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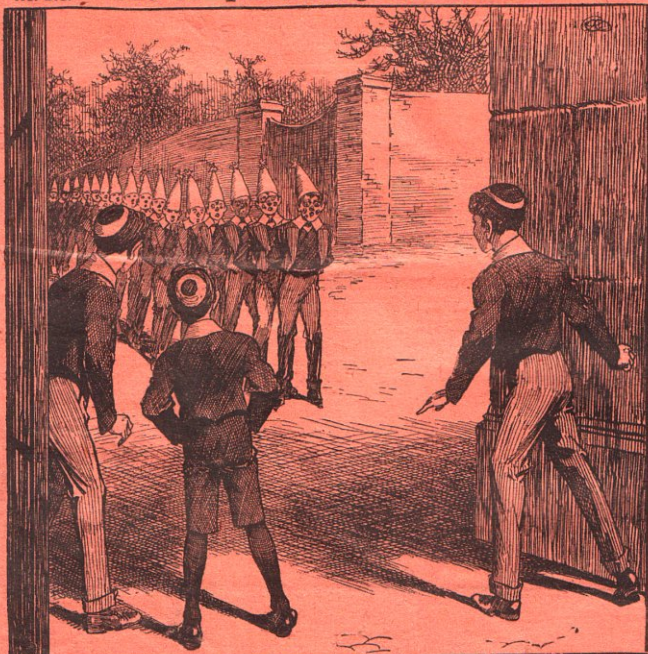
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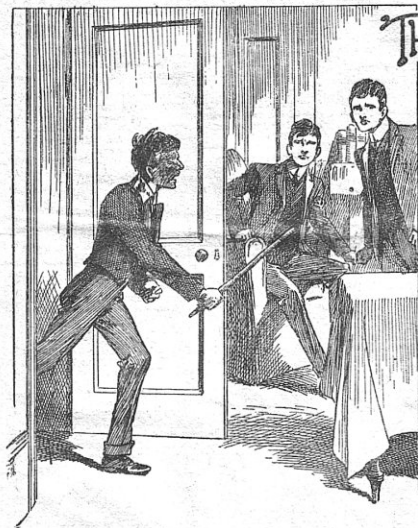
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of Harry Wharton & Co. at
Greyfriars. By

FRANK RICHARDS.

by looking on at a Remove footer match. But they were there in good force this time, and they seemed to be much amused; it was, as Coker was heard to remark, as good as a circus.

The Remove were playing the Upper Fourth. It was a windy March afternoon at Greyfriars. The ground was not in particularly good condition, and the ball was reeking with mud, and the players were splashed with it, their boots

were heavy with it. But they were playing up manfully; and it was really inconsiderate of Coker & Co. to air their pleasantries in such exceedingly loud tones.

The Remove, as a rule, although the junior Form of the two, played footer much better than the Upper Fourth. They practiced more, and their combination was better, and they had at least three fellows in the Form who could skipper a team well. The Remove prided themselves upon being a footballing Form. They prided themselves upon a good many things, as a matter of fact, but most of all they prided them-

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Not a Victory.

"H A, ha, ha!"
"My hat! They call that football!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed as he heard the decisive remarks round the junior football ground. They came from Coker & Co. of the Fifth Form, and Coker & Co. seemed to be enjoying themselves.

It was not often that the Fifth-Formers honoured the juniors

selves upon their footer. There wasn't a fellow in the Remove who didn't believe firmly that they could beat the Fifth itself, in a fair match, if the Fifth would consent to play them—which the Fifth certainly wouldn't do!

But luck was against the Remove on this special Wednesday afternoon.

A house divided against itself, as was said of old, shall not stand. So it was with the Greyfriars Remove.

The combination which was one of their strong points had failed them now, owing to circumstances over which they had no control.

And Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth were simply walking over them. In the first half, Temple, Dabney & Co. had scored one to nil. In the second half, they were already another goal up. And the Remove had not broken their duck.

It was quite an unusual experience for the Remove.

They had beaten stronger teams than the Upper Fourth of Greyfriars, when they were at their full strength.

But there was no doubt that the Fourth-Formers were pulling it off this time.

Coker & Co. of the Fifth, had gladly come down to see the unusual spectacle of the Remove being licked.

For the Remove, the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars, ought in the nature of things—according to Coker—to have regarded the Fifth with respect, if not veneration, and to have bowed to the dust, as it were, when a Fifth-Former passed them by.

But they didn't! That was the trouble! They "cheeked" the Fifth—they offered to lick them at Footer—they repaid cuffs or slanging with japes that made the Fifth feel sorry for themselves—and so relations between the two Forms were strained almost to breaking point.

Hence the satisfaction of Horace Coker and his friends was great, when they saw the Remove "going through it" in this manner.

Temple, of the Fourth, put the ball into the goal with an easy kick, and the Upper Fourth counted three to their credit, and Coker roared.

"Hurray!"

And Coker's faithful followers clapped their hands and yelled.

"Goal!"

"Bravo!"

"Those Remove kids call this playing football," Coker remarked, in a voice that could be heard half across the ground.

"Football, you know! Not hop-scotch! Not marbles! Football! Ha, ha, ha!"

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

And the Remove players heard, and flushed with wrath. Bob Cherry, looking very muddy and savage, paused by the touch-line a moment to glare at Coker & Co.

"Shut up, you silly asses!" he called out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can't play footer for coffee, anyhow," yelled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let them alone," said Wharton. "If they'd meet us on the footer ground, we'd make 'em sit up."

"You'd make 'us lie down—he don't know—weep—if you played footer as you're doing now!" retorted Coker.

And the Fifth roared again.

The Removeites lined up after the Fourth-Former's third goal. They were all flushed, and muddy, and excited, and mostly angry. Vernon-Smith had his lips set in a tight line, and his eyes were gleaming under his contracted brows. Harry Wharton & Co. were all frowning. The Fourth-Formers were grinning in the most irritating way. Their success was something of a surprise to them, but they were enjoying it.

Wingate, of the Sixth, was refereeing the match. Wingate was captain of Greyfriars, and he took a great interest in junior footer, and often encouraged the juniors by acting as referee in their matches, when he had the time. Wingate was accustomed to seeing good play from the Remove, and he seemed surprised now at the poor show they were making. But it was really not the Remove's fault.

Circumstances were against them.

The Remove was divided against itself. There was a dispute about the captaincy. Bulstrode, the late captain, had been unpopular and had resigned. Harry Wharton and Vernon-Smith were the two new candidates for election, and the voting had been so close that the question could not be considered decided. They had agreed to abide by three tests imposed by Wingate, the captain of the school; the winner of two out of three to become captain of the Remove.

Wharton had won the first test, indisputably. The second and the third had not yet been decided upon.

The Remove were, therefore, without a captain. In the Remove the Form captain was also football skipper; while the Form had no head, the eleven was also without a skipper.

The match with the Upper Fourth for that afternoon was a regular fixture, and could not be put off. The question had therefore arisen as to who should captain the Remove eleven.

Bulstrode, the old captain, had been asked, and he had refused. Bulstrode had resigned under pressure from the

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eleven, and he was not going to be made use of. That was what he said. As a matter of fact, Bulstrode was "on his dignity," and he not only declined to captain the team, but he declared that he didn't feel up to footer that afternoon, anyway, and he stayed out of the eleven altogether. Bulstrode was not an ideal captain, but he was a good player, and he was missed.

As neither of the candidates for the Form captaincy had been duly appointed, neither would agree to the other taking the lead. Vernon-Smith flatly refused to serve under Wharton, unwilling to do anything that would seem like recognising his rival's right to lead the Form. And Wharton's backers had promptly retaliated by declaring that neither should Vernon-Smith take the lead. Wharton would have given way, for the sake of the team, but he could not oppose his own party.

The Remove had to look for a new captain, and football captains, as Bob Cherry remarked, did not grow on every bush.

Wharton, Bulstrode, or Vernon-Smith might have led the team to victory, but none of the three was available, owing to the peculiar circumstances.

Bob Cherry was selected at last.

Bob was a good player, and invaluable as back, and he could play half with distinction. But he was not gifted as captain.

His friends did not tell him so, but there was no doubt that the eleven fell to pieces under his lead.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith, two of the best players, were on the worst of terms with one another, and that added to the difficulties.

Wharton was doing his best to smother his dislike towards the Bounder, and to play up for the good of the game. But Vernon-Smith did not take that view. He was next to Wharton on the wing, and he kept the ball away from his rival as much as he could, without attracting attention to his selfish play.

If he could prevent it, his rival should not add to his popularity by scoring—that was the Bounder's view—and he was only too successful.

Under such conditions, the Remove were not likely to win—with a captain who was hardly up to handling the team, with one of the best players left out, and with another occupying himself in preventing the centre-forward from scoring.

The Fourth-Formers were taking full advantage of the "rot" that had set in in the Remove game.

They were three up, and they were pressing on for a fourth. There remained still a quarter of an hour to play, and there was little reason why they should not double their score in that time, judging by the way things were going.

And Coker & Co. rejoiced as they watched.

Coker occupied a good deal of his time in considering how he could take the Remove down a peg or two, and now he was seeing them taken down many pegs, without any effort on his part. He had only to stand there and laugh—and he did!

He laughed loud and long.

The "chipping" from the Fifth-Formers added to the discomfort and annoyance of the Remove, and helped to make them reckless.

Coker gave a yell, and clapped his hands again. The ball had gone in from Dabney's foot, and Hazeldene in goal could not deal with it.

"Goal!"

"Bravo!"

"Four up! My hat!" chuckled Greene, of the Fifth.

"And those kids call this playing footer. They had the cheek to ask us to play them, once. Us! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove lined up again and kicked off with gloomy faces. But they were game to the last.

With something of their old old spirit, they bore down upon the enemy, and Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Ogilvy, passing the ball like clockwork, rushed for goal. The Fourth defence closed up to stop them, and the ball was sent out to Vernon-Smith, and Wharton dodged the backs and ran on. He waved his hand to the Bounder.

"To me!" he shouted.

But Wharton was not captain of the team now.

Vernon-Smith had the ball, and he kept it.

There was an easy centre to Harry, and almost a sure goal; but the Bounder ran on with the ball, and was stopped by a back, and the leather went out to midfield.

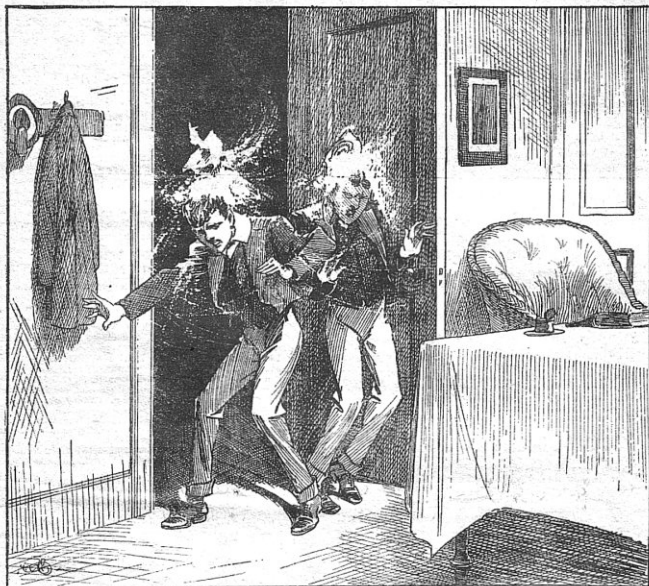
The field followed it with a rush, Wharton gritting his teeth.

"You cad!" he muttered, unable to restrain his anger.

Vernon-Smith looked at him with a sneer, but did not reply.

"Play the game, Smithy!" shouted someone from the ropes.

ANSWERS



As the two rival candidates opened the study door, from somewhere above something descended—and burst—and a cloud of white settled over them. They staggered and yelled. "Ugh!" "Ow!" (See Chapter 2.)

The game was sweeping down to the Remove goal now. The time was getting close, and the Fourth Form seized their chance while they had it, and made a determined attack. Once more Hazeldene in goal was found wanting. The ball whizzed in from Temple's foot, and lodged in the net. There was a yell of delight from the Fourth-Formers who were crowded round the ropes, watching.

"Goal! Five up! Hurry!"

It was the last goal. Wingate blew the whistle, and the Form match was over. The Fourth-Formers crowed audibly as they marched off the field.

"Five to nil!" ejaculated Temple. "I fancy we've put those cheeky young beggars in their proper place now. What?"

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

It really looked like it.

Color met the muddy Removeites as they came off.

"Still want to play the Fifth?" he asked pleasantly.

"Oh, go and eat cake!" growled Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha! We should feel too nervous to meet you, you know."

"Rats! Buzz off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And amid an extremely exasperating yell of laughter from the Fifth-Formers, the Removeites put on their coats and tramped away towards the house, to clean off the mud and change their clothes, and to say things to one another, more emphatic than polite, on the subject of whose fault it was that the match had been lost.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Floury Language!

QUITE a gloomy party came in to tea in Harry Wharton's study in the Remove passage, after the match.

There were six juniors there, and all of them looked glum.

Harry Wharton probably felt the defeat of the Remove most keenly of all. It was Wharton who had brought the Remove eleven, in the first place, to the pitch of success, and under his leadership it had first beaten the Upper Fourth, and since then it had often added to its laurels. Matters had not been so successful under Bulstrode's captaincy; but, upon the whole, the Remove had not been disgraced. But matters had gone from bad to worse now. The Remove wanted a captain, and wanted him badly. As in the olden time, when there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes, the Remove needed a guiding hand. It was high time that the question of the captaincy was settled, one way or the other.

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry, as he came in with Mark Linley and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, his study mates. "If we go on like this, we may as well chuck footer for good."

"The chuckfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh.

"It's jolly rotten," said Frank Nuggett. "Wharton ought to have been skipper; he had one vote more than Vernon-Smith, when Inky turned up in time to vote. Anyway, the matter ought to be settled at once."

NEXT
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Order Early.

The juniors all nodded assent to that.

They were hungry after the match in the keen March weather, and they sat down to tea with good appetites, in spite of the depression caused by the woeful show on the football-field.

"The Fourth will never leave off crowing about this," said Johnny Bull.

"We'll make 'em leave off crowing when we're in form again," said Bob Cherry. "But we want a skipper first."

"Wingate was going to 'net three tests," Harry Wharton remarked thoughtfully. "The first one has been settled—"

"And you've pulled it off, old chap."

Wharton nodded.

"Yes. I think some of us had better see Wingate, and ask him to arrange the rest of the business as quickly as possible."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob. "The sooner the quicker. You're bound to beat the Bounder all the time, anyway."

"The boundfulness is terrific, my worthy chums," said Hurroo Janset Ram Singh, "and when we have beaten Vernon-Smith, we will proceedingly beat the esteemed Fifth, and pay them out for their crowsfulness this afternoon."

"The rotters!"

"The bounders!"

"Oh, never mind Coker & Co.!" said Wharton. "We can always put them in their place. I think—"

He paused as a tap came at the door. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, came in. The juniors looked at him grimly enough.

"The Bounder surveyed them with his usual cynical smile. 'Rejoicing after our big successes to-day?' he asked."

Wharton knitted his brows.

"It was your fault, as much as anything, that we made such a rotten show," he said. "You didn't play the game."

The Bounder sneered.

"I expected you to put it like that," he remarked.

Wharton flushed.

"That's the only way to put it. I could have scored one goal, at least, if you hadn't kept the ball."

"You could have done wonders, no doubt, if you'd had everything your own way," said the Bounder, with a sneer.

"But you didn't, you see. But I didn't come here to listen to the mighty things you might have done. I think it's high time the question was settled. We can't go on like this."

"I quite agree with you there."

"It would be a good idea for us both to go to Wingate and ask him to settle the matter," said Vernon-Smith.

"I'm ready."

Wharton rose from the table.

The two juniors did not speak as they went down the passage. They were on the worst of terms with one another, and there was no disguising the fact. Vernon-Smith had introduced a spirit of bitterness into the contest for the captaincy, and the fact that he was ever ready to take an advantage made it impossible for Wharton to trust him in the slightest degree.

They turned into the Sixth Form passage, and met Coker and Potter of the Fifth face to face. The two Fifth-Formers grinned.

"Wingate wants to see you chaps," said Potter. "We were just going to tell you—weren't we, Cokey?"

"Just so!" said Coker.

"Well, we're going to see him," said Wharton shortly.

"Good!"

The Fifth-Formers grinned, and walked on. Vernon-Smith threw a very suspicious glance after them.

"Those rotters are up to something," he said.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, blow them!" he said. "Let's get on."

He tapped at Wingate's door and opened it, and the two juniors stepped in. The next moment they staggered and yelled.

From somewhere above something descended—and burst—and a cloud of white settled over them.

"Ugh!"

"Groo!"

"Ow! It's flour!"

"Yow! Oh's!"

They were smothered with it. The gas was burning in the study, but the room was empty save for themselves. Wharton staggered across the room, and gasped for breath. He looked round at Vernon-Smith. The Bounder of Greyfriars was white from head to foot.

"The cads!" yelled the Bounder, sputtering out flour.

"They had just rigged up this hooby trap for us when we met them."

"Groo!"

"You silly chump, you ought to have guessed!"

"You ought to have guessed, you mean, you fathead!"

"Groo!"

"Ouuugh!"

There was a step in the passage, and Courtney of the Sixth looked in. He burst into a roar of laughter. Wingate was behind him, and he gave a kind of hysterical yell.

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"What on earth— Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooooh!"

"Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Courtney. "How did you do that?"

"Groo! It was a hooby trap—yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It must have been that ass Coker," laughed Wingate. "I asked him to tell you that I wanted to see you. I suppose he didn't mention that I was in Courtney's study!"

"Groo! No!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you'd better go and get yourselves cleaned up," said Wingate, laughing, "and you can send my fag to clean up that flour off my carpet. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Courtney, and the floury Removies departed, still gurgling and choking.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wingate Doesn't Mind.

COKER and Co. were in the passage, and they greeted the two Removies with a yell of laughter.

"See the conquering heroes come!" roared Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price flour?"

"Cheap. They get it for nothing—in the neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton and Vernon-Smith tramped on furiously. Even the Removies who saw them roared with laughter. They certainly did look comical.

"These are the chaps who are going to put the Fifth in their place!" chuckled Greene.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blundell. "They look like doing it. Why, they've turned quite white," and the passage echoed with laughter.

The two unfortunate juniors hurried up to the Remove dormitory.

A crowd of the Remove followed them there, and looked on while they washed off the clinging flour and changed their floury clothes. It required a great deal of combing and brushing to get the flour out of their hair.

They were very red and wrathful by the time it was finished. Some of the Removies were sympathetic, but even the sympathetic ones could not help laughing.

Wharton recovered his good-humour at last, but the Bounder looked white and furious. Vernon-Smith could not take a joke against himself.

"We shall have to make the Fifth sit up for this," said Bob Cherry. "5-5's getting altogether too thick. They were crowing at us on the football-field to-day, and now— Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling!" growled Vernon-Smith.

"The cackle is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, "but the stipulations of the esteemed Fifth should also be terrific."

"Right you are, Inky," said Nugent. "Look here, I've got an idea."

"Oh, rats!" said the Bounder.

Nugent grinned.

"Thanks," he said. "I've got an idea, you chaps, about the second test for the candidates. Suppose we fix it that the Fifth have got to be downed, and the chap who does it is to be considered winner of the second test?"

"Good egg!" shouted the juniors.

The Bounder looked more amiable.

"Well, that's not a bad idea," he assented.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I would agree to that willingly!" he exclaimed. "The Fifth want a lesson badly, and it's time they had it, only—"

"Only what?"

"Wingate is to fix the tests, and I don't suppose he'll regard japing the Fifth as a suitable one," said Wharton.

"By Jove! I forgot that!"

"That can easily be arranged!" exclaimed the Bounder eagerly.

"We'll tell Wingate we've thought of a test for our selves for the second round, and he will leave it at that. He doesn't specially want to be bothered with our Form affairs."

"Quite right."

"The Bounder's right."

"Agreed!" said Harry Wharton. "It will have to be put to the whole Form, though. The thing has got to be done in order."

"We'll have a Form meeting on the subject," said Nugent.

"Good egg!"

"Get the fellows into the Form-room, then," said Wharton.

No time was lost.

In ten minutes the Remove were gathered in the Form-room, and the suggestion made by Nugent was stated.

It was greeted with unanimous applause.

The Removies were all feeling very sore over the defeat of the

afternoon, and specially sore over the way the Fifth had chipped them about it.

The whole Remove were "up" against the Fifth, and the vote suggested by Frank Nugent for the second round of the contest between the rival candidates found favour with all.

"But it to the vote," said Boslover. "We don't want anybody saying afterwards that it wasn't agreed to."

"None of us would be likely to say that," retorted Bob Cherry. "We leave rotten tricks like that to your side."

"Oh, cheese it!" said the Bouncer, as Boslover flushed with anger. "Let's put it to the vote, and have all fair and square."

"We've no objection," said Nugent.

It was put to the vote. Every Remove who was present voted in favour of the idea, and there was only one fellow absent from the meeting, and that was Billy Bunter, and all were agreed that Billy Bunter didn't count, anyway.

"That's settled, then," said Harry Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"It's a competition between us," said Vernon-Smith. "The one of us who succeeds in making the Fifth Form sing small is the winner of the second round."

"Agreed!"

"But we've got to get Wingate to agree to it," said Bob Cherry doubtfully. "He's not likely to agree to a raid on the Fifth. Law and order, you know, and all that."

"We can simply tell him that we've found a test, without going into particulars," said Nugent. "If he asks for details, of course, he will have to have them. I dare say he will listen to reason. Who's going to tell him. If we catch him now while he's having tea with Courtney he won't ask too many questions."

"You can go, Franky."

"All serene. I will."

And Frank Nugent made his way to Courtney's study. He knocked and opened the door, and found three pairs of eyes fixed upon him. Courtney and Wingate and North were there, having tea at Courtney's table.

"Hallo!" said Wingate. "What do you want?"

"Sorry to interrupt you," said Nugent, "but I won't keep you minutes. The Remove are anxious about those three rounds, you know. We thought of a dodge for settling the second of the three tests, and getting it over."

"Right you are," said Wingate.

"The whole Form agrees to it, bar none," said Nugent. "I suppose I can go at that?"

"All serene."

"But what is the test, then?" asked Courtney.

Nugent hesitated.

"I don't want to keep you from your tea," he said.

"You won't keep me from my tea," grinned Courtney. "I can manage to eat while you are talking."

"Yes, let's know what it is," said Wingate, cracking a second egg.

There was no help for it now.

"Well, you see, the candidates are going to stand up for the honour of the Remove," said Nugent cautiously. "The chap who does best for the Form is the winner."

"But in what way?"

"Well, you—see—"

"Come, out with it," said Wingate brusquely. "I can see that there is some japing going on."

Nugent coloured.

"Well, you see," he explained, "the Fifth have been cheeky lately—"

"What!"

"Crowing a lot lately, I mean," Nugent amended. "We think it is time they were licked. Wharton and Smithy are going to get them, you see. Chap who makes the Fifth knuckle under wins the round. No harm in that, is there, Wingate?"

To Nugent's surprise, and greatly to his relief, the captain of Greyfriars burst into a roar of laughter.

"You—see—"

"Yes, I see you're a sort of young ass," said Wingate, laughing. "So you think that you kids will be able to make the Fifth Form sing small?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You're more likely to have lickings handed out to you."

"We'll risk that."

"Cheeky young buggars," said North.

"Oh, let them go on!" said Wingate, laughing. "They will get licked if they back up against the seniors, and it will serve them right, and take some of the cheek out of them."

"You consent, Wingate?" asked Nugent eagerly.

"Oh, yes! Go ahead and get licked!"

"Thanks!"

And Frank quitted the study before Wingate had time to say more. He did not want to give the captain of Greyfriars time to think better of it.

He hurried back to the Remove Form-room, where the juniors were awaiting him eagerly.

"Well?"

"What does Wingate say?"

"Out with it."

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"It's all right," said Nugent. "He cackled, but he agreed, and that's all we want. I had to tell him, but it's all serene."

"Good egg!"

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly good!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, his eyes gleaming.

"Now, it's agreed the fellow who downs the Fifth wins the second round. And it's agreed that all the other fellows back us up, Wharton or myself, as the case may be, when called upon, and so a bunch march out on the field if needed."

"Done!" said Wharton.

And so it was settled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker Comes to be Licked.

HARRY WHARTON and Co. gave a great deal of thought to the matter that evening.

Vernon-Smith and his friends were thinking it out, too.

It was agreed that either candidate should be backed up by the rest of the Remove, in whatever plan he might decide upon, and that they should back one another up. In the latter arrangement Vernon-Smith had the advantage. For while the Bouncer could always rely upon Wharton's loyalty, Wharton was by no means able to rely upon Vernon-Smith's. In any plan he might make, he knew that he would have more chance of success if he left the Bouncer out of it.

How to "down" the Fifth was the question that now had to be answered, and the rival candidates for the captaincy of the Remove gave it a great deal of thought.

On the following morning, Coker and Co. were still very merry upon the subject of the Remove-Fourth Form match of the Wednesday afternoon.

Coker had heard, too, of the agreement between the rivals of the Remove, and after morning school he met Harry Wharton and Co. in the passage, when the Remove were dismissed by Mr. Quelch.

"I hear you chaps are going to make it warm for us!" Coker remarked.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"We're going to do our best, at any rate," he said.

"And the chap who makes the Fifth sing small is going to be captain of the giddy Remove," grinned Potter.

"That's it."

"I rather think the Remove will be wanting a captain for a long time, then," Greene remarked.

And the Fifth-Formers laughed in chorus.

"We shall see," said Bob Cherry.

"You're welcome to begin the downing process as soon as you like," grinned Coker. "You will find us at home, and awake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Fifth walked away laughing.

"Pride goeth before a fall," Nugent remarked. "But how the dickens are we going to down those bouncers, Harry? Have you thought of a wheeze?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Not yet," he confessed. "You see, it's not easy. A study raid or a booby trap would be no good. We've got to make the Fifth admit they're licked, and I'm blessed if I quite know how to do it, yet."

"We can lick them, as far as that goes, but as to making them admit they're licked, that's a coat of quite another colour," Johnny Bad remarked.

"There's the rub, of course."

"We've got to get them into some fix, where they will have to climb down all the way, to get out of it," said Harry. "But how—that's the question."

And the question remained very difficult to answer.

Harry Wharton and his followers turned the matter over in their minds, over and over again, in fact; but the required scheme did not present itself.

Vernon-Smith was equally inactive, apparently.

If he had thought of a scheme, he had certainly not yet put it into effect.

That day passed, and the next one dawned, and neither of the rivals of the Remove could claim any advantage over the other.

The Fifth Form took it as a great joke. The whole Form knew about it now, and from Blundell, the captain of the Form, to Coker and Co., the Fifth clapped the Removeites on the subject whenever they met them.

Wingate, too, was suspected of regarding the matter humorously, judging by some expressions he let fall.

"It's getting absurd," Frank Nugent remarked, on Friday evening, as he came into the study, where Wharton was doing his preparation alone.

The fellows are beginning to ask us if we've given up the idea, Harry."

Wharton wrinkled his brows as he looked up from his work.

"I've been thinking it over," he said.
"So have I," said Nugent ruefully. "But it doesn't seem to be much good. The Fifth are on their guard now. We japed them splendidly over their nigger minstrel show, but they're not likely to give us a chance like that again."
"No—but—ah!—!"

The study door was pushed open, and Coker entered. He was followed into the study by Potter and Greene and Blundell and Bland and Norton, of the Fifth. Harry Wharton and Frank rose to their feet in alarm.

"What do you want?" demanded Nugent.
Coker chuckled.
"Lock the door, Potty," he exclaimed.
Potter obeyed.
"Rescue, Remove!" howled Nugent.
Coker chuckled yet more gleefully.
"The Remove won't find it easy to get through a locked door," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Wharton and Nugent placed the table between them and the Fifth-Formers. They had considered the advisability of raiding the Fifth, but they had not considered the possibility of the Fifth raiding the Remove.

"Look here—" began Wharton.
"We've come!" said Coker.
"Come for what?"
"To be licked."
"Eh?"
"You've undertaken to lick the Fifth," said Coker blandly. Please we've come."

And the heroes of the Fifth chuckled.
"There's been too much gas from the Remove lately," went on Coker airily: "we've decided to cut off the gas."

And his followers chuckled joyously at this great witicism.
"That's it," said Potter. "We've come to be licked. You've been talking about licking the Fifth, and now's your chance."
"You'd better make the best of it, too," said Coker. "We made Vernon-Smith the same offer, and he couldn't do it, so we licked him. If you can't lick us, we're going to lick you. See?"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent saw very clearly. And as they were locked in the study with six powerful fellows of a senior Form, it really looked as if they were booked for a licking.
"Now, look here—" began Wharton.
"Going to lick us?" demanded Coker.

"You ass—!"
"Collar them!" shouted Coker.
The Fifth-Formers rushed round the table to seize the juniors. Wharton caught up an inkpot, and Nugent a ruler. The odds against them, they felt justified in that. The ink streamed out upon the Fifth-Formers as they rushed on, and Coker received a large dose of it full in the face, and gurgled.
"Groo!"

"Yarrop!" yelled Potter, as the ink swamped in his eye.
"Yowp! Oh!"

"Collar the cheeky young cads!"
Nugent went down in the grasp of Blundell and Norton, and Bland and Greene seized Harry Wharton. The two Removeites put up a desperate fight, yelling to the Remove for rescue. There was a trampling of feet in the passage, and a hand tried the door. But it was securely locked, and the Removeites could only rage outside and shout threats at the raiders through the keyhole.

"Got 'em!" gasped Coker, mopping the ink away from his face with his handkerchief—with disastrous results to the handkerchief. "Hold the little beasts!"
"We've got 'em!"

"Tie 'em to the chairs."
"Leggo!" roared Nugent.
"Rescue, Remove!" shouted Wharton.

Bang! bang! bang! came at the door. Two dozen Removeites were there, eager to come to the rescue; but they could not get in; and they might as well have been in the Form-room, or the gym, for all the use they were to Coker & Co.'s victims.

Potter drew a cord from under his jacket; the raiders had come prepared. Wharton and Nugent were jammed into the chairs, and tied hand and foot there. Then the raiders completed their work at more leisure.

Potter explored the study cupboard, and brought out a jar of jam, and another of marmalade. Coker took the fire-shovel and raked down soot from the chimney. The two helpless juniors watched these preparations in great alarm. They knew what was coming now, but they could not avoid their fate.

"Hold on, you beasts!" Wharton gasped.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter opened the jam-pot, and Greene the marmalade, and the two jars were held upside down over the heads of the Removeites.

They squirmed and writhed and twisted in vain.
Both the jars were nearly full, and the contents rolled out, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 213.

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and fell in plumping lumps upon the hair and the faces of the bound juniors.

"Groo!"
"Grooooooh!"
Potter scraped out the jars with a ruler, and bestowed the whole of the contents upon the Removeites. Then Coker put in his work with the fire-shovel and the soot. By the time the sticky jam and marmalade had been plastered over with soot, the state of Wharton and Nugent was decidedly unenviable.

"Groooooooh!"
"Xowwlewwlewwow!"
"Talking Chinese, I suppose," said Coker. "It doesn't sound like English. I dare say they learned it from Wun Lung. Do you kids like this?"

"Grooooo!"
"Groowwewoww!"
"That's Turkish or Russian, I should think," said Coker.
"Now, I think we've finished here. This is a gentle hint, you fags, that you're not to cheek the Fifth, you know. Good-bye!"

"Groo! Beast!"
"Yowp! Rotter!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We shall have to rush for it, as there's a crowd outside," said Coker, with his hand on the key in the lock. "All together!"
"Right-o!"

Bang! bang! bang! rang on the outside of the door from the furious Removeites.

Coker threw the door suddenly open, and the crowded juniors outside started back for a moment, taken somewhat by surprise. The Fifth-Formers did not lose a second. They rushed out together, hitting right and left. Half a dozen powerful seniors rushing upon them unexpectedly had little difficulty in driving a passage through the junior crowd. In a couple of seconds Coker & Co. were through, and were retreating to the Fifth Form passage, laughing loudly.

"They're gone!" roared Bob Cherry. "After them!"
"Faith, and look at Wharton!"

"Look at Nugent!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The wrath of the Removeites melted away as they looked into the study and beheld the unfortunate victims of Coker's perverted sense of humour. A roar of laughter rang along the Remove passage.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Bouncer Loses His Temper.

NUGENT blinked at the laughing juniors with eyes half-closed with jam. Harry Wharton struggled furiously in his bonds.

"Groo! Come and let us loose, you idiots!" gasped Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yow! Untie these beastly cords!" howled Frank.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bob Cherry ran into the study, and picked a knife from the table, and soon cut through the cords. Wharton and Nugent staggered up, red with rage under the jam and marmalade and soot. The Removeites roared.

"You—groo—silly asses!" panted Nugent. "There's nothing to—groo—cackle at!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let's go and get clean, and let 'em cackle!" said Wharton. "You'd better give Sirrithy a look-in—those rotters said they'd seen him."

And Wharton and Nugent rushed away to a bath-room.
"Rot!" said Bolsover. "Smithy wouldn't be caught napping like that. No fear!"

"Not much!" said Snoop.
"Rot!" retorted Bob Cherry. "We'd better see."

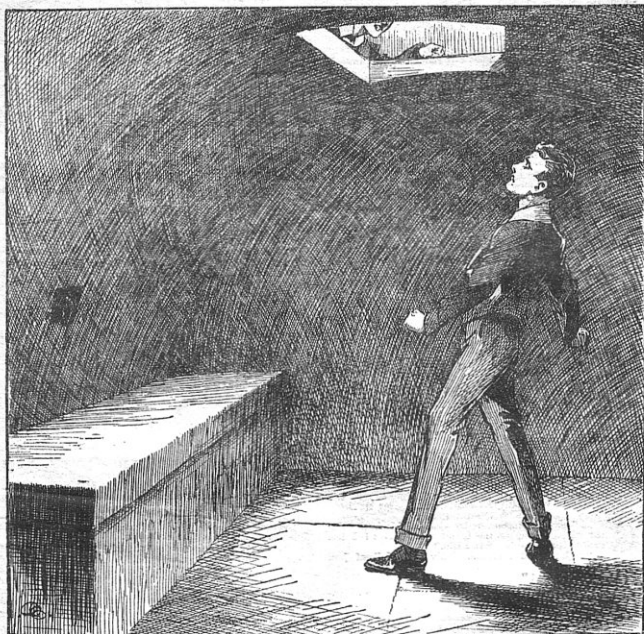
And he ran along the passage and opened the door of Vernon-Smith's study.

Then he burst into a roar.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's happened?"
"Look!"

It was pretty clear that the Fifth Form raiders had been in Vernon-Smith's room before they paid their visit to Study No. 1.

The Bouncer was there! He was sitting in his armchair—not from choice. His hands were tied to the arms of the chair, his ankles to the legs of it, and a stout cord round his chest fastened to his back. A handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, and secured there with several windings of knotted string. His face was as black as the ace of spades. It had been coated, apparently, with a mixture of soot and ink, which had also flowed liberally over his collar and waistcoat. From that weird complexion his eyes gleamed and glittered with



"Let me out of this!" gasped Blundell, as Vernon-Smith lifted the flagstone that covered the cell. "It's cold, and—and dark, and—and there's horrible creepy things here—ugh!" "I'll let you out of this, with pleasure, when you agree to my little proposition," answered Vernon-Smith. (See Chapter 14)

frantic rage. But he could not call for help; he could only wriggle in his chair, and mumble.

The juniors yelled with laughter.

Bolsover strode into the study and released his leader. Vernon-Smith staggered up, and tore the handkerchief from his mouth, and spat furiously.

"Who did it?" demanded Bolsover.

"Idiot! The Fifth, of course!"

"Look here—"

"I'm going to make Coker pay for it, too!" yelled the Bounder, who was beside himself with rage.

"Take it gently," said Johnny Bull. "It was only a jape, after all, though it was rather thick."

"The japefulness was terrific!" cried Hurree Singh.

The Bounder caught up a cricket-stump from the table, and ran to the door and into the passage. Bob Cherry shouted after him in alarm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you going?"

"I'm going to see Coker!"

"You-ass!"

"You duffer, come back!"

"Come back, you fathend!"

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But the Bounder did not come back. He dashed on furiously. His temper was never good, and now it was very nearly demonic. If he reached Coker, with that cricket-stump in his hand, he was likely to do some serious damage, and get himself into trouble, and some of the Removites rushed after him to stop him.

"The silly ass!" gasped Bob Cherry, dashing down the passage after the enraged Bounder. "If he welts Coker with that stump—"

"The brute will get himself expelled," said Mark Linley.

"We must stop him!"

But that was not so easy. Vernon-Smith seemed to have wings. He dashed into the Fifth Form passage, his discoloured face still streaming with ink and soot, and drove open the door of Coker's study with a crashing kick.

There were half a dozen Fifth Formers in the study chuckling over the joke. They gave a yell of surprise as the black-featured junior tore in.

"Here he is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out, Coker," shrieked Potter, "he's mad!"

Right at Coker the Bounder was springing, with the cricket-

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TUESDAY:

"THE FIGHT FOR THE CAPTAINCY!"

By FRANK RICHARDS,
Order Early.

stump lifted to strike. If that savage blow had reached Coker's head, as the Bounder fully intended, it would have stunned him, and perhaps have done more serious injury still. Fortunately, Blundell put out his foot in time, and Vernon-Smith fell over it blindly, and tripped, and went with a crash to the floor. The falling stump just missed Coker, who was standing almost transfixed, too slow and too astounded to save himself.

"M-m-my aunt!" gasped Coker.

"The Fifth-Formers piled on Vernon-Smith in a second. He had no chance. Potter dragged the stump away from him, and Blundell and Bland grasped him, and made him a prisoner. Coker's eyes gleamed.

"The rotten cad!" he ejaculated. "He was going to welt me with that stump—he might have busted my napper!"

"More likely busted the stump," said Bob Cherry, from the door. He had come up breathless and panting.

Coker glared at him.

"Kick those kids out!" he exclaimed.

The door was slammed upon the juniors. Then Vernon-Smith, powerless in the grasp of Blundell and Bland, was stretched face downwards upon the table, and Coker took the cricket-stump in hand.

Vernon-Smith struggled desperately, gnashing his teeth with rage. But he was helpless in the iron grasp of the Fifth-Formers. "Now, you rotten cad," said Coker, "you're going to have a lesson! You're going to be sorry you played the hooligan, you worm!"

And Vernon-Smith certainly was sorry before the enraged Fifth-Former had finished with him.

Coker gave him twelve strokes with the stump, all in the same place, and when the dozen were complete Vernon-Smith was writhing and yelling for mercy.

Coker broke the stump across his knee, and tossed the pieces into the fire.

"Chuck him out!" he said.

Potter opened the door, and the Bounder of Greyfriars was bundled out in a heap into the passage, and the door was slammed after him.

Vernon-Smith lay where he had fallen, gasping painfully. Bob Cherry and Linley and Johnny Bull were still there, and the Bounder glared at them in fury.

"Why didn't you help me?" he yelled.

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"We didn't come here to help you," he replied. "We followed you to stop you from doing any damage with that stump, and the kicking you've got serves you jolly well right."

And the juniors walked away, leaving the Bounder to groan and grit his teeth, and limp after them more slowly.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Plot and Counter-Plot.

"GROO!" gasped Nugent, as he scrubbed his face under the steaming tap in the bath-room. "Groo! I feel as if I shall never be clean again."

"Ugh!" said Wharton. "My hair's full of jam and soot!"

"The horrid beasts!"

"The rotters!"

Bob Cherry looked into the bath-room, which was thick with steam. The atmosphere was clouded, and there was an incessant sound of splashing. Bob grinned at the two juniors, who were stripped to the waist, washing away as if their lives depended upon it.

"Getting clean?" he asked.

"Groo! Yes!"

"Coker's a funny beast," Bob Cherry remarked. "Vernon-Smith's had it worse than you, and he's raging!"

"Let him rage! Groo!"

Wharton began to towel his head. His hair was dripping, and his face a scarlet red from continual rubbing.

All the same, we're going to make those bounders sit up," he remarked. "I had been thinking of a scheme just when Coker came into my study."

"Oh, good!" gasped Nugent. "What is it?"

"To-morrow's Saturday—"

"I know that, ass!"

"The Fifth are going to Abbotsford to play the eleven there in a footer match, and Coker has got his place in the team."

"Yes; he made such a row that they had to shove him in," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "He can't play footer for toffee."

"Of course he can't," said Nugent. "But what the dickens has Coker's footer match at Abbotsford got to do with us?"

"Lots!" said Harry Wharton, breathing hard from the toweeling. "You see, they are going over in a brake, and we know just when they're booked to start—at two o'clock from the gates of Greyfriars."

"I know that."

"What's to prevent twenty or thirty Remove chaps from ambushing the brake on the road, in the loneliest place—say the lower road by Courtfield—and collaring the brake?"

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"My hat!"

"There will be Coker and the rest of the eleven, and two or three over," said Harry. "The brake won't hold more than fifteen or sixteen at the outside—it's old Todger's brake. We can take pretty nearly all the Remove—we shall be two or three to one, and we shall take them by surprise. We shall capture the whole giddy bagful!"

"By Jove!"

"Then we'll tie them up in the brake, just as they tied us up in our study, and drive them to Abbotsford, with their faces chalked white, and paper foot-scaps on their heads," said Wharton, grinning. "Abbotsford are a swell lot, and you can imagine their faces when a crew like that comes to play footer with them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about the driver?"

"We can shift him off the brake—that won't be any trouble, and one of us can drive the brake into Abbotsford, and right up to the door of the school there, and cut before Coker & Co. are let loose."

Bob Cherry leaned against the bath-room wall and roared. Nugent collapsed into an hysterical heap of yells and cackles and rumbled towels.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you think of the idea?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, glorious!" roared Bob Cherry. "When I think of Coker sitting in the brake with his face chalked white, and a foot-scap on, and all Abbotsford cackling at him, ha, ha, ha!"

"It's too rich!" shrieked Nugent. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three juniors roared at the prospect.

"Not a word, though," said Harry Wharton, as he finished a toweeling, in high good humour now. "If the Fifth got a whisper of it, they'd have a crowd in the brake, and it would be off—all off."

"Not a breath," said Bob Cherry.

"Hark!" cried Nugent.

"What's the matter?"

"There's somebody in the passage."

The bath-room door was ajar. Bob Cherry dragged it open, and ran out into the passage. It was very dusky there; someone had turned out the gas-jet. Bob Cherry struck a match, but the passage was empty, save for himself.

"Nobody here," he said.

"I thought I heard a footstep," said Nugent.

"Oh, it was nothing."

"It was careful, though," said Harry Wharton. "Better not speak about it excepting in the study, and with the door shut. We can arrange details presently. I think the idea is a jolly ripping one, and if it works the Fifth will have to sing small."

"Yes, rather."

"Vernon-Smith will have to get up jolly early in the morning to beat it, I know that," said Nugent.

And the three chums repaired to No. 1 Study, to discuss the scheme in all its bearings, and to settle the plan of action. It was unanimously decided not to confide it to anybody else, with the exceptions of Linley, Bull, and Tom Brown, until just before it was time to put it into execution. And even then Vernon-Smith was not to be told. None of the chums of the Remove trusted the Bounder. A treacherous word to Coker and the whole scheme would be spoiled—and was the Bounder above speaking that word? His previous record did not make the chums of the Remove inclined to place much faith in him.

"A still tongue shows a wise head," Bob Cherry remarked.

"Mum's the word."

And so it was agreed.

Tom Brown and Mark Linley and Johnny Bull were called into the study, and admitted to the secret, and joined in the discussion of the plan; but so far no one else was told. The six juniors chuckled joyously over the scheme. It was certain that if it succeeded the Fifth would be thoroughly "done."

And why should it not succeed?

"There was a reason, if the Removites had only known it. While Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing their plan in No. 1 Study, Potter of the Fifth entered Coker's quarters. Coker was stretched in his armchair, with his feet on the table, reading. That was Coker's way of doing his preparation—a way that sometimes led him into trouble with Mr. Froul, his Form-master.

"Hallo!" said Coker, glancing up idly from his paper; then, catching the expression upon Potter's face, he asked, quickly:

"What's up?"

"Great news!" grinned Potter.

He closed the door carefully.

"You're jolly mysterious," said Coker, sitting up in his chair. "What the dickens is the news about?"

"The latest from the Remove," chuckled Potter. "I was passing the bath-rooms a few minutes ago—"

"You generally do pass them, I believe," grinned Coker.

"Oh, don't be funny! I tell you I was passing the bath-

rooms, and those young bounders were washing off the jam and root.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And talking at the top of their voices, just as if they wanted me to know all about it," grinned Potter.

"Oh!" said Coker. "Well, what about it?"

"They've got a scheme."

"Haven't they had enough yet?"

"Looks not. And if I hadn't happened to hear them, Coley old man, we should have cut precious figures at Abbotsford to-morrow," said Potter impressively.

"Why, what—?"

"They're going to ambush the brake in the lower Courtfield Road, take us prisoners, tie us up in the brake, and chalk our faces and put fool's-caps on our heads, and drive us up to the door of Abbotsford School in that style!"

Coker gasped.

"My only aunt!"

"What do you think of that for a wheeze?" grinned Potter.

"Jolly lucky we're on to it. They are going to have all the Remove there, and bring the paint and chalk and fool's-caps, I suppose. Nice for us to turn up at Abbotsford in that style. What?"

"The young beggars!"

"Only we'll nip it in the bud," grinned Potter.

"We'll go and wallop them at once."

"Hold on," said Potter coolly. "I've got a better dodge than that. We'll have the Fifth there before the Remove arrive on the spot—ambush the ambushers, you know. And then—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Coker went off into a sudden roar.

"Hallo!—what's the joke?" asked Greene, looking into the study.

Potter explained, and Greene joined in the roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's a surprise waiting for the Remove kids to-morrow," chuckled Potter.

And Potter was right.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Lying Low.

LITTLE dreaming that the plot was already known to the redoubtable Coker, Harry Wharton & Co. kept their own counsel upon the subject, and discussed the plan within the closed doors of the study with bated breath, when they discussed it at all.

Coker & Co., on their side, were equally careful to preserve the silence which is golden.

In the morning, Coker and his friends were heard talking of the coming match with Abbotsford, and of the intended drive over to the school in the brake, and they seemed to be in blissful ignorance of the fact that their drive was to be interrupted.

Wharton and his chums chuckled as they heard them.

After morning school that Saturday, Coker & Co. prepared for their journey. A good number of the Fifth set off immediately after dinner, with the intention of reaching Abbotsford in time to watch the beginning of the match—or so they declared. There was nothing to excite the suspicions of the Remove in that. When an out match was played, the fellows who wanted to watch it could not all, of course, afford to go in brakes, and those who wanted to get there as soon as the brake had to start early. It was a good long walk from Greyfriars to Abbotsford.

Coker and the rest of the eleven intended to leave in the brake at two o'clock. At all events, the brake was to be at the school at two o'clock, and if Coker & Co. were ready they would start.

It was not an uncommon thing for quite a crowd of Greyfriars fellows to walk over to an out match to watch it, and so the departure of nearly all the Fifth excited no remark. By the time the brake arrived, only the footer eleven remained of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

By that time most of the Remove had disappeared.

Harry Wharton had waited till a quarter to two, in order to give the Fifth Form walkers time to get well ahead on the road. It would hardly be feasible to ambush the Fifth Form brake, of course, if there were Fifth-Formers dribbling along the road in twos and threes all the time. But the Fifth fellows had started so early after dinner that by a quarter to two the road was sure to be clear, Wharton thought.

And at that time the Remove slipped away in twos and threes, taking separate paths, to meet on the lower Courtfield Road.

Most of the Remove had been let into the secret, to enable them to take a part in the jape against the Fifth.

Vernon-Smith and his immediate friends, however, were left out. It was only cautious to leave them out, for an incautious word might give the whole show away, and Harry Wharton's chums did not trust the Bounder.

Thirty Removites streamed by various paths towards the place of meeting, and they were all there by the time the clock of Courtfield Church rolled out the hour of two—the hour fixed for the brake to start from Greyfriars.

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Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were the first upon the spot.

It was an excellent place for an ambuscade. The road was sunken, following a depression of the ground, and there were high hedges dotted with trees on either side, casting a shade over the road.

In the hedges and the masses of rambling bushes that grow on the belt of grass beside the road there was room enough for a regiment to ambush.

"Just the place!" said Frank Nugent, looking round.

"Ripping!" said Harry. "Not a soul here yet."

None of the Removites, save themselves, had arrived. The place was quiet as a churchyard. The chums of the Remove would not have felt so safe, however, if they had known that back among the trees two dozen sturdy Fifth-Formers were lying in ambush. But they did not know it; they were as yet reposing in the ignorance that is bliss.

"Here they come, some of them!" said Nugent.

Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came along the lane.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Nobody else here?"

"Not yet."

"Ten to two," said Mark Linley, looking at his watch.

"Plenty of time yet. Shall we get into cover, in case any stray Fifth-Former might come by? You can't be too careful."

"Quite right; roll into cover," said Harry. "I'll whistle to the chaps as they come by, and they can join us."

And the Removites took cover among the bushes. In ones and twos and threes the Removites strolled up from all directions, and Harry Wharton's whistle warned them where the ambush was laid.

Before two o'clock all were there.

Thirty Removites lay hidden in the bushes, waiting for the brake to roll by, and ready to rush out into the road at the sound of its wheels.

"Two," said Bob Cherry, as the chime of the church clock came echoing over the meadows. "Time they started from Greyfriars."

"They're sure to be late—Coker always is."

"The lateness of the Honourable Coker is terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "We shall see him in the sweat by-and-by-fulness!"

The Removites waited.

It was cold where they lay hidden. The spring green was showing on the bushes and the trees, and the sun was bright overhead; but the wind blew cold and chill from the sea. But they did not mind it; they would soon have enough exercise to warm them. Though there were thirty of them, the Fifth-Form fellows in the brake would be certain to put up a good fight. They would not be overcomers without a struggle, though, of course, a struggle with such odds could only end one way.

"It's the giddiest jape we've ever japed!" said Johnny Bull. "I fancy Coker will look pretty sick when he arrives at Abbotsford with a chalked face and a fool's-cap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The sickfulness of the esteemed Coker will be terrific!"

"I don't think the Bounder will be able to beat this," said Hazlebone.

"No fear!"

"Hark!"

The sound of wheels came along the road.

"The brake's coming!" muttered Wharton. "Quiet!"

"The quietfulness is terrific!"

"Shut up, Inky!"

"My esteemed friend—"

"Rats—dry up!" said John Bull.

The juniors lay very quiet.

There was a rumble of wheels and a rattle of horses' hoofs on the hard road. Harry Wharton looked out from the thick bushes, and caught sight of the brake. It was crowded with Fifth-Formers, in coats and caps, and the two horses that drew it were coming along at a good rate.

"Here they are!"

"Ready, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The readiness is terrific!"

"Show a leg, then!" shouted Bob Cherry.

The brake was almost abreast. The juniors ran out into the road in a crowd.

"Halt!" shouted Wharton.

The driver pulled his horses in amazement. The lane was too narrow for the brake to turn, if he had wanted to turn it, and there seemed to be no escape for Coker & Co.

But Coker & Co. did not seem to want to escape. They sat in the brake staring at the crowd of Removites in the road and grinning.

"Hullo!" said Coker. "What do you fags want?"

"We want you!" said Wharton grimly.

Coker chuckled.

"Sorry, but you can't have me! I'm booked for a footer match this afternoon, and so I have no time to give you a licking. Get out of the way!"

"Rats!"

"We're going to Abbotsford," Potter explained blandly. "Will you get out of the way, you fags, or shall we make the driver drive over you?"

"Hold the horses' heads, Bob and Bell!"

"Right-o!"

"We've got 'em!"

"I say—" began the astonished driver.

"You dry up!" said Wharton crisply. "You're dead in this act!" Coker, and the rest of you, get out of that brake!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Coker.

"Get down into the road at once!"

"What for?"

"Because we order you to!"

"My only aunt!"

"Faith, and that's a good reason intirely!" said Micky

Demmond, grinning. "Get down into the road, ye spalpeens, before we chuck ye out of the brake!"

"But, I say—"

"No time for jaw," said Nugent. "You'll be late for Abbotsford!"

"Oh, you don't mean to stop us going to Abbotsford?"

said Potter.

"No fear!"

"What are you going to do, then?"

"You'll see!"

"Now, look here, you fags—"

"Get out of that brake!" shouted Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker, moved by a sudden impulse he could not restrain. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my aunt! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton stared at him in surprise.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll give you something to cackle at soon, you cackling ass!" said Frank Nugent. "If you must cackle, get down in the road and cackle!"

"Get down at once!" commanded Wharton.

"What will you do if we don't?" inquired Greeno.

"We'll get into the brake and chuck you out!"

"Faith, and we will!"

"I guess you'd better hop it lively!" remarked Fisher T.

Fish. "I kinder reckon we mean frozen business this time!"

All out," said Blundell, the captain of the Fifth.

The Fifth-Formers descended from the brake, and stood in a group in the road.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Turning the Tables!

COKER & CO. looked decidedly mack.

The Remove could hardly understand it.

They had ordered the Fifth-Form footballers to alight,

certainly, but they had not expected the order to be

obeyed. They had expected to have to charge the brake, and

pitch the Fifth-Formers out, after a hand-to-hand struggle

into the road. As there were thirty of them, and they surrounded

the brake and cut off all escape, the matter was in their hands.

But they had never dreamed that the Fifth would accept it as

tamely as this. The sight of the Fifth-Formers stepping quietly

and meekly from the brake amazed them.

"My hat! Coker & Co. are getting mighty humble lately,"

said Bob Cherry, with a puzzled look. "They don't seem to

mean to show fight at all."

"Blessed if I catch on to it," said Nugent.

"Keep your eyes peeled," said Ogilvy. "They're up to

some game, most likely."

"They seem to be tickled about something," Penfold

remarked. "They seem to look upon the whole thing as a joke."

"Well, so it is; but the joke is up against them."

"They don't seem to think so," said Mark Linley, with a

puzzled look.

"Oh, it's only bluff, I guess!" remarked Fish.

"Yes, most likely it's bluff."

"But why don't they put up a fight?" said Leigh.

"Blessed if I know."

By this time the footballers were all in the road. There were

two fellows as well as the team, making thirteen in all. They

allowed themselves to be ranged in a row along the side of the

road by the Removites as if they were fags and the juniors were

Form-masters at least.

Their meekness amazed the heroes of the Remove.

The only explanation was that they intended to make a

sudden dash for liberty, hoping to take the Remove by surprise;

and the juniors were consequently very much on their guard.

The brake remained at a standstill, the driver sitting on his

seat, chewing a straw, and looking on at the peculiar scene with great interest.

"Well, you've got us," said Coker pleasantly. "Now what

are you going to do?"

"Tie you up first of all," said Wharton.

"Oh, dear!"

"Got the bag, Nugent?"

"Here you are!" said Frank.

He dragged a bag out of the bushes, and opened it, and took

out the contents. There was a coil of strong, thin cord, enough

of it to tie up a whole school if necessary, and a number of

folded-up fool's-caps of paper, and a quantity of chalk, and some

grease-paint. The Fifth-Formers looked on with great interest,

and burst into a sudden roar of laughter, much to the amazement

of the Removites.

"What are you going to do with those things?" asked

Coker.

"Tie you up."

"What then?"

"Chalk you over the chivvy and above your fool's-caps on,"

said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And then take you to Abbotsford and let you loose," said

Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fifth Form were roaring with laughter.

The Removites stared at them in amazement. It was not

bravado, it was not bluff, it was evidently genuine merriment.

Tears of mirth were rolling down Coker's cheeks, and Potter

was weeping with laughter, and Greene was doubled up almost

in hysterics.

"So you think it's funny, do you?" demanded Wharton,

much perplexed at the spirit in which the Fifth-Formers were

receiving the joke.

"Funny!" roared Potter. "Ha, ha, ha! Funny isn't the

word! Ho, ho, ho!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the captured footballers.

"Funny!" gasped Coker. "Why, you don't know how

funny you are! You'll know soon! But you don't know yet!

Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you silly asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, tie them up and stop their silly cackling!" said Tom

Brown.

"Coker first," said Wharton.

"Yes. Begin with the biggest ass."

Wharton and Nugent advanced upon Coker, with a length of

cord ready in their hands. The Removites were standing ready

to pile on the prisoners at the first sign of resistance. Coker

put his fingers to his lips and blew a sudden, sharp, echoing

whistle.

Wharton started as it rang out.

He knew in an instant what it was, of course.

It was a signal!

"Look out!" yelled Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look out!"

The Removites needed to look out.

There was a crash of many heavy bodies in the bushes, and a

crowd of Fifth-Formers poured into the lane from their hiding-

places.

Two dozen stalwart fellows of the Fifth had started up at

Coker's signal, as if from the bosom of the earth; as of old the

clansmen of Roderick Dhu started up from the mountain-

side at the sudden whistle.

The sudden rush came the instant the signal had rung out.

And as the Fifth-Formers rushed from their ambush into the

road, Coker & Co. flung themselves upon the Removites.

In a second a wild and whirling conflict was raging in the

narrow lane.

The Remove put up a splendid fight.

But they were taken by surprise, and they were outnumbered,

to say nothing of the hopelessness of a struggle of juniors against

seniors.

The Fifth-Formers had seven or eight more fellows on their

side than the Remove had, and they were all, of course, bigger

and heavier fellows—seniors, in fact. The tables had been

turned with a vengeance.

Harry Wharton & Co. had no chance.

But they fought hard, simply because there was no retreat.

A few of them could have fled, but nearly all were in the grip

of the Fifth-Formers, and so the few who retreated returned

into the fray again to aid their friends.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Coker.

"Lick the cheeky fags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Back up, Remove!" roared Harry Wharton.

It was soon clear that it was not the intention of the Fifth

merely to lick the juniors who had waylaid the brake. That

they could easily have done. It was their aim to take them



Mr. Wodyer, the new master, lighted his pipe, and was soon blowing out thick clouds of smoke, that floated in the air and drenched every corner of the room with the smell of strong tobacco. The juniors were almost suffocated. (For the above incident, see the grand, long, complete tale of TOM MERRY & CO., at St. Jim's, entitled "FIGGINS & CO'S NEW MASTER," by Martin Clifford, which is contained in this week's issue of "THE GEM" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

prisoners, and that was slower work, for the juniors struggled as long as they had an ounce of breath left.

But one by one they were dragged down into the road, and the Fifth secured them by the simple process of sitting on them.

Harry Wharton was the last to fall, and he did not go down until Coker and Potter and Greene were all hanging upon him and dragging him down. Then he fell, and they fell upon him, and the fight was over.

"Got 'em!" roared Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gasped Wharton. "Ow! Rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker shifted himself into a more comfortable position on

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Wharton's chest. Wharton lay on his back in the dust, breathless and exhausted.

"I rather fancy we score this time," Coker remarked genially.

"You see, the rest of the Fifth were there all the time and only waiting till I whistled. I dare say you can see why we laughed now."

Wharton could!

"And now we'll use their own rope to tie them up," Potter remarked.

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

With a Fifth-Former sitting on each of the prisoners to keep him down, there were half a dozen of the Fifth left disengaged

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Nugent minor, of the Second Form. "Is that you, Franky? What's made you turn so pale?"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us loose, can't you?" growled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut these blessed cords, you grinning baboons!" howled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd, friends and foes alike, seemed to be able to do nothing but laugh. They roared. They held their sides, or staggered against the gates yelling.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a rizzly circus!"

"Who's doing it?"

"Was it the Highlife cads?" gasped Hoskins.

"No!" growled Wharton.

"The Fifth, then?" yelled Vernon-Smith. "That was it. Don't deny it. You've been japing the Fifth, and they've japed you instead."

"I haven't denied it!" snapped Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't let them loose!" shouted Vernon-Smith, pulling back Nugent minor, who had taken out his penknife. "Let them process."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurray for the procession!"

"Go it!"

"March round the Close!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The weary Removites tramped in. Faces were at all the windows of the School House by now. Across the Close the juniors could see masters looking out of their studies, and the fellows on the footer-field were staring too.

Wharton gritted his teeth. He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and he felt that he had never looked so absurd in his life before. And the triumph of the Bounder was very hard to bear.

"Let us loose, you cads!" shouted Tom Brown.

Only yells of laughter replied.

The Greyfriars fellows were enjoying the sight.

"These chaps went out to jape the Fifth!" shrieked the Bounder. "Look at them now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton swung round towards the porter's lodge. Goeling, the porter, was standing in his doorway, with a broad grin upon his face.

Wharton halted at the lodge, and the long file of Removites halted behind him. They had no choice about it.

"Let us loose, Gossy, will you?" Wharton exclaimed.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Goeling.

"I'll give you half-a-crown if you buck up!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Wot I says is this 'ere—haw, haw, haw!"

"Will you buck up?" shouted Wharton.

"Haw, haw! Yes, Master Wharton, certainly. Haw, haw, haw!"

Goeling disappeared into his lodge, and came back with a knife in his hand.

Crowds gathered round thicker and thicker as Goeling sawed through the cords, and released the Removites one after another. It was some time before all were freed.

When they were loose, they tramped away towards the School House, to get the chalk and paint washed off their faces, leaving the crowd shrieking.

"My hat!" Vernon-Smith exclaimed, with tears running down his cheeks. "I don't think I ever saw anything quite so funny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't think Wharton looks like winning the second round," chuckled Bolsover.

"Ha, ha! No."

The fellows crowded into the School House to watch the heroes of the unfortunate adventure. Yells of laughter greeted Harry Wharton & Co. when they came down washed and brushed, and still looking exasperated and furious.

In the common-room, Vernon-Smith and his friends received an account of the adventure, and they yelled over it afresh. Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry and their chums had gone to their studies, but most of the unfortunate adventurers were in the common-room, and they gave a graphic description of the "muck-up," as Ogilvy termed it.

"I don't think Wharton was the second round, over this," grinned the Bounder.

Ogilvy smothered.

"I should say not," he exclaimed. "We'd have bumped the silly ass fifty times, on the way home, if we hadn't been tied up."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"I guess we've been dashed," grunted Fisher T. Fish. "And I guess I shall think twice before I back up Wharton against the Fifth again—some!"

"Yes, rather!"

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Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"Well, you'll have a chance of backing me up, instead," he remarked. "I've got a scheme for making the Fifth sit up, and I think it will answer better than Wharton's dodge."

"What's the dodge?" asked a dozen voices.

The Removites were keen enough to avenge their defeat upon the Fifth.

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"I'll tell you at a meeting," he replied. "I don't want my scheme to be collared by Wharton and his friends. I'm putting a notice on the board for a Form meeting at seven, and I want you to be there."

"Faith, and I'd be glad to give the Fifth one in the eye," said Micky Desmond. "But sure I don't see how ye're going to do it."

"You'll see at the meeting," said the Bounder.

And he sat down at the table to draw up the notice.

Ten minutes later, all Greyfriars that happened to be interested in the matter could read the following upon the notice-board in the hall:

"Notice to the Remove.—A meeting of the Form is called for seven sharp, in the Form-room. Most important. Signed, H. VERNON-SMITH."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith's Idea.

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent were sitting at tea in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage. They were both looking a little less cheerful than usual. They had had their tea almost in silence. Nugent pushed back his chair as he slowly negotiated the last of the jam-tarts.

"It was an awful mucker, Harry!" he remarked at last.

Wharton nodded.

"I'm afraid it's no good denying that," he said.

"Coker & Co. are looking up," Nugent said thoughtfully.

"We've always looked on Coker as the champion ass, you know, but—"

"Oh, he got wind of the dodge, somehow," said Harry.

"Perhaps someone heard us talking it over. You remember we thought someone passed the bath-room when we were talking?"

Ah, yes; very likely.

"But it certainly was a mucker," said Wharton, smiling in spite of himself. "We must have looked a set of asses when we came in."

Nugent chuckled.

"I'm afraid we did—the fellows appeared to think so, anyway!"

"Well, it's up to Vernon-Smith to do better, if he can," said Harry.

"There was a kick at the study door, and it flew open. Bob Cherry and Hurree Janset Ram Singh came in, smiling cheerfully."

"Hallo," said Wharton, "you're just too late. There's some cream puffs left, though."

"Had tea," said Bob Cherry.

"The halfpence is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh.

"Well, make yourselves at home," said Harry.

"The halfpence is—"

"Terrific," grinned Bob Cherry. "This is quite like old times, isn't it?"

He sat on the table and swung his legs, and knocked a couple of cups over with his elbow.

Harry Wharton nodded. Both Bob Cherry and Hurree Janset Ram Singh had once shared No. 1 Study with Wharton and Nugent; but the space was confined for four, and Bob Cherry had been changed into a new study when one was opened further up the passage, with Mark Linley for his study-mate.

The new studies up the passage were larger than the old ones; and when Hurree Janset Ram Singh had returned to Greyfriars after his long absence, he was put into No. 13 with Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, instead of into his old quarters. But though divided, as far as quarters went, the Famous Four of the Remove were as close chums as ever.

"Have you heard?" asked Bob.

"Heard you knock the crockery over?" asked Nugent.

"Yes."

"No, ass. There's a notice on the board—Form meeting at seven."

"Oh! Who's called it? Not Bulstrode?"

Bob Cherry laughed.

"No, not Bulstrode. Bulstrode's at his dignity lately—he won't take any interest in the Remove. He's retired to his tent like that giddy old Greek bounder—who was it?"

"Achilles!"

"Yes, that's the bounder—chap who bunked into his tent to sulk. But we'll go and dig him out to go to the Form meeting," said Bob Cherry. "All our party had better turn up in force, I think. You never know."

"But who's called the meeting?" asked Wharton.
 "The Bouncer. The fellows are saying that he's got some dodgy for downing the Fifth, and he wants to expound it to a whole meeting."

"Well, it's his turn," said Harry.
 "Just so. It's ten to seven now, so we called in to fetch you," said Bob. "Come along. You never know what the Bouncer's up to, and we ought to keep an eye on him."

"Quite so."
 The four juniors left the study, and Bob Cherry kicked open the door of the adjoining room. There the study, shared by Bulstrode, the former captain of the Remove, with Tom Brown and Hazeldene. The two latter were gone down, doubtless to attend the meeting in the Form-room, and Bulstrode was alone in the study. He had his books on the table, and a pen in his hand, but he did not seem to be working.

"Coming?" asked Bob Cherry genially.
 Bulstrode looked up.
 "Coming where?" he asked.
 "Form meeting—most important," said Bob, quoting from the notice on the board.

Bulstrode shook his head.
 "It's nothing to do with me," he remarked.
 "Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "It's as much to do with you as with anybody else. And we want all our friends there, in case the Bouncer is up to any of his giddy knavish tricks."

"I don't want to come."
 "Oh, don't be an ass. Come on!"
 "Better come," said Nugent. "The fellows will think you're ratty at being out of the captaincy, you know."

Bulstrode flushed.
 "It isn't that," he said. "Only—"
 "Well, come on," said Harry Wharton.
 "Oh, all right, if you want me."

And Bulstrode came.
 The five juniors descended the stairs together, and John Bull and Mark Linley joined them as they went in. Most of the Remove were already in the Form-room; it was close upon seven o'clock. The Bouncer and his immediate friends stood in a group near the Form-master's desk, and there was an expression upon the hard, clear-cut face of Vernon-Smith that told of anticipated triumph.

"What the dickens has the ead got into his head?" muttered Nugent.

Wharton shook his head. He could see that the Bouncer had thought of some plan that pleased him very much. But he could not guess what it was.

Vernon-Smith's hard, keen eyes were upon Harry Wharton & Co. as soon as they came in.

"We're all here now, I think," said the Bouncer. "Shut the door, Snooty."

"Right-o!"
 "Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Bolsover & Co., ever ready to encourage their champion.

"Go it, Smithy!"
 Vernon-Smith jumped on a form.

"Gentlemen of the Remove, you know the terms of the contest between Wharton and me. Three rounds, and the winner of the rubber to become captain of the Remove. Wharton won the first round—"

"Bravo, Wharton!" roared John Bull.

There was a cheer. Vernon-Smith listened to it with an unpleasant expression upon his face, and when there was silence again he resumed:

"The terms of the second round are that the one who downs the Fifth and makes them sing small is the winner."

"Hear, hear!"

"Wharton has had a try to-day to down the Fifth, but I think he will admit that it was rather a mucker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And, in fact, the Fifth downed him—"

"Yes, he, he, he!"

"I think Wharton ought to admit that—"

"Speak up, Wharton!" shouted Bolsover.

"I do admit it," said Harry shortly. "It wouldn't be much good to deny it. The Fifth did us in the eye—we were downed all along the line. Get on with the washing."

"Very well," said Vernon-Smith. "Wharton's had his try, and mucked it up. According to the agreement, I should have backed up Wharton if he'd asked for my help, but he didn't. I am going to suggest a plan for downing the Fifth, in my turn, and I shall ask Wharton to back me up—and all his friends, too."

"We're all ready," said Bob Cherry. "A bargain's a bargain."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll back you up, of course," said Wharton. "I don't see what I can do, but if it's a fair and square jape against the Fifth, I'm your man."

"Very well. Now," said the Bouncer, after a pause—and the Removes listened breathlessly; they felt that he was coming to the point now—"now, you know that we Remove chaps play jolly good footer—"

"What on earth—"

"Don't interrupt. The Fifth think they can play, but we think that if they'd meet us on the footer-field, and we could get a fair chance at them, that they'd be licked."

"Especially if we play as we did on Wednesday," sniffed Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That was an unlucky match," said the Bouncer. "But I put it to you fellows who play footer. If we made up the best possible team we could get out of the Remove, shouldn't we have a jolly good chance of beating the Fifth?"

"Yes, rather."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's my plan, then," said Vernon-Smith, with a gleam in his eyes. "I shall captain a team against the Fifth, and I call upon the Remove to back me up. If I beat them, I'm to be considered as having won the second round."

"But they won't play us!" said Wharton impatiently.

"We've challenged them, and they say they won't play the Lower Fourth. This is all rot if they won't fix up a match. We can't take them on the footer-field by force, I suppose, and make them play, can we?"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"That's part of the jape, of course," he said. "I think I can make them accept our challenge. If I can't, of course it's all off."

"Oh!"

"They won't play, Smithy," said Bulstrode.

"If they won't—as I say—it's off. But if I can make them

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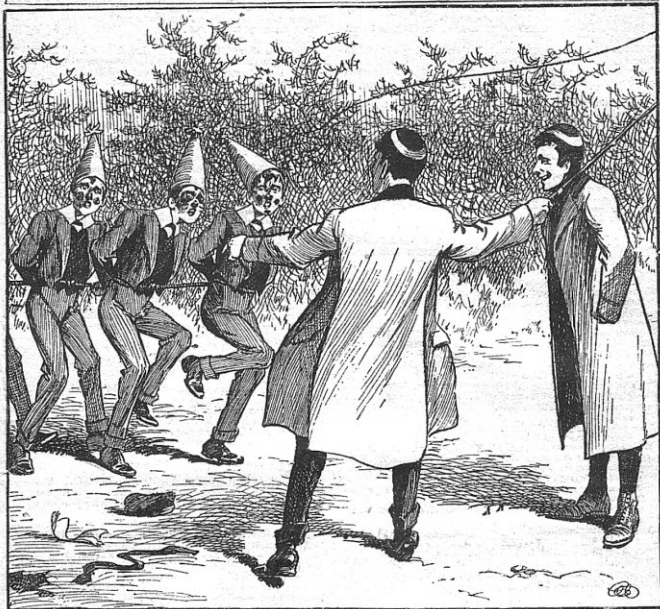
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Coker cracked the long lashed whip, and it curled round the legs of the Removites. There was a roar as the juniors squirmed and jumped to avoid the lash. "Ow! Yow! Leave off! Ow!" (See Chap. 8.)

play, and I captain a team to beat them, I am the winner of the second round. Is that agreed?" demanded the Bounder.

There was a shout of assent at once.

"What do you say, Whurton?"

"I agree it's fair enough," said Harry. "But I don't see how you'll get the Fifth to agree to play a match with us."

"That's my bizney. I think I can do it."

"Very well, then."

And so it was settled. There was no doubt that the Bounder's plan was a good one—if it came to anything. A defeat of the Fifth on the football-field was as big a victory over the senior Form as the Remove could ever think of gaining. But would the Fifth play? They had always entrenched themselves in their dignity as a senior Form, and refused even to entertain the idea of playing the Lower Fourth. How were they to be forced to depart from the position they had taken up?

It was "up" to the Bounder to make them do so, and even Vernon-Smith's faithfulest backers had very strong doubts as to whether he would succeed.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. A Challenge and a Chuck Out!

COKER & Co. came home from Abbotsford in high feather. They had beaten the Abbotsford team by two goals to one, and Coker was inclined to attribute the victory chiefly to one person—Horace Coker!

It was true that Coker had kicked the winning goal, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 213.

It had been, as the rest of the Fifth knew perfectly well, a fluke—Coker had scored by a miracle.

But he had scored, and the Fifth Form of Greyfriars had beaten Abbotsford Seniors, and they gloried in the victory.

Coker was looking very pleased with himself as he sat down to tea in his study with Potter and Greene. Potter and Greene were very polite about that goal. They were only too glad that no disaster had followed Coker's inclusion in the team. There was such a thing, as Greene observed privately to Potter, as fool's luck. It hadn't been such a bad thing to play Coker after all. But Greene did not say that to Coker. Coker would not have taken the remark in a friendly spirit.

As a matter of fact, Coker, although he had not been long in the Fifth, had made his mark in the Form.

He was very rich, for one thing, being the favourite nephew of a wealthy old lady, who sent him the most liberal tips; and Coker's study was something of a horn of plenty for hard-up fellows in the Fifth.

And then Coker was a big, powerful fellow, and though what he did not know about boxing would have filled whole books, his strength and pugnacity made him a dangerous opponent for anyone to tackle.

His private opinion was that he ought to be captain of the Fifth, though so far he had not disputed Blundell's position as skipper.

The Fifth, as a whole, took Coker good-humouredly, and they

were willing to let him believe that he could play football, though Blundell would have considered very, very seriously before playing him in a really important match.

"Bent them hollow, didn't we?" Coker remarked, as he sat down to the well-spread board.

"Hollow isn't the word," said Potter, helping himself to poached eggs and ham. "We walked right over them."

"It was a close thing at the finish, though," Coker remarked thoughtfully. "If I hadn't taken that goal it would have been a draw."

"Yes, but you saved the situation," said Potter, with a wink at Greene.

"Just in time! Regular surprise that goal was," said Greene. "I never saw one like it in my life."

"Oh, that's all right," said Coker modestly. "I can play footer, you know. There are some things I can't do; but I can play footer."

"Never seen a chap play as you do," agreed Potter.

"Never seen anything like it in my life," chimed in Greene. "The Abbotford chaps were surprised at the way you played. I could see that."

"Simply amazed!" said Potter.

Coker nodded.

"Yes; and I'm glad Blundell can see at last that he's got a jolly good recruit," said Coker. "He hummed and hawed a good deal about playing me."

"Not really!" exclaimed Potter, in astonishment.

"Yes, he did. Between ourselves, entre nous, you know," said Coker confidentially. "Blundell is an ass."

"Several sorts of an ass," said Greene. "These eggs are really ripping!"

"So's the ham!"

"Help yourselves," said Coker hospitably. "I'm jolly glad I pulled off that match. By the way, I don't think we shall have much more trouble with the Remove. I think they've learned by this time not to back up against the Fifth."

"Ha, ha! I should think so!"

"From what I hear they made a sensation when they got back to Greyfriars. I should think even those cheeky cubs in No. 1 Study would sing small after that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Coker.

He expected to see some Fifth Form fellows. But it was Vernon-Smith, of the Remove, who entered the study. Bolsover followed him in. The three Fifth-Formers stared at him.

"Hallo! What do you want?" demanded Coker.

"Only a word or two," said the Bounder. "We represent the Remove."

"Do you want to be tied up in a procession like the others?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith laughed, too.

"No," he said, "we've come to bring you a challenge."

"Oh! The Remove haven't had enough yet, eh?"

"Not quite enough," said the Bounder coolly. "We challenge the Fifth to a football match. Will you meet us on Wednesday afternoon?"

Coker stared.

"Play a footer match—with you?"

"Yes."

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Of all the nerve!" said Potter.

"Oh, these Remove kids take the biscuit for sheer, undiluted gall!" said Greene. "Shall I kick them out of the study, Coker?"

Bolsover took his hands out of his pockets. He was a big fellow, and not very easy to kick out of any study. The bully of the Remove was not unwilling to combat with any fellow in the Fifth, if it came to that.

"Better think twice about the kicking out," said Bolsover truculently.

"Oh, rats!" said Coker. "What do you mean by coming here with a piece of cheek like that? Get out!"

"Will you play us?"

"No fear!"

"You're afraid, then?"

"What!" roared Coker.

"You're afraid to meet us on the footer field," said Vernon-Smith, with all the contempt he could throw into his voice and look. "That's what's the matter with you. You won't risk getting kicked."

"Why, you cheeky young sweep—"

"If you're not afraid, fix up a match and play us."

"You young ass! You'll have to ask Blundell, anyway. I'm not captain of the Fifth," said Coker. "If I were, I'd play you, just for the pleasure of wiping up the ground with you and putting you in your place."

Beneath our dignity, though," said Potter.

"Oh, rot!" said the Bounder. "Above your courage, you mean."

"Why, you—you—"

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"Here's Blundell!" said Greene, as the captain of the Fifth came into the study with Bland. "Blundell, old man, the Remove are challenging us to a footer match."

Blundell burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They've done that before," grinned Bland. "There's no stopping the Remove from being cheeky—excepting by licking them. You'd better buzz off, you young duffers!"

"Yes, get out," said Blundell good-humouredly. "Of course, it's impossible for a senior Form to play the Lower Fourth. We don't play the Upper Fourth. We only play the Shell out of politeness, you know."

"You can play us out of politeness, too, if you like," said Vernon-Smith. "I don't care why you play us, so long as you do play us."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Blundell impatiently. "Of course we shan't play you! Why don't you ask the Sixth?"

"We don't specially want to beat the Sixth."

"So you think you could beat us?" grinned Blundell.

"Yes—I fancy so."

Blundell pointed to the door.

"Look here," he said, "you may be a funny merchant, and I'm no doubt you are, but we're fed up on your fun. Get out!"

"Are you going to play us? You'd better," said Vernon-Smith quietly.

Blundell stared at him.

"We'd better!" he repeated. "Why had we better? Are you going to box our ears if we don't?"

"Or spank us?" grinned Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you refuse to play, we're going to make you," said the Bounder quietly. "We shall show you up to all Greyfriars as being afraid to face us."

Afraid!" roared Blundell.

"Yes, that's the word. If—"

"Get out!"

"Will you play, then?"

"I'll sling you out of the study," said Blundell. "That's all I'll do."

And he ran at the Bounder. Vernon-Smith dodged out quickly through the doorway. Blundell laid his hands upon Bolsover instead, but the big Remove was not easy to handle. He hit out straight from the shoulder, and Blundell caught his knuckles upon the point of the chin, and fell flying backwards.

"Or!" yelled Blundell. "You-woow!"

Crash!

The captain of the Fifth fell back upon the table. There was a terrific crash as it rocked, and the crockery and the feed went off to the floor. Coker and Greene and Potter jumped up in a towering rage.

"Kick him out!" yelled Coker.

The Fifth-Formers throw themselves upon Bolsover. The burly Remove resisted desperately, and gave some hard knocks, but they were too many for him, and he was swept off the floor and hurled bodily through the doorway.

Vernon-Smith dodged out of his way just in time. Bolsover crashed down upon the linoleum, and lay there gasping. Bland slammed the study door after him.

"Or!" groaned Bolsover.

Vernon-Smith helped him up.

"Never mind, Bolsover."

The Remove bully groaned.

"Ow, ow! But I do mind it! I'm hurt! Yow!"

And he limped away down the passage, growling. Vernon-Smith followed him in silence, with a gleam in his eyes. His challenge to the Fifth had certainly not had a flattering reception; but the Bounder of Greyfriars had by no means given up his idea.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Has a Plan.

THE next day was Sunday—a very quiet day at Greyfriars.

That day nothing more was heard of Vernon-Smith's plan of campaign. If he discussed it at all, it was with his intimate friends, and nothing leaked out outside his study.

But it was certain that the Bounder had not given up his idea.

If he could force the Fifth to play somehow, he would have scored a big triumph; and if the Remove beat the senior Form—as they were confident they could do, especially if Coker played for the Fifth—then the Bounder would be held to have won the second round of the contest.

It was agreed that if the match came off Vernon-Smith should captain the Remove eleven. That was only fair—it was Vernon-Smith against the Fifth.

That was why he had insisted upon the agreement that Wharton & Co should back him up in the enterprise.

Without Harry Wharton and his chums the Remove could not

put a team into the field that would have a chance against the Fifth Form.

Vernon-Smith, as a rule, was a shaker, and did not play footer, but when he played he showed a mastery of the game that was really wonderful, and it compensated in the eyes of the Removites for many of his unpopular ways.

There was no doubt that the Bounder could captain an eleven successfully if he chose, and there was no doubt that upon an occasion like this he would do his very best.

And he could depend upon Harry Wharton & Co to back him up. Had the case been reversed—had Wharton's success depended upon Vernon-Smith's backing—the Bounder would have failed him. But he knew that Wharton would not fail. The Bounder was a keen judge of character, and he knew that Wharton would keep his word, and that if the match came off he would play his hardest, although he was playing himself out of a chance for the captaincy.

But would the match come off?

That was the question that the Removites were asking, without being able to answer it. The Fifth were standing very much upon their dignity, and they had taken the mere challenge as an example of Remove cheek. How were they to be forced to play? It was known that Coker was in favour of playing—he thought it would be a good way of putting the Remove in their place for good and all. But Blundell was captain of the Fifth, and Blundell was dead against it.

On Monday the juniors anticipated with much interest some move on the part of the Bounder. Vernon-Smith undoubtedly had some plan, and they wondered what it was.

After morning school on Monday the Bounder was looking very thoughtful as he came out of the Form-room with the Remove. He had received fifty lines in class from Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, for inattention to lessons, and the juniors guessed that he was thinking out his plan of campaign. A crowd gathered round him in the passage. Vernon-Smith was the cynosure of all eyes just now.

"Got it?" demanded Fisher T. Fish.

"Got what?"

"The giddy scheme? How are you going to make the Fifth play up?"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I've got an idea," he said. "But I'm not going to tell all Greyfriars until it comes off. You'll know soon enough."

"I guess—"

"You can go on guessing," grinned Vernon-Smith. And he signed to Bolsover and Snoop and Trevor, and walked away with them.

"I guess it's all gas," said Fisher T. Fish.

"I don't know," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "The Bounder is awfully deep. But I'm blessed if I see how he's going to work it."

"Here comes the Fifth!" said Nugent.

The Fifth-Form door was thrown open, and the Fifth-Formers streamed out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Are you going to play that match?"

"No!" growled Blundell.

"Still in a state of funk?" asked John Bull cheerfully.

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

Blundell strode on with great dignity. Coker paused for a moment.

"I'd play you with pleasure," he said. "I'd like the chance of knocking you silly kids into a cocked hat, and showing you that you can't play footer for toffee. But, after all, it would be a stain on the dignity of the Form."

"Rats!"

"Bah!"

"Yah!"

"You're a set of funks!"

"Yah!"

And there was a scuffle in the passage, which was only stopped by Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, coming out of the Form-room.

The Remove streamed out into the Close, discussing the matter. Blundell seemed more determined than ever on the subject, and the rest of the Fifth agreed with him—and even Coker had only half a mind, so to speak, that it would do to play the Remove. Perhaps Coker was the only one who felt perfectly assured that the Remove would be beaten.

Vernon-Smith strode into the Close with his hands thrust deep into his trousers' pockets, and a thoughtful frown upon his face. His companions watched him curiously, without speaking. They had great faith in the cunning of the Bounder; but they did not know what plan he could possibly devise for persuading the Fifth Form to meet the Remove in a footer match when they were determined not to do so.

"I think I can work it," said the Bounder at last.

"Well!" said Bolsover, "are you thinking of chipping them into it—calling them funks, and so on, till they play? That might answer with Coker and some of them, but I don't think it would make much difference to Blundell."

"Same here," said Trevor.

"I dare say I could think of a dozen plans, if necessary," said the Bounder coolly. "I've more brains than a dozen of

Blundell, I think. But I've got a dodge, if you fellows will stand by me?"

"You can rely on that."

"I think we'll all do a good deal to keep Wharton out of the captaincy," remarked Snoop. "You can depend on me."

"And on me," said Trevor, but more slowly.

"I'm going to make Blundell agree to play us," said Vernon-Smith abruptly. "If he won't accept a challenge, and can't be chipped into accepting it, there's only one way left."

"And what's that?"

"To force him."

Bolsover shrugged his broad shoulders.

"But how are you going to do that?" he asked. "There's the rub."

"I think I can work it." The juniors had strolled into the old Cloisters of Greyfriars, a quiet spot remote from the school buildings, and he paused there. He tapped his foot upon a square flagstone with a rusty iron ring embedded in the stone. "You fellows know what's under this?"

Bolsover stared.

"Yes, the old monk's prison-cell," he said. "You're not thinking of exploring it, I suppose?"

"I've explored it once," said the Bounder. "It's a deep hole, and no way out excepting up the spiral stair under this flagstone, and all the lower steps are broken away. Chap can't get up or down without a ladder."

"I know that—I've been there," said Snoop. "But what—"

"Suppose Blundell were got into that cell," said the Bounder, in a low voice.

"Blundell!"

"Yes."

"But—but what—"

"I think he'd be willing to agree to anything, to be allowed to get out again," said the Bounder, with a grin.

"M-my hat!" said Bolsover, with a deep breath, while Snoop stared blankly. Trevor turned very red.

"Hang it all, Smithy!" he exclaimed. "That's too thick. You couldn't shut a fellow up in a stone cell like that."

"I imagine I could—if it suited me."

"You'd have to let him out for lessons, you know," said Bolsover, after a pause.

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"I shouldn't do anything of the sort. He could take his chance about the lessons. I should make him agree to my terms before I let him out."

"My word! I—I say, you know—"

"I wouldn't have a hand in it," said Trevor. "It's too thick! Hang it all, Smith, it's a rotten dirty trick!"

Vernon-Smith's eyes glittered unpleasantly.

"You needn't have a hand in it, if you don't want to," he said. "I can do without your help. Keep mum, that's all."

"I'll do that," said Trevor. "But I'll have nothing to do with it."

And he walked away. Bolsover and Snoop exchanged glances, Vernon-Smith watching them the while with his sneering smile.

"Will you back me up?" he demanded.

"It's—It's rather thick, you know," faltered Snoop.

"Rot! I take all the risk if there's a row about it. I'll own, up it was my dodge, and you fellows only helped me. Besides, there won't be any trouble. Blundell will agree to anything to get out of the cell."

"All right!" said Bolsover. "It's a go!"

"Then the sooner the quicker!" said the Bounder, with a grin. "I fancy Blundell will agree to a footer match on Wednesday—and we shall beat the Fifth! You can get ready your congratulations for the winner of the second round."

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Blundell.

"CHEEKY young rotters!" muttered Blundell.

He had just entered his study, was glancing out of the open window, when a couple of Removites passed. They bawled up to the captain of the Fifth:

"Funk! Yah!"

Blundell slammed down his window.

The captain of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars was an obstinate fellow, and he might have been chipped by the juniors for a long time before he would have consented to get off his pedestal, as Nugent termed it, and play the junior Form. But he was getting "fed up" with the subject, and he looked very annoyed, as he turned away from the window.

"I say, Blundell—"

Vernon-Smith looked into the study. The captain of the Fifth swung round towards him with an angry frown.

"You cheeky young cub! Have you come here to jaw about that rotten match?" he exclaimed, laying his hand upon a ruler.

"Not this time. You're going to play, you know, and I'm going to rag you till you agree," said the Bounder coolly, keeping

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a wary eye upon the ruler. "To begin with, have you missed your new footer?"

Blundell glanced anxiously round the study. He had had a new football as a present from an affectionate uncle on his birthday lately. That new footer—a real guinea match ball—was an object of great pride to Blundell. But it was gone from its place.

"You young rotter!" shouted Blundell. "Have you taken it?"

Vernon-Smith nodded coolly.

"Where is it?"

"Better look in the Cloisters," said Vernon-Smith, with a drawl. "I've been punting it about there. It's rather ruddy, but—"

The Bouncer did not finish.

He had just time to dodge and run, as the infuriated captain of the Fifth rushed at him. Blundell tramped angrily out of the house, mentally promising Vernon-Smith the thrashing of his life when he caught him. That any junior should dare to lay hands upon his match ball was almost incredible to the majestic Blundell. His brow was wrinkled with anger as he crossed the Close to the Cloisters, and looked under the silent old arches for the footer.

There it was—muddy and wet—lying on the ringed flagstone that gave admittance to the monk's cell under the old pavement. Blundell ran towards it; and as he did so, three figures darted out of the shelter of the old stone pillars. Vernon-Smith had reached the Cloisters first, and he and his comrades were ready for the unsuspecting captain of the Fifth Form.

As Blundell stooped over the ball, the three juniors rushed upon him behind, and he was hurled over in the twinkling of an eye.

He came with a heavy bump upon the stone flags, and the trio were upon him, pinning him down by sheer weight. Blundell lay partly upon his side, with one arm under him, and though he made a desperate effort to throw off his assailants, he had no chance at all. Bolsover was almost a match for the Fifth-Former by himself, and Vernon-Smith was strong and wiry; and even Snoop was some help, at least to hold a fellow when he was down. Blundell squirmed and struggled under the three juniors in vain.

"Got him!" grinned Bolsover.

"Lemme gerrup!" roared Blundell.

"Not just yet," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "Hold the brute, you chaps, while I rope up his paws."

"Right-o!"

Blundell renewed his struggles furiously, but it was in vain. A noose was slipped over his wrists, and drawn tight, and his wrists were pulled together, and the cord was knotted. The captain of the Fifth lay helpless. He rolled over, and glared up at the triumphant juniors in almost speechless rage.

"I—I—I'll simply smash you for this!" he gasped.

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Will you play footer on Wednesday?" he asked.

"No!" roared Blundell.

"We'll see. Open the trap, Snoopy."

"Here goes!"

Snoop dragged on the iron ring, and the flagstone rose out of its place. A chilly breath of air came from below. Blundell stared at the Removites in blank amazement.

"You—you don't dare to shove me in there," he panted.

"That's just what we are going to do."

"Rescue, Fifth! Help!" yelled Blundell desperately.

"Stop his row!"

Bolsover jammed a handkerchief into Blundell's mouth, as the hapless Fifth-Former opened it to yell again. Blundell mumbled and snorted.

He was rolled to the opening, and rolled in. He bumped on the hard stone stairs, and he was bundled down them to the bottom. The four lowest of the steps were broken away by time, and in the stone cell below the wreck of them he lay. There was a drop of nearly five feet to the flooring of the old stone cell.

"Lend a hand," said Vernon-Smith.

"The beast's heavy!" said Bolsover.

"Don't break his neck—if you can help it!" called Snoop, from above.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They grasped Blundell by the collar, and swung him into the cell over the broken steps. His feet touched the littered floor, and they let him go, and he stumbled and fell. He gave a howl of pain, and swung over into a sitting position. He glared at the juniors, as they looked down from above, his face crimson with fury. The handkerchief had jerked out of his mouth in the fall, and he had his voice again.

"You young hounds!" he roared. "You—you are no better than criminals! Let me out of this at once."

The Bouncer laughed—a laugh that was not pleasant to hear.

"We'll let you out, when you've agreed to our terms," he said.

"Terms! What do you mean?"

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NEXT "THE FIGHT FOR THE CAPTAINCY!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

"Will you play the Remove at footer on Wednesday afternoon? You've scratched the match for that afternoon, so you have it free, as I happen to know."

"I'd rather play a team of toads than you, you cad!" yelled Blundell. "If you don't let me out at once, I'll break every bone in your body."

"I don't know how you'll get at me to do it, then," said Vernon-Smith, with perfect coolness. "You're not going to be let out of this cell until you agree to play my team on Wednesday, and promise not to make a fuss over what's happened. That's the compact."

"I'll smash you!"

"I'll leave you to think it over," drawled the Bouncer. "By the time we've had dinner I dare say you'll be in a more reasonable frame of mind."

"You—you're going to make me miss my dinner!" gasped Blundell.

"What ho!"

"I'll yell! I'll raise the place!"

"I don't think your voice will sound through that stone, when we shove it back," said the Bouncer calmly. "Yell, my dear chap, by all means, if it will relieve your feelings. I don't suppose it will have any other use. Good-bye!"

"Look here, I'm hungry!"

"You will be hungrier by the time we come back!" said the Bouncer, making a sign to Bolsover to go back up the stairs.

"You—you can't keep me here after two, anyway!" yelled the unhappy Blundell. "You won't dare to make me miss lessons!"

"You don't know what I dare, my dear fellow, when I'm in earnest," said the Bouncer. "If you don't agree to my terms, I shall keep you here not only this afternoon, but all night, too, and all to-morrow. I dare say you will be hungry enough to come to terms by then."

"You—you young villain!" gasped Blundell.

"Au revoir!" drawled Vernon-Smith.

Blundell yelled furiously after him as he ascended the spiral stair. The Bouncer did not even trouble to reply. He stepped out into the Cloisters, and the heavy stone rolled back into its place; and the cries of the Fifth-Formers were suddenly cut off, as by the silence of the tomb.

"My hat!" muttered Snoop.

He was a little pale. Bolsover looked very serious. They had been led into this by the cool daring of Vernon-Smith, but it was only the steady nerve of the Bouncer that sustained them. Vernon-Smith laughed lightly.

"Come on," he said; "I'm hungry! It's close on dinner-time!"

"I—I suppose he'll be all right there!" faltered Snoop.

"Of course, he will! Come on!"

And they went in to dinner.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Blundell Gives In!

BLUNDELL, of the Fifth, did not come in to dinner, naturally. Mr. Prout, his Form-master, asked Pastor if he knew where Blundell was, and Pastor said that he didn't. That was all. The head-boy of the Fifth, though, of course, not so mighty a person as a Sixth-Former, was of sufficient importance to be allowed to stay out a meal-time if he thought fit, and Mr. Prout let the subject drop. But Bland and Potter and the rest were curious, and after dinner they looked round for Blundell. They did not find him. They did not even think of looking in the Cloisters, and, if they had done so, they would hardly have suspected that their Form captain was hidden in the old monk's cell beneath the cracked stone pavement.

After dinner, Vernon-Smith and his comrades strolled out into the Close. Bolsover and Snoop were both looking very uneasy, but Vernon-Smith was as cool as a cucumber. Bob Cherry called to them near the doorway of the School-House.

"Do you know where Blundell is, Smyth?"

The Bouncer looked round.

"How should I know?" he asked.

"Well, he seems to have disappeared somewhere," said Bob, looking very keenly at the Bouncer. "I fancied it might be one of your tricks."

"Thanks!"

"Then you don't know where he is?"

"I haven't said so, have I?"

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Is it some joke of yours, Smyth?"

"Perhaps."

"Well, no bizney of mine," said Bob Cherry carelessly. "I don't see how you're going to get him to agree to play the match, jape or no jape, that's all."

"It isn't necessary for you to see how," said the Bouncer urbanely.

Bob Cherry walked away towards the footer-field, and the Bouncer & Co. strolled into the Cloisters by a circuitous path.

Snoop and Bolsover remained keeping a look-out, while the Bounder raised the flagstone over the hidden cell.

There was a quavering cry from below.

"Help!"

"Hullo, Blundell!"

"Is that you, Smith?"

"Yes; here I am."

"Let me out of this!" gasped Blundell. "It's—it's cold and dark, and—there's horrible creepy things here—ugh!"

Vernon-Smith could almost hear him shudder.

"I'll let you out with pleasure!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You've got to agree to my little proposition first, that is all."

"How long have you left me here, you scoundrel?" asked

Blundell, between his teeth.

"We've just had dinner."

"My hat; I thought I'd been here hours!" exclaimed

Blundell, in astonishment.

"About three-quarters of an hour," said Vernon-Smith, laughing. "If you haven't made up your mind, I'll give you another half-hour or so, and come back just before afternoon school. If you don't knuckle under by then, you'll wait to stick it out till half-past four, as I shall not be able to see you again till after lessons."

Blundell shuddered.

"Look here, Smith, what do you want?"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed. He knew that he had his man now.

"You know what I want," he said coldly. "You're going to play the Remove on Wednesday with a Fifth-Form team, and you're going to let this drop—not go for me in any way over it—honour bright!"

"I won't!" roared Blundell.

"You can stay here, then!"

"Look here, Smith—"

"No time for talk!" said the Bounder crisply. "If you don't agree, it's no good talking. I'll give you another look-in in half an hour."

There was a sound as the Bounder moved the stone.

"Hold on!" shouted Blundell desperately. "I—I can't stand this darkness, and—and I'm catching cold, too! You—you are a young scoundrel! You ought to be a burglar!"

"Thanks! In that all?"

"I agree."

"You promise to play the Remove team on Wednesday afternoon, honour bright, and to let this matter pass as if it had never happened?" said the Bounder categorically.

There was a long pause. It was a bitter pill for the captain of the Fifth to swallow, but he got it down at last. He realised that he had no choice in the matter. He had made the discovery that Vernon-Smith was utterly unscrupulous and remorseless, and, as a matter of fact, he was more than a little afraid of the cold, cunning, calculating Bounder.

"I promise!" said Blundell at last.

"Honour bright?"

Blundell gulped something down.

"Honour bright!" he said.

"Good!"

The Bounder descended the spiral stairs. He struck a match, and the light glimmered upon Blundell's pale face, looking up from below. Short as the Fifth-Former's imprisonment had been, he was chilled to the bone, and the horror of darkness and silence had driven every vestige of colour from his face.

"Come close on those chunks of stone, and I can reach down and cut the cord," said the Bounder.

He lighted another match. Blundell came as close as he could, and Vernon-Smith reached down with his knife and cut the rope.

Then he gave Blundell a hand-up. The Fifth-Former was staggering as he staggered out of the cell into the Cloisters. Vernon-Smith let the trap fall into its place with a thud. Bolsover and Snoop drew closer to Vernon-Smith, their hands clenched. In spite of the promise by which Blundell had gained his freedom, they fancied that the captain of the Fifth would exact vengeance.

But Blundell was a fellow of his word. He had given his promise, and he would keep it. Vernon-Smith was a keen judge, either of men or of boys, and he knew that the Fifth-Form captain was to be relied upon in this respect.

"You young scoundrels!" said Blundell at last. "I've a jolly good mind to wade in and thrash you within an inch of your lives! But I've given my promise, and I'll keep it. I'd rather be in my shoes than yours, Vernon-Smith. If you don't end up your life in prison, I shall be astonished!"

The Bounder laughed.

"Possibly," he said, with a shrug of the shoulders; "but just now we'll make arrangements for the footer match on Wednesday."

"I'll play you!" said Blundell abruptly. "I said I would, and I will! Kick off at three, and we'll give you a kicking to take the cheek out of you! And—and you needn't say anything about this, either." Blundell flushed; he knew how absurd he would look in the eyes of Greyfriars if the true story of his change of front was known. "The fellows can just think I've changed my mind; that's enough for them to know. It wouldn't

do you any good, either, to let fellows know what a rotten young scoundrel you are!"

"Ho, ho, ho! Right you are—mine's the word!" said the Bounder.

Blundell strode away.

"My only hat!" said Bolsover, looking at the Bounder in admiration. "You've worked it; they're going to play us! My hat!"

"This will be one in the eye for Wharton & Co.!" chuckled Snoop.

"Yes, rather!" said the Bounder. "We may as well go and tell them."

And the three young rascals walked away from the Cloisters in search of Harry Wharton & Co. They found them punting a ball about in the Close, while they waited for the bell to go for afternoon lessons.

"I've got some news for you chaps," said Vernon-Smith carelessly.

"Go ahead," said Wharton.

"We're playing the Fifth on Wednesday afternoon."

"What?"

"Blundell's agreed to play," explained the Bounder nonchalantly.

The juniors stared at him; they could hardly believe the statement. Yet the Bounder could hardly be merely "pulling their leg."

"Blundell's agreed to play?" repeated Johnny Bull.

"That's it."

"When did he agree?" asked Nugent.

"I've just had a talk with him, and he's withdrawn his refusal. They're meeting my team on Wednesday afternoon—kick-off at three o'clock," said Vernon-Smith carelessly.

"By Jove!"

"I suppose you're not rotting!" Wharton exclaimed.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll soon hear for yourself, anyway," he said. "I'm going to make up the list of my team to-night, and I shall want you to play."

"I'll play, certainly."

"Good! You'll have to play up, of course—no letting the side down, because a win will mean the second round to me," said the Bounder.

Harry Wharton flushed.

"If you think I'm likely to let the team down, you'd better leave me out!" he exclaimed.

"I don't think so," said the Bounder coolly. "That's all right. I think all the eleven will play up—we don't often get a chance of beating the Fifth Form on the footer-field. It will be a ripping win for the Remove."

"But why did Blundell change his mind?" asked Nugent, still astonished.

"What does that matter—he's changed it?"

"It's jolly queer."

"Yes, isn't it?" drawled the Bounder.

He walked away with his chums, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. looking at one another in astonishment.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Nugent.

"He's jipped Blundell in some way, and made him agree," said Bob Cherry. "Blundell's disappearing at dinner-time had something to do with it, I believe. But I suppose it's no business of ours. Vernon-Smith is an awfully deep card. He's worked it. And now we're going to play the Fifth—and beat them hollow."

"Yes, rather."

The Remove were all agreed upon that point.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Day of the Match.

THE news that Blundell had consented to the football match was a surprise to the Remove; but it was simply amazing to the Fifth.

They did not believe it at first.

But when a dozen or more fellows had been to Blundell's study, and came away with the information that Blundell said that it was so, the news could no longer be doubted.

Blundell had changed his mind. But the only fellow in the Fifth who approved was Coker—and Coker did not approve very much. Coker was rather an uncertain fellow, and as soon as he found that Blundell had come round to his way of thinking, he began to criticise Blundell for doing so. However, criticism or no criticism, it was certain that Blundell's word was law upon the subject—if he said that the Fifth Form eleven was to meet the Remove on the footer-field, meet them they would.

Two or three fellows, especially Potter and Bland, ventured to remonstrate with Blundell. But the captain of the Fifth had made up his mind—though he hardly seemed to have any adequate explanation to give.

"We're going to play the Remove!" he said abruptly.

"But what for?" asked Blundell.

"Because I have decided to."

"What have you decided to for?" asked Potter.

"Oh, rats!"

"It's a come-down for the Forni, to play those blessed fags,"

said Potter.

"Well, we shall lick them, and they will have to sing small or shut up," said Blundell. "After all, it was Coker's idea, and not half a bad one."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, blow your butts," said Blundell. "I've made up my mind about it, and that's enough. We're playing them on Wednesday afternoon."

"Coker playing?" asked Potter.

Blundell laughed.

"Yes. It doesn't matter much what sort of an eleven we get to play the Lower Fourth, I suppose. Put Coker in by all means."

Potter laughed. He reported Blundell's remark to Coker, softening down the way the Fifth Form captain had put it, however.

Blundell's quite made up his mind to play the Fifth," he said to Coker. "He wants you in the team, old fellow."

"Good!" said Coker heartily. "Must get up a strong team—it wouldn't do to run any risk of being beaten by a team of fags."

"Er—exactly," said Potter. "That—that's just what old Blundell thinks."

"Well, I'll play," said Coker. "Of course it will be a walk-over."

"Of course—especially with you in the team!" assented Potter.

The Removites were as pleased as Coker to hear that Coker was playing in the match. They had more faith in Horace Coker's powers to help the enemy than to help his own side.

With Coker against us, we shall be sure of one opening in the defence, at all events," Bob Cherry remarked. And the Removites laughingly assented.

Vernon-Smith, in the meantime, was very carefully selecting his team.

He had the whole Remove to choose from; and he chose the team like an experienced football captain, picking out the best material where he could find it, irrespective of any consideration as to whether the fellows were friends or foes, so long as he knew they could be relied upon to do their best.

The best players of the Remove—such as Wharton, Nugent, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Tom Brown, and Bulstrode, he chose without a moment's hesitation. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, too, who was a very fast forward, was chosen, and Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad. The Bounder himself, of course, was to skipper the team, in his favourite position on the wing. Wharton took the centre of the front line. These nine fellows could hardly be improved upon, but the Bounder still wanted a half and a goalkeeper. Hazeldene frequently kept goal for the Remove, but his displays of late had not been very reassuring. Bolsover, naturally, expected a place in the team, and he flattered himself that he was not easily beaten either at back or in the half-way line. But to his rage and astonishment the Bounder had no place for him in the eleven.

"You're going to leave me out!" Bolsover ejaculated, when the Bounder stated that fact, hardly able to believe his ears. "Leave me out—when I've backed you up all the time! Me!"

"You see, Bolsover—"

"You're joking, of course," said Bolsover.

"I'm serious. This is football, not friendship," the Bounder explained. "You might as well say that I ought to play Snoop, because he has backed me up."

"Snoop isn't a footballer, and I am," said Bolsover furiously. "If you leave me out—"

"I've got no choice in the matter. I must make up the strongest team we can possibly pick out of the Remove—everything depends on this match."

"Do you mean to say that there's a better half in the Remove than myself?" roared Bolsover.

"Half a dozen!" said the Bounder coolly.

Bolsover almost choked.

"You'll pass me over, like this, after all I've done," he said. "I've backed you up all the time against Wharton, chiefly because he wouldn't have put me in the team, and you know it. It was an understood thing that I was to have my cap for the eleven as soon as you became captain of the Forni."

"But I'm not captain of the Forni yet."

"It's all the same—you're captaining this team, and you're filling up the places with fellows who'd let you down if they could, and leaving your own friends out."

"We shall have a fearful hard tussle with the Fifth," said Vernon-Smith. "I tell you I can't afford to risk anything."

"I'm a good half. Who's better, I'd like to know!"

"Morgan and Micky Desmond, both of them."

"I could lick the pair of them—"

"Yes, in the gym, but not in the footer-field. It's no good,

Bolsover—I must play the best men I can get—I want to win."

"You're a lying cad, Vernon-Smith, and I jolly well hope you'll get licked," said Bolsover bitterly. "You've taken me in."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Chap must look after himself," he remarked.

"I'll look after myself, after this," said Bolsover. "I'm on Wharton's side in this election business, from this minute."

"Sorry, but—"

"Enough said!" snarled Bolsover. And he went out of the study and closed the door with a slam. Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders again and turned to the list of names he was coming over. He had no time to waste thinking of Bolsover's disappointment.

By Tuesday the eleven was complete. Vernon-Smith had decided upon Hazeldene, after all, for goal, and the vacant place in the half line had been given to Morgan. The team was now about as strong as the Remove could possibly make it.

On Wednesday the team turned out for early practice before breakfast. A scratch eleven of the Remove played against them. Vernon-Smith's team was in splendid form, and they followed the lead of the Bounder well. Their passing, shooting, dribbling, and their combination could hardly be improved.

"Ripping!" said the Bounder, when they knocked off practice.

"We shall give the Fifth a good fight, anyway," Harry Wharton remarked. "I don't think Blundell is taking much trouble over his team."

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"No; he's a little too cocksure about it—all the better for us," he remarked.

"The betterfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The lickfulness of the esteemed Fifth will also be terrific."

"What ho!" said Bob Cherry emphatically.

The Bounder did not feel sure of that. But he knew that the Remove team had an excellent chance, and that every member of it would play his level best; and with that he contented himself.

Wingate was asked to referee the match, but as the Sixth were playing a match that afternoon themselves, he could not oblige. But Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, who was a gentleman of rather sporting tastes, and sometimes refereed senior matches, was secured. In such a match the juniors particularly wanted a referee who could be relied upon, and a Form-master, of course, was sure to decide without fear or favour.

The Remove looked forward to the match keenly enough. Their practice in the morning had shown them that they were as fit as they could ever hope to be, and they were certainly all as keen as mustard.

The Fifth, on the other hand, showed little keenness. They so evidently regarded the match as unworthy of their powers, and as a certain walk-over, that they were in danger of giving the game away from sheer over-confidence.

The Bounder, with his usual cool calculation, counted upon that.

"We shall pick up a goal or two before the Fifth know that we are dangerous at all," he remarked to Wharton.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Harry. "But after that we shall have a fight! But we'll beat them if we've got it in us."

The Bounder looked at him enviously.

"I know you'll do your dead best," he said. "You're a queer beggar. If we win, I win the second round for the captaincy of the Remove, and you will be helping me."

"I'm playing for the Remove, though; not for you," said Wharton. "Besides, fair play's fair play. You know you can rely on me."

"Yes, I know that."

And there was a unusual cordiality in Vernon-Smith's manner to his rival as they walked down to the football-field together.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Goal.

HARRY WHARTON looked over the Fifth Form team as they came upon the field. Blundell had not taken any special care in the selection of his eleven; he was under the impression that any eleven chosen at random from the Fifth could make rings round the Lower Fourth. But they were a very tough-looking team all the same. Coker, perhaps, was the only really poor player, and Coker was, as Potter had remarked, blessed with fool's luck. The disproportion in age, size, and weight between the Fifth and the Lower Fourth should, of course, have made the Fifth Form victory easy. And the Fifth expected it to be easy. Most of the Fifth who were not playing had gathered round the field, with the declared intention of yelling at the Remove when

they were licked, and hooting them for their cheek. But the Remove team, though younger and smaller, looked very fit. What there was of them was of the best quality.

And in all their ranks there was not a single "rotter." Every fellow was hard as nails, and ready for the game of his life. Handsome and very fit they looked as they turned out in their blue and white captain's coat.

Vernon-Smith looked very fit at the head of his men. In spite of the "rotten" look the Bouncer cultivated; in spite of late hours, visits paid after lights out to a public-house in the arcade, in spite even of secret snoring, the Bouncer was fit. He had a constitution of iron. More than one fellow whom he had led into his own reckless ways had paid for it in wretched health, but the Bouncer seemed never to suffer. Of late, too, he had been very careful—the jaunt out at night, and the secret cigarette in the study, had both been barred during the long tussle for the captaincy of the Remove. And the Bouncer looked very well, his step was firm, and his eyes were clear and keen, as he led his team into the field.

A cheer from the Removeites round the ropes greeted them. "Play up, Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

Blundell laughed scornfully.

"We'll pile up five or six goals in the first half, and then dawdle through the rest, Doty," he remarked.

"Yes," it's rotten to waste time over the young duffers," said Potter.

Mr. Prout blew the whistle. The Remove had won the toss, and the Fifth kicked off. The ball rolled, and the Fifth rushed after it.

The Fifth forwards came sweeping down the field, and they looked big enough and heavy enough to sweep the Removeites away if they opposed.

So indeed they were; but they had to deal with opponents who put activity, quick agility, wary dodginess, against strength and weight.

Somehow—Blundell & Co. never knew how—the ball was in the Fifth half, and the Remove forwards were on it there, and the Remove front line was away in wonderful order, passing like clockwork, with only the backs to beat.

Bland and Greene at back rushed in to stop them, but Wharton passed out to Vernon-Smith, and Vernon-Smith gave the ball to Hurree Singh out on the wing, and Inky centred back to Wharton in the nick of time, and Wharton shot for goal.

Whiz!

The goalie was beaten hands down, and there was a roar from the crowd—of surprise from the Fifth, and of joy from juniors and fags—as the leather lodged in the net.

"Goal!"

Blundell rubbed his eyes.

"Goal!" he muttered. "My hat! Goal!"

It was no dream—it was goal; and the Remove had scored in the first five minutes of the match. Blundell & Co. did not look so scornful as they walked back to midfield and lined up for the second half.

Bob Cherry chuckled joyfully as he caught Blundell's amazed expression.

"Look at Blundy's chivvy! It's worth a guinea a box, and no mistake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Play up,!" roared the Remove.

Both sides did their very best to obey the injunction. They played up well.

But Blundell's plan of piling up a hopeless majority of goals in the first half, and taking it easy in the second, did not seem to work, somehow.

For the Remove were "there" all the time.

Try as hard as they would, the Fifth could not beat the defence, though their rushes were deadly; and it was not till the close of the first half of the game that they scored. Then Blundell, at last, succeeded in beating Hazeldene in goal, and the ball went in.

The whistle blew. The score was one to one, and neither side could claim any advantage. But, if anything, the Fifth was the more eager of the two sides to start.

A fire of excited discussion ran round the field. The Fifth, who had swaggered on to the ground expecting to carry everything before them, had failed to beat the Remove so far, at all events.

The crowd, which was increasing in numbers now, waited with keen interest for the second half to begin, and there was a general craning of heads when the whistle went.

The play was hot and fast from the start. The Fifth were attacking all the time, and now their weight seemed to tell. There was a good deal of rough charging—quite within the rules, but very bad for the Remove, for, of course, a junior had no chance when a heavy senior thundered down upon him.

But, at the same time, there was no doubt that the juniors were more agile, and, upon the whole, faster.

The defence was very good, turned into attack every few minutes; but the Fifth were pressing hard, and at last they put the ball in again. Blundell was breathing hard as he walked back to the centre.

"Two up!" he muttered. "Keep it at that! This is THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 213.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

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going to be a tougher match than I dreamed. There's hot "By Jove, yes!" said Coker. "Of course, we shall lick them."

"Oh, of course!"

The Fifth tried their rushing tactics again. Coker was robbed of the ball right up at the Fifth Form goal by Bulstrode, and, unfortunately for himself and his side, he eluded hold of Bulstrode in his excitement. Perhaps Bulstrode's grin was rather provoking as he robbed the heavy-footed Fifth-Former of the ball; but Coker had done it now!

There was a roar.

"Goal!"

"Penalty!"

Bulstrode had rolled over, and Coker had cleared the leather, but the whistle went at the same moment. There was no doubt about the foul, and Mr. Prout awarded a penalty kick to the Remove. The Fifth stood round with anxious faces while it was taken.

It materialised, and the goal-keeper clutched at it in vain. Another goal for the Remove.

"Two-to-two! Tootle-to-too!" chortled Bob Cherry

"Oh, my respectable Aunt Matilda! This is gorgeous!"

"The gorgeousness is terrific," grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The score was level again. The Fifth pressed hard as the second half wore away, but to their surprise they found that they could not get through. Hazeldene in goal was in danger once or twice, but he always saved, and the game more and more swayed and surged to the Fifth Form end of the field.

More and more the tussle came round the Fifth Form goal, and Blundell, to his own astonishment, found himself pecking his goal against the deadly attack.

There was no doubt about it—the Remove players were lasting better, they were more fit, and, after a grueling game, they were pressing hard, and the Fifth defence was waxing fainter.

Mr. Prout was seen to glance up at the clock-tower. Several glances followed his there. Time was getting very close now. Was the great match, Fifth against Lower Fourth, to end in a draw? A draw, indeed, would count very much the same as a defeat for the Fifth, so far as their prestige went. But the Remove wanted a victory—Vernon-Smith was almost savagely determined upon a victory. Five minutes more—three minutes. The Bouncer had the ball, he was through the defence, he was speeding for goal!

A wild yell and roar came rising round the field.

"Go it!"

"Kick, you duffer, kick!"

No—pass! Let Wharton have it! Pass!"

Vernon-Smith rushed on. Only one back was in the way, and he was closing in to stop the Bouncer; the goal-keeper was watching him like a hawk. Wharton clicked his teeth. Was the Bouncer going to ruin everything as he had done before, by selfish play? Was he going to spoil his chance of the captaincy of the Remove by keeping the ball to himself? Surely—

But even as the thought shaped itself in Wharton's mind the Bouncer passed. The ball came in to the centre, and Wharton kicked it on, a back and a half had turned in to stop him, but they had no chance. Whiz!

The goalie almost hurled himself across the goal to save, but a second too late! The ball dropped in the net, and the custodian slipped and fell.

There was a roar!

"Goal! Goal!"

"Hurrah! The Remove wins! Hurrah!"

The next moment the whistle rang out. The match was over, the Remove had beaten the Fifth by three goals to two! Another second, and the field was black with the surging crowd—cheering, clapping, roaring, yelling! The Remove had won—the Remove had beaten the Fifth!

Thanks, Wharton," said Vernon-Smith, and his face was bright and friendly for once. "You've won for me; you've kicked me into a chance for the captaincy of the Form, and yourself out of a chance."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We've beaten the Fifth," he said.

"And I've won the second round," said the Bouncer.

"Yes; but we've beaten the Fifth!"

Hurrah!

And Blundell & Co. walked off the field in grim silence, to hide their diminished heads; while still there rose from the victorious Remove a roar of cheering.

"Hurrah for the Remove!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

And Vernon-Smith had won the second round in the rubber for the captaincy of the Remove—won it by the winning goal kicked by his rival!

THE END.

(Next week's grand, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co.—describing the third and final test for the captaincy of the Remove—is entitled "The Fight For the Captaincy!" by Frank Richards. Order your copy in advance. Price 1d.)

CHING-LUNG IN THE FORBIDDEN LAND.

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THE OPENING INSTALMENTS.

THROUGH TRACKLESS TIBET!

BY
SIDNEY
DREW.



(READ THIS FIRST.)

Wishing to explore the practically unknown land of Tibet, Ferrers Lord, millionaire, makes up a party, including Prince Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and a number of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, to travel with him across Tibet to Kwal-Hal, the capital of Ching-Lung's province in China.

The party, conducted by an Afghan guide named Argal-Dinaj, have just crossed the Himalayas into The Forbidden Land, when they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his rufianly followers. These are beaten off, and the party, after a period of hard travelling, reach the first Tibetan village. Here they are surprised to find that the head man is an Irishman, Barry O'Roonoy by name. They stay at his house for a time, and while at dinner they are startled by the arrival of Argal-Dinaj, who bears the news that Storland Sahib and his followers are riding towards the village. Storland and his brigands attack them fiercely, and the party takes refuge in a couple of sheds, where they are hotly besieged.

They are rescued by Ferrers Lord's wonderful aeroplane, The Lord of the Skies, and after having successfully driven the attackers away, the party go on board the strange vessel for a trial spin. They are flying over the crater of an extinct volcano, when the engines suddenly stop working, and they are sent hurtling down through the crater into an underground lake. They are plunged into darkness; but after a while they manage to reach the shore of the strange lake. The aeroplane is so damaged that all the suspensory screws, except one, stop working.

(Now read on from here.)

AGROUND IN THE CAVERN.

"Listen!" said Ching-Lung to the millionaire. "Isn't the screw working faster?"

The faint f-r-r of the one screw that rotated seemed to sound a little louder. Perhaps the hostile current was losing its power.

Twenty voices blended in a ringing shout of joy. Two of the carbons of the arc-lamps showed red-hot, like two gleaming eyes. And human eyes, full of anxiety, stared at the luminous points.

"Would they die out, or would they increase in brightness? There was a groan. Darkness had fallen again.

Steadily came the f-r-r of the spinning screw. Once more the points of red appeared in the centre of the two lamps. The red became pale white, the white a dazzling blue that shone on haggard faces and soaked figures.

The screw spun swiftly, and a cheer echoed through the hollow cave.

They could see clearly for a circle of forty yards, and the foundered vessel was the central point of the circle. Three of her uprights were missing, but the dome of the wheel-house was just visible. Now was the time to act if they were to act at all, for the light might fail.

Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung swam swiftly towards the ship.

"Where's Gan-Waga?"

"Me here, sir!" said the Eskimo.

Ferrers Lord scrambled upon the roof of the wheel-house and peered down into the water. It was so black and turbid that the light could not pierce it.

"There is a chance," he said, "that some of the levers have become jammed, although the plant may not have been injured. It is useless for Gan-Waga to go. He would not understand what to do. I will try myself."

He balanced himself, stiffened his body, clasped his hands above his head, and dived. He rose again almost instantly, like a cork. He had failed to reach the deck, twelve feet below. The water, as heavily charged with salt as the Dead Sea of Palestine, refused to allow him to sink deep enough.

"I want something to weight me down," he said, looking round him—"something heavy."

"Here's the very thing, old chap!" said Ching-Lung.

It was a fluke broken from one of the suspensory screws. It had fallen upon the dome of the wheel-house, and crashed through the glass. The tough steel framework had prevented it from dropping through.

Ferrers Lord tugged it out, and plunged into the water again. The weight dragged him down swiftly.

Once below the surface, the fluke, though it weighed several hundredweight, appeared amazingly light. He found that he could carry it easily under one arm. Even then he did not touch the deck, but floated about three feet above it.

His eyes smarted painfully, and he could not see, but his hands felt the edge of the open door. One stroke brought him into the almost submerged wheel-house. Swimming round, he blindly pulled lever after lever. There was a hammering noise in his ears, and his heart seemed ready to burst. He could not tell what was the result. The fluke

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slipped from under his arm, and he bounded to the surface into the air and light.

Anxious faces were peering through the glass, and Ching-Lung seized his arms, and dragged him through the hole.

"Bravo! Well done!" shouted Thurston.

Six lights were burning instead of two, and a dozen screws were rotating. More than half the wheel-house was visible. The vessel, too, was moving slowly. Her stern screw was at work.

"By Jove, we're rising fast!" said Ching-Lung. "Look! I can see the top of the wheel. We're not dead yet by half! We're up another foot! And another! Hurrah!"

The men yelled like maniacs. The power grew stronger. Hal Honour lowered himself through the hole, and, dropping into three feet of water, silently examined the levers. He jerked two down, and two more of the suspensory-screws added their f-r-r to the chorus. The glistering deck showed above the water.

"We must try and run her upon some shallow," said the millionaire. "Can you get any more power?"

Honour groped in the water for his tools, and hammer-blows rang out. Still another screw rotated, lifting the deck several feet clear of the surface.

"Send her ahead!" cried the millionaire. "Keep a good look-out, and go carefully. If we can beach her we may get out of this."

The aeroplane moved slowly over the dark lake.

"Easy! Easy!" bellowed Maddock from the prow.

One of the walls of the cavern loomed before them. High overhead a little patch of light shone. They were under the shaft down which they had fallen. The vessel scraped, quivered, and became motionless. Honour turned off the power, which they needed no longer. The Lord of the Skies was aground.

"Ching," said Ferrers Lord, "I am prouder of my vessel than ever I was. Has another ever been built with engines that will work under water? I think not!"

Hal Honour, calm and cautious, extinguished all the lights but one. And then the engineer and owner held a council of war in the wheel-house. Honour made one remark:

"We must find out how much she is damaged."

But that was a task of difficulty and danger. There were four feet of water in the upper corridor, and eighteen in the engine-room.

Ching-Lung, Prout, Honour, and the millionaire descended the ladder. To their pleased astonishment, three lights answered the switch.

"Have you any diving-suits on board?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Plenty, if we can get at them."

"We'll get a drink first though," answered the prince.

"There's wine galore in the state-room."

Though the water was only four feet in depth, it was impossible to wade through it, for it lifted them off their feet after a few steps. Swimming was easier, and they went down the corridor one behind the other.

The state-room was a wreck. The ruined furniture was floating about, and costly hangings were faded and saturated. Ching-Lung seated himself upon the piano and wrenched

open the cupboard door. He pounced on a case of champagne which kindly floated out, and Prout got to work with a big knife.

They knocked the necks off the bottles and drank greedily. "Now I'm off!" said Ching-Lung. "The other poor chaps are dying of thirst. Pout! That water would have choked a steam-engine! Just look how the heavy things float! Yank 'em out, Tom!"

Prout pulled three more of the cases out of the cupboard. Seating himself on the empty one, his knees almost touching his chin, Ching-Lung fastened the others together with a piece of cord. Then, using a piece of the lid of the first as a paddle, he piloted his little canoe out of the room, and sailed merrily down the corridor, towing the cases behind.

"Loud cheers from the deck told that the welcome cargo had arrived in safety and been received with delight by the castaways.

"Take the door from its hinges," said the millionaire. "We might as well use a raft as swim."

Prout's big knife was quite an armoury in itself. It contained a screwdriver, and in five minutes the door was afloat. With careful balancing, it held the three of them. Honour punted it along with a curtain-pole.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said Prout, "there don't seem much wrong with this end of the vessel."

"No; we struck with the prow at an angle. The damage will be there."

The fore-end of the corridor was in utter darkness. They found switch after switch, but all failed them.

"There seems a little light lower down—"

Prout bit his tongue and said no more. There was a faint bluish light before them. And, with a sudden sinking of heart, each understood its meaning.

Honour forced the little raft forward with a powerful push. They were floating on the gloomy lake, with the solitary arc-light blazing and hissing behind them.

The whole forepart of the Lord of the Skies had been torn away!

The eyes of Ferrers Lord and the engineer met.

"It is impossible," said Ferrers Lord. "We cannot repair her!"

Hal Honour shrugged his shoulders. It seemed that the gallant aeronef must rot in this black pit of horror, confining the bones of her gallant crew.

All Hands to the Pumps—The First Night in the Cavern—A Solitary Quest—Hal Honour Makes a Startling Promise—Tollers of Darkness.

It said much for the marvellous vessel designed by Ferrers Lord that one atom of machinery could do its work after such an accident. But the millionaire had weighed his chances in building her. An ordinary vessel is supported naturally by the element in which it floats. The sole difficulty which confronts the marine engineer is to obtain speed. Even when the machinery of a ship breaks down the vessel does not sink. Unless the weather is very stormy, the passengers and crew have little to trouble them, for sails may be rigged or machinery repaired. Even if it is past repairing, aid is sure to come, and the ships fitted with wireless telegraphy can summon help from ships miles away.

But the aeronef is heavier than the air in which it sails. It must possess two separate mechanical forces, one to lift and keep it suspended the other to drive it in any direction. A breakdown with the driving machinery would not be serious, but the collapse of the suspensory power would bring the vessel down at a frightful speed, and shatter her to atoms.

Ferrers Lord had guarded against this latter contingency. Each of the suspensory screws was independent of the others. If six—ten—twelve failed at once, the rest would sustain the vessel. If more failed the power would still be great enough to allow the vessel to sink gradually and lightly as an aeronaut falls from a balloon in a parachute.

In one thing only the millionaire's foresight had been at fault. He had not foreseen the effect of an atmosphere heavily charged with electricity would have on his piles and accumulators. The aeronef, it is true, might have sailed the skies for a hundred years without encountering another such disaster. Now it was beyond their power to repair her. The delicate mechanism must be replaced before the aeronef could fly again. The mechanism could only be manufactured in a shop with the proper machinery.

"Well, Honour," said the millionaire sadly, "we are beaten. She has sailed her first and last voyage."

Hal Honour shrugged his shoulders, and pointed up at the little speck of light.

"You mean we must make an effort to escape?"

The engineer nodded in his silent way, and, jerking his

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hand towards the aeronef, again pointed up the shaft. The millionaire understood all his gestures. Honour meant that if they escaped he would not abandon the aeronef.

"Let us escape first," said the millionaire, smiling. "But, remember, it will be a terrible undertaking to bring new machinery from England, and carry it across the Himalayas. Even then the mouth of the shaft is far above snow-line. Only my engineer would have dreamt of such a thing. Dare you attempt it?"

"If I have to tunnel the mountains," said the engineer. "I was started at the men in awe, and Ferrers Lord held out his hand to the indomitable engineer."

"If we escape, Honour," he said, "you shall try. If you fail, I shall know you have only failed because you attempted an impossibility. Spend what you like. If the bill runs into millions, it will be cheaper than building a new vessel. Have you any hope of succeeding?"

"Unless the Lord of the Skies is sailing the clouds in six months' time I shall be dead."

The engineer relapsed into silence, and the door scraped lightly along the aeronef's side. Down below the men were splashing through the water.

It was a busy time for Gan-Wagu. The plucky Eskimo made five attempts to reach the store-room, and succeeded. He brought up a hand-pump, and would have gone down again, but he was so exhausted that Ching-Lung would not let him go.

Then Ching-Lung made the descent, and a roll of tarpaulin was obtained. Five hours of labour were spent in getting the tarpaulin rigged over the rent. Then the pump was rigged and manned.

The little patch of light vanished, telling that night had fallen over the peaks, and the clatter of the pumps and the splash of water alone broke the silence of the black pit.

A cheer answered the news that the lower corridor was clear of water.

Once more the aeronef was afloat. Honour set the screw working, and she moved a good hundred yards before she again grated on the bottom. It was possible to enter the store-room now, and obtain provisions for the starving men.

Tins of beef and tongue were obtained, and canisters of biscuits, which had not been hurt by the water. Candles and matches, too, were found undamaged. Twenty minutes later the fresh-water tanks were reached, and a keg of petroleum was brought up in triumph by Joe, the carpenter. It was the task of patience to coax the wood of one of the champagne boxes into a blaze; but, aided by a few candles and a little petroleum, a fire was built at last, a kettle boiled, and coffee made.

But it was a sad meal. All the time a tiny light, moving here and there, was flickering through the darkness. It was a candle on the little raft. Ching-Lung and Thurston were searching for lost comrades. They found two bodies floating on the black water. Both men were dead.

"Have you seen Argal-Dinjat?"

Prout suddenly recollected the Afghan. "Do you mean that wild black ruffian?" asked O'Rourke, cutting himself a huge slice of beef. "Because as that's the man he'd more sise now to come wid us. He wint off wid a gun, looking as ugly as a mad baboon!"

"He's gone in search of Storlad Sahib!" whispered the millionaire to Thurston.

Rupert nodded.

Argal-Dinjat had been like a maniac since he had been prevented from shooting the renegade in cold blood.

"Do you think he will forsake us?"

"Never! When his fit of rage has gone he will return."

"But what will he do?" asked Thurston. "He cannot trace us."

"Then he will wait. Argal-Dinjat knows that we will never abandon him. Perhaps he will even help us."

How Argal-Dinjat could help them, how he could discover their hapless position seemed an utter impossibility to Thurston. It would take a day at least to scale the great peaks, and only a man of superhuman strength could hope to reach the summit alive. He made no comment.

Refreshed by their meal, the men went to the pumps again. There was no murmur of discontent. Ferrers Lord, Thurston, and Ching-Lung shared in the labour. Little by little the vessel rose higher in the water. Her screw propelled her close under the cliff before she grounded.

"How are we now?"

"Four feet in the hole, sir," answered Maddock, smiling.
"Then we can do no more," said Ferrers Lord. "Sleep as best you can, my brave lads. You have earned a rest. Serve out the rum, Prout, and make a few good fires."

The indiarubber coating of the deck had been scraped away in a few places. A quantity of wood had already been dried in readiness, and half a dozen fires were speedily blazing on the steel plates. Blankets were rung out and dried as well as possible. The air of the cavern was not cold, but it was unpleasant to breathe, for it was tainted with sulphur. One by one the weary castaways sank into sleep from sheer fatigue. But there was no rest for Ferrers Lord that night. He moved like a shadow among the silent forms, quietly putting more fuel on the fires. And when he paused with folded arms to gaze into the darkness the flames lighted up his tall figure, and he looked like some ghoul gloating over the corpses of his victims.

A solitary star twinkled above the shaft, and as the hours sped a crescent-moon sailed over the opening and vanished. The position of the aeronaut prevented him seeing them, though he could look slantwise up the shaft.

"Life or death," he muttered. "Which is it to be?"
They had provisions to last for months, enough fresh water to keep them alive for a long time. Even if the electric light failed, there were several barrels of petroleum. And Hal Honour was there, the cleverest engineer in the world. At least, they would make a gallant fight for life and liberty.

Silently Ferrers Lord got a searchlight into position, and sent its white beams shooting along the shaft. The sides were of rough lava and pumice-stone, almost impossible to scale. A stoep-jack might have climbed the dizzy height by dragging up ladder after ladder, and fastening them to the cliff as he advanced. But they had no ladders.

The millionaire's brain was clear and tireless. Could they build a balloon? He could manufacture hydrogen gas, for he had acids and zinc. He needed silk for that, but he had no silk. And then he started and laughed softly. Again he replenished the fires, and took up his old position. Lighting a candle he stepped upon the door, and poled himself under the cliff, and sprang out. There was a broad shelf of lava here, covered with sand. Whatever his plans were he seemed satisfied, for, after a few moments, he pushed back to the aeronaut. He returned again to the raft with a piece of board in his hand, and a supply of candles. The little craft glided away, and the light of the fires grew fainter and fainter.

The long flat board was a poor paddle. His watch, which had a thoroughly waterproof case, showed him that it was three o'clock in the morning. It was four o'clock before he reached the other side of the underground lake. Here he found a shore of soft white sand. He pulled the door up, and left two candles burning. He could still see the glow of the fires. Ferrers Lord strode across the sand. It was studded with crags, seamed with sulphur. He examined them carefully by the poor light. Few men alive knew more about geology, and his knowledge told him that millions of years must have elapsed since fire and flame had gushed from the crater above him. What was he looking for? What was his aim in making a solitary expedition in the bowels of the mountain? He plunged deeper and deeper into the abyss. The two candles on the raft burned out. He had a large stock with him, and his own footprints would enable him to retrace his steps. A steep cliff barred his way at last. He held the light above his head, and it flickered on a dark, shiny substance. A cry burst from him:

"Coal! Coal!"

When the others awoke, Ferrers Lord was sleeping as quietly as a child beside the ashes of a dead fire. The kettle was boiling before he opened his eyes, and Maddock was making coffee.

The millionaire beckoned Hal Honour to follow him below.
"Honour," he said, "you will never be able to save the Lord of the Skies."

"Not unless we get out of this."

"Even if we get out of this. I have been puzzling over our chances. Please forget your usual silence for once, and let me hear you talk. I say it is impossible to rescue the Lord of the Skies."

The engineer shook his head.

"Nothing makes a thing impossible for a man of brains and energy," he answered, "except death."

"Then suggest some plan of escape. We cannot build a balloon for we have no silk. We cannot climb the shaft, for we have no ladders. We cannot repair the Lord of the Skies, for we have no materials."

Hal Honour lighted his pipe, and looked fixedly at his employer.

"All that is true," he answered. "Give me one thing, and I can ask no more to bring us safely out of this."

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Read the grand new story of the Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled:

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"And that thing is!"

"Fuel," said the engineer.

"Then," said the millionaire, smiling, "our thoughts have run in the same groove. We cannot repair the aeronaut for want of material. She is too large. And if you had fuel what would you do?"

The imperturbable engineer puffed at his pipe, and spoke as calmly as a carpenter making a window-frame.

"If I had fuel, sir, I would have you out of this in a month. I admit I could not patch up the Lord of the Skies unless I had metal also. Give me fuel and iron ore and I guarantee, without one hand to help me, I will have her aloft in two years. Give me fuel now, and men to aid me, and I will build you a small aeronaut. It will be a mere platform to hold the suspensory screws, driving gear, and engines, but it will carry six men. I will build it out of the bones of the Lord of the Skies. All I have to do is to cast uprights and suspensory screws of the proper size, and all I ask is fuel."

"Give me your hand, my lad!" said Ferrers Lord. "You shall have your fuel. You shall smelt and melt to your heart's content. I have found coal—thousands of tons of it!"

"Then," answered the engineer, "in a month from to-day we shall sail out of this in triumph."

When the great news was told, the crew were wild with delight. Though Hal Honour was a new comrade, they felt that he had Ferrers Lord's confidence, and that he merited their own. Enthusiasm ran high. Even the prospect of having to pass the month in the horrible place was cheerfully welcomed.

About eight o'clock they went to the pumps again and floated the vessel. With her searchlight flashing she came about, and headed for the opposite shore. They found shallow water, and, working with a will, dragged her close in. There was no necessity to spare light, as they could get at the piles and the engines and manufacture unlimited electricity.

Honour divided the men into three batches, each batch headed by a foreman. Ching-Lung was in command of the mining party. The light was focussed on a seam of coal, and the cavern resounded with the rattle of picks and coal and crowsbars.

What was wanted now was clay to build the furnaces. It was found barely three feet beneath the surface of the sand. A mighty fire was built, and as fast as the clay was dug out it was moulded into rough bricks, which were placed near the fire to be burnt.

And late in the afternoon thick smoke was rising through the crater.

The hard work made them forget their anxiety. Every man was as black as a nigger when they assembled for supper, and vast volumes of smoke were pouring up the shaft. Tired as he was, Ching-Lung gave them a dozen rousing songs, and lusty choruses started the echoes of the cavern.

"Bedad," said O'Rourke, "O've been a few things in me toime, but Oi never expected to be a collier!"

"You look more like a nigger minstrel," laughed Ching-Lung. "Give us a stave. Sing us a rale Orish chune, Barry, me broth of a bhoys. Give us 'The Wearin' of the Green' or 'Biddy O'Flanagan's Wedding.'"

"Hear, hear!" roared several voices.

O'Rourke did not refuse. He sang till he was hoarse, and was ready to sing until he lost his voice. However, they could not work unless they slept, and Ferrers Lord put an end to the concert.

As the Lord of the Skies was safely moored, they camped out on the shore. They had dried their clothes and blankets, and the soft sand formed a glorious bed.

Thurston was blinking at the enormous fire, when a small voice said:

"Well, Ru, old chap, what do you think of Tibet?"

"Well, much, Ching."

"Well, it's not so bad when you get into it, and I reckon down here we are about as far into it as we can get. That chap Honour is a ripper, isn't he? I believe if we wanted a line-of-battle ship built he'd just take off his coat and start on it. Well, good-night, old son!"

"Good-night, my king of colliers!"

But Ching-Lung was not fated to sleep long. He was dreaming sweetly when a rough shake aroused him, and in the glow of the searchlight other figures were waiting, leaning on their picks.

"Work!" said the engineer.

"Hang it all!" growled Ching-Lung. "I've not had forty winks!"

"Someone must always be working, your highness, unless you wish to stay here three months instead of one."

A very mud-stained face appeared over the edge of the hole that looked strangely like a grave. It was the face of the

millionaire, who was steadily digging out clay. Ching-Lung grinned, and shouldered his pick.

"Come on, you black diamond hunters!" he said. "They say old King Cole was a merry old soul, but he would have jumped on his fiddlers three if they'd roused him out of his beauty sleep. Now, you black-faced imps, quick march! 'Til each the first man that strikes out a coal."

And again lusty arms drove picks into coal.

Tells How the Castaways, Though Very Much in a Hole, Knew How to Make the Best of Things—A Holiday—O'Rooney and Gan-Waga Make Themselves Conspicuous.

Little by little the officers and crew of the wrecked aeroplane found their eyes growing accustomed to the gloom. Even when a considerable distance away from the lights of the workings they were able to discern objects in the darkness. So far the only living creatures they discovered in the cavern were a species of lizard, quite without eyes, and hideously repulsive.

The work went on apace. Hal Honour had manufactured his bricks and made lime. He seemed a master of every possible trade, and he showed them how to use a trowel. For two days all hands were engaged in building the smelting furnace, and in removing the deck plates from the aeroplane. On the fifth day Ferrers Lord applied the match to the furnace fire, and as the flames roared through the flue the clever engineer was greeted with three times three.

The engineer and Ferrers Lord had already drafted out the plan of the little aeroplane to be built out of the wreck of the Lord of the Skies. There was nothing elaborate about it. Once it rescued them, they would need it no more; so they designed a mere platform, only just strong enough to hold the machinery, and secured against any risks of overbalancing by heavy weights attached to each corner of the platform.

Again and again the calculations of weight and lifting powers were made and checked. Eighteen suspensory screws and as many vertical columns had to be cast. A single driving screw would sell if they proposed, and one dynamo would be sufficient to drive all.

"We only need a life-saving machine, not a flying machine," said Ferrers Lord.

"She will be both," said the engineer, with sturdy confidence. "I shall start on the moulds at once."

Merrymakings in the evenings compensated for the toil of the day.

Ching-Lung rigged up a sheet across the deck with a powerful electric light behind it. It was a splendid shadow show, and the shadows of himself, Gan-Waga, and O'Rooney indulged in such forth-provoking antics that the audience roared with delight.

At the end of the first week the first number of "The Coal-hole Gazette, or Sweeps' Review," was published. Ching-Lung edited it, and it was a single type-written sheet, containing items of news that made the amused readers giggle. In every way Ching-Lung strained every nerve to keep up the hearts of his comrades.

Sunday night came. It had been a day of rest. They had managed to make the state-room fairly comfortable.

"I shall run the metal into the moulds to-morrow," said the engineer, when supper was over.

"Then we can do little or nothing until it cools?"

"Nothing. It will take a long time to cool down. The lathe I have made works very well. I am hampered by only having one anvil, but I shall cast one that will serve the purpose. I think the lads might have a holiday."

"Hear, hear!" cried Ching-Lung. "How can we amuse them?"

"Why not have a regatta on the lake?" suggested Thurston.

Ching-Lung slapped him on the back, and carried the news to the men. A committee, consisting of Prout, Maddock, Joe, Ching-Lung, and O'Rooney, was formed to discuss the matter. Within an hour type-written leaflets were distributed.

"THE COAL-HOLE SWIMMING AND ROWING CLUB.

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H.H. CHING-LUNG.

PROGRAMME OF SPORTS."

There were to be races of every description—pig-hunts and seal-hunts, tournaments and tug-of-war, all for valuable prizes. Rupert was appointed judge, and Maddock starter. All the men were up early. The great cavern was filled with a dull, red glow, and the air was strangely hot.

They rushed forward cheering. Hal Honour had opened the furnace, and the hissing liquid was pouring into the moulds. They watched with bated breath, dreading an accident. With folded arms and impassive face the engineer watched the result. Then he lifted his pipe.

"All right!" he said.

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How they cheered! They shook hands with each other, and yelled like madmen. Then, headed by Prout, they bore down on the engineer. Lifting him from his feet, they raised him shoulder-high. Gan-Waga snatched up the big kettle and a stone and used the kettle as a drum. Ching-Lung brought his whistle, and the triumphant procession moved round the glowing moulds, whilst the vast cavern echoed their yells.

"The lads are going mad to-day," said the millionaire, smiling. "They keep up their hearts gallantly. Tell the cook to bring out his best, Rupert, and spare nothing. We need not be careful about our stores. Look at those idiots!" O'Rooney and Gan-Waga were walking together in front of the procession.

"Do yez reverse, swate wan?" roared O'Rooney.

"Hunk," inquired Gan-Waga, "who-dat? Not know him."

"Reverse, love. Twiddle round the other way."

"What twiddle?"

"Twist, turn, spin, do ut backwards, me flat-faced darlint."

"Like so, Hunk?"

They were close to the edge of the water, and Gan-Waga gave a sudden twist and a more sudden push. O'Rooney had only time to yell as he went flying headlong into the lake. Gan-Waga dived after him.

They expected wet clothes that day, so a drenching did not matter.

"Chuck us a loife-belt!" howled O'Rooney. "Murther! There's a beastly crab stealin' me watch and chain! Ut's as cawled as oice-cream, and O've forgot to put on me flannel waistcoat. Av yez haven't a loifebelt, plaze oblige me with a footwarmer. Cowl'd fate always brings on baldness wid me. Arrah, go away wid yez!"

The last remark was drowned, for Gan-Waga seized his leg and dragged him under water. O'Rooney was not a good swimmer, but anyone could swim in the dense, buoyant water. He avenged himself by dragging Gan-Waga in a shallow place, and sitting on him for quite a minute.

The cook served up a splendid breakfast, and then there was a rush for boats. Everything that would answer the purpose was seized upon—boards, doors, tubs, piggins, and large tins. Ching-Lung sailed out merrily in a foot-bath, and the course was marked out by anchored boards, to which petroleum lamps were firmly fastened. Three hissing arc-lamps gave a magnificent light.

"A seat hunt!" cried Ching-Lung. "The seal gets thirty seconds' start, and must cover the course, out and home. That is the only rule. The man who catches him receives a silver-plated revolver."

Sitting on boards or in tins, or swimming, the hunters got into line. Gan-Waga was the seal, but as there was no possible chance of capturing him in the ordinary way, he was handicapped by having to tow five or six inflated balloons behind him.

"Are you ready? Go!"

Crack! rang Maddock's pistol, and Gan-Waga took a header overboard. Crack! sounded the revolver again, and with mighty splashing, the pursuit commenced. They could see the bladders trailing across the black waters.

Accidents came with what Maddock called a rush. Boards and tubs overturned, some by accidents, and some because the swimmers upset them out of sheer wickedness.

"O'Rooney will get him!" yelled Joe, who was a spectator.

"Go it, Barry!"

Barry O'Rooney, on a long plank, headed the chase, paddling splendidly. The seal turned round and put his

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fingers to his snub nose. It was Barry and the seal, the rest however.

"Have ut yer!" yelled the Irishman, making the water fly. "Don't hurry me joil, for I'll soon be wid yez!"

"Rats!" said the seal. "You not catch me! I'm only playing funny face. Yah-h!"

"Bedad, is that ut? Oi'll show yez!"

They were barely a yard apart, but Gan-Waga proved that he was not joking by increasing the distance with the greatest ease. The others were far behind. Hunter and seal rounded the mark, and started on the homeward course.

"I'll let you have a shot wid my revolver when get 'um!" crowed Gan-Waga mockingly.

"Faith, yez won't ever see the colour of that same, bho!"

"If it was the same colour as yo' hair, I'd chuck 'um away jolly quick!" said Gan-Waga insultingly.

Mr. O'Rooney set his teeth, and churned up the spray; but the grinning Eskimo hept tantalisingly out of reach. He was barely thirty yards from home. Ching-Lung and Rupert had agreed to call it no race, and to have it swim over again later on, handicapping Gan-Waga more heavily.

"The little beggar is such a water rat that I believe he'd win with his hands and feet tied," said Thurston. "I didn't imagine O'Rooney could follow him so well."

Ten yards now from home.

"I'll let you have two shots out of my revolver for tuppence, funny-face!"

"Barry's chuckled up the sponge," said Maddock, as the Irishman pulled wildly out of his course. "Well rowed, Barry! You deserved to—well, I'm durned!"

There was a yell of delight. The Irishman was far from beaten. He dropped his paddle, and whipped up a bow. Fitting an arrow to which a string was tied, he took aim at Gan-Waga's bundle of bladders. Four of them burst with a noisy popping, and collapsed, and the line became entangled.

A swift tug sent the board shooting forward, and the astonished Gan-Waga felt two sturdy arms around his neck.

"A kill! A kill! Bravo, Barry! Well rowed, sir! Well swim, Gan!"

A flotilla of boards and other strange crafts escorted winner and looser back to the starting-post. Gan-Waga was in a state of utter stupefaction. He could not understand how he had been captured until O'Rooney's clever ruse had been explained to him several times.

It took no less than six tallow candles, eaten two at a time, to raise his fallen spirits. And when O'Rooney came and murmured, "O'il let yez have three shots wid me revolver for fourpence, yaller face!" it took the strength of four powerful men to prevent murder.

Bad News—Search for Water.

Until the castings were cool enough to handle, there was little work for the unskilled members of the crew. Hal Honour had five competent electricians to help him, and though the work fell heavily upon them, they did not grumble. But in the horrid pit it was necessary to keep the men occupied in some way to keep them from becoming depressed. As the water had not effected the aeronef's supply of cartridges, and a little oil and elbow-grease soon improved the rifles, a shooting competition was got up.

They fired at a floating target lighted by lamps. Prout headed the score, but Thurston and O'Rooney ran him closely. As Maddock and Ching-Lung were crack shots, they were handicapped until they had not the slightest hope of winning.

Great coal fires were kept burning day and night, and the smoke poured steadily up the shaft. The upright draft seemed to clear the shaft of its oppressive air. Once or twice, however, when a gale was raging round the peaks, the smoke was beaten back in suffocating clouds that caused the cast-aways to gasp and cough miserably.

Ching-Lung was busy with the second number of the "Coal-Hole Gazette," when the door opened behind him.

"Bad news, Ching."

"What news is that, old chap?"

"We're short of water, the cook says. One of the tanks was strained, and every drop of the water has leaked away—nearly three hundred gallons. The water in the other tank is unfit to drink."

Ching-Lung looked gravely at his chief.

"How long will the supply last?" he asked.

"Not six days, though I thought we had sufficient for as many weeks."

"But we can distil it!"

"Only in small quantities," answered the millionaire. "I have just been analysing the wretched stuff. It is loaded with sulphur and salts. In fact, it is almost what chemists would call a saturated solution. In a gallon of it you could hardly manage to dissolve a few ounces of sugar. We must be off in search of water. There may be a spring somewhere."

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Read the grand new story of the Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled: "FIGGINS & CO.'S NEW MASTER!" In this week's "GEM" Library. Now on Sale.

"I'm your man, old chap. I'll start when you like."

The news was kept from most of the crew. Joe, the carpenter, split up a couple of clove-sticks, about four feet long. Round these, strips of rag were fastened with wire, and when the rags were dipped in petroleum the torches were complete. Those experimented with burned from ten to twenty minutes. They were made up into bundles of twenty.

In case of accidents, Ferrers Lord carried with him an electric lamp and storage battery, which would give a brilliant light for ten hours. Provisions were packed, and water-bottles filled. Joe, Maddock, Ching-Lung, and the millionaire were the exploring party. Maddock carried the petroleum for the torches on his back, and the other loads were equally distributed.

"In six hours," said the engineer.

"If we are longer than that the cavern will be much larger than we expected, Honour."

The men crept as they watched the red glow of the torches grow fainter and fainter, until at last darkness swallowed them from sight.

Ferrers Lord went on ahead. They travelled in an easterly direction, skirting the margin of the lake. The way was obstructed by masses of rock and coal, which jutted through the sand. How excellent coal came to be in the heart of the volcano puzzled the millionaire. It was mingled with layers of white sulphur, and there were traces of lead ore.

Another thought had been in his mind for some time. Once, and only once, he had detected a current of air blowing from the east. At other times there had been a distinct updraught, and nothing more. Was it possible that there could be another outlet at the east, and that the current only occurred when the wind came from that direction?

His pedometer had been set, and on looking at it he found that he had taken over an hour to cover less than three thousand yards, or less than a mile and three-quarters.

"This is slow travelling, Ching!" he said. "Ah, there's the end of the lake! It must be more than two miles long. Which way now?"

"Straight ahead, I guess. Follow your nose, wherever it goes, only don't bang it against anything."

At intervals they halted to saturate the torches with petroleum. Even the powerful light of the electric lamp when flashed upwards revealed no roof. They had been ascending steadily since they had left the aeronef. They were very silent, but occasionally, as Prout or Maddock barked his shins against jutting rocks, strange mutterings were heard which sounded strangely like "Dat is it."

Still, there was no vestige of water, except a few pools that tasted like vinegar and salt mixed together. Joe got a stone in his boot, and sat down to remove it. The others moved on. With the boot in his hand, Joe listened.

"Hi, hi!" he shouted.

"What's the matter?"

"Water! I can hear it."

"It's over yonder, sir," said Maddock, pointing to the darkness.

"I think you are right," said Ferrers Lord. "Even if it proves to be fresh, it will be a long way to carry it; but we must struggle to find any at all."

They left the path they had been following at right angles, and plunged deeper into the gloom.

"Do you hear it now?"

No; the splashing sound had gone. For a minute they stood still.

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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 213.

LEAVES FROM GREYFRIARS SCHOOL CHRONICLE.

Being the Adventures of One-time Members
of the Remove Form at Greyfriars School.

This Week: "A RACE FOR STOLEN PLANS!"

Two young men hurried out of the Foreign Office, and turned out of Downing Street into Whitehall. There was a look of stern resolve in the white, set features of one, while the other looked positively scared as he looked at his companion.

"Jack," he said, "this will ruin me, and will probably ruin England. The honour of the country is at stake. I cannot imagine how these false documents have been substituted for the genuine articles which I had charge of, and had to take to the King's messenger this morning. I discovered the trick only a moment ago, and I simply haven't told the Chief. The documents must be retaken somehow, and destroyed. The thief caught. No message can be sent along the wires, even in cipher. What can you do to help me? Do let us succeed, for the sake of our old school. We always have been such great chums—always. At Greyfriars we always acted together in everything. We went there together, and we left together. We started work at the Foreign Office together. Come, do help me now, Jack, old chap! Let us imagine we are trying to score off a rival Form." In spite of the seriousness of the conversation, the speaker gave a faint smile, and then continued: "Oh, I shall be ruined! It may end in war, and people will point at me, and say, 'There is the culprit! There goes Charlie Brand. He is to blame for this bloodshed. There—' Oh, but Jack, we must have the papers!"

Jack Phillips jumped into a waiting hansom-cab, and Charles Brand followed.

"Now, let me understand the position!" said Jack Phillips quickly. "There have been false papers substituted for documents intended for the German Minister in Berlin, and entrusted to the care of a plenipotentiary. The gentleman's name?"

"A Mr. Arthur Blake."

"Arthur Blake. Good! He would die at his post of duty. I know him by repute. Now, what are we to do?"

"Try and overtake poor old Blake, and receive the false packet from him, and give him these which I have in the janneped case here. I don't know how you are to do it, for the train has gone, and has exactly thirty minutes' start. There is fine weather, and the mail-packet boat will leave the moment the boat-train arrives on the quay side."

"No matter. We shall do it if it is to be done. If we miss the boat, there may be a way to overtake it on the sea."

Charles Brand looked puzzled; but he relied implicitly on his old chum, and asked no questions. The cab stood still yet.

"There is no need for me to ask questions about the robbery or transference of the documents now," said Jack Phillips. "What I have to do is to get to Dover before that packet boat starts. It's seventy-eight miles, and the train's got a long start. How can I do it? Why don't you try the cipher telegram, and stop the man on the arrival of the train at Dover?"

Charles Brand's face was working horribly. He caught Phillips' arm in a spasmodic grip.

"Jack," he cried, "you don't understand! I dare not telegraph. I dare not telephone. I dare not use Marconi's wonderful invention. And why? Because there will be emissaries from over the water, from every land in the world, watching at all points—because it means life or death, triumph or ruin—because the papers which Blake carries, if they fall into the hands of the German Minister, will plunge this country into a dreadful war. That is why. I dare not trust, even to a wire in cipher. The fate of the Empire—the fate of the nation—my fate—are in your hands!"

"And Providence decides for us!" cried Jack Phillips, exultant. "Look!"

He pointed from the window of the hansom. His chum followed the direction in which his finger pointed. Coming along at a furious rate were a string of racing motor-cars. The traffic had been stopped to allow them to pass. There was a great race being held that day at Brooklands, and some of the competing cars had just started from the Hotel Metropole. The first of them was a low-lying, rakish car, painted grey, of tremendous power, and in it were seated two men whose faces were concealed in the hideous masks adopted by the chauffeur. The foremost car was almost on them.

"That is our only chance!" said Jack, in a whisper. "And at any cost I shall take it!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 213.

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

He pushed up the trap in the roof of the cab with his stick. "Driver," he yelled, "draw your cab right across the path of that car! There, don't argue about it! A sovereign for you if you do as I wish!"

The bribe offered him, and the fact that he had recognised his passengers as coming from the Foreign Office, satisfied the caddy. He whipped up his horse, and, turning its head round, wheeled the cab right into the centre of the street, where two refugees for pedestrians helped to condense the thoroughfare. He was not a moment too soon. Indeed, there was almost an accident, for the motor was upon them, and the driver, with an oath, shut off steam just in time. The horse reared up; the cab was almost overturned.

"You scoundrel!" cried the driver of the motor. "I'll have the law of you for this! I'll give you in charge!" "No, you won't!" said Jack Phillips, jumping from the cab, and clambering into the car as cool as a cucumber. "I told him to stop you. I want your car, and I'm going to have it!"

Seizing the owner by the scruff of the neck, Jack, with wonderful rapidity, precipitated him into the roadway. The next moment he had caught the astonished driver of the car also in his arms, and with a good aim flung him at his master, who was getting to his feet, white with rage.

The next instant Jack Phillips jammed down the lever, and sent the car off at full speed. "You'll find your car at Dover, if you telegraph. Ta-ta!" he cried.

The next moment he was on his way, the janneped case in one hand, the steering gear in the other, the car rushing onward with incredible swiftness.

It was only when he began to get clear of the denser traffic, and was well on his way towards the country lanes of Kent, that Jack Phillips became suddenly aware of the fact that he was not alone. Looking round, he saw his friend seated beside him.

"Hallo, Charlie, old chap!" he ejaculated. "How the dickens did you get here?"

"Jumped in as the owner was thrown out," explained Brand. "And now I've got my gun ready," he added grimly between his breath, for the car was going at such a rate that breathing without a mask on was a painful effort. "If any foreign-looking body tries to stop us, I shall shoot, and shoot straight. Geo-whit! What a hill! Jack, old chap, you were a corker at Greyfriars, but now you take the blessed cake! How can you do it?"

How could Jack Phillips do it? The hill was marked "dangerous"; it rose at an acute angle from the valley below; but Jack kept that lever down, and went at it full speed. They could not breathe; they could hardly see. Steering was almost guess-work; but there were brains in that head of the old Greyfriars boy, and even the market cart, which got in the way half the distance down, did not give him pause. The carter fell from his seat, and was picked up an hour later, half dead with fright. But the car went on. Dover was nearer; the hill had been done at the rate of eighty-seven miles an hour. Jack Phillips didn't fear death or anything; that's how he did it.

"The one question which troubled him was: 'Would the car break down?'"

But as it happened the owner of the car was a man who knew a lot about such things, and he would have given half his fortune to have won that race at Brooklands. There was no fear of the machine going wrong. It didn't; and so, smothered with dust from head to foot, with his eyes swollen and burning from the effect of the terrific onrush through the wind, Jack Phillips at length reached Dover.

He whirled the machine on to the railway-line, and, fearing the rails no more than he had done the roads, he whirled the car over the points at the same amazing speed, and at length drew up on the quay side. There were a number of packet-boats there, but none with steam up; and there was no sign of a passenger standing about, or anyone busy at the customs office, nor was there trace of smoke or funnel on the horizon at sea. The packet-boat had gone fifteen minutes ago, as Jack could tell after a glance at the clock on the platform. He had lost the race.

For a moment he despaired.

"Brand," he cried, "I reckon I'm done now!"

There was a moment's pause.

"I wonder—I wonder," muttered Jack Phillips, "if there is a Government boat at Dover fast enough to overtake the mailboat, giving her eighteen minutes to go with?"

"There's the Tally-Ho, destroyer, just out there—just off the Admiralty Pier, and—"

"Tally-Ho," said Charles Brand. "Thornycroft, Chiswick," interrupted Jack. "33 knots an hour; may do more at extreme pressure; trials satisfactory! By Jove, Jack, we can do it!"

The next moment the motor was on the move again at the same wild speed.

They were soon down by the Admiralty Pier, and there Jack Phillips saw the destroyer, steam up, lying by the pier-head. Jack was out of the car in a moment, and, followed by his chum, he sprang down the steps, and was aboard the boat, and speaking to the officer in command.

The officer was about to resent his intrusion, but Jack Phillips, as quick as lightning, explained the situation. He waved the Japanese case in the air. He convinced the officer. "It's against all regulations. There will be trouble about it," objected the man.

"Never mind the regulations or rules of the Service! Talk to the Admiralty afterwards! At the worst, it's only court-martial and dismissal for you. Save your country! Save your country!"

"Pull for the ship!" cried the officer, objecting no more. "Men, lay on to it!"

As they put foot on the deck of the destroyer, Tally-Ho, a deafening report came from the land. Jack looked shoreward. There was a mass of smoke rising in a single cloud in the air. The motor could not be seen, and the crowd were fleeing for their lives. The motor had blown up. Its heart had been broken by the detective's rapid journey.

"Never mind!" cried Jack Phillips, turning to the young lieutenant. "Let's hope you don't blow up, too. Quick, man, get your engines going!"

The engines were soon going indeed. The boat tore through the water.

The sea was smooth, and there was not even a rough wind to battle with. The shore regarded with incredible stillness. A hot, stern chase it was, with life and death in the balance, and when at last they caught sight of the racket-boat steaming swiftly on ahead of them, Jack and his chum gave a groan of delight.

"Fire your gun," he commanded.

The gun was fired. The steamer took no notice, though through his glass Jack could see the excited passengers crowding to the sides.

"Another shot!" called Jack.

The second discharge brought the steamer to, and soon the ocean grayhound was alongside. The skipper of the mail-packet was red with fury.

"Coming aboard!" cried the lieutenant cheerily. "Sorry to stop you, captain, but necessary. Let Mr. Arthur Blake, messenger of His Majesty's Government, attend!"

There were murmurs of amazement; but the boat was got out, Jack Phillips clambered aboard, and, going at once to the plenipotentiary, whom he recognised:

"This case from the Foreign Office to you," he said, touching his hat. "I've roused all England to get at you. The papers you carry are to be given to me; these to the Minister at Berlin. And now I must search the ship for suspicious characters. By Jove, there goes one of them overboard! That man had his eye on you, and would have killed you, if necessary, Blake! I am afraid it's no use trying to save him!"

A man had indeed sprung from the side of the ship into the sea.

Jack Phillips had spoken the truth when he said it was no use trying to save him, for he couldn't swim, and sank almost without a struggle.

"Lieutenant," said Jack, turning to the young officer, who had enabled him to carry out his mission. "I shall never be able to repay you for the service you have rendered me to-day; but I must go on now to Berlin. Blake, there is danger lurking everywhere. Charlie Brand and I will not leave your side until you have handed these papers into the hands of the Minister at Berlin."

They went below, washed, and came on deck again. Blake was looking after the vanishing destroyer, Tally-Ho. The mail-packet was on its way to France.

"Tell me what it means!" cried he.

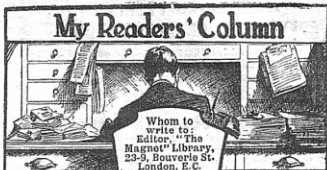
"The documents were changed," said Jack Phillips simply. "But it is all right now. You have the right ones, and a terrible danger has been averted. The police will catch the real culprit when I return to England. For the present, we have to get you to Berlin safely."

And this they did. Blake met the German Minister that night, a pleasant feeling was established between England and Germany, and Jack Phillips had saved his old school chum's reputation, and—who can deny it!—the reputation of Greyfriars School.

After a long drink and a fine luncheon with his chum, Jack Phillips, one-time captain of the First Eleven at Greyfriars, sat down at a writing-table.

"Now," said he, "I'm going to write a long letter of apology to the owner of that blessed car, or he'll never forgive me for stealing and blowing up his motor."

THE END.



For Next Tuesday.

There are lively times indeed at the old school next week! In Frank Richards' latest tale of the famous chums at Greyfriars, entitled

"THE FIGHT FOR THE CAPTAINCY,"

Harry Wharton & Co. are hard put to it to keep their end up with their redoubtable rivals, who are so vigorously disputing with them the leadership of the Remove Form.

"THE FIGHT FOR THE CAPTAINCY"

is a really splendid tale of schoolboy life, and my readers should make sure of enjoying it by remembering to ORDER NEXT WEEK'S "MAGNET" IN ADVANCE.

A letter from one of my girl readers contains a reference to a piece of advice which I recently gave in this column to a reader who was in trouble, owing to his mother having forbidden him to read "The Gem" and THE MAGNET. Here is my girl chum's letter in full:

"Grays, Essex."

"Dear Sir,—I feel that I must write and tell you how I appreciate THE MAGNET and 'The Gem.' I think they are both simply ripping. I met with the same disapproval at first as 'An Ardent Reader,' but took your advice and asked my mother to read one. She was really surprised how interesting it was, and said how sorry she was that she called it a 'penny horrible.' Now mother reads and enjoys them every week. I hope that 'An Ardent Reader' will take your advice and meet with the same success."

"Yours sincerely,

"A GIRL READER."

And so say all of us, "Girl Reader!"

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Master W. H. K., Queen Mary's Hospital, Carshalton.—Many thanks for your letter and postcard, which pressure of space only has prevented me from answering before. So pleased to have your testimony and that of your doctors that reading our bright little papers has such beneficial effect in cases of illness. I have often heard the same thing before from other readers. You will be specially interested in next week's Greyfriars' tale, dealing with the great contest for the captaincy of the Remove Form. You have my best wishes for the future.

"Billy Bunter," Dublin.—If you will repeat your request for back numbers of THE MAGNET you require, giving your name and address, I will have pleasure in including same in the "Back Numbers Wanted" column on the "Chat" page of our companion paper, "The Gem" Library. "Old Chum," Epsom.—Bulstrode took Harry Wharton's place as captain of the Remove in the story entitled "Harry Wharton's Downfall" (No. 170). Bulstrode previously filled the position before Harry Wharton came to Greyfriars.

Minnie A., Plaistow.—Thanks for your nice long letter. If you will send up the numbers of the six issues of THE MAGNET Library you have lost, I will have pleasure in inserting your request for them in the "Back Numbers Wanted" column on the "Chat" page of "The Gem" Library.

Albert P., Liverpool.—Many thanks for your appreciative communications, which I have received quite safely, although lack of space has prevented me from acknowledging them before this.

Notice!

Tom Tandy, of 16, Southampton Street, London, E.C., would be glad if his old chum, Fred Budden, who was last heard of at Llanyfelach Wales, would communicate with him.

THE EDITOR.

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