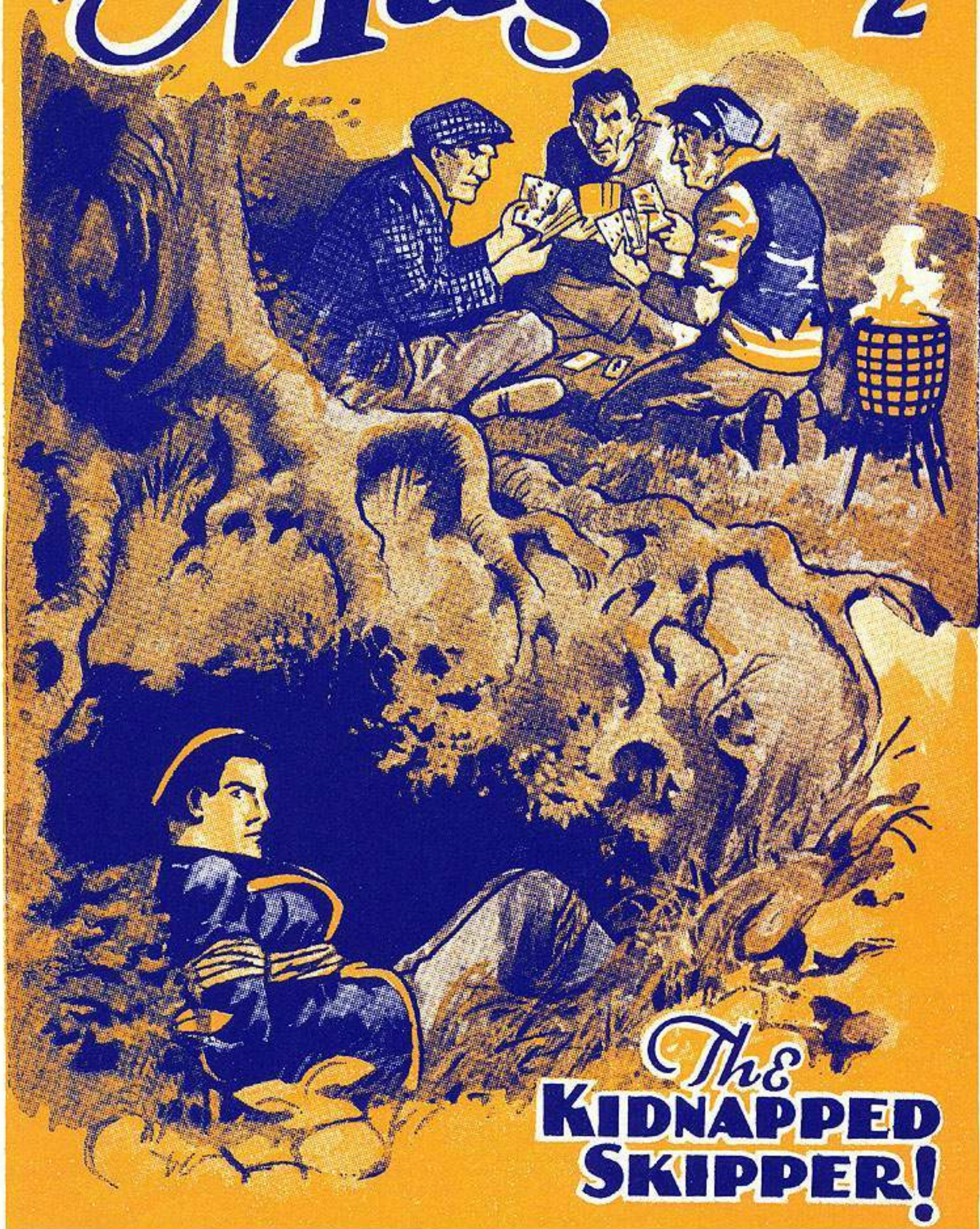


"COKER THE KIDNAPPER!" Great Greyfriars School Story Inside!

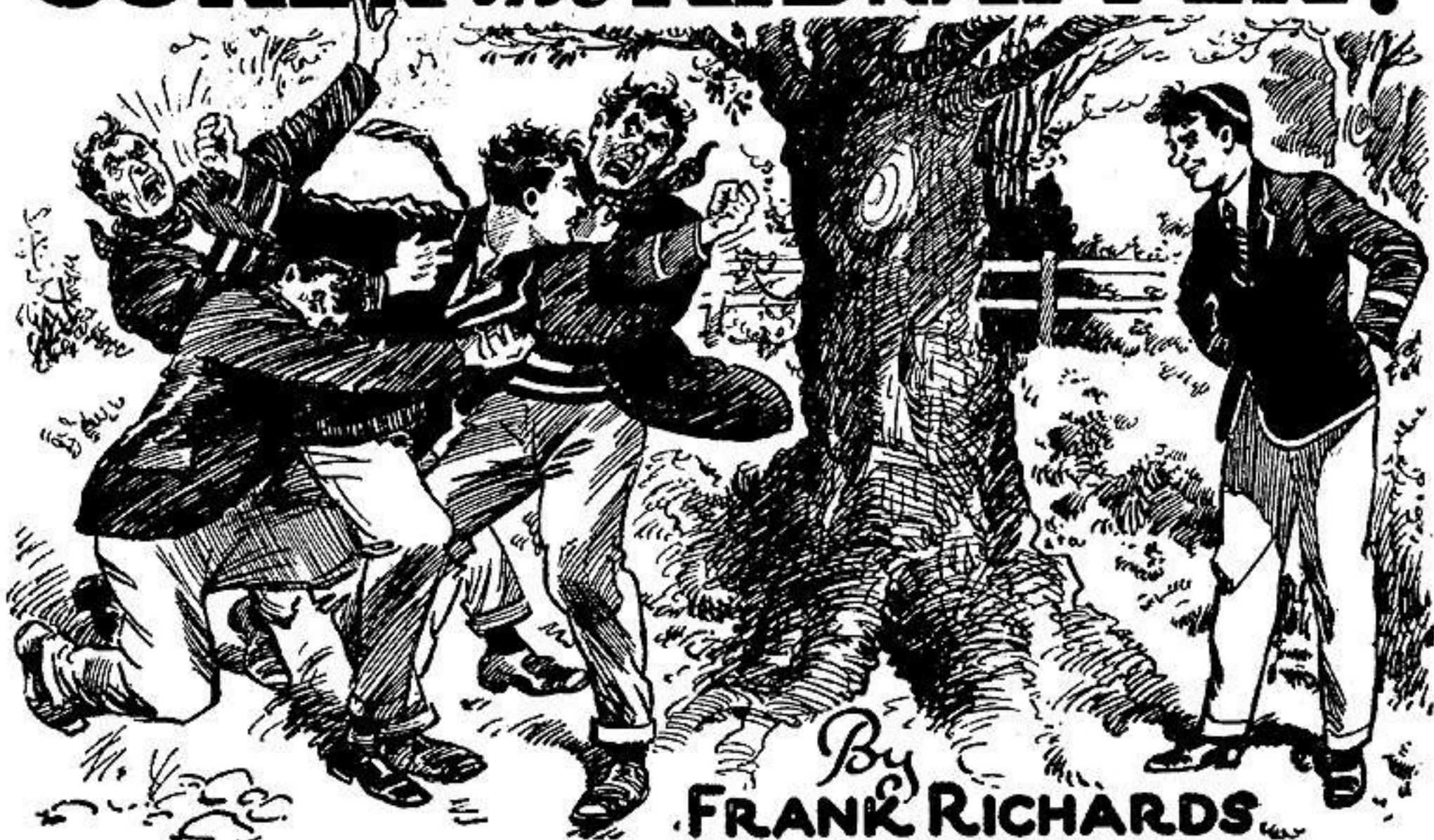
The Magnet 2^D



The
**KIDNAPPED
SKIPPER!**

CHAMPION CHUMP CLASSES HIMSELF AS STAR SOCCER PLAYER!

COKER *the* KIDNAPPER!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

Lively Schoolboy-Adventure Yarn, featuring **HARRY WHARTON & CO.,** the Cheery Chums of **GREYFRIARS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Asking for It!

WHOP!
"Ow!"
Whop!
"Wow!"

The voice of Billy Bunter, like that of the turtle of old, was heard in the land. It was heard on its top note.

It reached many ears. Among others, it reached those of Wingate of the Sixth Form, the captain of Greyfriars School.

Wingate, walking in the quad, with his official ashplant tucked under his arm, had a corrugated brow, deep in thought. No doubt it was some problem in connection with first eleven football that occupied his mind. But as he heard the wild yells of the Owl of the Remove, Wingate glanced round, dismissed Soccer for the moment from his mind, and strode to the spot whence the yells proceeded.

Often and often Bunter of the Remove made a fuss with little cause. But now he had cause—plenty of cause!

Herbert Vernon-Smith was grasping him by the back of his fat neck with one hand and wielding a cricket-stump with the other. He whopped and whopped.

The Bounder of Greyfriars had plenty of beef, and he was putting it all into that whopping. The cricket-stump rang on Billy Bunter's tight trousers.

Whop, whop!

"Ow! Leggo! Beast!" yelled Bunter. "It wasn't me—I keep on telling you it wasn't me! Wow! I'll hack your shins! Beast! Wow!"

Whop!

"Oh crikey!"

Smithy was too busy with Billy Bunter to observe Wingate approaching. He was made aware of Wingate's arrival by

a grasp on his own collar, which jerked him backwards.

He spun round with an angry exclamation.

"Let go, you fool! Let go, or—" Then, as he saw who had grasped him, the Bounder checked himself.

"Stop that, you young ruffian!" snapped Wingate. "Let Bunter go at once!"

Vernon-Smith still kept his grasp on the collar of the wriggling Owl of the Remove, while his own was grasped by Wingate. And he did not let go at the command of the head prefect and captain of the school.

Wingate's brow set grimly. He was a good-tempered fellow—but he had no use for cheek from juniors.

He gave Smithy a wrench that almost lifted him from his feet. Bunter's collar was released, and the Bounder spun in Wingate's hefty grasp. The moment he was free Billy Bunter shot off like an arrow from a bow. He was gone in the twinkling of an eye.

"Now," said Wingate, "what were you whopping Bunter for, Vernon-Smith?"

"Let go my collar!" said the Bounder between his teeth. When his temper was roused Smithy was reckless, and he was more than half disposed to hit out at the prefect who held him.

"Answer my question!"

"Find out!" snarled the Bounder.

"I'm going to!" said Wingate grimly. "I'm going to whop you till you answer civilly."

Smithy resisted, as he was bent over. But he was as powerless in Wingate's grasp as Bunter had been in his own. Twisted over, struggling and panting, he gave a yell as the ashplant came down.

Whop!

"Now, Vernon-Smith—"

"You rotter, let me go!" yelled the Bounder.

Whop!

A dozen fellows came crowding up. Among them was Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. Wharton interposed hastily.

"Bunter asked for it, Wingate! That fat ass has been grub-raiding in Smithy's study—"

"No reason why Vernon-Smith should not tell me so!" answered the captain of Greyfriars quietly. "And a Remove kid can't take the law into his own hands to that extent."

Harry Wharton made no reply to that. The fact was that, exasperating as Billy Bunter's manners and customs were, the Bounder had been laying it on too hard. He had lost his temper—as he very often did—and Smithy's temper was not pleasant when it got out of control.

"Well, you know now!" said the Bounder savagely. "Now let go my collar, you meddlin' ass!"

"Shut up, Smithy!" breathed Tom Redwing. He was alarmed for his chum. Really, a Remove junior could not call the captain of the school a meddling ass. Prefects of the Sixth Form were not to be told what the juniors thought of them—not with impunity!

"That tears it!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The tearfulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "is terrific!"

Wingate of the Sixth set his lips. He released Vernon-Smith's collar, and pointed to a bench under the elms with his ash.

"Bend over that bench, Vernon-Smith!" he said curtly.

The Bounder, panting for breath, eyed him sullenly and savagely. The

fact that he was in the wrong, that he could not resist a Sixth Form prefect, and that at heart he liked old Wingate as much as any other fellow at Greyfriars did, made no difference to Smithy at that moment. He was sore and savage, and recklessly defiant.

"What for?" he snarled.

"I'm going to give you six, for cheek!"

"You're not!"

"What?" roared Wingate.

"Deaf?" sneered the Bouncer. "I've said you're not, and I mean it!"

"You howling ass, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Smithy——" began Redwing.

"Leave me alone, you ass!"

"Vernon-Smith, bend over that bench at once!" exclaimed Wingate, with a gleam in his eyes. "Now, then!"

"Shan't!"

The Greyfriars captain made a stride at him.

Vernon-Smith promptly jumped back and dodged.

"Hands off!" he snapped.

"By gum!" breathed Wingate. He made another stride, and the Bouncer jumped back again—a quick and active backward spring.

It was rather unlucky that Coker of the Fifth was coming up to see what the row was about, and that he was only two or three feet behind Smithy when he made that backward spring.

Smithy's heels came down, crashing on Coker's feet.

Coker's feet were large, and there was plenty of space for a happy landing. Smithy landed, with all his weight, and Coker gave a fearful yell. It sounded as if Coker was hurt. No doubt he was.

Stumbling off Coker's feet, Smithy stumbled into Wingate's grasp. That grasp closed on his collar.

"Ow!" roared Coker. "You clumsy young ass! Ow!"

Vernon-Smith, with one swing of Wingate's powerful arm, was swung to the bench and across it. Then the ashplant in Wingate's right hand rose and fell.

Six whops rang out in swift succession. A crowd of fellows looked on. Generally, a fellow up for "six" was an object for sympathy. But there was little sympathy for a fellow who cheeked old Wingate, who was as popular in the Lower School as in his own Form. If ever a fellow asked for it, the Bouncer had, and now he received that for which he had asked.

Having administered the six, the Greyfriars captain tucked the ash under his arm, without a word or a look for the wriggling, scowling Bouncer, and walked away.

Smithy stood by the bench gasping.

"Oh, the rotter!" he breathed.

"Don't be an ass!" said Johnny Bull gruffly. "What did you expect, when you cheeked Wingate?"

"I'll make him sorry for it!" said the Bouncer, gritting his teeth.

"Fathead!" said Frank Nugent.

"Better forget all about it!"

"Look here, Smithy——" began Harry Wharton.

"Oh, shut up, the lot of you!" snarled the Bouncer, and he drove his hands into his pockets and stalked away, savage and scowling.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Cheek for Coker!

"THIS way!" said Coker irritably.

"But——" said Potter and Greene of the Fifth together.

"Don't jaw!" said Coker, still more

irritably. "When I say this way, I mean this way! I don't mean that I want a lot of cackle—see?"

Horace Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars was not in the best of tempers. He was, in fact, angry. And, like the ancient prophet, felt that he did well to be angry.

It was an hour since Smithy's heels had crashed on his feet; but he still had a pain in them. Coker's feet were extensive, and the pains extensive in proportion. Having arranged to walk through Friardale Wood with his friends that afternoon, Coker stuck to that arrangement, regardless of the pains. Now in the middle of the wood he rather wished that he hadn't. He was almost limping.

Coker had other worries on his mind, too. The football season was near its end. Coker, as usual, had been completely passed over in the school games, which he naturally resented. He suspected that his own familiar friends, Potter and Greene, agreed with Wingate's view that he was no good for the first eleven. It was enough to make a fellow shirty.

Coker, tired of limping with painful feet, decided to take a short cut back to the school through the wood, instead of following the footpath. Being Coker, he naturally turned in the wrong direction.

Potter and Greene had no objection to a short cut. But they had a natural

Horace Coker is a big enough idiot on the footer field, but he's a bigger chump off, as is proved when he adopts drastic measures to get a place in the Greyfriars First Eleven!

desire to arrive at their destination, and not some other place. So they objected, rousing Coker's ire still further.

"I'm dashed if I ever saw such fellows for jaw!" said Coker. "Jaw, jaw, jaw!"

"That isn't the way!" shrieked Potter.

"Don't be an ass, Potter! Just come on!"

"I tell you——" hissed Greene.

"Don't be a fool, Greene! Come on, and don't jaw!"

Leaving the footpath, Coker plunged into the wood, bright with the green of spring. Potter and Greene, exchanging a glance, remained where they were, on the footpath. Horace Coker glanced back.

"I said come on!" he pointed out.

They came on—reluctantly. Luckily, it would be easy to disappear from Coker's sight in the wood, and leave him to take his short cuts to unknown places on his own. They followed him—but not far.

Coker tramped on, Potter and Greene tramping behind him. Two minutes later they slipped away among the trees, and vanished.

Unaware of that circumstance, Coker led on through the wood, leading the way with nobody following.

"It's sickening," said Coker, addressing his friends over his shoulder, happily unconscious that they were no longer there. "That fool Wingate—You needn't tell me that he's not a fool! I don't want any silly jaw!"

Potter and Greene did not tell Coker that Wingate was not a fool. Not being present, they really couldn't.

"The utter idiot!" went on Coker. "Here we are at the end of the football season, with only one more match to play. Is Wingate going to put me in the St. Jim's match? You know he isn't! What do you think he did when I put it to him—laughed?"

Coker gave an angry, contemptuous snort.

The bare idea of Coker in the first eleven was enough to make any Greyfriars man laugh. Indeed it was enough to make a cat laugh. Coker was the only man who saw nothing comic in it. Why, Wingate had laughed, Coker did not know, but he felt very sore about it.

"Well, let him laugh," resumed Coker bitterly. "I'll give him something else to laugh about. If he chooses to leave out the best footballer at Greyfriars, and the other silly asses choose to let him get away with it, he's got me to deal with. I'm going to make him put me in. Hear that? You can snigger, if you like, but I mean every word of it—see?"

Coker did not hear a snigger. But he glanced round, expecting to see Potter and Greene grinning. He did not see Potter and Greene at all. They had long vanished.

Coker stared. It dawned on him that there had been no listening ears while he made his remarks. He had been wasting his sweetness on the desert air.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Coker. "The silly dummies, losing the way, with me walking just in front of them, pointing it out! Potter!" he shouted. "Greene! You silly chumps, this way!"

But answer there came none.

"Well," said Coker, with a deep breath, "if they've lost themselves they can jolly well stay lost! I'm not going to hunt for them—I jolly well know that!"

And Coker of the Fifth tramped doggedly on, leaving Potter and Greene to their fate.

It was about ten minutes later that Coker began to wonder whether he was, after all, on the right track. The earth here and there was rather soft and muddy from recent rain, and in several muddy patches traces of boots could be seen. This at first made Coker feel certain that he was following a track through the wood that led towards Friardale Lane, and Greyfriars School. But even Coker could not help noticing that the wood grew denser and denser, and that he was getting deeper into it, instead of getting out of it.

He wondered whether this was, after all, the beaten track he had supposed it to be, and whether the footprints in the mud had been left by some rambler at large in the wood.

—On the whole it was just as well that Potter and Greene were gone. They would have made out, for a certainty, that Coker had lost his way. Coker knew, only too well, the sort of carping criticism he had to expect from those two silly asses.

He tramped and limped on, more slowly, staring to and fro among endless trunks and thickets.

He was glad of the sudden sight of a battered bowler hat. Somebody was there—and Potter and Greene being absent—Coker did not disdain to inquire his way.

A man in tattered garb was seated on a log under a tree, smoking a short, black pipe.

Under the massive, wide-spreading roots of that ancient tree, there was a deep hollow, partly covered by the

tree itself, partly by branches that had been gathered and perched over it. This made a sort of cave, or dugout, and from the dusky interior came the ruddy glow of a fire smouldering in a perforated bucket. By the opening of the dugout the tattered man in the battered bowler sat smoking, evidently a tramp, who had formed this shelter for himself in the heart of the wood.

He glanced at the Greyfriars Fifth Former. He had a stubbly face with a broken nose, and a leering eye.

Some fellows would have felt rather chary about meeting a ruffianly-looking tramp in a lonely wood. Not so Coker. It did not occur to Horace Coker to feel alarmed in the least. He tramped on.

As he arrived nearer the man he recognised him. He had seen that broken-nosed tramp several times before, and was aware that he was named Juggins.

Juggins eyed Coker curiously, and rose to his feet.

Camped in that dugout in the lonely wood, Mr. Juggins supplied himself with necessities by the simple process of "pinching" from the surrounding farms. So he was naturally pleased to see Coker. A prosperous-looking senior schoolboy, miles from everywhere, was rather a windfall for Mr. Juggins—a much more paying proposition than dog stealing, pulling up vegetables under cover of night, or pilfering washing from a line.

"Here, my man!" said Coker. "Show me the shortest way to Friardale Lane, will you? I'll tip you a shilling."

"Thank you kindly, sir!" said the broken-nosed man, picking up a cudgel from the log. "Mebbe you'd make it a pound?"

Coker stared at him. He was not quick on the uptake, and did not see the connection between the cudgel and the request for a pound.

"Don't be a fool!" he said. "I said a shilling, and I mean a shilling! And—Oh, you cheeky rotter! Ah!"

Mr. Juggins' idea was that one lick from the cudgel would induce Coker to make it promptly a pound. But he did not know Coker. Coker's hat cracked under the lick; but the next moment the enraged and indignant Coker hurled himself at Juggins, hitting out. His fist, which resembled a leg of mutton in shape, but was perhaps weightier, hit Mr. Juggins on his nose, sending him over backwards with a terrific crash.

Juggins' nose, being broken already, in some previous trouble, could not be broken again. But it felt as if it was. He sprawled on his back, and yelled.

Coker, glaring, snatched the cudgel, and tossed it away among the trees. Then he grasped Juggins by the collar, and jerked him to his feet.

"Now," said Coker, "if you want another—"

"Old on!" gasped Juggins. "No! 'Old on—I mean leggo! Oh! Ow! My smeller! Ow!"

"Now show me the way to Friardale Lane," said Coker. "I'll tip you a shilling, as I said, but I don't want any cheek."

Albert Juggins looked at Coker. He was calculating the chances of a struggle. But a gesture with the leg-of-mutton fist decided him in the negative. He felt over his nose, and discovered, to his relief, that it had not been pushed through the back of his

head. Without a word, but with a very expressive look, he turned, and led the way through the wood.

Twenty minutes later they reached the edge of Friardale Lane, with the grey old tower of Greyfriars in sight in the distance.

"That will do," said Coker. "Here's your bob."

He tossed Juggins a shilling, and walked out of the wood into the lane, and headed for the school. Juggins stood looking after him with a long, long look. He was hoping that he might meet that young gent again later with a pal or two with him to lend a hand.

Coker, tramping on to Greyfriars, forgot the unimportant existence of Albert Juggins. He was thinking of the pain in his extensive feet, and of the football ambitions which had been nipped in the bud by Wingate's refusal to recognise his uncommon quality as a Soccer champion. He had no thoughts to waste on Mr. Juggins—little dreaming, at that moment, of what the near future held in store, and of the part Mr. Juggins was to play therein.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Jape!

"**L**END me some gum, will you?" Harry Wharton & Co. were at tea in Study No. 1 of the Remove, when the Bounder looked in and made that request.

The Famous Five looked round at Smithy.

The expression on the Bounder's face was not pleasant. Apparently, he had not yet got over the "six" that Wingate had given him in the quad. But the chums of the Remove gave him agreeable grins.

Smithy had threatened to make Wingate sorry for that six; and he was not the fellow to leave such a threat unfulfilled if he could help it. The cheery Five were more willing to do anything they could to keep him out of mischief till he had had time to forget about it.

"Trot in, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "Just having tea."

"Tea with us, old bean!" said Frank Nugent.

"I haven't come here for tea. I want some gum, if you've got any!" said Vernon-Smith curtly.

"There's a bottle of it in the cupboard," answered Harry. "But take a pew and join us with this cake."

"Topping cake, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry. "And Bunter seems to have snaffled yours. Come on!"

"Bother your cake!" answered Smithy, crossing to the study cupboard.

"What I like about Smithy," remarked Johnny Bull, "is his nice, polite, polished way of declining an invitation!"

"The politeness is truly terrific!" assented Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

And the Famous Five smiled.

The Bounder, unheeding, stood at the study cupboard, and sorted out a bottle of gum. To the surprise of the juniors, he produced a large bottle from under his jacket, already half-filled with that sticky fluid. Removing the cork, he proceeded to pour the gum from Wharton's bottle into the larger bottle.

"What's the name of that game, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Going about collecting gum?"

"Yes," answered the Bounder, over his shoulder.

"You've got about half a pint there already!" remarked Nugent.

"I want all I can get."

Having replaced the cork in the large bottle, the Bounder lounged back to the door, followed by the curious glances of the Famous Five. What any fellow could possibly want with half a pint of gum was a mystery to them.

Vernon-Smith stepped out into the passage. The next moment the juniors heard Tom Redwing's voice.

"Look here, Smithy, you silly ass, you're not going to do anything of the kind! Chuck it!"

"Mind your own bizney, Redwing!"

"Do you think Wingate won't guess who did it, you silly fathead?" came Redwing's voice sharply. "You'll get another six! Wingate may take you to the Head!"

"Let him!"

The Bounder's footsteps went tramping away towards the Remove staircase. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another, jumped up, and ran to the study doorway.

Smithy was disappearing across the landing at the end of the passage. Tom Redwing stood looking after him in angry dismay.

"Is that silly ass going to jape Wingate?" asked Harry. "Is that what he has been collecting gum for?"

Redwing nodded.

"Yes; he can't get over that six. It will mean a fearful row if he rags in the study of the captain of the school! No good talking to him!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Not a bit," he agreed. "Cut after him, you chaps. We'll pour the gum down his own neck—that will stop him!"

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull.

"Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton; and the Famous Five went after Herbert Vernon-Smith with a rush.

It was, perhaps, no concern of theirs, exactly, if the Bounder chose to ask for serious trouble in this wild and reckless way. Still, it was only good-nature to save him from his own hot-headed folly.

Smithy was already going down the Remove staircase when they came across the landing with a rush. He glanced back, and probably guessed their intention, for he went down the stairs two at a time.

"After him!"

Taking two or three steps at a time, the Famous Five tore in pursuit. On the middle landing Billy Bunter was taking a rest, coming up, before he negotiated the remainder of the stairs.

Bunter hardly knew what happened to him.

He had a vague impression that a thunderbolt had got loose, somehow, and smitten him. He went over with a wild roar, and the Bounder trod over him and darted down the lower stairs.

"Oooogh!" gurgled Bunter. "Urrgh! I say, you fellows—Wooooogh!"

Bunter was in the way, and the Famous Five had no time to go round him. Five pairs of feet passed over Bunter.

He was left spluttering and squeaking frantically. He spluttered and squeaked unheeded, as the Famous Five rushed down the lower staircase after the Bounder.

At the foot of the big staircase, Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, stood in conversation with Prout, master of the Fifth. There was just space between the two beaks for a fellow to pass. The Bounder, with the cool nerve for which he was famous, cut between them—greatly to their indignation and astonishment.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Vernon-Smith!" almost shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" The Bounder stopped. "Sorry, sir—"

"How dare you, Vernon-Smith?" thundered the Remove master.

"Sorry, sir—some fellows are after me, and—"

Five fellows came down at a rush—and stopped suddenly at the sight of the beaks.

Mr. Quelch gave them a glare.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "I excuse you, Vernon-Smith! Wharton, Cherry, Bull, Nugent, Hurree Singh, how dare you chase another boy down the stairs in that disorderly manner? Take a hundred lines each!"

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Yes, sir!"

The Famous Five gave Herbert Vernon-Smith expressive looks. He smiled at them from the safe side of Quelch and Prout, then turned and walked away.

Harry Wharton & Co. made a move to follow, at a more leisurely and sedate pace. But the Remove master stopped them, with another glare.

"Go back to your studies at once!" he snapped.

There was no help for it, and they went. Certainly, Mr. Quelch would have taken quite a different view had he known that Vernon-Smith was heading for a prefect's study, with a bottle of gum hidden under his jacket, to play a disrespectful trick there. But Quelch did not know that; and the chums of the Remove could not tell him. So they turned back in silence, and the Bounder of Greyfriars was left to his own devices.

His own devices led him to the Sixth Form studies. He was aware that Wingate was teeing in Gwynne's study, and the coast was clear so far as the Greyfriars captain's own quarters were concerned. He waited at the end of the passage till Carne of the Sixth, who was in his doorway, had gone in and shut the door. Then, quite unobserved, the Bounder cut along to Wingate's study and cut in.

He closed the door softly.

The dusk was falling in the quadrangle outside. But a fire glowed in the grate, and Smithy had ample light for his purpose.

He stepped to Wingate's armchair, which stood by the fire, and drew the bottle of gum from under his jacket. Taking out the cork, he poured out the gum, into the deep seat of the chair. All over that leather seat he trickled the gum thickly, till the bottle was empty.

The Bounder grinned sourly.

On the dark, old, well-worn leather the gum was barely visible, unless specially looked for. A fellow was not likely to observe it till he sat down in the chair. After that, of course, he was bound to discover it. Sitting in a sea of sticky gum, Wingate of the Sixth would no doubt feel sorry for himself.

But Vernon-Smith was not finished yet.

He dropped the empty bottle into a wastepaper-basket, and picked up the inkpot from the table. Inkpot in hand, he stepped to the bed alcove.

Sixth Form rooms at Greyfriars were bed-rooms as well as studies. Wingate's bed was in an alcove, with a curtain to screen it from view in the daytime. The Bounder stepped behind that curtain, with the intention of pouring the ink into the bed.

The curtain dropped behind him as he leaned over the bed. A moment more, and the ink would have been streaming on the white sheets. But at that moment the study door opened.



"Oooogh!" gurgled Billy Bunter, as several pairs of feet passed over him. "Urrgh! I say, you fellows—woooogh!" He spluttered and squeaked unheeded, as Harry Wharton & Co. rushed down the staircase after Vernon-Smith.

Vernon-Smith stood transfixed as he heard it.

He had not dreamed of Wingate coming back to his study so soon. He had counted on a quarter of an hour, at least.

But the door opened, and heavy footsteps came in. Smithy was deeply thankful that he was out of sight behind the bed-curtain. There was a chance for him yet if the newcomer did not remain in the study. He set his teeth and listened. What the dickens had Wingate come back from Gwynne's study so soon for? But a few moments later he learned that it was not Wingate.

"Not here!" came a gruff grunt. "Blow the fellow!"

It was the dulcet voice of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form.

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth. Coker of the Fifth had no business in Wingate's study that he knew of. That

ass, Coker, had to choose that unfortunate moment for calling on the captain of the school. As Wingate was not there, Smithy hoped that the fathead of the Fifth would go. But Coker did not go. He switched on the light.

"Blow him!" he repeated. "Silly ass! Making a fellow wait! Blow him!"

Heavy footsteps crossed the study. Coker of the Fifth, it seemed, was going to wait for Wingate to come in.

Smithy, scowling savagely, considered whether to cut for the door. But after what he had done, it was very necessary to keep it secret that he had been in that study. He remained where he was. Then there came the sound of a heavy plump. Coker had sat down in the armchair!

As he was going to wait for Wingate, it was natural for Coker to sit down. As he did not know there was gum in THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1516.

the armchair, it was natural for him to sit in the armchair. So he sat in it—in the gum!

The Bouncer had already decided not to reveal his presence. Now he was less disposed than ever to reveal it. He waited breathlessly for Horace Coker to discover the gum; and a mouse, with a cat at hand, could not have been more cautiously silent, than the Bouncer as he waited.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker Means Business!

GEORGE WINGATE of the Sixth Form pushed open his study door, which Coker had left half-open, and stepped in.

He raised his eyebrows in surprise at the sight of Coker of the Fifth sitting in his armchair.

Coker did not rise as he entered. Coker had no politeness to waste on him. He had, in fact, little politeness at any time. Polished manners were not Horace Coker's long suit.

Coker stared at Wingate rather inimically.

"You can shut the door!" he said.

"Thanks!" said the Greyfriars captain. "I'll shut it when you're on the other side of it, Coker, if you don't mind!"

"I do mind," answered Coker calmly. "I've come here to talk sense to you, Wingate!"

"You have?" repeated Wingate, in surprise. Apparently, he had never expected Coker to think of talking sense.

"Yes," Coker frowned. "About the football—"

"Is that a subject you can talk sense about, old man?" asked the Greyfriars

captain. "If so, why haven't you started it sooner?"

The Bouncer, behind the bed-curtain, suppressed a chuckle. Horace Coker frowned more grimly.

"But run on, old chap!" said Wingate good-temperedly. "I've got a few minutes to spare."

"I shall want more than a few minutes!" said Coker. "Shut the door!"

Wingate gave him a look. But he shut the door, and sat on a corner of the table, facing Coker. Wingate, in his talk with Gwynne over tea, had settled some doubtful and knotty points about the eleven that was to meet the St. Jim's men on Wednesday. With that matter off his mind, the captain of Greyfriars was feeling cheery and good-humoured, and disposed to be patient with the egregious Horace.

He had, in fact, some sympathy for old Coker. Coker was keen on Soccer. He was a trier. He did not know that his exploits on the Soccer ground resembled those of an escaped elephant or a wild walrus. Coker really believed that he could play Soccer.

On what grounds he based this belief nobody knew. But with a brain like Coker's, a fellow might believe anything.

Keen as mustard, convinced that he was the best footballer at Greyfriars bar none, it was hard on Coker to be left out of games, even the Fifth Form pick-ups. But as playing Coker meant making the enemy a present of the game, no captain really could do it. Still, with a few minutes to spare, Wingate was prepared to let Coker derive what comfort he could from wagging his chin.

"Go it!" he said.

"We're playing St. Jim's on Wednes-

day," said Coker. "Kildare's bringing his men over here for the last decent match of the season. So far, you've left me out of everything. I'm prepared to overlook this, on condition that you do the right thing now. The list isn't up yet for Wednesday."

"No."

"Is my name going to be in it when it goes up?"

"Hardly."

"You're leaving me out?"

Wingate smiled. Really, it was not easy to talk to Coker. Billy Bunter of the Remove might as well have asked that question as Coker of the Fifth. It was amazing that Coker did not know what a hopeless dud he was at games. But there it was—he didn't!

"Well," said Coker in a deep voice, "I'm fed-up! I'm not standing any more of this, Wingate! You're captain—"

"Oh, I thought you might have forgotten that!" remarked Wingate, with gentle sarcasm.

"You're captain," pursued Coker, unheeding. "You're no good, but you're captain! I needn't tell you what I think of the silly owls who let you carry on as skipper—"

"You needn't!" agreed Wingate, with a nod.

"You choose to leave out the best man at Greyfriars—I may say, the only really good, all-round footballer in the school!" said Coker.

"Modesty, thy name is Coker!" murmured Wingate.

"Facts are facts!" said Coker. "I'm not bragging about it—I just state the facts! If a fellow's the best Soccer man in the school, he's the best Soccer man in the school! And what's the good of beating about the bush? Whether you're blinded by jealousy or whether you're simply a fool, I can't say! But facts are facts!"

Wingate gazed at him.

He was good-tempered and patient; but conversation with Coker required quite a lot of good temper and patience. Wingate was getting restive.

"Well, if that's the lot—" he said.

"It isn't!"

"Cut it short, then!"

"I'm here to tell you—What the dickens is the matter with this chair?" Coker jerked and wriggled. "I seem to keep on sticking to the seat! Have you been spilling something sticky on this chair?"

"Not that I know of! Carry on—and cut it short!"

"I'm here to tell you what I've decided on!" said Coker. "This is your last chance to do the decent thing of your own accord! Will you post my name for the St. Jim's match or not?"

"Not!"

"Is that final?"

"Quite!"

"Then," said Coker deliberately, "I'm going to make you!"

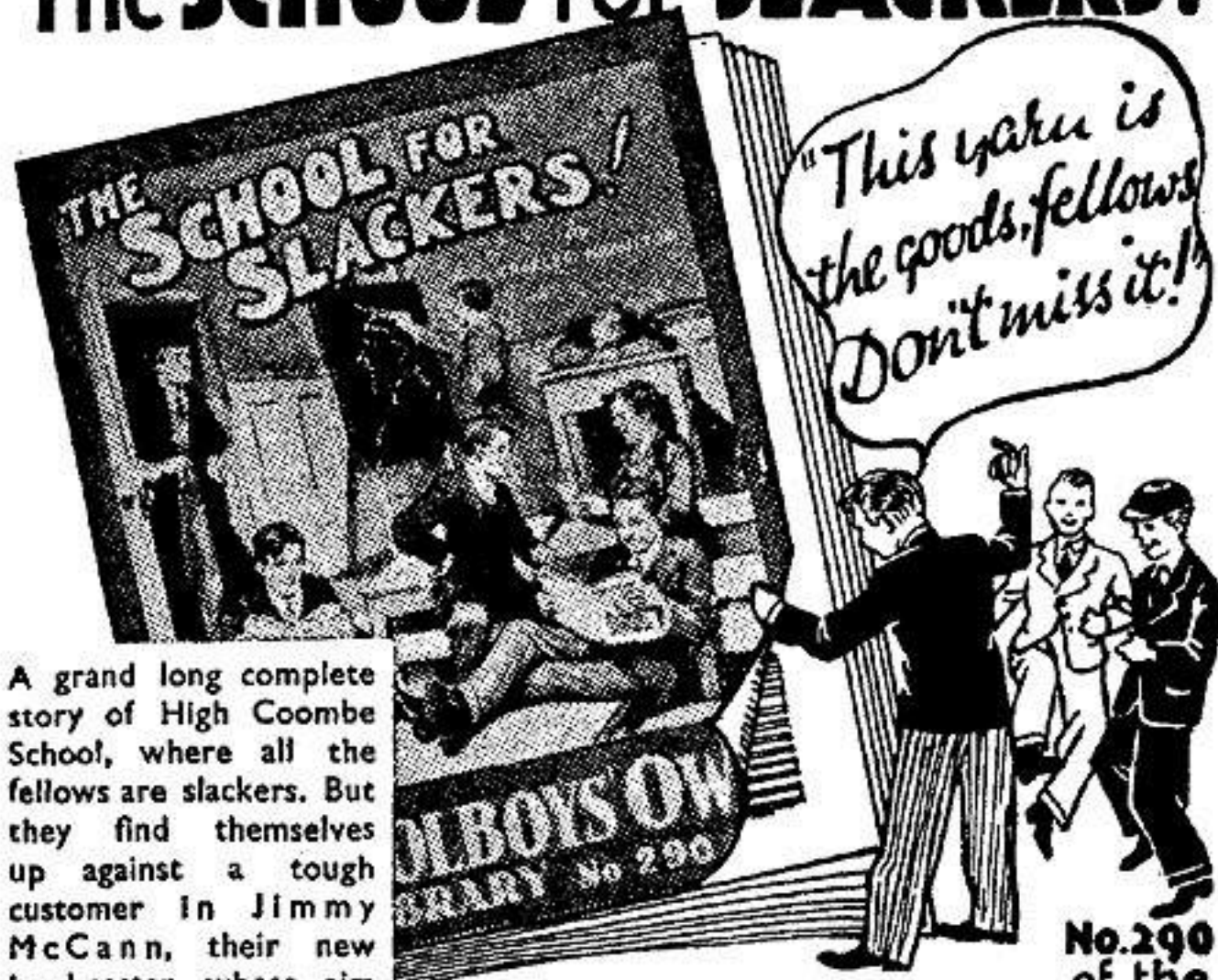
"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wingate. He stared at Coker, and laughed. "Might a fellow inquire how you are going to do it, Coker?"

"You'll find out fast enough when I get going!" said Coker grimly. "I've had enough injustice! I've thought this over carefully."

Wingate did not inquire what Coker had thought it over with. He only wondered.

"I've thought it out," continued Coker, "and I've made up my mind definitely to stand no more injustice, no more cheek and no more nonsense! You may be captain of the school, and head of the Sixth and all that; but I don't think much of the Sixth, and I don't care who knows it! I get a lot of injustice, but I'm not the fellow to

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grouse. Prout rags me in the Form, making out that I'm dense. Me dense! Well, I can stand that. But when it comes to games, a fellow has to stand up for his rights! Can't let really important matters slide. Prout can make out that I can't spell if he likes; but when you start making out that I can't play Soccer, it's time to put my foot down!"

"Time's up!" said Wingate.

"Eh—what do you mean—'Time's up'?" asked Coker irritably.

"I mean that I've no more time to listen to your delightful and instructive conversation!" explained Wingate. "Travel, old man!"

"I'm not going yet! I— What the dooce is the matter with this beastly chair?" exclaimed Coker, in great annoyance. "It feels damp! I've noticed for some time it felt damp! It's sticky, too!"

"Well, get out of it!" suggested Wingate. "And get out of the study at the same time! I've some work to do!"

Coker rose from the armchair—at least, he began to rise. But there was no doubt that the seat of the chair was sticky.

An invisible bond seemed to hold Coker back. The fact was that some of the gum had dried on Coker's trousers, sticking them to the seat of the chair. He partly rose, and sat back again, quite surprised.

"What the dickens—" he ejaculated.

"Anything the matter?" inquired Wingate.

"You silly idiot!"

"Eh?"

"You fatheaded chump!"

"What?"

"Playing silly tricks like a silly fag!" roared Coker. "My hat! Sixth Form prefect and captain of the school, playing fag tricks on a fellow!"

"If you're not mad, what do you mean?" asked Wingate, in astonishment.

Coker wriggled and jerked.

"You dummy!" he roared. "I'm stuck to this chair! I thought it felt damp! And sticky! I never knew you'd gummed it for me, you idiot! You jolly well knew I was coming here! You blithering blockhead!"

Coker wrenched and the gum gave way. The Fifth Former heaved himself out of the armchair. He spun round and stared into the seat of the chair. On a close inspection, gum was visible. Some of it was dry—some, where it was thicker, was still wet. But only about half the gum remained on the leather. The rest was adhering to Coker's trousers.

Coker breathed wrath.

Quite unaware of the Bounder's jape in the captain's study, he put this down to Wingate. A fag trick, played by a Sixth Form man! No wonder Coker breathed wrath and scorn.

He twisted round to look at the gummy trousers. It was not easy to get a view, and Coker, as he twisted, looked remarkably like a cat chasing its tail.

Wingate grinned.

"You—you—you idiot!" hissed Coker.

Coker's trousers were sticky and shiny with gum. The tail of his jacket was rich in gum. Coker was of the gum, gummy!

"You—you chump!" he gasped. "A rotten fag trick—and you call yourself captain of the school! Yah!"

"Has somebody been gumming that chair?" exclaimed Wingate. "By Jove, I'll look into this! I might have sat in it! Thank goodness you dropped in,

Coker! You never came in more useful in your life!"

"You—you—you—"

"We'll take the rest of the speech as read! You want a change, Coker—go and get it! And don't come back!"

Coker ceased to squint round at his gummy trousers. He fixed his eyes on the Greyfriars captain with a deadly glare. Coker had come to that study on the warpath, and the gum on his trousers gave the finishing touch to his wrath. He breathed rage.

"Now, you fool—" he said.

"I don't want to chuck you out of this study, Coker, if I can help it! Will you shut up and go?"

"You idiot! Last time of asking—will you do the right thing and put me up for the St. Jim's match?"

"Fathead!"

That reply was evidently in the negative. Coker wasted no more time.

"That settles it!" he breathed.

"Quite!" agreed Wingate.

He expected Coker to cross to the door and go. But the Fifth Former did nothing of the kind. He made a sudden, tiger-like spring, and grasped Wingate of the Sixth before Wingate knew what was coming! The Greyfriars captain came off the corner of the table with a sudden bump on the floor. He landed on his back with a crash and a gasping howl. Coker's hefty knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down.

"Now," said Coker, as Wingate stared up at him dizzily. "Now, talk sense. You're going to put me up for Wednesday's match, and I'm going to bang your head on your study floor till you agree to do it! See?"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Butts In!

VERNON-SMITH gasped. During that conversation in Wingate's study, the Bounder had been hard put to it to suppress his chuckles. Coker, not consciously a humorist, evoked merriment in his most serious moments.

Now the Bounder stared from the bed-curtain at the remarkable scene in the study, his eyes fairly popping.

No more than Wingate had he foreseen how that interview was booked to end. He, like Wingate, had supposed that Coker, when he had finished talking rot, would go. He blinked at Coker, kneeling on Wingate's chest, blankly.

Wingate struggled fiercely.

Coker was a hefty man, but he was no match for the Greyfriars captain, and but for the fact that he had taken Wingate by sudden surprise, he would have had no chance of getting by with this.

But now he had the big Sixth Former at a hopeless disadvantage.

Wingate, on his back, with a sinewy knee grinding into his chest, was almost helpless. He struggled, but he struggled in vain.

Coker glared down at him grimly.

Coker meant every word he said. Fed-up to the back teeth with injustice, Coker was taking the law into his own hands in this drastic manner. It was a method worthy of Coker's powerful intellect.

"Now—" said Coker.

"You—you—you blithering idiot!" gasped Wingate. "Gerroff! Let me get up at once! You dummy—"

"You heard what I said!"

"Do you know that you might be sacked for this?" howled Wingate.

You'll get a prefect's beating, anyhow! Now, chuck it!"

"I'm not dealing with you as a prefect; but as games captain!" said Coker. "Don't come the prefect now! Am I going up for the St. Jim's match?"

"Idiot!" gasped Wingate.

"Yes or no?" booted Coker.

"Dummy!"

Coker's jaw squared. He meant every word he said. He grasped Wingate by the hair with his strong right hand, jerked his head off the floor, and banged it down again hard!

Bang!

"Oooooooh!"

Bang!

"Ow!"

Wingate struggled frantically. But the hefty Horace had the upper hand and kept it.

The fact that any fellow could be expelled for assailing a prefect mattered not a whit to Coker. He was not, as he had said, dealing with Wingate as a prefect, but as football captain. This distinction satisfied Coker.

Certainly, it was rather unusual for a fellow to persuade a football captain to play him by banging his head on the floor. It was an unusual and, indeed, quite original method. But Coker was an original fellow.

"Yes or no?" inquired Coker.

"Gerroff, you mad ass!"

Bang!

"Oh gad!" gasped Wingate.

He opened his mouth to yell for help. In his present position he could not handle Coker—Coker was handling him. And those bangs were heavy and hard, and they hurt. But Wingate did not utter that yell. He had a natural disinclination to be found in so utterly ridiculous a position by a crowd of fellows coming to the study.

"Now—" said Coker.

"I'll smash you!"

Bang!

"Wow!"

"I'll keep this up as long as you like!" said Coker. "I mean business. I can tell you that! I've tried every other way—and you've got to admit that it was no good. I've been passed over all through the season. There's only one more match, and you want to leave me out of that, like the rest! I've told you, I'm not standing it!"

"You idiot—you ass—you dummy—I—I—I!"

Bang!

"I'll take your word, if you promise to do the right thing," said Coker. "I can trust your word, though not your sense! Yes or no?"

"I'll whop you till you howl—"

Bang!

"Oh crumbs!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith had watched transfixed up to that moment. Now he stepped out from behind the bed-curtain.

He had come there to rag Wingate's study in vengeance for that "six" in the quad. But he forgot that now.

He stepped out and jumped at Coker. His sudden appearance startled both the seniors. Neither of them had had the remotest idea that a junior was in the study.

In a flash, the Bounder's grip was on the back of Coker's collar. He dragged the hefty Horace over backwards.

Coker sprawled.

"Oh!" he roared. "Ow! Why, you cheeky young rotter— Oh!"

The back of his head banged on the floor.

Wingate sat up dazedly. His head

was ringing and singing from the succession of hefty bangs Coker had bestowed upon him. But as Horace turned on the Bounder and grasped him, Wingate staggered to his feet and grasped Coker.

"Open that door, Vernon-Smith!" he gasped.

The Bounder, grinning, opened the door.

Coker, resisting manfully, was whirled to the door and pitched headlong into the passage. He rolled over there.

"Prefects' room at half-past six!" Wingate called after him, and shut the door. The Greyfriars skipper rubbed his head as he turned to the Bounder. There was a severe ache in Wingate's head. Smithy was grinning.

"What the dickens were you doing, hidden in my study?" demanded Wingate.

"Guess!" said the Bounder.

Wingate's glance turned to the gummy armchair. It was rather easy to guess.

"You cheeky young rascal!" he exclaimed.

"Sorry I was here?" asked the Bounder, with a chuckle.

"Oh! Well, no. That mad ass!" Wingate rubbed his head tenderly. "By gad, I'll knock some sense into that blithering cuckoo somehow! Ow!"

The Bounder eyed him warily.

Wingate gazed at him for a moment or two, as if uncertain. Then he pointed to the door.

"Cut!" he said.

"Thanks!"

Vernon-Smith left the study, still grinning.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

To Go or Not to Go?

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Too late!" said Bob Cherry. "Eh?" Billy Bunter, in the doorway of Study No. 1, blinked at the five juniors therein through his big spectacles. "Wharrer you mean, too late?"

"We've finished tea!" explained Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And there's nothing left!" said Bob, shaking his head. "Try next door."

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. "Can't a fellow look into a study without a fellow being supposed to be after a feed?"

"Not if the fellow's name's Bunter!"

Billy Bunter snorted. As a matter of fact, Bunter was not, for once, after a feed. He had tea'd with Peter Todd, in his own study, early; he had tea'd with Lord Mauleverer, in Study No. 12, later; and he had dropped into Study No. 3, to help Ogilvy and Russell dispose of some doughnuts. After which, even William George Bunter was feeling as if he could hold out till supper.

"I say, you fellows, don't talk rot, you know," said Bunter peevishly. "I say, do you know where Smithy is?"

"Gone japing, in the Sixth, I believe," answered Harry Wharton. "Want to see Smithy? I think he wants to see you, too!"

And the chums of the Remove chuckled. Smithy had not finished whopping Bunter when Wingate had interrupted him in the quad that afternoon. It was improbable that Bunter wanted to see Smithy, though it was quite likely that Smithy wanted to see Bunter, to carry on with the good work!

"Well, look here, I've been dodging

that beast ever since we had that row in the quad," said Bunter, "but I can't keep on dodging him for ever. Wingate gave him six, I hear, but that makes his temper no better—I feel sure of that. He makes out that I had his cake, just because I was in his study, you know, and the cake was gone, and there were a few crumbs about. As if I'd touch a fellow's cake! He actually chased me, with a cricket stump. I want you to interfere, Wharton, as captain of the Form. Otherwise, I shall go to Quelch."

"Better go to Quelch," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It's high time you were whopped for grub raiding!"

"I never had the cake!" roared Bunter. "I told Smithy, at the time, that I dropped into his study to borrow a Latin dic. He's suspicious—that's what's the matter with Smithy. Low, I call it! Getting after a fellow with a cricket stump when a fellow went into his study to borrow a French grammar—"

"A what?"

"I mean a Latin dic. I never even saw his cake! I was looking into the cupboard to see if he kept his dictionary there. I wasn't going to have the cream puffs, as well as the cake. Not that I had the cake, you know! Rotten, measly cake to make a fuss about, too—hardly any plums in it! Now, look here, Wharton, it's up to you, as captain of the Form, to stop Smithy ragging a chap. I've come here to say plainly—Yaroooooop!"

Billy Bunter broke off with a wild yell as a boot was suddenly planted on his tight trousers.

He staggered into Study No. 1, yelling.

"Ow! Ow! Wow! Who's that kicking me?" yelled Bunter. "Oh, Smithy, you beast! Wow! I never had your mouldy old cake! Ow!"

Vernon-Smith came into the study, and Bunter dodged round the table.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What have you done with that bottle of gum?"

"Mopped it into Wingate's armchair," answered the Bounder coolly. "You knew what I was going to do with it, that's why you got after me."

"Yes, and you got us a hundred lines each from Quelch!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Serve you right, for bargin' in."

"Look here—"

Johnny Bull rose to his feet, looking warlike.

"There'll be a fearful row if that gum's sat in!" said Harry Wharton, frowning.

"It's been sat in already."

"Oh, my hat! Wingate—"

"No!" The Bounder grinned. "Coker!"

"Coker!" grinned the Famous Five.

"I came up to tell you. What do you think is Coker's latest?" chortled the Bounder. "I was in Wingate's study—ha, ha, ha!" He roared. "He got Wingate down on the floor—"

"Coker did?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, and started banging his head on—"

"Banging Wingate's head!" gasped Wharton. "What on earth for?"

"To persuade Wingate to give him a chance in the Soccer!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five stared at the Bounder. They roared. Even Billy Bunter—with a wary and apprehensive eye on the Bounder—chuckled!

The mere existence of Coker of the Fifth added to the gaiety of life at

Greyfriars School. But the news of his latest exploit quite took the juniors by storm. They roared, and yelled, and almost shrieked.

"Coker's up for a prefects' beating!" went on the Bounder. "Half-past six—and it's close on that now. He's telling the world, at the present moment, that he's not going. He's got all the Fifth yelling, in the games study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and see the show!" said Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five rushed from the study, the Bounder, much to Billy Bunter's relief, going with them. They ran down the Remove staircase and across the landing to the Fifth Form passage. They found a good many other fellows heading in the same direction. News of Coker, apparently, had already spread.

In the games study, the room at the end of the passage where the Fifth Form most did congregate, there was a sound of laughter—loud laughter. Horace Coker's powerful voice could be heard through the sounds of merriment.

The door of the games study was open. Round the doorway two or three dozen juniors were collected, greatly interested. Hobson of the Shell gave the Famous Five a grin as they scudded up.

"Coker's going it!" he said.

"Goin' great guns!" chortled Temple of the Fourth. "Listen to him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were a dozen Fifth Form men in the games study. All of them were laughing, except one. That one, of course, was Horace Coker. Coker's face was red with wrath and indignation, and he was evidently in a very serious mood, not at all disposed for merriment.

"Me?" Coker was saying, in a voice that the celebrated Bull of Bashan might have envied. "Me! Up for a prefects' beating! Well, I'd like to see them get away with it! I'd just like to see them, that's all!"

"You'll see them, all right!" grinned Blundell of the Fifth. "Why, you ass, if Wingate chose to report you to the Head you'd be sacked!"

"Sacked like a shot!" said Price.

"No great loss, either!" remarked Hilton.

"Oh, don't talk silly rot!" snorted Coker. "Think the Head would sack a man like me? There are some fellows who can't be spared from a school! The Head would think twice before he sacked a man like me!"

"Isn't he rich?" gurgled Bob Cherry. "Isn't he gorgeous?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, I explained to Wingate that I wasn't handling him as a prefect, but as games captain!" went on Coker. "I made that quite clear."

"Did that make his napper feel any better, after you banged it?" inquired Blundell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He asked for it!" said Coker. "I told him fair and square that I wasn't standing his cheeky rot any longer. A fellow couldn't say fairer than that. I'd have made him play up, too, and do the right thing, if a cheeky fag hadn't butted in and pulled me off—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" snorted Coker. "Well, Wingate says I'm up for a beating in the prefects' room! I say I'm not! You'll see who's right!"

"There goes half-past!" remarked



Inkpot in hand, Vernon-Smith leaned over Wingate's bed. A moment more and the ink would have been streaming on the white sheets. But at that moment the study door opened. "Not here!" came a gruff voice. "Blow the fellow!" Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth as he recognised Coker's voice.

Fitzgerald of the Fifth, as a chime was heard from the clock tower.

"Let it go!" jeered Coker.

Potter and Greene of the Fifth exchanged anxious glances. They were pals of Coker, and any pal of Coker had reason to feel anxious about him just then.

Coker, it seemed, fancied that he could be a law unto himself. But in point of fact, he couldn't. Any fellow "up" for a prefects' beating had to undergo the same. Coker's powerful brain seemed impervious to facts. Still the facts were there.

"Coker, old chap," murmured Greene. "I think I'd go!"

"I've no doubt you would!" agreed Coker. "I shan't, though!"

"You'd better, old fellow!" said Potter.

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

A Sixth Form man—Loder of the Sixth—pushed through the crowd of juniors at the doorway and looked into the games study.

There was a hush of breathless excitement.

"Coker here?" asked Loder.

"Here I am, if I'm wanted!" retorted Coker, with a glare of defiance.

"You're wanted in the prefects' room."

"Take me there!" suggested Coker.

Loder gave him a look. Then he shrugged his shoulders and walked away. It was true that a fellow could be sacked for punching a prefect. But it was equally true that that would not have mended Loder's nose, had one of Coker's leg-of-mutton fists landed on it, with Coker's unlimited beef behind.

Gerald Loder went away to report. Coker gave a vaunting look round the games study.

"That's that!" he said.

But Coker of the Fifth was the only fellow who supposed that "that" was "that." Every other fellow knew that

there was more to come; and they waited breathlessly for it to happen.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Going Through It!

"HERE comes Wingate!"

There was a murmur of excitement as the captain of Greyfriars was seen on the stairs. He was followed by Gwynne of the Sixth.

Loder had reported that Coker refused to attend in the prefects' room. The fact that a fellow couldn't possibly refuse made no difference at all to Horace Coker. He had refused! The head prefect had the choice of reporting him to the headmaster which would have meant the direst consequences to Coker, or of dealing with him himself. Wingate's arrival on the scene showed that he had adopted the latter course.

The crowd of juniors made room for the two big Sixth Form men to pass. A sea of eager eyes watched them enter the games study.

Laughter in that apartment died away now. The matter was getting altogether too serious. Horace Coker did not even understand the trouble for which he was recklessly heading; but that did not make it less serious. Coker was not, as he seemed to suppose, a law unto himself!

Standing firm on his feet, Coker met the two prefects with a steady, undaunted stare. He stood like Ajax defying the lightning.

Wingate beckoned to him from the doorway.

"You're wanted, Coker!" he said.

"Go on wanting!" jeered Coker.

"Coming?"

"Hardly!"

Wingate wasted no more time in words. He stepped to Coker, and

Gwynne stepped with him. Up went Coker's mighty fists.

"I'll jolly well—" he began.

He was gripped before he could finish. His arms, sinewy as they were, were safely pinned. Coker, breathing wrath, resisted manfully. But with his arms held in a grip of iron, he could not hit out—which was fortunate for Coker. The two prefects walked him, between them, out of the games study, and through the grinning crowd at the door.

"I won't go!" roared Coker. "Do you hear me, you piffing fatheads? I jolly well won't go, see?"

"I think," remarked Wingate cheerfully, "that you will!"

"Sort of!" smiled Gwynne.

And Coker did!

Really, there was no choice in the matter for Coker of the Fifth, though he seemed to fancy that there was. Either of the Sixth Form men was more than a match for Coker, beefy as he was. In the grasp of the two of them Coker was powerless. He dragged back with all his strength, as he was walked to the stairs—but he dragged in vain.

"Now walk down!" said Wingate.

"I won't!" roared Coker. "Here! Potter! Greene! Lend me a hand!"

Potter and Greene smiled at one another. They were sorry for poor old Coker, but they really were not disposed to enter into war with the prefects, and the school authorities generally, on Coker's account. Not quite!

Wingate and Gwynne trod down the stairs. Coker didn't. But his arms had to go, as they were firmly held, and the rest of Horace Coker followed, rather like a sack of coke.

Clump, clump, clump, clump! went Coker's boots on the stairs, clumping from step to step.

An excited crowd followed. Every-

body was interested in Coker. He had the house, so to speak.

Fifth Form men, Shell fellows, and Fourth and Remove crowded down the staircase after Coker and his conductors.

Clump, clump, clump! went Coker helplessly.

Wingate and Gwynne marched steadily down, supporting Coker by the arms, while his long legs trailed behind and his boots clumped and clumped.

On the middle landing Coker decided to walk. He was tired of transit in the manner of a sack of coke.

He walked down the lower stairs, between the two prefects, breathing and gurgling red rage. Then he walked down the corridor to the prefects' room—a grinning crowd behind.

The door of the prefects' room stood wide open. Within, the whole body of Greyfriars prefects could be seen, sitting in state.

Coker was marched in.

A chair had been placed in readiness for him to bend over. It was doubtful, however, whether Coker would bend over that chair of his own accord. He was overcome, but far from subdued.

"Now bend over, Coker!" said Wingate.

"Oh, shut up!" roared Coker.

"Will you bend over that chair?"

"No!" bellowed Coker.

"Look here, take him to the Head!" exclaimed Loder. "I don't see putting up with his cheek, Wingate!"

"I do!" answered Wingate. "Coker can't help being a fool, but a prefects' beating may teach him a little sense! Shove him over, Gwynne!"

A twist, and the hefty Horace was bent over the chair in a suitable attitude for a whopping. He struggled frantically.

"Will you leggo?" raved Coker.

"Yes, if you'll bend over and have done with it."

"You silly idiot!" roared Coker. "Catch me bending over! I'll jolly well punch your face!"

"You first, Loder!" said Wingate calmly.

Loder swished the cane.

A breathless crowd at the door stared in. A prefects' beating did not often occur at Greyfriars. When it did, it seldom or never occurred in this style. Coker was the only Greyfriars man who ever had to be held down for it. But Coker had to be—and was!

A prefects' beating was not an ordinary whopping. It was a much more severe infliction than the customary "six." Every member of the prefectorial body had to be present, and every one of them had to deliver a whop. It depended on the prefect how hard the whop was.

Loder's, plainly, was going to be hard and heavy. Coker had out-faced Loder of the Sixth in the games study ten minutes ago. Loder was not the fellow to forget that. He had gone to fetch Coker, and Coker had treated him with derisive scorn. Now it was Loder's turn. He made the most of it.

Swipe!

The cane came down on Coker's trousers with a terrific crack. It rang like a rifle shot. Louder rang the terrific bellow that followed from Horace Coker. He struggled and wrenched and almost got loose. But not quite. He was safely pinned as Loder handed the cane to Carne of the Sixth.

Swipe!

Carne's lick was nearly as hard as Loder's. Another bellow came from the suffering Coker. Carne passed the cane to Walker.

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Swipe!

"Oh! Ow! Yoo-hoop!" roared Coker. "I'll smash you! Whoohooooop!"

"Poor old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What a man he is to ask for things!"

"He's getting off cheap!" said the Bounder. "Any prefect but Wingate would have taken him to the Head to be barked."

"The cheapfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurreo Janset Ram Singh.

It was quite true that Coker was getting off cheap, after his remarkable performance in the captain's study. But that fact did not seem to penetrate into Coker's solid brain.

"Oh, you rotters!" he roared. "Ow, leggo!"

Walker passed the cane to Faulkner of the Sixth. This time the swipe was lighter. But it drew a yell from Coker.

From one prefect to another the cane passed, and the swipes followed one after another in swift succession.

Coker bawled continuously. But he ceased to struggle. Even upon Coker's almost impenetrable intelligence it was born; that, in entering into warfare with the whole body of prefects, he had bitten off more than he could masticate. And the whopping had a subduing effect. It was hardly necessary to hold him when it came to Wingate's turn, at last, to handle the cane. And Wingate's whop was a mere flick.

Then Coker was allowed to rise to his feet.

He stood wriggling.

Wingate pointed to the door.

"Cut!" he said briefly. "And don't ask for any more, Coker!"

Coker looked at him. He opened his extensive mouth for a retort—for an overwhelming volley of defiance. But he did not utter it. Even Coker realised that he had had enough, and did not want any more.

Wriggling eel-like, he turned to the door. He wriggled out. The crowd outside kindly subdued their merriment as Coker wriggled through. He wriggled away. He was heard to gasp as he proceeded on his eel-like progress up the stairs. He disappeared—wriggling!

"Poor old Coker!" sighed Bob Cherry.

"Poor old silly ass!" said the Bounder.

"I fancy he won't bang Wingate's head again in a hurry!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker of the Fifth did not return to the games study. He went to his own study, and slammed the door. For quite a long time afterwards fellows passing his door heard gasping sounds from within.

"Ow! Oooogh! Oh! Oh crikey! Oooogh!"

Coker made those remarks at intervals till prep.

When Potter and Greene came to the study for prep, they sat down to their work as usual. Coker did not. Coker did his prep that evening standing up!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Strategic!

"OH!" gasped Billy Bunter. It was the following morning, and the Greyfriars fellows were out after class.

Harry Wharton & Co. and other Remove fellows were punting a footer about for exercise and warmth in the keen air. The Bounder was one of the punters—but when Bunter came out of

the House, Smithy left the other fellows, and walked after Bunter.

Short-sighted as he was, Billy Bunter did not fail to note that action on the part of Herbert Vernon-Smith. He had a very wary eye open for Smithy!

It was pretty sickening, Bunter thought, for a fellow to make so much fuss about a cake. How many cakes Bunter had snaffled in his fat career as a grub-raider, he could not have counted without going into very high figures. Smithy's cake was, to Bunter, a mere trifling item on a very long list.

But the Bounder seemed keen on taking its value out of Bunter in booting. The fact that Wingate had given him "six," on Bunter's account, perhaps made the Bounder keener. Anyhow he had dropped into the habit of booting Bunter at sight—which was very unpleasant and uncomfortable for Bunter.

Wharton, appealed to as head boy and captain of the Remove, undertook to stop Smithy promptly, if Bunter returned the purloined cake. That seemed a fair offer, but it was useless to Bunter, who had long ago eaten the cake. Like the dear dead days in the old song, it was gone beyond recall.

So here was Bunter, trotting with the Bounder on his trail, evidently intending to boot him once more. Bunter dodged round the old elms in the quad in the hope that Smithy, losing sight of him, would give it up and go back to the punt-about.

It was then that Bunter gasped "Oh!" as he ran into a fellow who was leaning on one of the elms, with long legs and large feet stretched out in Bunter's way.

Billy Bunter did not see the fellow there till he came cutting round the tree; and then it was too late, as he stumbled over Coker's extended and extensive extremities.

Coker of the Fifth gave him a glare.

The Fifth Form man was leaning on that elm in a quiet and secluded spot, with folded arms and a frowning brow.

Coker of the Fifth did not often seek solitude: but at the present time Coker had weighty problems and worries on his mind, and he was thinking them out, or, at all events, going through the peculiar mental processes which had to suffice Coker in lieu of thinking.

Coker had had a prefects' beating! He had got over the actual anguish of that whopping; but not over the humiliation thereof. Other fellows, of course, had been beaten by prefects; but they did not matter. When the happy man was Coker of the Fifth, it mattered a lot. Coker had a vague sort of feeling that it was time for the skies to fall.

The skies remained in their usual place, however, and nobody but Coker seemed to realise how awfully serious a thing it was that had happened.

And this was not all! The Soccer problem remained unsolved!

Coker's amazing tactics for getting into the first eleven for the last game of the season had been a failure. Coker was a stickler, and he was sticking to the idea. But he was not thinking of repeating his remarkable process of banging the football captain's head to knock sense into it. Even Coker understood that that was a chicken that would not fight.

Deep in these painful and abstruse problems, Coker was irritated by a fat junior suddenly popping round the tree on which he leaned, and falling over his feet. He glared at Billy Bunter, reached at him, and gripped him by the back of a fat neck.

"Oh!" repeated Bunter. "Oh! Ow! I say—wow!" He wriggled like a fat

jelly in Coker's powerful grip. "I say, Coker—"

"You fat, clumsy frog—" began Coker. He hooked Bunter towards the elm, with the obvious intention of banging a fat head on the same.

"I—I say, hold on!" gasped Bunter. "I—I came to speak to you, Coker! I—I've got something to tell you!"

Luckily for Bunter, it was always easy to pull Coker's leg. And a regard for veracity had never been one of Bunter's weaknesses.

"Well, what?" rapped Coker. "If it's from Wingate, you can go back and tell him, from me, to go and boil himself!"

"I—I say, it's Smithy—"

"Smithy!" repeated Coker. "Do you mean that cheeky young scoundrel, Vernon-Smith?"

Coker glared as he inquired. It was Vernon-Smith who had barged in, the day before, in Wingate's study. But for that intervention, Coker's remarkable stunt might have been a success—in Coker's opinion, at least.

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter. "I say, he—he says he's going to barge you over again, Coker, same as he did yesterday in Wingate's study."

"Does he?" gasped Coker.

"His—his very words!" gasped Bunter. "And—and he's coming along here now to do it, Coker!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Coker, in amazement and gathering wrath.

He released Bunter's fat neck, and glared round. If Smithy of the Remove really was thinking of repeating that performance, Coker was exactly in the mood to give him what he deserved.

Glaring round, he sighted Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder came through the elms, looking about him, clearly in search of somebody.

That he was looking for Bunter did not occur to Coker. And Bunter was not likely to tell him.

"I—I say, there he is, Coker!" gasped the fat Owl. "I—I say, he says he's going to barge you over, and—and bang your head, like you did Wingate's, and—and—"

"I'll give him a chance!" said Coker grimly.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed the Bounder, catching sight of Bunter under the elm; and he came on at a run towards the fat junior—and, naturally, towards Coker of the Fifth, too.

Bunter grinned breathlessly.

He did not think that he was in much danger from Smithy now. It was Smithy who was in danger.

Coker strode to meet him, and grabbed at him. The Bounder gave an angry yell as he was grabbed.

"Let go, you fool! I—"

"Barge me over, will you?" grinned Coker savagely. "Bang my head on the ground—what? Well, get on with it!"

"You silly chump, leggo!"

"I fancy I'm going to do the barging. Like that!" said Coker. And the Bounder, struggling furiously, went over in his grasp, and sprawled on the ground.

"Ho, he, he!" came breathlessly from Billy Bunter.

"Whose napper is going to be banged, do you think?" inquired Coker. "Yours or mine, what? Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"Yoo-hoop!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

Bang!

"Oh, gum!" shrieked the Bounder.

"You mad idiot, leggo!"

Bang!

"Yaroo!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter, and

he rolled away, chortling, and leaving Coker of the Fifth still banging.

The Bounder struggled frantically, his wild yells ringing far and wide. But he was no match for the hefty Horace.

Bang, bang, bang! went his hapless head on the hard, unsympathetic earth.

"That enough?" grinned Coker.

"Think you'd like to start banging my head now—what? Waiting for you to try it on. Ha, ha, ha! Next time you brag that you're going to barge me over and bang my head—"

"You silly idiot!" howled Vernon-Smith. "I never—"

"Oh, don't tell crammers!" snapped Coker. "I had it from Bunter, and he told me every word you said! And—"

"You born idiot! I never—"

"That's enough!" said Coker. "Next time I hear you've been bragging that you'll bang my head, I'll give you some more. That will do to go on with! Take it as a tip!"

Coker walked away, leaving Vernon-Smith gasping for breath and rubbing his head. It was two or three minutes before Smithy felt equal to getting after Bunter again. But by that time the astute Owl had vanished into space.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Big Idea!

"SAUCE for the goose—"

"Eh?"

"Is sauce for the gander!" said Coker.

Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, did not know what Coker was driving at. Neither did they want to know. So they did not inquire.

But it booted not. Coker told them, all the same.

"That ass Wingate—" went on Coker.

"Oh dear!" murmured Potter. He almost moaned.

Potter and Greene had come up to the study to tea. They had been glad to see Coker there. Coker generally stood tea in that study, and generally on a lavish scale.

But if Coker was going to talk football, and air his grievances on that subject, Potter and Greene felt that there was a limit to human endurance. Tea in Hall was preferable.

"It's no good talking to the fool!" said Coker. "Whether it's jealousy of

a better man, or sheer crass stupidity, I don't know, and it does not matter much, for it comes to the same thing. I'm left out."

"Oh! Yes!" said Potter. "Coming down, Greeney?"

"Don't go!" said Coker. "I've been waiting for you chaps. I want your help in a little matter I've got in mind. I've been thinking this out, and you fellows will be useful—the lion and the mouse over again, you know."

Potter and Greene edged towards the door. They did not seem keen on playing nice to Coker's lion!

"I said don't go!" remarked Coker.

They halted dispiritedly.

"You see—" went on Coker.

"What about tea?" asked Potter. And Greene nodded. If they had to stand Coker's jaw, they felt that they were entitled to stand it over tea. Standing it for nothing was altogether too much to ask of any fellow.

"Never mind tea," said Coker carelessly. "This is important! As I said, sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I'm left out! Well, if Wingate leaves me out of the St. Jim's match, suppose I leave him out? What? Sauce for the gander, see?"

Potter and Greene looked at Coker rather anxiously. This sounded to them as if old Horace had, at long last, gone right off his rocker.

Wingate, as football captain, could leave a man out. How Coker, who was not in the team at all, could leave a man out, was a mystery known only to the remarkable intelligence of Horace James Coker.

"Did—did—did you say leave Wingate out?" stammered Potter.

"Just that!" agreed Coker. "Sauce for the gander, what? One good turn deserves another—so does one bad turn! See?"

"And—and how?" gasped Greene. "Have they made you football captain this afternoon while we weren't looking?"

"Don't be an ass, Greene! Kick-off to-morrow's at two-thirty," said Coker. "I dare say you know that, Potter, as that fool, Wingate, has been crass idiot enough to put you in the team! Put you in—and left me out—ha, ha!" Coker laughed—one of those bitter, sardonic laughs. "Well, suppose Wingate doesn't turn up on Big Side at two-thirty to-morrow! He will be left out, I fancy."

"But he will turn up, old chap," said Potter soothingly, as if he were speaking to a child. "That's all right."

"He might be stopped!" said Coker.

"Eh?"

"What!"

"That's the big idea!" said Coker, while his dumbfounded friends gazed at him open-mouthed. "That's what I've thought out! Suppose, say an hour or so before the match, Wingate is collared—"

"Kik-kik-collared—"

"Rolled off to a box-room—"

"To a bib-bib-box-room—"

(Continued on next page.)



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"And tied to a trunk or something—"

"Oh crikey!"

"With a duster over his jaws to keep him quiet—"

"Oh, jiminy!"

"What about that?" asked Coker. He gazed complacently at Potter and Greene. "Sauce for the jolly old gander! He leaves me out! I leave him out! What do you think of that?"

Potter and Greene did not state what they thought of that. They gazed helplessly at the great Horace.

"He can't say," went on Coker, "that he hasn't been warned! I've told him, more than once, that I'm not standing his cheeky rot any longer. We get him fixed up before the game—"

"We—we—we do?" articulated Greene.

"Yes! I shall want you fellows to help!" explained Coker. "Wingate's pretty hefty. I dare say I could handle him on my own—I did yesterday, in fact! Still, a fellow can't be too careful! The three of us will handle him like a baby. We shall get him all right!"

"Shall we?" gasped Potter. He seemed to doubt it.

"Easy as falling off a form!" said Coker. "Mind, I shouldn't do this, if it would make any difference in the game. But one dud more or less doesn't matter. When we've got him fixed, Wingate may agree to do the right thing, and put me in the team. If so, of course, we let him go again."

"Oh!"

"If he doesn't, we keep him fixed!" said Coker cheerfully. "See? Then another man will be wanted. Gwynne will captain the team if Wingate's away—and there's a sporting chance that he may have sense enough to play me. That will mean victory for Greyfriars."

"Oh crikey!"

"If not, they'll play some other dud in Wingate's place—perhaps you, Greeney! It won't make any difference! I mean to say, that a team that has chaps like you in it, Potter, hasn't an earthly, anyhow. You see that?"

"Oh!" gasped Potter. "Not quite!"

"Well, you know now I've told you!" said Coker testily. "Now you see how it stands. Wingate gets what he's asked for. The team will be improved if I'm put in his place—or it will be just the same mob of duds, if Greeney's put in. No harm of any sort will be done—"

"Oh scissors!"

"That," said Coker, "is the idea. If you fellows have any suggestions to make about carrying it out, I'm willing to listen. Don't jaw too much, though. You chaps keep on jawing, and never talk sense."

Potter and Greene looked at one another.

They had supposed, hitherto, that they knew every kind of silly ass Horace Coker was. But Coker was still full of surprises for his friends. His exploit of the previous day had surprised them. But they had supposed that that was the limit—the very outside edge. Evidently it wasn't!

"Well?" said Coker, looking at them. "Have you got it clear?"

"Oh, let's have it clear, by all means," gasped Potter. "We're to kidnap our football captain, and tie him up in a box-room. Fine! We're to leave out the very best footballer who ever played Soccer at Greyfriars, and make St. Jim's a present of the match! And we're to be lynched afterwards by the team! Anything more you'd like, Coker?"

"Don't forget to mention it, if there

is!" said Greene, with deep sarcasm. "What about knocking Wingate on the head with a brick? It would be safer! We could bury him in a quiet spot in the Head's garden—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter.

Coker stared at them.

"This isn't a joke!" he said icily.

"Your mistake, old man, it is," said Potter. "Forget all about it!"

Coker's eyes gleamed.

"If that means that you're not going to back me up—" he began.

"Back you up!" repeated Potter.

"Think we're as mad as you are, old bean? I can see myself kidnapping old Wingate—quite a lot."

"Oh, a whole lot!" chortled Greene.

Coker's jaw squared grimly. Coker had expended a lot of mental effort on thinking out this masterly scheme, which seemed to Coker the real goods. He did not expect much in the way of sense from Potter and Greene, but he did expect his pals to back him up. It seemed that he had expected too much.

"Now, look here!" said Coker, clenching his big fists in readiness for proceeding from words to actions.

"And you look here!" said Potter.

"Chuck it! If the fellows heard a word of it, they'd come here and rag you bald-headed! You can't help being a fool!"

"What?"

"But there's a limit! Wingate's the best footballer at Greyfriars, as you'd know, if you knew anything about Soccer! You don't!"

"Not an atom!" said Greene, nodding.

"If anything happened to Wingate, the game would be a goner," said Potter. "You don't understand that, because you can't understand anything, old bean—see?"

Coker gazed at his friends speechlessly.

Seldom or never did Coker hear plain English like this in his study. But Potter and Greene felt driven to put it plain this time. When Coker began to plot and plan the kidnapping of the football captain just before a match, it was time for Coker to be told, in the plainest possible language, where he got off.

"You're left out of the football," resumed Potter, "because you can't play Soccer. I don't believe you could play marbles."

"Or kiss-in-the-ring," said Greene.

"You can play the goat, and that's about all you can play," said Potter—"see? You start playing mad tricks on Wingate, and we'll jolly well scrag you—see? You'd have been sacked yesterday if Wingate wasn't the best-tempered chap in the school. Don't start asking for it again. Now chuck it!"

Plain English was of no use to Coker. Potter and Greene were putting it plain enough, as they felt driven to do. But it was no use. Coker, so far from being convinced, was not even shaken in his opinions. The only effect on him was to rouse his deep ire.

He could see, at least, that Potter and Greene weren't going to back him up in carrying out this big idea. Even Coker could understand that. And Coker glared wrath and indignation.

"You—you—you—" gasped Coker.

He stopped. Words could not express his feelings. Actions could. Coker rushed into action.

Potter and Greene generally contrived to dodge trouble with Coker. But this time it was not to be dodged.

Coker came at them like a charging hippopotamus.

Three fellows in deadly combat staggered about the study, punching.

Coker was going to thrash the pair of them. That, Coker felt, was the very least he could do. But Coker, hefty as he was, was hardly a match for Potter and Greene together.

He landed many punches. He received twice as many. Then, suddenly uprooted from the floor, Coker was hurled over, crashing.

He hit the floor with a mighty bump. Breathlessly he rolled and spluttered.

Potter lingered a moment, to jam the wastepaper-basket on his head. Then he left the study with Greene.

Coker, gasping, was left struggling to get the wastepaper-basket off.

Potter and Greene went down to Hall to tea. Obviously there was going to be no spread for Potter and Greene in Coker's study.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Winner!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned. Billy Bunter, as he came up to them in the quad, blinked over one fat shoulder, and then over the other fat shoulder, looking this way and that way, like Moses of ancient times.

Bunter was in a state of wary trepidation.

Thrice that day, since the incident with Coker under the elm, the Bounder had got after him. Each time he had landed a good one, before the hapless fat Owl escaped.

Now after class the Bounder still had a sharp and wrathful eye open for Bunter.

Really Bunter might have expected it. His astuteness in landing Coker on Smithy had saved him, but only for the moment, and it had added to the Bounder's ire. Smithy might, by this time, have forgotten the grub raid, as he had already dismissed from his mind that "six" from Wingate, which the previous day had made him so vengeful.

But that banging of his head by Coker of the Fifth had roused the Bounder to the deepest ire. He had a bump or two, and an ache or two, and a pain or two, and so long as they lasted Smithy found solace in booting Bunter—and he booted him hard, and he booted him often.

This was, of course, a game of which Bunter tired much sooner than Smithy. Bunter often complained that he did not get justice. But when he got it, he found it rather painful.

He blinked reproachfully at five grinning faces through his big spectacles. The Famous Five seemed to regard this game of Bunter-hunting as amusing. Bunter regarded it as anything but amusing.

"Smithy after you again, old fat bean?" asked Bob. "Look here! Why not face the music—take a jolly good booting, and get it over?"

"You've asked for it, you know," Harry Wharton pointed out.

"The askfulness was truly terrific."

"Oh, really, you fellows!" Bunter blinked to right, and blinked to left again. "I say, I've a jolly good mind to thrash that cad Smith!"

"Good wheeze!" said Johnny Bull heartily. "Let's go and look for him now, and we'll see fair play. I'll hold your hat!"



"You won't put my name down for the match against St. Jim's?" said Coker. "No!" answered Wingate. "Then I'm going to make you!" said the angry Fifth Former. He tried to rise from the armchair, but an invisible hand seemed to hold him back. "Playing tricks like a silly lag now, what?" he gasped.

"I'll hold your jacket!" said Frank Nugent.

"Well, the—the fact is—" mumbled Bunter.

"The fact is," remarked Bob Cherry solemnly, "that what Bunter wants is a chap to hold Smithy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I could thrash the cad, but—but—I'm not going to soil my hands on him. But I say, I think you fellows ought to butt in. I mean to say, you know what he did yesterday—gummed Wingate's armchair all over, you know. Wingate would have sat in it, if that ass Coker hadn't. Well, look here! Wingate ain't a bad chap, though he's a prefect."

"One of the best!" said Harry.

"But what about Wingate?"

"Smithy's after him again," said Bunter.

Harry Wharton frowned.

"If that silly ass—" he began.

"Well, he is!" said Bunter eagerly. "I heard him say to—to Redwing that he was going to pour a pint of ink into Wingate's bed, for him to find when he turns in. I think you fellows ought to stop him."

"So we jolly well will!" said Bob Cherry. "He can rag Loder and Carne all he likes, but he's jolly well going to leave Wingate alone!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"That's right!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, give him a jolly good ragging! That will stop him hunting a fellow—I mean, that will stop him ragging old Wingate. Mop him up, you know! Punch him—see? He may be after me this very minute—I mean, he may be sneaking off to Wingate's study this very minute. I heard him tell Skinner—"

"Skinner?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"I mean Redwing!" said Bunter hastily. "I heard him tell Redwing

that he had the whitewash all ready."

"The whitewash?"

"I mean the ink. He's got it all ready. I heard him tell Snoop—I mean Skinner—that is Redwing, not ten minutes ago. If you chaps collar him, and jolly well rag him—"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Bunter, and looked at one another. They had been very nearly taken in. But leg-pulling was not quite so easy with the Famous Five as with Coker of the Fifth. They were not quite taken in.

"You fat villain!" said Harry Wharton. "You heard Smithy tell Redwing and Skinner and Snoop—you don't know which—and you don't know whether it was ink or whitewash. And it's all gammon from beginning to end."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The gammonfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Where's Smithy now?" demanded Bob.

"Eh? I don't know. I haven't seen him since class," answered Bunter. "I've been keeping out of the brute's way."

"You haven't seen him since class!" yelled Bob. "And you heard him talking to Redwing and Skinner and Snoop, only ten minutes ago."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I mean—"

"Yes, I know what you mean," said Harry Wharton. "You mean that you want us to rag Smithy and stop him booting you, and you've made up this yarn to pull our leg. You fat scoundrel, I—"

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Bunter. "I tell you I heard Smithy say to Bolsover major—I mean Skinner—that is, Redwing—he said he had the

glue all ready to mop into Wingate's bed—"

"The glue?" howled Johnny Bull.

"Yes, a lot of glue!"

"As well as the ink and the whitewash!" roared Bob.

"Oh! I mean ink—that is, whitewash! No—ink!" gasped Bunter. "I—I meant to say white ink—I mean whitewash—that is, ink!"

Billy Bunter belonged to the class of persons who, proverbially, should have good memories. But Bunter had a bad one. His fibs were innumerable but incredible. Obviously, he was trying the same game with the Famous Five that he had tried with Coker of the Fifth. It did not prove a winner.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "Bunter's asking to be bumped. What about letting him have it?"

"Good egg!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows—"

Bunter jumped back—too late!

The Famous Five grasped him, and sat him down in the quad.

Bump!

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

Bump!

"Ow! Beasts! Yow!"

"Now," said Bob Cherry, "did you hear Smithy telling Skinner, or Snoop, or Redwing, or Bolsover major, about ragging Wingate?"

"Ow! Yes!"

Bump!

"Ow! Beast! No!" yelled Bunter. "I was only jig-jig-joking! Wow! I haven't seen the beast since class! Wow! Leggo! Ow!"

The Famous Five, having bumped the truth out of Bunter, walked off, grinning.

Billy Bunter sat on the quad, and gasped.

(Continued on page 16.)

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COKER the KIDNAPPER!

(Continued from page 13.)

He was in no hurry to rise. He was breathless, and he had a lot of weight to lift. A Remove fellow came towards him, and Bunter squeaked:

"I say, Toddy, lend me a hand!"

"I'll lend you a foot!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Oh crikey!"

It was not Toddy—it was Smithy! And he lost no time in lending Bunter a foot.

The fat Owl bounded up.

"Keep off, you beast!" he roared, and he scudded.

The Bounder, grinning, followed on behind, dribbling Bunter.

Bunter shot out of gates. Blinking back over a fat shoulder, he saw the Bounder shoot out after him.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. And he went down Friardale Lane on his highest gear.

The Bounder, grinning, turned back into the gateway. He had no idea of chasing the fat Owl across country, and there was games practice after class that day.

Billy Bunter, in the fixed belief that Herbert Vernon-Smith was just behind him, darted out of the lane into the wood, and plunged on through trees and thickets, panting.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Latest!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" "What's up now?" "Trouble in the happy family!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were interested. So were other fellows. They watched Coker of the Fifth with smiling faces.

Horace Coker came out of the House, in hat and coat, apparently to go out of gates. There was a grim, stern expression on Coker's rugged features. It was the expression of a fellow whose mind was grimly, sternly made up. Evidently Coker's mind, such as it was, was in that grim, stern state.

Potter and Greene were at hand. As they were Coker's pals and study-mates, Coker's manner towards them was surprising.

He stared at Potter and Greene, a grim, stern stare, and passed them by, otherwise, unregarded.

"That ass——" Potter murmured to Greene.

"That dummy——" Greene murmured to Potter.

Coker, with lip curled in scorn, passed on. He had cut his pals in quad. He passed them by with scornful contempt, like the idle wind which he regarded not. Only too plainly there was trouble in the happy family.

"You men had a row in the study?" asked Hilken of the Fifth, glancing after the burly Coker, and then at Potter and Greene.

"Sort of!" said Potter.

"Coker's rather mad!" said Greene.

But they gave no details. They had been driven to scuffling with Coker, and now he had cut them dead in quad; but they were not going to refer to the remarkable scheme he had propounded

in the study. They did not want old Horace to be lynched by the senior footballers. And something little short of lynching would have been Coker's fate had the first eleven men learned of his wonderful plan for dealing with the football captain.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Ho's after Wingate!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

Coker of the Fifth was seen to look round him, spot Wingate, and march directly up to the Greyfriars captain. Two or three dozen fellows marched after Coker, to see the entertainment, if Coker was going to perform again.

Wingate was standing with Gwynne and Sykes of the Sixth. He affected not to see Coker. Wingate was a tolerant fellow, and he could make allowances for a chap handicapped with a brain like old Horace's. He really did not want to have to call him up for another prefects' beating.

But it was impossible to ignore Coker. Coker marched right up to him, elbowing Gwynne and Sykes out of his way.

As both of them were Sixth Form prefects, they were not, of course, to be elbowed out of the way like common mortals. They turned expressive looks on Coker, and Gwynne slipped an ash down into his hand.

Unheeding, Coker fixed his eyes on the Greyfriars captain.

"Just a word, Wingate!" he said gruffly.

"Two if you like!" said Wingate amicably.

"Look here——" began Gwynne.

"Don't interrupt me, please!" rapped Coker. "I've no time for Sixth Form gabble!"

"Phwat?" roared Gwynne. "Why, if I don't give yer six entirely——"

Gwynne became more Irish than usual when he was excited.

"Hold on, old man!" said Wingate hastily. "Look here, Coker, don't be a cheeky ass! What do you want?"

"Just a word, as I've said!" retorted Coker. "This is your last chance! We play St. Jim's to-morrow——"

"For the love of Mike, don't begin on that again!" implored Wingate.

"Don't jaw!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I said don't jaw! We play St. Jim's to-morrow!" resumed Coker, with stern calmness. "I'm giving you, here and now, your last chance of doing the right thing. Playing me or not?"

"Not!"

"That does it!" said Coker.

He turned and walked away towards the gates. The stern, grim look on his rugged features was more pronounced than ever.

Wingate stared after him and smiled. Judging by Coker's look, something of a terrific nature was to follow his refusal to play that great man in Soccer. But he did not seem alarmed.

"Look here, that cheeky fathead——" said Gwynne.

"Coker can't help being a silly ass, old chap. Let him rip!" said Wingate pacifically. "After all, it's a pity he can't play Soccer, when he's so jolly keen. Never mind Coker."

And the great men of the Sixth walked away together, dismissing Horace Coker from their lofty minds as a trifle light as air.

Probably they would not have done so, had they been able to guess what was in Coker's mind.

But that, of course, they could not

do. Even Potter and Greene, well as they knew their Horace, could not have guessed his latest. It was, indeed, a stunt that no Greyfriars man could possibly have guessed or dreamed of. It was the sort of thing that came only into Coker's mind.

Coker walked out of gates. The crowd of fellows, who had rather expected to see a scrap, broke up, feeling that Coker had disappointed them. He had, after all, given no performance!

Grimmer and sterner was Coker's rugged brow as he tramped down Friardale Lane and went into the wood.

In the wood, Coker headed in a certain direction. With all his great gifts for losing his way, Coker remembered that direction, as he had traversed it only the day before.

He was heading for Mr. Juggins' dugout.

Potter and Greene had failed him. Basely they had refused to back up a pal. Handling Wingate required help. Coker had thought it out. He was perfectly satisfied with what he was up to. Coker's motives were always good—he was, indeed, quite a good fellow. There was nothing wrong with Coker's heart, whatever might have been said of his head.

From Coker's point of view, a fathead who ought not to have been football captain at all was leaving out the best footballer in the school from a match. If that fathead was missing on the day of the match, no harm would be done, as any other fathead would be as good, or as bad, in his place.

That was how Coker looked at it.

The fact that nobody else at Greyfriars would have looked at it like that made no difference to Coker. Coker was the fellow who knew: and he knew that he was!

Sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander! Coker had had the sauce for the goose, and Wingate was going to get the sauce for the gander. As for the consequences, Coker did not even think of them. He was not much given to thinking, anyhow. With his mind made up, fixed and adamant, Horace Coker threaded his way through the wood, heading for the tramp's dugout.

Wingate, discussing the St. Jim's match with his friends, little dreamed of what was scheduled to happen before the ball was kicked off in that match.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Alone in the Dugout!

"BEAST!" hissed Billy Bunter. His eyes gleamed through his spectacles.

Having taken to the wood, Billy Bunter fully expected to get a rest from the Bounder. But there was no rest for the wicked!

Leaning on a beech, gurgling for breath, the fat Owl was thinking chiefly of tea. Getting back to the school for tea meant running the gauntlet of Smithy's boot. He did not like the idea. But he had to get back for lock-up, anyhow, boot or no boot. It was quite a worrying problem. Thinking it out, Bunter caught a rustle in the thickets, as someone came towards him through the wood.

He started like a hunted hare.

The problem, whether or not to risk the Bounder's boot, was dismissed from his fat mind, with that boot at hand.

Bunter immediately decided not to risk it.

He detached himself from the beech, and plunged deeper into the wood.

Behind, there came a sound of tramping and rustling.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

Whoever was behind him was invisible. Trunks and thickets screened him from view. But he had no doubt that it was Smithy. Who else could it be?

Anyone passing through Friardale Wood would naturally take the footpath. Bunter was a good distance from any footpath. So it was someone who had a special reason for cutting through the wood in a special direction. Clearly—to Bunter—it was Smithy, after him.

Bunter knew nothing of Juggins' dugout—nothing of Coker's meeting with the tramp—nothing of Coker's resolve to see the man again. He was not likely, therefore, to guess that it was Coker of the Fifth who was tramping through the wood, off the footpaths. Smithy, and Smithy's boot, haunted his fat mind. He had not the slightest doubt that the irreful Bounder had pursued him down Friardale Lane, seen him cut into the wood, and cut after him.

He plunged and scrambled on.

Booting in the quad was bad enough—but it was likely to be worse here. In the quad, plenty of fellows would stop Smithy, if he went too far, as Wingate had stopped him the day before. Here there was nobody to stop him. And, remembering how Coker had banged Smithy's head, Bunter felt a deep alarm at getting grabbed by the vengeful Bounder, with no one else at hand.

He gasped and scrambled on.

Behind him, every moment or so, came a rustle, or a brushing, or a tramping sound. The pursuer did not seem to be hurrying to run him down. But he was coming on after Bunter.

Breathlessly, the scared fat Owl threaded his onward way.

There was no path, but there seemed to be a sort of track, winding among the trees and bushes. Here and there a muddy footmark was visible.

This was, in fact, Mr. Juggins' route, when he left his den, and Juggins had, as it were, blazed a trail. It was easier to follow that track than to scramble through clinging bush and bramble, and Bunter followed it—never guessing that he was, for that very reason, certain to be followed by the fellow behind.

Bunter's fat little legs ached with exertion. It was a cold day, but the fat Owl's brow was bedewed with perspiration. But he dared not halt. This persistent pursuit showed how determined Smithy was to run him down. The fat Owl was thinking only of escape.

He blinked to and fro, like a scared rabbit, for a possible hiding-place. If only he could lie low, and let that beast pass unseen, it would be all right.

Suddenly Bunter spotted just what he wanted.

He came to a halt, panting for breath, under a large tree, and blinked through his big spectacles at an opening in the earth.

He blinked at it in surprise. It looked like a wild animal's den, but was on too large a scale for any animal to be found in Friardale Wood. It might have been a wolf's lair, but for the circumstance that it was a thousand years or so since wolves had roamed round Friardale.

Whatever it was, it was a port for Bunter. He stooped and plunged into the opening, under covering boughs and branches that had been laid together for a rude roof.

To his further surprise, it was quite warm within.

He blinked round him in darkness. But as his eyes became accustomed to it, it was not so dark.

He made out several old coats and ragged rugs spread on the earthen floor. He discerned a perforated pail, in which a mass of dead embers lay, with a faint red glow. This accounted for the warmth.

Somebody had been camping there. Bunter understood that now. Some tramp, without doubt. The man was absent now—but he had been there. Bunter had barged into that retreat when there was nobody at home.

Footsteps, and rustling, came to his fat ears again. He listened, with palpitating heart.

If the beast passed on, without guessing that he had taken cover, well and good. He would be able to cut back to the school, leaving Smithy still hunting for him in the wood.

The footsteps stopped.

They stopped quite close to the opening of the lair. Billy Bunter barely suppressed a squeak of terror. He was run down!

He expected, the next moment, to see the Bounder ducking his head and coming in.

A shadow darkened the opening of the dugout. Billy Bunter backed to the extreme limit of the dugout. Crumpled up in the farther corner, he drew one of the old coats over him, and hoped for the best.

Footsteps again!

The beast had stepped in. A voice called, coming faintly, in muffled tones, to Bunter, through the old coat that covered him. But he made out the words, though the voice was not clear enough for recognition.

"Are you there?"

He was not likely to answer. He squatted silent under the old coat.

He heard an annoyed grunt. Then more footsteps—the beast was going! It seemed too good to be true—but he was going!

Half-suffocated under the extremely unclean old coat he had dragged over himself, Bunter listened, and then threw the coat aside.

He was alone in the dugout.

In the dark interior he had not been spotted. If a glancing eye had noted that frowsy old coat at all, it had not noted that it covered a fat junior.

Bunter gasped with relief.

He crept back to the entrance. But before he reached it, he stopped. He heard footsteps outside.

The beast had stepped into the dugout, and stepped out again; but he had not gone. He was pacing to and fro.

Did he guess that Bunter was hidden somewhere about? It looked like it, for the pacing footsteps never went far from the opening. The beast was walking up and down there, as if waiting for somebody.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He waited.

Surely the brute would go! But he did not go. Bunter could not see him, but he could hear his steady pacing to and fro. It did not cross his fat mind to doubt that it was the Bounder.

A quarter of an hour passed—half an hour—on leaden wings to Bunter. Several times he heard an impatient grunt from the fellow pacing outside.

Billy Bunter was getting desperate. He almost made up his fat mind to attempt a sudden bolt. But not quite.

Then, suddenly, the pacing footsteps ceased. He heard a voice:

"Oh, here you are! Bother you, I've

been waiting for you half an hour or more!"

Billy Bunter's head almost turned round with astonishment.

It was the fellow outside who was speaking. But it was not Vernon-Smith's voice. It was the voice of Coker of the Fifth.

It dawned on Bunter that it had been Coker all the time! It was not the Bounder at all! Still, he could not possibly have guessed that, as he had not the remotest idea that Coker had any business in Friardale Wood, or, indeed, that the great Horace had gone out of gates at all.

An answering voice came:

"Ho! You agin, blow yer!"

It was a rough, gruff voice, in surly, savage tones. It seemed to Bunter that he had heard it before somewhere.

"Yes. You needn't be afraid," went on Coker's voice scornfully. "I'm not going to hit you, you fool! Come here, Juggins! I've got something to say to you—and it may be worth that pound you asked me for yesterday. Don't be a fool! I've come here specially to see you, and I've been waiting for you, as you weren't in that filthy den of yours."

Billy Bunter wondered whether he was dreaming this!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Startling News!

ALBERT JUGGINS stared at the Greyfriars Fifth Former.

The dingy, tattered tramp had a tattered bag under his arm, containing, no doubt, the various odds and ends that he had been collecting during the day—unconsidered trifles that he had snapped up. Coming home, Mr. Juggins certainly had never dreamed of finding Coker hanging about his front door.

Had he been aware of that, Juggins would not have come alone. He would have brought a pal or two with him, and Coker would have met with a disagreeable surprise.

As it was, however, Juggins came alone, and though he scowled at Coker, he made no other hostile demonstration. It was twenty-four hours since Coker's leg-of-mutton fist had smitten his nose; but there was still a lingering pain in the spot. Juggins did not want another added to it.

He hesitated to approach, eyeing Coker wolfishly and dubiously—and Horace glared at him with angry impatience.

"Come on, you silly chump!" said Coker. "Think I've come here to bash you, or what? What are you afraid of?"

Juggins was afraid of Coker's big fist. But he realised that, for some unaccountable reason, Coker was there to speak to him, not with hostile intent. So he came on, and stopped at the dugout.

He pitched his bag in at the entrance; and a fat junior, crouching within, just dodged it with his fat head, as it flew in.

Then Juggins faced Coker, with surly inquiry in his stubby face.

"Wotcher want with a bloke?" he asked.

Juggins was curious to learn that. So was Billy Bunter.

The fat junior, hidden in the dugout, listened with all his fat ears!

Coker's present proceedings were so utterly amazing that a less inquisitive fellow than Bunter might have felt curious.

Neither Coker nor Juggins knew that
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he was there; and the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars listened with intent interest.

"Just listen!" grunted Coker. "I suppose you'd like to earn a pound or two? You look as if you could do with them."

"I believe you!" assented Juggins.

Had he been able to handle Horace Coker he would have earned a pound or two on the spot.

"I'll tell you what you're to do, then!" said Coker. "A week or two ago you were hanging about the school, and you saw a lot of the fellows. You'd know Wingate, the captain of the school, if you saw him again?"

"I know him all right."

"I want you to bag him."

Mr. Juggins jumped.

"Eh?" he ejaculated.

"Not you alone," snapped Coker; "you couldn't handle half of him! Get a couple of blighters of your own kidney to help; some of that gang you had with you when I saw you about the school—see? Three of you ought to be able to handle the chap. Got that?"

The broken-nosed tramp stared blankly at Coker.

Billy Bunter, in the dugout, repressed a squeak of sheer amazement.

He had wondered, with keen curiosity, what he was going to hear. Certainly he had never dreamed of hearing anything like this.

"Bust my buttons!" said Juggins. "I get you, sir! You've 'ad a row with that young bloke at your school, and you can't 'andle him, and you want a bloke to bash 'im for you! I get you!"

Coker looked at the man grimly.

"You bash him," he said, "and I'll come after you, and bash you fast enough, and bash you so hard that you won't be able to crawl for a week."

"Eh?"

"It's nothing of the kind, as you'd understand if you weren't a putrid, thick-headed idiot!" said Coker politely. "Listen to me and don't jaw! Wingate has got to be collared, and kept away from the school to-morrow afternoon. That's all! If he's hurt, I'll hurt you fast enough, and see you sent to chokey, too!"

"Bust my buttons!" said Mr. Juggins.

"I was going to handle this matter myself," went on Coker; "but my friends have let me down, and I thought of you. I want the chap bagged, and kept out of sight for a few hours. That den of yours is just the place. I'll pay you, of course and your friends, for helping."

"Sort of a practical joke, you mean?" asked the mystified Juggins.

"No. There's a football match at the school," explained Coker. "I want Wingate to miss it, that's all."

"My eye!" said Juggins.

"That chap Wingate is football captain. He's left me out of the game, so I'm going to leave him out! Understand now?"

"Oh!" said Juggins.

"Just watch for him, pin him, and walk him off, and keep him here till five o'clock to-morrow afternoon," continued Coker. "If you hurt him, I'll come after you and smash you! He's a good chap, and I like him—"

"Eh?"

"But he's a fool!" said Coker. "He's such a fool that he can't get it into his head that I ought to be in the first eleven. I like him personally, as everybody does; but I'm fed-up with his playing the fool, leaving me out of matches, and all that, and I'm going to teach him a lesson! I've got to miss the game to-morrow—and Wingate's got to miss it, too. See?"

Juggins did not quite see.

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He knew little of football, little of schools, and was not in the least interested in either. But he did see that Coker wanted to enlist his services, and was prepared to pay cash for the same. That interested Juggins. So long as it was not work that was required, Juggins was ready to earn money.

Billy Bunter, hidden in the dugout, was as interested as Juggins. But he was feeling uneasy as well as fearfully interested.

From Coker's words, Bunter learned that that dugout was Juggins' den. So, when this peculiar interview was over, it was probable that Juggins would enter.

What he would do to Bunter if he found him there was a rather painful question. It was a still more painful question what Coker would do if he discovered that Bunter had overheard his amazing plot.

The fat Owl wished himself anywhere else. But there he was—and there he had to stay!

"I get you, sir," said Juggins; "and me and my pals will do it for a fi'pun note, and glad!"

He eyed Coker furtively. Coker looked as if he was good for that sum, and as if he was fool enough to part with it. Juggins hoped that he had judged him correctly.

He had!

Coker nodded carelessly.

Coker had plenty of money, and he was not the fellow to haggle.

"All right, if you carry out orders exactly," said Coker. "First of all, the chap's not to be hurt. Any bashing, and you'll get bashed pretty hard, I can tell you! Just pin him—three of you. Get him here, and sit on him, or tie him up, till the time to let him go. That's the lot."

"Ow'll we get 'old of 'im?" asked Juggins. "You ain't asking us to walk into the school and pick him up under the heyes of the other coveys?"

"Don't be a silly ass!" said Coker. "Of course not! That part's perfectly easy. You know that coppice by the river, near the school gates—the place where that big oak is?"

"I know it."

"Be there early in the afternoon, with your friends. You'll find Wingate on the spot. I can fix that."

"Easy, sir, if it's like that!" assented Mr. Juggins. "We can walk him off from there, in the wood all the time, and get him 'ere. I'll get Jimmy and Ike to 'elp, and we'll get 'im all right!"

"That's settled, then!" said Coker.

He smiled with satisfaction. All, it seemed to Coker, was going well. Wingate was going to have the lesson that, in Coker's opinion, he sorely needed. What other fellows would have thought of this did not worry Coker. Coker was satisfied with his proceedings, and when Coker was satisfied, all was satisfactory!

"O.K., sir!" said Juggins. "I'll get along to the Peal of Bells now, and see my pals about it, and fix it up. I'm your man, sir!"

Billy Bunter, in the dugout, grinned. If Juggins got along to the Peal of Bells without entering his den, that was the fat Owl's chance!

He listened. There was a sound of retreating footsteps. A murmur of voices came to his fat ears, dying away.

Bunter peered cautiously out.

Juggins and Coker were at a distance, their backs turned. Coker, apparently, was going along with the tramp, to give him a few more instructions.

But as Juggins disappeared from sight in the trees, Coker turned back. Billy Bunter popped his head back like that of a tortoise into its shell.

Coker's heavy footsteps passed the dugout.

They died away again in the direction of Friardale Lane.

Once more Bunter peered out.

Coker was gone.

Juggins had departed in one direction, Coker in another. Both had disappeared.

In great relief, the fat Owl of the Remove crawled out of the lair. He grinned as he started in the same direction as Coker—at a very leisurely pace, however, anxious not to overtake the Fifth Former.

"Oh erikely!" breathed Bunter.

His eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. Bunter liked to be the purveyor of startling news. He had news now, so startling that it would make the fellows fairly jump. He was anxious to get going with it. He forgot even his uneasy dread of the Bounder's boot in his eagerness to startle and thrill the Remove fellows with that amazing narrative. In happy anticipation of the sensation he was going to make, Bunter rolled on to the school.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

"TODDY, old man!"

"Had it!" answered Peter Todd.

"Eh? Had what?"

"Tea!"

Billy Bunter gave him a glare through his spectacles. Past tea-time as it was, Bunter, for once, was not thinking of tea.

Peter was the first Remove man he saw as he rolled in at the gates. So he hooked on to Peter, to tell him first. Really and truly, he was not thinking of sticking Toddy for tea—he was only thinking of astonishing and thrilling him with the news of Coker's plot.

"You silly ass!" said Bunter. "Blow tea! I say, Peter, what do you think?"

"I think you're after a feed—"

"Beast! I say, Peter, do listen to a chap! I say, I've discovered an awful plot!" said Bunter impressively.

"Go hon!" said Peter. He did not seem impressed.

"Wingate's going to be kidnapped, and—"

"Eh?"

"Coker's doing it—"

"What?"

"And I'm the only fellow who knows!" said Bunter.

Peter Todd looked at the fat Owl. He looked at him expressively.

Bunter had expected that statement to be startling. It was, in fact, a little too startling for Peter Todd. Like Thomas of old, he doubted!

Billy Bunter was well known—indeed, celebrated, for his yarns. Facts had little appeal for Bunter. They were too tame. When Bunter had a tale to tell, he relied chiefly on his fat imagination. Nobody, of course, ever believed Bunter. Indeed, it was said in the Remove that if Bunter stated that it was raining, a fellow had to look out of the window before he believed it!

Peter Todd gazed at him. He believed Bunter's astounding statement just about as much as he would have believed had Bunter stated that Mr. Quelch was going to kidnap the Head.

"You burbling, blithering, frumpious bandersnatch!" said Toddy. "Do you think you can pull my leg, and to that extent? Have you been to the films?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Fathead!" said Toddy. "Ass!"

He walked away—totally unthrilled. So far from being thrilled, he only



With Vernon-Smith hard on his trail, Billy Bunter dodged round the old elm. He did not see a pair of large feet stretched out before him until he tripped over them. "Oh!" he gasped, as he went with a thud to the ground.

supposed that the fat Owl was spinning a more idiotic yarn than usual.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

He rolled on to the House. Coker of the Fifth was standing in the doorway—he was back long before Bunter.

Bunter gave him an uneasy blink. If Coker guessed what he knew—But Coker could not, of course, guess anything of the kind, and he did not even look at Bunter. A fat junior was miles from Coker's notice.

The Owl of the Remove rolled past him rather hastily, however. He went up to the Remove passage. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing were talking together on the landing. At sight of Bunter, Smithy made a movement—and Redwing caught him by the arm.

Bunter rolled past rapidly, and arrived at Study No. 1. The door was half open, and voices within revealed that the study was populated.

Harry Wharton & Co. were there, having had a rather late tea after games practice.

Bunter rolled in hastily and shut the door.

"I say, you fellows," he began. "I say, what do you think? I say, you'll be jolly surprised. What do you think Coker's up to?"

The Famous Five smiled. They were prepared to hear that the fathead of the Fifth was "up" to almost anything!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's jolly old Coker's latest?"

"Asking for another prefects' beating?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"You'd never guess!" said Bunter.

"Well, tell us, and save the trouble!" suggested Harry Wharton.

"Kidnapping Wingate!" said Bunter.

"Kik-kik-kidnapping Wingate!" stuttered Bob.

"That's it!" said Bunter.

He blinked rather anxiously at the Famous Five. Peter Todd had refused

to be thrilled. He hoped for better luck in Study No. 1.

But there was no sign of a thrill. The chums of the Remove stared at him blankly. Like Toddy, they were under-studying Doubting Thomas!

"You howling ass!" said Frank Nugent. "Mad!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The pottiffulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Been to the films?" asked Wharton—the very question that Peter Todd had asked.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, it's true!" said Bunter. "I'll tell you all about it. Somebody will have to butt in, you know, and frustrate his knavish tricks. The game is to keep Wingate away from the football match tomorrow. Coker's planned the whole thing, and I heard him."

"Better not let Coker hear you saying so!" advised Johnny Bull. "There would be a dead porpoise lying about soon afterwards."

"Oh, really, Bull! I say, you fellows, you remember that tramp, named Juggins, that you had that shindy with—him and his gang—"

"Well, what about Juggins?"

"He's in it with Coker," explained Bunter. "I heard the whole plot. I was lying—"

"Wrong tense!" said Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Wharrer you mean?"

"You should use the present tense. You are lying!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I was lying—" hooted Bunter.

"I think we can believe that much!" interrupted the captain of the Remove. "You were lying, and are lying; you never do anything else."

"I was lying in a sort of cave under a tree in Friardale Wood—"

"Queer place to pick for telling lies in!"

"I don't mean I was lying, you idiot, I mean I was lying—lying in cover, you know, out of sight of those villains!" howled Bunter. "I wasn't going to let them see me, of course. I was lying in that dugout—"

"And now you're lying in our study?"

"I tell you it's true!" shrieked Bunter. "I thought Smithy was after me, and dodged into that den out of sight. But it was Coker, and Juggins came up, and then I heard it all. He said he would give him five pounds if he got him and took him to that spot and sat on him, and he wasn't to let him go till after the football match, and he said he—"

"Cut out a few of the pronouns!" suggested Bob. "You're getting a bit mixed. Who's he and who's him?"

"I wish you'd let a fellow speak. Coker knows that man Juggins—knows him jolly well—"

"Sort of pal a Greyfriars fellow would have!" agreed Bob. "Has Coker asked him to tea in his study?"

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

The door opened, and Herbert Vernon-Smith looked in. Billy Bunter promptly backed out of reach. But the Bounder glanced at the Famous Five.

"You can be heard up the passage," he remarked. "What's the tremendous joke?"

"Oh, come in, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You, too, Reddy! Bunter's going strong this time."

"He's been to the films, and come back stacked with it!" explained Bob. "He thinks that things that happen on films happen in real life, too."

"I haven't been to the films!" yelled Bunter. "I've been in Friardale Wood. You saw me going out, Smithy."

"I did!" agreed the Bounder. "I helped you out, with my boot! There's some more to come, too!"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, this is serious!" exclaimed Bunter, in almost tearful earnest. "Do you want Wingate to be bagged by a gang of tramps and kept away from the St. Jim's match to-morrow?"

"Oh, gad!" gasped the Bounder, staring at Bunter. "Is he right off his rocker?"

"That's the yarn he's spinning!" chuckled Bob. "He fancies we're going to believe it—don't you, Bunt?"

"It's true!" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I heard Coker of the Fifth plotting it with Juggins!" yelled Bunter. "He's going to stand him a fiver to bag Wingate to-morrow and keep him away from the football."

"Go it!" said Nugent, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder, and Tom Redwing chuckled. "This is rich—even for Bunter! Pile it on, old fat man!"

"I say, you fellows, I heard every word—" wailed Bunter.

"At the talkies?" asked Bob.

"No!" howled Bunter. "In that dug-out in Friardale Wood. You can go there and see the place, if you like—it's about half-way between Friardale Lane and the Pegg road, and—and I tell you I was there and heard them, and he said that if he bagged him and kept him away he would—"

"Too many 'he's'!" said Bob. "Sort 'em out!"

"Coker, you fathead, Coker said that he would pay him—I mean Juggins—a fiver for bagging him—"

"Bagging Coker?"

"No, you ass—Wingate! And he said—"

"Wingate said?"

"No!" shrieked Bunter. "Wingate wasn't there, of course! Coker said—"

"Coker wasn't there, either. I fancy!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Neither was Juggins! And you weren't, you fat fibber!"

"If you fellows don't believe me—"

"Believe you!" gasped Bob. "Oh, my hat!"

"I heard every word! If somebody doesn't butt in, Wingate will be kidnapped to-morrow, and hiked off to that den—"

"So probable!" chortled the Bounder. "I can see Juggins walking in and kidnapping Wingate—say, in the changing-room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or in the middle of the quad!" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, he said he'd got that fixed all right, and he was to get him in the coppice—I mean, Coker said that. Wingate is to be bagged after dinner to-morrow in that coppice where that old oak is—"

"And he's going there specially?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wingate's a good-natured, obliging sort of chap!" remarked Harry Wharton. "But I can't see him walking out to a lonely spot just before a Soccer match, specially to be kidnapped by a tramp! It seems sort of improbable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's what Coker said!" howled Bunter. "I don't know how he's going to do it, but that's what he said, and Juggins agreed. I heard every word the awful villains said."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The description of Horace Coker as an awful villain made the juniors yell. Coker was every known and unknown THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,516.

kind of ass, but, really, villainy was not in his line at all.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" roared Bunter. "I think t jolly serious, kidnapping the captain of the school—"

"Jolly serious, if true!" chuckled Bob. "Now, if you've finished your funny story, old fat man, roll off. Smithy's waiting to help you out."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Chuck it, fathead!" said the captain of the Remove. "If you want to spin a yarn, can't you try to make it a bit probable?"

Billy Bunter glared at the hilarious Removites with a glare that might have cracked his spectacles.

This was a blow to Bunter! Evidently there were not going to be any thrills! Nobody believed a word of it, or thought of believing a word of it! Only that afternoon Bunter had told the tale to the Famous Five with Smithy as the villain of the piece! Now he was telling the tale with Coker as the villain of the piece! That was all!

"Have you been grub-raiding in Coker's study?" asked Nugent.

"No!" howled Bunter.

"He hasn't kicked you?"

"No, you fathead!"

"Then why are you spinning this yarn about him?"

"It's true!" shrieked Bunter.

The Bounder winked at the Famous Five.

"If it's true, let's go and see Coker about it!" he suggested. "Bunter can come with us and denounce the kidnapping villain! What?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Let's!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'd rather not see Coker!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in alarm. "He would be fearfully shirty—he would pitch into a chap! I—I—I'd rather not see Coker about it—"

"I fancy not!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Hardly!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"But, I say, you fellows—"

"You'll see Coker about it, fast enough, if he hears you've been spinning such a yarn about him!" said Bob. "You'd better make your will first if you're going on with it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"And now—" said Smithy, lifting his foot.

Bunter dodged—too late. There was a heavy thud, and the fat Owl roared. He jumped for the door, and there was another thud as he jumped. A yell floated back as Bunter disappeared up the passage. And there was laughter in Study No. 1, till the chums of the Remove dismissed Billy Bunter and his amazing story from mind.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

St. Jim's Day!

NEARLY every fellow at Greyfriars the following day was thinking of Soccer.

The first eleven match with St. Jim's was the one topic.

Big Side was certain to be packed that afternoon by seniors, juniors, and fags—and masters, too. It was a big fixture—a very important one. Few fellows were likely to clear off for that half-holiday.

Harry Wharton & Co., who had matches with St. Jim's juniors, attached rather more importance to the junior matches. Still, they were rolling up as one man to watch Wingate and his merry men defeat St. Jim's

first eleven—or to be defeated by them, as the case might be.

Every fellow hoped for the former, and it seemed likely enough, for the team was strong, and old Wingate, its skipper, was a tower of strength to his side. Without Wingate, certainly, prospects would have been very much more uncertain.

But Wingate was there, all right. He was at the top of his form, and he was going to put up a great game. Only Coker of the Fifth and one other knew what was scheduled to happen to Wingate. The Remove fellows who had heard Bunter's yarn had already forgotten it—or, if they remembered it, it was only to chuckle.

Billy Bunter had been discouraged by his reception in Study No. 1. But he had told several other fellows—who had stared or laughed or told him not to talk rot, as the spirit moved them.

Nobody, of course, believed a word of it.

Even a probable story from Bunter would have found few believers. And this was an extremely improbable one.

The fat Owl asked Toddy whether he had better warn Wingate. Toddy advised him to pack his bags with exercise books before he tried to pull the captain's leg to that extent.

Bunter did not tip Wingate. If nobody in the Remove believed him, a Sixth Form man was still less likely to do so.

It was the truth, as it happened, but Bunter and the truth were such strangers that nobody was likely to suppose that they had suddenly become acquainted, as it were.

Moreover, Bunter was extremely unwilling to let Coker know that he had been eavesdropping. Coker's hand was heavy and his foot heavier, and Bunter did not want to sample either.

So Bunter had to let it go at that. But it worried his fat mind a little. Not a lot, for Bunter was constitutionally unable to bestow much thought on any person but W. G. Bunter. Still, he rather liked old Wingate, in a way, and Wingate had stopped Smithy batting him, too. Bunter would willingly have saved the Greyfriars captain from the machinations of that ass Coker if he could have done so, especially without any painful results for himself.

In morning break that day, therefore, the fat Owl made one more attempt to interest the Famous Five in the matter.

He spotted them in the quad and rolled up to them, with a serious and worried expression on his fat face.

"About Wingate, you fellows—" he began.

"Same yarn?" asked Bob.

"Yes. You see—"

"Chuck it at that! If you've got a new one, all right! But you've told that funny story once!"

"I say, you fellows, do listen to a chap!" urged Bunter. "It's true, every word of it! You fellows know I never tell crammers—"

"We know you never tell anything else!"

"If you fellows were as truthful as I am, you'd do!" said Bunter. "Look here, I don't want a row with Coker, and Toddy thinks that Wingate wouldn't believe a word of it. But you fellows—"

"Of course he wouldn't—any more than we do!" said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I know whether you're making it all up, or whether you went to sleep and dreamed it! It's all gammon, anyhow!"

"If you fellows warn Wingate—"
"Fathead!"
"I mean, he would believe you," explained Bunter. "He mightn't believe me. He's doubted my word before; I don't know why—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"But if you fellows all go to him together, it will be all right," urged Bunter. "You needn't say you got it from me; he might take it in then. Say you were there, and heard it all."

"What?" yelled the Famous Five.
"That would make it all right—see?" explained Bunter. "Say you were all on the spot, and heard Coker talking to Juggins, and—"

"Ye gods!" said Bob Cherry. "That's the chap who wants a fellow to believe him! I wonder if Bunter could tell the truth if he tried?"

"He's never tried yet!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Well, it's up to you fellows!" said Bunter. "If Wingate thought I was stuffing him, he would give me six; and if Coker hears about it, he will boot me all over the shop. I don't want that. But you fellows can go to Wingate and say—Yaroooh! Yoo-hooooop!"

Billy Bunter fled at Bob Cherry's foot landed. Four others were rising, but Bunter got away before they reached him.

And that was that!
At dinner that day Billy Bunter blinked along at the Fifth Form table at the rugged face of Horace Coker.

Coker sat, as usual, between Potter and Greene, but he was not taking any note of the existence of those two youths.

They were still cut dead by Coker.

They had, as Coker considered it, let him down. Had they backed him up, he need never have had any dealings with that frowsy tramp, Juggins. It would have been much better in every way to bag Wingate in the House and jam him into a box-room. Coker was feeling bitterly the hollowness of friendship.

Apart from that, he was feeling satisfied. Let down by his friends, he had proved himself equal to the occasion. Sauce for the gander was going to be served out to the captain of Greyfriars—if not in one way, then in another.

Coker glanced several times at Wingate, at the high table where the prefects sat in state. He smiled sardonically as he glanced.

He was unconscious of Bunter's blinks at himself from the Remove table. But Bunter, blinking at him, spotted those sardonic smiles, and he knew jolly well of what Coker was thinking.

But Bunter soon dismissed the matter from his fat mind. There was steak-and-kidney pie for dinner. When there was steak-and-kidney pie before Billy Bunter, he was not likely to waste much thought on trifles like football matches or kidnapping schemes.

When the Greyfriars fellows went out after dinner, Coker of the Fifth was still indulging in sardonic smiles. He strolled about for some time, with his hands in his pockets, and with an eye on Wingate and some other Sixth Form men, who were walking on the Sixth Form green.

When Wingate left his friends, Coker bore down on him.

Wingate gave him a rather impatient glance. Coker was going to speak, and the Greyfriars captain did not want any more bother from Coker. He was a patient fellow, but Coker had strained his patience to the limit.

"Hold on a minute, Wingate!" said Coker. "I'm not going to talk football," he added.

(Continued on next page.)

The STately HOMES of GREYFRIARS

TODDY OF BLOOMSBURY

By

The Greyfriars Rhymester



(1)

In some remote and distant land
Called Bloomsbury, I understand,
Not far from Fleet Street and the Strand,
But not much sought by visitors,
Within a square—although the ground
Comprising it is nearly round—
Near the Museum, may be found
Todd, Todd & Todd, solicitors.

(2)

This wealth of Todds is now no more;
No troupes of Todds are seen to pour
Through that old early Georgian door—
Alas, they've all departed!
That mass of Todds lived long ago:
About two hundred years or so,
In coaching days, when life was slow,
Todd, Todd & Todd was started!

(4)

And year by year those learned men
Grew old, too old to wield the pen,
And died—and many Todds since then
The law have been controlling:
For though the times must change, we
know,
And Todds, like men, may come and go;
Like Ol' Man River in the show,
Todd, Todd & Todd keeps rolling!

(6)

This quaint old house, brass plate on wall,
With massive clock inside the hall,
Is known and recognised by all
The lawyers on their journeys;
For never since the firm began
Has it produced a worthless man,
There's no firm more respected than
Todd, Todd & Todd, Attorneys.

(8)

And Peter spends his holiday
In rather an unusual way,
Upon an office chair he'll stay,
And he will not be nervous
At writing title-deed and writs!
A most "engrossing" pastime, it's
Enough to give me forty fits!
Todd, Todd & Todd preserve us!

Next Week: GEORGE WINGATE, who lives down by the Dee.

Possessing the "gift of the gab" and enjoying the distinction of being known as the schoolboy lawyer, Peter Todd is striving hard to follow his father's footsteps and uphold the name of Todd, Todd & Todd, Solicitors.

(3)

By six tall candles' glimmering light
Those Todds wrote parchments half the night,
Old whiskered men with fading sight,
With wigs and snuff and laces.
No telephones would buzz and ring,
No typewriters start worrying,
But many a client came to bring
Todd, Todd & Todd their cases.

(5)

There's still a Todd in Bloomsbury Square,
For Peter's father now is there,
And Peter, too, will take a chair
When he has done with college.
The Todd tradition holds him fast,
He studies law, and aims at last
To boast that no one has surpassed
Todd, Todd & Todd for knowledge.

(7)

They still won't type a deed or will,
They write them all—and use a quill!
Use sand for blotting paper still,
They'd even use a candle
If that were not a bit absurd!
But do they know their stuff? My word!
Why, every case you've ever heard
Todd, Todd & Todd could handle!

(9)

Well, here's good luck to Peter Todd,
We possibly may think him odd,
But if he puts bad lads in quod,
We'll all admit he's clever.
That is the end of all his aims,
Just deeds and parchments, bills and claims!
The spell of those three magic names!
Todd, Todd & Todd, for ever!

Wingate smiled.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Anything else you like, old bean?"

Wingate was quite willing to give Coker a few minutes of his time if that was any solace to him, so long as he kept off Soccer.

"It's quite another matter," said Coker blandly—a sort of sardonic blandness. "Will you come out of gates?"

"What the dickens for?" asked Wingate, in surprise.

"It's only a step," explained Coker. "Just over in the coppice. There's something I want you to see, if you'll spare a minute or two."

"Oh, all right!" said Wingate.

It was more than an hour before the St. Jim's team were expected, and the Greyfriars captain had plenty of time on hand. He was a little puzzled, but certainly it did not occur to him to be suspicious. Nobody at Greyfriars was likely to think of Coker of the Fifth as a deep, wily plotter.

Neither of them noticed that a large pair of spectacles was turned on them as they walked out of gates.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Billy Bunter.

He blinked round in search of Harry Wharton. The Famous Five and the Bounder were at a little distance, and the fat Owl hurried to them.

"I say, you fellows!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Want another?" asked Vernon-Smith, drawing back his foot.

"Beast! I say, you fellows, Wingate's just gone out of gates with Coker—"

"What about it?" asked Harry.

"You know what I told you—"

"Chuck it!"

"Give us a rest!"

"Boot him!"

Billy Bunter retired hastily, without waiting to be booted.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Kidnapped!

"HERE you are!" said Horace Coker.

He grinned.

Wingate looked puzzled.

They had walked into the old coppice which lay between the school and the river. They had stopped under the big old oak that towered above the other growths.

Why Coker had led him there was a puzzle to Wingate. He did not mind in the least, but he was puzzled.

"Yes, here we are!" he assented. "What the dickens is it you want me to look at, Coker? Taking up bug-hunting, or what?"

"Hardly! Step out!" called out Coker.

Wingate fairly jumped.

From the farther side of the massive oak three dingy figures stepped into sudden view.

Wingate stared at them.

He knew all three by sight—Juggins, Ike the Weasel, and Jimmy the Pincher—three tramps who had been mixed up in some recent trouble at Greyfriars, and whose existence he had forgotten till he was now reminded of it.

The three were grinning.

Before Wingate could guess what was intended, they closed in on him, and Juggins and Ike had his arms gripped. Jimmy grasped his shoulder.

"Pin him tight!" said Coker, with a chuckle.

He did not need to give that order. The three tramps were pinning Wingate.

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gate tight enough. The Greyfriars captain was a powerful fellow, and though he would have had no chance against such odds, he could, and would, have put up a tremendous tussle, given a chance. That was quite clear to Juggins & Co., and they gave him no chance.

Taken utterly by surprise, Wingate wrenched at the frowsy hands that grasped him.

"You cheeky rotters! Hands off!" he roared. "What the thump do you mean? Coker, you mad idiot—"

"We got him, sir!" grinned Juggins.

"Will you let me go?" roared Wingate, struggling.

"Ardly!" said Ike the Weasel.

The Greyfriars captain wrenched and struggled. But he was securely held, and he had not the ghost of a chance of getting an arm loose. Panting from his efforts, he glared at the grinning Coker.

It was difficult for Wingate to believe it, even as he stood helpless in the grip of the three tramps; but it was clear enough that Coker of the Fifth had led him there into a trap.

"You mad ass, Coker! What's this game?" he panted.

"I'll tell you!" said Coker calmly.

"I told you there was something I wanted you to see, didn't I? Well, what I want you to see is sense! Got that? I'm tipping these blighters a five-pound note to walk you off, and keep you safe till five o'clock—see?"

Wingate gazed at him.

"But I'd rather chuck it up, if you'll do the right thing!" went on Coker.

"Now, look here, Wingate, be a sensible chap! Fooling apart, you know I'm the best footballer at Greyfriars, and that I can't be spared from a team that's out to win. Admitting that you haven't sense enough to see it for yourself, take my word for it!"

"You—you—" gasped Wingate. Words failed him.

"Say the word," said Coker, "and we wash all this out! Play me in the St. Jim's match to-day, and judge by results! I'm only asking you to do what you jolly well know it's your duty to do, as football captain!"

"You—you—you idiot!"

"I've told you plainly that I'm standing no more of your rot!" said Coker. "If I were a football dud—like your friends Gwynno and Sykes, or like my own pal Potter—it would be different. I'm not the man to barge in where I'm no use, I hope. All I ask is a chance to show what I can do. I ask you to play me and judge by results."

"Idiot!"

Coker did not know that the result of playing him in the St. Jim's match would be disastrous. Wingate did, but Coker didn't. Coker never even suspected that he was about as useful on a Soccer ground as a wild walrus. Any Greyfriars man could have told him, but it was quite hidden from Coker. Coker's view was that he was up against jealousy, or incapacity, or a mixture of both. He was, therefore, justified in taking the law into his own hands even to this remarkable and amazing extent.

"Yes or no?" asked Coker.

"Dummy!"

"Well, if you're leaving me out, I'm leaving you out, that's all," said Coker. "I hope it will be a lesson to you, Wingate. You can take it from me that if I don't play in the match to-day, you don't!"

"If you mean this—" gasped Wingate.

"You'll find that I do!"

"You've tricked me here—"

"Nothing of the kind! I wanted you to see something, as I said, and what I want you to see is sense—just plain common sense," said Coker. "It was a bit strategic, I dare say. No harm done, that I can see; you've got your last chance of doing the right thing. Why not take it?"

"Oh, you idiot!" gasped Wingate. "Look here, Coker, if you try to keep me away from the football—if you keep me away you'll be sacked! Understand that? Sacked from the school!"

"Draw it mild, old man."

"I shall have to report this to the Head, you dummy!"

"Report—and be blowed!"

"You can't do this!" shrieked Wingate.

"Seems to me that I can," answered Coker coolly. "I'm going to, and chance it. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If you can leave out a better man than yourself, I can leave out a worse one than myself—what?"

"It's no good talking to you, you benighted ass!" gasped the Greyfriars captain. "Let me go at once!"

"Do I play to-day?"

"No!" roared Wingate.

"Then I'll watch it!"

"You ass—you dummy—you fool! Can't you see that this is a dirty trick? A rotten, rascally piece of trickery?"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Coker contemptuously. "You jolly well know that I've never played a dirty trick in my life—and wouldn't! I'm surprised at you, Wingate! You're rather a cad, after all!"

"Oh, you born idiot—"

"Get away with him!" said Coker. "You know where to take him! Keep him out of sight!"

"Wot to!" grinned Juggins.

"I'll come along at five o'clock and bring the fiver," said Coker. "Keep him safe till then!"

"Coker, you mad ass—" yelled Wingate.

"That's enough!"

George Wingate made a terrific effort to break loose. He exerted every ounce of his strength in that effort. Three to one as they were, Juggins & Co. had hard work to hold him for a few minutes.

But it was in vain. The odds were too heavy. Spent by that tremendous effort, Wingate sagged, gasping, in the grasp of the tramps.

Grinning, they walked him away through the trees.

They hardly needed Coker's injunction to keep him out of sight. They were not likely to let any eye fall upon them thus engaged. Winding among the trees, they disappeared with their prisoner.

"That's that!" said Coker, addressing space.

And he strolled back to the school in cheerful mood. He strolled in at the gates, his hands in his pockets, whistling unmusically, but cheerfully.

Gosling glanced at him from his lodge and noted that Coker of the Fifth seemed to be in good spirits. He little dreamed that he was looking at a successful kidnapper!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy on the Scent!

"I WONDER—" remarked Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"What?" asked Redwing.

Smithy did not reply immediately. His eyes were fixed on Coker of the Fifth strolling in the quad with a lurking grin on his rugged face.

Tom Redwing followed his glance and



Facing his attackers, Horace Coker hit out right and left. Noses streamed crimson—eyes winked and blinked—bumps and bruises galore decorated stubbly faces. But the more damage Coker did, the more he received. "Ere, 'elp a bloke!" shrieked the Pincher, as he went crashing down with a smashing blow on the jaw.

noted Coker with his grin, and looked at the Bounder again.

"Seen Wingate lately?" asked Smithy.

"I saw him come out after dinner." "That was some time back. Bunter told us that he went out of gates with Coker!"

"Must have come back, then, as there's Coker. In the changing-room, most likely," said Redwing. "What about Wingate?"

"I wonder—" Vernon-Smith paused. "I wonder," he went on, "whether it's barely possible that Bunter was telling the truth. Has that howling ass been up to anything?"

Redwing laughed. "Kidnapping stunts?" he asked. "Not likely!"

"After all, he's fool enough for anything," argued the Bounder. "It doesn't seem possible that even Coker would be such a fool as all that, but—well, I saw him banging Wingate's head on his study floor, thinking that it might persuade him to put the blithering idiot into the team. That's how Coker's brain works."

"What about going down to the ground?" asked Redwing. "The fellows are packing there already."

"Not yet," said Smithy.

The fact was that the Bounder was beginning to think hard. Bunter's tale of what he had overheard in Friardale Wood was incredible, especially coming from a well-known Ananias like Bunter. Smithy had laughed at it as much as any other fellow, and yet—

It was a singular coincidence, at least, that Wingate had walked out with Coker and had not returned with him. And the fatuous grin on Coker's face must mean something.

And Smithy remembered what had happened in Wingate's study. Coker

was not the man to play a rotten trick if he understood that it was a rotten trick. But there was no limit to his fatheadedness.

Gwynne of the Sixth came along and called to Coker.

"Seen Wingate?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!" answered Coker. "I was speaking to him only a quarter of an hour ago. Haven't seen him since."

"I hear that he went out with you," said Gwynne. "Didn't he come in with you?"

"Oh, no! I left him out of gates!" grinned Coker.

"What the dickens are you grinning at?" asked the Sixth Form man, staring at Coker.

"Oh, nothing! I say, if Wingate's gone off somewhere—"

"How could he go off somewhere, fat-head, when it's the St. Jim's match this afternoon?" asked Gwynne. "What do you mean?"

"Well, he's rather a fool, isn't he?" said Coker.

Gwynne gave him a look and turned away. He was going to the changing-room, where the footballers were already gathering.

Coker walked after him.

Vernon-Smith walked after Coker, and Redwing, surprised, went with his chum. He did not see why the Bounder was interested, but Smithy was.

"Let a fellow speak, Gwynne," said Coker sharply. "If Wingate doesn't turn up for the game, you'll skipper the side and pick another man to fill Wingate's place. What about me?"

Gwynne stopped and looked at Coker again.

"You blinking idiot!" he said. "Why shouldn't Wingate turn up? But if he was missing and every other man in the team was missing I'd make up a new

side from the Third Form sooner than put in a dangerous maniac like you. Don't you really know that you can't play Soccer?"

With that, Gwynne of the Sixth walked off.

Coker glared after him, but followed him no farther. Clearly the absence of Wingate was not going to benefit him so far as bagging a place in the eleven was concerned. On this subject Patrick Gwynne was as obdurate as George Wingate, and as blind to Horace Coker's uncommon merits as a Soccer champion.

"Dummy!" said Coker.

He walked away, frowning. A deep frown replaced the previous grin. Coker had, no doubt, nourished a faint hope that, with Wingate missing, Gwynne might do the sensible thing. Still, that hope had been faint; Coker did not really expect much sense from the Sixth.

"You heard all that, Reddy?" remarked the Bounder, looking at his chum.

"Poor old Coker!" said Redwing, laughing. "He thinks he can play Soccer. But I'm blessed if I know why he thinks that Wingate may not turn up."

"Looks as if he does think so," said the Bounder quietly. "Reddy, old man, I'm beginning to think that that fat chump wasn't just gassing! I'd like to know just where Wingate is this minute."

"But it's impossible, old chap! Coker's an awful idiot, but he'd never play a rotten, dirty trick—"

"Not if he knew it," agreed the Bounder, "but he's such a blithering ass—"

"Not to that extent."

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"I wonder!"

Fellows were crowding down to the football ground now. Redwing would have gone with the rest, but he was not going without his chum, and Smithy remained where he was. More and more it was borne in on the Bounder's mind that Billy Bunter's amazing yarn was not all hot air.

The St. Jim's team might arrive any minute now. It was singular, to say the least, that Wingate was not on the spot.

It seemed singular to others, as well as the Bounder. Fellows were asking where Wingate was. Half a dozen fags had been ordered by prefects to look for him. His absence was exciting more and more surprise.

Several fellows, it transpired, had seen him with Coker. These fellows asked Coker where he had seen him last. Coker, grinning once more, answered that he had left Wingate out of gates. Some fellows cut out of gates, to see if he was about.

The Bounder's eye was on Coker. He was wondering—more and more. Potter of the Fifth came out of the changing-room and cut across to Coker, with a troubled look on his face.

"Seen Wingate, Coker?" he asked.

Coker gave him a cool and steady stare, and did not answer. Potter had forgotten that he was no longer on speaking terms with the great Horace—Coker hadn't.

"Look here, you went out with him, I hear," snapped Potter. "Where is he, Coker?"

No answer.

"Can't you speak?" yapped Potter.

"I'm not speaking to you, or Greene, either, after the way you've let me down!" retorted Coker. "Just shut up—see?"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" snapped Potter. "We've not said a word about that rot you were talking the other day, but now——"

"I've told you to shut up!"

"Look here, it's getting near time for the game, and Wingate seems to have disappeared," exclaimed Potter. "Have you been playing any mad trick, like that idiotic stunt you were jabbering about?"

Potter was evidently in a state of doubt and alarm. Wingate was not to be found, and he had been last seen with Coker. Potter could not help putting two and two together.

Coker, however, did not answer. He gave Potter a cold, grim stare, and turned on his heel.

"Look here, you fathead!" roared Potter.

Coker walked on, to the gates.

"Where are you going?" yelled Potter, following him.

"I'm going down to Courtfield, to the pictures," said Coker. "Coming?"

"Coming?" repeated Potter. "How can I come, fathead, when I'm in the team to play this afternoon?"

"That's all right—any other dud will do just as well," explained Coker. "Gwynne's got a lot to choose from."

"Look here, you dummy——"

Coker walked out at the gates.

Potter stared after him, more worried than ever, and went back slowly to the changing-room. The Bounder, who had not lost a word, looked at Redwing—whose face was startled now.

"Potter's guessed it!" murmured Smithy.

"But—it can't be possible, Smithy, and——"

"Coker's cleared off. He's tired of being asked about Wingate. He knows where Wingate is——"

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"But——"

"Oh, rot! Isn't it plain?" said the Bounder. "Wingate gave me six the other day, Reddy. I'm going to get even with him."

"Don't be an ass, Smithy——"

"Just what I'm going to be!" grinned the Bounder. "Know how I'm going to get even with him? Heaping coals of fire on his head! Good for evil, and all that. Just in my line—what?" He chuckled. "Come along to the school shop?"

"What the dickens for?"

"I want Bunter, and that's the place to spot him!"

"But——"

"Oh, come on!"

Redwing followed his chum.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Removites to the Rescue!

"ROT!" said Johnny Bull.

Johnny always expressed his opinions plainly.

The other members of the Co. were silent. But their looks rather indicated that they agreed with Johnny.

The Bounder smiled sarcastically.

He was sure now—quite sure. He knew that it depended on him whether the Greyfriars captain turned up or not for the St. Jim's match that day. But his own pal, Redwing, was doubtful; the Famous Five more than doubtful.

Smithy would not have bothered about them at all, but for one reason—if Wingate was being forcibly kept away, Smithy, on his own, could not have handled the matter. He had to have help, so he had called on the Famous Five. As they were keen to get good places on Big Side to watch the game, they were a little impatient. Certainly had they believed, as Smithy now believed, they would have forgotten everything, but getting Wingate out of his scrape. But it seemed to them altogether too steep.

"I say, you fellows——" began Billy Bunter.

Smithy had rooted him out of the tuckshop; Bunter did not yet know why. He hoped that it was a spread.

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Vernon-Smith. "Look here, you men——"

"But what's on?" asked Bunter crossly. "If it's a spread, I'm your man, of course. I thought you fellows were going to watch the football. What——"

"Dry up, you fat idiot! Look here, you men, are you going to help me, or not?" snapped the Bounder. "I'm going to make that fat ass point out the place where he saw Juggins yesterday. If Wingate's there I'm going to get him out of it! Will you back me up, or not?"

"Smithy, old man——" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Look here," said Bob Cherry, "you cackled at Bunter's yarn as much as anybody. What's made you change your mind?"

"Lots of things. Wingate's missing, just before the match——"

"He's about somewhere," said Johnny Bull.

"He went out with Coker——"

"Why shouldn't he?"

"He hasn't come in——"

"He'll come in, all right."

"Potter thinks that Coker has been up to something——"

"I don't suppose he thinks that Coker has kidnapped Wingate, or knocked him on the head and buried him behind the boathouse!"

The Famous Five grinned.

"Oh, cut it out!" snapped the Bounder. "I'm going! You coming, Reddy?"

"Yes, if you like!" said Redwing.

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton. "If you really think there's anything in it, Smithy, let's hunt up Coker, and put it to him——"

"Coker's gone to Courtfield, to keep out of the way," answered the Bounder. "Come on, Reddy! You come, too, Bunter! You've got to show me where the place is."

Billy Bunter looked alarmed.

"I—I say, I'd rather not come, Smithy!" he exclaimed. "I—I don't want to run into a gang of tramps. I—I'll tell you how to find the place——"

"You'll come with me, and point it out," snarled the Bounder. "I'll kick you all the way, if you object. See?"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I'll go if you do!" said Bunter. "Look here, Wingate's a pretty decent sort, and I really think you might help him out of a scrape like this——"

"You blithering owl!" hooted Bob. "We'd go, if there was anything to go for. But there isn't——"

Harry Wharton looked at Bunter's fat, alarmed face.

He began to wonder whether there was, after all, anything in it. Bunter, plainly, was alarmed; and there was no cause for alarm unless his tale was true. And it certainly was odd enough that Wingate was nowhere to be found.

"Let's go!" said the captain of the Remove abruptly.

"And miss the game?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Well, if there's a bare possibility of——"

"There isn't."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Shut up, you fat fibber!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"After all, kick-off's not due yet," said Harry. "The St. Jim's men haven't blown in yet. And we can trot! I'll come, Smithy!"

"Come on, then!" growled Smithy.

"I say, you fellows, I shan't go unless you all come!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I'm not going to be bashed by a lot of tramps——"

"Blessed if it doesn't look as if there's something in it," said Bob. "I suppose even Bunter wouldn't be frightened at nothing at all."

"Beast! I'm not scared in the least, but—but I'd rather keep clear of those tramps! There's three of them, from what Juggins said, and I—I couldn't handle more than two at once——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come on!" said Harry. "It's jolly queer that Wingate's cleared off like this, and Smithy may be right. Let's go!"

Johnny Bull gave a grunt, but he acquiesced.

The Famous Five followed Smithy and Redwing down to the gates. Billy Bunter, reassured, rolled along with them. Seven good men and true were more than enough to deal with Juggins & Co., and there was no danger for Bunter. When there was no danger, Bunter could be as bold as a lion.

They went down Friardale Lane at a trot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the St. Jim's fellows!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a motor-coach came in sight.

It bore Kildare and his men, from St. Jim's, on to Greyfriars.

Johnny Bull gave another grunt. However, he trotted on with his comrades. Billy Bunter puffed and blew astern. Trotting was not Bunter's long suit.

"I—I say, you fellows, don't race!" gasped Bunter. "I say, there isn't all this fearful hurry! I say, I'm out of breath!"

"Kick him!" said Smithy.

"Owl! Beast! I'm coming!"

They turned into the wood from the lane. Billy Bunter was the guide, but he was a rather doubtful guide. He blinked to and fro through his big spectacles. He was, in fact, glad of a halt.

"Lead on, you fat fool!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Buck up, Bunter!"

"I—I'm not sure of the way, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "It's about here somewhere. Let's sit down a few minutes while I— Yaroooooh! If you kick me again, Smithy, you beast, I'll— Yaroooooooooop!"

Bunter led on again.

As a matter of fact, the way was easy to pick up. It led through the thickness of the wood, but it had been traversed many times by Juggins, going to and fro, and there were broken twigs, trampled creepers, and marks of tattered boots.

Billy Bunter was kept on the trot by the simple process of applying a boot every now and then to his tight trousers.

He puffed and panted on.

Suddenly the Bounder grabbed him by a fat shoulder and stopped him.

Bunter was glad enough to stop. He leaned on a tree, gasping for breath.

"What—" began Frank Nugent.

"Look!" muttered the Bounder.

He pointed to an opening in the trees and thickets ahead. Through that opening there was a glimpse of a battered bowler hat at a distance.

"Oh!" breathed Wharton. "That's somebody—"

"I say, you fellows, that's the place—" gasped Bunter. "I knew we were near it! I—I say, I—I'll follow you chaps when I've got my breath—"

"Shut up!" grunted Vernon-Smith.

He went on, and Redwing and the Famous Five followed him. All of them were excited now.

Billy Bunter cast a blink after them and detached himself from the tree. But he did not follow on. He started in the opposite direction. Billy Bunter's chief desire was to keep clear of Juggins & Co.

But Bunter was not wanted now. The Greyfriars fellows had reached their destination. As they pushed on through the thickets, they had a view of the opening of the dugout under the big trees. Sitting on logs near the opening were three tattered, dingy tramps, smoking pipes and playing some game with dirty, dog-eared cards. Juggins, Ike, and Jimmy the Pincher were in plain view, but nothing was to be seen of Wingate. If he was there, he was in the dugout—and even Johnny Bull hardly doubted that now.

Anyhow, they were going to know. And if a doubt had lingered, it was banished when, as they advanced into the open, Juggins & Co. jumped up in alarm and bunched in front of the opening of the dugout.

prisoner, with no remote chance of getting away. He had to remain there till he was released; and he knew that he was not to be released till after the football match at Greyfriars.

It was all so amazing that it seemed almost unreal. But the stuffy, dusky den was real enough—the rope knotted round his wrists felt very real as it bit into the skin. He lay on the frowsy old sack, still in a state of amazement at this unheard-of happening, but with rage growing deeper and deeper.

Coker had done this—that ass, that fathead, that born idiot, Coker! Had some unscrupulous rotter played such a trick, it would have been less surprising. Coker, from sheer asinine fatheadedness, was doing what even an unscrupulous fellow might have hesitated to do.

But that was not going to save him from the consequences. Coker was going to get it right in the neck when the time came.

Unfortunately, that time could not come till after the match at Greyfriars. Whatever might happen afterwards, he was getting away with this.

It was useless to shout for help in the middle of a lonely wood. And if Wingate had tried it on, he would not have uttered more than one shout—for the three tramps were gathered just outside the lair, and they would certainly have stopped him fast enough.

He could only wait—wondering what the Greyfriars men were thinking of his unaccountable absence, whether they would delay the match, what would happen if they played it without him—dismal and disturbing thoughts. Every now and then a mutter of the three tramps came to his ears as they smoked and gambled to pass the time while they waited for five o'clock and Coker—otherwise, there was silence in the wood.

He writhed, and wriggled, and wrenched. He promised Morace Coker all sorts of painful things. Deeper and deeper grew his fury. Then suddenly he heard a movement outside the dugout and several exclamations at once.

Then, to his amazement, came a voice he knew, the voice of the junior he had whopped a few days ago—Vernon-Smith of the Remove.

"They've got him there! Stand aside, you rotters!"

"Ere, you—you git out!" came Juggins' voice. "You mind your own business, you young 'ound! Don't you come shovin' in 'ere!"

"Stand aside!" It was Harry Wharton's voice. "You've got a Greyfriars man shut up there—"

"Nothing of the kind, on my davy!" retorted the untruthful Juggins. "Ain't seed nobody like it 'ere! I ain't—"

"Help!" roared Wingate.

"Bust my buttons!" ejaculated Mr. Juggins, as that roar pealed from the dugout. "Ere, you stand orf, see? I'm telling yer—"

Harry Wharton & Co. were not likely to stand off. They were quite determined to search the dugout, in any case; but that shout from Wingate settled the matter.

"Coming, Wingate!" shouted back the Bounder.

"Go for 'em!" yelled Bob Cherry.

The three tramps bunched together, with grubby, knuckly fists up.

But they were feeling rather dubious—and with reason! The Greyfriars fellows were boys against men—but they were more than two to one, and they were all good fighting-men.

They rushed on, in a crowd, hitting hard and hitting fast.

Wingate, wrenching in vain at the rope on the peg, heard the trampling, scuffling, panting, and gasping of a strenuous combat. But it was brief.

Hard hitting at close quarters was not what Juggins & Co. liked. They stood up to it for about a minute—and then Juggins set the example of seeking the open spaces.

After him went Ike the Weasel and Jimmy the Pincher, like hares. Some hard knocks had been exchanged; but Juggins & Co. had had more than their share, and more than enough to satisfy them.

They ran for it, easily beaten. The Bounder, dabbing a streaming nose, ducked his head and stepped into the dugout.

"Here!" gasped Wingate.

"By gum!" Smithy grinned. "They've got you safe, old bean! Half a tick, and I'll have you out of that!"

He opened a pocket-knife and sawed through the rope.

Wingate, freed, scrambled out of the lair, rumpled and muddy, immensely relieved.

Harry Wharton & Co. greeted him with cheery grins.

"So you were there, after all!" said Johnny Bull.

"The thoroughness was terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and idiotic Smithy was absurdly right!"

Wingate glanced at the Bounder.

"Was it you—?"

"Little me!" grinned Smithy. "I nearly had to drag these silly asses here by the hair of their heads!"

"Well, we thought it all rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I can quite believe now that it was that—ass Coker—"

"It was!" growled Wingate. "And, by gum, I'll make him sorry for it! Never mind that now—I've got to cut! Thanks no end—you can guess how jolly glad I am—"

"Speech taken as read!" said the Bounder. "Put it on, and you'll get to the school before they begin without you!"

Wingate nodded, and hurried away. He disappeared through the wood like a deer. The juniors followed, but he was out of sight in a few moments, and remained out of sight. There was still time to join up for the St. Jim's match, if he did not lose a moment—and he was not likely to lose one.

"Glad you came, you fellows?" asked the Bounder sarcastically, as the juniors went at a trot through the wood.

"Yes, rather!" said Harry. "But—who'd have thought it?"

"I did!"

"So you did, old man—and I'm jolly glad you did! My hat! I shouldn't like to be in Coker's shoes when Wingate sees him again!"

"Hardly!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Wingate was out of sight ahead when the juniors came out into Priardale Lane. But a fat figure was trundling along breathlessly there.

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Come on, old-fat man!" roared Bob.

"You'll miss the footer at this rate!"

"Blow the footer!" gasped Bunter.

"I say—"

But Harry Wharton & Co. did not wait to hear what Bunter had to say. They flew on, leaving the fat Owl panting and squeaking behind.

Good speed as they made, they were long behind Wingate when they reached the school. They headed at

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Wingate's Win!

WINGATE half-wondered whether he was dreaming. He lay on an old sack, in the dusky dugout, with his hands tied to a peg driven deep in the earth. He was quite helpless. He was a

once for the football ground, where the game had started. Wingate, evidently, had been in time, for as they came panting down to the crowded field, a roar greeted them:

"Good 'old Wingate!"

"Goal!"

"Oh, good egg!" gasped Bob Cherry. "There's old Wingate! Bravo! Good old George! Hurrah!"

There was Wingate, in the Greyfriars blue and white. The game had been going a quarter of an hour when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived. And that Wingate's rough handling had not cramped his style was clear, as he had captured the first goal in the match.

Breathless from their run, the chums of the Remove joined the packed crowd watching the game, and did not lose another minute of it. And right up to the final whistle it was worth watching—especially as the result was a victory for Greyfriars by two goals to one. After all the extraordinary machinations of the fathead of the Fifth, the captain of Greyfriars had led his men to victory, and it was Wingate's win.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Coker!

HORACE COKER walked through the woodland paths with a cheery grin on his face.

It was five o'clock.

Coker was heading for the dugout in Friardale Wood.

Having spent the afternoon at the pictures in Courtfield, Coker, of course, was unaware of what had happened at the school. He knew that the football match would be over, and that was all he wanted to know. In the happy belief that Wingate had missed the match, and was still a prisoner in Juggins' lair, Coker was on his way to release him. He could get back to Greyfriars as soon as he liked now.

The consequences of his action loomed

over Coker. But he was not thinking of them.

That he would be sacked, if Wingate reported this astounding outrage to the Head, hardly occurred to Coker. That Wingate, when he was released, would be in a towering rage, he was aware—but that did not daunt him. If the Sixth Form man wanted trouble, Coker was ready to give him all he wanted, and a little over—being happily and completely unaware that he was no match in the fistical line for the Greyfriars captain. It did occur to Coker that the footballers might rag him for what he had done. But that did not worry him. Some of them would get hurt, if they did, anyhow. Coker, being satisfied with his own proceedings, did not care two hoots, or one, whether other fellows were satisfied or not.

He had, he considered, given Wingate a lesson—a much-needed lesson. It made no difference to the footer—one dud was as good as another. That was how Horace looked at it, his powerful intellect moving in mysterious ways its wonders to perform.

He came in sight of the dugout. Three slinking figures were lurking among the trees. They emerged as Coker appeared.

Juggins & Co. exchanged glances of satisfaction.

They had been doubtful whether Coker would turn up, after Wingate's escape. They had been doubtful about waiting for him, lest Wingate should have informed the police and sent a constable to look for them.

Now it was all right!

Coker, apparently, did not know that a party of schoolboys had unexpectedly turned up and released Wingate.

Anyhow, he had come, and a policeman hadn't. Juggins & Co. had been lurking among the thickets, with uneasy, watchful eyes. Now they came towards the great Horace—with intentions that that bright youth did not even begin to suspect.

He was there to hand over the pro-

mised fiver, and see Wingate released. It had not occurred to him that, in dealing with Juggins & Co., he was playing with edged tools.

Juggins & Co. had quite other ideas. Juggins on his own would have been very chary of Coker. With two other rascals to help him, there was no need to be chary. Coker, unconsciously, was asking for it; and Juggins & Co. were more than ready to give him that for which he asked.

Coker gave them a careless nod.

"Time's up!" he remarked. "I'll let him go now. Here's your fiver—you can change it somewhere and whack it out!"

Coker, clearly, supposed that Wingate was still in the dugout. Juggins did not take the trouble to explain. Had Wingate been there, he would still have let Coker have what he was asking for. The fact that Wingate was gone made no difference. All that was immaterial to Juggins. All that Juggins wanted was to see Coker arrive in that solitary spot, while he had a couple of pals at hand. That was what he now saw.

The Greyfriars Fifth Former took out his note-case and flicked a five-pound note therefrom. Greed snapped in the eyes of Juggins and Ike and Jimmy the Pincher. Coker did not even think of concealing his wealth—he did not, in fact, think at all. They saw another five-pound note in that note-case, as well as three or four currency notes. With all that wealth about him, the cheery Horace had walked into the middle of a lonely wood to meet three tramps! It was Coker all over!

"Here you are— Oh!" roared Coker, as the three rascals leaped at him like three tigers.

Jimmy the Pincher snatched the note-case—he was handy at such things. Ike and Juggins bore Coker backwards, with a bump, to the earth.

Coker, bumped and bewildered, sprawled and gasped. He had not expected anything like this. Really, he might have—but he hadn't!

The next item on the programme was to go through Coker's pockets, for the extraction of every article of tangible wealth. But that item was not easy to get on with, as it proved.

Coker might be an ass. He was. He might be a fathead. Undoubtedly he was. He might be the world's prize idiot. There was no doubt about that. But there was nothing the matter with Coker's pluck. Coker was not the man to submit tamely to robbery, even with three to one. He would not have submitted tamely with thirty to one—not, indeed, with three hundred to one! In such circumstances, Horace Coker would have fought to the last gasp—which he now proceeded to do.

Taken by surprise, bewildered, Coker sprawled in the grasp of Juggins and Ike. But, as thievish hands groped, Coker realised what was happening, and bewildered surprise changed to deadly wrath. A fist that was like a lump of iron came up with an awful jolt into Juggins' face. Another of the same hefty weight crashed into Ike the Weasel's ear. They yelled frantically, and Coker threw them off and scrambled to his feet.

He could have cut and run before they got him again. He did not even think of that. He hurled himself at Jimmy the Pincher, to recover his note-case.

The Pincher whirled in a mighty grasp, struggling and yelling.

"'Ere, 'elp a bloke!" shrieked the

(Continued on page 28.)

The Return of the Toff!

Having forsaken a life of crime for one of honesty, Reginald Talbot—known as the "Toff" to the underworld—would give anything to be back again with Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, the chums he made when he was a cracksmen. But a fugitive from justice, hunted and harried by a Scotland Yard detective, what chance has Talbot of redeeming the past and starting afresh? There's thrill upon thrill throughout this enthralling story of the Toff's struggle against his past life. It's the school yarn of the year!

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COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

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

WHO can boast the largest mail? It is a question I would not undertake to answer. I will say this much, though—I've got an idea that I would come well in the running!

It is a fortnight since the last of our Free Photogravure Postcards depicting "Britain's Defenders" appeared in the MAGNET, and still letters of appreciation come pouring in. I feel that I must take the opportunity of thanking you all for your enthusiasm and loyalty.

With such a large mail, it is only natural to hear from a dissatisfied reader now and again. One such reader writes this week to say that there is too much Bunter in the stories. This is rather surprising, as the majority of readers who correspond with me say the very opposite. Bunter undoubtedly figures a great deal in the Greyfriars yarns, but where would they be without the one and only prize porpoise of the Remove? This particular reader wants to hear more about Lord Mauleverer, of the Remove. As this character was the commander-in-chief of the Remove stay-in strikers in our recent series maybe my discontented chum will feel like giving me a pat on the back. To mention every character in every yarn is a matter of impossibility. If a certain character should not be mentioned for a week or two, one must not feel that he has been forgotten entirely. He will feature in some future yarn; you can rely on Mr. Frank Richards for that.

To those of my new readers who write asking me if I can supply them with early numbers of the MAGNET, I can only say "No!" If the copy required has been published within the last three months, however, it can be obtained from our Back Number Dept., Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. The necessary cost of the copies required plus postage must accompany the order.

New readers will be spending twopence to good advantage, however, if they purchase a copy of our companion paper—the "Gem." In addition to a splendid long complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, there is always a topping yarn dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars. This week's story in particular: "THE REMOVE ON A DIET!" is a real corker!

NOW let's dive into the letter-bag and see what we've got to answer this week. The first query looks interesting. It comes from Fred Howard, of Chichester. Fred wants to know

WHAT IS A VOODOO?

Here's the answer: A Voodoo is a follower of the snake-worshippers of Hayti, in the West Indies. Hayti is a negro Republic, and the inhabitants are the only people in the world who still keep up the practice

of "Voodooism." Not only do the negroes worship snakes, but they are said to make human sacrifices, and even to carry out cannibalism. Repeated attempts have been made to stamp out snake worship in Hayti, but the authorities have been powerless to put a stop to it. Voodooism still exists, and its secrets are most jealously guarded by the negroes.

The next yarn sounds as if it had come from Fisher T. Fish's country, but actually it happened in Deal, Kent, and concerns

THE FROG JONAH!

A resident of Deal was walking in his garden when a frog hopped over his feet. Immediately afterwards a snake wriggled from a bush, and caught the frog. As the snake was preparing to swallow its prey, the man killed the snake with a walking-stick. Then he cut the snake open. Believe it or not—out jumped another frog which had previously been swallowed.

Do you think you can swallow that yarn?

SOME years ago there used to be a music-hall performer who called himself "the human corkscrew." Well, here's a yarn which comes from Wigan, concerning

THE HUMAN CORK!

There's a man in Wigan who says he can't sink. Every time he tries to sink below the surface of the water, he pops up again like a cork. Having read in a newspaper about an Australian woman who couldn't sink, he decided to try it himself. Now he is giving exhibitions for a local swimming club. He has his hands and feet tied, and then floats on the water. Men with long poles push him under the water. But up he pops again. This human cork claims that he can stand up straight in sea water without sinking!

No wonder he's not afraid of drowning!

Another yarn I've dug out for you comes from the United States, where all sorts of curious things are always happening. It tells of a curious occurrence

WHEN WIND EMPTIED A RIVER!

Not so very long ago a terrific hurricane swept the vicinity of New York and the surrounding country. Even the skyscrapers were in grave danger, and the people literally "had the wind up"! Not so the oyster fishermen of Maryland, though. They were the only people who had cause to thank the hurricane, for it completely blew the water out of the Chester river and left the oyster beds high and dry! Oyster-fishing in those circumstances became an easy job!

My stamp-collecting readers will be interested in the query which "Philatelist," of Guildford, asks me. He wants to know which is

THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE STAMP?

The rarest stamp in the world is valued at no less than £8,000! It is the one-cent stamp of British Guiana, now in the possession of an American lady, whose husband bought it for £6,500. Originally it cost one half-penny. There is said to be only one specimen of its kind in the world. The stamp was lost for many years, and then was given to a church, which sold it. Keen stamp-collectors bid for it when it was put up for auction, and an Austrian count bought it. When he died, he left the stamp to the German Postal Museum; but it was deemed to be so valuable that the French Government seized it after the Great War as part payment of War Reparations. They sold it to an American two years later.

Now American stamp collectors are raising a fund to buy the stamp. They don't want it to leave America. But it's going to cost them forty thousand dollars to retain it! It's interesting to know that the late King George V wanted this stamp, but was outbidded at the auction.

Ever heard of

THE STREET OF TOMBSTONES?

Sounds rather grisly, doesn't it? But in the town of Simferopol, in the Crimea, there is a street which is paved with tombstones taken from the local churchyard. Apparently, the town authorities were faced with a shortage of paving material, so they decided that the tombstones would fit the case, and promptly started to pave their streets with them. Unfortunately, the wording on the tombstones can still be read, and pedestrians don't like it.

The local authorities have been well "ticked off," and there is not much likelihood of any further "streets of tombstones" being made in Simferopol!

And now a word or two about next week's bill-o'-fare.

"Magnetites" will meet their old favourites—Harry Wharton & Co.—in another grand yarn entitled:

"THE MAN WITH THE GLARING EYES!"

By Frank Richards.

Wanted by the police, and with stolen banknotes to the value of four thousand pounds sewn up in the lining of his coat, a distant relative of Mr. Queech seeks sanctuary at Greyfriars. Judging others by himself, the swindler and trickster thinks that the Remove master will, for a share of his ill-gotten gains, help him in his hour of need. Things do not work out as expected, however, and as a last resource, the lawless adventurer brings his hypnotic powers to bear upon Queech. And then things happen!

If any of my chums miss this treat of a story they will never cease to regret it. Our other features, as usual, will be well up to standard. A word of advice, chums—order your copy right now!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,516.

COKER the KIDNAPPER!

(Continued from page 26.)

Pincher. "Lend a 'and! Oh crimes! Lend a covey a 'and!"

Jimmy crumpled, struggling and kicking. But Juggins and Ike flew to his aid. Coker had to handle the three of them together.

He did it manfully. Standing four-square, as it were, Horace Coker hit out, hard and often. They came on, hard and fast, hitting as hard as Coker, and oftener—three pairs of fists landed thrice as many knocks as one pair. Coker stood up to it like a Trojan.

It was a terrific fight. One of the tramps was down nearly all the time—one or another of them, under Coker's mighty jolts. But he had never less than two to deal with at once, and the man down always jumped up and piled in again. Not only Coker's wealth, but the damage Coker was doing, urged them on.

Noses streamed crimson—eyes winked and blinked—bumps and bruises galore decorated their stubbly faces. But the more damage Coker did, the more he received. Coker, after five minutes of it, was unrecognisable.

But he kept it up gallantly. Coker was not the man to be robbed. He was not the man to surrender. While he had a kick left in him, Coker was going on fighting. He fought like a lion!

One of them he could have knocked into a cocked hat. Two of them he might have handled somehow. But the three were too many for him. From the start Coker really had no chance.

But it lasted ten minutes before Horace was on the ground, utterly winded—a complete wreck—both eyes blackened, nose pouring red, every inch of his face blue with bruises, and most of the rest of him.

Gasping, gurgling, winded to the wide, wrecked to the limit, Coker sprawled, and he could only wriggle feebly as the panting rascals turned out his pockets, cleared him out of everything he had of any value, and finally left him, with a farewell kick in the ribs.

"Urrrrgh!" moaned Coker, as they went.

It was some minutes before he could even sit up. When, at last, he did sit up, Juggins & Co. were gone. After that exploit, Juggins had no further use for his dugout in Friardale Wood. Juggins and his friends were taking the shortest route to the next county at the greatest possible speed.

"Urrrrgh!" repeated Coker.

He grabbed at a tree-trunk for sup-

port, and dragged himself to his feet. He leaned on the tree for many long minutes, gasping. When, at length, a little vigour revived, he staggered to the dugout. Wingate, he supposed, was there—and he was going to let him go.

He blinked, with blackened eyes, into the empty dugout. Wingate was not there. Why he wasn't, and where he was, hardly interested Coker. He was too far gone to be much interested in anything but his own awful state of aches and pains and unlimited damages.

He tottered away through the wood.

He dragged one weary, lagging leg after another.

It was more than an hour before he reached Greyfriars. Gosling almost fell down as he saw him.

Coker tottered in. He had just strength enough to totter to the House.

SHORT RATIONS! STUDY FEEDS FORBIDDEN! THE TUCKSHOP BARRED!

Read all about it in
**"THE REMOVE ON
A DIET!"**

this week's yarn of
Harry Wharton &
Co., in the

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He felt that if it had been another yard, he would have had to do it on his hands and knees! He staggered in.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Enough for Coker!

"I SAY, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coker!"

"Great pip!"

"Is that Coker?"

"Oh, my hat!"

Forth from his study, like a lion from his lair, came Wingate of the Sixth at the sound of Coker's name.

Owing to the Bounder, Coker's amazing kidnapping scheme had been a failure—like most things to which Coker put his masterly hand.

Wingate had led his men to victory; St. Jim's had departed defeated. But failure did not exonerate Coker. The whole school knew what he had done—and the whole school was waiting for Coker to come in!

There was hardly a man at Greyfriars who was not anxious to see Coker of the Fifth, and to get hold of him. Sixth Form men and Fifth, Shell fellows and Fourth and Remove, even fags of the Third and Second—all were ready for Coker!

But at the sight of the hapless Horace, wrath faded.

Instead of collaring him and slaughtering him on the spot, they stared at him blankly. Even the most exasperated first eleven man could see that Coker had been through a severe slaughtering process already.

Wingate came striding up, with gleaming eyes. But his eyes ceased to gleam as they rested on the wrecked and havocked Coker.

"What the thump—" gasped Wingate.

"Been under a lorry?" ejaculated Gwynne.

"What on earth's happened?" exclaimed Potter.

Coker blinked at them dizzily. He could hardly see out of his blackened eyes. He held one hand to his nose, with the crimson trickling through his fingers. He tottered. Potter and Greene, forgetful of disputes, rallied to his aid. They caught him by either arm and supported him. He needed support.

"Oooogh!" said Coker. "Urrgh! They pitched into me—tried to rob me—they did it, too. Got the lot—Urrrrgh!"

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

"Urrrrgh! I—I—I—Urrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate gave Coker a long look, then he turned away. Coker, it was clear, had had enough. He had had too much. For days, or weeks, to come Coker was likely to present a startling aspect.

Not a finger was raised as Coker tottered away, supported by Potter and Greene. Only a roar of laughter followed him.

Coker had to be punished. But, as he had gone out and collected his own punishment, it was left at that. Obviously, he had collected enough.

THE END.

(Look out for another special yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., by famous Frank Richards, in next Saturday's MAGNET, chums, entitled "THE MAN WITH THE GLARING EYES!" You'll rate it one of the finest yarns you've ever read!)

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BIRCHY'S BIG BLUFF!

The Fun Gets Fast and Furious in This Week's
Instalment of Dicky Nugent's Great Serial:
"THE ST. SAM'S TREZZURE HUNT!"

ON THE RUN!

"Good-morning, Lickham!"

Mr. Lickham jumped. It was the morning after the grato zebra hunt and the Fourth Form master was sitting in his study, digesting his breakfast—and also the latest number of "Comic Cackles," his favorite weekly journal. He was chuckling and giggling like a Second Form fag till his study door opened. But at the sound of the voice from the doorway, his chuckles and giggles soon stopped. That voice was the last voice he wanted to hear.

"The—the Head!" he phattered, putting down "Comic Cackles."

"Little me!" simp-ered Doctor Birchmall, as he closed the door behind him. "Aren't you pleased to see me, Lickham?"

Mr. Lickham rubbed his chin nervously.

"Why—er—yes, of course, sir. But it's a little awkward, you calling on me like this here. Troo, sir, you're still the Head of St. Sam's in name. But you're also a fugitive from justiss, with a price on your head!"

"Tutt-tutt! Surely that makes no difference between old friends like ourselves," grinned the Head. "Do you know, Lickham, I've had a beastly time since yesterday. It took me hours to get that tar off my fizz and I've been hard put to it to keep body and sole together. I had to stave off the naving pangs of hunger eventually by raiding the tuckshop when it was left unattended."

Mr. Lickham recoiled in horror.

"You—you descended to theiving tuck, sir?"

The Head frowned. "Certainly not, Lickham. You should know me better than to think I would theive. I left an IOU behind on the counter, of course. But to get down to bizziness—"

The Head broke off suddenly, an eggspres- sion of fear in his face. "Footprints!" he his-tered.

"Who is it?"

"Nobody to worry about, sir," answered Mr. Lickham. "Sir Gouty Greybeard said he'd drop in to see me this morning and I egg- spect it's he. He won't

blow the gaff on you, sir."

Doctor Birchmall leaned over close to Mr. Lickham's ear so that he wouldn't be heard outside the study. His voice was horse.

"Don't be an ass!" he said. "If Sir Gouty knows I'm a fugitive from justiss, he'll be mersyless! I'm going to hide myself in the cupboard. Mum's the word!"

"All screen, sir!" The Head made a dive into the cupboard and closed the doors behind him. He was not a moment too soon. Im- mejately after, there was a sharp knock on the door and Sir Gouty Grey- beard himself walked in.

"Good-morning, my deah Lickham!" he cried, in his deep, refined voice. "I say, I've just heard about Doctor Birchmall being run in and escaping from jail. I call it a disgrace, what! I take it you'll carry on during the old raskal's absence?"

"Yes, rather, Sir Gouty!" answered Mr. Lickham, with a bough. "I've already taken the liberty of attending to the second round of your grato trezzure hunt."

"Good man, bai Jove!" eggscclaimed Sir Gouty. "Now I'll tell you why I've called. The fakt is, Lickham, I've been called away to a forrin country on bizziness and I'm in a dilemmer about ap- pointing a temporary privit secretary to look after my affairs while I'm gone. I was wondering whether you could recom- mend a suitable man for the job."

Mr. Lickham pondered deeply for several min- utes, but he had to shake his head in the end.

"Sorry and all that, Sir Gouty; but I'm afraid I don't know any privit secretaries. Bless my sole! What's that?"

"Sounds like porlice- mon's boots to me, bai Jove!" said Sir Gouty.

The next moment, Sir Gouty's suspicions proved correct. The door was flung open and a perlice inspector tramped in, followed by three constables.

"Begging your pardon for the introsuion, gentle- men, but I'm searching the premises for Alfred Birchmall—wanted for pinching a perliceman's helmet and jail-breaking. I suppose you gentlemen haven't seen him?"

"A-TISHOO!"



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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FISH MAD OVER DEBT, SETTLEMENT STUNT!

Says JOHN BULL

Fish thought he was on his usual good thing when he started a tuck transport company. It was quite a bright wheeze and several chaps who should have known better invested their hard-earned bobs in it. But the inevitable bankruptcy followed and Fish thought the customary small dividend would satisfy his shareholders, with himself sitting back and waxing fat on the remainder.

This time, it didn't come off. Peter Todd was appointed by the share- holders to look after their interests. And Toddy looked after them very well indeed. Having checked off the divi., he reckoned out how much each shareholder had lost. He then proposed to Fishy that the losers should distraint on Fishy's goods and pos- sessions.

"Distraint," by the way, means levy; it's not, as you might suppose, connected with getting off a train. But Fishy went right off the rails when he heard of it. He said he guessed he wasn't having anybody rustle his private property and he reckoned he'd make potato-scrappings of anybody who tried it on.

Toddy then suggested that the shareholders appoint the Head as judge.

Fishy hastily decided to accept Toddy's terms after all. So the shareholders duly distrainted on Fishy's goods. They were very fair about it. They helped themselves to goods to the exact value of their cash loss. As Toddy remarked, Fishy had nothing to complain about.

But if you imagine Fishy thought that him- self, you should have been in Study No. 14 after the last shareholder had left! First he took a running kick at the table. Then he aimed a good straight left at the door. Then he turned himself into a catherine-wheel. Finally, he writhed on the floor and had a hearty meal off the leg of a chair.

Mad! I should jolly well think he was mad over Toddy's debt-settlement stunt! I enjoyed it better than anything since the breaking-up concert last Christmas!

Fate—in the shape of a terrific sneeze from the cupboard—had saved Mr. Lickham from having to answer that awkward question. The officers of the law made a dive.

"Here he is!" cried the inspector. "Nab him, men!"

But that was more easily said than done. As the perlice rushed at the cupboard, the cup- board doors flew open and a sort of yowman cyclone rushed out.



Biff! Bang! Wallop! Thud!

The men in blue fell like ninepins—though there were only four of them.

Doctor Birchmall—for the yowman cyclone was, of course, none other than he—nooked them spinning in all directions, then rushed over to the winder. In a trice, he had thrown up the sash. Another jiffy, and he was out of the winder and climbing down the ivy with litening speed.

Once again, Doctor Birchmall had foiled the law!

THE HEAD'S MASTER-STROAK!

"Who's got the key of the property box?" Jack Jolly asked that question.

The kaptin of the Fourth and a crowd of other juniors had as- sembled in one of the box-rooms for a dress rehearsal of "The Pirates of Penn's Aunts." Jolly was just about to open the big oak chest that contained the costumes when he found that the key was not in its usual place.

"Funny," remarked Merry. "We usually

leave it on the mantel- piece over there."

"See if the chest is unlocked," suggested Bright.

Jolly nelt down and tried to lift up the hevvy lid. Grately to his ser- prize, it didn't need lifting. He no sooner touched it than it jump- ed up itself, giving him a fearful clump on the chin.

The Fourth Formers then saw, with a gasp of amazement, that Doctor Birchmall had popped up out of the

to you," said the Head, with a break in his voice. "I know that in the past I've been a beestly rotter—a tirant and a booly. But I'm differ- ent now; and I sincerely hoap that you'll forgive me and let bygones be bygones—and help me out of this jam."

"My hat!" "How do you imagine we can help you, then, sir?" inquired Jack Jolly.

The Head winked. "That's easy, Jolly. All I want you to do is to lend me some of your theatrical props and assist me to disguise myself, so that I can get through the cordon unreckernised. What do you say?"

The fellows looked at each other dew- biously for a moment. But in the end Jolly nodded.

"All right, sir; we'll help you. Of course, you don't de- serve it really."

You've been a beest and broot to us. But we'll forgive you. The diff- culty is that the only costumes we have at the moment are pirate dresses."

"One of those will do, Jolly," said the Head, eagerly. "I can tell them I'm the skool porter and it's my uni- form. Thanks, awfully."

In a few minites the Fourth Formers had compleatly transformed Doctor Birchmall. His prosaik prison garb gave place to the romantick costume of a pirate chief. He wore top-boots and a coat of antook pattern and a pirate's hat on which was painted the skull and crossbones.

He would have made a very striking figger if the suit had fitted him. As it was, it happened to be about six sizes too small. But beggars can't be choosers, and the Head made the best of a bad job.

By the time the heroes of the Fourth finished with the Head, his own mother wouldn't have reckernised him. The chief difficulty had been the beard, but Jack Jolly had evenchally overcome this by wrap-

ping it round the Head's neck and making it look like a skarf.

The wheeze worked like a charm. Only once on his way to the gates was Doctor Birchmall challenged by a perlice- man; and when he said he was a skool porter in uniform, he was al- lowed to pass at once.

As soon as he reached the road, the Head broke into a run.

The direction he took would have serprized the St. Sam's fellows, had they known, for he made straight towards the residence of Sir Gouty Greybeard.

What followed would have serprized them still more. The Head marched boldly up to the front door and rang the bell.

When the footman answered his ring, he said: "Name of Mr. Smith. I've come to apply for the job of Sir Gouty Greybeard's privit secre- tary!"

BIRCHY TAKES CHARGE!

"Grate gad!"

Sir Gouty Greybeard sat back in his chair quite feirtly, when a fearsome-looking pirate tramped into his study.

"What the—how the—who the—" he gasped.

Doctor Birchmall grinned.

"Prey calm your fears, Sir Gouty," he said, in a disguised, high-pitched voice. "I'm not really a pirate, sir. It just happened that I was on my way to a fancy-dress ball when I heard about you wanting a privit secretary to mannidge your affairs while you go abroad."

"Grate, gad!"

"I'm—I shall do you very well, Sir Gouty. I had an eggcellent education at Rugton Collidge and Oxbridge University," grinned Doctor Birchmall.

"What's more, sir, I can show you some first-class references if you give me time to write them out—I mean, fetch them."

"I'm afraid I won't have time to go into references, bai Jove, for I'm leaving almost im- mejately," said Sir

Gouty, who couldn't help being impressed by the refined, educated tones of his visitor. "Howevah, I pride my- self on being a good judge of carricktah, and you certainly strike me as being the right kind of fellah for the job. Considah yourself en- gaged!"

"Hip, hip—that is to say thanks, awfully, Sir Gouty!"

"You will find all my papahs in my desk," went on Sir Gouty. "There is one mattah I want to mention par- ticulahrly—the St. Sam's Trezzure Hunt."

"Ah! I beleave I've heard tell of it already," grinned the Head. "I presoom you will want me to send on instruc- tions to the skool about what they have to look for next."

"Eggssactly! I have already prepared a list, Mr. Smith, and it will be your task to send on the various items on that list one at a time. The next item of trezzure

will be one of my visit- ing-cards, which I have already deposited in the crypt at St. Sam's, of course, you'll keep mum about it, won't you?"

"Why, of course, Sir Gouty! You can rely on me absolutely!"

It was less than an hour after that when Sir Gouty Greybeard left his house to begin his travels—feeling positive that he had left behind him a privit secretary who would take a deep interest in his bizziness affairs.

He had hardly reached the end of the drive before Doctor Birchmall was at the tellyfone.

"Is that St. Sam's? My name is Smith. I want to speak to Master Scrownger of the Fourth Form."

The Head waited, grinning all over his dial. After a breef interval he heard Scrownger's voice at the other end of the wire.

"Scrownger speaking. Who wants me?"

"It's me speaking—

your headmaster!"

"Sir Gouty's trezzure hunt prize is as good as ours, now," chortled the Head. "I know all about the next round already. You'll find the trezzure in the crypt—one of Sir Gouty's visit- ing-cards! Find it at once!"

"M-m-my hat! I will, sir! Trust me!"

"See you soon, Scrownger! Cheerio!"

The Head replaced the receiver and sank into a chair, laffing fit to bust.

"Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Ho, ho, ho! Noth- ing can stop me now!" he roared.

But Doctor Birchmall was to learn before long that there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip! (Don't miss next week's exciting instalment!)

MYSTERY MARKSMAN'S REIGN OF TERROR!

"Herald" Staff Interviews Secret Sniper!

Who is the Mystery Marksmen?

The question has been puzzling Greyfriars all the week. The identity of this elusive, fascinating character has intrigued everybody from lofty seniors down to inky-fingered fags. His en- raged and exasperated victims have sought for an answer in vain.

Armed with a catapult and ammunition consisting of small pieces of coal and coke, he has played havoc with the appearance of some of the best dressed and least liked of our citizens.

He first appeared last Monday afternoon on the roof of the School House. He was disguised by a hood worn over his head. He took care-



ful aim at a topper on the head of Loder, who was going out to tea. He scored a bull first pop and Loder's elegant piece of headgear detached

itself from him and fell into the lily-pond with a great splash!

That was the sensational beginning of the Mystery Marksmen's reign of terror. He vanished as suddenly as he had appeared and Loder never found a clue. But he soon reappeared in various places—at a window in the School House, for instance, and on the school wall and on the Highcliffe bank of the river from whence he suc- ceeded in giving Coker of the Fifth a "oner" on the nose with a lump of coal!

He attacked in turn Carne and Walker of the Sixth, Hil- ton of the Fifth, Angel and Kenney of the Upper Fourth, and Skinner, Snoop and Stott of the Remove. Several other nonentities came in for it during the latter part of the week. Not one of them found out anything about the secret sniper.

Now the excitement is all over. On Friday, the follow- ing notice appeared mysteri- ously on the notice-board in the hall:

"THE MYSTERY MARKSMAN Thanks Greyfriars for giving him an entertaining week of

catapult practice and begs to announce that he is now retiring. He regrets that he is unable to reveal his identity but assures his victims that he is well known to all of them being a prominent member of the Remove. FAREWELL!"

The Mystery Marksmen has gone. His last shot has been fired. And nobody knows who he is—EXCEPT, OF COURSE, THE STAFF OF THE "GREYFRIARS HER- ALD"! We know all about him ourselves—in fact, he granted us an interview, on condition that we didn't tell our readers his name. Perhaps when we tell you what he said, you'll be able to guess his secret! Here goes:

"Yeah, it surely was a swell idea, I'll tell the world. I say, you fellows, though— he, he, he!—you'll keep it dark, won't you? The shoot- fulness of the esteemed cata- pult was terrific, my worthy and ridiculous chums. Shure, an' it's meself that thought o'd die a-laughing. Me stopee shootee now; so if plectat askee you who shootee, you say 'No savvy' plenty much, eh!"

But perhaps, after all, you won't be able to guess who the culprit was from a few brief remarks like that!