

EVERY MODERN BOY READS THE "MAGNET"!

The MAGNET²





Come Into The Office, Boys!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

FOR the benefit of those readers who for various reasons were unable to complete their ALBUM showing EVERY BOY'S WORLD IN PICTURES I have decided to include some

MORE SUPER PICTURE STAMPS

in the MAGNET for the
NEXT FOUR WEEKS!

Among the stamps given away with next week's MAGNET you might possibly find one or more that will help to fill out your album. If you find that you already have these stamps get your pal to exchange them for some of his. And remember that, with the exception of copies sent overseas, there will be another strip of stamps in next week's MAGNET.

I suppose you have all heard of "pidgin English," but how many of you have heard of "Beche-de-mer English"? Tom Watkins, one of my Hanley readers, has come across the expression, and wants to know what it means. Literally translated it means

"SEA-SLUG ENGLISH!"

for the "beche-de-mer" is a sea-slug, and one, incidentally, which the Chinese eat! Of course, the Chinese will eat almost anything, as you know. Birds' nests, sharks' fins, various insects, and even rats and mice are considered great delicacies in the Celestial countries.

"Beche-de-mer English," however, has nothing whatever to do with sea-slugs. It is a sort of second cousin to "pidgin English," and is the language which is spoken in the various islands of the Pacific. It is a most picturesque language, and, although it is based on our own, it is sometimes very difficult to understand. A well-known traveller tells the story of a native who said to him:

"Fellow tummy belong me walk about all day!" That was his way of saying that he had stomach-ache!

This peculiar language is spoken all over the South Seas, even in Islands which are not under British control. It considerably annoyed the Germans when they had colonies in the South Seas. The natives resolutely refused to learn German, and the Germans, therefore, had to issue their official proclamations in "Beche-de-mer English!"

SOME things that take place in the South Sea Islands are very funny, indeed. On one island, which was owned by the Germans before the war, but is now British, the inhabitants measured their wealth by stone money. According to the size of the stones, so they were rich or poor, and the richest families owned stones that could not possibly be moved from where they were. The Germans decided that it was time the natives paid their taxes, and they sent around tax-collectors to gather in the

STONE MONEY TAXES.

But the stones were too heavy to be

moved, so the Germans simply painted a black mark on them, which showed that the stones belonged to the Government. Then there was trouble!

Nobody could do any trade, for all the big stones had been bagged by the authorities—though goodness only knows what good they were to them, as they couldn't be moved. The result was that the tax-collectors had to go round again and clean off the black marks—and prosperity returned to the island. It's no good to try to persuade these particular natives that paper, copper, silver, or even gold is money. Stones have always been their "money"—and always will be!

Here is a yarn which Bernard Baron, of 2, Ashfield Road, Rusholme, Manchester, has sent me, and for which he gets a topping Sheffield steel penknife:

Teacher (in a rage to dunce): "Tommy

Jones, you are the biggest fool in the school!"

Headmistress (standing near by): "Come, come, Miss Wilson, you are

forgetting yourself!"

Don't forget, chums, I still have plenty of penknives for jokes, and pocket wallets for Greyfriars limericks. So pull up your socks, and see if you can't win one of these top-notch prizes!

AS usual, there are a number of RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to various queries sent in by readers. Here they are:

What is a "Billy-Boy"? (Jack Jordan, of Leeds): This is the name given to a Humber, or East Coast, boat of barge-river build, or a bluff-bowed north-country trader. There is also a well-known seashanty called "Billy-boy."

How much was a Ducat? (K. G., of Harlesden): This coin, which was current in the twelfth century, was worth about 9s. 4d. if it were made of gold. When made of silver, it was worth 3s. 6d.

What were "Pieces of Eight"? (Same Inquirer): This was the name given to the old Spanish piastre, or peso. It was called "a piece of eight" because it was divided into eight reals. It was a silver coin worth about four shillings.

How much can an Elephant carry? ("Regular Reader," of Willesden): A fully-grown elephant can carry a weight of from 1,700 to 2,200 lbs. on a long journey, maintaining a steady pace of about four miles per hour.

Have there ever been Earthquakes in England? (Tom Forster, of Newton Abbott): Yes, several—although not disastrous ones. The last one took place as recently as the 7th of June, 1931, but, luckily, no one was killed. The greatest

earthquakes in history took place in Sicily in 1693, and Calabria in 1783. On both these occasions no fewer than 60,000 people were killed!

HERE is an inquiry which needs a little longer space to answer, as it may interest quite a number of readers. "Amateur Sailor," of Leith, wants to know how he can join

THE ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE.

I am afraid that an "amateur" sailor cannot join this branch of the Navy. Only people who are constantly engaged at sea in the Mercantile Marine are eligible. But perhaps he is thinking of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, which admits landsmen who wish to undergo naval training?

He can obtain full particulars by writing to the R.N.V.R. Committee, 58, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1. There are eight divisions of this force spread round our coast, and the conditions of service correspond more or less to the conditions in the Territorial Army. Training is done on certain evenings in the week aboard training vessels, and members of the R.N.V.R. can also undergo training with the Fleet for certain periods. The idea of the R.N.V.R. is to form a reserve which shall be composed of landsmen who have a hankering for sea-life, and who, of course, are liable to be called up for active service in case of war. It is possible for R.N.V.R. members to transfer to the Royal Navy later, keeping whatever promotion they have gained during their period with the reserves.

I think I have just room for another prizewinner. This time it is Charles Hoskins, of 30, Jessie Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, who sent in the following Greyfriars limerick. He gets a topping pocket wallet for it:

Bob Cherry's a likeable youth,
Who never departs from the truth.
At his lessons he's quick!
And at football, his kick
Is like one from a donkey forsooth!

NOW for next week's star programme. Frank Richards, as usual, "heads the bill" with a real first-class yarn of the chums of Greyfriars. It is entitled:

"BUNTER, THE FOOTBALLER!"

There are thrills—and chuckles—in it! Just the right amount of each! Judging by the number of letters I receive each week, complimenting Mr. Richards on these stories, they are getting better and better! And it takes some doing to keep a reader's interest unflagging for so many years! But Frank Richards has still got some more surprises up his sleeve for you—which you will discover in future stories.

"Nobby, the 'Shooting Star,'" too, seems to have "hit the mark," and proves that my readers enjoy a real good 'tec and footer story, when it is written by such an accomplished author as Hedley Scott. There are more thrills for you in next week's bumper instalment.

Next week's "Herald Supplement" is the real goods, while "Linesman's" contribution will prove of great interest to all Soccer fans. As usual, I will be "in the office" to give you any advice you may need!

All the best, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.



COKER THE DETECTIVE!

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Caught Napping!

SNORE!
 "What the dickens—"
 Snore!
 Coker snored.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared. They were surprised.

Even Billy Bunte of the Remove, who could almost beat Rip Van Winkle when it came to sleeping, was never known to sleep and snore at two in the afternoon.

It was a fine and frosty day, and most of the Greyfriars fellows were out of the House, enjoying the wintry sunshine and fresh air till the bell should ring for class.

Coker of the Fifth was an open-air fellow, a strenuous fellow, generally bursting with energy. He was the very last fellow at Greyfriars whom anyone would have expected to find taking an afternoon nap.

Yet there he was, stretched in the armchair in his study, his feet on the table, his eyes shut, and his mouth open—snoring.

From the doorway the juniors gazed at him, astonished.

They had noticed that Coker had gone up to his study for dinner. That was why they were there. They had a little account to settle with Coker. Coker, who had a short way with fags, had kicked Billy Bunter that morning, in break.

It did not, of course, matter whether Billy Bunter was kicked or not. Tho

Famous Five had often kicked him themselves, if it came to that. Still, Bunter was a Remove man, and if Coker of the Fifth fancied that he could kick Remove men at his own sweet will, the Famous Five were prepared to educate him on the subject. Coker being in his study, and nearly everybody else being out of the House till class, it was an opportunity not to be missed. They arrived at Coker's study, Bob Cherry having thoughtfully brought a fives bat under his arm. But at the

in the footsteps of his Form master. He had not merely dozed off before the fire—he was deep in slumber, buried in it—too fast asleep to hear the footsteps and the voices of the juniors at the door. Anyone looking at Coker might have supposed that he had missed his sleep the night before. He looked like it.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Better wako him up. We can't bat him without waking him up."

"Wake up, Coker!" called out Frank Nugent.

Coker did not wake.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry.

Coker did not wake even then. Bob's powerful voice boomed through the study and the Fifth Form passage. But Coker did not open his eyes. He still slept and he still snored.

"Well, this takes the cake!" said Johnny Bull. "Coker can't have had a night out last night, surely."

"Looks like it," said Harry Wharton, quite perplexed. "Anyhow, he'll wake when we tip him out of the chair on his neck! Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob, his eyes dancing. "If Coker doesn't want to wake up, let him have his nap out!"

"Rot! We've come here to bat him—"

"I've got a wheeze, old bean! This is the first time we've caught Coker napping! Never mind the batting!"

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Coker of the Fifth is several sorts of an ass, but he appears at his funniest in this grand story, which shows him trying to outshine Sherlock Holmes in the detective business!

sight of Horace Coker fast asleep, and snoring like a grampus, they paused—and stared.

Snore!

Coker was going strong.

In the Fifth Form dormitory at night Coker was accustomed to sleep like a top. But nobody had ever spotted him asleep in the daytime before. It really was amazing. "Beaks" at Greyfriars sometimes took a nap after lunch—Mr. Proud, the master of the Fifth always did. Now Coker seemed to be following

Wait here while I cut down to the woodshed—"

"What on earth for?"

"For Gosling's can of yellow paint."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg! Cut off!"

"The goodfulness of the egg is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Buck up, my esteemed Bob!"

Bob Cherry darted away. The other four fellows continued to watch Coker from the doorway. There seemed no danger of his awakening. It was almost weird to see the most energetic and obstreperous fellow at Greyfriars School buried deep in slumber in the middle of the day like this. He slept as if for a wager. Unconscious of grinning, gazing faces, he snored on. It could not be doubted that Coker must have missed a lot of sleep the night before.

How and why, was a mystery. Coker was not a fellow to go out of bounds after lights out, like Price of the Fifth or Loder of the Sixth. Anything like ill health never kept him awake at night—Coker was as healthy and strong as a horse. It was just a mystery which the chums of the Remove could not solve. They could only wonder while they waited for Bob to return with the can of paint.

Bob was not gone long.

There was a patter of feet in the passage, and Bob Cherry arrived with Gosling's paint can in one hand and Gosling's paintbrush in the other.

"Still asleep?" he gasped.

"Yes, rather!"

"The sleepfulness is terrific."

"Good!" gasped Bob.

He entered the study, and the other fellows followed him in. He dipped the brush in the paint and started. A big daub of yellow paint on either cheek gave Coker quite a startling look.

The juniors suppressed their merriment. They did not want to wake Coker now. But really there was no danger of waking Coker now. Rip Van Winkle and the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus had nothing on Coker just then.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Nugent, as Bob, with a gentle but rapid touch, painted Coker's unconscious countenance.

The brush travelled swiftly over Coker's face, his cheeks, his chin, his nose, his ears, his forehead, but Coker did not wake. He snored on regardless.

Bob Cherry stepped back at last to admire his handiwork. The Removites gurgled. Coker's aspect was startling, surprising—almost unnerving. What he would think when he woke up and found his face yellow was a problem. It was quite warm where Coker sat before the fire—warm enough to dry the paint if Coker did not wake soon. And he did not look like waking.

"Think that will do?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha! I fancy Coker would think so if he could see himself in the glass!" gasped Wharton.

"There's a lot left in the can! What about tipping it over his napper?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton grasped the too exuberant Bob and dragged him back.

"Draw it mild! That will do! Coker will make a sensation if he comes out of the House like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors shrieked at the idea. "Come away!" gasped Nugent. "Better not wake him! Give the paint time to dry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove retired from the scene. Coker's snore followed them down the passage. Whatever was

the mysterious cause of Coker's unusual slumber, he went on with it, and the Famous Five left him to it

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Doubt?

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, opened his window and looked out into the frosty, sunny quadrangle. His gimlet eyes fixed rather suspiciously on a little crowd of Remove fellows gathered by the door of the House. Sounds of laughter reached his ears. Apparently some joke was on.

The Famous Five were there, and Vernon-Smith and Redwing and Squiff and Peter Todd and Lord Mauleverer and Fisher T. Fish, and they were all laughing. Billy Bunter was squeaking with merriment. Mr. Quelch eyed his hopeful pupils with a suspicious eye. When a bunch of fellows belonging to his Form were in such a state of hilarity, Mr. Quelch did not need telling that they had been up to something.

"Wharton!" called out Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

The captain of the Remove came over to his Form master's window, reducing his face to gravity as he did so.

"What is the cause of all this merriment, Wharton?" asked the Remove master.

"I—I think the fellows are waiting to see Coker of the Fifth come out, sir," answered Harry demurely.

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp look. However, he did not pursue the subject.

"Please find Valentine, and send him to my study, Wharton!" he said.

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch stepped back from the window and sat down at his table. He could still hear a sound of sniggering from the quad. Evidently Coker of the Fifth, for some mysterious reason, was causing entertainment in the Remove.

But Mr. Quelch gave no ear to those sounds of mirth. His face was very grave as he sat at the table—his brow wrinkled with troubled thought. A letter was in his hand—a letter which had been addressed to Jim Valentine, the new boy in the Remove. Mr. Quelch had read that letter through several times, and now he read it through again, with darkening brows. That letter seemed to have caused the Remove master a great deal of discomfort.

There was a tap at his door, and Jim Valentine came in.

Mr. Quelch raised his eyes from the letter in his hand, and fixed them on the handsome face of the new junior. His look was hard and penetrating; but the handsome hazel eyes met it without faltering.

"Wharton told me you wanted me, sir!" said Valentine.

"Yes. Come in and shut the door, Valentine."

Valentine shut the door, and came over to the Form master's table, and stood waiting. His face was calm, and his eyes steady; but a faint expression of uneasiness was visible. A less keen fellow than Jim Valentine would have scented trouble in Mr. Quelch's grave, almost portentous manner.

"Valentine," said Mr. Quelch at last, "I must speak to you seriously. When I took you under my protection and brought you to this school, I made myself responsible for you. You had confessed to me that you had been in bad hands; that you had been in the power of certain lawless persons; but I believed you when you said that you

had fled from them, and desired nothing better than to keep clear of them."

Valentine's lip quivered.

It was his past rising up against him again; he could see that. Nosey Clark and the gang would never leave him in peace at Greyfriars, if they could help it.

"I told you the truth, sir!" said the boy quietly. "I hope I've done nothing to make you doubt that, sir."

"You are aware, Valentine, that a Form master here exercises supervision over his Form's correspondence."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"For that reason I have felt it my duty to open this letter addressed to you."

"I've no objection, sir."

"Read the letter!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

Valentine's hand shook as he took the letter. His handsome face whitened a little. What was in that letter? If Nosey Clark had betrayed him—if he had revealed the boy's miserable secret.

If the Greyfriars master had learned that Jim Valentine had been "Dick the Penman" in the gang of crooks and forgers! His brain seemed to reel at that dread! The letter swam before his eyes.

But he pulled himself together! Nosey Clark dared not betray him. The master crook was determined, if he could, to drive him from the school, back into the hands of the gang; but he dared not come to open warfare with the boy who, in his turn, could have handed him over to justice. It was not that!

"Read the letter!" repeated Mr. Quelch coldly.

Jim Valentine proceeded to read it. It was in the hand of Nosey Clark—a hand he knew well enough.

"Dear Jim,—I believe you got a half-holiday on Wednesday. Drop me a line, and I'll pick you up in the car near the school. All your old pals will be glad to see you again. We've missed you.

"NOSEY."

Valentine laid the letter on the table again. He raised his eyes to Mr. Quelch's, and found them fixed on him with a grim and penetrating look. Seldom had Jim seen his protector looking otherwise than kindly on him. But there was little kindness in Mr. Quelch's face now.

"Well?" he rapped. "This does not look, Valentine, as if you have thrown your old associations behind you—as if you have kept away from your former disreputable associates as you engaged to do. This letter, I conclude, is from the man named Clark, who, as Inspector Grin Courtfield has told me, is more than suspected of being the leader of an association of rascals and criminals."

"Yes, sir!" answered Jim.

"You are, then, in communication with this man?"

Valentine's lip quivered.

"No, sir! I haven't seen him since the day you saw him speaking to me in Friardale Lane. I've never wanted to see him—never written to him. Goodness knows I'd be glad to forget him if I could."

"Then what does this mean?" demanded Mr. Quelch. "The man certainly writes as if you are on familiar terms—friendly terms."

"That's his game," said Jim wearily. "He knew well enough that that letter would be seen before it reached me. He's going to drive me from Greyfriars if he can—that's what he wants."

"Oh!" This was rather a new idea to Mr. Quelch. "You mean that this man is rascal enough—unscrupulous enough—intentionally to give me a false impression—to do you harm, in my opinion?"

"That is it, sir."

"Yet I cannot understand, Valentine, why this man—these men—should be so anxious for you to rejoin them, if you have indeed thrown them over, as I hope and believe. You are but a boy—no older than most Remove boys here—what can your value be to these men, if they are so eager for you to go back to them against your own inclination?"

Jim Valentine stood silent.

The thought was in his mind, for a moment, of making a full confession—of

this letter is as you think, a trick on the part of that unscrupulous man, to do you harm here, it will not succeed," said Mr. Quelch.

He signed to the boy to leave the study; and Valentine went. Mr. Quelch sat with Nosey Clark's letter in his hand, and a thoughtful frown on his face, for quite a long time. He had trusted the friendless boy whom he had befriended and protected; and in every way since he had been at Greyfriars, Jim Valentine had confirmed the high opinion he had formed of him. Was his trust shaken now?

He hardly knew. He tossed the letter into the fire at last, and strove to dismiss it from his mind.

But that was not easy; and the

of his new complexion. But Coker had not happened!

Apparently he was still asleep in his study, though nobody could understand what made him sleep so soundly in the day-time. It was a disappointment. Coker walking in the quad with a yellow complexion would have been entertaining.

But if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet had to go to the mountain! A dozen Remove fellows started for the Fifth Form passage. Unluckily, Mr. Quelch, leaving his study to go to the Remove room, spotted them on the stairs.

"Where are you going?" inquired the Remove master. "Have you not heard



"What's wrong with my face?" roared Coker. "You've got a face yourself that would stop a clock!" "He's mad! Hopelessly insane!" gasped Prout. "I—I will call Dr. Locke! A—a—doctor must be sent for! This unhappy boy must have medical attention!"

telling all to his kind friend and protector. But it was only for a moment. To tell the Greyfriars master that he was Dick the Penman—the boy crook of whom the police were in search—that the imitation of hands had been his work when he was in the power of Nosey Clark—How could he tell the Form master that? He could picture the horror, the incredulity, in Mr. Quelch's face—and he shivered at the mental picture. He could not tell the Remove master that. He stood in miserable silence.

"I trust you, Valentine," said Mr. Quelch, after a long pause. "But"—he paused again—"I am very much perplexed to know why these bad men are so anxious that you should rejoin them, against your will. You cannot explain that."

"I—I've nothing to say, sir, except—except that I hope you will trust me, and I'll never give you cause to be sorry for it," said Jim Valentine, in a low voice. "I can only say that, sir."

"I shall trust you, my boy. And if

Remove master was still sitting with a wrinkled brow, thinking over the strange matter, when the bell rang for afternoon class. — — —

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Sleeping Beauty!

"I SAY, you fellows, there's the bell!"

"My hat! Is old Coker still snoring?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"He won't have much time to wash before class!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rotten!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith. "We wanted to see him! Let's go and give him a look-in, in his study!"

"Let's!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Goodness knows what he's snoozing like that for, but he will have to wake up for class."

The juniors had hoped to see Coker of the Fifth come forth, in all the glory

of the bell? Go to the Form-room at once!"

There was no help for it; and the Removeites went to the Form-room. Coker had to be left to it. They wondered whether he had heard the bell for class. In that extraordinary sound slumber, probably he hadn't. He was not to be seen among the Fifth Form men, heading for the Fifth Form room; and Potter of the Fifth was heard to ask Greene if he knew where old Coker was, Greene shaking his head in response. What was going to happen was a rather entertaining question to the Removeites; but they had to gather in their own Form-room under Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye, and leave Horace Coker to his own devices.

Coker's devices, for the present, led him to continue snoring in the armchair in his study. His chums, Potter and Greene, wondered where on earth he was. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, rolled ponderously into the Fifth Form Room, and immediately noted that Coker

was not present. Mr. Prout grunted as he noted it. Coker was often late for class—punctuality not being counted among Horace's many virtues. Mr. Prout made a mental note to give him a hundred lines when he did come in.

But Coker did not come in. Ten minutes passed—a quarter of an hour. Even the unpunctual Coker was never a quarter of an hour late for class. Mr. Prout's ire rose.

Coker was a troublesome pupil, at the best of times. He was obtuse, he was backward; he was slow and obstinate; and he had an unshakable conviction that, in most things, he knew better than his Form master. These shining qualities did not make him popular with Prout. Of late, too, Coker had been even more irritating than usual, as he had developed a custom of nodding, even dozing, in class. Prout's drone often had a soporific effect on the Fifth; but only Coker had ever ventured to doze in the Form-room; and Coker had only ventured to do so during the last few days. Mr. Prout was getting fed-up with Coker.

"Potter!" he rapped out suddenly. "Where is Coker? Why is he not here?"

"I don't know, sir!" answered Potter. "I haven't seen him since he went to his study after dinner."

"Apparently," said Prout, "he has forgotten class. Go and find him at once, Potter."

"Very well, sir!"

Potter of the Fifth left the Form-room. Where Coker was, was a mystery; but as he had last been seen alive, so to speak, in his study, Potter headed for that apartment. A deep and hefty snore that greeted him as he came up the Fifth Form passage apprised him that Coker was there, and that he was asleep. Potter had heard that snore often enough in the Fifth Form dormitory, though he had never heard it in the study before.

"Coker, old man—" Potter looked in at the doorway. "I say, Coker—why—what—great jumping Moses—what the—"

Potter's jaw fairly dropped as he gazed at Coker.

The great Horace was fast asleep and snoring. That was surprising enough in the daytime. But the most surprising thing was Coker's complexion. It was startling—it was unnerving—it leaped to the eye! Potter of the Fifth gazed at it dumbfounded.

"What—what—what—" stuttered Potter. "Coker, old man—are you ill—good lord—Coker—wake up!"

Snore!

Potter, amazed, alarmed, approached the sleeping beauty and shook him forcibly by the shoulder. He banged his head on the back of the armchair. Coker woke up then. He woke up quite suddenly.

"Yoooop!" howled Coker. "What the thump—ow! My napper! Wow! You silly idiot—wow!"

"I've come to wake you up, old chap—"

"No need to brain a fellow!" roared Coker, rubbing the back of his head. "Ow! Have I been asleep?"

"You could be heard all over Greyfriars—"

"Don't talk rot, Potter! Has the bell gone?"

"Twenty minutes ago! Prout—"

"Oh, my hat! What are you goggling at?" demanded Coker. "Staring at a fellow as if a fellow was a Punch and Judy show—"

"What have you done that for?" gasped Potter. On a close view, he could see that it was yellow paint on Coker's face. Why Coker had painted himself like this was an utter mystery to George Potter.

"Eh, what? What are you gabbling about?" asked Coker testily. "If I'm twenty minutes late for class I'd better cut off. No time to jaw."

"You're not going into the Form-room like that?" shrieked Potter.

"Eh! Like what?"

"Your—your face—" gurgled Potter. "You—you can't take a face like that into the Form-room."

Coker was striding to the door. At this, he turned back towards Potter. Coker's face, in its natural state, was not handsome. Even Coker did not think it was handsome! It was, in Coker's opinion, one of those strong, rugged, manly faces, full of character, infinitely to be preferred to mere namby-pamby good looks! In the opinion of many other fellows, it was a face that might have been used with success as a model for a Guy Fawkes mask. But Coker, though he was not handsome, and disdained handsomeness, did not like jokes about his features. He had heard a good many, and he did not like any of them. So now he turned on Potter in wrath. Quite unaware that he had been decorated while he slumbered, Coker supposed that Potter was making one of his usual rotten jokes.

"What's that?" hooted Coker. "Can't take my face into the Form-room? You think that's funny, do you, George Potter?"

"It looks funny!" gasped Potter. "Frightfully funny—"

"Well, if I had a face like yours," said Coker, "I'd ask somebody to use it as a doormat and tread it into a better shape. If I wasn't late for class, I'd alter some of your features for you—"

"Look here, Coker, I tell you—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Coker.

And he marched indignantly out of the study, leaving Potter gurgling. The Fifth Form passage rang to his heavy footsteps. Potter followed him, in a dazed state. What Coker had done it for, he could not begin to understand; and he could hardly imagine that Coker really intended to go to the Form-room in such a state. But evidently Coker did.

Trotter, the House page, was coming up the stairs as Coker tramped down. Trotter gave no look at Coker's weird countenance and uttered a startled yell. He backed away in sudden alarm, missed his footing, and sat down with a bump at the bottom of the stairs.

Coker stared at him.

"Clumsy young ass!" said Coker.

"Here, you keep off!" yelled Trotter, as Coker followed him down. "Keep off, you blooming maniac, whoever you are!"

"Whoever I am!" gasped Coker. "Are you potty? Don't you know me, you young idiot? What's the matter with you?"

Trotter certainly didn't know Coker on his looks. Even Horace's affectionate Aunt Judy would hardly have known him. But the voice was familiar.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Trotter, gazing at him. "What—what—what's the matter, Master Coker?"

"Nothing, you young ass! What do you mean?"

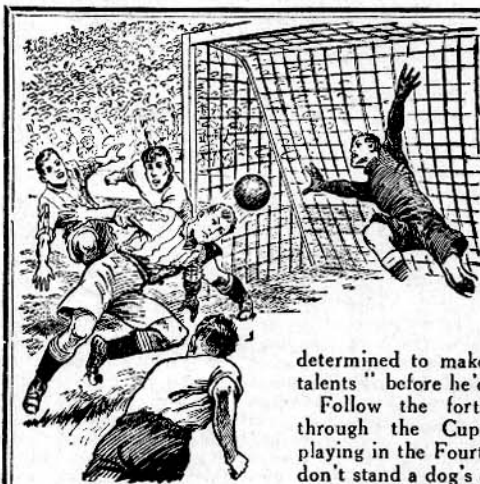
"Your face—" gasped Trotter.

"My face! My hat! That's what comes of your rotten jokes, George Potter—the dashed boot-boy is catching it now! But I'll jolly soon put the stopper on that!" roared Coker.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Trotter roared even louder than Coker as the exasperated Horace grasped the back of his neck and banged his head on the lowest stair.

Leaving Trotter roaring, Coker tramped away to the Fifth Form Room. Trotter rubbed his head and gazed after him. Potter followed him to the Form-room, still dazed. He wondered what was going to happen when Prout saw Coker.



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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Prout!

PROUT jumped. All the Fifth jumped. They gazed at Coker as he came into the Fifth Form Room. They stared at him. They goggled at him. The winter sunlight shone in at the windows of the Fifth Form Room. It lighted up Coker's yellow face to great advantage.

Prout would probably have jumped clear of the floor had he not had so much weight to lift. He gasped, and his eyes bulged at Coker. He really wondered whether his eyes were deceiving him.

"Is—is—is that Coker?" gurgled Prout.

Coker looked at him. Why all the Fifth were staring at him like this, Coker did not know. Neither could he guess why Prout was gazing at him as if he were the ghost of a Fifth-Former. Coker was the only fellow in the room who could not see Coker's face!

"Yes, sir—I'm sorry I'm late for class," said Coker. "I fell asleep—"

"How dare you, Coker?" shrieked Prout.

"Eh? I couldn't help nodding off in the study, sir—as it happens, I missed some sleep last night—"

"How dare you enter the Form-room like that, Coker?" raved Prout.

"Like what, sir?" asked Coker puzzled. So far as he was aware, he had entered the Form-room in his usual way—rather like a dray-horse.

"Is this a prank?" shrieked Prout. "Prank!" repeated Coker, staring.

"Is it what the juniors would call a rag?"

"A—a—a rag." "Is it intended, Coker, as an act of disrespect towards your Form master?" roared Prout.

"I—I don't understand, sir," stammered the bewildered Coker. "Have—have I done anything, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the Fifth.

"Silence!" boomed Prout. "This is not a laughing matter."

"Isn't it?" murmured Blundell of the Fifth.

"Coker, come here! Stand before me!" boomed Prout. "Now, sir, explain yourself at once! How dare you enter the Form-room with a face like that?"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Coker, hardly believing his ears.

Jokes, in rotten bad taste, about his features, he had often heard in the Fifth, but to hear anything of the kind from his Form master was astounding. He had banged Trotter's head for such an offence. He could not bang his Form master's head, of course, but he glared at Prout with deep indignation.

"Answer me!" raved Prout. "How dare you, I say—how dare you enter my presence with such a face?"

"Look here, you let my face alone!" bawled Coker, indignation carrying him away. "What about your own, if you come to that?"

"What—what?" "Like a pumpkin that's been trodden on, if you ask me!" declared Coker.

"Bless my soul!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fifth.

"Silence! If this wretched boy has taken leave of his senses, it is not a matter for unthinking hilarity! Coker, are you mad?"

"I jolly well think you are!" bawled Coker. "Making rotten jokes about a

fellow's face. It's a better-looking face than yours, and chance it! I'd like to know what the Head would think if, he heard you."

"The boy is mad!" gasped Prout. "Coker, calm yourself! Coker, explain to me, if you can, why you have done this?"

"Done what?" shrieked Coker. "What have I done, I'd like to know? What are all those silly owls cackling at? Blessed if I don't think I've walked into a lunatic asylum!"

"Your face!" gasped Prout. "Leave my face alone!" roared Coker. "You've got a face yourself that would stop a clock!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Mad!" gasped Prout. "Hopelessly insane! I—I will call Dr. Locke! A—a doctor must be sent for! This unhappy boy must have medical attention!"

"Look here!" bawled Coker. "Coker," gasped Potter, "for goodness' sake—"

"Coker, old chap—" gasped Greene. "By gum, I'll jolly well—"

"Calm yourself, Coker!" panted Prout. "Calm yourself at once! You shall have medical attention immediately. But if you become violent you must be secured."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the bewildered Coker. He gazed at the yelling Fifth, and then at the flustered Form master. "What—what—what's the row? Is—is there a smut or something on my face, or what?"

It dawned even on Coker's powerful intellect that something was amiss somewhere.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Prout. "Is it possible, Coker, that you do not know the state your face is in? Have you done this, and forgotten it—"

Coker dazedly passed a hand over his face. The paint was dry, but there were wet spots here and there where Bob Cherry had laid it on rather thick. A streak of yellow paint came off on Coker's fingers, and he stared at it dumbfounded.

"Wha-a-at's that?" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "He doesn't know," gurgled Hilton of the Fifth. "Mad as a hatter! He's painted his face, and forgotten it!"

"Coker," gurgled Prout, "unfortunate boy, is it possible that you do not know that your face is painted yellow?"

"Pip-pip-pip-painted!" stammered Coker. "My fuf-fuf-face pip-pip-painted! How can my fuf-fuf-face be pip-pip-painted? What rot!"

"Look here!" gasped Hilton.

Hilton, the dandy of the Fifth, was never without his pocket mirror. He held it up for Coker to look in.

Coker looked into it. At the sight of a yellow face in the glass, Coker nearly fell down.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh crikey! Oh, holy haddocks! Oh!"

"He—he never knew," babbled Blundell. "He's painted his face like that, and never knew! Mad as a March hare!"

"Coker," gasped Prout—"Coker! If—if you are not insane, what does this mean? Why have you done this? Have you forgotten doing it? Have you lost your memory? Coker, why did—"

"I—I—I—" Coker gabbled helplessly. "I—I—I—I never did it! I—I—I never knew it was did—I mean done! I—I—I—I've been asleep. I—I—I—I— Oh crikey! Somebody must have done this while I was asleep in my study! Somebody pip-pip-painted my face while I was asleep—"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout, while the Fifth yelled.

Coker passed his hands over his face. His fingers were streaked with yellow. Prout gazed at him. It was a relief to learn that Coker was not mad—as really had seemed only too probable. Coker evidently was not out of his senses—such as they were—but had been the victim of a practical joke. How a fellow could sleep so soundly in the daytime, as to remain unconscious of the painting of his face, was really mysterious; but evidently that was it. Coker was not mad. He was the hapless victim of some practical joker.

"I—I—I—I'll smash him!" gasped Coker. "Who was it? I'll jolly well find out who it was, and—and spifficate him!"

"Coker, leave the Form-room at once! Go and clean yourself! You will take a hundred lines! Go!"

Coker went, leaving the Fifth rocking with merriment. And even on Prout's majestic face there dawned something like a grin. Coker marching in to class with such a highly decorated countenance, unconscious of the decoration, was really enough to make a gargoyle grin. A howl of laughter followed Coker as he went. For what reason Coker did not know. Coker could see nothing funny in this. Coker was in a state of towering wrath and indignation, and not in the least amused.

It was half an hour before Coker came back to the Form-room. That half-hour Coker spent in a bath-room with steaming hot water and soap—lots of hot water, and lots of soap. But when he reappeared there was still a considerable amount of paint on Coker's countenance, and where the paint had been scrubbed off, the countenance was crimson from the scrubbing.

Prout looked at him, and uttered a sound suspiciously resembling a chuckle, which Coker considered frightfully undignified of Prout. Broad grins adorned the faces of all the Fifth. That afternoon Prout found it quite difficult to keep his Form serious. Indeed, whenever he glanced at Coker's glowing countenance, he found it difficult to keep himself serious.

It was not a happy afternoon for Coker. But to judge by their looks, it was the happiest of afternoons to the Fifth.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Vials of Wrath!

JIM VALENTINE chuckled. He could not help it.

The new boy at Greyfriars was not in a merry mood that day. That letter from Nosey Clark—in the morning—had had a subduing effect on his spirits, and he had been thinking of it with a clouded brow ever since.

But the sight of Horace Coker banished the cloud from his brow, and he burst into an involuntary chuckle. He came on Coker of the Fifth suddenly in the passages after class, and Coker's bright and glowing countenance took him by surprise.

Since class Coker had been rubbing and scrubbing again. He had got rid of some more of the paint. But there was still some left. And his rubbed and scrubbed countenance was like Marian's in the ballad—red and raw. His cheeks glowed; his nose fairly flamed. The most melancholy of mortals might have chuckled at the sudden sight of Coker's face.

But Coker was 'ed-up on chuckles

and chortles and giggles and sniggers. Nobody seemed able to look at Coker without chuckling or chortling or giggling or sniggering. Coker was tired of it. And as Valentine emitted that involuntary chuckle Coker spun round on him, jumped at him, and grasped him by the collar.

"Funny, isn't it?" roared Coker. "Well, I'll give you something to snigger at! I dare say it was you did it. You're cheeky enough. Take that!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Valentine, as he took "that." That was a bang of his head on the passage wall.

"And that!" roared Coker.

Bang!

"Yaroooo!"

Valentine twisted in Coker's grasp. Luckily he hooked his leg in Coker's, and brought the great Horace to the floor with a crash. Coker smote the floor and roared.

"You silly ass" gasped Valentine. "Now you take that—and that—"

Grasping Coker's ears, which were large and gave a good hold, Valentine banged Coker's head on the floor twice. Then, dodging Coker's frantic clutches, he departed rapidly from the spot. It was not judicious to wait till Coker was on his feet again.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Coker. He sat up and rubbed his head. There was nothing, perhaps, inside Coker's head to be damaged, but the outside felt hurt. "The—the cheeky tick! I—I—I'll—"

Coker scrambled up. Valentine had vanished round the nearest corner. Coker charged round that corner like a runaway motor-car. It was quite a surprise for Loder, Carne, and Walker of the Sixth. The three prefects were standing in a group, chatting, when Coker happened. Coker, of course, did not know they were there; Coker could not see round corners—no fellow could. He discovered that they were there as they went staggering, right and left, under his charge.

"What the thump!" roared Loder.

"What the dooce—" stuttered Walker.

"Oh crumbs!" yelled Carne, as he crashed.

Coker staggered from the shock. He recoiled, gasping.

"Gerrou of the way! Silly asses, getting in the way!" gasped Coker.

Loder & Co. turned on him. Coker of the Fifth was a hefty man, with whom even Sixth Form prefects did not hunt for trouble, as a rule. But Loder & Co. were cross now.

They turned on Coker like tigers, grasped him on all sides, and bumped him down on the floor with a heavy bump. Then they kicked him. Coker, sprawling and spluttering, hardly knew what was happening to him. Loder kicked him, Carne kicked him, Walker kicked him, and they all kicked him hard. Then they walked away and left him to splutter.

Coker resumed the perpendicular in a dizzy state.

"My hat!" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some fellows along the passage were laughing. Coker gave them an indignant glare. Indignant glares from a face that was crimson, with a nose burning like a house on fire, only seemed to add to the hilarity of the fellows who were laughing. They yelled.

Coker, breathing wrath, turned and tramped away. He headed for the Sixth Form passage and Wingate's study.

George Wingate, captain of Grey-THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,302.

friars and head prefect, was the man Coker wanted to see. The Greyfriars captain was at tea in his study, with Gwynne and Sykes of the Sixth, when Coker hurled the door open and tramped in.

The three Sixth-Formers stared at him and burst into a laugh. Coker's flaming face was too much for them.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Behold, he blushes!" said Gwynne.

"Look here, Wingate!" roared Coker.

"You call yourself a prefect—well, look at me!"

"I'm looking!" chuckled Wingate.

"You're worth looking at, Coker! But what's the game? Are you joining a circus, or what?"

"I fell asleep in my study after dinner, and some villain came and painted my face!" roared Coker.

"Well, I want you to look into it!"

"I'm looking into it! It's rather dazzling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, I want you to look into the matter! What's a prefect for? It's up to you to find out that young scoundrel, and whop him!" hooted Coker. "I shan't get all the paint off for days—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" roared Coker. "Cackle, you cackling asses! How can a fellow go about with a face like mine?"

"I've often wondered!" answered Wingate blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you silly ass! I mean with a face painted like mine! I want that young scoundrel nailed and whopped—see?"

"Dash it all, Coker!" said Sykes. "There's such a thing as gratitude!"

"Gratitude!" echoed Coker. "What the thump do you mean?"

"Well, somebody seems to have done you a good turn. You're better looking with your face out of sight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Coker. "You silly chump! You cackling idiot! You frabjous dummy! You piffing, pie-faced owl! You—"

"The speech may be taken as read!" said Wingate. "Cut it short, Coker. Shut the door after you!"

"Are you going—"

"No; you're going!"

"Are you going to take the matter up?" shrieked Coker. "You gabbling, grinning, gurgling idiot, is a senior man to be cheeked like this?"

"No!" said Wingate, rising from the table. "A senior man isn't to be cheeked like this! Hand me that cane, Sykes! Now bend over, Coker! As you say, a senior man is not to be cheeked—and I happen to be a senior man—"

Slam!

The study door closed as Coker departed. Wingate sat down again, laughing.

Coker, in towering wrath, tramped away to his own study in the Fifth.

Potter and Greene were there, thinking of tea. They were glad to see Coker come in. Tea in that study depended on Coker. As they were thinking of tea, and tea depended on Coker, Potter and Greene had resolved not to chuckle, chortle, giggle, or snigger at the sight of Coker's flaming face. But they could not help grinning.

With heroic efforts they refrained from chuckling, chortling, giggling, or sniggering—but it was beyond their powers to restrain a grin. Coker's countenance really was enough to make a cat laugh.

"You, too!" said Coker, in the tone that Caesar might have used when he said "Et tu, Brute!" "You, too! Every silly idiot in the school sniggers at the sight of me, and now my own pals—"

"Not at all, old chap!" said Potter hastily. "I—I don't think you look funny—not at all funny—ha, ha!—I mean—"

"Why, you're sniggering now!" roared Coker. "If you want something to snigger at, George Potter, snigger at that!"

Thump!

"Oh crumbs! Keep off, you lunatic!" roared Potter, dodging round the table.

"You howling ass—"

Coker came round the table after him. The vials of wrath were overflowing.

"Lemme get hold of you!" panted Coker. "I'll give you something to snigger at! I'll—"

Potter dodged out of the study. Greene dodged after him. They gave up tea in the study as a hopeless proposition. Coker, glaring from the doorway, roared after them.

"Come back, you cheeky ticks! Come back, you rotters, and I'll jolly well bang your sniggering heads together! Come on! I'll give you something to snigger at if you come back!"

But Potter and Greene, apparently, had enough to snigger at. They did not come back.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

After Lights-Out!

HARRY WHARTON gave a start.

He was half asleep, in bed, in the Remove dormitory.

Round him he could hear the steady breathing of many sleepers and the resonant snore of Billy Bunter. He had fancied that he was the only fellow awake in the dormitory. But the creaking of a bed told of a fellow getting up, and a faint, rustling sound told of the unseen fellow dressing in the dark.

Wharton lay without moving or speaking; but a dark and bitter look came over his face.

He had been thinking of Jim Valentine, the new fellow who shared Study No. 1 with him and Nugent. Valentine was much in the thoughts of the chums of Study No. 1 of late. They knew something of his past, and, in spite of what they knew, they had stood by him; believing that he was in deep earnest in his desire to keep clear of Nosey Clark and his gang; that, whatever he might have done when he associated with Nosey and Barney Hayes and Nutty Nixon, he had come to Greyfriars resolved to keep straight as a die. But—

He had been secretly out of bounds on the night of an attempted burglary at Highcliffe. He had told them that he had known of Nutty's intention, and had gone to defeat him and stop him. They hoped it was true—they tried to believe so. If that had been all—

But it was not all. Lord Mauleverer's notecase had been "pinched" in the Remove dormitory at night. The notecase had been found by Wharton, hidden in the study cupboard in Study No. 1. The money had not been found. What did it look like?

Yet they tried to believe Valentine's passionate assertion that he knew nothing of the matter; that he had never touched Mauly's notecase, and could not imagine how it came to be hidden in his study. They tried to believe, but they found it hard.

And now, as Wharton lay wakeful,



As Vernon-Smith turned from the door, after closing it, shadowy figures loomed round him in the gloom, and five pillows smote almost at the same moment. Swipe, swipe, swipe! "Oh! Ow!" he gasped. "What the thump—my hat! What the merry dickens—whoop!" "Give him jip!" "Pillow him!" "Ha, ha, ha!" The pillows smote and swiped.

listening to the faint sound that told of some fellow up at night, his face darkened and his heart hardened. If it was Valentine going out of bounds again, late at night! If it was that, he would know how much to believe! And if he was convinced that the new boy in the Remove was in truth still a crook, acting in collusion with the former associates he pretended to have cast off and done with—what then?

He had to know, at least!

He heard a faint sound of the dormitory door opening and closing again. Whoever it was that had got up, had gone out—there was no doubt on that point. Whoever it was, had dressed and left the dormitory at eleven o'clock at night.

Wharton lay for minutes, silent, thinking; but at last he turned out of bed.

He stepped to Nugent's bed and shook Frank by the shoulder.

Nugent came with a jump out of the land of dreams.

"What—Ooooh!" he murmured.

"Wharrer marrer?"

"Wake up, Frank!" whispered Harry Wharton.

Nugent rubbed his eyes and blinked at him in the darkness.

"What the thump—" he began.

"Wake up!" repeated Wharton, shaking him.

"I'm awake, fathead!" Frank Nugent sat up in bed. "What's the row?"

"Somebody's just gone out of the dorm," answered Harry quietly. "I couldn't see who it was, of course, but—"

Nugent started.

"Valentine?" he muttered.

"Who else? We've got to know! If it's Valentine, that settles it—and we've both got to know!"

"Easy enough!" said Frank. "I've got an electric torch in my jacket pocket. Wait a tick! If Valentine's gone, we shall know what to think—and we're done with him."

"More than that," said Wharton in a low, tense voice, "if he was lying to us—if he's taken us in—if he's hand-in-glove with that gang of crooks—he's got to get out of Greystones!"

He set his lips hard. He had no doubt in his mind that it was Valentine who had gone, and a bitter anger was rising in his breast. If the boy whom he believed to be Dick the Penman, wanted by the police, had deceived him, he would not spare him! He was resolved on that.

Nugent slipped from his bed and fumbled for the torch in his jacket pocket. He found it, and the two juniors passed along to Valentine's bed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice. "Is that somebody up?"

"Yes. Don't make a row."

Bob Cherry sat up blinking.

"What's the game?" he asked.

"Quiet, old chap!"

Wharton and Nugent stopped at Valentine's bed, Bob staring at their dim figures in the gloom in wonder.

There was a sudden bright beam of light as Nugent flashed on the torch.

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

He stared as the beam of light played on a handsome face with the eyes closed in slumber on Valentine's pillow.

Jim Valentine was in bed and fast asleep.

Wharton stared at him blankly. He was surprised—but he felt a rush of relief. There had been scarcely a doubt in his mind that it was the "boy with a past" who had crept silently out of the Remove dormitory in the darkness.

Evidently, however, it was not.

"He's here all right!" whispered Nugent.

Valentine's eyes opened. The beam of light playing on his face had awakened him. He blinked and stared.

"What the dickens!" he ejaculated.

Wharton coloured. He could not blame himself for his doubts, yet, finding that they were unfounded, he felt ashamed of them. Nugent shut off the light.

"What—" said Valentine wonderingly.

"All serene!" muttered Wharton. "It's all right! Somebody's gone out, and we want to know who it is."

He heard a deep-drawn breath.

"I understand," said Jim Valentine quietly, but with a note of bitterness in his voice. "Quite!"

"Sorry!" muttered Wharton awkwardly. "But—but—"

"I don't blame you. I understand."

Wharton stepped away from the bed. Valentine was there—he had been asleep—and Wharton's relief was deep. He could not help his doubt, and the boy could hardly blame him for it, but Valentine's tone told how deeply it hurt him.

The captain of the Remove was feeling bitterly angry, and his anger was now turned on the unknown fellow who had caused him to make that unhappy mistake.

Some Remove fellow had gone out at eleven at night, and as it was not Valentine it was obviously one of the reckless spirits of the Remove—Vernon-Smith, or Skinner, or perhaps Hazeldene. Whoever it was, Wharton made up his mind to make him sorry for it.

"What are you fellows rooting about after?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Some silly ass has gone out of

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bounds!" answered Harry. "Show the light on Smithy's bed, Frank."

The torch gleamed again on the bed belonging to Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Wharton breathed hard. The bed was empty. It was the Bounder who had gone.

"The rotten sweep!" muttered Wharton savagely. "The frowsy blackguard! Only Smithy, after all!"

"Smithy gone out on the tiles?" came a sleepy chuckle from Skinner's bed. Several fellows were awakening now at the murmur of voices. "Good old Smithy!"

"I'll give him good old Smithy when he comes back!" growled Wharton.

"What the dickens does it matter to you?" asked Skinner.

Harry Wharton did not answer that question. The Bounder's shady proceedings did not, perhaps, matter to him personally. But on this occasion Smithy's blackguardism had caused him to make a miserable mistake and wound the feelings of the hapless boy who, if he really was striving to keep straight—as Wharton hoped—had enough to bear. And on this occasion Smithy was going to suffer for his sins.

"Staying up for Smithy?" asked Frank.

"Yes!" answered Wharton curtly.

"You've got a long wait!" chuckled Skinner. "Smithy's gone to see a man about a horse; he won't be back for an hour."

"He'll find me ready for him when he does come back!" growled the captain of the Remove. He took his pillow from his bed.

"Can't mind your own bizney?" yawned Skinner.

"I'll make it my bizney to give you a few with this pillow if you don't shut up!"

Skinner decided to shut up.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Hear that? Is that Smithy coming back? He can't have seen his man about a horse yet."

There was a swift patter of feet in the passage outside.

"Get your pillow, Frank!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Nugent.

"Me, too!" grinned Bob.

"The toofulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I've got a few for him!" grinned Johnny Bull.

And the Famous Five, pillows in hand, ran to the door and waited for it to open. There was a surprise in store for the Bounder of Greyfriars when he got back to his dormitory.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Dodged in the Dark!

THE House was dark and silent when Herbert Vernon-Smith crept quietly away from the Remove dormitory.

The Bounder, with rubber shoes on his feet, made scarcely a sound as he crept. Downstairs, lights still burned in some of the masters' studies, and one or two of the Sixth were still up. But the junior quarters were deep in silence and slumber. Some fellows would hardly have liked creeping about dark and silent passages late at night, but the Bounder of Greyfriars had plenty of nerve. It was not the first time by many a one that Herbert Vernon-Smith had broken bounds after lights-out.

His intention was to go down the stairs to the studies and get out of the box-room window at the end of the Remove passage. That was the Bounder's usual mode of egress on such occasions. But on this particular occasion there was, so to speak, a lion in the path.

A faint sound in the gloom ahead caused Smithy to stop suddenly, his heart beating rather fast. It was the sound of a stealthy footstep—as stealthy as his own, but not quite so silent. He stopped and pressed close to the wall, listening intently, striving to pierce the deep gloom with his startled eyes.

Who the dickens could it be? he wondered. A master or prefect on the prowl, suspicious of fellows breaking bounds? It could hardly be anything else. At a later hour he might have supposed that the unseen one was a burglar; but the most enterprising burglar was scarcely likely to enter at eleven, while lights were still burning in some of the study windows.

Who the dickens could it be, he wondered? A master or prefect on the prowl, long minutes in vain. He wondered whether the other fellow had stopped also, and was listening, too.

Five long, slow minutes crawled by, and Smithy began to wonder whether he had been mistaken. He stirred at last and crept on out of the dormitory passage to the great landing, on which many passages opened. Near the head of the stairs was a large window, at which there was a glimmer of the winter starlight. And as the Bounder's eyes turned on that window his heart throbbed again and he stopped dead.

Silhouetted against the dim window was a dark figure.

Vernon-Smith stared at it blankly. If it was not a man's figure it was that of a well-grown youth, and he had no doubt that it was a Sixth-Former—a prefect. It was as big as any fellow in the Greyfriars Sixth.

But if it was a prefect on the watch for breakers of bounds, why was the fellow standing there by the window like a wooden image? As he made the figure out a little more clearly Vernon-Smith could see that the head was bent a little in an attitude of listening.

It rushed into his mind that the watcher had heard him, cautious as he had been, and was listening for further movements.

The Bounder's heart thumped. He was a reckless fellow, accustomed to taking risks. But he was well aware of the risk he was running. Any fellow who broke bounds after lights-out was certain of a Head's flogging, and might very likely be expelled from the school. Smithy could not doubt that the big fellow silhouetted against the window was a Sixth Form prefect—and he shivered as he realised that the prefect must have heard him, and that he might feel the grasp of Wingate or Gwynne or Walker on his shoulder the next minute.

Smithy was very keen to see a certain man about a certain horse. But he was still keener not to be caught out of bounds by a prefect and reported to his Form master in the morning. His heart beat quite unpleasantly as the burly figure at the window stirred and came towards him. Only too plainly he had been heard.

He backed away as silently as he could. He was not thinking now of seeing a man about a horse! He was thinking only of getting back to his dormitory undiscovered. But as he backed away his arm brushed the wall, and, faint as the sound was, a sudden sharply drawn breath told that it had reached the ears of the burly fellow approaching him across the dark landing.

There was a sudden rush in the dark, and as Vernon-Smith jumped away, two hands clutched at him and held.

Without stopping to think, the Bounder hit out.

It was rather a desperate proceeding, for "punching a prefect" was an offence that was certain to be followed by the "sack" if the offender was discovered. But the Bounder was desperate now, and he was the fellow to take desperate chances.

His fist landed on a broad chest with a heavy thump. He heard a grunt and a sound of staggering feet, and then a heavy bump. Whoever it was that had grasped him in the dark, Vernon-Smith had knocked him down!

"Urrrrgh!" came a breathless grunt from the half-seen figure sprawling in the darkness on the landing.

Herbert Vernon-Smith did not stay to listen. He dodged away in the gloom, and ran. But he did not run for the Remove dormitory. In those exciting moments the cool-headed, iron-nerved Bounder did not lose his presence of mind. He ran up another passage that led to the Fourth Form dormitory—and as he went he heard a sound of breathless grunting and pursuing footsteps behind him. In the passage was a window with a rather deep recess. In that recess the Bounder crouched, silent, still—stopping even his breathing as the footsteps came past.

They passed him, and the unseen pursuer went on up the passage.

Vernon-Smith crept out of the recess on tiptoe, and tiptoed back to the landing. Having sent his pursuer on a false scent, he scudded into the passage to the Remove dormitory.

Once there, he ran fast.

The prefect—if his pursuer was a prefect, as Smithy had no doubt—would be rooting about for him, and would probably switch on a light—Smithy was surprised that he had not switched on a light already. The Bounder had no time to lose. He ran up the dormitory passage almost as if he were on the cinder-path and reached the door of the Remove dormitory. He opened it swiftly and ran in, closing the door after him.

He supposed the Remove dormitory to be still deep in slumber, as he had left

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it. His intention was to bundle instantly into bed in case the dormitory was visited by a searcher. But he did not carry out that intention. As he turned from the door, after closing it, shadowy figures loomed round him in the gloom, and five pillows smote at the same moment.

Swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe!
"Oh! Ow! Oooogh!" gasped Vernon-Smith. "What the thump— My hat! What the merry dickens— Great pip! Whoop!"

"Give him jim!"
"Give him toco!"
"Pillow him!"
"That's one for your nob, Smithy!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The pillows smote and swiped. Vernon-Smith staggered and sprawled on the floor. The pillows still smote and swiped as he sprawled. There was a cackle of laughter along the row of beds. Most of the Remove were awake now. Five of them were up with pillows, smiting the sprawling, breathless Bounder. And a sixth speedily joined in. Jim Valentine arriving on the spot with his pillow.

"Give him beans!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You—you—you silly idiots!" gasped Vernon-Smith. "What are you up to? Oh, my hat! Keep off, you potty dummies! There's a prefect after me."

"Give him some more!"
"The morefulness is terrific!"
"Mop him up!"
Vernon-Smith scrambled to his feet, his eyes blazing with rage. But the pillows swiped him on all sides, and he rolled over again, panting.

Swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe!
The Bounder sprawled helplessly, panting with fury. As fast as he got on his feet he went over again under the swiping pillows.

"Will you chuck it?" he shrieked. "I tell you there's a prefect after me— he may butt in any minute— Yaroooh!"

"Serve you right if he does!" growled Johnny Bull. "Take that! It's time you were sacked! And that! And that!"

"Yow-ow-woooop!"
"And that!" added Valentine. "And that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I think that will do!" gasped Harry Wharton, winded by his exertions. "That's a lesson for you, Smithy!"

"You—you silly idiot—you cheeky rotter—," panted the Bounder, scrambling up again as the pillows ceased to smite. "I'll jolly well—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He wants some more! Here you are, Smithy, if you want some more." Bob Cherry's pillow caught the Bounder under the chin, and he went over with a crash.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Leaving the Bounder panting and sprawling, the Famous Five and Jim Valentine went back to bed. Vernon-Smith picked himself up again, gurgling for breath. He was in a towering rage; but it was no time to think of vengeance. He bolted into bed like a rabbit into a burrow. He lay listening for a sound of footsteps in the passage, in dread of seeing the door opened by a Sixth Form prefect. He was still uneasily listening when the rest of the Remove dropped off to sleep again.

But there were no footsteps in the passage: the door did not open. If the Bounder's pursuer was still seeking him, he did not come to the Remove dormitory. And Smithy fell asleep at last—glad, at all events, that he had

escaped his pursuer and escaped detection, and little dreaming of that pursuer's identity! He wondered a great deal who it was—but never for a moment did the name of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form cross his mind.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Horace—and Horace!

SNORE!
Mr. Prout gave a convulsive start.

It was the following day, and the Greyfriars fellows were in the Form-rooms. The Fifth were having a rather easy time of it.

Prout was a chatty gentleman. Sly fellows in the Fifth sometimes, with great cunning, led Prout on to chat; and Prout, enchanted by the music of his own voice, forgot that he was supposed to be hammering knowledge into the heads of the Fifth. Prout's chats were not entertaining in themselves; but they were, at any rate, better than Latin irregular verbs, in the opinion of his Form.

On this particular afternoon the Fifth were doing Horace with Prout. Few of

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the Fifth really liked Q. Horatius Flaccus. Luckily, they came on "Manet sub Jove frigido venator." It was quite a windfall.

Prout, in his youth, had been, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter. It was always easy to get Prout going on that subject. Prout had, or fancied he had, shot grizzlies in the Rocky Mountains. The mere mention of the words "hunter" or "hunting" would make Prout sit up and take notice, like an old war-horse snuffing the battle from afar.

So that reference in Quintus Horatius Flaccus to "the hunter staying out under the frozen sky" gave the Fifth a chance. Like the hunter in Horace's ode, Prout had stayed out under frozen skies—or fancied he had. It started the tide of reminiscence. Price, who was a wily fellow, led him on with a question or two. Once started, Prout needed no more leading.

He barged on. And the Fifth settled down to a comfortable hour of Prout's gas—as they disrespectfully termed it among themselves.

It was ever so much better than Horace. Blundell was able to discuss, in low tones, football prospects with Bland and Tomlinson. Price was able to reflect upon the chances of Bonny Boy in the Welsher's Handicap. Hilton cogitated on the important subject of neckties. And Horace Coker, perhaps lulled by the steady drone of Prout's voice,

nodded and nodded and nodded, till at last he fell asleep.

That would not have mattered, but for Coker's snore. Prout, relating how he had shot grizzlies, how he had climbed the wild passes of the Rockies, was not likely to notice if a fellow dozed. But when a deep and hefty snore resounded through the Form-room even Prout had to heed it. He gave a convulsive start, stared round, and fixed his eyes on the happy Coker.

The Fifth glared at Coker as if they could have eaten him. He had interrupted Prout—brought him back from the past to the present with a jump.

Prout was offended. He had not the slightest suspicion that his chatty talks made fellows feel sleepy. It was a disconcerting discovery.

Snore!
Coker was going strong.

"Upon my word!" said Prout. "Is—is—is Coker asleep? Has that boy fallen asleep in class? Is it possible?"
Snore!

Evidently it was possible. Coker was fast asleep, and snoring as if for a wager.

"Coker!" boomed Prout. Grizzly bears and the Rocky Mountains were dismissed at once. Prout was no longer a mighty hunter relating the exploits of his thrilling youth. He was once more the Form master—and an offended Form master.

"Coker!"
Snore!

What was the matter with Coker was rather a mystery to the Fifth. He seemed always sleepy of late. Only the previous day mischievous juniors had painted his face while he slept in his study. Now he was asleep in the Form room. True, Prout's chats had a soporific effect on fellows—but not to this extent, as a rule.

It hurt Prout! He had supposed that the Fifth were hanging on his words. He had believed that he had them thrilled. It was frightfully disconcerting to be interrupted by a snore!

"Coker! Upon my word! Potter—Greene—awaken that stupid boy!" snorted Prout.

Potter grabbed Coker by his left ear, Greene grabbed him by his right. They tugged together.

Coker woke up quite suddenly. "Oooh!" he gasped.

"Coker!" boomed Prout. "How dare you? I repeat, how dare you fall asleep in class! How dare you, Coker!"

"Oogh! Leggo! Oh, my hat!" Horace Coker rubbed his drowsy eyes. "Did I—I fall asleep? Sorry, sir! Oh dear! Ooooh!"

Coker was still half-asleep. He rubbed his eyes, yawned, and blinked sleepily. Prout glared at him.

"No doubt Horace is a very sleepy subject!" said Prout sarcastically. Perhaps he forgot that, for the last half-hour, his subject had been, not Horace, but Prout!

Coker blinked at him. "Eh?" he ejaculated.

Coker's name was Horace. And he had forgotten, in the mists and shadows of sleep, that the Fifth were doing Q. Horatius Flaccus, who was also called Horace, for short.

Coker wondered drowsily why Prout was calling him by his Christian name! "Very dull and uninteresting, no doubt!" said Prout, savagely sarcastic. "My Form will, however, kindly fix their whole attention upon Horace."

The Form's whole attention was already fixed on Horace Coker! Every man in the Fifth wanted to scalp him.

Coker stared in surprise.
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"Horace," went on Mr. Prout, who could be frightfully sarcastic when he was annoyed, "is really worthy of a little attention from my Form. He is really worthy of a little admiration, if my Form could understand it. Coker, of course, would hardly think so."

"Well, sir," gasped Coker, "it's not for me to say! It's very kind of you to say so, sir—it's really flattering."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged for your good opinion, sir," said Horace Coker.

Prout gazed at him.

"What—what did you say, Coker? Are you wandering in your mind? What do you mean by that remark, Coker?"

Coker blinked at him.

Prout did not understand him—but he, on the other hand, did not understand Prout. Quite plainly he had heard Prout say that Horace was worthy of the Form's attention and admiration. Horace Coker fully concurred—under the impression that he was the Horace alluded to. Surely it was up to him to acknowledge such a flattering statement!

"What do you mean, Coker?" boomed Prout. "If you mean anything—if you are mentally capable of meaning anything—what do you mean?"

"D-d-d-don't you know what I mean?" gasped the astonished Coker. "You said that I was worthy of the admiration of the Form—"

"What?" shrieked Prout. "I said Horace—"

"Well, I'm Horace, ain't I?" gasped the bewildered Coker.

"You—you—you— Bless my soul!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fifth.

"Coker—you stupid and obtuse boy, I—"

"Look here, sir! You said quite plainly—" exclaimed Coker resentfully.

"Silence, blockhead!" roared Prout.

"I was speaking of Quintus Horatius Flaccus, you incredibly stupid boy!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Coker, you will take an imposition—you will write out the first ode six times. Silence! We shall now resume."

Coker had made the Fifth laugh. But the desire to laugh soon left them, as they resumed Horace—the Latin gentleman of that name!

Prout was fearfully annoyed. He was no longer chatty. Far from it! He was like a bear with a sore head. If fellows fell asleep when he chatted, it was time for Prout to keep them strictly to business! And he did!

He fairly hammered Horace into the Fifth. Almost every man in the Form-room would have given a term's pocket-money to step back a couple of thousand years and hit Quintus Horatius Flaccus in the eye. For the rest of that lesson Prout kept them hard at it, and—perhaps to make up for lost time, perhaps because he was in a temper—he kept the Form a quarter of an hour over time—still grinding Horace into their unhappy heads.

By the time they escaped from Prout, the Fifth Form were fed-up to the back teeth with Horace and all his works.

Prout dismissed them at last—with a snap! When they got out of the Form-room they gathered round Coker.

"You pernicious idiot!" said Blundell. "You unspeakable chump! Prout would have gone on gassing till the finish, if you'd let him. Now he's nearly made my head split! Take that!"

"And that!" said Tomlinson.

"And that!" hooted Price.

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"And that!" howled Hilton.

How many of the Fifth kicked him before he got away Horace Coker never knew.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Study No. 1.

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent exchanged a glance, stepped up to Jim Valentine, and slipped an arm through his on either side.

Valentine was about to go into Hall to tea, when the chums of the Remove bagged him, and he glanced at them in surprise, as he came to a halt.

"What the thump—" he began.

"Tea in the study!" said Harry.

"Oh! But—"

"Come on, old bean," said Nugent amicably.

Jim Valentine hesitated. But the two juniors walked him away, thus deciding the point for him. They marched him up to the Remove passage, with linked arms, and arrived at the door of Study No. 1.

"Look here, you fellows—" said Valentine, stopping again.

"Trot in!"

"Oh, all right!"

Valentine trotted in. His handsome face was a little flushed; his dark, hazel eyes searched the faces of the two Removes.

It was a good many days since Valentine had tea'd in his own study. The atmosphere there, of doubt and distrust, was too chilly, and he had hardly entered the study for a long time, except for prep in the evening. He could hardly understand this sudden change in the manner of his study-mates; but there was no doubt that he found it agreeable. At the same time, he felt rather dubious. The "boy with a past" was not a fellow to be taken up, and dropped again, and taken up once more.

"Look here, Valentine!" said Wharton frankly and bluntly. "Last night I thought—well, you know what I thought. It turned out a mistake! Only that ass Smithy playing the giddy ox! I've made up my mind to wash it all out. Nugent's done the same—and that's that!"

"That's that!" agreed Frank. "If you've taken us in, Valentine, you've got a lot to answer for! But we've made up our minds to take you on trust."

Valentine breathed rather hard.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "But—better think it over. The position remains just as it was. I'm still the fellow who ran away from Nosey Clark and his gang—and you've only my word for it that I really want to keep clear of them. The money Mauleverer lost is still missing—and you can't get over the fact that his empty notecase was found in this study—where it certainly was not placed by either of you. And you've only my word for it that the night I went out of bounds I went to put the stopper on Nutty Nixon—not to help him. Think it over!"

"We've thought it over," answered Harry, "and talked it over, too, and we're going to trust you."

Valentine was silent for a moment or two.

"Mauleverer's money has never turned up," he said at last.

"No."

"Whoever pinched his notecase in the dormitory that night last week kept the money, and threw the notecase behind the lumber in the cupboard in this study."

"Yes. But—"

"That," said Valentine quietly, "means that there is a pincher about."

Wharton shifted uncomfortably.

"I—I suppose it does," he admitted.

"You've no idea who—"

"Not the foggiest."

"I've not been long at Greyfriars," said Valentine. "I don't know half the fellows. But you—"

"I can't think of a single fellow in the school who would do such a thing," said Harry.

And Nugent shook his head.

Valentine smiled faintly.

"But someone did it," he said. "And the empty notecase was found here. Mauly's determined to keep the whole thing dark. But if it came out—"

"It won't come out now," said Harry. "Mauly reported that the notecase was found, without mentioning that it was empty. Nobody knows that outside this study, and nobody need."

"If it came out," repeated Valentine, "you know what it would look like. You'd better think twice before you make up your minds to trust me."

"That's done already."

"Better have it clear," said Valentine quietly. "Whoever pinched Mauly's cash has got away with it, and nothing said."

"What about it?" asked Wharton uneasily.

"Suppose it happens again?"

"Oh!" The captain of the Remove started. "You—you think—"

"I think it's quite likely. Why shouldn't it?"

Wharton and Nugent stared blankly at Jim Valentine. That thought had not occurred to either of their minds.

It was a dismaying thought, yet it was probable enough. If there was a thief in the school who had escaped with impunity, it was only too probable that there might be another theft.

"Oh, my hat!" said Frank Nugent.

"But—but—" stammered Wharton.

"Better look at the thing sensibly," said Jim Valentine coolly. "A thief who gets away with the loot is very likely to try again next time he's hard up. For that reason, I think Mauleverer was wrong to keep it dark. The matter ought to have been reported to Quelch."

"Mauly doesn't believe there's a thief—he won't believe it," said Harry slowly; "and he won't have a word said about it to start such talk."

"That's rot, of course," said Valentine. "Whoever pinched Mauly's notecase is a thief. He's kept the notes that were in it, and left the notecase in the study cupboard here. And it looks to me as if the pincher is a fellow who knows something about me."

"How do you mean?" asked Wharton, startled.

"Why was the notecase parked in this study?" asked Valentine quietly. "The rotter could have hidden it anywhere or chucked it away out of gates. But it was left in this study. If Mauly had made a fuss about the matter—as any fellow but Mauly would have done—the notecase would have been found here, and then it couldn't have been put on you or Nugent, but it would have been put on me. I can't help thinking that that's why this study was picked. I can't see any other reason."

"Oh!" said Wharton. "But—but nobody here knows anything about—about your connection with Nosey Clark excepting us and Quelch and that fat ass Bunter, though he's forgotten already."

"Bunter cackled a good deal about it, though nobody took much notice of his cackle. Somebody may have heard. Anyhow, I believe that was the reason why Mauly's notecase was hidden in this study, because I can't imagine any other



The mysterious intruder flashed on his light for a second, but it was enough to show the watching Coker where he was. In the darkness, the Fifth-Former stepped swiftly from the banisters in the direction whence the light had come!

reason. The rotter wanted the thing to be put on me!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Nugent, aghast.

"And if it happens again, the same sort of thing may happen again along with it," said Valentine quietly. "I've thought that out. Plenty of fellows here have a lot of money as well as Mauly. Smithy has, and Coker of the Fifth, and Temple of the Fourth, and other fellows. And I believe that if there is another theft, there will be something to hook it on to me."

"Valentine!" muttered Wharton.

"You fellows hadn't thought of anything of the kind!" said Valentine, with a touch of bitterness. "You haven't had your wits sharpened in Nosey Clark's company—lucky for you! But that's how I look at it. And so I warn you, before you make up your minds to trust me and be friends, think it over! To-morrow or the next day you may change your minds again."

The two juniors stood silent.

Valentine waited a moment or two, but they did not speak. Quietly he turned to the door.

Then Harry Wharton made a quick step forward. He caught Jim Valentine by the shoulder and jerked him back.

"Hold on!" he said. "If it's as you say—and I suppose it's possible—you will want friends to stand by you. We've said that we trust you, and we mean it—every word!"

"Every word!" said Frank Nugent. "Stay where you are, Valentine!"

The chums of the Remove were in earnest. From the first they had tried to believe in the fellow whom they really liked. The incident of the previous night had given the deciding touch. They were determined to banish doubt and suspicion. Whatever Jim Valentine had been in the past—and they feared that they knew only too

well—they had made up their minds to believe in him now.

Jim hesitated.

"I've warned you," he said.

"That's all right! I tell you it's all washed out," said the captain of the Remove, "and if there's some awful rascal about, as you think, we'll jolly well nail him sooner or later. Sit down to tea, old bean! We've got rather a spread to celebrate the occasion."

Valentine drew a deep breath. He smiled, and sat down to tea. There was no doubt that he was glad, from the bottom of his heart, to be back in the study on the old friendly terms. Tea and toast and poached eggs were grateful and comforting, but still more was the atmosphere of cheery friendliness. And if a lingering doubt haunted either Wharton's or Nugent's mind, they banished it resolutely. They were determined to trust Jim Valentine—and that was that!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Letting Coker Down!

"YAW-AW-AW-AW!"

Coker of the Fifth yawned deeply.

Prep was going on, and Potter and Greene, in the Fifth Form study, were giving their attention to it. Coker was giving it very little attention. He seemed sleepy.

Sleepiness seemed quite a disease of Coker's lately. That afternoon he had gone the limit, so to speak, by falling asleep in the Form-room. A lot of fellows wondered what on earth was the matter with Coker.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!" repeated Coker. "Bother this prep! Blow it! Rotten waste of time—prep! What? Look here, I'm going to chance it with Prout in the morning! Prep be blown!"

And Coker, disdainfully shoving school books away, helped himself to a volume from his well-stocked bookshelf. That volume was entitled "The Clue of the Crooked Corkscrew." It was one of the detective novels in which Horace Coker delighted. His shelves were stacked with them. Coker had a deep disdain—indeed, a fierce hatred—for such authors as Virgil and Horace and Thucydides. Their works, in Coker's valuable opinion, were all rotten bosh, only suitable for the intellect of a schoolmaster. Yellow-jacketed detective novels were more in Coker's line.

But even "The Clue of the Crooked Corkscrew" failed to hold Coker's attention now. He yawned over it sleepily.

Potter and Greene finished their prep. They, at all events, were not disposed to chance it with Prout in the morning. Prep over, Potter and Greene rose to go, hoping to get out of the study before Coker began to talk.

That hope proved a delusion and a snare. Coker laid the "Crooked Corkscrew" on the table and started.

"Hold on, you men! If you've finished that tosh, I've got something to say to you!"

Potter and Greene had feared it. "The fact is, I want your help!" said Coker, rather loftily, as if he considered that rather a distinction for Potter and Greene—as doubtless he did.

"Well, dash it all, Coker, you might have started sooner if you wanted our help!" said Potter restively.

"I'm not talking about prep, fat-head! Something a bit more important than prep!" said Coker scornfully. "Shut up a minute, and listen to a chap! I dare say you've noticed that I've been a bit drowsy in the day-time lately?"

(Continued on page 16.)



COKER, THE DETECTIVE!

(Continued from page 13.)

"Well, just a few!" agreed Potter, with a grin. "I fancy Prout noticed it in the Form-room this afternoon."

And Greene chuckled.

"Well, it's beginning to tell on a fellow," said Coker. "A fellow can't miss his sleep every night without it telling on him in the long run. I haven't told you fellows about it before. I was going to let it be a surprise to you when I copped him—"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"But I haven't copped him yet," said Coker. "I nearly had him last night, but he got in a jolt in the dark and mizzled. Knocked me over, you know."

"Who did?"

"The pincher!"

"What pincher?" gasped Greene.

"Sit down, and I'll tell you about it," said Coker. "I shouldn't have told you till I had cleared it up, but, as I've said, I want your help. I can't keep awake every night, night after night, like this. My idea is that you fellows should take your turns. I'm letting you into it, see? Of course, I shall give you instructions exactly what to do, and you'll be careful to carry out my instructions. Don't try thinking for yourselves, or anything of that sort. That would muck up the whole thing, of course."

Potter and Greene gazed at him

They had wondered, like a good many other fellows, what made Coker so sleepy in the daytime. It was queer enough for a fellow to sleep so soundly in the daytime that another fellow could paint his face undiscovered. It was queer for a fellow to fall asleep in class.

It had never occurred to them, as an explanation, that Coker had been staying up at night, getting out of his dormitory while all the other fellows slept, in order to play the giddy ox! But that, it seemed, was the explanation. And apparently Coker was offering them the chance of playing the giddy ox likewise. It was an offer at which Potter and Greene were not likely to jump.

"It's like this," went on Coker. "You fellows remember what happened last week—"

"Eh! Yes! Do you mean the St. Jude's match?"

"Blow the St. Jude's match!" roared Coker. "No, I don't mean the St. Jude's match, you fathhead! I mean what happened one night. I went to the Remove dormitory to whop that cheeky young tick Valentine, and somebody was there—barged me over. I thought it was a burglar at the time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to snigger at," said Coker darkly. "There was a man in the dorm, and I naturally thought it was a burglar, though nobody believed me—"

"Burglars don't burgle junior dormitories, as a rule," said Potter.

"Next day," resumed Coker unheedingly, "I searched for the window he had got in by, but there wasn't a sign! No cut pane, or forced lock; not even a little cigarette-ash anywhere. Well, since then—"

"Is that Blundell calling?" asked Potter.

"Never mind Blundell," said Coker. "Let him call! Since then something else has happened. Two or three days later there was a fuss in the Remove over young Mauleverer's notecase being pinched. I got it from Bunter. As far as I can make out, there's no doubt that young Mauleverer's notecase really was pinched."

"I fancy Blundell will be expecting us in the games study—"

"I said never mind Blundell! Now, you fellows," said Coker, "I've read a lot of detective stuff, and I've often told you fellows that I rather fancy I should have made a pretty good detective. There's nothing whatever to snigger at, George Potter. Detective work requires a keen, cool intellect, rapid judgment; in short, brains! Well, that's my long suit!"

"Oh crikey!" said George Potter.

"My first theory," said Coker calmly, "was that there had been a burglar. But when I heard of that pinching in the Remove I modified that theory. A detective, as I dare say you know, modifies his theories as he goes along to fit in with the facts. See? It was clear to me—perfectly clear—that the man who barged me over in the Remove dormitory that night was a sneaking pincher; the same who, a few nights later, bagged young Mauleverer's notecase. If you put two and two together, I suppose you know what it comes to."

"Well, I should make it four," said Greene. "But you might make it six or seven, old chap."

"Don't be a silly ass, William Greene, if you can help it! I worked it out," said Coker, "that there's a pincher about. The cunning rascal doesn't leave any clue; no finger-prints, or cigarette-ash, or anything of that kind. There was only one way of nabbing him—watching for the scoundrel! That's what I've been doing. For three nights," said Coker impressively, "I've kept watch! While you fellows were snoring!"

"You've really been such a howling idiot—"

"What?" roared Coker.

"I—I—I mean, you've really stayed up at night! Oh, my hat! You've really got out of the dorm! Great pip! You've really mooched about the House in the dark! Oh jiminy! Suppose you'd been spotted?" gasped Potter.

"Better chuck it, old chap," advised Greene. "You see, if the beaks spot you out of your dorm at night they won't know you're a detective. Ha, ha! They'll think you're up to some rag, and—"

"Don't talk so much, Greene! Now, I've told you how I worked it out," said Coker. "And last night I had proof. I was keeping watch on the landing near the junior dormitories, and somebody came along in the dark—"

"You fancied it, old 'chap," said Potter soothingly. "Fellow hanging about in the dark fancies things—"

"Don't be a fool, Potter! It was about eleven, or a little later. Whoever he was, was creeping about in the dark, and I heard him, and spotted him, and got my hands on him!" said Coker.

Potter and Greene stared.

"You caught somebody?" exclaimed Greene.

"Yes; only he hit me on the chest and I fell down—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at!" roared Coker. "I went down wallop, and the villain scudded off. He ran by the Fourth Form dormitory, and I followed him, but he got away in the dark. I was thinking of giving the alarm—turning on the lights and waking the House, you know—but I thought I'd better not. Silly dummies mightn't have believed that there had been anybody at all, you know! So I thought I'd better not wake the House."

"Thank goodness for that!" gasped Potter. "Prout would have scalped you; the Head would have flogged you, very likely. You really shouldn't do these things, Coker."

"You shouldn't, old man!" agreed Greene, shaking his head.

"Don't keep on jawing," said Coker.

"Now, what happened last night is proof of my theory. Take the facts in order," said Coker, ticking them off on his fingers. "First there was the man I ran into in the Remove dormitory; then there was a pinching of Mauleverer's notecase; then the fellow last night who bunged me in the broad-basket and bunked. It's plain enough, I think. No sign of any sort of the House having been entered from outside. There's a pincher about; some measly rotter who roots about at night looking for a chance to pinch. Twice I've interrupted him and spoiled his game. Once he's got away with it; the notecase incident. See?"

Potter and Greene did not seem to see. As a matter of fact, Coker's masterly reasoning did not convince them. Probably it would not have convinced Coker himself had he known that the fellow last night was Vernon Smith of the Remove, who had been going out to see a man about a horse when he ran into Coker. But Horace, of course, did not know that.

"Now, it comes to this," resumed Coker, while his comrades stood dumb. "I'm on to this. I'm going to clear up the mystery, you know, like Bandog Chummond, or Sexton Blake, or Sherlock Holmes. But the trouble is, a fellow gets frightfully sleepy sticking up of a night. I've had three nights of it; now it's your turn. That's where you come in."

"Is it?" asked Potter and Greene together. They doubted it.

"That's it! You take your turns at keeping watch while I get a bit of sleep," explained Coker. "You begin to-night, Potter. I shall give you full instructions what to do, so that even a fool like you won't bungle it—"

"You can save your breath, old bean," said Potter. "I'm not breaking dorm bounds to play the giddy ox. Not this little infant! No!"

"If you funk it, Potter, then Greene—"

"Give me a miss in baulk, old chap," said Greene. "The first time you catch me out of the dorm at night, playing the goat, you can use my head for a football. I can't say fairer than that."

Horace Coker rose. His wrath rose also. Coker was in deadly earnest in this matter. There was a mystery. Coker was sure there was a mystery, though Potter and Greene were too dense to realise it. He was going to solve that mystery if he had to stay up every night that term, and go to sleep every day under Prout's eye in the Form-room. That was settled and fixed; as immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He expected help

from his friends, but evidently they were not going to help. Naturally he was wrathful. His eyes gleamed under knitted brows.

"Let's have this plain," he said curtly. "I've asked your help—such as it is. I'm not asking you to do any of the brainwork; I'm not an unreasonable chap, asking for impossibilities. No need for you to do any thinking. All you've got to do is to carry out instructions, obey orders, and all that. I expect you to play up. See!"

"Time we got along to the games study, Greene—"

"Are you going to let me down?" roared Coker.

"Bow-wow!" answered Potter.

He opened the study door.

"So that's it, is it?" said Coker bitterly. "You're letting me down. I've done a lot of things for you two

fellows—told you a lot of things about football, pointed out to you, lots of times, what silly fools you were, and all that. This is how you thank a fellow! Well, you can go and eat coke; but before you go I'll jolly well bang your silly heads together! I've often told you I would, and now I jolly well will!"

And Coker jumped at Potter and Greene and grasped them with either hand. Fellows who let down a great leader like Horace Coker deserved to have their heads knocked together, if ever any fellows did. Coker was going to give them what they richly deserved.

Perhaps Potter and Greene were unconscious that they deserved it. Or perhaps they did not want to get their deserts.

Anyhow, instead of having their heads knocked together they grasped Coker in their turn, and, exerting their

strength simultaneously, up-ended Coker.

Bump!

Coker hit the floor of the study.

He hit it hard!

He roared.

"Now, you silly ass!" gasped Potter.

"Now, you frabjous dummy!" gasped Greene.

"Wait till I gerrup!" gurgled Coker.

Potter and Greene, instead of waiting for Coker to get up, grasped him again. Potter grabbed his shoulders, Greene grabbed his legs, and they swept him off the floor. Coker, like Mahomet's coffin, was suspended between the heavens and the earth.

"Now, you howling ass," said Potter.

"Make it pax, or we'll bump you!"

"Leggo!" roared Coker, struggling.

(Continued on next page.)

THE CARE OF THE CUP!

NEWCASTLE UNITED, as winners of the English Cup last season, are, of course, frequently referred to as the Cup-holders. This has been true for several months past, but Newcastle are no longer Cup-holders in the literal sense. There is a rule on the books of the Football Association which says that the holders of the Cup must return it to its original owners—that is the F.A.—on or before the first of February each year.

There are several other interesting and little-known facts about the Cup which may be mentioned here, and about which I have from time to time received letters of inquiry from MAGNET readers. For instance, if the English Cup should be damaged or destroyed while in the possession of the club which has the right to hold it for a spell, the club is responsible for repairing such damage. In the old days, so it is said, there was a case in which a club had to pay a certain amount of damages. In the year 1889, when Preston North End won the trophy, the excitement of the supporters of the club was something wonderful to behold.

As the trophy was being carried round the town on a charabane, the excitement of the people over-ran their discretion. The Cup was hustled out of the hands of the holders, and—so the story goes—was for a little time at any rate kicked about the streets of Preston by the people in their rather fearful glee.

Of course, we are much more calm and collected in our enthusiasm in these days.

Here is another little point about Cup football which is not generally known. When two clubs have been drawn to meet in a Cup tie it is a rule that the officials of those clubs must, at least five days before the day appointed for the match, exchange lists of the players from whom they propose to choose their side. Such a list must be sent by registered post.

This does not mean, of course, that the manager of a club must definitely make up his mind concerning the eleven men who will play for the side in the Cup tie five days before the game is due to be played. What it does mean is that he must send a list of players from whom his Cup side will eventually be chosen. I can assure you that there are officials of several clubs who do not carry out this rule in these days, nor is it very necessary, really, that it should be carried out.

A SERIES OF PROTESTS!

YOU may be interested to know, however, how it came about that there is such a rule on the books of the Football Association. Many years ago—forty-one to be exact—Derby

SOCCER QUERIES ANSWERED HERE.

"LINESMAN CALLING!"



If in doubt over any Soccer problem, chum, write to "Linesman", c/o the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. He'll be only too pleased to help you out.

County and Sheffield Wednesday were drawn together in the third round of the Cup competition. Sheffield Wednesday won the match, but Derby County officials immediately entered a protest on the grounds that certain players of the Wednesday were not really eligible to play in the match. This protest was upheld, and the match was ordered to be re-played.

The re-play duly took place, and on this occasion Derby County won the game. Thereupon there was a protest from Sheffield Wednesday that at least one player of Derby was ineligible to play.

You may have heard the name of that player against whom the Wednesday protested: it was none other than Steve Bloomer, who still holds the record for the number of goals scored in first-class football by one player.

Again the protest was upheld, and again the tie was re-played, with the Wednesday victorious. There was still another protest from Derby, but probably because the F.A. had become completely sick and tired of the whole affair by that time the protest was dismissed and the result allowed to stand. It was because of this series of protests that the F.A. made the rule ordering the clubs to exchange a list of players from whom they proposed to select their Cup sides five days before the match. Being in possession of such a list, the manager of a club has time, even before the game is played, to make due inquiries as to whether all the players from whom the opposing club propose to choose their players are eligible.

In short, the idea of the rule is that any protest against the eligibility of a player can now be made before the match is played rather than afterwards.

DUPLICATES BARRED!

THE actual Cup for which the clubs are now striving is the third Football Association Cup. The first one, which did duty for many years, was stolen from a shop-window in Birmingham after it had been won by Aston Villa, and was being displayed by the shopkeeper. Only the people concerned in the theft know what happened to that Cup, for it was never traced, so a new one had to be provided.

The second one did duty until 1909, when it was decided to have yet a third Cup. The reason for this decision is interesting. In the season of 1908-9 the Cup was won by Manchester United, and in order, as they thought, to celebrate the occasion in a fitting manner, the officials of the club had made an exact duplicate of the Cup—exact in size, design and everything, even down to the name of the winners on the plinth. Thus when Manchester United duly returned the original of the Cup they still had one exactly like it in their possession, and I believe it remains in their possession until this day.

The authorities did not think this was quite right. So they handed the Cup to the then President of the Football Association, and ordered a new one, to cost the "prodigious" price of fifty pounds.

A point about the present Cup is that no other club can carry out the same ideas as Manchester United had of having a duplicate made. The design of the present Cup is copyright.

Just one other interesting Cup point. This present Cup will hold eight quarts of champagne. You will probably be able to decide for yourselves, on the strength of that information, exactly how much water the Cup will hold.

"LINESMAN."

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"I'll smash you! I'll teach you to let me down! I'll jolly well— Yarook!"

Two to one was long odds, but Coker was a hefty fellow. He struggled fiercely, and Potter and Greene let go, and Horace, left without any visible means of support, descended to the floor. He was let down—with a terrific bump! He sprawled and roared, and Potter and Greene departed hastily.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Ow! Wow! Oooooogh!"

He had said that he would teach Potter and Greene to let him down. Without any teaching, however, they had let him down—wallop! And for quite a long time Coker understudied the young man of Hythe, who was shaved with a scythe, and did nothing but wriggle and writhe!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In the Dark!

THE man with the vulture's beak stood under the leafless old elms, looking towards the dark and silent house. By Nosey Clark's side, the pasty face of Nutty Nixon, the cracksman, glimmered in the pale light of the winter stars.

Midnight had long since chimed out from the clock-tower, and Greyfriars was sleeping. Only the faint moan of the wind from the sea broke the silence.

"Get on with it, Nutty!" muttered Clark, at last, "and be careful, this time. It's a risky business, and we can't afford to make mistakes."

Nutty grunted.

"I never make any mistake. There was somebody up the first time, but I'd had time to pick up all I wanted to know about the place before I had to cut. And the second time it worked like a charm."

"With what result?" snarled Nosey. "Nothing's come of it. Jim would not be still at the school if it had worked."

"I don't catch on to that," admitted Nutty Nixon. "But I will tell you it all went smooth. I took a notecase full of notes out of some boy's pocket in the room where they sleep, and left the pocket turned inside out. I parked the notecase in Jim's study, in a cupboard, where he wouldn't be likely to spot it himself. And—"

"If you picked the wrong room—"

"I didn't. It was Jim's dormitory I took the notecase from. I'd seen him sleeping there, by a flashlight. It was his study I parked it in. I'd found books there, with his name written in them."

"Well, I don't understand it!" growled Nosey Clark. "When the robbery was discovered there must have been a search—and they'd be certain to search very carefully in the study of a boy with Jim's past. If they found the notecase there it would clinch it. But—nothing's come of it."

"One swallow don't make a summer," said Nutty Nixon. "It's failed—blessed if I know how. But this time I—"

"This time there must be no mistake!" muttered Nosey Clark. "We're in danger here. The school is watched. I'm certain of that now; and I've found out who is watching it—Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield. He must suspect Jim of something—goodness knows what—and he's keeping an eye open for him. But that makes it too dangerous for us. Make no mistake this time, Nutty."

"I tell you I never—"

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"That's enough! Get on with it!"

Nutty Nixon grunted, and slipped away in the shadows towards the sleeping house.

Nosey Clark remained under the elms, waiting. His hard face was uneasy, his black eyes glinted with watchfulness, his ears were strained to listen, like those of a hunted animal. There was, as he had said, danger for the crooks at Greyfriars, in the silent watches of the night, now that there was no doubt that Inspector Grimes was keeping the school under observation. In those very moments the keen-eyed police officer might be at hand.

Discovery meant not only the peril of arrest, but the failure of Nosey's cunning scheme for driving Jim Valentine from the school. What was to happen that night must be supposed to have happened within the House.

While the man with the vulture's beak waited, troubled and uneasy, Nutty Nixon swiftly approached the House in the dark shadows.

He stopped under the window of Mr. Quelch's study.

On his previous visits, unknown to anyone in the school, the cracksman had explored the House and learned all he needed to know about the interior. Nutty's plans were cut and dried now.

Kneeling on the broad sill of the window, he was at work hardly a minute before the sash moved under his hand. It was easy work to Nutty, and he was too skilled to leave a sign of his handiwork.

He pushed up the sash.

Silently, in his rubber shoes, he stepped in, and, standing in the darkness, closed down the sash after him and carefully fastened it on the inside. He intended to leave by some other way.

Then he turned on a glimmer of light from an electric torch and moved across the room.

He stopped at Mr. Quelch's desk.

Every drawer in the desk was locked, but the locks would have presented no difficulties to Nutty, had he chosen to pick them. But it was not his game to let it be supposed that a skilful cracksman had been at work.

He forced open a drawer roughly with a jemmy, the lock cracking open under the strain.

He flashed the light into the drawer. It contained nothing but a number of letters, and Nutty grunted, and turned to the next.

There was another crack as the drawer came open.

Nutty's eyes gleamed.

In that drawer were a number of business papers, and two little rolls of currency notes—pound notes and ten-shilling notes.

Nutty picked them out with his gloved fingers. Nutty was far too polite a gentleman to make a call without his gloves on! Nutty's finger-prints were registered by his natural enemies, the police; and Nutty was not running any risks in that line.

He grinned and closed the drawer.

He had felt fairly certain that something of value could be found somewhere in the Remove master's study. It only needed looking for. Now he had looked for it—and found it.

There were ten pound notes and twenty ten-shilling notes. Nutty was tempted to extract a few for his own behoof. But he resisted that temptation. He was not there, for once, to steal; he was there to carry out a dastardly scheme that was even worse than stealing—a scheme to drive a boy

back into the mire of crime, from which he had escaped.

The first treacherous blow from the hand of the crook had, somehow, failed. The second blow was surer. Somehow, nothing had come of the theft in the Remove dormitory—the crooks could not comprehend how. But something must come of this! A theft in the Form master's own study could not possibly be overlooked, or hushed up, or disregarded.

On the morrow the school would be ringing with it. There would be no sign—no trace of a sign—that the House had been entered from outside.

It would look like what Nutty, in his own dialect, called an "inside job." Upon whom would suspicion fall? It was Mr. Quelch who had taken up and befriended the friendless boy, knowing that his past was dubious. Mr. Quelch, whose study had been robbed, was the man who knew that Jim Valentine had once associated with crooks. Could his suspicions fail to fall on Valentine? And Nutty's work was not done yet.

With the currency notes in one hand, his flashlight in the other, the cracksman crept out of the study into the passage.

He listened there for a few minutes in the darkness, apprehensive of no danger, but habitually watchful and wary as a wild cat.

There was no sound in the sleeping House.

Silent in his soft shoes, the cracksman glided to the staircase and crept up, stair by stair.

He was heading for the Remove dormitory.

He knew which was Jim Valentine's bed—with his box standing at the foot of it. In that box, under the carefully folded clothes, the stolen currency-notes were to be placed—certain not to be discovered there by the unsuspecting boy himself, absolutely certain to be discovered there when a search was made! Five minutes would be enough for Nutty, and the thing would be done! And on the morrow—

It seemed that there could be no hitch this time—no possible failure of the dastardly scheme. The first blow had missed the mark—the second could not possibly miss. On the morrow Mr. Quelch would believe that his trust in the "boy with a past" had been misplaced—Jim Valentine would be driven from his only refuge, back into the hands of the gang! Dick the Penman would once more be at the orders of Nosey Clark!

Silently, swiftly, the cracksman trod up the dark stairs. He reached the dormitory landing and flashed on his light for a moment, to pick out the passage he wanted.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Luck at Last!

HORACE COKER drew a deep breath.

His heart beat a little faster. Standing leaning back against the landing banisters, Coker of the Fifth was very near falling asleep.

He had indeed nodded off once or twice, only to awaken again with a determined vigilance.

Coker was a stucker.

He knew that he was right! Coker always knew that he was right, howsoever doubtful other fellows might be about that.

More than a week ago, going to the Remove dorm to whop that cheeky tick



Suddenly something hard and heavy descended on Mr. Grimes' head, and he rolled helplessly from his prisoner. With his hands fastened in the "darbies," Nutty Nixon was helped over the wall by his confederate!

Valentine, he had been floored by a mysterious somebody who was in the dormitory rooting about.

Coker had taken him for a burglar. The House had been roused. Nobody believed in Coker's burglary! Prout had given him a whole book of the *Æneid* to write out as a penalty. But Coker, at least, knew that there had been a mysterious somebody on the spot if nobody else did. For days afterwards Coker had scanned and examined windows, searching for proof that somebody had entered the House at night—just to show Prout and the fellows that he was in the right. But he had not found any proof—not an atom!

Then came the affair of Lord Maul-ever's notecase. Coker had heard of that because the fat and fatuous Bunter had suspected him of "pinching" it. Coker, of course, knew that he hadn't! But somebody had.

Coker's powerful brain had worked hard on this subject. He was driven to the conclusion that it was not a burglar but a sneaking pincher of some sort that he had to deal with.

As the only fellow who knew what was going on, Coker felt it his duty to take the matter in hand. Moreover, he was very keen to prove that there had been somebody about that night when he had raised an alarm, and to prove that he was not, as all Greyfriars supposed, merely a doddering idiot!

Hence his nocturnal vigils, which had had no result so far but to make him deadly sleepy in the daytime, placing him at the mercy of a young rascal with a can of paint, and getting him into rows with Prout!

But last night he had had convincing proof. Happily unaware that it was Smithy who had thumped him over on

the landing, Coker had no doubt that he had had his hands actually on the lurking, sneaking, marauding pincher who rooted about the House at night.

Now he was on the watch again. He was frightfully sleepy, and he reflected bitterly that had Potter and Greene been the pals that such a fellow as he deserved to have, one of them would have relieved him on the watch.

But they had let him down. They were fast asleep in the Fifth Form dormitory, while Coker was struggling against drowsiness on the dark landing. Never had Coker found Morpheus so hard to keep at bay. His eyelids seemed like lead. The heroes of his favourite yellow-backed novels snoozed by day when they watched by night. But Coker, watching by night, was unable to snooze by day, except with very uncomfortable results. It was hard lines, but Coker, as aforesaid, was a stickler—and he stuck to it. Coker was going to prove that he was right, if he stayed up every night that term and snored like a grampus in the Form-room.

He was glad now of his sticking powers! Sleepiness vanished on the spot as he saw a sudden gleam of light in the dense darkness on the great landing.

He heard nothing, but he saw the gleam of the flashlight as it was turned on, and that was enough for Coker.

Somebody was there!

Where that somebody had come from Coker did not know—he had heard no sound. But whoever it was, and wherever he had come from, he was creeping about in the dark at one in the morning—and he flashed on his light for a second as he stepped silently across the wide landing.

Coker breathed hard and deep. The light gleamed only for a second,

but it was enough. It showed him where the unseen, mysterious lurker was.

Coker, invisible in the darkness, stepped swiftly away from the banisters, in the direction of the unseen one.

The previous night Coker had seized an unseen figure—that of the Bounder, if he had only known it—and had been rewarded with a thump in the region which he described as the "bread basket," which had dumped him down and left him guessing.

That was not going to happen again. This time Coker was going to take first knock!

With that grim intention fixed in his mind, and with his leg-of-mutton fist clenched hard, Horace Coker stepped across the path of the unseen individual who had flashed a light.

He heard a swift breath in the darkness—the unseen one had heard him. He had a glimpse of a shadowy form, of a startled, pasty face that glimmered round at him. Then Coker's leg-of-mutton fist crashed—before Nutty Nixon knew what was happening.

Crash!

Nutty Nixon was a wary bird, seldom taken by surprise. But he was taken utterly by surprise this time. The wariest cracksmen could hardly have suspected that there was a fellow hanging about a landing in the dark at one in the morning. Nutty had never dreamed of such a possibility.

What seemed to Nutty like the hind hoof of a mule landed in his face as if driven there by a mule of great strength and energy.

Nutty went over backwards, as if he had been shot.

Bump!

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He landed on his back, with a bump that rang through the silent House.

He sprawled, dazed and dizzy. His flashlight dropped from one hand, the two little rolls of currency-notes shot from the other. Nutty sprawled on his back and stuttered.

"Got you!" gasped Coker. And he hurled himself on the sprawling Nutty, planted a knee on his chest, and grasped him with both sinewy hands.

For a moment or two Nutty lay dazed and at his mercy.

Coker's heavy knee ground into his stomach, Coker's hands grasped his collar! Coker had him!

"Got you, you pinching rotter!" panted Coker. "You won't get away this time! Who are you—what? Own up—I've got you!"

Nutty Nixon panted. There was a sound of an opening door. A voice called from somewhere. Nutty's crash on the landing had awakened a good many sleepers.

"What is that noise?" called the voice of Mr. Quelch. "What—"

"Upon my word!" came the boom of Mr. Prout. "Upon my word! What is this disturbance? What—"

Nutty gathered his half-scattered senses. A few moments more and there would be a crowd on the spot.

He twisted like an eel in Coker's grasp, and, with a strength that Coker hardly expected in his prisoner, hurled him over sideways.

Coker rolled off, but he still grasped Nutty and shouted:

"This way! I've got him! This way!"

Nutty Nixon tore away like a wild cat. Coker gave a howl as a fist jolted on his jaw. The next moment Nutty was free, and he was leaping for the stairs. He descended the staircase in a series of desperate bounds, and was gone. In a few seconds his fleeing footsteps died away. Coker was left sitting on the landing, holding his jaw with both hands. It felt damaged.

Lights flashed on.

Mr. Quelch was the first to reach the spot and switch on the landing light. He saw nothing of Nutty—Nutty had

vanished. He saw Coker! He glared at Coker! Mr. Prout, in a flowing dressing-gown, came puffing on the scene.

Mr. Capper and Mr. Twigg were coming, and the voice of Monsieur Charpentier was heard in a startled squeak:

"Vat zen? Je demande, vat is all zat? Mon Dieu! Vat—vat—vat—"

"Coker!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Coker!" gurgled Mr. Prout.

"Coker!" exclaimed Messrs. Capper and Twigg together.

"Cokair!" ejaculated Monsieur Charpentier. "Zat Cokair!"

Horace staggered up. He was still holding his jaw. He blinked dizzily in the light, and gasped for breath.

"I—I had him, sir—he's gone, but—I had him—"

"Coker!" roared Prout. "You—you have ventured to break dormitory bounds again—you have once more alarmed the House in the middle of the night—you—you young rascal! You—you young scoundrel! Upon my word!"

Mr. Prout, in towering wrath, grasped that hopeful member of his Form by the collar and shook him.

Coker spluttered.

"I—I—I say, sir—" he gasped.

"Oogh! I say—Woogh—"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Ow! Leggo! I say—"

Shake, shake, shake!

Half-dressed fellows, crowding along on all sides, arrived on the scene and stared at the sight of Coker of the Fifth, wriggling and squirming in the grasp of his Form master, the enraged Prout shaking him till he shook like a jelly

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Thief in the Night!

"I SAY, you fellows! Lock the door!" howled Billy Bunter.

Every fellow in the Remove dormitory was awake. Most of them were jumping out of bed.

That alarm in the night had reached most ears at Greyfriars. What it meant the juniors did not know; but they wanted to know. Harry Wharton & Co. were the first out of bed, and the captain of the Remove dragged the dormitory door wide open.

Billy Bunter squealed; but nobody heeded Bunter. If there were burglars in the House Bunter preferred the door locked; but most of the fellows preferred to see what was up.

"Sounds like Coker!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The Cokerfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That silly fathead up to something again!" growled Johnny Bull. "Let's go and see, anyhow."

"Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five ran down the passage to the landing at the end, with a dozen other fellows after them.

Other dormitories were turning out. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, were coming. Hobson and his friends of the Shell were speeding up. A dozen of the Fifth were on the scene—and the voices of some of the Sixth could be heard—a lot of them were coming.

Coker, whatever he had been up to, was going to get a good audience.

What Coker was up to at the present moment was a wriggling act, in the grasp of Prout.

He wriggled and squirmed and gasped and gurgled, as the exasperated

master of the Fifth shook and shook and shook.

"Imbecile!" hooted Prout, red with wrath. "This is the second time you have alarmed the House in the dead of night—"

"Urrrrgh!" Leggo! I say—

Wurrgh—

"Scandalous!" said Mr. Quelch bitterly. "I fear that this boy in your Form, Prout, is scarcely in his right senses."

"Scandalous, indeed!" said Mr. Capper. "At this hour of the night—"

"Shocking!" said Mr. Twigg.

"C'est affreux," declared Monsieur Charpentier. "Je dorme—I sleep viz myself—zen of a sudden I am awake—I zink it is le feu—za' ze house is on a fire—and it is seulement zat Cokair!"

"What on earth's happened?" exclaimed Wingate of the Sixth, coming breathlessly up the stairs from the Sixth Form passage below. "Somebody was running in the dark downstairs—"

"Nothing has happened, Wingate," said Mr. Quelch acidly. "Only this unruly boy, Coker, has again created a disturbance—"

"I think I heard somebody downstairs, sir," said Wingate. "There was a crash, and it woke me up, and I opened my study door—and I heard somebody running in the dark—I think from the staircase—"

"Is it possible that someone—"

ejaculated Mr. Capper.

"Groo-hoooh! Leggo! Let a fellow speak!" gurgled Coker.

He jerked his neck away from Prout at last. Prout eyed him almost wolfishly, and Coker dodged round Wingate.

"Lemme speak!" he gasped. "There was somebody here—"

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout.

"I collared him—"

"Rubbish!"

"I—I tell you, sir—"

"What were you doing out of your dormitory at this hour of the night, you unruly, obstreperous boy?" thundered Prout.

"Ow! I was keeping watch—"

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"Keeping watch! Goodness gracious! The boy is mad!"

"I've been keeping watch for nights and nights!" howled Coker. "Nobody believed there was a man rooting in the Remove dormitory that night I copped him there, and I was jolly well going to prove it, see?"

"This boy is mentally deficient!" said Prout. "Mentally deficient!"

"I jolly nearly had him last night!" yelled Coker. "I got him, but he thumped me over on this landing—"

"Oh gad!" gasped Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites. They knew now that it was not a prefect that Smithy had run into the night before.

"And I kept watch again, and got him this time!" gasped Coker. "I hit him in the dial—I mean, in the chivvy—that is, the face! Got him fair and square, and he went down wallop! But he got away—"

"He would!" murmured Potter of the Fifth.

"They always get away from Coker!" sighed Greene.

"Does the potty ass really believe there was somebody?" asked Blundell of the Fifth, in wonder.

"He had a torch!" gasped Coker. "I believe he dropped it! Look for it—you'll jolly soon see—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's this?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

He picked up a small electric torch, which he had nearly trodden on.

He held it up for inspection.

"That's it!" exclaimed Coker triumphantly. "That must be it! And Wingate says he heard somebody! The pincher's run downstairs—"

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout.

"Look here!" shouted Jim Valentine. He pointed to a small object on the floor. Every eye was turned on it. It was a roll of currency notes, fastened in an elastic band.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

Valentine picked up the notes and handed them to the Remove master. Mr. Quelch stared at them blankly.

"Do these currency notes belong to you, Coker?" he asked.

"Eh? No—not mine!"

"Someone must have dropped them here," said Mr. Quelch. "Is—is it possible that—that there was someone—"

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout.

"Hallo! Look here!" yelled Ogilvy of the Remove.

All the fellows were looking about them now, and the Scottish junior spotted another little bundle of notes. He handed them to his Form master.

"This is extraordinary!" said Mr. Quelch. "It certainly looks—"

He counted the notes in the two little bundles. "It is very odd—I have two such rolls of notes locked in the desk in my study—ten pound notes and twenty ten-shilling notes—precisely this number! Is it possible—"

"Coker!" boomed Prout. "Have you been playing pranks in Mr. Quelch's study?"

Coker jumped.

"I!" he gasped.

"Yes, you!" roared Prout. "Nobody has been out of bed, but you, Coker, and if these notes have been taken from Mr. Quelch's study—"

"Oh crikey! I haven't been downstairs at all!" shrieked Coker. "I've been keeping watch on this landing all the time—"

"I am sure that I heard someone downstairs, sir," said Wingate.

"Hadn't we better look?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch. Lights had been turned on below. All the Sixth were up now as well as most of the other Forms. The House was in a buzz. The discovery of the notes on the landing gave a very different turn to the affair. Obviously, someone had dropped them there—and that someone must have had them in his hand. He could scarcely have dropped them otherwise. It was hardly possible to doubt that a "pinch—" of some sort had been on the scene.

Quite an army marched down after Mr. Quelch. Even Prout was a little impressed now, and wondered whether he had been a little too previous, so to speak, in shaking that hopeful member of his Form.

Mr. Quelch entered his study and flashed on the light. Wingate and Gwynne, Sykes and Loder and Walker, and some more of the Sixth, proceeded in other directions, turning on the lights as they went. Wingate was assured that

fastened on the inside. Search was going on all over the House now; but, so far, no sign of an intruder had been discovered. Mr. Quelch's face set hard. A sudden silence fell on the crowd in the study and the doorway. Whoever had taken those notes from Mr. Quelch's desk had gone upstairs with the loot in his hand—in the direction of the junior dormitories. That did not look as if anyone had entered from outside. It looked—

Everyone knew what it looked like. Mr. Quelch's eyes turned on the crowd of Remove fellows in the passage—and lingered on the handsome face of Jim Valentine. It was only for a second; but Valentine caught his look; and his face paled, and a chill came to his heart.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Grip of the Law!

HENRY GRIMES, police-inspector of Courtfield, shut his teeth hard, and his eyes glinted under his bushy brows.

He stared towards a window in the dark mass of the buildings of Greyfriars, which had suddenly burst into light.

It was the big window of an upstairs landing.

It was past one in the morning; and the school had been dark and silent, buried in slumber. But the sudden illumination of that big window showed that the school was awake now; that there was an alarm in the night.

Mr. Grimes drew a quick breath.

Nosey Clark, waiting under the dark elms for his companion in crime to re-join him, had thought it likely enough that the keen officer from Courtfield was at hand! It was a week or more since he had discovered that Mr. Grimes was keeping Greyfriars under observation. But he did not suspect how near at hand Mr. Grimes actually was.

Inspector Grimes, at that moment, was not more than a score of yards from the man with the vulture's beak, who waited in the darkness under the elms.

Not that Mr. Grimes was thinking of Nosey Clark or his gang. It was Jim Valentine that was in his thoughts.

Ever since he had seen Jim at Greyfriars, the inspector's suspicions had been concentrated on the boy who had once been the associate of crooks. He was convinced that Valentine, if he liked, could have given him the clue to the gang of thieves and forgers, of which the mysterious Dick the Penman was a member—though assuredly it had not crossed his mind, as yet, that Valentine himself was the unknown and elusive "Penman."

Several "cribs" had been "cracked" in the vicinity of Greyfriars School since Valentine had been there. In the attempted burglary at Highcliff a boy had been concerned; a boy who had very nearly been captured by the porter. Mr. Grimes drew his own conclusions from that.

Mr. Grimes was now in possession of a key to master's gate at Greyfriars. In view of the recent robberies in the vicinity, Dr. Locke had been very glad to accede to the inspector's request, that he should have facilities for keeping an eye on the school. He did not guess that it was a boy in the school on whom Mr. Grimes desired to keep his eye! That little circumstance Mr. Grimes was keeping carefully to himself for the present.

Mr. Grimes was a solid, stolid, patient man. He was prepared to devote a great deal of time and patience to the



he had heard someone running from the stairs in the dark, and the prefects were hunting for that someone. Mr. Quelch uttered a sharp, startled exclamation as his eyes fell on his desk.

Two of the drawers were open, which he had left locked. Both of them had been roughly forced. One, which had contained money, contained no money now. There was no doubt that the currency notes picked up on the landing had been taken from Mr. Quelch's study.

"Good heavens!" breathed Mr. Quelch aghast.

"A—a theft!" babbled Prout. "Goodness gracious! Your desk has been forced, Quelch—there has been a robbery—bless my soul!"

"Mon Dieu! Un voleur—" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier.

"A thief has been here!" exclaimed Mr. Capper.

Mr. Quelch collected himself.

"A thief has been here," he said. "These notes were undoubtedly taken from my desk, which has been forced. Someone has entered—"

He looked at the window. It was

task he had set himself. So far he had had no luck; if the boy Valentine was in communication with his old associates, by day or by night, Mr. Grimes had not yet spotted him. Neither had there been—so Mr. Grimes more than half-expected—any robbery at Greyfriars itself. But his patience looked like being rewarded at last. An alarm in the sleeping House in the middle of the night was more than enough to put the inspector on the alert.

Mr. Grimes had been leaning meditatively on a stone buttress, chewing an unlighted cigar, his eyes on the dark building, when the landing window suddenly flashed into light. In a moment the plump police-inspector flashed into activity.

Quietly, burly man as he was, Mr. Grimes ran for the House. There was a glimmer of wintry starlight in the quadrangle; and from the cover of the dark elms Nosey Clark spotted the burly figure as it ran, and he stared after it in surprise and terror.

Nosey's feelings were unenviable at that moment.

Something, evidently, had gone wrong. Nutty Nixon should have carried out his task in silence and left the sleeping House without leaving a sign that he had entered or left. Instead of which, lights were flashing in the windows, and even at the distance a hum of excited voices was audible. The whole place was in alarm—window after window flashed into light. Nutty had bungled again, it seemed; and the vulture-nosed crook ground his teeth with rage. The watching police officer was on the spot—right on the spot—and where was Nutty?

Where Nutty was Mr. Grimes discovered sooner than Nosey Clark did. Mr. Grimes was half-way to the House when a dark figure came running from the shadows, heading for the elms where Clark waited.

Nutty had lost no time. He had escaped by a downstairs door, locking it after him with a skeleton-key. He ran swiftly to rejoin his confederate, leaving danger behind him, and never dreaming that there was another danger in front of him.

But there was—in the shape of Inspector Henry Grimes of Courtfield.

As he spotted the running figure Mr. Grimes changed his direction and headed for it. Obviously, it was Mr. Grimes' business to collar that fugitive—who was running from a house alarmed in the dead of night.

Nutty saw him as he came—a glimpse in dim starlight. He did not attempt to dodge—he came straight on. Nutty supposed that it was his confederate coming to meet him, and he did not discover his mistake in time.

"Nosey," he panted. "We— Oh!" He broke off with a startled gasp, as the inspector closed in on him and grasped him.

The next moment the cracksman was struggling madly.

He went down with a crash in the inspector's grasp. Mr. Grimes was over him, with a knee on him, grasping him fast.

Had Nutty been alone that night, he would have passed the remainder of it in a cell in Courtfield Police Station. But Nosey Clark's eyes were on the inspector, and he was already running to the aid of his comrade.

Click!

Nutty gave a panting, savage cry as the handcuffs clicked fast on his wrists, dragged together by the iron grasp of the police-inspector.

The next moment, something hard and heavy descended on Mr. Grimes' head.

and he rolled helplessly from his prisoner.

Clark dragged Nutty to his feet.

"Quick!" he panted.

"The darbies—" hissed Nutty, holding up his handcuffed hands. "He got the darbies on me—"

"Quick, you fool—there may be others—"

Nosey Clark dragged the cracksman away by the arm.

Inspector Grimes lay where he had fallen under that stunning blow. For full five minutes he lay, stunned and senseless. Those minutes were more than enough for the alarmed crooks. With his hands fastened in the "darbies," Nutty Nixon was helped over the wall by his companion, and they fled into the night. Not a word was spoken till they reached the darkened car that waited for them in a shadowy lane at a distance from the school, with Barney at the wheel; and the car was racing away by the time Inspector Grimes sat up and put his hand dizzily to his aching head.

Mr. Grimes staggered to his feet.

His prisoner was gone—and the man who had helped him was gone. There had been two of them, and Mr. Grimes had had the worst of it. But his dizzy brain retained the memory of the name the crook had uttered, "Nosey." Nosey Clark had been there—Nosey Clark, the crook from whom Jim Valentine had fled—or pretended that he had fled! It was the suspected boy's old associates who had been at the school that night!

Mr. Grimes caressed his aching head ruefully. He moved dizzily towards the House. His head ached terribly, and a streak of red ran down under his grizzled hair. But duty came first, with Mr. Grimes; what he wanted now was a telephone to put the police on the track of a man who was fleeing in the night with handcuffed hands.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Mr. Grimes banged loudly at the door.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Puzzling Problem!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"What the thump—"

Knock! Knock! Knock! came ringing through the House.

It startled the crowd of Greyfriars fellows, gathered in Masters' Passage and on the stairs. All the school was up now; even the fags of the Third and Second had turned out in an excited crowd. Hardly a fellow remained in bed—except Billy Bunter, who had ducked under his bedclothes in the Remove dormitory, and was palpitating there in a state of shivering funk.

Knock! Knock!

"What—who—" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Someone is knocking at the door!" ejaculated Mr. Prout—a remark that was really superfluous. "Someone—"

Knock! Bang!

Mr. Quelch hurried out of his study. That sudden summons at the door astounded him, but he hurried to see who it was. A crowd followed him, in wonder. The door was opened, and there was a buzz of surprise at the sight of Inspector Grimes of Courtfield, with a face like chalk, and a streak of crimson on it.

"Grimey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The Grimefulness it terrific!" ejaculated Hurrey Jamsct Ram Singh.

"What the thump—"

"It's old Grimes—"

"He looks damaged—"

"Silence!" boomed Prout. "Silence!" "Mr. Grimes!" exclaimed the Remove master, as the burly officer strode in.

"What—"

"There has been a burglary here?"

rapped Mr. Grimes curtly.

"There has been a theft, certainly—but what—" stuttered the amazed Mr. Quelch. "Have you been hurt, sir?"

"Has anyone been seen—or caught?"

rapped Mr. Grimes.

"No! It does not appear that anyone has entered—"

"Certainly someone has entered, sir, as I caught him in the act of escaping!" rapped Mr. Grimes. "He had a confederate at hand who struck me down!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Then—then—then it was a burglar!" gasped Coker of the Fifth. "It—it—it was a burglar, after all—"

"I had the man handcuffed, sir, and he has escaped with his accomplice, with the handcuffs on," said Mr. Grimes. "Please let me use your telephone at once."

"Come this way, sir!"

With a splitting head, but a steady voice, Mr. Grimes rang up Courtfield police station, and talked over the phone.

Meanwhile, the crowd of startled fellows fairly buzzed. Mr. Grimes' statement had put the lid on, so to speak.

"There was a jolly old burglar, then!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It wasn't a pincher—it was a jolly old burglar! Fancy Coker scrapping with a burglar!"

"Must have been if Grimey collared him!" said Harry Wharton. "Wingate was right—he did hear somebody—"

"But what was Grimey doing here?" asked Vernon-Smith. "How did Grimey come to be on the spot?"

"Goodness knows!" said Bob.

Wharton and Nugent could have answered the Bounder's question—and Jim Valentine could have answered it. They were well aware that the Courtfield inspector was keeping an eye on the boy with a past.

Valentine had a rather grim smile on his face.

It was on his account that Mr. Grimes had been there—he had no doubt of that. But nothing could have been more fortunate. To all appearance, the theft in the Remove master's study had been committed by someone inside the House, and there was one head upon which suspicion was certain to fall, in that case. Now it was proved, beyond possible doubt that there had been an intruder from outside the House.

Valentine had never supposed that he would have reason to be glad that the suspicious inspector was keeping an eye on him! But he was glad now!

"They'll get the man!" said Nugent. "Grimey says he had the handcuffs on him—they'll get him all right!"

"Boys!" boomed Prout. "Go back to your dormitories—go back at once! You juniors should not have left your beds."

It was not easy to shepherd the excited crowd of fellows back to their dormitories.

But masters and prefects drove them away, while Mr. Grimes was busy with the Remove master's telephone.

Only Coker of the Fifth was allowed to remain up. Coker of the Fifth, as the man who had handled the burglar, was wanted. Coker of the Fifth was swelling with importance to such an extent that he really seemed in danger of sharing the fate of the frog in the fable, and bursting with it. Coker could not help thinking that he was the gods. Like the gentleman in Horace, Coker felt like striking the stars with his sublime head!



"I think Coker's mad——" Billy Bunter broke off suddenly, as a grasp of iron was laid on the back of his fat neck. Spinning round, the fat junior blinked at Coker's wrathful face through his big spectacles in horror. "Ow! Leggo!" he gasped. "I—I don't really think you're cracked! Besides, you can't help being cracked, old chap—yarooop!"

"I fancy," he said to Potter and Greene, "that the fellows will own up now that I was right! What?"

"Beats me hollow!" said Potter. He seemed quite overcome by the idea that Coker could have been right! It didn't seem in the nature of things, somehow! "The fellows laughed," said Coker sternly, "when I told them about that burglar last week! Did they, or didn't they?"

"They did!" agreed Potter.

"Laughed!" said Coker. "Well, there was a burglar! I knew it! And I've kept watch for him! Kept watch and grabbed him in the act! If you fellows had backed me up instead of letting me down, we should have got him! I hope you're jolly well ashamed of yourselves."

"Well, it ain't our business to sit up for burglars, old bean," said Potter. "Can't go to sleep in the Form-room like you do."

"I kept watch!" said Coker. "Like jolly old Hamlet, alone I did it!"

"Was it Hamlet?" asked Greene. "I thought it was jolly old Coriolanus."

"You don't know much about Shakespeare, Greene. It was Hamlet—or else Julius Cæsar—I forget which!" said Coker calmly. "Well, alone I did it—like Hamlet—or—or—Julius Cæsar!"

"Make it Coriolanus!" urged Potter. Coker of the Fifth refused to make it Coriolanus!

"Like Hamlet, alone I did it!" he persisted. "You fellows ought to have backed me up! I told you I knew there was a burglar—it was simply a matter of watching for him, and nabbing him!"

"You said a pincher," hinted Greene. "Last week it was a burglar, but this week it was just a pincher! Don't you remember?"

"Don't talk utter rot, Greene! It's like you to belittle a fellow who's done

a rather big thing, while you were snoring!" said Coker bitterly.

"Oh, my hat!" said Potter and Greene together, and they went off to their dormitory, leaving Horace Coker snorting with scorn.

It was true that Coker had modified his theory, as he termed it; and on second thoughts had changed his burglar into a prowling pincher. But now that it had turned out to be a burglar after all, Coker preferred to forget that little circumstance.

He dismissed the pincher, and jumped back, as it were, to his burglar—his original theory. The chief thing to be proved was that Coker had been right all along! Nothing else mattered, in comparison with that; and that Coker had accomplished, to his own satisfaction at least.

Coker felt as if he was walking on air when he was called into Mr. Quelch's study to see the inspector. Having finished telephoning, Mr. Grimes had examined the broken desk, and heard what Mr. Quelch had to tell him of the night's startling happenings. Inspector Grimes made few comments, but he was a much puzzled man. He fixed a keen eye on Coker when that youth presented himself, and emitted a slight grunt, which perhaps expressed his opinion of the amount of intelligence he read in Horace's rugged countenance.

"You will tell Inspector Grimes exactly what occurred, Coker," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir," said Coker breezily. "I had formed a theory——"

"Keep to the point!" snapped Mr. Quelch, who had no use whatever for the "Clue of the Crooked Corkscrew" at second-hand.

"Eh? That is the point, sir!" explained Coker. "Last week, sir, I

copped a burglar in the Remove dormitory. The fellows laughed! Just sniggered! Well, I formed a theory that the villain would be at it again! I kept watch! I bagged him! If he hadn't jerked me a jolt to the jaw I should have had him——"

"You have been keeping watch at night?" asked Mr. Grimes, opening his eyes rather wide.

"Night after night!" said Coker. "It's made me jolly sleepy in the daytime, but I stuck it, sir! And to-night I got him! Having formed the theory, I——"

Mr. Grimes did not seem to want to hear about Coker's theories. He rapped out a series of sharp questions, and ruthlessly kept Coker to the point. Having disentangled the facts—which was not an easy task in dealing with Coker, who was discursive—Mr. Grimes abruptly dismissed him. He was left with the impression that Coker of the Fifth was a fool! Coker went away with the same impression of Mr. Grimes.

It was a much perplexed police-inspector who left Greyfriars School at last. Everything that had happened in the House pointed to the existence of a "pincher" in the school itself; and if it had been left at that, Mr. Grimes would have had no doubt of the pincher's identity. But Mr. Grimes himself had furnished indubitable evidence that it was not a pincher in the school, but a thief from outside who had done the trick! Yet, why a cracksmen should take the trouble to break open a master's desk for a few pounds instead of making for the Head's safe where there was ample plunder, was a mystery—and why he should take his loot upstairs in his hand, in the direction of

the junior dormitories, was a still deeper mystery.

It looked like the work of a thief in the school—in a word, like the work of the boy whom Mr. Grimes suspected. Yet Mr. Grimes' own hands had fallen on the thief as he escaped from the House!

What did Valentine know of it? Did he know anything of it? The thieves who had been at Greyfriars that night were his old associates. That was certain. But was the boy concerned in it; and, if so, how? Mr. Grimes was quite at a loss, and that puzzling mystery seemed likely to give him more headaches than the blow he had received from Nosey Clark.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER! No Backers!

THAT wild night's happenings were, of course, the one topic at Greyfriars next day. At tea-time the Famous Five gathered in Study No. 1, and they were discussing the strange affair when a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in at the door.

"I say, you fellows—"

"How did Bunter know we had a cake?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I never knew you had a cake! If you think I saw Wharton unwrapping it, it only shows that you've got a rotten, suspicious mind!" said Billy Bunter warmly. "I didn't come here for the cake. Still I'll sample it, if you don't mind."

Bunter sampled it. He took quite a large sample!

"I say, you fellows," went on Bunter, with his mouth full, "they're having a fearful row in Coker's study."

"Poor old Coker!" chuckled Bob.

"I wasn't listening at the door, you know," explained Bunter. "I happened to stop to tie my shoelace, and I heard Coker say— This is a jolly good cake! I'll have a bit more."

"You heard Coker say that?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Eh? Nunno! I said that. I heard Coker say— You might give a fellow a cup of tea along with his cake."

"Did he say that to Potter or Greene?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm saying that to you, you ass! Coker said he wanted them to back him up to-night, and they called him a silly ass and he chucked a die at them, and they had to hold him down—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"He's going it again to-night!" chortled Bunter. "Some fellows are never satisfied. I hear that Prout's threatened to whop him if he leaves his dorm again at night for any reason whatever. Prout don't want any burglar-hunters in his Form!"

Bunter gobbled cake. There was a heavy footstep in the Remove passage—too heavy for a Removee. Bunter, gobbling cake, did not notice it.

"I say, you fellows, that silly ass Coker ought to be muzzled, or something," said Bunter. "They ought to chain him up at night, or something. Mooching about the House, you know, startling fellows in the middle of the night. And from what he said to Potter and Greene, he's keeping it up. Likes it, you know. Jever hear or dream of such a silly idiot as Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors as

a burly figure appeared in the doorway of Study No. 1. That heavy footstep had been Coker's.

Coker glared at the back of Bunter's head. Bunter, having no eyes in the back of his head, did not see Coker. He rattled on cheerily.

"The fact is, I believe Coker's rather mad. A chap couldn't really be such a fool as Coker without being a bit cracked, in my opinion. What do you fellows think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fellows, much entertained by the expression on Horace Coker's speaking countenance and by Bunter's happy unconsciousness of the fact that Horace was just behind him.

"Coker's relations ought to look after him, you know," said Bunter. "A school like this ain't really the place for a chap like Coker. A home for idiots— Yarooooooh!"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly as a grasp of iron was laid on the back of his fat neck.

Spinning round in that iron grasp, Billy Bunter blinked at Coker's wrathful face through his big spectacles in horror.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Ow! Ow-wow! Leggo! I—I say, Coker, I—I wasn't saying you were cracked, you know. I—I don't really think you're cracked. Besides, you can't help being cracked, old chap— Yarooooooh!"

Bump!

Coker's powerful arm swung Bunter through the doorway. He landed in the passage outside, with a concussion that almost rocked the passage.

"Whoop!" roared Bunter.

Coker slammed the door after him. Bunter roared in the passage, unheeded. The Famous Five and Jim Valentine eyed Coker warily. If Coker had arrived to ask for trouble, the chums of the Remove were ready to give him all the trouble he wanted, and a little over.

But Coker, it appeared, had not come for trouble. He was wrathful; but his wrath was not directed against the heroes of the Remove.

"Want anything, Coker?" asked Frank Nugent politely.

"I've come here—"

"We'd noticed that!" assented Harry Wharton mildly.

Coker breathed hard.

Obviously, he was tempted to rush on these cheeky juniors and smite them hip and thigh. With wonderful self-restraint he refrained from doing so. Nobly resisting that temptation, Coker proceeded:

"I've come here to talk about my plans! I've been let down in my own study! Even after what happened last night—proving that I was right all along—Potter and Greene refuse to back me up. They're prepared to snore in the dorm while the school is robbed right and left. I'm not!"

"You're prepared to snore in your study while some person or persons unknown paint your chivvy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Again Coker was tempted to smite. Again he resisted the temptation.

"Shut up and listen to me!" said Coker. "I've got to be backed up! I'm let down in my own study and my own Form! But a fellow can't stay awake night after night—I was half asleep last night when the burglar came. Might have missed him altogether, you know, if I'd nodded right off. Well, I'm keeping watch again to-night—"

"Not fed-up yet?" grinned Bob.

"It's a matter of duty!" said Coker

loftily. "You kids naturally don't understand—with your rather limited intelligence. I can't really blame you—fellows in my own Form are as silly and fatheaded as you are."

"There's one fellow in your Form, as silly and fatheaded as they make 'em!" remarked Bob Cherry. And his comrades chortled.

"More than one," said Coker, blind to jesting. "Well, this is how it stands. Several times I've baffled that burglar—three times at least."

"You've baffled him?"

"Baffle, you young ass, not baffle! Baffle!" said Coker. "Now, you can see, or, at least, you can see when I point it out that a burglar who comes three times in spite of being baffled every time is a sticker!"

"The stickfulness is preposterous."

"Well, having butted in three times, and been baffled every time, it's a cert that he will try it on again," said Coker.

"Whatever he's after, he will try it on again! Next time I'm going to cop him!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors chuckled. They did not "see," even now Coker pointed it out to them. They did not quite believe in his first burglar; and his second burglar, they knew, was Smitty going out of bounds to see a man about a horse. His third burglar seemed to be the genuine article; they admitted that.

"Every night," said Coker impressively, "I'm going to keep watch. But if I fall asleep what will happen?"

"You will snore!" said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"You young idiot!" roared Coker. "I'll jolly well—" Again Coker nobly resisted his natural impulse to mop up Study No. 1. "What will happen is this—if I fall asleep the burglar won't be baffled. That's where you kids come in. See? You're going to take it in turns to keep watch with me! It's absolutely necessary for somebody to help. My pals have let me down. You needn't point out that it's pretty rotten for a senior, a man like me, to have to come to sneaking little fags for help! I know that—and I feel it! But what's a fellow to do? I must use what materials I've got!"

"If the materials will let you!" suggested Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's it," said Coker. "That's what I want!"

"What a lot of difference there is between what a chap wants and what he's likely to get!" remarked Bob Cherry thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what about it?" said Coker. "I'm not saying you'll be much good—you won't! But better than nothing! That's how I look at it! One of you stays up and keeps watch with me. And if I nod off, you see—"

Evidently Coker had it all cut and dried.

"And suppose Quelch catches us out of our dorm?" asked Bob.

"Never mind Quelch!"

"Suppose Prout catches you at it?"

"Never mind Prout!"

"And suppose—"

"Don't jaw," said Coker, "I've had enough silly jaw in my own study! It's settled, then."

"Not quite!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You see, we do mind Quelch a little—we rather have to! Take my tip, Coker, and go to bed to-night—and stay there! Prout will have an eye on you—"

"I've told you," said Coker, breathing

hard, "that I'm willing to let you back me up, measly fags as you are! Are you backing me up or not?"

"Not!" said six voices in unison. And the Nabob of Bhanipur added that the notfulness was terrific.

Coker glared! Let down in the Fifth, he was turned down in the Remove! Again he was tempted to rush at these cheeky juniors and hand out to them what they richly deserved. This time he fell to the temptation. He rushed!

The next moment Horace Coker was mixed up with six Removites, and they were all rolling on the floor together.

What happened after that was hardly clear to Coker! It felt like earthquakes and air raids mixed.

It was a dizzy, breathless, and disbevelled Coker that emerged from Study No. 1, and he emerged flying, with six feet planted behind him, helping him in his onward career.

In the passage he crashed!

He crashed, and roared.
"Roll him down the stairs!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Coker did not wait to be rolled!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Capture!

MIDNIGHT!

Coker yawned.

He yawned long and he yawned deep!

There was this, at the very least, to be said for Horace Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars—he was a sticker. Let down all round, backed up by nobody, Coker was sticking to his guns.

But he was sleepy! He was frightfully sleepy! Night after night Coker had lost his beauty sleep! But he was sticking! Undoubtedly, if Coker was keeping this up he needed help. Potter or Greene, watching with him, would have given him the chance of getting a cat-nap now and then. One of the Remove fags would have served the same useful purpose. But nobody was backing up Coker! If he did it at all, it had to be on the same lines as Coriolanus of old—alone, unaided, he did it! Alone, unaided, Coker was determined to do it.

But he was fearfully sleepy! Like another gentleman in Shakespeare, he heard the chimes at midnight! And he yawned enormously. He yawned and yawned.

Flesh and blood, really, could not stand it! Coker yawned and yawned—leaning on the landing banisters. Presently he slid down to a sitting position, feeling that he might as well take it easy. Then it occurred to his powerful brain that he might as well listen with his tired eyes shut. He could see nothing in the dark—his job was listening—and a fellow could listen just as well, indeed, better, with his eyes shut! So Coker of the Fifth proceeded to listen with his eyes shut!

The eyes continued shut! But the listening did not continue! Unconsciously, unintentionally, Coker, with his eyes shut, slid into slumber.

Snore!

When Coker slumbered, he snored. He had a fairly hefty snore! Not quite so hefty as Billy Bunter's—but hefty! It woke many echoes. Had an enterprising burglar come a-burgling that night, there was no doubt that he would have been put on his guard by that deep rumble in the darkness.

Fast asleep, Coker did not hear the sound of an opening door in a passage at a little distance.

He did not hear a footstep.

Morpheus had claimed Coker for his own! The drowsy god had beaten him to it! Rip Van Winkle, old Epemenides, or the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, had nothing on Coker just then! He slept as if for a wager. And his deep and steady snore rumbled through the silent spaces.

And Mr. Prout's eyes glittered.

Prout was suspicious.

In spite of his commands, in spite of his threats of dire punishment if he dared to break dormitory bounds again, Prout had a suspicion that the ineffable Coker might carry on in his own wilful way, regardless. If he did, Prout intended to give him cause to be sorry therefore.

At midnight's witching hour, Mr. Prout turned out of bed, donned his slippers and his flowing dressing-gown opened his door, and listened. If there was a sound—

There was a sound!

As soon as Prout's door was open, he heard the sound—like the distant growl of a thunderstorm. It was Coker's snore.

Prout breathed hard and deep.

That day Coker had twice fallen asleep in the Form-room, and given Prout the trouble of waking him up with the pointer! It was not surprising that the Fifth Form master was fed-up with Coker's nocturnal stunts. And that deep snore from the darkness told its own tale! Coker was "at it again"—though this time evidently he had fallen asleep on his watch.

"Upon my word!" breathed Prout.

He was intensely angry. Coker's motives, no doubt, were good; and his extraordinary stunt had come in useful once. But there was a limit. Prout stepped out of his room with the intention of awakening Coker, and leading him back to his dormitory with a firm grip on his ear, and a reward of a thousand lines!

He switched on the light, and came across the landing.

"Upon my word!" repeated Prout.

He gazed at Coker.

Huddled against the banisters, his chin sunk on his manly chest, Horace Coker slept and snored. He was dreaming—but not of Prout! He was dreaming of creeping burglars, and collaring the same.

"Boy!" hooted Prout.

Deep in sleep, Coker did not hear.

Prout stooped, grasped him by the shoulder, and shook him violently.

Coker woke!

From a dream of struggling burglars, he came back to sudden wakefulness, to find himself grasped, and that was enough for Coker! Obviously, to Coker, it was a burglar's grasp. Coker bounded up, grasped in his turn, threw his weight on Prout, and brought him down with a crash.

"Ooooooogh!" gurgled Prout, as he crashed.

"You villain!" panted Coker. "Got you, by gum! Help, help! Burglars! I've got him! Help!"

"Urrrrrrrgh!" came in agonised tones from Prout.

"I've got him!" shrieked Coker. "Help! I've got him! Keep still, you scoundrel! I've got you!"

"Wurrrrrrgh!"

Prout, sprawling on the landing, struggled and squirmed in Coker's muscular grip. He gurgled and gurgled as he squirmed. He could not speak. Coker had him round the neck, and his face was under Coker's arm. Coker was not giving the burglar a chance to get away this time! Not if Coker knew it! With his sinewy arm

like a band of steel round Prout's suffocated neck, Coker held on to him, and roared to wake all Greyfriars.

"Coker!" Mr. Quelch arrived at a run. "Coker! You—you again! What—what—are you mad? Release Mr. Prout at once!"

"What?" stammered Coker.

He could not, of course, see the face under his arm. Neither could Mr. Quelch; but the Remove master recognised the dressing-gown.

He grasped Coker by the collar, and dragged him off Prout by main force.

Mr. Prout sat up gurgling.

Coker stared at him with eyes bulging from his head.

"Prout!" he gasped. "Pip-pip-pip-Prout! Oh crikey!"

"Urrrgh! Urrrgh! Wurrgh! Hold that boy, Quelch—gurrgh! I will cane him—urrgh! I will thrash him—gerrroogh—"

"Oh jiminy! I—I—I thought you were the—the burglar, sir!" stammered Coker. "I—I—I thought— Oh lor!"

"Urrrrrrrgh!"

"You ridiculous boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Go back to your dormitory at once! You have awakened the House! Mr. Prout, let me assist you to your room. No doubt you will prefer to deal with this ridiculous boy in the morning."

"Urrrrrrrgh!"

Mr. Prout accepted the Remove master's arm back to his room. He gave Coker a deadly look before he tottered away. He gurgled and guggled as he went. Coker stared after him.

"Oh, holy haddocks!" gasped Coker.

And Coker went to his dormitory. Even Coker felt that he had better not stay up any longer—in the circumstances! Startled fellows, who had turned out of bed at Coker's yelling, went back chuckling! It was only Coker!

Prout dealt with Coker the next morning.

He dealt hard.

He came very near "whopping" Coker. Unfortunately, he stopped short of that awful extreme. Instead, he gave him a thousand lines, and gated him for three half-holidays, and added that, at any repetition of Coker's conduct, he would be reported to the Head for a flogging. It was, as Coker told Potter and Greene afterwards, sickening. Still more sickening was the way the whole school roared when they learned that Coker had kept watch again, and collared his Form master in mistake for a burglar. It was, so far as Coker could see, quite a natural and excusable mistake—in the circumstances! He could see nothing to laugh at in that!

"I can tell you this," said Coker to Potter and Greene. "It's sickening—just sickening! I'm fed-up! If it had been a burglar, I should have had him! It happened to be Prout—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter and Greene.

"Oh, shut up!" roared Coker. "I can tell you this. I'm fed-up! I'm chucking it, see? If all the dashed burglars in the dashed country come here, night after night, I'll let them rip! See? If they come by dozens, I won't ever cop a single one of them!"

And Coker never did!

THE END.

(The next yarn in this stirring series is entitled: "BUNTER, THE FOOT-BALLER!" and it's one long scream from beginning to end. Make sure of reading it, chums, by ordering your MAGNET in good time!)

NOBBY, *the* 'Shooting Star'!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

NOBBY, a red-headed youngster of sixteen, who has worked in a football booth belonging to

DON CARLOS' circus, runs away to London. Through

FERRERS LOCKE, the detective, and Jack Drake, his boy assistant, he is introduced to

LORD DOUGLAS WEATHERSTONE, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C., who gives him a "job" as a ground-boy. Within a few days Nobby becomes a professional. Later he sees Lord Douglas' nephew,

DANIEL WILLOUGHBY THUNDERSLEY, disgraced in a beard and the worse for drink, outside a shady club. Anxious not to be recognised, Thundersley scrambles into a taxi, leaving his beard behind on the pavement. Picking up the beard, Nobby jumps into another taxi and follows, arriving at an ill-lighted arch around which his quarry is just disappearing.

(Now read on.)

Arrested!

NOBBY tore up to the archway, moved into the gloom of it uncertainly, and then stood still. Some sense of impending danger made him wheel. Too late!

Out of the darkness crashed a bunched fist which took him behind the ear, felling him to the cobble-stones as if he had been shot at point-blank range. He collapsed with hardly a sound; just the dull thud of his falling body as it met the cobbles—that was all.

A pale, vengeful face peered down at him, an elegant-shod foot spurned his prostrate figure, and a thick, drink-befuddled voice gloated over him.

"Meddling cub! That will teach you to spy on me! For two pins I'd—"

The voice broke off; the creaking, swinging light, caught up by a sudden, fitful gust of wind, swept its rays over the man's face.

And without the beard that face was easily recognisable as that of Daniel Willoughby Thundersley. Thundersley, the famous amateur forward of the

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Rovers—the man who was off colour on account of excessive sweating.

He looked what he was at that moment—a dissolute waster who had come precious nigh being bowled out by the red-headed youngster who lay at his feet.

Nobby began to stir. His eyes opened. His head ached from the treacherous, cowardly blow on that vital nerve centre. He got to his knees, from there staggered upright and propped himself against the wall, striving to bring his senses under control.

Of his assailant there was no sign. The beard was gone.

Through the darkness he began to stumble, hardly knowing where he was going. He paused by the side of a darkened doorway in order to get his bearings, blinked uncertainly into the gloom about him, and involuntarily leaned against the door. Unknown to him it had opened slowly, noiselessly.

Another moment and two gnarled, dusky hands reached out, and closed over his mouth stifling the cry that rose to his lips, almost choking him. Then something descended on his head and consciousness for the second time in the space of five minutes, deserted him in a maze of shooting lights before the curtain of oblivion blotted them out in utter darkness.

'Allo! Wot's this?'

Unconsciously the stalwart duty policeman spoke his thoughts aloud while the steady beam from his lantern focused on the sprawling heap of humanity in the gutter half a dozen feet ahead of him. A moment later the man in blue was bending over the huddled figure, his big red face a picture of alarm. A large size in hands felt for heartbeats, and, satisfied that life remained in that inanimate figure, the constable's face began to register disgust: for from the subject of his scrutiny came a pungent odour of alcoholic spirit.

"Drunk!" he ejaculated laconically. "Only a kid, too!"

The worthy policeman had feared worse. Crimes, wherein razors and broken bottles played a deadly part, were not infrequent in the negro quarter, quiet and respectable as it appeared at that hour of the evening.

"Come on, you young fool!" commanded the officer, shaking the youngster in an attempt to revive him. "Wake up!"

But it took young Nobby quite five minutes to blink open his eyes and inquire where he was.

"Where you are echoed the constable. "In the negro quarter. Where you are going to be in a few moments—the police station! Follow your age ought to be ashamed of himself! Come on—"

Nobby started to protest, but the constable was in no mood to listen, and after a while the youngster gave it up. Supported by the stalwart man in blue, he was marched into the police station. His head ached abominably; his nostrils, so far, had failed to react to the strong odour of spirit which apparently had been swamped over him. Who his assailant had been Nobby hadn't the faintest idea.

"Found him lyin' in the roadway—out to the wide!" grunted the constable to the sergeant in charge.

The sergeant eyed Nobby sternly. "Name?" he asked laconically, fidgeting with a pen and turning over a new sheet in the charge-book.

"Nobby," was the quiet reply.

"Nobby what?"

"Just Nobby," replied the youngster, colouring uncomfortably. "You see—"

The sergeant wagged the pen at him severely.

"Look here, me lad, this isn't the place to be funny. Perhaps you'll realise that when you've cooled off in the cells for a night.

Nobby jumped.

"In the cells? What do you mean? What have I done?"

"You don't have to say what you've done," said the sergeant, without attempting to hide his disgust. "You simply rock of it! Must have barfed in

it"—his nose screwed into manifold wrinkles. "But you can tell your story, if you've got one, to the magistrates in the morning. Your name—quick!"

Nobby's head was in a worse whirl now. For the first time he became aware that his jacket simply reeked of spirit.

"I haven't any other name," he said quietly. "Just Nobby."

The sergeant's face softened a trifle. "No parents?" he asked, a little more kindly now.

"Not so far as I am aware."

"Um!"

The sergeant looked at the constable, the constable looked at the sergeant. There was a lengthy silence.

"Anyone know you in London? Anyone, that is, you'd like to communicate with?" said the former at length.

"Yes, sergeant," said Nobby. "If you'll be so kind as to speak to Mr. Ferrers Locke I am sure he will come along and straighten out this awful muddle. You think I'm the worse for drink, but I tell you—"

The youngster did not get any farther. At the mere mention of Ferrers Locke's name both sergeant and constable started violently.

"Ferrers Locke!" exclaimed the former incredulously. "You pulling my leg? Mr. Locke, the detective of Baker Street?"

"Yes."

"Swop me bob!" exclaimed the constable. "It's coming to somethin' when a drunk and disorderly can call upon a detective like Ferrers Locke to stand for him! If you arks me, sergeant—"

But the sergeant was reaching for the telephone and asking for a number almost in the one movement.

"Hallo, sir! Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Locke, but I've got a young fellow here who is asking to see you. Name? Oh, of course, Nobby, he says he is! What's that?" The sergeant turned unbelieving eyes on the red-headed youngster before him. "You'll come along straight away. Well—"

Down slammed the receiver on the hooks, and the sergeant's innermost thoughts were never voiced aloud.

"Sit down, young man!" he said to Nobby. "Mr. Locke says he'll be along shortly. You, Scrivvens, had better get back to your beat. Yes, I've got all the evidence. Dead to the wide in the gutter—time, eight o'clock. Right-ho!"

And, much to his disgust, P.-c. Scrivvens departed from the station to resume his beat without learning at first hand just how much claim the red-headed youngster he had taken in charge had upon so famous a man as Ferrers Locke.

And three minutes after his departure the great detective was striding into the charge-room.

"Nobby!" Locke's face expressed nothing else but pleasure at the meeting, strange as was the setting. "Now who has been making a fatheaded mistake, eh?"

Nobby's heart warmed to the tall, immaculate figure of his benefactor.

"I've been run in here, sir, on a charge of being the worse for drink. My coat seems to reek of spirits—"

Locke's nostrils twitched as he bent his head over the youngster.

"You appear to have been bathing in it," he said shortly. "Where did it happen? Tell the story in your own way."

Nobby explained, leaving out the one

fact that he had been hastening after Daniel Willoughby Thundersley; that was a secret he preferred to keep to himself for the moment.

"And while I was trying to get my bearings, sir," he wound up, "I leaned against a door which suddenly opened. Next thing I knew was that something heavy biffed down on the back of my head, and a big, dirty hand closed over my mouth."

Ferrers Locke looked grim.

"We will not go into the question of your running after a man to give him back a beard he had dropped," said Locke quietly. "That doesn't concern this charge a bit. It looks to me as if you were the victim of a robbery. Some of our dusky friends in the negro quarter make quite a living out of preying on unsuspecting visitors to their neighbourhood."

Nobby started, and his hand flew to his inside pocket.

"Just see if you have been robbed,"

added Locke, and knew by the blank look that came over the youngster's face that the answer was in the affirmative. "Good heavens!" gasped Nobby. "My wallet's gone! My wages—"

The sergeant sat back in his chair, much more interested in the clever face of London's greatest detective than in the strange story Nobby was telling.

"It's an old trick of the negro to lay out a victim with a rubber cosh, relieve him of his cash and valuables, and then sprinkle spirit over him. Dumping you in the gutter was a clumsy trick to dispose of you for a few hours. The policeman on duty was bound to find you sooner or later, and run you in as an 'incapable.'"

Locke turned to the sergeant. "You can take my word for it, sergeant, that this youngster hasn't been drinking."

The sergeant leaned forward. "I've always respected your judgment, sir," he said, "but this story sounds a bit wild to me."

Locke laughed. "It's the result of a wild district. You want a few more lamps alight, and a few more police patrolling the negro quarter. It's a fatal place for the unwary. Look at the kid now. Does he look like a fellow who would fall for alcohol—"

"Never tasted a drop in my life, sir!" avowed Nobby earnestly.

The sergeant looked at him shrewdly. "Well, he don't look too incapable at the moment," he said warily. "But Scrivvens' evidence— However, I'll get on to the commissioners at the club. They'll be able to verify the man with a beard story, if it's true."

But true it was; the chief commissioner who had assisted in the throwing out of the man with the sandy beard was quite ready to testify. Once again the receiver was slammed down on the hooks. The sergeant turned to Nobby.

"Seems as if we've made a mistake, young fellow," he confessed.

Nobby's face lit up with relief. "Then I shan't have to go to the cells, or appear before the magistrates to-morrow?"

The sergeant scratched his head. "Mister Locke vouches for you; the commissioner at the club says that there was a man with a sandy beard whom he had to chuck out. Pity Scrivvens didn't run him in if he was so bad. But you take a tip from me. Don't go nosing about the negro quarter again. 'Tain't exactly healthy."

"I won't!" exclaimed Nobby earnestly, and saw to his great satisfaction the big "charge book" closed and pushed aside.

The sergeant leaned forward. "What do you think about this man in the beard, Mister Locke? Bit of a mystery, what? Men with false beards usually have a criminal reason for wishing to hide their faces. And he don't seem a grateful sort, does he? Sloshing a fellow who was only trying to return him his property."

Locke shrugged his shoulders. "There are plenty such in town," he said simply. "Come along, Nobby, and let's get that beating jacket off you. It reeks. Must have cost your negro friend a couple of bob or so. Did he get much out of your wallet?"

Nobby smiled ruefully. "A week's wages, sir. Sandy paid me my money the moment the forms came back from the F.A. confirming my registration as a Rover."

The sergeant scratched his head.

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"A Rover—Sandy? Are you talking about the Perriton Rovers and Sandy Macfarland?"

Locke put an arm round Nobby's shoulders.

"Correct, sergeant. Behold in Nobby a budding International."

A new respect shone in the heavy features of the sergeant. Truth to tell he was an ardent follower of Perriton Rovers, and Saturday afternoon—on off days—always found him in the shilling enclosure among the fans.

"Strike me—" he began. "Now if you'd said you was a Rover in the first place I should have known. No Rover looks on the wine when it's red—what?"

And with the one exception of the amateur, Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, he was correct; the Rovers to a man were total abstainers!

"You ain't playing to-morrow, I suppose?" said the sergeant. "Cause I'm off for the afternoon, and—"

Nobby shook his head. "What a pity," continued the sergeant. "Bit young; but you look a likely fellow now I run my eye over you."

"Come on, Nobby," said Locke. "The sergeant will talk football with you for hours if you give him a chance."

"Good mind to lock him up in the cells, after all," grinned the sergeant. "Then I could talk football to him. Good-night, sir! Good-night—er—er—Nobby! Sorry—sorry about—"

But Nobby and Ferrers Locke were gone.

Locke; "that was why I talked the sergeant past the point."

Ferrers Locke relapsed into silence.

He and Nobby were seated in the latter's bed-sitting-room at Derham Street, for the detective had insisted on driving the youngster back to his home.

"Did you catch a sight of his face—without the beard?" asked Locke at length.

Nobby shook his head.

"Honestly, no! It was his voice which gave him away, and his hurry to get out of my sight, that convinced me. He was in a terrible state."

"Must have been," agreed Locke, "for the commissionaires of that club to throw him out. And he's the star amateur who plays for the Rovers to-morrow, eh?"

"He's down to play, anyway," said Nobby. "Isn't it a shame?"

The detective agreed that it was.

"He's Lord Weatherstone's nephew, isn't he? Supposed to be training for a barrister, if my memory isn't at fault. So that's how he trains? No wonder he goes in for a beard. Reckon his lordship would clear him out on the spot if he knew."

Nobby looked concerned.

"But he mustn't know, sir. It would break the old chap. I believe he thinks the world of Thundersley."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of telling him!" smiled Locke, amused at the youngster's seriousness. "And neither, apparently, are you?"

"Not likely," declared Nobby. "I owe him too much for that. But I'd like to punch that cad Thundersley good and hard!"

A few moments later the detective took his leave, and, feeling fatigued after the strenuous events of the evening, Nobby turned in. But it was a long time before sleep closed his eyes. Before his imagination appeared constant pictures of the Don and Daniel Thundersley, and, in his distorted view, they appeared to be shaking hands and

leering evilly at him. Did it mean that the two had formed a partnership against him? The thought was prophetic, for such an alliance had indeed been ordained by Fate, and it was only a matter of time before it was to operate against him.

The while Nobby's restless fancy pictured these things Thundersley was helping himself from a crystal decanter, well stocked with liquor, in the privacy of his chambers. His face was pale; his eyes shone out like burning pin-points so un governable was his rage.

"The meddling cub!" He literally hissed the words. "He's dangerous! Feel sure he spotted me—but I wonder?"

Thundersley's own guilt tortured him. For years now he had bamboozled the big-hearted uncle who had brought him up from childhood. For the past two years in particular he had been travelling down hill at an alarming rate—so alarming, in fact, that he had not the strength of mind to pull himself up.

Thundersley's acquaintances were not the type to let so valuable a pigeon loose—once they had him in their net. Already certain "bits of paper," which bore the rascal's signature, were held above his head in shameful blackmail. Thundersley paid—he had to pay! It was that or exposure. And, while he paid, these acquaintances were content to let him go on living his life of deception.

While he pondered his unhappy plight Thundersley arrived at the conclusion that every man had his price. In other words, if he could hold off more powerful individuals who had it in their power to disgrace him with various payments in cash, surely it would be a simple matter to bribe Nobby into silence with something—say, a five-pound note? Some of the rage faded out of his hard eyes as he thus eased his mind, and a cunning smile transformed his face.

(Don't miss next week's exciting chapters of this powerful footer and detective story, chums, whatever you do!)

Hush-Money!

AND you think the chap you followed—the fellow who knocked you out the first time—was Thundersley? Ferrers Locke put the question with raised brows. "Sure of it," said Nobby. "I didn't want to say so at the police station, naturally."

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STOP STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars - FRANK B. HUGHES, 26, HART STREET, LONDON, W.C.1.

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BE TALLER! Increased my own height to 6ft. 3ins. CLIENTS GAIN 2 to 6 INCHES! Fee £2-2s. STAMP brings FREE Particulars. - P. M. BOSS, Height Specialist, SCARBOROUGH.

BLUSHING Shyness, "Nerves," Self-consciousness, Worry Habit, Unreasonable Fears, etc., cured or money back. Complete Course 5/-. Details free, privately. - L. A. STEBBING, 28, Dean Road, London, N.W.2.

BE TALL Your Height increased in 14 days or Money Back. Complete Course, 5/-. Booklet free privately. - STEBBING SYSTEM, 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.

BLUSHING, SEYNESS. -For FREE particulars simple home cure write Mr. HUGHES, 26, HART STREET, LONDON, W.C.1.

OUTFIT FREE! Album, Mounts, Perf. Gauge, Detector, Liberia Pkt. 51 diff. stamps. Send 2d., ask Approvals. - WILKINSON, 25B, Lawson Road, Colwyn Bay, Wales.

TO CIGARETTE MANUFACTURERS.
Please stop sending me samples. It's useless to expect me to praise the bally things. To me, everything's an "awful rag"—Lord Maulverer, The Abodo of Rest, Remove Passage.
OWN YOUR OWN STUDY!
No legal charges. Small deposit. Balance payable as rent. Mention which study you want and our advance agents secure it for you at the beginning of each term.—Write, The Own-Your-Study Racket, Study No. 14.

No. 17 (New Series)

EDITED BY W. HARTON

January 28th, 1933.

THE NEW Greyfriars Herald

EXTRA GOOD EDITION

GREYFRIARS CIRCUS and MENAGERIE.
BUNTER—THE HUMAN OSTRICH.
THE BEAK—A RARE OLD BIRD.
QUELCHY—THE RAGING TIGER WITH THE GIMLET EYES.
THE HUMAN AUTOMATON—ACTS WITHOUT A BRAIN.
THE PAINTED PIGMIES—INK-STAINED BARBARIANS OF THE PIG TRIBE.
Feeding-time at One O'clock Daily.
No Extra Charge!

BRONCHO-BUSTING IN QUAD

Coker's Wild West Show

Coker walked over to the donkey and calmly mounted it. The animal stood still. Coker patted its head. It made no movement. We should like to be able to add that Coker directed it to the gates, trotted it back to the field, dismounted, and returned to Greyfriars. But truth compels us to state that the donkey suddenly reared up on its hind legs, bucked and kicked and bolted. It would be pleasant to relate that Coker came through with flying colours, mastered the animal, and returned it to its owner. But truth again compels us to admit that Coker uttered a wild howl, whirled through the air, and fell on his neck. A farm labourer appeared soon after and led the animal away quite peacefully. Truth is a sad and painful thing at times, isn't it?



Coker took in the situation at a glance, and smiled. Obviously they were waiting for a MAN to take charge of them far and wide. While Mr. Prout dashed off excitedly for a Winchester repeater, Mr. Quelch waved a walking-stick at the intruder. His signal was ignored completely. Vernon-Smith tried to head it off and got bowled over for his trouble. Delaney and Wharton and several others tried their luck, with no better results. Then Coker came on the scene. What Coker doesn't know about horseflesh isn't worth knowing. He often says so himself, so it must be true. Anyway, he must know an awful lot about donkeys, if the number of times he's made

CAN YOU SOLVE HIS MYSTERY?

Fascinating Game

This is an imaginary mystery, invented by our Staff Manager purely for your amusement. Don't think us, much as we deserve it; it's all in our day's work! We give below the clues that will enable you to SOLVE THE MYSTERY, or not, as the case may be. All you have to do is study the clues carefully till you think you've arrived at the SOLUTION. You then write out your SOLUTION on thick sheets of brown paper, using one side only, and post to the address given below.

If no address is given below, communicate with the Chief Constable, Courthouse, Police-station, or with the Commissioner of Police at New Scotland Yard.

Now get on with the mystery, ye budding sleuths! By the way, no special meaning attaches to words printed in capital letters; it simply means we're short of the other kind.

Here are the clues:

1. On Tuesday, Squiff was seen crawling PURVILELY over the roof of Gosling's lodge. There was nothing unusual about him except that he was dressed as a Spanish torcedor.

2. On Wednesday, two men with EVIL, SARDONIC GRINS were seen conversing in Courthouse High Street. They

HOW TO LIVE TO A HUNDRED

Mr. Hacker's Method

Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, whose attack of housemaid's knee this week marks his first illness in a rather lengthy life, attributes his amazing good health to the scientific care he has taken of himself.

His rules for keeping fit are the result of years of experiment. By applying these rules any man, he believes, can enjoy unimpaird health to a ripe old age.

His meals are simple and consist of one type of food at each sitting. He eats humps of coal for breakfast, sawdust for luncheon, and baked molasses for dinner.

Mr. Hacker abstains from all alcoholic drinks with the exception of beer, wines, and spirits. He believes in rising early. Every morning he gets up at four and does cartwheels round the quad. Before luncheon he hangs from his study window by the feet for two minutes. After dinner, he toss himself up in knots. Now you know.

THRILLS FOR TRAY-SLIDING FANS

Big Crowd Cheers Finalists

Accounts from the Remove Traysliding Club having reported that Mr. Quelch had gone out, the final heats of the Championship were run off on Tuesday evening.

The Underworld turned up in an attempt to win the first prize by foul means, but fortunately the judge inspected Skinner's tray and disqualified him for greasing it, this being contrary to the regulations of the Traysliding Association.

The finalists were Tom Brown and Dick Russell, who were greeted with loud cheers as they lined up for their duel.

Unfortunately, before they could get going, Mr. Quelch put in an unexpected appearance on the lower landing, and there was a wild rush for the Rag and the studies, Tom Brown dropping his tray in the excitement and catching Mr. Quelch fair and square in the chest with it!

The final is postponed indefinitely!



The sport (writes our Traysliding Correspondent) was excellent, considering the deplorable condition of the stairs. Owing to restrictions on sliders, not more than two trays can race at the same time down the Remove staircase. Nevertheless, there was plenty of excitement and the big crowd of fans had lots to cheer about.

The first heat between Governor major and Tom Brown proved a thrilling sight. After racing neck and neck the entire length of the course, Brown won right on the post with a terrific burst of speed that carried him half-way down the next flight!

Considering their lack of practice, the contestants all showed most commanding skill. In one of the heats, Cheryl's tray struck a stair with the

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Mark Linley

By HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH

Most of my esteemed and ridiculous acquaintances at Greyfriars earnestly deserve one's respect. With the exception of the meek and dignified Skinner, the gorgeous and elephantine Bunter, and others of the same kind of finery, the esteemed and egotistical command admiral from everybody. There is one, however, for whom my respect is specially held reverentially, because he does not enjoy possessively the same advantages as the rest. The name of this esteemed and ridiculous person is Mark Linley.

Labour, as your English proverb remarks, conquers all things. Linley, by the examples of his psychomotorily by the terrible manner in which he won a scholarship and chagrelfully transformed himself from a factory lad to an esteemed and absurd Greyfriars scholar.

If you picturesquely contemplate how he burned the moonlight off, as your

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Mark Linley

saying goes, sturdying Groat and Latin after his day's work, you will rather that his energy was terrific!

We all know the preposterous trials and troubles he went through on first coming to Greyfriars. Many fellows would have chucked it up despondently. But adversity is the mother of distinction, as your English proverb remarks, and Mark Linley glouciously stuck to his task, all terrific and preposterous success crowned his efforts.

Today, none of my esteemed and ridiculous colleagues in the Remove is more popular than Mark Linley. Though his swiftness is terrific, he does not neglectfully disdain the absurd and praiseworthy playing-fields, where he plays with an enthusiasm and astuteness that are ridiculous and magnificent.

What I think of Mark Linley is now, I trust, my esteemed chums, brightly clear to all of you!

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Mark Linley

W. G. Bunter's short sight recently led him into a few where Farmer Brown keeps a average haul—and Bunter secures only by doing a record sprint!

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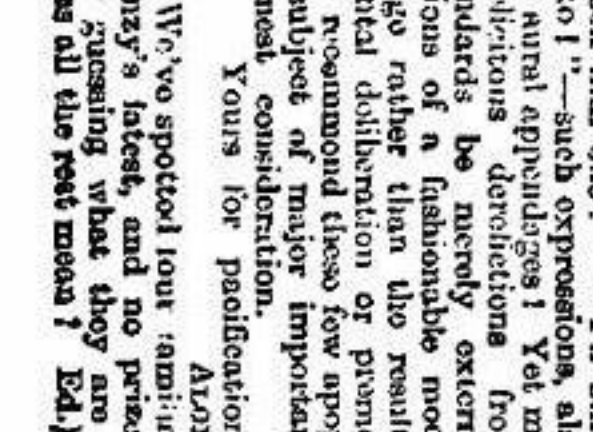
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WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY WISDOM

Our Form master's always cracking on because the more he wacks us the less we seem to learn.
Stop wanking us and see if that works the cracks, old bean! Kompanioor it's a wrong case that yodels no learning!



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W. G. Bunter's short sight recently led him into a few where Farmer Brown keeps a average haul—and Bunter secures only by doing a record sprint!