

The DUNCE of GREYFRIARS!



By FRANK RICHARDS

When it comes to brains Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form is on a level with the most backward boy in the Second Form. But what Coker lacks in brains he makes up for in brawn—and pluck! Read how he convinced his Form-master that brawn and pluck were a mighty sight better than being able to spell correctly!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

COKER KNOWS BEST!

“OXYPUT!”
“Oxyput!”
“Oxyput!”

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove at Greyfriars School, stared.

That word was enough to make any fellow stare.

They stared blankly.

What Coker of the Fifth was doing it for was a mystery to them.

But he was doing it.

Sitting at his table in his study in the Fifth-Form passage at Greyfriars,

Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, was writing that amazing and extraordinary word over and over again.

Coker's rugged brow was wrinkled. His lips were set. His whole expression was one of dogged determination. He seemed concentrated on his strange task—so deeply concentrated, that he remained unaware of the arrival of the Famous Five of the Remove.

True, they had arrived very quietly. They had tiptoed. They wanted to catch Coker. They did not want to give him time to slam his study door and turn the key.

But they really need not have been so excessively cautious. Coker did not look round or look up as the five juniors appeared in his study doorway. His back was to them as he sat at the table, and it remained to them. As they tiptoed into the study, Coker dipped his pen into the ink and wrote once more that remarkable word "Oxyput!"

The juniors, standing behind Coker and looking over his broad shoulders, could see what he was writing. It amazed them. It made them stare. It made them forget that they had come to the study to rag Coker.

Coker had to be ragged. Coker, who rather prided himself on having a short way with fags, had recently kicked Nugent minor, of the Second Form—doubtless for his own good. Perhaps he had forgotten, or perhaps he did not care, that Dicky Nugent had a major in the Remove; and that his major, Frank Nugent, was a member of that celebrated company, the Famous Five. If he had forgotten, he was going to be reminded. Nugent major had arrived with his comrades to indicate to Coker that kicking a fellow was a game that two could play.

Nugent major was going to kick Coker. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh were going to quell any objections Coker might have to the process. It was probable that Coker's objections would be somewhat strenuous.

Now, however, instead of collaring Horace Coker and up-ending him out of the chair, the chums of the Remove stared—just stared! They wondered whether Coker had gone off his rocker. They knew that he had not far to go.

"Oxyput!" wrote Coker for the fourth time, and then for the fifth time "Oxyput!" And then for the sixth time "Oxyput!"

It was really mysterious. Harry Wharton & Co. had heard of the word "occiput." It was, they believed, some section of a fellow's napper. But why Coker should be writing that word over and over again—and, above all, why he should be spelling it in so extraordinary a manner—mystified and intrigued them.

"The old ass!" Coker spoke aloud, communing with himself. "The old chump! I'll show him! Pompous old ass! Yah!"

The juniors guessed that Coker was alluding to his Form-master, Mr. Prout. The description seemed to fit.

Apparently Coker was in some trouble with his Form-master.

That was nothing new. Coker was often in hot water in his Form-room. He knew things better than Prout could tell him—or fancied that he did. That sort of belief inevitably led to trouble.

"They can say what they like!" went on Coker, still communing with himself. "Potter's an ass! Greene's another ass! I'll show 'em whether Prout's going to dictate to me! I'll show Prout!"

Once more Horace Coker dipped his pen in the ink and wrote:

"Oxyput!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry suddenly bawled in his ear. "What's the name of that game, Coker?"

Coker jumped.

That sudden roar close to his ear was the first intimation he received that the juniors were in the study at all. He fairly bounded.

"Wha-a-t——" gasped Coker.

A shower of blots flew from his pen. They scattered over his sheet of impot paper, almost obliterating several of his "oxyputs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker spun round. He glared at the juniors.

"You silly little idiots!" he spluttered. "Look what you've made me do! I shall have to start that impot. over again now! By gum! I'll jolly well whop the lot of you!"

"Is that an imposition!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"Of course it is, you young ass! Think I'm sitting in here writing occiput, occiput, occiput, for pleasure, while the other fellows are playing football?" snorted Coker.

"For Prout?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Of course it's for Prout! Think any other beak can give a Fifth-Form man an impot!"

"But—but—but Prout hasn't told you to write that!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"He has! A hundred times!" snorted Coker, "and I'd got fairly going when you've made me spoil it! And I'll jolly well whop you——"

Coker glared round the study. He was looking for a fives bat, with which to "whop" those cheeky juniors. It did not occur to Coker's powerful brain, for the moment, that whopping five sturdy fellows, all at once, was a large order—a very large order! It was likely to occur to him; however, when he started—the whopping!

"But, I say, Coker!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Prout couldn't have told you to spell the word like that!"



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry suddenly. Coker jumped. That sudden roar was the first intimation he received that the juniors were in his study. A shower of blots flew from his pen as he started.

"Wha-a-at!" he gasped.

Coker, ceasing for a moment his quest of the fives bat, glared at the captain of the Remove.

"How would you spell it, you cheeky young tick?" he demanded contemptuously.

"O-c-c-i-p-u-t!" spelt out Wharton.

Coker laughed. It was one of those jeering laughs!

"That's how Prout spells it!" he said.

"Well, then——" said Harry.

"It's not how I spell it!" said Coker.

"Looks as if it isn't!" remarked Johnny Bull, with a glance at the blotted paper. "But what——"

"We had a row about it, in the Form-room this morning!" said Coker. "The word turned up, and I spelt it oxyput—which is right! Any fool would know that occiput was spelt o-x-y-p-u-t, without being told!"

"Only one fool would know that, I think!" said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh! What?" Coker was not quick on the uptake. "I suppose Quelch teaches you fags to spell in the Remove! Prout doesn't, in the Fifth! The man's an ignoramus, you know! I wonder Dr. Locke keeps him on! I'd sack him, if I were Head! Making out that I can't spell——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Jawing a man, before all the Form!" said Coker, in tones of thrilling indignation. "A fellow could stand it, if a fellow was in the wrong! But Prout's always in the wrong! His spelling's atrocious! Would you fellows believe that he makes out that there isn't a K in picnic? I'm serious—he does! And that man a school-master!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Would you believe," went on Coker, "that after I pointed out to him the right way to spell occiput, he still persisted that there were two C's in the word, and no X at all? Sounds steep, doesn't it? But that's Prout all over! And he had the nerve to give me an impot—to write out the word a hundred times—spelt his way! His way! I'll watch it!"

"But——" gasped Harry.

"My esteemed idiotic Coker——" stuttered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Coker, old bean——" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I'll watch it!" repeated Coker grimly. "You can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink! Prout can give me an impot—that's within his powers, as a beak! But he can't make me spell wrong!"

"Oh, scissors!"

"I'm writing the word a hundred times, as he told me to do! But I'm going to spell it correctly!"

"Correctly!" gasped Frank Nugent. "Ye gods!"

"Yes—and Prout can like it or lump it!" said Coker firmly. "He will get his hundred words—spelt right! It may teach him to spell! He needs it! Anyhow, he's not going to make me spell as badly as he does!"

"But—but——" gasped Harry Wharton. "Coker, old bean, you—you can't take that to Prout! Prout's right, you know."

"Don't be a little ass!"

"There really are two C's!" gasped Bob.

"Don't be a little idiot!"

"And no X's—really and truly!" said Nugent.

"Don't be a little fathead!"

"But—but I say, Prout will be fearfully wild if you cheek him like

that, Coker!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Let him!"

"He might take you to the Head!"

"Let him! If he likes to show up his ignorance to the Head I'm not the man to stop him!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton and Co. gazed at Coker! They were quite concerned

They were really anxious to save Coker from himself, if they could!

"I—I say, why not let Prout have his way?" suggested Wharton, putting it diplomatically. "Even if he's wrong—ahem—you have to give a beak his head, you know, like a horse."

"It's a matter of principle with me!" said Coker. "I can't give in! I'd give in fast enough if I was wrong



Five pairs of hands grasped Coker all at once, and the next few minutes were wild and whirling for the Fifth-Former. Bump! Coker established contact with his study carpet with a concussion that brought dust from the carpet and a terrific roar from Coker!

for him. Such an act of defiance, from any fellow to his Form-master, could only lead to awful trouble. Coker did not seem to understand that. But then, Coker never understood anything. In their genuine concern for the fathead of the Fifth, the chums of Greyfriars forgot that they had come there to rag him.

—I hope I'm a reasonable chap—"

"Oh, dear!"

"But when a fellow's in the right, a fellow's in the right! Prout can like it or lump it! I don't care which!"

"He'll be waxy!" said Bob.

"The waxfulness will be terrific."

"Look here, Coker, don't be an

ass!" said Johnny Bull. "You can't spell for toffee——"

"Lucky you've blotted that impot!" said Nugent. "Start the next one as Prout wants it, Coker, and don't ask for trouble."

Coker did not answer.

His eye had fallen on a fives bat, which lay on the book-shelf.

He stepped across, and clutched it.

"Now——" he began.

"Let's clear, you men!" said Harry Wharton. "If Coker's going to cheek Prout like that, he will get enough without us giving him any. I say—whooop!"

The captain of the Remove gave a roar, as Coker caught him by the collar with his left hand and applied the fives bat with his right!

The whopping had started!

Coker's idea was that, having started, it would continue. But it did not continue! It ended as soon as it started!

Five pairs of hands grasped Coker, all at once.

Bump!

Coker established contact with his study carpet, with a concussion that brought dust from the carpet, and a terrific roar from Coker!

"Yooo-hooop!"

What happened next Coker hardly knew! The next few minutes were wild and whirling!

Then the Famous Five, rather breathless, quitted Coker's study. Horace Coker was left on the floor, in a still more breathless state, with the fives bat shoved down his back!

He sat up, gurgling.

"Ooogh! Grooogh! The cheeky young ticks — I'll — ooogh! Woooogh!"

Coker made frantic efforts to extract the fives bat. He succeeded at last.

By that time, however, the chums

of the Remove had long vanished into space, and it was too late for that fives bat to be of any use.

Coker hurled it into a corner of the study. He sat down at the table again, with a fresh sheet of impot. paper before him, and dipped his pen in the ink! His rugged brow was as determined as ever, or more so! Argument was wasted on Coker! When a fellow knew he was right, he knew he was right, and that was that! And with grim determination, Horace Coker proceeded to write out his imposition for Prout!

Oxypu! Oxypu! Oxypu!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

PLUCKY OF PROUT!

"LEGGO!"

"Look 'ere——!"

"Ow! Leggo! Help!" yelled Billy Bunter.

Mr. Prout paused.

That terrified yell from William George Bunter, of the Remove, reached his ears, through an intervening hedge.

Prout was walking back to Greyfriars, from the village. He had taken a short cut across a meadow, and was about to emerge into Friardale Lane, by a gap in the hedge, when he heard Bunter.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Prout, startled.

He paused, stared round him, and rolled on. Prout was a stout, portly pompous gentleman, and he rolled on his way round like a stately Spanish galleon of olden time. Bunter's dulcet tones continued to greet his portly ears, as he rolled out into the lane.

"I say—leggo! Yow-ow! I haven't any money! I—I've been disappointed about a postal order! I say—yaroooh! Leggo!"

Prout stared.

Billy Bunter, the fattest fellow at Greyfriars, or in the wide world, was wriggling and squirming in a grasp of iron that was fastened on his podgy shoulder.

It was a rough-looking man in a tattered pullover, with a stubbly face, who grasped the fat Owl of the Remove.

In the distance, towards the school, a fat figure very like Bunter's was vanishing, in full flight.

It was that of Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form.

The dusk was falling; and the two Bunters, evidently, had been on their way back to school when the tramp had happened on them. Both had bolted—but whereas Sammy had dodged and got away, Billy had fallen into the rough grasp of the footpad.

"Now then, 'and it over!" said a rough, savage, husky voice. "Turn out your pockets, you fat covey! If I have to 'it you, you'll get 'urt! You won't give Spadger 'Awkins any trouble, if you know what's good for you! 'And it over sharp!"

"I—I say, I—I haven't got anything!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I—I'd give it to you with pleasure, if—I had! But—but a postal-order I was expecting this morning never came!"

Spadger Hawkins, grasping the fat junior with his left hand, drew back his right, clenched.

"Well, if you will 'ave it——!" he growled.

"Yaroo! Help!"

Neither observed the surprised and indignant countenance of Prout staring from the gap in the hedge.

Prout breathed indignant wrath.

He had a stout walking-stick under his arm. He slid it down into his hand and grasped it. Then he weighed in!

The rough fist of Mr. Hawkins was threatening Billy Bunter's fat little nose, and the Owl's terrified eyes almost bulged through his spectacles.

Crack!

Prout's walking-stick descended on the battered bowler hat that adorned the tousled head of Spadger Hawkins.

It was a hefty whack!

The ruffian uttered a terrific yell, released Billy Bunter, and staggered across the lane.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He gave Mr. Prout one blink through his spectacles! But he did not stop for another! He was free to run—and he ran! Bunter, as a rule, was no sprinter; but the speed he put up on this occasion would have done credit to the most active fellow in the Remove. He fairly flew: and almost in a twinkling, vanished over the horizon after Sammy.

Prout did not run. He did not think of running. He was far too dignified to run. Besides, he had too much weight to carry.

"Scoundrel!" boomed Prout, shaking his stick at the staggering tramp. "Ruffian! How dare you attempt to rob a Greyfriars boy! If there were a constable at hand, I would give you into custody! Rascal!"

Spadger Hawkins stood rubbing his head. He had a pain there! The expression on his stubbly face was almost blood-curdling.

He cast a swift glance up and down the dusky lane. No one was in sight—the two Bunters had vanished! He clenched his hands, hard, and approached the Greyfriars Form-master, his eyes glinting.

"Stand back!" boomed Prout, brandishing the stick. "Stand back, scoundrel, or I will knock you down!"

The Spadger darted in—and

jumped back swiftly as the stick came down. But he jumped only out of reach.

He stood with clenched fists, glinting eyes, and jutting jaw, watching the portly Prout, watching for a chance.

Had Prout been a younger man—the Prout of ancient days who had climbed Alps—he would have dealt with the thickset, stocky ruffian easily enough.

But Prout was no longer young. He was no longer active. But for the stick he carried, he would have been at the mercy of the Spadger. He was already gasping for breath. It was, indeed, plucky of Prout, to have barged in at all, considering his portliness and his shortness of wind. All he could do now was to keep a wary eye on the footpad, and keep the stick ready for a smite. If the Spadger succeeded in running in under the stick, and getting a grasp on Prout, all was up with the plump master of the Fifth.

"Ruffian! Go!" gasped Prout.

"You wait a bit, old covey!" said the Spadger. "Wait till I get my 'ands on you! Jest wait! I'll give you cracking a man's nut! You jest wait! That's all."

Prout gave a hurried glance up and down the lane, as the Spadger had done! But there was no one to be seen.

Mr. Hawkins closed in again, and again retreated from a swipe of the stick. Mr. Prout gasped!

Prout had rescued Billy Bunter! But there was no one to rescue Prout! And really he was in need of rescue!

Obviously, this could not go on! But he could not venture to turn his back on the ruffian and stride away. Only too certainly the Spadger's

grasp would have been on the back of his plump neck the next moment.

"Will you — ooogh! — depart?" spluttered Prout.

"Will I?" said the Spadger. "I don't think! Not till I've pushed your nose through the back of your 'ead, old covey, for cracking a man's nut."

Prout made a stride at him.

The Spadger dodged back.

Prout made another stride! The Spadger dodged again, with a ferocious grin!

It was easy enough for him to dodge Prout! Prout could not get too close quarters and use the stick.

The plump Form-master panted.

He reversed.

He could not turn his back on the watchful ruffian. He could not remain where he was, holding him at bay. He retreated on reverse gear, so to speak, backing up the lane towards the school.

The Spadger, with glinting eyes, followed.

That crack on his frowsy head had evidently roused all the evil in the ruffian's nature; and there seemed a good deal of it. He wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly!

He made a spring—and Prout panted and lashed out with the stick! Again the Spadger leaped out of reach.

Prout backed on. Again the Spadger followed. And then the inevitable happened!!

Prout, of course, had no eyes in the back of his head! On reverse gear, he could not see where he was going! He stepped on a fallen branch that lay in the lane, slipped, stumbled, and sat down.

"Oh!" gasped Prout.

With the spring of a tiger, the Spadger was on him. Prout, gasping helplessly, went over on his back, like

a turtle, and a sinewy knee was planted on his plump waistcoat.

"Nar, then!" said Spadger Hawkins.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

REMOVITES TO THE RESCUE!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"What the thump——!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"You young ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form, did not heed. He barged on regardless.

The Famous Five were in the old gateway of Greyfriars, looking out into the road. It was close on lock-up: and they were looking for Lord

Mauleverer, of the Remove, who was out of gates. They were going to tea with Mauly: and Mauly was late—which was not uncommon with this lazy and unpunctual lordship. Looking in the direction of Courtfield, for Mauly, the chums of the Remove did not observe Bunter minor coming from the direction of Friardale—till he happened.

It happened quite suddenly.

Sammy, it seemed, was in a hurry. Sammy was almost as fat as his elder brother, William George: and, as a rule, he carried his weight about at a leisurely pace. Now he flew!

Coming up like a runaway steam-roller, Sammy Bunter bounced in at the gateway, barged into the group of Removites, and sent them scattering.



Spadger Hawkins, grasping Billy Bunter with his left hand, drew back his right, clenched. "Well, if you will 'ave it——" he growled. "Yaroo!" yelled Bunter. "Help!" Neither observed Mr. Prout staring at them from the gap in the hedge.

Sammy Bunter's weight, in a charge, was no light matter.

Johnny Bull staggered against the gate. Frank Nugent sat down. Harry Wharton reeled against Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Only Bob Cherry jumped clear in time.

Sammy, unheeding the excited exclamations behind him, barged on, and disappeared into the quad.

"What the merry dickens!" exclaimed Wharton.

"The young lunatic!" gasped Nugent, scrambling to his feet, "I'll jolly well kick him!"

"But what on earth's the matter with him?" exclaimed Bob. "Is somebody after the young ass, or what?"

The juniors stared down the dusky road towards Friardale. Another fat figure came racing into sight.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's raining Bunters!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter, gasping and panting, was coming on at full speed! His spectacles had slipped down his fat little nose, and his eyes bulged over them. Perspiration streamed down his podgy features.

The Famous Five stared at him.

"He's after Sammy, I suppose!" said Harry Wharton.

"Looks like it!"

"Stop him!"

From what they beheld, the chums of the Remove could only conclude that Billy Bunter was in fierce pursuit of Sammy Bunter! That was what it looked like.

So they lined up in the gateway, to put a stop to such an unbrotherly proceeding.

Billy Bunter came barging breathlessly on. He reached the gates and bounced in as Sammy had done.

But he did not get by like Sammy! Five pairs of hands seized him in full career, and swung him to a halt.

"Hold on, old fat bean!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yaroooh!"

"Chuck it, Fatty!"

"Help!"

"What are you after Sammy for?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing. "Has he bagged a tart or a bun from you, or what?"

"Urrgh! Leggo! Urrgh!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, leggo! He's after me! Ow! Leggo! Ooooh!"

"He's after you!" repeated Bob. "He's not after you, fathead—he was ahead of you! Weren't you after him?"

"Eh! Leggo! I tell you he's after me!" shrieked Bunter. "Old Prout won't be able to stop him—he'd burst if that rough hit him! Leggo!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I say, you fellows, leggo! I say, look out! I say, that fearful ruffian is on my track!" yelled Bunter. "Leggo!"

In blank amazement the juniors stared at him, and then stared along the road again. They realised that they had misapprehended. Sammy Bunter was not in flight from Billy Bunter! Both Bunters were in flight from some unknown enemy!

"Who—?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Nobody's in sight, you fat ass!" said Nugent. "You're in no danger, you flabby funk! What's happened? What's that about Prout?"

Bunter spluttered for breath.

"I—I say, you fellows, sure he's not in sight?" he panted.

"Nobody's in sight, ass!"

Bunter ventured to blink back along Friardale Lane, through his big spectacles! Nobody was in sight! The fat Owl of the Remove was relieved of his terrors.

"Oh!" he gasped, "I—I thought he was after me! He—he wanted to

rob me, you know ! He wanted all my money——"

"Wanted to become a millionaire, did he ?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"Oh, really, Cherry ! I say, he had hold of me when Prout butted in, and banged him on the head with his walking-stick ! I say, I thought he was after me ! Oh, dear ! I suppose he's bashing old Prout, instead of coming after me ! I expect he's nearly killed Prout by this time ! Lucky I got away, wasn't it ? Ow !"

"You howling ass !" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Is Prout mixed up with a tramp in a row—is that what you mean ?"

"Ow ! Yes !" gurgled Bunter. "Prout biffed him on the napper with his stick, you know, and he let go, and I bunked ! Oh, lor' !"

"You didn't stay to help Prout !" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Eh !" Bunter blinked at him. That idea, evidently, had never occurred to the Owl of the Remove.

"Come on, you men !" said Harry Wharton, tersely. "If old Prout's mixed up with a tramp he will want help !"

The captain of the Remove started down the lane at a rapid run. His comrades dashed after him.

Billy Bunter blinked at them as they vanished. It had not occurred to Bunter to lend Prout a hand in dealing with Mr. Hawkins ; but the Famous Five were made of sterner stuff.

"Oh, crikey !" gasped Bunter. And he rolled in. No doubt he was grateful to Prout for having barged in, and hoped that he wouldn't be quite killed by the truculent Spadger. But his chief concern was for William George Bunter !

Harry Wharton and Co. went down

Greyfriars Jingles



OF all remarks, as you will own,
This is the one most widely known ;
Each season and throughout the year
This oft-repeated phrase we hear :
"My postal-order !"

All up and down and round the Form,
In class-room, study, gym and dorm,
All day, at morning, noon and night,
We hear the Bunter bird recite,
"My postal-order !"

We know he's been expecting it
Since Caesar first invaded Brit.
He groans, "What's happened to the thing ?
Why can't that silly postman bring
My postal-order ?"

But when our cash he tries to borrow,
He's sure that it will come to-morrow ;
He says, "There's been a slight delay,
Or else it would have come to-day,
My postal-order !"

The long delay since it was sent
He blames upon the government ;
He says, "They're either fast asleep
Or trying purposely to keep
My postal-order !"

It's coming from his Uncle Bill,
His Aunt Elaine and Cousin Jill,
His Uncle Dick and Auntie Min
(They all have had a finger in
That postal-order !)

But Bunter in his stony state
Cries, "If you don't believe it—wait !
You'll see in just a few hours more ;
To-morrow I shall get for sure
My postal-order !"

the lane, as if they were on the cinder-path. They were not afraid of tramps ; and they were really concerned for Prout ! Prout, no doubt, had pluck ; but he was long past the age of fisticuffs, and it was really alarming to think what might happen to him, in a mix-up with some ruffianly footpad.

"Hollo, hallo, hallo !" gasped Bob, suddenly. "Look !"

They came speeding round a bend of the dusky lane, just as Mr. Prout sat down, and the Spadger sprang on him and pinned him on his back in the dust !

They arrived in the nick of time.

Spadger Hawkins had drawn back his right arm for a blow ! His big fist was clenched, like a lump of iron !

What would have happened to Prout's portly features, had that blow landed on them, would hardly bear thinking of !

Fortunately, it never landed !

Just as the Spadger was gathering force for that shattering punch, Harry Wharton, putting on a desperate spurt, reached him. He crashed headlong into the Spadger, hurling him bodily away from his victim, and the ruffian, with a roar, rolled in the lane.

Prout sat up, dizzily.

"Urrggh ! Bless my soul ! Urrggh !" he gurgled.

"Collar him !" roared Bob Cherry.

Frank Nugent ran to Prout, to help him up. The other four fellows rushed at the sprawling ruffian.

"S'elp me !" gasped the Spadger.

He leaped to his feet ! The grasping hands of the schoolboys were almost on him, when he bounded back, leaped through the hedge, and ran. There were too many for Spadger Hawkins, and he had been cheated of his vengeance. He vanished through the hedge, and did the adjoining

meadow at about 60 m.p.h. Almost in a moment, the dusk of evening swallowed the Spadger.

"Oooooogh !" gasped Prout, leaning heavily on Frank Nugent. "Woogh ! I—I am—am a little breathless ! Oooooogh !"

Prout understated the case ! He was very breathless indeed ! He gasped and gurgled for wind ! Frank Nugent sagged under his weight, as he leaned, and Johnny Bull ran to his aid, supporting the portly Prout on the other side.

"All right now, sir !" said Harry Wharton, "He's gone."

"Urrrgh !"

"The gonefulness is terrific, honoured sahib !" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Wurrrgh !"

"Hope you're not hurt, sir !" said Bob Cherry.

"Mmmmmmmrrrgh !"

Prout gradually recovered. Wharton picked up his hat. Bob picked up his stick. Prout passed his hand tenderly over the back of his head, which had hit Friardale Lane rather hard. He had a pain there—in that part of the napper which Prout called the occiput, and Coker the oxyput ! Prout caressed his occiput quite tenderly.

"Thank you, my boys, thank you !" said Prout, at last. "I am much obliged to you. Unfortunately my foot slipped, or that—that detestable ruffian would not have taken me at such a disadvantage ! Thank you very much, my dear boys."

"Not at all, sir !" chorussed the dear boys.

And they walked back to the school with Prout—what time Spadger Hawkins, resting under a distant hedge, was rubbing his head, where Prout's stick had smitten him, and breathing

threats of future vengeance, that might almost have turned the atmosphere blue !

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

NO SURRENDER !

"COME in !" boomed Prout.

There was a tap at his study door. Prout did not want to be disturbed, just then.

He was feeling very much shaken, and very much disturbed. And he had a pain in his occiput !

Perhaps the location of that lingering pain reminded him of Horace Coker, and Coker's imposition. That imposition had to be handed in to Prout before prep, and it was nearly time for prep now.

In his present disturbed state Prout



Just as the Spadger was gathering force for a shattering punch, Harry Wharton reached him. He lunged out at the ruffian, crashing into him at the same time, and the Spadger was hurled bodily away from Mr. Prout.

He was resting, in his study arm-chair, after his wild adventures ; and feeling none the better for those wild adventures.

Certainly, Mr. Prout did not regret that he had come to the help of two Greyfriars fags, attacked by a ruffianly tramp. But he had to regret the result.

was in a mood to deal severely with that most troublesome member of his form, Horace Coker, if the egregious Horace gave any more trouble. If Coker did not hand in his impot. on time, Coker was going to be sorry for the same !

Then came the tap at the door, and Prout had no doubt that it was Coker

with his impot. Without turning his head he boomed "Come in!" and the door opened.

"Come in," repeated Prout, still without turning his head. "I trust that you are going to give me no further cause for dissatisfaction, with your unexampled stupidity and obtuse obstinacy!"

There was a gasp of surprise.

"Mr. Prout! Sir!"

Prout spun round!

It was not Coker of the Fifth! It was Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second Form, who had entered his study!

Twigg gazed at him in shocked and offended amazement. Prout became scarlet.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Mr. Prout!"

"Mr. Twigg! I—I supposed——"

"I came here, sir——"

"Pray excuse me, Mr. Twigg!" gurgled Prout. "I was unaware—quite unaware. I supposed that it was Coker, of my Form—pray excuse the expressions I inadvertently used, under a misapprehension."

Mr. Twigg's face cleared.

"Oh, quite, sir!" he assented. "I understand! I—I was surprised."

"No doubt, sir! But—you see——"

"Oh, quite!"

"I was expecting Coker, of my Form, with an imposition! Pray be seated, Mr. Twigg! Pray excuse me."

"Oh, certainly!" Mr. Twigg sat down. "I trust, Mr. Prout, that you have not been harmed! I have heard, sir, of what recently occurred in Friardale Lane—and as one of the boys concerned, sir, belongs to my Form, I felt bound to express my acknowledgments, sir."

Prout smiled genially.

Evidently the story was getting about the school, of how he had tackled a hefty tramp in defence of two Greyfriars fags. Prout had no objection whatever. He rather liked the lime-light.

"I was bound to intervene!" he said.

"Very true, sir, but I have learned from Bunter minor, of my Form, that the tramp who stopped him and his brother in the lane was a hulking, powerful ruffian."

"A gigantic ruffian, sir!" said Prout. Prout was not the man to diminish his own glory.

"A very dangerous character, sir!" said Mr. Twigg. "The boys might have been seriously harmed——"

"Bunter minor, I think, was out of danger," said Mr. Prout. "He was running very fast when I saw him. But the ruffian certainly had hold of Bunter major, of the Remove."

"Indeed! Bunter minor did not mention to me that he was running!" said Mr. Twigg. "The ruffian might, perhaps, have overtaken him, but for your very gallant intervention, sir."

Prout beamed.

"It was no light matter, sir," said Mr. Twigg, "to engage in a struggle with a hulking ruffian."

Prout waved a plump hand.

"In the circumstances, sir, I had no choice," he said.

"True, true," assented little Mr. Twigg. "Nevertheless, you will permit me to say that the affair redounds very greatly to your credit, sir. Considering your years——"

"Eh!"

"Considering your somewhat advanced years, sir——!"

"Really, Mr. Twigg——"

Prout ceased to beam.

Twigg really was a little tactless. Prout's years were not so advanced



"Come in," said Mr. Prout, without turning his head. "I trust you are not going to give me further cause for dissatisfaction with your unexampled stupidity and obtuse obstinacy!" There was a gasp of surprise. It was not Coker who had entered; it was Mr. Twigg!

as all that! True, he was not a young man! But he was not old: not, that is to say, what would be called old! Not at all!

Perhaps it was fortunate that another tap came at the door, at that awkward moment!

The door opened.

This time it was Horace Coker, with a written paper in his hand.

Prout glanced round at him.

"Oh!" he said. "It is you, Coker!"

"Yes, sir!" said Coker, respectfully but firmly.

"Will you excuse me for a moment, Twigg, while I deal with this boy."

"Certainly, sir!"

"You may hand me your imposition, Coker!" said Mr. Prout. "I trust that a hundred repetitions of that word, Coker, have impressed its correct spelling on your mind."

"I always knew how to spell occiput, sir!" said Coker, calmly.

"What! You did not know how to spell the word in the Form-room this morning!" snapped Prout. "Your spelling is atrocious, Coker! There are small boys in Mr. Twigg's form who spell better than you."

Coker breathed hard.

No fellow, of course, could call his Form-master an ass or a fathead! But Coker was strongly tempted to do so at that moment.

It was bad enough for Old Pom-pous to slang him in the Form-room, before all the other fellows! But to slang him in the presence of another beak was the limit.

Coker detected a faint smile on the face of Mr. Twigg. He breathed hard, and harder!

He was glad now, more than glad, that he had not given in to Prout! His friends, Potter and Greene, had implored him, almost with tears in their eyes, not to take that remarkable impot. to Prout. Coker had been adamant! Now he was glad that he had been adamant! If Prout chose to have it all out before another beak, he could please himself. That other beak, at any rate, would see that Coker wasn't going to be bullied into bad spelling by an igno-ramus of a Form-master!

"Small boys!" repeated Prout, severely. "Small boys like Nugent minor, and Bunter minor, would be ashamed to spell as you do, Coker!"

Coker barely repressed a snort.

Prout was doing this on purpose—showing him up to another beak: little dreaming, of course, that he was only showing up his own ignorance!

"Are there not boys in your form, Mr. Twigg, who can spell the word occiput correctly?" asked Prout, passing a hand over his own occiput, as he spoke, where he felt a painful twinge.

"I trust so, sir!" said Mr. Twigg. "Any boy in my Form, I think, with the exception perhaps of Bunter minor."

"You hear that, Coker! You are on a level, sir, with the most backward boy in the Second Form!" said Mr. Prout. "But I trust—I trust—that we shall see an improvement. I shall certainly insist upon improvement. The spelling of this word, at least,

you should remember correctly, after writing it out a hundred times. You may hand me your paper, Coker."

Coker handed him his paper.

Prout glanced at it.

Then he stared.

His stare became fixed, mesmerised, petrified! It began to resemble the glare of the fabled basilisk. It became like unto the petrifying gaze of the Gorgon! Prout could, indeed, hardly believe his eyes.

Coker had written out the disputed word a hundred times! So far, Coker had given Prout his head!

But he had not spelt it Prout's way! He had spelt it his own way! Knowing better than Prout, Coker had felt that he really had no choice in that matter. Anyhow, he had done it!

Oxypu, oxypu, oxypu, oxypu, oxypu—there it was, a hundred times, staring Prout in his astonished face.

Prout hardly seemed to breathe.

Coker waited—calmly!

Mr. Twigg glanced at him, and glanced at Prout. He could not see what was written on Coker's paper. But he could see what was written on the speaking countenance of Prout!

Olympian wrath was gathering there.

"Coker!" gasped Mr. Prout, at last.

"Yes, sir!" said Coker, firmly.

"Are you out of your senses, Coker?"

"I hope not, sir!"

"You—you—you——" Prout seemed to find difficulty in articulating. "You—you have spelt this word incorrectly——!"

"Not at all, sir!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"I know how to spell occiput, sir!"

"Am I to understand," gurgled Prout, "that this is not mere

stupidity—that it is not mere obtuseness and ignorance—but that it is an act of disobedience and defiance?”

“Oh, no, sir! I hope I have a proper respect for my Form-master!” said Coker calmly. “But when you told me to write out the word in its correct spelling, sir, I was bound to do so. And I’ve done it.”

“You—you have—have done it?”

“Yes, sir!”

“Coker!”

Prout lowered the paper. Mr. Twigg glanced at it and gave a convulsive start!

The Fifth Form-master gazed at Coker.

Coker waited, calmly. Having done what was right and proper, whether Prout knew it or not, Coker could be calm. Anyhow, Prout couldn’t cane him. The Fifth were never caned.

Prout, perhaps, might have sense enough to see that he was in the wrong, and admit it like a man! Coker hoped so.

That showed that Coker had a hopeful nature! Prout did not look in the least like admitting that he was in the wrong! He looked, indeed, as if he were on the verge of a volcanic eruption.



Coker made one stride at Skinner, grasped him by the collar and spun him round. Skinner yelled, in anticipation. The next moment his anticipation was realised! Coker's foot landed on him with a crash. “Whoop!” yelled Skinner.

“Coker!” he gasped at last. “It would be beneath my dignity, and the dignity of a senior Form, to cane you! Yet what can I do?”

Coker did not answer that conundrum.

Prout pointed to the door.

“Go!” he said, “I will consider this matter! I will consider whether to request Dr. Locke to administer a flogging! I will consider! In the meantime, go!”

Coker went!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

CALAMITOUS FOR COKER!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter yelled.

He almost shrieked.

Wildly excited, the Owl of the Remove came barging across the landing, to a group of fellows who were chatting outside No. 1 Study.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, you fellows—he, he, he! Oh, crikey! He, he, he!"

Bunter, evidently, was amused! He was highly entertained! It was clear that Bunter believed himself to be in possession of the joke of the season—the jest of the term—the last funny word!

Harry Wharton and Co. were talking football. But they forgot even footer, as Bunter barged in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the jolly old news?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I say—he, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"Some joke, what?"

"Yes, rather—he, he, he!"

"Well, get it off your chest, fat-head!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't tell us your postal order's coming! We've heard that funny story before."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say—Prout—he, he, he——!"

"Prout!" repeated the Famous Five. Apparently the Fifth Form-master was the cause of Bunter's outbreak of merriment.

"And Coker——!"

"Coker!" repeated the five.

"Yes! He, he, he!" Bunter removed his spectacles, and wiped his eyes, "I say, you fellows, my minor told me—Sammy of the Second, you know! Hasn't your minor told you, Nugent?"

"Eh! No! I haven't seen Dicky!"

answered Frank. "What on earth's up?"

"Prout—Coker—Twigg——!" gasped Bunter. "He, he, he!" He went off into another prolonged cackinnation.

"What on earth's that row?" asked Vernon-Smith, coming along the Remove passage. "What are you fellows letting off an alarm-clock for?"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Oh! My mistake!" said the Bounder. "Was it your cackle, Bunter? Bottle it up, old bean."

"Beast! I say, you fellows——"

"For goodness' sake cough it up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I'm just telling you—he, he, he!"

"Spill it, you goob!" said Fisher T. Fish. Quite a number of Remove fellows were gathering now, to hear the news, whatever it was.

"You are keeping us on the esteemed tender-hooks, my absurd Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; probably meaning tenter-hooks.

"Shake it out of him!" said Peter Todd. "Take hold of his other ear, somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Leggo! I say, you fellows, he, he, he!—I'm just going to tell you—he, he, he! Coker—Coker of the Fifth, you know—he's going—he, he, he——!"

"Coker going!" exclaimed Harry.

"My hat! Coker can't have been sacked for his spelling!" said Bob Cherry. "It's enough to make a cat laugh, but they can't have sacked him for it."

"Is he going?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes, rather! He, he, he! He's going into—he, he, he——!"

"Into a lunatic asylum!"

"Or a home for idiots!"

"Into the Second!" yelled Bunter, getting it out at last, "He, he, he!"

"WHAT!" roared the juniors.

They stared at Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, it's true!" roared Bunter, "Coker of the Fifth, you know! A Fifth-form man—senior, and all that! Prout's fixed it up with Twigg—and Twigg's taking Coker—in spelling!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"All the Second know!" shrieked Bunter. "They're killing themselves laughing over it! Twigg told them in third school this morning! Coker's going to take a lesson every day in the Second Form! Sitting among the fags, you know! He's beginning this afternoon! Twigg fixed up his place in Form, and told the Second! My minor says he was grinning."

"No wonder!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"They're howling over it in the Second!" gasped Bunter. "Fancy Coker, you know—bigger than a lot of men in the Sixth! Sitting among the fags, to learn how to spell! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not the Shell, or the Fourth, or even the Third!" chortled Bunter. "The Second—he, he, he! Fancy Coker!"

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

"A giant among the pygmies, by gad!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

"Gulliver among the Lilliputians!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's twice as big as Twigg himself!" chortled Bob. "Coker will get the spot-light, in the Second Form."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Coker!"

"Well, he's asked for it!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "He

spells like a fag in the Second, only worse! But Prout's done this for his cheek, of course! I wondered what would happen if he took that impot. to Prout! Something was bound to happen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites yelled.

It was, undoubtedly, the joke of the season, the jest of the term! The mere thought of the burly, beefy, hefty Horace, sitting among the small fry of the Second Form, made the juniors howl.

If Prout had specially planned to make the self-willed, obstinate, pig-headed Horace feel small, he could not have thought of anything better than this.

Coker's feelings on the subject would be unutterable.

Probably he would repent before long, that he had not given into Prout, his master, in the matter of orthography!

"I guess this will hit Coker where he lives!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish, "I'll say this is the cat's whiskers!"

"Poor old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"O what a fall was there, my countrymen!" said Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I saw Coker in the quad," giggled Bunter. "Prout's told him—he's scowling like a demon in a pantomime! I say, I shouldn't wonder if there's a shindy in the Second Form this afternoon. I say, I shouldn't wonder if Coker chucks little Twigg across the Form-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's Coker now?" asked Skinner eagerly.

"In the quad—Potter and Greene are arguing with him!" chuckled Bunter. "I heard him say he

wouldn't go in with the Second, Prout or no Prout!"

"He will jolly well have to!" said Nugent. "Prout will take him to the Head, if he kicks!"

"I suppose it's meant as a lesson to Coker—not only in spelling!" said Wharton. "Well, a fellow shouldn't cheek his beak! He really couldn't expect Prout to stand it."

"Poor old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and take a squint at him!" said Skinner, and he rushed away.

"Oh, give him a rest!" called out Bob Cherry. "Coker won't like being squinted at, in the giddy circs."

Skinner, unheeding, went to look for Coker.

He found him in the quad, talking to Potter and Greene. Coker, with a red face and glinting eyes, was evidently in a state of great excitement and indignation. It was not a judicious moment to approach him, if Skinner had reflected.

"I say, Coker——!"

Coker glared round.

"Is it true you're in the Second Form for spelling?" howled Skinner.

Coker did not answer.

He made one stride at Harold Skinner, grasped him by the collar, and spun him round.

Skinner yelled, in anticipation.

The next moment his anticipation was realised! Coker's foot landed on him with a crash!

"Whooooop!" roared Skinner.

He flew!

Coker walked away with Potter and Greene. Skinner limped away in quite a pained state.

Nobody else went up to Coker to ask him about it! Evidently, Coker was dangerous at close quarters!

But, for once, everybody was

anxious for the bell to ring for classes! Everybody was interested to see the mighty Horace walking into the Second Form room, towering over the fags! And everybody was on the grin, in expectation of that interesting sight!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

TOE THE LINE!

"NOTHING——"

"But, old chap——!" urged Potter.

"Nothing——"

"Beak's orders, old fellow!" said Greene.

"Nothing," repeated Coker, with undiminished firmness. "Nothing will induce me to do anything of the sort."

"The bell's ringing!" said Potter.

"Let it ring!"

"Prout says——"

"Let him say!"

"But——!" said Potter and Greene together.

"It's no good talking!" said Coker, "I'm just not going to do it, and that's that! Prout's done this to insult me! He was in a fearful wax, yesterday, at having his ignorance shown up before Twigg——"

"Oh, dear!"

"He makes out," said Coker, "that I can't spell! I could spell his head off! Look at the mistakes he makes! You heard him, only this morning, say that unprecedented was spelt without an S in it! Didn't you?"

"But—but so it is, old chap!" urged Greene.

"Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"Look in the dictionary, old bean!" said Potter.

"Dictionaries are not much use!" answered Coker. "I've found a lot of mistakes in dictionaries."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Not that I want to argue with the man!" said Coker. "He's an ass—a pompous ass—and that's the long and the short of it! He can make mistakes if he likes! I don't want to argue about it. But when it comes to putting me down among a lot of fags, I draw the line! A Fifth-form man has to consider his dignity! I can't do it! And I shan't!"

Potter and Greene exchanged a hopeless look.

Coker stated that he couldn't, and wouldn't, and shouldn't, just as if he had the deciding voice in the matter! He seemed to think that he had! But, in point of fact, he hadn't!

It was for Prout to decide! And Prout had decided! It was only left for Horace Coker to toe the line!

That, however, simple as it was, Coker seemed unable to get into his head. And the bell was ringing!

"Well, we've got to get into the Fifth!" said Potter. "Come on, Greeney."

"So have I!" said Coker calmly.

And he walked into the House with his friends.

It was not yet quite time for the Form-room doors to open. But the Form-room passage was crowded.

Fellows were sometimes late for class. Not a fellow was late now. All were early.

Coker was the attraction. Everybody wanted to see Coker of the Fifth go in with the Second.

Outside Mr. Twigg's Form-room his Form were gathering: Dicky Nugent, and Gatty and



"Prout makes out," said Coker, "that I can't spell. I could spell his head off! Only this morning he said that unprecedented was spelt without an S in it." "So it is, old chap," urged Greene. "Don't be an ass!" exclaimed Coker. "Oh, crumbs!" murmured Potter and Greene.

Myers, and Sammy Bunter and the rest. All of them were grinning. They seemed to have brighter anticipations for that afternoon than Coker of the Fifth had.

"Here he comes!" grinned Nugent minor. Dicky Nugent had not forgotten Coker's short way with fags, and the kick the great Horace had bestowed on him the previous day. "I say, Coker, how many K's in cat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker disdained to take heed. He walked on with Potter and Greene. Mr. Twigg came down the passage and met him.

He blinked at Coker. Coker eyed him calmly.

"Oh, Coker!" said Mr. Twigg. "Pray come this way, my boy. You are aware that your Form-master has arranged for you to take lessons with my Form."

"Quite a mistake, sir," said Coker. "I'm not coming into the Second."

"Mr. Prout's orders, Coker." Twigg was a peaceable little gentleman, and he was persuasive. He blinked up at Coker, who was taller than the Second Form-master. "Come, come, my boy! Mr. Prout has talked the matter over with me, and I have consented——"

Coker walked on.

Mr. Twigg blinked after him.

"Coker!" he called out.

Coker did not answer or turn his head.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Twigg.

He went on to his Form-room and unlocked the door. He left Coker to be dealt with by his own beak.

Twigg, certainly, was not anxious to have that whale among the minnows in his Form-room.

Prout had asked him. He had consented. After the way Prout had

barged in, in the affair of the tramp, Twigg felt that he couldn't refuse. A boy of his Form had been threatened by a hulking ruffian. Prout had run a lot of risk in barging in. Twigg had called on him, in his study, to express his acknowledgments. Then Coker and his impot. had happened. And Prout, casting about in his mind for some adequate method of dealing with Coker, had hit on this. He could hardly cane a tremendous fellow like Coker. He did not want to take him to the Head to be flogged, if he could help it. He did want to teach him how to spell and to subdue his lofty swank. And so it was arranged.

That Coker would object was a foregone conclusion. That he would refuse had probably not occurred to Prout. He was going to learn that.

All eyes were on Horace Coker, as he stood with the Fifth, waiting for Prout. Fellows looked at him, peered at him, craned their necks at him. Coker was the cynosure of all eyes. He was the central attraction. He was the goods!

An elephantine tread was heard in the passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Prout!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!" from Billy Bunter.

"Poor old Coker," murmured Nugent.

Prout, majestic, arrived. He glanced over his Form, and his eyes fixed on Horace Coker. His brow darkened.

"Coker!"

"Yes, sir!"

"What are you doing here?"

"Waiting to go into the Form-room, sir."

"I have told you, Coker, that you are to go into Mr. Twigg's Form this afternoon," rumbled Prout.

"I hope you've changed your mind, sir."

"I have not changed my mind, Coker."

"I'm sorry for that, sir," said Coker politely. And he stood where he was.

He stood firm, facing his Form-master: four square to every wind that blew, so to speak. He had a feeling at that moment that he rather resembled Ajax defying the lightning, or Horatius defending the bridge. He felt a bit like Leonidas in the pass of Thermopylæ. And a bit like the Old Guard at Waterloo. "The Old Guard dies, but does not surrender!" That sort of thing.

All this, however, was lost on Prout.

Prout did not see in Coker a danger-defying hero. All he saw was a sulky and disobedient schoolboy.

It was one of those differences in the point of view which are bound to lead to trouble.

"Coker!" said Prout, in a very deep voice.

"Yes, sir!"

"Go to your Form-room!"

"I'm waiting for you to open the door, sir! It's locked, I think."

"I am alluding to the Second Form-room, Coker!"

"That's not my Form-room, sir!"

"For the English lesson, every day this week, Coker, that is to be your Form-room."

"Oh, no, sir!"

Prout gasped.

"Am I to understand, Coker, that you disobey me, your Form-master?" he inquired, in an awful voice.

In breathless silence, an army of fellows hung on Coker's reply! It came!

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't do it!"

"Will you obey me at once, Coker?"

Coker did not stir.

"Very well!" said Mr. Prout with calmness—an awful calmness. "You will go and pack your box, Coker!"

Coker started.

"Pip-pip-pack my bib-bib-box!" he stuttered.

"I shall now proceed to the Head!" said Mr. Prout. "I shall request him to expel you from the school, Coker! You will leave Greyfriars by the next train! Blundell!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Blundell of the Fifth.

"Please go to my study, and telephone for a taxi to take Coker to the station."

Coker gazed at Prout.

He was in earnest! He was in deadly earnest!

Coker's brain almost swam!

Expelled!

Sacked!

Bunked!

It was unbelievable! But there it was! He wasn't going in with the Second—he was going in a train—for home!

Coker gasped!

Potter and Greene gave him imploring looks. They really didn't want to lose Coker like this! Coker was rather a trial to his friends; but really they did not want him to be turned out.

Prout whirled round in the passage. He was going to the Head! Coker's fate trembled in the balance!

"Hold on!" gasped Coker. He found his voice. "If—if you mean that, sir——"

Prout whirled round again.

"I will give you one more chance—a last chance!" he boomed. "If you have not obeyed me in one second——"

The sixtieth part of a minute, brief as it was, was enough for Coker! With feelings that no fellow could have

expressed in words, Coker turned away, and walked to the Second Form room.

There was a general gasp of relief. Even Prout, probably, was relieved. He was a pompous gentleman, an important gentleman, but a kind-hearted gentleman. He wanted to be as easy with Coker as Coker would let him be!

"You need not telephone, Blundell! Enter!" said Mr. Prout, unlocking the door of the Fifth Form-room.

The Greyfriars fellows went into their Form-rooms. In the Second Form-room sat Coker of the Fifth: a whale among the minnows, a giant among the pygmies, a Gulliver among the Lilliputians! The grinning faces of the fags indicated that they took it as a huge joke. But Coker's countenance wore no grin. It was serious—solemn—not to say tragic!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

COKER IN THE SECOND!

HARRY WHARTON and Co. in the Remove-room, wondered how Coker of the Fifth was getting on. They could guess that he was not getting on well. And they were right—he wasn't!

Coker, a living picture of suppressed indignation, sat and glowered. Only one consideration kept him in the fag Form-room. It was the "sack" if he left it without leave!

He did not want to be sacked! True, the way he carried on was asking for it! But Coker, like many other people, did not want that for which he asked. The thought of being turfed out of Greyfriars was quite unnerving. He had never expected that Prout would go to such an extreme. Really, he might have expected it! But he hadn't!

In his present circumstances it was rather unfortunate for Coker that he had a short way with fags! Many a cuff had Coker bestowed on the heroes of the Second Form—for their own good, of course! Coker's opinion was that the more fags were cuffed, the better it was for them. In this the fags did not agree with Coker!

Now he was with them, if not of them. And the fags remembered many a cuff, and were ungratefully regardless of the fact that the same had been bestowed for their own good!

"I say, Coker," whispered Dicky Nugent, as Mr. Twigg stood busy at the blackboard, "I say, how many F's in fathead?"

Coker disdained to answer.

"How many D's in duffer?" whispered Gatty.

Stony silence from Coker.

"How many K's in scowl, Coker?" asked Myers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Twigg glanced round.

"Silence in the class, please!" he said mildly.

The fags subdued their whispers. But the whispering went on. Coker of the Fifth was fair game, in the opinion of the Second. He sat like a stone image, scowling—if a stone image could be supposed to scowl. His feelings were deep and intense—how deep and intense the Second Form did not know; and unfortunately did not care.

Sammy Bunter seemed to be the only fellow in the Second Form who was not interested in Coker! That was accounted for by the fact that Sammy was the happy possessor of a stick of toffee, in which he was very interested indeed.

So long as Twigg's back was turned Sammy was able to suck his toffee at

his ease; and he did so with great enjoyment.

Till the spirit moved Dicky Nugent to snatch the stick of toffee suddenly from Sammy's grubby fingers, lean over Coker from behind, and drop it down the inside of Coker's collar.

"I say——" howled Sammy Bunter, in dismay.

roared Coker, wriggling wildly.

"Something sticky——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Coker——"

"Ow! It's sticky! It——"

"Sit down at once, Coker! How dare you perform such antics in this Form-room!" exclaimed Mr. Twigg.

"Sit down!"



"You are aware, Coker," said Mr. Twigg, "that your Form-master has arranged for you to take lessons with my Form." "Quite a mistake, sir," said Coker. "I'm not coming into the Second." "Come, come, my boy!" said Mr. Twigg.

His voice was drowned by the roar that came from Coker!

Coker bounded to his feet.

Mr. Twigg faced round from the blackboard.

"What——" he began.

"Oooogh! Grooogh! Urrgh! There's something down my back!"

Coker wriggled horribly. Sticky toffee, in the small of his back, was frightfully uncomfortable.

"I tell you——" he bawled.

"Silence, sir! Sit down! How dare you!" hooted Mr. Twigg. "I warn you, Coker, that your unruly and disobedient ways will

not be tolerated in this Form-room."

"I've got something down my back——"

"Nonsense! How could anything be down your back? How dare you talk such nonsense! Sit down!"

"One of these little beasts——"

"What? What?"

"One of these grubby little scoundrels has——"

"Another word, Coker, and I will send you back to Mr. Prout!" bawled Mr. Twigg. "I will have nothing of this kind here, sir! I warn you, sir! Be quiet at once!"

Coker sat down. He was on the verge of explosion; but fortunately did not explode. Mr. Twigg eyed him with great severity.

"Take example by the boys of my Form, Coker, and behave yourself!" he snapped. "You are among well-behaved boys—take example by them, sir! I will not allow you to introduce uproarious unruliness into this Form-room. Be quiet in your place! Not a word! Silence!"

How Coker managed to keep silent he hardly knew. But he did! He sat breathing wrath, with the sticky toffee giving him horrid squirmy feelings in his back.

The fags exchanged blissful glances. Coker was not enjoying life, but he was adding considerably to the gaiety of existence in the Second Form of Greyfriars.

Only Sammy Bunter did not enjoy that jest on Coker. Sammy was thinking sadly of his lost toffee. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and could hardly be comforted. His only comfort was to see Coker wriggling and squirming on the form in front of him.

Mr. Twigg turned from the blackboard. He had chalked there a list of words in which some of his Form

had found difficulties. The fags had to copy them down. So had Coker. Taking part in an infantile lesson of this sort was simply excruciating to Coker of the Fifth.

He was far from realising that he needed it as much as the fags did!

One word in the list was "partikle." Mr. Twigg spelt that word in the common, or garden, way! Coker stared at it on the blackboard, hesitated, and finally spoke.

"If you please, sir——!" said Coker, with very careful respect.

"What is it, Coker?"

"Are we to spell those word correctly, sir?"

"Certainly," snapped Mr. Twigg. "How in the world do you imagine I wish you to spell them, Coker?"

"I mean not as they're written, sir."

Mr. Twigg gazed at him.

"Not as they are written!" he repeated. "Do you mean to imply, Coker, that I have set words for my class incorrectly spelt?"

"Well, look at that word partikle, sir!" said Coker patiently. "I know Mr. Prout spells it like that! I spell it with a K, sir."

"You spell partikle with a K!" repeated Mr. Twigg, like a man in a dream.

"Yes, sir!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Dicky Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in the class! Coker, I hardly know what to say to you! Your ignorance is astounding! Or is it impertinence?" demanded Mr. Twigg. "At all events, you will spell the words as written, and say no more."

Coker breathed hard.

Strongly was he tempted to write "partikle." He knew there was a K in it, if Twigg didn't!

But he resisted the temptation. After all, it was not his business to teach the Second Form-master how to spell! He had tried to make Prout understand that occiput was spelt oxyput, and failed! Already Coker was learning his lesson! He decided to let Twigg have his way: and with a sardonic smile, wrote down "particel."

After this painful episode Mr. Twigg gave his youthful Form some dictation. He selected a stanza from Byron for that purpose beginning "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!"

A snigger from some of his Form drew his attention to Coker! Fags peering at Coker's paper seemed entertained.

Mr. Twigg stepped to the desks, and glanced at Coker's lucubrations. His eyes popped, as he read:

"Role on, thou depe and dark bloo ocean, role!

Ten thowsand fletes sweap over thee in vane,

Man markes the erth with rooin, his kontrole

Stops at the shoar: upon the wattery plane

The rex are all thy dede, nore duth remane

One shaddow of man's ravnage, save his owne."

"Coker!" gasped Mr. Twigg.

Coker looked up.

"Is that intended for a foolish joke?" demanded Mr. Twigg.

"Eh?"

"How dare you play such foolish jests here, and distract the attention of the boys from their work!" exclaimed Mr. Twigg.

Coker had borne much! This was the limit! Goaded, he glared at Twigg!

Songs of the Seasons



MERRY falls the springtime,
Laughter's in the air;
Sing, for this is singtime,
Youth is everywhere!
Life is full of laughter,
All the world's at play,
Care may follow after,
We'll enjoy to-day.

Fresh among the rushes
Shaking in the breeze,
See, the river gushes
Merry melodies;
Just the day for boating,
Let us get aboard,
While the sun's devoting
Warmth for our reward.

Long have we been thirsting
For the happy hours,
Now the buds are bursting
On the trees and flowers;
Now the grass is greener.
Washed and newly-sprung,
All the earth is keener,
All the earth is young!

Get your cycle ready,
Oil your iron steed,
Mind and take it steady,
Careful of your speed!
Biking is delightful
When your wits are cool,
But it's rather frightful
In a village pool!

Mind you are not leaving
Cameras behind,
Spring is busy weaving
Spells for you to find;
Views await in plenty
Up the hill and down,
You may manage twenty,
If you've half-a-crown!

After months of prison
(Winter is so long),
All the earth has risen
With a happy song;
Youth and joy and gladness,
Tunes the whole refrain,
Gone is winter's sadness,
Spring is here again!

"What the thump do you mean?" he roared.

"Coker!"

"Talk sense!" roared Coker.

Mr. Twigg did not talk sense! He did not talk at all! He brought his pointer down on Coker's knuckles with a sharp rap!

"Yooooop!" roared Coker.

"Silence!"

"Wow! ow! wow!" Coker sucked his knuckles, furiously. Only by great self-command, did he refrain from dashing them at Twigg's nose!

"Look here——"

"Silence!"

"If you think I'm going to have my knuckles rapped, like one of these putrid little fags——!" shrieked Coker.

"Another word," hooted Mr. Twigg "and I will send you to the Head!"

Coker did not utter another word! He mastered his feelings, which were indescribable. How he got out of that Form-room, at last, without having punched Twigg, he never knew!

Fortunately, he did!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

BACK UP!

"Buck up, old man!" said Potter.

"Cheer up!" said Greene. Coker of the Fifth did not answer.

He did not buck up! He did not cheer up! He remained plunged in the deepest of gloom.

It was three or four days, since Mr. Prout's crushing sentence on Coker had made all Greyfriars chuckle, and Horace rage and foam.

In those three or four days, fellows had got quite used to seeing the hefty form of Coker towering over the fags, going into the Second-Form-room. They had almost ceased to smile at the sight.

The fags had got used to it. Twigg had got used to it. Prout had got used to it.

Only Coker hadn't!

Coker couldn't! Few, probably, guessed what anguish this was to Coker! It hit him, as Fisher T. Fish had expressed it, where he lived! He was wounded in the tenderest place—his self-esteem.

Ixion may have got used, in time, to whirling on his wheel; Sisyphus to rolling his eternal stone! But Coker could not get used to being treated as a fag among fags.

Deep gloom was imprinted on the manly brow of Horace Coker! He was plunged in pessimism! Glumness clothed him like a garment.

Sprawling in the armchair in his study, his long legs stretched out, his hands driven deep into his trousers' pockets, Horace Coker heard his friends' attempts at comfort, but heeded not.

He was past comfort.

"After all," said Potter, "it won't last! Prout only means it as a lesson to you, Coker, old man."

Coker looked up, at that!

"A lesson?" he repeated.

"Yes, that's all."

"Do you think, George Potter, that I'm in need of any lesson?"

"Oh, dear!" said Potter.

"Well, you did cheek Prout, you know!" urged Greene.

"Don't be a silly ass, Greene!"

"Um!"

"If it's cheek to be in the right when a pompous old ass is in the wrong, then perhaps it was cheek!" said Coker. "Not otherwise."

"Um!" murmured Potter and Greene.

"A fellow can't stand it!" said Coker, darkly. "The fags in the Second cackle at me! Grin at me!

I've had toffee slipped down my back——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you sniggering at?" roared Coker.

"Oh, nothing! But——"

"That little tick, Twigg, is cheeky," went on Coker. "He has the cheek to jaw me, before the fags! They cackle! A fellow can't very well pick him up and chuck him across the Form-room——"

"Oh!" gasped Potter. "No! N-n-not quite! No!"

"You see, it's the sack!" said Coker distressfully. "If it wasn't for that, I'd take Prout and Twigg by their necks and bang their heads together."

"Great pip!"

"But what would happen if I did?" demanded Coker. "The Head would sack me. That's a cert, I reckon. What?"

"Quite!" gurgled Greene. "I—I—I don't think there's any doubt that a fellow would be sacked if he knocked two Form-masters' heads together."

"Well, what's a man to do?" said Coker wearily. "Prout thinks he's getting away with this! Making a fellow look a fool! It's not only an insult to me, but to all the Fifth, if they could only see it! They can't! They only cackle! But look here, I'm not letting Prout crow over me."



Suddenly Dicky Nugent snatched the stick of toffee from Sammy Bunter's fingers, leaned over Coker, and pushed it down the back of his neck. "I say——" howled Bunter minor. But his voice was drowned by the roar that came from Coker. "Ooogh! Grooogh! Urrrgh!"

Coker sat up in the chair. There was a gleam in Coker's eyes.

The worm will turn! And Coker was not a worm! Such deep, inexpressible wrongs roused thoughts of vengeance.

"I'm getting back on Prout!" said Coker darkly. "He can make me look a fool, by sticking me among those putrid fags! Well, I fancy Prout will look rather a fool, too, when he gets a bucket of whitewash over his silly head."

"A—a—a what?" stuttered Potter, in alarm.

"I've been thinking it out," said Coker. "Prout's got me in a cleft stick—with the Head backing him up, ready to sack a fellow. I'm not going to be sacked, to please Prout! He's made me sit up! I'm going to make him sit up! See? You fellows are going to help."

Potter and Greene looked doubtful.

"Are we?" murmured Potter.

"Of course, I shall have to be a bit strategic," said Coker. "It won't do for Prout to know that it came from me. That's where you fellows will come in useful."

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene.

"Like the mouse and the lion over again," explained Coker. "The humble little mouse, in the fable, you know, who helped the lion when he was in the toils! In the same way you're going to help me."

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene again.

They did not seem to be greatly taken by the idea of playing mouse to Coker's lion!

"You know old Prout takes a trot in the quad of an evening," said Coker. "Rolls like a barge along the Elm Walk! Well, I know how to get that bucket of whitewash out of Gosling's wood-shed. You two fellows

get in one of the trees over the Elm Walk——"

"Do we?"

"Yes! You pull up that bucket with a rope! You keep it all ready——!"

"Oh!"

"And up-end it over Prout when he passes underneath! See?"

Potter and Greene gazed at Coker!

"What do you think of that?" asked Coker.

Potter and Greene did not tell Coker what they thought of the idea of up-ending a bucket of whitewash over the head of their Form-master! They seemed bereft of speech!

"Easy as falling off a form, what?" pursued Coker. "You see, you fellows slip along, and get up into the tree early. You have a rope with you. I come along with the bucket of whitewash, and you pull it up. Then I clear off—of course, I shall have to be quite clear when it happens, as Prout is bound to think of me! I shall have to have an alibi. See?"

Potter and Greene were still speechless.

"Fancy Prout!" said Coker. A pale smile dawned on his gloomy face, "Fancy Old Pompous drenched with whitewash from head to foot! Make him look a bit of a fool, what?"

"Oh, crikey!" said Potter, finding his voice at last.

"You'll get clear all right afterwards," went on Coker. "A jolly good chance, anyhow! If you get landed, of course, you'll get it a bit stiff! You take that risk!"

"We—we—we take that risk?" articulated Greene.

"Yes, you can't carry out a stunt like this without risk!" said Coker. "Never mind that, though——"

"Oh!" breathed Potter. "Never mind that?"

"The only drawback is, that I shan't be able to tell Prout that it came from me, to make him squirm for sticking me in the Second!" said Coker. "But it wouldn't do, of course."

"Oh! That's the only drawback?" gasped Greene.

"Yes; I'd like to tell him, but it wouldn't do! We'll get on with it this very day!" said Coker. "Gosling may move that bucket of whitewash to-morrow. Strike while the iron's hot, what?"

Coker rose from the armchair.

He was still gloomy, still glum. But he seemed to draw some crumb of comfort from this masterly scheme for making Prout suffer for his sins. Vengeance is sweet!

Potter and Greene did not rise. Coker was keen, Potter and Greene did not seem to share his keenness.

"Well, come on," said Coker, glancing at them, "I've told you exactly what you're to do, and even duffers like you can't very well muck it up, when you've got exact instructions. Why don't you come?"

"Do—do—do you think we're coming to mop whitewash over our beak?" gasped Potter.

"Eh! Yes!"

"Then you'd better think again!" hooted Potter. "We're not doing anything of the kind, see? We don't want a Head's flogging."

"And we don't want to whitewash Prout, either!" hooted Greene. "Prout's not a bad old bean!"

Coker looked at them. It dawned on his powerful brain that his own keenness for this great stunt was not shared in his study.

His brow darkened.

"If you mean that you're letting me down——!" he began.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Potter. "Look here, Coker, you've only got from Prout what you asked for——"

"Begged and prayed for!" said Greene.

"Make the best of it!" said Potter. "You're learning spelling, anyhow, in the Second!"

"And you need it!" said Greene.

Coker's eyes glinted.

"Are you backing me up, or are you not backing me up?" he demanded, categorically.

"No!" roared Potter and Greene together, desperately.

"That does it!" Coker pushed back his cuffs. "I can't bang Prout and Twigg's heads together for their cheek! But I can jolly well bang your cheeky heads together, and I'm going to."

And Coker rushed at his disloyal followers, grasped them, and essayed to bang their heads together, as they so richly deserved.

But Coker was not the only worm that could turn.

Potter and Greene did not, perhaps realise that they deserved to have their heads banged! Anyhow, they did not want them banged!

They grasped Coker.

They heaved at him together and upended him! A head banged in the study. But it was not Potter's head, or Greene's head! It was Coker's head, and it banged on the study table.

Bang!

"Yooooooop!" roared Coker.

Bang!

"Yaroooooh!"

Coker found himself sitting on the carpet, rubbing a dizzy head. Potter and Greene retired, rather hastily, from the study, and left him to it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

RALLYING ROUND COKER!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Too late!"

"Eh! What do you mean, too late?" demanded Billy Bunter.

"We've finished tea."

There was a chuckle in No. 1 Study in the Remove. Tea was over, in that celebrated apartment when Billy Bunter put his fat face and big spectacles in at the door.

"The too-latefulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, you fellows! I say, Coker's coming!"

"Oh, Coker!"

The Famous Five jumped up from the tea-table at once.

"I looked in, to give you the tip," said Billy Bunter, more in sorrow than in anger. "Still, if there's any cake left——"

"There isn't!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, as the heavy tread of Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, woke the echoes of the Remove passage.

Coker looked into No. 1 Study.

Five smiling faces were turned towards him.

Harry Wharton picked up a ruler. Frank Nugent picked up the inkpot. Bob Cherry lifted the poker from the fender. Johnny Bull grasped a Latin dictionary; Hurree Singh a pair of compasses. The chums of the Remove were quickly ready for Coker.

They supposed, of course, that the great Horace had come on the war-path. Coker was very often on the war-path. And they knew that his fiery temper had been fearfully exacerbated, of late, by his experience in the Second-form room.

To their surprise, however, Coker

showed no sign of hostility. He stared at them.

"What's that game?" he grunted, noting the various weapons in their hands. "What are you up to, you silly little idiots?"

"The question is what are you up to?" answered Harry Wharton. "Is this a friendly call, or have you come here for a ragging?"

"Don't be a young ass, Wharton! I've got something to say to you."

Coker shut the door.

Apparently he did not desire other ears to hear what he had to say to the chums of the Remove.

"Oh, all right," said Harry.

The ruler, the inkpot, the poker, the dictionary and the compasses were restored to their respective places. Coker, it appeared, did not need them!

"Sit down, old bean!" said Nugent hospitably.

Why Coker had called was a mystery. Still, if he was going to depart so far from his usual manners and customs as to be civil, the chums of the Remove were prepared to be civil in their turn.

"I'll stand!" grunted Coker. "You needn't fancy you've got a Fifth-form man visiting your study, because I've come here to speak to you. I don't want any of your dashed fag familiarity!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm in need of some assistance," said Coker. "I want something done, and my own pals have let me down." He rubbed his head reminiscently. "It's just the sort of thing you cheeky little sweeps would like, I fancy. You're always playing some fag trick or other."

The Famous Five eyed him.

It appeared that Coker had come there to ask some service at their



Potter and Greene grasped Coker together, heaved at him, and up-ended him over the study table. Bang "Yooooop!" roared Coker, as his head smote the table. Bang! "Yarooooh!" he roared again.

hands. Coker had his own inimitable way of asking favours.

"You've heard about the way Prout's been treating me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared.

"I haven't come here to listen to fag cackle!" he roared. "If you want me to thrash you all round you've only got to say so."

"So!" said Bob Cherry at once.

"What?"

"So!" repeated Bob.

"What do you mean, you young ass?" said Coker irritably. His powerful brain did not grasp things quickly; indeed, often did not grasp them at all. "Talk sense. Or rather, don't talk at all. I haven't come here to listen to your fag jaw. Look here, I'm after Prout."

"Eh?"

"A couple of you kids can do the trick," said Coker. "And I'll stand you a cake if you work it all right."

"A—a—a cake!" repeated the Famous Five.

They looked at Coker as if they could have eaten him. From Coker's lofty point of view, all juniors were fags, to be bribed with cakes or apples. Coker made no distinction whatever between the heroes of the Remove and the inky little imps in the Second Form, among whom he sat for his sins.

But there was a difference—a big difference.

"A big plum cake," said Coker. "I've had one in a hamper from my Aunt Judy. Big enough to make the lot of you sick."

They gazed at him.

"Well, this is the idea," said Coker

briskly. "Two of you hide in the big elm over the Elm Walk in about half an hour's time. Take a cord with you. I shall bring along a bucket of whitewash, and you'll pull it up."

"What—which—why—how——"

"Don't jaw—listen! You'll wait in the tree till Prout comes barging along, then you'll upend the whitewash over his head."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Then you can scoot," said Coker. "I daresay you'll get clear all right."

"You—you daresay! Oh!"

"You'll get away all right if you're careful. If you're not, serve you jolly well right if you get whopped."

"Oh, crikey!"

"And there'll be the cake afterwards," said Coker temptingly. "You fags are always gorging, I believe. A big plum cake! Is it a go?"

"Is it?" gasped Harry Wharton. "Not quite."

"The quitefulness is not terrific."

"You silly ass!"

"You blithering bandersnatch!"

"You frabjous fathead——!"

"Don't jaw," said Coker. "I don't want any jaw. I've had enough of that from Potter and Greene. I want you to do this. I'll stand you a cake to guzzle if you'll do it for me. I'll jolly well whop you all round, here and now, if you don't. I can't say fairer than that."

Horace Coker's fate trembled in the balance. He never knew what a narrow escape he had at that moment of being strewn over the floor of No. 1 Study, with five juniors treading on him. Bob Cherry waved his comrades back as they were about to advance.

"Let's have this clear," said Bob, with a glimmer in his blue eyes. "We get into the big tree over the Elm Walk, Coker——"

"We don't!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Shut up, old chap. Coker's here to give orders, aren't you, Coker?"

"Of course!" said Coker.

Johnny stared at his chum dumb-founded for a moment. Bob closed one eye at him. Johnny grinned and was silent.

"Well, go ahead, Coker," said Bob. "Let's have it clear. We get into that big tree over the Elm Walk——"

"That's it," said Coker.

"You bring along a bucket of whitewash——"

"Exactly."

"We pull it up."

"You've got it," assented Coker.

"Then we mop it over somebody passing along the path underneath."

"Yes; over Prout!"

"Prout?" repeated Bob, gravely. "Well, it's a bit shadowy under those trees, Coker! Suppose we mopped it over the wrong man?"

"Keep your eyes open, of course," grunted Coker. "If you make a mistake it's your own fault! Watch for the man you want, of course."

"Well, that's all right!" said Bob. "We watch for the man we want, and let him have it right on the napper?"

"Yes."

"It's a go, then!" said Bob.

The rest of the Co. stood silent.

That Bob Cherry had any idea, even the remotest idea, of mopping whitewash over the majestic head of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was wildly impossible. Coker might fancy so! Nobody else was likely to fancy so! The Co. could only conclude that Bob had some mysterious scheme for pulling Coker's egregious leg, and they let him get on with it.

Coker nodded with satisfaction.

"Half an hour's time, then!" he said.

"Right as rain!"

"Well, I'm glad I haven't had to

thrash the lot of you," said Coker, genially, as he turned to the door.

"You've reason to be glad!" remarked Johnny Bull. And the Famous Five chuckled.

Coker gave Johnny a look; but he left the study peaceably. These cheeky fags were going to do what Coker wanted; and that was that! But were they?

When the door closed on Coker, four members of the famous Co. looked expressively at Bob Cherry.

"Now, what's the game?" demanded four voices.

"Game?" repeated Bob.

"You're not thinking of mopping whitewash over Prout, I suppose?" demanded Wharton.

"Hardly! I never told Coker we'd do that, did I? I said we'd watch for the man we want, and let him have it right on the napper! So we will! Prout's not the man we want, though!"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "I—I see!"

"Time you did!" agreed Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of merriment in No. 1 Study. Coker heard it, as he went down the Remove staircase. He smiled! Evidently these fags were greatly entertained by the prospect of mopping down that whitewash on an unsuspecting head!

Coker smiled—though probably he would not have smiled, had he



"If some junior boy has played a prank on you, Gosling," said Mr. Prout, "go to the boy's Form-master! Why do you come to me?" "Master Coker ain't no junior boy," replied Gosling, "and wot I says is this 'ere——" "Coker!" repeated Mr. Prout, his eyes gleaming. He was fed-up with Coker.

known whose head was to get the whitewash !

THE TENTH CHAPTER

STRATEGIC !

GOSLING stared.

The ancient porter of Greyfriars' School was in his wood-shed. He had some work to do there.

He was sitting on a bench in the corner of the shed, slowly and methodically filling his pipe with tobacco, and cramming it down with a horny thumb.

No one, perhaps, would have guessed, from Gosling's occupation, that he had work to do ! But that, as a matter of fact, was the way Gosling often did his work ! He preferred doing it that way !

Having filled his pipe to his satisfaction, Gosling was about to strike a match, and apply it to the bowl, when he stopped—and stared !

A shadow fell across the half-open doorway of the shed.

A figure stepped in, on tiptoe.

Gosling stared blankly at Coker, of the Fifth Form ! Had a fag of the Third or Second sneaked into his wood-shed in that surreptitious way, Gosling would not have been surprised. Such young rascals were as full of tricks as monkeys ! But he was surprised to see a Fifth-form senior at it.

Coker, inside, glanced round and spotted the bucket of whitewash standing under the window. He did not spot Gosling.

Gosling was in the further corner, staring. Pipe in hand, with his mouth open, he stared.

"What luck !" Coker murmured the words aloud. "There it is—the old donkey hasn't used it yet ! Lucky the old ass left the door open, too !"

Gosling breathed hard. He could

not doubt to whom Coker's communnings referred ! He, William Gosling, was the old donkey, and the old ass ! And this Fifth-form fellow was after his whitewash !

The whitewash had been mixed that morning ! No doubt Coker had seen it, through the window, where it stood. And he was after it ! What use a Fifth-form fellow could possibly have for whitewash was a mystery to Gosling. Certainly Gosling was not going to let him walk it off ! Gosling had a use for it himself ! Indeed, he would have been using it now, had he not been busy on the more important occupation of resting his ancient limbs on a bench and filling his pipe !

"Hi !" ejaculated Gosling, suddenly and sharply.

"Oh !" gasped Coker.

He spun round.

"I'd like to know," said Gosling, as the Fifth-Former stared at him, "what you think you're up to, Master Coker ? Wot I says is this 'ere—wot are you up to ?"

"Oh !" gasped Coker. "Nothing !"

"You come in 'ere for nothing ?" asked Gosling, with crushing sarcasm. "Well, take it and go ! There's lots of it !"

Coker looked at him. He was annoyed. He was tempted to jam Gosling's head against the wall and walk off the bucket of whitewash under his cheeky nose, but he refrained. It was necessary for Prout not to know who had handled that whitewash. Just as Coker's vengeance was, he did not expect the Head to see the justice of it, if the facts came out. Circumstances compelled Coker to imitate the gentleman in the poem who did good by stealth !

He walked out of the wood-shed. Had he walked off that whitewash under Gosling's nose, Gosling would

have reported him to his Form-master. Then, after the happening, Prout would have guessed that Coker was concerned in the whitewashing! Coker could see that. Coker was not bright, but he was bright enough for that.

Strategy evidently was indicated. He had to have that whitewash. Already the Remove fellows were on the Elm Walk, getting into the tree, ready. But he had to have it without Gosling's knowledge.

Gosling snorted when he went. He lighted his pipe. He was going to smoke his pipe and use the whitewash afterwards, if there was time after he had finished smoking his pipe!

But his smoke was interrupted.

Hardly five minutes later the rugged features of Horace Coker looked in at the door.

Gosling eyed him with deep suspicion. This time, however, Coker did not enter; he called across to Gosling.

"You there, Gosling? Did you know that the Head was at your lodge, asking for you?"

"Ho!" said Gosling.

Coker walked off again.

Slowly, Gosling rose from the bench and laid down his pipe. If the Head wanted to see him at his lodge, he had to go. It did not occur to him for the moment that Coker had not said that the Head was at his lodge. He had merely inquired whether Gosling knew that he was there. Coker was rather a stickler for the truth.

However, this fine distinction was lost on Gosling's rather slow brain. He left the wood-shed and pegged away to his lodge.

When he was gone, a burly figure appeared round the corner of the shed. Coker had watched him go.

The astute Coker grinned as he whipped into the wood-shed and secured the bucket of whitewash.

Gosling was nowhere in sight when he walked out with it. Coker's strategy had been a success.

He walked away cheerily. He had to take rather a roundabout course to get that bucket into the quad unobserved, but he had plenty of time on his hands. Prout was not due to take his usual stroll for nearly half an hour yet.

Five minutes after Coker had vanished, Gosling returned with a red and wrathful face. He had not found the Head at his lodge. He realised that Coker had been pulling his leg! He debated in his mind whether the episode was serious enough for a report to Coker's Form-master. He pegged into the wood-shed, sat down on his bench again and picked up his pipe.

Then he uttered a startled ejaculation.

"My eye! That there whitewash!"

The bucket was gone.

Gosling saw it all. He had been tricked out of the shed while Coker snaffled the whitewash! It was as clear as noonday to Gosling.

"My eye!" he repeated.

Once more Gosling left the shed. This time he peregrinated towards the House. He kept his eye open for Coker, but did not spot him. He reached the House, and went to Mr. Prout's study.

"Come in!" said the deep and fruity voice of Prout, as Gosling tapped at his door.

Gosling entered, greeted by a surprised stare of inquiry from Prout.

"What is it, Gosling?" asked Prout, rather snappishly.

Mr. Prout was not in the best of tempers that afternoon. There was

something in the nature of a worry on his mind. He had had a rather unpleasant reminder of the existence of a gentleman whose existence he would gladly have forgotten. That was Mr. Spadger Hawkins!

The Spadger's exploits of nearly a week ago had been duly reported to the police at Courtfield. Inspector Grimes had undertaken to round up that rough and disagreeable gentleman, and provide him with free board and lodging for a time. Mr. Prout had naturally supposed that either the Spadger would be "run in," or else that he would disappear over the horizon and never be heard of again.

Neither had happened! The Spadger had been seen quite near the school, but the police had not succeeded in getting hold of him.

He had dodged them; but it was known that he was still in the neighbourhood; a much-sought-after man!

This was unpleasant news for Prout! He could not help feeling that the Spadger was lingering in the vicinity, at his peril, on account of that crack on the nut that Prout had given him! With some idea in his mind, perhaps, that one good turn deserved another, he wanted to crack Prout's nut!

It was disconcerting.

Prout had heaps of pluck! He feared no foe! But it was rather unnerving to think that that hulking ruffian was watching for him, when he took his walks abroad, with the intention of cracking his nut! It seemed judicious, for the present, to confine his walks to the precincts of the school.

Thinking over this, Prout was not in the best of tempers.

Certainly it was not Gosling's fault! But he snapped at Gosling! He felt like snapping at somebody; and

Gosling was the only person available at the moment!

"It's like this, sir——" said Gosling.

"Like what?" snapped Prout. "Kindly speak in English!"

"Eh?" said Gosling.

"If you have anything to say to me, Gosling, say it, and be brief, and do not disturb me further!" yapped Prout. "I am a busy man!"

"Ho!" said Gosling. "Well, sir, wot I says is this 'ere, if young ribs are to pull a man's leg, I says, and make a fool of him, I says, and send him orf to see somebody what ain't there, I says, and sneak his pail of whitewash while his back's turned, I says——"

"Nonsense!" said Prout. "If some junior boy has played such a foolish prank on you, Gosling, go to the boy's Form-master! Why do you come to me?"

"Master Coker ain't no junior-boy, sir," answered Gosling, "and wot I says is this 'ere, I've come 'ere, I says, because Master Coker——"

"Coker!" repeated Prout.

His eyes gleamed.

He was fed up with Coker! With the worry of Spadger Hawkins on his mind, he had no patience for Coker!

"Wot I says——!" recommenced Gosling.

"Be brief!" barked Prout. He rose. "Has Coker, of my Form, been to your wood-shed?"

"He 'ave——!"

"He has abstracted a pail of white-wash?"

"I ain't said nothing about extracting nothing," said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere, he's took it!"

"He has taken a pail of whitewash from the wood-shed?"

"Arter pulling of a man's leg——"

"I will see to the matter! You may go!"

Gosling went. He grunted as he went. He was annoyed with Prout and his brusque manner. Still, he drew comfort from Prout's manner—it indicated that Coker was booked for trouble! Gosling went back to his wood-shed, to complete his interrupted smoke, hoping that Coker of the Fifth would get it, as he described it, "ot!"

Prout looked as if Coker would, as he left the House!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

NOT PROUT!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Here he comes!"

There was a chuckle in the branches of the big elm. Five smiling faces looked down through the foliage on to the path below.

It was still quite light in the open quad. But on the Elm Walk, it was quite dusky.

It was not too dusky, however, for the Famous Five to observe a burly figure that came cautiously through the trees, carrying a bucket of whitewash.

They smiled down at Coker of the Fifth.



"Mind how you pull it up," said Coker, as Bob Cherry drew up the cord with the bucket attached. "Don't be clumsy young duffers if you can help it. Careful!" Coker watched the ascent of the bucket of whitewash with an anxious eye.

Coker had arrived on the scene of action! He had rather kept the Famous Five waiting. They had expected him sooner. They were not aware that he had had to use strategy to get hold of the whitewash.

However, here he was, at last.

He stopped under the big elm, of which the extensive branches completely roofed that part of the path. He looked up.

He frowned at the sight of five young faces among the leaves above him. Two of the fags would have been enough for the purpose. But it appeared that they all wanted to see the fun.

"Oh! You're all there!" grunted Coker.

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again," sang Bob Cherry, powerfully if not melodiously.

"Don't make such a row, you young ass!" snorted Coker. "Do you want to bring all Greyfriars here?"

"My esteemed and idiotic Coker," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Shut up, you silly, chattering nigger," snapped Coker. "Can't you silly fags ever hold your silly tongues?"

Really, if ever a fellow asked for it, Coker did. He seemed born specially to ask for it.

"Look here, Coker——" began Johnny Bull.

"I said shut up!" interrupted Coker. "No need to jaw. Just shut up. Now, have you got the cord? Just like you young idiots to forget it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We've got the cord, Coker," he answered.

"Let it down, then, and don't waste time, or jaw."

"Here it comes!"

The captain of the Remove, sitting astride the branch, let down the cord. It slithered down to Coker, uncoiling as it slithered. The coil was not quite uncoiled, when it landed on Coker's head.

He gave a howl.

"You clumsy young ass!"

"What's the matter now, Coker?"

"I didn't tell you to bang the thing on my head, you silly little idiot."

"That's all right, Coker—I could do that without being told."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared up at the five. Had they not been a dozen feet above his head, and consequently far out of reach, Coker might have interrupted the proceedings by starting to thrash them all round. He had no doubt that it would have done them good.

"Stop that sniggering!" snapped Coker. He captured the end of the cord and tied it to the handle of the bucket. "Keep quiet, you sniggering young asses. Prout won't be here yet, but you don't want fellows to hear you and come along. Can't you understand that this has got to be kept dark?"

"The understandfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker."

"Shut up!"

Coker knotted the end of the cord secured to the handle of the bucket, the Famous Five watching him with great interest from above.

"There, that's all right," said Coker. "Mind how you pull it up. Don't be clumsy young duffers, if you can help it. Careful!"

Sitting astride on the branch, Bob Cherry drew up the cord, with the bucket attached. Coker carefully helped it off the ground.

He watched its ascent with an anxious eye. Slowly but surely it reached the wide-stretched branch where the juniors sat.

"Now, careful with it!" said Coker. "Lodge it on the branch and keep it steady while you wait for Prout."

The bucket was grasped, lifted, and lodged on the branch.

"Prout may be along any time, in about a quarter of an hour," went on Coker. "Don't jaw, and keep an eye open for him. I shall have plenty of time to get clear——"

"Will you?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Yes, that's all right. I don't want Prout to think I've had a hand in it—he would be pretty certain to take me to the Head. I had to be jolly careful in getting hold of the whitewash—that old ass Gosling was there; but luckily I pulled the wool over his eyes all right," said Coker, in happy unconsciousness of the fact that Gosling had already reported his strategic exploits to Prout. "Mind you don't spill it, Cherry, you clumsy young ass."

Bob winked at his comrades.

Coker, standing under the branch, looking up, was about as good a target as any fellow could have desired.

"All right now, Coker," said Bob. "We're to watch for the man we want and let him have it on his napper."

"That's it. Prout——"

"Prout's not the man we want."

"Eh?"

"You're the man we want, Coker."

"What!"

"And here comes the whitewash!" It came!

Before Coker's powerful intellect realised what was happening, Bob Cherry tilted over the bucket of whitewash.

The contents shot down, with a swoooooosh!

Swoosh!

Splash!

"Urrrrrgh!"

Coker disappeared from view—under a gallon of whitewash! It

clothed him from head to foot! It clothed him like a garment! From the midst of it, the astonished Coker gurgled horribly.

"Urrgh! Wurrgh! Gurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bucket was tossed away among the trees. Five juniors dropped from branches, and scudded. A howl of laughter floated back. But Coker did not hear it. His ears were full of whitewash. He lived, and moved, and had his being in a world of whitewash. He was of the whitewash whitewashy! Streaming, splashing, gurgling, and breathing whitewash, Coker staggered on the path under the elms, uttering a series of the most remarkable ejaculations:

"Oooogh! Wooooogh! Urrrrgh! Wurrrrgh! Gug! gug! gug!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

HORRID FOR HORACE!

"H^A, ha, ha!"

"Who is it?"

"What is it!"

"Why is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout stared round him. He was coming out of the House, to look for Coker of his Form: wrathfully determined to inquire, with the greatest severity, why he had snaffled Gosling's whitewash, what he was going to do with it, and what had become of it—and to administer due punishment.

But Prout, as it turned out, was under no necessity of making all those inquiries. He was no sooner out of the House, than he discovered Coker, and the whitewash, and what had become of it!

A strange, startling, grisly and ghastly figure was tottering towards the House, from the direction of the elms.

It gurgled as it came!

Crowds of fellows stared at it! It was not recognisable as Coker of the Fifth! It streamed whitewash, and left a white trail behind it, like the wake of a ship! Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, gave a simultaneous jump at the sight of it. A dreadful fear smote them that it was Prout, and that Coker had carried out unaided, the remarkable stunt in which they had declined to lend their aid. If he had, it was the sack for Coker—the long jump on the spot! But they spotted the portly figure of Prout, and were relieved.

"It's not Prout!" breathed Potter.

"Thank goodness!" gasped Greene.

"But—but it's somebody——"

"And—and it's whitewash——"

"He's got the wrong man——"

"Just like Coker!"

"Oh, just!"

"Who's that?" roared Wingate, of the Sixth. "What sort of a game is this? Is that some fellow larking, or what?"

"I—I think it's Coker!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Coker!" roared Potter and Greene together.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did—did—did someone say that—that—that that was Coker!" articulated Mr. Prout.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a very extraordinary proceeding!" said Mr. Quelch. "What can Coker have done this for? Very extraordinary indeed!"

"Groooogh!" came from the ghastly figure. "Oooogh! Woooo-ooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oooogh! Gurrgh! Gug!"

"I say, you fellows, it's Coker!" yelled Billy Bunter. "I say, he's smothered himself with whitewash! He, he, he!"

"Coker!" boomed Prout.

He strode up to the whitewashy figure. Coker came to a halt, and gave him a dim blink through the whitewash.

Had the stunt gone according to plan, Prout would have been in Coker's present ghastly state. And Coker, though he did not realise it, would have been booked for the "sack." Really, Coker was better off, in his present state, though he did not realise that either. The chums of the Remove had saved Coker from himself, as it were; but Coker was not feeling grateful. His present desire was to slaughter them.

"Is—is—is that you, Coker?" gasped Prout.

"Urrgh! Yes, sir!" gurgled Coker.

"Why have you done this?"

"Urrgh!"

"Speak!"

"Gurrgh!"

"Explain yourself!" shrieked Prout.

"Woooooooogh!"

"You utterly absurd boy! Are you in your right senses? Gosling has reported to me that you abstracted his whitewash. Is it possible that you did so with this intention—to cover yourself, sir, with whitewash, and present this ridiculous spectacle to the school?"

"Ugggh! I—I—I didn't—I—urrgh——"

"The boy must be insane!" gasped Prout.

"Groooogh!"

"Will you explain yourself, Coker?"

"Ooogh! How can I—grooogh!—when my mum-mum-mum-mouth's full of—urrgh!—whitewash?" gurgled Coker. "I—I—oooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A most absurd jest, if jest it is!" said Mr. Quelch. "I see nothing whatever of a humorous nature in such a jest! The boy must have ruined his clothes."

"Groogh! I never—oooogh!"

"It is beyond me!" said Prout. "Beyond me entirely! The boy appears to have purloined a pail of whitewash, for no purpose but to smother himself from head to foot with it! I doubt whether he is sane!"

"Ooogh! I—I—grooogh—"

"Go into the House, sir!" boomed Prout. "Go and—clean yourself! I will question you later! Go!"

He stepped aside, and Coker trailed on, dripping whitewash. Prout glared after him. Quelch frowned after him. The Greyfriars fellows roared with laughter after him. Coker had the spotlight! He had brought down the house!

"Amazing!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Unparalleled!" gasped Prout.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker trailed in. Potter and Greene followed him. Coker wanted a wash and

a change; and they were prepared to help. Howls of laughter echoed behind them.

They got him to a bath-room. Coker wallowed in hot water and soap, which he badly needed. They brought him a change of clothes.



"Prout's not the man we want," said Bob Cherry. "You're the man we want, Coker! And here comes the whitewash!" Before Coker could realise what was happening, Bob Cherry tilted the bucket and the contents shot down with a swoooooosh! "Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Coker through whitewash.

But it was a long time before Coker presented anything like his usual aspect! When he got the whitewash off, he was as red as he had before been white, with scrubbing and exertion. And, with all his efforts, there were still traces of whitewash in his hair, and about his ears.

He was gasping for breath when he was finished at last. His rugged face was like a freshly-boiled beetroot.

"I'll smash 'em!" he said for the twentieth time. "I'll spiflicate 'em! I'll pulverise 'em!"

"But how did it happen?" gasped Potter.

"All your fault!" hooted Coker. "If you'd stood by me, it wouldn't have happened! I got those Remove fags to do it, and they had the cheek to mop the whitewash over me instead of over Prout."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Potter and Greene.

Coker glared at them.

"You cackling asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you sniggering at?" howled Coker. "Do you think it's funny?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently Potter and Greene did. They staggered away, doubled up with merriment.

"Oh, snigger!" roared Coker after them, greatly incensed. "Snigger!"

Potter and Greene took full advantage of that permission. They sniggered almost hysterically as they went.

Later, Coker had to see Prout. Even Coker was too wary to tell Prout what he had intended to do with the whitewash. He explained that he had never intended to get it upset over himself—which was the truth. He left Prout the richer by five hundred lines.

There was only one consolation left for Coker. That was to smash, spiflicate and pulverise the Famous Five of the Remove.

With that deadly intention, Coker dropped into No. 1 Study after prep that evening.

Soon afterwards a sound was heard on the Remove staircase, as if the coal-merchant was delivering sacks of coal there!

But it was not a delivery of coal! It was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, rolling down!

The chums of the Remove had not been smashed, spiflicated, or pulverised. But Coker, by the time he landed on the lower landing, was feeling considerably smashed, spiflicated, and pulverised! What was left of Coker tottered away, a sadder, if not a wiser Coker!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

SECOND TIME OF ASKING!

"It's rotten!" said Coker gloomily.

"Mine's right!" said Potter rather tartly.

"So's mine!" said Greene.

Coker stared at them.

The three were at tea in the study, a day or two after the hectic episode of the whitewash.

There were eggs for tea. Potter and Greene were demolishing their eggs with satisfaction. Football practice had given them good appetites.

Coker jabbed his spoon into his egg as if he hated it!

Gloom sat on Coker's manly brow.

Gloom, indeed, sat there perennially now! To Coker, of the Fifth, life seemed weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable.

He had hoped that Prout would relent, and let him off that awful business of attending class with the Second Form. He had hoped that

Twigg would get tired of having him there.

Probably the latter hope had been realised! Twigg, very likely, was tired of Coker in the Second. The Second Form were not tired of him—Coker made class more interesting for them. They liked Coker there! They liked to hear him spell! They liked to see the way he looked at Twigg, when Twigg told him that there were no X's in "accept," or no J's in "gem." They liked putting bent pen-nibs on the form for him to sit on. They liked dropping pencils and things down his back. They found Coker almost inexhaustible as an entertainment. But Mr. Twigg, it was very probable, would have been glad to see the last of him, though he did not like to say so to Prout.

As for Prout's relenting, that was hopeless. So far from relenting, Prout was adamant—hard as the nether millstone. Some fellows suspected that he was so glad, and so relieved, to get Coker off his own hands a bit, that he would not be in a hurry to let him off.

Indeed, Prout had plainly stated that Coker had to sit with the Second till his spelling improved! That was the same as saying that he had to sit with the Second till the Greek Kalends. It was a life-sentence, in fact!

If Prout had ever thought of relenting, the incident of the whitewash would have hardened him again. Prout was sensitive about a fellow in his Form cutting such a ridiculous figure. It banished any compunction he might have had.

No wonder that Coker said that it was rotten! He felt that he was getting near the limit of endurance.

This, really, was a thing no fellow could stand!

If he had only got away with that

Greyfriars Jingles

How Much Per Cent?

By
PETER
TODD



I GUESS you've heard of Fishy, eh?
That enterprising business jay,
Who cut his eye-teeth in Noo Yark?
Well, here's his favourite remark:
"How much per cent?"

He's lots of others, such as "Great!"
"I kind a guess and calculate!"
And "Snakes!" and "Say, I gotta hunch!"
But still, the pick of all the bunch
Is "How much per cent?"

Thus speaks our Shylock, Fisher T.,
"I guess you can't get over me!
It's time for prep? Aw, walk your chalks!
I guess I'm busy! Money talks—
How much per cent?"

He'll lend you money like a shot,
And hand it to you on the spot;
It isn't generous, it's "biz,"
And all you've got to worry is
How much per cent?

His "greenbacks" are his only friends;
For them his life begins and ends.
He lives and moves and has his being
In getting interest, and seeing
How much per cent?

Wherever you encounter him
In Rag or class-room, dorm or gym,
With heavy thought his eyes are shut,
Not thinking of his lessons, but
How much per cent?

whitewash stunt it would have been a comfort! Whitewashing Prout would have consoled him! But only Coker himself had been whitewashed, which was no consolation at all.

Gloomy, glum, restive, Coker sat at the tea-table and jabbed at his egg as if the egg had been Prout!

"Rotten!" he repeated. "Putrid!"

"They're new-laid!" said Potter.

"What?"

"New-laid!"

"Mad?" asked Coker.

"You've not tasted it yet!" Greene pointed out.

Coker blinked at them. Potter and Greene did not know that he was speaking of Prout's conduct, of his own uncommon wrongs and grievances, and of the stale, flat, and unprofitable state of the universe generally. They supposed that he was speaking of the eggs! And as they were eating eggs, it was a natural supposition.

"Tasted it!" said Coker.

"Yes! Taste it, and see!" said Greene. "Mine's all right and Potter's is all right! Fresh as a daisy."

"Perfectly fresh!" said Potter.

"You blithering, blethering, blinking blockheads!" said Coker. "Do you think I'm talking about eggs?"

"Eh! Yes! You said it was rotten—"

"I wasn't speaking of the egg, you fathead!"

"Well, if you mean the tomato—"

"The tomatoes are all right!" said Greene.

"I wasn't speaking of the tomato!" shrieked Coker. "Eggs! Tomatoes! That's all you fellows can think of! Eggs! Tomatoes!" Coker sneered—one of those bitter, sardonic sneers. "Talk about Nebuchadnezzar fiddling while Constantinople was burning!"

Potter and Greene made no re-

joinder to that. They had never, so far as they knew, heard of Nebuchadnezzar fiddling while Constantinople was burning! Possibly Coker was thinking of Nero and Rome, and had got it mixed.

But they did not argue! It was useless to argue with Coker! If he wanted to make it Nebuchadnezzar and Constantinople, he would make it Nebuchadnezzar and Constantinople, and that was that!

"But the worm will turn!" said Coker darkly.

"Um!" said Potter.

"Um!" said Greene.

"If you fellows had backed me up the other day, we'd have made that pompous old ass, Prout, sorry for himself!" said Coker.

"You'd have got sacked——"

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"Bunked!" said Greene.

"Don't be a dummy, Greene!"

Potter and Greene devoted themselves to eggs and tomatoes. They found these more interesting than Coker's conversation.

"You let me down!" said Coker.

Silence.

"Those cheeky Remove fags let me down!"

Still silence.

"But I'm a fellow," went on Coker, "that can depend on himself! If Prout thinks he's going to stick me among those putrid fags in the Second Form, and get away with it, Prout is making a big mistake."

Coker paused—not for a reply, but to demolish his egg! The egg duly demolished, Coker re-started after the interval.

"What do you think happened in the Second this afternoon?" he asked. "That ass, Twigg—that fathead, Twigg—that blithering cuckoo, Twigg—put up the word occiput on



As the strange, startling figure came tottering towards the House, leaving a white trail in its wake, crowds of fellows stared at it and roared with laughter. But the figure was not recognisable as Coker of the Fifth.

the blackboard! He spelt it without an X."

"Oh!"

"Like Prout!" said Coker.

"Oh!"

"I had to copy it down!"

"Oh!"

"I copied it down, just as the old ass wrote it!" said Coker. "I've had enough of trying to teach Form-masters how to spell! And what do think the old fathead said? He said I was improving!"

"Oh!"

"Improving!" repeated Coker, with a sardonic laugh.

"Um!"

"I sat on a pen-nib to-day!" went

on Coker. "One of the little beasts put it on the form while I was standing up! I sat down on it. It was sharp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Snigger!" said Coker bitterly. "Oh, snigger! Well, that's the sort of thing Prout's let me in for, because I wouldn't allow him to bully-rag me into bad spelling! But let him wait!"

Coker paused again. This time it was to deal with the tomatoes. The tomatoes followed the egg on the downward path, and Coker resumed: "I've thought it out!"

Potter and Greene refrained from asking him what he had done it with!

Coker, evidently, was in no mood for such inquiries.

"I've got it all cut and dried!" said Coker. "I'm not asking you fellows to help me, this time! I'm doing it alone! And it won't be whitewash, either! Let Prout wait!"

Coker breathed hard.

"Let him wait—till he takes his next trot on the Elm Walk!" said Coker. "Just let him wait! He'll find somebody there!"

"Coker, old man——" murmured Potter.

"For goodness' sake——" said Greene.

"Don't jaw!" said Coker. "As I said, let him wait! That's all! He's got it coming to him! It's coming to him all right! When he gets the bag over his head——"

"The—the bag!" gasped Potter.

"I've got the bag ready! I've soaked the inside with red ink. When Prout gets it slammed down over his head——"

"Coker——!"

"And tied, so that he can't get it off——"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Perhaps he will be sorry for himself—what?" asked Coker.

"You'll get sacked!" gasped Potter.

"I'm not going to tell him I did it!" said Coker sarcastically. "I wasn't thinking of mentioning that to Prout!"

"Coker, old man——" implored Greene.

"You needn't jaw!" said Coker, rising from the table. "Prout's made me sit up! I'm going to make Prout sit up—and how! That's what!"

"If you're seen with the bag——" gasped Potter.

"You'll be seen—spotted—nailed—snaffled——" groaned Greene.

"Think I'm a fool?" asked Coker.

Potter and Greene did not answer that question. Coker would have been offended, had they stated what they thought on that subject.

"I'm going to put the bag there ready, long before I bag Prout!" Coker condescended to explain. "I've got it here, in a brown-paper parcel. I shall leave it among the elms, where I can pick it up when I want it—which will be about an hour from now."

Coker, under the dismayed eyes of his friends, sorted a brown-paper parcel out of the study cupboard.

They looked at it. Certainly, that parcel looked innocent enough. No one could have suspected that it contained a bag, soaked with ink, intended to be jammed over the head of a Form-master! Nobody at Greyfriars could possibly have suspected that! Such things could hardly occur to any brain less original than Coker's.

"It will be all ready!" smiled Coker. "So shall I! Let Prout wait! That's all I say—let him wait!"

Coker, parcel in hand, walked out of the study.

Potter and Greene looked at one another! Coker was asking for it again—the second time of asking, as it were—begging for it with deep earnestness. This new scheme was, perhaps, a little more egregious than the whitewash stunt. On that occasion, Harry Wharton and Co. had saved Coker from himself! On this occasion they could not save him—nobody could save him!

If Coker bagged Prout with an inky bag, the result was certain. He would no longer have to sit with the Second Form of Greyfriars, it was true!—for he would no longer be at Greyfriars at all! It was the bag for Prout, and the sack for Coker!

"Oh dear!" sighed Potter.

"Oh lor'!" sighed Greene.

And they left it at that!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

ALL RIGHT FOR BUNTER!

BILLY BUNTER blinked.

But he did not stir.

He blinked anxiously and uneasily through his big spectacles. But he made no sound, and no movement.

William George Bunter, at the moment, was understudying the shy violet. He was seeking seclusion. Generally, Bunter was a gregarious animal. Just now he appreciated the charms which sages have seen in the face of Solitude.

In No. 1 Study, in the Remove, a box of chocolate creams had been intended to follow tea. That box of chocolate creams was missing from No. 1

Study. Billy Bunter was missing from the Remove passage!

When a box of chocolates and Billy Bunter were both missing at the same time, it was a safe bet that both had departed in the same direction! So the fat Owl of the Remove had a misgiving that he might be looked for.

For which reason, Bunter had strolled along to the Elm Walk, a shady and secluded spot, and turned off into the trees. Seated at the foot of an elm, in the dusk, Bunter negotiated the chocolates. If Harry Wharton and Co. were hunting him up and down the House, they were welcome, so far as Bunter was con-



As Bunter heard Coker rambling about, he sat still and silent with the box of snaffled chocolates. Next moment there was a sound as a parcel was dropped near him. "That's all right," came Coker's voice. "Nobody will see it there, and I can get it when I want it."

cerned, to go a-hunting as long as they liked. Bunter was not going to be seen in the House again till he had disposed internally of the evidence against him. By the time Bunter was seen, X-rays would be required to discover the evidence.

So the sound of a footstep among the elms rather alarmed Bunter! He blinked round him very anxiously.

He had not finished the chocolates yet! A lot of the evidence was still in sight if he was found. If those beasts had thought of hunting for him outside the House——

The fat junior hardly breathed.

Somebody was coming along the

Elm Walk! It might be old Prout, who always took a walk there in the early evening. It might be any fellow! Bunter could only hope that it was not the proprietor of the chocolates!

But his fat heart almost missed a beat as he heard the footsteps turn from the path into the trees.

They came directly towards the gnarled old elm behind which Bunter sat, his fat shoulders leaning on the trunk.

He barely repressed a yelp of alarm.

Then the footsteps stopped.

Only the tree was between Bunter, sitting with mouth agape and eyes bulging with terror behind his spectacles, and the unknown person who had arrived.

"This will do."

It was a murmuring voice.

Billy Bunter breathed more freely. He knew that voice. It was the voice of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form!

Bunter did not want to meet Coker. Coker had a short way with fags, and he was as likely as not to cuff Bunter for his own good! But it was a great relief to find that it was only Coker, and not one of those beasts who might have suspected Bunter of having snaffled the chocolates. Wondering why on earth Coker was rambling about there in the falling dusk, Bunter sat still and silent.

He heard a sound—as of a parcel dropping. Then the murmuring voice of Coker was audible again.

"That's all right. Nobody will see it there in the dusk, even if any fellow comes this way; and nobody ever does at dusk. I can get it when I want to all right."

Receding footsteps.

Coker was gone.

Bunter sat still and blinked. He was amazed.

Coker had sneaked into the elms and left a parcel there at the foot of a tree, intending to return later and retrieve it. It really was surprising.

To Bunter's mind, there was only one possible explanation. That parcel contained tuck!

On the rare occasions when Billy Bunter possessed more tuck than he could consume at a single sitting, it was his happy custom to bestow the remainder in a safe place till wanted. Only too well Bunter knew that if tuck was left about carelessly in a study, it might disappear. Often and often had he helped tuck to disappear in such circumstances.

Evidently—to Bunter—Coker had left a parcel of tuck in that safe place till he wanted it. It was rather an odd place to select, perhaps, but it was safe enough. Nobody would have dreamed that it was there, but for the happy chance that Bunter had been on the spot.

The Owl of the Remove did not stir—for two reasons. He wanted to give Coker time to clear, and he wanted to finish the chocolates.

The chocolates were duly finished. The silence showed that Coker had cleared. Bunter rose to his feet.

He came round the tree, blinking through his big spectacles in search of Coker's parcel.

There it lay, half-seen in the thick dusk under the branches. Bunter pounced on it.

It was wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. It was not very heavy—pastry, Bunter concluded.

Bunter's little, round eyes gleamed through his big, round spectacles. His fat fingers fumbled at the string.

That the tuck—if it was tuck!—belonged to Coker of the Fifth was a trifle light as air to Billy Bunter! Only that morning, Coker had kicked

Bunter. Only the day before he had smacked the head of Bunter's minor, Sammy, of the Second. A fellow who kicked and smacked Bunters could hardly expect the Bunter tribe to be very particular in dealing with him.

It would serve Coker right to bag his tuck, Bunter considered. He felt that he was quite justified.

In point of fact, however, he was thinking less of the justification than of the tuck! He fumbled with the string, and paused. Coker was coming back later for that parcel. It was not likely that he would come yet, as it was hardly ten minutes since he had left it there. Still, it was no use taking risks. All things considered, it was judicious to open that parcel at a safe distance.

Bunter put it under his arm and rolled away.

He blinked round rather anxiously in the quad. He did not want to meet Coker of the Fifth.

True, brown paper parcels were much alike. Still, he preferred not to meet Coker. Coker was rather a suspicious beast, quite capable of suspecting a fellow of snaffling his tuck!

However, he did not meet Coker. He rolled into the House and negotiated the stairs at unusual speed. It was a relief to roll into the Remove passage with his parcel safe and sound.

Billy Bunter felt pleased and satisfied.

That feeling of pleased satisfaction, however, was brief. As he rolled up the Remove passage from the landing, there was a sudden shout.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

"Here's the fat burglar!"

"Collar him!"

"Bag him!"

There was a rush of feet. Hands clutched at the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows——" gasped Bunter.

"Where's those chocs?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Bump him!"

"Squash him!"

"I say, you fellows, I never had the chocs!" yelled Bunter. "I say, I never went into your study, Wharton, and the chocs weren't in the cupboard, and I never saw them there, and——and they were still there, quite safe, when I left the study——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"As if I'd touch a fellow's chocs!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows——"

"Burst him!"

"I—I say, leggo! I say, I—I've got some tuck—I say, I—I was coming to whack it out with you fellows—something better than your measly chocs!" gasped Bunter. "I say, make it pax, you know! I never had the chocs——"

"Bump him!"

"I say, I've got a feed here—something ripping!" gasped Bunter. "I—I was coming to ask you fellows to whack it out!"

"Whose is it?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know! I—I've just fetched it from—from the tuck-shop—and—and I was coming to look for you fellows—I say, let's go into the study and—and whack it out!"

And the Famous Five, generously forbearing to slay Bunter as he richly deserved, marched him into No. 1 Study, where the brown paper parcel was dumped down on the study table.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

IN THE DARK!

"WAIT!" breathed Coker of the Fifth.

Mr. Prout did not know that that bright member of his Form was addressing him. His portly back was to Coker; and Coker was addressing that portly back—at a safe distance and under his breath.

"Just wait!" murmured Coker.

Prout, unconscious of Coker, sailed majestically across the quad, where the dusk was beginning to fall. Coker stalked him.

The Fifth Form-master was taking his usual walk—as Coker had expected he would. Prout was a gentleman of regular habits, and could be timed like a clock.

He was not thinking of Coker, of his Form. Had he thought of Coker, he would never have guessed that Coker was breathing vengeance. Prout was, in fact, unconscious of having deserved vengeance at Coker's hands. His own opinion was that he was very kind and patient with that backward and troublesome boy. Some Form-masters would have been much more severe with him. Prout, indeed, hoped, perhaps, that Coker was grateful!

If so, that hope was unfounded! Coker wasn't! Coker was thinking of vengeance, and of an inky bag that was to be jammed over Prout's head in the dark under the elms. With that inky bag over his nut, and the string drawn tight and tied under his chin, Prout would have reason to be sorry for himself, Coker considered.

Prout's portly form disappeared on the Elm Walk. Most of the fellows who were out were heading for the House; it was close on time for lock-up. Coker strolled after Prout with an air of exaggerated carelessness.

He dodged in among the elms from the quad. On the other side of the ancient elms was the school wall. There were quite a number of the old trees—ample cover for Coker, especially as dusk was falling. Under the wide-spreading branches it was quite dark.

A distant bell was ringing. Coker did not heed it. He did not care if the House was closed and locked. For Coker had been very strategic; he was, he believed, rather a whale on strategy. He had left a window open, in an obscure passage, for his return to the House. By that window he would regain the interior—unseen, undiscovered, unsuspected; after bagging Prout.

Dodging among the elms, he heard Prout's elephantine tread on the walk that ran among the trees.

It was Prout's favourite walk: and at that hour he had it all to himself. From one end of the Elm Walk to the other Prout paced—and back again. Coker could not see him in the deep dusk; but he could hear him. It would have been difficult not to hear Prout. He had a tread resembling that of the "huge earth-shaking beast" mentioned by Macaulay.

Coker's eyes gleamed.

Swiftly he made his way to the gnarled old tree, at the foot of which he had left the brown-paper parcel containing the inky bag!

He groped for it!

His plans were all cut and dried. He was going to ambush himself by the Elm Walk. He was going to whip out behind Prout when he had passed. He was going to have that bag over Prout's head, before Prout had the faintest idea that anything was happening. One pull on the string, and the neck of the bag would

be fastened round Prout's neck! Coker, perhaps, had looked rather an ass, when he tottered away from that very spot smothered with whitewash. Prout would look a bigger ass, staggering away with a bag tied on his head, and ink oozing all over him! Coker suppressed a chuckle at the thought!

He felt like chuckling. But he ceased to feel like it, as he groped for the parcel containing the bag.

It was not there!

Coker knew where he had left it. There was no doubt on that point. He knew the exact spot. Naturally he had expected to find it there. But it was not there!

This was rather a "facer" for Coker!

The elephantine tread drew nearer. Prout was pacing back along the Elm Walk! This was Coker's chance—if he had had the inky bag ready. But he hadn't. He was bagless at the psychological moment!

The heavy tread passed.

Coker breathed hard!

Where was that dashed parcel? He groped and groped. He went right round the tree. Glimmering in the dark were fragments of silver foil that had once enwrapped chocolates. They were traces of Bunter. But they were no use to Coker!

Where was that beastly bag?



Mr. Prout, hovering round Coker and the Spadger as they fought furiously, tried to help. But it was all too swift for the Form-master. He got in one blow—which landed with a thump on Coker's ear.

Again the elephantine tread drew nearer. Prout was coming up the path again. Again it was a chance for Coker—if he had not been bagless. But he was still bagless!

It was absolutely rotten—putrid, in fact! What silly ass could have come along, and shifted that parcel? Nobody had been anywhere near when Coker put it there—he was certain of that. What had become of it? Had he, after all, mistaken the tree? Was he rooting round the wrong elm?

He went a little further afield. He rooted round another elm, then round another. Still there was no brown-paper parcel to be found. Coker breathed harder and harder.

Suddenly he gave a start.

There was a footstep, quite close to him. It sounded, to Coker, as if someone had dropped from a wall or a tree. He stared round, in surprise.

A shadow flitted before his eyes, and was gone.

He blinked after it.

Somebody had clambered over the adjoining wall, and dropped within. Some fellow who had been out of gates, Coker supposed, and who had returned to find the gates locked. Gosling had to take a fellow's name if he presented himself at the gates after they were closed. In such circumstances, it was not uncommon for a fellow to give the gates a wide berth and clamber in over the wall, and take a chance of getting into the House on time.

That, Coker supposed, was it. It had startled him for a moment. But he dismissed the matter, and continued rooting after the brown-paper parcel.

It was rather bewildering, under the trees, in the dark. Easy enough for a fellow to mistake the spot. Still

in hopes of discovering that elusive brown-paper parcel, Coker rooted and rooted.

Then, suddenly, he jumped. Through the thick gloom under the elms, came the deep, fruity voice of Mr. Prout, in startled tones.

"What—who—who are you? What are you doing here?"

"Oh, crikey!" breathed Coker.

For a second, he fancied that he was discovered. Then he realised that Prout's words were not addressed to him. There was somebody else on the Elm Walk. A rough voice came in answer:

"P'raps you don't know me, old covey!"

Coker stood transfixed with astonishment. He remembered the half-seen shadowy figure that had dropped in from the wall and flitted for a moment and vanished. It had not been a Greyfriars fellow getting in after Gosling had locked the gates! That voice certainly was not a Greyfriars' voice! It was quite a strange voice to Coker's ears; he had never had the pleasure of listening to the dulcet tones of Mr. Spadger Hawkins!

"Who—what—you——!" came Prout's startled voice.

"Jest me, old fat covey!" said the husky tones of the Spadger. "Me, what you cracked on the 'ead with your stick last week, old fatty! I've been a-watching of yer, I 'ave!"

"Scoundrel——!"

"I've been a-watching of yer!" grinned the Spadger. "'Arf-a-dozen times I see yer, over that there wall! I've been a-watching of yer, and you can lay to that, old covey! Now I got yer! Whose 'ead is going to be cracked now, I'd like to know! I ask yer!"

Coker stood petrified.

He had heard of Prout's adventure

with the tramp ; it had been the talk of the school at the time. He had forgotten it—but now he remembered it ! This, clearly, was the tramp !

There was a startled cry—the sound of a struggle ! Coker felt a thrill of excitement, as he realised that Prout was in the grasp of the revengeful ruffian.

“ Oh, my hat ! ” gasped Coker.

Coker was there for vengeance himself ! He was there to bag Prout ! But he forgot all about that now ! This brute had been watching for Prout—and Prout had not taken any walks abroad lately ! As the mountain did not come to Mahomet, Mahomet had come to the mountain, as it were. Here he was, within the walls of Greyfriars, but at a safe distance from the House and help—with poor old Prout in his ruthless grip !

Coker did not stop to think ! Thinking was not his long suit, anyhow ! As he realised how matters stood, Coker woke to action !

He flew through the elms.

He bounced out on the Elm Walk.

There was Prout—portly, gasping, spluttering, struggling, but struggling in vain, in the grasp of a muscular ruffian twice, or thrice, as strong as he !

Prout went down, bumping ! At the same moment, Coker reached the Spadger. What hit the Spadger in the eye, all of a sudden, he hardly knew. It felt like a sledge-hammer, or a battering-ram.

But it was neither. It was the clenched fist of Horace Coker, with all Horace Coker's considerable beef behind it.

The Spadger went backwards as if he had been shot.

He crashed.

“ Oooogh ! ” gasped Prout dazedly.

“ Woooogh ! Help ! Urrggh ! Help ! What—who—what—— ! ”

“ All right, sir ! ” gasped Coker.

He bounded at the Spadger, who was leaping up. Prout sat and gurgled.

“ Woogh ! What—Coker ! Is that Coker ! Urrggh ! ”

Coker did not answer again. He had closed with the Spadger, and a terrific fight was going on in the dark under the elms. Coker had no breath left for conversation with Prout.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

NOT EDIBLE !

“ I SAY, you fellows—— ! ”

“ What the dickens is it ? ”

“ Tuck ! ” answered Bunter, “ I say, lend me a knife to cut the string.”

Bob Cherry cut the string of the brown-paper parcel on the table in No. 1 Study.

“ I hope,” said Bunter, with dignity, “ that you're not going to make a fuss about a few measly chocolate creams. I never had them, as I told you—and there were only about a dozen, anyhow. I've got something pretty decent here, and I'm going to whack it out with you fellows.”

“ Where did you get it ? ” asked Harry Wharton, rather suspiciously. “ If you got it in the same way that you got the chocolate creams——”

“ Oh, really, Wharton——”

“ Well, where did you get it ? ” demanded Nugent.

“ I told you fellows I was expecting a postal-order,” answered Bunter. “ Well, it came, and—and I changed it at the school shop, see, and—and bought this tuck specially to whack out with you fellows. I wasn't trying to get it quietly to my study when you jumped on me in the passage.”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Blessed if I see anything to cackle

at! I've got some jolly good tuck here," said Bunter warmly. "Coker always has good stuff—he gets it in hampers from his Aunt Judy, you know——"

"Coker!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Have you been snaffling tuck from Coker's study, you fat fraud?"

"Oh, really, Bull, I haven't been anywhere near Coker's study——"

"Is that stuff Coker's?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Certainly not! As if I'd touch Coker's stuff!" said Bunter indignantly. "Besides, he kicked me this morning."

"I hope he kicked you hard!"

"Beast! Besides, it's not Coker's! Of course, you needn't mention it to Coker. He's a suspicious beast, as you know. He might fancy that this was the brown-paper parcel he hid under the elms——"

"Coker hid a brown-paper parcel under the elms!" repeated Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"Well, he may have!" said Bunter cautiously. "Not that I know anything about it, you know. I wasn't under the elms eating chocolates, or anything."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The fact is, I haven't seen Coker to-day at all; almost forgot there was such a fellow at Greyfriars. This parcel came to me specially from Bunter Court——"

"Great pip!"

"You fat frabjous fathead——"

"If that's the way you thank a chap for whacking out his tuck with you, Bob Cherry——"

"How do you know there's tuck in it?" grinned Nugent. "Coker's not the sort of fellow to hide tuck, like a dog hiding a bone."

"Well, it stands to reason!" argued Bunter. "What would he want

to hide it for, if it wasn't tuck? I dare say he thought Potter and Greene would snoop it, if he left it in the study."

"Then it is Coker's?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, no! It's mine! I got it from Courtfield——"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Look here, not so much jaw," said Bunter crossly. "It will be calling-over in a few minutes now; let's get it open, and see what's in it."

"See what's in it!" gasped Bob. "You got it from the school shop, and you got it from Bunter Court, and you got it from Courtfield, and you don't know what's in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not waste time in replying. With tuck on hand, he considered that enough time had been wasted already in frivolous talk. He unwrapped the brown paper.

The contents were revealed!

Bunter blinked at the contents.

The Famous Five stared.

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Great Scott!"

"What the dickens——!"

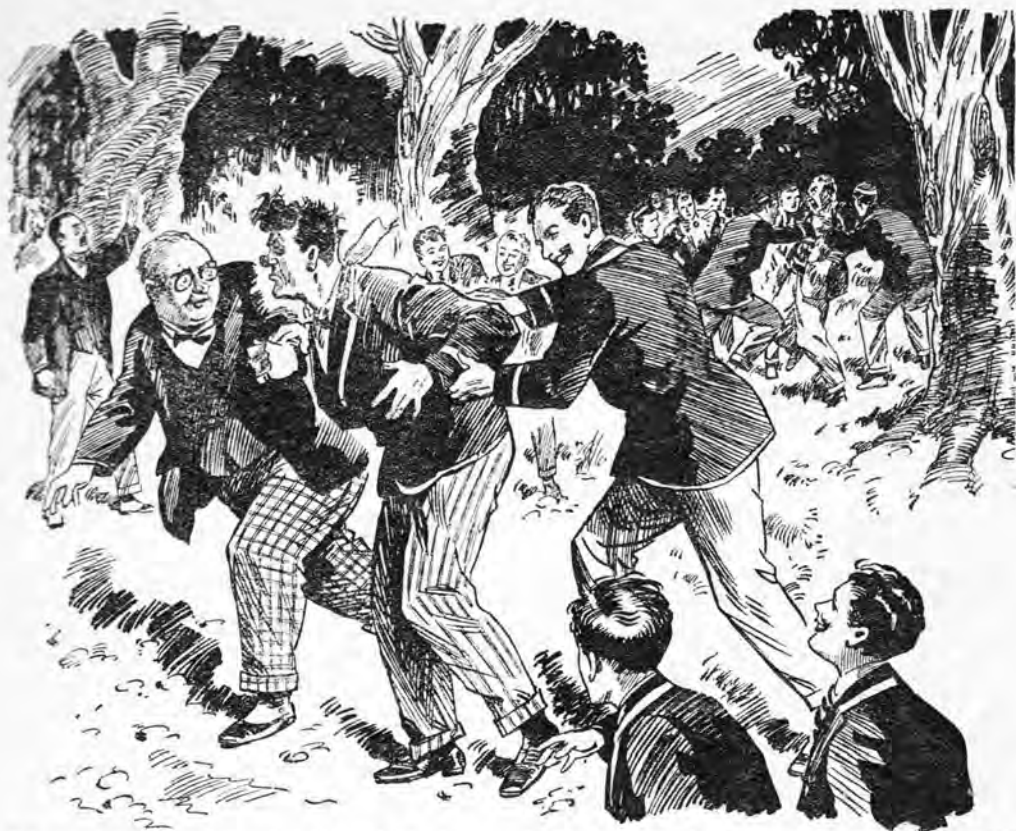
"What the thump——!"

It was not tuck! It was nothing like tuck. It did not bear the most distant resemblance to tuck. Even Billy Bunter, who could eat almost anything, could not have eaten the contents of Coker's parcel.

A bag—a large canvas bag, with a string threaded round the neck of it, lay folded in the brown paper. It dripped with ink. The bag, apparently, was empty—except for ink!

There had been, it seemed, quite a lot of ink in it. Coker had been liberal with the ink. But a great deal of the ink had oozed through the bag. It soaked and it dripped.

Billy Bunter blinked at it, in amaze-



"Come, Coker, my brave boy!" said Mr. Prout. "Take my arm—I will assist you to the House!"
 "Oooogh!" gurgled Coker. And with a black eye and nose feeling twice its size, and looking altogether hard hit, the Fifth-Former left the scene of the combat.

ment, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles.

"A-a-a-bib-bub-bag!" he stuttered, "and-and-and ink! Wha-a-t did Coker want to wrap up an inky bag for? Is he mad?"

"Mad as a hatter, I should think!" said Harry Wharton blankly. "Just a bag soaked with ink!"

"Coker must be potty!" gasped Bob.

"The pottiffulness must be truly terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He is completely off his absurd onion."

"The—the silly ass!" gasped Bun-

ter. "The howling fathead! A—a—a bag—a mouldy old bag soaked with ink. All the trouble I've taken to sneak it into the House without anybody seeing——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The blithering idiot! The burbling chump!" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought it was tuck, of course. And it's a bib-bib-bag! And—and nothing in it—except ink."

Bob Cherry gave a whistle.

"That ass, Coker!" he exclaimed. "He's up to his tricks again; you men remember the whitewash. I'll bet Coker had this for Prout——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton.
"That's it! The howling ass——"

It was light on the dark mystery! Coker was not mad! He was only the same silly ass the fellows had always known him to be!

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

From the dark quadrangle came a startling sound. It was a yell for help.

"Help! Help!"

"What the thump——"

"Help!"

"That's Prout's fruity toot!" gasped Bob.

"Oh, crumbs! Has that mad idiot Coker——"

"Come on!"

The Famous Five rushed out of the study—leaving Bunter with his prize. Other fellows were running for the stairs. Downstairs there was a hubbub of startled voices. The great door had been thrown open, and light streamed out into the dusky quad.

"Help!" came Prout's boom.
"Help!"

Wingate of the Sixth had already run out. Quelch and Twigg and several other masters rushed after him.

Harry Wharton and Co. flashed out in the midst of an excited mob. From the direction of the shadowy elms came shout on shout in Prout's fruity boom.

"Help! Help!"

Half Greyfriars rushed to the rescue.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

AND ALL WAS CALM AND BRIGHT!

COKER was going strong.

Over and over on the shadowy Elm Walk he rolled, in the grasp of the muscular Spadger—grasping hard in return.

Blows were exchanged—hefty punches.

Coker was no great boxer, but at such close quarters, even Coker could not fail to land his punches. And Coker's punches, when they landed, were big hits! Coker might not shine in brains, but Nature had made it up to him in brawn. Coker hit often and he hit hard—frightfully hard!

Spadger Hawkins was fighting rather for escape than for victory. But Coker was not aware of that. The Spadger, having failed to catch Prout alone and crack his nut, would have been glad to go, and postpone the cracking of Prout's nut till a more convenient time. But there was no getting away from Coker.

One of the Spadger's eyes had been closed by Coker's first hit. The other had collided with Coker's elbow and was blinking painfully. His nose streamed red.

But Coker was getting some of his helpings, too. Coker's nose ran like a river of claret, Coker was getting damaged, though in the excitement of the combat he hardly noticed it.

Prout, hovering round that wild fight, tried to help. But the work was too swift for Prout. He got in only one punch, which unfortunately landed on Coker's ear.

He roared for help.

That was more efficacious. His boom reached many ears in the House, and help came promptly.

Quite an army rushed across the shadowy quad to the elms. Twenty or thirty flash-lamps gleamed on the path.

"Help!" boomed Prout.

"Here we are, sir!" panted Wingate.

"Who—what——" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Help!"

"It's Coker!" yelled Potter.

"Coker!" gasped Greene.

"Pile in, you fellows!"

The Spadger made one last desperate effort to tear himself away from Coker. He succeeded, but as he got loose, Wingate of the Sixth grasped him by the collar. Potter and Greene got hold of him. In the grasp of the three, he struggled.

Then a dozen hands joined in. The Spadger went down. He was sat on. He almost disappeared under Greyfriars fellows.

The Spadger had put up a good fight, but he was done. He was done to the wide! Only feeble gasps came now from Mr. Hawkins.

Coker, gurgling for breath, leaned against a tree. The fight had not ended too soon for Horace Coker. He was hard hit. He was winded. One of his eyes was shut and rapidly darkening. His nose streamed crimson. His mouth had a list to port. Coker, in a few hectic minutes, had collected a lot of damage. He felt rather bad, and he looked it.

"Oooogh!" gasped Coker.

"Coker, old man!" breathed Potter.

"Coker, old chap!" murmured Greene.

"Coker! Brave, noble boy!" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"Oooogh!" gurgled Coker. He mopped his streaming nose. "Wooogh!"

"Brave, noble, gallant lad!" boomed Prout.

"Urrrrggh!" said Coker.

"But what—who—?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"That man—that ruffian—that—that desperado!" gasped Prout, "is the tramp I knocked down one day last week, when he was attempting to rob a boy in Mr. Twigg's Form, and a boy in your Form, Quelch. It is the same desperate ruffian! He came

Songs of the Seasons



THE buds that promised well in June
Have one by one unfolded,
To green and glorious shades the tune
Of summer's song is moulded;
The song must flow in tranquil rhyme
To praise the rich adorning
Of mellow dusk at evening time
And silver mist of morning.

When fiery hangs the sun at noon
Above the baking meadows,
We seek the wood where pigeons croon
To lie among the shadows,
Or cleave the river's placid breast,
In luxury declaring
That this alone is worth the rest
Of all the joys we're sharing.

The playing field is satin green
Where reigns the good King Cricket,
And white-clad figures dot the scene
While at the farther wicket
The batsman scores without a pause,
(He's got about a million),
And elm trees rustle their applause
Behind the school pavilion.

Through azure skies the galleons white
Of billowed clouds roll proudly,
The breezes play on downland height,
The hills are calling loudly;
We hear the call and take our course
In happiness together,
A merry climb through ferns and gorse
To picnic in the heather.

But chief of all the summer joys
To which we give devotion,
The seaside! Trust all British boys
To love the sparkling ocean,
For as we swim and sail and glide
Our eyes and limbs grow firmer;
What joy it is to stay beside
The sea's unending murmur.

But whether we're upon the turf
At cricket, golf or tennis,
Or riding gaily through the surf
To dare the billows' menace,
We all agree, though spring be gay
And autumn rich and fruity,
The summer season, come what may,
Takes pride of place for beauty.

here, and—and attacked me in the dark——”

“Is it possible?”

“I was already in his grasp,” panted Prout, “when Coker rushed to the rescue—rushed to my aid like the brave and gallant lad he is——”

“Oh, my hat!” murmured Bob Cherry.

Prout’s opinion of Coker seemed to have changed considerably! But that was not surprising.

What might have happened to Prout was evident from what had happened to Coker! But for Horace’s intervention, Prout’s majestic countenance might now have been in the same state that Coker’s was in! It was an awful thought!

“Why, Coker was here—how he came here, I do not know,” said Prout. “He seems to have been out of the House after lock-up——”

The Famous Five exchanged glances. Remembering the inky bag left in No. 1 Study, they thought they could guess why. But they were not likely to say so!

“But it was very fortunate for me!” said Prout. “Coker has saved me from serious injury! He has suffered himself, in helping his Form-master! I am proud to have such a boy in my Form!”

“Urrrrggh!” said Coker. “Ooogh!” For the present, shortness of wind limited Coker’s contributions to the discussion.

“Take care of that ruffian, Wingate!” boomed Prout. “I will telephone to the police to come and take him into custody! Coker, my brave boy——”

“Oooogh!”

“Come! I will not ask why you were out of the House—no trifling faults shall be remembered now! Take my arm—lean on my arm, my dear

boy—I will assist you to the House.”

“Wurrrggh!” gurgled Coker.

He leaned on Prout’s plump arm. One hand held a handkerchief to his nose. Thus they left the scene of the combat.

At the door of the House stood the Head. The uproar had brought him thus far. He stared at the startling sight as the procession arrived.

“What—what—what——?” said Dr. Locke, faintly.

Prout boomed.

“This brave, this noble boy, sir, has saved me from an attack—a desperate attack from a desperate desperado, sir——”

“Bless my soul!”

“A boy, sir, who is a credit to the school—whom I am proud, sir, to have in my Form. Come, Coker, your injuries must be attended to at once. Come, my dear boy!”

The dear boy was led in.

It never came out why Coker had been so fortunately near the Elm Walk on that thrilling occasion.

That was just as well. It might have diminished Prout’s gratitude.

Prout, of course, was grateful!

Coker could have spelt occiput with an X, or with two or three X’s, now, without rousing Prout’s wrath.

Of course, he was let off sitting with the Second. Never again did Coker sit with the Second! For the present, at least, he was the apple of Prout’s eye! Prout was proud to have him in the Fifth!

“Not a bad old bean, Prout!” Coker told Potter and Greene. “Prout’s all right!”

To which Potter and Greene made no reply. It was useless to argue with Coker!

THE END