

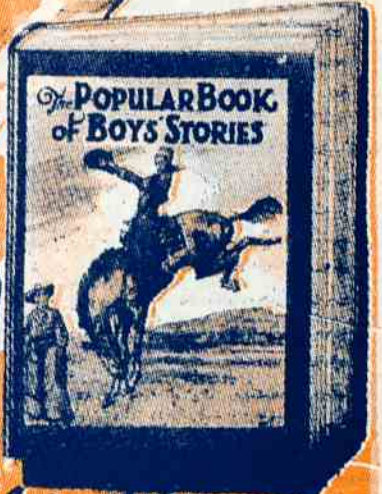
"PROUT'S LOVELY BLACK EYE!"

This week's sensational story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

The **MAGNET** 2^d



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Come Into the Office, Boys!

Here your Editor is pleased to answer questions and discuss topics of general interest. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

I HAVE received a letter this week from "A Loyal Magnetite," who asks me for information regarding the ill-fated liner Titanic, the sinking of which horrified the whole civilised world over eighteen years ago, and which was recently used as the subject of a British talking Picture. He asks if there is another liner as big as she was. Yes, up to the time of writing there are five ships larger than the Titanic was. Her gross tonnage was 46,328, whereas the present Majestic is 10,300 tons greater. But the Titanic was the largest vessel in the world at the time she met with disaster, which was April 15th, 1912. She carried 2,224 people aboard her, including the crew, and when she hit an iceberg and sank, no fewer than 1,513 people were drowned.

She was commanded by Captain Smith, and was sunk in such deep water that salvage was impossible. She was on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York at the time, and belonged to the White Star Line. I trust this is the information my chum requires.

Incidentally, whoever made the film, doesn't apparently know

HOW A SHIP SINKS.

For instance, the film shows the bridge under water while, at the same time, the boat deck was not completely covered, and the ship was shown as settling down on what was practically an even keel. Actually a ship, when she is sinking in deep water, tilts up to a tremendous angle, and often stands almost vertically for a fraction of a second before she takes her last swift slide under the surface. So, you see, there is not much chance of escape for anyone left on board at the time. Furthermore, a sinking ship creates a tremendous vortex which drags down everything within reach, so that even the strongest of swimmers have no hope of getting clear. Only those who have seen a ship sink under such conditions can have a clear idea of the terrible catastrophe involved.

WHILE we are on about the sea, "A Reader," who hails from Liverpool, asks me what are the average and the greatest depths of the ocean. The greatest depth is 32,089 ft. in the Pacific, off Mindanao. The mean depths of all the seas of the world is over 12,000 ft., while the mean height of the surface of the land above sea level is only 2,300 ft.

The next letter in my mail-bag comes from a girl reader, who lives at Bath, and sends me a most interesting account of her home city. Miss Lorna Williams—that is her name—tells me that she prefers the MAGNET to any girls' paper, and I don't blame her. In fact, she says

so many complimentary things about our paper that I haven't quite got over my blushes!

Anyway, Lorna doesn't think that boys are conceited! She says that the average boy is too fond of a good joke to think too much about himself. Thanks, Lorna! I am sure my boy chums will be glad to know that they have a champion amongst girls! I enjoyed your letter immensely, and I know myself what a beautiful old-world city Bath is, for I have spent many happy hours there.

I have received a letter this week from

AN AMBITIOUS READER

who wants to become an electrical engineer. This is a highly skilled and technical calling, and it depends entirely upon my chum himself as to what position he will reach in his work. Frank Phillips, the chum in question, hails from Llanely, and he should immediately get into touch with the nearest technical school in his neighbourhood. They will be pleased to give him full particulars of the courses he must study, and the cost of tuition. After that, of course, he must stick in at his work and learn as much as he can, for it depends upon his aptitude and his ability whether he advances or remains in the lower grades. A hard-working, painstaking chap can make a big success of himself in this line.

JUST while I got a breather, have a chuckle at this joke, which well deserves the first-class pocket knife which I have sent to Sidney Keight, of 39, Maidstone Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, who submitted it.

PASSING THE COMPLIMENT!



Judge: "Speeding, eh? How many times have you been in front of me?"

Motorist: "Never, your honour. I've

often tried to pass you, but my car will only do fifty!"



Now we'll return to John Hinchy, of Cork, who sets me the following puzzler: A man walks along a passage which is 15 ft. wide, and carries a ladder which is 30 ft. long. A second passage opens off at right angles, and the man has to negotiate the ladder around the corner. What is the minimum width of the second passage?

I must confess that this got me guessing! However, I didn't feel like going out to borrow a thirty-foot ladder and then

start experimenting in the passage of Fleetway House, so I tried to work it out on paper. As far as I can see, the second passage should be 7½ ft. wide, which would allow the ladder to go round on the level. Of course, if the ladder was tilted, it could go into an even narrower passage. However, my chum said nothing about the height of the passage. Obviously, if the passage was over 30 ft. high, the ladder could be carried round the corner upright in the space of a few inches!

Here is an interesting yarn I came across the other day. Would you believe that this could happen?

A FLEET OF SHIPS CAPTURED BY CAVALRY!

On the face of it, it looks ridiculous—yet it actually occurred! This was when France and the Netherlands were at war, and the entire Dutch fleet were in the Zuyder Zee. It was a very hard winter, and before the fleet could set sail the Zuyder Zee was frozen over, and the ships were held fast. A number of French Hussars came along, and, although the warships were powerful, they could not be moved. The cavalry charged and finally captured the fleet in what was surely the most amazing naval battle in history!

By the way, let me put you wise to the fact that both the "Holiday Annual" and the "Popular Book of Boy's Stories" are selling like hot cakes. Order your copies before it's too late!

JUST to finish up, read this clever limerick which has been sent in by Miss Y. S. Olsen, of 8, Bradstock Road, S. Hackney, E.9. She's got a splendid leather pocket wallet for it—and I don't want you to forget that I've still got plenty of wallets left for those who send along good limericks!

One day Harry Wharton & Co.
On a picnic were planning to go.
While the tuck was discussed,
To the keyhole was thrust
A fat ear—Bunter's first in the know!

There's a treat in store for you next week, chums! Frank Richards has written one of the best yarns that have ever come from his pen. It's entitled:

"WHO PUNCHED PROUT?"

and is the sequel to the yarn appearing in this issue. It will keep you chuckling—and interested—from the time you pick it up until you put it down again. Don't forget to let me know what you think of Frank Richards' latest yarns when next you write to me.

Let me know, too, what you think of our great soccer serial: "UP, THE ROVERS!"

Personally, I think that every yarn John Brearley writes is finer than the last, and this latest yarn of his is everything you could wish for. There'll be another "Greyfriars Herald" next week, to say nothing of "Old Red's" weekly talk and another snappy poem by the Greyfriars rhymester.

If you've got questions you want to ask, send them along and I'll deal with them in due course in this little weekly chat of mine.

YOUR EDITOR.

TOPPING PRIZES
WAITING TO BE WON!

Send along your joke or your Greyfriars limerick—or both—and win our useful prizes of pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives. All efforts to be sent to: c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

WANTED: ONE POUND OF STEAK FOR—

PROUT'S LOVELY BLACK EYE!



A Roaring Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., the cheery chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

him out but dimly. Prout peered at them in the fog.

"Oh! Ah! Is that the way to the House? This detestable fog came on so suddenly. Groooogh!" Prout coughed, puffed, and blew. "I believe I have quite lost my bearings. Grooh!"

"Keep with us, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"Are you sure you are right?" asked Mr. Prout. "I fancy you are going towards the chapel! Groooogh! Can you see the lights of the House, Wharton?"

"No, sir!"
"I think you are going in the wrong direction. You had better follow me," said Prout. "This you—this way."

The portly figure vanished in the fog again.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not follow. They were absolutely certain that they were heading for the House; but they were pretty sure that Prout wasn't.

"Keep on!" murmured Bob. "I believe Prout's heading for the Cloisters. His body will be found in the morning. Come on!"

The juniors chuckled, and kept on. Bump!

"Ow!" roared Johnny Bull. "What the thump—"

"I've run into some silly ass! Ow! Oh, my hat! It's a tree! Ow!"

Johnny Bull rubbed his nose ruefully. "Hurt?" asked Nugent.

"Ow! No! I'm doing a song and dance just for amusement!" answered Johnny Bull, with withering sarcasm.

"Ow. ow! Wow! My nose! Wow!"

"Keep to the path!" said Bob. "My hat! I believe we're off the path!" He stooped and groped. "We're treading on grass!"

"Must be near the fountain, then," said Nugent.

"The Sixth Form green, more likely."

"Oh, my hat!"

"O where and O where can we be?" sang Bob Cherry.

The fog did not seem to have any depressing effect on Bob's exuberant spirits.

"Hold on!" said Wharton. "Better stop till we get our bearings. Perhaps Prout was right, after all. Shout, and somebody may hear us."

"Fancy being lost in our own giddy quad!" said Bob Cherry. "This is some fog, and no mistake! A London particular is a joke to it."

"Shout!" said Harry.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. His voice boomed and echoed in the masses of fog.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Mistake in the Fog!

"**B** I'll think, isn't it?" gasped Bob Cherry. "The thickfulness is terrific!"

"Keep together!" said Harry Wharton.

It was thick; there was no doubt about that.

The fog had rolled in from the sea, and it covered Greyfriars like a blanket. It was misty in the House, where many lights burned, though it was not yet sunset. In the old quadrangle it was more than misty. It was almost like soup.

Fellows coming in had to feel and grope their way by paths, well known at other times, now dim and strange. Most of the fellows were indoors; but those who had been out when the fog rolled inland had to get in somehow. Among them were Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove.

The Famous Five groped in at the gates, and caught a glimmer of light from Gosling's lodge. To get to the House from that point ought to have been easy, for they knew every inch of the way; in fact, they would have expected to be able to find their way blindfold. Now, however, they were practically blindfold in the fog, and found that they couldn't.

They slowed down when the glimmer from Gosling's lodge vanished, and round them was nothing but dim fog.

"Stick to this path," said Johnny Bull. "If we get off it, goodness knows where we shall arrive!"

"I'll be jolly glad to arrive somewhere," said Frank Nugent. "Hark! There's somebody!"

A sound of snorting, not unlike the blowing of a grampus, came through the fog. It was quite near the juniors, but they could not see the gentleman who snorted. But they guessed who it was.

SENSATION! Prout's got a black eye;

It's a beautiful shade of art blue!

Now somebody's punched him, oh, my!

He's ashamed to emerge into view.

Who could now have biffed poor old Prout?

Frank Richards will tell you the culprit;

In this sparkling yarn he'll let out

The secret; read on—it's well worth it!

"That's Prout!" said Bob Cherry. "I'd know his snort anywhere! He's lost in the jolly old fog."

"Bless my soul!" came the voice of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. "Goodness gracious! This is—is unparalleled! Grooooh!"

"This way, sir!" called out Harry Wharton.

"What—what? Who is that?"

"Wharton, sir! This way to the House!"

A portly figure loomed up. Mr. Prout, in coat and hat, puffing and blowing, dawned on the Removites. Even close at hand they could make

"Hallo!" came back an answering voice, among unnumbered echoes.

"That's Coker's toot!" said Johnny Bull. "That's Coker of the Fifth! Oh, my nose! Ow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Coker!" shouted Bob.

"Hallo!"

Coker of the Fifth loomed up. The big Fifth-Former peered at the juniors and grinned.

"Lost?" he asked.

"The lostfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker!" answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Coker chuckled.

"Just like you silly kids!" he remarked.

"Well, you're lost, too!" snapped Bob.

"Don't you believe it!" said Coker disdainfully. "When I lose my way in a fog, you can use my head for a football."

"Anybody got any use for a wooden football?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be cheeky!" said Coker, frowning. "I've a jolly good mind to leave you here to wander about till morning."

"If you know the way—" said Harry.

"Of course I know the way, you young ass! I was going straight for the House when I heard you calling."

Coker spoke positively. But his positiveness did not quite carry conviction. Coker always was positive, whether in the right or in the wrong. And generally he was in the wrong.

"Look here! Are you sure?" asked Nugent.

"Don't be an ass!"

"Look here, Coker—" said Bob.

"Don't be a fool!"

"My esteemed Coker—"

"Shut up!" said Coker. "I'll see you through. It's up to a Fifth Form man to look after a mob of silly fags, I suppose. Follow me! I tell you I can take you straight to the House."

"When the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch!" quoted Nugent.

"Don't be an idiot! Come on!"

"But—" said Harry dubiously.

Coker snorted.

"Stay there, if you like," he said.

"But if you've sense enough to follow me, I'll take you straight in. This way!"

Coker marched off. Harry Wharton & Co., after a momentary hesitation, followed him. As they were completely at a loss, it did not matter much whether they followed Coker, or groped away by themselves.

"May as well," said Harry. "Keep the silly ass in sight."

And Coker's burly form was kept in sight. Coker strode ahead without hesitation. Coker's confidence in himself was unbounded. It always was.

Several long minutes elapsed, and the House did not come in sight. More minutes followed them. The juniors had had time to cross the quad twice over, and still the House remained unseen. Evidently it was a case of the blind leading the blind.

"Look here, Coker—" began Bob.

"Shut up, Cherry!" came over Coker's shoulder.

"Where the thump are you leading us?" demanded Wharton.

"Don't jaw, Wharton. Stick to me!"

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

"You're just wandering round the quad and we're wandering after you."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's a light!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

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"Oh, good!"

"What did I tell you!" sneered Coker contemptuously. "You silly fags would have wandered about till morning! Follow on, and shut up."

There was a dim yellow glimmer of light through the dense fog. Horace Coker marched on triumphantly towards it. Harry Wharton & Co. followed him. And they arrived at a little diamond-paned window from which the light glimmered; and Coker halted, and ejaculated:

"My hat!"

It was the window of Gosling's lodge. The party, after their wanderings, had arrived at the gates again!

"My hat!" repeated Horace Coker blankly. He was quite surprised by this result.

"You—you—you frabjous owl!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "You've brought us back to the gates—"

"You've led us all round the quad for nothing—" roared Bob.

"You—you—you—" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Hold your tongue, Wharton! I don't want any cheek! I've got my bearings now," said Coker. Coker did not exactly say so, but he left it to be inferred that he had deliberately headed for the gates, in order to get his bearings. Horace Coker was not the man to admit to having made a mistake, especially to a mob of cheeky fags.

"Now, stick to me—"

"Stick to you!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes, and I'll see you through. Come on!"

The Famous Five glared at Coker. For nearly ten minutes they had followed him through dense and clammy fog, and he had led them back to their starting-point. Coker, with undiminished self-confidence, was prepared to lead them again—no doubt with a similar result. But the chums of the Remove had had enough of Coker's guidance.

"Don't hang about there," said Coker, peering at them impatiently. "Just hold your silly tongues, don't cackle, and follow me. This way!"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Nugent.

"What—my hat—hands off! Why, I—I—I'll—" roared Coker, as the exasperated five collared him. "Leggo! Why, I'll smash you! I'll spifficate you! I'll—I'll—Yarooooooop!"

Coker was a hefty fellow, as hefty as any man in the Fifth. He was prepared, at any time, to mop up any number of Lower Fourth fags. Nevertheless, Coker proved quite powerless in five pairs of exasperated hands. Greatly to his surprise, and still more to his wrath, Coker was up-ended, and he came down on the hard, unsympathetic ground with a heavy bump.

Coker's yell rang over the quad, echoing far and wide in the fog.

"Give him another!" gasped Bob.

Bump!

"Whooooop!" roared Coker.

Horace Coker sprawled and roared. The chums of the Remove left him sprawling and roaring, and disappeared in the fog.

"Ow! Ow! Ooooooh!" gasped Coker, sitting up dazedly. "I'll smash 'em! I'll pulverise 'em! I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Coker. He scrambled to his feet, clenched his big fists, and glared round in the fog for the juniors. Vengeance was what Coker wanted, and he wanted it bad. Getting out of the fog, getting into the House, were matters of small moment compared with punishing those cheeky young scoundrels of the Remove as they deserved.

A footfall in the fog came to Coker's

ears. He fairly jumped at it. A dim form loomed up, and Coker hit out.

His knuckles came in contact with an eye.

There was a fall!

Coker was about to hurl himself on this cheeky junior and smack him right and left, when a voice proceeding from his victim almost froze the blood in his veins.

"Upon my word! Ooooooooh!"

Coker started back.

He knew that voice!

It was not a fag. It was not one of the cheeky Removites, as Coker had, in his haste, taken for granted. It was Mr. Prout!

It was Coker's own Form master!

Coker, for an instant, stood rooted to the ground, frozen with horror. Mr. Prout sprawled at his feet spluttering! Coker had hit his own Form master in the eye! Horror and terror and all sorts of unpleasant feelings thrilled Coker from head to foot. He was, for the moment, chained to the spot.

"Bless my soul! Who—what—" Prout was spluttering wildly. "Is that somebody? Have I run into a tree? What—what—who—how— Dear me, I—"

Gosling's door opened. A yellow stream of light glimmered through the fog. Coker fled.

He was not thinking of vengeance on the fags now! He was not thinking of anything but of escaping unrecognised. He had—quite inadvertently, it was true—knocked his Form master down! The inadvertence was not likely to excuse him if Prout recognised him. Like the guests in Macbeth, Coker stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. Gosling came groping from his lodge to the assistance of the spluttering Form master. Long before he reached the spot Coker had faded out of the picture.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Caught in the Act!

"WHO—" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "What—" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove stared in surprise.

They had groped and groped in the blanket of fog. What had become of Coker, of the Fifth, they neither knew nor cared. Of his unfortunate encounter with Mr. Prout they knew nothing. They groped and groped, and stumbled and grumbled, in a fog that was almost like pea-soup, till the clang of a bell guided them in the direction of the House. Some thoughtful master, evidently, had ordered the bell to be rung, as a guide, to weary wanderers in the fog.

The House loomed before the Famous Five at last; but they were not near the door. They arrived on the gravel walk under masters' windows. Before them loomed a study window with a faint glow of light from it, showing that a fire was burning in the room. It was the study of Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form master, untenanted now. Mr. Prout was still out of doors.

At the study window a surprising sight met the eyes of the chums of the Remove.

The lower sash of the window was up. On the sill they had a view of the very last thing they would ever have expected to see on a Form master's window-sill—a pair of check trousers.

For the first moment or two they saw nothing but the trousers. And they stared at them in astonishment.

Then they realised that a man was climbing in at the study window. His head and shoulders were within the room, bent downwards, as if he were groping for a clear space to drop in. Crouched on the sill he presented a view of little more than check trousers.

Those trousers, of a large check pattern, were patched in several places with cloth of different colours, giving them a distant resemblance to Joseph's celebrated coat.

The Removites stared at them blankly.

Such trousers were worn by nobody at Greyfriars. That was an absolute certainty. The man was a stranger to the school, whoever he was; and for a stranger to be entering by a window, in a thick fog, was a fact that explained itself. Evidently the occupant of the check trousers was some sneak-thief, who had taken advantage of the fog to sneak into the precincts of the school, in search of whatever he could pick up.

"A blinking burglar!" gasped Bob Cherry. "And we've caught him in the giddy act! Bag him!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I've seen those bags before," grinned Nugent. "I'd know them anywhere. It's a tramp—I saw him in Friardale this afternoon, and he touched me for twopence."

The trousers suddenly disappeared from sight.

The owner thereof slid into the study and vanished. The juniors heard a grunt as he picked himself up within.

"Of all the nerve!" murmured Bob. "A blinking daylight raid—only there isn't any daylight!"

"Well, we've got him now!" said Harry. "Bunk me up!"

The juniors gathered under the high sill of the study window. The man within had not heard them. They could hear him, however, moving about the study. He did not switch on the light. Doubtless the ruddy firelight was enough for his purpose; and probably he did not intend to stay long. The juniors grinned cheerily. But for the chance of their arrival under Mr. Prout's window, the sneak-thief would certainly have pocketed anything there was of value in Prout's study, slipped out the way he had entered, and escaped in the fog, unsuspected and undetected. But with five sturdy juniors outside the window, the matter was rather altered.

Wharton was bunked up, and he put his head in at the window.

There was a dim red glow from the fire, which had burned low during Mr. Prout's absence. It was sufficient to show the man in the patched trousers groping over the Form master's desk, pulling out drawers and peering into them. Wharton heard a muttering voice, in tones of satisfaction:

"Quid notes, by hokey! Real quids! 'Erbert 'Arris, you're in luck! 'Erbert, my boy, this is a bit of orl right! It is that! Wonder who these blooming notes belong to?" There was a chuckle. "They belong to me now, and that's straight!"

Wharton had his own opinion about that. He heaved himself over the sill, and dropped into the study.

The man at the desk spun round in alarm.

His thievish fingers had been on Mr. Prout's pound notes, when Wharton happened. Now he jumped away from the desk.

"Oh crimes!" he ejaculated.

Wharton stepped from the window. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were in the room behind him in a twinkling.



The breathless juniors hurled themselves at Mr. Harris; but with a flying leap he plunged headlong from the window!

Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were clambering in. Herbert Harris stared at them, in the dusky room, in surprise and dismay. Evidently he was no longer under the impression that this was a bit of "all right."

"Well, what are you doing here?" asked Wharton calmly.

"Oh crimes!" said Mr. Harris.

"Collar him!" said Bob.

The last two members of the Co. clambered in. There were five fellows for Mr. Harris to deal with; and any one of them could have given the weedy tramp a good tussle. Mr. Harris backed away a little.

"S'elp me, I ain't doing any 'arm!" he said. "Fact is, I've barked into the wrong 'ouse in the fog. I ain't touched anything."

"Not even the quid notes?"

"Oh crimes!" Mr. Harris realised that the schoolboy had overheard his muttered jubilation. "P'r'aps I was going to, sir, but I ain't done it! You startled me! I wish I hadn't come in 'ere now! But it seemed such a chance—the gate open, and the fog, and then finding an open winder! You let a bloke go, sir! This is the very first time I ever done anything of this sort! S'elp me!"

"You can tell Dr. Locke that!" said Harry. "Collar him!"

"'Ands off!" exclaimed Mr. Harris. "I tell you, I'll 'it out!"

"You'll get damaged if you do!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Bag him, you men!"

The Famous Five advanced on the pilferer.

Mr. Herbert Harris made a desperate rush for the open window.

He crashed into the juniors, and they collared him on all sides. Bob gave a gasp as he collected a punch in the ribs, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh yelled from a jolt under the chin. But the quintette were too many for Mr. Harris.

There was a terrific bump, that almost shook the study, as he went down on Mr. Prout's carpet, with the Famous Five sprawling over him.

Mr. Harris struggled, but he struggled in vain in the grasp of five pairs of hands. Two or three chairs were knocked over and the table rocked. The sneak-thief was putting up a strenuous resistance; but there was no chance for him.

The study door opened suddenly.

A portly figure entered.

"What—what—what—"

It was Mr. Prout's voice. Evidently the fogbound Form master had found his way in at last.

Mr. Prout stared in blank amazement at the heap of struggling figures on the floor of his study.

He did not switch on the light. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,187.

switch was just within the doorway, close to his hand, but Mr. Prout did not touch

or some inexplicable reason, Mr. Prout did not seem to want a light in his study.

"What—what—" he stuttered.

"It's only us, sir!" gasped Wharton, recognising Prout's voice.

"What—what? Is that Wharton? What?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Harry. "We saw a thief sneaking in at your window in the fog!"

"Bless my soul!"

"And we got in after him and collared him!" panted the captain of the Remove. "We've got him, sir!"

"The gotfulness is terrific!"

"Owl! Let a bloke go!" gasped Mr. Harris. "I wasn't doing any 'arm—I ain't touched a thing! Let a covey go!"

"We've got him, sir!" panted Nugent.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Prout, in amazement. "The scoundrel! The daring rascal! This is—is unheard of! Bless my soul!"

"Put on the light, sir!" gasped Wharton. "We're holding him."

Mr. Prout did not seem to hear.

"Look out!" yelled Bob Cherry.

The thief was twisting like an eel in the grasp of the juniors. He twisted loose suddenly, and leaped away, panting.

"Collar him!"

"Bag him!"

The breathless juniors hurled themselves at Mr. Harris.

He had only a second—but he made the best possible use of it! With a flying leap he plunged headlong through the open window.

There was a pump outside, and a howl! Mr. Harris seemed to have hurt himself a little as he landed in the quad.

"After him!" roared Bob.

He rushed to the window.

He had an instant's glimpse of a running figure vanishing in the fog. Then Mr. Harris disappeared into space.

Bob was half-way out of the window when Wharton caught his arm.

"Nothing doing!" he said. "You'll never see him in the fog! Chuck it!"

And Bob reluctantly gave it up. As a matter of fact, hunting for the elusive Mr. Harris in the fog would have been a more difficult task than hunting for the proverbial needle in a haystack. Mr. Herbert Harris had escaped—so far as the Famous Five were concerned, at all events. They were left with only the satisfaction of having prevented a robbery.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter is Asked to Tea!

MR. PROUT blinked at the juniors.

In the dim glow from the dying fire he could barely see them, and they could barely see him.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Prout. "Is the man gone?"

"He's got away, sir!" said Harry.

"A daring rascal—a most impudent rascal!" said Mr. Prout. "I have never heard of such a thing. I am very much obliged to you, boys—very much indeed. There is money in a drawer of my desk—undoubtedly his intention was robbery, the rascal!"

"I don't think he was able to take anything, sir," said Harry. "We were after him too quick. But you can soon see. I'll turn on the light."

He made a movement towards the electric light switch at the door. To his astonishment, Mr. Prout interposed.

"It is not necessary!" said Mr. Prout, in a hurried voice. "I—I do not require a light! You boys had—had better go! It will be calling-over very soon!"

"But hadn't you better make sure that that rascal never took anything from your desk, sir?" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment.

"Yes, yes! Never—never mind that now! Please go!" said Mr. Prout.

"Oh! Certainly, sir!"

"I—I am much obliged to you—very much obliged! But—but please leave my study now!"

There was a strange agitation in Prout's manner, a strange hurriedness in his tones. Harry Wharton & Co simply blinked at him. What was the matter with Prout was a mystery to them.

Evidently something was the matter. What it was the chums of the Remove simply could not guess.

They passed Mr. Prout and went to the door.

Prout was keeping his back to the doorway, through which a glimmer of light fell from the corridor without. They noticed, too, that his plump hand was before his face as if to shield his eyes from the exceedingly dim fire-glow.

In great astonishment, the Famous Five passed out of the study. Mr. Prout immediately shut the door after them. To their further astonishment, they heard the key turn in the lock.

In the passage they stopped and stared at one another.

From the study came the sound of the window shutting; then of the curtains being drawn. And then a glimmer under the door showed that Mr. Prout had switched on the light at last.

"What on earth's the matter with Prout?" whispered Wharton.

"Goodness knows!"

"Something's up, anyhow," said Bob. "No bizney of ours, though, I suppose. Let's beat it."

And the mystified juniors "beat" it. Really, it was mystifying. Prout, no doubt, was obliged to them for having prevented a robbery in his study; but he seemed to have attached little importance to the affair. That was not like Prout. Prout was the man to make the most of such an episode; to boom forth an account of it to all Greyfriars—in a word, to take the opportunity of getting into the spotlight, which he dearly loved.

Instead of which, Prout seemed to dismiss the matter as of little consequence. Something else was occupying his mind—something, apparently, that filled all his thoughts to the exclusion of all minor matters. The Removites could not help wondering what it was.


"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter met the Famous Five as they came out of Masters' passage. He blinked at them in surprise.

"How did you men get in?" he asked. "I've been waiting at the door for you for hours."

"Burgled Prout's window," explained Bob Cherry.

"I say, did you see Prout?" asked Bunter eagerly. "He's just gone to his study. Did you see him?"



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"Yes—only in the dark though," said Harry. "What about Prout?"

"Did you think he was squiffy?" asked Bunter.

"Squiffy!" ejaculated the Famous Five.

"Well, something's up with him," said Bunter. "He came in a few minutes ago and fairly rushed away. He was holding a handkerchief over his face; and he rushed by like—like—like a whirlwind."

"Did he?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. Quelchy spoke to him and he didn't answer—just rushed on! You should have seen Quelchy's face!" Bunter chuckled. "Quelchy just stood staring after him like a—a—a graven image, you know."

"Well, my hat!"

"But I say, you fellows, I've been waiting for you to come in!" said Bunter. "I was afraid you were lost in the fog, you know."

"Were you?" said Bob, staring. It was exceedingly uncommon for William George Bunter to concern himself about anybody but W. G. Bunter.

"Yes, I was awfully worried—in fact, alarmed," said Bunter, blinking at the astonished juniors through his big spectacles. "If you hadn't come in soon, I was going out to look for you."

"Oh crumbs!"

"You see, I was afraid you'd be late for tea—"

"Oh!"

"But it's all right now," said Bunter. "I was going to ask you fellows to a rather decent spread—"

"Good man!" said Bob. "We can just do with it. Lead on, Macduff!"

"Only I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"You fat chump!"

"Oh, really, Cherry. It's the fog, I suppose, upset the post office arrangements," said Bunter. "I was expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations. I think I mentioned it to you."

"I think you did!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, it hasn't come—"

"You needn't mention that. It never does."

"Well, as it hasn't come I shan't be able to ask you to tea," said Bunter. "I'll tell you what! I'll come to tea with you to-day, and you can come to tea with me to-morrow—when my postal order comes. See?"

The chums of the Remove grinned. They knew now why Bunter had been awaiting their return so anxiously.

"As it happens, there's nothing going in my study," said Bunter. "That beast Toddy is teasing out; and when he teases out, he never thinks of a fellow—after all I've done for him, you know. I shan't ask him to my spread to-morrow."

"He will miss a lot!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"The lotfulness will be preposterous."

"Well, is it a go, you fellows?" asked Bunter. "I tea with you to-day and you tea with me to-morrow. What?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"It's a go!" he said. "Come on."

"Good!"

Billy Bunter came on cheerfully. Tea to-morrow might be a doubtful matter as it depended on the arrival of Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order. But tea to-day was what Bunter was chiefly concerned about.

"I say, you fellows, where are you going?" exclaimed Bunter as the Famous Five turned their steps in the direction of Hall.

"Tea!" answered Bob.

"Well, that isn't the way to the Remove studies, fathead!"

"It's the way to Hall!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at them.

"But you've asked me to tea!" he howled. "Tea in Hall was not what Bunter wanted. He had been picturing a spread in the study. "Look here, you've asked me to tea—you're not going to tea in Hall!"

"We jolly well are!" chuckled Bob. "Funds are low, old fat bean, and there's nothing in the study."

"You—you beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Mean to say you were asking me to tea in Hall?"

"Just that!"

"Why, you—you silly fathead, I could go to tea in Hall if I liked without you asking me."

"Of course you could," agreed Bob.

"But you seemed to want to be asked. Come on, you men, I'm hungry; and all the doorsteps will be gone if we're late."

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

advancing years, had left a dome-like brow that Mr. Prout could not help thinking imposing. Blundell of the Fifth, who had once caught Mr. Prout gazing into his glass with obvious satisfaction, had expressed his wonder afterwards in the games-study, that the glass had not cracked! But, Mr. Prout, at least, was satisfied with what the glass told him; and Prout, after all, was the person chiefly concerned.

But satisfaction and complacency were wholly banished from Mr. Prout's visage now.

He gazed into the mirror with absolute horror.

For the mirror reflected, along with the rest of Prout's majestic countenance, a black eye!

It was a striking eye—a most conspicuous eye! It was an eye that would have drawn a second glance anywhere—and a third and a fourth. It was considered, as a black eye, a perfect specimen.

There are degrees in black eyes. It was not a pink eye, or a blue eye that blinked at Prout from the mirror; it was not an eye of one of the minor shades. It was black—perfectly black—as black as the ace of spades—as black as the skin of an Ethiopian—black, but not comely!

Prout had collected that black eye in the fog. What had happened had happened so suddenly and unexpectedly that Prout was not at all clear about it. Whether he had run into somebody, or whether somebody had run into him, or whether he had crashed on a tree or a buttress he could not have said with certainty. All he knew was that suddenly in the blinding fog he had received a terrific jolt which had floored him.

It had felt exactly as if somebody had knocked him down. But that was a rather wild hypothesis—for who could have knocked down a Greyfriars Form-master in the Greyfriars quadrangle? Nobody could possibly have wanted to; and nobody would have had the nerve, even if he had wanted to. Prout was driven to the conclusion that he had biffed that eye on something hard by sheer accident.

But he was less concerned about the cause of the disaster than about the disaster itself.

There was the rub. Prout had a black eye! He had such an eye as Mr. Harris might have had late on a Saturday night at the Cross Keys!

What would Greyfriars think? It was impossible to show that eye in public. That was not to be thought of—not to be dreamt of. But what was he to do?

Mr. Prout knew little about black eyes. This one, in fact, was the first in his experience. But he knew, at least, that they did not disappear rapidly—especially such a choice specimen as the one he had collected.

Several days, at least—more likely a week—most likely more than a week!

What would they say in Common-room? He was due for tea in Common-room now, but he could not go, of course. He fairly cringed at the thought of displaying the eye to other members of the staff.

He was not at all sure that they would believe his explanation. As a matter of fact, his story, though true, sounded thin. People had barged into things in the fog and damaged features many a time and oft. But who had ever bagged a black eye by barging into things in the fog? A beetroot nose, or a cauliflower

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HALT HERE

for one of this week's
WINNING GREYFRIARS
LIMERICKS!

Old Prout, with a springiness
rare,
Once rose twenty feet in the
air.

The cause of this jump,
Which outhalted with a
bump—
Was a pin he had found on his
chair!

T. Counsell, of 11, Albert
Terrace, Higher Walton, near
Preston, Lancs, carries off one
of this week's

USEFUL POCKET WALLETS
for supplying the above winning
effort.

Let's have a limerick from YOU
now. You may be just as
successful!

The Famous Five went on their way, Billy Bunter glaring after them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. But he did not follow. Tea in Hall was no use to Bunter; and he rolled away to the Remove passage in search of other victims.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Frightful for Prout!

"HORRIBLE!"
Mr. Prout fairly groaned
out the word.

With his door locked and the curtains drawn Mr. Prout had switched on the light in his study.

Now he was gazing into the mirror. He gazed in horror.

Generally when Mr. Prout gazed into the mirror it was with an expression of complacent satisfaction on his plump visage. He had reason—or so he firmly believed—to be satisfied with what he saw there. Generally—or so he believed—he saw a face that any unprejudiced judge would have pronounced handsome, distinguished, even a little majestic. It was fairly plump—not fat—and the gradual retreat of Mr. Prout's hair from his forehead, with

ear, perhaps—but a black eye! Prout knew that it sounded improbable.

He looked, and felt, as if somebody's fist had punched him in the eye. He realised, with a shudder, what his colleagues would think—whatever they might say.

Indeed, he realised himself how he would have smiled ironically had any other man walked into Common-room with a glaring black eye and explained that he had bagged it by accident in the fog.

He remembered how Capper, the master of the Fourth, had once had a bruised eye—merely bruised, and not a glaring black like this one—and had explained that it was due to a rebounding punch-ball.

Common-room had smiled ironically over that punch-ball story. Prout himself had remarked to Wiggins that the punch-ball explanation was worn thread-bare.

And now Prout himself had an eye, compared with which that of Capper's was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine.

A flush stole over his plump features as he remembered the peculiar expression on Gosling's face. Gosling had picked him out of the fog and taken him into his lodge and stared almost as if hypnotized at his eye. He had told Gosling that he had run against something in the foggy quad, and Gosling, in duty-bound, had said "Yessir!"

But the expression on the porter's face had been incredulous—frankly incredulous. Gosling himself had barged into things in the fog, and he had not collected a black eye thereby. Gosling had done his best for Mr. Prout's eye, and had guided him safely to the House afterwards. The expression on Gosling's face haunted Prout. He had tipped Gosling—a thing he seldom did. Somehow or other that black eye had to be kept secret, and Gosling had seen it. Mr. Prout did not say that he was bribing Gosling to be discreet, neither did Gosling mention a word to that effect. But both knew it.

With a handkerchief over his face Prout had rushed to his study. He had, as Bunter declared, rushed by like a whirlwind. Mr. Quelch had called to him—but he had not answered; he had taken no notice of Quelch—he had left the Remove master surprised and offended. It could not be helped! Anything was better than facing the ironical smile that he knew would glimmer on Quelch's face at the sight of the black eye—and which would intensify as he explained that he had picked it up by accident in the fog.

"Horrible!" groaned Prout. "Awful!"

The eye seemed to go blacker and blacker as he watched it. Plainly, it was not going to get better in a hurry. Apparently it was going to get worse.

Tap!

Prout spun round almost convulsively towards the door, thankful that he had locked it.

"Who is there?" His voice was husky.

"Dear me! The door seems to be locked!" It was Mr. Capper's voice.

"You are in, Prout?"

"Oh! Yes! Yes!"

"I thought perhaps you had lost yourself in the fog, as I was aware you had been out this afternoon. I came to see if you had come in. We are about to have tea, Prout."

The door-handle moved. The Fourth-form master, evidently, was surprised

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at finding Prout's door locked, with Prout in the study.

"Are you not coming to tea, Prout?" he asked, through the door.

"Yes! No! I mean, yes! That is no!" stammered Mr. Prout. "I—I have some—some papers to correct—I shall not bother about tea!"

"You are quite well, Prout?"

"Eh? Oh! Yes."

"Your voice sounds a little strange."

"D-d-does it. Imagination, my dear fellow!" gasped Prout.

"Perhaps you have caught cold," said Mr. Capper. "Your voice seems a little husky. If you have caught cold—"

Prout shook his fist at the door. He wondered whether Capper would ever go.

"Not at all!" he gasped. "Nothing of the sort."

"Your voice certainly has a strange huskiness," said Capper. "I have some essence of cinnamon in my study—it is an excellent thing for colds. Would you care for me to bring you the bottle?"

"No!" roared Prout.

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, no, thank you, Capper! I—I am very much obliged; but—but no thank you! The fact is I am very busy."

"Oh, very well." There was a slightly huffy tone in Capper's voice. He could not understand why Prout kept him locked out of the study. It was hardly the thing for a Greyfriars master to "sport his oak" where another member of the staff was concerned.

But Prout cared little for Capper's huffiness. He listened with deep thankfulness to Capper's retreating footsteps. The master of the Fourth was gone at last.

Prout's gaze returned to the glass.

How was he to conceal this fearful black eye from the staff? And from the boys! Even if the staff believed his explanation, which was dubious, he knew how the school would regard that black eye. A Public School master could not have a black eye—he simply could not. There would be rumours and surmises—it would be the one topic in the school, and a standing joke! Prout, the most majestic man on the staff—more majestic than the Head himself—would be the subject of ribald jesting!

Somehow, anyhow, that eye had to be kept dark. It was likely to keep dark, in a sense, for at least a week. And so long as it kept dark it had to be kept dark! Prout had to retire from public view for a time till that eye mended. Already in his mind's eye he could see the fellows grinning—already, in his mind's ear, he could hear the whispered surmises. Who had blacked Prout's eye would be the burning question at Greyfriars. Whom had Prout been scrapping with? Had he been turned out of a pub? Had a potman given him that black eye? Prout, shuddering, realised that the surmises would go as far as this, and farther.

Tap!

Prout ground his teeth as he heard another knock at the door. Was all Greyfriars coming to his study that evening?

The door-handle turned.

"Who—who—who is it?" gasped Mr. Prout.

"My lines, sir!"

It was the voice of Potter, of the Fifth.

"Oh! Ah! Never mind the lines, Potter."

"But I've brought them, sir," came Potter's surprised answer.

"Yes, quite! Take them away! I—I mean, I am busy! I—I cannot attend to you now, Potter."

"May I leave the lines in your study, sir?"

"No!" yelled Prout.

"Oh!" gasped Potter. "Is—is anything the matter, sir?"

"Oh! No! I—I will see you later. I am busy now—go away now."

"Very well, sir."

Potter's footsteps retreated. Prout mopped his perspiring brow. He wished that he hadn't given Potter lines that day. He remembered that he had given Greene lines. Was Greene coming, too?

Tap!

"Upon my word! What—what—"

"My lines, sir!"

It was Greene, of the Fifth.

"Go away!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I mean, I am busy! Your lines are doubled, Greene! Go and write out the imposition afresh."

"Wha-a-at?" yapped Greene.

"At once!" roared Mr. Prout.

Greene of the Fifth, bewildered and wrathily, retreated. Prout was left in peace once more. But not for long.

Tap!

Prout gritted his teeth.

"Who—what—"

"C'est moi!" It was the voice of Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. "You did not come to tea, mon cher Prout. I hope you are not malade."

"No! Yes! No! Go away!"

Prout was getting to the end of his self-control.

"Plait-il?" ejaculated Monsieur Charpentier.

"I mean—I am ill—that is to say, I am busy—very busy with some eyes—I mean papers—black papers—that is to say— Oh dear! Please do not disturb me!"

"Mon cher Prout, if you are ill—malade—"

"I am not!" hooted Prout. "I have a headache, that is all—merely a headache! I desire to be quiet! Please go away—I mean, excuse me!"

"Veree well, mon cher Prout."

Footsteps receded again. Prout gasped for breath and resumed his contemplation of the discoloured eye in the mirror. What was he going to do about that eye, he wondered dismally. And outside the study several persons were wondering, too—wondering what on earth was up with Prout.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Disappearance of Mr. Prout!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came out cheerily into a bright, sunny quadrangle. It was morning, and morning had dawned on Greyfriars School as bright and clear as if the fog had never been. It was a wintry sun; but it was bright, and it shone down quite gaily on the old school. It was really difficult for the juniors to believe that this was the same quad where they had been lost in the fog only the previous evening. After prayers the Famous Five trotted cheerily in the keen fresh air, while they waited for the breakfast bell. In the quad they passed Coker and Potter and Greene, of the Fifth Form. Coker was talking—he generally was. His booming voice reached the chums of the Remove as they passed.

"It's queer about Prout, you men." The Famous Five paused. They had, to tell the exact truth, forgotten the existence of Mr. Prout, little as Prout would have deemed such a thing possible. Coker's remark reminded them

of him, and of his strange and mysterious conduct. Coker's remark showed that others beside themselves had noticed something "queer" about Prout.

"He wasn't at prayers this morning," went on Coker, "and as far as I can make out nobody saw him last night after he came in. I went to his study to speak to him, and the door was locked, and he wouldn't let me in. Told me to go!"

"Same here, when I took him my lines," said Potter.

"Same here, too!" said Greene. "Well, he mightn't want to be bothered with you chaps and your blessed lines," said Coker. "But I told him I wanted to speak to him—through the door—and he told me to clear—you know. I mentioned that it was a rather important matter, but it made no difference. He said that if I persisted in disturbing him he would cane me. Me!" Coker gave a grunt. Evidently he

after his escape from Prout's study window, had run into Coker in the fog. And evidently Coker, in collaring him, had caught a Tartar.

"You fags clear off!" said Coker, with another frown at the chums of the Remove.

"But we're interested, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "You ought to be pleased at somebody being interested in your conversation. Isn't it the first time it's happened?"

Potter and Greene smiled. Coker frowned, and turned his back on the juniors.

"Well, the man was up to no good here," he said. "I felt bound to report it to Prout. But he wouldn't see me, or hear me. From what I learn he refused to see anybody last night. And he hasn't shown up this morning, yet. I heard a fellow say he was gone."

"But he can't be gone," said Greene,

said Potter. "If it's only a day or two, I suppose they'll carry on somehow. I hope there's nothing wrong with Prout. He's a pompous old buffer, but not bad in his way."

"I wonder——" said Coker.

The breakfast bell interrupted Coker, and he did not state what he wondered. The fellows converged towards the House.

After breakfast it was known far and wide that Prout was gone.

When he had gone, and why he had gone, seemed rather mysterious.

Obviously, he must have explained to the Head. He could not have absented himself from the school without the knowledge and permission of his chief. But if he had explained to the Head he had certainly explained to nobody else.

None of the masters knew anything. They were overheard by several fellows discussing the matter in various tones of surprise and surmise.

Prout had not told anybody anything. He had not bidden farewell to any single person. Nobody had seen him go. Up to a late hour he had been in his study. Apparently he had taken his departure after the rest of the staff had gone to bed. It seemed to have been his desire



"If you have caught a cold——" came Mr. Capper's voice from outside. Mr. Prout shook his fist at the door. "No! at all!" he gasped. "Nothing of the sort!"

was feeling this. Prout had "sporting his oak" the previous evening, denying everybody who came to his study. But Coker felt that, whatever the reason, he might have made an exception in favour of Coker! Coker was rather too important a person to be told to go away like a fag.

Harry Wharton & Co., who had grouped themselves near the three Fifth-Formers, smiled. Coker glanced at them, frowned, and resumed.

"I was going to tell him about the man I saw in the quad, you know. I ran right into him in the fog—a shabby-looking scoundrel in a pair of check trousers that you could have seen a mile off. He had no business in the place, of course, and I collared him to make him give an account of himself. You'd hardly believe that he had the neck to give me a jab under the chin, and bolt. But he did."

The Famous Five exchanged grinning glances. Evidently Herbert Harris,

with a stare. "Who's going to take the Fifth to-day if Prout's gone?"

"Blessed if I can make it out," confessed Coker. "Something's up with Prout, that's a cert. I've been to his study since prayers, and he's not there. I asked one of the maids, and she said that he's not in his room, and the bed wasn't slept in. Ain't it jolly queer?"

"The queerfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to his comrades.

And they nodded assent. Coker's information, if well founded, was certainly very queer.

"Well, I suppose he's been called away suddenly," said Greene. "May have had a telegram or something—family affairs or something or other." William Greene did not seem deeply interested. "I shan't be sorry to have a bit of a rest from Prout. But I wonder who'll take the Fifth?"

"Well, if he's gone for a long time the Head will get another man in,"

to get away, unseen, unknown, unobserved.

Mr. Capper told Mr. Wiggins that he was bound to say that there seemed to him something almost surreptitious about Prout's going. Wiggins agreed that it certainly was very peculiar. Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, observed that no doubt Prout knew his own business best. Hacker making this remark in a significant sort of way that might have meant anything. Twigg, of the Second, said that it was odd—very odd. He said that the more he thought about it the odder it seemed to him.

Common-room, in fact, was provided with a topic by the sudden and mysterious departure of Prout; and when Common-room got hold of a topic they worried it like a dog worrying a bone.

A lot of cackling old hens, was the way Coker described them—not in their hearing, of course.

The Fifth Form found their timetable considerably upset by the sudden departure of Prout.

They were not allowed, of course, to waste their time because they were deprived of their Form master. The Head saw to that; and he made arrangement for the Fifth to be kept as busy as usual.

Extra maths with Mr. Lascelles, extra French with Monsieur Charpentier, classics with the Head himself, filled up the school hours. On the whole, the Fifth did not mind. It was a change from "old Pompous," and there was no doubt that Prout was rather a bore in the Form-room.

But they were very curious. It was singular, to say the least, for a Form master to disappear in this way overnight. Even if Prout had been called away by a telegram, perhaps to some sick bedside, he ought to have left an explanation behind him. He had left no explanation. He had just vanished.

All through the day it was a topic, not only in Common-room, and not only in the Fifth, but among other fellows in other Forms. It was not till evening that some light was shed on the subject, and it was William George Bunter of the Remove who shed it.

After tea Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag, full of information.

"I say, you fellows," chirruped Bunter. "I know all about old Prout!"

Bunter was surrounded at once.

"How do you know?" demanded Vernon-Smith.

"The Head told me—"

"What?" roared the juniors.

"Well, at least, he told Quelch, and I heard him," amended Bunter. "You see, his study window was open, and quite by chance I was leaning on the wall under the window—"

"You eavesdropping fat porpoise!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You see, I saw Quelch come into the study from the quad," explained Bunter, "so I got under the window, noticing that it was open—I mean, I just happened to be leaning there, and heard them talking by sheer chance. I hope you fellows don't think I would listen!"

"Get on with it!" roared Bolsover major.

"Well, Quelch spoke to the Head about Prout. And the Head doesn't know any more about it than anybody else!" said Bunter triumphantly.

"Gammon!"

"I say, you fellows, let a fellow speak! I tell you I heard all they said. Dr. Locke never saw Prout before he went. He told Quelch so."

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"But Prout rang him up on the telephone," pursued Bunter. "Loeke said his voice was aggravated—"

"What?"

"I mean agitated! That was the word—agitated! He told Loeke that he had to leave suddenly for a few days, owing to a private affair, and begged Loeke to excuse him for leaving suddenly without leave. Loeke told Quelch that he was fairly flummoxed—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Well, he didn't use that word exactly—"

"I fancy he didn't!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"He said surprised—surprised and perplexed," said Bunter. "It comes to the same thing. But he gave Prout leave—on the phone, you know—to hook it for a few days—he didn't say hook it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But something to that effect, you know."

He said it was odd—very odd; but doubtless Prout had good reasons. Then that beast Quelch shut the window, and I didn't hear any more. But I saw you fellows, ain't it queer?"

"Jolly queer!" said Skinner. "You didn't hear where Prout telephoned from?"

"No; I don't think the Head knew."

"Of course, if Prout's been run in for something he might phone to the Head to come and bail him out!" remarked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's story soon spread beyond the Rag. It spread in the Fourth, and the Shell, and the Fifth. Several Fifth Form men made it a point to see Bunter and ask him for details.

Among them was Horace Coker. Coker of the Fifth listened to Bunter with a deep attention that was very flattering. He was so keenly interested that Bunter threw in a few extra details for Coker's special edification.

Coker went away looking very thoughtful—very thoughtful indeed.

All the fellows wondered and speculated about the strange disappearance of Mr. Prout. But Coker was the only man who formed a theory to account for it. Horace Coker's powerful intellect was at work on the subject; and the result was destined to be surprising.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker Sees It All!

"KIDNAPPED!" said Coker.

Coker of the Fifth shot that remark, as it were, at his study-mates. It came so suddenly from Coker that it quite startled them.

In the Fifth Form study that evening Potter and Greene were at prep. They had paused on prep to discuss a point of some interest, which was whether Greene was bound to write out that doubled impot, now that Prout wasn't there to ask for the lines.

Prout, evidently in a moment of annoyance, had told Greene to write the lines out a second time. Greene was not eager. And, in view of the fact that Prout was gone and the date of his return uncertain, Greene rather considered that he might forget to carry out that order.

Potter, on the whole, agreed. He remarked that, if Prout did ask for the lines when he came back, Greene could still do them. More likely Prout would have forgotten them by that time.

It looked as if Greene had a healthy chance of escaping that extra impot; which was, naturally, agreeable to Greene, and to Potter as his pal.

While this discussion was going on Coker had been silent. Coker had not started prep yet. He had been reading one of those best-selling, sketchy-covered volumes which were Coker's favourite reading matter. This particular volume was "The Clue of the Crooked Corkscrew," by Slapdash Wallop; and it held Coker entranced till he reached the very last page, where, of course, the wicked baronet, who was also a chief of crooks, was rounded up under the trusty automatic of Hickory Knutt, the wonderful detective, who could give Scotland Yard fifty in a hundred, and beat them hollow.

When Coker laid down the volume he did not begin to talk—which was rather unusual. He sat silent, with a wrinkle of thought corrugating his manly brow.

Coker being silent, Potter and Greene almost forgot that he was there, till they were reminded of his existence by

Coker suddenly shooting at them the remarkable word:

"Kidnapped!"

Whereupon Potter and Greene sat up and took notice.

"It's plain enough," said Coker, regarding his friends thoughtfully. "It doesn't seem to have occurred to anybody but me; but, after all, it wouldn't! A certain amount of brain is required to see it, plain as it is!"

"Eh?" said Potter.

"Prout, you know!" said Coker.

"What about him?" asked Greene.

"I've just told you! He's been kidnapped!"

Potter and Greene forgot all about extra lines, all about prep. They gazed at Horace Coker.

Fellows had made all sorts of surmises about Prout. But it was reserved for Horace Coker to make this brilliant suggestion.

Coker smiled. He seemed rather pleased by the effect his words had produced on his study-mates.

"Kidnapped!" said Greene faintly.

"Oh, ye gods!" said Potter.

"Nobody else has guessed it!" said Coker.

"Nobody else would!" said Potter. "Only you would think of a thing like that, Coker, old man!"

Coker nodded, accepting this tribute at face value. Sarcasm, of course, was wasted on Coker.

"Well, I'm the man to think of things," he said modestly. "I don't brag of it! I'm not conceited because I happen to be the brainiest man at Greyfriars. It just happens, you know!"

"D-d-does it?" stuttered Potter.

"Yes. I suppose I've rather startled you," said Coker. "But the thing is perfectly clear to me."

Potter and Greene both wondered for a moment what had put such a very weird idea into Coker's head. But their glances fell on "The Clue of the Crooked Corkscrew," lying on the table. From that volume their glances wandered to Coker's own particular bookshelf, which was weary and heavy-laden with any number of similar volumes. And they guessed whence Coker had derived his theory of kidnapping.

Coker was a tremendous reader—of that particular brand of literature. He possessed all the published works of Slapdash Wallop—by the dozen and the score—from "The Baronet Burglar," the "Kidnapped Coke-Merchant," and the "Clue of the Candlestick," to the "Secret Sixty-Six," and the "Secret of the Silk Socks."

Coker, who had plenty of money, gave two shillings a time for this thrilling literature, which sold everywhere like hot cakes, a fact which seemed to indicate that there were plenty of people about with brains like Coker's, though he believed his intellect to be almost unique.

Potter spoke of these yellow-jacketed best-sellers as "Coker's two-bob bloods." But not in Coker's hearing.

"You'd probably like to hear my theory!" remarked Coker, in the best manner of Hickory Knutt, detective.

Potter and Greene would have preferred to get on with their prep. But it was useless to tell Coker so. They knew they had to listen to his theory.

"Prout's been kidnapped," said Coker. "It may be either the work of some secret enemy, or a secret society."

"Oh crickey!" said Greene.

"I'm disposed—provisionally, at least—to work on the former theory," said

(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



"Old Ref" is at the service of all MAGNET readers. See if you can get him groggy with a knotty soccer problem. I doubt if you can!

A YOUNG reader of mine in Dublin is worried because this game of football gives him a headache—literally, that is. Writing to me, "Sammy" says:

"I can trap the ball, dribble, and shoot, but if I head the ball I get a pain in my head. Does this mean that I am weak in the head, or is there some special way to head the ball?"

Much as I should like to be of help to this reader in every direction, I am afraid I cannot give him a definite reply to one part of his question. It is possible that he may be heading the ball quite correctly, but that, owing to some weakness, the act of heading affects certain nerves and produces the pain. If this is the case, then it is obvious that the boy may be doing himself real harm in continuing to head a football, and the only advice I can give is that a medical man should be consulted.

I think it is quite possible that the pains in the head from which my reader suffers after heading a football is due to the fact that he heads in the wrong way. There are plenty of first-class footballers who have never mastered, properly, the art of heading the ball, and so a general hint or two may be worth while.

In the first place, a player who habitually uses the top of the head when the ball comes through the air is very likely to suffer from headache. And this is pain for which there is no necessity. The ball should not be propelled by the top of the head, as that part of the cranium was never meant for such rough usage. Even when the ball does come through the air to a footballer, his main object should be to get it down to the ground as soon as possible. In order to do this the forehead, or the side of the head should be used. The skull there is hard, and so far as most ordinary people are concerned, a football can be headed thus without any bad after-effects.

IT will probably be suggested that it isn't always easy to head the ball with the part of the head desired. This is true, but I can tell you how the difficulty arises. It is due to the fact that the player does not keep his eye on the ball. When an object is coming towards the head there is a perfectly natural tendency to close the eyes in order to protect them from a possible blow. But the player who does close his eyes—and there are plenty of players in the top class guilty of this "weakness"—is apt to get the ball in the wrong place, probably on the top of the head. Keep the eyes on the ball right to the moment of contact, and go to it with the idea of getting the ball down to the ground.

If my young reader should discover that there is some weakness in his head which renders it inadvisable for him to use it in heading a football, there is no reason why he should give up the game. In the course of the average match it is very seldom necessary for the outside wing men to head the ball, and perhaps my young friend could develop his football skill in one of those positions. As he says he can trap, dribble, trick opponents, and shoot hard, all these qualifications are useful in an extreme wing man.

STRANGE things happen from time to time in this game of football, and when they do happen I hear about them. I want to hear about them, too, for it is my job to explain. I have several letters this week raising questions concerning an incident during a match between Cardiff City and Barnsley, played at Cardiff.

A newspaper report of what happened has been sent to me, and I quote it: "A goal-kick was awarded to Barnsley, and Dixon, the full-back, in passing the ball back to the goalkeeper, slipped

and pushed the ball to the goalkeeper with his hands. The referee took no notice of the incident till the Cardiff players pointed out to him the infringement, and the official then gave a penalty kick from which a goal was scored."

There are several interesting features of this particular story. In the first place I don't think any referee could possibly justify his action in giving a penalty kick because of an infringement which was brought to his notice by the players. If the referee or his linesmen don't see things, then they cannot properly give decisions upon them.

The second observation is that if the circumstances were as quoted above, and were seen by the referee, he made a mistake in giving a penalty kick. The ball was dead when the full-back prepared to take the goal kick, and it would not be in play again until it had been properly kicked off. If the full-back, slipping, moved the ball off the line with his hands, the goal kick was not properly taken, and the referee could only order it to be taken again.

BEING interested in this case, I have made it my business to inquire, and as the result of those inquiries, my conclusion is that the newspaper report sent to me by two correspondents, and concerning which they are mystified, did not quite state the facts.

Apparently the Barnsley goalkeeper put the ball on the line, or somewhere near it, and then topped it to the full-back. The latter, instead of kicking it, used his hands to the ball. If this is the proper story of the incident, then the referee, seeing it, was in order in awarding a penalty-kick against the player who, after the ball had been kicked from the spot, touched it with his hands. The full-back may have been under a misapprehension when he did this—he may have thought that the goalkeeper had not kicked it off properly, and consequently the full-back pushed the ball back to the goalkeeper with his hands. The referee cannot act on the assumption that there was misapprehension, and must award a penalty kick.

IHAVE seen mistakes of a similar kind happen in other games. I remember Bolton Wanderers playing a match a season or two back. The play was in the Bolton penalty area when a full-back suddenly caught the ball in his hands. The referee gave a penalty kick, of course, and he stuck to this decision in spite of the explanation, given by the full-back, that he had heard a whistle blown by somebody and thought that the referee had whistled to stop play. The referee not having done so, and the full-back having intentionally handled in the penalty area, the referee had no other course but to award a penalty kick. You see the trouble which would arise once a referee began to accept the explanations and excuses of the players, even though those explanations may be perfectly true and genuine.

The habit on the part of a spectator here and there of taking a whistle with him to a football match and blowing it on occasion is a bad one, and I should say to such people, "Don't do it." Already this season Notts Forest have lost a point because of this habit. When they were playing the Spurs recent a whistle was blown by a man in the crowd. All the players stopped, thinking the referee's whistle had gone. When Harper, the Tottenham centre-forward, realised that the whistle which had sounded did not belong to the referee he went on and scored a goal which enabled the Spurs to win by two goals to one.

PROUT'S LOVELY BLACK EYE!

(Continued from page 10.)

Coker. "A secret enemy. A one-man job."

"You—you think Prout had a secret enemy?" said Potter faintly.

"That's obvious, if he was kidnapped."

"If!" murmured Greene.

"Not that there's any if about it," went on Coker calmly. "He's been kidnapped. The whole thing's clear—to me. You're making it equally clear to you."

Potter and Greene doubted that.

"You see, Prout wasn't always a Public School master—the harmless old buffer that we know," said Coker. "He was young once—"

"A jolly long time ago, I should think," remarked Greene.

"He used to climb the Alps, and shoot grizzlies in the Rocky Mountains, and so on," said Coker. "He's got guns and skins and things stacked round his study—you've seen them—"

"Price says he bought the lot at an auction," said Potter.

"Price is a suspicious ass! He was a different man in those days. And it was then, I fancy, that he made this bitter enemy who has now tracked him down," said Coker.

Potter and Greene tried hard not to smile. But the idea of plump, pompous Prout being tracked down and kidnapped by a bitter enemy was almost too much for their gravity.

"When I came on that suspicious character in the fog in the quad last night," resumed Coker, "I took him for a common tramp, who had sneaked into the school to pilfer. I realise now that he was in disguise."

"But—but he did try to pilfer from Prout's study," said Greene.

"I've heard that some Remove kids caught him there, and very nearly bagged him."

"I've heard that, too—that's part of my material," said Coker. "He got into Prout's study—not any other study, mind you—Prout's study. Why should he pick out Prout's study more than any other?"

"Perhaps because Prout left his window open," said Potter.

Coker waved an impatient hand. He did not desire to hear suggestions that did not fit in with his theory. He had not gone to the trouble of forming a theory in order to have holes knocked in it by carping critics.

"He selected Prout's study. When those Remove fags bagged him, he made out that he was pinching—the first excuse he thought of. He wasn't likely to tell them that he was there to kidnap Prout."

"It would have surprised them a bit, if he had!" murmured Potter. And Greene changed his chuckle into a cough just in time.

"That was his object," said Coker. "It's clear—from what happened subsequently. Prout saw him in the study, as we know, and recognised him as the desperate, determined enemy who had been tracking him down for years. That accounts for Prout's agitation, and his locking himself in the study. Every step in the passage, every tap at his door," said Coker impressively, "seemed to poor old Prout the footstep of his bitter foe."

"Oh!"

"In fear and trembling, Prout cringed behind a locked door," said Coker. "But that did not save him. In the dead of night—"

"The which?"

"The dead of night—that means the middle of the night," explained Coker. "In the dead of night, the desperate scoundrel penetrated to Prout's presence, and the game was up. Details," added Coker, "are, of course, lacking, so far. Whether the villain covered him with a revolver, or—"

"Or a blanket?" asked Potter flippantly.

Coker's eyes gleamed.

"If you think this is a joking matter, George Potter—"

"Nunno!" gasped Potter. "Go on, old chap. You're getting frightfully interesting."

"Thrilling!" said Greene. "Go on!"

Coker, placated, went on:

"Whether the dastard covered him with a revolver, and marched him off at the muzzle—whether he pressed the deadly blade of a dagger to his heart, and terrified him into submission—whether he stunned him with a blow from some blunt instrument—or whether he jammed a chloroform pad over his mouth—cannot be said. But the facts prove that somehow he downed Prout and got away with him."

"Carried him off?" gasped Potter.

"Yes."

"Then I can jolly well guess who he was!" said Potter.

Coker started.

"Rot! What do you mean? You can't! Who was it, then?"

"Hercules, looking for a thirteenth job!" said Potter. "Only Hercules could have carried off a man of Prout's weight."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Greene involuntarily.

Coker glared.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "If you think that's funny—"

"My mistake, old chap," said Potter soothingly. "Keep on with the jolly old theory! We're getting thrilled no end."

"If you don't want to hear my theory—"

"But we do, old chap—we do!" urged Potter. Potter did not, perhaps, want to hear it; but as he had to hear it, he certainly wanted to get it over. Prep appealed to him more than the kidnapping of Prout.

"Well, try to keep serious, on a serious subject," said Coker, frowning.

"It's serious enough for poor old Prout. I don't say the villain carried him off bodily—I dare say he made him walk at the point of a revolver, or the muzzle of a knife—I mean the muzzle of a revolver or the point of a knife. Anyhow, he got him as far as the car—"

"What car?"

"I deduce a car," explained Coker. "These villains generally have a fast car to carry out their deadly work."

"That's so," assented Greene, with a glance at the well-stocked bookshelf. "They always do, in fact. A car with a long, sinister-looking grey body—"

"Something of the sort," agreed Coker. "To-morrow, in the daylight, I shall look for tyre tracks. For the present we'll take the car for granted."

It seemed to Potter and Greene that Coker was taking a lot for granted, as well as the car. But they forbore to say so. The less they interrupted Coker the sooner he was likely to ring off.

"He got him to the car, and rushed him away at breakneck speed through the gloomy night," said Coker. "That was the last of Prout, so far as we know. He's kidnapped, and he's in the hands of the desperado who bagged him. Have I made it clear?"

"Um!"

"To anyone with my eye for salient facts," said Coker, "the thing is clear from the start. Prout's disappeared. Well, Public School masters don't disappear mysteriously like that without a reason. A man might be called away suddenly; but he would see somebody, explain the thing somehow, before he went. Prout just vanished. It's a clear case of kidnapping."

"A jolly obliging sort of kidnapper to let him telephone to the Head!" remarked Potter reflectively.

To Potter and Greene, that remark seemed to give the kybosh to Horace Coker's wonderful theory. Certainly, if Prout was kidnapped, it was extraordinary that he had phoned the Head. But Coker only smiled.

"That phone call was a fake!" he said.

"A—a—a fake?"

"Yes. It was the kidnapper who phoned the Head—using Prout's voice—I mean, using Prout's name. It was a fake, to satisfy the Head, and prevent him from calling in the police."

"Oh scissors! But the Head would know Prout's voice."

"The villain may have imitated it. Anybody could imitate old Prout's bark. Besides, the Head is a simple old duck! If the man used Prout's name he would suppose it was Prout speaking. The telephone message was a fake, of course."

Potter and Greene realised that the telephone message had to be a fake, or Coker's theory would not have held water. So they did not argue the point.

"Now the question arises," said Coker. "What's going to be done?"

"If you've got it right, Prout's going to be done!" Potter was flippant again.

"Don't be an ass, Potter, if you can help it. Prout's a bit of an annoying old ass in the Form-room, but he's our Form master. Besides, I owe him something," said Coker. "I gave him a punch, in the fog last night, in mistake for one of those cheeky Remove fags. That's to be kept dark, of course—I'd rather not have it known. But it makes me all the keener to help him out of his scrape. I hardly know whether to go to the Head, or to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, to tell my theory."

Potter and Greene gave a simultaneous jump.

"For goodness' sake—" gasped Potter.

"Don't!" spluttered Greene.

It was all very well for Coker to propound this remarkable theory in the privacy of his own study. But the idea of Coker propounding it to the Head, or to a police-inspector, made his friends look fairly aghast.

"You don't think the Head would see the matter as I do?" asked Coker thoughtfully.

"Nunno! I—I'm pretty sure he wouldn't!"

"He—he hasn't your brains, Coker!" gasped Greene.

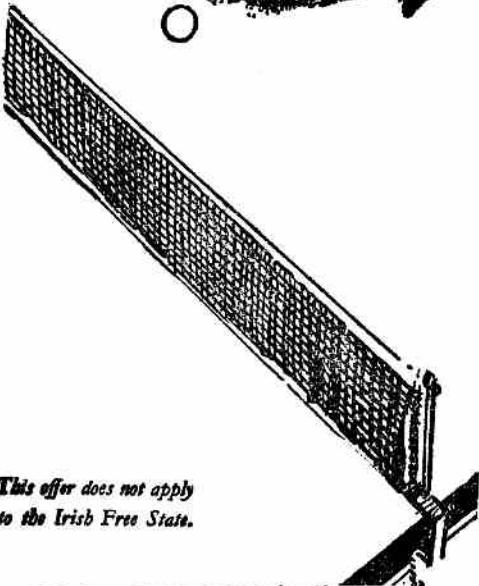
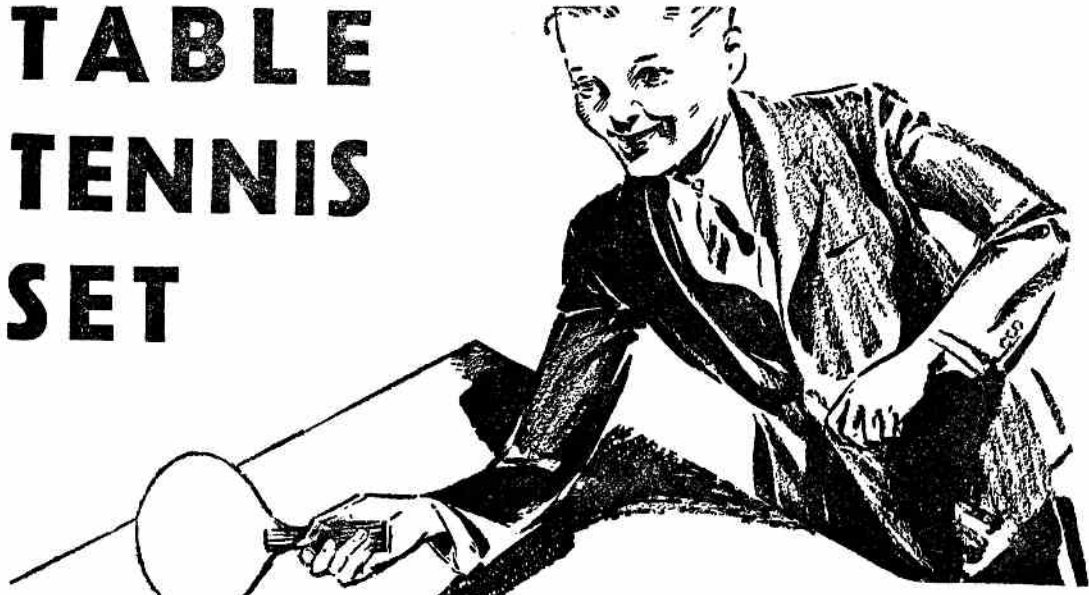
"That's so," agreed Coker. "I shall think it over before I tell anybody. In the meantime I shall go on gathering clues. If you fellows think of anything, you can tell me. In your humble way you may be able to render some small assistance. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know—"

"Oh crumbs!"

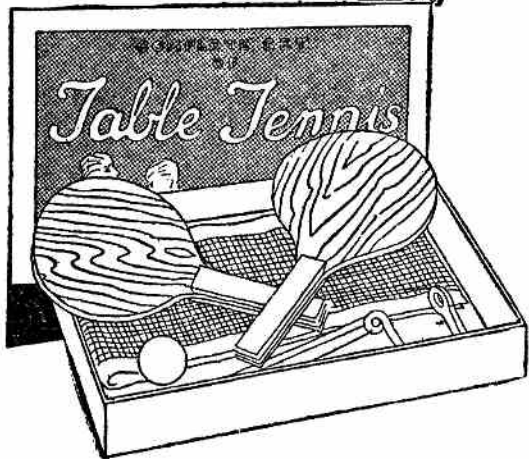
"We're going to save Prout, of course," said Coker. "That's up to us! I mean, I'm going to save him, and I shall let you fellows help. Goodness knows what might be his awful fate if I hadn't tumbled to the truth. Luckily, for Prout, I could see it all."

(Continued on page 14.)

TABLE TENNIS SET



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PROUT'S LOVELY BLACK EYE!

(Continued from page 12.)

Potter looked at Greene. Greene looked at Potter. They were making manful efforts to control their emotions. But their emotions threatened to be too much for their efforts at self-control.

"Now, I've explained the whole thing to you," said Coker. "That's my theory—for what it's worth! Tell me frankly what you think of it."

Coker paused; not, of course, for frivolous objections or carping criticisms. He paused like Sherlock Holmes for an outburst of wonder from Dr. Watson.

But if Coker was strong in the part of Sherlock Holmes, Potter and Greene failed lamentably in that of Dr. Watson.

They did not intend to tell Coker frankly what they thought of his theory and of the intellect that had evolved it. It would have offended Coker too much, and might have endangered their friendship. But as Coker looked at them earnestly, and waited for their reply, their long-suppressed emotions overcame them. Quite unintentionally they burst into a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker stared at them.

"What are you laughing at?" he demanded.

"Oh dear! Ha, ha! Nothing, old chap! Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Potter. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha! Sorry, Coker—ha, ha!—but it's too jolly funny—ha, ha!"

"Funny!" said Coker, in amazement. "Ha, ha!" yelled Greene. "I mean—ha, ha!—oh dear! Prout hasn't been kidnapped, old chap—it's all moonshine. Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker rose to his feet. The look he gave his study-mates might have withered a pair of stone images. But Potter and Greene were not withered. They went on chortling. The fact was, they could not help it. The desire to chortle had been strong upon them all the while Coker was propounding his startling theory. They had suppressed it. Now it had broken out, and taken the bit between its teeth, as it were. Potter and Greene yelled hysterically. They wiped their eyes and yelled again.

Coker gazed at them. His brow was set, his eyes beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath.

"So that's what you think of it?" he gasped.

"Oh dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, with a last withering glare, strode across the study, jerked open the door, and strode out, slamming the door after him with a slam that rang the length of the Fifth Form passage. And from Potter and Greene, now quite helpless with merriment, a yell followed him:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Asks For It!

BARGE in, fathead!" Harry Wharton called out cheerily as a knock came at the door of Study No. 1, in the Remove.

Prep was over in that famous study; and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were putting away their books. They expected their chums, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, to call in on their way down to the Rag. But it was not a member of the Co. who entered in response to Wharton's cheery hail. It was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form.

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Wharton and Nugent rose rather hurriedly as they saw Coker. Wharton's hand rested lightly on the inkpot; Frank's strayed, as if by accident, to a ruler. Friendly visits were not paid by Fifth Form men to Lower Fourth studies, and the chums of the Remove concluded that Coker was calling to settle accounts for that little episode in the fog the previous day.

But Coker, to their surprise, did not look hostile. He looked very thoughtful, indeed solemn, but not like a fellow on the war-path.

"Want anything, Coker?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"Yes," Coker glanced round the study. "I want some information. But I want to see the lot of you. Where are the other fags you kids generally go about with?"

"Us what?" asked Wharton politely. Coker made an effort.

"I mean, you fellows!" he conceded. "That's better," agreed Wharton.

"Well, the other fellows will come in when they've finished prep—any minute now."

"Then I'll wait," said Coker.

He sat down. He did not wait to be asked, or to inquire whether it was agreeable to the owners of the study for him to wait there. Coker was not the man to trouble about trifles like that.

Wharton and Nugent exchanged a puzzled glance, and then fixed their eyes on Coker. They were quite perplexed, and not particularly pleased, great as was the honour of seeing Horace Coker in their study.

"Did you say you wanted some information?" asked Nugent.

"That's it," Coker nodded.

"Trying to improve your spelling?"

"Eh?"

"If so, we'll coach you a little," said Frank. "Better begin with simple words, such as cat. C-a-t—cat! Not 'k.'"

Coker stared at him. Wharton chuckled.

"You cheeky young scoundrel!" said Coker. "If you want me to dust this study with you, you've only got to say so."

"So!" said Frank cheerily.

Coker half-rose from his chair. But he sat down again. He had not come there to row with the Removites, and he was exercising uncommon self-command.

"If it's not spelling, what is it?" asked Frank. "Do you want our help with your Latin? Take an easy example: Britannia est insula! Britain is an island. Now, say after me, Britannia est insula—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wharton, quite taken by the expression on Horace Coker's face. Again Coker half-rose. Again he sat down.

But apparently it was not on Latin, any more than on spelling, that Coker required information.

"Arithmetic?" asked Frank, apparently deriving some entertainment from pulling Coker's leg. "Considering the state of your knowledge of the subject, Coker, we'd better begin at the beginning! Twice one are two!"

Coker breathed hard.

"Twice two are four!" went on Nugent.

"You cheeky little scamp—"

"Twice three are six!" said Nugent gravely. "Now, we won't go any further till we're sure you've got that. Twice two?"

Coker glared instead of answering. "Four!" said Frank chidingly. "Try to remember that, Coker! Now, twice three?"

The door of Study No. 1 was hurled

open, and Bob Cherry tramped in, with the heavy tread that was reminiscent of the "huge earth-shaking beast" in Macaulay. Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh followed him in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" boomed Bob. "Finished prep? Hallo, hallo, hallo, you've got a jolly old visitor!" He stared at Coker.

"Coker's come here for information," explained Frank Nugent. "Judging by his failure to answer simple questions in arithmetic, he's in need of it. Now, Coker, try again! Twice two?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker rose to his feet. He controlled his strong desire to run amok and massacre the grinning Removites in a bunch. Coker had other fish to fry.

"Now you're all here," he said, "I'm going to put a few questions to you. I want you to speak frankly and carefully. I want the facts."

The Famous Five could only stare. What Coker of the Fifth was driving at was an utter mystery to them. They were not yet aware that Coker had taken up the sleuth business on the lines of Hickory Knutt, detective, as portrayed by that brilliant best-seller, Mr. Slapdash Wallop.

"I've taken up the case of Prout," added Coker, by way of enlightenment. "The which of who?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"The case of Prout."

"I don't quite follow," said Wharton. "Prout wasn't kept in a case, was he? Or do you mean his cigar-case?"

"You silly young noodle! I mean the case of Prout's disappearance."

"Has he disappeared?"

"He's gone!" said Coker. "I'm looking into the matter. Now, you kids—I mean, you fellows—were on the spot last night, when a disguised villain got into Prout's study after Prout. I saw the dastard later, in the quad, but only for a minute, and in the fog. You probably saw more of him. I hear that you handled him in Prout's study."

"That's so," said Wharton puzzled. "But what—"

"Have you any idea who he is?"

"I heard him numbing that his name was Herbert Harris—"

"Probably an assumed name!" said Coker. "Did you notice anything special about him—anything very special or striking?"

"Yes, rather."

"What was it?"

"His trousers."

"Trousers," repeated Coker. "Never mind his trousers—"

"I'm not going to. He can mind them himself, if they need minding."

"I mean, bother his trousers!" said Coker irritably. "Did you notice that he was in disguise?"

"My hat! No!"

"Had he a beard?"

"Sort of tuft like a billy-goat, I believe," said Harry, after some thought.

"Wanted shaving, I expect."

"False beard!" said Coker. "Did anything come off in the struggle?"

"Yes."

"What was it?" asked Coker eagerly, on the track of false beards and moustaches and wigs.

"His escapel!" said Wharton blandly. "We tried to prevent it, but it came off all the same."

"You silly young ass!" exclaimed Coker, blind to the playful humour of the Remove. "I mean, did his hair come off, or anything?"

"Yes; I fancy he got his hair off when we collared him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Be serious, you little idiot!" said

In a wild and dishevelled state, Coker was rolled along the passage. He roared as he rolled. "Yow-ow-ow! Yoop! Groogh! I'll spificate you!"



Joker angrily. "This is a serious matter—a jolly serious matter."

"Blessed if I see it," answered the captain of the Remove. "What do you want to know about that pincher for, anyhow?"

Coker hesitated. After its reception from Potter and Greene in his own study, he felt a little natural hesitation in propounding his theory of a kidnapping to these cheeky and unthinking fags. He had a sort of premonition that they would chortle, just like Potter and Greene.

"Well, the fact is, I'm taking the matter up," he said. "I'm going to find out what's become of Prout."

"Naughty to be inquisitive!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. "We're always kicking Bunter for being inquisitive."

"You silly young fathead!" gasped Coker. "I suppose I'd better tell you that I think Prout's had foul play. Now do you understand?"

The Famous Five jumped. Coker had succeeded in surprising them, at least.

"Foul play!" repeated Wharton blankly.

"That's it! The Head doesn't suspect it—and the police, of course, know nothing! I saw it all at a glance. Look here!" Coker simply could not

keep it in. "Look here, the fact is, my theory is that Prout's been kidnapped." "Kick-kick-kidnapped!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes, and by that scoundrel in a false beard, who pretended to be a common pincher when you bagged him in the study," said Coker. "According to my theory, he was an old bitter enemy of Prout's, who had tracked him down."

"Tut-tut-tracked him down!" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, rather like the Black-bearded Baronet in 'The Clue of the Copper Cooking-pot,'" said Coker. "Some old enemy from Prout's youth—"

"Must be a jolly old enemy, if he dates from Prout's youth!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The oldfulness of the esteemed enemy must be terrific!" concurred Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, that's the theory," said Coker, "and as I've taken up the case, I want all the information I can get. It turns out that you kids—fellows—were the last to see Prout alive. You saw the kidnapper in his study—"

"But—but he wasn't a kidnapper!" gasped Wharton. "He was just a common thieving tramp who'd taken advantage of the fog to sneak into the place to pinch something"

"He stuffed you with that!" said

Coker contemptuously. "You saw Prout in his presence. Did Prout show signs of recognition?"

"Not a small bit."

"He didn't start, or turn pale, or say anything like 'At last!' or 'After all these years!'" asked Coker anxiously. Coker was rather anxious for his case to proceed on the proper lines, as laid down by Mr. Wallop in his multifarious works.

The juniors chuckled.

"Not at all," said Harry. "He said 'What, what!' and 'Bless my soul!'"

Coker grunted. Evidently he was annoyed with Prout for having failed to play up on recognised lines.

"Well, he would, I suppose!" he snapped. "You feel sure he didn't recognise this man who assumed the name of Harris?"

"Quite sure! Even if he'd known him, he wouldn't have recognised him in the dark, I suppose. We could hardly see him ourselves."

Coker started.

"In the dark? Wasn't the light on?"

"No. Prout didn't want it on, for some reason—he stopped me when I was going to turn it on," said Harry. "He scooted us out of the study, and looked

(Continued on page 18.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,187.

IF THIS ADVERTISEMENT

should MEET the eye of Loder of the Sixth, I hope it blacks it!

Greyfriars Herald

Edited by HARRY WHARTON, F.G.R.



LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED!

One white mouse, answering to the name of Cornelius. Looks very much like Alonzo Todd. I am heart-broken at the loss, as I believe old Twigg has signed the poor beast's death warrant. GEORGE TUBB, Third Form.

No. 19.

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

November 15th, 1930.

BUSTER KEATON AT GREYFRIARS

“Wash Your Necks” Statement SURPRISING SEQUEL

There was a terrific sensation yesterday afternoon when it became known that Buster Keaton, the celebrated film star, had arranged to visit Greyfriars. How the rumour spread was not quite clear at the time. Bunter said he had heard Wibley talking about it in his study. Wib. who is rather in the know in film matters, didn't deny it, so most of us thought there must be something in it.

Great crowds assembled down at the gates in the afternoon. After a short interval, a lean, frozen-faced gentleman appeared down the lane, and there was a loud cheer as we recognised Buster Keaton himself.

Harry Wharton, representing the Lower School, stepped forward to do the honours.

“Welcome to Greyfriars, sir!” he said, doffing his cap. “Welcome to this historic old foundation—”

“So this is Greyfriars, is it?” interrupted Mr. Keaton, staring round him with a face like a graven image. “Funny little rabbit-hutch, isn't it?”



“Hem!” We frowned a little. None of us quite liked the comparison.

“I guess you're Greyfriars boys, then!” went on Mr. Keaton amiably. “Scruffy-looking crowd! Why don't you wash your necks occasionally?”

“Look here,” said Wharton with a frown.

“I'll look for a few seconds. Can't expect me to look longer than that at a face like yours, can you?”

“Mr. Keaton—” gasped Wharton. “That is, of course, if it is a face; but perhaps it's only a mask! Sakes alive! What's that?” yelled the film star, suddenly pointing to the ground.

“Something I'm treading on?” asked Bob Cherry in surprise. “No; it's your foot—I can see that now. Thought for a moment it was the foot of a mountain!”

“Why, you silly ass—” roared Bob.

“What a lot of niggers there are about!” remarked Mr. Keaton brightly. “Hold on, though; I believe it's only the ink-stains on your fingers!”

“Look here—” hooted a dozen chaps.

Mr. Keaton, a little alarmed, took a step back. That step was fatal! He tripped over the iron rail that bounded one of the flower-gardens and fell back in a heap. As he did so his hat came off and with it—a wig!

The next moment there was a yell. “WIBLEY!”

William Wibley, alias Buster Keaton, sat up, grinning ruefully.

“That's done it!” he remarked. “Anyway, you fatheads, I've done what I set out to do. After the way you howled me down over ‘Hamlet,’ I made up my mind I'd convince you I could act. Perhaps you'll admit it now!”

We did. We also admitted that Wibley deserved a ducking for his cheek, and what's more we saw that he got it without delay! By the time Wib. emerged from the pond in the Close he was firmly resolved that the next time he wanted to prove his Thespian ability he'd do it in a slightly less sensational way!

IF THE TRUTH WERE TOLD

Coker:

“I SWANK”

F. T. Fish:

“I SWINDLE”

A German scientist claims to have invented a preparation which acts on the brain in such a way as to compel people to tell the truth. When we get a supply of the magic dope at Greyfriars, the results should be very entertaining. This kind of thing, for instance, will be quite commonplace: HORACE COKER: What, me play footer? Ha, ha, ha! What I know about footer, I'm afraid, could be compressed into one word of three letters—“NIL.” I'll tell you one thing I am good at, though—SWANK! I really can guarantee to lick anyone else at Greyfriars hollow at that game! But I won't go on. Fact is, I talk too much; a nice long rest will do my jaw all the good in the world!

POTTER & GREENE: Coker, old man, you're an idiot!

FISHER T. FISH: Would any of you guys care to invest a few dollars in a first-class gilt-edged swindling ramp? If so, hand 'em over to me and you can bet your sweet life on one thing; that you'll never see 'em back again!

PERCY BOLSOVER: I went for him like a mad bull, but never landed anywhere near him! Meanwhile he was giving me a fearful pasting and I was yelling for mercy. All at once, he landed a hefty wallop on my jaw that laid me right out and that was the end of the scrap. I was four stone heavier than he was; so I ought to have won all right; but he was far too good for me—far too good!

PAUL PROUT, ESQ.: No, sir, I didn't kill a single grizzly in the Rockies. The reason? For one thing I'm too bad a shot and for another, I didn't see a grizzly.

BILLY BUNTER: I am not expecting a postal order. Imagination can hardly be expected to go farther than that, can it?

WIBLEY PLAYS HAMLET

CANDID CRITICS

A distinguished audience, containing many important figures in Remove society, assembled in the Rag to witness Mr. William Wibley's eagerly anticipated production of “Hamlet.” The famous actor-manager appeared in front of the curtain before the start and explained that he had improved Shakespeare's original version by cutting out all the characters with the exception of Hamlet. The advantages were: 1. That the production would not be spoiled by the incompetent acting on the part of minor characters, and (2) that the audience would be able to enjoy without interruption the magni-



ficent acting of the only real actor in the Remove—himself!

After this modest little speech Wib. got on with the washing. That's the best way I can put it, for the production turned out to be a complete washout! It's all very well to watch Wib. ranting and raving and clawing the air for five minutes at a time; but when it goes on without respite for an hour it's no joke. The audience stood it for a while. Then Bolsover started whistling; Skinner began a solo on the mouth-organ; Cherry and Bull got out a chess-board, and one or two others produced pea-shooters. Very soon Wibley had to yell at the top of his voice to make himself heard; soon after that the din drowned even Wib's yelling! One or two candid critics got up on the stage and told Wibley frankly that his acting was rotten, and that he ought to retire. As he didn't take the broad hint, he was bumped on the stage to the accompaniment of loud applause, and afterwards retired.

PROTECT YOUR CAMERAS WHEN TAKING PORTRAITS

Hints

With the dark days upon us, now is the time for amateur photographers to turn their attention to indoor studies. For those who revel in action snaps, some fine pictures of banister-sliding can be obtained at the bottom of the stairs leading from the Remove passage to the first-floor landing. Photographers are advised to take the precaution of erecting cast-iron barricades in front of them when on the job, otherwise the results to both camera and photographer are liable to be disastrous.

Several interesting “new angle” photographs have been secured by enterprising amateurs in the Remove recently. Dick Russell's photograph of a game of leapfrog taken while lying on his back with the camera on his chest is quite a little masterpiece. As to Wharton's snap of Bunter tying up his shoelace, taken from the keyhole of No. 1 study, it's a revelation—in no sense than one.

Kipps, the conjurer, joined the cameramen of the Remove last week, claiming to have invented a camera which would develop and print automatically, and deliver the completed picture a second or two after it had been taken. We fell for it like lambs and posed for a group outside the School House. Unfortunately for Kipps, Mr. Quelch strolled along at the crucial moment and joined the group without the new photographer's knowledge. When poor old Kipps emerged from the back of his “camera” proudly displaying a large-sized picture of a group of donkeys, the joke fell completely flat. Quelch hasn't gotten it yet, and Kipps certainly won't forget it until he's able to sit down in comfort.

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT: “Hypo” asks: “Will over-exposure ruin a negative?” I'm positive it will.

“LENS” asks: “How can I take a photo of myself?”

Very simple. Get your pal to hold the camera, stand across the room facing him, compose your dial, tell your pal to release the trigger, and—you've done the trick, providing the camera has survived the shock of your features, of course.

“NEGATIVE” writes: “Can I use a film that has been exposed but has come out blank?”

Yes, you can use up these films very well. Those you get without any image on them, put in your album, and affix a title to them as follows: “Aeroplane out of sight in a clear blue sky.” Or if the film's black: “Portrait of a nigger in a dark room.”

“BEGINNER” wants to know: “How can I start photography? I have got a camera, but the lens has gone. I've no money for films, the back of the camera is missing—but the handle is in good condition.”

Your problem is soon solved. Take the handle off the camera, throw the rest away, and keep that handle until pigs fly.



Harry Wharton's portrait of Billy Bunter “tying up his boot-lace.”



Action photo of junior playing leapfrog.

ARE YOU FAT-HEADED?

Handwriting Expert Requests Specimens

Professor Richard Rake, Handwriting Expert and Character Delineator, has been engaged by us at enormous expense for the purpose of delineating readers' characters, and advising as to their future careers from their handwriting. Readers are requested to send in specimens with a non-de-plume so that there can be no deception. The following are this week's characters:

“FAMOUS FIFTH FORMER.” You are foolish, fatuous, and fat-headed, brawny, bumptious, and brainless. You are overbearing, but not underhanded; you ride the high horse, but never walk away from danger. You're as obstinate as a mule, and generally speaking, you're an awful ass; but taking you all round, you're not a bad old scout! I should advise you to become a strong man in a circus or a retired colonel.

“TRANSATLANTIC” (Remove). Your cramped hand betrays a mean, grasping, mercenary nature, incapable of generosity or kindness. Your conceit is colossal and your “nerve” unlimited, but you've no brain to speak of, and no courage whatever. All the indications are that you would make an excellent money-lender or City shark; but I should recommend your adopting a career which keeps you in contact with honest work and decent company. Be a sailor or a navvy, and make a man of yourself, “Transatlantic”!

JUDGE SENTENCES HIMSELF

In the Woodshed Sessions, H. Wharton, Editor, surrendered to his bail on a charge of publishing an advertisement in the “Greyfriars Herald” calculated to cause a breach of the peace, the said ad. being for an alleged correspondence school for “blades” run by a certain H. Skinner.

There was some excitement in Court when the prisoner was seen to leave the dock, don a wig, and calmly proceed to make himself at home on the bench.

Tom Brown, K.C. (prosecuting counsel): “What the dickens—” Mr. Justice Wharton: “Silence in court! Get on with the washing, Browney!”

Tom Brown, K.C.: “But what are you doing up there? You're the giddy prisoner!”

Mr. Justice Wharton: “Quite; but I'm the giddy judge, too! Nothing wrong in that, is there? If you care to commit contempt of court by saying there is—”

Tom Brown, K.C. (hastily): “Nunno; certainly not, your lordship.”

Mr. Justice Wharton: “Carry on, then!”

Mr. Brown did so. His case was that the last number of the “Greyfriars Herald” contained an advertisement headed “Don't Be a Milkop!” which was not only offensive to every respectable reader, but was also an open incitement to innocent young men to abandon the straight and narrow path and become bold, bad blades. He held that prisoner, as Editor, was responsible for the publication of this objectionable ad. He demanded that the prisoner be given a dose of the “cat.”

Judge: “I will now defend myself. I admit responsibility for the publication of the advertisement, and would state that it slipped in quite accidentally. Unfortunately the paper is now printed with the exception of the stop press column, so it's too late to do anything. In the circumstances I find myself guilty!” (Sensation).

Tom Brown, K.C.: “And the sentence?”

Judge: “I sentence myself to pay a fine of five pounds.—Cheers—” The fine, of course, will be paid to the learned counsel who defended me.”

Tom Brown, K.C.: “But that's yourself!”

Judge: “Exactly. In other words, justice will be met if we consider the whole thing washed out. Next case, please!”

BOYS! You Can't Afford to Miss This!

The COURTFIELD CINEMA begs to remind its Greyfriars patrons that next week's programme includes the 100 per cent all-shooting Cowboy drama entitled:

“BANG!” Featuring Al Bunkum.

A Mighty, Thrilling, Gripping, Smashing, Soul-stirring, Heart-rending, Screamingly-funny Epic of Texas!

SUPPORTED BY The Most Staggering, Stupendous Spectacle of all time, showing Man's Struggle Against Inhu-

manity during the last 20,000 years.

“HOT DOG!” ROLL UP IN YOUR THOUSANDS, BOYS!

N.B.—Ink-pellets, pea-shooters, and squirters must be deposited with the manager before entering the hall.



(Continued from page 15.)

the door before he turned on the light." Coker's eyes gleamed.

"That clinches it!" he said, with conviction. "Prout would naturally have turned the light on when he came in. Evidently he knew the man, and hoped to keep his own identity secret from the villain. He didn't know that he was already known by the dastard."

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob Cherry. He gazed at Coker in great admiration. The juniors certainly had wondered why Prout hadn't wanted a light in his study. But assuredly it had never occurred to them that it was because he had an old, deadly dogged enemy there, from whom he wished to conceal his plump and podgy features. Only Coker was likely to think of an explanation like that.

"I knew it," said Coker. "I saw the whole thing at a glance from the beginning. Now it's an absolute cert. Prout's kidnapped, and that villain's got him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But the man scooted," said Wharton. "Prout was in his study long afterwards—"

"The villain came creeping back in the dead of night," explained Coker. "My theory is that he held Prout up with an automatic and marched him off to a car. That's the only theory that covers the whole ground. I fancy I've got the case pretty complete now—and I can go to the Head with it. It's for the Head to take action."

Harry Wharton & Co. fairly staggered. That Prout had been kidnapped, they did not believe for one moment. That Mr. Harris had been anything but a common sneak-thief, they declined to believe for one second. Coker's theory, in fact, was founded, not on actual occurrences, but on a long and enthusiastic perusal of "two-bob bloods." That was clear to the Famous Five, if not to Horace Coker. The idea of Coker going to the Head, and giving him this stuff, almost overcame the chums of the Remove.

"You—you—you're going to the Head?" gasped Wharton.

"That's it."

"To tell him that idiotic yarn?"

"That what?" ejaculated Coker.

"You howling ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "Prout hasn't been kidnapped. He's more likely to have gone to have his hair cut."

"For goodness' sake, Coker, don't be such a howling ass!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "The Head will think you're pulling his leg, and he may give you six."

"Don't do it, Coker!" urged Wharton. Really, it was kind of the Remove men. They were trying to save Coker from himself, as it were. The Head, of course, would utterly fail to see it all as Coker saw it.

Coker breathed hard and deep. He had stood this sort of thing from Potter

and Greene. He was not going to stand it from cheeky fags in the Lower Fourth.

"You think I'm making a fool of myself?"

"Well, I think Nature did that! But you're helping on the good work."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you think I'm going to stand your cheek?" roared Coker.

"My dear ass—"

"I haven't licked you yet for bumping me over in the fog!" bawled Coker.

"I might have let you off! Now I won't! You cheeky young cackling scoundrels, I'll mop up the study with the lot of you!"

"Here, I say, hands off! Oh, my hat!" roared Wharton, as the incensed Horace grabbed him. "Rescue!"

"Pile in!" roared Bob Cherry.

Coker, in just wrath, was going to thrash the whole Co., beginning with Wharton. But he ended as well as began with Wharton; it was a case of first in and not out! Coker found himself sprawling on the carpet in Study No. 1, with three or four fellows standing on him, and another emptying an inkpot over his upturned, infuriated face.

"Whooooop!" roared Coker. "Gug-gug-gug-gug!" he added, as some of the ink flowed into his wide-open mouth. "Yurrrrrgggh!"

"Roll him home!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Grooogh! Urrrrgh! I'll smash you! I'll— Yaroooooh!"

In a wild and dishevelled state, Coker was rolled out of the study into the Remove passage. There quite a crowd of Removites joined up, to lend a hand in rolling Coker home.

He rolled and roared.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yooop! Grooogh! I'll spifficate you! I'll— Yoop! I'll I'll— Whooooop! Grooogh! Oooooh!"

Coker, in a dazed and dizzy state, was rolled into the Fifth Form passage. There, at the uproar, a number of Fifth Form men came out of the games-study to see what the matter was. The Removites beat a prompt retreat, leaving Coker sprawling on the floor.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Blundell, of the Fifth.

"Groooooogh!"

"Ragging with fags again!" snorted Blundell; and he sniffed and went back to the games-study.

Coker picked himself up and crawled away. He gasped and gurgled as he went. And he did not call on the Head that evening to propound his startling theory of Prout's disappearance. After his experiences in the Remove passage he did not feel equal to unfolding his masterly theory to the Head.

Which was, perhaps, just as well for Coker. The Removites, after all, had saved Coker from himself—for the present, at least.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Discovery!

"RAIN!" grunted Coker.

And he added bitterly:

"Of course, it would rain!"

It might have been supposed, from Coker's bitterly sarcastic tone, that the elemental powers were devoting their special attention that Saturday afternoon to Coker of the Fifth.

Coker was following the road over the cliffs, all on his lonely own. It was Saturday, the third day since the mysterious disappearance of Prout.

Nothing had transpired during Thursday or Friday to account for that disappearance.

Prout had not come back. Nobody had heard from him. The Fifth Form, under a revised time-table, pursued the even tenor of their way, not worrying about Prout. It had leaked out that Coker believed that Prout had been kidnapped; but this, sad to say, only caused chuckles and chortles in the Fifth. Obvious as it was—to Coker—nobody else seemed to be able to see it. Price of the Fifth declared that anybody who kidnapped Prout could only have got him away, by rolling him along like a barrel. And such a proceeding would have attracted a lot of attention.

Jesting of this kind did not affect Coker's conviction. What he knew, he knew! What he had said, he had said!

But he had been discouraged from taking the Head into his confidence. Even Coker, convinced as he was by his own masterly reasoning, felt that he ought to have something a little more tangible to offer to the Head when he approached Dr. Locke on the subject. Every fellow who heard of this theory chortled. That did not prove that there was anything wrong with the theory, only that the fellows were a lot of fools. But it seemed probable that the Head might be affected in the same way. Theories were all very well; but an old-fashioned, rather fat-headed old gentleman like Dr. Locke was certain to ask for facts. Coker was short of facts.

So for the present Coker left the Head out of it, and concentrated his own mighty brain on the mystery.

Prout had been kidnapped! That was settled! Coker had deduced a fast car! But where had the car taken Prout?

Coker had examined the road for tyre tracks. He had found lots. Hundreds, in fact. He had plenty to choose from. But even Coker's eagle eye failed to select the tracks of the particular car that had carried off Prout.

In a couple of days most of the Greyfriars fellows had dismissed Prout from their minds. They had plenty of other matters to think about.

Coker did not dismiss him. If only as a consolation prize for that inadvertent punch he had given Prout in the fog, Coker was going to help him in his present distress—track down the dastardly kidnapper, and rescue the Form master. It was up to him, and he was going to do it.

This Saturday afternoon, Coker took a long walk, to have a quiet and concentrated think on the subject. Potter and Greene were playing football that afternoon; but, anyhow, Coker did not want their company. He was offended by the view they had taken of his kidnapping theory.

Coker thought hard as he walked; but he kept his eyes well about him all the time, of course. From his novel-reading he knew that chance often favoured a crime-investigator; for instance, the great Hickory Knutt dropped on clues in the most unexpected places. Coker had his eyes wide open for anything that might turn up—a little cigarette-ash, or a torn letter, or a blood-stain, or a fingerprint; all was grist that came to Coker's mill.

This might be the road, the very road, by which that sinister fast car had carried off Prout on Wednesday night. Prout might have dropped a

(Continued on page 20.)

BOYS! LOOK AT THESE NEW PRESENTS GIVEN BY CLARK'S CREAMED BARLEY



PRESENT No. 74.—No. 1 "Ernest Sewell" Cabinet of Six Conjuring Tricks, with full instructions. (Present No. 75, Cabinet of Ten Conjuring Tricks, for 30 Red Seals.)



PRESENT No. 76.—No. 3 "Ernest Sewell" Cabinet of Seventeen Conjuring Tricks, with full instructions.



PRESENT No. 77.—The fascinating Game of Diabolo—superior quality, comprising leather-bound ferrule-ended sticks and boxwood whistling cone with cushion rings.



PRESENT No. 87.—Nickel-plated Pocket Compass, invaluable to Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Walking Clubs.

EVERY PACKET OF CLARK'S CREAMED BARLEY

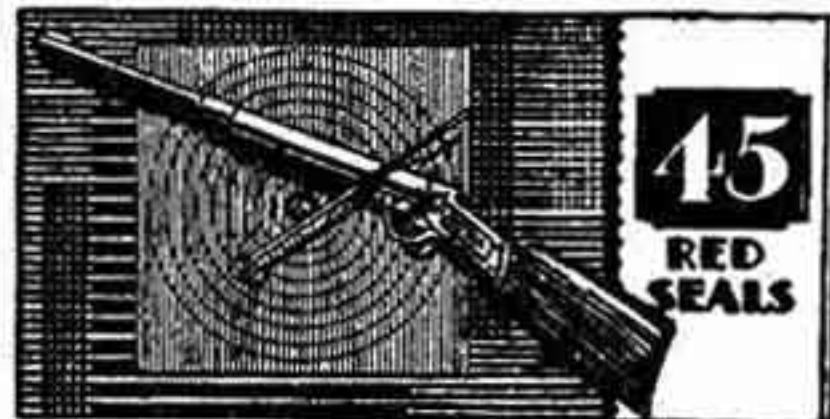
contains a Red Seal. Valuable Presents are given in exchange for these Red Seals. Examples are illustrated and described on this page. These Presents are entirely free from advertisement, and are sent post free in exchange for the number of Red Seals indicated.

CLARK'S CREAMED BARLEY

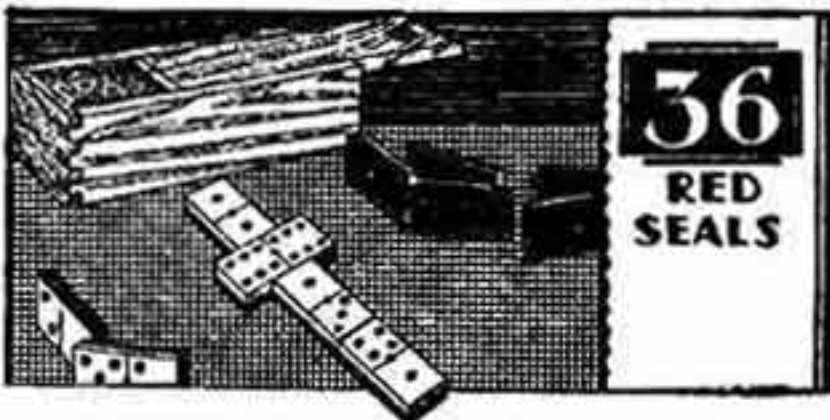
is a favourite with boys—and girls. It is delicious, and it is cooked ready-to-eat. It is rich in nourishment, and while it is satisfying it imparts a feeling of alertness and well-being. It is served instantly with milk, and it is delightful with stewed or preserved fruit.

**SAVE
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VALUABLE
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Get a 10½d. Packet from your Grocer



PRESENT No. 79.—Strong Air Gun, nickelled barrel—with box of pellets.



PRESENT No. 81.—Set of Dominoes in white-wood box with sliding lid.



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PRESENT No. 82.—Set of Polished Boxwood Draughts, in box with sliding lid, with artistic 14" Draughtboard.



PRESENT No. 84.—Set of Pocket Chess—chessmen finely carved in bone, with peg feet to fit into holes in inlaid walnut and satin-wood squares recessed in folding case, mahogany polished.



Sign this Coupon and get this Cycle for only 100 Red Seals

This Free-Wheel Child's Cycle, strongly made and well-finished with nickel-plated handle bars, brake, etc., will be supplied for only 100 Red Seals to all who send in this coupon to Clark's Creamed Barley, 72, Fleet Street, E.C. 4.

Name.....

Address.....

Name of Grocer.....

L&S/M

PROUT'S LOVELY BLACK EYE!

(Continued from page 18.)

handkerchief, or his spectacles, as a clue to searchers. Coker doubted, perhaps, whether Prout had brains enough to think of such a device; but it was, at least, possible. Coker would have been overjoyed had he picked up Prout's handkerchief, or Prout's specs, or anything else that was his.

His luck, however, was not in. If Prout had travelled that road he had not scattered any clues to ease the hard lot of a crime-investigator.

Then the rain came!

The fineness of the afternoon had tempted Coker out without either coat or umbrella. And the rain came on in a businesslike way.

Coker grunted angrily.

On the road over the cliffs there was no shelter. Buildings were few and far between. On Coker's left was a steep descent to the beach and the sea; on his right chalk cliffs extending to rolling grass-land. He was two miles from Greyfriars, and getting wet.

"Of course it would rain!" said Coker bitterly.

Fat lot of good it was looking for clues in a downpour of rain! Coker felt that it wasn't fair. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera of old; and really, the same thing seemed to be happening to Coker. He was the only fellow at Greyfriars who grasped the fact that his Form master had been kidnapped, the only fellow who was seeking to rescue him—and he was handicapped like this.

Coker trudged on doggedly, looking for shelter. There were cottages here and there along the cliffs, which in the summer were let to visitors; in the winter generally empty and locked up. The porch of such a cottage would have been a very welcome shelter to Coker.

That was how it happened that Coker, turning off the cliff road, followed a path that led to Cliff Cottage. It was a lonely building, set in a garden surrounded by a fence, facing the sea.

It must be admitted that Coker, powerful as his brain was, and masterly as were his deductions, had not deduced any connection between Cliff Cottage and the kidnapped Form master. It was not as a crime-investigator, but as a schoolboy who was getting wet, that he approached the lonely building.

As he approached he noticed that smoke was rising from the chimney; and it did not need the brain of a Hickory Knutt to deduce from this that the cottage was occupied.

Coker was glad to see it. It would be rather more pleasant to dry himself by the cottage fire than to stand shivering in the porch waiting for the rain to stop.

He concluded that a caretaker was in charge of the cottage, and was living there; for it could scarcely be let to a seaside visitor at that time of the year. A tip to the caretaker would make it all right. At the same time, Coker would ask him whether he had noticed a sinister-looking, fast car on that road on Wednesday night, or heard a cry for help, or anything of that sort.

Coker passed a little gate, walked up the path to the porch, and knocked on the door of the cottage.

He observed, as he did so, that the curtain of the front window was suddenly drawn. But for this Coker would have been able to look into the front

room window as he stood in the little trellised porch.

He did not, for the moment, attach any importance to the circumstance. What Hickory Knutt, or any other celebrated crime-investigator, would have deduced from it, we cannot say; but Coker, for the moment, deduced nothing. He was thinking chiefly of the rain that was trickling down his neck.

He knocked loudly on the door.

It seemed to him that he heard a murmur of voices within, but the sound was very indistinct. The door did not open, and Coker knocked again.

Then the green-painted door opened a few inches with a clinking of a chain. Possibly because the cottage was so lonely the occupant opened the door on the chain, being nervous of tramps. Or perhaps he had some other reason. Anyhow, the door opened only a few inches on the chain.

Through the aperture a face looked out at Coker.

It was quite a commonplace face. It was rather fat, it had a straggling beard and a reddish nose. There was a cast in one eye—which did not, for the moment, strike Coker as sinister, though he thought of it later. From what he could see of the man, he seemed commonplace and respectable; poor but honest, as it were. He looked at Coker inquiringly.

"Well?" he asked.

"I'm looking for shelter," said Coker. "I suppose you can see it's raining hard! Can't you open the door? Do you think I'm a tramp?"

"No, sir," answered the man civilly. "You can stay in the porch, if you like, till the rain stops. No objection, I'm sure."

"I'd like to dry myself by the fire," said Coker.

"Sorry, sir, but I can't let you in."

Coker stared at him. The man seemed about to close the door, but Coker promptly inserted a foot in the opening. Coker was not going to be shut out in the rain if he could help it.

"Why can't you let me in?" demanded Coker. "If you're the caretaker I'll pay you for your trouble. I'm wet—jolly wet."

The man shook his head.

"Are you the caretaker?" demanded Coker.

"No, sir; I'm the proprietor," said the man, still civil. "The fact is, sir, I've got a visitor staying here, and he's rather a nervous gentleman and doesn't like being disturbed. Sorry, but—"

"Well, I shan't disturb him. I suppose, by sitting by the fire while the rain passes off!" snapped Coker.

"Sorry, sir—"

Coker snorted.

"Look here, that's rot," he said. "Utter rot! I shan't disturb your visitor. Look at the rain!"

A gust of wind from the sea brought the raindrops spattering into the porch over Coker. Some of them spattered over the face that was looking out at him, and the man blinked.

"Please move your boot, sir," he said. "I want to shut the door."

"You're going to leave me out here in the rain!" hooted Coker indignantly.

"Sorry, sir; you can stay in the porch. My guest stipulated that he was not to be disturbed, and I'm paid according. If you'll move your foot, sir—"

"You're on the telephone here." Coker had noticed the wires. "Let me come in and telephone for a taxi from Courtfield, and sit by the fire till it

comes. That's not much to ask, I think."

"I'll telephone for you, if you like, sir," said the man. "But it will take a taxi a long time to get up here from Courtfield."

"And I'm to stand out here in the rain all the time?" hooted Coker, puzzled and exasperated.

This inhospitality was really perplexing, especially as the man did not look at all a cross-grained or evil-disposed fellow. In fact, he looked regretful; but at the same time he was evidently determined not to let Coker in. Coker could not understand it.

"Move your foot, sir, please," said the man, still civil. "I really must shut the door."

Coker planted his foot still more firmly. The man, as the owner of the place, was within his rights; but Coker was naturally irritated and exasperated.

"I'll stand you half-a-crown!" he snapped. "Now, then—"

"I can't let you in, sir!" said the man, more acidly. "I've let this cottage to a gentleman who wants to be quiet, and I'm not master here while it's let. Now please go away."

"Well, let him speak for himself," said Coker. "Call him!"

A fresh gust of wind and shower of rain made Coker all the more obstinate. There was not much shelter in a trellised porch from a heavy downpour.

"Sorry, sir; can't disturb him."

"Rubbish!" snapped Coker.

"Look here, take your hoof away, bother you!" snapped the man inside, growing angry in his turn.

Coker stared past the man into the tiny hall of the cottage, in the hope of seeing that gentleman who was not to be disturbed and putting it up to him. He saw no gentleman, but he saw a coatrack on which a greatcoat was hanging. As he saw that greatcoat Coker's gaze became fixed, as if mesmerised.

For he knew that greatcoat!

It had a fur collar, it was of a dark purple cloth, it was of ample dimensions, and it had served Mr. Prout, the master of Greyfriars Fifth, for many winters one after another.

Coker was fairly petrified.

There was no doubt about that coat! It was an unusual coat; it had been a very expensive coat, though it had seen its best days long ago. If it was not Mr. Prout's coat, it was the exact double of Mr. Prout's coat—same size, same unusual colour, same kind of fur collar, same kind of turned-back cuffs, same kind of broad bone buttons, and in the same stage of wear and tear.

The sight of Mr. Prout himself could not have startled Coker more. His eyes, passing the man's shoulder, glued on that coat.

What action Coker would have taken when he recovered from his amazement was doubtful; but he was not given time to recover and take action. The man at the door, obviously tired of Coker's persistence, and seeing no other way of removing the obstructing boot, suddenly pushed a pin into Coker's calf.

"Yaroooooh!"

Coker's roar startled all the seagulls along the cliffs. It might almost have been heard at Greyfriars.

Coker jumped wildly as he roared

Slam!

The door closed.

Coker was left in the rain, hopping on one leg.

"Fetch him, Biter!" said the man, and the mastiff rushed out. "Oh, crikey!" gasped Coker.



THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hook It!

HORACE COKER hopped. For the moment he forgot that he was a crime-investigator in possession of an important clue. The jab in his calf filled his thoughts and occupied his attention to the exclusion of all other matters.

It was a rather painful jab. Possibly the owner of Cliff Cottage felt that he had been driven to it, as there was no other way of getting rid of Coker. But it was painful. Coker hopped, and Coker bellowed.

"Oh! Ow! Wow! My leg! Wow! You scoundrel! Yoooop! I'll bash your cheeky nose through the back of your head! Yoooooooop!"

Bang, bang, bang!

Coker smote furiously on the closed door.

The little cottage echoed and re-echoed to his banging. From the interior came an exasperated shout:

"Go away! I'll set the dog on you! Clear off!"

Coker calmed himself. It had been a painful jab, but it wore off very soon.

The agony, as Macaulay would have said, had abated. Coker rubbed the injured place and ceased to bang on the door.

No longer distracted from the investigation of crime by the pain in his calf, Coker's thoughts returned to his discovery. He had seen Prout's coat hanging in the cottage. That was a certainty. It followed that Prout was there. Prout was not in the coat, but he was in the cottage. There could be no doubt about that. Obviously the Fifth Form master had left Greyfriars in that coat, and Coker had found the coat. It was the same thing as finding Prout.

Coker breathed hard and deep, and his eyes glistened.

Chance had led him to Cliff Cottage—or, rather the pursuit of clues on the cliff road had led him there. Coker, with a sort of mental jump, as it were, realised that he had felt suspicious about that lonely cottage from the very beginning. Anyhow, he had been looking for clues to the kidnapped Form master—and he had found an undeniable clue. It had fairly stared him in the face.

Coker had to think this out.

Of course, he understood the whole

thing now. The strange inhospitality of the cottager was explained—the visitor who did not want to be disturbed was a kidnapped man held a prisoner there. The excuse for refusing Coker admittance had been flimsy enough; but Coker saw now that the man had had a powerful reason. Very likely he had known that Coker was a Greyfriars man—the very last fellow he was likely to admit, if he had a Greyfriars master imprisoned in the cottage.

That purple greatcoat settled the matter. Prout was there! It was by this lonely cliff road that the sinister-looking fast car had carried Prout off. With great cunning the kidnapers were keeping him only a few miles from the school, knowing, of course, that if they were suspected and searched for, nobody would expect to find them near Greyfriars. Coker's powerful brain had visualised a fast car bearing Prout off to parts unknown—hundreds of miles, perhaps, from Greyfriars. Now he realised that the crooks who had kidnapped Prout had been more cunning than that. Even if the Head, or Inspector Grimes, had Coker's brains, and saw it all like Coker saw it, they would

not suspect that the kidnapped master was with an easy walk of the school all the time. The thing was safe, secure, from its very audacity.

Except, of course, for Coker. Chance, combined with a masterly following-up of clues, had led Coker to Cliff Cottage, and now he knew where Prout was.

Now he remembered how the curtain had been drawn across the front window as he approached. He knew why now—it was to shut off a prisoner from his inspection.

Prout was in that room—bound and gagged, most likely. For if he was not bound there was nothing to prevent him from bursting out of the cottage window. If he was not gagged there was nothing to prevent him from shouting for help when he heard Coker's voice—and he must have heard it, for Coker's powerful tones had boomed through the cottage and far beyond.

Bound and gagged! Poor old Prout! Lying bound and gagged, and hearing the voice of a fellow in his own Form at Greyfriars—unable to stir a finger, unable to call for help!

Standing in the little porch, getting what shelter he could from the steady rain, Coker thought it out. He tried to visualise what his favourite character in fiction would have done in the circumstances. Hickory Knutt, of course, would have put his brawny shoulder to the door, burst it open, and strode in with levelled automatic. But Coker's shoulder, though hefty, was not quite hefty enough for barging through a stout door; moreover, he had no automatic. It was no use saying "Hands up!" to a gang of crooks, or even to a single, solitary crook, when he had not even an umbrella with which to enforce the command.

Prudence counselled Coker to retire from the scene, get help, and come back

with strong forces to the rescue. The police were bound to take the matter up, when he could give them positive facts instead of airy theories. But suppose, in the meantime, that the crooks took alarm and whisked off Prout to a safer spot? It was possible.

He moved away from the porch, heedless of the rain. Rain mattered little now; besides, Coker was very nearly as wet already as he could be. Heedless of falling water, Coker looked for some object with which to barge in the door.

He selected a large chunk of rock from a rockery in a corner of the garden. He noticed that there were tyre tracks on the path outside the cottage. He had not noticed them before; but he was, of course, more watchful now. They were rather old tracks—obliterated in places by footprints, but still plainly distinguishable in the mud and sand here and there. Within the last few days a car had come up to that lonely cottage. That it had come on Wednesday night, and that it had contained Prout, Coker could hardly doubt. There was no garage to the place—the car was not kept there. It had landed Prout there and gone, leaving him in the charge of that scoundrel with the sinister cast in his eye!

Having selected a hefty rock, Coker approached the door of the cottage again. Probably his movements had been watched from a window, for as he neared the door it opened.

The man with the cast in his eye stood there, with an exceedingly angry face. What Coker intended to do with the rock was fairly obvious; and it seemed to have an annoying effect on the proprietor of the property.

For his anger Coker cared not a straw. But beside the man in the doorway stood a large mastiff. And the man said: "Fetch him, Biter!"

The mastiff rushed out. Coker jumped back.

"Oh crickey!"

Biter had a fine set of teeth, all of which were displayed as he rushed at Coker, and they indicated that he deserved his name. There was a deadly gleam in Biter's eyes as he made for Coker.

Coker dropped the rock and ran.

There was no help for it. There are times when the boldest spirit must retreat. The bold eagle that rushes exultingly forth from his home in the dark rolling clouds of the north must flee from the gun of the fowler. The biggest and proudest battleship must turn tail to a submarine. The boy who, unaware, ranging the woods to start a hare, comes to the mouth of a dark lair, where, growling low, a fierce old bear lies amid bones and blood—can only hit the home trail with promptness and dispatch. So it was with Coker! Bonehead Chummond would have stretched the mastiff dead with a single crack of his automatic; Hickory Knutt would probably have quelled him with a single penetrating glance of his inscrutable eye. But Coker didn't feel inclined to risk it. He ran for it!

And he ran hard.

"Fetch him, Biter!" yelled the man with the defective eye.

Biter did his best.

But Coker's long legs were going in great style. He took the garden gate in his stride.

After him leaped Biter.

Coker heard a snap of teeth. He realised that a section of trousering was missing from his attire. And he redoubled his efforts and disappeared along the cliff road at a pace that left Biter standing.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Grimes Is Not Taking Any!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"This way, Coker!"
"Come in out of the jolly old rain, fathead."

Coker stared round. The rain was simply drenching; but Coker hardly thought about the rain. That snap of teeth behind him, on the cliff road, had given Coker a horrid thrill. He ran, and ran, and ran—and he came out into Friardale Lane at top speed, panting, gasping, but still going strong. And then he was hailed from a car that slowed down at sight of the Fifth Form man racing along in the rain.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the car, with Lord Mauleverer of the Remove. The afternoon had started fine, and Mauly had asked the Famous Five to accompany him in the car for a drive over the downs. But the drive had been out rather short when the firmament opened and poured forth its watery contents. The juniors were on their way back to the school when Coker of the Fifth appeared in the offing.

The car stopped, and Coker came up to it. Cheerily the Removites made room for the drenched Fifth-Former; and gladly Coker scrambled in out of the rain. The fact that Coker was generally at deadly feud with the Remove men was forgotten now. Coker was wet—very wet—and the chums of the Remove were kind and good-natured.

"Lift back to the school, Coker?" asked Lord Mauleverer, as Coker sat down drenched and panting, the other occupants of the car giving him plenty of room, partly from motives of politeness, partly because he was so frightfully wet. Water was running down Coker



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and forming a pool on the floor of the car.

"Oh dear!" gasped Coker. "Thanks for the lift! I say, look here—give me a lift to Courtfield, will you?"

"Take you on to Courtfield with pleasure, Coker," said Mauleverer. "But—hadn't you better get in and change first? You look—er—damp."

"No time for that!" gasped Coker.

"You'll catch cold," said Bob Cherry.

"Never mind—so long as I rescue Prout."

This reply was so utterly unexpected that it made the Removites jump. They looked at Coker, looked at one another, and looked at Coker again.

"Prout?" said Wharton.

"Yes, I've found out where he's hidden away by the kidnapers. I'm going straight to the police now. Tell your man to stop at the Courtfield Police Station, Mauleverer."

"Great gad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Coker, old man—" murmured Bob.

"You see," murmured Wharton,

"Prout hasn't really been kidnaped, Coker! Not quite, you know! Hadn't you better—"

"The kidnapfulness has not been terrific, my esteemed and absurd Coker," said Hurree Singh, shaking his head.

But Coker, of course, was not to be dissuaded. What Coker knew, he knew.

"I've found him," he said calmly.

"You've found Prout?" stammered Wharton.

"Yes, he's a prisoner in a lonely cottage on the cliffs—the little place called Cliff Cottage, kept by a man with a cock-eye—"

"I've seen the place," said Harry.

But—

"Prout's there—a prisoner! The villain set his dog on me when I tried to get at Prout—"

The juniors understood now why Coker had been putting it on to such an extent when they sighted him.

"The brute jolly nearly got me!" said Coker. "He's taken a piece out of my trucks. That doesn't matter, though, so long as I get the police there before they can remove Prout to some other place."

"You saw Prout there?" ejaculated Wharton.

"I saw his coat hanging in the cottage. You know Prout's big purple coat—no mistaking that. And the cock-eyed villain wouldn't let me in out of the rain—made out that he had a visitor who mustn't be disturbed. Set the dog on me when I was going to bu't in the door! Tell your man to buck up, Mauleverer—I'm afraid they may get Prout away before I can save him. Hurry!"

"Oh gad!" said Mauly. But he did as Coker asked. The car fairly flew through the pattering rain.

Coker, as he recovered his breath, gave the juniors a full account of his startling discovery. They listened in astonishment. Certainly, they were not convinced that Prout had been kidnaped. But they had to admit that the circumstances were very curious, indeed, mysterious.

"Prout may have gone there for a rest or something," said Johnny Bull dubiously. "People take that cottage in the summer, you know—holiday people. Prout may be giving himself a rest—"

Coker sniffed.

"You think he's there of his own accord, you young ass?"

"Well, yes, if he's there at all."

"Then why didn't he show up? He must have heard me—and besides,

wouldn't he have let in a fellow of his own Form out of the rain? Why should he keep out of sight and let that cock-eyed blighter set the dog on me?"

That was unanswerable. If Mr. Prout, inexplicably, had hired Cliff Cottage, and was residing there, was it not certain that he would have let Coker in out of the rain? The juniors had to admit themselves perplexed.

"Perhaps it wasn't his coat, but a coat like his?" suggested Nugent.

"That coat's pretty well known at Greyfriars!" said Coker. "I'd know it anywhere."

"Well, it's a bit unique!" admitted Wharton. "But—"

astonishment, his astonishment to amazement, his amazement to a sort of petrification.

He gazed at Coker blankly.

"My word!" said Mr. Grimes. "My word!" He scanned Coker carefully. It was scarcely possible to suspect a Fifth Form man of Greyfriars of having been drinking. But the thought crossed Mr. Grimes' mind for a moment. Still, he could see that Coker hadn't been drinking. He had had plenty of liquid refreshment that afternoon, but all in the form of rain, and taken externally.

"There's not a moment to lose, Mr. Grimes!" gasped Coker. He was surprised that Mr. Grimes did not leap

GREYFRIARS CORRESPONDENTS.

No. 18.

This week our long-haired poet comes up to scratch again with a snappy poem written around George Tubb, one of the leading lights of the "fag" fraternity.



DEAR MATER,—I hate writing letters;
My wandering thoughts are at sea;

I'd very much rather my betters
Wrote lovely long letters to me!
For maters and paters are idle,
With plenty of lezzure to spare;
They know not the bit and the bridle
That hard-working fags have to bear!

I'm fagging for Wingate at prezzant;
He's decent, but awfully strict;
Whenever his mood is unplezzant
I often get scolded and kicked.
I burnt all his bacon this morning
To sinders, and he was "done brown."
He lifted his boot without warning,
And now I can hardly sit down!

With duties and cares multifarious
(A word Mr. Wiggins once used),
How can I be gay and hilarious,
And keep all my comrades amused?
I groan as I dry up the dishes,
I sigh as I shovel the coal;
And Wingate, who scolds me and swishes,
Forgets that a fag has a sole!

Dear mater, I'm worn out and weary;
My funds are exhausted, as well!
So make me feel chirpy and cheery,
And brighten my life for a spell,
By sending a hansum donation
(Five shillings would do me a treat).
I'll have a first-rate sellybration,
And prommis I won't over-eat!

At lessons I'm getting on glorious
(You'll dance when you see my report!);
I am valliant, brave, and victorious
At hop-scotch and other big sport.
And ev'ry Dick, Harry, and Tommy
knows
How grate is my prowess and skill
At ludo, at drafts, and at dominnoes;
I'm Lower School Champion still!

But lissen! I hear a voice bawling,
"Who's seen that young sinner,
George Tubb?"
To Wingate I'd better be crawling—
I feel I could brake down and blub!
For Wingate is giving a dinner
(A horrible, glutternus orgy),
And will not invite "that young
sinner,"
Your loyal and luvving son,
GEORGIE.

"There's no doubt about the matter," said Coker. "The only thing is to get the police there before they can get Prout away."

The car was dashing into Courtfield now. It drew up outside the police station, and Coker popped out of it like a pip from an orange. Harry Wharton & Co. remained in the car, while Coker of the Fifth shot into the building.

The constable on duty eyed him with surprise. Coker, drenched, excited, almost wild-eyed, startled him. But the Greyfriars senior was shown into Inspector Grimes' room, and the inspector, in turn, eyed him with surprise.

Coker panted out his startling story. Mr. Grimes surprise intensified to

from his seat to take immediate action. Instead of that the Courtfield inspector just sat blinking at him.

"Um!" said Mr. Grimes. "Cliff Cottage, you say?"

"Yes, yes!"

"A very respectable man, named Jenks, lives there," said the inspector. "He lets his cottage to visitors, and does the chores for them. Usually in the summer, of course, but—"

"My Form master is a prisoner in that cottage, Mr. Grimes."

"Um! Well, I'll speak to Jenks," said Mr. Grimes. "I remember he had the telephone put in for the convenience of his boarders. Wait a minute or two, Mr. Coker."

Mr. Grimes stepped to the telephone. Coker waited with the utmost impatience. Grimes was going to speak to the cook-eyed blighter—practically to put him on his guard! Coker could not prevent it, and he reflected bitterly that it was exactly what he might have expected from the official police. All the detectives in his favourite fiction were similarly handicapped by the obtuseness of the official police.

Mr. Grimes soon got his number. Coker did not hear what he said into the phone, and did not, of course, hear what was said in reply from Cliff Cottage. But from where he stood waiting he watched the inspector, and to his amazement he saw a broad grin dawn on Mr. Grimes' florid face.

"Oh, the dickens!" he heard the inspector ejaculate. "Oh, of course, Jenks! Strictly private, of course! Not a word, naturally! Ha, ha!"

The inspector was laughing. It was incredible to Coker—absolutely incredible. Somehow, that scoundrel at Cliff Cottage was fooling the official, of course; making out, perhaps, that Coker was an excited ass, who had discovered a mare's nest, or something of the sort. Undoubtedly, Mr. Grimes was laughing!

He put up the receiver at last and came back to Coker, his plump face wreathed in smiles.

"It's all right, Mr. Coker," he said reassuringly. "I've had a talk with Jenks—and it's all right. Nothing wrong—no harm done! Take it from me."

Coker stared at him. "I've got a car outside," he said. "Get your men into it, an' let's get off to Cliff Cottage at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Grimes. "What are you laughing at?" howled the exasperated Coker. "Can't you see it's serious?"

Mr. Grimes controlled his merriment. "My dear young man, it's all right!" he said. "Don't you bother any further about the matter. Take it from me."

"My Form master has been kidnapped—"

"Not at all, not at all!" said Mr. Grimes soothingly, as if he were talking to a child. "It's all right."

"Tell me what Jenks said!" demanded Coker.

"The fact is, it's private," said Mr. Grimes. "My advice to you, sir, is not to interfere in the matter at all. I am convinced that your Form master would not desire you to do so. You may do harm, but certainly no good. Jenks has explained the matter to me, and you can take it from me that there is absolutely nothing wrong."

"You mean that the scoundrel has pulled your leg, and you're fool enough to let him do it?" roared Coker in intense exasperation. The stolid obtuseness of the official police was rather too much for Coker's patience.

Mr. Grimes stared at him. "That's not the way to talk, young man," he said. "You had better go."

"Look here—"

"Come, come!" said Mr. Grimes impatiently. "I've told you it's all right! Now run away."

"You refuse to help me rescue a kidnapped man?" bawled Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped the inspector. "I—I mean—nobody's been kidnapped! It's all right! Mr. Jenks is a most respectable man. He set the dog on you because you were going to burst in his door. He was quite within his rights, Mr. Coker. You can't break up people's property like that, you know! You might have been summoned—"

"You've let him fool you, you fat—"

head!" roared Coker. It was not really a proper way in which to address a police inspector, in his own room in his own station. But allowance must be made for Coker's feelings. In his mind's eye, he saw his Form master lying bound and gagged, longing for help and rescue! And here was the man who ought to have flown to his aid, grinning like a monkey! Naturally, it was too much for Coker.

Mr. Grimes ceased to grin, and frowned portentously. He seemed to dislike being called a fathead. He touched a bell.

"Show this lad out!" he said to the constable who entered.

"Look here!" roared Coker. But he had no time to say more. He was shown out—or, to be more exact, led out, with a grasp on his shoulder that was like a vice. Once more Coker found himself in the falling rain.

He stood and gasped, the constable grinning after him from the station entrance, Harry Wharton & Co. smiling at him from the car. He bolted across the pavement to the car at last.

"Greyfriars!" he gasped. Coker squashed into the car.

"Get going! Tell him to rip! I've got to get to the Head! That fool Grimes has let the kidnapper pull his leg—he's not interfering! Get back to the school—quick!"

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "But—" gasped Harry Wharton. "Quick!" roared Coker.

The car rushed away. There was nothing doing at Courtfield Police Station; and Coker could only hope that he would have better luck with the Head.

Crimson with wrath, burning with impatience, Coker counted the seconds as the car sped swiftly back to Greyfriars.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Exciting News!

"I SAY, you fellows! What's up?" Billy Bunter wanted to know. The car had barely stopped when Horace Coker leaped out of it, and rushed into the House.

Bunter, as it happened, was on the steps. Seeing Coker coming at such a rate, Bunter would have done well to step aside, and leave inquiry till later. But Bunter's big brain seldom worked quickly. He blinked at Coker in great astonishment through his big spectacles, and blinked at the other fellows getting out of the car. He was in Coker's way—and Coker had no time to go round him. It was, in fact, a long way round Bunter. Coker gave him a shove, which spun him out of the way, and rushed on into the House.

Bunter sat down on the steps. He roared as he sat.

"What the thump!" exclaimed Wingate of the Sixth, who had been an amazed witness of Coker's hurried arrival.

Fellows gathered round. During the run home from Courtfield, the rain had stopped. A burst of sunshine followed the rain, and it had tempted many fellows out of doors. So there were plenty of Greyfriars men on hand to witness Coker's dramatic arrival.

Heedless, Coker rushed into the House. There was no time to lose, as Coker knew, if no one else did.

"Hallo, here's Coker!" exclaimed Potter of the Fifth.

Potter and Greene were loafing about with disgruntled looks. Football that afternoon had been a wash-out literally. The footballers had been fairly washed

off the field. Potter and Greene and the other men had naturally been annoyed, especially as the rain had now stopped, and the sun was coming out again, after the game had been abandoned. Potter and Greene were finding what comfort they could in making remarks about the weather and the climate, when Horace Coker dawned on them.

They stared at Coker. He was wet, excited, and in a terrific hurry. He was rushing past them when Potter caught him by the arm, to stop him and inquire what was up. Going at such a speed, Coker did not stop; but he spun right round Potter, as his arm was grasped, circling him as if Potter were the centre of a planetary system and Coker a revolving planet.

"Oh! I gasped Coker. "Leggo!"

"What's up?" shrieked Potter. "I've found him!"

"Him! Whom?"

"Prout!"

"But—but— What— Who— How—" babbled Greene. "I've got to get to the Head!"

"But, I say—" gasped Potter. Coker had no time to waste. He wrenched his arm away, and sped on, full steam ahead for Dr. Locke's study.

Potter and Greene stared after him, almost in stupefaction.

"Is he potty?" gasped Greene. "Was he ever anything else?" said Potter.

"I say, you fellows—"

The Famous Five had stepped out of the car. Lord Mauleverer was still sitting in it. The clouds had rolled away, and bright sunshine was streaming down on a weeping quadrangle.

Wingate of the Sixth strode up to the Famous Five. Thirty or forty fellows at least were gathering round.

"Coker came in with you kids?" asked Wingate.

"Yes," answered Harry.

"Then I suppose you know what's up with him? What has happened?" demanded the captain of Greyfriars. "Is he insane, or what?"

"More or less, I think," answered Harry.

"The morefulness is more probable than the lessfulness," remarked Hurreco Jamset Ram Singh.

"He thinks he's found Prout," added Wharton.

Wingate jumped.

"Prout! What about Prout? How could Coker find Prout? He hasn't been lost, has he?"

"Coker thinks he was kidnapped—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Loder of the Sixth. "I've heard that before! Coker has been telling the world that Prout was kidnapped the other night. Goodness knows what put it into his head."

"My only hat!" said Wingate. "The man must be off his rocker! Where has he gone now?"

"He's gone to the Head!" yelled Temple of the Fourth. "I saw him barge into the Head's study."

"Oh crumbs!" said Potter and Greene together. "Coker's done it this time."

"But—but—but—" gasped Wingate, staring at the chums of the Remove.

"If he isn't quite mad, what does he mean by it? What makes him fancy that Prout was—my hat!—kidnapped?"

"He's worked it out, as if it happened in a two-bob blood!" gasped Potter. "He's got it all out and dried."

Harry Wharton & Co. explained what Coker had told them in the car. The crowd round them increased in numbers, and all listened eagerly. Prout and his proceedings had been almost forgotten by most of the fellows; but there was a sudden revival of interest now. Coker



Mr. Prout beheld the staring crowd from the doorway, and heard an excited squeak: "I say, you fellows! Prout's got a black eye! He, he, he!"

of the Fifth had given the mystery of Prout a new lease of life.

"And—and he went to the police?" stammered Wingate.

"Yes." Wharton nodded. "But they seem to have turned him down! Inspector Grincks wasn't taking any."

"And—and now he's gone to the Head to tell him that Prout's been kidnapped!" gasped Wingate. "Oh, my only hat! The howling ass! The burbling fathead! The—the—the—" Wingate paused as if in want of expressions strong enough for the occasion.

"I'll say he's the world's prize boob!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"All the same, it's queer," said Bob Cherry. "If Prout's coat is at the cottage on the cliff Prout must have been there. And Coker could hardly be mistaken about that coat! We all know that coat! It's part of the scenery at Greyfriars in the winter term."

"That's so," agreed Price of the Fifth. "Solomon in all his glory wasn't arrayed like Prout when he's got that coat on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Prout's there, he must have gone there," said Wingate. "But—but it is jolly queer if he's there that he didn't let Coker in out of the rain—and let Jenks set the dog on him."

"The queerfulness is terrific."

"But—but there can't be anything in it!" said Wingate. "It's impossible, of course; and we all know what an idiot Coker is!"

"Easy enough to make sure!" said Blundell of the Fifth. "It's only a

walk to the place—and the rain's stopped—"

"Good egg!" exclaimed Fitzgerald. "Let's go and see! If poor old Prout has been kidnapped—ha, ha!—we'll soon root him out."

"He can't have taken a seaside cottage for a holiday in November I should think!" remarked Vernon-Smith.

"I say, you fellows, perhaps Prout pawned that overcoat!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Perhaps it was up the spout and the man bought it cheap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Prout was wearing that coat on Wednesday," said Nugent. He had it on when he was groping about in the fog.

"I'm going over on my bike," announced Temple of the Fourth.

A dozen fellows rushed away for their bikes. Others were heading for the gates with the intention of walking over to the cottage on the cliff. The keenest interest was now concentrated on that building. If Prout was there the matter was certainly mysterious and intriguing. His departure from Greyfriars had been sudden; and if he had gone no farther than a couple of miles, if he was lodging at a cottage so near the school, without letting anybody at the school know, obviously there was something mysterious about it. Some of the fellows wondered whether, after all, Coker might possibly be right. It seemed improbable that Coker could be right about anything. Still, improbable was not impossible.

Lord Mauleverer leaned out of the car.

"Hop in, you men," he said. "We'll run across there, what? Anybody else like a lift?"

There was a numerous acceptance of the offer. The Famous Five piled in, Billy Bunter wedged in after them, and as many fellows as the car would hold—and one or two more—wedged in after Bunter. When the car started it was loaded to capacity.

Cyclists were round it all the way; fellows on foot dotted the route. Half Greyfriars at least, was heading for Mr. Jenks' lonely cottage. If the missing Form master was there, kidnapped or not, there was no doubt that he was going to be rooted out. If Mr. Prout, like the flower in the poem, desired to blush unseen and waste his sweetness on the desert air, Mr. Prout was going to be disappointed.

HE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

To the Rescue!

THUMP!

It was not a knock at the Head's study door—not an ordinary knock. It was a hefty thump.

Dr. Locke gave a little jump. Mr. Quelch, who was with him, glared round at the door wondering who could possibly have the temerity to deal such a thump on such a door.

There was no need for the Head to say "Come in!" The door was almost hurled open and Coker of the Fifth came in unbidden.

"Sir!" gasped Coker. Dr. Locke rose to his feet. His majestic frown was terrific.

"Coker! Boy! How dare you enter my study in this disorderly manner? I repeat, how dare you?"

"I've found him, sir!"

"Is the boy insane?" asked the Head, apparently addressing space.

"I've found Prout, sir!" gasped Coker.

"Prout! Mr. Prout?"

"Yes, sir! He's been kidnapped—"

"WHAT!"

"And I've found him! He's kept a prisoner—"

"This unfortunate boy seems to be out of his senses!" said the Head, staring blankly at Horace Coker.

"Let me explain, sir—"

"You will certainly explain your extraordinary statement, Coker—and if your explanation is not satisfactory, you will be caned severely. Now, sir, what do you mean?"

Coker blurted it out. There was no time to explain to the Head all the masterly deductions by which Coker had established the kidnapping. There was no need for theories now. Coker had the facts.

He fairly hurled the facts at Dr. Locke. Prout, bound and gagged, lay in the lonely cottage on the cliff, guarded by a cock-eyed villain and a savage dog. These were the salient facts of the case; and Coker chucked them at the Head almost like brick-bats.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, gazing at Coker.

"There's no time to lose, sir!" panted Coker. "I'm sure the villains will be shifting Prout to another place—now they know they're discovered! They've got him, sir! I'm ready to handle them, with a few fellows to back me up—"

"Mr. Quelch," said the Head dazedly, "what do you think of this extraordinary story?"

Mr. Quelch fixed his gimlet eyes on Coker.

"You say that Mr. Prout was bound and gagged, Coker?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then you actually saw him—"

"Oh! No, sir!"

"Then how do you know that he was bound and gagged?"

"I deduced that, sir—"

"What?"

"I mean, he must have been, or he would have shown up! He must have heard me at the door—yet that bung-eyed bounder set the dog on me—scouted me out into the rain—Prout would have chipped in if he could have—"

"You have no proof that Mr. Prout is there at all."

"His coat, sir—"

"There may be other overcoats like Mr. Prout's—"

"Not like that coat, sir! You must have noticed yourself, sir, that coat of Prout's. It's a real corker."

Mr. Quelch looked thoughtful. There was no doubt that that magnificent fur-collared overcoat of Prout's was rather unique.

"Leave the study, Coker, while I consult with Mr. Quelch," said the Head.

Coker suppressed a snort and obeyed. As soon as the door had closed on him, the Head turned inquiringly to the Remove master.

"It is very singular, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, pursing his lips. "I am disposed to believe that Coker is right, so

far, and that Mr. Prout is at the cottage. What his reason may be, I will not undertake to surmise."

"But—but a kidnapping, Mr. Quelch, it—"

"Incredible, sir"

"Yet otherwise, why should Prout be there?"

Mr. Quelch shook his head. He could not guess that one.

"He left late on Wednesday night in peculiar circumstances," said the Head. "He was very agitated when he spoke to me on the phone. Certainly he gave no hint whatever that he was remaining in the vicinity of the school. I gathered that he had been suddenly and imperatively called away—"

"It is certainly very odd, sir."

"If it transpires that he left the school, in order to pass a few days in

The Head was unaware that Greyfriars was already thrilling with it!

"Quite so, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "The matter can hardly rest where it is if only for Prout's own sake. That would be the most judicious step to take."

"I shall be glad if you will accompany me, Mr. Quelch. Coker had better come, too, in the circumstances. I will order the car."

A quarter of an hour later the Head's car buzzed away from Greyfriars, with the Head and Mr. Quelch seated in it—and Coker. Coker, impatient as he was, had taken advantage of the interval, to change into dry clothes—a change that he badly needed. Coker was snuffing, and looked as if he were catching a cold. But he did not heed these symptoms. A cold was a small price to pay for success in rescuing a kidnapped Greyfriars master.

The Head and Mr. Quelch were silent, thoughtful, as the car dashed away. Coker was not quite silent. A succession of sneezes mingled harmoniously with the rumble of the wheels and the throb of the engine.

The Head and the Remove master were wondering, sympathetically and distressfully, whether poor Prout was suffering from some mild, some temporary breakdown in the mental line.

His strange conduct on Wednesday evening, followed by his strange and sudden departure, and his apparently extraordinary and aimless proceeding in locating himself in a lonely seaside cottage, seemed to hint as much.

Coker was not wondering—he knew that Prout was a kidnapped prisoner, bound and gagged. And Coker sneezed and looked forward to the rescue of Prout; and to the glory that would clothe him—Coker—like a garment when that rescue was effected.

Like the classical gentleman in Q. Horatius Flaccus, Coker felt like striking the stars with his sublime head—even though there was a cold in that head, and he sneezed while he anticipated.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Kidnapped!

"SCANDALOUS!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"My eye!" said Mr. Jenks. Mr. Prout gazed, hidden behind the curtain of the front window of Cliff Cottage, with a startled and horrified gaze.

Hitherto, when Prout had looked from that window, he had seen only the empty garden, and the deserted cliffs beyond. It was a solitary and not very inspiring view from Prout's window.

But there was a change now—with a vengeance! One of the most solitary spots in the county seemed suddenly to have become one of the most thickly populated. Its new and surprising population consisted wholly of Greyfriars fellows.

Prout could hardly believe his eyes.

"Amazing!" he gasped.

Prout had been annoyed already that afternoon. He had, of course, heard Horace Coker's powerful voice booming through the cottage. And it had been a great relief to Prout when Coker departed rapidly with Biter astern.

He little knew!

Prout, of course, was quite aware of the theory formed by Coker to account for his departure from Greyfriars. Whatever Coker might think, Prout,

**FORCE A GRIN. . .
YOU'RE SURE TO WIN
A POCKET KNIFE!**

William M. Barry, of 20, Burgoyne St., Northam, Western Australia, has scored a bullseye with the following laughable tale:



Teacher: "Don't you know that punctuation means that you must pause?"

Willie: "Oh, yes, teacher. A motor-driver punctuated his tyre in front of our house yesterday, and he paused for half an hour!"

Now, get busy **YOURSELF**, and win one of these useful presents.

a seaside cottage only a few miles away—"

"Very odd indeed, sir!"

"Mr. Quelch." The Head lowered his voice, though they were alone.

"You—you do not think that—that poor Prout may have—may have—h'm—may have suffered from—from some slight aberration—some temporary mental difficulty—"

"I should suspect so, sir, if he had actually absented himself from the school in order to reside, in secret, at a cottage a few miles away."

"We cannot leave the matter where it is, Mr. Quelch. The matter must be cleared up, explained."

"Most decidedly, sir."

"I think, perhaps, if I went personally to this cottage—the man Jenks would scarcely refuse me admission—I could satisfy myself how the matter stands—without undue publicity. There is no need whatever for this very strange matter to become the talk of the school."

of course, knew that he hadn't been kidnapped.

Long, long had he pondered over his predicament, that fatal night of the fog. At long last he had decided what steps to take.

And it was to the safety of Cliff Cottage that Mr. Prout had retired, to conceal his black eye from the gaze, the wonder, and the derision of Greyfriars.

And now it seemed that Greyfriars School was emptying itself on that spot that wretched afternoon.

Bang, bang!

There was knocking at the door. From the gate a number of the fellows had advanced up the path; others spread through the gardens, and peered at the windows.

Prout backed away from the window and drew the blind. There was a buzz among the crowd outside when the blind was drawn. It was obvious to all of them that somebody within the cottage had something to hide.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Is Prout really there?"

"They've drawn the blind!"

"He's there!"

"They've got Prout!"

Conviction was spreading that Prout was there. Fellows knocked at the door. Others tapped on the window.

The door opened at last—on the chain. Mr. Jenks looked out at a swarm of excited faces.

"Look 'ere, what do you want?" demanded Mr. Jenks. "You're trespassing in my garden! You clear, or I'll phone for the police!"

"Have you got Prout there?" demanded Hobson of the Shell.

"I got a visitor who mustn't be disturbed—"

"Name?" demanded Temple of the Fourth.

Mr. Jenks did not answer that question.

"I say, you fellows, here comes the Head!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"The Head!"

"Now we shan't be long!" grinned Bob Cherry

A car came grinding from the cliff road, up the muddy path to the cottage. It halted, and the Head and Mr. Quelch descended, followed by Coker of the Fifth. Dr. Locke glanced in astonishment at the crowd of Greyfriars fellows, of all forms, thronged in front of the cottage.

"Bless my soul!" he said. "What—what does this mean? What—"

"They've got Prout in there, sir!" shouted a dozen voices. "They've got Mr. Prout! They've drawn the blind to hide him! They've got him, sir!"

Coker grinned complacently. Evidently Greyfriars was coming round to his point of view at last.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

At a majestic pace he advanced up the garden-path. Mr. Quelch accompanied him; Coker followed him; behind Coker there was a swarm. Mr. Jenks, at the doorway, eyed the headmaster in dismay. Certainly he could not set Biter on to the Head of Greyfriars.

"Mr. Jenks, if that is your name," said the Head courteously, "I have some reason to believe that Mr. Prout, a Form master belonging to Greyfriars, is here. I desire to ascertain whether that is the case."

"Oh lor!" gasped Mr. Jenks.

He was in Prout's confidence; he had Prout's dark secret to keep. But he did not see now how he could keep it.

"Kindly answer me!" said the Head.

"Oh crumbs!" was all Mr. Jenks could say.

"Is Mr. Prout here?" demanded the Head, sharp suspicion in his tone now.

"Oh lor!"

"Mr. Prout!" The Head raised his voice loudly and distinctly. "Mr. Prout, if you are here, speak!"

"He's bound and gagged, sir!" said Coker.

"You young hass!" gasped Mr. Jenks.

But really it began to look as if Coker was right, for there came no answer from Mr. Prout, who certainly must have heard the Head's voice, if he was there. And the Head, staring past Mr. Jenks, could see the fur-collared, purple greatcoat hanging on the peg. He knew that coat! Prout was there!

His face became very stern.

"You refuse to satisfy me?" he demanded.

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Mr. Jenks.

Then, from the interior of the house came a hollow voice.

"Admit Dr. Locke—alone!"

It was the voice of Prout!

"Yessir!" said Jenks.

Mr. Jenks removed the chain; the door swung open. There was a buzz of breathless excitement. The sound of Prout's voice had electrified all who had heard it.

Dr. Locke strode in. Jenks indicated the way, and he passed through a doorway from the little hall into the front room.

"Prout!"

"Sir!"

"Goodness gracious me!"

Prout, red with dismay and chagrin, faced the Head. There had been no help for it; it had to be. Red as a beetroot was Prout, save in one spot—his eye! That was black as midnight.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head faintly.

"You—you see, sir," Prout gurgled.

"An accident in the fog, sir. My—my eye is discoloured. I could not let it be seen in public. I—I did not desire even you, sir, to see me so disfigured—"

"Bless my soul!"

"I—I thought it best, sir, to—to retire from public view for a time, until my—my eye resumed—resumed its normal aspect, sir. Such a disfigurement might—might be misunderstood."

"Dear me!" said the Head.

"I cannot imagine, sir, what brought you here. I cannot fathom it," said Mr. Prout. "But—but now you have seen this—this discoloration of my—my optic, sir, I—I beg of you to let it go no further. It was an accident—a sheer accident in the fog. But—but a disfigurement of so very peculiar a character—I am sure you understand, sir. I desire no other eyes to observe it—"

Alas for Mr. Prout!

He had directed Jenks to admit the Head—alone! Jenks had done so. But Jenks could not stop the swarm of excited fellows who pushed in after the Head. Mr. Quelch was pushed along in the crowd. The little hall swarmed, the doorway of the front room was blocked with faces. Every word that Mr. Prout uttered fell on twenty or thirty ears. More than a dozen pairs of eyes were fixed on Prout, more especially on his black eye.

Coker of the Fifth stood spellbound.

Prout was not kidnapped!

He was there—but he was not a prisoner! He was there to conceal a black eye from public gaze! And Coker, with a sudden, horrifying recollection, knew how Prout had collected that black eye! He remembered that reckless punch in the fog that had

floored Prout. It seemed to Coker that the universe was spinning round him.

"Oh, holy sakes!" gasped Coker.

Mr. Prout turned his eyes to the doorway! He beheld the staring crowd. He heard an excited squeak:

"I say, you fellows! Prout's got a black eye! He, he, he!"

Dr. Locke glanced round.

"Go!" he thundered.

The crowd faded out of the picture. Except Coker! Coker stood rooted to the floor, still spellbound.

Mr. Prout gave a groan.

"My dear Prout—" said the Head kindly.

"My dear Prout—" said Mr. Quelch.

They understood now that it was not a case of mental aberration.

"I cannot imagine," said Prout, in a hoarse voice—"I cannot imagine, sir, how you came to find me here!"

Dr. Locke indicated the spellbound Coker.

"It was that—that incredibly stupid and obtuse boy who brought me here," he said. "That unbelievably absurd and fatuous boy, Coker!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

"He informed me, and almost convinced me, that you—you were detained in this building against your will—that you had been, in short, kidnapped!"

"And in the very odd circumstances of your sudden departure, Prout—"

murmured Mr. Quelch.

"Of course," said the Head, "I never dreamed—"

"Coker!" gasped Prout.

"You—you see, sir—" babbled Coker.

Prout made a stride towards him. Coker woke to action. The look in Prout's eye was positively dangerous. Coker made a backward jump into the hall, and vanished from the scene.

"Mr. Prout," said the Head, "I—I understand your motive for absenting yourself from the school. I believe—I fully believe and trust—your explanation of that—that unfortunate discoloration. Bless my soul! But perhaps—since the matter is no longer a secret—it would be advisable for you to return. Pray accept a seat in my car—h'm—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell. "Prout's got a black eye, that's all! Good old Coker! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Send those boys away, Mr. Quelch."

Mr. Quelch drove them away. They trooped off to Greyfriars, yelling. When they reached the school and told the other fellows, Greyfriars rang with merriment. The only fellow who did not laugh was Coker of the Fifth. Coker saw nothing to laugh at; he did not perceive the slightest cause for all this merriment. He was the only fellow who didn't.

Prout was home again the next day—black eye and all.

Coker of the Fifth was in the sanatorium—with a bad cold.

It was rather fortunate for Coker. His life would hardly have been safe in the Fifth Form room with Prout.

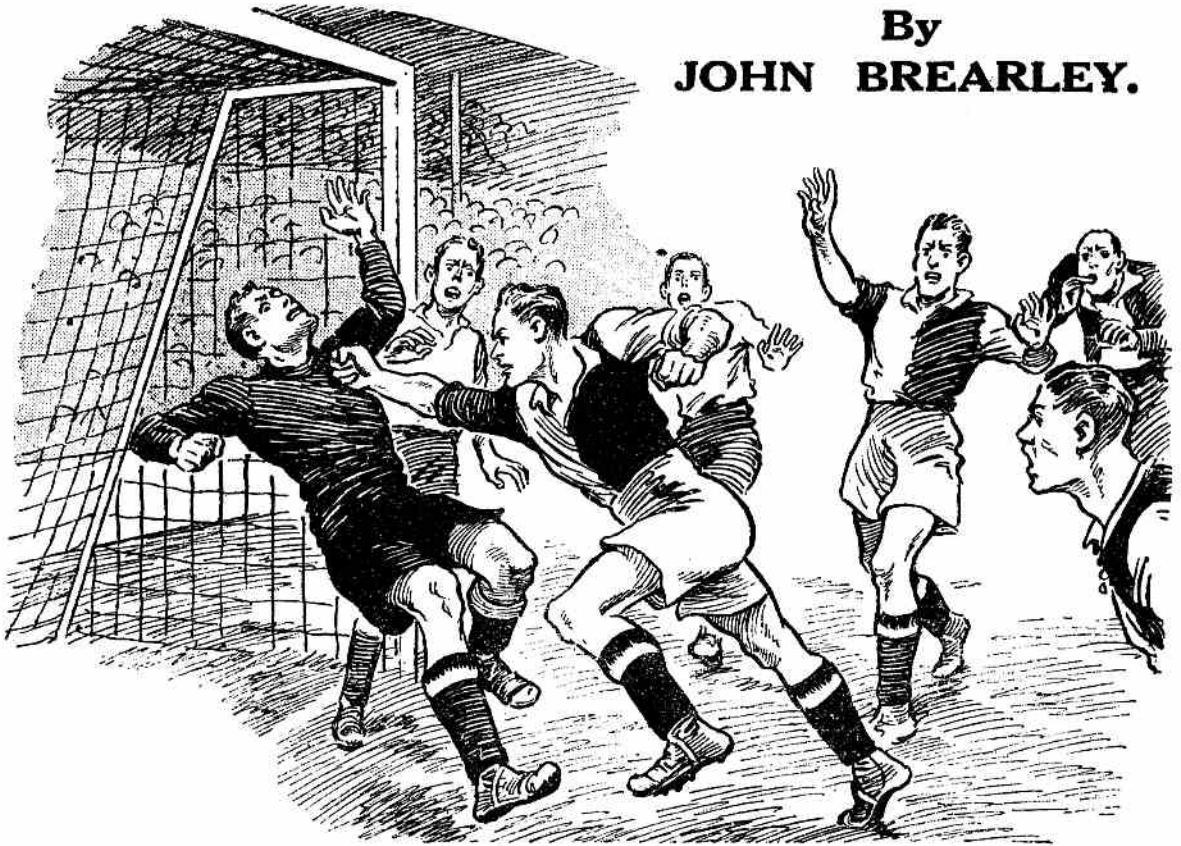
THE END.

(Now look out for the sequel to this grand story which will appear in next week's MAGNET. It is entitled: "WHO PUNCHED PROUT?" and is undoubtedly one of the best yarns Frank Richards has ever written.)

THERE'S A REAL LIVE KICK IN THIS SENSATIONAL SOCCER STORY!

UP, THE ROVERS!

By
JOHN BREARLEY.



LAST WEEK'S INSTALMENT BRIEFLY RETOLED.

Determined to stop the rot that has set in, James Brennan, the genial but masterful owner of the Raitlon Rovers F.C., decides to pay a huge transfer fee for an experienced centre-forward to put new life into his team. The deal fails to materialise, however, for Brennan is robbed of his savings by means of a forged cheque and then attacked by some unknown assailant who deals him a blow to the heart which proves fatal. Left without a penny to carry on, young Jimmy receives his first unpleasant experience of football management when some unknown enemy fires the Rovers' grandstand. Needing at least six thousand pounds to put the Rovers on their feet again Jimmy clinches a deal with Mr. Thurgood, the local bank manager, to sell his house for five thousand and borrow another thousand from the bank.

(Now read on.)

A Stormy Interview!

"S—O—you are seriously selling the Rovers?"

"Yes."

"To Mr. Thurgood?"

"That's so."

"H'm! Rather sudden, isn't it?"

Jimmy Brennan shrugged.

"A lot of sudden things have happened lately, Mr. Sylvester. If you had brought me good news last night from the insurance company I wouldn't have accepted Mr. Thurgood's offer. But I must now. I need the cash."

"I see. And is the sale definitely settled?"

"Yes. At least, I've given my word. Mr. Thurgood wants the house, and he wants to give me a hand. So we fixed it up. He's coming to see you about the legal part of the deal."

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In the stuffy quietness of Henry Sylvester's office, a determined flush on his cheeks, Jimmy faced his lawyer coolly. He had said nothing about the thousand-pound loan yet; in fact, he was prepared for trouble, for an angry protest against the whole scheme. Sylvester's face, turned away from the light, was like a mask—dry, wrinkled, and impassive, as he studied the sturdy youngster and noted the firmness of his lips and the dogged attitude of his body. For some time a thoughtful silence reigned. Then, to Jimmy's utter surprise, something like approval gleamed in the lawyer's brooding eyes.

BIFF! But it wasn't the centre-forward's boot meeting the ball; it was the centre-forward's fist meeting the goalie's CHIN!

"Well, perhaps you have done right," he said at last. "I am sorry to see your family house passing into other hands, but I suppose it cannot be helped. Just now you can't afford to keep an expensive place going. I hope, James, you will put the money to good use."

Jimmy smiled slightly.

"I shall. I am rebuilding my main stand with it. At once!"

"What?" The lawyer stiffened in his chair, his voice sharp. "Then—then you are still dwelling on that mad scheme?"

"What mad scheme?" asked Jimmy quietly; and his eyes grew watchful as two angry red spots shined on the thin face opposite. "You mean—the Rovers?"

"You know I do!" rapped Sylvester. "Do you honestly mean you have sold the finest part of your property for £5,000 with the object of building a new stand? Why, it's madness! You, a mere boy, begging yourself for a professional football club, just as your poor father did! Wait!"—as Jimmy fired up hotly. "That is what happened. And that is what will happen to you."

Into Jimmy's heart came suddenly a fierce, wild longing for a row—for open warfare with this man who, from being his father's best friend, had become the only one in Raitlon to show hostility to himself—for what reason he couldn't think. Sternly controlling his temper, however, he answered, in a quiet voice:

"I don't get you, sir. What else can I do with the money?"

"What else?" repeated Sylvester tartly. "Why, follow the advice I gave you in the first place. Realise as much money as you can from the property your father left, get rid of this awful football ground, and the club that ruined him, and make yourself safe in some good profession."

With an impatient jerk of his hand he reached up and took a folded letter from a drawer. Jimmy guessed what it was immediately. It was the one from the Something-or-Other Land Society, offering some darned ridiculous price for the Rovers' ground.

His face froze. But he let Sylvester carry on.

Leaning forward, the solicitor eyed him severely.

"When you told me just now you had sold the house I was glad. I began to think you meant following my advice.

Why don't you? You have said the house is too big for you. Well, so is the football club!"

Jimmy sat rigid in his chair, glaring at him, too furious for words. Seeing the thundercloud on his face, the other shrewdly changed his tone, and his voice was persuasive when he went on again.

"Look here, my boy, I am trying to put you right. You have sold your house—a wise step. But why pour the money into the gutter?" Before Jimmy could reply he had unfolded the letter and spread it out. "Why not sell the ground, too—to these people? I admit their offer is low, but that is only business, after all. I can get them to raise it, I'm sure. Considerably. Then, with that and the five thousand from the house, you will have a sum large enough to equip you for anything. Engineering, medicine, languages—anything you like!"

He held up his hand.

"Why not think it over, Jimmy? I'll handle it for you. And perhaps get offers from other people, too!"

Jimmy sat for a long while, staring at his earnest face. Perhaps the lawyer meant well, but the youngster could not forget the way he had been treated over the forged cheque. Besides, the Rovers came before everything!

"No, thanks!" he said decisively. "Bill Nye's offered me a home in his cottage, and all the boys are behind me. I won't sell the ground, and if the Rovers go down I'll lose with 'em!"

Baffled and disappointed, Sylvester suddenly crumpled the letter in his hand and flung it on the desk.

"Then you're a hot-headed, reckless young fool!" he rasped forcibly. "Wasting Heaven-sent opportunities! I—"

He stopped, and looked up sharply.

"I suppose," he said, with a suspicion of irony in his voice, "you have made quite sure the missing £3,000 is not in the house? You have searched thoroughly, I take it—or will do before leaving?"

For answer Jimmy rose quietly, his face grim and pale. The row was coming; he knew it. He couldn't keep himself in hand much longer.

"Meaning—just what, Mr. Sylvester?" he asked softly. "I haven't searched for the money, because it was never in the house. Dad didn't get it, that's certain. Neither did I. And Mr. Thurgood won't fork out £5,000 for the pleasure of finding three. So what are you going to do about it?" he finished sarcastically.

Sylvester's lean shoulders rose.

"A lot, I hope, Jimmy. I was your father's oldest friend and—"

"But no friend of mine!" blazed Jimmy suddenly, violently. "Since dad died you've done nothing but hound me. I mean it! You've managed to throw suspicion on me right and left, both here and at the police station; and if my uncle, and cousin, and Mr. Thurgood don't believe I'm a crook it's through no fault of yours. You've tried hard enough."

Stepping forward, he smashed his fist down on the desk and bent forward.

"You're sore!" he gritted. "Mad, because I won't do just what you think is right. Because I prefer to carry out dad's wishes instead of selling the ground he loved to this precious society of yours. Don't interrupt, please! I've got the ball now. I'm going my own way, sink or swim, assisted by my own friends. And when you've fixed things up with Mr. Thurgood about the house, then I shan't be troubling you again with business—or friendship, either!"

In a white-heat of rage he whirled round and strode towards the door.

There, with his fingers on the handle, he was stopped by Sylvester's hard, strained voice, and the solicitor came forward quickly to make a final effort.

"Jimmy!" he implored. "Listen to me—please. Take my advice—sell the ground and stick to your money! Can't you—don't you realise it's all you've got left now? Why, if you spend it and any further disaster happens to the Rovers, you'll be completely ruined!"

Head lowered, eyes dark with anger, Jimmy glared at him.

"I know!" he flung back savagely. "And it's pretty obvious some people would like me to be. But I don't care. Let's hope there'll be no more—disasters, Mr. Sylvester!"

He bit off the last words with deadly emphasis. Next moment the door slammed behind him.

With a gesture of weary despair the solicitor turned slowly back to his desk.

Rovers versus Spurs I

TO Railton Town, during the next few days, the news that young Jimmy Brennan had sold the beautiful house his family had held so long, came as a shock. Lots of people, besides Henry Sylvester, tried to reason with him, but the young owner was too much like his dead father to heed them. Once having made up his mind, he set his jaw obstinately, and went through the deal with characteristic firmness.

The sale of the house was quickly settled, Charles Thurgood taking possession, with old Jeff and Jenny as his servants. And Jimmy, covering a nasty, groggy feeling with a grin, shifted to Bill Nye's pretty cottage on the bank of the Railton Canal, where, in a short while, he slipped into the cosy home-life there as easily as a duck into a pond.

He had no time to feel lonely or downcast—his friends in the Rovers saw to that. They knew the fight he was making for the club, and what it was costing him, and they rallied round stoutly, anxious to back him in everything. After the hard day's work on the training ground, scarcely an evening passed but three or four dropped into the cottage for a chat; and in the warm, lamplit parlour, with Bill Nye presiding, they revelled in football jaw, new tactics, or just plain chaffing until Mrs. Nye kindly but firmly turned them out at ten o'clock, and packed Jimmy and old Bill off to bed.

In addition, the team was doing well. Two surprise points were picked up at Nottingham against the Forest, and another at home against Cardiff. The Rovers were lying second in the League.

A better tonic than all this, however, was the music of hammers and saws, and the scurry of workmen busy as bees on the wrecked stand. In little more than a month now, the contractors guaranteed it would be ready for the public once more. Things were going smoothly it seemed.

By the time the fourth Saturday of the season came along, bringing with it a match against the Spurs, in London, Jimmy's broad smile was in full working order as he trotted behind George Harvey on to the turf at White Hart Lane, with the thunder of the huge crowd roaring all about him. The return to form of the famous Midland club had drawn a bigger crowd even than usual to the North London enclosure, and they gave the black-and-white shirts a rousing welcome. A little

nip in the air and a hardness in the ground promised a fast game.

It was the Spurs' kick-off. "Pheep!" shrilled the whistle; and straightway their hard-driving forward line flung themselves through the Rovers' halves and were storming round goal in an electric attack. From man to man the ball flickered, beating the Rovers' interceptors by split seconds, until, with the path to the net open, O'Callaghan, the inside-right, was in shooting position, steadying himself for the final drive. Then, out of goal, like a charging elephant, galloped big Reynolds, blocked the shot at two yards range, gathered, and cleared with a mighty kick amid a hurricane of cheers.

Thrills had started early. The crowd settled down for more.

They got 'em. Reynolds' kick was driven back by Messer; the celebrated white shirts swept downfield again. But this time was different. Dour and ready, Harvey and his half-backs met them, tackled them, beat them back. A pass like a rifle bullet flashed through to Miller, who nodded it to Jimmy, and Jimmy, leaving two Spurs standing with an eel-like swerve, drew the full-back, and sent Payton racing for the corner flag.

There was nothing green about that young man now. He was becoming a seasoned winger, with Jimmy's passes, timed to a nicety, bringing out the best of his great speed. He caught the ball a yard from the line, turned, and swung over a square centre that curled and dropped exactly in front of the Hotspur goal. And Thomas, well in position, as usual, jumped, and got his head to it.

"Goal!" A startled, incredulous roar burst from the home crowd. The Rovers were one up in the first minute. The speed and simplicity of the attack was paralysing.

Stung by the reverse, Tottenham got down to business. So did the Rovers. Up, down, and across the field the leather sped, from touchline to touchline, goal to goal. First Dimmock tore through the Rovers' backs and hit the cross-bar, then a long, delirious dribble by Jimmy saw Miller's finishing shot go behind. The cheering in the stands grew to a continuous bellow, but none of the players heard it. They were playing like demons—fast and clean, but desperately hard. There was no loafing; no breathing space. The Spurs' first-time passing kept Harvey & Co. working at full pressure, while at the other end the Rovers young but terribly speedy raiders put years on the Tottenham defence.

"Get young Brennan. Bottle that kid up!" The orders had become Second Division watchwords already. Two half-backs and Cook at inside-left were doing their best, but Jimmy's red head seemed all over the place, back on the half-line, bobbing in midfield, looming ominously near goal. His dazzling in-and-out swerving, lightning trickiness, and, above all, superb position play and passing, tore the Spurs wide open time and again, and only brilliant goalkeeping prevented a score.

Ten minutes from half-time, a lovely run by Dimmock, followed by a centre, saw Tottenham equalise beautifully. The ball flashed across, O'Callaghan pulled it down, snapped it to Harper, who, with a first-time swerver, beat Reynolds hopelessly and nearly burst the net!

One all!

"Come on, Rovers! Another before half-time!"

Under cover of the cheering, Harvey's words spurred his men sturdily.

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The kick-off came to Jimmy. He ankle-tapped it back to Thomas, ran clear, received the ball again, and put it across to Miller. The inside-left was robbed; the ball hissed downfield. A second later, Reynolds, at full length, was called upon to save from Cook at the expense of a corner. Fast football all the way!

No whit disheartened, the Rovers came again. Ames, the right-back, cleared from the corner kick, putting the ball into touch; and from the throw-in Miller and Atkins went away in a pretty passing run that flashed the ball almost to the Spurs' goal-line.

And there it stopped. Like a solid avalanche, the Rovers poured in for an overwhelming attack. Backing up grimly, Harvey, Blake, and Riley, the halves, blocked all the Tottenham clearance-kicks, and drove the ball back to where Jimmy and Miller writhed and wriggled like weasels through the packed and gasping defenders, with Thomas hovering near goal on the alert for a shot.

Backwards and forwards before the home net the ball swung, creeping ever nearer. The crowd were on their toes, feverish with anxiety, begging the Spurs to beat back the lithe, clever youngsters threatening them, and thus hold out till half-time.

The pressure increased. In whirlwind style, Jimmy slammed through a gap; a full-back tackled him just in time. Next Miller hit an upright; then a rising cross-volley from Payton was just tipped over the bar.

Corner! The teams lined up, Tottenham desperately packing their goal, the

Rovers grim. Harvey's voice snapped out curtly:

"Now for it, Railton!"

To a despairing howl from the crowd, young Payton's corner-kick dropped gloriously into the goal-mouth. The players bunched swiftly; frantic heads rose in the air to meet it. A Tottenham back won, but the ball glanced off Miller's head, and somehow came to Jimmy, who lobbed it past a headlong defender, straight to the head of Thomas, standing in a bare foot of clear ground. And the centre-forward, rising stiffly, swung his muscular neck and flipped the leather into the far corner of the net, like a shot from a gun.

The Rovers were leading again!

A moment later, and the whistle sounded for half-time.

Trouble at Tottenham!

DURING the interval, in their dressing-room, the famous London team held a sharp, short confab, very much to the point. Their skipper held the floor, and his words were blunt.

"Now, listen, chaps! We're not licked yet. We're good for another goal or two this half, even against old 'uns like Harvey and Reynolds. What we've got to do is sit on their bally forward line!"

"Huh!" snorted someone. "You try markin' young Brennan! Darn wriggling red-head!"

"That's it!" snapped the leader. "Shadow Brennan wherever he goes.

And mark Thomas, near goal. He's no leader, but he can shoot, and every raid they make finishes up with him. But if we can hold him tight he'll get rattled. Then he gets cold feet. The other kids are good, but still raw; and if we bottle up Brennan and take the starch out of Thomas the whole line'll go phut. Savvy?"

"Right!"

The Spurs ran on to the field for the second half with the set faces of men who knew what to do and meant doing it. League battles are won that way.

Before the period had lasted five minutes, Jimmy realised what was happening. He was up against it. Everywhere he moved, two men stuck to him like old friends, regardless of where the ball was. And every time the Hotspur goal was in danger Thomas suddenly found himself surrounded by white shirts and blotted out completely.

The scheme worked. The Railton centre, with two goals to his credit, had come out for the second half like a roaring lion. After fifteen minutes' futile struggling with the heavy-charging, clean-tackling net that was drawn round him, he began to bite his lips and scowl.

Despite the two men sticking to him, Jimmy was still a thorn in the Hotspur side, out-guessing and out-thinking his warders time and again. Yet no matter how daintily he dribbled, or how fast Payton and Atkins ran, the result was the same. Thomas couldn't get clear of Messer anyhow, attack after attack petered out—and the centre-forward crumpled up.

Meanwhile, the Spurs' forwards were seizing every chance. Their attacks grew furious and incisive. Twice in succession only Reynolds stood between them and a score, and the third time, Dimmock missed by inches, with the giant keeper beaten to the wide.

Jimmy set his jaw hard.

"Come on, old son," he whispered to Thomas, during a lull. "One more for your hat-trick."

Thomas only grunted. The ball came to Payton, who drew his man and passed to Jimmy. Jimmy carried on the raid, was challenged, and drilled a clean, fast pass to his centre. Immediately, on both sides, two Spurs seemed to spring from nowhere, to block the runner's path. Thomas glared at them wildly, took his eyes off the ball, and stabbed at it with a hasty, half-hearted boot.

He miskicked. The leather curled feebly away; Lyon slipped through and trapped it, and, with a mighty, low drive, sent Dimmock whirling down the touchline.

Thomas' face grew dark with anger and sulkiness once more. Jimmy watched the flying Spurs with a sinking heart. Beating Ames with a lightning sidestep, Dimmock swung the ball first time into the middle, where Cook came up, took it in his stride, and passed through to Harper. From Harper it went to O'Callaghan; the inside-right dribbled neatly, and sent it back. In a perfect line the Tottenham attack swarmed over the Railton full-backs, and, taking a last pass two yards from the goal-line, Cook scored with a shot no 'keeper on earth could have saved.

White Hart Lane exploded in a long, joyous shout. The scores were level. But better than that, the Spurs were on top now, and the dangerous black-and-white forwards were dangerous no longer.

And, within thirty seconds of the kick-off again, Dimmock had slashed his way through on his own, and the Spurs were leading 3-2.

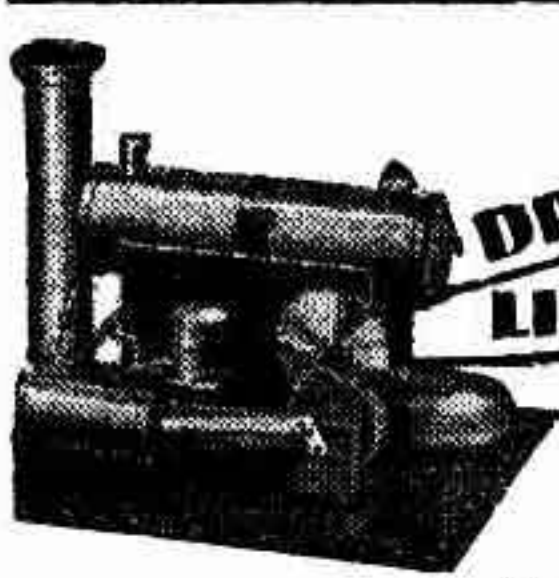
There was a hard glint in Harvey's blue eyes as he rallied his team this time.

"Come on, boys! Plenty of time! Thomas, snap into it, man!"

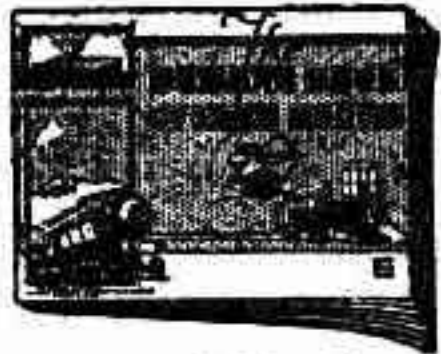
Thomas' scowling face went red. Straight from the kick-off he made a last desperate effort to conquer himself, and force his way through. Messer robbed him, but, before the Tottenham half could clear, the burly centre had knocked him off the ball, and whipped it ahead of Jimmy.

The youngster's heart leapt with glee. Thomas was waking up again. With a bewildering feint and sidestep the boy

(Continued on next page.)



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drew clear of his tacklers and raced up-field, Payton in attendance. He snapped his fingers, made as though to swerve inwards, and instead changed feet prettily, and swung out towards the touchline at top pace. As he did so Payton, running like a deer, cut in behind him from the wing.

The manoeuvre came off. At the crucial moment, just as Hodgkinson ran wide to tackle Jimmy, the lad overran the ball and backheeled it in a flash, straight to Payton's toes.

Puzzled by the lightning change the Spurs' defence halted for one precious second. Without a moment's delay Payton slammed the ball inside, right in front of Thomas. The Raitton centre, free of the Spurs' net at last, went headlong for goal.

His path was clear. On either side the backs closed in, but, spreadcagled by Jimmy and Payton, they were too late. The posts loomed up before him, with the 'keeper posing himself for a rush.

Scarcely daring to breathe Jimmy

stood on his toes, dancing in suspense. He saw Thomas push the ball sideways, pivoting on his left leg for a rousing corkscrew drive. Then the goalkeeper ran out, arms wide, and left the ground in a terrific headlong dive.

Crump! There was a thud, a gasp, a strangled cheer. Full in the chest the shot hit the goalie, and the ball skidded to Lyon, who promptly and gratefully ballooned it out of play. A roar of relief went up, dying away next instant. For, mad with rage and disappointment, Thomas had jumped forward and lifted the goalkeeper clean off his feet with a terrific punch to the jaw!

Amid dead silence the referee gave Thomas "marching orders."

The rest of the game went like a long, bad dream after that. With Thomas in the dressing-room Jimmy went into the centre himself, and, hard-eyed and haggard of face, flung himself desperately through the white shirts before him, dribbling, passing and fighting in a dull

mist of despair until, in a solid body, White Hart Lane rose to the plucky youngster every time he got the ball.

Everything that skill and bitter grit could do he did then; but though at times the Rovers' front line seemed to riddle the Spurs to shreds, they could not score. With only four young forwards against a weighty and experienced defence, the case was hopeless.

The whistle went at last for "Time!" with Jimmy still battling doggedly in front of the Tottenham goal. It was only when Messer's kindly hand dropped on his shoulder, and pulled him round that he realised the game was over. Lost! And with it, for a month at least, his only decent centre.

In silence he followed the downcast Rovers off the field.

(Young Jimmy's luck seems dead out, doesn't it, chums? But he's determined to keep the flag flying as you'll discover when you read next week's instalment of this powerful Soccer story.)



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