

COKER MINOR: SIXTH-FORMER!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life. By Frank Richards.

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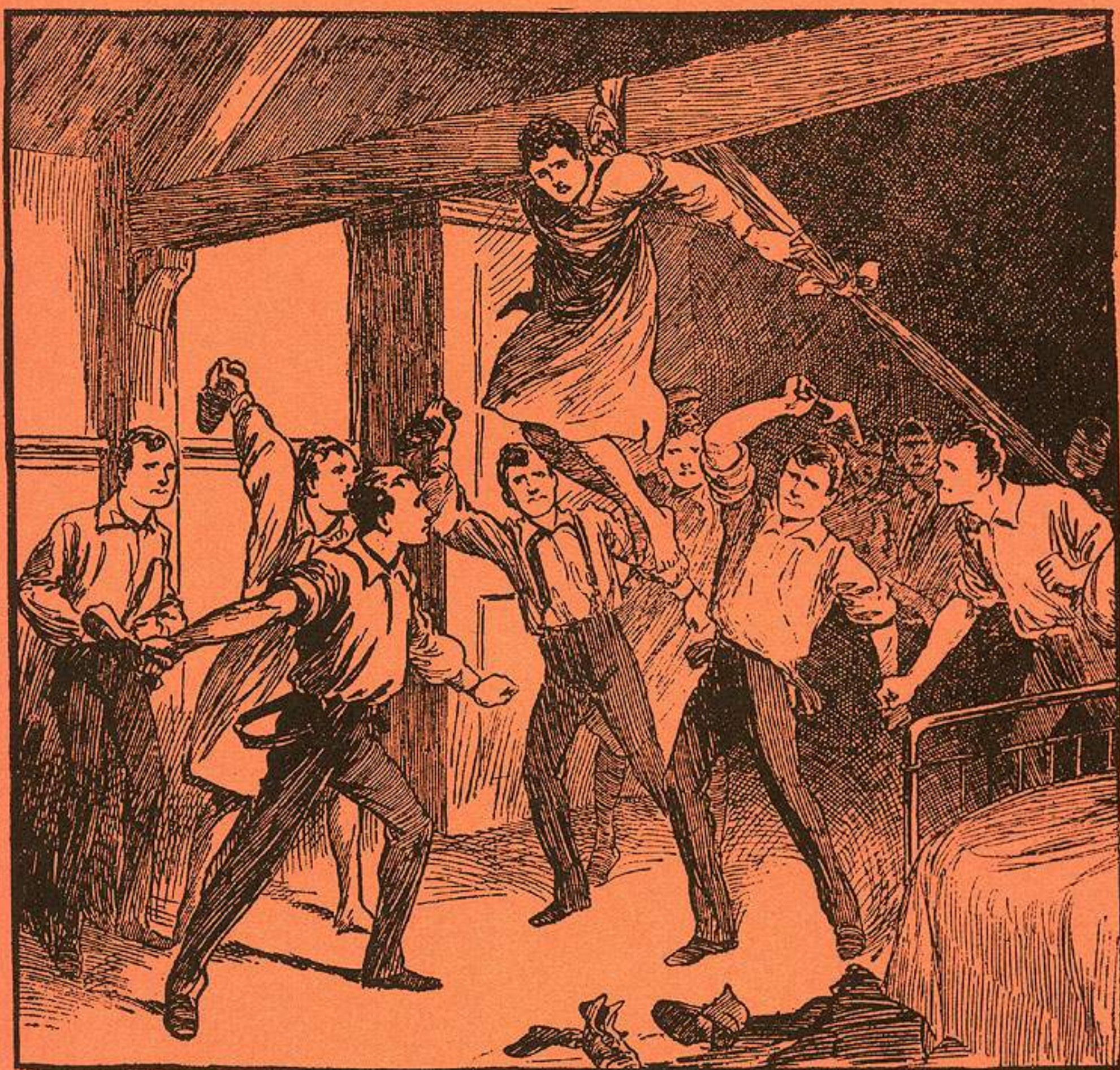
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A GRAND COMIC
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MENT!

No. 241.

The Complete Story-Book for All.

Vol.



Coker minor swung over his tormentors, dizzily. Slippers and socks were thwacking upon his undefended limbs, and the Fourth-form fellows roared with laughter as they administered the punishment. "And that's in the Sixth!" cried Hobson. "That's what Greyfriars is coming to. Old Coker in the Fifth and Young Coker in the Sixth! There's too much Coker in the school!" Thwack, thwack, thwack! (See the grand, complete story inside.)



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COKER MINOR, SIXTH-FORMER!

A Splendid, New, Long,
Complete School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at
Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Temple advanced upon the reluctant hero of the Sixth. A brilliant idea occurred to the unfortunate Reggie Coker. He stood upon one leg, holding the other up with his right hand, and smiled feebly at Temple. "Now, if you hit me I shall fall down!" he said. (See Chap. 11.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. News for Coker.

"Oh, good!"

Coker, of the Fifth, made that remark Coker was having tea in his study with Potter and Greene, his chums in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. Coker had left his ham and eggs and toast to read a letter from home which had just arrived. Potter and Greene were still busy with the ham and eggs and toast.

"Good!" repeated Coker, laying the letter down.

Potter looked sympathetically inquiring. Coker's people were rich, and Coker so often had handsome remittances from home that his pater's letters were as welcome as the flowers in May in the Fifth Form study.

"Good news?" asked Potter.

"Well, I think it's good," said Coker.

"Postal-order?"

"Oh, no!"

"Not a remittance at all?" asked Greene.

"No."

"Oh!" said Greene. And he helped himself to another egg and another slice of ham and a round of toast. "I say, this is all right, Coker. You're neglecting your feed, old chap."

"Oh, blow the feed!" said Coker.

This was such a surprising remark from Coker, who generally had a first-class appetite, that his chums stared at him in surprise.

"Fellow doesn't have a brother come to school every day!" explained Coker.

"Oh!" said Potter. "You've got a minor coming?"

"That's it," said Coker.

"Minors are a rotten bore," said Greene. "Majors always say so. It's no good for a fellow to have a brother in a lower Form. They're always getting into trouble, and expecting their majors to get them out of it. You get mixed up in all sorts of fag rows. I was jolly glad my young brother went to another school. Pass the pickles!"

"Well, I'm jolly glad my young brother's coming here," said Coker. "He isn't much like me, but he's a ripping kid. Clever, you know."

"Swots?" asked Potter, with rather a sniff. Swotting was not popular with the great majority of fellows at Greyfriars.

"Swot isn't the word," said Coker. "He simply eats up knowledge. Knows more than I do."

A New
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(See page 27)

Potter chuckled into his teacup. Coker minor might know more than Coker major without being exactly an Admirable Crichton. Horace Coker looked sharply at Potter, and Potter turned red.

"Went down the wrong way," he explained. "I—I was coughing."

"Oh!" said Coker.

And he attacked the ham and eggs.

"I'm jolly glad your minor's coming, Cokey, old man," said Potter, trying to obliterate the effect of his unlucky chuckle. "We'll all stand by him and back him up, you know. It's a good thing for a fag to have friends in a senior Form."

Coker thawed again.

"Yes, that's what I want you to do," he said. "Young Reggie isn't a fighting man. I've been a pugilistic chap ever since I could walk, but Reggie isn't like that. He's peaceable, and he'd walk a mile for a fellow rather than fight him. I think he'll have a bit of a rough time in the Remove."

"Oh! Is he going into the Remove?" asked Potter. "Those kids, Harry Wharton and the rest, may make it warm for him. You don't get on too well with Wharton."

Coker nodded.

"That's so," he said. "I don't think Wharton himself would rag young Reggie merely because he's my brother. But some of them would. And I'm jolly well not going to have Reggie ragged. I'm standing by Reggie. My pater says he wants me to back him up in every way, and, of course, I'm going to do it. Must do the decent thing."

"Oh, good!" said Potter. "You'll be a paragon of a major, Coker. Most majors are down on their minors."

"I'm not going to be like that. I like Reggie, and he respects me, as a young brother should," said Coker. "I'll jolly well teach him to box, and make him hold his own among the fags. By Jove, I'll make him captain of the Remove, and he shall keep that cheeky Form in order, with us backing him up."

"Hear, hear!" said Potter and Greene, cordially enough. The Fifth Form at Greyfriars had many a rub with the Remove, and it was really a flattering prospect that opened before them—of ruling the Remove through Coker's young brother.

"Of course, he mayn't go into the Remove," said Coker thoughtfully. "They may put him in the Upper Fourth. It's very likely. I must see Temple and Dabney about it. Wherever he goes, I want him to get a good reception."

"No chance of his coming into the Fifth, I suppose?" grinned Potter.

Coker smiled.

"Oh, no, of course not! He's younger than I am. They might put him in the Shell, though, as he's such an awfully clever young beggar. I'll speak to Hobson, and put in a word for him, in case."

Potter and Greene smiled. Coker's anxiety that his young brother should have a good reception at Greyfriars was very creditable to Coker, but it was a little unusual. Minors generally were left to take their chance, and the chief lesson inculcated into their minds was that they must not bother their majors. Horace Coker evidently intended to do his brotherly duty, and more than his duty. Coker was good-natured to a fault, and if he sometimes offended the juniors with his lofty manners and customs, it was chiefly from a desire of upholding the dignity of the Fifth Form. Most of the fellows agreed that Coker was an ass; but, as Bob Cherry, of the Remove, had observed, he was a good ass. His heart was right, if his head wasn't.

"When is he coming?" asked Potter.

"To-morrow."

"And his Form isn't settled yet?"

"No. The pater says he hopes he'll be well placed in the school, as his tutor gives a very flattering account of him. He may get into the Shell. Hardly do to have him in the Fifth; minors don't do in the same Form. But, of course,

there's no chance of that. If he gets into the Shell, he may pass up into the Fifth when I go into the Sixth. That would be all right." Coker finished his tea. "If you fellows will excuse me, I'll walk round and see Wharton."

"Certainly, old man!" said Potter.

Coker left the study.

Potter and Greene exchanged a grin.

"Coker's going to have his hands full if he's going to coddle a minor in the Remove," Greene remarked. "If I were Coker, I'd wire them at home to send him somewhere else. Minors are no good to a chap."

Potter chuckled.

"Coker's idea seems to be that a chap should be good to the minors," he remarked.

Greene sniffed.

"Blessed if I half like it," he said. "This means that we shall have an inky kid always about the study, very likely snivelling because somebody has been pulling his ears. He will always be coming to his big brother for help. We shall be dragged into all sorts or rows with the fags. Look here, if there's too much of Coker minor I shall jolly well cut Coker major!"

"Not while he stands such jolly good feeds as this," grinned Greene, helping himself to what was left on the dish. "Coker's a good sort. We must make up our minds to stand Coker minor."

They little knew!

But, as the novelists say, we must not anticipate.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Surprise for No. 1. Study.

HARRY WHARTON was opening ginger-beer. Wharton and Nugent, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, were in their study, No. 1 Remove passage. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh had come in to tea. Nugent was making toast at the study fire, and Johnny Bull was boiling eggs, and Bob Cherry was laying the cloth. All the fellows were making themselves useful. It was just as they were most busy that Horace Coker, of the Fifth, looked into the junior study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry genially. "Have you come to fag for us, Coker, old man? Hand me those plates off the bookcase, will you?"

"Run and fill the kettle, Coker, old man."

"And don't spill the water in the passage."

Coker of the Fifth smiled sheepishly. The chums of the Remove expected a torrent of forcible remarks in reply to their humorous greeting. But Coker was in an amazingly good temper. He smiled, and handed Bob Cherry the plates from the bookcase, and Bob Cherry was so astonished that he failed to take them safely, and they slipped from his fingers to the floor.

Crash!

"Oh, my hat!"

"You clumsy ass!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"My fault!" said Coker.

"Well, it was your fault," gasped Bob Cherry. "What's the little game, Coker? What are you being so funny for?"

"I'm not being funny," said Coker. "You asked me to help, and I was helping. Where's the kettle?"

"The what?"

"The kettle."

"What do you want the kettle for?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Didn't you ask me to fill it?"

Nugent jumped.

"Ye-es. Here you are."

He handed the kettle to Coker, and Coker took it and left the study. The Removites stared at one another blankly. Bob Cherry tapped his forehead in a significant way.

"Must be that!" he said. "Must be quite rocky! Unless he's come round to our way of thinking, and decided that the Fifth Form ought really to take second place to the Lower Fourth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It must be some little game," said Harry Wharton, bewildered. "He's going to jape us somehow, I suppose. Better keep an eye on him."

"The eyefulness shall be terrific," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The japefulness of the esteemed Coker is the only possible explanation."

"Here he comes! If he wants to fag for us, let him."

"Oh, yes, rather!"

Coker re-entered the study, with the kettle in his hand. He was carrying it very carefully.

"Shall I put it on the fire?" he asked.

"Yes. Stir the fire," said Nugent.

"Certainly!"

"And don't smother the grate with cinders."

"Right-ho!"

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241

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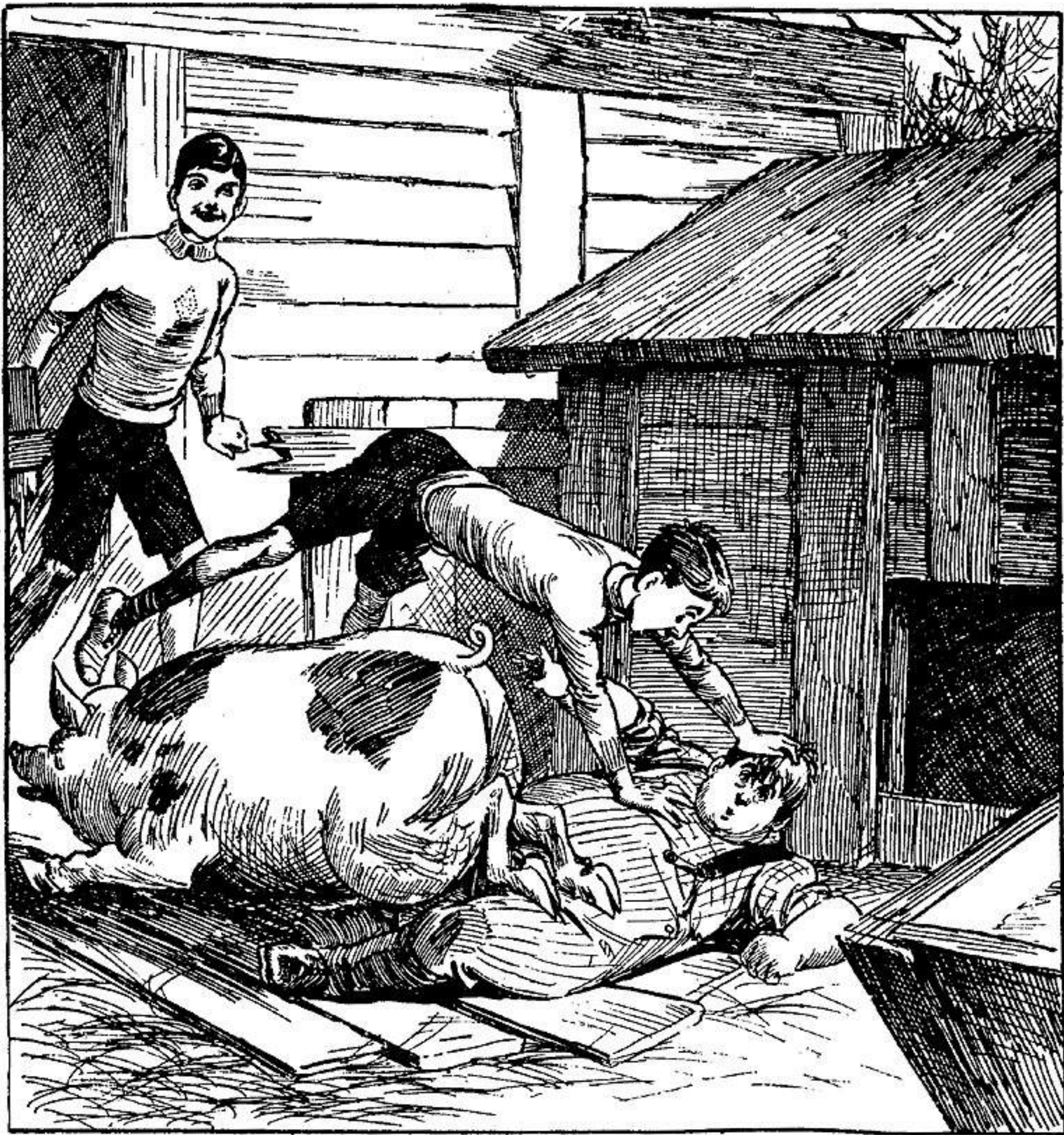
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The next moment there was a wild and whirling mass of arms and legs, pig and Coker minor and pig-keeper. Bob Cherry halted, shrieking with laughter. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" he cried. (See Chapter 14.)

Coker stirred the fire and placed the kettle carefully upon it. The ohums of the Remove watched him with more and more surprise. There was no sign of an intention to jape in Coker's manner. He was quite in earnest. But why Coker, of the Fifth, who always exasperated the Remove by assuming airs of lofty superiority, should come of his own accord and fag in a Remove study was a very deep mystery. Johnny Bull asked Coker if he had had his tea. It was barely possible that Coker was hard up, and wanted a meal. But Coker's reply knocked that hypothesis on the head.

"Yes, I've had tea, thanks," said Coker. "Is there anything more I can do for you fellows?"

"Ye-es," said Nugent. "You can finish making the toast."

"With pleasure!"

Nugent handed him the toasting-fork. Coker stooped before the fire, and impaled a round of bread upon the fork and began toasting it. The natural expectation was that he

would burn it. But he didn't. He browned it all over very carefully, and then turned it upon the fork and began toasting the other side.

The Removites' cup of astonishment was now full to the brim. In his amazement, Harry Wharton allowed a cork to escape him as he opened another bottle.

Pop!

Biff!

"Yow!" roared Coker, as the flying cork caught him behind the ear. "Oh!"

"Sorry!" gasped Wharton. "Quite an accident."

Coker rubbed the side of his head.

He seemed about to break out into some of the remarks that might naturally have been expected of Coker under the circumstances. But he didn't. He rubbed his head and smiled rather painfully.

"Never mind!" he said. "It's all right."

And he resumed toast-making. The chums of the Remove

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were silent from sheer surprise. Coker was allowed to finish making the toast, and he rose from the fire with a very ruddy face.

"What can I do next?" he asked.

"Cut down to the tuckshop and get some jam," said Johnny Bull.

"Yes. What kind?"

"Oh, strawberry! Don't forget to pay for it."

"Right you are!"

Coker left the study. The Removites gasped.

"He's really going to get it!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"And pay for it!" said Bob Cherry.

"What on earth does it mean?"

"He must be potty."

"The pottyness is terrific."

Coker returned with the jam. He brought also a jar of pickles and a bottle of jelly. He set them upon the table, with a friendly smile.

"I thought you chaps might like these things," he said.

"It's all serene. It's my treat, you know."

Bob Cherry sat down violently in the armchair. He was overcome.

"Tea's ready!" said Harry Wharton. "Will you have tea with us, Coker?"

"Well, I've had tea," said Coker; "otherwise, I'd be delighted. But I'll have a little gargle of ginger-beer, if you like, just to be sociable."

The Removites sat down round the table. Nugent politely offered Coker a chair; but as chairs were somewhat scarce, Coker declined with equal politeness, declaring that he preferred to stand. He leaned against the mantelpiece while the juniors started their tea.

"Hand up the teapot, Coker!" said Johnny Bull.

Coker handed it up.

"You might as well pour out the tea, as you're being so jolly useful," Nugent suggested.

"Certainly!"

Coker poured out the tea. The least to be expected was that he would pour the hot fluid over the knees of the juniors. But he didn't. He filled the cups carefully, and placed the teapot in the fender again.

Harry Wharton felt that he could stand the mystery no longer.

"Look here, Coker," he exclaimed, "what's the little game?"

"Game?" said Coker.

"Yes. What are you driving at?"

"N-nothing."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean?" said Coker.

"Yes, you ass! What do you want?"

"Oh," said Coker, "now I come to think of it, I want to ask you fellows a small favour!"

And the chums of the Remove grinned. They were coming to it at last.

"Go ahead!" said Wharton tersely.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Coker Does His Best.

"**A**HEM!" said Coker.

"Yes?"

"Ahem!"

"Well?"

"Ahem!"

"Is that a vocal exercise you're practising, Coker?" asked Bob Cherry, with some curiosity. "Or are you catching a cold?"

"Ahem!"

"My hat! Pass the toast, Frankie, while Coker is ahemming."

"Ahem!" said Coker. "The fact is——"

"Yes, let's have the facts," said Harry Wharton gravely.

"There's been a certain amount of friction between this study and the Fifth," said Coker. "You kids don't know your place."

"The trouble is that the Fifth don't know their place," said Bob Cherry warmly. "And you can't say that we haven't done our best to teach 'em."

"Very likely," said Coker, with unexpected agreement. "I dare say there are faults on both sides. I shouldn't wonder."

The Removites simply gasped.

"Is it Coker talking, or are there visions about?" asked Bob Cherry faintly.

"Ahem!" said Coker.

"My word! He's beginning again!"

"Ahem! My idea," said Coker, "is this. It's better for fellows to pull together, and to—to stand by one another, and so on, you know, and—and that sort of thing, and—and to set themselves against these rows and raggings."

"Course it is," said Bob Cherry. "Little birds in their nest should agree. Otherwise, they fall out."

"Ahem! I've got a young brother," said Coker.

"My sainted aunt! Are there any more at home like you?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got a minor," said Coker, unheeding. "Young Reggie, you know. Clever young beggar, Reggie. I dare say you've heard me talk about him."

"Can't say I have," said Bob Cherry. "Most of your talk has been on the subject of Coker major, so far as I've heard."

Coker smiled feebly.

"Well," he said, "I've got a minor, and he's coming to Greyfriars. I expect he'll be put into the Remove or the Fourth."

"My hat!" said Frank Nugent. "A Coker in the Remove! My dear chap, I'm afraid it will be a case of too much Coker."

"Ahem! I want you fellows to be decent to him, if he comes into the Remove," said Coker. "Now, I know there have been little difficulties between us. But I appeal to you to do the right thing by my minor, you know. He's not much like me——"

"Good-looking?" asked Bob Cherry.

Coker tried to smile.

"I mean, in his way," he explained. "He's not a fighting man. I don't mean to say that he'd let himself be put upon; but still, he's hardly up to the rough-and-tumble ways you have in the Lower Fourth. Now, it wouldn't be cricket to rag him because we've had our little rubs, would it? I put it to you."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton heartily. "I think it's jolly decent of you to stand up for your young brother like this, Coker. If he behaves himself we'll look after him, and we won't visit your sins on his head."

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry. "You can rely on us, Coker."

Coker smiled more cheerfully.

"Well, I'm jolly glad to hear you say so," he said. "He's a most inoffensive chap, young Reggie is, and you'll like him, I know that. He's always had a tutor, you know, and hasn't roughed it at all, and he may be some time finding his place here. I expect he'll get to the head of the Form. He's so jolly clever. If you fellows treat him decently, I shall be much obliged."

"Depend on us, Coker. But you might as well have asked us straight out, instead of beating about the bush so much," said Wharton.

"All right," said Coker. "Of course, he mayn't come into the Remove. It's quite likely he may go into the Fourth, or even the Shell, he's so jolly clever. Ta-ta! I'm just going along to speak to Temple."

And Coker, with a genial nod, quitted No. 1 Study. Harry Wharton & Co. grinned at one another over the tea-table.

"Blessed if I should have expected that of Coker," said Bob Cherry. "Young brothers are a bother sometimes. Look at Nugent minor."

Nugent laughed.

"Yes; young Dick is a trouble," he agreed. "And majors ain't always so nice as myself. Bolsover major rags his minor to death."

"Well, Coker's showing up very well," said Wharton. "We'll do what he wants. If young Coker comes into the Remove, we'll look after him. If he's an inoffensive kid, he'll have Bolsover down on him at once, and we'll see him through."

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"Hear, hear!"

Coker, satisfied with the result of his mission to No. 1 Study, walked away to the Fourth-Form passage. He was not finished yet. It was tea-time at Greyfriars, and he found Temple Dabney & Co., the leaders of the Upper Fourth, at tea in their study. They greeted Coker with a stare as he came in. Visitors from the Fifth Form were not common in the junior studies.

"Looking for anything?" asked Temple blandly.

"Oh, no!" said Coker.

"I thought you might be looking for the door," suggested Temple. "If so, there it is."

And the other fellows cackled.

Coker turned red, but he did not tell Temple what he thought of him. The Fourth-Formers, who had expected a slanging match, followed by a tussle, were amazed at the mildness of Coker's manners. All his truculence was gone.

"The fact is——" said Coker.

"Stony?" asked Temple.

"Eh? No."

"Don't want to borrow a bob or two?"

"Of course not!"

"Then what are you so jolly civil about?" demanded Temple.

Coker grinned feebly.

"I've got a young brother coming to Greyfriars," he explained, thinking it advisable to come to the point with a directness equal to Temple's. "I dare say he will be put in the Fourth Form, you know."

Temple, Dabney & Co. glared at Coker.

"We jolly well won't have him," said Temple. "We'll fire him out!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"I—I want you fellows to be decent to him if he comes into your Form," said poor Coker. "He's simply a ripping little chap, and as inoffensive as—as anything——"

"Can't be much like you, then," said Fry.

"Well, he isn't, as a matter of fact. If he's ragged at all, I shall be down on the raggers," said Coker. "But——"

"You'll be down on the carpet if you cheek us in our own study," said Temple. "Look here, one Coker is enough at any school. You'd better send your people a wire to say that there are enough Cokers here, and recommend them to send any more Cokers they've got to dispose of somewhere else. Why not try Eton?"

"Look here——"

"Or Harrow."

"You ask——"

"Any old place will do," said Temple. "We're not having any Cokers in the Fourth. It's bother enough having one in the Fifth. You just run off and send that wire. If your pater insists, tell him we won't stand it."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Coker glared. He had really restrained his temper admirably so far, but there were limits to his patience. He strode towards the tea-table, round which the Fourth-Formers were seated, and glared at them threateningly.

"Look here," he bellowed, "I don't want any of your cheek. I came here to ask you a slight favour——"

"We've given you some good advice instead. Run away, and send that wire."

"Oh, rather!"

"I tell you——" roared Coker

"And I tell you——" said Temple, with equal heat.

"My minor——"

"Blow your minor!"

"Reggie——"

"Blow Reggie!"

Coker snorted. His patience was expended, and he forgot the urgent necessity of propitiating the leaders of the Fourth, in readiness for the arrival of his minor. He grasped the edge of the tea-table, and, with a tremendous wrench, swung the edge of it up into the air, shooting its contents over the Fourth-Formers.

There was a terrible roar.

Temple went backwards over his chair, and Dabney and Fry and Scott sprawled in various directions. Tea flowed and splashed over them, and milk, and jam, and marmalade, and eggs, and buttered toast. There was crash on crash of breaking crockery.

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Yaro-o-o-o-oh!"

"Whoop!"

Coker strode to the door, and marched out furiously, slamming the door after him with a slam that echoed the whole length of the Fourth-Form passage. In Temple's study, four juniors scrambled out of the wreck of the tea-things—and the things they said would fill a whole chapter if we recorded them here.

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ONE
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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success.

COKER of the Fifth strode away from the Fourth-Form passage with a frowning brow. He had succeeded with the Remove, but he had certainly failed with the Fourth. But the state he had left Temple's study in was some consolation.

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, met him at the corner of the passage. Wingate had heard the terrific crash in Temple's study, and he glanced curiously at the excited face of the Fifth-Former.

"What's the trouble?" he demanded.

Horace Coker snorted.

"I've been on a peaceful visit," he said.

Wingate laughed.

"It didn't sound very peaceful, and you don't look very peaceful," he remarked.

"Well, I was cheeked," said the indignant Coker. "I've got a minor coming to Greyfriars. My minor is a splendid little chap, awfully clever, you know. I think very likely he'll go into the Fourth, and I went to Temple's study in a friendly way, to ask them to be decent to him. And there was trouble. I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wingate. "It looks as if there's going to be more trouble. You'd better cut, Coker."

Coker glanced back along the passage. The door of Temple's study had been flung violently open, and four juniors had rushed out, apparently in a state of insanity. They were wet with tea and milk, sticky with jam and marmalade, dusty with rolling on the carpet, and red with rage. Temple had a poker in his hand, Dabney a cricket-stump, Fry a bat, and Scott a toasting-fork. They caught sight of Coker, and came for him with a war-whoop worthy of Red Indians on the warpath.

Coker agreed with Wingate that he had better cut. And he cut.

He did not return to his own study. He had to interview the chiefs of the Shell yet, and he turned quickly into the Shell passage and darted into Hobson's study. Temple, Dabney & Co. came round the corner with a whoop, and, not seeing Coker, rushed off towards the Fifth-Form passage.

Coker had entered Hobson's study quite suddenly, and he closed the door behind him. Hobson was there, and so was Hoskins, the amateur musician of Greyfriars, and so was Benson of the Shell. Hobson and Benson were eating their tea, and Hoskins was talking music. He generally was. He did not leave off as Coker came in. Hobson and Benson glanced at the Fifth-Former, but Hoskins ran on. Other fellows at Greyfriars had hobbies, and talked their hobbies in season and out of season; but they sometimes gave their subjects a rest. Not so Hoskins. Hoskins was like the little brook—he went on for ever.

"Take my sonata in F," said Hoskins. "Now, you've heard me play my sonata in F. I ask you candidly, Hobby, isn't my sonata in F up to anything of Mozart's?"

"Ahem!" said Coker.

"If you chaps like to come along to the music-room, I'll play it over again to you," said Hoskins. "We can have tea presently."

"Ahem!" said Coker.

"Hallo, Coker!" said Hobson. "Will you do us a favour?"

"Certainly," said Coker. "Only too willing to oblige, under the circumstances. What can I do?"

"Take Hoskins to the music-room, and let him play his sonata in F to you."

"Oh!" said Coker.

"I will, with pleasure!" said Hoskins, rising. "Will you come, Coker?"

"Ahem!" said Coker, who was willing to make almost any sacrifice to propitiate the Shell excepting the one that was required. "I—I came here——"

"I'll run over my grand march in G while we're there," said Hoskins.

"And give him the symphony in X flat," said Hobson.

"My dear Hobson, there is no key of X——"

"Well, Z will do," said Hobson.

Hoskins smiled patiently.

"One performer cannot play a symphony, my dear Hobson," he said.

"Oh, you can!" said Hobson. "You make a sonata seem funny."

It took Hoskins several minutes to understand that this was a pun. While he was thinking it out Coker took advantage of the opportunity of speaking.

"I'm expecting a minor," he remarked.

"Are you?" said Hobson, without enthusiasm. "Is he anything like you?"

"Well, I suppose there's a resemblance."

"Poor chap! Can't anything be done for it?"

Coker choked. It was not a good beginning, and he came very near wiping up the study carpet with Hobson. But he remembered that he was there on a peaceful mission; so he swallowed his wrath, and even smiled.

"He's a jolly little chap," he said. "I think very likely he'll come into the Shell. He's awfully clever. Prout'll put him at the top of the Form, I expect."

Hobson glared.

"If you've got a cocky young brother coming here you'd better keep him out of my way, unless you want a fatality in the family!" he growled. "I'm not having any new kids put over my head in the Shell, I can tell you!"

"No fear!" said Benson, with emphasis.

"It was bad enough when you were in the Shell," pursued Hobson. "But you were always an ass. The airs you've put on since your Aunt Judy bullied the Head to put you into the Fifth are simply sickening!"

"Sickening!" agreed Benson.

"You oughtn't to have passed into the Fifth, as you know very well," continued Hobson, who was now upon an old grievance; "and the way you swanked over Shell chaps when you got your pass-up was simply disgusting!"

"Disgusting!" echoed Benson.

"And we're not standing any more of the Coker family," pursued Hobson. "If any of your blessed minors come into the Shell, let 'em look out for squalls, that's all!"

"Look here, Hobby, old man, we used to be good chums in the Shell," said Coker feebly.

Hobson snorted.

"Yes; but we ain't good chums now," he said. "I don't like Fifth Form swank. Besides, you're only a Shell chap yourself, really. The Head knows you haven't brains enough for the Fifth. It was your aunt made him give you your remove, by threatening to come and see him again if he didn't give you a shove up."

"Look here, Hobby, if you want a thick ear you've only got to say so!" bawled Coker.

"Rats!"

"Yah!" said Benson.

Before the argument could proceed further there was a trampling of feet in the passage outside. Coker started. He guessed that Temple, Dabney & Co. had drawn the Fifth Form quarters blank, and were looking for him in the Shell passage. Apparently they had discovered where he was, for the hurried footsteps did not pass Hobson's door.

The door was hurled open with a crash, and four jammy and furious juniors glared into the study.

"There he is!" roared Temple.

"Go for him!"

"Sock it to him!"

They rushed at Coker and smote. Coker dodged round the table in alarm.

He was a big and powerful fellow, and could have accounted for any two Fourth-Formers; but four of them were a little too much—and they were armed, and in a terrific rage. They smote at Coker in the most reckless way; but he dodged, most of the blows descending upon the table—with ruinous results to the tea-cups.

Hobson and Benson and Hoskins were so taken by surprise at this sudden invasion that they were speechless for a moment.

Then they roared:

"Gerrou!"

"You mad young duffers, what are you up to?"

Temple, Dabney & Co. did not heed. They chased Coker round the table, smiting at him, knocking over chairs and Shell fellows in their furious pursuit. Coker darted out of the study, and fled along the passage.

"After him!" yelled Temple.

"Hurray!"

And the Fourth-Formers swept out of the study in hot pursuit.

Hobson sat up in the fender, where he had been hurled by the rush of the avengers. He was sitting in a dish of poached eggs, and a broken teapot poured tea over his trousers. He gasped for breath.

"Have they g-gone mad?" he gasped.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Benson. "It's all Coker's fault! The ass! The fathead!"

Hobson groaned, and scrambled up.

"Yow! I'm wet—I'm eggy! Ow!"

"The dangerous ass! My hat! If his minor comes into the Shell—"

Hobson snapped his teeth.

"If his minor comes into the Shell we'll scalp him!" he said. "We'll smash him! We'll slaughter him! Ow!"

By which it will be seen that Coker's round of visits, prompted by brotherly affection, to secure a pleasant reception for his minor, could not be called a howling success.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Good Example.

"PENNY for your thoughts, my infant!" said Bob Cherry. Harry Wharton laughed.

It was the day after Coker's round of visits. It was a Wednesday—therefore, a half-holiday at Greyfriars. The Remove had come out of their Form-room, and Harry Wharton was observed to wear a very thoughtful expression. He had not replied to two or three remarks, and his chums gathered round him with some curiosity.

"What is it?" asked Nugent. "A new jape on the Fifth?"

"Oh, no!"

"A raid on the Fourth?"

"No."

"A feed?"

"No."

"Then what the dickens are you thinking about?" asked Bob Cherry, in surprise. "You're not bothering about lessons, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not that, either," said Wharton, with a shake of the head.

"Then what is it? Wherefore that worried look?"

"I've been thinking."

"Yes, I know that. But if it isn't a jape or a raid or a feed, what on earth have you been thinking about? Thinking out the footer eleven?"

"No. Look here, I've been thinking—"

"Yes, we've had that."

"I've been thinking—"

"He's understudying a giddy gramophone," said Nugent. "Let him run on. Perhaps he'll change the record presently."

"I've been thinking," persisted Harry. "It's up to the Remove, as the really most important Form at Greyfriars—"

"Hear, hear!"

"To set a good example!"

"Eh?"

"Therefore—"

"Dotty, I suppose!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Have you been reading 'Sherrick; or, Chunk by Chunk' lately? Or 'Good Little Georgie, and How he Loved His Kind Teachers'?"

"No!" said Harry, laughing. "I mean business. It's up to the Remove to set a shining example to the school. It's about Coker minor."

"Oh, blow Coker minor! I'm fed up with Coker minor—to say nothing of Coker major. Let's get out into the quad."

"But I mean it," said Harry, as he walked out into the fresh, sunny Close with his chums. "Coker is anxious about his minor, and it's very decent of Coker. You know what Bolsover of our Form has been like to his minor. I think it's jolly creditable of Coker."

"I dare say it is," said Nugent, with a yawn. "Wait till he's had a minor here for a term; then he'll know what it's like. I do!"

"Coker hasn't been very successful, getting fellows to kill the fatted calf for his minor!" grinned Johnny Bull. "They seem more inclined to kill Coker minor in the Fourth and the Shell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hobson has been swearing the vendetta already," said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "And Temple of the Fourth is simply foaming. He told me that he's simply longing for Coker minor to come into the Fourth, so that he can make him wish that he'd never been born."

"Poor Reggie!" chuckled Nugent. "What a time Reggie will have if he goes into the Shell or the Fourth!"

"All the more reason why we should stand by him," said Harry Wharton.

"No bizney of ours, is it?"

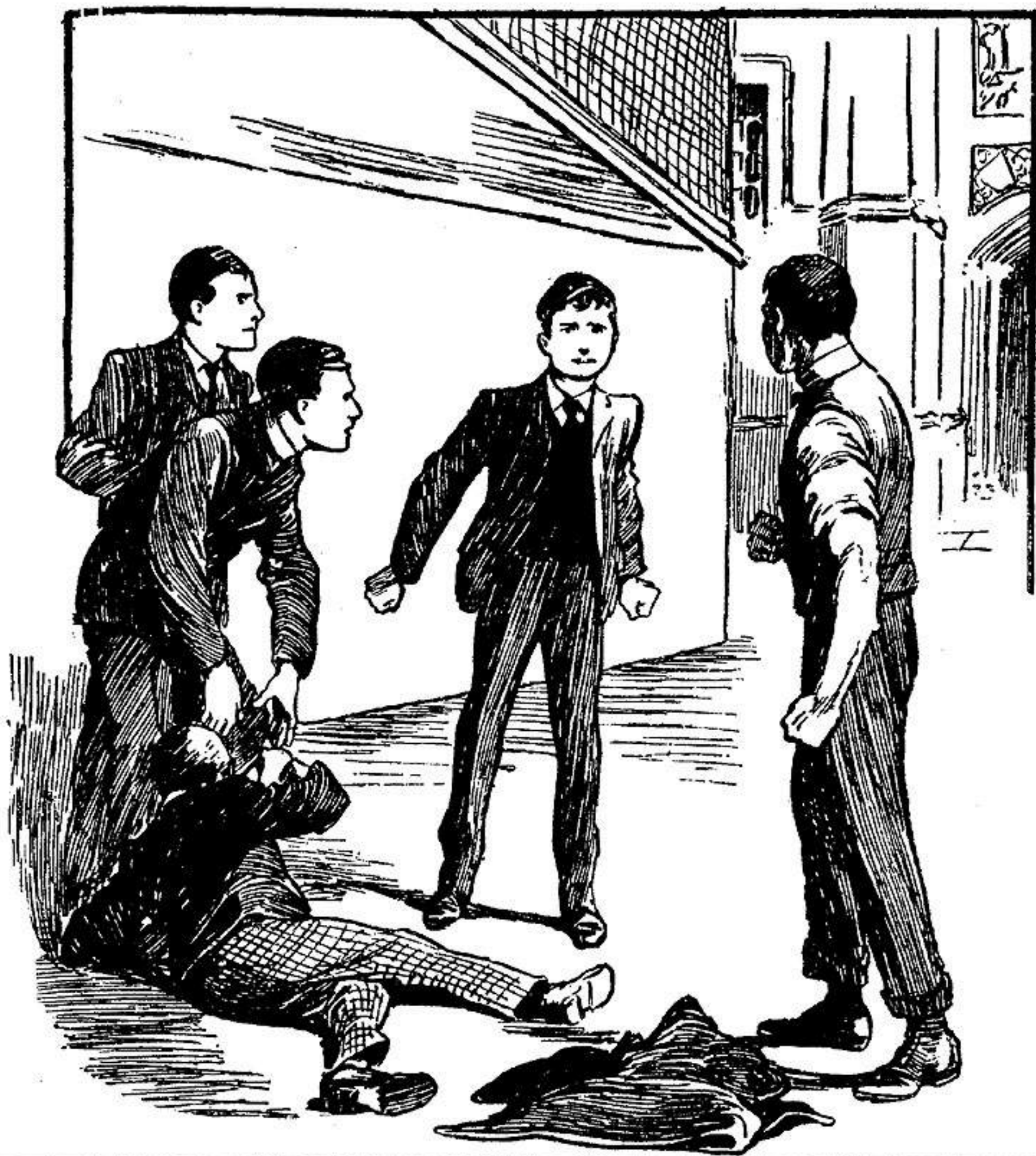
"Yes. I think we ought to make it our business. That's what I've been thinking out. Old Coker is several sorts of an ass, and he has got on the wrong side of the Remove as a rule. He feels uneasy about his minor, as we might take it out of him. Now, admitting that Coker is an ass and a duffer, and wants taking down several pegs—all the same, I think it's up to us to set a good example to the junior Forms, and show that Coker major's fatheadedness isn't going to make us down on Coker minor."

"Well, you do dig up some weird ideas," said Johnny Bull, with a yawn. "But I don't mind. If the kid's shoved into the Remove we'll take him under our wing, and comb his flaxen hair for him, and kiss him on his baby brow when he goes to bed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mean exactly that," said Wharton, laughing.

"But what I do mean is that we can show the fellows we're



As Bolsover's left landed with a terrific drive on Coker minor's chin the new Sixth-Former gasped, and tumbled over backwards as if a cannon-ball had struck him. "I say, that's a bit thick!" cried Stott, being blessed for the moment with an atom of courage. And he advanced grimly upon the Remove-Form bully. (See Chapter 11.)

not going to visit Coker's sins on his head, and not going to see him ragged."

"Oh, all right," said Bob Cherry resignedly. "We'll keep the Remove in order, put a stopper on Bolsover & Co., and if necessary we'll fight the whole Fourth and Shell single-handed, and if the seniors dare to fag Coker minor, we'll jump on the Sixth."

"Ass!" said Wharton politely. "For a start, I think we'll go down to the station and meet Coker minor. Old Coker's going, and it will please him like anything if we go too. It will show him that we mean well."

"Blessed if I care about showing Coker that we mean well. The fellows will say we're crawling up to Coker for his money, too."

"We can punch their heads if they do."

"Yes; I forgot that. Certainly. When is the great Coker going to meet the little Coker?" asked Nugent meekly.

"He gets in by the half-past three train at Friardale. Now, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 241.

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my idea is to turn up at the station, and give him a welcome. It would be doing the handsome thing, you know; and it will be a pleasant surprise for Coker."

"I'd rather give him an unpleasant surprise, myself; but anything you like," said Bob Cherry. "It's a go!"

And the chums of the Remove decided upon it. Harry Wharton's suggestions generally were acted upon. This one was, as Johnny Bull remarked, somewhat weird; but it would be a surprise to everybody, and that was something. The Famous Four were fond of surprising their Form-fellows; and they had a maxim that the Famous Four, like the monarch in the British Constitution, could do no wrong. The whole Remove would naturally expect to make an example of Coker's young brother if he came into their Form; and the protection of the new-comer by the Famous Four would show, at all events, that they were cocks of the walk, if it effected no other purpose.

Coker was not apprised of their intention. Coker, when

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the time came for going to meet his brother's train, asked Potter and Greene if they'd care to go. Potter had an important engagement, however, and Greene developed a toothache; so Horace Coker snorted, and started alone. Potter and Greene did not care to waste a half-holiday walking down to the railway station to meet a fag, though they did not say so to Coker.

Coker's burly form disappeared down the lane; and the Famous Four watched him go. A good many Removites looked after Coker, grinning. The impending advent of Coker minor was the talk of the Lower Forms; and a good many of the juniors were already planning little surprises for him. It was popularly supposed that his life would not be safe in the Fourth; and the Shell were determined to scalp him, at least. Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, and Bolsover's friends intended to make matters equally warm for him in the Remove.

"Coker seems to be worried about his giddy minor," Bolsover remarked, with a chuckle. "We'll give him something to worry about—what?"

"What-ho!" said Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "If he comes into the Remove he shall have a giddy time."

"Order!" said Bob Cherry.

Bolsover & Co. stared at him.

"Hallo! What are you chirruping about?" demanded Bolsover disagreeably.

"The person of Coker minor is sacred!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. "We—the Famous Four—bosses of the Remove, and the most important persons at Greyfriars, have taken him under our wing. We are going to cherish him."

"He is the giddy apple of our eye!" said Johnny Bull, with equal solemnity. "Anybody laying a sacrilegious finger upon Reggie Coker will die the death!"

"Oh, don't be funny," growled Bolsover. "I'm jolly well going to give him a licking to start with."

"Faith, and it's a bastely bully ye are, Bolsover," said Micky Desmond, backing out of Bolsover's reach as he made the remark. "Let the kid alone."

"I'll give you a licking, too, if I have too much of your chin-music," said Bolsover threateningly. "I'll make an example of the Coker cad; and if he goes into the Fourth, I'll help Temple to do it; and if anybody tries to stop me there will be ructions."

"Then you can look out for ructions," said Harry Wharton calmly. "We shall jolly well stop you doing it."

Bolsover scowled.

"I'm going to wait for him here, at the gate, and wallop him as he comes in," he said.

"You'll have to wallop us too, then."

And the Famous Four walked out into the road, and took the path to Friardale. Coker was out of sight by this time, and they strolled easily towards the village.

"I told you how it would be," said Harry Wharton. "If Coker minor arrived alone, he would get it warm at the start. Bolsover is a beastly bully."

"We will constitute ourselves the Coker Lifeguard!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove arrived in Friardale, and reached the railway station. The train was in, and they waited in the vestibule for Coker to appear with his young brother. The Fifth-former had gone on to the platform.

Harry Wharton & Co. waited with considerable curiosity to see Coker minor. They wondered what he was like. They would naturally have expected a miniature edition of Coker major; but Coker's description of his brother was not like that. A brother of Horace Coker who was studious, quiet, and inoffensive would be worth seeing, as Frank Nugent remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here they are! Now then, all of you make your best bow!"

The chums of the Remove chuckled; but they grew immediately grave as Coker major and Coker minor came up. The four Removites stepped forward in a row, and raised their hats at precisely the same moment, and bowed profoundly to Coker minor.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Arrival of Coker Minor!

COKER MINOR was not much like Coker major.

There was a distant resemblance in features, and that was all.

Reggie was much smaller than his brother, much less muscular, and extremely inoffensive in his manners. He looked like a fellow who had been somewhat crushed all his life by the over-shadowing effect of a very big brother. Reggie had a big forehead, which indicated brains, and plenty of them; but his muscular development was not great. His limbs were very slim, and his eyes a little watery.

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But his face was full of good nature and kindness. If Coker minor had been more like Coker major, probably Coker major would not have liked him so much. As it was, nobody could possibly dislike Reggie Coker; and it was not surprising that the big, burly Horace took a protecting interest in his young brother.

Coker minor blinked in surprise at the four Removites as they stepped forward, raising their hats as if by clockwork. Coker major frowned.

"Now then; none of your little jokes," growled Coker.

"My dear Coker," said Bob Cherry gracefully, "this is not a little joke. This is a respectful greeting. How do you do, Coker minor?"

"How do you do, young Coker?" asked Nugent.

"Comme vous portez vous?" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Wie geht's?" grinned Harry Wharton.

The Famous Four felt that they could not do more than greet Coker minor all together, and in three languages at once; but it was naturally a little surprising to Reggie, who did not know the little ways of the Remove. He stared.

"We've come to meet you," explained Bob Cherry. "Coker says you'll very likely be coming into our Form, you know—the Lower Fourth! Hence these smiles."

"Good!" said Coker major heartily. "I'm glad to see you kids here. It's very decent of you. Reggie, old man, these chaps are in the Remove, the Lower Fourth, you know; and they'll be your Form-fellows. This chap is Wharton, captain of the Form!"

"The Lower Fourth?" stammered Reggie.

"Yes."

"I—I'm very glad to see you fellows," said Coker minor mildly; "but—but I don't think I shall be going into the Lower Fourth."

"Well, we'll keep an eye on you—a fatherly eye, even if they shove you down into the Third," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, good!" said Horace Coker.

"But I—I think they won't put me in the Third," said Reggie timidly.

"Oh, they couldn't put a chap of your age in the Second," said Harry Wharton. "You're older than I am."

"Oh, no; not in the Second."

"I suppose you're not anticipating being put in the First Form, among the Babes, are you?" demanded Coker, with a puzzled glance at his brother.

"Oh, no, Horace. Goodness gracious."

"Oh, I see," said Bob Cherry. "You're looking for a chance of getting into the Upper Fourth. Is that it?"

"No, no."

"The Shell, then?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, no! Perhaps—perhaps I might go into a senior Form," said Coker minor timidly.

Coker major snorted.

"Oh, don't be a young ass, Reggie," he said. "I couldn't have a minor in the Fifth. It wouldn't be the thing. Come on; let's get to Greyfriars."

"Yes, Horace."

And the Greyfriars fellows left the station. Reggie seemed rather timid, but he tried to be very friendly with the Famous Four. In spite of his apparent ambition to get into a senior Form, he evidently wanted the friendship of the Remove fellows. Harry Wharton & Co. were very cordial to him; but they regarded him sometimes with dubious glances. If Reggie Coker got into a senior Form, the case would be very much altered. A senior boy no older than themselves would be rather unusual. Sometimes a very clever fellow passed up in the school with unusual speed; and a case was remembered at Greyfriars of a Sixth-Former who had a twin in the Shell. But that kind of thing was not popular with either seniors or juniors; and Coker major himself was likely to take it very badly if he should find his minor in the Fifth along with him. Reggie glanced timidly at his big brother several times, but he did not mention the subject again, evidently being afraid of displeasing his major.

Quite a crowd of fellows were gathered at the gates of Greyfriars when Coker minor and his escort arrived there.

Bolsover & Co. were in full force; and Bolsover's declared intention of making things warm for Coker minor immediately upon his arrival had brought a good many fellows to the spot to see the proceedings.

Trouble between the bully of the Remove, and the great fighting-man of the Fifth, would be worth watching, in the opinion of the fellows who took a deep interest in fistio encounters—and there were a great many of them.

ANSWERS

Bolsover frowned as he saw the Famous Four and Horace Coker with the new boy. His task looked a little bigger now than he had anticipated; but he had plenty of bulldog courage, and he did not retreat.

He planted himself in the middle of the gateway as they arrived.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed.

"Hallo!" said Coker. "Get out of the way, you young ass!"

Bolsover pointed to the new boy.

"Where did you dig that up?" he asked.

"Goodness gracious!" murmured Coker minor.

But Coker major did not say goodness gracious. He gave Bolsover a glare, and then, without wasting any more words upon him, rushed at him. In a moment the two fellows were grappling, and whirling round in the old stone gateway.

Powerful fellow as Percy Bolsover was, he hardly matched the Fifth-Former. He would have fared badly if he had not been backed up.

"Rescue!" he roared.

Vernon-Smith and Stott rushed to his aid. Coker was grasped by the two of them, and dragged over, and Stott sat upon him.

Bolsover panted.

"Keep that beast down!" he said. "I'll attend to the minor."

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Reggie, as Bolsover strode towards him.

Harry Wharton exchanged a glance with his chums. The Famous Four closed up round Coker minor, and met the Remove bully with a cheerful grin.

"Hands off!" said Bob Cherry blandly. "Coker minor is under our protection."

"Get aside!" roared Bolsover.

"Not this evening! Some other evening," said Nugent sweetly.

"I'm going to lick him."

"Begin with us!" said Harry Wharton.

"By George, I will!"

Bolsover rushed at the Famous Four. In a twinkling four pairs of hands grasped him, and he was whirled off his feet.

Bump!

Bolsover gave a terrific gasp as he descended upon the ground. He lay there gasping for breath. All the wind had been knocked out of him.

The Famous Four turned to Vernon-Smith and Stott, who were holding the furious Coker on the ground.

"Let Coker alone!" said Harry Wharton crisply.

And the Bounder of Greyfriars and his companion thought it better to obey. They would not have stood long against the Famous Four.

Coker jumped up as the two juniors released him. He did not take any notice of Vernon-Smith or Stott. He rushed towards Bolsover, who had also gained his feet.

"Put up your paws, you cad!" he exclaimed. "I'll show you whether you can rag my young brother or not."

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Coker!"

"Buck up, Bolsover!"

A single-handed contest with the burly Coker was not what Bolsover had planned. But there was no getting out of it now.

He put up his hands, and faced Coker's terrific onslaught.

But even Bolsover could not stand against Horace Coker. Coker simply knocked him right and left, and Bolsover's tough fight only made his punishment worse.

Bolsover went to the ground with a crash at last, with red streaming from his nose, and one of his eyes closed.

Coker stood over him, glaring.

"Do you want any more?" he roared.

"Groo! No!" gasped Bolsover.

"Are you going to let my minor alone?"

"Groo! Yes!"

"Mind you do, or you'll get it warmer next time!" growled Coker. "I'm much obliged to you, Wharton. Come on, Reggie, and I'll take you in."

And Coker major linked arms with his minor and walked him away across the Close to the School House.

Bolsover sat up.

He blinked painfully out of one eye, and dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. He gave the Famous Four a deadly look.

"You—you rotters!" he stuttered. "So you're backing up Coker against your own Form now, are you, you rotten sneaks?"

Wharton flushed angrily.

"Nothing of the sort!" he exclaimed. "But we're not going to let you pile on a new chap who's not big enough to tackle you. You're a rotten bully, and you've only got what you deserve. Go and eat coke!"

And the Famous Four walked away, leaving Bolsover to bathe his damaged nose in the fountain in the Close, and mutter vows of vengeance.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Coker!

REGGIE COKER was looking a little scared as he accompanied his big brother into the School House. Coker major dabbed his nose, which had suffered in the combat, though not so seriously as Bolsover's. Reggie looked at him in a distressed way.

"You are hurt, Horace," he said.

Coker grinned.

"Only a little claret from the boko," he said. "That's nothing. You'll get used to that sort of thing here."

Reggie looked alarmed.

"Do—do the boys fight very much here, Horace?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I should say so."

"Goodness gracious!"

Coker major patted him on the shoulder.

"You'll be all right, Reggie," he said affectionately.

"You've got a big brother to stand by you, you know. Depend on me. If any chap touches you, I'll hammer him till his life isn't worth living. But you'll have to learn to look out for yourself, too, you know. I'll give you some boxing lessons every day, and teach you to stand up and take your punishment."

Coker minor did not look overjoyed at the prospect.

"Oh dear!" he said.

"You're not afraid, Reggie, are you? You can't be a coward, you know."

Coker minor coloured.

"I'm not a coward, Horace. I'm not afraid. But—but I came here to study, you know. I—I want to get on, you know, with my lessons. I had no idea the boys would be rough."

Coker chuckled.

"My dear kid, they're not spoonies at Greyfriars," he said. "Fellows learn to take care of themselves here. What does a thick ear or a fat nose matter? You get over it, and it teaches you to stand punishment without whining. Mind, I'm supposed to be rather a fighting-man myself; but I'll give you some good advice. Never get into a fight for nothing; but never try to sneak out of one. And when you fight, fight till you drop. Always hit your hardest, and even if you get licked every time fellows will soon learn to leave you alone."

"Oh!" said Reggie.

"That chap Bolsover, for instance," said Coker major. "He's a bully, and terrorises kids in the lower Forms; kids who haven't the nerve to stand up to him, you know. He can lick nearly anybody lower than the Fifth. But there are some fellows he doesn't try to bully. They would stand up to him, and he would have a tough fight every time; and he doesn't want that all day long. He bullies chaps who don't resist. If ever you're bullied, fight till you can't stand. That's good advice."

"Ye-es."

"You'll soon get used to standing up for yourself. I'll give you a good slogging in the gym. every day, so that you'll get used to being punched hard," said Coker encouragingly.

"You—you're very kind, Horace," faltered Reggie.

"I mean to be kind," said Coker. "I'm going to look after you, but the best thing I can do for you is to teach you to look after yourself. And, look here, as you're such a jolly clever little beggar, you'll soon get up into the Fifth—by the time I get into the Sixth, very likely—and then you'll be a senior, and they can't touch you."

Reggie brightened up.

"Oh, if I am a senior, I suppose they won't be able to go for me," he said.

"Oh, no! The Sixth are sacred," grinned Coker. "Even I have to let the Sixth alone."

"Oh, good!"

"Here's the Head's study. He told me to bring you to him as soon as you arrived," said Coker. "He's going to put you through your paces himself. Do your level best, and see if you can squeeze into the Shell."

Coker knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said the deep, pleasant voice of Dr. Locke.

Coker gave his nose another hasty dab, and led his young brother into the Head's study.

Dr. Locke looked at them with his kindly glance.

"My young brother, sir," said Coker.

"Very good, Coker. How do you do, Coker minor? You may leave him with me, Coker."

"Yes, sir."

Coker whispered to his minor as he went to the door.

"Buck up, Reggie! The Head's a real brick! Come to my study as soon as you're clear, and tell me what Form you're in. No. 3 Study, in the Fifth; anybody will tell you where it is."

"Yes, Horace."

And Coker major left the Head's study, closing the door after him. Coker minor was left to the ordeal of an examination at the hands of the doctor.

A good many stares were turned upon Horace Coker as he came down the passage into the hall.

"So your young brother's arrived?" asked Hobson, of the Shell, grimly.

"Yes," said Coker.

"Good! Settled about his Form yet?"

"No."

"I hope he'll come into the Shell," said Hobson. "If he does, I'm going to ask to have him put in my study."

Hobson's look conveyed very clearly that his intentions were not friendly, if he succeeded in getting Reggie into his study.

"Same here!" said Temple, of the Fourth. "If he comes into the Fourth, I'll ask to have him in my study. I'll make him sorry for himself."

Coker snorted.

"Mind, if anybody rags my young brother, he'll have me on his track!" he said.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Yah!"

Coker major controlled his temper with difficulty, and walked away. He realised that he would have all his work cut out to look after his minor if he went into the Fourth or the Shell. He hoped that Reggie would be put into the Remove, where at all events the Famous Four had undertaken to stand by him. Coker was looking very thoughtful and a little worried as he came into his study in the Fifth Form passage.

Potter and Greene were there, and they bestowed a glance upon Horace Coker that was not so friendly as usual.

"Been all this time looking after your minor?" demanded Potter.

"Yes," said Coker defiantly.

Greene grunted.

"Well, I think it's rot!" he said. "And look here, Coker, we're jolly well not going to be swarmed by your minor in this study! Why can't you let him alone?"

"He's my young brother, ain't he?"

"Well, we can't have this study mixed up in fag rows," growled Potter. "Better leave the kid to shift for himself and find his own level. You haven't succeeded in making the Shell or the Fourth feel very friendly towards him, anyway."

"The fact is, Coker, the less you have to do with your minor the better it will be for him," said Greene. "You've been jolly high-handed with the lower Forms yourself, and they'll take it out of your minor, especially if you interfere and back him up."

"We can't have him scuttling into this study when the fags are after him, Coker."

"No fear!"

Coker glared at his study-mates.

"You go and chop chips!" he said truculently. "I'm going to look after Reggie. And I'll have him in this study as much as I like."

"Look here, Coker—"

"And I'll thank you to be civil to him," snorted Coker. "He's coming in here presently, after he's seen the Head, and you chaps may as well clear out and let us have the study for a bit. I want a jaw with Reggie."

"Look here!" roared Potter. "If you're going to coddle your minor, you're not going to coddle him in our study."

"Rats!"

"And if you want to throw over fellows in your own Form, to chum up with a fag, we'll jolly well change into another study!" shouted Greene.

"Change, and be hanged!" retorted Coker.

"Look here—"

"Oh, travel off, and be quiet!"

Potter and Greene gave Coker furious looks and tramped out of the study, slamming the door behind them.

Coker did not seem to mind. He was thinking of his minor, not of the Fifth-Formers. He sat down to wait for Reggie to come.

It was a considerable time before his minor appeared.

There was a timid tap at the door at last, and it opened, and the inoffensive face of Coker minor looked in. Coker jumped up.

"Here you are, Reggie," he exclaimed cheerfully. "Come in, kid! We're going to have a jolly tea together. I've booted the other chaps. Come in! Squat down in the armchair!"

Reggie came in.

Coker pushed him into the armchair. There was a strange hesitancy in his minor's manner, an uncertainty in his look,

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 241

which Coker attributed to the strain he had been through of an examination with the Head.

"Cheer-ho!" said Coker encouragingly. "Did it go all right?"

"Yes, Horace."

"The Head's all right, ain't he?"

"He is a very kind gentleman," said Reggie.

"He's a brick!" said Coker. "I'm glad you got through all right. What Form have you been stuck in—Remove?"

Reggie shook his head.

"Ah, I'm rather sorry for that, in a way!" said Coker.

"Wharton and the rest would have stood by you in the Remove. They're cheeky young rotters sometimes, but they've got a lot of good points. I hope it isn't the Fourth."

"No," said Reggie, "it isn't the Fourth."

Coker looked a little anxious.

"You may have trouble in the Shell," he said. "Hobson is very ratty. You see, Hobby used to chum with me when I was in the Shell, and he was rather waxy at my getting my remove and leaving him among the juniors. Of course, I couldn't chum with Hobby after I was in the Fifth—infra dig., you know. But I'll see that he doesn't damage you, old man."

"But—but it isn't the Shell," faltered Reggie.

Coker started.

"My sainted aunt! You don't mean to say that the Head's been ass enough to shove you into the Fifth!" he exclaimed, in dismay.

"N-no."

"Not the Fifth?"

"No."

Coker stared blankly at his young brother. Even then the terrible truth did not dawn upon him.

"Then what on earth Form have you been stuck into?" he demanded.

"The Sixth!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker Objects.

"THE—the—the Sixth!"

Coker stuttered out the words.

He could hardly grasp it at first. He stared blankly at Reggie, who looked very uneasy, and shifted under his amazed gaze, with a guilty look, as if he knew that he had done something enormous.

"The Sixth!"

Reggie nodded.

"The Sixth!" thundered Coker.

"Yes, Horace."

Coker gasped for breath.

"I—I suppose you're joking?" he said, with forced calm.

"No, I'm not joking, Horace."

"The Sixth!"

"Yes."

"Rot!" said Coker angrily. "If this is a joke, young Reggie, I don't like your jokes. Now, then, let's have the truth."

"B-b-but it is the truth, Horace," said Reggie, in dismay.

"I—I hoped that I should get into the Sixth, you know."

"You hoped you would?"

"Yes."

"You—you—" Coker broke off. Words were inadequate to express his feelings.

"M-my tutor said I—I should be all right for the Sixth," said Coker minor timidly. "I—I was going to tell you at the station, b-b-but you seemed not to—to like the idea—"

"The Sixth!"

"Yes. I—I'm all right for the Sixth, Horace. I know I'm young, but I've studied, you know; I've done the work for the Sixth, and—and I'm quite up to it. M-my tutor says I'm rather clever, you know. And—and the Head mentioned that he's had younger chaps than I am in the Sixth once or twice. It—it doesn't depend on age, you know."

"The Sixth!" repeated Coker, as if any other words refused to come from his tongue. "The Sixth! The Sixth Form!"

"You—you are not angry with me, Horace?"

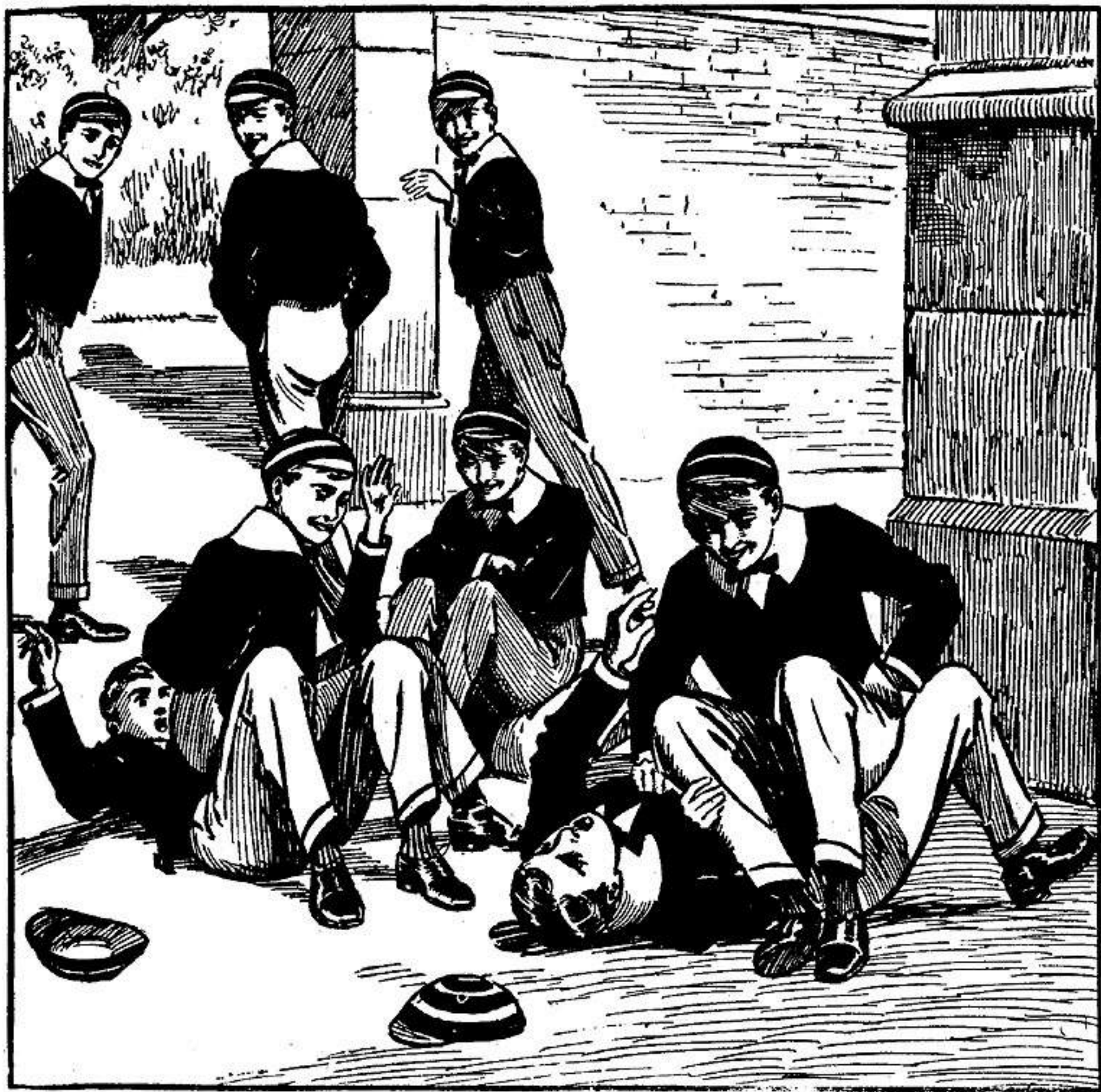
"The Sixth!"

"I—I wish I hadn't been put into the Sixth now," faltered Reggie, looking at his brother's clouded and angry face. "But—but the Head said—"

"You young rotter!" said Coker, in a tone of concentrated anger. "So you've come to Greyfriars to spring a thing like this on me! I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself."

"Oh, Horace!"

"It's a caddish thing," said Coker. "My hat! Me in the Fifth, and lots of fellows saying that I ought still to



"Sit on 'em!" said Figgins serenely. "Reddy, I depend upon you to keep these School House youngsters out of mischief while we go and meet Cousin Ethel." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Redfern. "Anything to oblige! What-ho!" (For the above incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled: "THE SENTENCE OF THE HOUSE," by Martin Clifford, which is contained in our popular companion paper, The "Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

be in the Shell, and my young brother in the Sixth over my head! It's disgraceful!"

"Horace!"

Coker moved restlessly about the study. He could not doubt the truth of the statement any longer, and his astonishment was giving place to fury.

"I shall be chipped to death! Won't Potter and Greeno chuckle. I've just been rowing them because they didn't want me to chum up with a fag, even if he was my minor. The Sixth! You in the Sixth, swanking over your elder brother—"

"Oh, I—I wouldn't do that!" gasped Reggie. "You can't think that of me, Horace."

"They'll laugh me out of Greyfriars!" yelled Coker. "Here I've been making the rounds of the lower Forms, to try to get the fags to treat you decently, and now you go and get into the Sixth over my head!"

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

"THE GREYFRIARS INSURANCE COMPANY!"

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"I—I'm sorry, Horace. But—"

"Won't they yell when they hear of it? Won't they cackle? I fancy I can see Hobson. He'll ask me if I'm going to fag for you!"

"Oh, Horace!"

"I won't stand it!" roared Coker. "I won't have it! If you think I'm going to put up with this, you've jolly well made a mistake!"

"Oh!"

"It's an insult to me! I'm not having it. Look here, kid, you march straight back to the Head, and tell him you can't go into the Sixth."

"Horace!"

"I'll try to stand you in the Fifth, if you like, though that would be ridiculous enough," said Coker. "Major and minor both in the Fifth! A pretty fool I shall look! All the fellows will say that if I'd done a proper amount of

work I ought to have passed into the Sixth before you got into the Fifth!"

It struck Reggie that the fellows would be quite right, but he did not say so. He did not wish to exasperate his brother further.

"But I'll try to put up with you in the Fifth," said Coker, calming down a little. "Go and tell the Head he's a duffer, and that you're going into the Fifth."

"I—I can't!"

"Well, you can leave out the part about the duffer," said Coker considerably. "But tell him you can't possibly go into the Sixth."

"I—I can't, Horace!"

Coker stopped still and fixed his eyes upon his minor. He did not look at him—he glared.

Reggie cowered in the chair.

"You mean you won't?" roared Coker.

"It's impossible, Horace."

"Do you think I'm going to stand you in the Sixth—over me?" shrieked Coker.

"It—it can't be helped."

"Will you go to the Head?"

"I can't!"

"Well, if you can't, I can!" said Coker. "I tell you I won't stand it! I shall be chipped to death! If you won't do your plain duty and go to the Head and tell him that it's impossible, I'll go myself."

"Horace!"

"Are you going?"

"N-no—"

"All right! Then I will!"

Coker rushed to the door. Reggie jumped up in alarm.

"Horace! Oh, I say, Horace—"

Slam!

Coker minor dropped, gasping, into the chair again.

Coker major strode furiously along the passage. Several fellows who saw him pass stared at him in surprise. One or two spoke to him, but Coker brushed them aside without answering. He strode on without a pause till he reached the Head's study, and knocked, and entered, without waiting for the Head to ask him to come in.

Dr. Locke looked up. He did not notice for the moment how red and furious Coker's face was. He nodded genially.

"Ah! You have come to speak about your young brother, Coker?" he said, in his pleasant voice.

"Yes, sir!" said Coker sulphurously.

"A very clever lad—a most clever and well-informed lad," said the Head. "Your brother will do you credit here, Coker. You are not yourself distinguished by scholarly attainments; but I hope now that that is rather due to carelessness on your part, rather than to any want of natural ability. I hope that you will take example by your brother, and do your best to join him in the Sixth Form."

"Sir!"

"It must have come to you as a pleasant surprise," said the Head. "No other boy in the Fifth Form here has a younger brother in the Sixth."

"Dr. Locke!"

"It is a great distinction, Coker. I dare say you were surprised."

"Yes, sir, I was very much surprised," gasped Coker; "and not pleased, either."

"What?"

"Isn't there some mistake, sir?"

"Mistake?" repeated Dr. Locke, his brow growing stern.

"What do you mean, Coker?"

"My minor can't be in the Sixth, sir, when I'm only in the Fifth!"

"Why not?"

"Because—because it will make me look a silly ass, sir!" blurted out Coker.

Dr. Locke smiled slightly.

"I am sorry for that, Coker. I do not look at it in that light; but, in any case, it is unavoidable. You cannot expect me to put Coker minor into a lower Form than the one he is suited for simply because you appear to have an objection to seeing him in a higher Form than yourself."

"The fellows will say—"

"Ahem! I am afraid that I cannot concern myself with what the fellows will say, as you express it," said the Head stiffly. "And now, Coker, my time is valuable—"

"You—you mean to stick him in the Sixth, sir?" said Coker dazedly.

"I have already said so."

"I object, sir!" roared Coker, forgetting for the moment the respect due to the reverend Head of Greyfriars. "I object, sir! I object!"

"Coker!"

"I think it's rotten!" gasped Coker.

Dr. Locke rose, and, resting one hand on the table, raised the other and shook his finger reprovingly at Coker.

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Don't miss the Splendid New School Story, entitled

"THE SENTENCE OF THE HOUSE!" in the "GEM" LIBRARY. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.

"Coker, this is not the way to speak to your headmaster! Leave my study at once!"

Coker looked at the Head's frowning brow, and the torrent of words died upon his lips. He clenched his hands hard, and strode, without another word, from the Head's study.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Sixth.

"COME in!"

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, rapped out the words sharply, as there came a timid tap at his door. Wingate was having his tea in the study, with three more fellows of the Sixth—Courtney, Valence, and North.

The door was opened slowly, and a nervous-looking youth presented himself.

Wingate glanced at him.

"Well, why don't you come in?" he demanded.

"Thank you!" gasped the stranger.

All the Sixth-Formers turned round from the tea-table to look at him. His nervous and timid manners seemed quite appropriate, as he had come to the captain's study, where were congregated four great men of the noble Sixth. It was only right that the Sixth should inspire awe, especially in new boys. But this particular new boy seemed to have it very bad indeed.

"Well, we're not going to eat you," said Courtney.

"Thank you!" stammered the new-comer.

The seniors roared.

"Is—is this Wingate's study?"

"Yes," said the Greyfriars captain. "And I'm Wingate."

"Th-thank you!"

"You needn't thank me," said Wingate; "it's not a special merit on my part. I was born Wingate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Th-th-thank you, Wingate!"

"I suppose you're Coker minor," said Wingate, looking curiously at the new boy. "I heard that Coker was expecting a minor this afternoon."

"Yes, thank you."

"Well, Coker's study is in the Fifth Form passage. Go down towards the big window with stained glass, and turn to the right."

"I—I've seen my brother, thank you!"

"Do you want to see the Head?"

"I've seen him, thank you."

"Oh, I suppose you want to see me now?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, take a good look, and then buzz off; I'm busy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the Head told me you would tell me which was my study," said Reggie.

Wingate looked surprised.

"Blessed if I know why the Head should send you to me!" he said. "Why don't you go to your Form-master? What Form are you in?"

"The Sixth."

"Eh?"

"The Sixth, thank you!"

"Oh, you're a giddy humorist, are you?" said Wingate crossly. "Well, when you've been at Greyfriars a little longer you'll learn not to make jokes about the Sixth. That is the easiest way to collect a first-rate crop of thick ears. Clear off!"

"But the Head said—"

"Rats!"

"No, he didn't say that," said the new boy, in surprise. "I—I didn't think the Head would use an expression like that, Wingate, thank you."

Wingate frowned.

"Look here, young Coker," he said, "you may be a very funny young person, but your funniness is being wasted. If you don't want a thick ear, hop out!"

"And sharp!" said North.

"Oh, very well!" said Reggie patiently. "Shall I tell the Head you don't know which is to be my study?"

Wingate stared at him.

"Are you being funny, or are you not being funny?" he demanded.

"Oh, no, thank you!"

"Do you mean to say that you're in the Sixth?" exclaimed Wingate, aghast.

"Yes, please!"

"Yes, please," mimicked Valence. "Oh, my only summer hat!"

Wingate drew a deep breath.

"Look here, if you're being funny, you will be made to smart for it," he said. "What do you mean by saying that you're in the Sixth?"

"I am in the Sixth, please."

"My aunt! We shall be having Tubb of the Third lifted into the Sixth next," said Wingate. "I'm surprised at the Head."

"Perhaps the Head knows whether I ought to be in the Sixth or not, Wingate, please."

Wingate stared hard at him. But the new boy was evidently only very innocent, and did not mean to check the high and mighty captain of Greyfriars.

"Yes; perhaps he does," said Wingate gruffly. "Do you know you've got a brother down in the Fifth?"

"Yes," said Reggie pathetically. "He is very cross."

"Very cross, is he?" snorted Wingate. "I suppose you couldn't say ratty, or waxy? Cross!"

"Yes; he is very cross. He seems annoyed by it."

Wingate chuckled.

"Well, it won't be all lavender for a Fifth-Form chap to have a minor in the Sixth," he remarked. "I suppose they haven't made you a prefect yet?"

"Oh, no; thank you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you're in the Sixth," said Wingate, surveying the new boy with an expression of mingled surprise and disdain, "you—you can come in to tea. Take a chair."

"You are very good," said Reggie.

"Well, I suppose we must welcome you into the Sixth," growled Wingate, whose expression was not very welcoming, however. "How did you get round the Head?"

Reggie's eyes opened wide.

"I didn't get round him," he explained. "I just did the work he set me, and answered his questions. He said it was very good, and I should be a credit to the Sixth."

"Oh, he did, did he?"

"Yes; thank you."

Reggie sat down at the table. He seemed to have a good appetite after his railway journey, and he appeared a little more confident in his manner after he had disposed of several cups of tea and some sandwiches and cake.

The Sixth-Formers watched him as dogs in a kennel might have watched an addition to their number of an entirely new breed.

"My sainted uncle!" murmured Courtney.

"You will have a time in the Sixth!"

The new boy blinked at him.

"I shall try to be very friendly with everybody," he said. "I'm sure I sha'n't interfere with anybody. I hope the fellows will not try to put on me because I'm smaller than most fellows in the Sixth. That would be caddish."

"So it would," grinned Wingate. "But I fancy they'll do it all the same."

"Goodness gracious! It will be very unpleasant."

"Your brother doesn't like it, eh?" asked Valence.

"No; not at all!"

"I suppose he's cut up rusty?"

"Well, I—I don't know about that," said Reggie. "He said he would punch my head if I came into his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder of the Sixth looked in. He stared at Reggie.

"Hallo! Fags to tea?" he asked.

"No," said Wingate, laughing. "This is a new member of the Sixth!"

"Go hon!"

"Fact!" said Wingate. "He's in the Sixth. Ripping, ain't it?"

Loder snorted.

"I think a protest ought to be made to the Head," he growled. "A kid like that in the Sixth! Look here, young hopeful. You'd better ask the Head to take you out, and drop you into the Third, or else write to your people to take you away. We don't want you making the Sixth look silly. See?"

Reggie shook his head.

"No; I don't see," he replied, with unexpected firmness.

"I can do the work of the Sixth, and it's only right I should be in the Sixth. If bigger fellows take advantage of me, I can't help it; but I suppose I can stand it. Anyway, I'm in the Sixth, and I'm jolly well going to stick in the Sixth."

"Hurrah!" said Wingate, laughing. "The kid's got some spirit, after all."

Loder scowled. Loder was a bully by nature, and his heavy hand often fell upon the juniors; and he was not disposed to spare a Sixth-Former who was only the size of a junior. He strode towards the new boy.

"Then you can take that for a start," he said. "It will help you to learn how to keep your place, you cheeky cad."

Wingate put out his hand quickly, and knocked the prefect's slap aside. Loder gave a sharp yelp, and held his wrist in the other hand.

"What are you up to, Wingate?" he snarled angrily.

"Go easy!" said Wingate. "No need to bully the new kid because he's a little fellow. If the Head's put him into

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the Sixth he belongs to the Sixth, and that's an end of it. He'll have trouble enough with the juniors, without our beginning on him."

Loder scowled savagely; but in a moment his face broke into an unpleasant grin.

"Quite right!" he said. "I'm anxious to see him dealing with the juniors. My hat!" And Loder left the study.

Reggie finished his tea, looking somewhat uneasy. He could see very well that his path in the Sixth Form at Greyfriars was destined to be a path of thorns. But Wingate—though he was not exactly pleased at the addition to his Form—was a kind-hearted fellow; and after tea he conducted the new boy to his study, and was very kind and friendly to him; and he left Coker minor somewhat comforted.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Reggie.

HOBSON of the Shell looked into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage. Harry Wharton & Co. were all there, discussing football—a subject now of growing interest at Greyfriars. Hobson's expression was so very peculiar that the juniors left off their discussion to stare at the Shell fellow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry exclaimed. "Seen a ghost, Hobby?"

"No! Have you fellows heard?"

"That depends," said Bob Cherry. "We heard the rising-bell this morning. We heard old Quech in the Form-room. We heard a silly ass coming up the passage, and saw him look into the study!"

"Have you heard the news?" roared Hobson.

"Which news?"

"About young Coker."

"In trouble again?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Then you haven't heard?"

"Heard what? Out with it, you ass!"

"He's in the Sixth!"

"Eh?"

"The Head's put him in the Sixth!" shrieked Hobson. "It wasn't bad enough to have his major in the Fifth, when he doesn't know enough to be in the Shell. They've put Coker minor in the Sixth."

"My only uncle!"

"He's got a study to himself in the Sixth; he won't have to sleep in a dorm., where we can get a chance at him!" said Hobson, his face flaming. "He's a giddy senior; they'll be making him a prefect next. What do you think of that?"

"Well, it's a surprise," said Nugent. "How is old Coker taking it?"

Hobson chuckled.

"Coker? He's ramping—simply ramping."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fancy a kid like that in the Sixth; putting on the airs of a senior!" said Hobson.

"Has he put on any airs?" asked Mark Linley innocently.

"Huh! Of course he will!"

"Well, give him a chance till he does."

"Rot! We're going to show him that we're not going to have kids of his age swanking about as seniors!" snorted Hobson. "I looked in to ask you fellows if you'd come?"

"Come? Is it a feed?" queried Tom Brown.

"Feed be hanged! We're going to show Coker minor what we think of him, having the awful cheek to sneak into the Sixth. Half the Shell are going, and a lot of the Fourth. Temple & Co. are frightfully waxy about it. We're going to Coker minor's study to turn him out."

"Better go slow," remarked Bulstrode, with a grin.

"Coker major may be there."

"Coker major's more wild with him than anybody else," said Hobson. "Coker major won't interfere; no danger of that."

"You'd better let the kid alone," said Wharton decidedly.

"If he's entitled to go into the Sixth, I suppose the Head did right in putting him there. We're not going to have a hand in ragging him, anyway. Looks to me as if he's likely to have a rough time."

"Yes; rather!" yelled Hobson. "We're going to make it rough for him—rather. If you won't join in, you can stay out, and be blown."

And Hobson tramped away angrily. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged amazed glances. The football committee was thinking of anything but footer now.

"Well, this is a giddy surprise," said Harry Wharton.

"Coker the Second will have a hard row to hoe in the Sixth. The seniors won't like it. Loder and Carne and Walker will get their backs up, for a cert."

"And poor old Horace. He was so particular about making things easy for his minor in a lower Form," said Nugent, laughing.

"I suppose he will feel ratty. I don't see why he should, but—"

"But he will!" grinned Nugent.

"We said we'd stand by the kid if he came into the Remove," said Harry Wharton hesitatingly. "If he's in the Sixth, I suppose we're not called upon to interfere. A Sixth-Former might think it cheek on our part if we do. But if that crowd's going to rag him—"

"Let's go along and see fair play," suggested Mark Linley.

"Hear, hear!"

And the football committee left No. 1 Study, and made their way to the Sixth-Form passage. They found a big crowd going in the same direction.

All the juniors seemed to be exasperated.

The fellows who, remembering Coker major's high-handed ways, had intended to "take it out" of his minor, were simply wild at hearing that their intended victim had been placed in the highest Form, among the prefects. To "take it out" of a Sixth-Former was a very unusual proceeding, and likely to lead to painful results, but in their exasperation the juniors were simply flocking towards the new fellow's study. Hobson of the Shell was the leader, but Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were well to the fore. Tubb and Paget and Bolsover minor of the Third were there too. They were more exasperated than anybody else, as the new Sixth-Former would have a right to fag them, and each of the heroes of the Third was convinced that he could knock the new senior into a cocked hat in a fair fight. And to fag for a fellow whom he could knock into a cocked hat was too deep a humiliation for any fag.

"Come on," said Hobson; "let's have him out! Don't make a row—we don't want Wingate to come chipping in."

Hobson threw open the new fellow's door without the preliminary of knocking.

There was a little startled exclamation from Coker minor.

Reggie was kneeling beside a box of books, which he was unpacking. The sight of the books increased the wrath of

the raggers. Greek and Latin classics seemed to form the majority of them, showing that Coker minor was that most reprehensible of all persons—a "swot," otherwise a reading fellow. Reggie rose to his feet in alarm, as the threatening crowd filled his doorway and overflowed into the study.

"G-g-good-afternoon!" he said feebly.

"G-g-good-afternoon!" repeated Hobson, with exquisite mimicry. "I suppose you're young Coker?"

"Yes, please."

"Yes, please!" roared Hobson. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"A rotten spooney!" said Benson.

"A blessed noodle!" said Temple of the Fourth.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"I—I say, I—I hope I haven't offended you fellows," said Reggie in bewilderment.

"Well, you have," said Hobson sternly. "You're in the Sixth?"

"Yes, please."

"Well, what do you mean by being in the Sixth—hey?" demanded Hobson, in a magisterial voice.

"I—I—I—"

"Do you think we're going to stand your cheek?"

"Oh, dear!"

"Do you think we're going to fag for you?" shrieked Tubb, shaking an inky fist into the study. "Yah!"

"Goodness gracious!"

"Have him out!" roared Bolsover of the Remove.

"Bump him!"

"Chuck his rotten books out of the window, the beastly swot!"

"And chuck him after them!"

"Hurray!"

"We're fed up with Cokers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reggie Coker hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. He was seized in the grasp of a dozen hands, and his beloved books were grasped and tossed about the study. Reggie gave a cry of dismay.

"Oh, please, you fellows—"

"Chuck it!" came the voice of Harry Wharton from the passage. "Let him alone, Hobby. We're not going to have it!"

"Yah! Go and eat coke!" retorted Hobson.

Outside in the passage the Famous Four were striving to reach the study. But the crowd was too thick, and nobody was disposed to make room for Harry Wharton & Co. to pass. There was a yelling and swaying in the passage, the excited juniors having quite forgotten Hobson's cautious admonition to make no noise.

"Let us come in, you bounders!"

"Yah! Buzz off!"

"Clear out!"

"Oh! Please don't!"

gasped Coker minor, as Hobson and Temple swung him into the air. "I—I—I say—please—ow!"

Bump!

"Give him another!"

"Hurray!"

There was a sudden swaying and scuttling in the passage. The crowd cleared off as if by magic. Wingate of the Sixth, with a cane in his hand, strode into the study. He did not waste time in words. He laid the cane about him with strict impartiality upon all who were within reach. Even the unfortunate Coker minor received a lash or two as he rolled out of the grasp of the raggers.

The raggers made a wild rush to escape. There was no arguing with Wingate; he had not, evidently, come there to argue. The cane rose and fell like lightning, and the raggers, yelling and bawling, fell over one another in their haste to



"I object to having my young brother put in the Sixth Form!" roared Coker, forgetting for the moment the respect due to the reverend Head of Greyfriars.

"I object, sir! I object! I think it's rotten!" Dr. Locke rose angrily.

"Coker," he said, "leave my study at once!" (See Chapter 8.)



Suddenly the door opened, and in the excitement of the moment the juniors did not notice it, and the sledge race went on. A horrified gasp broke from Coker minor as he caught sight of the awe-inspiring figure, and that attracted the attention of the riotous Fourth-Former's at last. "Oh Crumbs!" gasped Fry. "Cave! The Head!" (See Chapter 15.)

get out of the study. There was a block in the doorway, and before the jammed juniors could extricate themselves the cane had told upon their backs and legs and shoulders. They broke into the passage and fled, whooping.

Wingate turned breathlessly to Coker minor.

"All right?" he asked.

Reggie gasped.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Wingate grinned.

"If they should come again, take a cricket-stump to them," he said. "But I don't think they'll come again. They've had a lesson."

And the raggers did not come again. They were nursing their injuries in distant corners, and, in spite of their exasperation, they agreed that ragging in the Sixth-Form passage was "not good enough."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Fighting Man!

REGGIE COKER took his place in the Sixth Form of Greyfriars the next morning.

He was regarded with much curiosity by the rest of the Sixth.

Some of them—Loder and his friends—were very gruff to the new-comer. They did not want a "kid" in the Form. But the greater part of the Sixth said nothing. If the Head

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chose to put him there, it was the Head's business, and ragging was quite below the dignity of the lordly Sixth. Besides, Reggie was an inoffensive fellow; he was kind and obliging, and did not put on airs as if he were as good as anybody else in the Sixth. He showed a properly grateful appreciation of any kindness, and the Sixth felt that they could condescend to be kind to him. The only trouble was that so youthful and diminutive a Sixth-Former would hardly be able to uphold the dignity of the Form among the juniors. The lower Forms certainly wouldn't respect a senior whom they could lick, and it would be a very bad precedent if a member of the Sixth could be checked with impunity by the fags.

And Coker major was not very likely to back up his minor in the various rows that awaited him.

That Reggie would have trouble among the juniors was certain. Bolsover of the Remove had announced that he was going to give him what he was asking for.

When lessons were over that morning, Reggie left the Sixth-Form-room with doubt and misgiving. The Head was very pleased with him. The Head took the Sixth himself, and he had expressed satisfaction at Coker minor's performances on his first morning at the school. The Head's approbation was grateful and comforting in the Form-room, but outside those august limits it was not likely to be of much use to Coker minor.

Reggie kept beside Wingate as they went down the passage. Wingate did not notice him, and walked away with Courtney.

Reggie would gladly have shadowed the stalwart captain of Greyfriars until dinner-time, but that was impossible, and he drifted away into the Close by himself disconsolately.

He felt very lonely. His brother was so angry that he could not venture to seek out Coker major. But he was not left lonely for long. As he meditated upon his prospects in a secluded corner of the Close, Bolsover & Co. bore down upon him.

Bolsover planted himself before Coker minor in a threatening attitude.

"Here you are, then!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, please!" faltered Reggie.

"Well, I don't please," said Bolsover grimly. "You're in the Sixth. I've never licked a Sixth-Former yet. I'm just going to begin!"

And Vernon-Smith and Stott and Snoop grinned approval.

"Please don't be rough," urged Reggie. "I do not wish to quarrel with you. It was really not my fault that I was put in the Sixth."

"Put up your hands."

"What for?"

Bolsover surveyed him in astonishment and disgust.

"To fight, of course, you young idiot!" he said.

"B-b-but I d-d-on't want to fight!" faltered Reggie.

"It's not a case of what you want, but of what you're going to get," explained Bolsover. He tore off his jacket and handed it to Vernon-Smith. "Now then, are you ready?"

"N-no!"

"Will you put up your paws?"

"I—I—please—"

Biff!

Reggie staggered back as Bolsover major tapped him forcibly on the nose.

"Oh!"

"Now are you going to fight?" roared the Remove bully.

Coker minor's eyes flashed. In spite of his timid and uncertain ways, he was not by any means wanting in pluck.

"You—you beast!" he exclaimed. "I don't want to fight you, but I will now! Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Vernon-Smith. "Don't hit him too hard, Bolsover. He might break into little pieces."

Bolsover squared up to the unfortunate Sixth-Former.

Reggie squared up in return, and his fighting attitude made the juniors shriek. What Coker minor did not know on the subject of fighting would have filled volumes.

"Now, come on, you beast!" gasped Reggie.

Bolsover major came on.

He knocked up Coker minor's feeble guard, and planted a terrific drive on his chin. Coker minor gasped, and tumbled over backwards as if a cannon-ball had struck him.

"Ow!"

"I say, that's a bit thick!" cried Stott, being blessed for the moment with an atom of courage; and he advanced on Bolsover, faced him grimly, and the bully's look seemed to cause Stott's momentary courage to ooze out at his fingertips; for the next instant he gave a sickly grin, and looked down at the new Sixth-Former.

Reggie lay on his back, blinking up at the bully of the Remove.

Bolsover major pranced round him, brandishing his fists.

"Get up!" he roared.

"Ow!"

"Gerrup!"

"Yow!"

"Do you want any more?"

"Groo! N-n-no!"

"Do you confess yourself licked?" demanded the Remove bully.

"Yes! Ow! Yes!"

"Well, you're a ripping specimen to shove into the Sixth, I must say!" growled Bolsover major, as he took his jacket from Vernon-Smith and slipped it on. "You're not worth licking!"

"Ow!" groaned Reggie.

"Pah!"

Bolsover major walked away with his comrades. His inglorious victory had been complete; but, as Bolsover remarked, there wasn't much satisfaction in licking a chap who fell down like a skittle as soon as he was touched.

Reggie lay for nearly five minutes on the ground in a dazed state. Finally he sat up, and rubbed his nose and rubbed his chin.

"Goodness gracious!" he murmured. "Oh, dear! I don't think I shall like Greyfriars! Ow!"

And he rose slowly to his feet, and moved away disconsolately towards the School House.

There was a shout from a group of Fourth-Formers as they caught sight of him. Before Coker minor could avoid the rush, Temple, Dabney & Co. had surrounded him.

"Here's the giddy senior!" roared Temple.

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"Oh, rather!"

"Here's the new Sixth-Former! Collar him!"

"Oh, dear!" said Reggie, backing away. "I—I'm very sorry that I'm in the Sixth! I—I assure you I'd much rather be in your Form. I should like it very much."

"The liking would be all on your side, then!" growled Temple.

"Oh, dear!"

"Now, which of us are you going to take a licking from?" asked Fry.

"If you please, I'd rather not fight any of you," said poor Reggie. "I'm not used to fighting, and it makes me feel quite ill."

The Fourth-Formers surveyed him in utter disgust.

"Did you ever hear anything like that?" demanded Temple. "I call it a disgrace to Greyfriars! That—in the Sixth!"

"Rotten!" said the Co. unanimously.

"Must lick him, for the honour of the school!" said Temple. "Can't have a chap here who's afraid to fight! Which eye shall I bung up for you, young Coker?"

"N-n-not either, thank you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple advanced upon the reluctant hero of the Sixth. A brilliant idea occurred to the unfortunate Reggie. He stood upon one leg, holding the other up with his right hand, and smiled feebly at Temple.

"Now, if you hit me I shall fall down!" he said.

Temple paused.

"Well, my only Aunt Matilda!" he gasped. "When I hit a chap, kid, he generally does fall down. Stick your feet on the ground, and stand up like a man and take your gruel!"

"My dear fellow, I—I don't want to."

Temple snorted.

"And that's in the Sixth!" he ejaculated, in wonder and scorn. "What is Greyfriars coming to? A Sixth-Former standing on one leg like a giddy crane so that a chap can't punch him! Oh, let's get away! He makes me ill!"

And Temple marched indignantly off, followed by the Co.

Coker minor gasped with relief, and hurried into the House.

He felt that he would be safer indoors.

Coker major was in the doorway, with a frown upon his face. Reggie gave him an appealing glance, but it was lost upon Coker major. Horace Coker was wounded in his tenderest place—his personal dignity—and he hardened his heart towards his minor. He frowned more darkly, and stalked away.

Reggie, with a heavy heart, went into his study and remained there until the bell rang for dinner. And his face was clouded when he came into the dining-room and took his place at the Sixth Form table.

It was beginning to dawn upon him that other attributes besides learning were required in the Sixth Form at Greyfriars—and those attributes were not at all to his taste. But a Sixth-Former who could not hold his own in combat with one of the Remove or the Fourth was an anomaly; and Coker minor realised ruefully that he would have to learn.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Strung Up!

LODER of the Sixth tapped Coker minor on the shoulder in a genial sort of way. Reggie looked round at him with a cordial smile. If he had known Loder of the Sixth better he would have distrusted him when he appeared most genial. But he did not know Loder, and he was only too glad to greet any appearance of friendliness from a Sixth-Former. Coker minor was feeling very lonely in his elevation, and he was feeling his major's desertion very much.

It was getting near bed-time, and Reggie was going to his room, when Loder stopped him in the Sixth Form passage. The Sixth were allowed to stay up late if they liked, and most of them did not go to bed till ten or half-past; but Reggie was accustomed to junior bed-time. It was half-past nine now, and he wanted to go to bed. But he stopped at once, in the most cordial way, to speak to Loder.

"Will you do me a favour, kid?" asked Loder.

Reggie beamed. He would have done anybody in the Sixth any number of favours.

"Certainly!" he said. "What can I do, Loder?"

"I have to see lights out for the Shell," Loder explained. "I'm a prefect, you know. Prefects have to do that; it's part of the bizney. But any senior will do. Would you mind doing it for me this evening?"

"I shall be very pleased," said Coker minor. "Anything you like."

"It's no trouble, you know," said Loder. "You simply have to go to the Shell dorm., and see that the kids are in bed, and put the light out."

"Thank you," said Reggie.
"They're gone up now," said Loder. "I'll show you where the dorm. is, if you'll come to the stairs."

"Yes, certainly."
And the unsuspecting new boy followed Loder, who pointed out the Shell dormitory.

"Tell them they're not to make a row," said Loder.
"Yes."

And Reggie hurried away to do Loder's duty for him. Loder watched him, with a grin, and then joined Carne and Walker, who were waiting for him in the passage.

"Has he taken it on?" grinned Walker.

"Yes—the young ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Shell will scalp him!" said Loder. "Serve him jolly well right, too! The cheek—coming into the Sixth! I'll Sixth him!"

Coker minor reached the door of the Shell dormitory and opened it. The light was on in the dormitory, and the Shell were all in bed.

Loder, when he saw lights out for the juniors, did not like to be kept waiting, and he sometimes brought up a cane with him to help the juniors to hurry. The Shell were waiting for the light to be turned out, and they expected Loder; and they simply stared at the sight of Coker minor. The new Sixth-Former advanced timidly into the dormitory.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Hobson, sitting up in bed. "What do you want?"

"Nothing, thank you," said Reggie. "I've come to put the lights out for the Shell. You are not to make a row."

Hobson stared at him speechlessly.

It seemed too good to be true that the obnoxious Sixth-Former had actually placed himself entirely in the power of the Shell by invading thus the territory of his enemies.

"Well, my hat!" said Hobson at last.

"My only uncle!" ejaculated Benson. "Here's a kid of fifteen come to see lights out for us! What is Greyfriars coming to?"

"Loder asked me to," explained Reggie gently. "Are you ready for the light to be turned out, my dear fellows?"

Hobson jumped out of bed.

"Of all the cheek!" he gasped. "If this doesn't take the whole giddy biscuit factory!" He ran across to the door to cut off the escape of Coker minor. "Collar him, you chaps!"

The Shell were tumbling out of bed on all sides.

Coker minor looked alarmed.

"I—I say—please—" he stammered.

"Collar him!"

The Shell fellows closed round the youthful senior. They collared him, and were rather disappointed that he made no resistance. Reggie was too bewildered to resist. He did not understand what the Shell were so exasperated about. To Hobson & Co. it seemed like a personal injury that a fellow younger than themselves should be in the Sixth at all. But to have him come and put the lights out for them, as if he were a real senior and a full-blown prefect, that was insult added to injury. They had a suspicion, too, that Loder knew very well the kind of reception Coker minor was likely to meet with in the Shell dormitory, and that the prefect would judiciously refrain from hearing any noise they might make.

"I—I say, you know—please—" stuttered Reggie.

Hobson surveyed him with frowning brows.

"So you've come to see us to bed, have you?" he demanded.

"Yes, please."

"Yes, please!" mimicked Benson. "Ha, ha, ha! Did you ever see such a spooney? Does your mother know you're out, kid?"

"Yes, please," said Coker minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that's in the Sixth!" roared Hobson. "That's what Greyfriars is coming to. Old Coker in the Fifth, and young Coker in the Sixth. My hat! There's too much Coker in this school."

"Hear, hear!"

"And we're going to make an example of them—and we'll start with this babbling burler," said Hobson. "You've come to put us to bed, have you?"

"Yes, please."

"Well, we'll put you to bed. Strip him!"

"Oh, dear!"

Coker minor began to struggle. But he did not have much chance. He was whirled over, and the Shell fellows, roaring with laughter, undressed him. They dragged off his boots and his socks, and yanked away his trousers, and tore the rest of his things away, considerably damaging them in the process. Benson dragged an old nightshirt out of his box, and it was slammed over Coker minor's head. His head came through it, flustered and breathless. He wriggled out of the grasp of his tormentors, and jumped up, gasping for breath.

"Oh, dear!"

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The Shell fellows roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear! I—I—I— Give me back my clothes!"

Hobson kicked Reggie's clothes away with his foot, as the unfortunate Sixth-Former made a rush for them.

He threw open the door of the dormitory.

"Now you can bunk!" he said.

Reggie gasped.

"I—I can't go without my clothes!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You jolly well can't go with them!" grinned Hobson.

"Clear off!"

"But I—I can't—"

"Buzz off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reggie's eyes flashed. He was getting very angry now.

"Look here, you rotters!" he exclaimed. "I'm in the Sixth, and I'm not going to stand this cheek from you juniors, so I warn you!"

The Shell simply glared at him. So long as Coker minor was meek and mild, they were willing to rag him gently. But this was too much!

"Us juniors!" gasped Hobson. "There isn't a fellow in the Shell who isn't older than he is! Us juniors! My sainted uncle!"

"The cheeky young ass!"

"Serag him!"

Hobson shut the door.

"You wouldn't go when you had the chance," he remarked grimly. "Now you're going through it. Gather round, my sons!"

"Hurrah!"

Reggie made a rush for his clothes. Benson put his foot out, and Reggie stumbled over it, and rolled on the floor. There was a yell of laughter.

"Look here, you fags!" roared Reggie, scrambling up.

"I—"

"Fags!" gasped Hobson. "Fags! Oh!"

"We'll fag him!"

"Collar the cheeky cad!"

Many hands closed upon the unfortunate Reggie. He hit out now, but his blows did not do much harm. Fellows held his wrists, and he gasped and struggled in vain in the grasp of the Shell.

"Get a sheet off a bed, Hoskins!" roared Hobson. "We're going to hang him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, I say!" gasped Coker minor, in dismay. "I really — Oh, goodness gracious!"

"Lynch him!" roared Benson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A sheet was dragged from a bed. Another sheet was twisted and tied to it, then another, till a rope of considerable length was formed. Hobson took the rope, and threw the end of it over one of the great beams below the rafters.

"Hang on there!" he shouted.

"Hurrah!"

Half a dozen Shell fellows seized one end of the rope of sheets. The other was formed into a noose, and Hobson approached Reggie with the noose in his hands. Reggie gazed at him in terror. His experiences since he had arrived at Greyfriars had been so strange, that he would not have been surprised if the excited Shell fellows had really intended to lynch him to the beam overhead.

"Oh!" he panted. "Don't! I— Oh!"

Hobson slipped the noose over his head. But he did not put it round his neck. He passed it down over his arms, jerked it under his armpits, and pulled it tight. Then he stepped back.

"Haul away!" he shouted.

"Good egg!"

The Shell fellows hauled upon the rope. Coker minor was swung off his feet, and dragged into the air. He swung to and fro dizzily.

"Now then!" roared Hobson. "Slippers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Reggie. "Help!"

The end of the rope of sheets was secured to a bed. Then the Shell fellows gathered round the suspended senior, slippers and socks in their hands.

"Go it!" shouted Hobson. "Wallop him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ow! Ow! Oh, dear! Goodness gracious! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Poor Reggie.

COKER MINOR swung over his tormentors dizzily. Slippers and socks were thwacking upon his undefended limbs. The Shell fellows roared with laughter as they administered the punishment.

"Go it!"

"Give him beans!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" panted Coker minor. "I—I say—don't, you know. Please! Oh!"

Hobson approached a little too near, and Reggie's foot caught him under the chin with a sudden concussion. Hobson sat down violently.

"Ow!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly asses?" demanded Hobson indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

"Oh, dear! Help! Oh!"

"Cave!" suddenly shouted Hoskins, from the door. "Here comes Wingate."

The Shell fellows made a rush for their beds.

Those who were half dressed did not stop to take their things off. They plunged into bed, and drew the bedclothes over them, and began to snore, as the door of the dormitory was reopened, and the captain of Greyfriars strode in.

"M-my hat!" gasped Wingate.

He stared blankly at Coker minor, suspended from the beam.

"Oh, dear! Please let me down, Wingate!" gasped the unfortunate Sixth-Former.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wingate. "How did you get up there?"

"I—I—"

"You fellows are all asleep, of course," said Wingate sarcastically. "You've been making all that fearful din in your sleep, haven't you?"

Snore!

"Hobson!"

Snore!

Wingate strode to Hobson's bed, and shook the captain of the Shell roughly by the shoulder. Hobson opened his eyes, and blinked sleepily at Wingate.

"Hallo!" he said. "'Tain't rising-bell."

Wingate jerked the bedclothes off him.

"Get up!"

"Yaw!" yawned Hobson sleepily.

"Fast asleep, of course," said Wingate. "Do you always go to bed in your trousers?"

"Oh!" said Hobson. "Oh! No! Ahem!"

"What have you been ragging young Coker for?"

"Coker!" said Hobson, in surprise. "Where is he?"

"He's hanging up there."

Hobson blinked at Coker minor.

"Dear me!" he said. "So he is! What a peculiar thing for young Coker to do! Fancy young Coker hanging himself up there!"

Wingate burst into a laugh.

"Well, get him down, even if you don't know how he got there. Buck up!"

"Oh, certainly! What a surprising thing!" said Hobson.

Two or three Shell fellows turned out, and unfastened the rope of sheets, and let the gasping and breathless Sixth-Former slide to the floor. He came down with a very quick run, and bumped on the floor of the dormitory.

"Oh!" said Reggie. "Ow! Dear me! Oh!"

"What did you come here for, you young ass?" demanded Wingate.

"Loder asked me to see lights out for the Shell," gasped Reggie. "I came here to oblige Loder."

Wingate sniffed.

"Oh, Loder! Well, you'd better not be so jolly quick to oblige Loder again. What on earth did you undress here for?"

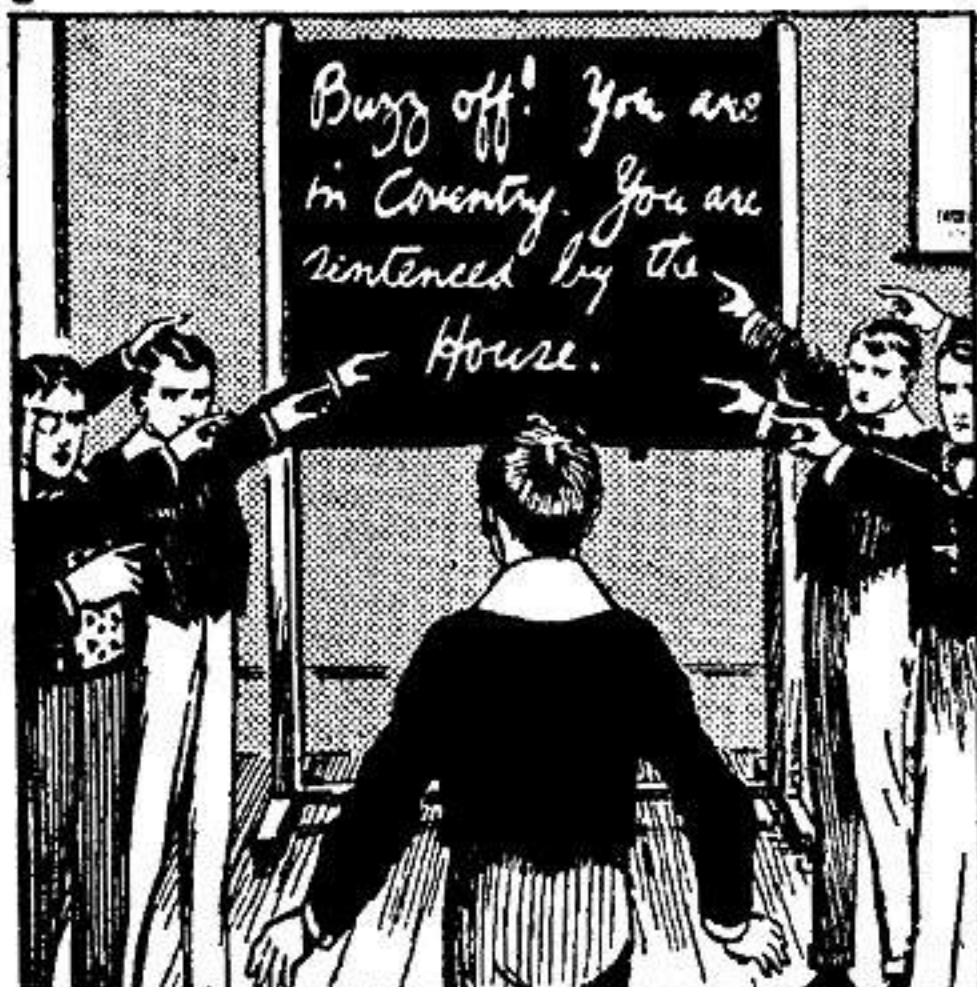
"They—they made me."

"Who did?" demanded Wingate.

Reggie hesitated.

"The Sentence of the House."

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"You juniors will have to learn not to lay hands on one of the Sixth, even if he is a kid," said Wingate. "Who did this, Coker minor?"

"I—I'd rather not mention who did it, Wingate," faltered Reggie. "I—I don't want to get them into a row. I don't really mind; it was only a game."

"Oh!" said Wingate, staring at him. "Well, get into your clothes and bunk."

And Coker minor very gladly did so. Wingate regarded the apprehensive Shell grimly.

"As Coker minor hasn't pointed out the ringleaders, we'll let that pass," he said. "But all the Shell will take a hundred lines, and show them up to-morrow before tea-time. And if anything of this kind happens again I'll report you to the Head."

And Wingate extinguished the light and left the dormitory.

"My hat!" murmured Hobson. "I expected a licking all round. We're jolly well out of that."

"Not a bad little beast, that Coker animal, after all," remarked Benson. "He's not a sneak, anyway."

"No; not half a bad little beast."

Coker minor had risen a little in the estimation of the Shell.

Wingate strode away, and looked into Coker minor's study. Reggie was going to bed, and he turned a rather pathetic face upon Wingate.

"You seem to have been in the wars, kid," said the Greyfriars captain.

"Yes, please," said Reggie.

Wingate grinned.

"You'd better keep out of the junior dormitories," he said.

"Indeed I will," said Reggie fervently.

"And, look here, I'll give you some advice," said the captain of Greyfriars. "I suppose you're well up in Form work, quite deep in Latin and Greek, a terror at mathematics, and strong as a horse on history ancient and modern—eh?"

"I—I don't know, please, Wingate."

"Well, those qualifications are all right for getting into the Sixth, Coker minor; but you want some others as well, if you're to have a good time in the Sixth. You'd better take up physical exercises—running, jumping, boxing—especially boxing. You'll have a fearful time until you learn to stand up for yourself. Do you understand?"

"Ye-es."

"Take my advice, then, and start to-morrow."

"I will," said Reggie.

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, Wingate! Thank you!"

And Wingate retired, grinning. Reggie went to bed in a rather doleful mood; but he had the presence of mind to lock his door. It was as well. Twice before midnight his door was tried from the outside; but the intended ragers, whoever they were, had to retire unsuccessful.

Coker minor came down the next morning feeling somewhat stiff and sore. He met Coker major as he went in to breakfast, and stopped to speak to him timidly.

"G-g-good-morning, Horace!" he said.

Horace snorted.

"Hallo! How do you like the Sixth?" he said.

"I—I haven't had a very good time so far," faltered Reggie.

Another snort.

"Serve you right! You ought to be in the Fourth. I think it's rotten, putting yourself over your major's head in this way, after all my kindness to you, too," said Horace Coker indignantly.

"But I—I can't help it, Horace, you know," said Reggie.

"I had to go into the Sixth, as the Head said so."

Snort!

"I'm so sorry if you don't like it, Horace."

Snort!

"I've had a rotten time, Horace."

Snort!

Coker's replies were not intelligible, but they expressed his feelings. Reggie sighed, and went on into the dining-room. Coker went to the Fifth Form table, Coker minor to that of the Sixth. And Horace Coker's feelings of indignation were not assuaged by the chipping he received from the other Fifth-Formers.

"How do you like having a minor in the Sixth?" grinned Potter.

"I suppose he's going to take you in hand and look after you, isn't he, Coker?" inquired Greene.

Coker glared, but made no verbal reply.

"If I had a minor like that," said Potter, "I'd boil him!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Coker unexpectedly. "You wouldn't have a minor with brains enough to get into the Sixth, anyway."

"Yes, he seems to have all the brains of the family," said Potter caustically.

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And Coker, not having a reply ready for that remark, contented himself with snorting.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Run.

"GETTING on all right in the Sixth?"

Harry Wharton asked the question cheerily, as he met Coker minor after lessons that day. Reggie looked at him doubtfully. The juniors of Greyfriars had been so exasperated by his elevation to the dignity of the Sixth Form that he was surprised by Wharton's friendly tone.

"Don't you mind my being in the Sixth?" he asked timidly.

"Ha, ha, ha! No. Why should I?"

"I think you're the only junior that doesn't, then," said poor Reggie. "The Sixth don't like it, and my brother doesn't like it, and all the juniors seem to take it as an offence to them personally. I wish I hadn't come to Greyfriars."

"Oh, don't say that!" said Wharton good-naturedly.

"They'll soon get over it. As for old Coker, he's bound to feel it a bit at first, but he'll come round. From the way he went round getting ready for you before you came, I should think that you were the apple of his eye."

"He was always fond of me at home," said Reggie. "But he doesn't like my being put over him in the school."

"Well, a fellow gets chipped, having a minor in a higher Form," said Harry. "I don't know that I should like it myself. But he'll come round; I'm sure of that. As for the juniors, you must get into the habit of punching their heads."

"Ye-es; Wingate says so, too," said Coker minor. "But—but fighting isn't much in my line. I'm not a funk, you know, but I don't like it; I'm not suited to it. Wingate says I'm to take up running and jumping and boxing, and so on. But—but I don't think the Sixth will care to take me into their games, and—"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"We're going for a run before tea," he said. "Come with us for a start. We'll take you across country, and it will be a beginning. You'll have to go into training, and no mistake, if you're going to hold your own in the Sixth."

Reggie brightened up.

"Will you take me?" he asked eagerly.

"Ha, ha! Yes. It will be an honour for us to have a Sixth-Former with us—even such a little one," said Harry, laughing. "Go and get into your running things."

"Thank you so much!"

Coker minor came out in ten minutes in his running clothes. He did not look very athletic, but he was very keen. He had evidently taken Wingate's advice to heart. Harry Wharton & Co. were waiting for him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's the giddy Marathon winner! Come on!"

And the chums of the Remove closed round Coker minor and marched him out of the school gates. Harry Wharton & Co. were going into training for the footer season, and nearly every day they got out for a run across country. They were in very good form, but they had not trotted half a mile before Coker minor showed signs of giving in.

Bob Cherry called a halt.

"I say, this won't do," he exclaimed. "You can't slack, you know."

"No, thank you," said Reggie.

"You must buck up."

"Oh, yes!"

"Now, let's see what you can do," said Bob. "Look here! You're going to run across this field, cut through Dalton's farm, and get out into the road by the plank bridge over the ditch. I'll give you one minute's start, and then I'm after you. If I catch you before you get to the road, I'll pitch you into the ditch! See?"

"Oh, dear!"

"Now, start!"

"B-b-but I say—"

"Start!" roared Bob Cherry.

Coker minor started. Bob Cherry gave him exactly one minute, and then uttered a loud and terrifying whoop, and started in pursuit. The whoop reached the ears of Coker minor, and he put on a terrific spurt. He had never known before that he could run so fast. Bob Cherry came tearing on his track, with the other Removites close behind him, laughing as they ran.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Coker minor.

He ran on as hard as he could. He had no doubt that Bob Cherry would fulfil his threat, and fear lent him wings.

As he bolted across the farmyard, there was a loud quacking of startled ducks and a shrieking of frightened hens. A pig ran across his path, and he stumbled. There was a roar from a stout farmer in the distance and a terrifying whoop from Bob Cherry. Reggie simply did not dare to fall down. He gathered himself up somehow and raced on, his mouth open and his eyes wide and fixed.

"Whoop!" roared Bob Cherry. "I'm after you! Who-o-op!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!"

Coker minor cast a terrified glance over his shoulder. Bob Cherry was close behind, and the Sixth-Former dashed on again at frantic speed. Yelling with laughter, the Removites tore in pursuit.

Coker minor found his progress obstructed by a fence, and he did not venture to jump it. He swerved, and the Removites swerved after him, and Bob Cherry emitted another ear-splitting whoop.

Coker minor dashed round the buildings. There was a loud and terrified squeal as a fat porker trundled into his path. A stout youth with a fat face remarkably resembling a side of bacon roared to him:

"Go away! Keep off! You be not allowed 'ere! You be frightening t' pigs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Don't get into the pigsty, Coker. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Coker minor.

The terrified pigs squealed and dashed out of Coker minor's way. The largest and fattest of them charged blindly at Coker minor. Reggie was simply swept off his feet by the charge of the fat porker, and he flew fairly over the head of the pigs, throwing out his hands wildly.

Biff!

He crashed right into the bacon-complexioned youth and sent him sprawling, and sprawled wildly over him. The pig squealed wildly, and Coker minor gasped and yelled, and the bacon-complexioned youth roared. For a moment there was a wild and whirling mass of arms and legs—pig and Coker minor and pigkeeper.

Bob Cherry halted, shrieking with laughter.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Groo!"

Squeal!

The pig trundled away, and Coker minor sorted himself out from the fat youth, who was gasping on the ground, completely winded. Reggie staggered up, panting.

"Cut!" roared Bob Cherry. "Here comes the farmer!"

"Goodness gracious!"

Coker minor cut.

With a wonderful speed, considering how little practice he had had, he fled from the pigsty and sprinted across the field to the road.

He dashed over the plank bridge and escaped through a gap in the hedge, and halted in the lane, gasping.

The Removites joined him there, gasping too, but more with laughter than with exertion.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent. "Splendid! But, my hat, you do niff! What on earth did you want to roll in the hogwash for?"

"I—I couldn't help it!" moaned Reggie. "I assure you that I did not do it on purpose. I—I think it smells very unpleasantly."

He was quite right—it did!

"You'd better keep to leeward," gasped Johnny Bull; "you don't smell nice! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors trotted back to Greyfriars, carefully keeping on the windward side of Coker minor.

As they entered the quadrangle there was a shout from Temple, Dabney & Co., and they gathered round the runners.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Temple. "Here's the giddy senior!" Then he sniffed. "Why—what—which—My Aunt Maria! What's the matter with him?"

"If you please it's hogwash!" murmured Reggie. "I fell in it—"

"Groo! Keep off!"

"Stand further away!" gasped Dabney. "Don't you come near me! Groo!"

"Why, he's smothered with it!" stuttered Fry. "Keep off! Ow!"

Coker minor grinned. It suddenly occurred to him that he had the advantage now. He advanced upon Temple, who promptly retreated.

"Keep off!" roared Temple.

"Go for him!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Wallop him, Reggie! He was cheeking you yesterday—like his cheek to cheek the Sixth! Go for him!"

"Gerrooh! Keep off!" yelled Temple.

And he ran.

Coker minor dashed in pursuit, and Temple fled at top speed.

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speed. Reggie halted as he caught sight of Hobson of the Shell in the Close. He had little scores to pay off against the Shell fellow, and he was never likely to have a better opportunity.

But at the first whiff of the hogwash, which was streaming from Coker minor, Hobson threw his dignity to the winds, and ran as if for his life. He dodged round Bolsover of the Remove, and Reggie transferred his attentions to the Remove bully. His chin was still aching from the recent application of Bolsover's knuckles. Bolsover major, as he caught the malodorous whiff, would have fled, too, but he had no time. Reggie clasped him round the neck.

"Grooh! Gerrooh!" gasped Bolsover. "Ow! Ow! Drag-gimoff! He's horrid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker minor clung to him.

"You—you w-wanted to f-fight me yesterday!" he panted.

"I'll f-f-fight you now, Bolsover!"

"No, you won't!" shrieked Bolsover. "Yow! You're suffocating me! Ow! Leggo! Gerroff! I give you best! Pax! Yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker minor released him—he had transferred about half the hogwash to Bolsover. The Removite was smelling as unpleasantly as the Sixth-Former now.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "You want a wash, Bolsover! Don't come near me! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo!"

Bolsover clenched his fists and glared at Reggie; but the scent of the hogwash was too terrible, and he fled. And Coker minor, panting, went into the School House and made a direct line for the nearest bath-room, feeling, upon the whole, not dissatisfied with the results of that little run.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Slight Disturbance.

WALKER of the Sixth frowned as he came out of the prefects' room just before lessons the next afternoon. Loder met him in the passage, and gave him an inquiring look.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

Walker grunted disconsolately.

"Oh, it's old Capper!"

"Capper?" said Loder, in surprise.

Mr. Capper was master of the Upper Fourth at Greyfriars—an enthusiastic philatelist, but otherwise quite harmless.

"Yes. He's heard about a giddy stamp specimen somewhere, and he's off after it; and he's asked me to take the Fourth Form for an hour this afternoon."

"Oh, rotten!" said Loder.

"Fellow can't very well say 'No,'" said Walker, with a grunt. "But it's rotten, fooling about after a gang of fags. Huh!"

Loder chuckled.

"Why not ask Coker minor?"

"Eh? Coker minor?"

"Yes. Why not? He's a most obliging kid, and he's as fit to take the juniors as any fellow in the Sixth—fitter, in fact. He simply bristles with knowledge. And any Sixth-Former ought to be able to keep a fag's form in order. If he can't, he's no right to be in the Sixth. You've a right to assume that Coker minor can do it."

Walker grinned.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed. "If there's any trouble it won't be my fault. If Coker minor can't look after fags he oughtn't to be in the top Form."

"Exactly so."

"I'll ask him."

And Walker did.

Reggie assented at once, only too pleased to be able to please Walker, who was a prefect. In fact, Reggie felt that this was a chance to get on better terms with the Fourth Form. He wished it had been the Remove, instead, as he had friends in the Lower Fourth; but, after all, with a judicious admixture of kindness and firmness, he would be able to get on very well with the Upper Fourth, and make them respect him.

Temple, Dabney & Co. and the rest of the Form went into their class-room that afternoon without knowing what was in store for them.

Harry Wharton and his chums encountered Reggie as they were going to the Remove-room.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's not your room!" said Bob Cherry, as he saw Reggie stop at the Fourth Form door. "You haven't come down in the world, have you?"

Reggie smiled.

"I'm taking the Fourth this afternoon for an hour," he explained.

"Eh?"

"Mr. Capper has gone out, and he left Walker to look

after the Form, but Walker has asked me," said Coker minor.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You're going to do it?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, indeed!"

"Look out for squalls."

And the chums of the Remove chuckled as they went on to their own Form-room. They anticipated trouble in the Fourth that afternoon—and they were right.

Reggie entered the Fourth Form-room.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were standing about, chatting. Some of the juniors were in their places at their desks. There was a general movement to sit down as the Form-room door opened; but as soon as the Fourth saw that it was not their Form-master they stopped. They bestowed a stare of astonishment upon Reggie.

"My hat!" said Temple. "Here comes the Babe of the Sixth! Have you got a message from old Cappy, young Coker?"

"Cappy's out this afternoon," remarked Fry. "Walker's taking us."

"Please, I'm taking you, instead of Walker," explained Reggie.

"What?"

"I'm going to take the Fourth Form for an hour, until Mr. Capper comes back," said Reggie a little timidly.

"My hat!"

"Oh, Great Scott!"

"You?"

"Yes, I!" said Reggie, with more firmness. "Will you please take your places?"

The Fourth-Formers did not stir.

"It's a dream!" said Temple. "It can't be true! This little worm can't have the awful cheek to come here to teach us! It can't be true! It's a giddy vision."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Pray sit down!" said Reggie.

Temple strode towards him. Reggie took refuge behind the master's desk.

"Now, look here, young 'un," said Temple impressively, "is it a fact? Cappy's gone out, Walker's chucked it, and you've taken us for an hour?"

"Yes, please."

"Good!" said Temple. "Gentlemen of the Fourth, as captain of the Form, I grant you an hour's holiday this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We can't leave the Form-room, but we can dig up some fun here," said Temple. "I suggest sledging with the forms."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear boys—" began Reggie, in dismay.

"Shut up!" roared Temple.

"But, I say—"

"No, you don't; you don't say anything," said Temple. "If you say anything, we bump you. And you don't go out of the Form-room, either. If he goes near the door, you fellows, collar him at once, and squash him!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Oh dear!" said Reggie. "I—I wish I hadn't taken the Fourth. My dear boys, you—you ought to do your lessons, you know, like—like good boys."

Temple glared at him.

"Good boys!" he bellowed. "Who told you we were good boys, you young ass? I'll good boys you!" And he made a rush at Coker minor, who dodged round Mr. Capper's desk in alarm.

Temple shook his fist at the alarmed Sixth-Former.

"You keep quiet!" he exclaimed. "You're not worth licking, or I'd make an example of you. Don't go near the door, and don't talk. Now, you fellows!"

"Hurrah!"

The Fourth Form were only too pleased to be released from the restraints of Form-room discipline for an hour.

Instead of settling down to lessons under the eye of the Sixth-Former, they started the afternoon's work by a game of leap-frog round the Form-room.

Reggie looked on helplessly.

He could not interfere; and even if he had been allowed to leave the Form-room, he would not have liked to get the Fourth into trouble by invoking the aid of the Head.

He simply looked on.

Leap-frog having palled upon the taste of the unruly Fourth, they dragged out some of the forms to use as sledges. Temple, Dabney & Co. twisted paper caps of impot. paper, and stuck them on their heads, and mounted upon a couple of upturned forms for a chariot race. Two teams of Fourth-Formers dragged them along, amid an uproar of laughter, and yelling and trampling and shrieking and cheering.

The noise was terrific.

In the next Form-room, where the Remove were at work, the thick walls did not prevent the noise from being heard;

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and Harry Wharton & Co. grinned as they heard it. Mr. Quelch heard it, too, but as he did not know that Mr. Capper was absent, he did not think of interfering.

The fun was waxing fast and furious in the Fourth Form-room.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

Crash! Crash!

"Whoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it!"

"Buck up!"

"Hurrah!"

"Temple wins!"

"Bravo!"

The din was growing simply terrific. The unfortunate Sixth-Former stood looking on, wondering what would happen next. The juniors seemed to have forgotten that noise travels, and that they were making enough of it to be heard all over Greyfriars. As they grew more excited their yells redoubled.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it!"

"Bravo!"

The door opened. In the excitement of the moment, the juniors did not notice it, and the sledge race went on. A horrified gasp broke from Coker minor as he caught sight of the awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown at the door. That attracted the attention of the Fourth-Formers.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Fry. "Cave!"

"M-m-my hat!"

"The Head!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER. Coker Comes Round.

I T was the Head!

Dr. Locke gazed in upon the scene of confusion and excitement with a grim expression upon his face.

The overturned forms, the paper caps, the startled Fourth-Formers, and the horrified Reggie looking on, made a peculiar picture such as the Head certainly never had looked upon in a Form-room of Greyfriars before.

"Oh!" murmured Temple, in dismay. "We're

booked for it now!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Crumbs!"

The Head strode into the room.

"What does this mean?" he thundered.

"Mean, sir!" stuttered Temple.

"Yes. What are you doing?"

"Chut-chut-chariot races, sir," stammered the captain of the Fourth.

"Indeed! Is it a custom in the Fourth Form to play at chariot races with forms, during lesson-time?"

"Nun-nun-no, sir!"

"Coker minor, I understand that you were left in charge of this Form?"

"Yes, please, sir."

"You should not have undertaken the task, Coker minor, unless you were able to keep some semblance of order among the juniors."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Return to your own Form-room at once."

"Yes, please, sir, thank you."

And Reggie gladly departed.

Dr. Locke turned a stern and frowning glance upon the dismayed Fourth-Formers. He picked up a cane from Mr. Capper's desk.

"Kindly come here one at a time," he said.

"Oh!" murmured the Fourth.

They marched past the Head, and halted one at a time to receive a cut from the cane. By the time the whole procession had passed him, the Fourth-Formers were not feeling in nearly such high spirits.

"Now," said the Head sternly, throwing the cane upon the desk, "it is time your Form-master returned. Take your places and wait for him. If there is another sound of disorder from this Form-room I shall come back."

And the Head swept out.

The Fourth-Formers set the forms in order, and sat down meekly. They squeezed their hands, and twisted their faces, and grunted. But they did not venture upon any fresh rag. When the Head was "waxy" they knew it was time to be good.

Mr. Capper came in five minutes later, and was astonished to find his Form in nobody's care, but in perfect order, and as meek as so many lambs.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were very meek outwardly, but inwardly they were smarting. They squeezed their hands under the desks to assuage the pain; and very unreasonably laid all the blame upon Coker minor. It was certainly not Reggie's fault that they had turned the Form-room into a bear-garden, but undoubtedly it wouldn't have happened if Coker minor hadn't had the awful nerve to take charge of the Form—that was how the Fourth-Formers looked at it.

And they waited impatiently for lessons to be over, so that they could see Coker minor again, and tell him what they thought about it.

In the Sixth Form-room, Coker minor was at peace. He liked his lessons, and he liked to please the Head, which he always succeeded in doing so far as Form-work was concerned. But peace vanished with the closing of the Form-room door when he left the august apartment of the Sixth.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were waiting for him.

Reggie lingered in the Form-room passage, after the other seniors were gone, in the hope of seeing his brother when the Fifth came out. The Fifth Form had not been dismissed yet.

He did not see Coker major—but he soon saw Temple, Dabney & Co. They came towards him with grim looks, and Reggie backed up against the wall.

"I—I say—" he stammered.

"You got us into a row this afternoon!" bellowed Fry.

"Oh, I didn't, you know! You behaved like—like rotters, you know," explained Coker minor.

"You took charge of the Fourth—us!" said Temple, in a voice that indicated that even yet he could hardly believe in Coker minor's stupendous cheek. "Now we are going to massacre you!"

"Oh, please, Temple—"

"We'll teach you to take charge of the Fourth! We'll

"We'll slaughter him!"

"We'll scalp him!"

"Oh dear! Goodness gracious!"

Reggie was swept off his feet. He whirled dizzily in the grasp of the Fourth-Formers. But before they could proceed any further the door of the Fifth-Form-room opened, and the Fifth came streaming out.

They stopped to look on at the scene, laughing. Potter and Greene shouted encouragement to the Fourth.

"Go it, you fags!"

"We're going it," said Temple. "Yank him out into the Close, you fellows. We'll duck him in the fountain for a start."

"Hurrah!"

"Yank him along!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The struggling Reggie was borne helplessly down the passage. Horace Coker stood looking on with a gloomy brow.

"Serve the cheeky young bounder right!" grinned Potter.

"Nico for the Sixth!" chuckled Greene. "Hallo, where are you going, Cokey?"

Coker did not reply.

He had pushed back his cuffs, and clenched his big fists, and now he was rushing down the Form-room passage after the raggers.

He did not speak to them.

He dashed among them, hitting out right and left, and Temple, Dabney & Co. went reeling and staggering in all directions with a chorus of yells.

"Oh! Stop him!"

"Yah!"

"Yow!"

The astonished Reggie was dropped upon the floor. The Fourth-Formers surged round furiously, but Coker major was in deadly earnest. He went for the juniors with terrific drives, and Temple, Dabney & Co., in spite of their numbers, fairly ran.

Coker minor lay gasping upon the floor; Coker major stood over him, gasping, too, with his exertions. Potter and Greene came up, surprised and exasperated.

"What are you up to, Coker?" shouted Potter. "What are you sticking to the cheeky little beast for?"

Coker glared at him.

"What's that?" he exclaimed. "Are you calling my brother a cheeky little beast?"

"Yes, I am."

"Then take that!"

Biff!

Potter took it. "It" was Coker's fist, and Potter took it upon his nose. He gave a surprised yelp, and sat down on the floor.

"Yaroop! Oh!"

"Got anything to say about it, Greene?" roared Coker, as Greene glared at him.

"Yes, I have!" roared back Greene. "You're a silly ass! You're a fathead! If you're going to back up that cheeky young sweep, I'm done with you. Yah! I— Yowp!"

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Greene joined Potter on the floor.

"Now then," said Coker, with a glare round, "anybody else want to talk rot?"

Nobody did, apparently.

The victorious Coker stooped, and lifted up his minor.

"Come on, kid," he said.

"Oh! T-thank you, Horace. Oh, dear!"

"Get on your feet."

"Yes, pip-pip-please."

Coker grinned, and linked arms with his minor, and marched him off. Potter and Greene sat up and blinked and stared after them.

"My word!" gasped Potter, feeling his nose, a little doubtful as to whether it was still there. "My sainted Sam! He's dotty!"

"Oh!" groaned Greene. "Yow! My eye!"

"Faith, and Coker's an uncertain beggar intirely," grinned Fitzgerald of the Fifth. "Ye'd better lave Coker minor alone. He's taking him to his study, bedad!"

"To his study—my study—our study!" snorted Potter. "We won't stand it! We're not going to have it! Come on, Greeney!"

And Coker's chums rushed off towards their study in the Fifth-Form passage. Coker major had taken Coker minor there. It was insult added to injury. Greene and Potter burst into the study like a whirlwind. Coker minor was sitting in the armchair, trying to get his breath back, but looking very happy. Coker major had come round—there was no doubt about that.

"Look here—" roared Greene.

"Coker, you idiot!" shrieked Potter.

Coker major turned upon them.

"Get out of this study!" he roared. "You're disturbing my minor!"

Potter and Greene staggered. Horace Coker had "come round" with a vengeance. To be told to get out of their own study because they were disturbing the obnoxious minor was a little too much. It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and in that moment of wrath Potter and Greene forgot that Coker was a terrible slogger, and forgot that his ample funds stood most of the study feeds. They rushed at Coker for vengeance.

"Oh, dear!" said Reggie.

Coker major stood up to the two furious Fifth-formers with a cool grin. He gave Potter his right, and Greene his left. They rolled over one another on the study carpet.

"Oh!"

"Help!"

"Get out!" roared Coker.

"Bravo, Horace!" chirruped Reggie gleefully. "Wallop 'em!"

Coker picked up a cricket-stump. Potter and Greene whirled out of the study. They had had enough—in fact, a little too much. Coker slammed the door after them.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Go it Horace!

COKER MAJOR looked doubtfully at his minor. Reggie was smiling cheerfully. He did not mind the rough handling he had received from the Fourth-Formers now, as it had apparently been the cause of Horace's "coming round." Reggie had almost given up the hope of being able to make it up with his major. But evidently, in Horace's estimation, blood was thicker than water.

"Hurt?" asked Horace Coker.

"N-no; only a bit shaken, Horace," said Reggie brightly.

"I don't mind. I say, you did punch those two chaps!" Coker grinned.

"They're not going to cheek me," he said. "Look here, Reggie, I'm sorry I cut up so rough about your being in the Sixth."

"It's all right, Horace."

"It was a rotten surprise to me, and—and it's very awkward having a minor in a higher Form," said Coker. "Fellows chip one so. They ask me if you're going to give me lessons, and if you've got all the brains of the family. As a matter of fact," said Coker, in a burst of confidence, "you have, Reggie."

"Oh, no, Horace."

"Yes, you have. I had to scrape into the Fifth," said Coker. "and it's quite true that Aunt Judy came down and saw the Head about it, and fairly ragged him into giving me my remove. And here you come along, two years younger than I am, and walk into the Sixth as easy as rolling off a log. I felt a bit wild at first, but it's all right. The fellows are not going to rag anybody named Coker. I've made up my mind about that. I'm going to stand by you, Reggie. I ought to have done it at first."

The tears came into Reggie's eyes.

"It—it's all right, Horace," he said. "It was cheeky of me, come to think of it. I—I'd rather not have come to Greyfriars than have bothered you so."

"Stuff!" said Coker cheerily. "Rot, my son! I was to blame, but it's all right now. Matter of fact, it's rather an honour to have a minor in the Sixth. Shows there's some brains in the family, doesn't it?"

"I'd rather be as strong as you are, Horace, and able to take care of myself, than be in the Sixth," said Reggie.

"Well, there's something in that, too," assented Coker.

"It's not much catch, to be in a school where you can't stand up for yourself. But you're going to learn—I'm going to teach you boxing, and you'll be able to whack the juniors soon. But till you're able to stand alone, I'm going to hold you up. I'm going to let the school know that I'm backing you up, kid. Come on!"

Reggie rose.

"Where?" he asked.

"We're going to make a round," explained Coker. "I want all the fellows to know that I'm backing you up, and that it won't be safe to rag you. We'll begin with the Shell. Come on!"

Reggie looked rather doubtful, but he did not say nay. The brothers walked round into the Shell passage, and found Hobson and Benson chatting in the passage.

"Hallo, here's the old Obadiah and the young Obadiah!" grinned Hobson.

"I came round to speak to you chaps," said Coker abruptly.

"This is my minor, and I'm backing him up. Understand?"

"You can back him up, or back him down, but we're not standing him," said Hobson defiantly.

"You've ragged my minor," said Coker.

"We'll rag him again."

"Then here's a sample of what you'll get if you do."

And Coker rushed to the attack. Hobson and Benson backed away, putting up their hands, but nothing could withstand the terrific onslaught of the mighty Coker.

"Bravo!" said Reggie, clapping his hands.

Coker bestowed a glare upon his fallen foes, and as they did not rise he marched off in the direction of the Fourth-Form quarters. He looked into Temple's study, and found Temple, Dabney & Co. preparing tea.

They looked at him far from amiably.

"What do you want?" growled Temple. "Clear out, both of you. We're fed up with Cokers."

"Oh, rather!"

"This is my minor, and I'm backing him up," said Coker.

"Blow your minor, and blow you!" said Fry.

"I'm backing him up!" roared Coker. "I've come here to give you a sample of what you'll get if you rag him."

"Look here— Oh!"

"Yaroo!"

Coker came on like a hurricane. He knocked Temple into a corner of the study, pitched Dabney on top of him, and chased Fry round the table, and added him to the heap. Then he overturned the table upon the sprawling, gasping juniors, and glared at them. Reggie went off into a chirrup of laughter.

"Go it, Horace!"

"Now then!" said Coker, fixing his eyes upon the three dusty, flustered, scared faces that glared out from under the upset table. "Are you going to rag my minor again?"

"Ow! No! No!"

"Good! Mind you don't! Come on, Reggie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The delighted minor followed his major from the study. The Remove passage was their next destination. Most of the Removites were in their studies at tea; and Coker found Bolsover at home. Bolsover stared at him as he entered, and rose to be ready. He saw that there was trouble coming.

"You licked my minor the other day," said Coker.

Bolsover snorted.

"I'll lick him again, too," he said.

"Will you? Here's a sample of what you'll get if you do!"

The next moment the study resembled pandemonium. Arms and legs seemed to be flying in all directions. The table went reeling into a corner; chairs were knocked right

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and left; books and papers were scattered. In a few minutes the terrific confusion and uproar died away, and Bolsover was disclosed on his back on the carpet, with Coker major sitting on his chest.

"Grrrooooooh!" That was what Bolsover was saying.

"Now, then," said Coker, "are you going to rag my minor again?"

"Yow! Yes!" yelled Bolsover.

"Give me that cricket-stump, Reggie."

"Bravo! Go it, Horace!"

Horace went it. He grasped the cricket-stump, and grasped Bolsover, and rolled him over, and lashed.

"Now then, what do you say?" demanded Horace.

"Yow!"

"What else?"

"Grooh!"

"Ha, ha! Are you going to rag my minor again?"

"Yow! Oh! No! Blow! Lemme alone! Take your minor away, and be blowed! I won't touch him! Yown!"

Coker rose, panting, and tossed the cricket-stump into a corner. The Remove bully lay gasping and groaning on the carpet.

"Mind you keep to that," said Coker. "I'm backing my minor up, and don't you forget it."

And Coker major and Coker minor left the study, leaving Bolsover feeling as if he had been through a particularly violent cyclone.

Reggie chuckled gleefully.

"Any more?" he asked.

"No!" said Coker, laughing. "We'll look in and see Wharton & Co.; but that's the last licking. I don't think they will rag you any more."

"Ha, ha, ha! No, I don't think so."

Coker tapped at Harry Wharton's door, and the cheery voice of the captain of the Remove sang out to him to come in. Coker pushed the door open, and entered. His minor followed him in timidly.

Wharton and Nugent were at tea, and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Mark Linley were there as well. There were piles of good things on the tea-table; some member of the Famous Four was evidently in funds.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Come to tea?"

"I've come to speak to you chaps," said Coker. "I've often had to put you kids in your place—"

"Rats!" said the Removites, all together.

"Well, we've had our little rubs," said Coker, with unexpected amiability. "But you've done the decent thing by my minor, and I'm obliged to you. I'm going to back my minor up."

"Hear, hear!"

"Glad to hear it," said Harry Wharton cordially. "He would have a pretty rotten time in the Sixth, if you don't."

Coker nodded.

"Well, I'm backing him up," he said. "I've been going round letting the fellows know it. I don't think they'll rag Reggie any more, now."

"No fear!" chuckled Reggie.

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton. "Now you're here, stay to tea; we've got a first-chop spread, and we'll celebrate the occasion."

And the chums of the Remove forced Coker major and Coker minor into chairs at the table; and the reconciliation of the Coker brothers was duly celebrated.

Whether there were any more troubles before Reggie of the Sixth, or not, he looked very happy now; and, at all events, it was certain that the worst of his troubles were over, now that Coker major was backing up Coker minor—Sixth-Former!

THE END.

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TWICE ROUND THE GLOBE!

THE STORY OF THE
GREAT MAN-HUNT
BY SIDNEY DREW



Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.



Prince Ching-Lung, adventurer, conjurer and Ventriloquist.



Nathan Gore, jewel collector and multi-millionaire, Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN."

Nathan Gore, millionaire and jewel-collector, clenched his hands furiously and raved like a madman on the deck of the liner Coronation. He had started specially from America in order to be present at the sale-room in London where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," was to be put up for auction. "A telegram for Mr. Gore," a voice rang out through the darkness. The American was told the message, and as he listened, his face came over deathly pale, and he gave vent to a terrible oath. The message was: "Ferrers Lord purchased 'The World's Wonder' privately. No bidders. Price unknown." "I'll win yet," shrieked the man. "By foul means or fair, I'll win!"

"THE WORLD'S WONDER."

In the magnificent drawing-room of Ferrers Lord's house in Park Lane was assembled a varied collection of individuals. First of all there was the celebrated millionaire himself, and close to him sat Ching-Lung, a Chinaman, busily engaged in making paper butterflies. Hal Honour, the great engineer, was sipping tea, and Rupert Thurston yawned in a chair. "How much did you pay for that great diamond?" presently asked the latter. The millionaire smiled. "Money and fair words, Rupert," he replied. "By the way, you have not seen it yet?" The priceless gem passed from hand to hand. A thousand fires burned in its crystal heart: a thousand colours, ever changing, leaped from every facet. "I guess it would have been more money and less fair words if old Gore had turned up," remarked Ching-Lung sagely.

"I'LL TAKE THE CHALLENGE!"

The millionaire's house was wrapped in silence. A faint light shone from the drawing-room. Ching-Lung pushed open the door, then a cry broke from him. A man lay face downwards on the floor. There was a ghastly crimson stain on his collar. The man was Ferrers Lord. "Ching—the diamond!" came in a hoarse voice. Ching opened the drawer which Lord indicated, but there was no diamond there. But a message had been left behind: "To Ferrers Lord.—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst. I defy you. The stone is mine.—Nathan Gore." The millionaire rose to his feet. "I take the challenge, Ching," he said. "I'll hunt him down and win back my diamond." He begins the chase after the diamond thief, and rushes across Germany into Russia in a special train, taking with him a number of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, which vessel has been destroyed by Nathan Gore.

They are not able to overtake Gore, however, and when they reach the estate of Brinco Miguel Ollenord, the prince invites them to stay at the mansion. Ferrers Lord, thinking that Nathan Gore is in hiding there, accepts. After a stay of a few days, Nathan Gore escapes, and continues his mad flight through Russia to the Black Sea. Ferrers Lord follows, and they take a boat, on arriving, to pursue Gore, who they learn has caught the packet steamer to Constantinople. In Constantinople they run their quarry to earth, only to find that they have been chasing a man who is Gore's exact double, and has been paid by him to lead them off the scent. Undismayed, Ferrers Lord immediately sails for Brindisi, intent on picking up the trail of the mad millionaire again.

(Now go on with the story.)

Once Round the Globe—The Hunters Outwitted—Nathan Gore Makes a Queer Purchase—Gan-Waga Finds that Pride Goes Before a Fall, and Causes Another Disturbance in a Quiet Household.

Where was Nathan Gore?

That was the question that puzzled Ferrers Lord as he sat before a cheerful fire in his study. It was dusk. He could hear the hum of the traffic up and down Park Lane.

Five months had passed since he had sailed to catch the eastward-bound steamer at Brindisi. They had pursued a shadow. Nathan Gore was always just ahead. At Colombo, Singapore, Sarawak, Hobart, Christchurch, New Zealand, Rio, Teneriffe, and back to London he had left a clear, strong scent behind him, but he had outrun his pursuers. They had circled the globe once, and come back to the start—THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 241.

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ing-point. Had Nathan Gore resumed his wild flight? Or was he lurking in the great city, to take breath and recover his strength?

The red firelight was dancing on the glazed bookshelves when Ching-Lung glided in. The millionaire looked up with a smile of welcome. Ferrers Lord had been beaten so far; but he never knew defeat, and he took the failure of the man-hunt lightly. It was not a defeat to him, but a reverse. He pointed to a chair and the cigar-cabinet.

Ching-Lung, looking more of a Celestial in his English evening-dress suit than ever he did in the attire of his country, lifted his coat-tails, and stood with his back to the fire.

"All hail, my king of globe-trotters!" he laughed. "Why this silence and this gloom?"

"A reverie, Ching."

"Bad for the liver, old boy," said the prince. "What deep and dark deeds do you meditate?"

The millionaire smoked thoughtfully.

"Well, Ching," he answered, "it was something objectionable, from your point of view. I know the man-hunt is distasteful to you all. You may as well be honest and say so."

"I'll be honest, then, as you put it so plainly," said Ching-Lung. "It has puzzled us all. We have been chasing a man for stealing a dirty bit of carbon, and breaking our necks scooting round this ball of mud and water we call the earth. The diamond, we'll admit, old chap, is one of the finest ever known. What does that matter? What are diamonds to you? If you miss the stone, I have some grand ones in my treasury, and the key is yours, to pick and choose what you will. You know that. Gore is a felon and a criminal. Speak to the police, and you'll catch him wherever he goes. That's what puzzles us. Why do you hunt him, and turn yourself into a police-inspector and your weary-footed followers into constables?"

The millionaire stared harder into the fire.

"Is it for mere excitement?" asked Ching-Lung.

Ferrers Lord shook his head.

"Then, in the name of common-sense, my dearest of friends, what is your motive?"

"A whim."

The prince stared.

"You are a queer fellow," he said; "a puzzle—a mystery. This seems childish to me."

"Perhaps it is childish," answered Ferrers Lord. "It may have been childish at the outset; but remember what has happened. Is it childish to hunt down a man who wrecked our boat, who let loose a locomotive upon us, and almost hurled us to eternity—who cut a bridge under our feet? It is no longer a whim. I am intent—determined. I shall run him to ground, Ching. I would not ask you to follow me further against your will. The moment we get news I shall start again."

Ching-Lung sighed, and switched on the light.

"This is curious," went on Ferrers Lord, taking a newspaper cutting from his pocket.

The prince took it and read:

"Galpin Island.—A millionaire's odd purchase. We learn from our Tampa correspondent that Galpin Island has been purchased from the Dutch by Mr. Nathan Gore, the American plutocrat and diamond-collector. This island lies south of Crozet, and has barely been visited, as it is far from the track of ships. It is volcanic, and a mass of wild jungle and fever-swamps. It seems an eccentric purchase, and people are anxious to know what Mr. Gore will do with it. He is called eccentric by his countrymen, but if Mr. Gore had been a labourer instead of a millionaire he would probably be called mad. The price was eighty thousand dollars. Galpin is said to be the only island, with the one exception of the Galapagos group, that produces the strange monster known as the giant tortoise. It is a deadly fever-bed."

Ching-Lung did not know what to make of it. It seemed an extraordinary purchase.

"This is queer," he said. "Does the old boy want to start a little kingdom of his own?"

"I cannot decide," said Ferrers Lord. "Gore may be mad, but there is a lot of sense and method in his madness. I landed on Galpin Island once. It was nominally a Dutch possession; but I think Holland had a very poor claim to it. Nobody seems to want the island. Four miles south there is a second island, also nominally Dutch. It is nameless, or was, but I have christened it Ching-Lung."

"You have christened it?"

"Yes, Ching, and after you. I have bought it," said Ferrers Lord calmly.

Ching-Lung whistled with amaze.

"But why—how—what the——" he gasped. "I say, old chap, what is it all about?"

The millionaire handed him a second cutting.

"Galpin Island.—It has just leaked out that a party of medical men left for Galpin Island three months ago. Their purpose was evidently to rid Mr. Nathan Gore's property of malaria by putting acids, &c., in the lagoons where the mosquitoes breed, and to drain away the water. The expedition has been kept a profound secret; but we have heard that two steamers and a sailing-vessel have also gone to Galpin. Whispers are going round that the island was not bought for mere fun. They talk of valuable pearl-beds, diamonds, and valuable minerals. Perhaps the Dutch will tear their hair presently at having sold the place so cheap."

Ching-Lung shook his head.

"I could understand Gore," he muttered, "but you beat me. What do you want an island for in such a corner of the earth? Are you thinking of going into the hermit business, and live on carrots and other roots in a cave?"

"I am serious."

"What, about the carrots and the cave?"

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"No; about the island. Gore is playing some game. What it is we shall know in time. We must find out what he is doing at Galpin, Ching, and what he means to do. I have an idea!"

"Tell it."

"That he is afraid of me," said the millionaire.

"But——"

"Wait, Ching—wait. Let us discuss some other topic. Where are you going to-night?"

"Well, I must toss up," sighed the prince. "They won't let me rest. I've got no less than fourteen invitations for this one blessed evening! I think I'm going to be taken ill. Do I look pale?"

"Deathly," smiled Ferrers Lord.

"I knew it. It's coming on fast. I shall be laid up with rheumatic-fever, and then, oh, king, I shall disguise my beauty under a full-sized black beard and bushy side-whiskers, and take Gan and Barry to the theatre. It is decided! No balls for me!"

"Where dat Chingy?" gurgled a voice in the distance. "Say, yo' yaller-legged chap, have yo' seen R'yal 'Ighness Ching-Lung?"

"No, sir," answered a footman. "I have not, sir."

"Well, yo' go and eats some coke," said Gan-Waga politely.

"At once, sir."

Ching-Lung's eyes twinkled.

"He has a soft and soothing way of talking to the servants, hasn't he?" he grinned. "I heard him tell one of them this morning— Well, I'll not tell tales out of school. Gan!"

Though the door was closed the Eskimo heard distinctly, and waddled in. He had a good slice of cheese in one hand and bread-and-marmalade in the other, and he took a vast semi-circular bite from each one in turn with high relish. The millionaire rose and went into an inner room. Gan beamed on his beloved Ching-Lung and sat down on a brass log-box.

"That's a nice mixture, Gan."

"Doolicious, Chingy. Good 'nough butterful grand. Have a bite?"

"I'd sooner have the bite than what you leave, my son," said the prince. "By Jove, you're getting fat! Where are the boys?"

"Barry, him eating Irish stews," gurgled Gan-Waga; "Joe, he gonied to see him mother at Greenwich; Tom, he helpses Barry wid de stews; and Master Ruperts, he offs in hims motty-cars."

"Oh," said Ching-Lung, "that's the catalogue, is it? I say, I can absolutely see you grow! Is there any coal?"

The fire was getting low. Ching-Lung rang the bell and gave the order. A footman brought in a scuttle, stumbled on the rug, and let the heavy copper scoop fall on Gan's slippered foot. It was an accident, but it hurt, and the servants did not like Gan; he was too much of a tyrant. Gan gave a roar of agony and indignation, and, seizing the footman's powdered locks, he vigorously polished that terrified gentleman's face with the marmalade side of the bread. Then, before Ching-Lung could interfere, he rushed the man out violently and hurled the cheese after him.

"You're going the proper way to get yourself disliked," said Ching-Lung.

"What about my poor footses?" roared the Eskimo, hopping round. "Yo' not feels him. I lame fo' nevermores. Ow, he busted all the bones! I nots walk always agen. Ow!"

"You rubbed it in pretty thick."

"I rub it in somes more," said Gan savagely. "I gotted my tempers up. I going to kill him!"

"You bloodthirsty fat lump!"

"I going to kill him, Chingy! I be back in a bitises."

Gan was angry. Seizing an ivory paper-knife—the handiest weapon—he bounded out to fulfil his awful threat. Scenting battle in the air, but no bloodshed, Ching-Lung strode out on the landing. There were rows of exquisite statues on either side. Gleaming in the electric light at the end, at the head of the noble staircase, stood a large porter's chair. Beside the chair, scraping the sticky marmalade from his face, and growling horrid menaces, was the assaulted footman. Like a tiger robbed of its young, Gan hurled himself onward.

The footman turned in time.

"Murder!" he yelled, and dodged round the chair. "'Elp, 'elp, 'elp! Ooch!"

The "Ooch!" was caused by a prod in the ribs with the paper-knife. The footman was long and slun, and Gan was short and fat. Gan failed in his attempt to get between the chair and the wall, so he paused, with the light of battle in each eye.

"I goings to kill yo'!" he said grimly.

It was cheerful news for anybody to hear. The lean footman took it without a murmur, and Ching-Lung, who was peeping round the door, began to think that he would be amused.

"Oh," said the thin footman, "you ain't going to damage me no wuss, Mr. Freak!"

"I kill yo', den I scalp yo', den I fry yo'!" said Gan.

"You won't 'urt me no more?"

"I break yo' into tape!" said Gan. "Yo' comes out!"

"Comin' in 'alf a mo'!"

The lean servant took off his coat slowly and deliberately and hung it over the chair. Gan whisked it off and flung it over the banisters. It fell on the butler's pug-dog, and, getting entangled in one sleeve, the dog howled weirdly, and made a blind bolt for it. Falling down the lower stairs with a succession of bumps, the uncanny object rolled across the floor of the butler's pantry. The butler was in the act of treating the second coachman to a whisky-and-soda. He had the syphon in his hand and his thumb was on the tap. The sudden arrival of the animated blue coat frightened him so much that he missed the glass by yards, and washed every grain of powder out of the second coachman's hair in less time than one could say "ping-pong." The second coachman howled "Firo!" and sat down to cool in a pail of mingled ice and water that had been put in readiness for the dinner champagne. Then the butler got mixed up with the coat, and dropped the syphon into the grate, where it exploded with a bang that put out the fire. The metal top flew right through the left eye of an oil-painting of the butler's aunt, and gave the old lady a bad squint for life.

While the excitement was hot below—at least, the second coachman was not very hot in the ice-pail—the footman with the long legs was preparing for action. His name was Slivers, and he came from the country. He was not afraid of Gan-Waga or of anybody else. The prospect of being killed, scalped, and fried did not alarm him at all. He removed his waistcoat and wiped the jam from his brow.

"Now," he said, "fair is fair. I'm a sarvent in this 'ouse, Mr. Fat-Face, and if I punches yer I worry like gets sacked."

"Yo' nots gets sacked," said Gan darkly, "yo' gets buried!"

"Hoo!" said the lean man. "Come hon, then!"

He turned up his sleeves and clenched his fists.

"Come hon—come hon, Mr. Lord Duke Hearl Fat-Face!"

Somehow Gan did not feel half so bloodthirsty when he saw the thin man hopping up and down, with his bony elbows squared and a curly slip of orange-peel glistening on the end of his nose. He did not feel inclined to kill, fry, scalp, or bury him; but he had to do something, and, waving the knife aloft, he charged.

And at once Gan's left eye witnessed a glorious display of fireworks—stars, rockets, squibs, catherine-whoels, and serpents. Then his right eye saw the same beautiful things, with a few jumping crackers and devil-among-the-tailors thrown in. A moment later his nose ran against something with painful force, and it hurt terribly. After that he dreamed that somebody had mistaken his ribs for a boiler, and was driving in rivets with a steam-hammer forty to the second. He sat down. Mr. Slivers, who had not turned a hair, picked him up, bundled him into the chair upside down, closed the half-doors, and, with a smile of joy on his face, and a curl of marmalade on his nose, walked downstairs to wash, and recover his coat.

Gan's slippers only were visible, for his head was under the seat. He did not even groan. It had all happened so suddenly. His eyes were closing fast, and his nose was badly damaged. Like a warrior taking his rest, he remained where he had been placed, his toes turned up, and his features turned down. The prince stole out, and, with a piece of billiard-chalk, swiftly turned the soles of Gan's slippers into two grinning skulls.

"Oh, pip!" grinned the heartless Ching-Lung, "he was just wiped out! That chap is a marvel with his hands. Shouldn't I like to get him into a row with old Barry!"

He slipped back into the room as he caught a glimpse of white cap-ribbons. A chambermaid was coming upstairs.

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Just before she reached the landing a deep sob from the chair shook the silence.

"Lawks a me!" gasped the maid. "What was that?"

"Oo-oo-oh!" wailed Gan. "Ow-ow-oo-oh-oh!"

The girl gazed wildly round her, and nearly dropped the pail she carried. At that instant Gan began to kick freely. His feet, shod in crimson slippers, were of great size. The skulls were cleverly drawn, and the deception was perfect in the vague light. She shrieked, and flung her apron over her head, and then began to perform a kind of quick-step.

"What's the matter? What is it?"

"Help, help, help!" screamed the girl.

The butler, looking scared, wild, and damp after his recent experience, started to puff up the stairs. He met the pail descending, and, liking the look of his bald head, the pail hung itself on it, and the butler took a seat on the mat, with the handle round his neck, and yelled "Perleece!" one hundred and fifteen times without stopping, in a very hoarse and thick voice.

"Faith! Is the old man dotty?" growled Barry O'Rooney.

"By hokey, he must be off his onion!" said Tom Prout.

"What's the matter, old phonograph?"

"Perleece, per-leece, per-leece!" gasped the butler, seventy-one times more.

"Help, help!" came the cry from above.

"Bedad," roared the gallant Barry, "ut's a lady!"

He rolled the butler out of the way and bounded up the stairs. A dustpan cannoned off his head and smote Prout behind the ear with such unexpected suddenness and force that the steersman reeled, trod on it as it fell, and, clutching wildly at the air, spun round, missed his footing, and, gliding down eight steps on his stomach with much skill and grace, lay at the bottom lovingly, his arms round the butler. The butler panted "Per-leece!" another twenty-seven times, but, as the bucket had slipped over his head, and Prout's full weight was on him, the words were muffled and indistinct.

Barry reached the landing, where the maid was still performing the step-dance and calling for help.

"What is ut, my dear?" asked the Irishman. "Och, till ould Dinnis what blayguard has frightened yez, and, boy the blud of the O'Rooneys that flows in his veins he'll make mincemeat and sawdust of that same rogue! Show him to me, Oi say! Troth, av yez can foind enough of him to fill a thimble whin Oi've finished yez may call me a pink-whiskered centipede wid a million legs! Shure, don't squeal no more! What was ut at all, my dear?"

"Ghosts, Mr. O'Rooney—ghosts and skeletons!"

"Where? Show thim me!"

"In—in the chair! Oh, I daren't look, I daren't! And — Oh, oh, oh!"

Ching-Lung, feeling anxious about Gan, had stolen down a side stairway and switched off the lamps. The only light now came from the hall, and it was a weak and dim one. Gan had had sense enough to put his feet inside. He did not want to argue or quarrel with anyone just then.

"Whist, whist!" said Barry soothingly. "Ut's only the loight gone down, Tom!"

"Hallo!" said Prout mournfully.

"Where are yez?"

Prout looked round him.

"I ain't sure!" he answered. "By hokey, how did I get here? I'm sittin' on a hanimile wi' a bucket on its top-knot. Cur'ous—mighty cur'ous! It's got a red weskit, this 'ere animile has; but why the blithery does it wear that bucket?"

Barry had managed to soothe the housemaid. She was as pretty and trim and neat as ever a housemaid could be and very often she had smiled at Barry. It was absurd to be afraid of anything with the great, strong Irishman there, but Jane trembled a good deal, and had to catch hold of his arm.

"Tell me agin," said Barry, "what ut was!"

"Ghosts—awful ghosts, Mr. O'Roney! Skulls they were, and—and they glared at me horful out of the chair!"

"Did they, by gum!" growled Barry. "Oi'll ghost 'em!"

(Another grand, long and thrilling instalment of this serial story next week. Order a copy of Tuesday's "Magnet" Library in advance Price One Penny.)

NEXT
TUESDAY:

The Greyfriars Insurance Company!

A Splendid, New, Long,
Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. at Grey-
friars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Order your copy in ad-
vance. Price 1d.

My Readers' Page.



OUR GRAND NEW
WEEKLY FEATURE
ON PAGE 28 AND
PAGES III. AND IV.
OF THE COVER.
SHOW YOUR FRIENDS
THIS COPY.

YOUR EDITOR'S SPECIAL MESSAGE TO HIS CHUMS.

I have a glorious piece of news for my readers this week—news which all my friends will receive with as much pleasure as I feel in being able to give it. The earnest and oft-repeated entreaties of thousands of enthusiastic Gemites and Magnetites have had their effect at last, and in a few weeks' time a

New Companion Paper

to the popular twin libraries, the "Gem" and the "Magnet," will make its appearance. One of the principal features of the new story-paper will be a

Complete Story of Tom Merry and Co.,

relating the many enthralling and amusing adventures of their early schooldays, specially compiled by Martin Clifford.

In addition to this grand series of weekly school stories, which alone is sufficient to ensure for the new paper instant and abiding popularity, the list of contents includes a

Magnificent Detective Story,

dealing with the most thrilling and amazing incidents in the career of that most famous of detectives, Sexton Blake. Thirdly, that talented author, S. Clarke Hook, will be called on to relate, in a series of splendid complete tales, the most exciting and amusing of the early adventures of the three famous comrades known throughout the world as

Jack, Sam, and Pete.

This, then, is the bill of fare which will every week be set before the readers of our New Companion Paper, and I ask my chums to pause a moment and consider whether such a magnificent range of really wholesome, first-class reading matter is, or even can be, offered to them by any other paper in the world. After many months of reflection, I have satisfied myself that it is impossible to offer my chums anything better than the feast of superb reading matter I have outlined above, so that it is with perfect confidence that I ask for their

Enthusiastic and Whole-Hearted Support

for my new venture, which I have undertaken entirely at the earnest and insistent request of many thousands of "Gem" and "Magnet" readers.

And now for that most important matter, the title of our Grand New Companion Paper!

It will be called

"THE PENNY POPULAR"

a title which I pitched on at once, in view of the absolute confidence that I feel in its immediate and unqualified success. With such a table of contents as I have outlined above, our new paper is bound to spring into world-wide popularity with the issue of the first number, and for that reason I consider

"THE PENNY POPULAR"

to be the most appropriate title that can be bestowed on it. "The Penny Pop."—as it will no doubt be immediately christened—will be published towards the end of each week, and will therefore be hailed with extra delight by the great army of my chums who tell me, in their letters, that they find

"The Week-end Gap"

between Thursday's "Gem" and Tuesday's "Magnet" so dull and hard to bear.

Everything that human brains and foresight can do will be done to make

"THE PENNY POPULAR"

worthy of its title and its two splendid companion papers, the "Gem" and "Magnet" Libraries, and it will only require the staunch support and universal encouragement of my Gemite and Magnetite chums, who have always hitherto backed up their Editor so splendidly, to make our new venture into a huge success.

I am proud to say that, in the light of my experience as Editor of the two most popular companion libraries on the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 241.

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co, next Tuesday:

"THE GREYFRIARS INSURANCE COMPANY!"

Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance.

market, I do not feel the slightest doubt in the world that that same staunch support and universal encouragement will be freely and generously given, and that within a week of the issue of the first number

**Everybody will be Reading
"THE PENNY POPULAR."**

FOR NEXT WEEK.

Next Tuesday's splendid, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled

"The Greyfriars Insurance Company,"

by Frank Richards, and my readers will guess from past experience that Fisher T. Fish, the 'cute—sometimes too 'cute—Yankee junior has a hand in the game. The latest idea is taken up with enthusiasm by the business man of the Remove, but somehow a hitch occurs somewhere, as is often the case with the American junior's precious schemes.

However,

"The Greyfriars Insurance Company"

is productive of much fun and excitement while it lasts, and my readers should on no account miss reading this splendid and amusing story.

From a Plain-Spoken Reader.

I have selected the following letter from this week's post-bag as being particularly appropriate in view of the announcement I have just made: Woolwich.

Dear Editor,—Surely it is time you brought out a new paper? We all know what a success "The Magnet" is, and has been for some years, while "The Gem" Library is also very good, but why should we have to go from Wednesday to Monday every week without anything decent to read? I suppose you know your own business best, but I should have thought it was only sense to bring out another paper for the end of the week, when you must know that it would be successful. Anyway, I think you might have more consideration for your readers. Excuse my plain speaking, Mr. Editor, but for goodness' sake buck up and give us something more! We'll see that it's a success, all right.—E. M. P.

Well, E. M. P., you certainly speak plainly enough, and I rather take exception to your remark urging me to have "more consideration" for my readers, since it is always my one endeavour to consider readers in every possible way. However, we will let that pass, as I can see that the best intentions lie behind your letter, and your last remark is distinctly encouraging. I shall take you at your word, and rely upon you and your friends to back up

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

which you will find will meet with your requirements exactly in the way of filling in the "week-end" gap you grumble about.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

F. B. (Bermondsey).—Thank you for your interesting letter. I have received no notice of the existence of a "Magnet" League in Bermondsey. I look to you to be the founder of one in your district, and expect to hear within a few weeks that it is going well ahead.

A. G. V. H. and friend.—Thanks for your postcards. You may probably hear more of the subjects and characters you mention at some later date.

"Bermondseyite."—I regret having to refuse to insert your request, but the Chat Page is now reserved for matters connected with the popular Library. I am glad you like the stories, etc., contained in "The Magnet."

A. Gillam (Hove).—The best way for you to get employment on board ship is to apply personally either to an agent's office or to the captains of the ships as they enter port. Boys are employed in some cases, but only in the position of cabin or deck-boys.

Will any amateur comedian, living in the district of North Kensington, who is a reader of "The Magnet" Library, and who is willing to become a partner to W. G. R. Stone, kindly write to 261, Droop Street, North Kensington.

THE EDITOR.

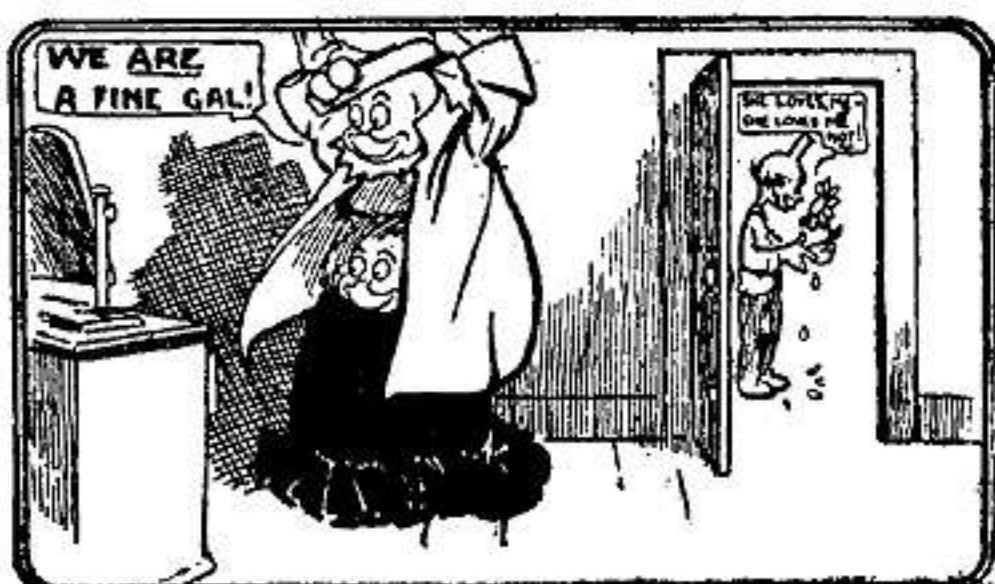
OUR SPLENDID NEW FEATURE!

SPECIAL COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

MISS BUNSEYBOYS DECEIVES IKE THIS WEEK!



1. Dear Readers,—“Boys!” yelled Happy Ike. “Boys, I’ve had a love letter sent me!” “Grate gingersnaps!” cried me. “You don’t mean it, Ike!” “Hahoo!” said Ike. “She sss I’m to meet her by moonlite! I wiltest! I will meet her largely!”



2. This is where we lets you into a sekret, deer people. Whisper: We sent that love letter. But that ain’t all, by a jugful. When the shades of night had fallen we bonced our-ourselves to ma’s wardrobe, and set about number two part of the tiny wheezelet.



3. ’Twas in a moonlight glen. Beneath a chesting spreadnut tree stood a lady whose fase was the only bar to her buty. Pretty presently thare arrove Happy Ike. “Ah, ha!” he smiled, as he approachethed. “She has not disappointed me.”



4. We mite hav known Ike wood maik a silly of hisself, and chuk all his yerning luv out in wun plaice. Wid a yell of: “Darlin’, your own, your hansum Ike, has kum to kiss you!” he grabbed us round the waist. “Wow!” yelled Georgie as we kame in half. “Are we to part like this, Bill?”



5. Ike piped it. “DECEIVED!” he yelled. “Gurr-rr! I’ll teech you to raise me fond hart’s hopes only to dash ’em to the pavement again!” Wid that he chased Georgie and me for all he was werth.



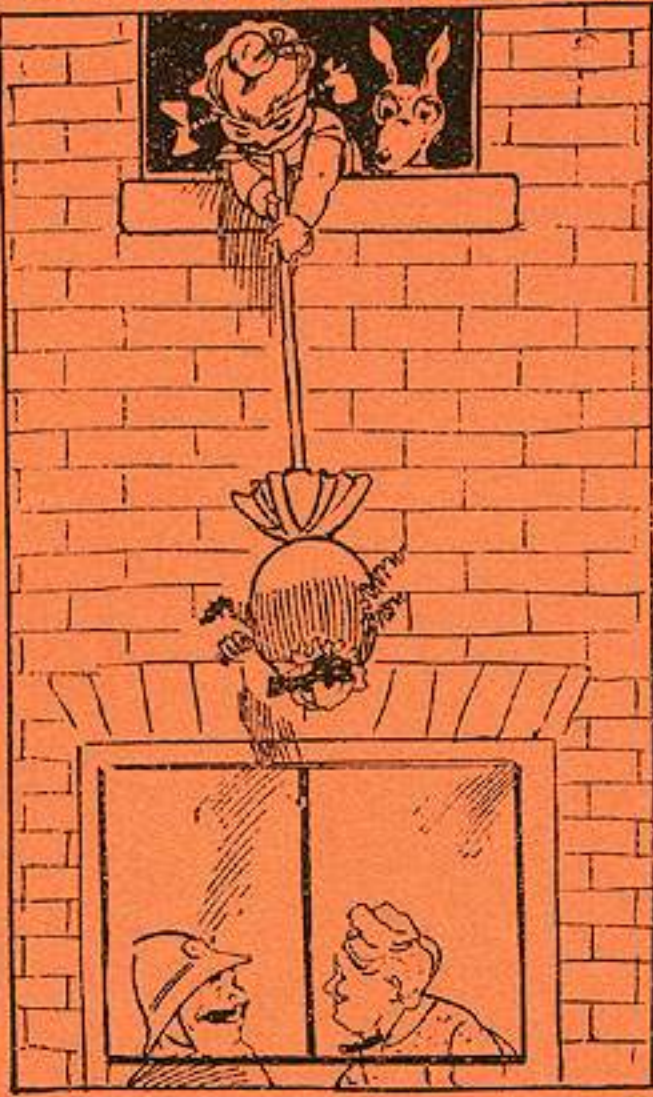
6. When ma heerd about our kleverness she must hav bin jellus of it, ’cos she swoopt down on us and they gave us a warm—very warm—invitoot to keep the kole-kumpany (leerful joak that) for a while.

Yours till the cellar-door opens agen,
FERDY, The Bunsey Boy.

GUESS WHAT THE COOK'S GUEST GUESSED IT WAS!



1. Now, what artless antic is Naughty Nora up to here? "Cookie has got P.c.-Fairyfeet in to supper again," she smiles. "But I won't tell auntie. But by painting Auntie's portrait just like so—



2. "And then lowering it down till it looks for all the world as if Auntie is hanging on to the sill by her toes, and—

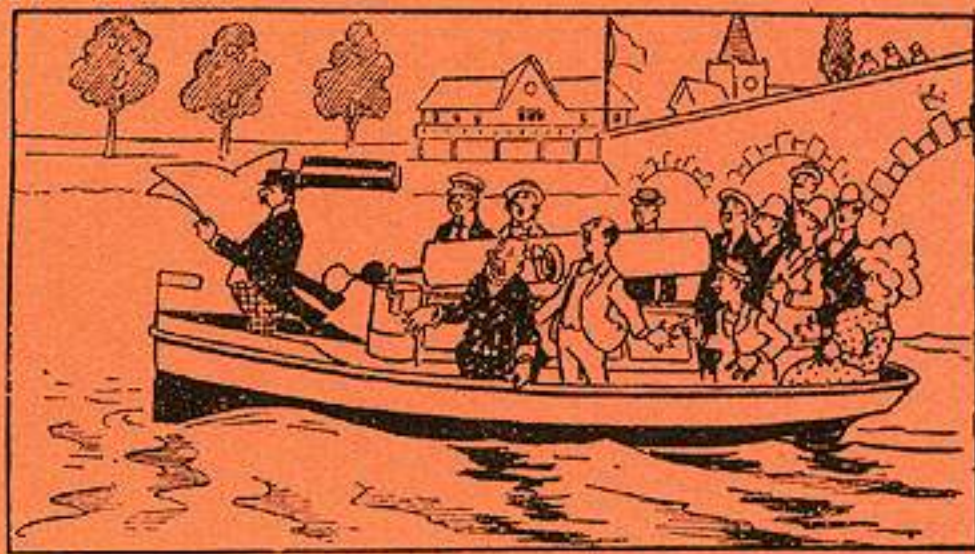


3. "Has her spectacles on the merry feasters—the result should be simply surprising. Tee-hee!" And so it was, too.

ANOTHER HAT-TRICK.

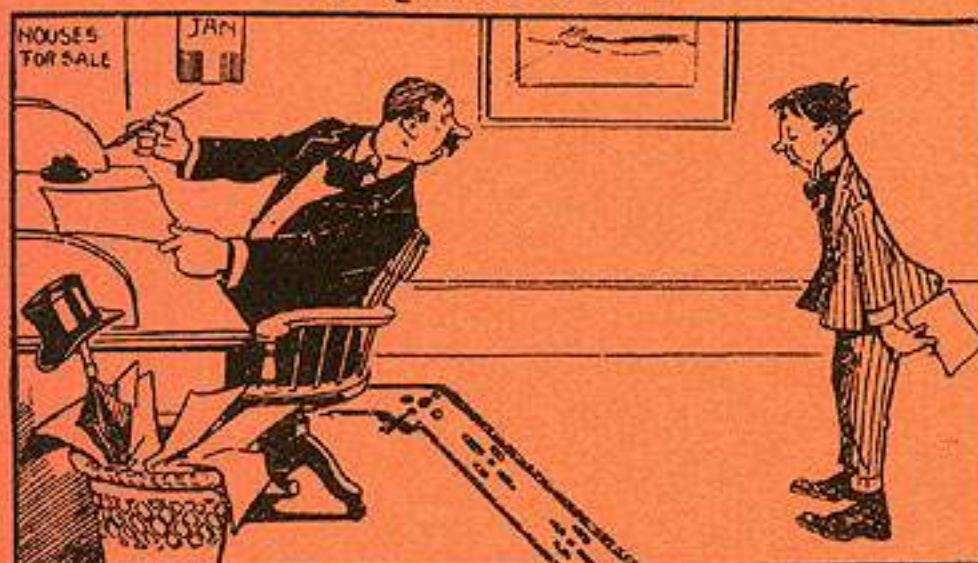


1. "Look out, guv'nor!" cried the river trippers, as they approached the bridge. "Mind your hat, old man!"



2. But they didn't know that old Sprowtz had his patent hat on, and when they reached the bridge he made it all right—like this!

A QUICK TRIP.



The Boss: "Did you tell income-tax man who called that I had gone to America?"

New Office-boy: "Yes, sir. I told him that you had started this morning."

The Boss: "Good! What did he say?"

New Office-boy: "He wanted to know when you'd return, sir, and I told him I didn't think you'd be back until after lunch."

A CONSIDERATION.

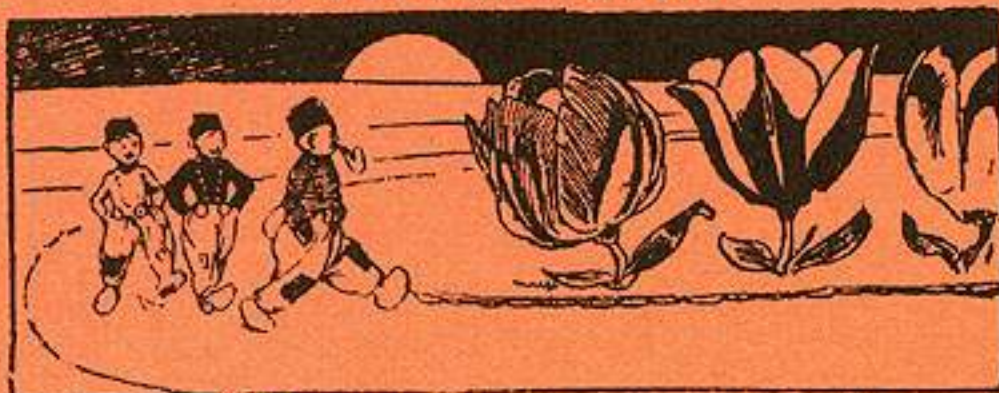


Cleverton (who has hired a taxi to propose in): "Say yes, darling!"

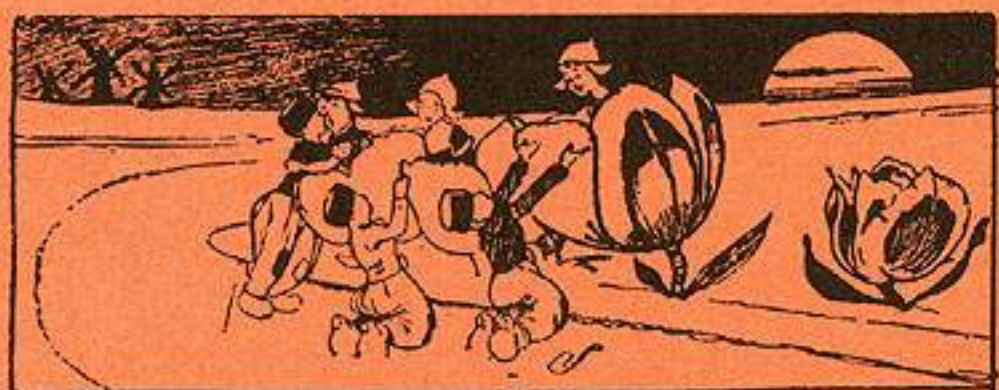
Miss Waiterbit: "Give me time to think."

Cleverton: "Good gracious! Not in here! Consider the expense!"

A FLOWERY STORY.



1. Now, what are these three little Dutch chaps toddling off to the tulip gardens for? P'raps the next picture will explain.



2. Ah! It does! They were going to meet their sweet-hearts, who had hidden themselves inside the big blossoms. See!



3. But the next evening the fathers of the little Girly-girlies were there instead, and then there was trouble, if you like!

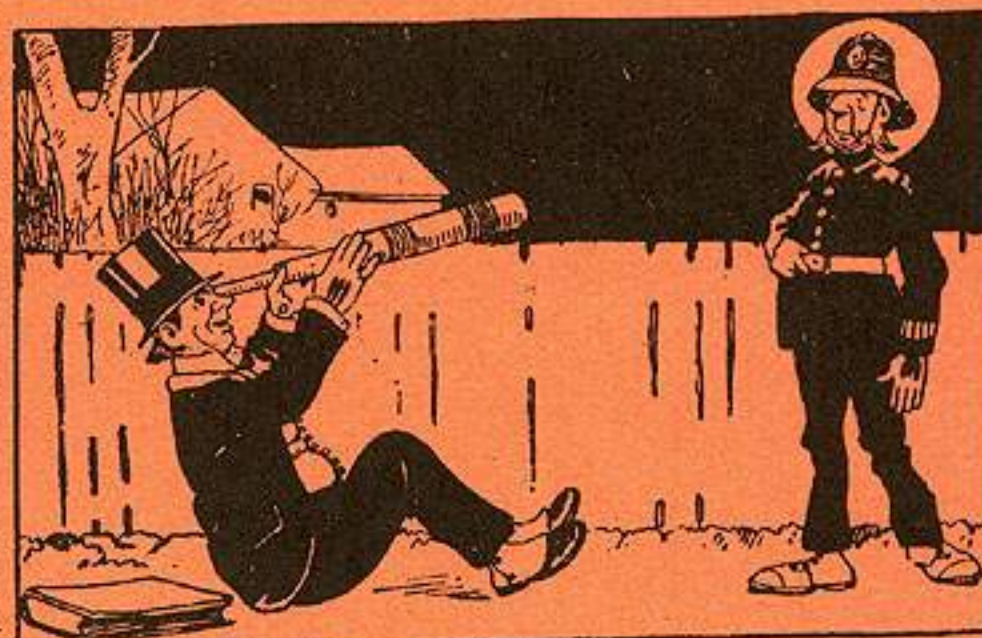
SHE MISUNDERSTOOD.



Artist: "Now, look here, Mrs. Jones, if you'll sit still and let me paint you, I'll give you five shillings."

Mrs. Jones: "Ah, that's all very well, Mr. Brown; but how will I get the paint off again?"

SAW HIM TOO PLAIN-LY.



The Professor: "How remarkable! I can distinctly see the man in the moon! What an exceedingly plain person!"

A H-AIR RAISING ACTION.



1. Yes, readers, the British soldier chap has been surprised and cut off, and those foreign Johnnies fancy they've got a capture. But what has the artful boy got the rocket fixed up for?



2. "Ah, this is where I take a rise out of you foreigners!" he twittered, as he fired a blank cartridge. "I hope this won't cause you any pain. This firework display is for my benefit, for—"



3. "I'll just drop on one of your gee-gees that you've left behind you!" For net result see small circle. Yes, the giddy foot-soldier went back to camp a la cavalry; and he deserved to, didn't he?