

THE FIGHT FOR THE CUP!

Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in This Issue.



No. 362. Vol. 9. January 16th, 1915.



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gerous ass! Can't you see you've slammed it into your own goal?" (An amazing scene in the magnificent new long complete school tale contained in this issue.)

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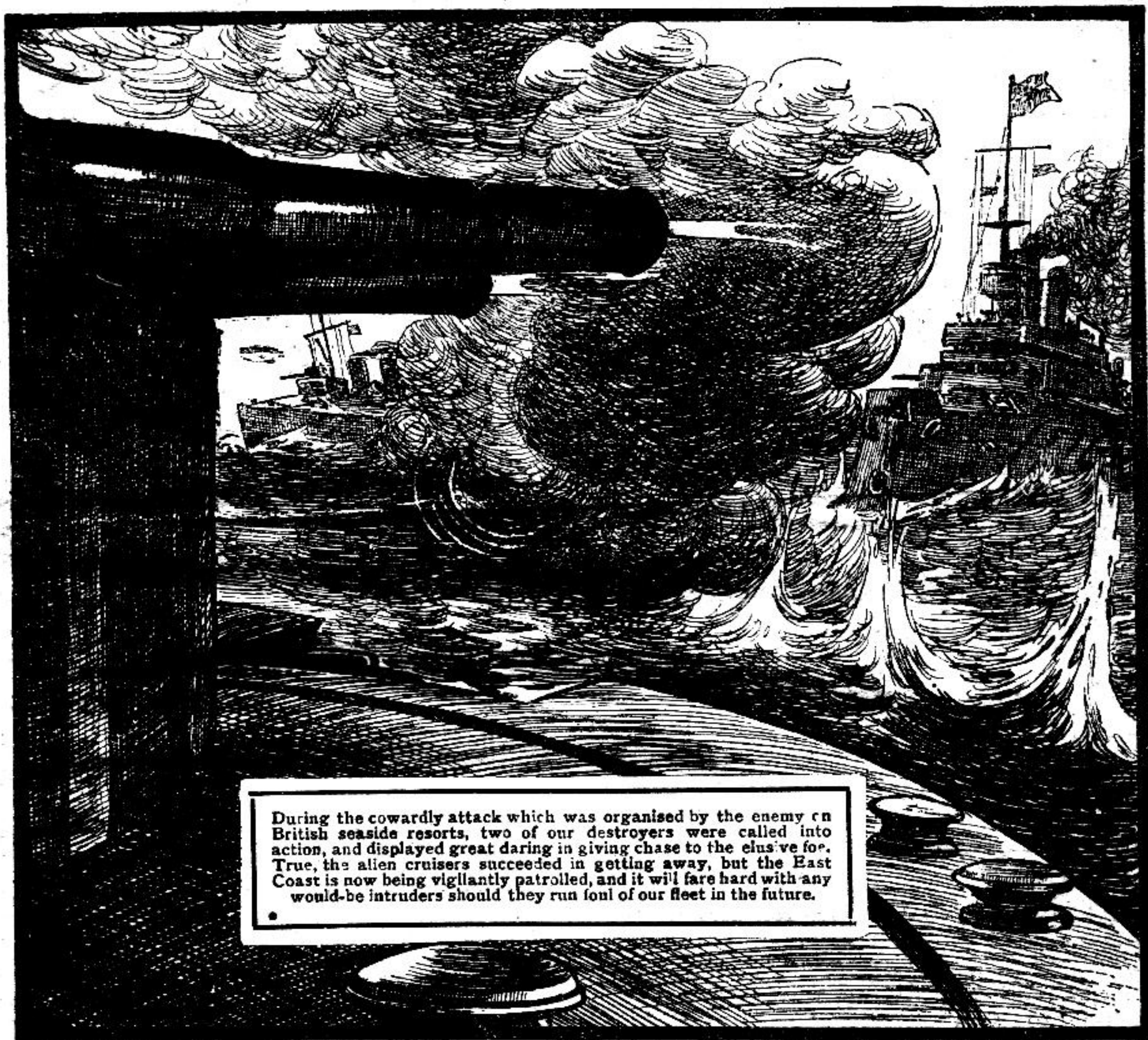
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READ THIS FIRST.

Thorpe and Dick Thornhill, brothers, and inventors of the airship Falcon II., play a prominent part in the great war with Germany on land and sea. Dick captures a German gunboat, and takes it to Berwick, where he hears that Lord Roberts is journeying north in a special train. The young inventor is instrumental in preventing a collision between this train and a runaway engine, and is personally complimented by Lord Roberts. He hears later that the sister airship to the Falcon II. is in difficulties, being attacked by three German machines. Dick is successful in destroying one and beating off the rest, but later discovers that the German aerial fleet is being largely reinforced. A terrific battle in the air ensues, from which the brothers emerge victorious, having captured one of the enemy's craft. With their own and the captured airship, Thorpe and Dick Thornhill prepare to sail against the invaders, who are in possession of Edinburgh. As they approach their destination Thorpe observes two German cruisers hastening to warn their consorts in the

Firth of Forth. "If those cruisers reach the Forth in time to give the alarm, many of the enemy's ships will escape!" he calls to his brother, who is in command of the captured airship. "I'll take the chap on the left! You settle the other!" (Now go on with the story.)

In the Grip of the Storm.

Dick nodded, and the next moment they sped to meet the swiftly steaming cruisers.

These two vessels had been cruising in the North Sea, on the look-out for the Mediterranean Fleet, and, therefore, had not heard anything of the recent appearance of the Avenger and the Night Hawk; in fact, the first intimation that they had foes and not friends to deal with was in the shape of two well-directed bombs exploding upon their decks, carrying death and destruction amongst their frightened crews.

Then, doubling like hares trying to escape a greyhound's fangs, the cruisers sought to evade their remorseless foes.

But in vain. A well-aimed shell from Dick's forward turret plunged into his opponent's engine-room, and, exploding with terrific violence, left her rocking, a hopeless wreck, on the sea.

Both airships now concentrated their fire upon the second cruiser; and she, not wishing to share the fate which had befallen her comrade, struck her flag.

"Surrender to the British admiral!" shouted Thorpe from his aerial craft.

Then, leaving Dick to guard the captured vessel, for the first cruiser was too crippled to escape, he steered for the on-coming British Fleet, which advanced under forced draught in line, presenting a splendid spectacle.

But all this had taken time. An hour had elapsed ere Dick had first caught sight of the German cruisers, during which the threatening storm had crept upon them unseen in their excitement. Suddenly a fearful crash reverberated overhead, and a bright flash of lightning caused every man on board the Night Hawk to shield his eyes with his hand.

The next moment the storm burst upon them in all its fury. The rain pelted down upon the Night Hawk's decks; the lightning illuminated her frame with momentary flashes. Once Thorpe felt a fearful thrill course through his body, and feared that his vessel had fallen a prey to the fearful thunderbolts of heaven.

But the next moment he recovered, and, looking round, saw his airship still uninjured.

Dropping almost to the surface, he turned his ship's head to land. It was indeed a fearful journey; an experience such as he hoped never to meet again. But at last he reached the Scottish shore, and, coming to the ground, looked in search of the Avenger and his brother.

A dull, hopeless pang of fear entered his heart as he did so. The Avenger was not in sight; but as, careless of the lightning and the drenching rain, he scrambled on to the headland upon which he had landed, he saw that Dick, regardless of the storm, was still hovering over the captured cruiser.

It was not till a torpedo-boat destroyer from the Mediterranean Fleet took over his prize that Dick Thornhill relinquished the post of danger his brother had entrusted to him and turned his ship's head shorewards.

There was little for the airships to do during the rest of that day, for until evening the storm raged fiercely, and when the storm ceased the swell was so great that the British admiral postponed attacking his foes that day, but contented himself with blockading the mouth of the Forth, to prevent the Germans escaping.

As soon as the wind dropped, Thorpe Thornhill flew to the British flagship. He found the admiral about to enter a steam-launch, en route for land; but he gladly availed himself of Thorpe's offer of a passage on the airship.

Having landed his passenger at headquarters, Thorpe turned to the place where they had halted the previous night. Here he was rendered exceedingly anxious by lack of news from little Tom Evans; and he determined, as soon as night set in to go in search of him, and at the same time to see for himself what the Germans were doing.

Well he knew that he would carry his life in his hand, for if he was discovered he would be shot as a spy. But a spice of danger was as the breath of life to Thorpe Thornhill, and it only served as an extra inducement to undertake the adventure.

Fortunately, the disguise he sought was easily found; in fact, there was no lack of German officers, prisoners in the British camp, from whom he could borrow a uniform.

As it happened, the lieutenant in command of the airship Dick Thornhill had captured was about Thorpe's size and build. And, donning the prisoner's uniform, Thorpe Thornhill mounted the Avenger's deck.

"Ach! Donner und blitzen! You are a proper Sherman man. Von long pipe, von beeg sausage, and you is there!" laughed Dick, walking round his brother, and regarding him admiringly.

"Insulting young villain!" retorted Thorpe, laughing. But, seriously, old man, do you think I'll do?"

"Do? Why, you'd pass muster with the German Emperor himself!" returned Dick.

"I hope so," replied Thorpe coolly, "for it would be quite unkind to be so near Edinburgh Castle without calling upon him."

Dick looked at his brother in amazement.

"You don't mean to say—" he began.

"That's just what I do mean," interrupted Thorpe.

"You've made a muddle of catching this wily bird; I'll try my hand at it now."

A look of utter disgust swept over the younger Thornhill's face as he said:

"Oh, yes, of course, you'll do it—you'll do it! Take him up and tie him in a knot and thrust him into your pocket!"

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It's an awful easy thing to kidnap an emperor in the middle of his own troops, isn't it?"

"Don't be sarcastic, Dick; it doesn't suit you. But, anyhow, set your old tin balloon in motion; it's already dark enough to make the attempt," directed Thorpe.

And a minute later the Avenger was moving swiftly through the air in the direction of Edinburgh.

It was a splendid night for their adventure, just dark enough to hide their approach, yet with sufficient light to see where they were going, whilst the grey clouds floating about rendered it easy for Thornhill to make his airship invisible when he chose.

"Are you ready to land, Thorpe?" asked Dick, a little later. "There's your destination."

Thorpe approached the side and looked down.

"You young idiot, that isn't the Castle!" he said half angrily.

"I never said it was, donkey!" returned his irreverent brother. "That is the lunatic asylum, where, if I did my duty, I'd certainly land you, for nobody but a madman would attempt the adventure you are entering upon this evening."

"Oh, dry up! You're only jealous because you're not going with me!" returned Thorpe.

And Dick grinned an assent.

In fact, the adventure was one that appealed strongly to him, and he would certainly have accompanied his brother but that it would not do for both to place themselves into unnecessary danger. Of course, their crews were by this time well up in aerial navigation, but all knew that they would be of comparatively little use without the master-minds that had directed them so far with such signal success.

Face to Face with the Kaiser!

The boldest course is invariably the safer. Consequently, Thorpe directed his brother to land him in the Grassmarket, which was by this time crowded with German troops, for it contained the headquarters of the nominal commander of the army of invasion.

A number of officers crowded round Thorpe as he stepped from the rope-ladder dependent from the Avenger's hull. And crying, "All right, herr! Good luck!" in German, waved his hand as a signal for the airship to ascend.

"Where is the Emperor?" he asked, turning to one of the officers clustered round him.

"In the castle," was the reply. "Are you the bearer of despatches?"

"Yes. We have been south gathering secret information," returned Thorpe.

"Is the report true which I hear that Lord Roberts has himself arrived in the British camp?" asked one of the officers uneasily.

"Your pardon, herr captain!" returned Thorpe. "Did I not say that mine is secret information?"

As he spoke he looked significantly at the officer, who, although eager for information—for no news had reached the invaders' ears for several days—knew better than to make further inquiries.

"Ah, ten o'clock! I am half an hour before my time. The Emperor likes punctuality. I have just time to go to get a snack."

And with these explanatory words, Thorpe slipped his sword on to its hook, and strode through the crowd, followed by the curious and envious glances of his supposed comrades; for, so terrible had been the mortality among the crews of the airships that all the officers of the aerial service were looked upon as heroes.

Walking slowly through the crowd, Thorpe passed out of the Grassmarket, and, keeping the castle well in sight—for he was a stranger in Edinburgh—sauntered slowly along the streets, now and again pausing to chat with officers of different branches of the Service, and thus gathering information on every side.

Thorpe remembered the last time he had visited the German Army, and was struck by the difference it presented to a keen observer. Then nothing but certainty of success filled every heart, now everyone was quiet, subdued, and fearful.

There was not a bugler-boy in the German Army but knew that the enterprise they had entered upon so blithely must end in disaster and disgrace.

But often he had to bite his lips to refrain from smiling, as a German, more sanguine than his comrades, spoke of the certainty of a re-embarkation on the morrow, for Thorpe knew that the Mediterranean Fleet was between the Germans and their Fatherland.

In Princes' Gardens a band was thundering forth patriotic airs, and there was some pretence of gaiety amongst the assembled troops; but the pale, anxious, and strained faces of the Germans showed that it was but a hollow sham.

For an hour Thorpe paced the streets of Edinburgh, noting the state of unrest which obtained on every hand; then, making for the shelter of some trees, he drew a pair of night-glasses he had brought with him from their case, and carefully scanned the heavens immediately above the castle.

Yes, Dick was on the alert, for, so indistinct that it was some minutes before Thorpe, even though he knew it was there, could distinguish her, there floated the Avenger, ready to descend and bear him aloft at the first signal of alarm.

Then, as the French say, taking his courage in both hands, he mounted the stiff incline leading to the castle.

As he drew nearer the grey walls an unaccountable feeling of depression weighed upon the young inventor's heart; and when he joined a throng of officers passing beneath the frowning gateway the quaint idea entered his head that he was a rat walking open-eyed into the mouth of an awful trap, which might at any moment snap to and destroy him utterly.

But the thought that he could even yet give up his dangerous enterprise never entered his head.

Whatever the difficulties and dangers that faced them, the Thornhills never turned back once they had put their hands to the plough.

Stealthily consulting his watch, he saw it was just a quarter-past eleven; then, quickening his pace, soon overtook a general officer.

"Pardon, herr general," he said, saluting. "Can you assist me to the Emperor's presence?"

The general looked suspiciously at him.

"Why?" he asked, in a quick, short monosyllable.

"Because I am the bearer of important despatches from airship No. 7."

"Give them to me. I will deliver them."

Thorpe hesitated; then, with a short laugh, shook his head. "I was told to deliver them into the Kaiser's own hands, herr general," he replied. "Besides, I am only a lieutenant of Engineers. Who knows? If the information pleases the Emperor, I may leave his presence a captain."

The general nodded.

"Well, well, my lad," he said good-naturedly, "you youngsters must have a chance sometimes. Besides, you men of the new aerial service deserve all the encouragement you can get. I am no coward myself, but, by thunder, I would sooner lead a squadron of Uhlans against the British Guards in open field than exchange even a single shot on board an airship! So far, too, I fear these Thornhills have got the best of it."

"Yes," returned Thorpe, wondering what the German would say if he knew who he was talking to, "but our turn may come. It is all a toss-up. One lucky shot, and we would be avenged. There is only one of the British airships that came out of their Chepperton works left afloat."

"Ah, that is good hearing! We might, even now, snatch victory from their hands if that one could be destroyed!"

"Ay, and we will do it!" cried Thorpe, with pretended enthusiasm.

By this time they had passed courtyard after courtyard, through narrow passages, up worn stone steps, until the general halted in a small ante-room filled with men of the Prussian Guard, intermixed with a constantly changing stream of officers.

"Remain here until I have seen the Kaiser," he said, as he disappeared through a door held open for him by a saluting orderly.

Although Thorpe Thornhill's heart was beating as though it would burst through his ribs, he managed to keep a calm exterior, as he noted the many curious glances cast in his direction.

Strolling to a window, he looked out with well-assumed carelessness.

Immediately beneath him was a brilliantly-lighted courtyard filled with soldiers, and a few—a very few—civilians; for, needless to say, the Scottish people, although at the Germans' mercy, held aloof when possible from the invaders.

Presently he started, and leaned eagerly out of the casement, for it was a warm night, and the window was open.

Almost immediately beneath him, lolling carelessly upon a wooden packing-case, was Tom Evans, chatting confidently with a dark-browed, evil-looking fellow clad in a fisherman's blue guernsey and rough overalls.

Thorpe had just time to note that Tom had changed his own clothes for like garments, when the door leading into the Emperor's apartment opened, and the general, standing in the doorway, beckoned him to enter.

"The Kaiser will see you!" he said, with military brevity, as he drew on one side to allow Thorpe to pass.

Wondering whether the pulsation of his quickly-beating heart could be heard by those in the room, Thorpe stepped over the threshold, clapped his heels together, and saluted, as he had often seen German officers do.

Standing by a table, his hands clasped behind him, was William of Germany. The last time Thorpe had seen him was several years before, as, seated by the Prince of Wales's side—late King Edward VII.—he passed, a friendly monarch, through the streets of London, and a thrill of pity went

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through his heart as he saw the great change a few years—or it might have been a few days—had made in the Emperor's appearance.

His face was very pale, and marked with dark lines of care; whilst his head was bowed as in deep thought—perhaps in anticipation of the humiliation he saw approaching, but could not avert.

"You have despatches for me?" said the Emperor, looking up.

"I have two, sire, of great importance. I was ordered, if you would deign to allow me, to give them into your own hands in private."

Thorpe spoke the last words in a low voice. The Emperor looked searchingly at him, and the Briton's heart almost ceased to beat, for a glance of semi-recognition appeared in the Kaiser's eyes.

"We have met before. Your name, sir?"

"Albert Gozern, a Pole in your Majesty's service. I scarcely dared hope that your Imperial Highness would remember so unimportant an individual as myself," returned Thorpe calmly.

In fact, the partial recognition puzzled Thorpe considerably, but the Emperor's next words reassured him.

"I never forget a face, but in your case I can see I have been deceived by a fancied resemblance. You are very like Richard Thornhill, the brother of the man to whom Germany owes her misfortunes," he said.

A terrible paroxysm of rage shook the Emperor's frame.

"Heavens, if I had him here!" he cried huskily. "No death would be so slow and lingering enough to satiate my revenge! But no matter, England cannot stand against the might of the German Empire for ever, and as long as I can lift a hand there shall not be peace between us!"

Then, with a mighty effort, he recovered his usual calm and kingly bearing, and, turning to his followers, said:

"Leave us. We would be alone."

All left the room, and therefore Thorpe Thornhill found his heart's desire fulfilled. He was alone with the German Emperor!

"Your despatches, sir?" said the Emperor, holding out his hand.

The next moment he started back, with an exclamation of alarm.

"This is my despatch, your Highness, and if you dare to call for assistance it shall rid the world of an ambitious tyrant!" cried the Englishman, as he drew a revolver from his pocket and thrust it into the astounded Emperor's face. "You are my prisoner, and I am the Thorpe Thornhill whose death you so much desire!"

The Hohenzollerns have never lacked courage. It was not fear of death which made the German Emperor hesitate. It was the certainty that if he was killed his followers would lose no time in surrendering to the British troops, and he would rather have died twice over than that should happen.

With folded arms, he eyed the stern, determined face of the young Englishman without flinching.

"So you are Thorpe Thornhill! You are the man who hopes to bring all my carefully thought-out plans to nothing?" he asked curiously.

"Pardon me, your Highness, but we can discuss this later. At present you are in my power, and must do as I command!" interrupted Thorpe.

The Emperor elevated his eyebrows with a gesture of surprise.

"Command!" he repeated. "I am unused to hearing that word addressed to me!" Then a contemptuous smile crossed his lips. "Fool! It is true I am at your mercy, and you can murder me in cold blood. But do you think that you can take me single-handed through the whole German Army?"

"I have no intention of putting the forbearance of your faithful soldiers to a test!" returned Thorpe sardonically. "My airship is floating overhead, awaiting the signal to take you off. Kindly stand where you are. If you move towards the bell, if you open your mouth to give the alarm, I will pull the trigger of my revolver, and Heaven forgive me for the deed!"

As he spoke Thorpe moved towards the window, still keeping the Emperor covered with his weapon, held in his right hand; whilst with his left he drew an electric lamp from his pocket, and, holding it outside the window, flashed it twice.

As he did so he noticed a sudden light spring into the Emperor's eyes, but not a muscle of his face moved.

"Your Majesty will approach the window," said Thorpe in polite but firm tones; "then, when the airship descends, you will—Ah!"

The last exclamation was drawn from his lips by feeling his wrist grasped from behind and the pistol jerked upwards,

whilst strong arms encircled his body and iron fingers were entwined about his throat.

He had failed! Like a flash the truth burst upon him. He had failed, and failed through his own carelessness in omitting to lock the door at his back, through which help to his prisoner had come.

Bitterly he regretted his folly, the more so, having seen the signal and all ignorant of what was taking place within the room, his brother was even now descending rapidly towards the castle, and would assuredly be captured.

Captured!

The thought stirred him to renewed effort, and, putting forth all his strength, he burst from his captors, and, rushing to the window, shouted:

"Back, Dick—for your life, back! I have failed. Farewell!"

The next moment he was again seized and hauled into the room, just as the glistening hull of the Avenger appeared outside the window.

"Thorpe—Thorpe, are you there?" he heard his brother cry.

Then one of his captors struck him a severe blow on the head, and for a moment he lost consciousness; whilst Dick, following the impulse of the moment, drew his sword and rushed towards the window.

But even as he did so the aperture was filled with gleaming rifle-barrels, and he flung himself to the deck only just in time to escape the hail of bullets which flew over him.

The next moment the airship had risen above the castle walls, and, realising that Thorpe was now indeed lost to him—perhaps for ever—he soared aloft, then remained motionless in mid-air, ready to do what man could to rescue his brother.

Although dazed from the effects of the blow which had for the moment quieted him, Thorpe Thornhill regained consciousness just in time to hear the voice of the Kaiser raised in loud command:

"Stop! The man who kills him dies! He has dared to lay sacrilegious hands upon an anointed Emperor, and his punishment shall be commensurate with his crime. He is unarmed. Release him!"

The next moment Thorpe found himself free, and for several minutes the Emperor of the Air and the man who had believed himself capable of becoming the Emperor of the World faced each other in silence.

"Well," said the Kaiser at last, "have you nothing to say? No pardon to ask?"

Thorpe shrugged his shoulders.

"It was touch-and-go. I knew when I started on this enterprise that I was staking my life against your liberty. Well, you have won. Take your stakes!"

A look of unwilling admiration flashed from the Emperor's eyes.

"You are a brave man!" he said grudgingly. "To such as you death has no terrors; captivity may have more. You are dangerous in the open air. Throughout the rest of your life you shall have but little of it. You will be kept a close prisoner whilst in Edinburgh, and after that we will see if we cannot conceive some prison which will tax even your great inventive genius to escape from. There are dungeons in this place, are there not?" he added, turning to an officer standing near. "Then see that he is kept safe until we are able to remove him!" he said, having received an answer in the affirmative.

Guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets before and behind, Thorpe was led from the room in which he had nearly carried his great scheme to a successful termination.

Once more they descended the time-worn stairs, and threaded the long, tortuous passages, until at last they entered the courtyard in which Thorpe Thornhill had seen Tom Evans.

Eagerly he looked around for the little arab. At first he could not see him, but as the soldiers in the courtyard pressed round to catch a glimpse of the daring Englishman who

had almost carried off their Emperor, for the tale had already been circulated, he caught a brief glimpse of Tom Evans's white face regarding him with studied indifference, but ere he lost sight of him again a look of quick intelligence in the youngster's eyes told him that he was not quite so unfriended in that castle as his captors thought; indeed, although he was taken down many stairs and thrust into a dark, noisome dungeon, which had not been used as a prison for over a hundred years, he was anything but dismayed.

With his brother free and floating in the air above his head, Tom Evans apparently on intimate terms with the invaders of the castle, Thorpe deemed it probable that, after all, a way of escape would be found.

And neither was he mistaken; but the first aid to escape came from a totally different source to that from which he had expected it.

Some hours later the door opened, and an armed sentry, bearing a lantern—for although day had broken no streak of light could enter that fearful place—entered the cell with his breakfast.

Thorpe looked carelessly at the soldier, and a gleam of recognition sprang into his eyes.

The man saw it, and pressed his finger for a moment on his lips ere he vanished, closing the heavy door behind him.

"Well, that's strange!" muttered Thorpe. "I haven't many acquaintances amongst the German Army, and yet it seems as though it wasn't in Germany I saw the man last. Let's think. By Jove, I have it! St. James's Restaurant! And—why, hang it, it's the man I saved from the crowd at Woolwich! I wonder if the beggar will prove grateful? Pshaw! It isn't likely! A grateful German! Who ever heard of such a thing?"

And, having nothing better to do, Thorpe lifted a loaf of bread and dug a blunt knife with which he had been provided into it.

As he did so, his blade encountered something hard. He weighed the loaf in his hand.

"I've heard of heavy bread, but this is the heaviest loaf I ever came across! Made of cast-iron, it seems, too!" he muttered.

Once more he drove his knife through the yielding crust. Again some hard substance stopped its further progress.

"Oh, hang it, I'll get to the bottom of this mystery!" muttered Thorpe, as he pulled the loaf to pieces.

Then an exclamation of surprise and delight burst from his lips, for snugly hidden in the loaf was a small revolver, and, what was almost as welcome, a short but strong, hard chisel.

"Well, this is practical gratitude with a vengeance!" exclaimed Thorpe. "By Jove, your Imperial Highness, you will have to look sharp, or Thorpe Thornhill will disappoint you of your vengeance after all!"

Thus muttering to himself between mouthfuls, he made a very good breakfast.

Suddenly he stopped eating, and listened. A subdued knocking resounded from without, which presently he was able to locate in a wall on his left.

He moved towards the spot from whence the sound came, and, after a minute's hesitation, struck the wall gently, in reply.

The sound suddenly ceased, and, wondering whether it was intentional or accidental, he seated himself on a stone bench which ran along one side of the cell, and was soon lost in plans of escape.

Presently the knocking commenced again, and yet again, at regular intervals throughout the morning.

In vain Thorpe tried to find out who his unknown friend was, but each time he answered the signal it ceased.

Suddenly an explanation of the mystery presented itself to him, for he had discovered that, whilst three sides of the cell were of stone, this wall was of brick, and, from the friendly signals that had come from the other side, probably beyond those bricks lay a way of escape.

Slipping the revolver into his pocket, he grasped his hard chisel, and began scraping the mortar from between the bricks.

(Another long instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order your copy now.)

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"That's my ultimatum!" said Bunter, blinking furiously at the hilarious Removites. "I'm fed up with your rot. I'm going to have my whack in that cup. And I tell you plainly, that if you don't do the sensible thing, I shall start at once raising a new eleven to knock you out of the competition." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. (See Chapter 1.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter's Ultimatum!

"FIFTEEN quid!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Fifteen quid!" repeated Billy Bunter. "Why, it would be a sin and a shame!"

Billy Bunter, the plumpest junior at Greyfriars, was reclining at ease in the armchair in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage. Billy Bunter did not belong to No. 1 Study, but No. 1 Study might have belonged to Billy Bunter, judging by the way he had made himself at home there.

He blinked round through his big spectacles as the Famous Five came in together, but he did not trouble to rise.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" repeated Bob Cherry. "What are you mumbling about?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Buzz off!" said Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove.

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"Sorry to disturb you, Bunt, but it's a meeting of the football committee. Travel!"

"That's all right," said Bunter. "I'm going to attend the meeting. I've been waiting for you fellows."

"Scat!" said Nugent.

"I suppose you're meeting about the Cup?" said Bunter. "I suppose you haven't forgotten that the draw for the Cup takes place this week?"

"Exactly," said Harry Wharton; "and fat toads aren't admitted to the meeting. There's the door!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I've got something to say to you about the Cup—something rather important. In fact, it's an ultimatum!"

"A which!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"An ultimatum!" repeated Bunter firmly. "Now, in the first place—"

"In the first place, you get off the grass," growled Johnny Bull. "Get out!"

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"THE CRUISE OF THE FAMOUS FIVE!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"In the first place—" roared Bunter.

"Are you going?"

"No, I'm not going, you beast! I've got something important—leggo that chair, you ass! Yaroooh!"

Johnny Bull did not let go the chair. He grasped it by the back and tilted it up, and Bunter was shot out on the hearthrug like a sack of coke.

"Ow! You rotter! Yow! I'm hurt!" roared Bunter as he rolled over on the rug. "You've sprained my neck—I mean my backbone! I'm injured! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" roared Bunter, sitting up breathlessly, and setting his glasses straight on his plump nose. "Before you hold the meeting I'm going to give you my ultimatum. I'm not going to be left out of the Cup competition, as I was last time! See?"

"Oh, rats!"

"The rattfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter!" murmured Hurree Singh, the dusky member of the Co., in his soft voice and marvellous English.

Bob Cherry lifted his boot, and Bunter jumped up in a hurry, and dodged round the table with great alacrity, considering how injured he was.

"I say, you fellows, don't be beasts! I tell you this is important!" spluttered the Owl of the Remove. "Now, look here! The draw takes place for the Cup-ties this week. Now, you know that the Coker Cup cost fifteen pounds, don't you? Coker of the Fifth said so plainly when he offered it for competition last season. I remember hearing him tell Potter that his Aunt Judy paid fifteen pounds for the silver Cup. I happened to be outside the door when he said it. If you throw that cushion at me, Bob Cherry, you beast, I'll—yaroooh!"

"Will you get out, you fat duffer?" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "The members of the committee are coming to the meeting to discuss the draw. Do buzz off!"

"I haven't finished yet. I've got a suggestion to make—a really valuable suggestion!" howled Bunter.

"Well, buck up, then!"

"That cup's worth fifteen quids, and the Remove team won it last time, and still hold it. Well, you're not bound to put the same cup up again for competition. If Coker of the Fifth wants a blessed cup to be played for, let him put up another one. He can ask his Aunt Judy to pay for it, you know. She's got lots of money. My idea is that that cup should be sold—"

"Scat!"

"For the benefit of the whole Form, as the whole Form own it!" said Bunter firmly. "Lots of the chaps agree with me. I want my whack, anyway! You've no right to put up that same cup again. Let Coker find another. Now, that cup would fetch ten quid at least, as it cost fifteen!"

"Bow-wow!"

"That's my first proposition," said Bunter. "But I haven't finished yet. If you don't take my advice—"

"Well, we don't!" grinned Bob Cherry. "What next?"

"I say it's a sin and a shame to waste fifteen quid like that!" said Bunter angrily. "Look at the feed you could stand for fifteen quid! Look at the jam-tarts you could get for that! And the ginger-pop, and the sausages! I think you're a set of blithering idiots. But if you won't sell the cup, as you ought, then I'm jolly well going to play in the Remove team this time in the Cup competition!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at!" said Bunter crossly. "With a player like me the Remove would be pretty certain to win the Cup again, and as a member of the winning team I should demand to have it sold!"

"It wouldn't be a winning team if you were in it!" grinned Bob. "The Remove would be sold, not the Cup."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if you don't agree to that," roared Bunter, "I shall start a new eleven myself, and lead it to victory, and collar the Cup, lock, stock, and barrel! What do you think of that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's my ultimatum!" said Bunter, blinking furiously at the hilarious Removites. "I'm fed up with your rot. I'm going to have my whack in that cup. It's a sin and a shame to waste cash by sticking a silly silver cup up on a sideboard. And I tell you plainly, that if you don't do the sensible thing I shall start at once raising a new eleven to knock you out of the competition!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter. The idea of the fat, unwieldy Owl of the Remove captaining an eleven in the Coker Cup competition was a little too much for them. They laughed till they wept.

Billy Bunter blinked at them angrily. He could not see anything whatever to cause merriment. Nothing would

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have convinced William George Bunter that he was not kept out of the Remove eleven by sheer jealousy of his tremendous powers as a footballer.

"Hallo!" said Squiff, the Australian junior, coming into the study. "What's the little joke? Wherefore the cackin-nation?"

Sampson Quincy Iffley Field—who was generally called Squiff, because life was short—looked inquiringly at the hilarious juniors.

"It's Bunter!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He's going to—ha, ha, ha!"

"Going to what?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Captain an eleven—ha, ha, ha!—and knock us out of the Cup competition!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Squiff.

Bulstrode and Peter Todd and Mark Linley were following the Australian junior in. They echoed his yell of laughter. No. 1 Study rang with merriment. Billy Bunter shook a fat fist at them.

"You cackling asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You thumping idiots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you blithering hyenas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can jolly well cackle as much as you like!" howled Bunter. "You won't cackle when I mop you up and collar the Cup!"

"No," gasped Bob Cherry, "we sha'n't! We shall die from the shock. Don't be hard on us, Bunter. Go easy. Let us off!"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Bunter firmly. "I'm not letting you off—not much! You'll either sell that cup and share out, or you'll play me in the Form eleven, or else I shall enter against you and mop you up!"

Squiff sank into the armchair and gurgled helplessly.

"Oh, don't, Bunter!" he murmured. "You're killing me!"

"You know what kind of footballer I am!"

"More like a football than a footballer," remarked Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's my ultimatum! Now, I want my answer—sharp!" said Bunter loftily. "Are you going to treat me as I deserve, or—"

"Yes, rather," said Bob Cherry promptly. "Collar him!"

"Here, I say—I—I—leggo—yah!"

The grinning juniors collared the Owl of the Remove, swung him through the doorway, and deposited him on the linoleum outside—hard. Then the door of the study closed on him.

Bunter sat and gasped. Loud sounds of merriment were still audible from No. 1 Study.

The fat junior staggered up, still gasping—his wind was short. He opened the door and blinked into the study.

"You rotters!"

"Get out!"

"Look out, that's all! I'll mop you up—simply mop you up!" roared Bunter. "I'll show you! I'll jolly well—oh!"

A cushion whizzed through the air, and Bunter dodged just in time. He slammed the door and retired, snorting; and the football committee of the Remove were left to their deliberations, apparently quite undismayed by Bunter's ultimatum.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Draw for the First Round!

HORACE COKER sat in his study, with an expression of lofty importance upon his face. Coker of the Fifth was a truly important person that evening.

Indeed, at any time there were few more important persons, if Coker's own opinion on the subject was to be trusted.

Potter and Greene, his study-mates, were there, and they were very respectful to the great Coker just then. Whether that was because of their spontaneous admiration of Coker, or because a handsome remittance from his Aunt Judith had lately arrived, it is impossible to say. At the festive board in that study Coker was monarch of all he surveyed, and as he generally paid for all he surveyed, Potter and Greene did not mind. As Potter often said—not in Coker's hearing, of course—Coker stood the feeds, and they stood Coker, which was an equal division of labour.

Coker looked at his watch.

"They'll be here soon," he remarked. "Got the slips ready, Potter?"

"All ready," said Potter.

"The Cup is coming back to the Fifth this time, I think," remarked Coker.

"Let's hope so," said Greene cordially. "But didn't you say you were going to play for the Fifth?"

"It's because I'm going to play for the Fifth that the Cup's coming back," said Coker.

"Oh, I see!"

Coker looked at him a little suspiciously; but Greene smiled blandly. Coker's extraordinary belief that he could play football never ceased to tickle his chums. But it was not judicious to tell Coker what they thought on that subject. It would have destroyed the harmony of the study.

Besides, they really liked Coker. No one could really help liking Coker. Of course, he was a thumping ass; his best friend would not have denied that. He was, in fact, several sorts of an ass. What he didn't know about footer would have filled huge volumes; but he was accustomed to laying down the law on the subject. But Coker was the biggest fellow in the Fifth, with a four-point-seven punch, so to speak, so his opinions had to be listened to with a certain amount of respect. And he always had plenty of money, and spent it like a prince. And he was thoroughly good-natured—quite tolerant towards the rest of the world, in fact. When the prime fact of Coker's great importance was recognised and admitted, Coker was a very pleasant fellow to know. The heroes of the Remove never recognised or admitted it, and that had led to much trouble between them and Coker.

Still, Coker had done a very popular thing in founding the Coker Cup. It wasn't every fellow who would "blow" fifteen pounds on a silver cup to be competed for by all the Forms in the school, without distinction. Of course, there were drawbacks. Coker drew up all the rules, without any help from inferior brains, and he reserved the right to alter the rules as he went along, according to the inward light that was in him. Still, there was the Cup, and it was worth having. The Remove had won it, and kept it, till the date came round again for the next competition.

There was one clause in Coker's rules that was unpopular. Coker had a natural desire to be in the winning team that bagged the Cup. So he stipulated for the right to be in any team he chose, and one after another, if he liked. And each team could only hope that he would select their opponents to give assistance to. For with Coker's valuable help on the football field a team simply hadn't an "earthly." And though the fate of the Cup was doubtful, one thing was quite certain, and that was that it wouldn't go to a team that included Horace Coker in its ranks.

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, had offered ten to one in quids on that, but he had found no takers. It would have been a dead cert for the Bounder.

The draw was to take place this evening. The captains of the various elevens were to meet in Coker's study and draw for the first tie. There would be a good many competitors. It was really luck that had helped the Remove to bag the Cup last time. Coker's assistance to their rivals had been the main factor. And even the great and glorious Sixth Form wanted to bag the Cup, if only to show that the Sixth, the Palladium of the school, could walk over any other Form quite easily in matters of football.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage and a tap at the door, and Wingate, of the Sixth, came in. Wingate was the captain of Greyfriars, leader of the First Eleven. Coker gave him a genial nod.

"First in the field!" cried Coker. "They'll all be along soon. Sit down."

Wingate sat down.

"I was going to make a suggestion about the draw, Coker," he remarked.

"Glad to hear any suggestion," said Coker. "Of course, the whole matter is in my hands. I run this show. You understand that that isn't empty swank; nothing of the sort. But as a fellow who thoroughly understands the ins and outs of footer, and may claim to be a bit of an authority on the game. You see?"

"I don't quite see," said Wingate; "but never mind. Last time you drew the First Eleven against a fag Form; I forget which. That's rather ridiculous for the Sixth. This time we're playing by Forms; some of the First Eleven will be in the Sixth Form team, and some in the Fifth Form team. That makes it all the more rotten if the Sixth should be drawn against the Second, you know—kids of eleven and twelve. Could you arrange it for the Sixth to play the Fifth in the first tie, instead of a draw?"

"It means your being knocked out in the first tie," said Coker.

"Eh? You think the Fifth—"

"Yes. I'm playing for the Fifth!" explained Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, Wingate?" demanded Coker, with a glare.

"Ahem! Excuse me. We're willing to risk being knocked out in the first tie," said Wingate, calming down.

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PENNY.

"Better for you, too. You'd rather play the Sixth than a fag team."

Coker nodded thoughtfully.

"The others might object," remarked Potter.

"Let 'em!" said Coker, up in arms at once at the idea of opposition to his sovereign will. "I'll do as you suggest, Wingate. The Sixth and Fifth won't enter the draw at all; it's arranged in advance for them to meet. I have reserved the right to make any alterations in the rules. That's one I choose to make. That's settled."

"Good egg!" said Wingate, with a breath of relief. The prospect of meeting the fags of the Second on the football field had worried him.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, came in. Blundell had agreed to play Coker in his team. Coker had a right to insist, by his own rules, on that point. But he had firmly resisted Coker's suggestion that he should captain the Fifth Form eleven. Blundell did not quite see that.

Temple, the captain of the Fourth, and Hobson, of the Shell, followed Blundell in. Then came Harry Wharton, of the Remove, and Tubb, of the Third. Nugent minor, of the Second Form, was the next to arrive, and he was greeted with smiles. Against the mighty men of the senior elevens, of course, the Second Form fags had no chance whatever. But Dicky Nugent did not mean to be left out, all the same. Dicky Nugent was keen, and he had explained to his chums, Gatty and Myers in the Second, that there was a chance. For when Coker's team was beaten he would claim his right to play in another team in the next tie, and so on to the final. And it might happen that the Second would have Coker against them all the time, in which case there was a chance of winning the Cup. That was how Dicky Nugent looked at it, though he would not have ventured to explain his views to Coker.

"All here now," said Coker.

There was another knock at the door, and Billy Bunter came in. Coker frowned at him.

"Clear out, Bunter! We're busy!"

Bunter came firmly in, and closed the door behind him. Bunter was there on business, and he meant that to be understood.

"It's all right, Coker," he explained. "I'm in this."

"Eh? In what?"

"In the competition. You remember last time Todd raised a second eleven in the Remove, but he's playing in Wharton's team this time. But there are going to be two Remove elevens, all the same. I'm raising a team."

"What!"

"My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm raising a team!" repeated Bunter, with a glare round at the grinning footer captains. "There's nothing to cackle at. By the terms of the competition, which is open to all comers, I demand the right to compete!"

"If you've really got a team—"

"Of course I have! And a better team than Wharton can raise!" said Bunter. "We're going into this thing on business lines. And I think I could tell you in advance who's likely to get the Cup, too!"

Coker hesitated. He was inclined to make a new rule on the spot, excluding William George Bunter from participation in the Cup-ties. He didn't want his Cup competition to be made absurd. Still, fair play was fair play, and Coker was a great stickler for fair play all round. The rules allowed anybody who liked to enter, if he could raise an eleven among the Greyfriars fellows.

Horace Coker nodded at last.

"Well, all serene," he said. "You'll be knocked out in the first tie, so it won't much matter."

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"There are eight teams," said Coker, looking round over the company in the study. "That will be four ties—two semi's and a final. In the first tie the Sixth play the Fifth."

"What about the draw?" asked Harry Wharton. He had hoped to be drawn against Coker's team, so as to make sure of victory in the first round at least.

"Sixth and Fifth left out of the draw," said Coker calmly.

"That isn't in the rules," said Temple of the Fourth.

"I've just put it in," explained Coker.

"Oh!"

"So there are six teams to draw," said Coker. "Shove those slips into a hat, Potter, old man. Now go it!"

The draw for the first round proceeded. Harry Wharton and Hobson drew together, the Remove were to play the Shell. Temple and Tubb came together—the Fourth and the Third. Bunter's eleven was drawn with the Second Form. Billy Bunter looked pleased. If he made up any kind of a team at all, he felt that he ought to be able to beat Second

Form fags. Dicky Nugent looked pleased, too. He was quite sure that Bunter's team would be the easiest team to lick.

"That's settled," said Coker. "Now for the dates. The first round will be played out on Wednesday afternoon; the second on Saturday; the third on the following Wednesday. That's the final. I understand that the dates have been kept open."

"We can fix that, anyway, according to the teams knocked out," said Wharton.

"Right-ho!"

"Gentlemen, the draw is over! I can't wish you all good luck, as I fully expect that the Cup will come home to roost in the Fifth Form," said Coker. "But I wish you jolly good games."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on," said Hobson of the Shell grimly. Hobson of the Shell was always a little bit "edgewise" with Coker ever since Coker had passed over his head into the Fifth. "There's one point. Last time, Coker, you talked some rot about playing for a winning team after your own team had been licked. When that happens this time—"

"It won't happen this time," said Coker.

"But when it does—well, if it does, if you like that better," said Hobson. "We don't want you playing the giddy ox like that again. For instance, when the Sixth have beaten the Fifth, the Fifth will be out of it. And we don't want you offering to play for the Shell in the second round."

Coker sniffed.

"The founder of the Cup competition reserves the right to offer his services to any team, if his own should happen to be beaten. Not that it's likely," he said.

"Then the captain of a team reserves the right to refuse his blessed services!" exclaimed Hobson, a little excitedly.

"Not under the conditions of the Cup competition," said Coker, shaking his head. "The competition is entered subject to the rules, and there's the rules."

"Well, I think—"

"Never mind what you think," said Coker cheerfully.

"You can withdraw from the competition if you like."

"Oh, rats!"

"It's all right, Hobby," said Wharton comfortingly. "You won't be in the second round, you know; you're playing the Remove in the first."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Hobson, and he quitted the study, and closed the door with a force that was not really necessary.

And the meeting in Coker's study broke up.

As a matter of fact, Hobson's uneasiness was shared by the other skippers. They felt pretty certain that Coker's team would be beaten, and then the valuable services of the great Coker would be thrust upon another team for the second tie. And the unlucky recipient of them might as well give up all idea of getting the Cup at all. And so, besides the other matters connected with the competition, the footer skippers had a good exercise for their brains, in thinking how they were to get rid of Horace Coker and his aid when the time came.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter's Eleven!

FOOTBALL was the order of the day now at Greyfriars.

The Greyfriars fellows were always keen on the great winter game; but the wide-reaching Cup competition made them keener than ever. Every Form above the "Babes" of the First was engaged, and there was an "extra eleven" to be captained by William George Bunter. All the good footballers in the school would be busy, and the second-best would be in practice as reserves in case of accidents. And even fellows who were not keen on the game were keen on their particular Form capturing the Cup.

There were some, indeed, who looked at it from Billy Bunter's point of view. Although the Cup was supposed to be kept by the winning team, to be played for again next season, there was really nothing to prevent it from being sold, if the winners were mean and unsportsmanlike enough to sell it. Billy Bunter looked for recruits among fellows of his own point of view. He had coolly entered the draw, without having made up his team; having as yet only one recruit, his minor, Sammy of the Second Form. Sammy was willing to go through the fag of a footer match once, for the bare chance of collaring a "whack" in fifteen pounds; though getting him to practise was another matter.

Billy Bunter thought it out very carefully the next day, and after lessons he proceeded to beat the Remove for recruits. The Famous Five were all in the Form eleven, and the rest of the members were Peter Todd, Mark Linley, Vernon-Smith, Bulstrode, Tom Brown, the New Zealander, and Squiff. They were the best team the Remove could put into the field, and they represented the Form when the match was

likely to be a hard one. On less important occasions, less doughty players were given a chance; Penfold, and Ogilvy, Micky Desmond, Tom Dutton, Bolsover major, Hazeldene, Morgan, and a few others, who were all on the playing list. Billy Bunter would have been glad to snap up those reserves for his eleven, but they would as soon have thought of playing for the Owl of the Remove as for the man in the moon. He tackled Bolsover major first. Percy Bolsover was a good goalkeeper, nearly as good as Bulstrode, and firmly believing himself much better.

Billy Bunter came into his study with a card and a pencil in his hand. He had a good many names written on the card, not thinking it judicious to confess that so far his eleven consisted only of himself and his minor. He found Bolsover major looking grumpy. Bolsover had been pointing out, with all the eloquence at his command, that on an important occasion like that he ought to be played in goal. But the football committee of the Remove had failed to see it.

"Well, what do you want, fatty?" grunted Bolsover.

"I'm looking for a goalkeeper," said Bunter.

"Eh!" said Bolsover, with a stare. "What the dickens do you want with a goalkeeper?"

"For my eleven," explained Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a jolly good goalkeeper, Bolsover," said Bunter insinuatingly.

"I know that."

"Better than Bulstrode, in fact," said Bunter, who had had considerable practice in the soft answer that turneth away wrath.

"I know that, too."

"Well, play for my eleven," said Bunter. "I'm going to be centre-forward, and you can depend on me to lead you to victory."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"I'm not being funny, you silly ass," said Bunter, indignantly. "I've pretty well mapped out my team, but I want a goalie. Remember, I'm going to sell the Cup if we win it, and that's about thirty bob each for the members of the team."

"Pig!"

"Eh! What?"

"If I won the Cup, I wouldn't sell it," said Bolsover, with a snort. "But I'll tell you what. If you've really got an eleven together, I'll captain it if you like."

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"I couldn't play you, though," said Bolsover decidedly. "I should have to leave you out."

"Why, you—you fathead!" spluttered Bunter, greatly enraged at the mere idea of being left out of his own eleven. "You—you dashed idiot! Oh! My word! Yah!"

Bunter skipped out of the study as dictionaries and Latin grammars began to fly. He snorted angrily and rolled along the passage. Evidently it was necessary to look a little further for a goalkeeper. He dropped into Hazeldene's study, where he found that youth and Bulstrode and Tom Brown at tea. Bulstrode promptly pointed to the door.

"Scat!" he said.

"I haven't come to tea," growled Bunter.

"Well, scat, all the same. We don't want to hear that you're expecting a postal-order, and we've got nothing to lend."

"'Tain't that, this time; I mean, 'tain't that at all. I want to speak to Hazel. I say, Hazel, you're left out of the Form team. You're a pretty good goalkeeper."

"Thanks!" said Hazeldene. "I'm stony."

"I don't want you to lend me any money, you silly ass!" howled Bunter, exasperated.

"Then what are you soaping me for?"

"I want you to keep goal for my team."

"My hat!"

"I've had to tell Bolsover that he won't do. He's not quite up to the mark. Can I depend on you, Hazel?"

"I'm a reserve for the Form," said Hazel cheerfully. "I'm hoping that Bulstrode will break his leg or his neck before the ties are all played. Ask somebody else."

"Now, look here, Hazel, I'm going to sell the Cup and divide up," said Bunter temptingly. "I've got practically all the team complete excepting a goalkeeper. You'd better chip in, you know."

"Sell the Cup," said Tom Brown. "You Philistine! Kick him out!"

Hazeldene jumped up readily. Bunter did not wait to be kicked out. He rolled out rapidly, and slammed the door.

He made his way discontentedly to the end study. He found Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, there.

"Fishy, old man," said Bunter, sure this time that he



"What station's this?" yelled Coker, bounding out of the carriage. "Canterbury, sir." "Thunder! Next train back to Courtfield?" "Five-thirty, sir!" "Five-thirty!" yelled Coker. The porter dodged away, quite alarmed. (See Chapter 10.)

was talking to a fellow after his own heart, "I want you in my team. I know you're a good player."

"I guess I could show some of them how to play the game," said Fisher T. Fish, with a sniff. "I reckon I've offered Wharton my services, but he don't see it. The fatheadedness of you British makes me tired—tired, sir."

"Well, put in for me," said Bunter. "I want you as inside-left. You can play inside-left?"

"I guess so."

"I'm going to sell the Cup when we win it, and divide up—"

"Now you're talking!" said Fisher T. Fish, with great heartiness. "That's what I call a real business proposition. I guess I never thought you had so much hoss-sense, Bunter."

"Shall I put you down?" asked Bunter eagerly. "I've got all the team excepting inside left—just that place open."

"Put me down!" said Fish.

Billy Bunter put him down, and rolled away, feeling a little encouraged. It was one recruit, at least—if not a very valuable one. But a captain like Billy Bunter was not able to pick and choose. He had to take what he could get. His next visit was paid to the Bounder's study, where he found Skinner. Vernon-Smith was in the Form team, but his study-mate was too much of a slacker to have a chance of that.

"Hallo, Skinny!" said Bunter affably. "I'm looking for an outside-left. I've got all my team filled up excepting outside-left. Shall I put your name down?"

"Oh, scat!" said Skinner.

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"You take an equal whack in the profits when I sell the Cup!"

"Oh!" said Skinner, looking interested.

"First catch your hare!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Well, it won't hurt to try," said Skinner. "Mind, if we get the Cup, it's fair shakes all round, Bunter! None of your larks, you know!"

"That's all right!" said Bunter. "You're outside-left, then. Right?"

Bunter was looking more and more satisfied. Evidently there were fellows who agreed with his views as to the proper disposal of the Coker Cup—when won! They did not happen to be much in the way of footballers, but that could not be helped. He had to enlist somebody.

The fat junior met Snoop and Stott in the passage, and buttonholed them at once.

"I say, you fellows, will you play for me on Wednesday? I've got my team complete excepting for the backs."

"What's that about selling the Cup?" asked Snoop thoughtfully. "It's a jolly good idea, if we could get hold of it. And you never know your luck—especially if Coker helps the other side. Put me down."

"Me, too!" said Stott. "It won't do any harm, if it don't do any good."

"Oh, we'll win!" said Bunter. "I'll lead you to victory, you can depend on that!"

The fat skipper had five names on his list now, as well as his own. His team was growing. He had settled on his minor, Sammy, as goalkeeper. That was where Sammy would do

least damage, he reflected. Smith minor was his next recruit; Bunter explained to him that he had just the one place of centre-half open, and Smith minor good-naturedly agreed to fill it. Then Bunter went into his own study, No. 7. His three study-mates, Peter and Alonzo Todd, and Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, were there. Peter Todd grinned at the sight of Bunter's list.

"How's the eleven getting on?" he inquired.
"Getting on topping," said Bunter loftily. "If you were a decent chap, and had a proper regard for your own study, you'd play for me instead of Wharton."

"Bow-wow!" said Peter.
"As it is, I shall have to put Alonzo in," said Bunter.
"I suppose you're willing to play for me, Alonzo?"
Alonzo Todd smiled his gentle smile.

"My dear Bunter, I shall be very pleased! Of course, I do not know much about football, but I will do my best. What shall I be—wicket-keeper?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.
"My dear Peter—"

"Fathead!" said Bunter. "I'll put you in as a half. Now I want a winger. I say, Dutton, I shall want you!"

"Eh?" said Dutton, looking round.
"I've got just one place open in my team," said Bunter.

"Will you play outside-right for me?"
"That's according," said Dutton. "Whom do you want me to fight for you? Has Loder been bullying you?"

"Play for me," shouted Bunter, "in my team!"
"Scream? Loder made you scream?"

"Oh, my hat! Will you play in my eleven? I've got just one more place, and then the team will be full."

"Well, if you called him a fool, it served you right, whatever you did," said Dutton. "Loder is a beast, but he's a prefect—"

"I want you in my eleven!" shrieked Bunter.
"Seven what?"

"Will you play for me in the Cup-tie?"
"Rot!" said Tom Dutton.

"Eh? What's rot?"
"I don't believe you hit him in the eye. He would have whopped you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.
Bunter gasped. Talking to his deaf study-mate was a labour of love. But Tom Dutton was a first-rate forward, and Bunter wanted to secure him if he could. He put all his beef into his voice as he went on:

"I WANT YOU TO PLAY IN MY ELEVEN!"
"I can hear you," said Dutton crossly. "No need to shout. I'm not deaf!"

"Oh, my hat! Well, will you play?"
"What did I say? I said I wasn't deaf!"

"Oh, dear!"
"And as for playing in your eleven, of course I won't!" said Dutton. "I'm a footballer, not a comedy merchant. Go and eat coke!"

"Look here, you ought to back me up, a chap in your own study!" howled Bunter.

"I shouldn't mind getting muddy," said Dutton. "It isn't that. But you can't play footer for toffee!"

"You ought to back me up!"
"Catch me cracking you up," said Dutton contemptuously.

"I think you are a silly ass! That's my opinion of you!"
Billy Bunter gave it up. He snorted and rolled out of the study in search of new victims. He still wanted four men, and although he was willing to put in anybody who offered for the sake of making up an eleven, he did not find anybody to offer. Even the prospect of a "whack" in the price of the cup—when won and sold—did not reconcile the juniors to the idea of playing under Bunter's leadership. The Remove was drawn blank, and Bunter, in desperation, looked among the Third for recruits. He found two fags in the Third who had been rejected from Tubb's eleven, and were willing to enlist, and put them down. Two fags from the Second Form made up the eleven at last—pals of Sammy's. Bunter impressed upon his team that they would have to turn up to practice—under his direction. Then he posted up his list proudly on the board, along with the lists of the other elevens.

If Bunter expected his list to have an imposing effect, he was disappointed. The fellows who saw it on the board roared with laughter—much to his annoyance. Bunter could not see anything to laugh at. It was true that his eleven was not

exactly what one would have called topping; but under Bunter's remarkable leadership there was no reason why they should not do great things—at least, that was how Bunter looked at it.

"You'll jolly well see what you'll see!" snorted Bunter. And certainly there was no doubt about that.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Football Extraordinary!

WEDNESDAY was a very important day for the competitors for the Coker Cup. No fewer than four matches were to be played that afternoon on the extensive playing-fields of Greyfriars. There were, indeed, almost as many players as spectators. And, curiously enough, it was Bunter's eleven that drew the largest crowd of onlookers.

Bunter's eleven had done some practice together; not much, for they were all slackers. But they had done enough to give the fellows a hint of what the match would be like, and the juniors all wanted to see that match—they expected to enjoy it. As Ogilvy remarked, it wouldn't amount to much as football, but as a screaming farce it would be top-notch.

There was nothing exciting in seeing a match between the Sixth and the Fifth—except to watch Coker's blunders. Fourth v. Third, and Remove v. Shell, too, offered nothing out of the common. But Bunter's team was certain to play something quite out of the common. And when the Bunterites and the Second eleven came down to their ground quite a crowd gathered round to watch, grinning. Billy Bunter blinked over the crowd with considerable satisfaction. He was flattered at having drawn an audience like this, while Big Side was almost deserted.

"I say, you fellows, looks as if they expect us to be a winning side, what?" said Bunter, with a fat smirk of satisfaction.

"I guess they know there's one first-class man in the team, anyway," remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"Thank you, Fishy—"

"Nothing to thank me for, I guess. I was speaking of myself."

"Fathead!" said Bunter.
"You fellows ready?" asked Dicky Nugent, the skipper of the Second.

"I guess I'm ready!"
"My goalkeeper ain't here yet," said Bunter, blinking round. "Anybody seen Sammy?"

"In the tuck-shop, most likely!" said Gatty of the Second.
"Somebody go and look for him," said Bunter. "There's no hurry. We'll jolly well give you fags a licking; you needn't be in a hurry."

"You couldn't lick half of us," said Gatty, with a snort.
Two of the fellows rushed away to the tuck-shop to look for the missing goalkeeper. Billy Bunter blinked round at the other games, which were already in progress. On Big Side the Sixth and the Fifth had closed in strife, and the great Coker was already distinguishing himself. The voice of Blundell could be heard:

"Chuck it, Coker, you silly idiot! Can't you see you're off-side?"

The Fourth and the Third were hard at it, too; and further on, the Remove and the Shell were playing up hard. Harry Wharton & Co. were in great form; and the Shell team were doing their best for the Cup. But the Remove eleven had few lookers-on. The lookers-on were all round Bunter's field of play. They wanted to see the fun.

"Here he comes!" said Snoop.

Sammy Bunter could be seen, dragged out of the tuck-shop by Skinner and Fish, and being rushed down to the footer ground.

"What, ain't you ready, you young ass?" demanded his major, frowning. "You're keeping us waiting!"

Sammy, who had arrived in a somewhat breathless state, gasped:

"Groo! I'm ready!"
"Get into goal!" said Billy Bunter loftily.

"Ain't you going to toss?" demanded Nugent minor.
"Oh, I forgot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Nothing to cackle at, you cheeky fag. We're going to lick you, anyway!"

They tossed for ends, and the kick-off was awarded to Bunter. The referee—a Fourth-Form fellow—blew the whistle, and they started.

Billy Bunter had his own ideas about footer. He pictured himself, in his mind's eye, taking the ball down the field in a fine, irresistible rush, leaving the forwards stranded, scattering the halves, knocking the backs right and left, and sending

ANSWERS

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in the leather upon a dismayed and demoralised goalkeeper. That was the programme which Bunter had mapped out quite nicely in his mind. But mapped-out programmes do not always go as planned.

Bunter got away with the ball. But a moment later he was rolling on the ground, without the slightest knowledge of where the ball was, or what was happening. And he sat up and blinked and gasped and roared:

"Yaroooh! Where's my spectacles? Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

The crowd were already beginning to enjoy themselves. Even Coker's antics in the Fifth-Form team could not draw their eyes away.

"Go it, Tubby!"

"Roll on!"

Bunter scrambled up blindly, found his glasses, and jammed them on his nose. He blinked round dizzily.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ball was smiting Sammy Bunter on the chest, and stretching him on his back in goal. The Second-Form team chirruped with delight.

"One to us! Goal! Hurrah!"

"I say, that goal doesn't count!" yelled Bunter. "I wasn't ready!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck that ball out, Tubby minor!" said Dicky Nugent.

Sammy Bunter gathered himself up breathlessly, and pitched the leather out. It was taken back to the centre of the field. The fags were grinning now with glee. They did not anticipate much difficulty with their opponents.

"I say, you fellows, just back me up this time!" said Bunter severely.

"Oh, rats!" said Skinner. "You'd better let me captain the team! You can't play for toffee!"

"Order, there!" rapped out Bunter. "None of your cheek, Skinner!"

"I guess I'd better captain the team," said Fisher T. Fish. "Leave it to me, Bunter. I guess I can show you how to play footer!"

"You silly ass!"

"Let's kick Bunter out, and play a man short," suggested Smith minor.

"Why, you cheeky rotter—"

"Don't let me interrupt the conversazione," said Dicky Nugent politely. "but we're waiting for you to kick off. Take your own time, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ball was kicked off again, and the fags made a determined rush into Bunter's half. Bunter was rolled over at once, and Alonzo Todd rolled over him, and Dicky Nugent & Co. swept down on goal. Sammy Bunter, who was waving his arms to keep himself warm, left off waving them a little too late to attend to defence, and the ball whizzed over his head into the net. There was a roar of laughter from the spectators.

"Goal! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my aunt!" ejaculated the goalkeeper.

Bunter came puffing down the field, and he shook his fist at his minor.

"You silly young ass! Why didn't you stop that ball—eh?"

"You silly chump!" retorted Sammy. "Why did you let them get through?"

"I'll jolly well lick you if you let it in again!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" retorted Sammy.

"Look here," said Skinner. "I'm fed up with you Bunters! Either you make me captain on the spot, or I go off!"

"Go off, and be hanged!" said Bunter. "We shall be better without you! You got in my way when I was making a run—"

"Well, I'm off!" said Skinner, with a snort. And he walked off amid howls of laughter.

It fell the Bunter to kick off once more. This time the Bunterites made a great effort, and got the ball somewhere near the Second-Form goal. Bunter was bowled over, as usual, but he scrambled up, and rushed on again furiously. It was evident that only first-class leadership could do anything with that team, and Bunter was prepared to give it the first-class leadership. He got on the ball again—falling on it with a bump that nearly burst it. Nugent pushed him off, and kicked the ball away, and Stott intercepted it, and sent it back, and then Snoop sent it forward to Bunter, who, by a miracle, saw it, and got on to it, and raced it on to goal. It was plain to everybody on the ground excepting Bunter that he was off-side, but Bunter did not think of little things like that. He rushed on, and slammed the ball in, the goalkeeper keeping his hands in his pockets, and laughing, instead of making any attempt to stop the ball.

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NEXT MONDAY—**"THE CRUISE OF THE FAMOUS FIVE!"** A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!" panted Bunter. "One for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Off-side, you fat idiot!" shrieked the referee. "Oh, you fat dummy, don't you know when you're off-side?"

"Rats!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Look here, I'm not going to have you favouring the other side, referee or not!"

"Oh, you—you—you idiot!"

"Off-side, you fat lunatic!" yelled Snoop. "Get out of it, for goodness' sake!"

"Rot, I tell you!" yelled the indignant Bunter. "That's my goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you jaw me, I'll send you off the field!" exclaimed the referee, equally indignant.

Bunter glared.

"Send me off! I'll jolly well punch your nose, Jones minor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you fat duffer—"

"You silly ass—"

"I'll jolly well—"

"So will I—"

In another moment the referee and Billy Bunter were hammering one another. Bunter was not a fighting-man as a rule, but in his fury at being robbed of his goal he would have fought whole legions. Dicky Nugent wiped away his tears.

"Drag 'em apart!" he gasped. "Oh, my hat! Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia! What a match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter and the referee were dragged apart. Bunter's nose was swollen, and the referee caressed a damaged eye. He shook his fist at Bunter, and stalked off the field. He had finished refereeing.

"Line up, you fellows," said Bunter. "we'll finish this match without a referee! Oh, my nose! We don't want a beastly referee! I say, where are the fellows gone?"

Bunter's team—apparently dissatisfied with their leadership, for some reason—seemed to have melted away. Snoop and Stott and several others had departed, snorting with disgust. Fisher T. Fish stayed, but only to address some personal remarks to Bunter before he went.

"I guess, of all the blithering mugwumps, you're the blitheringest!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I calculate I wouldn't be found dead in your team, you slab-sided jay! You hear me? Yah!"

And Fisher T. Fish stalked away.

Bunter blinked round the field in dismay. Only the good-natured Alonzo, and Sammy Bunter in goal, remained of his eleven. The Second-Form fellows were doubled up with laughter.

"Are you going on, Bunt?" shrieked Dicky Nugent.

"Yes," howled Bunter; "or we'll postpone the match. I shall have to make some changes in my eleven!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't be postponed, ass!" said Nugent minor. "You've got to play it out or give it up!"

"I am willing to go on, my dear Bunter," said Alonzo gently. "I fear, however, we shall have little chance of winning, with only three persons in the team."

"Go hon!" chuckled Gatty.

Bunter snorted with wrath.

"There's nothing to cackle at, you silly, blithering chumps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't play a team of three, and I don't recognise this match at all!"

"That's all right. It'll be recognised for you," grinned Nugent minor.

Bunter snorted again, and stalked off in high dudgeon. And the field being abandoned by their opponents, the Second Form gave a loud cheer for their victory, and walked off too. The first half had not been finished, but the Second Form had won. And the spectators walked away to see the other matches, aching with merriment. Billy Bunter had made his first and last appearance as a captain in the football-field.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Distinguishes Himself!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were engaged in a hard tussle with the Shell fellows. In the first half the score stood one to one. With the Fourth and the Third, the Fourth were one up when the whistle went for the interval. But the spectators who had come away from

Watching Bunter's marvellous performances did not stop to see the junior matches. They were interested in Coker. As Bolsover major remarked, Coker would not be quite so funny as Bunter, but he was the next best thing.

Wingate's team was going strong. The Sixth had taken two goals to one in the first half, and from the looks Blundell & Co. bestowed upon Horace Coker, it did not look as if the best of feelings reigned in the Fifth Form team. Blundell, indeed, glared at Coker as if he would like to eat him.

Coker, too, appeared a little dissatisfied—not with himself, of course. He was dissatisfied with Blundell. And as they went back to the middle of the field for the restart, Coker ventured on a word of advice, tapping Blundell on the shoulder in a friendly manner.

"We shall have to put it on a bit, Blundy, old man," he remarked. "We've got to pull up in the second half, you know. May I suggest a change?"

"What change?" growled Blundell.

"I rather fancy myself as centre-forward," said Coker modestly. "I think I could do more good there than on the wing."

"I put you outside, because I thought you'd do least mischief there," the captain of the Fifth explained deliberately.

"Look here, Blundell—"

"But if you really want to help us win, Coker—"

"Of course I do!" said Coker testily.

"Then the best thing you can do is to walk off the field!"

"Why, you silly ass—" exclaimed Coker, greatly incensed.

"Oh, line up there, and don't jaw, hejabers!" said Fitzgerald.

Coker lined up sulkily in his place. Matters were not going well with the Fifth Form team, and Coker knew the reason—the leadership was bad. That was how Coker looked at it. Some of his finest manoeuvres had been spoiled by Blundell calling him to order—at least, Coker thought so. If the Fifth had had the sense to make him skipper, Coker knew what would happen. So did the Fifth, for that matter!

But the good-humour returned to Coker's face as he heard the shouts from the spectators, when the second half started. They had evidently come there to see him, and that was a very gratifying tribute.

"Go it, Coker!"

"On the ball, Horace!"

"Give Coker a chance!"

"Bravo, Coker! Go it!"

Coker felt quite backed up by those unsolicited testimonials. Thus encouraged, he bucked up wonderfully. Instead of keeping in his place on the wing, he kindly undertook Bland's duties as inside-right, and Blundell's at centre, as well as his own. He also did a lot of work for the halves. Indeed, he was here, there, and everywhere, and the number of fellows he obstructed and bothered was surprising; even the backs were not quite safe from him.

Coker was full of energy—simply brimming over with energy—and he gave his superabundant energy full play. All eyes were on Coker, and loud yells of applause, mingled with shrieks of laughter, came from the crowd.

"Hurrah! Pile in, Coker! That's ripping! Hurrah!"

"Give Coker a chance! Hurrah!"

Coker had the ball, and he took it down the field, shouldering away Bland, and knocking Blundell fairly over. Courtney of the Sixth tackled him, and Coker passed—Wingate getting the pass, and taking the ball on to the Fifth Form goal. Coker rushed energetically back for the defence, not feeling that it was safe with the halves and backs, and Blundell simply screamed at him:

"Coker! Get away! Keep in your place, you idiot!"

But Coker did not heed.

Greene, at back, cleared, and Coker got the ball, and kicked valiantly. It was a tremendous kick, but unfortunately not in the right direction, and Potter, in goal, had just time to punch it out, or Coker would have scored—for the enemy.

The crowd nearly doubled up with mirth. Coker was going stronger and stronger every minute. There was a tussle before goal, and Loder of the Sixth put the ball in—Greene, who might have stopped him, colliding with the energetic Coker, who was going to stop him, too.

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Potter gave Coker a terrific look as he tossed the ball out. If looks could have slain, Horace Coker would have fallen withered on the field. But as it was, Coker only glared at Greene.

"You ass!" he said.

"Wha-a-a-at!" spluttered the enraged Greene. "You thundering idiot, what did you get in my way for?"

"You got in my way, you fathead!" bellowed Coker.

"You villain!" shrieked Blundell. "What do you mean by charging your own backs from behind—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Coker.

"You—you—you—Oh, there ain't a word! Keep in your place! If you try to play the whole game off your own bat again, I'll send you off the field! You—you silly idiot, you ought to be playing hop-scotch, not football!"

"Look here, Blundell—"

"Oh, line up!" snapped Blundell.

"Don't mind him, Coker, bedad!" shrieked Micky Desmond. "Sure, we're enjoying it! Play up your own way, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Coker!"

"Hurrah for Coker!"

It was something, at least, to feel that the crowd was with him—that was a great comfort to Coker. But, certainly, his fellow-players did not seem to appreciate him. They looked daggers at him, when they looked at him at all; they shouldered him away without mercy; they dodged him more carefully than if he had been an enemy. Coker never had a chance of getting at the ball unless he got it by main force, and as he was a tremendously big and strong fellow, he made chances for himself—with disastrous results to his side.

When the whistle went at last, and the Sixth Form had won with six goals to one, the only surprise was that the six goals weren't a dozen.

Wingate and his men came grinning off the field, easily the victors in the first tie.

The Fifth-Formers were looking furious. Whether they could have beaten the Sixth or not on their own merits, it was only too evident that with Coker's help they hadn't had an earthly from the start. And the things they said to Coker would have made his flesh creep, if he had been at all sensitive to them. Fortunately, he wasn't. It was not so easy to get through Horace Coker's armour of self-satisfaction.

"Satisfied now, I hope!" gasped Blundell. "You've chucked away the match, and made us look a lot of silly idiots! Anything more you'd like?"

Coker shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't see that we had a real chance—with a skipper like you, Blundell!" he said. "Don't mind my speaking frankly. I always speak my mind. You ain't a bad player—in your place. But on an occasion like this, I think you ought to have stepped down, and made room for a chap who was equal to the business. That's my opinion, for what it's worth. You'll know better another time."

And Coker stalked away, leaving the captain of the Fifth quite speechless.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Soft Sawder!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came off the field cheerfully. They had had a hard fight against the Shell, but their score was two to one, and they were satisfied. The Remove had survived the first round. Temple of the Fourth was grinning serenely—the Fourth had beaten the Third, which was only to be expected, though Tubb & Co. had put up a stout fight. Four teams had been knocked out of the Cup competition—the Fifth, the Shell, the Third, and Bunter's eleven.

The victors rejoiced, but their rejoicing was not unmixed rejoicing.

For each of the winning captains was haunted with a terrible fear.

Coker was irrepressible. His clause in the rules, that he was at liberty to play for any team he chose through all the ties, worried them. Coker would insist upon his rights; there was no doubt about that.

On Saturday afternoon the semi-final was to be played among the four winning teams, and there was not the slightest doubt that Horace Coker's services would have to be accepted by one of them.

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There was a roar of encouragement to Coker from all the juniors. "This way, Coker!" "Put it on, old man!" Wingate was a picture of dismay. Coker came up panting and gasping. He rushed straight on the field. "I'm in time!" he gasped. "Hooray!" (See Chapter 15.)

Which? That was the question.

"I think we're pretty safe, so far," Bob Cherry remarked at tea in No. 1 Study. "Coker is pretty certain to play for the Sixth in the next tie. He's bound to choose the Sixth to play for, rather than a fag Form."

"Poor old Sixth!" grinned Frank Nugent.

"May be a good thing for us, if we're drawn against the Sixth," said Johnny Bull. "We don't really stand much chance of beating the Sixth on our form."

"We'll give 'em a tussle, anyway," said Squiff.

"The tusslefulness will be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But if we get into the esteemed final, then very likely the honourable Coker will play for us."

Wharton knitted his brows.

"We shall have to keep the idiot out, somehow," he said. "It isn't as if he'd keep in his place, and make it no worse than a man short. He tries to play the whole game, and mucks up everybody's play."

"It means a licking for the team Coker's in," remarked Tom Brown; "and it's no good arguing with him. He's such a blithering ass—"

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"Shush! Here he comes!"

Horace Coker came into the study, and gave the Removites a good-natured nod. He was evidently in a good-humour with himself.

"I hear you've had good luck," he remarked.

"Yes; we've beaten the Shell," said Harry. "We shall be in the semi-final. When does the draw take place?"

"To-morrow evening," said Coker. "If you young beggars are drawn against the Sixth, you won't have much chance."

"We'll do our best."

"Besides, you'll be playing for the Sixth, won't you, Coker?" said Bob Cherry, rather unfortunately.

Wharton stamped on his foot.

"Will you be playing for any of the teams, Coker?" he asked pleasantly. "I know you've got a clause—"

"Certainly," said Coker. "I play in every tie, of course."

"Ahem!"

"Naturally, as a senior, you'll play for the Sixth?" said Wharton casually.

Coker nodded.

"Naturally," he said. "But, the fact is, the Sixth are simply overwhelming against a junior Form. Fair play's a jewel, you know. I've thought it over, and I've decided to do the right thing—as I see it."

"The—the right thing?" stammered Wharton.

"Yes," said Coker generously. "The Sixth is a team out of all proportion to you juniors, you know. I've decided to give the weaker party a leg-up."

"Oh, my hat!"

"So if you're drawn against the Sixth, you can depend on my playing for you," said Coker.

Dismay kept the juniors silent.

"It's only fair," said Coker cheerfully. "Against a big team like the Sixth, you want all the help you can get; so whether the Sixth is drawn against the Remove, the Fourth, or the Second, I play for the junior team, and make matters a bit level—see?"

"I—I see!" gasped Wharton.

It was very kind of Coker. He meant to be generous. But the prospect of having the ineffable Coker in their eleven was simply unnerving.

"I—I say, that's jolly kind of you, Coker!" said Wharton at last.

"I mean to be kind," said Coker.

"But—but don't you think you ought to consider your—your position?" said Wharton. "As a senior—as a Fifth-Former—it's up to you to consider that. The Sixth is the proper place for you—no doubt at all about that!"

"Yes, a fellow in your position ought to consider his dignity, Coker, old man," said Bob Cherry, with owl-like gravity.

He had caught on at once to Wharton's idea. There was no other way of getting rid of Coker's proffered assistance; but if soft sawder would accomplish that desirable purpose, soft sawder would not be lacking. Under the circumstances, any amount of soft sawder was justifiable.

"Just think of a tremendous big fellow like you, Coker, and—and such an—an extraordinary player, among the nippers of the Second, frinstance!" said Squiff.

"Well, yes, it would be a bit thick," assented Coker thoughtfully. "Now you speak of it, I couldn't very well play for the Second!"

And he shook his head.

"Well, we're really a nipper team like the Second," said Wharton, with unaccustomed modesty. "Your play would be—ahem!—above our heads!"

"The abovefulness would be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of the head.

"Oh, I've no doubt about that!" said Coker. "Of course, you'd hardly be expected to be up to my style of play. But I'm going to help you or the Fourth."

"I'm afraid the Fifth would regard it as rather infra dig if you did," said Wharton seriously.

"Oh, blow the Fifth!" said Coker. "I'm my own master!"

"But a chap who occupies a leading position—ahem!—in a senior Form," said Squiff. "You ought to think of that, Coker!"

"Even for the sake of your help in the match, Coker, I don't think we should be justified in letting you compromise your dignity," said Nugent.

"Besides," went on Wharton, "if you play for the Sixth, it may open Wingate's eyes to—ahem!—your real qualities as a footballer, and he may—perhaps—put you in the First Eleven afterwards!"

"By Jove!" said Coker. "I didn't think of that. There's certainly something in that!"

"You see, you wouldn't show up to much advantage among a lot of fags," said Bob Cherry, "while in the Sixth you would be in your—ahem!—natural place. It would dawn on Wingate just what kind of a player you are!"

"Quite true," said Coker thoughtfully. "I must say, you kids look at the matter in a sensible light. I meant to do you a good turn; but, of course, there's no doubt my proper place is in the Sixth. That's all right; but, of course, you kids will be wiped right off the face of the earth!"

"We must face that," said Bob.

Coker nodded, and quitted the study. The juniors remained silent till the door had closed behind him; then they gasped.

"My hat! What an escape!" said Nugent.

"Good old Coker!" chuckled Bob. "He meant to be kind. The best thing about Coker is that he can never see when a chap's pulling his leg. It's only fair that the Sixth should have him. They're out of all proportion to the other teams, and it will level things up a bit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder what old Wingate will say?" grinned Squiff. "He will bless us for planting Coker on him. But it's fairer for him than for us!"

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"Yes, rather!" said Bob.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

Horace Coker, in a thoughtful mood, proceeded to Wingate's study in the Sixth-Form passage. His opinion of the Remove fellows had been raised. Never before had they shown any sign of realising what a truly important person he was.

Their delicate consideration for the dignity of his position as a great man in the Fifth was something new, but it was very gratifying.

He knocked at Wingate's door, and went in. Wingate and Courtney and Valence of the Sixth were having tea together. They smiled at the sight of Coker. They had just been talking about his performances on the football-field.

"Just dropped in to tell you I shall be playing for you on Saturday, Wingate," said Coker affably.

The smile vanished from Wingate's face.

"Playing for us?" he stuttered.

"Yes," said Coker. "I was thinking of giving one of the fag teams a leg-up, but, on reflection, I feel it's up to me to play in a senior team. You can depend on me!"

"But I—I say—" stammered the dismayed Wingate.

"I should suggest your putting me in as centre-forward," said Coker. "That's where I'm best, though really I'm a pretty good all-round player, and you could put me anywhere. Use your own judgment, of course!"

"Look here—" began Courtney warmly.

Wingate made a sign to him. Although he was captain of the school, he was bound by the terms of the Cup competition, as devised by Coker. Coker could not be refused; but the Removites were not the only fellows who knew the sweet uses of soft sawder.

"That's all right, Coker," said Wingate. "But if you don't mind my saying so, it would be generous of you to play for a fag team. You see, the Sixth are pretty strong already—ahem!—and those fags won't have much chance, anyway. It would be a kind and generous thing to back them up, and I really think, Coker, that they will expect it of you!"

"Well, I was thinking so myself," said Coker, wavering again. "It does hardly seem fair for a whacking big team like the Sixth to tackle a fag team, and—"

"You ought to back up the weaker side, there's no doubt about that," said Valence. "That's what I should call chivalry, and chivalry is expected of the founder of the Cup Competition, Coker. It would be an example!"

"Perhaps you're right," said Coker thoughtfully.

"Oh, I'm sure of it," said Courtney. "We're strong enough already, and we should raise no objection to your playing against us. It would—ahem!—level matters up a bit, and make the match more interesting!"

"You're right," said Coker decidedly. "I play against you—unless you're drawn against the Second. I couldn't play in a little nipper team like the Second. Young Field pointed that out very truly. It would be ridiculous!"

"But—but if we're drawn against the Second, it would be hardly fair to play for us," said Wingate. "It would make it simply overwhelming for—for them—I mean, it would overwhelm them—"

"Pelion piled on Ossa, you know," said Valence.

"Oh, quite so!" said Coker. "In that case, I'll help either the Fourth or the Remove, whichever one I think needs bucking up!"

"Now, that's what I call really generous, Coker," said Wingate, with a breath of relief. "It—it's what's expected of you, Coker!"

"England expects every man to do his duty," remarked Courtney.

When Coker was gone the three Sixth-Formers looked at one another, and ejaculated together:

"My hat! What an escape!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sportsmanlike!

COKER presided the next evening in great state in his study for the draw for the second round. Wingate and Temple and Wharton and Dicky Nugent came to the draw.

Wingate drew with Dicky Nugent, and smiled. Nugent minor drew a long face. In the last fight for the Cup, the Second had played the Sixth—with direful results to the Second.

"You against us, Wharton," remarked Temple of the Fourth.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"You're playing for the Sixth, Coker?" he remarked casually.

Coker shook his head.

"No; I don't want to help overwhelm those kids," he said.

"Oh, then you're backing up the Second?"
"I say—" began Dicky Nugent, in dismay.
But Coker shook his head again, much to Nugent minor's relief.

"No; I could hardly play among those nippers," he said.
"I hadn't thought of it, but young Field pointed it out to me yesterday in your study!"

"Oh!" said Wharton.
"It wouldn't do," said Coker.
"Of course it wouldn't," said Dicky Nugent promptly.
Wingate and Nugent minor left the study, greatly relieved to know that they were not to be backed up by Coker in the semi-final.

Wharton and Temple looked at one another dubiously. It was pretty certain that Coker meant to play, and there were only the Remove and Fourth-Form teams left for him to choose from. Upon one unlucky captain or the other the chopper was bound to come down. They both turned to Coker and spoke at once.

"I suppose you'll be playing for the Remove, Coker?"
"I suppose you'll be playing for the Fourth, Coker?"
Coker looked thoughtful.
"I haven't decided yet," he remarked. "I shall have to think that over."

"Of course, you might be referee," suggested Wharton.
"I'm going to play," said Coker, very decidedly.
"But I say—"

"I'll let you know later," said Coker. "I want to be perfectly fair to both of you. But you can depend on it, I'm going to play."

Wharton and Temple left the study in dismay. In the passage they paused to look at one another.

"All up with one of us!" grunted Temple.
"Looks like it," said Harry.

"He's jolly well not going to play for us! Look here. If you'll have him, I'll agree to play a man short, and make things even," said the captain of the Fourth.

Wharton laughed.
"If you'll have him, I'll agree to play two or three men short, and make matters even," he said.

"The silly ass!" said Temple. "Why can't he sit down? Extraordinary thing that he doesn't know what an ass he is!"

"I shall tell him if he wants to play for us!" growled Wharton.

And he returned to his own study to inform his dismayed chums that all the "soft sawder" of the previous evening had been wasted.

Temple went back to his study, too, where he found Dabney and Fry and Scott awaiting news. The Co. looked very serious when they heard the result.

"The silly ass may play for them, not for us!" said Scott hopefully.

"We've got to plant him on them somehow," said Temple determinedly. "It's fair enough. They'd plant him on us if they could."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Temple sat down and thought it over. It was a serious moment. Whichever team Coker played for was pretty certain to lose its chance of the Cup. There was not a moment to be lost, especially as the chums of the Fourth knew that the Removites would be cudgelling their brains at the same moment for a similar dodge.

Temple jumped up at last.
"I've got it!" he exclaimed.

His chums looked at him doubtfully.
"Come on!" said Temple. "We're going in a deputation to Coker."

"A deputation!" said Dabney. "What on earth for?"

"To appeal to him as a sportsman," said Temple.

"Oh, rot! If you tell him we don't want him, he'll insist on playing for us out of sheer cussedness, very likely."

"Ass! Do you think I should be duffer enough to tell him that?" said Temple. "You come along with me and back me up, and you'll see. Coker is a sportsman in his own way, and we may work it."

Temple led the way, and Fry and Scott and Dabney followed him, still in a dubious mood. They were willing to back up their leader to any extent, but they felt that it was a forlorn hope.

They found Coker alone in his study. They were glad of it. It would not have been quite so easy for them if Potter and Greene had been there. Coker met them with a genial nod. His impression was that they had come to secure his services before the Remove had a chance.

"We've come to you as a deputation, Coker," said Temple solemnly. "We've discussed this matter, and we feel that, as sportsmen, there is only one decision we could come to."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co., wondering what on earth Cecil Temple was driving at.

"Go ahead," said Coker. "You want me—"

"First of all we thought of bagging you, and making you promise to play for us," said Temple unblushingly. "That was our first impulse. It was natural, under the circumstances, for, of course, we're very keen after the Cup."

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NEXT MONDAY—

"THE CRUISE OF THE FAMOUS FIVE!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

Dabney and Fry and Scott nearly fell down. Coker nodded cordially.

"But on second thoughts," continued Temple, "we felt that it wouldn't be the fair thing. You see how it is, Coker. We're an older team than the Remove, and naturally we have the advantage. Then we've often watched you play, and picked up a lot of real solid knowledge—"

Fry made a peculiar sound at that moment as if he were choking. Then he began to cough violently.

"You're standing in the draught," said Coker. "Shut the door."

Dabney shut the door. He was glad to turn his face away from Coker for a moment. Temple went on with an iron nerve:

"Considering it fairly all round, Coker, we felt that if we secured you, as we wanted to, it wouldn't be a fair game. I said to the fellows that we must be sportsmen before everything. I put it plainly to them. I said quite plainly, 'Old Coker is a thorough sportsman, and it's up to us juniors to follow his example.' Didn't I, Dab?"

"Your very words," said Dabney, in a choking voice.

"So the decision we've come to," went on Temple magnanimously, "is this: As we're an older team than the Remove—quite a senior team by comparison—and as we have those other advantages I've mentioned, we felt that we must let the Remove have your help, Coker. It may mean a licking for us. It may mean the loss of the Cup. We are prepared to face it as sportsmen. If we won the Cup by beating the Remove on what we could only regard as unfair terms, we should not value it. On the whole, therefore, we've come to tell you this: As sportsmen, we ask you to play for the Remove, and give them a chance. If we're beaten we'll stand it. But we shall know that we've done the real sportsmanlike thing."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. in chorus.

Coker looked very genial.

"I must say, Temple, that you've put that very decently," he said. "I hadn't made up my mind, but the Remove, as a younger team, has a claim on me, as you say. But, of course, you understand that this means that you haven't an earthly?"

"We'll risk that, rather than take an unsportsmanlike advantage," said Temple heroically.

"Hear, hear!"

"Good!" said Coker. "As a sportsman, I adopt your suggestion. Better to lose the Cup, than to win it feeling that you've taken advantage of the other team. It's settled. I play for the Remove."

"Bravo, Coker!" chirruped Fry.

"It's what I expected of you, Coker, old man," said Temple. "We all look up to you—ahem!—as an example. The Remove can depend on you, then?"

"Honour bright!"

"Hear, hear!"

The deputation retired from the study, feeling extremely satisfied with themselves. They controlled their emotion until they reached their own quarters. There Temple slammed the door, and proceeded to execute a wild war-dance of triumph round the study table.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" he yelled. "The Remove's got him! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! What do you think of my wheeze now—what!"

"Oh!" gasped Dabney. "Oh, my only aunt! You nearly killed me, Temple! If I hadn't shouted 'Hear, hear!' I should have burst something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Wharton! Still, it's as fair for him as for us; and he'd have planted the idiot on us if he could."

"Of course he would! Ha, ha, ha! This is where we come in. Ho, ho, ho!"

"Phwat's the matter intirely?" demanded Murphy of the Fourth, putting his head into the study. "Sure we can hear ye at the end of the passage!"

"Coker's going to play for the Remove!"

Murphy gave a yell.

"Hurrah! Hu-blooming-rah! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Murphy rushed off to tell the good news to the rest of the Fourth. And that evening there was much rejoicing in the Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Too Good!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out of the Remove Form-room after morning lessons the next day, and proceeded at once into the Close. They wanted to get in a little football practice before dinner. The next day was Saturday, when the semi-final was to be played, and

Wharton was very keen to keep his eleven in form. The Fifth Form were already out, and Coker of the Fifth was waiting for the Removites.

"Hallo! Here you are!" said Coker genially. "I've been waiting for you!"

"Oh!" said Wharton.

"You're going to make a bit of a change in the team for to-morrow," remarked Coker.

"Yes; I'm putting in Penfold and Micky Desmond instead of Inky and Nugent," said Harry. "Nugent's had a knock on his ankle, and Inky doesn't feel fit."

"The fitfulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Pen is every bit as good as my honourable self."

"Yes, yes," said Coker carelessly. "But I mean another change."

"I—I say—" murmured Wharton uneasily.

"Going down to practice now?" asked Coker.

"Ye-es!"

"Good! I'll come with you. Better get a bit in the habit of playing together," said Coker.

"But—but why—"

"I'm playing for you to-morrow."

"Oh, my hat!"

"All you'll have to do is to watch me, and not get in my way," said Coker. "You can practically leave the whole game in my hands. Back me up, you know, and be ready to defend if they get past me—not that it's likely. You'll be able to keep the Cup after all."

"But—but—"

"Not a word!" said Coker. "Let's go and get some practice."

"But—but I say—" stammered the dismayed Wharton. "Don't you think you ought to play for the Fourth? They're older than us. We're really only fags—"

"The fagfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Coker."

"That's just why I'm going to play for you, to help you out," said Coker. "Temple put it to me very nicely—he relinquished all claim on me, himself, as you kids are the younger Form—see?"

"Oh, the rotter!"

"What!"

"I—I mean, don't you really think you ought to play for the Sixth, Coker?"

"No fear. Those Second Form nippers will be squashed bad enough without me piling on them."

"But why not help the Second against the Sixth, then?" asked Squiff desperately. "It would be—er—noble. Generous. In fact, magnanimous."

"Why, you yourself said that I couldn't do such a thing—it would be absurd for me to play in a team of babes," said Coker, in surprise.

"D-d-did I?" gasped Squiff. "Oh, I—I was only putting a case, you know!"

"You were quite right," said Coker. "I want to be kind, but I must draw a line at playing with kids of eleven and twelve. I'm going to help you. Of course, it's a bit rough on the Fourth; but you ought to be glad of a chance of keeping the Cup."

"Rough on the Fourth!" growled Bob Cherry. "I like that! Look here, Coker, we know you mean well, but we want only Removites in our team."

"Yes, that's how it is, Coker," said Harry Wharton.

The time for "soft sawder" had evidently gone by, and it was necessary to be candid.

Coker frowned. He meant to be kind, as he said; but he could be very obstinate. And opposition always made him more determined.

"Now, look here," he said, "I don't want to argue with you fags. I've decided what to do, and I'm going to do it. You know the terms of the Cup competition—I choose to play for the Remove in the semi-final, and that settles it."

"Settles us, you mean!" groaned Nugent.

"None of your cheek," said Coker. "Come down and practise."

"But, look here, Coker, you can't play for toffee," said Bob, losing all prudence in his dismay and exasperation. "You mucked up the game for the Fifth on Wednesday. You're jolly well not going to muck up our game."

"What!" roared Coker.

"You can play for the Fourth, or go and play marbles," said Bob. "You jolly well ain't going to play for the Remove."

"'Nuff said!" exclaimed Coker angrily. "I play! That's settled! And if you don't like it, you can withdraw from the competition, and hand over the Cup."

"My hat!"

"It's in the rules," groaned Wharton. "We've got to stand it."

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"And be licked!" growled Vernon-Smith.

"The lickfulness will be terrific," said Inky dolefully.

"Come on!" said Coker. "Are you going to do any practice or not?"

"I—I suppose so. It won't be much good, but we may as well," said Harry.

They proceeded to the footer ground. Some of the fellows came down to see Coker at practice. He was not quite such a "scream" at practice as he was in a regular game; but he was worth watching. Billy Bunter rolled down among the others; he was grinning with glee. Since his remarkable team had been knocked out of the competition, Bunter had offered his services once more to Wharton, and had received nothing but a rude reply. And the amiable Owl was glad to see that Wharton's chance of keeping the Cup for the Remove was going to be knocked on the head, too.

Coker was certainly worth watching. He had a perfect genius for getting into people's way on the footer ground. He had a fixed belief that it was up to him to be in constant possession of the ball, and when he had it, his kicking was of a clumsiness that could only be called miraculous.

Harry Wharton & Co. came off the field after the practice, in the lowest possible spirits. Coker of the Fifth was planted on the Remove team, like the Old Man of the Sea on the shoulders of Sindbad, and, unfortunately, they could not get rid of him like Sindbad. Coker walked away quite satisfied with himself—after some disparaging remarks on the team—and the Remove footballers looked at one another lugubrously.

"We're in for it!" groaned Squiff.

"And we shall soon be out of it," said Wharton. "We couldn't beat even the Second, with the born idiot in the eleven."

"Sure, and a good man will have to stand out to make room for the omadhaup," said Micky Desmond.

"He, he, he!"

The juniors turned fiercely upon Billy Bunter as he emitted that cachinnation. The Owl of the Remove blinked at them and grinned.

"What are you he-he-heing about, you fat imbecile!" growled Squiff.

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Bunter. "You've refused a good player, and now you've got a jolly bad one. He, he, he."

"Blessed if I don't think Bunter would have been better than Coker," said Bob Cherry despairingly. "We could kick Bunter out of the way, but you can't kick Coker out of the way."

"I say, you fellows, I'll make a suggestion, if you like—"

"Oh, rats!"

"But really, you know, I can help you right out of the difficulty," said Bunter. "You've only got to take my tip. I tell you it will be all right."

"Well, what's your blessed suggestion?" growled Bob.

"You hold the Cup now," said Bunter, "and you're jolly well going to lose the last chance of keeping it, if Coker plays for you to-morrow—"

"We know that, fathead!"

"Well, why not sell the Cup to-morrow?" said Bunter brilliantly.

"Eh?"

"I'll take it down to old Lazarus's in Courtfield, and see what he'll give for it," said Bunter eagerly. "Of course, I shall expect a whack, as I made the suggestion— Yaroooh! Leggo! Huh—hoh—hugggggh!"

The Removites walked away, leaving Billy Bunter gasping on the ground. That was all the gratitude he received for his really valuable suggestion.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Inky to the Rescue!

M R. QUELCH found some of his class a little absent-minded that afternoon. He was a little sharp with them, and a good many lines were distributed, the Remove-master attributing it to carelessness. That football matters could occupy minds supposed to be devoted to lessons did not occur to him, fortunately.

He would have been quite surprised, and very much annoyed if he had known that the tie for the Coker Cup made his pupils perfectly indifferent to Latin versification, and even to the history of France under the Merovingians.

But so it was. Harry Wharton & Co. found it difficult to think of lessons after Coker's declaration that he was going to help them in the tie. They were very glad when they were dismissed for the afternoon, and were able to hold a council of war on the subject.

The Famous Five and Squiff met in No. 1 Study to consult. They consulted over tea, and that tea was not cheerful. There seemed no way of getting rid of Coker. Soft sawder was



In another moment the referee and Billy Bunter were hammering one another. Bunter was not a fighting-man, as a rule, but in his fury at being robbed of his goal he would have fought whole legions. Dicky Nugent wiped away his tears. "Drag 'em apart!" he gasped. "Oh, my hat! Oh, my only Aunt Sempronla! What a match!" (See Chapter 4.)

useless, and plain speaking was still more useless. Coker was determined, and the rules—made by Coker—upheld him.

There was no getting out of it. But if the terrible Coker played for them, the Fourth would win the match—and the Remove, the present holders of the Cup, would be squeezed out of the competition. It was hard cheese—very!

They did not regard the Fourth as a hard team to beat—far from that. To the tie in itself they looked forward with confidence. It was in the final that the real struggle would come. Only, with Coker in the team, they would be knocked out of the semi-final.

Without Coker, they would come through smiling. And Coker's importance was not at all exaggerated. If he had been merely a duffer at football like Bunter, he could have been ignored in the field, or shoved out of the way, and the team could have played the match practically a man short. But it was not so—Coker was a duffer, but not that kind of duffer. As Squiff dolefully remarked, he was a duffer in the active, not the passive.

Coker would have the lion's share of the game. He would be here, there, and everywhere. He would help everybody—take on everybody's work—pile in for all he was worth in every direction. With the team thrown into utter confusion, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 362.

just as if they had a wild elephant charging about in their ranks, winning was out of the question.

Coker was too big and too heavy to be shoved about, and too plucky and determined. Only a miracle could save the match for the Remove, with Coker in the team.

"It's rotten," said Bob Cherry. "I don't see how it's going to be helped, though. We may pull it off, somehow, after all."

"Not likely," grunted Johnny Bull.

"We can't get rid of Coker," said Wharton. "It's no good talking to him. The more you talk to him the more obstinate he is, the ass."

"Our luck's out!" groaned Nugent.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was wearing a thoughtful expression. His dusky face was screwed up into wrinkles of deep reflection. He had been silent so far, while his chums "groused."

"Our luckfulness is not great," the Oriental junior remarked at last. "But it is possible to help our luck, my esteemed chums. A stitch in time helps those who help themselves, as your English proverb says."

The juniors grinned at the English proverb.

"What are you thinking of Inky?" said Wharton hope-

fully. He knew that his Indian chum was remarkably deep in some matters, and it was barely possible that the dusky nabob had thought of a way out of the difficulty.

"It is agreeably decided that we do not want the august assistance of the great Coker?" remarked Inky, looking round.

"Yes, rather."

"And it would be just to rid ourselves of his noble and esteemed aid—"

"What-ho, if we can work it!"

"But how?" said Nugent.

"I have been thoughtfully reflecting. You remember once upon a time in a match with Highcliffe, they collarfully took one of our players and put him somewhere to keep him out of the match," said Inky.

"Yes, but what—"

"Of course, it would be impossible for honourable sahibs like ourselves to play a dodge trickfully on our esteemed opponents in that manner. It would not be playing gamefully. But it would be allowable to kidnap a member of our own team, and shut him up where he could not help us."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Suppose that to-morrow afternoon, just before the tie, the esteemed Coker is locked up in his excellent study, and cannot get outfully—"

"My hat!"

"Then the esteemed Wharton would have to put another man in his place, and everything in the garden would be gorgeous!"

"Great Scott!"

"As I am standing out of the esteemed eleven to make room for Penfold, I should be gladly willing to take care of the estimable Coker."

The chums of the Remove stared blankly at Inky. They had not thought of a way out of the fix on those heroic lines. But their faces lighted up with hope. There was no doubt that they were justified in using any means short of homicide to get rid of Horace Coker. The only question was, how was it to be done? And Inky's suggestion came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. It came like a ray of light in a very dark place.

"My only Aunt Euphemia!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Inky, old man, you're a giddy genius! You're a black diamond! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" chorused the juniors.

Inky smiled modestly.

"By Jove!" said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "There's something in that. Coker's study wouldn't do. He'd just get out of the window or up the chimney, rather than be left out of the match. We must think of a safe place to stick him till the match is over. He's got to be inveigled somewhere and shut up. Lucky he's a silly ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, where are we going to plant him?" said Wharton. "Anywhere in the house he'd get out, or he'd make such a thundering row that somebody would come and let him out. Where can he be planted?"

"Oh, where and oh where can it be?" murmured Bob.

"He's rather a big beast to handle," murmured Frank Nugent, "and we mustn't appear in it personally, either. He would make a new rule disqualifying us for the Cup."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say," exclaimed Squiff, who had been thinking hard, "the Cliff House girls are coming over to see the match, I think!"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Coker would like to meet them at the station."

"He's jolly well not going to!" exclaimed Bob warmly. "I'm going to meet Marjorie and Clara and bring them over. Besides, they're not coming to any station; they're going to walk over."

"But they could come to Courtfield Station."

"I suppose they could. It's a longer way."

"Never mind that; they could. And Coker could meet them. I've noticed that Coker is always unusually civil when Marjorie is around."

"Look here—"

"Well, then, if he were asked, he'd trot down to Courtfield like a shot to meet them and escort them over, and tell 'em all about footer on the way," said Sampson Quincy Illey Field. "Now, suppose they didn't turn up there after all!"

"Eh?"

"Nugent and Inky can be with Coker, as they're not playing in the match. At the last moment, as the girls don't turn up, they rush Coker into a train home, to get back in time for the match."

"What on earth good would that do?"

"I was thinking," said Squiff calmly, "that in the hurry of the moment you might rush him into the wrong train!"

"Eh?"

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"Say, into the express that doesn't stop till it reaches Canterbury."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Coker could have a look round Canterbury instead of playing in the tie. It's a very interesting town. There's a cathedral there, you know, and lots of antiquities, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My esteemed chum's wheeze is simply terrific!"

"But suppose he spotted it was the wrong train."

"Then you'll have to get a taxi home, and bribe the man to have a breakdown, or to take the wrong road, or to have an accident or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anything short of actually killing Coker is justifiable under the circumstances."

"Hear, hear!"

"It will work," said Wharton, laughing. "As I said, it's lucky that he's an ass. We can't have him in the team for love or money. Nugent and Inky can work the oracle. Let's go and see Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove finished their tea in much higher spirits. And after tea they had an interview with Horace Coker, which was eminently satisfactory to both sides.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Day Out!

AFTER lessons the next morning football was the one topic.

That afternoon the Sixth were meeting the Second, a match that worried them a little, as they could not but feel that their dignity suffered in the encounter. But that could not be helped. The Remove were meeting the Fourth, and Coker was down to play for the Remove. It was noticeable that Temple, Dabney & Co. were in great spirits. As a rule, they entered into their matches with the Remove in uneasiness of spirit. But this time they had no doubts about it. It was going to be a walk-over for the Fourth, for once, and Temple, Dabney & Co. rejoiced accordingly.

They expected to see the Removites cast down. They were surprised to see that Harry Wharton & Co. were quite cheerful.

"I suppose you know you're going to be licked, Wharton?" Temple remarked, considerably puzzled by Wharton's evident good spirits.

"Licked!" said Harry Wharton. "My dear boy, we're going to beat you to the wide!"

"Ain't you playing Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker's down to play," said Temple. "What do you mean by saying that you're going to win? You know jolly well you're booked for a licking!"

"Well, we'll try to give you a bit of a tussle," said Harry.

"There's many a slip, you know."

"Quitefully so," remarked Hurree Singh. "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley between the cup and the lip, as Poet Burns says."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you can cackle!" said Temple crossly. "You know jolly well you're going to get it in the neck. Rats!"

"Coker would be flattered," said Harry, with a smile, as Temple walked huffily away; and the Removites chuckled.

Coker came out of the School House after dinner, looking a little more carefully-dressed than usual. His chums, Potter and Greene, surveyed him with some surprise, noting the clean collar, the new tie, and the general air of nattiness. Coker was not generally very careful in those matters.

"Hallo!" said Potter. "Anything on? Ain't you playing this afternoon?"

"Certainly!" said Coker. "I'm going down to the station to meet some ladies who are coming to see the match, that's all."

"Oh!" said Potter. "Mind you're not late back. We wouldn't miss seeing you play for the Remove for anything!"

"No fear!" said Coker. "I shall be back in lots of time! I'll take jolly good care of that."

And Coker of the Fifth walked away, Nugent and the nabob joining him in the Close. The three walked down to Courtfield cheerfully enough. Coker somehow had the impression in his mind that Marjorie and Clara were coming over from Cliff House School chiefly to see him play. Coker often got impressions of that kind. And Coker meant to be very kind and patronising to the young ladies from Cliff House. After Coker was out of sight, Bob Cherry and Wharton also started for Courtfield. But they did not go

to the station. It had been necessary to tell Coker that Marjorie and Clara were to be met in Courtfield, so a post-card had been sent to Cliff House asking them to come that way. But Wharton and Bob were going to meet them in the bun-shop and bring them to Greyfriars. Coker had concluded that they were coming by train. But Coker's conclusions, of course, were entirely his own business.

"Not here yet," remarked Coker, as he walked on the platform at Courtfield.

Nugent and Hurree Singh smiled sweetly. It would have been very odd if the Cliff House girls had been there, considering that they were not coming by train at all. But they did not mention that to Coker.

"Oh, wait a bit!" said Nugent. "Lots of time, Coker. We can get the train to Friardale, if we have to wait. That will save walking back."

Coker nodded. Nugent was carefully keeping within the facts. They could have got the train to Friardale, which was close to Greyfriars, but Nugent did not intend to get it. That was another little matter he forgot to mention to Coker.

The unsuspecting Coker kicked his heels on the platform for some time. He looked at his watch rather anxiously at last.

"Dash it all, the girls don't seem to be coming!" said Coker.

"Well, they're not here," said Nugent thoughtfully.

"Come to think of it, this is a jolly long way round for them," said Coker. "They may have changed their minds and walked over."

"H'm!"

"What time does our train go?" asked Coker. "I suppose you've looked that out."

"Two-fifteen."

"Oh, good; that will be in lots of time! It's only a short run to Friardale."

Nugent did not reply to that remark. He hummed a tune.

Coker was growing uneasy. A good many trains came into the station, which was a junction, and had several platforms, but the Cliff House girls did not appear. At ten minutes past two Coker looked quite cross.

"They're not coming," he said.

"Give 'em a few minutes more," said Nugent.

"But our train—"

"It's only the other side of this platform."

"Sure that's our train?"

"Looked it out specially in the time-table," said Nugent.

"Have some of this toffee, Coker?"

"I'm not a fag!" said Coker, with dignity.

"Ahem!"

"Look here, as the train's in, we'd better get into it, and we can keep our eyes open from there," said Coker. "I don't want to run any risk of getting back late to Greyfriars. As I've undertaken to help the Remove this afternoon, I can't risk it."

"Let's get in," agreed Nugent. "I've got the tickets."

"Better give 'em to me," said Coker. "Can't trust a kid like you with tickets."

Nugent coughed. Coker seemed to be more Cokerish, so to speak, than ever this afternoon. But Nugent could afford to be patient. He meekly handed Coker three tickets, singles to Friardale. They jumped into an empty carriage, and Nugent and Inky were careful to take the seats next to the door, and to close it. Then, to keep Coker's great mind from wandering, they engaged him in talk on football. They asked his opinion about the off-side rule. On that subject Coker could have talked for hours, expounding really original views, forgetful of time and space. The two Removites, with judicious remarks at intervals, kept Coker going at full pressure, and Coker had no time to think about whether he was in the right train for Friardale or not.

Doors slammed along the train, and the porters shouted, and Coker was still in a full flow of talk. Nugent and Inky were almost breathless with anxiety. There was time yet for Coker to jump out, if his suspicions were awakened.

"Has Wingate decided to put you in the First Eleven, Coker?" Nugent asked hurriedly.

Coker sported.

"No, the ass!"

"Not after the way you played for the Fifth the other day?" exclaimed Nugent, in astonishment.

"What Wingate don't know about footer would fill books," said Coker. "Greyfriars calls itself a footballing school, but they don't really know much about the game. Look how Blundell bungled it the other day in the tie. I did my best. I was simply all over the field. All the crowd cheered me, and hardly mentioned anybody else. I played up for all I was worth, but it was no good. The fellows got in my way in the clumsiest manner. And though Blundell's a good sort,

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and I like him, I must say that I don't think much of him as a footer captain. I must say that. Hallo! We're off!"

Nugent gasped with relief as the train moved out of the station.

"A footer captain ought to be willing to take advice from a member of the team who knows the game thoroughly," said Coker, shaking his head. "I pointed a lot of things out to Blundell, but he only got ratty."

"You'd take advice, if you were footer captain?" murmured Nugent.

"No fear!" said Coker promptly. "That's different; quite different."

"The differentfulness is terrific," purred Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"This train is going jolly fast for a local," said Coker, in surprise. "Hallo! We're passing through a station without stopping. What station was that?"

"I didn't see the name. I was listening to you, Coker. You were saying—"

"Never mind that now," said Coker, starting to his feet. "My impression is that we've got into the wrong train."

"Wrong train!" exclaimed Nugent, in alarm. "Oh, Coker! You wouldn't get into the wrong train, surely!"

"We depend on you, my esteemed Coker, for the rightfulness of the train."

"I—I didn't notice. I thought you knew—"

"Did you ask the porter?" queried Nugent sweetly.

"Of course I didn't!" roared Coker. "I was jawing to you young duffers. My hat! There we go through another station. This can't be the local. If it is, we've passed through Friardale without stopping."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, dear!"

Coker dragged the window down, and glared out. The train, gathering speed, whisked through another station. This time Coker caught the name as it flashed by.

"Redclyffe!" he yelled. "My only aunt! We've got into the express!"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, Coker!"

"Don't 'Oh, Coker' me!" howled Coker. "It wasn't my fault. I thought you knew the train, and you kept me talking, you young idiots. My word! Why, very likely it doesn't stop for a dozen stations. We shall be late for the match. Still, I suppose Wharton will have sense enough to put it off till I have time to get back."

"I don't think!" murmured Nugent.

"Eh! What did you say?"

"This must be the Canterbury express."

"Canterbury!" shrieked Coker, in dismay. "Why, we sha'n't be back till after dark, then!"

"The darkness will be—"

"Terrific!"

"Well, of all the silly idiots!" howled Coker. "This serves me right for coming out with a pair of silly fags. Oh, crumbs!"

The train rushed on. At every station Coker jumped up, in a wild hope that it was going to stop. But it didn't stop. Station after station fled by, and Coker's temper grew worse and worse. Nugent and Inky bore it cheerfully. They pointed out to Coker that it couldn't be helped, and that it was no good crying over spilt milk. But Coker didn't see it in that light. He grumbled and groused and almost raved. With heroic efforts, the two Removites stifled their desire to yell with laughter. The train rushed on, and on, and on!

It seemed like an eternity to Coker, but the train stopped at last in a big station.

Coker bounded out of the carriage like a pip from an orange. He caught a startled porter by the shoulder.

"What station's this?"

"Canterbury, sir."

"Thunder! Next train back to Courtfield?"

"Five-thirty, sir."

"Five-thirty!" yelled Coker.

The porter dodged away, quite alarmed. Coker shook his fist at Nugent and Inky, and stalked away.

"Dear me!" murmured Nugent. "Coker seems to have had enough of our company."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker had! The two Removites waited cheerfully for the five-thirty, and travelled back without Coker. That great man sulked in a carriage by himself, like Achilles in his tent. And the other passengers in the carriage with Nugent and Inky were surprised to hear the two juniors burst into incessant chuckles, for apparently no reason whatever.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

On Their Own!

"W HERE'S Coker?"

Greene of the Fifth, in Norfolk jacket and whistle, came down to Little Side. Greene was to referee the match Remove v. Fourth Form. He looked round rather curiously for Coker. Coker of the Fifth was not to be seen. Temple, Dabney and the Fourth Form team were there, smiling and cheerful. Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove had turned up in good time, equally cheerful. But Coker, whose valuable aid was to be lent to the Remove team, was conspicuous by his absence.

A good many Remove fellows had gathered round the field to watch the tie played, and some of them were smiling. Those who could be relied upon to keep the secret had been let into the "little game" with regard to Coker. And they were not surprised that the great man of the Fifth failed to appear.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been feeling a little anxious. Coker was so tremendous an ass that it was pretty certain he would not smell a rat till he was safely started for Canterbury. But there was a possibility of failure; and if Coker came rushing in before the match started, the game would be up. But it was time for the kick-off now, and there was no sign of Coker. Wharton and Bob Cherry had returned from Courtfield with Marjorie and Clara, who were accommodated with camp-chairs among the spectators. Billy Bunter was devoting himself to them, and explaining at great length how it was that his team wasn't in the tie, owing to his followers breaking up in the first round in spite of the most brilliant leadership.

"Where's Coker?" repeated Greene.

Nobody answered that question. Nobody knew where Coker was. Some of the Removites guessed approximately where he might be. But they did not feel inclined to inform Greene.

"Coker doesn't seem to be coming," remarked Bob Cherry gravely. "It's rather hard cheese on us, Marjorie. He was going to play for us."

Marjorie smiled. She had seen Coker play once.

"Topping good luck for you, I should say," remarked Miss Clara.

"If Inky were here he would say that the topfulness was terrific," chuckled Bob. "Well, captain, I suppose we'd better get on."

"Yes; no good waiting," said Wharton. "Goodness knows when Coker will get here. I shall have to play Penfold after all. You're ready, Pen?"

"Yes," grinned Penfold.

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth, in surprise. "Ain't you playing Coker?"

"He hasn't come," said Wharton.

"He must be about somewhere," said Temple anxiously.

He had doubts about beating the Remove on their own, and he didn't want to lose that dead cert if he could help it. Coker in the ranks was a tower of strength—for the other side.

"Yes, I dare say he's about somewhere," agreed Wharton. "He doesn't seem to be here, though, and we can't wait. It gets dark jolly early, you know."

Cecil Temple looked at him suspiciously.

"You've wangled this!" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, are you waiting for Coker?" asked Greene. "If you'll take a tip from me, you'll pile in before he gets here. That's my advice."

It was excellent advice, and the Removites intended to act upon it.

"Just what we're going to do," said Harry. "You fellows ready?"

"Well, you know, if you want to wait for your man, we're quite at your service," said Temple. "We'll wait—ahem!—as long as you like."

"I dare say you would," chuckled Bob Cherry; "but we're jolly well not going to wait—see? We're after that Cup."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should have great pleasure in going to look for Coker, my dear fellows, if you are anxious about him," said Alonzo Todd, in his obliging way.

"Yes—do!" said Bob Cherry. "We'll get on while you're gone. When you find him, will you give him a particular message from me?"

"Oh, certainly, my dear Cherry!"

"Say to him, 'Oh, Willy, we have missed you!' with the accent on the have," said Bob Cherry. And he walked into the football-field, leaving the kind Alonzo considerably perplexed.

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"You—you're going to play without Coker, Wharton?" said Temple.

"Looks as if we've got to," said Wharton blandly. "He isn't here."

"He said something about going to Courtfield to meet the Cliff House girls," remarked Greene. "But they're here—"

"Must have come another way," said Squiff. "They walked. Perhaps Coker went to the station, and waited."

"My hat! He may be waiting yet!" ejaculated Greene. "Ha, ha, ha!" Which was very unsympathetic of Greene.

Temple reluctantly tossed for ends. The Remove footballers all looked decidedly cheerful, but Temple's cheerfulness had departed. Instead of the walk-over he had anticipated, he had a hard struggle before him, with a very doubtful prospect of victory. And it was not cheering.

The Remove kicked off, and they played up hard and fast from the start.

Once the match had started, they were safer from Coker, even if he returned. But he showed no sign of returning. Nugent and Inky were still absent, too. But everybody soon forgot Coker, in the interest of the two ties that were being played.

On Big Side, the unfortunate fags of the Second, were being walked-over by the Sixth—a match of Davids against Goliaths, without a ghost of a chance for the Davids. It was a great honour for the Second to play the Sixth on Big Side, and Dicky Nugent and his comrades appreciated it—at first. But gradually, as they were pushed and rushed over incessantly, and utterly failed to pierce the senior line on a single occasion, their appreciation faded away.

The fags kept on gamely, however, for the first half, when the Sixth had taken more goals than they could count, and the Second hadn't even crossed the half-way line.

Then Nugent minor and his team gracefully gave it up.

Completely blown and fagged, they came off, abandoning the second half, and leaving the grinning Sixth-Formers easy victors. But Wingate patted Dicky good-naturedly on the shoulder, and told him that he had done jolly well to get into the semi-final at all, so Dicky was comforted. And, anyway, as Gatty remarked, they could now say as often as they liked, "The other day, you know, when we were playing the Sixth—" That was something.

Meanwhile, the Remove versus the Fourth were going strong.

In the first half, Wharton and Squiff took a goal each, and the Fourth had taken only one, so at the interval the heroes of the Remove were feeling very well satisfied.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The other match is chucked!" Bob Cherry remarked, glancing over in the direction of Big Side. "Looks as if the Sixth have had luck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Means the Sixth against us in the final," said Harry Wharton. "Now, if Coker would only play for the Sixth then—"

"Let's hope he will!" said Squiff fervently. "That might mean the Cup for us again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker has not come yet," remarked Marjorie, with a smile.

"No," said Harry. "I can't help thinking that he must have got into the wrong train with Nugent and Inky, or something of that sort."

The shout of laughter that followed enlightened Marjorie and Clara, and they laughed too. However Coker's absence was to be accounted for, certainly he did not come. There was no sign of him when the Fourth and the Remove lined up for the second half.

Temple, Dabney, & Co. put all they knew into the second half. There were a good many slackers in the Fourth-Form team, however, who had never been keen on practice. Cecil Temple's system was to put his friends in, or fellows who made themselves very agreeable to him, and the result was not a good fighting team. The Remove, who were as hard as nails, and trained regularly together, had a big advantage, and they made the most of it.

Struggle as they might, the Fourth-Formers could not turn the tide of battle, and the few shots they sent at goal were easily dealt with by Bulstrode. Penfold put the ball in, and Wharton put it in again, and when Greene of the Fifth blew the final whistle, the Remove were four to one.

A loud cheer greeted the victory of the Remove. Temple, Dabney, & Co. came off the field looking glum. Temple's stroke of genius, with regard to Coker, had turned out a fraud after all, and the Cup had escaped his grasp. But the Removites were rejoicing. After the match there was quite a merry party in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage, where Marjorie and Clara stayed to tea.

Still Coker did not return. Harry Wharton & Co. walked

home to Cliff House with Marjorie and Clara, and when they came back Coker was still absent. As Bob Cherry remarked, it was clear that old Coker was making a day of it.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Coker Comes Down Heavy!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Here are the giddy wanderers!"

A shout greeted Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamsar Ram Singh as they came into the junior common-room. They looked a little tired, but quite cheerful.

"So you've got back!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"The got-backfulness is terrific!" said Inky. "How did the esteemed match go?"

"Oh, we won!" said Harry. "Four goals to one."

"Good egg!" said Nugent—"even without Coker to help!"

"Ha, ha—even without Coker!"

"I guess this hyer is a gum-game," said Fisher T. Fish. "You galoots went out with Coker. Why didn't you come back?"

"Coker got into the wrong train," explained Nugent.

"The wrong train!" ejaculated Fish. "Oh, my hat!"

"Where did you go?" asked Alonzo. "I trust you have not had a long and fatiguing journey, my dear fellows."

"Well, we have, rather," said Nugent. "The train didn't stop till we got to Canterbury."

"Of course, it was all Coker's fault," grinned the Bounder.

"Of course," said Nugent. "Naturally, as meek little fags, we trusted ourselves to the guidance of our elders. I think Coker thought that the train was going to Friardale."

"You think. Good!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth came in, looking very glum. Harry Wharton & Co. put on solemn expressions at once. Wharton looked reproachful.

"Oh, here you are, Coker!" he exclaimed. "I must say, you are a pretty chap—promising to play for us, and then clearing off for the afternoon, without a word of explanation. Is that what you call sporting?"

"I'm sorry," said Coker—"extremely sorry! These silly young asses got into the wrong train, and I didn't notice."

"Couldn't you get out at the next station?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"It was a non-stop run to Canterbury," said Coker.

"You could have jumped and chanced it," said Johnny Bull, with a shake of the head.

"Why, you young ass, I should have broken my neck!"

"Well, well, as it can't be helped, we must overlook it," said Wharton. "I must say I'm surprised at you, Coker—very much surprised. You'll be glad to hear that we won the match all the same, because you didn't—I mean, although you didn't help us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker looked round suspiciously.

"What's the cackle about?" he demanded.

"N-nothing!"

"All right, Coker—we excuse you."

"The excusefulness is—"

"Terrific! Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all very well," said Coker surlily. "Potter started cackling like an old hen when I told him."

"I wonder why!" exclaimed Wharton, with a look of astonishment. "There was nothing to laugh at, was there, Coker?"

The juniors yelled. They could not help it. Coker was more than suspicious now. He had been merely exasperated when he came back to Greyfriars; but Potter's reception of the story of his misadventure had opened his eyes a little. Potter had come dangerously near having an attack of hysterics. And Coker had come to interview the Removites in a somewhat truculent mood.

"Look here," said Coker, beginning to glare, "I'm not a suspicious chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha! We know that!"

"I know you're not, Coker," said Wharton soothingly. "I'm sure nobody here would take you for a suspicious chap. It's all right, Coker. You've explained, and we excuse you for leaving us in the lurch like that, as it couldn't be helped. Enough said!"

"That's all very well," said Coker. "I repeat, I'm not a suspicious chap; but I'm not a duffer, either. It looks to me

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as if there's something fishy about this. I took the word of those young rascals that it was the right train."

"So it was!" said Nugent. "I said it was our train. Well, it was our train, wasn't it?"

"I thought it was the Friardale train."

"You didn't say so."

"You know I thought it!" yelled Coker, as the juniors went off into another roar of laughter.

"What I knew isn't evidence," said Nugent, with a shake of the head. "I might have my own surmises about what you thought, Coker; but my surmises wouldn't be admitted as evidence in any respectable court of law. Ask Toddy—his pater's a lawyer, and he knows."

"Quite so," said Peter Todd seriously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle at me!" roared Coker. "I've got a jolly clear idea now that you planted me in the wrong train on purpose."

"Oh, Coker!"

"Will you give me your word you didn't?" demanded Coker.

"Ahem!"

They could hardly give him their word they hadn't when they had! It was evident that even the far from acute Coker was not to remain in the dark much longer.

"You planted it on me, you young villains!" exclaimed Coker, growing crimson as the juniors held their ribs with merriment. "It was a trick to keep me away from the match. A rotten trick on your own team. I suppose some of the Fourth Form fellows squared you to do it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth, with a gasp. "Don't suspect us, Coker! Not guilty, my lord—not blessed guilty! I'd have given a term's pocket-money to see you in the Remove team."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then why did you do it, you young sweeps?" roared Coker. "If you weren't squared by the Fourth, what did you play this trick on your own team for, and risk giving the match away to the other side?"

That was too much for the juniors. They yelled with merriment. Coker stared suspiciously at Harry Wharton, his enlightenment gradually increasing. Wharton was almost weeping with laughter.

"Why, you—you—you—" stuttered Coker—"you had a hand in it too, Wharton. You put those young beggars up to it."

"Oh, help!" gasped Wharton. "Coker, you'll be the death of me! I know you will. You're too funny to live."

"So—so—so it was a dodge to keep me off the field, was it?" shrieked Coker, grasping the whole truth at last. "You—you ungrateful young villains, when I was going to help you win the Cup."

"Oh, Coker!"

"Yes, I was—and I was going to play for you in the final, too, and help you beat the Sixth," said Coker crushingly.

"Well, I dare say you think this very funny. I don't."

"We do—a little bit," chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I don't!" roared Coker. "And I'm going to make you sorry for your cheek! I'm going to come down heavy!"

Harry Wharton became suddenly grave. It was within the rules for Coker to play for the Remove in the final, if he liked; and it would not be easy to plant him in an express train a second time.

Coker glared round triumphantly as the laughter of the Removites died away. He saw that he had made an impression.

"You don't think it's funny now, what? Well, I'm coming down on you heavy, and you'll have plenty of time to be sorry. I was going to help you in the final. Now I've made up my mind that after this trick, I won't allow you a dog's chance of winning the Cup. I'll take jolly good care that you don't have a smell of a ghost of a chance of winning the Cup. I don't think you're fit to have a Cup. You understand? In the final, I shall play for the Sixth, and you've got yourselves to thank for it."

The Removites simply gasped. Coker thought they were gasping with dismay. He did not suspect that it was with

relief. He gave them a crushing look, and turned and stalked out of the room.

Perhaps Coker expected that they would rush after him, and beg him to reconsider his crushing decision, and not come down so heavy. But they didn't, and Coker strode away to his study with his mind fully made up.

As a matter of fact, the juniors weren't in a condition to rush after Coker.

They were almost in hysterics.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Means Business!

DURING the next few days, Wingate of the Sixth was noticed to wear a worried look.

The final for the Coker Cup was fixed for Wednesday. Under ordinary circumstances, of course, the Sixth Form would not have felt worried about the result of a match with the Remove. Hard players as Harry Wharton & Co. were, they could not have expected, in reason, to beat the top Form of the school—big fellows, years older than themselves.

Of course, the Remove would never have fallen easy victims like the Second. They would have put up a tremendous fight, and they would have given the Sixth a hard tussle. It was barely on the cards that they might have made the match a draw. They were well known to be dangerous opponents, even for a much older team. Every man was well-trained, and knew his place, and what to do, and had complete faith in his captain, who was worthy of it. Still, at the best, the Remove could hardly have hoped to do anything better than draw with the Sixth.

But under the circumstances—Coker being the circumstances—the prospects of the Remove had brightened very considerably.

For Coker, having once made up his mind as to what he would do, struck to his resolution with iron determination. He meant that the Remove should be utterly deprived of any possible chance of holding the Cup—and that, of course, meant that he had to play against them—the way Coker looked at it. So he had informed Wingate of his intention of playing in the Sixth-Form team, as he was fully entitled to do under the rules. Not that Coker was likely to bother about the rules—he was always willing to make a new rule if required.

Wingate had remonstrated gently. He had pointed out that, as the odds were already overwhelming against the Remove, it was really rough on them for Coker to add to the overwhelming odds in this way. The poor little beggars wouldn't have an earthly. To which Coker replied heartlessly that that was just what he wanted.

Then the Greyfriars' captain urged him to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. Coker retorted that the shorn lamb could be dashed.

Finding Coker deaf to persuasion, Wingate proceeded to argument. He came out plainly with the statement that he didn't want Coker in the Sixth Form eleven. Which, of course, put Coker's back up at once, and he answered that he didn't care a red cent whether Wingate wanted him in the eleven or not. He was going in all the same.

The time having come for perfectly plain-speaking, Wingate spoke with a plainness that was really quite painful.

"Look here, Coker," he said. "You can't play in the team, you know. I wouldn't mind so much if it was against the Fifth; it wouldn't be so bad to chance being licked by a senior Form. But if you play, and muck up the game as usual, it may lead to those cheeky kids beating the Sixth, and that's not to be thought of. We must think a bit of the dignity of the Form, you know. We can't chance being beaten by the Lower Fourth. With you in the team, playing the giddy ox and getting into everybody's way, I tell you it's quite on the cards that we may be even licked. So I ask you to stand out as a sensible chap."

Coker did not reply for a moment. He was speechless.

When he recovered his breath, however, he replied. He stated his opinion at considerable length, and with great emphasis, on Wingate's abilities to judge the form of a footballer. He hinted that if the fellows weren't cracked, if not actually mad, they wouldn't have Wingate for a captain at all. He revealed a fixed opinion that, so far as Wingate was not actuated by crass stupidity, he was a victim of unworthy jealousy of a splendid player, who was likely to put him in the shade.

Then he reiterated his fixed determination to play in the final, invited Wingate to go and eat coke, and retired from Wingate's study, slamming the door after him with a slam that rang the whole length of the passage.

After that, of course, it was impossible to argue with Horace Coker on the subject any more. Wild horses would

not have dragged him from his firm resolution to play for the Sixth, if only to show Wingate that he could play.

Courtney and Valence and Loder and several others of the Sixth ventured to give Coker gentle hints; but their hints were received so truculently that they gave it up quite hastily. Indeed, when Loder was seen nursing a swollen nose one day, there was a rumour that it was the outcome of an argument with Coker.

All of which was good news for the heroes of the Remove. They only hoped that Coker wouldn't change his mind before Wednesday. It would make all the difference in the world to their chance in the final tie.

It was not surprising that George Wingate wore a worried look in the days that preceded the final. It was not only the Cup that was at stake. Having entered the competition at all, of course, the Sixth wanted to win the Cup, as a demonstration of the fact that the lower Forms couldn't stand against them.

Their dignity was involved in winning the Cup. But that was not the only consideration now. Apart from the Cup, they disliked the bare possibility of a junior Form beating them. And with Coker baffling all the efforts of his own side, it was only too possible that they might be beaten.

Courtney even suggested withdrawing from the competition. But there was a general shaking of heads at that. To withdraw would be to put themselves in the same position as the Second Form, which had withdrawn from the semi-final after playing less than half a match. It would count as a licking, and the Remove would still hold the Cup as victors.

"But what on earth's to be done?" demanded Courtney, at the meeting in Wingate's study on Tuesday evening. "To-morrow's the final."

"We can't let those kids keep the Cup!" urged Valence. "Dash it all, we can't! It would be too disgraceful!"

Wingate gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders.

"I've talked to Coker," he said. "Might as well talk to a blessed mule! It's no good talking to him."

"Can't something be done?" said Courtney. "I've heard a yarn about the way those kids dealt with him on Saturday."

Wingate laughed.

"Yes; I've heard that, too. They got him into an express train."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we can't do that," said the captain of Greyfriars, with a shake of the head. "He wouldn't be caught like that a second time."

"I say, though, there's something in the idea," said Valence thoughtfully. "If we could get him bagged and kept off the field somehow for the afternoon, it wouldn't matter what he did or said afterwards."

"But how? I'm ready for anything short of manslaughter."

The Sixth-Formers thought it out. At any other time, on any other occasion, planning a "rag" in the manner of fags would have been whole leagues below the dignity of the Sixth. But desperate diseases require desperate remedies. Wingate was ready for anything, as Harry Wharton & Co. had been in the same predicament.

"Could we shut him up somewhere?" said Courtney.

"What price the old tower?" asked Loder. "There's one room with bars to the door, you know, and once in there—"

"Too far off for anybody to hear him yell, too," said Walker.

"But—but we couldn't appear openly in it," said Wingate. "That would hardly do. We can't play japes like fags. Besides, after the way they dished him on Saturday, he'd be suspicious. If we asked him to walk into the old tower with us, it would be a bit too much like the spider and the fly."

"I suppose it would. But—"

"But we can't have him in the team, Wingate; and, according to his blessed rules, we can't keep him out, unless he's detained somewhere by accident—"

"The Fifth!" exclaimed Courtney. "Look here, Blundell of the Fifth is as ratty as anything about Coker mucking up the match for him the other day. The ass thinks they might have beaten the Sixth if Coker hadn't insisted on playing for them. Blundell would do us a good turn if we asked him, and he'd like to take a rise out of Coker for mucking up the first round. Bland would help him."

Wingate nodded thoughtfully.

"There's something in that," he agreed. "I know Blundell doesn't like the idea of a kid Form winning the Cup, after the Fifth has been beaten. I'll speak to Blundell and Bland."

And that same evening Wingate might have been seen in close confabulation with the captain of the Fifth in the latter's study. Blundell was grinning during the confabula-

son; he was more than willing to help save Wingate's team from the disasters Coker had brought on his own.

After that interview, it might have been observed that Wingate looked more cheerful, and so did the other members of the Sixth Form eleven.

The next day was the day of the final, and the Removites, little dreaming of the plot that had been plotted among the astute Sixth-Formers, were in great spirits.

Morning lessons were over at last, and they went down to the footer-ground, where they had the pleasure of seeing Coker practising with the Sixth. The sight was very encouraging to them—in fact, exhilarating. The Sixth seemed to have resigned themselves to their hard fate—Coker went down to practise with them as a matter of course.

"Good old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry. "If he keeps that up—like that—it looks as if we shall hold the giddy Cup another season."

"What-ho!" chuckled the juniors.

"The Sixth ain't quite up to our form in some things," grinned Squiff. "They won't be able to plant Coker in an express train."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. went in to dinner in great good-humour.

After dinner, Blundell and Bland came out with Coker, apparently on exceptionally good terms. As a rule, they were not chummy—Coker's fixed conviction that he ought to be captain of the Fifth somewhat marring his relations with Blundell. Just now, however, they were as chummy as could be desired; and Billy Bunter, who overheard some of their conversation—he was generally overhearing somebody's conversation—announced that Blundell was "buttering up" Coker. Why Blundell should want to "butter" Coker up was a mystery—to the Removites, at least.

But Harry Wharton & Co. had no time to think about such things as that. The final for the Cup occupied all their thoughts, and they did not even notice that Coker had disappeared with the two Fifth-Formers.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Kidnapped!

HORACE COKER was feeling very pleased and satisfied. After the opinions Wingate had plainly expressed with regard to his value as a footballer—and which Blundell, too, had expressed with equal plainness many a time and oft—the process of buttering-up was grateful and comforting to his ears.

Blundell was commiserating the unfortunate juniors who were going to have Coker against them. Bland observed that, that afternoon, the Sixth would see what kind of a footballer Coker really was. Blundell asked Coker's opinion about a certain incident connected with the offside rule, and listened to his reply with a delightful air of deference.

Coker began to think that old Blundell wasn't such an ass, after all. Coker laid down the law on football, as they sauntered in the Close, at great length, and his two Form-fellows listened respectfully. They sauntered, quite by accident, of course, out of the Close, and through the old Cloisters, and came to the ancient tower which was a relic of the oldest building on the site of Greyfriars.

"Let's have a look in here," said Blundell. "I haven't been in the blessed old place for dogs' ages. Come on, Coker!"

"Pretty near time to get ready for the match," remarked Coker, looking at his watch.

He had no taste for antiquarian research.

"Oh, may as well look in, if Blundy likes!" said Bland. "Lots of time yet, Coker. This way!"

Coker acquiesced, good-humouredly. They entered the deserted old building, which was half in ruins, and ascended the stone stairs. Blundell opened the heavy oaken door of a room some distance up—almost the only room that was in anything like a state of repair.

"You get a view of the Sark from that window," he remarked.

Coker glanced casually from the window.

Blundell and Bland stepped quickly back out of the room, and Blundell pushed the door shut. Bland grabbed up one of the rusty old bars.

Coker turned from the window.

"Hallo! Where are you fellows? What's the door shut for? I say—"

Clang!

Coker jumped.

It was the sound of a heavy iron bar falling into iron sockets.

"My hat! What—"

Coker rushed to the door, and shoved at it. The door opened outwards—or, rather, it should have opened outwards. Now it didn't. It remained immovable, and another loud clang announced that another bar had dropped into its place.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 362.

NEXT MONDAY—**"THE CRUISE OF THE FAMOUS FIVE!"**

EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

Coker hammered on the thick oak with his knuckles. "Here! No larks!" he called out. "I've got to get back!"

There was no reply from without. But there came another clang as the third and last iron bar was jammed home. Coker gasped.

"Do you hear me?" he roared, kicking on the door.

"Hallo! Yes. Did you speak, Coker?"

"Let me out!"

"Ahem!"

"I don't mind a joke," said Coker; "but I've got to get back! They'll be getting ready for the final soon!"

"Go hon!"

"Now open the door—"

"Good-bye!"

Coker, to his great alarm, heard a sound of retreating footsteps. He thumped furiously on the door.

"Blundell! I say, Blundell—"

"Hallo! What's the matter now?"

"Let me out, confound you!"

"That's all right; we're coming back to let you out later," said Blundell calmly. "You can expect us about five o'clock."

"Why, you—you idiot, the match will be over then!"

"Exactly!"

A light dawned upon Coker's mind. He clenched his fists furiously. It was just as well for the captain of the Fifth that the big oaken door was between him and Horace Coker at that moment.

"You—you rotter!" shrieked Coker. "You're not going to keep me here! You cad! You want those junior rotters to win the Cup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me out, I tell you! What have those Remove blighters given you to do this, you rotter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blundell, old man, don't be a cad! Open the door!"

"Yes; at five!"

"Oh, you rotter! I—I'll smash you!" bellowed Coker.

"You—you villain!"

"One good turn deserves another!" chuckled Blundell.

"You mucked up our match, and kept us from a chance of winning the Cup, Coker, old man!"

"Why, you—you ungrateful rotter—"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's all right! We'll come and let you out later," said Blundell. "You can spend the time thinking what a ripping footballer you are! Good-bye!"

"You—you villain!" shrieked Coker. "You want the Sixth to be beaten, just because they beat you, in spite of the way I bucked the team up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter! I'll pulverise you! Open the door! I say, Blundell, old chap, this is more than a joke, you know!"

"Deadly earnest!" chuckled Blundell.

Footsteps died away down the stairs, and the voice of Blundell was heard no more. Coker yelled, and stamped, and kicked the door, and raved; but only the echoes of his own voice answered him.

He gave it up at last. He stamped about the room with clenched hands, making promises of all sorts of things for Blundell and Bland later on. But just at present there did not seem to be anything that he could do—except stamp and rave.

He went to the window and looked out. He was forty feet from the ground, and out of sight of the playing-fields, which were beyond the Cloisters. Over the tops of the leafless trees he could see the roofs of the School House and other buildings, but he knew that he was too far away for his voice to be heard if he shouted for help.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Coker. "The—the rotters! This is a trick to give the Remove kids a chance of getting the Cup! I shouldn't wonder if Wharton put them up to it, as he did Nugent and that nigger the other day! Oh, crumbs! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Coker.

He looked despairingly out of the window. There was ivy down below, but not within his reach. Coker had heaps of pluck, and he would have run almost any risk to get out of the old tower, and arrive on the field in time for the final; but there was no chance. Even Coker did not feel inclined to risk a jump of forty feet. Coker gritted his teeth.

In desperation, he shouted again and again, in the faint hope that some fellow might have wandered by chance in that direction, and might hear him.

Meanwhile, Blundell and Bland strolled away through the Cloisters, chuckling. They had done Wingate a good turn, and they had saved a footer-match from being mucked up,

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. by FRANK RICHARDS.

so they felt that they deserved well of their country. They sauntered cheerfully across the Close, and grinned at the sight of Harry Wharton & Co. chatting in a group outside the School House.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked at them a little curiously. He had noticed that they had strolled away with Coker, and that they had come back without him.

"Where is the esteemed Coker, my worthy Blundell?" he asked.

"Coker?" said Blundell, with a look of surprise. "We left him some time ago. Isn't he getting ready for the match? It's about time."

"High time!" grinned Bland.

And the two Fifth-Formers went in. The Nabob of Bhanipur sauntered in after them. Blundell proceeded to the prefects' room, where Wingate was waiting in some anxiety.

"All serene!" said Blundell.

"Safe and sound?" asked Wingate.

"Sound as a bell."

"And there's no danger—"

"Not at all. Better get the match started as soon as you can, though, in case of accidents. He's not in an express train this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blundell walked out, and nearly ran into a dusky junior in the passage.

"Is the esteemed Wingate here?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smoothly.

Blundell looked hard at the Nabob for a moment. But Inky's dusky face was childlike and bland in its expression.

"Yes, there he is," said Blundell. "You kids ready for the match? I'm going to referee, you know!"

"The readiness is terrific."

"Coming!" said Wingate. "Tell the kids we'll be on the ground in five minutes."

"Right-ho, my esteemed Wingate!"

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh walked away, his dusky face very thoughtful—very thoughtful indeed.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

Coker Wins!

"HERE we are again!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. The Remove players were on the field, ready for the start. They were in good spirits. The prospect of even a chance of beating the Sixth was enough to inspire them. Every fellow in the team was ready to play the game of his life.

"Where's the giddy enemy?" said Squiff.

"Here they come!"

The Sixth-Form team came down to the ground. A big crowd had assembled for the final, and they greeted the great men of the Sixth with a cheer. Wingate & Co. threw off their overcoats and mufflers, and strolled on the field.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Coker?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Coker!" said Wingate, with elaborate carelessness.

"Isn't Coker here?"

"Puzzle, find Coker!" murmured Blundell.

Harry Wharton looked alarmed. It wasn't like Coker to be late for an important match like the final tie for his own Cup.

Coker's absence on Saturday had brought great joy to the Removites, but on this occasion it was quite different. Circumstances alter cases.

"Why, you've got eleven without him!" exclaimed Wharton, in surprise.

"Ahem! Just as well to have a reserve on the field, in case of accidents, you know," said Wingate calmly. "Coker got detained somewhere the other day when he was going to play for you. He might do the same thing again!"

"Might have stepped into the wrong train," suggested Courtney. "You never know!"

Wharton's jaw dropped.

The absence of Coker and the smiles of the Sixth-Formers sent a dreadful suspicion through his mind. He suspected a "plant." Of course, it was scarcely possible to object to the Sixth doing exactly as he had done himself, and, of course, Wingate had a right to leave anybody he liked out of his team. There was nothing for Wharton to say on the subject.

But he thought the more. The vision of beating the Sixth and keeping the Cup was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream!

The utter dismay in the faces of the Removites made the seniors chuckle.

"We're ready when you are," said Wingate politely.

"Ain't—ain't you going to wait for Coker?" stammered Bob Cherry.

"Coker ought to be here if he wants to play," said Wingate

coolly. "Still, I'll do the same for Coker that you did the other day. Did you wait for him?"

"Nunno!"

"Then we won't wait."

The Removites looked at one another with sickly expressions. They felt that they were caught. Their high hopes crumbled away.

"One esteemed moment, my respected chums," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The kick-off was timed three o'clock, and now it is but ten minutes to three. The august Wingate is not bound to wait for Coker, but you are not bound to advance the esteemed kick-off!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "Good old Inky!"

"Kick off at three, Wingate," said Wharton, with a breath of momentary relief.

Wingate laughed.

"Just as you like," he replied. "Sharp three, though!"

"All serene!"

The Sixth-Formers proceeded to punt the ball about. Harry Wharton & Co. drew together, with dismayed looks, to consult.

"Of course, it's a dodge," said Squiff. "They've got rid of him somehow. They can't have taken him out and put him in a train; he'd be on his guard against that. Besides, he was strolling round with Blundell and Bland a quarter of an hour ago."

"Then he's still somewhere near," said Wharton. "Did you see which way he went, any of you—Bob, Frank, Inky? Where the dence is Inky? Inky!"

"The blessed duffer's cleared off!" said Bob Cherry. "Never mind Inky. He's not in the team, anyway. Coker might be in his study!"

"He wouldn't forget the match!"

"I'll cut off and see," said Bob; and he rushed away towards the School House.

Several other fellows looked round in various directions for Coker. But the minutes were passing. What had become of him? Had he been kept away purposely? Yet Harry Wharton knew that the Sixth-Form eleven had all been indoors till they came out for the match.

Bob Cherry came back with a lugubrious look. There was no sign of Coker in the house, and Potter and Greene had not seen him.

"Look here, Blundell, where did you leave Coker?" demanded Wharton desperately.

The referee looked surprised.

"Coker? Don't worry; if he doesn't turn up, Wingate has got another man ready."

"You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Sixth-Formers. "Don't worry!"

"Time!" said Blundell, looking at his watch. "As referee, I must see that you keep to time. Get into the field, please!"

"Toss with you, Wharton," said Wingate blandly.

"Ye-e-es; all right!"

They tossed for choice of ends. Wharton won the toss, and gave Wingate the wind to kick off against. With slow steps the Removites proceeded to their places. There was a sudden roar from the crowd.

"Look out!"

"Coker!"

"What!"

Every eye turned in the direction of the distant Cloisters. A burly figure, running at top speed, came into view. The Removites gave a shout. Bob Cherry hastily picked up the ball, to make quite sure that the Sixth would not steal a march on them by kicking off before Coker arrived.

There was a roar of encouragement to Coker from all the juniors.

"This way, Coker!"

"Put it on, old man!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blundell.

Wingate was a picture of dismay. Coker came up, panting and gasping. He rushed straight on the field.

"I'm in time!" he gasped.

"Hooray!"

"Good old Coker!"

"You—you—" stuttered Wingate.

"Awfully sorry, Wingate!" gasped Coker. "Glad I'm in time, too! I've been tricked! That rotter Blundell—the referee dodged back just in time as Coker made a swipe at him—that rotter barred me in the tower! Left me there, by gum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you villain! How did you get out?" yelled Blundell.

Coker glared at him.

"No thanks to you, you rotter! One of the juniors happened to come that way, and heard me shouting, and he let me out—"

(Continued on page III of cover.)

THE FIGHT FOR THE CUP!

(Continued from page 24.)

"My esteemed self!" purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, coming up, panting. "It was a delightful pleasure to be of service to the great Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Inky!" yelled Bob Cherry, giving the dusky junior a thump on the back that made him stagger. "You—you black tulip! Hurrah!"

"Wait a minute while I change," Coker was saying. "I'm sorry, Wingate, but you see for yourself it was all the fault of that beast Blundell. He wanted you to lose because you beat him the other day. It was mean!"

"Wanted me to—to lose!" gasped Wingate.

Coker whipped into the pavilion, and soon emerged in all the glory of football colours. He lined up with the dispirited Sixth-Formers, amid cheers. All the juniors, at least, were glad to see Horace Coker lining up with the Sixth.

Coker was in great feather. He felt that his kidnapping and his sudden dramatic arrival on the football-field in the nick of time ought to be followed by a tremendous game, and the winning goal from him, to make the picture complete.

He did his best to make the picture complete. He played up for all he was worth. He put all his beef into it. He very nearly played the whole game.

The game was almost indescribable. Coker was at his best, and the spectators were nearly in hysterics the whole time. Two of the Sixth had to get off the field in an early stage of the game, severely damaged by being charged over by Coker, who was kindly trying to play their game for them. Two more were seen to limp after collisions with Coker. Coker was very determined, and greatly excited. And the whole crowd, entering into the humour of the thing, encouraged Coker with yells and cheers, and there was simply no holding Coker.

The Remove failed to get through and score in the first half. But they held their own—with the unintentional help of Coker.

In the second half the Sixth lined up two men short—a direful result of Coker's exploits. But they made a determined attack, and it looked as if they would break their duck at last, when Coker sailed in just in the nick of time, and collided with Wingate when he was about to send the ball irresistibly in. Then the grinning Removites brought it up the field again.

"Bravo, Coker!" roared the crowd. "Go it, Coker!"

Coker went it. Neither side had scored, and there was only five minutes to go. Coker was determined that it should not be a draw. He captured the ball, shoving Courtney off it, and raced away. Unfortunately, in his excitement, he mistook his sense of direction, and the crowd simply gasped at the sight of Coker charging down on his own goal.

But when they "tumbled" a hurricane of cheers broke forth, which excited Coker still further, and goaded him on to his final effort. Right down to goal rushed Coker, and the astounded goalkeeper clutched at the ball too late as Coker sent it thundering in.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Goal!" shrieked the crowd wildly. "Good old Coker! Coker wins—for the other side! Hurrah! Ha, ha, ha!"

The whistle went. "There was no time for a restart. Harry Wharton & Co. threw themselves on the ground and shrieked.

The Sixth-Formers surrounded Coker as if they were going to lynch him.

"My goal!" said Coker cheerfully, panting for breath.

"Your goal!" yelled Wingate. "You dummy! You villain! You dangerous ass! You've lost us the match! Fat-head! Chump! Lunatic! Can't you see that's Valencia in that goal?"

"Eh?"

"Can't you see you've slammed it into our own goal?" shrieked Wingate.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You—you—you—"

"I—I say, that's rather awkward! I'll—I'll make a new rule, and we'll play the tie over again—"

But Coker had no time to say more. The enraged Sixth-Formers collared him, swept him off his feet, and frog-marched him off the field to the accompaniment of wild yells from Coker.

Harry Wharton & Co. limped off the field, weak with laughter. The spectators were laughing like hyenas. Coker had done it—he had kicked the winning goal! He had kicked it for the wrong side, but, after all, that was only a detail! The Remove had won. Harry Wharton & Co. were still the guardians of the trophy—winners—thanks to the nefarious Coker—in the fight for the Cup!

THE END.

The EDITOR'S WEEKLY CHAT WITH HIS READERS.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE CRUISE OF THE FAMOUS FIVE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In next Monday's magnificent, long, complete Greyfriars story the chums of the Remove add to their long list of exciting adventures by a most amazing circumstance. Ponsonby & Co., the cads of Highcliffe, make the Removites the victims of one of their unsportsmanlike japes by releasing a barge from its moorings, and causing the Famous Five to drift out to sea. Startling indeed would be such an adventure in times of peace, but whilst all manner of alien vessels are patrolling the seas it is rendered doubly so. There are sundry skirmishes with the enemy, and many exciting incidents ensue ere

"THE CRUISE OF THE FAMOUS FIVE"

comes to a happy termination.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

V. R. H. (Lancashire).—I will bear in mind what you say concerning the serials, but it is my intention to keep the "Magnet" as topical as possible. Owing to press difficulties in the present crisis, I regret your second wish cannot be gratified. Best wishes.

B. B. H.—I am always delighted to hear from my girl readers, and your letter gave me great pleasure. Hope you enjoyed your holiday.

"Constant Reader" (Cardiff).—The First Form pupils at Greyfriars are about eleven years of age, while some of the prefects and elder boys are seventeen. Scholarships for admission to such a school are only competed for in exceptional cases.

"A Girl Reader."—Cherry and Wharton are each 5ft. 4ins. in height.

"A never-miss-one-week-Reader" (Brixton).—I regret that the pruning of a pear-tree is a subject on which I can give you no information in these pages.

J. W. (Rothsay).—The places you name are fictitious.

"Constant Reader" (Gillingham).—Some or all of the stories you mention may appear in book form, but this is a matter over which I have no control. There is a grand serial dealing with Army life in the "Gem Library." Best wishes.

M. R. (Western Australia).—Many thanks indeed for your splendid letter, M. R. I hope your League will be a topping success. The matter you mention is one which I am putting before Mr. Richards. Good luck to you!

R. Truslove (Western Australia).—All the boys you mention are aged about fifteen. Very glad to hear from you.

"Sheffield Reader."—If you will let me know your full name and address, I shall be glad to give you full particulars for making a copygraph. There is not sufficient space in this column to tell you.

"Whim."—If you are eighteen you should be able to join the Army as a motor engineer in the Army Service Corps. You should obtain the address of the nearest recruiting station from a post-office or Labour Exchange, and get fuller particulars.

M. E. H. (Bayswater).—Many thanks for your interesting letter. I do not know whether there is a "Gem" Club in your neighbourhood. You are quite right about our new series of war adventures from our chum at the front. I am always very pleased to hear from my girl friends.

"An English Reader."—There are no big towns within a ten-mile radius of Greyfriars; the nearest is Ashford. Courtfield is the name of the small town near the school. Your portrait of the Kaiser, although a credit to you, is more imaginative than lifelike.

E. Dean (Bilbrook).—I am sorry to say I am unable to supply you with the name of a French paper resembling the "Union Jack."

"Five Grammar School Chums" (Hastings).—I regret the reformation of Vernon-Smith has caused you to take up such an absurd attitude. Much as I should like to humour you, you must bear in mind that in all matters where my readers are concerned I am guided by the majority.

The Editor

Our Grand Ferrers Lord Serial Story.



THE UNCONQUERABLE.

A Magnificent Story of Thrilling Adventure.

By SIDNEY DREW.

A Surprise.

"I thought you said Asphalte, souse me," said the bo'sun. "Never mind about the compliments, they'll do later. We couldn't trust you wi' a word like compliments, for you'd fall over it and break it afore you got it there. Stop that bowing, or I'll hit you wi' the piano-stool. You make me nervous."

For answer, the negro bowed himself out backwards, and closed the door.

Barry lay down on a couch, and yawned.

The door was again opened.

"Note fo' Massa Prout, sah."

It was in Ching-Lung's handwriting, and the steersman read it aloud.

"Dear Tommy,—Am having a chat with Senor Paravalt, and as you don't speak Spanish, it would be slow for you. Are dining here, and this note will bring our dress clothes, as you will see at bottom. Thurston and Kennedy are also coming. Hope Gan-Waga and I did not keep you waiting long. Enjoy yourselves. See you before dinner.—"

"CHING."

Below were a few instructions to the chief steward of the yacht relating to their dress-suits, and something else written in Spanish.

"Take it away, Whitewash," said Prout, "and don't wait for an answer. Tell the cook from me to hurry up that dinner, and make a lot of it."

Maddock put his hands in his pockets, and made a tour of the room.

A large aquarium blocked up one end of it to a height of six or seven feet.

The bo'sun watched the lazy fish swimming in and out, and then turned to the pictures, as any man would do in a strange room.

"Souse me!" he cried. "Look here! Who's that?"

He had stopped before the photograph of the fore-part of a steamer. The crew stood in a semi-circle, and the officers were seated in front. Maddock's finger was pointing at the central figure—a huge man, who occupied the captain's place of honour.

"Bedad, ut's Big Jeff Sanday, as plain as a fog!" said Barry. "And the ship's the Gurdon, that popped under on the Windmill Rocks. Look at the name on their jerseys; and ye can't mistake Big Jeff, for there's not two loike him alove. Sthrange we should tumble across that here."

"Why so strange, gentlemen?" asked a whining, stuttering voice. And the three men stared in amazement. "Why is it strange?"

"Mart Arkland!" shouted Barry O'Rooney. "Or is it your ghost, Martin?"

"Are these ghosts?"

The little man stepped aside, and a dozen barefooted negroes filed in.

Prout turned and made a dash for the window, for the negroes were armed. The front of the aquarium gave way as he grasped it, and he sprang aside just in time to escape the great pane of glass and the deluge of water. Then he dashed forward again, but was seized and dragged down among the weeds and struggling fish. He could hear Barry's yells as he fought to shake off his captors, but could offer no aid.

Maddock felled two of them with a champagne-bottle before his legs were knocked from under him.

Martin Arkland watched the struggle from a safe distance, blinking and rubbing the palms of his hands together. More men rushed in.

"Aisy, aisy, ye black bastes!" gasped Barry O'Rooney. "Oi've given in, so ye needn't twist the arms of me out by

the roots. Arrah, Oi'd sthoph your blinking, Mart, av Oi cou get near enough. Bagged again, Tommy—bagged again that insect. How do you fale about ut?"

Prout uttered a bellow of rage, and tried fiercely to f himself, but with no success, for in a moment he was haff cuffed.

"Never mind, souse it! I laid out a brace of 'era," said the bo'sun; "and there's a bit of comfort in that. We can fight the lot, so we may as well put on a smile, and do wh we're telled. I'll meet you one dark night, Arkland, and t you all about it."

Ching-Lung's already made friends with the Rubber King Kennedy," said Thurston, reading the note that a messeng had brought. Schwartz, you might tell the steward to see his Highness's evening-suit, and also Prout's, Maddock's, and O'Rooney's over to the house."

"Dunder! Is ud dot I am not invite, yea?" asked Herr Schwartz. "Are dose rasgals invito to der panquet, and not, is ud?"

"I am afraid you have hit upon the hideous truth," laughed Thurston. "Senor Paravalt is not aware of your important existence, and we cannot invite you. We must leave somebody in command, you know. While we are away you will be monarch of all you survey."

Herr Schwartz scowled darkly, but revenged himself by leaving out three dress-ties, and omitting Barry's silk waist coat.

"Und we haf ein little dinner oursellufs," he said to Chan Song-Pu; "a petter dinner than they efer daste, mine friend. Ach, I cok ein dinner for dwo, Chan, dot make you dink y nefer daste a dinner pefore, so go und beel der potatoes."

Chan-Song-Pu patted his silk blouse where it protruded most, and smiled. He knew that Herr Schwartz would be as good as his word.

Just before eight o'clock Captain Kennedy and Rupert Thurston left the yacht.

Herr Schwartz decided to dine on deck in state. Electric light had been fitted under an awning, and the table, laid for two, was decorated with flowers.

Champagne and other wines were cooling in the silver ice-pail, and as Schwartz never became flurried over culinary matters, he had plenty of time to dress, part his hair elaborately, and make himself beautiful.

"Ol' ri, ol' ri, ol' ri!" grunted Chan-Song-Pu, surveying the table with much satisfaction. "Velly muchee ol' ri!"

"Shaf! Vait dill ye pegin," said the chef. "I haf excel mineselluf, Chan. Deir meufa water von ye dell dem about it. Slin-Ho, ve are reaty."

Chan-Song-Pu rolled his eyes, and rubbed his blouse as the deft Chinese waiter placed the dishes before them. He switched on the glow lamps.

The tuneful chorus of a plantation song sung by the negro crew of the Paravalt came across the water through the gathering dusk.

"You enchoy yourselluf, yea, Chan?" inquired the cook. "You nefer haf such ein lofely dinner cad, yea?"

"Heavenlee!" sighed Chan-Song-Pu. "Ol' ri—very tof-sidee ol' ri! I could eatee him all over againce!"

He relapsed into a happy silence, with one of Ching-Lung's most expensive cigars in his mouth.

Herr Schwartz lay back, and puffed out the perfumed smoke luxuriously. The crew had gone down to supper, but Slin-Ho waited.

"You can glear out und glear oop," said the cook. "I make der goffee mineselluf."

Schwartz made coffee like an artist. He lighted the spirit-lamp under the cafetiere, and presently the water was bubbling round the glass receptacle that held the freshly ground coffee. He turned on the little tap and filled the cups. The coffee was fragrant and delicious.

"Ach, dot vas petter dan eating rage and pones dey gall dinner ofer dere," he said. "Dot vas goffee, Chan; not maff und vater, mine poy."

Chan granted sleepily.

When Herr Schwartz looked again the fat Chinaman had slid gently out of his chair, and was snoring. The cook fell drowsy himself—not because he had made too free with the wines, for the chef was most abstemious—but he felt lazy and comfortable after his dinner.

"Dere vas sossitches vor breakfast," he murmured; and then nodded, and closed his eyes. "Peautiful bork sossitches vor breakfast, yea."

"Way down upon the Swanee River,

Far, far away.

Dat's whar' my heart am turnin' eber;

Dat's whar' de ole folks stay!"

A banjo strummed, and the well-sung chorus fell faintly on the cook's drowsy ears.

(A splendid instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order your copy now.)