

“WHO PUNCHED PROUT?”

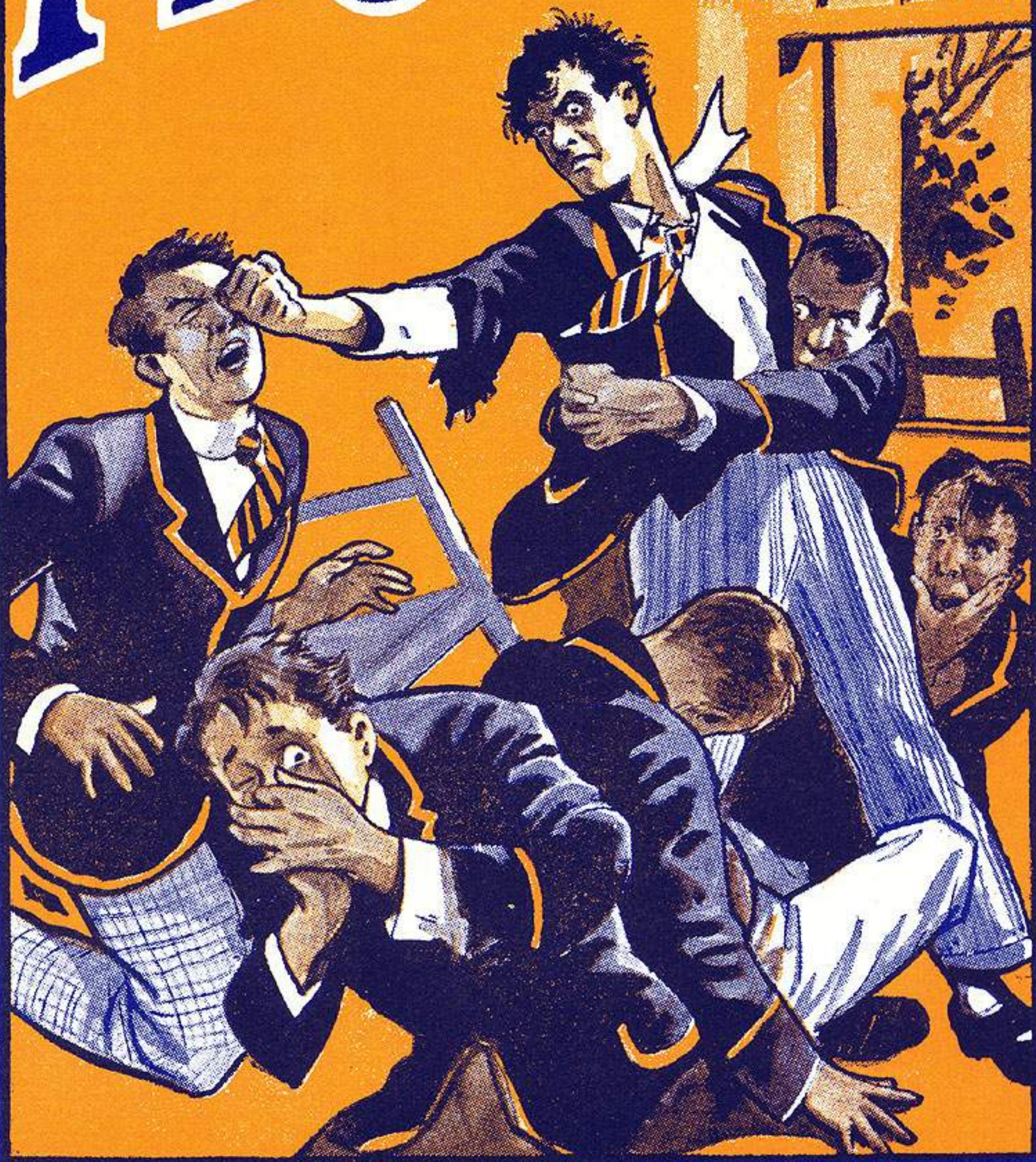
This week's breezy yarn
of school life at Greyfriars.

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The Magnet 2^d

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COKER—THE GREYFRIARS SAMSON!

(It took umpteen fellows to subdue Horace Coker—and they all had something to show for it! See the grand school story of the Chums of Greyfriars—inside.)

Our Special Football Feature!



This week "Referee" winds up his popular footer series of articles with an interesting account of the methods of Willis Edwards—the International right half-back of Leeds United.

IT would probably be difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion as to which trade or calling has provided the greatest number of footballers who have risen to the top of the tree. But I think if we could go back right through the years we should find that at least as many, if not more, footballers have come out of the mines than out of any other calling.

In fact, in the old days there were officials of certain clubs who used to say that whenever they wanted a footballer to fill a certain position they went to the pit-shaft of a coal-mine and whistled down for a player to be sent up. It is even said that one day an official of Derby County went to the pit-shaft and called down: "Send us an inside-right!" And the inside-right they sent up was Steve Bloomer, the fellow who scored more goals in first-class football than any other player has ever done, and possibly more than any one player will ever score.

An Ambition Achieved!

It is not literally true to say that Willis Edwards, the present right half-back of Leeds United—and England's first choice—came up to play football when somebody whistled down the mine that they wanted a right-half. But Willis did start his career in a mine at Alfreton, and, like all young miners, he played football, hoping, as he has told me himself, that the day would come when he would be able to turn pro.

The day duly came, and there is rather an interesting story connected with it. Though only playing in junior football in the district in which he lived, Edwards came under the eye of a scout of the Blackburn Rovers club, and this scout arranged for him to have a trial run with the Rovers. He was just about to accept when a friend of his asked him if he would like a run with Chesterfield. Chesterfield being quite near home, he accepted the second invitation rather than the first, and one game was enough to convince the Chesterfield people that another gem—I think they call coal black diamonds—had come out of the mine.

For several seasons Edwards played with Chesterfield without gaining any distinctions out of the ordinary. As a matter of fact, honours don't come the way, usually, of players associated with such teams as Chesterfield. The players are not watched by the members of the International Selection Committee.

So when the chance came for Edwards to join a really first-class club in Leeds United he took it. Leeds paid a fairly

big transfer fee, and Edwards has achieved his ambition—risen to the top of the tree.

Always in Form!

To-day he is generally recognised as the best right half-back in English football. First and foremost, he is really most useful because he is so consistent. He has been with Leeds nearly three seasons now, and he never missed a match save when he has been injured or when he has been away on International duty. And when I talked to the manager of Leeds about him the other day the manager paid this tribute: "In all that time Willis has never played a bad game."

Maybe there are players who can on occasion rise to greater heights, but those self-same players can also descend to a very ordinary level when they are not "in form." And the best and truest thing which can be said of the Leeds United player is that he is always in form.



WILLIS EDWARDS,
right half-back of Leeds United and
England's first choice.

When I asked him the secret of consistency he confessed that he had little or no explanation to give.

"It just happens," he said, "and it is very nice of people to say that I keep up a good standard."

But if you talked to Willis Edwards as I have done you would perhaps be able to "get at" the secret of his consistency. To him the game of football is what can best be described as the absorbing passion. He plays the game because he loves it, thinks about it during the day, and, I strongly suspect, dreams about it at night. After all, that is the real way to success, isn't it—to imagine the success or failure of the team depends on you being right up to concert pitch? Concentration on the job in hand, that's the way to keep in form.

There is evidence of the fruits of this constant thought in his play. We all talk a lot about combination in football, but most of us, when we use the word, think about the attack. This half-back of Leeds United is just as keen on the necessity of combination in defence—not combination in the sense of passing the ball from one player to another, but combined work in the defenders covering each other.

Support Your Forwards!

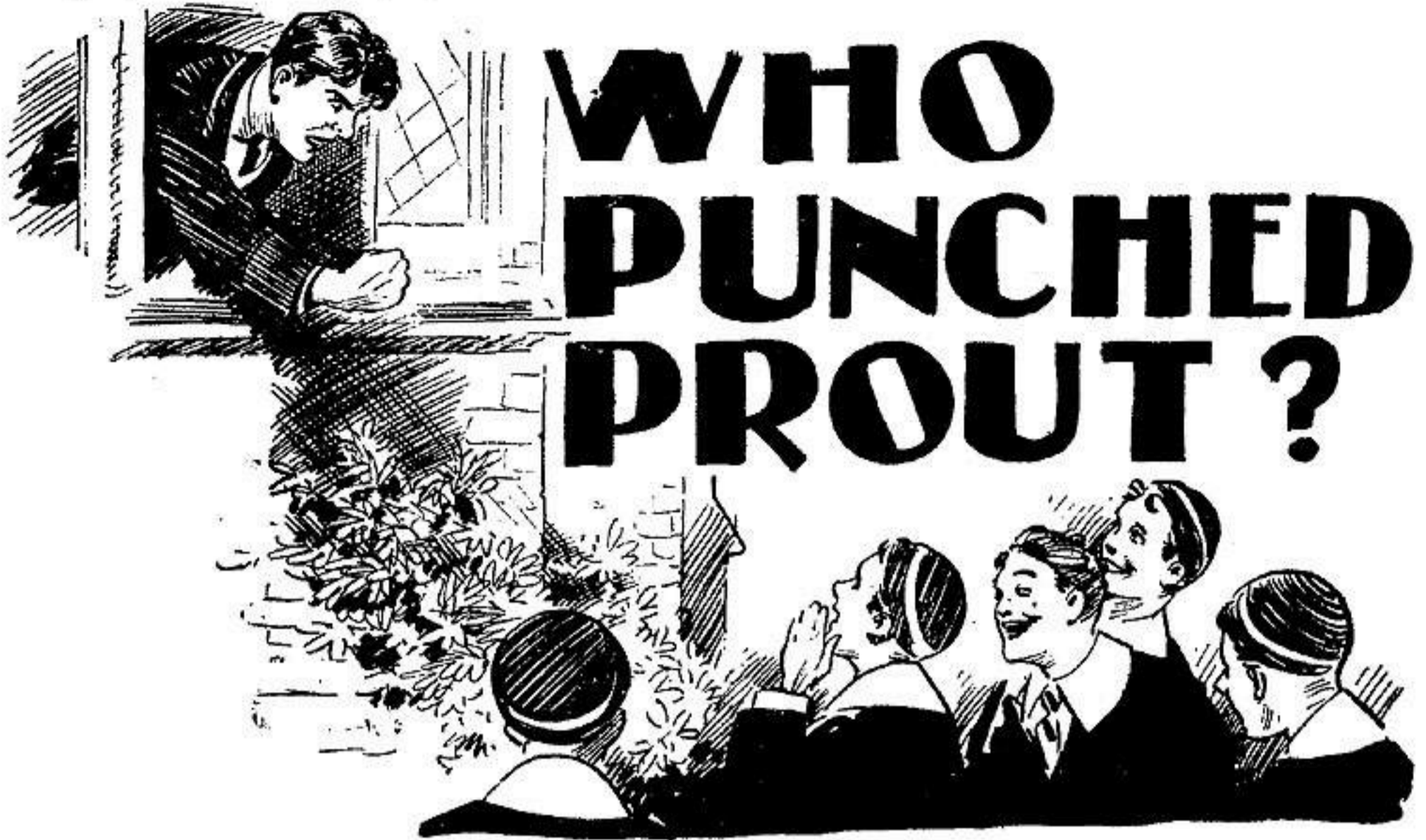
"I believe," he said, "that in football to-day—that is, since the change in the offside rule—half-backs must be as much a part of the attack as ever; they must go up in support of their forwards. But the attacking half-back must be ever on the watch, and must be able to get back to his own half of the field in the quickest possible time and by the shortest possible route.

"This calls for real understanding between backs and half-backs. Covering work must be done well and quickly. There must be no hesitation in going to tackle under present conditions; but when the half goes to tackle one player, there must be a full-back covering the player to whom the ball is most likely to be passed in case the half-back fails to get it."

In the foregoing you have Willis' own ideas of the defensive side of the wing half's game. On the attacking side he is a real help to his forwards, because he is close behind them. At ball control he is a master, which means that he can get the object down to his feet and make the pass along the ground to one of the men in front of him.

To sum up, Edwards is a great half-back because he is also a great half-forward. That is why he plays for England.

SENSATION AT GREYFRIARS! Somebody's punched old Prout's nose—and "old Prout" is the master of the Fifth! Ye gods, no wonder there's excitement at Greyfriars! Who is the giddy culprit? Get started on this laugh-a-minute school yarn, boys!



WHO PUNCHED PROUT?

Here's a tip-top story of fun and frolic, introducing Harry Wharton & Co., the world-famous chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

THAT something was up, every fellow in the Lower School at Greyfriars knew ten minutes after the rising-bell had ceased to clang.

They did not know what was up, but they knew something was. On that point there was no doubt—no possible, probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever.

The juniors knew that something was up as soon as they were out of their dormitories.

The very atmosphere seemed to tell them so. It was as if charged with electricity.

The seniors—the Fifth and Sixth—knew what it was; that was clear enough to observant and perspicacious juniors.

Sixth Form prefects had awfully serious looks. Fifth Form men gathered in little groups, in twos and threes and fours, talking in hushed tones. When the masters were seen, they were seen to look preternaturally solemn. One master—Prout, the master of the Fifth—was not seen at all. But the others were seen, and seen at their solemnest.

Curiosity in the Lower School was intense. Naturally, the fellows wanted to know.

Something had happened, and, whatever it was, it had happened after the Lower School had gone to bed the previous night. That was why the juniors knew nothing about it. The seniors, whose bed-time was later, knew.

"But what was it?" Bob Cherry of the Remove asked, in wonder.

"Echo answers what!" said Harry Wharton, equally perplexed.

"Echo answers that the whatfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Everybody's looking as solemn as a

boiled owl!" said Frank Nugent. "Just as if a man was going to be sacked!"

"Something's up, anyhow," said Johnny Bull.

"Let's ask some of the Fifth—they know!" said Harry Wharton.

Potter and Greene of the Fifth had come out of the House, and were walking together, speaking in hushed whispers. Their faces were grim. Coker of the Fifth, who was generally seen with Potter and Greene, was not to be seen with them now.

Harry Wharton & Co. approached the two Fifth-Formers. It was rather a check to question the Fifth, from the Fifth Form point of view. Between the Upper School and Lower School there was a great gulf fixed. But the Famous Five wanted to know.

"I say, Potter, what's up?" asked Wharton, very civilly.

Potter gave him a stare, and walked on with Greene.

"What's up, Greene?"

Greene did not even stare. He walked on with Potter, regardless. Apparently, the two seniors did not desire the great gulf between Lower and Upper to be bridged.

"Silly owls!" commented Johnny Bull.

"What on earth's up, you men?" asked Skinner of the Remove, joining the Famous Five. "Anybody know?"

"Something jolly serious, I think," said Wharton. "Can't imagine what, unless there's going to be an expulsion."

"You going to be bunked at last, Skinner?" asked Johnny Bull.

Skinner jumped. "Eh—what? What do you mean, you ass?"

"Well, the beaks might have found you out, you know," said Johnny Bull calmly. "If they did, I suppose you'd be bunked. Don't you think so?"

Skinner did not state what he thought on that subject. He gave Johnny Bull a glare and stalked away.

"Tain't Skinner!" said Bob Cherry,

with a chuckle. "They tell a man if he's going to be bunked. Look here, something must have happened after we went up to dorm last night! What the thump was it?"

"Goodness knows!"

"There's Wingate. Let's ask him."

"Hem! A prefect—"

"No harm in asking," said Bob, "and he's not such an ass as those Fifth Form duffers. Let's try it on."

"Let's!" agreed Nugent.

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, had appeared in the offing. His face was serious, almost grim. Whatever was the mysterious occurrence that had mysteriously occurred, obviously Wingate knew, and was deeply concerned by it. The chums of the Remove approached him in their most ingratiating manner.

"I say, Wingate, was there a burglary last night?" asked Bob.

The Greyfriars captain stared.

"No!" he answered shortly.

"Or a fire?"

"No, you young ass!"

"But something's happened?"

Wingate nodded, and walked on.

"What was it, Wingate?"

"I dare say you'll hear soon enough!" was all that Wingate replied, over his shoulder.

The Famous Five looked at one another. Their curiosity was more keenly whetted than ever. Wingate had admitted that something had happened, though they had been sure of that already. They knew now that it was not a burglary or a fire. But what was it?

"What about Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, after a pause. "Bunter knows everything that happens. Let's ask Bunter."

"But it happened after we'd gone to bed," said Harry. "Bunter went to bed with the rest of the Form. Even Bunter can't know anything about it this time."

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Bob Cherry grinned.

"But he may have found out by this time. Bunter will never be kept in the dark long, so long as they make key-holes to doors!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some Fifth-Formers looked round, frowning, as the juniors laughed—as if the sound of merriment came as a shock to their ears in those solemn moments.

"Shut up, you fags!" called out Blundell of the Fifth.

"What's up, Blundell?"

"Mind your own business!" growled the captain of the Fifth.

"It's something to do with the Fifth," said Bob, as the Famous Five proceeded in search of Billy Bunter. "They all look as if they were going to their own funerals!"

"But what can have happened in the Fifth?"

"Goodness knows!" said Bob.

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

The Famous Five bore down on William George Bunter. If anybody in the Lower School knew, Bunter would know, that was certain. The Peeping Tom of Greyfriars had his own methods of acquiring information. He prided himself on always knowing what was on. Anyhow, there was always something to be heard from Bunter. If he did not know the facts, he was always prepared to draw upon his fertile imagination. Never was Billy Bunter willing to admit that he didn't know.

But it was a changed Bunter this morning.

The Owl of the Remove, instead of bursting with news, or being eagerly in quest of it, was silent and morose. He blinked at the Famous Five, without speaking, as they bore down on him. Bunter did not seem to know or to want to know, which constituted a record in the Greyfriars Remove.

"What's happened, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"How should I know?" grunted Bunter.

"Mean to say you don't?"

"Of course not!"

"Well, my hat!"

"How should I know anything about it?" demanded Bunter warmly. "If anything's happened to old Prout, how could I possibly know? You fellows know I was in bed at the time."

The Famous Five stared blankly at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter had said rather too much for a fellow who didn't know. Apparently, he knew, but was unwilling to impart what he knew. This was very remarkable.

"So, you know?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No, you ass! I've said I don't."

"What's happened to Prout?" demanded Nugent.

"Nothing, that I know of."

"Then why did you mention him?"

"I didn't. I mean I didn't mean to. That is to say, I don't know anything about it. Do leave a fellow alone!"

"Prout hasn't shown up this morning," said Nugent. "He generally rolls out into the quad before brekker. Anybody seen him?"

Nobody had.

"We're getting nearer," said Bob. "It's something to do with the Fifth; and Bunter says it's Prout—"

"I didn't!" howled Bunter. "I keep on telling you I don't know anything about it. Nothing's happened to Prout. Besides, it was a sheer accident!"

"What was it?"

"Nothing."

"My only hat! Nothing's happened to him, and what happened was a sheer accident!" gasped Bob.

"Yes. Give a chap a rest!" snapped

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Bunter. "You know jolly well I was fast asleep at the time in the Remove dorm. How could I possibly know what happened in Coker's study?"

"But what happened in Coker's study?" shrieked Bob.

"Nothing."

"Look here, you fat ass—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He jolly well knows," said Harry Wharton. "Why he doesn't want to tell beats me. Usually he runs a fellow down and jaws, whether the fellow likes it or not."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Why can't you tell us?" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Think I'm going to get myself sacked, you ass?"

"What?"

The Famous Five almost jumped clear of the quad.

"Besides, I don't know anything about it," added Bunter. "I was fast asleep at the time, as all the Remove can bear witness, as they were fast asleep, too."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"My mind's a perfect blank on the subject," said Bunter. "If anybody was punched last night it was done without my knowledge. If anything's happened to old Prout it's a mystery to me how it happened. It was an accident—a sheer accident. Besides, nothing's happened, that I know of."

And with that categorical denial William George Bunter rolled away, to elude further questioning.

The Famous Five gazed at one another.

"Bunter knows!" said Bob.

"The knowfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh. "But why-folly does he not babble, as is his esteemed and absurd custom?"

"I give that one up. It beats me. But we've got on to this—something happened to Prout, the Fifth Form beak, in Coker's study. Bunter's found that out somehow. My only hat!" yelled Bob Cherry suddenly. "You fellows remember, the other day—there was no end of talk about it—Coker saying in the games study, before all the Fifth, that he was going to punch Prout—"

"Phew!"

"Can he have done it?"

"Impossible! Even Coker—"

The breakfast bell rang. The juniors trooped into the House. The Lower School were still in the dark as to what had happened—unless Bunter knew. All sorts of rumours were rife. The impression had gathered and strengthened that there was going to be an expulsion.

At breakfast Harry Wharton & Co. watched the Fifth Form table eagerly. They were eager to see Coker of the Fifth. It was well known that Coker of the Fifth had had a lot of trouble with his Form master lately. It was well known that they were mutually fed up, and that Coker, in a moment of unthinking exasperation, had announced that, if driven too far, he might punch Prout. Had he done it? The same idea had apparently occurred to other fellows, as well as the Famous Five, for many glances were turned on the Fifth. But at the Fifth Form table that morning there was one vacant place. Horace Coker was not there. And the head of the table was also vacant. Mr. Prout, who generally breakfasted with his Form, was not there, as usual.

Neither Coker nor his Form master was to be seen. All the rest of the Fifth were to be seen, and preternatural gravity sat on their faces. The conclusion was obvious.

It had happened!

Coker of the Fifth had punched Prout, and Coker of the Fifth was going to be sacked. By the time breakfast was over not a man at Greyfriars doubted it—unless it was Billy Bunter. And what the Owl of the Remove may have thought he kept carefully to himself and said no word.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Going!

"SEEN Prout?"

"No."

"I've seen him!" grinned Temple of the Fourth.

Cecil Reginald Temple was instantly surrounded by an eager crowd. The Greyfriars fellows were thirsting for news. The rumour that Coker of the Fifth really had punched Prout was a general conviction by this time. Prout had not been seen that morning. Generally the ponderous and majestic Prout was much in the public eye. Now he seemed shy and retiring. That looked as if it was true. For if Coker had punched Prout it was very probable that Prout's countenance was unsuitable to be seen in public. Coker had a hefty punch.

The fellow who had seen him immediately became the centre of attraction, the cynosure of all eyes.

"You've seen him?" exclaimed Skinner.

"What did he look like?"

"A wreck."

"He's got a nose on him," said Temple. "He's got a boko that would draw the booby prize in any beauty show. If Prout goes out after dark with that nose he'll hold up the traffic. Anybody would take it for a danger signal. Talk about crimson beaks!"

"Then Coker really has punched him?" exclaimed Bob Cherry breathlessly.

"Somebody has, anyhow. Unless he ran his nose against something—hard! I fancy that what he ran it against was Coker's fist."

"Where is he?" exclaimed a dozen voices. Everybody wanted to see Prout—or, at least, his nose. The rest of him did not matter.

"Gone to the Head's study," said Temple. "I spotted him turning the corner. He put his hanky to his nose when he saw me, as if he had a cold. But I spotted the boko. You couldn't miss it. A blind man could have seen it. Looks like a beetroot. A bit like a tomato."

"Poor old Prout!" said Bob.

"Poor old Coker!" said Wharton. "He must have been right off his rocker to hit Prout."

"Well, he said he would!" grinned Skinner. "Coker's a man of his word."

"The awful ass!"

"It will be the sack, of course!" said Skinner. "I wonder whether they'll push him out quietly or have it in Hall, with all the school, and the Head on the high horse, and the whole bag of tricks. That would mean cutting a class. They ought to have it in Hall!"

Expulsions were rare at Greyfriars. The mere rumour of one was enough to excite the school from end to end. The certainty of one was thrilling.

"Prout's with the Head, then," said Wharton. "But where's Coker?"

"Bet you he's locked up," said Peter Todd. "A man going to be sacked would be in clink."

By which Peter Todd meant the punishment-room.

"Let's go and see," suggested several fellows.



"You mean to say that you deny having struck Mr. Prout?" exclaimed Dr. Locke, in amazement. "I cannot listen to what is obviously a false statement, Coker. You may be silent." "Think I'm going to shut up, and be sacked like a ninny, because Prout's made a silly mistake?" exclaimed Coker. "Not me!" (See Chapter 3.)

There was a general move towards the corridor that led to the punishment-room, in a rather isolated part of the old buildings of Greyfriars.

But in that corridor Walker of the Sixth was discovered, whistling cheerily. Walker ceased to whistle and frowned at the juniors.

"Clear off!" he said laconically.

Evidently Walker of the Sixth was on guard.

"I say, Walker, is Coker in clink?" asked Peter Todd.

"Find out!"

"That's all right. That's what we've come here for," explained Peter. "Can't you tell us, Walker?"

"Hook it!" was Walker's reply.

The Sixth-Former was uncommunicative. Skinner, trying to edge past Walker, was caught by the collar, spun round, and shaken.

"Hook it!" repeated Walker. "Nobody allowed this way. Head's orders."

The juniors reluctantly retired.

"Might spot him from outside," suggested Squiff.

The suggestion was followed by a rush into the quadrangle. Twenty or thirty fellows scudded round the school buildings, to the secluded spot overlooked by the high window of the punishment-room.

That window was barred; so the prisoner, if prisoner there was, could not be looking out. But a dozen fellows were assured that they caught a glimpse of a face pressed to the panes inside the bars.

Somebody was there! The fact that Walker was placed on guard to keep inquisitive fellows away, showed that somebody was there. It could only be Coker of the Fifth. Only Coker was missing from the public view.

"He's there!" said Bob Cherry.

"Poor old Coker!"

"I can see something," said Skinner, peering up. "Looks rather like a Guy Fawkes mask, so I suppose it's Coker's face."

"He's there all right," said Peter Todd. "Waiting to be sacked! Poor old Coker. He always was an ass!"

"They may bring him out any minute!" said Hazeldene.

The suggestion was enough. The whole crowd raced back to the House.

But Coker was not brought out.

No order came for the school to assemble in Big Hall.

Apparently, if there was going to be an expulsion, it was not going to be in public, with the whole bag of tricks, as Skinner expressed it. That would have been ever so much more dramatic and thrilling; but probably Dr. Locke lacked a taste for the drama. It was much more likely that the expelled senior would be sent away quietly, while the school were at classes, in order to avoid a sensation. The whole affair, thrilling as it was to the Lower School, must have been excessively disagreeable to the headmaster.

It was drawing near time for classes now; and excitement was keener than ever. It was mingled with disappointment. Expulsions being so rare, many fellows considered that the most ought to be made of one when it did happen. It wasn't the thing, Skinner considered, to sneak a fellow out of the school in this surreptitious way. An expulsion was an example and a warning to the whole school. What became of the example and the warning, if it was done in this hole-and-corner manner?

But it became clear at last that it was going to be done quietly, if it was going to be done at all. The bell rang for classes, and the Lower School went slowly and reluctantly to their Form-rooms.

Mr. Quelch was frowning when he came in to take his Form. The state of excitement in the Remove did not please him. But the Remove master's grim look silenced the buzz of whispering.

But there was trouble in first lesson. Fellows simply could not keep their

minds on the matter in hand. They could not help thinking of Coker of the Fifth. Mr. Quelch grew sharper and sharper.

Lines fell in the Remove-room like leaves in Vallombrosa of old. Lines failed to produce the required effect of fixing the attention of the Remove upon the valuable knowledge Henry Samuel Quelch sought to impart. The cane was brought into requisition, after which the Remove master received something like attention.

Strange to relate, Billy Bunter had not joined in the whispering and nudging and murmuring. Bunter, who generally talked enough for two or three, said nothing. Bunter, who was inquisitiveness itself, did not seem inquisitive at all on this thrilling topic. Everybody else wanted to know; Bunter appeared to want to know nothing. This would have caused great surprise had anybody observed Bunter. But nobody did.

The Owl of the Remove sat in his place, with a deep wrinkle in his fat brow, deep in thought. That he was not thinking of his lessons was clear, from the random answers he made to Mr. Quelch when addressed. It seemed that there was a worry on Bunter's fat mind—a deep worry.

When the time came for morning break every fellow was anxious to get out, to learn what had happened during class. They had no doubt that by that time Horace Coker was gone. But they wanted to know.

Bunter rolled out of the Form-room with the other fellows, the wrinkle deeper than ever in his fat brow. He grabbed Peter Todd's sleeve in the passage.

"I say, Peter—he gasped.

"Leggo, Fatty!"

"Think Coker's gone?" gasped Bunter.

"Pretty certain! I'm going to find out. Leggo!"

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"'Tain't my fault, you know!" mumbled Bunter.

Peter stared at him.

"How could it be your fault, fat-head? What do you mean? You had nothing to do with it."

"Of course I hadn't!" gasped Bunter. "I couldn't have, could I, when I was fast asleep at the time? I'm as innocent as a babe, Peter."

"Wandering in your mind?" asked the puzzled Peter.

"Of course, I'm sorry for Coker," said Bunter. "But he asked for it. Lots of fellows heard him say he would punch Prout. But—"

"But what, ass?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "You men, Coker's not gone!"

"Not gone!" ejaculated Bunter.

"No."

"Oh, good!" gasped the Owl of the Remove.

And Peter, as he stared at the relieved fat face, could only conclude that Bunter was wandering in his fat mind. Otherwise, there was no accounting for his deep concern in the fate of Coker of the Fifth.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Brought Before the Beak!

HORACE COKER, of the Fifth Form, heard the bell when it rang for classes—classes that he was not to attend.

Coker was pacing the punishment-room.

He had had his breakfast; and now he was waiting—waiting to be taken before the Head for judgment!

A fellow locked in the punishment-room, waiting to be sacked, might have been expected to look dismal and downcast, if not despairing.

Not so Coker!

In Coker's rugged countenance there was no dismay; there was nothing whatever like despair. There was deep wrath and indignation. Coker paced the punishment-room like a tiger stalking to and fro in a cage.

Any fellow in Coker's position might have been expected to shrink from the coming interview with the headmaster. But Coker did not shrink. He was eager for it. From his Form master, Prout, Coker had long given up expecting as much sense as a bunny rabbit might be supposed to possess. But the Head would see him righted. He had faith in the Head.

This was rather a compliment to Dr. Locke, for Coker had, as a rule, little respect for constituted authorities. It often seemed to Coker that he was the only fellow with gumption, in a world of duffers. Nobody at Greyfriars understood or acknowledged Coker's intellectual powers. That alone showed what chumps they were! Still, he hoped for better things from the Head. If the Head failed him, Coker could not help realising that he was in a bad box. Not that he envisaged the "sack." If the Head turned out to be as crass an ass as Prout, still Coker was not beaten. He was not going to be sacked!

On that point Coker's mind was firmly made up. Exactly what he was going to do, if the Head sentenced him to expulsion, was not yet clear in Coker's mind. All that was clear was, that he wasn't going to be sacked!

There were footsteps in the corridor at last.

All the fellows were in the Form-rooms by this time. The beaks were trying to keep the thing quiet, Coker

reflected bitterly. They did not want to advertise the fact that a Greyfriars Form master had had his nose punched. Were they going to sack Coker for something he hadn't done, just to keep the thing quiet? Coker's jaw squared. Not if he knew it!

The key turned in the lock; the door opened. Wingate and Gwynne, two prefects of the Sixth Form, entered.

Coker eyed them warily and with hostility.

Coker did not think much of the Sixth. He often said so. This did not make him popular in the Sixth Form. But Coker was such a hefty fellow, with so heavy a fist, and such a readiness to use it, that even the Sixth Form treated him with some tact.

"I suppose you've come for me," said Coker grimly.

"That's it," said Wingate.

"We're to take you to the Head," said Gwynne.

Snort from Coker.

"Well, I don't need taking. I can walk. If you put your paws on me, I shall hit out. That's a tip."

"If you come quietly, and don't play the goat, we don't want to touch you, Coker," said Wingate. "I'm sorry it's come to this."

"Does the Head think I punched Prout?" demanded Coker.

The Sixth-Formers stared.

"He knows you did, if that's what you mean," answered Wingate.

"That isn't what I mean!" retorted Coker. "What I mean is, have they found out who punched Prout, if he ever was punched at all?"

"My only hat! You're not going to deny it?" exclaimed Gwynne.

"Of course I am!"

"Not much use. You can't expect to get away with that."

"I never touched him."

"Hem!"

"If you think I'm a liar, Gwynne—" roared Coker.

"Well, what's a fellow to think of a fellow who rolls out lies like that?" asked Gwynne. "Everybody knows you punched Prout, and that you're going to be sacked for it. What's the good of talking rot? Here, keep off, you fat-head!"

Coker was advancing on Gwynne with his hands up. Coker was not the man to have his word doubted, even by a Sixth-Form man and a prefect.

Wingate hastily interposed.

"Stop that, Coker! No good kicking up a shindy here."

"Do you think I'm going to be called a liar?" bawled Coker. "I tell you fellows that I never touched Prout. Isn't my word good enough?"

"I won't pass any opinion on that," said Wingate, with a curl of the lip. "We're not judging you; we're taking you to the Head. Come along!"

"I'm ready," growled Coker.

He gave the two prefects a glare of defiance, and stalked from the room. Wingate and Gwynne followed him.

Coker was quite determined not to be taken to the Head's study in custody. He was prepared to hit out if a hand was laid on him. Coker was not a man to consider consequences.

But the two prefects contented themselves with walking on either side of Coker. As a matter of fact, they had a good-natured compassion for the fellow whose asinine obtuseness and unruly temper had landed him like this. They were quite willing to be civil to a fellow who was about to be kicked out of the school. Coker, of course, did not understand that mental attitude, Coker never

understood anything. He glared defiance at them all the way to the Head's study, with the happy conviction in his mind that they dared not touch him.

By silent and deserted passages they went. All the school was at class, with the exceptions of Coker, the two prefects, and the Head and Mr. Prout. The two latter were waiting for Coker in Dr. Locke's study.

Arriving at that apartment, Wingate tapped at the door and opened it.

"Here is Coker, sir!" he announced.

"Very good, Wingate! You may come in, Coker," said the Head's deep voice.

Coker strode in.

His bullet head was held high. Nobody was going to see any sign of funk about Horace Coker.

Dr. Locke was sitting at his table, and his calm eyes rested on Coker as he entered. Coker's lofty manner was intended to show the consciousness of innocence and a proper self-respect. Unfortunately; to the Head's eyes it seemed more like hardy defiance. He frowned.

Wingate hesitated at the door.

"Shall we stay, sir?" he asked.

"It is not necessary, Wingate. Pray go to the Sixth Form room and await me there."

"Very well, sir."

Wingate and Gwynne retired, and the door was closed.

Mr. Prout had been standing at the window, with his back towards the door. The less his nose was seen in its present state, the better Paul Prout was pleased. But as the door closed behind the two prefects Mr. Prout turned from the window and faced Coker.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Coker.

Mr. Prout did not answer that greeting.

His eye bored into Coker like the eye of a basilisk. Coker's glance fixed on the Fifth Form master's nose, and he smiled faintly. A fellow could not help smiling when he saw a nose like that. It was obvious to the most casual eye that Prout's nose had received serious damage. It was swollen, it was red, it was plainly painful. Something had struck Prout's nose with great force—Coker could see that. He wondered how it had happened.

Unfortunately for Coker, Prout and the Head had no doubt whatever how it had happened. They attributed it to Coker.

"Coker"—Dr. Locke fixed his severe eyes on the Fifth-Former—"I have but a few words to say. Any boy in this school who should so far forget himself as to strike a Form master must know what to expect."

"Quite so, sir!" assented Coker.

"You will leave Greyfriars immediately. You are expelled from the school, Coker. You will be given half an hour to pack, and then Gosling will drive you to the station. You will take a letter from me to your father, explaining why you are sent home. That is all."

Coker stared.

"That's all?" he asked.

"There is nothing more to say, Coker."

"Isn't there?" said Coker warmly.

"Is that what you call justice, sir?"

"Boy!"

"Sacking a man for nothing! Why, I was taking it for granted that I should get justice from my headmaster!" exclaimed Coker indignantly.

Dr. Locke started a little.

Coker's manner and words were not respectful; but there was a ring of sincerity and earnestness in his voice that struck the headmaster.

"I fail to understand you, Coker," said Dr. Locke. "What do you mean to imply? You cannot think of offering any excuse for your action, I presume.

I could not possibly listen to anything of the kind."

"I should imagine not," said Mr. Prout, breathing deeply. "I should imagine not."

"I'm not going to offer any excuse, sir," said Coker. "There's nothing to excuse that I know of. What I want to know is, what am I bunked for?"

"You are well aware, Coker, that you are expelled for striking a Form master."

"Only I never did, sir."

"What?"

"I never did."

"You do not mean to say that you deny having struck Mr. Prout?" exclaimed the Head in amazement.

"I jolly well do!" retorted Coker emphatically. "I never touched him. Who did, I don't know; but I jolly well know I never did."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Who Punched Prout?

DR. LOCKE took off his glasses, polished them, and replaced them on his nose and blinked at Coker. Mr. Prout stared at the truculent Horace speechlessly. To Prout this denial of obvious facts seemed like sheer impudence. And he was surprised, too. Coker, with all his faults—and their name was legion—had never been known to be untruthful. He was far too lofty and self-satisfied to deign to prevaricate, if he had no better reason. It was to be expected of a fellow like Coker, headstrong and reckless and unruly, that having acted in an outrageous way, he would admit what he had done, and make some pig-headed attempt to justify the same. Denial of what he had done was the very last thing to be expected of Coker.

"Hold on a minute, sir!" gasped Coker. "I was asleep; I woke up when I heard Prout fall down. Mr. Prout turned out the light when he came in—"

"I did not!" boomed Mr. Prout.

"But it was out when I woke up, sir!" exclaimed Coker, perplexed. "I never turned it out. You see, sir?" He looked at Dr. Locke. "I had a translation to do—some Suetonius. Mr. Prout told me to get it done before bedtime, and I had it in my study going for it hard. It was jolly hard work, and tired me out. I fell asleep over it. I didn't mean to, of course, but I did—fast asleep, sir."

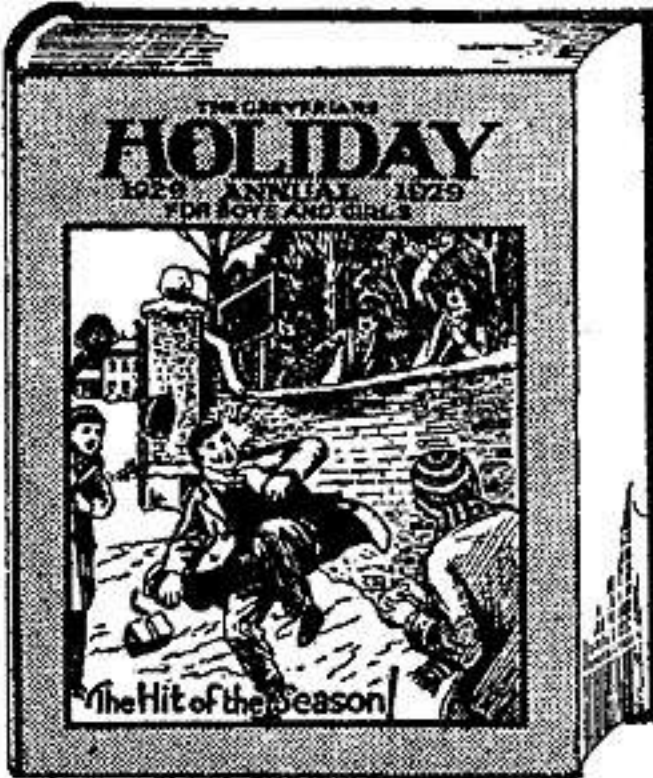
"Well?" said the Head coldly.

"I woke up, hearing an awful crash," said Coker. "The study was all dark. I jumped up, thinking it was a rag or something. I bumped into

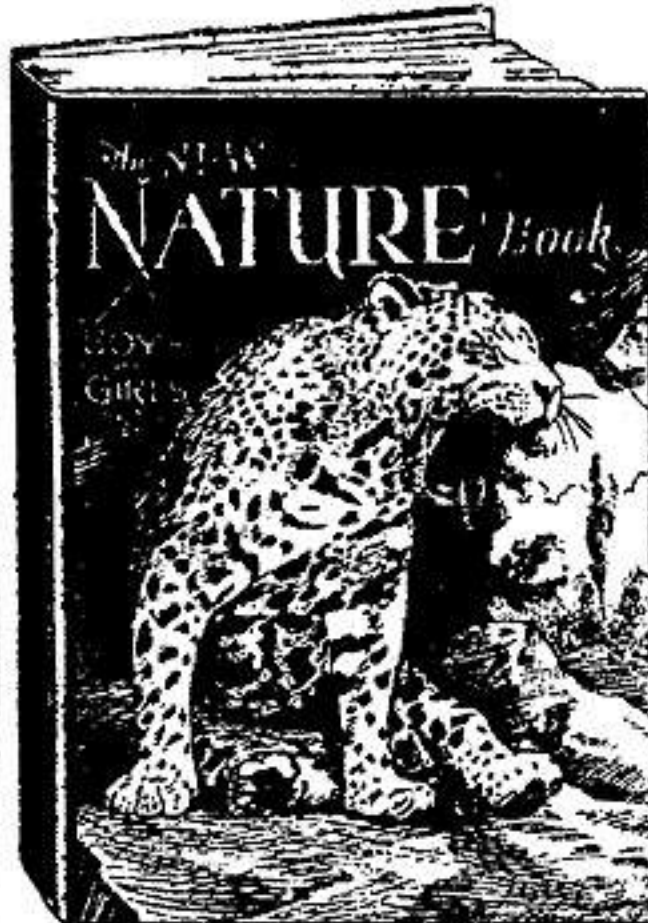
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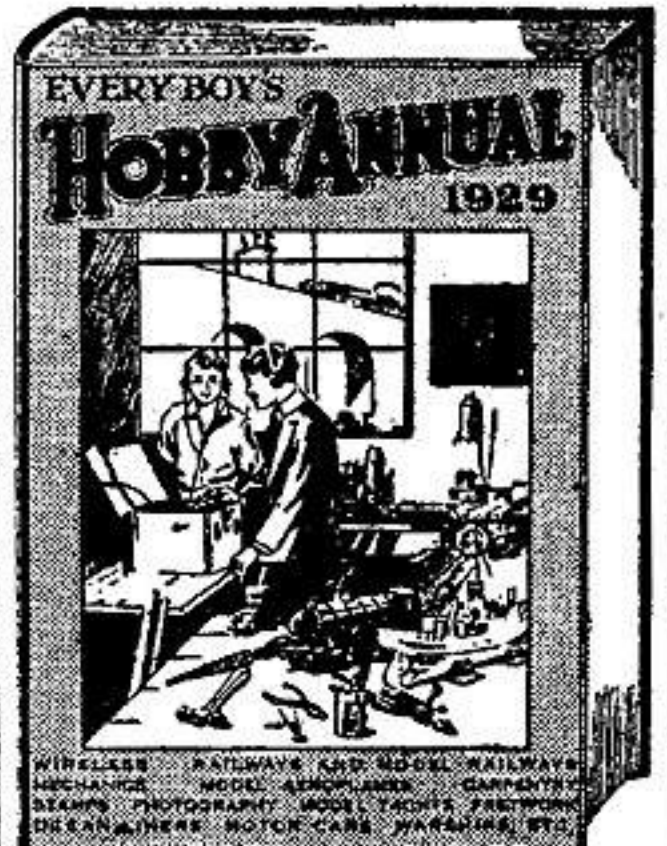
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"Bless my soul!" said the Head. Mr. Prout gasped.

"Impudent boy!" he exclaimed. "Upon my word, Dr. Locke, this passes all patience! The boy has the audacity to deny—"

"I deny having ever touched Prout, sir. I wouldn't touch Prout, sir, I—"

"Coker, I cannot listen to what is obviously a false statement," said the Head. "You may be silent."

"Catch me!" said Coker.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Think I'm going to shut up and be sacked like a ninny because Prout's made a silly mistake!" exclaimed Coker.

"Not me!"

"Coker!"

"I never touched him!" roared Coker. "Can't you understand, sir? I suppose Prout thinks I did, as he's told you so. But I never did. It's all a mistake. If you go into the matter, sir, you'll find it's all a silly mistake. I give you my word, sir, that I never touched him!"

And as Coker's roar died away there was silence in the Head's study.

"This is somewhat unexpected, Coker," he said. "I had no idea whatever that you intended to deny the occurrence. As the proof is overwhelming, it is of little use to waste words. But if you persist—"

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Coker.

"In that case, I shall go through the matter in your presence. Mr. Prout has already acquainted me with the occurrences in the Fifth Form last night. But you have a right to hear why you are condemned, if indeed you persist in this futile denial."

The Head paused.

"I never did it, sir," said Coker. "It looks to me as if somebody must have hit Mr. Prout on the boko—I mean the nose. I don't know who did. I did not."

"I understand that no one else was present in the study when Mr. Prout came to ask you for a translation," said the Head.

"That is so, sir."

"It was in your study that Mr. Prout was struck."

"I—I suppose so, sir—"

"Then how dare you deny—"

Prout, and he grabbed me in the dark. I thought he was mad."

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Coker!"

"I'm bound to tell you what happened, sir," said Coker. "I thought he was right off his rocker, grabbing a man in the dark after turning out the light. That's all I know. When the fellows came along and turned on the light I was simply astounded to hear Prout accuse me of hitting him. I never knew even that he had been hit."

"Wretched boy!" said Mr. Prout.

"The light was turned out as I was in the act of entering your study. It was turned out by you!"

"It wasn't!" hooted Coker. "I was asleep, I tell you. It must have been you turned out the light as you came in."

"How dare you!" boomed Mr. Prout.

"One moment!" said the Head quietly. "Is it possible that some third party was in the room, Mr. Prout? If Coker was indeed asleep at his table,

as he states, some other boy may have entered the room and turned out the light as you entered."

Coker jumped a little. His powerful brain did not work quickly, and he had not thought of this obvious possibility.

"That's it, sir!" he exclaimed with conviction. Coker could see anything that was sufficiently obvious when it was pointed out to him. "There was some other chap in the study, and he turned out the light when he heard Prout coming. It's quite plain, sir. He must have punched Prout's nose and bunked."

"Kindly choose your expressions with a little more circumspection, Coker," said the Head severely. "Mr. Prout, do you consider it possible that a third party was in Coker's study?"

"No, sir!" said Mr. Prout. "I do not, sir! I consider it quite impossible, sir, as any third party would have been discovered when the light was turned on."

"Not if he had bunked!" said Coker. "Silence!"

"I was struck in the darkness, sir," said Mr. Prout. "The unexpected blow felled me to the floor. I was taken completely by surprise. Coker rushed into me in the dark; I seized him, and he struck me down—"

"I didn't!" hooted Coker.

"I fell, sir," said Mr. Prout. "As I was endeavouring to rise Coker collided with me again, and I seized him and held him till help arrived."

"It wasn't me biffed you the first time, sir," said Coker. "I was asleep till you woke me up by bumping on the floor."

"I understand that some Fifth Form boys came to your aid, Mr. Prout?"

"Yes—Blundell, my head boy, and a number of others."

"Did Blundell see anyone in the study, or leaving the study?"

"I have not asked him, sir; but I am assured that he did not."

"Most likely he did; and he'd have told you if you'd asked him!" said Coker.

"Silence!"

"Blundell must be questioned," said the Head. "One cannot be too careful in a matter of this kind."

"I should jolly well think so!" remarked Coker.

"Will you be silent, Coker?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Dr. Locke touched the bell; and when Trotter, the page, appeared he was sent to the Fifth Form-room to fetch Blundell. In a few minutes Blundell of the Fifth entered the Head's study.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Blundell. I desire your testimony with regard to what happened in the Fifth Form passage yesterday evening. You heard Mr. Prout call for help from Coker's study?"

"Yes, sir. A lot of us heard him and came."

"You found Coker's study in darkness?"

"Yes. I turned on the light."

"How many persons were in the room?"

"Two, sir—Mr. Prout and Coker."

"No one else?"

"No one else, sir."

"Did you observe anyone leaving the study?"

"No, sir; nobody left."

"The Fifth Form passage was lighted?"

"Yes, sir; it was still a few minutes before ten. The passage light is usually turned out at ten."

"Did you see any person whatever in the passage?"

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"Nobody, sir."

"You would have seen anyone who had left Coker's study?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Did you arrive immediately Mr. Prout called?"

Blundell considered.

"We came at once when we heard him, sir—the very instant. But we were having a sing-song in the games study; so we may not have heard him at once."

"Blundell came immediately, or almost immediately," said Mr. Prout. "I think I called two or three times."

"You are certain, Blundell, that there was no one, excepting Coker and Mr. Prout, in the study, or in the vicinity of the study, when you came?"

"Absolutely certain, sir!"

"Very well, Blundell! Thank you! You may return to your Form-room."

Blundell left the study; and Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon Horace Coker again with great sternness.

"Have you anything more to say, Coker?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir."

"You may say it."

"It seems to me, sir, that the fellow who was in my study and who punched Mr. Prout must have got out awfully quick, sir," said Coker.

Dr. Locke breathed hard.

"It is established, Coker, that it was a practical impossibility for anyone to have been in your study at that time undiscovered. I admit that there is a bare possibility, for which reason I have gone thoroughly into the matter. Do you suggest that some other Fifth Form boy struck your Form master?"

"Oh, no, sir! Not likely!"

"Do you suggest that some boy belonging to another Form was secretly in your study?"

Coker paused.

"Must have been, sir," he said at last. "As I never hit Mr. Prout, it must have been so."

"Some junior boy, do you mean?"

"Well, it wouldn't be a Sixth Form man, of course, sir."

"It was a few minutes to ten," said Dr. Locke. "The juniors go to their dormitories at half-past nine."

"Oh!" ejaculated Coker. He had forgotten that.

"Your suggestion is, then, that some junior boy was out of his dormitory half an hour after his bed-time; that he was in your study; that he struck Mr. Prout for no conceivable reason?"

Coker was silent. Put like that, it did seem a staggering improbability. Even Coker had nothing to say.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Going—But Not Gone!

HORACE COKER stood silent before the Head. He was in a state of mental bewilderment, and at a loss for words. He almost wondered whether he had, after all, punched Prout and forgotten about it. He blinked helplessly at the Head, whose stern brow grew sterner and sterner.

"I have listened to you, Coker," said Dr. Locke. "I have made every possible inquiry. Nothing has transpired to exonerate you, or to cast the slightest doubt on your guilt."

"But, sir—" stammered Coker.

"I will now refer to another matter with which Mr. Prout has acquainted me," said the Head, in a deep voice. "Did you, a few days since, threaten, in the presence of many members of your Form, to strike your Form master?"

"Not exactly, sir!" gasped Coker.

"What I said was, that if Prout went on persecuting me I might punch him if he went too far."

"Mr. Prout appears to have acted with extraordinary leniency, Coker," said the Head. "Had he brought you before me on that occasion, I should have expelled you from the school for threatening a Form master!"

"But it wasn't a threat, sir!" gasped Coker. "I—I was just talking to the fellows, sir! A chap might say anything, talking to the fellows when he's a bit excited. I dare say I was a bit of an ass. I never meant it! Why, sir, if it came to the point, I know jolly well I'd never have punched Prout! I'd almost as soon punch your head as my Form master's, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"I never would, and never did!" said Coker. "I was feeling a bit wild when I said that. 'Tain't fair to make out that a fellow's done a thing, just because he said he might do it!"

"That is perfectly correct, Coker. But it is certain that you uttered a threat to strike your Form master, and that shortly afterwards your Form master was struck in your study when only you were present."

"Yes, sir; but—"

Dr. Locke interrupted him.

"I have sifted the matter with every care, Coker. It is now ended. I will say that I am sorry to see you resort to prevarication, instead of expressing your regret, before you leave, for your ruffianly conduct."

"I never did—"

"Silence! You are expelled from Greyfriars, Coker; and you will now go and pack your box!"

Coker stood rooted to the floor, blinking at the Head. He seemed unable to get Dr. Locke's meaning into his brain.

"You—you mean I'm sacked, sir?" he gasped.

"I mean what I say—that you are expelled!" Dr. Locke glanced at his watch. "As so much time has been lost, I can now allow you only a quarter of an hour for packing. You may go!"

Coker gasped.

"Go? Leave Greyfriars, do you mean?"

"You can scarcely mistake my meaning, Coker. Go!"

Wrath and indignation replaced the dismay in Coker's speaking countenance. His eyes flashed fire.

"Well, I'm not going to be sacked!" he bawled.

"Coker!"

"I won't go!" roared Coker.

"Bless my soul! I—"

"Think I'm going to be sacked for nothing?" hooted Coker. "You'll be jolly sorry for this when you find out who really punched Prout!"

"Silence, you insolent boy!" snapped Mr. Prout.

"I'm not going!" roared Coker. "I won't be sacked! I'm not the fellow to sit down under injustice like that, I can jolly well tell you! No jolly fear!"

Dr. Locke rose to his feet. His august countenance was majestic in its wrath. He pointed to the door.

"Leave my study!" he thundered. "In a quarter of an hour Gosling will take you to the station!"

"He jolly well won't!" retorted Coker, undaunted.

"Leave my study and pack your box!" Coker left the study.

But he did not pack his box. He was expelled from the school. Sacked! Bunked! But Coker had said that he would not be sacked! And he meant it, every word.

A quarter of an hour later Gosling



"Please exert yourself a little, Gosling," said Mr. Prout, with asperity. The school porter paused to glare at the Fifth-Form master. "Look 'ere, sir," he said. "This 'ere is hard work. Wot I says is this 'ere—" "Please do not waste time talking, Gosling," said Mr. Prout. "That door must be opened, and at once!" (See Chapter 7.)

was ready with the trap to take Coker to the railway station.

But Coker was not ready.

The Head was personally superintending the departure of Horace Coker. That is to say, he intended to do so. He had the letter, all ready written, to hand the expelled senior to carry to Mr. Coker. Gosling was ready, the trap was ready, the Head was ready, the letter was ready. Everything and everybody was ready, excepting Horace Coker.

Trotter, sent to look for Coker, was a considerable time gone. He came back at last, with wide, round eyes, and the information that Coker was in his study in the Fifth Form passago.

"In his study!" repeated the Head.

"Yessir."

"Did you tell him that I was waiting for him?"

"Yessir."

"What did he say, Trotter?" asked the Head, puzzled.

"Ho said as 'ow—" Trotter paused.

"Well?" said the Head sharply.

"Ho said as 'ow you can wait, sir!"

"What?" ejaculated the Head.

"As 'ow you could wait, sir!" said Trotter.

Dr. Locke breathed hard and deep. He dismissed Trotter with a gesture, and made his way to the Fifth Form passago. With stately tread he proceeded along that passago to the door of Coker's study.

The door was closed. Dr. Locke grasped the handle and turned it. But the door did not open.

It was locked on the inside.

The headmaster of Greyfriars gazed

at the locked door for some moments, the colour flushing in his cheeks. Deep wrath possessed him. Finally he raised his hand and knocked at the door.

Coker's voice answered from within:

"Who's there?"

"It is I, your headmaster!" said Dr. Locke, in his most majestic tones. "Open this door immediately, Coker! All is ready for you to proceed to the station to take your train!"

"I'm not going!"

"You—are—not—going!" repeated the Head, articulating every syllable with intense clearness, as if he were biting them off.

"No, sir!"

"What do you mean, Coker?"

"I mean just what I say, sir!" Coker's voice was firm. "No disrespect intended, sir, but I mean what I say! I've done nothing to be expelled for. I'm bound to stand up for my rights! I'm not going to be expelled! I'm not going to be bunked! I'm staying!"

"Are you out of your senses, Coker?"

"Not a bit, sir! Most sensible chap at Greyfriars, if you ask me!" answered Coker cheerily. "I'll come out of this study as fast as you like to go to my place in the Fifth!"

"You will never enter the Fifth Form room again, Coker. You are expelled from Greyfriars, and you will leave immediately!"

"I think not, sir!"

"I command you to open this door, Coker!"

"Sorry, sir—nothing doing!"

Dr. Locke stood silent. Perhaps his breath was taken away. Certainly, if Coker did not choose to open the door

the headmaster could not deal with Coker. Thick, strong oak was between, and Horace Coker was on the safe side of the oak. There was a long, long pause.

"Coker," said the Head, at last, "if you do not leave the precincts of Greyfriars in a quiet and orderly manner you will be removed by force!"

"Trot out your force!" said Coker.

"What? What?"

"I'll handle it all right, never fear!" said Coker.

Dr. Locke seemed to find some difficulty in breathing. There was another pause before he spoke again.

"Coker! This is outrageous—as outrageous as your whole line of conduct. I will leave you to reflect for a time; I trust that you will come to your senses and to some proper view of the fitness of things. I trust that you will decide to act in a more sensible and becoming manner, Coker."

With that Dr. Locke retired from the spot. He was overdue in the Sixth Form room, and he proceeded thither. The amazing conduct of Horace Coker left him quite at a loss. Few fellows had been expelled in Dr. Locke's time, but the few who had suffered that condign fate had never dreamed of taking this line. It was left to Coker to adopt an original procedure.

Coker, indeed, was nothing if not original. He was original even in such simple matters as spelling. He was original in the way he played football—nobody but Coker recognised it as Soccer. Now his originality had, so to speak, taken the bit in its teeth.

How to deal with such an unprecedented state of affairs was a problem that was wholly new to the Head, and not easy to decide.

He retired to the Sixth and Thucydides, hoping that Coker would, on reflection, act sensibly. Which showed that the Head had a very hopeful nature.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Still the Same Old Coker!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. heard the news immediately the Remove were out of their Form-room for break. The other junior Forms heard it as well as the Remove. Every man in the Shell, the Upper Fourth, the Remove, the Third, and the Second buzzed with excitement and thrilled with deep interest. Coker had been sacked, but Coker had not gone. Coker, expelled by the headmaster, was no longer a member of the Greyfriars community. But Coker was still there, as large as life. Coker wasn't gone! Coker did not mean to go! Coker was a sticker, and he was sticking on.

Of late Horace Coker had filled rather a large space in the public eye. His celebrated threat to punch Prout had echoed and re-echoed through the school. It had been considered at the time as "gas." Nevertheless, even a gaseous statement to such an effect was bound to cause a sensation. It had brought Horace Coker into great prominence. Fellows had pointed him out in the quad as the man who had threatened to punch his Form master. But if Coker had captured the spot light by a mere threat to punch Prout, he was assured of undying fame as the fellow who had actually done it.

Any stranger dropping in at Greyfriars that day would have supposed that Coker was the greatest man at Greyfriars, a man who had won big football matches, or something of the sort, for his name was on every tongue. Wherever two or three gathered together there was one topic—Coker. It was Coker first and the rest nowhere. To parody the poet, it was Coker, Coker all the way.

Fellows had been sacked before. It happened seldom, but it happened. But a fellow who was sacked was always glad to get away with as little publicity as possible. That was not Coker's style. Evidently he did not object to publicity. No expulsion had ever caused such a sensation as this one, when the fellow expelled refused to go.

Refused to go! It was incredible; in fact, impossible. But there it was. Coker was known to be still at Greyfriars. Ocular evidence convinced any doubters that he was still at Greyfriars, although sacked, for Coker could be seen at the window of his study in the Fifth Form passage. The door of that study, it was known, was locked. Coker adorned the window with his determined if not prepossessing countenance. Any fellow who liked could go round under the Fifth Form windows and spot him there. Plenty of fellows liked. Indeed, during morning break, every fellow at Greyfriars stared up at Coker of the Fifth, and there was a constant, buzzing crowd under his window.

"He's not gone!" said Harry Wharton, staring up at Coker. "He's sacked, but he's not gone! Did you ever hear anything like it?"

"Never!" said Bob Cherry.

"Hardly ever," grinned Johnny Bull. "The neverfulness is terrific," remarked Hurreo Jamsat Ram Singh.

"The esteemed and absurd Coker takes the ridiculous biscuit."

"I say, you fellows"—Billy Bunter blinked up at the window of Coker's study, rather handicapped by limited vision—"is he there?"

"There he is!" said Frank Nugent. "As large as life and twice as natural."

"Sure it's Coker?" asked the Owl of the Remove.

"Yes, ass! Is there another face like that at Greyfriars?"

"Or in the wide world?" chuckled Skinner.

"But he's sacked," said Temple of the Fourth. "It's well known that he's sacked. I've had it from Gosling that he was ordered to take Coker to the station for his train home."

"He's sacked all right," said Bob. "What the thump did he expect after punching Prout? Does the howling ass think he can stay on after giving a Form master a nose like a tomato?"

"Must be off his giddy rocker!" said Hobson of the Shell. "I've often thought Coker was jolly near it. When he was in the Shell I often thought so. The way he did his con, you know—"

"And the way he plays footer," remarked Stewart of the Shell. "Screw loose somewhere."

"But what on earth's going to happen now?" asked Harry Wharton. "They can't let him stay."

"The order of the chuck-out!" said Bob. "The prefects will have the job of chucking him out. I fancy some of them will get hurt. Coker's rather hefty as a fighting man. And he will show fight."

"Oh, my hat!"

The picture of Coker forcibly removed by Sixth Form prefects, and fighting every inch of the way, almost awed the crowd. Evidently Horace Coker was going to make history at Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows, perhaps the Beak will let him stay, after all," said Billy Bunter.

"Fathead! He couldn't."

"Well, he might, you know. If he didn't punch Prout—"

"But he did, ass! Everybody knows he did."

"Coker denies it, though," said Hobson of the Shell. "I've heard the Fifth talking about it. They say he denies punching Prout."

"That's not like Coker," said Wharton. "Coker's the man to own up to what he's done. Can't imagine Coker telling lies to save his life."

Bob Cherry gave a long whistle.

"Great pip! There can't be any mistake about the matter, surely? It can't have been any other man that punched Prout?"

"Who but Coker would ever dream of punching a Form master?" asked Peter Todd.

"Yes, that's so. But it's queer his denying it. That's not Coker's style at all, if it's true."

"Well, a fellow would say anything when the chopper was coming down," observed Skinner, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Some fellows would!" grunted Bob.

"I jolly well know I would!" said Skinner.

"Likely enough. I'm jolly surprised at Coker telling whoppers, though. He's the biggest idiot that ever was, but he's no liar."

"He's told lies this time, anyhow. We all know he punched Prout."

"But does he deny it?" asked Ogilvy.

"I've heard the Fifth saying so," answered Hobson.

"We'll jolly soon settle that," said

Bob. "He can hear us from here if we shout. Let's ask him."

"Good egg!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry, hailing the expelled Fifth-Former, who was staring down from his study window. "Coker! Coker!"

The window opened. Horace Coker put his head out.

"Don't yell up at me!" he barked.

"What!"

"You cheeky fags, clear off!" barked Coker.

"Same old Coker!" grinned Bob.

The sentence of expulsion evidently had not changed Horace Coker, or his manners and customs. He was the same lofty and dictatorial Horace that the fellows had always known, with the same short way with fags.

"I say, Coker," shouted Wharton, "did you punch Prout?"

"No, you young ass!"

"Who did?" shouted Peter Todd.

"I don't know. Prout doesn't know. It was done in the dark, and the old donkey doesn't know who did it. I'd fallen asleep, so I don't know. Some cheeky fag, I expect."

Coker's bull voice carried to the crowd in the quad, and to a considerable distance farther. A hundred fellows heard him. There was no doubt now that Coker denied having punched Prout.

"One of you fags, I suppose," went on Coker. "You're cheeky enough for anything. I'd soon find out if it was left in my hands. But the beaks have no sense. A lot of duds."

"One of us?" murmured Bob Cherry. "The cheeky chump—"

Coker waved a commanding hand.

"Clear off!" he boomed. "I don't like a mob of fags under my window. Clear off and shut up!"

"Yah! You're sacked!" hooted Skinner.

"That's all bunkum!" said Coker. "The Head says I'm sacked. I'm disappointed in Dr. Locke. I thought he had more sense."

"Aren't you going?" shrieked Hobson of the Shell.

Coker eyed him with cold contempt.

"Going? Certainly not! Don't ask cheeky questions. I've ordered you to clear off. Shut up!"

The window slammed shut. There was a buzz of excited voices, mingled with some hoots and hisses. Most of the fellows had felt rather sorry for Coker. But Coker's ways were not propitiatory. It was rather difficult to give compassion to a fellow who received it as Coker did. Coker would have regarded it as a check for any fellow to be sorry for him.

Wingate of the Sixth came along and waved the crowd away.

"Clear!" he rapped. "You're not to hang about here. Head's orders."

"What are they going to do with Coker, Wingate?" asked a dozen breathless voices.

"You needn't worry about that. Clear!"

The crowd cleared off. Coker, at his study window, was left with empty space to meet his eyes. Wingate glanced up at him with a curious expression on his face and followed the dispersing crowd.

The bell rang for third lesson. Fellows who had hoped that the climax would come during break were disappointed. Apparently the beaks preferred to deal with Coker while the school was in the Form-rooms. It was rather a shame from the point of view of the school. They did not want to miss the excitement. Nobody doubted that Coker would be dealt with during

third lesson, for that afternoon was a half-holiday, and it was pretty certain that the Head would not allow the entertainment to go on all day.

In all Form-rooms during that lesson there was a buzz of muttering and whispering; and even Mr. Quelch was scarcely able to keep silence in his Form. Greyfriars was on tenterhooks. When loud sounds were heard from a distance fellows jumped up in their seats, unable to keep still. Coker was being chucked out, and nobody was allowed to see the chucking out. It was intensely exasperating; but it could not be helped. Form masters carried on, pretending not to hear those crashing sounds from the distance. But they heard them—and all the fellows heard them—and the excitement was now red-hot.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

PAUL PROUT, majestic, dignified, in spite of his flaming nose, came with ponderous tread up the Fifth-Form passage and stopped at Coker's door. He tried the handle of the door, and found it locked. Then he tapped on a panel, loudly.

"Is that Prout?" called out Coker. Doubtless he had recognised the elephantine tread of the Fifth-Form master.

"It is I, Coker."
"Found out your mistake yet?"
"What—what?"
"Have you found out who punched your nose?" demanded Coker.

"I did not come here to listen to insolence, Coker," said Mr. Prout, in a deep voice. "I have come to make an appeal to your common sense, if you have any—to your sense of decency, if

you are not wholly destitute of it. You have disgraced yourself and your school, Coker. You are expelled, and you no longer belong to Greyfriars. No purpose can be served by prolonging the present state of affairs. Nothing but unseemly disturbance can accrue from your present line of conduct. Coker, open this door!"

"No fear!"
"I urge you, Coker, for your own sake, to leave the precincts of Greyfriars quietly, without further disturbance."

"I'm not leaving at all."
"I desire to be patient with you, Coker," said Mr. Prout, breathing hard. "What purpose do you hope to serve by this—this conduct?"

"Well, I hope the Head will find out who really hammered your boko, sir. I suppose he's trying to?"

"Do you dare to persist in your ridiculous denial, Coker, of having committed violent assault upon your Form master?"

"Of course! I never did!"
"It is useless to repeat falsehoods, Coker. Will you, or will you not, leave the school quietly?"

"Not!"
"Have you not sufficient intelligence, Coker, to realise that you will be removed by force if you do not go?" boomed Mr. Prout.

"Not while I can hit out, sir," replied Coker. "Anybody laying a finger on me will be jolly sorry for himself!"

"If you mean that you will resist—"
"I jolly well do!" said Coker emphatically.

"Are you insane, Coker?"
"No, sir. Are you?"
"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Upon my word! This is beyond all bearing! Gosling!"
"Yes, sir!"

The Greyfriars porter had followed Mr. Prout up the passage.

"You have your tools, Gosling?"
"Yes, sir!"
"The Head's orders are that the lock of this door be forced," said Mr. Prout. "Kindly proceed without loss of time, Gosling."

"Yes, sir!"
Gosling proceeded without loss of time. It was not an easy task that had been set him, for the door was thick and strong, the lock a large, heavy, old-fashioned one, made in the days when locks were locks. Gosling proceeded to drive a chisel between door and jamb, with heavy blows of a large hammer. The din rang through Greyfriars School.

Bang! Clang! Bang! Clang!
The door creaked, and the lock groaned. Gosling smote and smote.

Bang! Clang! Bang! Clang!
Fellows in the Form-room looked at one another and whispered, and thrilled with excitement.

The chisel was well driven in at last. Then Gosling's horny hands wrenched at it.

Gosling perspired with exertion. He grunted, and he snorted. Exertion never had appealed to Gosling.

"Please make haste, Gosling," said Mr. Prout.

Prout was anxious to get it over before the fellows came swarming out of the Form-rooms. It was bad enough as it was, in Prout's opinion. It would be worse with a buzzing throng taking a deep interest in the proceedings.

Gosling grunted emphatically. He was not a quick worker at the best of times. Now he really had hard work to do. It was all very well for Mr. Prout to tell him to make haste. Prout was standing there doing nothing, while
(Continued on the next page.)

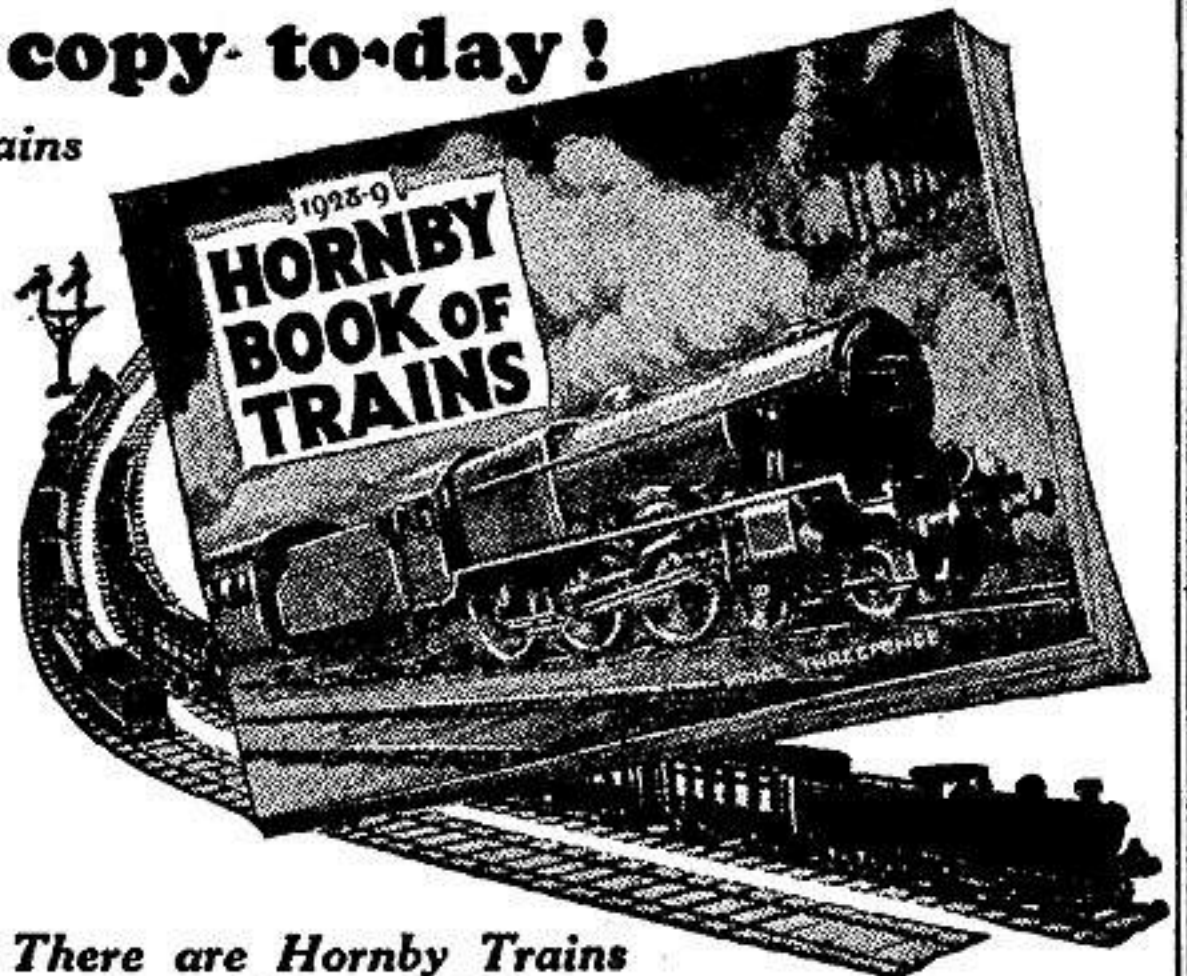
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Gosling laboured and perspired. There is something irritating to a working man to be urged to greater speed by a man who is doing nothing. Gosling was on the point of telling Prout what he thought of him, but fortunately restrained himself.

"Come—come, Gosling!" urged Mr. Prout. "We are losing time. My time is valuable, Gosling."

Snort from Gosling.

"Please exert yourself a little, Gosling," said Mr. Prout, with asperity.

Gosling's view was that he was exerting himself a lot already. He paused to glare at the Fifth Form master.

"Look 'ere, sir," said Gosling, "this 'ere is 'ard work! Wot I says, sir, is this 'ere—"

"Please do not waste time in talking, Gosling."

Apparently Mr. Prout was prepared to do all the talking that was required. Gosling gave a still more emphatic snort, and resumed his labours.

There was at last a terrific crack.

Something had yielded.

The lock no longer held, and the door moved as Mr. Prout pushed it. But it moved only an inch.

Though no longer held by the lock the door did not open. Mr. Prout pushed harder. He might as well have pushed at the solid stone walls of Greyfriars School. The door budged no further.

"Upon my word! Is that wretched, rebellious boy holding the door?" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Push it, Gosling!"

"Wot's the good of pushing it, when it's fixed tight?" demanded Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere, that there door won't come open, sir, 'cause why, it's fastened somehow inside."

"You've got it, Gosling," came Coker's cheery voice. "I've nailed a box to the floor inside. Nothing doing, old bean!"

"You—you—you have nailed a box to the—the floor inside!" ejaculated Mr. Prout.

"Just that, sir."

"Wretched boy!"

"Wretched man!" retorted Coker.

"What—what?"

"Give it a miss, sir," said Coker. "You can't get in. I'm not letting anybody into the room until I get justice. As for leaving Greyfriars, that's all bunkum! I'm not leaving!"

"Gosling, force the door!" spluttered Mr. Prout.

Gosling fixed an inimical glare on the Fifth Form master. Gosling, a practical man, did not expect much in the way of sense from schoolmasters. But this was the limit.

"P'raps you'll be so kind, sir, as to tell a man 'ow he's to force that blooming door!" said Gosling, with withering sarcasm. "I'm 'ere and ready. Jest tell a man 'ow it's to be done, sir, and rely on me. I only want to know 'ow."

That problem was beyond Mr. Prout. If a box was nailed to the floor inside the door, getting the door open was undoubtedly a problem exceeding in difficulty anything to be found in Euclid. Only by getting the hinges off or breaking the door in pieces could it be opened. Breaking that stout oak into pieces was a large order.

"Take off the hinges, Gosling!" said Mr. Prout, at last.

"The 'inges, sir!" said Gosling.

"Yes; then the door will fall," explained Mr. Prout. "The lock being broken, it is held only by the hinges. The hinges removed, Gosling, it will fall over the box, which that impudent boy has affixed to the floor within."

"Course it will, sir," said Gosling. His sarcasm was overwhelming.

"Course it will, sir! I see it quite clear, sir! You've only got to point out 'ow I'm to get at the blinking 'inges, sir, them being inside the door."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Prout.

That trifling circumstance had escaped his notice. Obviously, Gosling could not take off the hinges without first getting inside the study—in which case, of course, the hinges might as well have remained where they were.

"Jest waiting for orders, sir," said Gosling, still bitterly sarcastic. "'Ow am I to get at them 'inges, sir?"

"It—it appears impracticable to remove the hinges, Gosling," said Mr. Prout. "It is very unfortunate, but it does seem impracticable. How do you suggest forcing this door, Gosling?"

"A blooming pickaxe would do it, sir!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Prout.

The idea of Gosling wielding a pickaxe, and hacking the stout oak into splinters, was rather startling. Mr. Prout was not prepared for such heroic measures—not yet, at all events. Prout made one more appeal to the rebel of the Fifth.

"Coker, I command you to remove the box you have affixed behind the door."

"No fear!"

"For the last time, Coker—"

"Bow-wow!"

"What—what did you say, Coker?"

"Bow-wow!"

The school porter chuckled.

"Upon my word! Gosling, there is nothing whatever to laugh at in that boy's audacious impertinence. I am surprised at you, Gosling! You may go!"

Gosling went. Mr. Prout stood glaring at the door for a few moments, and then he also went. Prout was beginning to feel that Horace James Coker was a little too much for him.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Game!

"SCANDALOUS!"

Thus the Head.

Classes were over. Fellows had come swarming out, breathless with excitement, eager for news.

The Head had been with the Sixth. He had left the Sixth Form room, in the fullest expectation of hearing that the unpleasant affair of Coker was at a definite end.

That expectation was disappointed. As soon as he saw Prout he learned that the unpleasant affair, so far from being at an end, was only at the beginning.

"Scandalous!" repeated the Head.

"Unprecedented!" agreed Prout.

"Shocking!" said the Head.

"Unheard of!" assented Prout.

"Outrageous!" gasped Dr. Locke.

"Iniquitous!" said Prout.

It was really like a chorus, strophe and anti-strophe. But both the old gentlemen realised that this was doing no good. It was action, not words, that was needed. Words afforded some relief to the feelings, no doubt; but action was required, strong and prompt action, to deal with the amazing state of affairs that had followed the sacking of Horace Coker.

"The boy must be dealt with," said the Head.

"He must be dealt with," responded Prout.

"Immediately," added the Head.

"Without the loss of a moment!" said Prout.

It looked like the chorus beginning again. But the Head could be a man of action.

"I will proceed to the spot," he said. "I will see whether this audacious boy will defy the orders of his headmaster."

And the Head proceeded to the spot.

He was intensely irritated by the interest taken in his proceedings by all Greyfriars. From every corner a curious face looked. Breathless voices announced on all sides that the Head was going to see Coker. An army attempted to march into the Fifth Form passage after him; but they were turned back at the stairs by prefects of the Sixth.

As near as they could get to the scene of action, breathless swarms of fellows waited and listened and buzzed. Tubb of the Third gasped out the wild suggestion that Coker, who had punched Prout, might punch the Head! The idea of it sent a thrill through the waiting mob. The punching of Prout had made such a sensation as Greyfriars had never known before. But if the Head was punched—if the Beak himself was seen with a crushed-tomato nose—Fellows held their breath at the thought.

Dr. Locke reached Coker's door. He tapped on it.

"Hallo!" came Coker's voice.

"Coker, it is your headmaster."

"Yes, sir. Anything wanted?"

"Open this door, Coker."

"Awfully sorry and all that, sir. Can't be done!"

"Am I to understand, Coker," said the Head in a gasping voice, "that you refuse to obey your headmaster?"

There was a pause.

"Let's have this clear, sir," said Coker. "Am I to stay at Greyfriars?"

"Certainly not!"

"Am I sacked?"

"You are expelled."

"If that's so, sir, you're not my headmaster," said Coker.

"What—what?"

"If I'm a Greyfriars man, sir, you're my headmaster, and I'm bound to obey your orders. If I'm not, you're nobody."

"Nobody!" gasped the Head.

"Nobody at all, sir," said Coker cheerfully.

"Bless my soul!"

"Unprecedented!" murmured Mr. Prout.

He could think of no stronger word—of no longer one, at all events.

"I scarcely know how to deal with this boy," said Dr. Locke, passing his hand over his scholastic brow. "Never, in all my experience as a headmaster, has there been such an occurrence as this. Coker, for what purpose are you acting in this outrageous manner?"

"I want justice, sir," explained Coker. "I've done nothing to be sacked for. I've told you I never punched Prout. I'm not going to be sacked. I absolutely refuse to be barked from Greyfriars. I'm holding on tooth and nail. My idea, sir, is that you should let me alone for a bit, and try to find out who punched Prout."

"Coker, I command you to leave this study."

"Nothing doing, sir."

"Otherwise the door will be broken in, regardless of damage, and you will be removed by force."

"You'll find me ready, sir. I'm game!"

"I will give you an hour for reflection, Coker."

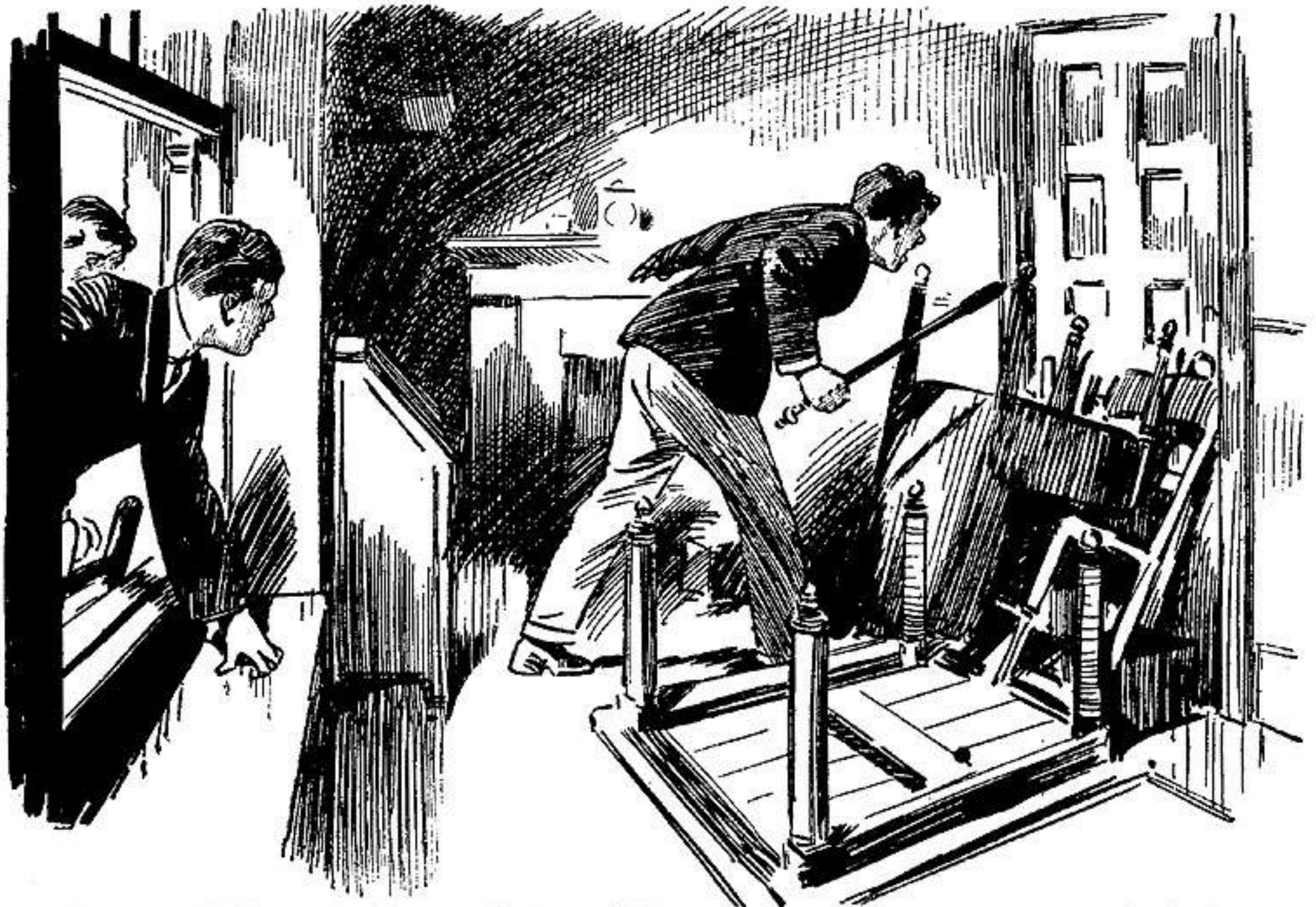
"No need, sir. Get on with it!"

"Do you imagine, Coker, that you can remain at this school after you have been expelled by your headmaster?"

"Right on the wicket, sir. I'm not going!"

"Bless my soul!"

"It's not my wish to give you all this



"Buck up, you Sixth-Form rotters!" shouted Coker. "Get a move on! Try a little beef! You can't get in! If you do, I'll make you sorry you did! I've a jolly good mind to come out and mop up the passage with you! Yah!" Unbeknown to Coker, Blundell had got the sash up and his head and shoulders were in the room. (See Chapter 10.)

trouble, sir," said Coker. "Any man in the Fifth will tell you that I'm a quiet, peaceable chap, as gentle as a lamb. But you can see for yourself that I've got no choice in the matter. It's a question of justice and a fellow's dignity. I decline absolutely to be bunked. Besides, you'd be awfully sorry yourself, sir, after I'd gone, when it came out that it was somebody else who punched Prout."

"There is no doubt on that subject, Coker."

"I give you my word, sir——"

"Nonsense!"

"It's bound to come out, sooner or later, sir. Then think how you'd feel if you'd sacked me for something I hadn't done! Think it over, sir."

"Silence, you impertinent boy!"

"Unparalleled!" murmured Mr. Prout.

"I shall leave you to reflect, Coker, for a time. If you do not leave this study then, the door will be broken in. That is all."

"Rely on it that I shan't leave, sir."

Dr. Locke rustled away. Mr. Prout rustled after him. From Coker's study the sound of whistling, cheerful though out of tune, followed them. Coker did not seem to be despondent.

Crowds of Greyfriars fellows saw the Head in retreat. Coker was still in his study. Sounds of shifting furniture from that study seemed to indicate that Coker was preparing for an attack in force by barricading the door. The entertainment was by no means over; and it was a half-holiday this afternoon. All Greyfriars, after all, would have a chance to see the fun.

A Form match had been arranged between the Remove and the Upper Fourth that afternoon. By common consent it was postponed. Even Soccer

had lost its attractions. The winter game took second place to Coker.

"Footer?" said Temple of the Fourth. "No fear! Why, I wouldn't miss Coker for worlds!"

"We can play footer any time!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But Coker only happens once."

After dinner the whole school was on the qui vive. Fellows gathered outside the House to stare at Coker's window, rewarded occasionally by a glimpse of the bullet head and rugged features of the great Horace. Others haunted the stairs, others the passages. Everybody wanted to see the last act in the drama when it came about. There was a general feeling that a vote of thanks to Coker ought to be passed. The great Horace was providing Greyfriars with the biggest sensation known to the oldest inhabitant.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

What's the Matter with Bunter?

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"But, I say——"

"Rats!"

Nobody wanted to be bothered by Billy Bunter just then. All thoughts were on Coker; all eyes were on the watch for the first sign of hostilities. When the great offensive against Coker's study took place, nobody wanted to miss a single item.

Harry Wharton & Co. were sitting on the banisters of the Remove landing. That was as near as they could get to the scene of action. Sixth Form prefects kept guard in the Fifth Form passage. Coker's study was isolated from the rest of the school. Nobody

was allowed to be in communication with Coker.

"But, I say, you fellows——" persisted Bunter.

He blinked almost tragically at the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter was worried. He was deeply worried. Nobody noticed William George Bunter very much, but no doubt his state of worry and dismay would have been observed but for the counter attraction of Coker. Bunter had not shared the general excitement. His fat voice had not been continuously heard, as was customary with Bunter. Anyone observing Bunter would have noted without fail that something was amiss with the fat junior. Bunter had something on his mind, had anyone taken the trouble to observe it. So far nobody had.

"It's a shame, you know!" said Bunter.

"What is, ass?" asked Bob Cherry.

"About Coker."

"What rot! He was bound to be sacked for punching Prout. What are you burbling about, fathead?"

"He never did punch Prout!" said Bunter desperately.

"What!"

"Fathead!"

"How on earth do you know?"

"I—I don't know, of course!" gasped Bunter, in great haste. "I know nothing at all about it."

"Exactly! Dry up!"

"But — but — but——" stammered Bunter.

"The too-much-fulness of the esteemed Bunter's chinwag is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"But he says he never did, you

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,065.

BRAVVO BIRCHEMALL!

BY DICKY NUGENT.

THE HERO OF THE HOUR!—With flames roaring all round him, and in a temperature of no less than a thousand degrees, Dr. Birchmall, as cool as a cucumber, rescues Jack Jolly from the jaws of death.

I.
ANY news of Dr. Birchmall, sir?"

Jack Jolly, the kaptin of the Fourth, asked that question of Mr. Lickham as he handed in an impot. just before bed-time.

"No," said the new Head of St. Sam's. "I'm afraid we shall never see him at the school again. At the prez-ent moment, no doubt, he is lang-wishing in a fowl prizzon cell, loaded up with hevvy iron shackles and bitterly bewailing his fate."

"No, I'm not!" came a voice from outside the window, just then.

Mr. Lickham and Jack Jolly jumped, for the voice was that of the very man they had been speaking of. Then, conkering their astonishment, they rushed to the window and opened it, and Doctor Birchmall, attired in the distink-tive dress of a convict, climbed into the room.

"M-m-my giddy aunt!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "Fancy seeing you here, sir! Have they let you out already, then?"

"No, Lickham, they have not!" answered Dr. Birchmall, glarnings fearfully round the room like a hunted deer. "To tell you the trooth, I have done a bunk!"

"D-d-done a bunk?" repeated Mr. Lickham, his eyes almost bolting out of his head.

Dr. Birchmall nodded.

"I buzzed off, vam-ooosed, skedaddled, or slung my hook, entirely of my own accord. I didn't even stay to bid the prizzon

guvverner good-buy. And even while we stand here arguing the toss, warders and perlicemen armed to the teeth, and detectives assisted by blud-hounds, are scouring the countryside for me."

"Oh, grate pip!"

"Lickham," said Dr. Birchmall, "I have come to St. Sam's to throw myself on your mersy."

"Oh, I see! You want me to help you hide from your persooers!" eggsclaimed Mr. Lickham.

"Eggsactly!" said the ex-headmaster of St. Sam's. "If you can hide me up a chimbley, or in a coal-box, I shall be everlastingly grateful to you."

"What about hiding in a packing-case in one of the box-rooms?" suggested Jack Jolly.

Dr. Birchmall started violently.

"Grate pip! I was forgetting you were here," he eggsclaimed. "Jolly! Do you think you can let bygones be bygones, and help me out of my fix?"

"Certainly, sir," answered Jack Jolly, immejately. "I'm not the sort of chap to bare mallis, I hope."

"You're a good chap, Jolly, and no mistake," said Dr. Birchmall, with a catch in his voice. "Anyway, for hevvens sake don't go and squeek to the perlice."

As Dr. Birchmall finished speaking there came a sound from the quad that brought an eggspression of terror into his eyes.

Yap-yap-yap! Bow-wow! Gr-r-r-gh!

"The blud-hounds!" whispered the hunted headmaster, horsoly. "Hide me, before it's too late!"

"Where shall we hide you, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham, in a fever of eggsitement. "Do you think you'd be all right under the desk?"

"No, I don't think anything of the kind, Lickham!" roared Dr. Birchmall.

"Do you think a pack of ferocious blud-hounds can be fooled so easily as that? I'm going to adopt Jolly's eggscellent suggestion and hide myself in one of the box-rooms."

"Stop!" cried Mr. Lickham despritley. "If you show your fizz outside this room, you'll be spotted at once. Why, the boys haven't gone up to bed yet."



Luckily, Jack Jolly was, as usual, full of bright wheezes.

"I know!" he grinned. "Disguys yourself as an Eastern potentate, sir, and I'll pretend I'm showing you over the skool. Nobody will dream it's you, then."

"But how the merry dickens can I disguys myself as an Eastern potentate?" hooted the convict-headmaster, almost dancing with impatience.

"Easily!" answered the kaptin of the Fourth. "You can use the table-cover as a robe, and one of the curtains for a turban, then rub coal-dust all over your dile, and nobody will be able to toll you from a genuine rajah."

A drowning man will clutch at a straw. Dr. Birchmall clutched at the table-cover, and hastily throo it around his bony person. After that, with the deft movements of one accustomed to slate-of-hand trix, he tore down a curtain and converted it into a turban, then, plunging his hands into the coal-box, he rubbed a jenniferous helping of the contents over his lizz.

The transformation was simply amazing. If anyone had told you that the visitor in Mr. Lickham's study at that moment was Dr. Birchmall, you would have larfed him to skorn. For the visitor in question looked eggactly like a mitey potentate from the East, and not a bit like the headmaster of a grate Public skool, or an escaped convict from a grate prizzon.

"My giddy aunt!" eggclaimed Mr. Lickham, farely flabbergasted. "It would take a Herlock Sholmes to pennytrate your disguys now, sir."

"Not bad, is it?" said Dr. Birchmall, with a dusky grin. "Nevertheless, I don't dare face the perlice, so I'll buzz off upstairs now. Are you ready, Jolly?"

"What-ho!"

The two kwitted the study, and made their way upstairs. As it happened they were not a minnit too soon, for only a few seconds after they had left, a bludhound followed by a warder hertled through the window, a detective crashed down the chimbley into the room, and a cupple of perlicemen cantered in by the doorway.

So, taking it all round, the fewgitive was lucky to get away.

Proceeding to a box-room at the top of the building the kaptin of the Fourth and Dr. Birchmall quickly found a sootable packing-case. It was the work of seconds for the escaped convict to make himself comfortable inside it. Jack Jolly then went downstairs again.

II.

BY the time the kaptin of the Fourth reached the lower floors, the house was farely swarming with bludhounds, detectives, perlicemen, and prizzon warders.

Masters and boys alike were being riggerously eggaminated and cross-eggaminated. Cupboards, coal-scuttles, curtained corners, and even the cracks and crevices in the walls were being searched without rosult.

"Are you Convict 99?" demanded a feerce-looking detective, grabbing Jack Jolly by the scruff of the neck as he entered the hall.

"Ow-wow-ow! Certainly not," gasped the leader of the Fourth indignantly. "Do I look like Convict 99?"

"You might be Convict 99 in disguys," growled the detective, peering into our hero's face suspiciously.

"A man can easily shave off his beard and change into skoolboy's togs," added another detective. "Do you think this is our man, Sexton?"

"You silly cuckoos!" roared Jack Jolly. "Doctor Birchmall is a cupple of feet taller than I am!"

"That's according to prizzon records,

He may have worn high-heeled shoes then," suggested the first detective. "But, perhaps, after all, you're a bit on the small side."

Arriving at the conclusion that Dr. Birchmall could not be on the ground floor, the invading army scampered up the stairs, and started searching the floors above. And very thoroughly they did it, too. Wherever there was an electric light, that light was switched on. Wherever there was a gas-jet, that jet was lighted. And where there was neither, matches were struck and tallo candles lit, and the search went on by that primitive illewmination.

Probably it was a carelessly dropped match or tallo candle that led to all the trubble that followed. In the eggitement that rained for the next hour, nobody stopped to inkwire how the thing started. It was quite enuff that it had.

Fire broke out at St. Sam's! All of a sudden, flames seemed to spring up from nowhere, and in no time a cupple of dormitories were ablaze. A sinnister red glow lit up the landings and passidges near the main staircase. Doorways began to belch fire, and the hungry flames began to lick the bannisters.

Instantly, pandymonium rained. The detectives, their faces garstly white in the blud-red light of the fire, fled with their bludhounds, the latter growling mizzerably as they went. Strong warders, yelling with fright, ran for their lives. Even the perlicemen, after throwing a few jugs of water over the flames, sprinted for the main eggit.

Mr. Lickham was almost frantick. "Burleigh! Tallboy! Strapper! Put out the fire at once!" he roared, as he

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saw the Sixth-Formers preparing to buzz off.

Burleigh obligingly fetched a pail which he found already filled in the kitchen and threw it over the flames. Unforchunty, he made things worse, for, as it turned out, the pail contained, instead of water, a lot of frying oil which the cook had recently been using. The fire roared more feercely than ever, and even Mr. Lickham hezzitated no longer, then. With a yell of fear, he turned tail and raced after the rest into the open air, leaving St. Sam's to its fate.

Out in the quad, the entire skool was mustard away from the heat of the fire, and the roll was called. It was then that a surprising discovery was made.

Jack Jolly was missing!

Just as that horrifying news went round General Jolly, Jack's pater, turned up with the majistrate who had sent Dr. Birchmall to prizzon. They had herd of his escape and had hurried post-haste to St. Sam's to join in the hunt.

General Jolly's purple face blanched when he herd that his son was missing, for he loved young Jack with all his hart and sole.

"What! My son missing?" he roared, as Mr. Lickham eggplained what had happened. "Have him rescued immedjately!"

Mr. Lickham gave a hopeless shrugg. "I would, sir, if I could get volunteers. But who is there brave enuff to enter that raging inferno now?"

"Why don't you go yourself, General Jolly?" suggested Burleigh.

"I would, if my doctor hadn't warned me recently against getting too close to fires," answered the gallant old soldier regretfully. "He told me that if I got near a fire and came out into the nite air afterwards, I should catch cold, so, of course, I can't do it."

His listeners nodded simperthetically, and as none of them volunteered, it began to look as if Jack Jolly would perish in the flames.

Meanwhile, what had our hero been doing? As soon as the fire broke out, his thoughts flew to Dr. Birchmall, and he rushed up to warn him to escape.

In his eggitement, the kaptin of the Fourth tripped over the top stair, and fell to the floor with a sickening thud, knocking himself unconshus.

It was there that Dr. Birchmall found him, when he peeped out of the box-room to see what all the eggitement was about.

Instantly, the convict-headmaster acted. He might, of course, have bolted for his life on seeing the fire, leaving Jack Jolly to be roasted alive. But he didn't.

Deep in the hart of the old scamp there were kindly feelings which had remained berried for a long, long time. They came to the four now. With a look of grim determination on his dile, Dr. Birchmall lifted Jack Jolly up and slung him over his shoulder.

By this time the plaice was a raging inferno. But with the temperature at a thousand degrees at least, Dr. Birchmall remained as cool as a cucumber. Stopping only to light a cigarette, he calmly climbed through a window on to a parapet below, and at the dizzy height of a hundred feet, trotted along to find a good place from which he could climb down the ivy to the quad beneath.

As he did so, the crowd below saw what had happened and burst into a roar of cheering which grew louder and louder in volume as Dr. Birchmall swung lightly over the top, and, with the ajility of a monkey, lowered himself hand under hand towards the ground.

Ten minnits later, he arrived in the quad, and amid terrific applaws, handed Jack Jolly over to his pater.

The rest is soon told. The Muggleton Fire Brigade turned up and mannidged to subdew the flames before the fire had spred beyond the upper floors, so the old skool was saved without much damage being done after all.

Needless to say, Dr. Birchmall was the hero of the hour, and both General Jolly and his friend the majistrate, were loud in their praises.

"Natcherally, we can't let you go back to prizzon after this," said General Jolly. "You must arrange to have the sentence squashed, judge."

"Most decidedly!" replied the majistrate, beeming. "I will wire the prizzon-guvverner and the Home Secretary immedjately. Consider yourself pardoned at once, Doctor Birchmall."

"Thank you, jentlemon!" grinned the Head. "And do you think they'll give me back my old job, general?"

"Rely on me!" said General Jolly; "I'll get it back for you!"

And he did.

Thus, amid the cheers of the entire skool, Dr. Birchmall came back to St. Sam's in a blaze of glory, and for a long time afterwards the school eckowed with the cry:

"Bravvo, Birchmall!"

THE END.

(Next week's amusing yarn of St. Sam's is entitled: "MR. LICKHAM IN THE LIMELIGHT!" Make sure you read it, chums, by ordering your MAGNET early.)

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WHO PUNCHED PROUT?

(Continued from page 13.)

know," said Bunter. "You all heard him. I think a man's word ought to be taken."

The Famous Five regarded Bunter curiously. He had succeeded in arousing their interest at last.

That Bunter was concerned about the fate of Horace Coker was clear. Why he should be concerned about him was far from clear.

He disliked Coker. Coker had a heavy hand with fags, and a heavy foot for a fag who raided his ample tuck. And that was what Bunter had done, or attempted to do, only the day before.

More than one burglarious attempt had the Owl of the Remove made on a cake that had arrived from Coker's Aunt Judy. More than once Coker had kicked him out of his study. Bunter was perhaps accustomed to being kicked, but he did not like it. Many fellows felt rather sorry for Coker, but all agreed that he deserved to be expelled for punching his Form master. Only Bunter had a word to say in his favour. And that was really remarkable, for it was not Bunter's way to concern himself about the troubles of others. As a rule, Bunter's universe began and ended with W. G. Bunter.

Now his fat face was troubled and distressed. The Famous Five could see that he was distressed quite plainly. He was deeply worried. He was deeply concerned about Coker. It was amazing. He did not want Coker to be turned out of Greyfriars. His reason was inexplicable—unless, indeed, he supposed that Coker was going to take his cake away with him. That might have accounted for it.

"Look here, you fat duffer," said Harry Wharton, scanning the Owl's fat and troubled face, "what's the matter with you? What do you mean? You don't care twopence about Coker—or anybody else, for that matter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What does it matter to you if Coker is bunked?" demanded Frank Nugent.

"It doesn't, you know. But—"

"But what, you burbling bandersnatch!"

"Tain't fair!" said Bunter. "The chap ought not to be sacked! He—he says he never punched Prout. I—I believe him."

"What utter rot!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm surprised at Coker telling whoppers about it! But he punched Prout all right."

"It's rather rotten to doubt a fellow's word, Bull!"

"What!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Rotten!"

"You fat, cheeky porpoise—"

"Look here, Bunter, do you know anything about it?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

Bunter jumped.

"No! No fear! Nothing at all!"

"Then what do you mean?"

"I—I—I mean, I—I take Coker's word, you know," said Bunter. "I—I believe that he never punched Prout, and it's rotten to sack him for what he

never did. I—I think something ought to be done!"

"Shall we go to the Head and tell him he's made a silly mistake?" inquired Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"You might go to Prout," said Bunter.

"Prout!" ejaculated the Co.

"Yes. He would be jolly glad to find out that Coker never punched him. It makes him look awfully small being punched by a chap in his Form. The other masters are taking it out of him in Common-room, you can bet. Prout's so jolly lofty, they'd jump at the chance of dressing him down. I heard Capper sympathising with him this morning, and Prout looked as if he could bite him."

The juniors chuckled. They had no doubt that the unfortunate Prout would receive a good deal of barbed sympathy from the other members of the staff.

"He would jump at it," urged Bunter. "He thinks Coker punched him because the silly ass was gassing about going to punch him. But he'd simply leap at it if he knew."

"Very likely," said Wharton. "No Form master likes to show up as a man who was punched in his Form, I suppose. It's knocked all poor old Prout's dignity on the head. But Coker did punch him, you chump!"

"He didn't—I—I mean, he says he didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"Then who did?"

"Eh?"

"You've seen Prout's boko. Somebody hit it. If Coker didn't, who did?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't know, of course. You fellows know I was asleep in the dormitory at the time."

"We know that, of course, fathead! Have you got any idea who punched Prout if Coker didn't?"

"No!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, no! Not at all!"

"Then you're talking rot!"

"But—but perhaps Prout's nose never was punched," suggested Bunter. "He may have knocked it on something—"

"He did—on Coker's knuckles!"

"You know what an old ass he is. Suppose he banged his nose when he fell down in Coker's study?" suggested Bunter hopefully.

"Fathead! He fell down when his nose was punched. That tumble was an effect, not a cause."

"Well, I don't believe Coker punched it!" gasped Bunter. "Prout's making a mistake. You fellows go and suggest it. I'm jolly sure he'd be glad to know."

"You can go to Prout with your own giddy suggestions if you want to!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! No fear!" ejaculated Bunter. "He might think—"

"What might he think?"

"Oh, nothing."

"My only summer bonnet!" said Bob Cherry. "If the Remove hadn't all been in bed at the time, I should think that Bunter had been spying as usual, and knows who punched Prout. But I suppose even Bunter can't pry when he's fast asleep in bed."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He can't know anything about it," said Harry. But he looked doubtfully at the Owl of the Remove. "Look here, Bunter, if you're not talking out of the back of your neck, and if you know anything, cough it up. It struck me as odd that Coke should lie about it—it's not like his style. If he's got the chopper for what some other chap did, it's pretty serious. If you know anything, you're bound to speak out."

Bunter gasped.

"I don't know anything about it! Not a syllable! I—I think very likely Prout fell down and knocked his nose—like a silly old ass, you know—"

"Fathead!"

Bunter gave the Famous Five a dismal blink, and rolled away: looking more worried than ever. They stared after him.

"He can't know anything about it," said Bob. "He went to bed last night along with the rest of us. What on earth's the matter with him?"

"The whatfulness is terrific."

"Nobody but Coker could have punched Prout," said Nugent. "Nobody else could be silly idiot enough. Besides, if it was somebody else, who was it?"

"Not Bunter, I suppose!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five chuckled at the idea. Not for a moment did it cross their minds, then, that Bob's humorous suggestion had hit the right nail exactly on the head.

There was a sudden yell from Skinner.

"They're going it!"

And Bunter and his mysterious goings-on were dismissed from mind at once at the news that the big offensive had started.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Great Fight!

COKER heard them coming.

Coker's face was grim. It had grown considerably grimmer since dinner-time. Coker had considered it rather masterly strategy to bar himself in his study. He was resolved not to leave Greyfriars: and he had great confidence in his own powers as a fighting-man: but even Coker doubted whether he could tackle all Greyfriars single-handed. He was prepared to do it, rather than go, but it was clear even to Coker that it would be judicious to avoid such odds in combat. Hence his masterly strategy in entrenching himself in his study, and there, behind a fastened oaken door, bidding defiance to all comers. But Coker's strategic gifts were limited. It is said that an army marches on its stomach. Still more does a beleaguered garrison hold out on its inner man. But a fellow could not think of everything at once—especially a fellow like Coker. He had absolutely overlooked the necessity of provisioning his citadel.

By the time Coker thought of that—which was not till Coker was getting hungry—it was, of course, too late. Sixth Form prefects guarded both ends of the passage. Coker, going out for forage, would have been collared at once; and refused a way back to his study, at least. Once the door was open, Coker knew what would happen. Cheeky Sixth Form cads would shove in. The game would be up. Not that Coker would go! He was not going, anyhow! But it would be rather a puzzle how to remain, in the hands of stalwart prefects with orders to chuck him out of the school gates. That, certainly, would be a puzzle: and as Coker did not know the answer to that one, he wisely stayed where he was, with the door still fast.

But he was getting awfully hungry.

Coker had a healthy appetite. He was not a greedy fellow like Bunter. But he liked a lot. He missed his dinner very seriously. He rooted through the study cupboard for tuck. Yesterday there had been an enormous cake from Coker's Aunt Judy—the cake which had tempted Bunter of the

(Continued on page 18.)

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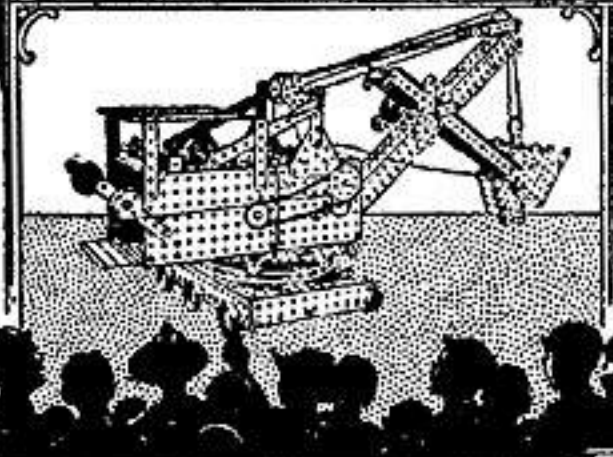
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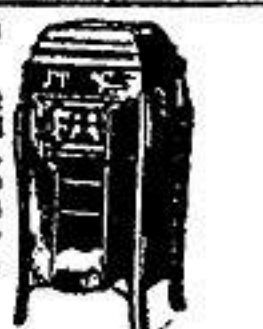


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Remove. That cake, unluckily, had been finished by Potter and Greene. Only a few chips of it remained: which Coker disposed of, feeling as hungry as ever when he had done so. There was nothing else in the cupboard save a packet of toffee and a box of chocolates. Coker ate the toffee and the chocolates: but what Coker really wanted was a square meal, and he did not feel satisfied. He missed his dinner: and looked forward with considerable apprehension to tea-time.

Beyond tea-time, tea-less, lurked supper-time, supper-less: beyond that, a long, hungry night, and no breakfast in the morning. In the circumstances, Coker did not expect the Head to send in his meals. In normal times, Coker's study was a land flowing with milk and honey. But undoubtedly he had struck the lean years now. Being hungry, Coker felt cross: as fellows with healthy appetites sometimes do in such a state. The sound of the enemy advancing was welcome to his ears. He looked grim and warlike. He was actually eager for a combat, even against heavy odds. He felt that punching somebody would be a solace.

It says much for Coker's resolute character, that his omission of provisions from his scheme of operations did not make him think of surrender. Garrisons have been starved into surrender, many a time and oft. But those garrisons were not composed of Cokers. Inward pangs of this sort only made Coker more dangerous.

Heavy footsteps came along the Fifth-Form passage. There was a buzz of voices. Blows rang on the stout oak door.

"Go it!" shouted Coker savagely. "Break it down! I've got a stack of stuff behind it! And a poker! I'm sorry for the first cheeky cad that shoves his nose in here."

Crash, crash, crash!

Coker gave a jeering laugh.

From the voices, he knew that a lot of the Sixth were outside. The Head had called in the aid of the prefects to secure this rebel. Wingate, and Gwynne, and Loder, and Walker, and some more. They seemed to be beating on the door with heavy sticks. If the silly asses thought they were going to break the door down by that means, it only showed what silly asses they were, in Coker's opinion. Nothing short of a pick-axe, such as Gosling had suggested to Mr. Prout, or a sledge-hammer would have done it.

Greyfriars had been built in ancient days, before builders had had the advantages of a modern education. The doors, consequently, were doors: just as the walls were walls. In those primitive, simple days, builders had built stoutly, using materials that were likely to last: believing, in the innocence of their simple old hearts, that a day's pay was worth a day's work. Getting at Coker was therefore a task much more hefty than it would have been in a modern building constructed on the latest scientific principles.

Coker laughed jeeringly: and he had reason to laugh, so far as the attack on his door was concerned.

The fact was, that the Head had a strong objection to having that handsome piece of ancient oak hacked to pieces. Dr. Locke was quite well aware that it would have to be seriously damaged to open it. And the Head was capable of strategy, as well as Coker.

While the hammering and banging on the door went on merrily, Gosling's

ladder was being reared to the ivied wall under Coker's window.

Dr. Locke was a great scholar. But he was not, like so many great scholars, a dud in practical affairs. This outrageous affair had to be wound up promptly and swiftly. Coker having refused to come out, it was necessary for authority to step in. The Head took his measures with a degree of intelligence, in a schoolmaster, which would have surprised Coker, had he known.

The assault on the door held Coker's attention. The Head had no doubt that it would. Meanwhile, the ladder was raised to the window. Up the ladder went Blundell of the Fifth, other Fifth Form men holding it below. Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, was able to deal with Coker, if he got to close quarters. And once he was inside the study, unlimited reinforcements would follow him. It was only a question of getting in.

Blundell reached the window, held on to the sill, and peered in. He had a view of Coker's back, as Coker stood watching the door, poker in hand, ready to smite if he found anything to smite at. Coker was laughing jeeringly, and urging the prefects outside to put their beef into it.

"Buck up, you Sixth Form rotters!" shouted Coker. "Get a move on! Try a little beef! You can't get in! If you do, I'll make you sorry you did! I've a jolly good mind to come out and mop up the passage with you. Yah!"

A stick was driven between the door and the jamb, and wrenched. The door groaned and creaked. Then the stick snapped: and there was an angry exclamation outside, and a yell of jeering laughter from Coker.

Bang, bang, bang! Crash! came at the door. Any sound that Blundell might have made at the window was drowned.

Blundell had the sash up now.

His head and shoulders were in the room. One plunge and Blundell would be in, headlong. Four or five Fifth Form men, behind him on the ladder, were ready to follow. Coker's fate trembled in the balance.

Had Horace Coker looked round at that moment, there would still have been time. But the attack on the door was redoubling in violence, and it held Coker's attention chained.

Bump! Blundell landed in the room on all fours.

Then Coker turned. That heavy bump on the floor apprised him, at long last, that there was danger from another quarter.

He stared blankly at the sprawling Blundell. With equal blankness, he stared at Fitzgerald at the window, scrambling in. Coker's powerful brain did not work quickly. He was taken by surprise, and he stared blankly. Blundell leaped to his feet.

"Now, then, Coker," he panted, "the game's up! Chuck it!"

Then Coker woke to life. He gave a roar of warlike wrath, and leaped at the captain of the Fifth. He made a swipe with the poker, which Blundell dodged with ease. The next moment, Blundell had closed with him, and they were struggling. The poker clanged to the floor; Coker bumped after it; Blundell sprawled on Coker.

Fitzgerald rolled in at the window; Hilton rolled in after him; after Hilton plunged Bland, and Smith major. Every fellow, as he arrived, collared Coker. Foes on all sides grasped the great Horace.

He fought furiously.

Single-handed, against so many foes,

Coker was not dismayed. Had anyone asked him in those wild moments whether he was downhearted, Coker would have replied—had he had any breath to reply with—"No!" It was a great fight. Coker heaved, and tossed, and rolled, and struggled, under many foes. More fellows came in at the window. They all poured on Coker. Still the great Horace fought valiantly.

It was like the last great fight of Hereward the Wake. It resembled the terrific battle that raged in the doomed Hall of Nibelungen. It was epic.

Outside, the Sixth-Form men had ceased banging at the door to listen to the sounds of Homeric strife within.

"Coker's going it!" gasped Loder.

"My hat—he is!" said Wingate. "There won't be much of the study left if this goes on!"

And it went on!

It went on wild and uproariously.

But all things come to an end at last. Coker, fighting with Berserker rage, was overwhelmed by odds. In the grip of many hands, winded, gasping, wild, and dishevelled, Coker was captured. So long as he had strength left to resist, he resisted. But his strength was gone at last, and Coker, overcome by odds, was a prisoner in the hands of his foes.

And Blundell & Co., looking at one another breathlessly, realised that they had won a Pyrrhic victory—next door to a defeat. Coker was damaged—that was true. But every other fellow in the study was damaged, also—swollen and streaming noses abounded—eyes were darkening—bruises and bumps were beyond computation. Coker, beaten at the finish by resistless odds, had given a remarkably good account of himself.

The study looked as if a cyclone had struck it. So did Coker. So did Blundell & Co.

"We—we—we've got him!" gasped Blundell. "Clear away that rubbish from the door—we've got him—ow! My eye!"

"Wow!" said Fitzgerald. "My nose—wow!"

Coker said nothing. He couldn't. He only gurgled for breath. He was past struggling now, but some of the Fifth still held him, while the others cleared away the barricade from the door. Coker, gasping, gurgling, staggering, was handed over to the prefects to be taken to the Head.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Exit Coker!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Here he comes!"

"Is that Coker?" gasped

Nugent. "Oh, crumbs!"

"What's left of him!"

"Poor old Coker!"

"Well done, Coker!" shouted the

Bounder. "Good fight, old man!"

"Silence!" rapped out Wingate.

The prefects were marching Coker downstairs. Greyfriars fellows swarmed to look. Blundell & Co. had gone to repair damages. Coker's damages were still unrepaired. They were prominent, they leaped to the eye. Coker, held by either arm by a stalwart prefect, looked an absolute wreck. He tottered as he walked. He was on his last legs.

But his look was still defiant. If there was not pride in his port, there was defiance in his eye. Coker, mauled, and walloped, captured, was still unconquered.

"Bravo, Coker!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Nobody supposed that Coker was in the right in his remarkable outbreak.



As the train glided out of the station, the people on the platform were treated to the view of a wildly-excited crimson face staring from a window, a furious fist shaken in the air, and a powerful voice yelling defiance and threats. Wingate and his fellow-prefects were seeing Coker off, according to instructions. (See Chapter 14.)

But any fellow was bound to admire pluck and courage. That Coker's pluck and courage were worthy of the highest traditions of Greyfriars, was certain. Fellows who had seen Blundell & Co. limping away, battered and bruised, wondered how Coker had done it. Right or wrong, Coker had put up a tremendous fight; he had fought to a finish, and the fellows felt that he deserved his meed of praise. Like the Tuscans of old, the Greyfriars men could not forbear a cheer.

"Silence!" hooted Loder.

"Bravo, Coker!"

"Good man, Coker!"

"Well done, Coker!"

"Hurrah!"

Even the arrival of Mr. Prout on the scene did not stop the cheering. There was quite a revulsion of feeling in Coker's favour. Coker, at least, was game, and the fellows could admire a man who was game.

"Silence!" snorted Prout.

"Bravo, Coker!" yelled a hundred voices.

And the roar followed Coker, doubtless comforting him a little, as he was marched down the Head's corridor to the headmaster's study.

Dr. Locke was waiting him there. He was awaiting him with a grim brow. But the grimness faded out of his face, to be replaced by a look of shocked concern, at the sight of Coker. He had directed Blundell to use what force was necessary. Obviously, Blundell had found a lot necessary.

"Bless my soul!" The Head gazed at Coker. "What—what—"

"Here he is, sir," said Wingate.

"He appears to have been—hem—somewhat—hem—roughly handled," said the Head. "I regret this, Coker! I regret it very much. Your own obdurate folly brought it upon you."

"Grooogh!" said Coker.

"What? What did you say?"

"Oooooooh!"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Coker could utter nothing but gasps and grunts. He was almost in a state of collapse. So far from resisting further, Coker would probably have lurched over, but for the strong grasp of the prefects on his arms.

The Head surveyed him in silence for a few moments.

"The boy must leave Greyfriars immediately!" he said. "But he cannot leave in that state. Wingate, may I ask you to see what can be done for Coker, to—to make him look a—a—a little less disreputable? Do the best you can for this foolish and headstrong boy, Wingate."

"Certainly, sir!"

"As soon as he is a little more—hem—presentable, Wingate, take him to the railway station and place him in a train. Take his ticket. Remain with him till the train leaves. Take Gwynne and Loder with you. Under no circumstances leave Coker until he is in his train."

"Very well, sir!"

Coker made no attempt to speak. Breath failed him. He gurgled. Still gurgling, he was led away.

The prefects, not unkindly, looked after Coker. They could not help respecting the fight he had put up. They hoped he would not begin again before

they got shot of him. But they were very careful. No fewer than six hefty prefects remained with Coker all the time. He bathed his damaged features, he changed his clothes—his raiment being largely in rags after that terrific battle. He refused to put his hat on to go; Wingate jammed it on his head. He was led to the door.

Nearly all Greyfriars had gathered to see him pass. Between rows of eager, excited faces, Coker marched down to the gates, six prefects in attendance—a tribute to Coker's prowess.

"Good-bye, Coker!" called out Harry Wharton.

Coker did not answer. He was still rather breathless. Besides, he was not going to say good-bye. What had happened had not changed Coker's resolution.

"Good-bye, old fellow!" said Potter and Greene together, at the gates.

They commiserated Coker sincerely. They were sorry he was sacked, sorry he was going. Coker's study would be a poor, penurious place without Coker. The horn of plenty had run dry. Obviously, Aunt Judith's hampers, cakes, and other good things, would not continue to stream into that study when Coker was no longer there. Only one thing could have consoled Potter and Greene for the departure of their friend—had Aunt Judy adopted them as beloved nephews in Horace's place. That was not likely to happen. So it was probable that Potter and Greene would be inconsolable.

Coker looked at them. He had not

deigned to answer Wharton; but he condescended to enlighten his study-mates.

"That's all right," he said. "I'm not going."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"I mean," explained Coker, "I'm coming back."

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"They've got me!" said Coker bitterly. "A fellow expects his friends to stand by him at a pinch. My friends have not stood by me."

Potter and Greene could only stare. They had refrained from taking part in the capture of Coker—whether moved by friendship, or by a wholesome dread of Coker's hefty punch. But certainly it had not occurred to them that Horace expected them to back him up in warfare with the headmaster. Really, that was putting friendship to a rather severe strain.

"Not that I blame you," said Coker magnanimously. "You haven't much pluck. You're rather noodles. I've often told you so. But it's all right. I'm coming back."

"Come on, Coker," hinted Wingate.

Coker paused.

He was, at the present moment, one heap of casualties. He was not in a state to fight six prefects all at once. But his fighting spirit was reviving. With a few friends to help him—

"Look here, Potter and Greene, lend me a hand—"

Potter and Greene suddenly remembered an engagement elsewhere. They vanished behind the crowd.

Wingate pulled at Coker's arm.

"Come on!"

"Take your paw off me, you Sixth Form pig!" said Coker disdainfully.

But he came on. There was no help for it. He gave one glance back at the breathless crowd in the gateway.

"See you again soon!" he called out.

And he was gone.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

What Did Bunter Know?

"COMING back!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Coker—coming back!"

Sacked, but coming back! Great pip!"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, the entertainment is not yet over," said Skinner cheerily. "The show will be resumed after the interval."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Greyfriars generally had expected that the matter would be at an end once Coker was nailed and walked out of the school. But with a fellow like Coker you never really knew what to expect.

Coker had said that he was not going, and it was only after a terrific resistance that he had gone. He had said that he was coming back, and not a man doubted that he would come back if he could. The entertainment, as Skinner put it, was not yet over. Only the first house, so to speak, had come to an end; the second house was to follow.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "Coker takes the cake! He prances off with the jolly old biscuit!"

"The takefulness of the absurd cake is terrific," agreed Hurree Singh.

"Coker means business," chuckled Nugent. "Coker's a man of his word. He'll come back all right."

"What on earth did he punch Prout for, if he's so jolly keen on staying at

Greyfriars?" said Johnny Bull. "He must have known that he'd have to go. Even Coker's got brain enough to know that."

"Did he punch Prout?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"Eh, what? You know he did."

"I thought he did," admitted Wharton. "The evidence was that he did. Everybody takes it for granted. But—"

"The fact is, you men, I'm beginning to have jolly strong doubts," said Harry. "I couldn't make it out when I heard that Coker denied it. He's not the man to deny anything he did, however fatheaded!"

"That's so. But—"

"And this fearful shindy he's been kicking up," went on Wharton. "It's as fatheaded as you like—it's the way a silly ass would carry on, but it's not the way a guilty party would carry on. If Coker really punched Prout, he knows he can't stay here. Kicking up a shindy wouldn't help. He knows that a man who hit his Form master would have to go."

"But he did hit him—"

"The question is, did he?" answered Wharton. "He hung on after being sacked. Now he says he's coming back. But even Coker's got sense enough to know that there's nothing in it, if he really hit Prout. Then why is he doing it?"

"He's ass enough for anything," suggested Nugent.

"Well, yes. I'm not saying that he's not the biggest idiot that ever was or will be. But if he hit Prout, he's got to go, and he knows it. It begins to look to me as if he didn't hit Prout, after all. He must have some reason for carrying on like this, ass as he is. If he didn't punch Prout, that's a reason—and a good reason. He may expect the truth to come out and see him clear."

"But it's clear enough," said Bob. "Prout thinks Coker punched him. He was punched all right—his nose is a witness to it. There's a nose-witness if not an eye-witness."

"Prout's rather a fathead—between ourselves," said Harry. "And it happened in the dark. Suppose some other fellow had been in the study—"

"Why should he punch Prout, if he was? Nobody but Coker ever had any idea of punching Prout," said Nugent. "Nobody else ever wanted to. Nobody else was idiot enough."

"I know! But"—Wharton paused—"I can't help thinking that the way Coker's carrying on looks as if he thinks he's not had justice. It's a bit thick if a fellow is sacked for something he never did. Of course, it's all his own fault. What settles it is, that he was known to have gassed about punching Prout. He's asked for what he's got. Still, if he never did it, it's awfully hard lines on Coker!"

"Somebody did it," said Johnny Bull. "If not Coker, who?"

Wharton was silent again. It was hard to imagine that there was any fellow at Greyfriars, excepting Coker, who would think of punching a Form master. It was hard to believe, in fact, that even Coker would actually have done it, unless he had taken leave of his senses. Yet Prout's nose had been punched. The state of Prout's nose was irrefragable evidence to that effect.

"I can't make it out," said Harry at last. "But one thing seems jolly clear to me, and that is, that Bunter knows something about it. He's said a lot of things that show that he knows something. If he does, he ought to be made to cough it up."

"Only his gas!" said Johnny Bull. "Bunter's always talking some rot or other!"

"Yes; but it's plain that the fat chump has got something on his mind. I've been thinking it over," said Harry. "It looks to me as if Bunter knows, and is afraid to own up to what he knows. It's on his conscience."

"First time I've ever heard of Bunter having a conscience."

"Well, he's rather a sweep; but if he knows that a man has been sacked unjustly, it's enough to worry a worse fellow than Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "Look here, men! If some other chap, and not Coker, punched Prout, and Bunter knows, he ought to be mad; to speak out. If some fellow is frightening him into keeping it dark, we'll take a hand in the game. Coker's a howling ass, and we've had rows enough with him, but this is a serious matter. Let's go and see Bunter."

"Oh, let's!" assented Johnny Bull.

They looked for Bunter at the school shop, as a matter of course. But he was not there. Then they looked in the Remove passage. They found the Owl of the Remove in his study. It was near tea-time; but Bunter for once did not appear to be thinking of tea. He was seated in the armchair in Study No. 7 with a gloomy shade on his fat brow, and he eyed the Famous Five with lack-lustre eyes as they came in.

"I say, you fellows, is Coker really gone?"

"They've taken him to the station," answered Harry.

"Oh dear!"

"He says he's coming back again!" grinned Bob.

"Oh!" Bunter brightened visibly. "Good! Coker's a beast! He kicked me! You fellows know he kicked me, making out that I was after his cake. Still, it's a rotten shame for a man to be sacked for nothing."

"Nothing?" repeated Bob, with a very keen look at the Owl of the Remove. "What do you mean exactly by that, Bunter?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Do you know for a fact that Coker never punched Prout?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

Bunter looked alarmed at once.

"Oh, really, Wharton! How could I know? You fellows know jolly well that I went to dorm along with the rest of the Remove last night! How could I know what happened in the Fifth?"

"You're making out that you know," said Harry.

"Nothing of the kind," said Bunter hastily. "I keep on telling you that I don't know anything about it. I want that quite clear! My mind is an absolute blank on the subject. If you fellows think—"

"Well, what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. That he knew something, or thought he knew something, was clear. That he had, or thought he had, some knowledge of the subject which he was afraid to reveal was obvious.

"Look here, Bunter, did you go down from the dorm last night?" asked Harry Wharton very quietly.

Bunter jumped.

"I—I— Of course not! Why should I?" he gasped.

"I remember you sat up in bed and asked the fellows if they were asleep," said Wharton, eyeing him. "I remember that, now. Did you go down after we went to sleep?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"If you did, and if you found out anything, cough it up! Can't you see you're bound to speak out when a man's being sacked, if you know anything in his favour!" exclaimed Wharton hotly.

"I—I know!" gasped Bunter. "That's what's been worrying me all day. Oh dear!"

"Then you do know something?"

"Oh, no—nothing!"

"You've been worrying all day about nothing?" roared Bob.

"Oh, yes! Exactly! I say, you fellows, isn't that Squiff calling you in the passage?" gasped Bunter. "I—I wouldn't keep him waiting."

"Will you tell us the truth, Bunter?"

"No fear! I—I mean, certainly, old chap! But—but, I say, wasn't that Mauly calling you?"

"No. Look here, Bunter—"

"The fact is, I don't care to discuss it," said Bunter. "Let it drop. After all, Coker was a beast. He kicked me. Let it drop. If you fellows will clear out, I've got some work to do."

The Famous Five did not clear out. Instead of that, Harry Wharton shut the study door and leaned back on it, fixing his eyes on Bunter's agitated face.

"Now, then," he said tersely, "cough it up!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Cough It Up, Bunter!"

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the ohms of the Remove through his big spectacles with a blink of dismay. Whatever it was on the fat conscience of the Owl which had caused him to throw out mysterious hints he did not want to confide it to the Famous Five.

"I—I say, you fellows," he stammered, "I wish you'd clear off. I've got a lot of lines to do for Quelch."

"They will keep," said Harry. "Did you go down from the dorm after lights-out last night?"

"Certainly not. Besides, suppose I did? A fellow can do as he likes, I suppose. No business of yours," said Bunter warmly. "I didn't, either."

"What did you go down for?"

"Nothing."

"Just for a little walk about the passages in the dark?" asked Bob Cherry, with a sarcastic grin.

"Yes. Exactly—I mean, no! Not at all! Nothing of the kind!" gasped Bunter. "It wasn't dark there—"

"Where?" demanded Wharton.

"Nowhere, old chap! Nowhere at all!"

"Do you mean the Fifth Form passage?"

"Certainly not. If you fellows think I was going down to Coker's study, you're simply making a silly mistake. I never knew that Coker had a cake yesterday."

"A cake!" roared Bob.

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton. "I see now! Bunter was after that cake all day, and he went down after lights-out to try again."

"I didn't!" howled Bunter. "I've told you I didn't. Besides, how was I to know that Coker would be in his study up to bed-time? He never is other nights. I never knew he had a translation to do. I suppose I couldn't guess that the silly ass had fallen asleep over a translation. Not that I went to his study, you know. Nothing of the sort."

"Was Coker asleep when you got to the study?"

"Snoring," grunted Bunter. "If he hadn't been snoring I shouldn't have gone in. Not that I went in, or, in fact, ever went anywhere near the study

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at all, you know. I hope you can take my word about that."

"You—you—you hope that we shall take your word about that!" repeated Wharton dazedly.

"Yes, old chap. I hope I'm a fellow whose word can be taken," said Bunter, with dignity. "Not like some fellows I could name."

"You frabjous ass! You heard Coker snoring, and went in, to bag this cake," said the captain of the Remove. "That's all clear so far. Then what happened?"

"Nothing!" said Bunter promptly. "In the first place, I never went down from the dorm at all! I was fast asleep at the time."

"You heard Coker snoring in his study while you were fast asleep in the Remove dormitory?" asked Bob.

"Oh, no! Yes! I—I mean—"

"Go it! Let's know what you mean?"

"I—I mean—" Bunter stammered helplessly. "Look here, you fellows, if you're trying to make out that I punched Prout you can chuck it! I didn't! I never dreamed that the old ass was coming there at all. I suppose I'm not an idiot like Coker, to think of punching a Form master. Why, I turned out the light—"

Bunter stopped suddenly.

"You turned out the light in Coker's study when you heard Prout coming?"

"No!" gasped Bunter. "You see, I wasn't there!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Besides, what was a fellow to do? Naturally, I thought I might be able to cut and run in the dark. I never meant to touch Prout. But the old ass stood fairly in the doorway, and I biffed into him—"

"I see!"

"It—it was awful!" gasped Bunter dolorously. "The old chump grabbed me, and I tried to get away. Goodness knows how it happened. If I hit him on the nose it was an accident. I was just struggling to get off." It came with

a rush now. "You see, he'd got hold of me, the old donkey, and I had to get away. He would have taken me to Quelch for being out of dorm bounds at nearly ten o'clock. See? I whacked out without thinking. I heard him go down on the floor. I think he fell over something. You can bet I didn't stop to look at him. I just hooked it!"

"Oh!" said the Famous Five. They were following the breathless tale with interest, equally breathless.

"There was nobody in the Fifth Form passage. I got round the corner!" gasped Bunter. "After I was round the corner I heard Prout yolling for help. I got back to the Remove dorm and bunked into bed, of course. I never knew what had happened till this morn— when all the fellows were saying that Coker had punched Prout. Oh dear!"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Coker must have woke up in the dark, you know, when Prout bumped on the floor," groaned Bunter. "The old ass never knew who hit him—he never saw me in the dark, of course. He thought nobody was there but Coker. Of course, that chump having threatened to punch him was what did it. Prout thought he had kept his word. Oh dear!"

Bunter gasped into silence. He seemed to feel a little better now that he had got it off his chest.

The chums of the Remove looked at him in silence. They knew now why Bunter had been worried about Coker. Any fellow, with a tougher conscience than Bunter's, might have been worried in the circumstances.

Coker had been sacked for punching Prout, and it was Bunter who had administered that historic punch! No wonder the Owl of the Remove had been deeply troubled by the fate of the hapless Coker.

"I say, you fellows, I've told you now," mumbled Bunter. "Of course, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,085.

you've got to keep it dark. You made me tell you. Keep it dark."

"Keep it dark!" repeated Wharton.

"Of course! If they knew they'd sack me, instead of Coker. I know it's rotten about Coker of the Fifth being sacked for nothing. It's worried me a lot. You know what a kind-hearted chap I am. Always thinking of others. But, of course, not so bad as me being sacked. That would be serious!"

"You're bound to speak out, Bunter!" said Harry quietly. "You can't let this go on. You wouldn't be sacked. Prout would know jolly well you never meant to hit him—that you just floundered about and landed him in the dark. You'd get let off with a licking."

Bunter glared at the captain of the Remove.

"You silly chump!" he bawled. "Do you think I want a licking?"

"Better than letting a man be bunked for nothing, you fat villain!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You're bound to own up."

"Well, if you think so, you jolly well own up!" hooted Bunter. "You can tell them you were after Coker's cake. So you would have been if you'd have done it for me when I asked you. Only you always were selfish."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Anybody who likes can own up!" said Bunter liberally. "I've no objection. If you think a Remove man would only get a licking—well, all right. What's a licking? One of you fellows go to Prout and own up—"

"You silly owl!" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You've got to own up, you fat fraud."

"Shan't! Besides, I never did it."

"What?" yelled the Co.

"I know absolutely nothing about it. Being fast asleep in the dorm at the time I went to Coker's study, how could I know anything about it? If you fellows think you're going to drag me into it you're jolly well mistaken."

The chums of the Remove did not reply to that. Really, it was a little difficult to know what to reply. Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"If you fellows think a Remove man ought to own up and get Coker off, go and do it," he said. "I'm not stopping you. But don't make out that I know anything about it, when I'm as innocent as a babe."

"You've told us—" shrieked Nugent.

"I—I may have put a case," admitted Bunter cautiously. "I may have used a—a figure of speech. What I really meant to say was that I know absolutely nothing about it, being fast asleep at the time I punched Prout—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I mean at the time I didn't punch Prout," gasped Bunter. "You catch a fellow up so. I never touched Prout, any more than Coker did; and it was an absolute accident, which might have happened to any fellow in the dark, as I've told you. I was never more surprised in my life than when Prout went down on the floor. As for owning up, that's all rot. What is there to own up to, when I know nothing whatever about what happened?"

"Isn't he a prize packet?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Why did they send him here, instead of to a home for idiots?"

"The whyfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! The fact is, I prefer to let the subject drop," said Bunter, with dignity. "You're practically casting doubt on my word."

"Eh?"

"I dare say you don't mean it, but that's what you're doing. You can hardly expect a fellow to like it. Let it drop."

"Oh, fan me!" gasped Bob.

The Famous Five left the study. At this extraordinary conjuncture they simply did not know what to do. To give Bunter away, after they had extracted his secret from him, like a tooth at the dentist's, was hardly possible. But to leave Coker of the Fifth to his fate, now they knew for certain that he had been unjustly sentenced, was quite impossible. Between two impossibilities the chums of the Remove were on the horns of a dilemma; and yet it was clear that something had to be done.

Billy Bunter blinked after them from the doorway of No. 7.

"I say, you fellows!"

Wharton turned his head.

"Well?"

"Keep it dark, you know. And—and remember that I never did it. Bear that in mind."

Harry Wharton & Co. went their way. Evidently this position was one that required careful thinking out.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

More Coker!

MANY eyes watched Wingate and the other prefects when they came back from the station.

They came without Coker, so it was to be presumed that they had seen Coker off, according to instructions.

Wingate went to the Head, to report that Coker had been placed in the train, and that he was gone.

Dr. Locke was glad and relieved to hear it.

The extraordinary proceedings of Coker had caused him a great deal of mental stress; and, worse than that, had caused thrilling excitement throughout the school. Coker, in the Head's opinion, could not be forgotten too soon.

"Then he is gone, Wingate?" said the Head, breathing more freely.

"Yes, sir."

"I trust that he made no—no unpleasant scene, Wingate?"

"He rather objected to getting into the Canterbury express, sir," answered Wingate.

"But you persuaded him?"

"Yes, sir. He was a little excited, but we persuaded him."

Wingate did not think it necessary to explain how he had persuaded Coker. It would only have perturbed the Head to learn that Coker had been hurled bodily into the carriage, and that two prefects sat on him there till the train was starting. Neither was it necessary to mention that as the train glided out of the station the people on the platform were treated to the view of a wildly-excited crimson face staring from a window, a furious fist shaken in the air, and a powerful voice yelling defiance and threats. These details were better omitted in a report to the Head.

"Very good, Wingate!" said Dr. Locke. "I am much obliged to you, Wingate!"

"Not at all, sir!"

And Wingate left the Head in a much more placid frame of mind. The egregious Coker was gone; the whole miserable affair was over and done with. So the Head supposed, at all events. He was to learn shortly that he was taking a little too much for granted.

"Gone!" said Blundell of the Fifth, in the Common-room. He rubbed his nose, which bore now a strong resemblance to Prout's. "Well, thank goodness it's over. Sorry for the silly ass, all the same!"

"He wasn't bad, in his way," remarked Potter. "Fat-headed, you know, and obstinate as a mule, but he had his good points."

"I'm sorry he's gone," said Greene. "We shall miss him in some ways." Perhaps William Greene was thinking of Aunt Judy's hampers. "Still, it will be a bit quieter in the study."

Fitzgerald rubbed an eye that was growing blacker and blacker.

"I'm sorry he's gone, in a way," he said. "I should have liked to give him an eye like this to carry with him, blow him!"

"Oh, he wasn't bad," said Tomlinson. "I believe he's loosened some of my teeth; they feel like a misfit since he jammed his idiotic fist on my jaw. But he was a prize ass, and no mistake! Punching a Form master—"

"Ho was the limit!" said Price.

All the Fifth spoke of Coker in the past tense. They did not know yet that Horace Coker was still in the present tense.

As a matter of actual fact, while the prefects were walking back to Greyfriars Coker was whirling away in the express—and getting out at the first stop.

While Wingate was making his report to the Head Coker was whizzing across country in a hired taxi.

While the Fifth Form were discussing him in the past tense Coker was stepping out of the taxi a dozen yards from the school wall, very much in the present tense indeed.

While all—or nearly all—Greyfriars concluded that the last had been seen of Horace Coker, the indomitable Horace was clambering over the wall of the ancient cloisters and dropping once more within the forbidden precincts of the school.

There was no doubt whatever that Coker was a stickler.

All that had happened at Greyfriars that day Coker regarded, apparently, as a series of bad jokes. So far from being sacked, so far from having gone home, Coker was in his old haunts, and absolutely determined to stick there.

It was Tubb, of the Third Form, who saw him first. Coker had arrived at tea-time, when most of the fellows were either in their studies or in Hall. Tubb of the Third, seeing Coker in the House, stared at him as if he were Coker's ghost. Coker gave him a cuff in passing—for staring at a Fifth Form man. All the disasters that had happened to Coker had not made any difference to the short way with fags on which the great Horace prided himself.

If Tubb supposed that it was Coker's ghost, he was undeceived by that cuff, which proved that Coker was solid flesh—very solid. Tubb of the Third fled—yelling.

"He's come back!" yelled Tubb, as he fled. "Coker! He's come back! He's here! Coker's here!"

The news spread like wildfire.

"Coker back!"

"Coker!"

"Good old Coker!"

Greyfriars rang with it. Fellows of all Forms rushed to and fro, hunting for a sight of Coker.

"Where's Coker?"

"Seen Coker?"

The House echoed with excited inquiries for Coker.

He seemed to have vanished after Tubb had seen him. But as it was now

"The blow was struck in the dark," said Mr. Prout. "Do you mean to imply, Bunter, that some other person was in the study other than Coker, and that you know who it was? Where were you at the time?" "In—the—study, sir!" "What!" The Owl of the Remove trembled from head to foot. (See Chapter 16.)



known that he was in the House, he was run down at last. Studies and passages and Form-rooms, having been drawn blank, the excited searchers tried the dormitories. It was against rules for fellows to go up to the dormitories in the daytime; but that rule was disregarded. And it was in a dormitory that Horace Coker was discovered at last. As soon as it was found that the door of the Fifth Form dormitory was locked on the inside, the fellows knew where the great Horace was, and a buzzing crowd collected outside that door.

"You here, Coker?" yelled Vernon-Smith, through the keyhole.

"Don't yell there, you fags!" came Coker's voice. "What the thump are cheeky fags doing at that door?"

"He's there!"

"Coker's there!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off!" shouted Coker. "Don't kick up a shindy here, you cheeky little sweeps, or I'll come out to you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blundell of the Fifth came on the scene. The expression on Blundell's face was extraordinary. He tried the handle of the door and knocked.

"You there, Coker?"

"Is that Blundell? Yes, I'm here."

"You born idiot!"

"Don't be cheeky, Blundell! Take a message to the Head, will you? Tell him I've come back, and you can mention that I've got my pockets full of grub this time, and it won't be any use any fellows trying to sneak in at the

window. I'm going to nail up all the windows—I've brought a hammer and nails. I'm going to stack all the beds against the door. I'm here to stay."

"You—you—you—" stuttered Blundell.

"Tell the Head that, with my respects."

"You crass idiot!" roared Blundell. "Think you're going to keep us out of our dormitory to-night?"

"I fancy so."

"Why, we—we—we'll—"

"Chuck it, Blundell! Best thing you can do is to try and find out who punched Prout. Then this trouble will be over."

Wingate of the Sixth arrived, and shooed away the juniors. Wingate was in a state of great excitement.

"Is Coker really here?" he asked.

"He's here all right!" answered Blundell. "He's going to nail up the windows, he says, and stack the beds at the door. And he's got a lot of grub. Sticking here till the end of the term, it looks like."

"The mad duffer!"

Wingate knocked at the door.

"Coker! Are you there, Coker?"

"Yes, Wingate. Want anything?"

"Open this door."

"Don't be funny!"

"I shall have to report to the Head that you're here, Coker."

"That's what I want."

"The fellow must be absolutely potty!" said Wingate blankly.

"Potty isn't the word," said Blundell. "He's stark, staring, raving

mad! Mad as a hatter! Mad as a March hare! Madder!"

"Well, my hat!" said Wingate, with a deep breath; and he went away to report to the Head.

It was difficult for Dr. Locke to believe his majestic ears when Wingate reported. He stared blankly at Wingate.

"Did—did—did you say that Coker was—was here?" stuttered the Head. He almost babbled.

"Yes, sir; locked in the Fifth Form dormitory."

"Impossible!"

"I'm sorry to say it's the fact, sir! I've spoken to him—through the door."

"Incredible!" said the Head.

After some cogitation, realising that what was both impossible and incredible had actually happened, Dr. Locke proceeded to the Fifth Form dormitory. He tapped at the door, even yet hardly realising that he really would hear the voice of the expelled senior. But he heard it.

"Hallo!" called out Coker.

"Is—it—is that Coker?"

"Little me, sir!"

"How dare you return here, Coker?" gasped the Head.

"Well, I like that!" said Coker. "What did you expect? If you sack a man for nothing, do you expect him to take it lying down? Be reasonable, sir!"

"Coker, I—I—you—you—" Words failed the Head.

"I'm sorry to find that you haven't

spotted the man who punched Prout yet, sir. Have you tried?"

"I—I refuse to bandy words with you, Coker! I order you to leave Greyfriars! You are a trespasser here!"

"Gammon!"

"What? What did you say, Coker?"

"Gammon!"

"Bless my soul! Coker, if you do not leave the school immediately, the police will deal with you as a trespasser and law-breaker! I shall telephone to Courtfield Police Station for a constable!"

"Better ask them to send more than one, while you're about it, sir. One won't be much use."

"Bless my soul!"

The Head retired. Coker, sacked but unconquered, was left, for the present, in possession of his new citadel. And from end to end Greyfriars buzzed with wild excitement.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Brought Up to the Scratch!

"BUNTER, old bean.

"Chuck it!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Now I want you to understand one thing," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove angrily. "Chuck it! See? I'm fed-up with the subject! I'm tired of it! Let it drop! Leave a fellow alone! Shut up!"

"Coker's come back—"

"I know that. Blow Coker!"

"The Head's going to send for a bobby to shift him—"

"It's not my fault, is it?" said Bunter peevishly. "What's the good of worrying me about it? What about tea?"

"Tea!" ejaculated the Famous Five.

"Yes, I've had practically no tea. Only tea in Hall, and tea with Toddy—and you know what Toddy is. Mean! I'm hungry. I've been disappointed about a postal-order; and so—"

"We'll stand you a spread in the study, if you like," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, good!"

"After you've owned up."

"You silly chump!" roared Bunter.

"Now, look here, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "Try to have a little sense. We can't give you away to the beaks, you know that."

"I should jolly well think so," said Bunter warmly. "I told you about it in confidence. Besides, there's nothing to give away."

"But if you let a man be sacked for what you did, you'll be sent to Coventry by the Remove."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And it's bound to come out, sooner or later. Things always do come out," said Bob Cherry. "Where will you be then?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If it comes out, somehow, that you punched Prout, it will be taken for granted that you punched him on purpose, and you'll be sacked," said Harry. "Can't you see that it's safer to own up, while you've got a chance of owning up and explaining how it really happened?"

"But nothing did happen! I've told you—"

"Prout will be jolly glad to learn that a Fifth Form man never punched him. It lets him down before all the other masters and before all the school. He will be jolly glad to know that it was a Remove chap that did it—by accident—"

"But—but will he believe it was an accident?" gasped Bunter.

"Well, he knows that a junior wouldn't punch a Form master if he could jolly well help it. That stands to reason."

"I—I suppose it does," said Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five—very dubiously, however.

"And the beaks will be bound to

make allowances for a chap who comes forward in a straightforward and manly way and owns up to get another man out of a scrape," said Bob Cherry encouragingly.

Bunter brightened a little.

"Well, that's all right," he agreed. "Straightforward and manly—that's me all over!"

"Oh crikey!"

"You'll get all the credit of having acted decently," said Nugent. "Fellows will think better of you."

"And you'll save your bacon," said Johnny Bull. "What do you think will happen to you if it comes out afterwards that you let a man be sacked for something you knew he hadn't done?"

"The fogfulness would be terrific, and the sackfulness would be an esteemed certainty," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"For your own sake, Bunter, it's safer to own up now while you've got a chance," said Wharton. "Apart from that, you can't do such a rotten thing as to let a man be sacked for nothing. Nobody at Greyfriars would touch you with a barge-pole afterwards."

"I—I—I say, you fellows, of—of course, I'm ready to—own up," gasped Bunter. "I—I've been awfully worried about it, you know. But—but—"

"It's up to you!" said Harry.

"The upfulness is terrific."

"Do the decent thing, Bunter," urged Bob.

Bunter blinked dismally at the Famous Five. They were giving him good advice, and he knew it. But—there was a but—in fact, many buts. Bunter really wanted to do the decent thing. But at the thought of the interview with Prout and the Head his fat heart misgave him. He hesitated dismally.

"We've got at the truth," went on Wharton. "We can't give you away, but we can't keep it dark and let Coker be bunked. Other fellows will get at it sooner or later. When it's the talk of the Form you'll be hauled up before the beaks soon enough. You've got a chance now."

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

"Make up your mind to it, old fat man," said Bob. "It's like a dose of medicine; you'll feel better when you've got it down."

Bunter slowly detached himself from the chair. His fat mind was made up—or almost made up. He got as far as the door of his study, and there he stopped. Wharton took him by the arm and walked him to the staircase.

"Go it!" he said.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Make the plunge, old fat man."

"But—but—"

"But what? You're wasting time."

"But—but what about that spread?" gasped Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you know you said—"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"That's all right! We'll stand you a topping spread after it's over," he said.

"Cake and tarts and buns!"

"Any jam?" asked Bunter cautiously.

"A whole jar!"

"Two-pound jar?"

"Yes, you cormorant—three-pound jar if you like!"

Bunter brightened.

"What about some meringues?" he asked. "Mrs. Mible's got a fresh lot of meringues in to-day."

"A dozen if you like!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm going to Prout! After all, a fellow's bound to



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do the honourable thing!" gasped Bunter. "I always was a sportsman, as you fellows know. I'm going!"

And he went.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Manly of Bunter!

MR. PROUT sat in his study. His face was gloomy. Occasionally he caressed his nose. The more brilliant hues of that nose had faded a little; but it was still remarkable to the view.

Prout was not happy.

True, justice had been done on the rebellious fellow who had punched him. Or, at least, justice was in the process of being done—having been a little thrown out of gear, as it were, by Coker's amazing return to the school, and his entrenching himself in the Fifth Form dormitory. But the severest justice meted out to Horace Coker could not set matters right. Prout's nose, in the course of time, would mend. But that would not set matters right.

What could alter the fact that he, Paul Prout, master of the Fifth, had had his nose punched by a member of his Form?

Nothing!

That fact remained.

In Common-room Mr. Prout had received much sympathy and condolence—most of it barbed. He had detected, or fancied he had detected, lurking smiles on the faces of the other masters.

When there had been trouble in other Forms Mr. Prout had been wont to remark that such things did not happen in the Fifth. Now he knew that the other masters were remarking among themselves that the punching of a Form master's nose never had happened and never could happen in any Form but Prout's Form.

Prout was overwhelmed by the humiliation of the position.

He knew that he could never hold his head up in Common-room again. He knew that he could not again lay down the law there as he had been wont to do. He knew that he could not advise and counsel other masters, in that lofty, patronising way of his, on the management of their Forms. How could he when in his own Form his nose had been punched?

Sitting in his study, Mr. Prout was considering whether he had better hand in his resignation immediately to the Head, or leave quietly at the end of the term. Facing the staff and the school, after what had happened, day after day, was an ordeal from which the ponderous gentleman shrank.

These cogitations and reflections were bitter indeed; and it was no wonder that Prout's brow was overcast with gloom. It was no wonder that when a timid tap came at the door of his study he snapped savagely:

"Go away!"

Tap!

The door opened.

Mr. Prout glared at Billy Bunter of the Remove as if he would eat him. His look was so alarming that Bunter jumped back.

"What is it?" snapped Prout. "What do you want, Bunter?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"Then go!"

"But—but—but, sir—"

"Is it a message from the Head?" snapped Prout.

"Nunno, sir!"

Mr. Prout controlled his feelings. He did not want to pose as a master whose ferocious face scared juniors. His usual pose was quite different from that—

genial, encouraging, benign, almost elder-brotherly.

"Come, Bunter! You may come in. What is it, my boy?" he asked, with a rather forlorn attempt at his old podgy geniality.

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter, a little encouraged. "I—I thought, sir—I—I thought you'd like to know that it wasn't Coker who punched you, sir."

"WHAT!"

"It—it was another fellow, sir, as—as I happen to know—" gasped Bunter. Mr. Prout gazed at him.

His expression was extraordinary. This was the last news he had dreamed of receiving. It was the best news he could have received. It was, in fact, too good to be true.

"Bunter, are you speaking seriously? What do you know about the occurrence? It is true that Coker denied the outrage—and he has hitherto been a truthful boy? Is it possible that a mistake has been made?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"If you know anything, Bunter, it is your duty to acquaint me with it," said Mr. Prout graciously. "I fail to see, however, how you can know what occurred when you were in your dormitory at the time—"

I WONDER HOW THE "MAGNET" IS MADE?

A-ha, chum, you're not the first fellow to voice that! So the programme in a fortnight's time will be of double interest to you, for an expert contributor will tell you all about the making of the MAGNET right from the time that the trees, which are turned into pulp, are felled in the forests of far-away Canada.

Every "Magnetite" will derive interest from this new feature, so look out for the first article—

THE WEEK AFTER NEXT!

"I—I came down, sir—"

"Oh, proceed!"

Bunter opened his mouth, and shut it again. Mr. Prout beamed encouragement at him. He wanted to know. Very much he wanted to know.

"The blow was struck in the dark," he said. "There was, to my knowledge, no one else in the study but Coker. Do you mean to imply, Bunter, that some other person was there, and that you know who it was?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Where were you at the time?"

"In the study, sir."

It was out at last.

There was a silence. Mr. Prout gazed at Bunter. Bunter trembled from head to foot, and wished from the bottom of his fat heart that he was safe back in the Remove passage. But it was too late now.

"You!" gasped Mr. Prout, at last.

"It was an accident, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"An accident!" thundered Prout.

"Ow! Oh dear! Yes, sir! You see, Coker was asleep, and I—I nipped in for—for a lark. Then you came, sir. I—I turned out the light so—so that you shouldn't nab me, sir. Oh dear! And—and then you grabbed me, sir, and—and—and I—I—I just whacked out without thinking, sir. I—I—I never dreamed I should hit you, sir. I—I—I

wouldn't have done it for worlds, sir, I—"

"Upon my word!"

Mr. Prout gazed at the Owl of the Remove.

"And for what reason, Bunter, have you come to me, at the eleventh hour as it were, to make this statement?"

"I—I thought it would be straightforward, sir, and—and manly," gasped Bunter. "It worried me a lot, sir—Coker being bunked for nothing—and—and being straightforward and—and manly, sir—"

Bunter's voice trailed off.

"You will come with me and repeat your statement to the Head, Bunter," said Mr. Prout, at last.

"Yarooogh!"

"You need not be alarmed, Bunter. You have acted in a very manly and meritorious way in admitting the truth," said Mr. Prout. "I shall use my best endeavours to induce the Head to overlook the matter."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He did not fully grasp Prout's reasons. He was not aware that Prout could actually have hugged him at that moment in his joyful relief. Bunter was nobody; the punch was nothing, so long as it had been accidental, and not administered with malice aforethought by a member of Prout's Form.

Prout looked ten years younger.

His nose had not been punched in the Fifth. He was not a Form master who had been struck in his Form. He could hold his head as high as ever in Common-room; he could look all Greyfriars and the whole world in the face. A frightened junior had jabbed his nose in the dark—that was quite a different matter.

Prout beamed.

Bunter did not understand. But his fat face beamed also. He saw that it was, anyhow, all serene.

He was quite brisk as he trotted beside the ponderous Prout to the Head's study.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Pardoned!

GREYFRIARS had been thrilled and amazed by the affair of Coker, the sacking of Coker, and the refusal of Coker to accept the sack.

It was still more amazed by the outcome of the affair.

Fellows could scarcely believe their ears.

Coker had not punched Prout. It was a Remove fag who had punched Prout—a fag who had sneaked down from his dormitory for some lark in Coker's study that night, had been collared by the Fifth Form master, and jabbed Prout's boko accidentally in struggling to escape. Coker hadn't done it. He had said he hadn't, and it was so. Merely an accident had happened to Prout's nose—the greatest thrill in the history of Greyfriars had been, after all, an unfounded thrill. It hadn't a leg to stand on.

Coker, of course, was fully exonerated. In view of the fact that he had been expelled in error, his expulsion, of course, was rescinded. He came out of the Fifth Form dormitory cleared and pardoned, still a member of the Greyfriars Fifth. The Head judiciously overlooked Coker's rebellious truculence in refusing to go. Had he gone the Head could scarcely have done anything but recall him, in view of the facts that had come to light. So it was, after all, rather fortunate that he had not gone.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,065.

WOLVES of the SPANISH MAIN!

By
ERNEST McKEAG.



They thought they had seen the last of the Chevalier when they sent him to the sharks. But they hadn't—not by a long way! And the sharks went away as hungry as they came!

How the Chevalier Walked the Plank!

ONE-EYE rose from his seat and flourished his fist.

"Rat ye, lad, but ye speak mighty free now," he said. "Then shall ye rot i' this foul hole till ye come to your senses, for I swear that the chart shall be mine! Lie there, rat, and starve and taste the tortures o' thirst! Rip me, but I'll bring ye to a more reasonable frame o' mind!"

He snatched up the lanthorn and passed through the door of the hole in which Roger was incarcerated, leaving the lad wondering what his plan could be. He had not long to wait before One-Eye appeared again, this time bringing with him an earthenware vessel filled with water and a crust of bread. These he placed upon the floor at a distance that was just too far for Roger to reach, for the heavy chain that was fastened around his waist allowed him but little space to move. Then One-Eye placed the lanthorn by the water and bread, and halted in the door to fire a parting shot at the helpless lad.

"There be food and drink!" he said. "When ye come to your senses and tell me what I would learn they shall be yours. Till then, learn ye the tortures

of hunger and thirst, and rot ye if ye speak not."

One-Eye then disappeared, leaving Roger to his own sorry reflections. How long he had been unconscious the lad knew not, but already he had fallen a prey to thirst, and he knew full well that these tortures would continue.

Furthermore, he knew full well that he could hope for no mercy from One-Eye. Once that scoundrel had the chart he would make short work of both the Chevalier and Roger.

The young adventurer gazed around, for he knew that he must find a more secure hiding-place for the chart and the papers than that afforded by his shirt.

He judged the hole in which he was to be in the bows of the vessel, low down below the water-line. Near where he lay he caught sight of a broken board in the deck, and, crawling painfully to it, found that by levering with his fetters he could prise it up a little, revealing a small space between the deck board and the one below it. Here he placed the chart, finding yet a little consolation in the fact that it was safer there than upon him. Then he settled down to wait whatever the future might bring.

Time passed uncounted, and the tortures which he was undergoing in-

creased steadily. The very nearness of the life-giving water, for which he craved, nigh drove him frantic, and time and again he was seized by a madness that made him tear at his fetters as though he would break them and fall upon the water which seemed to mock him with its nearness. But the fetters were strong, and they held him securely.

One-Eye came at intervals to taunt him, but Roger would not speak to the rogue, nor suffer a cry to escape him when One-Eye kicked him savagely, hoping to bring from him an appeal for mercy. But a great weakness assailed the lad, and he wondered whether his strength might not give way beneath this torture, and his lips cry, unwillingly, the secret of the chart's hiding-place.

It was the patience of One-Eye which gave way first, however. Nearly a score of times had he visited Roger; but the lad would not betray the secret which he kept securely locked in his bosom.

"So be it, then, my turkey-cock!" he said at last, when, after taunting Roger unsuccessfully for some considerable time, he could get no clue from him. "Then to-night shall the Chevalier meet his doom. Ye shall see him go, lad; see him struggle in his death throes 'ere the sharks drag him down!"

He went to the door, and raised his voice to a shout:

"Hi, come ye here, Lop-ear!"

Footsteps shambled towards the door, and then the pale light of the lanthorn glimmered on the crafty features of Lop-ear.

"Strike off the fetters, Lop-ear!" commanded One-Eye. "Bring the whelp to the deck, and mark it that he shows no fight!"

Roger could have smiled at the words. Show fight! Right readily would he have done so, if he could, but he was so weakened by his long imprisonment and his lack of food that he scarce could move as the fetters were struck from his chafed wrists and ankles. He was helpless as a babe, and had it not

been for Lop-ear dragging him out of his hole, along the hold of the vessel and up the companion-ladder which gave on to the deck, he could not have moved.

But his degradation was not yet complete. Lop-ear threw a rope around his wrists and triced him to the main mast. Then the scoundrel stripped off the lad's shirt, at which Roger was glad that he had hidden the chart below. One-Eye superintended the tying of Roger to the mast, taking care that the lad should be secured in such a fashion that he could see where the plank had been rigged.

Darkness had already fallen, and the guttering lanthorns sent their ghostly rays playing on the savage faces of the assembled cut-throats.

"Ye shall see the Chevalier go to his doom, lad!" One-Eye chuckled grimly. "An' ye can reflect, as ye see it, that your lips could give the word that would set him free." He turned to several of his cut-throat crew who hung around near by. "Bring up the shark's meat!" he ordered.

In a few moments the Chevalier was hauled roughly on deck. Gone was his neat and spruce appearance; for he, like Roger, had been stowed away in the bilges of the vessel. Yet the Chevalier bore himself as a noble and gallant fighter, nor did he give one sign that he cared that doom hung so closely over him. He bowed to Roger, and the lad saw that there was a smile on his lips. The Chevalier would meet death as he had lived—smiling and still confident!

"Look, ye scum!" roared One-Eye, fetching the back of his hand across the Chevalier's face. "The plank be ready; the sharks be waiting, for I ha' thrown fresh meat o'erboard for the last two days to lead them on. Ye shall scream and squirm, Chevalier, ere ye go to your last reckoning! An' ye can go to it knowing that I will rip the heart out o' this whelp an' he tells me not where the chart is hidden! Your death shall be a joyful one compared to what lies in store for him an' he speaks not!"

"Heed not his words, Chevalier, for I shall not speak and betray your trust!" broke in Roger.

"Gallant lad!" said the Chevalier. "Trust this gallows-rat not, Roger, lad, for your doom is sealed the moment ye speak!"

"Silence!" shrieked One-Eye; and once again his hand fell heavily across the Chevalier's mouth. "Say now, will ye speak and tell me where the chart is hidden? For I shall ha' it, Chevalier—I shall ha' it!"

"Not this side o' the grave, One-Eye!" was the calm reply. "An' I must die, and the lad must die, still, dying, we will take our secrets with us!"

"Cut loose the bonds that bind his hands!" cried One-Eye to his men. "I would fain see him struggle ere he be dragged under. Stand by him, Lop-ear, and ye, too, Lomez, for he be the very devil incarnate! Ha' your cutlasses ready!"

The Chevalier was seized by three of the pirate crew. They were taking no chances, and it was not until the Chevalier was shoved on to the plank that Lopez cut the ropes that bound his wrists.

Resistance was useless, for all around the plank where it jutted out from the bulwarks stood the pirates, cutlasses and pikes in hand, ready to plunge them into the Chevalier should his steps falter.

One-Eye drew his pistols and levelled them

"Away wi' ye, Chevalier!" he stormed. "The sharks are waiting!"

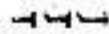
"I shall not keep them waiting long!" was the Chevalier's answer. "Adieu, Roger, lad, and ne'er let your lips disclose the secret they hold!"

"Still his cackling tongue!" yelled One-Eye; and one of the pirates, leaning out over the bulwarks, made a lunge at him with a pike.

The pike, however, did not strike the Chevalier; for, with a mocking gesture, he raised his hand lightly, and kissed his finger-tips mockingly to One-Eye ere he took the last pace that plunged him from the sight of Roger and sent him hurtling to the sharks below!

There came a mighty splash; and then the air was rent with a scream as though of a man in direst agony.

Roger, sick unto death, hung by his hands from the mainmast, the last cry of the Chevalier ringing in his ears. So the sharks had got him, and Roger was alone—alone amidst these cut-throat gallows-rats, who would show him no more mercy than they had shown to the ill-fated Chevalier!



How Roger's Luck was Followed by Misfortune!

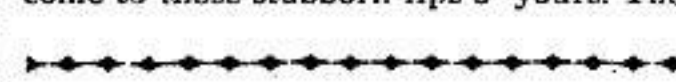
"WELL, my bully boy, an' how like ye that? Would ye, too, be shark's meat?"

Roger, who had closed his eyes tightly, as though he would shut out from his sight the whole evil scene, opened them again to see One-Eye thrusting his face forward into his own. An evil leer spread across it from ear to ear, and the solitary eye glittered like a serpent's.

"Ye heard his scream!" went on One-Eye. "'Tis few men who do not quail when the sharp teeth o' a shark bite deep into their flesh! Ay, lad, but I ha' been merciful to him to what I will be to ye an' ye tell me not where the chart is I seek!"

"I'll tell ye naught!" panted Roger. "Do wi' me what ye will. This tongue o' mine shall not betray my trust."

"We shall see, lad—we shall see," growled One-Eye, and he chuckled in a manner to make Roger's flesh creep and his blood to seem to freeze in his veins. "Ye shall stay there the night, and when morning dawns let's see if the lash shall make cries for mercy come to those stubborn lips o' yours. The



HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

Spurred on by the call of the sea and tales of treasure on the Spanish Main, young Roger Bartlett sets out for the seaport of Fotheringham. He is nearing his destination when he overhears two pirates named Abednigo One-Eye and Slim plotting the death of the owner of a nearby house. Roger warns the man before the scoundrels can carry out their murderous design. Mortally wounded in the fight that follows, the stranger hands over to Roger a sealed packet, charging him to take it to a man known as "The Chevalier." The latter proves to be a fashionably-dressed gallant who makes the discovery that the packet contains the chart of an island on which great treasure lies buried. One-Eye and Slim are determined to get their hands on the chart at all costs, and, four days after the Chevalier's schooner sets sail for the Spanish Main, it is attacked by the pirates' evil craft. Despite their gallant fight against overwhelming odds, the Chevalier and Roger are made prisoners and taken aboard the sea-wolves' barque, the schooner being left in the charge of Slim. Unknown to the pirates, the Chevalier has handed the chart over to his young comrade. After a vain search, Abednigo One-Eye offers the lad his freedom and a share in the treasure if he will divulge the whereabouts of the plan. "Ere my tongue should tell ye aught," replies Roger. "I would rather tear it out!"

(Now read on.)

lash, lad! Think ye o' that whilst ye hang there!"

He turned abruptly away, and his voice rang out as he shouted orders to his gang. The plank was drawn in-board; the pirates shambled off to where the lights of the fore-castle shone on the darkened deck. The lanthorns that had shed their fitful rays o'er the scene were taken away, and darkness wrapped the barque in velvet pall. Roger heard One-Eye chuckling to himself, and then the chuckles gave place to that chant of his:

"Where the dead man lies, his staring eyes,
Look out to the Westward—ho!
And none can tell where the dead men—"

A door clanged and the chant was heard no more. Silence descended upon the deck, and Roger was left to his misery and his thoughts. Had his sufferings been great before, they were increased tenfold now; for, in addition to his weakness and the tortures of thirst and hunger, he was nigh fainting with the pain of the position in which he had been triced to the mast, and his body hung heavily from his wrists and swayed with the motion of the ship.

Roger feared that before the morning he would be dead, for it seemed that he could no longer suffer the tortures that were his lot. Far better would it have been had he, too, been flung to the sharks. Far better that excruciating torture as the sharks ripped him limb from limb.

Occasionally he heard footsteps as a pirate walked the deck, and then the silence fell again, to be broken only by the plash of waters, the rustling of the wind, and the sigh of the sails and shrouds above him. Then Roger started suddenly, and became aware that someone had crept up silently behind him.

Who it was he could not see, for he could hardly muster strength to move, so weak was he. But he heard the sound of breathing behind him, and it brought terror to him. Was he to die by knife-thrust, then—knife-thrust delivered from behind, so that he might not even have the satisfaction of seeing his opponent?

"Who is there?" he called. "What want ye? Ha' ye come to dispatch me?"

"Sh! Make no sound!" whispered a voice, and Roger was greatly amazed.

For the voice was not that of a man. It was a soft voice—a voice that was almost as gentle as a woman's! With great difficulty he swung himself around, so that he caught a glimpse of the soft-footed figure that had crept up behind him under cover of darkness. And then he had the greatest difficulty in suppressing a cry of surprise, for here was no pirate, but a boy! A boy, too, of tender years!

Roger judged that he could be no more than twelve years of age, and he was small and ill-nourished. He was clad in rags, and his face, upon which the moon shone softly, was almost ghost-like in its pallor. In one hand he clasped a knife, and even as Roger marked this, the boy slashed at the ropes which held Roger to the mast. The ropes fell apart, and Roger would have dropped had not the newcomer caught him and supported him with great difficulty. Then in silence the boy set to work with a key to free Roger of his fetters, a task he accomplished in a few moments.

Roger rubbed his cramped wrists, and there was a look of bewilderment upon THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,085.

his face as he turned his gaze on the newcomer.

"Who be ye?" he gasped in a whisper.

"Speak not yet," answered the lad. "Come, I will guide ye to a hiding-place; for I know every plank of this foul craft!"

He beckoned Roger to follow him, and, greatly wondering, Roger allowed himself to be led along the deck and down a companionway, his companion halting ever and anon to listen, lest their footsteps should have betrayed them. Into the deepest depths of the darkened hold the boy led Roger, and then he whispered cautiously:

"Wait ye here until I return."

Roger would have questioned him further, but the lad slipped away in the darkness, leaving Roger alone, his brain a riot with the curiousness of this proceeding. For how long he waited he knew not, but soon the glimmer of a lanthorn told him that his helper was returning. Nor did he come empty-handed, for he brought with him bread and water, upon which Roger fell to with an avidity that only one who has been denied these things for countless time can possess.

"Who be ye, boy?" asked Roger, when his hunger and thirst had been appeased.

"They call me Jem," was the boy's reply. "'Tis the only name I ha' known. I be a powder-boy aboard this craft, and I ha' watched my chance to help ye since ye ha' been aboard, for it pained me to see how ye ha' been treated."

"How came ye here?" was Roger's next question.

"I ha' been aboard o'er since I can remember," was the amazing reply. "An' many is the time I ha' tried to escape, for I ha' no love for such doings as happen here. 'Tis naught but blood and sudden death, an' who knows but that my time might not come? 'Tis in the hope that ye ha' friends that will search for ye an' save ye, that I ha' freed ye, for was it known what I ha' done, my skin would pay for't! I ha' hopes to escape one day, an' if ye will help me, then swear it now, an' I will do all in my power to aid ye hide aboard—ay, an' bring ye food and water, too!"

A gleam of hope came into Roger's heart. He had not thought to find a friend aboard the pirate craft, much less such a one as this. If this lad could, indeed, help him to remain hidden, then might it not be that they

could both escape the toils of One-Eye and his minions? His hand went out

"Here's my hand o'ut, Jem!" he said. "I owe ye much for this night's work o' yours, and ye shall not find me fail ye. Keep me hidden until such time as we can get ashore, and then, Jem, will I pledge myself right readily to aid ye."

And there, in the flickering light of the lanthorn, the two swore to aid each other, and Roger Bartlett made the acquaintance of one whose future was to be bound up so much with his own!

WHO PUNCHED PROUT?

(Continued from page 25.)

Bunter came through with flying colours.

The punch was admittedly an accident. Prout, the person most nearly concerned, was the most eager of all to proclaim that it had been an accident. He would have admitted or proclaimed almost anything in his keenness to demonstrate that he was not a master whose nose had been punched.

Bunter having taken the risk of owning up in such a manly way was pardoned. That reward was felt to be due to his manliness.

There was another reward equally gratifying to Bunter—a handsome and extensive spread in No. 1 Study in the Remove. Justice having been done all round, Bunter did justice to the spread.

Horace Coker's troubles in the Fifth Form were not perhaps over. Suetonius and other matters presented the same old difficulties to Coker's powerful brain. Prout never somehow seemed to be satisfied with his construe. And even in simple matters of spelling he continued to find fault with Coker.

But if Coker sometimes in the games study made bitter and sarcastic remarks about Prout, he never, never again uttered a threat to punch Prout. He still talked too much. Being Coker he could not help that. But even Coker had learned a lesson, and he dismissed from his mind for ever the mere possibility of punching Prout. Never again, so far as Horace Coker was concerned, was Greyfriars likely to be agitated by the thrilling question, "Who Punched Prout?"

THE END.

(There will be another topping long story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, chums, entitled: "THE FORM MASTERS' FEUD!" You can only make sure of reading it by ordering your MAGNET well in advance.)

The boy Jem was as good as his word.

On the following day Jem told Roger how One-Eye had discovered that he was gone. One-Eye, suspicious against all his pirate crew, had endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to find out how Roger had so mysteriously vanished. He had bethought him that one of his men, anxious to learn the hiding-place of the chart, had freed Roger, learned from him the secret, and had then dispatched him and thrown his body to the sharks.

Thus was suspicion sown in the heart of the crafty One-Eye, and Roger chuckled as he thought of the surprise that would one day be the pirate's lot when he discovered that Roger was alive and well.

Days passed, and Roger remained like a rat, skulking in the bilges of the ship by day, and seeking a breath of air by night, when the pirate ship was wrapped in silence. 'Twas Jem who told him when it was safe to creep up to the deck and drink deep of the fresh air, and as night followed night Roger crept silently and lay on deck, hardly daring to breathe lest he betrayed his presence.

But as days passed and he was still undiscovered, Roger became more daring, until one night, as he lay by the bulwarks, disaster o'ertook him!

He had dozed off, lulled by the gentle rocking of the barquo as it scudded through pleasant seas, and he had not marked the approach of footsteps. He awoke suddenly to a realisation of his position as feet struck him, and a man stumbled over him and rapped out an oath.

The next moment Roger found himself seized by the shoulder and dragged out of the shadow, so that the light of the moon played on his face.

"The lad we thought had gone!" cried the man who had discovered him. "Sink me, but 'tis he! Hi! The watch! Come quick!"

Roger's heart sank within him, and he sought desperately to escape the grip of Lop-Ear—for 'twas he who held him! But the grip was one of iron, and Roger could not tear himself free from it.

(What terrible fate is in store for Roger Bartlett now that he has fallen into the hands of the pirates again? Next week's instalment of this gripping tale of the Spanish Main will keep you thrilled from beginning to end. See that you read it, chums.)

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