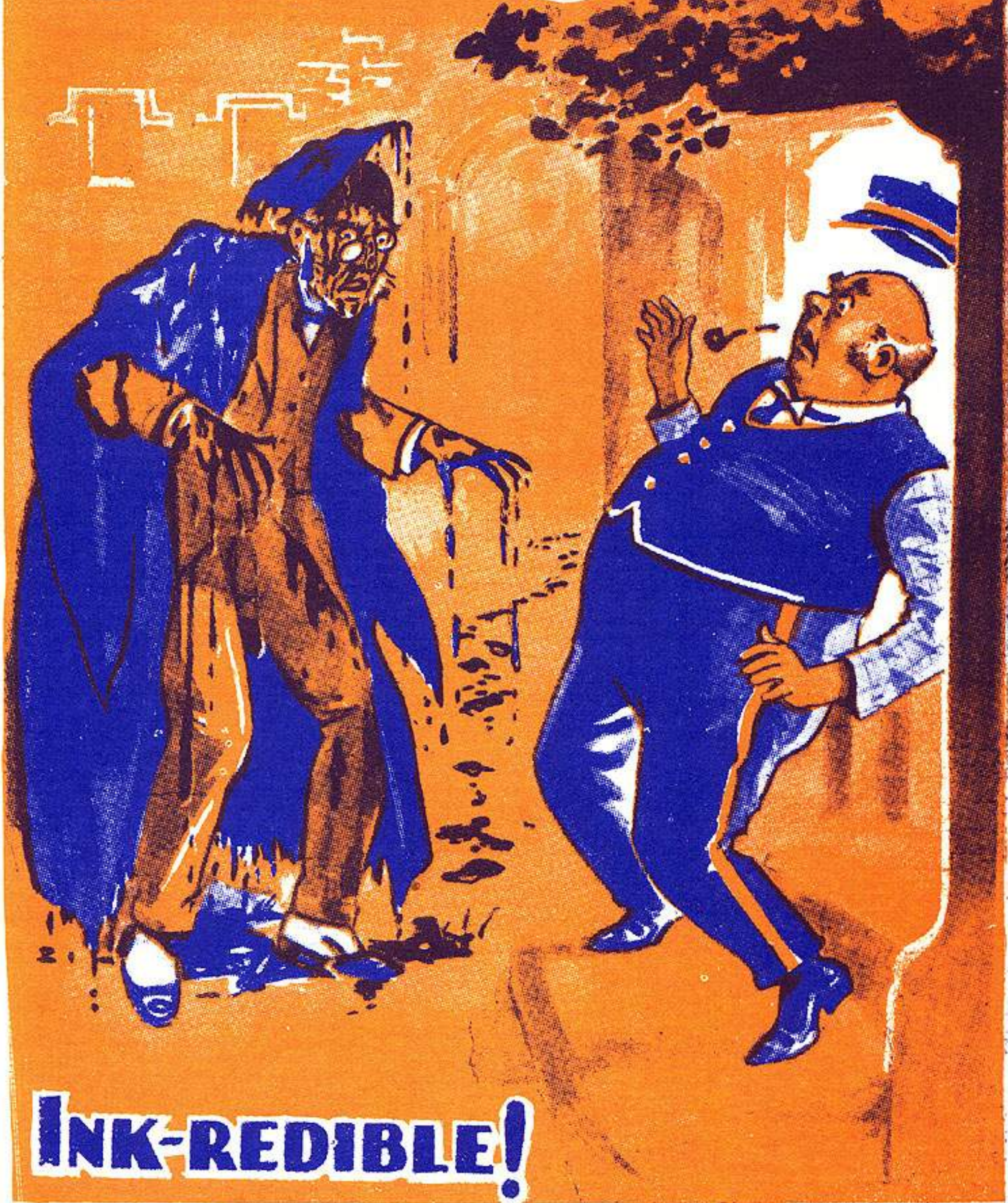


Meet CAPTAIN VENGEANCE, Modern Pirate, Inside!

# The Magnet <sup>2<sup>D</sup></sup>



**INK-REDIBLE!**

# HORACE COKER'S DARK DEED!

By FRANK RICHARDS



## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Follow Your Leader!

“COAST'S clear!” said Bob Cherry.

“But—”

“Nobody's about—”

“But—”

“Oh, come on!”

Bob did not wait for a third “but.” He swung himself on the broad, smooth oaken banister and went sailing down.

“Fathead!” said Harry Wharton.

But he followed. Where one member of the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove went the rest were sure to follow.

Venturesome fellows liked to descend the big staircase sitting on that long, smooth oaken banister and sailing down at headlong speed. A fellow whizzed down at a dizzy rate, lifted his leg over the massive newel post at the lower end, and jumped off to the floor—and it was quite exciting and exhilarating, but rather dangerous.

A fellow who lost his nerve after starting would have been booked for a fall that would have done a great deal of damage.

For which reason sailing down the banisters was strictly forbidden at Greyfriars and liable to punishment.

Bob Cherry rather forgot that. A glance down having revealed that there was, for once, nobody about—neither beaks nor prefects—it seemed to Bob too good a chance to be missed.

So down he went—whizzing!

Harry Wharton, having remonstrated in vain, followed, and whizzed after

him. After Wharton went Johnny Bull, then Frank Nugent, and then Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. Five fellows were sitting on the banister all at once, one after another, all whizzing. Putnam van Duck, the American junior, who was coming downstairs with his friends, paused.

“Gee!” he ejaculated, staring at that sudden, startling acrobatic performance.

Van Duck had plenty of nerve; he was not afraid to follow where others led—but this was a new one on him, and for a moment or two he stood and stared.

It was a rapid performance. Almost in a second Bob was down to the newel post, lifting a leg over it, and shooting off, to land lightly on his feet. After him shot the rest of the Co., landing, one after another, actively, lightly, and successfully.

Then Van Duck prepared to start.

Unlike his fellow-countryman, Fisher T. Fish of the Remove, he had heaps of pluck. It was a dangerous game—and he knew it—but he was not going to get left. He swung on the banister to go.

At the same moment there was a startled and dismayed exclamation below.

“Ware prefects!”

The lower hall was not so deserted as Bob Cherry had supposed at that cursory glance from the landing. From the big window above Loder of the Sixth stepped out.

He had been looking out into the quad, scowling at the sight of a bowler-hatted man who was walking there, but at the sound of five fellows jumping, one after another, Gerald Loder looked round and stepped forth.

He came quickly towards the juniors with a grim look on his face; they backed away from the stairs, trying to look as if they had never thought or dreamed of sliding down the banisters in all their young lives. Unfortunately, Loder of the Sixth was not of a trusting disposition, and he had a dislike for those cheery members of the Lower Fourth. He had not seen them come down, but he had heard them—and he knew.

“You young sweeps!” said Loder. “Sliding down the banisters—what?”

“No harm done, Loder,” ventured Bob.

“You might have broken your necks!” said Loder. “Not that that would have mattered much! But what about House rules?”

Bob did not answer that question; really there was no answer to be made. He had rather forgotten House rules—good and necessary rules, as Bob was ready to admit. Still, a fellow did rather forget rules at times—especially when he had an exuberant nature, and was always full of beans, like the cheery Bob.

Loder, standing by the newel post, regarded the dismayed five with malicious satisfaction. This meant a report to Mr. Quelch, and lines or a gating, if not a whopping—which was a satisfaction to the bully of the Sixth.

“I’ll take you to Quelch now—” he recommenced.

He was interrupted.

“Look out!” yelled Bob.

Loder did not catch on in time. He had caught the Famous Five, and he was not aware that a sixth fellow was following their example and following their descent of the banisters.

Van Duck had started before he noticed that Loder was there. Once started, there was no stopping.

It was a long banister, with a wide curve in it. It was not easy to negotiate. A fellow could have fallen off at any point, but he could not have jumped off safely till he reached the end.

Had Loder of the Sixth looked round in time and seen Van Duck coming he might have jumped clear, but he did not look round in time.

Putnam van Duck came like a bullet. He flew down the banisters and flew off the end and failed to jump clear, like the Famous Five, because Loder was in the way. He landed on Loder!

Crash!

Bump!

It seemed to Loder of the Sixth that a battering-ram had hit him. Van Duck was not a heavy-weight, but he came with a terrific impetus. Loder was knocked spinning.

He spun two or three yards before he crashed—and when he crashed it was a terrific crash.

“Oooooh!” stuttered Van Duck breathlessly.

He crashed a split second after Loder—and it was on Loder that he crashed, sprawling right over him.

From one point of view, this was fortunate. The old oaken floor was hard to fall on; Loder was much softer. Van Duck's fall was broken by Loder.

Judging by Loder's agonised howl, he was broken, too.

Harry Wharton stared on in dismay. Breaking the rules was serious; breaking a Sixth Form prefect was still more serious.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

Harry Wharton ran forward to give Putnam a hand up. The American junior staggered breathlessly to his feet.

"Carry me home to die!" he gasped. "What the great horned toad did that pesky geck get in the way for? I've sure collared a million bumps and a few over—and then some!"

"Urrrgh!" came a moan from Loder.

"Hurt, Loder?" asked Bob.

It was quite a superfluous question. Only too plainly Loder of the Sixth was hurt. Still more plainly, he was wildly enraged.

He staggered up, gasping and spluttering; he turned to Putnam van Duck with a deadly glare.

As a prefect, Loder was entitled to report these delinquents to their Form-master; he was entitled to order Van Duck to "bend over" and take "six" for having floored him. But he was too enraged to think of what he was entitled to do. Had he had his ashplant with him, no doubt he would have used it—hard. But he hadn't. He leaped at Van Duck, almost like a tiger, smacking his head right and left—which no Greyfriars prefect was entitled to do. The smacking of heads was absolutely "taboo" at Greyfriars School.

He did not merely smack—he banged! "Yurroop!" roared Putnam.

A bang on the right side of his head gave him a list to port, and a bang on the left righted him again; another bang was coming, which would have floored him—for Loder was too savagely exasperated to think or care what he was doing—but Putnam dodged that third bang, cut across to the open doorway, and scudded out into the sunny quad.

"Stop!" roared Loder.

Stopping for more bangs was the last thing that Putnam van Duck was thinking of. He flew.

After him flew Loder in fierce pursuit.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five, in a state of great dismay, followed on into the quad to see what was going to happen.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Poker Pike Horns In!

**P**OKER PIKE glanced round. The bowler-hatted man was walking sedately in the quad, on the path by the elms, when Putnam van Duck flew out of the House.

Some of the Greyfriars fellows smiled when they passed him.

The idea of a Chicago gunman being posted at the school to guard the son of a Chicago millionaire from kidnapers, rather amused them.

But as Poker Pike had been at Greyfriars since the first day of the term they were getting used to the sight of him, with his serious hickory face under the brim of the tight-fitting bowler hat, that seemed never to part company with his bullet head, even indoors. Even the fact that he was known to "pack a gun" had ceased to thrill them.

Mr. Pike was prepared to "pull" that gun if danger threatened the son of

Vandordecken van Duck, entrusted to his watchful care. The millionaire had hired him for that purpose, and Poker was a dutiful "guy."

Protecting Putnam from Chick Chew, the "star" kidnapper of the great United States, was Poker's present duty, and he did it with thoroughness.

There had been some trouble, because Poker seemed to consider it his duty to protect Putnam, not only from threatening kidnapers, but from everybody else who got too "fresh."

He had even interrupted a Sixth Form prefect who was whopping Putnam, and carried that prefect—Loder, of the Sixth—struggling and kicking under his arm, which had led to a long and serious "jaw" from the Head, who had had to impress on Mr. Pike just where he got off, so to speak.

Now, looking round, Mr. Pike saw Putnam van Duck in full flight, and, raging on his track, Loder of the Sixth.

His slits of eyes glinted, and his gash of a mouth set hard. His brows knitted under the clamped-down bowler.

He made a stride towards the scene.

Then he stopped.

Poker was not a man easily impressed, but the headmaster of Greyfriars had impressed him. Also, Mr. van Duck had directed him to respect and obey the headmaster in every particular.

His impulse, at the sight of his charge chased by Loder, was to "cinch" Loder and beat him up a few. But the Head's stern injunctions weighed on his mind, and he paused.

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## SENSATION at GREYFRIARS!

**Some person unknown has had the effrontery to drench the Head with ink, and the question is being asked up and down the school—WHO DID IT?**

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As he stood undecided, Van Duck flew past. After him came Loder, as if he were on the cinder-path.

Poker Pike stepped abruptly into his way.

He was not going to cinch Loder, or beat him up; but he was going to stop him. Poker reckoned that no reasonable guy could find fault with that.

He stepped suddenly in front of Loder, and stood like a rock, and Loder crashed like a wave on a particularly hard rock, and almost broke like a wave.

It was a terrific concussion.

Loder was going at great speed, stared at on all sides, forgetful of everything but his desire to get hold of the junior who had floored him. It was a most injudicious exhibition of excitement and bad temper on the part of a Sixth Form prefect, but Loder was too enraged to think of appearances.

Going at top speed, his impact would have hurled almost any other man off his feet. But Poker stood like a rock, and the concussion did not seem even to shake him. It more than shook Loder!

Loder staggered back, crumpled, and rolled over from the shock. He rolled at Mr. Pike's feet, gasping.

"Man down!" gasped Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five came trooping out of the House.

"That jolly old gunman!" gasped Frank Nugent.

There was a shouting of voices all over the quad. Fellows rushed up from all quarters.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "That gangster's at it again! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gerald Loder sat up dizzily. Mr. Pike was looking down at him with a calm and serious face. Putnam van Duck came to a panting halt at a little distance, looking back, ready to dodge again if Loder resumed the pursuit.

"Oh!" gasped Loder. "Ow! Ooogh! You rotten ruffian! Ooogh!"

"Pack that up, big boy!" advised Mr. Pike. "I got orders from the king-pin of this here caboodle not to beat you up, but you don't want to ask for it none."

Loder staggered up.

He gave the man from Chicago a deadly glare. Loder would have liked nothing better than to have planted his fist full in the hard-boiled hickory face, and sent Mr. Pike spinning. He would have tried it on, but for the knowledge that the punch would have hurt his fist more than it would have hurt Poker's face!

Instead of hitting Mr. Pike, he moved to go round him and get after Putnam van Duck.

But Mr. Pike moved at the same moment, and the bully of the Sixth found him still in the way.

Loder moved again, and Mr. Pike moved again. The stocky figure still barred Loder's way.

"Will you get out of my way, you ruffian?" howled Loder.

Mr. Pike shook his head.

"Nope!" he answered. "Not if you're 'gunning' after that Putnam van Duck. I guess I'm here to look after that young guy."

"You cheeky fool!" roared Loder.

"Can it!" said Mr. Pike warningly. "I keep on telling you not to ask for it, you, Loder!"

"Get out of my way!" yelled Loder.

"I should smile!" answered Mr. Pike.

Putnam van Duck, a dozen yards behind the gunman, grinned. About fifty fellows, gathering round the scene, grinned also. Loder made another move to walk round the gunman. Mr. Pike promptly headed him off.

He had his hands in his pockets, resisting the temptation to beat Loder up a few. At home, in Chicago, Mr. Pike would have beaten up any guy who fooled around like this—if he had not, indeed, pulled a gun on him. But Poker, greatly to his credit, was trying to accommodate himself to the strange manners and customs of the strange land in which he now sojourned. He wasn't going to beat Loder up if he could help it, but he was not going to let him go "gunning" after Putnam van Duck.

Loder was almost dancing with rage.

"Will you let me pass?" he howled.

"Not so's you'd notice it!" answered Mr. Pike.

"I'll knock you down if you don't stand aside!" bawled Loder.

"Aw, forget it!" advised Mr. Pike.

"You couldn't chew it if you bit it off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Greyfriars fellows. Mr. Pike's flow of language never ceased to entertain them. According to what they learned in their school books, America was one of the English-speaking countries; but the variety of English that Poker Pike had brought from Chicago bore little resemblance to the language spoken at Greyfriars.

"You cheeky ruffian!" yelled Loder.

"Park it!" said Mr. Pike.

Again Loder attempted to circle round the obstruction. Again Mr. Pike barred his way.

Prudence failed Loder. In his fury, fanned to white heat by the laughter of

the crowd of fellows behind him, he forgot that Mr. Pike was too large an order for him.

He made a spring at the gunman, hitting out fiercely with both fists.

Crash!  
"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Mr. Pike had shoved his hands into his pockets, perhaps to help him resist his natural inclination to knock Loder into the middle of next week, or further along the calendar. So the sudden attack took him off his guard.

Both Loder's fists, with all Loder's weight behind them, landed in his hickory face before he could whip out his hands.

Mr. Pike went over backwards. He went over an uprooted tree. His bowler hat crashed on the quad, and his feet flew into the air.

"Yurrooogh!" gasped Mr. Pike, as he crashed.

He was knocked down! Loder of the Sixth had knocked him down! And as he sprawled on his back, Loder rushed past.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What next?"

"Look out!" shrieked Bob.

Poker Pike was on his feet with a bound. His hickory face was grim with wrath. His hand flew to his hip. In amazement and horror, the Greyfriars fellows saw that he was pulling a gun.

"Pike!" yelled Wharton.

"Stop!"

"You mad fathead!"

"Stop him!"

"Oh crikey!"

Mr. Pike did not heed. His six-gun had leaped into his hand, and the muzzle bore on Loder of the Sixth.

Bang!

Loder leaped clear of the ground with a yell of terror, as a bullet smashed up earth at his feet. He spun round, his eyes starting from his head, almost jabbering with terror. Mr. Pike strode at him, with levelled gun, and grim face over it.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Jump!

**T**HERE was a roar of excitement in the old quadrangle of Greyfriars.

The report of Poker Pike's six-gun had awakened every echo, and startled every ear in the school.

Windows were crammed with faces, looking out.

Dr. Locke was seen at his study window, his eyes almost popping through his glasses. Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, was at his window; Prout, master of the Fifth, was leaning out, amazed. Startled faces stared, and startled voices sounded on all sides.

Poker Pike did not heed. Neither did Loder! The smoking gun in the gunman's hand transfixed the bully of the Sixth with terror.

His impression was that Poker had fired at him, and was going to fire again. Of course, Poker hadn't! Poker was a handy man with a gun, and he could plant a bullet just where he liked. He had chosen to plant that one at Loder's feet—certainly very close, but a miss was as good as a mile!

"Now, you pesky gink!" roared the exasperated Poker. "I guess I'm going to fan you a few! You get me? Dance, you geek, dance!"

Bang!

The six-gun roared again.

"Yaroooh!" roared Loder.

He leaped a foot in the air.

The bullet took a chip of leather from his boot. Loder actually felt it as it

chipped his boot. He was not hurt. But he was frightened almost out of his wits.

"Jump, you gink, jump!" roared Mr. Pike. "I guess I'm fanning you a few, and if you don't jump, and keep on jumping, I guess you'll want crutches! Surest thing you know! Jump, you gink! Dance, you geek! You got it coming!"

Bang!

"Urrgh! Help! Yoop!"

Loder yelled—and jumped!

With bullets crashing at his feet, he had to jump!

There was an alarmed yell from Putnam van Duck.

"Poker, you geek! Pack it up! You hear me? You can't fan a guy here, you gink! You figure that you're fanning a hobo in a Chicago joint, you pesky bonehead! Can it!"

But Poker Pike did not heed. He banged again with the six-gun, and Loder gave another convulsive bound.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"It's all right!" stuttered Wharton. "He's not going to hurt Loder. It's his idea of a game!"

"Some game!" grinned Bob.

"The gamefulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bang!

Loder bounded.

Breathlessly, the Greyfriars crowd looked on. Had Mr. Pike been shooting at Loder, plenty of fellows would have rushed on him to stop him, taking the risk of the gun.

But everybody except Loder could see that he was not being "shot up." And even Loder could see that he was all right so long as he jumped. He jumped for his life!

Some of the fellows had heard of the peculiar game of "fanning." They had heard of it as a wild and woolly custom of the wild and woolly West. They had never expected to see it in the quadrangle of Greyfriars School. Now they saw it!

Bang!

Loder leaped nearly a yard into the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coming down after that terrified leap, Loder stumbled, and sat. He sat suddenly and hard, and yelped.

Mr. Pike, his gun emptied, glared at him over the smoking revolver.

"You pesky galoot!" he said. "I guess that lets you out! You beat it! You head for that shebang, and hunt cover, and I guess I give you till I get this gun loaded! Absquatulate, you geek! Hoof it, you gink! Get going, you doggoned big stiff!"

Loder leaped to his feet.

He forgot vengeance on Putnam van Duck. He forgot everything but that terrifying gun. He ran for the House.

Loder was not a first-class man on the cinder-path, but he ran now as no fellow had ever run for the School 100 yards. His feet scarcely touched the ground. He flew.

A roar of laughter followed him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Put it on, Loder!" roared Coker of the Fifth.

"Hook it, Loder!" howled Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It did not take Mr. Pike long to reload a six-gun. But he had no further use for that gun. Loder beat him to it. Before Mr. Pike was ready to resume "fanning," Loder reached the House steps.

He went up those steps with the bound of a kangaroo. He halted into the House, like a scared rabbit into a burrow.

He had no time to look where he was going. He neither knew nor cared what might be in front of him. What was behind him was enough for Loder to think about.

Had he reflected, he might have guessed that the Head would be hurrying out to intervene in that amazing and alarming scene in the quadrangle. But he had no time to reflect.

He bounded headlong into the House, just as Dr. Locke, in hot haste, reached the doorway. There they met!

It was a sudden and unexpected meeting on both sides.

Loder, when he had crashed into Mr. Pike in the quad, had broken like a wave on a rock. He had better luck crashing into the Head! The headmaster did not stand rock-like, in Poker's style. The Head went backwards, spinning.

Loder, halted by the shock, stood spluttering. Dr. Locke lay extended, gazing up at him, wondering if it was an earthquake, or whether Greyfriars School had fallen in on him.

"Oh!" gasped Loder.

"Ooooooogh!" said the Head faintly.

"Wooooogh!"

Other masters were speeding downward. Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout rushed to the overturned headmaster. Mr. Capper and Mr. Wiggins, Mr. Hacker and M. Charpentier, followed them fast. There were plenty of helping hands for the Head! He needed them. He was quite winded.

"You clumsy young rascal!" Prout hooted over a plump shoulder at Loder.

"Loder! How dare you!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I—" stammered Loder helplessly.

Sympathetic hands lifted the headmaster. They stood him on his feet. He stood unsteadily, supported by Quelch and Prout—Capper, Wiggins, and Mossoo hovering round with anxious sympathetic murmurs.

"Urrrgh!" was the Head's first remark.

"My dear sir—" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Grooogh!"

"My dear Dr. Locke—" gasped Prout.

"Urrgh! Loder! You—you—you—you clumsy, stupid, reckless—urrgh!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Loder.

There was a yell at the doorway. It was the voice of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Look out, Loder! He's coming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a false alarm. Poker Pike was not coming! But it was enough for Loder of the Sixth! He bounded away—shouldering M. Charpentier as he passed in his haste, and sending the little French master tottering.

"Ciel!" squeaked Mossoo. "Mon Dieu! Je crois—urrgh!" He clutched at Mr. Hacker to save himself, and caught the master of the Shell round the neck. They staggered together.

Loder did not heed. He bounded on, reached his study, slammed the door after bounding in, and turned the key in the lock.

Not satisfied with that, he dragged the study table to the door, and backed it up with the armchair. Then, feeling a little safer, he had time to gurgle for his second wind.

Dr. Locke did not proceed into the quadrangle. He was in no state to deal with Poker Pike! Had the Chicago gunman loosed off a whole battery of

machine-guns, the Head would hardly have heeded in his present winded state.

He tottered back to his study between Quelch and Prout, sympathetically supported on either side. And for quite a long time afterwards the Head seemed to be imitating the young man of Hythe who was shaved with a scythe and did nothing but wriggle and writhe!

In the quad, Poker Pike packed his gun and resumed his sedate pacing. He seemed to regard that trifling incident as over and done with.

The Greyfriars fellows, rooking with laughter, did not take the same view. Fanning a guy with bullets was O.K. in Chicago, no doubt; but it was wildly out of place in a school quad—and everybody but Poker Pike guessed that something was coming to the Greyfriars gunman!

"Well, you know these school-masters!" said Coker disparagingly. "They think they know everything. I don't suppose for a moment that Dr. Locke would listen to advice from a Fifth Form man—even me! Fatheaded, if you like, but there it is."

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene. "That man Pike," went on Coker, "has got to have a lesson. Having him here is all rot. I don't suppose that young ass, Van Duck of the Remove, is really in any danger from kidnappers—and I don't see that it matters, anyhow. He checked me, I know that; and I know that that man Pike ducked me in the fountain for whopping him. I'd have mopped up the school with him, only the actual fact is, you fellows, I can't handle him."

Coker made this statement as if he

good of thinking of it when it can't be done? There are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. That man's made himself dashed unpleasant—well, I'm going to try to be a bit unpleasant, too!"

Coker's friends thought that he would not have to try very hard to effect that result!

"Easy as falling off a form!" repeated Coker. "He ducked me in the fountain. I'm going to duck him—only more so—see? He ducked me in water—I'm going to duck him in ink!"

"Eh!" ejaculated Potter.

"What?" stammered Greene.

"I've got it all cut and dried," said Coker. "Just listen! That blighter Pike has his quarters in Gosling's lodge. I fancy the Head's idea was to keep him as far away from the House as possible.



Putnam van Duck came like a bullet. He flew down the banisters, and flew off the end—and failed to jump clear, because Gerald Loder was in the way! Crash! It seemed to the Sixth Former that a battering-ram had hit him. "Oooooh!" gasped Van Duck. "Urrrgh!" moaned Loder.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Coker Knows How!

"EASY as falling off a form!" said Coker of the Fifth.

Potter and Greene looked doubtful.

"I mean, of course, if you do exactly as I tell you, and don't start thinking for yourselves!" added Coker.

This made Potter and Greene look still more doubtful. Horace Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth had unbounded confidence in himself. His friends had less! In fact, much less—if any!

"I suppose," said Coker, with a touch of sarcasm, "that Fifth Form men aren't going to take cheek and dashed impudence from a ruffian out of a Chicago slum, and smile! That cheeky ruffian has got to be put in his place! The Head ought not to allow him here. I've told you that before."

"Why not tell the Head?" suggested Potter, with a private wink at Greene.

expected it to surprise his friends very much.

But they were well aware that even the beefy Horace could not have handled one half of Poker Pike—or even one-quarter! Still, it was rather surprising that Coker could see that obvious fact! Coker's usual idea was that he could handle anybody, and that it was only his good nature that kept him from being a regular terror.

"I've tried," said Coker, "and he pitched me about like a bundle of rags. You know what happened on the river the other day. He floored me easily. As for you fellows, you knew better than to try tackling him at all. He can handle me as easily as I could handle either of you chaps!"

Potter and Greene looked at Coker. They were not so sure that Horace Coker could handle them so frightfully easily!

"Thrashing the rotter," went on Coker, "is what I'd like: but what's the

There's a side-door at the porter's lodge, as I dare say you know, that opens into his room—that's the door he uses! There's a porch, with a roof, over that door; and what about you sitting on top of that porch, Potter—"

"Eh?"

"With a big can of ink—"

"What?"

"And mopping it over his head—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Or Greene could do it!" said Coker. "Either of you could do it all right. You haven't much gumption; but any fool can do a thing, if he's careful to carry out instructions. You see that?"

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene together.

"I've got all ready for it," continued Coker. "I've collected a lot of ink, and parked it in a tin pail, in those rhododendrons near Gosling's lodge. I got it all ready before lock-up. All that

remains is to carry out the wheeze. Either of you—I don't mind which!"

Coker did not mind which; it was immaterial to him. But Potter and Greene looked as if they minded very much.

"I say, hadn't we better get along to the games study?" asked Greene uneasily.

Prep was over in the Fifth, and Potter and Greene would have gone already had not Coker kept them while he used his chin.

"Yes, come on," said Potter. "Blundell's got something to say about the cricket, and we don't want to miss it. See you later, Coker."

"Don't go!" said Coker calmly. "I've not finished yet."

"But—"

"And don't jaw! I've thought all this out," went on Coker, heedless of his friends' longing glances at the door. "After dark, that man Pike goes rooting all over the shop—keeping tabs, as he calls it, in his wierd lingo. He fancies the kidnapers are coming after that young Yankee in the Remove at all hours of the day and night. Beaks are always running into him when they take their trots in the quad of an evening. And—"

"It's after lock-up, Coker!" Potter pointed out. "Of course, I—I'd like no end to sit on top of that porch with a can of ink! Just the thing I'd really enjoy doing! Hem! But as we're not allowed out of the House after lock-up—"

"We can get out all right!" said Coker.

"I say, there'd be a row—"

"I'm not suggesting that you should call on Prout and tell him what we're up to!" said Coker sarcastically. "Keep

it dark, of course. Now, have you got it clear? That ruffian Pike will be rooting about the House and the quad as usual to-night; but sooner or later, of course, he will go indoors. That's where you get him, Potter."

"Do I?" murmured Potter.

He seemed to doubt it.

"Only Pike uses that side door at the porter's lodge. No chance of making a mistake in the dark. I know you'd make a mistake if you could; but it's safe as houses! Sitting on top of that porch, you mop the pail of ink over him as soon as you hear him coming—see?"

Potter and Greene was silent. It was clear that Coker had been thinking this out with deep cunning!

He had it all out and dried! Really, it looked good. Still, they did not seem keen on it. Breaking House bounds did not appeal to Coker's friends as much as it did to Coker. Also, even if the pail of ink was successfully mopped over the objectionable Mr. Pike, there was some doubt as to what might happen afterwards. Coker did not seem to have thought of that. Potter and Greene thought of it.

"Got it clear?" asked Coker. "Mind, this is only a beginning; we're going to keep on ragging that ruffian Pike till he gets fed-up and gets out of the school. I'd rather thrash him, as I've said. But I'm hardly up to his weight. Ragging him is the idea! We're going to rag him right out of Greyfriars—and this is the start."

"Um!" said Potter and Greene.

They did not like Mr. Pike. They had had one sample of his heavy hand, and hadn't liked it at all! Ragging him out of Greyfriars struck them as quite a desirable sort of thing, and they were prepared to stand round and cheer

while somebody else got on with it. But they were not prepared to rag him personally—especially after what had happened to Loder of the Sixth that afternoon!

Coker rose from the armchair. He seemed to have finished talking—which was a relief, as far as it went. But if action was to follow discussion, Potter and Greene really would have preferred Coker to go on talking.

"Come on!" said Coker.

He led his friends from the study.

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. They did not want a row with Coker, and it was clear that there was going to be a row if they refused to back him up in this enterprise. Still more they did not want to enter into a hostile encounter with the Greyfriars gunman. It was a difficult position.

However, they followed Coker.

Blundell of the Fifth called to them as they passed the open door of the games study. Potter and Greene paused.

"Come on!" said Coker testily.

Potter and Greene suppressed their feelings and came on. They went downstairs, and Coker led them to the Fifth Form Room.

Form-rooms, of course, were deserted at that time, only an hour before dorm. They were supposed to be kept locked; but as Prout always forgot to lock his Form-room, that was all right.

Coker tramped in, followed by Potter and Greene. He closed the door, and led them across to the window.

The May night was fine, but dark. There was no moon, and hardly a star in the dark sky. Nothing could have been more favourable for Coker's enterprise.

It was important, of course, not to be seen! Breaking House bounds, by way of a window, meant lines, and probably detentions—as well as a lengthy jaw from Prout—worse than either detentions or lines. And ragging the man from Chicago was not an enterprise of which beaks would have been likely to approve!

But the quadrangle was dark and deserted. Unless Poker Pike was "rubbering" around, on the watch for kidnapers, there was nobody about.

Coker pushed up the window.

"Safe as houses!" he remarked. "I hope you've got it clear! You'll climb on the porch, Potter, and I'll hand the pail up to you. Greene and I are going to wait round the corner. We shall be ready to cover your retreat—you'll have to get away afterwards, you know. Quite likely that ruffian will be shirty, and will get after you."

Potter thought it probable!

"If he does we'll barge him over, see?" explained Coker. "You can leave that to me! Now, come on!"

Coker led the way. He clambered through the window, held on to the sill, and dropped. It was quite a short drop from the Form-room window to the ground. But Coker, of course, lost his footing, and tumbled over.

Bump!

"Oooh!" gasped Coker.

There was a faint chuckle from within the open window. Then there was a faint whisper. Then, if Coker could have heard it, there was a faint sound of tiptoe tread!

Horace Coker picked himself up. He grunted and stared up at the window. Potter and Greene were not following him out.

"Come on!" hissed Coker.

No reply. Coker breathed hard!

"Are you coming?" he yelled.

Still no reply! If Potter and Greene heard, they did not heed. Probably



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they did not hear—very probably, for they were already out of the Form-room and on their way to the games study.

"Potter!" hissed Coker. "Deaf? Greeno!"

Coker could not venture to shout to them. A shout would have been heard by other ears; and even Coker realised that it would be injudicious to draw general attention to the fact that he was outside the House after lock-up. He breathed wrath.

"Are you silly idiots deaf?" he hissed. "Are you coming? Can't you hear me? How long are you going to keep me waiting? You blithering idiots—you silly asses—you potty chumps—you frabjous, footling fatheads—are you coming, or are you not coming?"

Evidently the answer was "not." There was no answer, and they did not come. Coker, at last, grabbed the sill again, lifted himself, and glared into the dark interior of the Form-room. He was quite perplexed.

"Are you there?" he breathed. Stony silence! Potter and Greene were not there!

Slowly it dawned on Coker's powerful brain that they had only waited for him to give them a chance to cut off, and leave him on his lonely own! If Coker was keen to carry on with his remarkable scheme for making Mr. Pike tired of Greyfriars School as a residence, Coker had to play a lone hand! Either Coker, alone, unaided like Coriolanus of old, had to mop that pail of ink over Mr. Pike—or Mr. Pike had to be left to go on the even tenor of his way unmopped!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Poker Pike Gets It in the Neck!

"OH!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bunter was startled.

After prep that evening, most of the Remove fellows were gathered in the Rag. The chief topic there was the "fanning" of Loder of the Sixth in the quad that afternoon; and what the probable result was likely to be for Poker Pike.

Putnam van Duck was worried. It was true that he was fed-up to the back teeth with Poker and his watchfulness. He could hardly walk ten yards outside the House without finding Poker on his trail. Even inside the House the watchful gunman cropped up in all sorts of places, at all sorts of times, to give him the once-over, and make sure that he was still there!

Still, his popper, back in Chicago, was very keen on Poker keeping "tabs" on him; and after what had happened, it looked as if Poker might be politely, but firmly, requested to depart from Greyfriars.

Personally, Putnam would not have mourned to see the last of his gunman guardian. But he knew that Chick Chew, the star kidnapper of the United States, was likely to get busy if Poker went—and he did not want his popper to be alarmed for his safety. So Putnam was worried.

Billy Bunter happened to blink out of the window. That blink was followed by his startled gasp.

Flattened on the window-pane was a human face!

Really, it was startling!

Billy Bunter blinked at that face at the window, his little round eyes almost popping through his big round spectacles.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Ooogh! I say, you fellows— Oh crikey!"

A dozen fellows looked round.

"What the dickens!" exclaimed

Vernon-Smith, in astonishment, as he spotted the face at the window. "Who the thump—"

"I say, you fellows, is it a burglar?" gasped Bunter.

"Fathead!"

The Bounder ran to the window and threw up the sash. A hickory face, under a bowler hat, looked in!

"Pike!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith.

"Sure!" assented Poker. The bowler hat gave a nod.

"You silly idiot!" yelled Bunter.

"What the thump do you mean, making a fellow jump out of his skin?"

Mr. Pike did not answer that question. The window being open, he put his bullet head and his bowler hat inside, and his slits of eyes scanned the interior of the room.

There was a chuckle from the juniors.

It was only Mr. Pike's watchfulness! He was dutifully keeping tabs on Putnam van Duck; and giving the Rag the once-over, no doubt with a lingering misgiving that the millionaire's son might have been spirited away since he had last seen him.

"Say, you guys, where's that Putnam van Duck?" inquired Mr. Pike.

Van Duck was seated in an armchair which had its back towards the window. He was, therefore, invisible to his gunman guardian's anxious eyes.

"You howling ass!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Do you think the kidnapper has come down the study chimney after him?"

"I wouldn't put it past him!" answered Poker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Say, is that young guy around?" demanded Poker.

Putnam van Duck grinned and sat where he was. He was tired of Poker and his once-overs. Once-over was not so bad; but the twice-over, and the thrice-over, and the dozen times over, got on his nervous system. He sat tight and left Mr. Pike to go on inquiring.

The hickory brow puckered anxiously under the brim of the bowler hat.

"Say, put me wise!" snapped Poker Pike. "If that young guy ain't around, I guess I got to get on his trail! I'll mention that I ain't setting around while Chick Chew gets away with that Putnam van Duck! Surest thing you know."

"Van Duck's all right, Mr. Pike!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The rightfulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Poker!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Says you!" retorted Mr. Pike. "I guess I want to see that baby! Yep! I sure do want to give him the once-over."

Leaning his elbows on the window-sill, Poker Pike pushed his head and his bowler hat farther in to survey the room.

Herbert Vernon-Smith grinned, stepped closer to the window, and suddenly jerked down the sash.

Mr. Pike gave a convulsive bound as it shut on the back of his neck.

There was a shriek of laughter from the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yurrooop!" gasped Mr. Pike. He felt, for a moment, as if he had been guillotined. He wriggled wildly.

Had Mr. Pike's hands been inside, the Bounder would have had reason to regret playing that little trick. But Mr. Pike's hands were outside. Only his head was inside, the rest of him barred off by the shut sash.

He heaved frantically; but he could not raise the sash with the back of his neck. Poker Pike was a prisoner!

"Let up, you young geck!" he roared. "Say, you pesky gink, you going to let up on a guy?"

"Not so's you'd notice it!" said the Bounder, answering Mr. Pike in his own language. "I guess I got you, Poker Pike; and I'll say you're cinched a few, and then some."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, have that hat off him! Nobody's ever seen it off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poker wriggled wildly. But the Bounder kept a hand on the sash, and the gunman, hefty as he was, had no chance.

Billy Bunter rolled up to him—undaunted by Mr. Pike's infuriated glare. So long as Mr. Pike's hands were outside the window, Bunter was bold as a lion.

He jerked the bowler hat off Poker's head. A well-oiled crop was revealed, glistening in the light.

Bunter waved the hat in the air.

"I say, you fellows, it comes off!" he squeaked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Really, it might have been doubted whether Poker Pike's hat did come off; he was never seen to remove it, and fellows had almost wondered whether it grew on his head! But it was off now! It was not, after all, a permanent fixture; evidently it was at least semi-detached!

"Pass!" yelled Peter Todd.

Billy Bunter tossed the bowler hat into the air. Skinner caught it with his foot as it came down, and "passed" to Peter, who passed in turn to Bob Cherry.

There was a scramble after the hat! It passed from foot to foot, all over the Rag, amid howls of laughter.

Poker Pike spluttered with wrath.

Outside the window his legs thrashed wildly. His wild wriggling gave him quite a pain in the back of his bull-neck. But he could not wriggle loose. He was held fast by the jammed sash, and he could only splutter and gurgle and gasp, as he watched the juniors playing football with his hat.

Up and down and round about the Rag went that hat, passed from foot to foot. It showed signs of damage after a time.

"Say, you ginks, will you let up on that hat?" shrieked Poker Pike. "I'm telling you to let up!"

"Pass!" roared Squiff.

"On the ball!" shouted Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gee!" chuckled Putnam van Duck. "I'll say this is the bee's knee! I'll tell a man it's the grasshopper's side-whiskers, and then some."

"You Putnam van Duck!" roared Poker, as the American junior, rising from the armchair, came into his view. "You young scallawag, you get a cinch on this winder, and let a guy out!"

"Forget it, Poker!" answered Putnam cheerfully. "You poked your cabeza in where it wasn't wanted, and you can sure park it there."

"You doggoned young geck!" hooted Poker.

"Pass that hat!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poker Pike could only wriggle in wrath. Generally he was a "guy" who could take care of himself, and a little over; but this time he had got it in the neck—right in the neck! Amid roars of laughter the game of football went on, with Poker's hat, which was getting more and more damaged, and every moment looked less and less like a hat.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

## Splash!

**H**ORACE COKER breathed wrath and indignation as he peered into the deserted Fifth Form Room from the dusky quad. Slowly he dropped back from the sill, a deep frown corrugating his rugged brow. Potter and Greene had let him down. And Coker was inclined to go after them, tell them what he thought of them, and follow it up with knocking their heads together.

But that, though satisfactory in its way, would not have helped on his campaign against the Greyfriars gunman. And Coker, angry and indignant as he was, kept to the matter in hand. Leaving the House behind him, Coker scuttled away across the quad.

He had been left to carry on alone; and Coker was not the man to turn back when he had set his hand to the plough. He was going to carry on.

Once away from the lighted windows, it was very dark in the quad. From the direction of the Rag, the room where the juniors most did congregate, Coker heard sounds of merriment as he went—some sort of shindy seemed to be going on among the fags. But he did not heed it. Fags were miles, if not leagues, beneath Coker's lofty notice.

He reached Gosling's lodge.

A light burned in the ancient porter's window, and he had a glimpse of William Gosling inside through the curtain.

Passing on round the little building, Coker cautiously annexed the pail of ink he had left concealed in the shrubbery.

It was a small size in pails, but it held quite a lot of ink. There was a good gallon in it. Coker had plenty of money, which he spent lavishly on anything that took his fancy. This time, it appeared, his fancy had run to ink.

Pail in hand, he approached the side door of the lodge, with redoubled caution. There was no light in Mr. Pike's room there. That looked as if he was out of doors.

He was, as a matter of fact, or, to be exact, his head was indoors, and the rest of him out of doors. All of him, at any rate, was at a good distance from his quarters.

This suited Coker. Had Mr. Pike been in, Coker would have had to wait for him to come out; and he mightn't have come out. As he was out, it was certain that he would go in sooner or later. The sooner the better, once Coker was in a position to receive him.

Coker had no doubt that he had, as was his custom, gone round scouting—on the watch for kidnapping gangsters. Nobody else at Greyfriars supposed for a moment that Chick Chew and his gang would ever make any attempt on Putnam van Duck in the school. But Poker Pike took no chances. At any moment of the day and night his bullet head and his bowler hat were liable to pop up anywhere. Coker had observed the manners and customs of the gunman, and laid his plans accordingly.

Having satisfied himself that Poker was not at present on the spot, Coker of the Fifth stopped at the porch outside the side door.

That porch had a solid wooden roof, with a slight slant on it. Its sides were trellised and easy to climb.

A fellow posted on top of that porch

had anyone who came to the door below at his mercy. It was as Coker had told his friends, as easy as falling off a form.

It was not easy to make even an easy climb, burdened with a pail of ink. Coker missed his friends now. His plan had been for one fellow to climb up, and another to hand up the pail, which was simple. It was not so simple to climb up carrying the pail.

Essaying to do so, Coker slipped, and there was a gush of ink from the tin pail. Coker breathed hard as he felt it splash his trousers.

It made them feel uncomfortably damp. And it wasted the ink. About a quart had splashed over Coker's trousers.

He set the pail on the ground and groped in his pocket, where he remembered he had some string. Had Coker intended to provide himself with string he would no doubt have forgotten to do so. But it happened to be there, and it came in useful.

He tied one end of the string to the handle of the pail. The other end he looped over his wrist.

Then he clambered on the porch.

This time it was easy. The darkness was deep, and Coker knocked his head once or twice on projections, and murmured things. But he landed safely on the roof of the porch.

Then, with great care, he pulled up the pail by means of the string. It banged twice on the trellis, shedding a splash of ink each time. About another quart was missing by the time Coker landed his fish.

Still, there was more than half a gallon remaining. Half a gallon of ink was a good amount to land on any man's head. Even a quart would have made anyone sit up and take notice. Half a gallon was enough to do the job fairly thoroughly.

Squatting on the porch, pail in hand, Coker waited and watched, and listened for footsteps. Watching was not of much use in the deep dark. He could see little or nothing. But he was certain to hear a footstep when it came. And nobody, of course, ever came to that door, excepting Mr. Pike. When Mr. Pike came, Coker was bound to hear him, and he was ready for him.

So far, he had been glad that the gunman was off the scene, giving him a chance to get through with his preparations. Now that he was ready, he waited impatiently.

It was less than an hour to dorm, and he had, of course, to be in the House at bed-time. Coker was a reckless ass, but certainly he did not want Mr. Prout to miss him when the Fifth Form went to roost.

When was the brute coming?

Already he had been absent some time. He might come back any minute. Coker, as the minutes passed, wished he would buck up.

He was, of course, quite unaware that Mr. Pike, in those moments, was unavoidably detained with a window-sash shut down on the back of his neck. Mr. Pike was unable to return to his quarters till the juniors were done with him; and they were not done with him yet. But Coker was in a state of blissful ignorance of what was going on in the Rag.

He waited, with intensifying impatience.

He was cager to get on with the good work. A lot of the fellows had declared that Poker Pike would get "booted" for his gun-play performance in the quad that afternoon. The Head was sure to come down heavy for it,

That was all very well, but it was certain that he had not been booted yet. The Head, so far, seemed to have taken no steps. Coker was taking steps, and he was going to take more, too, keeping on with it till the obnoxious and obstreperous Poker had had enough.

"Blow the brute!" muttered Coker impatiently.

It was not a comfortable position, squatting on top of the porch. Ink was sticking his trousers to his legs. Coker was not enjoying this. But he was a sticker, and he stuck!

At last—at long last—there was a sound of footsteps.

Coker's eyes gleamed.

Someone was coming.

All he could see in the dark was a faint shadow as it moved. He waited. If it was old Gosling coming out of his lodge for something or other, he would pass on, and all well. If it was Poker Pike, he would come up to the side door; then there would be no mistake.

Coker listened intently.

The footsteps came directly to the side door of the lodge. Below him, as he peered down, a dim figure loomed in the dark—about to pass under the porch of the door.

That was Coker's moment!

The tin pail was lifted—and up-ended! Out from the pail shot, at one fell swoop, more than half a gallon of black ink!

It landed fairly on the head beneath Coker!

Splash!

There was a sudden gasp below.

"Urrrrrgghh!"

Drenched, dripping, smothered with ink, the dim figure reeled, staggered, and sat down, with a bump.

Coker did not linger.

He had not thought much about consequences. But Coker, though he was not bright, was too bright to remain within hitting distance of a Chicago gunman after smothering him from head to foot with ink.

He made a bound from the top of the porch, landed on his feet, tumbled over headlong, picked himself up, and ran.

Behind him, as he ran, horrid sounds woke up the echoes of the night—sounds made by a man who seemed to have an impediment in his speech. Some of the ink, it seemed had gone into the recipient's mouth.

"Urrggh! Hurrgrgh! Gurrgrggh!"

Coker grinned as he ran.

Almost in a twinkling he was back at the House, scrambling into the Fifth Form Room.

To shut the window, get out of the Form-room, and bolt, was the work of only a few seconds. Coker was safe back while his hapless victim was still gurgling horribly in the darkness at Gosling's lodge.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

## Horrid for the Head!

**T**O say the headmaster of Greyfriars School was astonished would be to put it mildly.

Astonished was not the word. Amazed—astounded—would be nearer the mark. Flabbergasted would perhaps express it better.

Life is full of surprises. Unexpected things are always happening. No doubt Dr. Locke had had his share of life's surprises. But this one beat all the rest hollow—knocked them into a cocked hat.

Dr. Locke, indeed, hardly knew what was happening, at first, so utterly was he taken aback.





Gerald Loder made a spring at Poker Pike, before the gunman could draw his hands from his pockets, hitting out fiercely with both fists. Mr. Pike went over backwards, like an uprooted tree, and his feet flew in the air. "Yurroogh!" gasped the gunman, as he crashed.

Having thought the matter over and decided what he had to say to Mr. Pike, the headmaster had walked down to Gosling's lodge, to see Mr. Pike, and say it. Gun-play, to which Mr. Pike was so happily accustomed in his native Chicago, could not possibly be permitted at Greyfriars School, under any circumstances whatever. Either Mr. Pike had to give his faithful promise never to handle a firearm again within the walls of the school, or he had to go—and go at once. The Head intended to speak politely, but firmly—very firmly indeed.

Such were the thoughts in his majestic mind as he arrived at the side door of Gosling's lodge. But those thoughts—and, indeed, all thoughts—were driven out of his mind by what happened next. He was about to step into the porch to knock at the door when it happened.

It seemed, for an awful moment, as if the dark skies had opened their floodgates on him. Fluid of some sort splashed and poured down on him from above.

Taken quite off his balance, the Head stumbled back, and sat down, gurgling horribly.

Fluid—he did not realise for the moment that it was ink—streamed all over him. It drenched him. It smothered him. He dripped with it.

Coker, having spilt so much, had rather wondered whether there was enough left in the tin pail to give Mr. Pike a good drenching. He need not have had any misgivings on that point. There was enough—quite enough! It happened to be Dr. Locke, not Mr. Pike, who got it. But there was no doubt

about the thoroughness of the drenching.

Sitting there in the dark, streaming ink, the Head gurgled. He saw and heard nothing of Coker's flying leap and flight. Ink was all over him; he was conscious only of ink. He lived and had his being in a world of ink.

"Hurrgh! Gurrgh! Wurrgh! Mooooogh!" gurgled and mumbled the amazed headmaster.

He sat and gasped, and gurgled. Slowly he gathered his startled wits. He staggered to his feet.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "What—what—who—what—Bless my soul! It—it—it is—I think—ink! Urrgh!"

He gazed round him almost wildly. It was not the floodgates of the sky that had unexpectedly opened on him. He had been drenched with ink! It was an outrage—an unprecedented outrage! Astonishment, flabbergasted amazement, began to turn to wrath.

Who had done this? It was long past lock-up. The Greyfriars fellows were all in the House. It could not have been one of them, even if it was imaginable for any Greyfriars fellow to play such a trick on his headmaster. Who could have done it?

"Bless my—gurrgh—soul!" mumbled the Head. "The—the rascal! The ruffian! The—groogh! Oogh! Who can have—ugh!—Who—ooogh!"

There was a sound of an opening door. Gosling, in his lodge, had heard something.

The Head staggered away, leaving a pool of ink on the ground, but taking more with him. He came into the light as Gosling opened his door and the illumination streamed forth.

"Who—" began Gosling. "What is—"

He broke off as he saw the Head, and gave a startled howl.

"Gosling—" gasped the Head, as he totteringly approached.

Gosling backed into his doorway.

"Ere, you keep orf!" he roared. "Wot I says is this 'ere, you keep orf! Out of it, you blooming nigger!"

Gosling backed in and slammed the door. The astonished Head heard the sound of a shooting bolt.

He did not quite realise that, with black ink smothering his face, he was unrecognisable, and rather a startling object, to see suddenly in the dark.

Gosling bolted himself, and then bolted the door!

"Bub-bib-bless my soul!" gasped the Head.

He tottered to Gosling's door and knocked. He was in need of immediate help, and he did not in the least understand Gosling's strange actions.

"Gosling!" he called out. "Gosling!"

"You 'ook it!" came a howl from the porter within. "You 'ear me! Wot I says is this 'ere, you 'ook it or I'll telephone for the perlice!"

"Gosling—"

"'Elp!" roared Gosling, as the Head knocked again. "'Elp!"

"Gosling!" shrieked Dr. Locke. "It is I, the headmaster—"

"'Elp!" yelled Gosling. "There's a wild nigger! 'Elp!"

"Are you mad, Gosling? Or have you been drinking? It is not a negro—it is Dr. Locke—"

"'Elp!"

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Who?

"Upon my word!" gasped Dr. Locke. "Gosling, I shall discharge you for this! Open your door at once, you stupid man!"

"Elp!"  
"Gosling——"  
"Elp!"

Dr. Locke turned away. There was no help from Gosling. Gosling seemed to want help himself—or, at least, "elp!" The inky headmaster tottered away to the House.

He shed dripping ink as he went. He passed the lighted windows of the Rag and heard a roar of laughter from that apartment. Something was going on there. But he gave that no attention.

He tottered on.  
"What—what—who——"

It was Mr. Prout's voice. The master of the Fifth was taking his usual stroll in the quad when he suddenly spotted the Head, in the gleam of light from many windows.

Prout jumped almost clear of the ground.

"Who—what——" he stuttered.

"Mr. Prout!" gasped the Head.

He approached the Fifth Form master, who backed away as swiftly as Gosling had done. There was no doorway at hand for the alarmed Fifth Form master to dodge into, but he backed promptly, waving fat hands at the inky headmaster, as if to wave him off, like a wasp.

"Keep your distance!" spluttered Prout. "Keep your distance! I will strike you—I will knock you down if you dare——"

"Prout!" shrieked the Head.

"Who are you?" thundered Prout. "How dare you enter these premises? Keep your distance! I am not afraid of a black ruffian! I will knock you down——"

"Prout! I am Dr. Locke——"

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Prout.

"I have been smothered with ink——"

"Wha-a-t——"

"Mr. Prout——"

"Upon my word!" Prout recognised the voice at last, if he could not recognise the face. The face, indeed, was quite unrecognisable. "Is—is—is it indeed Dr. Locke? My dear sir, forgive me! I did not know—I did not dream—I fancied it was some dreadful negro—I—I—— Goodness gracious! Who has done this?"

Prout gazed at his chief in horror.

"I—I do not know!" said the Head feebly. "I saw no one. But—pray assist me to the House, my dear Prout. I—I—I——"

"An unparalleled outrage!" gasped Prout. He gave his chief a helping arm. "An absolutely unprecedented outrage! Pray allow me."

Prout navigated the tottering headmaster to the House. Five minutes later the news spread like wildfire.

Somebody had been ragging the Head! Somebody had been lying in wait for him at Gosling's lodge, and had mopped tons and tons of ink over him! The Head had been nearly drowned in ink!

Everybody buzzed with excitement! Two Fifth Form fellows in the games study looked at one another with almost ghastly faces when they heard. Potter and Greene remembered Coker! They gazed at one another in mute horror. But everybody else buzzed. Such a happening was, as Prout had justly said, unparalleled and unprecedented. Greyfriars School fairly thrilled with the startling news.

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"STOP that row!"

That was Coker all over. Sixth Form prefects might have noticed that an unusual uproar was going on in the Rag, and barged in to quell the tumult. They might have brought ashplants along, and handed out swipes from the same.

But no Fifth Form man had any right whatever in the junior quarters. No fellow who was not a prefect had any right to interfere, though the juniors had been making as terrific and discordant a din as the jazziest of jazz bands on the radio. And it was not so bad as that!

Certainly there was plenty of noise. Twenty fellows could not play football with a hat indoors without making a noise. Chairs went over—a table rocked—fellows slipped and stumbled and bumped—they shouted, and they cheered. No doubt a prefect would have looked in sooner or later. But, as it happened, it was Coker who looked in.

When Coker of the Fifth threw open the door of the Rag, and looked in, and told the Remove to "stop that row," the Remove stopped it. Not that they were in the least disposed to obey orders from Coker of the Fifth. But his check in barging in, and giving them orders, called for prompt treatment.

Poker Pike's hat had been reduced to a state of ruin. The next item on the programme was to reduce Coker of the Fifth to the same state.

Twenty or more glares were turned on the Fifth Former. Heedless of glares, Coker stepped into the Rag, frowning.

"You noisy young sweeps!" he snapped. "Do you know you can be heard all over Greyfriars? Stop it, see?"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Johnny Bulk. "What are you butting in here for? Collar him!"

"Bag him!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Scrag him!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

There was a general move towards Coker. The remains of Poker's hat lay unheeded on the floor.

"Say, you young ginks, you letting up on a guy?" yelled Poker, with another frantic squirm, under the shut sash.

Coker jumped.

He stared across the Rag at the window, and nearly fell down at the sight of the gunman's red and furious face, and his bullet head, pinned down by the window-sash on the back of his neck.

Coker could not believe his eyes.

Hardly five minutes ago he had drenched and smothered that bullet head with ink at Gosling's lodge—or, at any rate, he believed that he had.

Yet here was the bullet head jammed in the window of the Rag, without a sign or a spot of ink on it.

The ghost of Poker Pike could not have startled Coker more than Poker did in the flesh, at that moment.

"Why, what—what——" gasped Coker. "Who—who—who is that? Is—is—is that—that—that—that man Pike?"

Harry Wharton & Co., about to hurl themselves at Coker, and give him what he was asking for, stopped, in sheer surprise.

"Is—is—is that Pike?" gasped Coker blankly.

"Don't you know him when you see him, fathead?" asked Harry Wharton. "Do you think it's his ghost, ass?"

"Has—has he been there long?" gasped Coker. Coker was not quick on the uptake; but it was dawning on him that it could not have been Poker Pike who had got the ink.

Getting rid of that ink would have taken time. Whoever had got that ink had a good hour's washing before him, at least. And there was not a spot on Poker.

"About half an hour!" answered Harry.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

That settled it! If Poker Pike had been jammed in the window of the Rag for half an hour, or half that period of time, evidently Poker Pike had been nowhere near Gosling's lodge when Coker mopped the ink!

Somebody had got it! Who? Somebody, it was certain. Coker had heard that somebody's horrid gurgles as he fled. Who?

"Say, you pesky young guys," roared Poker Pike, "I'm telling you to let up on a guy, or I sure will beat you up a few!"

Coker stood goggling at him.

He might have stood goggling at him for quite a long time, petrified with astonishment. But he was interrupted.

The Removites interrupted him.

They interrupted him by collaring him on all sides, and Coker was up-ended on the floor of the Rag.

He roared as he smote the floor, and the mystery of the ink was banished, for the moment, from his mind. He had nearer and more pressing matters to think of now.

"You cheeky little ticks!" howled Coker, struggling in many hands.

"Leggo! I'll wallop the lot of you!"

"Roll him over!" yelled Skinner.

"Bump him!"

"I say, you fellows, lemme get at him! Give a fellow a chance!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Scrag him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nearly every fellow in the Rag lent a hand! If Coker of the Fifth fancied that he had the authority of a prefect, and could give orders to the Remove, they were the fellows to undeceive him on that point. They did so—promptly, drastically, and effectually.

Coker rolled and roared.

Putnam van Duck picked up the wreck of his gunman guardian's hat. He went to the window with it and jammed it on Poker's bullet head, grinning cheerily at the exasperated Poker.

"I guess you can beat it, Poker!" he remarked. "I'll say we're through with you, big boy. You keep your cabeza parked in your own shebang, see? Don't you put it in here any more."

"You pesky young geck!" gasped Poker. "You ornery, dog-goned, pie-faced, slab-sided young mugwump——"

"That'll be enough!" said Putnam. "You beat it, old-timer." He shoved up the sash, and Poker Pike was able to get his head out at last. Poker had a severe crick in the neck by that time.

"I guess——" began Poker sulphurously; but Putnam slammed the window shut, and cut short the flow of his remarks.

Then he joined the Removites, and lent a hand with Coker.

Coker of the Fifth was going through quite an exciting time. It was being impressed upon him that it was injudicious to butt into the Rag and issue commands to the juniors there.

"Roll him over!"

"Bump him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Sit on his head!"

"Gurrgh!" gurgled Coker.

Wingate of the Sixth looked in at the open doorway of the Rag. His arrival was fortunate for Coker. Coker's state was rapidly approximating to that of Poker Pike's hat!

"Stop that!" called out the captain of Greyfriars sharply.

"Ware prefects!" exclaimed Skinner.

"All right, Wingate!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Only giving Coker what he came in specially to ask for!"

"Stop that row at once, you young sweeps!"

"Well, perhaps Coker's had enough," remarked Bob.

"Urrrgh!"

Coker staggered up as the Removites released him. He looked as if he had had enough. He felt as if he had had too much.

"What the thump are you rowing here with the fags for, Coker?" asked the Greyfriars captain testily. "Clear off, you ass!"

"Urrrgh!"

Coker tottered to the door. Wingate frowned at him as he went.

The Removites eyed the head prefect of Greyfriars rather uneasily. They realised that there had, as a matter of fact, been rather an uncommon uproar in the Rag, first with Poker Pike's hat as a football, and then with Coker of the Fifth.

But it was not on that account, as they soon learned, that Wingate had looked in. As Coker tottered away, the Greyfriars captain fixed a stern and searching look on the mob of juniors.

"Any of you young rascals been out of the House?" he demanded.

"Not since lock-up, of course," answered Harry.

"Oh, of course!" said Wingate sarcastically. "I'm quite aware that no fellow of the Remove would dream of such a thing!"

"Honest Injun!" said the captain of the Remove. "Has anything happened out of the House, Wingate?"

"Yes!" grunted Wingate. "Something jolly serious has happened! Somebody has been ragging the Head."

There was a general jump.

"Ragging the Head!" gasped Wharton.

The idea of "ragging" the Head, or even of thinking of such a proceeding, rather took the juniors' breath away. It was an unthinkable thing.

"Some mad ass seems to have waited for him at Gosling's lodge, and mopped a can of ink over him!" said Wingate. "Goodness knows who—some young lunatic, anyhow! Nobody here been out of the House?"

"Nobody!" answered Harry.

"No fear!" said Bob.

"We've been rather busy here for some time, Wingate!" drawled the Bounder, and there was a chuckle.

"Well, whoever did it is booked for the sack!" growled Wingate.

And he turned and left the Rag, leaving the Removites in a buzz of surprise and excitement.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Keep It Dark!

"U RRRRRRGGGH!"

That sound of gasping was audible in Coker's study as Potter and Greene arrived.

Coker had gone up to his study after leaving the Rag. He felt that he needed a rest. He collapsed into his armchair, and gasped and gurgled for breath. In that winded and breathless state, Coker was fully occupied with his own little troubles, and he remained, so far, unaware of the thrilling news with which the whole House was buzzing.

Potter and Greene looked in.

"Oh, here he is!" said Potter.

They came into the study, gazing at Coker. Coker gazed back at them. He

noticed the horror in their faces, but had no idea of its cause.

"Been in a row?" asked Greene.

Coker looked as if he had been in a row. He was dusty all over, his tie was gone, and his collar hung under one ear. His hair was like a mop.

"Yes!" gasped Coker. "Those cheeky young scoundrels—Ooogh! Didn't you fellows hear that fearful row in the Rag? Ooogh!"

"There's always a row in the Rag," said Greene. "Have you been rowing with the fags?"

"Urrgh! I looked in to tell them to stop that din!" gasped Coker. "They set on me—urrgh—ragged me—ragged a Fifth Form man, you know! Pretty state of things Greyfriars is coming to! Ooogh! Quelch doesn't whop those scoundrels enough! I've a jolly good mind to tell him so! Ugggh!"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance.

Having seen Coker started on his expedition to Gosling's lodge, they had been absolutely horrified when they heard what had happened to the Head. They could not doubt that Coker had got the wrong man in the dark. But the discovery that he had been scrapping with juniors in the Rag gave them a ray of hope.

"So you've been in the Rag?" exclaimed Potter.

"Urrgh! Yes! Wurrgh!"

"Thank goodness!" said Greene. "Then you never went to Gosling's lodge, after all! Thank goodness!"

"Eh—of course I did!"

"You did?" exclaimed Potter and Greene together.

"Of course I did!" grunted Coker. "I went into the Rag after I came back. What are you goggling at, you dummies? You know I was going. You let me down like rotters!"

Potter and Greene stared at him. That ray of hope vanished. Coker had, after all, carried on! So there was no doubt about what had happened!

"You let me down!" repeated Coker. "And a pretty muck you've made of the thing, too! I never got that brute Pike, after all!"

"Oh, you awful ass!" groaned Potter.

"I can't quite make it out," said Coker. "It puzzles me. You see, I had it all out and dried. Nobody ever goes to that door except that man Pike. Well, when somebody came to the door, what was I to think?"

He glared at his dismayed chums.

"All your fault, of course! If you'd been with me, it wouldn't have happened! Lotting a fellow down! I thought I had him; but when I went to the Rag to stop that thundering row, there he was—those young sweeps had him there, with his head jammed in the window—Pike, you know! You could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw him! Up to that minute I thought he'd had the ink! Somebody had it!"

"S-s-somebody!" groaned Greene.

"Yes," Coker nodded. "Somebody had it—Gosling, perhaps—"

"Gig-gig-Gosling?"

"Well, I can't make it out, but I don't see who else it could have been," said Coker. "Gosling was in his lodge when I got there. I saw him through the curtain. He may have come round to Pike's door to speak to him. I don't see why he should, and, of course, I never expected anything of the kind. But somebody did—"

"Oh dear!" moaned Potter.

"Whoever it was, he got the ink right on his topknot!" said Coker. "Serve him jolly well right for barging in where he wasn't wanted, if you come to that! I suppose it was that old ass

Gosling. If it wasn't, I just can't make out who it was. But it wasn't Pike! You see, it couldn't have been, as those fags had him stuck in that window all the time!"

"No!" gasped Greene. "It wasn't Pike! Oh lor'!"

"Oh, you mad ass!" moaned Potter.

"Don't be a dummy, Potter! It was all your fault! I couldn't see who it was, of course—I'm not a cat to see in the dark! If you fellows had been there, helping a chap—"

"You don't know who it was yet?" gasped Greene.

Coker shook his head.

"No—unless it was Gosling. Can't make it out! Nobody ever goes to that door except Pike. I suppose somebody had to see him this evening—goodness knows who! I hope it wasn't a master!"

Coker started a little as that idea came into his mind.

"You—you—you hope it wasn't a master!" stuttered Potter.

"Well, that would mean a fearful row!" said Coker. "But it can't have been, of course. Old Prout may have been prowling in the quad, but he wouldn't have any reason for going to see Pike—"

"The Head had a reason!" groaned Potter.

"The Head?"

"I dare say he was going to see him about that row this afternoon when he played the goat with Loder of the Sixth. Anyhow, he went."

"The Head?" repeated Coker mechanically.

"The Head!" said Potter and Greene.

Coker gazed at them. He forgot his bumps and bruises, his shortage of breath—he forgot everything in the overwhelming horror of that communication.

"The Head?" he breathed. "You—you mean to say—you—you mim-mim-mean to s-s-s-say that— Oh crikey!"

"The whole House is buzzing with it!" said Potter. "Can't make out why you haven't heard—too busy playing the fool with the fags, I suppose! They're searching all over the place for a fellow who's been out of the House since lock-up."

"Oh crumbs!"

"The Head got it!" groaned Greene. "It's the sack, of course! They're looking for a man to sack!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Prout found the Big Beak tottering about in the quad, smothered with ink; took him for a nigger at first, I hear, and—"

"Oh scissors!"

Coker sat, petrified with horror.

The dreadful seriousness of the situation was borne in, even on Horace Coker's almost impenetrable intellect. He had drenched his headmaster with ink! It was Dr. Locke's majestic napper that had received the contents of the tin pail! Horror held Coker spellbound!

A rag on the headmaster was not only awfully bad form, it was awfully dangerous; it meant the "sack." And this was no common rag; it was the limit in rags—the very outside edge. A pail of ink on the headmaster!

Coker sat almost stunned.

Potter and Greene could only gaze at him. Their looks showed that they took it for granted that Coker was done for; he was as good as bunked already!

Coker found his voice at last.

"It was a mistake, of course! How could I know the Head was going there? I can't see in the dark. I say, sure it was the Head?"

"Sort of! It's all over the House."  
 "I—I wonder if—if the Head would understand that—that it was a—a—a mistake if—if a fellow explained—" said Coker haltingly. "It—it's the sort of mistake any fellow might make, you know, in the dark—"

Coker's voice trailed away. He realised that, mistake as it was, it was the kind of mistake a fellow was expected not to make.

And he could not even explain the mistake without admitting that he had been out of House bounds after lock-up, lying in wait for Mr. Pike with a pail of ink. That was not the sort of admission a fellow could make to a headmaster—especially a headmaster whom he had swamped with ink!

"This has got to be kept dark," said Coker at last. "Don't you fellows gabble."

"Kept dark!" repeated Potter. "I can see it being kept dark! The whole House—"

"Don't jaw!" Coker was recovering a little. "Nobody knows that I was out of the House. It was rather lucky Wingate finding me in the Rag when he did; it was very soon afterwards, and—and it's a sort of alibi really. He didn't know I'd only just got there."

"Well—" said Greene.  
 "Don't gabble!" said Coker. "It's all right! Nobody's likely to fancy that a Fifth Form man would do such a rotten thing as to rag his headmaster. Taking it for a rag on the Head, they'll never think of the Fifth. See?"

"I—I suppose there's a chance—" said Potter.

"Don't you fellows jaw, that's all!" said Coker. "Keep it dark!"

"If you're going to try to keep it dark," said Greene, with sarcasm, "you'd better go and change your bags. You look as if you'd been swimming in ink."

"All your fault!" said Coker. "If you'd been there to hand up the pail—"

"If they find a fellow with ink on him—" said Potter.

"I know that—as well as you do, Potter—better!" Coker jumped out of the armchair. "I'll cut off to the dorm and change. Don't you fellows say a word. You know what you're like for gabbling—"

"Look here—" said Coker.  
 "Don't jaw! And don't gabble!" Coker went to the door; at the door he turned back and added impressively: "Mind you don't gabble!"

Then he departed. When the Fifth Form went to their dormitory a little later Coker was in spotless trousers—and the inky pair were safely hidden from sight at the bottom of his box. Later they had to be got rid of; such deadly evidence could not be got rid of too soon. But for the moment it was all right; Coker had recovered his confidence, and Potter and Greene could only hope for the best.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Loder, the Detective!

**T**HE next day there was one topic at Greyfriars School.

Who had ragged the Head?  
 Who had inked the Big Beak?  
 Who, in the name of wonder, had mopped gallons and gallons and gallons of ink over the august and majestic napper of the headmaster? And why?

"Why" was a more baffling question than "Who." For why had any fellow, granted that he was idiot enough, wanted to do it?

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Apart from the peril of such an exploit, it was rotten bad form, rotten bad taste—the sort of thing that wasn't done. Nobody could brag of such an exploit; any Greyfriars man would have kicked the fellow who had done it readily and willingly. It was the rottenest thing that had ever been known to happen in the school. So why? Who could have wanted to ink the Head?

Nobody was likely to guess that a fellow had inked the Head without wanting to.

It was clear that someone had ambushed him in the dark. The inky pail was found; all sorts of inky tracks and traces were found. Someone, it was surmised, had watched the Head go, tracked him, and got him in the dark with that pail of ink.

The whole thing, as Loder of the Sixth remarked, had evidently been planned from the beginning. The pail of ink must have been got ready. No fellow was likely to have a pail of ink at hand ready for use at a moment's notice. It was not the sort of thing a fellow kept by him. It had been specially got ready for the Head, of course.

Loder of the Sixth was putting in some deep thinking on this subject. It seemed to Loder that he saw light.

Three fellows in the Fifth knew the truth, but they buried their knowledge deep. Nobody thought of Coker in connection with the matter.

Loder was not thinking of Horace Coker; he was thinking of quite a different person—no other than Poker Pike, the gunman.

Probably the wish was father to the thought. But it seemed very probable to Loder. The man who had made him dance in the quad was capable of anything and everything—from inking a headmaster to holding up a bank.

The outrage had occurred at Mr. Pike's door. Who could have been there but Pike? The Head had spoken very severely to Poker on some occasions; and Loder had no doubt that he was revengeful. Loder's way of judging was to judge others by himself. Nobody, so far as could be learned, had been out of the House at the time. But Pike, of course, was out of the House; and as he was always prowling about after dark, very likely he had spotted the Head on the way to the lodge. It seemed so probable to Loder that he wondered that everybody else did not guess it at once.

Nobody did—but Loder.  
 Gerald Loder was not a very dutiful prefect; he was, in fact, rather a slacker and a black sheep. But he could be very keen on duty sometimes. He was very keen now to discover the perpetrator of this awful outrage—if it was Poker Pike.

Masters and prefects, that day, were inquiring and investigating right and left. Only Loder had a clue—or thought he had.

He followed it up with a success that quite surprised him.

After morning lessons he went down to Gosling's lodge and looked at the scene of the outrage. There were still plenty of traces of ink about. A dozen fellows were looking at them when Loder arrived. Ink, evidently, had been splashed about on a liberal scale.

Gosling was in his doorway; he was eyeing the little crowd that had gathered. The Bounder, among the juniors, was speaking as Loder came up.

"Must have been gallons of it," Smithy remarked. "If I were a prefect I should be looking for a chap with ink on his clobber."

"A chap who got ink on his clobber

would have sense enough to change his clobber, I fancy," remarked Skinner.

"Then I should jolly well look for a fellow who changed his clobber this morning!" grinned the Bounder.

Loder made a mental note of that remark. It seemed to him a very sensible remark. He resolved to ascertain as soon as he could whether Poker Pike had changed any article of attire that morning. That would be easy to ascertain at a single glance, for Poker always sported the same garments. Loder felt quite obliged to Smithy for the hint.

He stopped to speak to Gosling. It was known that the tin pail which had been found in an inky state had been abstracted from Gosling's woodshed; the ragger had borrowed it for his purpose.

"I suppose you've no idea who took that pail from your shed yesterday, Gosling," Loder began.

"Which I ain't," replied Gosling. "If I knowed I'd know who was fooling about 'ere last night, Mr. Loder."

"Did you miss it from your shed?"

"Not till it was found lying about this morning."

"Does that man Pike ever go to your woodshed?"

Gosling blinked at him. That question rather revealed the drift of Loder's suspicions.

"He's been there at times," answered Gosling dryly. "Lent me a 'and sometimes with the roller. He's got his ways, but he ain't a bad sort."

"Did you see him there yesterday?"

"No," said Gosling.

"Did you notice anybody else hanging about anywhere near the woodshed yesterday?"

"No, I didn't!" said Gosling. "'Cept Master Coker, what I passed coming away."

Loder made a note of the name. Coker was not an observant fellow; still, if he had been near the woodshed, he might have observed anybody who was about, such as Mr. Pike!

"Where is Pike this morning?" asked Loder. "I haven't seen him about as usual."

"Been down to Courtfield to buy a new 'at!" answered Gosling.

Loder started.

"A new hat!" he repeated.

"Yes, he's back now, if you want him!" said Gosling.

Loder turned away, his eyes gleaming! Poker Pike had worn the same hat—in fact, lived in it night and day—ever since he had been at Greyfriars School. Why had he bought a new hat, the very next morning after the outrage with the ink?

There was only one answer to that question! He had splashed his hat with ink, swamping the Head, and dared not let such a clue be seen! Could anything be clearer? Loder had noted Smithy's suggestion that the ragger might change inky clobber! Pike had changed his hat! If that was not proof that that ruffian had inked the Head, Loder would have liked to know what proof was.

"I say, you fellows!" It was a squeak from Billy Bunter, as the side door of the lodge opened, and Mr. Pike walked out. "I say, he's got a new hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Pike walked by the juniors—in a new hat—and gave them a rather grim look as he passed. Mr. Pike had lived perpetually in the same hat since arriving at Greyfriars. But that game of football in the Rag had done it! Poker was not, perhaps, particular about his hats, but even in the cheapest joint in Chicago he could not have worn that



Held fast by the jammed sash, Poker Pike could only splutter and gurgle and gasp, as he watched the Removites playing football with his hat. "Say, you ginks, will you let up on that hat?" he shrieked. "I'm telling you to let up!" Amid roars, the game of football went on.

bowler which had been used as a football by the playful juniors.

The juniors, who knew—better than Loder!—why Mr. Pike was sporting that new file, chuckled. Poker frowned as he walked on. Loder's eyes followed him, fairly gloating.

It was a new hat! There was no mistake about it! Its newness shone in the May sunshine. It was not merely a clue! It was proof!

Loder, quite sure of his ground now, hurried away in search of Coker of the Fifth—to learn whether Coker could tell him anything—little dreaming what Coker could have told him, had he liked!

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### No Information from Coker!

"WHAT about those trousers?" asked Potter.

"Yes, those bags!" said Greene.

They were anxious.  
So was Coker!

A pair of trousers, drenched with ink, were safely tucked away at the bottom of Coker's box in the Fifth Form dormitory. There, of course, they were safely out of sight. Still, there they were. If, by some horrified chance, they came to light, the game was up for Coker.

The discovery that a fellow had drenched his trousers with ink at the time that some person unknown had drenched the headmaster with ink, would not have left much mystery about the matter.

So long as those inky trousers remained in the House there was danger! Suppose a Head's Inspection took place! Such things happened without a notice beforehand. That would be the finish!

"It's all right!" said Coker. "I'm

going to get rid of those trucks. I thought of burning them in the study, but—it might attract attention—"

"Oh crikey!" said Potter, aghast at the idea. He had no doubt that such a proceeding as that would attract attention—quite a lot of it!

"Or I could bury them somewhere!" said Coker thoughtfully. "It would have to be after dark, of course."

"Of course!" said Potter.

"The first thing," said Coker, "is to get them safely out of the House! I can stick them in some cranny somewhere, to be got rid of later. Only a fellow might be noticed going out with a bundle."

It was rather a worry!

"I think I've got the idea, though," Coker went on. "I'll get up to the dorm. You fellows go round and stand under the window. I'll drop the bundle down to you. See?"

"Um!" said Potter and Greene.

"One of you can keep watch, and the other catch the bundle," said Coker. "Whistle if anybody comes along, and I'll wait. See?"

It seemed a sound scheme. Potter and Greene went out of the House—passing Loder of the Sixth coming in as they went.

Coker headed for the stairs.

It was a rule at Greyfriars, as at most schools, that fellows did not go to the dormitories in the day-time without leave from a master. Coker, in view of the business he had in hand, certainly did not want to draw a beak's attention to the fact that he wanted to go up to the Fifth Form dorm. Neither did Coker care about rules, anyhow.

He went regardless. It was, as a matter of fact, a rule that was often forgotten. Still, any fellow who was seen on the upper stairs was liable to be called to order.

Coker, ascending the upper staircase,

was about six steps up when his name was called.

"Coker!"

Horace glanced round. It was Loder's voice.

Standing on the stairs, Coker looked down at Loder! He breathed hard and deep!

Had Prout, his Form-master, spotted him and called him down, it would have been annoying. This was more than annoying. Coker did not think much of the Sixth, and often said so. It was very irksome to Coker, considering what an important fellow he was, to be under the authority of prefects! He could have knocked Loder into a cocked hat, with one hand! To Coker's masterly intellect, that seemed a good reason why Loder should refrain from exercising authority in his direction.

"Well?" snorted Coker.

"Come down!" said Loder.

Coker glared.

"Throwing your weight about, as usual?" he jeered.

That was not the way for a fellow to speak to a prefect! But, strange, to relate, Loder showed no signs of anger.

He was not, in point of fact, spotting Coker breaking the rules, and exercising authority. He was thinking of far more important matters.

"I want to speak to you, Coker," he said, quite civilly.

"You can speak where you are!" said Coker.

"I don't want to shout! Look here, Coker, it's rather urgent—come down!" said Loder. "I've been looking for you."

"Oh!" said Coker, mollified. He realised that this was not a case of "throwing weight about."

Coker came down. Potter and Greene, by that time, were waiting under the

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"That is undoubtedly a coincidence," he said. "But—well, I will send for the man and speak to him, Loder. You may remain here."

Dr. Locke rang for Trotter, and the House page was dispatched, to request Mr. Pike to step in.

Mr. Pike was prowling in the quad at the moment, so Trotter was not long in finding him. He arrived at the Head's study in a few minutes.

The Head glanced at his hat as he came in, Mr. Pike, according to his invariable custom, keeping it on his head!

Obviously, it was a new hat!  
"I guess a young guy allowed you wanted to chew the rag with me a piece!" remarked Mr. Pike, taking a seat, in an easy attitude, on the corner of the Head's writing-table.

"Oh! Yes!" gasped the Head. He did not always find it easy to follow Mr. Pike's meaning. "Quite so! I desired to speak to you. You have heard of what happened last night, Mr. Pike, at your door?"

"Surest thing you know!" assented Mr. Pike. "I'll say the whole bunch is chewing the rag about that very thing."

"May I ask whether you were indoors at the time?"

"Nope!"  
"You saw nothing of the occurrence?"  
"Nonk!" said Mr. Pike. "I guess if I had been around, I'd sure have given the guy a sockdolager or two! But I sure was not on the spot."

Loder's lip curled.  
"Will you tell Dr. Locke where you were?" he asked, as the Head paused.

Poker glanced at him.  
"Sure, if he wants to be put wise!" he answered. "I was looking in at a winder, giving young Putnam van Duck the once-over."

"It doesn't take long to look in at a window," sneered Loder.

"That's all you know, and it ain't a lot," retorted Mr. Pike. "I guess I was looking in at the winder a good half-hour, and then some—and I'll say that it seemed longer."

Loder shrugged his shoulders, and the Head raised his eyebrows. Mr. Pike's statement struck them both as somewhat extraordinary. They did not know the peculiar circumstances in which Mr. Pike had looked in at the window of the Rag.

"You bought a new hat this morning," said Loder.

As the Head did not speak, Loder took up the questioning.

"Yep!" assented Mr. Pike.

"Will you tell Dr. Locke why?"  
Poker stared at him.

"I guess the king-pin of this here outfit ain't interested in my hats," he answered, in surprise. "He sure ain't sent for me to ask me about that."

"You had a reason," said Loder.

"You said it."

"What was the reason?"  
Mr. Pike blinked at him, and blinked at the Head. Not dreaming for a single instant that he was suspected of being the mysterious mopper of ink, he was utterly astonished. However, he answered.

"I guess the old hat was a goner," he said. "I'll say I was sorry to lose that hat. It was a good hat, and it set me back six dollars when I bought it in Chicago. But it sure was a back number."

"You mean something happened to it last night to spoil it?" asked Loder, feeling quite like a questioning detective-inspector.

"Surest thing, you know," assented Mr. Pike.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

He did not, and could not, believe that Mr. Pike had mopped ink over him. But really it was beginning to look as if there was something in Loder's circumstantial evidence.

Loder's eyes gleamed. He was sure of his ground, and he felt that he was extracting the truth from the delinquent, little by little.

"About what time last night was the hat spoiled?" asked Loder.

And the Head gave quite keen attention now.

"I sort of disremember exactly," said Mr. Pike. "I guess it would be about nine."

"About the time that Dr. Locke was drenched with ink at your door?"

"That very time," agreed Poker.

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head.  
"I think it's pretty clear now, sir," said Loder. "But seeing the hat will be conclusive."

"I don't get you," said Mr. Pike, more and more puzzled. "What's all this chin-wag about a guy's hat?"

"Where is the old hat now?" asked Loder.

"I want to know," answered Poker,

meaning thereby that he did not know in the least. "I chucked it into a dust bin. Mebbe it's there yet, if you're powerful interested in my old hat."

"If you will send Trotter, sir—"

Loder turned to the Head.

"One moment!" said Dr. Locke.

"Please tell me, Mr. Pike, in what manner your hat was spoiled? Was it splashed with ink?"

"Ink!" repeated Mr. Pike. "Nope! Wusser'n that, I'm telling you! But I ain't complaining about it, sir. I can take a joke with the next man. Boyees will be boyees, I guess!"

The Head started; and Loder stared.

"Boys!" repeated the Head. "Do you mean that your hat was spoiled by some of the boys, Mr. Pike?"

"You said it, sir—me with my neck jammed in a winder, and them young geeks kicking that hat about all over the shebang," said Mr. Pike. "I'll say it didn't look a löt like a hat when young Putnam lammed it on my cabèza agin. Nunk!"

"Bless my soul! Please tell me exactly what happened, Mr. Pike!"

(Continued on next page.)

## GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS.

This week our long-haired poet gives you a pen-picture in verse of a fellow who is handy "with his mits."

RICHARD RUSSELL,

the fighting man of the Remora.



(1)

Dick Russell has a solid claim  
To figure in our Hall of Fame,  
For in the gym in fighting trim  
He boxes with a will;  
His strength and science are immense,  
He's cool and full of common sense,  
And in the art of self-defence  
We all admire his skill.

(3)

That was, of course, the reason why  
I thought I'd keep a wary eye  
On Russell while in tactful style  
I paid my weekly call.  
If Russell started hitting out,  
I'd no desire to stop a slout  
Upon my somewhat tender snout—  
No! No desire at all!

(5)

I soon discovered why his tone  
Was like a dulcet gramophone:  
He wanted me, I found, to be  
A catspaw, more or less!  
Said he: "Old Coker's coming soon,  
He told me so this afternoon,  
And so I'm waiting for the coon!  
And ready, too, I guess!



(8)

We raised our weapons in the air,  
The door was opening—and there  
Was Coker's scowl and Coker's growl!  
He strode into the room!  
Then he tripped upon the study mat  
And, pitching forward, landed flat  
Upon his toes and nose—and that  
Was how we met our doom!

(2)

Bob Cherry is the only chap  
Who ever beats him in a scrap,  
And even Bob admits the job  
Is rather more than tough!  
While as for me, I shouldn't stand  
A single chance in all the land  
To fight and get the upper hand  
If Russell cut up rough.

(4)

However, he was quite polite  
And showed no tendency to fight  
As I barged in and, with a grin,  
Inquired how did he do.  
He did not land an uppercut  
Upon my solar plexus, but  
He answered: "Not so bad, old nut!  
Walk in and take a pew!"

(6)

"If Coker wants to find a row,  
He'll find it here, and find it now!"  
He said as he invited me  
To take a cricket stump.  
"Stand there, against the door!" he said,  
"And when you hear old Coker's tread,  
Bring down the stump upon his head—  
But please don't kill the chump!"

(7)

He took a poker from the shelf  
And joined me at the door himself;  
On either side we stood, and tried  
To keep our ears alert.  
He facing me, I facing him,  
We stood in silence, keen and grim,  
Till Coker's tread, far off and dim,  
Was heard! Now he'd be hurt!



(9)

For as we brought our weapons down,  
Instead of meeting Coker's crown,  
My cricket stump fell with a bump  
Upon Dick Russell's bean!  
His poker banged upon my brow,  
And down we fell together! Wow!  
And so we're in the Sanny now,  
While Coker laughs unseen!

"Mind, I ain't complaining!" said Poker. "I guess I don't want them young ginks called up on no carpet. Boyees will be boyees, like I said. If that's a cinch, I ain't no objection to putting you wise."

"Certainly—certainly!" said the Head. "It is not a question of that. I simply desire to know what occurred."

"I'll shoot, then," said Poker.

And he briefly related what had happened at the window of the Rag, in the very moments when Dr. Locke was getting the ink at Gosling's lodge.

Loder turned almost green as he listened.

Dr. Locke bit his lip with vexation. He had said that Loder's accusation was absurd. Now he knew it.

Loder, in fact, had succeeded in proving an "alibi" for the gunman. As Mr. Pike had been fixed at the Rag window, with his head jammed under the sash, at the very time that the ragger was at work with the ink, obviously Mr. Pike could not be the ragger. Unless, indeed, he had the remarkable and unusual gift of being in two places at once.

"I remember," said the Head, "that I noticed that some uproar was going on in the junior room when I returned from the lodge. I am sorry, Mr. Pike, that the boys should have—"

"O.K.!" said Mr. Pike cheerfully. "Boyees will be boyees! I ain't got no kick coming, sir."

He looked inquiringly at the Head.

"You wanted to chew the rag a piece?" he asked. "Spill it!"

It did not even occur to Mr. Pike that he had been under suspicion, and that the matter for which he had been sent for was now dealt with and done with.

"Ah! 'Hem! Another time, Mr. Pike," said the Head, a little confused—"I am sorry to have troubled you—another time—"

"Jest as you like, sir," said the wondering Poker; and he slid off the table and walked out of the study, still with his hat on.

When he was gone, Dr. Locke turned to Loder.

"Have you anything further to say, Loder?" he asked coldly. "Any further absurd and nonsensical accusations to make?"

Loder breathed hard. Apparently he had none. At all events, he had nothing to say. He was glad to get out of the Head's study.

He heard the Head give a pronounced sniff as he went. That was all the reward he received for displaying so much zeal in tracking down the unknown delinquent. Really it was not very encouraging to a zealous prefect.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Inky!

"INKY!" shouted Bob Cherry.

Coker of the Fifth started violently, and spun round with a flushed face, staring at Bob.

Bob did not notice him.

Bob was, in point of fact, calling to Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, who was commonly called "Inky" by his friends; on account of his beautiful complexion.

Coker possibly was aware of that circumstance, if he had thought about it, which he did not. He was not thinking of the Nabob of Bhanipur; he was thinking with a worried brow of his inky trousers, not yet disposed of.

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"Inky!" roared Bob.

Bob had just come down from the studies.

All the Famous Five had been rather busy since class that day. They had "impots" to write. Putnam van Duck and his five friends had been awarded two hundred Latin lines each for their exploit of sliding down the banisters, which, of course, Loder had reported to Mr. Quelch.

Those lines had to be handed in after tea, and, as so often happened with impositions, they had been left rather late.

But the six juniors had wired in and done them at last. Bob, as the slowest worker of the Co., finished last, and now he had come down to look for his friends.

Spotting the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur in the distance across the quad, Bob naturally hailed him. Equally naturally he hailed him by the name by which Hurree Singh was known to his pals. He did not even see Coker, and Coker did not notice him till he shouted: "Inky!" Then Coker noticed him immediately and emphatically.

"Inky!" roared Bob.

Coker had a guilty conscience. That was why he took it for granted that Bob was shouting at him.

How this little beast knew anything about the matter that was wrapped in mystery, Coker could not guess. But evidently he knew, as he was shouting "Inky!" at him in the quad—or, at least, Coker supposed that he was.

Coker strode towards him, red and angry and apprehensive.

"Shut up!" he hissed.

"What?" Bob stared at him. "What's biting you, Coker? Can't I call Inky if I want to?"

"You'll get jolly well kicked if you call after a Fifth Form man in the quad, you cheeky young sweep!"

"Wha-a-a-t!" stuttered Bob.

"How did you know?" demanded Coker.

"What and which?" asked the astonished Bob.

"You know what I mean!" breathed Coker. "Keep your cheeky mouth shut, see? You call Inky again, and I'll jolly soon shut you up!"

Bob simply stared at him blankly.

Coker was the man to barge in, in all sorts of matters that did not concern him; seldom or never had he been known to mind his own business. But it seemed rather over the limit, even for Coker, to barge in when a Remove fellow was merely calling to a fellow in the quad!

"You silly, cheeky ass!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I'll jolly well call Inky as much as I like, and as often as I like!"

And he immediately suited the action to the word, just to show Coker that he was nobody.

"Inky! Inky! Inky!" he roared.

"My esteemed Bob—" came Inky's answer, as he came trotting up.

"Here, hands off!" roared Bob, as Coker, alarmed and enraged, collared him. "You mad ass—Yaroooh! Rescue, Remove!"

"I'll give you Inky!" panted Coker. "I'll jolly well give you Inky, you cheeky little beast!"

"Yaroooh! Rescue!" yelled Bob, struggling manfully.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh rushed in at once. A dusky hand gripped the back of Coker's collar and jerked him backwards from Bob.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent came speeding from one direction—Johnny Bull from another.

They arrived in a bunch and hurled themselves on Coker.

They did not delay to ask questions. Questions, in fact, were not needed. Coker of the Fifth was asking for more trouble, and they had plenty more for him if he wanted it. They handed it out.

Coker was strewn on the hard, unsympathetic earth. He was strewn hard. He roared as he was strewn.

Feet, planted on Coker, pinned him down! It seemed to amuse the cheeky young rascals of the Remove to use Horace Coker as a doormat. They chuckled as they trod.

"Dear old Coker!" said Nugent. "Always asking for it. What's the matter with him this time, Bob?"

"Blessed if I know!" gasped Bob. "I was calling Inky, and he suddenly pitched into me. Blessed if I think Coker's quite sane."

"Lemmo gorrup!" came gurgling from Coker.

"You silly ass, Coker!" said Harry Wharton, in wonder. "What the thump does it matter to you if Bob calls Inky?"

"I'll call Inky all day long, and all night, too, if I jolly well want to!" snorted Bob.

"Oh, shout it out!" said Coker bitterly. "Get a man sacked! Sneaking little beasts!"

"Wha-a-at?"

In sheer astonishment, the chums of the Remove gazed down at Coker. They withdrew the pinning boots, and Coker sat up, gasping. Then he tottered to his feet.

"Rotten little sneaks!" gasped Coker. "I've whopped you often enough, but you can't say you haven't deserved it! Now you've got a chance to get your own back! Make the most of it!"

"Is he potty?" asked Frank Nugent. "The pottiffulness seems terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"What the thump do you mean, Coker?" roared Harry Wharton. "Who's sneaking? What the dickens are you driving at?"

"You know jolly well!" snorted Coker. "I can't imagine how you've found out—"

"Found out what?" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't gammon!" snapped Coker. "You know jolly well, when you howl out 'inky' at a chap! Have you been sneaking into my dorm?"

"Y-your dorm!" stuttered Wharton. "If you've seen the trousers—"

"Trousers?"

"Anyhow, you've nosed it out somehow!" said Coker contemptuously. "Well, go and tell the Head, if you like, that I did it! I shan't deny it! Go and sneak—it would be more manly than giving a fellow away by yowling at him in the quad!"

The chums of the Remove gazed, dumbfounded, at Coker. They could not doubt to what Coker alluded.

Coker was owning up that he was the man who had inked the Head! Why, the juniors could not imagine.

It was an amazing surprise to learn that the culprit was Coker of the Fifth! It was more amazing for him to tell them, unasked, what they had not thought of suspecting!

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Wharton. "You—you—you did it, Coker? It was you who—who—"

"You know it was!" snarled Coker. "I dare say you don't know it was a mistake in the dark, and I meant it for that Chicago blighter, Pike—"

"Oh crikey!"

"But the Head got it! How you



found it out beats me! Go and give a man away!" growled Coker. "I'm not asking you to keep it dark! Catch me asking favours of scrubby little scoundrels in the Lower Fourth! But don't howl it at me in the quad—I'll jolly well smash you if you do!"

"Who was howling it at you?" hooted Bob.

"Eh? You were!" snarled Coker.

"I? I—" stuttered Bob.

"Yes, you—howling 'inky' at the top of your voice—I dare say twenty fellows heard you, as I suppose you meant them to!" sneered Coker.

Bob Cherry gasped. His friends gasped. They saw Coker's misapprehension now. They gazed at Coker—they gazed at one another—and they burst into a yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Laugh!" said Coker, with sardonic bitterness. "It's funny to see a man sacked for making a mistake that any fellow might have made in the dark! Laugh!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Bob, wiping his eyes. "You'll be the death of me yet, Coker. Do you think I was calling 'inky' to you?"

"I know you were!"

"Nothing of the kind, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't gammon!" growled Coker. "You couldn't have been calling it at anybody else—nobody else is inky, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was calling Inky!" shrieked Bob.

"Yes, I know you were calling 'inky'—"

"I mean Inky—not 'inky'!" howled Bob. "I mean Hurree Singh! See? This chap—this here blessed inky-complexioned Indian prince as ever was! Got it now?"

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh scissors!" gasped Harry. "We call Hurree Singh Inky, Coker. Bob was calling to Hurree Singh—calling him Inky! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is an absurd and ludicrous name applied to my ridiculous self!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker gazed at the almost hysterical juniors. They were nearly weeping. Slowly Coker realised it.

"Oh!" he repeated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then—then—then you never knew!" stuttered Coker.

"Not till you told us!" answered Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" said Coker.

"All serene, you born idiot!" said the captain of the Remove. "We never knew till you told us—but we're not telling anybody else. Not a word about this, you fellows!"

"No fear!" said Bob.

"Oh crumbs!" said Coker. "Of—of course, when I heard that young tick shout 'inky,' I thought—"

"You thought?" asked Bob.

"Yes, I thought—"

"What did you do it with?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want any cheek!" roared Coker. "If you think you can be cheeky, because you know about it, I can jolly well say— Yaroooh! Yoohoop!"

Coker did not mean to say that. He said it involuntarily as the Famous Five sat him down on the quad again, cutting short his flow of eloquence.

"Don't tell anybody else, Coker, old man!" advised Harry Wharton. "We're keeping it dark; but I wouldn't tell everybody. Come on, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, almost weeping with merriment, scuttled off before Coker could get on his feet again.

**THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.**  
**Danger Ahead!**

**W**HIO did it? Up and down, and round about, that question was still being asked—and, so far, nobody had been able to supply the solution to the riddle.

The masters discussed the strange mystery in Common-room, at almost endless length. Each was certain of one thing only—that the rascal who had mopped ink over the Chief Beak was not in his particular Form! Beyond that they knew nothing.

Prefects were keen on the hunt. Loder had lost all his enthusiasm, and now that it had been proved—by his own investigations—that Poker Pike had had nothing to do with it, Loder did not care two hoots who had inked the Head, and whether he was found out or not. But the rest of the

(Continued on next page.)

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August body of the Sixth Form prefects kept going.

Juniors debated the matter with keen interest. In the Shell and the Fourth they had little doubt that a Remove man had done it. In the Remove they were divided in opinion, whether it had been done by a Shell fellow or a Fourth Former.

Five fellows knew. They had had it from Coker! But they kept it awfully dark—as dark as Potter and Greene were keeping it! They did not even tell their American chum, Van Duck.

Such an awful thing could not be kept too dark! Nobody wanted to see old Coker sacked—especially as it appeared that he had not meant to rag the Head at all, but had, with his usual fat-headedness, got him by mistake!

Mistake or not, the culprit's fate was fixed, if it was spotted! And if Coker of the Fifth hoped that the excitement would die away he was disappointed.

No doubt, if no discovery was made, it would be forgotten, in time. But a good deal of time was required. Headmasters were not half-drowned in ink every day! It was a tremendous sensation. Instead of the affair dying away it seemed to ripen.

The hunt was up! Kind-hearted old gentleman as the headmaster was, he could not possibly let a matter like this pass. He hoped that the investigation would prove that the culprit was no Greyfriars fellow. But if it proved that a Greyfriars man was guilty, it was the "long jump" for that hapless Greyfriars man!

Smithy's surmise that the unknown ragger might have stained himself with ink, which had appealed to Loder, had occurred to others. It transpired that search was being made for fellows who had ink stains on their clobber.

That, as Bob Cherry remarked, incriminated the whole of the Second and Third Forms! Most of them, at least, were of the ink, inky!

Skinner solemnly warned Billy Bunter to wash! True, Bunter had no actual ink on him. But, according to Skinner, if the prefects saw Bunter's neck they might think it was black with ink!

Which made the Removites chuckle, and Bunter snort! Skinner, of course, exaggerated. Even Bunter's neck was not quite so bad as that.

The feelings of Horace Coker may be more easily imagined than described when he heard that inky clobber was being looked for. Those inky trousers were still wrapped up in a bundle, in Coker's box.

Loder, in his annoyance, had reported Coker to Prout, and Coker had been given two hundred lines for going up to the dormitory without leave. Lines did not worry Coker much; he was past caring about lines.

But Prout, reminded of forgotten duties by the incident, locked the door of the Fifth Form dormitory, so that it was impossible for any fellow to go there without asking leave!

This thoughtfulness on the part of Mr. Prout was not likely to last long. But for the moment it was fatal! For the inky trousers were now locked up, and Coker had no chance of getting at them till bed-time.

Those dreadful trousers remained, as irrefutable evidence against Coker, if some unfortunate chance brought them to light! Coker's worried thoughts were haunted by inky trousers.

And he had cause for alarm. After tea that day Billy Bunter burst into Study No. 1, in the Remove, with startling news.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I say, they're going to cop him, if he is a Remove man."

"And how?" asked Putnam van Duck.

The Famous Five were not interested; they knew that it was not a Remove man.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I say, I've just seen the prefects going up! Quelch has gone with them. They're going to search the junior dormitories, beginning with the Remove."

"What on earth for?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Inky clobber!" grinned Bunter. "Everybody's clobber is going to be looked at, every box is going to be nosed into. See? They think the fellow,

whoever he was, must have got ink on him—and changed afterwards, of course. A fearful lot of ink was slopped about, you know. If it was one of you chaps, you're booked."

"You silly ass!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We were all in the Rag at the time, kicking Pike's hat about!"

"It wasn't a Remove man!" said Harry. "They won't find anything in our dorm. I—I wonder if they'll search the senior dormitories."

"Sure to, if they draw the junior dorms blank," said Bunter. "I fancy they'll be going through the Fifth tomorrow; and then, very likely, the Sixth Form Rooms. I say, you fellows, I wonder if it was a Sixth Form man? I thought very likely it might have been Loder—"

"Loder!" gasped the juniors.

"Well, he was nosing about Gosling's lodge to-day, and asking Gosling a lot of questions," said Bunter. "He seemed very anxious to find out if Gosling had seen anybody near his woodshed—where the pail was taken from, you know. Looked to me as if he was worried about something."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Jolly good thing if Loder was sacked—what?" said Bunter cheerfully. "Do you fellows think it was Loder?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Well, it looks like it to me," said Bunter.

Herbert Vernon-Smith looked in at the door.

"You fellows heard?" he asked. "They're up in our dorm—going through our boxes, I hear. I say, Skinner was in the Rag at the time, wasn't he?"

"I think so," answered Harry.

"Why?"

"Well, he seems worried," grinned the Bounder.

The chums of the Remove left the study and joined a crowd that was gathering in the passage. The news was spreading that the Remove dorm was being searched by prefects, for a possible clue to the culprit. Harold Skinner undoubtedly looked very uneasy. So much so that a good many glances were cast at him, and fellows exchanged significant looks.

There was a general move down the passage to the landing, to the foot of the dormitory stairs. But the Removites were able to go no farther than that. Gwynne of the Sixth stood on the upper staircase, to bar off intruders.

"I suppose a fellow can go up, Gwynne?" said Skinner.

The prefect gave him a look.

"Not unless he's sent for," he answered, in a very significant tone.

"He, he, he!" from Bunter.

"You ass, Skinner!" muttered Snoop. "What the dickens did you do it for? You must have been poty!"

"Idiot!" was Skinner's answer.

Wingate of the Sixth looked down the stairs.

"Skinner's wanted!" he called out.

"Send Skinner up!"

"Skinner!" called Gwynne.

Skinner slowly ascended the upper staircase. There was a buzz in the thickening crowd on the landing. Fellows of all Forms were gathering there, and the excitement was growing.

"So it was a Remove man, after all!" said Hobson of the Shell. "I rather fancied that it was."

"I guessed that, first thing!" remarked Temple of the Fourth.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"You silly asses!" hooted Bob Cherry. "Do you think a Remove man would rag the Head?"

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**THE PILOT 2<sup>d</sup>**

Of all Newspapers. Every Friday.

"Looks as if the prefects think so," grinned Temple. "Why have they sent for Skinner?"

That was rather a puzzle. Excitement was intense, and only Gwynne on guard prevented an eager rush up the stairs to see what was going on in the dormitory. The general conclusion was that a clue had been found, and that Skinner was the man!

"Hark!" exclaimed Frank Nugent suddenly.

A sharp yelp was heard from above. It was repeated. It sounded like a fellow getting swipes from a cane. The crowd on the landing exchanged glances.

"That's Skinner!" breathed Bob.

"Quelch is there, you fellows!" breathed Billy Bunter. "I noticed he had his cane under his arm. But, I say, he can't be letting Skinner off with six! Everybody thought the chap would be sacked—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

Skinner came back down the stairs to the landing. Every eye was fixed on him. He wriggled painfully as he came. Evidently, he had been caned by his Form-master. But it was not a caning; it was the "sack" for the man who had ragged the Head. It was quite perplexing.

"I say, ain't you going to the Head?" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"You fat idiot!" answered Skinner.

"Ain't you going to be sacked?" demanded Hobson.

"Fathead!"

"Why did they send for you, Skinner?" asked Harry Wharton.

Skinner snarled.

"The silly fools found a packet of cigarettes, rooting through my box!" he answered. "I knew it was there, and if I'd known they were going up to the dorm—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Owl!" said Skinner. "Wow! The silly idiots—wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently Harold Skinner was not "the man." He had not been afraid that the prefects would find inky clobber in his box. He had been afraid that they would find his packet of cigarettes. And they had!

There was a roar of laughter as Skinner wriggled painfully away.

Half an hour later, Mr. Quelch came down—grim, but satisfied. Nothing of an inky nature had been found in the dormitory occupied by his boys. The prefects remained in the regions above—going through other junior dormitories with other Form-masters.

It was close on prep when that lengthy and laborious search finished—drawing blank! Fellows went to the studies to prep, highly excited. No clue had been found in the junior quarters, and the search was dropped. Would there be a search of the senior quarters? And would anything be found there if there was?

It was a deeply interesting question to the juniors. It was still more deeply interesting to Coker of the Fifth! To him, indeed, it was more than interesting—it was horrifying and terrifying!

He knew that the idea had been mooted. He knew that Prout was already booming indignantly on the subject. The Fifth, in Prout's opinion, were above all imaginable suspicion in such a matter. Junior masters did not see this!

It was unlikely! But it might happen next day, if nothing was discovered. And if it happened, what about those trousers?

There was only one resource! Those trousers had to be got rid of that night—somehow, or anyhow! A bundle dropped from a window in the dark, after all the fellows were asleep, could be picked up in the quad by a fellow who got out early, before rising-bell! It was risky—but it was the only way! Coker went to bed that night with the rest of the Fifth—but not to sleep!

## COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

**W**HICH is the stronger animal, a lion or a gorilla? David Franks, of West Ham, asks me that question. As a matter of fact, there isn't much to choose between them. A famous explorer has just related how he witnessed

### A BATTLE TO THE DEATH

between a lion and a gorilla. The lion had been stalking a baby gorilla, but, before the lion could leap upon it, the father gorilla appeared. The gorilla beat its chest loudly like a drum and emitted its appalling roar. Incidentally, I wonder if you know that the amount of energy required to emit that roar is said to be as much as would break a man's neck? The lion, swinging round, charged the gorilla. The gorilla, leaping aside, gripped the lion by one of its hind legs, snapping it immediately. The next moment, the two of them were locked together in a death-grip. In a few seconds the fight was over. The gorilla was almost torn to pieces. But the lion did not survive. It was so terribly injured that it could only limp away a few yards, and then fall. Its neck was so mauled that the beast bled to death where it lay. So it seems that when these two kings of the jungle meet, honours are even.

Here's a true yarn from America. In Kansas City,

### POLICEMEN MUSTN'T WEAR MOUSTACHES!

They've all been told to shave them off. The reason is that the moustaches have caused so many fights between police and civilians that the police director has banned moustaches for good. The whole trouble started when a "speed-cop" grew a fancy little moustache. It looked so comical that people used to roar with laughter when they saw it, and even pass rude remarks. This was more than the speed-cop could stand. He would jump off his motor-bike and go for whoever dared to laugh at him. Apparently, moustaches are not popular in Kansas

### THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

#### One for His Nob!

"O W, pack it up!" snapped Chick Chew.

"I guess—" muttered Bud Parker.

"Can it, you!"

The fat gangster peered through the thick shadows of the Greyfriars quad. Bud Parker, his "side-kicker" in the kidnapping game, blinked round uneasily through his horn-rimmed spectacles.

It was a late hour. Stars glistened in the sky; but it was dark in the quad, especially where the shadows of the trees and buildings fell. Chick Chew, star kidnapper of the United States, was on the spot.

Chick had found more trouble in the kidnapping business since he had hit England, than he had ever experienced in his own happy land. Bud Parker

City, for when other policemen began to grow them, they, also, came in for uncomplimentary remarks. So many free fights were caused between the police and the civilians, that the only way to stop the whole business was to prevent the police from wearing moustaches. So peace has at last been restored!

Talking of restoring peace reminds me of the fact that I have restored peace with the many thousands of my readers who have been constantly asking me to republish stories dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton. This grand new feature—under the title of "THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!"—commenced in last week's issue of our grand companion paper, the "Gem." If any of my chums have not yet taken advantage of this great treat I should advise them to do so now. The "Gem," by the way, is on sale every Wednesday, price 2d.

Just room for some

### REPLIES IN BRIEF!

**When Were Tithes Instituted in this Country?** Tithes are the payments which farmers are compelled to make for the upkeep of the churches. They were instituted by the first Archbishop of Canterbury about the year 600.

**Who Built the Taj Mahal?** The "Pearl Mosque" was built nearly 300 years ago by Shah Jehan as a mausoleum for his wife. It is known as the eighth wonder of the world.

**How Many Books are there in the British Museum?** It is difficult to say, for new books are being added every day. There are considerably over four million volumes, making it the largest library in the world.

I suppose you are all wondering what I have in store for you next week. Well, you'll certainly enjoy:

### "THE GANGSTERS' SWOOP!"

By Frank Richards,

the fourth yarn in our grand new series. Poker Pike is finding it a real hard job "keeping tabs" on Putnam van Duck. As to what actually happens in this all-thrilling yarn I leave you to learn in due course. Believe me, chums, you'll find it a real top-notcher!

As usual, there will be another full-of-chuckles edition of the "Greyfriars Herald," a contribution by our clever Rhymester, and more chapters of our great new story of modern piracy which you will find is going to surpass all previous MAGNET serials for thrills, drama, and exciting adventure.

YOUR EDITOR.

was frankly discouraged. Bud would willingly have thrown down the whole game and streaked for home. Not so Mr. Chew! Mr. Chew was going to cinch the son of the Chicago millionaire, if it cost him a leg! The word failure did not exist in Chick Chew's vocabulary.

Standing under the shadowy elms, the two kidnapers watched the great facade of the House. Innumerable windows glimmered in the starlight.

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Not a light burned. All Greyfriars was sunk in silence and slumber.

"I guess it's O.K.," murmured Mr. Chew. "I'll say it would be as easy as pie, if Old Man Vanderdecken hadn't coughed up that idea of hiring Poker Pike to keep tabs on his boy. Yop! But I guess we're buying it, you Bud, all the same, Poker or no Poker!"

"Mobbe he's around!" muttered the uneasy, horn-rimmed man, "and I'm telling you, that guy Poker is pesky sudden on the shoot—"

"Park it!" growled Chick. "I guess even Poker goes to sleep, times. You keep here, you Bud, and if you spot any guy rubbering around, you pass him a tap on the cabeza with the butt of your gat, and keep him from singing. I guess I'll be back afore you can say no sigar in minot!—and I'll mention that I'll have that young geck Putnam rolled up in a blanket, this side up with care! I ain't never got left yet—and I ain't going to begin, in this here one-horse country. Nope!"

Leaving the uneasy Bud on the watch under the shadowy elms, Chick Chew made a cautious approach to the House.

Cool and confident as he was, Chick was glad when he got into the cover of the deep shadow of the building.

He could not help feeling how exceedingly unpleasant it would be to hear the sudden bark of Poker's six-gun breaking the silence of the spring night.

Watchful as he was, Poker certainly had to get an allowance of sleep. But it was quite probable that he might prowl a few at night!

That, indeed, was Poker's invariable custom, had Chick only known!

Chick hoped that he was at the moment, asleep; but he took every precaution, in case he was awake and wary.

Fat as he was, the gangster moved lightly and swiftly, and dodged into every available cover as he approached the House—and did not breathe freely till he was wrapped in dark shadow under the walls.

His plan was carefully mapped out—to get into the school, search there for Putnam van Duck; tap him on the head to keep him quiet for a necessary length of time; roll him in a blanket, and walk off with him!

Only from the watchful gunman did he fear peril, and if he eluded the watchfulness of the gunman, it was pie—and clam pie at that!

Getting into the House presented little difficulty to Chick. He had played many parts in his time, before he burst into fame as the star kidnapper of the United States. In earlier and humbler days he had cracked safes and picked locks.

Locked doors and fastened windows only made Mr. Chew smile. Even bolts and bars did not stop him, and only checked him for a time.

But bolted doors, of course, meant delay, even to a master-hand at the game like Chick. He moved round the building, looking for an easily accessible window.

His footsteps made no sound as he moved, and the darkness covered him like a cloak. Bud, watching across the quad, might feel uneasy—but Chick was full of cheery confidence.

Even if the gunman was awake, and wary, and watching, he wasn't going to see Chick in the dark. Once he had reached the building Chick felt safe. A sound, certainly, might have given the alarm in the silence of the night. But Chick was going to make no sound.

When he had selected his window, that window was going to open noiselessly under his skilled hand. It was

going to be left open for the passage of the tapped and blanketed millionaire's son, when Chick got him! There was not going to be any noise—unless something unexpected happened—as, indeed, something unexpected so often does!

It was the unexpected that happened now!

It was so utterly unexpected, that even the wary gangster was taken totally by surprise. The wariest gangster that ever put a guy on the spot could not have foreseen or guarded against this amazingly unexpected occurrence.

Chick had calculated all chances! Poker Pike might be rubbering around—he had reckoned on that! Some master might be up late—he had reckoned on that! Even a "cop" might have been roped in to keep tabs on the school—Chick had reckoned on that possibility. He had, he fancied, reckoned up everything in the list!

But he had not reckoned on a bundle suddenly falling out of the dark sky and crashing on his head!

No guy could have foreseen that!

If Chick Chew had been asked to name the thing that might possibly cramp his style that night, the very last thing he would have thought of, would have been Horace Coker's trousers!

He had never heard of Horace Coker! Had he heard of him, he would never have envisaged the possibility of Coker throwing his trousers, tied up in a bundle, out of window in the middle of the night.

It was not the sort of thing that was often done! It had never come within the scope of Chick's experience before, wide as that experience had been. It was the very last thing he could have thought of!

Yet it was what happened.

Coker—as ignorant of Chick below, as Chick was of Coker above—dropped that bundle from the window of the Fifth Form dormitory, breathed a sigh of relief—and then gave a startled jump.

Coker had supposed, of course, that the bundle would fall on the earth, and remain there till morning—when, at the earliest possible moment, he would get out of the House, pick it up, and scud down to the river with it.

Instead of which, the bundle had fallen fairly upon the head of Chick Chew; knocking him spinning.

The bundle was neither very large nor very heavy. But, descending from so great a height, it landed with terrific force. It fairly crashed on the gangster's head. From the startled Chick there came a howl that woke nearly every echo of Greyfriars School.

"Yooooo-hoooooop!" howled Chick.

He crashed.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

He put out his startled head, and stared down. He could see nothing. But he could hear. Something, he could guess, was happening. He did not know what.

Chick Chew staggered up dizzily.

The bundle that had knocked him over had fallen beside him.

Chick did not heed it. He did not even worry about the amazing mystery of its descent from a dark sky. He knew that his startled howl must have reached any wakeful ear in the school, and probably startled a good many sleeping ones out of slumber. He had given himself away—with a vengeance! He had spilled the beans!

Panting, he listened. If Poker was around—

He was!

Bang!

It was the roar of a six-gun!

A running figure loomed up in the gleam of the stars. It was little more than a dim shadow, crowned by a bowler hat. It was Poker Pike, burning the wind towards the spot where the uproar had sounded.

Probably he glimpsed the gangster. Anyhow, he burned powder—flash on flash, crack on crack!

"Search me!" gasped Chick.

Carrying off Putnam van Duck was now, in the way of stunts, a back number—as dead as the dodo. Chick knew that he would be a lucky gangster if he carried himself off, with the alarm given, and Poker Pike loosing off lead with a generous liberality.

Chick ran, and Bud ran, and Poker ran, and rapped out lead at the same time.

Windows opened, voices shouted; the whole school was awakened.

Coker, from the window of the Fifth Form dormitory, stared. He had no idea that his trousers had started that terrific row.

He had not seen what occurred—only heard the result. Startled voices floated up to the window; some of the masters and prefects were turning out. Coker hoped fervently that none of them would happen to spot a bundle lying in the shadow of the wall.

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### At Last!

"I SAY, you fellows, what's up with Coker?"

"Coker?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Look!" grinned Bunter.

The Famous Five looked round at Coker. As a matter of fact, a good many fellows had looked at Coker already that morning. Since breakfast Coker's proceedings had been rather attractive of attention.

Coker was going up and down and round about by the wall of the House, staring into corners, looking round buttresses, scanning window-sills, peering into shrubbery. Coker seemed to be in search of something.

"I say, I asked him what he had lost, and he called me names!" said Billy Bunter. "He's fearfully shirty! If he's been dropping money about, I'd help him look for it with pleasure; but when I told him so, he was simply ill-bred—"

"Perhaps he knows you think findings are keepings!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Harry Wharton & Co. went over to Coker. Poker Pike was in the quad, and they noticed that he had his eyes on Horace, watching him very curiously indeed. His serious, hickory face was quite intent under his bowler hat.

Coker did not notice the Greyfriars gunman. He did not heed anybody or anything in his search for that bundle. He had not found it yet.

Coker was out of the House that morning before the rising-bell had given three clangs. But the early bird was not destined to catch the worm. There was no bundle to be seen. The trousers had vanished.

It was dismaying.

Had the trousers vanished for good, of course, that would have been all right. But Coker could not hope that.

The trousers were somewhere. The bundle, Coker supposed, must have gone farther than he intended to throw it; it had fallen somewhere or other, but he could not spot where. He had searched till the breakfast-bell went—in vain. He searched again after breakfast—still in vain!



"I'll call Inky all day long, and all night, too, if I jolly well want to!" snorted Bob Cherry, pinning Coker down with his foot. "Oh, shout it out!" said Coker bitterly. "Get a man sacked! I'm not asking you to keep it dark that I inked the Head! But don't howl out 'Inky' at me in the quad or I'll jolly well smash you!"

Where were those trousers?

It was a baffling mystery. Coker had dreaded that the bundle might be spotted and picked up. But that could not be the explanation, for the discovery of a bundle containing a pair of trousers drenched with ink would have spread like wildfire through the school.

Everyone would have known that it was a clue to the man who had inked the Head, and before this the garments would have been traced to their owner, and Coker would have been up before the Beak. But what had happened? Where and O where were the trousers?

Coker, having searched every possible and impossible spot, was searching the lot over again. He really seemed to hope to be able to conjure the trousers there by sheer force of looking.

"Lost anything, Coker?" asked Harry politely.

Coker glared round at him.

Billy Bunter had not over-stated the case in saying that Coker was shirty. He had under-stated it. Coker was in a state of suppressed rage and fury, mingled with apprehension and alarm. He was simmering—almost boiling.

"Shut up and clear off, bother you!" snorted Coker.

"Don't they learn nice manners in the Fifth!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"The niceness is terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"If you want me to smash you—" began Coker, in a roar. Then he checked the roar, remembering that these juniors knew the secret, and were keeping it dark. "Here, I say, you can help me to look, if you like. I've lost my trousers!"

"What-a-at?" stuttered the five together

"Trousers! They're gone!" breathed Coker.

"But you've got them on!" gasped Frank Nugent, wondering whether Horace was wandering in his mind.

"Eh—what? You young idiot! Not these trousers!" snapped Coker. "The other trousers—"

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at Coker. Knowing nothing of the thrilling adventures of those trousers, they were naturally astonished.

"You—you've lost a pair of trousers?" gasped Bob Cherry. It was the very last thing the juniors expected to hear that a fellow had lost in the quad. "Mean to say you came out in two pairs of trousers this morning, and lost one—"

"You young ass! No!" hooted Coker. "Haven't you any sense? I chucked them down from the dorm window last night in a bundle."

"You—you—you chick-chack-chucked a pair of trousers out of a window at night?" stuttered Bob.

"Yes. I was going to field them first thing in the morning, and bury them somewhere, or drop them in the river," said Coker. "But—they're gone!" Then, as he saw the blank amazement in the juniors' faces, he snorted. "You young asses! If they find those bags, my number's up! Don't you understand?"

"But why?" gasped Harry Wharton. "Think they won't guess how the ink got on them, you young fathead?"

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "Was there ink on them?"

He began to understand. "Do you think I should chuck trousers away for fun?" snorted Coker. "Don't

be a sillier young idiot than you can help!"

The juniors grinned. Their idea was that, if there was a silly idiot on the spot—as certainly there was—it was not one of themselves.

It had not occurred to Coker to mention that the trousers were inky—which really was the important point.

"There was a row last night," went on Coker. "I hear that that gunman spotted the kidnapers after young Van Duck—or fancied he did—and started banging away at them. The row started after I'd chucked the trousers down. I wouldn't have done it if I'd known what was coming, but I never heard a sound till I'd dropped the trousers. Then somebody yelled, all of a sudden, like billy-ho! Hardly a second after I'd dropped the trucks, you know! I can tell you it startled me!"

"The bundle can't have been found!" said Harry. "Some of the masters came out when the row started, but if they'd found the bags—inky—"

"It's not that," said Coker. "I should have heard about it before this. But what's become of the bundle?"

"According to Pike, the kidnapper was around," said Bob. "But I suppose he never stopped to kidnap your trousers?"

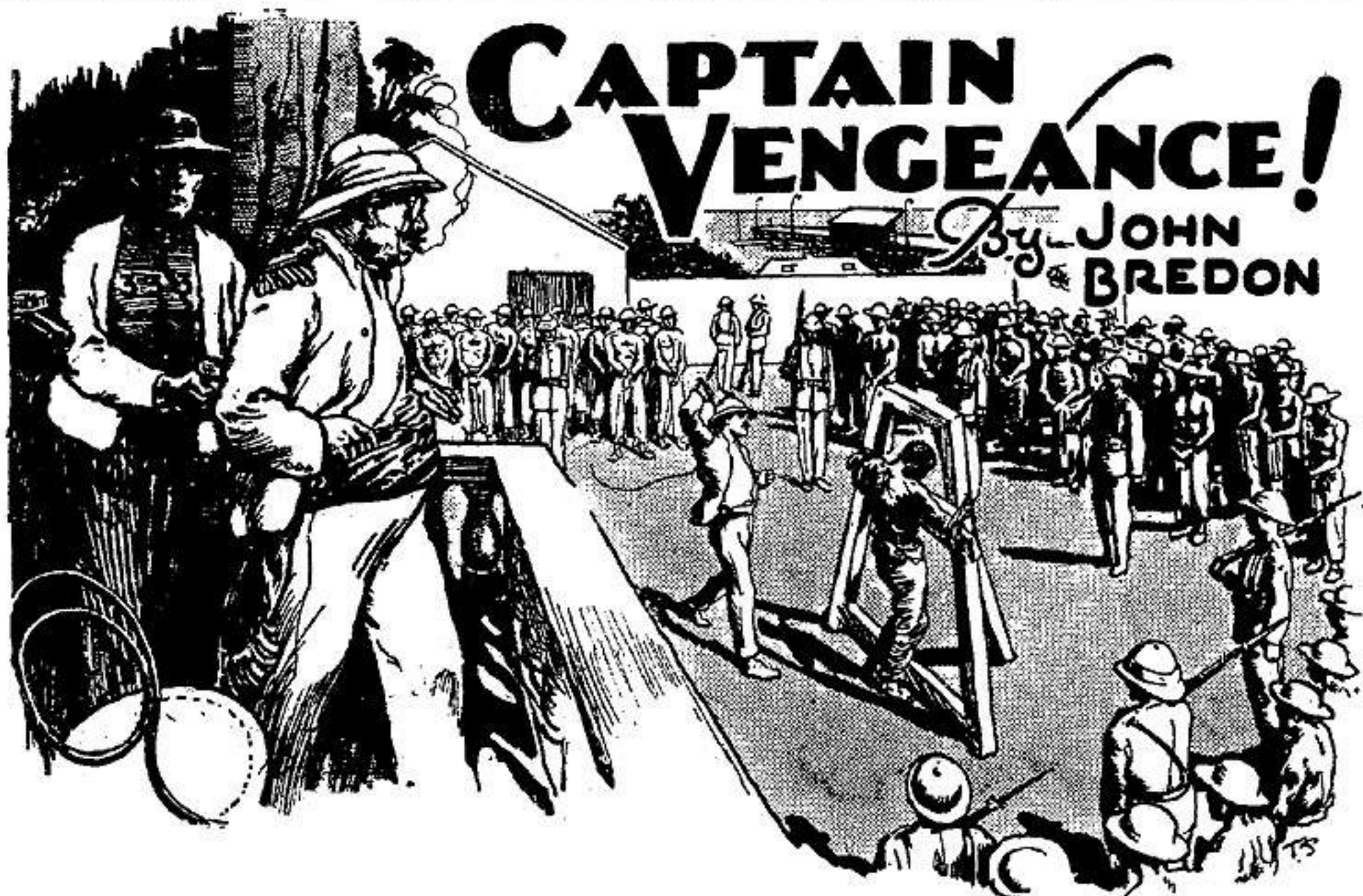
"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Coker did not laugh. It was no laughing matter to Coker. Those unhappy trousers were irrefragable evidence of guilt. They were somewhere—but where?

"It's all that rotten gunman's fault!" groaned Coker. "If he hadn't cheeked me, I should never have gone after him

(Continued on page 28.)

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# CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

By JOHN BREDON

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Nemesis Island I

**N**EMESIS ISLAND lay green and golden in the intense sapphire blue of the Indian Ocean; like a giant tropical lizard basking in the sun.

Coconut-palms, tall, slender, graceful, thrashed their feathery tufts to the song of the monsoon. Green tamarisks waved. White sands lay cracked and baking in the sun. Silver surf creamed and boomed along the razor-edged coral reefs that guarded the channel into the little half-moon bay that was the sole and only landing-place of Nemesis Island.

Above the long wooden jetty, with its palm-thatched goods sheds, rose the high observation tower of the white prison buildings. In the interior, dense tropical jungles enfolded the quarries and plantations where the wretched convicts toiled out their hopeless lives under the whips and guns of the overseers.

### Nemesis Island!

It is said that every crook and criminal, every spy, adventurer, and political refugee, gives a shudder at the very mention of that dreaded name.

Nemesis Island is a by-word as the most terrible penal settlement in the world. It belongs to the republic of Varland, a small European power in the Baltic. To its living death have been sent murderers and criminals of all nations, the worst men in the world, for Varland was the Mecca of every runaway crook with money in his pocket—until Morgan Drake, mystery man of the British Secret Service, induced its government to pass a law against them that was as sudden as it was unexpected.

Under a striped awning that shielded him from the blinding rays of the afternoon sun, lolled Governor Zarda, huge, bald, and yellow of countenance, with black, beady eyes that were almost hidden in rolls of fat; like a

great humped hog heaped into a basket chair. Silently he levelled a pair of binoculars at a tiny speck that was cutting an arrow-head of foam through the shimmering, unruffled sea.

A smile of gloating satisfaction creased the governor's heavy, bloated features as he recognised one of the motor launches belonging to the settlement. With a podgy finger he pressed an electric bell-push at his elbow. Next moment, from the stately white house with the green sun-blinds that was Governor Zarda's quarters, came a broad and powerfully built man in the straw hat and canvas slacks of a convict, with the crimson dagger of Varland and the number 333 branded in red on his rugged, massive chest.

"You observe, No. 333?" gloated Governor Zarda, turning his gleaming monocle upon the silent convict. "That is our launch. They have captured the negro who tried to escape. No man ever gets away from Nemesis Island, No. 333—no man has ever done so, or ever will!"

Complacently the governor smirked as he swabbed the sweat-band of his solar topee.

Fortunately for his peace of mind as he made that arrogant boast, Governor Zarda did not possess the gift of seeing into the future. Still less had he the power to read the thoughts that were hatching in No. 333's teeming brain, as the convict stared out across the flashing ocean. Silently the governor and No. 333 watched as the prison launch foamed alongside the landing pier.

"Tell the prison lieutenant to bring in his cattle, No. 333," continued Governor Zarda, mopping his moistured brow. "I have entertainment for them. They shall see their negro comrade lashed into bleeding ribbons. That will teach the scum how hopeless it is to think of escape!"

"At once, Excellency!" The face of No. 333 was a mask of grim immobility as he passed into the office to seek out the prison lieutenant

It was a remarkable countenance, incidentally; strong, ruthless, cunning, with a jaw of iron, and pale blue eyes that were hard as flints.

A few years before No. 333 had been Von Eimar, the world's master-spy, the man on whose head a dozen governments had set a price. Now he was Convict No. 333—but, having still the brain of Von Eimar, he had been excused the brutalising work in the quarries or plantations, and, becoming the governor's secretary, now knew more about the secrets and organisation of Nemesis Island than did Governor Zarda himself.

The prison siren brayed out its insistent, brazen note. From quarries and plantations the guards were herding the cowed and shackled convicts—drooping listlessly in their rusty chains and in the blazing glare of the sun, into the dusty, arid square beneath the governor's house.

"No man escapes from Nemesis Island!" That was Governor Zarda's confident and oft-repeated boast; and, up till now, he had no occasion to unsay it.

At night the prisoners were huddled into a barbed-wire enclosure that was studded with concrete watch-towers equipped with machine-guns and powerful arc-lamps. The barriers were charged with electricity from the prison power-house, and to touch them meant death. By day the convicts toiled in chain-gangs, overlooked by inhuman task-masters, whip in hand and gun in belt. If one broke his fetters and slipped away into the green, poisonous mangrove swamps or tangled jungle, the shark-infested Indian Ocean still hemmed him in.

The negro runaway was half-dead. For two days, without food or drink, he had been afloat on a miserable raft that he had constructed out of bamboo poles and palm fibre. A hovering aeroplane, sent out by the governor, had spotted him, and the launch had

brought him in. In any case, he had had no chance. Nemesis Island was hundreds of miles from the nearest shipping routes.

Now, drooping and faint, he was being lashed up to the terrible triangle beneath the governor's window. His fellow convicts, sullen, crushed, yet dully resentful, were lined up under the rifles of their guards to watch his punishment.

Lash, lash, lash!

With the feral cruelty of a diseased mind, Governor Zarda laughed softly to himself and rubbed fat fists as he watched the black's tortures from the window.

Some of the prisoners of Nemesis Island were not present at the "entertainment." One of these was No. 333—Van Eimar, as has been said. Another was No. 186, who had once been the notorious doctor and poisoner of Brussels, Dr. Nieuwe.

Since the regular prison doctor had died of tropical fever—or, possibly, something else—No. 186 had been in charge of the prison hospital.

"Is all well?" asked No. 186, a tall, thin, stooping man, with a narrow, swarthy face and pointed "imperial," peering through his rimless pince-nez as Von Eimar met him in the dispensary.

"Yes. It's our best chance," breathed No. 333, his eyes glittering beneath narrow lids. "The guards are all in the square. We may not have another chance like this for weeks. Come on!"

A warder, with a revolver holstered to his belt, was nodding drowsily in a chair by the door that led to the hospital ward. He rose to his feet as the convicts approached.

Von Eimar wasted no time in words. As the unsuspecting warder opened his mouth to speak Von Eimar slipped past him and let fly with a powerful fist.

Taking a terrific pile-driver just behind his right ear, the man flopped out with not so much as a groan.

"Good!" grunted No. 333, stooping to possess himself of the man's revolver-belt. "Not so bad, eh? Now for a sudden recovery of your patients, doctor!"

### Mutiny!

**T**HERE were nearly thirty men sweltering in the confined and breathless heat of the prison hospital, besides a couple of convict orderlies.

At a word from Von Eimar all but half a dozen leaped from their beds and stood tensed and alert.

Sick men? Dying of tropical fever? Not they! Except for those six genuine cases, there were not two dozen more healthy fellows, nor greater villains, than the group of evil-browed felons that crowded round Von Eimar and the doctor.

Simple as the plot was, it was carefully planned and carried out. It was easy for Von Eimar, who had access to every record and card-index in the governor's office, to pick out a number of the most hardened and ruthless scoundrels in the convict settlement to join him in his desperate enterprise. And what was easier than for his confederate, Dr. Nieuwe, to report these men as being sick, after first handing them a potion to give them the hideous, yellow appearance of tropical fever?

And what a crowd they were, too! "Killer" Moran, for instance, Chicago gangster, bootlegger, racketeer, kidnapper, and hold-up man, with a dozen cold-blooded murders to his record! His brutal, gorilla face and beetling brows stamped him for what he was. And Luis Ramiro, the flashing, dark-eyed South American! Mikhail Lebedoff,

the Russian ex-naval artificer and engineer! They were all of a kidney, except, perhaps, the tall, good-looking, straight-limbed Englishman, of about thirty, whose temples were already greying with the horrors of Nemesis Island, and the little bow-legged Cockney, who had found himself in the convict settlement because of his broad-minded views on the subject of property.

"No talking!" exclaimed Von Eimar briefly. "You know our plan. Every man knows what he has to do? Good! Then follow me, and keep quiet!"

Through a maze of empty, white-washed corridors, No. 333 led his men up a vertical iron ladder to the flat leads of the single-storied prison buildings. Stooping, with their heads ducked low under the parapet, they hurried in a snaking line towards the lofty control tower that dominated the settlement.

A sentry was lounging idly by the door at its base. As they swarmed round a corner he made a sudden grab for his rifle, but at the sight of Von Eimar's murderous eyes squinting down the sights of a levelled automatic, he thought better of it and raised his hands, dropping the weapon. Moran and Luis Ramiro lashed his arms behind his back with cord, gagging and binding the man with quick and scientific efficiency.

The turret-door was of reinforced steel, but the forcing of locks was child's play to Mikhail Lebedoff, expert safe-cracker since his expulsion from

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**"No man escapes from Nemesis Island!" Such is the proud boast of Governor Zarda—until Convict 333, the world's master-spy, turns the tables on his captors and becomes CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!**

---

the Russian Navy. Up the narrow, twisting stairs bounded two of the mutineers to surprise and overpower the solitary operator in the wireless transmission station above.

The lower floor of the control tower was the arsenal, and swiftly the rebel convicts armed themselves. Racks of glistening, well-oiled rifles were promptly emptied. Over naked shoulders were slung ammunition bandoliers and revolver-belts loaded with cartridges. Killer Moran swung on to one shoulder a light machine-gun, which he knew so well how to use.

Lolling on the stone balcony-rail of his window, Governor Zarda heard a rapid tramping of bare feet in the passage-way. Surprised, he flung a glance over his humpy shoulder into his office.

Then he stood appalled!

The office door was flung violently open, and the governor's eyes almost popped from under twitching, hairless lids as he saw the gap crammed with a mob of armed villains, headed by Von Eimar, who had levelled his gun.

"Wha—what—" stuttered Governor Zarda, not daring to trust his bulging eyes.

"Silence, you fat pig!"

The barrel of Von Eimar's gun was jammed into the governor's fat and palpitating ribs. There was none of the convict secretary's habitual deference about him now. It was not out of politeness that he picked up the governor's fallen cigar, where it was burning a hole in the expensive carpet, thrusting it between those flabby lips;

nor when he jammed the dangling monocle back into Zarda's terror-brimming eye.

With a swing of his powerful arm, he forced the now abject governor back through the window.

All unsuspecting of the tense drama that was being enacted above them, convicts and prison guards were massed in the square before the whipping-post, all facing the window. The negro was drooping upon his leashed wrists, already unconscious, perhaps dead. Still the whip coiled around his black, criss-crossed shoulders.

"Now!" snarled Von Eimar, keeping well behind the governor's bulky figure as his iron grip squeezed that trembling elbow. "Tell your dogs of warders to line up under the window! Then give the order 'Ground arms!' Quick, you son of a pig!"

The hidden automatic drove into Governor Zarda's fleshy back.

As in a dream, Governor Zarda fumbled in the folds of his ample sash for a whistle. Every face was upturned to the balcony as he wined a call upon it. Von Eimar and his confederates hung well in the background, out of sight, the arch-mutineer screened by the mosquito-curtains of the window.

In a thin, piping voice, utterly unlike his usual rich and domineering tones, the governor spoke as Von Eimar instructed him.

Surprised, but obedient, the prison guards filed forward under the governor's window, lowering their rifles to the ground, but watchful, hands upon the butts under their holster-flaps.

Then, in a snapping voice, Von Eimar spoke:

"Let 'em see your ironmongery, Moran!"

With a wicked, ugly grin, Killer Moran swung the muzzle of his light machine-gun between the shoulders of Von Eimar and the governor; sights aligned, drum clicked into position, his thick fingers crooking round the trigger.

Surprised ejaculations escaped from the row of sun-helmeted guards at that unexpected development.

"Surrender, you scum!" suddenly bawled Von Eimar, heaving the governor aside and hanging his brawny body over the balcony. "We've got you cold! No tricks, you rats! One hand to a gun, and I'll drop each man where he stands!"

A wave of Von Eimar's podgy hand to that black, hovering death-muzzle was sufficient. The guards raised their hands above their heads.

Left to himself, Killer Moran would have mown down those horrified warders with as little compunction as if they had been a row of ninepins. But Von Eimar, cold, hard, and ruthless as he could be upon occasions, was not one that loved murder for its own sake.

Lovingly, Moran cuddled his itching finger round that trigger that, at a twitch, could release a stream of murderous lead. But he knew better than to defy Von Eimar's expressed order.

"Now, men!" roared Von Eimar, to the equally stupefied convicts massed behind the guards. "Where are your wits? Disarm the dogs! Quickly! Make them prisoners! Are you afraid, you fools?"

His staccato voice broke the spell.

With a prolonged, bestial howl, rattling their irons as they rushed, or, rather, hobbled, the delighted prisoners converged in a dense mob upon their

paralysed guards and overseers.

Disarmed, stripped of their uniforms, cursed, kicked, buffeted, and spat upon, the luckless guards would have been trampled underfoot and clawed limb from limb had not Von Eimar intervened to save them.

"Take them to the cells!" he thundered, above the howling, raving clamour. And it says much for the man's dominant personality that his commands prevailed.

The dusty, naked, and bleeding warders, now prisoners in their turn, were dragged off by their jubilant, triumphant captors and locked in the row of iron-barred cells under the prison buildings—black, horrible dens that were used for solitary confinement.

Then bedlam was let loose on Nemesis Island. Three hundred mutinous convicts, babbling with joy, swarmed over the entire penal settlement, looting, destroying.

Wild shouts echoed as they broke into the engineering shop for tools to release them from their irons, to which many of them had been linked in files perpetually for years.

Furiously they stormed into the liquor stores and maddened themselves with raw spirits.

Never had such sights been seen before on Nemesis Island.

Grim, masterful, and forbidding, Von Eimar stood upon the broad staircase that led from the hall of the governor's house, with the shrunken prison governor cowering in his grip.

He had seized upon the governor's monocle, screwing it into his own pale blue eye, and he looked a strange sight, stiff and upright like a Teutonic officer, the felon brand scarring his naked breast, and the governor's topee tilted upon his square, shaven head.

A mob of half-naked convicts, their evil faces flushed and distorted, flourished knives, rifles, and billets of wood as they howled and lusted for Governor Zarda's blood.

"Give him to us, the mangy old wolf!"

"Kill the dog, kill him!"

"We'll tear him to bits!"

"Lash him to the triangle and do to him as he did to the nigger!"

These and worse threats in half a dozen different languages were hurled at the terror-stricken governor as he stood with quaking paunch and flexing knees.

With hairy, naked, perspiring breasts, branded with numbers and the crimson dagger of Varland, wrists scarred with shackle-marks, backs scored by the lash, the rebel convicts came tramping in a dense mass up the stairway.

Fierce yellings changed to brutal laughter as they saw their late tyrant, half-mad with panic, crouching away behind Von Eimar's straddling legs.

Von Eimar took a pace forward, his little eyes narrowed. Behind him, their faces dark and grim, grouped the little band of mutineers who had effected the conspiracy.

"Back, you pig-dogs!" Von Eimar growled like a savage mastiff, baring his teeth. "Governor Zarda lives. I say so. I need him alive for a special purpose!"

In surprise the would-be murderers halted, daunted for a moment by that fierce, dominant glare; and then a snarl of wild-beast anger mingled with coarse and derisive mirth rumbled from their hoarse throats.

With a curse, a gigantic half-caste Malay spat out something inarticulate, thrusting forward with bare, splay-toed feet as he flourished a heavy iron bar.

Von Eimar grinned, showing white, gold-filled teeth like a spitting cat. The drink-misted eyes of the mutineers hardly saw his clenched fist move, so suddenly did he swing it up. But it crashed under the half-caste's chin with a jolt that almost snapped his spinal cord, and the brute slumped down among the legs of his startled and wavering companions.

Then, as the excited rabble hung back in a doubting mass, sullen, resentful, yet subdued by Von Eimar's cold and measuring glance, a telephone-bell on a near-by stand buzzed suddenly into whirring life.

Von Eimar, scowling, lifted the receiver from its hook.

"Well?" he barked into the transmitter, revolver levelled, one eye upon the seething mob that filled the hall.

His face darkened as a clear English voice came over the wires from the observation post at the top of the control tower. It was the English ex-naval lieutenant who was speaking.

Von Eimar listened to what the man had to say; then, replacing the receiver, he addressed the seething mob.

"Men!" he said in a snapping voice, which cut like steel through the noise and babble. "Listen to me, you pack o' fools! You'll have something more to think about presently than making a jigsaw puzzle of Governor Zarda!" Sneering, he laughed in their faces. "There's a ship heading for the island, my friends! A warship! She's making for the harbour, and when she reaches it—"

### The Captured Cruiser!

**T**HE incipient storm collapsed like a pricked bubble. In terror the convicts crowded up to Von Eimar, begging of him to know what he intended to do now that this awful gulf yawned at their feet.

With a wave of his podgy hand the arch-mutineer quelled them.

"Leave this to me, men," he said coolly. "I am leader here! Is that agreed? Very well! Obey my orders implicitly if you wish to get out of this trap."

With that he made his way to the control tower, followed by his lieutenants and the whole throng of the now subdued and dismayed insurgents.

With a pair of binoculars in his hands, a cigar sticking out from the corner of his mouth, Von Eimar leaned against the iron railing of the observation tower, apparently in no way disturbed by the danger that threatened to wreck all his carefully prepared schemes.

Beneath him on the flat prison leads massed the convicts, a sea of anxious faces all staring at that grim, grey warship, with its plume of drifting smoke and creaming bow wave, that was steaming slowly towards the island harbour.

"It's the cruiser Zermac," announced Von Eimar gravely. "The flagship of the Varland Navy—on a world tour, so I understand. I hadn't calculated on this. The supply ship, on which I intended we should make our escape, isn't due for two days!"

"Awkward!" commented Ronald Westdale, the tall Englishman who had first observed the unexpected cruiser. "I don't know how many men she

carries, but you can't expect our lot of underworld rats to put up a fight against disciplined Navy men."

"A crack in our gearbox, an' no error!" supplemented Hilarity Hinton, the cheery, irrepressible Cockney, whose spirits could not be damped either by the horrors of Nemesis Island or by the imminence of death. "This is where we split, as the pea-pod said to the basin!"

"Perhaps!" Von Eimar ruminated, as though speaking to himself. "Perhaps not! I think I have a plan—yes, it might work. Donner! I'll make it work!"

As Admiral Mericski, of the Varland Navy, came alongside the pier in his swift motor-pinnace it was too dark for him to see anything unusual about the guard of honour which was drawn up with rifles and fixed bayonets to receive him. They wore the cool, white uniforms of prison guards, their scarred, ugly faces shaded by sun helmets, and in the dim, uncertain light there was nothing to show that they were convicts disguised.

At the head of the jetty stairs stood Governor Zarda, looking very sick and pale in his splendid, epauletted uniform. Beside him, arm-in-arm, was a sturdy, square-set man in neat white ducks—none other than Von Eimar—wearing a monocle that shone against the quay lights.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Admiral Mericski," purred Von Eimar, smiling cordially. "Pray excuse Governor Zarda. He is greatly sick—of a tropical fever—and speech is too much for him; it might bring on a fatal stroke."

Governor Zarda licked his trembling lips as the barrel of Von Eimar's automatic prodded him in the small of his back.

Admiral Mericski stared in haughty surprise.

"And who, in the name of Satan, may you be, sir?" he demanded.

"If you will accompany us to Government House I can explain, my dear admiral," returned Von Eimar blandly.

The admiral stared haughtily, and at last condescended to pace along beside Von Eimar and the governor, clanking his sword importantly as he went.

As soon as they were in Governor Zarda's private office, Von Eimar laughed gutturally. Slipping the automatic into his pocket, he slapped his hands. The folding doors were flung open, to reveal Killer Moran, scowling as he chewed, and a dozen ragged and half-naked convicts, armed with rifles and bayonets.

Admiral Mericski was staggered.

"What means this?" he gasped, uncomprehendingly. "Is this some form of a joke?" Angrily he swung upon Governor Zarda, who had collapsed weakly into a swivel chair. "If so, I must say that it is in the worst possible taste. I am offended! Perhaps you, sir, can enlighten me," he added, turning to Von Eimar. "Order those ruffians away, whoever they are!"

Von Eimar beamed through his monocle.

"Certainly I can enlighten you, admiral," he said smilingly. "It is a joke, to be sure, though one that I fear you will not appreciate. Let me introduce myself. This morning I was No. 333, a guest of the Republic of Varland, on Nemesis Island. A few years ago I was Von Eimar, international spy. You will have heard of me, I imagine. To-night I am Captain



Vengeance, the pirate, and your cruiser, my dear admiral, is to be my private man-o'-war." He pressed a fat thumb upon the soda-water siphon at his elbow. "A drink, my dear admiral? I fancy you will need it?"

Admiral Mericski seemed to be on the verge of an attack of apoplexy. Thunderous rumbles and gurgles sounded in his plump throat. He strove to speak, but he could form no words.

"Ruffians," exclaimed Von Eimar, turning to Killer Moran and his men, "the admiral has requested me to order you away. Go, then, and take these two other ruffians with you!"

With an ugly smile upon his gorilla face, Killer Moran took the Admiral by the elbow.

"Aw c'mon, baby!" drawled the giant American gangster, chewing as he spoke. "This way, ol' palooka! Don'tcha be frightened, admiral boy! Guess we ain't gonna take yuh for a ride—not unless yuh git ferocious! Nope, sirree! We'll take yuh for a nice li'l sea-trip, instead!"

Like a man in a dream, Admiral Mericski suffered himself to be led away.

At a poke from a bayonet, none too gently administered, Governor Zarda heaved his great bulk from the chair and waddled hopelessly behind him.

A minute later a man in the uniform of a prison official approached the coxswain in charge of the admiral's pinnace.

"The admiral's orders," he said, saluting, as he handed the petty officer a folded note. "All the crew except the duty men are to be landed at once, without arms. They are to be lodged in the governor's fort. Here are Admiral Mericski's official instructions to the commander."

If the coxswain was surprised at the unusual order, it was not for him to question it. At a word from him the outboard engine was started up, and the pinnace foamed back smartly to the hawsered cruiser.

The commander who acted under Admiral Mericski was puzzled. But his instructions were explicit and peremptory. The admiral himself had penned them, at Von Eimar's dictation, with a revolver held to his head as an encouragement. Promptly, therefore, the commander issued orders for the lowering away of the boats, and he himself accompanied the first boat-party to the shore.

The trap worked like a charm. As the sailors passed unarmed through the narrow sally-port of the battery they found themselves suddenly dazzled by blinding searchlights. Stern voices ordered them to throw up their hands if they didn't want to be riddled by machine-gun bullets.

Group after group was hustled through the frowning prison gates, clamped into the irons discarded by the convicts, and locked into different casements of the fort.

It was after midnight, when the officer of the watch, pacing the bridge of the cruiser, was surprised to see a number of motor-launches speeding towards the Zermac.

The boatswain's whistle piped smartly. Duty men lined the cruiser's well-deck as Governor Zarda and Admiral Mericski came climbing the accommodation-ladder, arm-in-arm with Von Eimar, who chatted amiably with them as his monocle shone in the deck-lights.

The lieutenant of the watch advanced to meet them, and then gaped foolishly at the ragged and branded mob of



"Ruffians!" exclaimed Von Eimar "Take these two other ruffians with you!" "Aw, c'mon, baby!" drawled Killer Moran, taking the admiral by the elbow. "Don'tcha be frightened, admiral boy, we ain't gonna take yuh for a ride, not unless yuh git ferocious!"

convicts that scrambled up the steel sides of the cruiser.

"Wha-what—" he exclaimed, in bewilderment.

"T-tell your men t-to surrender, officer!" gasped Admiral Mericski, forked beard quivering ludicrously as he spoke. "That is an order. D-don't do anything rash, for Heaven's sake!"

Cheering, and brandishing knives and guns, a sea of armed convicts poured over the bulwark rails from the boats crowding below.

The officer and the watch made no resistance. Indeed, they had very little chance, being unarmed. In stupefaction they allowed themselves to be bound with their own lanyards, and hustled off to the cruiser's brig under the foredeck.

Swarms of excited convicts overran the captured cruiser. Into the gun-turrets they climbed, along the superstructure past the squat black funnels and deck-houses, swinging up the ladders from the well deck on to the quarter deck, dropping down vertical iron ladders to overpower the engine-room hands, and the firemen and trimmers who were banking the fires in the stokehold below.

Never was a proud warship subdued more easily. The crew of the Zermac had a courage fully equal to that of their admiral and the island prison governor. Inside ten minutes the convicts were masters of the entire vessel.

Von Eimar tramped up the steel ladder rungs to the bridge, a satisfied smile lighting his broad Teutonic features. He threw open the door of the chart-house and entered.

Next moment, however, he halted in blank amazement.

"Teufel!" he rapped out, in surprise.

A smooth-faced, athletic youngster of about fifteen, with fair hair and frank, grey eyes was studying a chart by the glow of the electric bulb. He wore, not the uniform of the Varland Navy, but a white yachting suit, and his appearance was distinctly English.

"Donnerwetter!" exploded Von Eimar, grunting in his throat.

The boy looked up. He was as amazed as the escaped convict leader himself.

"Von Eimar, the spy!" cried the lad, rising from the chart-table.

For once in his life Von Eimar lost his iron self-control. A white blaze of anger consumed him.

"Yes, I am Von Eimar, the international spy!" he thundered stamping into the room with a strong fist closing over the butt of his revolver. "And you are Roderick Drake, the son of Morgan Drake, the British Secret Service agent, who sent me to the living death of Nemesis Island!"

Fierce passion distorted his livid face, and Roderick Drake, looking straight into those glaring eyes, saw murder in their depths as Von Eimar unholstered his gun, and squinted along the sights on the barrel.

(Face to face with the son of the man who had sent him to the penal settlement on Nemesis Island, Von Eimar has revenge in his reach! Look out for startling developments in next week's thrilled-packed chapters of this powerful pirate yarn!)

**HORACE COKER'S DARK DEED!**

(Continued from page 23.)

with that ink, and shouldn't have got the Head by mistake! By gun, if I get through this, I'll make that brute sit up! I'll rag him right and left till I rag him out of the school! I'll give him something better than ink next time—a bucket of tar—"

"Mind the Head doesn't get it, Coker!"

"Ha ha, La!"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Coker. "Look here, if you've got any idea what can have become of those dashed trousers—"

Harry Wharton glanced round. At a little distance Piker Pike was standing, with his keen slits of eyes fixed intently on Horace Coker. For some reason he was keenly interested in Coker that morning, and Harry Wharton fancied he could guess why.

"What about Pike?" he asked.

"Pike!" repeated Coker.

"I mean, he was prowling about, and if anybody spotted the bundle, he was the man to spot it. Then he might hang about to spot a fellow looking for something here—and that's what he's jolly well doing now!"

"Oh!" said Coker.

He stared across at the Greyfriars gunman. Piker certainly was the man likeliest to have spotted the bundle if it had been spotted. But why he should have kept such a discovery dark was rather a mystery.

"Oh!" repeated Coker.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the bell!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the bell rang for first school; and the Famous Five cut off to the House.

Coker did not follow. Proud would be ratty if he was late in the Form-room, but that did not matter; what mattered was trousers.

Looking at the gunman, he discerned a faint grin on the hickory face. Coker made up his mind at last and approached the gunman.

"Look here—" he began.

"Looking," said Piker laconically.

"Did you—" Coker paused.

"Shoot!" said Piker.

"Did you—" Coker paused again.

"Spill it, big boy!" said Piker.

"You the guy that chucked a bundle out of a window last night?"

"Did you find it?" gasped Coker.

"Jest a few!" agreed Piker. "I'll

say it was that bundle dropping that made Chick Chew let out a howl like he was Sitting Bull on the war-path and put me wise that he was around. Surest thing you know!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

"I guess I rubbered around a few after they hit the horizon," said Piker. "I sure did spot that bundle and cinched it, and I'll mention that I stared some when I piped what was in it, You'n?"

Coker hesitated.

He disliked that gunman—disliked him intensely. It was his fixed intention to rag him out of the school—if he was not himself, unfortunately, sacked before he could carry out that fell intention. In these circumstances, he felt a natural coyness about placing himself at Piker's mercy. Yet he realised that he already was at Piker's mercy if Piker had the fatal trousers.

"You'n, I reckon!" said Piker, as Horace did not speak. "I guessed I'd spot a guy looking for that bundle in the morning, and I sure was around early, and I'll say I've been watching you a few. Them trousers was parked full of ink, and I guess I don't need telling why a guy wanted to lose them. I'll say you're the guy that got the king-pin of this here outfit the other night at the door of my little caboose with a pail of ink. Surest thing you know!"

Coker breathed hard.

"Boyces will be boyces," went on Piker; "and I ain't the galoot to give a boyce away. Nope! But I'll tell all this here island it was a dirty trick to pass up on a mild old guy like that schoolmaster."

"It—it was a mistake!" gasped Coker. "I never meant it for the Head; I'd have mopped it over myself sooner! I—I meant it for somebody else."

"That lets me out," said Piker, with a nod. "If you never meant it for that schoolmaster guy, I ain't shouting it out any. But who'd you reckon you'd get with that can of ink at the door of my caboose?"

Coker did not answer that question.

Really it hardly needed an answer.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Piker Pike. "Why, you ornery young geek—you pie-faced, slab-sided, gold-darned, pesky gink—you figured on getting this baby with that doggoned ink! Surest thing you know!"

Coker stood dumb.

There was a long pause.

"Search me!" said Piker at last. "I'll say you was asking for more'n you could chew if you'd bit it off—and then some! But if you never aimed to get the schoolmaster guy, that lets me out. I guess you can have them trousers."

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

He followed Mr. Pike to the lodge. At the sight of the bundle Coker felt like a shipwrecked mariner who saw land. The trousers—those terrible trousers—were in his hands at last! Coker made quick time down to the river.

Harry Wharton & Co., when they saw Coker of the Fifth again, beheld a cheery smile on his rugged features.

From which they deduced that it was all right.

And it was!

Coker had a hundred lines, not to mention a "jaw," from Prout for being late for class that morning. But lines and jaw left Coker unmoved, in his happy relief. Those trousers—those wretched trousers—were gone; sunk, full of stones, at the bottom of the Sark, and no clue remained to connect Coker with the mysterious mopper of ink.

The hunt was still going on. That day, in spite of Prout's indignant boom, there was a search in the Fifth Form dormitory. Coker did not mind. Coker only smiled. Nothing would ever be known now. That was all right!

"That gunman chap isn't a bad sort," he told Potter and Greene.

"Eh?" said Potter and Greene.

"The fact is I rather like him," said Coker.

Potter and Greene could only stare at their great leader.

"He's got some funny ways," said Coker. "But I tell you he's a good sort in his own way. You can take that from me! Don't let me hear any more rot about ragging him, or anything of that kind! I shan't stand it!"

"We never—" gasped Potter.

"It was you!" hissed Greene.

"Don't jaw!" said Coker. "What fellows you are for jawing! Jaw, jaw, jaw!"

THE END.

(The next yarn in this full-of-thrills series is entitled: "THE GANGSTERS' SWOOP!" It's the brightest and most sparkling yarn you could wish to read, so make sure and order next Saturday's MAGNET in good time!)

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