

Wonderful New Annual. **THE POPULAR BOOK OF BOYS' STORIES.** Price 2/6. On Sale Everywhere

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# The MAGNET

2<sup>d</sup>

EVERY SATURDAY.



## SIX IN THE SOUP!

### THE WRONG VICTIM!

A startling incident from this week's gripping school story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars,



Who Wants a Penknife or a Pocket Wallet? See Below!



# 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.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to  
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

I HAVE just received a letter from a chum of mine who has been over in Belgium with his parents for a few weeks.

"I thought I would have to miss my usual copy of the MAGNET," he tells me. "However, I was most surprised to find that it was on sale in all the big towns, so I managed to get my copy each week as usual."

I am pleased to hear it! Of course, this paper of ours gets all over the world, and it would astonish you fellows to find out exactly how far it travels. Occasionally I get letters from readers who reside in such little-known countries as Esthonia and Latvia, and I know that I also have some readers in the Far East and also in South America; while, of course, you'll find the MAGNET all over the British Empire.

It would be interesting to know which is the most out-of-the-way place the MAGNET reaches. Now, you readers who live in the great, wide spaces, drop me a line and tell me how far off the beaten track this paper of ours gets. We stay-at-homes will be pleased to hear from you and to know that we have a link between us—a rattling good paper that appeals both to the boys of the cities and the boys of the back-blocks!

Have you fellows ever heard of

## THE BLARNEY STONE,

which is supposed to bestow the gift of eloquence upon anyone who kisses it? Sam Walker, of Sunderland, asks me if there is any truth in the story. Well, I have certainly met some glib talkers who have kissed the Blarney Stone; but, then, I have also met some who haven't! However, the Blarney Stone is found at the top of Blarney Castle, not far away from Cork, in Ireland. In order to kiss it one has to bend right backwards and hang on to iron bars while remaining suspended, head downwards, over a sheer drop of about 120 feet! You can imagine that it takes a fair amount of nerve to kiss the stone, so that all visitors to the castle don't accomplish the feat. In fact, at one time it was only kissed about once in every six months.

People seem to have more nerve nowadays, for the stone is kissed much more frequently. The rhyme about the stone says that whoever kisses it is sure to turn out to be "a rare spouter," and possibly a Member of Parliament! Well, it's a number of years since I kissed the Blarney Stone, but I am certainly not a Member of Parliament!

You all know the old saying about there being no smoke without fire. But, like many old sayings, it's not strictly true; and one of my readers wants "Mr. X." to tell him how to produce

## SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE.

HE was at a chum's house the other day, and this chum, who is something of an amateur conjurer, showed him two perfectly empty clay pipes. He then placed the

bowl of one over the other, put one of the stems in his mouth, and commenced to blow clouds of smoke from the empty pipes! How was it done? Here's the way "Mr. X." says it can be managed:

A few drops of spirits of salts are placed in one of the pipes, while the other is similarly treated with ammonia. The union of the two chemicals (which, of course, takes place when the bowls of the pipes are placed one over the other) produces a thick vapour which has all the appearance of tobacco smoke.

Here is a way in which you can elaborate the trick. Treat a glass tumbler and the bottom of an ordinary plate with the two chemicals. You show the tumbler to be empty, and then, by covering it with the plate, immediately produce quantities of smoke from nowhere!

If you want to

## ASTONISH YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER,

here is a way by which you can do so. Wait until he is blowing bubbles and then join in. Get an ordinary clay pipe, but before you start blowing the bubbles fill the bowl of the pipe with cotton-wool soaked in gasoline. You will be able to blow bubbles in the ordinary manner, but when you approach the floating bubbles with a lighted candle they will explode in a flame, giving a very novel effect.

Ready for a laugh? Right! Here's a yarn which wins one of this week's useful MAGNET pocket knives. It has been sent in by Robert Howell, of 21, Redvers Street, Ardwick, Manchester.

## TAKING NO RISKS!



McTavish had just bought a little chemist's shop in a town up North. Two of his customers happened to meet outside a week or so after he had opened.

"How's McTavish doing?" asked one.

"Not so bad, I understand," said his friend. "But I'm afraid being a chemist is ruining his health."

The first man looked surprised.

"Ruining his health?" he exclaimed. "I didn't know he was working so hard."

"Oh, he's not," said the other. "But he's getting no sleep, all the same. You see, he stays up every night to keep a watchful eye on the vanishing cream!"



## DO SEA SERPENTS EXIST?

asks Jack Fraser, of Jedburgh. Scientists are still divided in their opinions regarding the existence of this monster. There is a species of exceedingly poisonous sea-snakes which are known as "sea serpents," and are found in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. But the gigantic monsters with small heads, long necks and bodies in loops, which are alleged to have been seen

on various occasions are generally supposed to be the arms of gigantic cuttlefish. This is not surprising when one remembers that cuttlefish have been captured with arms of more than 50 ft. in length! There is also in existence a 15 ft. long ribbon fish, which might have been mistaken for a sea serpent. Even to-day we do not know everything regarding the denizens of the deep, and it is quite possible that giant sea serpents do exist in the greater depths of the ocean.

While we are on about the sea, I can reply to a question asked by E. L., of Dublin. He often crosses over to England, and suffers badly from seasickness. "Can it be

prevented?" he asks. Personally, I think the best way to prevent seasickness is to walk up and down the deck and get plenty of fresh air. Favourite remedies include nerve sedatives, such as potassium bromide; but I think my chum will find that strong coffee is as good as anything for preventing seasickness.

Next question?

## "WHAT IS A TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN?"

asks a reader who, I hope, will never be one himself! A "ticket-of-leave" man is a convict who is released from penal servitude before the completion of his sentence. He has to report himself every now and again to the police, and if he doesn't he forfeits his ticket. Naturally, only good conduct prisoners are allowed out on "ticket-of-leave."

I think I have just room for a limerick, and then I'll have to wind up this chat. Here's a limerick which has been sent in by Miss Florence M. Jordan, of Wroxham Hall Estate, Norfolk, and which I think deserves the pocket wallet which I have sent along to her.

Harry Wharton one day, went out shopping,  
Met Bunter, who said: "Why, how topping!

I could do with a bun,  
So give me just one."

But Harry soon sent him off hopping!

Now let's see what the black book has to say about next week's programme. First and foremost, of course, is the usual long complete school yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., from the pen of Mr. Frank Richards. It is entitled:

## "BUNTER, THE BANDIT!"

and you'll find it well up to the mark, as all Frank Richards' yarns are. As the title shows, Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, plays a prominent part in the story; while, of course, your other old favourites are well to the fore.

There will also be another "meaty" instalment of our gripping new serial:

## "PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"

And when you've finished that you can turn to our centre pages and have a good laugh at the adventures of Jack Jolly, Merry and Bright, and the rest of the cheery chums of St. Sam's, as told by Master Dicky Nugent, in a side-splitter which is entitled:

## "BOWLING OUT THE HEAD!"

which is the third and last tale of the "Tuckshop" series.

After that comes No. 3 in our interesting series of "footer" talks by "The Old Ref," under the heading of "Inside Information," while your Editor will be "in residence"—as they say—on his usual page.

Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.



# SIX IN THE SOUP!



**A Superb New, Long Complete School Story, featuring Harry Wharton & Co. and Peter Todd of Greyfriars.**

**By FRANK RICHARDS.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

**"Listen to My Tale of Woe!"**

**"WOW!"**  
"Hullo, hallo, hallo!"  
"Yow-wow!"  
"What the thump——"

"Wo-o-o-ow!"

Billy Bunter tottered into the doorway of Study No. 1, in the Greyfriars Remove, uttering sounds of woe.

Tea was going on in that celebrated study.

Outside, a dim November mist hung over the quadrangle, and the leafless trees loomed like ghosts through the vapour. But in the study a cheery fire burned, and lights gleamed on a well-spread tea-table and five cheerful faces.

But the fat face that appeared in the doorway was not cheerful. It was anything but cheerful. It was dreary and dolorous. To judge by Billy Bunter's looks, most of the troubles of the universe had descended upon his fat shoulders at one fell swoop.

Bunter was wriggling painfully. Sounds of woe had preceded him up the Remove passage; and they continued to stream from his lips as he blinked at the Famous Five.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-woooooow!"

"Anything up, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yow-ow!"

"Licked?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Wooooooooh!"

"Got a pain?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmm!"

"The painfulness appears to be terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "What is the esteemed matterfulness, my worthy and absurd Bunter?"

"Oh! Ow, ow! Oh!"

"Trot along to your own study, old fat man," suggested Johnny Bull. "You can't expect to kick up that row in other fellows' studies."

"Beast! Ow! Wow! Ow!"

Bunter did not trot along to his own study. Perhaps he was in search of

sympathy. Perhaps the well-spread tea-table attracted him. At all events, he rolled into Study No. 1. Whatever was the matter with Bunter the Famous Five were going to have the benefit of his lamentations.

"I say, you fellows," groaned Bunter. "I—wow! I'm hurt! Ow! I say, I'm suffering fearfully! Yow!"

"What about suffering in silence?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast! Ow!"

"The golden silence in hand is worth more than a cracked pitcher in the bush, as the English proverb says!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" said Bunter dismally. "I'm hurt! I'm suffering frightfully! Ow!"

"Sit down, old fat bean," said Harry Wharton, with a smile, and he pushed Bunter into a chair.

## SENSATIONAL ATTACK ON SCHOOL-MASTER!

### SWAMPED WITH PURPLE INK!

#### Assailants unknown!

Bunter sat down.

The next moment he leaped to his feet with a howl.

"Yaroo!"

"What on earth's the matter now?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"Wow! I—I won't sit down!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'd rather stand! Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've had six!" groaned Bunter. "That beast Walker—ow!—pitched into me for nothing, you know! Absolutely nothing! You know what a bad-tempered beast Walker of the Sixth is! Yow-ow! I've had six! He made me bend over in the quad and gave me six! Oh dear!"

"What for?" asked Harry.

"Nothing!"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—yow-ow-ow!"

Whether Bunter had had six for nothing, or for something, it was evident that the six had been very severe.

The fat junior was wriggling with anguish.

Six from an ashplant as a punishment varied a good deal in severity. Six from Wingate, for instance, was generally mild. From Loder it was always painful. From Walker of the Sixth it varied according to the temper James Walker happened to be in.

On the present occasion James Walker must have been in a very bad temper indeed, to judge by Bunter's state.

Bunter was the fellow to make the most of his sufferings. But he clearly was not humbugging this time. He was hurt. James Walker had laid on the six not wisely, but too well. Bunter was not the fellow to stand when there was anything at hand to sit or sprawl on. Now he preferred to stand—very much he preferred it.

Standing by the table, Bunter helped himself to cake. Deep as his woe was, it was not, apparently, too deep for him to appreciate a plum-cake. But he did not

gobble the cake with his usual speed. Even his appetite seemed a little affected. Between the munches he paused to groan. Evidently Bunter was suffering seriously.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter gobbled and groaned, and resumed: "I say, that beast Walker took it out of me. For nothing, you know! I've a jolly good mind to go to Quelch about it! A fellow's Form master ought to interfere, you know. Licking a chap for nothing——"

"Gammon!" repeated Johnny Bull. "Walker's rather a bully; but he wouldn't give a man six for nothing."

"I tell you he did!" howled Bunter. "How could I help butting into him in the quad when it's as foggy as

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anything? I couldn't see the beast coming, could I?"

"Oh, you butted into him in the quad, did you?" asked Wharton.

"Ow! Yes! You see, I was going to the tuckshop, and Walker was coming away from it. How was I to see the beast in this beastly fog?" groaned Bunter. "It was a sheer accident. I couldn't help the silly ass dropping his silly parcels when he butted into me, could I? Ow! Wow! Think I'd butt into a Sixth Form prefect if I could help it? Wow!"

The chums of the Remove looked sympathetic.

Certainly it was unlikely that Bunter had butted into Walker of the Sixth on purpose. It was hard lines to be given six for an accident in the fog which a fellow couldn't help!

"Walker's rather a bully," remarked Bob Cherry. "He's not so bad as Loder or Carne; but he's got a beastly temper sometimes."

"He had no right to cane Bunter for butting into him in the fog," said Frank Nugent; "that's altogether too thick!"

"The thickfulness is terrific!"

"I'd jolly well go to Quelch," said Bunter; "but a fellow doesn't like to sneak! Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow! I say, you fellows, you oughtn't to let that beast bully the Remove! Six for a sheer accident! And I can tell you he laid them on! Ow, ow!"

"The brute ought to be jolly well ragged!" said Bob warmly.

"Can't rag a prefect," said Johnny Bull. "We don't want to get six each."

"Ow, ow, ow! I say, you fellows, is there any more cake? Ow, ow, ow!"

"The ragfulness of the esteemed Walker is the proper caper," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the sixfulness each would be ludicrously painful!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Grin and bear it, old fat bean!" said Nugent.

"Ow! Is there any more cake?"

"No; that's the lot."

"Oh dear! Ow!"

Still groaning, Billy Bunter rolled out of Study No. 1, and betook himself to Study No. 7, his own quarters. His groans died away along the Remove passage.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not finish their tea. They had intended to finish with the cake. Bunter had finished it for them. But, to judge by his deep groans as he departed, the Owl of the Remove had not derived much consolation even from the cake. Billy Bunter was in the same state as Rachel of old—he mourned, and could not be comforted.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Toddy Takes a Hand!

"CHEESE it!"

Groan!

"Chuck it, Bunter."

Thus Peter Todd—unsympathetically.

"For goodness' sake chuck it."

Groan!

Bunter, no doubt, considered that a fellow had a right to do as he chose in his own study. Study No. 7 in the Remove was Bunter's study; and he chose to groan. So he groaned.

Unfortunately, it was Peter Todd's study also, and Peter found Bunter's groans neither grateful nor comforting.

Moreover, Peter was hard at work. Peter had fifty lines from the "Henriade" to write out for Monsieur Charpentier, the French master.

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Fifty lines of French were bad enough, without an accompaniment of deep groaning from William George Bunter.

"If you think that's pretty to listen to," said Peter, glaring across the study table at the Owl of the Remove.

Groan!

"I've got this impot to write out——"

Groan!

"Fifty lines of Froggy!" growled Peter. "Look here, you can read it out to me while I scribble, if you like. Begin at the beginning—je chante de ce heros qui regnait sur la France——"

Groan!

"What's the matter with you?" hooted Peter. "Can't you sit down and be quiet?"

"Ow! No! I—I think I shan't be able to sit down for a week!" groaned Bunter.

Peter Todd grinned.

"Licked?" he asked.

Bunter blinked at him.

"You silly ass!" he gasped. "Do you think I'm making this row for fun? Ow!"

"You never get licked for anything—always for nothing," remarked Peter, sarcastically. "Never was such an innocent bird! Have you been raiding Walker's grub?"

Groan!

"Well, what did Walker give you six

## 6 "BOWMAN" STEAM ENGINES (with Rails)

and

## 50 "WARNEFORD" AEROPLANES

## MUST BE WON!

See this week's issue of

## THE POPULAR

On Sale Tuesday.

for?" asked Peter, eyeing him suspiciously.

Once more Bunter's tale of woe was told.

But it fell on rather sceptical ears. Peter shook his head.

"Walker's a bit of a bully," he remarked. "But he wouldn't give a man six just for butting into him by accident in the fog."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "Do you think I don't know whether I've had six or not? Ow, ow, ow!"

"But Walker wouldn't——"

"Ow! He did, you ass! Wow! You might be a bit sympathetic to a fellow in your own study! Ow!"

"And you did nothing but run into him in the fog?"

"Ow! Nothing! Wow!"

"If that's the truth——" said Peter doubtfully.

There was room for doubt. Bunter was not on intimate terms with the truth—they had hardly even a nodding acquaintance!

"Oh, really, Peter! You know how truthful I am," said Bunter reproachfully.

"I do—just!" agreed Peter. "That's the trouble! You see, you're such a frightful fibber, Bunter——"

"Beast! Ow!"

"Such a fearful fabricator——"

"Wow!"

"In fact, such an awful liar, in plain English," said Peter cheerfully. "Ananias and George Washington were fools to you!"

"If that's all the sympathy I get in my own study——" said Bunter bitterly. "Ow, ow, ow!" he added, as a fresh twinge caught him. "Wow, wow! The beast laid it on as if he was beating a carpet! Wow-ow-ow!"

"Well, if Walker's jolly well licked you for nothing, Walker's jolly well going to sit up," said Peter. "He's jolly well not going to bully the Remove, especially this study. But——"

Groan!

Billy Bunter leaned on the table and poured forth sounds of woe. It was clear that James Walker had laid it on very hard indeed.

"If Walker's licked you for nothing I'll get some fellows to join up, and we'll jolly well give Walker beans somehow," said Peter determinedly. "But——"

Groan!

Peter Todd rose from the table.

"I'll jolly well go and see Walker," he said. "If it's as you say, Bunter, we'll make him sit up—somehow! If it isn't, I'll come back and give you six with a fives bat, to match the six Walker gave you—see?"

"You can get on with my impot while I'm gone, if you like," added Peter. "Mossoo won't bother about the fist: and he told me to bring it to him after tea. Put in the accents."

Groan!

Peter Todd left the study.

Billy Bunter did not get on with the French imposition. He had found a little comfort in the cake in Study No. 1. But he did not expect to find any in a French impot. He moved about the study, mumbling and groaning.

Peter Todd went downstairs. In the lower hall he encountered Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. As his impot was not yet written, and in fact hardly begun, Peter was not anxious to meet Mossoo. Mossoo was standing at the door, blinking out into the mist, apparently undecided whether to venture forth or not. But he caught sight of Peter, and beckoned to him.

"Zose lines, zey are written, hein?" asked Mossoo.

"Hem! Not quite, sir," said Peter.

"Zen vy you not write zem in zis moment, mon garcon?" demanded Monsieur Charpentier, severely.

"I—I'm going to see a prefect, sir," murmured Peter. "We're not allowed to keep a prefect waiting, sir."

"C'est bien," said Mossoo amiably.

"But zose lines, zey must be written, mon garcon! You take zem to my study, and if I am gone out viz myself, you lay zem on ze table, isn't it?"

"Oh, certainly, sir."

Mossoo turned to the misty doorway again, and Peter Todd went on his way to the Sixth-Form passage.

He tapped at the door of James Walker, and opened it.

Walker of the Sixth was in his study. He was seated at the table, writing a letter.

He stared round impatiently at the Removee.

"What the thump do you want?" he snapped. "Is it a message?"

"Not exactly," said Peter. "I——"

"Then buzz off! I've got to catch the collection with this letter," grunted Walker. "No time to waste—buzz off!"

"I wanted to ask you——"



"Shut up and clear."

Walker of the Sixth resumed writing his letter. It was getting near time for the school box to be cleared by the postman, and Walker wanted to catch the post. So he had no time to waste on an importunate junior. But Peter Todd did not shut up; neither did he clear. He had come there for information.

"I say, Walker—"

No answer from the prefect, who was busy scribbling.

"Bunter says you licked him for butting into you in the fog, in the quad," said Peter.

Walker glared up.

"That's so; and I'll give you the same if you don't buzz off without saying another word!" he snapped; and he reached towards the cane that lay on the table.

Peter Todd did not utter another word. Walker, evidently, was in an extremely bad temper, and Peter did not want the "same."

He stepped back into the passage.

"Shut the door!" snapped Walker.

Peter Todd closed the door and retired from the Sixth-Form quarters. His face was thoughtful as he took his way back to the Remove passage.

He did not return to Study No. 7. Billy Bunter continued to groan there uninterrupted, and the French imposition had to wait. Peter was thinking of something more pressing than French impots as he stopped at the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Six on the Warpath!

"TROT in, Toddy!"

It was a chorus of welcome in Study No. 1 as Peter looked in.

Toddy trotted in.

The Famous Five had been discussing the affair of Bunter. They agreed that Walker of the Sixth was a beastly bully, and that he ought to be made to sit up for licking a Remove man for nothing.

But making a Sixth-Form prefect sit up was a difficult and perilous proceeding. The consequences of "handling" a prefect were dire. The chums of the Remove agreed that Walker ought to be made an example of. But nobody wanted to bag six from a prefect, a caning from a Form master, or a flogging from the Head.

So although there was considerable indignation in Study No. 1, the Famous Five would probably have come to the conclusion that there was nothing doing—when Peter Todd happened.

Peter came in and closed the door behind him.

"You fellows game?" he asked.

"The gamefulness is terrific, my esteemed Toddy," answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what is the absurd upfulness?"

"Bunter's been licked—"

"We've had that!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Bunter's told us all about it—we've listened to his tale of woe."

"The woefulness was—"

"Preposterous!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, Bunter's in my study," said Peter. "He's a fat bounder, and a

podgy fathead, and all sorts of a worm, but he's in my study, and he's not going to be licked for nothing. That bully Walker walloped him for butting into him in the fog—just that."

"Bunter's such a fibber," said Johnny Bull.

"I've asked Walker" said Toddy. "It's official! And it's the giddy limit. It's up to the Remove to let Walker know that he can't do these things."

"Hem!"

The chums of the Remove eyed Peter dubiously. They were willing, indeed eager, to deal with Walker of the Sixth in the most drastic manner imaginable. But there was a but.

"You see, there's a frightful row if a man handles a prefect," said Frank Nugent. "The Sixth are the giddy Sixth, you know."

"The jolly old Palladium of the school!" said Bob Cherry. "Mustn't lay hands on the jolly old Palladium!"

"It's foggy in the quad," said Peter.

"We've noticed that, fathead."

"Walker's going out soon to post a letter at the box. He wants to catch the collection."

"What about it?"

"Lots about it," answered Peter. "Walker's got to get what's coming to him, and at the same time we don't want to be marched before the Head for handling a prefect. That's where the fog comes in. If Walker is collared in the fog—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He won't see who did it. That won't hurt us. On such an occasion we're not yearning for the limelight."

"No fear!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, are you coming?" asked Peter. "Walker's rather a hefty brute, but the lot of us can handle him like a baby. We're going to be on the spot when he comes along with his letter, and as soon as he's dropped it into the box we jump on him—"

"I've got a bottle of marking-ink," continued Peter. "I was going to mark collars with it. But I'd rather mark Walker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Walker," said Peter Todd. "Bunter says you licked him for butting into you in the fog." The Sixth-Former ceased scribbling and looked up. "That's so," he snapped; "and I'll give you the same if you don't buzz off!" Peter did not want the "same," so he stepped back hurriedly into the passage. (See Chapter 2.)

"If you're game—"

"Oh, we're game!" said Harry Wharton. "There'll be a frightful row if it comes out."

"The rowfulness will be terrific."

"We're not going to give Walker our names or leave him our visiting-cards," said Peter. "He won't know us from Adam."

The Famous Five looked at one another.

They had had many troubles with the bully of the Sixth, and were not averse from the idea of giving James Walker a little kind attention in the fog. And undoubtedly he deserved a ragging for giving a Remove man six for a sheer accident.

There was a generous nodding of heads.

"We're on!" said Bob Cherry.

"The onfulness is preposterous."

"Follow your leader, then," said Peter. "Walker won't be long, and we want to be ahead of him. Come on."

The Famous Five followed Peter from the study. They did not leave the House by the door on the quad. It was indubitable that James Walker deserved what he was going to get, that he had asked for it, and that he ought to have what he had asked for. The juniors had no doubt on those points. But they did not expect masters or prefects to see eye to eye with them in such a matter. It was necessary to be very wary, and exceedingly secret. Walker was certain to make a fuss about it, richly as he deserved it, and it was necessary for no one to know that the six juniors had been out of the House when it happened. So they left the House by the window of a deserted class-room, unseen.

"My hat! It's thick!" muttered Bob Cherry, as he blinked round him in the heavy mist that hung over the quad.

"The thickfulness is beastly," grunted Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shiver.

"Come on!" said Peter. "Keep together or we shall lose one another."

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"Lead on, Macduff!" said Bob. The juniors groped their way along the path.

The mist from the sea lay like a blanket over Greyfriars. Dimly the shapes of trees loomed up, and from lighted windows a faint illumination shone into the fog.

They found their way at last to the post-box in the school wall. There they halted, peering at one another in the gloom.

"Thick as soup!" mumbled Nugent. "All the better," said Peter Todd. "Walker isn't likely to recognise anybody in this."

"No. But—"  
"Safe as houses," said Peter.

"Yes; but—"  
"But what, fathead?"

"Suppose he doesn't come to post the letter?" said Frank. "He may change his mind when he sees how thick it is."

"Oh, rot!" said Peter.

"Well, it's only a few minutes to the collection now, I believe—unless the fog keeps Boggs late," said Harry Wharton. "Wait and see, anyhow."

The juniors waited.

It was not pleasant. A thin drizzle was falling through the mist, and every moment the fog seemed to be getting thicker. From far out at sea came a dismal sound of syrens. They waited; but there was no sound of approaching footsteps.

"Look here, Toddy, are you sure—" began Johnny Bull.

"Yes, ass!"

"He doesn't seem to be coming!" grumbled Johnny.

"Hark!"

There was a sound in the mist. It came from the path, hidden in the mist, and was unmistakably a footstep.

"He's coming!" whispered Peter.

"Quiet!"

The juniors waited breathlessly.

Someone was coming down the path directly towards the letter-box. Peter Todd drew the bottle of marking-ink from his pocket and removed the cork.

"Ready!" he breathed.

A dim figure loomed for a moment in the gloom. They heard a letter dropped into the orifice of the box.

The dimly-seen form turned from the letter-box again, and at the same moment the Famous Five closed in on it.

There was a startled gasp as they collared that dim form and up-ended it and dropped it on the earth.

"Ooooooooooooooh!"

Bump!

The next moment, Peter Todd was leaning over the sprawling figure, and the purple marking-ink was streaming from the bottle over the upturned face.

"Gerrroooooogh!"

That upturned face was the dimmest of dim patches in the thick mist. It was quite unrecognisable, and still more unrecognisable after Peter had weighed in with the purple marking-ink.

"Ooooooooooh!"

Some of the ink, apparently, had gone into an open mouth. The sounds that came from the sprawling figure were awful.

"Gug-gug-ug! Oooooch! Grooooooch!"

Six figures faded away into the fog. The chums of the Remove did not utter a word. The victim of the rag could not possibly have recognised them, if he had seen them at all; but he might have known their voices. In deep silence, like phantoms, they faded away.

Horrid sounds followed them through the mist.

"Gug-gug! Gerroooooogh! Oooooooooch!"

Twice the juniors missed their way in the clinging mist, but they got back to the Form-room window at last, and

clambered in. Very carefully they closed the window behind them.

Not till then did they venture even to chuckle.

"Quiet!" murmured Peter. "Walker will kick up a fearful row about this. He can't possibly like it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet!"

Suppressing their emotions, the juniors left the Form-room quietly. After that they strolled away towards the door of the House. There was nothing to connect them with what had happened in the quad, and they were quite interested to see Walker of the Sixth come in. He was likely, they considered, to present a very unusual aspect, and to be in a highly excited state.

Several fellows were standing by the big doorway, looking out, when the juniors came along from within.

"Looks jolly thick!" remarked Loder of the Sixth.

"Yes, doesn't it? I fancy I'll leave posting my letter," said another voice.

The six juniors gave a convulsive start. They knew that voice.

Like fellows in a horrid dream, they gazed at Walker of the Sixth.

He was standing at the doorway with Loder, a letter in his hand. Obviously, he had not posted his letter. Obviously, he had not gone down to the post-box in the school wall.

Someone had!

They knew that—only too well! But not Walker of the Sixth.

For a moment Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at one another in silent horror. Someone—goodness knew who—had walked into their hands in the fog, and had got what was intended for Walker. Who it was they could not even imagine. It might have been anybody at Greyfriars—except Walker! A prefect, perhaps—perhaps even a master! Peter Todd's face was a study.

"Oh, crikey!" he whispered.

The juniors retired silently to the Remove passage. They were no longer interested to see the victim of the rag come in. The less they saw of him, and the farther off they were when he came, the better. Not till they reached the Remove passage did they express their feelings in words. Then all the Famous Five spoke at once.

"Toddy! You silly idiot!"

"I—I thought—" stammered Peter.

"You benighted fathead!"

"I—I—"

"You burbling chump!"

"Look here—"

"Bump him!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yaroooooh!"

Leaving Peter on the floor of the Remove passage, the Famous Five retired into Study No. 1. Peter picked himself up breathlessly and limped along to No. 7.

An unmusical sound greeted him as he entered.

Groan!

Billy Bunter was still in a state of lamentation. He blinked at Peter, as he came in, through his big spectacles. Then he uttered a deeper groan than ever, no doubt with the idea of eliciting sympathy from Peter.

But Peter was not in a sympathetic mood. He was in a state of dismay and apprehension.

He gave William George Bunter a glare.

"Shut up!" he howled.

Groan!

"You fat, frabjous fathead! You've landed me into a precious pickle!" said Peter Todd. "All your fault, you footling frump!"

Groan!

Peter Todd, with a fed-up, ferocious expression on his face, looked round the

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study, evidently in search of something. Bunter blinked at him, forgetting, for the moment, to groan.

"Looking for something, Toddy?" he asked.

"Yes!" hissed Peter.

"What is it?"

"A fives bat."

"Wha-a-at do you want a fives bat for?"

"You!"

Peter found the fives bat, and grabbed it. Then he looked round for Bunter. But he did not find Bunter. Bunter was gone.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### A Mystery of the Mist!

"**E**XTRAORDINARY!" said Mr. Quelch.

"My eye!" said Gosling.

Both of them listened.

Quelch, the master of the Remove, had just come in. He had been caught in the thickening fog, and had had some difficulty in getting back to Greyfriars at all from the village. He stopped at Gosling's lodge to make some remarks—not complimentary ones—on the weather, and to suggest that Gosling should light him across to the House with his lantern.

Gosling, who did not expect a tip for the service, was not enthusiastic, but Mr. Quelch was a gentleman whom it was difficult to refuse. Gosling mentioned, in a casual sort of way, that he didn't know just where to lay his hands on that lantern, that the lantern was empty of oil, and that he had mislaid his matches. Then he found the lantern, found that there was oil in it, found his matches and lighted up, expressing his feelings the while in a series of grunts.

Lantern in hand, the school porter was starting to convoy Mr. Quelch to the House, when from the deep and blinding mist there came strange sounds that startled both the Form master and the porter.

"Gug-gug-gug! Gooog! Hooog! Hoooch!"

Strange and suffocating sounds came from the fog. It was no wonder that Mr. Quelch described them as extraordinary. They were, so to speak, extra extraordinary.

Mr. Quelch stared round him in the fog. Nothing was to be seen but ghostly mist and dim branches looming through.

"What is that extraordinary noise, Gosling?" asked the master of the Remove.

"Ask me another, sir!" said Gosling. "Some blooming hanimal got into the place in the fog, I s'pose."

"Some what?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"Some blooming hanimal, sir."

"I should be obliged, Gosling, if you would select your adjectives with more circumspection when addressing me!" said the Form master stiffly.

"My eye!" said Gosling.

"Gooooog!" came from the fog.

"Moooooch! Urrrrrrrgggggg!"

"It's some blooming—I mean blinking—hanimal!" said Gosling.

"Gug-gug!" came from the fog.

"Oooch! Mon Dieu!"

Mr. Quelch started.

"That is a human voice!" he exclaimed. "It is Monsieur Charpentier! It can be no one else! He is in some trouble—an accident of some kind—"

"Mon Dieu! Oooch! Ciel! Wooooch!"

"It's that blooming—I mean blinking—Froggy!" muttered Gosling. "I'm waiting for you, sir."

"Monsieur Charpentier is in some trouble," said Mr. Quelch. "Perhaps he has fallen in the fog. We must find him."

Grunt from Gosling. William Gosling

was not a very obliging old gentleman, and he was not keen on rooting about in the fog for a "blinking Froggy." But there was no help for it; Mr. Quelch was not to be denied.

Gosling proceeded to grope in the direction of the weird sounds, flashing the light of his lantern before him, and the Remove master followed.

"Mooooch!" came a mumble from the mist. "Oooch! Mon Dieu! A moi! A moi!"

"Monsieur Charpentier!" called out Mr. Quelch.

"Hein! Ow, ow! Oh! A moi! Help! Mon Dieu!"

"It is Monsieur Charpentier," said Mr. Quelch. "He appears to be hurt—some accident in the fog. How fortunate that we heard him, Gosling!"

Another grunt from Gosling. In Gosling's lodge was a bright, warm fire, and a glass of gin and water. Gosling was thinking of them with yearning. He did not see anything at all fortunate in the present state of affairs.

"We must find him at once. Where are you, Monsieur Charpentier?" shouted the Remove master.

One of this week's "MAGNET" POCKET KNIVES goes to: Alfred Andrewartha, of 9, Brodick Street, Moston, Manchester, who sent in the following amusing joke:

#### BAITING THE KEEPER!

The keeper, discovering a stranger angling on a private stretch of water, ordered the offender to draw his cast. The angler complied, and it was seen that his hook was baited with a carrot. The keeper burst into laughter and said: "If that's the bait you use, go ahead!" Several hours later the two met again. Pointing to the angler's full basket, the keeper said aghast: "Good heavens! You didn't catch all those fish with a piece of carrot, did you?" "No," replied the sportsman; "I caught you with that!"

Perhaps it will be your turn next to win one of these useful prizes, chum. Pile in with your effort!

"Helas! Je suis ici!" came a muffled voice from the fog.

"Can't make out what he says, sir," grunted Gosling. "If he means it's easy to find him I don't see it, sir."

"Monsieur Charpentier did not say 'easy,' Gosling; he said 'ici,'" answered Mr. Quelch.

"That's his blooming—I mean blinking—funny way of speaking, sir," said Gosling. "If he says eecy he must mean easy, I s'pose."

"'Ici' is a French word, meaning 'here,' Gosling."

Grunt from Gosling.

"Lots of blooming use saying 'here'—if he's a-saying 'here!'" he said. "Where's 'here.' I'd like to know, in this bloom—blinking fog?"

"Monsieur Charpentier!" called Mr. Quelch.

"Ici, mon ami!" came a gasping voice from invisibility. "Je suis ici! Ici! On m'assomme! Groooogh!"

"This way, Gosling!"

"I can't see nothing, sir! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"We must be guided by the sound of Monsieur Charpentier's voice, Gosling. Something must have happened to him."

"Wot I says—"

"He may be hurt, Gosling."

Gosling hoped that he was.

He groped on in the fog, the lantern glimmering before him. Gasping and gurgling sounds, mingled with wild ejaculations in French, helped to guide him.

"Venez! Je suis ici! Groooogh! Oh, ceil! Mon Dieu!"

"Why a cove can't speak plain English, instead of that queer lingo, beats me!" growled Gosling. "Ow them blooming Froggies understand one another is a mystery to me. Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Monsieur Charpentier!"

"Ici! Groooogh!"

Gosling plunged on. Suddenly, from the mist, a face emerged into the light of the lantern.

Gosling gave a howl of startled affright.

He had expected to see the French master. What he saw was a strange, horrid countenance, striped with purple, zebra-like in appearance.

"My eye!" gasped Gosling.

The lantern dropped from the porter's startled hand.

"Gosling! How can you be so clumsy?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"It's a blooming spook!" gasped Gosling. "It's a 'orrid spectre! Did you see it, sir? 'Elp!"

"Gosling! Remain here—"

But Gosling did not remain. He departed. One glimpse of that wild, weird face in the fog was enough for Gosling. Leaving his lantern on the ground, the Greyfriars porter plunged away through the mist towards his lodge.

"Gosling!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

But answer there came none. Gosling was gone.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch impatiently.

He stooped and groped for the lantern. Fortunately, it was not extinguished by the fall.

The Remove master caught it up and flashed the light round him.

"Monsieur Charpentier! Where are you? Why—w h a t—w h a t—w h a t—" ejaculated Mr. Quelch, and he very nearly dropped the lantern, in his turn, as the strange, startling face dawned on him from the mist.

It was hard to believe that it was a human face. It was striped with purple, and a purple patch surrounded the gasping mouth; and the eyes glared wildly. Mr. Quelch gazed at it in consternation.

"Who—who—what—" he stuttered.

"Je suis ici—"

"Monsieur Charpentier!"

"Mais oui! C'est affreux! Regardez moi!" bleated Monsieur Charpentier. "I am attack in ze fog! I am knock over. I am hustle and bustle. I am drench viz somezing wet. I am all confuse and choke. Somezing he go into my mouth, sair, somezing verree nasty. I am suffocate! I lose mo ze breiff! Groooogh!"

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He gazed at the French master of Greyfriars in horror.

It was Monsieur Charpentier. The voice proclaimed that fact. But Mossoo's nearest and dearest relative could never have recognised him otherwise.

Something, evidently, had happened to Monsieur Adolphe Charpentier.

"What—what—what—" ejaculated the Remove master. "What—what—what has happened, Monsieur Charpentier?"

"Is it zat I know?" groaned Mossoo.

"Je n'en sais rien! I valk viz myself to post one letter in ze boite, and when I have ze letter drop in zat boite I am seize—I am attack—I am renverso—vat you call chuck down. Somezing he is

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pour over ze face. He go in ze mouth. I am choke—"

"It is ink!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. He approached the lantern nearer to the zebra-like countenance and scanned it. "It is ink—a purple ink—a marking-ink! An indelible ink!"

"Mon Dieu!"

"It is an outrage!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Who has done this, sir?"

"Je ne sais pas, moi!" gasped Mossoo. "I know nozzings. I am seize in ze fog—I am attack—I am renverse—tout bouleverse. Helas!"

"Come with me, Monsieur Charpentier," said Mr. Quelch, taking the French gentleman's arm. "I will guide you to the House. Some dastard—some wretch—some unmitigated rascal—has taken advantage of the fog to make this iniquitous attack on you. You may rely upon it that the dastardly wretch will be discovered and expelled from the school. Come with me!"

"Merci, Monsieur! Zank you!" gasped Monsieur Charpentier. "I understand nozzings of zis! I see no vun! I hear no vun! I drop ze letter in ze boîte and I am attack—I am chuck down—I am smother viz somezing nasty that go into ze nose and ze mouth—I am choke and suffocate—"

"Come!"

Mr. Quelch led the French master away through the mist, holding up the lantern in the other hand. Monsieur Charpentier tottered along by his side. He gurgled, and gasped, and spluttered as he went. Purple ink streaked his countenance and drenched his hair and his collar and tie, but some of it had been taken internally. A stream of purple ink had gone into a wide-open mouth, and it was only too clear that it did not taste nice.

Mr. Quelch navigated the gasping, spluttering French gentleman to the House. Monsieur Charpentier tottered in, his remarkable appearance causing surprised exclamations to be uttered on all sides.

"Who—who—who's that?" ejaculated Walker of the Sixth.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Loder.

"Mon Dieu! C'est moi—"

"It is Monsieur Charpentier!" said Mr. Quelch, with thunder in his brow. "He has been the victim of an outrage. Some person, or persons, attacked him in the fog and drenched him with ink, as you see—"

"My hat!" ejaculated Walker. "Who—"

"That is not known at present. Walker, Loder, inform the other prefects at once, and let a search be made for the authors of this detestable outrage. Let it be ascertained immediately what boys were out of the House!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Come, Monsieur Charpentier!"

Mr. Quelch led the tottering French gentleman away. In about a minute more the news spread like wildfire through the House! A master—the French master—had been attacked by some person or persons unknown, drenched with purple ink. It was the sensation of the term at Greyfriars. In the history of the school no such outrage had ever occurred before. It was the sack, short and sharp, for the delinquents when they were discovered, and all the prefects of the Sixth Form were engaged

in the task of discovering them. And the question that was asked up and down Greyfriars was—who had done it? Who had waylaid, attacked, assaulted, and inked a member of the staff in the fog? But for the present, at least, there was no answer to be found to that question.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Awful!

PETER TODD stepped quietly into Study No. 1, greeted by grim looks from the five juniors there. Hurrying feet passed the study—fellows were going down to see what the rumpus was about. Something had happened—all the House knew that; and Remove fellows were curious to know what it was. But Peter Todd and the Famous Five did not think of joining in the rush down the Remove staircase. They were not curious to know more—they knew too much already.

Peter shut the door of the study and stared gloomily at the Famous Five. They stared back gloomily at him.

"This is a go!" said Peter.

"The go-fulness is terrific!"

"You born idiot!" said Bob Cherry.

"You benighted ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Peter. "Was it my fault?"

"Of course it was, you frabjous chump!" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly. "You led us there to wait for Walker—"

"And it wasn't Walker!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Who the dickens was it? If it was a junior it wouldn't matter. But he was too big for a junior, whoever he was. Might have been a Fifth Form man! That wouldn't matter a lot. In fact, if it was Coker, we needn't mind."

"He wasn't so big as Coker," said Harry Wharton. "Of course, it may have been a Fifth Form man! I hope it was."

"No such luck!" said Nugent. "It was a Sixth Form man—and most likely a prefect. Trust Toddy for that!"

"Well, we meant it for a Sixth Form prefect!" said Toddy.

"Yes, you ass—Walker! But—but suppose it was Wingate!"

Toddy gasped! Ragging and inking Walker would have been serious enough; but if it turned out to be the captain of the school—

"It wasn't Wingate," said Harry Wharton. "Whoever the silly ass was, he wasn't so hefty as Wingate! We should never have bowled over old Wingate so easily as all that!"

"That's so!" agreed Bob Cherry. "I—I say, it couldn't have been a master, could it?"

There was a silence of horror in the study for a moment or two at the suggestion.

"Nunno!" said Wharton at last. "Whoever he was, he wasn't big enough to be a master! I hardly think he could have been a Fifth Form man! He went over like a skittle when we collared him. Might only have been one of the Shell, after all."

"It's possible," said Bob, in great relief. There was a brightening of faces in the study. If it was one of the Lower School who had been handled in mistake for Walker, the seriousness of the matter departed at once.

"But—" said Johnny Bull slowly.

"But what?"

"I don't think it was a Shell man. I didn't see him, of course, any more than you did, but—he had a tail-coat on. I'm sure of that."

"Must have been a senior," said Nugent.

"Anyhow, I'm sure it wasn't Wingate or Gwynne," said Harry. "Not hefty enough. And it can't have been a master. Goodness knows who it was. If it was anybody important there will be a fearful row. Still, there would have been a fearful row if we'd got Walker."

"That's so," said Bob. "But—"

"Can't be helped now," said Nugent. "We've got to sit tight and keep our mouths shut. It will blow over."

"We shall soon know who it was, anyhow," said Peter Todd. "There's a row going on downstairs—the whole place seems to be in a buzz. Better wait here till we get the news."

The juniors listened. Faintly from afar came sounds that told of unusual perturbation in the House. The door of the study suddenly opened, and they started guiltily. Skinner of the Remove looked in.

"You fellows know what's on?" he asked.

"Is anything on?" asked Bob Cherry, with elaborate carelessness.

"Yes, rather! Something jolly unusual. I'm going down to see," said Skinner. "Somebody's called out that a master has been attacked by somebody!"

Skinner departed—the last of the Remove, excepting the guilty six, to hurry down the Remove staircase.

The six gazed at one another.

"A—a—a master!" murmured Nugent.

"Not—not—not Quelch, surely!" stammered Bob.

"Quelch!" gasped Wharton.

"Well, Quelch was gone out. If—if he had come in, and—and we got him in the fog—"

"Don't!" gasped Peter Todd.

The bare idea that the victim might have been their own Form master was absolutely horrifying.

"It wasn't Quelch!" Wharton recovered himself. "I'm sure it wasn't Quelch! Not so tall as Quelch! I'm sure of it!"

"The surefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It was not the esteemed and absurd Quelch."

"I—I wish I knew who it was," groaned Bob Cherry. "I say, perhaps we'd better go down and find out. This suspense is killing me, as the man said when he was hanged."

"Here comes somebody!"

There was a footstep outside the study, and the door opened. It was Billy Bunter who blinked in.

Bunter's fat face was full of excitement. He had even forgotten the remaining twinges of the "six" he had had from Walker.

"I say, you fellows—" he gasped.

"Anything up?" asked Wharton.

Bunter chuckled.

"I should jolly well say so! I say, the House is fairly humming with it!" he gasped. "It's the sack for them, of course!"

"For whom, fathcad?"

"The fellows who did it."

"Did what, image?"

"Assaulted and battered him, you know—"

"Whom?" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Wharton gave Bob a warning glance. It was on Bunter's account that the whole trouble had been incurred. But Bunter was the very last fellow at Greyfriars to be entrusted with the secret. A secret entrusted to William George Bunter might just as well have been proclaimed from the housetops.

"Somebody assaulted and battered?" asked the captain of the Remove, as carelessly as he could.

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"Mossoo's been collared in the fog and bumped over," said Bunter. "WHAT!" "Quelchy picked him up and carried him in. He was fearfully injured, and his face was streaming with blood!" The six juniors gazed at Bunter. The discovery that they had ragged and inked Monsieur Charpentier in mistake for Walker was bad enough without the thrilling details added by Bunter. (See Chapter 5.)

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Bunter. "From what I hear, he was collared in the fog, and bumped over, and drenched with ink. He, he, he!"

"Who was it?"

"Mossoo—"

"WHAT!"

"Mossoo Charpentier!" said Bunter, blinking at the horrified juniors. "That little French ass, you know! Can't say I'm sorry. He rags me a lot in the French class, making out that I don't got the right accent. My accent's better than his, and chance it. I say, Quelchy picked him up in the quad and carried him in—"

"Carried him in?"

"Yes. He was fearfully injured—"

"Injured?" gasped Wharton.

"Streaming with blood—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Frightfully knocked about," said Bunter. "Attacked, from what I hear, in the most brutal way—"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Have you seen him?" roared Bob Cherry.

"I haven't exactly seen him, but you can take it from me that he's fearfully injured. Jaw broken—"

"What?"

"Both eyes blacked—one of them, I think, knocked right out—"

"You—you—you—"

"Streaming with blood when Quelchy picked him up," said Bunter. "Quelchy had to carry him in, as I understand that his legs were broken—"

"His—his legs broken?"

"In several places," said Bunter. "He's lying now in his room—dying, I think. Practically breathing his last! Awful, ain't it?"

The juniors gazed at Bunter. The awful discovery that it was Monsieur Charpentier whom they had ragged and inked, in mistake for Walker, was bad enough, without the thrilling details added by Bunter. And it was all Bunter's fault, too. For a moment

there was silence. Bob Cherry broke it.

"Bump him!" he said.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

Bunter dodged—too late! Six pairs of hands descended on him.

"Yarooogh! Leggo! Wharrer you up to? Yooooop!" roared Bunter, as he smote the floor of Study No. 1 with his fat person.

"Whooo-hooooop!"

"Kick him out!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-woooooop!"

Billy Bunter hardly knew how he got out of Study No. 1. The door slammed after him.

Then Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at one another.

"So it was Mossoo!" said Harry, with a deep breath.

"Poor old Mossoo!"

"You idiot, Toddy!"

"You dangerous lunatic, Toddy!"

"You terrific and preposterous ass, Toddy!"

"Chuck it," said Peter acidly. "It can't be helped now. There'll be a frightful row; but, after all, nobody knows we had a hand in it. Mum's the word!"

"Poor old Mossoo!" said Bob dismally. "Why, we all like Mossoo. I wouldn't hurt Mossoo for a term's pocket-money. Poor old Froggy!"

"You frabjous chump, Toddy!"

"What the thump did he want to go out in the fog for to post a letter, when we were expecting Walker?" demanded Peter. "It was really his own fault."

"You footling ass!"

"Well, it was you fellows collared him," said Peter. "I only inked him. anyhow, it can't be helped now. Keep it dark."

"The mumfulness of the esteemed word is terrific!"

"Not a syllable to a soul!" said Johnny Bull.

"Not a whisper!" said Wharton. "It may blow over. If—if anything comes out we're fairly in the soup! If we get nailed, it won't be much good explaining that we intended it for Walker, a Sixth Form prefect! Mum's the word."

And the juniors left the study, at last, and went downstairs, where they heard, with appropriate expressions of surprise, of the extraordinary occurrence in the foggy quad.

The whole House was humming with the sensation. Every fellow was asked a dozen times whether he knew anything about it. No fellow admitted that he knew anything. The prefects had made prompt inquiry; but, so far as they could ascertain, no fellow had been out of the House. It was known that the Head was going to investigate the matter, and the investigation was certain to be deep and searching.

Had Walker, as intended, been the victim of the rag, there would have been excitement and inquiry, but nothing like this. Assault on a master was unheard of, unprecedented, unparalleled—a thing that could not possibly be suffered to rest. A rag on a prefect was serious, but compared with an attack on a master it was moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. Six fellows in the Remove hugged the dread secret to themselves, and whispered no word.

So far, there was no suspicion. No man in the Remove suspected that six members of that Form were so seriously in the soup. And the unhappy half-dozen could only hope for the best.

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## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

## A Deep Mystery!

"**B**LESS my soul!" Dr. Locke spoke quite faintly. He was horrified. Never, in all his experience as a schoolmaster, had there been such an occurrence.

He gazed at Monsieur Charpentier.

The little French gentleman had been busy with soap and hot water, and removed, so far as was practicable, the purple ink with which he had been so recklessly and liberally decorated. But that marking-ink was advertised as indelible, and, unlike most advertised articles, it lived up to its advertised reputation.

Much of it was gone; but much remained. There were purple streaks on the countenance of Monsieur Charpentier which soap and hot water, rubbing and scrubbing, had not been able to eradicate. No doubt they would wear off in time. In a few days, perhaps, Mossoo would present his normal and accustomed appearance. During those few days, however, Mossoo was likely to wear a remarkable aspect, with a complexion that was bound to strike the eye of the most casual observer.

Dr. Locke gazed at him. Mossoo was a good-looking little gentleman, very dapper and rather dandified. He had a belief that wherever he went he was likely to receive a second glance. Now he was pretty certain to receive a third and a fourth. He had a weirdly mottled look.

"It is incredible!" said the Head. "A master, a member of my staff, attacked—assaulted! It is unthinkable!"

"Mais c'est vrai!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "Zis zing he happen, sir. He is unthinkable, but he come to pass viz himself."

"There shall be the strictest investigation," said the Head. "The offenders shall, of course, be expelled from the school. There can be no question about that."

Wrath gathered on the Head's brow.

"C'est affre se," said Monsieur Charpentier. "C' est une chose affreuse—one frightful zing, monsieur! I am attack—I am ink—"

"Who were the offenders?"

"Moi, je ne sais pas!"

"You do not know, monsieur?"

"Non! Je n'en sais rien! In zat fearful fog I see nozzing. I slip one letter in ze boite, and zen I am seize—I am assomme—I am attack in ze fog. I see nozzings! De tout! Nozzings!"

"No doubt the perpetrators of this unspeakable outrage deliberately took advantage of the fog to attack you with impunity," said the Head.

"Sans doute, monsieur."

"More than one person, I presume?"

"Mais oui! Quatre ou cinq ou six ou sept—four or five or six or seven, sair—I know not! I am seize on all sides by one crowd. Zey rush on me in ze fog and seize me."

"I am utterly amazed," said the Head, in perplexity. "That one such ruffian might be found at Greyfriars is possible, but that half a dozen hooligans of this kind exist in the school is almost incredible. You are sure, Monsieur Charpentier, that more than one or two persons seized you?"

"Mais certainement, monsieur!" The little gentleman sat more erect. "One, two person, and I am equal to zem! I am not infant; I am strong man! One, two—and I chase zem away! Six au moins—at least six of zem!"

The Head suppressed a smile.

Little Mossoo was not, as a matter of fact, an athlete. There were plenty of

fellows in the Fifth Form who could have handled him easily. Indeed, there were Shell fellows who could have put paid to Mossoo single-handed. Half a dozen fellows certainly had not been required to put Mossoo through that painful experience.

"We must ascertain the exact facts, so far as possible, monsieur," said the Head. "The precise number of your assailants is important."

"Sans doute! Five or six at ze verree least."

"Did they all seize you at once?"

"Oui, sair! All at vunce. Zey rush on me and I am seize, overturn, bump on ze ground! Five or six pairs of ze hands!"

"You saw nothing of the ruffians?"

"Nozzings! Ze fog he is so zick, and I am taken so mooch by ze surprise. He all happen so quick I see nozzing, I know nozzing."

"But you must have discerned whether your assailants were seniors or juniors," said the Head.

Monsieur Charpentier reflected; but he shook his head.

"Je n'en sais rien," he answered. "I cannot say, sair. I zink zey must have been seniors, sair, for because it is impossible zat ze enfants—ze smaller boys—handle me lik zat."

"If there were half a dozen of them, sir, they would probably have had no difficulty," said the Head. "Did you hear their voices? Did they speak?"

"Pas un mot. Not vun word!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "Zey say nozzings. Zere is no sound!"

The Head wrinkled his brows in perplexity. He glanced at Mr. Quelch, who had accompanied the French master to his study. But Mr. Quelch could only shake his head. He was quite unable to throw any light on this most mysterious affair.

"You saw nothing of Monsieur Charpentier's assailants when you found him in the quad, my dear Quelch?" asked the Head.

"Nothing, sir,"

"And heard—"

"Nothing."

"It is most perplexing," said Dr. Locke.

"Extremely so, sir," said the Remove master. "So far as can be ascertained, all the boys were within the House. There is no doubt, of course, that some must have left the House surreptitiously. But there is, as yet, no clue to their identity."

"You have no idea?"

"None, sir, except that I feel assured that no member of my Form was concerned in this outrage. That appears to me beyond doubt," said the Remove master.

The Head made no comment upon that. He had no doubt that every other Form master in the school would express precisely that view.

"Are you aware, Monsieur Charpentier, of any boys, in any Form, who have any personal dislike towards you?"

Mossoo shook his head.

"Mais non, sair! Zat is impossible. some of ze boys are troublesome sometimes in ze French set. Sometimes I punish zem. Pas beaucoup. But I do not zink any garcon he dislike me."

"It is obvious, monsieur, that what has happened is an act of malice, indeed of vengeance," said the Head. "Such a barbarous assault could not have been carried out without a motive."

"It is true," said Mossoo, in great distress. "Somevun he vish to make me vat you call sit down—non, vat you call sit up. Oui, zat must be so. Yet I cannot zink zat any garcon can be my enemy. Non, non!"

Again the Head made no comment. He had not been a schoolmaster so

long, without becoming aware that many a master fancied himself popular, when, in point of fact, his class felt a powerful desire to lynch him.

Indeed, the facts of the case seemed to admit of no doubt. If half a dozen fellows set on a master in the fog and ragged him mercilessly, it was a proof that he had half a dozen enemies in the school. No master was likely to admit that any boys could possibly dislike him to such an extent. But facts were facts.

"Obviously an act of vengeance," said the Head.

"Obviously," said Mr. Quelch.

"Mais—" said Monsieur Charpentier feebly.

"There can be no doubt of it," said the Head. "We must proceed upon that line of investigation. Have you had occasion to punish any boy of late, Monsieur Charpentier, with unusual severity?"

Mossoo shook his head.

"Pas du tout! I give out ze lines; but ze cane I never use him," he said. "Zere is nozzing but lines. Je ne comprends pas?"

"It is difficult to imagine even a lawless and ruffianly boy taking such a revenge for a mere imposition," said the Head. "Yet we cannot lose sight of the fact, sir, that the assault has actually happened."

"C'est vrai. Zere is do doubt about zat," agreed Mossoo.

"Have you had any special trouble with any boy? Has any boy uttered anything in the nature of a threat?"

"Zere is zat Cokair—"

"Coker! Coker of the Fifth Form?"

"Oui, sair. But I am assure zat Cokair he never do zis. He is one fool, but he is not bad boy. He is verree stupid, but he is bon garcon. Hier, yesterday, he say in ze class zat he fed-up."

"A most improper remark for any boy to make to a master," said the Head, frowning. "Did you punish Coker for that remark?"

"I lose me ze temper one leetle," said Monsieur Charpentier. "I say to him zat if he chcek me, I report him to ze headmaster. I give him two hundred lines. Voila tout—zat is all."

"Coker of the Fifth Form is a very thoughtless and headstrong boy, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "He is in constant trouble with his own Form master, Mr. Prout."

"But a mere warning that he might be reported to his headmaster, scarcely furnishes a motive for this brutal assault," said Dr. Locke. "Is there any other boy, Monsieur Charpentier, whom you could possibly suspect of harbouring revengeful designs towards you?"

"Non. I zink of no one."

The Head paused.

"Was anyone aware that you were about to go out to the letter-box to post a letter, Monsieur Charpentier?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I zink not, sir. I tell no vun. I zink at first I not go; it is so foggy. Zen I zink I go, and I go viz myself. But I zay nozzing to anyvun."

"Apparently you were seen leaving the House, and followed," said the Head. "You saw no one follow you?"

"No vun, sair."

"It is most mysterious," said the Head. "However, the matter shall be sifted to the very bottom, and, undoubtedly the delinquents will be discovered. Such an act as this must be visited with the most condign punishment. There will be an end of all discipline in the school, otherwise. An attack upon a master has never occurred

(Continued on page 12.)



# INSIDE INFORMATION!



By "The OLD REF."

Strange things are always happening on the football field—incidents which cause a great deal of argument when the match is over. "Old Ref" is here to settle those arguments. Send your queries along to him, chums; the more the merrier.

**T**HOSE of you who lined up for our first little football lecture in last week's issue will remember—I hope—one thing which I pointed out about the rules. It was a suggestion that the officials did not always mean exactly what they put down in the rule books.

My attention has just been drawn to another case which illustrates this point. I have a reader in Sheffield, who sends me the facts. He says that when Sheffield United were playing Middlesbrough, the visitors were making an attack on the Sheffield goal. Suddenly George Cammell—that demon goal-scorer of Middlesbrough—found himself in an offside position. He wasn't near the ball, but he was near to goal. So he had a brainwave—he ran over the goal-line and thus out of play. While Cammell was over the goal-line the 'Boro carried on the attack and scored a goal.

I have referred to that incident for two reasons. The first is that it proves, to my mind, anyway, that footballers think more than they are given credit for doing. It was a very smart move of Cammell to go off the actual field of play rather than run the risk of the ball being passed to him when he was in an offside position.

*But my friend at Sheffield thinks differently. He points out that the rule-book says that no player shall leave the field without the permission of the referee, and that in his leaving the field, Cammell broke a rule, and should have been called up and told not to do it again.*

Now it is true that the rule-book says a player must not leave the field without the consent of the referee, but here's the funny part about this rule—it doesn't mean what it says.

The only commonsense view to take of this rule is that it means that no footballer should cease to take part in a game without the consent of the referee. It doesn't mean that no player can slip out over the touch-line or goal-line temporarily.

If the rule were to be taken literally, then there would be about eight players lectured every match for leaving the field. Doing a run along the touch-line, wing men often step over the line to get round an opponent. They are leaving the field just as completely as Cammell left the field in the circumstances given. Then, again, when a half-back throws the ball, he must, to obey the rules, stand outside the actual playing area. I am sorry to have to draw the rule-makers over the coals, but they should really look through the rules carefully, and revise the wording here and there.

To touch another aspect of this question, why was it ever suggested that a player should not leave the field without the consent of the referee? I'll tell you. That regulation was put in to prevent a player dashing off the field, having a quick rub down, and then coming back like a giant refreshed.

**L**INCOLN is a place where strange things happen, and I hope my Lincoln readers won't take objection to that statement. More funny things have been happening at Lincoln recently.

*There is a story which reaches me to the effect that in a recent match between Lincoln City and Stockport County, the Lincoln goalkeeper threw his cap at the ball when it was about to be kicked*

*towards goal by a Stockport forward. It is only fair to the Lincoln goalkeeper to say that he declares that he did not throw his cap at the ball, but that he suddenly decided to take it off.*

So we will take it that the story was incorrect, and just consider what could be done if the goalkeeper did take off his cap and throw it at the feet of an oncoming forward, just as he was taking a kick at the ball. Now that is one of the things which comes under the "not done" heading, and the things which should not be done are "ungentlemanly conduct" within the meaning of the act.

I have seen goalkeepers do strange things in their attempts to stop the ball from going into the net. An incident of some years ago made me laugh at the time. It was a very cold day, and in order that the goalkeeper could keep himself warm, he borrowed an overcoat and threw it over his shoulders. An attack against his side developed quickly and unexpectedly. The ball was sent in to goal just as the goalkeeper whipped off his coat. As he could not get to the ball he threw the coat at it, and actually stopped it from going into the net.

He was cautioned by the referee not to do it again, but there was no other punishment for the player—no penalty kick or anything like that—because he had not been guilty of a foul or even of dangerous play.

*There was a premature ending to the Lincoln City-Stockport match to which I have made reference. Owing to bad light the game had to be stopped ten minutes from the end, when the score was one goal each. Somebody has asked me what is usually done in these circumstances.*

What is usually done is this: the League Management Committee usually orders the match to be replayed in its entirety. But as a matter of fact, there is another course which the League authorities could take if they so desired. They could order the match to stand as if it had been completed. That may seem strange, but I will tell you why they have such power. It is given to them to prevent a club deliberately kicking off so late that a finish to the match is impossible, in order to get two "games" from one game. I don't suppose any football club has ever been so cunning as to do this, but the League people try to guard against all contingencies.

**W**HILE we are at Lincoln—metaphorically—I may just recall one of the strangest Cup-ties which has ever been played in this country. Bradford City and Norwich City had met twice in a Cup-tie without either side being able to claim the right to progress in the competition. There was a war on—a little affair which started in 1914 in which Germany played a big part. It was then necessary for every ounce of energy to be put in by workers in the making of ammunition. So the authorities ordered the third meeting between Bradford City and Norwich City to be played on the Lincoln City ground behind closed doors. The public were not admitted, but about twenty of us got in by special permit.

As I told you to write to me last week, I don't need to tell you again.



## SIX IN THE SOUP!

(Continued from page 10.)

before, and shall certainly never occur again."

Monsieur Charpentier left the study, leaving the Head in consultation with Mr. Quelch.

"Obviously," said the Head, when the French master was gone, "Monsieur Charpentier has made himself unpopular with some section of the boys, and this outrage is the result."

"It would certainly appear so," assented Mr. Quelch.

"It is not uncommon for a master to flatter himself that he has no enemies, when the reverse is the case."

"Not at all."

"Obviously, that is the line that the investigation must follow," said the Head thoughtfully.

"Obviously."

"A number of boys—three or four, perhaps—have taken this lawless method of retaliation for some fancied grievance."

"That is clear."

"And the Form master concerned will no doubt succeed in discovering the delinquents in a very short time," said the Head.

"Probably in a few hours, or less," said Mr. Quelch.

"Each master will question his own Form on the subject, and pursue the inquiry until a discovery is made," added Dr. Locke. "All that is necessary is to trace certain boys who have entertained revengeful designs towards the French master."

"That is all," assented Mr. Quelch.

The investigation into the mysterious outrage, therefore, followed the line indicated by the headmaster, though, as it happened, that line of inquiry was likely to lead anywhere but to the culprits. Harry Wharton & Co. were well known to like Mossos personally, and never to have failed in respect towards the French gentleman. So the line of inquiry, sedulously followed by the whole staff, was certainly not likely to lead to the Famous Five.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Clue of the Purple Stain!

POTTER of the Fifth gazed at Coker, of that Form, with a strange, fascinated gaze. Greene of the Fifth did the same.

Coker had just come into his study.

Potter and Greene had been engaged in prep; a little matter that Coker had had no time for, being otherwise engaged. But they suspended prep as Coker came in with his heavy tread.

They gazed at Coker.

They gazed at him in a really extraordinary way. Something about Coker seemed to draw their fixed attention. It was as if Coker had suddenly cast a spell on his two study mates.

Horace Coker threw himself into a chair. Potter and Greene still gazed at him, their eyes glued on Coker. They hardly breathed. Once, for a second, they exchanged a startled glance. Then they gazed at Coker again.

Coker noticed it, but without giving it any special attention. Coker being the great man he was, it was natural that his study mates should sit up and take notice when he came into the study. Besides, Coker was thinking. This unusual proceeding on the part of Coker brought a deep wrinkle into his rugged brow, and prevented him from heeding the strange, startled, fascinated stare of Potter and Greene.

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"Nothing's come out, so far," said Coker.

"Eh?"

"About Froggy, I mean."

"Froggy?" repeated Potter.

"I suppose you fellows have heard," said Coker. "Mossoo was ragged in the quad a couple of hours ago. Some fellows bagged him in the fog and ragged him, and smothered him with purple ink."

"We—we've heard," stammered Greene.

"Pi-pip-purple ink," murmured Potter.

And Potter and Greene stared harder than ever at Coker. On one of Coker's large hands was a deep stain of purple ink. On his shirt-cuff was a larger and deeper stain. On several other parts of Coker were stains of purple ink. Coker himself did not seem to have observed them. But Potter and Greene observed them with horror.

"All the masters are on the war-path," said Coker. "Every beak is rooting through his own Form for the raggars. Of course, they won't find them."

"You—you think not?" gasped Potter, gazing at the purple stains on Horace Coker.

"I don't think—I know. A matter like this requires brains," explained Coker. "Well, what brains have they got? Practically none."

"But—" gasped Greene.

"They won't find the man or men," said Coker. "Mossoo thinks he was bagged by a mob. You see, that little boulder thinks he's no end of a sportsman in a scrap. But he isn't. Why, I could handle him with one hand."

Potter and Greene did not speak. They only gazed at Coker.

"Either of you men could handle him," said Coker. "Hobson of the Shell could knock him out. There's kids in the Fourth and the Remove who could do it. I believe Mossoo's got no end of pluck. But there isn't much of him, you see. My idea is that he fancied that mob. More than likely it was one fellow bowled him over."

"One fellow!" gasped Potter.

"And they'll never find him," said Coker. "They haven't the brains. The prefects won't find him, either. What brains have they got? Put all the Sixth Form prefects together in a bunch, and what does their intellect amount to? You could put the lot in a thimble. I don't think much of the Sixth, as I've said before."

Coker shook his head.

Long ago it had been borne in on Coker's mind that he was the only fellow at Greyfriars with anything to speak of in the way of intellect. He had never seen any reason to change that opinion.

"If the Head would make a fellow like me a prefect!" said Coker. "But he won't! I fancy I could put my finger on the man who handled Mossoo."

"You—you—you could!" stuttered Potter.

"You!" breathed Greene.

For once, Potter and Greene had no doubt of Coker's ability to do as he stated. Those tell-tale signs of purple ink on Coker proved it, to their minds.

"Little me!" said Coker. "Why, look at the thing, as it stands! Purple ink was swamped all over Froggy! Now, is a fellow going to handle purple ink in a rag without getting some on himself? What?"

"No!" gasped Potter.

"Not likely!" stuttered Greene.

"I've read a lot of detective stuff, as you know," said Coker. "I've often thought I should make a good detective. What does it need? Keen

intellect, an observant eye, cool, clear-headed common sense, rapid judgment, unflinching penetration—well, that's me all over. I don't brag of it, you know. It happens to be like that, that's all."

Coker paused thoughtfully.

"On my system," continued Coker, "they wouldn't wander about asking fellows questions. What's the good? Is any fellow going to own up that he's done a thing he's certain to be sacked for? Not much! My system would be to look for a clue. That's the proper detective style. 'The Clue of the Purple Stain'—see? Sounds like Edgar Wallace, doesn't it?"

Potter and Greene, gazing at the clues of the purple stains on Coker, made no remark.

"If the Head left the matter to me—" said Coker.

Coker shook his head again. Coker had once gone to the length of actually suggesting to the Head that he should be made a prefect. For reasons unknown to Coker, the Head had not discerned in him the qualities necessary to the office. Coker was not really surprised; for, as he often remarked, he did not expect much sense from a school-master.

"Well, let 'em go on rooting," said Coker. "After they've failed to find anything out, I may have something to tell them."

"You!" murmured Potter.

"Yes. The fact is, I know more about the matter, I fancy, than anybody else at Greyfriars," said Coker.

"For goodness' sake, don't say so outside this study!" gasped Potter.

"Eh, why not?"

"Why not?" repeated Potter, aghast. "Don't you know that it's the sack?"

"The sack?" Coker stared at him.

"What on earth made you do it, Coker?" gasped Greene. "Were you right off your rocker?"

Coker transferred his stare to William Greene.

"We'll keep it dark, of course," said Greene. "We're not going to give you away, Coker. But for your own sake, keep your mouth shut."

"What the merry thump are you burbling about, Greene?"

"And get a wash, quick," said Potter.

"A—a—a wash?" repeated Coker.

"Yes. You'll be spotted; it's a wonder you haven't been spotted already. But I suppose nobody thought of a senior being mixed up in it."

"Blessed if I can make you out!" said Coker in bewilderment. "What are you silly asses driving at?"

"You must have been potty—actually potty," said Greene. "What had Mossoo done to you, anyhow?"

"Mum-mum-Mossoo?"

"You rag him a lot in the French class," said Potter. "He threatened to report you to the Head yesterday, I remember. But—"

"He was cheeky," said Coker, frowning. "I don't like cheek, especially from a French master. I find it hard enough to stand cheek from Prout, and I'm not taking any from Mossoo. I'm jolly well ready to tell him so, too, any time!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"The fact is, I had a jolly strong temptation to pick him up yesterday and chuck him across the room," said Coker. "It would have served him right. You know how Prout makes out that I can't spell. Well, Mossoo was making out precisely the same thing. Actually told me that there wasn't a 'k' in the word 'lyrique.' What do you think of a man undertaking to teach French without knowing how to spell his own language? What?"

There was a heavy tread in the Fifth Form passage outside. It was a





"Now that you admit what you have done," said Dr. Locke, in a deep and thrilling voice, "it only remains for me to pass sentence. Coker, you are expelled!" Coker jumped. "Expelled, sir?" stuttered the Fifth-Former. "Yes," said the Head. "You will leave Greyfriars at once! You are a disgrace to the school!" (See Chapter 9.)

ponderous tread, that could have proceeded only from Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, or from the huge, earth-shaking beast mentioned by Macaulay in the 'Lays of Ancient Rome.' Evidently Mr. Prout was coming to the study.

Potter and Greene jumped up in alarm. Coker showed no sign of alarm. But his study mates were scared.

"Put your hands behind you, quick!" panted Greene.

"Eh, why?"

"If Prout sees them——"

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Oh dear——"

"Too late!" gasped Greene.

There was a tap at the door; Prout always tapped at a man's door before he rolled in. Then it opened.

The three Fifth-Formers stood to respectful attention as their Form master entered. Potter and Greene could hardly conceal their uneasiness; but Coker was quite calm, only a little surprised by the strange and unaccountable conduct of his study mates.

"G-g-good-evening, sir!" stammered Potter.

Prout bestowed a gracious nod.

Then his eyes fixed somewhat sternly on Coker. That was not unusual. Coker often had stern looks from his Form master. Coker's conviction that he knew most things better than Prout often led to trouble.

"I have come here," said Mr. Prout in his deep, fruity voice, "to speak to you, Coker."

"Here, sir!" said Coker, with calmness.

"An outrage, an unparalleled outrage, has recently been perpetrated within the walls of Greyfriars."

"I know, sir."

"Dr. Locke has requested me to examine the boys of my Form on the subject."

"What rot, sir!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Fifth Form men are above suspicion in such a matter, sir," said Coker firmly. "It's rot to suppose that a Fifth Form man would rag a master."

"You express yourself in a manner to which I must take exception, Coker," said Prout in his ponderous way. "Nevertheless, your sentiments approximate to my own. I cannot credit for one moment that any member of the Fifth Form can have any guilty knowledge of this deplorable occurrence."

"Oh, quite sir," murmured Potter.

"Notwithstanding my persuasion of this," pursued Mr. Prout, who never used a monosyllable if a polysyllable would do, "I am constrained to investigate this lamentable affair, as requested by the headmaster. I address myself more particularly to you, Coker."

"To me, sir?" said Coker.

"To you! It transpires that you uttered certain impertinent remarks to Monsieur Charpentier in the French class, and that he had occasion to menace you with a report to the Head."

Coker smiled.

"I remember, sir! Of course, it was only gas!"

"It was—was what?"

"I mean, there was nothing in it, sir. Mossop had made a rather silly mistake in spelling, and he was rather waxy at my not agreeing. That's all, sir."

Prout fixed his eyes on Coker.

"You are a very obtuse boy, Coker! You are a very reckless and unthinking

boy! If any member of my Form is capable of committing a senseless prank, you are that member. I am here, Coker, to ask you definitely whether you know anything of this deplorable episode. In a word, did you or did you not share in the attack on Monsieur Charpentier?"

Coker jumped.

"I, sir!" he stuttered.

Potter and Greene exchanged a hopeless look.

Mr. Prout's gaze had fixed, suddenly, on Coker's shirt-cuff.

It was, indeed, rather surprising that he had not noticed those tell-tale purple stains before. Now he had noticed them.

Thunder gathered on the majestic brow of Prout.

"Coker!" he gasped.

"Really, sir——"

"You!" thundered Mr. Prout.

"I don't understand——"

"No prevarication, sir!" boomed Prout. "Follow me! Follow me immediately to your headmaster."

"Certainly, sir, if you like," said Coker. "I don't mind! In fact, I should like to see the Head—I fancy I know more about what's happened than any other fellow at Greyfriars——"

"I have no doubt you do!" boomed Prout. "The evidence of my own eyes convinces me that you do. Follow me!"

Prout rolled from the study. Coker followed him. Potter and Greene looked at one another.

"It's the sack!" said Potter.

"No doubt about that!" agreed

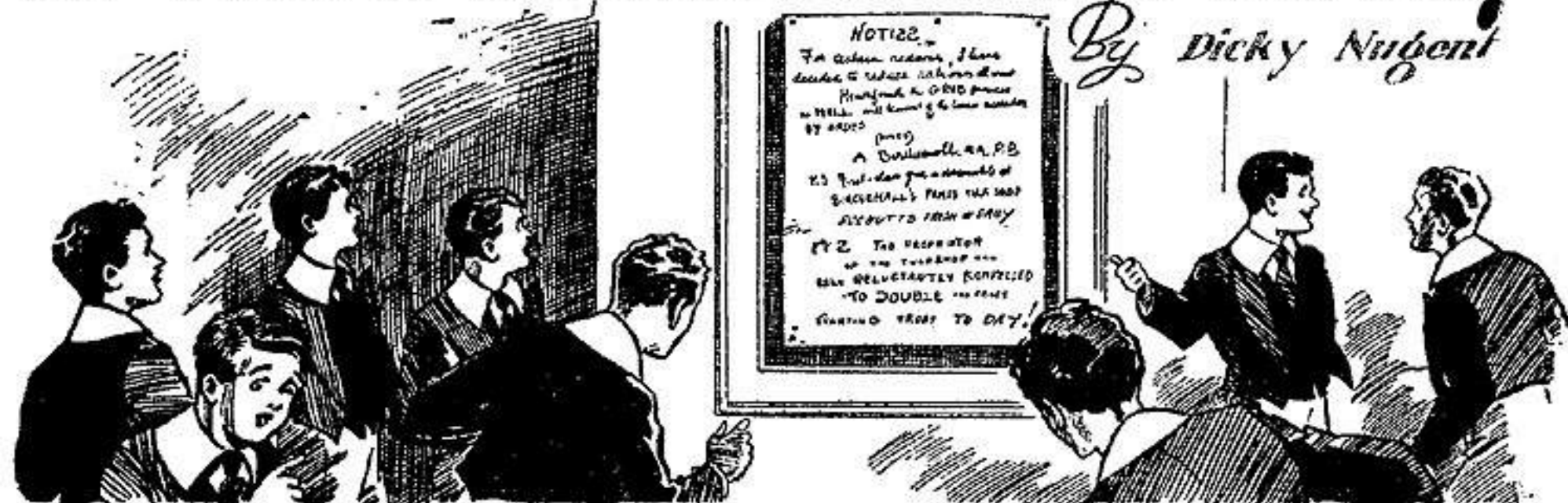
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# IN THE PROPHETEER'S POWER!

By Dicky Nugent



Dr. Birchmell has been seen in many unpopular roles in the course of his lengthy career at St. Sam's. But never has the rascally old fogey filled so unpopular a role as when he takes charge of the tuckshop at St. Sam's.

I.

**C**OMING down to the tuckshop, you fellows? My treat, you know!"

Frank Fearless of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's issued that jenneros invitation one evening. There was an immejate corus from Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright of:

"Yes, rather!"

Our heroes then linked arms and proceeded to the little skool tuckshop that stood under the elms.

They fully eggsppected to find it full of customers. Trade had been brisk since Dr. Birchmell, the stately and vennerable headmaster of St. Sam's, had taken it over—so brisk, in fact, that the Head had had to get Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, to assist him behind the counter.

But Jack Jolly & Co.'s eggspceptions were not realised. There was not a single customer in the tuckshop when they arrived—for the simple reason that the tuckshop was closed!

Outside an indignant crowd of juniors had gathered to discuss the eggstraordinary position. They pored out their tail of woe into the ears of the newcomers as soon as they came up, and Jack Jolly & Co. were dumbfounded.

"But there's a light inside the shop!" eggscclaimed Jack Jolly. "And I believe I can see the Head and Mr. Lickham inside!"

"Eggsactly! But they won't open the door!" said Lirrick, the poet of the Fourth, in axxents of bitter angwish.

Jack Jolly's jaw set grimly.

"We'll soon see about that!" he remarked. "Just watch me, you fellows!"

So saying, the kaptin of the Fourth went up to the door and wrapped sharply on it.

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

There was no reply from the tuckshop.

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

Still no answer.

Wallop! Crash! Bang!

At last there was a movement from within. A rattle of bolts was followed by the opening of the door. Then a stern, bearded figger in cap and gown peered out.

"What the merry dickens is the matter?" asked Dr. Birchmell in his refined way. "Is the skool on fire? Or is it meerly an earthquake?"

Jack Jolly faced him fearlessly.

"Please, sir, we want some tuck," he said.

"So do I. That's why I've closed the

giddy tuckshop," eggspained the Head blandly.

"But—but we're your customers!" gasped Jack.

The Head smiled grimly.

"What about it? Do you think this shop is run for the bennyfit of the customers? If you do, you'd better have another think!"

"My hat!" ejackulated Frank Fearless.

"As a matter of fact, the tuckshop at St. Sam's is run for the special bennyfit of the proprietor," eggspained the Head. "That being so, the proprietor is at liberty to open and close the shop eggsactly when he pleases. This evening, as it happens, he and his assistant feel more like feeding their faces than serving a crowd of hungry fags. So they've closed the shop, and are now going to have a jolly good feed in peace and comfort. Savvy?"

"Well, of all the nerve——" began Jack Jolly indignantly.

Dr. Birchmell frowned severely and held up his hand.

"Enuff, Jolly! I have no time to argew the toss with you just now. While I'm wasting time here, my assistant, Mr. Lickham, is skoffing pork-pies and ham-patties for all he's worth!"

And with those words the Head slammed the door violently and retired, leaving the crowd almost speechless.

Within the shop Dr. Birchmell returned to the back-parler, where Mr. Lickham was sitting at a table that farely groaned under the wait of the good things on it.

"Tick them off, sir?" asked the master of the Fourth, taking an enormous bite of a tremendous pork-pie.

"Yes, rather! I think I may flatter myself that I ticked them off, good and proper!" replied the Head, with a smirk. "Gimme over a ham-patty, Lickham. They look prime!"

"They jolly well are prime!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "Having sampled half a duzen of them, I can speak with nollidge!"

"Greedy rotter!" sniffed the Head, as he waded in with a ravenous appetite.

For some time after that no sound was herd in the tuckshop save the steady munching of the Head and his assistant. When the keen edge of their appetites had worn off, however, Mr. Lickham broke the silence with:

"How are the prophets of the shop going, sir?"

Dr. Birchmell looked rather thoughtful.

"To tell you the truth, Lickham, we've been eating into them during the last few days," he said. "Yesterday we made ten bob prophet and ate thirty bobs' worth of grub between us. The day before the prophets were over a pound, and our feed came to twice that amount."

"Grate pip!" eggscclaimed Mr. Lickham, turning rather pail. "Don't you think Dame Grubbe will be rather annoyed when she returns from the Kontinent?"

The Head stroked his beard nervusly.

"I'm afraid that is quite possibul," he admitted. "I agreed to pay Dame Grubbe ten bob a week for the privilage of taking over the shop during her absence, and so far I haven't sent her a penny-peace. If things go on as they are going her prospects of getting that ten bob a week are not very bright!"

"Hem! Eggsactly!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "What do you suggest we do about it, sir?"

Dr. Birchmell's thin lips twisted into a cunning smile.

"Since you ask me, Lickham, I will tell you the braney wheeze that I have thought out. What I have decided to do is to put up the prices of all the tuck we sell."

"But—but that will meerly drive our customers away, sir!" objected Mr. Lickham. "We shall find that they will content themselves with the grub supplied by the skool!"

"Shall we?" grinned the Head. "I rather doubt it, Lickham! You see, that's only half of my wheeze. The second half konsists of cutting down the skool rations to a minimum that will send up our trade by leaps and bounds."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" mormered the master of the Fourth.

"For breakfast I shall decree one doorstep and a cup of coffy per man," eggspained the Head, with a leer. "For dinner one ounce of meet and half a potato——"

"G-g-grate pip!"

"For tea a crust of dry bread and a cup of cultered water——"

"My hat! And for supper?" gasped Mr. Lickham.

"Supper I shall abolish altogether!" answered the Head calmly. "That, Lickham, in brief, is my wheeze. What do you think of it?"

Mr. Lickham drew a deep breth.

"Well, of all the villanous, dasterdly skeems——" he began.

"What!" roared the Head.

"I mean, of all the braney, original skeems I ever heard of, this is by far



the best!" corrected Mr. Lickham hastily. "I suggest we toast success to it in a bottle of the best!"

"Good egg!" grinned the Head. And headmaster and Form master toasted the success of their propheteering enterprise in foaming jinjer-pop.

## II.

"SHAME!"

"Skandalous!"

"It's sheer tyranny!"

Such were the opinions of a large crowd of St. Sam's fellows gathered round the notiss-board in the Hall next morning.

The cause of their indignation was not hard to find. On the notiss-board was pinned a large sheet of paper covered with the Head's sprawling handwriting. This is how it read:

### "NOTISS.

"For certain reasons I have decided to reduce rations all round. Henceforth the grub provided in Hall will consist of the barest necessities.

"By order.

"(Sined) A. BIRCHEMALL, M.A., D.D.

"P.S.—First-class grub is obtainable at Birchermall's famous tuckshop. Doenutts fresh in daily.

"P.P.S.—The proprietor of the tuckshop has been reluctantly kompelled to dubble the prices, starting from to-day."

"Of corse," remarked Jack Jolly, "it's obvious to the meenest intelligence why he has taken this step."

"Eggsactly! I can quite see the reason myself!" nodded Merry. "The Head's idea is to make us all hungry, and then force us to buy his tuck at propheteering prices!"

"Shame!" cried half a duzen juniors indignantly.

"It won't work with me, anyway!" said Frank Fearless. "After this, I'd rather starve than patronise such a propheteer as the Head!"

"Hear, hear!" corussed the indignant juniors.

Just then the dinner-bell rang, and further talk was dropped in the usual wild rush to the dining-hall.

When the fellows got to their places they farcly blinked at the tables.

Instead of the usual tempting array of boiled beef and carrots, tripe and

onions, and jam-puddings, the tables bore a striking resemblance to the selly-brated cupboard of Old Mother Hubbard. The only grub to be seen on each plate konsisted of one small piece of meat the size of a peanut and a section of potato that really needed a microscope to make it distinktly vizzible.

There was a mermer of dismay from the assemblled skool. All eyes were turned on the Head as he swept in through the door, grinning all over his dile.

"Wade in, my boys!" called out Dr. Birchermall, as he sat down at the head of the Sixth Form table. "Don't gorge yourselves too much. It's bad form in company, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Mr. Lickham from his place at the top of the Fourth table.

Burleigh, the kaptin of the skool, jumped to his feet, looking very determined.

"Look here, sir, is this all we're going to get for dinner to-day?" he asked heatedly.

"Most decidedly!" nodded the Head, bestowing rather a grim look on Burleigh. "I trussed, Burleigh, that you have no complaint to make?"

"Well, I jolly well have, anyway!" hooted Burleigh. "Just cast your optix over his plate and tell me what you think of this for a dinner! There's about a quarter of a spud—"

"Tutt-tutt, Burleigh! You really must lern to eliminate slang from your speech when addressing your headmaster!" interrupted Dr. Birchermall testily. "What you mean, I presoom, is, not a quarter of a spud, but a quarter of a MURPHY!"

"Spud or murphy, it's all the same to me!" declared Burleigh recklessly. "Why, I haven't enuff on my plate to nurrish my pet goldfish with! Mean to say you eggspect me to live on this?"

Dr. Birchermall cofferd slifely.

"Really, Burleigh, you cannot eggpect me to desend to vulgar argewments about your grub supplies. If you are not satsified with the dinner provided here, I recommend you to adjern afterwards to the skool tuckshop, where a cupple of pork-pies and half a duzen ham-patties will doubtless fill the aching void!"

"So that's the game, is it?" sneered Burleigh. "In breef, sir, you are trying to starve us, so that we shall be forced to buy extra grub at the tuckshop, and so add to your ill-gotten prophets!"

"Shame!" went up a cry from a hundred throats; and then a storm of booing and hissing broke out.

"Stop!" The Head was on his feet, skowling furiously. "How dare you hiss your headmaster, you disrespectful young caddis? Another sound, and I'll birch the whole skool black and blue—bust me if I won't!"

The Head glared round like a tiger on the warpath, and the skool became silent, cowed by his majestick wrath.

"May we get on with this sumptuous repast now, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham in fawning tones.

"You may do so when I have addressed a few words to these ungrateful young rebbels!" answered the Head loftily. Turning to the assemblled skool, he went on: "Boys, you have just listened to a shocking display of disper-tinence, not to say downright cheek, from the kaptin of the skool! The best answer I can give to his whining complaints takes the form of one little word containing five letters: 'Ratts!' That's all I have to say in the matter, eggsept to mention that the tuckshop will be open again as soon as dinner is finished. You may now feed your faces!"

So saying, Dr. Birchermall sat down.



"So your game is to starve us so that we shall be forced to add to your ill-gotten gains by buying extra grub at the tuckshop!" said Burleigh fiercely.

And in a buzz of indignant talk, the froogal meal prosceeded.

As soon as this mockery of a dinner was over there was a rush to the tuckshop, for everybody felt ravvenous. Dr. Birchermall and Mr. Lickham, who had left the dining-hall before the rest, were waiting behind the counter, and for the next hour they had a really bizzy time. Even those who had sworn to starve rather than patronise the tuckshop turned up.

The jeneral indignation grew stronger and stronger as the fellows eggsperienced the Head's revised prices.

Doenutts and jam-puffs, which were usually tuppence each, had now gone up to fourpence. Sixpenny ham-patties were now a shilling, and shilling pork-pies two shillings.

It really was a bit thick. Everybody was agreed on that point.

By the time the evening arrived most of the fellows were roofully counting up their cash, and wondering how much longer they could eggsist if the prezzent state of affairs continued.

While they were engaged in those unplezzant reflecktions, the Head and Mr. Lickham, behind the bolted door of the tuckshop, were sitting down to a feed that would have satsified fifty ordinary jentleman.

"Well, sir," remarked Mr. Lickham, as he skoffed a tin of ox-tung, "I really must congratulate you on the wonderful improvement you have made in to-day's trade!"

"It's simply a matter of branes, Lickham, that's all," eggsplained Dr. Birchermall. "Modesty forbids me to say any more, so I will get on with this eggcellent chicken insted."

And the Head prosceeded to do so, while Mr. Lickham seezed a dish of chocklit merangs and set about polishing them off in double-quick time.

But though they didn't know it, Nemmysis was on their track. Something was soon going to happen that would put a sudden end to the happy dream of the two greedy old fogeys.

THE END.

(There'll be another fine yarn in this uproarious series next Saturday, chums, entitled: "BOWLING OUT THE HEAD!" If you miss it, you'll feel like kicking yourselves!)

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Great eggscitement rained outside the tuckshop when Jack Jolly & Co. arrived to find the door closed to them.





(Continued from page 13.)

Greene. "What on earth could have made Coker do it?"

"What on earth makes Coker do anything?" asked Potter. "Is there ever any sense in anything he does?"

"Well, no," admitted Greene. "But this is the jolly old limit! A Fifth Form man ragging and inking a master—"

"He's asked for it," said Potter. "It's good-bye to Coker. Let's go and tell the fellows."

And Potter and Greene went to tell the fellows. Long before Coker of the Fifth arrived at the Head's study, all Greyfriars knew that the perpetrator of the mysterious outrage had been discovered.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Startling News!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter fairly shrieked. Bunter inserted his fat face and big spectacles into the doorway of Study No. 1, blazing with excitement.

"I—I—I say—" shrieked Bunter.

Wharton and Nugent were at prep in Study No. 1. They were not, however, giving a lot of attention to prep. There were other matters on their minds; pressing and worrying matters. So far, the inquiry into the mysterious outrage in the quad had not arrived anywhere near the six who were so nearly in the soup. But no member of the hapless half-dozen could feel easy in his mind in the present state of affairs.

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!" growled the captain of the Remove.

Bunter was not persona grata in Study No. 1 just then. Bunter was the root of the whole trouble. Had Bunter taken his licking without making such a fuss, the heroes of the Remove would not have sought to avenge him on James Walker, and that deplorable mistake in the fog would never have happened.

"Get out, fatty!" snapped Nugent. "I jolly well wish Walker had given you a dozen instead of six!"

"I say, you fellows," howled Bunter, "they've got him!"

"What—what—"

"Coker!" yelled Bunter.

"Blow Coker! Who's going to bother about Coker?" growled Wharton.

"Coker can go and eat coke!"

"It's come out!" roared Bunter.

"What's come out, fathead?"

"Coker did it!"

"What on earth has Coker done now?" asked Wharton, faintly interested at last. "He's always doing something fatheaded. Who is it this time?"

"He ragged Mossoo—"

"What?"

"And inked him—"

"Eh?"

"And Prout's found him out!" gasped Bunter. "Fancy it being Coker all the time! Nobody suspected

that it was a Fifth Form man! But Prout found him out somehow. They've got him."

Wharton and Nugent leaped to their feet.

They stared at the Owl of the Remove in utter consternation.

"They—they—they think it was Coker!" babbled Nugent.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Wharton.

"They know it was, and they've jolly well got him!" grinned Bunter. "Coker had a row in class with Mossoo yesterday, I hear, and Mossoo threatened to report him to the Head. That's why he did it."

"Oh crumbs!"

"The Fifth are fairly buzzing with it! I say, you fellows, I saw Coker being taken to the Head's study. Prout was taking him. He looked as black as thunder—"

"Coker did?"

"No; Prout. Of course, he doesn't like the chap to be found in his Form. Rather a let-down for Prout!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, he's got a spot of the purple ink on the tip of his nose—"

"Prout has?"

"No; Coker."

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" groaned Nugent. "Who'd have expected this?"

"I heard a fellow say he's got ink splashed over him in a dozen places," said Bunter. "Must have splashed himself, you know, when he was dousing Mossoo with it. Awful ass not to wash it off afterwards. But I suppose he never noticed it—Coker never sees anything! I dare say that's how they found him out."

"Found him out!" repeated Wharton blankly.

"Yes; he's gone to the Head to be sacked—"

"Sacked!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"Of course. Think they'd let off a fellow who ragged a master like that? Of course they wouldn't. It's bunking for Coker."

"But—but—but he never did it!" shrieked Nugent.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Eh! Of course he did it! He's found out—"

"That ass Prout—" groaned Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, you needn't worry about Coker," said Bunter. "Of course, he's a silly ass; but he was rather a brute to rag Mossoo like that! I said all along that the fellows who handled Mossoo must have been beasts—"

"You fat idiot!"

"Awful rotters, you know!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "Absolutely outside cads, in my opinion!"

"You burbling bandersnatch—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Look here, is it true that they've got Coker, and think that he did it?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Haven't I just told you so? I saw him being taken to the Head to be sacked! Serve him right! Handling Mossoo like that was rotten—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Mean—"

"Get out!"

"Blackguardly—"

Wharton picked up the inkpot from the table; and William George Bunter hastily retired, to spread his startling news along the Remove passage.

Prep was going on in the Remove studies. But not much attention was given to prep when the news spread. The whole Form buzzed with excitement at the tidings that the unknown, mysterious ragger had been caught.

Wharton and Nugent looked at each other in something like horror.

"Who'd have thought it?" gasped Wharton at last.

"That idiot Coker! He was bound to butt in somehow! Fancy his being ass enough to get himself suspected!"

"Isn't he ass enough for anything? But—but—but they can't sack him when he never did it!"

"If—if they do—"

"Oh crumbs! If—if they do we shall have to own up!"

"Oh dear!"

There were footsteps in the Remove passage. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Peter Todd came into the study. Their faces wore looks of utter dismay.

"You—you've heard—" stammered Bob.

"Yes."

"What on earth is going to happen now?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Goodness knows!"

"The knowfulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But it seems to me that all the esteemed fatfulness is in the absurd fire!"

The juniors looked at one another in doubt and dismay. Hitherto it had seemed only necessary to keep the secret closely. It had never even occurred to them that suspicion might fall upon an innocent person. There was no reason why it should; for if there was no clue to the guilty parties, how could there be a clue to parties who were not guilty?

But now—

The six in the secret were in a most uncomfortable position. Suspicion, for some inexplicable reason, had fallen on Coker of the Fifth! He had been taken before the Head! If he was adjudged guilty, he would be sacked. There was no doubt about that. And if it came to that pass, the six had to speak out. There was no doubt of that either. No fellow with a rag of honour could keep silent, and let another fellow be punished in his place.

"Oh, crikey!" said Peter Todd, at last. "We're in the soup this time, and no jolly old mistake."

"And you put us there, you crass ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Look here—"

"Let's go down," said Harry. "It mayn't be as bad as it looks. Even if they suspect Coker, they can't prove that he did something he never did do."

"You never can tell," said Bob gloomily. "You see, in a case like this, they're simply bound to get somebody. And that idiot Coker has done something to make them suspect him. I've heard that he had a row with Mossoo yesterday—Coker's always in some shindy or other. That may have done it. If—if—if he gets bunked—"

"We couldn't let it go to that."

"No fear; but—but—"

"But the bunkfulness of our esteemed selves would not be a boonful blessing," said Hurree Singh ruefully.

"If I'm bunked," said Johnny Bull grimly, "I'll jolly well mop up Greyfriars with that idiot Toddy before I go."

"Look here—"

"Oh, let's go down," said Wharton. "For goodness' sake, let's get the latest news, anyhow."

The worried half dozen left the study and went down. They found the stairs crowded with Remove men.

At the foot of the staircase appeared the tall, angular form of Mr. Quelch. He was frowning up at the juniors.

"What does this mean?" demanded the Remove master. "Why have you boys left your preparation?"

"We—we've heard that they've found



the fellow who ragged Mossoo, sir," said Skinner. "Is it true, sir?"

"That is no reason why you should leave your preparation, Skinner," said Mr. Quelch. "But it certainly is true that a boy of the Fifth Form has been taken before the Head for inquiry."

"Coker, sir?" asked Snoop.

"Yes, Coker! Now go back to your studies."

"I say, you fellows, he had a spot of the ink on his nose—"

"Silence! Go back to preparation at once."

There was no gainsaying Mr. Quelch. The Remove trooped back to their own quarters. But there was little more prep done in the Remove studies. The passage was in a buzz from end to end, with discussion of the latest excitement, and surmises as to Coker's probable fate. Billy Bunter declared that he had suspected Coker all along, and Skinner remarked that he wasn't surprised to hear that it was Coker. In Study No. 1, six fellows with a secret discussed the matter with even more heartfelt interest than the rest of the Remove. Even Coker himself could not have been more anxious concerning his fate.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Merely a Misunderstanding!

"COKER!" Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon Coker of the Fifth, as he was shepherded into the study by his Form master.

Coker was quite calm.

Mr. Prout, on the other hand, was flurried and flustered, as well as indignant and wrathful. No Form master at Greyfriars was willing to admit that the author of the outrage could possibly be in his Form. Yet it was certain that the delinquent was in some Form. Prout had felt most certain of all that the Fifth were not concerned in it. True, he had had a lingering doubt of Coker—knowing Coker of old. But even Coker, Prout considered, was not capable of this. It was merely to carry out the headmaster's instructions, that Prout had questioned the Fifth at all. His discovery of Coker with the purple stains of guilt upon him, was a blow to the master of the Fifth.

Dr. Locke observed those stains at the first glance, and his brow grew very stern.

"Coker!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir!" said Coker cheerfully.

"What does this mean, Coker?"

"I don't know, sir!" answered Coker. "Mr. Prout asked me to come here, sir. That's all I know."

"I regret, sir!" boomed Prout. "I regret to say that it would appear that Coker knows something of this lamentable matter. I have brought him here for you to deal with, sir. I have no excuse to offer for him. I can only say that I am ashamed to have such a boy in my Form."

"Oh, draw it mild, sir!" remonstrated Coker.

"What, what?"

"Draw it mild, sir! I can tell you—"

"Silence, Coker!" rapped out the Head. "I gather that you know something of the outrage that took place in the quadrangle, of which Monsieur Charpentier was the victim."

Coker smiled complacently.

"I think I do, sir."

"The evidence of his guilt is upon him, sir," said Mr. Prout heavily. "I'm sorry to say that there can be little doubt."

"So it would appear," assented the Head.

Coker looked bewildered for a moment.

"I don't quite know what Mr. Prout means, sir," he said.

"I spoke of your guilt, wretched boy!" boomed Prout.

"I don't see anything guilty in what I've done, sir," answered Coker, with spirit. "Nothing of the kind."

"Are you in your right senses, Coker?" gasped Mr. Prout. "You see no guilt in what you have done?"

"None whatever, sir."

"I leave him in your hands, Dr. Locke!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, as if in despair. "I leave him to you, sir."

"Coker!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"The stains of purple ink, which I perceive upon you in several places, leave only one conclusion for me to draw."

Coker glanced down at himself.

"Yes, I'm rather stained, sir," he admitted. "That was rather unavoidable, in the circumstances. You can't handle such stuff as indelible marking-ink without getting a stain or two."

"You admit having handled the fluid you refer to?"

"Of course, sir!" said Coker in surprise. "Why shouldn't I?"

"It was your intention, then, to make a full confession?" asked the Head, unbending a little.

"I should hardly call it a confession, sir," said Coker; "I should call it a statement."

"What you term it, is immaterial," said the Head. "The fact is enough! This purple ink, with which you are stained in several places, is, I am to conclude, the same with which Monsieur Charpentier was drenched?"

"That is so, sir."

"And why," said the Head, in a deep voice, "why did you do this, unhappy boy?"

Again Coker looked bewildered.

"I considered it up to me, sir," he said.

"You — you — considered — what — what?"

"Nobody else, so far as I can see, had the brains for it," explained Coker. "I took the matter in hand for that reason."

"Is this boy sane?" asked the Head, addressing space.

"Really, sir—" said Coker warmly.

"The boy is an utter fool, sir," said Mr. Prout. "Let it be remembered, in extenuation of what he has done, that he is an absolute and incorrigible fool, sir."

"Look here—" gasped Coker.

"Coker, you admit what you have done?" demanded the Head.

"Certainly, sir! There's no secret about it. I was just going to tell Potter and Greene, when Mr. Prout came into my study. I don't mind all Greyfriars knowing. Why should I?"

"This is extraordinary," said the Head, "most extraordinary. However, as the matter now admits of no doubt, it remains only for me to pass sentence upon this member of your Form, Mr. Prout."

"Quite so, sir!" said Mr. Prout.

"Coker," said the Head, in a deep and thrilling voice. "You are expelled from—"

Coker jumped.

"—from this school. Expelled in all ignominy," said the Head. "You will leave Greyfriars—"

"Leave Greyfriars?" stuttered Coker. "Immediately—"

"But — but — but—" articulated Coker.

Dr. Locke waved his hand.

"You admit your guilt! There are no extenuating circumstances! You are a disgrace to the school! You will leave—"

"But, sir—but—"

"Take this boy away, Mr. Prout!

See that he packs his box and that he leaves the school by the earliest possible train in the morning."

"In—in—the morning?" gasped Coker.

"But for consideration for your relatives, Coker, I would send you away this very night!" said the Head sternly.

"Take him away, Mr. Prout!"

"Certainly, sir! Allow me, sir, to express my regret that a member of my Form should so have disgraced his school! In all my career as a Form master—"

"Quite so, Mr. Prout. Please remove him!"

"Follow me, Coker!" boomed Prout.

Prout strode to the door. Coker's bewildered gaze followed him; but that was all. Coker himself remained where he was.

"You hear me, Coker?" boomed Prout, from the door.

Coker did not heed him. He turned his bewildered gaze on the stern face of the headmaster.

"Dr. Locke—"

"Enough! Follow Mr. Prout, Coker!"

"But what—"

"I desire to hear nothing more from you, Coker! You can add nothing to your confession! Go!"

"But, sir—"

"I repeat, Coker, that I desire to hear nothing more. You are expelled from Greyfriars for what you have done. That is all."

"But—but you don't know what I've done yet, sir!" stuttered Coker. "I was going to tell you, sir, but I haven't told you yet."

"Are you insane, Coker? You have confessed to the outrageous assault upon Monsieur Charpentier—"

Coker jumped almost clear of the floor.

"What?" he roared.

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head.

"You need add nothing to your confession, or statement, as you choose to call it; the matter is closed. Go!"

"But I haven't—" howled Coker.

"Enough!"

"I didn't—"

"Silence!"

"Follow me, Coker!" boomed Prout.

"I won't!" roared Coker. "Think I'm going to be sacked for what I haven't done, when I was trying to find out who did it? No fear! I never touched old Mossoo! I can't imagine what's put it into your head! Looks to me as if you've gone potty—"

"Coker!"

"I never touched Mossoo!" roared Coker. "I never ragged the little ass! As if I would! What on earth made you think I did?"

The Head gave Coker a startled look. It dawned on him that there was a misunderstanding of some sort. Mr. Prout gazed at Coker like one bereft of speech. Coker stared at one, then at the other. Wrath and indignation gathered in his rugged face.

"My hat! Me!" he ejaculated. "Well, I like that! Me! Why, that must be what those asses Potter and Greene were thinking! They stared at me like a pair of stuck pigs! Great pip! I—"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout. "This—this boy is too much for me! A mental home—"

"There appears to have been some misunderstanding, owing, doubtless, to the crass obtuseness of this extraordinary boy," said the Head gently. "We must inquire further, Mr. Prout."

"I should jolly well say so!" gasped Coker.

And the Head proceeded to inquire further.



## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

## Coker's Clues:

**H**ORACE COKER blinked at the Head. The Head stared sternly at Horace Coker. Mr. Prout stood silent. His expression indicated that he gave Coker up as a problem beyond his solving.

"Coker," said the Head, at last, "answer my questions, and, so far as possible, answer them sensibly. Did you, or did you not, have a hand in the assault upon Monsieur Charpentier?"

"Certainly not!" gasped Coker.

"Then why did you confess that you did?"

"I—I didn't!" gasped Coker.

"Your words could have implied nothing else!" snapped the Head.

"You are stained with purple ink; and you have admitted that it is the same ink with which Monsieur Charpentier was drenched by an unknown hand."

"That's so, sir. But—"

"Where did you receive these stains, Coker?"

"On the spot where Mossoo was ragged, sir," answered Coker.

"You were there?"

"Certainly."

"Then you witnessed the assault?"

"Oh, no, sir! I mean, I was there later."

"Later?" said the Head. "For goodness' sake, Coker, reflect before you speak, and answer me like a sane person. Do you mean that you visited the spot some time after the assault?"

"That's it, sir," said Coker. "I must have picked up these stains in following up my investigations."

"Your what?" articulated the Head.

"Investigations, sir," said Coker.

"I fail to apprehend your meaning. But no matter. You distinctly admitted that you knew more about this occurrence than any other person at Greyfriars. Inform me at once what you know of it."

"That's what I want to do, sir," said Coker. "I feel, in the circumstances, that I'm bound to help, being the only fellow in the school able to do so. If you'll let me explain, sir—"

"I am waiting for you to do so, Coker," rapped the Head, "and I warn you that you are wasting my time!"

"Well, sir, my time's of value, too," said Coker innocently. "But I'd like to tell you what I've done, sir. I don't know whether you ever read detective novels, sir—"

"Detective novels!" repeated the Head, as if he could hardly believe his ears.

"Yes, sir, I read a lot—such as the 'Clue of the Twisted Chimney-Pot,' and 'The Sign of the Scarlet Stain,' and the 'Secret of the Blood-Stained Beer-Barrel,' and—"

"You absurd boy, what—"

"And I've often thought, sir, that I should shine as a detective," said Coker modestly. "That's why I took this matter up. Here, I said to myself, is a mystery that beats all Greyfriars. The Form masters don't know how to handle it, the prefects are done in, the Head himself is flummoxed."

"What?"

"Flummoxed, sir! Well, what I said to myself was this—I'll handle it," said Coker. "So I went to the spot to take up my investigations, sir. I made a thorough investigation on the spot, sir, and picked up some clues."

"Bless my soul!"

"A mental home," murmured Mr. Prout. "A mental home!"

"The ink that was mopped over Mossoo," continued Coker, "was a purple marking-ink, sold in a bottle."

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Now, sir, a fellow swamping purple ink over a man's chivy is very likely to get some on himself. That's the first clue. Then there's the bottle. That's the second. Find a fellow stained with purple marking-ink—"

"You are stained with purple marking-ink, Coker!" said the Head, in a grinding voice.

"Oh!" ejaculated Coker. "My hat! Was—was that why Mr. Prout brought me here sir? Oh crumbs!"

Light was dawning on Coker. Even Coker's powerful brain was not totally impervious to impressions from without.

"It was!" boomed Prout. "You incredibly stupid boy—"

"Of course, I don't count, sir," said Coker, recovering himself. "Any detective might get bloodstains on him, for instance, in following up a murder mystery. Same with this ink. Now, sir, what I propose is this—that you leave the matter in my hands."

The Head gazed at him.

"I can answer for it, sir, that it will be in capable hands," said Coker. "Following up my clues, I have no doubt whatever that I shall lay hands on the murderer—I mean the ragger—"

Dr. Locke turned to the Fifth-Form master.

"It appears, Mr. Prout, that this foolish and absurd boy has drawn suspicion upon himself, only by thoughtless meddling in a matter that does not concern him," he said. "I am disposed to believe his statement that he is innocent of the assault on Monsieur Charpentier."

"I agree, sir," said Mr. Prout. "It is almost incredible that any boy in his right senses would act as Coker has done. But I am bound to say that my experience of him is that he is capable of that or any other folly."

"We must, at all events, wait for further evidence," said the Head. "In the meantime, you may go, Coker; but you are, to a certain extent, under suspicion."

"I, sir," ejaculated Coker.

"If it should prove that you were the author of the outrage, Coker, you will be expelled from the school. For the present the matter remains in abeyance. Now leave my study."

"But, sir—"

"Not a word more! Take him away, Mr. Prout!" said the Head. "One word, you will take five hundred lines, Coker! You will see that this imposition is duly written out, Mr. Prout."

"Most certainly, sir."

"Now go, Coker!"

"B-b-but—" stuttered Coker.

"Take him away!"

A heavy hand dropped on Coker's shoulder. Mr. Prout marched him from the study, and the door closed.

"Go back to your study, Coker!" said Mr. Prout sternly. "I shall expect your lines to-morrow. I shall consider whether to advise your parents to take you away from Greyfriars, and place you in some suitable home for the mentally deficient. Now go!"

Coker went.

He went in quite a dazed state. He was still dazed when he arrived in his study. Potter and Greene looked at him sadly.

"Sacked?" asked Potter.

"Bunked?" asked Greene.

Coker sat down, or rather collapsed, into a chair. He was quite overcome.

"Don't be a pair of silly idiots," he said. "Of course not. I say, you men, you know that Prout's a fool. But did it ever strike you that the Head was as big a fool as Prout? Well, he is. He fancied that I had something to do with ragging that little ass, Mossoo!"

"Hadn't you?" gasped Potter.

"No, you chump!" roared Coker.

"I—I thought—"

"You frabjous ass! Don't you start thinking, with a brain like yours," said Coker. "My hat, it's a bit hard on an intellectual chap to be surrounded by silly idiots like I am."

"Where did you get stained with that ink, then?" yelled Greene. "We thought, and Prout thought—"

"Set of chumps!" said Coker. "How could I help getting these stains, investigating the mystery on the spot? This is the thanks I get for using my abilities as a detective to clear up a mystery."

"Oh, crikey!" said Potter. "Is that it? Might have known that you'd only been playing the ox—"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Well, you've had a jolly lucky escape," said Greene. "But I suppose the Head knew you were an idiot—"

"We'd better go and tell the fellows this," said Potter. "They're thinking that Coker's sacked. This will make them laugh."

"Laugh!" ejaculated Coker. "What is there to laugh at?"

"Oh, my hat! You can't see anything funny in it?" asked Potter.

"No, you chump!"

"Look in the glass, then!"

And with that parting advice Potter left the study, followed by Greene. Coker stared after them. They were laughing as they went down the passage, and a minute or two later a roar of merriment showed that other Fifth Form men saw something comic in this occurrence. Coker wondered why.

But Coker did not waste much attention on them. Coker had some thinking to do. Ingratitude and misunderstanding might discourage Coker, but could not stop him. Coker had taken up the mystery, and Coker was going to solve it, and thus show all Greyfriars who was who and what was what. Beside the Clue of the Purple Stain, which had almost led to the conviction of Coker himself, there was the Clue of the Missing Bottle. Coker was going to follow up that clue, and lay his finger on the culprit.

At least, that was his intention. Coker was deeply-read in detective fiction, and flattered himself that he knew the whole bag of tricks. It was to be hoped, as he continued his remarkable career as a detective, that he would have better luck with the Clue of the Missing Bottle, than he had had with the Clue of the Purple Stain.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

## The Last Straw!

"PREP?" said Frank Nugent.

"Blow prep!"

"Bless prep!"

"Bother prep!"

The half-dozen juniors in Study No. 1 were not, evidently, in a mood for prep. Nugent, indeed, only made the suggestion in a half-hearted way.

Prep was off. More pressing matters than prep occupied the minds of the Famous Five and Peter Todd.

How matters had gone with Coker was a burning question. The fact that suspicion had fallen upon an innocent fellow was simply disastrous from the point of view of the culprits. Fellows like Skinner and Snoop might have held their peace, and let another man take their medicine. That was impossible to Harry Wharton & Co. But what were they going to do?

"They can't have bagged Coker without any evidence," said Harry. "There must be some sort of grounds—"





Bob Cherry stepped to the study door and opened it quickly. A slight sound there had caught his ear. "Ow!" came a startled gasp, as Billy Bunter rolled headlong into the study. "You fat villain!" roared Wharton. "Listening! Scrag him, chaps!" "I wasn't listening," yelled Bunter. "I don't know that it was you that ragged Mossoo!" (See Chapter 11.)

"Trust that idiot to get into trouble," growled Johnny Bull.

"Bunter says there was purple ink on his silly nose," said Bob Cherry. "He may have been marking his collars or something, and got himself inked. That would be enough to make the beaks suspicious."

"They can't condemn him for nothing," said Frank.

"Nunno. But—"

"I wish we knew," said Harry. "But we can't go down till after prep. We can't tell Quelchy how anxious we are for the giddy verdict."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"One thing's certain," said the captain of the Remove. "If Coker is really in trouble over it, we shall have to own up."

"The ownupfulness will be the proper caper," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But it will be the esteemed sackfulness for us."

"Could they sack six fellows all at once?" asked Bob. "It would be rather a record. More likely a flogging."

"Who wants a flogging?" asked Nugent, with a dismal grin.

"Well, it's better than the push," said Peter Todd. "Besides, Mossoo will be feeling better to-morrow. And he's a good little ass. He may put in a word for us. We can tell him it was all a mistake."

"Not without owning up that we

meant it for a Sixth Form prefect," said Wharton, "and that's jolly serious."

"It's that brute Walker's fault," growled Peter. "If he hadn't licked Bunter for nothing, we shouldn't have gone for him. If it all comes out, we can give our reasons. The Head may think we were justified in ragging a prefect who gave a chap six for nothing."

"Not likely. If it all comes out, we're in the jolly old soup," said Bob Cherry. "The best we can say is that we were going to rag a Sixth Form prefect, and got a master by mistake in the fog. And that—"

Bob broke off suddenly.

He stepped to the study door and opened it quickly. A slight sound there had caught his ear.

"Ow!" came a startled gasp.

Billy Bunter rolled headlong into the study as the door was suddenly opened.

"Bunter!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"You fat villain!" roared Wharton.

"Listening—"

"Scrag him!"

"Burst him!"

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter, "keep off! I wasn't listening! I wasn't anywhere near the keyhole. I—I'd stooped to tie my shoe-lace. I never heard a word you fellows were saying. I don't know that it was you that ragged Mossoo. Ow, keep off!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob. "The fat's in the fire now!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Scrag him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ow, keep off! I ain't going to give you away!" howled Bunter. "I can keep a secret. Besides, I never heard anything. Keep off, you beasts!"

Bob Cherry shut the study door, and put his back to it. The six juniors looked at Bunter as if they could have eaten him.

The dread secret was in Bunter's keeping now. The Peeping Tom of Greyfriars knew all. The position had not been hopeful before, but it was very nearly hopeless now.

"I'm going to smash him," growled Johnny Bull.

Bunter scrambled to his feet.

"Keep off, you beasts! You touch me, and I'll jolly well tell all the fellows about you ragging Mossoo! Yah!"

"You fat rascal!" said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—" Bunter recovered himself a little, and grinned as he blinked at the dismayed juniors through his big spectacles. "Look here, you'd better be civil. Mind, I wasn't listening at the keyhole. I'd scorn such a thing, as you know. I happened to stoop outside the door to pick up a stud. Merely that! I caught a few words by sheer chance—"

"You prying worm!"

"I jolly well knew there was something on," grinned Bunter. "I wondered

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why Toddy was sticking in this study instead of coming back to prep."

"So you came along and listened?" said Bob Cherry savagely.

"Nothing of the sort! I've told you it was sheer chance; I really couldn't help hearing when I stooped near the door to pull up my sock—"

"Well, you know now, you fat scoundrel!" said Bob.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Bunter. "He, he, he! Fancy it being you fellows all the time! He, he, he! What would Quelch say if he knew? I say, you fellows, Coker's going to get sacked for what you did! He, he, he!"

"Is that a laughing matter, you frabjous fathead?"

"Well, it serves Coker right," said Bunter. "He's a rotter! He kicked me yesterday, in his study—making out that I was after his cake. As if I'd touch a fellow's cake. I say, you fellows, what did you rag Mossos for? I thought you liked the little ass."

"We mistook him for Walker, in the fog, fathead."

"He, he, he! Like your cheek to think of ragging a Sixth Form prefect," said Bunter. "It was asking for trouble, and no mistake."

"You fat villain, it was on your account!" hooted Peter Todd. "We were going to rag Walker for giving you six."

"Serve him right," said Bunter. "That's all right, of course, but you must have been silly asses to bag Mossos instead! Pity I wasn't there. I shouldn't have blundered like that, you fellows."

"Look here, you men, perhaps it's just as well that Bunter knows," said Harry. "It looks like all coming out now, and we shall have to own up that we meant it for Walker. Bunter can witness that Walker thrashed him for nothing, and that will help."

"That's so," agreed Nugent.

Billy Bunter looked alarmed.

"I say, you fellows, I'm not going to get a Sixth Form prefect down on me!" he exclaimed. "You leave me out of it, see?"

"It's rather too late for that," said Peter. "You're the cause of the whole trouble, you fat freak! We took up your trouble with Walker, and it's landed us in the soup. You'll have to come with us to the Head and explain that Walker gave you six for butting into him in the fog. It will help."

"But—but Walker will very likely make out that I—I bagged the tarts," stammered Bunter.

"The tarts?" repeated six voices. This was the first Harry Wharton & Co. had heard of the tarts.

It dawned upon them that they were not yet acquainted with the whole of the details of that accident in the fog which had led to so much more serious an accident in the fog.

"I told you Walker was coming away from the tuckshop when I ran into him," said Bunter. "He dropped his parcels. You see, he was bringing in some things for tea in his study. Like a good-natured fellow, I helped him pick them up. You know my good-nature and thoughtful kindness—"

"You bagged Walker's tarts?" gasped Peter.

"No!" roared Bunter. "Nothing of the sort! Helping him pick up his parcels, I picked up the tarts. I thought he couldn't see what I was doing in the fog—I—I mean, I never touched the tarts—never thought of touching them! Not for one moment."

The juniors gazed at Bunter.

"But he saw me," said Bunter. "I mean, he made out that I was scoffing the tarts, and laid into me with his

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ashplant. He gave me six for nothing. Absolutely nothing! As for his measly tarts, I'd have paid for them if he'd asked me! Besides, I never touched them. In fact, I don't believe he had any tarts with him at all. He just said so as an excuse for pitching into me. He's untruthful."

"My only hat!" said Bob.

"I hope you fellows can take my word," said Bunter, with dignity. "Knowing me so well, you can, of course. But if Walker makes out to the Head that I scoffed his tarts, the Head will think he was justified in giving me six. You can see that. And the Head's sure to believe him instead of me. He always backs up the prefects."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter in silence. Walker of the Sixth, after all, had not thrashed Bunter for nothing. He had thrashed him for a good cause. The "six," if reported to the Head, would be fully justified in the opinion of the headmaster.

It was the loss of the last hope of the hapless Co. Had matters been as they had believed, they had some sort of an excuse to offer for what they had done; some explanation, at least.

Now what could they say? That they had been going to rag—not a bad-tempered bully, but a prefect who had administered a deserved and just punishment to a young rascal!

### HOW'S THIS FOR A CLEVER GREYFRIARS LIMERICK, CHUMS?

There's one at Greyfriars who has caught on;  
He's "right there" whenever there's sport on.  
Rarely licked in a fight,  
He's all muscle and might.  
Yes, you've got it! His name's Harry Wharton!

A pocket wallet has been forwarded to: Miss W. P. Gill, of 43, Ormande Road, Hythe, Kent, for the above winning effort!

It was the last straw!

"Well," said Bob Cherry at last, "we're for it now; and I think we deserve it, too! Any fellow who's ass enough to believe Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We know Bunter so well, and we let him take us in!" said Peter Todd. "I actually asked Walker. He was busy writing a letter, or he might have mentioned that Bunter scoffed his tarts—"

"I didn't!" hooted Bunter. "I never touched them! I was helping Walker pick up his things, in my kind-hearted way. He made out that I butted into him on purpose to make him drop the parcels, and that I was after the tuck. Of course, that was only his rotten suspicious mind! You fellows know whether I'm the fellow to touch another fellow's tuck."

"We've been silly asses—" said Bob.

"Glad you can see it," said Bunter. "I've often told you fellows what silly asses you are. You can't say I haven't."

"We've been taken in, and we've made fools of ourselves, and we're in the soup!" said Bob. "But—"

"Keep it dark," said Bunter. "I'll keep the secret for you. Of course, I shall expect you to treat me decently. One good turn deserves another, as I've said before. Mind, I don't approve of your conduct; this ragging is rather a ruffianly sort of thing, in my opinion. Still, I don't expect you fellows to look at things in a high-minded way, as I do. I can make allowances for you. Still,

I'm going to keep it dark for you. What about supper?"

"Supper?"

"Yes; I think you fellows might stand a study supper to a fellow who's protecting you and keeping secret your ruffianly and rather blackguardly conduct. What do you think?"

The chums of the Remove did not tell Bunter what they thought. It seemed to them that it was a time for actions, not for words.

With one accord they fell on William George Bunter and smote him hip and thigh.

"Yarooogh!" roared Bunter. "Keep off! Help! Fire! I'll tell the fellows! I'll tell Quelch! I'll tell the Head! Yarooooooop! I'll go straight to the Head and say— Whooooooop! Yow-ow-ow!"

A dismal, dusty and dilapidated Bunter was deposited in a heap in the Remove passage, and the door slammed on him.

Whether that was the best method of inducing Bunter to keep the secret, might be doubtful. But there was, at least, solace in it. The chums of the Remove were feeling better.

Bunter, to judge by the fearful yells that woke every echo of the Remove passage, was not!

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### THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

#### Caught Bending!

"COKER!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

Coker stared at him.

After prep was—officially—over, Wharton had lost no time in repairing to the Fifth Form passage to inquire concerning the fate of Coker of the Fifth. If, by some horrid mischance, punishment had fallen on Coker for what the juniors had done, nothing remained but to own up; the chums of the Remove were agreed on that. So, naturally, they wanted very much to know what had happened to Coker.

Wharton did not need to go so far as his study. In the Fifth Form passage he came on the great Horace—not looking, certainly, like a fellow who was under sentence of the "sack."

"What do you want?" grunted Coker. "Think I'm a ghost?"

"You're not sacked?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Don't be a young ass!"

"But—but Prout took you to the Head—"

"Prout's an ass, and the Head's another."

"Then you've got off?" exclaimed Wharton in great relief.

Coker stared at him harder. Wharton's relief was evident in his face; and Coker was naturally surprised to see a junior so concerned in his fate.

"Of course I got off!" he grunted. "Prout had a fatheaded idea that I was mixed up in that rag on Mossos, when I was only investigating the matter."

"Investigating it?" repeated Wharton.

"I'm looking into the affair," said Coker loftily. "Nobody else knows what to do, but I fancy I shall clear it up."

"What business is it of yours?" asked Harry.

"Don't be cheeky."

"You can't mind your own business?" inquired the captain of the Remove.

"If you've come here for a licking, Wharton—"

"Well, I'm glad you've got off," said Harry.

"Much obliged!" said Coker sarcastically. "I'm not asking cheeky fags to worry about me that I know of. You'd better cut off, Wharton, before I give you the licking you're asking for."



"Fathead!" answered Wharton cheerfully.

And he cut off, to carry the welcome tidings to his chums in the Rag.

All was clear—so far as Coker of the Fifth was concerned. The secret six were not under the painful necessity of owning up. Unfortunately, their discussion of the matter had been overheard by Billy Bunter, and there were now seven in the secret.

A secret in Bunter's keeping was in a rather precarious position. But the chums of the Remove hoped for the best. Dire threats of what would happen to him if he breathed a word had some effect on William George Bunter. It was only to be hoped that that effect would be lasting.

After all, the affair would blow over in time. In a few days, if the culprits were not discovered, the excitement would die away and the inquiry slacken. Mossoo's mottled complexion would, in the course of time, wash off, and his equanimity would be restored. Something else would happen to take the general attention off the subject.

Harry Wharton & Co. went to their dormitory that night in a rather relieved and more comfortable frame of mind.

Morning dawned on Greyfriars clear and bright. The fog, which had caused so much trouble to various members of the Greyfriars community, had cleared off in the night. Harry Wharton & Co. went down cheerfully into the bright winter sunshine in the quad.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter, as they left the dormitory.

They did not heed Bunter.

"I fancy it's all right, you men," said Peter Todd, coming up to the Famous Five in the quad. "Nothing's come out, and they've not dropped on anybody since Coker. Of course, that born idiot asked for it. So long as Bunter keeps his mouth shut, we're all right."

"But will he?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"If he opens it we'll jolly well scrag him, anyhow. As he knows that, he may keep it shut."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Coker!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What the thump is he up to?"

"Potty," suggested Frank Nugent. "I've always thought Coker had rather a screw loose! Looks like it."

The juniors gazed at Coker. They had supposed that they were first down that morning, but obviously Horace Coker was also an early riser. His proceedings were undoubtedly strange and mysterious.

Coker was moving about in a stooping attitude, bent almost double. His eyes were fixed on the ground, as if in search of something. He moved along slowly, scanning the ground. The juniors watched him with interest and surprise.

"Hallo, hallo hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Lost something, Coker?"

Coker straightened up suddenly and stared round at the juniors.

"Oh, you!" he said. "Clear off! I don't want any fags messing around."

"Have you bought the quad?" asked Frank.

Coker frowned.

"Clear off, I tell you! Hold on, though," added Coker, as an after-thought struck him. "Perhaps you can help. I'm looking for something."

"What is it?"

"A bottle," said Coker mysteriously.

"A bottle?" ejaculated the six juniors.

"Yes."

"I'm surprised at you, Coker," said Bob Cherry gravely. "Have you taken to drink in your old age? Was it whisky or gin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker stared at them,

"You young asses, what do you mean? It's a small bottle—a bottle that contained marking-ink. It's a clue."

"A—a—clue?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. I don't mind letting you into it," said Coker condescendingly. "You're a cheeky little beast, but I don't suspect you of having had a hand in ragging Mossoo."

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You—you don't?"

"No," said Coker. "Disrespectful little rotters as you are, you wouldn't do a thing like that."

"Thanks!" said Harry Wharton gravely.

"I'm after the gang that did it," explained Coker. "I'm looking for a clue at the present moment—the clue of the ink bottle. See?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Mossoo was drenched with purple marking-ink," said Coker. "The ink must have been in a bottle—"

"Did you work that out in your head, Coker?" asked Bob Cherry, with owl-like gravity.

"Yes; I've got rather a brain for problems of this sort," said Coker.

He was quite good-humoured now. Coker liked an audience, and Potter and Greene had refused—quite rudely—to turn out before rising-bell and accompany him in his investigations that morning. Coker liked to talk, and fags were better than nothing in the way of hearers. And when Coker was playing Sherlock Holmes, he naturally felt the need of a Dr. Watson to admire his cleverness. So the great Horace proceeded to expound: "The ink was in a bottle! You see, it's sold in bottles."

"I see!" said Bob, with a nod. "Do you fellows see?"

"The seefulness is terrific."

"Well, the bottle was in the hand of the fellow who inked Mossoo," said Coker. "The question arises, what did he do with it?"

The Famous Five involuntarily glanced at Peter Todd. Peter grinned.

"I fancy the fellow would chuck it away first thing," suggested Toddy. and the Famous Five grinned, too.

"That's it," said Coker. "Well, if he chucked it away, as I deduce, it's somewhere about."

"It would be!" agreed Wharton. "Unless it was chucked away so hard that it fell right outside the solar system, it's bound to be somewhere about."

"Eh? Exactly," said Coker. "Well, I'm going to find that bottle. It's a clue to the gang."

"The—the gang?"

"Yes. This outrage was the work of a gang," said Coker.

"Oh crumbs!"

"A gang of dastardly young ruffians," said Coker. "I'm sure you think the same about them as I do—absolutely ruffianly young scoundrels."

"Oh!"

"It's a fellow's duty to root them out and show them up," said Coker. "The sooner they're expelled from the school the better. You see that?"

"Oh! Ah, quite!"

"The quitefulness is terrific."

"Well, that's my job," said Coker. "Nobody else at Greyfriars has the brains to do it. So it's up to me."

"Nobody else at Greyfriars has brains quite like yours, Coker," said Bob, with conviction.

"I don't brag of it," said Coker modestly. "It just happens! But being, as it happens, the only brainy man in the school, I feel that this is up to me."

The chums of the Remove suppressed their emotions. It was not easy to keep serious faces while Horace Coker was talking. But they managed it.

"But suppose you find the bottle?" said Harry. "Aren't ink-bottles much alike? Lots of fellows have bottles of marking-ink, and they naturally throw the bottles away when they've done with them."

"That depends," said Coker. "There may be finger-marks on the bottle."

"Finger-marks?"

"You kids, of course, don't know much about detective work," said Coker, with lofty condescension. "I've rather studied it. Lots of criminals are traced by finger-marks. They keep volumes and volumes of finger-marks at Scotland Yard. There's a scientific theory that no two men's finger-marks are exactly alike. There's a possibility, of course, that an error may creep in,

(Continued on next page.)



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but you can take it from me this is very seldom the case. Broadly speaking, you can put your shirt on a finger-mark clue."

"Wonderful!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Marvellous!" said Nugent.

Coker nodded and smiled. His opinion of these cheeky fags was rising. Apparently they could see what a wonderfully clever fellow Coker was.

"And how will you identify the finger-marks?" asked Wharton. "Don't they have to be photographed and magnified or something like that? Are you going to take finger impressions of every fellow at Greyfriars, to compare them?"

Coker paused a moment. Apparently he had not thought that part out yet.

The six regarded Coker with cheery interest. If Coker's success depended on finger-print clues, they did not think that the "gang" had much to fear from Coker's detective work.

"One thing at a time, you know," said Coker. "The first thing is to find the bottle. You fags can help me, if you like. I'm sure you feel as keen as I do to show up that rascally gang."

"Hem!"

"Well, there's no time to waste," said Coker. "Let's get going."

And Coker resumed his bending attitude and moved along, scanning the ground inch by inch.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another, and looked at Coker. The temptation was irresistible. Horace Coker seemed to have placed himself deliberately in a favourable position for a goal-kick.

With his back to the Famous Five, bending double, Horace Coker moved along, scanning the ground before him.

After him moved the Famous Five.

"Who's taking this goal?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You, old bean. You've got the biggest feet."

There was a suppressed chuckle.

Bob Cherry broke into a run and arrived behind Coker. He let out a large size in boots.

Crash!

"Yaroooop!" roared Coker, as he sprawled, head foremost. "Whooop! What—Oh, my hat! Yarooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

Coker sprawled and roared.

"Hook it!" gasped Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The six juniors promptly hooked it. Coker roared and bellowed, and scrambled to his feet, and glared round with a homicidal glare. Harry Wharton & Co. were vanishing into the distant Cloisters.

"I—I—I'll—!" gasped Coker.

He made a stride in pursuit, but checked himself. His detective work claimed him; and there was not much more time before a crowd of fellows would be swarming into the quad. Coker suppressed his just wrath and resumed his search for the clue of the missing bottle.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Cat out of the Bag!

**B**ILLY BUNTER blinked round him through his big spectacles and grunted.

"Beasts!"

Bunter had rolled out of the House to look for the Famous Five. He did not see them.

He could see Coker of the Fifth rooting about the quad, giving rather the impression of a dog in search of a hidden bone. But he did not heed Coker of the Fifth. He did not even know

that Coker was exercising his wonderful abilities as a detective. He merely wondered, for a moment, why Coker was playing the goat. It was the Famous Five that Bunter wanted.

They did not seem to want Bunter. If they saw him they eluded him. Bunter rolled in search of them.

Bunter was expecting a postal-order that day. There was a possibility—Bunter admitted the possibility—that it mightn't come. In which case, and in the peculiar circumstances, Bunter saw no reason why the chums of the Remove should not cash that postal-order for him, before it came. He felt that it was up to them, in the circumstances, and that was what he wanted to see them about.

This was an important matter—to Bunter, at least. So he rolled hither and thither, looking for the Famous Five. Thus it was, by pure chance, that Bunter's eye caught a gleam on the earth in the morning sunlight, under the elms, which attracted his attention at once. If someone had dropped a shilling or a half-crown, Bunter was prepared to take charge of the coin till the owner should be found—though not prepared, perhaps, to make any very desperate efforts to find the owner.

But it was not a shilling, or a half-crown, or a coin at all, that caught the gleam of the sun. Bunter, bending down and blinking at the shining object through his spectacles, gave a grunt of disgust as he discerned that it was glass—a small bottle.

Then he grinned.

It was a small, empty bottle, lacking a cork, and from the label on it, and its inky state, it had evidently contained purple marking-ink.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

Obviously, it was the bottle that the ragers had thrown away, after drenching Monsieur Charpentier with the contents.

Bunter picked it up.

"That's Toddy's bottle!" murmured Bunter. "I remember seeing it in the study yesterday. Of course, I'm not going to give Toddy away—I wouldn't! Still, it's evidence!"

Bunter grinned.

It was likely enough that those ungrateful beasts might refuse to admit that one good turn deserved another. Bunter considered that the possession of this "evidence" strengthened his claim for the cashing of his postal-order.

With the bottle in his hand, he rolled on, looking for the chums of the Remove. A sudden grasp fell on his fat shoulder.

"Got you!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, spinning round.

He found himself in the grasp of Coker of the Fifth.

"Ow! Leggo, you beast!" howled Bunter indignantly. "Wharrer you collaring me for?"

"Got you!" repeated Coker, with satisfaction. His eyes fairly gloated on the bottle in Bunter's hand. "You're up early this morning, Bunter."

"No bizney of yours," said Bunter. "Leggo!"

"You didn't get up specially early to get rid of that bottle?" asked Coker banteringly.

"Eh? No."

"Of course not," said Coker, with deep sarcasm. "You're the laziest young sweep in the Lower Fourth, and you never turn out till the latest possible minute, but you're up early this morning—"

"I'm looking for some fellows. It's important!"

"You may as well speak the truth," said Coker calmly. "I've got you, and

you may as well own up. You got up early to throw that bottle away in a safe place."

"You silly ass! I picked it up in the quad—"

"Pile it on," said Coker, still sarcastic. "But you'd better confess, Bunter. Who helped you in that rag on Monsieur Charpentier? It was the work of a gang, I know that. Who were the others?"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Bunter.

"You were one of them," said Coker. "That's proved, by your getting up early to get rid of that evidence—"

Coker had already deduced that the ragger had thrown the bottle away, hence his search in the quad. But he was prepared to change his deductions to suit the circumstances of the case. Theories, after all, have to fit the facts; and the fact was that Bunter had got up early to get rid of incriminating evidence. That was perfectly clear—to Coker, at least.

"Who were the others?" demanded Coker.

"There—there weren't any others," gasped Bunter.

"Mean to say you ragged Mossoo on your own?" demanded Coker.

"No," howled Bunter. "You silly ass, I had nothing to do with it."

"Cheese it!" said Coker. "I've been following up the clue of the missing bottle, and it's led to you. There's no doubt about the matter. You're coming to the Head."

"Yarooooh!"

"This way!" said the victorious detective of the Fifth, and he jerked the Owl of the Remove towards the House.

"Yow-ow ow! Help!"

"Come on, you fat villain!"

Bunter had no choice about coming on. Coker whisked him away towards the House at express speed.

"I didn't!" shrieked Bunter. "I never did! I won't go to the Head! I wasn't! I never! Yarooogh!"

"Come on!" grinned Coker.

He whisked Bunter to the doorway of the House.

"Yaroooogh! Leggo! Help!" yelled Bunter.

"Coker!" An angular figure appeared in the House doorway, and two gimlet eyes fixed sternly on the great man of the Fifth. "Coker! What does this mean? Release Bunter immediately!"

"I've got him, sir!" gasped Coker. "I've tracked him down."

"You have—what?"

"Tracked him, sir! I've solved the mystery."

"The—the mystery?" stammered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, rather, sir. I've looked into the matter, sir, and followed up my clues, and found out that it was Bunter."

"It wasn't!" shrieked Bunter.

"What was Bunter?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Ragged Mossoo, sir—"

"What?" ejaculated the Remove master. "Bunter! Is it possible that you had a hand in the assault upon Monsieur Charpentier?"

"Ow! No. I wasn't—I didn't—"

"I caught him getting rid of the incriminating evidence," said Coker cheerfully. "That bottle—"

"That bottle?"

"Yes, sir, that's the bottle that contained the purple ink that was mopped over Mossoo. Bunter got up early to get rid of it."

"I didn't!" wailed Bunter.

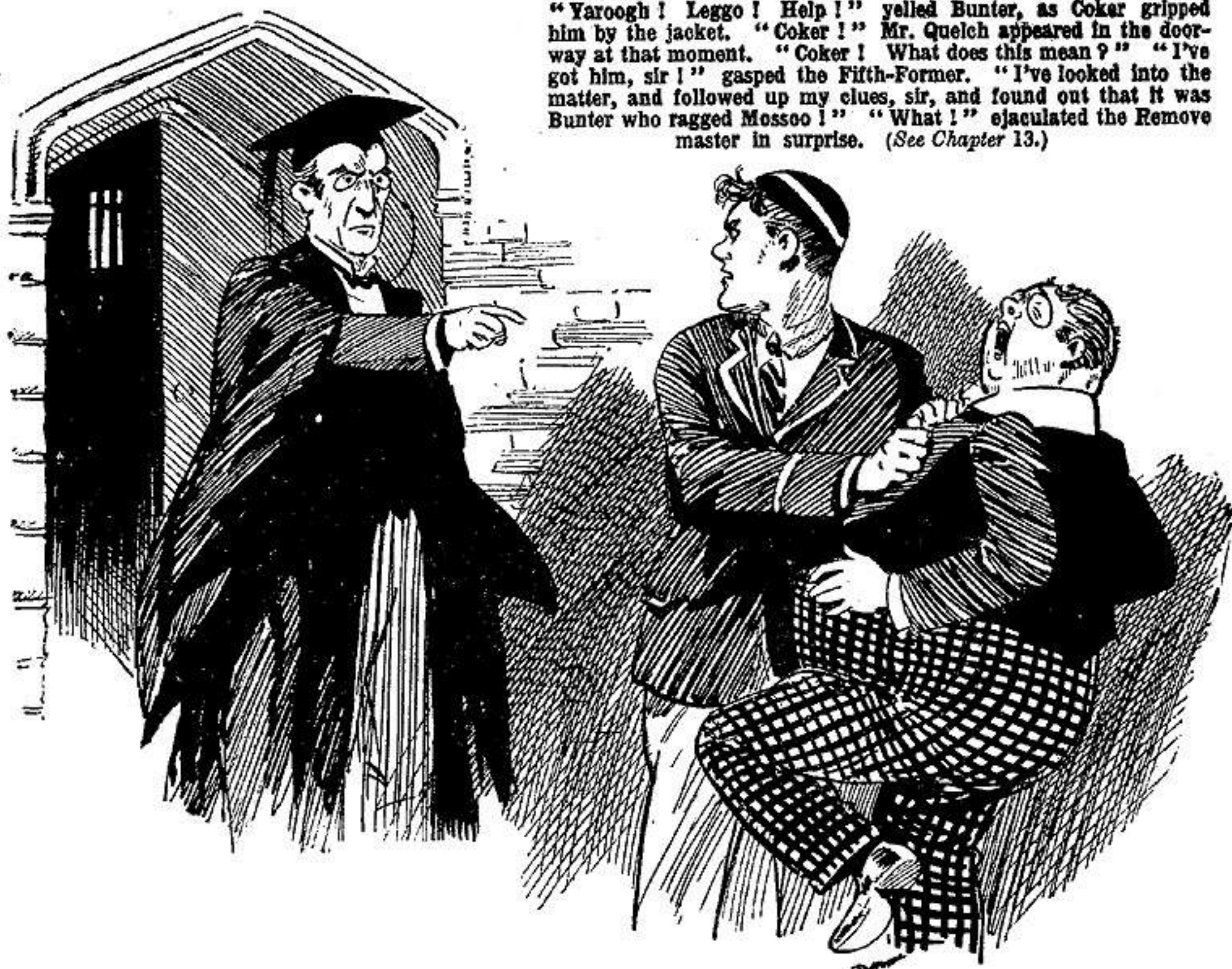
"Where did you obtain that bottle, Bunter?"

"I—I picked it up in the quad, sir."

"Gammon!" said Coker.

"Silence, Coker! If that empty bottle





"Yaroooh! Leggo! Help!" yelled Bunter, as Coker gripped him by the jacket. "Coker!" Mr. Quelch appeared in the doorway at that moment. "Coker! What does this mean?" "I've got him, sir!" gasped the Fifth-Former. "I've looked into the matter, and followed up my clues, sir, and found out that it was Bunter who ragged Mossoo!" "What!" ejaculated the Remove master in surprise. (See Chapter 13.)

was picked up in the quadrangle it would certainly seem to be the one used in the outrage," said Mr. Quelch. "Do you know to whom that bottle belongs, Bunter?"

"I—I—I—"

"Were you concerned in the outrageous attack upon Monsieur Charpentier?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Of course he was, sir!" exclaimed Coker warmly. "I've followed up the clue, and it's led straight to Bunter."

"Bunter, if you were concerned in the outrage—"

"Ow! No. Oh dear! Nothing of the kind, sir!" howled Bunter, in dire terror. "I never knew anything about it, sir, till I heard the fellows who did it talking in the study—I mean—"

"You know who did it, Bunter?"

"Oh, dear! No, sir! I mean, I—I didn't hear them talking in the study, sir. They will tell you the same, sir. They were all there when I heard them—I mean, when I didn't hear them. Ask Wharton, sir!"

"Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in horror. "Is it possible that the head boy of my Form is concerned in this outrage?"

"Nunno! I—I mean—"

"A lot of them were in it, sir," said Coker. "I've already deduced, sir, that it was the work of a gang—"

"Will you kindly cease to make ridiculous remarks, Coker?"

"Eh?"

"Bunter, tell me what you know of the matter immediately. You have named Wharton—"

"I—I mean—I didn't mean—I—I—I don't know anything about the matter, sir," gasped Bunter. "They weren't talking about owning up, sir, when they thought Coker was going to get the

chopper, and I didn't hear them. That—that's what I really meant to say, sir."

"When was this, Bunter?"

"Last evening, sir, when Prout took Coker to the Head," groaned Bunter. "They thought the game was up, and they'd have to own up to save that idiot Coker. I mean—I—I—I mean—"

"You heard a number of boys discussing the outrage that they had themselves committed?"

"Yes, sir! I mean, no, sir! I never heard anything! You see, sir, I wasn't anywhere near the keyhole of Study No. 1. I wouldn't listen, sir. I'm quite incapable of it."

"I shall question Wharton," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I have no doubt that I shall arrive at the truth."

"Oh dear!"

"You repeat that you were not concerned in the outrage, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! All six of them will tell you I wasn't!"

"There were six boys concerned in it?"

"Oh, no! I mean—"

"You need say no more, Bunter. Go! As for you, Coker," said Mr. Quelch, fixing his gimlet eyes on the Fifth Form detective, as Bunter scuttled—"as for you, I can only express my disgust—"

"Eh!"

"My contempt—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"My utter scorn," said Mr. Quelch.

"Tale-bearing, or sneaking as it is called among the boys, is abhorrent to me. You should be ashamed of yourself, Coker!"

Mr. Quelch swept into the House, leaving Coker rooted to the steps, transfixed.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Coker,

He was dumbfounded. Never for a moment had it entered Coker's powerful brain that, in taking up the case and solving the mystery, he was guilty of what the fellows called sneaking. Any other fellow who gave a man away certainly might justly be called a sneak. But Coker was above the considerations that apply to ordinary mortals.

Coker was still breathless with indignation when Potter and Greene came out into the quad, and he joined them.

"What do you fellows think?" gasped Coker. "I've solved that mystery—it's come out that it was Wharton and his gang did it—owing to my masterly deductions—and what do you think? Quelch calls it sneaking!"

Potter and Greene stared at him.

"Well, what do you call it, then?" asked Potter.

"Eh?" gasped Coker.

"Yes, what do you call it?" asked Greene.

"What?"

"If you've given those kids away, you ought to be jolly well kicked!" said Potter.

"And jolly hard!" said Greene.

Coker could not speak; he could only gasp. Potter and Greene walked on, and left him gasping.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vive la France!

"BON jour, mes garçons!"

Monsieur Charpentier smiled—a rather mottled smile—as he greeted the Famous Five.

"Good-morning, sir!" chorused the juniors.

(Continued on page 28.)

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They capped Mossoo very respectfully. Mossoo's complexion showed very visible traces of the purple ink. Soap and water, rubbing and scrubbing, had not quite obliterated his zebra-like appearance.

But Harry Wharton & Co. were careful not to smile. As a matter of fact, they were feeling more concerned than amused. They liked Mossoo, and they respected him, and they would have given anything to undo that unfortunate mistake in the fog.

"I—I hope you—you feel all right, sir, after—" hesitated Bob Cherry.

"Mais oui," said Monsieur Charpentier. "I am terribly shock. I am awfully upset. I am what you call in English, cut down—"

"Cut up, sir," murmured Bob.

"Oui; cut up," assented Mossoo sadly. "It is terrible shock to me, mes garçons, to discover that zere is at zis school persons who dislike me so mooch zat zey tatter me—"

"Rag you, sir," murmured Wharton.

"Ze rag and ze tatter, vat is ze difference?" asked Mossoo. He passed his hand over his mottled countenance. "Zat tattering—zat ragging, in itself, mes garçons, it is nozzing! But it break me ze heart to zink zat I am so dislike—zat I have enemy in zis school! Vat have I done zat somevuns zey should dislike me so much? Hein?"

There was deep trouble in his kind little face.

From the ragging itself Mossoo had recovered. But the thought that a number of fellows in the school regarded him with aversion or hatred was deeply distressing to him.

The juniors exchanged guilty looks.

"I—I—I'm sure, sir," stammered Harry Wharton, "that nobody at Greyfriars does dislike you, sir. Nobody would rag you, sir."

"But I am rag!" said Mossoo. "I am seize—I am attack—I am ink! Nevair I believe him possible; but he happen!"

He shook his head sorrowfully.

"It break me ze heart," he said, with a tremor in his voice. "I zink to myself, if zis is so, I stay no more in zis school! I go to ze Head, and I resign zat post. Oui! Since it is zat I am so dislike in zis school, he is no place for Adolphe Charpentier!"

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Harry.

"In some ozzer school, peut-etre, zey like me bettair," said Mossoo. "In some other school zey will not tatter me—yes!"

Wharton drew a deep breath, and glanced at his chums.

"But, sir, it's a mistake. Nobody does dislike you here—nobody would rag you, sir," he said earnestly. "I—I can assure you, sir, that—that—"

"But he happen," said Monsieur Charpentier sadly.

"It was a mistake, sir," said Harry.

"It was all through the fog. The fellows who ragged you took you for somebody else in the fog, sir."

"You zink?" exclaimed Mossoo, his face brightening.

"I—I'm sure of it, sir."

"Quite sure, sir," said Bob.

"The surefulness is terrific, honoured sahib!"

But Mossoo shook his head again.

"Zat is verree kind of you, mes garçons, to say so to comfort me," he said sadly. "But you zink—you do not know—"

"We do know, sir," said Harry, taking the plunge. "The fact is, sir, we—we know the fellows who did it."

"Mon Dieu!"

Wharton looked at his friends again, and they nodded assent to his unspoken question.

The idea that Mossoo, in his distress at the discovery that he had a number

of supposed enemies in the school, was thinking of leaving Greyfriars, was too much for the juniors. They forgot the risk, for the moment, in their desire to reassure the sensitive little gentleman.

"You know—vous savez!" said Mossoo.

"It was a mistake in the fog, sir," said Harry Wharton. "We—we—we were the fello— who did it, sir!"

"Vous!" ejaculated Monsieur Charpentier, in amazement. He stared blankly at the guilty six.

"Yes, sir," said Peter Todd. "It was all my fault! We were waiting for a fellow, to rag him, and you came along, and we took you for him."

"You see, we couldn't see you in the fog, sir," said Frank Nugent. "If we'd known it was you, sir, we'd never have—"

"The neverfulness is terrific!"

"We were awfully sorry when we heard it was you, sir," said Johnny Bull. "We thought we'd got the fellow we were after, and we found out afterwards—"

"It was an awful mistake, sir," said Harry. "We knew the fellow we were after was coming down to the letter-box—but he never came, after all—and you happened to come, so— We're awfully sorry, sir! It was a wretched mistake!"

Monsieur Charpentier gazed at the juniors in silence. His face was brightening, like the sun coming out from the clouds.

The distress in the faces of the juniors showed how earnest they were. A weight was lifted from Mossoo's mind. The ragging and the mottled complexion remained; but that dreadful thought that he was disliked and detested by a crowd of fellows in the school was gone. And that was what had tormented the sensitive Frenchman.

"We're sorry, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "It was an idiotic mistake! We—we can't say how sorry we are, sir!"

"Mon Dieu!" murmured Mossoo.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bunter came panting up.

"Oh, shut up, Bunter! Clear off!"

"I say, you fellows, it's all out!" gasped Bunter. "I came to give you the tip! Quelch's got on to it!"

"What?"

"That idiot Coker found it out and told Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "I never let out a word! You can rely on that! But it's all out, and Quelch knows who ragged Mossoo—"

"You fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, we're for it, anyhow," said Harry. "As we've already told Mossoo, it doesn't matter much if Quelch knows. We'd better go in and take our gruel, you men."

"Restez!" said Monsieur Charpentier. He smiled genially.

"Mes garçons, you have acted verree foolishly—verree thoughtlessly. But a mistake, he is one mistake—he is not one outrage—he is not one insult! You do not tatter me because you dislike me—"

"Oh, sir! We all like you!" said Bob.

"It is not because you do not respect me?"

"We all respect you, sir," said Frank.

"The respectfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Zen, qu'importe?" said Monsieur Charpentier. "It is one foolish mistake. But zat is nozzings! I forgive him."

"Oh, sir!"

"I am relieve—I am comfort," said Monsieur Charpentier. "It is not zat I

have enemy. It is all one mistake! Consolez-vous, mes garçons. I speak to zat good Mr. Quelch—I speak to ze Head—I explain zat he is all one mistake, and I beg zat all be forgiven. Voila tout."

"Oh, Mossoo!" gasped the six.

Mossoo waved his hand.

"Zat is all left!" he said.

"All right, do you mean, sir?" gasped Bob.

"Mais oui—vat you call, all right! He is all right!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "Leave him to me, mes garçons, and tear nozzings! Je vais expliquer—I go to explain! He is as right as ze hail!" added Mossoo, probably meaning as right as rain.

And, with a reassuring smile to the repentant six, Monsieur Charpentier trotted away towards the House.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "My hat!"

"Jever hear of such luck!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"The luckfulness is—"

"Terrific!" chuckled Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Let's kick Bunter for letting it out, all the same," suggested Bob.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaroooooh!" Bunter fled.

"And give Mossoo a cheer!" said Harry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Vive la France!" roared Bob, and his comrades echoed the roar, till the quadrangle rang with it.

Monsieur Charpentier glanced back. He smiled, and raised his hat in acknowledgment. Then he trotted on again towards the House—leaving six Remove fellows in a very relieved frame of mind.

The secret was out.

But the six were no longer in the soup.

They had a severe "jaw" from the Head—and a still more severe and lengthy jaw from Mr. Quelch. But that was all—owing to the kind and generous intervention of Mossoo. But really they owed their escape to their own kind hearts. For had they not taken compassion on Mossoo's distress, and confessed the truth to him, the matter would have ended very differently.

As it was, all was well that ended well! The six tried to show their gratitude to Mossoo by being extra respectful and attentive in the French class—for quite a long time. They also showed their gratitude to Coker of the Fifth by waylaying that great man in the quad and ducking his head in the fountain. The clouds had rolled by, and the cheerfulness at Greyfriars were those of the six who had been in the soup.

THE END.

Look out for another splendid story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled:

**"BUNTER, THE BANDIT!"**

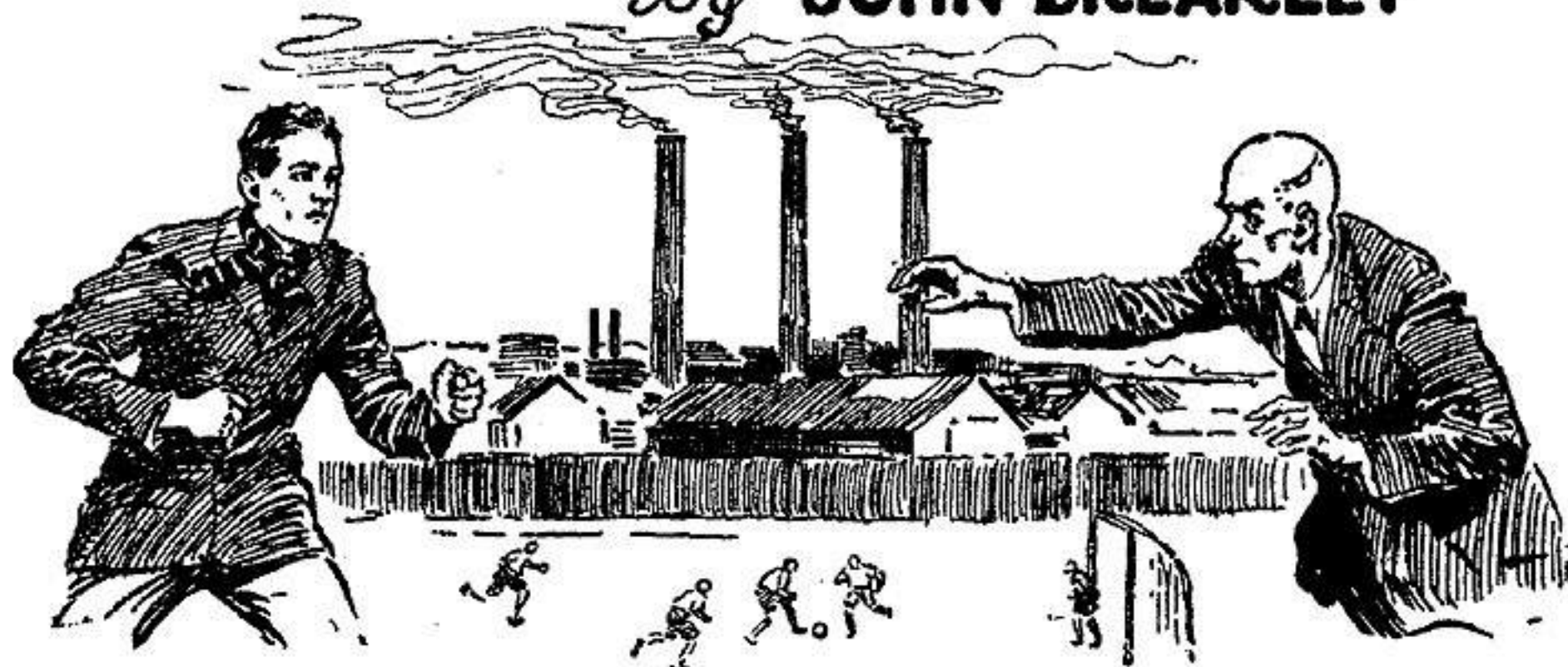
If you fail to read it you'll miss one of Frank Richard's best yarns.



THE GREATEST SPORTING AND INDUSTRIAL TALE EVER TOLD!

# Peter Frazer-Ironmaster!

By JOHN BREARLEY



## INTRODUCTION.

Head and sole owner of Frazer's Iron Foundry! It is a strange prospect that lies before Peter Frazer, a youngster of eighteen, when he arrives in the squalid industrial city of Maxport late one night to take over the great business left to him in his dead uncle's will. The lad's first inkling of the forces working against him comes when he is kidnapped and taken to a ship anchored in the estuary of the River Maxwell. There he learns that he is to be taken to sea—never to return, and the only clue to the identity of his unknown enemy that he discovers is that the man is completely bald, with a great scar running across the top of his head. Peter manages to escape from the ship, and later he learns from Mr. Dimmock, his manager, that he must have fallen into the hands of the same gang that has long been working to ruin Frazer's Foundry. Peter is determined to fight his enemies tooth and nail, and on the day of his first inspection of his works he strikes the first blow. Led by a ruffian named Granger and his gang, the foundrymen stop work in favour of dog-racing in the city, but find their way barred by the young ironmaster. Peter offers to fight the best man amongst them, stipulating that if he wins they go back to work. Granger accepts the challenge, and in the midst of a yelling mob the fight takes place. The second round sees Granger hopelessly beaten, and desperately he lets fly with a terrific kick. Blind with anger, Peter slams his right home with all his force to the other's jaw in a knock-out!

(Now read on.)

## An Ally!

**I**F the crushing defeat of Granger, the former ruler of the foundry, had come as a surprise to the men, they were booked for another on the day following the great scrap.

For when the foundry hooter blew and the day-shift came lounging in to take over from the small crew that tended the furnaces throughout the night, they found in the place of Mr. Granger, sacked, a new hand—youthful, alert, and very fit-looking in new dungarees.

One of his eyes was a bright, rich purple, and a dark blue lump ornamented his left cheek; but the remaining eye was keen, grey—and determined.

Peter had formed his decision at dinner the previous evening.

"I'm going into the foundry," he announced abruptly half-way through the meal.

Mr. Dimmock looked up, startled.

"I beg your pardon?"

Peter grinned as heartily as his damaged features would allow.

"I'm going to work among the boys," he explained carefully. "For one reason, I simply must learn all the work as soon as possible, all the machines and furnaces, not to mention the processes, and so on. And for another reason, I can't stick that beastly office."

Mr. Dimmock could not help a faint smile.

"I suppose you really should learn all about the business from the bottom," he agreed thoughtfully. "But, Peter, won't it be rather hard and rough—that is—"

He stopped in confusion before Peter's meaning grin. After the little affair with Granger, his solicitude for his young employer seemed a little unnecessary.

**All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. So Peter Frazer, ironmaster, is determined to restart his foundry "footer" team. It's an uphill job, all right, but then Peter of the big heart and the big fists is a born climber!**

"Well, that's settled, then!" said Peter cheerfully, but with decision, and they passed on to other talk. But he was still thinking the matter out when he went to bed.

"My place is down in the foundry," Peter told himself. "If I'm down among the men all day, the quicker we'll know each other all round. Then I can start doing things—there's plenty to do! If I can get the lads together and a bit better spirit into everything, it'll buck us all up, and then whoever comes looking for trouble can have it! Old Dimmock won't need me in the office—he's been running it long enough. He's a good old scout, but jolly windy! Have to brace him up a bit, too!"

Whereupon, having mapped out briefly this modest little programme, that very self-reliant ex-Clayton skipper and Maxport ironmaster, Peter Frazer, clambered into bed.

It had been a great day.

And next day, when the morning hooter blew, he was on the job!

The people who experienced the most

painful surprise were undoubtedly Granger's gang.

After the first shock had worn off, some ugly looks were exchanged, and the other men lingered around, obviously expecting the fur to fly straightway, but somehow, nothing happened!

Spider Huggins, glowering evilly, muttered something derisive from the corner of his mouth to another of the gang, but looking up, encountered Peter's cool, steady stare, and the muttering died away.

The same challenging gaze swept briefly over the others, there was a moment's tenseness all round, then each man bent to his day's work amid the heat and roar.

Apparently Granger's gang were not looking for more open trouble—yet!

That the effect of the fight had sunk pretty deeply into the rest of the men was evident, too.

There were some tough specimens among them—men who fancied themselves in a fight, but yesterday they had been front row spectators of an inexhaustible and burly youngster who hit like a steam-hammer and fought like a mad thing, and just for the moment they were not

taking any.

They pitched into their work with something approaching vim, and for the first time for months Moller had a quiet morning.

The big engineer found time to show Peter closer details of the great furnaces and mills, and explained in jerky phrases some of the points in the processes. Also, he made it perfectly plain that he did not approve of the young master leaving the office and coming into the foundry.

That, however, did not worry Peter, who was all ears and eyes. And when later on Moller was called away, Peter carried on the tour by himself.

Wandering out of the foundry into the great yards where the ore trucks were being loaded, he came upon more trouble.

In an angle formed by two huge smouldering slag-heaps, two wiry forms were pitching into each other with hearty good-will, while their mates dropped work and cheered.

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The fighters were only youngsters, and they were scrapping merrily.

Peter stepped quietly through the on-lookers, and ramming an iron hand on the neck of each fighter, neatly knocked their heads together and then sat them down on the ground with a bump.

Of the two, the taller stayed where he was put, dizzily feeling for his head and wondering what had hit him; but the other, a sturdy, curly-headed fellow, scrambled up immediately and gathered himself for war.

His mouth fell open comically as he saw who his new foe was, and then to Peter's utter surprise, a broad, cheeky grin spread over his freckled face.

"Well?" inquired Peter grimly.

The youth waved his hand airily, but kept two bright blue eyes on his employer.

"'Tis awreat, mister!" he said loftily. "Ah've no quarrel with thee!"

Peter reached out a long arm and cuffed him lightly, whereat the youngster's grin grew wider.

"'Tis awreat, I tell thee, mister! Ah'm on thy side—after yesterday!" he added as an afterthought.

"You'll be on my knee!" quoth Peter, not unkindly. "You have your scraps out afterwards, and I'll referee. This is work-time now. Mind that, all of you!"

Saying which, he released the cheerful youth, and thrusting him back to his truck, went on with the tour. But as he went he was thinking.

"Well, great Scott, thank goodness there's one of these chaps at least who can laugh!"

Later on, he found the cheerful one's name was Sparrow. It suited him.

In the roar and racket of the new work, Peter forgot the incident quickly, but when at last the hooter blew again, and the men began speedily to pour out of the works, he observed Master Sparrow & Co. moving with definite purpose towards the footer field.

He remembered his promise to referee, and nipping quickly into the office for the boxing-gloves, hurried after them.

A group of the men were still in the yard, talking among themselves or lighting pipes for the walk to their homes, and the sight of the gloves in his hand drew them instantly.

They scented excitement once more—perhaps a repetition of yesterday's battle, and with one accord pressed at his heels, eager for the fun.

As a fight, this one, however, was disappointing, for Master Sparrow, still grinning widely, hurled himself upon his willing opponent, and had him down three times in the opening round.

In the second, he again put his man down with quite a stylish counter; but then the other arose, and, casting off the gloves, went for Sparrow tooth and nail.

He used his boots, too! And before the outraged Peter could interfere, Sparrow, taken by surprise at the wild-cat attack, was down and in a bad way. The crowd around bellowed with mixed feelings. Their raucous yells sounded in Peter's ears like the cries of wild animals.

It isn't often that a referee joins in a fight, but it happened in this case. A whirlwind seemed suddenly to strike Sparrow's opponent and hurl him into the crowd. A fat furnace stoker, leading the yells in favour of such unsporting methods, received a full-blooded drive between the eyes and toppled over, after which Peter neatly spread two of his neighbours on top of him.

Wheeling fiercely, he drove the others off the field, blazing with wrath.

"Off with you!" he snapped. "It's time someone showed you some clean

fighting! Now get off the field, all of you!"

And with a glance at the men on the grass, they went.

"Thank ye, sir!"

Peter looked round. The cheerful Sparrow, pale and gasping, but still smiling, was by his side, gingerly rubbing his ribs where a hearty kick had landed.

"Don't stand any nonsense, do we, mister?" he grinned.

"You all right, lad?" asked Peter.

"Awreat, save for this kick in t' slats," grinned the youth. "'Twas a mighty boot! Wait'll I catch him again! No more boxing-gloves for me, mister!"

Seeing that he was still rather shaky, Peter laid a hand on his elbow and together they strolled across the field. As they approached Mr. Dimmock's house, he had a sudden impulse and invited the stricken warrior to tea.

Mr. Dimmock had not come in yet, so he sat his guest down before a well-filled table and began to chat.

For a while they talked of the fight, and fighting, then Peter began to lead the conversation back to the foundry and the men.

Sparrow, he soon found, was a mine of information. The lad lived "somewhere in the docks." He had been a



**MOLLER, the burly foreman of the Frazer Iron Foundry.**

"norphan" since he was nine, and had picked up a living in his cheery way by doing all sorts of jobs. He had been in the foundry now for nearly three years. Liked old Dimmock. Couldn't stand Moller—disagreeable hog! Liked footba'. Did the master play footba'? Good! College, o' course? Thought so! All the nobs in Maxport played for Maxport Hornets. Amereboor club, ye know—like them Corinthians. Supposed the master would play for the Hornets?

"No fear!" said Peter cunningly. "I'll play for the foundry!"

Sparrow hooted derisively.

"Noa, thee won't, sir! 'Cos why? 'Cos there isn't no foundry team!"

Peter nodded through the window towards the goalposts.

"Them?" mourned Sparrow wistfully. "Wonder they ain't been chopped down long whiles. We ain't got a team now. Granger—"

It suddenly occurred to him that Granger, as far as the foundry was concerned, was no more. He stared across at Peter wide-mouthed, eyes blue and eager.

"Gummy, mister, does tha mean tha'll start t' team again?"

Peter nodded decisively.

"That's just what I do mean," he said. "Going to help?"

Going to help? Sparrow was lost for words. Then he said:

"There'll be not many as'll play now, sir—not big 'uns, I mean. Perhaps some of us kids might, but we'd be too light, ye see. You want big 'uns for the Works League, mister."

"Oh, I'll get 'em to play in time!" said Peter, with a fine show of optimism. "And you kids can be the second eleven."

Master Sparrow became a bundle of enthusiasm. With difficulty only was he prevented from giving three cheers. Together they bent their heads over the tea-table and talked earnestly and eagerly.

Later, Peter saw him to the gate, and afterwards not even Mr. Dimmock's worried tale of the day's woes in the office could damp his spirits. The football talk had carried Peter back to Clayton days; but, best of all, he had found an ally among the men, and a definite step had been made.

He took time from the works shamelessly next day, and came into the office late in the afternoon, beaming happily.

In his arms he carried a bulky parcel, while behind him came a man with another. These he planked down by Mr. Dimmock's desk, and met that gentleman's astonished stare with a chuckle.

"Footer togs!" he explained briefly; and, deftly opening the parcels, yanked out football shirts and shorts, displaying them proudly to the delighted Jenkins.

The old colours of the foundry had been emerald green and white shorts, and he had had to ransack Maxport's sports shops before he could get them.

"There's a crato of boots coming later," he grinned at the astounded manager. "Those that don't fit I've arranged to send back. We'll dish 'em out to the team, and if they like they can buy their own gear."

"But what team, Pe—Mr. Frazer?" stammered the manager.

"Our team!" chortled Peter proudly. "Frazer's Foundry!"

Jenkins pressed forward eagerly.

"Are we starting again, sir?" he breathed.

Peter winked jovially.

"Rather! We're in the Works Cup, too, Jenkins! Been talking to the secretary for hours. Too late for the League this season, but he's let us into the Cup. My word, didn't he roast me! I've had to make all sorts of promises about turning out full sides, and everything! But we'll do it! And I'm going to punt all round the town and get some 'friendlies' to fill up.

His enthusiasm, the expression on his cheery face was good to see. Only Mr. Dimmock shook his head sadly.

"You don't know our men yet, Peter!" he murmured. "Why bother? They'll only break your heart, lad!"

But Peter made no reply. He hurled himself at a typewriter, then remembered he could not type. Seizing the grinning clerk by the shoulders, he jammed him into the seat.

"Now then, Jenkins, my lad! The first notification that Frazer's football team is alive again!" He planked a paper down on the desk. "Type out about a dozen of these and fix 'em up all round the place! And let it be gently known that any base fellow tearing one down will be interviewed by the boss! This is where I start my job!"



# The Trial Match!

**O**F course, the bills were torn down! Peter himself caught one man at it, and that man was awarded the sack and an aching jaw in just half a minute. Sparrow caught another, a great beefy puddler, and went for him like a terrier, but Moller, the foreman, broke up the fight before he was badly hurt.

And the news went round the foundry—Frazer's Football Club was re-starting!

Peter, dirty, hot, and busy in the roaring foundry, began to study the men as well as the machines.

Most of the furnace men, he decided, were either too bulky or too old, while the youngsters outside on the trucks were rather light and wiry.

The middle class was his most fruitful ground—young, hefty fellows on the rolling-mills and machines, or in the shops outside the foundry. If he could get some of them interested they would make the nucleus of a fine big side.

He tackled the matter in characteristic style. Bills and proclamations were all very well, but if he waited for the men to come along themselves, the season would be over before they started. Also, fighting wouldn't be any use, for you can't hammer a man into football togs.

Sparrow's set—the youngsters—were fairly keen and solid, for the idea of playing real football again with football jerseys and new balls had gone to their heads. But he was after pace and weight.

Whereupon, casting his eye shrewdly round to likely-looking men, he marched up and put it to them, either singly or in little groups.

Briefly but friendly-wise, he told them his plans, and asked them to help. In every instance his first words were received with suspicion, and narrow eyes, set in hot, dirty faces, stared at him hardily. It was difficult work, but he stuck to it gamely and patiently.

Rebuffs, as he expected, were common. Some were blunt refusals, made doggedly and defiantly, and these he passed without another word. Time enough for them later, once he got football started.

Others were hesitating, the man plainly struggling with the desire to play again, but fearful of what would happen at night when work was over. For though Granger was deposed, there were plenty of his friends still left, and their hands would come down heavy on backsliders.

To these fainthearts Peter spoke strongly—so strenuously that he succeeded in breathing some of his own fighting spirit into them. He told them of his ideas apart from football—of how the foundry was going to improve and give them steady employment for years. He was going to fight for the works, and he wanted their aid.

Some jeered openly, others turned away; but enthusiasm backed by pluck can work wonders, and before three days were up Peter, much to the plainly expressed surprise of Mr. Dimmock, found himself with just enough men to hold a trial on the Saturday afternoon.

It was something of a triumph. Jubilantly he and the enthusiastic Jenkins plunged into the task of arranging the sides. The luck seemed too good to be true.

On Saturday the foundry knocked off at noon, and the hands dispersed, those

who had promised to play under instructions to be back by one-thirty.

It was a very anxious ninety minutes that Peter spent then. And when eventually he came into the yard and found all his men there, he could have whooped with relief.

As a matter of fact, luck had again favoured him strongly in that dinner-hour, for Granger's gang had played their hands badly. Had they waited to let the rebels get to their homes and seek them out singly, either to persuade or coerce them, Peter would not have held his trial. But the enemy were lacking in strategy. The moment the footballers were outside the gates they had been surrounded, and, without further ado, a lively five minutes had resulted.

And—another setback for Granger's gang—they had been defeated. Three energetic constables had completed their rout, and they had fled, leaving behind a victorious body of men who were more firmly determined to play football now than ever. Peter's luck was well in the ascendant.



As Peter Frazer hooked the ball from the opposing inside-right's toe, the man flicked his foot out, and brought the young ironmaster down heavily. "Don't do that again!" warned Peter, eyeing him steadily. (See this page.)

## A Valuable Find

**F**RAZER'S organisation worked smoothly. He had appointed Jenkins captain of the Whites and himself skipper of the Colours. The little man who had refereed the great fight had asked to referee the match also, and the loud and cheerful Sparrow, very gorgeous in a red goalkeeper's sweater, was keeping for Whites, for which position he had begged hard. The two sides were as nearly equal in weight as Peter's limited knowledge could make them.

Thus, at fifteen minutes past two, two teams filed out on to Frazer's field for the first time for two years.

Pheep! The game started with a rush. In five minutes Peter was not quite sure whether to be cheerful or despondent, for of rough, hard play there was plenty, but of science and football nil.

All four backs had one idea—to knock the tar out of an opponent and balloon the ball anywhere. The same applied to the halves, who also hung on to the ball until someone came up with a rush and knocked them off it.

Playing for the Whites, however, was a slim, dark-haired man at inside-right who looked clever in a flashy sort of way, but too selfish; and once when

Peter neatly hooked the ball from his toes, his foot flicked out and brought the young ironmaster down heavily.

"Don't do that again, my lad!" warned Peter, eyeing him steadily.

But the man smiled cockily, and two minutes later tried it again. After he had got his wind back, and made certain that his left shoulder had not been knocked clean off, he was a sadder and wiser man, and suddenly simmered down to play quite a useful game.

Gradually Peter, to whom the game was a well-loved science, began to get his team together.

A brilliant centre-half, with his heart in the job, can do wonders with even the scratchiest side, and Peter Frazer was the best half Clayton had ever turned out.

He was here, there, and everywhere, directing, coaching, and restraining; breaking up the Whites attack cleanly and neatly; long, smooth passes to the wing, and sudden, deft touches to unmarked insides sent the Colours flying towards Sparrow in something like an organised attack.

By half-time both sides were playing better football, and Sparrow had already earned his place in the team, for he had given a sparkling display.

Grinning like a cat, with a stream of chaff for friend or foe, he made save after save, diving for a cross-shot, beating down another at point-blank range, or neatly scooping a third right off the centre's foot.

To test him, Peter took three or four deliberate shots at goal, regular pile-drivers, but not until nearly half-time did he get one past Sparrow—a flat scorching from thirty yards out, knocking the lad's hands aside before it tore into the net.

The cheerful one grinned wryly as they crossed over, rubbing his stinging hands.



"Gosh, mister, reckon ah'll roll myself some steel mitts on Monday if ah've got to save many of them!" he chortled!

Peter made a few changes at half-time, and the game went on, Colours winning at last 3-1, the dark-haired inside-right dribbling through very prettily to score.

During the last ten minutes, however, plenty of the men had bellows to mend, and tempers were ruffled in consequence.

The backs took to charging more wildly than ever, and fouls became frequent as the players tired or grew sore, until at last a wiry little half-back on the Colours side tripped his man, and in turn was knocked flat by another.

Their captain was among them, however, before they could even start the inevitable fight! Seeing him, the little half crouched desperately and prepared for war; but Peter's long arm grabbed him and shook him.

"What on earth do you want to spoil a good afternoon for?" he asked mildly. "You've tackled that chap cleanly all the afternoon. What the dickens d'you want to trip him for now? Have some sense! Same applies to you others! Don't start any rows now that we have had such a clinking good game!"

That was all. He made the combatants shake hands, which they did sheepishly, and the game went on for its last five minutes.

When the final whistle blew, it was a tired but contented lot of foundry hands who followed their skipper back into the works to change. Another step was taken!

But Peter noticed that there had been only one solitary spectator!

**D**URING the next week Frazer's Football Club held two more practices, short games in the evening before the light went.

No more recruits were added to the squad, but the others stuck loyally. Already he was in a fair way to conquering the hearts of the little band.

"High-falutin'!" they called him among themselves. "But, o' course, college made him that; but if he spoke like a toff he was a good sport!"

"An' no blinking side, either, laads!" said one of them seriously.

"Ah, if he ain't riled!" said another.

The team began to take shape. Sparrow in goal was splendid, and midway through the week, as Peter bent over a tool-bench, a hand touched his arm, and, looking up, he saw two gigantic forms looming high above him.

He recognised the men as two brothers, Scotsmen, skilful men on his biggest mill. They had never been known to talk to their mates, and took no interest whatever in foundry politics, while, by virtue of their size and strength, even Granger's men had left them severely alone.

Now they stood staring down at Peter with solemn, granite countenances.

"We'd like to play fitba!" announced one. "Eh, mon Phairson?"

"Richt, Elspeth!" growled the other. "Pleased to have you," smiled Peter.

"Why didn't you come along before?"

"Och, we thought we'd wait!" said Elspeth cautiously. "Can ye do with twa fu'-backs?"

"I can."

"Ay, we knawed it!" grunted Phairson. "We ken the others ye've got, mon!"

So saying, they turned on their heels as abruptly as they had come, but when practice started that evening they appeared on the field, two giant figures, in the foundry shirts and shorts, but with their own football boots.

Moving quickly and lightly, despite their size, they showed wonderful defensive tactics, and a knowledge of each other's play, covering Sparrow in goal so completely that that young warrior was moved to lament!

They did not use their weight once, but tackled deftly and surely, and their clearing kicks came low, and hard as bullets.

Peter guessed they were old pro's, grown past their best, and he was not far wrong. So that settled the defence.

The forwards were still a worry. Hammond, the dark-haired inside-right, was a really clever attacker, and he made his winger into a good man, too. On the left Peter had a man named Baker. He knew nothing of decent football, but his pace down the touch-line was simply terrific!

What was badly needed, however, was a centre-forward. Peter tried Jenkins there, but the clerk was much too light, and the heavy foundrymen knocked him off the ball every time.

He went there himself, and the half-back line fell to bits. When the Saturday morning came, he was still in a quandary, for the opening match was only a week away!

(It looks as though Frazer's Iron Foundry is going to have "some team by the time young Peter's finish doesn't it, chums? You'll find another gripping instalment of this powerful serial in next week's MAGNET.)



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