

Aunt Judy at Greyfriars!



BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

"WHERE is he?"
"The wherefulness is terrific!"

"He came this way—"

"He can't be far off!"

"We'll scrag him!"

Billy Bunter hardly breathed. Five voices, all speaking at once, fell distinctly on his fat ears. Five Remove fellows were searching for Billy Bunter, and they were quite close at hand, though they could not, for the moment, see him. Bunter was hugging cover. The trunk of one of the old Greyfriars elms was between him and the Famous Five of the Remove. It screened him from their sight. But if they came round the tree—

The fat Owl of the Remove hoped that they wouldn't! He hoped that they would pass on their way, seeking him further afield.

That ancient elm stood by the windows of Masters' Studies. Behind Bunter was the window of Mr. Prout's study, wide open in the sunny June afternoon. If Prout, the master of the Fifth, had looked out he must have seen Billy Bunter's fat form crouching against the old elm. Bunter hoped that Prout wouldn't look out.

Footsteps came along the path that ran before Masters' Windows. The old elm was between the path and the windows. Bunter was in cover, so long as the chums of the Remove kept on the path. But if they stepped off it and looked round the tree—

"Oh lor'!" breathed Billy Bunter inaudibly.

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Really, it was an awful moment. Billy Bunter almost wished that he hadn't snaffled the bag of jam tarts that was clutched in his fat hand. But he couldn't quite wish that. There were six jam tarts in that flimsy paper bag—flaky and juicy and jammy! Bunter had not had time yet even to open the bag. The beasts had been after him so quickly. He hugged cover, and listened with deep trepidation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he heard Bob Cherry roar. "I say, Smithy, seen Bunter about?"

"Looking for Bunter?"

Smithy's voice came from the quad.

"Yes. Seen him?"

Bunter trembled. If Smithy had seen him—dodge behind that elm—

"He came this way!" said Harry Wharton.

"He's bagged my tarts!" Bob Cherry was speaking again, hardly three yards from the hidden Owl. "I'd just got a bag of tarts from the tuckshop, you know—tarts for tea! I laid the bag down for a minute while we were knocking Coker's hat off, and that fat villain snaffled it and bolted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smithy seemed amused.

"Look here, fathead, have you seen him?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"No, I haven't seen him!"

Billy Bunter breathed again.

"Well, he can't be far off," said Frank Nugent. "Shouldn't wonder if he's behind that tree all the time."

Bunter trembled.

"We'll jolly well scrag him," said Bob. "Snaffling a man's tarts fairly under his nose! We'll jolly well give him the tarts if we find them on him. We'll give him one on the nose, one in

each ear, and the others down his neck. That will teach him to leave a fellow's tuck alone."

"Good egg!"

Bunter shuddered.

He liked jam tarts—in fact, he loved them—but only when taken internally! Taken externally, even Bunter did not like jam tarts! Jam tarts squashing on his fat little nose and his fat ears, and squeezing down his podgy back, were neither grateful nor comforting.

He blinked round him wildly for a way of escape. Mr. Prout's window behind him was wide open, and there was no sign or sound of the Fifth Form master there. Very likely he was not in the study! The desperate idea came into Billy Bunter's fat mind of scrambling headlong in at Prout's window and hiding in the study.

Then he realised that if he quitted the cover of the tree he would be in sight of the juniors on the path. He could not reach Prout's window unseen.

"Oh lor'!" mumbled Bunter.

"Bet you ho's sticking behind that tree all the time!" said Johnny Bull. "Let's look, anyhow."

"Let's!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"And we'll jolly well make him tired of tarts," said Bob Cherry. "We'll make the fat villain wish he'd never heard of jam tarts!"

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

They were coming!

A few moments more and the fat pilferer would be revealed, with the bag of tarts in his fat hand.

Bunter quite wished by this time that he hadn't snaffled those tarts. Obviously, he was not going to be given time to devour them. He was going to be caught with the plunder on him, and

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those juicy, jammy tarts were going to be plastered over his nose and his ears and down his back. There was no escape—and seconds were precious.

The fat junior's brain in those thrilling moments worked swiftly. There was only one thing to be done—get rid of the plunder before he was bagged. And there was only one way of getting rid of it. To drop it, or throw it anywhere within sight, was useless. But the open study window was at hand—and the study apparently empty—

Whiz!

The bag flew.

In a fraction of a second it vanished through the open window of Mr. Prout's study, and landed somewhere inside.

Bunter, empty-handed, waited.

Footsteps were approaching.

Five figures appeared in view, coming round the elm. Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Here he is!"

"Bag him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Hand over those tarts, you fat scoundrel—"

"We're going to plaster them over you—"

"The plasterfulness will be terrific, my fat, esteemed Bunter," chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "and the stickiness will be preposterous."

"I say, you fellows—leggo! Look here, wharrer you up to?" demanded Bunter indignantly. "Can't a fellow take a rest in the shade without a lot of beasts rushing on him and grabbing him?"

"Where are those tarts?" roared Bob Cherry.

"What tarts?" asked Bunter.

The Famous Five released the captured Owl. They stared at him. There was no bag of tarts to be seen. There was no sign of tarts about Bunter. Had he scoffed the tarts there would have been indubitable traces of the same about him. There was no trace—not a sign of jam on Billy Bunter's fat countenance.

"Look here! You bagged those tarts, you fat frump!" roared Bob Cherry. "I saw you running a second after I missed them!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Where are they?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You had them!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I hope I'm not the fellow to scoff a fellow's tarts!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "You can see whether I've got any tarts or not! You've got eyes, I suppose? I don't know anything about your tarts, of course. Of all the suspicious beasts I think you fellows take the cake! Making out that a fellow's bagged your tarts—"

"What were you running for?" demanded Bob.

"Exercise," answered Bunter calmly.

"I'm not a fellow to slack about with my hands in my pockets, like you chaps."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Tarts!" said Bunter scornfully. "As if I'd touch your tarts! I hope I'm above that sort of thing! If you've really lost any tarts, Cherry, I expect one of these fellows scoffed them when you weren't looking—Wharton, perhaps—"

"What?" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"Or Nugent—"

"M—me!" stuttered Frank.

"Anyhow, I suppose you can see that I've not got your rotten tarts!" said Billy Bunter, with indignant scorn. "If

you think I'd pinch a bag of tarts, I can only say— Oh crikey!"

There was a sudden interruption.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Six for Bunter!

PROUT was surprised.

Mr. Paul Prout, the master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars School, had seldom been so surprised.

Life is full of surprises, some of them pleasant, some of them unpleasant. It was a surprise of the latter kind that had happened to Mr. Prout.

Prout was sitting in the armchair in his study, facing the open window. It was a very warm afternoon in June, and Prout had found the Fifth Form rather trying, especially Coker, who was a pupil that might have turned any Form master's hair grey. Having finished with the Fifth, Prout had retired to his study for a well-earned rest. His ample form filled the big armchair almost to overflowing as he reposed after his labours with the Fifth. His eyes were half-closed. He was not exactly asleep, but he was nodding. In the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the study, Prout forgot the worries of a Form master's life—forgot even Horace Coker. He nodded—and dozed! And then the surprise happened!

Poor old Horace Coker—what would he do without his Aunt Judy? For it's thanks to her that Horace doesn't get expelled from Greyfriars for an offence he never committed!

Something dropped on his upturned face.

His eyes opened wide.

He jumped.

His first impression was that the ceiling of his study was falling in. His surprised stare went upward. The ceiling was in its usual place—it was not that!

He sat upright in amazement.

He realised that it was something of a soft and squashy nature that had dropped on his face. It was also something of a flimsy nature, for it had burst as it crashed! It was, in fact, a flimsy paper bag, and it had burst on Prout's nose. The contents rolled down Prout as he sat up. In a dizzy state of astonishment, he grabbed at them—and juicy, jammy tarts squashed in his fingers!

Prout sat transfixed.

To say that he was surprised is understating the case. He was astonished, amazed, astounded—in fact, flabbergasted!

In each of his plump hands was a jam tart, squashing over his plump fingers, jammy and sticky. He had clutched them without realising what they were, but he was, of course, aware of their jammy nature as they squashed over his fingers. Four more jammy tarts were on him, sticking to his scholastic gown! The burst paper bag was on his plump knees!

Transfixed with amazement, Prout sat and gazed.

He was alone in the study. The ceiling was intact. Yet in some mysterious way it was raining jam tarts! It was enough to astonish any middle-aged gentleman suddenly startled out of a nap.

"Goodness gracious!" murmured Prout.

He held up the sticky things in his hands and looked at them. They were jam tarts—there was no doubt about that—and they had fallen on him in his study like a bolt from the blue! On a well-known historic occasion manna fell from the sky. But jam tarts falling from the ceiling of a Form master's study was unheard of. It was really an amazing mystery, and for a long minute Mr. Prout sat and gazed at the tarts in a flabbergasted state of astonishment.

Then he was aware of a sound of voices in the quadrangle without. That sound directed his attention to the open window. And his plump brain, clearing from the mists and shadows of sleep, grasped what must have happened. That bag of tarts must have been flung in at his study window. Some incredibly impertinent young rascal had buzzed that extraordinary missile at him as he dozed in his study!

As he realised the truth Prout woke to action. Amazement gave place to overpowering indignation and wrath. He lifted his weight from the armchair. Four jam tarts and a burst bag rolled to the floor. Two squashed tarts still clung lovingly to Prout's plump hands. He strode to the window and looked out into the June sunshine.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove stood surrounding Billy Bunter of that Form between the window and the elm. Prout's eyes glittered at them. And Billy Bunter, as he saw the jammy and infuriated countenance of the Fifth Form master at the window, uttered a gasp of alarm. The study had not, after all, been empty, as Bunter had hoped and supposed. Prout was there! And he was glaring from the window with an expression that the fabled Gorgon might have envied.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows— Oh lor'!"

"Wharton!" boomed Prout.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

The captain of the Remove spun round towards the window.

"Some boy," boomed Prout, "has hurled a bag of—of—of sticky comestibles—in fact, of tarts—jam tarts—into the window of my study!"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

The Famous Five knew now why the plunder had not been found on Billy Bunter.

"This missile fell upon me!" boomed Prout. "It was flung at me—hurled at me—by some boy outside my window! I find you here! One of you boys hurled this disgusting missile into my study! Was it you, Wharton?"

"Oh, my hat—I mean, no, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"No doubt you were all in the plot together!" thundered Prout.

"Oh dear! No, sir! Not at all, sir!"

"No fear, sir!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific, esteemed sir!"

"It wasn't me, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never had a bag of tarts, sir! I've just been telling these fellows that I never had, sir! As for buzzing it in at your study window, sir, I never thought of such a thing! Besides, I thought there was nobody in the study."

"What?" roared Prout.

"I did, sir, really!" gasped Bunter. "I couldn't see you, sir, and I thought you weren't there. Not that I threw the bag of tarts in, sir! I never had a bag of tarts at all, and I wasn't hiding behind this tree because these fellows fancied I had pinched their tarts, and—"

"It was you, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter blinked at Mr. Prout through his big spectacles. Somehow—Bunter did not know this—his denials only seemed to convince the Fifth Form master that he was the culprit.

Prout raised a commanding, though jammy, hand.

"Bunter, go to your Form master's study at once! I shall come there immediately! I shall report this to Mr. Quelch!"

"But—but I didn't—" gasped Bunter.

"Go!" roared Prout.

"I—I—I wasn't—"

Prout swung away from the window. He was jammy and sticky, and more wrathful than either. No middle-aged gentleman likes to be suddenly awakened from a peaceful nap, especially by a bag of tarts falling on his nose. Prout was almost boiling. He rolled out of his study, leaving jammy traces on the door handle, and rolled along to Mr. Quelch's study. Quelch, the master of the Remove, glanced up in surprise as Prout rolled in. Deep in Latin papers for his Form, Henry Samuel Quelch had not heeded the buzz of voices under the windows.

"Mr. Prout! What—"

"Look, sir!" boomed Prout.

He held up his hands for Quelch to see. The Remove master gazed at them in astonishment.

For a moment he wondered whether Prout had taken leave of his senses. It was really extraordinary for Prout to come into his study and hold up a pair of jammy hands for inspection. It was extraordinary for a gentleman of Prout's age and gravity to have jammy hands at all.

"What—" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"A boy of your Form, sir—a boy named Bunter, sir—is the cause of this! A bag of jam tarts, sir, was hurled at me—hurled, at least, into my study—and crashed upon me, sir, and burst! Look at me, sir! I am smothered with jam! Look!"

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

"This boy, sir—this—this Bunter—"

Mr. Quelch, with a stern brow, rose from his table and stepped across to the window and looked out. A fat voice floated up to his ears.

"I say, you fellows, old Prout's gone to old Quelch! I say, it was all your fault! If you hadn't been trying to make out that I had your tarts, I shouldn't have chucked them in at Prout's window! How was I to know the old josser was there? Now he's gone to the other old josser, and—"

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Come to my study at once, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter trailed dismally into the House. Harry Wharton & Co. walked away, grinning. The tarts were lost—gone beyond recall. But it was probable that the fat Owl would repent him of having snaffled those tarts. The way of the transgressor was hard.

Judging by the sounds that, a few minutes later, echoed from Mr. Quelch's study, Billy Bunter was in a state of deep repentance. Six fearful yells from that study floated out into the June sunshine, indicating that Billy Bunter was getting "six." And when the Owl of the Remove crawled away after that infliction he seemed to be understudying the young man of Hythe, who was shaved with a scythe, and could do nothing but wriggle and writhe. And for quite a long time even jam tarts could not have comforted him.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Coker All Over I

"A MAN couldn't be expected to stand it!"

Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, made that statement.

Coker of the Fifth was moodily pacing under the elms, his hands driven deep into his trouser pockets, and a frown corrugating his rugged brow, when Potter and Greene joined him.

Coker of the Fifth seemed to be in a pessimistic mood. On that bright summer's afternoon the sunshine seemed to be reflected in most faces at Greyfriars School. On Big Side, the senior men were at cricket, and looking as if they enjoyed life. On Little Side, Harry Wharton & Co. were knocking the ball about after tea, and looking very merry and bright. Dicky Nugent and a crowd of the Second Form were leap-frogging along a path under the trees with vociferous enjoyment. Everybody and everything, in fact, seemed rather jolly, excepting Coker of the Fifth! Coker was moody, frowning, indignant, and wrathful.

"A man," repeated Coker, "can't be expected to stand too much. There's a limit, though Prout doesn't seem to know it."

Potter and Greene nodded sympathetically. It was not really to sympathise that they had hunted out Coker. It was long past tea-time, and as Coker had not come to the study they had come in quest of Coker. They were, in point of fact, thinking of tea, not of Coker's wrongs and grievances. Still, they were prepared to hand out sympathy, if that was what Coker wanted—as a preliminary to disposing of a hamper from Coker's Aunt Judy!

Coker had rather been through it in the Form-room that afternoon. Prout had been irritable. He had talked to Coker as Mr. Twigg might have talked to a fag in the Second, or Mr. Wiggins to a backward fag in the Third. Fifth Form men were not supposed to be jawed like fags. It hurt Coker. It wounded him. It was insulting. It was, in fact, a thing that a man couldn't be expected to stand. Hence the moody, pessimistic frown on the brow of Horace Coker, and his forgetfulness of tea-time!

"A fellow has to give a beak his head," went on Coker. "A fellow can't very well stand up in Form and tell a beak what he thinks of him. Can he?"

"Well, no," agreed Potter. "Not quite! I shouldn't recommend it."

"But I came jolly near it," said Coker darkly. "You see, the trouble is that the man's ignorant. If Prout ever learned anything at school he's forgotten it. It's like that with lots of schoolmasters. Prout makes mistakes, and is too jolly self-satisfied to own up to them. If a fellow was wrong he could stand it. But what's a fellow to do when he's right?"

"Um!" said Potter and Greene.

"I give the man his head," went on Coker, with growing indignation. "He makes out that I'm a dud at Latin; he finds fault with my history—even with my arithmetic! But when it comes to spelling—well, I fancy I could spell Prout's head off."

"What a fancy!" murmured Greene.

"Eh? What did you say, Greene?"

"I—I said it's past tea-time, old chap! What about tea?"

"Never mind tea," said Coker. "You men heard how Prout jawed me this afternoon—fairly picked on me—practically holding me up to ridicule! Ho

talked to me as he might have talked to you, Potter—"

"Eh?"

"Or to you, Greene—"

"Oh!"

"A man who has a position to keep up in the Form can't stand too much of that sort of thing," said Coker. "But what's a fellow to do? I came jolly near telling him he was an ass. You heard what he said—making out that I couldn't spell even simple words! Now, you fellows know how I spell!"

"We do!" agreed Potter.

"What are you grinning at?" demanded Coker. "It's not a grinning matter, I can jolly well tell you. Take only one sample. You heard Prout say that there was no 'K' in 'panic.' How's a man to deal with a beak like that, I ask you?"

"But—but there isn't a 'K' in panic, old chap!" gasped Greene.

"Don't be a fool, Greene."

"The dictionary—" began Potter.

"I don't think much of dictionaries," said Coker. "I've often found them wrong. Some fellows are born spellers—and I'm one! I don't brag of it—it's nothing to brag of. It just happens! I can no more help spelling better than you fellows than I can help playing cricket better."

"Oh!"

"I think I can say that orthography is my long suit," said Coker. "I could hardly make mistakes in spelling if I tried. Prout keeps on making out that I can't spell. It's not merely ignorance—it's cheek, as well! Prout's a cheeky man!"

"But—" murmured Potter.

"Take another sample—depose!—an easy word for a fag! You fellows would hardly believe that Prout fancies there's only one 'p' in depose, if you hadn't heard him say so."

"How—how—how do you spell it, Coker?" gasped Greene.

"D-e-p-p-o-s-e—depose!" said Coker. "Double 'p,' of course! Keep that in mind, Greene; don't let Prout mislead you. You'd better make it a rule to consult me in doubtful cases."

"Oh! Ah! Um!"

"The question is, how much ought a man to stand from a beak?" said Coker. "There's a limit—and Prout's jolly near the limit! If he makes me tell him off in Form some day he will be sorry for it. And—"

"That beast, Prout!" came a squeaky voice at that moment, and Horace Coker broke off and stared round.

It was Billy Bunter who was speaking. He was addressing Peter Todd and Wibley and Kipps and Ogilvy, and two or three other Remove juniors. Bunter seemed to be as indignant as Coker, also on the subject of Prout. Coker, therefore, might have been expected to sympathise. Instead of which, Coker glared at Bunter.

"I've had six from Quelch!" went on Bunter. "Jolly hard, too! All through that cheeky beast, Prout! Fat old frump, you know! Fat old freak!"

"Well, my hat!" said Coker. "I think that's the limit. Hear what that cheeky little beast is saying about our Form master?"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Potter carelessly. "What about going in to tea, Coker? It's rather late—"

"If you think I'm going to let a scrubby little tick in the Lower Fourth slang my Form master, Potter, you're mistaken!" retorted Coker, and he strode off towards the little group of Removites.

Potter and Greene exchanged a

glance, and walked away in the other direction.

Coker, frowning, bore down on Bunter.

Apparently Coker's view was that nobody but he might be allowed to slang Prout. That was Coker all over.

Prout himself was no great shakes in Coker's eyes. But he was Coker's Form master! A poor thing, but his own, as it were. It really seemed to be Coker's view that whatever importance Prout possessed was derived from the fact that he was Coker's beak!

Coker was not the fellow to let a cheeky fag slang his beak. He proceeded to make that clear to Billy Bunter.

"Come on, you men!" grinned Peter Todd, and he led a rush.

Coker released Billy Bunter. He had to, as half a dozen pairs of hands grasped him on all sides.

Bump!
Horace Coker smote the cold, unsympathetic earth! He smote it hard! He roared as he smote it!

"Whoop! My hat! Yooooop!"

"Give him beans!" chuckled Wibley.

"Give him jip!"

"I say, you fellows, let a fellow gerrat him," gasped Bunter. "I say, give a fellow room to punch him in the eye."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For a few minutes, Coker of the Fifth was wildly mixed up with the mob of

As a matter of fact, he wasn't! Prout was scanning an imposition that Coker had done for him. It caused him dissatisfaction. It was seldom that Prout was really pleased with the work of that bright member of his Form.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, had declared in the games study, that Prout had distinctly aged since Coker had got into the Fifth. Hobson of the Shell declared that Hacker, his Form master, looked younger and brighter since he had got rid of Coker. Whether these statements were well or ill-founded, there was no doubt that Coker was the kind of pupil to make a school-master feel that he was earning his salary, and a little over.



"Oh erikey!" gasped Bunter, as the jammy and infuriated countenance of Mr. Prout appeared at the window. "Wharton!" boomed the Fifth Form master. "Some boy has hurled a bag of jam tarts into the window of my study!" "Oh!" gasped Wharton. He now knew why the plunder had not been found on Bunter!

"The meddling, cheeky old ass, you know—" Bunter was saying. "I can jolly well tell you fellows I'm going to tell Prout that he's a cheeky old ass— Yaroooooh!"

Bunter was suddenly interrupted by a grasp on the back of his fat neck.

He spun round and glared at Coker of the Fifth through his big spectacles.

"Ow! Leggo, you beast!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you grabbing a chap for? Ow! Make him leggo, you fellows!"

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Oooooogh! Urrrugh! Wurrgh!" spluttered Bunter as Coker shook. "I say, you fellows— Grooogh!"

"You young sweep!" said Coker wrathfully. "Do you fancy you can talk about senior Form masters like that? Quelch doesn't lick you enough. I'll jolly well—"

"Urrrrrgh! You're chook-chick-choking me!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, rescue! Grooogh!"

Removites. When they walked off, roaring with laughter, Coker was left on his back, gazing dizzily up at the spreading branches of the elms overhead, and struggling frantically for his second wind. It was many minutes more before he was able to totter away—a dusty, dishevelled and dilapidated Coker!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Tarts for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER raised a fat hand—and lowered it again.

He hesitated.

It was nearly time for prep; and Billy Bunter should have been on his way to his study in the Remove passage.

Bunter, however, was thinking of jam tarts!

He was standing outside Prout's door in Masters' Passage. Prout was within—Bunter could hear him grunting. It did not sound as if Prout was in a good temper.

Prout grunted in the study, while Bunter hesitated without. But the fat Owl made up his mind at last. Having been whopped for pitching the bag of tarts into Prout's study, Bunter felt that he was at least entitled to the tarts. Prout could have no use for them. Even Bunter, it was likely, would be tired of tarts by the time he was as old as Prout. It seemed to Bunter a natural proceeding to roll along to Prout's study and ask for the tarts. Still, that sound of grunting from within the study made him hesitate—and hesitate long. You never really knew how to take a beak. Bunter knew that by sad experience. Beaks were uncertain animals! They had to be handled with care. Still, tarts were tarts; and Bunter was hungry! He had had only two teas that afternoon.

He tapped at last and opened the door. Prout looked up with a grim eye. Coker's paper irritated him. In spite of Prout's "jaw" in the afternoon,

Coker had spelt panic "panick," and he had spelt depose "deppose." Prout doubted whether this was sheer stupidity or sheer impertinence. Anyhow, he was feeling annoyed. He glared at Bunter. He had trouble enough in his own Form, without being interrupted and bothered by Mr. Quelch's boys.

"What do you want?" snapped Prout.

"If you please, sir—" began Bunter.

"Leave my study."

"Oh, certainly, sir! But—may I have the tarts?" stammered Bunter.

"The—the what?"

"Tarts, sir! My tarts!"

Prout looked at him. That bag of tarts had crashed on his nose. Two of them had squashed over his plump hands, making them jammy and sticky! Those two he had, of course, since washed off. The other four he had thrown into the wastepaper-basket. He had been far from satisfied with the "six" Mr. Quelch had given Bunter. Sixteen or sixty would have been more adequate. And now the impudent young scoundrel actually had the audacity to come to his study and ask for the tarts—the tarts that had impinged violently on Prout's majestic nose!

"You see, sir, they're my tarts," explained Bunter. "If you'd be so kind, sir, I—I'd like to have them. They're fourpenny ones, sir."

"Upon my word!" said Prout, addressing space. "This passes all bounds! It passes all patience! No, Bunter, I will not give you the tarts."

"Oh, really, sir!" said Bunter in dismay. "They—they're mine, sir! I—I think you might let me have them, sir, or—or some of them, sir! If you've eaten some, sir—"

"What?" gasped Mr. Prout.

"I—I don't mind, sir, really—but—but if there's any of them left—" said Bunter, hopefully.

Mr. Prout rose from the table. His plump face was purple. The suggestion that he, an elderly and dignified Form master, might have scoffed the tarts, was rather too much for him. Bunter, of course, could not possibly guess that Prout had thrown them away. That any person in his right senses could throw away juicy, jammy tarts, was unimaginable to Bunter.

Prout looked round his table. Bunter looked hopeful. He fancied that Prout was looking for the tarts. Prout wasn't. He was looking for a cane.

"Step into the study, Bunter!" said Prout in a deep voice.

Bunter stepped in quite brightly.

Prout found his cane and picked it up. Then he turned to the happy Owl of the Remove.

"Some hours ago," said Prout, "you had the unparalleled impertinence to hurl a bag of sticky comestibles into my study. Now you have the unheard-of impudence to come here and demand their return. I shall not take you to your Form master again, Bunter."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

He backed to the door.

"I shall deal with you myself," said Mr. Prout. "Far be it from me to overstep the prescribed limits of my authority and intervene in the province of another master! Nevertheless—"

Nevertheless, far as it was from Prout, he proceeded to do exactly that!

He made a grab at Bunter's collar, just in time to prevent the scared Owl jumping back into the passage.

Swipe!

The cane came across Bunter's trousers with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

Swipe!

"Whooooooooop!"

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"Now go," said Prout, "and if you come here again—"

Bunter did not wait to hear more. The moment Prout's fat hand released his collar, he made one bound into the passage.

Prout laid down the cane, and sat down again, feeling a little better!

Bunter, feeling worse, bolted down Masters' Passage.

It was rather unfortunate that Mr. Lascelles, the maths master, was coming out of his study as Bunter passed the door, running like a runaway steam-engine.

Crash!

"Oh!" gasped Larry Lascelles, staggering from the shock. He sat down in his doorway.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, reeling across the passage.

"Bunter—" stuttered Mr. Lascelles.

"Ow! It wasn't me!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh lor'! Oh crikey!"

"You young rascal—you—"

Larry Lascelles staggered up. Billy Bunter did not wait for him to get on his feet. He bolted again.

By the time Mr. Lascelles resumed his perpendicular, Bunter was going round the far corner as if he were on the cinder-path. Larry Lascelles stared after him, and made a stride in pursuit—and then stopped. Bunter, unaware of that circumstance, charged on like an escaped rhinoceros. He went round the corner at full pelt—much to the surprise

TO READERS IN THE IRISH FREE STATE.

Readers in the Irish Free State are requested to note that when free gifts are offered with this publication, they can only be supplied when the article is of a non-dutiable character.

of Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth Form, who were standing near the corner engaged in conversation. They ceased to converse as Bunter suddenly happened.

Crash came Bunter—and Wingate staggered to one side, Gwynne to the other. Bunter sat down between them, gurgling.

"Ooooooogh!"

"What the thump—" spluttered Wingate, as he bumped on the wall.

"What the dickens—" gasped Gwynne, bumping on the other wall.

"Ow! Oh lor'! Oh crikey! Wow!" gasped Bunter.

The two prefects glared at him. Then they stepped towards him. From one side Wingate's foot, from the other, Gwynne's, landed on Bunter. There was a terrific roar!

"Whooooop!"

Bunter scrambled wildly up. Wingate got in one more as he fled, and it helped Bunter on his way. A wild howl floated back as the Owl of the Remove vanished.

"Oh crikey," gasped Bunter, as he panted up the Remove staircase. "Oh crumbs! Beasts! Wow! Oooooogh!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life, old bean?" asked Bob Cherry, as the fat Owl came gurgling into the Remove passage.

"Ow! Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I've been whopped—"

"Good!" said Harry Wharton.

"The goodfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"That cheeky beast Prout!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, it's pretty thick when the Fifth Form beak whops a Remove man! You ought to go to

Quelch about it, Wharton, as captain of the Form. He actually whopped me for asking for my tarts."

"Your tarts?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, he's scoffed them," said Bunter. "Fancy Prout scoffing a fellow's tarts, and pitching into him when he asked for them."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites. They could not quite fancy the majestic Prout scoffing the tarts.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I told him I didn't mind if he'd eaten some, if he let me have the rest—"

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

"And then he grabbed me and whopped me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" roared Bunter. "But I think it's pretty thick for a beak to scoff a fellow's tarts and whop him into the bargain. Prout's a cheeky beast, and I'll jolly well tell him so."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Let us know when you're going to tell him—we'd like to hear you doing it!"

"The likefulness would be terrific!"

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled on to his study, leaving the Removites yelling.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Takers!

"YOU'RE plucky, Smithy!"

"Eh?"

"That's what I've always admired you for most—pluck!" said Billy Bunter enthusiastically.

Herbert Vernon-Smith looked at Bunter. It was after prep that evening, and most of the Remove fellows were in the Rag. Several fellows heard Bunter's remarks to the Bounder—and grinned. Smithy did not grin—he just stared.

"Pluck!" went on Bunter, "is your long suit, Smithy, old chap."

"What are you burbling about?" inquired the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy! What I mean is, you've got nerve—iron nerve, and all that!" said Bunter. "But you're not afraid of the beaks—not you, Smithy!"

"You howling ass!" said Smithy ungratefully.

So much hearty praise ought really to have drawn a politer reply than that from Herbert Vernon-Smith. But perhaps Smithy had no use for "soft sawder."

Without even waiting to hear what Bunter had been going to say, Smithy walked across the Rag, to meet Redwing, who had just come in. Bunter blinked after him, and sniffed.

"What are you trying to pull Smithy's leg for, fatty?" inquired Skinner.

Bunter blinked at Skinner.

"I say, Skinney, old chapt! You've got heaps of pluck—"

"Ton's!" asserted Skinner.

"I don't think you a sneaking funk, you know, like most of the fellows," said Bunter brightly.

"Eh?"

"You're not afraid of the beaks, like that funk Smithy! You'd have nerve enough to walk into old Prout's study, just as if it belonged to you."

"Old Prout's study!" repeated Skinner, with a stare.

"Yes, and stick something on his table for him to find when he comes back from jawing in Common-room," said Bunter. "Something that will jolly well make him sit up, see?"

"Oh crumbs!" said Skinner.

"I've got it written out, you know," grinned Bunter. "A message for him—make him sit up—what? Cheeky beast, you know, whopping a Remove man! Look here!"

Skinner, amazed, looked.

Bunter drew from under his jacket a rather crumpled sheet of foolscap. On it was written a sentence in large capital letters—this being an astute device to prevent the discovery of the writer:

"PROUT IS A CHEEKY BEEST!"

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!" gasped Skinner.

"You see, he won't know a fellow's hand, as I've put it in capitals," grinned Bunter. "Rather deep—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Skinner. "Ho might know a fellow's spelling!"

"Eh? Wharrer you mean? Fellows spell the same, you ass!"

"Not always!" chuckled Skinner.

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know! This will make him squirm!" said Bunter. "I'd take it to his study myself, only he might spot me—I—I mean, there isn't the slightest danger of being spotted, Prout being in Common-room, you know, chinning with the other old fossils. You wouldn't care, anyhow, being so plucky, old chap! You're plucky enough, Skinner."

"Plucky enough," agreed Skinner.

"But not silly ass enough."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Ask Mauly!" suggested Skinner. "Mauly's the biggest ass in the Remove—present company excepted, of course."

"Yah!"

Lord Mauleverer was stretched in an attitude of lazy and graceful ease, on the sofa in the Rag. Billy Bunter blinked across at him and decided to take Skinner's tip. So he rolled over to Mauly.

"I say, Mauly, old chap—"

"Oh dear!" murmured Mauly.

"Anything the matter, old chap?" asked Bunter, blinking at him. A minute ago, Mauly had been looking quite bright and cheerful. Now he seemed quite depressed.

"Yaas!"

"What's the matter, then? Anything unpleasant happened?"

"Yaas!"

"What is it?"

"You!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, don't get up—I've got something to say! You know how I've always admired you, Mauly—"

"Eh?"

"For your pluck! The pluckiest chap in the Remove, and chance it," said Bunter. "That's what comes of being of noble blood, you know—a true aristocrat! That's what makes you so fearless!"

"Great gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"It's the same with me—"

"Oh scissors!"

"Being so plucky, brave as a lion, and all that, you wouldn't be afraid to walk right into old Prout's study," continued Bunter. "You'd do it without turning a hair! Skinner advised me to ask you, Mauly, because you're so courageous. He didn't say it was because you're the biggest fool in the Remove!"

"Oh gad!"

"You'll take this paper and put it on Prout's table," said Bunter. "See? I'd take it myself, only I don't want to go to Masters' Passage. I'll tell you why—"

"I think I can guess why," grinned Lord Mauleverer.

Here's an interesting article telling of the cameraman's job of work on the bed of the sea.

FILMING THE OCEAN'S DEPTHS

forms the subject of this week's grand photo-plate.



THE cameraman who "gets" thrilling pictures for us to gloat over at the local cinema has now been everywhere—even down the crater of a very-much-alive volcano. But filming the red-hot inferno in the volcano's throat holds scarcely less thrills for him than filming sea creatures down in their own dark domain. Some of the most astonishing undersea pictures ever secured were recently obtained on the sea-bed whilst a tiger-shark and a giant octopus fought a terrific twenty minutes' battle; and the cine-camera clicked behind the thick glass window of the big, metal ball in which the cameraman crouched, until the shark got the death grip on the octopus, and the battle was done.

A Giant Telescope.

Deep-sea life never before observed at close quarters has in this way been brought to the screen, thanks not only to the pluck of the man with the camera, but the ingenuity of the designer of the special watertight chamber in which the photographer goes down to the sea-bed. A powerful light shines out through the thick glass window, illuminating the darkness of the deep water, and, incidentally, attracting all sorts of weird and cerio creatures who want to discover whether this strange, glowing object is as good to eat as the last meal that came their way.

The cameraman's connection with the living world above is through the telescopic pipe or shaft which joins the chamber to the ship floating on the sea. Air is pumped down through the pipe, so that he can remain under water almost indefinitely. When his job is done down below, he climbs up

Now turn to page 17 and see the miniature reproduction in black-and-white of next week's handsome souvenir photogravure plate.

"The fact is, I might see Lascelles, and I'd rather not! I shoved him over just before prep—"

"You shoved Lascelles over?" gasped Mauly.

"Yes; he was in my way, and I was in a hurry, and I just shoved him over. So I'd rather not see him again. Now, Prout's in Common-room—I passed the door and heard him talking. You know, he never leaves off when once his chin starts, so he's safe enough. If you cut off to his study at once—"

"If!" chuckled Lord Mauleverer.

"You'll do it, old fellow?" urged Bunter.

"Not just now!"

"Well, there's no time like the present. But when will you do it?"

"Ask me again on the thirty-first of June."

"Eh? There's only thirty days in June, you fathead."

"Yaas! Exactly."

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Look here, will you do it, or won't you? If you won't, say so!"

"So," said Lord Mauleverer.

the steel ladder which is inside the tube, and so regains the ship. His descent is made similarly.

The big chamber, which is immensely strong, so that it can withstand the tremendous pressure of water which might otherwise squash it flat, can be raised or lowered at will by the men operating the steel tube from the ship. The tube is constructed in sections, rather like a giant telescope, and as it is quite flexible it can be moved along—very slowly, of course—when the man inside the chamber wishes to change his position, the ship altering its course accordingly.

So Near, and Yet So Far.

It is not only for the purpose of getting thrilling undersea pictures for the cinema that this strange watertight chamber can be used. If a wreck is to be salvaged, it is a simple matter for the cameraman to go down in his metal ball and take as many pictures, from different positions and angles, as are necessary to enable the divers, who will later go down, to get a full and accurate idea as to just how the wreck is lying before they start their operations.

The man behind the thick glass window has all the fun without the risks endured by the ordinary diver. For whilst a sharp-toothed shark or a shuddery octopus has an excellent chance of making a snack of the unprotected diver, the same shark would only dent its nose on the stout chamber, whilst the octopus might feel over the chamber with its many-tentacled arms until it grew dizzy, finally slinking away in disgust that the tempting human was so near, and yet so far from reach!

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter turned a contemptuous back on Lord Mauleverer, leaving that noble youth grinning. He rolled over to where the Famous Five stood in a group, engaged in a cheery discussion of the Rookwood match, which was the next big fixture on the Remove list. Bunter, in search of a catspaw, was not having much luck, so far. But hope springs eternal in the human breast.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Smithy will be a surprise-packet for them," said Bob. "You fellows know how he bowled in the Highcliffe match—jolly near your class, Inky—"

"The nearfulness was terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"Cricket as usual," snorted Bunter. "Can't you fellows think about anything but cricket? Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while Manchester was burning—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look at this!" said Bunter. He held up his crumpled paper, inscribed with

the message that was to have the effect of making Prout "sit up." "Now, I want one of you fellows to nip into Prout's study and leave this on his table—see? You're a plucky chap, Cherry, and—"

"You blithering idiot—"

"You've got pluck enough to do it, Nugent—"

"You burbling bandersnatch—"

"What about you, Wharton? It's up to you, as captain of the Form, to back up! Prout whopped me—"

"He doesn't seem to have whopped you enough!" remarked Harry Wharton. "A man ought to be a bit more thorough!"

"You silly ass! Now, look here, take this paper!"

"Hand it over!"

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

And he handed the paper over promptly to the captain of the Remove.

"You fathead!" bawled Johnny Bull. "You're not going to do anything of the kind! Prout would raise Cain if he saw that paper! You're jolly well not going to take it to his study!"

"You shut up, Bull!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "You leave Wharton alone! He ain't afraid of Prout, if you are!"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"All serene!" said Wharton cheerfully. "You're willing to leave this in my hands, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather, old chap!"

"And I can put it where I think best?"

"Well, on Prout's table would be best. But put it where you like, old fellow!"

"Done!" said the captain of the Remove.

With his left hand he grabbed Bunter's collar. With his right he proceeded to stuff the crumpled paper down Bunter's fat neck.

Bunter wriggled and roared.

"Ow! Leggo! Wharrer you up to, you silly beast? Oooogh! What do you think you are doing?"

"Putting this paper where I think best!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter, squirming frantically. "Yow-ow-ow! You silly fathead—Ow! Leggo! Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co., as Wharton stuffed the paper down Bunter's back with a firm hand.

"Beast! Ow! Wow! Rotter! Yow-ow!" roared Bunter.

"There you are!" said the captain of the Remove, releasing the fat Owl at last. "Always happy to oblige! Anything more I can do for you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

He rolled away, leaving the chums of the Remove chortling. For quite a long time afterwards Billy Bunter was busily and breathlessly engaged in striving to extract that crumpled paper from his back. By the time he had succeeded, it was time for dorm. That night, at least, Prout was not going to be made to sit up by learning what Billy Bunter thought of him!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Beetles!

"O H, my hat!"

"Look!"

"The fat idiot!"

It was in break the following morning. Harry Wharton & Co. were standing in a little group near the House, watching Kipps of the

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Remove. The schoolboy conjurer was entertaining them with some of his sleight-of-hand tricks. Kipps had a mechanical black beetle in his hand—a lifelike imitation of the real article. With a quickness of hand that deceived the eye, he made that beetle appear and disappear in a really wonderful way, so that a fellow could almost have sworn that Kipps had a dozen or more black beetles about him, and could scarcely believe that it was the same beetle all the time.

But attention was transferred from the Remove conjurer to William George Bunter all of a sudden. Frank Nugent, happening to glance round, spotted the fat figure of the Owl of the Remove—in the very act of clambering in at Mr. Prout's study window!

Prout was accustomed to take a walk in the quad in break, so there was no doubt this time that the study was untenanted. Evidently Bunter, having failed to find a catspaw, was taking the matter in hand himself. He was going to land that paper in Prout's study, which was to inform the Fifth Form master that he was regarded as a "cheaky beast."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Come back, you fathead!"

"Stop, you ass!" shouted Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter, half in the open window, blinked round over a fat shoulder, his big spectacles flashing back the rays of the sun.

"Stop him!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

And the Famous Five ran towards Prout's window, and Kipps, dropping his black beetle into his pocket, ran after them. The chums of the Remove shared, more or less, Bunter's opinion of Prout—as a meddling old gentleman, at all events, if not exactly as a cheaky beast. But it was not judicious for fellows to let beaks know what fellows thought of them. Bunter had to be saved from his own folly, if possible.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter.

He made an effort, heaved himself over the window-sill, and dropped into the study. The juniors arrived on the spot a moment too late. The sill was on a level with their heads, and Harry Wharton tiptoed and looked in. Bunter, gasping for breath, blinked defiance at the captain of the Remove.

"You blithering ass!" exclaimed Harry. "Come out at once!"

"Yah!"

"If Prout catches you there—"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter groped in his pockets. There was no stopping him without clambering in at the window after him. And as Prout was somewhere in the quad, no fellow felt disposed to do that. Prout's eye might be on them at that very moment, for all they knew.

"Oh crikey!" exclaimed Bunter, as his fat hands came empty out of his pockets. "I say, Wharton, I've left it in my study!"

"You howling chump!"

"It's your fault, you beast! You crumpled up that paper, sticking it down my neck last night, and I put it on the study table under a dictionary to flatten it out! And—and I've left it there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, one of you cut up to the Remove and bring that paper here—"

"I don't think!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Look here, I can't stick that paper on Prout's table when I've left it in Study No. 7—"

"Go hon!"

"I'll wait here while you fetch it and hand it in to me—"

"The waitfulness will be terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted with wrath. He had taken the risk and the exertion of clambering in at Prout's window to land that precious document on Prout's table. It was quite disconcerting to discover that he had left it on his own study table in the Remove.

"Look here, you beasts, go and fetch that paper for me!" he hooted. "It's under Toddy's die on the table in Study No. 7—"

"And it's going to stay there!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Safer there than in Prout's study!"

"Beast! I say—"

"Cave!" came in a hurried whisper from Kipps. "Here comes Prout!"

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

The fat junior ducked out of view at once. The plump, portly, majestic form of Mr. Prout was coming along the path by Masters' Windows. Prout, of course, was taller than the juniors, and he could see into the study when he reached the window. Bunter crouched below the window, inside, in a state of palpitating funk. If Prout looked in—

Harry Wharton & Co. turned their backs to the window. Prout's eyes were on them as he came along the path, with a suspicious gleam. It was quite unusual for six juniors to be hunched under a master's window, and Prout had not forgotten the incident of the previous day. He suspected that those cheery youths were up to something!

"Better cut!" murmured Bob.

"No; stick it out!" whispered Wharton. "If he looks in at the window he will spot that fat chump! If we bolt, he will be certain we've been up to something, and it will be six for Bunter if he spots him."

"The stickfulness is the proper caper!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And the juniors remained where they were, with the most innocent expressions they could assume, trying hard to look as if butter would not melt in their mouths.

"I say, you fellows," came a frightened squeak from within, "has he spotted me?"

"Quiet, you fat lunatic! He's just coming!"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter crouched and palpitated. Prout rolled on, suspicion gleaming in his eyes. The six juniors looked quite innocent—perhaps a little too innocent! Prout did not roll on his way past them; he came to a ponderous halt.

"What are you boys doing here?" he inquired.

"Nothing, sir," answered Wharton politely.

"The nothingfulness is terrific, esteemed sir."

"If you have been playing disrespectful tricks in my study—" boomed Prout.

"Oh, sir!"

"You were concerned with Bunter in his impertinent prank yesterday! However, I shall ascertain."

Prout left the path and stepped towards the open window of his study. Evidently he was going to put his majestic head in at that window and see for himself whether the juniors had been "up" to anything. The Remove fellows exchanged dismayed looks. Bunter was for it now. The moment Prout put his head in, the fat Owl would be spotted within. No doubt he deserved to be licked; still, the chums of the Remove would have saved him

if they could. It was Oliver Kipps who came to the rescue—in a rather unexpected way.

Kipps stepped quickly towards the Fifth Form master.

"Excuse me, sir!" exclaimed Kipps. "Did you know that there was a beetle on your coat?"

Prout stopped—only a yard or so from the window.

"A—a beetle!" he ejaculated. "On my coat?"

"Look, sir!"

Kipps stretched out his hand and touched Prout's coat. He picked—or appeared to pick—a blackbeetle off it.

Prout stared at the unpleasant object in the junior's hand in horror and disgust. It was too lifelike in appearance for Prout to guess, or dream, that it was an imitation beetle. He shuddered at the thought of the horrible insect having crawled on him. Kipps made a motion of throwing it away.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout. "Thank you, my boy! I cannot imagine where that disgusting insect came from. I did not see it—I was quite unaware— Bless my soul!"

Harry Wharton & Co. suppressed their emotion with difficulty. They knew all about Kipps' beetle! Fortunately, Prout didn't!

Prout made a movement to approach the window again.

"Excuse me, sir! Is that another?" exclaimed Kipps.

"Wha-a-at?"

Prout stopped again. Kipps touched his coat, and a beetle appeared in his hand again. Prout fairly jumped. Again Kipps made a motion of throwing the disgusting object away. Even the juniors, who were watching him, could not see it disappear into his sleeve. Prout did not dream of it.

"This is—is—is horrible!" ejaculated Prout. "I sat for a few minutes on the bench under the elms. There must be beetles there. They must have crawled on me. Horrible!"

"Is that another——"

"Goodness gracious!"

Prout felt quite faint as Kipps picked another blackbeetle off his coat. His rosy face was almost pale.

"Why, sir, you seem to be swarming with them!" exclaimed Kipps, with a look of great concern. "Look here—and here—and here!"

"Good heavens!" gasped Prout.

He fairly staggered and gasped. Beetle after beetle appeared in Kipps' hand as he dabbed at the Form master's coat. Beetle after beetle was—apparently flung away as Kipps picked them off. That it was the same beetle all the time was quite unknown to Prout. He was unaware of the skill of the conjurer of the Remove.

Prout shuddered from head to foot. One beetle was bad enough; two or three were horrible—and he seemed to be fairly smothered! He felt creepy from head to foot. He seemed to have been invaded by an army of blackbeetles—which was enough to make any man shudder.

"Thank you, my boy! Bless my soul! See if there are any more. This is horrible—fearful!" gasped the Fifth Form master. "They must have crawled on me in swarms while I sat under the elms. I must speak to Gosling about this——"

"Is that one?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, entering into the game, as it were. "I'll jolly well knock it off!"

Smack!

"Oooogh!" gasped Prout, as his fat shoulder received a hefty smack. "Ow!"

(Continued on next page.)

Secure This Bargain Now, Boys!

THE RIGBY "SUPER" MODEL AEROPLANE FOR 4½d.

* * *

Dimensions:
Length, 9 ins.
Wing Span,
10½ ins.
Colour, Red.

* * *



* * *

It Flies!
It Stunts!
It's a Super!

* * *

Like other boys you're keen on Model Aeroplanes, aren't you? Yes? Then you would like to own a RIGBY "SUPER," Model Plane. To buy one assembled and ready to fly would cost you every penny of 2s. 6d. But half-a-crown is rather a lot for boys to spend all at once these hard times, so this is where your Editor can be useful to you all.

I have arranged with the designer of the Rigby "Super" Plane to supply MAGNET readers with the full parts, mechanism, and full instructions for assembling them, for the remarkably cheap price of 4½d. What a bargain, eh? Normally these parts would cost you one shilling, at least. Now they are offered to you for 4½d.—that is, 1½d. for the plane, 1½d. for the mechanism, and 1½d. for postage. This is an opportunity you must not miss.



Cut this out and keep it by you. There will be another token in next week's MAGNET.

The RIGBY "SUPER" will reach you in an envelope, complete with mechanism and full instructions for assembling the various parts.

It's simple to make, and if instructions are followed it's

A GRAND FLYER

incorporating all the improvements in design resulting from years of experiment by one of the greatest model plane experts in the land.

This is an Offer You Must Not Miss!

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO TO GET THE PLANE.

On this page you will see a special coupon marked MAGNET Aeroplane Token. One of these will appear in the MAGNET Every Week! When you have collected three MAGNET Tokens, fill in the application form below. Next pin three 1½d. stamps to the application form in the space provided and send it to:

MAGNET Aeroplane Offer,
The Amalgamated Press, Ltd.,
Bear Alley, Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.

POINTS TO REMEMBER.

You must first collect THREE TOKENS before sending in your application. Tokens must be taken only from the MAGNET. 1½d. stamps only must be sent. Stamps must be pinned to the application form and NOT stuck.

APPLICATION FORM <small>MAGNET 1-7-33.</small>	
Please send me a Rigby "Super" Aeroplane, for which I enclose three MAGNET Tokens and 4½d. in stamps.	
Name (in block letters).....	PIN 3 1½d. STAMPS HERE.
Address	
.....	

Not so hard, my boy! Thank you—but not so hard!”

“Is that one on his foot?” exclaimed Johnny Bull. “Stamp on it!”

“Yaroo! Oh dear! This is dreadful! What—what— Surely that is not one on my neck—” gurgled Prout, as Kipps dabbed at his collar.

“Look, sir!” The blackbeetle was in Kipps’ hand as he drew it away.

Prout gasped with horror.

“They—they—they are simply swarming on me!” he gasped. “I—I must go and—and change at once! This is horrible—fearful—awful—”

Prout turned and rushed away, heading for the door of the House.

The Remove fellows contrived by herculean efforts to suppress their merriment till Prout vanished into the House. Then they yelled.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I say, you fellows, is he gone?” squeaked Billy Bunter.

“Yes, fathead—and you’d better get gone, too!”

“Oh lor’!” gasped Bunter. He came rolling hurriedly out of Prout’s window.

“I say, you fellows, catch me; I’m slipping! I say— Whoooop!”

Bump!

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Wow! I say— Wow! Ow! Beasts! Wow!”

Bunter sat and roared—while the other fellows stood and roared. They were roaring with laughter. Bunter wasn’t!

Meanwhile, Prout had shot up to his room, doing the stairs in record time. There he changed—and searched for beetles. To his surprise, he did not discover a single beetle. Not one was left on him! Those obliging Remove boys, apparently, had cleared off the whole swarm! Prout was red and

breathless when he rolled into the Fifth Form Room for third school. And he was ten minutes late for class—for which the Fifth Form were duly thankful.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The High Horse!

“**B**ETTER!” said Greene.

“Much better!” urged Potter.

Horace Coker shook his head.

Coker was adamant. There was, as he had told Potter and Greene, a limit to what any man could stand. Coker had now, it seemed, reached the limit.

He was not standing any more.

There was tea in Coker’s study—one of those lavish teas which made Coker’s acquaintance a thing worth cultivating. Whatever Prout might think of Coker, Coker’s Aunt Judy, at least, continued to have the highest possible opinion of her dear Horace. A recent hamper from Miss Judith Coker had turned that study into a land flowing with milk and honey. It did not lift the cloud from Coker’s rugged brow, but it bucked his study-mates considerably.

Every now and then Potter and Greene doubted whether they could stand Coker much longer. But one of those hampers from home always made them realise that Coker—in his own way, of course—was by no means a bad chap.

Coker might be every known species of an ass, but there was no doubt that he was an open-handed fellow. He might be obstinate, fatheaded, self-satisfied, but there were good points about Coker—those hampers, for instance. Potter and Greene were feeling very friendly

towards old Horace just now, and quite concerned about him. From of old they knew how futile it was to argue with Coker—yet they argued. If they could save Coker from himself, they were going to save him.

Coker was grim, determined—adamant, in fact. Having stood all that a man could reasonably be expected to stand, Coker was not going to stand any more. And that was that!

“You see,” Potter said patiently, “beaks are beaks. You have to give a beak his head, just like a fractious horse. If Prout says write it out over again, let him have his way.”

“Rot!” said Coker.

“After all, it’s a short paper!” said Greene.

“It’s the principle of the thing,” explained Coker. “I’ve written out my paper! I’ve taken it to Prout! I wrote it out very carefully! Instead of praising a fellow, as a fellow might reasonably have expected, what does Prout do? Snaps at a man! Tells him to write it out again, and write it out correctly! Bundles a fellow out of his study when a fellow tries to explain that it is quite correct.”

“The spelling—” hinted Potter.

“Don’t be a cheeky ass, Potter!”

“Um!”

“He practically shoved me out of his study,” said Coker. “Made out that I was cheeking him—answering him back, and all that! How could I point out that he was making mistakes, without answering him back?”

“Um!”

“I’m to write out that paper again, and take it to him after tea!” said Coker bitterly. “Well, it’s after tea now! I haven’t written it out again! I’m not going to!”

“Better—” murmured Greene.

“The man’s cheeky,” said Coker. “The long and short of it is, that the man’s cheeky! He doesn’t seem to have the faintest idea of my position in the Form. He treats me just as he might treat one of you fellows!”

“Oh!”

“I shall go to his study,” said Coker. “He may feel better after tea, and be in a more reasonable temper. I shall ask him calmly to point out the errors, if any, in the paper I handed to him yesterday. I shall keep my temper, whatever Prout does! I hope I have a proper sense of dignity—if Prout hasn’t! I shall be perfectly civil, but firm! I shall not enter into any wrangling with the man.”

“Oh!” gasped Potter. “Nunno, I—I—I wouldn’t, old chap. M-m-much better not.”

Coker rose from the table. It was plain that Coker had made up his mind. He was going to be civil to Prout—but firm! Very firm! He was not going to write out his impot a second time, on the ground that it was not written correctly, when he knew that it was absolutely correct! But he was going to give Prout a chance to point out the errors—if any! Potter and Greene exchanged hopeless looks. It was useless to argue with Coker, especially when he had mounted the high horse—and he was on the high horse now with a vengeance.

Horace left the study.

“Well, old Coker’s the man to ask for it!” said Greene, when he was gone.

“He’s the man to sit up on his hind legs and beg for it!” sighed Potter.

“If we didn’t see Coker every day, old chap, we couldn’t believe that there was such an idiot in existence—outside a home for idiots, I mean.”

“Hardly!” agreed Greene. “What will Prout do to him?”

“Well, what can he do?” asked



A RIGHT-ON-THE-WICKET SCHOOL AND CRICKET STORY

By Frank Richards

Fritz von Splitz is the laziest boy at Grimslade School, but he plays cricket—he has to!

Fritz von Splitz is the world’s worst cricketer—but he saves his side from defeat!

Fritz von Splitz as a cricketer is a real scream. If you want to roar with laughter, don’t miss reading Frank Richards’ latest school yarn featuring the cheery chums of Grimslade School. It appears in this week’s six-story issue of

The **RANGER** Published Every Saturday **2^d**

Potter. "The Fifth ain't caned—though Prout's forgotten that once or twice, with Coker. He may forget it again. Or he may take him to the Head. Or give him detentions. I suppose he can't very well brain him with the inkstand."

Greene chuckled.

"Poor old Coker! I say, this pineapple is jolly good!"

"Topping!"

"Coker told us to finish it——"

"So we will!"

And they did!

Meanwhile, Horace Coker walked off to Masters' Studies. The masters generally had their tea in Common-room, and generally stayed there a while after tea to exercise their chins—especially Prout. Prout's plump chin was the most thoroughly exercised at

Greyfriars School. Still, as Prout had told Coker to come to him after tea, Coker supposed that he would be in his study. Masters' Passage was deserted, but at the corner Coker spotted five juniors belonging to the Remove. They were looking along the passage, as if interested, indeed anxious, about something going on there. Coker stopped, and frowned at the Famous Five.

"What do you fags want here?" he demanded.

It was Coker all over. Horace never seemed to be able to get it into his head that he wasn't a Sixth Form man and a prefect! It seemed frightfully hard for Coker to understand that he was not as one having authority, saying "Do this!" and he doeth it!

Lower Fourth juniors were not expected to hang about Masters' Studies,

and a prefect would no doubt have ordered them off—and the juniors would have gone. But a Fifth Form man they passed by like the idle wind which they regarded not.

The chums of the Remove only smiled at Coker.

"Cut off!" said Coker.

"It's his lower jaw that moves, you fellows," said Bob Cherry gravely. "Watch him!"

"You cheeky young sweep!" hooted Coker. "When I say cut off, I mean cut off—see?"

"When he says cut off, he means cut off, you men!" said Johnny Bull. "He's telling us because he thinks we might like to know!"

Coker of the Fifth breathed hard! These cheeky young rascals were

(Continued on next page.)



Readers who want any knotty cricket problems solved should write, without delay, to "Umpire," c/o The MAGNET,

The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and then watch out for his reply in this paper.

I KNOW quite a lot of MAGNET readers who are members of their school cricket teams, and I am naturally interested in the doings of these teams. Recently, in showing this interest, I have been giving my young friends a bit of a shock. When I have run up against them after they have played a match I have not asked the obvious question: "How did you get on?" I have asked a different sort of question: "How many catching chances did your team miss to-day?"

Often I have discovered that the boys who tried to answer such a question were not quite sure. Frequently, however, the reply has been: "Oh, several." In such a reply you get the answer to the question of why many cricket matches are lost.

Missed chances in the field account for as many games being lost as bad batting or indifferent bowling.

So let us talk about fielding this week, by way of a change. Don't run away with the impression that the talk is going to be dull. The fielding side of cricket is not dull if you look at it from the right angle.

While our English cricketers were touring in Australia I noticed in the newspapers one day one very significant sentence. It was to this effect: "Immediately the match was finished Captain Jardine collected all his men and took them away for some fielding practice." Obviously the England skipper knew the importance of the fielding side of the game; realised that if he could get this up to the required standard, and keep it there, he would have taken a real step forward in the task of winning back the Ashes.

If men who have risen to be good enough to play for England need fielding practice, how much more do the young players of the game need it?

Take my tip then, chums, and get as much fielding practice as you can.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FIELDING!

IT was said of Percy Chapman's team which won four out of the five Test matches in Australia that in these games no reasonable chance was missed by a fieldsmen until the last Test game of the tour. That last Test game was lost and the other four won. I could talk for a long time about the importance of the fielding in cricket without getting home a better lesson than is contained in such a statement.

I want you to regard the fielding side of cricket as a part of the joy of the game; the fun of it. You will feel like this about it when you become efficient in the field.

Think of the joy of dismissing a good batsman with an "impossible" catch; think of the pleasure of running out a batsman with a quick pick-up and an accurate return to the wicket.

And in passing I would say this: you may not have it in you to become a super-batsman or a really good bowler, but I honestly believe that every cricketer can be good in the field—if he will try and if he will practise.

"ON THEIR TOES!"

THINK of the runs a good fielder can save in the course of an innings. Good fielding gets the batsmen scared to try anything.

I remember a bit of advice which was once given to a young batsman by his more experienced partner. G. L. Jessop—one of the finest fielders who have ever played for England—was a member of the opposing side. Said the one batsman to the other: "Don't run for a single if the ball goes towards Jessop, unless you think there is a possible two." What a tribute to a fieldsmen!

You must be on your toes to be a good fielder; there is no doubt about that. Watch the batsman as he shapes to make the stroke, and try to anticipate where he means to play the ball.

Watch the fieldsmen in a well-drilled, first-class side. Those in front of the wicket—cover-point, mid-off, mid-on—start to move towards the batsman as he makes his stroke. They are closing in, and being on the move already, are able to turn aside to the right or to the left quicker than they would be able to if they were standing firm-footed. That is one thing which is meant by the phrase "on their toes."

Slip fielding is not easy. I grant you that. But when the fast bowlers are on it is efficiency in the slips which so often tells. Patsy Hendren, the Middlesex man, is one of our best fielders, and not long ago he gave me a catching tip which, so he said, has helped him to make quite a lot of catches, especially in the slips.

As he holds his hands to take the fast-moving ball he crosses the two little fingers, thus locking the hands together. By this means, according to Hendren, he reduces the chances of the ball forcing the hands apart.

That will do for this week, so far as fielding is concerned, and I must go on to answer certain correspondents. Before doing so, however, I promise some hints for wicket-keepers in next week's talk.

SNEAKING RUNS!

IF the batsman at the bowler's end is backing up a bit too enthusiastically—leaving his crease before the ball is delivered, can the bowler run him out? That is one query which reaches me, and the answer is in the affirmative. According to cricket law the ball is in play when the bowler starts his run. If the batsman at his end has left his crease by the time the bowler gets there, the bowler can run such a batsman out by removing the bails before he has delivered the ball.

The bowler need not change the ball from one hand to the other to do this. I must say, however, in connection with this question, that running a batsman out in this way, although legitimate, is one of the things not often done. The usual procedure for the bowler who notices that the batsman at his end is trying to sneak a bit of ground is to warn him that if he insists on doing it he will run him out. If, after such a warning, the batsman continues to leave his crease before the ball is delivered, then the bowler is justified in taking such an action as I have described.

After all, the batsman who is backing up too enthusiastically is really taking a mean advantage. By all means be ready to run, but don't start to go towards the other end until the ball has been delivered.

"UMPIRE."

making fun of him. Coker could see that!

"If you want me to whop you——" said Coker.

"Go it!" said Bob invitingly.

Coker very nearly "went" it! But he remembered that he had to see Prout, and he controlled his wrath and marched on up the passage. The juniors at the corner stared after him.

"If he's going to Prout's study——" said Harry.

"He'll spot Bunter!"

"Oh, my hat!"

That was why the Famous Five were there. Billy Bunter was making one more attempt to land his precious document in Prout's study! The Famous Five had spotted him—too late! They had been debating whether to pursue him as far as Prout's study, and yank him away neck and crop, when Coker came along. But it was rather too risky, as Prout might come along any minute.

Now Coker had gone to Prout's study—and the juniors wondered what would happen when he ran into Bunter there! Certainly Bunter's antics were no business of Coker's—but Coker never was a man to mind his own business. He would mind anybody's, but his own.

Coker, glancing back when he had reached Prout's door, saw five faces looking round the passage corner after him, with intent interest. He frowned at them, and frowned more darkly when they smiled back.

Then he tapped at Prout's door, and opened it. He could hear someone moving in the study, and had no doubt that his Form master was there.

But it was not Prout! As Coker opened the door and stepped in, there was a sudden gasp of alarm:

"Oh crikey!"

And Coker stared at Billy Bunter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Landed at Last!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at Coker.

Coker stared at Billy Bunter.

It was a mutual surprise.

Bunter gasped with relief.

When the study door opened, he had dreaded to see Prout! For a second he had been frightened out of his fat wits. His podgy brain almost swam at the idea of Prout catching him there.

For he would have been caught in the very act! On Prout's table lay the sheet of foolscap, rather crumpled and grubby, bearing in large capital letters the startling message:

"PROUT IS A CHEAKY BEEST!"

Bunter had laid it there, to catch Prout's eye when he came in. But he did not want it to catch Prout's eye, and catch Prout's eye himself at the same time! Very much indeed Bunter did not want that! He wanted to be safe off the scene before Prout saw that message. Bunter was placing a paper-weight on the corner of that precious document to keep it in place, when Coker happened.

"Oh! You!" gasped Bunter. "Only you!"

"Only me!" said Coker grimly. "You tricky young scoundrel, what are you up to in my Form master's study—what? I knew there was something on when I saw that gang down the passage. What are you doing here?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Bunter. He edged round the table. "I—I—I'm just going!"

"What's that?" demanded Coker, staring at the document on the table.

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"Oh! N-n-nothing!"

"My hat!" Coker stared, and then glared, at the document. "Prout is a cheeky beast! My only hat! You've come here to check my Form master like that!"

Coker was red with wrath.

His own line of action towards Prout might have been described, by prejudiced fellows, as cheeky! But Coker was unconscious of that! Coker was far from realising that his firmness and dignity were, in fact, cheek—merely cheek, and nothing more!

The bare idea of a wretched fag venturing to cheek his—Coker's—Form master, was more than enough to rouse Coker's wrath. He had made that clear the previous day. Now he made it clear again.

"Cheeking my beak!" exclaimed Coker. "A measly, sneaking, scrubby fag—sticking an insulting message in my beak's study! Why, I'll——"

He jumped at Bunter.

Bunter circumnavigated Prout's table in record time.

"Ow! Keep off, you beast!" gasped Bunter.

Coker strode round the table. Bunter dodged round it again. Twice round the table they went as if they were playing "Here we go round the mulberry-bush!" Then Coker paused, and glared at the Owl of the Remove across the table.

Bunter gasped for breath.

"Look here! You mind your own bisney, Coker—see!" he panted. "You cheek Prout yourself, you cheeky ass! Look here! Let a fellow pass!"

Prout's cane was on the table. Coker grabbed it up.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter, as Coker reached across the table with a long arm, and licked with his Form master's cane.

"Take that, and——"

"Whoop!"

Billy Bunter made a desperate dive for the door. Coker dived after him. The cane whacked again as Bunter flew, and landed on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars with a crack like a pistol shot. Bunter roared and bolted into the passage.

"Yow-ow-ow! Beast! Wow! Oh crikey! Whoop!"

"I'll jolly well——"

Bunter flew.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter fled for his life. Coker sent a glare after him, and then turned back into Prout's study. He had to wait for Prout. Also he had to deal with that impudent message Bunter had left on the study table. Coker was not going to let that impudent message meet Prout's eyes. He had too much respect for his Form master for that.

Bunter reached the corner where the Famous Five waited. And Harry Wharton caught him by the collar, and brought him to a halt.

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Bunter.

"What have you done with that idiotic paper?" demanded the captain of the Remove. "Have you left it in Prout's study?"

"Ow! Yes! Leggo! Beast!"

"Then cut back and get it!" said Harry. "You burbling ass, can't you understand that you'll get into a fearful row?"

"Beast!"

"You blithering idiot!" said Bob. "Prout will raise Cain about it! You'll get a flogging!"

"He won't know——"

"Coker's seen you in the study," said

Nugent. "You'll be spotted at once if he mentions it to Prout."

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Go back and get it!" said Nugent.

"That beast Coker's there!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, one of you cut along and get it! I—I'll put it there again another time—see? One of you fellows go——"

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Bunter, you fearful lunatic!" exclaimed Wharton. "Go and get that paper before Prout comes along. It may be a Head's flogging. Ten to one you'll be spotted!"

"Leggo!"

"Are you going——"

"Ow! No! Leggo! Beast!"

"Then I'll tap your head on the wall till you do!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—— Wow! Ow! Chuck it! Yooop!"

Bang!

"Yaroooh!"

Bang!

"Oh crikey! I say, I'll go—— Yarooop! Leggo!" yelled Bunter.

"Upon my word!" It was a deep, booming voice. "Upon my word! How dare you make such a disturbance here! I repeat, how dare you!"

"Oh, my hat! Prout!" gasped Bob.

It was Prout—coming along majestically from Common-room. He halted, surveying the juniors with a portentous frown. A shindy at the corner of Masters' Studies was simply outrageous, in Prout's opinion. His podgy brow was like a thundercloud.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

He jerked his collar loose from Wharton, and fled.

"How dare you!" boomed Prout. "I shall report this—this riot to your Form master! Upon my word! I——"

Harry Wharton & Co. departed after Bunter, without waiting for Prout to finish. Obviously it was useless to think of retrieving that document from Prout's study with Prout in the offing. Like the guests in Macbeth, they stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

Prout glared after them with a thunderous glare, and rolled down the passage to his study. He had remembered that he had to see Coker there after tea, and had come along for the purpose—not in the best of tempers.

If Coker had not written out his impot a second time, as commanded, Prout intended to deal drastically with Coker. He had had more than enough impertinence from Coker of the Fifth. Frowning, he rolled into his study, and found Coker there, standing by the table with a paper in his hand.

Coker had picked up Bunter's precious message, and was considering what to do with it. There was no fire in the study in June, and the waste-paper-basket was hardly a suitable place for such a document. Coker was still considering that point when Prout rolled in.

"Oh, you are here!" granted Prout crossly. He glanced at the paper in Coker's hand. Naturally, he supposed that it was Coker's impot, brought there for his inspection. "I trust, Coker, that you have written out your paper correctly this time, with some regard, at least, for the common rules of orthography."

He jerked the paper from Coker's hand.

He looked at it.

Then he stood transfixed.



"Is that a beetle?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, entering into the fun of pulling Prout's leg. "I'll knock it off." Smack!
 "Oooogh!" gasped Mr. Prout, as his shoulder received a hefty thump. "Ow! Not so hard, my boy!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Unparalleled!

MR. PROUT gazed at that paper.

He gazed at it dumbly. His eyes almost bulged from his purple face.

It seemed, from his expression, that he could not quite believe the evidence of his eyes. Perhaps he couldn't.

Words failed him.

He was accustomed to trouble from Coker. He was accustomed to impertinence. He was accustomed to wrong-headed obstinacy; but he had never dreamed of this.

This was the kind of thing that really did not happen—that could not happen—that, at the very least, ought to have been impossible.

Coker had been ordered to bring him a paper. And this was the paper he had brought—a paper bearing the words in large capital letters: "PROUT IS A CHEAKY BEEST!" The spelling did not surprise Prout. He was used to that sort of spelling from Coker. But the impudence of it; the amazing offrontery; the defiance of all authority—these were things calculated to take any Form master's breath away.

They seemed to take Prout's breath away. He could not speak. After some dumb moments he gurgled. That was all. His complexion, always rich, was now purple. His eyes bulged. He gasped like a fish out of water. He gazed at the paper. He gazed at Coker. He gazed at the paper again. Still he was speechless.

"Upon my word!" Prout found his voice at last. "Upon my word! Can I believe my eyes?"

"You see, sir—" began Coker. Prout woke to action. Smack!

Coker gave a roar. He was surprised—as surprised as Prout.

Boxing a fellow's ears was unknown at Greyfriars. Even in the Second Form, Twigg did not box the ears of the fags, though no doubt he was often tempted to do so. In a senior Form it was not only unknown, it was unthinkable, incredible.

Coker staggered to the left as that hefty smack landed on his right ear. He was taken utterly by surprise, and looked like pitching over on his beam-ends. But another terrific smack on his left ear righted him again. After staggering to port he took a list to starboard.

"Oh!" roared Coker. "Ow!"

That Prout supposed that Coker had written that precious paper, and brought it to him in disrespect and defiance, did not dawn on Coker's powerful brain for a moment.

Prout, of course, could suppose nothing else.

He knew nothing of Bunter's fatuous proceedings. He did not know that Bunter had been in the study at all.

He had expected to find Coker there, with a paper in his hand. He had found him there with a paper in his hand! And this was the paper!

What was Prout to think?

This was the culmination of Coker's many offences—Pelion piled on Ossa, as it were! He had not written his impot—he had written this, and brought it to Prout! This was clear—to Prout!

In a calm moment Prout would never have dreamed of smacking a fellow's head! But he was not calm now. He was anything but calm.

And he was not finished yet! Coker, in great alarm, backed round the table as Prout came at him. He wondered if the man was mad. Having given him two broadsides, it appeared to be

Prout's intention to rake him fore and aft! Coker jumped away.

His head was singing and buzzing from those two hefty smacks! His face was crimson with wrath. Coker was not a fellow to have his head smacked!

"Boy!" gasped Prout. "Rascal! I will—"

"Keep off!" roared Coker. "Look here— Oh, my hat!"

Prout was coming round the table after him, just as Coker had gone round the table after Bunter!

Coker made a frantic bound for the door.

There could not be any doubt now—the man was mad! Else why was he attacking Coker in that extraordinary manner? Plainly a fellow was not safe in Prout's study. Coker got out of that study as rapidly as his long legs could move.

"Coker!" gurgled Prout.

Coker did the doorway in one leap.

"Come back!" gurgled Prout.

Coker was doing the passage at about 60 m.p.h. He was not coming back! It was not likely.

Prout panted to the door. He glared into the passage. He had a momentary glimpse of a long leg disappearing round a corner! That was the last he saw of Horace Coker!

"My dear Prout—" Mr. Quelch was looking out of his study doorway, startled by Coker's fleeing footsteps. "Prout! What—"

The Remove master came along to Prout, with quite a concerned expression on his face. He had never seen the Fifth Form master looking quite like this before!

"What has happened?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Prout gasped.

"You—you saw that—that boy—"

"Coker—yes—"

(Continued on page 16.)

Aunt Judy at Greyfriars!



(Continued from page 13.)

"It—it—it is incredible, Mr. Quelch! Even yet I can scarcely believe it!" gasped Prout. "It is outside all my experience—beyond anything I could have imagined! He will, of course, be expelled! You will hardly believe it, Quelch—even of that impudent, that disrespectful boy Coker!"

"But what—" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Yesterday," gasped Prout, "I gave him an imposition—a short paper in English. He brought it to me full of glaring errors in spelling! I ordered him to rewrite it correctly, and bring it to my study after tea to-day! And—and this is what he brought!"

Prout displayed the document. Mr. Quelch gazed at it in horror! "Is it possible?" he ejaculated. "I should not have believed," said Prout, "that it was possible! I could not have believed that it was possible! The boy is foolish, obstinate, wrong-headed, ignorant! But this—this! A direct defiance of his Form master! An insulting message, handed to me by his own hand! Brought to my study to be handed to me personally, in place of the imposition he was commanded to write. Can you credit it?"

"Amazing!" said Mr. Quelch. "I shall take this paper to the head-master!" said Prout, in a trembling voice. "I shall place it in his hands! I shall demand Coker's instant expulsion from Greyfriars! Nothing short of that will satisfy me! Nothing short of that will be adequate! I have no doubt that Dr. Locke will meet my views!"

"There can be no doubt on that point, sir!" said Mr. Quelch consolingly. "Such disrespect—such defiance—I am glad to say that there is no boy in any other Form at Greyfriars capable of it!"

Mr. Prout started a little! Quelch was sympathetic; but there was a barb in his sympathy! Sympathetic as he was, he evidently considered that this sort of thing could only happen in Prout's Form!

That remark from Quelch was a hint of what was going to be said in Masters' Common Room—a foretaste of the wrath to come, as it were!

Prout fairly shuddered at the thought of the coming cackle in the Common-room! This would be a topic—such a topic as seldom came the way of the beaks. They would fasten on it like dogs on a bone! They would all give Prout their sympathy—sympathy with a cutting edge! Behind his portly back they would smile!

It was awful to think of! It intensified Prout's wrath against the offending Coker!

He turned abruptly away from the sympathetic Quelch, and started for the Head's study. That crumpled, grubby, insulting paper was to be laid before Dr. Locke. Coker would be sent for, and promptly dealt with!

There was solace in that, at least.

Coker was going under the chopper—and the Fifth Form at Greyfriars was going to lose its prize fathad!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Aunt Judy Blows In!

"LITTLE boy!" Bob Cherry jumped. The voice that addressed him was very pleasant and amiable. But it rather made a Remove man jump to be addressed as a little boy! Really and truly, Bob Cherry was not a little boy! He was quite a big boy—a hefty boy—almost an outside in boys!

But the kind old lady who had drifted in at the school gates and addressed him was unaware that at Greyfriars every fellow was a "man." Even the fags in the Second Form were "men." Much more the heroes of the Remove!

No doubt Miss Judith Coker, who was no longer so young as she had been in the nineteenth century, regarded all the Greyfriars fellows as little boys. She might even have addressed Wingate, the captain of the school, or Blundell of the Fifth, that magnificent and tremendous "blood," as "little boy" had she spotted either of them as she came in.

Bob spun round. He raised his cap politely, nobly suppressing his feelings. Had Temple of the Fourth or Hobson of the Shell addressed Bob as "little boy," there would have been fireworks at once. Such a fellow would have been strewn in the quad in a damaged condition. But nice old ladies, of course, could not be strewn in the quad! Bob's manners were equal to the occasion.

Suppressing his feelings, he raised his cap.

Miss Coker beamed on him. "I have seen you before, I think," she said pleasantly. "I think I remember your name. Is it not Plum?"

"Plum?" repeated Bob. "Nunno! Cherry!"

"Ah! I knew it was something of the kind," smiled Miss Coker.

Bob gazed at her. It had never occurred to him personally, that the name Cherry was anything like "Plum." He was glad that no other fellow was within hearing. Miss Coker's little mistake was enough to earn him the nickname of "Plum" for the remainder of his schooldays had it fallen on other ears.

"Where is Horace?" asked Miss Coker.

There might have been a dozen fellows at Greyfriars named Horace! Hacker, the master of the Shell, was named Horace. But to Miss Judith Coker there was only one Horace in the wide world. That was Horace Coker, her beloved and highly prized nephew.

Bob guessed which Horace she wanted, as he recognised Coker's aunt. Miss Coker did not often visit Greyfriars; but she was a lady to be remembered. She was a little old-fashioned, and gave an impression that she had not changed her bonnet since Victoria was Queen.

"Oh! Coker?" said Bob. "I think he's in the House, ma'am."

"I think you are one of dear Horace's friends," said Miss Coker, beaming. "But I suppose all the dear little boys are his friends, really, as Horace is so popular."

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Quite!" stammered Bob. "We—we all like old Coker, ma'am. He's really one of the best!"

"The dear boy will be surprised to see me," said Miss Coker. "I have not told him I was coming to-day. It will be a delightful surprise for Horace. You are

sure he is in the House? He is not playing football?"

"Football?" said Bob. "Oh, my hat! I—I mean, no, ma'am; I'm quite sure he's not playing football!"

It was really improbable that Coker of the Fifth would be playing football in June! But Miss Coker's knowledge of the various games played by these dear little schoolboys was rather vague!

"Thank you!" said Miss Coker. "Dear Horace is well, is he not? I suppose you have seen him to-day?"

"Oh, yes, quite lately!" said Bob, remembering the meeting at the corner of Masters' Passage a short while ago, when dear Horace had had a narrow escape of being wrecked and havocked by the Famous Five. "He's quite well, ma'am—he's always well."

"Is that Mr. Snout?" asked Aunt Judith suddenly, pointing with her umbrella at Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Third, who was walking in the quad. It was a brilliant June day, but Miss Coker carried an umbrella—she was never without it. The climate, after all, was uncertain; and doubtless Miss Coker attached a considerable value to her Victorian bonnet. Possibly it was an heirloom in the family!

"Mr. Which?" gasped Bob. "Mr. Snout—dear Horace's Form master."

"Oh, Prout! Not Snout—Prout!" gasped Bob, wondering what on earth Prout would think if Miss Coker addressed him as Mr. Snout. "No, ma'am, that's Wiggins. I think Prout's indoors."

"A very bad-tempered old gentleman, is he not?" asked Aunt Judith.

"I—I believe he's a—a little waxy sometimes, ma'am," answered Bob. "But—but Prout's all right, really."

"I should think him a very bad-tempered man, from his half-term's report about Horace," said Miss Coker. "That is really why I have called. I have something to say to Mr. Snout—that is, Lou—I mean, Prout!"

The kind and amiable old face looked quite grim for a moment. Prout, apparently, had let himself go in that half-term report!

Miss Judith walked on towards the House. Bob gazed after her and smiled. He did not envy Prout the coming interview, if Prout had found fault with Miss Judith's darling Horace!

Skinner and Snoop, of the Remove, were loafing near the House steps, and they grinned at one another as Miss Coker sailed up.

"That's Coker's old frump of an aunt!" remarked Skinner. "Bit of a sketch—what?"

"She sends him jolly good hampers," said Snoop.

"I suppose that's why he stands her here!" said Skinner. "Silly ass, though, not to give her a hint to steer clear. Hallo, she's going to speak to us. Let's shift! Coker can have his jolly old aunt to himself. Bit too sketchy for me."

Skinner turned away, his manners not being anything like so nice as Bob Cherry's. The next moment he jumped almost clear of the quad with a startled howl as the business end of an umbrella poked into his back.

"Ow!" yelled Skinner. He glared at Miss Coker. That kind old lady smiled sweetly. She had only been drawing Skinner's attention, and was happily unaware that she had nearly punctured him.

"Little boy—" began Miss Coker. "What?" hissed Skinner.

"Please take me to Horace's study," said Miss Coker.

Skinner was about to tell Miss Coker that she could ring, and that a servant employed for such purposes would take her to Coker's study. But he did not. Second thoughts supervened.

"Horace's study?" he repeated.

"Yes; dear Horace—"

"This way, ma'am," said Skinner, and he ushered Miss Coker into the House. Greyfriars School was a rather rambling, ancient place, and there were innumerable studies, many of them round unexpected corners or up unexpected passages or stairs, and it was not surprising that Miss Coker did not remember her way to Horace's study. But she knew that it was up a staircase, and so she was surprised when Skinner led her into a broad passage on the ground floor.

"Is Horace's study here?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, ma'am."

"It was up a staircase last term," said Miss Coker. "But perhaps Horace has changed his study. Perhaps the headmaster thought it would be more convenient for him on the ground floor. Dr. Locke is so thoughtful."

"Oh crikey!" murmured Skinner.

To Miss Judith, of course, Dr. Locke was only a portion of the environment of Horace Coker. She regarded him as a very nice old gentleman and quite worthy to be Horace's headmaster. But that, of course, was all he was!

"Here you are, ma'am," said Skinner, tapping at the study door of Horace Hacker, the master of the Shell.

Miss Coker had asked to be taken to Horace's study. She had not particularised which Horace she wanted. Skinner was entitled to misunderstand, if he liked.

Having tapped, Skinner opened the study door and promptly backed.

"Thank you, you kind little boy!" said Miss Coker graciously.

But Harold Skinner departed hastily, without waiting to listen to thanks. He preferred to be off the scene when Miss Coker met that particular Horace!

Miss Judith Coker sailed into the study.

"Horace—dear Horace!" she exclaimed as she sailed in. "My dear, dear Horace! Give me a kiss, my dear!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Horace?

MR. HACKER jumped to his feet.

He was busy correcting Latin papers for the Shell. And as he jumped, blots scattered far and wide from his pen over those papers.

Hacker was astounded.

He blinked at Aunt Judith.

If he had ever seen Coker's aunt before he did not remember her. All he knew was that an elderly female, in an ancient bonnet, had invaded his study and asked him to kiss her! Naturally, he was astonished, and shocked and scandalised, too.

"Madam!" he gasped. "What—what—who are you, madam? A—a—a kiss! Upon my word! Certainly not!"

And Mr. Hacker stepped quickly round the table, to place it between himself and his visitor, as if in fear that he might be kissed against his will!

Miss Coker blinked at him.

"Certainly not!" repeated Mr. Hacker, with emphasis. "I should

not dream of doing anything of the kind. Really—"

"Sir!" gasped Miss Coker.

"Madam, please retire. Please leave my study! I refuse—I absolutely refuse—to kiss you, or anyone else!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker, in great agitation. "I have never heard of such a thing! Such—such a request—"

"Sir! How dare you?" ejaculated Miss Coker, bridling indignantly. "How dare you suppose—"

"Kindly keep your distance, madam! I beg you—I insist upon you keeping your distance!" shrieked Horace Hacker. "I refuse to kiss you. I

refuse absolutely! Upon my word—"

"Where is Horace?" shrieked Miss Coker.

"Horace?"

"I was brought here to see Horace—my dear Horace. I was told that Horace was here!"

"My name is Horace," gasped Mr. Hacker. "What—what—?" It dawned on the master of the Shell that there was a mistake in the matter. "Who—who—who are you?"

"I am Miss Coker!" snapped Aunt Judith, with angry disdain. "Is this not Horace's study?"

(Continued on next page.)

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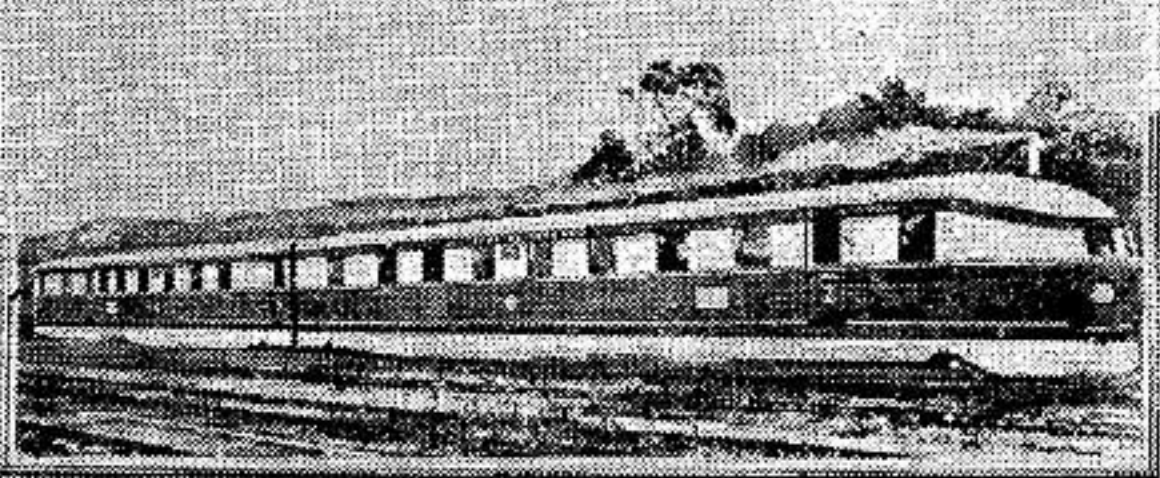
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"Oh!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "Miss Coker—no doubt a relation of Coker of the Fifth Form. I remember his name is Horace—at least, I think so."

"Where is Horace?"

"Probably in his study, madam! Coker is no longer in my Form. He had his remove some time ago, thank goodness—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, no doubt Coker is in his study. I will ring for the page to conduct you there—"

"A kind little boy led me here and told me it was Horace's study," said Miss Coker, eyeing the master of the Shell suspiciously. She had a doubt whether that unfortunate gentleman had been drinking. His conduct seemed like it, to Miss Coker!

"It would be wiser, madam, to ask for a boy by his surname," snapped Mr. Hacker. "There may be a dozen Horaces in the school. I will ring for—"

"You need not trouble, sir!" snapped Miss Coker, and she flounced out of the study, greatly to Horace Hacker's relief. He fell into his chair and wiped his perspiring brow.

Miss Coker sailed off on a voyage of discovery. Wingate of the Sixth was standing by an open window, talking to a fellow outside. The captain of Greyfriars gave a sudden yelp as Miss Coker's umbrella poked in his ribs. This seemed to be Aunt Judy's usual way of drawing attention when she needed it.

"Ow! Wow!" howled Wingate, rather to the surprise of the fellow standing under the window, and he whirled round. "You silly ass! You blithering chump! What the merry dickens— Oh, my hat! Oh!" He stared round at Miss Coker. "I—I beg your pardon, ma'am. I thought it was some fellow— Oh crumbs!"

"I hope I did not startle you, little boy," said Miss Coker. "I am looking for Horace's study. Horace Coker," she added, taking that tip from Hacker.

"Oh!" gasped Wingate. "Oh! Yes, I—I see! Up the stairs, madam, in the Fifth Form passage, past the games study— Here, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton, passing in the distance, looked round. Wingate beckoned to him, and the captain of the Remove came up.

"Take this lady to Coker's study," said Wingate.

"Certainly," said Harry politely. "How do you do Miss Coker? Perhaps you remember me?"

"Oh, quite!" said Miss Judith. "You are one of the dear little boys who visited Horace one Christmas. Your name is Parker. I think?"

"Wharton, ma'am This way," said Harry.

He led Miss Judith away. This time Aunt Judy had a reliable guide, and she was duly piloted to Coker's study in the Fifth. The door of that study was half-open, and there were two fellows in the room—Potter and Greene. They had finished the pineapple, and were busy on a box of succulent and luscious pears.

"This is Coker's study, ma'am," said Harry.

"Thank you, my dear little boy."

Miss Coker sailed in.

"Dear Horace, give your old aunt a kiss— Where is Horace?"

Potter and Greene jumped up.

"Oh! Miss Coker!" ejaculated Potter.

"Coker's aunt!" murmured Greene.

"Where is Horace?" asked Miss

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Judith. "That dear little boy Plum—I think his name was Plum—or—or—Apple—told me that Horace was not playing football—so—"

"He—he's gone to see his Form master, ma'am," stammered Potter.

"That cross old man, who sent such a bad report?" said Miss Coker, frowning.

"Well, well, Horace did not know that I was coming to-day, or I am sure that he would no have gone to see Mr. Snout just now. Perhaps one of you little boys will run along and tell him that I am here."

"Please sit down, ma'am—we'll go at once!" said Potter.

Miss Coker sat down, and Potter and Greene retreated doorward. They were not going to have Coker's aunt landed on them—not if they knew it!

Outside the study Potter called to Wharton, who was going down the passage:

"Here, young Wharton!"

Harry glanced round.

"Just cut along to Prout's study," said Potter. "Tell Coker his aunt has arrived."

"My dear man," said the captain of the Remove genially, "what ever put it into your head that you can fag the Remove? You can't, you know."

And Wharton walked round the corner and vanished.

"Well, you'd better go, Greene—"

"I was thinking that you'd better go, old chap."

"Oh, rats!" grunted Potter. "Prout must be jawing him, to keep him all this time. I don't want to butt in, if the old bean's got his rag out!"

"Same here"

"Well, after all, he'll come back to the study when Prout's done with him," said Potter. "Can't really call a fellow away when his beak's jawing him. Let's get out."

And they got out. Neither of them felt disposed to butt into Prout's study, if Prout was giving Coker a "royal jaw" in that apartment. They went down and walked out of the House, and strolled across the quad. And then, greatly to their surprise, they saw Coker!

Coker was standing under the elms, leaning on a tree, with a fixed and gloomy expression on his face. He seemed wrapped in deep and gloomy thought. Apparently he had been there some time, too deeply engrossed in his deep thoughts to give heed to anything else. Obviously, he was unaware of his Aunt Judy's arrival. Potter and Greene came on him quite unexpectedly, and they stared at him.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Greene. "Ain't you with Prout?"

It was rather a superfluous question; plainly, Coker wasn't with Prout.

Coker's eyes were fixed on the ground. He raised them and looked glumly at Potter and Greene.

"Prout jaw you?" asked Potter.

He could see that something was up. Coker drew a deep breath.

"He's mad!" he said.

"Eh! Who's mad?"

"Prout!"

"Prout—mad?" ejaculated Greene.

"What—"

"Look at my ears!" said Coker.

That injunction made Potter and Greene wonder, for a moment, whether it was Coker who was mad! But they looked at Coker's ears—which were certainly large enough to be seen. Those ears were red and burning.

"He smacked them!" said Coker.

"Prout smacked your ears!" exclaimed Potter and Greene together, in amazement.

"He did!"

"Oh, my hat! But—but what did you do to him?" gasped Potter. "Must have made him frightfully wild if he did that."

"Nothing! I never even had time to tell him I hadn't done the impot—never had time to say a word—"

"But—but—" stuttered Greene.

"Came at me like a tiger!" said Coker. "Smacked my head right and left! I ran for it! Dodged out of the study and hooked it! I could hardly knock him down, you know—a Form master—"

"Oh! No! Hardly!" gurgled Potter.

"Mad as a hatter! Raving!" said Coker. "I cut out of the House—I half-expected him to get after me, with a poker or something! Insane, you know—dangerous!"

"Phew!"

"I've been trying to think it out! What's a fellow to do? I can't have my head smacked, of course. Shall I go to Dr. Locke, and tell him that Prout's mad, and suggest sending for a doctor?"

"Oh crikey! Nunno! D-d-don't do that, Coker!"

"Well, in the circumstances—"

"Oh, here you are!" Loder of the Sixth came up, looking decidedly angry. "I've been looking for you, Coker! The Head wants you! What the thump are you sticking here for, out of sight, when you're wanted?"

"The Head wants me?" repeated Coker.

"Yes," grunted Loder. "What have you been up to, you ass? Some more of your cheeky rot—what? Prout's with him, looking as fierce as a tiger. You're for it, I fancy! Cut off to the Head."

Loder stalked away, annoyed at having his valuable time used up in hunting for Coker.

Coker looked at Potter and Greene. They looked at him.

"I'd better go, I suppose," he said.

"I—I think so—when the Head sends a prefect for you, I think you'd better go—really!" murmured Potter.

Coker nodded, and walked to the House. Potter and Greene gazed after him.

"What on earth's he done now?" asked Potter.

"Goodness knows! Must have driven Prout wild, if the man really smacked his head! Can't imagine Prout doing it—but I suppose he did, as Coker says so. Nothing in it to damage any—how!" added Greene.

Meanwhile, Miss Judith Coker was waiting in Horace's study for dear Horace. But she waited in vain. Dear Horace did not come.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Mad!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bow-wow!"

"It's worked!" said Billy Bunter.

Bunter was grinning.

"He's got it!" he added.

"Who's got what?" yawned Bob Cherry.

"Prout! Wild as—as a Red Indian!" said the Owl of the Remove. "Foaming! He's gone to the Head! I saw him."



Mr. Prout gazed at the paper, and his eyes almost bulged from his head, for on it, in large capital letters, appeared: "PROUT IS A CHEAKY BEEST!" The Fifth Form master woke to action. Smack! Coker gave a roar as a terrific smack landed on his ear. "Oh! Ow!"

Bunter chuckled. Harry Wharton & Co. did not chuckle. They looked very serious. If Prout had found Bunter's precious document in his study and gone to the Head about it, it was not a chuckling matter. If Bunter was discovered to be the author of that document, he was likely soon to be uttering sounds not resembling chuckles in the very least.

"You left it in his study, really?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Yes, rather! On his table, with a paperweight on the corner," said the fat Owl. "He was bound to see it. I say, you fellows, you don't think Coker will mention that he saw me there—he's not a sneak."

"You benighted ass!" said Harry Wharton. "It may come out!"

"Well, after all, it's only Coker's word against mine," said Bunter. "And you fellows can bear witness that I never went near Prout's study, as you saw me go—you're real eye-witnesses, you know."

"Oh crikey!"

"I shall expect my pals to stand by me, of course, if there's any suggestion that I had a hand in it," said Bunter. "Lucky you were there, as it turns out—what?"

"You pernicious porker——"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say——" Bunter chuckled again. "I say, Prout looked perfectly frantic. Foaming at the mouth——"

"Fathead!"

"Well, jolly nearly, and grinding his teeth——"

"Catch him grinding his teeth!" said Johnny Bull. "They might come out if he did!"

"He never even looked at me when he passed me in the Head's corridor,"

grinned Bunter. "He doesn't know I did it! I say, he had it in his hand—at least, he had a paper crumpled in his hand—and it must have been that paper. Never even looked at me—brushed past! I said: 'Silly old ass!'"

"You said that to Prout?" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Well, I didn't say it loud enough for him to hear, you know——"

"You howling fathead!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! He fairly rushed into the Head's study! Old Locke was startled; I heard him say: 'Great pip!'"

"Yes; I can hear the Head saying 'Great Pip!' It sounds like him!"

"I mean he said 'Good gracious!' I couldn't hear what they said in the study, as that beast Loder came along the passage. Of course, I shouldn't have listened. I was nowhere near the key-hole. I say, you fellows, I told you I'd make Prout sit up! I've jolly well done it! He, he, he!"

"You've done it, and no mistake!" said Nugent. "Now you'd better pack some exercise-books in your bags, ready for what the Head will do."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"The donfulness is terrific, grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, they'll never know," said Bunter. "Nobody knows I did it, and you fellows are witnesses that I didn't! Prout knows what we think of him now. You fellows would never have the nerve to tell a beak that he was a cheeky beast."

"I hope we shouldn't have the bad manners, anyhow," said Harry Wharton, "and I hope you won't get spotted, you irascible owl! Hallo! There's Coker!"

Coker glanced round at the Removites.

"Have you kids seen Prout?" he asked.

"I jolly well have!" chuckled Bunter.

"He's mad!" said Coker.

"Mum-mum-mad?" stuttered Wharton.

"Yes! Keep an eye open, if you come across him—that's a tip! He's mad—might start on any fellow any minute."

Coker went on his way, leaving the Removites staring. He went on to the Head's study. He tapped at Dr. Locke's door, and entered.

Prout was there, and Coker eyed him uneasily as he came in. In the present state of Prout's sanity Coker would not have been surprised if Prout had sprung at him! However, Prout showed no intention of springing. He only gave Coker a look like thunder.

Dr. Locke was looking thunderous, too! Never had the chief beak's face been so stern.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Coker, looking at his headmaster, but with one eye on Prout.

"I sent for you, Coker," said the Head, in a deep voice, "to expel you from the school!"

Coker almost fell down.

He stared at the Head. He goggled at him! If the bust of Socrates, on the Head's bookcase, had uttered those words, Coker could hardly have been more astonished.

"Wha-a-t?" he stuttered. He wondered if he had heard aright. "D-d-did you say expel me, sir?"

"I did, Coker!"

"Well I'm blowed!" said the amazed Coker.

Dr. Locke, with a slim, white forefinger, tapped a crumpled, grubby sheet of foolscap that lay on his desk, bearing the disrespectful words: "PROUT

IS A CHEAKY BEEST!" That document stared Coker in the face, without alarming him, however. It was nothing to do with him, so far as Coker could see.

"Mr. Prout took this paper from your hand, Coker, in his study!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir," agreed Coker. "I had it in my hand when he came in! I thought I wouldn't leave it lying on the table."

"Whether you left it lying on Mr. Prout's table, or whether you handed it to him personally, is immaterial!" said Dr. Locke.

"The unparalleled insolence of this boy—" began Prout.

"Such insolence, sir, will not be permitted for one hour, one moment, at Greyfriars," said the Head. "Fortunately, it is yet early enough for Coker to take the train from Courtfield—"

Coker blinked. "You will proceed at once to pack your box, Coker—"

"Pip-pip-pack my bib-bib-box!" stammered Coker.

"I shall ring for a taxi-cab—"

"A tut-tut-taxi—"

"To take you to the station—"

"The stat-stut-station—"

Coker seemed to be afflicted with stammering.

"You will reach your home quite early in the evening—"

Coker gasped.

"But—but—but what—" he howled.

"What am I sacked for, I'd like to know? I'm jolly well not going to be sacked!"

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"You are expelled, Coker, for calculated insolence to your Form master!

Such conduct cannot possibly be condoned. You will explain the matter to your parents when you reach home—"

"But—" gasped the hapless Coker. "I—I never—I didn't—I wasn't—"

He became a little incoherent. "Had you been a junior boy, Coker, I should have flogged you! But in the case of a senior boy only expulsion will meet the case."

"But—but I never—I—I—I never ever raised my hand!" gasped Coker. "I let Prout smack my head, and never touched him! I can't help it if Prout goes mad."

"What?" boomed the Head.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout.

"Smacked my head right and left!" panted Coker. "And all I did was to dodge out of the study. If he's mad—"

"Silence!" almost roared the Head, starting to his feet in great wrath. "How dare you, Coker? This additional insolence will not benefit you, sir! Leave my study!"

"But I—I—I—" "In half an hour you will leave the school!"

"B-b-b-but—" "You are expelled! Enough! Go!"

"B-b-but—" Coker gazed dizzily at Dr. Locke, wondering if the Head was mad as well as Prout. "B-b-but—" "Go!" thundered the Head.

"B-b-but—" "If you do not instantly leave my study, Coker, I will ring for a servant to remove you!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker. He staggered to the door. In a state of bewilderment that almost amounted to idiocy, he tottered into the passage. Gaping, he tottered away.

"I say, you fellows!" came a fat

squeak, as he reached the corner. "Look at Coker!"

Harry Wharton & Co. came quickly towards Coker, quite startled by the look on his face.

"What on earth's the matter, Coker?" exclaimed Harry.

"The—the matter?" stammered Coker.

"He's mad!"

"Prout?" asked Bob.

"The Head!" gasped Coker.

"Oh crumbs!"

"I told you Prout was mad! Now I find that the Head's mad, too!" gasped Coker. "It seems to be catching! He says I'm sacked!"

"Sacked!" yelled the juniors.

"So he says—old Locke, you know! He must be as mad as Prout!"

"But what for?" shrieked Bob.

"Nothing—nothing that I know of! I haven't done anything—and he says I'm sacked! I never did that impot for Prout—but they don't sack a man for that! There's nothing else that I know of! He's mad—as mad as Prout! Fancy a mad headmaster in a school!"

Coker tottered away, leaving the chums of the Remove almost as amazed and bewildered as himself.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Sacked!

"LITTLE boy!" It was George Blundell, the captain of the Fifth Form, member of the First Eleven, a double Colour, and the most tremendous "blood" at Greyfriars, who was this time addressed as "little boy" by Miss Judith Coker.

Blundell, magnificent in flannels, and a First Eleven blazer, an Olympian of the Olympians, walked in the Fifth Form passage as Augustus Caesar might have walked in the Forum in ancient Rome! And Aunt Judy, putting her kind old face and Victorian bonnet out of Coker's doorway, addressed him as "little boy!"

Quite ignorant of the shock to the system which she thus administered to George Blundell, Miss Judith smiled on him kindly.

Blundell, speechless, gazed at her. At that moment, as he told the men in the games study afterwards, you could have knocked him down with a feather!

"Can you tell me where Horace is?" asked Miss Coker. "I have been waiting here for some time, but Horace has not come."

"Oh!" gasped Blundell. "Do you mean Coker? Oh! Ah! I—I think he's gone to the Head—Loder asked me if I'd seen him, because the Head wanted him."

"Thank you, little boy."

"Oh! Not at all!" gasped Blundell.

"Perhaps I had better go to the Head," said Miss Coker thoughtfully. "Perhaps you will show me the way, little boy! This is such a rambling place—"

"Oh! Quite! Pleased!" gasped Blundell.

"Thank you so much," said Miss Coker, with a winning smile, coming out of the study. "I think Greyfriars is such a nice school for Horace! All the dear little boys have such nice manners. Are you a great friend of Horace's?"

"We—we're in the same Form!" articulated Blundell.

"And you play football together, and—and marbles?" said Miss Coker. "How nice! How very nice indeed!"

Blundell did not answer that. He couldn't! The supposition that he played marbles bereft him of speech.

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In a sort of stunned silence the great man of the Fifth—whom Miss Coker, in the innocence of her heart, mistook for a little boy—guided the dear lady down the staircase and headed for Head's corridor.

At the corner of that corridor, a group of Remove juniors stood—the Famous Five of the Remove. It was not five minutes since Coker of the Fifth had passed them, and gone—and they were discussing in amazement what he had told them. Billy Bunter had rolled away, bursting with the startling news that Coker of the Fifth was sacked. Bunter liked to be the spreader of news—and this time he had an item calculated to make fellows jump when they heard it. Bunter was losing no time.

But the Famous Five were there—and they ceased to speak as Miss Judith came along with Blundell. Blundell pointed out the Head's door; and considering that he had done enough with that, took himself off. Miss Coker gave the juniors one of her kind smiles.

They looked at her in dismay. It was an unfortunate time for Miss Judith to have called at the school to see her nephew—when he had just been sacked by his headmaster. Her sweet and gracious smile showed that she had not seen Coker, and knew nothing as yet. Awful news awaited her! Harry Wharton stepped forward.

"Are—are you going to see the Head, ma'am?" he stammered.

"Yes, little boy. Horace is with his headmaster now," said Miss Coker. "Dear Horace—"

"I—I think he's left the Head's study, ma'am—in fact, he passed us a few minutes ago," stammered Wharton. He was anxious to spare the good old soul if he could. "If—if you like, I'll go after him and—and find him, and—and—"

"Thank you, my dear little fellow," said Miss Judith. "But I think I will see Dr. Locke now I am here. I have to speak to him about Horace. I am very far from satisfied with the report his Form master gave him at the half-term—I must speak to Dr. Locke about Mr. Snout."

And Miss Judith passed the dismayed juniors and went up the passage to the Head's study door. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob. "All the fat will be in the fire now! If the Beak tells her he's sacked Coker—"

"The fatfulness in the esteemed fire will be terrific!"

"It's rotten," said Harry. "What on earth can he have sacked Coker for? There must be some mistake somewhere! Coker's a born idiot—but they don't sack a man for being a fool! He'd have been sacked his first term in that case. But—"

"Poor old soul!" said Nugent.

"Poor old Head!" said Johnny Bull. "I wouldn't like to be too near her umbrella if I was the Head telling her Coker's sacked. You know how Coker got his remove into the Fifth—she came to see the Head about it, and the fellows say that she was going to whop him with that broly if he didn't give Coker his remove—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'd better find Coker," said Harry. "He went out into the quad. I suppose he will go home with his aunt as he's sacked. But what the thump can the Beak have barked old Coker for?"

"Cheeking Prout, perhaps—"

"Yes, I suppose that's it; I heard that he had some trouble on with his beak. But it's jolly queer! That poor old dear will be fearfully upset."

The Famous Five went out of the House. On their way they passed Billy

Bunter—the centre of an interested group of fellows. Bunter was spreading the startling news.

"Sacked, you know!" said Bunter. "Coker, you know! I fancy he hit Prout! Looks like it. In fact, I know he did! From what I hear, he knocked Prout spinning across his study—"

The chums of the Remove passed on without waiting to hear more. Bunter could never tell a plain unvarnished tale. He was already improving on it.

It did not take the juniors long to find Coker. Coker was the centre of a crowd in the quadrangle. He had not gone to pack his box, as the Head had bidden him. Coker was boiling over with wrath and indignation. He was telling the world.

"Mad as a hatter!" roared Coker. "Prout's mad, and Locke's mad! A pair of dashed old lunatics, if you ask me."

"Draw it mild, old man!" murmured Potter.

"Chuck it!" said Blundell.

"If they ain't batty, what do you think they mean?" roared Coker. "Sacking a man! I haven't done my impot—I know that! Do they sack a man for leaving an impot over? Calculated insolence—that was what Locke said! The man's balmy."

"But you're not really sacked?" exclaimed Greene.

"So the Head says!" hooted Coker.

"You—you—you're not going?" exclaimed Potter blankly. "What on earth have you done, Coker?"

"Nothing!" roared Coker.

"Well, that's rot, you know!" argued Hobson of the Shell. "They don't sack a man for nothing! That's rot."

"I tell you I've done nothing! I tell you Prout smacked my head and I never touched him! I jolly well felt like knocking him down in a heap, and I fancy he would have burst, if I had! I never even told him what I thought of him! That might have made him wild, of course! I just dodged out of the old lunatic's study—and now the Head says I'm sacked! Sacked! Me!"

"Did you cheek the Head?" asked Blundell.

"Certainly not. I told him Prout was mad—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Well, I had to tell him! Prout's not safe! Suppose he started smacking old Locke's head, all of a sudden—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He might!" said Coker. "But it looks to me as if the Head's mad, too! What else has he sacked me for?"

"You must have done something—" said Hobson. "I tell you— Here, keep off— Yaroooh—whooop!"

Coker was at boiling point. Now he boiled over. He jumped at Hobson of the Shell, got his head into chancery, and proceeded to make James Hobson sorry that he had spoken.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Oh, my hat! Draggimoff!" yelled Hobson, struggling wildly. "Oh, my nose! Whoop! Rescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker was dragged off. Harry Wharton caught him by the arm.

"Coker, old man—"

Thump!

"Yooop!" roared Wharton, staggering back.

"Hands off, you cheeky fag!" hooted Coker. "I'll smash you! I'll smash the lot of you! I'll—"

"You dangerous maniac," yelled Wharton. "I was going to tell you—"

"Shut up! I'll jolly well—"

"Your aunt—Miss Coker—she's here!" shrieked Wharton, dodging another

thump. "You howling ass, your Aunt Judy—I came to tell you—"

"Oh!" said Coker. He calmed down a little. "I haven't seen her—I didn't know—"

He started for the House; leaving a swarm of fellows buzzing with excitement in the quad. From end to end of Greyfriars the news was spreading that Coker of the Fifth was sacked—and for the time being, that startling news banished every other topic.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Horrid for the Head!

"**B**LESS my soul!" murmured Dr. Locke.

He gazed at Miss Judith Coker.

If there was any person in the wide world whom the Head of Greyfriars School did not desire to see at that moment it was Coker's Aunt Judy.

Had that good lady been announced, the Head might have found some means of avoiding the interview. He might have sent a message that he was very busy, or even that he was ill; or he might even have retired to the library, or some other secluded spot, to lie doggo till Miss Coker was gone. But Miss Coker announced herself. She tapped on the door, and in response to the Head's "Come in!" she came in. And there she was! And Dr. Locke, only too painfully conscious that he had just "sacked" her beloved nephew, Horace, gazed at her, as Priam of old might have gazed at the dread figure that drew his curtains at dead of night.

It was really an unfortunate moment for Aunt Judy to blow in, especially as she evidently knew nothing of the recent happenings at Greyfriars. Her sweet and innocent smile showed that. She smiled her kind smile at the headmaster who had just sacked Horace!

"Mum-mum-Miss Coker!" stammered the Head.

"I hope," said Aunt Judith, with her winning smile, "that I have not interrupted you."

"The—the fact is—yes—quite—the fact is, I—I am very—exceedingly—busy this afternoon!" stammered Dr. Locke.

"I am so sorry!" said Miss Coker.

"And I certainly should not take up your time, dear Mr. Locke, if the matter was not so very important."

"My—my dear Miss Coker—"

"It is, of course, about Horace," said Miss Coker.

"Oh, yes! Quite! But—"

The Head had to offer Miss Coker a chair. He longed for her to go. He would not have been displeased had the floor opened and swallowed her up. But she evidently did not intend to go, and the floor was solid! Courtesy constraining him, he offered a chair, and Miss Coker sat down. She beamed on the Head.

"I have not seen Horace yet," she confided to him.

Dr. Locke had already guessed that much. Had Miss Coker seen Horace, in his sacked state, her smile certainly would not have been so sweet.

"Oh! Um! Quite!" said the Head.

"I trust," said Miss Coker, "that Horace is progressing satisfactorily, and that you are very, very pleased with him."

Dr. Locke gasped.

"I have every faith in you, dear Mr. Locke," explained Miss Coker, "and I am sure that you do not share the views of Mr. Snout."

"Mr.—er—Snout!" ejaculated the Head.

"Dear Horace's Form master."

"Oh, Mr. Prout!"

"Mr. Snout—did you say Prout?—appears to misunderstand Horace," said Miss Coker. "The half-term's report was a great disappointment to us all. Mr. Snout does not seem to understand Horace as we understand him. In the report the words 'careless' and 'slovenly' were used. But perhaps the whole thing is a mistake, and Mr. Snout was thinking of some other boy."

"The—the fact is, madam—"

"I hope, dear Mr. Locke, that you are not about to say that you approve of Mr. Snout's very extraordinary expressions—"

"The fact is, Miss Coker, that—that—that—" The Head gasped, almost like a fish out of water. Really, he had a very difficult thing to say. "The fact is, that—that—possibly it would be convenient for you to take Coker home with you, as you are here—"

"Most certainly!" beamed Miss Coker. "If you are granting dear Horace an extra holiday—"

"Oh!"

"It will be a pleasure to us all. More especially as we shall take it as an expression of your high opinion of dear Horace."

"I—I—I was not referring to a holiday!" gasped the Head. "The—the fact is, Miss Coker, that—that the boy is leaving the school—"

"Leaving the school?" repeated Miss Coker blankly.

"Owing to certain circumstances—"

"I scarcely understand you. Horace's parents have no intention of removing him from this school. We are all quite satisfied with the school. I believe that Horace is happy here."

"No doubt! But—"

"You do not think that Horace is happy here?" asked Miss Coker anxiously. "Surely that is an error, sir! He has made no complaint."

"My dear madam—"

"He does not even complain of that very cross old gentleman Mr. Snout. Horace has a very kind and patient nature."

"My dear Miss Coker—"

"In the event of Mr. Snout continuing to misunderstand Horace, that could easily be arranged. No doubt you would dismiss Mr. Snout."

"Madam," gasped the Head, "I must speak plainly. Your nephew must leave Greyfriars. He is sent away from the school for an act of deliberate insolence and defiance to his Form master."

Miss Coker blinked.

"Nonsense!" she said, as soon as she recovered her voice. "Nonsense!"

"Madam—"

"Absurd!"

"Madam, I have told Coker of the Fifth Form to pack his box. Doubtless you will take him away with you."

"And what," said Miss Coker, in a trembling voice—"what has the dear, good boy done, Dr. Locke, to be sent away from school? What excuse have you to make for this act of folly and injustice?"

"Madam!" gasped the Head.

He picked up the crumpled sheet of foolscap from his desk. He handed it to Miss Coker. She gazed at it and read: "PROUT IS A CHEAKY BEEST!" She blinked at it.

"Madam," said the Head, "your nephew was ordered by his Form master to write out an imposition and bring it to his study. Instead of doing so, he brought this insulting paper which he handed to Mr. Prout."

"Nonsense!"

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"I assure you, madam—"

"I was already aware," said Miss Coker, "that Snout had a prejudice against the dear boy; but that he should go to this length—to the length of making a false accusation—"

Dr. Locke jumped.

"Madam—" he stuttered.

"A wicked and false accusation!" said Miss Coker inexorably. "Is it possible, Dr. Locke, that you believe this? Or are you in the plot?"

"Goodness gracious!" gasped the Head.

Miss Coker flicked the offending paper back to the Head's table with contempt.

"Horace did not write that!" she said.

"Madam, he did not deny—"

"Horace did not write that, Dr. Locke! You have been deceived and deluded."

Dr. Locke gazed at Miss Coker.

"Or possibly Mr. Snout may have been deceived," conceded Miss Coker. "He may not be a bad, designing man, but only a very foolish one!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Horace is quite incapable of such an action, Dr. Locke! He did not write that paper. The internal evidence is convincing. The spelling is incorrect. Horace would never—"

"Madam, Mr. Prout took that paper from your nephew's hand in his study. The matter is at an end. Coker leaves Greyfriars to-day. I am sorry! I deeply regret, but—"

Miss Coker rose to her feet. Her hand was tightly gripped on her umbrella. Dr. Locke kept a rather uneasy eye on that instrument. Perhaps a doubt crossed his mind that Miss Coker might intend to use it as a weapon of offence.

"Horace," said Miss Coker icily, "will certainly leave this school, Dr. Locke! I shall take him away with me. I cannot trust him in the hands of a headmaster unworthy of my confidence."

"Madam—"

"I shall certainly take Horace away from a school where he is misunderstood, maligned, and the victim of false accusations," said Miss Coker. "I shall consult with his parents whether to bring an action against Mr. Snout—"

"Madam—" said the Head feebly.

"Or whether the action had better be brought against you, sir—"

"Madam—"

"Or both! Probably you are equally to blame!" said Miss Coker. "It is clear that both of you misunderstand and misjudge Horace!"

Miss Coker swept from the study. Dr. Locke sank back feebly in his chair, and passed his hand over his brow.

"Bless my soul!" he said faintly.

He was deeply relieved, at least, that Miss Judith Coker was gone. But Miss Judith was not gone yet!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton Takes a Hand!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, Coker!"

Horace Coker rapped out Wharton's name like a prefect calling a fag. But the captain of the Remove answered him with sweet civility. Coker, sacked or unsacked, was always Coker! But a good-natured fellow was prepared to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. If Coker wanted to throw his weight about, during his last few minutes in the school where he had thrown it about so often, Wharton was

not the fellow to say him nay. He was more than willing to allow Coker that little indulgence.

"It seems that my aunt's with the Head," said Coker. "Wait for her to come out, and tell her I'm packing!"

This was a direct order, such as Loder of the Sixth might have handed out to Tubb of the Third. But Wharton's cheery forbearance stood the strain. He nodded assent.

"Yes, Coker! Certainly!"

"Better take her to the visitors' room and ask her to wait there, if she's done with that old donkey before I come down!" added Coker.

"Yes, Coker!" said Wharton again.

Coker walked away with Potter and Greene. They were going to help him pack. They were looking serious enough. No doubt they would miss Coker when he went. There was still less doubt that they would miss Aunt Judy's hampers. They were glad to see him keeping calm, at all events. Coker had told them that he had a jolly good mind not to go; and if he decided not to go, he was of opinion that he would be a difficult proposition to handle. He was prepared to knock all the Sixth Form prefects into a series of cocked hats, if it came to that. Indeed, it appeared that only one consideration restrained Coker from going on the war-path. He admitted that a shindy was not the thing, with Aunt Judy on the spot.

A shindy, with Coker whopping the Sixth Form prefects right and left, would upset the old lady, he told Potter and Greene. On the whole, Coker decided to act with quiet dignity. That was a relief to his friends. They did not want to see Coker leaving Greyfriars by the rough and drastic process of being hurled forth headlong! If he had to go, he might as well go on his feet as on his neck, Potter and Greene thought. And they were really sorry he was going. So were plenty of other fellows. Even the heroes of the Remove, who had so often ragged Horace Coker for his own good, were sorry he was going.

Harry Wharton waited at the end of Head's corridor for Miss Coker. He had been waiting about ten minutes when the Head's door opened and Aunt Judy came out. She swept out rather than walked, with her nose in the air, her eyes sparkling with anger and indignation—evidently very indignant after her interview with the Head. She knew now, that was clear. But as she came down the passage, angry indignation failed her, and her old head drooped, and Wharton heard a sound suspiciously like a sob. The junior felt a lump in his throat.

He hurried towards her.

"Miss Coker!"

She blinked at him with wet eyelids.

"They are sending Horace away!" she faltered. "Dear, good Horace, who is so loved by all the school, so—so admired, so—so popular!"

"Coker's gone up to pack," said Harry, hardly knowing what to say to comfort the dear old soul. "You won't have to wait for him long. If you'll let me take you to the visitors' room—"

Miss Judith laid a trembling hand on Wharton's arm and he led her away. He piloted her to the visitors' room, where Miss Coker sank into a chair.

"I'm so sorry!" murmured Wharton.

"It is false!" exclaimed Miss Coker.

"Eh?"

"Horace never, never, never—I am certain that he never—"

"Oh!"

Wharton realised that Miss Coker must be alluding to something that had passed in the interview with the Head.



Wingate gave a sudden yelp as Miss Coker's umbrella poked in his ribs. "Ow! Wow!" he howled. "You silly ass—you blithering chump! What the merry dickens—oh, my hat!" He stared round at Aunt Judy. "I—I beg your pardon, ma'am!" "I hope I didn't startle you, little boy," said Miss Coker.

"He is such a dear, good, kind, respectful, well-mannered boy!" said Miss Coker tearfully. "No doubt he has a very low opinion of Mr. Snout, but he would never express it in such a manner—never!"

Wharton looked the sympathy he felt. It was known that Coker had been sacked for checking Prout, as the juniors termed it; for "calculated insolence," as the Head expressed it. All over the school fellows were wondering exactly what Coker could have done. Coker, personally, seemed unaware that he had done anything. But, of course, he must have given fearful offence, as Prout had not only lost his temper and smacked Coker's head, but had gone directly to Dr. Locke and demanded his expulsion from the school. There hardly seemed room for a mistake in the matter. Still, Wharton wondered. Prout was hasty, and Coker was a fool.

"What was it Coker did, ma'am?" asked Harry.

"Nothing!" answered Aunt Judy.

"H'm! I mean, what is he supposed to have done?"

"They say—they say that he wrote that paper!" sobbed Miss Judith. "As if Horace would spell so incorrectly—a clever boy like Horace!"

Wharton nearly ejaculated "My hat!" He knew what Coker's spelling was like; it was on a par with Billy Bunter's.

"And such expressions!" said Miss Coker. "Horace would never dream of using them! He is always so gentle, so polite, so delicately courteous in every way!"

Evidently Coker at home differed from Coker at Greyfriars! No Greyfriars man would have recognised Coker of the Fifth from Aunt Judy's description!

"It is false!" said Miss Coker. "Horace never, never, never—"

"Coker wrote a paper?"

Wharton was trying to get at what had happened, but it was not easy.

"No; I am sure he never did!"

"But what was on the paper?" asked Harry.

"Some insulting words," said Miss Coker. "Dr. Locke showed me the paper; he said that Mr. Snout took it from Horace in his study."

Harry Wharton jumped.

"Some insulting words—on a paper—in Mr. Prout's study!" he ejaculated.

Light was dawning on Wharton.

"Yes. As if Horace—"

"Oh crumbs! You've seen that paper, Miss Coker?" exclaimed Wharton, in great excitement.

"Yes."

"Was it written in capital letters—a sheet of foolscap, rather grubby and crumpled?"

"Oh! Yes!"

"Great pip! And were the words: 'PROUT IS A CHEAKY BEEST'?" almost shouted Wharton.

Miss Coker blinked at him.

"Yes. Those were the words, my dear little boy! As if Horace—"

"Oh, my hat! Oh, great Christopher Columbus!" gasped Wharton. "Coker was in the study; Prout took the paper from him—the silly ass!"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—but why hasn't Coker told them he never wrote it?" exclaimed Wharton. "Blessed if I can make that out! But he's idiot enough for anything—I—I—I mean—"

"Wha-at?"

"I—I mean, it's all a mistake!" gasped Wharton. "Coker never wrote that paper! I know he didn't! I know who did! Oh crikey!"

Miss Coker gazed at him.

"You—you know?" she ejaculated.

"Wait there!" gasped Wharton.

"This has got to be put right! Thank goodness you told me! Just wait!"

He rushed out of the room, leaving Aunt Judy blinking after him.

"Bob, where's Bunter?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The Co. came up as Wharton ran out of the House, his face ablaze with excitement. "What the—"

"Where's Bunter?" gasped Wharton.

"In the Rag, I think. But what—"

"Oh, come on! We've got to find him—before Coker goes!"

Wharton rushed into the House again, his startled chums at his heels.

"But what—" gasped Nugent.

"No time to lose! We've got to find Bunter! He will have to own up, the howling ass!"

And they ran into the Rag, where they found Billy Bunter going strong.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Not Taking Any!

BILLY BUNTER was rather enjoying life. He was the centre of a crowd of fellows who were listening to him in the Rag.

Bunter, no doubt, was sorry for a fellow who was sacked—if he had had time to think about it. But he hadn't. Bunter was going strong. It was Bunter who had first spread the news that Coker of the Fifth was sacked. Bunter was not content to leave it at that. Bunter liked to be regarded as the fellow who knew things. Nobody knew why Coker had got the push, Bunter no more than any other fellow, except that it was for checking his beak. Everybody was curious to know. Bunter was the fellow to satisfy their curiosity. In the absence of knowledge, he drew on his fertile imagination. His imagination seldom failed him.

"Jolly nearly brained the man," Bunter was saying, as the Famous Five came breathlessly into the Rag. "You see, I was there—that is, I'd just been there—in Prout's study, you know. Never mind why I was there. I may have landed a message on Prout's table, and I may not." Bunter chuckled. "Prout's a cheeky beast, and some fellows have the nerve to tell him so.

"Coker came barging in while I was there, you know. I could see in his face that he was going to cheek Prout. It was just after that that it happened. From what I hear Prout smacked his head. He called Prout an old donkey, and Prout smacked his head. Coker grabbed up the inkstand and knocked him spinning—jolly nearly brained him—"

"Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, don't interrupt me when I'm telling these chaps what happened in Prout's study!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Having felled Prout with the inkstand—Beast! Leggo! Leggo my collar!" roared Bunter, as the captain of the Remove grasped him, thus effectually cutting short his thrilling narrative.

"You fat villain! You've got to own up!" gasped Wharton.

"Leggo!"

"What the thump—" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"I've found out what they've sacked Coker for!" gasped Wharton. "The Head told Miss Coker, and I've got it from her. They think that Coker wrote that idiotic paper."

"Bunter's paper?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You fellows have all seen Bunter's fathheaded message to Prout!" gasped Wharton. "He landed it in Prout's study after tea, and that ass Coker barged in, and somehow Prout seems to think that it was Coker."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Coker all over!" chuckled the Bounder. "What a man to ask for it!"

"You'll have to go to the Head, Bunter—"

"What?" yelled Bunter.

"And tell him you did it!"

"You silly idiot! I should be whopped!"

"That doesn't matter!"

"Doesn't it?" shrieked Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you it does! Catch me asking the Head for a whopping!"

"You can't let Coker be sacked."

"Blow Coker!" roared Bunter indignantly. "Why, he whacked me with Prout's cane in Prout's study! Catch me getting whopped for Coker! Besides, I never did it!"

"You—you—"

"I wasn't there! I never went near Prout's study! Don't you get making out that I did it, Harry Wharton! Mean, I call it!"

Harry Wharton stared at the fat Owl of the Remove. Minutes were precious. But persuading Bunter to own up was obviously not a matter of minutes. It looked more like a matter of years.

"Well, I shall go to the Head!" said Harry.

"Well, if you like to go and own up, all right," said Bunter. "I've no objection to that. Only don't mention me. I prefer to keep clear of the whole thing."

"You fat chump!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Look here, Bunter, you ought to own up. I can't give you away, but

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I'm bound to let the Head know that Coker never wrote that silly paper."

"Well, tell him you did it, then," suggested Bunter. "The Head may let you off lightly if you own up—in a frank and manly way, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you benighted bandersnatch!" gasped Wharton; and he turned and hurried to the door.

Bunter yelled after him.

"I say, mind you don't mention me. Don't you get making out that I know anything about it."

Headless of the alarmed Owl, Harry Wharton left the Rag. Without losing a moment he hurried down the Head's corridor, and tapped at Dr. Locke's door. He opened that door without waiting to be bidden, and stepped in.

"My dear madam!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

Apparently the Head fancied that it was Miss Coker returning to the charge. Then as he saw Wharton, he frowned.

"What—" he almost barked.

"I—I had to come, sir!" gasped Wharton. "Coker never did it, sir—"

"Boy!"

Wharton's eyes fell on the crumpled, grubby sheet of foolscap, with its startling inscription. It still lay on the Head's table where Miss Judith had contemptuously tossed it. He caught it up. The Head started to his feet with a brow of thunder. But the captain of the Remove was undaunted.

"I must speak, sir! This is the paper that Coker was supposed to have written."

"What do you mean, Wharton? How dare you? That is the paper that Mr. Prout took from Coker's hand, and which he does not deny having written."

"He never wrote it, sir!" gasped Harry. "I know who did. Twenty fellows know who did. It was a junior, sir, not a Fifth Form man at all. Coker must have found it in Mr. Prout's study."

"Coker has not denied writing that insulting message to his Form master, Wharton."

"I can't understand that, sir. But he never did write it. Why, sir, this paper has been in my hands before! I jammed it down the fellow's back for being such a fool as to write it—that's what crumpled it. We tried to stop him from taking it to Prout's study after tea."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "Is it possible that there has been some extraordinary mistake? Yet Coker did not deny— However, I will question Coker again in Mr. Prout's presence. Go and find Coker at once, Wharton, and bring him to my study."

"Yes, sir."

Wharton rushed out.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

PROUT grunted.

The Head coughed.

Horace Coker stared.

The two masters were ready for Coker when he arrived with Harry Wharton. Wharton followed Coker in, and remained modestly by the door.

Dr. Locke scanned Coker's rugged face. Prout regarded him with inimical grimness. But Wharton was feeling hopeful. He felt that this strange and mysterious matter was going to be cleared up.

"Coker," said the Head, in a deep voice, "a statement has been made by this junior, which has caused me to reopen this question. Give me a direct

answer, Coker. Did you, or did you not, write this paper?"

His slim forefinger tapped the paper on the table.

Coker blinked at him.

"Eh—what? No, of course I didn't, sir!" stammered the astonished Coker. "Does anybody think I did?"

Wharton winked at the ceiling.

"You did not?" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Then why did you not tell me so?"

"You never asked me, sir."

"Wha-a-t?" Dr. Locke realised that this was true; he hadn't asked Coker. He had accepted Prout's statement. "But—but you knew that I was informed that you had written these insulting words."

"I didn't. Never thought of such a thing!" gasped Coker.

"Bless my soul! Is this boy utterly stupid?" exclaimed the Head blankly. "Mr. Prout—you believed—have you any doubt—"

"I took that paper from Coker's hand in my study, sir," said Prout. "He brought it there instead of his imposition, as I have told you."

"Brought it there!" gasped Coker. Even on Coker's solid brain a glimmering of light was dawning. "I never brought it there, sir."

"It was in your hand!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, I picked it up off the table."

Prout gazed at him.

"Is it possible, Coker, that you mean to say that you found that paper on my table when you went to my study?"

"Of course I did!" stuttered Coker.

"I know who put it there, too, and I jolly well whopped him for his cheek."

"Coker," articulated the Head, "if—if, as you say—if you found that paper on Mr. Prout's table, why did you meddle with it? How comes it that Mr. Prout saw you with it in your hand?"

"I was going to destroy it, sir," explained Coker. "I wasn't going to let a cheeky fag cheek my Form master like that. Of course, I wasn't going to leave it there for Mr. Prout to see. Hardly!"

"Why did you not tell Mr. Prout so?" gasped the Head. "Why did you allow Mr. Prout to suppose—"

"Did Mr. Prout suppose that I'd written it, sir?" asked Coker, as if this was an entirely new idea to him.

"Certainly he did! What else could he have supposed in the circumstances?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker. He was seeing light now. "Was—was—was that why you smacked my head, sir?"

"Why else did you think I boxed your ears, Coker," gasped Prout.

"I thought you'd gone mad, sir—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Enough!" exclaimed the Head hastily. "Mr. Prout, it seems that a mistake has been made—owing to this boy's almost incredible obtuseness. Wharton states that he knows the junior boy who wrote this paper—that other boys are aware of it—"

"Certainly, sir," said Harry.

"His name!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "I am prepared to believe that Coker's unexampled stupidity has led to a mistake—but—"

"The name must be given!" said the Head.

There was a pause. Wharton had no intention of giving away the Owl of the Remove. Coker shared his feelings, narrow as his own escape had been. In that pause there came a tap at the door, and it opened to admit a fat face and a large pair of spectacles.

Billy Bunter blinked in.

(Continued on page 28.)

ALLISON OF AVONSHIRE!

By JOHN BREARLEY!



WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Simon Allison, once part-owner of the great Allison Motor Works, invents a powerful supercharger, but fails through lack of funds to put it on the market. Realising that the new invention will revolutionise the small car industry, Len Allison, Simon's rascally nephew—"boss" of the works and a "big noise" in the county cricket team—determines to steal the plans. Later, while bowling for his school against Avonshire Club and Ground, Bill Allison, Simon's son, proves too good for Len and his fellow-batsmen. Seething with rage, Len plots with a hired thug named Valetti to steal the plans that night, and then returns to the field of play to see Bill eventually bowl Conway, the steadiest bat in Avonshire.

(Now read on.)

The Hero of the Game!

CONWAY, however, wore a frown of surprise as he entered the pavilion, tugging at his cap in answer to the ovation.

After batting nearly seventy minutes he had thought that he had got Bill's every trick taped.

"Then, blow me, if he don't go and spring a new one!" he grumbled, good-humouredly. "The young blighter! I'm tellin' you, chaps, that kid's the goods!"

"H'm! That's more than we are!" Ted Forbes pulled a wry face. "Gosh, bundled out like this by a schoolboy! Doesn't make our prospects look too bright for the County Cricket season this year, does it?"

Some of the men shook their heads ruefully, while others shrugged. But Mr. Jerry Tempest, that kindly sportsman, hastened to put in a few soothing words.

"Rot!" he said, puffing meditatively at his pipe. "You chaps don't seem to realise that we've been taken by surprise by a youngster who's going to play for England one day!" He held up an impressive finger. "He will, you mark my words! My experience of county cricket goes back thirty-odd years; and if young Bill out there isn't as good as Wilfred Rhodes when he first started, then I'll chuck cricket and take to gardening! All I'm hoping is that the lad will be able to afford to play for Avonshire when he leaves

school. And right now I'll be glad to see him in the county team after the way he's just diddled you, Frank!"

Bill, too, was secretly thrilled by his latest and greatest success of that triumphant afternoon; for last season, when he had tried to produce that baffling "outswinger" and off-break, he had failed every time. The fact that he had been able to do it now and trick such a batsman as Frank Conway showed beyond doubt that he had improved. That ball was one more weapon in his armoury.

As for his chums and the crowd in general, they were still eagerly discussing Conway's downfall.

With 62 runs still to get, Conway out, and only three tail-enders to come in, the game was as good as over. Nevertheless, none of the onlookers moved from their seats. All wanted to stay and cheer the first Grammarian victory over the Club and Ground for many a long season—with a special cheer for the tall, plucky lad who had won the victory in spite of a badly damaged head.

Bill did not keep them waiting long.

Four balls later he bowled Frazer neck-and-crop with another off-break, which the Avonshire bowler never saw after it pitched. Then one of Alec Bromley's fastest expresses wrecked the wicket of Bates, another county trundler. That brought in the last man, Dick Hayes, the perky little wicket-keeper—and one of the dullest bats in first-class cricket, as Dick himself confessed quite cheerfully.

An old friend of Bill's, he gave the lad a wheedling grin as he waddled past him.

"Now then, you big stiff, be a pal!" he urged. "Those chumps in the pay have bet me I'm out for a blob—see? So go easy, William, go easy, or a stumper's curse be upon your fat head!"

"Oo-er!" chuckled the light-hearted Bill; and as soon as Hayes was ready—

"Mind your eye, Dick!" he called, and deliberately chucked up a slow full-toss on the leg-side.

With one mighty swipe the little county keeper promptly lashed it out

of the ground, amid mirthful shouts from the crowd and derisive hoots from the pavilion.

But the next ball—well, Dick tried to slog that, too; but, deceived by the corkscrew swerve, he lammed out valiantly at empty air, and swung round again, to see his middle-stump nearly flat.

The match—Bill's own "Test Match" was over. The school had won by 55 runs.

On to the field then rushed a horde of Grammarians, yelling and laughing as they swarmed around Bill, brushing aside his protests and struggles. In another minute the hero of the game was swaying, red-faced and breathless, on their shoulders, and chaired, amid bedlam, into the pavilion.

It was a triumphant moment—the most exhilarating of Bill's life. And for him the only fly in the ointment was a brief glimpse of Len, dark-faced and handsome, staring down at him from the balcony with coldly inscrutable eyes.

But even his cousin's silent enmity failed to trouble Bill very much just then. For all his modesty, he knew that he had made a success. Besides gaining a long-overdue victory for the school, he had taken a big stride towards his own ambitious goal.

By main force he managed to wrench free of his cheering captors at last, and fairly staggered into the dressing-room, where he was mobbed afresh by his jubilant team-mates. And Terry Mason, running down from the scorer's box, knocked the last remaining breath out of him with a hearty thump.

"Here's your analysis, Bill—nine for 42, and six of 'em county men! Golly, but you bowled some!"

Then, grabbing Bill's arm, the Grammarian skipper yauked his chum away from the others and dragged him over to the washbasins.

"You've earned your chance of becoming a pro now, Bill!" he breathed eagerly. "Old Jerry Tempest's burbling about you—just heard him! When are you going to ask to be taken on?"

With one lusty jerk Bill stripped off

his shirt and beamed as he shied it across the room.

"Monday, after school!" he answered.

"Good!" cried Terry excitedly.

But neither youngster could guess what events, stirring and fateful, lay in store for Bill Allison 'twixt then and Monday evening. Only Len Allison possessed that knowledge.

And he was already driving homeward to play his part in the schemes of Corsica Phil Valetti and the mysterious Unknown, "Joe the Hump."

The Fake Plans!

T IRED, but happy as a sandboy, Bill also wended his way homeward half an hour later, though at nothing like his usual tear-away speed. Now that the thrilling match was over, his bruised forehead had begun to make itself felt once more, and a slight giddiness warned him to go careful.

But if, perchance, he had to ride with exasperating slowness through the dusky, winding lanes to Kelsey, Bill's thoughts, at least, were racing.

That he stood a gilt-edged chance of getting on the Avonshire County staff could not be denied now. Mr. Tempest's warm handshake and the pro's genial congrats at parting showed how much they had been impressed by his bowling. What his father would say about the idea of turning cricket professional Bill did not know, though—or at least, he did, but refused to think about it! His own mind was firmly made up.

"Dad's pretty obstinate—but I can be a bit of a mule myself!" the lad grinned as he kicked open the cottage gate. "Anyway, I'm sick of being a passenger when money's so tight, so I'm just going to take the chance—and chance it afterwards. Do or die—that's the ticket, ain't it, Wheezy Anna?"

Encouraged by this characteristic piece of philosophy, Bill wheeled his precious bike into the toolshed and entered the workshop, expecting to see his father busy as usual with the new Allison super-charger.

Rather to his surprise, however, the plans and the small, partly-assembled model of the "blower" lay on Mike Doyle's bench for once, and the mechanic was poring over one of the blue prints. All that adorned Simon Allison's bench was an untidy pile of bills, while the old inventor himself stood idle, frowning at them glumly. Bill noted, with a pang, that his father looked fagged and dejected. There was an ominous droop to the broad shoulders, and his hands were deep in his pockets.

At the boy's entrance Mike turned quickly, his deep-set, expressionless eyes narrowing as he saw the bandage round Bill's forehead. But Simon Allison, beyond a brief: "That you, lad?" kept his moody gaze on the bills.

"Hallo, dad! What-cheer, Cannonball!" Bill sang out gaily, and strode across to lay a hand on his father's shoulder. "What's up, father Simon—tired?" he asked affectionately. "Been slogging at the good old blower again?"

Simon Allison shrugged heavily.

"No," he growled. "Mike's been fiddling with that all day—I've been doing a repair-job for old Davis, the haulage man." He sighed. "I'm getting about tired of the blower, anyway, Bill! The only people interested in the

infernal thing are Len and that foreign brute, who— Here, what the dickens?"

For the first time the dispirited old man noticed that Bill had been hurt. Uttering a sharp exclamation, he made an anxious clutch at the boy, who smiled soothingly as he dodged.

"It's all right, dad—just stopped a ball with my bean, that's all!" Bill explained, discreetly forgetting to mention Len's part in the affair. "I'm fine now, and we knocked the stuffing out of the Club and—"

"Hold your noise, and let me look!" ordered old Simon Allison, hustling Bill to the window, while Mike Doyle, rolling up the plans neatly, limped across also.

As soon as the bandage was undone, the ex-racing star gave the ugly bruise a close, expert scrutiny, and grunted.

"H'm, nasty place—seen worse, though," he drawled in his dour way. "Don't fuss over the young rip, guv'nor, anyway. He'll be O.K. after a night's sleep!"

Calmly sidestepping Bill's indignant clout, he tapped the roll of plans.

"Want these any more to-night? If not, I'll shove 'em away and get along home!"

Simon Allison, still "fussing" over his son's injury, shook his head absently.

"No. Stick 'em in the safe, Mike! I don't want 'em!" he mumbled, and Mike, after a moment's hesitation, turned away.

Tucking the plans under one arm, and picking up the model of the super-charger, he ducked beneath Simon Allison's workbench, and opened the already-unlocked door of the small safe there. The model he placed carefully inside. Then, just for another second, he hesitated again and flicked a searching glance at his employer.

By this time Simon Allison had jammed the protesting Bill down on a stool and was gently retying the bandage. His back was turned squarely to Mike and the workbench.

The ghost of a grin flitted across the mechanic's tight lips. Then, quick as lightning, his hand streaked inside his jacket and came out grasping a second roll of paper, identical in size and shape with the one under his arm.

Quicker still, he made the change.

Simon Allison's valuable plans vanished—the fake roll was thrust into the safe. There came a loud clang as the heavy steel door closed, followed by the click of tumblers in the combination-lock.

Cannonball Mike Doyle rose to his feet. Nonchalantly he crossed to the workshop door and opened it, turning an impassive, hard-bitten face to Bill and his father.

"I'm off now, guv'nor!" he drawled. "S'long, Bill—get to bed early!"

He went out into the dusk with a curt nod as the others bade him good-night.

Once outside, with the door closed behind him, Mike Doyle took a quick, almost instinctive look round, then limped away down the dark lane into Kelsey Village, where he lodged in one of the cottages. As he went, he pressed his left arm closer to his side and grinned sardonically at the faint crackle of paper under his jacket.

"You won't be missed till morning!" he muttered to himself.

And the smile still lurked on his lips as he entered Widow Johnson's cottage.

Once safely inside his own small, bare room, the smile grew to a sudden fit of grim, silent laughter, though a steely glitter shone in his eyes.

Pulling a suitcase from under the bed, Mike Doyle tossed the Allison plans inside and stood nodding down at them, softly rubbing his game right leg the while.

"H'm! Well, now laugh this off, Corsica Phil!" he said harshly. "You beat me once, maybe—but maybe I get even this time! You an' that Len Allison pup don't get your mitts on these plans this trip! And—"

A bitter, derisive sneer twisted his mouth as he locked the suitcase and kicked it back into hiding.

"The same applies to Joe the Hump, if you're bringing him into this stunt, too!"

The Masked Hunchback!

T HERE, that'll do! It's a sizeable bruise all right, lad—must have been a real fast ball that hit you, eh? Thank your stars you've got a thick head!"

All unaware of Cannonball Mike Doyle's piece of juggling with the plans of his important invention, old Simon Allison finished the re-tying of Bill's bandage, and gruffly invited the youngster to "clear out."

He himself followed, after carefully locking-up the workshop for the night, though without another glance or thought for the safe under his bench, in which he had told Mike to place the precious plans. Father and son strolled into their little cottage and, as usual, prepared supper together.

It was a glum, silent meal they ate, however.

At first, Bill, eager to broach his plan of turning pro. for Avonshire, made one or two wily attempts to start a discussion on cricket, but met with no encouragement. Now that he was satisfied that his tall, tough son had not been seriously hurt in the Club and Ground match, Simon Allison turned to thoughts of his own work again, and sank into a moody reverie.

That he was badly upset by the constant failure to launch his new super-charger on the motor-world, was painfully obvious. Bill never remembered seeing his stubborn father look so tired and discouraged.

Wisely, therefore, the youngster kept his scheme bottled-up for that night, at least; and about nine-o'clock, when the old inventor still showed no signs of wanting to talk, he betook himself and his sore head to bed.

"Cheerio, dad! I'm off," he said cheerily.

"Night, boy. Sleep well!" murmured old Simon Allison kindly, but absently, and was soon absorbed in a note-book filled with calculations before Bill was out of the door.

Upstairs in his small room, which overlooked the back garden, Bill undressed and flopped wearily into bed, glad to get between the cool sheets after a stirring day. But though he counted invisible sheep, and performed other sleep-inducing stunts, excitement and his bruised forehead kept him awake.

His thoughts were fixed on Monday evening, when he firmly intended to ask Mr. Jerry Tempest, the county secretary, for a job on the Avonshire staff, and he was wondering—well, lots of things! Wondering about his chances, wondering what his dad would say, and—he grinned suddenly—how cousin Len would take it if he was engaged.

"Golly, never thought of that before," he mused. "I'll bet Len'll have a fit if we ever play for the County together,

with him as the lordly 'amachewer' and me just a pro. Maybe he'll set that big ox Valetti on to try to scare me out of it, like he tried to scare dad into selling the invention for about tuppence. I wouldn't put it past him—though, my hat, I wish both of 'em luck! They'll need it if they try any more rough stuff on us again!"

Restlessly, Bill tossed and turned in bed, until at last, when the downstairs clock chimed ten, he heard his father come slowly up the stairs. For another minute or so, there were sounds of movement in the next room; then the night silence shut down once more, broken only by the occasional hoot of an owl, or the rustle of trees in the meadow behind the cottage. And presently Bill drifted off into fitful slumber.

What exactly roused him again, Bill could not discover for the first few seconds. Nor did he know for how long he had slept. But all at once he found himself sitting bolt upright in bed, eyes wide open and heart pounding through the shock of sudden awakening.

Something had jolted him violently from the depths of sleep. But what?

His head was spinning and worse, an icy feeling of dread—of dire danger—made him shiver. It was as though he had just started up from an awful nightmare, yet somehow he knew there was a more solid reason for the queer panic that gripped him.

Holding his breath, he listened. Not a sound came from his father's room. Frowning, he turned his head to stare out into the dimly-starlit night. Then, all at once—

"Ye gods, someone's trying to—"

Next instant, Bill was out of bed, with head and shoulders thrust through the ever-open window, and muscles taut with alarm.

By craning his neck, he could just see the black shapeless blur of his father's workshop adjoining the cottage. And from the interior of the shed floated sounds that drove him to furious action.

There came suddenly a sharp, breathless cry—his father's voice, instantly stifled! Then strangled gasps, the dull thud of heavy blows, the scrape and scuffle of feet. A brief flash of electric light stabbed the gloom, followed by the metallic crash of a falling torch. Someone had broken into Simon Allison's workshop, and the old inventor had discovered him, and was fighting for dear life!

Bill did not hesitate a second—did not even waste time by dashing down the stairs and out through the cottage parlour.

With the recklessness so typical of all his actions, he swung himself vigorously over the sill in his pyjamas, clung to the window-ledge for a bare instant, then let go his hold and dropped sheer into the garden twelve feet below.

Thud!

Feet first, Bill landed, pitching over backwards among the rose-bushes in the flower-bed. Fortunately the soft mould lessened the impact, and fighting-mad, he hardly noticed the sharp thorns that scratched and tore his lightly clad limbs. Scrambling up dizzily, he burst free of the bushes and raced to the aid of his father.

He was just too late, however, for even as he reached the corner of the cottage, there sounded the smash of a last wicked blow, and a groan of agony. Then out of the workshop reeled Simon Allison, who threw up his arms and collapsed without another sound. A moment later his assailant appeared also, bending low over the old man he had just stunned.

Bill stopped dead for what seemed an

age, then horror froze him in his tracks. He could only lean against the cottage wall, staring with glazed eyes at the nightmare shape hovering over his father like some misshapen ghoul of darkness.

A cold thrill ran down the boy's spine. In the soft starlight he just made out a squat, powerful figure clad in black high-necked jersey, trousers, and rubber shoes. A close-fitting skull-cap of the same sable hue covered the thug's head, and all Bill could see of the lowered face was a thick, unkempt beard cocked at a brutal angle.

But worst feature of all was the unsightly, crooked hump that disfigured the bowed shoulders.

To Bill's fevered imagination the grisly deformity twisted its owner into the likeness of some hideous gorilla, gloating silently over its victim. A sudden spasm of disgust, increasing to blind, hateful rage, shook the lad out of his momentary stupor, and he sprang forward from the shadows.

A savage oath of surprise parted the

bearded lips of the stooping raider at sight of Bill's pyjama-clad form bearing down swiftly, and just as quickly the hunchback leapt aside from the prostrate inventor. In one black-gloved hand he gripped a rubber cosh; in the other a crumpled roll of papers. The Allison plans, Bill knew at a glance.

Hugging the roll closer to his chest, the thug snarled like a dog over a bone. For perhaps a second he halted, glaring malevolently through the slits of a crepe mask and balancing his cosh, as if uncertain what to do next.

Bill settled the question for him.

"You devil!" he cried, shooting through the air in a smashing low-tackle.

Full at the hunchback's knees Bill aimed, wrapping his arms round a pair of muscular thighs and planting his man good and hard. There was a jarring thump, a hoarse grunt, and a tangle of legs and bodies as the two slammed to earth together, Bill uppermost. Then, rolling clear, he made a

(Continued on next page.)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

HALLO, chums! You've got another magnificent free gift photogravure plate this week, bringing your total up to ten. But this series of photos showing "Marvels of Modern Engineering" has not finished yet. Next week's free souvenir photo-plate illustrates "The Flying Hamburger"—a veritable monster of the iron way plying between Hamburg and Berlin. Gee, and can't she move! This handsome photo-plate is undoubtedly one of the best in the series and should not be missed on any account. Give an order for next Saturday's MAGNET now and you won't be disappointed.

I have some more interesting items to bring to your notice this week, chums. First, is a great new summer scheme in which.

A QUARTER OF A MILLION BARS OF CHOCOLATE

will be given away free to "Magnetites." Readers of the MAGNET who are about to visit the seaside for their holidays will be jolly glad to learn that Messrs. Cadbury Bros., of Bournville, have contributed no fewer than two hundred and fifty thousand bars of Dairy Milk Chocolate for the consumption of readers buying the MAGNET from beach sellers, kiosks, and other such places at most of our popular seaside resorts. In addition to this, Cadbury Bros. are contributing pound boxes of their delicious assorted chocolates as prizes at our Concert Party, Cinema, and Gala Competitions. Be sure, then, and watch out for the MAGNET representatives when you are at the seaside this summer.

And now a word about our great aeroplane offer which I feel sure you will all take advantage of. If you've not already started collecting the necessary three coupons do so now—you don't want to be left out in the cold, do you? By the way, will my Irish chums please note that there is no duty on these aeroplanes, so Irish readers can take advantage of this stupendous offer on the same lines as readers in the Old Country.

And now let me put you wise to the corking yarn of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, entitled: "THE SECRET OF THE TOWER!" which appears in this week's "Gem." Gore, the cad of the Shell, tempts Fate once too often with the result that he is given "the order of the boot." Of the consequences which follow and the everlasting lesson Gore learns is told in Martin Clifford's inimitable style. You will find this story both thrilling and amusing, and I am sure you will thoroughly appreciate it.

Before switching on to next week's programme I have just room for a Greyfriars limerick, which F. Brierley, of 40, Laurel Street, Tottington, near Bury, Lancs, has sent me, and for which he will receive a handsome pocket-wallet. Here it is:

The fellows all chuckle and snigger
At Bunter's preposterous figure.
He's as lazy and fat
As an overfed cat,
And hasn't a ha'porth of vigour!

NOW for next week's programme: Frank Richards, of course, "heads the bill" with a first-class yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled:

"BUNTER'S HUNDRED-POUND BOATER!"

You can take it from me your favourite author has packed this story with some of his best work, too. Once you start reading it you won't want to lay it aside until you've read every line of it. John Brierley, too, is in fine fettle in our powerful cricket story, while a rib-tickling "Greyfriars Herald," together with more of "Umpire's" interesting answers to readers' queries will round off a programme it'll be hard to beat.

Meet you all next week, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,324.

snatch at the plans, just missed them in the gloom, and piled on top of his cursing foe again.

A terrific punch under the ear was followed by a kick in the ribs that drove him backwards, groggy and winded, into a bush. Rage, the desire for revenge, alone forced him to his feet again. He tottered forward once more, letting fly right and left, as the hunchback also scrambled up. But the black bullet-head bobbed skilfully; a lightning jab stopped the lad's rush, and then—

Bill sensed rather than saw the vicious sweep of a rubber cosh.

Moro by luck than judgment, he ducked in the nick of time, and the murderous weapon swished over his shoulder. But, though he escaped possible death, he could not dodge the hunchback's down-swinging arm also, which thudded down squarely on his injured head. That was the finish. Still conscious, but helpless with pain, Bill went to earth like a log and stayed there.

The hunchback was off in a flash, thrusting the Allison plans into his hip pocket as he fled.

"Help! Stop thief!"

Febly Bill tried to shout for aid, but a husky croak was the only result. He heard the cottage gate click, heard the fast-fading patter of running feet, and presently—a sound that killed his last hopes—the purr of a powerful engine, perfectly tuned. It came from somewhere along the dark lane, murmured in his ears for a brief minute only, and then ceased.

Bill writhed in sheer fury.

That he had put up a storming show against an older, experienced, and far stronger foe brought him no comfort. All that counted was that the mysterious hunchback, aided by a confederate with a fast car, had got away with the plans.

"Dad!"

Gritting his teeth against the faintness that threatened to overcome him, Bill crawled back to his father—a motionless heap, lying half in, half out of the workshop door. The boy's hand trembled as he touched the grizzled head, and a horrified cry escaped him when his fingers came away moist and reddened. The fear that his father was dead already stabbed him like a hot knife.

(Look out for further thrilling chapters of this popular cricket story in next week's Bumper Free Gift issue of the MAGNET.)

AUNT JUDY AT GREYFRIARS!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Bunter!" rapped the Head.

"What—?"

"It wasn't me, sir!"

"What?"

"If Wharton says it was me, sir, it wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought I—I'd better come and—and tell you, sir, that—I never knew anything about it! I told Wharton it wasn't me, and he jolly well knew it wasn't, too, because he was there with the other fellows when I went to the study—"

"To Mr. Prout's study?" asked the Head, with awful grimness.

"Oh! No! I mean, I never went there, sir—never went near it! As for writing that paper, sir, I never even thought of such a thing. I—I shouldn't dream of telling Prout that he was a cheeky beast, sir! I'm much too respectful to tell him what I think—"

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"If—if—if Wharton says it was me, sir, I—I—"

"Wharton has said nothing of the kind, Bunter," said the Head grimly.

"Neither, I think, is it necessary. Mr.

Prout, I think the whole matter is clear now."

"I—I think so, sir."

Harry Wharton left the study. Billy Bunter would gladly have followed. The Head, in an awful voice, told him to remain. He remained for execution.

"Dear Horace—"

"It's all right!"

"My dear, dear boy—"

"Right as rain!"

Horace Coker hugged Aunt Judy and almost danced her round the room. Miss Coker smiled through her tears.

"You see, it was all a silly mistake," explained Coker, cheerfully. "Prout's rather dense, and the Head's not very bright! They fancied I'd written that silly paper—as if I would, you know! Goodness knows what put such an idea into their heads—but schoolmasters are rather a fatheaded lot! Of course, I never knew what they'd got in their silly heads! Lucky you told young Wharton and he went to the Beak. It was rather cheeky of him perhaps, but he meant well—he's not a bad kid! And it's all right—right as rain—hurrah!"

It was a relieved and happy Aunt Judy that departed later in a taxi for the station. Her visit to Greyfriars that day had been, after all, fortunate for her dear Horace. But for that, it was very probable that Coker would have departed—sacked—and still in sublime ignorance of what he was supposed to have done. Greyfriars fellows chuckled over the story—they roared over it—they howled over it—they wondered what sort of brain was parked inside Coker's rugged head, and indeed, whether there was any brain there at all! Coker was puzzled to know what all the merriment was about. So far as he knew, he had done nothing to set the House in a roar. But Coker wore a cheery grin that evening. All was well that ended well; and the Greyfriars Fifth was not to lose its brightest ornament!

There was only one fellow who did not laugh. That was Billy Bunter. When the Head had done with him, Bunter did not feel like laughing, and he resolved then and there never to tell a beak what he thought of him.

THE END

(Billy Bunter and the chums of Greyfriars appear in another grand yarn next week, entitled: "BUNTER'S HUNDRED-POUND BOATER!" Get ready for another hearty laugh, chums, and don't forget that next Saturday's MAGNET will contain another Free Photo-Plate!)

CRACK A JOKE and WIN A PENKNIFE!

One of this week's useful prizes goes to: Tom Brown, 93, Askew Avenue, Gipsyville, Yorks, who sent in the following ribtickler:

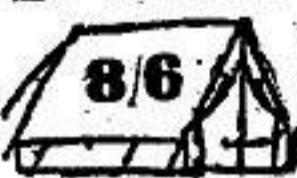


Foreman: "Now, then, Bill, what about carrying up some more bricks?"

Bill: "I ain't feelin' well, guv'nor; I'm tremblin' all over."

Foreman: "All right, then, get busy with the sieve!"

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O'Brien THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, 17 COVENTRY.

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, UNION JACK SERIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

SITUATION VACANT
Ambitious lad, desirous of rising above his fellows, wanted to sit on the chapel roof and yell out when the bells are coming.—Apply Bolsover's Free Fight Syndicate, behind the chapel any evening.

SMELLING SALTS
May be obtained at the sanatorium if you feel faint after reading the following announcement:
Fish has just paid his annual subscription to the cricket club.



THE NEW Greyfriars Herald



FIFTY PER CENT COMMISSION
Paid to any gentleman who will collect the ten bob I lent Loder last term. Mask, life-preserver, knuckledusters, and suit of armour provided free.—Apply "HAD SOME," Box 77, "Greyfriars Herald."

SUSPENDERS WANTED! URGENT!
Lascelles is so fed-up with my maths paper, he says he'll report me to the Head unless I pull my socks up!—H. SKINNER, Study No. 11, Remove.

No. 39 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

July 1st, 1933.

"CYCLONE" SQUIFF GETS SCOOPS

New Reporter's Amazing Methods

Squiff earned the nickname "Cyclone" very soon after he joined the staff of the "Greyfriars Herald," and we're going to tell you, without fear of contradiction, that he collects news like other people collect Free Gift coupons. Boy, what a reporter! Why, the lad's the greatest genius ever known to journalism!

Within half an hour of his appointment he had returned to the editorial office with news of a bomb explosion, a cricket-field riot, a shipwreck, and an armed hold-up. Our Editor almost wept with joy.

"Squiff, old chap," he said, in a voice broken with emotion, "you're wonderful—marvellous—the man we've been waiting for for years! How on earth do you manage it?"

"Oh, it just comes naturally to me," Squiff answered, with a modest smile. "Matter of fact, it's a kind of instinct—what they call news-sense, I believe."

"Whatever it is, it's just what we want on the 'Herald'!" Wharton said. "Thank goodness we found you when we did!"

Wharton gave him a rather peculiar look.

"Is that the bomb explosion you reported, Squiff?" he asked.

"Yes, that's the one!" Squiff answered coolly. "I wonder what silly ass gave the game away?"

"Well—my hat!"

Before we had time to tell Squiff what we thought of that item of news, Bunter had burst into the room, squeaking with terror.

"Save me!" he howled. "Someone's found out I was



using my ventriloquism to make the Shell and Fourth punch each other on the cricket-field, and the blessed teams are both after me now! Tell 'em how you gave me five bob to do it, Squiffy, or they'll serag me!"

The editorial staff gasped.

"Is this true, Squiff?" asked Wharton.

"Well—yes, in a way!" said Squiff rather sheepishly. "Oh crumbs!"

The last exclamation as Coker and Pottor and Greene burst into the editorial office,

streaming water all over the place.

"There's the man that took out the plugs and nearly drowned us!" roared Coker, pointing to Squiff. "Smash him!"

"So—so that was Squiff's reported shipwreck!" stammered Wharton, almost dazedly. "But what the thump—"

He broke off in amazement, as two evil-looking tramps stepped in.

"There's the young gent!" roared one of them. "Told us 'o'd give us 'arf-a-crown if we'd pretend to 'old up another young gent, 'o did; and now we've done it, the 'arf-crown turns out to be bad!"

"M-m-my hat!"

The two tramps wore the armed hold-up men, whose exploit Squiff had just reported!

All the sensational happenings Squiff had reported from beginning to end, had been arranged by Squiff himself!

Then followed a riot, which became a free fight when the Fourth and Shell cricket teams turned up, thirsting for Squiff's gore.

Only the Head was able to quieten things down—and there was a riotous scene in the Head's study when he got Squiff back there!

"Cyclone" Squiff has been fired from the "Herald" reporting staff. We're firm believers in hot news, but Squiff's kind of news is a bit too hot for us!

Amateur Bullfighters' Attention

Grand Competition after tea next Monday, to see who can venture nearest to Farmer Hedges' mad bull, waving a red flag. Prize: A beautifully-bound volume on "Spanish Bullfighting." Order of entry will be decided by tossing up. Order of exit probably ditto!

COKER'S DREAM GIRL!



(NOTE.—This article is in response to numerous requests for something fresh from Coker's pen. We asked him to make it serious, so as to give you a good laugh. He calls it "My Dream Girl"!—Ed.)

You may wonder why a chap of my standing and inflexance should rite for a fagg jornal. The explanation is that that cheeky young ass Wharton told me the public were clamoring for an article from my pen and with my usual good nature I promised to give him the bennyfit of my mitey brain for once.

I have called this article "My Dream Girl." By that, I mean My Ideal Girl. Now I happen to have had a lot of eggsperience of Girls. There's something about my rugged, manly appearance that appeals to them. As Miss Fillis Howell, of Cliff House, once remarked, when a girl's with me she feels safe against robbers and bandits, for one look at my face would strike terror into the scoundrells' harts.

But while I admit I've had a lot of eggsperience of girls, I must also konfess that there's something misterious and elusive about them that still puzzles me—something almost forrin to the open, manly out-

Fifth-Former Spills Sentiment

look of a chap like myself. They seem to feel like anything when I talk in a serious vein; and yet, when I tell them screemingly funny jies, they usually look as sollem as boiled owls.

They seem to lack a senso of logic. You'd think any girl would be glad to be protected against insults, wouldn't you? Yet I remember an incident that makes me wonder whether that's always trow. It was an occasion when I was talking to a Cliff House girl named Clara Trevlyn, in the lane. Two Remo' rks—Rake and Wibley—hap, al to pass, and both had the awdassity to wink at her! Quivering with anger at the idea of a young lady being insulted in my presence, I rushed at them and nocked their heads together. And then, to my amazement, the very girl I had been defending turned round and smacked my face! I defy anybody to understand a young lady like that!

My Dream Girl is something very different. The meer thought of raising a hand against me would never occur to her. She wouldn't r me as I went in to bat at cricket, she would respect me and admire my every action, she would agree with everything I said, be suitably serious when I spoke seriously, and laef like anything when I cracked a joke.

I remember telling Miss Barbara Redfern this, one day. Much to my surprise, she told me that what I wanted was not a girl, but a ventriloquist's dummy!

Dashed if I can see any senso in that statement. Can you?

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Master Tom Brown

By Mrs. Jessie Mimble

(NOTE.—Mrs. Mimble firmly declined to commit her opinion of Brown to paper, so we had to take it down in shorthand as she spoke. Here it is, verbatim!—Ed.)

No, Master Wharton, I have quite enough writing to do, making up the books for my little shop, without starting to write for the newspapers. Me write for the newspapers, indeed! The vory idea!

But I will say, if you want me to tell you about Master Brown, that—yes, Master Temple, they're fresh in to-day. Half a pound? Thank you!

Well, as I was saying about Master Brown—what's that, young Master Tubb? "North hasn't had his parcel yet"? You go back at once and tell Master North I gave it to Trotter to deliver quite an hour ago! Dearie me, that page-boy is the bane of my life! You'll pardon the expression, Master Wharton? But about Master Brown—

Good-afternoon, Master Coker! Settle your bill? Yes, it's two pounds, five and sixpence. Thank you, sir! No receipt? But you must have a receipt—dearie me, the boy's gone. Just like Master Coker! But as I was saying about Master Brown—

No, Master Bunter! Yes, I said "no," and I mean "no"! And if you dare lay your hands on those tarts—oh, very well, Master Wharton, if you insist on paying; but Master Bunter doesn't deserve it. He's a greedy boy, and I don't care if you do hear it.

Now, what I was going to say about Master Brown was this—oh dear, here are the boys from the cricket game, all wanting ices and lemonade, I'll be bound! If you don't mind waiting half an hour or so, I'll tell you just what I think of Master Brown, and—yes, Master Hobson? Thank you, Master Fry! If you'll reach me those glasses, Master Bolsover—

(At this point, seeing that the only way of getting Mrs. Mimble's opinion of Tom Brown was to knock her up in the middle of the night, I chucked it!—Ed.)

WAKE UP, GREYFRIARS!

Mauleverer's Rousing Advice

"Wake up, Greyfriars!" was the rousing injunction issued by the Earl Mauleverer, in the course of an interview yesterday.

"It's my belief that the chappies are gettin' slack an' lazy in their old age," went on the languid lord, with a sigh. "When I was a lad, Greyfriars used to win easily at the games the chappies played—footet an' crickball or somethin', I fancy.

"But nowadays, dear man, the beggars occasionally lose! Only this week, I understand, somebody or other beat them at somethin'. Shockin', isn't it?"

"Things all round seem quieter an' tamer than they used to be. Everybody used to be frightfully energetic, and fellows used to rush about like anythin'! They don't do it half as much to-day.

"I believe in a certain amount of rushin' about, y'know. Labor omnia what's it, as they say in the classics; you understand Latin, I hope, ol' bean?"

"Rushin' about or somethin' has helped to make our far-flung what-day'call-it whatever it is or somethin' or other like that—I forget exactly what.

"In a word, what's wanted to-day at Greyfriars is a great revival—a resurgence of l'esprit de what's it, if you follow me, dear man.

"Wake up, Greyfriars! Wake up as much as you like!

"There's only one thing I ask: Don't wake me!"

And, exhausted by his oratorical efforts, Lord Mauleverer sank into the arms of Morpheus!

WHEN AMATEUR GARDENERS CALL—

On the Editor, will they please leave their sacks of earth and pails of water outside? We don't want people to think we're going in for a mud-slinging campaign!



'Lonzy's Little Letters

Dear Editor.—In the anticipation that my epistolary activity may ameliorate the felicity of the animate existence of a confederative associate of my domiciliary apartment, I am constrained to transgressive occupation of your unoccupied apatial capacity in the interest of a potential increment in the aural puissance of that individual.

The semi-imperviousness to aural sensation or consciousness experienced in this case contemporaneously with the indubitable juvenile propensity for indistinct verbal audibility would seem to actuate the inference that the extirpation of lingual incomprehensibility and a positive clarification of the enunciative issue would be immeasurably beneficial.

My remarks are relative to a juvenile known as Thomas Dutton.

Yours for auricular amelioration,
ALONZO TODD.

(What 'Lonzy means is that if we'll only speak up, young Tom Dutton, our hard-of-hearing specialist, will hear us! But it takes 'Lonzy half a dictionary to say it!—Ed.)

Dicky Nugent's Weekly Wisdom

When a lady visitor told our Form master we looked like angels, he said he was quite certain none of us had wings.

All the same, he can't deny that we're always skylarking about in the Form-room!

BUNTER STILL UNCHALLENGED

Linley's uncle, who is an experimental cloth designer in a Yorkshire woollen mill, has recently invented some amazing yarns.

We understand, however, that they are not half so amazing as the yarns Bunter invented when he was late for calling-over last night!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Mark Linley has a unique collection of autographs, including nearly every inmate of Greyfriars—even Bunter. Bunter's signature, incidentally, takes up the largest area!



Coker just missed F.C. Tozer the other day when showing what his re-conditioned motor-bike could really do. He didn't miss the village pond, however, from which Tozer gallantly rescued him.



A Remove Secret Society—the Sportive Blades—presided over by Harold Skinner, came to a sticky end when Wingate and Gwynne raided the first meeting—a card party—with their ashplants.



In an eight-oared race between Remove and Upper Fourth crews, Remove won easily by three lengths. Temple & Co. hadn't a puff left in them at the finish!



Uncle Clegg, who runs the sun shop in Friardale, makes Bunter pay cash for every purchase—a wise precaution, due to Bunter's long-standing account!



Harry Wharton is top of the Remove batting list so far. His latest score is 142 against St. Jude's. Mr. Lascelles, the games master, considers Wharton an England hope of the future!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

MASTERS' COMMON-ROOM NEWS

Owing to pressure of work this month, Mr. Prout has been unable to entertain his colleagues with his exciting stories of big-game hunting in the Rockies.

Sleepy sickness, which was very prevalent among the masters, has completely disappeared since the end of last month.

NOT THE KIND HE WANTED

Bunter's pater has written to tell him to shift up from the bottom of the Form, unless he wants a jolly good hiding at the end of the term.

This is the first postal "order" Bunter has received this year!