*Starts Inside* **"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"** *The Greatest Industrial Story Ever Told.*

No. 1,133. Vol. XXXVI. Week Ending November 2nd, 1929

# The MAGNET

EVERY SATURDAY 2D

## BLACKMAIL!

## COKER CAUSES A CATASTROPHE!

**You'll find an abundance of sensation, humour, and drama in the grand yarn of Greyfriars inside.**

**More penknives and pocket wallets won this week!**


# Come Into the Office, Boys!

***Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.***

APPARENTLY I am not the only fellow who is interested in circuses! W. Brandon, of Leicester, writes this week to ask me what the difference is between a "three-ring" circus and an ordinary one. When there is a very big tent to a circus, he says, why do not the proprietors make one big ring of the whole affair, instead of splitting the ring space up into two or three rings?

The reason for this is because the animals—and the horses in particular—are used to a certain sized ring. They are trained to perform in a ring of a standard size, and would feel out of place if they were put into a ring that was not that size. Now some circuses are larger than others, and if their rings were larger, the horses would not be able to go through their evolutions with the precision that is required. Consequently, if the space between the seating accommodation is too big for one ring, the circus has two—or even three!

### A QUERY ABOUT LIGHTS

comes from Tom Weatherby, of Newport. He saw a ship at night recently, and instead of the usual masthead light, it carried two red lights, one above the other. Why was that? Well, the ship which carried these lights was "not under command." That means that her steering gear had broken down, or some similar trouble had overtaken her. When a vessel is "not under command," all other ships give her a wide berth, and the two red lights are hoisted in order to warn them to do so. In the day-time two black balls are hoisted to denote the same thing. Tom also wants to know something about

### THE RULE OF THE ROAD

at sea—for ships have to obey certain "traffic directions" just as motorists ashore have to do. A steam vessel must always get out of the way of a sailing vessel, for, obviously, the steamer is better able to manœuvre than the sailing vessel is. When two steamers are proceeding in the same direction, the one on the port hand—that is, the one which is on the left of the other—must keep clear. If any of you are interested, here is a little rhyme which will tell you how "the rule of the road" is carried out at sea:

If upon my port is seen
A steamer's starboard light of green,
For me there's nothing but to see
That green to port keeps clear of me.
But if to starboard red appear,
It is my duty to keep clear.

When two vessels are approaching on to each other, each one should turn to the right. The rhyme goes on to say:

When all three lights I see ahead,
I port my helm and show my red.

Port, as I expect you all know, is the left-hand side of a ship, looking forward, and starboard is the right-hand side. But the curious thing is that when you "port your helm" you actually turn the steering wheel to starboard, and thus you alter your course to the right. This is because in the old days, when tillers were used instead of wheels, the steersman had to put the tiller over to the opposite side to that which he wanted the vessel to go. Thus he actually "ported" his helm when he wanted to go to starboard.

Got that? Right! Then let's get on to the next letter from my post-bag. It contains a joke, which I certainly think deserves a penknife. It comes from John Heapey, of 2, Pretoria Street, Hill Top, Slaithwaite, near Huddersfield, Yorks, and here it is:

### EASILY ANSWERED!

**"I say, boy," said a man, out of breath through hurrying, "which is the best way to get to the doctor?"**

**"Eat one pound of green apples!" said the youngster with a grin, and darted away.**

The next query comes from Hector Duncan, of Paisley. Hector wants to know why naval lieutenants are called

### JUST PLAIN MISTER?

The reason is that an Army lieutenant does not rank as high as a naval lieutenant, who ranks with an Army captain. Relative naval and military titles are very misleading. For instance, a captain in the Navy ranks with a colonel in the Army—which is four steps higher up the ladder than an Army captain! Incidentally, a naval officer might be the actual captain of a warship without being a captain in rank. I have even known sub-lieutenants in the Navy to be "captains" of ships, because the man in command of a vessel is always termed "captain," no matter what his actual rank may be.

Most of my readers are too young to remember what Germany was like before the War, and some of you may be as puzzled as Harry Bennett of Folkestone is regarding the number of princes he has read about who hail from Germany. He asks me:

### IS A DUKE HIGHER THAN A PRINCE?

The answer is "No" in this country, but "Yes" in European countries before the War. The German Empire—which was the name by which Germany was known before the War, consisted of no less than four kingdoms, six Grand Duchies, five Duchies, three independent cities, and the Reichsland—which was Alsace-Lorraine. A duke was really a petty sort of king, and was the ruler of a province. A prince was any son of a royal personage—so it often happened that a duke ranked much higher than a prince. In this country only the sons of the King are entitled to be called "Prince."

Curiously enough, I was talking to a Persian the other day, and he told me that in Persia one will often come across

### PRINCES WHO ARE BEGGARS.

In Persia every son of a prince is called a prince, and this has been going on for hundreds and hundreds of years. The result is that there are nearly as many princes in Persia as there are ordinary people! It reminds me of those South American armies where there are more generals in the forces than there are privates! The same sort of thing used to happen, to a lesser degree, in Russia—which is why one finds so many Russian "princes" knocking about!

One of my readers has written to me telling me that

### HE WANTS TO BE A STEWARD

on an ocean liner, and would like to know how to go about it. He must, first of all, write to the Chief Shore Steward of any well-known shipping line (he can find out the address of the offices from any shipping paper) and ask for conditions of service. He will not have to be afraid of hard work, for he will probably have to start as a kitchen assistant, and then it will be up to him to work for his own promotion. The big liner companies afford an excellent opportunity for boys to advance, and once he gets a start, it will be his own fault if he does not make the most of his chances.

To become a steward on a cargo steamer, he must go to some shipping port when a vessel is signing on her crew, and must ask the captain or the chief steward to give him a start as a messroom boy (that is, a cabin-boy). A willing boy who is not afraid of work will soon learn how to advance himself up the ladder of promotion.

Now let's have a Greyfriars limerick. This comes from Miss Irene Phillips, of 13, Chesterton Road, Plaistow, E.13, and she now owns a splendid MAGNET pocket wallet!

**Bunter packed Fishy's cake tight inside him,**
**But Fishy came along, woe betide him.**
**Bunter quaked at the knees,**
**Fishy rolled up his sleeves,**
**And said: "Now for a rattling good hiding!"**

Quite a good effort, what? Well, now let's get down to serious topics—which means, of course, the things I have in store for you next week. The first is another splendid yarn from the pen of Frank Richards. It is entitled:

### "FOOL'S LUCK!"

and is the sequel to the topping yarn you have just read. Frank Richards, as the doctors say, has given us "the mixture as before." And a jolly good mixture it is, too—fun, thrills, excitement, and the thousand and one things which go to make a jolly good yarn.

Next will be instalment number two of our grand new industrial serial:

### "PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"

I guess you've learnt to like Peter Frazer already, chums, and will be waiting on tenterhooks to see what is going to happen to him next week. This yarn is going to prove a "great hit," believe me.

Then we'll have Dicky Nugent's contribution—a real rib-tickler, entitled:

### "WELL DONE, THE FOURTH!"

being the third and last yarn in the exciting "footer" series. Also another article on flying.

Need I mention that I shall be in the office as usual, waiting to hear from you?

Cheerio, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

# BLACKMAIL!

***A Powerful New Long Complete School Tale of Greyfriars, featuring Harry Wharton & Co. and Paul Pontifex Prout, master of the Fifth Form. By FRANK RICHARDS.***

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Two on the Telephone!

BOB CHERRY jumped.

He was startled.

Quelchy was out. He knew that Quelchy was out, because five pairs of eyes had watched Mr. Quelch's stately progress down to the gates, and had seen him safely off the premises.

Quelchy being out, there was no reason, as far as Harry Wharton & Co. could see, why a fellow in need of a telephone should not use Quelchy's telephone.

Hence Bob's rather alarming situation at the present moment. He was standing in his Form master's study with the receiver in his hand, about to ask for his call. Already a gentle, feminine voice had come along the wires, saying "Number, please?"

Before Bob could give his number, there was a sound of footsteps, rather heavy footsteps, in Masters' passage. They stopped at the study door.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bob.

He had no doubt that Quelchy, after starting, had come back for something. It was most unfortunate. Quelchy was not likely to be pleased at finding a member of his Form making free with his study and his telephone. He was likely to be displeased. There was a cane lying on the study table. It seemed probable that Robert Cherry was about to make closer acquaintance with that cane.

But there was no escape for Bob. Even as he stood there, looking round in alarm towards the door, the door opened.

Then Bob gave a gasp of relief.

It was not Mr. Quelch.

"Coker!" ejaculated Bob.

It was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, who strode into the study. Obviously, he had expected to find it unoccupied, for he gave quite a jump as he saw the junior there.

Coker frowned.

"What the thump are you doing here, you young sweep?" he exclaimed.

Bob grinned cheerfully. He did not mind a Fifth Form man finding him in the study. Coker of the Fifth, though a very important person in his own estimation, was in the estimation of the Remove nobody at all.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob cheerily. "You made me jump, you ass! I thought Quelchy was coming back!"

"What are you doing here?" repeated Coker.

"What are you doing here, if you come to that?" asked Bob.

**Lions and tigers and other dangerous animals Mr. Paul Prout, the Fifth Form master of Greyfriars, has faced with unflinching nerve—according to his own story. But never yet has he had to face the deadly attack of an unscrupulous blackmailer.**

"You little sweep——"

"You big sweep!"

Coker came across the study to the telephone. Evidently, Coker also knew that Quelch was out, and had need of a telephone.

"Give me that receiver," he snapped.

"Just going to phone, old bean."

Coker glared.

"I've told you to give me that receiver."

"Number, please?" came over the wires, in a slightly acidulated tone.

Bob Cherry, taking no heed of Coker, approached his mouth to the transmitter.

Coker, at the same moment, approached his hefty right hand to the back of Bob's collar.

The young lady at the exchange, listening for the number, received the most extraordinary communication she had ever received since she had taken up her duties at the Courtfield Exchange.

"Yaroooooh!"

"What?" gasped the young lady at the exchange.

But Bob did not answer her.

He couldn't!

In Horace Coker's powerful grasp, he was wrenched away from the instrument, and the receiver was left hanging to its cord.

"Ow!" gasped Bob. "You silly ass!"

He turned on Coker and grappled with him, boiling with wrath.

Both of them had come there to borrow Mr. Quelch's telephone. Bob had been first, and was obviously entitled to use the instrument first. But that mattered nothing to the lofty Coker. To wait for a Lower Fourth fag was an idea that never entered Horace Coker's lofty mind at all. He would have scorned the idea, anyhow. Coker, as he often said, had a short way with fags.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Bob.

"Shut up!" snapped Coker.

"I'll jolly well——"

"Shut up, I tell you! You're wasting my time!"

Coker hurled the junior aside. Bob was a very sturdy fellow, but he was not up to the weight of the hefty Fifth-Former. There were fellows in the Sixth who were not up to Coker's weight.

Bob went sprawling on Mr. Quelch's carpet with a gasp.

Leaving him there, Coker turned to the telephone again, and picked up the receiver.

"Courtfield 200," he said.

Bob Cherry sat up dizzily.

He had had a heavy bump on the floor, and he was breathless. But he scrambled up, with the intention of

hurling himself at Coker. Coker rather flattered himself on his short way with fags, but with the fags themselves it was not, of course, popular.

But on second thoughts, proverbially the better, Bob did not hurl himself at Coker. Scrapping in a master's study was rather too reckless a proceeding. Coker never thought of the consequences, but Bob could not help thinking of the view Henry Samuel Quelch would take, if he came back and found his study looking as if a dog-fight had taken place there. It was wiser to deal with Coker outside the study. So Bob restrained his wrath and waited.

Coker, unheeding the indignant Removite, was proceeding with his telephoning. Remove fellows were to Horace Coker like the idle wind, which he regarded not.

"That Courtfield 200—Courtfield Garage?" he was saying into the transmitter, while Bob gasped for breath. "Coker speaking from Greyfriars School—Horace Coker!"

"Yes, sir." The answer came very respectfully from the garage. Coker was a good customer at that garage. He had heaps of money to spend, and they helped him to get rid of it.

"Send the car at half-past two," went on Coker. "I want it to run across to Lantham, in time for the football match there. I'm taking some fellows. Send the Rolls."

"Certainly, sir."

"You will put it down to my account."

"Quite so, sir."

"Half-past two at Greyfriars," said Coker.

"Very good, sir."

Coker put up the receiver, and turned away from the instrument. He fixed a frowning glance on Bob Cherry.

"You came here to use your Form master's telephone?" he demanded.

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, I can't allow anything of the kind," said Coker. "Get out of this study."

Bob blinked at him. As Coker had just used the telephone himself, this was cool, even for Coker. But it was Coker all over.

"Why, you—you cheeky idiot——" gasped Bob.

"Outside!" said Coker.

"You burbling chump——"

"That's enough."

Coker demonstrated once more his short way with fags. His powerful grasp fell on Bob Cherry, and Bob was jerked to the door. He went struggling wildly, but he went. Coker jerked him out into the passage, still resisting wildly, and dropped him there in a breathless heap. Bob sprawled and spluttered, and Coker of the Fifth walked loftily away and left him to it.

Bob sat up.

He was rumpled and untidy and breathless, and for some moments he could do nothing but gasp and splutter for breath. And he was in a towering state of wrath. His one thought was—as soon as he got his second wind—to rush after Coker, call his comrades to his aid, and smite Coker hip and thigh. Coker of the Fifth had received many lessons in dealing with the Remove fellows, but evidently he was in need of one more.

But again the proverbial superiority of second thoughts caused Bob to change his mind.

The wrathful frown on his face changed to a grin.

He staggered to his feet; but instead of pursuing Coker of the Fifth he stepped back into Mr. Quelch's study. There he took up the receiver and called Courtfield 200.

"Hallo!" came through from Courtfield Garage.

"Speaking from Greyfriars," said Bob, making his voice as deep and gruff as possible, to resemble the dulcet tones of Horace Coker. "About the car just ordered——"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't send it to the school—stop it at the cross-roads on Courtfield Common, and pick me up there."

"Certainly, sir."

"I'll be there with my friends by the time the car gets to the cross-roads. Is that clear?"

"Quite, sir, thank you."

"Good-bye."

Bob rang off. The man at the garage who had just received Coker's call had no doubt that Coker had rung a second time to add those further instructions. Bob left the study with a cheerful grin on his face. Coker of the Fifth was likely to wait a long time for that car to pick him up at Greyfriars School.

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## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Whose Car?

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Roll off, Bunter."

"I'm coming."

"Bow-wow!"

"I know Bob's gone to phone for a taxi," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the four juniors in the quad through his big spectacles. "Well, if you're going to have a taxi I'll come. See?"

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled.

Four members of the famous Co. were waiting in the quad for Bob Cherry to come out of the House.

The Famous Five, as well as Coker, intended to get over to Lantham that afternoon, to see the League match there. It was a half-holiday, and there was no game at Greyfriars—no game in which the Remove were concerned, at all events. A Form match between the Fifth and the Shell did not interest the heroes of the Remove.

Funds were high among the five for once. That was why they had resolved on the unusual luxury of a taxi to Courtfield Station to catch the express for Lantham. To call a taxi it was necessary to telephone, for which reason the chums of the Remove had carefully watched Mr. Quelch depart, to patronise his instrument while he was gone. Incidents of this kind no doubt accounted for little difficulties that sometimes cropped up between Mr. Quelch and the Post Office authorities when the bill came in for telephone calls. Mr. Quelch often told the other masters in Common-room that he knew—positively knew—that he hadn't had all the calls with which he was charged, and made bitter remarks about Government inefficiency.

Billy Bunter was not specially interested in League matches. But he was deeply interested in tea at the Pagoda Tea-shop which was to follow. Certainly the fat junior would not have walked to the station. But if there was going to be a taxi there was going to be a Bunter. The taxi made it all right for Bunter, and it was, of course, unnecessary to consider anybody else.

"But we're going by train, fatty," said Frank Nugent. "You'd have to pay your fare to Lantham."

"I think one of my pals might stand me a ticket!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Well, go and ask one of your pals," suggested Johnny Bull. "If you can find one to stand your fare we'll give you a lift in our taxi to the station."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Better buck up," said Frank. "Your pals may be hard to find, old fat bean."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"The buck-upfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Procrastination is the cracked pitcher that saves a stitch in time from being a bird in the bush, as the English proverb says."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Inky!" Bunter blinked at the smiling four reproachfully. Evidently they were the pals to whom he had alluded, though they were wilfully blind to the fact. "I say, you fellows——"

"Here's Bob!" said Nugent, as Bob Cherry came out of the House, looking a little red and rumpled, but very merry and bright.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You fellows ready?" asked Bob.

"The readyfulness is terrific——"

The taxi won't be here yet," said Harry Wharton. "It's got to come from Courtfield—that's three miles or so——"

"That's all right," said Bob, "leave it to your Uncle Robert! Come on. Like to come, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Yes, rather!" he gasped.

"But what——" asked Wharton, puzzled. "Do you want to walk along and meet the taxi, Bob?"

"I've washed out the taxi."

"What for, ass? Want to walk to Courtfield?"

"There's a car," explained Bob. "I'm borrowing a friend's car for the whole run, instead of taking the train from Courtfield."

"My only hat!"

"Whose car?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, a Fifth Form man's," said Bob carelessly. "He asked for it—in fact, begged for it—so I'm not saying no. Come on—no time to lose, the car will be waiting at the cross-roads in ten minutes."

"Why couldn't it come to the school?" asked Frank.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Lots of reasons! Come on."

"A car all the way?" ejaculated Bunter. "Why, it costs pounds for a car to Lantham and back."

"Money's no object with my friend in the Fifth. Come on."

"What-ho!" chuckled Bunter.

Bob Cherry led the way down to the gates. His friends followed him in a rather perplexed mood. They had felt that they were rather "going it" in calling a taxi for Courtfield. A car all the way to Lantham, and all the way back, was a luxury that fell to the lot of only wealthy fellows—such as Coker of the Fifth. Still, if there was a good thing going they were quite ready to make the most of it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Newland!" bawled Bob. "Like a trip to Lantham to see the League match? We're having a car."

"What-ho!" answered Monty Newland promptly.

"Toddy! Hallo, hallo hallo, Toddy! Join up, old man—car to Lantham for the football match."

"I'm on!" said Peter Todd.

Eight juniors turned out of the gates and walked along the Courtfield road. It was a cold day, but dry and bright, and they were in great spirits. Joy-rides rather appealed to them.

"Somebody left you fellows a fortune?" asked Peter Todd. "Or have you won a car in a raffle?"

"Neither," answered Bob cheerily—"a Fifth Form man is standing this car,"

**"Do you hear me?" snapped Coker. "Give me that receiver!" Bob Cherry, taking no heed of Coker, approached his mouth to the transmitter. At the same moment, Coker approached his hefty right to the back of Bob's collar. "Yaroooooh!" yelled Bob into the transmitter, just as the young lady at the exchange asked his number.** *(See Chapter* 1.)

"What on earth for?"

"For us."

"Fathead! I mean why?"

"The whyfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I thinkfully opine that it is some sort of esteemed jape."

"Right on the wicket, Inky," said Bob, with a chuckle. "But we get the car! What's the odds, so long as you're 'appy?"

A somewhat puzzled but very cheery party of juniors arrived at the crossroads on Courtfield Common. A large and handsome Rolls was already standing there, with the chauffeur waiting beside it. He glanced at the party of Greyfriars men and touched his cap as they came up to the car.

"From Courtfield Garage?" asked Bob.

"Yes, sir."

"Then this is the car Coker ordered?"

"Yes, sir."

"Coker is unable to come, but the car goes all the same," explained Bob. "We're his friends."

"Very good, sir."

"I say, you fellows, there won't be room for the lot of us in that car," said Billy Bunter. "Somebody had better stop behind."

"Good idea!" agreed Bob. "You stop behind, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"That will leave seven——"

"Beast! I'm coming!"

And Bunter bolted headlong into the car to make sure that if anyone was left behind, it was not William George Bunter.

"Pack in, you men," said Bob. "I'll sit in front with the driver, as I'm the biggest."

"You mean you've got the biggest feet?" asked Johnny Bull. "There wouldn't be room for both of them in the car, that's a cert."

"Look here, you ass——"

"Tumble in," said Harry Wharton, "the sooner we're off the better. It's a longer way by car than by train. We don't want to be late for the match."

The juniors packed themselves in, Bob taking the front seat, and the well-laden car glided away for Lantham.

Bob Cherry smiled cheerily, as the car ate up the miles, and the keen wind from the sea blew into his ruddy face. Coker of the Fifth had a short way with fags. One fag, at least, was demonstrating that he had a short way with Coker of the Fifth. Coker, in Bob's opinion, had asked for this—in fact, begged for it. There was, so far as Bob could see, no reason why Coker of the Fifth should not get what he begged for. And the thought of Horace Coker waiting at Greyfriars for the car that was eating up the miles to Lantham made Bob smile, with a smile that looked as if it would not come off.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Three for the Train!

"TIME it was here!" remarked Potter of the Fifth.

"Quite!" observed Greene.

Both of them looked at Horace Coker.

Coker of the Fifth, stretched at ease in the big armchair in his study, with his long legs extended their full length, and his hands in his pockets, did not stir. Coker was feeling comfortable, and disinclined to stir.

Potter and Greene thought it was a good idea to walk down to the gates for the car. Not so Coker.

"It's all right, you men," said Coker carelessly.

"But——" said Potter.

"I tell you it's all right," said Coker testily. "I've tipped a fag of the Second to come and tell me when the car gets here."

"Well, it's rather late," said Potter.

Coker glanced at his watch.

"It's a bit late," he admitted. "But they always send me a good car, and it covers the ground all right. I'll tell the chauffeur to let her out."

"There'll be a rotten crowd at the ground," remarked Greene. "We don't want to get rotten places by being late."

"We shan't be late."

"But——"

"Leave it to me," said Coker. "I'm managing this! You fellows needn't worry. All you have to do is to leave things to me, and they're bound to come right. See?"

Potter and Greene did not "see." But they felt that they had to leave it to Coker. Coker was standing the car—it was always Coker who did those magnificent and expensive things. Still, if that expensive car got them to Lantham too late to see the football match, it would be rather a pity. But they knew from old that it was futile to argue with Coker. The car was late—and the minutes were passing. But Coker was talking—and when Coker was talking, he hardly heeded the passage of time. When Coker was talking—which was frequently—the minutes seemed to fly—to Coker. To his hearers, on the other hand, they seemed to drag along their weary length like wounded snakes. It was a difference in the point of view.

Coker had a letter in his hand—a letter from his celebrated Aunt Judith. He was telling his chums about it.

Potter and Greene were politely interested, with perhaps more politeness than interest.

Certainly, Coker's Aunt Judy was a valuable possession. It was from Aunt Judy that those ripping hampers came for Horace, which he whacked out so generously with his friends. It was chiefly from Aunt Judy that the big

remittances came, which made Coker a fellow worth knowing.

Had that letter from old Miss Coker dealt with a hamper, or a remittance, of course, Potter and Greene would have been glad to hear all about it. But it dealt with a matter in which they had no concern, and only as much interest as politeness forced from them. Two Fifth Form men at Greyfriars really couldn't be expected to worry because an innocent old lady had taken into her employment a secretary who had turned out to be a doubtful character, and who had disappeared suddenly, several articles of value disappearing at the same time.

Coker, on the other hand, was deeply concerned.

Coker was fond of his Aunt Judy, as he had every reason to be. Aunt Judy almost worshipped Horace, which, as far as Horace could see, was very right and proper, and quite natural. Aunt Judy regarded him as the handsomest, cleverest, and finest fellow that had ever honoured the earth by walking on it. Coker regarded Aunt Judy as a lady of very good judgment indeed.

Coker had told his study-mates all about it—many times. They had expressed sympathy, and had expected the matter to drop.

It did not drop.

It became a constant topic with Coker, and Potter and Greene, at times, almost wept with boredom when he told them about it all over again.

Even Coker's lavish spreads in the study hardly compensated them for hearing, over and over again, about that rascal Buzzard, and how he had diddled Miss Coker, and how Coker would have dealt with him had he been on the spot.

Coker was "at it again," as his chums expressed it. Another letter from Aunt Judy had told him that nothing had been heard of that wicked man she had trusted, and who had robbed her. Coker went into the matter, wide and large, as he sat in the armchair, waiting for the car to arrive. Potter and Greene felt that they would almost rather have walked all the way to Lantham.

"The awful rogue, you know," said Coker. "I saw him in the hols—did I mention that I saw that man Buzzard in the holidays?"

"You did!" said Potter; adding under his breath: "About a million times."

"A measly little beast," said Coker. "Horrid ugly little man with a long nose—longer than yours, Potter——"

"Eh?"

"Quite as ugly, and longer," said Coker. "Eyes of a greenish colour. I knew he was a rogue when I first saw him."

"Why didn't you warn your aunt about him, then?" asked Potter viciously.

Coker did not reply for a moment. He was quite assured that he had known that the long-nosed, green-eyed little man was a rogue, at first sight. Still, it certainly hadn't occurred to him to give Aunt Judy the tip. Indeed, he had never given the man Buzzard a thought at all, till he heard that he had disappeared from Coker Lodge, taking some portable property with him.

But Coker was not going to admit that, even to himself. Coker was convinced, or at least determined to believe, that his eagle eye had spotted the rogue at the first glance.

"Yes, why didn't you, Coker?" asked Greene.

"The worst of consulting you fellows is that you make such a lot of carping remarks, instead of talking sense!" said Coker. "As I said, I knew the man was a rogue—and what happened afterwards proved it. If only it had happened in the holidays, I'd have put my finger on him fast enough. The police haven't found him. I'd have found him."

Potter closed one eye at Greene.

"I should have picked up a clue to him, or something," explained Coker. "Depend on it, he wouldn't have got clear away, if I'd been there. I told Aunt Judy so in my letter to her. She agrees! A very intelligent old soul, my Aunt Judy."

"I say, that car's jolly late!" said Greene restively.

"That's all right——"

"But it's turned three," said Greene. "We shall never get to Lantham in time for the kick-off, if we wait any longer."

Coker seemed impressed at last. Even Coker's powerful brain could realise that it was of little use to drive over to Lantham to see something that was no longer to be seen.

He rose from the armchair, and dropped, at last, the subject of Aunt Judy and that bad man Buzzard.

"Get a move on, you men!" said Coker. "Let's walk along to meet the car. It's certainly late. We'll meet it on the road. Let's buck up. Look here, get going! No good slacking about the study!"

That was just like Coker. Potter and Greene had long been anxious to get a move on, and go to meet the expected car to save time. But Coker assumed, as a matter of course, that he was the only fellow with any "go" in him, and that he had to buck other fellows up.

Coker strode out of the study, Potter and Greene following him, with inimical looks at the back of Coker's head.

They put on their hats and coats and left the house, hoping to find the car at the gates. But it was not there—and the Second Form fag whom Coker had tipped to report its arrival had seen nothing of it. Coker was quite puzzled. Generally they treated him with great distinction at Courtfield Garage. At that garage Coker ran up bills that his Aunt Judy paid without a qualm; and as Coker was loftily careless in such matters as accounts, and as Aunt Judy was a lady with a touching faith in human nature, the bills were not always strictly accurate, and Miss Coker sometimes paid for drives that Horace had never had.

Naturally, such a customer as Coker was valuable, and had to be treated carefully, and as a rule they were very careful not to offend Coker. Now they seemed to be treating him with neglect.

"We'll walk along and meet the car," said Coker. "I can't understand this! I told them plainly, on the phone, half-past two! There couldn't be a mistake. If they've let me down, I shall tell them what I think of them, and give my orders at another garage. But I can't understand anybody letting me down. It's disrespectful. I'm not the fellow to be treated with disrespect, I think."

Coker said this, and a lot more, as the three Fifth-Formers walked along the road towards Courtfield Common. Potter and Greene said very little. They were growing cross. They wanted to see that game at Lantham; and they were rather sorry they hadn't taken the train. A joy-ride was attractive, even with Coker in the car. But a train journey had its compensations, as they could have got away from Coker. Now it looked as if the joy-ride wasn't coming off; in which case they would have the train journey and Coker along with it! It was enough to make any fellow cross.

There was no sign of the car on the road, and the town came in sight at last. Coker was more and more puzzled, and Potter and Greene more and more cross.

"They can't have sent the car at all!" grunted Potter.

"But I told them to!" said the puzzled Coker.

"Well, where is it?"

"It's no good asking me where it is," said Coker. "But they must have sent it, or else disobeyed my instructions. That seems hardly possible."

Evidently Horace Coker regarded himself as one having authority, who said "'Do this,' and he doeth it!"

"Well, I don't see the car!" almost snarled Greene. "Taken a wrong road, if they sent it at all—or something! We've walked to Courtfield now. If we'd started earlier, we could have got the bus."

"We'll go on to the garage, and see about it," said Coker. "It's not far past the station."

Potter looked at his watch.

"We've just time to catch the train, if we buck up," he said. "Let's go by train."

"Rot!" said Coker.

"A car takes twice the time—it would land us at Lantham when the match was nearly over!" snapped Potter. "We're nearly at the station now—let's take the train."

"Let's!" urged Greene.

Coker looked at his watch. He was quite keen to walk on to the garage to tell them what he thought of them. Still, there was the League match at Lantham to be considered. But Coker was not the man to accept suggestions, or acknowledge them, from a mere follower.

"Leave this to me!" he said. "I'm managing this. There won't be time for the car now. We'll take the train."

"That's what I said——" began Potter.

"For goodness' sake, don't argue, Potter! You're always arguing, and wasting time!" said Coker snappishly.

"Look here——"

"We'll cut out the car and take the train," said Coker, just as if it was his own idea. "Don't talk—just move! If you slack about like this, wagging your chins, we shall lose the train, too. Get a move on!"

Coker marched off towards the railway station. Potter and Greene suppressed their feelings, and followed him. What had happened to the car they could not imagine; but they had no doubt that Coker had mucked up the arrangement somehow. That was Coker all over!

They were just in time to catch the Lantham express. Coker took three tickets—first-class—which was a slight consolation to his friends for his company in the train. They rushed across the platform and leaped in, just before the express started.

"Caught it," said Coker, as he settled down in a corner seat. "Lucky for you men I was with you. You'd have lost it. You fellows never can catch trains, can you?"

No reply.

"Leave it to me to manage," said Coker cheerfully. "Some fellows are born to command, you know—born leaders! I happen to be one of them. I don't brag of it—it just happens."

"I think——" began Potter in a deep voice.

"Don't you think, old bean—leave the thinking to me," said Coker. "It's not in your line, old chap. Now, I was telling you in the study before we started——"

Potter and Greene groaned simultaneously. They were going to have the Buzzard story over again, they could see that. They were tired to death of Aunt Judy's vanished secretary. They groaned—they could not help it. Really, it would have been better to have taken their own tickets, and dodged Coker for the afternoon. Coker stared at them.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing!" groaned Potter.

"Nothing, old chap!" said Greene dispiritedly.

"Well, I know you're interested in this matter, as friends of mine," said Coker. "That's the best of having really good pals—a fellow can talk about things freely, knowing his pals are interested. As I was saying——"

"Prout gave you lines this morning, didn't he?" asked Potter.

Any subject, Potter felt, was welcome for a change. Coker was bound to talk; there was no help for that. But if he didn't put on a fresh record Potter felt that he would scream soon. So he skilfully switched Coker off. The way Prout, the master of the Fifth, treated Coker, that glory and ornament of his Form, was a sore subject with Horace. He fell blindly into the trap.

"Yes," he said. "He made out that there was something wrong with my construe. I don't claim to be a whale on the classics, you men; but I've an idea I could teach Prout Latin. I've never had time to bag prizes and things; but if I went in for that sort of thing I've often thought that I should make some fellows open their eyes—some masters, too. Prout was quite wrong this morning. He generally is. I came jolly near shying Livy at his head, I can tell you!"

And Coker, once on that topic, ran on, and kept to the subject of Mr. Prout till the train ran into Lantham; for which relief his faithful chums were thankful.



## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### The League Match at Lantham!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here we are!"

The Rolls halted, and Bob Cherry jumped down. The chauffeur opened the door of the car, and it disgorged its contents.

Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived at Lantham in ample time for the football match. Coker's car had come in very useful.

"We're going round to the Pagoda for tea, after the match," remarked Johnny Bull. "The car can wait there."

"That's right!" agreed Bob; and he gave the necessary instructions to the chauffeur, who drove away in the Rolls.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, I've got an idea——"

"Take it away and boil it."

"I say, you fellows, what about having a smack at the Pagoda before the match?" urged Bunter. "I'm hungry."

"Are you ever anything else?" grinned Peter Todd.

"Beast! I say, you fellows, it doesn't matter if we miss the first half, you know," said Bunter. "Let's go to the Pagoda. I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you! Beasts!"

The fellows did walk away, and Bunter, with a discontented grunt, rolled after them. Bunter's suggestion seemed, to his fat self, an eminently sensible one; but it did not seem popular among the other fellows. They pushed into the football ground, and Bunter pushed in after them, his fat thoughts following the car to the Pagoda.

The Greyfriars party got good places, in plenty of time for the kick-off. They settled down comfortably.

"Jolly good of Coker to lend us that car—what?" Bob Cherry remarked.

"Coker?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes. He lent us the car."

"Did he know he lent it to us?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I fancy not! He will know that later."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry explained the little episode in Quelch's study. His chums chuckled as they listened.

"You see, Coker asked for it," said Bob. "He wouldn't let me use a Form master's telephone to phone for a taxi. Of course, I should have phoned, all the same; but it occurred to me to use Coker's car, instead. He likes to have his own way, so I let him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be a row when we see Coker again!" chuckled Nugent.

"The rowfulness will be terrific!"

"Probably!" agreed Bob. "But we can give Coker all the trouble he wants, and a little over."

"Hear, hear!"

"It may even be a lesson to him, and warn him not to meddle with the Remove," remarked Bob. "Like his cheek to use our Form master's telephone, anyhow! Prout's got a phone in his study; and a Fifth Form man ought to use that!"

"Prout hadn't gone out!" said Wharton, with a laugh. "You can't do these things when a master's at home."

"The bagfulness of the car is a proper punishment for the cheekfulness of the esteemed Coker!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the worthy Coker will be terrifically infuriated."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Dry up, Bunter!"

"Here they come!" said Monty Newland; and conversation ceased among the juniors, and they watched the footballers.

It was quite a good match, between Lantham Ramblers and a junior League team, and the Greyfriars men were keenly interested, being keen footballers themselves, with the exception of Bunter.

Bunter was bored. Why any fellow should sit watching a football match when he might be sitting in a bun-shop enjoying a spread, was a mystery to William George Bunter—a mystery that his fat brain was never likely to solve.

Twice during the first half Bunter proposed an adjournment to the Pagoda; and his proposition was not even listened to. When the interval came Bunter grew more emphatic.

"I say, you fellows," he urged, "I'm hungry! What's the good of stopping here watching these duds? They don't play footer like I do, anyhow."

"They don't!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"The don'tfulness is terrific!"

"Well, what about cutting out the second half, and going along to the Pagoda?" asked Bunter. "Jolly good idea—what? Look here, I'm going to stand a spread all round! You fellows have stood me a drive, and I'm going to stand the spread. That's only fair."

"Bow-wow!"

"I mean it," said Bunter. "I shall have to ask one of you fellows to lend me a quid, as, coming away in a hurry, I left my purse in the study. But you won't mind that."

"You left your purse in the study?" asked Bob.

"Yes, old chap."

"Did you leave anything in the purse?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Heedless of the famished state of William George Bunter, the Greyfriars party remained for the second half.

Bob Cherry looked over the crowd several times, to see whether Coker & Co. had arrived. As Coker had—in a way, at least—asked for it, Bob had felt fully justified in borrowing his car. But he charitably hoped that Coker & Co. had got along by some other means of locomotion.

Just before the second half started he discerned two Fifth-Formers of Greyfriars coming in.

"There's Potter and Greene!" he remarked.

The juniors looked round. Potter and Greene were at a distance, but they could see that the two looked rather disgruntled; and that Horace Coker was not with them. Apparently they had shed Coker somewhere on the way to the football ground.

"Where's Coker, I wonder?" remarked Wharton.

"Still looking for that car, perhaps!" suggested Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then the ball was kicked off again, and the Greyfriars fellows forgot all about Coker of the Fifth.

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## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### A Surprising Recognition!

AND where was Coker?

Thereby hangs a tale!

The express came into Lantham in ample time for Coker & Co. to get across to the football ground. That was what Coker & Co. expected to do. But it was the unexpected that happened.

Coker happily switched off the topic of that bad man Buzzard and his purloining of portable property at Coker Lodge, and talked on the subject of Prout during the journey; and was still talking when the three Fifth-Formers alighted from the train.

Prout was, in fact, one of Coker's favourite topics.

Coker had many misunderstandings with his Form master. Prout had no idea what a prize-packet he had in Coker in the Fifth. He never dreamed that he was, so to speak, entertaining an angel unawares.

So far from realising or acknowledging what a credit to the Form Coker was, Prout persisted in regarding him as a dunce, a duffer, and the most backward fellow in the Fifth.

Every man in the Fifth agreed that Prout's opinion was well-founded, except Coker. Coker did not agree.

Many times Coker had come near to losing patience with Prout. Many times he had been tempted to shy Livy at his head. Fortunately, he had resisted these temptations.

But he often told Potter and Greene that there was a limit, and that he doubted whether he could stand Prout much longer. What was going to happen when the time arrived when he could no longer stand Prout, Coker did not explain.

"That man Prout——" Coker was saying, as he stepped from the train after Potter and Greene.

Then he jumped.

He stopped talking!

Something had suddenly struck Coker with surprise—indeed, amazement. He left off talking; and that in itself was so unusual that both Potter and Greene looked round at him.

They saw Coker standing as if rooted to the platform, staring across it in blank astonishment.

Astonished themselves, they followed his gaze.

On the other side of the platform was the local line, where slow trains started for small places. Half a dozen passengers were loitering about, waiting for the local, which was to carry them on to Friardale or Woodend, or some such village.

Among these passengers was a little man dressed in black, with a long, sharp nose that was like a beak, and greenish eyes.

Upon this unpleasant-looking gentleman Coker's gaze was fixed. He stood rooted, his mouth open in astonishment.

Potter touched him on the arm.

"What on earth's up?" he demanded.

"Come on, Coker!" said Greene.

Coker did not come on. He stood and stared and gasped.

"Him!"

"Him! Who?" asked Potter.

"That villain!"

"What villain?" asked the amazed Potter.

"You remember my telling you about that man Buzzard——"

Potter groaned.

"The man who swindled my Aunt Judy——"

"We shall be late, after all!" said Greene. "Come on, Coker!"

"Shut up, Greene!"

"But, I say——" urged Potter.

Really, he was not feeling equal to listening to any more about that man Buzzard, with only a few minutes left to get to the football ground.

"It's him!" exclaimed Coker, with great excitement and reckless disregard of grammar. "It's him!"

"Who's him?" gasped Potter.

"That beaky little beast across the platform!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Potter and Greene stared across at the little man in black again. The long-nosed gentleman was looking up the line, in expectation of seeing the train come in, and did not for the moment observe the group of Greyfriars seniors.

"Mean to say that that's the man Buzzard?" asked Potter blankly.

"That's him."

"But are you sure?"

To ask Coker whether he was sure of anything was something like waving a red rag under the nose of a bull. He snorted.

"You silly ass——"

"Well, you've only seen the man once or twice, and it was a long time ago," said Potter. "I hardly think——"

"You don't think at all!" corrected Coker. "Don't try. It will make your head ache! I know that man as well as I know Soccer."

That, to Potter and Greene, was a confession that Coker did not know the man at all. But Coker did not mean it that way.

"It's him," said Coker, still regardless of grammar. "I know his beaky nose—rather like yours, Potter, as I told you——"

"Look here——"

"And his green eyes," said Coker. "I know the rotter! Fancy running into him like this!"

"Fancy!" murmured Greene. "Well, let's get off, Coker! We shall be late for the football match at this rate!"

"Blow the football match!" snorted Coker.

"But we came here to see the game," said Greene plaintively.

Snort! from Coker.

"Do you think I'm going to let that blighter get away, now I've got my eyes on him, for the sake of a silly football match?" he exclaimed. "Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"Well, what are you going to do!" demanded Greene sulkily.

He was not by any means convinced that the little man in black really was Miss Judith Coker's runaway secretary—and he didn't care, anyhow.

"I'm going to collar him and hand him over to the police!" announced Coker. "You fellows can lend a hand."

"We shall miss the footer!"

"Blow the footer!"

"Look here, Coker, if you're making a mistake——" said Potter uneasily.

The bare idea of collaring some harmless member of the public and accusing him of being somebody he wasn't made Potter feel cold all over.

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"But——" urged Greene.

"Don't be a fool, Greene!"

"Look here——"

"Come on!" hooted Coker.

And he strode across the platform with mighty strides and eager eyes.

Potter and Greene followed more slowly.

The little man in black had observed them now. His greenish eyes turned on them, carelessly at first, and then became fixed in a startled stare on Horace Coker's rugged, excited face.

He jumped, just as Coker had jumped on seeing him. Evidently he recognised Coker.

The next moment he had his back to the Greyfriars men, and was racing along the platform to the exit.

Potter and Greene stared after him, dumbfounded.

They had not supposed that Coker was right; it was so highly improbable that Coker would be right, on that subject or any other. But the action of the man in black left no doubt.

He was fleeing with the fleetness of a deer, winding and dodging among startled passengers like a man running for his life. The sight of Coker had done it. Evidently the man was Buzzard.

"After him!" roared Coker.

He rushed in furious pursuit. After him, in dazed astonishment, went Potter and Greene.

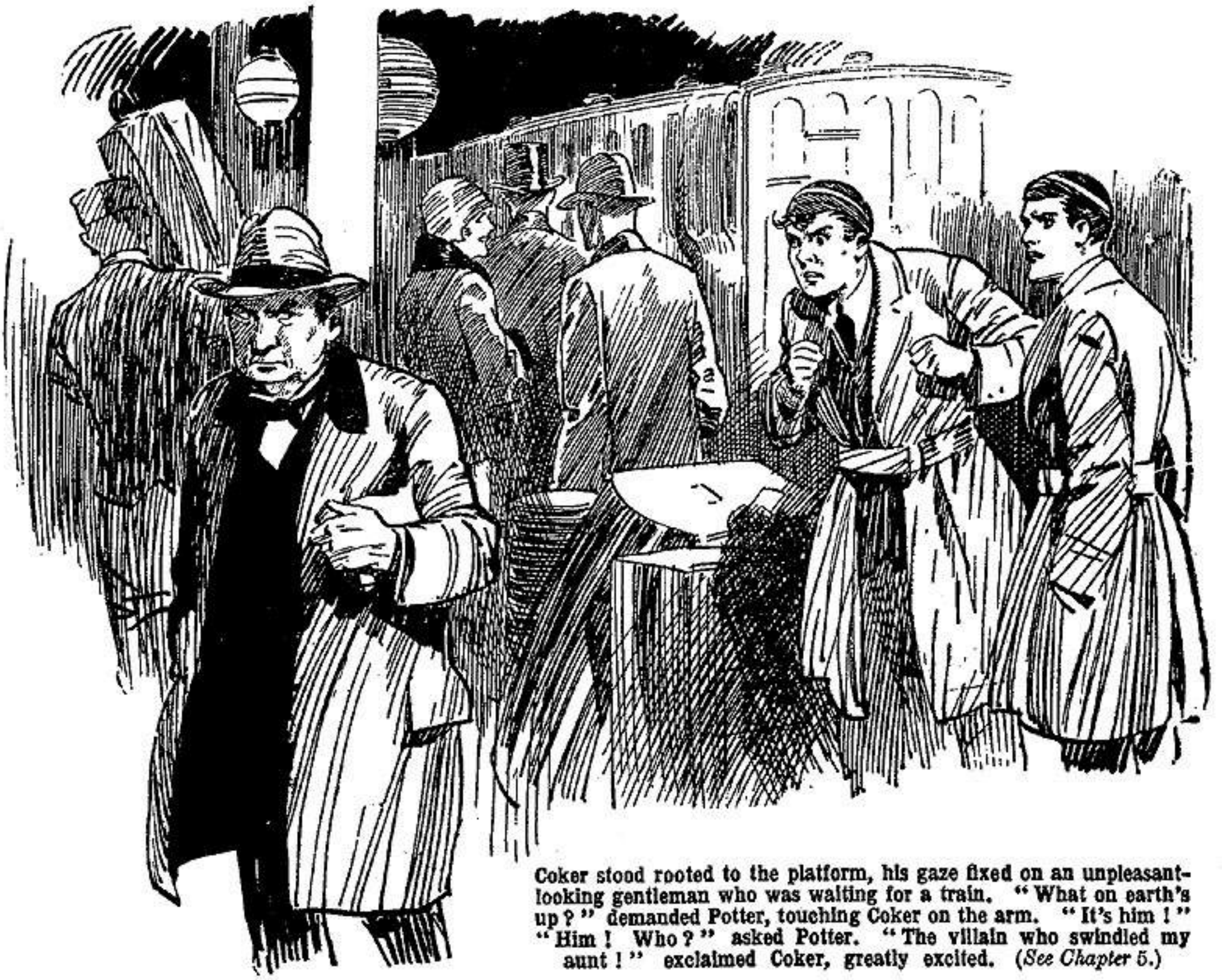
Horace Coker prided himself on being a man of action, master of any situation that might arise—one of those strong, silent characters who are equal to any emergency. But, like many of those characters, he expended too much time and energy in the exercise of his chin. Had Coker, immediately on recognising Buzzard, darted across the platform and seized him, the man in black would have had no chance—not an earthly. Now he had a chance—and a good one.

There was a crowd on the platform at Lantham, and the little man wound among them with the agility of a monkey. Coker charged after him like a bull.

Coker hurled a passenger to the right and a passenger to the left as he charged along the platform. It was no time, Coker felt, to stand on ceremony. Anybody in the way had to be shifted out of the way in the shortest possible time. A roar of angry indignation followed Coker along Lantham platform.

He did not heed it. He rushed on, regardless.

A porter with a trolly of baggage



**Coker stood rooted to the platform, his gaze fixed on an unpleasant-looking gentleman who was waiting for a train. "What on earth's up?" demanded Potter, touching Coker on the arm. "It's him!" "Him! Who?" asked Potter. "The villain who swindled my aunt!" exclaimed Coker, greatly excited.** *(See Chapter 5.)*

pushed across his way. He did not see Coker coming, and Coker was going at too terrific a speed to stop. He established contact with a pile of bags and boxes and trunks on the trolly suddenly.

Crash! Crash! Bump! Clump! Bang! Crash!

Baggage and trolly and Coker were wildly mixed. Potter and Greene, coming on fast behind, added themselves to the wreckage.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Potter, as he sprawled headlong over Coker.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Greene, as he sprawled over Potter.

"Ow! Ow! Wow! Grooogh!" gurgled Coker, as they sprawled on him. "Ow! Gerroff! Whoooop! Oooooooch!"

"Look 'ere!" roared the Lantham porter.

Coker & Co. struggled up. Baggage surrounded them like a sea, and the porter was waving his hands wildly as he expressed his opinion of Coker at the top of his voice.

"Come on!" spluttered Coker.

"Oh dear!"

"Look 'ere——" shrieked the porter.

Coker trampled over the baggage and rushed on. Potter and Greene tottered after him. But the delay had saved the fugitive. The little man in black had vanished from the station.

"Which way did he go?" roared Coker, grabbing a startled ticket-collector by the arm.

"Ow!" gasped the man, as his bones almost crunched in Coker's powerful grip. "Ow!"

"Which way——"

"Leggo! Leggo my arm!"

"Which——"

"Help!"

Coker relinquished his victim and rushed on. He charged out of the station into Lantham High Street, Potter and Greene gasping at his heels. Up and down and round about Coker glared in search of the little man in black, but he did not see him.

"Come on!" gasped Coker. "He can't have got far! Follow me! We've got to get him!"

Potter and Greene, resigning themselves to their fate, followed Coker. For a long time they hunted up and down the High Street and the streets adjoining. Coker was eager on the chase, but Potter and Greene, every moment that it lasted, grew more and more fed up. A brilliant idea occurred to Potter at last.

"Coker, old man," he gasped, "let's separate and search in different directions—what? Meet again at the Pagoda at half-past five."

"Right!" said Coker, for once adopting a suggestion without delaying to make it clear that the idea was his own. "Buck up!"

Coker vanished round a corner, and Potter caught Greene by the arm.

"Come on!" he said. "This way to the football ground!"

Greene chuckled breathlessly.

"We've got time to see the second half," smiled Potter. "We'll meet Coker at the Pagoda afterwards for tea. I think we've earned our tea."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Greene.

And the two Fifth-Formers walked away to the football ground, where they arrived in time for the second half.

Coker continued to search up and down the purlieus of Lantham for the elusive man in black. He had the impression that his faithful chums were similarly engaged. But Coker often had impressions that were quite without foundation.

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## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Painful for Prout!

"PROUT'S got 'em!"

Blundell of the Fifth made that remark.

His chum, Bland, nodded his assent.

All the Fifth Form of Greyfriars knew that day that Mr. Prout, the portly and ponderous master of the Fifth, had "got 'em," as Blundell elegantly expressed it.

His ragging Coker in class was no proof of it. He generally ragged Coker in class. But that morning he had ragged nearly all the Fifth.

Prout's temper had been very short indeed. The least hint of contradiction always annoyed Prout, but that day it seemed to infuriate him. When Coker argued, Prout had really looked like boxing Coker's ears—an unheard-of proceeding, short of which Prout fortunately stopped.

Something, the Fifth opined, was worrying Prout; perhaps the rheumatism, a hardy annual that haunted Prout in the autumn. Whatever it was, it made the Greyfriars Fifth tired.

At the present moment Blundell and Bland were walking in the quad, lofty and majestic as became seniors, great men at games, and first-class "Bloods." Lesser mortals they passed by, like the idle wind which they regarded not. Secretly they regarded Prout himself as

a lesser mortal—but this opinion it was necessary to keep secret.

Prout, generally genial, full of chat, passed the two men of the Fifth without a word or a glance. He did not seem to see them.

Blundell and his friend were naturally glad, so far as that went. Being stopped in the quad by Prout for one of his chatty talks was a thing that Fifth Form men had to endure, but which they did not delight in.

But it was unusual and surprising for Prout to pass them by in this manner, just as if they—the great ones of the Fifth—were lesser mortals themselves.

They stared after him, and Blundell remarked that Prout had "got 'em." The expression on his fat, florid face was clouded and worried.

"He's got 'em!" agreed Bland. "Coker's enough to worry any Form master into a decline."

"It's not only Coker," said Blundell sagely. "It's something more than Coker! I'd ask him what's the trouble, only——"

"Only?" asked Bland.

"Only he might tell me," said Blundell gloomily. "You know what Prout is when he begins. He never leaves off. Let's beat it before he spots us and chats."

And the two great men of the Fifth changed the direction of their walk to give their Form master a wide berth.

But they need not have feared. Prout was not in his usual chatty mood. He did not even see the two Fifth-Formers in the quad at all. He walked with a frowning brow, and his eyes on the ground. He walked like a man buried in deep and painful thought, as no doubt he was.

He paced to and fro, occasionally glancing up at the clock-tower. At last he gave a sigh and went into the House.

By force of habit his steps led him to Masters' Common-room. One master was in that room—Mr. Hacker of the Shell—reading a newspaper. Hacker doggedly buried himself deep in that newspaper, determined not to see Prout if he could help it.

To his surprise, Prout did not speak. Hacker was left undisturbed to the enjoyment of his newspaper.

Prout drifted round the Common-room, stopped at a window, lighted one of his big black cigars, and let it go out. Then he drifted out of the room again.

He went down Masters' passage to his study. Mr. Quelch, who had just come in, was coming up the passage from the opposite direction.

Taking advantage of the fact that Prout's eyes were on the floor, Mr. Quelch quickly side-stepped into his study and closed the door softly. Safe in the room, he breathed like a man who had had a narrow escape. There was only one member of the Greyfriars staff who enjoyed Prout's long, long chats. That was Prout.

Prout turned into his own study, closed the door, and stood at the window looking out.

He sighed.

The master of the Fifth, usually so impressive, portly, and majestic, had quite a crumpled look.

"It is scandalous!" he said, addressing, apparently, the old elms in the quad. "Scandalous!"

He took a turn across the study. He stopped again, staring at a bust of Demosthenes on his bookcase.

"Scandalous!" repeated Mr. Prout, apparently addressing Demosthenes.

Demosthenes took no notice.

Prout sighed again, looked at his watch, sorted out his hat and coat, and left the House.

With a slow and stately motion, like a galleon under full sail, Mr. Prout rolled down to the gates.

Gosling, at the gate, touched his hat.

"A very fine afternoon, sir!" said the Greyfriars porter, thus giving Prout an opening for a chat if he liked.

Prout only looked at him gloomily.

"For the time of year, sir!" added Gosling.

"Scandalous!" said Mr. Prout.

Gosling blinked.

Mr. Prout walked out of gates, leaving Gosling staring after him blankly. Prout's remark had been made in connection with his own gloomy thoughts, and he was hardly conscious of Gosling.

The Fifth Form master walked down Friardale Lane.

Dark and gloomy was his brow, and several times his eyes flashed, and he took a grip on his stick and flourished it in the air.

"I am not to be imposed upon!" said Mr. Prout to space. "I shall refuse to be imposed upon! Scoundrel!"

At the stile on the footpath in Friardale Wood, Mr. Prout stopped and sat on the top bar to rest. There had been a time when Prout had been a great hunter, a mighty hill-climber, an active walker—at least, so he often told Common-room. But that time was past, and at present Mr. Prout could not walk half a mile without feeling a shortness of wind. So the rest on the stile was welcome to him.

Prout fumbled in his pocket, and took out a letter, which had a well-thumbed look, and had evidently been read over several times. Now Prout read it over again, and his brow blackened as he read.

*Biter's Buildings,*
*London, E.C.2.*

*Sir,*

***Referring to the matter of Mr. Eustace Prout, and our conversation on the telephone, our Mr. Tighe will see you to discuss the matter.***

***We fully appreciate your view that you have no responsibility whatever for the actions of this gentleman, your nephew.***

***Nevertheless, we feel assured that you would prefer the matter to be discussed in an amicable way, and all possibility of scandal avoided. This, we cannot help thinking, would be very painful to a gentleman in your position.***

***As it is desirable, for obvious reasons, that the interview should not take place at the school, our Mr. Tighe will see you at the place mentioned, at four-thirty on Wednesday afternoon.***

*We are, sir,*
*Yours faithfully,*
*Sharp & Co.*

"Scoundrels!" said Mr. Prout, addressing the trees of Friardale Wood. "Leeches!"

He folded the letter and replaced it in his pocket.

He descended from the stile and followed the footpath. Late in the autumn as it was, it was a warm afternoon, and the portly master of the Fifth was warm, perspiring, and fatigued. He had a considerable amount of weight to carry, and he felt it severely after the first mile.

But he had an appointment to keep at a distance from Greyfriars, and he plugged onward. He emerged at last on the towing path on the bank of the Sark, and followed it till he came to the old stone bridge.

The half-hour chimed from somewhere in the distance as Mr. Prout mounted the bridge.

He stopped there, glanced about him, and breathed hard and deep. There was no one in sight.

"Rascal!" said Mr. Prout.

Our Mr. Tighe, evidently, was not punctual in keeping his appointment. Mr. Prout took off his hat, wiped his perspiring brow, and replaced his hat. Then he stared angrily in the direction of the village of Friardale from which it appeared that he expected Mr. Tighe to arrive.

But there was no sign of Mr. Tighe, or anyone else, on the road from Friardale to the bridge over the Sark.

Mr. Prout snorted.

He sat down at last on one of the stone seats on the old bridge to wait. The minutes ticked by.

At five o'clock Mr. Prout rose to his feet, purple with anger and annoyance, and scanned the road. One or two rural labourers had passed him, but no one who could possibly have been Mr. Tighe, from Sharp & Co. of Biter's Buildings, E.C. 2.

"Scandalous!" said Mr. Prout. "I will wait no longer! The rogue has not even the manners to keep an appointment! I refuse to wait for him!"

But having made that remark Mr. Prout sat down again to wait. Once more he took out Messrs. Sharp & Co.'s letter, read it through, and replaced it in his pocket. Once more he lighted a big black cigar, allowed it to go out, and threw it over the parapet into the Sark. Half an hour later he rose to his feet again, bristling with indignation. Still our Mr. Tighe did not put in an appearance.

"I will not wait!" hissed Prout.

But he sat down again and waited.

The early dusk was creeping over the woods and the river. The afternoon had been warm, but it was growing chilly now. Mr. Prout drew his coat more closely about him. The dusk deepened to darkness.

He started up at last at the sound of a footstep. A little man dressed in black, with a long, prominent nose and a greenish gleam in his narrow, closely-set eyes, came on the bridge, looking round him with a curious, cat-like furtiveness. He spotted the portly Form master and came towards him, peering at him in the shadows.

"Mr. Prout?" he asked.

"That is my name, sir!" boomed Prout.

"I am glad to see you here, sir."

"Are you Mr. Tighe?"

"I am."

"From Sharp & Co., who first had the impudence to telephone me, and then the audacity to write me a letter?"

"My dear sir——"

"Understand, sir——" boomed Mr. Prout. Then his booming voice died away under the cold glitter of the greenish eyes.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, sir," said the man in black: "very truly sorry! Owing to an accident, I lost my train when I changed at Lantham for the local line, and I have been very much delayed. I can only apologise."

"It is immaterial," rumbled Prout. "But I desire you and your employers plainly to understand——"

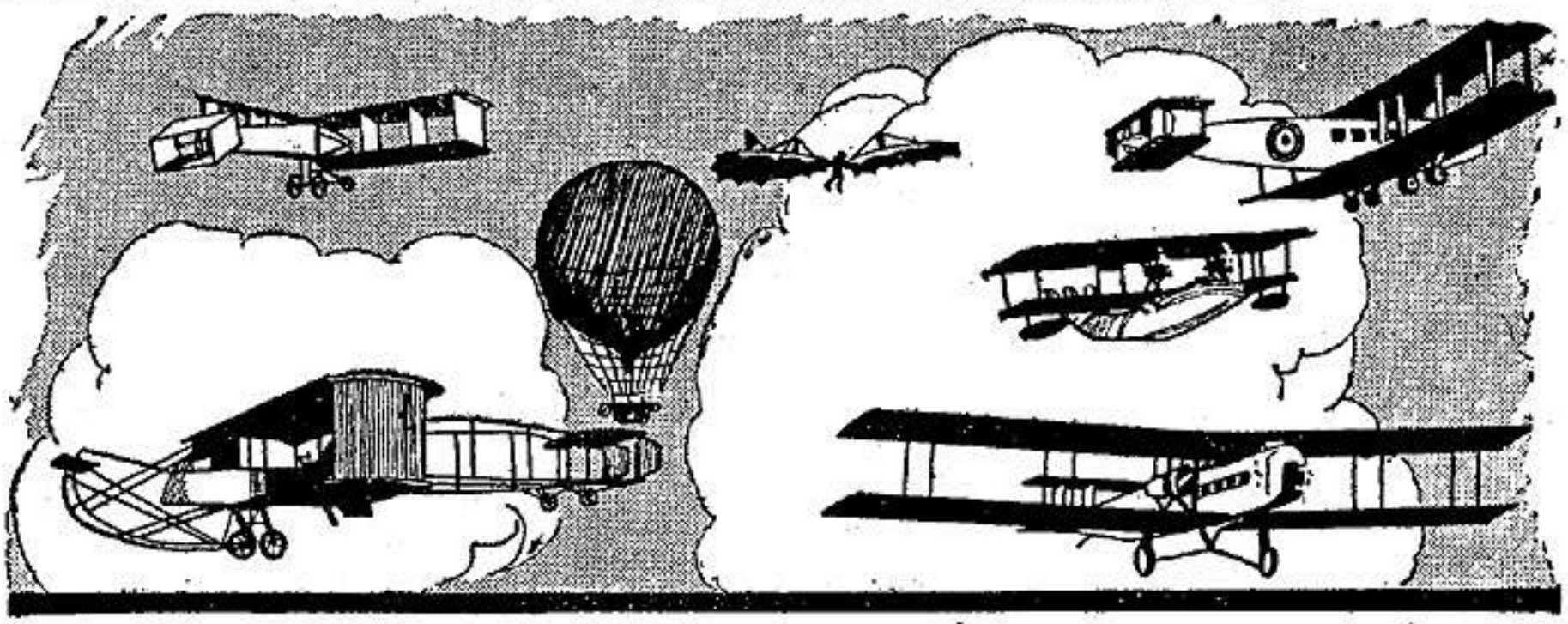
"Perhaps, sir, it would be wise to retire to a less conspicuous spot to discuss the matter," suggested Mr. Tighe.

"There is nothing to discuss!" said Mr. Prout. "I am not responsible for my nephew, as you are very well aware. Good gad! I have hardly seen him for years! I utterly disclaim any responsibility."

"Perfectly so," assented Mr. Tighe; "and if you decline to discuss the matter I have only to return to London and allow the law to take its course. From

*(Continued on page 12.)*

**Here's Another Interesting Flying Article by Our Special Contributor!**



# LEARNING to FLY!

*Ten years ago the first British plane carried passengers over to Paris. Now people are growing tired of travelling as mere passengers in the huge sky-liners. They want runabout planes of their own.*

### LANDING-GROUNDS IN MID-OCEAN!

IF the air-lines now being worked by the world's passenger-carrying aeroplanes were as plain in the skies as are railway lines on the ground, non-flyers might be able to get a better idea of the simply amazing feats of the air pioneers.

For they are pioneers, these 1929 pilots who are opening up fresh pathways through the heavens to link up the regions of the earth. The air-lines stretch now like tentacles all over Europe, down to India and Egypt, over Australia and America and Africa.

And it is less than twenty-six years since the first successful man-carrying plane brought off its staggering stunt—a flight that didn't last a full minute.

Until ten years ago the Atlantic Ocean was still unconquered by aeroplanes. Two Britishers—Alcock and Brown—showed the world how to do it. No one managed it again for eight years. Then young Colonel Lindbergh successfully crossed the Atlantic, and the spell was broken. It has been done time and again since, and now engineers are drawing up schemes for artificial landing-grounds in mid-ocean.

The idea is that aeroplane "hops" shall be made possible over the ocean. Every here and there, artificial islands will be anchored, where planes can descend for refuelling and to take up and set down passengers.

**The Air Force Cross won by Flying Officer Waghorn, winner of the Schneider Trophy 331 miles per hour.**

### MOTORING—A BACK NUMBER!

In 1903 the greatest distance flown by any plane, without alighting, was 850 feet. Staggering, isn't it? Then, ten years ago, the first British passenger-carrying service was started. An extremely modest beginning it was, too—a converted bomber, carrying a couple of passengers each day (when it could get them) to Paris.

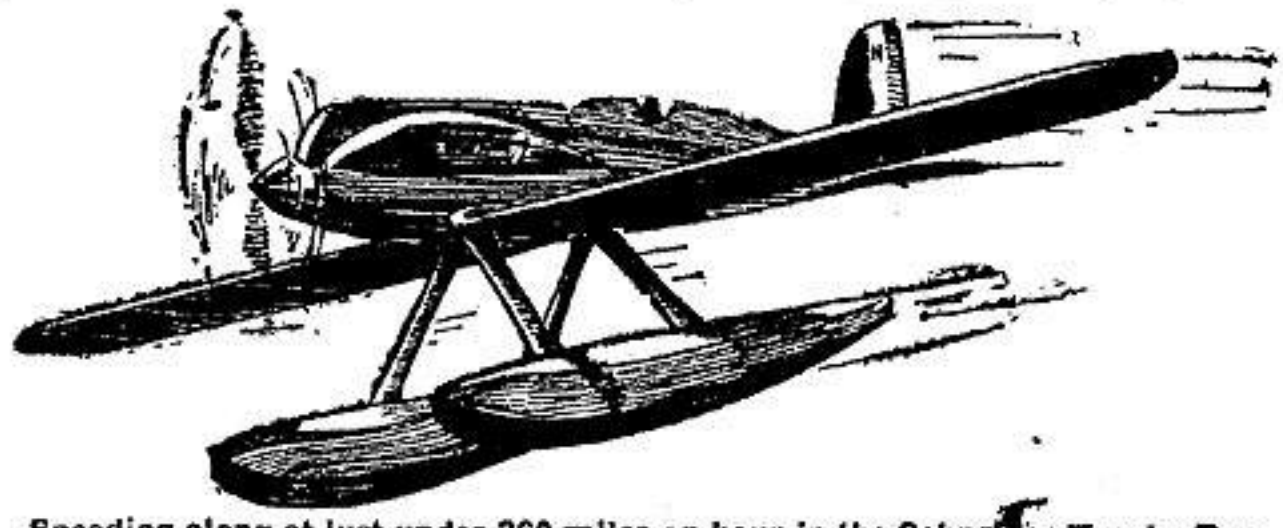
Now the route mileage of the world's air services runs into scores of thousands of miles daily.

But already people are growing tired of travelling as mere passengers by air in the sky-liners. They are wanting runabout aeroplanes of their own, and those who can pay out £600 can possess one.

That's for a brand-new two-seater light plane, with an engine about the same size as that of a Bentley motor-car. Private flying clubs are springing up, and people are actually deserting motoring for the air.

### BABY PLANES FOR EVERYBODY!

You can join a private club and have lessons in the club's machine. And as for the comparative costs, the running of an up-to-date light aeroplane—a two-seater to cruise comfortably at eighty miles an hour—is less than first-class fare by train or boat.



**Speeding along at just under 360 miles an hour in the Schneider Trophy Race.**

Inventors, scenting fresh developments of this craze for private flying, are determined to make it still cheaper and more simple. Baby planes that can be shut up for the night in a roomy garage are on the market, and the next thing we shall have will be planes that can go straight up in the air and straight down again without the need for a run-way.

That means you could keep a plane on the roof of your house, provided the roof is flat. Jolly handy, a plane like that, to go to school or work with. You'd just climb on to your roof, hustle into the cockpit of your plane, grab the controls, whizz straight up, hover there motionless as long as you pleased, then hurtle off to wherever you want to go.

Sheds could be built at the rear of your school or place of business—whichever the case may be—in which to house your plane. Think of the coming home part, too. No waiting on a crowded platform until your train came in and then fighting for a seat in a stuffy carriage. Oh dear, no. We shall all be fresh air fiends.

Fortunes have been, and are being, spent on the quest for such a plane, and now it has been practically accomplished. It remains only to bring the price down, and then there will be baby planes for everybody—and we shall all be Blazers of the Air Trail!

### 357 MILES PER HOUR!

But those who can approach the world's records in flying will be as limited in number then as now. It needs supermen and super-machines to do what Squadron-Leader Orlebar and Flying-Officer Waghorn, of the R.A.F., did in early September. Waghorn won the Schneider Trophy—the world's most coveted air prize for Britain, at nearly 5½ miles a minute, for which he was awarded the Air Force Cross, while Orlebar set up for us the world's record of over 357 miles an hour.

More than a million people watched Waghorn's victory, and the world marvelled that any pilot in that race could endure not only the excessive speed, but have the nerve to sit in what was not unlike an oven—an engine in front of the pilot and an oil-tank at the back, both doing their best to bake or fry the cramped hero.

The man who first blazed the Schneider Trophy air trail romped home the winner at 45 miles an hour. Sixteen years later—this September—Waghorn, of the R.A.F., did it at an average speed of 328 m.p.h., his third lap (there were seven all told) working out at 331 miles an hour!

# BLACKMAIL!

(*Continued from page 10.*)

your consenting to meet me here, however, we presumed that you desired an accommodation."

Mr. Prout stared at him. Prout was a majestic man, accustomed to ruling the roost in Common-room at Greyfriars, accustomed to reducing his Form to silence with a glance. But his majestic stare had no effect whatever upon Mr. Tighe. He did not seem in the slightest degree disconcerted by it. In fact, it was Mr. Prout's glance that faltered under the steady stare of the greenish eyes. It was a contest between dignity and impudence; and impudence won the day.

"As we are here we may, perhaps, discuss the matter," said Mr. Prout weakly. "I warn you, however, that I am not to be imposed upon."

There were footsteps on the bridge, and a man with a hoe on his shoulder passed in the dusk and glanced at the two in passing. His footsteps died away towards Friardale.

"No doubt you will see the wisdom of retiring to a more secluded spot for our little discussion," suggested Mr. Tighe.

Mr. Prout opened his mouth and closed it again. He gave a curt nod of assent, and followed the green-eyed man from the bridge.

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## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Coker Finds His Car!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out of Lantham Football Ground in the midst of a streaming crowd. The match was over, and it had been a good game, and the Greyfriars fellows had enjoyed watching it; and now they were ready for tea to wind up a jolly afternoon. After which there would be a rapid run home in the borrowed car, and the lights of Greyfriars through the autumn dusk. In a cheery crowd they marched along the High Street of Lantham towards the bunshop that was called the Pagoda, where they had Chinese decorations and lantern effects, and an orchestra, and were very up to date for a country town. Better still, they had good tuck at the Pagoda, as Bunter knew; and through that football match, from the kick-off till the final whistle, Bunter's thoughts had dwelt on the tuck at the Pagoda. Now at last that beastly match was over, and Bunter was heading towards the things that really mattered; and, hungry as he was, he smiled.

Outside the Pagoda a handsome Rolls waited, with a stolid, patient chauffeur in attendance. It was Coker's car and Coker's chauffeur, annexed for the afternoon by Bob Cherry. As Coker was to be charged four shillings an hour for waiting, the driver did not mind how long he waited. The juniors smiled cheerily as they saw the car standing in readiness; it was quite pleasant to think of the rush home by country lanes in a rapid car after tea. There was no doubt that Coker of the Fifth, with all his faults, had his uses.

The merry party marched into the bunshop, engaged a table, and sat down to tea in a crowd. Bunter, as usual, was a "passenger"; wherever Bunter was, it was an understood thing that he did not stand his whack. But the other fellows combined resources for a handsome spread; and when it came to dealing with the good things, Bunter did more than his whack—much more. But there was plenty to go round, and Bunter was given his head.



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry suddenly.

He was looking towards the door, and the juniors followed his glance. Potter and Greene, of the Greyfriars Fifth, had come in.

They stood within the bunshop, looking round them, evidently in search of someone.

It was easy to guess who that someone was. It could only be Coker.

"Oh, my hat!" said Nugent. "They've dropped Coker somewhere, but they've fixed it to meet him here."

"Looks like it," said Harry.

"If Coker's coming here——"

"Let him come!" said Bob cheerily. "Coker can't kick up a row here—even Coker! He would be chucked out."

"I mean, if he sees the car outside he will know it's his car——"

"Oh scissors!"

Potter and Greene spotted the crowd of juniors at their table in an alcove, and came over towards them.

"You kids seen anything of Coker?" asked Potter.

"Us what?" asked Wharton politely.

Potter breathed hard.

"You fellows," he said. "We're looking for Coker! He was to meet us here after the football match. Seen him?"

"We haven't had that pleasure."

"He's not been here?" asked Greene.

"Not that we know of."

"The silly owl!" said Potter to Greene. "He's still hunting for that green-eyed merchant, I suppose. Look here, we can't hang on here waiting for him. Goodness knows how long he may be!"

"I can tell you how long Coker will be, Potter!" said Bob.

Potter stared at him.

"Eh? How long will he be, then?"

"About six feet two, when he's done growing."

"You silly young ass!" growled Potter, while the juniors chortled; and he turned to Greene again. "Look here, we can't wait about."

"What about having tea?"

"Coker was going to stand the tea," grunted Potter. "I suppose the silly ass has forgotten that, playing the giddy ox. May expect us to wait two or three hours for him."

"Let's have another look for the silly owl!"

"Come on!" growled Potter.

The two Fifth-Formers made their way to the door again, and went outside to look around for Coker.

They were feeling impatient and irritated. There was no objection, of course, to Coker rooting through Lantham highways and byways for the long-nosed man, so long as Potter and Greene were watching the football match. That was all right! But when the match was over, and Potter and Greene ready for tea, it was time for Horace to give up playing the giddy ox, and come down to business.

"Hallo, here he is!" exclaimed Potter, in relief.

Coker had arrived; but he was not coming into the tea-shop. He was standing on the pavement, staring at the car and the waiting chauffeur.

Even the man in black—whom he had failed to find after his long search—faded from Coker's mind, as he saw the Courtfield car and the Courtfield chauffeur standing there.

He knew that car: it was the only Rolls in the Courtfield Garage, and it was the car for which Coker had stipulated on the telephone.



Why it had not turned up for him at Greyfriars, Coker did not yet know; and he was amazed to discover it standing outside the tea-shop in Lantham, when he came along to the Pagoda for Potter and Greene.

Wrath gathered on Coker's rugged brow.

His expression was like that of Roderic Dhu, when dark lightnings flashed from Roderic's eye.

"My hat!" Coker was saying, when Potter and Greene appeared. "My only hat! The cheek of it! Cheek! My hat!"

"Hallo, Coker, old man!" said Potter genially. "Here we are—just arrived. Did you find that johnny?"

"No! Look at that car!"

"Eh?" Potter looked. "What about the car?"

"It's my car."

"Eh?"

"By Jove!" said Coker.

He strode towards the waiting chauffeur, who touched his cap respectfully. He had often driven Coker, and was not unmindful of liberal tips. When Coker was joy-riding, he exuded half-crowns. He was quite pained to see this valued patron of the garage looking so annoyed and angry.

"Look here, Jones!" said Coker sulphurously.

"Yes, sir!"

"That's the car I ordered this afternoon."

"Quite, sir."

"You leave me in the lurch, and take on another job, what?" said Coker. "Well, it's the last job you'll have from me. You can tell them that at the garage! Tell them to send in my account, and I'll never have another car from your place, see?"

The chauffeur looked astonished, as well he might.

"But, sir——"

"That's enough!" said Coker. "I engaged that car, and waited for it—and took the train because it didn't arrive. I supposed you'd had some accident! I find you on another job! Not the sort of thing I'm going to stand, my man!"

"But—but I ain't on another job, sir!" gasped Jones. "I'm on your job, Mr. Coker."

"My job!" ejaculated Coker.

"Yes—I brought your friends to Lantham, and I'm waiting for them now."

"Mum-mum-my friends!" stuttered Coker.

"Yes, sir; eight young gentlemen of Greyfriars——"

"Eight young gentlemen of Greyfriars!" repeated Coker, like a parrot.

"My hat!" ejaculated Potter. "Those young rascals in the tea-shop—there's eight in that gang!"

"I don't understand this!" said Coker. "Mean to say that some other gang bagged my car?" He glared at the chauffeur. "Didn't I telephone to you to send the car to the school at half-past two?"

"Yes, sir; but you telephoned again to tell us to let it wait at the cross-roads."

"I didn't!" roared Coker.

"Didn't you, sir?" gasped the chauffeur.

"Certainly not."

"Well, someone did, from the school," said Jones. "He rang up immediately after you, sir, and they thought it was you, in the office."

"Great pip!" gasped Coker.

"And those young gentlemen came along, at the cross-roads, and mentioned that you couldn't come, sir."

"Oh!" stuttered Coker.

"And took the car, sir," said Jones.

"As they came from Greyfriars. I supposed they were your friends—in fact, they said so."

"My hat!"

"I drove them to the football ground, sir, and now I'm waiting to take them back to the school."

"Oh, gad!" gasped Coker. He was beginning to understand. "That young villain, Cherry—he was there—he heard me phone for the car—he must have! Oh, my hat! They've had my car! The young scoundrels! Where are they now?"

"In the tea-shop, sir; I'm waiting for them!"

Coker made a stride towards the Pagoda, and Potter promptly caught him by the arm.

"Hold on, old chap!"

"I'll smash them!"

"But I say——"

"I'll pulverise them!"

"Yes; but——"

"I'll spiflicate them!"

"Not here!" gasped Potter. "You can't kick up a row here, Coker! And—and there's a whole mob of them! Leave it till you get back."

"They'll keep, old chap!" urged Greene.

The prospect of a battle-royal in the Pagoda was quite dismaying to Potter and Greene. Fortunately, Coker, justly indignant as he was, realised that the smashing, pulverising, and spiflicating of the juniors would be more appropriate at Greyfriars than in the Lantham tea-shop. He checked his stride, and consented to listen to reason.

He turned to Jones again.

"Look here, you're an ass!" he said. "You ought to have known that a crew of fags were no friends of mine!"

"Being Greyfriars boys, sir——"

"Rubbish! You're a fathead!" said Coker. "Still, as you were taken in, we'll let it pass! Mind, though, this is my car; and you're to wait here for me, and if those young cads come back for the car, tell them off. You're not to let them use the car again. Understand that?"

"Quite, sir!" said Jones.

"Wait here for me! I'm going in to tea! Wait for me, and mind you don't be a silly idiot again. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come on, you men!" said Coker, turning to the tea-shop again. "I'm hungry. I never found that man. He dodged off somehow. Did you see anything of him?"

"No!" said Potter, without adding that it would have been rather difficult to see anything of the elusive man in black, while he was watching the football match.

"Did you look?" grunted Coker.

"We kept our eyes open all the time," said Greene, which was the exact truth. "We watched every minute."

It was unnecessary to add that it was a football match he had been watching.

"Well, I never expected much of you," said Coker. "You were bound to let him slip through your fingers, of course."

"He seems to have slipped through yours!" remarked Potter.

"Don't be an ass, Potter! Let's go and get some grub—I'm hungry."

Potter and Greene were hungry, too, and they gladly followed Coker into the Pagoda in search of grub.

Coker cast a glare across the tea-shop in the direction of the juniors' table. But he contented himself with glaring, and sat down to tea. During that meal, he told Potter and Greene how he had searched up and down Lantham for the long-nosed man, and made some sarcastic remarks on the way Potter and Greene had allowed the man to slip through their fingers. But the tea was lavish and good; and it compensated for Coker's conversation. Coker stood the tea, and Potter and Green stood Coker, which was fair all round.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
### Ways and Means!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Get a move on, Bunter!"

"But I'm not finished——"

"Yes, you are."

"I'm not!" hooted Bunter.

"Your mistake!" said Bob Cherry, as he rose from the table.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Dry up, Bunter!" said Wharton.

There was a thoughtful expression on Bob Cherry's face, and it was reflected on other faces in the party.

The advent of Horace Coker had rather a disturbing effect on the chums of the Remove.

Coker himself, of course, did not matter. Had Coker been so ill-advised as to have started ructions in the tea-shop, the Famous Five were quite prepared to strew Coker all over the Pagoda. It was the car that mattered. Coker's arrival put rather a different complexion on that matter. It was practically certain that Coker must have spotted his car outside the Pagoda; in which case it was doubtful whether the Rolls would be available to take the cheery party home to Greyfriars.

In the happy belief that they were going home by car, the chums of the Remove had rather spread themselves on that tea. It was not often that they tea'd at the Pagoda, and it was an expensive place, and all sorts of excellent things were to be had—if paid for. The juniors had had them and enjoyed them. The bill was rather an extensive one. It left little over for further expenses in the way of railway fares.

So the question of the car was rather a burning question. It brought thoughtful expressions to many faces.

The bill was settled, and the juniors moved off, Bunter bringing up the rear

(*Continued on page* 16.)


"Well, now the car's gone, it's a case of the railway or nothing," said Harry Wharton. "Let's see if we've got enough to pay the fares." There was a careful turning out of pockets and counting of change. But the spread in the Pagoda had left a very narrow margin. (*See Chapter* 8.)


(*Continued from page* 13.)

with a discontented expression on his fat face. Bunter had not finished tea—he had had only enough for three or four fellows as yet. But Bunter had had to stop. Naturally, he did not feel satisfied.

Outside, the car was still waiting.

But there was a rather sly grin on the face of Jones, the chauffeur, as the juniors came across the pavement, which warned them what they had to expect.

"We're ready now," said Bob, rather dubiously.

Jones' grin become more pronounced.

"Indeed, sir!" he said.

"Yes; start up."

Jones made no movement to start up.

"I'm waiting for Mr. Coker," he explained.

"I say, you fellows, this is our car!" said Billy Bunter. "What the thump does he mean? Coker can't have our car!"

"It is Mr. Coker's car, sir," said the chauffeur, grinning. "I'm waiting for Mr. Coker now. Nothing doing, young gentlemen!"

"Sold again!" remarked Peter Todd. "The soldfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at the chauffeur, and the chauffeur looked at Harry Wharton & Co.

Evidently there was nothing doing.

Coker had found his car, and reclaimed it, and that was the end of it. Nothing short of hurling the chauffeur into the road and seizing the Rolls would have placed the Removites in possession of it. And that was not a practical proposition.

The juniors moved away, leaving Jones still grinning. Jones seemed to derive some amusement from the situation. To the juniors, stranded nearly ten miles from school, it was not amusing.

"Well, what's going to be done?" asked Nugent.

"We are!" said Bob ruefully.

"I say, you fellows——"

"For goodness' sake shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! How are we going to get back?" demanded Bunter. "You've brought me here, wasted my time looking at a silly football match, and hooked me away before I've finished tea. Well, I've got to get back to school. It's up to you fellows. And, I say——"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

"We shall have to get back by railway," said Monty Newland.

"That's so! But——"

"Look here, you fellows told me it was going to be a car!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "Now you talk about railways! If that's what you call treating a fellow decently I can tell you I don't agree. Letting a fellow down——"

"Kill him, somebody!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"It's the railway or nothing," said Harry Wharton. "Let's see how the exchequer stands."

"I'm not going back by railway!" stated Bunter. "You fellows offered to stand a car——"

"Will you dry up?"

"No, I won't! Anyhow, if we take the train, you'll have to stand a taxi at the other end, and I insist on that."

"We're not taking the train yet," said Bob Cherry grimly. "It's a question whether we can raise the fares."

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter relapsed into speechless indignation.

"It's rather a muck-up," said Bob. "Of course, a fellow couldn't foresee that idiot Coker turning up like that."

"Of course not," agreed Wharton.

"Well, if he came to Lantham for the football match, he was pretty certain to tea at the Pagoda afterwards," remarked Peter Todd. "A fellow might really have thought of it."

"Well, you didn't!" said Bob curtly.

"All serene, old man—I'm not grousing," said Toddy. "Everybody's wise after the event. The question is, what are we going to do?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Kick him!"

"Yaroooh!"

There was a careful turning out of pockets and counting of change. But the spread in the Pagoda had left a very narrow margin.

Among the Famous Five there were some coppers and sixpences. Bunter, of course, was in his usual stony state. Peter Todd was down to twopence. Monty Newland was a wealthy fellow; but he did not carry his wealth in his trousers pockets. His "whack" in the Pagoda bill had left him a few shillings.

"I say, you fellows, we've got to get back!" wailed Bunter.

"Cheese it!"

"We shall be late for call-over, at this rate."

"Do you want another kick?"

"Beast!"

The juniors made anxious calculations over the sum, when it was pooled, and considered railway fares. The adding together of the shillings, the sixpences, and the coppers did not produce a sufficient sum to carry eight fellows home by railway.

"It's up to Bob!" growled Bunter. "He was idiot enough to bag Coker's car, and fathead enough to let Coker bag it back again. It's up to him."

"You fat, grousing oyster——"

"Well, what I say is this—— Yaroooooh!" Another kick changed the current of Bunter's remarks.

"Look here," said Harry Wharton, after anxious calculation. "We can manage it. There's enough to take three tickets as far as Friardale, and five as far as Redclyffe. I've worked that out, and it leaves a penny over."

"I can use that in an automatic machine," said Bunter. "Ow! If you don't stop kicking me, Cherry, you beast——"

"That means that five of us will be jolly late for call-over, if we have to walk from Redclyffe," said Nugent. "But it can't be helped. That idiot Coker was bound to butt in and spoil the whole thing."

"Let's all go as far as Redclyffe and walk the rest," suggested Monty Newland. "Sink or swim together."

"I'm not going to walk from Redclyffe!" howled Bunter. "Why, it's over three miles!"

"Will you dry up, you fat worm!" demanded Peter Todd.

"No, I won't. Besides, walking from Redclyffe means getting in late, and that means a licking from Quelchy. If you fellows think you're going to land me a licking from Quelchy——"

"Three fellows can go all the way," said Harry. "No need for the whole lot to bag trouble. It's up to us, you men."

"That's so," agreed Johnny Bull.

"Well, if I go all the way, that's all right!" announced Bunter. "You fellows can do what you like. But what about a taxi at the other end?"

"Kick him!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The juniors started for the station.

There, eight tickets were taken; three for Friardale, which were handed to Toddy, Newland, and Bunter, and five for Redclyffe, which were retained by the Famous Five. As it was a member of the famous Co. who had landed the party in the scrape, it was up to the Co. to take the consequences, and the objections of Toddy and Newland were overruled. As for Bunter, he did not make any objections. The Owl of the Remove was concerned only about his fat and important self, and the real trouble, according to Bunter, was that he wasn't going to have a taxi at the other end.

The Removites boarded the train, and it whizzed away, to the accompaniment of grousing from William George Bunter.

At Redclyffe, the Famous Five descended.

The train ran on, taking Toddy and Newland and Bunter on their way back to Greyfriars in time for calling-over. And Harry Wharton & Co., as cheerfully as they could, walked out of Redclyffe Station and started the long walk to Greyfriars.

"It was rather a frost, after all," remarked Bob Cherry, as the five juniors left Redclyffe behind, and started the long tramp by country lanes, where the October dusk was already falling.

"The frostfulness was terrific."

"Fancy that idiot Coker diddling us at the finish!" said Bob. "Nobody could have foreseen that!"

"Nobody!" agreed Wharton.

"After all, we've had a joy-ride, and we did dish Coker, and we've seen the League match, and had a jolly good tea!" said Bob. "A walk won't hurt us, and if Quelch gives us lines, well—we've had lines before, and lived to tell the tale!"

"Right as rain," said Nugent.

"It's all in the day's work," said Bob. "What's the odds, so long as you're 'appy?"

Nevertheless, it was with thoughtful faces that the Famous Five tramped on through the thickening dusk. They were going to be late for calling-over, very late, and they knew that there would be a painful interview with Mr. Quelch at the end of a long walk. Quelch was not likely to sympathise with fellows who had thoughtlessly landed themselves ten miles from home without their railway fares in their pockets, and certainly they could not explain to a Form master that they had counted on bagging a Fifth Form man's car for the joy-ride home. It had been a jolly afternoon, but after the feast came the reckoning.

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## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Unexpected!

"THERE'S the jolly old bridge!" said Bob Cherry.

"Another mile!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"More!" said Nugent.

Ahead of the five tramping juniors, a glimmer through the gloom showed where the Sark flowed. They could not

see the bridge in the darkness, but they knew where it was. It was a welcome landmark, on the long walk back to Greyfriars, but it told them that there was still more than a mile to be traversed.

"That idiot Coker!" growled Bob.

"Coker's not the only idiot at Greyfriars!" remarked Johnny Bull; a remark which indicated that Johnny was tired.

"Well, if he hadn't butted into Quelch's study when I was phoning, this wouldn't have happened. If he hadn't had the cheek to sling me out of the study, I shouldn't have thought of dishing him over the car. I——"

"Never mind the 'ifs.' Let's get on."

"Look here, Johnny, if you're going to grouse——"

"Who's grousing?"

"You are!" said Bob tartly.

"My esteemed chums," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "the grousefulness will not catch you any fish. Let us preserve our benignant and delightful equanimity."

"I'm not grousing," said Johnny Bull. "I merely remarked that Coker wasn't the only idiot at Greyfriars. And he isn't. There's another."

"Thinking of yourself?" asked Bob.

"Look here, you ass——"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We're all getting a bit fagged," he said. "In for a penny, in for a pound. We shall be frightfully late, anyhow, and we may as well take a rest."

Wharton's eye was on Nugent. Frank was the least athletic member of the famous Co., and though he walked on in silence, and never dreamed of grousing, he was tired.

"I'm all right, old chap," said Frank, who sometimes had a way of jumping to a fellow's thoughts. "I can keep it up."

"Well, I'm tired," said Harry. "Let's take ten minutes' rest before we tackle the last mile."

"Let's," agreed Bob.

"The restfulness is the proper caper," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ludicrous Quelch will be infuriated, in any case, and the in for a penny is also in for the poundfulness."

"Here you are!" said Harry, coming to a halt. "Sit down."

Timber had been cut in the woodland along the road leading from the bridge on the Sark, and a number of felled trunks lay in the grass beside the lane, ready for removal. The juniors left the road, and sat down in a row on the trunk of a felled beech that had been cleared of most of its branches.

It was a welcome rest, after more than two miles by an uphill road. The evening was fine and calm, though the dusk was now so thick that the juniors could hardly see one another's faces as they sat.

A country labourer passed on the road, went on in the direction of the bridge, and disappeared over it towards Friardale. Deep silence followed the last echo of his footfall. It was a lonely road after dark.

"We shall be jolly late!" remarked Johnny Bull, breaking the silence.

"What cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the English proverb says!" observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Th juniors chuckled over the English proverb.

"Ten minutes more or less won't make any difference," said Harry Wharton. "Quelch will be waxy, anyhow."

"The waxfulness will be——"

"Terrific and preposterous!" chuckled Bob.

Then there was silence again, as the juniors rested their weary limbs. From the direction of the bridge came the sound of footsteps. Lonely as that lane was after dark, there were apparently some more passengers on it on this especial evening.

In the darkness the juniors could not see who was passing, and they were not interested. But the footsteps came to a stop, and a voice was heard, a voice that made them jump. It was a voice they knew, the rich, fruity voice of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. It was impossible to mistake that voice. That voice was as distinctive of Mr. Prout as his circumference and his majestic manners.

"I have no more time to waste, Mr. Tighe! You have already wasted more than enough of my time."

"I have already apologised for being late at this appointment, Mr. Prout," answered a thin, squeaky voice. "I have told you that an accident occurred when I changed trains at Lantham, causing me a very considerable delay in arriving here——"

"Enough, sir! Now you are here, let us waste no more time. I am expected back at the school, sir!"

"Quite so. But——"

"I repeat, that you have wasted more than enough of my time," rapped Mr. Prout. "If you have anything to say to me, say it, and be done."

"This quiet spot is more suitable for our discussion, sir, than the bridge," said the squeaky voice. "You do not, I presume, desire anyone who might pass to observe us together?"

"Certainly not!" boomed Mr. Prout. "I should certainly be most perturbed, Mr. Tighe, if anyone at Greyfriars should learn that I had made, and kept, an appointment with a man of your character."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Harry Wharton, under his breath.

In the darkness, among the felled trunks, the juniors blinked at one another. Mr. Prout was not ten feet from them, though they could not see him or his companion.

The position was rather an awkward one, and the chums of the Remove hardly knew what to do.

Their first thought was to make their presence known, but after Mr. Prout's remark, that was obviously a very awkward matter.

"There is no reason for anyone at the school to know anything, Mr. Prout," went on the squeaky voice. "For that reason I did not come to Greyfriars to see you, but made the appointment to meet on the bridge."

"An appointment you failed to keep!" snorted Prout.

"I have already explained——"

"Enough, sir! Come to business, though, in truth, you have no business with me. None whatever, sir! Your asking for an appointment was an act of impudence—sheer impudence, sir! You are very well aware that I have no responsibility—no responsibility whatever—for anything that my nephew, Captain Eustace Prout, may have done!"

"Quite so, sir. But——"

"And it would have been better, sir, for you to call, if you persisted in seeing me, at the school. No remark would have been likely to have been made; it would have been supposed that you had called on some business matter, if you had been noticed at all."

"I did not desire to call at Greyfriars, Mr. Prout. I have my own reasons," said the other coldly.

"Remark is likely to be excited, sir, by my meeting you at a place distant from the school if we should happen to be observed!" rapped Mr. Prout. "It would be commented upon—discussed."

"For your own sake, sir——"

"Nonsense! I should have preferred this interview, if it had to take place at all, to take place in my study!" boomed Mr. Prout. "In fact, as it is now so late, owing to your failure to keep the appointment you insisted upon making, I suggest that the matter be left over till to-morrow, and that you call openly at the school like an honest man!"

"I refuse absolutely to call at the school, Mr. Prout!"

"And why?"

"I have my reasons, into which I need not enter. Neither will I consent to postpone this interview."

"Sir, if you venture to dictate to me——"

"Let us discuss the matter calmly, Mr. Prout. You have, as you say, no legal responsibility for your nephew Eustace. Say the word, and I will leave you this instant and return to London. And to-morrow"—there was a venomous tone in the squeaky voice—"to-morrow the law will take its course, and your nephew will be placed in prison!"

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## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Blackmail!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. sat as still as if turned to stone on the felled beech in the gloom. They had not exchanged a whisper, hardly a look, but the same idea was in every mind. They must not listen to what was said at this strange, mysterious interview between a Greyfriars master and the unknown man from London; but, above all, they must not let Mr. Prout know, or even suspect, that they had been on the spot and heard a word.

To get away undiscovered, unseen, was difficult; they were not likely to be recognised in the darkness if they stirred, but they could not move away without making sound enough to betray their presence. Mr. Prout and Tighe had stopped by the roadside, a few feet off the road, close by the felled timber that lay in the grass. To get away unseen, the juniors had to stumble through the sprawling trunks for some distance, and they knew they would be heard.

But it was possible, at least, to keep it from Mr. Prout that they were Greyfriars fellows. He need not know that.

It was not fear of consequences, fear of the anger of the Fifth Form master that concerned them. It was a feeling of concern for "poor old Prout," as they mentally termed him.

Prout was so majestic, so self-important, so inflated with his own consequence that a humiliation in the eyes of Lower boys would hit him very hard indeed. He was, in his own eyes, a tremendous personage, yet here he was practically being bullied by some little beast with a squeaky voice. There was some shabby family secret—something that, if it was known, would clothe Prout with shame and humiliation as with a garment.

Certainly his feelings were likely to be bitter towards any fellow who got wind of it even by accident. And a Form master whose feelings were bitter was able to make himself very unpleasant. The chums of the Remove did not want to bear the brunt of an indignant, humiliated man's anger and dislike. Still, that was not the chief

reason why the five juniors desired to fade away from the spot as quietly and quickly as possible. They were not like Bunter, who would have rejoiced in hearing details of an affair that did not concern him. It would have been pie to Billy Bunter, but Harry Wharton & Co. were made of different stuff.

Had Wharton been alone, he would have risen at once from the trunk and got away as quietly as he could. Each of the others, doubtless, would have done the same—alone. But there were five of them, and they could not compare notes without speaking, and Prout was near enough to hear the lowest whisper. They could not even see one another's faces clearly in the gloom as they peered at each other. It was difficult for the five to know one another's thoughts or to act in concert, though they were all feeling the same on the subject—feeling that they had heard too much, and did not want to hear any more.

There was a silence after Tighe had uttered the word "prison" that seemed long, though probably it lasted only a few moments.

In the silence the juniors could hear Mr. Prout's stertorous breathing.

Harry Wharton rose from the log as quietly as he could, hoping that his comrades would catch on to his intention and follow his example.

But as he moved his foot knocked against a loose billet of wood, and there was a sound, and he stopped again.

Prout's startled voice was heard at once:

"What is that? I heard——"

"Nothing," said Tighe coldly. "A rabbit, perhaps. We are quite alone here, Mr. Prout."

"If someone should have heard your words—your impudent, insolent, infamous words——"

Mr. Prout's voice trembled.

"There is no one to hear. Let us come to business, Mr. Prout. We are losing time. I have to return to London to-night, and trains do not run late from this district."

Again Mr. Prout's stertorous breathing was heard.

"Do you desire me to return to London, and let the law take its course, Mr. Prout?" demanded Tighe. "It is for you to decide. I have already admitted that you have no legal responsibility for what Eustace Prout has done. Leave him to his fate, if you so desire."

"He is my nephew!" muttered Mr. Prout.

"He will not be the first ex-officer who has gone to the bad with a crash!" said Tighe cynically. "What is your answer?"

"I am not responsible, as you admit. How dare you come to me, or, indeed, inform me of that matter at all! You cannot hope to extort money from me!"

"It is not a question of that. If you choose to pay the debt, Captain Prout stands clear. But it is entirely a matter of choice with you."

"I am not in a position to pay debts incurred by reckless young men!" snapped Mr. Prout.

"Your position is well known to my firm!" said Tighe dryly.

"Doubtless you have inquired—spied—and——"

"We generally obtain the information we desire; neither is it difficult to learn of the circumstances of a master at such a school as Greyfriars," said Tighe. "We are quite assured that you can pay the five hundred pounds if you wish."

There was a gasp.

"Five hundred pounds!"

"That is the sum."

"Rascal!" boomed Mr. Prout. "Your firm of screwing, rascally, unscrupulous moneylenders gave fifty pounds to Eustace Prout, on your own showing!"

"Quite correct!"

"According to your statement, Captain Prout gave you a cheque for sixty pounds, post-dated, to cover principal and interest. That cheque is all that you have a right to recover."

"Precisely—had Captain Prout signed his own name to the cheque," answered Tighe coolly. "In an absentminded moment, doubtless, he signed another man's name."

"You dare——"

"Keep cool, Mr. Prout! In plain language, Eustace Prout gave us a forged cheque!"

"Which you knew at the time you took it from him, I have no doubt!" hissed Mr. Prout.

"What we knew is immaterial. A cheque of that nature is sometimes a more valuable document than a straightforward one. That cheque is now in our possession, and is a saleable article. The price of it is five hundred pounds!"

"This," gasped Mr. Prout, "is blackmail!"

"Not in the least. We offer you an article for sale, and you are at liberty to accept or refuse it," said Tighe.

"And if I refuse——"

"The matter goes before the courts. It is for you to decide whether you will allow your nephew to go to prison."

"If he has committed a crime, yes! A thousand times yes! Do you imagine for one moment that I am a man to shield the guilty from their just deserts?" boomed Mr. Prout.

"No doubt! It is also for you to decide what will be the outcome for you personally——"

"What do you mean?"

"Whether," said the squeaky voice, "your position as a Form master at a school like Greyfriars will be affected—whether your name shall appear in all the papers in connection with a sordid crime——"

"My relationship with the young rascal need not transpire—there is no reason why it should——"

"I think it probable that it will transpire! I think you may take it as assured, Mr. Prout, that everyone who reads the report of the trial will know that Eustace Prout's uncle is a Form master at Greyfriars."

"That is a threat!"

"Why waste words?" interrupted Tighe impatiently. "You know as well as I do that you could never hold up your head at Greyfriars again, among your colleagues, even if the headmaster did not ask you to resign—as most likely he would."

There was deep silence.

Wharton had not moved again, and his companions remained still and silent. From sheer pity for Mr. Prout they would not risk letting him know that anyone had heard all this.

"This is blackmail!" repeated Mr. Prout in a trembling voice. "You are taking advantage of my position at the school, of the fact that a Public school master's reputation must be spotless, to extort money from me."

"Is that your answer?"

"I will redeem the paper given you by my nephew—I will pay you the sixty pounds to which it entitles you—though in my own opinion a moneylender is entitled to nothing."

"I have stated the price of that specimen of your nephew's handwriting!" jeered Tighe. "Take it or leave it."

"Scoundrel!"

"Really, Mr. Prout——"

"Rascal!"

"When you are finished, sir——"

"I have a great mind," gasped Mr. Prout, "to take you by the collar, sir, and lay my stick about you, sir, and break every bone in your body, sir."

"Probably! But that is quite beside the point. Are you a buyer of that document, or not?"

Another silence.

"Rogue!" said Mr. Prout at last. "I do not even know whether you are speaking the truth—whether such a document is in actual existence. Do you suppose that I will take your word?"

"I am not unreasonable enough to expect that, Mr. Prout. The document will be shown to you. It is in the form of a cheque made payable to Eustace Prout by a certain party who, as we have ascertained, has never even heard of it. It is endorsed on the back by Eustace Prout, as the payee. Without that we should not, of course, have taken it from him. The sight of the paper will convince you."

"The foolish, reckless, rascally young sweep!" groaned Mr. Prout. "The War is the cause—the poor boy has never been the same since he had shellshock in the War. Before the War——"

"I am not here to discuss ancient history with you, Mr. Prout."

"Rogue!" boomed Mr. Prout. "This lad risked his life for you, among others, in the War—that alone should prevent you from making a victim of him."

"I am afraid I cannot enter into that, Mr. Prout. The question is, are you a buyer of your nephew's signature?"

"I—I will see the document. I—I will think the matter out. Bring the paper to me at the school——"

"I have told you that I have reasons for desiring not to come to the school. I will meet you in the same place when you like, and bring the document with me."

"Is there some other person at Greyfriars who knows you for a rogue, and who might, perhaps, hand you over to the police?" asked Mr. Prout, with bitter scorn.

"You wander from the point, Mr. Prout. When will you meet me and look at the document?"

There was a pause.

"I will reflect on this—I will write—or rather, telephone," said Mr. Prout. "I will leave you now—I cannot trust myself, sir, to remain in your presence—I fear, sir, that I cannot forget the dignity of my position and my character and treat you as you deserve! Not a word more, sir—you will hear from me."

Mr. Prout turned away and strode towards the bridge with the heavy, ponderous tread that had caused the fellows in his Form to liken him to the "huge, earth-shaking beast" in Macaulay.

His ponderous tread died away as the shadows swallowed him.

The little man with the long nose and the greenish eyes was left alone by the dark roadside. The juniors heard a low, gnomish chuckle.

Then a match was struck, and Mr. Tighe lighted a cigarette. In the gleam of the match the juniors caught a glimpse of a mean face with meagre features, projecting nose, and narrow, greenish eyes. The match went out, and that unpleasant countenance was lost in the darkness again.

For a few minutes Mr. Tighe remained where he was, smoking, and twice again the juniors heard that unmusical chuckle. Then the man in black moved off, following the direction Mr. Prout had taken, towards the bridge, and his footsteps died away.

In the grasp of five pairs of hands Mr. Tighe was dragged to the edge of the pond, struggling frantically. "In with him!" cried Bob Cherry. The man sailed through the air and landed in the middle of the pond with a splash. "Oooooch!" he spluttered. "Groooogh—oooch—wooooch!" "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Harry Wharton & Co. *(See Chapter* 11.)

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Ragging a Rascal!

BOB CHERRY drew a deep breath.

"Well, my hat!" he said in a low voice.

"Poor old Prout!" whispered Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton set his lips.

"It's rotten," he said.

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

"It was rotten for us to hear what they said—but we couldn't help it," said the captain of the Remove. "Nobody here is going to breathe a syllable about it, of course."

"Of course, ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"I really believe Prout would fade away and die of shame if he knew that we knew," said Harry.

"He would jolly well have his knife into us!" said Johnny.

"What-ho!" murmured Bob.

"We couldn't help it," said Harry. "We could have got away without Prout knowing that we were Greyfriars men—but he would have known that somebody had heard, and that would have been as bad, or worse, come to think of it. Fancy his feelings if he knew that people in the neighbourhood had heard his talk with that villain, Tighe—worse than knowing that Greyfriars fellows had heard it. He would think every minute that it was going to become the talk of the village."

"My hat, yes! It was better to keep mum!" said Nugent. "But I wish we hadn't heard it."

"No good wishing that now! We hadn't the remotest idea that Prout was anywhere in the offing when we sat down here to rest.'

"What cannot be cured must go longest to the well," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "There is no harm done, my esteemed chums, if we carefully observe the golden silence which is the stitch in time that saves ninepence. Let us get on."

"Hold on," said Harry, his eyes gleaming under knitted brows. "That cur, Tighe, is a blackmailing rascal."

"A horrid toad!" said Bob. "I'd like to have five minutes with him, without the gloves."

"He said he was going back to London," said Harry. "He's gone towards Friardale. The other side of the bridge, Prout will turn to the left for Greyfriars, and Tighe to the right for the station."

"What about it?"

"We're going after him," said Harry. "Prout will be clear off the scene and we shall have the Tighe bird all to ourselves."

"Oh!" said Bob. "You don't mean to let him know anything, surely?"

"Of course not, ass! I mean to give him what he's been asking for, and what poor old Prout daren't give him."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Good egg! Let's!"

"We're jolly late!" said Johnny Bull.

"A little more latefulness will not matter," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is worth while expending a few ridiculous minutes on the worthy and execrable blackmailer. There is a pond on the lane to Friardale, my esteemed chums——"

"I was thinking of that," said Harry. "Come on!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Bob.

The five juniors moved back to the road and started at a run for the bridge.

Their feeling towards "poor old Prout" was one of sympathy and compassion, though undoubtedly it would have made the pompous master of the Fifth writhe had he known that he was an object of compassion to Lower boys. Towards the man Tighe they felt the loathing they might have felt for an adder.

Poor old Prout, obviously, was not in a position to deal with the rascal as he deserved. But there was nothing to deter the Famous Five of the Remove from doing so.

Whether the rogue would succeed in his scheme of extortion they could not tell, and it was not particularly their business; but it seemed to them that it was somebody's business to see that the dastardly rascal did not wholly escape punishment.

And they were cheerfully prepared to make that their business.

Once past the bridge, they ran lightly along the lane towards the village. Mr. Prout, they knew, would have turned off by the towpath to get back to Greyfriars, so there was no danger of the Fifth Form master coming on the scene. Not, probably, that he would have disapproved of anything that might have happened to Tighe.

It was very dark in the lane between tall trees. But at length they had a glimpse of a shadowy figure moving ahead.

They slackened down to a walk.

They did not want to overtake Mr. Tighe until he reached the roadside pond—with which they intended him to make a closer acquaintance.

The man in black apparently caught the sound of footsteps behind him, for he stopped, turned his head, and glanced back along the dim lane.

Then he proceeded on his way again.

An opening among the roadside trees and a glimmer of water told the juniors that they were near the pond.

"Put it on!" said Harry.

And the five went on at a rapid run, and in a few moments overtook the man in black abreast of the pond.

Tighe gave a startled exclamation and spun round as the five shadowy figures came up with him.

"What do you want?" he exclaimed in a gasping voice. "Stand back! Hands off! If you are footpads I will shout for help!"

"Dear man," said Bob Cherry, "we're not footpads! And you can shout till you burst your boiler without anybody hearing you around here!"

"You dare to lay hands on me——" gasped Tighe.

The juniors were already laying hands on him. He struck viciously at Wharton's face, and Harry knocked the blow aside with a rap on Tighe's wrist that elicited a howl of pain from him.

Then his arms were pinioned, and he wriggled in mingled rage and fear.

"What do you want?" he exclaimed shrilly. "What does this mean? I shall go to the police——"

"I dare say they'd be glad to see you if you did!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You're the sort they want."

Tighe started violently. His mean face was quite white, and his greenish eyes glittered. Bob's chance remark had struck home, as it seemed.

"This way!" said Johnny Bull, jerking the man in black towards the glimmering pond.

"What—what are you going to do?" hissed Tighe.

"Duck you!" said Harry Wharton.

"But what—what—— Why, what do you mean? I am a stranger here! I do not know you—I've never seen you before! Who are you?" panted Tighe, in terror and bewilderment.

"We're going to duck you because we don't like you," explained Bob Cherry. "We don't like the colour of your eyes, or the shape of your nose, or the way you do your hair! See?"

"Are you mad?" gasped Tighe.

Bob's explanation really might have inspired anyone with a doubt of his sanity. But if it did not satisfy Mr. Tighe, he had to remain unsatisfied.

The juniors jerked him to the pond.

It was a shallow pond, there was not a lot of water in it; but there was a lot of mud and slime, and a good allowance of green ooze.

Tighe stared at it in horror.

On the edge of the pond he put up a frantic struggle.

But his resistance did not avail.

He was hurled fairly into the pond, and splashed into it three or four yards from the bank.

Splash!

"Oooooooch!"

Tighe went right under for a moment, but he came up again immediately. The water rose little over his knees as he stood.

But he came up draped with green ooze as with a garment. Water and mud ran down him in streams.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Nugent. "There's a picture for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looks a jolly old merman, doesn't he?" chuckled Bob.

"Grooogh—oooch—woooooch!" came spluttering from the hapless blackmailer. "Yooooogh! Gug-gug-gug!"

Some of the pond, it seemed, was in Mr. Tighe's mouth and some in his nose.

He scrambled wildly shoreward.

As he reached the bank Bob Cherry extended a foot and tapped him on the chest with his boot. It was a hefty tap, and it laid Tighe on his back in the pond again.

"Gooooooggghh!"

This time Mr. Tighe sat up in the pond, with muddy water oozing round him. He gouged green ooze from his face and glared muddily at the chuckling juniors.

"This way, old bean!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Tighe slowly assumed the perpendicular. He gasped, spluttered, and gurgled, with the pond washing round his legs. But he did not approach the bank again where the schoolboys stood. He scrambled across the pond and dragged himself out, squelching in mud, on the other side.

"Good-bye, old tulip!" called out Johnny Bull.

And the juniors, chuckling, turned away and took the direction of Greyfriars.

After they were gone a wretched man crawled and squelched back to the road and stood there, uttering a string of observations of the most emphatic kind.

Mr. Tighe seemed to draw some solace from telling the autumn evening what he thought of the unknown young villains who had assaulted him. Who they were, why they had handled him, the man in black had no idea. He had hardly discerned in the gloom that they were schoolboys, and certainly it never occurred to him that they had any possible connection with his intended victim at Greyfriars, Mr. Prout.

He was puzzled, perplexed, enraged—and very wet and muddy! He left a trail of mud and water behind him as he tramped on drearily towards the village.

Almost was he tempted to drop in on the village policeman and report that inexplicable attack and demand the pursuit of the offenders. But Mr. Tighe had reasons for leaving the police severely alone. The last thing that Mr. Tighe desired was a policeman looking into his affairs.

He squelched on his way—wet and weary and wrathy—finding, for once, the way of the transgressor hard and thorny.

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This brilliant GREYFRIARS LIMERICK wins one of this week's useful pocket wallets.

**There's an author of Second Form fame.**
**As a writer of thrillers he's tame.**
**But for laughter and fun**
**We all vote he's the one.**
**Need you ask—Dicky Nugent's his name.**

Sent in by Joseph Owen, 86, Commonside, Ansdell, Lytham, St. Annes, Lancashire.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Luck!

"WHICH you're to go at once to Mr. Quelch's study!" said Gosling, as he admitted five tired and dusty juniors at the school gates.

Harry Wharton & Co. trailed in—home at last. They would have been late—very late—anyhow, and the kind attentions they had bestowed on Mr. Tighe had made them later than ever.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked that the hangfulness for a sheep was no worse than the hangfulness for a lamb; but no member of the Co. was looking forward with any pleasure to seeing Mr. Quelch.

"Nice goings hon!" added Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere——"

"Can it, old bean!" said Bob Cherry.

"Look 'ere, Master Cherry——"

"Couldn't, old scout, unless you get a new set of features. That lot won't bear inspection."

And the five walked on, leaving Gosling breathless with indignation. They arrived at the House.

"I say, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter met them as they came in. The Owl of the Remove grinned at them.

"You look a dusty lot," he remarked. "I say, you're frightfully late! You're for it! He, he, he!"

The five trailed on, Johnny Bull bestowing a kick on Bunter as he passed, changing the fat junior's cachinnation into an indignant howl.

"You young sweeps!"

It was the voice of Horace Coker.

Coker of the Fifth came towards the chums of the Remove, with a frowning brow, and a gleam in his eyes. Coker had been in a long time, and he had been waiting for Harry Wharton & Co. to come in.

"Oh, run away and play, Coker," said Bob. "We've got to go to our Form master now."

"You bagged my car!" said Coker, pointing an accusing finger at the Famous Five.

"You asked for that," explained Bob.

"Eh?"

"Don't you remember how you cheeked me in Quelchy's study this afternoon?"

"Cheeked you!" repeated Coker. "Why, you impudent little beast——"

"Oh, sheer off!" growled Johnny Bull. "We've no time to waste on you now, Coker."

But if the Famous Five had no time to waste on Coker, Coker evidently had some time to waste on them. Coker had had to store up his vengeance for a long time, and like wine it had improved with keeping.

"You bagged my car!" said Coker. "I'm jolly well going to give you the licking of your lives."

"You silly ass—oh, my hat! Collar him."

Coker charged. Coker never counted odds, an arithmetical omission which he often had cause to repent.

Five Remove fellows, and Coker, mingled on the floor near the corner of Masters' passage. Coker was undermost.

It was very thoughtless of Coker, for at any moment a master might have come on the scene. But Horace Coker never considered consequences—never, at all events, until it was too late.

He wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly. He did not, however, get what he wanted. What he wanted was dire vengeance on the cheeky juniors who had bagged his car. What he got was a severe bumping on the floor.

He rolled and roared under the scrambling juniors. His voice resembled that of the celebrated Bull of Bashan.

"Yoop! Gerroff! Leggo! I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! Oh, my hat! Potter! Greene! Yaroooogh."

If Potter and Greene heard, they understudied the ancient gladiator, and heeded not. They were not looking for a scrap with a mob of Lower Fourth fags. Coker was left on his own.

Bump! Bang! Crash!

"Yaroooogh! Leggo! I'll smash you! Ow! Oh, crumbs!" roared Coker, struggling wildly. "Oh, crikey!"

A portly figure came towards Masters' passage. It was Mr. Prout, who had just come in, tired, winded, worried, and irritable. Mr. Prout paused to survey the scramble on the floor.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Prout angrily. "Really, this passes all patience! Really——"

The Famous Five let go Coker as if he had become suddenly red-hot, and

scudded down Masters' passage. Coker was left sprawling on the floor at the feet of his Form master.

"Groooogh!" gasped Coker. "You young villains—— Ow! Wow! Oooh!"

Mr. Prout gazed at him.

"Coker!" he boomed.

"Ow! Yes, sir!" gasped Coker, suddenly becoming aware of his Form master's presence.

"How dare you sprawl on the floor in that ridiculous manner?"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I——"

"Get up at once!" boomed Prout.

Coker scrambled to his feet.

"How dare you?" repeated Prout. "You are the most troublesome boy in my Form, Coker—the most backward, the most obtuse. But even you should have some sense of dignity as a member of a senior Form!"

"I—I——" spluttered Coker.

"Yet I find you, a Fifth Form boy, engaged in a scramble with Lower boys—actually scrambling on the floor——"

"I—I——" stuttered Coker.

"I am ashamed of you, Coker! You should be ashamed of yourself!"

"I—I—I——"

"Have you no sense of dignity?" thundered Prout. "Have you no sense of what is becoming to a Senior boy?"

"I—I—I——"

"This horseplay—this undignified scrambling with juniors——"

"I—I—I——"

"Take five hundred lines!"

"But I—I—I——" stammered Coker.

"Enough! Go to your study! Not another word. I shall expect your lines to-morrow! Go to your study!"

Mr. Prout sailed majestically on, leaving Coker stuttering, and in an almost frantic state of mind.

Meanwhile, the Famous Five had reached their Form master's study. Wharton tapped, and they filed in, to meet the gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. "You have returned!"

"Yes, sir! We——"

"Newland and Todd have explained to me," said Mr. Quelch. "It appears that you found yourselves without sufficient money for your railway fares at Lantham."

"Yes, sir!" said Harry. "We could only get as far as Redclyffe, and had to walk the rest."

"That was very thoughtless of you!" said Mr. Quelch severely.

"Yes, sir!" said the juniors meekly.

"It was very thoughtless indeed," said Mr. Quelch.

"The thoughtlessness was terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the sorrowfulness and repentfulness are also preposterous."

"Such want of thought and foresight might very easily lead to serious consequences," continued Mr. Quelch, in his most magisterial manner.

"Yes, sir!" murmured the juniors.

There was a cane lying on Mr. Quelch's table on which their eyes lingered uneasily. They wished that Quelchy would get on with it, and get it over. It really wasn't fair on fellows to jaw them first, and linger out the agony in this manner.

"You are probably very tired," said the Remove master.

"A—a little, sir."

"You are late for preparation."

"Yes, sir."

"Your school work will probably suffer in consequence."

"Oh, sir!"

"It is a very serious matter," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"I trust that you fully realise that?"

"Oh, quite, sir!"

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch. "Let it be a lesson to you, and do not let it occur again. You may go."

For a moment the Famous Five blinked at their Form master. Then they gasped in chorus: "Thank you, sir!" and escaped from the study.

They were tired, and preparation had still to be struggled through somehow, but they were quite cheery as they came up the Remove passage.

"Licked?" asked Peter Todd, looking out of his study as they arrived.

"No fear! Quelchy's bark is worse than his bite," chuckled Bob Cherry. "We're let off with a caution. Who'd have thought it?"

And the Famous Five dispersed to their studies for prep.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Worms Turn!

"THIS," said Horace Coker, "is the limit!"

Potter sighed, and Greene grimaced. Coker had come into the study, and almost before he was inside, he began to talk. The Fifth, like other fellows, had prep to do, and prep could not be done to an accompaniment on Coker's chin. Potter and Greene wondered dismally whether they were to hear some more about that man Buzzard, who had swindled Aunt Judy, or whether Coker was going to be eloquent on the subject of Prout and his shortcomings. Obviously, he was going to be eloquent.

"It's the giddy limit!" repeated Coker, staring at them, as they did not answer. "The giddy limit! The outside edge, you men."

Still they did not ask Coker what it was. No doubt they knew he would tell them, anyhow.

"You don't seem to want to know about it," said Coker sarcastically.

"Well, prep, you know!" murmured Potter.

"Prep, of course, is very important," said Coker, still sarcastic. "More important than me!"

This was crushing sarcasm; for Coker, of course, could not really imagine anything or anybody being more important than his important self.

"Well, what is it?" sighed Greene.

"That idiot Prout——"

"Oh, Prout this time?" asked Potter, adding under his breath: "Thank goodness it isn't Buzzard, anyhow." Both topics were boresome; but Potter felt that he could stand the Prout topic better than the Buzzard topic.

"That chump Prout——"

"Tell us after prep," suggested Greene. "We've really got to get our work done, Coker! We don't want to be ragged in Form to-morrow."

"You'd rather I was insulted and treated with cheek and disrespect?" asked Coker, going the whole hog, so to speak, in the sarcastic line.

"Oh dear!" said Greene. "Well, what's happened?"

"That fathead Prout——"

"Cut the cackle and come to the hosses," suggested Potter. "What has Prout done this time?"

"Insulted me!" hooted Coker.

"Well, what do you want us to do?" Potter was driven into sarcasm himself. "Shall we lynch him in his study, boil him in oil, or strew the hungry churchyard with his bones?" And Greene giggled.

"Don't be a silly owl, Potter! This is serious! I was thrashing those Remove fags when Prout butted in——"

"Like his cheek to butt in," said Potter. "After all, he's only a Form master, and you're Coker."

Coker did not even see that this was

(*Continued on next page.*)

sarcasm. He took it as a remark that showed uncommon intelligence on the part of George Potter.

"That's so," he assented. "That's how I look at it."

"Oh, ye gods!" murmured Potter. He gave up sarcasm. It was wasted on Horace James Coker.

"He butted in," resumed Coker, "and instead of listening to a chap, he slanged me—actually accused me—me, you know!—of playing fag games with fags—scrambling, and so on—as if I'd been larking with a mob of Remove kids! Called me names for larking with kids!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Coker. "Is this a laughing matter, you pair of howling asses?"

"Isn't it?" asked Potter. "Oh, all right! My mistake! Are you going to do any prep, Coker?"

"Hang prep!"

"Well, we could hang prep if we could hang Prout, too," said Greene. "But as we can't——"

"Shut up, Greene! You talk too much! I'm blessed if there's another study at Greyfriars where so much jaw goes on!" said Coker testily.

"You're right—there isn't!" said Potter, with feeling.

"You needn't interrupt, Potter! You're as fond of hearing the sound of your own voice as Greene is. A pair of old women for talking! Prout gave me five hundred lines."

Silence.

Coker waited for his comrades to express surprise, horror, and indignation. But they didn't! They preserved a stony silence.

He glared at them indignantly.

"Can't you speak?" he hooted.

"Didn't you tell us we talked too much?" asked Potter meekly. "Really, there's no pleasing you, Coker."

"There's a time to speak, and a time to shut up!" snapped Coker.

"Is there ever a time for you to shut up?" asked Greene in a goaded voice. "For goodness' sake, let's get on with prep!"

"Get on with prep!" said Coker, with withering scorn. "I've been checked and diddled by a set of fags, and insulted by an old donkey of a Form master! And you talk about prep! Talk about Marcus Aurelius fiddling while Carthage was burning!"

"Wasn't it Nero and Rome?" murmured Potter.

"No, it wasn't! You got that from Prout, I dare say," sneered Coker. "The ignorance of that man is amazing. Why, I've found him out in mistakes in spelling common English words! Only yesterday he stood me out that there was no 'k' in 'panic.'"

"And is there?" asked Potter.

"Don't be an ass, Potter! Of course there is."

"Not in the dictionary!" remarked Potter blandly.

"That goes for nothing! I've found a lot of mistakes in dictionaries," said Coker. "Quite common words, too, spelled wrongly. But to come back to the subject, Prout's getting near the limit. I don't see how a fellow can stand any more from Prout."

Potter and Greene looked at their work, far from finished, looked at one another, and sighed. Coker doubted whether he could stand any more from Prout. Potter and Greene doubted whether they could stand any more from Coker.

"Of course, I shan't do the lines," said Coker.

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's impossible, in the circumstances. A man has his dignity to consider. If Prout makes a fuss——"

"No 'if' about that," said Potter. "If you don't do the lines, you'll get reported to the Head."

"I shall explain to him that Prout is a hasty old donkey——"

"Oh crikey!"

"And leave it to his common sense," said Coker. "After all, the Head's no fool. I'm not satisfied with the way he manages Greyfriars; but he's no fool, taking him all in all. I mean, of course, for a schoolmaster. One doesn't expect much in the way of brains from a schoolmaster."

"Are you going to tell the Head that?" gasped Greene.

"I shall be civil to the Head, Greene. That's only good form. It's not civil to tell a master what fellows think of him really. It would be insulting. I shan't do the lines. That's settled."

"Well, now that's settled, let's get on with prep," said Potter.

"Never mind prep. I suppose you haven't forgotten that those Remove fags bagged my car to-day——"

"Nunno! But——"

"They'll be in the Rag after prep," said Coker. "It's not long now. I'm going to wait for them there. You fellows are coming with me."

"Are we?" asked Potter and Greene simultaneously.

"Yes. You can keep the other little beasts off if they have the cheek to chip in," explained Coker.

Potter and Greene exchanged glances. Even the worm will turn; and they were fairly goaded into resistance at last.

"Look here, Coker!" bawled Potter. "We're going to do our prep, see? We're not going to be ragged in Form to-morrow morning, and called dunces and ignoramuses, like you! You can have that all to yourself. And we're not going to mix up in a shindy with a mob of fags, see? If you'd got the sense of a bunny rabbit, you'd leave them alone."

"What?" gasped Coker.

"If you hadn't meddled, like a meddling ass, with that kid Cherry this afternoon, he wouldn't have played that trick on you! You asked for it, and you got it! Now let it drop, and shut up!"

"Shut up?" repeated Coker dazedly.

"Yes, shut up—if your chin can keep still, which I doubt. Keep it as quiet as you can, anyhow."

"And if you don't shut up, we'll jolly well push you out of the study!" declared Greene, taking his cue from Potter. "We're fed up!"

"Pip-pip-push me out of the study!" articulated Coker.

"Yes. That's a tip! So shut up while you're safe!"

The maxim of "safety first" never had appealed to Coker. For some moments he stood staring at the rebels of the study. Then he jumped at them. His intention was to nip this sort of thing in the bud. More than once had Coker, in exasperated moments, told Potter and Greene that he had a jolly good mind to knock their heads together. Now he decided to do it.

But for one fellow to knock together the heads of two fellows, it is necessary for the two fellows to play up, as it were. Potter and Greene did not play up.

Coker grabbed them, and they grabbed Coker! Instead of Potter's head banging on Greene's, it was Coker's head that banged on the study table. The roar it drew from Coker awoke most of the echoes of the Fifth Form passage.

Then Coker, in a state of mingled rage and bewilderment, found himself propelled into the passage and the door slammed on him. As he stood spluttering, the key was turned in the lock.

For a long minute Coker stood spluttering. Then he hurled himself at the door. But the door stood fast. Coker thumped and banged and shouted. The occupants of the study did not even trouble to reply. Unheeded, Horace Coker raved at the door, while Potter and Greene got on with their prep—which, in their misguided opinion, was more important than Coker. And Coker, breathless, wrathy, and indignant, gave it up at last, and drifted away to the Rag. The cheeky Removites had still to be dealt with, and Coker resolved to take it all out of them.

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## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Six for Somebody!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter put a fat, grinning face into the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Wharton and Nugent waved him away.

Prep claimed them, unusually late. There was not much time left before dorm; but something had to be done, to scrape through in the Form-room in the morning.

If there was little time for prep there was still less for William George Bunter.

"I say——" repeated the Owl of the Remove.

"Go away!"

"But I say——"

"Prep, fathead! Buzz off!"

"But I say—Coker——" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "What about Coker? If he comes here bothering us before we get through, we'll scalp him."

Bunter chuckled.

"He's in the Rag!" he said.

"Seniors aren't admitted to the Rag!" said Frank Nugent. "Go and tell him to take himself off, Bunter."

"He, he, he!" Bunter was not likely to carry that message to the heftiest man in the Fifth. "I say, you fellows, he's waiting for you!"

"Let him wait!"

"He's told the fellows he's going to lick you for bagging his car to-day," said Bunter. "He's got a stick."

"The silly ass!"

"He's frightfully wild," said Bunter. "I believe he's had some trouble with Potter and Greene. Anyhow, they ain't there. He's waiting for you to come down; and he says if you don't come soon he'll come and fetch you."

"Tell him to get on with it!" said Harry, laughing.

"He thinks you're funking coming down," explained Bunter. "In fact, he said so. He's in a frightful temper!"

"Tell him we'll give him something to cure all that."

"He, he, he!"

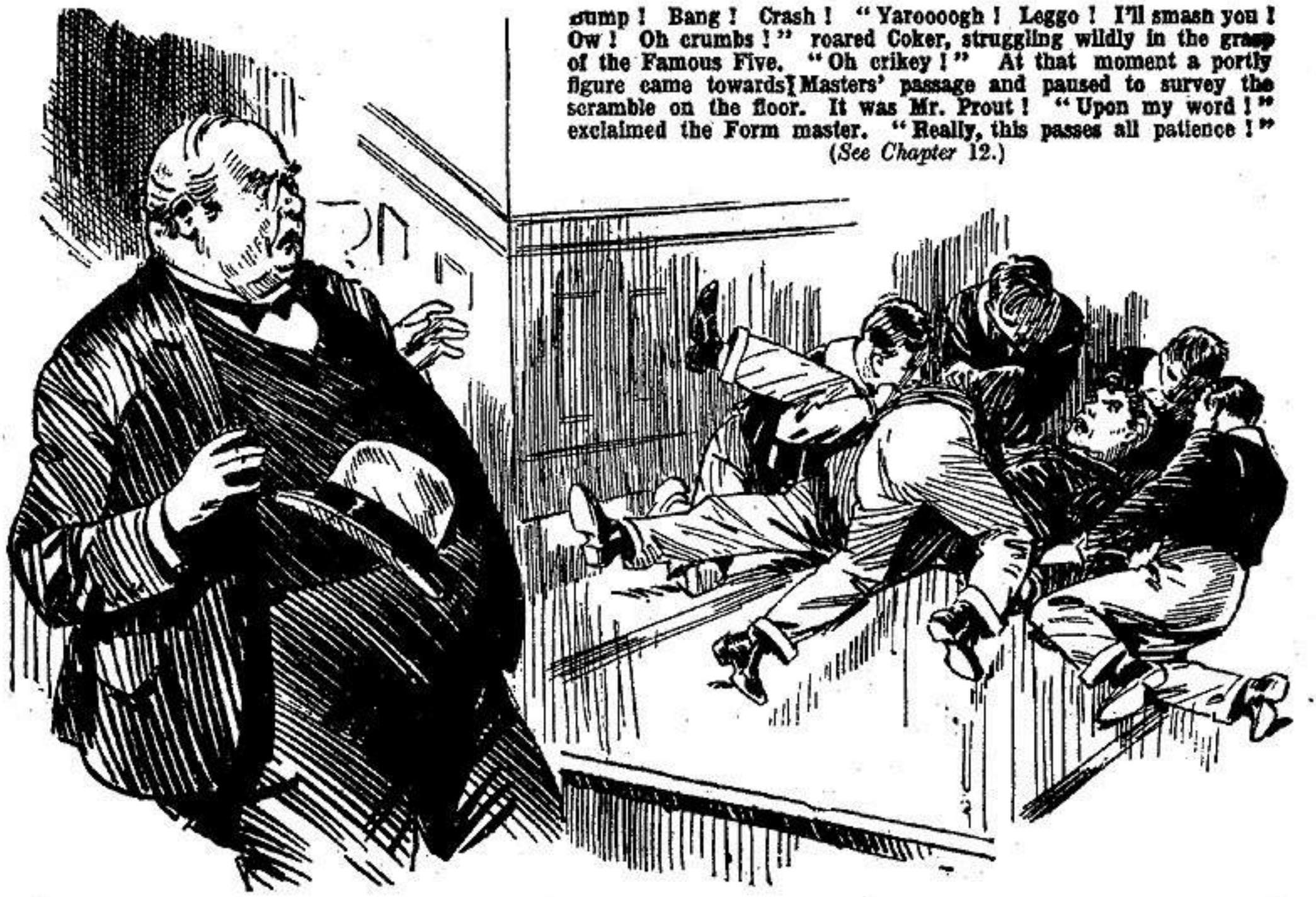
Bunter rolled away, chuckling. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent exchanged a grin. Then they resumed prep.

A little later there was a tramp of feet in the Remove passage, and Bob Cherry arrived at Study No. 1, followed by Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. All three were grinning, and evidently had been apprised by Bunter of what was awaiting them downstairs.

"Finished prep?" asked Harry.

"Well, we've cut it a bit short," said Bob. "If Coker of the Fifth thinks we funk going down, it's time we went."

"Cut it short, too," suggested Johnny Bull. "If we don't go down before dorm, Coker will fancy we're afraid of him."



**Bump! Bang! Crash! "Yaroooogh! Leggo! I'll smash you! Ow! Oh crumbs!" roared Coker, struggling wildly in the grasp of the Famous Five. "Oh crikey!" At that moment a portly figure came towards the Masters' passage and paused to survey the scramble on the floor. It was Mr. Prout! "Upon my word!" exclaimed the Form master. "Really, this passes all patience!"**

(*See Chapter* 12.)

"Which would never do!" said Harry, laughing.

"The neverfulness is terrific!"

"After all, we've done enough to scrape through with Quelch in the morning," said Frank. "It wouldn't be polite to keep Coker waiting any longer. Why shouldn't he have what he begs for?"

"The whyfulness is——"

"Preposterous!" chuckled Bob. "Come on, you men! It's only twenty minutes to dorm, and we can't possibly miss Coker."

"Hear, hear!"

And—prep being dismissed into space—the Famous Five proceeded down the Remove staircase in quite cheery spirits, in spite of the outburst of wrath that awaited them below.

The chums of the Remove had been quite prepared to let the trouble drop, especially as they had had the best of it. But if Coker wanted more, they had no objection to giving him more. There was no reason why Coker of the Fifth should not have all that he asked for.

Meanwhile, there was considerable excitement in the Rag. Seniors, as a rule, did not frequent that apartment, and hostile looks had been given to Coker when he arrived there. Hobson of the Shell had suggested chucking him out; but Coker was rather a hefty fellow to handle, and on second thoughts he was allowed to remain.

He made no secret of the fact that he had come there to deal with the Famous Five, nor of what he intended to do with the stick he carried under his arm. Neither did he conceal his opinion that the Famous Five were funking coming down to the Rag, because they knew what they were going to get.

He waited impatiently. A swarm of juniors waited also, quite curious to see what would happen when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived.

Coker, apparently, fancied that he was going to lick those cheeky fags with the stick he had brought with him for the purpose. Few fellows in the Rag fancied that Coker would get away with it. Between what Coker thought he was going to do and what he actually was going to do there was a great gulf fixed.

"I'll give them till a quarter past!" said Coker. "After that, if they don't show up, I'll go and look for them."

"I wouldn't do that!" remarked Squiff.

"And why not?" demanded Coker.

"Because you might find them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker frowned. He was standing before the fire, on the rug, his stick under his arm, in what he fondly believed was a majestic and awe-inspiring attitude. He frowned round at a crowd of grinning faces, not one of which seemed inspired with awe.

"Don't cackle at me!" said Coker. "For two pins I'd wade in and lick the lot of you—the whole lot! Fags in this school ain't licked enough. That's my opinion! The prefects don't do their duty! The masters don't! The Head doesn't! But I've got a short way with fags, and you'd better look out."

Coker, apparently, was the only man at Greyfriars prepared to do his duty. He glanced at the clock, and grew more and more impatient. It was ten minutes past nine, and bed-time for the Remove was half-past. Coker had no doubt, by this time, that the five delinquents were fleeing from the wrath to come.

But he had no longer to wait. There was an excited squeak from Billy Bunter at the door.

"I say, you fellows! They're coming!"

And there was a buzz of excitement in the Rag as the Famous Five appeared in the doorway.

Coker stared across the room at them. He was rather surprised to see that they showed no sign of alarm. In fact, they were smiling as they walked into the Rag.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's old Coker!" said Bob Cherry. "Kind of you to give us a look-in, Coker! But don't you know that seniors and dogs are not admitted here?"

"I'm waiting for you!" said Coker grimly.

"Well, here we are!" said Harry Wharton. "Can't give you long, Coker, as it's so late. But if you buck up we'll hear you say your piece."

"You bagged my car to-day!" said Coker. "You checked me all round. I'm not the man to stand——"

"Give Coker a chair, Bunter!" said Bob.

"Eh? I don't want a chair," said Coker, staring. "I'm not going to sit down."

"Didn't you say you were not the man to stand?"

"I don't want any rotten jokes!" roared Coker. "That's not what I've come here for. I'm not the man to stand——"

"Then take a pew!"

"I'm not the man to stand cheek from fags!" roared Coker. "Properly speaking, the prefects should lick you for your cheek. But it's no good expecting that. If I went to them, they'd only laugh."

"That would happen if you went to anybody, old bean," said Bob. "What can you expect, with a face like yours?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker breathed hard.

"I'm going to deal with you as a prefect ought to deal with you," he took the trouble to explain. "I'm going to give you six each. I warn you that if you kick up a shindy, you'll get it harder. Now, you first, Wharton!"

Coker pointed to a chair.

"Bend over!" he rapped out.

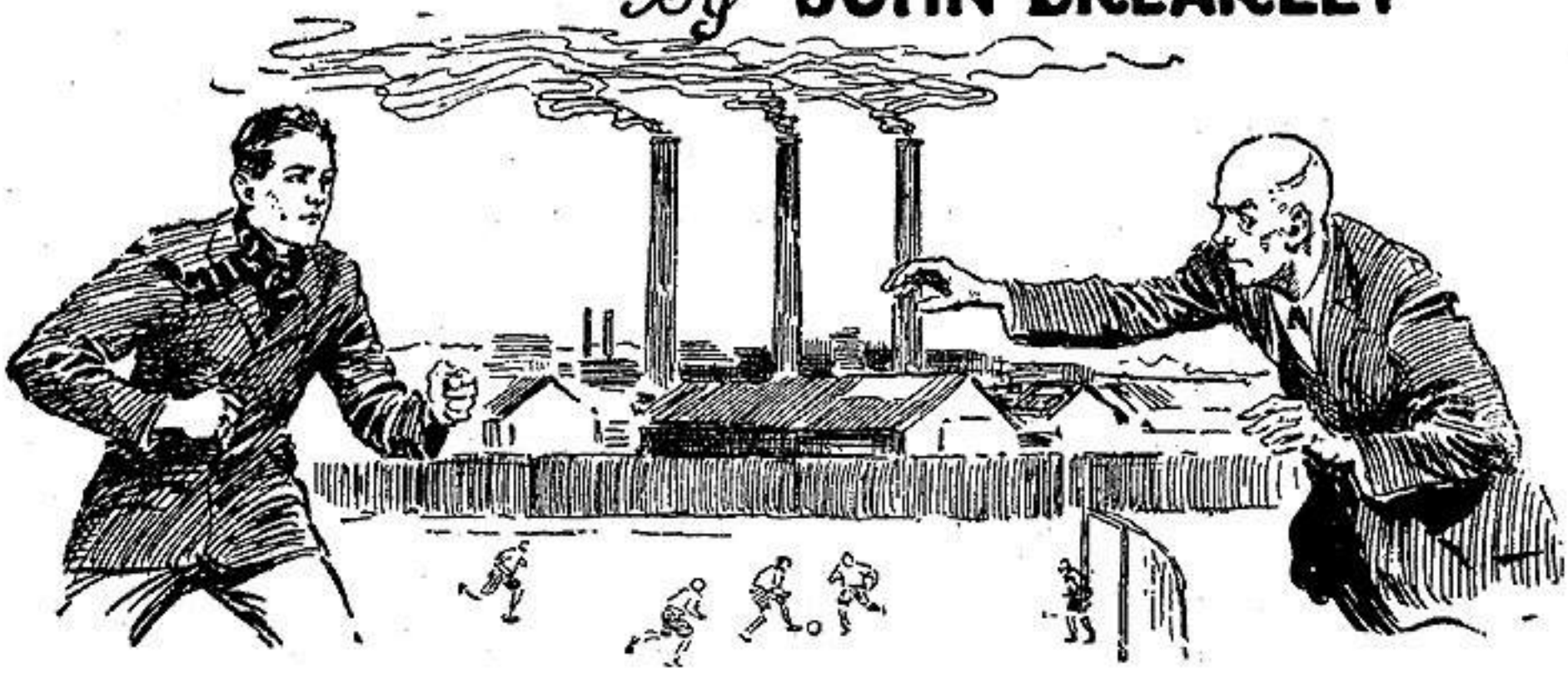
The Famous Five gazed at him. So did the crowd of juniors in the Rag. It really seemed incredible that even Coker fancied he could get away with this! But there was no accounting for

(*Continued on page* 28.)

**The Opening Instalment of Our Grand New Industrial Serial that will hold you spell-bound from start to finish!**

# Peter Frazer-Ironmaster!

## by JOHN BREARLEY



### THE FIRST CHAPTER.
### Maxport Docks!

"MY hat, what a hole!"

Peter Frazer, kitbag in hand, stood doubtfully in the exit of Maxport Docks' little station and surveyed the squalid street outside with strong disfavour.

A few yellow lights glistened dully on the soaking pavement, but all around tall tenements and factories and the mass of crooked alleys, made ugly by the darkness and rain, were hidden in mist. He hitched up his macintosh collar quickly as a patter of rain drove in through the station door.

From somewhere out of the mysterious blackness the wild mournful wail of a ship's siren drifted through the night

Mechanically Peter slipped a hand inside his mac, and although he knew the contents by heart, drew out a crumpled telegram that had reached him in London that morning, only a few minutes before he had started out on his journey north. The wire read:

"Sorry cannot meet you. Called urgently out of town. All cabs know this address. Everything ready for you.—DIMMOCK, Manston, Maxport."

With a rueful expression on his rugged, cheery face, Peter thrust the wire back into his pocket and took another look outside.

He had travelled two hundred miles that day from London to this great industrial city, and arriving at the terminus, found he still had another six miles to do, on a jolting suburban line that had at length dumped him down in this black nest of poor streets and docks on a soaking wet Saturday night.

There was not a soul in the city Peter knew; and he was tired, damp, and very hungry. Wherefore he continued to stare out of the station with exasperated eyes.

"Hope 'everything' means bath and grub," he grunted, thinking of the wire. "All very well to say cabs know the place, but are there any cabs in this bloomin' place? Nice sort of manager, this Dimmock! Dash it, I'll sack him!"

For some reason this cheered him up and caused him to chuckle deeply, so that he did not hear the light footstep in the booking-hall behind him, nor the sharp, short cough until it was repeated more loudly. As he wheeled quickly and stepped aside a little man in a heavy belted coat and a cap nodded his thanks and stepped towards the door. Apparently, although he hadn't noticed it before, the crawling local had set down another passenger beside himself.

"Sorry," he said courteously. "I say—er—would you mind telling me if there are any cabs to the station?"

The little man checked and half turned. Beneath the peak of his cap his eyes ran peeringly over the hefty Peter. The strapping youngster, in old plus-fours, battered raincoat, the colours of a famous school in his silk scarf and a polite smile on his healthy face, looked rather out of place in this dismal quarter, and the man was a long minute in replying. When he did so, his voice was curiously high and jerky.

"Cabs? Cabs? Of course. Cab somewhere! Whistle, my boy! Wait—I'll do it for you!"

He peered out into the street, and cocking his head to one side, whistled long and sweetly. The surprising melody, and the little man's perky movement, reminded Peter irresistibly of a small bird, and he could scarcely keep back a chuckle as his companion whistled again. Then, before he could utter a word of thanks, the little man nodded sharply over his shoulder, and was gone.

Silence fell, broken only by the hiss of the rain, and Peter, having stared blankly after the retreating figure, relaxed his own big frame patiently against the side of the door. He couldn't go without a cab, for he hadn't the foggiest idea where Manston was. So for a cab he had to wait.

"Hope someone heard that chap's whistle," he muttered. "Queer bird. This is a jolly fine welcome to my kingdom—I don't think! I'll swop it! Come on, cab! My kingdom for a—— Oh, loud cheers!"

Whether it was the answer to the little man's whistle or his own handsome offer, Peter didn't pause to think, for at that moment, with a dismal clop of hoofs and rattle of wheels, a ramshackle hansom lurched up in front of the station and collapsed to a standstill. The horse was the oldest Peter had ever seen, and the cab looked even older. Nevertheless, grabbing his bag up, he stepped towards it briskly. A husky voice from high above hailed him.

"Cab, sir?"

Peter grinned frankly up at the dimly-seen Jehu.

"I'll take your word for it, cabbie," he said. "D'you know Manston, Mr. Dimmock's house?"

"By the foundry — why, surelye, guv'nor!"

"Good man! That's me, then. Whack her ladyship up a bit, will you? I'm late!"

"Surelye, sir! 'Twon't take long! Step up, will 'ee!"

Throwing his bag into the cab Peter clambered aboard. The interior was damp and musty, but he huddled back and pulled the aprons shut.

With a flick of his whip the cabby started his ancient horse, and the conveyance rattled off creakingly.

The drizzle, driving through the open front of the cab, did not assist in making Peter's thoughts any cheerier, but the thought that he would soon be at his destination was some comfort. As the cab rocked and rolled over the villainous road, Peter fell to wondering what sort of a house Manston was, what Mr. Dimmock was like, and how he would fare in Maxport.

For Peter was the head and sole owner of Maxport's oldest iron foundry, Manston would be his future home, and Mr. Dimmock would be his manager!

And as he had never clapped eyes on the latter and knew as much about an

**An iron foundry left to him in his uncle's will. This is the start of the greatest adventure in young Peter Frazer's life. What he doesn't know about foundry work would fill libraries. But that doesn't stop him from setting out single-handed to take possession of his strange legacy.**

iron foundry as he did about Maxport City, the thought made him smile grimly and nervously in the darkness of the cab.

"It was fine of Uncle Desmond to leave all this to me," he meditated, staring out absently at the blackness through which they were trotting. "Specially as I only saw the old boy once as a kid. But I wish I knew more about things. Wish the pater was alive, too," he thought wistfully, and instantly jerked his mind away from a painful subject with characteristic force. "Wonder what sort of chap Uncle Desmond was. Bit of a terror from all accounts. Terrible quarter, this! I wonder how chaps can live in it. But still, they must, I suppose, if this is all the powers that be build for 'em! Rotten hard luck! Now if I were somebody——"

The death of the uncle he did not remember had, according to the solemn old lawyer he had interviewed many times lately, left him sole master of Frazer's Foundry. There had been a will to read, a dickens of a lot of swearing and signing legal papers, and then a long, dry speech of advice from the lawyer.

The worthy man had thought it would be best if Peter returned to finish his last term at Clayton, leaving the business in his and Mr. Dimmock's hands until he should be ready to start in the spring; but Peter, thinking the matter out slowly, had shaken his head finally and decided to get into his business—his own business—at once. His father had died a year ago. Now his uncle had gone, too, he was left entirely on his own. The sooner, therefore, that he got to know all about his new kingdom, the better.

Thus, at one stroke, he had stopped the lawyer's arguments, come North, and left Clayton.

The action was typical of him. Outwardly Peter was a hefty youth, with a cheerful, mischievous grin, stiff black hair, and shrewd grey-blue eyes. Barely eighteen, he was a young giant, splendidly built and quick on his feet, with a strength beyond his years, inherited from his famous athletic father. The men of his family had been powerful fellows, veritable sons of Anak, for as long as he could trace back—tough men with massive shoulders, trim waists, and long, clean legs. And though, as yet, young Peter had not attained full strength, he promised one day to be a worthy descendant.

That was his outward appearance. But if he looked on things usually as a huge joke, there were times when his mouth set grimly, and his eyes grew hard. He had a habit of relying on himself, of taking quick decisions and abiding by them, and another habit of not allowing little things, or big things, either, to make him swerve from his course. Also, a cheerful habit of seldom knowing when he was licked.

In the course of a career at Clayton he had landed the jobs of captain of footer and head monitor, and with them the air of authority that was very necessary for both. This authority he handled carefully, refrained from throwing his weight about, and managed to smile genially on both fag and Sixth-Former. Thus, it can easily be understood why Clayton School, on hearing of its idol's departure, had lifted up its three hundred voices and cheered.

The cab lurched on, deeper and deeper into Maxport's dockland.



### The Attack in the Archway!

CLIP, clop, clippety clop! Peter yawned cavernously. Gradually the fag of the long day's journey began to tell on him, and the regular beat of "her ladyship's" hoofs on the wet road made a rhythm that soon lulled him into a half-doze. Staring absently out of the cab he paid no attention to his surroundings beyond thinking lazily that it was getting even blacker and wetter with every yard they went.

If the neighbourhood round the station had been bad, that through which they were passing now was heartbreaking, for they had reached the very heart of Maxport's dockland. On either side clumps of black tumbling houses were divided by blacker straggling alleys, from whose depths men and women popped out and vanished like rabbits in a warren, and cries and raucous yells occasionally filled the air.

Sleepily he wondered if the place ever got any better, and whether, when he was "fixed" at his own foundry, he would be able to change things for the people who worked so hard and yet lived so badly off.

Further, too, he wondered how much longer the jolting journey to Manston was. He was on the point of raising the dickey to ask some direct questions when, with a heave and a rattle, the cab swung off the main street suddenly and instantly plunged into a darker road spanned by the huge arch of a bridge.

Half-way through it a feeble lamp guttered through the rusty bars of a lantern on the wall, making a tiny oasis of light in the blackness.

He felt the cabby take a cautious pull at his reins, as though steadying the ancient steed, and as the cab slowed down a whistle, shrill and piercing, rang through the echoing arch just as they passed beneath the light.

And with the whistle came a tremendous lurch as the driver threw all his weight on the reins and the horse was pulled back almost on to her haunches!

Peter was startled out of his drowsiness in a flash by being thrown forward through the apron of the cab. As he clung there, dimly wondering what had happened, three lithe figures, springing out of the darkness by his side, seemed literally to shoot aboard the cab. Next instant, dazed and bewildered, Peter had been swept clean out of the cab and on to the cobbled lane, with iron hands reaching for him on all sides.

He heard a vicious order, and someone fetched him a clump that knocked off his hat. A rope rasped over his face, and he felt it settle across his shoulders. But before they could tighten it he had recovered from the shock and began suddenly to fight like a young bull.

The feel of the rope maddened him. Wrenching an arm away, he smashed at a dim face and a man dropped silently into the road. Startled cries rang out—sailors curses, he noted, even as he sprang back. Ducking his chin into the folds of his scarf, and plunging, heaving and twisting, he punched himself free of the hands that held him and backed against the cab. Who the men were he could not for the life of him guess, but the whirlwind fury of his wild attack had paralysed them for a second.

Only for a second, however. Even as he sent a bellowing shout for help rolling through the arch, they closed on him again, sliding silently in on poised toes, with crooked arms and ready hands.

Peter met them coolly and desperately. Figures sprang at him, curses were whispered, and, hitting, butting and tripping, he fought them off again. One dived at him low and swiftly, but met an iron knee with his face, then another came over the cab and dropped on Peter from behind.

Frantically Peter reached up, and, grabbing the thug by the hair, heaved. The man's flying body crashed among his snarling comrades, and his thrilling screech as his collar-bone snapped on the cobbles stopped them dead in their tracks.

It was a chance. Peter seized it and rushed, letting out another yell as he did so. He dodged a whizzing kick by instinct, dropped the kicker, and, hurling himself away from the cab, plunged headlong forward while they were gathering themselves together, in an effort to win the open street.

For just a second, so unexpected was his charge, it looked as though he was through. The man lay in the road, and another sprawled weakly against the wall. His rush caught the other flat-footed, and there was only one between him and the street.

Hands shot out and grabbed at his throat, but the scarf saved him. Next instant he had landed a lightning uppercut, and the hands fell away.

He hurled the man aside, and was free. Then, from high above him as he passed the back of the cab, something swished downwards through the air and crashed frightfully on his bare head.

He reeled, stopped, then stumbled feebly, still groping forward. The road beneath his feet began horribly to dissolve, brilliant lights leapt and burned before his eyes.

There came a shrill ejaculation from the cabman in his high seat as he leaned out and slashed again with his weapon—a length of rubber tyre—and missed, and the last man Peter had hit dived forward with a sob and took him round his wobbling knees.

Then, blackness.

---

### The Scarred Man!

BETWEEN Maxport City and the sea lie the marshes, nearly four miles of wild, salty wastes, formed by the estuary of the river.

At the point where the huge city spreads its prosperous bulk on either bank of the Maxwell the river is nearly a mile in width; and immediately it broadens out into its famous estuary, split up by numerous sandbanks and tiny islands.

At the seaward end of the city are the docks and dockland—ancient, distorted, and ugly—a crowded mass of wharves, warehouses, and tenements that come suddenly and curiously to a clean-cut end at the very edge of the marshes. One second there are the dark streets and docks, the next only the sweep of the desolate salt waste stretching away to the sea

From one of the ramshackle wharves at the edge of the town, a dinghy shot out and slipped downstream. A mist was creeping in over the river from the sea, thickening every minute, and with the rain settling down to a steady swish the crew of the boat pulled hard under the forcible commands of the steersman, a squat, powerful man, who shared the stern sheets with two passengers. Of these, Peter Frazer lay, a limp, unconscious figure partly covered with a heavy oilskin, while the other passenger bent over him and lashed his limp hands securely behind his back.

The task finished, he lurched forward awkwardly to do the same to the feet, but the sudden roll of the boat brought an angry growl from the steersman, and the man sank back quickly.

Before he could say anything in answer, however, out of the darkness loomed the black sides of a small steamer, anchored near the edge of the channel. She was entirely without lights. Piloted by one who knew the estuary like the palm of his hand, she had crept in from the sea under cover of the mist and rain like a sinister wraith, and even had there been watchers on the marshes this wild night they could scarcely have seen her.

Briskly the boat ran alongside, and the crew slipped up the jacob's ladder. A noose slithered down from the deck above to the steersman, who, with practised dexterity, caught it and bent it securely round the limp captive under the oilskin. Swaying and bumping, Peter was hauled aboard.

Quickly and silently, two of the crew picked him off the deck and hurried him below to the cabin. They hurled him viciously into the solitary bunk, and stood, arms akimbo, eyeing him grimly. Then one whose jaw had been nearly broken by Peter's knee in the fight beneath the arch, stepped forward with a vicious leer on his twisted lips. But heavy footsteps clumping down the companion froze him in his tracks, and the two seamen stiffened to attention as the burly steersman—obviously the captain of the ship—burst into the cabin, followed by his other passenger.

A curt command dismissed the sailors. The cabin door banged behind them, and the skipper, taking the light from its hook above the table, strode towards the bunk, where the other man already stood silently appraising the unconscious captive.

Brutally he thrust out a gnarled fist and grabbed the youngster by the hair, twisting the white, still face towards the light. Holding him so for a moment he thrust him still further back into the bunk with a powerful jerk, then, as Peter's head lolled over helplessly, he turned to his companion with a grin.

"Out to the world, mister! Losh, but yon was a crack ye fetched un!"

The other smiled, too—a soundless ghost of a smile. He was smaller than the great broad skipper, and entirely shrouded in a macintosh cape and wide round hat of the kind affected by cab drivers. His voice as he replied was slow and colourless.

"He forgot me sitting high above him, skipper. Just as well. Your men made a sad bungle of it!"

There was no expression either of exultation or reproof in the quiet voice. Water was running in tiny streams from the cracks and creases in his soaked macintosh and from the brim of his hat, but he stood immovably staring down at Peter. The burly skipper looked at him curiously. That the man had forgotten his presence and was lost in deep thought was obvious even to the sailor's blunt mind. With his hat casting a deep shadow over his face, and the shapeless wet garment hiding his figure, he looked strange and featureless. There was something patiently triumphant about the man's pose, like one who had laboured for years towards one end, and now at last sees the goal in sight. Even as the seaman fidgeted impatiently the colourless voice spoke again, softly and musingly.

"The young fool—a schoolboy cub—to rob—— But there!" Briskly he turned on the captain. "To business, skipper. We've wasted time already. Your men bungled things! If I hadn't helped with this——"

He stopped significantly, and from his pocket drew out a long length of rubber pram-tyre, bound with twine at one end. Looking up, he met the captain's stare coolly.

"Effective, and leaves no mark, captain. A very tough schoolboy, eh? Gave your men some trouble!"

Again the soft, ghostly smile.

Furious dark blood rushed into the skipper's heavy face. He rolled venomous eyes towards the youngster on the bunk.

"Ay," he gritted slowly, and stared savagely at the other. "I'll be glad to do this yere job, mister, and so will some of the crew!"

The ex-cab-driver clapped him on the shoulder.

"Good! Now to details. First, we are quite safe here?"

"Safe? Safe as houses! 'Tisn't the first time I've brought her into the estuary quiet-like."

"The crew? No one can hear us?"

"My crew don't listen to my secrets, mister," growled the skipper. "They does what I says. It pays 'em to."

"Good again!"

They turned to the table. And Peter Frazer, in the shadow of the bunk, opened his eyes.

He had first recovered consciousness in the wind and rain out on the river, but slumped back into mistiness again until the skipper's brutal clutch at his hair had roused him fully. Only his splendid nerve and hard self-control had prevented him yelling out under the cruel grip; but the pain had been effective, and although his head was one big ache, it was beginning to clear rapidly.

Thus he had lain limp and still until the men had turned away, then, warily and coolly opening his eyes to the merest slits, he took stock of his captors and prison.

The cabin was a big one, crudely furnished and smelling vilely. A big lamp swinging on a hook above the table at which the two men were seated cast a swaying shadow upon them.

The skipper had his back towards the bunk, and his broad form obscured most of the smaller man from Peter's limited view, but suddenly he thrust his chair back a little and the youngster had a good view of the man at whose instigation apparently he had been captured.

To his keen disappointment the broad hat and upturned cape collar hid the man's features completely in the shadow cast by the lamp. He had thrown the length of pram tyre carelessly on the table, and his fingers played with the bound end ceaselessly as he argued in slow, placid whispers with his squat confederate.

**Frantically Peter Frazer reached up and, grabbing the thug by the hair, heaved. The man's flying body crashed among his snarling comrades and stopped them dead in their tracks!**
(*See page* 25.)

Printed and published every Saturday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.—Saturday, November 2nd, 1929.

Peter's mouth hardened as he noticed the tyre.

"So that's the little thing he hit me with from the cabby's seat!" he thought. "If only he'd lift his face out of that collar!" Now that he had a sight of his foes, the ache in his head was forgotten. He had one idea only—an icy determination to fight it out to a finish, and this ruled him to the exclusion of fatigue, pain, or any other feeling. Where lesser men would have betrayed themselves with an involuntary groan or plunged straightway into a reckless dash for freedom, he collected all his will-power to lie inert and listen until the time for action came.

A hitch had apparently occurred between the men, for they were arguing in insistent whispers. Although he strained his ears, he could not catch the drift of the talk, but presently the skipper, bending forward, silenced his companion and muttered fiercely and abruptly, emphasising his points with a thick forefinger on the table.

It seemed to Peter that he was delivering something like an ultimatum, for finally the smaller man nodded his head and the seaman rose quickly and began to search the table drawer for pen and paper.

This left the chief enemy in full view. Still he kept his head down, drumming incessantly on the table, interested, seemingly, in the captain's movements. Then, perhaps because the cabin was close and the rain-soaked hat heavy, he took it off slowly and threw it down on the floor beside him.

And revealed a clue to identity that was unforgettable. For, although the swinging lamp above him threw his collar-hidden features into shadow, the rays shone brightly on the worst scar Peter had ever seen.

The man's head was completely bald. There was not a vestige of hair on it anywhere, but right across the top of the skull, stark white and jagged, seared the broad mark of an old and terrible wound.

---

### Escape!

A WILD thrill shot through Peter's heart as through narrowed lids he took in every detail of the scar searing the bald, polished head bent over the table. Even if he failed to catch a glimpse of the man's face, and up till now he had not the faintest idea what he looked like, such a mark could not possibly be hidden. By gad, if he got free——

With a crash and a growl, the skipper jerked the drawer open and all the contents shot on to the table. A pen rolled out of some papers, and, triumph glittering in his piggy eyes, he lurched back into his chair and began to write laboriously. Once more Peter's view of the scarred man was blocked, but he noticed the tapping hand grow still.

The sailor finished his task and pushed paper, pen, and ink across the table. There was a long pause. Then, as the skipper stiffened ominously, the other shrugged, and reaching for the pen, wrote in his turn.

Both men rose, and the skipper, after folding the paper carefully away in a greasy pocket-book, again unhooked the lamp. They approached the bunk, and there followed another long scrutiny of their captive. Peter braced himself, eyes closed tightly, in case the skipper should grab at his hair again; but apparently his limp attitude satisfied them, for nothing happened save at last a long hiss of indrawn breath from the landsman.

"There'll be no hitch, captain?" he asked abruptly. It was the first sign of nerves he had shown.

**As if released by a powerful spring, Peter Frazer's legs shot out with every ounce of desperate energy behind them, and the heavy brogue heels met the seaman's unshaven jaw squarely!** *(See this page.)*

For answer, the seaman laughed gratingly.

"Don't worry, mister! This 'ere ain't the first covey that's been taken to sea for 'is 'ealth! An' this one—some of my men'll be glad to see 'e don't return."

He nodded significantly and clapped the other on the shoulder loudly. And with that, abruptly he turned and rolled towards the door. Peter's unknown enemy stayed, bent down and peered closely into his face. He felt the hot breath fanning his cheeks.

The skipper muttered something impatiently from the door, and the scarred man straightened himself. Next moment Peter heard them climbing the companion steps again, and he was alone.

At length he opened his eyes widely but warily, and took a thorough look round, without, however, moving his position. The porthole was closed, and the heavy cabin door also. Quickly he tested the bonds round his wrist, but they were tied securely, and he failed to gain an inch.

His feet were not bound—apparently they had either forgotten or deemed it unnecessary after all—but with his hands bound behind him he felt pretty helpless. Also, his head was as heavy as lead. The feeling, however, lasted only a minute. The next he had pulled himself together and was struggling with his wrists. He was still tugging at the rope in tight-lipped desperation when returning footsteps down the companion-way checked him. Abandoning the effort, he sagged back limply into the frowsy bunk to wait further developments.

The cabin door opened once more, and this time a deckhand, burly and dirty, rolled in.

"Luck's dead out," thought Peter resignedly; and closed his eyes tightly as the man lumbered towards him.

Satisfied that the captive could give no trouble, he perched himself on the corner of the table, and, taking out a clasp-knife, commenced to pare a fill of tobacco.

Peter, opening an eye gradually, fixed it on the sharp, gleaming knife and instantly closed it again as the beginnings of a chancy plan began to form in his head.

If luck would turn, it might be done. Softly, as one returning to painful consciousness, he gave a groan, then slowly began to twitch and writhe, drawing himself as he did so still further into the bunk. Resting a minute, he tried it again, the sailor watching him with sneering eyes.

Again he flopped helplessly, his head lolling forward, and then he allowed his eyes to open and flicker wildly, at the same time giving a final hoist that got him so far into the bunk that now he could feel his shoulders braced against the cabin wall.

The plan began to work. Through a slit-like eye Peter watched the man lay down his knife and plug slowly and deliberately and lurch towards him.

"Got him!" he thought with unholy glee, and gave one last twist—a violent paroxysm of seeming pain, drawing up his knees into the bunk as he did so.

With a muttered curse the sailor peered in curiously, his brutal, grimy face leering with enjoyment. For a brief, split second the two stared at each other. Then Peter kicked! As if released by a powerful spring, his legs shot out with every ounce of desperate energy behind them, and the heavy brogue heels met the unshaven jaw squarely.

There was a sound like a snapping stick, a horrid animal grunt, and the seaman hurtled backwards across the cabin, hit the table and collapsed, arms outstretched and eyes tight closed.

Giddy and breathless, Peter struggled out of the bunk and staggered towards the table, his heart in his mouth. Would the luck hold?

*(Peter Frazer's bid for freedom seems a hundred-to-one chance, doesn't it, chums? But he's the lad to win through against odds! You'll like the next instalment even better than the first. Look out for it, then, in next week's* MAGNET.)

# BLACKMAIL!

(Continued from page 23.)

Coker's fancies. His powerful intellect moved on original lines.

"I'm waiting!" said Coker. "Are you bending over that chair, Wharton, or do you want me to handle you?"

"I think you'd better handle me!" said Wharton gravely.

Coker took him at his word. He made a jump at the captain of the Remove, and collared him.

"Now, then!" he said grimly.

The captain of the Remove returned grasp for grasp. The grasp of four more pairs of hands was immediately added.

Coker had had more than one lesson in dealing with the cheery chums of the Remove. But lessons were wasted on Coker. His powerful brain did not assimilate them. It was Coker's way to bite off more than he could masticate. He had done it before—and now he was doing it again—but never had he done it so disastrously.

With a bump, in the grip of five pairs of hands, Coker came down over the chair. Bob Cherry had his right arm, Johnny Bull his left; Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a tenacious grip on his shock of hair, and Frank Nugent took care of his legs, which thrashed wildly. Harry Wharton picked up the stick which Coker had dropped.

Whack!

The whack rang through the Rag like a pistol-shot. It was followed by a roar of laughter from the juniors, and a roar from Coker that had no tincture of merriment in it.

Whack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whack!

"Yarooogh! I'll pulverise you—yarooop! Leggo!"

Whack!

"Wow!" Coker struggled frantically, but in vain. "Yow-ow-ow! Wow!"

Whack!

It seemed like an evil dream to Coker. He had come there to give the cheeky fags six! He was getting the six himself! The thing was working the wrong way round! Coker was getting six! It was time for the skies to fall!

Whack!

"Yaroooooooh!"

"That's the lot!" said Wharton cheerily. "If you ever want another six, Coker, come here again! Don't forget to bring a stick with you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, in a dizzy frame of mind, went whirling out of the Rag. He hardly knew how he got out; but he knew that a lot of boots helped him on his way. He staggered back, and glared back at a sea of grinning faces in the doorway. For a moment he was tempted to charge back into the Rag. But he didn't. Even Coker realised that, for the present at least, he had had enough. He tottered away, followed by a yell of laughter—a sadder if not a wiser Coker.

THE END.

*(Make sure you read the sequel of this topping yarn: "FOOL'S LUCK!" which will appear in next week's bumper issue of the* MAGNET. *You'll enjoy every line of it, chums!)*

# FOILED AT THE FINISH!

(Continued from page 15.)

"Shame!" cried some of the Fourth-Formers.

The Head frowned.

"All those who cried 'Shame!' can hop it at the same time!" he growled.

There was no help for it. The referee's decision had to be respeckted, and eight juniors wended their way to the pavilion, leaving only three to defend the honner of the Fourth.

Those three fought gamely. But natcherally, they could do little against such fearful odds, and when the whistle blew for the finish of the game, the First Eleven ran out the winners by 60—6.

When the Head joined the players in the pavilion, he made a little speech.

"Jentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" he said. "I think we may all take sattusfaction in the nollidge that the best team has won. By winning this grate match, Burleigh's side has qualified to play the famus French team, Lay Rodeurs, next week."

Jack Jolly & Co. sat down to tea that afternoon in a gloomy silence. If only fair play had been meted out to them, they would have licked the seniors to a frazzle, and the honner of playing the forriners would have fallen to them.

Jack Jolly, however, was the kind of fellow who never said die. He hadn't given up hope, and a daring skeem was forming in his branebox.

Whether that skeem would be suxxessful or not was a question that only the future could reveal!

THE END.

*(Next week's* MAGNET *will contain the third and last yarn in this amusing "footer" series: "WELL DONE, THE FOURTH!" Stand by for one long roar of laughter, chums!)*

# FOILED at the FINISH!

By DICKY NUGENT.


**That they can beat the Sixth Form to a frazzle at footer, Jack Jolly & Co. of the Fourth are convinced. But they little expect the rude awakening that is in store for them.**

I.

"WHAT about a deputation to Burleigh?"

Jack Jolly, the kaptin of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, made that sujestion to his study-mates one nite. And the rest of the Co. signified their agreement with a harty corus of:

"Hear, hear!"

The heroes of the Fourth were discussing an awfully serious problem. The First Eleven at St. Sam's had just arranged a fixture with the sellybrated French football team known as Lay Rodeurs. Jack Jolly was oggstremely anxious to "bag" that fixture for the Fourth Form team. The difficulty was that the orthorities didn't see eye to eye with him in the matter. When Jack had mentioned it to the Head and to Burleigh, the kaptin of the Skool, both of them had larfed fit to bust.

Jack Jolly & Co. had just been chewing the matter over between themselves, and Jack, as usual, had trotted out a really brilliant wheeze. This was to issue a challenge to the First Eleven for a match to take place on the next half-holiday, the condition being that whichever team won the match was to have the privilege of playing Lay Rodeurs.

The problem was how to approach Burleigh with the challenge. Jack's sujestion that a deputation would meet the bill met with immejate approval.

"You see, after all, there's safety in numbers," said Jack Jolly thoughtfully. "If I go along on my own with the challenge, Burleigh may think I'm pulling his leg and cut up rusty."

"Eggsactly!" grinned Frank Fearless. "Whereas if a duzzen or so of us go along, he'll have to treat us with a certain amount of respect."

"Hear, hear!"

"Then if we're all agreed, we may as well striko while the iron's hot," said Jack. "Let's scout round and get a crowd together."

So saying, the kaptin of the Fourth rose to his feet and led the way out.

In a few minnits half the Fourth had gathered behind Jack Jolly's banner. Everybody was keen on securing the grate match for the Form, and so long as their leader was willing to stand in front and argew the toss with Burleigh, the rest of the fellows were quite willing to stand at the back and chime in with an occasional "Hear, hear!"

Wearing very determined eggspressions on their fizzogs, the Fourth-Formers at last set out for the Sixth Form passidge.

They halted outside Burleigh's study, and Jack Jolly gave a sharp wrap on the door.

"Trot in, fathead!" called out Burleigh's deep voice from within.

Jack Jolly opened the door and trotted into the study as rekwested. The rest of the deputation followed at a respectful distance.

Burleigh was engaged in a sternly-fought game of tiddley-winks with Swotter of the Sixth when the deputation entered. He bestowed a frown on the kaptin of the Fourth.

"Please, Burleigh, we've come!" said Jack Jolly meekly.

Burleigh nodded.

"I can see that. Now go!"

"But we haven't discussed our bizziness yet," pointed out the leader of the deputation.

"And the probability is that we shan't discuss it!" said Burleigh, rather tartly. "At present, Jolly, I am engaged in the very stern bizziness of licking Swotter at tiddley-winks. Kindly buzz off!"

Jack Jolly's handsum face took on a very firm look.

"Sorry. But it can't be did!" he said. "On behalf of the entire Fourth Form I demand an immejate interview with the kaptin of the First Eleven!"

Burleigh stared.

"Why, you cheeky young sweep——" he began.

"To get down to brass tax," said Jack Jolly, unheeding, "we have come to issue a challenge to the First Eleven!"

"A—a challenge?" cried Burleigh.

"A challenge to a game of Socker," nodded Jack Jolly. "You see, we've got a slite idea that we're as good as the First Eleven!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Burleigh.

Jack Jolly cullered.

"Nothing to larf at, that I can see," he said. "Anyway, funny or not, we wan a game with the First Eleven."

"Oh, my hat! Anything else?" asked Burleigh, grinning all over his dile.

"Yes, rather! We want to make it a condition of the game that whoever wins has the honner and privilege of playing Lay Rodeurs when they come."

Burleigh smiled a sarkastic smile.

"I seem to remember you saying something like that before. Don't you know any other funny stories?" he asked.

Jack Jolly frowned.

"We want an answer to our challenge, Burleigh," he said firmly. "Do you axxept or not?"

"Not!" snorted Burleigh. "Whatever happens, the dignitty of the First Eleven must be preserved—mind our tiddley-wink board, you ass!"

"Bust your tiddley-wink board!" retorted the kaptin of the Fourth fearlessly. "We're making you a fair offer. If you win, you play Lay Rodeurs. If we win, we take the game over. See?"

But Burleigh still shook his head.

"The thing's impossibul!" he said. "For mitey seniors like us to play meer faggs like you would be far beneeth our dignitty. The answer is therefore in the negative. Here, what the thump—yaroooo!"

The limmit of Jack Jolly's patience had been reached. Instead of continuing to argew the toss for an indefinite period, the kaptin of the Fourth had therefore grabbed Burleigh's tiddley-wink board and bashed him on the napper with it.

Wallop!

"Yaroooo!"

"Bump him!" yelled Frank Fearless eggsitedly.

The juniors had so far forgotten the respect dew to a stately Sixth-Former as to rush forward and make a grab at him. But before they could execute their desines, a deep, refined voice at the rear made them pull up with a start.

"Now, boys, what's all this here about?"

It was Dr. Birchemall, the revered and majestick headmaster of St. Sam's.

"My hat!" eggsclaimed Jack Jolly. "The Head!"

Dr. Birchemall russled into the study, his classicle feetchers stern and seveer.

"Do my eyes deceeve me, or am I actually witnessing a barberous attack by meer juniors on the kaptin of the skool?" he asked.

"Sorry, sir," mermered Jack Jolly. "It was just a bit of an argewment we were having with Burleigh about Socker."

"Tutt-tutt! Why will you use this objectionable slang?" asked the Head testily. "Presdomably, Jolly, you meen footer, not Socker!"

"That's it, sir! You see, we—that is, the Fourth—want to play Lay Rodeurs. So we challenged the First Eleven to a match, the winners to have the honner of playing the forriners. But Burleigh won't hear of it."

Dr. Birchemall permitted a slite grin to spread over his cowntenance.

"What's the objection, Burleigh?" he inkwired, in his ellegant way. "Scared that they'll whack you?"

Burleigh turned as red as a pony.

"Certainly not!" he cried hawtily. "It's beneeth our dignitty to play these scrubby faggs, as a matter of fact. You would understand that without my telling you, if you were anything like a real headmaster!"

Dr. Birchemall skowled.

"How dare you make such disrespecktive remarks!" he cried. "For two pins I would make you touch your toes and weeld my birch on your annatomy. But no! On second thoughts, a more suitable punishment will be to make you play the Fourth whether you want to or not."

"Hooray!" cheered the Fourth delitedly.

"The match is hereby fixed for two-thirty to-morrow afternoon," said the Head. "What is more, in order that fair play shall be guaranteed, I will act as referee myself."

"And do the winners play the forriners?" asked Jack Jolly eagerly.

"Yes, rather!" replied the Head. "If the First Eleven can't make mincemeat of you juniors, they then don't deserve to play such a sellybrated team as Lay Rodeurs. Enuff, Burleigh! My mind is made up and I don't intend to argew the toss about it!"

With those words, the Head kwitted the study, followed by a cheer from the juniors.

Jack Jolly had won the first round! It only remained to lick the First Eleven now, and the grate fixture with the forriners was his!

II.

PROMPT to the minnit, the two teams turned out on the following day. The seniors were looking very hawty, and treated their yoothful opponents with lofty kontempt. On the other hand, Jack Jolly & Co. were looking very grim and determined.

There was a cheer from the assembulled crowd as Dr. Birchemall, wearing football shorts and a blazer beneeth his academmick gown, strolled on the field and called the rival kaptins to toss for choice of ends.

Pheep!

A shrill blast from the Head's whistle, and the game had started.

The First Eleven forwards, acting on instructions already received, swept forward at a fearful pace, carrying all before them. So fast did they run that they had no time to notiss where the ball was, and it wasn't until they reached the Fourth-Former's goal-mouth that they realised that that important leather object was at the other end of the field.

Meenwhile, Jack Jolly and Fearless between them were outwitting the First Eleven halves and fool-backs.

PLONK!

It was a mitey kick from the unerring foot of Jack Jolly—a kick that left Broadribbs, the seniors' goalie, completely guessing and lodged the ball right into the back of the net.

"Goal!" went up a roar from a thowsand throats—more or less.

"Good old Jack Jolly!"

That goal proved to be the first of several. Five minnits later, Fearless scored; then Merry; then Jack Jolly notched another one.

Burleigh & Co. looked distinktly peeved. They began to adopt desprit mezzures, rushing at their opponents feercely and nocking them right and left like ninepins. But the Fourth-Formers didn't mind a few nocks. As fast as they were nocked down, they got up again, grinning all over their diles. And the First Eleven men found that all their ruff taktix were unavailing.

Half-time came with the score standing at 6—nil in Jack Jolly & Co's favour, and the Fourth Form players trotted into the pavilion to the accompaniment of deffening cheers from every part of the field.

During the interval, Burleigh had a konfab with some of the most important members of his team to discuss what to do.

"We simply can't lose—we mustn't!" he said. "The very idea of the First Eleven being licked by the Fourth is impossibul. What can we do?"

"I know!" said Tallboy, suddenly. "Bribe the ref!"

"Eh?"

"Bribe the ref to help us by giving decisions in our favour, et settera!" said Tallboy calmly. "I feel sure we can win with his help!"

"But—but we can't bribe the Head!" cried Burleigh, agarst. "A jentleman in his position would never take money——"

"Perhaps not!" agreed Tallboy. "But knowing how greedy he is at hart, I fansy he won't be averse to axxepting a free feed in return for a few friendly decisions!"

And Tallboy's opinion proved to be correct. When the matter was eggsplained to him, the Head farely jumped at the opportunity of earning a free feed so easily.

The second half of the game commenced. But the history of this session was different from the history of the first.

The Fourth started well. Frank Fearless took the ball up the field on his own and scored a grand goal with a shot that beat Broadribbs all hands down. There was a roar of "Goal!" from the speck-tators. But instead of awarding a goal Dr. Birchemall blew his whistle and yelled out:

"That was offside!"

"Eh?"

"Offside!" repeeted the Head.

"Offside, be blowed!" said Frank Fearless warmly.

Dr. Birchemall raised his eyebrows.

"Are you disputing the decision of the ref., Fearless?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Very well, then. In that case, I order you off the field, and award a penalty kick to the First Eleven!"

There was a yell of rage from the juniors, but the Head was adammant. Nothing would satisfy him but for Fearless to leave the field and the First Eleven to take a penalty kick. As a result, Burleigh scored the first goal for his side, and the Fourth lined up for the kick-off with one man short.

(*Continued on page 28.*)