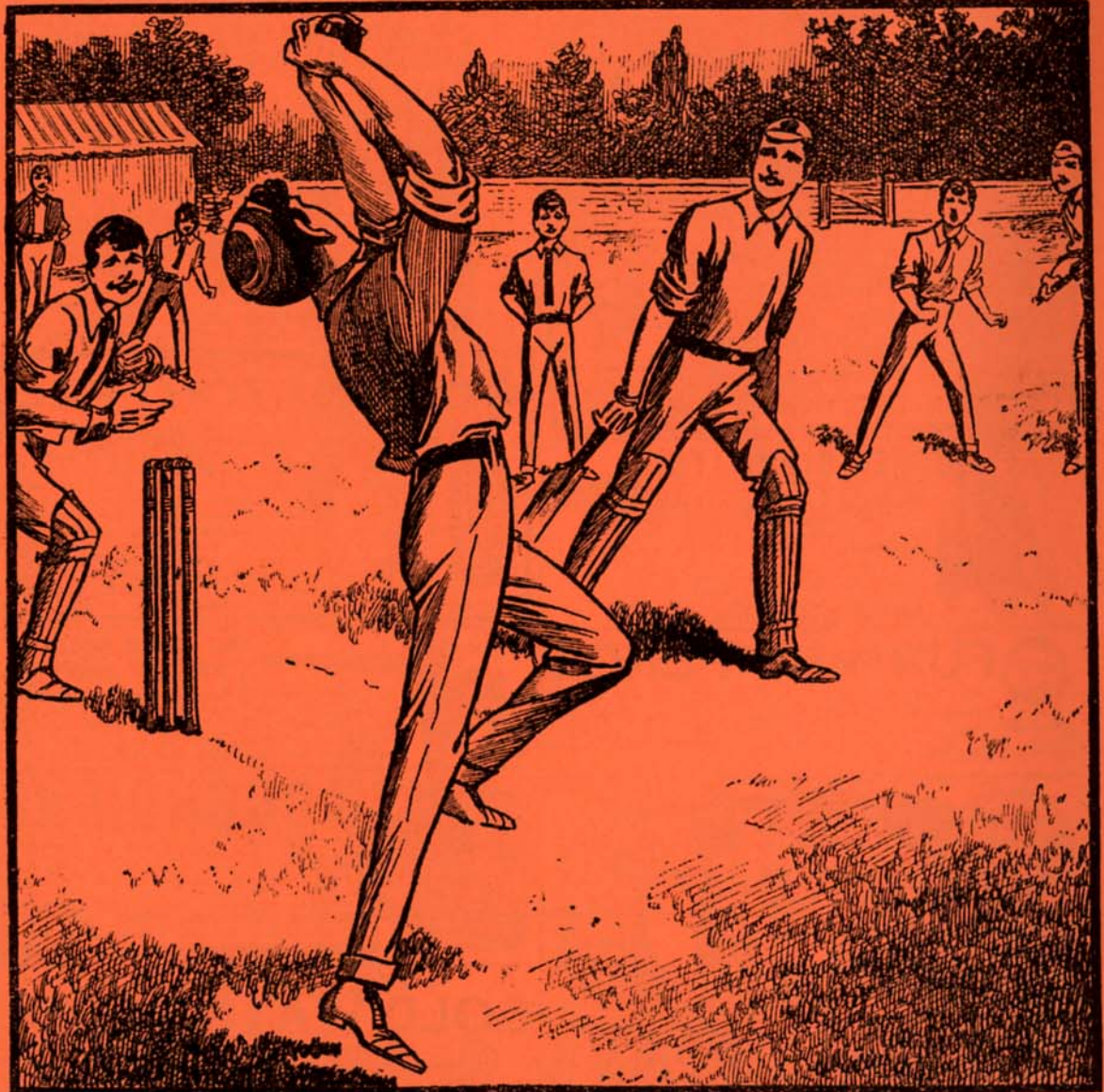


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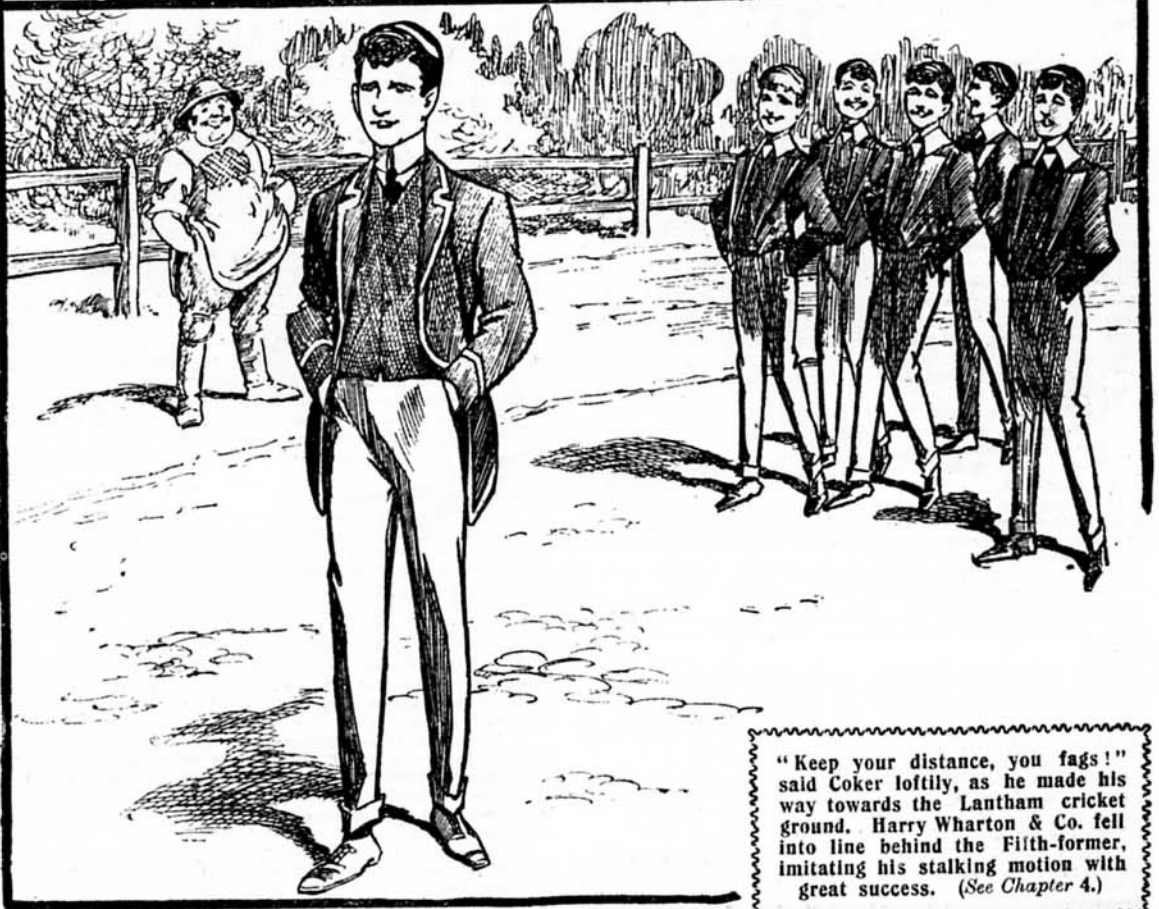
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Coker's Plot!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale, dealing with the Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. - By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Keep your distance, you fags!" said Coker loftily, as he made his way towards the Lantham cricket ground. Harry Wharton & Co. fell into line behind the Fifth-former, imitating his stalking motion with great success. (See Chapter 4.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Base Ingratitude!

COKER of the Fifth came up to the Remove passage at Greyfriars with a grim expression upon his face. Coker of the Fifth was wrathful.

Two or three Remove fellows, who sighted him coming, scudded into their studies. There had been trouble between Coker of the Fifth and the Removees, many a time and oft. Coker of the Fifth was a great man, in Coker's estimation; but in the estimation of the Remove fellows he was decidedly small beer—hence the frequent trouble. But Coker was not on the warpath now. He only sniffed when Snoop and Skinner scuttled away, and snorted when Bolsover major hastily reached a cricket-bat out of his study. He

stopped at the door of No. 1—Harry Wharton's study—and thumped upon it.

The door was ajar, and it flew open under Coker's powerful thump. There was a loud yell within the study. Bob Cherry was standing just inside the door, laying down the law on the subject of cricket, and the suddenly-opened door caught him on the back of the head, and changed his flow of eloquence into a yell of anguish.

"Ow!"

Coker looked in.

Harry Wharton & Co. were all there—the Famous Five of the Remove. Wharton and Nugent were sitting on the table, Johnny Bull leaned gracefully on the mantel, and Hurrree Singh reclined in the armchair. Bob Cherry rubbed

the back of his head, and bestowed an almost homicidal look upon Coker.

"You silly ass!" roared Bob.
 "Oh, shut up!" said Coker testily. "What's the matter with you?"

"You—you dummy! You've nearly punctured my napper!"

"Keep your silly napper out of the way, then!" growled Coker. "Look here, you kids, I've got something to say to you!"

"Sorry," said Harry Wharton politely.

Coker stared.
 "Sorry! What do you mean?"

"What I say," said Wharton cheerfully. "We're just off to see the Trojans play at Lantham—only waiting for Bob to finish blowing off steam. Can't wait for you to blow off steam too!"

"Why, you ass——" began Bob Cherry.

"Look here," said Coker, "this is rather important. I sha'n't keep you long, because I'm going to see the match at Lantham myself, with Potter and Greene. I'm going to make you a jolly good offer, Wharton!"

"Oh, good! We'll give you five minutes, then," said Harry, wondering what was coming. It was very unusual for Coker of the Fifth to visit No. 1 Study in the Remove with friendly intentions. "But why me specially?"

"Because you're skipper of the Remove cricket team," said Coker.

"Pile in, then!"

The juniors regarded Coker with curiosity. Coker's interest in the great game of cricket was very keen; but as he could not play for toffee, his views on the game, and on his own powers therein, were not taken seriously. The juniors knew that there had been heated arguments between Coker and Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, because Blundell failed to realise Coker's value as a cricketer. There had been still more heated arguments with Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, because Wingate showed an equal blindness to Coker's qualifications, and refused point-blank to put him in the First Eleven.

The Greyfriars captain, indeed, had told Coker that he would play him with pleasure whenever he was getting up a team to play hop-scotch, or beggar-my-neighbour, or kiss-in-the-ring; but at cricket—Never, with a big N. What Coker could have to say to the Remove skipper about cricket, therefore, was a mystery.

"You kids are taking up cricket quite seriously this season, I hear," Coker began.

"Us what?" inquired Nugent politely.

"You juniors," corrected Coker.

"Yes," said Wharton.

"Now, you know how I play cricket, don't you?" demanded Coker impressively.

The chums of the Remove exchanged grins. They certainly knew how Coker played cricket; their knowledge of how he played cricket made them smile whenever they thought of it.

"We do!" said Nugent solemnly.

"We does!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well," said Coker, "I've offered my services to Wingate as a member of the First Eleven. What do you think he said?"

"Give it up," said Wharton. "He probably said 'Rats!'"

"Well, so he did, as a matter of fact," admitted Coker. "He said some other things, too, which I won't trouble to repeat. He simply can't see that I can play the game as it ought to be played!"

"Must be blind!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Blind—that's it," agreed Coker unsuspectingly. "Well, Blundell, my Form captain, is just the same. He won't put me in the Fifth-Form team."

"You don't say so!"

"But I do say so," said Coker. "I don't know whether it's jealousy, or whether he's simply a silly ass; but there

you are—he won't give me a chance to play for the Fifth I'm out of it! So I told the Shell chaps I'd play for them this season. Of course, it was a come-down; but I went to Hobson of the Shell, and told him he could put me in his eleven."

"And what did Hobson say?" asked Wharton, with interest.

"Never mind what he said," replied Coker, rather hastily. "There was some trouble, and I've just left Hobson nursing his nose. It needs it. I'm not going to play for the Shell—not if Hobson asked me on his bended knees!"

"I can see him doing it—I don't think!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Did you ask the Fourth?" inquired Wharton, quite interested by this time in Horace Coker's progress downward through the school.

"Well, I spoke to Temple——"

"What did Temple say?"

"He was cheezy," said Coker, with a frown. "He's gone to bathe his eye now."

The Removites grinned, and drew a little closer together. They could guess now why Coker of the Fifth had come to the study, and they prepared for war. Coker evidently did not take the refusal of his valuable services in good part, so there was likely to be trouble in No. 1 Study before the interview was over.

"So you see how it is," said Coker. "Wingate's to blame. He's got an idea in his silly head that I can't play cricket, and the other fellows think that he knows what he's talking about. But I know what to do—I'm going to make Wingate and the rest sorry for themselves. I'm going to show them that they've deliberately declined the services of the best cricketer at Greyfriars——"

"How are you going to show them that?"

"By playing for the Remove," said Coker.

"Oh!"

"Of course, it's a pretty big come-down to play for the Lower Fourth—me in the Fifth!" said Coker condescendingly. "But I've made up my mind—I'm going to do it. It will make your team practically invincible. You can challenge all the other Forms, meet them, and beat them—even the First Eleven, if we can get a match with them. You see the point?"

"I—I don't quite see it, Coker."

"It's plain enough. I'm going to put up such a game in the Remove eleven that all Greyfriars will see what a good man Wingate has deliberately thrown away. Then, when Wingate comes round and asks me to play for the First Eleven, I'm going to refuse! I shall utterly decline to play for the First Eleven this season at all!"

"You—you wouldn't be so cruel as that?" stammered Bob Cherry.

Coker nodded firmly.

"I would—and I shall!" he said. "Wingate requires a lesson, and he's going to get it. Perhaps after a time I might come round—I'm not a vindictive chap—but at first I should certainly refuse, and the whole committee would have to ask me very civilly before I should consent to play for the school. That's why I've come to you—to tell you I'll play for the Remove this season. You can put my name down!" added Coker, with a lofty wave of the hand.

Apparently Coker of the Fifth expected the juniors to be impressed—and grateful. Probably he expected a chorus of "Oh, Coker, that's ripping of you!" or, "Oh, Coker, that's simply topping!"

If he expected that, however, he didn't get it. The juniors looked at one another, their faces working with emotion; but the emotion was not gratitude. They could not suppress it, however, and it burst out from all of them together in a yell of laughter that rang through the study:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker stared at them blankly.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you fags! I don't want any of your cheek——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry was almost doubled up. Hurree Singh was rocking in the armchair. Nugent seemed on the point of hysterics. Coker glared from one to another gloweringly.

"You young sweeps——" he began.

"There's one point you've left out of consideration, Coker, old man," said Harry Wharton, wiping away his tears.

"And what's that?" demanded Coker wrathfully.

"You're not going to play for the Remove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you understand?" said Coker, trying to be patient. "I've come here to offer you my services, Wharton, as you're skipper of the Remove team. Of course, I should expect you to stand aside and make me skipper—that's understood."

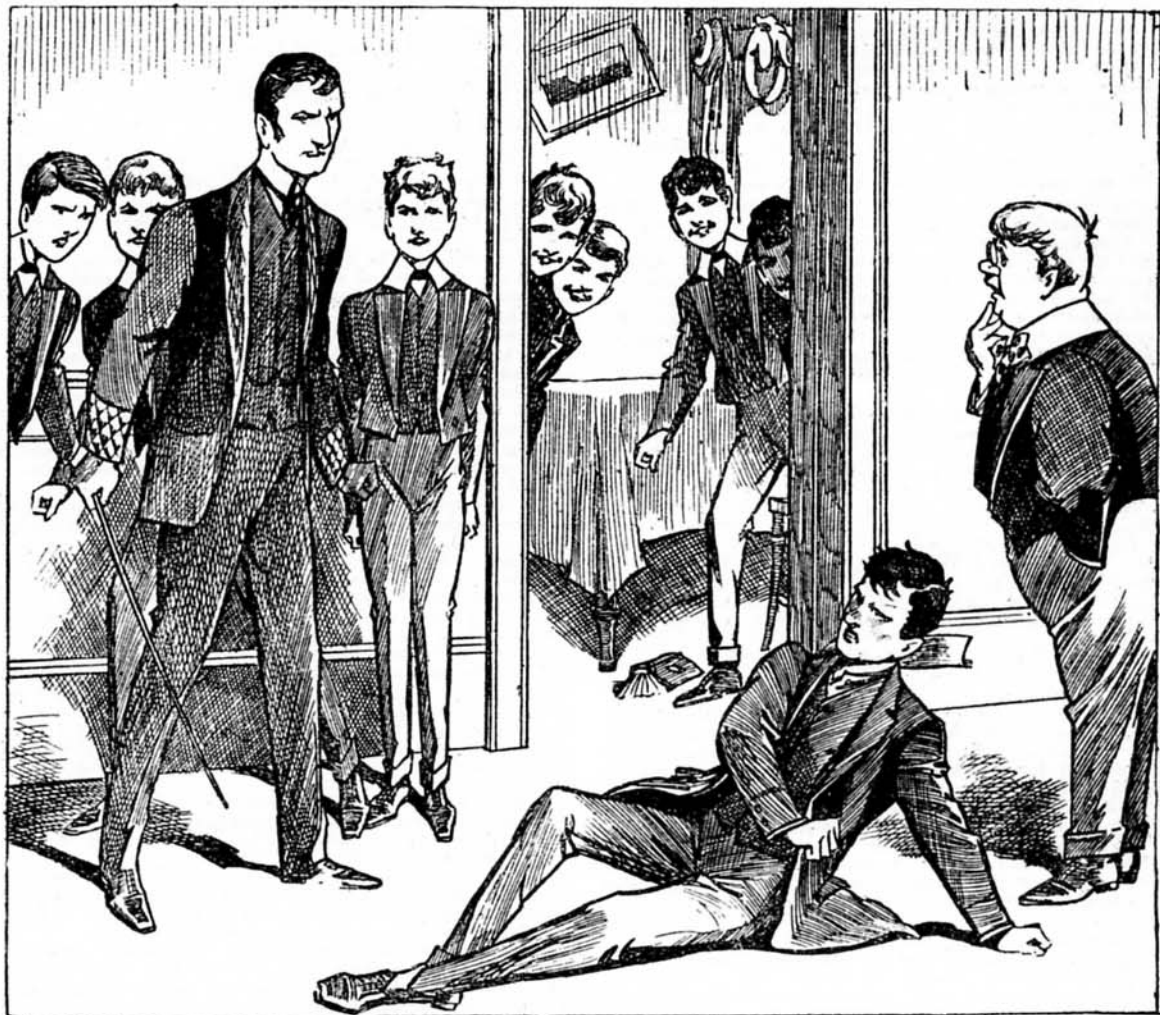
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Just as Mr. Quelch reached the study door, Coker came floating out, to land in a sprawling heap right at the form-master's feet. Bump! "Grooooh!" gasped Coker. "Yo-ow!" "Coker!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "What is the meaning of this disgraceful performance?" (See Chapter 2.)

"Oh! That's understood, is it?" gasped Wharton.
"Yes, of course. It will be infra dig, anyway, for me to play for the Lower Fourth, and the least you can do is to make me captain. In fact, I shall insist upon that. Of course, you see it couldn't be otherwise?"

"Ahem! No, I don't quite see it. What I see is, that you're not going to play for the Remove at all," explained Wharton.

"What!"
"Declined with thanks, Coker."
"Do you mean—"

"You see, we're going to play cricket," Wharton further explained, "not marbles, or pegtops, or hop-scotch. Cricket, you know. So there won't be any room for you in the Remove team. We're sorry, but there you are."

Horace Coker breathed hard through his nose. After his previous experiences, he ought to have expected it; but evidently he hadn't expected it. He had come down from Olympian heights, as it were, with a generous offer to mere fags, and to have that generous offer refused by the fags—amid laughter—was a little more than Horace Coker's temper could stand. His complexion became purple, and he clenched a very large pair of fists.

"You cheeky imps!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I give you one more chance!" exclaimed Coker furiously. "Am I going to play for the Remove, or am I not?"

And five voices replied, with wonderful unanimity:
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"Not!"

And Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh added, in his weird and wonderful English, that the notfulness was terrific.

Then Coker exploded.

He made a wild rush at Harry Wharton, and clasped him round the neck as if he loved him. But his next proceedings were far from loving. Wharton's head was in chancery in a second, and Coker was pommeling away at his features as if he mistook them for a punching-ball.

"Ow!" roared Wharton, struggling wildly in the grasp of the burly Fifth-Former. "Ow! Yow! Rescue!"

In a twinkling his four chums had hurled themselves upon Coker, and the big Fifth-Former went with a crash to the floor, with the juniors scrambling and sprawling over him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Awful Luck!

"GREAT Scott! What's the row?"

"Is it an earthquake?"

"Or a giddy cyclone?"

There was a rush of Remove fellows along the passage to see what the matter was. They crowded round the open door of Study No. 1 and stared in. All they could see was a scrambling mass of rumpled jackets, arms and legs and boots wildly waving, while chairs were hurled right and left, and the table crashed over into the fender.

Horace Coker was somewhere in the midst of the heap of

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

juniors, and, to judge by appearances, he was putting up the fight of his life.

"Go it!" roared Bolsover major. "It's Coker, you fellows, and they're slaughtering him. Pile in and win!"

Crash! Bump! Tramp—tramp! Bump!
Coker was hitting out right and left in blind fury. Harry Wharton & Co. were striving to drag him towards the door, but it was not easy. Study No. 1 was a wreck, and its owners looked like wrecks too. There was a sudden yell from Billy Bunter, in the direction of the stairs.

"I say, you fellows! Cave! Quelch's coming!"
The crowd of juniors in the passage melted away. Tom Brown shouted a warning to the combatants in the study.

"Look out, you chaps! Cave!"
But the combatants were too excited to hear him. All the Famous Five had been hard hit by Coker's lashing fists, and their blood was up. They fastened on Coker like dogs upon a deer, and the great Coker was fairly overcome at last. He was dragged up bodily from the floor, and swept towards the door, still struggling and gasping.

"Out with him!" panted Wharton.
"All together! Go!"
And Horace Coker floated through the study doorway. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was hurrying upon the scene, to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. He ascertained it—not as he had expected. Just as he reached the study Coker came floating out, to land, in a sprawling heap, right at the Form-master's feet.

Bump!
"Groooh!" gasped Coker.
Mr. Quelch halted, thunderstruck.
Had he been a few inches nearer, he would have collided with Coker as he came flying out, and the results would have been serious, for Coker, of the Fifth, was no lightweight.

"Wha-a-at," gasped Mr. Quelch—"wha-a-at!"
"Yow-ow!" roared Coker.
"Coker, what is—"
Coker did not heed or hear. He leaped to his feet, to charge back into the study, and take summary vengeance upon the juniors who had hurled him forth. Five flushed and excited faces looked out of the doorway, and grew dismayed at the sight of the Remove-master.

"Coker!" thundered Mr. Quelch.
Then Coker heard, and he stopped just in time.
"Oh! Yes, sir," he mumbled.
"Stand where you are! Boys, what is the meaning of this? What do you mean by making such a disgraceful disturbance in your study?" shouted Mr. Quelch.

"Ahem!"
"Sorry, sir!"
"D-d-did we make a noise?" murmured Nugent.
"Only a little fun, sir."

"I've been chucked out!" roared Coker. "I—I—I—"
Words failed him.

"Then you should not have come to this study, Coker," said Mr. Quelch. "Go at once! I shall report you to your Form-master for taking part in this disturbance!"

"I—I—I—" spluttered Coker.
Mr. Quelch raised his hand, and pointed sternly down the passage.

"Go!" he commanded.
And Coker, with a snort, went.
Then the Remove-master fixed his stern gaze upon the five juniors, who looked extremely self-conscious and dismayed. They were utterly ruffled and dishevelled by that homeric combat with Coker of the Fifth, and they realised that they were not in a suitable state to meet the inspection of their Form-master. Neither was the study in a fit condition to meet the eye of a careful and tidy Form-master. Mr. Quelch's expression grew grimmer and grimmer as he surveyed them.

"Well?" he rapped out.
"Well, sir—ahem—" stammered Wharton.
"I trust you are ashamed of yourselves?"
"H'm! I—I trust so, sir."
"You have made a disgraceful disturbance! Perhaps you consider that a half-holiday is a sufficient excuse for turning your study into a bear-garden!" said Mr. Quelch majestically. "I differ from you on that point! Your half-holiday shall be otherwise occupied! You will be detained this afternoon!"

"Oh, sir!"
Blank dismay fell upon the chums of the Remove. That afternoon was to have been spent on the Lantham cricket-ground, basking in the sun, and watching the famous Trojans play the county team.

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in order that you may not find the time hang heavily upon your hands!" added Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir!"
"Which, I trust, will be a lesson to you!" said the Remove-master. And he turned away.

Harry Wharton hurried into the passage after him.
"If you please, sir—"

"But I do not please, Wharton."
"We—we are sorry, sir."

"I have no doubt you are sorry now, Wharton. Probably you will be sorrier still by the time you have finished your tasks!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"We—we were going to see the Trojans' match at Lantham, sir."

"You will now be otherwise occupied, Wharton."
"It's a very special match, sir," urged Wharton. "The Trojans are down at Lantham for a week—you've heard of the Trojans, sir; they've beaten I. Zingari and the M.C.C.—and—and we want to see them, sir, and—and—"

"I have nothing to add to what I have said, Wharton!"
"But, sir—"

"That will do!"
And Mr. Quelch stalked majestically away. Harry Wharton turned back into his study, his dismayed eyes resting upon four faces as blank as his own. The Famous Five were, as Bob Cherry expressed it, knocked into a cocked hat.

"Well, this is a go!" said Johnny Bull, breaking an oppressive silence. "We sha'n't see the Trojans play, after all!"

"What rotten luck!"
"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"May see them play next Saturday," said Nugent hopefully. "They're going to stay at Lantham over the week-end."

Johnny Bull shook his head.
"They haven't a match on for Saturday," he said. "The county match finishes to-day; and they have a two-day match on Thursday and Friday, and there's nothing on Saturday at all. We're done!"

"Dished and done!" said Bob Cherry dismally. "I suppose there's nothing left to do but to take Coker into a quiet corner and kill him."

"Oh, it's too rotten for words," said Wharton crossly, "all through that silly ass thinking he can play cricket! Anyway, he will get detained, too, I suppose, if Quelch reports him to Prout."

"Serve him right!"
"Latin conjugations instead of a cricket-match!" groaned Frank Nugent. "And it's the finish of a county match—the Trojans at their best! Oh, I could weep!"

It was not much use weeping, however, so Frank restrained that proof of his emotion. The Famous Five were "done." They had looked forward for a long time to seeing that match. The Trojans were a famous cricketing team, and it was a glory and a privilege to see them play. Especially their captain, Lynn, was a mighty man of his hands; and almost any junior at Greyfriars would have walked miles to see him bat against the county. But it was all up now. The five juniors were detained, and there was an end of it.

They sat down in a state of gloomiest depression. Mark Linley looked in at the door with Tom Brown, the New Zealander, and Hazeldene.

"You fellows ready?" he asked.
"We're ready!" said Bob dismally.

"Well, come on, then!"
"Can't! We're detained for the afternoon."

"Oh, how beastly!" said Mark sympathetically.
"You go all the same," said Bob. "It's all right."
"If you see Coker, you might kill him," added Johnny Bull.

The three juniors grinned and departed. Quite a number of the Remove were making the journey to Lantham that afternoon, to see the great match. Coker intended to go over on his motor-bike, and Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, had hired a trap; but most of the fellows were catching the train from Courtfield Station. Even Wingate, of the Sixth, was letting cricket alone that afternoon, to go over to Lantham and see the Trojans play. Wingate and the senior cricket committee had had a wild idea of asking the Trojans to play Greyfriars' First Eleven, but they hadn't the "cheek." The Trojans were miles above any school team—had they not beaten the one and only M.C.C.?

"You fellows coming?" asked Peter Todd, looking in—with his study-mates from No. 7 Study—Tom Dutton, and Alonzo Todd, and Billy Bunter.

"Detained!" groaned Wharton.
"Hard cheese! Can't you bolt?"

"Quelch will be keeping his eyes open, worse luck!"
"Well, we'll tell you all about it when we come back,"

said Peter Todd. "The papers say it will be a close finish between the Trojans and the county. Ta-ta!"

The Famous Five groaned in chorus, and Peter Todd & Co. departed. Billy Bunter came back after a few moments. His little round eyes were glistening behind his spectacles, as if a bright idea had come into his mind.

"I say, you fellows, I'm awfully sorry about your being detained," he said.

"Thanks!" said Wharton, somewhat surprised by that amount of sympathy from William George Bunter. As a rule, Bunter had no sympathy to waste upon anybody's troubles but his own.

"Not at all," said Bunter. "It's too bad. I suppose you really won't be able to go?"

"Of course not."

"And you had the tin to pay your fares to Lantham—rather a lot of money for five, isn't it?" said Bunter. "I'll tell you what, you chaps. I'm expecting a postal order this evening—"

"Eh?"

"Unfortunately it hasn't come in time for me to take the cash over to Lantham this afternoon. I want to have tea there—and I'm rather stony, and Todd's awfully mean. I suppose you don't mind lending me that tin—you won't want it now, you know—and you can have my postal order when it comes this evening."

The Famous Five stared at Billy Bunter. They understood now why he had come back to express his sympathy. They exchanged glances, and rose to their feet with one accord, and seized Billy Bunter. They wanted to bump somebody, to relieve their feelings; they could not bump Mr. Quelch, and Coker was out of reach. The Owl of the Remove had come along in the very nick of time.

"Here, I say!" howled Bunter, as five pairs of hands closed upon him. "Wharrer you at? Leggo! I say, you fellows—beasts! Ow! Yoop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter descended upon the linoleum in the passage, and slid away towards the stairs. The door of No. 1 Study slammed after him.

"Are you coming, Bunter?" shouted Peter Todd, from the foot of the stairs.

"Ow! Ow! Groo! I'm coming! Beasts! Yow!"

And Billy Bunter limped downstairs. In No. 1 Study, the chums of the Remove were left to their meditations—which were not happy ones.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Virtue Rewarded!

"**B**LOW it!"

Harry Wharton dashed his pen down on the table, completely spoiling the present indicative, active mood, of the verb amare.

"I can't stand it!" he growled. "It's no good, I can't stay in here! Let's get out for a stroll in the Close, anyway—we can do those filthy verbs afterwards."

"Right-ho!" said Bob Cherry feelingly. "I feel just the same, old scout. Let's go and chip Coker—he's detained, too, you know."

"Good egg!"

The juniors left No. 1 Study. The School House was quite deserted, save by themselves, on that lovely spring afternoon. All the fellows who could raise the necessary cash for the railway fare had gone over to Lantham to see the Trojans. Never had the Famous Five felt so completely left out of it. They were usually right in the middle of things, so to speak; but on this special afternoon they were right out of it—simply beached.

There would be a little harmless and necessary consolation in chipping Horace Coker, the cause of all their misfortunes. If Coker hadn't fancied that he could play cricket, this wouldn't have happened. And the five juniors made their way to Coker's study, in the Fifth Form passage, reckless of consequences. If Mr. Quelch dropped on them again, he could hardly do worse than he had done already. After inflicting detention upon them, while everybody else was gone to see the Trojans, Mr. Quelch had done his worst. A licking, however severe, would have been light in comparison.

But there was no sound of life in Coker's study as they approached it. Bob Cherry kicked the door open—the study was empty.

"Not here!" said Bob, looking round.

"Doing his detention in the Form-room, I suppose," said Wharton. "Come on!"

"Half a mo'!"

Bob delayed a few minutes, to upset the study table, hurl the books from the bookcase into the fender, and empty the inkpot over Coker's Sunday silk hat. Those artistic touches finished, he followed his chums from the study. His spirits were rising already at the thought of Coker's feelings when he returned to his quarters.

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EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

The Famous Five hurried down to the Fifth Form-room. But the Form-room was drawn blank. Coker was not there! The juniors gazed at one another.

"He's gone out, then," said Nugent.

"Then he's not detained at all!" roared Bob Cherry.

"What a rotten swindle! Old Prout's only given him lines, and hasn't detained him at all!"

"Foul play!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Rotten!"

The chums of the Remove naturally felt curious. They had certainly taken a fair share in the terrific disturbance in No. 1 Study, but Coker had been the principal offender. And they were detained, and Coker wasn't! It was, as Bob said, a swindle. Mr. Prout had evidently let Coker off more lightly than the Remove-master had let his boys off.

"It's a rotten shame, when Coker did it all!" growled Johnny Bull. "Now he's off to Lantham on his stink-bike; to have a good time."

"Perhaps he's not started yet!" said Nugent hopefully.

The suggestion was enough. The Famous Five rushed out of the house in search of Coker. Their detention only confined them within the school gates, and they had the freedom of the Close. From the direction of the gates came a well known sound.

Gug-gug-gug!

"That's Coker!"

"Hurrah! Come on!"

They swooped down to the gates. There was Horace Coker, alone with his famous stink-bike. His chums, Potter and Greene, had evidently gone by train. Coker's face was flushed, and his eyes were gleaming. Apparently all was not exactly as it should have been with the stink-bike. That stink-bike was sometimes of an obstinate temper, perhaps owing to the way Coker looked after it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! So you're not detained!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Coker looked at them and snorted.

"No," he snapped; "I've got two hundred lines from old Prout, and I'll lick you young sweeps for that, when I get time!"

"No time like the present," suggested Nugent sweetly.

Coker did not heed. All his attention was given to that obstinate stink-bike again. Coker's hands were black, and there were oily smudges on his face. His temper was approaching boiling-point.

"Something wrong with the wicket?" asked Bob sympathetically. "Why don't you give it a miss in baulk, Coker?"

"Clear off!" shouted Coker.

"Trying to disguise yourself as a Hottentot?" asked Johnny Bull. "You haven't done it, completely—you've left a patch of white on your left cheek."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker breathed sulphurously, but made no reply.

"We're detained," said Harry Wharton.

"Serve you right! I'm glad!"

"And I suppose you're going to see the Trojans?"

"Yes, I am, hang you."

Wharton shook his head.

"We don't think that fair, Coker. You've stopped us from seeing the Trojans, all through your humorous idea that you can play cricket and we're bound to stop you."

"One good turn deserves another," remarked Bob Cherry.

The juniors surrounded Coker and his bike. Coker rose to his feet with a gasp of relief.

"All right now!" he exclaimed. "Stand clear, you kids! I'm going to mount!"

"I don't think!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Here, what are you up to? Hands off! I'll—I'll—Yarrah!"

The next moment Coker was sprawling in the road on the edge of the ditch. Two pairs of hands seized the motor-bike and ran it into the ditch. Coker gave a roar of wrath as the stink-bike squashed into a foot of mud, and there was a succession of weird sounds from the machine, which seemed to hint that it was seriously out of order.

"You young villains!" yelled Coker, sitting up. "You—you—"

He jumped up and charged at the Removites.

They were ready for him. They grasped the infuriated Fifth Former, and he was swept off his feet, and deposited gently but firmly upon the stink-bike in the ditch. The juniors left him there and walked back into the Close with smiling faces. Their expressions were those of youths who felt that they deserved well of their country.

"The blessed Latin verbs won't seem so bad now," Bob Cherry murmured.

And the juniors chuckled, and returned to No. 1 Study. From the study window a few minutes later they had the

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE UNINVITED GUESTS!"

pleasure of seeing Coker pushing his stink-bike up the path. Evidently the journey to Lantham was "off." Frank Nugent turned the key in the study door, and they settled down to Latin verbs.

There were heavy footsteps in the passage a few minutes later, and a thump on the study door. The handle was furiously rattled from outside.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's there!" called out Bob Cherry.

"Let me in!"
 "Is that you, Coker?"
 "You know it is, you young beast!"
 "What do you want?"
 "Let me in!"
 "You've been let in once over that ride to Lantham!" chuckled Bob. "Don't be greedy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Bang!

"Go away, Coker! You're disturbing our studies!"
 Bang, bang, bang!

"Naughty!" said Bob Cherry.
 Thump, thump, thump!

"I wonder how long it will be before Coker brings Quelchy on the scene with that row?" Bob Cherry murmured reflectively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 It was not long. Coker was too infuriated to think about such things as Form-masters. His attack on the door of No. 1 Study rang along the Remove passage. It was interrupted by the sharp voice of Mr. Quelch.

"Coker, how dare you!"
 "This is where the band plays!" murmured Bob.

The juniors suppressed their laughter as they listened to the voices in the passage.

"Coker, this is outrageous! This is the second time I have found you here this afternoon! I begin to think that you were wholly to blame in the previous disturbance. I observe that the juniors have locked their door to keep you out! Coker, I am surprised at this conduct in a Fifth-Form boy!"

"I—I—I—" spluttered Coker.

"Go away instantly! If I find you here again I shall report your conduct to the Head."

There was a sound of Coker's heavy feet tramping away. Then came a sharp tap at the door, and Wharton opened it. Mr. Quelch looked in.

"Wharton, it occurs to me that perhaps I was a little hasty in detaining you and your friends for the disturbance here an hour ago. Probably Coker was wholly to blame. He certainly was in your study at the time. His present conduct has caused me to change my mind. I rescind your detention."

"Oh, sir! Thanks awfully, sir!"
 "The thankfulness is terrific, most honoured and sublime sahib!"

Mr. Quelch nodded graciously and walked away. As soon as he was gone the chums of the Remove gave a whoop of triumph. Bob Cherry danced a war-dance round the table in his exhilaration of spirits.

"Oh, what topping luck! Hurrah!"
 Wharton rushed for a time-table and scanned it eagerly.

"Good egg! There's a train in twenty minutes from Courtfield. We can run all the way and catch it! We can see the Trojans, after all! Come on!"

"Good old Quelchy! What a kind man to reward us like this for wrecking Coker's stink-bike!" gasped Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The juniors rushed breathlessly from the study. They stayed only to snatch up their caps, and bolted across the Close and dashed out of the gates. They sprinted along the road to Courtfield as if they were on the cinder-path.

They had nearly reached Courtfield when there was a ringing of a bicycle bell behind them. Coker of the Fifth swept past—not on his stink-bike, but on his "push" machine—evidently bound for the station to catch the same train. The juniors sent a yell after him as he pedalled on into Courtfield.

"He's going, all the same!" grinned Bob Cherry breathlessly. "Coker's a sticker! Come on! Only four minutes more!"

The train was in the station when they reached it. Wharton took the tickets, and they rushed for the platform. The guard was waving his flag. Wharton tore open the door of the nearest carriage, and the Remove juniors bundled in. An angry voice yelled at them from within the carriage:

"Keep out of here, you fags!"
 It was Coker!

But the Removeites did not heed him. They bundled in headlong, and the guard slammed the door after them, and the train moved out of the station. And the Famous Five sat down in a row and smiled sweetly at Coker.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Pleasant Journey for Coker!

HORACE COKER frowned. He had reached the station, put up his bike there, and boarded the train for Lantham in the comfortable conviction that the heroes of the Remove would be left hopelessly behind.

And here they were, tumbled into the same carriage, as cheerful as so many monkeys!

Coker of the Fifth objected to travelling with juniors. It did not consort with his dignity as a senior and a Fifth-Former. And he sat very erect on his side of the carriage and strove to frown the Removeites into respectfulness. But it was all in vain. The more Coker frowned the more the Removeites smiled.

"How lucky we tumbled into the same carriage, Cokey!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "You'll have our company all the way to Lantham now!"

"Which will be a great pleasure for the esteemed and ludicrous Coker!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Don't talk to me!" roared Coker. "And, look here, don't you kids fasten on to me in Lantham! I don't like being seen with juniors!"

Bob Cherry took out his pocket-handkerchief and went through a pantomime of weeping bitterly into it.

"You kids will get a licking for this!" went on Coker. "You're detained! The best thing you can do is to get out at the next station and get back to the school!"

"But we're not detained," said Wharton, laughing. "We owe that to you, Coker. We want to thank you."

"Eh?"
 "Quelchy decided that we weren't to blame, after he found you hammering at our door. Of course, he was right. We never are to blame! It's only naughty Fifth-Formers who cause all the trouble!" said Bob Cherry, ceasing to weep, and wagging his forefinger at the enraged Coker.

"It's a sort of reward for wrecking your stink-bike!" explained Johnny Bull. "Thus is virtue rewarded by our kind teachers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Quelch is a silly ass!" growled Coker. "Anyway, shut up, and don't talk to me! And don't hang on to me in Lantham, that's all! Be quiet!"

"I think we might have a song to pass the time," said Bob Cherry, with a wink at his comrades. "It would cheer Coker up, too!"

And the juniors burst into song with all the force of five particularly healthy pairs of youthful lungs.

"Shut up!" roared Coker. "If you don't stop that row I'll jolly soon stop you!"

"Chorus, gentlemen!" said Bob Cherry. And the juniors roared more loudly than before.

Coker jumped to his feet. The happenings of the afternoon had had a very exasperating effect upon his temper—which was not to be wondered at—and he was at boiling-point now. He made a jump at Bob Cherry, who was nearest to him, and collared him.

"Rescue!" roared Bob. Five juniors piled on Coker in a moment, and he went down into the bottom of the carriage.

He struggled fiercely, but there was little room for a tussle in the carriage, and, having got Coker down, the Removeites kept him there.

"Put your feet on him!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't try to get up, Coker! You may get hurt! If your head knocks against my boot—"

"Yaroo!" roared Coker.
 "There! I knew it would happen! Why can't you keep quiet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Will you lemme gerrup?" gurgled Coker.

"No fear!"
 "I—I'll let you sing, if you like!" gasped Coker, finding that he could not escape from the five pairs of boots that were planted firmly upon him.

"Thank you for nothing—we're going to sing anyway!"
 "Lemme gerrup!"
 "Rats!"

"Look here," shrieked Coker frantically. "I can't lie on the floor all the way to Lantham, you silly young lunatics!"

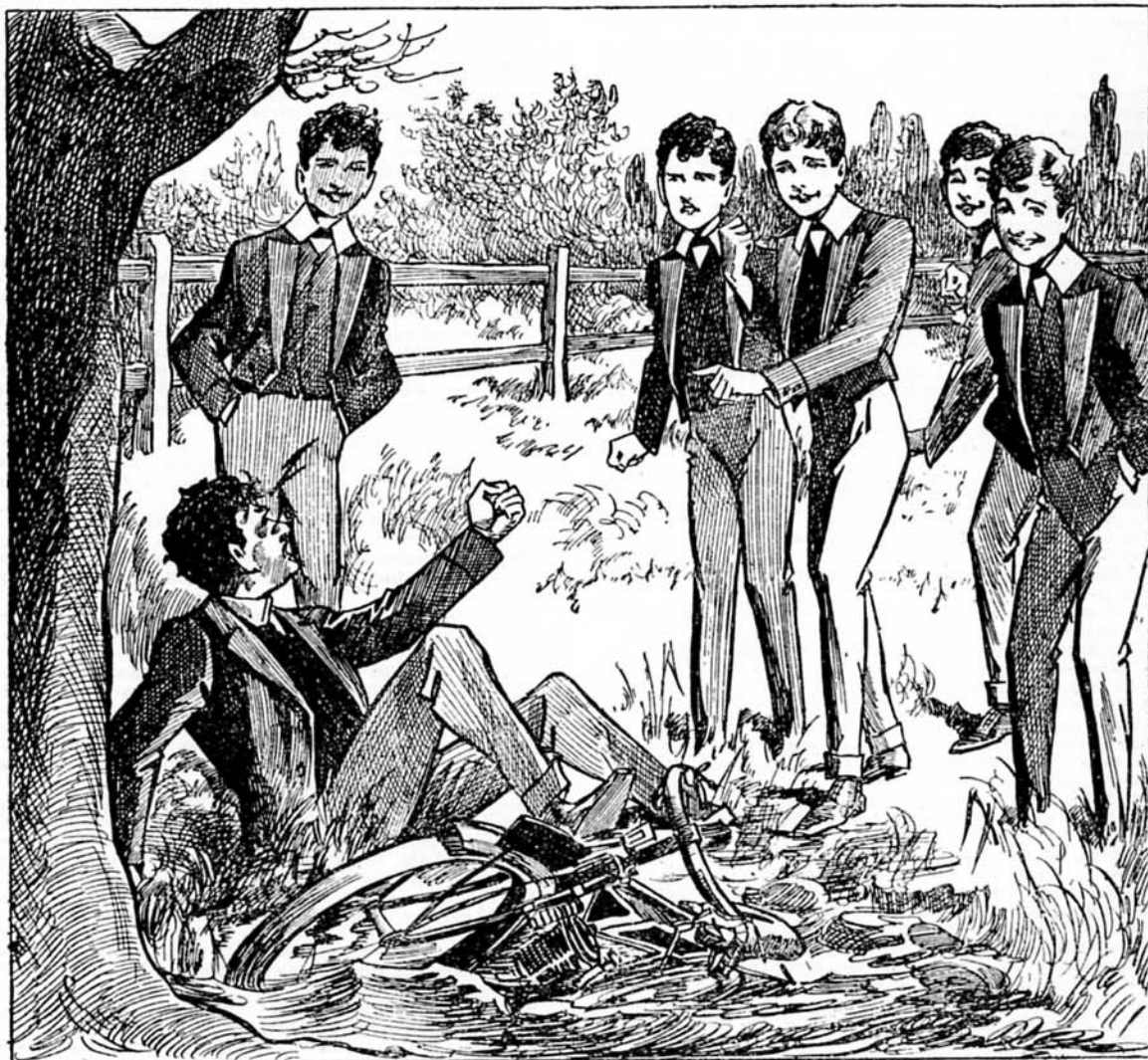
"Can't you?" said Wharton politely. "Well, we'll see! You never know what you can do till you try, you know."

"I—I—I'll— Lemme gerrup—"
 "Chorus, gentlemen!"

The juniors burst into melody again. Coker made a desperate effort to rise, but in vain. He was held down too firmly; and his clothes, in the struggle, were beginning to bear a close resemblance to a very dirty doormat. The juniors' boots

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The Removites grasped the infuriated Fifth-former, and he was swept off his feet, and deposited gently but firmly on his motor-bike in the ditch. There the juniors left him. "Those blessed Latin verbs won't seem so bad now!" remarked Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 3.)

had been very dusty after their run to Courtfield. The boots were not so dusty now—but Coker's clothes were.

Coker sank back with a gasp. The Famous Five looked down at him smilingly.

"Better take it calmly!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"I—I—I'll slaughter you for this!"

But Coker's threats were unheeded. The train rushed on, Coker remaining in his uncomfortable position, with five pairs of boots resting upon him.

"You can get up if you'll promise to be a good boy," said Wharton, after a quarter of an hour had elapsed, by which time Coker was reduced almost to a homicidal maniac.

"Say 'Please, pretty!'" said Bob Cherry.

"You young villains—"

"Well, you'll stay there till you say 'Please, pretty,' and promise to behave yourself!" said Wharton calmly.

Coker ground his teeth; but after another five minutes, he had had enough of it—more than enough.

"Lemme get up!" he gasped. "I'm being suffocated in this dust!"

"Will you say 'Please, pretty'?" asked Bob Cherry.

"P-p-please, pretty," gurgled Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you promise to behave yourself?"

"I p-p-promise!"

"He p-p-promises!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Gentlemen, move your hoofs!"

The gentlemen moved their hoofs, and Horace Coker staggered to his feet, dusty, dishevelled, and furious. He plumped down in his seat in the corner, and glowered at the Removites during the remainder of the run to Lantham. Bob Cherry stooped and picked up a ticket Coker had dropped from one of his pockets, and slipped it into his sleeve. He had an idea that Coker would want that ticket presently.

"Lantham!"

Coker jumped out of the train almost before it had stopped moving. He was very anxious to get away from the juniors. The Famous Five followed him in a more leisurely manner to the exit. Coker was first there, and behind him was a fat old gentleman with a pair of field-glasses slung over his shoulder, evidently going to the cricket-match. Next came a lady with a basket of washing on her arm, and then the juniors.

"Tickets, please!"

Coker was going through all his pockets.

"Tickets, please!"

"I—I've got a ticket!" panted Coker. "I—I can't find it!"

"Why don't you look after your ticket?" demanded the

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gentleman with the glasses. "Don't keep us waiting all day, young shaver!"

"I—I must have dropped it in the carriage," stammered Coker. "It's all right, my man—I took my ticket at Court-field—"

"You're keeping us waiting!" snorted the fat gentleman. "Why don't he keep 'is ticket in 'is 'and, if he can't remember where he puts it?" asked the lady with the basket, addressing space. "I always tells my little boy to keep 'is ticket in 'is 'and!"

Coker was crimson by this time. The exit was narrow, and the other passengers could not pass him, and they were impatient.

"You'll have to pay the price of the ticket, sir!" said the collector suspiciously.

He had had to deal before with travellers who had "lost" their tickets.

"Look here, I took my ticket—"

"You ain't got one—you'll 'ave to pay!"

"And hurry up!" said the fat gentleman. "Why, the Trojans will be batting now! Are you going to keep us here till midnight, boy?"

"Pay up, please, and let the gentleman pass!" said the collector. "One-and-threepence!"

"Look here, I'm not going—"

"Perhaps this is your ticket, Coker," said Bob Cherry blandly. "I picked it up in the carriage. I shouldn't wonder if it's yours!"

Coker grabbed the ticket, and gave Bob Cherry in return a glance that ought to have withered him up on the spot. He gave up the ticket and passed out, and the other passengers followed him. In the street Coker shook a big fist at Bob Cherry.

"You young sweep! You picked up that ticket on purpose!"

"Of course I did," said Bob innocently. "I didn't want you to have to pay over again, Coker."

"I mean, you kept it on purpose!" snorted Coker.

"Yes; I kept it for you, Coker, old scout. Don't you think it was kind of me—especially after the way you acted in the train?"

Coker seemed on the point of foaming at the mouth. He swung round, however, and stalked away in the direction of Lantham cricket-ground. The juniors followed him, and Coker turned his head furiously.

"Didn't I tell you not to hang on to me?" he roared.

"Oh, I say, you haven't bought the street, have you, Coker?"

"Keep your distance, you rotten fags!"

Coker increased his pace, and stalked on. The five juniors fell into line behind him, several paces behind, imitating his stalking motion with great success. Coker wondered why everybody he passed was grinning. He discovered, as soon as he looked round at the Removites.

It was not till he reached the turnstile of the cricket-ground that he succeeded in shaking them off. Coker, who did everything in style, paid for a seat in the grand stand. Harry Wharton & Co. paid their sixpences cheerfully, and went in with the crowd. They were in great good humour.

"I really think," Bob Cherry remarked meditatively, "that we have done the one and only Coker quite brown this time!"

And the Co. agreed that they had.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Trojans!

THE Lantham cricket-ground was crowded.

Evidently the third day of the county cricket-match was of keen interest to cricket lovers in the vicinity of Lantham. Indeed, excursion trains had brought in crowds of spectators from goodly distances. The fame of the Trojan team was widespread, and everybody who knew anything about cricket wanted to see them play. It was a brilliant, sunny afternoon, ideal weather for cricket, and the finish of the county match was going strong.

Harry Wharton & Co. found themselves in a thick crowd, but they managed to get a good view of the field. The Trojans were finishing their second innings, and the juniors learned that there were three more wickets to fall.

The chums sighted a good many other Greyfriars fellows in the crowd. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was there, and Harry Wharton & Co. joined him.

"How's the score, Smithy?" Wharton asked.

"Hallo, you here?" said the Bounder. "I heard you were detained. Bolted?"

Wharton laughed.

"No; let out! We came by the train after yours, so we're a bit late. Do you know how they stand?"

"County were 100 in their first innings, and 120 in their second—total, 220," said Vernon-Smith. "Trojans, 110 in their first innings. In their second, so far, they've made 90—three more wickets to fall."

"Who's batting?"

"The Trojan skipper—he was first in, and not out yet, this innings, I hear. He was batting when I got here, and he's still going strong."

The juniors looked with keen interest at the captain of the Trojans. He was a big, powerful fellow, with a handsome, good-natured face—the kind of fellow one takes a liking to at a glance. He had just swiped at the ball, and there was a roar from the big crowd, and a ripple of hand-clapping.

"Well hit! Well hit, sir!"

"They're not running!" remarked Nugent.

"It's a boundary! By Jove, that chap can hit!" said Harry Wharton. "Hallo, there's old Wingate, yelling like mad! I hear that the First Eleven were thinking of sending a challenge to the Trojans—they've a vacant date on Saturday."

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"Greyfriars' First wouldn't have much chance against a team like that!" he remarked. "They wouldn't play a school crowd, either."

"Might almost as well ask them to play the Remove!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"My hat—wouldn't that be ripping!" said Harry Wharton, with glistering eyes. "Not that we should have an earthly, but—"

"Well, they've got a vacant date!" chuckled Vernon-Smith. "Trot round after the match and ask them. They're staying at the Lantham Grand Hotel."

Wharton shook his head and laughed. To play a team like the Trojans would have filled his cup of happiness to overflowing; but, of course, it was not to be thought of. The Remove might as well have challenged the M.C.C., or I Zingari. Even Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, who had a tremendously good opinion of Greyfriars' First Eleven, hadn't the cheek to challenge the Trojans.

They watched the big, handsome Trojan captain. The county bowling was good, but the Trojan skipper was dealing with it with perfect ease. At the end of the over the score was 100, and the Trojans wanted only 11 to win. It was pretty clear that the extra wickets would not be wanted.

The field crossed over, and the bowling came to the Trojan captain's partner, upon whom all eyes were now turned.

"Who's that chap?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Flaherty," said Vernon-Smith. "He's a Trinity College, Dublin, man, and pretty nearly as good as his skipper. My hat, though, there he goes!"

It was a lucky catch in the slips, and the Trinity man, with a good-humoured grimace, carried out his bat.

Next man in took a single, and then the batting came to the Trojan captain again for the rest of the over.

"The finish won't be long now," Frank Nugent remarked.

"We've paid a tanner each for the last three overs."

"Worth it," said Wharton. "How that chap bats! It's worth a guinea a box to watch him in one over! There goes a boundary, bet you my hat!"

Harry Wharton was right. It was a boundary!

"Hundred and five!" said Vernon-Smith. "Six wanted to win! He'll get them in this over."

Again the creak of the willow and the leather, and the batsmen were running. One—two—three—four!

"Hurrah!"

"Well run!"

"Bravo, Lynn!"

Clap, clap, clap!

The ball came in, and Lynn's wicket was knocked to pieces; but the bat was on the crease, and the umpire shook his head.

"Not out!"

"Close shave!" remarked Bob Cherry. "But a miss is as good as a mile."

The ball came down again from the county bowler, and Lynn lashed out at it. Away it went, a speck on the blue, and the batsmen ran, and ran again! Then there was a roar of cheering.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo the Trojans!"

The Famous Five joined heartily in the cheering and hand-clapping. They had arrived only in time to see the finish; but it was a splendid finish. The Trojans had won the county match by a run and two wickets.

ANSWERS

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The crowd began to clear off the field. The burly shoulders of Coker of the Fifth were sighted in the crowd, as the chums of the Remove made their way to the gates, and they hailed him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there you are, Cokey!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Coker looked round, but he was not frowning now. Apparently his bad temper had passed, under the genial influence of the great game. He gave the Removites a nod.

"You kids see the finish?" he asked.
"Yes, rather! Ripping, wasn't it?" said Harry Wharton.
"Topping!" said Coker. "That chap Lynn, the Trojan skipper—did you notice that he has a way of driving just like mine?"

The juniors gasped.
"Like yours!"
"Yes, the way he drove that ball to the boundary. Just the way I should have played that kind of ball," said Coker.
"With the same result?" grinned Bob.
"Yes, of course," said Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What are you cackling at?" said Coker, his frowns returning. "Look here, Wharton. I've been thinking over what I said to you in your study to-day."

"Really?"
"Yes," said Coker impressively. "I've made up my mind to give you another chance."

"You're too good, Cokey," murmured Wharton.
"You see, I'm bound to play this season," said Coker, "and as Wingate can't make up his mind to put me in the First, and as Blundell is a silly ass, and—and—"

"As you're not wanted in the First Eleven, or in the Fifth Form team, or in the Shell, or the Fourth, you come to us!" grinned Wharton. "It's awfully kind of you, Coker, but we're not on the look-out for other fellows' leavings. Thanks, all the same!"

"I'm really paying you a great compliment, Wharton, taking it for granted that you know a good player when you see one. Wingate doesn't."

"Thanks for the compliment. But—"
"We'll call it settled," said Coker kindly. "That's all right, it's settled. Perhaps Potter and Greene will play too. They're left out of the First Eleven."

"That's a jolly big perhaps!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The fact is, Coker—"
"Nuff said!" replied Coker. "It's settled."

"It jolly well isn't settled!" exclaimed Wharton. "I tell you we wouldn't have you found dead in our team, Coker."

"Look here, you cheeky fag—"
"That's settled," said Harry Wharton. "But if you want a tip, I advise you to go and apply to the Third Form. Young Tubb may be glad to have you—perhaps! If, he doesn't want you, ask Nugent minor of the Second Form!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Coker's face was growing purple, and he made a dash at the juniors. But they melted away in the crowd, chuckling, and dodged Coker, who stalked away in great wrath. It was really too bad for a great cricketer like Coker to be going begging, as it were; but such was the state of the case, and Coker had to grin and bear it, or to bear it, at all events, even if he did not grin. The Remove fellows did the grinning.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Stunner!

POTTER and Greene came into the study in the Fifth Form passage at Greyfriars. Potter and Greene had the honour of sharing that study with Horace Coker.

Coker was there. He was sitting in the arm-chair, his hands thrust deep into his trousers-pockets, his long legs stretched out, and a thoughtful frown upon his rugged face.

Potter and Greene whistled at the sight of the study's interior. It was exactly as the Famous Five had left it after their visit. Coker did not seem to have noticed it. The two fellows stared round the dismantled study, and then stared at Coker.

"What have you done this for, Coker?" Greene demanded.
"Off your rocker?" asked Potter.

Coker snorted.
"Fatheads! Some of the fags did it while we were out."

"Well, you might have started putting the place to rights!" growled Potter, dragging the table out of the fender.

"Rats! I've got something more important than that to think of."

"Tea, I suppose you mean? Well, I'm hungry, too."

"I'm not thinking of tea."

"What then?"

"Cricket!"

"Oh, blow cricket!" said Potter. "I'm hungry. There's nothing in the cupboard. Are you going to stand a tea, or shall we go into Hall?"

"Too late for that," said Greene. "Old Coker's going to stand a feed, of course. We can always rely on old Coker in the hour of need."

"Oh, bother tea!" said Coker. "Look here, I'm thinking something out, and I want you chaps to help me."

"We'll help you," said Potter, "only let's have tea. We can talk better over tea, you know. You must be hungry, too."

"Well, so I am, now I come to think of it," admitted Coker. "You chaps get the room to rights, while I buzz down to the tuckshop."

"Now you're talking!" said Greene heartily.

Coker left the study, and Potter and Greene exchanged a wink. Coker was rolling in money, owing to the generosity of his affectionate Aunt Judy. Potter and Greene were not rolling in money. Coker was very lavish with his cash; and Potter and Greene did not conceal from one another the fact that that was how they came to be able to stand Coker.

When Coker stood a feed, his study-mates would listen to his remarks on footer or cricket with great gravity, and sympathise with him over his unjust exclusion from the First Eleven. On a good turn deserved another! But if Coker's supply of cash had run short permanently, if the horn of plenty had ceased to flow, he would probably have heard some startling opinions from Potter and Greene on the subject of his cricket and himself. They liked Coker. Nobody could help liking a big, good-natured fellow like old Coker, though he was several sorts of an ass. But it was the horn of plenty that made his study-mates so patient with him, and made them treat him as the head and leader of the study.

"Poor old Coker!" murmured Potter. "I wonder what makes him fancy that he can play cricket! Queer, ain't it?"

"'Strordin'!" said Greene. "He's asked Wingate for a place in the First Eleven!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, Wingate won't even give me a place in the senior eleven," said Green, "and as for Coker—"

"Well, that's not surprising," said Potter. "What beats me is that Wingate doesn't put me in. You've noticed that late cut of mine—"

"Yes, I have!" snorted Greene. "Very late sometimes, isn't it, after the ball has knocked your bails off."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Look here, you fathead—"

And, with that exchange of compliments, Potter and Greene proceeded to spread the tea-table. Horace Coker came back into the study with a big parcel under his arm and the thoughtful frown still upon his face—Coker was evidently doing an unusual amount of thinking that day.

"Here you are!" said Coker. "Got the kettle boiling? That's right! No need to cook anything. I've got ham, and a cold pie."

"Good egg!" said Potter. "I'm pretty sharp set. You're a jolly good sort, Coker, old scout, and it's a shame they don't put you into the First Eleven!"

Coker nodded, and sat down to tea.

"The fellows think Wingate knows a lot about cricket," he remarked, "but he doesn't. He plays a pretty good game himself, I'll admit that, but he's no judge of another fellow's form."

"Not a bit," said Greene. "Pass the pie! I say, this is a spiffing pie!"

"But it isn't Wingate I want to speak about," said Coker. "He can go and eat coke! Nor Blundell either. I'm fed up with Blundell! I had a good idea—a ripping idea! I made up my mind to play for the juniors, as the seniors can't see my form. My scheme was to play such a game that Wingate would see what he'd lost, and come round begging me to play for the First."

Potter seemed to choke over a mouthful of pie.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Yow! You—you shouldn't say those funny things when I've just filled my mouth—Ow!"

"Funny things!" roared Coker. "What do you mean? I'm not being funny."

"My mistake!" murmured Potter. "I thought you were."

"Look here—"

"Of—of course, it was a ripping idea!" said Potter hastily, remembering that Horace Coker was standing the feed.

"Have the juniors accepted? I suppose they jumped at it?"

"They would!" murmured Greene.

"They haven't!" said Coker.

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Potter.

Coker nodded.

"They've refused. Hobson of the Shell—you know he used to be my pal when I was in the Shell—he's up against me because I've passed into the Fifth before him. It isn't my fault that I've got more brains than Hobson, is it?"

9

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

FOR NEXT MONDAY—

"THE UNINVITED GUESTS!"

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"Not at all!" gasped Potter.

"They say it was your Aunt Judy bullying the Head that made him give you a leg-up in the school, Coker," said Greene bitterly. "Of course, there's nothing in it."

"Of course not," said Coker. "However, as I was saying, Hebson cut up rusty. Even Temple of the Fourth declined my services."

"Cheeky little beast!"

"Yes. So I put it to the Remove fellows."

"They jumped at it, of course?"

"No, they didn't!"

"You don't mean to say that the Lower Fourth declined the services of a cricketer like you, Coker?" exclaimed Potter, with an air of great astonishment.

"But I do!" said Coker.

"Well, things are coming to something, I must say!" said Potter, with a shake of the head. "After that, I shouldn't be surprised to hear anything!"

"Well, it's something for a fellow to be appreciated and understood in his own study," said Coker. "Outside this study there's not a chap at Greyfriars who will admit that I'm a good cricketer."

That fact was easily to be explained, by the circumstance that Coker's feeds were stood inside his study. But Potter and Greene did not mention that. They nodded sympathetically.

"Well," said Coker, "Wingate can go and eat coke, and Blundell can drown himself, for all I care. What gets on my nerves is the cheek of those Remove kids. They ought to have jumped for joy at the idea of a Fifth Form chap playing for them—especially a player of my class. But they only yelled at the idea. I gave them a second chance, too, and Wharton advised me to apply to the Third or Second."

Potter gurgled.

"Going to do it?" he asked.

"Of course not!" snorted Coker. "It would be a bad enough come-down to play for the Lower Fourth, but to play with little fags would be a bit too thick. The Remove is the lowest Form I could possibly play for, and, as a matter of fact, I should have preferred them to the Fourth. There's no denying that they play a good game, especially Wharton and Vernon-Smith and that New Zealand chap, Brown. I shouldn't have been ashamed of being seen playing with them."

"But now—"

"Now I'm going to make them sorry for their blessed cheek," said Coker. "They think I'm an ass—they've said so—"

"No!" murmured Potter.

"They have! Well, I'm going to make them sit up!" announced Coker. "I was thinking of it over at Lantham to-day, when I was watching the Trojans. They think a lot of their blessed Remove eleven. The idea came into my head. I happened to hear a Remove kid—Todd of the Remove—say to another young rascal, how ripping it would be to play the Trojans."

"Play the Trojans!" gasped Potter. "The Remove—a fag team! Why, the Trojans are too high and mighty to play Greyfriars First Eleven! My hat!"

"Oh, he was only saying how ripping it would be," said Coker. "They're not thinking of challenging the Trojans, of course. Even the Remove haven't cheek enough for that. But the remark put an idea into my head."

"There was room for it," murmured Greene.

"Eh? What did you say, Greene?"

"I said it was bound to be a jolly good idea," said Greene calmly. "I'm quite anxious to hear it. Go ahead, Coker!"

"Well," said Coker, "I thought it out, and I thought that it was simply a stunning wheeze, even for me."

"Then it must have been a stunner!"

"It was," said Coker. "It is. You fellows know that the Remove always cheek the Fifth. They haven't the slightest respect for us seniors. They jape us—they've taken us in lots of times—even me—"

"Cheeky little beggars!" agreed Potter.

"We've agreed lots of times that they ought to be kept in their place—only—"

"Only they have a way of keeping their end up when we go for them," Potter remarked. "We don't always have good luck in dealing with the little beasts."

"Exactly. But my idea will simply squelch them this time—make them look silly idiots to all the school," said Coker, with a chuckle. "I've got a scheme for guying them—making them the laughing-stock of Greyfriars. What do you think of that?"

"Ripping!" said Potter. "If it works."

"If!" murmured Greene.

"Well, I'll explain it. Suppose the Remove received a challenge from the Trojans to play them at cricket? The Trojans have a vacant date on Saturday."

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"What!"

"What do you think they'd do?" asked Coker.

"They'd accept it, of course. They've got conceit enough for anything," said Potter. "And they'd gloat over the seniors about it, too. But as there isn't the slightest chance of their receiving a challenge from the Trojans, I don't quite see the point. I tell you Lynn's team wouldn't even play our First Eleven, let alone a fag team. You're wandering in your mind, Coker, old man."

"That's my scheme," explained Coker.

"Eh? What is?"

"The Remove are going to receive a challenge from the secretary of the Trojans Club, asking them to play on Saturday at Lantham."

"But—b-b-but—" gasped Potter.

"Of course, it won't come from the Trojans," Coker chuckled. "They'll think it does, but it won't. I'm going to send it from Lantham."

"You!"

"Exactly."

Potter and Greene stared blankly at their leader. They had always listened to Horace Coker's ideas, hitherto, with hidden merriment. Coker was not really a fellow of brilliant ideas. But this time—

"Oh, my hat!" said Potter.

"My only sainted aunt!" said Greene.

"I've worked it all out in my mind," said Coker confidently. "Wharton will receive a letter dated from the Grand Hotel, Lantham—that's where the Trojans are staying, you know."

"But it would have to be written on the hotel paper, or they'd spot it at once," Potter exclaimed.

"Quite simple. It's going to be written at the hotel."

"Oh! But—but the handwriting—"

"I shall get another chap to copy it out—a chap I know in Lantham."

"Oh!" said Potter again. "But—but the name—"

"That's where I think I've hit it!" chuckled Coker. "I've thought it all out. The Trojans' secretary is named Smith."

"Yes, everybody knows that."

"Well, the chap I know in Lantham is named Jones, as a matter of fact—he's a sporting tout, and a pretty tough character, I fancy. I don't really know him, you know," added Coker hastily. "I leave that kind of thing to Loder and Carne and their set—but one day at Lantham I met the man, and he got me to put some money on a horse. I did it just for a lark—"

"Lucky the Head didn't get to know about your lark," commented Potter.

"Well, I lost the tin, and since then this man Jones has written to me once or twice to tell me of some more good things, and I've put his letters in the fire," said Coker. "I did it once for a lark, but I don't care for that sort of thing—it's bad form. But I'm going to make use of Jones—see?"

"No, I don't quite see."

"The chap's name is Jones, but he's going to take a room at the Grand Hotel in the name of Smith."

"Great Scott!"

"He will write the letter on the hotel paper and sign it Smith," continued Coker. "He will add the number of his room—say, twenty. When Wharton writes back accepting the challenge, he'll put the number of the room on the letter. Then it will be delivered to my man's room, and not to the Trojans' secretary at all."

"Oh!"

"Then there'll be another letter from Smith, clinching the matter," added Coker, "and the Remove kids won't have any reason to suppose that it's not all serene."

"My hat!"

"But—but isn't that forgery?" stuttered Greene.

Coker snorted contemptuously.

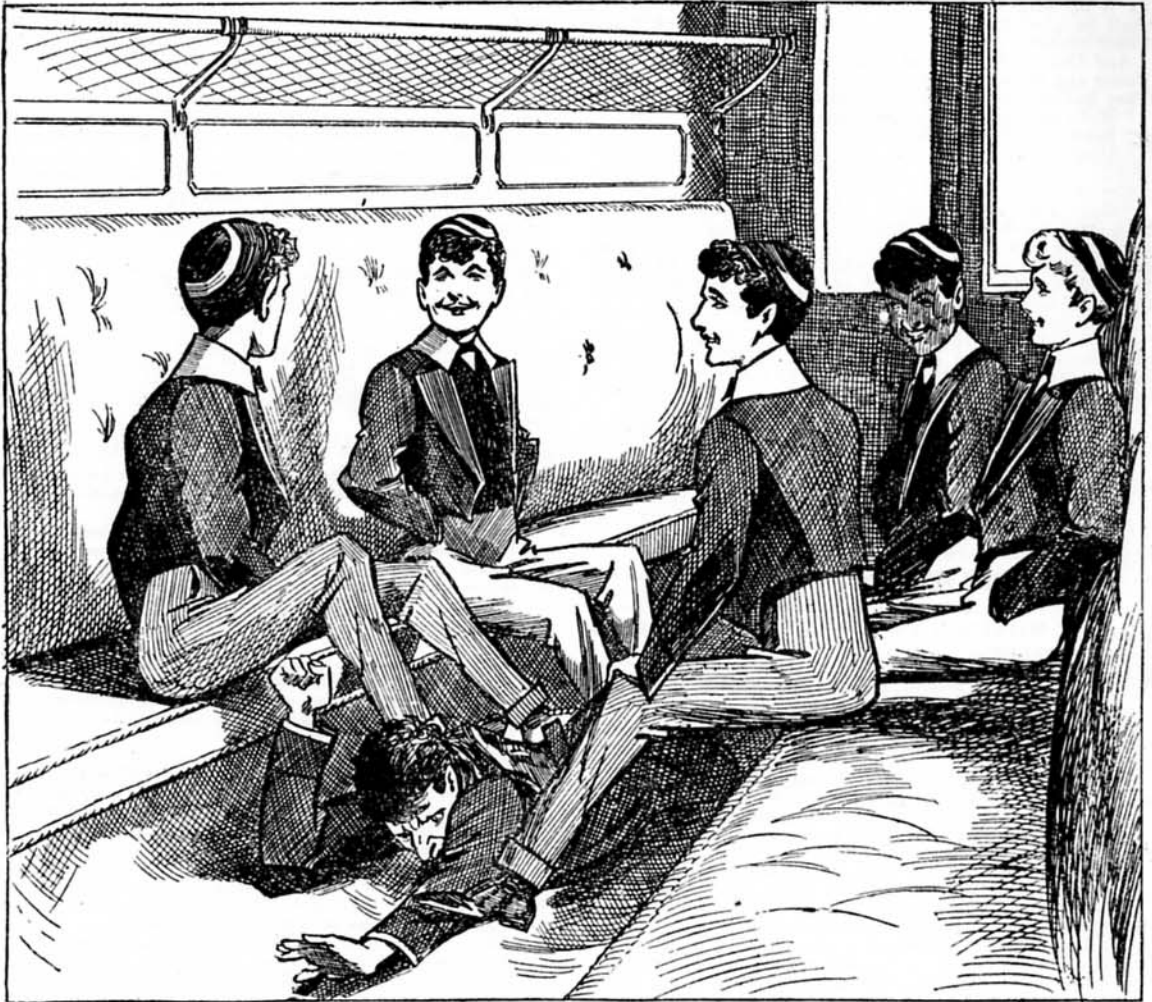
"Of course it isn't, fathead! There won't be any imitation of handwriting. Wharton doesn't know the fist of the real Smith, so there wouldn't be any need. Jones will simply write in his own hand."

"But using the other man's name—"

"Anybody can use the name of Smith if he likes. In fact, I don't believe Jones is really the man's name at all—that kind of man changes his name pretty often. He may be named Smith for all I know," argued Coker, "or Brown or Robinson. He's going to stay at the Grand Hotel under the name of Smith, and he will have the right to receive letters in that name."

"But—but calling himself the Trojans' secretary—"

"He won't do that. The letter will be worded carefully. It will simply be a letter from Smith, asking the Remove team to meet the Trojans on Saturday. Anybody has a right to call himself Smith, and write a letter like that. If the



Coker made a desperate effort to rise from the floor of the carriage, but the five pairs of boots were planted on him too firmly. "Better take it calmly!" said Bob Cherry. "I—I—I'll laugh at you for this!" howled Coker. (See Chapter 4.)

Remove kids choose to think that this Smith is the Trojan Smith, that's their look-out!"

"Ha, ha! But they're bound to think so, when the letter is a challenge to play the Trojans, and comes from the Trojans' hotel."

"Of course; otherwise, they wouldn't be taken in. Afterwards, when they look at the letter, they'll see that the writer doesn't say he's the Trojans' secretary at all. But they'll notice that too late."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, if they weren't conceited young bounders, they'd think there was something queer in the Trojans being willing to play them!" chuckled Coker. "But they're so satisfied with themselves, that they'll take all that for granted!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll march over to Lantham on Saturday morning; they'll ask the Head for the morning off, and he'll give it to them, of course, on such an occasion as that, and they'll arrive there to play the Trojans—"

Potter and Greene simply yelled. The picture of the Trojans' astonishment, when a team of junior schoolboys arrived uninvited to play them—the thought of the horror and dismay of the Removites when they discovered that it was a jape—struck Potter and Greene irresistibly. Coker was certainly coming out. Never, in all his career, had the great Coker been quite so brilliant as this.

Coker grinned with satisfaction. No man, it was said of old, is regarded as a prophet in his own country, but

certainly, on this occasion, Coker was fully appreciated in his own study. Potter and Greene even forgot the pie in their hilarity.

"Well, what do you think of the idea?" asked Coker.

"Ripping!"

"Top hole!"

"Of course, it will cost some tin," said Coker. "My man Jones won't do it for nothing, and there will be his hotel expenses."

Potter and Greene suddenly ceased to laugh. That was a serious aspect of the case.

"Ahem!" murmured Potter. "I—I fancy it's rather too risky, after all. The fags would be bound to spot it, I think."

"Sure to," said Greene, with a shake of his head. "Wharton's rather sharp, and they might smell a rat, and—"

"Of course, I'm going to stand all the exes," said Coker cheerfully. "I've got plenty of money, and a jape like that on the Remove would be worth a few quid."

Again Potter and Greene's expressions changed. It was really quite kaleidoscopic. They grinned genially.

"On second thoughts, I don't see why they should spot it!" declared Potter.

"Not at all!" agreed Greene. "I think the wool will be pulled over their eyes beautifully. It's a gorgeous idea!"

"First chop, and no mistake!"

"Oh, topping!"

"Keep it dark, of course!" said Coker impressively.

"Not a whisper outside this study. I'll send a postcard to Jones, asking him to meet me somewhere to-morrow, and fix it up with him. Of course, we can discuss details; I shall be glad to have suggestions from you chaps," said Coker condescendingly.

And Coker left the study with the postcard in his hand. Potter and Greene stared at one another across the tea-table. They had not recovered from their astonishment.

"Well, this beats the giddy band!" said Potter.

"Beats it hollow!" assented Greene.

"How on earth did Coker come to think of a wheeze like that?"

Greene shook his head.

"Don't ask me!" he said. "It simply beats me! May be a sign that he's going to be ill or something! Why, it's the biggest jape that ever was japed! Just fancy the faces of those cheeky young beggars when they arrive at Lantham, and find that the Trojans don't expect them, and won't play them, and have never even heard of their existence!"

Potter yelled with merriment.

"And just fancy the reception we'll give them when they come back!" almost sobbed Greene. "Why, they'll be laughed to death! They won't dare to show their faces in the Close afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And just fancy Coker thinking of it—old Coker—Coker, you know—"

"What blithering duffer was it said that the age of miracles was past?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And they yelled again.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Meets a Man!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. smiled when they saw Coker the next day.

Coker smiled, too.

It was after lessons, and Coker was just going out—to meet a man. A man who had made an appointment in reply to a postcard of the previous day, as a matter of fact. But the chums of the Remove did not know anything about that.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Coker, old man!" said Bob Cherry genially. "Have they put you into the First Eleven yet?"

"Not yet," said Coker, with equal geniality.

"Trying for the Third Form team yet?" asked Johnny Bull affably.

To the juniors' surprise, Coker did not frown or scowl, and neither did he fly into a temper. He only laughed.

"No; I'm not bothering the Third," he replied.

"The Second, perhaps?" asked Frank Nugent. "My minor might give you a chance in the Second Form eleven!"

"No; I won't worry your minor," said Coker. "So-long, you fellows! I've got to see a man."

And Coker nodded and walked away.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked after his burly form as it disappeared across the Close, and then looked at one another. Coker's manner puzzled them. He seemed to be in a state of complete satisfaction, and yet it was quite certain that none of his cricket aspirations had been realised.

"Don't quite catch on," said Bob. "Cokey seems to have something up his sleeve. He is in a remarkably good temper, compared with yesterday, anyway. Surely the one and only Coker can't be planning anything up against our noble selves?"

There was a general chuckle. The Famous Five were not alarmed at the idea of Horace Coker planning anything up against them. They had no doubt whatever of their powers to deal with anything that Coker might plan.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, coming out of the House, "seen Coker? Do you know, he had a big remittance this afternoon—a whacking money-order from his Aunt Judy, I think! At least, it was her writing on the envelope—"

"Prying again!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Well, I happened to pass Coker when he was opening the letter," explained Bunter. "I say, where has he gone? I want to speak to him most particularly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Bunter crossly. "If Coker likes to cash a postal-order for me in advance, it's no bizney of yours, I suppose! Where is he?"

"Just gone out," said Wharton. "After him, Bunt—run him down! If you get anything out of Coker you shall stand us a feed!"

Billy Bunter did not reply, but he scudded across the Close as fast as his fat little legs would carry him. He was evidently determined to tackle Coker before the hero of the Fifth had had time or opportunity to get rid of that handsome remittance from Aunt Judy.

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The Famous Five went down to cricket practice. Cricket was at full swing now, and the Removites were preparing keenly for great victories that season. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, was very keen about getting his team into the best possible shape to beat the Courtfield fellows in the first important match of the season. And the Remove eleven was already in great form.

Tom Brown, the New Zealander, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were splendid bowlers, and in Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull, the Remove had three bats that any team might have been proud of.

The Remove were easily ahead of the Fourth at cricket, and they firmly believed that they could beat the Shell hollow; indeed, they would have tackled the Fifth Form cheerfully, if the seniors could have been induced to give them a match.

Harry Wharton kept his men hard at practice, and it was not till dusk was falling that the Remove players came off the pitch, pretty well satisfied with themselves. They came back in a crowd to the School House, ready for tea.

Funds being "up" in No. 1 Study, Wharton had the eleven there to tea, and they were crowding in the study—somewhat close quarters for so many fellows—what Billy Bunter looked in. Billy Bunter appeared a little dusty and red after his walk.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Did you find Coker?"

"Yes, I did," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you might make room for a chap. I'll sit in your chair, Toddy, if you've finished!"

"But I haven't finished," said Peter Todd calmly.

"Linley, old man, if you're done with your chair—"

"I haven't done with it," said Mark, laughing.

"Oh, really, you know; make room for a fellow—"

"Buzz off!" said Harry Wharton. "This is a tea to members of the Form eleven, and there isn't room for a porpoise."

"Well, I should be in the Form eleven if it wasn't for personal jealousy on the part of the committee," retorted Bunter. "I say, I've got something to tell you chaps, too, only don't let it go any further. It's about Coker."

"Keep it!" said Nugent.

Bunter helped himself to cake.

"I suppose you chaps didn't know that Coker was following in Loder's footsteps?" he remarked. "It's a fact! He's going in for the same kind of thing that you used to go in for, Smitty."

Vernon-Smith frowned.

"What do you mean, you fat fool?" he asked curtly.

"Well, you know what you're called the Boulder for," chuckled Bunter. "Blessed if I ever thought old Coker was given to putting bobs on gee-gees, though."

"Coker!" exclaimed all the juniors, in astonishment.

"Yes, Coker! I'll have some of that jam, Nugent."

"You'll have a thick car, if you come here telling lies about Coker," said Harry Wharton gruffly. "We know he's an ass, but he's not that kind of an ass."

"Well, I didn't think so till to-day," said Bunter. "But I found him out to-day. You know I went out after him to ask him about cashing a postal-order for me, a postal-order I'm expecting this evening. Well, I found him in the lane, talking to a chap. I don't know the chap by sight, but he had bookmaker written all over him."

"Rats!"

"Honour bright!" said Bunter. "A chap with a sporting look, you know, and a big cigar, and sham diamonds and things. I was taken aback, and, feeling it my duty to see what Coker was really up to, I walked on the grass beside the road. I—I mean, I happened to be walking on the grass, and they didn't see me coming. So I happened to hear the man say, 'I can give you a good thing for the Magford Handicap, Master Coker.'"

"Bosh!"

"He did!" roared Bunter. Like many persons who followed the profession of the celebrated Ananias, Billy Bunter was very much annoyed when his word was doubted. "I tell you I heard him plainly."

"Then you are a spying sneak!" growled Bob Cherry.

"What else did they say?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I didn't hear any more, because Coker caught sight of me, and he came towards me," said Bunter. "I think he was going to be a beast, so I bolted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But that shows that Coker isn't what we thought him," said Bunter. "It would serve him right to give him away to his Form-master—what?"

"Let me catch you giving him away," growled Peter Todd. "I'll break a cricket-stump over your fat carcass!"

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"You fat duffer!" said Bob Cherry. "Coker isn't that

kind of a chap. You've made some idiotic mistake, or else you're telling whoppers, as usual."

"Look here, Bob Cherry—"

"Oh, shut up! Fed up!"

"I tell you I saw the man, and I heard him say—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry. "If you've been spying you needn't come here with your yarns. Kick him out, somebody!"

"Oh, I say, you fellows! Yah! Yaroooh!"

Bunter departed violently from the study, and the door slammed on him. His only consolation was that he took a large chunk of cake in each fat hand.

When tea was over Peter Todd went back to his own study, and he found Billy Bunter there. The Owl of the Remove scowled at him over his spectacles. Peter Todd's face wore a thoughtful expression as he looked at him.

"Is that fact or gas about Coker, Bunt?" he asked, eyeing the fat junior.

"Fact!" growled Bunter.

"Coker must be an ass if he's being led into any nonsense by a betting sharper," said Peter Todd musingly, "and a still bigger ass to meet the man near the school. You don't know who the man was?"

"I heard Coker call him Jones."

"Jones. I've heard that name before, certainly," grinned Peter Todd. "Well, keep your mouth shut about it, Bunter, or there's a licking for you! I think I'll speak to Coker. He's a silly ass, and cheeky, but I don't want to see him sacked!"

Peter Todd walked to the Fifth-Form passage. As he approached Coker's door he heard a sound of laughter within. He knocked on the door.

"Come in!" sang out Coker.

Peter Todd entered. Coker and Potter and Greene were having tea, and they seemed very hilarious about it. They seemed more hilarious still at the sight of Peter Todd. The mere sight of a member of the Remove cricket eleven seemed to move their mirth greatly.

"Hallo!" said Coker, with a wink at his comrades. "What do you want, young shaver?"

"I've come here to do you a good turn," said Todd, puzzled by the merriment of the Fifth-Formers. "I've just heard from Bunter that he saw you meet a man in the lane to-day, a man he says looks like a bookmaker."

Coker started.

"Yes, the young rotter was spying on me," he said.

"What about it?"

"Then it's true?" exclaimed Peter.

"Quite true."

"Well, you ass! You don't mean to say that you're taking up rotten games like Loder of the Sixth?" exclaimed Peter, aghast.

The Fifth-Formers roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not exactly!" chuckled Coker. "Not quite that!"

"Bunter says he heard—"

Horace Coker jumped.

"Bunter heard! What did he hear?" he exclaimed, in evident alarm.

"He heard the man say something to you about a good thing for the Mugford Race."

"Oh," said Coker, breathing more freely, "is that all?"

"That's all. It's enough, I should think. Enough to get you into trouble if the Head knew," said Peter warmly. "I came here to warn you. If you must play the giddy goat don't meet your precious friends close by Greyfriars, or you'll be landing yourself in Queer Street. I'll see that Bunter doesn't cackle this out. But you ought to be more careful."

"Much obliged!" grinned Coker. "But Bunter can cackle it out if he likes. You see, I haven't been putting money on horses. Nothing of the sort. Quite a different sort of thing. Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Blessed if I quite understand," said Peter Todd, puzzled and cross. "However, I've said what I came to say, and you can go and eat cake!"

And he retired from the study, closing the door after him with quite unnecessary force.

The chums of the Fifth laughed uproariously when he had gone.

"Not a suspish!" grinned Potter.

"Not a bit of it," said Coker. "I was afraid, just for a minute, when he said Bunter had heard something. As a matter of fact, that ass Jones fancied I wanted to see him about a race, and he began with a dead cert for the Mugford Race, and that was what Bunter heard. But I soon switched him off. No blessed horse-racing for me. I hope I've got too much sense for that. I fixed it all up with Jones about the jape, and it's jolly lucky Bunter didn't hear any of that—what?"

"Yes, rather. And it's all settled?" asked Greene.

"To the last nail," said Coker. "Wharton gets the letter THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 325.

to-morrow morning. Just time for them to answer, you know, and that's all before Saturday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Fifth-Formers finished their tea in great spirits.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. The Impossible Happens!

"GREAT pip!"

Harry Wharton uttered that ejaculation in tones of the greatest astonishment.

It was morning—Friday morning. Wharton stood with a letter in his hand, which had come by the first post.

Wharton had opened it carelessly enough. He had noticed that the postmark was Lantham, and wondered who could be writing to him from Lantham, as he did not know anyone there. But as he glanced over the letter, the carelessness faded from his face, and an expression of amazement replaced it. He caught his breath, his eyes opened wide, and he was gasping by the time he finished the letter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Someone left you a fortune?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Better than that, if I'm not dreaming!" Wharton gasped. "Dreaming!" said Bob. "You're not dreaming, my son. Shall I pinch you to prove that you're awake?"

"No, ass! Keep off! But—but it seems like a giddy dream. The Trojans, you know!"

"What about the Trojans?"

"Their secretary—Smith—"

"Yes; I know their secretary's named Smith," said Bob, in wonder. "Everybody knows it, who's taken the trouble to know anything about them. What are you driving at?"

"This letter is from him."

"From Smith!"

"Yes."

"The Trojans' sec.!"

"Yes."

"My hat! What does he say?"

"They want us to play them!"

Bob Cherry jumped clear of the floor.

"Play them! Play the Trojans!"

"Yes!"

"Impossible!" gasped Bob.

"Here it is—in black and white!"

"But it's impossible! The Trojans play a junior school team! Why, we might as well think of playing I. Zingari, or the M.C.C. itself!" exclaimed Bob. "You're dreaming, alter all! I'd better pinch you—"

"Cheese it, you ass! I tell you it's so!"

Wharton's exclamations had been heard, and a little crowd of juniors had gathered round. There was amazement and incredulity in every face. A challenge from the high and mighty Trojans, to the Remove of Greyfriars! A challenge from the M.C.C. would not have been more astonishing. It was amazing—incredible—impossible! But even while they pronounced it all three of these things, the juniors' faces glowed at the bare idea of playing the Trojans. What a triumph for the Remove, to meet that famous team, even though a deadly certain licking was the result! After such a match, the Remove would be the heroes of Greyfriars—even the great and dignified First Eleven, with all the crack players of the Sixth and Fifth in it, had never been able to book such a fixture.

"Must be a mistake!" said Mark Linley soberly. "You've got the letter instead of Wingate. It's barely possible they might play the First Eleven. But us—"

"Out of the question," said Tom Brown.

Wharton held up the letter.

"Read it!" he said. "There's my name plain enough—on the envelope, and on the letter, too. It's amazing—but there you are. They want to play us!"

The juniors crowded round to read the letter. They craned over one another's shoulders in their eagerness to see the precious document. And there was a buzz of amazement, stupefaction, and delight, as they read the unmistakable lines.

The letter ran:

"Grand Hotel, Lantham.

"Dear Wharton,—I dare say you will be surprised to get this letter. I hope, however, you will be able to do as we want. Would you care to meet the Trojans in a one-day match?"

"We have heard a good deal about the form of the Greyfriars Remove at cricket. We have a free day to-morrow—Saturday—and if you would care to bring over a team, we shall be happy to meet you and give you a match. In case you agree, stumps to be pitched at 10 a.m., play to close at 6 p.m. We hope you will come. Let me know by return of post if you can.—Sincerely yours,

"J. SMITH (Room 16)."

The Removites simply gasped.

There was no doubt about it.

It was a friendly challenge from the Trojans. That glorious experience the Remove fellows had not dared to dream of, a match with the famous amateur team, was to be a reality—and it had come utterly unexpected—unasked—unhoped for. "Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "That's genuine enough! They've got an off day on Saturday—we knew that—and they're willing to play us. The chap says he's heard of us."

"Well, a good many people have heard of us," Johnny Bull remarked. "We play St. Jim's, you know, and there are some old St. Jim's boys in the Trojan team. Lynn himself used to be at St. Jim's, I believe."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That may be how they came to hear of us," he agreed. "Or, perhaps, they've heard of some of our matches round here. We've beaten Redelyffe and Courtfield and Highcliffe and a good many other teams."

"I suppose they intend to practise to-morrow, anyway—and they think playing us will be as good as practising with the groundsmen," Peter Todd remarked.

"Well, it will be as good as that, anyway," said Wharton.

"Of course, we can't beat them!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Beat them! Beat the Trojans!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Why, the County couldn't beat them! The M.C.C. could hardly beat them."

"Still, we'll have a try," said Harry Wharton determinedly. "We'll see what we can do. As they're going to play us, we'll give them a run for their money."

"Yes, rather!"

"We shall have to get off to-morrow morning from lessons," added Harry, with a glance at the letter. "I'm sure Quelch will let us off, under the circumstances. I'll ask him, and then we'll answer the letter at once."

"Good egg!"

Harry Wharton hurried away in search of his Form-master, leaving the fellows in a buzz of delight and amazement.

Mr. Quelch looked a little surprised as Wharton came up to him, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, the letter in his hand.

"Well, what is it, Wharton?" asked the Form-master good-naturedly.

"If you please, sir, I want to ask you a favour. Will you read this letter, sir?"

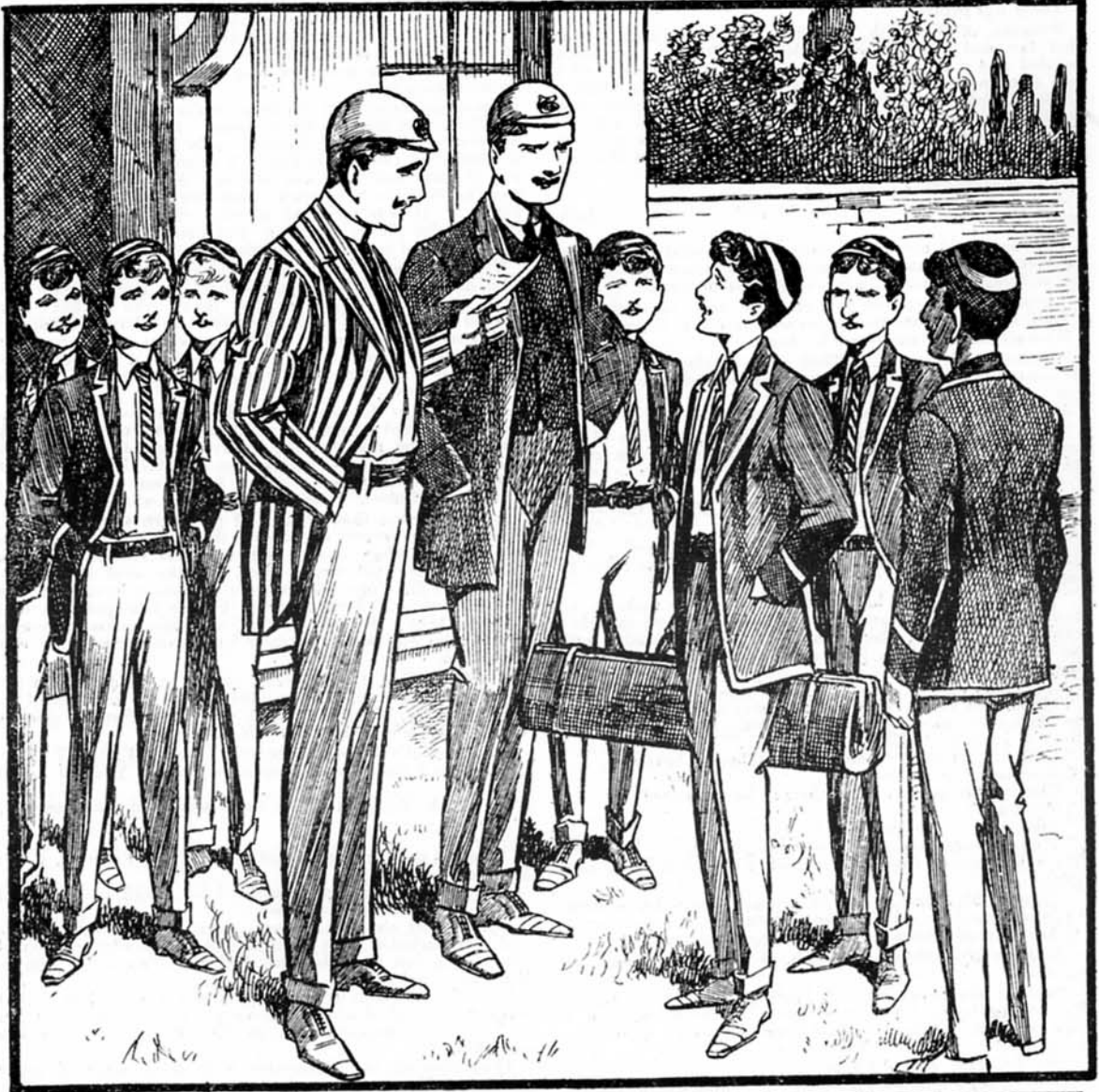
"Certainly!"

Mr. Quelch read the letter, and gasped. He knew something about the Trojans and their reputation. A challenge



AMBITIONS—No. 2.

The above picture illustrates the ambition of many a sturdy Magnetite—to become a fireman and to fight the flames, ready always to risk life and limb at the call of duty.



The juniors scanned Lynn's face eagerly as he read the note. "That's all right—what?" demanded Nugent. "I'm afraid it's not all right!" said the Trojan captain. "Some silly person has been playing a joke on you! This letter was not written by our secretary at all!" (See Chapter 12.)

from that famous team to the Greyfriars Remove took his breath away. He stared blankly at the letter.

"This—is this is amazing, Wharton!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, isn't it, sir? Will you let the members of the Remove eleven off lessons to-morrow morning, sir, so that we can meet them? It's the chance of a lifetime, sir," Wharton added anxiously. "The First Eleven would be jolly glad of a chance to play the Trojans. It's an honour for Greyfriars."

"I quite understand that, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, who had been a cricketer himself in his younger days. "I understand your eagerness to accept this challenge. It amazes me that it has been sent to you—but certainly you may accept it. You may certainly take your team over to Lantham to-morrow morning, with my very best wishes."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

Wharton rushed back to his chums. To Frank Nugent, the secretary of the Remove Cricket Club, fell the task of writing the reply to Mr. J. Smith, Room 16, Grand Hotel, Lantham. The juniors put their heads together over that letter, wishing to express fully their sense of the great honour that had been done them by the gallant Trojans. The letter was completed

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at last, and duly posted to J. Smith; and then the Removites trooped to their Form-room in a state of satisfaction approaching ecstasy.

They were going to play the Trojans! It was incredible, but it was true—and from end to end the Remove thrilled with it. Fellows who were not in the eleven felt almost as glad and satisfied as fellows who were—for it was a triumph for the Remove—it exalted them above all other Forms at Greyfriars—they were thrice-blessed among all Greyfriars fellows that day.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Removites Gloat!

"PLAY the Trojans!"
"Yes."
"The Trojans!"
"Yes."

"Rot!"
"Rubbish!"
"Rats!"

Such were the comments that nearly all Greyfriars passed

upon the news, when it spread through the school. For it was incredible. The Remove—a junior team—the mere Lower Fourth! Rats—and many of them—that was the School's opinion.

Yet it was proved.

Wingate, of the Sixth, sought out Wharton after lessons that day, and asked to see the letter. Wingate was feeling puzzled and a little sore. Knowing that the Trojans had a free day on Saturday, he had thought of sending them a challenge, but he had refrained. He, and the senior committee, felt that it would be too much cheek to ask the Trojans to play them. And now the Trojans were going to play the Lower Fourth—if it was true! And when Wingate had read the letter, which Wharton handed to him at once, he had no doubt that it was true.

"Well, that's square enough," he said. "I wish you luck, Wharton."

Wharton could not help feeling how splendid that was of old Wingate. He knew how sore the Greyfriars captain must feel at being passed over in favour of a junior team.

"I say, Wingate, will you play for us?" he exclaimed. "We'll shove you into the eleven with pleasure, if you like." Wingate laughed and shook his head.

"Thanks, kid—but no. They want to play the Remove, for some mysterious reason known only to themselves—and I won't wedge in. Thanks all the same!"

And Wingate walked away.

"Takes it jolly well!" said Vernon-Smith. "Some of the seniors don't take it quite like that. Loder is quite green about it. So is Walker."

"Blundell of the Fifth says they must be mad," chuckled Bob Cherry. "He wouldn't believe it till he saw the letter. Now he thinks the Trojans are potty."

"Well, it is rather queer," Mark Linley observed. "It really seems to me as if they're going to play us more or less as a joke."

"It's going to be as hard a match as we can make it, all the same," declared Wharton. "I don't see why we shouldn't draw, even if we can't beat them. And a drawn match with the Trojans would be a bigger thing than a win over any other team."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hallo, you kids! What's this I hear about your playing the Trojans?" asked Coker of the Fifth, coming up to the group of juniors. "All gammon—what?"

"Look at that letter!" said Harry Wharton loftily.

Coker looked at the letter.

"Then you're going to play them!" he exclaimed.

"What-ho!"

"Like wine!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Well, I congratulate you," said Coker blandly. "I won't offer to help you—I feel that I shouldn't be of any use in that match."

"Quite right, Coker! You're getting quite a lot of sense in your old age!" said Bob Cherry admiringly.

Coker laughed; he seemed in high good-humour.

"Regular triumph for you kids, if you beat them!" he remarked.

"Well, I don't know about beating them," said Harry Wharton modestly. "but we're going to try to make it a draw, at least. You can come over and watch us, Coker, if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"Where does the cackle come in?" demanded several voices warmly.

But Coker did not explain. He walked away, still laughing. But the Removites had no time or attention to waste upon Horace Coker. Every spare minute that day was devoted to cricket practice. Harry Wharton made his team slog at it, and they were only too willing to slog. Weren't they going to play the mighty Trojans on the morrow?

Coker's remark to his chums, that the Remove had a good opinion of themselves as cricketers, was quite true. They had! They would have told anybody, with serious conviction, that what they didn't know about the great summer game wasn't worth knowing.

They were surprised that the Trojans should have selected them to play, instead of the First Eleven, but not so much surprised as might have been expected. As for any nervous bashfulness about meeting the Trojan team, that did not enter into their calculations at all. They weren't nervous, and they weren't bashful. They were going to play the Trojans, and give them the hardest tussle they could—indeed, some bold spirits were already discussing the chance of winning the match. By phenomenal and miraculous good luck, they might pull it off. Who could tell? And if the Remove beat the Trojans—well, after that, as Temple of the Fourth remarked, they would want a new and larger size

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in hats all round, and Greyfriars itself wouldn't be big enough to hold them.

Wingate had taken it well, but other seniors did not take it so well. Some members of the First Eleven were very sore. Loder of the Sixth was heard to say that the young idiots ought to be prevented by the Head from making fools of themselves. Blundell of the Fifth stuck to his opinion that the Trojans were suffering from a sudden and acute form of insanity.

Some suggested that the letter really must have been sent to Wharton in mistake for Wingate. But that theory would not hold water, for the Remove reply had been delivered to J. Smith, at the Grand Hotel, Lantham, in the afternoon, and if there had been any mistake, J. Smith would surely have notified the Greyfriars fellows on the subject. But he hadn't! It was clear to all that that letter was really intended for Harry Wharton, and that it was the Remove team that had been asked to play.

That day Harry Wharton was the recipient of unnumbered kind offers of assistance in the match. Every fellow who could play cricket—and a good many who couldn't—considered it his duty to place his services at Wharton's disposal. If Wharton had accepted all the generous offers that were made him, he would have led into the field a team composed of at least a hundred players, from the Fifth to the Second Form inclusive.

Naturally, he did not accept all the offers—as a matter of fact, he did not accept any of them. His team was made up of the best material the Remove could furnish, and he did not want anybody outside the Remove in it. He had been willing to stretch a point in favour of Wingate, if Wingate had liked. But to all others he was adamant.

It was in vain that Walker of the Sixth told him that a Sixth-Former or two would give the team a backbone, and afford them a slight chance of beating the Trojans. In vain Bland of the Fifth urged upon him the vital necessity of having a Fifth Form chap or two. Equally in vain Hobson of the Shell and Temple of the Fourth besieged him with offers of help. Equally in vain, also, Removites who were not in the eleven urged their exceptional claims to consideration.

Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, guessed that on this occasion Wharton couldn't possibly leave out a galoot of his calibre. But Wharton replied cheerfully that he guessed wrong. He was going to be left out.

"I guess it's a special occasion," urged Fisher T. Fish. "I reckon I should open your eyes some! You-got to put me in!"

To which Wharton made the classic and time-honoured rejoinder:

"Rats!"

"I guess you'll repent it just a few!" was Fisher T. Fish's parting warning.

And the Remove captain assured him, with undiminished cheerfulness, that he would risk it.

Billy Bunter also had claims to urge. Bunter said that he had been excluded from all important matches by jealousy of his powers, but that the time had really come for him to have his whack.

Bob Cherry promptly bestowed a whack upon him, but it was not the kind of whack Bunter wanted. However, it put an end to his importunities on the subject, and that was something.

That evening the Removites were in a state of great hilarity. Mr. Quelch had given permission for fourteen fellows to go over to Lantham—the members of the team and three more. The fourteen were in great spirits. And all the rest of the Form and most of the fellows of other Forms intended to get over to Lantham by hook or by crook as soon as lessons were over on Saturday—Saturday being a half-holiday.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth announced their intention of turning up in force to see the Remove beaten hollow. Many of the Fifth and Sixth intended to go over too, although, as a rule, a junior match was miles beneath their lordly notice.

There were three fellows who expressed no intention of going over to Lantham to see that match. The three were Coker, Potter, and Greene of the Fifth.

Coker & Co. had shown no jealousy of this wonderful triumph of the Remove—no soreness whatever on the subject, and they had not offered their services to the Remove skipper. They went about that day with serene smiles, as if they were in enjoyment of some source of comfort unknown to other fellows.

In Coker's study at tea-time there was great hilarity.

"Swallowed it whole!" murmured Coker. "Taken the bait, hook and all! My sons, we shall be smiling to-morrow morning—what!"

"We shall—a little!" agreed Potter. "Oh, my sainted

Uncle Joseph! Think of their faces when they get to Lantham!"

"Think of their faces when they come home again!" sobbed Greene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Other fellows in the Fifth Form passage heard roars of laughter proceeding from Coker's study at intervals during the evening. Several curious persons looked in to ask what the joke was. But Coker & Co. did not explain.

They were keeping it dark—enjoying the joke all by themselves until the morrow. On the morrow all Greyfriars would know, and one universal yell of laughter would be the portion of the Remove when they came down off their perch.

And Potter and Greene, the more they chuckled over the wonderful success of Coker's plot, wondered the more how on earth Coker had come to plot such a plot. For although Coker frequently plotted little plots for the discomfiture of the Remove, they generally ended badly, somehow, for Horace Coker himself. His plans and schemes were something of the nature of boomerangs, and returned to their owner after being launched at the enemy.

But this time—there was no earthly doubt about it—this time Horace Coker was bringing off the biggest jape that had ever been perpetrated at Greyfriars; and Potter solemnly declared that the age of miracles was not past.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Coker Gloats!

SATURDAY morning dawned bright and clear.

The rising-bell awoke a cheery and expectant Remove. Cheeriest of all were the members of the Remove eleven. They were not only going to play the celebrated Trojans, but they had the morning off from lessons. On account of that great match, the juniors had a whole holiday instead of a half, that great Saturday. That alone was cause for satisfaction.

At ten o'clock stumps were to be pitched on the Lantham cricket ground, where the Trojans had been playing for the past week. The juniors wondered whether there would be a crowd, and whether gate-money would be charged. Considering that the Trojans would only be playing a schoolboy team, that was not likely. But in the afternoon, at all events, there would be a crowd—nearly all Greyfriars.

Instead of preparing for morning lessons, Harry Wharton & Co. prepared for the journey to Lantham. They had to start pretty early, for Lantham was a considerable distance from Greyfriars.

The Co. were in great spirits.

The team was at the top of its form, and ready to give even the mighty Trojans a tussle. Wild hopes of winning the match, somehow or other, flickered in the breasts of the youthful cricketers.

The juniors had debated how to get across to Lantham—whether by train or by brake. The train service across country was not satisfactory in the early morning, and it was a great distance for a brake, as they had to be ready to play at ten o'clock.

But Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, had come to the rescue. The schoolboy millionaire was the right man in the right place just then. Under the extraordinary circumstances, Lord Mauleverer remarked, the thing ought to be done in style, and he was prepared to stand a motor-car, money being no object with Mauleverer. And the juniors, feeling that justice ought to be done to the great occasion, accepted his offer cheerfully.

Immediately after breakfast the car arrived—a huge Daimler, in charge of a chauffeur, from the garage at Courtfield. Lord Mauleverer had telephoned for it the previous day.

Half Greyfriars gathered to see the team off. Prominent in the crowd were Coker & Co., smiling beatifically.

Lord Mauleverer was going with the team—not as a player, of course. He was one of the three extras. His lordship and the cricketers mounted into the big car with their bags. Wingate of the Sixth came out to wish them luck.

"I hope you'll have a good match, kids!" said Wingate cordially. "I shall run over on my bike in the afternoon to see how you're getting on."

"Thanks awfully!" said Wharton gratefully. "We'll play up better with your fatherly eye on us, Wingate."

"The play-upfulness will be terrific," assured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Temple of the Fourth expressed his feelings with a loud snort.

"Do you think those kids will make the match last till the afternoon against the Trojans?" he exclaimed.

"Well, four innings couldn't very well be played through in a morning, however fast the wickets go down," said Wingate, laughing. "I hope I shall see the finish."

"Oh, we'll all come over to see you done in, Wharton!" said Hobson of the Shell.

"Thanks!" said Wharton.

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE UNINVITED GUESTS!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"It will be as good as a comic cinematograph, and cheaper!" Blundell of the Fifth remarked, with a sniff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we're going to do our best," said Bob Cherry stolidly. "No man can do more than that. You coming over, Coker?"

Coker chuckled.

"No; I don't think so," he replied. "But I'll be here to see you when you come back. I really think you won't be playing this afternoon—eh, Potter?"

"Ha, ha!" No, I don't think so!" roared Potter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Harry Wharton, with some asperity. "It may be funny, but not so funny as if you were in the team, Coker. Well, all aboard."

"Yaas!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Start, then."

And the big car rolled away. Some of the Greyfriars juniors sent a cheer after it. Coker & Co. seemed doubled up with merriment. Right up to the last moment they had not felt quite certain that the jape would really come off. It seemed too good to be true. There was always the possibility of a hitch at the eleventh hour. But it had worked like a charm—everything had gone swimmingly. The Remove team were off at last—off to play the Trojans—who had never even heard of their existence! No wonder Coker & Co. were killing themselves with laughing.

In the Fifth Form that morning, sudden, irrepressible cackles broke from Coker & Co. in the course of lessons, to the surprise of their Form-fellows, and to the annoyance of Mr. Prout, their Form-master. Mr. Prout inflicted lines upon Coker and Potter and Greene for their ill-timed levity—but they did not mind the lines. At intervals, as hidden thoughts moved their risibility, they cackled again, unable to keep their mirth quite in check.

They were wondering what was happening to the Remove cricketers.

Coker calculated that, after arriving at the Lantham ground and discovering that they had been japed, the disappointed cricketers would return to Greyfriars just about the time morning lessons were over. Coker & Co. meant to be at the gates to receive them. That would be their great hour of triumph.

To see the Removites come sneaking in, to admit that there had been no match—that was a joyful anticipation to the chums of the Fifth.

"What on earth's the matter with you chaps?" Blundell whispered to Coker, after Mr. Prout had come down on the great Horace a second time. "Have you got some awfully good joke on, or is it a case of insanity?"

"The joke of the season!" murmured Coker. He felt that it was time to take the other fellows into his confidence now. By the time the Remove fellows came sneaking home covered with confusion, he wanted all Greyfriars to know the facts, to be ready to give the cheeky juniors a proper reception.

It was too late now for any interference in the jape, for by this time the Remove team must have reached Lantham. It was, therefore, time to tell the great secret.

"Well, what's the joke?" Blundell inquired.

"Ep against the Remove," said Coker.

"Seems to me the laugh is on your side!" growled Blundell. "They've secured the match of the season, and the seniors are left out!"

Coker gurgled.

"They haven't!" he murmured.

"Dotty?" asked Blundell politely. "Ain't they gone to play the Trojans?"

"No!" said Coker coolly.

"What!"

"It was a jape!"

"A jape!" murmured the captain of the Fifth. "A jape! What do you mean?"

"And I worked it!" said Coker loftily. "That letter—the challenge from the Trojans, you know—I got a man to write it!"

"What!" gasped Blundell.

"It was all spoof! They're not going to play the Trojans. The Trojans have never even heard of them!" grinned Coker.

Blundell stared blankly at Coker for a moment or two. Then, as the full gorgeousness of the jape burst upon him, he gave a wild yell, forgetting that he was in the Form-room, and supposed to be devoting his attention to the classics.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout swung round upon him angrily. Mr. Prout was already annoyed, by the unaccountable risibility of Potter and Greene and Coker. He fixed a very exasperated look upon the captain of the Fifth.

"Blundell!" he rapped out.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

"Ha, ha!—yes, sir—ha, ha, ha!" spluttered Blundell. "The Form-room is no place for this unseemly merriment," said Mr. Prout severely. "I am surprised at you, Blundell—you, the head boy of the Form!"

"I'm sorry, sir!" gasped Blundell. "Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Take a hundred lines, Blundell!"

"Certainly, sir! Ha, ha!"

Blundell almost choked in the effort to suppress his laughter. When Mr. Prout's back was turned, he thumped Coker on the shoulder.

"Oh, what a giddy jape!" he murmured. "And all the fellows think you an ass, Coker!"

"Do they?" said Coker, rather grimly.

"Ha, ha!—yes—but—ha, ha!" And Blundell nearly choked again.

Whispers ran through the Fifth Form-room now—the story of Coker's great jape was spreading through the Form. And as fast as they heard the story, the Fifth-Formers giggled and gurgled over it, in ecstatic enjoyment. Mr. Prout was in a state of great and growing exasperation. He could not understand his Form that morning. Lines fell as thick as leaves in the celebrated Vallombrosa, but the Fifth-Formers did not care for lines. What were impots to them, when they were anticipating meeting the returning Removites and enjoying their looks as they sneaked in discomfited?

Lessons were over at last, and the Fifth-Formers escaped from the Form-room, and rushed down in a body to the school gates. The car was not back yet; but it might be seen any minute now. There was no sign of it in the road, however.

"They can't be long now," said Coker. "They've had lots of time to get to Lantham and back by now. I suppose they don't care to show their faces in the school. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The story was spreading like wildfire now. Removites heard it, and looked glum or furious, as the case might be. The Fourth Form and the Shell heard it with rapture, and gave loud cheers for Coker. Loder of the Sixth was seen to double up when he heard it. Wingate looked rather stern, but he burst out laughing, too, at last. It was irresistible. A whole laughing school awaited the return of the discomfited Removites.

But—
They waited in vain.
The car was not seen. Like Sister Anna, Coker watched the road, but he did not see anyone coming.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. A Surprise!

AND how had the Remove cricketers fared? Never had Harry Wharton & Co. been in such high spirits as they were that fresh, crisp, spring morning, as the big car dashed along. Cheery voices were raised in a loud chorus as the car swept along the white road.

They were going to play the Trojans—and their cup of satisfaction was full.

The rapid car seemed to eat up the distance. Lantham appeared in sight at last, and there was a stir in the crowded car. Harry Wharton looked at his watch.

"Half-past nine!" he said. "Lots of time. We shall be at the ground in ten minutes now."

"Hurrah!"

The car glided into the streets of Lantham. The faces of the junior cricketers were bright with anticipation.

Truly, it was a day worthy to be marked with a white stone in the annals of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Here we are!" said Bob Cherry.

They had arrived.

The Lantham Cricket Ground had a somewhat deserted appearance, so far as they could see from the car. Evidently the Trojans were not on the spot yet. But, after all, a great team like the Trojans would not make much fuss about meeting a schoolboy eleven. They would probably stroll down from their hotel at the last moment.

"Anyway, we're in time!" said Harry Wharton.

"Queer that there's nobody about, though," Vernon-Smith remarked, with a somewhat uneasy glance in at the gates.

The gates were open. A man could be seen rolling the pitch, and a couple of groundsmen were chatting idly near the gate. The car stopped, and the cricketers poured out, with their bags, and marched in. The two groundsmen stared at them, and one of them came over towards the Greyfriars crowd.

"Hallo!" he said.

"Hallo!" said Wharton.

"What do you youngsters want here?"

They stared at him. It was like his cheek to call them youngsters, of course. Not that they were anything else—but they felt at that moment all the dignity of a team that

had come to play the mighty Trojans. They were entitled, for the occasion at least, to all the respect that would have been accorded to the M.C.C.

"What do we want?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes; what do you want?"

"We're from Greyfriars," Wharton explained. The groundsmen looked puzzled.

"Greyfriars!" he repeated. "What's that?"

"Eh? It's our school, of course!"

"Oh, a school!" said the man. "You're a school team, eh? Well, you've made a mistake; this isn't the ground you want. Lantham High School is on the other side of the town. I suppose that's what you're looking for. Keep straight on, and—"

"We're not looking for any old High School!" broke out Bob Cherry. "We've come here to play the Trojans!"

The groundsmen almost fell down.

"You've come here to—to—what—to which?" he babbled.

"To play the Trojans!" said Bob indignantly. "Don't you know that there's a match on to-day?"

The groundsmen recovered himself.

"Don't be funny, young gentlemen," he said. "Now, don't crowd in here—you ain't allowed in here. Some of the gentlemen are coming down to practice presently."

"There's a match on!" howled Johnny Bull.

The man shook his head.

"There's no match on to-day, sir; the two-day match finished yesterday. If you've come to see a match, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed."

"We haven't come to see a match—we've come to play a match!" said Harry Wharton, in bewilderment. "I tell you we've come to play the Trojans. We had a challenge from the Trojans' secretary."

The man grinned broadly.

"I'm afraid somebody has been having a joke with you, sir," he said, not unsympathetically. "But—but, surely you didn't really believe the Trojans would play a schoolboy team—kids like you? Oh, my 'at!"

"Look here!" said Harry Wharton testily. "It's not a joke. We had a challenge from the Trojans, and we've come here to play them. I suppose you haven't been told about it. Any of the Trojans down here yet?"

"Not yet. Mr. Lynn and Mr. Flaherty are coming down presently, I believe, to put in an hour or so," said the groundsmen. "But—"

"Where are they now?"

"At their hotel, I s'pose."

"Well, we'll go into the pavilion, and wait for them," said Wharton, with dignity.

"Oh, come off!" exclaimed the groundsmen. "You won't get into the pavilion. Schoolboys ain't allowed to make free with this here ground."

"I tell you we were asked—"

"Oh, stuff!"

"Why, what do you mean? You—"

"I s'pose somebody has been pullin' your leg, or else you're tryin' to pull mine," said the man testily. "Anyway, you ain't coming in here. You can wait outside if you like till Mr. Lynn comes down, and speak to him."

And the man walked back to his companion, and the next moment the Greyfriars juniors had the pleasure—or otherwise—of seeing the two of them laughing like hyenas.

The Removites gathered in a dismayed crowd by the car, looking at one another. They were astonished, chagrined, and bewildered.

"I can't make head or tail of it," said Harry Wharton desperately. "They can't possibly have forgotten that they asked us to play, I suppose."

"It can't be a joke of their secretary, surely?" said Nugent.

"Why should he do such an idiotic thing?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Anyway, there's no sign of a match to-day," said Vernon-Smith, with a shrug of the shoulders. "And there goes ten o'clock!"

Ten chimed off from a neighbouring church.

It was the time that the stumps should have been pitched, according to the terms arranged in the letter of J. Smith. The Greyfriars Remove were on the spot, ready for action, but there was no sign of their opponents.

Harry Wharton took J. Smith's letter from his pocket, and the juniors read it over again. There it was—evidently quite genuine—written on the official paper of the Grand Hotel, Lantham—evidently, therefore, written in the hotel where the Trojans were staying. And there was the signature—J. Smith.

"It's right enough," said Peter Todd—"right as rain! I simply can't understand it. But what's going to be done now?"

"They owe us an explanation, at least!" said Harry

Wharton wrathfully. "If they don't want to play, they need not; but they've got to explain."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Vernon-Smith. "Fancy going back to Greyfriars, and telling the fellows there hasn't been a match after all!"

The juniors felt cold all over at the bare idea. After their triumph, after their "gloat," to have to sneak back to the school and confess that there had been no match!

It was impossible! They would never be able to face Greyfriars! A feeling of desperation seized them.

"They're at the Grand Hotel," said Bob Cherry. "It won't take long to run the car there. Let's go and see them, and demand an explanation."

"It's the only thing to be done, I suppose."

"The man said Lynn was coming down to the ground—we may miss him," said Vernon-Smith. "Some of us had better wait here—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, good!"

The tall, handsome captain of the Trojans had just appeared in sight, walking down to the cricket-ground with Flaherty. They came up to the gates, glancing rather curiously at the stationary car and the crowd of excited juniors.

Harry Wharton ran towards Lynn.

"You're late, Mr. Lynn!" he exclaimed.

The big Trojan looked down at him in surprise.

"Late!" he repeated.

"Yes; it's past ten."

"I don't quite understand you," said Lynn good-humouredly. "Who are you, by the way?"

"I'm Wharton."

"Oh, you're Wharton, are you?" said Lynn, with a smile. "I'm afraid I'm no wiser than before. I don't catch on."

"From Greyfriars!" added Wharton.

Lynn looked more puzzled than ever.

"Oh, you're Wharton—from Greyfriars!" he said. "And what is your business with me, Wharton from Greyfriars?"

"You can't have forgotten!" exclaimed the bewildered junior.

"Forgotten what?"

"About arranging a match with us today."

Lynn jumped. Flaherty jumped, too. It was only too clear that Wharton's remark had caused them the most profound astonishment.

"Arranged a match with you!" said Lynn faintly.

"Faith, and that's too rich!" murmured Mr. Flaherty. "Too rich intirely!"

"But—but—but—" stuttered Wharton.

"I'm afraid there's some mistake," said Lynn good-humouredly. "I suppose you're not trying to pull my leg, young 'un?"

"Of course not!" said Wharton indignantly.

Lynn glanced over the crowd; their excited, anxious faces showed plainly enough that they were in earnest. It was certainly no joke—so far as they were concerned, at least.

"Then there's some mistake," said Lynn, with a smile. "This is the Lantham ground, you know, which has been lent to us while we're here. We are the Trojan team."

"Yes; I know you're the Trojans. We've come to play you."

"Play us?"

"Of course!"

"I—I—I'm afraid we don't play with junior schoolboys teams, as a rule!" gasped Lynn, almost overcome. "We—we appreciate the—the honour of the offer, but really—really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Flaherty. "It's too rich intirely. Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Greyfriars juniors did not laugh. They did not feel like laughing. They were feeling puzzled, bewildered, and sore and savage. It was only too clear now that there had been some misapprehension somewhere, but where they could not guess. But their castles in the air were tumbling down now.

"But you challenged us!" howled Bob Cherry

"Oh, come, now—"

"You asked us to play!"

"My dear kid—"

"We're the Greyfriars Remove!" shouted Bob. "Don't you understand? We're the Remove team from Greyfriars!"

"My dear kid," said Lynn soothingly, "that's all right! I can see there's been some mistake. But, I assure you, I've never heard of the Remove team—"

"What!"

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"And I've never heard of Greyfriars!" There was a dead silence. The Removites were dumb. It was the last straw!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

After All!

LYNN stood looking at the dumbfounded juniors of Greyfriars, and they stood looking at him. Flaherty was trying to suppress his merriment. Lynn looked concerned, but he could not help looking slightly amused also. There was a mistake, evidently. But for these "kids" to fancy that they could play the Trojans—well, it was, as Flaherty said, too rich intirely!

"You've never heard of Greyfriars!" Wharton managed to articulate at last.

"Never, I'm sorry to say."

"Then what did your secretary mean by sending us a challenge?"

"Our secretary!"

"Yes; your secretary, Mr. Smith!"

"Impossible!"

"I've got it here."

"I should be very glad to see it," said Lynn drily.

Wharton handed over the famous letter without another word. The juniors scanned Lynn's face eagerly as he read it. The astonishment in Lynn's face was a plain enough proof that he had never known of the existence of that letter before.

"That's all right—what?" demanded Frank Nugent.

"I'm afraid it's not quite all right," said the captain regretfully. "Some silly person has been playing a practical joke on you."

"How?"

"This letter isn't in Mr. Smith's handwriting at all. It certainly was not written by him."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Then who did write it?" exclaimed Tom Brown warmly.

Lynn shook his head.

"I really don't know. I've never seen the writing before. I observe that the writer's room is given as No. 16. Mr. Smith shares my room—No. 4. Apparently there is another Smith staying at the same hotel. It's not an uncommon name. And this Smith has played a practical joke on you—for some reason of his own, I suppose."

"Oh!"

"My hat!"

Lynn handed the letter back to Harry Wharton. He took it with a nerveless hand. He understood enough now. Why a mysterious Mr. Smith, staying at the Grand Hotel, Lantham, should play such a rotten joke on the Greyfriars Remove was beyond all understanding. But it was clear that he had done so.

The letter which had caused so much delight to the Remove at Greyfriars, was not from the Trojans' secretary at all. It was from another Smith in the same hotel; and that Smith, of course, had received the Remove's reply, the Trojans remaining in happy ignorance of the whole affair.

Smith, indeed, had written as if he were the Trojans' secretary, though Wharton noticed now that he had not actually mentioned himself as such. But there was nothing in the letter to excite a suspicion that a trick was being played, excepting the one circumstance of a junior school-boy team receiving a challenge from such a club as the Trojans. Wharton realised, too late, that that ought to have astonished him more than it had done.

The utter dismay and woe in the faces of the junior cricketers touched the Trojans' captain—Flaherty ceased to grin. It was funny enough to them, certainly; but it was a tragedy to the Greyfriars Remove.

"I'm really sorry for this!" said Lynn, kindly enough. "This man Smith ought to be kicked for playing such a trick! I suppose it is somebody you've had some disagreement with?"

Wharton shook his head.

"I've never heard of him before," he said.

"Then it is very curious."

"The rotter!" muttered Bob Cherry, clenching his fists. "We'll call on him before we go back, anyway, and smash him up!"

Wharton laughed bitterly.

"He won't be there to see us," he said. "It's a rotten trick, and he'll take care to clear off before we can get at him. It's a jape, and there's no reason why a stranger should fool us like this. Somebody at Greyfriars has fixed this up!"

Bob Cherry gave a yell.

"Coker!"

"Coker!" gasped Nugent.

Wharton's eyes gleamed. Only too well now he remembered the uncontrollable laughter of Coker & Co. whenever the Trojans' match was mentioned.

"Coker, of course!" he said savagely. "I shouldn't have fancied he had brains enough! I shouldn't wonder if this was the man Bunter saw him meet the other day, too! Well, Coker has done us this time! We shall be laughed to death!"

"The laughfulness will be terrific!"

"I say, I'm sorry about your being so disappointed," said Lynn, quite concerned. "It was rotten of the practical joker to use us like this to take you in. If there's anything I could do—"

Bob Cherry groaned dismally.

"Nothing you could do—excepting to play us!" he said.

"Ahem!"

Now that they were face to face with the Trojan captain, the juniors realised that it was, as a matter of fact, a piece of colossal cheek on their part to have thought of playing the Trojans at all. They really ought to have "tumbled"; they could see that now—too late.

Flaherty broke into a chuckle, and drew his skipper aside. He whispered something into Lynn's ear, and Lynn shook his head.

"Impossible!" he murmured. "You wild Irishman, what an idea! How could we do anything of the sort—a junior schoolboy team!"

"Sure, and it's a shame to disappoint the kiddies!" said the good-natured Flaherty. "And we're doing nothing to-day."

"But—"

"It will be fun intirely, and as good as batting to the groundsmen. Telephone to the chaps and tell them to come."

"But—but—"

"Be a sport!" urged Flaherty. "The kids have been diddled—they've come over here expecting to play us. Be a sport, old fellow! It's not their fault; and they've had out a car and all. Play 'em!"

"Play a set of schoolboys—"

"Yes; for the fun of the thing, intirely. They won't last a couple of hours."

Lynn's face broke into a smile. He was good-natured, and he felt for the woeful disappointment that was expressed in the faces of the Greyfriars juniors. He made up his mind.

"I'll do it!" he said.

"Bravo!" chirruped Flaherty.

The Trojans' captain turned back to the juniors. Some of them were getting into the car.

"Hold on, you youngsters!" said Lynn. "You've been taken in, and I'm sorry; but, if you like, we'll give you a game."

Wharton started, and caught his breath.

"You'll play us, all the same!" he exclaimed, scarcely able to credit his ears.

Lynn nodded.

"All the same," he said. "It's a rotten shame to disappoint you, after you've come all this way. It won't hurt us, anyway. Would you care to play?"

Would they care!

The delight and relief that flashed into every face sufficiently answered the question of the Trojan captain.

Lynn smiled.

"Then it's a go!" he exclaimed.

"Thanks, awfully!" said Wharton. "You're a jolly good sport! Of course, you'll lick us—we know that—"

"Ahem! I think it probable!" murmured Lynn.

"But we'll give you the best match we can. You see, if we go back to Greyfriars without playing, we shall be cackled simply to death—"

"I understand. It's a go!" Lynn looked at his watch. "Come in! I'll telephone to the hotel, and we'll have the men down here in a brace of jiffies. We'll pitch the stumps as soon as I can get my men here."

"And we'll stick to six p.m. for drawing stumps?" asked Wharton.

Lynn burst into a laugh.

"Yes; if you last until six!" he replied.

"Right-ho!"

And the Greyfriars juniors, in high spirits again, trooped into the Lantham Cricket Ground—to play the Trojans, after all!

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Play Up for Greyfriars!

STUMPS were pitched at eleven.

Harry Wharton & Co. had quite recovered their spirits by this time.

They had been japed, and they were in little doubt as to who was the japer. Coker, undoubtedly, was nearly killing himself with merriment at Greyfriars at that very moment. But the laugh would be on the other side when Coker discovered how his jape had turned out.

Lynn was a sportsman, and he had acted nobly; the juniors felt that. They were going to have the match, after all!

"And we owe it to Coker!" grinned Bob Cherry, in the pavilion. "Coker has got us this match with the Trojans! Coker!"

And the Removites shouted with laughter.

It was true enough. But for Coker of the Fifth, they certainly would never have played the Trojans! Coker's plot had fixed up the match for them—which was certainly the last thing in the world that Horace Coker had intended or dreamed of.

The Trojans had arrived on the ground, strolling in by ones and twos, in a state of astonishment and hilarity. The idea of playing a schoolboy team seemed to strike most of them as funny. Certainly, the teams seemed very disproportionate, when they were seen together—an eleven of Goliaths opposed to an eleven of Davids. But the juniors remembered that David had beaten Goliath.

Lynn tossed with Harry Wharton, smiling. He won the toss, and elected to bat first. His idea was to pile up a big score in a few overs, and then declare, and let the schoolboys bat. Then he would make them follow on their innings, and their two totals not equaling the Trojans' first score, the match would be over. There was no need for it to last after lunch.

That was Lynn's plan—gratifying the schoolboys by giving them the match they wanted, and having a morning's fun with them. Only, the Greyfriars Remove were tougher customers than Lynn knew. He was going to find that out.

Lynn himself and Flaherty went to the wickets for the first over. Harry Wharton placed his men to field. He had watched Lynn's performances once, and he knew what to expect, and the Greyfriars juniors fielded deep. And they looked very businesslike as they took up their positions.

The Trojans were smiling, as was only to be expected. But the Greyfriars players were not smiling. It was deadly earnest with them, and they meant to surprise the Trojans if they could.

Tom Brown, the New Zealander, was put on to bowl first. Lynn swiped away the ball, and three were run. The next ball gave Flaherty four. For the third ball Flaherty took three, bringing his skipper back to the batting end. Tom Brown sent down the fourth ball of the over, and Lynn drove it through the slips, and they ran.

But—

A white figure leaped up from the green, there was a faint sound, something between a click and a kiss, and Harry Wharton of Greyfriars was holding up the ball!

And the umpire gasped:

"Out!"

Lynn stood and stared. He had been caught out—at the fourth ball of the first over—caught out by a schoolboy! No wonder he stared.

Up went the ball from Wharton's hand, to come down straight as a die into his palm again.

Lynn's face broke into a grin.

"Well caught!" he said.

And he walked back to the pavilion, laughing, and another man came in to take his place.

The fieldsmen exchanged looks of satisfaction. True, the Trojan captain had not been so alert as he would have been in a more serious match; but that did not alter the fact that he had been caught out, and one wicket had fallen in the first over. It was a good beginning for Greyfriars.

And it had taught the Trojans to be careful, too. They played up now as if they were facing a team of their own weight, and did not give away chances if they could help it. But there were some they could not help, and the juniors were only too watchful to take advantage of them.

The score was at 50 for one wicket, when Tom Brown bowled Flaherty clean as a whistle. And there was a joyous yell from the field:

"How's that?"

"Out!"

Flaherty stared down at his wrecked wicket, and walked off, shaking his head. He had not expected to be bowled. But the New Zealand junior had performed the unexpected.

Lynn grinned as Flaherty joined him outside the pavilion.

He was watching the fielding of the Greyfriars juniors with an approving eye.

"Hot stuff, those kids!" Lynn remarked.
"Faith, and you're right!" said Flaherty. "They caught you napping, but I was clean bowled—as good a thing as I've seen at the Oval or Lord's. They're hot stuff intirely!"

"We'll declare when we get the hundred," Lynn remarked.
"They won't pile up a hundred in both their innings, of course. A dozen, or twenty, perhaps, in their first—as they seem to be rather hot stuff—and then we'll make them follow on."

"But we sha'n't get more than the century before lunch," remarked Flaherty. "We shall be playing in the afternoon after all, my boy."

Flaherty was right. The Trojans' two best bats were out, and the rest, good as they were, found that the Greyfriars' field was very hard to deal with. The bowling was of the best, Tom Brown and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh doing their very best, and their very best was good indeed. Vernon-Smith, as a change bowler, was also at the top of his form, and he accounted for a Trojan wicket. Lynn's idea of a hundred for no wickets had had to be abandoned before the first over was finished. Then he had to abandon his intention of winding up the match before lunch. And, indeed, if he had not resolved to declare at a hundred, the innings itself would not have been finished before lunch.

The runs were coming in more slowly now, as the field warmed to its work. The quickness, the alertness, the pace of the juniors opened the eyes of the Trojans. Six wickets were down by the time the score reached a hundred. It was half-past twelve.

Then Lynn declared.

Harry Wharton & Co. were glad enough of it. By declaring the innings at an end, the Trojans deprived themselves of the additional runs they might have gained, and Wharton hoped that they would need them later on in the match.

"They fancy we can't get a hundred in both innings," Bob Cherry murmured to his leader, "and I fancy that we're going to undeceive them—what?"

"You bet!" said Harry tersely.

"You're going to lunch with us, you youngsters," said Lynn genially. "We're having lunch sent from the hotel, you know. This way."

The junior cricketers lunched with the Trojans in great spirits.

They had not done badly, so far, in the great match, and they had high hopes for the afternoon. With luck, they might succeed in astonishing the Trojans yet. And as they lunched with the hospitable Trojans, they wondered what the fellows were thinking at Greyfriars.

"Coker will be expecting us back," Frank Nugent remarked, with a chuckle. "He will be rather surprised when we don't come."

And the juniors grinned.

The practical joker certainly would be mystified by the failure of the japed eleven to return to the school. After lunch, the juniors expected to see Greyfriars fellows dropping in at the Lantham ground. They went on to begin their innings in great spirits.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry opened the innings. The Trojans were smiling as they trooped out to field. How long the schoolboy innings would last under such bowling as the Trojans could give them they could guess. Flaherty went on to bowl the first over—to Wharton's wicket.

Flaherty was a bowler of renown. County batsmen dreaded him, and sometimes got "rattled" when he gripped the round red ball in his sinewy hand, and took his little hopping ran.

But Wharton was not "rattled" perhaps because he had never played Flaherty's bowling before. He stood up coolly to the bowling, and stopped the first ball dead, declining to be tempted to hit out at it. He stopped the second ball, and the third. He ventured to hit the fourth, and it sailed away, far beyond the reach of the field, and the batsmen ran—once, twice, and safe home!

They had broken their duck, at all events!

"Good men!" said Lynn, as he tossed in the ball too late.

And they were soon proving that they were good men, for Harry Wharton had taken 20 off his own bat before he was bowled, and Bob Cherry had piled up 10 of his own when he was caught in the slips. Peter Todd put 8 on the score, Nugent added 4, Penfold contributed 6; and then Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was in, with Mark Linley at the other end. Forty-eight runs for five wickets. That was not bad for schoolboys against the Trojans. But there was better to come.

For the Bounder of Greyfriars was in wonderful form, and Mark Linley backed him up well. The Trojans opened their eyes when the Bounder wiped away the first ball to the boundary, and followed it up with another. Their bowlers put all they knew into it, but the Bounder was firmly planted. Linley went out with 8 to his credit, and Bulstrode joined Vernon-Smith. Bulstrode added 4, but the Bounder was

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scoring all the time. Lynn's face looked quite serious when the 100 runs were turned, 40 of them belonging to the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Faith, and they've touched the century!" Flaherty gasped.

And the Bounder was still scoring. But it was not to last much longer. The Greyfriars score was 115 when the Bounder went out, caught by Lynn. Five more had been added by the time they were all down. And the total read: First innings—Trojans, 100; Greyfriars, 120. And Lynn and his merry men had to bat again.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not as per Programme!

HORACE COKER wondered.
Where were the Remove cricketers?

For hours now the school had been chuckling, waiting for their return. But they had not returned. Was it that they dared not face the laughter of the school, and were making a day of it in the motor-car? That seemed the only possible explanation to Coker of the Fifth. But somehow he was beginning to feel uneasy.

Bolsover major of the Remove came up to him in the Closo soon after dinner. Bolsover was looking ratty.

"Look here, Coker!" he exclaimed. "Have you been pulling our leg—what?"

"What do you mean?" snapped Coker.

"About that jape. It looks to me as if they are really playing the Trojans, and you've prevented us from going over to see them. Is that your little game?"

Coker snorted.

"I tell you they're not playing! It was a jape from beginning to end."

"Then why haven't they come back?"

"Afraid to show their faces, most likely," said Potter.

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Bolsover major decidedly. "If you'd fooled them like that, they'd come back top-speed and rag you bald-headed, Coker! They've not come back, and so I'm pretty certain they are playing the Trojans. Own up!"

"They're not playing!" growled Coker.

"Well, I'm going over to see!" said Bolsover major.

"I'm going to catch the two train at Courtfield!"

"You'll have your journey for your trouble!" sneered Greene.

"I'll risk that."

Several more Removites decided to risk it, too, beginning to believe that Coker, instead of having japed Harry Wharton & Co., as he had declared, was japing the school, to keep them away from the great match. Coker wore a worried look as half a dozen Removites departed for Courtfield Station.

"I'm blessed if I quite understand it," he confided to Potter and Greene. "What that young cad said is quite true—they'd have come back raging to scalp us."

"But they can't be playing the Trojans," said Greene helplessly. "The Trojans weren't expecting them—hadn't even heard of their existence."

"Something's gone wrong," said Potter.

"But they can't be playing."

"Goodness knows."

Coker & Co. were feeling quite uneasy and worried. The great jape seemed to be falling flat. During the next hour or so, Bolsover's opinion gained ground. A good many fellows told Coker what they thought of him, and started for Lantham.

Coker tried to feel that they were going to have their long journey for nothing, but somehow he couldn't feel quite easy about it. Something must have gone wrong with the great plot—what, he could not guess, but evidently something.

Coker & Co. were lounging idly at the gates when the telegraph-boy came from the post-office. It was nearly two hours since Bolsover major and his comrades had gone. The telegraph-lad went into the House, and two minutes later a crowd of juniors came rushing out, making for the gates.

"Hallo! Where are you off to?" asked Coker.

"Lantham."

"I tell you there's no match!"

"And I tell you there is!" shouted Skinner, waving a telegram under Coker's nose. "That's from Bolsover. He's sent it from Lantham. I asked him to wire me if there was a match."

Coker gazed at the telegram in stupefaction. It read:

"All serene. Remove playing Trojans. Going strong."
"BOLSOVER."

"Remove playing Trojans!" stuttered Coker.

"Yes! Hurrah!"

"Bolsover must be spoofing you!" yelled Coker wildly. "I tell you they're not playing the Trojans! I tell you the man Smith who wrote to them wasn't Smith at all! His name's Jones, and he's a bookmaker, and I paid him to write from the Lantham Hotel!"

"Well, they've fixed it up somehow, all the same," grinned Skinner. "Ta-ta, Coker! I'm off to Lantham!"

The news of the telegram had spread, and other fellows were off to Lantham now in crowds. Wingate of the Sixth glared at Coker as he passed him on the way out.

"So you were japing us, to keep us away from the match, you thundering ass, Coker!" he exclaimed wrathfully.

"I—I wasn't!" said Coker feebly. "I tell you there isn't a match!"

"Rot!" said Wingate.

And he hurried out.

Coker & Co. exchanged dismayed glances. Potter and Greene were feeling ratty towards their great chief.

"Something's gone wrong," said Coker dolorously. "The Trojans must have taken pity on them, and played them, or something!"

"Might have known you'd make a muck of it, Coker," said Potter, in measured tones. "You trying to jape the Remove? Yah! You couldn't jape a bunny rabbit!"

"You couldn't jape a stuffed tadpole!" snorted Greene, equally incensed. "You've got them the match—a match with the Trojans—that's what you've done!"

"Oh, you ass, Coker!"

"Oh, Coker, you fathead!"

Coker sank limply against the gatepost. There could be no doubt of it now—the Remove, after all, were playing the Trojans. With a good nature and kindness that had not been calculated upon, the Trojans had evidently consented to play the schoolboy team; but how could Coker have foreseen that?

He certainly couldn't have! It wasn't Coker's fault. The jape had been a great jape—the plot had been a first-class plot! Only—only it had worked out into a tremendous triumph for the Remove, and into a crushing blow for the plotters! Coker—the astute Coker—had only succeeded in securing for the detested Remove the match of the season! Coker groaned in bitterness of spirit, and felt inclined to kick himself.

Potter and Greene, utterly exasperated and enraged, continued to tell Coker what they thought of his intellect in unmeasured terms. Coker listened like a fellow in a dream, without heeding.

"Oh, shut up!" he said at last. "You fellows were in it too—you made a muck of it as much as I did!"

"We left it to you, you thundering idiot! It was your idea!"

"Now there won't be any holding the Remove! My hat! Even if they're licked, they've played the Trojans—and the wire said they were going strong, too!"

"Going strong!" Coker snorted. "You don't mean to say you're idiot enough, Greene, to think that they could possibly beat the Trojans!"

Greene shrugged his shoulders despairingly.

"I shouldn't wonder; there's no telling what those young villains may or may not do! I shouldn't be surprised now if they beat the Trojans with an innings to spare!"

Coker detached himself from the gatepost.

"I'm going over to see!" he growled.

And ten minutes later Coker was buzzing away on his stink-bike for Lantham.

Coker was in a state of excitement and suppressed fury, and he rode that stink-bike at a reckless speed, with fatal results to several geese and a dog, and very nearly with fatal results to himself. But he buzzed and puffed into Lantham at last, put up his bike, and rushed for the cricket-ground.

Quite a crowd filled the enclosure by this time.

News of the match, that the Trojans were playing with the schoolboys, had spread, and the townspeople had crowded in to see, attracted all the more by the fact that there was no charge at the gate on this occasion.

And Greyfriars fellows had already arrived there in scores.

There was a sound of cheering and hand-clapping as Horace Coker came tramping in at gates. He got a view of the field. It was true! There was Harry Wharton, there was Bob Cherry, going out from the pavilion to bat.

Wingate of the Sixth, head and shoulders above the crowd of Greyfriars fags, was clapping his hands to encourage the batsmen. Coker hurried to him.

"They're really playing?" he stuttered.

Wingate laughed.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" he remarked.

"What innings is this?"

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"Greyfriars' second innings," said Wingate cheerily. "Trojans batted first, in the morning!"

"You—you don't mean to say that the Trojans have had to bat twice?" murmured Coker, feeling as if the Lantham cricket-ground were swimming round him.

"But I do!" chuckled Wingate. "I got here while they were batting a second time!"

"How—how is the score?" muttered Coker dazedly.

"Trojans' first innings, 100 runs; Greyfriars' first innings, 120—"

"Oh, my only aunt!"

"Trojans' second innings declared closed for 150," said Wingate, greatly amused by Coker's expression. "They declared in the first innings—never expected to have to bat again, I suppose. But they had to!"

"I think I'm dreaming!" said Coker. "Do you know how they came to be playing at all?"

Wingate chuckled.

"Yes; I've spoken to Wharton. It turned out that some rotter had japed them, and the Trojans gave them a match so as not to disappoint them. Very decent of Lynn, I think!"

"Who'd have thought it?" groaned Coker.

"Oh, Lynn is topping—a first-class sportsman," said Wingate. "It was a very decent thing to do. Of course, they had nothing on to-day; but—well, it was decent. I fancy they expected to polish the kids off very quickly; but it's turning out to be a whole-day match, all the same. Oh, well hit, Wharton! Well hit, sir!"

And there was a ripple of hand-clapping as the round red ball sailed away to the boundary.

"Good man!" roared Bolsover major, quite forgetting that he wasn't on good terms with Wharton. "Oh, good man! Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

Coker almost collapsed.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Thanks to Coker!

GREYFRIARS Remove were indeed "going strong."

Harry Wharton & Co. were in high spirits, and at the top of their form, and they were giving ever the mighty Trojans plenty to do.

The result of the first innings had been that the Trojans were compelled to bat a second time, and that second innings, instead of being the rapid pile-up of runs that the Trojans intended, was a hard-fought fight.

The Remove bowling and the Remove fielding were both top-hole. True, the Trojans could have kept at the wickets probably until the time for drawing the stumps, if they had cared to do so. But in that case, although they would have piled up runs by the century, the match would have been an unfinished one, and would have counted as a draw.

To draw a match with a junior schoolboy team was not what the Trojans wanted. Anything would have been better than that. So Lynn had declared the innings at an end for a hundred and fifty runs. Greyfriars Remove were left a little over an hour to play again.

In an hour, against such opponents as the Trojans, there was little chance of the juniors piling up a winning score, so Lynn's declaring had been quite safe, so far as that went. But in an hour, the Trojan captain fondly believed, there was ample time to down all the Greyfriars wickets, and so save the match.

But Harry Wharton & Co. had their own ideas about that.

They wanted 131 runs to win, and they meant to make a desperate effort to get them. But even if they did not get them, they intended to keep possession of the pitch till time came for drawing the stumps, and make it a draw. Not that they intended any dawdling tactics, such as frequently have such a soporific effect upon spectators of county cricket matches.

They were there to play the game, not to dawdle out time to make an unfinished match. But, without a moment's unnecessary delay in playing, they felt that they could stand their ground against the Trojans for an hour—anyway, they were going to do their best. And a draw with the Trojans—that would be a never-dying glory for the Remove.

True, it would be due to the fact that the Trojans had declared in their innings; the balance of runs and wickets would be on the Trojan side. But a draw was a draw, all the same for that. If it had been a single-innings match, the Trojans would have wiped them off the field, undoubtedly. But, then, it wasn't a single-innings match. Facts are facts; and if they drew with the mighty Trojans—why, it would be a draw—there would be no getting out of that.

But it was not going to be a draw if the Trojans could

help it. Lynn and his merry men were playing up splendidly now.

If they couldn't settle a schoolboy innings in an hour, as Lynn remarked, it was time they took to playing marbles instead of cricket. But the schoolboy innings proved a very hard nut to crack.

Harry Wharton was in wonderful form. He was playing the game of his life, and he was as cool as a cucumber. Flaherty tried him with every kind of ball, but "paid" was put to every one of them. And the pace of the juniors surprised their opponents. Lynn himself never crossed the pitch with more celerity than Wharton was displaying now. Greyfriars fellows were crowding in every minute now, adding to the crowd, and to the volume of cheering for every good hit.

Bob Cherry's wicket went down, and Nugent followed him in, and fell, and then Penfold. Then Bulstrode and Johnny Bull.

But Wharton was still set. Five down for sixty runs; and now the Bounder came in to join his captain. And a loud cheer greeted Vernon-Smith.

"Go it, Smithy!"

"Play up for Greyfriars!"

And Vernon-Smith took up his stand, prepared to do his level best for the old school and the Form he belonged to.

Had those two clever bats played a purely defensive game, leaving the runs alone, and concentrating their efforts upon wasting time, there was no doubt that they could have dawdled the match out. But they never even thought of that. They were there to play the game, win or lose.

They played up for all they were worth, taking plenty of risks, but without the least recklessness. And the runs came thick and fast. The score had jumped to ninety by the time Vernon-Smith was caught out, and ten minutes remained before the time fixed for drawing the stumps.

Six down for ninety. Peter Todd came in to join Wharton at the wickets. Lynn tossed the ball to Flaherty with a comical grimace.

"For goodness sake go in and finish them, old scout!" he muttered. "We can't draw a match with a set of giddy schoolboys."

Flaherty grinned ruefully.

"Faith, and it isn't so dashed easy!" he remarked. "For a set of schoolboys, it's a wonderful game they play, intirely."

Flaherty put all he knew into that over. The first ball Wharton stopped dead, the second knocked his middle stump out of the ground.

And Lynn almost gasped with the relief.

"Oh, good!" he exclaimed, aloud.

Harry Wharton gave one regretful glance at his wrecked wicket. His hopes had been wrecked along with it. But he walked quickly back to the pavilion, and hurried up Mark Linley, who was coming in. He wanted to give his generous opponents every chance of finishing the match.

Mark Linley received the next ball, and ill-luck betided it. It was a good hit, but the round red ball sailed right into Lynn's ready palm.

"Well caught!"

Eight down! Another man in, and the last ball of the over scattered his baits! The finish was getting sharp.

"We shall just do it!" murmured Lynn, with a breath of relief. "Just do it. The Trojans against a set of schoolboys! My word!"

"Last man in!" rapped out Wharton. "Hurry up!"

The Trojan fieldmen heard the "Hurry up!" and smiled. The captain of the schoolboy team was a sportsman to the finger-tips, evidently. For there remained only four minutes to play, according to the time agreed upon for drawing the stumps, and a little dawdling would have left the match unfinished.

But there was no dawdling.

Last man in fairly ran to the wicket.

Peter Todd was getting the bowling now, and it was certain that it would be the last over. But Todd was as good a sportsman as his captain. He played for runs, not for time. Away went the leather, and three-four were taken before

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it came spinning in to the wicket-keeper, too late! Lynn was bowling now, and bowling his best! Down came the ball again, and Todd swiped it away for two! Down once more, and again Todd swiped, and there was a leap in the slips, the click of a palm on a whizzing ball, and short slip held it in the air, grinning.

"Caught!"

"Oh, caught, sir!"

Todd made a grimace. But he was not sorry. He had done his best. Wingate clapped his hands, and cheered.

"Bravo, the Remove!"

The Trojans had won the match. Lynn strode away to the pavilion, and shook hands heartily with Harry Wharton.

"You are a sportsman, and your team are all good sports," he said cordially. "I'm glad we played you, jolly glad! And glad I've met you; by Jove!"

Wharton flushed with pleasure.

"Of course, we knew you were too strong for us," he said, with a smile. "What we wanted was to play the Trojans, and we've played you, and we're satisfied. But—but I think we've put up a fair game, considering, don't you?"

"I should jolly well say you have!" exclaimed Lynn. "And I hope that you'll be playing in the Trojans some day, Wharton, when you're older—what?"

"What-ho, if I get a chance," said Harry joyfully.

Wingate clapped Wharton on the shoulder as the Remove team came out of the pavilion with their coats on, their bags in their hands.

"Well played, kid!" he said. "Well played, indeed! It was worth watching! Greyfriars will be proud of you!"

"And all owing to Coker!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Good old Coker! We owe Coker a vote of thanks!"

"He's here!" laughed Wingate. "He doesn't look joyful. You'd better go and comfort him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors looked for Coker, and found him. Coker looked at them with feelings too deep for words.

"It was you that japed us, Coker?" Wharton demanded.

"Yes," groaned Coker. "How was I to know it was going to turn out like this—eh? You young rotters! You always seem to fall on your feet, somehow."

"We do—we does," grinned Bob Cherry. "Gentlemen, a vote of thanks to Coker, for getting up a match with the Trojans for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Passed unanimously!" grinned Wharton. "Coker, old fellow, you're a brick!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the cricketers trooped away to the waiting car, leaving Coker feeling that the life of a fellow who planned first-class japes was not worth living.

The only consolation Coker & Co. had was that the Remove team hadn't beaten the Trojans. If they had done that, certainly the junior eleven would have wanted a larger size in hats all round; and, really, Coker wouldn't have been surprised at it, considering the awfully good luck that seemed to attend those obnoxious young bounders.

But the mere fact that they had played the mighty Trojans at all was glory enough for the Remove.

And they persisted in thanking Coker for having given them the chance, and lost no opportunity of expressing their gratitude to Coker and Potter and Greene till the chums of the Fifth grew positively dangerous at the mere mention of Coker's Plot!

(Another splendid long complete tale of the Greyfriars Chums next Monday, entitled: "THE UNINVITED GUESTS!" by Frank Richards. Meanwhile read the grand school tale by the same inimitable author in this week's CHUCKLES, &c. Now on sale.)



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THE BLUE ORCHID

BY SIDNEY DREW

A Wonderful Story dealing with the Thrilling Adventures of Ferrers Lord—Millionaire, and his comrades, Ching-Lung—Juggler and Ventriloquist; Rupert Thurston, and Gan-Waga, the Eskimo.

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**READ THIS FIRST.**

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is engaged on one of his adventurous expeditions, in company with Ching-Lung (the Prince of China), Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga (the Eskimo), also Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and the rest of the famous band of stalwart seamen. Their quest is a field of rare blue orchids, which is said to exist somewhere up the great Amazon River, and their craft is a small steam launch, named the Blue Orchid, which has been captured from Lord's enemy in this enterprise, a German millionaire named Hausmann. Hausmann's great yacht, the Medea, has pursued the Blue Orchid into a network of lagoons, and Ferrers Lord's native guide and devoted servant, Vasco, points out that if a narrow channel could be blocked up behind the Medea, the great yacht would be a prisoner. Ferrers Lord decides to make the attempt, and with Ching-Lung and a picked party, leaves the Blue Orchid in a canvas canoe. Meanwhile, Gan-Waga, one of those who are left behind, prepares to have some fun with Barry O'Rooney. He slips overboard from the launch, lands, and climbs a tree, where he comes across something that surprises him very much.

"Hallo, what yo' names, hunk?" he exclaims.

(Now go on with the story.)

**Gan-Waga's "Mushroom!"**

Gan was addressing a tree fungus almost the size of a bicycle-wheel. It was brilliantly coloured with stripes of crimson, orange, and bright green. Gan touched it, and, to his astonishment, his fingers sank into it. Gan, as a rule, did not mind strong odours, but the smell that exuded from the hole made by his finger almost made him fall.

"Yo' beens eatins onions, hunk!" he grinned, touching the fungus again. "Yo' not smells nicefuls as yo' look, hunk. Not tink I see anythings like yo' before. Yo' awful softness, too. Why yo' smells so funny, hunk?"

The fungus was as soft as butter. Gan had brought the mud with the intention of presenting it to Barry O'Rooney. He chuckled softly and looked down. The fungus would be even a more suitable gift.

With great care and patience the Eskimo removed the fungus from the branch. Balancing it there, he gazed down. His hopes sank. To hit Barry, the Irishman must be well forward in the bows. He was standing forward, smoking his pipe, but he was yards from where Gan wanted him to be. Gan broke a large piece from the fungus and let it fall.

"Troth, is that a crocodile?" said Barry, hearing the splash. "Or phwat is ut at all? Ut was a big fish by the row."

The Irishman went forward to discover the cause of the splash, and sealed his fate. He leant over the bows, but could see nothing. The next instant the mighty mushroom descended, and, striking his shoulders, burst into a spray of horrible-smelling stickiness that flew far and wide. The howl that came from Mr. O'Rooney of Ballybunion would have drowned the noise of a boiler-factory in full blast.

"Ho, ho, hoo! Allez! I comings! Yahoo! Allez!"

Thurston and Maddock started to their feet, and stared upwards in the direction of the faint cry. A naked body cleft the air like an arrow, and plunged into the pool.

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"How yo' like yo' mushroom, hunk, Barry O'Lunatics?" crowed the voice of Gan-Waga. "Nices, hunk? No—oo!"

Barry said nothing, and Rupert and Benjamin were too busy holding their noses to answer for him. Gan alone was happy.

**How Ferrers Lord Made a Bold Attempt to Trap the Medea.**

"There's a decided current, Ching," said Ferrers Lord. "Unless this creek drains some lagoon or swamp it should run out of the main fork. How far across do you think the delta is at its widest, Vasco?"

"Perhaps a hundred miles, Excellency."

The delta was a mere swamp, so soaked and saturated that it was impossible to make a fire. Joe had thrown the bacon they had brought with them overboard, for the steaming atmosphere had turned it rancid in a night. They had slept in the canoe, and awakened cramped and stiff. None of them were hungry, so they had breakfasted on quinine. There was enough fever in the hot mist to kill an army a million strong. It lifted, however, with the sun, and they were glad enough to seize the paddles.

"I don't wonder there aren't any natives here," said Ching-Lung. "What would you think about a chap who hung out in these beautiful climes, Tommy? Dotty! What? Me, too, as poor Gan says. It's a nice place to start a watercress farm, only a bit far from the London market. Pull, lazy, pull! Let's get out of it!"

Vasco had been used to a paddle all his life, but he frankly admitted that, even had he been well, the two sturdy British sailors were quite his equal. Except for the trying heat, they would have been more.

The current was so slow and sluggish that it was like paddling in dead water. The canoe was heavily laden, for in addition to her crew she carried nearly six hundred pounds of gunpowder, boring tools, provisions, and a keg of water. The water of the creek was undrinkable. It would have poisoned a cow.

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"Lagoon ahead!" said Ching-Lung. "We shall soon know our fate."

Ferrers Lord stood up and gazed forward. Was it merely a landlocked pool, or did the north fork of the river run through it? If it proved to be only a pool, their difficulties would begin in earnest, for the canoe would be no longer of any use.

The canvas boat swept on and darted out into the hot sunshine.

"There is no way out," said the millionaire quietly; "which is all the worse for us."

There was no break in the trees that surrounded the lagoon. It was about three miles wide, shallow and thick with water-plants and weeds.

Vasco shook his head.

"I do not know the place, Excellency," he said, "but the river must be near. I can smell it."

"Then you've got a wonderful nose, Vasco," said Ching-Lung. "All I can smell is bilge-water and bad drains. Steady a moment, lads, while I dole out the quinine. We won't catch fever if we can help it. Poof! Get on with you and pull. That's the thing that hums!"

It was the bloated carcass of an alligator, and swarms of flies hovered over it. Swiftly the unsavoury object was left behind, and they crossed the lagoon. The millionaire raised his hand for silence.

"There's running water somewhere, lads," he said. "Can't you hear it?"

"I can," said Ching-Lung promptly, "but I can't make out where it is."

"To the left," cried Vasco suddenly.

Ching-Lung sprang out and ran through the trees. Presently they heard him shout. Ferrers Lord followed.

"What is it?"

"Water, and lots of it," answered Ching-Lung. "There's nothing the matter with us. We've only got to unload the canoe and carry it across."

Another creek entered the lagoon, but it was so overgrown with reeds that they had failed to see it. In an hour they were afloat again. Six miles further brought them to another lagoon, but it had no outlet. They landed. The ground was higher and firmer, and it was possible to make a fire. After a meal of tinned meat and biscuits they lighted their pipes. The day was still young. Vasco slipped away unnoticed.

"By honey, Joe," said Prout, "I must be out of form! I'm as sleepy as a dormouse! I'm going to have forty winks."

"I shouldn't mind fifty myself," answered the carpenter, stretching himself out lazily on the soft, warm ground. "It's like a Turkish bath, ain't it? It takes all the life out of a man. Good-night!"

Both men closed their eyes, and were quickly sound asleep. Then Vasco glided back through the trees like a ghost.

"I have found it, Excellency."

Ferrers Lord flicked the ashes from his cigarette and stretched himself. Ching-Lung was snoring.

"Good! How far is it?"

"Not a mile, Excellency."

Ferrers Lord took up a pail and filled it with water. He poured the contents over the smouldering embers of the fire. Then he took a bundle of canvas bags out of the canoe and spread them in the sun to air. Very carefully he opened one of the powder-barrels, and with a copper scoop he filled the bags with gunpowder.

"I will go and look, Vasco," he said. "Bring the lead and an axe."

The Indian led the way through the trees. The ground became harder and dryer as they advanced, and a hot breeze shook the leaves and swayed the branches. At last Vasco paused.

"Look, Excellency!"

The millionaire walked swiftly forward. To the south lay a broad lagoon, shining like polished silver in the sun. There was another to the north, its surface ruffled by the hot breeze. Forty or fifty feet below him wound the narrow stream, creeping between two walls of rock.

"The lead, Vasco."

It splashed down into the water. Ferrers Lord drew in the line, and then tested the rock with his knife. It was soft and soapy and easy to work.

"That will do," he said. "We must work, Vasco. Go back for the others."

The millionaire slipped off his coat, and began to lop the branches from a tree. It took three journeys before the canoe and the rest of the goods were brought up. Two rope ladders with wooden rungs were made. The canoe was carried to the southern lagoon and launched. Prout and Ching-Lung crossed in her, taking with them one of the ladders and half the gunpowder.

The rock was easy enough to bore. Perched on the ladders, they attacked it on each side. Darkness put an end to the task, and they slept without lighting a fire. With

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the first rays of the dawn Ferrers Lord roused them. At noon the powder-bags were packed into the holes and slit open. The front of the holes were packed up with rock and padded with clay, and the long fuses, pegged to the cliff, were ready to be fired.

"All ready?"

"All ready, sir!"

Prout, Joe, and Vasco sent the canoe flying towards the lower lagoon. Ching-Lung stood waiting on the other side with lighted match.

"Medea!" shouted Ferrers Lord. "Light the fuse!"

Ching-Lung gave a cheer, for against the bright sky the smoke of a steamer was rising above the trees. The wax match touched the fuse. The next instant Ching-Lung and the millionaire were running for their lives.

#### Checkmate—Ching-Lung Confers a Decoration.

"Somebody has let off a cracker, and a mighty big 'un," said Ching-Lung. "Ow! Help!"

The roar of the explosion almost stunned him. He pitched over on his head, and fell into a prickly bush that kept him too busy to take much notice of anything else for some seconds. He had been looking round and running at the same time, and had tripped over a root. The others saw the rocks leap into the air amid a rush of flame and smoke, and crash back, flinging up the water. A lofty pillar of black and grey smoke stood erect for nearly a minute above the scene of the explosion, and then beat downwards and spread out across the lagoon in an impenetrable cloud. Like a hare the millionaire raced back.

Ching-Lung sat and sighed as he picked the thorns out of himself. They stuck like fish-hooks, and he was compelled to leave fragments of his clothes behind. The bush refused to part with them at any price.

"This comes of trying to do two things at once!" groaned his Highness bitterly. "I've gone and made a silly pin-cushion of myself. Hallo, Lord! You look pretty pleased all at once. How did the fireworks go off?"

"Splendidly!" The millionaire's eyes were sparkling. "The channel is utterly choked. What have you been doing?"

"Perforating myself. I say, old chap, do dig that splinter out of my ear. It feels the size of a telegraph-pole."

They hurried down to the canoe. Every moment was precious now. They could not avoid leaving tracks in crossing the strip of forest—tracks that any white man, however unskilled in woodcraft, could easily follow. The tools had been flung away, so there was little to carry except the canoe. The brilliant success they had achieved had raised their spirits enormously. Ching-Lung, of course, was not particularly joyful, but people who dive into thorn-bushes without wearing armour do not go wild with delight all at once.

"He was blackberrying, by honey," said Prout, winking at Joe. "Did you get many, sir?"

"Was they ripe, sir?" grinned the carpenter. "Ave you ate 'em all, sir? Is there enough over to make a tart? Blackberry-tart is joy to me."

"You mind your own interferences," said the prince savagely, "and get on with your job!"

"I'll follow you, lads," put in Ferrers Lord. "Pack up and get ready to start the moment you reach the lagoon. We shall have the whole pack at our heels the instant they discover the true state of affairs."

Choosing a tall, slender tree, the millionaire swiftly climbed it. He took out his knife and cut away some of the thick leaves. The Medea had come along at her usual reckless pace, and was now slowing down. There was a turmoil of excitement on board. Almost before the handsome yacht had come to, three boats were in the water. The millionaire uttered his quiet laugh and descended from his lofty perch.

"A pretty thrust, friend Hausmann," he said. "We got through your guard neatly."

Just then the fat German, his eyes bulging out of his head, his breath coming and going in hoarse gasps, was staring at a boulder that had been torn out of the cliff. The boulder had fallen to the left of the creek, and half-buried itself. On its flat surface was neatly written in chalk:

"Checkmate! With compliments.—F. L."

The German's rage was terrible. He spluttered and raved and brandished his clenched fists. Ten minutes later forty men, armed to the teeth, poured into the forest. There was a murderous yell as they found the trail. Splashed to the eyes with evil-smelling mud, they burst through the trees and came upon the abandoned camp. They found nothing at first but the ashes of the fire, a few scraps of food, and the

empty gunpowder kegs. Then one of the men brought his perspiring leader a muddy old boot that had been tied to a branch. There was an envelope inside, which Hausmann took out and opened. His face turned livid. The pencilled note was in German, and the contents were brief and to the point.

"His Imperial Highness Prince Ching-Lung, of Kwai-hai, has graciously consented to confer upon Hans Friedrich Hausmann, Esq., the Noble and Illustrious Order of the Boot. Take it and smile!"

Ping! The German jumped back, and a man behind him shrieked aloud with pain and clutched his thigh with both hands. From the impenetrable woods beyond the lagoon came the faint bark of a rifle.

**The Very Mysterious Conduct of Three Caps and Three Coats.**

"Ahoj. Blue Orchid—ahoy! Man your sides, by honey, and stick out your bunting! Are you all dead?"

They were far from dead. Lusty shouts of welcome answered Prout's thunderous hail, and lights flashed out through the misty darkness. The instant his feet touched the deck, Ching-Lung felt himself enfolded in the arms of Gan-Waga, and that joyous Eskimo howled hideously with glee.

"Gerrout! You've got cod-liver oil on your hair!" said the prince; "and you're rumpling my shirt-front to ruin. Unclutch, you boulder! Lemme go, you frenzied fossil! Don't do it! I don't know this dance!"

"Nevers let yo' goes no morer," sang Gan, in ecstasy. "Ooh! I loves my butterfuls Chingy wid de tailpigs downs him back. And Prouts have a big, red necks. Oh, paint dat red necks blue. It was alls so happyfuls when ole Chingy wid the snubs little yaller noses come ho-o-o-me! Kisses me quick and shout 'Hoorays!'"

"Get out of it, and bark in your dog-kennel!" said Ching-Lung. "That's a jiu-jitsu bit—see, my child?"

He neatly placed the singer flat on his back, and shook hands with Rupert Thurston.

Gan, in his prone position, still continued to sing, until somebody accidentally trod on his ear. Then he changed the tune.

There was little time for talking. The cables were taken in. Thurston had kept the yacht in readiness to sail at any moment. There was plenty of danger in attempting to navigate the winding creek in the dark, but there was greater danger in delay. The lagoon would not stop the German. He had plenty of men and plenty of boats at his disposal. It would not take him long to take his boats through the strip of forest, or to discover the creek by which the canoes had escaped.

"Take her as carefully as if you were handling eggs, Tommy," said Ching-Lung. "If you hang her up on a mud-bank or hook her up in a tree, you'll soon have more bullets in you than I have thorns."

"I'll watch it, sir, by honey! I could feel the way out of this."

All hands kept on watch, though their eyes were of little assistance, for the darkness was intense.

A cheer was raised for Prout when the dawn began to creep through the leaves. The Blue Orchid had not even scraped her paint.

"He must do it wi' his nose, souse me!" remarked the admiring bo's'un. "He must ha' smelled the way!"

"I did it wi' my brains," said Prout witheringly, "which is somethin' you ain't got. Come and have a spell at steering!"

Two minutes later Prout was snoring in his bunk with his boots on. He had plied a paddle for eight solid hours, and stood at the wheel for another six. Joe and Vasco picked out a couple of soft planks, and dropped off to sleep at once. Ching-Lung took a bath before turning in, but the tireless millionaire remained on deck.

"The whole affair seems almost brilliant, Rupert," he said. "I am convinced that Hausmann will have all his work cut out to clear a way through. It may take six months, or he may never get out at all. If we get a very dry summer, the Medea will not be worth the money it cost to paint her bowsprit."

"You mean that the lagoon will dry up and leave her?" "It will do that exactly. A million pounds' worth of yacht high and dry in the Amazonian jungle!"

Rupert laughed heartily at the mere idea. It tickled him hugely.

"Fine!" he said. "Poor Hausmann!" he chuckled. "He's beginning to find out that there are a few people alive as smart as himself. It's glorious! He walked into one of his own mousetraps that he didn't expect to be sprung on him. And what are the arrangements now?"

"Now, my dear Rupert," said Ferrers Lord, "we begin where we left off. The Amazon was our proper way, and we have got rid of Hausmann, unless he can travel very fast. In any case we have got rid of the Medea. We make for the Amazon, then, and start afresh on the way to Obidos and the blue orchids."

The long, hot day passed, and night came. They were again close to the great river.

"Drop a light anchor, lads!" said the millionaire. "We must wait till moonrise. Dare you take her through those shoals by moonlight, Vasco? Don't be afraid of saying 'No.' It is not an easy task."

"We can accomplish it, Excellency," answered the Indian. "The moon will be very clear."

It was more ticklish work, but Prout seemed to revel in it. His bald head shone like a little moon, but the perspiration on it was not caused by nervousness, but by the heat. At last Vasco began to roll a cigarette.

"All is well, Excellency. The Blue Orchid has sixty feet of water under her keel."

"Hurroo! Good luck to yez, Copperface!" cried Barry O'Rooney. "But Oi wish it was whisky!"

The great river, gleaming like burnished silver, was greeted with a rousing cheer. By some extraordinary means, the yachting-caps of Joe, Ben Maddock, and Barry O'Rooney soared from their owners' heads, and hung themselves upon the very top of the mast.

Ching-Lung was seated on the rail quietly engaged in peeling an apple; but, in spite of this, five angry and accusing eyes glared at him.

There were only five eyes to glare, for a mosquito-bite had closed one of Maddock's, an accident that gave that gentleman a curious look.

Then the five indignant eyes sought the masthead.

"Be jabers," said Barry slowly, "that's moighty queer intoirly! There's only room for wan on the top ut a toime; and, bedad, there's all three o' thim stickin' to ut! How did he do ut, is it? A nate thrick—a verry nate thrick!"

Barry grasped the slender mast, and gave it a powerful shake; but the caps refused to be dislodged.

Ching-Lung got up and walked aft, to make sure, perhaps, that the propeller was going round. The boatswain scratched his wiry head in perplexity, and Joe craned his neck as if under the impression that hard staring would solve the puzzle.

"Why yo' nots whistles thens, hunk?" gurgled the Eskimo. "Ho, ho, hoo! Dey comes down dens—very likely nots. Yo' give me some cangles, and I fetch them down, hunk? How many cangles yo' gives, Wall-eye, hunk?"

"He'd sooner have one heye all his life, souse me, than 'alf a face like your'n! growled the boatswain. "Can you sew?"

"I sews butterfuls, silly. I sews all my sealskins suit."

"Then run away and sew up a bag," said Maddock. "When you've finished, stick your thick 'ead in it!"

"Yo' gives me three cangles, and den I gets down yo' capses, and yo' can stick yo' thick heads in them!" grinned the unabashed Gan. "Gimme cangles first. Nots like yo' faces—ho, ho, hoo!—so nots trusts yo'."

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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 325.

**FRANK RICHARDS** Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale in our New Saturday Companion Paper— **"CHUCKLES," 1/2**

Ching-Lung had disappeared. Barry suggested that Joe, being more youthful, should climb the mast; but Joe pleaded blistered hands, caused by long paddling in the canoe.

Maddock had a bone in his leg, and protested that it was cooler without a cap, and much better for the hair. Finally they accepted Gan-Waga's offer, and Joe went for the candles, and duly handed them over.

"Much 'bligers, ole 'microbes!" said Gan, taking an ample bite. "Dat butterfuls. Now I does him. Yo' get backs, fo' if this drops on yo' faces he makes yo' sing. Yah-h! It easy as pie and pudden."

Gan had brought his bow. They stepped aside, for even a blunt arrow can cause grief if it falls on a man's unprotected head. The Eskimo quickly changed the arrow for another, and took aim at the target.

Twang whizz, thud! The caps came down with a suspicious rattle. Gan was down the ladder almost as quickly. The three men gathered round their property.

Prout picked the caps up, but he did not speak a word. He had to tug to drag the arrow out of the deck.

The head of the weapon, from barb to barb, was nearly five inches across. It had passed through the crowns of the three caps without adding much to their value.

Then Barry cut a piece of rope into three lengths. Grasping these weapons, the three outraged men tip-toed below.

A second later Ching-Lung glided across the deck and clutched at the air. He bent over the coats, and vanished.

"Ain't yez found the oily spalpeen?" muttered Barry O'Rooney.

The boatswain, who had been exploring, snorted and shook his head.

"Ho, hoo, hoo-o-oo!" suddenly laughed Gan-Waga. "Yah-h! I knockses 'orrid 'oles in alls yo' 'eads, and den out come the sawdusts. Yo' make me smiles. Peek-a-boo! Ho, ha, he, hoo!"

They made a rush for the cabin; but Gan-Waga's beaming countenance shot back out of danger, and he bolted the door. Slowly and sadly the three disappointed men returned to the deck.

"U'll kape," said Barry. "U'll save up. Phwat does the chuneful poet say? He says—"

"Look 'ere," remarked Joe warningly, "stow it! You start slinging any of your poetry at me, and I'll put you in 'orspital for a fortnight; and Ben'll help me to do it, you—you red-wigged misery! Stow it, I tell you, Mister Barry!"

Barry smiled weakly at the two clenched fists that were held close to his nose.

"Faith, ut's a blessin' to be able to live wid two such gintle and swate-timpèred crayturs!" he said. "Whin Oi look at your rosy, smoilin' faces, Oi faal as happy as a lark—in a sudden! O'hone! As my poor Uncle Dinnis said whin the ould billy-goat lifted him into the duck-pond: 'Mercy on us! Phwat are yez doin'?"

Ben the boatswain had stooped to pick up his coat. To his amazement, the garment slid away quite a couple of feet. Benjamin made a heroic clutch at it, and sprawled flat on the deck with a thud. Then the three coats sailed upwards and hung together at the truck of the mast.

"Souze me!" moaned the boatswain, fondling his nose.

"Ow-oooh! That was 'ard, souze me!"

"It was 'orrid! 'ard, souze me!" said the sepulchral voice.

"Oh, do not put your nose near the deck, Maddock, or you'll set the ship on fire! Ha, ha, ha! What a beautiful view, to be sure!"

The five eyes glared upwards once again. There was Ching-Lung almost at the top of the mast.

"Your coats, gentlemen. I'm much obliged, and thank you kindly!"

The coats came practically like three solid bulbs; they were wrapped up so tightly. Ben and Joe received theirs on their heads, and sat down—not because they were tired, but because they could not help it. Barry was more wily. He tried to catch his, but it swung back, and, returning like a punching-ball after a hard smite, struck the Irishman exactly over the fifth waistcoat-button, and practically drove all the breath out of his body.

"Wha-oof! Ow! Oi'm kilt!" wailed the boy from Ballybun, and sat down, too. "Oi'm as dead as mutton!"

Ching-Lung slid down the spar, put his hands in his pockets, and went off whistling gaily.

#### The Motor-boat—Ferrers Lord's Message.

Gan-Waga was fast asleep in the bath, only his nostrils above water, and only Vasco and Prout were on deck. Prout had perspired until he could perspire no more. He was tanned to such an extent that his skin was only a few THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 325.

FOR NEXT MONDAY—

**"THE UNINVITED GUESTS!"**

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shades lighter than the Indian's. He stood there and baked heroically.

"It's like being on a grill, Vasco," he grumbled, "only wusser. A grill only fries you one side at once, but I'm fryin' all over, by honey. I can almost 'ear myself a-fizzling. Phew! I shall melt into a spot o' grease!"

Vasco grinned, displaying all his shining teeth. He looked cool enough.

"The senor is not used to our climate."

"Senor be bothered!" said Prout. "That ain't my name. Call me Tom or Prout, or nothing. How far is it to that place—Obidos? Got any idea?"

"Some three hundred miles."

"Oh, that's nothing," said the steersman, "barring the 'eat. We could walk that on our 'eads, by honey. It's hotter than pickles and cayenne-pepper, Vasco. I'd like to go to bed in a tub of ice-cream."

Just then Ferrers Lord appeared and took a swift glance over the shining river. They had passed the mouth of the tributary up which the Medea had sailed—a mere brook compared with the Amazon, although two miles wide. The millionaire sat down and pondered over the strange chart that Oscar Whiteman had left behind him. The only definite thing about it was the name "Obidos." It was all exasperatingly vague. Obidos might be hundreds of miles away from the spot where the coveted blue orchids blossomed, or it might be thousands. A few hundred miles count for nothing in the vast Brazilian wilds.

"Perhaps we shall learn more at Obidos," muttered Ferrers Lord, replacing the scrap of faded paper in his pocket-book. "It is foolish to make guesses, for they are generally wrong. A hot morning, Rupert."

Thurston, fresh and rosy after his bath, filled his pipe.

"Do you think we've shaken Hausmann and his buccaneers off, Lord?" he asked.

"That is hard to say. If the fellow does the proper thing, I hardly think we have finished with him."

"And what do you mean by the proper thing?"

"To divide his forces," answered the millionaire. "He ought to have sent two or three boats in pursuit of our canoe, and sent another force direct to the Amazon north to attempt to cut us off. He knows very well that we do not intend to turn back. If he acted smartly he ought to be ahead of us, for we had more than a hundred miles further to go than he had. In his place, that is what I should have done."

Rupert whistled rather dolefully. He had not thought of this before. The Blue Orchid had taken a long and devious course before emerging into the Amazon north of the delta. Had Hausmann promptly dragged his boats over the barricade caused by the explosion, and followed the south fork of the stream, he could easily have gained the river first. Thurston started as the millionaire sprang to his feet, and shading his eyes with his hands, looked astern.

"That looks remarkably like doing the correct thing, Rupert," said the millionaire lazily. "Second thoughts, I presume; for he is rather late. A neat little craft that, and a bit of a fier."

"Boat astern, by honey, and a motor!" roared Prout.

"Why don't you heave a few nails and broken bottles overboard, and puncture its tyres, then?" said the voice of Ching-Lung.

Barry O'Rooney put his head out of one of the engine-room portholes and yelled up to know what was the matter. He jerked his head in again when a wet mop smote him.

"Is it Hausmann?" said the prince.

"Who else can it be?"

"How do I know, Ruperto? Motor-launches are pretty common nowadays. I hope it is Mr. H. If he's got the cheek to tackle us in that thing, I shall respect him more. By Jove, he's got a weakness for things that can move along!"

The launch could certainly travel. She simply raced through the water. She was not more than thirty feet in length, but she left a wave behind her like a torpedo-boat destroyer. It was impossible to believe that Hausmann would be reckless enough to attack the yacht, however many men the launch carried. She was too small to hold anything in the shape of a dangerous gun, for its recoil would have shaken her to pieces. With their rifles on their shoulders they watched the swift little boat.

"She's four knots faster than we are," said the millionaire.

"If we can get a few bullets through her petrol-tank, speed would not count. Give her a reminder, Ching, that we are prepared to receive company."

Ching-Lung sent a bullet hissing above the launch. A white flag fluttered in the breeze.

Ferrers Lord opened the flag-box. His answer was brief:

"Come closer, and we fire!"

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# My Readers' Page

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**FOR NEXT MONDAY:**

## "THE UNINVITED GUESTS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In this grand, long complete tale of the boys of Greyfriars School, Lord Mauleverer, the schoolboy earl, plans a splendid week-end outing for himself and his friends. Thanks to the kind offices of Billy Bunter, Harry Wharton & Co. obtain the required leave, and prepare for their excursion in high spirits.

Then Lord Mauleverer's slackness in sending a telegram gives an opening to Bolsover, Skinner, and Bunter, and the three put their heads together and plot a plot! The result is that they resolve to join the week-end party, and they duly carry out their resolve. Lord Mauleverer and his friends find themselves forestalled, and their week-end cottage in possession of

## "THE UNINVITED GUESTS!"

Much scheming is resorted to on both sides, and in the end Harry Wharton & Co. establish their identity, but not before Bolsover & Co. have given them a "high old time"!

## FRIEND OR FOE?

One of my chums, signing himself "Warlike," and writing from Liverpool, sends me a very nice letter, full of praise of the good old companion papers. This, however, I will modestly pass over, to deal with an interesting question which this reader raises. "Is there anything in this constant German war scare?" he asks. "Is it true that special preparations are being made by Germany for war with England, or is it not?"

Well, "Warlike," it is certain that Germany takes pains to keep herself in a state of readiness for war, but whether with this country specially, I should not like to say. Here are some particulars of her huge "war-chest," which I believe to be perfectly accurate.

In the Julius Tower of Spandau, a Prussian fortress eight miles from Berlin, a vast quantity of specie and £6,000,000 in gold are stored and held in reserve, ready for immediate use should Germany go to war.

Needless to say, elaborate precautions are taken to guard this mass of hoarded treasures. The gold coins are stored in chests, piled one upon another, in rooms, to which access only is possible by passing through three doors, each fitted with several locks.

Each of these doors weighs a ton, and is made of steel, with an oak core; whilst each of the keys is held by a different Government official, so that it is impossible for any one of these officials to gain admission to the treasure chambers unaccompanied.

Is the money ever counted? No, never. The task, of course, would be almost impossible; but periodically each chest is weighed—and the correct weight, it may be said, is known to the smallest fraction of an ounce; whilst occasionally the seals are broken, the chests opened, and a careful inspection made by certain high officials, to make sure that the contents have not been tampered with in any way.

It looks almost as if Germany is ready for war with some-one, doesn't it, "Warlike"?

## KITE FLYING.

Kite-flying, like bubble-blowing, is a clear example of philosophy in sport which may be made science in earnest. Sir Isaac Newton blew soap bubbles to such purpose that by their aid he evolved his well-known doctrine of the interference of light by thin plates, while Lord Kelvin, by indulging in the same gentle pastime, arrived at a method of computing the size of the molecule.

In a similar fashion the flying of kites has at last suggested to scientific men the solution of a problem over which the spirit of man has fretted for many centuries. After attempting to fly by means of wings, balloons, and other contrivances, we have at last come to the conclusion that the secret of aerial navigation lies perdu in the boy's kite.

For the modern aeroplane, which is admitted by experts to be by far the most promising of the many methods suggested to conquer the air, is nothing more than a huge kite minus the flying cord, the latter factor being replaced by the force of gravity in the case of the motorless aeroplanes of the early pioneers, Lilienthal and Chanute, which glide from the top of a hill to the bottom, and by the propeller in the case of those driven by self-contained energy, represented by the machines of Bleriot, Latham, Farman, Santos Dumont, and Wilbur Wright. It is a curious instance of the circle in which human ideas frequently travel, that the latest expedient of aeronautical science is identical with the first primitive attempt to imitate the soaring power of the bird.

## A Sacred Performance.

Kites were known and flown at least a thousand years before the Christian era. Their inventor was probably a member of the ancient Malay civilization, the knowledge of kite-flying gradually extending from the archipelago to China, Siam, and the Japanese Islands.

The primitive purpose of the kite was not merely amusement. Kite-flying had a religious significance, prayers and messages to the gods being carefully inscribed upon these heavenward fliers. There was a tradition among the old sailors of the East India Company that long before their time kites were frequently visible from the decks of vessels passing the Malay islands, as if flown by men in the interior. Upon a boat's crew landing, however, on one of the smaller islands of the archipelago, and penetrating into the interior, the natives becoming aware of the foreigner's approach, invariably withdrew their kites from the heavens, as if the flying were too sacred a performance to be witnessed by profane eyes.

A singular parallel to this ancient custom was the school-boy's practice of covering his kite with his most cherished scholastic exercises:

"My Kite—how fast and far it flew!  
 Whilst I, a sort of Franklin, drew  
 My pleasures from the sky!  
 'Twas papered o'er with studious themes,  
 The tasks I wrote—my present dreams  
 Will never soar so high!"

It will be remembered, too, that Mr. Dick, in "David Copperfield," covered his kite with "manuscript very closely and laboriously written; but so plainly that as I looked along the lines I thought I saw some allusion to King Charles the First's head in one or two places. . . . There's plenty of string," said Mr. Dick, "and when it flies high it takes the facts a long way. That's my manner of diffusing 'em."

(Next Week: Another Article on Kite Flying.)

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