan who had hurled the metal tankard at Tiny Scannan; and a straight-arm blow crashed against the unshaven jowl, spread-eagling the hooligan in the muddy roadway.

This was the signal for a general assault, and the Man of Iron remained as lifeless as a log as the battle royal raged round him. The flying missile had gashed his temple and stunned him, but neither Terry nor the others were able to do anything for him as he lay with his arms outspread and his head in the gutter, a tragic figure in the flickering light of the street lamp. For they were altogether too busy at that moment, hitting out right and left, and keeping their eyes skinned for treachery; and it looked as though the tide of battle was turning in their favour, when reinforcements arrived, soft-footed, shadowy figures looming up through the mist, attacking them with loaded sticks and knuckle-dusters.

"Where's Scannan?" went up the cry. "Let's get at the rat!"

"String 'im up!"

"We ain't got a tree!"

"Wot's the matter with the lamp-post!"

"At 'im!"

Terry Carson and little Battle were standing over the lifeless form of Tiny Scannan as three or four wild-eyed hooligans made an ugly rush across the

pavement, and a swinging blow from a cudgel caught the winger a smash to the ribs and dropped him into a writhing heap.

"Hold that, you rotter!"

It was Hefty Hebble who gave a shout of anger and sent Battle's big-limbed assailant reeling across the roadway with a terrific punch to the ear; and the next moment Hefty was standing over the Man of Iron and fighting with a cold-blooded ferocity that struck something very like terror into the armed hooligans.

"Come on!" he shouted, dodging a swipe from a blackthorn and planting a snappy punch that placed another of the enemy on the casualty list. "Attack a defenceless man, will you, you jackals?"

A howl of fury went up from the hooligans.

"Get 'old of Scannan!"

"Lynch the rat!"

"All together, boys!"

The footballers, most of them showing signs of wear and tear, stood shoulder to shoulder round the prostrate figure of Tiny Scannan and beat off the massed attack; but Hebble, who had taken command, knew that weight of numbers was bound to tell in the long run. For the players were outnumbered to the tune of at least three to one, and in the second vicious rush Coyne and Craye were placed out of action, a blow from a loaded cane almost smashing the latter's shoulder-bone.

Indeed, the position was fast becoming desperate when a rush of feet announced that further reinforcements had arrived.

"Into 'em, me boys!" roared the stentorian voice of Uncle George, president of the Supporters' Association. "Set 'em alight, me lads!"

Jim Rivett's honest countenance looked hard as granite as he threw himself into the melee and punched his way into the thick of things, and the dozen or so footer fans who followed close upon his heels soon began to make their presence felt. Hitting out with right and left, the newcomers dropped man after man in clean-cut, workman-like fashion, and it was not long before the leader of the Smith Street gang realised that he was fighting a losing battle.

Shipping a punch that knocked him clean off his balance, the big fellow sprawled sideways and rolled over and over across the roadway, and a moment later he scrambled to his feet and padded off into the shadows.

"Starky's beat it!" shouted one of the hooligans.

The cry—a signal for a general retreat—was quickly taken up by the other ruffians, and within a matter of seconds the retreat had become an ignominious rout.

"See 'em off, my boys!" roared Uncle George. "Up, the Villa!"

The slum quarter of Storrydene is honeycombed with narrow alleys and passages, dark and forbidding, and it was into these alleys and passages that the hooligans vanished, scuttling away like a lot of scared rats.

"What's it all about, Hefty?" asked Jim Rivett, gazing reflectively at his broken knuckles.

"Nothing much," answered Hebble, wincing slightly as he fingered an enlarged ear. "Tiny Scannan had a slight difference of opinion with the Smith Street gang, and we happened to arrive just in time to enjoy the fun, that's all!"



The door flew back with disconcerting suddenness, and Scannan, unable to save himself, lost his balance completely, and landed upon his face, his ample nose collecting splinters as it slid along the floorboards. (See this page).

"What you mean, me boy," declared Uncle George, "is that you and the others guessed what was likely to happen to Scannan and followed him up! That was real sporting of you, me boy; for if a fellow ever asked for trouble, it's Scannan!"

"Seems to me," remarked Jim Rivett, in his stolid way, "that he's asked for it once too often, for he's got his full whack this journey! How long has he been doing the sleeping-beauty act, Hefty?" he inquired, glancing across at the lifeless figure on the pavement.

"He went down for the count just as we arrived," answered Hebble.

"So he doesn't know that you fellows came to his rescue?" asked Uncle George.

"No," answered Hefty, shaking his tousled head. "What's more, we don't want him to know! You see," he explained, with a whimsical smile, "he might want to fall on our necks and thank us, and we couldn't stand that!"

"Hefty!" called Terry Carson, who was trying to bring the big fellow round.

Hebble and the others walked across to the lamp-post.

"What is it, son?"

"We'd better carry him back to his lodgings and send for a doctor," said the youngster, a grave note in his voice, "for he may have concussion or something!"

"You leave him to us, young Carson," said Jim Rivett, "for you fellers have done quite enough for one night. I know where Scannan lives, and I accept full responsibility in taking him off your hands! What you chaps had better do is to get a move on and attend to yourselves, 'cause a few of you look as though you could do with a few yards of sticking-plaster! Go on!" he ordered, looking warlike. "Off you go! We'll attend to Scannan!"

"You're a good fellow, Jim," said Hefty Hebble, "and I want you to do me a favour."

"What's that?"

"I want you to promise that you

won't say a word about this business to Scannan. I mean, I don't want him to know that we happened to turn up just when we did. It might embarrass him, you understand, for he's a most sensitive chap! Do you promise to keep mum?"

Jim Rivett nodded.

"Hefty," he vowed solemnly, "I'll be as silent as a tongue-tied oyster with a sore throat!"

Monday morning was grey and threatening, and the sullen anger of the stormclouds that scudded across the heavens was reflected upon the narrow brow of Mr. Tiny Scannan. Tiny looked ripe for trouble as he kicked open the clubhouse door and strode off towards the dressing-rooms, and his general appearance was not improved by a discoloured eye and a broad strip of sticking-plaster that decorated his forehead. Tiny, as a matter of fact, was in a bellicose mood, and he promised himself that he would "take it out" of the Villa players.

Reaching the dressing-room, he thrust his mighty shoulder against the door and charged with vicious force, and the door, being unlocked, at once gave before that terrific pressure. Indeed, it flew back with disconcerting suddenness, and Scannan, unable to save himself, lost his balance completely and landed upon his face, his ample nose collecting splinters as it slid along the floorboards.

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded Terry Carson, as Tiny Scannan's bullet head came into violent contact with the leg of the table. "Oh, I say, that's too bad, isn't it? Most unfortunate! I hope you didn't hurt— Ha, ha, ha! Excuse me, old man, but true, heartfelt sympathy always takes me this way! If you could have seen yourself— Ha, ha, ha! I suppose you sailed in on your face in order to save shoe-leather—what! Dashed good idea, old man! I—I— Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go on, you little rat!" roared the Man of Iron, sitting up and glowering across at the youngster, "laugh your

silly head off! Laugh, I tell you— laugh!"

"I assure you that I'm not crying, old man," gurgled Terry Carson, dabbing his eyes with a handkerchief. "But, seriously," he added, "what was the idea?"

Scannan's broad countenance turned a deep shade of purple as he scrambled to his feet and steadied himself against a locker.

"What was the idea?" he echoed, giving Terry a glimpse of big teeth. "Oh, I just did that for fun, you know!"

"I see," nodded Terry, without a smile. "I once knew a chap who swallowed rusty tin-openers as a hobby, and—"

"Hold your tongue, you little rat!" snarled Scannan, with a change of mood and tone. He turned round and glared up at the moon-faced clock upon the wall. "Where are the others?" he rasped, bringing his thick black brows together in a fierce scowl.

"Haven't the faintest idea, old man," answered the brown-eyed youngster. "As a matter of fact, Scannan, they're not due for another five minutes!"

"That's just where you're wrong, my pup!" snapped the Man of Iron. "Didn't I tell the lot of you that you'd got to be here at nine o'clock this morning?"

"No, you didn't!" answered Terry, without hesitation. "We are supposed to be here at nine-thirty—"

"You'll be here at six-thirty if I give orders to that effect!" snorted the Man of Iron. "I gave orders on Saturday that you were to report at nine."

"You did not!" declared Terry, with quiet emphasis. "Perhaps you think you did, or maybe you're saying this in order to work up a spot of bother with the boys."

"What d'you mean by that, you little rat!" shouted Scannan, flushing with guilt. "Do you think I'd go out of my way to make trouble?"

"Yes, I do!" returned the youngster, meeting the man's blistering gaze. "What's more," he ran on, with a significant glance at the black eye and

strip of sticking-plaster, "it looks as though you've succeeded! What happened, old man? Did a charabanc snap at you when you weren't looking?"

"You mind your own blessed business!" snarled the Man of Iron. "You've got too much to say, and I'm not in the mood to put up with a lot of nonsense this morning! I'm going to run this club on strict lines, and—"

"Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, for I am the Spirit of Spring!" warbled Hefty Hebble, whirling through the doorway with outstretched arms and smiting the Man of Iron a backhand blow across the neck. "Dear, dear, I'm so sorry, old man," he apologised, coming to an abrupt standstill and smiling into Scannan's blazing eyes. "Quite an accident, I assure you, quite an accident!"

"But it won't be an accident if I get 'old of you and knock your blessed head off!" snarled the Man of Iron, his massive jaw jutting like the toe of a boot. "First Carson, and now you!" he snorted. "There'll be something doing if I get any more of this funny stuff, I give you my word!"

"Feeling a bit Monday-morningish, aren't you, Scannan?" asked Hefty. "Who are you in mourning for, by the way?"

"Eh? What's that?"

"I see that you are wearing a black eye—"

An explosive gurgle came from Terry Carson as the Man of Iron stepped across the dressing-room and shook a leg-o'-mutton fist under Hefty Hebble's nose.

"Say another word, you big stiff, and I'll—"

"Come, lads and lasses, come out and play. Crown Flannel-Faced Scannan Queen of the May!" sang Thirlboy, leaping into the room with elephantine grace, and coming into violent collision with the Man of Iron. "S-sorry, old man," he stammered, flushing slightly as the big fellow swung round upon him. "Smatter of fact, I didn't expect to find you here so early."

"You bet your life you didn't, you flat-footed goop!" growled the Man of Iron savagely. "What's the matter with all of you? Have you gone dippy? Is there something in the air?"

"I am a bird on the wing—tweet-tweet!" chirped little Battle, fluttering into the dressing-room at that moment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Another of 'em!" shouted Tiny Scannan, his little eyes blazing with fury. "You're all barmy—up the pole—"

The apartment echoed with laughter as the rest of the players trooped into the great man's presence, and the man of Iron swung round and pointed with a dramatic gesture as the moon-faced clock struck a single chime.

"Half-past nine!" he cried, glowering at the players. "What's the meaning of it?" he rasped. "Why are you lot half an hour late? When I give orders I expect them to be obeyed—"

"But you didn't give orders," growled Hefty Hebble, "so we turned up as usual!"

(Next week's instalment of this grand story is better than ever, chums! If "Tiny" is ever to be popular with the Storrydene boys he'll have to change his ways! Do you think he will?)

DR. BIRCHEMALL'S COME-BACK!

(Continued from page 15.)

"You will remember that I coached you when you were only the blessed School Porter—"

"I remember nothing of the kind!" snapped Dr. Birchmall.

"But surely—" gasped Jack Jolly, the grin vanishing from his face. "Don't you remember promising me free passes to the pictures, and so on, if the extra toot I gave you got you back your old position?"

"I think you must have been dreaming, Jolly," said the Head. "As if I—the learned and skollery Dr. Alfred Birchmall!—would come to a meer junior for instruction!"

"But you know thumping well you did!" said Jack, indignantly.

"Nonsense!"

"But—"

"Another word, and I'll birch you black and blew!" roared Dr. Birchmall.

With feelings too deep for words, Jack Jolly kvitted the study. Evidently the ups and downs that Dr. Birchmall had suffered had made him no more honourable than he had been before. Bitterly now, did our hero regret having helped the old scamp to get back his job. But regrets were of no use. The tirant of St. Sam's was back again in his old place now. And the chances were that he was going to remain there for ever!

(There will be another amusing story of the chums of St. Sam's in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "A BARKEROUS AFFAIR". You can't afford to miss it, chums.)

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