

THE
MAGNET

GREYFRIARS SCHOOLBOY DEFIES FORM-MASTER!

SEE
INSIDE.

THE
**WANDERER'S
RETURN!**
By FRANK
RICHARDS



The
MAGNET
Billy Bunter's
Own Paper 2^D



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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THE TAX-COLLECTOR'S SECRET!

Another St. Sam's "Shocker" by **DICKY NUGENT**, telling of the Amazing Adventures of **JACK JOLLY & CO.**

"I'm kik-kik-cold!"
"S-s-same here!"
"Brrrr! I'm f-f-freezing!"
"Atishoo!"

It was a cold and frosty evening—and nowhere in St. Sam's was it colder and frostier than in the Junior Common-room.

The fellows in the Junior Common-room were simply shivering and shaking. Some were quivering and quaking, but that was only because they wanted to be different.

As a rule, the Common-room was warm and cosy in the evening, owing to the big fire that was kept going in the great. But the axe of Dr. Birchmall's Anti-Waste League had fallen heavily on the Common-room coal; and on this particular evening the great was as empty as Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard!

Everybody was frightfully fed-up about it. The fellows felt they simply couldn't speak; at the same time, their teeth never stopped chattering!

In appearance they strongly resembled a polar egg-sploration party. Jack Jolly wore a woollen muffler and leather gloves. Merry and Bright were huddled up in armchairs with their overcoats on, and the collars turned up. Fearless was sitting on the hearthrug wrapped up in a thick collared blanket, like a Redskin.

"Look here, you chaps, this is really the giddy limit," said Fearless, peering out from his blanket like a snail peering out of its shell. "Something ought to be done about it. What about holding a protest meeting?"

"Good egg!"

"On the bawl, Jolly!"

Jack Jolly climbed up on a chair. The kaptin of the Fourth was always ready to rise to an occasion like this.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" he cried. "The time has arrived for us to raise the banner of revolt!"

"Go it, Jolly!"

"When it comes to sitting in the Common-room in a temperature of umpteen degrees below zero, then I say the joak has gone too far! Frankly, you fellows, it's a bit thick

—and the Head's eggscuses for leaving us like this are decidedly thin!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The Head says it's necessary to economise. But does he economise himself?"

"Not likely!"

"Of course he-duzzent!" said Jolly indignantly. "I bet if we saw him at the present moment he'd be toasting his toes in front of a big, blazing fire, and—"

"Jolly!" thundered a voice from the doorway.

"Oh crums!"

It was Dr. Birchmall himself! The old fogey stalked into the Common-room with his beard faredly bristling with rage.

"Jolly!" he cried, in his refined voice. "How dare you talk about your headmaster like this here? What if I do have a big fire in my study? Don't you think I deserve it after my tireless efforts for the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League?"

"No, I don't!" answered Jolly boldly.

"Wha-a-at?"

"If you want to know what I think,



sir," said the kaptin of the Fourth, "I think it's a beestly shame to leave us shivering here without a fire all the evening just because you want to make a bit on the school coal!"

Dr. Birchmall gave the intrepid leader of the Fourth a black look.

"You—you cheeky yung welp! The idea of suggesting that I am making munny when I haven't made a penny more than twenty quid—er, I mean, I haven't made a single penny!" he corrected hastily. "I declare this mewtinous meeting closed, and I order you yung rascals to go up to bed at once!"

"But it isn't time for bed yet, sir!" protested Fearless.

The Head smiled feintly.

"I know it isn't, Fearless. But it is time, anyway, that we stopped the waste of light in the Junior Common-room, and the best way to do that is to get you all up to your dorms! Scram!"

The juniors scrambled. It was no good argewing the toss with Dr.

Birchemall. But as soon as the Fourth were in bed and the Head had gone, the dorm simply buzzed with indignation.

"This Anti-Waste League must be stopped!" cried Fearless. "Can't you think of a way of stopping it, Jolly?"

"Leave it to me!" was Jolly's confident answer. "I shall have a branewave sooner or later!"

After dinner on the following day, a tall, gawnt figger, in an official uniform and a peaked cap, was seen stalking up to the House from the gates, with a stiff, military gate. The stranger stopped at the foot of the steps and spoke to Tubby Barrell in a hard, grinding voice.

"Dr. Birchmall at home, yung man?" he wrapped out. "If so, kindly show me up to him!"

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped Tubby. "This way, sir!"

Dr. Birchmall had quite a shock when the tall, uniformed gentleman stalked into his study.

"Who the merry dickens are you?" he cried.

"The tacks-collector!" was the newcomer's startling answer—and at those words the Head's demeanour underwent a remarkable change. His hawty, majestick manner slipped off him like a cloak, and he started cringing and fawning and grovelling like a whipped cur!

"I—I beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure!" he mermered, in a wimpering, wining voice. "What can I do you for—I mean do for you, your honner?"

"Eggsplain why you have never told us about the prophets you made from the St. Sam's Anti-Waste League!" was the stern answer.

A garetly pallor spread over the Head's feetchers.

"I—I've never heard of it, sir!" he phaltered. "Besides, there have never been any prophets from it. And—and, anyway, I have always handed over all the prophets to the Distressed Headmasters' Fund!"

"You had better konfess!" cried the tacks-collector sternly. "You have pocketed the prophets and never put them on your tacks form! Konfess, before I hand you over to the perlice!"

"Nunno! Not the perlice!" gasped Dr. Birchmall, trembling violently.

"I—I konfess! I purloined the prophets, and I never put them in my income-tacks figgers! P-p-please, sir, what can I do now to put things right?"

A grim smile appeared under the visitor's mistosh.

"Aha! Now we're getting down from income-tacks to brass tacks! Forchunitly, there is one course still

(Continued on page 27.)

THEY CAN'T GET RID OF HORACE COKER AT GREYFRIARS! LIKE THE PROVERBIAL BAD PENNY—HE KEEPS ON TURNING UP! AND THIS TIME HIS AUNT JUDY TURNS UP AS WELL!

The WANDERER'S RETURN!

By FRANK RICHARDS



THE WHOLE LOT FOR BUNTER!

"SEVEN-AND-SIX!" said Billy Bunter.

And he snorted.

"Seven - and - six!" repeated Bob Cherry.

"Yes! Blow!" grunted Bunter.

Why Bunter said "Blow!" was not clear! Seven-and-sixpence was not, perhaps, a large sum! But it was seven shillings and sixpence! Seven shillings and sixpence, in war-time, was not to be despised!

In morning break at Greyfriars some of the fellows were getting letters from the rack. There was a letter for Bunter—which the fat Owl of the Remove grabbed with eagerness. There was at least a sporting chance that it contained the postal order that Billy Bunter had long been expecting. It was, in fact, time that postal order came, if it was coming at all!

But Bunter did not seem pleased when he opened that letter and blinked into it through his big spectacles! He snorted with dissatisfaction, and uttered the words seven-and-six in tones of exasperation.

"Well, some fellows have the luck!" said Harry Wharton. "Nothing for us."

"Not a thing!" sighed Bob Cherry. "I sometimes think, you chaps, that the old folks at home are overdoing this war-time economy stunt!"

"What are you doing here, Coker?" boomed Mr. Prout. "I've come back to Greyfriars!" answered Coker. "I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, sir, if you are!"

"It's possible to have too much of a good thing!" agreed Frank Nugent.

"The too-muchfulness may occasionally be too terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I'll tell you what!" said Johnny Bull. "Let Bunter whack out!"

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob. "Whack out, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Why not?" agreed Nugent. "Bunter owes more or less to every man in the Remove! Whack out, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

It seemed quite a good idea to the Famous Five of the Remove.

Like the seed in the parable, they had fallen in stony places! Funds were not only at a low ebb! They had disappeared! That morning's post

had been the last hope—and it had been drawn blank.

Harry Wharton & Co., among the five of them, had exactly one half-penny, which Bob had found in his pocket.

Bob Cherry was always ready to whack out with his friends. He was willing—more than willing—to place all his wealth at the general disposal of the whole Co. So far as that half-penny went, they were all welcome.

But it was clear that that sum would not carry them very far.

So if Billy Bunter had seven-and-six, really and truly, it was up to Billy Bunter to square some of the innumerable little loans he had extracted from the Famous Five during the term.

It was true that Bunter never squared. It was true that nobody ever expected Bunter to square. Still, why shouldn't he? If Bunter, for once, was in possession of cash, why shouldn't he?

"Quite a good idea!" said Harry Wharton. "Go it, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

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35,000-word Story of Exciting Schoolboy Adventure—Starring HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS.

"Shell out, Bunter!" said the whole Co. together.

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five. He seemed puzzled.

"I say, you fellows, wharrer you talking about?" he asked peevishly. "I was just going to ask you to lend me something to tide me over till my postal order comes! It's bound to come pretty soon, you know—I've been expecting it for some time!"

"Hasn't that jolly old postal order come, then?" asked Bob,

"Eh? No!"

"Then how the dickens has your pater sent you seven-and-six? I suppose he hasn't sent you a cheque?"

"Eh? He hasn't sent me seven-and-six."

"What?"

"He says that he can't send me anything, because income-tax has gone up to seven-and-six."

"Oh!"

"Seven-and-six!" said Bunter. "Seven-and-six in the pound, you know!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed.

Evidently, there had been a misunderstanding.

Bunter hadn't received seven-and-six in that letter from Mr. Bunter. He had only received an explanation that he couldn't expect anything from home, since income-tax had gone up to seven-and-six. Which was quite a different thing!

"Well, Bunter can't square out of that seven-and-six, that's a cert!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Blow!" said Bunter. "I call this thick! It's practically making me pay income-tax, you know! I say, you fellows, when do you think income-tax will go down?"

"Not before Hitler does!" said Bob.

"Blow Hitler!" said Bunter. "Blow the silly ass! But look here, you fellows, if there had been a remittance in this letter I should have whacked out, of course, with my old pals. I should have said: 'Here you are, you chaps! Take the lot!'"

"I can hear you saying it!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, what I mean is this: I should have whacked out, so I think it's up to you fellows to whack out. As the matter stands, I'm just stony—and I simply must have a snack in break, or how's a fellow to get through third school? So what are you going to lend me—till my postal order comes?" asked Bunter.

He blinked inquiringly at the chums of the Remove.

Bob Cherry bestowed a wink on his friends.

"It's up to us!" he said. "If Bunter was going to lend us all he had, we can't do less—"

"I was, really!" said Bunter eagerly. "If it had been a pound, I should have said: 'Here you are, you chaps, here's a quid off those little amounts you've lent me from time to time!' Those would have been my very words!"

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"Oh crikey!" gasped Frank Nugent.

Really, he did not think he could hear Bunter uttering those very words if in possession of a pound!

"But there's nothing!" said Bunter sadly. "Only some rot about income-tax being seven-and-six in the pound—as if that helps! If it had been a fiver, I should have said: 'Here, you chaps, a quid each!'"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Those would have been my very words!" said Bunter firmly. "And so—"

"And so," said Bob, "we're not going to do less! You fellows agree? Shall we let Bunter have all the cash we've got?"

"Let's!" agreed Nugent. "We're not going to be less generous than Bunter! Let him have the whole lot!"

"I don't mind!" assented Johnny Bull.

"Go it!" said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter's little round eyes glistened behind his big round spectacles. He held out a fat, grubby hand—which looked as if a shortage of soap had already set in.

Bob Cherry placed a halfpenny in it!

Billy Bunter blinked at that unexpected and inconsiderable coin.

"Eh? What's this?" he ejaculated.

"All the cash we've got!" answered Bob affably.

"Wha-a-t?"

"If you were going to let us have the lot—if any—we're going to let you have the lot! One good turn deserves another."

Billy Bunter blinked at that halfpenny in his grubby palm. He blinked at the Famous Five! Words seemed to fail him. But the expression on his fat face was expressive, and it made the juniors yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter found his voice.

"You silly idiot!" he howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You blithering chump!"

"Is that how you thank five fellows for giving you all the cash they've got?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you idiot! You—you—you fathead! You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked away, laughing—leaving Billy Bunter glaring at that halfpenny with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles—evidently not in the least grateful or comforted by that transfer of all the cash possessed by the chums of the Remove!

COKER AGAIN!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Coker!"

"Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker again!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were going out—when Coker came in!

They stopped at once! They were interested in Coker,

All Greyfriars were interested in Horace Coker, who a week or two ago had been Coker of the Fifth.

When Coker of the Fifth had been expelled and walked off to Courtfield Station between two Sixth Form prefects, Greyfriars fellows had supposed that they had seen the last of Coker of the Fifth.

That had proved to be quite an error.

Horace Coker had never been so much in evidence as a Greyfriars man as he had been since he had ceased to be a Greyfriars man!

On the rare occasions when a fellow was expelled, that fellow usually vanished! Coker had not vanished! Far from it! The last thing of which Horace Coker was thinking was the performance of the vanishing trick!

And here he was again!

Coker had a packet under his arm. He walked into the House with it, as coolly and cheerfully as if he had never been sacked.

Outside, in the quad, a crowd of fellows were grinning at one another.

Coker's extraordinary antics since he had been sacked undoubtedly added to the gaiety of existence at Greyfriars School.

"Hallo, you fags!" said Coker, glancing at the Famous Five. "Old Pompous in?"

Old Pompous was the Fifth Form's pet name for their Form-master, Mr. Prout! It was Old Pompous who had caused Coker to be sacked by the Head. Since then Coker's chief object in life had been to make Prout wild! He had succeeded!

"Prout's in his study, I think!" said Harry Wharton. "But—"

"Has he asked you to call, Coker?" grinned Bob Cherry.

Coker grinned.

"Not exactly! I suppose the old ass hasn't found out yet who banged off those fireworks in his study that he got me bunked for?"

"No, but—"

"Priceless old ass, ain't he?" said Coker, heedless of the fact that a crowd of fellows had gathered round and were hearing that description of his former Form-master. "It's more than a week since that big bang in his study! I told him I never did it! He's had lots of time to find out who did! Well, if I make him wild enough, I dare say he'll set his wits to work—such as they are, you know."

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came hurrying up, pushing through the crowd of grinning fellows surrounding Coker.

He fixed his gimlet eyes severely on Horace Coker, late of the Fifth Form.

"Coker! You here again!" he exclaimed.

"Yes! Good-morning, sir!" said Coker cheerfully. "I wish you'd been my Form-master, sir, instead of Prout."

"What?"

"I've no doubt you'd have found out who put up that bang in the

study!" explained Coker. "You're no fool! Prout is!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch. "Coker, you absurd boy, why are you here? You are perfectly well aware that you should not revisit the school from which you have been expelled. You have been ejected several times, Coker! Have you no sense of propriety? Go away at once, or you must be ejected again!"

"I'm going to see Prout!" explained Coker.

"You should not have been admitted!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Gosling has strict orders not to admit you to the school!"

"You needn't blame the jolly old porter, sir! I sat him down in the gateway—he's still sitting there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word! Coker, if you do not go instantly I shall call the Sixth Form prefects to eject you, as before!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"I'm going to see Prout, sir!" said Coker. "I've got this packet for him."

"That packet!" repeated Mr. Quelch, staring at it. "What do you mean, Coker? What is in that packet?"

"Cigars, sir!"

"Cigars!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"From the tobacconist's in Courtfield!" explained Coker. "I've got a job now as errand-boy there!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Greyfriars fellows.

They fairly yelled.

Coker's adventures, since he had been sacked from the school, had been really extraordinary! He was determined not to go home sacked—and his parents, no doubt influenced by Coker's Aunt Judy, in whose affectionate eyes Coker could do no wrong, had given him his head, as it were.

Horace was staying on in the neighbourhood till the Head consented to let him come back to the school.

This was quite an astute scheme on Coker's part.

Coker knew—if nobody else did—that he hadn't caused that terrific explosion of fireworks in Mr. Prout's study, for which he had been found guilty and expelled.

Coker considered that it was up to Prout to discover who had. Then, of course, Coker, cleared of that charge, would be allowed to return. The Head, it was certain, would be sorry that he had sacked him for nothing—the Head would reinstate him in his old Form, in all honour! That was safe to bank on—if it came out that Coker was not the guilty one.

Unfortunately, Mr. Prout remained convinced that he had done it—and Coker's antics only confirmed him in that belief.

But Coker's view was that if he kept up this extraordinary game, Prout would be driven, in the long run, to getting at the facts, if only for the sake of a quiet life!

So, ever since he had been turfed out, Coker had been going strong. First he had got a job at Uncle

Clegg's in the village, and delivered groceries at Greyfriars! Having lost that job, he had been taken on by old Joyce, the local woodcutter, and had wheeled a barrow of faggots into the school! Again he had lost the job—but was he downhearted?

Evidently not—for here he was in a new job—calling at Greyfriars to deliver a packet of cigars to Prout from the Courtfield tobacconist's.

Mr. Quelch eyed him.

Coker, the expelled Fifth-Former, was liable to be chucked out on his neck if he ventured into his old school! But Coker, the tobacconist's boy, had to be allowed to deliver the goods with which he had been dispatched by his employer!

"You—you—you are in employment at Courtfield, Coker?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch at last.

"Just that, sir."

"Coker, this is only a subterfuge—a mere trick to enable you to enter this school and annoy your former Form-master!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Not exactly annoy him, sir!" said Coker cheerfully. "Making him wild is the idea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Coker, this amounts to persecution!" said Mr. Quelch.

"You will not be allowed to do this, Coker!"

"Don't you butt in, sir!" said Coker. "I've got goods to deliver to Mr. Prout! I've got to take the money back—no tick in war-time! I can't even let my old beak have tick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker, you foolish, obstreperous boy——" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Sorry to interrupt you, sir," said Coker, "but being in employment I've no time to waste! I'm not one of those errand boys who slack about when their governor's eye isn't on them! Glad to have a chat with you after working hours, sir——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But not now!" said Coker, shaking his head. "No time for it, sir!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The master of the Remove stood blinking, while Coker coolly walked past him with his packet for Mr. Prout.

He made his way through a yelling crowd. Only one fellow there was not laughing—Price of the Fifth, who was scowling at Coker from the staircase.

Price was probably the only Greyfriars man who was not feeling hilarious at the sight of Horace Coker.

Wingate and Gwynne and Loder, all prefects of the Sixth Form, came up and looked to Mr. Quelch for directions. They had handled Coker before, on previous visits, and were ready to handle him again if required. But even the Sixth Form prefects were grinning.

"Shall we take him away, sir?" asked Wingate.

Mr. Quelch paused. He was annoyed and exasperated by Coker's proceedings, which were not at all in accordance with the fitness of things,

from the point of view of a schoolmaster. On the other hand, if Coker had been sent to the school with goods to deliver by his employer, it was hardly feasible to intervene. The fact that Coker had been a Greyfriars man little more than a week ago did not prevent him from taking a job in Courtfield if he liked—and if he had taken on a job, he had to carry out the duties of that job!

Quelch breathed hard.

"It—it appears that—that Coker has certain goods to deliver here," he said. "Perhaps he had better be allowed to deliver them! But you will see that he then leaves the school at once."

"Certainly, sir!" said Wingate.

And it had to be left at that!

Heedless of Mr. Quelch, heedless of Sixth Form prefects, Horace Coker swung on cheerily to Mr. Prout's study, and banged at the door.

COKER DELIVERS THE GOODS!

"EXTRAORDINARY!" said the Head.

"Unprecedented!" said Mr. Prout.

And he added, after a moment's pause:

"Unparalleled!"

Dr. Locke, headmaster of Greyfriars School, was in Mr. Prout's study.

He had stepped into that study to speak to the Fifth Form master, on the subject of Horace Coker, late of the Fifth Form.

It was a thorny and troublesome subject to the headmaster, as well as to the Form-master.

Such a situation could not continue. A fellow who had been expelled from Greyfriars could not be permitted to hang on in the neighbourhood of the school, barging in from time to time on one excuse or another, causing perpetual disturbance and excitement.

It was impossible! But how was it to be stopped? There was the rub!

The Head was discussing this with Prout as he sat by the Form-master's window, when his eyes fell on the subject of the discussion—coming across from the gates to the House.

At his exclamation, Mr. Prout rose to his feet, looked from the window, and saw Coker also!

Prout's plump face purpled! He had dreaded that Coker might come again—and here he was again, turning up like a very bad penny!

"Amazing!" said the Head.

"Astounding!" agreed Mr. Prout. "Unexampled!"

Words, indeed, could hardly express Prout's feelings—even the longest words he knew.

"This boy's conduct," said Dr. Locke, "is extremely amazing—I may say, exasperating!"

"Extremely so!" agreed Prout.

"He is here again! He has been strictly forbidden to enter this school, from which he has been expelled! Yet he has entered it—time and again! Under pretence of being a grocer's boy, he came here with a

basket! Under pretence of being a woodcutter's boy, he came here with a—a barrow! Now he is here again—on some new pretext. I have no doubt! Drastic measures must be taken, sir!"

"Undoubtedly!" said the Head. "This cannot continue!"

"It cannot!" said the Fifth Form master, with emphasis. "A severe caning—perhaps a flogging—"

"As Coker is no longer a Greyfriars boy, Mr. Prout, there are difficulties in the way!"

"True! But—"

Prout broke off. Really, he did not know how to deal with Horace Coker. Coker had almost turned his hair grey as a member of his Form! In his sacked state, he seemed likely to make Prout's remaining scanty locks fall out entirely!

Bang!

It was a hefty knock at the door! The study door opened, and Coker tramped in!

Prout looked at him!

The Head, from the window, looked at him.

But Coker did not, for the moment, notice the figure by the window. His eyes were fixed on Prout, and the headmaster passed unnoticed.

"Here you are, sir!" Coker slammed his packet on the table. "From Carlyle's, the tobacconist's, sir. Eighteen-and-six to pay."

"You are here again, you impertinent boy!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir—got a job in Courtfield now!" said Coker cheerfully. "Your cigars, sir—can't leave them without the money!"

"If my tobacconist has given you employment, Coker—"

"No 'if' about it—he has!" said Coker.

"I shall immediately cease to deal with that tobacconist, and shall so inform him by telephone!" said Mr. Prout. "Go! Take that packet with you, and go!"

"That's hardly playing the game, you know!" said Coker.

"What?"

"You got me the sack from Uncle Clegg's, in Friardale, by getting the Head to put his shop out of bounds!" said Coker warmly. "And I jolly well know that old Joyce gave me the push because he'd heard from you! Now you're at the same game again! I won't work, Prout!"

"Go!" breathed Prout.

"If I get the sack again," said Coker, "this isn't the last time you'll see me, old bean! Don't you worry! You'll see me pretty often—till I come back! Why don't you find out who banged off those fireworks?"

"Leave this study, Coker!"

"It's up to you!" went on Coker, unheeding. "You call yourself a Form-master! You get a fellow sacked for nothing! I'm surprised that the Head takes any notice of you! I can jolly well tell you that Dr. Locke will be pretty shirty when he finds out that you made a silly mistake and got him to sack the wrong chap!"

"Boy!" gasped Prout.

"You've put the Head in a pretty

rotten position!" said Coker. "He had to back you up—headmasters have to! He had to take your word for it. What else could he do? I can tell you he will jolly well comb your hair for you when he finds out that you've made him sack the wrong chap!"

Prout gurgled.

"The Head's all right!" said Coker, still happily unconscious of the eyes fixed on him from the seat by the window. "I don't think much of schoolmasters, as a rule—a dense lot, in my opinion—but our Head's a bit of an exception! A very sensible old chap, I think! I've known him do a lot of really sensible things! If you had as much sense in your head as he has in his little finger, you wouldn't have made this silly blunder, Prout."

Prout gasped for breath.

"It's jolly well time," went on Coker, "that you found out who really did it! Ten to one it was some cheeky fag! Some young sweep in Quelch's Form, most likely! Find him!"

"Go!" gurgled Prout.

"Think the Head wouldn't find him out, if he was handling the matter?" demanded Coker. "Of course he would! He's got sense! Leaving it in your hands is his mistake—"

"COKER!" came a voice from the window.

Coker jumped and spun round.

"Oh!" he gasped.

He blinked at the Head.

"Oh! I didn't see you, sir!" he stammered. "I didn't know you were here, sir! I—I—I—"

Coker was abashed.

It was not easy to abash Horace James Coker, once of the Fifth! But the calm dignity of his headmaster—his former headmaster—abashed old Horace!

This was his first personal encounter with the Head since he had been sacked! Coker was prepared to cheek Prout to any extent, and make Old Pompous as wild as he possibly could! But even Coker, it seemed, was not prepared for such methods with the Head!

"Coker!" said Dr. Locke, in a deep voice. "You are impertinent! I think, Coker, that your impenetrable stupidity is some excuse for you—but this must cease! Go—and do not return here under any circumstances."

Coker recovered himself.

"Sorry, sir!" he answered respectfully, but firmly. "I've got to carry on! If I'd done anything to be sacked for, I'd cut like a shot! But I haven't! I'm going to stick on till you send for me to come back, sir."

"That is impossible, Coker!"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Coker cheerfully. "I know you, sir! We all know you! You'll be as sorry as anything when you find out that I was sacked for nothing, all through a mistake of Mr. Prout!"

The Head gazed at him.

"Coker! Mr. Prout has no doubt on that subject. He heard you threaten to explode those fireworks in his study! They were exploded in his study! If, by remote chance, an

error was made, you have only your own unthinking impertinence and unreasonable folly to thank for it! Now go!"

"I'll go, sir!" said Coker. "I ain't going to cheek you, sir! But I'm coming back before long! I'm not letting Prout off."

"What?"

"Prout's got to find out who did it!" said Coker stubbornly. "I'm going to keep on till he does! I only want justice, sir! A headmaster's bound to be just, if you don't mind my pointing it out, sir!"

Dr. Locke gave him a look.

"Go!" he said.

"Very well, sir. I'll leave the cigars, Prout. Eighteen-and-six, please! Cash in war-time, you know!"

"Go!" gurgled Prout.

"Well, look here, as you're my beak, I'll trust you," said Coker generously. "I'll leave them on tick!"

"Take that packet, and go!"

"That's all right, Prout. I'll trust you to pay! Any orders I can take back to the shop? I can call any day with the goods. I shall call, anyway. You're going to see me every day, till I come back to the Fifth!"

Dr. Locke rose to his feet.

"Mr. Prout," he said, "will you kindly hand me your cane?"

Coker executed a strategic retreat to the door. He did not wait for Prout to hand Dr. Locke the cane.

"All right—I'm going!" he said. He opened the door. "But look here, sir—"

"Go!" thundered the Head.

"All right! But look here, you make Prout find out who banged off those dashed fireworks!" urged Coker. "It's up to you, as headmaster! I don't expect much sense from Prout, but from you, sir, I expect—Yaroooooh!"

The cane was in Dr. Locke's hand. It interrupted Coker! It came down with a swipe.

Coker roared.

The Head's arm went up again.

Coker did not wait for it to descend. He departed suddenly, and the door banged after him.

CHUCK IT!

"PRICE! What the thump do you want?"

Harry Wharton stared at Price of the Fifth.

After class that day, he came up to his study, No. 1 in the Remove.

It was tea-time, but for once the chums of the Remove were not teaing in the study. The dearth of cash made it necessary to tea in Hall—the resource of the stony!

But in the study cupboard in No. 1 there was a small pot of jam—and fellows were allowed to take such things in to tea. So Wharton had come up for that little pot of jam—when he found Stephen Price of the Fifth Form in his study—very unexpectedly!

Fifth Form men did not often call on the Remove. Coker, when in the Fifth, was liable to butt in some-



“The Head will jolly well comb your hair for you, Prout, when he finds out that you’ve made him sack the wrong man!” said Coker. “COKER!” It was the voice of the Head himself. Coker had not noticed him there.

times, hunting for trouble. But Price was not a man to hunt for trouble. He was less likely still to pay a friendly call in that particular study—so it was a surprise to see him there.

“I’ve been waiting for you!” snapped Price. “You’re generally to be found here at tea-time, I believe.”

“Oh! We’re tea-ing in Hall to-day, if you want to know!” said Wharton snappily. “What the dickens do you want? You’re not wanted in this study, Price!”

“Shut that door! I’ve something to say to you, Wharton!” muttered Price.

“Say it quick, then—and the door can stay as it is,” answered the captain of the Remove coolly. “Cut it short—you’re not the sort of fellow I want to talk to!”

Price of the Fifth gave him a black and venomous look.

Such words to any other senior in the Fifth Form would probably have been followed by drastic action on the part of the Fifth Form man. But Price, it was plain, had reasons for keeping his temper—though the bitterness of it showed plainly in his rather pasty face.

He did not speak for a moment, and Wharton went on impatiently:

“Get it off your chest, if you’ve anything to say! I suppose you haven’t come here to ask me to a smoking-party, or to tip me a winner for the races at Wapshot? You can keep all that for your pal Hilton—we’ve no use for it in this study!”

“Don’t be a fool!” Price breathed

rather hard. “Look here, that howling idiot, Coker, butted in here again to-day—”

“And you don’t like him hanging about!” said Wharton sarcastically. “I can understand that!”

“That fool was sacked for threatening to blow off his silly fireworks in Prout’s study—and then doing it!” said Price. “Everybody knows he did it. You know it as well as anybody else, Wharton!”

“I thought so, like everybody else, at first,” answered Harry. “The silly ass shouted out all over Greyfriars that he was going to do it, and when it happened, of course, everybody supposed that he had done it! What was a fellow to think? But—”

“Well, he did it!” Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

He understood now why Price was there. But if Price fancied that he could browbeat the captain of the Remove, he was mistaken—Fifth Form senior as he was!

“I don’t believe Coker did it, now,” answered Harry. “When his Aunt Judy came here the other day, she talked to us about it. Coker says he never did it, and old Miss Coker takes his word; and she started us thinking about it. Coker’s all sorts of a silly ass—but he never was a liar—and the long and the short of it is that we believe Coker.”

“No bizney of yours, anyway!” snarled Price.

“Oh, yes it is!” said Wharton coolly. “If it came out that Coker

never did it, the Head would let him come back. Old Miss Coker asked us to find out who did it, if we could, so as to set old Horace right again. We said we would—and I think we have, too!”

Price set his thin lips. “You’ve started a tale all over the school that I did it!” he said, between his teeth. “I’ve heard that from a dozen fellows!”

“I believe you did it!” answered Harry. “If Coker didn’t, it’s plain enough that some fellow did knowing that it would be landed on Coker! Precious few fellows at Greyfriars are mean enough to do a thing like that—but you’re one of the few, Price!”

Price’s eyes glittered at him.

“We talked it over, and thought it out,” went on Harry. “Coker’s a high-handed, overbearing sort of ass who never can mind his own business—I know that! He shipped your study, and chucked your smokes into the fire, and jammed your head into a wastepaper-basket for raising objections. It served you jolly well right, if you come to that! But it was no business of Coker’s, and if you’d got back at him in any decent way, that would have been all right. But—”

“You’ve got to stop it!”

“That’s what you came here to say, is it?” asked the captain of the Remove. “Well, you can save your breath! We set out to spot the fellow who set off those fireworks in Prout’s study, knowing that Prout would think it was Coker and get

him bunked for it. And as soon as we thought of you, we jolly well knew we'd spotted him!"

"And what proof have you got?" hissed Price, eyeing the captain of the Remove rather like a big, bad wolf.

"None at all," admitted Wharton. "So far as I know, nobody spotted you going to Prout's study while he was out, and while Coker was up in his study doing lines. We're jolly sure you did, all the same!"

"And you think that's enough to accuse a fellow on?"

"No! We never meant to say anything, but that fat toad, Bunter, heard us talking about it, and spread it over the Remove. We weren't going to say anything till we were sure."

"And how were you going to be sure?" sneered Price.

"Well, the truth does come out, you know," said Harry. "Liars always get found out in the long run. If you never did it, you needn't have any objections to answering questions on the subject, so far as I can see. But when we came to your study about it, you kicked up a shindy!"

"You cheeky young fool, do you think a Fifth Form man is going to be cross-examined by cheeky fags in the Lower Fourth?" snarled Price.

"You can take your choice!" said Wharton coolly. "We only wanted to get at the facts, as we'd promised old Miss Coker that we would do. If you choose to answer questions—"

"I don't!"

"I fancy not," agreed the captain of the Remove. "You'd rather not explain just where you were, and what you were doing, while Prout was out that afternoon. You can get on the high horse, if you like, as a Fifth Form man who won't be questioned by juniors—but we jolly well know what to think!"

Stephen Price eyed him evilly.

"You've got to stop this!" he said. "I don't care much what fags in the Remove gabble to one another—but it's getting about the school. You've got to stop it! If it gets as far as the Head, you'll get into a row for starting such a yarn!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"And you're anxious to keep me out of a row with the Head?" he said sarcastically. "Chuck it, Pricey! You'd go straight to the Head, if you dared, and ask him to call me on the carpet! Why don't you?"

Price did not answer that, but his scowling brow grew blacker and blacker.

"Let's go to the Head together," said Harry Wharton. "If I've made a mistake about you, Price, I'd be only too glad to own up to it—if it turned out to be a mistake. I don't like you, and I think you're a smoky swab, and a disgrace to the school, with your rotten geeges, and racing rot—everybody knows the sort of cad you are, and hardly a man in your own Form would touch you with a barge-pole, except that slacking ass, Hilton, who's not much better than

you are. All the same, if I've made a mistake about this, I'd be glad to be set right, and I'd say I was sorry."

Wharton paused a moment, his eyes mockingly on Price's dark, malicious face.

"If you want it out before the Head, I'll come now!" he said. "Do you?"

"Don't be a cheeky fool!" snarled Price. "I'm not going to the Head about this!"

"I thought not! He might ask you too many questions—and you haven't the nerve to stand up and lie to him!" said Wharton contemptuously. "Your nerves would go to rags, under the Big Beak's eye! I know why you don't want to go to the Head about it all right."

Price clenched his hands.

"You've got to stop it!" he said again. "You've got to stop this sort of yarn about a Fifth Form man. That's what I've come here to tell you. You've started this story—and you've got to stop it!"

"Rats!" said Harry Wharton. "If any fellow asks me who I think banged off crackers in Prout's study, I shall say what I think. And if you don't like it, go to the Head—as every fellow has a right to do."

"I shan't go to the Head," said Price, between his teeth. "I shall give you the hiding of your life if you don't chuck it! See? That's what you've got coming, you cheeky young scoundrel!"

"Is that the game?" Harry Wharton did not look alarmed. "Get on with it, then!"

Price looked at him.

Apparently he had expected that threat from a Fifth Form senior to produce some effect on a junior of the Lower Fourth. Price was no fighting man, and he was weedy and seedy and slack; but he was in the Fifth; he was a head taller than Wharton, and, weedy slacker as he was, it certainly had never occurred to him that any junior in the Remove had a chance of standing up against him in combat.

He was quite taken aback by Harry Wharton's answer. But he stepped quickly between Wharton and the door.

"I mean it, you young cub!" he said savagely. "Either you'll stop spreading this yarn about me, or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life—and you can take your choice!"

Harry Wharton eyed him coolly.

A scrap with a Fifth Form man—any Fifth Form man—was a big order for a junior. But he was as fit as Price was unfit—he had heaps of pluck, of which it was pretty well known that Stephen Price had little, and he was not, in point of fact, alarmed by Price getting between him and the door. He was ready at all events to give a good account of himself.

"Now then," snarled Price, "are you going to chuck it, and keep your cheeky tongue quiet about me—or do you want the biggest thrashing you ever had in your life?" He kicked the door shut.

"I'm not going to chuck it!" said Harry Wharton deliberately. "I'm

going to make sure, if I can, that it was you landed that fool Coker in the soup, and then I'm going to shout it out all over the school, so that you'll be shamed into owning up and getting that silly chump clear, and—"

He did not finish.

Price rushed.

The next moment a terrific combat was raging in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

SOMETHING LIKE A SCRAP!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry in surprise.

The door of Study No. 1 was thrown open, and four fellows stared in.

Having waited in vain for Wharton to come down with that pot of jam, the Co. had come up for him.

They found Study No. 1 in a state of wild and whirling excitement.

"H a r r y!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"That cad Price!" hooted Johnny Bull. "Bag him and chuck him out on his neck!"

"The terrific toad!" exclaimed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "Collar him!"

A Fifth Form senior against a Lower Fourth junior was not fair play—and the Co. were ready to wade in and level matters up.

But Harry Wharton called out:

"O.K., you men! Keep clear!"

The captain of the Remove was, in fact, holding his own. He was standing up to Price's attack with cool and steady determination.

Price had the advantage in age, height, weight, and reach—which were big advantages. But Wharton had the advantage in being strong and sturdy, fit as a fiddle, and full of beans!

Price had not rushed him off his feet, and hammered him right and left, as he had intended and expected. Price found his attack stopped, and as much coming back as he handed over—which was a very unpleasant surprise for him.

The junior was getting some punishment. But the senior's nose was spurting red, and his chin had a lump on it. And he was already getting short of breath. Too many cigarettes told their tale on Price's wind, now that he needed it all.

He gasped for breath as he lashed and hit and thumped.

The junior's wind was sound as a bell, and his boxing was a good deal better than that of the Fifth Form man.

As the captain of the Remove told them to keep clear, the Co. kept clear—though rather uneasily.

They watched from the doorway—and the din of trampling feet soon drew a crowd along the Remove passage.

"What's the row?" asked Vernou-Smith. "Who's scrapping?"

"Wharton—with Price," answered Bob breathlessly.

"Price of the Fifth! Oh gad!" The Bounder pushed for a front place.

"Go it, Wharton!" chirruped Peter Todd.

"Give him beans, old man!" chuckled Squiff. "By gum! He's holding him! Not much stuffing in Pricey!"

"Wharton's knocking it out—what there is!" remarked Tom Brown.

"I say, you fellows, let a fellow see!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say—Wow! Stop shoving, Bols-over, you beast!"

Fellows shoved and crowded and crammed round the doorway to get a view.

A Remove man scrapping with a Fifth Form man was a sight not to be missed.

"Pile in, Wharton!"

"Give him beans!"

"Bellows to mend!" chuckled the Bounder. "Pricey will be falling down soon. Hear the bellows blow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tip for you, Smithy!" said Peter Todd. "That's the smokes!"

"Fathead!" said Smithy.

Price had bellows to mend, with a vengeance. His gasping was growing quite agonised. He gasped and gasped and gasped.

His gasps suddenly changed into a howl!

A jolt to the jaw sent Price staggering, and he landed on his back on the study carpet.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"Man down!" grinned Skinner.

"Oh what a fall was there, my countrymen!" chuckled Wibley.

"Pick him up, somebody!"

"Take him up tenderly, treat him with care!" chortled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton stood panting.

Price lay on the carpet, gurgling for breath. His hand went to his jaw as he sprawled. He looked dizzy.

Had the bad hat of the Fifth anticipated anything like this, it was certain that he would never have adopted such drastic measures in dealing with the captain of the Remove.

Thrashing Wharton had seemed to him a good method. He had never thought of doubting that he could do it. Now he was feeling doubtful—and it was clear, at least, that it was going to be a painful process.

He staggered up at last.

There was a roar from the crammed doorway.

"Buck up, Pricey! You're not dead yet!"

"Stick to it, Pricey!"

"Have a few more, old bean!"

"Pricey's not greedy!" said the Bounder. "He knows when he's had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Redwing.

"What will they say in the Fifth to a Fifth Form man being licked in the Remove?"

"They'll boot him!" said Peter Todd.

Price of the Fifth rushed to the attack again. Those remarks spurred him on.

At that point Price would have been glad to drop the matter and go.

But it really was impossible. No Fifth Form man could admit a licking at the hands of a Remove junior. He could hardly have shown his face in the Fifth afterwards. Price had started it—and now he had to stand to it.

He put all his beef into it—all he had.

The Co. looked rather anxious as their chum backed and backed before a crashing attack by the Fifth Form man.

Wharton went back as far as the box-seat under the window. His knees banged on it, and a jolt sent him sprawling backwards over the box.

Price hammered at him with fury, in that awkward position, heedless of the howls of remonstrance from the Remove crowd.

"Hold on!"

"Give him a chance!"

"Price, you cad——"

"Price, you rotter——"

But Harry Wharton, twisting like an eel, got off the box-seat under a rain of punches and jumped clear.

Price rushed him down again.

With a set face, set teeth, and glinting eyes, Wharton faced that rush—and met it with left and right, and all his strength in the punches.

Crash!

Price fairly flew.

He spun across the study, crashed over, and sprawled!

Wharton reeled against the wall, panting for breath. Price lay extended, and did not rise!

Wharton panted and panted, and got his breath—and waited.

But Price only sat up—he did not get on his feet.

With one hand to a bruised chin, and the other to a streaming nose, Price sat and mumbled. He was knocked out. Fifth Form man as he was, he was knocked out and had to take the count!

"Oh gad!" said the Bounder. "Licked!"

"Licked!" said Peter Todd. "A Fifth Form man—licked!"

"Whopped to the wide!" said Bob. "Ye gods and little fishes! What will they say in the Fifth to this?"

Price grabbed at a chair for support and dragged himself to his feet at last. With a burning face, he stumbled towards the door.

The crowd there opened to let him pass. With a handkerchief to his nose, Price stumbled away down the passage, gurgling for breath, and disappeared.

"Remove wins!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

"Come and bathe your face, old chap!" said Frank Nugent; and he took Wharton's arm and led him from the study.

Harry Wharton's face needed bathing. He had had a good deal of punishment. He bathed it at the sink at the end of the Remove passage, amid a cheering and jubilant crowd.

A Fifth Form man had been whopped in a scrap in the Remove, and though that Fifth Form man was not a very creditable sample of his Form, there it was—and the Removites rejoiced accordingly.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh declared that it was a day worthy to be marked with a white stone—and his chums agreed that it was!

JUST LIKE COKER!

"K NOW that chap?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

His chums chuckled.

After dinner the following day Harry Wharton & Co. were strolling in Friardale Lane.

Every now and then, Wharton rubbed a nose that was unusually red and an eye that persisted in winking. There were visible signs of that scrap in the study to be seen on the countenance of the captain of the Remove.

A burly figure came in sight from the direction of the village.

It was that of Horace Coker, once of the Fifth Form—lately in the employment of a tradesman at Courtfield, but now, apparently, one of the unemployed. Coker's jobs never seemed to last long.

From the direction he was taking, it looked as if Coker was heading for the school—doubtless to pursue his remarkable policy of making Prout wild as a method of getting back to Greyfriars.

He paused as he saw the Removites.

Harry Wharton & Co. gave him cheery smiles. If Coker was visiting the school again, they were prepared to give up their walk, follow on, and see the entertainment.

"Oh!" said Coker. "You lot! Any news yet?"

"News!" repeated Harry.

"I mean, have they found out who did that bang?"

"Oh! No!"

"Has Prout been making inquiries, or anything? Looking into it?"

"Not that I've heard of," said Harry Wharton, and the Co. chuckled.

Coker, apparently, expected his peculiar methods to set Prout going.

Nobody but Coker was likely to expect it.

"The old ass!" said Coker, frowning. "Well, I shall keep at him! I won't give him much rest till he finds out who it was. It's up to him—unless the young rotter owns up. It's as plain as anything that it was some cheeky fag—a Remove kid, most likely. I've wondered a good deal whether it was one of you!"

Coker gave the Famous Five a stern look.

"Fathead!" said Bob Cherry politely.

"Don't be cheeky, Cherry," said Coker. "If you ask me to smack your head I'll smack it fast enough! Now, look here, if it was one of you young sweeps who did it, you ought to own up! You'd get off with a whopping if you owned up—they wouldn't sack you—see? It's rather dishonourable to keep mum while it's landed on me!"

"You blithering clump!" said Johnny Bull.

"I said no cheek!" warned Coker. "Now, I know it must have been some silly fag banged off those fireworks—"

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only a silly fag would do such a thing. Prout ought to have sense enough to guess that—but he's a fool! If it wasn't one of you, you can easily find out which scrubby little swab it was—and kick him till he does the right thing—see?"

Evidently, it was fixed in Coker's mind that the unknown perpetrator of that explosion in Prout's study was a fag—and his suspicions of the Famous Five were strong.

They were, in Coker's view, a cheeky lot—they had often checked Coker! Fags who checked Coker were capable of anything.

"Look here, Coker!" said Harry Wharton. "We told your Aunt Judy, when she was at the school, that we'd find out if we could who had done it. Well, we think we've found out."

"Oh!" Coker was interested. "A Remove kid, of course?"

"No, ass!"

"One of the Fourth?"

"No!"

"Might have been a Shell chap," said Coker thoughtfully. "Hobson of the Shell is pretty cheeky! Do you mean Hobson?"

"No!" answered Harry. "Not a junior at all."

"Don't be an ass!" said Coker. "Seniors don't play potty tricks like that on beaks!"

"You were shouting out all over the school that you were going to do it," growled Johnny Bull. "That's why Prout jumped on you!"

"Never mind what I was shouting out," said Coker. "Don't you be cheeky, if you don't want to be tipped into that ditch!"

"We think it was Price of the Fifth," said Harry.

"Price! Don't talk rot!"

"You see, you got his back up by meddling in his study and jamming his head into a wastepaper-basket, like the high-handed, fatheaded ass you are!" explained the captain of the Remove. "We think he did it to get even. So if you're keen to spot the man, keep your eye on Price of your Form."

"You cheeky little sweep!" said Coker. "It was some fag, as I think you know jolly well. And if you say it was a Fifth Form man, I'll smack your head!"

Coker did not agree with the view of the Famous Five. He disliked Price, and despised him; but Price was in the Fifth, Coker's Form, and was not, therefore, to be criticised by juniors. Harry Wharton's belief that Price had done it was, in Coker's view, sheer cheek!

"Look here, Coker——" exclaimed Wharton.

"That's enough!" said Coker. "Cut that out! You're asking for a whopping! You look as if you've had one already!" he added.

"Well, I haven't!" said Wharton tartly. "Price has!"

"Whopped to the wide!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The whopfulness was terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh. Coker blinked at them.

"You've been scrapping with a Fifth Form man!" he exclaimed.

"Yes! Price doesn't like me think-

ing that he was the man who blew up Prout!" explained Harry. "He started to whop me—but it worked out the other way."

"You're not telling me that you licked a Fifth Form man—even that cad Price!" exclaimed Coker.

"Yes, I'm telling you exactly that," answered the captain of the Remove coolly. "Price had all he wanted—and he hasn't asked for any more, so far."

"Well, my hat!" said Coker, in angry astonishment. "Things are coming to something when cheeky little scrubs in the Lower School scrap with Fifth Form men and make out they've licked them. This kind of thing wouldn't happen if I was at the school—I shouldn't allow it! Have you got the nerve to tell me that you've been punching a man in my Form?"

Coker, clearly, was as Fifth-Formy as ever!

"Well, this beats it!" said Coker. "I shouldn't have thought that even a rotter like Price would let a cheeky fag get away with that! Didn't he wallop you for punching him?"

"No; I walloped him!"

"Did you?" roared Coker. "Well, if you walloped him I'll jolly well wallop you for your cheek—see?"

Coker made a jump at the captain of the Remove and grabbed him with the intention of giving him a record wallop for his cheek in punching a Fifth Form man! If Price could not wallop that cheeky junior, Coker certainly could—and he was going to!

At least, he thought that he was going to!

He grabbed Wharton to begin. But he did not get farther than the beginning.

Harry Wharton, going all out, had licked Price of the Fifth! But the burly, beefy Coker was altogether too big a handful for any junior. Coker would have got away with that walloping—a well-deserved one, in his opinion—had not the Co. been at hand!

But the Co. were at hand—and, as Coker grabbed Harry Wharton, they grabbed Coker.

Coker whirled in the grasp of many hands.

"Sit him in the ditch!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I'll smash you!" roared Coker. "I'll spifficate you! I'll thrash the lot of you! I'll—yooo—whoooooop!"

Splash!

Coker sat suddenly in the ditch. There was a foot of water, over several inches of mud, in that ditch. Coker sat in it with a tremendous splash.

Muddy water and mud flew up all round Horace Coker as he sat.

"Ooooooooooooh!" spluttered Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five looked at him, sitting in the mud, and roared. Then they walked on their way, leaving Coker to his own devices.

Coker, spluttering with fury, floundered in mud. He spluttered and floundered, and plunged and splashed. He got out of the ditch at last. He was clad in mud, as in a garment, up to his armpits. He stood streaming mud—and gurgling wrath.

"By gum!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I—I—I—!" Words failed him.

Coker did not carry out his intention of calling at Greyfriars! He did not want to walk into the school a walking pillar of mud. Coker trailed away to get a change of clothes. He left a trail of mud behind him as he squelched away.

Mr. Prout remained in happy ignorance of his narrow escape from receiving another visit from that expelled member of his Form!

LODER BUTTS IN!

"I SAY, you fellows——"
"Blow away, Bunter!"
"I say, Loder's coming!"
"Blow Loder!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were in Study No. 1.

It was tea-time; but they were not there to tea. Funds were still at a low ebb—the very lowest—and the Famous Five were discussing a problem—whether to stick Lord Mauleverer for a tea in No. 12, or to go down to Hall again.

"I say, you fellows, Loder's after you!" said Billy Bunter, blinking in at the door through his big spectacles. "I heard him ask Toddy, if you were in your study! I say, what have you been up to?"

Harry Wharton & Co. were, happily, unaware of having been up to anything, so they were not unduly alarmed by the news that a Sixth Form prefect was coming up to the study.

They only wondered what the dickens Loder of the Sixth wanted. So did Bunter—so he rolled into the study.

A minute later, Loder came striding up the passage, and looked in.

Loder had his official ashplant under his arm. He had a rather grim expression on his face. It looked as if trouble was coming—though the Famous Five could not yet guess what it was.

The bully of the Sixth had rather a down on that study—still, even Loder had to have some sort of an excuse before he exercised his whopping privs.

"Oh! You're here!" said Loder, stepping in. "I've got something to say to you, Wharton—what's all this I hear about you and Price?"

"Price!" repeated Harry.

Then he caught on!
Price of the Fifth was rather pally with Gerald Loder of the Sixth. Plenty of fellows knew—or, at least, suspected—that they were birds of a feather. And Loder was a prefect! This official visit was due to Price!

Having failed to get anywhere by the process of whopping the captain of the Remove, Price had invoked the aid of his pal in the Sixth.

"Price?" said Harry again. "I don't know what you may have heard, Loder—but if you've heard that Price came to this study to bully me, and that I licked him, and he was glad to crawl off, you've got it right!"

Loder knitted his brows.
"That will do," he said. "I've



Wharton went sprawling backwards over the box. Price hammered at him with fury, in that awkward position, heedless of the howls of remonstrance from the Remove crowd!

nothing to do with your scrapping. You've been telling lies about Price!"

"Rats!"

Loder jumped.

"What did you say?" he ejaculated.

"I said rats!" answered Harry Wharton coolly. "Do you want me to say it again, Loder? Rats!"

Loder slipped his ashplant down into his hand! That, really, was not the way a junior was supposed to speak to a Sixth Form prefect.

"You're asking for six, Wharton!" said Loder grimly.

"Rats!" said Wharton. "And more rats! You say I've been telling lies about Price. Well, that's a lie."

"What!" roared Loder.

"A lie!" said Harry. "L-I-E—lie! Got it now?"

"Bend over that table!" roared Loder.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" retorted the captain of the Remove. "If you handle that ash here, Loder, I'll take the poker to you! Do you think you can come to a fellow's study and call him a liar, because you're a prefect! I'll ask Quelch whether you can!"

The Co. stood silent.

Harry Wharton stood facing the bully of the Sixth, his face cool and determined.

Loder paused.

"You've been telling the whole school that Price did what Coker was sacked for?" he said, at length.

"I haven't been telling the whole school! If any fellow asked me, I've said that that was what I believed. I think it's true!"

"That comes to the same thing. Now I've heard of it—"

"Oh, I know how you've heard of it!" interrupted the captain of the Remove contemptuously. "Price thought he could bully me into chucking it, and he's found out his mistake. Now he's dragged you into it! You've heard about it from Price."

"Well, I've heard about it!" said Loder. "As a prefect, I shall inquire into it! You, a junior of the Lower Fourth, are taking it on yourself to make out that Coker's Form-master made an idiotic blunder!"

"Nothing of the kind! Prout couldn't help thinking what he did, after hearing Coker yell out that he was going to do the very thing that happened the next day. Prout's not to blame—Coker is," said Harry. "It's a mistake—but the fault's Coker's, not Prout's. I've not said a word about Prout."

"You make out that the Head has sacked a man for nothing?"

"The Head backed up Prout, which he was bound to do. I believe that Coker was sacked for nothing—nothing except talking like a fool and making Prout believe that he did a thing that he never did! It won't wash—you can't make out, and Price can't, that I've been slanging Prout or the Head!" said the captain of the Remove. "If that's the game, you may as well chuck it at the start."

"Oh crikey!" murmured Billy Bunter, his eyes popping behind his spectacles.

He expected to see the ashplant come into prompt play at that.

But Loder held his temper in check.

"You've said that Price did it!" he rapped.

"I've said that I believe so! If Price isn't satisfied, I've offered to go with him to the Head and let Dr. Locke inquire into it! If I'm wrong, I'm ready to admit it! But if the Head inquired into it, I believe it would come out that Price was the man, and I believe that that's what he's afraid of."

Loder looked at him very sharply.

He had come there, on Price's account, to wield his authority as prefect and put a stop to that story about Price. Probably he had regarded it merely as a yarn by a junior who disliked Price. But the Co. could see that other thoughts were in Loder's mind now.

"Well, you've got to stop it!" he said at last, rather lamely.

"I shall go on believing what I believe, if that's what you mean!" answered Harry. "Price has his remedy, if he doesn't like it! He makes out that he won't be questioned by a junior. Well, you're a Sixth Form prefect—you ask him where he was, and what he was doing, at the time those fireworks were stacked in Prout's study grate."

"I don't suppose he remembers, after all this time!"

"Let him try!" said Harry. "It wasn't so very long ago—only last Wednesday week! Price will remember that day—it was the day Coker shipped his study and jammed his head into a wastepaper-basket."

"Oh!" ejaculated Loder. "Did he?"
 "Pricey hasn't mentioned that?" asked Wharton sarcastically. "Well, he did, and I believe that was why Price played that foul trick on him, knowing that everybody would believe it was Coker, after what the silly ass had been shouting out all over the shop. I wasn't going to speak about it to a prefect—but as Price has done so, get on with it! It's a prefect's duty to find out the facts."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.
 "You're not making out that you saw Price—" asked Loder slowly.
 "Not at all! I know he was indoors, because he came in when Coker was shipping his study, and Coker handled him when he butted in. But we were playing passage football here, as it was raining, and not bothering about what was going on in the Fifth. Somebody else may have seen him, for all I know."
 "A prefect can inquire into that!" said Johnny Bull.

"Coker was in his study, doing lines for Prout!" went on Harry. "Prout was out on a hike with Quelch. Most of the Fifth were in the games study—having a sing-song—we heard them. Where was Price?"

"The wherefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"If there's nothing in it, Loder, it's for Price to knock it on the head," said Frank Nugent.

Loder stood rather nonplussed. The matter having now come before him through Price, it really was up to him, as a prefect, to make an official inquiry. Probably Price had been sure that there was no danger of his pal in the Sixth taking that step.

"Well, look here," said Loder, "this won't do! The matter's settled and done with—Coker's sacked, and you can't go behind a sentence of the headmaster. I don't want you to teach me a prefect's duty—and it's not for Lower Fourth fags to make out that they know better than the Head! You've got to stop this! Not another word about Price! Understand that?"

"Yes, I understand!" assented Wharton. "And if you want an answer, you can go and eat coke—and Price can do the same!"

Loder's eyes glistened.
 "You fancy you can talk to a Sixth Form prefect like that?" he asked.

"You haven't come here as a prefect—you've come here as Price's pal, to bully the fellow who licked Price!" answered Wharton. "You won't get by with it! Go and eat coke!"

Loder gripped his ashplant, hard. "Bend over that table!" he bawled. "Rats!"

"By gum!" breathed Loder. He made a stride across the study at the captain of the Remove.

Wharton caught up the poker from the fender. The poker circled in the air, and Loder backed just in time to save his nose.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter involuntarily.

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Swipe!
 "Wow! Yaroooooop!" yelled the fat Owl as Loder's ashplant landed. "Ow! Oh crikey! Whoop!"

Bunter bolted out of Study No. 1. One swipe from the angry prefect's ash was enough for Bunter.

Loder stood eyeing the captain of the Remove, crimson with rage.

"Put down that poker!" he breathed. "Wharton, if you don't bend over that table this minute and take six, I'll go straight to the Head and report you!"

"I'll come with you!" said Harry. "The Head may be interested to hear that you're trying to stop the truth from coming out. He may think that's what he made you a prefect for—perhaps! Let's go together—and let's call for Price and take him with us!"

"Will you bend over that table?"
 "No!"

"Then you go to the Head!"
 With that threat Loder of the Sixth tramped out of the study—the ashplant in his hand.

Bob Cherry whistled.
 "Think he's going to the Big Beak?" he asked.

"He can if he likes!" answered Harry. "I'm ready to go! But he jolly well won't—he doesn't want to land his pal in the soup!"

And it proved that Wharton was right!

Having decided at length to stick Mauly for a tea, the Famous Five repaired to his hospitable lordship's study—where tea was not interrupted by any summons to the Head's study.

Loder of the Sixth evidently was not taking the matter any further.

ONLY SUPPOSE!

"SUPPOSE—" said Billy Bunter.
 He spoke slowly and thoughtfully.

Bunter was in his study, Study No. 7 in the Remove.

Peter Todd, at the study table, was slicing a loaf. Tom Dutton, at the study fire, was making toast of the slices. There was margarine on the table, to be spread on the toast. There was a shortage of butter—not due to the war, but to a lack of ready cash in Study No. 7.

"Suppose—" repeated Bunter.

"Go it!" said Peter Todd. "While you're supposing, suppose you stand your whack in the study, just for once?"

"So I would, old chap, if my postal order had come!" said Bunter. "But—it hasn't! It's the war, I expect—delay everywhere, you know! Anyhow, my postal order hasn't come."

"Blow that sweep Hitler!" said Peter Todd. "Stopping us from having a spread in the study! Still, perhaps your postal order mightn't have come, even if Hitler hadn't started Hitlering. It's just barely possible, perhaps!"

"Well, I was expecting it from one of my titled relations, you know! Still, it hasn't come! I'm hard-up for once, Peter!"

"Only for once?" asked Peter. "Not twice?"

"But look here, suppose—" "Suppose you spread that toast, if you're so keen on supposing!"

Billy Bunter gave the margarine a contemptuous blink.

"I want something decent for tea!" he said. "This is no better than we could get in Hall! Look here, Peter, suppose—"

"Have you been oiling your supposer?" asked Peter Todd, staring at the fat Removeite. "You're doing a lot of supposing! Do you happen to mean anything, or are you just burbling out of the back of your fat head?"

"Well, suppose a chap saw him!" said Bunter.

"Eh, who?"
 "Price, you know."

"Price!" said Peter blankly. "Who's talking about Price?"

"I am! You know what happened that Wednesday," said Bunter, blinking at his surprised study-mate. "Coker shipped Price's study while Price and Hilton were out. Price came in and copped him at it, and Coker stuck his head in a wastepaper-basket, and carried on. Bet you it made Price wild!"

"Safe bet!" said Peter. "Wharton thinks that's why he diddle Coker over those fireworks. I think Wharton's right."

"Well, suppose a chap saw him?" said Bunter.

"Nobody saw him, or it would have come out before this, fathead!" said Peter. "Pricey would take jolly good care that nobody did!"

"Oh!" said Bunter, apparently a little taken aback. "I—I suppose if a chap had seen him at it he would have said so before this."

"Of course he would, ass—especially since Wharton's stanced it round the school that Price did the trick."

"Oh!" said Bunter.
 This seemed to give the fat Owl food for thought.

Peter Todd stared at him, quite perplexed. Bunter's fat brain was evidently at work, though with what object was far from clear.

"Well, look here," said the fat Owl at last, "suppose—"

"Still supposing?"

"Suppose a chap was going to Quelch's study," said Bunter argumentatively. "A chap might have been—a Remove chap, of course."

"Quelch was out with Prout!"

"Oh, I'd forgotten that!" Bunter seemed taken aback again. But he rallied at once. "Well, suppose a chap went to Quelch's study to see whether he had come in! A chap might have wanted to ask him about verbs or something. I might have, Peter."

"You might have," agreed Peter, "but you didn't! You were on the Remove landing when Quelch came in."

"Price didn't know that!" said Bunter.

"Eh? No, I don't suppose Price knows anything about you—what the thump does it matter whether he does or not?" asked the astonished Peter.

"Well, it might!" said Bunter. "Suppose I was going to Quelch's study to see whether he had come in—"

"You weren't—"

"Well, suppose I was," argued Bunter. "I go into Quelch's study, and find that he isn't there! I'm just coming out, when I see Price—"

"You— you— you see Price!" stuttered Peter. "How could you see Price when you weren't there?"

"I mean, supposing I was there, as I've said! I'm just coming out, when I see Price sneaking along to Prout's study in a syrupstigious way! So—so—so I know it was Price with those fireworks, see?"

"But you never did!" shrieked Peter.

"Price doesn't know that!" said Bunter. "I might have been watching him from Quelch's study all the time for all he knows. That is, of course, if Price did it! Do you really think he did?"

"I'm pretty sure he did!" said Peter. "But if I hear you saying that you saw him at it, you fat, foozling frog, I'll give you such a whopping that it will stop you telling whoppers for the rest of the term."

"Oh, really, Peter—"

"Now shut up, and shove that marge on the toast, if you want any." Bunter sniffed.

"You can keep it!" he said. "But look here, Peter, suppose I saw Price at his games that day—"

"You didn't!" howled Peter.

"I know I didn't, fathead—but supposing I did?" hooted Bunter. "Then it might seem a bit queer that I hadn't mentioned it, perhaps! Still, suppose I forgot about it, and remembered it afterwards?"

Peter Todd blinked at his fat study-mate. Why Bunter was indulging in these mysterious and remarkable supposings was a mystery to him.

"You think that Price did it, don't you?" added Bunter anxiously.

"Oh, blow Price and what he did!" grunted Peter.

"Well, if he didn't, of course he wouldn't believe that a fellow saw him at it," argued Bunter. "That stands to reason! But if he did—"

"You fat foozler, are you going to make out to Price that you saw him at it?" exclaimed Peter blankly.

"Oh! No! Nothing of the kind!" said Bunter hastily. "I—I ain't going to say a word to Price of the Fifth—and I ain't going to his study now, Peter! I—I'm going for a walk!"

And the fat Owl rolled out of Study No. 7, leaving Peter staring.

BUNTER COMES TO TEA!

CEDRIC HILTON of the Fifth Form smiled faintly.

The scowling face of his study-mate, Stephen Price, seemed to amuse him.

Price was leaning on the mantel-piece in the study, his hands driven into his pockets, a black scowl on his face—which had a good many marks

of his strenuous scrap in a Remove study the day before.

Hilton, lounging in the window-seat, watched him curiously. He could read Price's thoughts almost like an open book, and he was well aware of the state of mingled fury and funk that filled the bad hat of the Fifth.

Price glanced at him several times without speaking. He was in a mood to quarrel; and Hilton's smile had an intensely exasperating effect on him. But Hilton was the only fellow in the Fifth with whom Price was on friendly terms—and that friendship was a little precarious, anyhow. It was chiefly easy-going laziness that made Hilton stand Price.

"Look here, old man!" Hilton broke the silence. "Like a word of advice now you're in a corner?"

"Who's in a corner?" snarled Price.

"Aren't you?"

"No!"

"Oh, all right!" yawned Hilton. "If you're not, I won't bother you with advice! What about tea?"

Price gave him a dark look.

"You can spout it out all the same," he said. "What do you mean, and what are you driving at, anyhow?"

"Well, old man, if I were in your shoes, I'd see that those shoes took the shortest cut to Prout's study!" said Hilton. "I'd tell Old Pompous the truth, before it was dragged out."

"Tell him—what?" breathed Price.

"Tell him who banged that bang in his study."

"Coker's sacked for that!"

"I know! Lots of fellows are asking now whether the right man was sacked. Those kids in the Remove have nosed it out somehow."

"They've spread a rotten lying yarn about me!" said Price bitterly.

"Keep that for Loder!" said Hilton.

"They've said what they believe—what I suspected, more or less, before they mentioned it! If they've got it wrong, you can prove it—you've a right to take them to their beak, or the Head, for saying what they have."

"Not a shadow of proof!"

"No—except what you're puttin' up, you ass. Look here, Pricey, don't be a fool! That blundering, bungling, overbearing ass, Coker, got your back up—and no wonder! But it was an awfully foul trick to get him bunked by pulling Prout's leg—that's outside the limit!"

"So you think I did it?" breathed Price.

"If you didn't, all right! But if Coker had done it, he would never be playing his present game—and fellows are beginning to see that. He's hanging on round the school, to be fetched back—he's driving Prout nearly insane, to make him find out who did it. All that means that he never did it—and can't mean anythin' else."

"Oh, rot!" muttered Price.

"Old Pompous is too wild with him to look at it like that, but I shouldn't wonder if the Head begins to think so!" said Hilton. "I know

a lot of the fellows are thinking so, especially since those Remove kids started rooting it out, and put it on you. Take my tip, Pricey, and go to Old Pompous—"

"You fool!"

"It's you who's the fool, old bean! If it all comes out, you get it right in the neck—Coker comes back, and you get the boot! But if you hike off to Prout in time, you save your bacon. Put it that your conscience won't let you keep mum. Don't laugh. No reason why Prout shouldn't believe that you've got a conscience."

"You cheeky fool!"

Price did not laugh—he glared.

"You own up like a good little Eric, because it's put on another man. Prout's just the romantic old goat to fall for that!" said Hilton. "Believe me, Pricey, it's your best guess, if you could only see it."

"Oh, shut up!"

Hilton shrugged his shoulders.

"O.K. Have your own way—let's have tea!" He yawned. "Hallo, did you ask that barrel to roll in?"

Hilton stared at the door as it opened to admit the rotund figure of William George Bunter, of the Remove.

Price glared at the fat Owl.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

Billy Bunter eyed him warily through his big spectacles.

The signs of evil temper were only too plainly to be seen in Price's bitter face. Bunter did not want to be booted the length of the Fifth Form passage—and Price looked as if he would enjoy doing that very thing.

"I wanted to speak to you, Price!" squeaked Bunter.

"Do you mean you've got a message, you fat ass?"

"Oh, no! Just a chat!" said Bunter.

Price breathed hard. Apparently he did not want a chat with the Owl of the Remove.

He made a step towards Bunter, and the fat Owl promptly backed through the doorway.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter defiantly. "I'll go along and see Potter and Greene! As they're Coker's pals, I dare say they'd like to hear. Know whether they're in their study, Hilton?"

He blinked at Hilton.

"After all, they ought to know, as Coker's pals," he said. "I fancy they'd like Coker to come back. They'll miss his Aunt Judy's hampers now he's gone. If they knew a fellow saw Price that day—"

Hilton gave a start.

Price almost jumped clear of the floor.

"What?" he panted.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Hilton. "This is gettin' thicker and thicker! Pricey, old man, better take my advice—"

"Shut up!" hissed Price. "Come in, Bunter! You can come into the study if you want to speak to me."

Billy Bunter grinned. He had, as it were, shot an arrow at a venture—but it had obviously hit the mark.

Price's angry, bullying look had changed into one of dismayed apprehension.

"No larks, you know!" said the fat Owl, as he rolled into the study. "You start booting a chap, and——"

"Shut the door!" said Price.

Bunter gave him a wary blink, and shut the door. But he remained very near to it. He was prepared to dodge, if necessary.

But he could see that Price's hands were shaking, and he did not think that it was likely to be necessary. His words had, in fact, filled the wretched black sheep of the Fifth with terror.

Price could hardly keep his voice steady as he went on:

"Now, what did you mean by that, Bunter? What are you driving at?"

"Well, a fellow knows what he knows!" said Bunter airily. "A fellow may have gone to his beak's study, that day, to ask him about a Latin verb. He may have seen a chap pass the study door while he was there. See?"

Price shivered.

He had been very cautious and very careful on that occasion when he had crept to his Form-master's study to plant those confiscated fireworks in Prout's grate, all ready to bang when Prout came in and put a match to the fire. He was sure that he had not been seen—so very cautious had he been. Certainly he had never dreamed that an eye could have been on him from Mr. Quelch's study—Quelch being out of gates with Prout at the time.

Yet it might easily have happened.

A Remove fellow might have gone to the Remove master's study, not knowing that he was out. He might have been there when Price passed stealthily on his way to Prout's study. It had not, as a matter of fact, happened—but it easily might have!

Hilton sat up in the window-seat and whistled.

Price's eyes were fixed on Bunter, almost wolfishly. He would have given a good deal to sling the fat junior out of the study and boot him out of the passage.

Bunter was well aware of that. So he could not fail to be aware of Price's reason for not doing it. Price was the man—and he believed that Bunter had seen him at it. He dared not.

"A fellow may have looked out and seen a fellow passing along in a syrupstidious way!" remarked Bunter. "He may have wondered what that fellow was up to. He may, or he may not!"

"And why have you been keeping it dark all this time if you saw anything of the sort, Bunter?" asked Hilton.

"A fellow might have forgotten all about it," said Bunter. "Nothing to do with me if a Fifth Form man goes sneaking syrupstidiously into his beak's study when his beak's out. Still, a fellow might remember it afterwards, after all this talk about Price. See?"

Bunter blinked at Price.

"I thought I'd mention it," he

said breezily. "I'm not going to say anything, of course. I'm not the man to give a man away. If a fellow treats me in a friendly way, I don't mind being friendly. I think a fellow might ask a fellow to tea——"

"What?" breathed Price.

Bunter was coming to the point now. This was the outcome of the supposings that had so perplexed Peter Todd.

It did not occur to Billy Bunter that he was acting like a young rascal. Bunter was thinking of tea in a Fifth Form study—and he knew that there was always something good in Hilton's study. Price sponged to a considerable extent on his wealthy study-mate. Bunter was ready to do the same.

A fellow could not think of everything—and tea, at tea-time, was enough for Bunter to think of. It was, after all, the most important matter.

This extraordinary stragem had germinated in Billy Bunter's fat brain wholly and solely because he wanted to feed on the fat of the land in Hilton's study!

"I don't mind staying to tea, if you ask me!" went on Bunter, making it plain. "What about it?"

Price realised that a study spread was required to secure Bunter's silence about what he had seen—or, rather, hadn't seen.

"Stay to tea if you like!" he mumbled. "I—I mean, I'd be glad if you stayed to tea here, Bunter!"

Hilton rose from the window-seat.

"You can have your fag friends all to yourself, Pricey!" he remarked dryly, as he crossed to the door. "If you're not a born idiot, you'll take the advice I gave you a little while ago——"

He paused, with his hand on the door, and looked at Price.

Price only gave him a black look, and Hilton, shrugging his shoulders, left the study.

He left Bunter at tea with Price.

It was a good tea.

Price of the Fifth did not, perhaps, look the part of a genial and hospitable host. But he acted the part, if he did not look it—he dared not do otherwise. He lavished good things on Bunter.

It was a shiny, jammy, and sticky Owl that rolled away from the study, after tea, in a mood of complete satisfaction.

The mood in which he left the wretched Price was far from being one of satisfaction.

COKER COMES BACK!

"COKER!"

Potter and Greene of the Fifth Form gave a simultaneous jump.

They had been thinking about Coker as they came up to the study.

It was tea-time; and at tea-time they often thought about their absent pal.

There had, in fact, been rather a thin time in that study since Horace Coker had been sacked. No hamper had arrived from Aunt Judy. No open-handed Horace had been splashing money about. Cakes and jellies, jam and pickles, were things of the past in that study—cold chickens had, so to speak, taken unto themselves wings and flown away!

Generally speaking, life was more peaceful in the study without Coker. At prep, for instance, a fellow could get through his work without an unending accompaniment of chin-



Coker got out of the ditch at last. He was clad in shaking a threatening fist at the Famous Fifth.

music. And it was undoubtedly a relief that, for a couple of weeks, Coker had not been telling them how to play football and explaining to them what duds they were at the game.

But at tea-time there was no doubt that Coker's pals missed Coker and realised that old Horace had his good points, and that he had been a pretty good pal, according to his lights.

But though Potter and Greene had been thinking of Coker as they came up to the study, they certainly had not been expecting to see him.

Now they saw him.

They blinked at him.

There was old Horace, sitting in the study armchair, his long legs stretched out, looking for all the world as if he had never been sacked from Greyfriars at all.

"Kik-kik-Coker!" stuttered Potter.
"Trickle in, old beans!" said Coker genially. "Surprised you—what?"

"Oh, yes! Just a few!" gasped Greene. "What the thump are you doing here, Coker?"

"I've come back!"

"You—you—you—you've come bib-bib-back?" Potter was afflicted with a stutter. "D-d-d-did you say you'd kik-kik-come bib-bib-back?"

"That's it!" said Coker. "Ready for tea, too! Like old times, tea-ing in this study—what?"

Coker seemed pleased to be back. The old familiar study was pleasant to him. He seemed in great spirits.

"Does Prout know?" asked Greene blankly.



mud, as in a garment. "By gum!" he gasped, "I—I'll—I'll—" Words failed him.

"Not yet, I think. He will know at calling-over?"

"At kik-kik-calling-over!" Potter was afflicted with that stutter again.

"Yes; I shall turn up for roll."

"Oh crikey!" breathed Greene.

"Didn't anybody see you coming in?" asked Potter. "Gosling's got orders to keep you out."

"I nipped in over the Cloister wall," explained Coker. "Some Remove fags saw me coming in. They started laughing when they saw me—I don't know why! I'd have thrashed them—but I wanted to get in quietly! My idea is this. I'm here, see?"

"I—I see!" gasped Potter. "But what—"

"When the bell rings, I go in to roll in the usual way," said Coker. "I simply take my place as a Grey-

friars man, as if nothing had happened."

"Oh jiminy!"

"If Prout has sense enough to let it go at that, all right!" said Coker.

"If!" gurgled Greene.

"This rotten state of affairs," said Coker, "has gone on long enough, in my opinion. I'm simply not standing it any longer. I've given Old Pompous plenty of rope. He's had time to snaffle that young blighter, whoever he was, who banged that bang in his study. If he doesn't choose to, that's his look-out. I'm here!"

Potter and Greene gazed at the returned wanderer.

They knew, of course, that Horace Coker was the biggest ass going.

They had known him long enough to have no doubt about that. They did not expect any sense from Coker—they admitted that that was too much to expect. But old Horace was still able to surprise them.

Coker had been sacked. Coker seemed to think that that was a mere incident—a trifle light as air—which he could disregard. Having spent a couple of weeks making Prout wild to the umpteenth degree of wildness, Coker had, it seemed, given that up as a method—and just come back. And here he was!

"But, old chap—" gasped Potter.

"But—" moaned Greene.

"That's that!" said Coker. "I've come back. Here I am! If Prout doesn't like it, he can lump it! I shan't go again. I utterly decline to go. As a Greyfriars man, I stand on my rights!"

"But as soon as Prout sees you—" stuttered Potter.

"He'll tell the prefects to chuck you out!" said Greene.

"I'm not easy to chuck out!" said Coker calmly.

"I've got my own ideas about that, too. They

chucked me out before—I know that! They may not find it so easy next time. We'll see. Here, on the spot, I may be able to put my finger on the young rotter who banged that bang! It needs intelligence. Prout can't do it. Perhaps I can!"

"Are you still keeping it up that you never did it?" asked Potter.

"Haven't I said I never did it?" asked Coker, looking at him.

"Well, yes, but—" "Do you want one in the eye, George Potter?"

"No, thanks! But—" "You're asking for it!" said Coker darkly.

"I don't allow fellows to doubt my word. I've punched fellows for less than that, Potter. If you want to go out of this study with my boot behind you, you've only to say the word!"

Potter and Greene exchanged a

glance and moved back to the door.

What would happen when Coker was discovered in the school, they had no doubt. Coker would be chucked out on his neck. And anybody who aided and abetted Coker in this invasion would get into a fearful row. Coker, in present circumstances, was a rather dangerous acquaintance.

"If you fellows think I did it when I've said I never did, I'm ready to bang your silly heads together and see if I can bang a little sense into them," said Coker. "I can't say fairer than that."

"But you did, you know—" stuttered Greene.

"What?" roared Coker.

"I mean, everybody knows—"

"Yes; you see, everybody knows—" said Potter.

That did it!

Coker had come back quite merry and bright, in the most genial of tempers. He was ready for tea in the study, with Potter and Greene, just as if nothing had happened, and he had never been sacked. But he was not, of course, standing that.

He jumped at Potter and Greene.

Promptly they dodged out of the study.

They dodged quickly. Potter got out first—Greene rapidly after him.

But Greene was not quite quick enough. The largest foot in the Greyfriars Fifth landed on Greene's trousers as he went, and Greene roared as he shot into the passage, crashing into Potter and sending him spinning.

"Wow!" roared Greene.

"Oh!" gasped Potter.

"Now, you swabs!" roared Coker, from the doorway. "If you want a few more—"

Potter and Greene did not linger for a few more! They departed down the Fifth Form passage as if that passage had been the cinder-path.

Coker hurled a snort of scorn after them.

They vanished—and Horace Coker, in sole possession of his old study, was left alone in his glory.

ON HIS NECK!

"ADSUM!" Coker's name, of course, was not called at roll.

Mr. Prout was taking roll in Hall, and naturally he did not call the name of a fellow who had been expelled and no longer belonged to the school.

But at the point where Coker's name should have been called, if it had been called at all, a powerful voice from the ranks of the Fifth answered "Adsum!" just as if the name had been called.

Prout fairly jumped.

Prout did not know that Coker was there. Accustomed as he was getting to the extraordinary antics of the sacked Fifth-Former, Mr. Prout never dreamed that he would turn up for call-over in Hall.

He had.

Prout had noticed that there was a lot of half-suppressed merriment in Hall. He had wondered what was

the cause of it, without thinking of Horace Coker.

Coker had come in with the Fifth. He was there with his old Form. The Fifth Form men stared at him, blinked at him, grinned at him. But there he was, as large as life.

Fellows in other Forms, hearing that Coker had come back, craned their necks to look at him from all quarters.

There was a continual ripple of merriment in the Shell, the Fourth, the Remove, the Third, and the Second.

Even in the high and mighty Sixth there were grinning faces.

Sixth Form prefects were ready to deal with the obstreperous Horace as they had dealt with him before, at an order so to do. But they left him alone till he should be spotted by the eye of authority.

Other masters, present at calling over, had noticed him, though Prout had not.

Mr. Quelch gave him a stare—Mr. Hacker gave him a glare—Mr. Capper and Monsieur Charpentier blinked at him amazed. But it was Prout's business, not theirs—indeed, they were rather thankful that it was not. Horace Coker was rather a difficult problem to solve.

A fellow who was sacked but declined to accept that sentence and go, was rather like the man in the old story who was dead, but would not lie down. It really was not easy to dispose of a fellow who popped up continually like a jack-in-the-box.

As Coker's powerful voice boomed "Adsum!" there was a chortle all through Hall.

Prout jumped, and fixed his eyes on the ranks of his own Form—discerning at last the hefty figure of Horace Coker there.

Prout goggled at him.

The Fifth were all grinning—except one. Price was giving Coker looks that were positively homicidal.

The black sheep of the Fifth was in a miserable state of trepidation. Already half the school were debating whether he, Price, had done what Coker was supposed to have done. Worst of all, that afternoon an eye-witness had turned up—in the fat shape of Billy Bunter.

Price was a keen, wary, and suspicious fellow—but he did not suspect that Billy Bunter had been pulling his leg wholly and solely to bag a free feed in his study. He had no doubt that Bunter had seen him on that occasion when he had sneaked surreptitiously into Prout's study after those fireworks.

Bunter, in point of fact, had not even said so. Bunter had said, in an airy way, that a fellow might have gone to Quelch's study about that time, that he might have looked out, and might have seen Price on the warpath. So, certainly a fellow might have.

But the guilty flee when no man pursueth. Price's guilty conscience was enough. He had no doubt that the prying fat junior had seen him—and was in a position to be a witness against him.

In that state of uneasy apprehen-

sion the sight of Horace Coker, back at Greyfriars, was horribly dismaying to Price of the Fifth.

If only that fathead had cleared off at the sentence of the sack, like any other fellow, Price would have been safe enough. Now he realised only too clearly he was very far from safe.

According to the old proverb, great is truth, and it must prevail. Price was fearfully apprehensive that it would prevail. With that ass, Coker, on the spot, there was no telling what might happen.

So it was a relief to Stephen Price when Prout's goggling eyes fell on Horace Coker. He was very anxious for Coker to be chucked out, and he hoped, though it was rather a faint hope, that when Coker went he would go for good.

Roll came to a sudden stop.

Prout seemed stricken dumb.

He gazed at Coker with almost unbelieving eyes.

"Is—is—is that Coker?" breathed Prout at last.

"That is Coker, Mr. Prout," said Quelch.

"Coker!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir!" answered Coker cheerily.

"What are you doing here, Coker?"

"We have to turn up for roll, sir," answered Coker. "I've come in with my Form, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!" rippled through Hall.

"Silence!" boomed Prout. "Coker! You have not come in with your Form. You do not belong to any Form in this school. You do not belong to Greyfriars. You are an intruder here."

"Not at all, sir!" answered Coker. "I've come back. I was sacked for nothing—"

"Silence! Go!"

"I was sacked for nothing, and I've come back. You can't say that you haven't had plenty of time to find out who banged that bang in your study, sir. A couple of weeks is enough, and some over. If you haven't done it, it's not my fault!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've been treated with injustice," went on Coker. "I'm prepared to overlook it, and go on as before. I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, sir, if you are."

"Is that boy in his senses?" gurgled Prout. "Coker! Cannot you understand that you have been expelled by your headmaster and must not enter this school?"

"Oh, no, sir!" answered Coker. "I'm here as a Greyfriars man. I'm sticking here. If I'd done anything to be bunked for it would be different. I haven't. I'm standing up for my rights."

"Leave this Hall at once!"

Coker made no movement.

Potter nudged his arm.

"Clear off, old chap!" he whispered.

"Don't be a fool, Potter."

"For goodness' sake—" whispered Greene.

"Don't be an idiot, Greene!"

"You cheeky fool, get out!" hissed Price.

Coker looked round at him.

"Did you speak to me, Pricey?" he asked.

"Yes, I did!" snarled Price. "Get out of it, you cheeky dummy! Get out, before you're kicked out, you fool!"

"I can't punch you in Hall, Pricey!" said Coker. "I'll look for you presently. Now shut up, or I shall smack your head!"

Price gave him a venomous look; but he shut up.

Mr. Prout, on the dais, was still goggling at Coker, rather like a man in a dream. But he woke up at last.

"Wingate, Gwynne, Loder! Remove that boy!" he boomed.

"Yes, sir!"

The prefects went into action.

Coker gave them a warlike look.

"Hands off!" he said. "You start handling me, and I can jolly well tell you that I'll— Yaroooooop!"

Coker roared as he came bundling out of the ranks of the Fifth in the grasp of three pairs of sturdy hands.

"Eject him!" boomed Prout.

"Back up, Coker!" yelled the Bounder, from the Remove. "Punch 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker had come back and taken his old place. Whether he fancied that he could keep that place by main force was not clear. If he fancied so, he now discovered that it was a mistake. He couldn't!

Price ran to open the door.

Coker, in the powerful grasp of Wingate, Gwynne, and Loder, went through, whirling.

He crashed and roared.

The door was shut on him.

Prout, in a state of considerable agitation, went on with the roll.

Coker had gone—on his neck!

Had he departed from the precincts of Greyfriars School? Prout hoped that he had. Price of the Fifth hoped that he had. Quite a number of fellows hilariously hoped that he hadn't!

Later, it transpired that he hadn't!

NO ADMITTANCE!

"WHAT silly ass—"

"What thumping clump—"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent made those remarks together.

Harry Wharton was turning the door handle of Study No. 1 in the Remove. Frank Nugent was pushing at the door.

The door did not open.

It was prep, and the Remove had come up to their studies. It was annoying to find that somebody had locked the door of Study No. 1, and that the key was not visible.

"What blithering idiot—" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"What howling ass—" asked Frank Nugent.

"What's up?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Can't you get into your study?"

"The door's locked!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Who's got the key of this study?" called out Harry Wharton. "What burbling ass has locked my study and taken the key away?"

"Silly trick!" said Peter Todd. "Who's got the key?"

"You been playing tricks, Skinner?"

"Not guilty, my lord," answered Skinner.

"Well, who's got the key?" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "We've got to get in for prep. Where's that key?"

A crowd of fellows gathered outside Study No. 1. Two or three of them tried the door. But it was, evidently, locked. There was no access to that study for the owners thereof.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "There's somebody in the study."

He caught the sound of a movement within.

"Somebody in the study!" exclaimed Wharton blankly. "Who the dickens—"

The juniors stared at the locked door. Finding it locked, Wharton and Nugent had supposed that somebody had locked it and taken out the key, by way of an idiotic practical joke. But it seemed that there was somebody inside. Why any fellow should lock himself in that study was a mystery.

Harry Wharton thumped on the door. He realised now that the key was inside.

"Who's in there?" he shouted. "Open this door, you silly chump, whoever you are! Do you hear me, fathead?"

"Don't be cheeky, Wharton!" came back an answer from the locked study—in a well-known voice.

There was a yell in the Remove passage.

"Coker!"

"Coker!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Coker!" stuttered Nugent.

"That ass, Coker!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What the thump is that born idiot doing in a Remove study?"

"So he hasn't gone!" chuckled Skinner.

Wharton thumped on the door again.

"Coker, you silly ass—" he shouted.

"I said don't be cheeky!"

"Let me get into my study, you goat!" roared the captain of the Remove. "It's prep, you ass! What are you playing this silly game for, you fathead?"

"That will do!" came Coker's voice through the oak. "Don't make a row at that door—I don't like it!"

"Will you let us in?" shouted Nugent.

"No!"

"You won't let us into our own study!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Have you gone potty, or what?"

Really, it looked as if the great Horace had! Almost anything might have been expected of Horace Coker—but locking himself in a Remove study was really the limit.

"You can't use this study," came Coker's voice.

"Can't use our own study?" yelled Nugent.

"No!"

"And why not?"

"I want it!"

"You want our study?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yes! I'm staying here!"

"Staying here—in our study?"

"Yes! You can go and tell Prout! I want him to know I'm still here."

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder. "That's Coker's latest! Coker's a sticker! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The stickfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"The—the—the potty ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Coker, you goat, if you want to stick in a study till you're chucked out, go and stick in your own study! You can't stick in a Remove study!"

"Can't I?" answered Coker. "I fancy I can! I've selected this study—it's not so easy to get at. They could get at the window in the Fifth—they can't get at this window! This study suits me."

"Do you think you can turn us out of our study?"

"Eh? Yes!"

"You blithering goat—"

"That will do, Wharton! Don't kick up a row at that door while I'm reading your 'Holiday Annual.'"

"We've got to get in that study for prep!" roared the captain of the Remove. "Where are we to do our prep, you fathead?"

"Anywhere you like! You can't come in here! I can't risk unlocking the door. Besides, I can't be bothered with fags in the study."

"And what about us?" howled Nugent.

"Eh? It doesn't matter about you, does it?" asked Coker. "I suppose you're not expecting me to worry about fags?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you footling fathead!" roared Wharton. "You've got to open that door and clear out of our study!"

"Keep quiet out there!"

"What?"

"Keep quiet—I'm reading!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent gazed at that door. There was no means of opening it until it was unlocked on the inside.

The other fellows in the passage howled with laughter.

This, evidently, was Coker's latest! He had come back—and he was staying!

As Prout declined to let bygones be bygones and let it go at that, but had, on the other hand, had him chucked out of Hall, this was the next move in Coker's remarkable strategy.

He was not going! Perhaps it had dawned on his powerful intellect that he could not handle the whole body of prefects. So he had locked himself in a study—apparently prepared to hold the fort there!

He had selected the study that suited his strategy best. As for the owners of the study, they were only fags, and did not matter. Coker had plenty to think about without bothering about fags!

They, in Horace Coker's lofty opinion, were trifles light as air. He really seemed surprised that they couldn't see that for themselves. Anyhow, if they did not like it, they could lump it!

Coker, sitting in the study arm-

chair, perusing an interesting volume he had found in the study, did not want to be bothered by a row at the door. That was all that concerned Coker.

"Will you come out of that, you goat?" hissed the captain of the Remove through the keyhole.

"Be quiet, will you?"

"We want our study!"

"I said be quiet!"

Wharton and Nugent looked at one another. Everybody else was howling with laughter. But, really, it was no laughing matter for fellows who wanted to get to prep.

"Do you think you can stick there, Coker?" exclaimed Harry Wharton at last. "How long do you think you can stick there?"

"That depends!" answered Coker cheerfully. "They won't get me out in a hurry, I know that!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Think you can stay there all night?"

"Eh? Yes, of course!"

"Are you going to sleep on the hearthrug?" gasped Bob.

"I've fetched some blankets and pillows from the dorm! That's all right!" answered Coker.

"Oh crikey!"

Coker, it seemed, had made his preparations for a siege!

"Now be quiet!" added Coker. "There's a jolly good story in this Annual about a chap called the Rio Kid, and I'm reading it."

"You'll be hungry by morning, Coker!" chuckled the Bounder.

"What are you going to do for brekker?"

"Think I never thought of that, you young ass? I've got a bag of grub!"

"Oh gad! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you burbling bandersnatch, do you fancy you're going to stand a siege in our study?" yelled the captain of the Remove.

"Yes—unless Prout comes round!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now keep quiet out there!" added Coker. "I'm reading—and I don't like these interruptions! I shan't answer again! Go away and be quiet!"

"You mad ass!" roared Wharton. "Come out of it!"

No reply.

"Come out of it, you potty chump!"

Still no reply!

"Will you come out of it, Coker, you insane hippopotamus?"

Silence from the study.

Coker, deep in the thrilling adventures of the Rio Kid, declined to answer any more.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath. "What are we going to do? We can't bust in at the door!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"You'll have to do your prep in other fellows' studies!" he said.

"All our books are in there—"

"You'll have to borrow some books! Come on—we'll cram you into Study No. 13," said Bob. "We shall have a prefect up at this rate! Come on!"

There was nothing else to be done!

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Coker, clearly, was not going to open that door; he declined even to reply to objurgations from without!

Wharton and Nugent had to give it up; and they went along to Bob Cherry's study for prep.

Coker remained in possession of Study No. 1. How long he would remain in possession of it, and what measures would be taken to hook him out, were deeply interesting questions to the Remove.

COKER MEANS BUSINESS!

"IMPOSSIBLE!" boomed Mr. Prout.

"He's there, sir!" said Price of Mr. Prout's Form.

"Coker—impossible!"
"He's locked himself in a junior study, sir! I thought you'd better know," muttered Price.

"Amazing!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Is there no limit to the folly—the insensate folly—of that boy? Thank you, Price—I am glad you have apprised me of this! Upon my word!"

Mr. Prout rolled out of his study. He headed for the stairs—to go up to the Remove and get Coker out of it.

Price, from the bottom of his heart, hoped that he would be successful. Price of the Fifth was in a state of uneasy funk that was far from enviable.

The Fifth Form master mounted the stairs.

Prep was over; but few fellows had come down from the studies. The news that Horace Coker was locked in a Remove study, that he was going to hold the fort there, drew a crowd. The Remove landing, and the Remove passage, swarmed with fellows of all Forms.

Sounds of merriment greeted Prout as he ascended. Coker's latest seemed to be evoking tremendous hilarity.

"I say, you fellows, here comes Old Pompous!" squeaked Billy Bunter, on the Remove landing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Prout's heard!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Here comes his nibs!" chuckled the Bounder. "He's after Coker's scalp! How's he going to get at old Horace? He can't squeeze through the keyhole!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors, at the idea of the portly Prout squeezing through the keyhole! A whole doorway was not too wide for Prout!

Grinning faces surrounded the master of the Fifth as he progressed majestically to Study No. 1.

"Wharton!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir!"

"I think this is your study! Where is the key?"

"Inside, sir!" answered Harry.

"You should not have permitted Coker to lock himself in your study, Wharton! How dare you allow a boy, expelled from the school, a lawless intruder here, to lock himself in your study?" boomed Prout.

"I didn't ask him to, sir!" ex-

plained Harry. "He was locked in when we came up to prep! I'd be jolly glad if you could get him out! We want our study."

Prout snorted and halted at the door of the locked study. He turned the door-handle in vain; and then thumped on a panel.

"Coker!" he boomed. "Are you there, Coker?"

"Hallo! Yes, I'm here, Prout!" came the answer from within.

"Come out of that study at once, Coker!"

"Am I to come back to the Fifth, sir?"

"What! Certainly not!"

"Then you're not speaking as my Form-master?" asked Coker.

"What! No! I am not your Form-master, you stupid boy, as you do not belong to my Form, or to the school at all."

"Then you can shut up!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"Shut up!" said Coker. "If you're my Form-master, I'll do exactly what you tell me, as a Greyfriars chap is bound to do. If you're not, you can pack it up, and don't jaw!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled about a hundred fellows.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout. "Coker, you—you—you young rascal—you young ruffian—I order you to emerge at once!"

"Bow-wow!" retorted Coker.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout.

"I—I—I—"

Words seemed to fail Prout. He stood blinking at the door.

Round him surged a grinning crowd. Even Wharton and Nugent, who had been turned out of that study by the high-handed Horace, were grinning like the rest. Their sympathies, after all, were with Coker—they believed that he had been sacked for what Price had done, and they wished him luck. And there was no doubt that Coker's campaign was entertaining and exhilarating.

"If you refuse to open this door, I—" boomed Prout, finding his voice again.

"Bank on that!" assured Coker. "I'm here, and I'm sticking here! You see, I'm camping here!"

"Camping there!" gurgled Prout.

"I've got some blankets and a good bit of grub! I've decided not to leave Greyfriars again!"

"You—you—you have decided!" breathed Prout. "Do I dream that I hear this? Bless my soul!"

"Get on with finding out who banged that bang," said Coker. "You've had lots of time already; you can't deny that! I'm going to stay here till the Head tells me I'm to stop!"

"This door will be forced, Coker, if you do not open it!"

"Get on with it!" said Coker cheerily. "I've got a hammer and nails here, and I shall nail the table down inside the door, if it becomes necessary. I've got a hammer! I don't envy the man who gets his head inside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall call the headmaster here, Coker!"

"I don't mind! Always glad of a

chat with Dr. Locke!" answered Coker. "In fact, I'd like to explain to him what an old donkey you are!"

"What!"

"Old donkey! You ought to have spotted the right man long ago! I may be able to make the Head see that! Bring him up, by all means!"

Mr. Prout stood blinking at the study door. He almost gibbered at it.

It was not an easy task to force that door. It was of good strong oak. Greyfriars School had been built in the days when builders were builders. And even if the lock went, it would not be much use, if Coker nailed down the table to the floor inside. Coker, in fact, had taken up a very strong position. It was not easy to see how he was to be dislodged.

Yet to leave him there in possession of his citadel was really unthinkable.

"What is all this?" Mr. Quelch arrived on the scene, far from pleased by the hilarious excitement reigning in the quarters of his Form. "Mr. Prout—what—"

"It is—is—is Coker!" gurgled Prout. "Locked—in this study—"

"Coker! Locked in a Remove study!" Mr. Quelch rapped sharply on the door. "Coker! Come out of that study immediately, Coker!"

"Guess again!" answered Coker.

"Do you dare to remain in a study belonging to boys of my Form, Coker—" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Just a few, sir!"

"You impudent boy, the sternest measures will be taken—"

"Go it!" said Coker. "But I'll tell you what, sir! You've got more sense than Prout! Why don't you take a hand and find out who banged off those fireworks in his study? I'm pretty certain that it was some cheeky fag in your Form."

"Silence! Come out of that study instantly!"

"I'll watch it!"

Quelch set his lips.

Prout stood gibbering helplessly; but Quelch was not the man to gibber. Quelch was a man of action.

He glanced round. There were Sixth Form prefects on the scene now. He called to Loder.

"Loder, please find some tools and bring them here! The lock of this door must be forced at once!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Loder.

"Now we shan't be long!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder of the Sixth hurried away, and came back with tools.

A moment later the Remove passage rang and echoed to the unwonted sound of the banging of hammer and chisel, while an eager crowd looked on, in excitement that was now growing to fever heat.

FIRST ROUND TO COKER!

BANG! Bang!

Crack!

Cra-a-a-ck!

Loder of the Sixth put his beef into it. He banged and banged, filling the Remove passage with echoing din. The lock cracked. It was a fairly

strong lock, but it was not designed to stand that kind of attack. It cracked and cracked, and gradually disintegrated.

Prout and Quelch stood looking on. They were eager to see that door open and Coker hooked out. There was plenty of force at hand to deal with Coker once the door was open.

But as Loder of the Sixth banged on the outside, another sound of banging was heard from within. Another hammer was being wielded, inside the study.

Coker was hammering in nails! Coker was well provided! He had had time to get ready for a siege before the Remove came up to prep. Bob Cherry's tool-chest—though Bob was not aware of it at the moment—was in Study No. 1.

Bang, bang, bang! rang Loder's hammer outside.

Bang, bang, bang! answered Coker's hammer, from within.

"There goes our study table!" murmured Harry Wharton to Nugent.

Nugent nodded and grinned.

"Going west!" he agreed. "They won't get that door open in a hurry if he's nailing it down inside!"

That was exactly what Horace Coker was doing. The study table was upended inside the door, Coker was hammering nails through the legs into the floor! It was rather a formidable obstacle in the way of the aggressors!

The lock went at last.

Loder gave the door a shove. It opened about five or six inches. Then it brought up against an immovable obstacle.

"Push it open, Loder!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Push it open at once, Loder!" boomed Prout. "Wingate, Sykes, Walker, Carne, enter that study as soon as the door is open, and remove that young ruffian!"

Loder shoved at the door. He shoved hard, but the door did not shift farther. As it had come up against the table nailed to the floor, it couldn't.

"It won't open farther, sir!" said Loder, gasping with his efforts.

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout. "If there is something placed against it, Loder, reach inside and remove it!"

Loder pushed his arm through the aperture and groped for the obstruction. His fingers met the leg of a table.

They met something else the next moment!

Rap!

"Yarooooooh!" roared Loder.

He withdrew his groping hand as suddenly as if the interior of Study No. 1 had become red-hot! He jammed his fingers to his mouth and sucked them frantically, almost dancing in the passage.

"What——" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yowwwwwp!" roared Loder.

"Loder! What does this nonsense mean?" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "You are wasting time, Loder! You——"

"Yooo - hoop! Wow!" howled Loder. "My fingers! Wow! That idiot's banged them with the hammer! Wow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the mob in the Remove passage.

"Ow! Oh crikey! Ow!" yelled Loder. "Oh crumbs! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" boomed Prout. "Loder, try again! You must not mind a little pain, Loder—you, a Sixth Form prefect! Put your hand in again and remove whatever it is that stupid boy has placed against the door!"

"Wow!"

"Do you hear me, Loder?"

"Ow! Wow! Yes, and I jolly well won't!" roared Loder. "You can put your paw in to be rapped by a hammer if you like. I don't! Wow!"

"Loder!" boomed Prout. "Where are you going, Loder? Come back at once!"

"Wow! Yow!"

Loder of the Sixth did not come back! Still spluttering with anguish, in a perfectly frantic manner, Loder of the Sixth tramped away and tramped down the stairs.

Gerald Loder, it appeared, had had enough! One rap on the knuckles from a hammer was enough for Loder. He was not greedy!

Prout snorted angrily.

"Wingate! Kindly reach into that study and remove the obstacle at the door!" boomed Prout.

The Greyfriars captain blinked at him. Inserting a hand in that narrow space, to be rapped by a hammer as soon as it was inside, did not seem to him an attractive prospect.

"Come on!" came Coker's voice, from within. "I've got the hammer ready! Shove your paw in, Wingate, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you hear me, Wingate?" roared Prout.

"Well, yes, I hear you, sir," answered Wingate. "But I'd rather not have my knuckles rapped with a hammer, if you don't mind, sir."

"Pah! Poo! Walker, kindly insert your hand!"

"Not if you don't mind, sir," said Walker of the Sixth promptly. "I'll stand ready to shove the door open, sir, if you'll put in your hand and get it clear."

"Oh!" said Mr. Prout. "Ah!"

He did not seem fearfully keen.

"Oh do!" called out Coker. "The hammer's ready! Just shove in your paw, Old Pompous!"

"Mr. Quelch, perhaps you——" suggested Prout.

"Not at all, sir!" said the Remove master. "Coker is a boy of your Form—it is for you to deal with him."

"Probably one of these juniors—Wharton!"

"Please excuse me, sir!" said Harry Wharton politely.

"Hurree Singh!"

"The excusefulness is terrific, esteemed sir!"

Prout breathed hard. He made up his mind to it and rolled to the door. To seize the obstacle within, to wrench it out of the way, to leave the door free to open, was feasible—but for Coker and the hammer. But, really, it wanted some nerve to put a hand round the door, inviting a smite from the hammer!

Prout paused.

"Coker, you young rascal!" he boomed.

"Prout, you old ass!" answered Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That was enough for Prout!

Hammer or no, Coker had to be got out of that study!

Prout shoved a plump arm through the aperture and groped with a plump hand!

He got a grip on a table-leg! He wrenched!

Bang!

It was a terrific smite within!

Prout snatched back his plump hand as rapidly as Loder had done. For a moment, Prout really thought that his plump fingers were smashed! Not till he got his plump hand out did he quite realise that that terrific bang had missed the mark. It had landed on the door, not on Prout's paw!

"Oh!" gasped Prout.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the mob in the passage. They guessed, if Prout did not, that Coker had missed that plump paw intentionally. That fearful bang on the door had been enough for Prout.

"Try again!" called out Coker.

Mr. Prout did not try again. The thought of what his fat fingers would have felt like had that bang landed on them made him feel quite a shiver down his plump back. Prout was not tempting fate twice.

"What—what—what is to be done, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Fifth Form master. "What—what—what do you advise?"

But even Quelch, the man of action, was at a loss now! Actually, there was nothing to be done, unless the oak door was hewn down with an axe! And that was a very big order!

"I think, sir," said the Remove master, "that the Head had better be consulted as to the measures to be taken in dealing with that extraordinary boy!"

"Perhaps so!" said Mr. Prout.

Grinning faces watched the two masters as they turned away from the door of Study No. 1. It was defeat—consulting the Head was only camouflage, as it were, to cover the retreat!

The fact was that they did not know how to deal with Coker, they could not deal with him, and they had to give it up!

Coker, for the present, was victorious! Howsoever his amazing invasion of Greyfriars turned out, Horace Coker had won the first round.

Prout and Quelch disappeared—leaving the Remove passage in a roar.

It was near bed-time now; and Coker, clearly, was there for the night! He was there; he was not to be dislodged; and he had to be left there!

He was still there when the Greyfriars fellows went to their dormitories. He was still there when the dim November morning dawned on Greyfriars School!

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW!

"I SAY, you fellows, he's still there!"

"There he is!"

"Good old Coker!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,653.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Innumerable faces, after breakfast in the morning, were upturned to stare at the high window of Study No. 1 in the Remove from the quadrangle.

That window was open. At the open window could be seen the bullet head and brawny shoulders of Horace Coker leaning on the window-sill and looking out.

Coker looked quite cheerful. He waved his hand to Potter and Greene of the Fifth when they looked up.

Potter and Greene gazed at him. "Jever hear of such a blithering idiot, Greeney?" murmured Potter.

"Never!" said Greene. "He thinks he's come back to stay!" breathed Potter.

"Thinks?" repeated Greene. He seemed to doubt whether Coker could think, or whether he had anything to do it with.

Mr. Prout came out of the House, all eyes on him as he came.

Prout looked up at Coker's face at the window. He did not speak! Perhaps his feelings were too deep for words. He just gazed at Coker.

Coker waved his hand again in greeting to his Form-master.

"Good-morning, sir!" he called out. "Thought it over yet? I'm ready to come down and go into Form, if you say the word!"

Prout did not say the word. He did not say anything. He only gazed at Coker with a petrifying gaze.

"Here comes the Head!" breathed Bob Cherry.

There was a hush as the stately figure of the Head was seen advancing to the spot. What the Head was thinking was not expressed in his calm, majestic face. He gazed up at Coker like the rest.

"Good-morning, sir!" called out Coker, very respectfully. Even the fathead of the Fifth realised that he ought not to cheek the Head. "Sorry there's been a row, sir—not my fault!"

"Coker!" said the Head, in a deep voice. "You must leave that study! You must leave the school!"

"I've come back, sir!" explained Coker. "I'm a reasonable chap, I hope! I've given Mr. Prout plenty of time to find out who banged that bang. I've kept him in mind of me all the time, in case he forgot—he can't say I haven't! He hasn't done it yet."

Dr. Locke did not reply to that. His eyes were fixed very keenly and intently on Horace Coker's rugged face.

"Don't think I mean any disrespect to you, sir!" went on Coker. "I don't blame you for acting on Prout's report!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head.

"Not in the least, sir!" said Coker. "But, you see, there was a mistake! I know you'd be jolly glad to set it right, sir! A man expects justice from his headmaster—that's what headmasters are for! Well, why not make Prout find out who did it? That's all I want."

Dr. Locke did not answer. He gave Horace Coker another thoughtful

survey and walked off the scene—Mr. Prout accompanying him. Nearly all Greyfriars remained on the spot, staring up at Coker, laughing and grinning.

Among the crowd were Hilton and Price of the Fifth.

Hilton was smiling—Price scowling blackly.

"Sticker, ain't he?" grinned Hilton.

"The fool!" breathed Price. "The cheeky fool! Prout ought to have got him out of it last night. Fancy letting that cheeky fool stick in the school all night—and leaving him still there! Why doesn't the Head do something?"

"Coker's a fool!" agreed Hilton. "But this is his best guess, all the same. Think a fellow would be carrying on like that if he had really done what he was sacked for? He's got nothing to expect, unless they find out that another man did it! And if that's what he's after, what clearer proof could they want that he never did it?"

"Rubbish!" grunted Price.

But he was deeply uneasy! It was, in fact, growing clear to all the fellows that these extraordinary antics on Coker's part were a proof that he was not the guilty man.

"I gave you some good advice yesterday, Pricey—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"O.K.! But you'd better chew it over, all the same—there's still time," said Hilton. "The Head's no fool—and I believe he can see what everybody else is beginning to see—that Prout made a mistake. There simply isn't any other explanation of Coker carrying on like this."

"Rot!" Price lounged away, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his thin face clouded with worry.

He could call it rubbish and rot, but he knew that Hilton was right.

At a little distance, over by the elms, the Head and Mr. Prout were pacing together, deep in conversation.

Stephen Price would have given a great deal to know what the Head was saying, and to learn whether he was taking the view that Hilton suggested.

As the two masters paced to and fro, Price lounged in a casual way under the elms and stopped, leaning on a tree and taking a letter from his pocket, affecting to read it. At that spot, he was within earshot of the headmaster and Form-master when they came pacing back.

It was rather a risky proceeding to play the eavesdropper where the Head was concerned, and Price did not like taking risks, but he was in too anxious a frame of mind to care for that.

The two masters, pacing majestically, passed on the other side of the elm on which Price was leaning, without noticing him there.

Dr. Locke's voice floated to his ears. "If there is any doubt, Mr. Prout—"

"None, sir!" boomed Prout. "With my own ears, sir, I heard that obstreperous boy Coker threaten to explode the fireworks in my study. I have reason to believe that he repeated this threat among the boys—

it was common knowledge. Then, sir, it occurred—"

"Certainly it would seem a clear case, Mr. Prout. But so foolish and hot-headed a boy may have uttered a threat he never intended to carry out. Foolish and impertinent as it was, it was no matter for expulsion, if actually he did not carry out the threat."

Price gritted his teeth as he heard that. Evidently, Hilton had judged correctly what was passing in the headmaster's mind.

"True, sir!" said Prout. "Very true! But I have no reason—no reason whatever—to suspect any other boy of such a harebrained act. Only Coker was capable of it, of all the boys in my Form. And his subsequent conduct—his unparalleled impertinence and persistence—"

"This persistence, Mr. Prout, seems to me to cast doubt on the matter. Coker is an uncommonly stupid boy—yet he can surely have no other object than to reopen investigation into the matter. That would serve no purpose, so far as he is concerned, unless an error has been made."

"There is, perhaps, something in that view, sir. Yet—"

"If it should transpire, sir, that Coker actually did not commit the act for which he was expelled, I should have no choice but to allow him to return to the school—"

"No doubt! But—"

"It would be extremely awkward, after his headstrong proceedings here—yet justice must be done!" said the Head. "Perhaps—"

Price heard no more, as they paced on out of his hearing. But he had heard enough to make a cold chill run down his back.

The Head doubted—that was clear! If Prout began to doubt, too—

It was a dismaying prospect for the fellow who actually had done it.

A bell rang at last, and the grinning crowd under the window of Study No. 1 broke up and crowded away to the Form-rooms.

They left Horace Coker still cheerfully surveying the landscape from the study window.

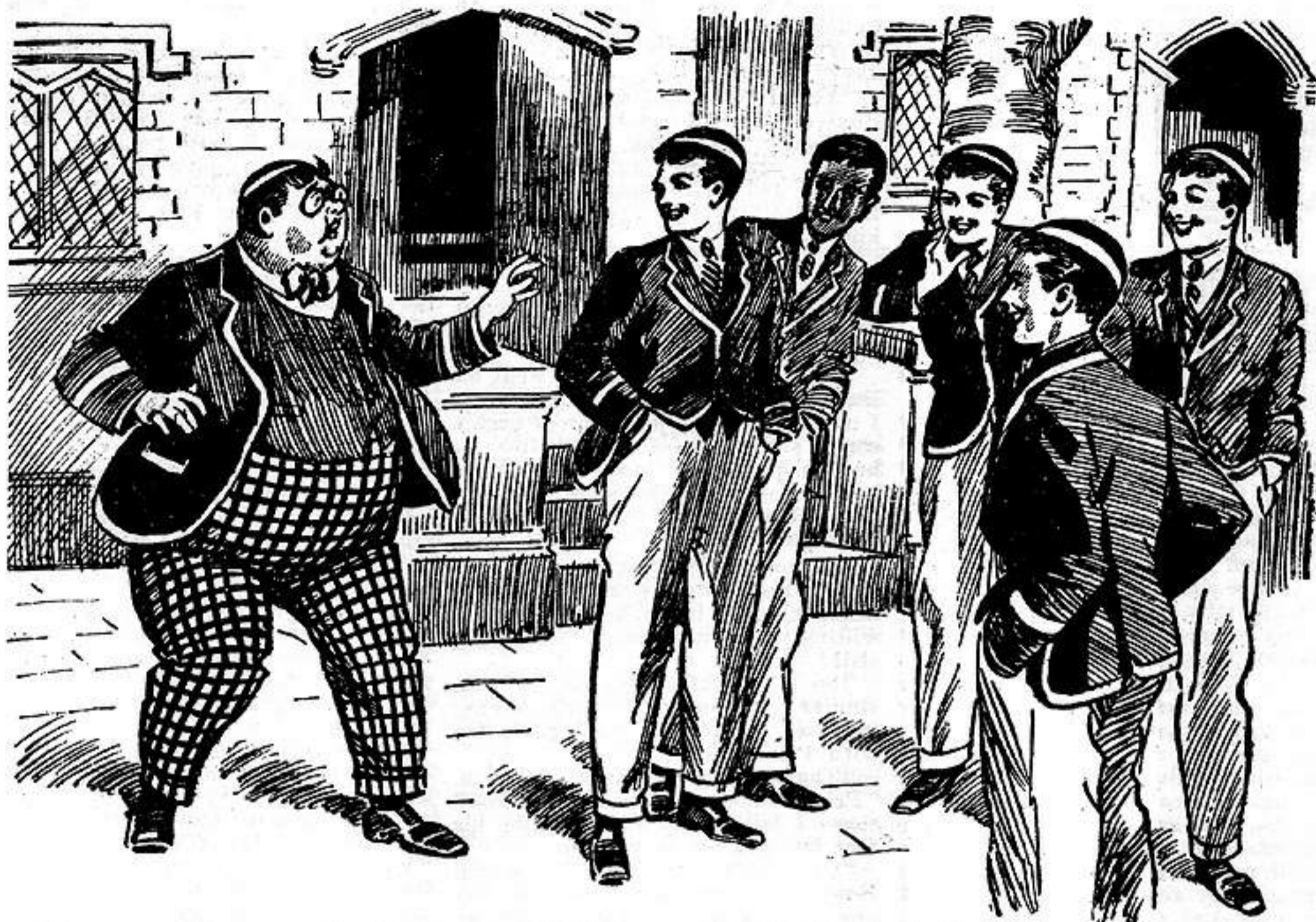
In the Form-rooms that morning it was not easy for masters to keep the attention of their classes fixed on the business in hand. Every fellow in the school—from the Sixth down to the Second—was thinking of Coker—and wondering what was going to happen. They listened for sounds from the direction of the Remove studies—the general opinion being that Coker would be hooked out of his stronghold while the fellows were in class.

But there were no sounds of disturbance—no hint that a study door was being knocked in. If Coker was going, he was going quietly—which nobody expected Coker to do.

Never had the Greyfriars fellows been so eager for break. When at last the Forms were dismissed, there was a rush to one spot—to stare up at the window of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there he is!" roared Bob Cherry.

"He's still there!" chuckled the Bounder.



"Are you fellows coming to tea or not?" demanded Billy Bunter indignantly. "I've got the run of a senior study—tons of grub—and I ask you fellows, to give you a treat! Ain't that enough?"

"Good old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was Coker—as large as life. He waved his hand cheerily to a laughing mob. And all Greyfriars chortled as they gazed up at the face at the window.

GENEROUS OF BUNTER!

"I SAY, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Still stony?"

"Yes. Buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You've got all our cash!" said Bob. "I handed it all over to you the other day, old fat man! Have you spent it all?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, don't be an ass!" said Billy Bunter. "If you fellows are up against it, I'm going to see you through!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

It was after class when the fat Owl of the Remove thus surprised the Famous Five.

As tea-time was approaching, Bunter, naturally, was thinking of tea.

Harry Wharton & Co., being still in the unhappy, stony state, had to make up their minds to tea in Hall.

It was true that Lord Mauleverer's hospitality was unbounded, so far as his friends were concerned, but having touched Mauly for one tea, the Famous Five were not going to touch him for another. So it was

tea in Hall for the chums of the Remove—though, at the moment, their minds were not dwelling on it—meals not being such important functions with them as with William George Bunter.

They were, in fact, thinking about the extraordinary garrison in Study No. 1. Wharton and Nugent wanted their study—but it was still in possession of Horace Coker.

Coker was still a fixture there.

Some of the fellows knew that he had emerged several times during the day, while the masters were in the Form-rooms and the fellows in class, to walk about and get a little exercise. But at the first sign of danger, Coker popped back into that study, like a rabbit into a burrow—and hammered nails again.

After class, he was strongly entrenched once more—now that the beaks were at leisure to deal with him.

He had not been dealt with yet.

Nobody knew what the Head was going to do about it. So far, he had done nothing.

Perhaps he was waiting for Coker to get tired of his new stunt and go. Some fellows suspected that he was beginning to take the view that very many fellows were taking—that Coker was, after all, an innocent party, and that the guilty man had to be looked for elsewhere. Price of the Fifth had little doubt on that point, and he was not enjoying life that day.

But Harry Wharton & Co. forgot

all about Coker as Billy Bunter made his surprising statement that he was going to see them through.

They gazed in astonished inquiry at Bunter.

If by some miracle Bunter was in funds, they had no objection to collecting some of the various small sums that the fat Owl had owed for whole terms.

But it did not seem probable.

If Bunter was in funds, they would not have expected to meet him outside the tuckshop.

"I mean it!" said the fat Owl, blinking at them through his big spectacles, and with an emphatic nod of his fat head. "You fellows have stood by me at times when I've been hard-up! Well, now I'm going to stand by you!"

"You're going to square that huge sum we lent you the other day?" inquired Bob.

"Come into a fortune?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Don't tell us your postal order's come!" said Frank Nugent.

"Well, as a matter of fact, it hasn't!" admitted Bunter. "I can't quite understand it, as it's coming from one of my titled relations. I suppose it's the war, you know. Anyhow, it hasn't come. But it's all right. I'm going to tea in a senior study."

"While the senior's out?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No!" roared Bunter. "And if that's how you thank a fellow for

offering to take you to a splendid tea in a Fifth Form study, Bull—"

"Somebody asked you to tea in the Fifth?" asked Harry Wharton. "Well, he must be a jolly hospitable chap if he will let you bring in five hungry fellows to tea!"

"He, he, he! He hasn't much choice about it!" chuckled Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean, he will be glad to see my friends," amended Bunter hastily. "I could take the whole Remove if I liked! Price jolly well wouldn't say no, I know that!"

"Price!" ejaculated the Famous Five, all together.

"Well, that chap Hilton stands the tea, really," said Bunter. "We jolly well know who spends the money in that study!"

"We do!" said Bob. "Mean to say that Price has asked you to come and scoff Hilton's tuck? Gammon!"

"Come and see!" retorted Bunter. "I can jolly well go to tea in Price's study whenever I like! I tea'd with Pricey yesterday!"

The Famous Five regarded Bunter with astonishment. It was more or less known that Price, who was hard-up, sponged on Hilton, who was wealthy. But that Price ever thought of asking a Remove fellow to tea to help him pick up the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table was news to them. They could imagine no reason why Price should do so. And certainly, if he wanted a guest from the Lower School, they

would not have expected that he would select Billy Bunter.

"You tea'd with Price yesterday?" repeated Bob.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" answered Bunter. "And I can tell you it was a ripping tea! That chap Hilton doesn't care how much money he spends, and Price uses his stuff as if it were his own. There were three kinds of jam!"

"Why the thump did Price ask you to tea?"

"Well, I dare say he likes good company!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm going again to-day," went on Bunter. "I don't see why I shouldn't. I mean to say, my postal order hasn't come, and if Price doesn't like it, he can jolly well lump it! That's how I look at it, you know!"

Which astonished the Famous Five more and more.

If Price willingly asked Bunter to tea in his study, it was surprising enough. But if he asked him unwillingly, it was more surprising still!

"So I thought of you chaps!" said Bunter generously. "You're stony, same as I am! Let's all go to tea with Pricey, see?"

"Thanks!" said Harry Wharton. "Pricey mightn't be fearfully pleased to see a fellow who was punching his face the day before yesterday!"

"Oh, that's all right!" assured Bunter. "Price won't dare to say anything, you bet! I've got Pricey fixed all right!"

"He won't dare!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" Bunter realised that he was saying too much. "I—I mean, he—he'll be glad to see any friends of mine. Come on! You'll jolly well see that it will be all right! You'll get a ripping spread, and that's what you want, ain't it?"

But the Famous Five were in no hurry to come on!

It was quite true that a ripping spread had its attractions for them, in contrast to dishwater and doorsteps in Hall! But they were rather more particular in such matters than Bunter.

On no account would they have tea'd with Price of the Fifth, whom they loathed, and who they believed to have played the trick for which Coker had been sacked. Still less would they have gone to tea with a fellow who did not dare to say no to a crowd of hungry guests from the Lower School.

"I say, you fellows, come on!" urged Bunter. "I mean it, you know! Price has the run of the study! Hilton pays, but he don't care! I expect he will clear off when we go in—he did yesterday! Well, we don't want him! What we want is the grub—and I can tell you that's prime!"

"Hold on a minute, you benighted ass!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "What's making Price of the Fifth feed you when he doesn't want to?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I can tell you he's jolly glad to see me in his study! I can take as many friends as I like. Don't you worry about Pricey cutting up rusty, or anything. He mayn't look very pleasant—you know his rotten temper—but I've got him down all right!"

"And how have you got him down?"

"Oh! I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! Look here, are you coming to tea, or not?" demanded Bunter indignantly. "I've got the run of a senior study—tons of grub—and I ask you fellows, to give you a treat! Ain't that enough?"

Billy Bunter was pink with indignation. This really was too thick! Out of sheer generosity Bunter was going to share his plunder with these fellows—and they might have thanked a fellow, at least! Bunter was boundlessly hospitable when there was plenty to go round! There was plenty in Hilton's study, and the fat Owl really intended to be kind! Bunter never could understand that grub was not the beginning and end of all things to other fellows, as it was to his fat and fatuous self.

"If I asked Skinner and his pals, they'd come fast enough!" said Bunter warmly. "Well, I'm asking you! Coming, or not?"

"Not, you fat chump—"

"Then you can go and eat coke! I'm going!"

"Look here—"

"Yah! I'll jolly well ask some other fellows! I shan't ask you now—you're left out! Yah!"

And Billy Bunter, with a snort of indignation, rolled into the House. He left the Famous Five staring.

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By
OWEN
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THE LIMIT!

HILTON stared. Price gritted his teeth. The two Fifth-Formers were sitting down to tea in their study, when there was a knock, and the door opened.

Something like an army marched in.

Billy Bunter led—with a happy grin of anticipation on his fat face. After him came Skinner, Snoop, and Bolsover major of the Remove—and bringing up the rear was Bunter minor—Sammy of the Second.

The Famous Five had turned down Bunter's generous invitation. But other fellows were less particular.

Skinner and Snoop would have snaffled a spread wherever a spread was to be found. Bolsover major did not see why he should not go, if a Fifth Form man was willing to let Bunter take a party. And Sammy Bunter's views on such subjects coincided exactly with Billy Bunter's—if there was grub about, Sammy was after it.

So there they were! Cedric Hilton regarded them with surprise.

Price gave them slaughterous looks. He could guess why Bunter had come again—Bunter had to be fed to keep him quiet. But he had not expected Bunter to attempt to plunder him to this extent.

He looked on Bunter as an unscrupulous young scoundrel who had found him out, and was bent on making a good thing out of it! But in that he did not do the fat Owl justice.

Bunter, in the first place, hadn't found him out! He had only let Price think that he had! In the second place, Bunter considered that a fellow who would play a mean trick, getting another fellow sacked, deserved all that came to him, and serve him jolly well right! In the third place, it was sheer benevolence on Bunter's part to let other fellows into a whack in what was going. Bunter was feeling very hospitable and generous as he led his flock to tea in Price's study.

"What the dooce!" said Hilton. "Have you asked that crew here, Steve?"

Price did not answer. He gave Billy Bunter a deadly look.

But Billy Bunter chirped cheerily.

"I told you I'd drop in to tea again, Pricey! I hope you've got something good! I say, I'm going to ask you to tea in my study when I get a postal order I've been expecting for some time."

Price almost choked. "Get out, the lot of you!" snapped Hilton.

"Oh, really, Hilton——" "And quick about it—and shut the door after you!"

"If Price doesn't want me, he can say so!" retorted Bunter independently. "This is Price's study as well as yours, Hilton! And don't you be cheeky, either!"

"What?" roared Hilton.

"You're as syrupstigious as Pricey is!" said Bunter accusingly. "You jolly well know all about it! Think

I don't know that? You'd both be up before Prout, if Old Pompous knew!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" breathed Price.

"Well, let Hilton shut up, then!" retorted Bunter. "I've come here in a friendly way, to tea, and brought a few pals with me. If we're not welcome, you can jolly well say so."

"Get out!" roared Hilton, rising from his seat.

"Look here, what's this game?" growled Bolsover major angrily. "Bunter said he was asked to tea here, and could bring his friends."

"That's what Bunter said!" agreed Skinner.

"It—it—it's all right!" gasped Price. "I—I don't mind! I—I mean, you can tea here, if you like! For goodness' sake, Hilton, don't kick up a row!"

His tone was beseeching. Hilton stood, looking angrily at the juniors, and then gave his unhappy pal a glance of the most utter contempt.

"Are you goin' to stand this, you fool?" he snapped. "Can't you see that this is as good as shoutin' the whole thing from the roof?"

"Will you keep quiet?" breathed Price.

"Yes, you keep quiet!" said Bunter. "If you don't like the company, nobody wants you to stop, Hilton. There's the door!"

"By gad! I'll——"

Hilton made an angry stride at the Owl of the Remove.

Price jumped up and grabbed him by the arm.

"Stop, you dummy!" he panted.

"Look here, you silly ass——"

"Leave them alone!"

Hilton jerked his arm away.

"Well, you're a fool!" he said. "If you weren't such a frightened funk, you'd see what a fool you are!"

And he stamped out of the study, and slammed the door after him.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" remarked Billy Bunter cheerily.

"We don't want Hilton, do we, Pricey? I say, you fellows, sit down!"

The guests sat down round the table.

Bolsover major was looking puzzled, Skinner and Snoop grin-

ning at one another. Exactly how much Price wanted those guests in his study, they could see plainly enough; and they could only wonder how Bunter was making him stand it.

As for Sammy Bunter, that fat youth was concentrating on the food-stuffs.

Sammy's first proceeding, when he sat down, was to bag a pot of jam—his next, to bag a spoon.

Manners were not polished in the Second Form—and Sammy did not often get the run of a whole jampot. Sammy's one idea in the present happy circumstances was to make hay while the sun shone. Sammy started on jam!

It was a well-spread tea-table. If some things were short, other things were abundant—especially in the way of delicacies which cost money. This was a treat for Bunter & Co.

Price was kept busy.

He was not feeling much like tea himself, in such a worried, driven, and almost desperate frame of mind. And he had plenty to do, waiting on his many guests.

Well supplied as the study table was, five hungry juniors soon made a clearance, and Price had to extract further supplies from the study cupboard.

The fact that most of those expensive things belonged to Cedric Hilton mattered no more to Price than it did to Billy Bunter. But he gritted his teeth as he handed them out, and watched them disappear—rapidly.

But if Price was not hospitable, Billy Bunter was.

"Have some more cake, Skinner—there's lots of cake! Try that jelly, Snoopsey! Those peaches are spiffing, Bolsover! Sammy, old bean, tuck in—just tuck in, old chap!"

"Mmmmmmmmm!" was Sammy's reply. His mouth was too full of cake for easy utterance.

"Jolly good spread!" said Bolsover major. "I say, you're not eating anything, Pricey!"

Price's answer was inarticulate.

Skinner, in the most unscrupulous way, was parking biscuits in his pockets, to take away after the feed. Billy Bunter was jammy, sticky, beaming with satisfaction and hospitality.

(Continued on next page.)

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His tea-party really did not know what to make of it all; but they were ready, at least, to make hay while the sun shone—and they did!

Price was almost at his wits' end.

Obviously, this kind of thing could not go on. It was simply shouting out to all Greyfriars that the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove had some sort of hold over him and was making him toe the line.

Had Bunter really been a young rascal, he would have had a limit! Being only a particularly dense fat-head, he hadn't!

Plainly, he was going to carry on like this, regardless of what fellows thought about it, or, rather, not realising that fellows would think anything about it at all.

That was the sort of intellect Bunter had! Really, it was more difficult to deal with a fool than with a rogue! Price simply didn't know what on earth he was going to do.

When, at length, that tea-party was over—which was not till the table was bare, and the cupboard empty, Bunter & Co. departed, leaving Price in a state of perspiration.

Bunter blinked back at him from the door, through his big spectacles, with a cheery blink.

"Thanks for the feed, Pricey, old man!" said Bunter. "Look here, I'll drop in again to-morrow if you like!"

"Get out!" gasped Price. He seemed to be breaking down under the strain.

"What did you say?" demanded Bunter sharply.

"I—I mean—all right!" stammered Price.

"If you mean all right—all right," said the fat Owl severely. "I'm not the fellow to butt in where I'm not wanted, I hope. If you'd like me to drop in to tea to-morrow, I'll come! I may bring a friend or two. If it's inconvenient, you can say so, I sup-

pose! You've got a tongue in your head!"

"I—I——" Price gurgled.

"Yes or no?" asked Bunter.

"Yes!" gasped Price.

"Right-ho! Done, then!" said Bunter, and with quite a friendly nod to the miserable Price, he rolled off with his party.

Price shut the door after them. He passed his hand over his brow. He tried to think it out. Now that the tea-party was over, he had leisure to think, and decide what had best be done.

What could he do?

This couldn't go on! This would soon be the talk of the school. If that fat tick could have been relied on to keep within limits, and hold his tongue, it would have been all right. But this— How long would it be before fellows began putting two and two together? How long before he had to disappoint that greedy young villain—with the consequence that he would tell what he knew?

Hilton's advice recurred to his mind. He knew that it was good advice, though he had not dared to act on it.

Now, however, as he thought and thought it over, he realised that he had no other resource. His only chance was to speak out—before Bunter did! There was a chance for him if he confessed before Bunter told the world what he had seen on that day of the big bang!

That Bunter had seen nothing that day, and had no idea whatever of stating that he had, Price was happily unaware. He was frightened by an unsubstantial shadow—and his own guilty conscience!

For a long, miserable hour the wretched black sheep of the Fifth thought it over in his study—thought it over and over till his head ached. Then, at long last, he left the study,

and with his knees shaking went down to Prout's study.

BUMPS FOR BUNTER!

"I SAY, you fellows! What's up?"

"You fat villain——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You podgy pirate!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"You fellows leave Bunter alone!" chuckled Skinner. "Bunter's a broth of a boy! 'Tain't every blackmailer that whacks out the loot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky beast, Skinner!" howled Billy Bunter indignantly.

This, really, was very ungrateful from Skinner, who had scoffed a full share of that spread in Price's study, and gone off with his pockets full of biscuits!

"What the dooce does he know about Pricey?" asked the Bounder. "Must be something pretty strong to make the fellow stand this."

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

Quite a crowd of Remove fellows had gathered round Billy Bunter in the Rag after tea.

Bunter could see, by their looks, that there was something up. He did not know what it was. Bunter was quite unconscious of wrong-doing of any kind; he was, in fact, in a very cheerful and satisfied state, and thinking happily of another spread with Price on the morrow.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Harry Wharton. "Unless it's something about Coker's affair. But Bunter knows no more about that than any other fellow! What are you grinning at, you fat freak?"

"Oh, nothing!" grinned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, if you're shirty because I didn't take you to tea with Pricey, it's your own fault. I asked you, didn't I? You can come to-morrow if you like."

"To-morrow!" repeated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, old chap! Pricey has asked me to tea in his study again to-morrow," said Bunter breezily. "I told him I might bring a friend or two! Well, I'll take you fellows!"

"What is Price doing this for, Bunter?" asked Harry quietly.

"Eh? He—he rather likes me, you know! Good company, and all that," said Bunter. "I suppose I can take up a Fifth Form man if I like, without asking you?"

"Bump him!" said Bob.

"Look here!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm.

Skinner & Co., of course, had talked about that remarkable tea-party in the Fifth. Skinner regarded it as no end of a joke, and described, with great humour, the expression on Price's face while he entertained his guests.

Other fellows did not take it so humorously as Skinner. Price was a bad hat, and most of the fellows believed that he had had a treacherous hand in getting Coker sacked. But that was no excuse for Bunter, and the captain of the Remove had promptly decided that Bunter was going to stop it, and stop it at once.

"Answer my question, you fat ass!" rapped Wharton.

Come adventuring on the Spanish Main!



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Written by
Flying-Officer
W. E. JOHNS

"Eh? I've answered it!" yapped Bunter. "I'm rather pally with Pricey—"

"Bump him!"

"I say, you fellows— Leggo!" roared Bunter.

The fat Owl roared with wrath and apprehension as he was hooked out of the armchair.

He sat on the floor of the Rag with a tremendous concussion. He sat and roared.

"Now, you fat oyster—" said Johnny Bull.

"Yarooop!"

"Now cough it up—"

"Ow! Beast! Shan't! Wow!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Oh crikey! Ow!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! Stoppit! Oh scissors! I say, you fellows, chuck it! I'll take you to tea with Pricey next time—I will, really—honest Injun!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yoo-hoooooop!" roared Bunter.

"Now, you bloated burglar, cough it up!" said the captain of the Remove. "You've got to stop this, see?"

"Ooooooh! Beast! Wooh!"

"Now get it off your chest! Why is Pricey—"

"Ow! I—I don't mind telling you!" gasped Bunter. "The—the fact is, I—I've promised to ask him home to Bunter Court for Christmas, and—and introduce him to some nobby people—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Ow! Will you stoppit?" wailed Bunter. "Look here, it's all right! I don't know anything about Pricey—I don't, really. He may think I do—but it ain't my fault what he thinks, is it?"

"Now we're coming to the milk in the cocoonut!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Give him another bump and it will bump the truth out of him!"

"Stoppit!" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I—I don't mind telling you! I never told Pricey I saw him sneaking to Prout's study that day the fireworks went off! I never told him anything of the kind!"

"So that's it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You podgy villain, you've told that cad you knew—"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "He may fancy so—that's all! 'Tain't my fault what he fancies, is it? All I said was that a fellow might have been in Quelch's study, and might have looked out, and might have seen him sneaking along to Prout's study! That's all I said! So a fellow might, mightn't a fellow?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"As if I'd say I saw him when I never saw him!" gasped Bunter. "Of course I wouldn't! All I said was that a fellow might have seen him."

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

"If Price chooses to fancy a fellow saw him, that's his look-out, ain't it?" argued Bunter. "If he chooses to ask a fellow to tea because he's in a blue funk, why shouldn't he?"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

(Continued on next page.)



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 Street, London, E.C.4.

QUITE a number of readers have written me this week complaining that they have been unable to obtain a copy of the MAGNET from their newsagent. They feel very peeved about it, too!

Well, chums, there's a war on, and war-time restrictions ban newsagents from ordering more copies of the MAGNET than they can sell. It is for this reason—and this reason alone—that your newsagent wants you to place a regular order for the MAGNET. Don't leave it to chance—or you will risk disappointment. Your newsagent will be only too glad to reserve a copy of the MAGNET for you every week if you ask him to do so. See him to-day and place a standing order. You'll find an Order Form for this purpose on page 23 of this issue.

A very interesting letter this week comes from Charles Smart, of Catford, who informs me that he is anxious to become a plumber. Apparently, when Charles mentioned his decision to his friends, a good many told him that plumbing was a very unhealthy trade. My Catford chum writes to know my opinion on the subject.

Personally, I do not regard plumbing as a particularly unhealthy trade. In fact, any lad who takes up this trade, and who follows the ordinary rules of cleanliness, need not fear that he will suffer in health. It is curious what strange ideas on the subject of occupations some boys have. A particular chum of Charles told him not to go in a business at which he had to start at six o'clock in the morning, because no money was to be made at it.

I do not know where this idea comes from, but it certainly does not meet with my approval. I can only ascribe this young man's reluctance to take up a trade that means starting at six in the morning to sheer laziness. The young man who wants to succeed in life has to work early and late—and work cheerfully, too. For the boy who is afraid of starting work at six in the morning, there is precious little chance of success. Never be afraid of honest work, because work, early or late, is good for all. This is an idea which every boy starting in life should bear in mind.

"What would you like for a birthday present?" many aunts and uncles will be asking of their nieces and nephews during the next few weeks. To those of you to whom this question is put, make your choice—a

wise one by selecting the "Holiday Annual." Believe me, chums, this year's "Holiday Annual" is something well worth having. You'll meet all your old chums in this bumper Annual, which is packed full of wonderful school yarns and articles concerning Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, and Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, as well as many other fine features.

Ask your newsagent to let you have a peep at this tip-top book—once you've glanced through its pages you won't rest content until you have a copy of your own. Maybe you haven't got the full amount—five shillings—to purchase a copy of the "Holiday Annual" right now. If such be the case, ask your newsagent to put a copy aside for you until you have the necessary five shillings. He'll do it like a shot!

Now for a

RAPID REPLY IN BRIEF

to a reader's inquiry:

O. MOSS-VERNON (Surrey).—Ernest Levison was expelled from Greyfriars some while ago. Horace Coker's age is seventeen years and Sammy Bunter's thirteen.

So much for answering queries. Now I must draw your attention to

"BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAIN!"

By Frank Richards,

the long, complete Greyfriars yarn for next week. By a series of coincidences the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove finds himself stranded miles from Greyfriars. How to get back to the school, and at the same time save his fat legs from foot-slogging, is a problem, until Billy brings his fat wits to bear. Unscrupulous as his methods are, Bunter succeeds in getting over the difficulty, and, what's more, makes a "quid" into the bargain! He's as artful as a wagonload of monkeys is our Billy! You'll enjoy this yarn to the very full, just as you will our next "Herald," in which you will find another laughable "Sheerluck Jones" story, written by Peter Todd. Other special articles by Dick Rake and Bob Cherry, and a parody by Dick Penfold, go to swell this special issue.

Don't get left! If you've not already done so, fill in the Order Form on page 23 of this issue and hand it to your newsagent at the very first opportunity.

Till next week, then, cheerio!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,658.

"That cad has got frightened about nothing, and he's feeding Bunter to keep him from telling what he doesn't know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if that's it, one thing's jolly clear," said Harry Wharton. "Price couldn't be scared like that by Bunter pulling his leg if he hadn't done it!"

"The clearfulness is terrific!"

"That settles it about Pricey!" said the Bounder, with a nod. "You fellows were right—Pricey's the man!"

"And that howling ass in our study never did it!" said Frank Nugent. "Aunt Judy was right about dear Horace!"

"We jolly well knew!" said Bob. "But this is as good as proof! Now let's boot Bunter all round the Rag for trading on it!"

"I say, you fellows, stop it!" roared Bunter. "I say, I—I only wanted to make Price sit up for being such—such a rotter, you know! It wasn't the tuck in Hilton's study I was after. I never gave that a thought!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boot him!"

"Yarooooooh!"

Peter Todd came into the Rag.

"You fellows know what's up with Price?" he asked.

Attention was turned from the yelling fat Owl—much to his relief.

"Price?" said Harry Wharton.

"What—"

"I've just seen him," said Peter. "He looked as white as chalk—never seen a fellow look so awfully sick! He's gone into Prout's study!"

"Oh!"

"May have gone to own up to Prout!" grinned the Bounder. "May like that better than tea-parties in the Fifth!"

"Phew! If that's it, it will be all right for Coker!" said Bob Cherry. "If he thinks that Bunter knows—"

"I say, you fellows, I never said I knew! All I said was that a fellow might—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows crowded out of the Rag, anxious for news. And news was not long in becoming known. Half the school already believed that Price had done it—and now all the school knew, as the news spread, that Price of the Fifth had gone to his Form-master and owned up! And the fact that Price had owned up because he was afraid that Billy Bunter would tell what Billy Bunter didn't know made the Removites chortle.

ALL RIGHT FOR COKER!

"COKER!"

Mr. Prout's voice boomed at a barricaded door in the Remove passage.

Behind Prout there was a swarm of fellows. Quite an army had followed Prout up to the Remove.

Coker's voice came cheerily from Study No. 1.

"Hallo, old bean!"

"Coker! You are speaking to your Form-master!" boomed Prout.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,658.

"Am I?" asked Coker

"You are!"

"Oh! If you're my Form-master again, sir, I beg your pardon, sir!" came Coker's cheery voice. "I hope I know how to treat my Form-master with proper respect, sir!"

"I hope so!" boomed Prout. "Coker! A discovery has been made! Certain facts have come to light! It transpires, Coker, that it was not you who caused the explosion of fireworks in my study!"

"I told you that at the time, sir!" pointed out Coker.

"Your own headstrong and insensate folly, Coker, was the cause of your condemnation!" said Mr. Prout. "The blame lies entirely upon yourself. Nevertheless, as it transpires that you were not guilty of that act for which you were expelled, justice requires that your sentence should be rescinded!"

"Good egg!" said Coker. "I—I mean, I'm glad to hear it, sir!"

"In view of this, Coker, I have consulted with the headmaster, and Dr. Locke has consented, and I have consented, to overlook and excuse your extraordinary conduct since you left Greyfriars!"

"I don't see anything extraordinary about it, sir. I only wanted to spot that cad—"

"Silence!"

"Look here——" Coker broke off, remembering that he was in the Fifth again, and that Prout was his Form-master once more. "Just as you like, sir! You say what you like, and I'll say 'Yes, sir.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the crowd behind Prout.

"If you've found out now who did it, sir——" went on Coker.

"It was Price of my Form, Coker," said Mr. Prout.

"Oh crumbs! Pricey!" exclaimed Coker. "Are you sure, sir? I know those Remove fags thought it was Price—and I jolly well smacked their heads for saying it was a Fifth Form man! I don't think it was Price, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"More likely some Remove fag, if you ask me, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout. "Has this boy's stupidity no bounds? Coker, Price has admitted the fact!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

"Price came to my study and made a full confession!" said Mr. Prout. "He came to me of his own accord and told me the whole story. He has admitted having played that foolish trick with the fireworks; and he has explained that he could not continue to keep silent, in view of the miscarriage of justice."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Good old Pricey!" grinned the Bounder.

"Silence!" boomed Prout, glaring round at the army behind him.

"Silence! In view of Price's frank confession in the interests of justice, Coker, I have decided to deal with him as leniently as possible. He will be flogged by the headmaster, and the matter will end. There will be no expulsion—your sentence being rescinded! If you immediately cease

these lawless, headstrong, rebellious proceedings, Coker, you may resume your place in the Form, and all will be forgotten and forgiven!"

"What-ho!" chortled Coker. "I mean, yes, sir! Certainly, sir! I'm coming out the minute I get the door unfastened, sir!"

"Very well, Coker. The matter closes here!" said Mr. Prout; and he turned and walked majestically away through a buzzing crowd.

There was a sound of hammering and clanging in Study No. 1.

Coker was busy demolishing his barricade at the study door.

In a few minutes the door flew open. Horace Coker emerged from his stronghold.

"Gratters, Coker!" said Harry Wharton.

"Jolly glad, old chap!" said Bob Cherry.

Coker looked at him.

"Did you say 'old chap,' Cherry?" he asked.

"Eh? Yes!"

"Then don't! I don't want any cheeky familiarity from fags!" said Coker. "I won't smack your head this time, but don't do it again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen!" said Bob Cherry. "Coker doesn't want our gratters! He wants to be rolled out of our passage! Give him what he wants!"

"Now, then," said Coker sharply, "if you young ticks start being cheeky, you'll find that I've got a short way with fags, as I've told you before! If you want your heads smacked all round, I can jolly well say— Yurroooooop!"

Coker had no time to finish.

He rolled and roared, and roared and rolled, many hands and a considerable number of feet helping him out of the passage, across the Remove landing, and down the steps to the study landing. There Coker, no longer rolling, still roared.

"Good-bye, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter and Greene came and picked Coker up, and walked him off to his study in the Fifth.

Coker of the Fifth was back again. Price, glad to get off with a flogging, rather expected more trouble with Coker. But Coker, to his surprise, was quite genial. Coker thought it was rather decent of Price to own up—and told him so! Which was a relief to Price—and he found another relief in kicking Billy Bunter the next time he came across that fat youth!

Horace Coker, once more, was Coker of the Fifth. It was, as he told Potter and Greene, like the king coming into his own again. And Potter and Greene, without batting an eyelid, agreed that it was.

THE END.

(Now look out for next Saturday's MAGNET and another tip-top story of Greyfriars, entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAIN!" You'll roar with laughter when you read it. Meanwhile, make sure of your copy by ORDERING IT NOW!)

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

open to you. You can return all the munny you have made out of this Anti-Waste League to the people concerned; and in that way you will not have to pay income-tacks on it after all. All screen?"

The Head nodded eagerly.

"Yes, rather, sir! .. Anything is better than being handed over to the perlice."

"Then I will let you off with a cawtion, Birchmall, and I advise you to disgorge your ill-gotten gains at the earliest possibul moment!" wrapped out the tacks-collector.

"I—I savvy, sir! I assure you I'll give back every stiver—honner bright!" whimpered the Head.

After that, the income-tacks man departed. He left the Head farely gasping with releef.

But instead of leaving the school, the income-tacks man went straight to Jack Jolly's study and joined Merry and Bright and Fearless.

"Did the wheeze work?" asked Fearless.

"Yes, rather!" grinned the income-tacks man.

Merry and Bright and Fearless thereupon gave a wringing cheer. And then an amazing thing happened. Fearless helped the income-tacks man to take off his trowsis, and the reason for his pekuliar way of walking was at once reveeled. He had been walking on stilts.

A moment later the mistery was solved, for, with his false mistosh and eyebrows removed, the "income-tacks man" was seen to be none other than Jack Jolly himself!

It was a grate triumf for the kaptin of the Fourth when the Head went round disgorging all the prophets of the Anti-Waste League. But Jack Jolly & Co. kept mum over the reason for Dr. Birchmall's repentance, and nobody else at St. Sam's ever found out the Tacks-Collector's Secret!

FROM MY SANCTUM!

BY THE EDITOR

"Which," asks a reader who calls himself "Greyfriars Fan," "is the happiest study in the Remove?"

Well, "Greyfriars Fan," my first instinctive reply is bound to be Study No. 1. There can surely be no study in which harmony reigns more completely than it does between Frank Nugent and myself! All the same, it would be unfair to the rest of the Remove to let it go at that without casting an eye round the other studies.

Dick Russell and Ogilvy hit it very well together in No. 3. I really can't remember an occasion when there has been trouble between this well-matched pair. There is always an atmosphere of calm, too, about No. 12, where Lord Mauleverer dwells luxuriously with Sir Jimmy Vivian

and Delarey—Mauly being the soothing factor in this particular combination.

No. 4 enjoys equally peaceful times now and again; but Smithy, always uncertain in behaviour, is liable to break out here now and again, and in spite of Redwing's equable temper, I don't think we can regard this study as qualifying for the honours.

Harmony of a kind exists also in No. 11 between Skinner, Snoop and Stott—mainly, I suppose, because all three are tarred with the same brush—but I think I must rule this study out on account of the dingy interests that bring the inmates together.

In Study No. 13, I fancy we have as happy a mixture as anywhere. It's an odd mixture, too—Bob Cherry, Wun Lung, Hurree Singh and Mark Linley—but there is never a cross word between the strangely assorted quartet.

In fact, I would award the palm to No. 13 without hesitation—if there were no Study No. 1.

All clear now, "Greyfriars Fan"? Good!

More next week, chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

BOYS OF THE "HOLD" BRIGADE!

Remove Wrestlers
Who Never Lose Their
Grip!

Dick Russell and Johnny Bull have taken up wrestling; and, wrestling being a novelty among Greyfriars sportsmen, quite a large crowd turned up in the gym the other evening by invitation to see an exhibition match between the two.

Bob Cherry, who officiated as M.C., opened the proceedings with a little speech. He said that wrestling was the most exciting sport in the world, and in this exhibition match between Russell and Bull they would get thrills galore of a kind to make their pulse beat at double speed and their breath come in spasmodic gasps.

Bob explained that in the particular form of wrestling they were about to witness, the aim of each wrestler was to get his opponent flat on his back. There was no dividing the bout up into rounds, and no time limit.

"Now, sit back, lads, and get ready for the thrill of your lives!" concluded Bob.

The gong then sounded, and Bull and Russell began to wrestle.

Or, rather, they didn't exactly begin right away. They filled in some time at the beginning in circling round one another—looking for weak points in each other's armour, it seemed.

The audience became a little restive after the first five minutes or so of this. Some of them began to chant: "Here we go round the mulberry bush." But suddenly the wrestlers broke the spell and set to work in earnest.

The struggle that ensued was simply terrific. Bull grabbed Russell, and Russell grabbed Bull, and they heaved at each other with vim and vigour, to an accompaniment of grunts and heavy breathing.

This was awfully interesting for the first five minutes, but when they kept on at the same stunt for half an hour or so without budging an inch, critics in the crowd were heard to express the opinion that the thing had begun to pall.

More thrills, however, were on the way. With a suddenness that took the spectators completely by surprise—the whole movement did not take longer than ten minutes or so—they both began to sink to the ground. After making themselves as comfy as possible on the boards, they started the heaving business all over again.

How the match ended, we cannot say. When the last of the audience left, late in the evening, the two principals were still on the floor, heaving away for all they were worth.

Members of the audience, by the way, were removed by friends one at a time, all suffering from a malady resembling sleep or unconsciousness.

It is thought that the trouble was the result of the excitement brought on by Russell and Bull—the Boys of the "Hold" Brigade, as Skinner was heard humorously to describe them.

Well, that will be all about wrestling this week, thank you.



FUN FOR WINTER EVENINGS!

By HAROLD SKINNER

Some chaps get a kick out of sitting in the Rag all the evening playing chess. Some are quite satisfied with sitting in front of a fire roasting chestnuts. Some want nothing better than to spread themselves out in an armchair reading a book.

These are the rank and file—the smaller fry, so to speak. There are others, like me, who would as soon play noughts-and-crosses as chess, who wouldn't give you tuppence for a

hundredweight of roast chestnuts, and who confine their bookwork strictly to the Form-room.

These choice spirits ("choice" is right!—Ed.) need something more original in the way of entertainment for the dark evenings. Here are a few ideas of my own for any of you who feel like joining us:

1. Ask all the most credulous chaps you know if they have heard that a ghost has been seen prowling round the school lately. When the yarn has spread about sufficiently, dress yourself up in a sheet and use a spot of phosphorus paint to the best advantage, then jump out on any stray fag who comes along. You will find his reactions awfully amusing.

2. Bore a hole through a coin and tie it to a length of thread. Leave the coin in the passage and wait behind the door of your study, holding the other end of the thread so you can jerk the coin away as soon as any passer-by tries to pick it up. The trick can be varied by heating the coin and letting the unhappy chap who picks it up burn his fingers. This little jape can provide you with hours of fun and laughter.

3. Stroll round the House with a handkerchief in which you have concealed a small supply of soot. Stop anybody smaller than yourself and tell him he has a smudge on his face and offer to remove it for him with your handkerchief. You can then decorate his face with soot and he'll thank you for it!

4. Sprinkle itching powder on the floor near the beds of fellows you don't like in your dormitory, and wait till they have taken off their shoes and socks. The results are guaranteed to be frightfully funny—from your own point of view, of course!

These are just wheezes for beginners. As you get used to the idea, you will find yourself improving on them and inventing new gags of your own.

In time, with practice, you may become almost as expert as I am myself at devising fun for winter evenings!

H. VERNON-SMITH on CHARACTER FROM DART-THROWING!

When I strolled into the box-room to watch a game of darts the other evening, two things struck me. The first was a stray dart that grazed the tip of my somewhat prominent nose when I came through the doorway. The second was the fact that every dart-player has a characteristic style of his own when he throws his dart.

It's the second that intrigued me. I had never noticed it before, but it's really quite fascinating to see the different ways fellows have of doing it.

Bolsover major, aspiring heavy-weight champion, for instance, had a pose like a boxer squaring up to his opponent in the ring. He threw his dart with just the same movement as he would have landed out at somebody's chin!

Skinner was quite different. He sneaked into position in a furtive kind of way and released his javelins as though he were trying to conceal what he was doing.

Skinner's style was as different as you can imagine from that of Wibley, who went next. Our tame actor walked to his stand slowly, sedately, and deliberately, threw back his head, ran his eye over the audience, then gathered up his feathered flights with a flourish and condescended to play. No Sherlock Holmes is needed to detect the actor in Wibley when Wib. descends to playing this plebeian game!

Fisher T. Fish followed. Fishy skidded across the box-room, fixed a hawk-like glare on the board, and aimed his three at machine-gun speed, grinding his teeth the while. You can always rely on Fish for concentration and business from the word "Go!" Yes, sir!

Frank Nugent was like a dose of soothing syrup after the human whirlwind from Noo Yark. He sauntered to his place, handled the darts neatly, not to say elegantly, and let them fly with graceful and effortless ease. On the strength of that exhibition, lasting less than ten seconds, any shrewd observer could have labelled Nugent as a fellow with a serene outlook on life, an orderly brain, and strong artistic impulses!

Finally came Bob Cherry, barging his way through his fellow-players, and digging Nugent in the ribs as he passed. He threw his darts like he throws a cricket ball, made a wise-crack with every throw, and beamed all over his face at making the poorest score of the lot. From which a complete stranger might easily have deduced the healthy animal spirits, good sportsmanship, and appetite for fun that go with the name of Bob Cherry!

I spent quite a profitable ten minutes in that box-room and enjoyed it much better than I should have enjoyed playing the game. Take my tip, kids, and try it yourselves. Cast your optics over the players instead of the board and see what sort of a fist you make at telling character from dart-throwing!

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Miss P. Pocock, 22, Ferndale Road, Maitland, Capetown, South Africa; girl correspondents, age 17-19; film stars, sports, dancing; California, U.S.A.

J. Ezanic, Sweet Yahumkah Lovers, Newtownship, Bogoso, via Sekondi, Gold Coast, British West Africa; pen pals; anywhere in world.

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Miss O. Heron, Cawongla P.O., via Kyogle, New South Wales, Australia; girl correspondents, age 15-18; knitting, dancing, riding.

Miss D. Giddings, Uphill, Erchfont, nr. Devizes, Wilts; girl correspondent, age 15-18; interested in anything; Canada.

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