

THE PAPER THERE'S NO RESISTING!

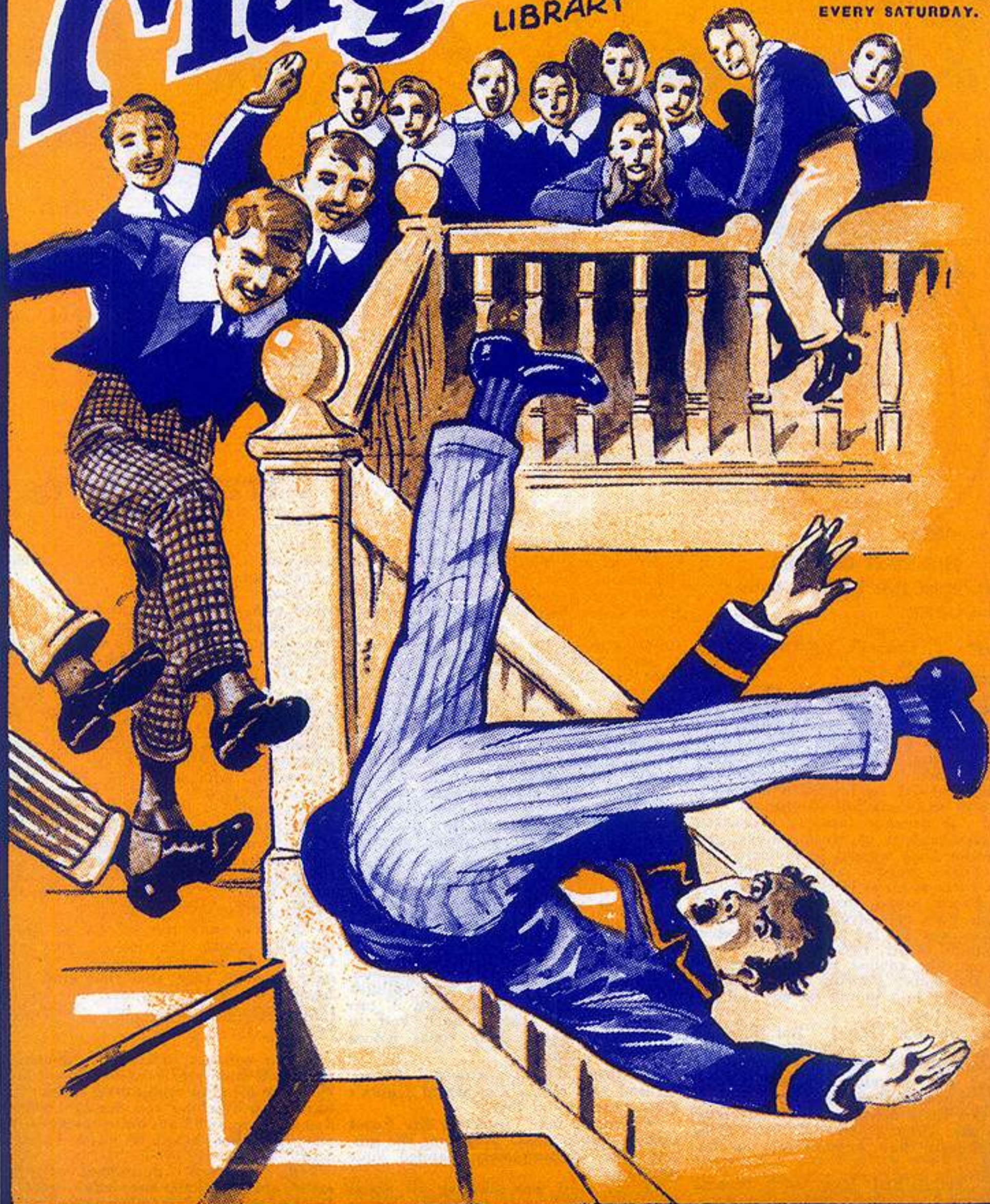
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THE REMOVE REMOVE COKER!

(A rousing incident from this week's splendid story of school life, featuring Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.)

The Hero of



:: BY ::

Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mr. Prout Puts His Foot Down!

"COKER!"
"Silence!"
"Coker!" boomed Mr. Prout.

Again silence.

The Fifth Form grinned. Mr. Prout stared across the class-room at Horace Coker with a frozen stare. Twice had he addressed Coker—each time without any response whatever. If Horace heard, then, like the celebrated gladiator of old, he heeded not.

But it was doubtful whether he had heard. A dreamy, faraway expression was on the face of Horace Coker—an expression that seemed to indicate that his thoughts were a long way from the Fifth Form room at Greyfriars. And as Mr. Prout noted that his expression became even more frozen.

Coker was by far the most troublesome pupil in Mr. Prout's Form. There was scarcely anyone in the Shell, or even the Upper Fourth, who could not have given him points on any subject taken in class.

That was bad enough. But, to make matters worse, he suffered from the delusion that he was quite a brilliant scholar, and, therefore, did not need so much instruction as the rest. And it was this little delusion that made him, from Mr. Prout's point of view, more troublesome than anyone else in the Fifth.

Mr. Prout had long since become accustomed to Coker's inattentive ways, and he would not have been surprised to see Coker start, or betray in some other

small way that his thoughts were not on the lesson.

But the trance-like condition into which Coker had gone on this occasion came as a shock, even to the long-suffering master of the Fifth. There was a limit, and Mr. Prout felt that the limit had been reached.

"Coker!" he roared, in a voice that would have done credit to the Bull of Bashan. "Horace Coker! I am speaking to you!"

With a jump Coker at last woke up.

"Oh! Sorry, sir!"

Coker blinked at Mr. Prout.

"Scandalous!" boomed the master of the Fifth. "Monstrous! How dare you allow your attention to wander in such a manner, Coker!"

"I—I—"

Coker stuttered. It was not often that he was at a loss for words, but on this occasion he obviously did not know what to say.

"I am shocked, Coker!" went on Mr. Prout, in his ponderous manner. "Accustomed as I am to your childish lack of concentration in class, I can hardly believe that I have had to shout your name three times before obtaining a reply!"

"Th-three times?" stuttered Coker, turning very red. "I'm afraid I didn't quite hear you at first!"

"Obviously not!" retorted Mr. Prout tartly. "And what, pray, was the subject that so completely claimed your attention?"

"H'm! I—I was thinking all about the lesson, sir," answered Coker, rather sheepishly. "All about Livy, you know, sir!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Prout, raising his

eyebrows. "And what were you thinking about Livy, Coker?"

"Hem! You've taken it out of my mind now, sir!" answered Coker, rubbing his chin in perplexity. "I think it was about his notes on the Gallic Wars, sir—Gaul being divided into three parts, and all that, you know!"

Mr. Prout snorted and the Fifth grinned. Coker was not very bright at any subject, but when it came to the Classics his lack of knowledge was quite alarming. Cæsar, Livy, Virgil, Sophocles, Euripides, and the other classic gentlemen whose works were either studied or referred to in the Fifth Form were all one to Horace Coker.

Mr. Prout was aware of that fact. Nevertheless, when he heard Coker seriously ascribe Cæsar's famous remark about Gaul to Titus Livius he could hardly refrain from snorting.

"So Livy was the subject of your thoughts about the lesson, was he, Coker?" he observed grimly. "I can only conclude, then, that your mind has become extremely confused, for up to this moment I have not mentioned Livy!"

"Oh!"

"Your conduct in class is becoming more and more reprehensible!" said Mr. Prout, in his most magisterial tones. "I have been watching you during the last five minutes, and I am quite certain that you have not heard a word I have said!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Coker, rather shaken by the knowledge that the Form master's eye had been on him so long. "But, sir—"

"Silence! I have come to the conclusion, Coker, that you have been



When Horace Coker gets "spoons" on a fair young lady he finds himself involved in all manner of adventures and thrilling situations. Yet the champion duffer of the Fifth emerges from them with great credit, which surprises no one more than Horace Coker himself!

writing something on a sheet of paper under your desk! Kindly bring it out to me!"

The rest of the Form regarded Coker curiously. Coker himself was evidently undergoing a variety of emotions at Mr. Prout's sudden command, for his face changed from red to purple, then back to red again, during the few moments that elapsed while he was hesitating.

"I—I— It was only a few notes I was scribbling, sir!" he said lamely.

"I intend to confirm the truth of that, Coker!" said Mr. Prout severely. "Bring the paper to me at once!"

Coker rose and made his way slowly to the front of the class, holding in one of his big hands a piece of paper, over which his weird hieroglyphics were sprawled. What the paper contained that Coker did not want Mr. Prout to see the Fifth could not guess. Whatever it was, Coker's behaviour made it quite clear that he was not anxious for Mr. Prout to see it.

Mr. Prout, however, apparently had every intention of seeing it, for he took it from Coker's reluctant hand, and adjusted his glasses in quite a decided manner.

Coker stood by the Form master's desk, and waited. The Fifth waited, too. It was most unusual for Coker to be wearing such a sheepish expression as he was wearing at that moment, and they began to wonder what Mr. Prout had stumbled across.

Mr. Prout examined the mysterious paper with great care, and as he read Coker's notes, a look of bewilderment spread over his podgy face.

"Dear me!" he said, at last, giving Coker a very peculiar look, and getting stiffly to his feet. "Is it possible—is it credible, Coker, that you have been spending your time in class, inventing this preposterous doggerel? Answer me!"

"Doggerel, sir?" said Coker, recovering his sang-froid, and looking rather indignant. "That's poetry, sir!"

There was a chuckle from the Fifth, as they realised what the paper contained. It was easy now to understand why Coker had not wished Mr. Prout to see it.

Mr. Prout flourished the piece of paper dramatically before the class.

"This, boys, is the result of Coker's studies in Latin, this morning!" he said, bestowing a glare upon Coker before reading the paper aloud.

He cleared his throat, and began to recite:

"ODE TO KITTY.

"You have a face, a face, that is so fair,
A smile, a smile, a smile, so rare, so rare,
Upon your head, some golden hair,
hair, hair,
No wonder that I stare, stare, stare,
stare, stare!"

There was a howl of laughter from the Fifth. They could not help themselves, though it was evident from the expression on Mr. Prout's face that he did not see the funny side of it.

"Silence, please!" boomed Mr. Prout, giving another angry look at Coker. "Here is another verse:

"Although I seldom take much note of girls,
At sight of you, my head, it whirls, it whirls;
Those lips, those cheeks, those curls, those curls,
And rows of teeth like pearls, pearls, pearls, pearls, pearls, pearls!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of rows of teeth like pearls, pearls, pearls, pearls, pearls, evidently struck the Fifth as funny. They roared.

"And so," said Mr. Prout, silencing the laughter with a sharp gesture, "we see how the most stupid and backward scholar in the Fifth passes away his time in class—in the writing of nonsense-verses!"

"But—but they're not nonsense-verses, sir!" gasped Coker indignantly. "That's a poem, and a jolly good one, too, I think!"

Mr. Prout looked long and hard at Coker.

"Are you serious, Coker?" he asked at last. "You are not endeavouring, I trust, to play a joke on me? You really mean that those ridiculous verses were written in good faith?"

"Of course they were, sir!" retorted Coker. "And I don't see that they are ridiculous, either!"

Mr. Prout drew a deep breath. "In that case," he said ponderously, "the matter is even more serious than I had imagined it to be. Kindly stay behind after lessons this morning and I will discuss it with you."

"But I can't, sir!" said Coker, in dismay.

"Indeed, Coker! And pray, why not?"

"I have an appointment soon after dinner, and I want to get ready!"

The Fifth chuckled. That reply was just like Coker.

"Your appointment must wait!" snapped the Fifth Form master angrily. "I desire no more argument with you, Coker! Return to your desk at once!"

Coker grunted and went back to his place, and the lesson proceeded. And the amateur poet was reluctantly compelled to pay more attention to Latin for the rest of the morning.

After the class was dismissed, Coker stayed behind, and when the last member of the Fifth had departed from the Form-room, Mr. Prout motioned him up to his desk.

"Now, Coker," he began, regarding that troublesome individual with a far from affectionate look. "I have kept you behind in order that you may talk quite freely. I desire an explanation of your extraordinary conduct in composing this nonsensical verse. First, you say it was written in all seriousness?"

"Certainly it was, sir," answered Coker promptly. "I—"

"Then, in that case," said Mr. Prout, cutting short Coker's remarks, "there actually exists a person to whom the absurd lines were composed?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" admitted Coker rather reluctantly. "I hadn't intended—"

"You hadn't intended that I should know!" barked Mr. Prout. "No! I can well understand that, Coker! I can well understand that!"

He regarded Coker with knitted brows.

"And who, may I ask, is the—ahem!—the person, in question?" he demanded.

"Well—" Coker hesitated. "I'd rather not—"

"You will kindly answer my question!" snapped Mr. Prout. "I demand to know the name of the—ahem!—person!"

"Well, if you must know, sir," growled Coker reluctantly, "it's Miss Kitty Collinson!"

"Indeed! And who may—er—Miss Kitty Collinson be?"

"She's the daughter of a coastguard at Pegg, sir!"

"The daughter of a coastguard at Pegg!" repeated Mr. Prout, beginning to look quite horrified, now that he realised the import of Coker's answers.

"And pray, how did you come to meet the daughter of a coastguard at Pegg?"

"I—well—I nearly knocked her over when I was riding my motor-bike along the cliffs one day," explained Coker. "After that, I gave her a lift home on the back."

Mr. Prout's eyebrows went up in horror.

"And you have seen this person since that occasion?" he asked sternly.

"Several times," answered Coker quite dreamily. "But I can assure you, sir, she's a wonderful girl! You should see her eyes—"

"What!"

"Like stars, you know, sir! And her teeth—"

"Boy!"

"Like pearls! And her nose—"

"Stop!" roared Mr. Prout. "How dare you, Coker!"

He glared at Coker, his eyes almost dilated with horror.

"Coker!" he boomed. "I am shocked—shocked beyond all measure—at the confession you have made!"

"Oh, sir!"

"I have had occasion before, to remark on your extreme stupidity, but never before did I realise how incredibly silly you are!" continued Mr. Prout angrily.

"Oh, but I say, sir—"

"Silence! You are notoriously the most backward boy in the Form, and you, of all people, should be the one to devote most attention to your studies. Your backwardness, I may say, has become a serious problem, both to myself, and the headmaster."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Please do not interrupt me with absurd slang expressions! You, I say, should be the one to apply yourself most assiduously to the studies in which you are so backward. Instead of that, you are continually wasting your time in class!"

Coker looked indignant, but did not venture to interrupt again.

"But inattentive as you are, I should never have dreamed, but for the finding of this paper, that your thoughts were taken up with the daughter of a coast-guard at Pegg!" said Mr. Prout, banging the desk with his fat fist to emphasise his remarks. "I must repeat, Coker, that your confession has shocked me beyond all measure. You are the most stupid and ridiculous boy I have ever met in my life!"

Coker's lips opened, but he was so indignant for the time being, that he could not find words to express his feelings.

"And now," continued Mr. Prout, "I must give you a most solemn warning, Coker. Unless this absurd—er—friendship ceases, the consequences for you are going to be most serious."

"Oh!"

"I cannot allow such a preposterous affair to interfere with your studies, and I do not intend that it shall. I therefore order you not to go within a mile of the village of Pegg until such time as I give you permission."

"Oh!"

"Furthermore, if I catch you on one single occasion breaking bounds in the direction of Pegg, I shall immediately request the headmaster to transfer you to a lower Form."

"Oh, dear!"

Coker gasped, as the full meaning of Mr. Prout's words penetrated his brain. One visit to Pegg, and he—Coker—would be back in the Shell! Or even—horrors—in the Upper Fourth! The mere thought was sufficient to make Coker's ruddy face turn pale.

"Oh dear!" he gasped. "Do you really mean that, sir?"

"I was never more serious, Coker!" answered Mr. Prout firmly. "I am of opinion, indeed, that such a transfer might be for your ultimate good, and in the event of your disobeying my

command in regard to Pegg, I shall not hesitate to recommend the headmaster to put it into effect!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The dreadful possibility of such a degradation left Coker almost stunned. "You may go!" concluded Mr. Prout abruptly.

"But, sir—"

"I do not think the matter requires any further discussion, Coker! You may go!"

Coker went!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Exchange of Caps!

"IT'S awkward!"

"Yes, old chap!"

"It's very awkward!" said Coker with a frown.

Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, nodded agreement, though what it was that their leader considered awkward, they hadn't the least idea.

Coker and his study-mates had just finished their dinner, and had strolled out into the quad. During dinner, Coker had maintained a thoughtful silence that was most unusual for him. Potter and Greene guessed that it was associated with their leader's interview with Mr. Prout after class, but in what way, they did not know. The existence of Miss Kitty Collinson, of Pegg, was as completely unknown to them as it had been to Mr. Prout before Coker had enlightened him.

"You see there's no time for me to wire her," said Coker, speaking to himself more than to his chums.

"Eh?"

"No time to wire her, you know!"

"No, I suppose not!" agreed Potter. "We haven't the faintest notion what you're talking about, but I expect you're right—you usually are!"

"What the dickens am I to do?" demanded Coker.

"Ask me another!" grinned Potter.

"You're talking Greek to me, old man!"

Coker stared moodily at his two followers.

"Ah, I forgot you chaps didn't know!" he murmured. "The fact is, I'm in a bit of a fix."

"Oh!"

"You see I'd arranged to see a lady this afternoon," explained Coker. "Miss Kitty Collinson, of Pegg, you know!"

"And who the dickens is she when she's at home?" asked Greene, staring.

"I don't want any of your cheek, William Greene!" growled Coker.

"Miss Kitty Collinson is a personal friend of mine, and anyone who says a word against her will have to answer to me!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Potter and Greene looked at their leader in dismay.

"I say, old man," said Greene uneasily, "you don't mean to tell us you're spoons on some blessed girl?"

"I don't like the expression," said Coker, frowning. "But, anyway, you chaps, you should see her eyes!"

"Eh?"

"Her eyes, you know! Like stars! And her teeth—"

"Her teeth?" stuttered Potter.

"Like pearls!" murmured Coker poetically. "You should just see her, you chaps!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'd arranged to meet her this afternoon," went on Coker gloomily. "And now that silly old duffer Prout has gone and put his foot in it!"

"So I should jolly well think!" snorted Potter. "You ought to be grateful to him for looking after you."

"He's gone and put Pegg out of bounds for me!" said Coker bitterly. "Out of bounds, you know—for me!—just as if I were a blessed fag!"

"Well, if you told him you were spoony on a girl at Pegg, you were asking him to!" commented Greene.

"Begging and praying for it, in fact!" added Potter.

"Idiots!" grunted Coker. "Anyway, the awkward thing about it is that I've arranged to see her this afternoon at Pegg, and Prout's made it impossible for me to keep the appointment. There's no time to wire, so, as I say, I'm in a fix!"

"Blessed if I see it!" said Potter. "There's an easy solution."

"What's that?"

"Don't turn up!"

"Easy!" smiled Greene. "Don't turn up! Come along and watch us at cricket practice, instead, old chap!"

"Rot!"

"Come along, old man!" urged Potter, linking arms with Coker. "Forget it, and come with us!"

"Bosh!" said Coker, shaking himself free, and glaring at his chums. "Fine pals you are, I must say! Watch you at the nets, indeed! I'd sooner watch a hopscotch match!"

"Well, we're on Big Side all the afternoon, anyway," said Potter. "If you change your mind you'll know where to find us."

"And, incidentally," added Greene, "I suppose it's about time we changed our clobber. Coming along, Potter?"

Potter nodded.

"I'm ready, if you are. What are you going to do, Coker?"

"One thing I'm certainly not going to do is to watch you try to knock a ball about!" snorted Coker. "And I think you chaps had better call it off, too!"

"Eh?"

"You chaps can help me out this afternoon, and, what's more, you're going to!" said Coker decisively. "What I want you to do is to run over to Pegg for me, and take a message, arranging a fresh appointment at Friardale. Old Prouty said nothing about Friardale being out of bounds, so it'll be all right if I meet her there."

"Sorry!" said Potter and Greene together.

"We would if we could, you know," explained Greene. "But—"

"We can't!" finished Potter. "Sorry, old chap!"

Coker glared at his henchmen quite savagely.

"I'll make you sorrier still, in a minute!" he snorted. "I've a good mind to knock your silly heads together! Mean to say you seriously intend to turn up at your rotten cricket practice when I want you?"

"We do!" answered Potter.

"We do, we does!" supplemented Greene humorously.

"Then I'll jolly soon make you change your minds!" roared Coker.

Coker's patience was usually exhausted in a short space of time, and he certainly had none left now. The idea of his two trusty followers refusing to cut cricket practice when he, Horace Coker, needed them, made him see red, so to speak.

He took a pace forward, and reached out with his big hands to make a sudden grab at Potter and Greene.

Potter and Greene evidently did not want to be grabbed by Coker's big hands, for they dodged simultaneously, and easily succeeded in evading their outraged leader.



Bunter's heart began to thump wildly as he heard the shuffle of feet. For one second he stood petrified, then, tucking the cake under his arm, he leaped wildly out of the little shop and raced away down the village street as fast as his little fat legs would carry him. (See Chapter 3.)

What happened next was like a nightmare to Coker.

He felt two pairs of hands seize him forcibly, jerk him off his feet, and deposit him with a bump on the hard, unsympathetic gravel path.

Coker was so astonished that he allowed this outrage to be committed almost without resistance, and by the time he had collected his thoughts again Potter and Greene had vanished.

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Coker dazedly. "The—the cheeky rotters! The ungrateful cads! M-my hat!"

He could hardly realise that he had been bumped—bumped like a Third Form fag—by his own chums, and for quite a long time Coker sat on the gravel path like one in a dream.

Then, fairly boiling over with indignation, he staggered to his feet, and tramped back towards the School House. At any other time, he would have pursued his attackers, but time was precious if he was to get a message over to Pegg in time to divert the course of Miss Kitty Collinson.

Just as Coker leaped up the steps of the School House, a fat form rolled out of the entrance.

Coker was going too quickly to avert a collision, and there was what a novelist might have described as a sickening thud as the two met.

"Yaroooop!"

"Groooogh!"

Crash!

Locked in affectionate embrace, the two whirled round, then crashed through the doorway to the floor within.

Billy Bunter, of the Remove—for it was he—roared with pain as Coker's hard head cannoned into his fat chin.

"Whooop! Gerroff my chest, you rotter! Help! Murder! Police!"

"You clumsy idiot!" gasped Coker, getting to his feet again. "Why didn't you get out of the way?"

"Beast!" howled Bunter, nursing his injured chin with one hand and tenderly feeling for broken bones with the other. "Ow! I'm dead! You've killed me! Beast! Ow-ow-ow!"

"Get up, and stop howling!" hooted Coker furiously. "I'm in a hurry, and you're sitting on my cap! Get up, or I'll kick you!"

With another howl, Billy Bunter grabbed one of the two caps on which he had been sitting, and made a flying leap out of reach of Coker's big boot.

Coker picked up the other cap from the floor, and, jamming it on his ruffled locks, continued his interrupted journey, raging, while Bunter, with many a groan, rolled off into the quad.

In the excitement of the collision, neither Bunter nor Coker had had time to notice details. And neither of them was aware of one trivial result of their spill that was destined to lead to quite a surprising series of results within the day or two that followed.

If Coker and Bunter had looked inside their caps at the spot where their names were sown in, events might have happened in quite a different way. But they didn't take that precaution.

Consequently, Coker and Bunter went their respective ways in blissful ignorance of the fact that their caps had become exchanged.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes the Cake!

BILLY Bunter hesitated outside Mrs. Mimble's little tuck-shop behind the elms.

After leaving Coker, he had made a bee-line for the shop, but now that he had reached his objective, he hesitated.

His hesitancy was not caused by any doubt about feeling hungry. In spite

of the fact that it was but half an hour since he had eaten enough dinner for three, Bunter still felt hungry enough to do justice to a large-sized snack in the school shop. In any case, no considerations of that kind had ever kept him away from tuck. Bunter hesitated for quite another reason.

As a necessary preliminary to the purchase of comestibles from Mrs. Mimble, customers usually brought some money with them.

Billy Bunter had no money.

Therefore, he hesitated.

He gazed longingly at the array of jam-tarts, cream-puffs, meringues, and eclairs temptingly displayed in the window of the little shop. The sight of them was sufficient to whet the appetite of the Owl of the Remove, and the thought of his impecunious condition made them seem very desirable indeed.

After a little more hesitation, Bunter rolled into the shop.

Mrs. Mimble frowned as she appeared from her back parlour and recognised her fat customer. Bunter was not a favourite of Mrs. Mimble's.

"Well, Master Bunter?"

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Mimble!" said Bunter affably. "Nice weather, ma'am!"

Mrs. Mimble looked even grimmer. Such a polite greeting from Bunter was not a good sign, in her estimation.

"Those look topping meringues you've got in the window!" said Billy Bunter, eyeing Mrs. Mimble rather dubiously through his big spectacles. "I was thinking of having some for a little spread I'm standing to-day!"

"Then I hope you've got the money to pay for them, Master Bunter!" said Mrs. Mimble, with painful lucidity.

Billy Bunter coughed.

"Hem! Well, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Mimble, I haven't actually got the

cash on me. What I was going to suggest was that you let me have the stuff now, and leave the settlement till this evening, when I'm expecting a postal-order."

Mrs. Mimble's plump lip curled derisively. She had heard of Bunter's celebrated postal-order before.

"I'm afraid you will have to wait for the meringues until your postal-order arrives, then!" she said, making a move towards her back parlour again.

"Look here, Mrs. Mimble, be sensible!" urged Bunter. "I tell you there's some money in the post for me—from one of my titled relations, you know! It's bound to arrive by the evening delivery, and as soon as it comes I'll settle for the blessed meringues all right. What about letting me have a dozen, say?"

Mrs. Mimble did not trouble to answer that question. She ambled back into her little room, leaving Bunter to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Bunter breathed hard. It was always a difficult matter for Bunter to exercise politeness towards those whom he considered to belong to the lower orders, and it had cost him quite an effort to speak to Mrs. Mimble in so amiable a manner. The realisation that all his trouble had been for nothing was very exasperating to William George Bunter.

He gazed fondly at the meringues, and edged a little towards them. Unless something had occurred to stay his hand, it was highly probable that Bunter would have yielded to the temptation to help himself. But at that moment a fresh customer entered the shop in the person of Walker of the Sixth.

Walker gave the fat Remove a suspicious look.

"What are you up to?" he demanded. "On the prowl?"

"Oh, really, Walker—"

"Get out of here!" said Walker impatiently. Walker had a quick way with juniors, particularly juniors who feared him, among whom Bunter was to be numbered.

"But, I say, Walker—"

"Get out, I tell you!" roared Walker, giving Bunter a cuff on the ear that sent the fat junior staggering out of the shop.

"Beast!" howled Bunter, from the doorway. "Brute! Yah!"

Walker took a step towards him, and Bunter fled.

The Owl of the Remove rolled down to the school gates in a most disconsolate frame of mind. Before his visit to the school tuckshop he had not been particularly hungry. But the sight of Mrs. Mimble's fresh supply of pastries had stirred his imagination, and he felt quite ravenous now.

His prospects of obtaining anything to eat before teatime were, to put it mildly, remote. Peter Todd, his study-mate, was down to his last sixpence. And when Bunter had suggested a loan of precisely that amount, Todd had refused in no uncertain manner, emphasising his answer with the aid of a cricket-stump.

The only possibility Bunter could think of was Uncle Clegg, the proprietor of the tuckshop at Friardale.

In the past, Bunter had often pointed out to Uncle Clegg the amazing business advantages to be derived from the credit system. He had explained on innumerable occasions that all big businesses had been built up on a credit basis, and had hinted that the application of credit principles to a tuckshop in Friardale would result in its becoming a kind of second Selfridge's within

a short space of time. It seemed to follow that Uncle Clegg's first step towards fame and fortune should be to allow Billy Bunter to eat as much stock as he could without paying. But, strangely enough, Uncle Clegg had never allowed Bunter to help him to prosperity in that manner.

Billy Bunter, therefore, did not entertain very high hopes of obtaining a supply of tuck "on the nod" from Uncle Clegg. He was not, however, without hope altogether. It was quite a long time since he had mentioned the credit system to the crusty old tuckshop proprietor, and possibly Uncle Clegg had lost some of his old touchiness over the proposition by now.

A drowning man will clutch at a straw, and Billy Bunter rolled down the lane towards Friardale with the intention of clutching at Uncle Clegg.

Bunter was not fond of exercise, and he did not enjoy the walk to Friardale. The thought of tuck, however, spurred him on, and he did not take long to reach the village.

He put so much vigour into the walk, in fact, that, by the time Uncle Clegg's shop was in sight, he was hot and breathless.

"Phew!" gasped Bunter. "If the old codger lets me down after all this I—"

He shuddered at the thought of a weary and hopeless trudge back to Greyfriars without a feed of some sort to sustain him. It was not to be thought of. Bunter rolled into Uncle Clegg's with a very determined look on his fat face.

Inside the shop, he sat down heavily on one of Uncle Clegg's stools, and, taking off his cap—or, to be strictly correct, Coker's cap—mopped his heated brow for some seconds, and gasped.

Uncle Clegg was nowhere to be seen, and Bunter craned his fat neck to see if he was in the back-parlour. There was no sign of him in that little room, however, and for a moment the fat Remove began to wonder where the old tuckshop proprietor could be. Then, from beyond the back-parlour, he heard the sound of hammering, and of wood splintering, which seemed to indicate that Uncle Clegg was breaking open a wooden case—probably containing fresh stock of some description.

Billy Bunter listened, and his little eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

He had come in with every intention of indulging in a wordy battle with Uncle Clegg for the possession of enough tuck to satisfy his present needs. He had intended using every argument he could think of to extract something or other from the old gentleman, on the promise of payment in the sweet by-and-by.

But he knew that the argument would be lengthy and exhausting, and the outcome extremely doubtful. And Bunter was tired after his unaccustomed exercise.

Uncle Clegg was not in his shop. Why, then, trouble him with argument? Why not take the required tuck, and make a graceful exit before Uncle Clegg returned? Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed at the thought.

Of course, the money could be paid later on—out of the next postal-order, whenever that might come along. The fact that his contemplated action bore a remarkably close resemblance to stealing did not trouble Bunter very much. Bunter had a very hazy idea of what was right and what was wrong. Usually, in his obtuseness, he managed to persuade his wrongs into rights without much difficulty.

There was a large cake displayed

on the counter—a cake of quite imposing dimensions, with almonds on the top, and apparently a large quantity of fruit within. The sight of it made Billy Bunter's mouth water. His eyes fixed on it greedily.

Uncle Clegg seemed unaware that a customer was in the shop, for the hammering still continued. Billy Bunter looked round cautiously. There was nobody outside the shop, and the village street was clear.

The fat junior slipped quietly off the stool, and reached over to the cake. A moment later he was holding it in his fat hands. Then he hesitated.

It would hardly do to walk through Friardale holding a large cake, without some kind of wrapping to cover it. The appearance of Bunter under such circumstances would be likely to excite suspicion in the most unsuspecting passer-by.

He leaned over the counter, and detached a large paper bag from Uncle Clegg's supply. He acted as quietly as possible, for paper was inclined to rustle, and there was a danger that the attention of Uncle Clegg might be attracted.

And, carefully as Bunter went to work, that was exactly what happened.

The hammering ceased, and Bunter's heart began to thump wildly as he heard the shuffle of the old proprietor's feet leaving his work and entering the back-parlour.

For just one second Bunter stood petrified.

Then, tucking the well-stuffed bag under his arm, he leaped wildly out of the little shop, and raced away down the village street as fast as his little fat legs would carry him.

Fear lent Bunter wings, and the speediest runners in the Lower School at Greyfriars would have found it difficult to outpace him as he fled through Friardale that wintry afternoon.

When he was out of sight of the shop, however, he slowed down a little, and eventually fell into a walking pace, panting and blowing like a grampus from his short run.

His fat face was shining happily now. He had secured the cake—a magnificent cake, in fact—and it was evident from the fact that no alarm had been raised behind him, that Uncle Clegg had not immediately noticed his loss, and in all probability had not seen Billy Bunter's retreating figure. Bunter felt that he had done well.

As soon as he reached the woods Billy Bunter left the road and dived into them, and at the first secluded spot sat down on a tree-trunk and fetched out the cake.

"By Jove! This is something like!" murmured the Owl, surveying his prize with admiration.

He broke off a piece and tasted it, and his eyes glistened behind his spectacles. It was a cake for a connoisseur.

For the next ten minutes the fat junior's jaws were working steadily, and by that time the cake had shrunk to a shadow of its former self. A few minutes later the last crumb had disappeared, and Bunter, with a contented sigh, threw the paper-bag into some bushes and smacked his lips with satisfaction.

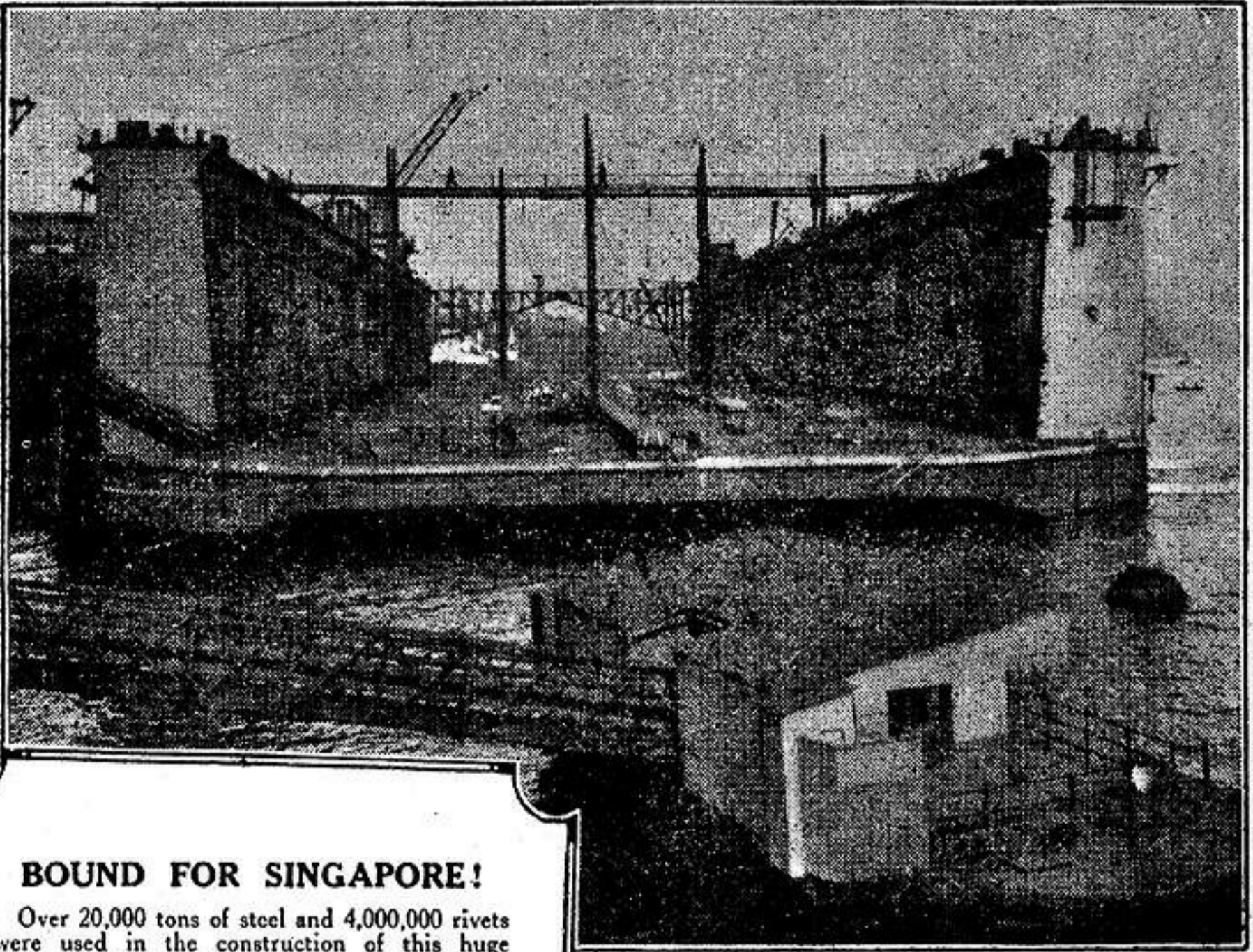
Billy Bunter continued to sit on the tree-trunk for a few minutes longer, ruminating on that glorious cake, Uncle Clegg, and the possibility of the latter suspecting Bunter. All of a sudden Bunter clapped his hand to his head and started violently.

"My hat!" he gasped.

For once in a way that exclamation had literally some connection with the

(Continued on page 8.)

News Pars and Pictures.



BOUND FOR SINGAPORE!

Over 20,000 tons of steel and 4,000,000 rivets were used in the construction of this huge floating dock which is destined for the naval base at Singapore. In the walls of the dock are extensive workshops containing a wide range of machinery for repair work. Eight powerful tugs will tow this mighty product of the Tyne to its destination, via the Suez Canal, a distance of 8,500 miles.



FIDO, THE LION-TAMER!

Yes, it's a real lion, boys—and a real dog! This surely must be the first time on record that the king of beasts and friend Fido have so far settled their differences as to lie down together. But it is open to question how long this comradeship would last if someone threw them a bone!

THE HERO OF THE FIFTH!

(Continued from page 6.)

matter he was thinking of. For Billy Bunter had suddenly realised that he was not wearing his school cap.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped. "What a silly ass!"

He remembered at once what had happened. He had left the cap lying on the counter at Uncle Clegg's shop. And Uncle Clegg would find it! And, as Billy thought, his—Billy Bunter's—name was inside it.

Bunter jumped to his feet, his podgy face blanching. The fat was in the fire now. Uncle Clegg would come up to the school and see the Head. Trouble, with a capital T, would follow. A flogging—possibly the sack! Bunter shuddered and began to wish very heartily that he had not been tempted now.

Billy Bunter rolled slowly off in the direction of Greyfriars with a sinking heart. He had had his feast, and now the reckoning was to come.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker Takes a Chance!

CRASH!
"What the dickens——"
Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent of the Remove looked up in surprise.

They were just getting ready to leave Study No. 1, and proceed to Little Side for the cricket match that had been arranged with the Shell, when there was a thunderous kick on the study door.

A moment later the door was flung open and Coker of the Fifth entered.

Coker was not looking at all pleased with himself.

Since his violent collision with Bunter he had been searching the House for a messenger to go to Pegg. And so far he had been unlucky. There was a singular lack of enthusiasm on the part of the fags to fag for Horace Coker. Everywhere he went the Third and Second-Formers melted away like snow before the summer sun. It was most annoying, but there it was.

Wharton and Nugent were not aware of the misfortunes that had befallen Coker. And even if they had been their feelings at Coker's violent entry would not have been particularly amiable.

They glared at the intruder, in fact, with glares that were the reverse of amiable.

"Looking for a thick ear, Coker?" asked Wharton pleasantly.

Coker looked surprised.

"Or a dot on the eye?" suggested Frank Nugent.

"What's the matter with you kids?" asked Coker, with a puzzled look.

"People who walk into this study by you method usually get one or the other," explained Wharton.

"Mean my kicking on the door?" snorted Coker. "Don't talk rot! I'm not in the habit of wasting politeness on scrubby fags! I want one of you to run over to Pegg for me."

"Oh, you do, do you?"

"Anything else we can do at the same time?" asked Frank Nugent, with a grin. "Run over to Lantham or Wapshot or Timbuctoo, or something?"

"I tell you I want one of you to run over to Pegg!" repeated Coker, raising his voice. "Any more back-answers and I'll lam you!"

"Oh!"

"And I want you to look slippy about it, too!" continued Coker, sitting down

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at the study table and producing a fountain-pen. "No hanging about in the road to play marbles, or anything like that. Give me a sheet of notepaper and an envelope, will you?"

The Removites looked at Coker almost breathlessly.

"You mean it, do you?" asked Harry Wharton. "It's not a leg-pull, or anything like that? You really want us to go to Pegg for you?"

"Of course I do!" hooted Coker. "What the thump do you think?"

"And when you want people to run messages for you, is this the way you usually ask them?" asked Harry wonderingly.

Coker snorted.

"Look here, young Wharton, no cheek from you or you'll regret it! As I say, I want you to run over to Pegg for me. I've arranged to meet a lady friend there, but—ahem!—owing to circumstances, I can't meet her there, so I want to change the rendezvous to Friardale instead. See?"

"I see," answered the skipper of the Remove. "And you want one of us to go there—eh?"

Coker nodded.

"And you think we're going, do you?"

"Of course."

"Sorry to disillusion you," smiled Harry Wharton. "Collar him, Franky!"

The two Removites piled into Coker with zest, and there was a wild yell from the hero of the Fifth as he felt the chair lifted from under him and strong hands seize his shoulders and arms.

"Fling him out!" gasped Wharton.

"Neck and crop!" grinned Nugent.

Coker, fairly bellowing with rage, was hustled to the door, which Wharton opened. In the doorway Coker put up a fierce resistance, and, being stronger and heavier than his aggressors, he might well have turned the tables on them had it not been for the intervention of others.

But he was in the enemy's camp, and, attracted by the row, Removites were looking out from other studies along the passage now.

There was a roar at the sight of Coker.

"Fifth Form cad!"

"Turn him out!"

"Scrag him!"

"Give him socks!"

The fellows swarmed down the passage to Study No. 1, and fell upon Coker in a body.

"Here, keep off, you young idiots!" howled Coker, in alarm. "I'll spifficate you! I'll— Yow-ow-ow! Yaroooh!"

The Remove gave Coker short shrift, and for the next minute or so the unfortunate Fifth-Former felt as though a violent earthquake were going on all round him. In actual fact, he was pulled about, bumped, rolled over on the floor, carried down the passage, and pitched down the stairs leading to the floor below. There was a series of bumps as Coker descended the flight, and each bump was accompanied by a fresh yell of mingled pain and rage.

The Removites, in a grinning group, shouted and waved affectionate farewells from the landing at the top.

"Good-bye, Horace!" sang out Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Sorry you couldn't stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Drop in again when you feel like it!" yelled Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker picked himself up at the bottom of the stairs, and shook his fist furiously at the hilarious Removites. For a moment it looked as if he intended to renew the assault, and the juniors stood

ready to give him a warm welcome. Discretion, however, proved to be the better part of valour, and Coker, with a gulp of rage and disappointment, tramped off, while the Remove cheerfully returned to their studies.

Horace Coker's brain was by the time in quite a whirl. It was now getting on for half-past two. And his appointment was for a quarter to three. He began to realise that it was practically impossible to get a message over in time now. That meant that he was faced with two alternatives—to miss his appointment, or to break bounds. And neither of them seemed very satisfactory to Coker.

The dreadful punishment that had been promised him in the event of his going to Pegg hung over him like the Sword of Damocles. It took a lot to scare Horace Coker, but the possibility of being removed to a lower Form certainly did scare him. Whatever his feelings for Miss Kitty Collinson might be—and in spite of Coker's seriousness they probably did not amount to more than an erratic mood on the part of a rather more erratic youth—it was very doubtful whether, in the ordinary way, he would have risked such shameful degradation to see her. But this occasion was different. He had promised to meet her. And the word of a Coker was his bond.

Coker felt that whatever the results for himself might be, in view of the fact that he had failed to alter the rendezvous, he would have to go over to Pegg that afternoon.

Having made up his mind on that point, he once more tramped out of the School House.

Mr. Prout met him on the steps, and glanced at him in disapproval.

Coker "capped" him, and would have passed on, but the Fifth Form master detained him with a gesture.

"You are very dirty, Coker!" he said severely.

Coker realised, with a start, that he had not yet brushed away the effects of his scuffle with the Remove.

"I am ashamed to see a member of my Form going about in such a disgraceful condition," went on Mr. Prout, frowning. "Have you been amusing yourself by rolling in the dust, Coker?"

"Nunno!" gasped Coker, quite truthfully. He had certainly been rolling in the dust, but the process had been the reverse of amusing.

"Your filthy condition is evidence to me of more of the childish horseplay in which you are continually indulging!" barked Mr. Prout. "Take a hundred lines, and go back and brush yourself at once!"

"Oh crumbs! But——"

"Do not bandy words with me, Coker! Go!"

Coker turned back, and his feelings towards Mr. Prout as he leaped up the stairs again were almost homicidal.

It did not take him long to brush himself down, and within a few minutes he was racing down the stairs again. In spite of his quickness, however, he fumed at the delay, for every minute was precious now.

He sped along the gravel path in front of the School House like a champion on the cinder-track, without once slackening speed until he reached the shed where his motor-cycle was stored. Then he brought out that famous "jigger" and wheeled it as quickly as he could down to the gates. The rules of the school prevented him riding it down the footpath, or he would certainly have done so.

Coker frowned as he reached the gates, for Mr. Prout was standing there,



Coker seized a travelling-rug and with one hand began vigorously to stifle the tongues of fire, while with the other he tested the extent of the force which pinned down the unconscious man. "Tell them to back the van away!" he called out. "I can't get this man free till they do!" (See Chapter 5.)

watching his progress very suspiciously. Evidently Mr. Prout was keeping an eye on Coker that afternoon.

"Ah, Coker!" he exclaimed. "It is your intention to go for a ride, I perceive! I trust you have not forgotten our talk after class this morning!"

"No, sir," growled Coker rather sorely.

"Let me remind you again that the village of Pegg is strictly out of bounds for you until further notice," said Mr. Prout.

"I understand that, sir!"

"I am glad to hear it. Where are you going now?"

"To Friardale, sir," answered Coker.

That was quite true. As a matter of fact, the road that led direct to Pegg was under repair. The best road to Pegg just then, from a motorist's point of view, was through Friardale, and Coker meant to go that way.

"Very well, Coker," said Mr. Prout. His looks, however, seemed to indicate that things were by no means very well.

He watched Coker start up the engine grimly, and his face was still full of suspicion as Coker drove wildly away in the direction of Friardale.

When Coker had disappeared round a bend in the lane, Mr. Prout crossed over to the porter's lodge, where Gosling was engaged in mending a window-sash.

"Afternoon, sir!" remarked the school porter laconically.

"Good-afternoon, Gosling! Do you happen to know whether any of the other masters have gone out walking this afternoon?"

"Wot I says is this 'ere: A man can't mend a window-sash and watch who goes hout at the same time," answered the crusty old official.

"You haven't noticed Mr. Quelch?"

"No, sir. But 'ere 'e comes, now you speak of 'im!"

Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form master, dressed in walking attire, came striding down to the gates as Gosling spoke.

He nodded stiffly to Mr. Prout. Mr. Prout was rather a bore, and the Remove master was inclined to keep him at a distance.

"Ah, Mr. Quelch! Out for a walk?" asked Mr. Prout.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Prout! I was contemplating a walk over the cliffs and down to Pegg."

Mr. Quelch felt that that answer would keep Mr. Prout away from him for the afternoon. The walk to Pegg over the cliffs was not a very long one, but it involved a good deal of hill-climbing, and Mr. Prout, in the usual way, was not particularly fond of exercise.

On this occasion, however, to Mr. Quelch's disappointment, he fell in with the idea quite enthusiastically.

"Well, I suppose you can put up with my company, can't you?" he asked jocularly. "I think I'll come with you."

Mr. Quelch nodded grimly. He couldn't very well get out of it.

Gosling chuckled and turned to his work again, and the two masters started down the lane on their walk to Pegg.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker to the Rescue!

ON leaving Mr. Prout, Coker went "all out" on his machine. Coker had never been an apostle of the gospel of "Safety First," and rules of the road and local speed regulations were usually ignored by him. On this occasion he

excelled himself, and his wild and erratic progress caused quite a lot of excitement to the passing pedestrians along the Friardale Lane.

He tore through the sleepy village of Friardale at a furious rate, and it was fortunate that nobody was about, or a bad accident might easily have occurred. As luck would have it, however, the village street was deserted, with the exception of a fat junior wearing a Greyfriars cap, who was just entering Uncle Clegg's tuckshop. Coker did not notice him.

Leaving Friardale behind, he turned up into the road leading to Pegg, and, with the keen sea breeze whistling past his ears, raced along towards the village where he had arranged to meet the fascinating Miss Collinson.

It was exactly a quarter to three as he came in sight of the sea. Coker gave a grunt of satisfaction. Considering the interference he had met with, he thought he had done very well.

He slowed up coming into the village, and came to a stop outside a tea-shop where Greyfriars people occasionally resorted in the summer. Here Coker "parked" his bike, and, leaving it under the eye of the proprietress, quitted the place and sallied forth to keep his appointment.

The meeting-place was at the little War memorial which stood at the other end of the village, near the cliffs and the coastguard station. To this point Coker hurried.

The fascinating Miss Collinson was not there, however, nor was there any sign of her approaching. Coker scratched his chin, and a rather worried expression appeared on his rugged face.

The thought of Mr. Prout, and the

probability that he would keep an eye on Pegg that afternoon, had been in Coker's mind ever since he had left Greyfriars. He guessed that Mr. Prout would either take a stroll over the cliffs to Pegg, or send a prefect to have a look round on his behalf. Consequently, Coker had made up his mind, during the journey, that immediately he met the young lady who had captured his susceptible heart he would drive her away from Pegg before Mr. Prout or his representative had time to reach the village.

He had not taken into consideration the notorious lack of regard for punctuality which characterises a good many young ladies, and it came as quite a shock to Coker to realise that he might have a long wait before him. Of course, if Mr. Prout was on his track, it would take that portly gentleman some time to reach Pegg. But, on the other hand, once he reached the cliffs he could look down into Pegg, and, with the aid of a pair of field-glasses, survey the entire village in detail. Delay was obviously dangerous, and Coker fretted at his enforced period of waiting.

Ten minutes went by, then another ten. The next time Coker looked at his watch he found that he had been waiting half an hour, and Horace Coker began to feel quite alarmed. In the ordinary way Coker would have felt no qualms at facing Mr. Prout after having broken bounds. Coker had a lofty scorn for the restrictions to which he was subject at the school, and he rarely took much notice of them. But his interview with Mr. Prout after class had made the particular offence of going to Pegg rather different. Mr. Prout had solemnly threatened him with removal to a lower Form in the event of his going within a mile of Pegg, and by so doing Mr. Prout had got Coker cornered, so to speak. For, from Coker's point of view, no calamity could be greater than the

loss of dignity, seniority, and prestige that would be associated with such a change. And Coker, for once in his life, felt really concerned at the possibility of being caught breaking bounds.

At last, however, the fair creature who had inspired Coker to poetry came tripping down the street, and Coker breathed quite a sigh of relief.

Miss Kitty Collinson was a cheery-looking young lady of seventeen or thereabouts, with merry, twinkling eyes. The eyes were so merry and twinkling as she observed Coker, in fact, that it looked as though she regarded Coker as rather a joke.

Coker, however, took himself quite seriously.

He swept off his cap—or, rather, Bunter's cap—with a flourish such as a cavalier of olden days might have envied, and showed his teeth in what was meant to be a most engaging smile.

"Well, old bean!" was Miss Kitty's breezy greeting. "Haven't broken your neck yet, thon?"

"Nunno, not yet!" answered Coker, looking at the young lady rather dubiously.

Coker was not very quick on the uptake, and facetious remarks usually left him feeling more puzzled than amused.

"What about the old jigger?" asked Coker's cheery friend. "Brought it over with you?"

"Yes, rather! But, I say, Miss Kitty, you're looking stunning to-day, you know!"

"Don't talk rot!" said Miss Kitty cheerfully. "Well now, are you going to take me for another hectic ride?"

"Yes; I was going to suggest a run over to Courtfield, or somewhere," said Coker, with an anxious glance over his shoulder at the cliffs. "Where would you like to go?"

"Courtfield will do," agreed Miss Kitty. "Let's get going!"

Coker nodded, and made to move off with his cheerful companion.

Before they had taken a couple of steps, however, something occurred that pulled them up with a start.

While they had been talking a big grocer's delivery-van had driven by, and they also heard from round the corner of the street, the sound of a car approaching from the opposite direction. It was as they started to walk away that this second vehicle—a big private car—came in sight, travelling at a good speed.

The street was narrow, and there was hardly room for the two to pass one another, and although the drivers of both vehicles wildly jammed on their brakes, they were too close to avoid a crash.

And the crash came—a crash that seemed to shake the little village street to its foundations, and that caused Coker to forget Mr. Prout and Miss Kitty, and race back to the scene of the accident almost before the echo had died away.

Coker's eyes took in the details in an instant. The private car had pitched right over on its side, and the grocer's van had smashed into the body of the car, splintering up the framework like matchwood. The driver of the grocer's van had been thrown into the road, and was lying there, dazed and unconscious. Where the driver of the private car was Coker could not tell for a moment.

As he drew closer, however, he could see what had happened, and a low whistle escaped him. For the unfortunate man was near the steering-shaft, pinned securely to the seat by the bonnet of the heavy van which had crashed into him.

Worse still, the petrol-tank had exploded, and little streaks of flame were rapidly spreading round him.

Coker, always a man of action, did not hesitate.

Climbing into the narrow space, he seized a travelling-rug which was still trailing from the seat, and with one hand began vigorously to stifle the menacing little tongues of fire, while with the other he tested the extent of the force which was pinning down the unconscious man. He could see immediately that release was impossible without outside help.

That, fortunately, was at hand now, for villagers were hurrying up from all directions. Working fiercely, Coker could see the startled face of Miss Kitty through the wreckage, and he signalled her closer.

"Tell them to back the van away!" he called out. "I can't get this man free till they do!"

The girl nodded, and Coker could hear her repeating his instructions to the men who arrived on the scene.


It was an anxious time for Coker, pent up in that narrow space, with the flames, in spite of his efforts, beginning to spread to an uncomfortable extent. But Coker, for all his foolishness, had plenty of grit, and he stuck it gamely.

At last there was a sudden movement of the van away from the private car as willing helpers heaved from the rear. The victim of the accident, no longer held up, then became a dead weight on Coker; but people were soon lifting him out of the wreckage, and, a couple of minutes later, Coker himself was free and brushing himself down in the middle of the road.

"Well done, old scout!" said Miss Kitty Collinson admiringly. "Blessed if you're not a jolly old hero!"

"How's the poor chap I fished out?" asked Coker.

"Not so bad, sir!" answered a policeman, coming up at that moment. "Arm



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broken, but nothing very serious, I think."

"And the driver of the grocer's van?"
"Shaken, that's all! And they've doused the fire with the chemical extinguisher, so things ain't so bad! Now, sir, wot about givin' me your name?"

He produced a notebook and pencil in a very officious manner, and Coker, with thoughts of Mr. Prout and the possibility of his learning the affair, frowned.

"What the dickens do you want my name for?" he demanded.

"Must make a report, you know, sir!"

"Yes; but I don't want Prouty—I mean, I don't want anything to do with this bizney now. You just leave me out of it!"

"Sorry, sir, but I must take your name," said the constable firmly. "I noticed, from your cap, that you're from Greyfriars School, so I've got your address already!"

"Where did I leave my cap, then?" asked Coker, in sudden alarm, as he realised that his cap was not on his head.

"Ere you are, sir!" called out somebody in the crowd, passing over the cap.

Coker made a grab at it, but he was not quite quick enough. Before he had donned it the policeman had spotted the name that was written inside.

"Dunno why you're so anxious to 'ide your name," he remarked, scribbling in his notebook. "Anyway, I've got it now. Mr. W. G. Bunter."

"Wha-a-at?" yelled Coker.

"Bunter—W. G. Bunter. That's right, ain't it?"

Coker tore off his cap, and gazed in perplexity at the name written inside. It was indeed W. G. Bunter, and for a moment Coker was puzzled to know how he came to be in possession of Bunter's cap. Then he remembered his collision with Bunter earlier in the afternoon, and he grinned.

"Well, that's the name in the cap all right, anyway," he admitted. "You'd better take that."

"You can't get over the Lore!" grinned the constable sagely. "Any'ow, you won't be troubled, I don't s'pose, sir. I just want the name and address for my report, that's all."

Coker nodded, and smiled quite cheerfully. It seemed that the change of caps, of which, up to that moment he had been unaware, might prove providential. Whatever happened, he did not want it to come out at Greyfriars that he had visited Pegg that afternoon. The chances were not very considerable, perhaps, that the accident would gain much publicity, but, if it did, he did not want his name associated with it. By allowing the constable to retain the belief that his name was Bunter, it seemed to Coker that he had covered up his tracks pretty effectively, for every report of the accident that appeared in the Press would refer to Bunter as the rescuer, instead of himself. And it was quite certain that Bunter would be perfectly willing to accept all the kudos, if it did come out at Greyfriars.

"But," said Miss Kitty, who had watched the affair of the cap with considerable surprise, "you told me your name was—"

"I say, isn't it about time we moved off?" interrupted Coker hurriedly.

"But—"

"Better hurry!" urged Coker, beginning to shoulder his way through the excited knots of people. "Come along, and I'll explain!"

A few minutes later, Horace Coker, feeling very glad at having got away from Pegg without meeting Mr. Prout,

was once more tearing along the country roads, this time with a fair passenger at the rear.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Bunter!

"DEAR me! An accident, it seems!" remarked Mr. Quelch.

The Remove Form master, with Mr. Prout sticking to him like a portly leach, was descending from the cliffs into Pegg, when he spotted the overturned car in the little village street. It was a quarter of an hour after Coker's departure, and most of the crowd had returned to their cottages by this time. Mr. Quelch noticed, however, that a policeman was on the scene, talking to a mechanic who was examining the wreck.

"Ah! These mechanical contrivances!" sighed Mr. Prout. "Nothing, I fear, will ever equal the horse as a medium of locomotion. Did I ever tell you, Mr. Quelch, the experience I once had in Western America?"

"I believe you did!" said Mr. Quelch hastily. "Let us see what's happened here."

Mr. Quelch, having had to listen to Mr. Prout's experiences since they left Greyfriars together, was glad of an excuse to dodge the experience concerned with Western America.

They made their way to the scene of the accident, though neither was really interested in it. Mr. Prout, as a matter of fact, now that he had reached Pegg, was much more interested to know whether Coker was in the village or not.

"A nasty accident, constable," remarked Mr. Quelch, as they stopped near the damaged car.

"Not so bad as it might 'ave been, sir," replied the constable.

"Indeed! Was anybody injured?"

"The driver was 'urt, sir, but not very badly."

The two Greyfriars masters nodded.

Mr. Quelch would have moved on after that, but Mr. Prout did not seem anxious to go. Instead of that he addressed the policeman—not, however, on the subject of the accident.

"Tell me, constable," he said, in his pompous way. "Have you seen any Greyfriars boys in the village this afternoon?"

"I should think I 'ave, sir," replied the limb of the law. "A very fine young feller, too—a credit to 'is school. Name of Bunter."

"Bunter! A member of your Form, Mr. Quelch!" remarked Mr. Prout. "Is he the only Greyfriars boy you have seen, constable?"

"Nobody else from Greyfriars been to Pegg to-day, far as I know," answered the constable.

Mr. Prout nodded, satisfied.

"And how do you come to know Bunter's name?" asked Mr. Quelch, with a curious glance at their informant.

"Well, sir, I 'ad to take 'is name for my report of the accident," explained the policeman. "I s'pose you gentlemen are masters from the school, so you'll be interested to 'ear what 'e did. I'll tell you."

And then he went on to relate the story of Coker's prompt and risky dash to the rescue of the imprisoned motor-car driver.

The two masters listened in great astonishment. Both Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch were well acquainted with William George Bunter of the Remove,

and neither of them had hitherto suspected that bravery was one of his characteristics. The idea of Bunter risking his fat carcass to save the life of another, seemed almost unbelievable to them.

But the policeman seemed sure of his facts, and he certainly had Bunter's name and initials "off pat." In spite of their astonishment, they could not very well disbelieve him.

Mr. Quelch would perhaps have gone more deeply into the matter, had there been time, but, no sooner had the officer concluded his description of the incident, than he was called to the cottage where the injured man had been taken, and there was, therefore, no opportunity of asking further questions.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch, as they walked away. "What an extraordinary story!"

"Almost incredible!" agreed Mr. Prout. "But truth is stranger than fiction, Mr. Quelch. I remember an incident happening when I was in mid-Atlantic."

"Yet the constable seemed to have no doubt about it," said Mr. Quelch, refusing to be drawn into his colleague's adventures in mid-Atlantic. "I am afraid I have rather misjudged Bunter. There is evidently more good in the boy than I suspected."

"Quite possibly!" assented Mr. Prout, frowning at being interrupted in his story. "But I was telling you about—"

"Really, Mr. Prout, you must give me a few moments in which to consider the news we have just heard," said Mr. Quelch sharply. "The matter affects a boy in my Form—a boy whom I have been inclined to regard as possessing a somewhat cowardly nature. It is very disturbing to me to know that I may possibly have been a little unjust to him in the past."

Mr. Prout stiffened, and his frown deepened, but he lapsed into an indignant silence, which lasted quite a long time, and for which the Remove master felt thankful.

Mr. Quelch devoted a considerable amount of thought during the return journey to the subject of Billy Bunter. The Remove master was a stern and somewhat unbending gentleman, and having no love for Bunter, he had, on many occasions, treated that fat member of his Form with some severity.

In spite of his sternness, however, Mr. Quelch possessed a strong sense of justice, and at the thought that Bunter had redeeming features which he had not observed before, he could not help wondering whether he had been a little too strict, at times. Gentler treatment might have brought out Bunter's redeeming features more strongly. Mr. Quelch wondered; and the possibility made him feel a little uncomfortable. He made up his mind to see Bunter as soon as he got back to Greyfriars.

The opportunity came as he and Mr. Prout were crossing the quad on their way to the School House. Bunter was strolling moodily in the same direction, wondering, as a matter of fact, what was going to happen when Uncle Clegg came up to the school to report the loss of his cake. He jumped guiltily, as Mr. Quelch called his name.

"Well, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, with an attempt at geniality in his hard voice. "And where have you been this afternoon?"

"I—I—I—"

Bunter stuttered helplessly. The thought that Uncle Clogg had reported his loss to Mr. Quelch went through

his fat brain like a flash of lightning, and his knees almost knocked together. Mr. Quelch placed a friendly hand on the fat junior's shoulder, and regarded him almost affectionately, for a moment. In his sudden mood of appreciation of Bunter, he saw, in Bunter's hesitancy, evidence of an additional good trait—namely, that modesty which is said to characterise all true heroes.

"You need not hesitate to tell me, Bunter," he said quite gently.

"I—I haven't been near Friardale, sir!" Billy Bunter managed to gasp at last.

"Quite so!" agreed Mr. Quelch, greatly to Bunter's surprise. "You have been to Pegg, have you not?"

"Ye-e-es, Pegg; that's right!" agreed the fat junior, blinking at Mr. Quelch in great relief. "H-how did you guess, sir?"

If Mr. Quelch had suggested he had been to Moscow, or Peking, Billy Bunter would have enthusiastically agreed. He didn't mind where Mr. Quelch thought he had been, so long as Friardale was not mentioned.

"I have heard what you have done, this afternoon, Bunter—" continued Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured the Owl, beginning to tremble again.

"And I shall certainly acquaint the headmaster with the facts!" concluded the Remove Form-master.

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. First, Mr. Quelch was suggesting in quite friendly tones, that he had been to Pegg. And then, he was saying that he knew all that Bunter had done, and would tell the Head about it! The contradictory nature of his talk made Bunter's obtuse brain reel for a moment. He simply blinked at the Remove master.

"You have done very well, Bunter—very well indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, giving Bunter's shoulder an approving pat. "I am afraid you have often been a trial to me in the past, but your behaviour to-day makes me think I have possibly been a little harsh in my judgment of you. You have acquitted yourself very creditably!"

"M-m-m-my hat!" murmured the Owl.

Mr. Quelch with a final nod marched on with Mr. Prout, leaving Bunter staring after him, dazedly. Bunter continued to stare until they had disappeared into the House, then he rolled after them, like one in a dream.

Mr. Quelch's peculiar remarks left the fat junior feeling absolutely flabbergasted. To Bunter, Mr. Quelch's statement that he knew what Bunter had done, and would report it to the Head, meant only one thing—that he knew about Uncle Clegg's cake! Yet, in that case, why was Mr. Quelch so friendly, and how did the mysterious reference to Pegg come into it? The more Bunter pondered on it the more extraordinary it seemed.

However, Billy Bunter was not one to worry unduly about any problem at tea-time, and when, shortly afterwards, that magic hour arrived, he dismissed all thoughts of Mr. Quelch and Uncle Clegg from his mind, and applied himself to the very real problem of getting an invitation out to tea—a problem which was eventually solved by Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent good-naturedly permitting him to grace their festive board for once. And Billy Bunter forgot all about the matter for the rest of the day.

Just before morning school the next

day, the bell was rung to indicate that the entire School was required to assemble in Big Hall. Such a call was not an everyday occurrence, and there was much speculation as to what was "on," as juniors and seniors streamed in from every corner of Greyfriars.

When the entire school had assembled, with all the Forms in their customary places, the Head rustled in, and the fellows were quick to notice that his expression was not particularly grave, as it very often was on the occasion of a general assembly. Evidently, they had not been called together to witness an expulsion, or a flogging. Even a "wiggling" seemed unlikely, for as the Head stepped up on his raised dais, where he could be viewed more clearly, it was seen that far from being unusually grave, he was quite genial.

"Boys," said Dr. Locke, surveying the crowded hall, "I have called you together to hear a most pleasing item of news concerning one of your number. It is always a pleasure to me to hear of Greyfriars boys distinguishing themselves in their behaviour outside the school, and the present instance is particularly pleasing. That is why I decided to make a public pronouncement on the subject."

The school waited expectantly.

"Yesterday afternoon," went on the Head, "a motor accident occurred in Pegg village. As a result of the accident a gentleman driving a motor vehicle became pinned in a most dangerous position among the wreckage. To add to the seriousness of his predicament, the vehicle caught fire."

The Head's narrative sounded quite thrilling, and everyone, from the staliest Sixth-Former down to the grubbiest fag, listened with great interest.

"I am glad to be able to say that he was rescued by the very prompt and courageous action of a member of the Remove Form of this school."

All eyes were turned to the Remove. The members of that famous Form put on appropriately modest expressions, though the news that they had a hero in their midst made them all feel quite pleased with themselves. They wondered who the hero could be, and Billy Bunter wondered just as much as anyone else. So far, the fat junior did not connect the incident related by Dr. Locke with the mysterious behaviour of Mr. Quelch on the previous day.

"But for the chance presence of two of the masters at Pegg later in the afternoon," continued Dr. Locke, "I doubt whether we should ever have heard of the matter. Such modesty is most commendable."

The Hall was in quite a buzz by now. Everybody was anxious to know the identity of the Removeite who bore such a noble character.

"And now," said the Head, "I will reveal the identity of the boy who has brought credit to the name of Greyfriars. The boy's name is—"

A pin could have been heard to drop in the Hall at that moment.

"Bunter!"

Dead silence.

The Head paused, and the school looked at him speechlessly for a few seconds.

BUNTER!

Could they believe their ears?

Bunter, the fat, boastful, white-livered Owl of the Remove! Bunter, a hero! And keeping mum about it, too! Impossible!

Yet here was the Head, solemnly assuring them that it was so. And Dr. Locke could hard'y be suspected of indulging in leg-pulling!

When Bunter himself heard Dr.

Locke pronounce his own name, he went quite dizzy. All through the Head's speech, he, in common with the rest of the Form, had been wondering who the hero really was. The last person in the world he expected to hear mentioned was William George Bunter.

He very quickly recovered, however. Obviously, some extraordinary mistake had been made. But, mistake or no mistake, it was quite certain that Dr. Locke was making an oration describing him in glowing terms. Billy Bunter felt that he deserved to be described in glowing terms, whether he had saved anybody's life or not, and he did not intend lightly to throw away the opportunity of fame and glory that had fallen like manna from Heaven at his feet. Possibly the mistake would be found out in time, but Bunter was not in the habit of looking very far into the future.

His podgy chest swelled in sudden pride, and he lifted his fat little nose very high in the air, as the rest of the Remove, in a state of blank amazement, continued to gaze at him.

"And now, boys," said Dr. Locke, "I think we should signify our appreciation of Bunter's brave act in the usual manner."

The fellows recovered from their stupor, and, led by Wingate, started a loud round of handclapping that echoed through the Hall, and sang like music in Bunter's ears.

Meanwhile, Coker of the Fifth looked round anxiously to assure himself that Bunter was taking it all right, and would play up to his unexpected role.

Coker was a curious mixture, and he did not see that there was anything much to clap about, anyway. That was why it did not occur to him that the fact of saving a man's life might cause Mr. Prout to regard his offence with a more lenient eye. From Coker's point of view, the problem was simply that if Mr. Prout knew he had been in Pegg he would be sent down from the Fifth. Consequently, he was very pleased to see that Bunter, evidently, was quite willing to have it said that he was the one who had performed valorous deeds at Pegg.

Coker was quite cheerful as he quitted Big Hall. Unfortunately, his cheerfulness was not destined to last long.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Hero of the Hour!

"WELL, I'm jiggered!"

"Bunter, you know!"

"Would you believe it?"

All Greyfriars were discussing Bunter, after the Head had given the signal to dismiss. The news that Billy Bunter had imperilled his corpulent carcass in saving a man's life came as a staggering surprise to everybody. Many of the fellows were frankly sceptical. But the information had come from such an authoritative source that most felt that they could not very well disbelieve it.

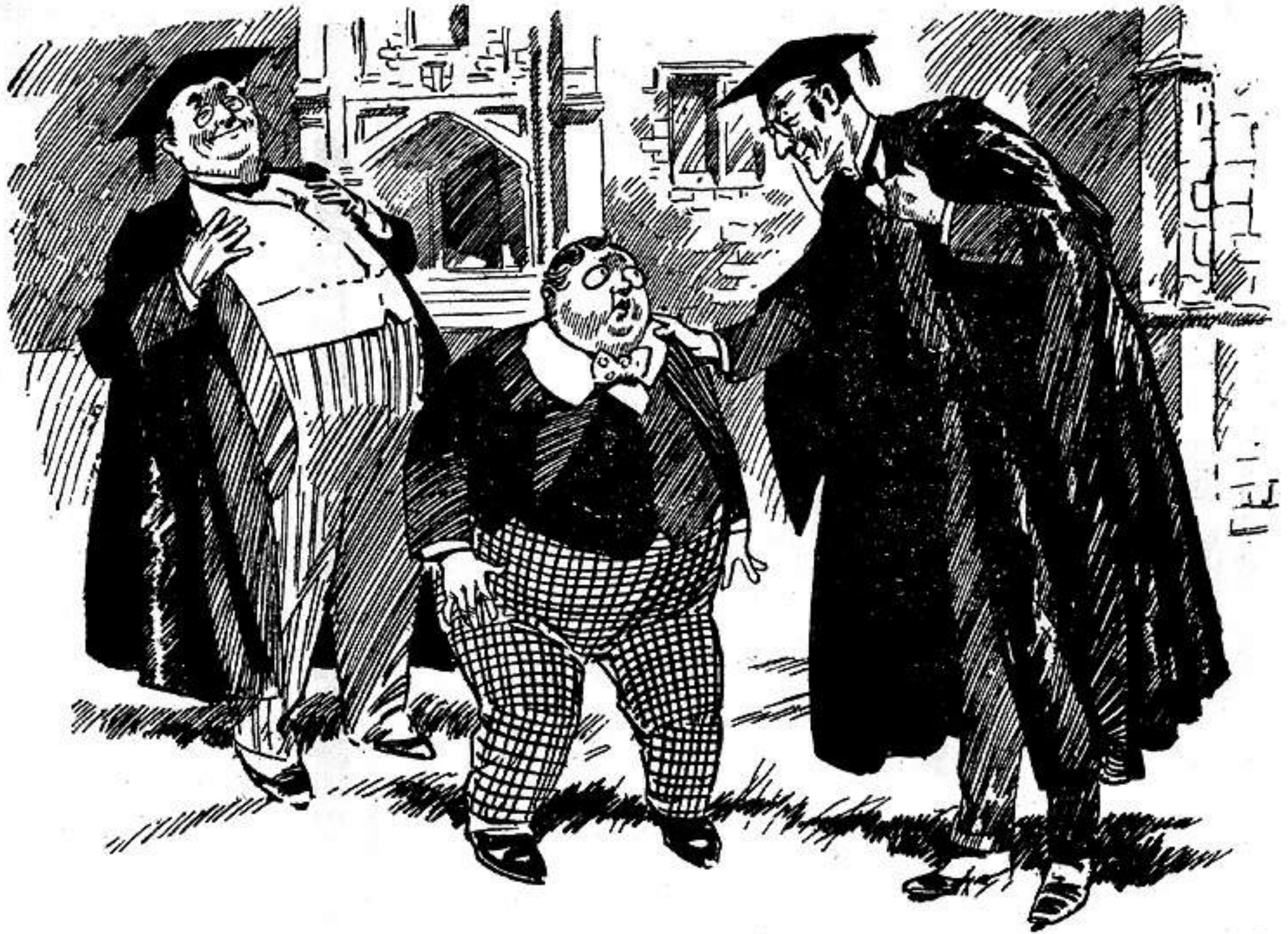
As soon as the Remove were out in the Close they surrounded Bunter, and fairly rained questions on him.

"Come on, Fatty! Let's hear all about it!"

"How did you get the Beak to believe that yarn?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! If you're going to rot about it, I shall refuse to talk about it!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I hope you're not going to get jealous, and say I didn't do it, or something!"



"You have done very well, Bunter—very well indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, giving the Owl of the Remove's shoulder an approving pat. "I'm afraid you've often been a trial to me in the past, but your behaviour makes me think I've been a little harsh in my judgment of you. You've acquitted yourself very creditably!" "M-m-m-my hat!" murmured Bunter in astonishment. (See Chapter 6.)

"Well, I wouldn't believe the yarn if it came from the lips of George Washington!" remarked Bolsover candidly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Don't worry, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton reassuringly. "We'll give you fair play, all right. I'm blessed if I can understand it, but I'm willing to believe the Head, anyway."

"Same here!" agreed quite a number of the others.

"The samefulness is terrific!" chimed in Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

There was no time for further discussion of the topic just then, for the bell for lessons rang, and the juniors had to hurry to their Form-room. The news they had heard, however, was of too startling a character to be lightly dismissed, and during the first half of the morning many curious glances were turned in the direction of William George Bunter.

Since greatness had been so unexpectedly thrust upon him, Bunter had assumed a very lofty expression, and that expression remained upon his fat countenance during the whole of the morning.

When morning break arrived, Bunter certainly behaved very much like himself.

In the quad he was again surrounded by an interested crowd of Removites, all anxious to hear from Bunter's own fat lips the story of his gallant deed.

"Now for it, Bunter!" said half a dozen fellows encouragingly.

"Let her rip!"

"On the bawl!"

"Give him air!"

Some of the fellows were grinning,

but practically all were showing more respect for Bunter than he usually received. If Bunter himself had spread the yarn that he had saved a man's life, not one of them would have believed it. But coming from the venerable Head of Greyfriars, the story, however surprising, bore the hallmark of truth.

"Well, if you chaps will give me a chance, I'll tell you all about it," said Bunter condescendingly. "I was standing in the little village, meditating on the rugged grandeur of the cliffs, and the vastness of the mighty ocean—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"When all at once I heard a rending, grinding noise behind me."

"His jacket had torn at last," murmured Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turning round," went on Bunter, with an indignant blink at Squiff, "I beheld—"

"You whatter?"

"I beheld," said Bunter firmly, "a sight that froze the blood in my veins. A luxuriously-appointed car—a Rolls-Royce, at least, I should think—had skidded on a banana-skin, or something—"

"B-banana-skin!" stuttered Bob Cherry faintly.

"Well, something or other," said the Owl of the Remove hastily. "Anyway, the car heeled over, and for one frightful moment it was lurching on two wheels. Then, with a sickening thud, it crashed over to destruction. Flames began to leap up. Escape, for

the driver, was cut off. What was to be done?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Skinner humorously.

"No, you ass! Well, you chaps, the situation was desperate. Luckily, I was near. With me, to think was to act!"

"He talks like a novelist!" grinned Hazeldene.

"Dashing on the scene with the swiftness of a hare," continued Bunter eloquently, "heedless of the roaring flames, I leaped to the rescue!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Draw it mild, you know!"

"Well, I did, anyway!" said the fat hero of the Remove. "From within that raging inferno I could hear the terrified screams of the prisoner. 'Have courage!' I cried. 'Deliverance is at hand!'"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Taking in the situation at a glance," said Bunter, unheeding the laughter, "I saw that the only hope was to make one bold plunge into the inferno, and pluck him out like a brand from the burning! And that's what I did! Well did I know what fearful risks I was taking. One slip, you know, and I should have perished with him. But I didn't hesitate!"

"Good old Bunter!"

"As it happened, I succeeded," said Bunter, with a dramatic gesture. "I might easily have failed, and been roasted to death by the cruel flames. But, still, I'm not boasting, you know."

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,058.

TUBBY TRIES It ON!

DICKY
NUGENT.



BEGGING FOR THE BULLET! It's an unheard of thing for a chap to plead for the sack. But in the amusing tale told below, Tubby Barrell has very sound reasons for making such a strange request.

COME in, fatted!" yelled Dr. Birchmall, in his quiet, cultured tones.

And he hastily dropped into the waist-paper basket the copy of the "Sweeney Todd" Library which he had been peroozing.

The adventures of the Denton Barber, who used to murder his customers in such a happy-go-lucky fashion, were forbidden froot to the St. Sam's fellows. The Head had banned the "Sweeney Todd" Library, on the grounds that the stories were too sloppy and sentimental, and the murders didn't happen quickly enuff. No story was worth reading—in Dr. Birchmall's opinion—unless there was a crime in every collum, and a pistol-shot in every paragraff.

The Head had no wish to be caught reading Sweeney Todd, lest it should be thought that he was getting proodish and sentimental in his old age. That was why he hastily dropped the book, with its blud-red cover, into the waist-paper basket.

"Come in, fatted!" he repeated. For there had been a tindr rattor-tat on the door of his study.

The door opened slowly, and into the Head's study rolled Tubby Barrell of the Fourth.

The fat junior slunk in like a whipped cur. His shoulders were stooping; his head was drooping; and his eyes were glood to the Head's carpet. It was only by a powerful effort that he managed to get them unstuck.

Dr. Birchmall swung round in his revolutionary chair.

"Why, Barrell!" he eggscclaimed. "What is the meaning of this introosion? Why do you come slinking into my study like a mizzerablo worm?"

"Please, sir, I am a mizzerablo worm!" said Tubby Barrell, with a wimper. "I'm not fit to live. And I'm
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certainly not fit to be a pupil of your Academy for the Sons of Jentlemen."

"Bless my sole!" gasped Dr. Birchmall, in serprize. "Wherefore this thusness? What have you been up to now, you fat rascal?"

"Sir," said Tubby. "I don't want to keep harping on it, but without blowing my own trumpitt, I'm the biggest bounder in all St. Sam's. I am the instrument of vice, and when it comes to shocking depravvity the other fellows must play second fiddle to me. I deserve to be drummed out of the school, sir. I am everything that is base and viol."

"Great pip!" ejaculated the Head. "And now I suppose you have come to face the musick?"

"That's so, sir," said Tubby Barrell, with a sob which would have melted a hart of grannit. "The fact is, I'm not fit to remain here, sir, rubbing sholders with the sons of jentlemen. So please sack me from the skool—and the sooner the quicker!"

The Head looked fairly flappergasted.

It was an unheard-of thing, for a fellow to go to the Head and plead to be sacked from the skool. But there was method in Tubby Barrell's seemng madness. He had very sound reezons for making such a strange rekwest.

You see, Tubby had taken out a pollicy with the St. Sam's Insurance Company, insuring himself against eggspulsion.

In the event of his getting sacked from St. Sam's, the fat junior would reseve the hansom bennysfit of fifty pounds.

Tubby Barrell would have aloud himself to be sacked a duzzen times over for less than that. He would cheerfully face the shame and astigmatism of eggspulsion for the sake of lining his pockets with luker.

Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright, who ran the St. Sam's Insurance Com-

pany, would have had several sorts of a fit, had they known of Tubby Barrell's plot to get himself eggspelled.

The Insurance Company was doing a roaring trade. Scores of fellows had insured themselves against lines, lickings, measels, mumps, and other courageous diseases; and the premiums were simply pouring in. But if the Company had to pay out for an eggspulsion, the whole of their prophets would be swallowed up at one go; and they would find themselves heavily in dett into the bargin!

There was a long paws in the Head's study. Dr. Birchmall blinked at Tubby Barrell in blank distonishment.

"Well, this beats the band!" he ejackulated. "I have had some queer rekwests made to me at different times, but this is the queerest of them all. A boy actually comes to me and supplicates for the sack—pleads for the push—begs for the bullet!"

Tubby Barrell flung himself on to his neeze, flinging out his arms appealingly.

"I implore you to sack me, sir!" he begged, with tears in his eyes.

Dr. Birchmall stroked his beard in perpleximent.

"But—but what have you done, Barrell, that I should inflict such a dire punishment upon you? I never sack boys from this skool, eggsept for terribul enormities, such as talking in class, failing to wash their nex, or making faces at their headmaster. I am a just man, Barrell. I never sack nobody for nothing."

Instantly, Tubby Barrell jumped to his feet, and poked out his tung at the Head, and made the most horrible grimaces at him.

"Barrell!" gasped Dr. Birchmall. "What are you doing of?"

"Making faces at you!" said Tubby roodly. "You are a baldheaded old buffer, Birchmall! You are a beast and a tirant! I hate and despise you! Yah!"

The Head's face turned a pale pinkish purple. He could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes—and his ears.

"Barrell, you impudent young rascal!" he roared. "I've a jolly good mind to sack you for this!"

"Oh, good!" mermered Tubby. "P'r'aps this will help you to make up your mind!"

So saying, Tubby stepped up to Dr. Birchmall and tweaked his nose—hard!

"Yaroooo!" yelled Dr. Birchmall. "Leggo by dose, you yug rodder!"

"Ratts!"

For one angwished moment, Tubby Barrell tweaked the Head's nose in a vice-like grip between his thumb and four-fingers. When at last he let go Dr. Birchmall's beak resembled a crushed strobberry.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The Head danced to and fro like a dervitch, breathing threttenings and slawter.

Never in the corso of his long and checkered career had Dr. Birchmall been so grossly, so fragrantly insulted, as on this occasion. Speechless with rage, he hurled a torrent of abuse at the junior who had had the fearful ordassity to tweak his skollerly nose!

"Barrell, you young welp! You've farely done it now! You have committed assault upon the sacred person of your headmaster. If I were a Beak I should send you to prison for tweaking my beak. As it is, your name shall be exsponged from the Skool Register, and you shall be despatched from St. Sam's by the next post—I mean, you shall be publicly eggspelled!"

"Hooray!" mermered Tubby Barrell, sotto vocey. "I've worked the orackle! That's fifty pounds in my pocket—a hansom return for my threepenny premium!"

Snorting with rage, Dr. Birchmall pressed the bell-push on his desk, and Binding the page came bounding in.

"Binding!" rapped out the Head. "Instruct Fossil the porter to sound the bell for a General Assembly in Big Hall. And buck up, you bratt!"

So Binding told Fossil, and Fossil told the bell. Its sollum toll boomed out over St. Sam's, and all the masters and fellows, wondering what was in the wind, wended their way to Big Hall.

II.

"**T**RUBBLE for somebody!" said Jack Jolly, as he and his chums poured into Big Hall with the rest of the fellows, and filtered down the gangway, and tickled into their places.

Merry nodded.

"A publick flogging for someone, I dare say," he said. "Let's hope the siddy culprit isn't an insured person. If so, we shall have to fork out five bob."

Up till now, everything had gone swimmingly for the Insurance Company. Nearly every fellow at St. Sam's had insured himself against something or other, and the premiums had simply poured into the coughers of the Company.

Not a single claim on the Company had yet been made; and no bennyfits had been paid out. This was a very wealthy and desirable state of affairs, so far as Jolly and Merry and Bright were concerned; but, of corse, it could not be eggspeted to go on for ever. Sooner or later, one of the insured persons would be flogged, and then he would claim his five shillings compensation.

Prezzantly the door of Big Hall was flung open, and Dr. Birchmall swept in with his majestick gate. Be-

hind him, wearing a broad grin on his plump features, came Tubby Barrell.

"Oh, good!" muttered Jack Jolly. "It's Tubby who's going to be flogged; and we refused to insure him against floggings!"

"Bit of luck for us!" chuckled Bright.

"Yes, rather!"

"Silence, you sons of doggs!" The Head's voice boomed through Big Hall. Dr. Birchmall mounted the raised platform, and his shifty little eyes scanned the serried ranks of St. Sam's fellows.

"My boys," he began, "I have a most sollum and paneful duty to perform—"

"Ninety-nine strokes with the birch for poor old Tubby!" wispered Jack Jolly.

The Head frowned.

"Dry up!" he cried sharply. "This boy Barrell, who stands shaking and quaking before me"—Tubby hadn't turned a hare, as a matter of fact—"has been guilty of the most appalling conduct. He is in very bad odour, having fragrantly insulted me—his headmaster! What do you think the young scamp did?"

"Give it up, sir."

"Ask us another!"

"Why, he put his fupg out at me, and made the most hideous grimaces; and,



The bulky Register alighted with a sickening thud upon Dr. Birchmall's pet corn. "Yaroooo!" he yelled. "You nearly braned me, Lickham!"

to crown everything, he actually had the ordassity to tweak my nose!"

"Gammon, sir!"

"He couldn't have done a rasher thing, and if he hopes to save his bacon now he will be disappointed," said Dr. Birchmall. "Never in all my long inexperience have I been treated so abominably!"

A mermer of amazement ran round Big Hall. The Head would have run round after it, only he was rather short in the wind.

"Now, there is only one punnishment that will fit Barrell's crime," said Dr. Birchmall. "And that punnishment I am about to administer."

"Bring hither the birch and block!" muttered Jack Jolly, antissipating the Head's next command.

But the command never came. Instead, Dr. Birchmall sent Mr. Lickham to fetch the Skool Register.

"What on earth does the old buffer want with the Skool Register?" mermered Bright.

"Goodness nose!" was Merry's wispered reply.

Mr. Lickham returned with the Register, which he ballanced very skillfully on his napper. The master of the Fourth looked rather like a muffin-man as he approached the platform. All went well until he halted in front of the Head; and then the bulky

Register nose-dived from his napper, to alight with a sickening thud upon Dr. Birchmall's pet corn!

"Yaroooo!"

A yell of angwish rang through Big Hall. Dr. Birchmall hopped around on one leg, clasping his injured foot, and calling Mr. Lickham all the names he could think of.

"Lickham, you clumsy idjut! You nearly braned me!" he roared.

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Lickham, in the tones of a man who had just made a new discovery. "Now I know where your branes are, Dr. Birchmall! It was quite obvious you have no branes in your top storey. You keep them on the ground floor—in your peddle extremities!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" hooted the Head. "I will deal with you later, Lickham, for your gross dispertinence! Meanwhile, it is my paneful duty to deal with this boy Barrell. Well might you shiver and quiver, you wretched young rascal!" (Tubby Barrell was standing as firm as a rock.) "Your name shall be struck off the Skool Register, and you shall be chucked out on your neck, or, as the vulgar would say, eggspelled from the skool!"

As this dread sentence fell upon Tubby Barrell's ears he grinned broadly.

But Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright did not grin. They were filled with consternation, and they blinked at each other in alarm and dismay.

"Eggspelled!" gasped Jack Jolly. "Oh, my hat!"

"And we've insured Tubby Barrell against eggspulsion!" groaned Merry.

"To the tune of fifty quids!" moaned Bright.

It was an awful shock to the staff of the St. Sam's Insurance Company. They had not dreamed that Dr. Birchmall would take the eggstream step of eggspelling Tubby Barrell. But he had done so; and Tubby's next move would be to put in a claim to the Company for a bennyfit of fifty pounds!

Jack Jolly & Co. went hot and cold by turns. For a moment they were stunned and stupefied by this uneggspeted turn of events.

"The Company's ruined!" groaned Bright. "We simply can't afford to pay out. Fancy that fat, frabjous duffer going and getting the sack!"

"There's only one way out," muttered Jack Jolly quickly. "We must beg him off. Come on!"

And Jack Jolly left his place and hurried towards the platform, with his chums at his heels.

Dr. Birchmall, who was in the act of ex-sponging Tubby Barrell's name from the Skool Register, looked up with a frown.

"What the merry dickens—" he began crossly.

"If you please, sir," said Jack Jolly, "we'd like you to reconsider your decision about Barrell. The poor chap isn't really to blame, sir. You see, he's not responsible for his actions."

"Bless my sole!" gasped Dr. Birchmall.

As for Tubby Barrell, he bestowed a deadly glare upon Jack Jolly. If looks could have killed, Jack would have collapsed in a lifeless heap at the Head's feet. Instead of which, he went on earnestly:

"Barrell has been very strange in his manner for some time, sir. There's no doubt that he's got bats in his belfry, and he's more to be pitted than blamed."

(Continued on page 24.)

THE HERO OF THE FIFTH!

(Continued from page 13.)

I only did my duty as a man. I only did what any other man would do. It was nothing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if that's really what you did, I should say it was something!" remarked Harry Wharton. "I suppose there must be truth in it, as the Head gave it out."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But what licks me," continued the skipper of the Remove; with a puzzled look at Billy Bunter, "is, why the dickens you didn't tell us all about it before. We all know what you're like—"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Didn't the Beak explain that? I kept mum, because I was modest, you know. I don't go swanking about over a thing like that!"

"Oh crumbs! Don't you?"

"Certainly not!" said Bunter, with dignity. "Real heroes don't, you know! It's only these tinpot fellows who think they've done something wonderful in saving lives that swank about. A chap like me—a fellow with nerves like steel, and plenty of brains and resource to back them up with—doesn't boast."

"Doesn't he, by Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Billy Bunter peevishly. "Anyway, even if you fellows don't appreciate my heroism, the Head does! Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly, and his lofty demeanour left him as he caught sight of the figure of an elderly man crossing the quad.

"I say, you fellows, is that Uncle Clegg over there?" he asked uneasily.

The Removites looked over in the direction where Bunter was pointing.

"So it is!" said Harry Wharton. "What about it, Bunter?"

"Oh, n-nothing!" replied Bunter. "I never pinched—I mean, anyway, I wouldn't do such a thing. I—I've just remembered I promised to see a fellow. Ta-ta, you chaps!"

Billy Bunter rolled across the quad towards the oncoming figure of Uncle Clegg, leaving the Removites staring after him wonderingly.

"Well, I suppose we've got to take the Head's word for it," remarked Harry Wharton. "But—"

"But it does seem a bit fishy, doesn't it?" finished Frank Nugent.

"The fishyfulness is terrific."

And at that the matter was dropped for the moment.

Meanwhile, Bunter had rolled over to Uncle Clegg, who was making for the School House.

There was an air of determination about the old gentleman as he hobbled along, and an expression of extreme sourness upon his crusty countenance, Bunter noticed both, and did not like them.

Drawing level with his host of the previous afternoon, Bunter did his best to assume an air of nonchalance.

"Good-morning, Uncle Clegg!" he remarked, with a sickly smile.

"Mornin', Master Bunter!" returned Uncle Clegg, without slackening speed.

"I say, how's your rheumatism, Uncle Clegg?" asked the fat junior, remembering suddenly that Uncle Clegg was reputed to be a sufferer from that distressing malady.

"None the better for your askin',"

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Master Bunter!" growled the ancient gentleman, still jogging along.

"Oh, really, Uncle Clegg! Anyway, I don't really care a rap about that!"

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"You'd better be careful, young man!" said Uncle Clegg darkly. "I didn't come to this 'ere school to be insulted by the-likes o' you."

"No, of course not," agreed Bunter, rolling along beside the old tuckshop proprietor, and becoming more alarmed every second as the School House drew nearer. "I—I say, hold on a minute! I believe my shoelace has become undone."

"Shoelace! Huh!" said Uncle Clegg contemptuously.

He continued to hobble along, as though all the shoelaces in the world wouldn't stop him.

Billy Bunter became desperate.

"Look here, Uncle Clegg," he blurted out, "I didn't do it!"

"Eh?"

Uncle Clegg stopped and looked at him in surprise.

"If you think I did, you're jolly well mistaken!" said Bunter.

"Did what?" demanded Uncle Clegg, with a blank stare.

"I—I—I—"

Billy Bunter stuttered and hesitated. Dull-witted as he was, it began to dawn on him that Uncle Clegg's replies, curt though they might be, were not the kind that might have been expected from a tuckshop proprietor to a cake purloiner. Uncle Clegg didn't seem to realise that Bunter had taken any liberties with his stock. Was it possible—a gleam of hope came to Bunter—was it possible that Uncle Clegg had not noticed the disappearance of the cake, and that his business at Greyfriars was not even connected with the cake?

"Well, if you've got anything to say, say it," said Uncle Clegg, regarding the fat junior sourly.

"I—I thought—"

"You've no right to think!" snapped Uncle Clegg.

He was about to resume his walk when an idea seemed to occur to him, and he turned to Bunter again.

"Do you 'appen to know someone 'ere named Coker?" he asked, with a questioning look at Bunter. "I dessay I know 'im myself, but my memory's a bit short at times."

"Coker?" said Bunter, without much interest. "Oh, he's a silly ass—in the Fifth, you know. There's some yarn going the rounds that he's spoony on some blessed girl at Pegg, or something. Why?"

"Never mind why," said Uncle Clegg darkly. "A cake was pinched from my shop yesterday afternoon—a beautiful cake!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Then Uncle Clegg knew!

"I won't say Master Coker stole it, and, on the hother 'and, I won't say 'e didn't!" said Uncle Clegg, very mysteriously. "All I can say is, if 'e did take it, 'e's goin' to sit up for it!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker the Thief!

DR. LOCKE was looking annoyed—very annoyed, in fact.

He was standing in his study, regarding, with a thunderous brow, a school cap which he held in his hand.

Uncle Clegg was going into the matter at great length.

"You see, sir," he explained for the fifth or sixth time, "I thought as I 'eard

someone in the shop, but when I came out not a sign could I see of anyone. Then I was just goin' back again, when wot should I spot but the cake-stand where I kep' the finest cake in my shop hempty!"

"Yes, yes! So you have already informed me, Mr. Clegg," said Dr. Locke impatiently.

"I knew it was all right five minutes before," said Uncle Clegg, unheeding. "An', wot's more, I knew at once someone 'ad pinched it."

"I quite understand."

"An' that there cap in your 'and was left be'ind by the person that pinched it," said Uncle Clegg. "There's no doubt wotever about it, sir, an' I came up 'ere to see you to get justice."

"You shall certainly have that," promised the Head. "All the same, I really cannot believe that Coker, to whom this cap certainly belongs, can be guilty of such an act. I think you will find that there is some other explanation—possibly that a cap of Coker's has been lost and picked up by a village boy. However, we will see."

The Head motioned Uncle Clegg to resume his seat, and rang the bell for Trotter, the page.

"Please tell Coker of the Fifth Form that he is wanted at once in this room," he said, when Trotter, after an interval, opened the door.

"Yessir," said Trotter, and departed.

The Head then sat down at his desk, and there was a somewhat uncomfortable silence in the room for the next few minutes.

Dr. Locke disliked trouble at any time. In particular he disliked trouble with local tradesmen. When such trouble occurred it usually took the form of local tradesmen sending him bills which his charges were unable to meet. Although Dr. Locke disliked that sort of thing very much, and dealt severely with offenders, he doubtless realised that occasional trouble of that kind was inevitable, and made allowances accordingly.

But this was rather different. A cake had been stolen from the village tuckshop, and a Greyfriars boy had been accused of the theft. That was bad enough; but, to make matters worse, the accused was a senior—a member of the presumably dignified Fifth Form. The Head felt that there must be a mistake. He was prepared to believe that it was a lark—though an extremely foolish lark—on the part of some Second or Third-Formers. But he could not bring himself to think that any senior—even though that senior was Horace Coker—could play such an absurd prank.

While the Head sat in silence, frowning and pondering over the matter, there was a tap on the door, and a moment later Horace Coker entered.

"You sent for me, sir?" he said, glancing at the Head, and then at Uncle Clegg, in puzzlement.

"Yes, Coker. I have sent for you to question you in regard to a somewhat serious matter. I want you to tell me, in the first place, where you went yesterday afternoon."

Coker started, and turned red in the face. His first thought was that the Head had found out that he had broken Mr. Prout's edict, and he almost groaned aloud at the idea that, after all his care, he had been found out. There was no doubt that Horace was, for once, seriously concerned at having disobeyed the master of the Fifth. The threat to reduce him to the status of a Shellite, or something even lower, was, in Coker's eyes, far more formidable than a threat of Chinese torture.

"Well, Coker, I am waiting for an answer," said the Head sternly.

"Hem! I—"

Coker hesitated.

"Did you go to Friardale?" demanded the Head.

"Why, yes, sir," answered Coker, with some relief, suddenly remembering that he had passed through the village on his way to Pegg. "I was there some little time before three o'clock."

"Ho!" remarked Uncle Clegg. "An' it was twenty to three when my cake was took! Ho!"

"Your cake!" stuttered Coker. "What the dickens—"

"Silence, Coker!" interrupted the Head. "Since Mr. Clegg has interposed we will come to the facts at once. At twenty minutes to three, yesterday afternoon, a cake was—er—taken from Mr. Clegg's shop in Friardale, while he was engaged at the rear of the premises."

Coker looked completely mystified.

"After the disappearance of the cake, a Greyfriars cap, evidently left behind unwittingly by the person who took the cake, was found in the shop. That cap contained your name, Coker!"

"Oh!"

"I have explained to Mr. Clegg that I cannot conceive of a member of the Fifth Form playing such a thoughtless prank, and I sincerely trust that you have a complete answer to the charge. As the matter stands, however, the circumstances are that you, on your own admission, were in the village at the time, and your cap was found in the shop afterwards. Appearances, therefore, point to your being responsible. Now, Coker, what have you to say?"

The Head leaned back and surveyed Coker expectantly. From the care which he had taken to make the circumstances quite clear, it was evident that he expected that Coker would clear himself without difficulty.

Coker gulped.

He could see what had happened. Bunter was the one who had raided Uncle Clegg's shop, and Bunter it was who had left his cap behind. That was quite clear.

It was equally clear that he, Horace Coker, was in a peculiarly difficult position. If he revealed the truth, he would certainly demolish this absurd charge. On the other hand, the fact that he had defied Mr. Prout's solemn decree and gone to Pegg would then come to light. And what would that mean? Ignominious expulsion from the Fifth Form, and loss of that seniority that Coker prized so highly. Coker felt that he could never stand that.

"Well, Coker?" said the Head.

Coker gulped. He decided that the lesser of the two evils was admitting to taking the cake.

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir," he said, almost choking at the thought of the shameful act to which he was going to confess. "I—"

"You admit appropriating the cake?" asked Dr. Locke faintly.

Coker nodded, and the Head sat back in his chair quite limply.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured. "But, Coker, I cannot believe—"

He seemed very unwilling to believe it.

"It is true!" almost groaned Coker.

"It—it was only a lark, sir!"

Dr. Locke sat up again and regarded Coker very grimly.

"I am loth to believe that a Greyfriars senior can be guilty of such behaviour," he said sternly. "However, Coker, I must accept your statement. I can understand that it was only a 'lark,' as you term it, for I know your allowance is sufficient to permit you to gratify any of your desires for

comestibles. I intend to teach you later, however, that such larks are not permissible. For the present you will leave me to speak to Mr. Clegg. You will report to me again after class this morning."

Coker, with feelings too deep for words, quitted the Head's study.

Outside in the quad a fat junior was thoughtfully wandering towards the School House, with his hands stuck in his trousers pockets and a very puzzled frown on his podgy face. Billy Bunter was still pondering on the mystery of Uncle Clegg.

At the sight of him Coker's gorge rose within him.

Leaping down the stone steps, he raced with mighty strides towards the fat Removite whom he, not unreasonably, considered responsible for his present troubles.

At the sound of Coker's pounding foot-falls Billy Bunter started, and when he caught sight of Coker and noted the terrific expression on Coker's face, his hair almost stood on end.

"I—I say, Coker, old man," he gasped, "I haven't done anything, have I? Here, keep off, you beast! Yarooop! Ow-wow-ow!"

"Take that!" roared Coker savagely, he himself taking a running kick at Bunter.

"Whooooop!" hooted Bunter, blinking furiously at his attacker, and dodging hurriedly as Coker's big boot rose again. "You rotten bully! What have I done?"

"You fat, thieving, grubby villain!" howled Coker. "Haven't you anything on your conscience, you—you toad? Anything connected with Uncle Clegg?"

"Oh, really, Coker! I—I—"

Bunter began to stutter wildly.

"No need to tell a pack of lies to me!" snorted Coker. "I know all about your pinching a cake from the shop!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter, in dismay. "I say, Coker, you don't mean Uncle Clegg has gone and reported me? He said he was going to report you, not me!"

"That's exactly what he did," answered Coker. "Mean to say you haven't tumbled to what's happened yet?"

Billy Bunter shook his head uncomprehendingly, and Coker grunted.

"You fat imbecile! When I bashed into you yesterday our caps got mixed up and we both went off with the wrong one. And when you, like an idiot, left a cap behind in Uncle Clegg's shop, it was my cap you left, not your own."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Then—then I suppose that accounts for that Pegg bizney, somehow or other. You were—"

"E x a c t l y!"

snapped Coker.

"I fished the driver out of that blessed car, and they got what they thought was my name out of the cap I dropped."

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter blinked at Coker in consternation. He could understand everything now. Also, he could see his brief reputation as a hero coming to an end, and a new reputation as cake-thief beginning.

Bunter shuddered.

"However," continued Coker,

"don't let the fact that I know everything worry you. I'm not going to let on to anybody."

"You're not?" gasped Bunter, in amazement. "You're really not going to tell the Head about it?"

"No."

"But what the thump—"

Bunter blinked at Coker in utter astonishment.

"Matter of fact, I have a particular reason for not wanting it known that I was in Pegg," explained Coker. "Never mind why. But, anyway, because of that, I'm going to stand the racket over your rotten cake, and I want you to keep it up at your end that you were at Pegg."

"Oh crumbs! Certainly I will, Coker, old chap!" said Bunter, a fat grin replacing the worried look which had previously appeared on his countenance. "Anything to oblige an old pal, you know, old chap!"

"Not so much of the 'old chap'!" grunted Coker. "Well, anyway, that's that! Now, to conclude, you can quite see, I suppose, that I'm getting you out of a thumping good licking by taking the blame over that cake?"

Bunter nodded.

"However, that doesn't prevent me giving you a kick every time I see you," said Coker grimly. "And that's what I'm going to do, my fat friend, for the remainder of the term. Here's one to go on with!"

"Whooooop! Yarooooop!"

With a wild howl Billy Bunter fled.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Coker!

AS soon as the Fifth were dismissed that morning, Horace Coker made his way to the Head's study.

There was a portentous frown on the Head's face when he entered that dreaded apartment. Evidently Dr. Locke regarded Coker's alleged misdemeanour as a serious matter.

"I have endeavoured—successfully, I think—to get Mr. Clegg to look upon yesterday's affair as a prank," he said, when Coker was standing before his desk. "I have promised that you will remit him eight-and-sixpence—the price of the cake—without delay, and you will, of course, do this immediately."

"I see, sir!"

"However," continued Dr. Locke, "the matter, so far as I am concerned, does not end there. It comes as a most painful shock to me to realise that a senior at Greyfriars can play such a trick which local tradesmen, at least,

(Continued on next page.)



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are likely to find difficult to distinguish from theft.

"Oh!"

"I must say I am disgusted with your behaviour, Coker, and I have seriously been considering whether I ought not to expel you from the school!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker, in surprise and dismay.

"Please refrain from the use of childish slang, Coker! On consideration, I have decided that it would perhaps be wrong to prejudice your career on account of what appears to be a moment's mad freak. The matter is, however, too serious to be met by a mere imposition, or detention."

Dr. Locke looked steadily at Coker.

"I am loath to use corporal punishment to a member of the Fifth Form, but I think it is the only way to deal with you. I am therefore going to flog you, Coker!"

"Oh dear!" said Coker.

A flogging! For him, Horace Coker, the mighty man of the Fifth! He had expected lines or detention, but hardly that!

However, he had chosen his bed, and now he must lie on it, so to speak. And anyway, a flogging would be over more quickly than detention or "impot" writing. Nevertheless, the indignity of being flogged like some tuck-marauding fag in the Third was a bitter pill for Coker to swallow, and he did not like it.

The Head flogged him then and there—and he laid it on well and truly. Possibly he thought that, as corporal punishment was so seldom meted out to Fifth-Formers, he would make a special event of this. Whatever the reason, he gave Coker a "licking" such as Coker, even in his fag days, had never received before. And although Coker, always as hard as nails, did not descend to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, he was certainly feeling rather sorry for himself by the time Dr. Locke had finished with him.

"There!" gasped the Head at last. "Let this be a lesson to you, Coker! You may go!"

With a grunt of relief, Coker went.

As he came out into the passage outside the Head's study, he saw a fat form disappearing round the corner. He felt too injured, both bodily and mentally, to catch Bunter up, but he realised that the fat Removite had probably been listening to all that had gone on inside, and he wondered, for a moment, whether Bunter would be likely to spread the yarn. On consideration, he decided that, although it was advisable to take the precaution of warning Bunter, it was likely that on this occasion, at least, Bunter would keep quiet. Bunter had too much to lose by the truth coming out, to risk stirring up trouble that might lead to that undesirable event happening.

Coker did not know Bunter, however.

When that fat junior fled round the corner, after having listened to the flogging of Coker inside the Head's study, his little eyes were fairly bulging with excitement behind his spectacles. For a chap like Coker of the Fifth to be punished like a fag was, in Bunter's eyes, an event of outstanding importance.

He fairly longed to communicate his tidings to all and sundry, and the fact that it was his offence for which Coker had been punished did not seem to him of such account as the fact that Coker—a Fifth-Former and a senior—had been flogged.

He rolled along to the Remove passage in a state of great excitement.

"I say, you fellows, what do you think?" he gasped, coming across a group of Removites standing at the top of the stairs.

"What is it, Tubby? Queen Anne dead?" asked Squiff humorously.

"Been rescuing Quelch from under a burning desk?" suggested Skinner sarcastically. "If so, thanks for nothing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Skinner! But, I say, old Coker—"

"Blow Coker!"

"Old Coker's just had a Head's flogging!" said Bunter persistently. "For pinching a cake from Uncle Clegg! He, he, he!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"Here, come off, Bunter!"

"Fact!" said Bunter. "I happened to be passing the Head's study at the time, and I heard it going on."

"Rot!"

"Not often Fifth men are licked!"

"Why should Coker want to pinch a cake from Uncle Clegg, anyway?"

"You've been dreaming, Bunter!"

"I tell you it's true!" said Bunter indignantly. "You can ask him yourself, if you like—I mean, p'r'aps you'd better not ask him, or he might let it all out—that is to say—"

"What ever are you burbling about, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing. "This rescue bizney hasn't got up into your head, has it?"

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter, in sudden alarm, as he realised that he might be saying too much. "What I really meant to say was that I don't think it could have been Coker, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was at that moment that Coker himself came up the stairs. He was looking savage and wrathful, and Bunter started as he noticed a cap in the Fifth-Former's hand.

The Remove held themselves in readiness to give Coker another warm reception, but Harry Wharton could see that there was something unusual about his manner, and the Remove skipper motioned the fellows to stay their hands.

"Bunter here?" asked Coker. "Ah, there you are! Here's your rotten cap, and I want a word with you on the quiet."

The Removites regarded Coker curiously.

"Anythin' in the rumour that's goin' round, Coker?" asked Skinner airily.

"What rumour's that?" asked Coker, with a frown.

"Why, that the Beak has licked you for lifting a cake from Uncle Clegg!"

Coker's face was a study for a moment, then, with a roar of rage, he made a jump at Bunter.

"You fat, spying villain!" he roared. "I'll smash you! I'll—"

"Rescue, Remove!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Keep him off our prize hero, whatever happens!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove made a rush at Coker, and the unfortunate Fifth-Former was swept off his feet in the twinkling of an eye, and tumbled down the stairs again before he could touch Bunter.

"Well, so much for Coker!" remarked Tom Brown, as the fellows crowded back into the passage. "But the funny part about it is that he didn't deny what Bunter said."

"That's what I noticed," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "He simply seemed wild about it, as if Bunter had let the cat out of the bag."

"Just what I thought."

"What a lark, though!"

The Removites were genuinely interested now.

"Well, life's full of surprises," said Bob Cherry sagely. "First Bunter becomes a hero, and now Coker becomes a cake-snatcher. It's a sort of exchange of characters between the two."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry little realised at that moment how near he had come to the truth.

Still discussing the news, the group broke up, while Bunter, somewhat scared now that the story of Coker and the cake had become common property, rolled off to Study No. 7.

By tea-time that day the story that Coker had been flogged for raiding Uncle Clegg's tuckshop had spread far beyond the confines of the Remove passage. And as Coker strolled across the quad with the faithful Potter and Greene in attendance in the evening, the crowning incident of Coker's series of misfortunes happened.

"Seem to be a lot of fags about," Greene remarked, as they sauntered back from the elms towards the School House. "Is there a jamboree on, or something?"

There were, indeed, quite an unusual number of Second and Third-Formers about, and the strange thing was that they seemed to be concentrating in the vicinity of Coker & Co.

Coker glanced round at the gathering hordes of grinning fags and frowned. He could sense that some kind of a rag was on the board, and knowing that the Remove already knew about his flogging, and that the news had by this time probably reached the whole of the Lower School, he could guess that the rag would be directed against himself. So far he had not told Potter and Greene anything about it. The whole thing was so ridiculous that he hardly knew how, or even what, to tell them, and consequently he had said nothing. And as Potter and Greene had heard no rumours yet they were in blissful ignorance of the existence of anything untoward.

All at once Tubby of the Third, supported by a number of other Third-Formers, planted himself in the way of the three great men of the Fifth.

"Can I speak to you, please, Coker?" he asked meekly.

"Well?" growled Coker.

"We've just lost a cake. I suppose you haven't been making a raid round our Form-room, have you?"

Coker kicked out wildly at the cheerful leader of the Third; but Tubby was on his guard, and he and his followers scattered quickly and roared with laughter from a little distance away.

"What's the game?" asked Potter in surprise.

"What did he mean about a cake?" asked Greene.

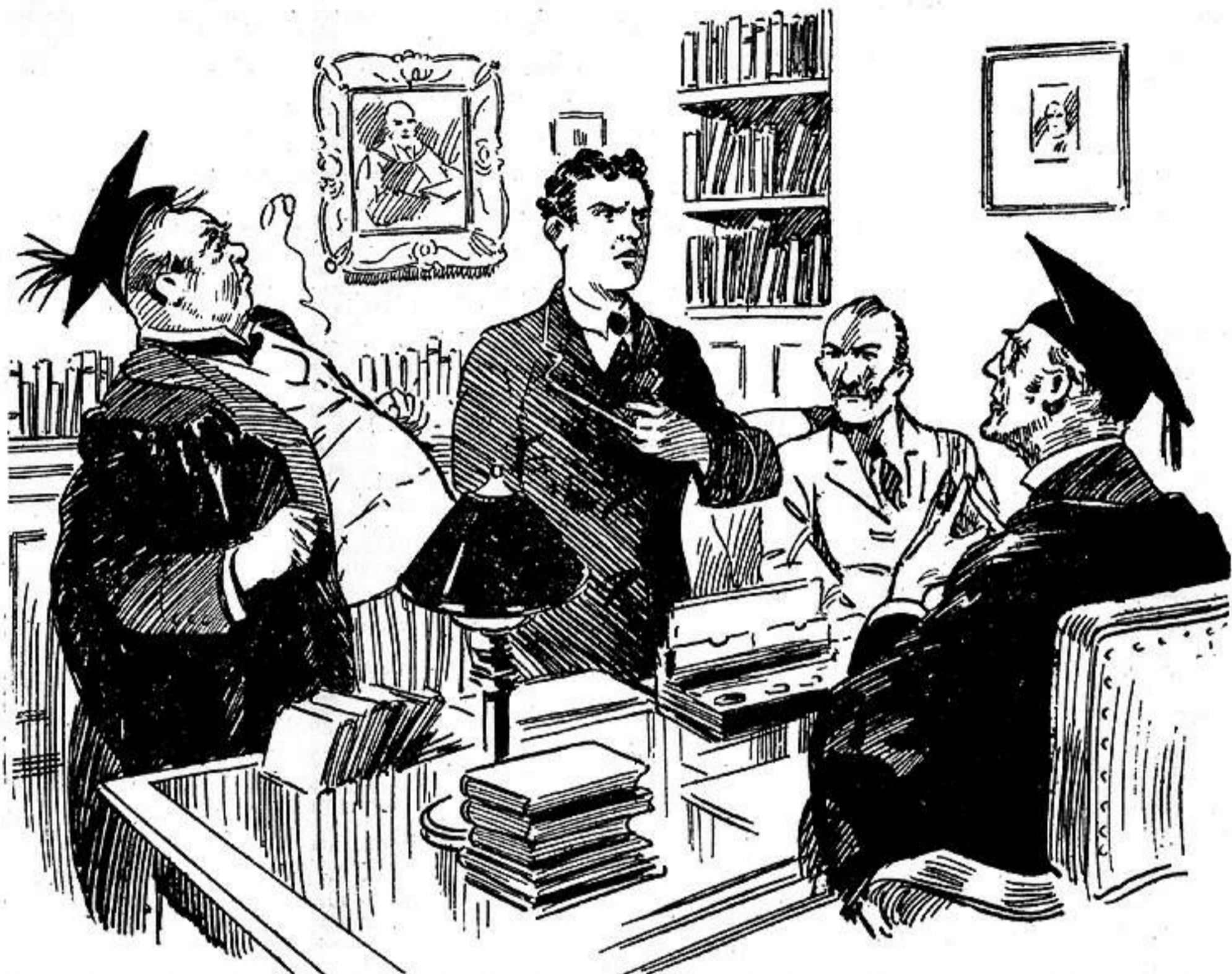
"Oh, nothing!" said Coker shortly. "Let's get in."

Coker was not to reach the School House without further molestation, however.

As Coker approached the steps of the main entrance of the school, Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth sauntered forth, smiling slightly.

"I say, Coker, I've had a cake lifted from my study. Yow! Yarooooop!"

Coker did not waste time over Cecil Reginald. He grasped the dandy of the Fourth firmly by the scruff of the neck, banged his elegant head against the wall with a resounding thwack, and sat him down on the gravel in a heap.



“Well, Coker, and what is your explanation for breaking bounds?” asked Dr. Locke. “Well, you see, sir,” answered Coker, “old Prouty——” “Wha-a-at!” roared Mr. Prout. “Oh crumbs! I mean, Mr. Prout, sir, said that if I went to Pezz he’d have me turned out of the Fifth and sent down to a lower Form!” (See Chapter 11.)

Feeling a little better after that, Coker went into the House.

“I say, what ever’s the matter with everybody?” asked Greene, as they mounted the stairs leading to the Fifth Form quarters. “What is all this cake business, Coker, old man?”

“Oh, don’t ask me!” growled Coker wearily. “It’s the most idiotic mess I’ve ever known in my life, that’s all.”

“But what do they mean by this talk about cakes?”

“Nothing. Shut up and let me think for a bit!” answered Coker, with scant politeness.

“By all means, as you put it so nicely,” answered Greene, shrugging his shoulders. “Shall we come along to Blundell’s study for a jaw, Potter?”

“What-ho!” assented Potter, quite emphatically. “This thinking business can be overdone, and you seem to be overdoing it to-day, Coker. Come on, Greeney!”

Abandoned by his two study-mates, Coker turned into Study No. 3, and sat down in the armchair, to stare moodily before him.

Doubtless, if he had chosen what seemed to him the other alternative—namely, degradation to a lower Form—Coker’s dignity would have been offended to an even greater extent. But it was offended quite considerably over the affair of Uncle Clegg’s cake—considerably enough, anyhow, to keep Coker staring moodily into space for the greater part of that evening.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. The Head is Suspicious!

“IT’S up to us!”
Tom Brown of the Remove made that remark.

Several Removites were gathered in a group in the Rag discussing a subject that had been discussed quite a lot at Greyfriars for a whole day—namely, William George Bunter.

Several of the fellows were of opinion that Bunter’s strange and unlooked-for feat of valour deserved special commemoration. The most natural form by which such an event could be commemorated seemed to be a Form-feed. And when the proposal had cropped up in discussion, Tom Brown emphatically asserted his opinion:

“It’s up to us!”
“Well, what about it, then, Wharton?” asked Squiff.

Harry Wharton nodded.
“I’m game, if you chaps think it ought to be done,” he said. “I hadn’t suggested it myself because—well, to tell the truth, though I suppose you’ll think I’m a suspicious beast—I can’t quite swallow it yet.”

“Oh, drop it!” said Tom Brown. “It was difficult enough for any of us to believe it in the first place, and Bunter, of course, doesn’t make it any easier by blowing his own trumpet. But it comes from the Head, and it must be all right.”

“Hear, hear!”
“Well, right-ho, then!” said Harry

Wharton, laughing. “I’ll drop it, and come in with you on a feed in honour of Bunter, if you like. Where is the fat bounder, by the way?”

“Here I am, if it’s me you’re referring to,” said Billy Bunter, rolling into the Rag at that moment. “Did I hear somebody mention a feed?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”
“If there’s a feed on, I’m perfectly willing to do the cooking,” said Bunter generously. “You know what my cooking’s like!”

“We were just thinking of standing you a tuck-in, to celebrate the Pegg bizney,” explained Wharton.

“I say, you fellows, I call that jolly decent of you,” said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his big spectacles. “As it happens, I’m feeling rather peckish just now, so I can begin at once, if you like!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”
“Well, it’s tea-time, so we can get the provender in from Mrs. Mimble’s, and make it a Form-feed in the Rag,” said Harry Wharton. “Gather the clans and go round with the hat, somebody, and don’t forget to bring your own cups!”

“Right-ho!”
“There’s only one stipulation we make, Bunter,” added Wharton, turning to the fat junior. “After to-day let’s hear a little less about your bravery! You’ve told us so much about it during the last twenty-four hours that we are never likely to forget it now!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”
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"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"And we shall all think you're so much nicer!" added Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Some of the Removites started to clear up the Rag in preparation for the feed, and others were making for the door to round up the rest of the Form, when Trotter, the page, looked in.

"Master Bunter 'ere?" he asked.
"Ah! The 'Ead wants you!"

"Oh crumbs! D-does he?" stammered Bunter, the happy grin which he had been wearing disappearing as if by magic. "I w-wonder what he wants me for?"

"Dunno, Master Bunter! There's another gent in there with 'im too. A lawyer bloke, I think."

"Why the alarm, Fatty?" asked Skinner curiously. "You're in the Beak's good books at present, aren't you? Perhaps it's someone from the Humane Society to award you a medal!"

"Yes, p'raps it is," agreed Bunter dubiously. "I'd better go along and see, anyway!"

He rolled out of the Rag, leaving the Removites tidying up that celebrated apartment in readiness for the coming feed.

Billy Bunter did not feel at all happy at the prospect of facing the Head. True, he was, as Skinner had pointed out, in the Head's good books, but his position was extremely precarious, and since things had become so awkward and irritating for Coker, Bunter would not have been surprised at any moment if the Fifth-Former revealed the truth.

Reaching the Head's study, he tapped nervously on the door.

"Come in!"
Bunter entered.

Dr. Locke was seated at his desk, in conversation with a thin, shrewd-looking gentleman, as Bunter came in.

They both looked up at the newcomer, and Dr. Locke gave Bunter a kindly nod.

"Bunter, this is Mr. Grabbett, a solicitor, from Courtfield. He has come to me for permission to question you regarding the accident at Pegg last Wednesday."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Mr. Grabbett is acting on behalf of Mr. Coutts, whose life you were instrumental in saving, on that occasion. The question of who was responsible for the accident is likely to arise, and the matter may have to go to law."

"I—I see, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Mr. Grabbett therefore wishes to know if you can describe how the accident happened, in order to determine whether your evidence will be likely to assist him in his case."

"Your headmaster has explained the position exactly," chimed in Mr. Grabbett, fixing Bunter with his steely grey eyes in a way that made that fat junior squirm. "I am very happy to meet you, Master Bunter, and I am instructed to convey to you my client's deepest thanks for your heroic act."

"Oh, that was nothing, sir!" mumbled Bunter, blinking uncomfortably through his spectacles at the lawyer.

"I also appreciate your heroism very much, and I shall appreciate you still more if you are able to give me the information I require," went on Mr. Grabbett, still piercing the uncomfortable Bunter with his penetrating eyes. "Now, what I want from you in the first place, Master Bunter, is an exact description of what happened, so far as you were able to observe."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Billy Bunter, dismayed for a moment.

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"You may proceed to give the description," said Dr. Locke.

"Well—er—" Bunter stammered. Then, deciding that the only way out of this dreadful hole was to utilise the yarn he had been spinning to all and sundry, he took a plunge: "Well, sir," he said, "I was standing in the little village, meditating on the rugged grandeur of the cliffs—"

"What?" gasped Mr. Grabbett.

"The—the rugged grandeur of the cliffs, sir, and the vastness of the mighty ocean, you know!"

"Indeed!" remarked Mr. Grabbett, giving Bunter a very strange look. "Go on, Master Bunter!"

"When, all at once, I heard a frightful crash, like—like a clap of thunder."

"Ah!" said Mr. Grabbett.

"Turning round, I beheld a sight that turned the blood to ice within my veins!" said Bunter dramatically.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Dr. Locke, gazing at Bunter in perplexity.

"A luxuriously-appointed car," continued Bunter, then he stopped abruptly, realising that he was speaking to someone who had seen the car and might consider that description extravagant.

"I—I mean, an ordinary-looking car," he corrected, "had skidded on a banana-skin, or something—that is to say, it had not skidded on a banana-skin at all! It just skidded, if you follow, sir!"

"Skidded!" repeated Mr. Grabbett blankly.

"That's right!" said Bunter con-

fidently. "Just skidded, you know! Well, anyway—"

"But you say that the car simply skidded," interrupted Mr. Grabbett, frowning. "Surely there was some explanation?"

"None whatever!" asserted the Owl of the Remove. "I—I had a good look afterwards, and I couldn't see anything at all!"

"But what about the other vehicle, then?"

"Oh lor! Was there another vehicle?" stammered Bunter feebly. "Oh, that's right, now you mention it, sir! I distinctly remember something else being there!"

"You do, do you?" said Mr. Grabbett grimly. "Very well, then! Pray proceed!"

"Well, sir, after skidding on the banana-skin—that is to say, the banana-skin that wasn't there—I—I mean, after not skidding on the banana-skin that was there—"

Billy Bunter was becoming incoherent.

"After not skidding on the banana-skin that wasn't there," he said at last recklessly, "the car heeled over, and for one frightful moment was suspended between heaven and earth, like—like the sword of Damocles—"

"The sword of Damocles!" repeated the Head, in surprise, then he smiled faintly. "I presume you mean Mohamed's coffin, Bunter! Go on!"

"I covered my face with my hands to shut out the fearful sight!" said Bunter dramatically, rather encouraged by the Head's kindly intervention. "With a

terrible roar the car crashed to destruction. Flames began to leap up, and I could see that, unless some brave fellow acted at once, the driver was a goner!"

"A—a goner?"

"A goner!" repeated Bunter firmly. "Anyway, sir, as luck would have it, I was on the spot, and with my usual pluck—anyone in the Remove will tell you what a plucky chap I am!—I jumped to the rescue!"

"I see! But didn't you observe whether the other car had anything to do with the accident or not?" asked Mr. Grabbett, regarding Bunter very suspiciously.

Billy Bunter scratched his chin reflectively, and blinked uncertainly at his interlocutor. He could tell that, somehow or other, he was on dangerous ground here.

"Well, it may have had something to do with it," he said cautiously. "On the other hand, it may not."

"How would you describe the other vehicle, Master Bunter?"

"I—I—" Bunter blinked at Mr. Grabbett in growing alarm. He didn't like all this questioning. "Well, anyway, it—it had four wheels, sir, with—er—tyres on, you know, and—and I didn't notice much else!"

"You were a little unobservant—eh?" said Mr. Grabbett, with a grim smile for which Bunter felt an immediate dislike. "Would you say, anyhow, that it was a good-looking four-seater touring car?"

"Yes, that's it!" said Bunter eagerly.

"Not, by any chance, a grocer's delivery-van?"

"Certainly not! That is to say—"

Bunter had a feeling that he was being trapped. "I— What I really mean is that it wasn't either of those, but it was a bit like each, if you follow, sir. Sometimes it looked like a touring-car, and sometimes it looked like a grocer's delivery-van. It was a funny sort of car, sir!"

"So I should think!" commented Mr. Grabbett dryly. "Very well, Master Bunter! Unless your headmaster wants you we need not detain you any longer."

"You may go, Bunter!" said Dr. Locke, eyeing the fat junior rather strangely.

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter.

He rolled out of the Head's study, breathing a sigh of relief. That interview had not been at all pleasant. Bunter felt exceedingly glad to escape the penetrating eyes of Mr. Grabbett.

When Bunter had gone, Mr. Grabbett turned round to Dr. Locke with a rather serious look on his face.

"There is some extraordinary mistake here, Dr. Locke," he said. "I am convinced that that boy did not witness the accident. His story is pure invention."

"I must confess that my own suspicions are aroused," admitted Dr. Locke. "I was very much surprised when the matter was first reported to me, for Bunter has no reputation for courage. Our information, however, seemed authentic, and I could not doubt it."

"Your information was, of course, obtained from the County Police at Pegg?"

Dr. Locke nodded.

"Very well. With your permission, I will telephone through to them myself."

"By all means," agreed Dr. Locke. "I am very anxious to know the truth myself."

The lawyer picked up the telephone receiver from the Head's desk, and was soon through to Pegg.

"Hallo! Are you the County Police at Pegg? Am I speaking to the officer who witnessed the motor accident at Pegg last Wednesday? Good!"

**EXTRA SPECIAL
FOR NEXT WEEK!**

**"THE BOY FROM
THE EAST!"**

**DON'T MISS IT, CHUMS,
WHATEVER YOU DO!**

Mr. Grabbett quickly came to the point.

"Would you mind describing the Greyfriars boy, Bunter, who rescued Mr. Coutts?"

There was a pause, while Mr. Grabbett listened to the reply.

"I see!" he said, at last. "He was not fat, then? And did not wear glasses? And his age?"

Another pause, then Mr. Grabbett nodded, satisfied.

"Many thanks, constable!"

He replaced the receiver, and turned round to the Head with a smile.

"The constable's description certainly does not apply to the boy we have just seen," he said. "He tells me that the Bunter he saw was tall and muscular, about seventeen years of age, and dark."

"Indeed!" murmured the Head, knitting his brows. "I am afraid, though, that that description will hardly be sufficient to enable me to identify the individual. Certainly there is nobody at the school named Bunter to whom that description would apply. Another boy must have given Bunter's name, though, for what reason, I am at a loss to know."

"No name was given, as a matter of fact," said Mr. Grabbett. "The constable tells me that he obtained the name from the inside of the boy's cap."

"Dear me! Then the other boy must have been wearing Bunter's cap! This is all very strange!"

"Very strange, indeed!" agreed Mr. Grabbett. "I think, though, that I have one piece of information that will narrow down our search for the boy we want. The constable indicates that the boy he saw drove away on a motor-cycle. Are there many boys here who own motor-cycles?"

"Indeed, no! Coker of the Fifth Form is the only boy I am aware of. And—bless my soul!—the constable's description applies to Coker."

In quite a state of excitement, Dr. Locke summoned Trotter.

"Please find Coker of the Fifth Form, and tell him he is required in this room immediately," he said.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Smiles Again!

COKER entered the Head's study, wondering why he was wanted. So far as he knew he had committed no fresh offence, and, since he had, by now, paid for the cake which Bunter had purloined from Uncle Clegg, he didn't expect to hear any more about that.

He was aware that both the Head, and the stranger who was present, looked at him curiously as he came in.

"Ah, Coker! I have sent for you in connection with some very important and surprising information I have just received from the police," said Dr. Locke.

"The police?" echoed Coker, staring.

"Yes. Pray do not be alarmed, Coker!"

Coker grinned faintly. The Head's injunction was quite unnecessary, in his case. He was surprised, but certainly not alarmed.

"What's happened, then, sir?" he asked.

"That is a question which I am going to put to you, Coker. I want you to tell me whether it was not Bunter who saved Mr. Coutts in that motor-car accident the other day, but you yourself?"

Coker jumped.

"Oh!"

"Is that not the truth?" demanded

Dr. Locke, looking keenly at the uncomfortable Fifth-Former.

"I—I—"

Coker stuttered. He was fairly taken by surprise at the realisation that the Head knew.

"I trust, Coker, that you are going to answer my question without equivocation," said the Head seriously.

"The gentleman here with me now is a solicitor, acting for Mr. Coutts in connection with a claim for damages arising out of the accident, and nothing but completely truthful and unambiguous answers will serve his purpose."

"Well, I hope you don't think I'm a liar, anyway, sir?" said Coker, rather indignantly.

"Not at all, Coker. I am only warning you that if you are really the one who rescued Mr. Coutts, and if for reasons which are utterly incomprehensible to me you wish Bunter to get the credit, it will not do to endeavour to conceal the truth any longer, for the matter may soon come under the jurisdiction of the county court, when concealment will no longer be possible."

"Oh, I see, sir!" said Coker slowly.

"Come, Coker! What have you to say?"

"Well, sir, I—"

Coker halted. He really didn't know quite what to say. The unexpected development was perplexing and annoying to Horace Coker of the Fifth.

Now that the trouble with Uncle Clegg was over, and the school was already forgetting all about it, Coker had begun to look forward to a more cheerful time. He had no intention of going to Pegg again, and he considered, in spite of the worry and trouble to which he had been put, that his actions had justified themselves. He had steered clear of the danger of relegation to a lower Form, and that, to Coker, was all that mattered.

And now, just when he was beginning to congratulate himself that his sufferings, both physical and mental, had not been in vain, the whole thing was raked up again. Coker felt quite dismayed.

"I am still waiting, Coker," said the Head quietly.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Coker, at last. "I suppose it's got to come out, if you put it like that, sir."

"Then you admit it?"

"There's nothing else to do," Coker replied, his face considerably lengthened now at the thought of Mr. Prout soon learning all about it. "I fished the old boy out of that car, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"Good gracious me!" added Mr. Grabbett, his keen eyes fixing on Coker in great astonishment.

"But, my dear Coker, whatever induced you to withhold the truth for so long?" asked the Head wonderingly.

"Well, you see, sir, I didn't want it known that I was in Pegg," explained Coker.

"Dear me! I fail to understand why not!" said the Head.

Then he started.

"But, Coker—really, this is positively extraordinary! Did I not punish you for taking an article of food from a shop in Friardale on that very afternoon?"

"That is so, sir!" agreed Coker.

"Then you were at Friardale, as well as Pegg?"

"Yes; but I didn't lift the cake, anyway!" said Coker.

"You didn't lift—"

"I mean I didn't pinch it—take it, you know, sir!"

"But, Coker, you previously admitted taking it!"

"I know I did," said Coker, while Mr. Grabbett listened to the dialogue in growing surprise, not unmixed with amusement.

"But what—" gasped Dr. Locke, staring at Coker in complete puzzlement, and running his hand through his hair in a most worried manner.

"You see, I admitted pinching the cake because—well, because that would prevent inquiries being made about my whereabouts that afternoon," said Coker.

"Bless my soul! I am still more perplexed!"

"And how was it that you were wearing Master Bunter's cap?" put in Mr. Grabbett.

"Ah! That is a point!" said the Head, then he started again. "Dear me! I remember now, Coker, that it was your cap that was found at Mr. Clegg's shop, and it was upon that evidence that I sent for you, and punished you. Then—then—"

"It looks as if Master Bunter and our friend here exchanged caps," said Mr. Grabbett.

"That is exactly what I had begun to think! Is it so, Coker?"

"Quite right, sir," agreed Coker. He could see plain enough that no good would come of trying to withhold anything now.

"Then Bunter has accepted the honour for a deed which he did not perform, and furthermore, has allowed another to be punished for a misdemeanour which he committed!" said Dr. Locke, frowning portentously. "We will attend to Bunter later! Now, Coker, tell me why it was so important to conceal the fact that you were in Pegg?"

"Out of bounds, sir!" explained Coker briefly.

"Nonsense! Pegg has never been out of bounds for any boy!"

"It's out of bounds for me, anyway, sir," said Coker gloomily. "You—you see, sir—"

He hesitated, hardly knowing how to explain things.

Dr. Locke, meanwhile, rang his bell, and while Coker was hesitating, Trotter entered.

"Tell Mr. Prout I wish to speak to him!" said the Head.

"Yessir!"

Coker had not properly begun his explanations before Mr. Prout, full of self-importance, rustled into the room. He looked curiously at Mr. Grabbett, and frowned at Coker.

"You sent for me, Dr. Locke?"

"I understand from Coker, here, that the village of Pegg has been placed out of bounds for him."

Mr. Prout nodded.

"That is so, sir! I had no alternative. Since the matter has apparently been brought to your notice, I will explain the reason for my action."

Mr. Prout then recounted the incident in the Fifth-Form room, and the Head listened in thoughtful silence, while Coker fidgeted uncomfortably.

"So I considered that the only course to take was to place Pegg out of bounds for Coker," explained Mr. Prout, concluding.

"A very proper decision," agreed the Head. "Would you mind remaining for a little while, Mr. Prout?"

"Not at all, sir! Not at all!" replied Mr. Prout. "I—"

But the Head had already turned to Coker again, and was not listening to the master of the Fifth.

"I now understand why your Form master placed Pegg out of bounds for you, Coker," he said. "For all that,

I still do not understand why you allowed this strange mix-up between yourself and Bunter to go so far. Does it appear to you that breaking bounds is more serious than stealing?"

"Nunno, certainly not, sir!" gasped Coker. "But you see—"

"So Coker has broken bounds has he?" boomed Mr. Prout, addressing nobody in particular.

"Well, what is the explanation, Coker?" asked the Head.

"Well, you see, sir, old Prouty—"

"Wha-a-at!" roared Mr. Prout.

"Oh, crumbs! I mean Mr. Prout, sir, threatened me that if I once went to Pegg he would have me turned out of the Fifth, and sent down to a lower Form."

"Oh!" said the Head, the light of understanding beginning to come to him at last. "I see, Coker! But if that was so terrifying to you, why did you go to Pegg at all?"

"Well, I had to," answered Coker. "I—I had an appointment, you see, sir!"

He described his frantic endeavours to get a messenger to go to Pegg, and the Head listened gravely, while Mr. Grabbett chuckled aloud.

"I begin to understand, now!" said the Head, with a faint smile, when Coker had finished. "But did it not strike you that the fact of your saving Mr. Coutts' life would be an extenuating circumstance, if the facts came to your Form master's notice?"

"I don't quite follow you, sir," said Coker, genuinely puzzled. "My idea was, if it was known that I had been to Pegg, I should get booted out of the Fifth. And I didn't want to leave the Fifth!"

"Very obviously not!" commented the Head dryly. "Now, Mr. Prout, let me explain what has happened."

He briefly recited all that he had found out concerning the motor accident at Pegg, and Mr. Prout listened in astonishment.

"Well, well, well!" he ejaculated, when Dr. Locke had finished. "Then it was not Bunter who performed that act of heroism, but Coker! Tut, tut! Coker, I am proud of you, my brave boy!"

"Oh!"

"Proud to know that a member of my Form did his duty like a man!" said Mr. Prout ponderously.

"Oh crikey!"

"Strangely enough," continued Mr. Prout, "the purpose of my visit to Pegg was to ascertain whether you were in the village, Coker!"

"I guessed that, sir!"

"But, my good Coker, surely you did not think that I would be likely to relegate you to a lower Form, after your heroic deed?"

"Well, I didn't see what difference it made, sir," answered Coker, still considerably surprised at the equanimity with which Mr. Prout had taken the news of his being at Pegg. "Do you mean to say, then, sir, that you won't ask the Head now to chuck me out of the Fifth?"

"Certainly not!" answered Mr. Prout. "I am very pleased indeed to have you in the Fifth, Coker!"

Coker nearly fell down. It was the first time during his Fifth Form career that Mr. Prout had said that!

"Then—then I've had all this trouble for nothing!" gasped Coker. "I'd have been let off, anyway! Oh crumbs! What a prize idiot I've been!"

"You have certainly behaved in a very foolish manner, Coker," said the Head quietly. "I trust you will give

the matter due reflection, and take care that such peculiar behaviour is not repeated!"

"I will that, sir," said Coker, grinning cheerfully now.

"I would like you, also, to look at things from a commonsense point of view, and ask yourself whether you are being fair to your Form-master in neglecting your studies as you have recently."

"H'm!" said Coker dubiously.

"Your behaviour in composing doggerel during class is altogether inexcusable, and must not occur again. And as to your regard to this young lady at Pegg, while I approve of friendly association with young ladies on such occasions as tennis matches, I do not regard your riding a motor-cycle with a young lady pillion-passenger as decorous. It must cease!"

"Right-ho, sir!" assented Coker. "Matter of fact, this biznoy has made me fed-up with the whole affair, and it shan't occur again!"

"I am glad to hear it, Coker!" said Dr. Locke, quite amiably. "And now, my boy, it only remains for me to add my congratulations to those of Mr. Prout's. You acted very promptly and bravely on the occasion of the accident. You did well!"

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Coker, quite flustered.

"Now we go into the question of the evidence which Mr. Grabbett requires. Mr. Prout, I need detain you no longer!"

Mr. Prout quitted the room, and Mr. Grabbett once more took up the subject of Mr. Coutts' motor-car accident—this time, with somebody who really had seen something of it!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

An Interrupted Form Feed!

"GOT plenty of cream puffs?"

"Rather!"

"And chocolate eclairs?"

Bunter's keen on eclairs, you

know!"

"We've bought up Mrs. Mimble's

entire stock of chocolate eclairs,"

replied Frank Nugent, with a grin.

"And Bunter can have the lot if he

wants 'em!"

"Good! Now where's Bunter?"

The Rag presented a scene of great

animation.

Practically every member of the

Remove Form had turned up to the

feed in honour of William George

Bunter. And as most of the fellows had

brought along with them sufficient tuck

for three or four, it looked as though

Bunter, for once in his life, was going

to have a feed that would really satisfy

him.

Half a dozen fellows had already

made pots of tea, and everything was

ready for the feast. The guest of the

evening, however, had not yet returned

from his interview with the Head, and

a start was delayed until he was

present.

The Removites did not have long to

wait. After leaving the Head's study,

the fat junior, quickly obliterating the

memory of his somewhat uncomfortable

interview with Dr. Locke and Mr.

Grabbett, rolled off at top speed to the

Rag.

When he opened the door of that

celebrated room, the sight that greeted

his eyes was one to gladden the heart

of a Bunter.

All available tables in the room had

been set end to end and covered by the

best and cleanest linen to be found in

the Remove quarters, the whole presenting quite a pleasing appearance.

It was not the linen, however, that made Billy Bunter's eyes glisten, but the comestibles set out thereon. Cream puffs, chocolate eclairs, currant cake, fruit cake, iced cake, tins of fine red salmon, ham, tongue, dishes of pineapple chunks, custards and jellies. There was no end to the good things laid at the feet of the newly-discovered hero of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, this is something like!" said Bunter.

"Trot in, Bunter!"

"Make yourself at home!"

"Room for a giddy hero there, please!"

Billy Bunter, with a grin of joyous anticipation on his podgy face, sat down between Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry.

"Help yourself, old barrel!" said Bob Cherry hospitably.

"How about some of this ham?" suggested Squiff.

"Try a bit of salmon, Bunter!"

"Pass the pineapple chunks to

Bunter, you chaps!"

Billy Bunter cheerfully solved the problem of choice by helping himself indiscriminately to everything that came along. He didn't really worry much whether it was salmon, or ham, or pineapple chunks, or chocolate eclairs, so long as it was something in the tuck line.

"By Jove, this is top-hole!" he mumbled between mouthfuls of Harry Wharton's salmon. "Of course, it's only what you ought to do, really!"

"What!"

"Only what you ought to do, really," repeated Bunter, almost choking in his endeavour to eat and speak at the same time. "You've been a mean lot of rotters in the past, you know!"

"Oh!"

"Becoming a hero hasn't improved his manners!" commented Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Hazel! Still, I don't want to hold up the feed to argue with you! Pass the mustard, will you, Harry, old man?"

"Harry, old man" passed the mustard, and Bunter resumed his operations.

The festivities were at their height, and Billy Bunter's face had reached the stage when it was beginning to shine like a full moon, when there was a sudden interruption.

The door of the Rag suddenly opened, propelled by a powerful kick from the outside, and Horace Coker of the Fifth looked in.

He looked, with surprise, at the feasting Removites.

The feasting Removites also looked at him—not only with surprise, but with considerable hostility. Horace Coker was not popular in the Remove Form at Greyfriars.

"Fag feed on, what?" remarked Coker, with a lofty look round the Rag.

"That's it!" agreed Tom Brown.

"Fifth Form pirates not invited. They can look after themselves—especially in the cake line!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll box your ears, young Brown!" said Coker, frowning and taking a step towards the cheerful Colonial.

"Better keep out, Coker!" warned Harry Wharton. "We shouldn't like to spoil the look of your baby-face, you know; but—"

"None of your cheek, young Wharton!" said Coker severely. "I came here to look for Bunter."

"What, again?"

"Bunter's busy!"



Billy Bunter, with a grin of joyous anticipation, sat down between Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. "Help yourself, old barrel!" said Bob Cherry hospitably. "How about some of this ham?" suggested Squiff. "Some salmon, Bunter?" The Owl of the Remove solved the problem of choice by helping himself to everything that came along. (See Chapter 12.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter, at that moment, was taking huge bites of plum cake, and had no time to waste on Coker of the Fifth.

"What d'you want to see Bunter for, anyway?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Well, if you want to know," said Coker. "That prize pig of yours is spoofing you!"

"Eh?"

"Oh, really, Coker!" said Bunter, looking up uneasily from his plum cake.

"It's all piffle about that rescue!" said Coker. "You see—"

"Here, draw it mild!"

"It's in the local paper, anyway!"

"I don't mean it didn't happen, you brainless young idiots!" said Coker politely. "What I mean is, Bunter wasn't the one who rescued Mr. Coutts."

"Oh!"

"Well, if Bunter didn't do it, who the dickens did?" demanded Squiff.

"I did!"

There was a roar from the Removites.

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Why the thump haven't you said so before, then?"

"Look here! If you doubt my word—"

—said Coker, his brow darkening.

"Of course we doubt your word!" snorted Squiff. "Think it's so easy to come here and spoof us, then?"

"Rag the Fifth Form rotter!"

"Bump him!"

"Try any of your fag tricks on me, and I'll bash you!" warned Coker. "I tell you I'm the man that did it, not Bunter!"

"Rats!"

"Rubbish!"

"Do you think the Head is spoofing us, too, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The suggestion that Dr. Locke might have been "spoofing," when he made the announcement concerning Bunter's brave rescue, struck the Removites as rather funny. They roared.

"But, you young idiots!" gasped Coker. "The Head—"

"Rats!"

"I tell you, the Head—"

"Don't listen to him! Bump him!"

"The Head—" shrieked Coker.

"Yooooop! Yarooooop!"

Coker's explanations changed to yells of pain, as the Removites jerked him off his feet, and deposited him, with great vigour, on the floor.

"Bump him again!" grinned Tom Brown. "Keep it up till he recants!"

"Till he whats?"

"Till he recants! Eats his own words, you know!"

"Oh! Good egg! Once again!"

"Yarooooop! Leggo, you rotters! Groooogh!"

"Going to recant yet, Coker?"

"No, you idiots! I tell you the Head— Wow-ow-ow! Whoop!"

"Hold on!" said Wharton, as the excited juniors lifted Coker again. "I think Coker's got something to say about the Head and Bunter. May as well hear it!"

"I say, you fellows, don't believe anything—"

"Groooogh! You—you—" Words failed Coker, as he scrambled to his feet and glared at the Removites.

"Now, Coker, if you've got anything to say, say it!" said Wharton.

"I should jolly well think I have got something to say!" roared Coker.

"What I was going to say was that the Head knows all about Bunter now, and you'll jolly well hear for yourselves soon that I'm the one who fished that

merchant out of the car, not your fat fraud!"

"Oh!"

"I say, you fellows, don't believe him!" mumbled Billy Bunter, still munching plum-cake, but looking rather scared now.

"Is that the truth?" asked Wharton, looking keenly at Coker. "Not a leg-pull? Honour bright?"

"Of course, it's true!" growled Coker.

"And the Head knows?"

"I've told you he does!"

"Well, that's rather different," said Bob Cherry. "Why didn't you tell us at first, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'm blessed if I can understand it!" said Squiff. "How did Bunter come in it, and why did you remain mum?"

"I should have explained all that before if you'd kept your grubby paws off me!" said Coker sorely. "Anyway, I'll explain now!"

Just then the door of the Rag opened, and Trotter, the page, for the second time within an hour, ambled in.

"The 'Ead wants Master Bunter!" he announced. "And, my word, don't 'e look waxey? Not 'arf!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Sounds as if you're in for it, Tubby!"

"Sounds as if Coker's right, too!"

"Oh, lor'! I—I—I feel a bit queer, all of a sudden!" said Bunter plaintively. "C-can't you go and tell him I'm unwell, Trotter?"

"Which I ain't in the 'abit of telling fibs, Master Bunter!" said Trotter cheerfully.

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter, with a very scared look on his podgy face, rolled sadly and

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slowly out of the Rag, and crawled away to the Head's study, leaving Coker to explain matters to the wondering Removites.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vice Versa!

"HE, he, he!"
A mirthless snigger came from the fat lips of William George Bunter as he entered the Head's study.

On his way to that dreaded apartment Bunter had considered his position, and had come to the conclusion that he was in a very tight fix. From what Coker had said, it was obvious that the Head knew all. Bunter's instinct was to continue the bluff and maintain still that he and not Coker was the rescuer of Mr. Coutts. But it penetrated even the Owl's obtuse brain that there was no hope of keeping it up for long.

Bunter, therefore, reluctantly reconciled himself to the inevitable, and tried to think out how he could make his part in the affair appear less deserving of censure than it actually was. The only plan he could think of was to pretend that the whole thing had been a sort of innocent joke, arranged between Coker and himself. He made up his mind to bring this aspect to the Head's notice, and; in order to introduce a jovial atmosphere into things, he entered the Head's study, giving vent to the unmusical cachinnation.

"He, he, he!"

Dr. Locke stared at his fat visitor in astonishment.

"Is there anything wrong with your throat, boy?"

"Oh, really, sir! That was me laughing, you know, sir! He, he, he!"

"Indeed!" said Dr. Locke icily.

"Have the goodness to cease laughing at once, then, Bunter! The matter I am going to speak to you about is by no means a subject for laughter!"

"Oh, really, sir! If you're referring to that motor accident—"

"I am referring to the motor accident!" said Dr. Locke, sternly.

"I have discovered that on the occasion when you were here before, you told a tissue of lies to myself and the other gentleman who was here!"

"Oh, really, sir! That was what I was laughing at, sir!" explained Bunter.

"It's just been a jape all the time!"

"A jape!"

"Yes, sir! A jape—a joke, you know! Old Coker and I arranged it all; but, of course, now that it's all over, we're telling everybody. He, he, he!"

"Silence, you stupid boy!" roared the Head.

"Am I to understand, after you have accepted the praise and honour due to Coker, and allowed him to be punished for an offence committed by you, that it is all a joke?"

"That's it, sir!" said Bunter.

"And you expect me to believe that, Bunter?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Your expectations will not be realised!" said the Head grimly.

"And with regard to the article of food which was taken from Mr. Clegg's shop—was that a joke, too?"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter had forgotten Uncle Clegg's cake.

"I—I don't know anything about that, sir! In any case, I fully intended to pay for it out of the postal-order I'm expecting!" stammered Bunter.

"You intended to pay for a cake you knew nothing about?"

"Yes, sir! I mean, no, sir! That is to say—"

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Bunter floundered wildly.

"You are a wicked and deceptive boy!" said the Head sternly. "It seems useless to talk to you, Bunter! I shall flog you before the whole school!"

"Oh dear!"

Bunter almost collapsed.

"You will report to me after prayers to-morrow. You may go, Bunter!"

Bunter rolled off towards the Remove quarters with black despair in his heart. If ever a boy repented of his sins it was William George Bunter at that moment.

There was a shout as he drew near the Rag. Coker was still there, telling the Removites.

"Here he comes!"

"You fat villain!"

"You spoofer!"

"Own up! We know all about it!"

"Oh, really, you fellows!" said Bunter, sinking dejectedly into an armchair.

"I've just been trying to tell the Head it was only a jape. But he didn't seem to take my word for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you wouldn't laugh!" said Bunter peevishly.

"It's no laughing matter for me, you know. I'm booked for a public flogging to-morrow! Oh dear!"

"Phew!"

"The beak's got his rag out, then!"

"No wonder!"

"I suppose it was that bizney of pinching the cake from Uncle Clegg's that did

"TUBBY TRIES IT ON!"

(Continued from page 15.)

"Here, here!" said Merry. "He didn't really mean to insult you, sir. In his sane moments he always speaks awfully well of you, and says what a dear, kind, lovable headmaster you are."

The Head was quite touched—a fact which some of his pupils had suspected for some time!

"It is very jennerus and noble of you, my boys," he said, "to come forward and plead the cause of this young rascal. He ought to feel very grateful to you."

But the looks which Tubby Barrell bestowed upon Jack Jolly & Co. were anything but grateful. They were positively Hunnish.

"I feel that I cannot turn a deff ear to such a jennerus appeal on behalf of a skoolfellow," went on Dr. Birchmall.

"In the serkumstances, I shall not sack Barrell from St. Sam's. I shall endeavour to restore him to a state of sanity by administering a severer flogging!"

"Yaroo!" yelled Tubby Barrell.

"Oh, you awful rotters! You know jolly well that I'm as sane as you are. You're only doing this so as you won't have to pay me—"

"Shurrup!" commanded the Head sternly.

Then he beckoned to Fossil the porter. "Bring hither the birch and block, in order that justiss may be done!"

By the time the flogging was over Tubby Barrell felt that justiss had been very much overdone! He was moaning and groaning, and gasping and grunting, and feeling that life was not worth living.

The St. Sam's Insurance Company had refused to insure Tubby Barrell against floggings; so he could eggspect no compensation from that quarter. And the unhappy Tubby bitterly regretted having plotted his deep, dark plot to get eggspelled from St. Sam's.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's amusing tale of Jack Jolly & Co., entitled! "A BOM-SHELL FOR BRIGHT!" It's a scream from beginning to end chums!)

it," conjectured Harry Wharton.

"You're a silly ass, you know, Bunter!"

"I suppose it's partly my fault," admitted Coker, with a frown.

"Not the cake, of course, but I was a fathead to allow the complications to set in."

"Hear, hear!" said the Remove cordially.

"Still, you're a giddy hero, for all that!" said Wharton.

"What about three cheers for Coker, chaps?"

The chaps were mostly in full agreement, and for the first time in history the Rag echoed with cheers for Horace Coker of the Fifth; a graceful compliment to which Coker responded with the remark:

"You're a set of silly young asses!"

"I've just been thinking," he went on, a moment later.

"As it's partly my fault that the prize porker's in trouble, I ought perhaps to see the Head about it and put in a word for him."

"Oh crumbs!"

The Remove grinned. It was just like Coker to want to step in and advise the Head on the conduct of the school.

"I think it's up to me," said Coker thoughtfully.

"Of course, the fat young idiot deserves it, I know—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—" murmured Bunter foeibly.

"Still, a public flogging is a bit thick!" said Coker, with a frown.

"I'll see what I can do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker went off, and the Remove broke up and drifted off in twos and threes to their studies for prep, discussing the revelations they had just heard, and chuckling at the idea of Coker interceding on Bunter's behalf.

Strangely enough, however, Coker succeeded. Bunter received quite as much punishment as he wanted in the Head's study—more than he wanted, in fact!—and Mr. Quelch, for weeks after, had a special "down" on him; but the only event that took place in public was a full explanation of the affair by the Head. Coker had the satisfaction after that of seeing the same juniors who had ragged him over Uncle Clegg's cake nod to him with considerably more respect than they had ever shown him before.

It was about a week after when Mr. Prout received a visit from Coker.

"Well, Coker?" said the Fifth Form master interrogatively.

"I want to know whether you would mind lifting the ban on Pegg for me, sir."

"But the young lady you mentioned—Miss—er—"

"She's gone now," said Coker.

"Her pater was shifted to somewhere on the West Coast, so she's no longer in Pegg."

"Oh, I see!"

Mr. Prout smiled quite graciously.

"Very well, Coker, I agree—in the circumstances. I most certainly agree that Pegg should no longer be considered out of bounds to you. And from your own point of view, I am glad that this—ha!—friendship of yours is thus necessarily terminated."

"Well, to tell you the truth, sir, so am I," admitted Coker.

"When I come to think over it I think she only regarded me as a joke all along!"

A remark which showed unusual perspicacity for Horace Coker of the Fifth!

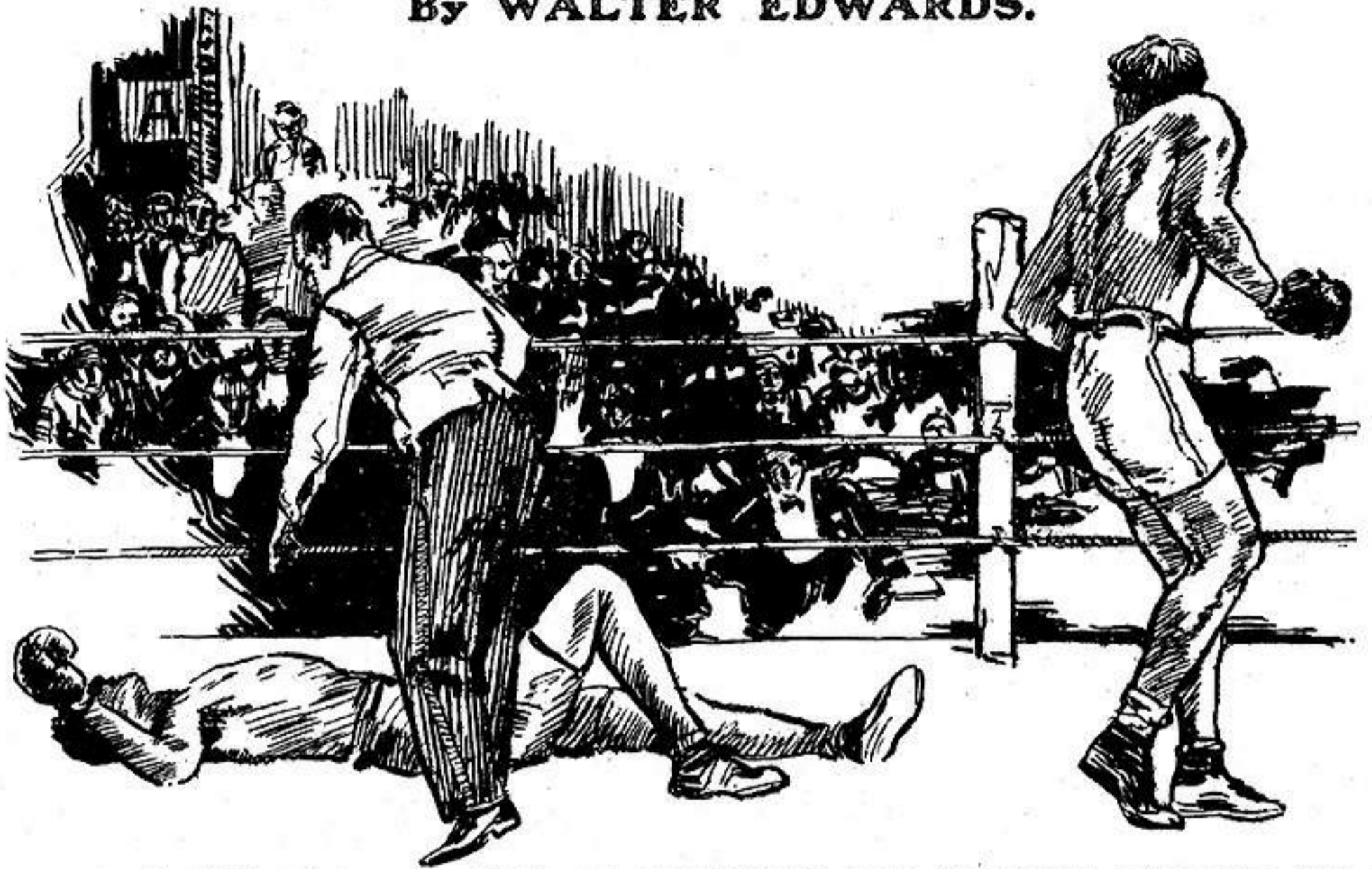
THE END.

(There will be another magnificent story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "THE BOY FROM THE EAST!" Make sure of securing a copy by ordering it WELL IN ADVANCE!)

A WORLD BEATER! A human fury, a hurricane, a blizzard, all wrapped into one—that's how they speak of the Pittsburgh Dentist. But, despite that reputation, it's "Tiny" Scannan's boast that he could put the American pugilist to "sleep" inside sixty seconds!

THE MAN OF IRON!

By WALTER EDWARDS.



The Challenge!

THE Pittsburgh Dentist was breathing heavily, but the terrible power of his punches increased rather than diminished, and a terrific smash beneath the heart made Dave Iremonger wince and grunt.

Standing away from his man, Pal did some speedy, long-range hitting that quickly reduced Iremonger to a state of impotence; then, stepping forward, he brought over a tricky right hook that threatened to pulverise the jawbone.

Crack!

The unmistakable sound echoed through the packed building, bringing a gasp from scores of fans, and a second later Iremonger sagged like an empty sack and crumpled up, to roll over and stare up at the swaying arc lamps with eyes that did not see.

The Pittsburgh Dentist won that contest in a shade under two minutes.

The counting-out of Dave Iremonger was a mere formality, for he was unconscious long after he had been carried into his corner, and Pal Jordan, surrounded by his friends, did not spare a glance as the Londoner was lifted over the ropes and borne down the sloping gangway towards the dressing-room.

This callous attitude was not at all to the liking of the "fans," and many were the rude remarks that were yelled at the grinning Dentist from all parts of the house.

Lolling back in his ringside seat, a fat cigar protruding from the corner of his full-lipped mouth, Sir Aubrey Ailen turned to his companion.

"What do you think about it, Tiny?" he asked, an eager note in his voice.

"I could lick his head off!" grunted Scannan, running a thick finger round the inside of his wing collar.

The giant looked anything but happy in his evening clothes, and he declared

that he was as uncomfortable as the man whose skin didn't fit him properly. "Good!" smiled Ailen, getting to his feet.

"One moment, Jordan!" he cried, as the pugilist dropped from the edge of the ring and set off towards the dressing-room. "Can you spare a moment?"

The baronet's throaty voice could be heard all over the house, and every ear was pricked up as the American turned back and grinned down at Sir Aubrey.

"Sure!" drawled the Dentist. "What's the trouble, old-timer? Found another White Hope?"

The baronet shook his sleek head.

"No, it's the same one," he returned, "and I'm willing to back him for any amount you like to name! What is more, he'll fight you where you like and when you like, and under whatever conditions you care to name!"

Again the words reached all ears, and an expectant thrill ran through the packed building.

"What 'ave you got to say to that, Jordan?" demanded a voice from the gallery.

"Aw, shucks!" grinned the American, dismissing Sir Aubrey's challenge with a wave of the hand.

"What d'yer want, Jordan," yelled

INTRODUCTION.

Sir Aubrey Ailen, chairman of the Storrydene F.C., and a big gun in the sporting world, is convinced that the Storrydene goalkeeper—a giant of a man, with the name of "Tiny" Scannan—could make mincemeat of Pal Jordan, a pugilist with a big reputation from the United States. The big thing, however, is to fix up a match, and Sir Aubrey sets about this task with his usual cunning. Some time later Sir Aubrey and his protege are occupying ringside seats at the Olympus, watching the American's bout with Dave Iremonger, a London fireman. It is obvious from the start, however, that Pal Jordan has the Londoner at his mercy.

(Now read on.)

the sportsmen in the gallery—"jam on it?"

"Say," drawled Pal, an ugly glint in his eyes, "I wish you'd ask your friend to be quiet! If it's your son——"

Sir Aubrey was roused at once, and he was swelling visibly as he jammed his monocle into position and glared up at the pugilist.

"H'm! Ha!" he said, adopting his pompous manner. "It may interest you to know that it is not my habit to tolerate impertinence from prize-fighters! But I will let the matter drop for the moment and revert to our previous business! I refer to the challenge I made on behalf of Tiny Scannan!"

"As I told you before," smiled Pal Jordan, "I'm a boxer—not an executioner!"

"And that is the best reason you can put forward for refusing to meet Scannan?" asked the baronet, and there was a wealth of meaning in the question.

A tinge of colour crept into the boxer's cheeks as he glared down at the baronet.

"Say, what are you gettin' at?" he drawled. "Are you suggestin' that I've got cold feet, you poor mutt?"

"It certainly looks as though your pedal extremities are—er—somewhat chilly, doesn't it?" asked Ailen.

A shout of laughter rumbled through the hall, and loud cries came from the gallery.

"What about it, Jordan?"

"Got the wind up, old man?"

Certain it is that such a scene was unprecedented in the short history of the Olympus Hall; and it is equally certain that Sir Aubrey would have been ejected but for the fact that he was a director of the concern and one of the largest shareholders.

The raucous cries from the gallery

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were taken up by the people in the better-class seats, for Sir Aubrey Ailen's seed had fallen upon fertile soil; and it was not long before the hall was in a state of uproar, sticks and fists being shaken at the American pugilist.

Pal Jordan looked stunned for the moment, and then in a flash he realised all that this hostile demonstration would mean to him. The newspapers would say that he funk'd meeting Scannan, Ailen's White Hope! Scannan! A third-rate chopping-block with glass elbows! Scannan! A guy who'd been in the game for about five minutes! Scannan! Ugh! He—Pal Jordan—could eat the stiff, gloves and all!

The Pittsburg Dentist muttered savagely as he shot a defiant glance round at the sea of white faces.

"Got cold feet, have I?" he roared. "Where's Scannan? Where is the mutt? I'll fight him at once—right here and now, and I'll knock his ugly block off!"

The Big Bluff!

SCARCELY did the words ring through the hall than a broad-shouldered giant in evening-dress rose from his ringside seat, and thrust his way to the spot where Pal Jordan was surrounded by a crowd of excited "fans."

"Say that again—you!" growled the giant, embedding the tips of three muscular fingers between the American's ribs.

Pal gave a wild yelp and swung round, and his surprise was almost comical to behold when he found himself dwarfed by a mountain of a man with a face like a jigsaw-puzzle.

"Gee!" breathed the Pittsburg Dentist, gazing up at the strange collection of features. "What a map!"

"Got anything else to say?" demanded the giant.

Pal nodded.

"Sure!" he said. "Whose little boy are you?"

"I'm Mrs. Scannan's little boy," growled the "little boy," clenching his big fists. "Name of Tiny."

"Gee!" breathed Pal, running expert eyes over the other man. "Why the heck I didn't tumble to that at first I don't know! You're Ailen's 'White Hope'?"

It was Scannan's turn to nod.

"Sure!" he answered, gruffly. "I'm the feller whose block you're going to knock off. I suggest that you get busy, sonny! There's too much hot air about you!"

The "fans" heard the words, and a thunderous roar of voices made the arc lamps sway.

"What about it, Jordan?"

"Have you got cold feet?"

The Pittsburg Dentist appeared to be deaf to the wild shouts, for he was giving all his attention to Tiny Scannan, whose mighty frame seemed to fascinate him. Pal, of course, was a judge of physical condition, and there was something about Scannan's clear skin and bright eyes that he found mildly disconcerting.

The Dentist turned to Maulstein, his manager, and whispered animatedly for some seconds. Then he swung round upon Tiny Scannan.

"I guess I'll knock your block off, after all," he drawled.

"And what about the money side of the business?" put in Sir Aubrey Ailen, his little eyes gleaming with cupidity.

Things were panning out exactly as

he wished. Maulstein, of course, would back his man for twenty or thirty thousand dollars—more, perhaps—and thus would Ailen and Scannan complete a profitable night's work.

Maulstein, who was watching Ailen closely, ran his fleshy hand over his bald head.

"Eh?" he queried, narrowing his beady eyes. "What money business?"

"Aren't you going to back Pal for a pile?" asked the baronet, giving way to sudden panic.

Maulstein shook his head.

"Nope," he drawled, showing a number of gold teeth. "Betting in any form is sinful. I sha'n't have a red cent on Pal this journey. It 'ud be too much like robbing a kid of its candy, 'cause your man don't stand a snow-ball's chance against the Dentist."

Ailen looked as though he were about to collapse on the spot; and Tiny, also, appeared to be badly shaken. A gentle zephyr would have knocked both of them down at that moment.

The bait had been dropped, but the fish would not bite.

"I want to have a word with you," said the baronet. And Tiny, moving like a person in a trance, allowed himself to be led aside. "I can see what it is," said Sir Aubrey huskily. "They are scared about you. They won't risk a penny until they know how you

shape. But we'll fix them. We'll beat 'em yet, Tiny." Ailen paused, and lowered an eyelid. "You know what I mean."

The giant nodded.

"Sure!" he grunted. "Let's go to it!"

A six-rounds bout was staged whilst Tiny Scannan changed into his fighting kit; but the affair went less than two rounds, a glossy-haired young gentleman from Whitechapel flooring his man with a smash to the chin, the snappy hook finding the "point" with mathematical precision.

And then came the "needle" fight.

Tiny Scannan stripped well, and something very like a gasp broke from the fans when the curtains were thrust aside, and the giant strode down the gangway. Tiny, physically perfect, looked every inch a world-beater, for he had the arms, legs, and torso of Samson. He was magnificent, a revelation in physical fitness, and the American boxer was almost dwarfed when Tiny stood beside him.

Even the Dentist was struck by the disparity, and the contemptuous grin vanished from his features as he looked up at Scannan's queer collection of features.

"Gee!" mused Pal. "Some face fittings!"

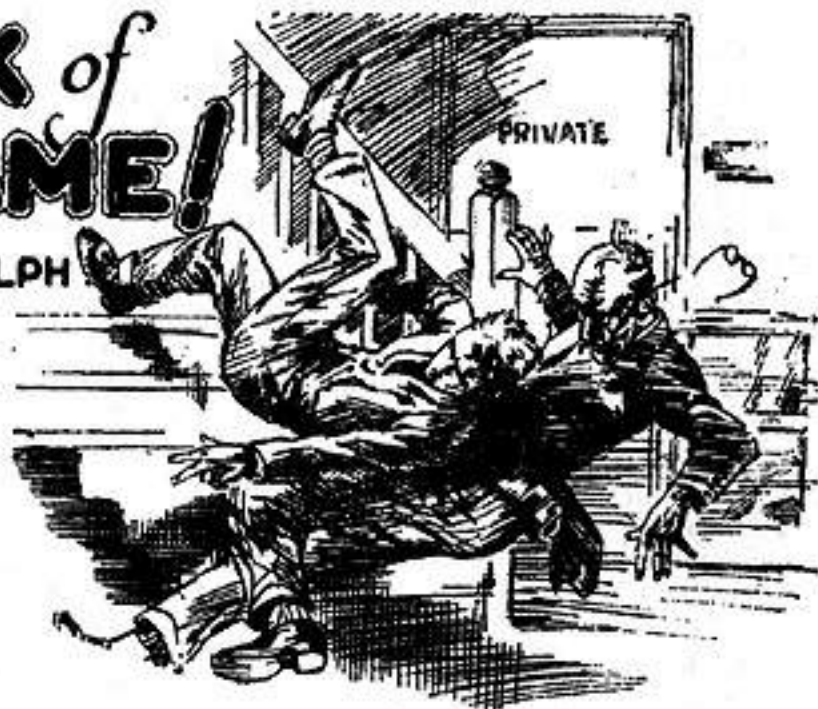
He managed to force a grin, but he was worried and anxious all the same.

(Continued on page 28.)

GRAND CRICKET STORY STARTS IN THIS WEEK'S "GEM," CHUMS!

The **LUCK** of
the **GAME!**

RICHARD RANDOLPH



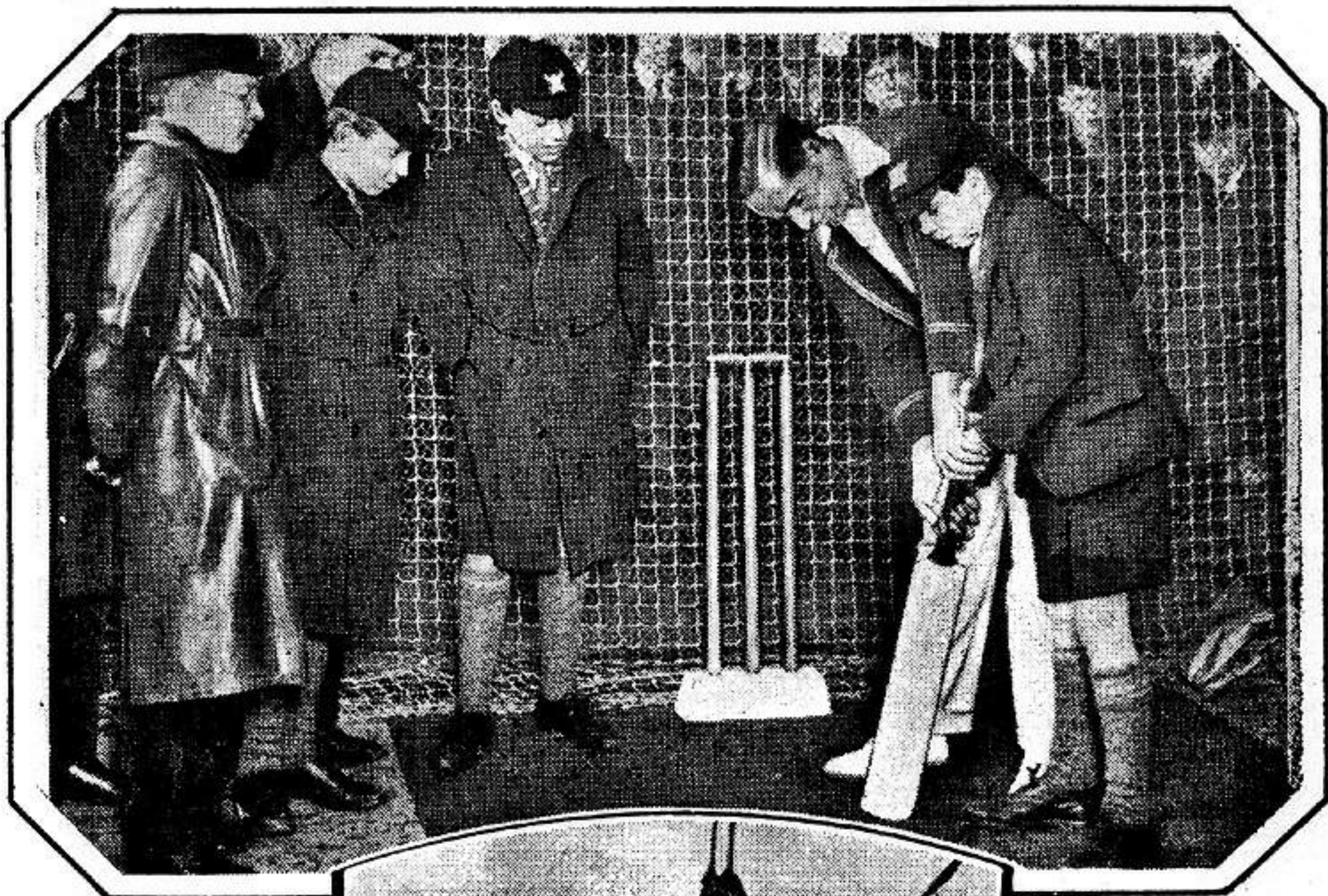
Dick Dare, full of grit and a sportsman to his finger-tips, longs for the smiling, green cricket field; longs to feel the willow in his capable hands. But the powers that be have decided that Dick should follow an indoor occupation. It would appear that cricket, the game he loves and for which he is naturally fitted, is not for him. It would appear so until Fate steps in and re-shuffles the fortunes of young Dick. Every sportsman will enjoy

"The LUCK of the GAME!"

By Richard Randolph.

the opening chapters of which will appear in Wednesday's bumper issue of the *GEM*. Do your pals a good turn and tell them about this wonder story of King Cricket.

News Pars and Pictures.



FUTURE CHAMPIONS!

There's a right and wrong way of holding a bat, as H. Sutcliffe, the famous Yorkshire cricketer, is demonstrating to a keen disciple of the great summer game. The other fellows looking on are memorising the correct way to hold a willow, and who knows but their thoughts are of future boundary hits . . . and a place in their county eleven? If they emulate the feats of their present instructor, any county eleven would welcome them with open arms.



IRRESISTIBLE!

This unusual photo is of a giant electro-magnet used by a Junk Company for lifting and transporting great masses of steel and iron. It does the work of many men, when it is charged with electricity, with unparalleled efficiency. It certainly makes light of the task of lifting a huge steel ring in which two men are standing, as shown in the picture alongside. But even so, it doesn't possess the unparalleled "attracting" powers of the MAGNET you now hold in your hand!



(Continued
from page 26.)

And he would have withdrawn from the affair had that been possible. But he did not see how he could back out at the last moment, for a refusal to fight might easily have led to something very like a riot.

It was well known that Scannan had been chasing the Dentist for a match, but there was not a fan in the hall who had imagined that the pair would meet under such dramatic conditions.

Seated in his corner, his great shoulders hunched, his gloved hands upon his knees, Pal Jordan kept his shrewd eyes upon his man; but the ugly, inscrutable face of Tiny Scannan told him nothing.

George Morris, the obese M.C., was already inside the ring, and, with the first clarion note of his voice, he obtained the silence for which he begged.

He did not waste time.

"Ladies hand gentlemen!" he cried, making heavy work of the h's. "Hi beg to announce a fifteen-rounds contest between Pal Jordan, of Pittsburg, U.S.A., and Tiny Scannan, of England! Hon my left, Pal Jordan, hon my right, Tiny Scannan!" Morris waddled across the canvas and smiled down at Captain Herriott, the referee. "The lads are ready and waitin', sir!"

"Seconds out!"

Tr-i-i-i-ing!

Pal Jordan yawned and stretched himself after he had slipped out of his gaudy bath-gown, and there was an expression of utter boredom upon his face as he stepped out of his corner and touched gloves with the giant. It was a beautiful piece of acting, but it was wasted upon Tiny Scannan, who opened the proceedings by aiming a terrific swing at the American's head. Avoiding the wild punch with ease, Pal stepped forward and planted three swift blows to the other man's body; and he had the satisfaction of seeing Tiny wince.

Covering up, the giant crouched and retreated before the cat-footed Dentist, and a moment later he was reeling beneath a terrific two-handed fusillade of blows.

Thud, thud, thud! Thud, thud, thud!

Punches rained upon his head and body from all angles, and he looked almost pitiable as he staggered before the merciless attack of his lighter opponent. He seemed to have no idea of defence, for his guard was of the tissue-paper order; but few were the

human beings who could have absorbed so much punishment and remained standing. It seemed almost uncanny to the fans, but Pal alone knew that never once was he able to place a blow to a vulnerable spot.

The fans, of course, were giving tongue.

"Make a fight of it, Scannan!"

"Stand up to 'im!"

"You've got him, Pal!"

"Attaboy!"

Pal was hitting just when and where he pleased, but he was unable to make very much impression upon the mountain of a man who obviously knew not the elementary principles of the mitting game.

The whole thing was farcical, pitiful, and many a sportsman called upon Scannan to "sky the towel."

But Tiny was deaf to the wild shouting, and in the last minute of the round he electrified everybody by landing his first blow. Having taken a smash to the mouth, he suddenly leapt, as swiftly as a rattler from its coil, and the punch took the Dentist square on the chin and knocked him flat.

And that unexpected punch changed the whole situation.

"He's 'out'!"

"Stand back, Scannan!"

"—Three—four—five—"

It was a very dazed American who sat up and wondered what had hit him, but his brain cleared rapidly when the hysterical voice of Maulstein struck his ears, and the wild-eyed face of Maulstein glared at him through the ropes.

"Pal! Pal! You're takin' the count, boy!"

"—seven—eight—"

No sooner was he on his feet than the Dentist became a human fury, a hurricane, a blizzard, and it was difficult to believe that any man could have become the very embodiment of concentrated venom. It looked as though Jordan were out to destroy, and within fifty seconds he had reduced Tiny Scannan to an inert mass of insensibility; and the whole building seemed to shake when the giant crashed to the boards and rolled over like a mighty porpoise.

Tiny having been counted out, Abe Maulstein leapt into the ring and embraced his principal; and then he turned to Sir Aubrey Ailen, who had followed him through the ropes.

"Didn't I tell you that it 'ud be as simple as robbing a kid of its candy?" he drawled. "Your man can't live in the same ring as Pal!"

An unpleasant smile flitted across the baronet's pale features.

"Rot!" he snapped. "Tiny was a bit off colour to-night, but he'll eat your man if they ever meet again!"

The words came plainly to the people in the ringside seats.

"Why not fix up another contest, Sir Aubrey?" asked Captain Herriott, the referee.

"Sure," drawled Maulstein, playing

into Ailen's hands. "Why not? But I guess you won't be so all-fired eager to have a bet this time!"

"Rot!" repeated Ailen. "I'm a sportsman and a gentleman, and I'm still willing to back Scannan for any sum you care to name! I'm an Englishman, y'know."

"Any sum?" drawled Maulstein.

Ailen nodded.

"Waal," said Maulstein, glancing across at the Dentist, "what's the matter with a thousand aside—in pounds?"

"What's the matter with five thousand aside?"

"Or twenty?"

"Or fifty?"

Fifty thousand pounds!

Little beads of perspiration stood upon Maulstein's broad forehead as he glanced across at Pal Jordan, and Jordan, who was trembling, gave a short nod.

"Say, we'll shake on that, Ailen," drawled Maulstein, "and then we'll get along and fix the articles! Do you agree?"

"Certainly," said Sir Aubrey, his voice quite steady; but the heft beneath the bulging shirt-front was thumping with exultation.

Abe Maulstein, the 'cute American, had walked into the trap!

Sir Aubrey Ailen looked very pleased and well nourished as he swayed back in his chair and clasped his hands upon his rotund waistcoat.

"Tiny, my dear fellow," he cried, with fulsome cordiality, "I hand it to you: for I've never seen a better bit of acting in the whole of my life! You bluffed the crowd and you bluffed Abe Maulstein, but most important of all you bluffed Pal himself! The poor soak thought he had you stone-cold, yet you were just acting all the time! You'd make a fortune on the stage, my dear boy!"

The Man of Iron gave a grim kind of smile and nodded his bullet head.

"And I mean to make a fortune off the stage, old-timer," he declared, "for there ought to be a heap of money in this boxing business! What's more, Ailen, I mean to have my full share of everything that's going! I want you to understand that at the kick-off of this partnership!" He fixed his host with a hard eye and added: "I'm going to have a square deal!"

Sir Aubrey raised a podgy, protesting hand.

"My dear fellow!" he cried, in shocked tones. "Surely you're not suggesting that you won't get a fair deal!"

"I'm not suggesting anything," returned the Man of Iron; "I'm just stating a fact!"

(Tiny Scannan is confident that he can put the Pittsburg Dentist to sleep in the first minute. But can he? Don't fail to read next week's thrilling instalment, whatever you do, chums!)

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