

BILLY BUNTER IN A ROLICKING NEW ADVENTURE!

The Magnet 2^D



**BUNTER THE
RACKETEER!**

The POPPER COURT TEA-PARTY!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

Starring **HARRY WHARTON & CO.**, the World-Famous Chums of **GREYFRIARS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Batting for Bolsover!

BILLY BUNTER hurled open the door of Coker's study in the Fifth Form passage at Greyfriars, and rushed in.

Bunter was in haste.

His fat face was crimson, and he puffed and he blew. He had come up the passage at top speed, and he hurtled into Coker's study like a fat cannon-ball.

In such haste was Bunter that he hurtled half-across the study before he could stop; and even then it was only the study table that stopped him.

Bunter bumped on that table, and clutched it for support, and gasped for breath.

"I—I say, Coker—" he spluttered.

Horace Coker of the Fifth Form uttered a sound that was like unto the trumpeting of a wild elephant in the jungle. Coker was seated at that table, working at a Latin exercise. The table rocked; the inkpot rocked; and a splash of ink went over. Coker's exercise. Some of it went over Coker! Coker fairly roared with wrath.

"Why, you—you—you—"

Coker jumped up.

But for the table between, his grasp would have fallen at once on Bunter. Coker started round the table.

So did Billy Bunter, in the other direction.

The fat Owl of the Remove was breathless. But he was not too breathless to dodge Coker. Coker looked positively dangerous.

"I—I say, Coker, I—I came to tell you—" gasped Bunter, as he circled Coker's table.

"I'll smash you!" roared Coker, as he circled the table after Bunter.

"Bolsover's coming—"

"Look at my exercise!" roared

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Coker. "I'll teach you to rush into my study like a mad bull, and—"

"He's going to whop you—"

"What?"

"With a fives bat—"

"Eh?"

"I came to tell you!" gasped Bunter, still with the table between him and Coker. "He will be here in a minute! He says he's going to whop you, in your own study, with a fives bat."

Coker of the Fifth stopped in sheer astonishment.

"Whop me!" he gasped.

"Yes, old chap!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I came to tip you—"

"A Remove fag—whop me!" stammered Coker.

"He's coming."

There was a sound of tramping feet coming up the passage. Horace Coker stared blankly at Bunter, and then swung round towards the doorway. Somebody was coming up the passage—in haste! But Coker could hardly believe that it was Bolsover major of the Remove coming to whop a Fifth Form man in his study.

Bolsover was a big and hefty fellow—the biggest fellow in the Lower School. He was, in fact, bigger than a good many of the seniors. He was rather a bully, and had a heavy hand with small fags. He was cheeky to the Fifth; and Coker had more than once regarded him with a disapproving eye and thought that a thrashing would do him good.

But certainly it had never occurred to Horace Coker that Bolsover thought that a thrashing would do him good, and fancied that he could administer the same.

If Bolsover fancied that, Coker was the man to cure him.

"Mean to say—" gasped Coker.

"He's been bragging in the Remove passage that he's going to do it," panted the fat Owl. "You'll see him in a minute. He's got a fives bat—"

"I'll be glad to see him!" said Coker grimly.

He glared at the open doorway.

If Bolsover major of the Remove appeared there with a fives bat in his hand Coker knew what he was going to do.

Bolsover might fancy that he could whop a Fifth Form man in his study. But Coker fancied that if a junior barged into that study with a fives bat, that junior was going to get such a hiding that it would be quite a record at Greyfriars School.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, came the heavy footsteps up the passage.

A figure appeared in the doorway.

It was that of Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove—with a red, excited face and a fives bat in his grasp. He glared into the study.

"Oh, there you are!" he roared as his eyes fell on Billy Bunter. And he rushed in.

The next moment Coker had him.

Up to that moment Coker had doubted. He could really hardly believe that any junior, even a big, headstrong, overbearing fellow like Bolsover major, could actually think of whopping him in his study. He was well aware that plenty of juniors would have liked to whop him. Coker prided himself on having a short way with fags; which did not, of course, make him popular among the fags. But that any junior could really think of whopping him was almost unimaginable to the great Coker.

But he could not doubt now—as the red and wrathful Removite rushed into his study, fives bat in hand.

He grasped Bolsover.

Big and hefty as Bolsover major was he was not so big and hefty as Coker of the Fifth. Coker whirled him off his feet and strewed him on the study carpet.

"Ow!" roared Bolsover as he went down. "Ow! Leggo! I—"

Coker's left hand grasped Bolsover's collar. Bolsover major's features grubbed into the carpet. Coker's right wrenched the fives bat from his hand.

Up went Coker's arm! Down it came! The fives bat banged on the Removite's trousers with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Oooh!" roared Bolsover. "Urrgh!" He spluttered wildly, with his nose grinding into Coker's carpet. "Wurrgh! Leggo, you mad idiot! I—urrgh—"

Whack, whack!
Bolsover struggled frantically. But Coker had him pinned, and he whacked and whacked.

"Whop me, will you?" roared Coker. "I'll show you! My hat! I never heard of such cheek!"

Whack, whack!
"Gurrgh!" gurgled the struggling junior. "Urrgh! I didn't—I wasn't—leggo—urrgh—"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. The fat junior gave the scene one blink through his big spectacles as he scuttled round the table. But he stayed only for one blink. Then he scuttled out of the study and his fleeing footsteps died away down the passage.

Coker did not heed him. And Bolsover major had no leisure to heed him, with his face grinding into a dusty carpet under Coker's grip, and the fives bat beating on his trousers.

"Whop me, eh?" roared Coker. "By Jove! Get on with it! I'd like to see any Remove fag whop me! I'd just like it! You've come to this study to whop me, have you? Who's getting the whopping? What?"

Whack, whack!
"Urrgh! Leggo! No! I haven't come—"

"Changed your mind!" grinned Coker. "I rather fancied you would, when you started on the job."

Whack, whack, whack!
"Will you chuck it?" shrieked Bolsover major, struggling wildly. "Ow! My hat! Yaroooh! Leave off!"

"Who's getting the whopping?" chortled Coker, as he whacked and whacked. "I don't think it's me! Ha, ha! Why don't you get on with it, when you came here specially to do it?"

"I didn't!" shrieked Bolsover. "You mad idiot—yaroooh—I was after Bunter—yooop—"

Whack!
"You can't crawl out of it now, my pippin!" grinned Coker. "You can't take me in! Get on with the whopping! Sorry you spoke, what? I hear that you told them in the Remove that you were coming here to whop me—"

"I didn't!" shrieked Bolsover.

"Well, Bunter said you did—and you came!" grinned Coker. "I'm waiting for that whopping!"

Whack, whack, whack!
"I never said—"

Whack!
"Oh crikey! Oh crumbs! I was after Bunter—"

Whack!
"Yaroooh! I tell you, I was after Bunter!" yelled the wriggling Removite. "I saw him dodge into the Fifth, and came after him—"

Whack!
"Yarooop! I tell you, I caught him snaffling my toffee, and got after him with a fives bat!" shrieked Bolsover. "I tell you—"

Whack, whack, whack!
"Whoop! Yaroooh! Oh crikey!" It was useless for Bolsover to attempt to explain. Coker was not to be taken in.

Coker had, as a matter of fact, been taken in by the astute Owl of the

Remove. But when an idea was once lodged in Coker's head, it was a fixture there. There was room in Horace Coker's powerful intellect for only one idea at a time. Having been convinced that Bolsover had come there with the cheeky intention of whopping him in his study, Coker was not open to conviction otherwise. He whacked and whacked.

Bolsover major struggled and wriggled and roared. Three or four Fifth Form men came up the passage, attracted by the uproar.

"Killing a pig in here, Coker?" asked Potter.

"What on earth's that game?" asked Greene.

"You'll have the roof down soon!" remarked Hilton.

Coker glanced round. "This cheeky fag came here to whop me with a fives bat!" he said. "He looks like doing it, doesn't he?"

"Yow-ow! I never— Yaroooooh!"

Whack, whack!
"I never— Yurrrrooop!"

"Looks like it—what?" grinned Coker. "What do you men think—eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whack!
"You'd better not quite slaughter him, though!" remarked Potter.

"Quech would make a row if you polished off one of his young sweeps!"

Coker chuckled.

Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, is as artful as a wagonload of monkeys, and many and varied have been his dodges to satisfy his gargantuan appetite. But his latest wheeze—that of playing the part of Horace Coker—beats 'em all!

"Well, I think that will do!" he remarked. "You can have your bat, Bolsover." He shoved the fives bat down the back of the wriggling junior's neck. "Now you can cut! You men kick him down the passage!"

He heaved Bolsover major to the door. The bully of the Remove staggered into the passage. Potter and Greene and Hilton, grinning, kicked him as he passed, and Bolsover major tottered away.

"Come back again when you want to give me another whopping!" roared Coker derisively.

But Bolsover major was not thinking of whopping Coker. He was not thinking even of whopping Billy Bunter, much as that fat youth deserved it. He could hardly have whopped a fag of the Second Form just then. He tottered away, and Coker of the Fifth, in high good humour, strolled along to the games study, to tell the Fifth Form fellows there how a cheeky fag had come to his study to whop him, and what had happened to that cheeky fag.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Wants Company!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter squeaked his loudest, and Harry Wharton & Co., who were going out of gates, glanced round.

The fat Owl of the Remove was

scuttling after them from the House, his little fat legs going like clockwork, his spectacles flashing back the rays of the June sun.

"Hold on!" squeaked Bunter.

The Famous Five obligingly held on. They were in no hurry, as they were only going for a ramble after class. If Billy Bunter wanted to join up for the ramble, they had no great objection, though they did not exactly pine for his fat company. They waited in the gateway for him to come up—which Bunter did, panting for breath.

"Going out?" he asked breathlessly.

"Oh, no!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "We've walked down to the gates because we're not going out!"

"Oh, really, Bull! I say, you fellows, if you're going to the pictures, I'll come!" gasped Bunter.

"But we're not!" said Frank Nugent.

"Bunshop?" asked Bunter hopefully.

"Not even the bunshop!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Where, then?" demanded Bunter.

"Just a walk through Popper Court woods to the river, and back by the boathouse," answered Harry Wharton.

"What on earth for?"

The Famous Five chuckled.

There were quite good reasons for taking that walk. It was glorious June weather; there was sunshine, a blue sky, and a balmy breeze from the sea; the woods were shady and green and inviting, and walking was a good exercise.

But these good reasons were quite lost on Billy Bunter. Billy Bunter preferred to take his exercise sitting still. He never moved if he could help it—except his chin! Bunter's chin, it was true, seemed to have discovered the secret of perpetual motion. Why fellows should walk miles in order to get back to where they had started from had always been a mystery to Bunter.

"Look here," he said, "don't be asses! Stop in!"

"Fathead!" said Bob Cherry politely.

"We're going out! Coming?"

"I say, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter.

"I—I say, come up to the studies, and—and I'll do some of my ventriloquial tricks to—to amuse you—what?"

"Anybody want to stick in a study in this glorious weather to hear Bunter making weird noises with his neck?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked out. Rather to their surprise, Billy Bunter rolled after them.

It was clear that Bunter did not want to go for a walk. But it seemed that he was keen on the company of the Famous Five—so keen that he was willing to exert himself for the sake of the same—which was very flattering, at all events.

"I say, you fellows, don't race!" exclaimed Bunter irritably.

The chums of the Remove were sauntering at their ease, but Bunter was a slow walker. He could have beaten a snail, but perhaps only an old, tired snail.

"Oh dear!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Walk, if you're going to walk, fatty! Do you want us to crawl on our hands and knees?"

"Beast!"

Bunter puffed and blew. Several times he blinked back over a fat shoulder through his big spectacles. But he seemed more easy in his mind when the school gates were out of sight behind.

"What about sitting on this fence, you chaps?" he asked. "We could get a rest here till calling-over."

"Sit on it by all means!" said Bob

Cherry. "We'll collect you when we come back!"

"Well, I don't want to lose your company!" said Bunter, rolling reluctantly on. "I always enjoy a walk with you fellows. You're such nice company!"

The Famous Five of the Remove looked at Bunter. They were willing to agree that they were nice company. They would have admitted that there was none better in the Greyfriars Remove. Still, they had not expected to hear it from Billy Bunter.

"What's the soft sawder for?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Buck up, if you don't want to lose our nice company, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We want to do more than two yards an hour!"

Billy Bunter bucked up. Once more he blinked back over a fat shoulder.

"Expecting somebody after you?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Oh, no! I'm not dodging that beast Bolsover!" said Bunter. "I came out with you fellows because I'm keen on a walk and I like your company."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The mystery was solved now.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter. "I fancy Bolsover won't be so full of beans when Coker's done with him. Still, I don't want a row with the brute. If he cuts up rusty when we get in, I shall expect my pals to stand by me."

"Why not cut off and warn them that they may be wanted?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——" Apparently, the Famous Five were the pals to whom Bunter alluded. "I say, as captain of the Remove, Wharton, you're bound to put down bullying! Quelch would expect it."

"Quelch won't be disappointed," said Harry cheerfully. "Who's been bullying whom?"

"That brute Bolsover!" said Bunter. "He got after me with a fives bat just before I came out. If I hadn't cut into Coker's study, he would have had me. Luckily, Coker fancied, for—some reason, that Bolsover had come there to row with him and pitched into him. I left them scrapping."

"More power to both their giddy elbows!" said Bob heartily. "Both of them can do with a hiding!"

"Well, Bolsover may be very waxy about it," said Bunter. "I'd rather keep with you fellows for a bit. You can handle him all right."

"What have you been up to, you fat spoofer?" demanded Wharton.

"Nothing. The beast made out that I snaffled toffee in his study—and I wasn't in his study at all. I haven't been near his study. Besides, I only went there to speak to that French chap, Dupont."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But you know that cad Bolsover, he won't take a fellow's word! He's untruthful himself, that's the reason," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, let's stop here!" The walkers had reached a spot in the lane where a stile gave access to a footpath through Popper Court woods. Billy Bunter blinked longingly at a sloping, grassy bank. "Let's sit down."

"The sit-downfulness is not the proper caper, my esteemed lazy Bunter!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky! I say, I'm not tired—I could walk you fellows off your legs, and chance it," declared Bunter. "But you know old Popper kicks up a fuss about people walking through his woods. Just as he does about people

camping on his island and in the river. What's the good of hunting trouble?"

"Bow-wow!"

The Famous Five jumped over the stile, one after another. Billy Bunter cast another anxious blink backward before he followed. He had last seen Bolsover major in a very bad temper, and he judged—rightly—that Bolsover's temper would not be improved by his hectic experience in Coker's study, in the Fifth. So long as there was any danger of Bolsover major appearing in the offing Bunter was anxious for company—the company of fellows who could, and would, handle the bully of the Remove.

There was no sign of pursuit. But Bunter decided not to risk it. He heaved his considerable weight over the stile.

The juniors followed the footpath towards the river, under the shady branches of old oaks and beeches. There were birds innumerable in the wood, and Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, was very particular about his birds. That was not because he was fond of birds, his ultimate object being to find entertainment in shooting them! But until the time came for Sir Hilton to slaughter them with his own lofty hand he was very particular indeed about them, and anyone who disturbed Sir Hilton's birds was sure of Sir Hilton's terrific wrath.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter suddenly. "That's the old blighter!"

A hat showed over a thicket at a little distance. It was worn by some man coming through the wood, to emerge on the footpath.

Bunter halted in dismay.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped. "That's old Popper, ten to one! He'll report us to the Head——"

"This is a public footpath, fathead," said Harry. "Even the Great Panjandrum can't turn anybody off it."

"You know that crusty old codger! He's always complaining about somebody or something, and the Head——"

The Famous Five glanced in the direction of the hat, bobbing about among the underwoods. It was true that Sir Hilton Popper was a testy and rather unreasonable old gentleman, and as he was a governor of Greyfriars, they knew that the Head had to treat him with tact. They knew, too, that he had turned pedestrians off that path more than once, not because he had any right to do so, but because it was his lofty will and pleasure.

"Might dodge the old ass!" murmured Bob.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"We've a right here," he said.

"You silly asses!" squeaked Bunter. "If you want to get into a row with the Head, I jolly well don't! I'm getting out of sight. I say, give me a bunk up!"

Bunter scrambled at a gnarled old oak, of which the branches jutted right across the footpath. Wharton gave a sniff, and Johnny Bull a grunt, but Bob Cherry gave the fat Owl a bunk, and Bunter clambered into the leafy tree. He gasped and gurgled as he clambered, and Bob was rewarded for his aid by a foot clumping on his chin, which caused him to utter a startled yelp.

"Ow!"

The bobbing hat was seen to turn in the direction of the juniors. The wearer thereof had heard them.

Bunter, at least, was in safe cover as Sir Hilton Popper came striding out into the footpath. He had reached a thick bough that jutted over the path, and lay along it, holding on to jutting twigs.

Had Sir Hilton looked up, no doubt he would have spotted the fat figure sprawling on the branch, and the uneasy eyes blinking down through the big spectacles. But Sir Hilton Popper did not look up. He strode out into the footpath, and halted in front of the group of juniors, right under Bunter's bough. The fat junior could have touched the top of his hat by stretching down his hand.

Which Bunter, of course, did not think of doing! Bunter's belief was that there was going to be a row, and Bunter's fixed idea was to keep doggo and let the Famous Five have the whole benefit of it. Billy Bunter was still as a mouse and silent as a graven image as he lay on the leafy branch and blinked down at the top of Sir Hilton Popper's hat!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Drops In!

"HATS off!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Five fellows raised their hats very politely to the lord of Popper Court. The Famous Five did not, as a matter of fact, think very much of Sir Hilton Popper, Baronet. They regarded him as crusty-tempered, overbearing, and rather an old ass! Still, he was a governor of the school, and, anyhow, he was an elderly man, and respect was due to age. So they "capped" him politely.

Sir Hilton stared at them, his grizzled brow wrinkled over his gleaming eyeglass. He had a gun under his arm. No doubt he had been at his favourite entertainment of killing some of his hapless feathered or furry fellow-creatures.

"Huh!" he grunted.

Nobody could have supposed that he was glad to see the schoolboys there. But he did not look so crusty as usual. He did not order them off the path, and out of his woods. He glared at them through his eyeglass, and grunted.

"Nice afternoon, sir!" ventured Bob.

"If you have been disturbing my birds——" grunted Sir Hilton.

"The disturbfulness has not been terrific, honoured sahib!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh solemnly.

"Good gad!" said Sir Hilton, staring at the dusky nabob of Bhanipur. He had seen Hurree Singh more than once before, and no doubt remembered him by his remarkable variety of the English language. "You are Greyfriars boys?"

"Yes, Sir Hilton!" said Harry, repressing a grin.

Sir Hilton had met the Famous Five at least a dozen times, but, no doubt, they were very small fry in his lordly eyes, and he did not take the trouble of remembering them.

"What are you doing here?"

"Walking!" said Johnny Bull, with a grunt as expressive as Sir Hilton's own.

"Going down to the river, sir!" said Bob hastily.

"Wandering in the woods, climbing trees, and disturbing my birds, I have no doubt!" snapped Sir Hilton.

"Not at all, sir!" said Harry politely. "We haven't wandered in the woods, we haven't climbed trees, and——"

"Don't be impertinent!"

The Famous Five smiled. They could see that Sir Hilton Popper, for some unknown reason, was suppressing his irritable temper. His natural impulse was to order them off, regardless of the fact that the path was a public footpath, to which every subject of King Edward the Eighth had free and legal access.

But for some reason which they could not guess, he was holding his autocratic temper in check.

Billy Bunter, on the branch above, suppressed his breathing. The reference to climbing trees alarmed Bunter. Bunter had climbed that oak. He had, by his excessive caution, put himself in the wrong. He was the least likely of the party to pull through without a row, if the lord of Popper Court spotted him. So he was more anxious than ever not to be spotted. The footpath was the public's. The trees were Sir Hilton's. Bunter was a trespasser, though the Famous Five were not.

"You are Greyfriars boys," went on Sir Hilton. "Is one of you named Coker?"

"Coker!" repeated Harry Wharton blankly.

Coker of the Fifth was at least six inches taller than any of the juniors. He was a Fifth Form senior, and they

The purloiner thereof had hidden it under the willows on the island in the Sark till he could remove it to a safer place—and Coker of the Fifth had found it there.

Those silver pots were said to be worth more than a thousand pounds; so no doubt Sir Hilton had been greatly pleased when the plunder was restored to him.

For which reason he was prepared to be very nice to Coker of the Fifth—though probably to no other fellow.

Had one of this little party been Coker, no doubt Sir Hilton would have given him a gracious grin, even a grip of a bony, knuckly hand; he might even have asked him up to the house to tea!

Coker was missing something!

There was a rustle on the bough over Sir Hilton's head. The juniors were careful not to look up—they wondered uneasily whether Sir Hilton would do so. That ass Bunter was shifting!

Sir Hilton evidently regarded this as a great and gracious concession.

"In fact," said Sir Hilton, "I desire to see Coker! You may take him a message—no, no; probably foolish schoolboys would forget all about it."

"Thank you, sir," said Bob meekly.

And the foolish schoolboys grinned.

"I shall telephone," said Sir Hilton. "Who is his Form-master? What is his name?"

"Coker's in the Fifth, sir. Prout's his Form-master."

"Prout! Prout!" repeated Sir Hilton. "I think I remember the name. Very good."

As Sir Hilton had asked Mr. Prout to dinner at least once in that term, he contrived to remember the name!

"Very good," he repeated. "Prout—yes, yes, Prout! Very good! You may go! Go straight on your way—I will not allow wandering in my woods—disturbing my birds. By gad, if I find that



A horrified squeak escaped Bunter, as he felt himself going. Before that squeak was fairly uttered, he was gone. Crash! He landed heavily on Sir Hilton Popper's head, driving his hat down over his eyes. The lord of Popper Court gave a gurgling gasp as he collapsed under the strain. "Urrrgh?" he gurgled.

were Lower boys. Sir Hilton's question showed that he was quite unacquainted with Horace Coker, though evidently he knew that great man's name.

"Yes, Coker!" rapped Sir Hilton. "If one of you is Coker I am very glad to see him—very glad! Which is it?"

It could hardly be doubted that Sir Hilton Popper must have seen Coker of the Fifth more than once. But, clearly, he did not remember him. He stared questioningly at the smiling juniors.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Harry. "Coker's a senior—a big chap—"

"Huh!" grunted Sir Hilton.

But the juniors guessed now why the lord of Popper Court was suppressing his crustiness.

A few days ago there had been a burglary at Popper Court, and the historic silver plate of that mansion had been snaffled.

It was Bunter's cue to be silent as the tomb. But it was not really Bunter's fault. A tree-beetle was crawling into Bunter's neck.

The fat junior could not venture to let go his hold, to deal with that beetle. He wriggled his fat neck frantically. The insect seemed all legs; and all the legs were tickling Bunter's fat neck. Leaves and twigs rustled as Bunter wriggled.

Luckily, Sir Hilton did not look up. If he noticed the rustle overhead, he put it down to the wind.

"I should be glad to see Coker!" grunted Sir Hilton. "He has done me a great service—a very great service. He must have been trespassing upon my island when he found the plunder hidden there by that rascal—huh! But I shall not hold that against him. I shall not complain to Dr. Locke on that account."

you have been climbing trees, I will lay my stick about you."

"You're awfully good, sir!" said Bob. "The goodness is terrific!"

"What—what?" barked Sir Hilton. "Don't answer me back! Go! Go at once!"

The Famous Five shifted uneasily. Bunter—owing to his excessive caution—was unable to move a limb! Bunter was perched on the branch over Sir Hilton's hat!

Sir Hilton Popper stood where he was, staring grimly after the juniors as they went. Perhaps he suspected them of intending to waunder in the woods, or climb trees, if his lordly back was turned.

From above, two exasperated eyes glared at Sir Hilton through a big pair of spectacles.

Bunter wondered if the beast was ever going!

The beetle, by that time, had crawled right inside Billy Bunter's collar, and was nestling down comfortably in the small of his back.

It felt horrid.

Bunter gave convulsive jerks and wriggles. He was not well up in natural history, and did not know whether beetles bit or not. But he was in momentary expectation of a sharp nip.

Meanwhile, the tickling of his podgy back was getting unendurable. He wriggled and wriggled.

Harry Wharton & Co. moved slowly towards the path that led through the wood towards the river. Then Sir Hilton grunted and moved.

He was going at last!

Unfortunately, it was at that moment that the tormented Owl of the Remove reached the limit of endurance.

Risky as it was, Bunter released one fat hand, to smack at that beetle.

He smacked—slipped—and rolled. The next second he was off the branch.

A horrified squeak escaped Bunter as he felt himself going. Before that squeak was fairly uttered he was gone!

Crash!

Sir Hilton Popper did not know what was happening. He had a vague impression that an uprooted oak-tree was crashing on his head.

But his impressions, naturally, were very vague. All he knew was that something terrifically heavy crashed on his hat, driving it down over his eyes and ears, imprisoning his lofty head inside a crushed hat.

He gave a gurgling gasp, and collapsed under the crash.

Bunter rolled off him.

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Sir Hilton.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Bunter.

Bunter sat up dizzily.

Sir Hilton Popper sat up, clutching at his hat.

Bunter bounded to his feet.

For the moment Sir Hilton Popper was completely blindfolded by the hat. He could not see Bunter. But that happy state of affairs was not likely to last long.

So long as it lasted Bunter had a chance! He bounded up—and he bounded away! He flew!

He vanished!

He did not keep to the path. He plunged headlong through the wood, only anxious to escape being seen, regardless of disturbed birds. Fluttering and cackling accompanied his wild flight! Birds were disturbed on all sides—a most awful offence! Regardless, Bunter bolted on.

Sir Hilton, sitting in the path, struggled with his hat. He wrenched at that hat. He wrestled with it. He got it off at last. He staggered to his feet, in a dizzy state, crimson with wrath.

It was not the oak that had fallen on his head! He knew what it must have been—a young rascal hiding in the tree! The sounds that followed Bunter's flight told him all. Gasping, he plunged in pursuit—as reckless as Bunter of disturbed birds!

But he had no chance.

Bunter, whose motions generally resembled those of a tired snail, was now putting up a speed worthy of a wild, untamed zebra. Leaving an alarmed bird population fluttering and cackling behind him, Billy Bunter got out of Popper Court woods, into the lane, and ran—and ran—and ran!

Sir Hilton was left with nothing but a smashed hat to remind him of the episode. Which was very fortunate for

Bunter, for had the baronet's grasp closed on him, there was little doubt that Bunter's state would have resembled that of Sir Hilton's hat!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Wrathy!

PETER TODD picked up a cricket-stump and stepped to the doorway of Study No. 7 in the Remove. He was only just in time. Bolsover major, about to rush in, jumped back from the business-end of the stump.

"Kik-kik-keep him out, Toddy!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter was in the armchair in his study. Ever since his wild adventure in Popper Court woods Bunter had been taking a rest—a much-needed rest.

But though Billy Bunter's fat person was at rest in the armchair, his mind was far from being at rest. He was sure—almost sure—that Sir Hilton Popper had not spotted him in the wood, with the crunched hat over his eyes. But he would have preferred to be quite, quite sure.

If nothing were heard from Popper Court, it was all right! But Bunter had to wait, to learn whether anything was going to be heard. It was an anxious period of waiting.

Meanwhile, he had another worry nearer home. Bolsover major, by that time, had recovered more or less from the terrific whopping Coker had given him in his study. But if Bolsover was feeling better, it was absolutely certain that his temper would be no better—but worse. Bunter was not surprised when the bully of the Remove arrived at Study No. 7. He was not surprised to see a fives bat in his hand. But he was deeply alarmed.

He had been strategic—very strategic—in landing Bolsover on Coker of the Fifth, and leaving him for the hefty Horace to deal with. But really his deep strategy had only postponed the evil hour. Here was Bolsover, looking for him, obviously in a fearfully bad temper.

Luckily, Peter was a fighting-man, if Bunter was not. Nobody was going to throw his weight about in Toddy's study. It was another respite.

"Hook it!" said Peter amicably.

"Gerrouit of the way!" roared Bolsover major. "I'm going to smash that fat rotter! Do you hear?"

"Quite!" assented Peter. "I think all Greyfriars can hear, old bean."

All the Remove could, at all events. Fellows came out of the other studies. Harry Wharton came along from Study No. 1, with a frown on his face. Percy Bolsover had his good points; but he was a good deal of a bully; and it was not uncommon for the captain of the Remove to have trouble with him on that account. Head boy of a Form had duties to do—and one of them was to see that fellows like Bolsover did not take undue advantage of their size and weight.

"I'll smash you first, Peter Todd, if you like!" bawled Bolsover. "Let me get at that fat rotter, will you?"

He barged into the doorway again. Peter lunged with the stump. It took effect on Bolsover's waistcoat, and the burly Removite jumped back again, with a yell.

"Sorry!" said Peter politely. "But you can't barge in here, old bean."

"What on earth's the row?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Chuck it, Bolsover!" said Redwing.

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Bolsover major did not heed. He jumped at Peter Todd, and the fives bat crashed on the cricket-stump.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles, as he blinked at the fencing match in the doorway of Study No. 7.

Crash! Crash! Bang! Clatter! The cricket-stump had the best of it. The fives bat went whirling in the air, and once more Bolsover major backed away from a poke in the waistcoat.

Harry Wharton caught the bat as it whirled.

"Give me that bat!" howled Bolsover.

The captain of the Remove put it behind him.

"You don't want this," he remarked. "I'll jolly well take it, if you don't hand it over!"

"If you do, you'll take it on your bags, hard!" retorted Wharton. "You've been batted for bullying before, Bolsover, and if you ask for it, there's plenty more on tap!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Bunter, "keep him off! I haven't done anything. It wasn't my fault Coker thrashed him—"

Bolsover major clenched his big fists. Wharton was a sturdy fellow, but the burly Bolsover almost towered over him. But the captain of the Remove faced him quietly.

"Chuck it!" he said. "If Bunter's done anything—I dare say he has—give it a name! But you're not pitching into him with a bat!"

"He pinched toffee from my study this afternoon!"

"I didn't!" howled Bunter.

"You jolly well did!" said Harry Wharton. "If there was any toffee there, you pinched it, if you could get your paws on it!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We can take Bolsover's word for that!" went on the captain of the Remove.

"What about my word?" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I never had the toffee! I never went to the study!" howled Bunter. "You can ask Dupont—he was there and saw me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter had the toffee," said the captain of the Remove. "Shut up, Bunter! But Bunter scrounges tuck from every study in the Remove, without fellows raising Cain about it. I dare say Bunter could tell me what became of a bag of bullseyes I left in my study this morning."

"I don't know anything about your rotten bullseyes," roared Bunter indignantly. "I never saw them, and never touched them. There were only about a dozen, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter ought to be whopped for grub-raiding," went on the captain of the Remove. "A fellow's entitled to that."

"Beast!"

"Leave me alone, then!" hooted Bolsover major.

Wharton shook his head.

"You look like overdoing it," he answered. "You can give Bunter one whop if you like—and I'll see you do it! Stop at that!"

"I'm going to smash him!"

"Exactly what you're not going to do!" said the captain of the Remove coolly. "You're not going to bully anybody, Bolsover—especially a fat rabbit who can't put his hands up."

"I tell you—" roared Bolsover.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Ogilvy. "Bunter's had toffee out of my study, without the roof being raised about it."

"Tain't the toffee, you silly ass! I don't care twopence about the toffee! I've been pounded nearly to a pancake by that idiot Coker——"

"Well, Bunter's not responsible for Coker's actions," said Peter Todd. "Why, he's hardly responsible for his own."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He scuttled into Coker's study with me after him!" hooted Bolsover. "He put it into Coker's head that I'd come there to whop him, and that howling ass pitched into me, thinking so——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fellows in the Remove passage.

"And that fat villain got away while Coker was whopping me!" howled Bolsover major. "That was why he pulled the idiot's leg——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" roared the enraged Bolsover. "But I'm going to smash him for it! He went out of gates afterwards, and I hunted for him for hours—and now I've got him, I'm going——"

"I say, Toddy, keep him off!" yelled Bunter, as Bolsover made a jump at the doorway.

Peter lunged with the stump. But Bolsover was wary this time. He gave a sudden kick, and kicked the stump from Peter's hand as it lunged. The cricket-stump flew in the air—and the next moment Bolsover jumped on Peter, and bore him backwards into the study.

Bump!

Toddy sprawled, and Bolsover sprawled over him, punching.

"Yoo-hoop!" spluttered Toddy.

"Oooo-hoop! Draggimoff!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry jumped on Bolsover from the passage. They grasped an ear each, and dragged Bolsover back into the doorway. The bully of the Remove sprawled on his back in the passage, bellowing.

"Now chuck it!" said the captain of the Remove.

"I'll smash the lot of you!"

"Will you chuck it?"

"No!" roared Bolsover major.

"Frog's-march!" said the captain of the Remove.

Bolsover major wished, perhaps, that he had "chucked" it when his arms and legs were grasped, and he was taken up the passage in the frog's-march. By the time he reached his own study, Study No. 10, he was shrieking to the juniors to let go. They let go, in the doorway of Study No. 10—spinning Bolsover major headlong in, and sending him sprawling at the feet of Dupont, his astonished study-mate.

"Now take a rest, old man!" said Bob Cherry. "Lots more if you want it—but why ask for it, if you don't?"

And the door was slammed on the bully of the Remove, and he was left to gurgle for his second wind.

Apparently he decided to take Bob's advice—and a rest—for the door did not reopen.

The crowd in the passage broke up, grinning. And in Study No. 7, Billy Bunter was grinning, too. Danger was over—for the time, at least—and Billy Bunter seemed rather amused to see Peter rubbing his nose, from which a crimson stream exuded.

"Bother that fathead!" grunted Peter. "I shall have a prize boko for days—Ow!"

"He, he, he!"

Peter glared at the fat Owl.

"Do you think that's funny?" he bawled.

"Well, it looks funny!" grinned Bunter. "Bit like a squashed strawberry, old chap! He, he, he!"

Peter breathed hard and deep. A nose that looked a twin to a squashed strawberry was, perhaps, funny, from a spectator's point of view—but there was nothing funny in it to the owner. And as that nose had been punched in Bunter's defence, the fat Owl's amusement really was a little misplaced.

"It won't spoil your good looks, old chap!" said Bunter.

"Won't it?" grinned Peter.

"No! You see, you haven't any."

Peter breathed harder and deeper. He did not answer in words; but he looked about the study, for the cricket-stump that had flown from his hand. He found it and picked it up.

"What do you want that for, now?" asked Bunter.

"I don't want it!" answered Toddy.

"You do!"

"Eh! I don't!" said Bunter, in surprise.

"You do—and you're getting it!"

The next moment, Bunter discovered what the stump was wanted for. It landed with a swipe, and the fat Owl bounded for the door. It landed again as he scuttled into the passage.

"Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter, as he fled.

"Come back and have another!" hooted Peter, brandishing the stump in the study doorway.

"Beast!"

Bunter did not come back. He accelerated and vanished!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Rag in the Fifth!

HORACE COKER gripped.

It was the following day, and, after class, Coker was walking down to the gates with Potter and Greene.

He grinned as he passed Bolsover major of the Remove in the quad.

Bolsover gave Coker the blackest of black looks. Even after the lapse of twenty-four hours, Bolsover was still feeling twinges from that terrific whopping in Coker's study. In response to his black look, Coker gave him a cheery grin.

"Trying it on again?" he inquired. "Look at that chap, you men. That's the fag that came to my study yesterday to whop me! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover clenched his fists. He was very keen to avenge that whopping—and he was strongly tempted to punch Coker, senior and Fifth Form man as he was.

But even the burly Bolsover had no chance in a scrap with the hefty Horace. He clenched his fists—but unclenched them again.

Coker, watching that proceeding, chuckled.

"Want some more?" he queried banteringly.

"Oh, come on, Coker!" said Potter. "We don't want to be late for the pictures."

"Bother that fag," said Greene. "Come on!"

"Don't jaw!" said Coker.

However, he came on; and Bolsover major scowled after the three as they went out of gates.

He scowled thoughtfully.

Coker & Co., it seemed, were going to the pictures at Courtfield. That

meant that Coker would not be back for a long time—probably not much before calling-over.

There was senior cricket practice going on, on Big Side; and most of the other members of the Fifth were there.

Bolsover's eyes gleamed.

He had been waiting for a chance to "get back" on Coker! This looked like a chance! Bolsover was thinking of a rag in Coker's study. He could not rag the hefty Horace, as he would have liked to do. But he could rag his study—when he was absent!

It was, indeed, as good a chance as he could have desired. The coast was absolutely clear. Coker & Co. were off the scene—most, if not all, of the Fifth were away from the studies—and Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form master, had gone off for a walk with Mr. Quelch after class—which meant that both Coker's Form-master and Bolsover's Form-master were safe out of the way. Bolsover thought it over for a few minutes, and made up his mind.

But he did not start immediately for the Fifth Form studies. He glanced round and called to some Remove fellows.

"Seen Bunter?"

"Oh, leave Bunter alone!" answered Harry Wharton. "Do you want another frog's-march, fathead?"

Since that frog's-march Bolsover major had given Bunter no attention—much to the fat Owl's relief. But the bully of the Remove was not the man to forget the matter.

"Can't a fellow speak to a chap?" he snapped. "I want to speak to the fat chump. I'm not going to lick him."

"Oh, all right! Better look in the tuckshop, if you want him."

"He's there, if he's got any money," remarked Bob Cherry. "If he hasn't, he's trying to horrow some of Mauly. If you draw the tuckshop blank, look for Lord Mauleverer."

Bolsover major stalked away, leaving the chums of the Remove laughing. He found the fat Owl of the Remove blinking in at the window of the school shop.

Bunter eyed him warily through his big spectacles as he came up. But he was comforted by the sight of the Famous Five in the offing.

Bolsover did not look hostile.

"Oh, here you are!" he said. "Did you know Coker had gone out?"

"No; has he?"

"He's left a hamper in his study."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

"Serve him jolly well right to snaffle it!" said Bolsover.

"Oh, really, Bolsover! I hope I'm not the fellow to snaffle a fellow's tuck."

"You silly fathead!" grunted Bolsover major, and he went into the tuckshop, leaving Bunter to his own devices.

Billy Bunter rolled off towards the House.

Harry Wharton & Co., up to that moment, had an eye on the bully of the Remove. But seeing Bolsover go into the school shop and Bunter roll off to the House, they left it at that. There was games practice for the Remove as well as the Fifth that afternoon; and the Famous Five were soon afterwards on the cricket ground, forgetful of both Bolsover and Bunter.

Bunter, meanwhile, reached the landing at the end of the Fifth Form passage, and was blinking cautiously along that passage through his big spectacles.

Billy Bunter was not a bright youth. But he was bright enough to be on his guard on this occasion. Very likely, of

course, Bolsover would be glad to see Coker's hamper snaffed, in revenge for that whopping. More likely still, however, he would be glad to land Bunter in Coker's clutches.

If a hamper was there, and Coker wasn't, Bunter was not the fellow to let his chances, like the sunbeams, pass him by. But he was fearfully cautious. For several minutes he blinked along a deserted passage. Then he rolled up the passage to Coker's study.

If Horace was there, it was, after all, easy enough to ascertain the fact, and scoot before Coker could buzz a Latin grammar at his head. If he was not, it was all serene.

Bunter tapped!

As there was no reply, he opened the door and blinked in. The study was empty.

Bunter rolled in and shut the door.

Then he blinked round for the hamper. Only too well Bunter knew what gorgeous Hampers Coker sometimes received from his affectionate Aunt Judy. He had sampled the contents of more than one of them.

But there was no hamper to be seen now. Bunter looked in the study cupboard—he looked under the table; he blinked behind the screen in the corner. No hamper rewarded his search.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

Evidently, Bolsover major had been pulling his fat leg. Coker was not there, it was true; but neither was there a hamper. There was not even anything of an edible nature in the study cupboard. Bunter had drawn Coker's study absolutely blank.

The door opened suddenly.

Bunter spun round, with a squeak of alarm. He expected to see Coker. But it was Bolsover major who entered.

He stepped in quickly, shut the door, and turned the key in the lock.

"Here we are again!" said Bolsover agreeably.

"I—I say—" stammered Bunter, backing round the table. "I—I say, you touch me, you beast, and I'll jolly well yell."

"Who's going to touch you?" inquired Bolsover blandly.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter. "What did you pull my leg for, you beast? You jolly well wanted to get me here—I can see that now—"

"What a brain!" said Bolsover.

"Well, I'm jolly well going—" Bunter made a move towards the door. The bully of the Remove pulled the key out of the lock.

"You're not going till you've done what you came here to do, old fat bean," said Bolsover major pleasantly.

"There isn't any hamper—"

"Never mind that! You came here to rag this study."

"I didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"You did!" answered Bolsover major coolly. "And I'm going to sit on the table and watch you do it. Plenty of time—Prout's out, and the Fifth are at cricket, and Coker's gone to the pictures with his pals. Still, you may as well get going."

"You silly ass!" gasped Bunter in great alarm. "I'm not going to rag a Fifth Form study! There would be an awful row."

"There will be a row if you don't!" said Bolsover still blandly. "You're going to rag this study till it looks as if a cyclone had struck it. You got me a fearful whopping from Coker yesterday. Now you can earn one for yourself. I shan't give you away, of course; but if Coker finds out who ragged his study, I fancy you will get teco. You can take the chance."

"Look here, if you want the study

ragged, you can jolly well rag it yourself," gasped Bunter. "I'm not having a hand in it."

"You are—two hands, in fact!" declared Bolsover major. "I advise you to get going. I'm not going to rag the study—but I'm going to pelt you with Coker's books till you begin."

"I—I say—yoop!" spluttered Bunter as the bully of the Remove picked up a Latin grammar and buzzed it. It caught Bunter under the chin, and caused him to sit down on Coker's carpet with a sudden bump.

"Oh, here's Coker's compasses!" remarked Bolsover major. He picked them up. "Just the thing for you, Bunter! If you want to be punctured—"

Bunter squirmed wildly away.

"Ow! Keep off, you beast! I—I'll rag the study if you like—keep those compasses away— Yow-ow-ow!"

Bolsover major grinned and sat on the corner of the study table, compasses in hand. Billy Bunter cast a longing blink at the door. But the door was locked, and the key in Bolsover's pocket. There was no escape for the hapless fat Owl.

His remarkable strategy of the previous day had not yet been paid for—but now it had to be paid for with interest.

"I—I say, suppose somebody comes to the study!" stammered Bunter. "We—we shall get copped here, old chap! I—I shouldn't mind but—but I don't want to get you into a row."

"Get on with it!"

"I mean you clear off, old fellow, and—and leave me to it— Yaroooh! Keep those compasses away, you beast! Wow!"

"Have another?" grinned Bolsover.

"Ow! Beast! Wow! I—I say, any man in the Fifth might come to the study!" groaned Bunter.

"Well, the door's locked," said Bolsover; "and if anybody comes you can answer as if it was Coker. You brag that you can imitate anybody's voice with your rotten ventriloquial tricks—"

"I—I can't, old chap! Not at all!"

"Then I'm sorry for you!" said Bolsover cheerfully. "If anybody comes you'll have to answer, because I shall stick these compasses into you till you do. If you choose to let it out that you're in the study I don't mind. Why should I? I'm waiting, Bunter. Are you going it?"

"I—I say— Ow! Keep off! I'm going it, ain't I?" howled Bunter—and he went it!

There was no help for it; it was either ragging Coker's study, or taking a series of jabs from Coker's compasses. Bunter did not want to rag the study, but still less did he want to be jabbed by the compasses.

So he set to work. Bolsover major sat on the table, grinning, and watched him. Every now and then he spurred the fat Owl on with a flourish of the compasses. Bunter was not keen to rag, but he was very keen to get through and escape from those dangerous quarters, so he put his beef into it.

Books and papers flew all over the study; the fender was overturned, the mantelpiece swept clear over it; bookshelves were emptied, and ink splashed over the books, the carpet, and the furniture. Coker's study soon had a fearfully dishevelled appearance.

"I—I say, that'll do!" gasped Bunter.

"My dear chap, you haven't started yet!" said Bolsover major genially. "If you want these compasses—"

"Ow! Beast! Keep off!"

Billy Bunter re-started. He strewed Coker's crockery-ware over the floor among the books and papers and ink; he jerked down pictures, and overturned chairs amid the general havoc. Then he paused for breath.

"I say—"
Bolsover major held up his hand in warning; there was a footstep in the passage outside.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter. He felt quite dizzy at the thought of Coker coming back and finding him in the study, and the study in that awful state. Bolsover major ceased to grin; he, too, realised that it would be rather serious if he was caught there. Both of them listened with bated breath to the approaching footsteps, and both of them jumped as the footsteps stopped at the door and there was a tap.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter. Trotter waited for an answer. He had no doubt, of course, that one, at least, of the owners of the study was there as the door was locked inside—Coker, or Potter, or Greene. It was Coker he had come for. Horace Coker, it seemed, was wanted—at a very unlucky moment for the two juniors who were busy in the study.

Bolsover major made the fat Owl a threatening gesture.

"Master Coker, sir!" called Trotter. "Please open the door, sir!"

Billy Bunter gave a fat little cough. That was his usual preliminary to ventriloquial stunts.

Trotter, standing at the door tapping and calling, spelled danger to the ragers within. Trotter had to be got rid of promptly.

dashed exercise to finish for Prout. What the thump do you want?"

"Shall I tell you through the keyhole, sir?" asked Trotter, more and more surprised.

It was not uncommon for a fellow with work on hand to "sport his oak." But it was rather uncommon with Coker, who was not of a studious nature. Still, if Coker chose to sport his oak, that was no business of Trotter's.

"Yes—and cut it short!" growled the gruff voice within.

"Sir Hilton Popper, sir—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"On the telephone, sir—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"He wants to speak to you, sir."

"Oh!"

"He rang up, sir, on Mr. Prout's



Billy Bunter put his beef into it, and Coker's study soon had a fearfully dishevelled appearance. "I—I say, that'll do!" he gasped at last. "My dear chap, you haven't started yet!" said Bolsover major, genially. "If you want these compasses—"
"Ow! Beast!" groaned the fat Removite, restarting with Coker's clock. "Keep off!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Danger Ahead!

TAP!
Billy Bunter gave a gasp of relief. Clearly it was not Coker coming back; he would not have tapped at the door of his own study.

The door-handle turned. Having tapped, the newcomer was going to open the door—and would have done so the next moment had it not been locked.

But the door, being locked, did not open. There came another tap on the panels.

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter. "Better answer him," whispered Bolsover major. "Tell the silly idiot to go away, whoever he is!"

"Master Coker, sir!" came a surprised voice through the door. It was the voice of Trotter, the House page, and he was surprised at finding the study door locked. "You in there, sir? You're wanted!"

That was, after all, easy to the Greyfriars ventriloquist. Billy Bunter could imitate any voice he knew, especially if it was a little out of the common—as Coker's gruff bark certainly was.

"Go it, you fat idiot!" whispered Bolsover. He was uneasy now. He did not want Trotter to go and mention that Coker's study was locked and that there was somebody in it who refused to answer.

Tap, tap!
"Master Coker, sir!" came Trotter's voice. "Please open the door, sir! It's me, sir—Trotter!"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Bunter, with so startling an imitation of the gruff tones of Horace Coker that it made Bolsover jump, though he was expecting it.

"It's a message, sir!" came Trotter's answer.

"I'm sporting my oak, bother you!" granted Coker's voice from the mouth of the Greyfriars ventriloquist. "I'm not letting anybody in. I've got a

telephone," said Trotter, through the keyhole. "Mr. Prout being out, sir, I took the call; and Sir Hilton Popper says, sir—he says that he wants to speak to you, sir."

"Oh, all right!"
"I didn't know whether you was indoors, sir, so I told Sir Hilton Popper, sir, I'd see," went on Trotter. "So he said he'd ring off, sir, and you was to ring up immozit."

Billy Bunter grunted. This was about the last thing he would have expected to hear. The lord of Popper Court, being a governor of the school, might have rung up the Head on the telephone, but, so far as Bunter knew, he had never rung up a Greyfriars fellow before.

It was very annoying—to Bunter. But he remembered what he had heard the baronet saying to the Famous Five in Popper Court woods the previous day.

Sir Hilton had said that he would

telephone, and no doubt he had rung up Mr. Prout to ask to speak to Coker, who had rendered him that great service in recovering the snaffled silver. Prout being out, the call had been taken for him by the House page, and Sir Hilton had told him to send Coker to the phone.

It was quite simple—but very irritating at the moment. Fortunately, Trotter had no doubt that it was Coker who was answering him from within the study.

"Sir Hilton Popper said he would wait, sir," went on Trotter. "P'raps you'll go and ring up on Mr. Prout's phone, sir? He said immegit!"

"Oh, all right!" answered Bunter in Coker's voice, and he was greatly relieved to hear Trotter's footsteps die away down the passage.

Bolsover major chuckled when the page was gone.

"Lucky I locked the door," he remarked. "If that young ass had got a squint inside it would have been all over the shop by the time Coker comes in."

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter.

He blinked round the wrecked study. The havoc there was quite amusing to Bolsover major, but it was deeply alarming to the Owl of the Remove. He felt quite dizzy at the thought of Horace Coker discovering who had dealt with his quarters like that.

"Get on with it!" said Bolsover.

"I—I say, we—we'd better clear!" gasped Bunter. "I—I think we'd better get out of this, Bolsover!"

"Think again!" suggested Bolsover.

"I—I say, that old ass will be ringing up again if he doesn't get an answer from Coker. We shall have Trotter up here again."

"Oh!" said Bolsover. He realised that the argument was good. If Sir Hilton Popper was waiting for Coker's call, so impatient and autocratic an old gentleman was not likely to wait long.

"Let's get out!" urged Bunter. "If Trotter comes up again, and spots us going, Coker will know who ragged his study, and—"

"That won't hurt me," grinned Bolsover. "I haven't done any ragging."

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

"If it comes out," chuckled Bolsover major, "I'm sorry for you, old fat man. Coker lays it on hard with a fives bat, I can tell you."

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

"Still, we may as well clear," said Bolsover, getting off the table. "May as well go while the going's good. I'd rather not be found here. But you needn't worry, Bunter—"

"Needn't I?" hissed Bunter.

"No fear! You're booked anyhow!" chortled Bolsover. "Trotter will be up here again in ten minutes or so, when that old ass Popper rings up again. It won't take him long to find out that Coker's out of gates, and has been out for an hour. He will jolly well know it wasn't Coker answered him. Your jolly old ventriloquism's pretty well known, Bunter."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"You've played tricks on Trotter with it before now—making the House dame call him, and that sort of thing!" chuckled Bolsover. "Bet you Trotter will tumble. If he mentions it to Coker—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Pack some exercise-books in your bags before Coker comes back," said Bolsover major, with a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you beast!" gasped Bunter, in utter dismay. "You—you—"

awful beast! You've jolly well landed me now!"

"Didn't you land me yesterday?" grinned Bolsover.

"Oh lor! I—I say, old chap—I—I say, you go and give old Popper that call he's expecting, and shoo him off!" gasped Bunter.

"I'll watch it!"

"You can do it, old chap! Popper wouldn't know your voice," said Bunter eagerly. "He doesn't know Coker at all—I heard him ask some Remove chaps yesterday if one of them was Coker. Safe as houses."

"Quite safe?" asked Bolsover.

"Perfectly safe."

"Then you go and do it!" grinned Bolsover major.

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover major unlocked the door, and left the study. Billy Bunter rolled out after him. Both of them hurriedly left the precincts of the Fifth—Bolsover grinning with satisfaction; Bunter wriggling with dismay and apprehension.

Coker's study had been ragged—and it looked as if Billy Bunter was very likely to be spotted as the ragger—which, from Bolsover's point of view did not matter in the least. From Bunter's, however, it mattered a lot.

Bolsover strolled out into the quad, grinning. Billy Bunter rolled away to Prout's study. Any minute now, Sir Hilton Popper might ring up again, and Sir Hilton had to be barred off while there was yet time. Billy Bunter, in great haste, rolled into the Fifth Form master's study, shut the door, picked up the receiver, and gave the number of Popper Court on the telephone.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Shoo!

"**H**UH!" That sound, something between a grunt and a snort, announced that Sir Hilton Popper was on the telephone, in the library at Popper Court.

Billy Bunter quaked.

Sir Hilton was a terrifying old gentleman, and Bunter could not forget that he had fallen from a branch, on Sir Hilton's hat the day before. Nothing had been heard since about that incident, and Bunter was satisfied that Sir Hilton did not know who had squashed his hat on his lordly head. Still, that grunt over the wires made Bunter quake. He hardly dared to think of what Sir Hilton would have said—and done—had he been able to guess that his lofty leg was being pulled on the phone—and by the very same person who had squashed his hat.

Still, there really was no danger. It was not even necessary for Bunter to use his ventriloquial trickery. Sir Hilton's remarks the day before showed that he knew nothing about Coker. If he did not know Coker by sight, certainly he was not likely to know his voice.

"Huh! What? What? Who is speaking? Is that Coker?"

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh! Coker!" The bark over the wires became a little more genial. "Oh! I am glad to speak to you, Coker!"

"I—I came at—at once, sir—"

"Very good! Quite so! I am much obliged to you, Coker! I understand, from your headmaster that it was you, Coker, who recovered the articles stolen from my house last week by the man Leech—"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"You were trespassing on the island in the river at the time—" The bark became less genial.

"Oh! No! I haven't been anywhere near the island—"

"What—what?"

"I—I mean—"

"Nonsense! I am not angry with you, my boy! The rascal concealed his plunder on the island, and you found it there. You must have been trespassing. But I overlook it—I overlook it!"

"Oh! Yes, sir! Thank you!" gasped Bunter. "Is—is that all, sir! I—I think somebody's calling me—"

"I am not finished yet!"

"Oh lor!"

"What—what did you say, Coker?"

"I—I said pip-pip—please go on, sir!" groaned Bunter.

Bunter was only anxious to get through, and get out of such dangerous quarters as a senior Form-master's study. All Bunter wanted to do was to "shoo" the baronet off, like a troublesome chicken.

But it was impossible to cut off till Sir Hilton had finished. Sir Hilton, at present, had no suspicion that it was not Coker speaking. Bunter did not want to make him suspicious. Very much he did not.

"Now, my boy"—the bark was genial again—"I am under a very great obligation to you. I feel that I am bound to acknowledge it in some way."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"I shall excuse you for trespassing on my island. I have told your headmaster so. But I desire to see you."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter again.

"To-morrow, I think, is a half-holiday at the school—"

"Yes, sir, Wednesday—"

"Come and see me at Popper Court."

"Oh!"

"I shall be glad to see you, Coker, and make your acquaintance."

"Ah!"

"You will take tea with me—"

"Um!"

"What did you say, Coker?"

"I—I shall be pip-pip—"

"What?"

"Pip-pip-please, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Very good! Now," went on Sir Hilton, more and more genial, "I am not—hum—accustomed to entertaining schoolboys—hum! But I have been a schoolboy myself—hum—a long time ago, by gad! I shall try to make you enjoy your visit! The fat of the land, what?"

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter. Sir Hilton Popper, trying hard to be genial, struck him rather as a tiger trying to purr like a cat!

"You have placed me under an obligation, Coker! I shall acknowledge it—recognise it! I shall be delighted to meet you, Coker!"

Bunter blinked at the telephone. He rather wished that he was Coker. He would have shared Sir Hilton's delight, with tea at Popper Court, and the fat of the land. All the more, because his celebrated postal order had not yet arrived, and he was, as usual, stony. It was a delightful vision—if only he had been Coker, instead of merely spoofing on the telephone in Coker's name.

"Tea on the lawn at four!" said Sir Hilton. "I shall endeavour—hum—to make it one that a schoolboy may enjoy. Sticky things—hum! You may bring some friends, if you desire. Tennis—badminton—what?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Sir Hilton was making an effort. That was perceptible. He did not like

boyish company, and he would have enjoyed nothing less than a schoolboy party. But he was under an obligation to Coker of the Fifth, and he was going to acknowledge it. Doubtless Sir Hilton considered that an invitation to Popper Court, and his own lofty and lordly presence, was a sufficient reward for any service, however great.

"Come early," went on Sir Hilton, evidently determined to go the whole hog while he was about it. "Say three," he added rather hastily, as if struck by a sudden dread that Coker might make it two, or even one!

"Oh! Yes, sir!"
 "Very well! I shall expect you at—at three, Coker! Bring two or three friends if you like—three or four!" added Sir Hilton, with another perceptible effort. "It is settled—what?"

"Oh! Yes! Thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter.
 "Not at all—not at all! Good-bye, Coker!"
 "Gig-gig-good-bye, sir!"

Sir Hilton Popper rang off.
 Billy Bunter put up Mr. Prout's receiver, and stood blinking at the telephone in blank dismay.

He had "shoo'd" the baronet off. That was all right. There would be no ring to bring Trotter on the scene again. The havoc in Coker's study would remain undiscovered till Coker came in—hours yet. But—

There was a "but." All was safe—till the morrow. Coker would never even know that there had been a telephone call for him—till the morrow. But on the morrow Sir Hilton Popper would be expecting Coker at Popper Court. Tea on the lawn; the baronet, in his best temper, expecting guests—and nobody arriving! Coker, certainly, would not arrive, as Coker knew nothing whatever about it. What was going to happen then?

Angry inquiry—which would only too likely lead to Bunter! All Bunter had wanted to do was to shoo Sir Hilton off like an intrusive chicken. But Sir Hilton was no chicken, and not to be shoo'd off. He was shoo'd off till the morrow, and then—

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.
 It was a worried Bunter that rolled away from Prout's study.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

What About It!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
 "Roll away, barrel!"
 "Oh, really, Wharton, I haven't come here to tea—"
 "You haven't!" agreed Wharton.
 "I want to ask you fellows' advice," said Bunter.
 Harry Wharton & Co. came up to Study No. 1 in the Remove in a cheery crowd after cricket practice. They were not surprised to find Billy Bunter there, as it was tea-time. But they were surprised to hear that it was advice, and not tea, of which he was in search.
 "Advice!" repeated Bob Cherry.
 "Yes, old chap!"
 "Right as rain!" agreed Bob. "If that's it, you can look on me as your kind Uncle Robert! I advise you to wash your neck!"
 "Oh, really, Cherry—"
 "And your ears while you're about it!"
 "Beast!"
 "And, dash it all, why not a wash all over?" said Bob. "If you're feeling run down, or anything of that sort, a complete change may do you good!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I've got into rather a scrape. I think my pals might try to help me out."
 "Any pals of Bunter's here?" asked Harry Wharton, glancing round. "If so, they may as well help him out. Otherwise we shall have to do it."
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "Help him out, anyhow!" said Johnny Bull.
 "I don't mean that, you silly fatheads!" roared Bunter, dodging round the table. "I don't mean help me out of the study—"
 "We do!" said Frank Nugent.
 "Look here, no larks, you dummies!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you, I'm in a scrape, and I want you fellows to advise me. I say, you fellows, do you think a man who didn't know me by sight might take me for a Fifth Form man?"
 "Eh?"
 "What?"
 The Famous Five gazed at Bunter in wonder. That was an utterly unexpected and surprising question. Bunter had, at least, succeeded in riveting their attention.
 "I mean, I'm rather tall for a junior, ain't I?" said Bunter, drawing himself up to his full height—which, as a matter of absolute fact, was far from impressive.

(Continued on next page.)

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P.106a

"Only sideways!" said Bob, shaking his head.

"I mean, jealousy apart!" said Bunter irritably.

"Oh crikey!"

"Suppose you fellows saw me for the first time, and didn't know I was a Remove chap, what would you take me for?" ask Bunter anxiously.

"A barrel!" answered Bob.

"You silly ass!" shrieked Bunter. "Can't you be serious? I say, suppose I saw old Popper, think he would take me for a Fifth Form man?"

"Hardly!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But what the thump are you thinking of pulling old Popper's leg for, you fat ass?"

"Well, he's never seen Coker," argued Bunter. "You remember he asked you yesterday if one of you was Coker. You were an ass to tell him that Coker was a big chap, Wharton—but you always wore a silly ass! It might make him suspicious if I went there as Coker."

Billy Bunter's powerful intellect had been at work, evidently, since he had got off Prout's telephone. But the chums of the Remove, who knew nothing of his talk with the lord of Popper Court, could only stare at him in wonder.

"Well, you blithering ass," said Johnny Bull, "old Popper doesn't know Coker from Adam! But if you tried to spoof him like that he would jump on you at once!"

"I—I suppose it would be a risk!" muttered the fat Owl disconsolately.

"I should call it a cert!" said Frank Nugent. "But what on earth have you got in your silly nut now? If Coker's been asked to Popper Court, he's not likely to let you go instead, is he?"

"You see, he doesn't know he's been asked."

"He's been asked without knowing it?" ejaculated Bob.

"You see, I took the call——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's all right, as far as that goes," said Bunter. "But, you see, I'm not going to tell Coker. He would want to know how I came to take the call, and—and it might come out about his study being ragged——"

"Has Coker's study been ragged?"

"Oh, no! Not that I know of! I haven't been near the place. Besides, that beast Bolsover made me go! He stuck Coker's compasses into me till I did it. Not that I did anything, you know," added Bunter hastily. "Don't you fellows get jawing about a rag in Coker's study, and saying I did it! I don't want to have anything to do with Coker of the Fifth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! As the matter stands, a fellow can go to Popper Court to tea to-morrow—tea on the lawn, you know, and lots to eat. Coker can't go, as he doesn't know. But it seems a pity for it to be wasted, doesn't it? Besides, if nobody goes, old Popper will very likely ring up, and then it may all come out. You see, I'm in a bit of a scrape."

"Looks as if you are, old fat man!" said Bob. "If it's advice you want, I advise you to give up spoofing, as well as to wash your neck!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I was fairly driven into this!" said Bunter. "That beast Bolsover made me rag Coker's study, and I should have been spotted there if I hadn't made Trotter believe Coker was at home; and then I only gave that old ass Popper a call to keep him quiet—and then he springs this on me! If I dropped in and gave Coker's name, it would be all right—if he believed I was Coker. It would keep

him quiet—and there would be the tea, too! But—but he mightn't believe I was a Fifth Form man."

"The might-notfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And the chums of the Remove roared. Billy Bunter was not tall, even for a Lower Fourth junior. The least suspicious of baronets certainly never would have believed him to be a Fifth Form senior.

"Well, what about you, Bob?" asked Bunter.

"Eh?"

"You're the biggest chap here, and I want to keep it among my friends," said Bunter. "It will be a jolly good tea—you can rely on that. Old Popper's a bit of a beast, but he wants to be nice to Coker for getting back those tin pots and things. It's sure to be a good tea, that stands to reason. You're as tall as Price of the Fifth—a bit the start of him, I think. I say, old chap, what about it?"

"What about it?" gasped Bob Cherry. "What about my going to Popper Court and calling myself by another chap's name, do you mean?"

"Yes, old fellow! You're as big as some Fifth Form men—not so big as Coker, but the old ass has never seen Coker—and you're jolly nearly as ugly, anyhow! He, he, he! What about it?"

Bob Cherry's face was a study. The expression on it as he gazed at Bunter made his friends yell.

"Mind, I'm offering you a good thing," said Bunter, as he stared at him, speechless. "It will be a good feed. It's an absolute cert that it will be a good feed—old Popper can't do less. You take me as a friend. That's where I come in. The old ass said Coker could take three or four friends, if he liked. All these fellows can come as Coker's friends—see? There'll be enough for everybody. What about it?"

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

"I say, you fellows, don't cackle! We've got to get this settled," said Bunter peevishly. "It will get me out of a row if somebody turns up as Coker and stops that old ass poking his silly nose into things! And a long-legged spindleshanks like Bob could do it——"

"The esteemed and ludicrous Bunter forgets that the absurd Sir Hilton saw Bob yesterday in the wood!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He would expect the ridiculous Bob to have been Coker yesterday if he is Coker to-morrow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey! Oh!"

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

Billy Bunter, evidently, had overlooked that rather important detail. Certainly, if Sir Hilton saw Bob at all, he would expect him to have the same name on Monday as on Wednesday.

Bunter gave a grunt of disgust.

"That tears it!" he said. "You won't be any good, Cherry! None of you fellows would be any good! You're too fatheaded to get by with it, anyhow, I dare say! It's a thing that requires a bit of gumption! I think I'll ask Smithy—he's got more sense than the lot of you!"

The fat Owl started for the door.

Then he turned back. He had forgotten, for the moment, that it was tea-time. But that was not a thing that Billy Bunter was likely to forget for more than a moment.

"I'll see Smithy after tea," he remarked. "If you fellows are going to have tea, I'll—Whoop! Yoooop! Yarooooooop!"

Bob Cherry seemed to have been transfixed, for some moments. He

just stood gazing at Bunter. Now, however, he woke to sudden action.

Bunter never knew what Bob kicked him for. But he knew that Bob did kick him. Bob's boot was of too large a size to leave any doubt on that point.

"Yaroop! Beast! Yurrooooo!" roared Bunter, bounding for the door. "I say, you fellows—Whoop! You silly idiot—Yow-ow-woop!"

Bunter forgot tea again! Dinner, tea, and supper combined, would not have induced him to linger a moment longer. He flew.

Bob Cherry seemed disposed to pursue. But Harry, laughing, slammed the study door.

"The fat scoundrel!" gasped Bob. "Me—telling a pack of lies to bag a spread—me! Why, I'll burst him all over the Remove! I'll——"

"Easy does it!" said Wharton soothingly. "If Bunter's been ragging Coker's study, and pulling old Popper's leg on the phone, he's got lots coming to him."

"The lotfulness will be terrific!"

And Bob let it go at that!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Takers!

THAT evening, in the Rag, there were grinning faces.

By that time, most of the Remove fellows were aware of the weird and wonderful wheeze that had germinated in the powerful intellect of William George Bunter.

Most of them thought it fearfully funny.

But few, if any, of them, had any idea of joining up, to help Bunter through. It was altogether too weird and wonderful a wheeze to recommend itself to the average fellow.

Bunter was in a scrape.

There was no doubt about that! It was well known that Coker of the Fifth, having discovered his study in a state of havoc and wreckage, was breathing wrath and vengeance on the subject. Potter and Greene, who did not always agree with Coker, agreed with him that the ragger had to be found, slaughtered, and made a horrible example of. It was their study, as well as Coker's. So they felt this as deeply as Coker.

Fortunately, there was, so far, no clue.

Remove men knew, by this time; but they were not likely to mention what they knew to Coker & Co. Coker was understood to have suspicions of the Shell. He was on more or less scraping terms with Hobson of the Shell, and he had a suspicious eye on Hobby as the unknown ragger. Which was all the better for Bunter.

Bunter, it was true, had not wanted to rag that study. But it would have been futile to explain that he had ragged it at Bolsover's stern command. At the most, that would have made Coker slaughter Bolsover, major as well as Bunter. Bunter objected strongly to the slaughtering process for himself.

So far, however, Coker was not on the track—or, at any rate, only on a wrong track. But was it all coming out on the morrow?

If Coker did not go to Popper Court, obviously there would be further communication—probably angry communication—from Sir Hilton! He would want to know what the dooce it meant!

Then it would come out about the



The Famous Five and Horace Coker set their feet firmly in the grassy bank, grasped the rope attached to the notice-board, and pulled. Cra-a-ack! There was a rending sound as the board parted company with the post, and the sudden easing of the rope sent the tugging party stumbling backwards. Coker went over on his back, and over Coker went the Famous Five, sprawling! A chorus of gasps and gurgles followed!

spoof on the phone. Then it would come out that Trotter had gone to Coker's study to call him, and supposed that Coker had answered him—while Coker was at the pictures at Courtfield! Then all the fat would be in the fire! Ten to one, a hundred to one, it would all come home to Bunter!

Some fellows sympathised with the hapless Owl. It was clear that he was in a scrape, and that his efforts to make it better had made it worse. In seeking to steer clear of Coker, he had run aground on Sir Hilton Popper, as it were—like an ancient mariner eluding Scylla, and coming to grief on Charybdis.

Both of them would be after Bunter, if the facts came to light.

A fellow in a scrape was entitled to sympathy! Remove fellows sympathised, but they chuckled as well. Some of them would have helped Bunter out, if they could—but not to the extent of going over to Popper Court on Wednesday under the name of Coker!

Bunter tried it on, up and down the Remove, with no success. The Bounder as the most reckless fellow in the Form, might have been expected to play up. But Smithy only roared with laughter at the idea. Squiff chuckled, and Tom Brown chortled, and both refused. Peter Todd, like Bob Cherry, kicked Bunter for suggesting a trick that involved so wide a departure from the truth. Which was painful to Bunter—and very irritating, too—an absurd attention to an unimportant detail, in his opinion.

There were, at any rate, no takers. It was in vain that Bunter described, to fellow after fellow, what a gorgeous spread it was going to be at Popper Court. In vain he pointed out that it was safe as houses—Popper

knew nothing of Coker, and would not have the slightest suspicion that he was being taken in. He would get restive if nobody went; but of somebody went, calling himself Coker, it would be all right!

Nobody, it seemed, would go.

Even the prospect of a magnificent feed was no temptation. The fact was that, apart from other considerations, it was hardly an easy matter for a Lower Fourth junior to palm himself off as a Fifth Form senior. It was altogether too risky an experiment.

Only one fellow in the Remove, in fact, was fitted by nature for playing such a part—Bolsover major, the biggest fellow in the Form, who was bigger than some fellows in the Fifth.

But as Bunter could not go near Bolsover major without danger of a kick, a cuff, or a twist of his fat ear, he had not yet put it up to Bolsover. The bully of the Remove was a last resource.

There was a chortle in the Rag when Billy Bunter rolled into that apartment after prep.

Bunter's fat face was worried; but every other face wore a grin.

By that time, most of the Remove knew about the great wheeze—fellows Bunter had asked had told other fellows, and it was getting to be the standing joke in the Form.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles.

"Found a man yet?" chuckled the Bounder.

"I say, Smithy, you could do it—"

"Catch me going to old Popper and telling him a string of lies!" grinned Smithy.

"Well, you needn't mind that, Smithy," urged Bunter. "Look at the lies you tell Quelch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about you, Wibley?" asked Bunter. "You're jolly clever at make-up—you could make yourself look a bit older. You're so jolly clever, you know."

William Wibley chuckled.

"A bit too clever to play the goat, old fat man!" he answered.

"I say, you fellows, where's Bolsover?"

"Are you going to ask Bolsover?" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Guard with your left when you ask him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

Bolsover major had not yet come down from the studies, and Billy Bunter rolled away in search of him—leaving the Rag in a roar.

It was in an extremely uneasy frame of mind that the fat Owl approached Study No. 10 in the Remove.

Since that whopping in Coker's study, the bully of the Remove was very much up against Coker. For that reason, he might view with favour the idea of playing a trick at Coker's expense, and bagging a feed intended for Horace. But he was also extremely wrathful with Bunter, and a little dangerous to approach. Still, if Bolsover major would listen to the voice of persuasion, there was no doubt that he was the man!

Bunter blinked cautiously into Study No. 10. Bolsover, who was both slack and dense, had trouble with his prep, and was not through yet.

He scowled at the fat face and glimmering spectacles in his doorway, and reached for his Latin grammar.

Bunter popped back just in time.

He waited outside the study, till he heard Bolsover major slam down

(Continued on page 16.)

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The Popper Court Tea-Party!



FRANK RICHARDS

(Continued from page 13.)

his books and push his chair back from the table. Then he blinked in again.

"I say, old chap!" he squeaked. "I—I say, can I come in?"

"Do!" said Bolsover major. "I'll jolly soon boot you out again."

"Oh, really; Bolsover—" The fat Owl eyed him uneasily through the doorway. "I—I say, old chap, it's a feed."

"Oh!" said Bolsover major more placably. "Well, if it's a feed, I'll come. You can come in, Bunter."

Bunter rolled in—hopeful. The bully of the Remove looked almost good-tempered. Music is said to soothe the savage breast; and being asked to a spread seemed to have the same effect.

"Where's the spread?" asked Bolsover. "In your study?"

"Nunno—not in my study."

"In the dorm, do you mean, after lights out?"

"Nunno—not in the dorm."

"In the Rag?"

"Nunno—not in the Rag!"

"Where the dickens is it going to be, then?" demanded Bolsover suspiciously.

"If you're trying to pull my leg—"

"Oh, no, old chap! Not at all! It's a ripping spread—a topping one—really—best spread of the term—"

"Well, where's it going to be?"

"At—at Popper Court!" gasped Bunter.

Bolsover stared at him.

"At Popper Court!" he repeated. "You blithering idiot! I've heard of that rot you've been talking up and down the Remove! Is that what you've come here to talk about? By gum, I'll jolly well—"

He jumped at Bunter.

Bunter jumped at the doorway.

Bolsover major's boot reached Bunter as Bunter reached the doorway!

Thud!

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter did not stop for more! Bolsover, evidently, was in no mood to listen to the voice of the charmer.

Bunter's last hope was gone—and it was time for Bunter to be gone, too.

He went—rapidly!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Plays Up!

"NOT a bad idea!" said Skinner.

"Think not?" asked Bolsover major.

"Jolly good thing, if you ask me!"

"Oh!" said Bolsover thoughtfully.

It was to break the following morning.

Billy Bunter, woeful and worried, had given up hope of getting any fellow to back him up and get him out of that awful scrape by playing the part of Coker of the Fifth at Popper Court that afternoon.

But it is said that the darkest hour is before dawn. There was hope for Bunter!

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Bolsover major would not, probably, have listened to Bunter on the subject. But he had great respect for the judgment of Harold Skinner, who was reputed the sharpest fellow in the Remove—as well as the most unscrupulous.

"Well, look at it!" argued Skinner. "That ass, Coker, knows nothing of it, so he can't barge in. Some of the fellows say he ought to be told—but they can't tell him without giving Bunter away. That's all right. And it's safe with old Popper. He doesn't know Coker! Any man big enough to look like a Fifth Former could walk in at Popper Court this afternoon and get away with it."

"Um!" said Bolsover major.

"If I were as big as you, old chap," said Skinner, "I'd jolly well have a shot at it. Not much good my trying to make out I'm in the Fifth, though. I ain't what you'd call big, for the Remove."

Bolsover major grinned at the idea of the weedy Skinner trying to pass himself off as the brawny Coker. Still, old Popper did not know how big and brawny Coker was. Any fellow big enough to make out that he was a senior could pull it off. Bolsover, certainly, was big enough.

"It would be a jest on that fool Coker, bagging his spread," went on Skinner. "You owe him one, Bolsover."

"That's so!" agreed Bolsover.

"But—"

"And it's sure to be pretty decent," continued Skinner. "Stands to reason old Popper is jolly pleased with Coker getting back his best chromium-plated historic pots and things. He must mean to be pretty nice, or he wouldn't have asked the chap. He will do the party all right, you can depend on that. If you take it on, Bolsover, I'll back you up."

"How do you mean?" asked Bolsover.

"According to Bunter, Coker's allowed to take some friends with him. I'll come as a friend, and see you through. Snoopy would come, too, if I asked him."

Bolsover major looked thoughtful. Bagging a spread planned for Coker of the Fifth appealed to him. It would be tit for tat, in return for that whopping in Coker's study.

And the spread itself had attractions. Obviously, a baronet who asked a schoolboy to tea with the intention of doing him honour, would be bound to provide a pretty decent spread. There would be the best of everything—and lots of it. Tea on the lawn, under the shady old Popper Court oaks—waited on by liveried flunkeys—it certainly looked good!

"By gum!" said Bolsover major. "Blessed if I don't!"

"Do!" said Skinner. "I'll come. It's safe as houses—"

"You jolly well wouldn't come if you didn't think it was!" agreed Bolsover major, with a nod.

"It's just this one occasion only—old Popper will never want to see Coker again!" said Skinner. "So it can never come out that the wrong man went."

"I don't see how it could!" agreed Bolsover.

"He doesn't really want to see him now, if you come to that," added Skinner. "He feels that it's up to him to take some notice of the chap, for getting back his aluminium tinware. He will be glad to get it over and done with, and Coker would get the marble eye and the frozen mitt, if he butted in again. The whole thing begins and ends with the tea-fight on the lawn to-

day. I don't see letting it go begging."

"It's a go!" declared Bolsover major. "And I'll take some chaps! If old Popper's spreading himself in the hospitable line, make hay while the sun shines, what? You and Snoopy, and that fat bluebottle Bunter—and we might ask Hazel—he's always glad to bag anything he can get for nothing—and some more fellows—"

"Good egg!" said Skinner. "The more the merrier! Even if old Popper doesn't want a crowd, he can't say anything."

"Bunter says he said three or four. We can make it five or six!" said Bolsover. "If he's laid in tuck, I don't see wasting it or leaving it for the footmen to snaffle afterwards. We'll make it a party, what?"

"It's the catch of the term!" declared Skinner. "All it wants is a big chap to play Coker, with nerve to do it—and you've got tons of nerve."

"I fancy so!" said Bolsover major.

He went away to look for Hazeldene, and Skinner to look for Snoopy. Sidney James Snoopy whistled, when Skinner told him.

"Too jolly risky!" he said. "Why, old Popper would raise Cain if he found out that his leg had been pulled."

"He won't!" said Skinner. "How could he? He will never see Coker."

"He might!"

"And if he did, we're all right!" added Skinner coolly. "That fat ass, Bunter, did the spoofing—and Bolsover's going to do the rest. We are simply innocent, unsuspecting fellows who've accepted an invitation to tea."

"Oh!" said Snoopy.

"If it came out," said Skinner, "Bunter would get a flogging for his telephone tricks and Bolsover another for calling himself by another chap's name. It would do them both good, if you come to that."

Snoopy grinned.

"Innocent fellows like us, who simply went along to tea because a pal asked us, can't be blamed, so far as I can see," argued Skinner. "Lines, at the most, even if it comes out—and it's worth that. And it's not at all likely to come out."

"I'm on!" said Snoopy.

Two other fellows were "on" by the time the bell rang for third school. Hazel was quite keen, and Micky Desmond keener. Hazel, who was hard up as usual, preferred tea at Popper Court to tea in Hall; and Micky looked on it chiefly as a tremendous lark. Neither would have dreamed of playing a leading part; but Bolsover, under Skinner's artful persuasion, had consented to take the title-role, so to speak. Bolsover, certainly, was running a risk, though his dense brain did not quite realise it. The other fellows ran much less risk—and a spread with a baronet was worth it.

Billy Bunter had not yet heard that his problem had been solved; and he was a worried Bunter during third school. But when the Remove came out after that lesson, which was the last for the day, the afternoon being a half-holiday, Bunter heard.

His fat face brightened at the news.

Bunter, for once, was thinking less of the feed than of other considerations. His chief desire was to keep Sir Hilton Popper from inquiring into the identity of the fellow who had talked on the telephone as Coker. Still, the feed was very attractive to Bunter.

"Don't you fellows wish you were coming?" grinned the fat Owl, coming on the Famous Five in the quad.

"Where, fathead?" asked Harry. "Tea at Popper Court!" grinned Bunter. "I'd have taken you chaps, if you'd been a bit more civil. Now I jolly well won't!"

"You've found somebody?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bolsover's got more pluck than you, Cherry!" jeered Bunter. "He's not funkng it."

"The silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Look here, Bunter, you jolly well ought to let Coker know about old Popper asking him—"

"I'll watch it!" grinned Bunter. "Coker ought to be told!" said Johnny Bull.

"Are you going to tell him?" sneered Bunter. "I can tell you that if you jolly well give me away to Coker—"

"Don't be a silly Owl!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "Nobody's going to give you away. But you ought to tell Coker about it, and wash out this fatheaded stunt."

"I don't think!" grinned Bunter. "You never do!" assented Bob Cherry.

"Yah!"

By dinner-time the "stunt" was the talk of the Remove. Hitherto, Bunter's wonderful wheeze had been a joke in the Form; nobody had supposed that any fellow would be ass enough to think of playing such a game on Sir Hilton Popper. Now it was known that Bolsover major had taken it on, and some fellows wondered at his nerve, and others at his fatheadedness.

Fellows who noticed Coker of the Fifth stalking in the quad, with his usual air of being monarch of all he surveyed, wondered what the great Horace would have said if he had known.

But Coker did not know, and was not going to know.

He did not even know who had ragged his study the previous day. That was still a mystery. He had punched Hobson's head on "spec," as it were, and there had been a row in the Shell. That was all, so far.

As for the telephone call from Popper Court, Coker had never heard of it. Trotter, supposing that Coker knew, had naturally not thought of speaking about it again.

So far from being aware that the lord of Popper Court had asked him to tea, it did not even occur to Coker that the recapture of the silver pots had made any difference to the irascible old baronet. His opinion of Sir Hilton was that he was a cheeky old ass, who warned fellows off an island that did not belong to him, and Coker, as yet, saw no reason for changing that opinion.

Anyhow, Coker knew nothing, and, as far as could be seen, was not likely to know anything. All the Remove knew, and some of them disapproved of the stunt, but no fellow in the Remove had any idea of giving away the game. Coker was making his plans for that afternoon, but his plans certainly did not include tea with Sir Hilton Popper.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Party for Popper Court!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Harry Wharton & Co. smiled. Billy Bunter came out of the House, in the sunny June afternoon, looking quite a new Bunter.

He was spick and span, from head to foot, evidently considering that it was necessary to put on a little style when he was going to tea with a baronet.

Bunter was not often either spick or

span. Generally, he was grubby, his elbows shiny, and his knees baggy. Mr. Quelch had even been known to send him out of the Form-room for a wash!

Quelch, had he seen him at this moment, would not have thought Bunter the most slovenly fellow in the Remove.

He had washed since dinner; and two washes, in one day was rather a record for Bunter. Nobody, looking at Bunter now, could have guessed what he had had for dinner. As a rule, there were clues.

His trousers had been brushed. His shoes were brightly polished. His cuffs were spotless—which hinted that the shirt was not Bunter's own. The handkerchief that jutted from his pocket was white as the driven snow—also evidence that it was not Bunter's. His tie was new and neat, and the Famous Five wondered whose it was. A handsome straw hat surmounted his bullet head—and it was just as well for Bunter that Lord Mauleverer was not on the spot to recognise it.

Bunter was looking pleased with himself. He had been looking in the glass, and in the glass he saw reflected a handsome, well-dressed, well-set-up fellow, whose spectacles rather added to his distinguished appearance. Naturally, Bunter was pleased.

He blinked at the chums of the Remove through those spectacles. His manner had a touch of patronage.

"I say, sorry I can't take you chaps!" he said. "But it would hardly do, would it?"

"Fathead!" "What I mean is, old Popper's a crusty old stick, and a bit of an old blighter, but, after all, he's a baronet, and he's got a nobby place!" said Bunter. "Butler, and footmen, and all that! A fellow has to be a bit particular."

"You howling ass!"

"Yah!" Bunter rolled on, disdainful. "What about squashing that hat on his silly head?" asked Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed. "Don't!" he said. "Mauly would have to buy a new one."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Bolsover major came out, with Skinner and Snoop, Hazel, and Micky Desmond. All of them had rather a newly swept and garnished look. Tea with a baronet did not happen every day, and there had been a considerable amount of brushing and polishing.

Quite a crowd of the Remove gathered round to see them start. The party for Popper Court was the centre of interest in the Remove that afternoon.

Some of the fellows thought that Bolsover's nerve would fail him when the time came to start. But this did not look like it. Evidently, he was going.

Bolsover gave the captain of the Remove a nod.

"Like to come, Wharton?" he asked generously.

"Thanks, no." "We could cram in one more, if you like!"

"I'm not anxious to sample old Popper's boot, thanks!" answered the captain of the Remove, with a laugh.

"The bootfulness may be terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Bolsover major. "It's safe as houses. Skinner jolly well wouldn't be going if it wasn't."

"Thanks!" said Skinner.

"Well, you know you wouldn't!" said Bolsover. "It's all right, Wharton, if you'd like to join up. Dash it all, I'll take the lot of you, if you like! I don't see that old Popper could object, after

saying that a chap could take friends with him."

"Why not take all the Remove?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Look here, Bolsover, you're a silly ass!" said Harry. "The best thing you can do is to wash it out. It looks safe enough, but you never can tell, and if old Popper spotted you—"

"How could he?" "Well, I don't see how he could!" admitted Wharton. "But—"

"The butfulness is terrific." "Oh, rot!" said Hazel. "It's right as rain! Nothing could happen unless Coker walked into Popper Court this afternoon. Is he likely to?"

"Hardly! But—"

"Oh, come on!" said Snoop. The Popper Court party walked on, most of the Remove following them down to the gates. They walked out of the gates, grinning faces watching them as they went. Billy Bunter turned back to the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows," he squeaked. "Look here, you can come, if you like. I'll tell you what! If I stand you a tea at Popper Court, you stand supper in the study to-night. That's fair! What about it?"

"Fathead!" "Beast!"

Bunter rolled on. "Come on," said Bob Cherry. "Let's see them as far as Popper Court. They may come out suddenly, and want picking up and carrying home."

"Ha, ha, ha!" A dozen Remove fellows walked after the party, curious to see them to their destination, and to see what happened when they arrived there.

It looked safe—an absolutely safe game. The only danger was from Coker of the Fifth, and Coker had been left behind—they had seen him in the quad, with Potter and Greene, when they started. The faintest suspicion, in Coker's mind, that a cheeky Removite was going to borrow his name that afternoon would have put all the fat in the fire. But it was evident that Horace Coker had not the remotest, faintest suspicion; indeed, it was improbable that he was wasting any thought on such microbes as the Lower Fourth at all.

Bolsover & Co. marched up the road and turned into Oak Lane, by Courtfield Common, on which the great gates of Popper Court opened.

It was past three o'clock now, and no doubt Sir Hilton Popper was expecting his visitors.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "There's the old bean!"

The Popper Court gates stood open. In the gateway an eyeglass gleamed, screwed in the eye of Sir Hilton Popper.

The lord of Popper Court was standing there looking out into the lane.

Harry Wharton & Co. came to a halt. From a little distance they watched Bolsover's party walk up to the gates.

They noticed that the party slowed down a little. Perhaps some of them felt a slight misgiving at the sight of the tall, angular baronet, with his mastiff face and gleaming eyeglass.

But Bolsover major marched resolutely on. Bolsover, at all events, was not to be daunted.

"He's doing it!" murmured Bob.

"He is—he are!" grinned Nugent.

Sir Hilton scanned the party as they came up. Bolsover major marched resolutely ahead, Micky Desmond close to him, Hazel and Skinner and Snoop a little behind, and Billy Bunter bringing up the rear. Bunter, at that moment, had an awful recollection of dropping on Sir Hilton's head, a couple of days

ago, and a dreadful misgiving that Sir Hilton, after all, might know who it was that had dropped on his head.

But Sir Hilton was smiling!

Smiling was a rather unaccustomed performance for Sir Hilton Popper. His old brown, leathery face broke up into a thousand wrinkles as he smiled. Still, he did smile.

This, he knew, was the party he was expecting. Perhaps he had not expected it to be quite so numerous. He had said three or four over the telephone—and six were arriving. He had no doubt that the tallest Yellow, who towered over the others, was Coker. What else was Sir Hilton to think?

Anyway, they had arrived.

"Coker, what—what?"

Sir Hilton's bark reached the ears of the onlookers down the road. They exchanged grinning glances.

"Yes, sir!" said Bolsover major calmly. Really, Bolsover's nerve was quite admirable at that moment. "I've brought a few friends with me, sir, as you said I might—"

"Quite—quite!" said Sir Hilton genially. "Oh, quite! I am very glad to see you, Coker!"

He shook hands with Bolsover major.

"Very glad to see you! I have to thank you, Coker, for a great service—a very great service—"

"Not at all, sir!" said Bolsover major.

"Come in—come in!" Sir Hilton did not shake hands with the rest of the party but he gave them a genial nod as they raised their hats. "Come in—you and your friends! I am—hum—delighted to see you! Yes—hum—delighted!"

Bolsover major walked up the drive with Sir Hilton Popper. The party walked on behind.

"Well!" said Bob Cherry, as they disappeared.

"Well!" murmured Nugent.

Harry Wharton whistled.

"Looks all right!" he remarked. "I hope to goodness they'll get by with it. If old Popper smells a mouse, they're for it!"

The Famous Five walked past the gates a few minutes later. Bolsover's party had disappeared up the drive with Sir Hilton Popper. All, it seemed, was going well. And though the ohms of the Remove did not quite approve of leg-pulling to such a very remarkable extent, they certainly hoped that Bolsover & Co. would pull through safely, as they walked on towards the banks of the Sark.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Means Business!

"CHEEKY old ass!" said Coker.

"Yes—but—" murmured

Potter.

"But—" murmured

Greene.

Coker snorted.

Coker of the Fifth had been making his plans for that half-holiday. Those plans certainly did not include anything like tea with the baronet at Popper Court. But they included Potter and Greene—and those two youths did not seem overjoyed at the prospect.

"The man's a cheeky old ass!" repeated Coker. "Somebody ought to go to law with him about it. That island in the Sark belongs to him no more than it belongs to me, or to you, Potter. All very well to keep fags off it—untidy little beasts! But to bar off senior men of Greyfriars is cheek—sheer pure, unadulterated cheek!" said Coker categorically.

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"I know!" said Potter soothingly. "But—"

"The Head," said Coker, "put that island out of school bounds. Why? Just because old Popper is a governor of the school and he doesn't want any trouble with a governor."

"Headmasters don't!" remarked Greene.

"Well," said Coker, "I'm not a headmaster and I don't care a brass button. Last week Prout jawed me about it. You heard him! Well I jolly well said I'd go on that island, and I jolly well did!"

"What about Lantham this afternoon?" asked Potter. "There is a good cricket match there—"

"Never mind that, Potter! Do you know what I saw when I was on Popper's Island that day last week?"

"You saw old Popper's silver pots and—"

"I don't mean that, ass! I saw a board up: 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted,'" said Coker. "Mind, that island is public land. Every chap in the kingdom has a perfect right to land on that island, and stop on it as long as he jolly well likes! And that old curmudgeon has the nerve—the cheek—the impudence—to stick up a board saying that trespassers will be prosecuted! The neck!"

Coker of the Fifth breathed indignation.

"And speaking of those silver pots," he went on. "I found the stuff hidden under the willows—jolly well banged my head on it when I went over in the mud—mightn't have found it otherwise. What are you grinning at, you silly asses?"

"Oh, nothing! I say, what about getting down to Pegg, and having a boat out on the bay—"

"I'm speaking, Potter. If you must jaw you might give a fellow a chance to get a word in edge-wise. What has old Popper done about my finding his silver pots?" demanded Coker. "I'm not the fellow to do a song and dance about it, I suppose—but that stuff was worth hundreds of pounds, and I got it back for the old ass. Has he said a word about it?"

Coker snorted.

"He might thank a chap!" he said. "He might mention that he's obliged. Not a word! I suppose he thinks I'm a sort of manservant, and it's my business to pick up his silver pots when they're lying about. Might have expected me to clean 'em, before sending them back, as they'd been in the mud!" added Coker with deadly sarcasm.

"Well, he might have said something about it," admitted Potter. "I'm rather surprised that he hasn't. He must have been pleased at getting the Popper Court silver home again."

"I should jolly well think he might," said Coker scornfully. "If he's too high-and-mighty to walk over to the school, he could have rung up on the phone, and said as much as 'Thank you!' Has he?"

"Well, he always was a crusty old stick!" said Greene. "Can't expect much from him in the way of manners."

Another snort from Coker.

It was not uncommon for Coker of the Fifth to go off at the deep end without much cause. But in this case his friends had to admit that Coker had cause to be indignant.

It was not a small thing to recover the Popper Court silver, which a burglar had snaffled and hidden on the island. The police might have recovered it; but then, again, they mightn't!

Certainly, it was completely by chance and accident that Coker had come on it.

Still, he had done so! Coker of the Fifth had brought that bag of valuable silver goods back to the school, and Inspector Grimes had returned it to Popper Court—and the least—the very least, that Sir Hilton could have done would have been to render thanks to the finder.

Not a word had come from him—so far as Coker knew, at all events. Coker, as he said, was not the fellow to do a song and dance about it—but he did feel rather sore at such a service passing without a single word of recognition or acknowledgment.

If the lord of Popper Court fancied that the whole population of the kingdom existed for no purpose but to do him service, it was time he woke up, in Coker's opinion.

Coker's annoyance was natural. His ire was added to by Sir Hilton's "neck" in warning Greyfriars fellows off an island that did not belong to him. The "Trespassers" board was the finishing touch. Fellows liked a pull up the river and a picnic on that little wooded island.

Was Coker going to be barred off public land by an old curmudgeon who hadn't even the manners to thank a chap for recovering his family plate for him? Not Horace Coker!

"That board," said Coker, "is coming down!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Potter.

"I'm taking it down!" said Coker. "And when old Popper sees it down he may have sense enough to get on to it that he isn't the Great Panjandrum and the Lord High Everything Else that he fancies he is. What?"

"For goodness' sake," said Greene, "don't be such a giddy ass, Coker! You'd have got into a fearful row for trespassing on the island last week if you hadn't happened to find old Popper's silver pots there. That can't happen again. For goodness' sake, keep clear of that island."

"That board," said Coker calmly, "is coming down!"

"For the love of Mike—" groaned Potter.

"That board is coming down! I'm going to hook it down, and you fellows are going to help me. I shall want some help."

"Are we?" said Potter and Greene.

"We'll take a rope," said Coker, "tie it to the board, and all pull together. It will come down all right. I can get a rope from Gosling's woodshed—"

"Coker, old chap—"

"You fellows get down to the river and get the boat out ready. I'll join you on the raft."

"But—" almost moaned Potter and Greene, utterly dismayed at the bare idea of not merely landing on the forbidden island, but dragging down the board planted there to warn off trespassers.

"Don't jaw!" said Coker. "You fellows waste such a lot of time jawing. It makes me rather tired."

"But—" repeated Potter and Greene.

"I said don't jaw!" Coker pointed out.

"But—"

"Jaw, jaw, jaw!" said Coker. "Get going—I'll meet you on the raft. Have the boat ready."

Coker walked away to Gosling's woodshed.

Five minutes later he walked down to the boat-house with a coil of cord under his arm.

He expected to find his friends there, with the boat ready. That showed that

Coker, with all his faults, had a trusting nature.

He did not find them there! Neither was the boat ready.

Puzzled, Coker looked for them. He put in the next quarter of an hour looking for them. It was a sheer waste of fifteen minutes.

"The utter asses!" growled Coker.

He had given them explicit directions—the clearest possible. Yet it seemed that they must have misunderstood somehow. Or perhaps they hadn't! Anyhow, they were not to be found. If Coker's enterprise, that afternoon, was to be carried out, it was evident that Coker, like Coriolanus of old, had to carry on alone, unaided!

Which Coker did.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Popper Court!

SIR HILTON POPPER smiled. It cost him, perhaps, something of an effort to keep smiling. It was so very new an experience for him. But he did it.

Some elderly gentlemen feel bucked in the presence of cheery boyhood. But Sir Hilton was not one of that kind. He regarded boys as troublesome animals, and the less he saw of them the better he liked them. So it really was much to Sir Hilton's credit that he was making the effort, to testify the obligation he felt towards Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth. Far from being unmindful of Coker's service, as Coker had reason to suppose, Sir Hilton was going all out to acknowledge it—though unfortunately in the wrong quarter.

Some of the party had felt a twinge of uneasiness at first, but that soon passed off.

Sir Hilton was absolutely unsuspecting. It could hardly have entered his lofty and lordly mind at any time, that any fellow would dream of pulling his lofty and lordly leg. And there was nothing to make him suspicious now. He was expecting a party of Greyfriars boys—and a party of Greyfriars boys had arrived. He was expecting to see a big fellow called Coker—and he was seeing a big fellow called Coker! How was Sir Hilton to suspect that that big fellow, on other occasions, was called Percy Bolsover? Of course, he could not.

So Sir Hilton Popper smiled on his guests on the sunlit lawn of Popper Court; with his mind made up to bear the infliction as long as it had to last.

That he was not unmindful of services rendered, was clear, from the way he spoke to Bolsover major. He mentioned the matter of those silver pots several times over, and each time he told Bolsover major how very much obliged he was to Coker!

Little tables were set out under the branches of a big, shady oak. Men-servants were carrying things down from the house to those little tables. Billy Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, were on them. Bunter could see that it was going to be a good tea. He thought it rather a mistake not to have had it at once. But apart from that, Bunter was satisfied.

What to do with a party of school-boys was a little bit of a problem to the lord of Popper Court. He remembered, from his own distant boyhood, that eatables would surely be welcome. Eatables and drinkables had been provided in abundance—if not super-abundance.

But the whole visit could not be filled up with eating and drinking—though

that programme would have satisfied Bunter, at least. Tea was not due till four o'clock, which was quite early.

Sir Hilton smiled resolutely: and Bolsover & Co. had their best party grins on. But a whole hour could not be passed standing on the lawn smiling and grinning.

"Tennis, what?" suggested Sir Hilton brightly.

Nobody had brought a racket. But it was easy to fix the party up with rackets. Sir Hilton sent a man into the house to sort out rackets.

Bolsover major did not play tennis. Neither did Snoop. Hazel, Skinner, and Micky Desmond did, and Billy Bunter fancied he did. So four of them were disposed of.

The other two watched with Sir Hilton. Billy Bunter paired off with Hazel, Skinner with Micky.

"Rotten court!" remarked Bunter to Hazel, perhaps unaware that the remark reached Sir Hilton's ears. When Bunter played tennis, he generally remarked that it was a rotten court. The rotten-

ness of the court accounted for the rotten play Bunter displayed thereon.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Hazel.

"We've something better than this at Bunter Court," said the fat Owl, unheeding, "I hate these rotten old grass courts."

Bolsover major and Snoop, standing on either side of Sir Hilton Popper, exchanged a wink behind his ramrod back.

The expression on Sir Hilton's face at that moment, entertained them. His eye gleamed through his eyeglass at Bunter.

"Service!" called out Micky from the other end.

Bunter took the service.

He did not take it with his racket. Micky had a fast service, and the ball came down like a bullet. It was doubtful whether Bunter saw it at all. He flailed the air with his racket, what time the ball bounced up and landed on a fat chin.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

He sat down.

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS.

(1)

He studies everything from pigs to palaces,
His talk is unremittingly obscure;
He adumbrates innumerable fallacies,
Which few of us are willing to endure.
His character is one of great simplicity,
His qualities are singularly odd,
Exhibiting a mental eccentricity—
In other words—Alonzo Todd!

In looks, Peter and Alonzo Todd are as like as two peas in a pod. But there the resemblance ends. Last week, Peter came under the eagle eye and pen of our clever rhymester. Now we come to

ALONZO THEOPHILUS TODD,
the long-winded Reformer of the Remove.
(With apologies to the well-known song: "In Other words")

(2)

Possessing, as I do, familiarity
With 'Lonzy's conversational design,
I've tried to copy his peculiarity
In this poetic masterpiece of mine;
His manifest indulgence in verbosity
Exasperates his hearers to retort
In tones not wholly free from animosity,
In other words—"Cut it short!"



(3)

He frequently peruses with avidity
Professor Balmeyerumpet's works of art,
Devouring every volume with rapidity,
As Bunter would devour a stolen tart.
There's one which has no serious comparative
"Potatoes from the Planting to the Pot!"
A masterpiece of literary narrative,
In other words—tommy rot!

He quotes his Uncle Benjamin impressively
Reproving all our erring, sinful ways,
For Uncle Ben hates youthful joys excessively,
And 'Lonzy copies everything he says.
He depreciates all juvenile frivolities,
At fisticuffs he's horrified, alas!
His nature's full of meritorious qualities,
In other words—a silly ass!

(5)

I interviewed him rather accidentally
Through no determined policy of mine,
The form adventured forth experimentally
Upon a bold, but bellicose, design.
We all, except Alonzo, were unanimous
In visiting the Upper Fourth the other
night
Upon an expedition full of animus,
In other words—a pillow fight!

We fought with carefree irresponsibility,
We pillowed Temple underneath his bed;
We set about the Upper Fourth with much
agility,
Defeating them and leaving them for dead.
And then Alonzo rushed into the dormitory,
Exclaiming: "Cease this exhibition now!
Your place, my friends, is surely the Reform-
atory!"
In other words—"Stop the row!"



MY UNCLE
BENJAMIN
WOULDN'T
ALLOW THAT!

(7)

"I find myself compelled to view with
gravity
This totally regrettable display
Of instincts of primordial depravity,
To which you unreflectingly give way!
Resume at once respectable tranquillity."
He cried, and those who heard him
from afar
Replied with undiminished risibility,
In other words—"Ha, ha, ha!"



(8)

I ventured to remark with joviality
That pillow-fighting merely was a game
Said he: "This exhibition of brutality
You cannot dignify with such a name!
How can your criticism be so jocular
When Bolsover, I notice with a sigh,
Shows sad discoloration of an ocular!"
In other words—"A black eye!"

The combat raged with desperate ferocity.
A pillow hurtled through the atmosphere,
And, travelling at a maximum velocity,
Impinged with great momentum on his ear!
Which left him horizontally disqualified
From further opposition to the rout.
He lay inert to all objections mollified,
In other words—knocked out!

He sat down suddenly and hard, and it was perhaps just as well for Bunter that it was one of those rotten old grass courts, and not a hard court. Even the grass felt hard as he jammed on it with all his weight.

Bump!
"Yoo-hoo-hoop!"

Bunter dropped his racket and caressed a podgy chin which felt as if it had been pushed through his podgy head.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" squeaked Bunter, "Beast! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! My chin! Ow!"

"Fifteen—love!" chortled Bolsover major. "Is that how you play tennis at Bunter Court, old fat man?"

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Bunter staggered up. He rubbed his chin, and set his glasses straight on his fat little nose. Micky and Skinner, grinning, changed courts, and Micky brandished his racket again.

"Service!"

Hazel returned the ball and it came back from Skinner. To and fro it went. For a minute or two, Hazel played a single game, while Bunter rubbed his chin. But the fat Owl was not going to be left out, and he gripped his racket and rushed into the fray again, as the ball came over from Micky.

"Look out, Hazel!" yelled Bolsover major.

But it was too late.

Hazel and Bunter got the ball together. Hazel lifted it back neatly over the net. Bunter's swipe missed it by a foot. But every bullet has its billet; and that swipe found a resting place. Hazel let out a fearful yell as Bunter's racket cracked on his ear.

"Whoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bolsover major. "Bravo, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" howled Hazel, staggering. "Ow! Ow! My ear! My napper! You mad porpoise—ow!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter.

"That was my shot!"

"You mad rhinoceros—ow!"

"Thirty—love!" chanted Bolsover major, as the ball dropped unheeded, "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter as Hazel whirled on him with uplifted racket, and smote. "Ow! Keep off! Wharrer you up to? Oh crikey! Ow!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

Hazel, for the moment, seemed to have forgotten that he was playing tennis, and fancied that he was playing Bunter!

Swipe, swipe!

"You'll damage that racket, Hazel!" yelled Snoop.

"You'll damage Bunter!" chortled Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh! I say, you fellows—whoop!" howled Bunter, as he dodged frantically. "I say—yaroooh!"

"There!" gasped Hazel. "There, you mad ass—there, you fat lunatic—there, you blithering cuckoo—"

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Service!" roared Micky.

Hazel, glowering, retired to his court. Billy Bunter, gasping for breath, picked up his racket. Bunter was not enjoying this game. However, he prepared to take the service again.

Down came the ball, and this time Bunter got it. It was rather unusual for Bunter's racket to establish contact with the ball at all. When it did, the direction to be taken by the ball was quite an unknown quantity. It might have gone back across the net by a lucky chance, but with so many points of the compass to choose from, it was more likely that it wouldn't! On this occasion, it didn't!

Bunter swiped that ball, and it whizzed. For a fraction of a second nobody knew the flight of the ball.

Then a fiendish yell from Sir Hilton Popper announced where it had gone. The lord of Popper Court was seen to stagger and clasp a hand to his nose. The ball dropped at his feet.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bolsover major.

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Snoop.

"Good gad! Oooooogh!" spluttered Sir Hilton. "What—what—what—urrrgh! What—what—gurrgrgh!"

Billy Bunter blinked around.

"I say, you fellows, where's that ball?"

I say, did it go over the net? I say, has it gone off the court?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gurrgrgh!" gurgled Sir Hilton, clapping an anguished nose. "Wurrgrgh! You dangerous young rascal—urrrgh!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he realised where the ball had gone. "Oh, jiminy! I—I say, you keep off!"

Sir Hilton was making an infuriated stride towards him. With that sudden, severe pain in his nose, the baronet seemed to forget, for a moment, that Bunter was a guest. He strode at him with an expression on his face that made the fat Owl jump.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, and he bolted.

Between his short sight, and the haste of the moment, Bunter forgot the net. He was reminded of it, however, as he crashed headlong into it, stumbled, and hung over it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Groogh! Wow!" roared Bunter, wriggling. "I say, you keep off! Oooop!"

Fortunately, Sir Hilton remembered in time! He gave an angry snort and strode off the tennis court.

Billy Bunter disentangled himself from the net, and blinked round through his big spectacles.

"I—I say, is that beast gone? Oh dear! Ill-tempered old beast, you know—ooooh! Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That set finished without the presence of Sir Hilton Popper. He seemed to have had enough of Bunter's tennis at close quarters.

It was with the greatest difficulty that Sir Hilton summoned up a smile when the juniors came back to the lawn, Sir Hilton's nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw. It had a pain in it.

But it was time for tea now. Billy Bunter cast a blink of the deepest appreciation at the tables under the shady oak. Tennis, perhaps, was not Bunter's game, but when it came to shifting the foodstuffs, Bunter was in a class by himself.

"I say, you fellows, the grub's all right!" murmured Bunter.

When the grub was all right, everything was all right. The grub, undoubtedly, was all right; three or four menservants hovered about, to wait on the guests. Sir Hilton smiled with resolute hospitality, occasionally caressing his nose. In a state of happy satisfaction, Bolsover & Co. sat down to that gorgeous spread.

"I wonder what Coker would think if he saw this!" Skinner whispered to Bolsover major.

Bolsover chuckled.

"I wonder where Coker is," he remarked, "while we're bagging his feed?"

He little guessed!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Lending Horace a Hand!

HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Coker!"

"That ass!"

"What on earth's he up to?"

Harry Wharton & Co., after seeing the Popper Court party in at Popper Court, had strolled on, down to the river. Now they were sauntering down the bank of the Sark, on the towpath that bordered Popper Court woods.

As they came in view of Popper's Island, out in the river, they came also in view of a remarkable sight.

At the landing place on that island,

THE LAUGH'S ON THE FIRST ELEVEN!

What a laugh! What a jape! And what a story! The visit of the Rajah of Jal's eleven to play St. Jim's was a big event for the seniors. But they little guessed who the Indian cricketers were! You will revel in reading about the cricket match that was the jape of the term at St. Jim's! In addition every "Magnetite" will greatly enjoy the grand Greyfriars yarn contained in our popular companion paper. See that you get this week's number of

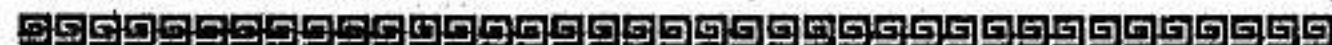
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a post had been planted, and the post bore a large board, on which was painted a legend in large letters:

"TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED!"

Nobody could walk along the towpath without seeing that board on the island. It was a standing offence in the eyes of Greyfriars fellows. But certainly no Greyfriars fellow, except Horace Coker of the Fifth Form, had ever thought of pulling it down.

Coker had not only thought of it; he was doing it. At all events, he was trying his hardest to do it.

Halting on the bank, the chums of the Remove stared across at Coker of the Fifth.

A boat was tied up at the island—evidently Coker's boat. Coker was on the island. He had knotted the end of a long, strong rope to the offending board. He was pulling on that rope with all his ample beef. His rugged face was red with exertion. If Coker's beef could do it, that board was coming down.

They gazed at him.

"The blithering ass!" breathed Harry. "He may be spotted any minute. If a keeper came out of the wood—"

"Asking for it!" said Johnny Bull.

"The askfulness is terrific!"

The juniors glanced round uneasily. The sweeping woods lay along the river with a dozen little dusky paths winding into the trees. From any one of them, at any moment, keepers might have emerged? Evidently Coker feared no foe! For the moment, however, the Famous Five had the river bank to themselves.

"Coker!" called out Wharton.

Horace Coker ceased his herculean efforts for a moment and stared round. He had not noticed, till that moment, that he had an audience.

Beefy as Horace was, he had not, so far, made an impression on the post or the board. He needed, as he had told Potter and Greene, help.

"For goodness' sake, Coker, get off that island!" called out the captain of the Remove. "I saw Joyce in the wood not ten minutes ago."

"Don't be cheeky!" answered Coker.

"You'll be nabbed!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Who cares?"

Coker, clearly, did not care! At all events, he was prepared to risk it.

"You fags cut off!" called out Coker. "Hold on, though!" he added. "You can lend me a hand if you like! It's a bit tough for one fellow. I expected Potter and Greene to come along, but the silly asses went wandering off somewhere."

"Couldn't follow a better example!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We'd better wander off somewhere, too, you fellows—and so had you, Coker!"

"Don't be a young idiot!" said Coker. "I'm getting this cheeky board down! The other fellows can stand old Popper's impudence if they like! I'm not taking any! I'll bring the rope across, and you can all pull—"

"Fathead!"

"Funky?" sneered Coker. "Well, if you're funky, you little rotters, clear off, before I come over and kick you!"

"Chuck it, you ass!" exclaimed Harry. "You'll get into a fearful row."

Coker did not even answer.

He grasped the rope, braced himself for a tug, and tugged. He tugged hard, but the offending board did not give. Beefy as Coker was, he had set himself a task rather beyond his powers.

The juniors watched him anxiously. Coker, it was clear, was not going to

chuck it till he had that board down. At his present rate of progress, he seemed likely to be busy all the afternoon. Harry Wharton cast another anxious glance along the border of the wood, and then looked at his comrades.

"After all, it's like old Popper's cheek to stick that board up!" he said. "And that blithering idiot is for it if he's caught. And he will be caught."

"Let's!" said Bob.

So far as pulling down the notice-board was concerned, the Famous Five were quite at one with Coker. What they did not want, was a terrific row at Greyfriars on the subject. But it was absolutely certain that Coker would be spotted if he stayed there on the island, in full view from the bank, as obviously he intended to do, till he got that board down. It was only good-natured to lend the fathead of the Fifth a helping hand, and get it over, before hostile eyes fell on the scene.

"Coker!" called out Harry.

"Shut up!" came over Coker's shoulder as he tugged.

"Bring the rope over, and we'll help!"

Coker gasped.

"Oh, all right!"

Whether Coker could have done it on his own or not, he was going to do it! At least, he was going on trying to do it! But undoubtedly he was glad of help. Five sturdy arms pulling on the rope would easily make all the difference. Coker was very glad of help.

He ceased to tug, and threw the end of the rope into his boat. Then he jumped into the boat, and punted it across the channel between the island and the bank.

He stepped out of the boat to the towpath, the end of the rope in his hand.

"Here you are!" gasped Coker.

He was rather short of breath. He had expended a great deal before the Famous Five happened on him.

"Line up!" said Harry Wharton.

"Quick as you can, you fellows!"

"There's no hurry!" remarked Coker.

"Take your time!"

"The hurryfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "If some absurd keeper comes out of the wood—"

"Rot!" said Coker.

"They keep an eye on this island, fathead!" said Bob.

"Let them!" said Coker disdainfully.

"If any keeper starts bothering me, I shall hit him. I'm not standing any nonsense from old Popper, or from his keepers, either, I can tell you!"

"Well, we're not looking for a scrap with keepers!" said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "You may like a flogging from the Head, Coker, but we should hate it!"

"Don't be a cheeky young ass, Wharton! Look here—"

"Nuff said!" interjected Bob Cherry.

"Get going, you men!"

The Famous Five grasped the rope, one behind another, as if for a tug-o-war. Horace Coker took the end.

"Now pull!" said Coker. "Don't jaw—pull!"

The five juniors braced themselves and pulled. They set their feet firmly in the grassy bank, grasping the rope with both hands, and exerted all their strength. Coker, at the end of the rope, put all his beef and weight into it. The rope stretched taut across the arm of the river, from the board on the island, to the tugging crowd on the bank.

That it was a task beyond Coker's solitary powers was clear—for the well-planted post resisted the efforts of the whole six.

They tugged, and tugged, and tugged. For a whole minute there was no

result. When the result came, it came suddenly.

The post on the island did not stir. But the board came off it, dragged bodily away by the dragging rope.

It flew off the post, and flew into the river with a splash. And the sudden easing of the rope sent the tugging party stumbling headlong backwards.

Coker went over on his back, and over Coker went the Famous Five, sprawling. There was a loud roar from Coker as he squashed into the grass, with five Removites distributed over him.

"Oh! Ow! Gerroff! You clumsy young asses! Oh!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors scrambled up breathlessly. Coker sat up in the grass and gurgled for breath.

"Urrgh! You clumsy little idiots! Ooogh!" he gurgled. "I've a jolly good mind to kick you all the way back to the school! Urrgh!"

"That's Coker's way of saying 'Thank you!'" remarked Bob Cherry. "The speech may be taken as read, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we've jolly well done it!" remarked Johnny Bull, as he pulled the rope, and the "Trespassers" board came bumping into the rushes. "And now we've done it, the sooner we do the vanishing trick, the better."

"Yes, rather."

"Untie that rope," said Coker. "I've got to take that back! We'll leave the board here for old Popper to see next time he takes a walk this way! And—"

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Look!"

From the wood, a little distance above the spot where the juniors stood, a man in gaiters and velveteens emerged into view. The juniors knew Joyce, the head keeper of Popper Court.

"Hook it!" breathed Nugent.

But there was no chance of "hooking" it. From the wood below the spot two more figures emerged, almost at the same moment.

The juniors looked up the bank, at Joyce, and down the bank, at the other two keepers. And Bob Cherry grunted:

"Copped!"

And Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh added sadly that the copfulness was terrific!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Held by the Enemy!

HORACE COKER breathed hard, his eyes gleamed, as the keepers converged on the spot. His big fists were clenched. Three hefty keepers were more than a match for Coker and the juniors; but Coker, as usual, feared no foe and counted no odds.

Obviously, he was preparing to knock Joyce & Co. into the middle of next week, or the whole length of the calendar, if they ventured to lay disrespectful hands on him. Which, equally obviously, they certainly were going to do.

The trespassers board, broken from its post on the island, lay in the rushes by the bank.

That was enough for Sir Hilton's keepers. But Joyce touched his hat as he came up.

"Sorry, young gentlemen," he said; "but I shall have to ask you to come along with me! You pulled down that there board."

"Sort of!" assented Bob Cherry.

"We shall have to take you to Sir

Hilton," said Joyce. "But I dessay he will only take your names, to send to your headmaster, sir."

Harry Wharton Co. nodded dismally. They could really have kicked themselves. They had lent Horace a hand to hurry on his proceedings, to keep him out of a scrape. Instead of keeping Coker out of a scrape they had tumbled into one themselves—and a very serious one.

But they were not, like Coker, thinking of punching a way out. Pulling down Sir Hilton's board was enough to earn them a flogging at Greyfriars. Punching his keepers certainly would not improve matters. It was more likely to have the effect of turning a flogging into the "sack."

But Coker did not think of that. Coker was no whale on thinking. Action was more in his line.

"Hands off, you!" snapped Coker. "If you want me to knock you into the river, you've only got to say so!"

"You'd better come quiet, sir!" said Joyce. "You pulled down that there board—"

"I'll pull it down again if that old ass Popper has the neck to stick it up again!" retorted Coker. "And if you lay a finger on me, I'll knock you spinning!"

"Coker—"

"Shut up, Wharton!"

Joyce eyed Coker dubiously. He gave a whistle, and there was a rustle in the wood. Two more keepers emerged.

Five hefty men in velvetens surrounded the Greyfriars party now. Resistance was hopeless, even if it could have led to anything but making matters worse. But that made no difference to Horace Coker.

Joyce touched him on the arm.

"Hands off!" roared Coker.

"Better come quietly, sir," said the head keeper. "You see— Yaroooh! Oh— Oooooogh!"

Coker hit out.

Joyce rolled over on the bank, under a hefty smite, roaring.

"Coker, you ass—" gasped Bob.

"Back up, you fags!" roared Coker.

And he rushed at the keepers, his sinewy arms going like the sails of a windmill!

Instantly he was collared, and a terrific struggle followed. Coker staggered right and left, struggling, punching, and spluttering. Joyce scrambled up—his good temper gone, and replaced by an extremely bad temper.

"Collar them!" he shouted.

Coker struggled wildly. The juniors stood nonplussed. Coker, as usual, was playing the goat; but to stand idly by while he struggled in the grasp of the keepers, did not seem good to the Famous Five.

Bob Cherry, forgetting prudence, rushed in to help Coker. He knocked one of the keepers backwards.

That was enough for the Co. With one accord they piled in. Prudence was thrown to the winds, and they backed up Coker with might and main.

For two or three minutes there was wild trampling and struggling and panting on the towpath.

Then Coker of the Fifth was pinned, a keeper's grip on either arm, and he wrenched and wrestled in vain to free himself.

"Leggo!" roared Coker. "I'll smash you! I'll spificate you! Will you leggo?"

But the keepers did not let go. They gripped hard and fast, and the hefty Horace was reduced to helplessness. He still struggled and spluttered, but they had him safe.

At the same time, Joyce got Nugent

and Hurree Singh by their collars, and held on. Another keeper secured Bob Cherry. The other was hotly engaged with Wharton and Johnny Bull. They could have got away—but they had no idea of leaving their comrades in the lurch. And it was clear now, even to Coker, that punching a way out was a chicken that would not fight.

"Chuck it, you chaps!" gasped Bob.

"The game's up!"

And Wharton and Johnny Bull

"chucked" it.

"You young rascals!" gasped Joyce.

"You're all going before Sir Hilton, and I 'ope your 'eadmaster will wallop you when you're sent back. Bring that fellow along!"

"Leggo!" roared Coker.

He resisted manfully. But the two men grasping his arms hooked him along, and he had to go. They did not relax their grasp on Coker for a moment. Coker, evidently, was going to be dangerous if he got loose.

"Now, you young rascals, come along!" said Joyce gruffly. And, with the other two keepers, he shepherded the Famous Five into the wood after Coker.

"Oh crumbs!" mumbled Bob, dabbing his nose as he went. "What an afternoon! We've asked for this!"

"The askfulness was preposterous!" mumbled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Will you leggo?" bawled Coker, his voice awakening the echoes of Popper Court woods.

"Quiet, you young rascal!" growled Joyce. "You're going to Sir Hilton, and I dessay he will send for a constable!"

"Blow, Sir Hilton! I'll jolly well tell the old ass what I think of him, if I see him!" roared Coker. "I'll tell him what I think of a crusty old 'curmudgeon! I'll tell him—"

"Shut up, Coker, you silly fathead!" hooted Bob.

"Don't be cheeky, Cherry! I'll whop you when we get out of this!" Coker, evidently, was still unsubdued.

"Git on!" growled Joyce.

The party followed a winding path through the woods, leading to Popper Court. Coker raged as he went, still full of beans. But the Famous Five went with glum faces. They were booked for a fearful row, and they knew it; and they hardly ventured to contemplate what their headmaster would say, and do, when they were sent back to the school—perhaps conducted there by Sir Hilton Popper in person!

They emerged from the wood at last, and Popper Court lay in sight in the distance.

The keepers marched them on, Coker still wriggling, and demanding to be "leggo."

As they approached the mansion, the juniors spotted a number of figures on the lawn before the house.

One of them was a tall, angular figure, with an eyeglass screwed in an eye. Others were menservants moving to and fro. And gathered at some little tables under a shady oak, were half a dozen schoolboys.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob. The Famous Five had forgotten about the Popper Court party. Now they were reminded of it.

They were being marched into the presence of Sir Hilton Popper—and of Bolsover & Co.

As they came towards the lawn, convoyed by the keepers, Sir Hilton's eyes turned on them in surprise—deepening to wrath.

The Popper Court party were sitting down to tea. Sir Hilton had screwed up his tough features into a genial, hos-

pitabile grin. But that genial grin vanished now, as if wiped off by a duster.

It was replaced by the grimmest of frowns.

"What is this?" he barked. "Trespassers; what? By gad! Are those boys trespassers, Joyce?"

And he strode to meet them, with an expression on his face that might have excited the envy of the fabled Gorgon! And the Popper Court party, all on their feet now, forgot the spread they had been about to sample—even Billy Bunter forgot it—as they stared at the captured trespassers.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bolsover major. "That—that—that—that's Coker!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Another Party! |

SIR HILTON POPPER fixed his eyes, and his eyeglass, on the new arrivals.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood silent. They were "for it" now, and they could only make up their minds to take what was coming to them as philosophically as possible.

Not so Coker! Coker, as full of beans as ever, glared defiance. He knew Sir Hilton by sight, if Sir Hilton did not know him. And he glared at Sir Hilton with undiminished truculence.

"Who are these boys, Joyce?" thundered Sir Hilton. "Have you caught them trespassing?"

"Yes, sir!" said Joyce. "They've pulled down the board on the island, Sir Hilton!"

"Pip-pip-pulled down the bib-bib-board!" Sir Hilton fairly stuttered, in his astonishment and wrath. "Pip-pip-pulled down my bib-board! Are you serious, Joyce? Is it possible? Gad!"

"And I'll jolly well pull it down again!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "Who are you to stick up a board?"

"What?" gasped Sir Hilton.

"What?"

"Who are you?" bawled Coker.

"Good gad!"

"If you want to know what I think of you—"

"Shut up, you ass!" gasped Harry Wharton. "For the love of Mike, shut up! Do you hear? Shut up!"

"Good gad!" repeated Sir Hilton. "Greyfriars boys—by gad! I know some of them—I've seen them before! Pulling down my board! Good gad! I'll have them flogged! I'll have them expelled! By gad! I'll—"

"Oh, chuck it!" interjected Coker.

"What! What did you say?" gasped the lord of Popper Court. Probably Sir Hilton Popper, in all his lordly career, had never before been bidden to "chuck it."

"I said chuck it!" retorted Coker. "Who are you, I'd like to know! Think you're the Great Panjandrum? Yah!"

"Who—who—who am I?" gasped Sir Hilton. "By Jove! I'll very soon let you know, you impudent young scoundrel! And I'm going to know who you are! I'm going to demand your expulsion from Greyfriars. Do you hear? If I'm a governor of the school, by gad, I—"

"Rats!" retorted Coker.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Rats!"

"Good gad! If I had my riding-whip here, I'd lay it about you! By gad! James, fetch my riding-whip! Do you hear? Fetch it at once!"

"Yes, Sir Hilton!" gasped James, scuttling off.

"Now, your name?" bawled Sir Hilton. "Your name, you impudent young rascal?"

"Think I'm afraid to tell you my name?" bawled Coker. "You're welcome to hear it, if you want to! My name's Coker, and a better name than Popper any day!"

Sir Hilton gave a start.

"Coker?" he repeated.

"C-O-K-E-R, Coker!" retorted Horace. "Like me to spell it for you? Coker! Got it? Coker!"

"Coker? Nonsense! Your name is not Coker! How dare you pretend that you are Coker, when Coker is here!" thundered Sir Hilton Popper.

"Eh?"

"How dare you!" roared Sir Hilton. "No doubt you fancy you may get off lightly by pretending that you are Coker, as I am under an obligation to

house with the riding-whip! Bolsover & Co. did not need telling on whom that riding-whip was likely to be used, in these unexpected circumstances.

They bolted!

And so, as Sir Hilton looked round at the tea party, calling to the fellow he believed to be Coker, what he saw was six alarmed schoolboys bolting across the lawn.

He had only a back view of his honoured guests!

Even Billy Bunter stayed only to grab at a cake, and did not stop to take a bite at it. Cake in hand, the fat Owl fled after the others.

Like the guests in Macbeth, the guests at Popper Court stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

They ran like rabbits!

Sir Hilton Popper stared at their backs blankly. Harry Wharton & Co.

move!" snorted Coker. "What the dickens do you mean? Mean to say he made out he was me? Rot!"

Sir Hilton Popper gasped.

He was not quick on the uptake, but he could not help understanding now that his lofty leg had been pulled.

"That—that boy is not Coker; those—those boys are not Coker's friends! I have been deceived, deluded! Certainly he gave his name as Coker, and I had never seen the boy before. Good gad!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Horace. "The cheeky young sweep! A kid in the Remove! I'll jolly well whop him! What the thump did he come here making out that he was me for?"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled. They knew the answer to that one, if Coker of the Fifth didn't.

"Good gad!" gasped Sir Hilton. "An impudent imposture! I—I—I—"



Gripping his riding-whip, Sir Hilton Popper charged across the lawn, in pursuit of the fleeing tea party. Bolsover & Co. were racing down the drive in grand style. But it booted not! Sir Hilton's long legs went like lightning. Bunter, rearmost of the party, gave a sudden fiendish yell, as the riding-whip landed. "Yoooop!"

the boy Coker! But I see through your trickery. Coker is here, at this very moment!"

Horace gazed at him. He forgot his wrath in his amazement.

"Potty, or what?" he asked. "My name's Coker! Ask your man Joyce—he knows my name well enough!"

"Joyce! What is this boy's name?"

"Coker, sir!" answered Joyce.

"Impossible! Nonsense! Coker is here! Coker is my guest this afternoon. I was speaking to Coker only a few minutes ago! Coker! Come here, Coker!" Sir Hilton glanced round at the tea party under the oak.

A startling sight met his view.

As soon as the name of Coker was mentioned, it was quite clear to the Popper Court party that the game was up. Nothing could have given the imposture away, except Coker unexpectedly butting in! And here was Coker—unexpectedly butting in!

James was coming back from the

grinned. Never had they seen a tea party break up so suddenly.

"What—what—what—" stuttered Sir Hilton Popper.

"Your riding-whip, sir," said James. Sir Hilton took it mechanically.

"What—what—" he stuttered. "I—I fail to understand this! Who was that boy? He gave his name as Coker—he was Coker! If he was not Coker, who was he? Joyce, are you sure that this young rascal—hum!—that this young gentleman is—is—is Coker?"

"Quite, Sir Hilton."

"Your—your name is Coker?" stuttered Sir Hilton, blinking at the amazed Horace.

"Of course my name's Coker!" hooted Horace. "Mean to say that somebody else has been calling himself Coker? Rot!"

"That young rascal!" Sir Hilton pointed with his riding-whip at Bolsover major's disappearing form. "That—"

"That's Bolsover, a kid in the Re-

Words failed the lord of Popper Court. He woke to sudden action.

Gripping the riding-whip, he charged across the lawn in pursuit of the fleeing tea party.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Put it on, Bunter!" roared Bob.

Bolsover & Co. had a good start. They were losing no time. But the long legs of Sir Hilton Popper seemed to cover the ground like lightning; he gained ground.

Harry Wharton & Co., from the lawn, watched the chase breathlessly. Still more breathlessly Bolsover & Co. ran for their lives. They were going down the drive in great style. But it booted not. Sir Hilton's long legs went like lightning. Bunter, rearmost of the party, gave a sudden fiendish yell as the riding-whip landed.

(Continued on page 28.)

CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

A Prisoner Again!

By JOHN BREDON

WITH long, steady strokes, young Roy Drake swam smoothly upon the in-running tide of Pai Yang Bay, the current drawing him swiftly towards the little Malay city, where a chain of twinkling lights shone like a necklace of golden beads upon a robe of violet silk.

Above, a bright tropical moon burned like a bronze lamp, phosphorescent flashes from the sea-swells shining up to it like dancing mirrors, as it looked down in silent majesty upon the crowded roofs, gilded spires, and domes of pagodas, and upon the bay with its crescent-shaped junks, sampans, and proas.

Fainly from the distant town came the low throb, throb of tom-toms, the drone of reed-pipes, and quaint Oriental music. The night wind souged through the overhung nets of Chinese sampans, hoisted to catch flying fish.

Over one wet shoulder Roy flung a backward glance, to see the grim, serrated outline of the pirate cruiser Vengeance; tripod masts, bridge, twin funnels, and bristling gun-turrets, with the false colours of the Varland Republic a-peak at her masthead. He also saw the crowded boats of the pirates, pulling in the wake of Von Eimar's petrol-launch as it speeded towards the unsuspecting native town.

There was need for haste, if Roy Drake was to succeed in his design of escaping from the pirate warship, to warn the Malay sultan and the Dutch resident of their impending peril.

Openly and brazenly, Von Eimar, the modern pirate, had steered his formidable man-o'-war into Pai Yang harbour, pretending to be admiral of the Varland cruiser Zarka, and his scheme was to loot the ancient tombs of the kings of Pai Yang, with all their fabulous wealth of gold and jewels.

Treading water, Roy let out a low warning hail as he drifted under the high, curving stem of a native sampan that had great red eyes painted in the bows.

A shadowy figure rose from the prow. Without a word, a rope was cast to the swimmer, and, grasping it with wet fists, Roy drew himself close towards the quaint native craft. Shadowy heads bent over the gunwale, yellow hands caught the lad and hauled him over the bulwarks on to the high, narrow fore-deck.

Gasping with relief, Roy stood upon the teak deckboards, stretching his limbs, and wringing the water from his clothes and hair.

"Do any of you Johnnies speak English?" He glanced from one to the other at the flat, yellow, high-cheeked, and almond-eyed countenances that ringed him round, the faces of burly Chinese sampan-men, bare and muscular of torso, with peaked straw hats shading their inscrutable features.

There was no word of answer; no glimmer of intelligence in those slant brown eyes. Roy remembered that Pai Yang was right off the beaten track, and these simple Chinese boatmen had probably never seen a white man before.

"Don't you chaps understand?" he said. "I want to get ashore." Diving a hand into his saturated hip-pocket, Roy found a silver dollar—for Von



"A serpent!" cried Von Eimar, as the swaying, writhing column rolled out from behind the sarcophagus. "Himmel! The treasures are guarded by a boa-constrictor!"

Eimar was not the man to rob his hostage, and none of the arch-pirate's underlings had dared—and pointed shorewards, where the land breeze was heavy with the perfumes of almond blossom. "This is for you if you take me ashore at once."

A hump-shouldered Chinaman, in a blue silk robe embroidered with flowers, whom Roy took to be the master of the little vessel, grunted in his muscular throat. Roy grinned as the yellow fingers closed around the silver coin.

With a gesture, as the boat's bows were pointed towards the shore, the man signed to Roy to follow him into a hooded bamboo cabin amidships. Within, a lighted paper lantern showed that the cabin, though tiny, was luxuriously furnished in carved and painted satinwood, gilded and lacquered in intricate Chinese designs.

Quite evidently this was no ordinary fishing craft. It looked more like the luxury boat of some wealthy Chinese merchant or mandarin ashore.

Roy sat himself down upon a carved red stool, shivering a little in his soaked clothes, though the night was warm. Impassively the man regarded him for one moment, then he snapped out an order to one of his crew,

Obediently the man opened a lacquered chest, drawing forth a loose robe of black silk, embroidered with a hem of gold, and wide nankeen trousers, which he laid before the castaway.

Roy Drake grinned.

"I wonder what the Dutch resident—whoever he is—will think when he sees me, all togged up like this. By gum! I hope he'll believe me. It will look queer," he soliloquised, "a white boy turning up from nowhere in this Chinese rig-out, and with a tale of modern pirates about to raid this city. Still, however remote Pai Yang may be, the authorities must have heard of the mutiny of the convicts on Nemesis Island, and of Von Eimar running away with the cruiser. If they haven't—well, I'll probably be taken for a lunatic."

As he spoke, robing himself in the outlandish garments that his rescuers had provided, Roy peeped through the curtains of the narrow cabin. The lights of Pai Yang were upon them now. Above the creak and dip of oars, and the song of the Chinese boatmen, he heard the busy drone of the quarter; and in place of the warm, cloying scents of flowered jungles, he now caught in his nostrils the rank stench of the fish-

market, and the smells of Chinese cookshops.

Behind him, his Chinese host clapped a pair of jewelled hands, and four brawny, half-naked sampan-men entered the cabin.

He uttered a few guttural words in an unknown tongue.

Roy Drake was utterly unprepared for what followed.

Strong, sinewy hands grasped his elbows from behind, his arms were drawn together, and his wrists lashed by tough cord. Roy cried out and struggled, but he had not a chance in the hands of the lithe, sinewy natives. His legs were tied together in the same way, and he was deposited upon a low settee at one side of the cabin.

"Wha—what's the idea?" panted the castaway, for a moment forgetting that the natives could not understand him. "What are you doing? Why—"

At a gesture from the chief, a gag was forced into his mouth and firmly secured.

"We had to make sure that you do not escape, my dear sir," mockingly replied the Chinaman, speaking in perfect English.

Roy gulped and groaned to think that all the time the man had understood his words, and had only been playing with him. Had he but known, he could have explained about Von Eimar and his pirates—but it was too late now! Probably, even if his gag was removed later, the Chinaman would not believe him—deeming it to be a wild tale to regain his liberty.

In a fury, Roy strained and twisted in his bonds on the settee. Why the natives had made him a prisoner he could not begin to imagine—unless it was that they were bandits determined to hold him for ransom. In that case he was in a most unfortunate situation. Far better for him to be in the hands of Von Eimar, ruthless as that latter-day pirate and adventurer might be, than to be at the mercy of balked and disappointed Chinese brigands, once they learned that no ransom would be forthcoming for their trouble.

A bumping of the vessel's sides and the clack of long heavy poles told him that they had drawn along by the quayside. A wild hope sprang in the boy's mind, only to die away instantly like a flame without fuel. It was unlikely that there were any white policemen in so remote a place as Pai Yang—and if there were, his captors would certainly see to it that he had no chance to make a signal to any one of them.

At a gesture from the chief of his abductors, Roy was muffled in folds of blue silk from head to foot, drawn so tightly around his mouth and nostrils, that he could hardly breathe. Then he felt himself being hoisted on to the broad shoulder of a coolie, and sensed the give and quiver of a primitive gang-plank as he was carried out on to the wharf.

Around in the clinging blackness he heard the chatter of alien voices, and even through the suffocating folds that swathed him came the sickly, overpowering reek of the native waterside quarter. He wriggled spasmodically as the coolie twisted in and out of bales of merchandise piled upon the wharf, but to no purpose; he was carried along as lightly as if he had been a child.

At last, he felt himself being dumped upon a low seat, and the stifling silk that covered him was withdrawn.

Shaking the last flap from his head as he heard a light door clacked shut, Roy stared through intricate fretted wood-

work, and realised that he was in a Chinese palanquin, effectively screened from the outside gaze.

Just as he made this discovery, he felt the palanquin lifted beneath him, and it was borne upon the shoulders of sturdy Chinese coolies through the narrow, busy, tortuous streets.

Kicking aside the swaddling silk, Roy tugged and strained at his ankles, shifted from side to side, screwing his lashed wrists and chewing hard upon the gag—all without avail. All he could do was to watch in impotent anger as he was carried along.

Around, the noise and babble of Pai Yang filled the squalid native streets. Tall, gaudily decorated houses towered on either side. Paper lanterns, hung outside Chinese gambling dens and chop-suey shops, illuminated the painted inscriptions on overhanging signboards; and shone down upon the faces of Chinese colonists, brown-skinned Malays, and dark little natives of Pai Yang. Roy strained his eyes in vain for a glimpse of the white ducks and sun-helmet of a European. He might as well have saved himself the trouble, for normally the only white inhabitants of the island were the Dutch resident and his staff of two or three officials. Palanquins jostled with rickshaw wheels in the rutted street, and Chinese coolies pushed their queer trundling barrows through the mob.

By this time, Roy surmised, Von Eimar and his pirates, all dressed as sailors of the Varland navy, would be well on their way to the sultan's palace, wherever that might be. He wished that he knew more of the chief pirate's plans. Obviously, Von Eimar wished to avoid a battle, and doubtless he would bide his time until the sultan, the resident, and all the chief men on the island were in his power before he threw off the mask.

Ostensibly Von Eimar was an admiral of the Varland navy, come to pay an official visit, and well Roy knew that the cunning master-spy and aforetime secret agent could play such a part to perfection.

Dependent as Pai Yang was upon the Dutch East Indies for protection, there would be no regular fighting-forces on the island—only the sultan's bodyguard and a few native police, armed probably with pikes and sabres, more for ornament than use. With their rifles and machine-guns, Von Eimar and his pirates would have everything their own way.

One thing only would spoil the master-schemer's plans, a single SOS from the Dutch resident's wireless station. Von Eimar's first act would be to destroy this. It was maddening for Roy, trussed in the palanquin like a chicken, when a single word from him, spoken in the right quarter, might have frustrated the whole nefarious enterprise.

At last the outskirts of the smelly, teeming Pai Yang city faced behind the coolies' plodding footsteps, and Roy found himself carried through a dark avenue, bounded by sombre, shadowy trees. A native walked ahead, carrying a lantern hung to a pole, and its swaying, unsteady beam showed to Roy the dim outlines of a stately house that was almost a palace, as he gazed through the interstices of the palanquin windows.

Great gates of carved wooden bars opened beneath a roof of green, glazed tiles, gleaming in the moonlight, and they clashed to behind and were barred as the palanquin was set down upon a path of gravel. The palanquin door

was opened, a knife slashed through the cords that bound Roy's feet, and yellow hands deftly removed the gag, though his wrists remained bound behind him.

Roy worked his numbed jaws to ease the pain.

"Do not trouble to cry out, my friend," whispered a voice into his ear. "There are no friends to hear you, and it would only mean the gag in your mouth again."

Roy recognised the voice as that of the man who had made him a prisoner on the sampan. Guessing that he was only a subordinate, he made no reply, resolving to explain the facts, if he could, to the chief of the kidnappers—whoever he might be. There was nothing to be gained by arguing with this man now.

"This way," murmured the soft, silky voice at his elbow.

Groves of magnificent trees, gardens of fantastic shrubs and perfumed flowers, led the way by intricate paths to the house. Over a rustic bridge that spanned a placid lotus pond, white in the moonlight, Roy stepped, and beyond the bridge loomed the great house with its curving eaves like horns, latticed windows, and steep roof ridged with gilt tiles that glittered in the night.

Forward Roy went, stumbling a little awkwardly in his flowing, unaccustomed silken garments. Servants in gorgeous liveries, silent as ghosts, opened the massive carved doors, and then stood like graven images as they passed through.

The boy was led to a tiny room, where a soft, subdued light glowed on exquisite furnishings and an atmosphere heavy with the incense of joss-sticks. Here Roy stood alone, for his captors had ushered him in and then withdrawn, closing the door behind him. He glanced around. The place was luxuriously appointed. Ming vases, beautiful in shape and colour, stood against the walls of panelled yellow silk. All was as hushed as a tomb.

Roy stood wary, pulses racing, fists gripped under his loose, flowing sleeves.

Brave as he was, he felt a vague chill creeping down his spine. All that he had heard of Chinese cruelty and treachery recurred insistently to his mind.

Suddenly there came the hollow boom of a gong through the stillness.

It struck upon Roy's tautened nerves with the effect of a blow. Then a latticed door before him opened silently, and into the room stalked a tall, stately, venerable Chinaman, with a long grey beard, and a wrinkled, arid scalp under his high headdress.

For a full minute they stood regarding one another silently and intently.

Then the Chinaman spoke.

"I am Chu Ho Shan, a poor dealer in silks and jewels," he said, with an elaborate Oriental salutation; and, somehow, his voice had to Roy an oddly familiar ring, which the boy could not fathom. "May I, with all obsequiousness, inquire the name of the honourable guest who deigns to visit my humble abode?"

Chu Ho Shan I

CHU HO SHAN! Roy Drake stood transfixed, thinking rapidly.

Where had he heard the name of Chu Ho Shan before?

Chu Ho Shan! Dimly the name struck a responsive chord in his memory; he recalled that his father,

Morgan Drake, of the British Secret Service, had spoken to him once or twice of Chu Ho Shan, a Chinese jewel merchant of incalculable wealth, whose life had once crossed that of the intrepid British Secret Agent.

Chu Ho Shan, the jewel king! If Roy's memory served him aright, Morgan Drake had once saved the life of the wealthy Oriental dealer in precious stones—or, at least, had done him such a service that Chu would always remember him with gratitude.

Watching his interlocutor narrowly, Roy reasoned quickly. Dared he reveal his identity? Chu's actions—or, rather, the actions of his servants—had been ambiguous, to say the least of it. What little Roy remembered of the jewel king inclined him to the belief that Chu was an honest man, and a friend to the British, certainly not one to be mixed up in any kidnapping racket.

The Chinaman was watching him closely and inscrutably.

Roy decided to take the plunge.

"My name's Roderick Drake—they call me Roy, for short," the lad explained. "My father is Morgan Drake, the British"—Roy hesitated—"the British explorer and big-game hunter."

Closely he studied the handsome Mongolian features, but he might just as well have scrutinised one of the impassive yellow faces exquisitely painted on the wall, for all the effect the name had on Chu Ho Shan.

"I believe you knew him once, Chu Ho Shan," the boy added.

The ghost of a smile wavered over Chu Ho Shan's wrinkled, yellow countenance.

"True, Morgan Drake once did me a great service," he said softly. With his fan he indicated a low, elaborately carved seat. "Will my august and illustrious guest but deign to honour my humble house?" he asked.

Again Roy sensed that curious, elusive memory awakened by Chu Ho Shan's gentle voice. Where had he heard it before? He was certain that this was the first time he had come face to face with the Oriental jewel magnate.

Puzzled, Roy seated himself upon the low, dragon-shaped settee.

Taking up an ivory gong-stick, Chu Ho Shan struck a hollow, musical chime upon a bronze gong. While its low reverberations still lingered, the lacquered door opened noiselessly, and servants in sumptuous liveries glided in, bearing food and an elaborate silver tea service on a tray.

"The best Chinese tea, young sir," smiled Chu Ho Shan, "with sugar and cream for your Western taste, which to us is so strange."

He waited until Roy had sipped the steaming hot liquid from the fragile cup, and then asked gently:

"And what, in all humility, may I ask, brings the son of the illustrious Morgan Drake to so remote and outlandish a spot as Pai Yang?"

Roy Drake threw a little, tight-lipped smile.

"As to how I come into your house, Mr. Chu, your servants can tell you—and I'd like to ask you why I was brought here?" he answered. "As to the rest, it's a long tale, and a mighty queer one!"

With that, and as briefly as he could,

Roy outlined the story of the convicts' uprising on Nemesis Island, of the capture of the Varland cruiser by Von Eimar and his mutineers, and, finally, came to the raid upon Pai Yang.

"And while we're talking here, Von Eimar and his ruffians are bringing off their coup," he concluded urgently. "I don't know how many police and soldiers you have on this island, but Von Eimar has three hundred and fifty armed men from Nemesis Island, the worst men in the world!"

"By this time, I should say, he has taken possession of the sultan's palace and the residency. I'd have warned the Dutch resident, but your servants prevented me. Now it may be too late. The guns of the Vengeance are trained upon Pai Yang town, and there's no time to be lost!"

Slowly the Chinese merchant stalked to and fro across that narrow room, stroking his short, tufted beard. Beneath shaggy brows his dark, slanting eyes burned with a fierce intensity.

"Von Eimar," he repeated to himself as much as to his visitor—"Von Eimar, the master-spy, now pirate. So—it has come at last! And he does not suspect!"

Watching him, Roy could almost have supposed that his news, startling as it was, was not entirely unexpected. Yet how could Chu have foreseen such a contingency? So far as the Oriental's impassive features betrayed any emotion, it was not that of fear, dismay, surprise, or alarm—but rather of a gloating satisfaction.

"Who doesn't suspect, Mr. Chu?" the boy asked blankly. "Excuse me, Chu Ho Shan, I couldn't help hearing what you said. You know Von Eimar? Have you met him?"

"Met him?" Chu halted in his padding stride, his oblique eyes fixing the boy with a direct look. "Yes, I have met him, Mr. Drake. I know him, Von Eimar—I know him well. But he will not know me. No, you, Mr. Drake, have convinced me that Von Eimar will not recognise his old acquaintance!" At once he became rigid. "What was that?" he demanded, listening intently.

From the stillness of the night outside there rose a loud, shrill, prolonged scream. It was followed by a rattle of hoarse, guffawing laughter, and then—crack, crack, crack!—the staccato, unmistakable reports of a magazine-rifle.

Roy Drake jumped to his feet.

"Von Eimar and his sea-devils! They're coming here! Von Eimar's thrown off the mask. It's too late now! If his men are here, he must have seized the town!"

Insistently, forgetful of Oriental decorum and etiquette in his haste, he plucked Chu's loose, flowing sleeve.

"Is there no way out, Mr. Chu?" he cried swiftly. "Can't we get away from here? Perhaps we could rouse the natives to resistance, even now—"

Gently the merchant disengaged the boy's hand. Smiling, he shook his head.

"My impatient young friend, can I, Chu Ho Shan, of the mandarin class, desert my house when guests are approaching? No! Let them come. Of what use is it to resist? We of Pai Yang are peaceful merchants and fishermen. Can we hope to beat off the white barbarians with their rifles, and bombs, and machine-guns?"

There came a groaning, sobbing

sound of one in pain from beyond the door, the echoed tramp of heavy, booted feet along the marble corridor, a hum of laughter, jests, curses, and the clatter of rifle-butts and accoutrements.

Roy braced himself for the inevitable. Smiling gently, Chu Ho Shan seated himself cross-legged upon a carpet, slowly waving a fan as he waited for the pirates' coming.

Crash!

Like brittle paper the delicately lacquered door was splintered inwards, and through the jagged gap loomed scowling, wolfish faces amid the sulphurous fumes of cordite.

Killer Moran, grinning savagely, with a smoking automatic in his brown fist, stood with legs astride on the threshold, and behind him, crowded in a mass, were a dozen or more convict blackguards clad in the dingy white uniforms of the Varland navy, with rifles, bayonets, cutlasses, ammunition-belts crammed with brass-clipped cartridges, and hand-grenades slung round their necks—and every man had loot from Chu Ho Shan's palace dangling from his belt.

The American gangster laughed harshly, wiping his lips with the back of a horny hand, as he took in that exquisite Chinese apartment in his gaze. Then his eyes snapped with wonder and surprise as they lighted upon Roy Drake.

"Waal, an' ef this ain't a welcome surprise!" jeered Moran. "An' how did yuh git hyar, young Britisher? Yuh should have been left behind on Inaccessible Island, two hundred miles away, accordin' to the boss' orders. I'll say this leaves me guessing, an' then some!"

The Tombs of Pai Yang!

KILLER Moran chuckled as his gloating eyes rested upon the boy, his hairy fingers toying with his long-barrelled Colt.

Luis Ramiro, the South American, leaned over his shoulder and whispered fiercely in soft, sibilant words into his ear.

Roy felt a strange chill at his heart-strings. Von Eimar's two lieutenants, as he knew, hated him with a poisonous fervour. Now he was alone and at their mercy, and Von Eimar, in all probability, was far away in the town.

"Yeah, in the lotus pond!" He caught vague snatches of the American's muttered answer. "The boss'll never git wise to it—shore we didn't ask the young Britisher to stow away on the cruiser—"

Instinctively Roy recoiled a step as he saw Luis Ramiro's brown, dirty fingers snaking towards a jewelled dirk.

Then, as he waited, Chu Ho Shan rose to his feet, a tall, stately, venerable figure, with yellow hand uplifted.

"Stay! I am Chu Ho Shan!" he said, speaking clear, correct English, and with inexpressible dignity. "This is my guest, Mr. Roderick Drake. What does all this mean? Are you bandits? Where is your leader? Take me to him!"

A brief, muttered consultation ensued among the pirates. If Killer Moran and the South American had really considered the cold-blooded murder of Roy Drake, the fact that Chu Ho Shan was a witness, who might repeat the facts to Von Eimar, evidently decided them. Von Eimar had ordered them to seize the wealthy Chinese merchant, and hold him, alive. And Von Eimar's

cold, merciless rage, when his orders were deliberately flouted, was a thing that these two scoundrels dared not encounter.

"So, yuh're Chu Ho Shan, are yuh, Chinky?" said Killer Moran. "I sorta guess yuh're our pris'ner now. An' don't try to make a breakaway from our fascinatin' company, or I guess it will be just too bad for your health. I'm tellin' yuh! Come along. An' bring that young covey along as well, Luis. I'll shore like to hear Von Eimar yaup when he rests his lights on him!"

Chu Ho Shan never spoke a word, but volumes could not express the cold, lofty contempt of his bland, Oriental smile. He followed the broad, swinging shoulders of Killer Moran along the corridors of his palace, Roy marching at his elbow, and Luis Ramiro with the other ruffians bringing up the rear.

Shattered Chinese vases, exquisite examples of porcelain carving ruthlessly and wantonly broken and trampled underfoot, bullet-holes burned in the painted walls, and a stunned servant lying in a huddled heap, testified to the brutality of the convict-pirates.

Out on the white coral road, bright as silver beneath the white radiant moon that rode in the starry blue, the night was warm. Down the hill there loomed before Roy's gaze, the dark indigo mass of Pai Yang town, the gilded spires and domes of pagodas aglint in the moon; beyond them, the slumberous, wine-dark sea, with the lights of the private cruiser like a cluster of jewels.

All seemed quiet and peaceful. Roy could visualise the dramatic scene that had transpired down in the native city.

As though on a visit of ceremony from the Varland republic, Von Eimar had marched his disguised convict-pirates up to the sultan's palace, and then, when all was in his hands, had suddenly revealed himself for what he was.

Evidently there had been no resistance. The sultan's bodyguard, in their brilliant, barbaric uniforms, had been forced to throw down their pikes, halberds, and swords, before the threat of massed rifles and machine-guns. With the sultan a prisoner in his own magnificent throne-room, Von Eimar had sent out detachments to secure the Dutch residency with the only wireless transmission station on the island; and knowing, as he knew all things, of Chu Ho Shan and the great riches of the Chinese jewel king, he had not forgotten to detail a party, under his two trusted lieutenants, to seize that valuable hostage and hold him as a prisoner.

Daring as Von Eimar's pirate raid had been, it had been carried through to perfection.

Not for him the ferocious "blunder and plunder" methods of his forerunners in the piratical game. He preferred the highly profitable and bloodless methods of scientific planning and precision.

The sound of marching feet rang upon the hard level road, and through the gloom of lofty, stately groves that lined the way, came a body of about fifty of the pirates, with the moon glinting upon their naked bayonets and upon the monocle of Von Eimar, as he strode in the van.

"So! You have secured Chu Ho Shan, Moran?" he approved, as his men drew abreast of the waiting group. "That is good! Why, who is this? Young Roderick Drake? How did he get here?"

Killer Moran jerked a thick thumb back towards the splendid mansion of Chu Ho Shan.

"Found him in there, cap," he said coolly—"with the Chink!"

"I stowed away aboard the Vengeance, at Inaccessible Island," Roy

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.

Space being so short this week, chums, I have only room for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to questions sent in to me by readers:

Do the Chinese Use Punctuation Marks?—Up to the present, neither punctuation marks nor capital letters have been used in Chinese writing. In future, though, full stops, commas, and semi-colons are to be used. Capital letters will be indicated by a dash in front of the letter.

How Many "Kentucky Colonels" are There?—There are no fewer than seventeen thousand colonels and admirals, most of them claiming to be veterans of the American Civil War. This number have been confirmed in their rank. But no figures are available to show how many impostors claim the rank!

Do Fur Trappers Use Drugs to Catch Animals?—Unscrupulous trappers have used drugs and poison bait. In Saskatchewan, Canada, any trappers found using these methods are to have their licences withdrawn.

Are There any Native Monkeys Found in Europe?—Only one type of wild monkey lives in Europe. This is the Barbary ape, found only at Gibraltar.

Who Were the "Big Five"?—This was the name given to the Council of Five, appointed at Scotland Yard in 1906. They were all chief inspectors, and their names were Arrow, Forest, Fox, Drew, and Kane. All the original "Big Five" are now dead, but, of course, other detectives have taken their places.

When Did Frank Richards First Write for the MAGNET?—Twenty-eight years ago. His early yarns are now being republished in our companion paper, the "Gem."

And now for next week's splendid bill-o'-fare. As the showman yells at the top of his voice: "Walk up, ladies and gentlemen, and see

"BUNTER THE LION-TAMER!"

Incredible as it may seem, it's perfectly true, as you will discover when you get next week's MAGNET and read the opening yarn of Frank Richards' grand new summer series. Billy Bunter has played many sensational parts since he has been at Greyfriars, but never before has the fat freak of the Remove played the role of lion-tamer. Fun and excitement simply tumble over each other in this super series of circus stories. You'll laugh louder than ever, and your chums will, too, if you tell them to read the MAGNET. "Captain Vengeance!" our modern pirate story, is still going "great guns." Next week's chapters are packed with thrills. A topical "Greyfriars Herald," another snappy contribution by the Greyfriars Rhymester, and my own little chat will complete this bumper feast of fiction. Why not make sure of next Saturday's MAGNET by ordering it right now?

YOUR EDITOR.

explained, as Von Eimar glared through his monocle. "I swam ashore to give warning of your raid to the natives. Unfortunately, I was prevented!"

Von Eimar, with an iron effort, controlled a gust of passion that brought the beads of perspiration to his forehead.

"Is that the case, boy? Then it is lucky for you that you are Morgan Drake's son, and that I mean to use you as the tool to break your father!" Beside him, Roy Drake felt Chu Ho Shan quiver in his embroidered robes. "Otherwise I'd shoot you, now, where you stand!"

Von Eimar's voice shook as he bridled his anger.

"So this is Chu Ho Shan!" he added, turning from Roy to the dignified figure of the Chinese jewel merchant.

"I am Chu Ho Shan, and I demand to know the meaning of this outrage!" was the answer.

"The meaning?" Von Eimar laughed gutturally: "Certainly you may demand that, Mr. Chu. The meaning is that you are my prisoner, and that you will remain so until you ransom yourself with some of those jewels for which you are so famous. You are the prisoner of Captain Vengeance—otherwise Von Eimar, one-time world spy, one-time convict on Nemesis Island, and now pirate and at war with the world!"

The eyes of Chu Ho Shan narrowed.

"And you mean to use this boy, Morgan Drake's son, as a tool to break Morgan Drake?" he asked softly. "Beware, Von Eimar! I, too, know Morgan Drake. He is not a reed that you may break so easily. You may meet with Morgan Drake before you expect—and it may be that he will break you instead, as he did before!"

"I'll take my chance of that, Chu Ho Shan," said Von Eimar, with a grin. "Come! We have work before us that I want to finish before daybreak!" To his men he added: "Forward! Before us lies the Great Pagoda of Pai Yang. In the Great Pagoda is the entrance to the tombs where is hidden the jewels for which we have come!"

A few hundred yards along the avenue brought them to a vast stone-built temple or pagoda, topped by fantastic gilt pinnacles that pointed to the soft night sky, its portico reached by flights of broad shallow steps guarded by sculptured dragons and phoenixes.

Noisily they clattered up the steps, with Roy Drake and Chu hustled in their midst, Von Eimar leading the mob with an automatic gripped in his podgy fist. Through the colonnaded entrance they surged in a dense mass.

In the shadowy, pillared hall a giant idol squatted, with a placid smile wrought upon its gilded features; and upon the altar steps before the image stood a priest in a yellow robe, lifting a skinny finger.

The high priest uttered a few, high-pitched words, cursing the irreverent intruders in his own tongue—and then, with a savage laugh, Von Eimar turned to the Chinese magnate.

"Chu Ho Shan," he grunted, "tell this young fellow to show us the secret passage that leads to the ancient tombs! Tell him that if he's not quick I'll soon make him move!"

Chu Ho Shan translated his words into the Pai Yang dialect, and, nodding abjectly, the terrified priest led them past the idol, down into a rugged stone vault, and pointed to a doorway carved into the semblance of the gaping jaws of some fabulous monster.

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"Follow me, young Master Drake!" said Von Eimar curtly. "I like to keep you under my eye. You, too, Moran and Ramiro. The rest of you wait until you are called!"

Steep, narrow, winding stairs, delving deep into the heart of the earth, brought them into a strange, subterranean world of damp, dripping walls, dusky shadows, and weird, hollow sounds that echoed their tread.

Von Eimar followed the priest, switching the beam of his electric torch along the twisting tunnels and narrow, arched dungeons, Roy Drake pacing along between him and the two others.

At last the guide halted before the doorway of a round, underground chamber, the low, domed roof of which was supported by a ring of squat stone pillars; and in the midst of this grotto was a carved stone sarcophagus.

"The tomb of one of the long-dead kings!" grunted Von Eimar, the walls whispering with the echoes of his words. "Why, what's that over in the dark yonder? Emeralds? No! Mein Gott, what—what is it?"

Roy Drake stared, and a lump rose in his throat.

Green, unwinking orbs, like twin lamps, shone in the dusky shadows.

Von Eimar switched his lamp right upon them.

Then he cried out with stark horror, as a swaying, writhing column rolled out from behind the sarcophagus.

"A serpent!" cried out Von Eimar; and for once in his life this bold, ruthless man exclaimed with sheer terror: "Himmel! A boa-constrictor! The treasures are guarded by—by one of—"

Even as he spoke, the torch was jerked from his hand and pitched to the floor, where it snapped out, leaving them in total blackness.

Von Eimar roared with rage as he shot out a hand to clutch at their guide. But, with the elusiveness of an eel, the man slipped away in the darkness.

A mocking laugh rang out behind them.

Roy Drake heard the great block of stone that served as a door grinding home, and he clenched his teeth and balled his fists, as they were left alone in the velvety blackness—alone with the hideous monster that guarded the treasures of the long-dead kings of Pai Yang!

(What fate awaits Von Eimar and his fellow prisoners in the ancient tomb? Prepare yourselves for another feast of thrills next week, chums!)

THE POPPER COURT TEA-PARTY!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Yooooop!"

The cake flew from Bunter's fat hand. He yelled and dodged. Five fellows were bunched together ahead, running wildly, but Sir Hilton was on them the next moment. The riding-whip whacked right and left.

Whack, whack, whack! Swipe, swipe, swipe!

Wild howls and yells rang from the hapless tea party; they dodged and jumped and howled and roared and ran.

It was quite exciting till they reached the gateway and bolted out into the road. Billy Bunter, last to escape, got the last swipe as he went, and his frantic yell echoed back. Sir Hilton Popper brandished the riding-whip after them as they vanished down the road.

"What next?" murmured Bob Cherry.

Sir Hilton, breathless, with the riding-whip tucked under his arm, came back to the lawn.

He looked at Coker. Coker looked at him. Coker was still truculent, but Sir Hilton had calmed down considerably.

"Joyce," he barked, "you may release those boys! You may go! Go at once!"

Joyce and the other keepers withdrew. Harry Wharton & Co. could only wonder what was coming next. Coker doubled his fists; he was prepared to dot Sir Hilton on the nose if it was necessary.

Fortunately, it wasn't.

"Coker!" said Sir Hilton. "You—you are Coker! You are the Coker—I mean the boy who recovered the stolen property for me—the Popper Court silver—what?"

"What about that?" grunted Coker.

"Why did you not come here to-day? I naturally supposed that that young rascal was Coker, as he gave the name, and I was expecting you—"

"Expecting me!"

"Certainly. After speaking to you on Mr. Prout's telephone yesterday—"

"You didn't!"

"Eh?"

"I never got any call on Prout's telephone—"

"What?"

"How could I, when I was out of gates all the afternoon—"

"You—you—you did not? Good gad! Someone else must have telephoned, using your name! There has been

trickery! That young rascal— Good gad! I shall inquire into this! However—" Sir Hilton paused. "Then you did not know that I telephoned to thank you for the great service you had rendered me—"

"Oh!"

"And to ask you to come to tea here this afternoon—"

"Oh!"

"And—and—" Sir Hilton paused again. It was not easy for him to swallow the affair of the notice-board. But he got it down. "Coker, I am much obliged to you—I am under a deep obligation to you! I shall overlook your offences; I shall forget them. You are here; stay to tea with me, you and your friends. Please sit down."

"Oh crumbs!" said Coker.

"I am glad to see you—to make your acquaintance, my boy! You are welcome, you and your friends. Please sit down. James! John! William! See that these boys have everything they want. Coker, pray sit down!"

Coker sat down.

So did Harry Wharton & Co.

It was quite a different tea party at Popper Court—but it was quite a cheery and satisfied tea party.

"Not a bad old bean!" Coker said afterwards to Potter and Greene.

The Popper Court party returned home in great spirits. They found the other Popper Court party in the lowest of spirits.

But it was all right for them.

Coker, like the good-natured fellow he was, had begged Sir Hilton to overlook what was. Coker explained, only a silly lark of silly fags. Sir Hilton consented to do so. So that was that! Harry Wharton & Co. handed over the good news, and all was well—except that Billy Bunter still mourned for the gorgeous spread that had been so nearly his, and which he had so narrowly missed.

And Coker, entertained and made much of at Popper Court, revised his opinion of Sir Hilton Popper, and said he was sorry.

THE END.

(Next week's grand long yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., "BILLY BUNTER THE LION-TAMER!" is the first of a brilliant new summer series, calculated to break all previous records for fun and excitement. In consequence of the growing demand for the MAGNET, I strongly urge regular readers to make sure of their copy by ordering it WELL IN ADVANCE!—Ed.)



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