

THE
MAGNET

SMILE ALL THE WHILE WITH HARRY WHARTON & CO., Inside.

The REMOVE DETECTIVES!

By FRANK RICHARDS



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Billy Bunter's
Own Paper

2^D



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DR. BIRCHEMALL WIELDS THE AXE!

A Sensational Story of Jack Jolly & Co. of St. Sam's, and their Amazing Headmaster—Dr. Birchermall.

"I'm fammished!" cried Jack Jolly, of the St. Sam's Fourth.

"Same here!" corussed Merry and Bright and Fearless.

"I only hoap there's something solid and substantial for dinner to-day," said the kaptin of the Fourth.

"What-ho!" grinned his loyle supporters.

Our heroes had come in to dinner with keen, healthy appetites. It was a cold November day, and they had been kicking a footer about in the quad for half an hour. So natcherally they felt as hungry as punters.

"Perhaps they'll dish up boiled beef and carrots and dumplings," remarked Fearless optimistically, as they reached the dining-hall. "I hoap so, anyway."

Unforchuntly, Frank's hoap was doomed to disappointment. When they reached their table, it was to find Dr. Birchermall, the revered and majestick headmaster of St. Sam's, dishing out the dinner; and all there appeared to be was a most decidedly thin-looking soup. The Head smiled a beeming smile as he notissed the new arrivals.

"Pass up your plates, boys, while the going's good," he cried. "This delishus soup is going like hot cakes; but the quantity is strictly limitted in accordance with the rules of the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League!"

Jack Jolly started slitley. At the mention of the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League—that notorious society founded by the Head, it seemed, for the sole purpuss of lining his own pocket—the kaptin of the Fourth felt a pang of suspishon run through him.

"Eggseuse me, sir," he said, "but would you mind telling me what we are having for dinner to-day after this watery-looking licker?"

"What are you having after, Jolly?" repeated the Head, raising his eyebrows half-way up his forrid in serprize. "Bless my sole! What do you think you are having after? Nix, of course—or, to put it vulgarly, nothing!"

"My hat!"

"The St. Sam's Anti-Waste League is determined to put down gluttony and piggishness," went on the Head, ladling out a measly little helping of soup into Jolly's plate and setting it down again on the table with a crash. "A portion of soup is quite suffishant for a normal boy's dinner. It's spiffing stuff, and by no means watery-looking licker like you

insinuate. I know for a fact that a piece of oxtail was held in it for five minnits while it was on the boil!"

"It's not suffishant for me, sir, anyway!" said Jolly boldly.

"Same here!" cried Fearless.

"Me, too!" yelled Bright, and a duzen other fellows joined in the corus.

Dr. Birchermall srghed weerily.

"Ah, me! Again, I see, I am faced with an eggssample of greediness and selfishness on the part of you yung raskals! But the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League will stand firm and refuse to be browbeaten! Lickham, you mite finish serving up this scrumptious soup to those who want it. I feel too melancolly to proseed myself."

"Oh, anything to oblige, sir!" sniffed Mr. Lickham, who looked by no means pleased himself at the Head's new anti-waste dinner.

Dr. Birchermall stalked majestickally back to his own table. He was followed by some very eggsspressive looks from the fammished Fourth-Formers, and their looks became still



more eggsspressive when Binding, the page, staggered in, boughed down under the weight of a grate steaming dish of food. It was easy to guess where Binding was taking that huge consignment of dinner.

Binding, as everybody eggsspected, duly planted the dish before the Head and lifted the cover. A mermer of wrath ran round the dining-hall, as he eggssposed to light a whole roast chicken and grate stacks of vegetables.

Jack Jolly's blod simply boiled as he saw the Head make a ravenous onslawt on that mountain of tuck. He rose to his feet and eyed Dr. Birchermall with gleeming eyes.

"What about sharing some of your dinner with us, sir?" he cried. "Fare's fare!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Head grinned.

"Fare's fare in the usual way, I admit," he larfed. "But in this case fare's fowl—and a nice, juicy one at that! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to larf at, sir!" growled

Burleigh, the kaptin of St. Sam's, from the prefects' table at the back of Dr. Birchermall. "My idea is that it's a bit thick!"

"Quite right, Burleigh!" cried the Head gaily. "It is a bit thick, and nice and tender at the same time. Just the right kind of chicken, in fact, to revive the flagging energies of one whose efforts for the Anti-Waste League call for plenty of sustaining fodder!"

"Shame!" came a cry from the Fourth.

Dr. Birchermall frowned.

"Oh, well, if that's going to be the attitude, I decline to diskuss the matter further," he said loftily. "The only thing I'd like to say is—yooop!"

That was not really what the Head had intended saying; but it seemed the most natcherall thing to say when he suddenly found his face pushed right into the middle of his plate!

It was Burleigh, of the Sixth, who had taken this drastick step. As a rule, the kaptin of St. Sam's was as meek as a mouse; but the Head's anticks had now made him ratty. Burleigh crept up behind the Head, sceezed his napper, and pressed his face right into that hefty grato dinner! It was the most commical site you could imagine, and the spectators roared with larfter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It took a lot to put Dr. Birchermall off his tuck; but that move of Burleigh's did the trick. The Head staggered to his feet, clawing chicken and vegetables out of his beard, and gasping and spluttering like the dickens. Then he made for the door at top speed. He had had quite enuff dinner for one day!

The general opinion was that Burleigh's little stunt would put a stop to the activities of the Anti-Waste League for some time.

But this was not the case. Half an hour after the scene in the dining-hall, Dr. Birchermall came clattering down the stairs of the School House with a grin on his face and an axe in his hand. The crowd scattered wildly at the site of that axe; but the Head, who seemed to have recovered his good spirits, called them back with a wringing whoop.

"Oyez! Oyez!" he cried. "Attention, everybody! The economy axe of the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League is now about to go into action! De Vere!"

"Yaas, sir!" drawled the Honorable Guy de Vere.

"I see you are wearing a diamond

(Continued on page 27.)

EXCITING SCHOOL-ADVENTURE YARN OF HARRY WHARTON & CO., OF GREYFRIARS, STARRING THE GREAT HORACE COKER and—

The REMOVE DETECTIVES!



COKER CALLS!

COKER!" About fifty Greyfriars fellows uttered that name all at once.

Fifty pairs of eyes at least were fixed on Horace Coker, as he walked in at the school gates.

"Oh, my hat! Coker!" roared Bob Cherry.

"That ass Coker!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Coker again!" chuckled Vernon-Smith.

"I say, you fellows, it's Coker!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Coker's come back!"

A few days ago, the appearance of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form in the quad would have excited no special remark.

Now his appearance made every fellow stare. It surprised them! It startled them! Indeed, the ghost of Horace Coker could hardly have startled Greyfriars more!

For Coker of the Fifth had been expelled.

Coker, once of the Fifth, was no longer of the Fifth—he no longer belonged to Greyfriars School at all!

But he walked in at the gates as coolly as if nothing had happened. He gave Gosling, the porter, a nod, as Gosling stepped out of his lodge and stepped in his way.

"Good-morning, old bean!" said Coker cheerily.

Gosling waved a horny hand at

"If you've come here as customers, all right!" said Coker.
"If you haven't, get out, before I boot you!"

him. Gosling, it seemed, was not going to admit Horace Coker to the precincts of the school from which he had been expelled. He stood in Coker's path and waved him off, as if Horace Coker were a troublesome bluebottle.

"Don't you come in, Master Coker!" said Gosling. "'Ead's orders that you ain't to be let in!"

Coker smiled genially.

"Who's going to stop me?" he inquired.

"I ham!" answered Gosling emphatically. "Wot I says is this 'ere, Master Coker—you 'ook it!"

Coker laughed.

Coker was big, and he was burly, and he was beefy. Coker could have handled two Goslings easily, one with each hand. But Coker had a proper respect for age—and he was not going to hit Gosling, unless Gosling insisted upon it.

"Trundle off, old thing!" said Coker good-humouredly. "Get out of the way while you're still in one piece!"

"Look 'ere——" said the Greyfriars porter.

"I've called to see my Form-master," explained Coker. "Just a friendly call, see?"

"Mr. Prout ain't your Form-master now, and well you knows it!" retorted

Gosling. "You 'ook it, Master Coker!"

A crowd of Greyfriars fellows gathered round the gates. Most of them were laughing.

Fellows had been sorry when old Horace was sacked. It was an awful thing to happen to any chap! But really, the way Coker of the Fifth took it made it seem more comic than tragic.

Coker had at first refused to go—and two Sixth Form prefects had run him off the premises. Then he had declined to go home, and had put up at Uncle Clegg's in the village. Then—as if he specially wanted to exasperate his late headmaster and Form-master—he had actually taken on a job as grocer's boy with old Mr. Clegg, and called at the school with a basket, delivering goods!

That was the climax. That had caused Dr. Locke to warn Gosling that Coker, if he reappeared, was not to be admitted to the school in any circumstances whatever.

Yet here he was again!

He hadn't a basket this time. He wasn't calling as Mr. Clegg's new boy. He was just walking in, to call on Mr. Prout!

"Prout will be glad to see Coker

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again—I don't think!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The gladfulness will probably not be terrific!" chuckled Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"Of all the asses——" said Frank Nugent.

"Of all the born idiots——" said Johnny Bull.

"Let him come in, Gosling!" called out Skinner. "Prout will be fearfully bucked to see him. Prout's looking out of his study window now! He looks glad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter and Greene, who had been Coker's pals in the Fifth before he was sacked from Greyfriars, came hurrying up.

"Oh, my hat—Coker!" gasped Potter.

"Back again—like a bad penny!" sighed Greene.

"Of all the thumping nerve!" exclaimed Price of the Fifth. "What the deuce do you mean by buttin' in here, Coker?"

Coker looked at Price.

"Hallo, you smoky sweep!" he said. "I shipped your study just before I left. I'll ship it again when I come back! I rammed your sneaking head into a waste-paper basket. I'll ram it in again!"

Coker made a forward stride.

Gosling, finding that he could not wave Coker off like a bluebottle, pushed him back. At least, he tried to push him back. He planted both horny hands on Coker's chest and pushed.

But Gosling's push produced no effect on Coker! Gosling might as well have pushed at the solid stone pillars of the gateway.

Coker stood like a rock.

"Go it, Gosling!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Shove away!" encouraged Smithy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look 'ere——" gasped Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere, look 'ere, Master Coker, you ain't coming in 'ere, I says—and don't you think it! You're sacked, you are, and you get off with you!"

"Aren't you getting out of the way, Gosling?" asked Coker.

"No!" retorted Gosling. "I ain't!"

"I fancy you are!" grinned Coker. Two mighty hands grasped old Gosling. The ancient Greyfriars porter was hooked off his feet.

Coker picked him up almost as if he had been a doll.

Gosling's ancient legs thrashed the air, amid a howl of laughter from the Greyfriars crowd.

"You leggo!" yelled Gosling. "You 'car me, Master Coker! You leggo, and put a man down! Oooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker did not let go! He did not put Gosling down! He raised Gosling above his head and carried him towards his lodge.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the whole mob of Greyfriars fellows.

"Ooooooh! 'Elp!" spluttered Gosling.

With his arms and legs wildly fly-

ing, Gosling was carried to his lodge and dumped down therein.

He sat in the doorway and gurgled for breath. He gurgled and gurgled.

"Sit there, old bean!" said Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And leaving Gosling sitting and gurgling, Coker strode on his way, amid a yelling crowd.

"Look here, you cheeky ass——" exclaimed Price of the Fifth.

Stephen Price seemed to be the only Greyfriars man who was not pleased to see Coker again.

No doubt that was accounted for by the fact that Coker had shipped his study and rammed his head into a waste-paper basket just before he left. Little attentions of that sort did not endear Coker to Stephen Price.

Coker did not answer Price in words. He swept out a powerful hand, which landed rather like a flail on Price's ear.

Smack!

"Whoo—hoop!" roared Price, as he went over under that hefty smack!

Price sprawled and roared.

Coker gave him a glance of careless contempt and walked on.

Nobody else made any attempt to stop Coker. Nobody wanted to stop him. Coker was providing a free entertainment by this visit to the school from which he had been bunked, and which he was forbidden to re-enter. Most of the fellows were disposed to encourage Coker to carry on.

"Follow on, my infants!" gasped Bob Cherry, as Coker strode away towards the House.

And the whole mob followed Coker, leaving Gosling sitting gasping in the doorway of his lodge and Price tottering to his feet, with a hand to a painful ear.

At the doorway of the House, Loder of the Sixth appeared.

Loder was a prefect. He held up a commanding hand.

"Stop!" he rapped.

In his days at Greyfriars School Coker had often wanted to punch the bully of the Sixth. Often and often had he told Potter and Greene that he didn't know how he kept his hands off Gerald Loder. But punching a prefect was too awfully serious an enterprise, even for the hot-headed and headstrong Horace—a fellow was sacked for that sort of thing!

But matters were altered now. Coker was already sacked. In his sacked state, Loder of the Sixth was no more to Coker than Sammy Bunter of the Second!

So this was an opportunity not to be missed.

At long last, Coker could punch Loder of the Sixth if he liked—and he did.

The word "Stop" was hardly out of Loder's mouth when Coker hit him.

Loder of the Sixth went over backwards in the doorway with a bump and a yell.

"Man down!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Good old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, regardless, walked on.

Leaving Loder of the Sixth for dead, as it were, Horace Coker walked

into the House, and the old Greyfriars quadrangle rang with merriment behind him.

PUTTING IT TO PROUT!

MR. PROUT, master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, gasped for breath.

From his study window, Prout had spotted Coker, and with popping eyes he had watched Coker's progress to the House.

Old Pompous seemed hardly able to believe his popping eyes. Still less could he believe them when the door of his study opened and that former member of his Form walked in.

Coker gave him a nod.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Coker.

"Boy!" gasped Prout.

"I've called——" Coker began.

"How dare you call?" boomed Prout. "I repeat, how dare you? You have been expelled from this school, Coker! You have been sent away from this school with ignominy for having perpetrated an unheard-of outrage in this very study——"

"Let a fellow speak, sir," said Coker. "I told you, when the Head sacked me, that I never banged off those fireworks in your study——"

"How dare you say so, Coker," boomed the Fifth Form master. "when, with my own ears, I heard you threaten to do so, and then——"

"Never mind what I said," interrupted Coker. "It's what I did that matters! I don't mind admitting that I blew off steam when you bagged my fireworks and confiscated them! Fellows often blow off steam! But I never really meant it—and I never did it!"

"Enough!"

"Haven't you found out yet who banged off those fireworks?" demanded Coker. "It's time you did!"

"You did!" raved Prout.

"I've told you I didn't! Ten to one it was some cheeky fag—one of those young sweeps in the Remove, very likely. Keeping a stack of fireworks in your study was really asking for it, with a lot of cheeky fags about!"

"Enough! Go!"

"I'm not going yet!" said Coker. "When you find out who really banged off those fireworks, I shall expect an apology!"

"What?"

"And then I'm ready to come back."

"Boy!"

"At present," said Coker, "I'm sacked! I'm sacked under a silly mistake! The Head will be glad enough to see me here again when it comes out that it was a silly mistake! You ought to be trying your hardest to find out who did it! See?"

"Go!" gurgled Prout.

"But that isn't what I came to say," went on Coker. "I thought I'd mention it, that's all. I've something else to tell you, Mr. Prout."

Mr. Prout waved plump hands at him.

"I desire to hear nothing from you, Coker! I refuse to hear a word from you! You are expelled from this

school. A sense of shame should prevent you from revisiting the school from which you have been ignominiously expelled."

"I've nothing to be ashamed of," explained Coker. "If anybody here has anything to be ashamed of, it ain't me—it's you!"

"What?"

"You ought to be jolly well ashamed of getting a fellow bunked under a silly mistake," explained Coker. "Don't you see that?"

Prout did not seem to see it. His majestic face was purple with wrath. He glared round his study as if in search of something—probably a cane!

"But never mind that," went on Coker. "I've got something else to say. I've come here specially to tell you. My Aunt Judy—"

"Leave my study!"

"My Aunt Judy at present knows nothing of this," continued Coker. "And I don't want her to know. I—"

"Leave this House!"

"You see, I can't have her worried by silly mistakes made by a schoolmaster," explained Coker. "As soon as it comes out who banged off those fireworks in your study, the Head will ask me to come back—that stands to reason. He's sacked me for nothing, and he will be jolly anxious to set it right. Well, I don't want my Aunt Judy to hear anything about it till then!"

"Leave this school!"

"I've written home, explaining that as I left school under a mistake, I am staying on in the neighbourhood till it's set right!"

"Go!"

"But all I've told Aunt Judy is that there was nothing to worry about," said Coker. "Now, as it happens, Aunt Judy had arranged to come here and see me to-day, it being a half-holiday—"

"Will you go?" roared Prout.

"As she doesn't know how the matter stands she will come, all the same," continued Coker. "Naturally, I want to be here when she blows in—"

"You, an expelled boy—" gurgled Prout.

"I'm trying to make you understand that I don't want her to know anything about that," said Coker patiently. "Don't you see? I want to see her when she comes, and have her to tea in my study, as usual. And after she's taken her train, I'm prepared to leave again without any fuss! But," added Coker, "no nonsense while she's here! I prefer to keep all this from her."

Prout gazed at him speechlessly.

It had often puzzled Prout, when Coker was in his Form, how any fellow could be so abysmally obtuse as Horace James Coker. Now he was as puzzled as ever. Coker, sacked from Greyfriars, seemed to think that this was a quite reasonable proposition.

Coker was fond of his Aunt Judy. He did not want Aunt Judy worried and bothered by the news that he had been sacked. This, to Coker, was important—other matters less important!

So it seemed reasonable to Coker that he should carry on that afternoon at the school just as if nothing had happened so long as Miss Judith Coker's visit lasted. It did not seem reasonable to Prout.

It was true that Coker knew, though Prout did not, that he never had caused that big bang in Prout's study. He had done his very best to make it look as if he had—but he hadn't! But, anyhow, Coker did not think much of schoolmasters, and their proceedings were matters of very small consequence in comparison with Coker's own affairs—from Coker's point of view.

On this point, few schoolmasters would have agreed with Coker. Mr. Prout certainly did not.

Prout's eye, at last, fell upon the article for which he was looking.

It was a cane! He clutched it up!

"Coker! I doubt whether you are in your right senses!" he gasped. "Go! I will excuse your impudence, your audacity, your effrontery, if you go—immediately! But go—at once!"

Coker stared at him.

"I'm not going!" he explained.

"I'm going to stay here till Aunt Judy comes! I'm going to stay so long as she does! After that, as I said, I'm perfectly willing to— Yarooooop!"

Swipe!

Coker dodged—but he did not dodge quickly enough. He got the swipe of Prout's cane and roared.

"Now—" boomed Prout.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked in at the open doorway.

Quelch's face wore its grimmest expression. With the trouble which had caused Coker's expulsion from Greyfriars, with the drastic sentence that had been passed on Coker, the Remove master had nothing to do—it did not concern him. But this invasion of the school by a fellow who had been expelled did

"Mr. Prout, if you require any assistance in dealing with this extraordinary boy—" exclaimed Quelch.

Coker stared round at him.

"Don't you butt in!" he exclaimed.

"This is nothing to do with you! I can jolly well tell you— Whoop!" added Coker, in a roar, as Prout's cane came down across his brawny shoulders with a terrific swipe.

"Go!" roared Prout.

"You silly old ass!" roared Coker, goaded out of all patience. "I've a jolly good mind to grab that cane away from you and whop you with it! For two pins, I would!"

"I have asked some of the prefects to come here, Mr. Prout!" said the Remove master. "Wingate, Gwynne, Sykes—"

Three stalwart men of the Sixth Form walked into Prout's study.

Coker eyed them rather like a bulldog.

"Don't you Sixth Form fatheads butt in!" he said warningly. "I shall hit out if you do!"

"Remove that boy!" gurgled Prout.

"Take him away! Eject him from the school! Take him away at once!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Wingate.

"Hands off!" roared Coker, as the

three prefects closed in on him. "I'll jolly well hit out—"

Coker was hitting out the next moment as Wingate, Gwynne, and Sykes collared him!

In a moment more a terrific shindy was raging in Prout's study.

CHUCKED OUT!

"I SAY, you fellows, Coker's going it!"

"Listen to the band!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Masters' Passage, generally a quiet spot, where juniors trod softly if they trod at all, was getting crammed. It was not a quiet spot now—it was in a roar of excited voices and laughter.

Coker, undoubtedly, was going it in the study of his former Form-master. The din could be heard over most of the House. Everybody wanted to see what was going on.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove pushed for front places. They succeeded in getting to Prout's doorway.

Round the Famous Five crowded fellows of all Forms. The passage was packed. Everybody who could get near the doorway stared in.

It was a sight worth seeing, at least from the point of view of the juniors.

Three stalwart Sixth Form prefects were grasping Coker, to persuade him to go.

Coker, really, had no chance in such a tussle, hefty and beefy as he was. But he was doing his best.

Coker was boiling with wrath and indignation. He had come there to make what seemed—to Coker—a reasonable proposition. Prout had not even listened to him—he had whopped him with his cane, and now he was directing the prefects to remove him by force!

Coker was not going to be removed by force, if Coker could help it. Coker put up a terrific resistance.

Coker had got in one—a good one—as the three prefects collared him.

Gwynne of the Sixth went over under a mighty punch and staggered up again with his nose streaming crimson. But he rushed back into the fray at once. The three had hold of Coker—but he was hard to hold.

Mr. Prout looked on in speechless wrath. Mr. Quelch looked on in grim anger and annoyance.

They were not heeded.

Coker, in the grasp of the three, staggered to and fro. They whirled him towards the door, and the crowd of fellows there surged back, expecting Coker to come headlong out.

But Coker did not come out yet. He rallied and whirled back—then, as he was dragged on again, he caught hold of the study table. He held on to the table tenaciously as the prefects dragged—and the table rocked over, scattering books and papers and inkpot.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Upon my word!" breathed Mr. Quelch.

"Go it, Coker!" yelled the Bounder.

from the pack of fellows in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, there!" called out Mr. Quelch angrily. "Go away—go away at once! How dare you—Ooooooh!"

Crash!

Coker, whirling in the grasp of three, crashed into the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch spun over, and over him went Coker, sprawling, dragging down the prefects as he went!

There was a gasping yell from Quelch as he disappeared under Coker and the prefects.

"Bless my soul!" gurgled Prout. "My dear Quelch— Goodness gracious!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the crammed passage.

"I say, you fellows, they're squashing old Quelch!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, they're making a pancake of old Quelch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a wild mix-up on the floor of Prout's study.

Mr. Prout rolled to the spot to give his colleague a helping hand—if he could! But as the master of the Fifth bent over the mix-up Wingate scrambled up—and his head, as he rose, butted on a plump and well-filled waistcoat.

Bump!

"Ah!" gasped Wingate.

"Ooooooh!" gurgled Prout, as he went over backwards and sat down with a concussion that almost shook the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooooooh!"

Prout, winded, sat and gurgled. Quelch, spluttering frantically, wriggled under the mixed-up combatants.

Coker rolled off at last in the grasp of the three and whirled to the door again.

This time they got him as far as the door.

"Leggo!" roared Coker, clinging to the doorposts. "You cheeky Sixth Form fatheads, leggo!"

"Clear the way, there!" gasped Wingate.

The crowd backed to give space.

Coker was jerked away from his hold. He came whirling into the passage, the three prefects bundling round him.

Prout's study was left a wreck behind him, Prout and Quelch sitting up in a gasping and gurgling state, amid papers, and books, and ink.

But Coker was out of the study at last! Now the prefects were getting him down the passage.

He was not easy to get! He disputed every inch of the way! It was several minutes—hectic minutes—before Coker was got to the door, whirling away through an excited, swarming crowd.

But he was got there at last and out into the quadrangle, still resisting valiantly.

"Will you leggo?" roared Coker. "I'm not going!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder of the Sixth joined in the

fray at that moment. Price of the Fifth out in to lend a hand.

With five pairs of hands on him Coker had less chance than ever. But he disputed the ground as he was persuaded across the quad to the gates.

Price's intervention was greeted with a howl of disapproval from the spectators.

"Get out of it, Pricey!"

"You ain't a prefect!"

"Leave him alone, Price, you cad!"

Price of the Fifth did not heed. He was anxious for a chance at Coker, and this was his chance.

Price had hold of Coker's ears, which were large, and gave a good hold. Price pulled, while the prefects pushed and shoved.

Coker, roaring, travelled towards the gates, with a crowd swarming round as he went.

Coker's collar was left in the doorway. His tie was left on the steps. Most of his buttons were strewn in the quad.

It was a wildly rumpled and dishevelled Coker that arrived, at long last, at the gates.

Gosling still gasping in the doorway of his lodge, blinked at him as he whirled past.

"My eye!" said Gosling.

"Now, then, you mad ruffian, out you go!" gasped Loder.

"Boot him out!" gasped Gwynne.

"Leggo!" spluttered Coker. "Leggo my ears, Price, you cad! I'll smash you! Will you Sixth Form rotters leggo?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker went headlong out of the gates. He was dumped down in the road, and the prefects stood gasping for breath round him.

Coker sat gurgling for breath, collar and tie gone, all the buttons off his waistcoat, his jacket split up the back, his hair a wild mop standing on end. Coker had put up a tremendous fight; but he had suffered a lot of casualties. He looked a wreck.

"Now!" gasped Wingate. "Hook it, and don't come back here again!"

"Shan't!" panted Coker. "I'm not going—"

With his last gasp of breath Coker panted defiance.

"Boot him!" hooted Loder.

"Are you going, Coker?" roared Wingate.

"Ow! No! Never! Ow! I—"

"Boot him, then!" said the Greyfriars captain. "Boot him till he clears!"

"Yaroooh!"

Coker had stated that he would not go. He had, apparently, some idea of charging back into Greyfriars heedless of the odds.

But now he gave up that idea! Many boots vigorously applied, urged him to do so.

Coker struggled to his feet and charged—not in the direction of the school gates! There were too many boots in the way! He charged in the other direction—booted as he went.

Coker did not count odds—but the odds were too heavy for him! He went!

A wildly dishevelled figure disappeared up Friardale Lane.

The prefects, panting for breath, came in again at the gates.

Coker was gone!

But whether Coker was gone for good was another matter. Mr. Prout supposed, and certainly hoped, that he had! But a good many fellows doubted whether he had—and perhaps hoped that he hadn't!

PAINFUL FOR PRICE!

"THE fool!" muttered Price of the Fifth.

Price scowled over the smoke of his cigarette.

Cedric Hilton, lounging in the window-seat of the study, laughed.

Hilton was smoking, as well as his pal. That was one of the customs of had hats of the Fifth in the privacy of their study.

Hilton, like most other fellows at Greyfriars, was amused by the extraordinary antics of Horace Coker. Price did not seem to be amused.

Hilton, in view of Coker's awful disaster in getting sacked, had quite forgiven him for having shipped that study. But Price's was not a forgiving nature.

"The dummy!" went on Price. "Who'd have thought that even Coker would act the goat like this? Who ever heard of a fellow sacked from a school hanging on in the neighbourhood, and butting in again?"

"Coker was always an original chap!" said Hilton, laughing. "What does it matter to us, anyhow?"

Price gave an angry grunt. Somehow or other, it seemed to matter to Price, though why, it would have been difficult for any fellow to say.

"The Head ought to step in and see that the fathead clears off home," he said. "He's actually put up at the village shop—old Clegg's! He's taken out groceries for old Clegg—"

"Making himself useful in wartime!" grinned Hilton. "More power to his elbow!"

"The fool!" snapped Price.

"Well, the fact is, old man, I don't think Coker is such a fool as usual in the line he's takin' now," said Hilton thoughtfully. "I'm not at all sure that he did bang off that stack of fireworks in old Pompous' study, as everybody believes."

Price gave a start, and fixed his eyes on his study-mate.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Everybody knows that he did! He bragged at the top of his voice that he was going to do it—and then it was done! It was clear enough."

"But Coker says he didn't!"

"Any fellow would, when he was up for the sack!" sneered Price. "Fat lot of notice Prout or the Head took of that!"

"Nor any fellow!" said Hilton, shaking his head. "Coker's the biggest idiot ever—but I believe he'd be carved into small pieces before he would tell lies! I thought at first, like everybody else, that he had done it, but as soon as I heard that he denied doing it, I began to doubt that—"



Horace Coker raised Gosling above his head and carried him towards the school porter's lodge.
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Greyfriars juniors.

"What utter rot!" snarled Price. "Of course he did it! He said he would, and he did!"

"He said he would!" admitted Hilton. "Coker always talked too much! But lots of fellows say they'll do things they never do! Some silly fag may have sneaked into Prout's study and played that trick—and Coker, after all his gas, of course, got the benefit of it."

"Rot!"

"Well, it looks like it to me," said Hilton. "Coker's hanging on near the school, instead of going home! That means that he thinks he may come back. Well, only one thing could bring him back—the Head finding out that he never did it. If the old bean found that out, he would be fearfully sorry for sacking Coker and would let him hop in again, like a shot. It looks to me as if that's what Coker is bankin' on."

Price compressed his thin lips spitefully.

"The cheeky fool ought to be cleared off home!" he said. "The Head ought to come down on him and make him go!"

Hilton sat up in the window-seat and gave his pal a very keen and very curious look.

"You don't know anything about it, Pricey?" he asked.

Price started.

"I? What do you mean, you burbling ass?" he exclaimed, in alarm. "How should I know anything about it?"

"Well," said Hilton slowly, "it may have been some silly fag who banged off those fireworks in Prout's study, never thinking of Coker—or it may have been some fellow who had his knife into Coker and wanted to land it on him! It was a pretty dirty trick, if that was it."

Price breathed hard through his nose.

"Don't be a silly fool, Cedric!" he muttered. "And don't gabble that sort of rot outside this study! You may start fellows thinking all sorts of things."

"Quite!" agreed Hilton. "But if some rotter did it, knowin' it would be landed on Coker as a matter of course, he would be a bit alarmed by Coker hangin' about the school and keepin' the affair alive, instead of goin' quietly home and lettin' it be forgotten."

Stephen Price lighted a fresh cigarette. His hand trembled as he did so.

"So long as Coker hangs about, the affair won't be forgotten, and there's always a chance of the facts comin' out!" said Hilton. "That's why I think that Coker's present game is not quite so fatheaded as it looks—that is, of course, if he never did it!"

"He did!" said Price. "You know he did, as well as I do!"

"I don't!" yawned Hilton. "I'm not at all sure! But I'll tell you one thing, Pricey—fellows don't like your taking a hand against the fathead, as you did. He's got it in the neck, and it doesn't look nice to keep up a

grudge against a fellow when he's down!"

"I've never liked the brute—and you haven't, either!"

"Not in the least! But he's down on his luck now, and there's no need to give him another shove! The Sixth Form prefects had to handle him—that's their duty—but there was no need for you to barge in, and I can tell you, nobody likes it—"

"I've owed him a booting for a long time!" sneered Price. "The fool shouldn't butt in where he's not wanted. I was jolly glad of the chance of giving him one or two when he went."

Hilton shrugged his shoulders and made no rejoinder.

Price smoked his cigarette, with a scowling brow. He could see that there was a lingering suspicion in his pal's mind; and it was an uneasy thought to him that that suspicion might spread to other minds.

It would have been all right had Coker gone, like any other fellow who was expelled from school. The whole matter would have been forgotten in a few days.

But Coker, always original, was more original than ever now that he was bunked. And his continued presence in the vicinity of Greyfriars was an alarming worry on Price's mind. Only Price knew who really had caused that big bang in Prout's study; and it was a secret that could

not be buried too deep—for Price's peace of mind!

There was a tramp of feet in the Fifth Form passage.

Hilton hastily put his cigarette behind him, and Price dropped his and clapped a foot on it as the study door was thrown open.

But it was only a couple of Fifth Form men who looked into the study—Potter and Greene of the Fifth.

"Oh! You're here, Pricey!" said Potter.

"Smoking—as usual!" said Greene, with a sniff.

"Any bizney of yours?" sneered Price. "Are you going to try to run the Fifth, like that fool Coker before he was kicked out?"

"My dear man, you can smoke yourself sick, for all I care!" answered Potter. "But there's one thing you can't do, and that's boot old Coker when half a dozen prefects have got hold of him."

"Coker's been turfed out!" said Greene. "He was our pal when he was here, and a pretty good pal in his own way! I know he was the biggest idiot that ever was—"

"Frightful chump!" said Potter, with a nod. "Born idiot! Maddest ass ever! He asked for what he got—nearly blowing up Old Pompous with fireworks! But—"

"But you ain't going to boot him, Pricey," said Greene. "Catch you trying to boot him if he wasn't held! You can let old Coker alone, see?"

"That's what we've looked in to say!" said Potter.

Price scowled at them.

"Well, now you've said it, you can clear!" he snapped.

"We haven't finished yet!" explained Potter. "Old Horace may barge in again—he's fool enough!"

"Pretty sure to," said Greene. "He's idiot enough!"

"And you ain't going to lend the prefects a hand if he does, Pricey!" went on Potter.

"I shall suit myself about that!" sneered Price. "Shut the door after you!"

"We're not going yet!" said Potter. "You're going to have a few, Pricey. Just as a tip not to hit a fellow when he's down."

Price leaped to his feet.

Potter of the Fifth grabbed him as he leaped, and spun him round.

Greene let out a boot as he spun.

Thud!

"Ow!" roared Price.

He wrenched himself away from Potter's grasp and darted round the study table.

Potter rushed after him!

Twice his boot landed, while Price raced round the table, yelling.

Hilton, sitting unmoved in the window seat, grinned.

Price made a jump for the door.

Greene, standing in the doorway, shoved him back.

Potter's boot caught him again, and Price yelled:

"Back up, Hilton, you fool!"

Hilton did not stir.

"Haven't you asked for this, dear man?" he inquired.

"You rotter—yaroooooh!" roared Price, bounding round the table

again, as Potter's boot crashed once more.

"That's a tip!" said Potter warningly. "You keep clear of old Horace next time he plays the giddy ox, Pricey! You barge in again, and we'll boot you up the passage and back again, and round the study landing!"

And Potter and Greene left the study, leaving Price wriggling, gasping, and scowling, and Cedric Hilton grinning.

AUNT JUDY BLOWS IN!

"I SAY, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "It's old Judy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Coker's jolly old aunt!"

"Phew!"

Everybody at Greyfriars School knew Coker's aunt, Judy. Miss Judith Coker was quite a well-known figure. Twice a term, at least, she visited her dear Horace—twice a week, at least, she wrote to him, and generally there was a handsome tip in Aunt Judy's letters. Aunt Judy's hampers, sent to her beloved Horace, were famous in the Fifth.

There were fellows who called Aunt Judy a frump, and a sketch, and a prehistoric relic. But they did not call her so in old Horace's hearing. Injudicious remarks on the subject of Aunt Judy had more than once caused serious trouble to the injudicious remarkers. Fitzgerald of the Fifth had once had a black eye that lasted weeks, because Coker had heard him allude to Aunt Judy as a frump.

Frump or not, Coker was fond of his kind old aunt; and Coker, always ready to punch anybody for anything, was specially ready to deliver his heftiest punch on Aunt Judy's account.

But though Miss Coker was well known at the school, nobody had expected to see her there again—now that Horace was sacked! She could hardly have come to see Horace, as Horace was no longer there.

But there she was—and many eyes turned on her. There she was, in her old-fashioned Victorian bonnet, looking like a relic of the Victorian age, especially as, on this occasion, she arrived in a Victorian hansom-cab!

Few Greyfriars fellows had ever seen a hansom-cab! They had heard of them, as they had heard of dodos. Now they saw one—and it seemed to suit Aunt Judy as a framework remarkably well.

War-time brings strange changes. Shortage of petrol had brought the old horse-cab back into its own again! Some enterprising Court-field cabby, unable to get a living on his petrol ration, had disinterred an ancient hansom-cab, and a horse that looked almost equally ancient. And in that interesting vehicle, Aunt Judy arrived at Greyfriars.

Naturally, that survival of the prehistoric ages drew a lot of attention, when it turned in at the gates of Greyfriars.

Gosling blinked at it. Gosling knew all about hansom-cabs—they

had been as common as blackberries in Gosling's younger days. But he had never expected to see one again.

Clatter, clatter, rattle, rattle, rang the old horse's hoofs, as the hansom bowled in.

"My eye!" said Gosling, almost forgetting to touch his old hat to Miss Coker, as he blinked at the vehicle in which she came.

"I say, you fellows—he, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter. "I say, a hansom cab—and an old frump in it—he, he, he!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—ain't she an old frump?" grinned Bunter. "Coker ain't here now. I suppose I can call an old frump an old frump if I like."

"Kick him!" said Bob. "Coker ain't here to kick him—so it's up to somebody else."

"Oh, really, Cherry—wow!" roared Bunter. "Beast!"

"It's Coker's aunt!" said Harry Wharton. "I wonder—I suppose she must know that Coker's gone!"

"Looks as if she doesn't!" said Frank Nugent. "She wouldn't be looking so merry and bright if she knew! She's fond of old Coker!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "If she's come to see him—"

"Bit of a shock for her if she doesn't know!" said the captain of the Remove. "That ass Coker ought to have let her know."

The Famous Five felt quite concerned.

Miss Coker's face was kind and cheerful, as usual. She certainly did not look as if she knew that irreparable disaster had befallen her dear nephew Horace. In which case, there was no doubt that Aunt Judy had a rather painful shock coming.

They capped her very politely and respectfully, as the hansom-cab drew up at the steps.

Bob Cherry rushed forward to open the flaps, and help her to extract herself from the extraordinary vehicle.

Miss Coker gave him the kindest of smiles. She knew all the Famous Five quite well, and remembered them kindly—their faces, at least, if not their names.

"Thank you, Plummy!" she said, beaming. "I think your name is Plummy, little boy!"

Bob Cherry blushed red as the ripest of the fruit from which his name was derived. He was not, in point of fact, a "little boy"—he was rather a big boy; but to Miss Coker, all schoolboys were little boys—she would probably have addressed even the great Wingate, the captain of the school, as "little boy."

"Oh! Cherry, ma'am!" stammered Bob.

"Oh, yes, of course, Cherry!" beamed Miss Coker. "I remembered perfectly well that it was a fruit of some kind! Or a vegetable! I was not sure whether it was a fruit or a vegetable. Thank you, Plummy—I mean, Cherry!"

Bob gallantly assisted Miss Coker from the hansom.

The driver, in his perch, seemed to be trying to appear unconscious of

the deep interest taken in his vehicle by the Greyfriars fellows.

"And where is Horace?" asked Miss Coker.

Aunt Judy expected everybody to know that Coker's front name was Horace. The Famous Five, as it happened, did!

"Oh!" stammered Bob.

"Is dear Horace in his study?" asked Miss Coker.

"Oh! No!" said Harry Wharton, as Bob remained dumb with confusion. "I—I think he—he's out of gates, ma'am."

Obviously, Miss Coker did not know that Horace was sacked! No member of the Famous Five was keen to tell her! She had to learn, but it was not their desire to strike the blow!

"Out of gates!" said Miss Coker. "That is very singular! Dear Horace cannot have forgotten that I was coming to-day—he knew last week! But, of course, he did not know my train—trains are so very uncertain in these days, owing to that dreadful man Potler—I think the dreadful man's name is Potler, or Hotler, but I never can remember."

"Hitler!" gasped Bob.

"Yes, that is it—at least, I think so. Dear me, is that Mr. Squelch? How do you do, Mr. Squelch?"

Mr. Quelch, coming out at the doorway, blinked at Miss Coker. He was as surprised as the rest of Greyfriars to see her there, considering that Coker of the Fifth had been gone for days.

"Miss Coker!" he ejaculated.

"You remember me, Mr. Squelch?" smiled Miss Coker. "I have called to see Horace, and these dear little boys tell me that he is out of gates! But as I wish to see Mr. Clout—"

"Mr. Clout?" repeated the Remove master. He was quite unacquainted with anyone of the name of Clout.

"Dear Horace's Form-master."

"Oh! Mr. Prout!"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Prout, of course! I am not very good at remembering names," admitted Miss Coker. "Though I had not forgotten that your name is Squelch—"

"My name is Quelch, madam."

"Dear me! What ever could have made me remember it as Squelch?" said Miss Coker. "Perhaps you will take me to Mr. Snout's study, Mr. Welsh. And I will see him, while I wait for dear Horace to come in."

"To—to—to come in!" stammered

Mr. Quelch. It dawned on him that Miss Coker could not know that dear Horace was gone for good!

"Yes. I am sure he will not be long, as he knows that I intended to come this afternoon. I wish to speak to Mr. Knout about Horace—I am not pleased with Horace's half-term report—I feel sure that Mr. Clout has made some mistake—I fear he does not wholly understand Horace."

"Oh! Ah! I— Oh!" stammered Mr. Quelch. "Did you not know— Oh! Ah! Pray—pray come with me, madam!"

Like the Remove boys, the Remove master shrank from dealing the blow! That was up to Prout, who had had Coker sacked.

Miss Coker, with a kind smile and nod to the Famous Five, went into the House with Mr. Quelch.

"This is pretty rotten, you chaps!" said Harry Wharton.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"That ass Coker—" said Johnny Bull.

"That fathead Coker—" said Bob.

"I wonder if that's why Coker butted in to-day?" remarked Frank Nugent. "He came a good deal too early, if—"

"I say, you fellows, I wonder what'll happen when Prout tells her?" gasped Billy Bunter. "I say, I shouldn't wonder if she smacks his face!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've heard that she went for the Head once with her umbrella, when Coker was in a row before," declared the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Fathead!"

"Well, I've heard so!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I jolly well shouldn't like to be in old Prout's shoes when he tells her!"

And in that the Famous Five agreed with Bunter! Nobody envied Mr. Prout the task of telling Coker's Aunt Judy that Coker was sacked!

A JOLT FOR AUNT JUDY!

"MR. PROUT—" "What is it, Quelch?" "Miss Coker—"

"Oh!"

Prout had dreaded it. Ever since Coker's visit he had dreaded it. It

had to come. But he dreaded it deeply!

Prout was a kindly man. He was sorry even for Horace Coker, who had been sacked—though Coker's subsequent proceedings had had a fearfully exasperating effect on him. There had been no choice about that—a fellow who nearly blew his Form-master up with fireworks had to be sacked! The headmaster had completely agreed with the Fifth Form master on that point.

He was sorrier still to have to break the news to a relation of Coker. Likewise, he was annoyed. Really, this task should not have fallen to Prout!

Coker's parents had been notified. The fact that Horace Coker had been as good as adopted by his Aunt Judy, that he was heir to her wealth and the apple of her eye, was nothing to do with Prout. Miss Coker ought to have been told by somebody—if she was interested!

From what Coker had said in the study, Prout knew that she had not been told! It was very disturbing and perturbing.

Prout rose to his feet as Mr. Quelch politely showed Miss Coker in—and then departed without delay.

Prout would have preferred him to remain and give moral support in this interview; but the Remove master did not seem keen on sharing Prout's troubles.

"Ah! Pray come in, madam!" said Prout. "Pray be seated, madam! I regret to have to inform you that—that—hem!"

Miss Coker sat down.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Grout—" she began.

"Prout, madam!"

"Quite so—Mr. Prout," assented Miss Coker. "I trust that I am not interrupting you."

"Oh! Yes—I mean, no!" stammered Mr. Prout. "Not at all! Hem! But—"

"No doubt you are at leisure, on a half-holiday, like the dear little boys, so happy playing marbles!" said Miss Coker.

"Mum-mum-marbles! Ah! Oh! Yes! Quite!"

"Dear Horace appears to be gone out at the moment," said Miss Coker. "He did not, of course, know the time of my train. Probably you have noticed, Mr. Snout, that trains are

(Continued on next page.)

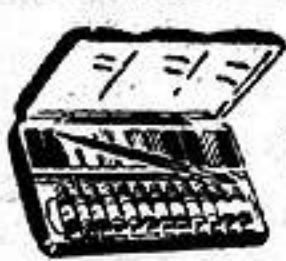
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somewhat uncertain, since that dreadful man Boodler began to act so strangely—I think his name is Boodler—it is either Boodler or Stickler, I cannot remember which—

"Do you mean Herr Hitler, madam?" gasped Prout.

"Yes, probably that is the name—though I certainly thought it was Boodler—or Stickler!" said Miss Coker. "However, never mind him! Dear Horace says that we take altogether too much notice of him, and that it makes him impertinent—and I think Horace is right."

"Oh! Ah! It appears that you have not been informed, madam, that—that—" Prout stammered.

"Horace is quite well?" asked Miss Coker anxiously. "Please tell me at once, Mr. Grout—is Horace quite well?"

"I believe so, madam—perfectly!" gasped Prout. "In the very best of health, I think."

Horace had certainly appeared to be pretty fit when he was scrapping with three prefects in Prout's study!

"You relieve my mind so much," said Miss Coker, with a charming smile. "I really feared, for a moment, that you had some bad news for me."

"Oh! Ah! Quite!"

"I have been so perplexed by your report of Horace!" continued Miss Coker. "I cannot guess for what reason you described him as careless—and very slow. Perhaps you do not understand Horace, Mr. Clout."

Prout blinked at her. In describing Coker as "careless—and very slow," Prout, always kindly, had put it very mildly. What he had really meant was that Coker was an unthinking ass and the biggest fathead he had ever struck in his career as a schoolmaster!

"Now, let us discuss this—" went on Miss Coker.

"It is immaterial now, madam—" "Nothing that concerns Horace is immaterial, Mr. Stout!" answered Miss Coker in surprise.

"I—I—I mean that your nephew, Horace Coker, is no longer at this school!"

Prout got it out at last.

But his words did not produce the shock he expected and dreaded. Miss Coker simply did not catch on!

"Oh, quite!" she assented. "I am aware of that, Mr. Snout. A dear little boy named Plummy told me that Horace had gone out—"

"Coker has left!" said Mr. Prout. Miss Coker started.

"Left?" she repeated.

"I am sorry—yes."

"There is some mistake, Mr. Grout—if Horace's parents had decided to remove him from the school, they would certainly have consulted me. You must have been misinformed, Mr. Snout."

I regret to tell you, Miss Coker, that Coker of my Form has been expelled from Greyfriars!" said Mr. Prout, taking the plunge.

Miss Coker jumped.

"Did you say expelled?" she ejaculated

"I am sorry, madam—"

"Expelled!" said Miss Coker dazedly. "I hope, Mr. Stout, that you are not making a foolish and thoughtless joke!"

Prout gurgled. Really, the majestic master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars was not the man to make thoughtless and foolish jokes.

"Madam!" he gasped.

"Expelled!" repeated Miss Coker. "Nonsense! Do you suppose for one moment, Mr. Stout, that I shall allow Horace to be expelled?"

"Madam, the headmaster has so decided—Coker left the school several days ago, though I regret to say that he has not gone home, as he should have done, and his parents appear to have left him to his own foolish devices—"

Miss Coker looked at him. Her lips trembled.

Prout fairly squirmed in his dread of tears! This was really awful for a Form-master—and a kindly soul!

But Miss Coker shed no tears. Her lips trembled—then they shut firmly. Amazement in her old face was replaced by angry scorn.

That anyone could find fault with Horace Coker to the smallest possible extent was incomprehensible to Aunt Judy.

Coker, in his aunt's fond eyes, was not merely a perfect character—he improved upon perfection, if possible! The news that he had been sacked from school was a shock—but it did not make Miss Coker suppose that Horace had committed any fault! It only made her suppose that his schoolmasters had committed some dreadful mistake!

"Oh!" said Miss Coker.

She looked grim. Her hand closed on the handle of her umbrella—rather to Prout's alarm.

"I regret, madam—" began the Fifth Form master.

"And why," asked Miss Coker, "has Horace been treated with this foolish and flagrant injustice?"

"Madam—"

"Kindly answer me, Mr. Stout! I insist upon an answer!"

"Madam, I am sorry—"

"You ought to be sorry and ashamed as well!" said Miss Coker.

"Madam—" gurgled Prout.

"What is it pretended that Horace has done?" asked Miss Coker coldly. "I presume that it is pretended that he has done something to deserve this."

"I will tell you, madam!" exclaimed Prout, goaded. "Last week, madam, I found that Coker had an enormous stock of fireworks in his study, against my strict orders. I confiscated them. In my hearing, Coker uttered the threat to explode those fireworks in my study!"

"No doubt the poor boy was annoyed!" said Miss Coker. "You should not have taken heed of a few thoughtless words, Mr. Stout. It was injudicious."

Prout breathed hard.

"I warned Coker, madam, that if he carried out that threat I should take him to his headmaster and that he would be immediately expelled from the school!" he hooted.

"In spite of my warning, he carried out that disrespectful threat. The fireworks were exploded in my study. Coker was expelled for this, madam."

Miss Coker was silent for a moment or two.

Even Aunt Judy seemed to realise that, if the matter was as stated by Prout, it was a serious matter. But she rallied at once.

"Are you quite sure that Horace did so?" she inquired. "Perhaps it was an accident—"

"It was no accident, madam."

"You may have dropped a match carelessly—" suggested Miss Coker.

"I did not drop a match carelessly, madam!" snorted Prout. "The fireworks were deliberately stacked in my fireplace and were set off when I put a match to the fire."

"By Horace?"

"Certainly, madam."

"Does Horace admit the action?"

"He does not, madam! He adds to his offence by an untruthful denial of his action!" snorted Prout.

Miss Coker rose to her feet. Her eyes gleamed scorn at Prout.

"How dare you, Mr. Snout!" she exclaimed.

"Wh-a-a-t?"

"You say that Horace denies the action! Are you so ignorant of Horace's character, although he is in your Form, that you are stupid enough to doubt his word?" demanded Miss Coker.

"Madam—"

"Are you a fool, Mr. Grout?"

"Miss Coker—"

"Are you an idiot?"

"Upon my word! I—"

"Are you out of your senses, such as they are?"

"Madam! I—I—you—I—I—"

"You dare to accuse Horace of untruthfulness!" exclaimed Miss Coker.

"You dare to say that he did anything that he denies having done! You are not fit to be a schoolmaster, Mr. Snout!"

Prout gurgled.

"Such utter incapacity—" said Miss Coker. "Such crass ineptitude—such obtuseness! I am surprised at you, Mr. Snout! I am shocked! I decline to discuss the matter with you further! I shall see the headmaster! I shall advise him to dismiss you from your post!"

Prout gazed at her speechless.

"Probably you are growing too old for your post, Mr. Stout. That may account for it! Senile!"

"Madam!" Prout fairly shouted. "Will you have the kindness to leave my study? This interview must cease, madam!"

"Senile!" repeated Miss Coker. "That must be it!"

Prout opened the door wide.

"Good-afternoon, madam!" he hooted.

"Silly!" said Miss Coker.

"If you will kindly go, madam, I—"

"I shall go at once to the Head!" Miss Coker flounced through the doorway. "You may expect your dismissal, Mr. Stout!"

Prout shut the door after her. He gasped for breath and mopped a perspiring forehead.



There was a fearful crunching and smashing as Mr. Prout sat in the box of eggs. From those innumerable smashed eggs rose a scent that was absolutely nothing like attar-of-roses!

The door reopened and Aunt Judy looked in again.

"Fool!" she said.

"Madam, will you——"

"Idiot!" said Aunt Judy.

Then she banged the door and was gone.

Prout turned the key in the lock. He was more than willing to pass Miss Coker on to the Head! He had had more than enough of Miss Coker! Even Coker of the Fifth was preferable to Coker's Aunt Judy!

NOTHING DOING!

"LITTLE boy!"

"Oh! Yes, ma'am?"

gasped Harry Wharton.

"Take me to the headmaster!"

"Oh! Yes! This way, ma'am!"

Harry Wharton was sympathetic. So were other fellows.

Miss Judith Coker had been rather expected to emerge from Mr. Prout's study dissolved in tears. But there were no tears about Aunt Judy. She was looking fierce.

The captain of the Remove dutifully guided her to the Head's study. It was clear that she had had no luck with Prout. He hoped she might have better luck with the Head. But it did not seem probable.

Coker was sacked! His proceedings since he had been sacked could only have irritated his headmaster intensely. So far as Harry Wharton could see, there was not a ghost of a chance for Coker.

"Old donkey!" said Miss Coker, on her way to the Head's study.

"Eh? What—who——" Harry ejaculated.

"Does anyone, except that foolish Mr. Stout, believe that Horace exploded those fireworks?" asked Miss Coker. "Tell me!"

"Oh! Yes, I—I think so!" stammered Harry. He did not like to say that all the school, including himself, believed that very thing, as Miss Coker seemed to have doubts on the subject.

"How ridiculous!" said Miss Coker.

"Oh!"

"Horace did nothing of the kind, little boy."

"Did—did—didn't he?" stuttered Wharton.

"Certainly not! He has denied it!" explained Miss Coker. "That is conclusive!"

"Oh!"

"You know, of course, that Horace would not tell an untruth!" said Miss Coker. "Such an idea! You, being one of his little schoolfellows, know his noble character."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!"

"An untruth!" said Miss Coker. "Absurd!"

Harry Wharton made no rejoinder to that. It was quite true that rugged old Coker, with all his faults, was not the fellow one would have expected to tell fibs, even to get out of an awful scrape. But Coker had banged off those fireworks in Prout's study—at least, everybody believed that he had!

The captain of the Remove tapped at the Head's door.

"Come in!"

Wharton opened the door.

"Miss Coker, sir!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Dr. Locke.

He rose to his feet. He bowed courteously to Miss Coker as she swept in. But he could not quite conceal his dismay. Miss Judith Coker was about the last person in the wide world whom the headmaster of Greyfriars desired to interview.

"Madam——" stammered the Head.

"Dr. Locke! Please send for Horace at once! Where is the dear boy now? You cannot have been aware that Mr. Stout has made a foolish mistake—that he is capable of making such a stupid error——"

Harry Wharton heard that much as he closed the door and departed. He did not envy Dr. Locke the rest!

"My dear madam," stammered the Head, "pray be seated! I—I regret that——"

"Where is Horace?"

"I—I believe that Coker has taken up his abode at a—a—a shop in the adjacent village, madam! His parents——"

"Send for him!"

"My dear madam——"

"It appears," said Miss Coker, "that some fireworks, or something of the kind, were exploded in Mr. Stout's study. Mr. Stout admits that Horace denies having been concerned in it."

"Quite so! But——"

"Mr. Stout is so foolish, so dense, as to doubt Horace's statement," said Miss Coker.

"But, madam, there is no doubt that——"

"I cannot understand why Horace has been sent away," said Miss Coker. "Mr. Stout should have been sent away! I suggest that he should be dismissed!"

"Really, Miss Coker——"

"Will you send for Horace at once?"

"I can do nothing of the kind, madam!" said Dr. Locke. "Coker has been expelled from Greyfriars. Since his expulsion, he has acted foolishly, defiantly, disrespectfully. Instead of going home, he has remained in the village of Friardale, to my great annoyance——"

"Nonsense!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Nonsense!" said Miss Coker firmly.

The headmaster of Greyfriars breathed hard and deep. He was not accustomed to hearing his observations described as nonsense! Nobody, hitherto, had expressed such an opinion in his majestic presence. He gazed at Aunt Judy.

"Horace has denied the action!" exclaimed Miss Coker. "Is that not sufficient?"

"No, madam!" snapped the Head. "It is not sufficient. Coker uttered a threat—that threat was carried out. That is all, madam—the matter is closed! I regret—I regret very much—but——"

"Are you as silly as Mr. Stout?" asked Aunt Judy.

"Eh?"

"Are you as stupid as that stupid Mr. Stout?"

"What?"

"Horace is perfectly innocent! He has said so, as Mr. Stout himself admits. Will you send for him immediately, Dr. Locke?"

"Certainly not!" gasped the Head.

"Why has not the proper person been discovered?" asked Aunt Judy. "It is your duty as headmaster to discover him."

"Madam, it was Coker——"

"Do not be ridiculous!" said Aunt Judy. "I will not allow you to cast doubt upon Horace's statements in my presence."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "Madam, I regret to say that I am somewhat busy this afternoon."

"That is of no consequence," said Miss Coker. "Horace has been treated with injustice. This must be set right! It is incomprehensible to me that you should doubt Horace's positive statement. It is not what I should have expected of a headmaster. All that remains is to discover the actual culprit! You can see that, I presume?"

"Really, madam——"

"When that is done you will, I conclude, be willing to reinstate dear Horace?"

"In such an event, madam, I should certainly be glad to do so! But as it was Coker, beyond doubt——"

"It was not!"

"Really, madam——"

"He has said so!"

"No doubt! But——"

"Nonsense!"

"My dear madam," said the Head feebly, "the matter is closed! It is

useless to discuss it further. I have explained the whole matter in a letter to Coker's parents. There is nothing more to be said."

"Nonsense!"

Miss Coker turned to the door—much to the Head's relief. Like Prout, he was feeling that even Coker was rather to be preferred to Coker's aunt. He longed to see that door close on Aunt Judy.

At the door, Miss Coker turned and gave him a withering look.

"Nonsense!" she repeated.

Then the door banged after her.

The Head was left gasping. Miss Coker made him feel quite dizzy.

It was quite a little time before the Head was able to resume Greek papers for the Sixth.

BROLLY FOR TWO!

"PLUMMY!"

"Oh! Yes, ma'am!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"You may take me to Horace's study!" said Aunt Judy.

"Coker's study!" repeated Bob. "Kik-kik-Coker isn't there, ma'am!"

"I am aware of that, Plummy! Dear Horace has been sent away, owing to a foolish mistake of his Form-master and headmaster."

"Oh!" gasped all the Famous Five.

"Take me to his study, Plummy! One of you other little boys go and find Potson and Bean!"

"Potson and Bean!" repeated Harry Wharton blankly.

"Horace's friends," explained Miss Coker. "They have often stayed with dear Horace at Coker Lodge, and are very much attached to him. I wish to see them."

"Oh, Potter and Greene?" ejaculated Wharton. "Yes, certainly, madam!"

Bob Cherry piloted Miss Coker to Horace's study in the Fifth.

Harry Wharton went to look for Potter and Greene.

It seemed that Miss Coker wanted to see Horace's pals, as Horace himself was not available.

Potter and Greene were discovered among the fellows admiring the hansom cab. Neither of them looked delighted when Wharton delivered his message. However, they went up to the study.

Miss Coker was seated in Horace's armchair when they entered that apartment. Her face was stern under her ancient bonnet, and her hand gripped the handle of her umbrella firmly. But she gave the two Fifth Formers a kind smile as they appeared in the doorway.

"Please come in, little boys!" said Aunt Judy.

Potter and Greene nobly suppressed their feelings at being called "little boys," and came in.

"My dear little boys," said Aunt Judy, "I have had a very great shock! I came here expecting to see dear Horace, as usual, only to learn that a terrible mistake has been made, and that he has, in consequence, been sent away from the school."

"It's rough luck on old Coker, ma'am!" said Potter awkwardly.

"Jolly rough, ma'am!" said Greene. "We—we're sorry."

"You must miss Horace dreadfully!" said Miss Coker. "I quite—quite understand your feelings, my dear little boys."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" mumbled Potter.

"Um! Yes! Oh, rather!" mumbled Greene.

Potter and Greene were sorry for old Horace. But they did not, perhaps, miss him so sorely as Miss Coker supposed.

Old Horace had his good points, and they were sorry he had been sacked; but, on the other hand, it was rather a relief not to have him telling them how to play football; and, undoubtedly, prep in the study was an easier proposition without Coker talking all the time. There were consolations for the loss of Coker.

They did not explain all this to Miss Coker, however! They waited to hear what she had to say, wondering what it was.

"This terrible mistake," said Miss Coker, "must be set right without delay! Mr. Stout is too stupid to set it right—and the headmaster appears to be extraordinarily under the influence of Mr. Stout—to the extent of doubting Horace's positive statement that he was not concerned in what happened in Mr. Stout's study."

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene.

"Someone else," said Miss Coker, "did this! Do you know who?"

"Eh?"

"You see how important it is for the right person to be discovered," said Miss Coker. "Until he is found, Mr. Stout will persist in his ridiculous mistake, and the headmaster will take his view. You two little boys, as Horace's friends and playmates, must leave no stone unturned to discover the truth, so that Horace may return to school."

"Oh gum!" gasped Potter.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Greene.

They understood what was wanted now.

To all Greyfriars, it was clear who had banged off those fireworks—Coker had! To Miss Coker, unable to doubt the word of her dear Horace, it was a mystery! Potter and Greene, as Coker's pals, were to elucidate that mystery and clear old Horace.

It was a difficult task for Potter and Greene, and they doubted no more than anybody else that Coker had done it. They blinked at Miss Coker.

"You, of course, trust Horace's word absolutely?" said Miss Coker.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! But——"

"The culprit must be found," said Aunt Judy.

"Um! Ah! But——"

"Then dear Horace will be cleared and will return to school. How delightful that will be for you!"

"Oh, frightfully!" gasped Potter. "But——"

"You must put everything else aside, and leave no stone unturned," said Miss Coker. "Even your games of marbles, my dear little fellows."

Potter and Greene gazed at her. Miss Judith Coker fancied that Fifth Form men at Greyfriars played marbles! They stood speechless.

"When I leave," continued Aunt

Judy, "I shall go direct to dear Horace and counsel him to remain near the school, ready to receive a message from his headmaster, recalling him."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Potter. "But the Head won't—"

"I shall assure him that you are labouring on his behalf to discover the truth," said Aunt Judy.

"But—" stammered Greene.

"Someone must have done it," said Miss Coker. "You see that? Obviously, someone must have done it if it was not Horace! So it must have been someone else. That is perfectly clear. Have you no suspicion?"

"But it was Coker!" gasped Potter.

"What?"

"It was Coker, you know," said Greene. "It was awfully fathheaded, but old Coker was always a bit of an ass. He did it."

"He said he would, and he did," explained Potter. "We're awfully sorry he was sacked for it—but Prout heard him shouting out that he'd do it, and that did it, you see."

Miss Coker rose to her feet. Her grip on her umbrella was firmer than ever and her face sterner.

"Horace has said that he did not do it!" she said icily.

"Oh, yes!" admitted Potter. "But I—"

"Fellows stretch a point when they're up before the beaks!" explained Greene. "Nobody wants to be sacked, you see."

"Am I to understand that you, Horace's friends, desert him—that you do not take his word?" asked Miss Coker.

"Well, you see, he did it!" said Potter.

"Yes, you see, he did it!" said Greene.

Miss Coker's eyes glinted. She had borne much that day. She had heard that her beloved Horace was sacked; that his Form-master persisted in his absurd mistake, and that the headmaster persisted in backing up the Form-master. Her patience had been sorely tried. Now it gave way. This was the last straw.

Coker hadn't done it! As he said he hadn't, he hadn't! Potter and Greene declared their belief that he had. That did it!

Bang!

Potter and Greene did not anticipate that Miss Judith Coker was going to grab them by their collars and bang their heads together. Had they anticipated it they would have dodged in time. But they didn't—they were taken quite by surprise.

Two fearful yells were blended into one as two heads cracked together with a terrific bang.

"Yaroooh!"

Potter and Greene jerked themselves away and jumped for the door. Like Prout and the Head, they had had enough of Coker's aunt—a little too much, in fact! They bounded.

Swipe, swipe!

Miss Judith was after them like a shot, umbrella in hand.

Potter and Greene got one each as they bounded at the doorway.

In their haste, they jammed in the doorway. Behind them was the umbrella!

Swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe!

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the passage.

Hilton and Price, and five or six other fellows, stared at the remarkable scene in the doorway of Coker's study. They yelled.

Swipe, swipe!

"Ow! Stop it!"

"Wow!"

Potter and Greene got out of the doorway. They fled down the passage for their lives.

Miss Coker brandished the umbrella, following them down the passage. She followed fast!

Swipe, swipe!

"Yurroop!" roared Potter.

"Ow! Oh! Ow! Oh crumbs!" howled Greene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter and Greene reached the stairs. They did the stairs three at a time, bounding like kangaroos.

Aunt Judy was left on the landing, brandishing the umbrella!

UP TO HARRY WHARTON & CO.!

"I SAY, you fellows," yelled Billy Bunter, "look out!"

"What—"

"She's coming!"

"What-a-t?"

The Famous Five had gathered in Study No. 1 for tea. But tea had not yet started when Billy Bunter put an excited fat face into the doorway and yelled the alarm.

"Aunt Judy!" exclaimed Wharton. "What do you mean, you fat frump? What—"

"Look out! She's bashing chaps with her broolly!" gasped Bunter. "She's brained Potter—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And brained Greene! Brained the pair of 'em! Now she's after you chaps! I heard her ask Hobson where your study was, Wharton—" gasped Bunter. "She's after you! Look out for her broolly! Oh crikey!" Bunter broke off with a yell. "Here she comes!"

The fat Owl of the Remove cut up the passage. Aunt Judy was coming up from the landing. Bunter had witnessed the fate of Potter and Greene. He did not want any, if Coker's aunt was running amok with that broolly! Bunter flew.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood looking at the study doorway in surprise and some uneasiness.

Certainly, they could see no reason why Aunt Judy should be after them. But neither could they see any reason why she should inquire her way to that study. If she had laid the umbrella round Potter and Greene, there really was no telling what she might do next!

Miss Judith appeared in the doorway. She looked a little flushed and excited. The umbrella was gripped in her hand.

The Famous Five backed round the

study table, prepared to dodge if necessary.

"Oh—er—please come in, Miss Coker!" stammered the captain of the Remove.

"Kik-kik-can we offer you a kik-kik-cup of tut-tut-tea?" stammered Bob Cherry.

Miss Judith came in.

Truth to tell, the chums of the Remove would have preferred that rather warlike old lady to call at some other study. They kept watchful eyes on the umbrella.

But Coker's aunt had not come there to use the umbrella—not yet, at all events. It was quite possible that it might be used if the Famous Five were no more tactful than Potter and Greene. But for the moment, at least, that baggy broolly was not raised in wrath.

"My dear little boys—" said Aunt Judy.

Evidently, it was not a hostile invasion. Though still a little uneasy about the umbrella, the Famous Five were relieved. Indeed, they were more than willing to stand Aunt Judy a tea in the study to compensate, as far as possible, for the unavoidable absence of her darling Horace.

"Please sit down, Miss Coker!"

"Take this chair, ma'am!"

"Get on with making that tea, Frank!"

"How many lumps of sugar, ma'am?"

Miss Coker sat down. She leaned the umbrella against the chair.

The juniors were glad to see it no longer in her grip.

Why she had come down there they did not know. Potter and Greene were Coker's pals in his own Form, so no doubt that was why she had wanted to see Potter and Greene. But the Remove fellows were not pally with Coker—generally they had been on scrapping terms with him. There had been an occasion once, however, when, owing to unusual circumstances, they had had a holiday with Coker of the Fifth.

Perhaps Aunt Judy remembered that. Or perhaps she regarded all Greyfriars men, from the Sixth down to the Second, as dear little boys at school together—playing marbles!

Anyhow, there she was, and the Famous Five were prepared to be hospitable, sympathetic, and polite.

Miss Coker accepted a cup of tea. She sipped it and gave the wondering juniors a kind smile.

"You dear little boys are very fond of Horace, are you not?" she asked.

Four of the dear little boys stood dumb. They really did not know how to answer that question.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, however, weighed in.

"The fondfulness is terrific, esteemed madam."

"He is so popular—so generally liked!" said Miss Coker. "Everyone admires him so much. It is so strange that his Form-master should be so foolishly prejudiced. Poor, dear Horace, even his own friends have deserted him! I could scarcely

believe my ears when his friends, Podley and Sheen, declared their belief that Horace had done that thoughtless thing, although he declared that he had not."

Miss Judith's eyes glinted.

"As if Horace would tell an untruth!" she went on. "If Horace had done it he would have said so at once. He is incapable of deception."

"We—we always thought so," stammered Harry, "but—but he told the Head he never banged off those blessed fireworks, and—and—"

"He spoke the truth!" said Miss Coker.

"Oh!"

"I have punished Podson and Bean for disbelieving him!"

"Oh!"

"But you, I am sure, do not doubt dear Horace!" said Aunt Judy.

As the Famous Five did doubt dear Horace very strongly, it was an awkward situation.

Old Horace was honest as the day; but up before the Head with the sack in prospect, he had departed for once from the exact path of veracity—at least, that was the general opinion.

But after what had happened to Potter and Greene, and with the umbrella close to Aunt Judy's hand, the Co. were not disposed to tell Miss Coker so. A diplomatic answer was required.

"We've always known old Coker to be jolly truthful!" said Nugent.

"Yes, that's so!" agreed Wharton.

"Never thought old Coker would come down to telling whoppers!" said Bob, without adding his belief that old Coker had, at last, done so.

Miss Coker beamed.

"I am so glad to see that you have faith in dear Horace," she said. "Dear Horace needs the help of his friends. You see how necessary it is for the bad boy who set off those fireworks to be discovered."

"Oh!"

The Famous Five supposed that that bad boy was already discovered, and that his name was Horace James Coker. But they did not say so. Tact was needed, with the broolly right on the spot.

"You little boys do not know who it was?" asked Aunt Judy.

Again a diplomatic answer was required.

"We don't know anything about it, except what we heard, ma'am!" said Harry.

"But you might be able to find out!" said Miss Coker.

"To—to find out!"

"And clear dear Horace of this foolish suspicion."

"Oh!"

"Then I have the headmaster's word that dear Horace will be reinstated," said Miss Coker. "It is only necessary to discover the real offender."

"Only!" murmured Bob.

"Will you do your best? Will you help?" asked Aunt Judy. "Horace must be righted! He must be feeling this injustice very deeply! I shall see him soon and give him what comfort I can. But he must be

cleared—he must be righted—he must return to the school."

"Oh!"

"You dear little boys, who are so fond of dear Horace, will, I am sure, do your best to clear him!" said Miss Coker.

"Oh!"

The Famous Five gazed at Miss Coker. They realised why she had come to Study No. 1 in the Remove now. Potter and Greene had failed her—so she had come to them—as dear little boys who were fond of Horace! It was rather awkward, as their opinion on the subject was precisely the same as that of Potter and Greene.

"We—we—we—" Harry Wharton stammered. "We—we—"

Oh, certainly! If—if—if it was another chap, we—we'll try to spot who it was, Miss Coker, and—and if—if we spot him, we'll jolly well make him own up!"

"I shall trust you!" said Aunt Judy. "Now I must go to my poor dear Horace."

The chums of the Remove respected and esteemed Miss Judith Coker. But they were not sorry to hear that she was going to poor dear Horace! They could not help feeling that an injudicious word, at any moment, might bring the umbrella into play.

They politely escorted Miss Coker down the staircase.

The hansom cab was still waiting outside the House.

Many eyes fixed on Miss Coker as she came out with the Famous Five. Many faces wore smiles. A booming voice was heard as they emerged.

"This cab is still here, Quelch! Is that—that person still in the House? Upon my word! I certainly thought she was gone, or I should not have left my study! I— Oh!"

Mr. Prout broke off at the sight of Judith Coker. He backed away hastily. Judy gave him a glare.

"Old donkey!" she said distinctly.

There was a joyous gurgle among about a hundred fellows.

"Madam!" gasped Prout. "Such expressions—"

Prout did not stay to finish. Miss Coker was taking a business-like grip on her umbrella.

It looked, for a moment, as if Mr. Prout was going to share the fate of Potter and Greene, of his Form.

Prout faded rapidly out of the picture.

Miss Coker gave a sniff.

"Donkey!" she repeated.

Then she stepped into the hansom.

The driver got his old horse into motion, and the Greyfriars crowd waved their caps and cheered as Miss Coker drove off at last in the hansom.

A LETTER FROM COKER!

MR. PROUT snorted.

It was the following morning, and Prout, in his study, after breakfast, glanced over a pile of letters on his table.

They were letters for fellows in his Form, and it was Prout's duty to give them the once-over before they were put in the rack.

One letter among the others had drawn Prout's special attention.

It was addressed to G. Potter; it was postmarked Friardale; and the address was written in a sprawling, scrawling hand that Prout knew only too well.

Only too often had Prout seen that



"Now cut off!" said Blundell, when the last m landing. "Don't you come barging

Aunt sprawling hand, in the Fifth Form Room; and he had hoped, and expected, not to see it again. Now he saw it unexpectedly; and the sight of it made him snort.

Coker was still in the village. That was irritating enough. He was writing to Greyfriars fellows from his new haunt. That was more irritating still.

Prout was fed-up with Coker—fed-up to the back teeth. If anything could have intensified that fed-up feeling on Prout's part, it would have been Aunt Judy's visit the day before.

The sight of Coker's rugged fist, on that letter addressed to Potter of the Fifth, made Prout snort like a war-horse.

He stepped to the study window. Some Remove fellows were at hand, and Prout called to one of them.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Please find Potter, of my Form, and ask him to come to my study at once!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Prout sat and snorted, while he waited for Potter. But he had not long to wait.

G. Potter tapped at the study door and entered.

The thunderous frown with which his Form-master greeted him rather alarmed Potter of the Fifth. He wondered what the dickens was the matter with Old Pompous now.

"Potter!" snorted Prout. "Look at that letter! That letter is addressed

Under Prout's baleful eyes, he read the letter.

"Oh gum!" he murmured.

"Potter!" boomed Prout. "It is necessary for me to see that letter. Have you any objection, Potter, to your Form-master seeing that letter?"

"I—I—" stammered Potter, in confusion. "I—I'd rather you didn't, sir. There—there's nothing in it—nothing—only—oh crikey!"

"You object to my seeing that letter, Potter?"

"Nunno, sir! B-b-but—" stammered Potter.

"I shall not insist!" said Mr. Prout.

"Oh! Thank you, sir!"

"But if you do not show me the letter, Potter, I shall be driven to conclude that you are acting in collusion with that impertinent boy, Coker, in defiance of your Form-master, and I shall have to act accordingly."

"Oh! No, sir! But—" gasped Potter. "Coker is— is rather careless how he words a letter, sir, and— and—"

"Will you show me that letter, or not, Potter? I shall not insist, if you object. But I shall take your objection as meaning that you are a party to that extraordinary boy's insensate proceedings, and you will be detained all holidays this term, and you will write a book, and—"

"Please read the letter, sir!" gasped Potter, without waiting for Mr. Prout to get on with the list of pains and penalties. "I—I—I'm sure I have no objection, sir!"

Prout took the letter.

Potter watched him very uneasily as he perused it.

The purple deepened in Prout's plump face.

He realised, as soon as he looked at the letter, why Potter did not want him to see it. It ran:

"Clegg's Stores,

"Friardale.

"Dear Potter,—Just a line to tell you I'm gowing on all rife, old been. My aunt Judy is backing me up all allong the lync, and I'm gowing to stop hear till I cum back to Greyfriars. My idear is this—that old ass Prout thinks I banged off those fireworks, and I jolly well didn't! Of course, you know what a phool the man is, having him in the Form-room every day. If I went home, and let the matter drop, that would be the phiinnish. Katch me gowing! I'm stikking hear till old Pompous climes down. Sooner or later, he will spot the swob who banged off those fireworks, if the matter ain't allowed to drop! See? That's the bigg ideah. Then the Head will doo the sensibel thing, and I shall cum back.

"Old Prout's lazy—that's his trabble. He won't take the trabble to root out that swob. I'm going to make him! You know I've taken on a job as growcer's boy hear. It's rather a lark. But there haven't been any orders from the school since I took it on. So I want you and Greene to send some orders to Unele Clegg—any old thing. Then I can butt in at the school with my baskitt on my arm again, see, and make old Pompous wild. I'm not gowing to let him phorget me for a single minnit, if I can help it. You can fone an order—usc old Pompous' fone when he is out. Then I can cum allong with the basket, see? You can drop in hear after class any time—you and Greene—and tell me how the old ass is gowing on.

"Yore pal,

"H. J. Coker."

It was no wonder that Potter of the Fifth had not wanted Prout to see that letter!

Prout's plump face grew more and more purple, and he seemed to find more and more difficulty in breathing; till Potter, watching him, really wondered whether Prout was going off with a bang, like those fireworks!

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout, at last. He found his voice. It came in a gasp. "Upon my word, Potter, if you hold any communication with that boy—if you accede to his request—if you visit him in the village—you will be expelled like him! Upon my word!"

Prout rose from his chair.

Potter backed towards the door.

But Prout did not clutch up a cane, as Potter feared.

"You may go!" gasped Prout. "I shall take this—this letter to the Head! Remember my warning, Potter! Go!"

Potter was glad to go.

Prout, with Coker's letter clutched in his hand, swept away like a thunderstorm to the Head's study.

When the Greyfriars fellows came out in break that morning there was a new notice on the board, signed by the Head. That notice placed the village tuckshop, at Friardale, out of school bounds until further orders!

WANTED ON THE PHONE!

"PLEASE, sir—"

"Well?"

Mr. Quelch rapped that word out like a bullet.

The Remove were in Form; and the Remove master did not like interruptions in class. So when Trotter, the House page, put his head in, Mr. Quelch barked.

"The telephone, sir," said Trotter.

"What? You may state that I am now engaged and shall not be at liberty before twelve o'clock!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

The Remove were in third school, after break.

"I 'ave, sir," answered Trotter;

"but Miss Coker, sir—"

"M's Coker!"

"Ye-err! Miss Coker says she must speak, sir, being important."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1.657.



Member of the Famous Five was pitched out on the ground here again, checking the Fifth!"

to you, from a boy recently expelled from this school!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Potter.

"You must be perfectly aware, Potter, that no such correspondence is allowed, in view of the fact that Coker has been expelled, and that he is remaining in the neighbourhood of this school in defiance of my wishes—of his headmaster's wishes! Have you written to Coker?"

"Oh! No, sir!"

"You will open that letter, Potter, in my presence!" boomed Prout. "You will open it immediately, Potter! I will allow no collusion between boys of my Form and a member of that Form expelled from the school! Open that letter immediately, Potter, in my presence."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Potter.

He slit the envelope, and drew out the letter.

Mr. Quelch stared at Trotter. All the Remove sat up and took notice.

Miss Coker had had the spotlight during her visit to Greyfriars the previous day. Nobody had forgotten Aunt Judy. Nobody would have been surprised had Prout heard something more from Aunt Judy—even had that lady called again and whopped Prout with her umbrella!

But it was rather surprising for Aunt Judy to call up Mr. Quelch. The Remove master had nothing to do with Coker of the Fifth, or the sacking of that remarkable youth.

"You are sure Miss Coker did not ask for Mr. Prout, Trotter?"

"Yessir! You, sir."

"Please tell Miss Coker that I regret that I am unable to come to the telephone at the moment!" said Mr. Quelch firmly.

"Yessir!" said Trotter.

He did not look hopeful as he departed. It was clear that he did not expect to get rid of Aunt Judy so easily as all that.

Third lesson was resumed in the Remove room. But it was scheduled to have another interruption.

A few minutes later, Trotter's chubby face reappeared in the Form-room doorway.

"Well?" rapped Quelch.

"If you please, sir, Miss Coker——"

"Did you not give Miss Coker my message?"

"Yessir; but——"

"You should then have cut off, Trotter."

"Yessir; I did, sir, but Miss Coker's rung up again, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose. Telephone calls in class-time were irritating. Neither had he the slightest desire to establish contact with Coker's aunt. He desired to keep that formidable lady at arm's length. He was thankful that there was no relation of Miss Coker's in the Remove.

But if Miss Coker refused to take no for an answer, there was only one thing to be done.

"Very well, Trotter!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

He turned to his Form.

"Wharton, I shall leave you in charge here for a few minutes."

"Yes, sir!" answered his Head Boy.

Quelch rustled out of the Form-room, with a knitted brow.

Immediately the door closed there was a buzz of voices in the Remove-room. Every fellow was curious to know why Aunt Judy was after Quelch.

Mr. Quelch lost no time in getting to his study! He grabbed up the receiver. He barked into the transmitter:

"Well?"

"Is that Mr. Squelch?" came Aunt Judy's voice over the wires.

"It is Mr. Quelch!" answered the Remove master, in a deep voice.

"I hope I have not interrupted you, Mr. Welsh."

"You have interrupted my class, Miss Coker."

"Indeed! I am so sorry, Mr. Welsh! But it was so necessary to speak to you that I feel sure you will forgive me."

"Will you kindly tell me why you have rung me up, madam?" asked Mr. Quelch, in concentrated tones.

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Squelch! May I speak to Carter?"

"Carter?"

"Yes; or Plummy! It really does not matter whether I speak to Carter or Plummy, but I must speak to one of them. It is very urgent."

"I am quite unacquainted with either name, Miss Coker."

"Dear me! Is it possible that you have forgotten the names of boys in your own Form, Mr. Welsh? I do not remember names very well, but a schoolmaster——"

"There is no boy of either name in my Form, madam! There was once a boy in the Remove named Carter, but he left long ago."

"My dear Mr. Squelch, I saw Carter when I was at the school yesterday!" exclaimed Aunt Judy, in surprise.

"I repeat that there is no such boy in——"

"Perhaps I am in error in the name, Mr. Welsh! I often forget names. The name may be Barker."

"There is no such name."

"Or Parker——"

"No boy named Parker——"

"My dear Mr. Welsh, you must be mistaken. Perhaps you are very absent-minded. I am sometimes a little absent-minded. At our age, Mr. Squelch, it is hardly to be expected that we should not be a little absent-minded and forgetful, and——"

Mr. Quelch looked as if he was going to bite the telephone. He was neither absent-minded nor forgetful, and he had not yet reached the ripe age of Coker's Aunt Judy. He repressed a snort.

"The little boy I mention is named Harry," went on Miss Coker. "Probably you call him Harry, and that is why you forget that his name is Carter, or Barker, or Parker——"

Quelch could not quite repress a snort at this. Miss Judith apparently supposed that he addressed Remove boys by their front names. Mr. Quelch could not quite see himself addressing members of his Form as Harry and Bob and Tom and Jimmy.

But the name "Harry" gave him a clue.

"Is it possible that you mean Wharton, Miss Coker?" he asked.

"Dear me! Now I come to think of it, that is the name," said Aunt Judy. "I knew it was something like Carter or Barker. That is the dear little boy to whom I wish to speak."

"Wharton is now in Form! If you will kindly ring up after twelve, I will allow him to use the telephone."

"I should prefer to speak to him now, Mr. Welsh! It is very urgent, as I am so anxious for news of dear Horace."

"Horace? Do you mean Coker? Boys of my Form have nothing to do with Fifth Form boys, Miss Coker! Coker is no longer here. I do not understand——"

"Dear Horace is in such trouble now, Mr. Squelch! I suppose you are

aware that that foolish old gentleman, Mr. Stout, has made a ridiculous mistake about dear Horace, and that he has been sent away——"

"The matter does not concern me, Miss Coker, as the boy was not in my Form," said Mr. Quelch. "If you will kindly ring off——"

"Am I wasting your time, Mr. Welsh?"

"You are, madam."

"I am so sorry! Please send Carter—I mean Barton—to speak to me on the telephone."

"Wharton is in Form! He knows nothing about Coker. He is not connected with the matter in any way. Good-morning, madam!"

Mr. Quelch jammed back the receiver.

Quelch was a polite gentleman in his frosty way, but, really, Aunt Judy was a little too much for him. He was beginning to feel as tired of Coker and all his works as Mr. Prout was.

Having cut off, Quelch rustled back to the Remove room.

A fat voice greeted his ears as he opened the door of the Form-room.

"I say, you fellows, I wonder what that old sketch is after Quelch for? Old Quelch looked frightfully ratty when he went——"

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter, his little round eyes almost popping through his big round spectacles at Quelch. "I wasn't speaking, sir! I never spoke a word, sir! I was only saying——"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter, for talking in class, and another hundred lines for your disrespectful allusion to Miss Coker."

"Oh lor'!"

Once more third lesson was resumed. But it was not destined to proceed uninterrupted on the even tenor of its way.

A few minutes later, Trotter's chubby face reappeared at the door.

"If you please, sir——"

"Trotter! What——"

"Miss Coker, sir——"

"Upon my word!"

"Miss Coker's rung up again, sir, and she says she was cut off, sir, and if you please——"

Quelch breathed hard. Quelch breathed deep. Then he called to the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton! Miss Coker desires to speak to you on the telephone. You may go to my study and take the call."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Harry, in surprise.

And he left the Form-room, and third lesson, at last, was enabled to go on its way without further interruption.

UP TO WHARTON!

HARRY WHARTON picked up the receiver in Quelch's study.

Aunt Judy's voice came through.

"Is that Carter?"

"It's Wharton, ma'am!" answered Harry.

"Oh, yes! Of course! How very

forgetful of me!" said Aunt Judy. "I seldom remember names very well, little boy. Is there any news?"

"News!" repeated the captain of the Remove blankly.

"About Horace."

"Horace?"

"I am sure, my dear little boy, that you have lost no time and that you have done your best," said Miss Coker. "I must not be impatient. But poor, dear Horace, all this time, is away from his school, so you can understand my anxiety, I feel sure."

Harry Wharton blinked at the telephone.

There was no news of Horace, except that the Head had placed Uncle Clegg's tuckshop out of bounds because Coker had taken up his residence there. He did not feel disposed to pass on that item of news to Aunt Judy.

But he realised to what Miss Coker was referring. He could not help feeling disconcerted. Miss Coker, evidently, was taking that interview in Study No. 1 much more seriously than the chums of the Remove had taken it.

Certainly they had soothed the old lady by stating that if the guilty man wasn't Coker, they would spot him if they could. But as they had no doubt that the guilty man was Coker, there did not seem to be much doing.

Aunt Judy, apparently, had a picture in her mind of five earnest youths, all very fond of Horace, leaving no stone unturned to find out who really had banged off those fireworks—certainly not Horace, as Horace had said that it was not he.

"Have you discovered anything?" asked Miss Coker.

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "No."

"You have not found out who that bad boy was?"

"Oh, no!"

"I must not be impatient!" sighed Miss Coker. "But you understand how anxious I am. Were Horace on the spot, I have no doubt that he would soon find out. Horace is so clever! But I must not, of course, expect you to be so clever as Horace!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Mr. Stout will make no move in the matter, as he is so foolishly prejudiced against Horace. Even the headmaster takes Mr. Stout's view, instead of Horace's, which is very strange. It is not what I should have expected of Dr. Locke."

"Oh!"

"So it all depends on Horace's friends in his school finding out what really happened!" said Miss Coker. "You see that?"

"Oh, yes, but—"

At the safe end of a telephone wire, the captain of the Remove could have ventured to tell Miss Coker his genuine opinion on the matter. There was no danger of the umbrella now! But he naturally shrank from doing so. He hardly knew what to say.

"Well, well, if you are doing your best, I must not complain," said Miss Coker resignedly.

"You—you see—" stammered Harry.

"I will ring up again to-morrow," said Miss Coker. "Perhaps you will have some news for me then."

"Oh!"

"Mr. Squelch seemed a little put out, I thought; he does not like his class to be interrupted, perhaps," said Miss Coker. "He does not seem to realise how urgent it is for Horace to be cleared of this unjust suspicion and reinstated in his school."

"Oh, yes, but—"

"I am sure you are doing all you can, Carter. But please, please don't spare any effort! If you can find that bad boy, I am sure you will be able to prevail upon him to go to the headmaster and confess. I am very much surprised that he has not done so already, as he must know that the blame is laid on poor, dear Horace."

"Oh, yes, but—"

"When you find him, you will point out to him how very, very wrong it is of him to keep silent in these dreadful circumstances!" said Miss Coker. "You see, Horace's welfare depends upon the truth being made known. Perhaps the boy does not realise that!"

"Oh!"

"Promise me that you will do your very best, Carter."

"Oh! Yes! Certainly!" groaned Wharton.

"Very well, then. I must be content to wait! I am very grateful for your efforts on behalf of poor, dear Horace, Carter. Horace himself will thank you when he returns to Greyfriars. Good-bye, little boy!"

"Oh! Good-bye, Miss Coker!"

Harry Wharton hung up the receiver and blinked at it. He was feeling extremely uncomfortable.

Miss Coker's simple faith and trust gave him a rather guilty feeling—but he really could not have told Aunt Judy that that fathead Coker had played the giddy ox and got what he had asked for!

He went back to the Remove room.

Mr. Quelch gave him a glance as he entered, but did not speak, and he went to his place in a very thoughtful mood.

The matter was very awkward, for he had now promised Miss Coker to do his best to find out the guilty man. The captain of the Remove could not regard a promise as like a pie-crust—made to be broken!

He began to wonder whether, after all, Aunt Judy might be right—and Coker wasn't the man! If, after all, he wasn't, it was up to Wharton now.

When the Remove were dismissed after third school, his friends gathered round him in the quad. They wanted to know.

"What the thump," asked Bob Cherry, "did Coker's aunt want?"

Wharton explained.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "But Coker did it! Everybody knows that Coker did it—except poor old Aunt Judy!"

"The didfulness is terrific!" agreed Harree Jarnet Ram Singh.

"If Coker didn't, who did?" asked Nugent.

"Who would?" said Johnny Bull. "Nobody else had anything up

against Prout. A fellow might have larked in his study, but he would know jolly well that it would be put down to Coker at once, after Coker's gas about it—so he wouldn't! Coker did it."

"I suppose there can't be any doubt," said Harry Wharton slowly. "Still, I must say I was surprised at Coker telling whoppers about it. That isn't like him. If there's a chance that he didn't—"

Bob Cherry whistled.

"If he didn't, the fellow who did must be an awful skunk to keep quiet while Coker was sacked!" he said.

"Well, look here," said Harry. "There's a sporting chance that it wasn't Coker. We'd better see him and see what he says, and then—"

"Uncle Clegg's is out of bounds now," said Bob. "It's a bit tough on old Clegg—bad for his business. But there you are!"

"We shall have to drop in quietly and see Coker!" said the captain of the Remove. "If he never did it, it's pretty hard cheese on him—though he certainly asked for it at the top of his voice. We're going for a walk after dinner—if you fellows are game."

"Game as pie!" agreed Bob.

And after dinner the chums of the Remove strolled out, taking the direction of Courtfield—which direction they changed, after they were out of sight of Greyfriars School, and headed for the village.

COKER ALL OVER!

HORACE COKER, late of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, sat on the counter in Uncle Clegg's little shop in Friardale High Street.

Coker had an apron on! He was in charge of the shop!

Uncle Clegg was smoking his pipe in his little parlour at the back.

Coker's rugged face was cheerful.

It was rather a lark, in Coker's opinion, to play the part of grocer's boy while he was excluded from Greyfriars! Uncle Clegg was in want of a boy, his former boy having gone on munitions. Coker regarded it as a war-time job; making himself useful when everybody else was doing his bit. Likewise, it served Coker's purpose of keeping near the school from which he had been sacked, and butting in there occasionally to annoy Prout.

Annoying Prout was not, perhaps, the most judicious way of persuading Prout to change his mind about Coker. But it was satisfactory in itself—and, at least, it prevented Coker from being forgotten at Greyfriars. It made it clear that Coker was not a back number.

Coker, certainly, was far from forgotten at his school. He had never, indeed, been so much in the limelight there as since he had left. From the Sixth to the Second, fellows talked of Coker, chuckled over Coker, and wondered what the dickens Coker would do next.

Coker was quite a good grocer's

boy in some ways. He was strong, and he was willing to work. The most heavily laden basket was a mercy to the hefty Horace.

In other respects he was not so satisfactory. He never could remember prices, and he was rather lavish by nature; so, when Coker was in charge of the shop, the customers did better out of the business than Mr. Clegg did!

But if Mr. Clegg was growing a little dissatisfied, Coker was still quite satisfied; so that was all right.

Business was not brisk at the moment. Coker had served a village boy with bullseyes—giving him about a shilling's worth for twopence—much to the satisfaction of the boy! Since then Coker had sat waiting for more custom. Now, at last, there were footsteps outside, and five fellows came in in a bunch.

"Oh!" said Coker, staring at the Famous Five of the Remove.

They grinned at him. They had come to interview old Horace on a serious subject; but they could not help grinning at the

sight of Uncle Clegg's new boy, in his white apron.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob cheerily. "Still going strong, Coker?"

Coker eyed them suspiciously. He had had more rows than anything else with the Famous Five at Greyfriars, and he suspected them of coming in for a rag.

"If you've come here as customers, all right!" said Coker. "If you haven't, get out, before I boot you!"

"Oh, my hat! Is that your style as salesman, Coker?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want any cheek!" said Coker darkly. "If you Remove fags think you can come larking here, you've got another guess coming. Now, what do you want to buy?"

"Nothing!" said Harry. "You see—"

"Then get out!"

"Shut up a minute! You see—"

"If I come across to you," said Coker, "you'll go out on your neck! That's a tip!"

"The Head's put this shop out of bounds," explained the captain of the Remove. "So there won't be any more customers from the school."

"Oh!" said Coker. "That's a rather rotten trick! I bet Prout's put him up to it! I was expecting an order from Potter. He must have had my letter this morning. I told him to phone an order."

"Oh!" said Harry. "Prout sent for Potter before class this morning—he looked fearfully shirty! I suppose that did it."

"Old ass!" said Coker. "Obstinate old ass! The truth is, I believe Prout never liked me in his Form at all. I can't imagine why; but I often had that feeling. Well, I'll jolly well make him more tired of me out of his Form than in it. I'll make him wish I was back before I'm done with him. You can go back and tell him so!"

"I can see us doing it!" grinned Johnny Bull. "You'd better tell Prout that over the phone, old bean."

"So this place is out of bounds, is it?" said Coker, frowning. "What the dickens do you mean by coming here, then? You ought to be jolly well licked all round for going out of bounds, you young sweeps!"

The Famous Five gazed at Coker. Evidently getting sacked had made no difference in old Horace. He was as Fifth-Formy as ever, and still suffered from his constitutional incapacity to mind his own business.

"We came to speak to you, Coker—" said Harry.

"Like your cheek!" answered Coker, with a stare. "Think I want Lower School fags hanging about? Get out of it!"

"Coker's the sort of chap who makes a fellow yearn to help him out of a scrape, isn't he?" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Let's get out!" growled Johnny Bull. "It's no bizney of ours, anyway, and we're fools to butt in!"

"Oh, hold on!" said Harry. "Look here, Coker, we want you to give a plain answer to a plain question.

Did you bang off those fireworks in Prout's study last week or not?"

"Haven't I said I didn't?" snapped Coker.

"Well, yes; but—"

"If you mean that you've come here to call me a liar, you cheeky little sweep, you've come to the right place for a whopping!" roared Coker.

"I suppose you know that the whole school believes that you did it!" answered Harry.

"Silly lot of asses!" said Coker.

"You said you were going to do it! Prout heard you! Lots of fellows heard you. Then it happened!"

"No bizney of yours," said Coker. "Shut up and get out!"

"If it was only gas, and you never did it after all, you can't grumble at Prout believing that you did!" said the captain of the Remove. "But your Aunt Judy believes that you didn't—"

"She's got more sense than two dozen schoolmasters rolled together," said Coker. "If I'd done it, I should have said so, of course. I had a jolly good mind to do it, after Prout's cheek in confiscating my fireworks. Still, he told me I should be sacked if I did—so I let him off."

"You let Prout off?" asked Bob.

"Yes."

"Not the fireworks?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That will do!" said Coker, slipping off the counter. "If you've come here to be funny, I'll shift you fast enough. Outside!"

"Look here—" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Have a little sense, Coker! If you didn't do it, we're going to try to find out who did—"

"You young ass! Fat lot of good you trying to do anything of the kind," snorted Coker. "Don't be a fool!"

"Well, if you didn't do it, somebody else did!" said Harry. "Have you got any idea who the chap was?"

"Of course I haven't—only I expect it was some silly, cheeky fag—one of you, more likely than not!" answered Coker. "If I was sure, I'd jolly well thrash you all round! Prout's an old ass—but I'm not going to have Remove fags playing tricks on my beak."

The Famous Five looked at him, and at one another.

Coker, it was clear, was not an easy fellow to help!

At the same time, they could not help having it borne in on their minds that it was the truth they were hearing from Coker.

Coker had not done it! Coker, in fact, rather suspected that one of them had—like the silly unthinking fags they were!

If Coker had not done it, who had, was a deep mystery. But, really, it looked as if Coker hadn't! Aunt Judy's faith in her dear Horace was justified.

"Well, this beats it!" said Bob. "If Coker didn't do it, who the thump did? Who had his rag out with Prout?"

"Goodness knows!" said Nugent. "But—"

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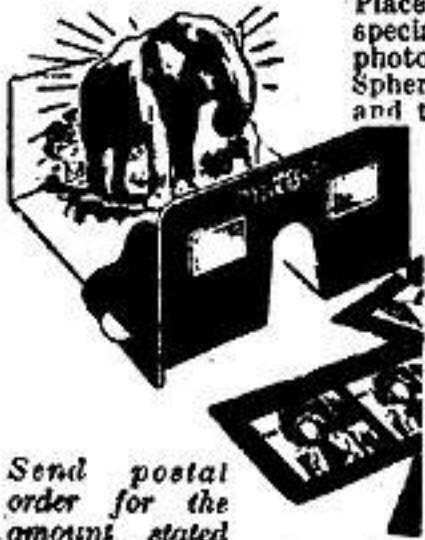
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"Well, if Coker didn't, we may be able to spot who did!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll try, at any rate. Coker can't help being a blithering idiot—but fellows aren't sacked for being blithering idiots!"

"That's enough!" said Coker. "Outside! I've had about all the cheek I want from you."

"Look here——"

"Out you go!" Coker rushed.

"You silly ass!" roared the captain of the Remove, as the irate Horace grasped him and whirled him towards the shop doorway. "Let go! Can't you understand that—— Ow! Back up, you men!"

The Co. jumped to the rescue at once.

Horace Coker was grasped on all sides, and dragged off the captain of the Remove by main force. His leg was hooked, and he was hurled back.

Bump!

"Oh!" roared Coker, as he landed on the floor of Uncle Clegg's shop, with a concussion that caused several eggs to roll from a long box tilted against the wall. "Wow! Why, I'll smash you! I'll spifficate you! I'll pulverise you!"

Uncle Clegg appeared in his parlour doorway. He stared at the scene.

Coker did not heed him! He scrambled up, his rugged face red with wrath.

"Better look it!" grinned Bob. "We haven't come here to slaughter Coker!"

The Famous Five backed to the shop doorway! But as Bob put his head out, he popped it back again, like that of a tortoise into its shell, at the sight of a portly figure in the village street.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob.

"What——"

"Prout!" breathed Bob.

"Oh crumbs!"

"He's coming here!"

"Great pip!"

For a moment the Famous Five stood in dismay.

They were out of bounds—only a few hours after the Head's order had been put on the board! And Prout was coming!

There was no time to lose!

Heedless of Coker, scrambling up and spluttering with rage, the juniors bounded over the counter, and ducked down on the inner side of it.

"My eye!" gasped Uncle Clegg, as he watched that proceeding.

"You young sweeps!" roared Coker.

"Shut up, you dummy!" hissed Johnny Bull, from behind the counter. "Prout's coming!"

"Oh!"

Coker turned towards the doorway, as Mr. Prout, ample and majestic, filled it from side to side with his portly person.

then passed him by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

He rolled towards the counter—behind which, ducking deep, were five Greyfriars fellows, keeping out of sight.

It was just rotten luck for the Famous Five that Prout had butted in. He was about the last visitor they would have expected at the establishment where an expelled member of his Form had taken refuge. But there he was—and they did not want him to spot them!

It meant report to their Form-master, and trouble following, for having disregarded bounds! So they ducked deep, and kept quiet.

It was, of course, Coker's letter to Potter that morning that had brought Prout! That letter had been the last straw; and Prout was going to get shut of Coker, if he could. He was there to see Uncle Clegg on the subject—and he disdained to take notice of Coker's existence.

But old Horace was not to be ignored! While Uncle Clegg blinked from the doorway of his little parlour, Coker opened the counter-flap, and went behind the counter—almost stumbling over the juniors in cover there. He gave them a glance. But Coker was not the man to give a fellow away to a beak. He contented himself with glaring, and then addressed Prout across the counter.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

Prout glared.

"Do not dare to address me, Coker!" he boomed.

"I'm in charge of the shop!" explained Coker. "I suppose you've come here as a customer?"

"I have done nothing of the kind!" boomed Prout.

"Well, you can't waste a business man's time," said Coker. "If you've merely dropped in for a chat, there's nothing doing in business hours. Later on, perhaps, when the shop is closed."

"Be silent!" roared Prout.

Coker had not the slightest intention of being silent. Silence had never been his long suit, in any case.

Coker's chief object in life, at the present time, was to make Prout wild—partly as a punishment for having got him sacked, partly to make him realise that Coker sacked was more trouble than Coker in his old place in the Greyfriars Fifth.

Prout having dropped in just where Coker wanted him, Coker naturally got on with the game of making Prout as wild as he could.

"Can I recommend our fresh eggs, sir?" he asked. "Home-made eggs—I mean, new-laid—none of your imported muck! Best value in the market!"

"Mr. Clegg——" boomed Prout.

"Never mind my employer, sir!" said Coker. "I'm serving in this shop at present! What about tea? Are you short of tea? Our special blend——"

"Silence!"

"Cheese, sir? Best Cheshire——"

"Will you be silent?"

"Jam?" asked Coker. "New-laid jam—I mean home-made! We recom-

mend our jam, sir! Our strawberry-jam is made of strawberries—the old-fashioned method! I think, sir, you'd like our strawberry-jam——"

"If you say another word, Coker——"

"Marmalade, sir?" suggested Coker cheerfully. "Or tomatoes? Vinegar? Salad oil? What about sugar? Or mixed herbs? Or——"

Coker broke off suddenly, and backed. A plump hand was reaching across the counter to smack!

Prout's stout circumference banged on the edge of the counter as he reached!

Luckily, the counter stopped him Coker just escaped!

"Look here, you chuck that, you know!" exclaimed Coker warmly. "You can't barge into a grocer's shop and kick up a row, Prout! If you're looking for a shindy, go along to the Red Cow!"

There was a chuckle below the counter. The Famous Five were rather enjoying Coker's conversation with his former Form-master.

Prout gurgled with rage.

"Mr. Clegg!" he roared.

"Oh, yes!" said Uncle Clegg. "Yes, sir!"

Old Mr. Clegg eyed Mr. Prout uneasily. He was much more in awe of the portly Form-master than Coker was.

"I am here to speak to you!" boomed Prout. "You have given shelter to this boy, who has been expelled from his school, and who should have gone home."

"No bizney of yours, Prout!" said Coker. "Don't you butt into what doesn't concern you, old bean! If you've come here to take me back to Greyfriars, I'll come—and I'll overlook everything that's happened. I can't say fairer than that! Otherwise, the sooner you travel, the better—you're in the way of customers!"

"Mr. Clegg!" foamed Prout. "That boy must be sent away! This shop has been placed out of bounds for the school—and will remain out of bounds so long as that impertinent boy remains here!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Uncle Clegg, in dismay.

Greyfriars custom meant a good deal to the keeper of the village tuck-shop! This was rather a blow!

"No Greyfriars boy," pursued Prout, "will enter this establishment so long as Coker remains here! That is what I have called to tell you, Mr. Clegg! Any boy entering this shop will be caned by his Form-master."

Mr. Clegg blinked at five boys ducked below the counter! Then he blinked at Mr. Prout.

"If the 'eadmaster don't like Master Coker being 'ere, sir——" he mumbled.

"He objects to it most strongly!" said Prout. "I object most strongly! It is an utterly unseemly state of affairs! It must end! No order will be sent from the school so long as he remains!"

"Oh! My eye!" said Mr. Clegg. "Look here, you ring off, Prout!"

exclaimed Coker indignantly. "If you've come here to make trouble

EGGY!

M^R PROUT rolled in.

Coker eyed him.

Prout did not deign to eye Coker. He gave him only one withering glance of lofty disdain, and

between me and my employer, you'd better get out! Are you waiting to be pushed out?"

"Look 'ere, Master Coker—" said old Mr. Clegg feebly.

"Don't you mind Prout, sir!" said Coker reassuringly. "I expect I shall be back at Greyfriars before long, and then it will be all right! Prout's made a silly mistake! But the Head's a jolly sensible old chap, and sooner or later he will sit on Prout! Don't you worry!"

Prout reached across the counter. This time Coker did not dodge in time.

Smack!
"Yaroooop!" roared Mr. Clegg's shop-boy, as a large, plump hand smacked on his ear with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Take that, you impertinent young rascal!" roared Prout. "And—"

"You cheeky old ass!" roared Coker, red with wrath. "Think you can throw your weight about here, as if you were in your Form-room? Keep your paws to yourself, you old donkey!"

There was a basket of tomatoes near at hand.

Coker grabbed one up and hurled it.

Prout was not his Form-master now—Prout had no right to smack his head! Prout was getting something back for that smack! He got it in the shape of a ripe tomato!

Squash!
"Gurrroooogh!" spluttered Mr. Prout as he got the tomato.

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Uncle Clegg, in horror. "Master Coker—you young idjit! Oh, my eye!"

"Wurrroooooogh!"

Prout staggered back, clutching at the ripe tomato that had burst over his majestic countenance. He staggered back and back; and his plump calves came in contact with the edge of the long box of eggs that was tilted up against the shop wall.

Prout had no eyes, naturally, in the back of his head. He did not see that tall egg box, as it was behind him. He did not know it was there till he staggered back against it.

Then it was too late!

As his plump calves banged on the edge, Prout sat backwards—into the eggs!

There was a fearful crunching and smashing.

Prout sat fairly in the box. It engulfed him. Eggs by the dozen smashed under him and round him.

He rolled in eggs! He squirmed in eggs! He lived and moved and had his being in eggs! From those innumerable smashed eggs rose a scent that was absolutely nothing like attar-of-roses! They were marked "best fresh." But the scent hinted

that they were neither best nor fresh! Once upon a time, perhaps, they had been both—but they were no longer so!

"Wooooooch!" gurgled Prout. Crack! Crash! Smash!

"Whurrroooooop!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Uncle Clegg. "Urrgh! Yurrooop! Wooooooch!" Prout rolled and whirled in eggs! Uncle Clegg tottered to his aid. Coker stood and roared.

Five juniors, almost suffocating with suppressed merriment, dodged along the back of the counter and escaped through Uncle Clegg's parlour and cut out of the back door.

They left the village tuckshop in a wild uproar behind them.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry, as they got back to Friardale Lane. "Think old Prout will have Coker back—after that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"If that's Coker's way of getting back to Greyfriars—" gurgled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Famous Five howled with laughter as they headed for the school.

Coker, it was clear, hoped to get back to Greyfriars—that was why he was hanging on at Friardale. But if Coker's return had been improbable before, it seemed rather more improbable now—since Prout had sat in the eggs!

Really and truly, that was not likely to prove a short cut back to Greyfriars!

DETECTIVES IN COUNCIL!

"WHO?"
"The whofulness is terrific!"

"Job for Ferrers Locke!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

After tea that day the Famous Five sat in consultation in Study No. 1 in the Remove. The subject of the consultation was Horace Coker.

That visit to Uncle Clegg's had produced one result—it had convinced the Famous Five that Coker was not the guilty man. Coker, they now believed, had told the truth—he hadn't caused that big bang in Prout's study.

But if Coker hadn't, who had?

Coker's reception of the juniors had not been flattering. It was probable that, if he knew they were working on his behalf, he would consider it cheek on their part! They did not expect any sense from Coker. It was not much use expecting sense from a fellow who had fairly shouted from the house-tops that he was going to bang off those fireworks in Prout's study—and thus

caused the chopper to come down on his fat head when it happened.

But there was old Aunt Judy to be considered. Now that they really believed that old Horace hadn't done it, they felt

that it was up to them. Besides, old Horace, fathead as he was, was entitled to justice. If they could, the heroes of the Remove were going to elucidate the mystery.

But it seemed very deep.

"You see," said Harry Wharton slowly, "everybody knew that those dashed fireworks were in Prout's study! The old ass had gone out for the afternoon. Any chap could have barged into his study and bunged the crackers in his grate, all ready for him to set off—"

"That gives us the whole school to choose from!" said Frank Nugent.

"Which is a big order, especially for fellows who haven't had a lot of training as detectives!" grinned Bob.

"Not a spot of a clue!" said Johnny Bull. "Smithy's the man for such a trick, if it had been Quelch. But Smithy's got nothing up against Prout."

"Must have been a Fifth Form man!" said Bob.

Harry Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"That's what I can't make out!" he said. "Nobody's got anything up against Old Pompous—except Coker. Coker had—Coker threatened to do that very thing. But nobody else had. Why should any man in the Fifth want to blow old Prout up in his study?"

"Echo answers that the whyfulness is terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a shake of his dusky head.

"You see," said Harry, "whoever did it must have known that Coker would get the benefit of it. Prout was certain to jump on Coker at once—he had heard Coker say he would do it! Everybody else was bound to think the same—we'd all heard Coker's gas! Well, the man, whoever he was, knew all that."

"Must have!" agreed Bob.

"Well, then, it was not a case of japing Prout and keeping it dark—which lots of fellows might have done for a lark. It was a case of japing Prout and letting Coker get sacked for it. When it happened, the man had either to own up or let Coker get it in the neck!"

"And he jolly well never meant to own up!" said Bob. "He's let Coker get it in his silly neck."

Harry Wharton nodded slowly.

"Well, then, looking at it like that, and taking it that Coker never did it, we get to this—that it was done by somebody who didn't care a straw if another fellow, Coker, got sacked for it."

"Not many rotters like that here!" said Bob. "Nine fellows in ten would own up if the wrong man got the chopper—but this man knew in advance that Coker would get the chopper and didn't care."

"Exactly!" said Harry. "And that means only one thing—it was done by some swab who had his knife into Coker."

"Oh!" said Bob. He made a grimace.

"It's not a nice idea, I know," said the captain of the Remove quietly, "but it speaks for itself. The man knew that Coker would be sacked for that bang. Prout had said so, and everybody knew. He must have been

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Crash! The barrow went over, and Coker with it! Over Coker went Mr. Prout, rolling in a sea of twigs, amid shrieks of laughter from the spectators!

pretty sick with Coker about something—either he did it not caring what happened to Coker, or, worse still, he wanted something to happen to Coker! And that's what it looks like."

"Done on purpose to dish old Horace!" said Bob, with a whistle.

"Yes—if Coker never did it—and we agree that he never did! Knowing that Coker would be bunked for it, the fellow did it—and that means that he was fearfully sick with Coker and wanted to pay him out."

The juniors looked at one another. It was a very unpleasant conclusion to which to come.

Nobody else, so far as they knew, had thought of anything of the kind; but then, everybody else was convinced that Coker had done it. Taking the line that Coker hadn't led inevitably to Harry Wharton's conclusion. Either Coker had done it, or an enemy had done it to dish Coker—that was the alternative.

"Is there such a worm in the school?" asked Bob uneasily. "There's some fellows here who ain't too particular—but that— Well, that's a bit over the jolly old limit."

"If we're going into this," said Harry, "we've got to spot some fellow who was sick with Coker, and vicious and malicious enough to play a rotten trick like this! Precious few such fellows here—but there must be at least one. Whom had Coker offended to that extent?"

"Is there anybody at Greyfriars he hasn't rowed with?" grunted Johnny Bull. "I believe he's rowed with every man in the Remove, and the

Fourth, and the Shell. He's even rowed with fags in the Third and Second! Coker's the man for rows! Half the Lower School would like to boot him."

"Booting him is one thing—getting him sacked by sneaking treachery is another, old chap! Nobody outside his own Form could loathe him as much as that—and precious few inside it! I suppose he's rowed with every man in the Fifth in his turn. But—"

"Hilton and Price were the latest!" said Bob.

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton. "Price!"

And there was a general movement of interest among the five amateur detectives in Study No. 1.

At the mention of that name they had a feeling that they were getting down to brass tacks.

"Price!" repeated Harry slowly. "Coker shipped his study and chucked his smokes into the fire, and when Pricey chipped in he bunged his head into his waste-paper basket! Pricey isn't the man to forget that!"

"No!" said Bob. "Not Pricey! Hilton wouldn't do a mean thing—but Pricey would! If Price did it, he never told Hilton."

"They're a pair of sweeps!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Still, I can't see Hilton playing dirty tricks to get a fellow bunked! I can see Pricey!"

"Pricey's sick with him, and no mistake!" said Bob. "Look how he joined in the other day, when Coker came here, helping the prefects to handle him! I heard that Potter and Greene booted him for it."

"Well, a fellow would feel sore at what Coker did!" said Harry. "It's no bizney of Coker's, if Price smokes in his study—he was a meddling ass to butt in as he did! And Price couldn't handle him—if he had pluck enough to try! But if Price has been hitting back below the belt, like this—"

"Price or nobody!" said Nugent.

"And if he did it on purpose to dish Coker, he's not likely to own up!" said Bob. "He would keep it as dark as a black-out!"

"Well, he would have to own up, if it got out!" said Harry. "Fellows would make his life here not worth living, if they knew he had dished that fatheaded old ass, Coker, like that. But we've got to make sure. Let's go and see Pricey."

"Think he'd tell us?" grinned Bob.

Pricey don't deal in the truth much more than Bunter does—and he won't begin now."

"We may get it out of him, all the same! Look here, we've promised Aunt Judy to do what we can—at least, I have—and we're going to!" said the captain of the Remove. "Detectives have to question suspected persons—well, we're detectives now, and we're going to question Price."

"May get booted out of the Fifth Form passage!" chuckled Bob. "The Fifth may not understand that we're a set of Ferrers Lockes and Sherlock Holmeses! But come on—and let's see!"

And that decision having been taken, the amateur detectives of the

Remove broke up the consultation, left the study, and proceeded to the quarters of Price and Hilton in the Fifth.

PRICE CUTS UP RUSTY!

"SACKED again?" smiled Hilton of the Fifth. "Coker's beginning to make it a habit!" Price laughed.

"So I hear," he answered. "I rather wondered what would happen, after Old Pompous came in from Friardale, coated with eggs and eggshells! So I got old Clegg on the phone in the prefects' room, and asked him if Coker was still there."

"And he wasn't?"

"No. Old Clegg's business wouldn't stand being put out of school bounds, I expect—and I don't suppose he thinks it so funny, as Coker does, to smother Old Pompous with broken eggs. He said Coker's gone—that means he's sacked! Short career as a grocer's boy, after all!" sneered Price.

"Sacked from the school—and now sacked from the shop!" said Hilton. "I wonder what the benighted ass will do next?"

"Go home, I expect. What else can he do?" grunted Price. "Not likely to get another job in the village! I can't understand his people letting him carry on like this—they ought to have had him home before this."

"I believe his Aunt Judy has the casting vote about old Horace,"

grinned Hilton, "and she's backing him up. She laid into his pals with her broolly for not doin' the same! Bet you Coker won't go home!"

Price scowled—and Hilton laughed. It was not easy for Stephen Price to conceal how anxious he was for Horace Coker to take the home-trail and give Greyfriars School a chance to forget all about him.

Now that his refuge at Uncle Clegg's was closed to him, Price thought that Horace would, at last, go home; the wish, no doubt, being father to the thought. Price would have given a great deal to hear that Horace Coker was a safe hundred miles from Greyfriars.

"The fool will have to go home!" growled Price. "He can't hang about for ever—especially now he can't pretend that he's doing a job. His people ought to see to it. Hanging about like that—"

Tap!
The door opened, and Hilton and Price glanced round, expecting to see Fifth Form faces.

They stared in surprise at five Remove juniors.

Removites were not frequent visitors in Fifth Form studies.

Price scowled at them—he did not like the cheery chime of the Remove. But Cedric Hilton gave them a polite nod.

"Want anythin'?" he asked.

"Yes—lots!" answered Harry Wharton. "Come in, you men!"

"I don't remember askin' you to this study!" remarked Hilton.

"Get out, you cheeky little ticks!" snapped Price.

"We want to speak to you first, Pricey!" explained the captain of the Remove.

"The want's all on your side! Get out!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had not come there to get out at Stephen Price's order. They came coolly in, and Wharton shut the door.

Hilton regarded them with amused inquiry.

Price scowled, and rose to his feet. "Will you get out of this study?" he snarled.

"No!" answered Harry.

"Are you waiting to be booted out?"

"The bootfulness may be a boot on the other leg, my esteemed and execrable Pricey!" said Hurree Jamsæt Ram Singh gently.

"Oh, let him get on with it!" said Johnny Bull. "Any of us could mop up the study with that weedy slacker, Fifth Form man as he is! I'd like to see him boot me!"

"Have you fags come here for a row?" asked Hilton.

"That depends!" answered the captain of the Remove. "We're not going till we've got through what we've come for, and you can bank on that! If Price cuts up rusty, we're ready to handle him."

"And you along with him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Spare me!" said Hilton gravely.

"Look here, Cedric, lend me a hand, and kick the cheeky little scoundrels out!" snarled Price. "I'll call along the passage to some other fellows, too."

"Why not let them say what they've come to say?" drawled Hilton lazily. "Anythin' for a quiet life!"

"We're going to say it, anyhow!" said Bob. "Keep away from this door, Pricey, or you'll get pushed!"

Price eyed him almost wolfishly. But it was clear that he was getting no backing from the dandy of the Fifth, and it was not easy to get the door open, with five sturdy juniors standing against it. He gave an angry shrug of the shoulders and sat down again.

"Carry on!" said Hilton. "We're frightfully interested—at least, I am, if Pricey isn't!"

"This is how the matter stands," said Harry bluntly. "Old Miss Coker asked us to find out, if we could, who put up that big bang in Prout's study last week."

Price, who had sat down, bounded to his feet.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"Sort of startled you, Pricey?" grinned Bob.

"What do you mean, you young idiots?" howled Price, while Cedric Hilton gazed curiously at the juniors. "You know that Coker did it, and he's been sacked for it. What do you mean?"

"We know that he's been sacked for it!" agreed Harry. "But we've made up our minds that he was telling the truth when he said he never did it."

"You fool!"

"Thanks! Fool or not, that's what we believe—and we're going to spot

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the right man if we can," retorted the captain of the Remove. "If that worries you, it's your own look-out."

"Why should it worry me, you young ass?" breathed Price.

"The whyfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"So you young duffers think that Coker never did it, and you've taken on the job of spotting who did?" asked Hilton, with an amused grin. "What's put it into your heads that Coker didn't?"

"Well, we thought the same as everybody else, at first," said Harry. "But Miss Coker started us thinking about it—and we've seen Coker today, in the village, and asked him about it! And the long and the short of it is, that we're sure Coker never did it—he hasn't sense enough, for one thing, to make up a whopping lie and stick to it."

"You've seen Coker at Uncle Clegg's?" asked Price, with a glint in his eyes.

"Yes—and had a jaw with him about it!"

"I seem to have heard that Uncle Clegg's was put out of bounds!" sneered Price.

"Detectives have to disregard little things like that, in working out their cases!" explained Bob Cherry affably.

Hilton chuckled.

"Better not let your beak hear!" he suggested. "Quelch might treat you like cheeky Remove fags, and not like detectives at all."

"The mightfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a grin. "But the esteemed Quelch is not wise to our execrable proceedings."

"So you saw Coker, and he told you a string of lies, as he did Prout and the Head?" sneered Price.

"We think that he told us the truth."

"Likely!" jeered Price. "Anyhow, what the thump have you come here to tell us about it for? Think we want to hear about your nonsense?"

"No—most likely you don't!" said Harry. "But you're going to hear, all the same, Pricey! What we want to know is this—were you the fellow who banged off the fireworks in Prout's study?"

The Famous Five all fixed their eyes on Stephen Price, as their leader asked that question.

Price stared at Harry Wharton blankly, the colour wavering in his pasty cheeks. Obviously, that unexpected question had given the black sheep of the Fifth a startling shock.

He stood as if dumbfounded.

Cedric Hilton whistled softly. What had been a vague doubt and suspicion in his own mind crystallised now into certainty, as he looked at Price's startled, frightened face. But he did not speak.

It was Price who broke the silence, in a husky, strained voice.

"What do you mean? Are you mad, or what? You cheeky young scoundrel!"

"You can cut that out!" said Harry. "Somebody put up that bang to fix it on Coker and get him bunked! We've got that far. Now we want to know who—and—"

"Get out of my study!" breathed Price thickly.

"You haven't answered my question yet!" said the captain of the Remove. "If it was you, and you look as if it was, it's up to you to get Coker clear. If you deny it—"

"Do you think I shall take the trouble?" yelled Price.

"If you deny it, we want to ask you some questions," said Harry, unmoved, "and if you don't answer—"

Price did not look as if he would answer the questions of the Remove detectives. His face, which had paled at the shock, was now flushed with rage. A lurking fear gave an edge to his temper.

"Get out!" he said, between his teeth. "By gad, I'll chuck you out! I'll teach you to come here and check a Fifth Form man in his own study!"

With that, Stephen Price fairly hurled himself at the captain of the Remove.

Evidently, the junior detectives were not going to pursue their inquiries in Price's study any further. Detective investigation changed, all of a sudden, into something like a dog-fight!

Wharton gave grasp for grasp, as Price seized him. He was a junior, and Price was a senior; but he was strong and sturdy, and Price was a weedy slacker, flabby with smoking. He was quite as much as Price could handle—if not a little more! They rocked to and fro, struggling.

"Back up, Cedric, you fool!" screamed Price.

Hilton rose to his feet.

"That's enough!" he said tersely.

"You've told us your funny story—now get out, sharp!"

"Rats to you!" retorted Johnny Bull.

That was enough for Hilton! He rushed into the fray. He was worth about three of his weedy pal in a scrap; and the Famous Five found their hands full!

Bob had foreseen trouble when they started detective investigations in the Fifth—now the trouble was happening!

Five juniors, mixed up with two seniors, rocked about the study, in fierce combat—and the uproar from that study rang and echoed to both ends of the Fifth Form passage.

ROUGH LUCK!

"I SAY, you fellows—look!" yelled Billy Bunter.

Bunter was on the Remove landing—which was a few steps up from the big study landing on which the Fifth Form passage opened.

Bunter's attention was drawn by a sound of wild uproar in the quarters of the Fifth.

There was a scuffling, a trampling of feet, a buzzing of voices; and the fat Owl of the Remove blinked across the landing, through his big spectacles, to see what was up! Then he yelled, and Remove fellows came out of their studies to stare.

From the Fifth Form passage a dishevelled figure came whirling, hurled by three or four big, grinning Fifth Form seniors.

It was that of Bob Cherry, with his collar and tie streaming, his jacket split, and his flaxen mop of hair on end.

Bob was a great fighting man, and he had put up a tremendous fight all the way down the passage from Price's study. But Potter and Greene, Blundell and Tomlinson, of the Fifth, were rather too many for him.

In a rumpled and crumpled, dusty and dishevelled state, Bob was hurled forth, and he rolled on the study landing, spluttering for breath, winded to the wide.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith. "What the dooce—"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Hallo, here comes another!" exclaimed Peter Todd.

Frank Nugent came next, wriggling in the grasp of several seniors. He, too, was hurled forth, sprawling beside Bob.

There were still sounds of conflict in the Fifth Form passage. The other members of the famous Co. were putting up a strenuous resistance.

"Looks as if those chaps barged in where they weren't wanted!" remarked Skinner.

"Here comes Wharton!" grinned Bolsover major.

The captain of the Remove came next, wildly resisting in the grasp of Blundell, Hilton, and Price. But he

(Continued on next page.)

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had no chance against the three. He was pitched out on the landing.

Three fellows now sprawled breathless. Two more were being hooked along the Fifth Form passage by grinning seniors.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shot out, and landed. After him shot Johnny Bull, rolling headlong over the fellows already there.

A crowd of Fifth Form seniors stared after them, grinning and laughing. The Famous Five sat up, gasping for breath.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, waved his hand at them.

"Now cut off!" he said. "Don't you come barging in here again, checking the Fifth! Get off before you're booted!"

"Ooooh!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh gum!" gurgled Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed hat!" spluttered the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The Remove detectives had had hard luck! Really, they had not gone to the Fifth for a row! Price, urged by a guilty conscience and a bad temper, had started the row. They could have mopped up Hilton and Price, but, of course, the shindy in the study had drawn a crowd of the Fifth there.

Fifth Form men did not waste time inquiring into the rights or wrongs of the matter. Finding a gang of juniors kicking up a shindy in a Fifth Form study, they simply collared them and chucked them out.

And they had not handled them gently. Five fellows spluttering on the study landing looked, and felt, as if they had been under a fleet of lorries!

"Don't butt in here again!" said Potter, grinning. "Keep to your own menagerie, you cheeky little sweeps!"

"Boot them back to their passage!" said Price viciously.

"Oh, shut up, I'ricey!" said Hilton. "They're chucked out! You kids cut off, and don't be cheeky again!"

The five staggered to their feet.

They looked at the grinning seniors, and at one another, and then tramped up to the Remove landing—where a grinning crowd of fellows watched them.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you look rather dusty! I say, you look a bit untidy! He, he, he!"

"What on earth is the row about?" asked the Bounder. "Why the thump have you been rowing in the Fifth?"

"The cheeky rotters!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The terrific ticks!" mumbled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But what—"

"What the dickens—"

The Famous Five tramped back to Study No. 1 without answering. They were winded and breathless, battered and bumped. They tramped gasping into the study, and shut the door, leaving the Remove fellows laughing.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Cherry, as he rubbed a damaged nose with one hand, and a painful ear with the other. "This is a go!"

"Oooooooogh!" gurgled Johnny Bull.

"Wow!" remarked Nugent. "Ow!"

"The gofulness is terrific!" moaned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton dabbed his nose with a handkerchief. There were red spots on the handkerchief. He gasped for breath as he dabbed.

"Might have expected it, really!" remarked Bob. "Pricey was bound to cut up rusty! But I'll tell you this much—Pricey did it!"

"I'm sure of that—now!" said Harry. "Price is the man! He looked frightened out of his wits when I put it to him. Pricey did it!"

"Well, we've found that out!" said Bob. "Not bad for amateur detectives, what? But proving it on the cad won't be so jolly easy."

"Wow! My nose!" murmured Nugent.

"No!" said Harry. He dabbed his nose again. "But we've got this far—I haven't the slightest doubt now! I suppose we can't say anything about it till we get it clear—but one thing's jolly certain—it was Price of the Fifth who banged off those fireworks in Prout's study last week, and he did it on purpose to get Coker bunked."

"Oh crikey!" came a sudden, startled ejaculation outside the study.

The Famous Five ceased for a moment attending to casualties and stared round.

The door was closed. That ejaculation came from the outside of it. Evidently a fat car was very near the keyhole!

"Bunter!" hooted Bob. He dragged the door open.

Billy Bunter jumped back. His eyes were popping in surprise through his big spectacles.

Bunter had been curious to know what that row in the Fifth was about—and he had adopted his usual method of acquiring information. What he had heard startled the fat Owl.

"You fat villain!" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I never heard a word you fellows were saying!" gasped Bunter. "But, I say, was it really Price—"

Bunter did not finish that question. He barely dodged a boot, and scuttled up the passage.

The Remove detectives had intended to say nothing on the subject as yet. But Billy Bunter was not the man to say nothing. Bunter was the man to say a lot!

While the dishevelled five were still under repairs in Study No. 1, Billy Bunter was confiding startling news to fellow after fellow, up and down the Remove.

"I say, don't tell anybody—but, I say, Wharton says it was Price who banged those fireworks off in Prout's study!"

Bunter had worked through the whole Remove before calling-over!

ONE BACK FROM PRICE!

"WHARTON, Nugent, Cherry, Bull, Hurree Singh!"

Mr. Quelch recited those names after calling-over. And the Famous Five answered together:

"Yes, sir!"

"You will follow me to my study!" said the Remove master.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Not in the happiest mood, the chums of the Remove followed their Form-master to his study. They were still rather feeling the effects of that shindy in the Fifth. Now, they supposed, they were to be called to account for it—at all events they could think of no other reason why Quelch wanted them—and it was plain that a row was coming.

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88 CARDS IN FULL COLOURS

In Quelch's study, the Remove master's first action was to pick up a cane from his table. Then he fixed his gimlet eyes on the row of juniors waiting for him to speak.

"Wharton! You are my Head Boy and the captain of the Form! From you I expect more discretion than from other boys in the Remove! I do not expect you to set the Form an example of insubordination and disobedience to orders, especially orders from your headmaster."

The captain of the Remove blinked. This exordium could not refer to the skindy in the Fifth!

Something else must have happened. For the moment, he could not imagine what.

"Have I done anything, sir?" asked Harry, perplexed.

"I trust not, Wharton! You are here to be questioned. It is my intention to ascertain the facts," said Mr. Quelch. "You have seen the headmaster's notice on the board, Wharton, placing the village shop kept by Mr. Clegg out of bounds for all Greyfriars boys till further orders?"

Wharton gave a start.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" he stammered.

He guessed what it was now!

Prout, he was certain, had seen nothing of the Remove fellows in Uncle Clegg's shop that day; Prout had been too busy sorting himself out of best fresh eggs when they had dodged from behind the counter through Uncle Clegg's parlour, and escaped by the back door. But it had come to Quelch's knowledge somehow.

"Have you disregarded this order of your headmaster, Wharton?"

No reply.

"Have you other boys disregarded it?"

Silence.

Mr. Quelch's face grew grimmer.

"Mr. Prout," he went on, "is naturally very much annoyed by communications between Greyfriars boys and a member of his Form who has been expelled and who audaciously persists in remaining in the vicinity of the school. Dr. Locke has expressly forbidden any such communication. It is my duty to see that boys of my Form do not transgress his orders."

"Does Mr. Prout say that he saw us there, sir?" asked Harry.

"Mr. Prout states that he has received information to that effect, Wharton. He desires me to ascertain the facts."

The Famous Five stood silent. Somebody, it seemed, had told Prout—he had not seen them.

It could not have been Coker, and, for a moment or two, they were puzzled to know who it could have been. Then they guessed—it was not very difficult to guess, remembering what had been said in Price's study!

"That cur!" muttered Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton set his lips.

It was Price, of course—he had not lost this opportunity of getting back at the juniors who suspected his rascality. The merest hint to Prout had been enough, in Old Pompous' present exasperated state of mind.

Price had not, perhaps, gone directly to his Form-master and sneaked—Prout would not have

allowed that. But he had contrived, in some underhand way, to let Prout know—some remark made in his hearing, no doubt! Anyhow, he had put Prout wise—with this result!

This was one back from Price!

"I am waiting for your answer, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. "This is a very serious matter."

It did not seem quite so serious to the juniors as it seemed to their Form-master. Still, now they came to think of it, it was rather serious to disregard a special order of the headmaster—certainly they had meant no harm, but that was what they had done.

"We were there, sir!" said Harry quietly. "I—I suppose we shouldn't have gone, but we wanted to speak to old Coker, and—"

"I am willing to believe," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "that you acted thoughtlessly and did not intend any disrespect to your headmaster."

"Certainly not!" said Harry.

"We just went," said Bob, rather lamely.

"Precisely!" said Mr. Quelch. "And I regret that it is my duty to punish you for having done so. You will bend over first, Wharton!"

For some minutes after that there was the sound of a swishing cane in the Remove master's study.

Harry Wharton, as Head Boy of the Form, and considered more responsible than other fellows, had a full six. The other four had three each.

Then Mr. Quelch pointed to the door with his cane.

The Famous Five left the study. Their feelings were deep as they went.

Quelch had a scientific hand in laying on a cane; Quelch's whoppings were never to be lightly dismissed from mind. They wriggled painfully as they went down the passage.

They did not blame Quelch, of course! He had his duty to do, and he had done it. But their feelings towards Price were hardly expressible in words.

"That cur!" breathed Johnny Bull.

"It was Price, of course!" muttered Nugent.

"Nobody else knew," said Wharton, between his teeth, "and Price would not have known if we hadn't told him! Price has got us this whopping—for finding him out!"

"The rotter!" muttered Bob.

They went into the Rag, where a good many curious eyes were turned on them.

"Whopped?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Yes!" grunted Bob.

"What for? Ragging in the Fifth?"

"No; going to see Coker."

The Bounder stared.

"What the thump did you want to see Coker for?" he asked. "I say, though, have you heard Bunter's latest?"

"Blow Bunter!"

"Bless Bunter!"

"Bother Bunter!"

"According to Bunter, you fellows have been making out that it wasn't Coker who blew Old Pompous up in his study, but Price!" said Smithy.

"I suppose it's only Bunter's burbling as usual?"

Harry Wharton was silent for a moment.

He had intended to say nothing for the present—but that licking from Quelch, due to Price's treachery, changed his intention. A crowd of fellows were looking at him and waiting for his answer.

Bunter's latest had already spread far and wide in the Remove—there was hardly a fellow in the Form who had not heard it by now. News from Billy Bunter, though often thrilling, was seldom reliable—and it was not taken very seriously. But every fellow was curious to know whether there was anything in it.

"Bunter heard us talking about it," said Harry, at last. "It's true."

There was a buzz in the Rag.

"Mean to say that Price of the Fifth did what Coker's been bunked for?" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Draw it mild!" murmured Skinner.

"How the dickens do you fellows know anything about it, if it's true?" asked Peter Todd.

"We can't say we know exactly," said the captain of the Remove. "I mean, we've no actual proof of it, so far! But that's what we believe—we're quite certain that Coker never did it, and we jolly well believe that Price did!"

"There'll be a row when Priccy hears of it!" grinned Skinner.

"Price has heard of it already!" answered the captain of the Remove coolly. "That was what the row was about in the Fifth! That was why Price pitched into me and started the row—and that's why he's sneaked about our going to see Coker, and got us a licking! Price knows all right!"

The Bounder whistled.

"There'll be a jolly old row about this!" he said. "It will get to the Head!"

"Let it!" answered Wharton. "We're ready to go to the Head about it—if Price is! I rather think he isn't!"

On that point, at least, the captain of the Remove was right.

Price of the Fifth was shaking in his shoes, and he certainly did not think of letting the matter get as far as the headmaster, if he could help it. The Head was the very last person that Price wanted to hear anything about the discoveries of the Remove detectives.

COKER'S LATEST!

"COKER!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Coker again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker happened suddenly, after dinner the following day.

Old Horace had chosen his time, when there would be a crowd on hand to witness his latest antics.

"I say, you fellows—Coker!" yelled Bunter. "I say, he's got a barrow this time! I say—He, he, he!"

In the gateway, to which all eyes were turned, appeared a large barrow, piled with bundles of twigs. Behind it was Horace Coker, pushing.

Crowds of Greyfriars fellows swarmed up, as Gosling rushed out of his lodge, waving excited hands at Coker.

"Houtside!" hooted Gosling. "You 'car me, Master Coker! Wot I says is this 'ere—no more of your larks ere, Master Coker! Get hout!"

Bump!

Coker pushed the barrow. It collided with Gosling's ancient knees!

The Greyfriars porter sat down.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker wheeled the barrow round Gosling. There was a cheery grin on Coker's rugged features.

Getting the sack from Uncle Clegg did not seem to have discouraged Coker. He was not downhearted. He was full of beans! Apparently he had found a new job. Anyhow, here he was—getting on with the good work of making Prout wild.

"Faggots for sale!" roared Coker, in a voice that woke all the echoes of the Greyfriars quad. "Cheap and good. Lay in your stock for the winter. There's a war on. Best faggots—any price you like!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look 'ere, Master Coker—"

gurgled Gosling.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Coker!"

"Carry on, Horace!"

"Here comes Prout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker carried on. He wheeled on his barrow into the middle of the quad as Mr. Prout shot out of the House like a lion from his lair.

A yelling crowd surrounded Coker. Old Horace's latest seemed to have taken Greyfriars by storm. Evidently, old Horace was not going to allow himself to be forgotten at his old school. He was keeping himself in mind.

And there was no doubt that he was making Prout wild.

Prout really looked savage, as he swooped down on Coker and his barrow.

"Coker!" he roared. "Coker! Miserable boy—"

"Hallo, old scout!" said Coker cheerfully. "Faggots for sale, Prout! I'm in a new line now, Prout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared Prout. "How dare you laugh at this boy's insolence! Coker—you—you—"

"You got me the sack at my last place, Prout!" said Coker. "But don't you worry—I've got a new job. I'm the woodcutter's boy now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go!" roared Prout.

"I'm here on business!" explained Coker. "I've come here to sell faggots! I'll let you have them at a special price, Prout. Now's your chance! Coal may run short, you know. Lay in a stock of firewood. Shall I take five bob's worth to your study? Terms strictly cash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout foamed.

The Greyfriars crowd rocked with laughter.

Other masters were looking on. But they did not intervene. It was for Prout to deal with this remark-

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,657.

able member of his Form—no longer a Greyfriars fellow, but more trouble to Prout than he had ever been in the Fifth Form Room.

"Will you go?" foamed Prout. "I order you to depart instantly! I command you not to enter this school again! Rascal! Go!"

"Pack it up, Prout!" answered Coker cheerfully. "Who the dickens are you to give a fellow orders? As soon as I come back to the Fifth you can give me all the orders you like! Until then, pack it up, and get out of the way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout packed it up—he was too breathless with fury to say more. But he did not get out of the way. He bounced at Coker.

Coker let go the handles of the barrow and dodged round it.

After him flew Prout, purple with fury, his gown fluttering behind him as he flew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Coker!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Put it on, Prout!" yelled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout, with a desperate swoop, got Coker. He clutched him.

Coker staggered against the barrow piled high with faggots.

Crash!

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The barrow went over. Coker went over, in a sea of twigs. Over Coker went Prout, rolling in twigs; amid shrieks of laughter from the spectators.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry, almost weeping. "Is this where we laugh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker scrambled up.

Prout was not so active. Prout sat up dizzily, in the midst of the twigs. He sat and spluttered wildly.

"Look out, Coker!" yelled the Bounder. "Here comes Wingate!"

Wingate and Gwynne rushed up. They grabbed Coker by the arms. They walked him off to the gates.

"I say, I want my barrow—"

expostulated Coker. "Never mind your barrow, you mad ass!" grinned Wingate. "Out you go!"

And Coker went out—quite quickly. His barrow and his load of twigs were left behind.

In the midst of the twigs sat Prout—gurgling.

Prout sat and blinked round him dizzily. Then, slowly, with a purple face, Prout heaved himself to his feet.

"I say, you fellows, look at Old Pompous!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

"I say—Yarocop!"

Smack!

Other fellows backed away from Prout.

Prout was looking quite dangerous. The Greyfriars fellows, howling with laughter, gave him a wide berth, as he rolled back to the House.

"Good old Coker!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Ain't he a card? Ain't he a coughdrop? I wonder what Coker will be doing next?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout, gasping for breath in his

study, listening to the howls of laughter from the quad, was also wondering what Coker would be doing next.

Coker had been rather a worry in the Fifth Form—but nothing like the worry he had been since he had been out of it!

Prout almost wished that Horace Coker had never been sacked. Really, it looked as if Prout would never see the last of Horace Coker.

Old Horace, at all events, seemed to be determined that he never would!

THE END.

"THE WANDERER'S RETURN!" is the title of the next yarn in this exciting series. Have you arranged with your newsagent to deliver the MAGNET regularly to you every Saturday?

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

ALTHOUGH my space is curtailed this week, chums, I must reply to Fred Banks, who omitted to send me his address. Fred wants to know if Frank Richards was the originator of Harry Wharton & Co. The answer is "Yes." Frank Richards wrote his first Greyfriars yarn in 1908—and he's been going strong ever since. In fact, next week's yarn—

"THE WANDERER'S RETURN!"

beats all its predecessors. It's great! It's amazing! It's wonderful! When a fellow gets expelled, he usually vanishes altogether. But not so the great Horace Coker! He never was in so much evidence as he has been since he ceased to be a Greyfriars man. Coker can always be relied upon to raise a laugh, and with the introduction of his Aunt Judy in next week's story, you can bank on the biggest laugh ever. To add to your merriment, Dicky Nugent writes another sensational story of Dr. Birchmell for the "Herald." If you've not already done so, fill up the Order Form on page 23 of this issue, hand it to your newsagent, and thus make sure of having your MAGNET delivered to you regularly every Saturday morning.

"Buy 'The Holiday Annual'!" is the slogan now, chums. And no wonder! Imagine the feast of fun you'll get out of its big budget of school yarns starring all your old favourites whose merry antics can never fail to please. Can you get better value for five shillings? Of course not!

The issues of the "Schoolboys' Own Library" on sale this week are No. 385: "The Tough Guy of Greyfriars!" a great yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.; No. 386: "Put to the Test!" a tip-top tale of Tom Merry & Co.; and No. 387: "The Secret World!" a sensational story of the boys of St. Frank's. Sample one, if not all, of these ripping book-length school yarns.

That's all for now, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

scarf-pin, De Vere—incoguscable in these days!" said the Head severely. "By order of the Anti-Waste League you are hereby fined two-and-six-pence! Cash on the nail, if you don't mind!"

With these words the Head tapped De Vere on the napper with the flat of the axe.

The swell of St. Sam's gave a yell. "Yarooooo! Oh gad! What's the ideah, sir? An' what happens to the bally munnay, anyway?"

"All fines for eggstravagance, De Vere, are given to charity—to the Distressed Headmasters' Fund, as a matter of fact! Thanks!" grinned the Head, as De Vere reluctantly handed over half-a-crown.

He bit the coin to make sure it was good before slipping it into his trowsis pocket. Then he looked round for fresh conquests.

"Ah, Swishingham!" he cried, giving the master of the Third a playful tap on the shoulder with his axe. "Your salary is far too big for these days of anti-waste. I hereby reduce it by five shillings a week—the difference to go to the Distressed Headmasters' Fund. Don't think me. It's a plezzure!"

"Look here, sir—" yelled Mr. Swishingham eggstidly.

But Dr. Birchmall had already marched on, looking for fresh fields and pastures new.

During the next hour or two, the old foggy wandered round St. Sam's like a lion seeking what he mite devour! He fined fags for wasting ink on their fingers; he fined seniors for wearing eggspensive clothes; he nocked five shillings a week off the pay of every master he met, and half-a-crown off Fossil's wages. Everywhere he went he used the flat of his axe to seal the bargain!

By the time Dr. Birchmall had finished his tour, St. Sam's was simply seething with revolt. But the Head went on his way rejoicing. He knew his league was looked on as a half-baked wheeze. He knew the masters were in a stew, and that the boys' blud was boiled. But he also knew that he had done them all brown—and that nollidge gave the Head a lot of satisfaction!

("The Tax-Collector's Secret!" is the title of the laughable sequel to this yarn in next week's number. Don't miss it!)

MORE CHIN-WAG

By The Editor.

One thing that continually surprises me is the passion some fellows have for collecting things. Talking about it, with a little crowd in the Rag the other evening, I came to the conclusion that half the Remove must be making a hobby of collecting something or other!

Monty Newland, it seems, is the

champion among half a dozen stamp collectors in the Form. Rake takes first place among the autograph-hunters. Fisher T. Fish has a colossal collection of cigarette cards. Fishy, by the way, ranks as a wholesale merchant rather than a collector, doing a roaring trade among the fags both on a cash and barter basis!

Remove collectors, however, do not restrict their activities to these orthodox channels. Squiff, for instance, hoards matchbox labels, and has several albums filled with unusual specimens. Bulstrode goes in for door knockers—all obtained by legal methods, I hope! Russell began saving spinning-tops when he was a fag, and can now display a most interesting collection of the same.

The queerest collector of the lot, though, to my mind, is Bolsover major, who owns over a hundred photographs of boxers in the process of receiving a knock-out!

Finally, there is Bunter, who is the world's greatest collector of other fellows' cakes—not, be it noted, for hoarding purposes! In the process, he has collected more thick ears than the rest of the Form put together!

Cheerio, chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

GROW YOUR OWN NEW LAID EGGS!

Says TOM BROWN.

Something ought to be done about those eggs they serve up for brekker lately.

I don't like complaining, chaps, but twice this week, after cracking an egg, I've had to put on my gas-mask. Another time, one whiff from Mr. Quelch's soft-boiled egg blew his mortar-board right up in the air.

I have heard it suggested that we could all have new-laid eggs daily if we kept chickens of our own in the school menagerie. This is quite a bright idea, but there are objections. One is that we shouldn't know whose chicken had laid which egg. Another is that chaps with mercenary minds might get up early and swap duds for the genuine new-laid. I could mention one Remove man at least who has been known to dabble in schemes equally fishy.

The best way out, it seems to me, is for every man to leave his own individual hen in a coop in his study over night.

They could all be hauled up in batches by a pulley to the landing window every evening and distributed among the owners in the Remove passage. The owners would see them comfortably placed for the night, and go up to the dorm in the happy expectation of receiving a real new-laid egg in the morning.

In the morning, after the owners had collected their eggs, the hens could be returned to the yard for the rest of the day.

The slight difficulty of keeping the powers that be in ignorance of the arrangements could easily be solved. We could drown all clucking and squawking during the transport of chickens into the House with other noises—loud singing and cheering, for instance, or the beating of tom-toms.

Once in their coops in the owners' studies, the birds could be relied on to go to sleep till daybreak, without further noise.

The loud cackling by which hens celebrate the laying of an egg in the early mornng would probably pass unnoticed. Most people who heard it would conclude that it was Temple of the Fourth laughing in his sleep.

All things considered, there's a lot to be said for keeping chickens and growing your own hen-fruit. I've a good mind to try it!

(We wish you luck.—Ed.)

"CHEERFULNESS ALWAYS WINS!"

—Coker Doesn't Believe in Blues.

In times of depression, Coker of the Fifth is a real ray of sunshine in the gloom.

"Me get the blues? Not likely! Don't believe in 'em!" he told me recently when we were crossing the quad together. "Cheerfulness always wins, if you ask me, and I do my best to be cheerful all the time.

Things that make other chaps fed to the teeth just make me laugh!"

As if to illustrate the truth of his statement, Coker broke into a loud guffaw as Blundell, who was walking in front of me, slipped up on a banana skin.

"Ha, ha, ha! There you are!" chortled Coker. "Look how peeved Blundell is. Yet it only makes me chuckle! Ha, ha, ha!"

A fiendish glare from Blundell did nothing to dampen Coker's cheerfulness. He strolled on, still guffawing, till we met Bunter.

Bunter appeared to be in the depths of despair. He was leaning against the balustrade of the School House steps, groaning miserably. There was a look of anguish on his face, and a tear glimmered behind his big spectacles.

Coker stopped guffawing and eyed the fat Owl with a frown.



"Something wrong, Fatty?" he asked. "You look as if you'd found sixpence and lost a shilling!"

Bunter groaned more deeply.

"I say, you fellows, I'm starving!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Coker.

"Beast! Look here, I'm expecting a postal order. It's been delayed on account of the international situation—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"What a scream! Ha, ha, ha!"

He staggered on, shrieking with mirth. He was still chuckling spasmodically when we met Wingate. Wingate was walking up from the direction of Big Side, looking unusually down in the mouth.

Coker grinned genially at him.

"Fed-up about something, Wingate?" he inquired.

Wingate shrugged.

"Oh, nothing much! We've lost the game against Highcliffe, and I'm not sure I did right in playing Bland—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"What did I tell you? I knew you'd lose if you left out the best forward in the school—myself! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate snorted and passed on. And then we met Stewart of the Shell. He was hurrying up from the gates with water streaming from him. Coker, in a state of great curiosity, rushed to meet him to find out all about it.

"Ha, ha, ha! Been taking your annual?" he yelled.

Stewart growled.

"I fell in the river, if you want to know! Think it's funny?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather! I believe in looking on the bright side and getting a laugh out of these things!"

"You do, do you?" snapped Stewart. "Well, see what sort of a laugh you get out of this, then!"

Stewart then gave Coker a push that knocked him backwards into the bowl of the fountain at the back of him, and Coker went under water with a horrible gurgle.

"I say, old chap," I grinned, as I helped him out, "it's a jolly lucky thing this has happened to you, and not somebody else. Anyone else would have been really shirty about it, but you, with your cheerful outlook on things, will just get a jolly good laugh out of it and— Here, what are you doing?"

Coker didn't answer that question. Instead he seized me by the hair and sat me down on the flagstones with a violent bump. He then tore after Stewart.

Why Coker should have behaved in this unaccountable way I don't know. I only mention it in conclusion as a strange and inexplicable fact—the real purpose of this article being to tell you how cheerful Coker remains through all misfortunes.

BAFFLING BEHAVIOUR OF BUNTER!

By BOB CHERRY

If you are any good at solving jigsaw puzzles, you may be able to solve the latest Bunter puzzle. It's jolly mysterious.

Bunter came up to me in the Rag the other evening, looking fearfully furtive. After scanning the horizon, as though he suspected spies in the distance, he started whispering cryptic communications in my ear.

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(More names and addresses in the GEM.)

MAGNET & GEM
PEN PALS COUPON
18-11-39

"I say, Bob, old chap, supposing one day, after Cripps the carrier had made his delivery at the gates, Gosling found a packing-case standing there addressed to Mrs. Mimble at the tuckshop—mind you, I'm only supposing—"

"He wouldn't, old fat bean," I said. "Cripps always delivers tuckshop stuff direct to Mrs. Mimble."

"Yes, I know. We're only supposing, of course, you fathead—I mean, dear old chap," corrected Bunter, as I extended my hand in the direction of his ear. "Well, supposing it did happen, Gosling would take it along to the tuckshop, wouldn't he?"

"Well, he'd have to do something about it."

"Bound to. And, of course, Mrs. Mimble would leave it at the back of the shop for a day or two like she always does new deliveries. You know what an unbusinesslike old girl she is," urged Bunter.

"Probably she would, old sport," I admitted. "But what the merry thump—"

"Well, supposing the stock in the packing-case wasn't stock at all—"

"Eh?"

"Supposing it was a chap who could get out of the packing-case from the inside—"

"My hat!"

"Then the chap would be able to hop out when the shop was closed and have a look round. And if he happened to be a chap who wanted to do business with the old girl on credit terms—mind you, I'm only stating a case—he could help himself to what he wanted and settle up later, couldn't he?"

"Great pip!"

"Now, what would you say, Bob Cherry, if a chap came along and asked you to help him get into a packing-case and dump it outside old Gossy's lodge?"

"I fancy I should burst him, old bean!"

"Oh, really, Bob Cherry—I—I mean, quite so, old chap. But, anyway, it doesn't matter, as nothing of the kind is likely to happen. After all, I'm only supposing."

Bunter then rolled away, leaving me right in the dark over his fearfully mysterious chain of suppositions.

I think he might have given me a clue of some kind to what he was getting at. But not Bunter! So I can tell you no more about it, old pals, and you'll have to work it out for yourselves if you're clever enough.

Don't go and get brain fag, will you?

HE WAS ALL "KEYED" UP!

"Is it true," asks "Constant Reader," "that Skinner is an amateur locksmith?"

Quite likely, old chap. We know for a fact that the last time he was spotted breaking bounds at night he made a "bolt" for the Remove dormitory!

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