ROUGH ON COKER!

Magnificent Complete School Story in this issue.

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No. 327. Vol. 8. May 16th, 1914.

A figure in convict garb swung round as Mr. Tozer entered the room. The convict had a stick of grease-paint in his hand—he was deliberately making up his face before the glass! "I've got you, my man!" exclaimed Tozer. "Better take it quietly!" "What!" gasped Horace Coker, alias Convict 99. *(See the Grand, Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., which is contained in this issue.)*

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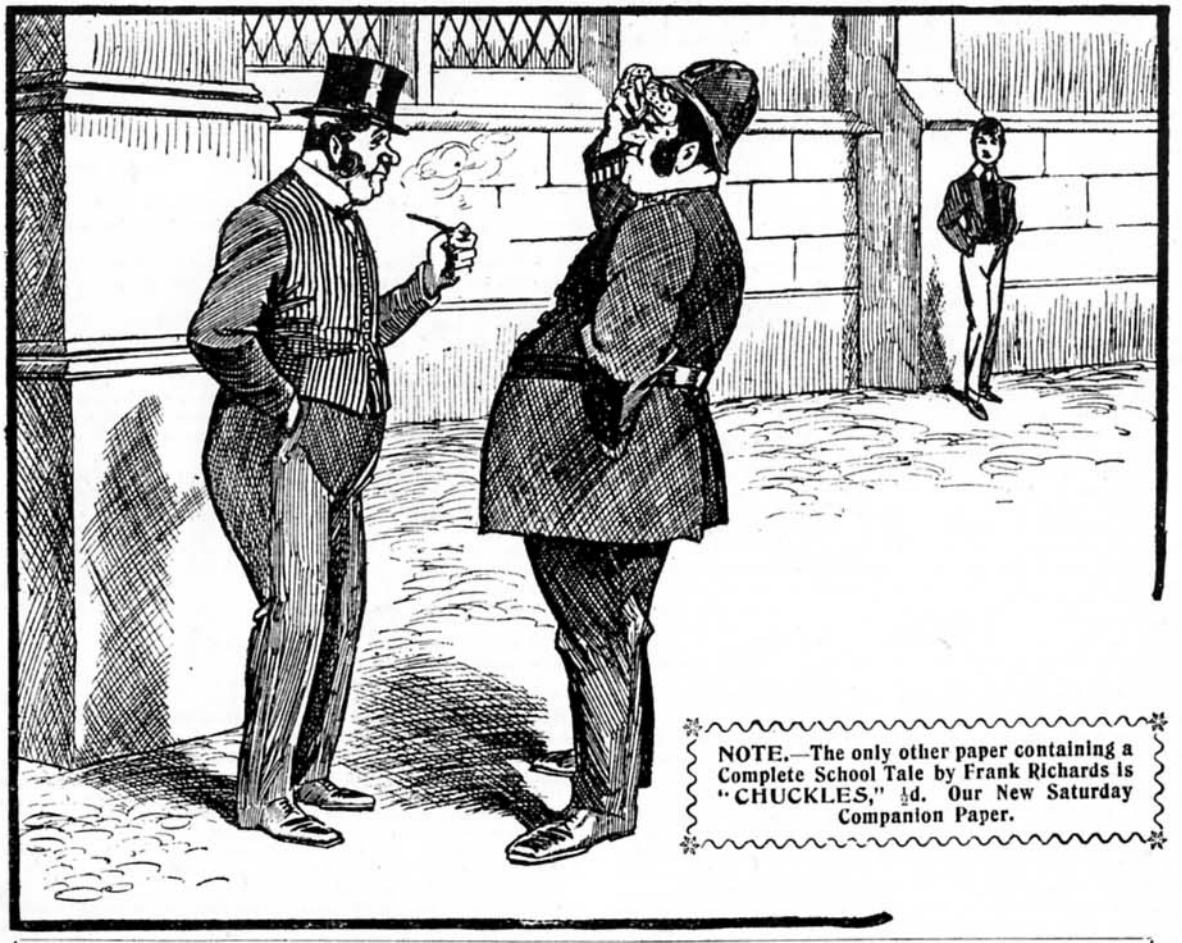

NOTE.—The only other paper containing a Complete School Tale by Frank Richards is "CHUCKLES," ½d. Our New Saturday Companion Paper.

Mr. Tozer paused on his way to the school-house, to exchange a word with Gosling. The officer was tired and hot, and he took off his hat and wiped his forehead. (*See Chapter* 2.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Coker's New Departure!

"CHEEK!"

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, pronounced that word all together, and with great emphasis.

They were indignant.

The chums of the Remove had just come in from cricket practice, when Bob Cherry spotted the new notice on the board. And the Co. gathered round to read it.

The notice was written in the big, sprawling handwriting of Coker of the Fifth. It also displayed to advantage the somewhat original orthography of Horace Coker. Coker had reached the Fifth Form without mastering all the mysteries of English spelling. The notice ran:

"ATTENTION!

"On Friday evening, at seven o'clock presiseley, the Fifth Form Stage Club will give a reppresentation of the Mellodrama, 'Convict 99.'

"Dramatized by Horace Coker, Esq., Pressident of the Stage Club, who will play the title-roll. Admission free to all Greyfriars fellows. Fags will be expected to wash their necks and behave themselves, otherwise they will be ejected.

"N.B.—No connecktion whattever with any fag drammatic society.

"(Signed) HORACE COKER."

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No wonder the chums of the Remove pronounced, with one emphatic voice, that it was cheek. It was the first they had ever heard of the Fifth Form Stage Club. Amateur theatricals at Greyfriars were represented by the Remove Dramatic Club. They had spurious imitators in the Fourth Form. But for Coker of the Fifth to take it up like this was pure and unadulterated cheek. Coker had often offered to play leading roles in the shows the Remove fellows gave. His kindly offers had been invariably declined, with or without thanks—generally without. Only a week or two before the Remove had given a play which had been really a tremendous success. Coker was evidently burning with emulation, and the foundation of the Fifth Form Stage Club was the outcome. Evidently Coker of the Fifth considered himself quite able to reap histrionic honours, and to put the Remove players quite in the shade. The reference to the "fag dramatic society" was especially exasperating.

"That's meant for us!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Us—a fag dramatic society!" said Harry Wharton indignantly. "Why, Coker would never have thought of the idea at all if we hadn't shown the way!"

"No fear!"

"Like his awful cheek!" said Frank Nugent, with a sniff. "Besides, he can't act any more than he can play cricket!"

"They must be off their dots to let him play the title-role," said Johnny Bull. "He will turn the giddy melodrama into a screaming farce."

"And he's written it himself! My hat!"

"It was our idea," said Wharton warmly. "We've been talking of a dramatised version of 'Convict 99' for dogs' ages. Coker must have heard something, and he's boned the wheeze."

"Cheek!"

"Nerve!"

"We'd better go and see Coker about this," said Harry Wharton. "Of course, we can't stop him starting a silly stage club if he likes, but he ought to let our schemes alone. I was going to write up 'Convict 99' and play the title-role when we did another play. Let's go and see Coker."

And the Famous Five marched off indignantly to the Fifth Form passage. Bob Cherry thoughtfully took his bat with him. It was quite possible that it might be wanted in an interview with Coker.

The door of Coker's study was half-open, and the sound of voices proceeded from the room. Coker shared that study with Potter and Greene of the Fifth, his faithful followers. The Removites heard Potter's voice as they came up the passage.

"That's topping, Coker, old man! You look the part to a T! Blessed if anybody wouldn't take you for a real convict!"

"Simply built for the part!" chimed in Greene heartily.

"The silly ass is making up!" murmured Wharton.

The Removites looked in at the door, and stared.

Coker of the Fifth was busy, and his admiring chums were helping him. Coker had the great advantage of being well supplied with money—a very important point in amateur theatricals. Probably his plentiful supply of cash had something to do with the faithfulness of his followers. It was extremely likely that Horace Coker was standing the whole expense of the Stage Club's play. That was the only way of accounting for the fact that he was to play the title-role, or any role at all.

Coker had "shed" his ordinary clothes, and was making up as the hero of "Convict 99." He was clad in convict garments, liberally strewn with the broad arrow. Coker was a big, burly fellow, head and shoulders above most of the Fifth. The convict garments certainly made him look like a ruffian. His hair was close-cropped, and his head resembled a bullet in shape, which added to the effect. He was making up his face now, with the aid of Potter and Greene, putting on plenty of grease-paint. He was barely recognisable.

Coker was too busy to notice the juniors looking in at the doorway. He surveyed his reflection in the glass, and gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Well, I do think it's topping, myself," he said modestly. "I've thought for a long time that I could act."

"Ahem!" murmured Potter.

"What did you say, Potty?"

"I said of course you can, Coker."

"Yes, I really think I can," said Coker. "I've rather a gift for it, you know. I haven't done much making-up; but you see I've got the right touch. I really think I look the part."

"You might have been born for it!" said Potter enthusiastically.

"Eh?"

"Your features suit it splendidly."

"Do they?" said Coker, apparently not over-pleased by that tribute.

"Yes, they do; and your build, and your manner, too," said Potter, with growing enthusiasm. "You don't need much make-up. You're simply planned by Nature for a part like that, old fellow."

Convict 99 glared at him.

"You silly ass!" he roared.

Potter started.

"What! I only said——"

"You silly chump! If you tell me I look like a convict——"

"Ahem! I meant——"

"Oh, shut up!" said Coker. "I look the part now, I know, and that's enough. Otherwise, I don't look any more like a convict than you do—not so much, in fact. And I'm not at all satisfied how you'll make up as a policeman. You can't act."

"Oh, can't I?" said Potter warmly. "I can act better than you any day."

"Don't rag," said Greene. "Get into your bobby things, Potter, and let's see. We want to know how the costumes go."

"They're in Fitzgerald's study," said Potter. "Fitz is going to be a bobby, too, you know. We've got warder's things for you, Greene."

"Go and put 'em on," said Coker. "Hallo! What do you fags want?" He caught sight of the grinning juniors at the door.

"Only come to admire," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, you can buzz off. I can't be bothered by fags now," said Coker loftily. "I'm getting into practice for my play."

"Your play!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You boned the idea from us!"

"Well, I may have heard you intended something of the kind," said Coker carelessly. "But of course, you would have made a muck of it. It was a good idea, and I took it up to make a success of it. Clear off!"

Potter and Greene left the study, and went along the passage to Fitzgerald's quarters. Harry Wharton & Co. remained looking at Coker. The great man of the Fifth continued to dab his face before the glass. He turned round and gave the juniors a patronising glance after a few moments.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

The juniors grinned.

"You want to know what you look like?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. What do you think? I admit that you know a little bit about amateur theatricals in a small sort of way," said Coker, still more patronisingly.

"What does he look like?" murmured Bob Cherry. "I should suggest a howling ass."

"A frabjous chump!" suggested Nugent.

"A harmless lunatic!" was Johnny Bull's opinion.

"A blithering duffer!" said Wharton.

Coker frowned. He had asked what he looked like, but he had not expected to be told in such painfully plain English.

"You clear off," he said, waving his hand. "I suppose it's rather hard on you, after your rotten fag shows, to have some real acting done here. But I can't help that. You can't expect to keep your end up against a chap who can really do things."

"Why, you ass——"

"You fathead!"

"You cheeky duffer!"

"And you've boned our idea of a convict play, too, you burglar!"

"Clear off!" roared Coker. "If you don't shift I'll come and shift you."

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Coker," purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, whose English was as weird as Coker's make-up.

Coker snorted, and made a rush for the door. He hadn't the slightest doubt that the fags would scatter and run. But he was mistaken. Instead of scattering and running, they closed in on Coker. Five pairs of hands seized him, and he

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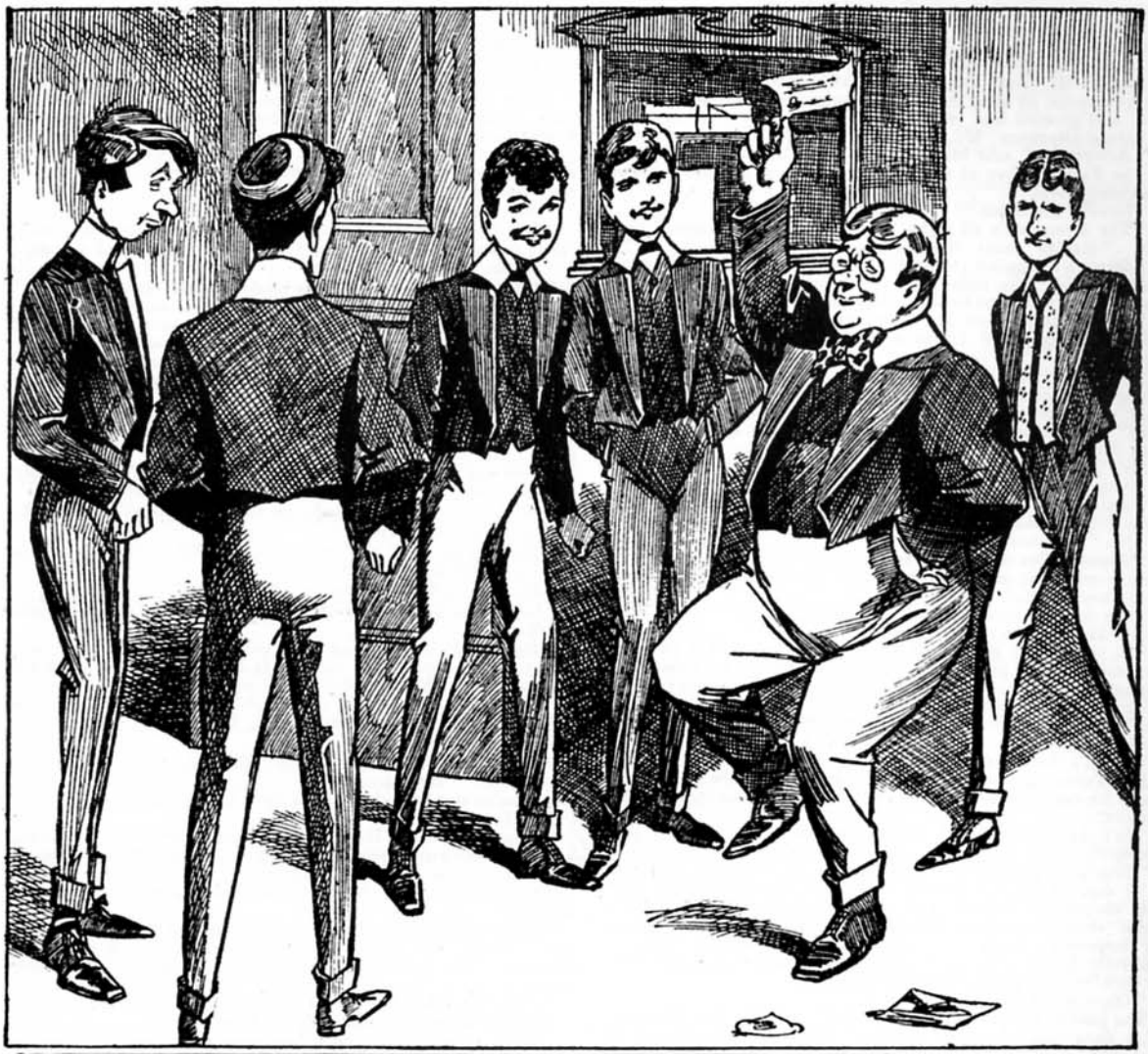

The juniors watched Billy Bunter as he slit open the envelope, and unfolded the letter, and revealed—a postal-order! Billy held it up, with a grin of triumph. "Well?" chuckled the fat junior. "What's that, Smithy?"
(See Chapter 9.)

was swept off his feet, and came down on the study carpet with a loud concussion.

"Yarooh!" roared Coker.

"Make him up!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker struggled furiously, but four of the Removites held him fast, while Frank Nugent proceeded to make him up. Nugent was very liberal with grease-paint, white chalk, and with charcoal. Coker's face grew wild and weird under his ministrations, and did not resemble that of Convict 99, or any other convict. It resembled nothing on the earth, or in the waters under the earth.

"Groogh!" spluttered Coker, as a greasy stick was jammed into his mouth. "Groogh! I'll smash you—I'll skin you—I'll—— Gerrogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites retreated from the study, shrieking with laughter, leaving Coker gasping on the floor. Coker staggered to his feet, and rushed to the door, and then paused. In his present guise it would hardly do to go forth from his study. The apparition of Convict 99 would cause too much excitement in the school. Coker yelled a threat after the vanishing juniors, who yelled with laughter in return, and then slammed his study door. Then he proceeded to unmake the over-generous make-up Nugent had placed upon his countenance.

FOR NEXT MONDAY— "CORNERED!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
From Information Received.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What does Tozer want?"

Bob Cherry asked the question, as he caught sight of the portly form of P.-c. Tozer entering the school gates. Mr. Tozer looked very ruddy and warm from his walk, and as he stopped to exchange a few words with Gosling, the porter, at the gate, he pushed back his helmet, and mopped his manly brow. Then he came on towards the School House, with his heavy tread, and with a most serious expression on his face. There was evidently something "up."

The Famous Five watched him from the steps of the School House. Mr. Tozer had had occasion, more than once, to visit the Head of Greyfriars with complaints concerning the conduct of their noble selves. Mr. Tozer had a rooted objection to snowballs in winter, and catapults in summer, and on these points the Greyfriars juniors did not always agree with him. Hence little difficulties between them and the majestic Tozer.

"More trouble!" sighed Harry Wharton. "I wonder what it is this time!"

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Can't be us," he declared. "It's ages and ages since we pulled the Tozer-bird's leg. A week, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

"Talk to him gently, and draw him out," said Nugent. "If it's a complaint, we may nip it in the bud. A soft answer turneth away wrath."

"Not Tozer's wrath," said Johnny Bull, with a shake of the head.

"Never mind—try it."

And as Mr. Tozer came majestically up the steps, the five juniors swept off their caps at the same moment, and bowed low, and greeted him respectfully.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Tozer!"

"Arternoon!" said Mr. Tozer stiffly. He did not approve of the Famous Five of the Remove, and he did not conceal his disapproval.

"Lovely afternoon!" hinted Bob Cherry.

"The arternoon's all right," said Mr. Tozer, fanning himself. "Rather warm, that's all."

"Doesn't it remind you of the sweet days of youth?" asked Bob Cherry, "the time when you were a giddy schoolboy, and used to yell after bobbies yourself."

"No, it don't!" said Mr. Tozer gruffly. "And I never did no such thing when I was a boy. I always respected th' lor."

"Ah, you were a model, Tozer. You must have been brought up on Eric, or Chunk by Chunk," said Bob. "We hadn't your advantages, Tozer. But what's the trouble this time? You're not going to cause any trouble for nice, innocent little chaps like us?"

Mr. Tozer grinned.

"Not this time, Master Cherry."

"Oh, good! Then who's the giddy culprit? What has he been doing? Making rude remarks about your face, Tozer?"

"No!" grunted Mr. Tozer.

"Because I'm down on that," said Bob solemnly. "I've always said that you can't help your face; these chaps have heard me say so."

"We have!" corroborated the other juniors.

Mr. Tozer's face turned purple.

"If you young gents will allow me to parse, I'll go in," he said. "I've got to see the 'Ead on most important business. 'Tain't nothing to do with you young gents; something more important than that there."

"Is there anything more important?" asked Bob, in surprise.

"What's the news, Tozer?"

Mr. Tozer was not averse to communicating the news that made his ruddy face so grave. He was willing to impress the juniors.

"It's an escape from Blackmoor Prison," he said impressively.

"Not Convict 99?" grinned Bob.

"I don't know his number," said Mr. Tozer; "but I 'ear that his name's Jaggers, and a most desprit character. He's hidin' somewhere about the country, and I've been 'phoned by Inspector Grimes at Courtfield about 'im. I come to warn Dr. Locke about it, so as not to let any of you kids fall in with 'im. It might be dangerous."

"Oh, crumbs!"

The juniors looked dismayed. After receiving that warning of a dangerous character lurking in the neighbourhood, it was quite possible that the Head might "gate" the whole school until the man was recaptured. And the prospect of being confined within gates for an indefinite period was far from pleasing.

"But that's rot," said Harry Wharton. "What danger should we be in, even if we met the johnny?"

"Bosh!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Them's my instructions," said Mr. Tozer solemnly. "That ain't all. Inspector Grimes thinks it's possible the willain may come lurkin' round this 'ere school, cause he used to be here."

"Used to be here!" exclaimed Wharton. "Do you mean to say that an old Greyfriars chap is a convict?"

Mr. Tozer grinned cheerfully. He was not sorry to be able to give the Greyfriars juniors that little dig.

"That's it!" he replied. "He's wot you call an old boy—name of Jaggers. He was at this 'ere school ten year ago, and I seen 'im when he was 'ere, too. Cheeky imp he was—never showing no respect for his Majesty's Police Force. He caught my 'elmet with a snowball one winter. I wasn't surprised when he went to penal servitude."

"Cause and effect!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But you don't mean to say that he was sent to penal servitude for catching your helmet with a snowball, Mr. Tozer?"

"Course not," said Mr. Tozer testily. "He was sent to prison for committin' crimes. He forged things. A desprit rascal. I knowed how he would turn out, I did, and I shouldn't be surprised if some other young gents was to turn out the same."

"Take warning in time, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, if you'll let me parse," said Mr. Tozer, with heavy sarcasm, "p'r'aps I can go in and see the 'Ead."

A sudden gleam darted into Bob Cherry's eyes. He closed one eye—the one that was away from Mr. Tozer—at his chums.

"I say, Tozer," he exclaimed excitedly, "describe the man to me. I think I may be able to give you a clue."

"You ain't seen him?" asked Mr. Tozer, interested at once. "If you 'ave, it's your dooty to tell me. I got the bracelets with me." Mr. Tozer jingled the handcuffs in his pocket. "I only wish I could git a chance at him. It would mean promotion for me. If you young gents 'ave seen the man——"

"Got his description?"

"Yes," said Mr. Tozer. "He's a small man, slim-built, 'bout twenty-seven. Dressed in conwick clothes, of course."

"Might be disguised?"

"Well, I don't see where he could get any disguise from," said Mr. Tozer. "But, of course, it's possible."

"I mean, he might have made up his face to disguise it."

"Of course, he would if he could; but——"

"In convict clothes, you say?"

"Yes. He ain't 'ad any chance of changing them."

Bob Cherry looked wildly excited.

"My hat! You're in luck, Tozer. And you expected, too, that he would be lurking about this school. That settles it."

"You ain't seen him 'ere?" exclaimed Mr. Tozer, equally excited now. "If you 'ave, it's your dooty——"

"Well, I've seen somebody in convict clothes," said Bob. "That's all I can say."

"That's enough," said Mr. Tozer, "that settles it. Where was it? Where is he?"

"He was lurking in one of the studies."

"Inside the house?" exclaimed Mr. Tozer, in astonishment.

"Yes."

"By gum! That takes the cake for cool nerve!" Mr. Tozer ejaculated. "My word! If he's still on the premises I'll nab him. Where did you see him?"

"I'll take you there" said Bob. "Of course, I don't answer for it that he's still there, but it isn't ten minutes since I saw him."

"That's good enough," said Mr. Tozer, loosening his truncheon. "Lead hon!"

"You're not afraid?" asked Bob admiringly.

Mr. Tozer snorted.

"Course I ain't. He's a small man, and I'm a big man, and I got my truncheon. If he resists, I shall 'ammer him in the name of the lor. Lead hon!"

"I say, give him a chance to surrender before you hammer him!"

"I shall call on 'im to surrender, and if he does, well and good!" said Mr. Tozer darkly. "Otherwise, I shall use wiolence. But lead hon—he may be getting away all this time."

"I don't answer for it that he's the chap you want——"

"If he's in conwick clothes, he's the man!"

"Well, he's in convict clothes right enough. These chaps have seen him, too. He was lurking in a study—just as if it belonged to him!"

"Show me that there study!" said Mr. Tozer. "I'll 'ave him hout. Lead hon, I say!"

"Come on, then!"

"We'll back you up, Tozer!"

"The back-upfulness will be terrific!"

"I may call on you for assistance in the name of the lor," said Mr. Tozer. "But I think I can 'andle him!"

And Mr. Tozer, with his truncheon drawn, followed the chums of the Remove to the Fifth-Form passage. There was a sound of someone moving in Coker's study. Bob Cherry caught his breath with terror in a way that did him great credit as a member of the Remove Dramatic Society.

"He's there—the chap I saw!" he gasped.

"Good hegg!" said Mr. Tozer. "You young gents stand ready to 'elp me if I want you!"

"What-ho!"

"Hallo, what's the row there?" called out Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, looking out of his study. But Mr. Tozer did not reply. His hand was on Coker's door, and he threw it open.

A figure in convict garb swung round towards him—a stick of grease-paint in his hand.

Mr. Tozer simply grinned with delight at the sight of him. A convict—deliberately making up his face before the glass! The coolness of the scoundrel was certainly astounding; but there was no doubt that Mr. Tozer had got his man.

"Hallo!" said Convict 99, otherwise Horace Coker.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Tozer grimly. "I've got you, my man!"

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"What!"

"Take it quietly," said Mr. Tozer. "I've got you—you can't git away. Surrender in the name of the lor!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Arrest of Coker!

COKER of the Fifth stared dazedly at Mr. Tozer. He knew the village constable well by sight, though Mr. Tozer did not know him—just then. Coker's own Aunt Judy would not have known him then.

"Don't you try to resist, my man," said Mr. Tozer. "I've got you!"

"He's drunk!" said Coker, addressing space.

"Drunk, am I?" said Mr. Tozer sarcastically. "I'm sober enough to lay you by the 'eels, anyway, you scoundrel!"

"Scoundrel!" gasped Coker.

"Har you giving in or not?" demanded Mr. Tozer, flourishing his truncheon. "I warn you that if I 'ave to 'it you, it will 'urt!"

"Keep that blessed club away!" roared Coker, dodging round the table.

Mr. Tozer jumped between him and the door.

"No, you don't!" he said grimly.

"You're mad!" panted Coker. "What do you mean? If you're not mad or drunk, what are you up to?"

There was a cackle from the passage. Coker glared towards the door. Five grinning faces were looking in.

"You young rotters!" shouted Coker. "Is this some trick of yours?"

"Ours!" said Bob Cherry, in surprise. "Well, I like that! You shouldn't have come here, Jaggers. I was bound to give Mr. Tozer information!"

"It was our dooty!" said Wharton solemnly.

"The dootyfulness was terrific, my esteemed Jaggers!"

"What are you calling me Jaggers for, you silly idiots?" snorted Coker. "Keep away, Tozer, you drunken dummy! I'll have you sacked from the police-force if you bother me. Keep that truncheon away, you mad idiot!"

"Idiot! Sacked! You imperent scoundrel!" roared Mr. Tozer, enraged by what he regarded as the insolence of the cornered convict. "I'll idiot you! I'll sack you! 'Old hout your 'ands for the bracelets, you skulking willian, or I'll brain you!"

He had cornered Coker in the corner of the study now, and Coker eyed the brandished truncheon in wild alarm. His first suspicion had been that Mr. Tozer was drunk, but he was convinced now that the police-constable was mad. A truncheon in the hands of a madman was a dangerous weapon, and no wonder Coker was alarmed.

"Keep off!" he panted.

Mr. Tozer jingled the handcuffs in his left hand.

"You goin' to come quietly?" he demanded.

"I—I—you—you——"

"'Nuff said. You're my prisoner!" said Mr. Tozer, and he closed in on Coker. Coker was as big as the escaped convict from Blackmoor Prison; but he was not so big as Mr. Tozer, and even without the truncheon he would not have had much chance. But he was not inclined to have the handcuffs on his wrists.

"Help me, you fellows!" he panted, as Mr. Tozer seized him. "He's mad!"

Click!

The handcuffs closed on Coker's wrists. Then Mr. Tozer put away his truncheon, smiling with satisfaction.

"Got 'im!" he remarked.

Coker dragged furiously at the handcuffs.

"Take these things off!" he roared.

"Har, har! That's likely!" chuckled Mr. Tozer. "Now you comerlonger me! I've got you—same day you escaped, too! This means promotion for me. Come quietly!"

"Escaped!" panted Coker "What do you mean, you fat fool?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fat fool, Mr. Jaggers?" said Tozer angrily, grasping Coker roughly by the shoulder. "I'll teach you to keep a civil tongue in your 'ead, you conwick scoundrel!"

"I'm not a convict, you silly ass!"

"Kim on!"

"I tell you I'm not a convict. I'm Coker of the Fifth!" screamed Coker.

"Well, of all the nerve!"

"I tell you I'm a Greyfriars chap—this is only make-up, you dummy!"

"I know you're a Greyfriars chap—or you was, Mr. Jaggers!" grinned Tozer. "I know all about that, my fine fellow. And you come back to 'ide in your old school—hey? But you can't fool me—not Ebenezer Tozer, my pippin! You come hon!"

"I won't come!" shrieked Coker. "Tell that silly idiot I'm Coker, you fags! You young villains, you've planted this on me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

FOR NEXT MONDAY— "CORNERED!"

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"Kim hon!" roared Mr. Tozer.

And he yanked Coker to the door.

Coker struggled furiously, but the handcuffs on his wrists impeded him, and he was marched wriggling and resisting through the doorway. The uproar brought the Fifth-Formers out of their studies. They stared at the scene in amazement. The Famous Five discreetly retired from the scene. They felt that an explanation was coming, and they also felt it would be safer to be at a distance when it came.

"What on earth are you doing to Coker?" exclaimed Potter of the Fifth.

"This 'ere is Jaggers, the escaped conwick!" explained Mr. Tozer. "I've run him down, from information received!"

"Jaggers! My hat!"

"It's Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Realistic effect of make-up!" chuckled Blundell. "Coker, old man, you're in for it. I hope you'll like skilly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Tozer, unheeding the remarks of the Fifth-Formers, marched his prisoner down the passage to the stairs. He was brimming with triumph. The whole countryside had been alarmed by the escape of the convict Jaggers; and here he was in the grip of the law—captured on the very day of his escape by Mr. Tozer! No wonder the Friardale policeman saw certain promotion looming ahead. He had captured the desperate character single-handed. Alone, unaided, he had done it!

"Kim on!" he jerked out, as Coker clung to the banisters with his manacled hands. "Now, I don't want to 'urt you, Jaggers!"

"Let me go, you fat idiot. I tell you I'm Coker! Help!"

"Well, that do take the bun—a captured conwick yellin' for 'elp!" gasped Mr. Tozer. "I never 'eard the like of it!"

"Potter! Greene! Rescue!"

But Potter and Greene were doubled up, helpless with laughter. Fortunately, Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was attracted by the din, and came hurrying upstairs.

"What ever is the matter?" exclaimed the Form-master. "Tozer, why—what—who is that?"

"The conwick Jaggers, sir," said Mr. Tozer. "He escaped from Blackmoor to-day, an' was lurkin' 'ere, sir. I've caught him!"

"Good heavens! Why did he come here?"

"He's an old Greyfriars boy, sir, beggin' your pardon!"

"Ahem! I remember now—I have heard of him!" said Mr. Prout. "Get the scoundrel safely off the premises!"

"Mr. Prout!" gurgled Coker. "Ow! Make the fat fool let me go! Ow!"

"I shall certainly not interfere!" said Mr. Prout severely. "I am surprised at you, Jaggers. You have disgraced the school you once belonged to. Have you no sense of shame, sir, that you come here, to the school you have disgraced, to be arrested in these precincts? It is outrageous—revolting! I have not the slightest sympathy for you!"

"I'm not Jaggers!" shrieked Coker. "I'm Coker!"

"What!"

"I'm Coker, sir! Ow!"

"Trying to deny his identity," grinned Mr. Tozer. "But he can't come over me."

"One moment!" gasped Mr. Prout. "I—I seem to recognise the voice! Did you say you were Coker?"

"Yes!" howled the unhappy Convict 99. "I'm Coker, sir! Make this blithering idiot let me go! You know my voice, sir."

"Yes, I—I certainly seem to know the voice," said Mr. Prout. "But if you are Coker, what does this garb mean?"

"I was making up for our play, 'Convict 99,' when this silly idiot burst into my study!" gasped Coker.

"Bless my soul!"

"Don't you take any notice of 'im, sir!" said Mr. Tozer stolidly.

"But—but I think this is Coker!" ejaculated the Fifth Form-master. "Pray delay a few moments, Mr. Tozer. I—I fear there has been a mistake. Potter, is this Coker?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, sir!" gurgled Potter.

"Get something and wipe that paint off his face, and we will see!"

Potter, almost in hysterics, hurried away for a sponge. He came back, and rubbed Horace Coker's face vigorously. Mr. Tozer, struck with a slight doubt at last, looked on with a very queer expression on his face.

"Grooogh!" gurgled Coker. "Don't rub my nose off, you silly fathead!"

"That will do, Potter! Let me look at him! Bless my soul! Yes, it is certainly Coker!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Tozer, you have made a mistake."

Mr. Tozer stared blankly at Coker. Now that his face

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was cleaned, he was easily recognisable as Coker of the Fifth. He was glaring almost murderously at Mr. Tozer.

"Well, my heye!" murmured Mr. Tozer at last.

"Take these things off!" shrieked Coker.

Mr. Tozer reluctantly removed the handcuffs. Coker doubled his fists, and would certainly have committed assault and battery upon the majesty of the law, had not Mr. Prout pushed him back in time.

"Calm yourself, Coker!"

"The silly chump——"

"Silence! Mr. Tozer, there has been a very serious mistake."

"Where's that young rip wot told me he'd a conwick here, then?" roared Mr. Tozer, glaring round him. "Master Cherry told me——"

"I knew it was those young villians!" snorted Coker. "And this silly fool let himself be taken in, the crass idiot."

"Look 'ere——"

"Silence, Coker! Go and take those ridiculous clothes off at once," said Mr. Prout sternly. "Mr. Tozer is not really to blame for the mistake, as you were dressed in that absurd manner. I do not approve of this nonsense. Mr. Tozer, I shall see that Cherry is properly punished for having deceived you——"

"But I didn't deceive him, sir," said Bob Cherry, from the foot of the stairs. "I only said I had seen somebody in convict clothes. Mr. Tozer was sure it was Jaggers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you not intend Mr. Tozer to make the mistake, Cherry?"

"Ahem!"

"Did you or did you not, Cherry?"

"Ahem! Yes, sir!"

"Then I shall report you to your Form-master," said Mr. Prout.

Mr. Tozer stamped away down the stairs. He gave the chums of the Remove an almost homicidal look as he passed them. They gave him a yell of laughter.

"So it wasn't the right man, after all, Tozey?"

"And you won't get promoted for arresting Coker," said Nugent sympathetically. "It's too bad. I'd have been willing to let you take him."

"Yes, rather—you're welcome to him, Tozer!"

"If I 'ad my way," said Mr. Tozer, in a suffocating voice, "I'd 'ave all boys drowned at birth, I would! Huh!"

And Mr. Tozer marched away as majestically as he could towards the Head's study. He left the crowd of fellows roaring with laughter behind him. Bob Cherry was called into his Form-master's study, and Mr. Quelch gave him two hundred lines—but Bob did not mind the lines. He felt that it was worth it—and everybody agreed with him—with the exceptions of Mr. Tozer and Coker of the Fifth.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The Unfortunate Jaggers!

THERE was considerable excitement in Greyfriars that afternoon. It was not on account of the performance of the Fifth Form Stage Club. That announcement had not caused so much excitement as Coker had expected. But the news brought by Mr. Tozer—and confirmed later from other sources—caused excitement. An escaped convict from Blackmoor Prison, lurking in the neighbourhood, was quite enough to interest keenly the whole school, from the head of the Sixth down to the smallest fag. And the interest was heightened by the fact that the escaped convict was an old Greyfriars boy.

Greyfriars fellows were wont to consider themselves rather a cut above the rest of the human species. Indeed, Temple of the Fourth, who was rather given to swank, classified the whole human race in two orders—Greyfriars fellows and outsiders. It came as a shock, therefore, to Greyfriars, to hear that a fellow who had belonged to the school now belonged to Blackmoor Prison. A chap who had once done lessons in the Greyfriars Form-rooms was now doing "time" at Blackmoor—or rather, had been doing so till he made his escape. It was a painful shock.

But there was no doubt about it. Vernon-Smith contrived to get an "Evening News," that evening, in which an account of the man was given. The fellows read it out in the junior common-room, and talked it over, and discussed it at great length. It was true enough. Charles Jaggers was the name of the man, and his number at Blackmoor had been 44. He had been at Greyfriars in his boyhood, but had not made any special mark there. Afterwards he had gone to Oxford, and after that into a counting-house in the City, where he had had the misfortune to mix other people's money with his own in an inextricable manner. He had tried to set matters right by inscribing certain papers with other people's names, imitating their handwriting closely to improve the effect. In vain—cold and unsympathetic men in blue had dropped down upon the unfortunate Jaggers, and put a sudden end to his caligraphic experiments, and since then he had been in Blackmoor.

Some of the fellows averred that he was innocent. A judge and jury had found him guilty; but, as Peter Todd sagely remarked, judges and juries will do those things. Todd's opinion was that a Greyfriars fellow couldn't possibly have done what Jaggers had been condemned for.

"Even Snoop wouldn't do it!" said Todd. "Would you, Snoop? I couldn't believe it even of you!"

Whereupon Snoop scowled ferociously.

"Well, I'm jolly glad he's got away!" said Temple of the Fourth. "Very likely the police made a bungle—they're always doing it, you know. And it was like their cheek to send a Greyfriars man to chokey, anyway."

"Hear, hear!" said quite a number of fellows.

"Shows he's got something in him, to get away from Blackmoor," said Bolsover major. "It's not an easy thing to do. The paper says he biffed a warder on the crumpet, and hooked it!"

"Does it say that?" asked Alonzo Todd, in astonishment. "What very extraordinary language for a newspaper."

"Fathead! It doesn't say those words!" growled Bolsover while the other fellows laughed. "The chap must have some go in him!"

"He's gone, anyway!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, you'd naturally expect a Greyfriars chap to be able to do things, even if he's a giddy convict," remarked Temple.

"Yes; he's done his employers, he's done time, and now he's done a bunk," Vernon-Smith remarked. "I wonder what he'll do next?"

"I hope he'll get clear."

"Same here!"

A good many of the fellows expressed that hope. The man, if what was said about him was true, was decidedly a bad character; but the fellows could not help having a sort of sneaking sympathy with an old Greyfriars chap who was down on his luck. And certainly the man had shown boldness in escaping from the well-guarded prison, and resource in keeping so far out of the clutches of the police and warders who were hunting for him.

What interested the juniors most of all was the fact that Charles Jaggers, No. 44, had come in the direction of Greyfriars in his flight.

There seemed to be no doubt about that. He had been seen by a farm-labourer near Lantham; he had been seen again near Redclyffe, which was only a few miles from the school. After that, a servant at Highcliffe School had seen a man in convict clothes creeping in the wood, and had given information. The wood had been scoured, and the man had fled, and there was vague information to the effect that he had fled towards Greyfriars. At all events, whether he was close to the old school or not, it was quite certain that he was within a mile or two.

"What the dickens can he want in this direction?" Nugent said, puzzled. "Not much good his making for the coast here. All the shipping at Pegg will be watched. The coastguards will be looking out for him."

"Perhaps he thinks he'll get help here," said Billy Bunter. "I jolly well know he won't get away from me. Some of the chaps might be soft enough to lend him a hand, because he used to be at Greyfriars."

"Against the law," said Peter Todd. Todd knew all about the law, as his father was a solicitor—at least, he was supposed to know all about it for that reason. "You mustn't help a prisoner dodge the police. You can be lagged for it."

"He can't expect anything of that kind," said Wharton, with a shake of the head. "Besides, he can't know anybody here. It's ten or twelve years since he left Greyfriars."

"The Head will remember him."

"And Gosling, too!" said Nugent. "Gosling has been here from time immemorial. Let's go and ask Gosling about him."

Quite a little army of juniors bore down on Gosling's lodge to ask him whether he remembered Charles Jaggers. Gosling looked a little alarmed as they swarmed into his lodge. He suspected a rag.

"Now, then," said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere, young gentlemen——"

"Pax!" said Bob Cherry laughing. "'Tain't a rag, Gossy. We're after information. Do you remember a chap that used to be here named Jaggers? You've been here an awfully long time, Gossy——"

"Since the reign of Henry the Eighth, isn't it, Gosey?" asked Skinner.

Gosling snorted. He was supposed to be enormously old, but certainly he did not date back to the reign of Henry the Eighth.

"I remember the young rip," he said.

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"Mr. Prout!" gurgled Coker. "Ow! Make this fat idiot let me go! Ow!" "I shall certainly not interfere, Jaggers!" said Mr. Prout sternly. "I have not the slightest sympathy for you!" (*See Chapter* 3.)

"What was he like, Gossy?"

"Something like you, Master Cherry!" said Gosling deliberately. "Used to be full of the same tricks. Very like you, Master Cherry."

There was a laugh.

"Young rip, he was," said Gosling reminiscently. "He put fireworks in my 'at one Fifth of November. After that, I wasn't surprised at wot 'appened to 'im. I shouldn't wonder if some more Greyfriars young gents goes the same way, by the way they carries on, Master Cherry. He was very like you in his ways——"

"Oh, rats!" said Bob crossly.

"I suppose you'd help him if he came along now, Gossy?" Vernon-Smith remarked.

Gosling grunted very expressively.

"Yes; I'd 'elp him to the lock-up," he said. "I only 'ope I get a chance. There'll be a reward out for him soon, if he ain't caught—and I only 'ope I'll get a chance of 'andlin' it. Let him come to me, that's all!"

"Shame!" said Nugent. "You're a mercenary beast, Gosling!"

"And a heartless old reprobate!" said Peter Todd severely.

"I shouldn't wonder if he was innocent, and if it was Gosling that did it all the time," declared Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

FOR NEXT MONDAY— **"CORNERED!"**

"Wot I says is this 'ere—you get outer my lodge!" exclaimed the exasperated Gosling. "If he comes 'ere, I'll 'and him hover to the perlice willing, and I honly wish I could 'and you all hover along with 'im!"

The juniors, after telling Gosling what they thought of him—at some length—departed from the lodge. Charles Jaggers had evidently not been a favourite with the crusty old porter; but that, as Todd sapiently observed, was a point in his favour.

"The trouble is that we may be gated while he's hanging around in these parts," Nugent remarked. "But I hope the Head will have more sense than that. He knows an old Greyfriars chap wouldn't do us any harm, even if he has gone to the giddy bow-wows since he left here."

Apparently the Head had more sense. He had received Police-constable Tozer's warning of the fact that the convict was lurking in the neighbourhood, but nothing was said about gating the school in consequence. And that was a great relief to the Greyfriars fellows—especially as a good many of them were keenly anxious to meet the convict, if possible, and have a look at him.

"It isn't as if he were a dangerous ruffian—a giddy Bill Sikes," Bob Cherry remarked. "He must have some decency left, as he was at Greyfriars once——"

"Dead cert!" grinned Skinner.

"Unless he was a chap like Skinner, of course——"

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"Why, you silly ass——"

"And it's rot to suppose that he'd do us any harm. He couldn't want to change clothes with a junior—it would be too much of a misfit. Of course, he might try to rope in one of the seniors and collar his clobber—Wingate's or Loder's togs would fit him, according to the size the paper gives of him. But they ought to be willing to do that much for an old Greyfriars chap."

"Against the law!" said Peter Todd.

"Blow the law!" said Nugent disrespectfully.

Peter shook a warning finger at him.

"You'll land yourself in chokey, some day, if you blow the law, Nugent! The law's the greatest of all institutions——"

"I should think so," grinned Skinner. "If it wasn't for the law, Todd's pater would have to work for his living."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In spite of Peter Todd, however, quite a number of the fellows agreed with Frank Nugent that it would only be decent to lend a hand to an old Greyfriars chap who had come a "mucker"; and so it was to be hoped, for their own sakes, that they would not come into contact with Charles Jaggers, Convict No. 44.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Coker Knows!

COKER, of the Fifth, wore a thoughtful expression. A thoughtful expression was quite unusual on the brow of the great Coker. As a rule, he did not do much thinking—indeed, Potter had confided to Greene his fixed belief that Coker hadn't the necessary mental apparatus. But Horace Coker was thinking now, and his two study-mates glanced curiously several times across the tea-table at his corrugated brow.

The chums of the Fifth were having tea in Coker's study. Coker had shed the convict outfit, and cleaned off most of the grease-paint. There were traces of it still about his ears and his eyebrows, but that was all.

"Pass the jam, Cokey," said Potter.

Coker did not speak. His eyes were fixed upon his tea-cup, as if he were trying to read his fortune in the remnants there.

"Coker, old man!"

"Eh!" said Coker, starting out of his brown study. "Did you speak?"

"I asked you for the jam."

"Oh, blow the jam!" said Coker. "I've been thinking."

"Did it give you a pain?" asked Potter sarcastically. "You shouldn't start these things suddenly at your time of life, you know."

"Look here, you ass——"

"Oh, pass the jam!"

Coker grunted and passed the jam. Potter helped himself liberally, and then, remembering that Coker had stood the jam for tea, he graciously inquired what it was his study-leader had been thinking about.

"The convict," Coker explained.

"Which?" grinned Potter. "Ninety-nine or forty-four?"

"Forty-four," said Coker. "That chap Jaggers—he's innocent."

"How the dickens do you know?" demanded Potter.

And Greene stared at Coker in surprise. Coker spoke positively, as if he knew all about it; but that was not really convincing. Coker generally spoke positively, as if he knew all about it.

"Well, I do know," said Coker. "He used to be at Greyfriars, for one thing. It's absurd to suppose that a Greyfriars chap would do a dirty trick like forgery, and collaring other people's money. It's unreasonable, on the face of it."

"Ahem!"

"Besides, he used to fag for my uncle, when he was here," went on Coker. "My Uncle George. Uncle George was here about fourteen or fifteen years ago, when I was a nipper. Well, Charley Jaggers was his fag. He was a kid in the Third Form at that time, or in the Remove—I forget. I've heard Uncle George speak of him, and how he used to lick him for pinching his tommy."

"He started pinching early," grinned Greene.

"Oh, rot!" said Coker. "All the fags pinch jam, don't they? Uncle George used to lam him with a cricket-stump—I've heard him say so. When this chap Jaggers was sent to prison, I remember hearing Uncle George talk about it—it was one vac. I was in the Shell at that time. Well, Uncle George said positively that he was certain that a kid he had licked so thoroughly when he was a boy couldn't possibly have gone to the bad. He used to larrup him for his own good, you know. They weren't so particular then about walloping fags. They used to get it hot and strong, and serve 'em jolly well right! It's a good training for 'em!"

"It doesn't seem to have had very good results in Jaggers' case," Greene remarked.

"I tell you he's innocent!"

"But how do you know?"

"You silly ass! Haven't I just explained to you?" demanded Coker, exasperated.

Greene stared.

"He's innocent because he used to steal your Uncle George's jam, and your blessed uncle used to wallop him with a cricket-stump?" he demanded. "I don't quite see the connection. That isn't evidence. If your Uncle George had gone and told the judge that——"

"What's the good of talking to a blessed judge?" snorted Coker. "They're asses! They have to sentence somebody to earn their salaries, of course."

"Oh!" said Greene. This was a new view of the functions of His Majesty's judges.

"But the police!" murmured Potter. "They found lots of evidence——"

"It's their trade to find evidence, fathead! When they can't find any they go to sleep and dream it!" said Coker. "Don't talk to me about the police! Don't they send lots of innocent people to prison? There was a chap—I forget his name—was sent for ten years', and he was as innocent as Charley Jaggers."

"Well, have it your own way!" yawned Potter. "Pass the cake!"

"That's what I've been thinking about," said Coker, unheeding the request for cake. "Here's an innocent man sent to prison for a blunder of the police—and he's an old Greyfriars chap, carefully trained by my Uncle George! Well, I think it's up to Greyfriars to help him out."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And I'm going to do it!" said Coker determinedly.

"You!" ejaculated Potter and Greene simultaneously.

"Yes; and you're going to help me."

Potter rose to his feet.

"Of all the bally idiots, I think you're about the balliest," he said in measured tones. "Don't you know it would be breaking the law?"

"I'm not a funk," snorted Coker.

"Well, I'm not; but I funk breaking the law. You must be off your rocker."

"Right off!" said Greene. "I agree with Potter."

Coker glared at them contemptuously.

"Then you won't help me?" he demanded.

"No jolly fear!" said Potter promptly.

"Not such a silly chump!" said Greene.

"Yah! You're a pair of funks! He's an innocent chap——"

"Rats!" said Potter. "He was found guilty. 'Tain't a case like Convict 99, you ass. Those things happen in books; but this is a live man. He was guilty enough."

"He was innocent, I tell you!" roared Coker furiously.

"Rot! He was guilty!"

Coker jumped up.

"Look here, if you want a thick ear, Potter, you've only got to say so. I tell you the man was as innocent as—as—as Julius Cæsar!"

Potter retreated to the door, and opened it.

"I say he was guilty!" he retorted. "And I think very likely your Uncle George's training had something to do with it. I think very likely he learned it from your Uncle George—yah!"

And Potter fled, and slammed the door behind him, as Coker made a rush at him. Coker turned to Greene, breathing hard.

"Do you agree with Potter?" he demanded.

Greene cast a longing glance at the door. He was not so big as Coker, and Coker was evidently in deadly earnest on this subject.

"Well, you see——" he temporised.

"Are you going to act like a pal, and back me up in helping the chap?" Coker demanded.

"No fear! I think you're a silly ass!" said Greene indignantly. "I think—— Here, hands off—yah—leggo—yoooop!"

Greene sailed through the study doorway, and landed in the passage with a bump. He sat up and stared stupidly at Coker.

"Oh! Ow! You mad duffer! Yow!"

ANSWERS

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"Get off!" roared Coker. "I'm fed up with you! Call yourselves a chap's pals, and refuse to back him up in helping an innocent man—yah!"

"You—you silly ass! You dangerous chump—you——"

"My hat! I'll——"

But Greene fled.

Coker turned back into the study fuming. Fully convinced that Charley Jaggers, Convict No. 44, was as innocent as a dove, for the excellent reason that Charley had fagged for his Uncle George, Coker was naturally exasperated by the lack of enthusiasm on the part of his chums. The least they could have done, in his opinion, was to back him up in rescuing that wronged and unhappy victim of a crying miscarriage of justice. But the defection of Potter and Greene didn't make any difference to the chivalrous Coker—not a whit. It only made him more determined.

Left alone in his study, Coker thought the matter over. Meanwhile, Potter and Greene were confiding to the senior common-room that Coker had gone stark, staring, raving mad. And before the evening was out all the school knew of Coker's fixed belief in the innocence of Charley Jaggers, and his intention to help him escape the clutches of the law.

The Chums of the Remove heard it, and roared.

"Just like old Coker!" said Bob Cherry, wiping away his tears. "The man must be innocent if he fagged for a member of the Coker family—ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker will get himself into trouble," said Harry Wharton. "Why, if the Head came to hear of his scheme——"

"Poor old Coker!"

"Well, he won't find the convict, that's one comfort," remarked Nugent. "I should be sorry to see old Coker led away like Eugene Aram, with giddy gyves upon his wrists."

Bob Cherry yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha! Why shouldn't he find him?"

"What!"

"Don't you see?" gurgled Bob. "There's a suit of convict toggery in the school—Coker's suit, that he's going to play Convict 99 in. We can get hold of it——"

"Oh!"

"And stick it on somebody—somebody who's big enough to fill it—and let Coker find him. It will be a lesson to Coker that will be worth a guinea a box to him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five yelled over the idea. The roars of laughter in No. 1 Study brought a good many of the Remove there to see what was the matter. And when they heard what was the matter, they yelled too.

"Oh, my word!" gasped Bolsover major. "Poor Coker! Fancy his having a giddy convict planted on his hands! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's going to do it?" asked Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, with a chuckle. "It will have to be a big chap!"

"Bolsover's the man!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm on," said Bolsover major. "If Coker takes me in and shelters me, I'll give him a high old time, I promise you that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites yelled again over the prospect.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major—Convict!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. kept an eye upon Coker of the Fifth that evening. They were not surprised to see him come down in his hat and coat, with a pass out of gates from his Form-master. Mr. Prout had granted Coker leave to go down to Friardale and see about his motor-bike, which was under repair there. But the juniors guessed easily enough that that was only the ostensible reason for Coker's going out. Horace Coker was going to look for the convict.

True, there didn't seem much chance of Coker happening on Charley Jaggers, Convict No. 44, considering that the police of half the county were searching for the man in vain. But Coker had thought it out. He certainly couldn't find the man by staying indoors. That was indubitable. Therefore, he went out. With luck, he might hit on the fellow. And if he didn't, he would try again and again, devoting all his spare time to the generous task. When Coker took up an idea, he never dropped it again—he never admitted defeat, and never by any chance admitted that he was wrong. He was very firm—as firm as a rock, he called it—or as obstinate as a mule, as Potter called it. That was simply a difference in the point of view.

Potter and Greene were on bad terms with Coker now. They glared at him as he passed them going out. Coker had declared that if they wouldn't back him up, they were no pals of his, and that if they weren't pals of his he wasn't going to have them in his study. As the study belonged as much to Potter and Greene as to Coker, that was rather high-handed. But Coker was a terrible

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fighting-man, and always willing and ready to back up his opinion with a pair of very large fists.

And so Potter and Greene took their exclusion from the study without resistance, and went to dig with Fitzgerald till Coker came to his senses again. But they were feeling decidedly ratty; and the things they said about Coker that evening would have filled a volume.

Indeed, their rattiness was so apparent that Harry Wharton ventured to give them a hint of the jape that was intended upon Coker; and Potter and Greene jumped at the idea. It was miles beneath their dignity, of course, to take a hand in a junior rag, but they agreed to keep the coast clear for the Removites. They were going to keep out of the study and to see that the other fellows in the Fifth kept out. That was all the Removites wanted—it made the arrangements easier for them.

After Coker's departure, the juniors coolly entered his study and searched for the outfit of Convict 99. It was discovered in a box along with a crowd of other theatrical appurtenances. There was a general chuckle as it was dragged out to view.

"Couldn't be better," said Harry Wharton. "If old Tozer took this for a real convict rig when Coker was wearing it, Coker will do the same when Bolsover's wearing it."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Coker won't be back for some time yet," said Wharton. "But we may as well get ready. Take off your clobber, Bolsover."

Bolsover slipped off his Etons. The scheme had already been planned out to the last detail. In case anything went wrong, it was agreed that the chums of the Remove were to be posted at the end of the passage, ready to rush to Bolsover's rescue. But it was not likely that anything would go wrong. The scheme had been laid too carefully for that.

Bolsover donned the outfit of Convict 99. It hung a little loose on him, for he was not so big as Coker, but the juniors pinned it together here and there, and made a slim convict of him.

Then they borrowed Coker's grease-paints. They were accustomed to the art of make-up, as members of the Remove Dramatic Society—a much superior society, as Nugent remarked, to Coker's new-fangled Stage Club. Nugent, who was very clever at make-up, bestowed a blue chin upon Bolsover, making him look as if he were badly in want of a shave, and reddened his nose, and darkened his eyebrows and eyelashes. Whether Charley Jaggers had dark eyebrows and eyelashes or not they didn't know; but Coker didn't know either, so it was all right. And it was necessary to disguise Bolsover somehow. He was already nearly unrecognisable, and a few haggard lines added to his face finished it artistically. When Nugent had finished the make-up, Bolsover major might have deceived even a warder from Blackmoor Prison, if such a person had come to Greyfriars in search of the escaped convict.

"Better make the clobber dirty, and tear it a bit," said Bolsover. "I've been lurking all day in the woods, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A few rents in the clothes, and some ink and ashes rubbed into them, gave them the disreputable appearance required. The juniors stood in a grinning circle, admiring their handiwork.

"Topping!" said Harry Wharton, with a gasp of laughter. "Blessed if it wouldn't take me in. Coker won't smell the tiniest mouse. Now, where are you going to hide?"

"Behind the screen," said Bolsover—"that's about the only place. Unfasten the window—I came in that way, you know."

Wharton unfastened the window.

"By the way, a hungry convict would raid the cupboard," Bob Cherry remarked. "Pile in! We've got to keep up appearances."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's cupboard was well supplied—it always was. The juniors were ready for supper, and Coker's supply was much more plentiful than their own. They raided the study cupboard with hearty goodwill, and left hardly a crumb.

"Now we'd better be clearing!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Got the knife, Bolsover?"

"Yes, rather!"

"And the rope?"

"You bet!"

"Then it's all serene. Come on, you fellows!"

Bolsover sat down on a chair behind the big screen in the corner of the study. Harry Wharton turned the gas out, and the juniors crowded out, chuckling, carefully closing the study door behind them.

They descended the stairs to watch for Coker.

It was twenty minutes or so later when Horace Coker

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came in. The chums of the Remove grinned as they saw him. He was looking tired and muddy. Evidently he had been looking about for the convict; but, to judge by his expression, he had had no luck.

"Found your man?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

Coker snorted.

"Go and eat coke!" he snapped.

"Sure you haven't got him about you?" queried Nugent, scanning Coker, as if the Fifth-Former might possibly have Convict 44 hidden in one of his pockets.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker frowned, and marched away to the Fifth-Form passage. The juniors heard his door open and close again.

"Now for the fireworks!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites crept cautiously to the end of the Fifth-Form passage, to listen for sounds from Coker's study. In case of mischance, they were ready to rush in and save Bolsover major from the wrath of Coker.

But there was no sound of alarm from Coker's study.

"It's all right!" murmured Bob Cherry, suppressing a desire to yell. "It's all serene, my infants! It's working!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!"

And the hilarious juniors "shushed," though with considerable difficulty. They would have given a great deal to see what was passing in Horace Coker's study in those moments. But they could guess, and the mental picture of it brought them to the verge of hysterics.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Black Ingratitude!

HORACE COKER grunted discontentedly as he came into his study, and he closed the door behind him with unnecessary force. The study was quite dark, save for a dim glimmer in the grate, where the fire was not quite out.

Coker fumbled in his pocket, and struck a match and lighted the gas. Coker was discontented and grumpy. He had had a long and somewhat muddy walk, in the hope of coming across the unfortunate fugitive whom he had so generously resolved to befriend. But he had not come across him. The man who was dodging the police with success was really not likely to be discovered in a hurry by Coker of the Fifth, and Coker could not help realising it, though he had great confidence in his own powers of doing all sorts of things that other persons could not do.

He felt rather bitterly that he might have had more luck if his pals had backed him up, as they ought to have done. They ought to have jumped at the chance of helping an innocent man to get away from the clutches of the law—taking Coker's word for it, of course, that the man was innocent.

The silly duffers wanted better evidence of his innocence than the fact that he had fagged for Coker's Uncle George when Coker's Uncle George was at Greyfriars. They couldn't take Coker's word for it—could not rely on his sapient judgment. Coker snorted at the thought. He also snorted to see the fire out, and no sign of Potter and Greene. He had turned them out of the study, in his high-handed Coker manner, but he somewhat unreasonably expected to find them there, with a good fire going, and supper ready. That was Coker all over.

Coker stirred together the remains of the fire in the grate, and then went to the cupboard. Coker had more money than any other fellow in the Fifth, and there was always something good in the study cupboard—a circumstance that made Potter and Greene very patient with Coker as a rule. But all the fleshpots of Egypt could not have tempted them to back him up in his latest wheeze—that of helping a convict to escape from his pursuers. Potter and Greene drew the line at that.

Horace Coker looked into the cupboard, and snorted once more. Like the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard, he found that the cupboard was bare.

"Well, the rotters!" exclaimed Coker. "They've been here and scoffed all my grub, anyway. The blessed cheek! Unless it was Bunter——"

Coker broke off, and swung round suddenly from the cupboard. He had heard a sound in the room. He was not, as he had supposed, alone there. A gleam came into Coker's eyes as he fixed them on the screen in the corner, from whence the sound of a movement had proceeded. He guessed that the individual who had raided his cupboard was hidden in the study. He had caught him. Probably it was a junior—Billy Bunter most likely—or Bunter minor of the Second Form. Coker made a jump towards a cricket-stump that stood in a corner.

He gripped the cricket-stump, and turned towards the screen again.

"Come out, you rotter!" he rapped out.

There was a sound of a gasping breath.

"Come out!" roared Coker. "I know you're there! I'm going to whale you! Well, if you won't come, I'll fetch you!"

He strode towards the screen, seized it, and dragged it aside.

Then he staggered back with a gasp.

A crouching figure, in convict garb, with a white and lined face and a blue chin, was there, shrinking!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker.

The cricket-stump fell from his hand, and clattered on the floor. He stared at the convict with starting eyes.

"Coker!" The convict's voice was husky and low. "Horace, help me! I've come here for your help! I used to fag for your uncle when I was at Greyfriars! You'll help me, Horace! I am innocent!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Help me to escape, Horace! I am innocent!"

And the convict covered his face with his hands and sobbed.

"My word! Jaggers!"

"Yes, yes, Charley Jaggers, your old uncle's fag—I mean, your uncle's old fag. Horace, you will help me, for his sake? I am innocent! I swear that I have never committed forgery in my life!"

"Well, this beats the band," stuttered Coker. "Convict 44! How on earth did you get here?"

"You will not betray me?"

"No fear!"

"Horace, you mean that?"

"Honour bright!" said Coker. "The fact is, I've been looking for you!"

"Looking for me!" moaned the convict. "You wish to hand me over to the warders?"

"Not a bit of it. I want to help you!"

"Oh, say those words again!" sobbed the convict.

"I want to help you," repeated Coker. "Well, this is luck! Hold on; I'll lock the door. Mustn't let anybody spot you here, Jaggers!"

"Bless you, Horace!"

"That's all right," said Coker, pleased enough with the grateful emotion of the hunted convict. "Rely on me!"

He locked the door quickly. His eyes were gleaming with satisfaction and triumph. In spite of Potter and Greene, he had found the man he wanted—or, rather, the man had found him—but it came to the same thing. All was plain sailing now. After he had helped the hunted man to escape, he would be able to tell Potter and Greene triumphantly that he had succeeded without their help.

The convict staggered from his hiding-place, and sank down in Coker's armchair, with his back to the light.

He was still sobbing.

"I suppose it was you scoffed my grub?" said Coker.

"Yes, Horace. I was hungry. After wandering in the woods——"

"Of course," said Coker. "That's all right. You're very welcome. But, I say, how did you get here? I knew you had skedaddled from Blackmoor—it's in the papers, you know, and a bobby has been here about it."

"Here!" ejaculated the convict, with a start of terror.

"Don't be afraid—he's been gone hours," said Coker reassuringly. "Nothing to be alarmed about. Did you make for Greyfriars to ask me to help you?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, that's jolly queer, because I meant to help you to clear off, if I got a chance," said Coker. "I knew you were innocent, Jaggers."

"Bless you, Horace! But how did you know?"

"My Uncle George said so. You used to fag for him, you know. He used to lick you when you fagged for him, and that's the way to bring a kid up," said Coker. "I always lick the fags myself—I think it's the right way. I know you're innocent, Jaggers, and I had made up my mind to help you. I've just been out looking for you. Jolly good luck your getting here like this! But, I say, how did you know this was my study?"

"I—I—I—— It was luck," said the convict, taken a little aback. "I just hid here, you know, and—and——"

"Well, it was luck, and no mistake," said Coker. "If you'd been spotted by any other fellow, you'd have been collared before you could say knife. But it's all right—I'm going to help you. Now, first of all, you want a change of clothes, and to get rid of those things!"

"Yes, yes!"

Coker reflected.

"I can get you the clothes easily enough—my things will do for you. I'm a bit bigger than you, as it happens——"

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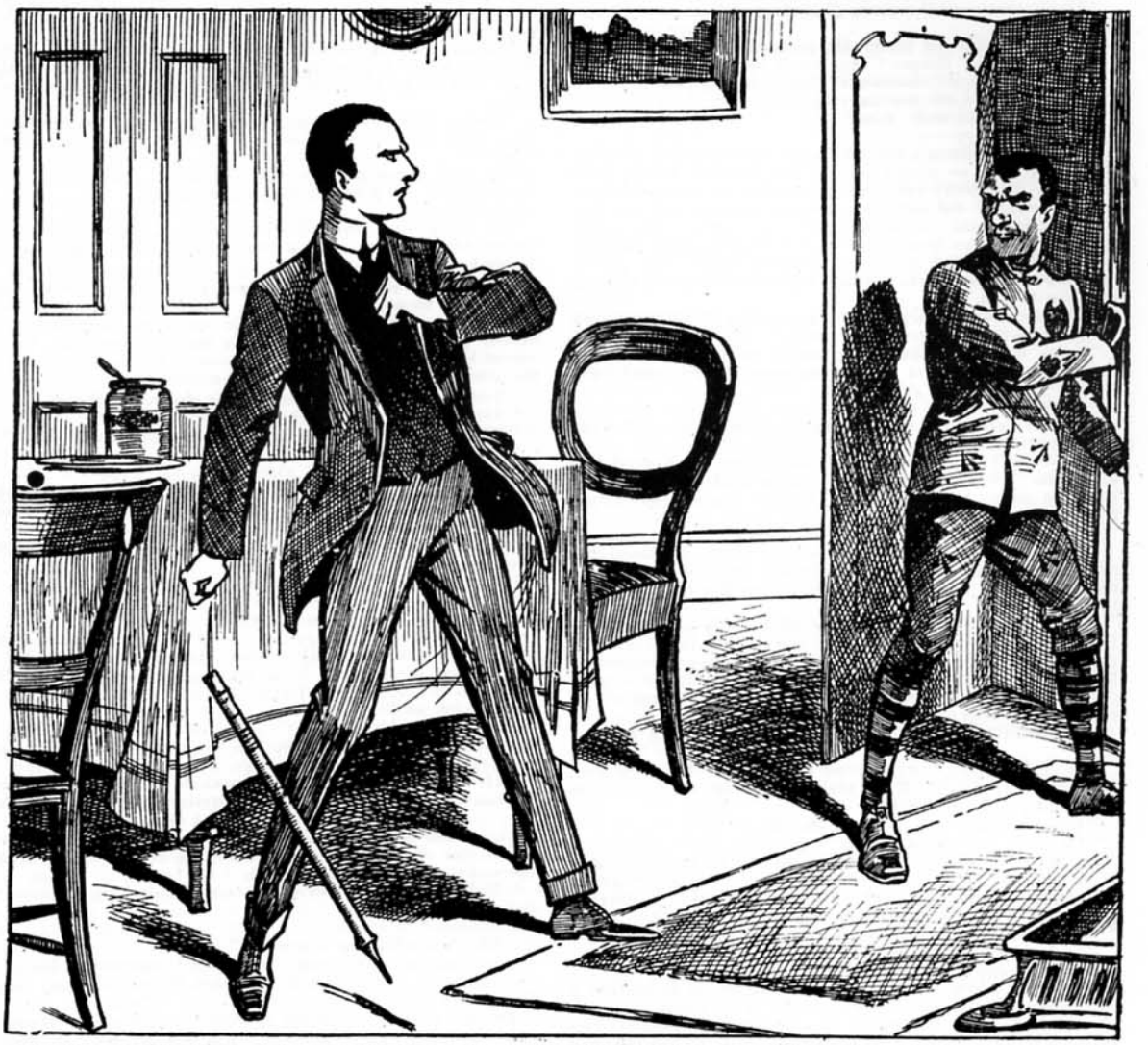

Coker staggered back with a gasp as he moved the screen, and he dropped the stump to the floor with a clatter. For there was the crouching figure of a convict—with a white face and blue chin! "Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker.
(*See Chapter 7.*)

"Don't leave the study!" gasped the convict, in alarm. "If you are seen bringing the clothes here——"

"Oh, that's all right! I won't let anybody come in!"

"I—I will never be taken alive!" muttered the convict; and he put his hand into his breast, and produced a carving-knife. "Look at this! It shall be dyed deep in blood before I am captured!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Coker, a little alarmed. "You mustn't think of using that, Jaggers. That will be a hanging matter, you know. Better go back to chokey than that."

"Never!"

"But, I say——"

"Let one person enter this room and find me, and he dies!" said the convict darkly. "In his blood——"

"My hat!" Coker began to feel a slight regret that Convict 44 had discovered his study, after all. He did not like the look of that knife, and it would be too jolly awkward if Potter or Greene should look in, and be slaughtered on Coker's study carpet. "Look here, Jaggers, put that blessed knife down. You don't want that."

"I will not be taken alive!"

"No, that's all right. I'm going to help you to escape. I'll go and get you some duds now."

"No, no! Remain where you are, Horace. You shall change clothes with me."

"Eh!"

"The clothes you are wearing will suit me. There is no need to risk fetching other things here. Leave the door locked, and give me the clothes you are wearing. And ere I fly I will bind you hand and foot!"

"You jolly well won't."

"Yes, yes; for your own safety. If I am captured, your clothes will be identified. If it is known that you aided me you will be arrested. But I will let it be supposed that I took them from you by force, and I will leave you bound, so that it will be supposed——"

"Well, I suppose that's so," said Coker. "I know this is against the law, and I don't want Mr. Tozer to come for me in earnest. You can just tie me a bit, to keep up appearances. That's enough. I suppose it will be better. But, I say, put away that knife. I don't like the look of it."

"Take off your clothes. There is no time to lose."

"Right-ho!"

Coker stripped off his outer garments. The convict unrolled a long cord—he was apparently well provided for all emergencies—and approached the Fifth-Former when he had finished. Coker grinned, and held out his hands for the cord.

"Not tight," he said. "Only just to keep up appearances."

"I understand," muttered the convict.

He placed a slipknot over Coker's wrists, and another round his ankles. Coker sat in the armchair, grinning, to be bound.

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With a sudden jerk the convict drew both slip-knots tight. Coker's wrists and ankles were secured in a twinkling.

"Hallo, that's not necessary!" exclaimed Coker. "Not so tight."

The convict did not heed. He proceeded to knot the cord again and again. Horace Coker was a helpless prisoner.

"I say, chuck it!" exclaimed Coker, losing patience. "I tell you all that's not necessary at all."

"It is better to make sure."

"But, look here——"

The convict did not heed. He calmly proceeded to tie more lengths of cord, securing Coker to the armchair by his arms and legs. The Fifth-Former expostulated in vain. The ungrateful convict did not even trouble to reply. Coker was feeling a little cold, too, as he was clad now only in his underclothing. He was losing his temper, and his kind feelings towards the fugitive from justice faded away. The fellow certainly was showing the blackest ingratitude after all Coker's kindness to him.

The convict stood back at last, and surveyed his handiwork with satisfaction. Coker glared at him.

"Look here, you thundering ass, I don't like this!" he exclaimed. "I tell you it's not necessary, and I won't have it. Do you hear?"

"Rats!"

"What!" yelled Coker, electrified by that unexpected reply from Convict 44.

"How do I know you would not change your mind and betray me!" hissed the convict. "How do I know that you have not simply been pretending, because you are here at my mercy?"

"Why, you ungrateful cad——"

"Perhaps it would be safer to slay you!" muttered the convict, taking up the carving-knife, and fixing a hungry look on Coker. "It might be safer to imbrue this blade in your blood! What?"

"Are you mad?" gasped Coker, thoroughly alarmed now. He was utterly at the mercy of the desperado. He could not move a limb, and the convict was flourishing the carving-knife within a foot of his face. "Keep off! I—I'm your friend! Keep that knife away, you idiot. Oh, crumbs! If ever I try to help a convict again——"

"It would be safer to leave you here wallowing in your gore."

"It—it wouldn't," stammered Coker. "I—I assure you, Jaggers, it wouldn't! Keep that knife away, or I'll yell for help, and you'll get caught."

"One word, one cry, and you die like a dog!"

"Oh, my only Aunt Maria!" groaned Coker, repenting from the very bottom of his heart that he had ever thought of helping to defeat the ends of justice. "Oh, crumbs! Jaggers, old man, put that awful thing away! I swear I won't betray you! On my honour!"

"I will spare your life; but I must gag you!"

"I—I assure you I won't say a word!"

"Bah! I can run no risks!"

The convict took Coker's handkerchief, rolled it up into a ball, and stuffed it into Coker's mouth. Coker kept his teeth shut at first, but a flourish of the carving-knife induced him to open them. The gag was inserted, and the convict tied a length of cord round Coker's head to keep it in place. Coker's aspect would have been comic, under less tragic circumstances, with his mouth wide open, and the stuffed handkerchief tied in between his jaws. But there seemed nothing comic about it to Coker. He was in a state of mingled terror and rage. If he could have brought the police down upon Convict 44 at that moment there is not the slightest doubt that he would have done so. The black ingratitude of the man was simply staggering. Probably the associations of Blackmoor Prison did not cultivate the finer sensibilities. But really Convict 44 was going too far. Coker was in a state of simmering fury.

"There, that will do now! Now I will go!" said the convict. He slipped Coker's clothes on over the convict garb. There was plenty of room in them for him.

"Farewell, Horace! Remember me to your Uncle George!"

Coker could not reply, but he glared. The convict slipped from the study, closing the door behind him.

Coker was left alone, bound hand and foot to the chair, and gagged. He could not move. He could not make a sound, excepting a faint gurgle. That was his reward for his generous aid to Convict 44, and his feelings can be better imagined than described.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Nice for Coker!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. met the convict in Coker's clothes as he came down the passage. They grinned joyously.

"Well, how's Coker?"

Bolsover major chuckled.

"You can go in and see him if you like! I'll go and get this stuff off my face, and change my clobber. I've left Coker quite happy."

And the amateur convict walked away grinning, and Harry Wharton & Co. hurried to Coker's study. They entered, and there was a chuckle as they sighted Coker. His aspect was funny.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, closing the study door after the Co. were inside. "What's the little game, Coker?"

"Is that a new wheeze, Coker?" asked Peter Todd. "I should think you'd find it rather uncomfy."

Gurgle!

The study was crowded with juniors. They stood round Coker, and grinned. Not a hand was raised to help him out of his predicament.

Coker's jaws struggled with the gag. All his desire to help Convict 44 to escape was gone. What he wanted now was to give the alarm before the villain succeeded in getting clear of the premises, so much had his feelings changed. Coker would have given a term's pocket-money to see Convict 44 in the safe clutches of the law at that moment.

"Isn't it rather cold without your clobber, Coker?"

"Don't you feel a bit chilly?"

"The chillyfulness must be terrific, my esteemed Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gurgle, gurgle!

Harry Wharton kindly cut the cord, and removed the stuffed handkerchief from the Fifth-Former's mouth. Coker panted for breath.

"I say, you kids, I'm glad you've come! The convict's been here."

"Oh, draw it mild, Coker!"

"Tell us another!"

"That's too thick, you know."

"I tell you it's so!" gasped Coker. "I found him here, and he's cleared off in my clothes. Let me loose—quick! I want to get after him! If we buck up, we may capture the scoundrel before he gets clear."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a giddy change!" chuckled Nugent. "Why, I heard that you wanted to help him to escape, Coker! Because he fagged for your Uncle George, you know."

"He's a rotten beast!" Coker panted. "A beastly, rotten ungrateful blighter! I'd give anything to see him handed over to the warders. Cut me loose at once!"

There was a general shaking of heads. The Removites hadn't the slightest intention of cutting Horace Coker loose. He was just as they wanted him.

"Will you let me loose?" shrieked Coker, in a fever of impatience.

"No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific!"

"You idiots! I tell you the convict is escaping! He's got my clobber," yelled Coker. "I say, Potter, Greene, help! Groooogh!"

The last remark was made as Wharton stuffed the handkerchief into his mouth again. Coker was reduced to silence once more.

"Lock the door!" said Wharton cheerfully.

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!" came from Horace Coker.

Bob Cherry locked the door. Harry Wharton shook an admonitory forefinger at the bound and furious Fifth-Former

"Coker, old man, you want a lesson. Do you know you might have got locked up for helping wild convicts to escape? Coker, you're a silly duffer."

"And a frabjous chump, Coker!"

"And a blithering ass!"

"And a howling idiot!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!" gurgled Coker, helplessly.

"But we can't let him catch cold," said Wharton. "Besides, he can't stay like this—suppose the House-dame should happen to come in? I'm really shocked at you, Coker."

"The shockfulness is terrific."

"His clobber seems to be gone, but we'll do the best we can for him," said Wharton. "There's the tablecloth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The tablecloth was draped round Coker's legs, as he sat in the chair, and pinned round his waist. Then Bob Cherry gathered up the hearthrug, and it was twisted round Coker's body. Coker sneezed violently as the dust rose from it. His aspect was growing funnier and funnier, and his fury was at boiling point. All this time the convict was escaping—and the juniors refused to realise the seriousness of the situation.

Bob Cherry opened Coker's hat-box, and produced his Sunday topper, and set it on Coker's head. There was a yell of irrespressible merriment. Coker, in a silk hat and a hearthrug and a tablecloth, looked extraordinary. But his face

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looked most extraordinary of all. It was simply convulsed with rage.

"Oh, my Aunt Sempronia!" gasped Bob Cherry helplessly. "I wish you could see yourself, Coker! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!"

Bob Cherry picked up a charred fragment of coal from the grate, and drew two circles round Coker's eyes, and placed a large black spot on the tip of his nose. Then the juniors simply shrieked.

"I—I think that will do!" gasped Bob. "If we do any more, I shall have a fit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think that will do, Coker?"

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you chaps," said Harry Wharton. "We've wasted enough time on Coker." He jerked the handkerchief from Coker's mouth. "Now you can call Potter and Greene if you like. Nighty-nighty!"

"Good-bye, Bluebell!"

And the juniors crowded out of the study—leaving the door wide open, so that any passers would have a full view of Horace Coker in his strange and wonderful guise.

They walked away down the passage, chuckling. Horace Coker wriggled furiously in his bonds. But Convict 44 had tied him too securely—he had no chance of getting loose—excepting by calling for help. And to be found looking like that—the thought of it almost made Coker's blood run cold. If ferocious wishes could slay, Convict 44 and the Greyfriars Remove would have perished at that moment in a general massacre.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Coker. "This is what comes of helping a scoundrel to get away from the police. Uncle George was a silly idiot—it's as plain as daylight that Jaggers was guilty. I only wish I could get another chance at him—that's all. Oh, my hat! I—I shall have to call the fellows in, I suppose!"

There was no help for it—the Removites evidently did not intend to return, and he had either to call for help, or to remain like that till somebody chanced to pass. He made up his mind to it.

"Potter!" he shouted desperately. "Greene! Blundell! Fitz! Help!"

Coker's stentorian voice rang the whole length of the Fifth Form passage. There was a sound of opening doors as he repeated his shouts.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Blundell, looking out. "What's Coker making all that hullaballoo for, Potter?"

Potter grinned, as he came out of Fitzgerald's study.

"Sounds as if something was up," he remarked.

"Help!"

The Fifth-Formers, in surprise and alarm, crowded along to Coker's study. Blundell was the first, and as he looked into the study, he gasped, and clung helplessly to the doorpost. The sight of Horace Coker sitting in the armchair, clad in a tablecloth, a hearthrug, and a silk hat, was too much for him. He was quite overcome. Coker's novel attire concealed the fact that he was bound to the chair, and Blundell's natural impression was that he had got himself up like that on purpose, for reasons best known to himself.

"Oh, my aunt!" gurgled Blundell. "He's mad! He must be quite mad! What on earth—ha, ha, ha!—what on earth have you done that for, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter. "Is that a new scene in the play, Coker?"

"He's dotty!"

"Mind he doesn't go for you."

"Faith, and he's off his rocker entirely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared ferociously at the yelling Fifth-Formers. He did not see anything in the slightest degree humorous in the situation.

"Will you help me?" he yelled. "I'm tied to this chair! Come and get me loose!"

"Tied!" ejaculated Blundell. "Rats! Who tied you?"

"The convict!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Jaggers!" yelled Coker. "He's been here—and he's taken my clothes and tied me up!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Tell us an easier one, Coker!" yelled Fitzgerald. "Do you mean to tell us that Jaggers made your chivvy like that?"

"No—the Remove rotters did that! Come and let me loose!"

"The Remove kids did it all, I fancy," grinned Blundell. "There hasn't been any giddy convict here, I know that. Oh, Cokey, you will be the death of me!"

"Will you let me loose?" hissed Coker.

Blundell staggered towards him, almost in hysterics. He jerked off the tablecloth and the hearthrug, and disclosed Coker in his underclothes. He yelled again. There was no doubt that Coker was bound to the chair, and Blundell opened his penknife and cut through the cords. Coker jumped up, a little cramped, and wholly furious.

FOR NEXT MONDAY— "CORNERED!"

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"You cackling idiots!" he exclaimed. "While you're cackling, the convict is getting away. I tell you, he's taken my clothes and cleared!"

"But you wanted him to clear, didn't you?" gasped Potter. "You said——"

"Never mind what I said. He's guilty, and I know it, and he ought to be captured. He ought to be hung. He ought to be boiled in oil, the scoundrel!" hissed Coker. "I—I can't go out like this——"

"Ha, ha, ha! I should say not!" shrieked Blundell. "I shouldn't recommend you to!"

"I can't—so some of you run to Mr. Prout and tell him—tell him the convict's been here, and he's gone off in my clobber—he can ring up the police——"

"What—the convict!"

"No, idiot!" yelled Coker. "Mr. Prout! Tell him to ring up Friardale and Courtfield, and tell them the man is here——"

"Catch me!" grinned Blundell. "You can go and tell Prout that yourself. I don't believe any giddy convict has been here. It's some jape of the fags."

"I tell you——" shrieked Coker.

"Rats! Hallo! What do you want, young shaver?" asked Blundell, as Bolsover minor, of the Third Form, came into the study, with a huge bundle in his arms.

The fag grinned cheerfully.

"Something for Coker," he said. "My major sent it—with his kind regards and best thanks. He says he's done with it now."

And Bolsover minor scuttled away, and the Fifth-Formers heard him laughing as he scudded down the passage. Coker looked at the bundle the fag had slammed down on the table. Potter unrolled it. There were Coker's clothes—and there was the suit of broad-arrow garments. Coker gazed at them in stupefaction.

"M-m-my clobber!" he stuttered. "M-m-my stage convict clothes, too! What—wha-at——" He made a rush for his theatrical-property box, and dragged it open. The convict clothes he had left there were gone—evidently the broad-arrow costume now lying on the table was the one belonging to Coker, in his character of Convict 99. The truth dawned on Coker at last—and on the other Fifth-Formers. They shrieked with laughter.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Coker. "Then—then there wasn't a convict here at all. It—it was Bolsover major, made up in my convict clothes! The—the villain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I've been taken in——"

"You have!" yelled Blundell. "Ha, ha, ha! Taken in and done for!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I'll slaughter him!" yelled Coker. "I'll smash him up into little bits! I'll break every bone in his body! I'll ——"

Words failed Coker. He rushed to the door.

"Hold on!" screamed Potter. "You can't go out like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker halted in the doorway. Certainly he could not go seeking Bolsover major in his underclothes, and with his face so strangely adorned. He came back hastily into the study, stuttering with rage.

The other fellows, almost sobbing with merriment, staggered out of the study, leaving Horace Coker to himself. But for quite a long time after that Coker could hear yells of laughter from the other studies along the passage—the only fellow in the Fifth who was not on the verge of hysterics was Horace Coker himself.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Postal-Order!

BILLY BUNTER blinked up at the letter-rack with an anxious expression upon his fat face. It was the day after Coker's adventure with the amateur convict. The juniors had just come out of the Form-room after morning lessons.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter. "Is there a letter for me? I'm expecting a postal-order this morning."

There was a laugh from the Removites. They had heard of Billy Bunter's postal-orders before. Bunter was in a perpetual state of expecting a postal-order—and he was generally seeking to borrow on his expectations. Sometimes he succeeded in extracting loans from new boys on the strength of that postal-order—the other fellows knew him too well.

Bunter blinked indignantly at the juniors through his big spectacles. As it happened, he was really expecting a postal-order that morning.

"By Jove! Here is a letter for you, Bunter!" said Bob

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Cherry, taking it down. "Now, open it, and let us see the postal-order. I've been waiting whole terms to see it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sniffed, and took the letter.

"It's from my uncle," he said. "And there's a postal-order in it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you there is!" shouted Bunter angrily.

"Bet you!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "Ten to one against the postal-order!"

Bunter hesitated. He was really expecting a remittance from a kind uncle who remembered him sometimes, but he wasn't quite sure it was in that letter. His hesitation elicited another shout of laughter from the juniors.

"Take that bet, Bunty," urged Skinner. "Take it in ponies."

"Well, you see——"

"Ten to one in bobs," said Vernon-Smith. "Only, just show up your bob first."

"Will you lend me a bob, Wharton?"

"No, I won't!" said Wharton promptly.

"I'll let you have it back out of Smithy's money——"

"My dear Bunter," said Alonzo Todd solemnly, "it is against the rules of the school to make bets. It is also a very foolish and wicked practice. My Uncle Benjamin has often told me that. He would be shocked—nay, disgusted! I am really surprised at you, Vernon-Smith, for encouraging Bunter——"

"Oh, cheese it!" yawned the Bounder. "Peter Todd, why don't you buy a gag for Alonzo? I'd contribute something."

"My dear Smith——"

"Well, Lonzy's right this time," said Peter. "It's a rotten thing to bet."

"Oh, rats! Ten to one, Bunter!" said the Bounder.

"Done!"

"Only, show up your bob," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm after that bob."

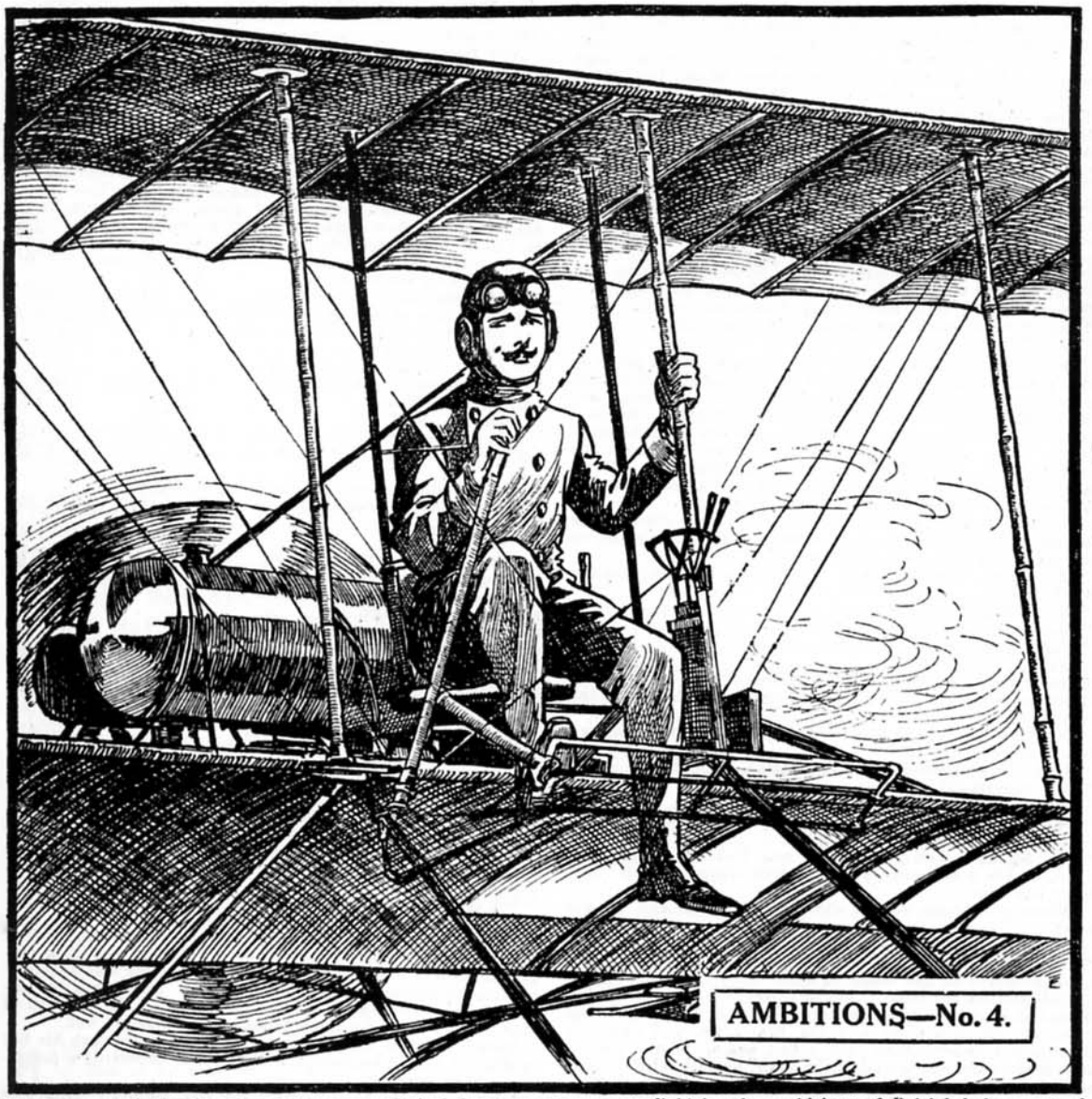
"Ahem! I'm rather short of money just now," said Bunter. "Will you lend me a bob, Nugent?"

"Rats!"

"I say, Inky, lend me a bob——"

"The ratfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, you might lend me a bob!" growled Bunter. "I'm jolly certain there's a postal-order in this letter."



The conquest of the air, so recently accomplished, has opened up a new field for the ambitions of British lads, many of whom look forward longingly to the day when they will occupy the pilot's seat of an aeroplane, as shown in the picture.

Bob Cherry picked up a charred fragment of coal from the grate, and drew two circles round Coker's eyes, and placed a large black spot on the tip of his nose. "I—I—I think that will do!" he gasped. "If we do any more, I shall have a fit!" (*See Chapter* 8.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lend me a bob, Skinner—"

"Make it a quid!" said Skinner sarcastically.

"I'll give you my knife," said Bunter. "If I don't pay you the bob to-day, you can keep the knife. It cost my uncle a pound."

"He was done, then!" jeered Skinner, looking at the pocket-knife. "You can buy those knives at half-a-crown each. Still, it's worth eightpence. I'll stand you a bob for it."

"Right! And you hand it back for the bob, mind."

"Good enough, if I have the bob to-day," said Skinner, taking the knife. "There's your bob" And he tossed Bunter a shilling.

Skinner had not the slightest belief in the postal-order, and he thought he had secured a good bargain.

"There you are, Smithy," said Bunter, holding up the shilling. "I'll take you on."

Vernon-Smith was a little taken aback. The fact that Bunter was willing to risk a shilling on the transaction seemed to indicate that he was really getting a remittance at last. But the Bounder could not back out now.

"Put up your cash," grinned Bunter. "Wharton will hold the stakes—"

"No, I won't!" said Wharton shortly.

"Well, Bolsover will. I say, Bolsover, will you hold the stakes? I'm not going to give Smithy any chance of getting out of it."

"You fat rotter!" said Vernon-Smith. "I always pay up!"

"Well, let Bolsover hold the stakes, then," said Bunter. He did not feel so sure that the Bounder would pay up.

"I'm your man," said Bolsover major. "Ten bob from you, Smith—one bob from Bunter. I hand the lot to Bunter if there's a postal-order in the letter."

"If!" sniffed the Bounder, extracting a half-sovereign from his waistcoat pocket. He was, as a matter of fact, feeling a little dubious now. He had plenty of money, but he did not like parting with it for nothing.

Bolsover major received the half-sovereign and the shilling, and put them in his pocket.

"Now, open the letter," he said. "Stand round, you chaps, and see fair play. If Bunty's really got a postal-order at last, it will be worth seeing."

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites crowded round. Billy Bunter inserted a fat thumb into the envelope, and tore it open. There was a letter inside. The juniors watched him breathlessly as he unfolded the letter and revealed—a postal-order. Bunter held it up with a grin of triumph. It was only for two shillings, but it was a postal-order; there was not the slightest doubt about that.

"Well," chuckled the fat junior, "what's that, Smithy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You're done this time, Smithy! Pay up!"

Vernon-Smith grunted.

"Well, it's a measly remittance, anyway," he said.

"Never mind that—it's a postal-order," said Bunter, grinning. "I'll trouble you for my bob back, Bolsover, and Smithy's ten. My hat! I wish I'd made it quids! If you'd have lent me a quid, Toddy, we'd have scalped Smithy for ten quids!"

"Blow Smithy and his quids!" growled Peter Todd. "You are a fat spoofer. You never do have any remittances."

"Oh, really, Todd; you know jolly well that I get a lot of remittances from my titled relations! Hand over my money, Bolsover," added Bunter, eyeing the bully of the Remove a little uneasily. "It's mine, you know."

"There's your bob," said Bolsover deliberately, handing the shilling to Bunter. Then he extracted four shillings from his pocket, and placed them in Bunter's fat palm. "And there's the rest! You owe me six bob, and this is settling-time."

The expression that came over Bunter's fat face made the juniors yell.

"Why, you—you rotter," spluttered Bunter, "that—that was last term!"

"Well, it's got to be paid, all the same," said Bolsover.

"But it was—was an old account——"

"Old or new, you've got to settle it now you've got the dibs," said Bolsover major coolly. "There's your money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now I come to think of it, you owe me some tin," said Vernon-Smith.

Bunter slipped the shillings hastily into his pocket. He was not looking for debts to settle just then.

"I'll pay you out of my next postal-order, Smithy," he said, with dignity.

"You'll get it along with your old-age pension, Smithy," remarked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You just give me my knife, Skinner—there's your bob!" said Bunter loftily. "You thought you were going to do me out of a knife worth thirty shillings——"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's going up!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Bunter sniffed, and stowed the knife in his pocket. Skinner looked rather glumly at his shilling. He had not made that good bargain after all. Billy Bunter had won all along the line, owing to the unexpected arrival of that postal-order. But from half the Remove there came a chorus:

"Now you're in funds, Bunty, you can settle up!"

"You owe me a bob!"

"You owe me half-a-crown!"

"You owe me five shillings!"

"You owe me——"

"I'll settle it all up out of my next remittance," said Bunter, keeping his fat hand on the money in his pocket, to make sure that it was safe. "I'm expecting another postal-order shortly——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter, and he rolled away in the direction of the tuckshop. He had something more important than settling debts to think of just then.

Alonzo Todd shook his finger at the Bounder.

"Let this be a lesson to you, my dear Smith," he said seriously. "You expected to win a shilling from your schoolfellow. You have lost ten shillings, which is simply a just punishment for your greed and your unscrupulousness in making bets at all. My Uncle Benjamin would say——Yaroooh!"

Alonzo's remarks came to a sudden termination in that ejaculation, as Vernon-Smith gave him a violent shove. Alonzo sat down without intending to do so, and the Bounder walked away.

"Dear me!" gasped Alonzo. "Did Smithy do that on purpose, you fellows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am quite unconscious of having said anything to offend Smithy. I was speaking to him for his own good—indeed, I should be glad to repeat to you fellows, for your good, the very valuable remarks my Uncle Benjamin has made on this subject——"

But the fellows were already gone. Much to Alonzo's surprise, there was no sign of eagerness to hear the valuable remarks of his Uncle Benjamin at second-hand.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
There's Many a Slip!

"AND a dozen jam-tarts!"

"Yes, Master Bunter!"

"And a seed cake, and a currant one——"

"That makes six shillings, Master Bunter," said Mrs. Mimble stolidly.

Bunter had laid four shillings and the postal-order on the counter in the little tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble's dealings with the Owl of the Remove were on a strictly cash basis; she knew Bunter.

"I suppose you can trust me for a currant cake, Mrs. Mimble?" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I'm expecting another postal-order shortly; and Bolsover major owes me six shillings, too——"

Mrs. Mimble turned away to serve Temple of the Fourth, who had come in, and Bunter grunted. He collected up his purchases, and left the tuckshop. He was afraid that some of his many creditors might follow him there. Six shillings' worth of tuck would not go very far among all the fellows to whom Bunter owed money. The fat junior left the shop with his pockets stuffed full, and a bag of tarts under his arm.

"Standing a feed, Bunty?" asked Hazeldene, meeting him outside.

Bunter did not reply; he scuttled off. He owed Hazel money, among the rest, and he was nervous. He had a dreadful apprehension that his supply of tuck would be ravished away from him before he could dispose of it. The Close was crowded with fellows, and Bunter scuttled round the schoolhouse, and made for the ruined chapel. In that deserted spot he hoped to be able to devour his prey, so to speak, in peace.

The ruins were a considerable distance from the school, quite in seclusion. Bunter turned out his pockets, setting his wares out on the old flagstones near the entrance to the ancient crypt. He jammed a tart into his mouth to go on with, and then went back to the old shattered doorway, to make sure that he had not been followed. It was really too bad that when a fellow received a remittance he should have to take all those precautions to keep the feed to himself. But as he blinked to and fro through his big spectacles, Bunter could see no pursuers. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and there was no man. With a grunt of relief, he turned back into the ruins, and returned to the spot where he had left his tuck.

Then he almost fell down.

It was gone!

On the old flagstone where he had laid the tuck in enticing array a few scattered dough-nuts remained—merely that and nothing more! Billy Bunter gazed at the bare flagstone in dismay and wrath. He was too taken aback to speak for a full minute. Evidently, while he had been looking one way, someone had stolen in another way and cleared off the feed, with the exception of half a dozen dough-nuts, dropped by the raider in his haste.

"Gone!" spluttered Bunter. "Scoffed! Pinched! Stolen! Oh!"

There was no doubt about it—it was gone—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream, to put it poetically. He mechanically gathered up the dough-nuts, and put them immediately into the safest possible place—his mouth. Of them, at least, he made sure. Then he looked round for the raider, crimson with wrath.

He scrambled excitedly among the old masses of masonry, seeking the raider. But the raider was not to be seen. With the exception of Bunter himself, the ruins seemed to be utterly deserted.

"I see you!" yelled Bunter desperately. "Come back, you beast! Give me my tommy, you—you thief! You rotter! Give me my tarts! My cake, you rotter! M-m-my dough-nuts! Where are you, you burglar! Gimme my grub!"

But only the echo of his furious voice answered him. The raider was gone. High and low among the ruins Bunter hunted for him. He descended the steps as far as the door of the crypt, and looked into the gloomy recesses below; but he did not care to venture into those shadowy old vaults. It is not likely that a junior would retire there to eat his ill-

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gotten tuck. Bunter had no doubt now that the rascal was sharing out the raided tuck among other fellows, all of them grinning over the discomfiture of the Owl of the Remove. He quitted the ruins, and rushed back desperately towards the schoolhouse, in the faint hope of yet saving some crumbs. He ran into Bob Cherry as he came tearing round the house, and Bob caught him by the shoulder and stopped him.

"Where are you running to, you fat duffer?" he demanded.

"Give it to me!"

"What? What do you want me to give you—a thick ear?" demanded Bob.

"Gimme my grub!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Has somebody raided your grub? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I had it in the ruins," stuttered Bunter. "I just took my eye off it for a moment, and some rotter sneaked in and boned it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry roared with unsympathetic laughter. Bunter dashed on in search of the culprit. Outside the tuck-shop, Bolsover minor and Tubb of the Third were eating dough-nuts from a bag, and Bunter bore down upon them, shaking his fat fists.

"Give me my dough-nuts, you rotten fags!"

The chums of the Third stared at him.

"I'll give you a dot in the eye," said Tubb darkly. "Who's got your rotten dough-nuts?"

"You have! You collared my tommy——"

"Go easy," said Bolsover minor cheerfully. "We've just spent a tanner on these—my tanner. Not guilty, my lord!"

"It—it wasn't you!" panted Bunter.

"Not this time," chuckled Bolsover minor. "Better look further. We bought this little lot five minutes ago—honour bright!"

"Have you seen any beast with a bag of tarts and a cake?"

"Yes; I saw one coming out of the tuck-shop ten minutes ago," snorted Tubb. "His name's Bunter! I haven't seen any other beast with a cake and jam-tarts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I'll find him!" gasped Bunter. "I'll—I'll kybosh him! I'll smash him!"

And he rushed away to pursue his search. But to all his demands for the raided tommy he received only laughter and negative replies. Nobody seemed to know who had raided his tuck; at all events, if they knew they kept their knowledge to themselves. Bunter's hopes of recovering even a fragment of the feed sank to zero. He spotted Mark Linley of the Remove sitting with a book under one of the old elms, in a spot whence he had a view of the ruined chapel, and he came panting up to Linley.

"Linley, old man, have you seen a rotter sneaking into the ruins after my grub——"

"I saw you go in," said Mark, looking up from his Xenophon; he was "swotting," as usual. "I didn't see anybody else, Bunter."

"But you've been here all the time—I passed you," said Bunter. "Didn't you see anybody come out of the ruins with my tommy?"

"I saw you come out." said Mark.

"But somebody else—with a bag of tarts, and a cake, and some dough-nuts, and——"

The Lancashire junior shook his head.

"I didn't see anybody," he replied. "Somebody might have passed while I was reading—though it's queer I shouldn't have seen him if he did."

"Jolly queer!" snorted Bunter incredulously. "You'd be bound to see anybody who came out of the ruins under your nose, whether you were reading or not. I'll trouble you for my grub, Mark Linley!"

"Eh!" ejaculated Mark in surprise. "What grub?"

"It was you!" yelled Bunter furiously. "If it had been anybody else you'd have seen him. You raided my tuck, and if you haven't scoffed it yet, you've got it about you! Hand it over, you rotter—you—you scholarship bounder! You beastly factory rotter, hand me over my grub!"

Mark Linley's brow darkened, and he looked steadily at Bunter.

"I don't know who's taken your grub," he said, "and as you're such a thundering liar, I don't even know whether you've lost any. I can't take your word. I can't hand over your grub, as I don't know anything about it. But if you call me names again, I'll hand you a thick ear, and jolly quick!"

"You've got it!" roared Bunter, too enraged to heed the threat. "You know you've got it, you factory sweep! They oughtn't to let outsiders like you into a decent school. I suppose you never had any jam tarts when you were working in a factory, before you got your beastly scholarship. Yah! Hands off, you cad!"

Mark Linley rose to his feet, seized Bunter by the collar, and swung him round. Then he brought his right foot into play. It seemed to the Owl of the Remove that Linley was

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kicking for goal, and kicking his hardest. He staggered six or seven paces before he rolled over. Mark Linley sat down again, and Bunter sat up. He set his spectacles straight upon his fat little nose, and gasped for breath.

"You—you beast! You rotter! You factory cad!"

"Will you clear off?" demanded Mark.

"No, I won't—not without my grub! You outsider—you cad——"

Mark rose again, his eyes gleaming; and Bunter decided, on second thoughts, to clear off. He cleared off at top speed, consumed with rage and indignation. Mark Linley sat down again with Xenophon, and Bunter tore off stuttering with rage, to take everybody who would listen into his confidence on the subject of his uncommon wrongs.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
Coker Makes a Discovery!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Can't you hear the dinner-bell?" said Harry Wharton; and he walked past the Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter caught at Bob Cherry's sleeve.

"I say, Cherry——"

"Say it after dinner," said Bob, jerking his arm away, and following the captain of the Remove into the schoolhouse.

"Inky—I say—Nugent—Johnny Bull——"

But the Co. grinned and went in to dinner, and Billy Bunter snorted with indignation, and followed them in. He sat down to dinner with the Remove, with a thundercloud lowering upon his fat face. He made an excellent dinner, but he was still thinking of the feed he had lost. His appetite, large as it was, was satisfied; but his thoughts still ran upon the missing tarts, and cake, and dough-nuts. Like the gentleman in the story whose beer was knocked over, and who for ever afterwards, however many times he was treated, had a lingering and inconsolable feeling that he was a drink behind, Billy Bunter could not forget the feed that had vanished. And as the Famous Five came out of the dining-room after dinner, Bunter pounced upon them. He was determined that, at all events, his woes should not remain unknown and unheard.

"I say, you fellows—look here! Mark Linley's your chum, and I want you to talk to him about it," Bunter spluttered.

"About what?" demanded Bob in surprise.

"About my grub! Linley's pinched my feed."

"Oh, rats!"

"I tell you he did!" roared Bunter. "And if he doesn't hand it back, I'll go and complain to Mr. Quelch, so there!"

"You're dreaming, Bunter," said Mark Linley, who had come out after the Co. "I haven't seen your blessed feed; I give you my word!"

"Then who did take it? Where you were you'd see anybody coming out of the ruins! If you didn't scoff it, you saw who did!" howled Bunter.

"Well, I didn't scoff it, and I didn't see who did!" said Mark.

"I don't believe a word of it. I—— Ow, Bob Cherry! You beast! Leggo my ear!"

"I'll let go your ear when you've begged Marky's pardon, and not before!" said Bob, compressing the grip of his finger and thumb. "You fat beast!"

"Ow-ow! Yow!"

"Say when!" said Bob, calmly, gripping harder.

"Wow-ow! When!" gasped Bunter. "I—I beg your pardon, Linley, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now cut off," said Bob, "and don't let me hear anything more about your feed. I'm fed up if you're not."

Bunter beat a retreat, glowering with rage, and still quite convinced that Mark Linley had "scoffed" that feed. Either Linley had had it, or it had vanished into thin air—unless, indeed, the ghost of Greyfriars, who was supposed to haunt the ruined chapel, had taken a fancy to cake and jam-tarts, and that was not probable. Billy Bunter, finding no help or sympathy among the Famous Five, looked for his study-mates, Peter Todd, Tom Dutton, and Alonzo. He found them in the Close, and made them listen to his tale of woe—with the exception of Dutton, who was deaf, and didn't hear a word. But Peter Todd declined to take summary vengeance upon Linley.

"You're a fat duffer!" he said. "It's being such a giddy Ananias yourself makes you think other fellows are liars. Linely never tells whoppers."

"He's got my grub!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Look here, I want you to back me up, Peter Todd!"

"I'll back you up against the wall, and knock your fat head

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on it if you don't ring off!" said Peter darkly. "Dry up, for goodness' sake!"

"Look here, Alonzo! Will you——"

"My dear Bunter, I think you should regard this occurrence in the light of a very fortunate happening," said Alonzo, in his serious and solemn way. "You frequently over-eat yourself, my dear Bunter, and perhaps the purloining of your over-abundant supply of food was the act of a friend solicitous for your health."

"You utter idiot!"

"My dear Bunter——"

"Dutton!" roared Bunter, shaking the deaf junior by the arm. "I say, Dutton, I want you to back me up!"

"Crack you up!" said Dutton, with a sniff. "Not likely! I don't think much of you, Bunter, and I'm jolly well not going to crack you up!"

"I want you to help me."

"I'll scalp you fast enough, if that's what you want," said Dutton. "I'll scalp you whether you want it or not, if you don't leave off yelling at me! I'm not deaf!"

"Linley has boned my grub!" shrieked Bunter. "If you help me get it back, or make him pay for it, I'll give you a whack!"

"You'll give me a smack!" said Dutton. "Go ahead, then, and there'll be a dead porpoise lying about here soon afterwards."

"I didn't say a smack!" shrieked Bunter. "I said a whack!"

"Oh, if you take it back, all right; only don't say it again," said Dutton. "Why, you silly fat duffer, I could wipe up the ground with you as easy as winking."

Peter Todd chuckled.

"You won't get anything out of Dutton, Bunty," he remarked. "You may as well chuck it, unless somebody will lend you a megaphone. Are you sure you didn't scoff the feed and forget all about it?"

"You—you silly chump——"

Peter Todd strolled away whistling, and Alonzo Todd, shaking his head solemnly at Bunter, walked off.

Bunter gave Dutton a despairing look, but he felt that his lungs were not equal to explaining to Dutton. He rolled away disconsolate; but he brightened up as he spotted Coker in the Close. Coker of the Fifth had a way of assuming a high hand with the juniors, just as if he were a prefect of the Sixth, as the fags sometimes said with burning indignation. It occurred to Bunter that Coker might see him righted—not so much from a love of justice as from a desire to act authoritatively towards the juniors. Bunter stopped the great Coker, who was alone, being still on the worst of terms with Potter and Greene.

"I say, Coker," said Bunter, "I want you to help me—to see fair play! I know you'll do the right thing, Coker."

"Oh, do you?" said Coker, whose temper was still ruffled from his experience of the previous evening.

Bunter poured out his tale of woe, without even noticing the unpromising expression on Coker's face. Coker was about to walk away and leave him talking to the desert air, but a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he paused and listened till the Owl of the Remove had finished.

"That's jolly queer!" said Coker meditatively.

"Of course Linley had it——"

"But you say he said he didn't? Linley isn't a liar," said Coker scornfully. "You'd know that if you weren't such a whopper-merchant yourself. Now, if you've pitched me the yarn right, there must have been somebody hidden in the ruins who collared your tommy."

"But I looked——"

"Did you look in the crypt?"

"I went down as far as the door of the crypt," said Bunter. "A chap wouldn't go in there with the grub. Might break his neck there."

"Hum!" said Coker thoughtfully.

"You're going to help me?" asked Bunter. "You'll make Linley hand over my tommy? He will do it for you."

"Oh, rats!" said Coker. "Buzz off! I'm thinking something out! Clear off, or I'll help you with my boot!"

"Wh-a-at!"

Horace Coker raised his foot, as if to suit the action to the word. And Bunter, his last hope vanished, vanished also. Coker watched him out of sight, his brow very thoughtful. Then he sauntered away towards the ruined chapel, a gleam in his eyes.

"Somebody was in the ruins," he murmured. "Of course, he must be hungry. It's twenty-four hours or more since he broke out of Blackmoor. What did he make in the direction of Greyfriars for?" Coker grinned, quite satisfied with his line of reasoning. "He's an old Greyfriars chap, and knows all about the crypt under the ruins, and the secret passage to the old priory in the wood, of course. I'll bet my Sunday topper to a tuppenny jam-tart that Charley Jaggers is hidden under the old chapel all the time, and that he had Bunter's prog!"

And Coker walked into the ruins. Coker's feelings towards Convict 44 had undergone a sudden change the previous evening, in the belief that the ungrateful convict had used him so badly. But after the discovery that the pretended convict was in reality Bolsover major of the Remove, Coker had returned to his previous views. He was as keen as ever to help Uncle George's old fag. If only to exasperate his unfaithful chums, Coker intended to adhere to his original plan, and do what he could for Charley Jaggers, if that unfortunate individual came in his way.

The Fifth-Former descended the old stone steps that led into the crypt, opened the oaken door, and gazed into the dark recesses. If, indeed, the escaped convict had taken refuge there, he could hardly have chosen a securer hiding-place. There were vaults after vaults, and a bricked passage that led away a great distance under the earth to the ruined priory in Friardale Wood. In those black and noisome recesses a fugitive might find safe hiding for a long time, if he could stand the cold and could live without food. Coker could imagine to himself the wretched man, creeping back to the old school in his flight because he remembered those hidden recesses which he had probably explored in the careless days of his boyhood. There he might hope to lie undiscovered while the pursuit went on above ground. Till, driven by hunger, he would venture out for food. And Coker pictured him peering out, and, seeing Bunter's feed, being unable to resist the temptation to snatch at it. After twenty-four hours without food, Convict 44 was probably in a state of famine and desperation.

Coker stepped into the first vault.

"Hallo!" he called out, and his voice rang with a thousand hollow echoes through the dim vista of stone arches. "Anybody here?"

Only the thunderous echoes answered him. Coker stood and reflected. If the hidden convict was there, he was not likely to show himself, and Coker had no means of making known his friendly intentions towards Uncle George's former fag. To explore the vaults in search of the man, he required a light—and time.

"My hat!" murmured Coker, as he caught sight of a few crumbs on the damp stone at his feet, and stooped to scan them. "That's proof enough! He's here, and he's had Bunter's grub. Poor old Jaggers! He must have been hungry! I'll jolly well find him! I'll come down here this evening with a lantern, and rout him out, and explain that I'm his friend. I know he's innocent, and I'm jolly well going to help him—blow the law! I'll find time between the rehearsal and the play this evening. Got to get into class now."

And Coker ascended the steps again, in a very thoughtful mood. In the Fifth Form-room that afternoon Potter noticed that Coker smiled to himself several times, but he did not guess what was Coker's inward and secret source of satisfaction.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.
The Dress Rehearsal!

AFTER lessons that day, the members of the Fifth Form Stage Club were very busy.

It was Friday, and that evening was to be given the representation of "Convict 99" by the Fifth Form Stage Club Company, with Horace Coker in the title-role—or, the "title-roll," as he had written it in his famous notice.

Coker was the great mover in the enterprise, and as Coker was standing all the exes he had found plenty of fellows in the Fifth, of a theatrical turn, to help him in getting up that play. Coker himself had written the "mellodrama," and, needless to say, he had given himself plenty of "fat." In fact, Convict 99—otherwise Coker—came on in every scene, and had all the action and most of the talk. The rest of the company were only "walking gentlemen." Some of the members had raised objections, but Coker ruled the Stage Club with a rod of iron. He had inaugurated it. He paid for the hire of the costumes; he "stood" all the grease-paint and other requisites; and after that, he considered that he had a right to run the drama as he wanted to, and he intended to do it. It was understood that a great feast to all the company, in Coker's study, was to follow the play, and that was probably the reason why Coker found persons ready to take the parts assigned to them. For, as Potter had observed in a very aggrieved tone, it was no great "catch" to stand on the stage looking on while Coker did all the business—especially considering the way Coker was likely to do it.

The final dress rehearsal was to take place immediately after lessons that day, and the old chapel was fixed for the

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spot. The Fifth Form actors could have used the Rag, but there they would have been liable to interruptions from the juniors, who persisted in looking on the great melodrama of "Convict 99" from a humorous point of view. As Coker had "boned" the very idea from the Remove Dramatic Club, the Removites would probably have felt that it was up to them to muck up the rehearsals if they could; and so Coker had fixed that last and most important rehearsal to take place in the ruins—far from the madding crowd, so to speak. The members of the Stage Club had arranged to take their "props" there quietly after lessons, without a word to a soul, so that the dress rehearsal could proceed without danger of interruption.

And so, while Harry Wharton & Co. were going down to cricket practice, a number of Fifth-Formers might have been seen, as the novelists say, wending their ways very mysteriously to the ruins at a distance from the School House.

The performance was to take place in the Fifth Form room, and several enterprising juniors looked in there in search of a rehearsal, with the kind intention of ragging it if found; and they looked into the Rag, but they did not discover any rehearsers. While they were wondering where the final rehearsal was taking place, Coker & Co. were getting to work in the seclusion of the ruins.

Coker, besides playing lead, was stage-manager and master of the ceremonies, and head cook and bottlewasher generally. Potter had hinted that perhaps he had taken on rather too much, but Coker didn't think so.

"Well, here we are," said Potter, as he came into the ruins, and dumped down his bag. "We haven't got any too much time, if we're going to have tea before the performance."

"Blow tea!" said Coker crossly.

"Well, I suppose we can't give the melodrama on empty tummies, can we?" Potter demanded warmly. "I know I can't, anyway."

"There'll be time for tea," said Coker. "We don't begin till seven. Now, get into your things, and shut up. I hope you've all got your lines all right."

"Sure, I haven't many lines to get," remarked Fitzgerald. "I only say six lines in each act entirely."

"And I've only got a dozen!" growled Greene.

"Same here," remarked Bland. "Of course, we can gag a bit."

Coker glared at him.

"Let me catch you gagging in my play!" he exclaimed. "I'll jolly soon gag you!"

"Coker wants the whole show, as usual," said Mitford discontentedly. "Coker speaks more than half the lines in every act."

"Well, isn't Convict 99 the principal person?" said Coker. "I suppose the convict can't be expected to stand quiet while warders and bobbies do all the talking. Potter has a good bit as a judge in the trial scene."

"Not so much as you have," said Potter. "I don't believe in a real trial they'd allow the prisoner at the bar to keep on jawing, as you make out."

"Melodramas aren't supposed to be like real life, fathead," said Coker witheringly. "Any ass could tell you that!"

"Thanks! Now you've told me——"

"Oh, don't be funny," said Coker, as the Fifth-Formers sniggered. "This isn't a time for jokes. Get into your toggery."

"I hope there won't be any ladies come along while we're changing!" sniffed Potter. "It would give 'em rather a surprise. I don't see why we couldn't rehearse in the Rag. The Remove always do."

"And we rag 'em when they're doing it," said Coker. "Those young rotters have been scheming to muck up our dress-rehearsal. P'r'aps that's what you want. I know jolly well you were hand-in-glove with them in that rotten trick they played on me last night."

Potter chuckled.

"Well, if you will go looking for convicts, it's a pity you shouldn't find any," he remarked; and the Fifth-Formers grinned again.

"I'm jolly well going to find that chap, Jaggers, all the same," said Coker defiantly. "I've got an idea where to look for him, too."

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't catch Bolsover major next time."

"Shut up!" roared Coker. "Did you come here to exercise your lower jaw, you dummy? Get into your things, and let us rehearse if we're going to."

The Fifth Form players changed into their dress for the play. There was quite an imposing array of warders and police. The play consisted chiefly in the hair's breadth escapes of Convict 99 in escaping the police and warders—desperate struggles in which Coker was always the victor, and tragic speeches, all delivered by Coker. As Coker considered it, it was no use a chap taking the trouble to write a play if he didn't give himself a good whack.

Each of the players was provided with a scribbled sheet, containing his part, but they were supposed to be letter-perfect by this time. Coker, in fact, was the only member of the company who had many lines to burden his memory with.

"Well, you begin, Coker," said Potter, when they were in costume. "You start with your blessed soliloquy—longer than Hamlet's, by George!"

Coker struck an attitude supposed to be suitable to a convict labouring under a sentence he had not earned, and a great sense of injury. He raised his right hand in the air, and smote his breast with the other. In his convict clothes, Coker looked quite remarkable in that tragic attitude.

"Ten years!" exclaimed Coker, in a deep and thrilling voice. "Ten long and weary years! Such is my doom! For ten long, weary years am I condemned to skilly! Hear me, ye skies and ye free winds of heaven! Hear me swear! This good right hand shall win me my freedom! To-night—aha!—to-night the base turnkey shall fall beneath this hand, and the prison bars shall ope."

"That last word sounds as if you'd dropped an 'h,'" said Potter.

"You silly chump!" said Convict 99. "Ope is poetical for open."

"Well, I 'ope the audience will see that," said Potter.

"If you're going to be funny, Potter——"

"Not at all; I leave that to you. Go ahead."

Coker glared, and went ahead.

"The prison bars shall ope! Freedom—ha, ha! freedom! In rich, red blood will I this hand imbrue ere I will be captured by the base minions of the law! Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed Potter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the whole company.

Coker gave them a look that a basilisk might have envied, or Medusa, when that stony lady was looking her stoniest.

"You silly duffers! You don't say 'Ha, ha!'"

"Bet you the audience will!" murmured Potter.

"You come in here, Potter it's your cue."

"All serene." Potter glanced at his scrip. "Now then, No. 99, none of your shirking! Get along with them there stones!"

"Base slave!" hissed Convict 99. "Base tool of the law! But wait! Ha, ha!"

"Wot you want is a taste of the cat!" growled Potter, in his character of warder. "You'll 'ave it soon 99, you mark my words!"

"Stand back! With this right hand——"

"Hallo!" said Potter, looking round. "There's somebody here!"

"You ass! That's not your line!"

"I know it ain't," said Potter, moving towards the entrance to the crypt. "But I jolly well heard somebody here. Those blessed fags——"

"Rats!" said Coker. "There's nobody there; don't go down!"

"Why not?"

"We've got to get on with the rehearsal," said Coker hastily. "Don't waste time buzzing down into that old crypt. Get to business."

"It's some of those fags!"

"Blow the fags! Get on!"

"Oh, all right," said Potter, and he resumed rehearsing. Coker took up a position between the players and the entrance to the crypt. He, too, had heard a movement there, but he knew it was not one of the Remove. His surmise was that it was the convict he believed to be hidden there, and he did not want Potter to spot him. Potter's feelings towards the escaped convict did not resemble Coker's in the least. Potter was quite unsympathetic towards convicts, even towards a convict who had fagged for Coker's Uncle George.

The rehearsal went on, and for the next hour the Fifth-Form Stage Club were very busy. When it was over, Coker pronounced himself satisfied.

"You chaps do passably well," he remarked; "but, after all, my part is the great thing. So long as that's all right, your little bits will pass. No need to take the clobber off; you can put on your coats to go in. Mind, in the Fifth Form-room, sharp at half-past six. We mustn't be late. I'll come in after you."

NOTE.

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FOR NEXT MONDAY— **"CORNERED!"**

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"What on earth are you going to stick here for?" demanded Potter.

"Don't ask questions, and I won't tell you any whoppers," was Coker's non-committal reply. "You go and get your tea that you're so jolly anxious about."

The Fifth Form Stage Club departed, somewhat puzzled. They hadn't the faintest idea why Coker wanted to be left alone in the ruins. Coker put on his coat, and after his Form-fellows were gone, he took a lantern from the pocket, and lighted it. Then he descended the steps of the crypt. That evening he would be busy with the representation of the great melodrama, "Convict 99," and he would have no time to seek the man he firmly believed was hidden in the crypt, so he intended to look for him before the play began. He was assured that the hidden man was near at hand now. The movement the Fifth-Formers had heard could only have been made by the man lurking in the vaults. Doubtless he had ventured to the opening in the faint hope of again capturing something to eat, or simply to look out and breathe the pure air. Horace Coker went down the steps, and advanced into the vault, casting the light of the lantern before him.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
Not Ready!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Here you are!"

The Famous Five of the Remove were coming in from cricket practice, just as the Fifth Form Stage Club reached the School House. Potter and his companions had coats on over their theatrical garb, but the juniors could see that they were in character, and they greeted the amateur actors with five sweet smiles.

"Been rehearsing?" asked Wharton.

"Yes," growled Potter; "and if you want to see your silly play-acting knocked sky-high, you can come and see us this evening. No charge for admission, so it will suit the pockets of the Lower Fourth."

"Oh, we'll come!" said Wharton. "We wouldn't miss it for worlds. If anything should happen to Coker, we'll lend you Bolsover major—he can play a convict part."

And the Removites chuckled.

"By the way, where is the great Horace?" asked Nugent. "Don't say the leading gentleman is crocked. The thing won't be half so funny without Coker."

"The funnyfulness will not be a quarter so terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I am prepared to come and applaud laughfully if the esteemed and ludicrous Coker is there."

"Oh, rats!" said Potter.

And the Fifth-Formers marched in, leaving the Removites grinning.

All the Remove intended to witness the performance of that great melodrama by the Fifth Form Stage Club. The general opinion was that it would be as good as a Punch-and-Judy show, or better, and therefore worth seeing. Coker in the role of a melodramatic hero would be a sight for gods and men, and little fishes, as Bob Cherry put it. They would not have missed it for worlds.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, joining the chums of the Remove as they went into the Schol House, "Tozer's here again!"

"Looking for Coker?" grinned Bob Cherry. "He'll have a chance of making an arrest at seven o'clock—if he's satisfied with Convict 99 instead of Convict 44. I don't see why he should be particular about a mere number."

"But what the deuce does he want?" said Wharton, puzzled. "He can't expect to find that fellow Jaggers here, surely?"

Police-constable Tozer was coming towards the School House with his dignified stride. He cast a haughty glance at the juniors; he had not forgiven Bob Cherry yet. Wingate of the Sixth stopped to speak to him.

"Found your man yet, Tozer?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Mr. Tozer; "not yet. But we're goin' to 'ave him, sir. We've got 'im in the 'ollow of our 'and."

"On the track?' asked Bob.

Mr. Tozer sniffed.

"More than that, Master Cherry. I come to speak to the 'Ead about it, Master Wingate," went on Mr. Tozer, turning to the captain of Greyfriars again. "The man is near 'ere—there ain't any doubt about that."

"Near here!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Yes! He's been tracked into this 'ere neighbourhood, and, bein' an old Greyfriars man, we know werry well wot his little game is. He's found a 'iding-place about 'ere—that's wot Inspector Grimes thinks," said Mr. Tozer. "'Course, as a schoolboy 'ere, he knew all about the ruings and them vaults and the passage underground, and all that. The 'ole place is surrounded by a cording——"

"A—a what?"

"A cording," said Mr. Tozer, with dignity.

"Oh, a cordon!" said Wingate. "Yes?"

"A cording," repeated Mr. Tozer resolutely. "The 'ole school is surrounded by a cording of officers and warders—the 'ole priory in the wood is bein' watched, and he can't get out, if so be as he is there. Mr. Grimes and arf a dozen warders is going to foller 'im by the underground passage to-night, and if he's there, he'll have to break out at this end. Well, another party of warders is comin' 'ere, to go down into the vaults under the ruings, with the 'Ead's permission. Then the rascal will be taken atween two fires, and we shall 'ave 'im in the 'ollow of our 'and. These young gentlemen 'ad better be kep' indoors, so they'll come to no 'arm; he's a desperate character. He bashed a warder something cruel at Blackmoor when he got away yesterday."

And Mr. Tozer went into the House to see the Head.

"That's right enough," said Wingate. "You kids keep inside the House. Do you hear? No need to run any risks."

"Oh, we'll keep indoors!" said Bob. "We've got a play to see this evening. But I say, don't let Tozer and his giddy army march into the Fifth Form-room and arrest Convict 99 and spoil the play."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites went in to tea, and in good time they turned up in the Fifth Form-room, where the audience were already gathering. Meanwhile, Potter and the rest of the stage club had had their tea, and were giving the finishing touches to their make-up. At half-past six the company were in the Form-room, behind the scenes, and waiting for Coker. Coker had not yet returned to the School House.

"Isn't that ass here?" asked Potter, as he came into the green-room—partitioned off by curtains from the rest of the Form-room and the stage. "Where the dooce has he got to? He can't be out of doors now; it's dark."

"I haven't seen him," said Greene. "I looked in his study for him, but he wasn't there."

"If he's late for the blessed play——"

"Just like Coker!" grunted Bland. "Where the dooce is he?"

"Blessed if I understand Coker, intirely," said Fitzgerald. "What did he want to stick there in the ruins for at all, at all? We can't go and look for him in this rig."

"Oh, the ass will be here by seven, I suppose!" said Greene.

But Greene was wrong—the ass wasn't there by seven o'clock. The audience were there—the Form-room was crowded. All the Forms at Greyfriars were well represented in the audience—they all wanted to see Horace Coker in his character of a melodramatic hero. They were prepared to reward him with a hearty tribute of Homeric laughter. It was time for the curtain to go up, but Coker hadn't arrived. Potter went to the door at the upper end of the Form-room, by which the actors came in behind the scenes, and looked out into the passage. But there was no sign of Coker.

There were signs of impatience, however, from the audience. A rhythmic sound of stamping on the floor was heard in the crowded Form-room, and impatient voices calling for the raising of the curtain.

"Now then, you slackers, start!"

"On the ball!"

"Play up! Play up!"

"Up with that blessed curtain!"

"We're waiting for Convict 99!"

"Hurry up! Get a move on! Now then!"

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

"There'll be a blessed riot if the thundering ass doesn't come soon!" exclaimed Greene anxiously. "Where on earth can he have got to? We can't begin without Coker. The chump takes the first scene in the first act—trust him for that!"

"Begin! Begin!" roared the audience.

"On the ball!"

"Play up!"

"First man in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Slackers! Begin!"

Stamp, stamp, stamp, stamp, stamp, stamp!

"If you don't raise that curtain, we'll jolly well come and raise it ourselves!" roared Bolsover major.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Start, you slackers—start!"

"My hat!" groaned Potter, looking out into the passage again. "There'll be a giddy riot. Those Remove rotters will make a row if they get a chance. Where can that awful idiot be? Oh, here he is at last!"

And Potter gave a gasp of relief as a figure in convict

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clothes, partly concealed by an overcoat, came hurrying along the passage.

"Come on, Coker, you duffer; we're waiting for you!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.
Convict 99 and Convict 44!

LITTLE did the Fifth Form Stage Club, or any other of the Greyfriars fellows, guess what was the cause of Horace Coker's strange and unaccountable delay. Coker had descended into the vaults below the ruined chapel to look for Charley Jaggers, quite sure that he was there, and that he could find him.

Coker's intentions towards the unfortunate Jaggers were of the kindliest, as we know. But there was one circumstance that Coker left entirely out of his calculations, and that was that, kindly as he felt towards the unfortunate Charley, the state of his feelings could not possibly be known to Convict 44. Jaggers was far from likely to guess that Coker of the Fifth wanted to run the risk of getting himself into serious trouble by helping him. It was very probable that Jaggers had entirely forgotten the fact that he had ever fagged for Uncle George at Greyfriars in the old days—doubtful if he knew that Uncle George had a nephew at Greyfriars now. In fact, it was pretty certain that if Convict 44 found a fellow looking for him, he would jump to the conclusion that the fellow came as an enemy—the most natural conclusion for him to jump to. Horace Coker had not thought the matter out so far as that, and it did not even occur to him that he might be going into danger.

He advanced into the vaults, flashing the lantern-light before him, scanning every nook and corner for a trace of the man he sought. He left the first vault behind him and the second and the third. Ahead of him was a dim vista of vaults, and then the bricked opening of the passage that led away towards the priory in the wood. And as Coker flashed the lantern there, he caught sight of a figure that dodged back into the shadows.

He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. Even in that brief glimpse he had recognised the broad-arrow of the convict garb.

"Got him!" ejaculated Coker, and he called out "Hallo, there! This way, Jaggers!"

What happened next was a surprise to Coker.

From the shadows a desperate figure came with a spring like a tiger, and Coker was gripped in savage hands, and borne backwards to the flagged floor. He crashed down upon the hard flags, with a shock that shook his breath away, and the convict sprawled over him with hands gripping at his throat.

It was the convict—there was no doubt about that—and Coker had found him—there was no doubt about that, either. But the meeting had not taken place according to the programme Coker had mapped out in his mind.

Coker struggled blindly in the grasp of the convict. Convict 44 was not much bigger than Coker, but he was a grown man, and the Fifth-Former, powerful as he was, had no chance whatever against him. A knee was planted upon Coker's chest, pinning him down on the cold flags, and the convict's hands were still upon his throat.

Coker panted helplessly.

He wanted to explain to the ruffian—for ruffian he evidently was, as Coker realised too late—that he had come seeking him as a friend and helper; but he had no chance whatever to explain.

He was in the hands of a desperate and determined man—a man who would assuredly stick at very little in the struggle for his freedom.

In those few horrible moments, as he writhed under the grip of the convict, Horace Coker realised his mistake, and sincerely repented him that he had had that lofty and self-satisfied disregard for the law of the land. It was borne in upon his mind that Blackmoor Prison was an excellent place for the rough brute who was gripping his throat so fiercely.

Indeed, for one horrible moment or two Coker felt a chilling fear that his very life was in danger, so savagely did that grasp fix upon his throat.

The lantern had been dashed upon the ground, but it was still burning, and the dim light glimmered upon the two figures, and showed to Coker the savage, desperate face that bent over him.

Two deep-set, gleaming eyes looked down at him, scanning his pale and terrified face—for Coker was feeling terror now. A very few moments had sufficed to change the current of his feelings.

Then the grasp on his throat relaxed.

"Hold your tongue!" whispered the man above him. "I mean, do not call out! If you call out, you will never leave this vault alive! Do you understand?"

"Yes," gasped Coker hoarsely.

His voice came with an effort; his throat still felt as though it were contracted with bands of steel. He could hardly speak at all.

FOR NEXT MONDAY— "CORNERED!"

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"You came here alone?"

"Yes."

"You came looking for me?"

"I—I—I——"

"Don't lie!" said the convict savagely, his fingers closing again on Coker's throat as a warning. "Your life is in my hands, and I would kill you as soon as look at you—if I were sure about that warder at Blackmoor. If he is dead, it's a hanging job any way!"

"He isn't dead," gasped Coker, glad that he could give the rascal that assurance, for his own safety.

More and more he realised what an utter brute he had to deal with, and the fatuous folly he had been guilty of himself in thinking of helping him to escape the law.

"How do you know?"

"It—it's in the papers," panted Coker. "The man was stunned when you hit him, that's all. He's not in any danger!"

"I thought afterwards I might have hit too hard," muttered the convict. He gave Coker's throat another savage nip. "You are not telling lies?"

"Grooh! No; it's the truth!"

"Good! All the better for you!" said the ruffian grimly. "If it's not a hanging job already, I won't make it one if I can help it. But take care. I am desperate. You came here looking for me, you spying young hound! How did you know I was here?"

"I—I——"

"Listen to me! I know you knew. I heard your voice some time ago, talking to your friends up there. I heard the whole of that foolery you were doing," said the convict grimly. "I know you came here with some knowledge that I was here. How did you know? Does anyone else know?"

"No, no!" gasped Coker. "I—I guessed you were here, because Bunter's grub was taken!"

"Ah, I risked it! I was starving. The fat fool came down as far as that door," muttered Jaggers. "If he had come further——" He did not finish. "So no one else knows that you came here looking for me?"

"Nobody—honour bright!"

"Well, you've found me," said Jaggers, with a cynical grin that made his hard, haggard face look almost devilish to Coker's eyes. "You've found me! You fool! Did you hope to take me single-handed?"

"I came to help you!" groaned Coker.

"Liar!"

"Look here, you rotten forger and thief," growled Coker, his courage returning a little, and his temper rising, "I don't tell lies! I came here to help you; but I wouldn't help you now at any price! I know you're guilty now!"

"Guilty of what?" asked the convict, staring at him blankly.

"What you were sent to prison for!"

"Of course. I pleaded guilty," said Jaggers, still staring hard at Coker, as if doubtful whether he had got hold of a lunatic.

Coker groaned. This was a "facer," and no mistake.

"My Uncle George thought you pleaded guilty for some other reason," he murmured. "To—to save somebody else, or something like that!"

"Then your Uncle George is as big a fool as you are!" said the convict.

"I suppose I was a fool!" said Coker bitterly. "I jolly well won't be a fool the same way again! Give me a chance, that's all, and you'll see! I believed you were innocent; my Uncle George thought so!"

"Who the dickens are you, and who is your Uncle George?"

"I'm Coker! You fagged for my Uncle George when you were at Greyfriars!"

Jaggers started.

"Did I? I remember now—a George Coker. He was the biggest fool in the Sixth Form here. He used to larrup me, and I used to make a fool of him to any extent. He was the biggest idiot in the school. It seems to run in the family!"

"Does it?" said Coker, between his teeth. "Only give me a chance——"

"Is it true that you came here to help me?" the convict said, staring hard into Coker's face, puzzled and perplexed.

"Quite true, hang you!"

"Well, I—I couldn't know that!" Jaggers grinned. "How was I to know that any boy would be such a thundering idiot as all that? But if you haven't changed your mind——"

"I have changed my mind!" said Coker savagely, careless of the savage hands that were still perilously near his throat. "I wouldn't help you now at any price! Now I know

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you're guilty. Blackmoor is the right place for you! You are a scoundrel!"

"That is no news," said Jaggers coolly. "After all, a blundering fool like you could not have helped me much! Now, I won't throttle you, though such a crass idiot deserves to be throttled; but I'm going to tie you up and gag you, and leave you here. I'm going to take your clothes and clear off, and risk it. I hope you'll be found—I dare say you will—but you'll have to take your chance of that!"

Coker grinned with a somewhat bitter satisfaction.

"You won't change clothes with me," he said. "I'm dressed for our play, and I'm wearing convict clothes under this coat, the same as you are!"

Jaggers uttered a savage exclamation. He tore open Coker's coat, and saw that the Fifth-Former was speaking the truth. His features worked with rage, and for a moment it seemed that he would carry out his threat of throttling Coker, in his furious disappointment; but he held his hand.

"You fool—you fool! That's my chance gone! But—but I must risk it! I'll take the coat, and chance it! They are after me. I've seen a policeman keeping guard in the priory in the wood, and that shows they know I've taken to this hiding-place. I must get off. Strip off that coat—quick!"

He picked up Coker's cap, which had fallen to the floor.

Coker slipped the overcoat off. Then the convict bound him hand and foot, tearing strips from his stage costume to provide the bonds. Coker gritted his teeth with rage, but he did not resist. He had no chance in a struggle with the desperate man, and he knew that his life would be imperilled if he resisted.

He was securely bound, and then a gag of folded cloth was stuffed into his mouth, and tied there with another strip from his costume. He lay helpless and silent on the floor. He remembered how the amateur convict had dealt with him in his study; but his experience at the hands of Bolsover major had been nothing to this—the real thing. The convict had bound him so tightly that his limbs were already aching with cramp, and his jaws ached with the tightness of the gag.

If he was not found and released soon, he was destined to pass some extremely uncomfortable hours in the vaults. And when would he be found? If he did not turn up at seven for the play, his chums would miss him, but would they think of exploring the crypt for him? It was not likely. They had no reason to suppose that he had descended there.

Coker felt a thrill of horror at the thought that he might remain there all night—all next day, perhaps. He was paying very dearly for his reckless and obstinate resolve to help Uncle George's old fag. And the rascal was guilty, after all. He did not resemble Convict 99 in the least. He was guilty, and an utterly brutal and unscrupulous scoundrel! Coker groaned in anguish of spirit. The gag choked back his groan into a faint, miserable gurgle.

Little did the ruffian care for the thoughts that were passing through Coker's mind!

He put on the overcoat, buttoned it to the chin, with the collar turned up, and then extinguished the lantern, leaving Coker in black darkness. Coker heard him groping away to the exit from the crypt, and then there was silence!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.
The Last Chance!

CONVICT 44 crept from the crypt, and looked out from the ruins towards the school. The dusk of evening was thickening over Greyfriars, and all the fellows were indoors. It was a favourable moment for the convict to make his dash for freedom.

Coker's coat and cap concealed him pretty well; only the telltale stockings below the coat betrayed him, and in the darkness they were not noticeable. He had pulled the cap down over his brows, and it shaded his hard face. Before many hours, he was certain, those recesses below old Greyfriars would be searched by the police, and while they were searching he had a chance of getting clear.

He quitted the ruins, and, keeping as much in the shadow as possible, made his way towards the school gates. His knowledge from his schooldays made the place quite familiar to him.

He came in sight of the gates, and started back at once into the shadow of a tree. Close by the gates stood the portly form of P.-c. Tozer, in conversation with Gosling. Outside, the tread of horse's hoofs was audible. A mounted constable was keeping watch and ward in the road.

The convict gritted his teeth with rage and disappointment. Escape by the road was cut off. They knew that he had taken to the subterranean passage, and both ends of it were evidently guarded. Was the school surrounded? He guessed that it was, but he sought to make sure. He crept away along the inner side of the school wall, and at a distance from the gates pulled himself up the wall and looked over. Another mounted policeman passed within a few feet of his white and desperate face, and he dropped back again, with a silent curse. With despair in his heart, the wretched man scuttled away to the rear of the School House, and again spied over the wall, and the muttering voices of a couple of warders came to his ears. He crept away in the direction of the playing-fields, but two or three forms loomed up there in the gloom, and he retreated hastily. The place was surrounded! They knew he was there! They had guessed easily enough why the old Greyfriars boy made off in the direction of Greyfriars; and the whole swarm of pursuers had concentrated there! The place was thronged with them! And as he crouched, with throbbing heart, under the trees in the Close, Convict 44 saw the stalwart form of Inspector Grimes in the gateway, and saw him advancing into the Close with three or four constables, evidently with the intention of searching.

With curses on his lips, which he dared not utter aloud, the hunted man retreated again. The Close was guarded and would be searched; the ruins would be searched. And there was no outlet. There remained only the School House, lighted up, and swarming with Greyfriars fellows. Could he find some nook or cranny there to hide himself? Some chance of obtaining clothes—perhaps a disguise? It was his only hope! And then there came into his mind the recollection of the dress rehearsal he had overheard in the ruins, and his eyes gleamed.

In the Fifth Form-room at seven Coker was to appear in convict garb, made up for his part. The convict knew it all; and he had heard Coker spouting his melodramatic lines. Seven had struck from the old clock-tower. They would be waiting for Coker—waiting for a fellow of Coker's size, made up as a convict and unrecognisable. It was the slimmest of slim chances, but it was all that remained to the desperate man—to enter the School House, and, if he were seen, to pretend, if he could, that he was Coker, made up for the play. Once in the house, among costumes and grease-paints belonging to the amateur actors, he might get a chance of changing his clothes, of disguising his face, and running the gauntlet of the police with safety. It was a desperate chance, but it was all that remained to Charles Jaggers.

Mustering up all his nerve, the desperate man hurried towards the house and boldly entered. The place was deserted. He guessed that nearly the whole school was gathered in the amateur theatre to see the play. He ran down the old familiar passages quickly, his heart throbbing, as he heard the voice of Inspector Grimes of Courtfield at the door of the School House. Two minutes later he would have been spotted as he entered. He stopped suddenly in the passage! Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was before him, staring at him with blank amazement.

"Why—what—who——" ejaculated Mr. Prout. "My goodness! The convict!"

Convict 44 restrained his impulse to spring at the throat of the Form-master. Before it came to that, he would essay to play his part. He took off his cap.

"Oh, no, sir!" he said, rendering his voice as steady as he could. "I'm Coker, sir—I'm Convict 99, just going in to the play, sir!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Prout. "You quite startled me, Coker. I really took you for the man the police are searching for. You had better keep in the Form-room while you are wearing that ridiculous costume. Mr. Tozer has already mistaken you once for the escaped convict, you remember. Don't let such a mistake occur again."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Prout was looking at him very curiously. Jaggers had had some idea of getting to a dormitory and obtaining clothes there, but under the eye of the Fifth Form-master, he had no choice but to carry out his assumed character. He went down the passage towards the door at the upper end of the Fifth Form-room. That door had opened, and Potter of the Fifth was looking out. It is possible that Mr. Prout had some lingering doubt as to whether it was really Coker, but Potter's greeting to the convict dissipated his doubt, if he had one, and he walked away satisfied.

"We're waiting for you, Coker! Where on earth have you been? The audience are making a fearful row," Potter said angrily, as he grasped the convict's arm and drew him hastily in. "You've got to go on in the first scene. Shall we ring up the curtain now?"

"Yes—yes!" muttered the convict, hardly knowing what he was saying.

"Up with it, Fitz!"

All the Stage Club stared at the convict in surprise. They had had a very poor opinion of Coker's powers as an actor—of his skill in the art of making-up. But certainly, this

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convict looked the real thing. Excepting that he was the same size as Coker, he did not resemble Coker in the slightest degree. His very features seemed different, as Greene remarked to Mitford in wonder. How on earth Coker could have made himself up like that was a giddy mystery. It was fortunate for Jaggers, perhaps, that he had to take the stage instantly, or a longer observation might have roused some suspicion among the Fifth-Form actors. True, they were waiting for Coker to come in made up as a convict, and here he was. But that superb make-up; it was very surprising. Convict 44, almost dazed by the position he found himself in, stood on the stage with Potter, and the curtain went up.

There was a buzz of surprise and applause from the audience crowded from end to end, almost of the Fourth Form They had expected Convict 99 to appear only too evidently Coker of the Fifth. But they didn't recognise Coker now. Bob Cherry remarked, in utter astonishment, that he didn't resemble Coker in the least. He had never believed that old Coker could do it. And the Removites gave the convict a generous cheer in recognition of unexpected talent.

The noise died away. Convict 44 tried to pull himself together. He knew that he was expected to speak. He remembered dimly the melodramatic speech he had heard Coker deliver in the rehearsal—but he remembered it very dimly. He had to play the part of Convict 99, or be discovered. Potter was staring at him angrily.

"Why don't you begin?" he muttered.

"I—I—all right!"

"Have you forgotten your words, you silly ass?"

The voice of the prompter was heard from behind the scenes—audible to most of the audience as well as the actors, as so often happens in amateur theatricals.

"Ten years!"

Convict 44, so strangely and unexpectedly changed into Convict 99, took up the tale.

"Ten years!" he stammered. "Ha, ha! Ten years! Ten y-y-years! For ten long, weary years am I doomed. I am doomed for ten long, weary years!"

"You ass, you've got it wrong!" murmured Potter.

"With this red right hand my freedom I will win, for ten long, weary years!" stammered the convict. "For ten long years this right hand shall imbrue in the base blood of the minions of the law!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Harry Wharton. "Coker's made up all right, but he can't have the lines right! Even Coker couldn't have written lines like that!"

"Now, then, 99, none of your shirking!" said Potter, in his character of warder.

"Bah! Base slave! Tool of the law!"

"Wot you want is a dose of the cat, 99; and, mark my words, you'll get it!" said Warder Potter threateningly.

"Stand back! With this red, right hand——"

Convict 44-99 hesitated and stopped. He simply couldn't remember the lines. He came closer to Potter.

"I—I—I've lost my nerve!" he whispered. "I can't go on!"

"Oh, you idiot! Call yourself an actor!" groaned Potter. "You're mucking up the whole thing! The Remove will chip us to death about this."

"Speak up, there!" roared Johnny Bull from the audience.

"Go it, 99!"

"On the ball!"

"I'll-collar you and march you off," said Potter. "We'll work up a scene without you in it. This is what comes of taking all the fat for yourself, you silly ass—yah!"

"Play up!" roared the audience.

Potter gripped the convict by the collar and marched him off the scene. Behind the scenes the rest of the company were in a state of tenterhooks.

"The silly chump's got stage-fright," growled Potter. "He's going to muck up the whole show. He'll have to be left out of the first act."

"But the first act's all Coker!" said Greene.

"We must gag it through, that's all."

"My hat!"

The convict had sunk into a seat, his head bowed, apparently in a state of collapse. The members of the company glared at him. Such an utter failure they had not expected even of Coker. They were pleased in one way—they would chip him to death about it afterwards. But they were not pleased at the mucking-up of the melodrama. But something had to be done. The stage was empty; and the audience were yelling. Potter thought it out quickly.

"Take those things off, Coker," he said quickly. "Fitz understudied your part. He will have to take it on, that's all. And we'll leave out his warder bit."

"Sure, I'm on," said Fitzgerald.

The Fifth-Formers expected strenuous objection from Coker. But no objection was raised. The convict stripped off the prison garb, and Fitzgerald hastily donned it, and made up his face differently. Greene and Mitford hurried on to the stage, with an improvised scene of a quarrel between two warders. They kept the audience at bay, as it were, till Fitz was ready to go on. Then Fitzgerald took the stage, and the audience grinned gleefully at the sight of a new Convict 99. Behind the scenes, Convict 44 heard the play go on—without listening to it, however. Towards the end of the first act, there was an ensemble scene, with all the characters on the stage. The convict was left alone. Then he acted with quick decision. From the property-box he grabbed a false beard and moustache and some sticks of grease-paint, and quitted the room, hurrying upstairs to the Fifth Form dormitory. The dormitory, of course, was empty. He turned on the light hurriedly, selected a suit of clothes from a box, and proceeded to dress and disguise himself.

Below, the first act of Convict 99 finished amid rounds of applause.

FOR NEXT MONDAY— "CORNERED!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.
An Interrupted Melodrama!

HORACE COKER, in the meantime, lay in the darkness of the vault, a helpless prisoner, shivering from the contact of the cold stone floor. It seemed ages to Coker before a light gleamed in the darkness of the vault. But, as a matter of fact, it was little more than an hour. Coker rolled over towards the light, as it came penetrating the darkness, and tried to call out, but emitted only a faint gurgle. There were voices and footsteps, and he fancied that his friends had come looking for him. But as the light came nearer, and gleamed upon him, he saw the form of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, and Mr. Tozer, and several policemen behind them.

"Here he is!" exclaimed the inspector, as he spotted the broad-arrow costume. "And, my word, he's tied up! What the dickens——"

"Got him?" said Mr. Tozer. Then, as he bent and looked at the white face of the Fifth-Former, he ejaculated: "'Tain't him! That's Master Coker!"

"What!"

Inspector Grimes scanned the senior's face. A glance was enough to show him that this was not Charles Jaggers. The inspector was astounded. He removed the gag from Coker's mouth, and cut through his bonds.

"What are you doing in these clothes?" he demanded.

"It's a stage costume. We're playing 'Convict 99,'" explained Coker, wisely keeping dark the fact that he had descended into the vaults with the intention of helping the rascal who had used him so badly. "I'm Convict 99 in the play. These are the clothes for the part. That villain took my coat and bunked."

"Then he's in the grounds of the school somewhere," said Mr. Grimes, with satisfaction. "Every outlet's guarded. He can't get away."

"Oh, good!" panted Coker. "The beast! I hope he'll be hung!"

"He won't be hung," grinned the inspector. "But he'll go back to chokey, Master Coker. Lucky for you we found you."

"But, I say, sir," exclaimed Mr. Tozer, "you say as how you was the conwick in the play, Master Coker. Then who's playing it now?"

"They can't be playing it," said Coker. "They haven't any other convict clothes, excepting these."

"You're sure of that?"

"Yes, of course," said Coker testily. "I provided the costumes. There isn't another convict rig-out at Greyfriars."

"But there is," gasped Mr. Tozer. "I tell yer I looked into the room, and they was playing, and there was a conwick on the stage!"

"Rats!" said Coker. "I tell you——"

Inspector Grimes gave a sort of yell.

"Oh, great Scott! The nerve of it. But it's just like Jaggers! Follow me!"

The inspector rushed out of the vault. His men followed him fast, and Coker followed them as fast as his cramped limbs would allow. The information that there was no other suit of convict clothes in the school enlightened the inspector. He dashed across the Close furiously towards the School House, with his men at his heels.

In the Fifth Form-room somebody was playing the part of Convict 99. Who was it? The inspector thought he knew, now, where the convict had vanished to. He rushed into the house in great excitement.

A man with a brown beard that covered half his face, and a long, curly moustache, with an overcoat on buttoned to the chin, and a soft felt hat drawn down over his forehead, was just coming downstairs. He stared at the inspector, a wild gleam coming into his eyes; but the inspector did not even

(Continued on Page 27.)

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Our Magnificent Serial Story. Start To-day.

A Wonderful Story dealing with the Thrilling Adventures of Ferrers Lord—Millionaire, and his comrades, Ching-Lung—Juggler and Ventriloquist; Rupert Thurston, and Gan-Waga, the Eskimo.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is engaged on one of his adventurous expeditions, in company with Ching-Lung (the Prince of China), Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga (the Eskimo), also Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and the rest of the famous band of stalwart seamen. Their quest is a field of blue orchids, which is said to exist somewhere up the great Amazon River, and their craft is a small steam launch, named the Blue Orchid, which has been captured from Lord's enemy in this enterprise, a German millionaire named Hausmann. Hausmann's great yacht, the Medea, has pursued the Blue Orchid into a network of lagoons, and Ferrers Lord's native guide and devoted servant, Vasco, points out that if a narrow channel could be blocked up behind the Medea, the great yacht would be a prisoner. Ferrers Lord decides to make the attempt, and with Ching-Lung and a picked party, leaves the Blue Orchid in a canvas canoe. They are successful in their errand, just as the Medea appears in sight. A landing-party from the yacht is sent in pursuit of the millionaire and his companion, but they escape to their own vessel, which immediately sets sail for the Amazon again. But late that night they see a fast motor launch rapidly overhauling them, and Ferrers Lord tells Ching-Lung to send a warning shot. The answer is given in the shape of a white flag of truce, but Lord refuses to acknowledge it. Shots are exchanged, and the launch retreats. In the night, however, it passes the Blue Orchid, and exchanges signals by means of rockets with someone on shore. A running fight with the enemy is the result, but Ferrers Lord's men keep their assailants at a distance, and with full speed ahead, are on the point of losing sight of their pursuers, when the Blue Orchid strikes a rock. The propeller is broken, and Ferrers Lord takes to the boats, and escapes ashore. Here Vasco, the native, finds a savage guarding a canoe, and, striking him senseless, points out to the millionaire that the stream on which the canoe is resting is the way to Obidos, their goal. The party embark, and paddle their way up, and this time there is no pursuit.

(Now go on with the story.)

Obidos—In the Path of the Tornado—Out of Cold Water Into Hot—Prout and the One-eyed Mule.

The fat little alcade, or mayor, bowed to the very ground. They had slept one night in Obidos, and none of them were very eager to spend another night there. The mayor had found two weedy-looking horses and four mules, for which he had demanded ten times their value. Greasy-looking natives, who seemed to live on cigarettes, stared at the strangers rudely, and yet spoke with the most gracious politeness. Every effort to hire another guide, or a few bearers proved utterly useless.

"It is impossible, Excellency," sighed the alcade. "I would give my life to aid you, but the forests have an evil name. These people are fools, dolts, and full of ignorance. They say that devils and monsters live up there. And they are so stubborn, these dogs."

"But Whateman did not go up alone, alcade?" said Rupert.

"Ah, no; but he brought his men with him, Senor Thurston. Oh, it is great madness, this orchid seeking! You are a strange people, you British—most strange. We cannot understand you."

The whole population watched them out of the town.

"Nevers see such a lots of bad 'nough ugliful faces in my lifes, Chingy," said Gan-Waga. "Makes yo' throat tickles to looks at thems, hunk? Wonder if they ever washes, Chingy?"

"Only when they get caught in the rain, wagtail, I expect," grinned Ching-Lung. "They're not so very handsome when you come to examine them. Mind you don't fall off that Arab steed and bend yourself."

Gan had taken possession of one of the spare mules. The animal could only boast of one eye, but that eye had enough wickedness in it for twenty. Ching-Lung had christened the creature Napoleon, because, as he explained to Gan, every inch of it was boney part.

They camped at dusk, having left Obidos a good twenty miles behind them. By the light of the fire, Ferrers Lord puzzled over Oscar Whateman's faded map. After supper they rolled themselves in their blankets. The millionaire kept watch. The night passed without any alarm.

"Tumble up—tumble up!" cried Ching-Lung merrily. "Six o'clock, my boys!"

They were dog-tired, when Ferrers Lord called a halt. So far the route had been fairly open. Standing on a low hill, Thurston and the millionaire looked across a scrub-covered plain to where the forest rose like an impassable wall.

"Our work will begin in earnest to-morrow, Rupert. All the rest has been mere play. Unless I am greatly mistaken, we shall have to carve out a path for ourselves."

Joe had got a couple of fires going, and the smell that rose from the saucepan made Gan pat himself.

"By honey, I shall sleep without rocking," yawned Prout, "if them blessed mosquitoes'll let me. Funny sort o' sky, Ben, ain't it? What do you make on it?"

"Looks like a soaker, souse me," said the bo'sun. "If I was at sea I'd keep a heye on it."

The sky had turned a dull coppery tint, and the sun just showed through it like a dim red ball. Great bats flew about on noiseless wings, though it was quite an hour sooner than they usually left their haunts.

"We'll have to sleep in wet shirts, I'm afraid," said Ching-Lung. "And I left my umbrella on the mangle. Isn't that soup done yet, Joe?"

"All ready, sir."

Presently, after a well-earned meal, they lighted their pipes. Vasco seemed uneasy, as his black eyes watched the southern sky. The smoke from the fires rose perfectly straight into the air.

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"Bah, it's stifling!" said Thurston. "I can hardly get my breath."

Vasco sprang to his feet.

"Look to the blankets and baggage, Excellency!" he cried. "I thought it would pass us. See, see!"

A dark pillar of cloud appeared to the south, and they heard a dull, shivering roar.

"Look to the cattle, Maddock!" shouted Ferrers Lord.

Neither mules nor horses had been hobbled, for they had seemed too tired to stray. Snorting with terror, the horses set off at full gallop, followed by the mules. Maddock managed to catch Napoleon's halter; but the one-eyed brute swung round and lashed out fiercely, and planted both its hind hoofs on the bo'sun's chest. Maddock staggered, and the next instant Napoleon was tearing after the others.

On came the inky pillar with incredible speed, tearing up small trees and shrubs, and flinging them high into the air like straws. The din was tremendous.

"Lie down—lie down!"

A saddle, lifted like a feather, struck Barry O'Rooney to the ground. Blazing logs, kettles, saucepans, and blankets rose in a little cloud, and were whirled away. It was as black as midnight. They lay flat, clinging to the grass, with the noise of a thousand thunders in their ears, and a hail of branches, stones, and clods of earth hissing over them. Then came the rain—a solid, roaring sheet.

"Phew!" Ching-Lung sat up in four inches of water. "Talk about blizzards!"

The sun was creeping out again. They were all soaked to the skin, and covered with mud. Barry O'Rooney was drinking from the millionaire's flask, and tenderly holding his ribs. The ground was a veritable swamp, and in the line of the tornado it had been stripped bare of every twig and blade of grass.

"Anyone else hurt?" asked Ferrers Lord.

Barry O'Rooney sighed as he wiped the mud from his eyes, and began to feel himself carefully.

"Bedad, Oi'm not so sartin that Oi'm all here," he said. "Oi got all me ten fingers and two ears, for a blessing, and two legs. Phwat a breeze! Ut's a wondher me goolden hair wasn't blowed out by the roots."

The ground, baked hard for months by the tropical sun, began to steam like a cauldron. In ten minutes it was impossible for them to see each other distinctly.

"Ut remoinds me of washin'-day at swate Ballybunion," said Barry dismally, "whin yez couldn't see to think for steam and soapsuds. Oh, whoy did Oi give up the troipe-and-onion business to sail on the stormy sea?"

They were utterly miserable. Darkness closed down, and to make a fire was out of the question. Ching-Lung and Prout managed to snatch a little sleep, but they were the lucky ones. For the others it was a long and dreary night. Luckily the ground quickly dried.

"By Jove, we do look a cheerful crowd!" said Ching-Lung. "Chase yourselves and get warm."

"We must search about to see what we can recover from the general wreck," said Ferrers Lord. "They have gone in the right direction," he added, with a smile; "but the journey can hardly have improved them."

Glad enough to stretch their cramped limbs, they set out. The tornado had swept its way into the forests, felling the trees as if a legion of giants had been at work. Thurston and Maddock discovered the horses and two of the mules quietly browsing in a hollow. Another mule was found further away with a broken neck. Quite five hundred yards from the camp Gan-Waga picked up a rifle, and the weapon was quite undamaged.

"It might have been worse," said Thurston, examining the heap of salvage. "Who hasn't come back?"

"His highness and the blubberbiter, sir," answered Joe, as he blew at the stubborn fire.

Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga were not in any great hurry to return. Gan's eagle eye had detected a kettle hanging on the branch of a tree, and he had also espied a tin cup and a packet of tea. They had, in addition, encountered a box of sweet biscuits. There was plenty of wood, and a pleasant water-hole surrounded by ferns. They were both hungry and thirsty.

"We'll have a light breakfast on our own, Eskimotor," said Ching-Lung, "in this bewitching glade. I'm tired of taking my meals with those vulgar people. I'm glad you spotted that kettle-tree with the kettle-fruit growing on it. Canst drink tea without milk or sugar?"

"Drinks anytings, Chingy. We bathes in there afterwardses, hunk?"

The pool was only about thirty feet square, but it looked clear, cool, and inviting. While waiting for the kettle to boil, they undressed and spread out their clothes to dry in the sun.

"Not likes tornaders," Ching, said Gan thoughtfully. "They too bad 'nough windy for me. They awfulness. Yo' puts the tea in the kettles, Chingy, 'cos he boilings. Well, I blessered! Dere ole 'Poleons!"

FOR NEXT MONDAY— "CORNERED!"

The mule's head appeared through the ferns on the other side of the water-hole, and Napoleon regarded them distrustfully, with his solitary eye. Napoleon had got rid of his bridle. If he had been in the way of the storm, it was a miracle that he had not got rid of his skin.

"He has a kind face and a loving smile, wagtail," grinned the prince, "and it would grieve me to part with him. Don't you think, dear, you'd better slip round and collar him before he takes it into his head to elope?"

"Tink I makes the teas, Chingy, and yo' catches hims 'fore he perslopes, hunk?"

"I believe you're afraid of the docile dumb animal, Gan. Go and nab him. Look him in the face and tame him."

Gan flatly refused to do anything of the kind. It was by no means an easy thing to gaze into Napoleon's face when one wanted to catch him, for that sagacious creature had a habit of turning in a circle and presenting his tail and hoofs to the gaze of the spectator. Napoleon stooped to drink.

"You're nothing but a fat coward, Gan," said Ching-Lung, as he pulled on his trousers and boots. "I'll have Mister Nap in two ticks. Throw me my shirt, will you? Ur-r-r! Ain't it a rotten sensation to get into a wet shirt? Watch me stalk him, and I'll bet money if I can once get hold of him, he won't slip me."

Ching-Lung glided into the ferns. Napoleon was still drinking. He was a cunning and crafty brute, but he was not so cunning as the prince. Ching-Lung hardly shook a leaf as he advanced. He saw the mule's neck and sprang.

Napoleon, the mule, was quite an important individual at that time. Both Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga were keenly interested in him, but his presence had awakened even more interest in another quarter. He was lean and sad to look upon, but an old jaguar with worn-out teeth and blunted claws cannot afford to pick and choose, for he must be satisfied with the game that is easiest to kill.

Napoleon squealed and reared as Ching-Lung grasped him by the neck. At that very instant the jaguar flung himself from the branch where he had been lurking, and fell on Napoleon's withers. His claws were in bad repair, but the mule felt them. With a louder squeal, Napoleon lifted his heels to the sky. To escape a wetting, the prince clung on tighter, quite unaware of the fact that the mule carried a passenger who had not paid his fare. There was a wild shriek from Gan-Waga.

"Ooh-ow-ooh! Tigerseses, Chingy! Oh, murders—bad 'nough murders! Ow, tigerseses!"

Then the mule attempted to stand on his head once more, and the rotten bank gave way. With a terrific splash, mule, jaguar, and Chinaman struck the water. The pool was ten feet deep, and Ching-Lung was underneath. He came up like a cork, his vision rather obscured. Knowing very well that the moment Napoleon placed his hoofs on solid ground he would wink his eye mockingly and bolt, the prince seized his tail.

At least, Ching-Lung in his innocence imagined it was Napoleon's tail, but he was promptly aware of his mistake, for the jaguar curved round like lightning when he felt that liberties were being taken with his caudal appendage, and his highness suddenly found himself gazing into a red dripping mouth, that was certainly not the mouth of Napoleon Bonaparte, the mule.

"Sandpaper and scissors!" howled Ching-Lung; and let go.

Ching-Lung made for the bottom like a stone. He had not even a knife, and he did not care for bathing in such company. He grasped a water-plant and held his breath.

"Phew!" he thought. "I hope Gan will shoot straight. If he only wings the brute, there'll be the mischief to pay."

He waited until his lungs felt about to burst. He had had no time to take a good breath, for the sight of the animal's jaws so close to his nose had quickened his movements. With the veins in his temples swollen, and his face almost purple, he bobbed to the surface.

"Shoot, shoot, shoot!" he shouted frantically. "Why don't you shoot?"

Gan-Waga levelled the rifle, and pulled the trigger. Round and round swam the mule, squealing in its terror. The jaguar, probably almost as frightened as Napoleon, had his front paws over the edge of the bank and was making desperate efforts to drag himself out, and his roars practically drowned the voice of Napoleon.

The rifle did not explode; it was not loaded. Gan struck the jaguar a blow with the butt, made as little impression on the jaguar's iron skull as a feather might have done.

"Bolt round the pool, and shin up a tree!" roared the prince.

It was too late, for the jaguar had obtained a foothold. Ching-Lung shuddered as the rifle slipped from the Eskimo's hand.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

"Ohmi, ohmi, I doned, Chingy!" wailed Gan. "I doned, I——"

Then Gan did one of the smartest things he had ever achieved. He snatched up the big iron kettle. The water was not actually boiling, but it was hissing hot. He poured it over the jaguar's head, and then bolted like the wind and shinned up a tree. Shaking his mangy steaming head, snorting and howling, Gan's enemy went off at a mad gallop, and presently a rifle cracked.

"Ohmi, ohmi, awfulness! Oh, bad 'nough shockingfuls!" wailed the Eskimo, climbing for his life. "Why nots the fathead's guns go offs? Ow murders! Where my Ching—ah-a-a-ooh-ooh!"

Gan was no squirrel or sparrow, and he made a mistake in attempting to perch on a branch only strong enough to hold a person half his weight. The branch snapped, and letting out a hideous wail of despair, Gan came earthwards upside down. There was water underneath, and nothing agreed with the stout Eskimo better than that. He shot up, only to feel the hot breath of an animal on his cheek and its appalling roar in his ears.

"Ti-tigereses!" shuddered the Eskimo. "Ohmi, I doned twices!"

It was only Napoleon shouting—so to put it—for the lifeboat, for he was getting tired of swimming. Very soon Gan-Waga put his nostrils out of the water, and then a little black eye followed. The little black eye was rather astonished to see a pair of naked human soles, and the underpart of ten bare human toes protruding over the bank. Between two of the toes was held a lighted cigarette.

"Dat Chingy. Ooh, good 'nough butterfuls!" said Gan-Waga. "Ho, ho, hoo! He eated the tigerseses, hunk?"

Napoleon had succeeded in finding a shallow corner, and, feeling that it was easier to stand still than swim about, he was patiently waiting there until called for. Ching-Lung's feet vanished and his face appeared.

"What is this I behold?" he said. "Is it a water-lily or a water-melon? What are you doing down there?"

"I lookings fo' apples on the pear-trees, Chingy. Where the tigereses, Chingy?"

"I believe he has gone to have his face repaired, to have it soled and heeled, in fact," grinned the prince. "He left in such a hurry that I was unable to ask him whither he was wenting. Hadn't you better come out boy? You're soaking all the beautiful greasy curls out of your hair."

Gan-Waga took one stroke and glided to the bank. Ching-Lung had refilled the kettle and placed it on the fire.

"Ols uglifuls runs when I pours the water on him whiskers, hunk Chingy," lisped Gan.

"Well, he didn't hang about long admiring the scenery," chuckled the prince. "He gave me a startler. It was rude of me to pull his tail without an introduction, but I did it thoughtlessly. When he turned and smiled I knew I'd be a lot safer down among the tadpoles, and I went. And now, Eskimotor, a word of advice. Next time you meet a jaguar, don't try to blow its brains out with an empty gun, because it's a trick that requires a lot of practice. You generally get chawed up before you learn how to do it, and there isn't always a hot kettle handy. And now we'll rescue Napoleon Bonaparte before he catches cold feet."

Before the kettle was ready, Ching-Lung had twisted a rope of dry grass and made a rough but strong halter.

"Dat hard works, Chingy," said Gan, when, after much hard tugging, the mule was landed and safely tied to a bush. "Wants some tea badful. Ho, ho, hoo! I laughs when I tink of that tigers, Chingy! He, he, he! Ohmi, ohmi!"

Gan-Waga laughed so hard that he could scarcely get his shirt on. His clothes, unlike Ching-Lung's, were fairly dry by this time. The Eskimo filled his mouth with biscuits, and waited his turn with the tin mug.

"Is it nice teas, Chingy?"

"As good as any," said Ching-Lung, passing the mug over. "Be careful, for it's a trifle warm, oily one!"

Gan-Waga grasped the mug, and then, as Barry O'Rooney, the famous poet, remarked later on:

"He raised the taycup to his lips
To take a moighty swill.
But whoy, oh, whoy those glassy oies,
And whoy that dreadful yell?
He screamed 'Ohmi!' he shrieked 'Oh, pip!'
Then loike a corrpse he fell."

The Eskimo did not fall all at once. He certainly raised the mug to his lips and opened his mouth, but not to drink. His little black eyes became fixed in their sockets. After that he shrieked "Ohmi!" and several other things, as he poured the hot tea down the front of his shirt; and, rolling heels over head backwards, tumbled into the pool.

"Har, har, har!" laughed Mr. Thomas Prout. "He played that same sort o' joke on us, by honey, once; only it warn't a tiger, it war a bear. Har, har, har, har!"

The bo'sun, who was carrying the head of the unlucky jaguar which he had shot, winked.

"Shut up, souse me!" he grinned. "Let's put the darlin' where he'll see it."

Creeping forward on hands and knees, Maddock fixed the head among the ferns in an artistic fashion, and rubbed his hands. Then he peeped over to see what had become of the Eskimo. Gan looked up at the same time, and he was not gleeful. There was fear in his bosom and pain outside it, for the hot tea had made his skin smart. He saw the jaguar's head, and he also saw the face and craned neck of Benjamin Maddock, and the fear within the blubberbiter's breast was changed to wrath and general nastiness.

He sank, and then bounded from the water like a leaping salmon, catching Maddock by the neck. Prout and Barry O'Rooney were astounded to see the bold bo'sun's lower extremities swiftly shoot into the air, only to fade away from human view. An eddying pool showed where he had sunk, and as they watched, huge bubbles rose to the surface, seeming to tell of some dreadful struggle down in the noisome depths.

Ching-Lung's face paled.

"He's in the grip of the jaguar!" he cried.

For a moment they stood spellbound, but nothing of the bo'sun was to be seen.

"He's gone to his doom," said Ching-Lung.

Through the Wilderness—A Rush for the River.

"P'r'aps Ching's fishin', is ut?" said Barry. "Oi didn't hear him say he'd got a boite, but me oies is gettin' so wake that Oi can't hear very well! Bedad ut's gettin' wet he'll be av he stops in there and ut happens to rain!"

"My word, look what pretty bubbles he's blowing!" said Ching-Lung.

There was a roar of laughter.

"What are you grinning at, souse me?" grinned the bo'sun "Gimme a 'and, can't you?"

"We ain't grinnin'; we're cryin'!" said Prout. "You're a nice kettle of cocoa, you are, by honey! You wants a nursemaid to look arter you, wi' a rattle and a perambulator! Swim across and get out."

"Oh, give him a hand, boys!" said Ching-Lung, gesticulating violently to Gan-Waga. "The bank is a bit rotten. Here, I'll hold you."

Gan understood, and unfastened the mule.

"Now," said Ching-Lung, "yank him out before he starts blowing more bubbles."

While pretending to hold Prout by the belt, he hitched the mule's halter to it. The steersman grasped Barry's left hand, and, leaning over at a perilous angle, Barry from Ballybunion extended his right hand to the swimmer.

"A bit more, souse me!" said the bo'sun acidly. "I ain't got a harm as long as a bowsprit!"

Barry drew back, and wiped away a tear.

"Troth, Tommy," he said, "ain't that a noice and swate way to talk to a man who's riskin' his loife in a wathery grave, not to mention the only pair o' droy socks he's got in the woide wurrld! Sure, av yez didn't owe me fourpence, Penjamin Maddock, Oi'd lave yez to drown! Phwat a thin' ut is to have a tinder hearrt!"

"You've got a tender 'ead, which means a soft 'un, souse me!" bellowed Maddock. "'Urry up!"

"Give me the fourpence, and Oi'll put a tombstone on your grave!" grinned Barry. "Oi don't know phwat koind of a monument yez can buy wid fourpence, but Oi'll do me best. Ben, darlint, let me entrate yez not to drown owin' money! Me Uncle Dennis always towled me ut was a bad habit for a man to git into."

"Oh, get him out, Irish!" said Prout.

Once more Barry leaned over the pool. Gan was already on his way to the camp with his share of the salvage. Ching-Lung waited until Maddock's hand met the poet's. Then he gave Napoleon a hearty dig in the ribs with the muzzle of his rifle, and Napoleon proceeded to dance a hornpipe on two legs. Prout was jerked backwards, and Barry joined the bo'sun in the pool.

"Whoa! Whoa-hoa! Gently, you beast!" shrieked the steersman. "Who the—— Help! Go easy, by honey! Stop your hengines! Ow! Whoa! Whoo-oo-oa!"

Thomas got on his feet, but he could only grasp the rope from behind. Pining for liberty, Napoleon began to move backwards, and he went at a pace that made Prout hop. Finding that the game would not do, the mule began to gallop in a circle, of which Prout was the centre. All this was exciting, but it was nothing to what happened when Napoleon foolishly flicked a red-hot ember with the end of his tail. Napoleon pranced about until Prout fancied there were at least a dozen mules. Then, and not till then, it

FRANK RICHARDS Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale in our New Saturday Companion Paper— "CHUCKLES," ½d.

suddenly dawned upon the steersman's hazy and muddled brain, that he ought to unbuckle his belt.

Napoleon was led back to the camp, with two soaked and fierce-eyed men sitting on his back, one behind the other. He was led by a third man, whose face was purple. Ching-Lung raised his eyebrows in amazement when he looked at Barry and Ben Maddock.

"Good gracious," he said, "how wet you are! Has it been raining!"

There was no reply, but Gan-Waga laid one podgy finger on his little snub nose and closed one little black eye.

The hillside was bakingly hot, and the grass and shrubs had been burned almost black by the pitiless Brazilian sun. Hardly a drain of water remained in their bottles, but Ferrers Lord was confident that they were not far from a river. He had more faith in Oscar Whateman's chart than had Ching-Lung or Rupert Thurston.

"Not go much furderer, Chingy," Gan sighed. "Too bad 'nough warmfuls fo' poor Gan! I meltings, Chingy!"

"Rot! Buck up, my bouncing boy! Think of icebergs and things, and fancy you're swallowing snowballs! Get hold of my belt, and I'll give you a tow. Pretend you're skating."

Gan's imagination was not large enough for that. He dragged his feet along heavily. Even Barry O'Rooney had ceased to chatter and crack jokes. Dust, heat, weariness, and thirst were telling their tale.

"No lagging there!" cried Ferrers Lord, glancing back. "All serene! Rouse up, Gan; you're keeping the procession waiting!" said Ching-Lung. "Prick up your ears and stick out your chest. Tut, tut, tut! We're not down-hearted, are we?"

Gan-Waga blinked his smarting eyes, and stepped out gamely. The black dust rose like smoke. No living thing seemed to inhabit this parched desolation—not even a fly, a lizard, or a snake.

"Hi! Water—water!" sounded Thurston's ringing voice.

Mules and horses pricked up their ears, and dilated their nostrils as if they understood the words. Deep below them gleamed a broad, winding river. There would have been a stampede except for the millionaire.

"Keep a tight hand on the cattle, or they'll shake off their packs!" he shouted. "There is plenty of time."

They licked their parched lips. The sight of the shining water, green banks, and waving trees was maddening. Ferrers Lord took his binoculars from their case, and gave the lenses a polish with his handkerchief. He raised the glasses to his eyes.

"Forward!" he said.

It was like stepping out of a wilderness into a paradise. The sweet grass was knee-deep, and the ground was soft and springy. The walk became a trot, the trot a gallop. Mules, men, and horses went headlong down the slope, and plunged over a bed of golden gravel, into the rippling water. Having quenched their thirst, they threw off their clothes, and sat in the river, shouting and splashing like a lot of schoolboys.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand new serial next Monday.)

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ROUGH ON COKER!

(Continued from page 23.)

glance at him. He rushed away with the policemen for the Fifth Form-room. And the bearded man in the overcoat, after one glance after him, grinned sardonically, and walked out into the Close.

Inspector Grimes burst into the Fifth Form-room. The audience were just applauding the close of the first act. On the stage all the characters were grouped, Convict 99 in the centre. With a bound the inspector was on the stage, in the midst of the startled actors. He grasped Convict 99, and, with swift dexterity, clicked the handcuffs on his wrists.

"Got you, my man!" he said grimly.

"Faith, and phwat——" stuttered Fitzgerald.

The audience was in a roar. Potter and the rest of the Stage Club crowded round Inspector Grimes and his prisoner in wild amazement.

"What are you up to, ass?" roared Potter. "What do you mean by handcuffing Fitz? He's not your convict, you chump! Let him alone!"

"It's all right, Potter!" yelled Coker, dashing up the room in his torn and ragged convict garb. "It's all right. He's the man!"

"Coker!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Coker! What the deuce——"

"The villain collared me, and tied me up!" panted Coker. "Then he had the cheek to come in and take my part here."

"Faith, and I'm not your convict, Mr. Grimes!" yelled Fitzgerald. "Lemme go, you spalpeen! Lemme go!"

Inspector Grimes jumped. A second glance was sufficient to show him that this was, indeed, not Charles Jaggers. He looked dazed as he took the handcuffs off Fitzgerald.

"It—it isn't Jaggers!" he stammered. "Then where did these clothes come from? They're Jaggers' clothes."

"I changed with Coker, of course," said Fitzgerald. "I—I mean—— Why, he's still got his clothes on. Then who the thunder did I change with?"

"The convict!" yelled Potter. "It wasn't Coker at all. I thought Coker couldn't make up like that, all the time. It was the real convict. The cheek!"

"Where is he?" exclaimed the inspector. "The man you took these clothes from—quick!"

"Behind the scenes there. I thought he was Coker."

Inspector Grimes rushed behind the scenes. But no one was there. The convict was gone. All was confusion in a moment. The school was in an uproar. The play was forgotten. The audience broke up, and police and schoolboys searched the house high and low for Convict 44. But he was not to be found. Potter missed the beard and moustache from the property box. Blundell missed a suit of clothes and Potter an overcoat from the Fifth Form dormitory; and as soon as Inspector Grimes learned that he remembered the bearded man in an overcoat who had passed him, going out of the house as he came in.

While he had been arresting Fitzgerald the convict had been escaping! Inspector Grimes smote his forehead, and rushed off in pursuit. But the convict was gone. A warder in the road remembered having seen a bearded man in an overcoat pass out of the gates. He had taken him for a master at the school. And Inspector Grimes, wild with rage, led his men off once more to scour the countryside in search of the elusive Convict 44.

"Well, my hat!" Harry Wharton ejaculated, as the excited constables rushed out of the gates of Greyfriars. "This does take the cake, and no giddy mistake! Jaggers has been here, after all, and it was Jaggers who started the play on the stage!"

"It beats the giddy band!" said Bob Cherry. "He deserves to escape for his blessed cheek. Did you help him, Coker?"

"Help him!" snorted Coker. "Let me get a chance of laying him by the heels, that's all, the scoundrel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The excitement died away at Greyfriars, but the famous play of "Convict 99" was not finished that evening. The performance was postponed indefinitely. The next morning the Greyfriars fellows were very eager for news of the escaped convict, and later in the day came the information that he had been recaptured, while attempting to get a passage in a sailing vessel from Pegg Bay. A great many persons were glad to hear that the desperate rascal was safe under lock and key again, but the gladdest of all was Horace Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the Greyfriars chums next Monday, entitled "CORNERED!" by Frank Richards. Order in advance. One Penny.)

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

My Readers' Page

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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"CORNERED

By FRANK RICHARDS.

This splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars deals with another brilliant inspiration which flashes into the fertile brain of Fisher T. Fish, the American junior at Greyfriars. His previous experiences with his precious schemes have made him cautious, and he goes to work in a business-like manner which promises success. The Removites find themselves fairly "cornered" by the astute Fish, and for a time the juniors' cash rolls into Fish's pockets in a steady stream. By his grasping methods, however, the Yankee schoolboy at length kills the goose that lays the golden eggs, and in the end it is Fisher T. Fish who is fairly

"CORNERED!"

FROM A NEW ZEALAND READER.

A New Zealand girl-reader's letter has the place of honour on our Chat page this week. Although space does not allow me to print it in its entirety, I am able to get most of it in. Here it is:

"Hawke's Bay,
"New Zealand.

"Dear Editor.—I am writing this letter to tell you how we enjoy 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem' out in New Zealand. We buy a whole budget of papers every Saturday evening, including 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem.' I have been a reader for a long time now. The first time I read 'The Magnet' was when it was given as a supplement to 'The Butterfly.' For a while we got it that way, until 'The Empire' was substituted as supplement. Then I saved my pocket-money and bought 'The Magnet,' and a little later we bought 'The Gem' as well, and have been buying it ever since. Needless to say, we enjoy reading them, and look forward to Saturday night. When we read 'The Gem' or 'The Magnet' it makes us feel as though we are taking part in the adventures which occur in their pages.

"Could you get a junior to arrive from Hawke's Bay to go to St. Jim's or Greyfriars? I don't want to put you to any trouble, but I am sure there are many readers who would appreciate it.—A sincere reader,

"MISS M. BROWN."

Thank you for your nice little note, Miss Brown! I wish I could oblige you by introducing a Hawke's Bay boy into one of my books; but I get so many requests of this sort from readers all over the world that I cannot possibly give ear to them all. I hope you will take the will for the deed as far as this matter is concerned.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Charles Clifton (Hoxton).—I cannot give you any definite promise, but will most certainly do my best as soon as possible.

John W. O'Brien (Western Australia).—Many thanks for your appreciative remarks about "Chuckles," also for help in getting new readers.

A. Sinclair (Australia) and Maurice McLaurin (Australia).—Many thanks for your letter. Regarding your suggestion, I will most certainly do my best. Your advertisement will appear in the "'Gem' Free Correspondence Exchange" in due course.

W. P. G. (Silvertown).—I am afraid your query would take up too much space in these columns. Send me your name and address that I may write you.

G. J. F. P. (Shepherd's Bush).—In addition to his long story appearing every week in the "Magnet" Library, Mr. Frank Richards contributes a complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in "Chuckles," our latest halfpenny companion paper.

F. G. Smith (Derby).—Mr. Sidney Drew, the author of many a "Magnet" serial, does not perform before the cinematograph camera.

"Two Readers" (Bishop Auckland).—All the numbers of "The Magnet" which you mention are out of print, therefore unobtainable from this office.

H. Burnett (Fraserburgh).—Most plate manufacturers advise users to develop their photos with special developer. I can recommend "Rytol," sold in cartons at one shilling. This makes over half a gallon, and is suitable for practically every make of plates and films.

The Box Kite.

The kite has very much the same form in Japan, China, Java, and Siam; indeed, the likeness between the products of these countries is the best evidence of their common origin. It remained for an Australian inventor to introduce quite a new pattern—the Hargrave or box kite.

The possibilities of this variety in relation to human flight have been strikingly shown by the models of Hargrave worked by compressed air, and later by the various inventors who have adopted this principle in the construction of their aeroplanes.

Another variety that has aroused much scientific interest is the tetrahedral kite of Professor Graham Bell. These are aerial vehicles rather than kites, and are by far the largest that have ever been flown. They are flown after the manner of kites, but the flying cords are stout manilla ropes, and they are anchored to the ground by several turns of the rope round stout cleats, like those employed on steamships or men-of-war.

In reality these huge fabrics are not single kites, but cellular structures consisting of a great number of units, each unit being a true tetrahedral kite with a framework of six rods enclosing four triangular faces, two of which are covered with fabric.

This arrangement is the result of an observed fact that it is not possible to increase the size of a kite indefinitely, for the carrying power does not increase in the same proportion as the weight, the weight increasing as the cube of the dimensions while the supporting surface only increases as the square. By adopting a cellular structure, however, this difficulty is eluded, and the kite may be increased to any size by the addition of fresh units. Kites have already been flown containing no less than 1,300 cells.

The tetrahedral kite does not possess the lifting power of the box kite, but it is very much steadier in varying winds. When struck by a squall the wind passes right through the cellular spaces, and lifts the opposite side as well as that first struck. This, of course, would be an enormous advantage if the kite were used as an aeroplane, and from these qualities in his invention, and from the fact that it requires only a low rate of speed to maintain it in the air, Professor Bell deduces the happiest auguries for its future as a flying-machine.

(Next Week: A specially interesting cricket article, entitled: "Fads of Famous Cricketers.")

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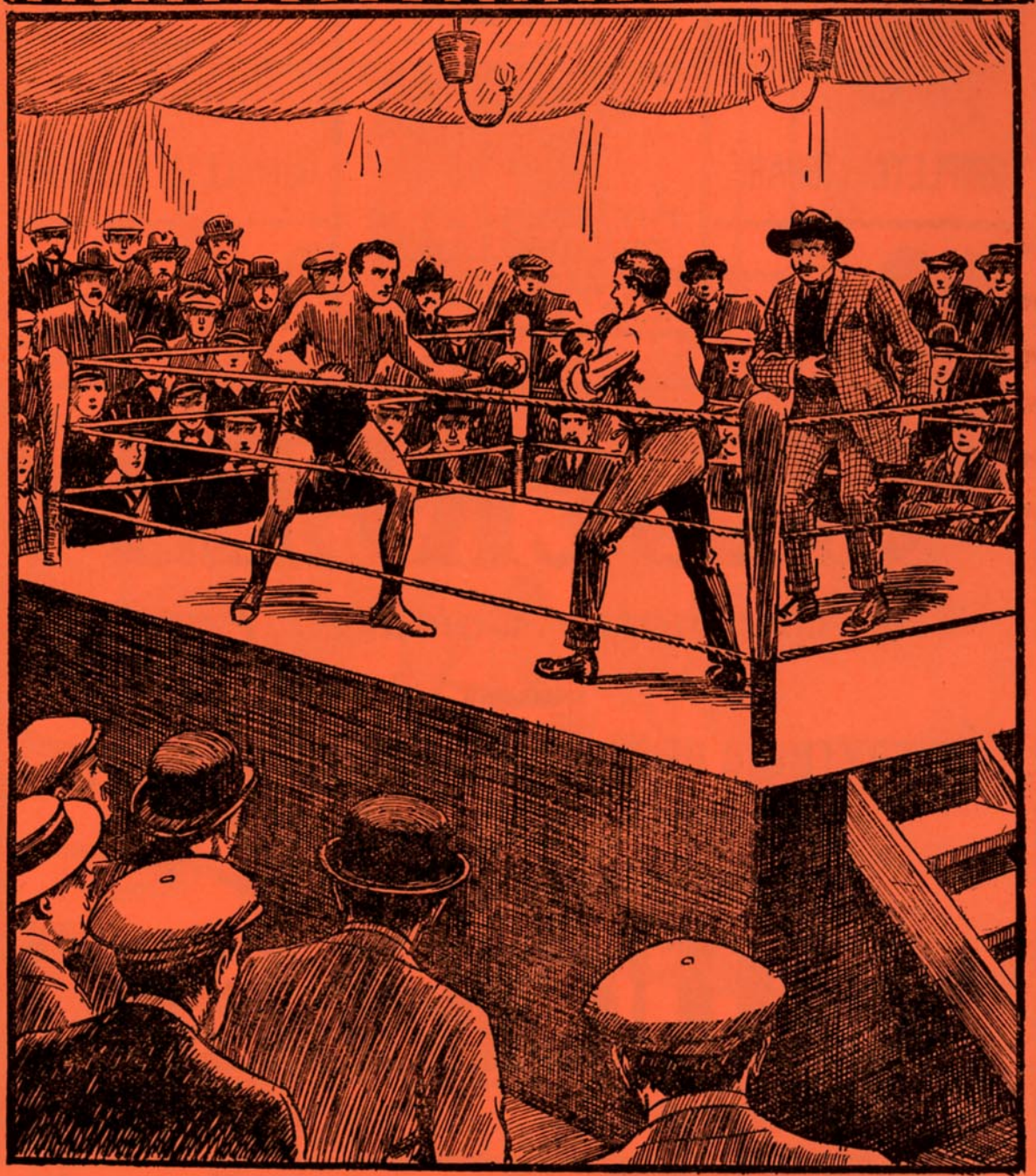

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