

# GRAND EASTER NUMBER!

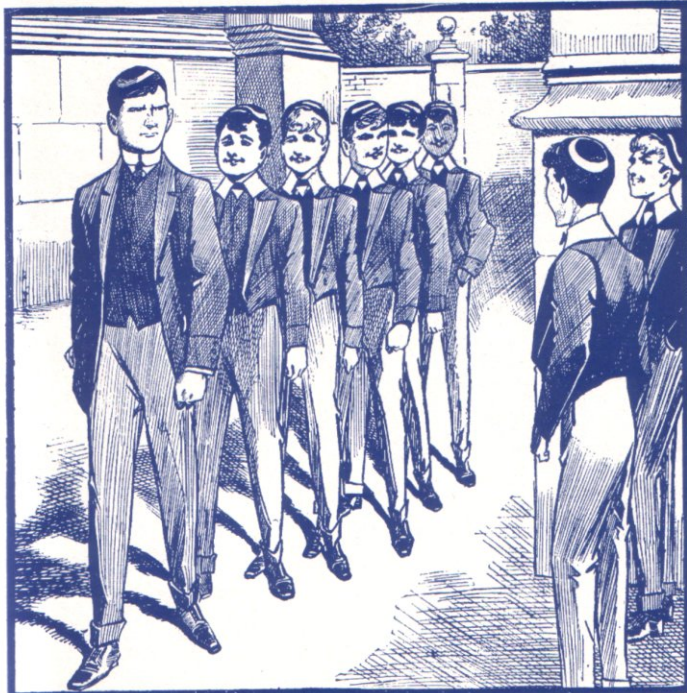
A Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



## The Magnet 1<sup>st</sup> Library

No. 429. Vol. 10.

APRIL 29th, 1916.



## FALL IN AND FOLLOW COKER!

(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)



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# MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d., COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 1d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

## "THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!"

By Frank Richards.



In this grand, long, complete story cricket plays a big part. Greyfriars v. St. Jim's is always a popular fixture; and it is a match between Tom Merry & Co. and Harry Wharton & Co. which is forbidden through the barefaced lying of Gerald Loder, the bullying prefect. The only way to play the match is to get Loder off the scene on the day fixed for it. Frank Nugent suggests a bold scheme for doing this, and the Famous Five carry it out with complete success. But an effort made by Loder to escape very nearly results in a tragedy, and the relief of those responsible is great when the pluck of Harry Wharton averts the danger. So, after all, no one but the unpleasant Sixth-Former, who has well deserved his lesson, has any cause to look back with regret upon the day of

## "THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!"

### THE HOWARTH LETTER.

When, a few weeks ago, I printed the letter in which a fellow signing himself "T. Howarth" poured the vials of his august contempt upon the "Magnet," and explained how in the future he anticipated being the only man in a wilderness of monkeys, whose sad condition would be due to their awful sin in reading the "Magnet" in the days of their youth, I knew that I should be getting no end of replies from my loyal readers, who outnumber the grumblers in the proportion of many thousands to one. And I have not been disappointed. The replies have come in heaps. If I were to print them all, more than a dozen editions of the "Magnet" would be needed. I cannot do that, of course; but I am going to give a few extracts from them.

"A Lad Discharged From the Army" writes: "I am only sixteen, but I have been to France to fight for my King and Country. Now discharged, owing to three bullets piercing my side and legs. I am not very fit, as you may guess, but I should like to fight Howarth, for the honour of the 'Magnet,' all the same." And, for my part, I should be quite content to trust the honour of the paper to the championship of this gallant youngster. But I cannot think Howarth is of the fighting type.

Private Jack Dear, of the Coldstreams, writes from the Front: "I think that letter from Howarth must have been written by somebody with either a silly or a malicious mind. He ought to see how your papers are appreciated over here. One reason for that is that most papers have tales of the war, which bore us stiff; yours are full of good, bright stuff, and there is never a word to do anyone harm."

Private Edward Evans, of the R.A.M.C., says: "Howarth's attack is simply Hunnish. It is insulting to many men who are now defending not only their own country, but also civilisation itself. He needs examination by a brain specialist. A good many of us do a lot of reading of a very different kind from the 'Magnet.' I myself am studying such subjects as first aid, anatomy, physiology, and sanitation; but I am as keen as ever on the old paper, and it is a welcome relief after heavier stuff. The 'Magnet' yarns help to educate the conscience, and to point out the difference between right and wrong."

And a reader who confesses to fifty years writes: "How now, Mr. Editor? Methinks thou makest too little use of the w.p.b. when thou lettest the feelings of all true Magnetites be disturbed by such piffle as that emanating from T. Howarth, of Newbiggin. I am the father of a family, and I think I have at least average intelligence and average literary taste. Though a voracious reader, I do not care for novels, but I have read the 'Magnet' every week since it was first published, and I have always found it all right."

Most of my correspondents ask why I print such stuff as these abusive letters at all. Well, it seems worth while to

give the other side a show once in a way, though it is a pretty poor show they make. And it has occurred to me that possibly some of my readers may be interested in entomology—that's the study of beetles and such things, you know!

### NOTICES.

C. Pearce, 8, Coombe Avenue, Portishead, will be very grateful if any reader would let him have the number of the "Magnet" in which Inky first appeared.

W. Pascoe, 23, North Street, Murton Colliery Co., Durham, wants to buy the copy of the "B. F. 3d. Library," entitled "Pete's World-Wide Quest."

Laurence Murphy, 142, Stanley Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool, would be glad to hear from W. B. Monmouth.

Collin W. Young, 14, Logan Terrace, South Shields, is starting a correspondence club, and would be glad if any reader interested will write him for particulars, enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

Will any reader who has a copy of "The Boy Without a Name" he can spare send it on a voyage to Australia? H. Thomas, Lachlan Street, Hay, N.S.W., would be very grateful.

R. Swain, Tristford Lodge, Harborton, Totnes, wants to buy back numbers of the "Magnet."

Private C. E. Foskett, 12119, R.A.M.C., 1st War Hospital, Ward 1C, Rednal, Birmingham, would like to correspond with a reader or two.

Private James Avery, 4673, Hut 11. "B" Coy., 6th Platoon, 3/7 Batt. Manchester Regiment., No. 5 Camp, Codford St. Mary's, Wilts, would be very pleased to hear from a few readers.

Private W. H. Brown, 14037, 10th Batt. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, B.E.F., France, would be very glad to correspond with a girl reader.

A. Wright, 38, Mayfield Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts, will be much obliged to any reader who will let him have a copy of the number of the "Magnet" entitled "Wingate's Folly" (No. 200).

Laurence Robinson, 196, Wharf Street, Leicester, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League among boys under fourteen in his town. Will those who wish to join call at his address between six and eight any evening?

Driver J. Cotterell, 90th Brigade, H.Q.S., R.E.A., B.E.F., France, would be glad to correspond with a girl reader.

If Clement Adare should happen to see this notice, will he write to his old friend, Geoffrey Gordon, at the same address as formerly, as there is news for him?

J. Carstairs, Buck Farm of Corneres, Austruther, Fifo, would be much obliged if any reader would let him have "The Boy Without a Name."

L. P. McDermott, 31, Claremont Street, Plymouth, would be glad to buy Nos. 1 to 250 of the "Magnet," and will give the full price for clean copies.

D. and N. Hoosen, 117, Beech Wood Road, Ovenden, Halifax, want to form a "Magnet" League in their town. Will any readers interested send stamped and addressed envelope for particulars?

Kemuel MacDonald, page, Stafford Hotel, St. James' Place, S.W., would like to arrange to join a football team for next season. Can keep goal, and has played through one season with a junior team at Calford.

A. E. Parsons, 6, Longwood Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League in his district, and will be glad if readers who care to join will write or call upon him.

Pioneer O. A. Livermore, 121350, Wireless Section, Royal Engineers Park Street Barracks, Cardiff, would be glad to correspond with some of the older boy and girl readers of the "Magnet."

Your Editor

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tive to all readers.

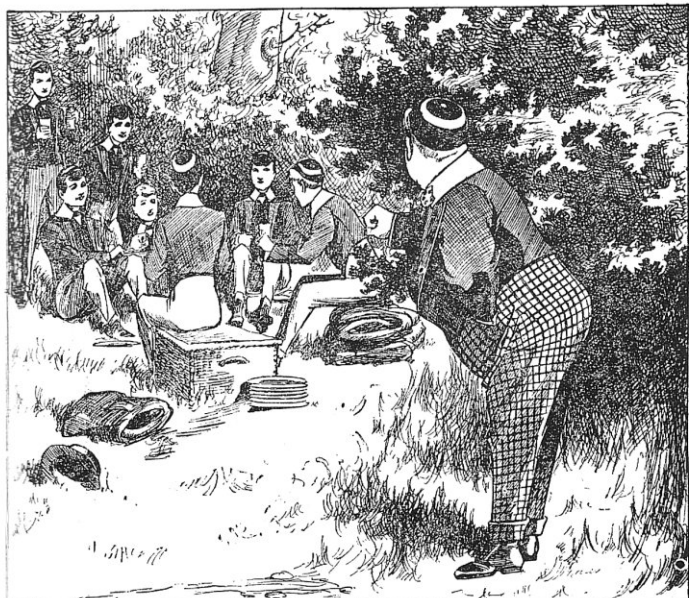


The Editor will be  
obliged if you will  
hand this book,  
when finished with,  
to a friend. . . .

# COKER'S CONSCRIPT!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS



Bunter's search had been crowned with success at last. In a glade of the wood, under the trees, a number of fellows were seated in the grass, with a big lunch-basket in their midst. "I say, you fellows—" began Bunter. (See Chapter 9.)

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. More Trouble for Coker!

**H**ORACE COKER, of the Fifth Form, came striding in at the gates of Greyfriars, with a deep frown upon his brow.

Harry Wharton & Co. were near the gates, improving the shining hour by gently chipping Gosling, the porter. But they transferred their attention from Gosling to Horace Coker, as the great man of the Fifth came in.

The portentous frown upon Coker's brow showed that all was not as it should be.

Something or other had occurred which did not meet with the approval of Coker of the Fifth. Probably it was nothing to do with Coker—indeed, that was extremely probable. Coker had very strong opinions upon all sorts of matters that did not concern him in the least.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, giving Coker a playful dig in the ribs as he passed. "Wherefore this thiness, Harry?"

Which was an awful cheek on Bob Cherry's part, Bob being a junior in the Remove, and Horace Coker a senior in the Fifth, and quite the most important person in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars—in his own estimation, at least.

"Groogh!" said Coker. Bob's dig in the ribs was a hard one, and it nearly punctured Coker. "You cheeky fag! Why, I'll—"

Bob Cherry backed away.

"Keep its little temper!" he said soothingly. "Tell us all about it, Coker! Has some common human being dared to come between the wind and your nobility?"

"Have rude boys been asking you where you got your face, and why?" asked Johnny Bull.

"You cheeky fags!" roared Coker. "I haven't time to lick you now—"

"What a stroke of luck for you, Coker!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The luckfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. The Nabob of Bhanipur. "Perhaps the lickfulness would be a boot on the other foot!"

Horace Coker glared at the juniors for a moment. He had had old troubles with the Famous Five; but perhaps he hadn't time to lick them—or perhaps he reflected that the licking was not easy to bestow.

Even the burly Coker, with his four-point-seven punch, could scarcely have handled the Famous Five. And when it came to hickings, the chums of the Remove were firmly of opinion that it was more blessed to give than to receive. After one crushing glare, Horace Coker strode on towards the School House with a lofty stride.

Bob Cherry closed one eye at his chums.

"Follow your leader!" he said.

Bob fell into line behind the great Coker, imitating his lofty stride with some exaggeration.

The juniors caught on at once. Johnny Bull dropped into line behind Bob, Frank Nugent behind him, then Wharton, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh brought up the rear.

With strutting steps and grinning faces they marched across the Close after the unconscious Coker.

There was a howl of laughter from fellows in the Close who sighted the peculiar procession. Rake and Wibley of the Remove rushed to join it. Seven juniors in file strutted after Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter and Greene of the Fifth, Coker's study-mates, were waiting on the steps of the School House. It was tea-time, and they were waiting for their chum to come in. Coker's society was not always yearned after by Potter and Greene, but at tea-time they were always glad to see him. Funds were low with Potter and Greene, as they often were, and there was no tea in the study till Coker came in.

Potter and Greene burst into a howl of laughter as Coker came striding up, with the strutting juniors in file behind him. Coker gave them a morose look.

"Well, what are you cackling at?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've just found out a jolly serious thing in Friardale," said Coker wrathfully. "I've got to take a hand in it. I was going to ask you fellows for advice, but if you're going to be a pair of silly, cackling, burbling asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter. "Sorry, old chap, but, you see—"

Coker looked round, and spotted his following.

"You—your cheeky young rascals!" roared Coker. "Cut off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker made a rush back at the juniors. They scattered before his charge, yelling with laughter.

The great man of the Fifth shook a furious fist at them.

"Naughty!" said Bob Cherry chidingly. "Don't lose its temper! Don't—Oh, my hat!"

Coker made a sudden rush, and collared the humorous Bob.

"Rescue!" yelled Bob.

"Back up, Remove!" shouted Wharton.

The Removites rushed in. Coker was boxing Bob Cherry's ears with a powerful hand, but he had time only for one box. Then the Removites were upon him, and hands seized Coker on all sides.

The great Horace, struggling fiercely, was swept off his feet. Potter and Greene exchanged a glance, and melted away into the House. They had no desire whatever to share in a rag with the merry Removites. Coker was always waking up trouble, and his chums generously left him to enjoy it all himself.

"Bump him!" shouted Wibley.

"Frog's march him!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Hooray! Yank him along!"

The juniors were in a merry mood. They whirled Coker

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off the ground, with his arms and legs flying, and rushed him along.

Coker, struggling vainly, and shouting threats with all the force of his powerful lungs, went round the Close at a great speed in the midst of the shouting crowd.

"Yaroo!" roared Coker. "Leggo! Lemme down! Why, I'll smash you! Cheeky fags! Yaroo! I'll pulverise you! I'll scalp you! Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Right round the Close went Coker at top speed, surrounded by Removites, and occasionally bumping on the ground. But as the crowd came sweeping past the door of the School House again, Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, looked out of his study window.

"Boys!" thundered Mr. Prout.

"Cave!"

"Hook it!"

Bump went Coker on the ground, sprawling under his Form-master's window, and the juniors vanished as if by magic.

Coker of the Fifth sat up dazedly. His cap was gone, his hair was tousled, and he was covered with dust. He gasped, and gasped, and gasped, as if he would never leave off gasping. Mr. Prout surveyed him from the window with a disapproving eye.

"Coker!" he said severely.

"Gruggh!"

"Once for all, Coker, I disapprove of this horseplay on the part of a senior boy! I am surprised at you, Coker!"

"Grooooh!"

"It is the place of a senior of the Fifth Form, Coker, to set an example of orderliness to junior boys!" said Mr. Prout sternly. "I am surprised and shocked, Coker, to see you joining in uproarious horseplay with boys of the Lower Fourth! Kindly do not let it occur again, Coker, or I shall be compelled to adopt severe measures towards you! You will take a hundred lines, Coker!"

"I—I—I—"

"That is enough, Coker! I am ashamed of you!"

"I—I didn't—I—I wasn't—I never—"

"I know what I have seen with my own eyes, Coker! Kindly say no more! Your conduct is utterly unworthy of your position in the school!"

"I—I—," yelled Coker.

"Enough!"

"But I tell you, sir—"

Slam! Mr. Prout closed his window hard, and retired with great dignity. Coker gasped, and sought for his cap, and strode into the School House in a dusty and infuriated condition, with looks and feelings which would have done credit to a Hun.

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## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Coker's Duty!

POTTER and Greene were waiting for Coker in the study.

They tried not to smile at the great Horace came in, breathing dust and fury. It was not only the frog's-march that worried Coker, but to be supposed to have joined Lower Fourth fags in horseplay in the quad—that was the unkindest cut of all. It was insult added to injury. Horace Coker simply snorted with wrath as he stamped into his study.

"Silly old ass!" he ejaculated.

In that disrespectful manner Horace Coker alluded to his Form-master.

Fancy thinking that I was ragging with those cheeky fags!" gasped Coker. "Me, you know! Silly old ass!"

"Let me give you a brush down, old chap," said Potter.

"You need it."

Coker submitted to the brushing-down, still snorting.

"Greene can cut down to the tuckshop," hinted Potter, as he relieved Horace of some layers of dust. "It's past tea-time."

"Blow tea-time!" growled Coker.

"Ahem! Don't you want your tea?"

"I'm thinking about something more important than tea. Anybody would think the country wasn't at war, to hear you fellows talk about tea," grunted Coker.

"Oh!" said Potter.

This was rather cool of Coker. Coker was a great trencherman himself, and there had been no sign whatever of a diminution of his appetite on account of the war. But Coker was evidently in a lofty state of mind.

"I suppose you know we're at war with Germany?" he added sarcastically.

"I've seen it in the papers," murmured Potter.

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!"



The burly man shook a big and not over-clean fist at Gosling. "I'm coming in!" he roared,  
(See Chapter 14.)

"Ahem! Any fresh news from the Front?" asked Potter pacifically. "Anybody got a move on yet?"

"I was going to consult with you fellows about it," said Coker.

"About the war?" said Potter in astonishment. "My dear chap, they won't listen to us. Of course, we could run the war in splendid style, like everybody else, except the chaps who are doing it. But they won't let us. Let's have tea instead."

"The fact is, I'm hungry," said Greene. "Suppose we send a flag down to the tuckshop, while you're telling us all about it, Coker?"

"Oh, rats!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter, of the Remove, blinked into the study. "I say, I'd be glad to go down to the tuckshop for you, if you like. I'd do anything to oblige you, Coker."

Coker made no verbal reply to this kind offer. He picked up a cushion and hurled it at Bunter, and the Owl of the Remove disappeared quite suddenly. Coker slammed the study door.

"Now, I'll tell you what's happened," he said. "That is, if you can leave off thinking about tea for a minute or two."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Potter resignedly.

"I suppose you know there's such a thing as conscription?" said Coker.

"Conscription!" repeated Potter. "Yes, I suppose so. Nothing for us to worry about, as we're under age. The war will be over before we're old enough to be collared."

"So that's how you look at it, is it?" snorted Coker. "I

jolly well wish I were old enough to be collared, as you call it!"

"Well, so do we all," said Potter. "I'd like it no end. Everybody who can't go is awfully keen on going. I've noticed that. I back up conscription, rather—till I'm eighteen, anyway."

"Don't be funny, George Potter! This is a serious matter. There's a chap in Friardale who's dodging conscription."

"What a nerve!" said Potter. "Must be a bad man. Awful rotter, in fact. How did he get exempted?"

"He isn't exempted; he's dodging it, clear, against the law," said Coker. "He's practically a deserter. You'd be shot for that in Prussia."

"Well, we're not quite Prussians yet," remarked Potter. "Let's hope he won't be shot. Anyway, what the dickens does it matter to us?"

"Especially at tea-time," said Greene.

Coker snorted.

"I might have expected that from you," he said. "You're unpatriotic. This chap, Bill Filey, is dodging conscription. The question is, what ought I to do in the matter?"

"You!" ejaculated Potter.

"Yes, I."

"What on earth's it got to do with you?"

"It's my duty to see that nobody dodges it, if I can help it. It's everybody's duty," said Coker loftily. "Some fellows have a very high idea of duty. I'm one of that sort. I can't allow this to go on. That's impossible. The question is, what steps ought I to take?"

Potter rubbed his nose thoughtfully. It was so close upon tea-time that he did not venture to call Coker a meddling ass.

"Well, you could inform the police," he suggested at last. Coker shook his head.

"I couldn't do that. It would be acting the informer, and an informer is a rotten toad! I'm not going to do anything of the kind."

"Suppose you were to mind your own business," said Greene, as if struck by a sudden brilliant thought.

"You silly ass!" roared Coker. "It is my business, isn't it?"

"Blessed if I see it!"

"You wouldn't see it," said Coker scornfully. "Well, I see it, and I'm going to do my duty, and my duty is to see that Bill Filey goes into the ranks. I'm not going to inform the police. I'd scorn to do anything of the kind. I'm not that sort. At the same time, I can't allow the man to dodge conscription, when the country needs men."

"Perhaps he'll be bowled out, and collared in time," suggested Potter, humouring the great Horace.

"Perhaps he will, and perhaps he won't," said Coker.

"Isn't every man needed at once? Don't we want every man we can get? I'm not going to allow Bill Filey to dodge his responsibilities. I'm going to interfere."

"Oh, dear!"

"The only thing I can think of is to find the man myself, and march him to the recruiting-office by the cuff of the neck," said Coker. "You fellows can help me."

"Dash it all, we're not recruiting-sergents, or blessed kidnappers!" said Potter warmly. "Let the poor beast alone! If he funks the trenches, the chaps there will be better without him. Besides, I dare say you're making a bloomer, as usual. How do you know anything about him at all?"

"I've just heard it in Friardale," said Coker. "I stopped at the inn for a ginger-beer, and some chaps were talking there. They mentioned Bill Filey. You see, this chap Filey is a vagabond, and hasn't any regular address, and I suppose that's how he escaped being registered. So, though he's of military age, he hasn't been called up. Of course, he's called up by proclamation; but he hasn't received his notice, as the authorities don't know of his existence. He hangs about, and does poaching, I believe, and odd jobs. I've heard of the man before. He's been sent to chokery at quarter sessions for stealing chickens."

"Nice sort of man to shove in the Army!" said Potter indignantly. "I should say they'd rather have his room than his company."

"That isn't the point. He's got to go. And I'm jolly well going to make him go!" said Coker. "I can't inform about him; that would be a mean trick; but I can jolly well make him go, and I'm jolly well going to do it! These chaps who were talking said he was only twenty-eight, so he comes under the first lot of conscripts, and ought to have been collared long ago. They said they hadn't seen Filey for some time, and reckoned that he was keeping out of sight. He generally lives in an old hut in the wood in summer, except when the keepers rout him out—a regular vagabond, you know."

"Perhaps his income won't run to a town house and a house in the country," suggested Potter humorously.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Potter! To-morrow's a half-holiday," said Coker. "I'm going to start then. Will you fellows come with me?"

"Ahem!"

"We three will be able to handle him easily enough. We'll take a lunch-basket, in case we're kept a long time on the hunt."

"Well, that's a good idea," said Potter, showing a little interest in the scheme at last.

"I'll ask Mrs. Mimble to make up a good basket. Can't think of money in a case like this," said Coker. "I'm pre-

pared to spend time and money to any extent to shove this blessed shirker where he ought to be. When we capture him, we'll hire a trap, and take him to the recruiting-office and hand him over. That's the programme. I'll jolly well give him a piece of my mind first too. I'm disgusted with him! Why, if chaps didn't go to fight the Germans, we ourselves might be in danger, sooner or later!"

"Awful!" said Potter. "I'll order the lunch-basket, if you like. We'll come."

Potter closed one eye at Greene. Greene nodded. Potter and Greene had not the slightest anticipation of getting anywhere near Bill Filey; but they were willing to take a walk and a lunch-basket in the woods on a spring afternoon.

Coker's brow cleared.

"Well, I'm glad you're going to back me up," he said. "That's settled, then. Let's have tea. I'll step down to the tuckshop." Coker opened the study door as he spoke, and there was a gasp as a fat figure nearly pitched into the study.

"Bunter, you eavesdropping rotter!"

"I—say, you fellows—Yarooocoo!" roared Bunter, as Coker's boot smote him heavily. "Leave off, you beast! I wasn't listening. Yarooocoo!"

Billy Bunter fled down the passage, yelling, Coker dribbling him along till the fat junior escaped into the Remove passage.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Lending Coker a Hand!

BILLY BUNTER was seated in the armchair in No. 1 Study when Harry Wharton & Co. came in to tea. The fat junior was still breathing stertorously, not having quite recovered from his exertions in escaping from Horace Coker.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "How the dickens did Bunter know that we had a cake for tea?"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I didn't know—"

"Then what are you doing here?"

"That beast Coker has been going for me," said Bunter pathetically. "I dodged in here. What kind of a cake is it?"

"Never mind the cake, if that isn't what you've come for," grinned Nugent.

"Ahem! Now I'm here I'll stay to tea," said Bunter. "I've had a skinny tea in No. 7. Toddy is jolly mean with the grub. I could do with another. There were only four herrings for the four of us, and Toddy would only let me have one—you know how mean he is. I say, you fellows, you oughtn't to let a Fifth Form rotter kick a Remove chap along the passage. You ought to stand up for the honour of the Form. If you like to go for Coker I'll come with you and—look on."

"What did Coker do to it for?" asked Wharton doubtfully. "Were you robbing his cupboard?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you know I'd scorn anything of the kind! Besides, I couldn't get at the cupboard; the beasts were all in the study. I wasn't listening, either; I had stooped to tie up my bootlace—"

"Serve you right if Coker kicked you!" said Bob Cherry. "I've a jolly good mind to give you another!"

"Look here, I think you might be sympathetic, at least," said Bunter indignantly.

"No sympathy to waste on eavesdroppers!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I tell you I wasn't listening—only by accident. I couldn't help hearing what Coker said, as I was tying my bootlace outside his study. I think it's rotten of him to meddle with that poor beast of a conscript, too!"

"That which?"

"He's going to hunt him down to-morrow afternoon and take him to the recruiting-office," said Bunter. "I hope Bill Filey will give him a jolly good hiding, that's all!"

"Who on earth's Bill Filey?" asked Wharton, puzzled.

"Lemme see, I've heard that name!" said Bob Cherry. "He's a poacher chap who hangs about Friardale and gets into rows with old Tozer. Spends half his time in prison, and the other half in pubs. What the dickens has Coker got to do with that ruffian?"

"Nothing at all," explained Bunter. "But you know Coker. He's heard that Bill Filey is dodging conscription, and he's going to bring him to book."

"Interfering ass!"

"They're going out hunting him to-morrow afternoon," said Bunter. "They're going to take a whacking lunch-basket, and make an afternoon of it. I hope they'll fall in with Filey and a gang of his pals and get a hiding."

"The silly asses!" said Nugent. "They won't find Filey; old Tozer can't find him when he wants him. And he's an awful hoodigan—by reputation, at least. He may break Coker's head for him."

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Bob Cherry's eyes glimmered.  
"Has Coker ever seen the man?" he asked.  
"I don't think so," said Bunter. "He doesn't know anything about him, only he heard some fellows talking about him at the inn. Like his cheek to chip in! He never can mind his own business. Jolly good idea to raid the silly duffers and collar their lunch-basket. I'll do it if you fellows will back me up."

"Yes, we're looking for a leader about your size—I don't think!" remarked Johnny Bull, with a snort.

"Where are you going, Bob?" asked Wharton, as Bob Cherry left the study. "We're going to have tea now."

"Back in a tick. I've got to speak to Coker."

"Coker! What for, ass?"

But Bob Cherry did not reply. He hastened to the Fifth Form passage, and found Coker and Potter and Greco coming out together. Coker frowned at Bob, and made a movement towards him that was decidedly hostile.

"Pax!" said Bob cheerily. "I want to speak to you, Coker—It's rather important—"

"I don't talk to fags!" said Coker disdainfully.

"Well, if you don't want any information about Bill Filey—"

"Hold on, Cherry! What's that about Filey?"

"I hear you're going to look for the awful boulder and round him up," said Bob. "I could give you some information if I liked. I shan't unless you're jolly civil, though."

"Well, if you can give me any points I'd be glad," said Coker, much more amiably. "I'm prepared to take any amount of trouble, but I'd rather nail the rotter at once, of course. I'll give him dodging conscription!"

"I suppose you know him by sight?" said Bob.

"No, I've never seen him," said Coker. "Hardly heard of him before to-day. That makes it all the harder to run him down—not that I shall give in if it takes me a week."

"That's just like you, Coker. You were always a stickler," said Bob Cherry admiringly. "It was an oversight not to give you Lord Derby's job. Well, if you want a description of Bill Filey to help you look him out, I'm your man. I'll write it out for you if you like."

"You chaps can go on to Mrs. Mimbles and see about the lunch-basket. Mind it's a jolly good one!"

"Leave it to me, old chap," said Potter affectionately.

Coker pushed a pen across the table to Bob Cherry.

"Put down every point," he said. "I want to make sure of my man. It wouldn't do to yank the wrong man to the recruiting-office, you know. I suppose you've actually seen the man?"

"I've seen him hanging about the Cross Keys," said Bob.

"Good! Put it all down."

Bob Cherry reflected, helping his cogitations by gnawing the handle of the pen. Coker watched him anxiously. This assistance was a windfall for Coker. Hunting down a man he had never seen, and of whose personal appearance he was quite ignorant, was a difficult task, though Coker wouldn't have given in if it had been ten times as difficult. But certainly an exact description of the man would make his self-imposed task much easier.

Bob began to write, evidently considering carefully every word he put on the paper.

"Height, about five feet seven. Face very red, very red nose, big moustache and side-whiskers ginger colour. Thick red hair. Wears an old bowler hat, thick boots, gurnsey, and a velvet coat. Bushy eyebrows, sandy colour. Big mouth and large ears. Drops his h's. Voice like a file."

"There!" said Bob. "I've written out a description of the man I've got in my mind's eye, as exact as I can."

Coker read through the description.

"Well, that's pretty clear," he said. "I think I could nail the fellow from that. I'm much obliged to you, Cherry. I was going to give you a hiding for checking me in the quad. Now I won't."

"You're awfully good, Coker," said Bob meekly.

"I'm always kind to fags, when they behave themselves," said Coker. "Of course, I don't stand any cheek. What are you grinning at?"

"Your face," said Bob. "Excuse me: it always makes me grin. By the way, I suppose you call it a face, Coker?"

Bob Cherry dodged out of the study before Coker could answer that question, if he felt inclined to answer it. Coker grasped a cricket-stump and made a jump after him. But he paused. After all, Bob had done him a considerable service in giving him that description of the conscription-dodger. Coker decided magnanimously to let him off.

"Cheeky little beast!" murmured Coker. "Never mind. I'm pretty sure of bagging that shirking scoundrel now."

Coker folded up the paper and put it in his pocket-book with much satisfaction. His hunt on the morrow was going to be a success, with endless glory for Coker. Coker was a kind-hearted fellow, in his way; but on some points he could be adamant; and he was adamant on that point—no mercy for the conscription-dodger! Bill Filey's fate was sealed—perhaps!

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.  
Bob Cherry's Wheeze!

"WIB!" Tea was over in Wibley's study. Rako and Morgan and Micky Desmond had gone down, but Wibley was there, at his favourite occupation—sorting over the props of the Remove Society, and laying schemes for fresh theatrical undertakings.

"Wib, you're wanted!"

"Buster!" said Wibley. "I've been thinking of a new play. What do you think of 'Torn from Home; or, the Chap Who Didn't Want to Go'?"

"Rotten!" said Bob. "You're wanted. Come on. It's a wheeze!"

"Oh, bother your wheezes!" said Wibley. "I've no time for your old wheezes. We haven't done anything in the theatrical line for a long time, and I've undertaken to do a play with a part for Phyllis. My idea is—Yooop!"

Bob Cherry seized Wibley by the collar and rushed him out of the study. The surprised Wib roared.

"You silly ass! Leggo!"

"Kim on!"

"Leggo! I'll pulverise you—yaroohoo!"

"This way!"

Struggling wildly, Wibley was rushed down the passage to No. 1 Study. He had a wig in one hand, and a moustache in the other, part of the props he had been sorting. Breathless and enraged, he was rushed into No. 1 Study, where Harry Wharton & Co. had sat down to tea.

"Will you leggo?" shrieked Wibley.

"Here you are!" said Bob cheerily.

Wibley crashed into Johnny Bull's back, and Johnny Bull bumped forward on the table, and there was a roar from Johnny Bull. He had a cup of tea in his hand. Half the tea went up his sleeve, and the other half down his neck.

"Yaroo!" roared Johnny Bull. "What the thunder—Why, I'll scalp you, Wibley, you fathead!"

"Tain't my fault!" yelled Wibley. "It's that dangerous lunatic!"

"Gerrogh! I'm smothered with tea—"

"You shouldn't waste tea in war-time," said Bob Cherry chidingly. "If the war lasts seventy years, it may be decided by the last pot of tea."

"You silly chump!"

"Shush!" said Bob soothingly. "Wibley's a clumsy ass, but he was born like that; he can't help it. He wouldn't come quietly."

"I'll pulverise you!" yelled Wibley. "You've given me a crack in the neck, you blithering ass!"

"Peace, my son! Didn't I tell you it was a wheeze!"

"Bother your wheezes!"

"Blow your wheezes!" howled Johnny Bull, dabbing at the tea with his handkerchief. "Bless your silly wheezes!"

"I say, you fellows, pass the cake—"

"Get out, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I'm staying to tea—"

"Can't be did! Out you go!"

"Look here—"

"Dash it all, we've let him stay to tea, Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "What's Bunter doing amiss?"

"Chatterbox!" said Bob. "What's the good of letting Bunter hear a wheeze? It'll be all over Greyfriars in ten minutes."

"I won't say a word, you know—"

"You jolly well won't," said Bob Cherry. "Out you go! Take the cake with you if you like. We don't want to lose it, but we think you ought to go. Vamoose!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter, seizing the cake. "I don't mind. There's only enough cake for me really."

"Look here, we won't take that!" bawled Nugent.

"Pooh! That's Bunter's consolation prize!" said Bob Cherry.

"Never mind the cake—I tell you I've got a wheeze."

"We can't have your wheeze for tea, fathead!"

"Blow tea!"

Bob Cherry bundled the Owl of the Remove out of the study. Bunter went cheerily enough with the cake. Bob slammed the door. He opened it a few seconds later, and Billy Bunter disappeared with the cake. Then Bob Cherry turned back into the study, and rounded up Wibley, who was on the point of escaping. Then he closed the study door and put his back to it, and smiled at his surprised and exasperated chums.

"Oh, collar him!" said Johnny Bull. "Bump the silly duffer!"

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"Don't I keep on telling you it's a wheeze?" demanded Bob Cherry. "I'm planning a happy afternoon to-morrow to entertain you all. You might be decently grateful. It's the catch of the season!"

"Some rot, I expect!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Look here!" roared Wibley.

"Shush! You're wanted, fathead. Ain't you the best hand in the Remove at acting and making up and all that?" demanded Bob.

"Oh!" said Wibley, somewhat mollified. "If it's something in my line—"

"Of course it is, ass! Do you think I brought you in here simply to enjoy looking at you? Not much catch in that."

"Look here, you ass—"

"It's a wheeze!" said Bob Cherry. "There's no match on to-morrow afternoon, and my idea is to pass the time entertaining Coker."

"Coker!"

"Exactly! Coker's going to hunt a conscription-dodger to-morrow afternoon, and he's taking Potter and Greene and a lunch-basket with him. I've been and given him a description of a man he will find in the wood—chap with moustache and whiskers and things."

"Bill Filey, do you mean?"

"Well, Coker thinks it's a description of Bill Filey," admitted Bob Cherry. "I didn't tell him so, but you know the way Coker jumps to conclusions. What I was really describing to him was Wibley with his war-paint on."

"Oh!" said Wibley.

"Coker wouldn't guess that, of course," said Bob, grinning. "Coker never sees anything till it's too late. He's never seen Bill Filey, but he's going to hunt for him. Well, my idea is to let him find him, and to find a gang of hooligans with him. The hooligans will collar Coker & Co. and make an example of them, and collar the lunch-basket. Wibley is going to be Bill Filey, and we're to be the hooligans with our war-paint on—see!"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"We'll take the things out in a bag, and Wib can make us all up," said Bob. "We can spend a happy afternoon helping Coker make a capture. And it will be good practice for our amateur theatricals. Besides, it's going to be a ripping lunch-basket. You know Coker does things in style. It will be a regular picnic for us—and it may teach Coker to mind his own business."

"Not likely," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But as he hasn't the least chance of finding the real Filey, he may as well find a spoof Filey."

Wibley rubbed his hands.

"Good egg!" he said. "We shall have to get some things; but that's all the better—they'll all come in for the next play. I'll make the next play a comedy with hooligans in it. I'll do the shopping, if you like, at old Lazarus'. But what sort of a jounie is it Coker's going to look for? What's the description?"

Bob Cherry dashed off the description on a sheet of impot paper.

"There you are!"

"Oh, I could do that on my head!" said Wibley confidently. "And I'll make you all up as bloodthirsty ruffians. Easy as falling off a form."

"And we'll have a few of the fellows hanging round, to guide Coker," said Bob. "They can tell him they've seen such a chap in the wood, and get the silly ass to walk into the trap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker may learn to give up man-hunting as an amusement on half-holidays," said Bob. "Anyway, he will be fed up with Bill Filey before we've done with him. And the lunch-basket will be the prize of war—to the giddy victor the spoils, you know!"

"What-ho!"

Bob Cherry's wonderful wheeze was adopted nem. con. The juniors discussed it in all its bearings over tea. That evening they were making some preparations. Coker also was making preparations for his man-hunt. He did not know anything about the preparations of the merry Removites. He was to learn all about them later.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Billy Bunter's Terrible Adventure!

**H**ORACE COKER was in great spirits on the following afternoon. Potter and Greene, too, were looking very cheerful.

Coker was looking forward to carrying out his self-imposed duty. Potter and Greene were looking forward to disposing of the contents of the lunch-basket.

The lunch-basket was, as Potter said, a "corker." Potter himself had seen to that. There was enough in that THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 429.

lunch-basket for five or six, and it was all of the best quality. Coker's latest remittance from Aunt Judy had come in very useful.

Potter and Greene were willing to walk about the fresh spring woods, looking for Bill Filey—until they got hungry. Then it was certain that Potter and Greene would insist upon a halt, and a long rest.

It was a beautiful afternoon—exactly suited to such an excursion. Potter and Greene really were thankful to Coker for having thought of that ripping idea.

There was another party starting out that afternoon, immediately after dinner. Harry Wharton & Co. and several more of the Remove, went out together as soon as they could get away.

It might have been noticed that several of the juniors carried bags or bundles—if Coker had had eyes for such insignificant persons as fags of the Lower Fourth—which he hadn't.

Coker's whole horizon was filled up by the majestic figure of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form.

Billy Bunter, however, observed the Remove party set forth. His little round eyes gleamed behind his big glasses at the sight of the bags and bundles. Bunter had no doubt what was in those bundles—no doubt at all. It was a feed from which the iniquitous Removites intended to exclude him—Bunter would have staked anything on that.

And the fat junior rolled out of gates after the smiling party, determined not to be excluded.

He rolled after them down the road, his fat little legs going like machinery.

"I say, you fellows, don't hurry!" he called out. "You know I can't walk so fast, you beasts!"

"Don't, then!" said Bob Cherry cheerily.

"If you think I'm going to miss this picnic, Cherry—"

"Oh, scat!"

"Yah! Beasts!"

The juniors quickened their pace, and Billy Bunter laboured on behind, breathing hard. Bunter had a good deal of weight to carry, and his wind was not good. But he was determined not to be beaten.

The juniors passed the stile, and set off across the fields, and disappeared into the wood.

Bunter toddled on breathlessly.

"Beasts!" he murmured. "Rotters! Oh, dear, I'm winded! Oh, dear!"

But he kept on. In a good cause he could never have found so much energy. But a feed was an occasion upon which William George Bunter could put forth his best powers.

He tramped into the wood with knitted brows, and gasping like a pair of very old bellows.

There he had to halt—partly because his wind had entirely failed him at last, and partly because he had lost the track.

The woods about him were thick in their spring green, and there was no trace of the Greyfriars party to be seen.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter. "But I'll jolly well find them all the same. I shouldn't wonder if they're going to meet Marjorie and Phyllis, and the girls will be awfully disappointed if I'm not there. Those rotters haven't thought about that. But I'll jolly well find them."

He tramped along the footpath, blinking to right and left. Save for the calling of the birds, the woods were silent round him.

There was no sign of Harry Wharton & Co. on the footpath, though Bunter followed it to the end. He turned back into the wood, determined not to give up the trail till he found the picnic.

Up and down and round about the fat junior went, till an hour had passed, and still the supposed picnic had not been found.

Tired and furious, Bunter rolled into the glade in the heart of the wood, where the old poacher's hut stood—a dilapidated wooden building which had not been inhabited for many years, save by a wandering tramp now and then.

There was a sudden rustle in the thicket, and Bunter uttered an exclamation of triumph.

"Found you, you rotters! Oh, my hat!"

Bunter jumped back in alarm.

From the thicket a terrifying figure emerged.

It was a ruffian of the deepest dye—short for a man, but looking very thick-set, in rough, shabby velveteens, with a thickly-bearded, dirty face, and a rag of a cap, and a cudgel in hand.

This fearsome-looking ruffian fixed his eyes on Bunter.

"Hallo!" he growled.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter.

"Found me, 'ave yer?" growled the ruffian. "'Tain't so blooming safe to find Bill Filey in the middle of a wood!"

"Help!" moaned Bunter.

"Looking for me, was yer?" growled the ruffian.

"Nunno! I—I wasn't! I—I was looking for some chaps



The three Fifth-Formers were all sprawling in the grass now, at the mercy of the Owl of the Remove. They struggled to rise, but it was not easy with their hands tied—and with Bunter attacking. (See Chapter 8.)

belonging to my school, Mr. Filey," said Bunter. "I—I really wasn't looking for you!"

"And hover yer watch!"

"I—I say—

"And yer money—sharp, before I brains yer!" growled the ruffian, with a threatening motion of his cudgel.

"Oh, dear!"

Bill Filey—if it was Bill Filey—turned his head suddenly, and seemed to be listening with great intentness.

Bunter took instant advantage of his inattention. He turned and ran for his life. He was not thinking of the picnickers any longer. He was only thinking of getting out of reach of that terrible ruffian—Coker's conscript!

There was a roar from the ruffian.

"Stop, I tell yer—stop, or I'll be arter yer!"

Billy Bunter did not stop. Wild horses would hardly have stopped him at that moment. He tore back to the footpath, and sped along frantically towards the Friardale road.

There was a crashing in the thickets behind him, and he could guess that the truculent ruffian was in pursuit.

Fear lent him wings, as the novelists say. And, indeed, Bunter would have surprised any Greyfriars fellow who had seen him then. He was going down the footpath as if he were a champion on the running-track.

He came out at the stile, and bundled over it breathlessly, and rolled in the road, quite exhausted.

"Wow-wow-wow!" he moaned. "Oh, dear! Groogh! Help!"

A hand fell on his shoulder and jerked him to his feet.

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"Help!" shrieked Bunter. "Help! Fire! Murder! Mercy!"

"Great Scott! What's the matter with the blithering idiot?" exclaimed the voice of Coker of the Fifth.

Billy Bunter gasped with sudden relief.

"Coker!"

The Fifth-Former shook him.

"What's the matter with you, you fat duffer? What are you sprawling here for, and yelling like a Hun for, you fat-head?"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! I—I say, is he here?"

"Who, you ass?"

"Bill Filey!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked round nervously. Bill Filey was certainly not in sight. Potter and Greene were there, with the lunch basket. That was all.

"You've seen Filey?" exclaimed Coker, in great satisfaction.

"Yow! Yes! Oh, dear! He attacked me in the wood!" moaned Bunter. "I—I had to run for my life! I—I thought he was after me! Yow!"

"Good!" said Coker. "Where did you see him, Bunter! We're after that chap!"

"Oh, dear! I fuf-fuf-fee fuf-fuf-faint!" stuttered the Owl of the Remove. "The awful ruffian; he came for me with a club. I knocked him down—"

"Gaumon!" said Potter.

"I mean I was going to knock him down, only—only—"

"Only you ran away instead," grinned Potter.

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"Oh, really, Potter——"  
 "Where did you see him?" demanded Coker, shaking the fat junior.

"Grooh! Leggo, you fathead! He was close by the poacher's hut in the glade!" gasped Bunter. "A frightful-looking ruffian, with a big club! Groooh!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Coker. "We'll soon nail him now!"

Potter and Greene exchanged glances. Their programme for the afternoon did not include a meeting with Bill Filey, though Coker's did.

"I—I say, suppose we tell the police instead?" suggested Potter.

"Jolly good idea!" said Greene heartily. "After all, we've no right to meddle with the man. We'll tell old Tozer, and then go and have a picnic."

"Are you coming?" snorted Coker.

"But—but I say—about that big club——"

"We've got our sticks, haven't we?"

"Ye-es, but——"

"Well, I'm going," said Coker. "If you funk it, you can hand over that lunch-basket, and clear!"

"Oh, we're coming, of course," said Potter. "We—we wouldn't think of deserting you, Coker."

"Then come on, and not so much jaw!" said Coker.

And the conscript-hunters plunged into the wood, two of them, at least, fervently hoping that William Filey had sought fresh fields and pastures new by that time.

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Run to Earth!

"HALLO, Coker!"

Vernon-Smith of the Remove was lounging on the footpath, when Coker & Co. came along. He glanced curiously at the three Fifth-Formers.

"Looking for somebody?" he asked.

Coker nodded.  
 "Yes, I'm looking for somebody. Have you seen Bill Filey?"

"Bill Filey!" The Bounder raised his eyebrows. "Who's that?"

"A rotten conscription-dodger," said Coker. "I'm looking for him. I'm going to take him to the recruiting office, and get him booked for the trenches. Have you seen him about?"

"They've appointed you conscription-hunter!" asked the Bounder.

"No, they haven't!" snapped Coker, while Potter and Greene smiled. "Nothing of the sort. I'm doing this on my own."

"By Jove! That's awfully patriotic of you, Coker!" said the Bounder admiringly. "I thought perhaps your great abilities might have been recognised by the War Office, and they might have given you Lord Derby's job."

"Look here, have you seen Bill Filey?" roared Coker.

"I may or may not have seen him," said Vernon-Smith calmly. "You see, I haven't the honour of the gentleman's acquaintance. I've seen a rather ruffian-looking chap lurking about the wood this afternoon, certainly."

Coker jerked out the written description.

"Height about five feet seven?" he asked eagerly.

"About that," admitted the Bounder, after some consideration.

"Red face and big moustache?"

"That's it!"

"Ginger side-whiskers and red hair?"

"Right on the wicket!"

"That's the man," said Coker. "How long since you saw him?"

"About half an hour."

"Where?"

"Near the poacher's glade."

"Good! Come on, you fellows! We're on the track!"

"Shall I mind your basket for you?" asked Vernon-Smith politely.

"No!" snapped Potter.

The three conscript-hunters tramped on, and Vernon-Smith winked at the trees and smiled.

Naturally, it did not occur to Coker's mighty brain that the Bounder of Greyfriars had been posted there specially to give him information.

That thought did not occur to Horace till long afterwards.

Coker & Co. plunged on through the thickets, heading for the glade in the heart of the wood. There was a rustle among the bushes, and Coker gripped his stick hard. But it was the smiling and innocent face of Dick Rake of the Remove that appeared in sight.

"Confound it!" said Coker, disappointed. "The wood seems to be swarming with these Remove fags!"

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NEXT

MAGNET—

"THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!"

"I say, where are you going?" exclaimed Rake. "Better get back to the path, you fellows!"

"Rats!"

"Well, there's a hulking-looking ruffian in the wood the way you're heading," said Rake. "A thick-set, red-haired ruffian——"

"That's my man!" exclaimed Coker. "How long since you saw him, Rake?"

"About ten minutes."

"What was he doing?"

"Sitting under a tree in the glade."

"Come on!" exclaimed Coker.

"You'd better give him a wide berth," said Rake warningly. "He doesn't look a nice customer to meet in a wood."

"Bosh!"

Coker & Co. pressed on, leaving Rake grinning. A few minutes later they almost ran into Kippis of the Remove.

Kippis made them a sign to halt.

"Don't go on!" he said. "There's a big, red-haired ruffian in the glade, and he looks as savage as a Prussian——"

"That's the man I'm after!" said Coker. "You'd better clear off, you fag! You won't be wanted here!"

Kippis grinned and cleared off.

Coker strode on towards the glade, stick in hand, with a warlike gleam in his eye. He was sure of success now. Potter and Greene followed more slowly, by no means so eager for the combat as was the truculent Horace. Coker looked back at them impatiently.

"Buck up!" he said. "We don't want the man to be gone before we get there."

"Don't we?" murmured Potter.

"What did you say, George Potter?"

"This basket is jolly heavy, Coker, old chap! I—I say, suppose we have a bit of a picnic first?"

"And give the man time to clear off, you ass?" snorted Coker.

As a matter of fact, that was what was in Potter's mind, but he did not venture to say so.

"We'll have him now!" said Coker. "For goodness' sake come on! Anybody would think you were funking it!"

"Ahem!"

"I suppose you ain't funking that dodger same as he's funking conscription?" said Coker sarcastically.

"He's got a big club, you know," said Greene.

"Well, what's that?" grunted Coker. "When we've cleared him we're going to send him to face bullets and bayonets and shells! We've got no right to send him if we funk ourselves!"

"Well, as a matter of fact, we've no right any way!" growled Potter. "Why the thunder can't you let the poor brute alone? It's no business of ours!"

"Some fellows are patriotic!" said Coker. "When I'm old enough, I'm going! I dare say the war will last five or six years yet. Well, if I meet this fellow out in Flanders, he'll thank me for sending him there—if he's alive, of course. If you fellows funk it, I'll collar him alone. Hand me that lunch-basket, and I'll get on. I believe you're wasting time on purpose."

"Oh, we're coming!" grunted Potter.

And the march was resumed—with considerable caution now, now that the hunters were close upon their quarry.

Coker paused on the edge of the glade, and held up his hand, with a very mysterious look.

"He's there!" he whispered.

"Oh, dear!"

"Look!"

Potter and Greene looked.

Under a big tree in the glade the hulking ruffian was seated, with an empty pipe in his mouth.

The Fifth-Formers watched him breathlessly.

He answered in every detail to that written description in Horace Coker's pocket. He was the man!

"Got him!" breathed Coker.

"We haven't got him yet!"

"Follow me!"

"I—I say, Coker——"

"If he resists, knock him down!" said Coker. "We're entitled to take the law into our own hands in a case like this. You see, that ruffian's dodging conscription, which is clear against the law."

"It's against the law to collar a man unless you're a policeman," said Greene. "We shall be breaking the law, too."

"That's different!"

"I don't see——"

"You wouldn't! Come on!"

"But look here——"

"Follow me!"

Coker put an end to the argument by striding out into the

glade and marching directly up to the red-whiskered ruffian. Potter and Greene followed. The ruffian looked up. "Surrender!" shouted Coker. "Billy Filey, I arrest you in the name of—of—in fact, I arrest you! Surrender!"

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Not a Success!

**H**ORACE COKER'S voice rang through the glade. The ruffian blinked at him. "Wot's the little game?" he asked, in a husky voice.

"You're Bill Filey!"  
"Ow do you know?"  
"I've got your description!" chuckled Coker. "I know you, Filey, my man! You've been dodging conscription for weeks, and you know jolly well you're wanted in the trenches. I'm going to take you."

"My heye!"  
"So up you get and surrender!"  
"Yes, surrender, you scoundrel!" said Potter, considerably encouraged by the ruffian's quiescence. "We're jolly well going to take you! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"I should say so!" said Greene, beginning to feel warlike too. "Chap like you ought to jump at the chance of being a decent soldier. What do you think will happen to us at home if somebody don't go and fight the Germans? Why, we might have our homes burned over our heads!"

"Of course we might!" said Coker. "The man's a regular scoundrel! Why, the Zeppelins might drop bombs on us—us ourselves, you know—just because Bill Filey and fellows like him don't go out and beat the Huns! I wonder the chap isn't ashamed to look anybody in the face!"

"Oh, my heye!" said the ruffian.  
"Up you get!" commanded Coker. "And I hope the sergeant will give you a high old time of it when he gets hold of you!"

"Wot right 'ave you young gentlemen to interfere with me?"

"Haven't you ever heard of conscription, you bounder?" demanded Coker. "Don't you ever see the papers?"

"You lemme alone!" growled the hulking ruffian. "I s'pose this 'ere is a free country, ain't it?"

"That's just where you make a mistake!" chuckled Coker. "But I'm not going to argue with you. I'm going to take you to the recruiting-office. Now, are you coming quietly, or would you rather be yanked along by your ears? You can take your choice about that. We mean business."

Instead of replying, the ruffian uttered a sudden, shrill whistle.

Coker & Co. jumped. For the first time it occurred to them that Bill Filey might have friends at hand.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Potter, in dismay.

There was a sudden rustling in the thickets and a rush of footsteps.

From all sides ruffianly-looking figures rushed into view.

There were six of them—fellows with dirty, bearded faces, wearing rough velveteens or old guernseys, thick boots, and coloured neckerchiefs.

Coker & Co. were surrounded in a twinkling, and "Bill Filey" jumped to his feet. He chuckled at the surprised and dismayed Fifth-Formers.

"Ho, ho, ho! Caught yourselves, me fine fellers! Ho, ho, ho!"

"Hands off!" roared Coker, flourishing his stick.

Crash!

A bag, hurled by one of the hooligans, smote Coker on the chest, and he was whirled over like a skittle.

The next moment, one of the hooligans was sitting on his chest, brandishing a big stick over him.

"Gotcher!" said the hooligan.

Potter and Greene made a wild rush to escape.

But hands grasped at them on all sides, and the ruffians were two to one against them.

"I—I give in!" gasped Potter. "D-d-don't be rough! I—I assure you—"

"Keep that stick away!" yelled Greene. "We give you best."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme gerrup!" roared Coker, struggling on his back in the grass. "I don't give in! I don't give you best, you rotters! Lemme gerrup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's furious struggles were in vain. A knee was firmly planted on his chest, and he was pinned down.

"Got 'em!" grinned Bill Filey. "Now tie the young raskils up, mates."

"Wot!"

"Now, then, you be quiet, you young hass, or you'll get 'urt!"

Potter and Greene were too wise to resist. They realised that they had no chance, and they were not looking for a battle royal with a crowd of hooligans.

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They submitted to having their wrists securely bound—the hooligans, curiously enough, having lengths of cord in their pockets all ready.

But Horace Coker was a harder nut to crack.

The bare idea of his enterprise ending like this infuriated Coker. He struggled and fought to the last gasp.

But the hooligans were too many for him.

His wrists were dragged together, and he was bound fast, and then he lay in the grass, panting with rage.

"I'll have you all looked up for this!" he roared. "You ruffians! You hooligans! You rotters! Yaroooooh!"

"My heye!" said Bill Filey. "The young gent ain't satisfied yet. I reckon I'm gon' to teach 'im not to come arter a pore cove. Turn 'im over!"

Two of the hooligans grasped Coker, and turned him over in the grass, and stood on his wriggling legs to keep him there.

"Now, I'm gon' to teach yer, and teach yer manners!" said Mr. Filey.

"Oh, you rotter! Yaroooooh!"

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Help!" roared Coker, on the point of bursting with rage and humiliation. "Yaroooooh! Leave off!"

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

The dust rose from Coker's trousers. Mr. Filey was administering his punishment with a hearty goodwill.

Potter and Greene looked on, grinning. They could not help grinning at the sight of the mighty Horace being spanked by the truculent Mr. Filey. It was an inglorious end to Coker's great enterprise.

Coker's wild yells rang through the glade; but Mr. Filey's heavy hand did not spare for his yelling.

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There!" gasped Mr. Filey. "I think that will do! Now we're gon' to borrow this 'ere lunch-basket, young man."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Can we 'ave this 'ere basket?"

"Yow! No!" roared Coker. "No, you scoundrel!"

Yooop!

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

"Now can we 'ave it?"

"Gerroooh! Yes! Anything! Oh, dear! Help!"

"Thank you kindly," said Mr. Filey, picking up the basket. "Now we'll leave you to go 'ome, and don't you come meddling with a pore cove again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you're not going to leave us tied up like that, are you?" exclaimed Potter, in alarm.

"I—I say, let our hands loose!" gasped Greene.

Mr. Filey & Co. did not take the trouble to reply. With the lunch-basket, they disappeared into the wood. Coker sat up in the grass, gasping. Potter and Greene looked at him, and looked at one another.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Coker. "Oh, the awful ruffian! Oh! Ow! Yow! Yooop!"

"Here's a go!" said Potter. "I can't get my hands loose. How are we to get home like this? Oh, dear! Oh, you silly fathead, Coker!"

"That's right—blame me!" said Coker bitterly.

"Well, isn't it all your fault, you blithering, burling ass?" yelled Potter. "You got us into this!"

"And the lunch-basket's gone!" howled Greene.

"And we've got to wander about and ask somebody to untie us. Good heavens!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Coker. "If you'd backed me up better, we'd have collared him."

"Fathead!"

"Dummy!"

"I'll jolly well have him next time!" gasped Coker.

"Next time!" yelled Potter. "So there's going to be a next time? You're not fed up yet, you crass idiot?"

"You wait till I get my hands loose, George Potter!"

"Oh, you silly dummy!"

Exchanging compliments of that kind, the three Fifth-Formers limped away out of the glade. The great enterprise was evidently at an end—for the time being at least. Perhaps it was fortunate that their hands were tied—otherwise it was certain that there would have been thick cars and black eyes distributed among Coker & Co. after that unfortunate failure of the conscript-hunt.

# ANSWERS

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 10. OUT TO-DAY.



Wingate and three or four prefects rushed after Mr. Filey, but he had caught Coker under the elms, and the strap was rising and falling, to an accompaniment of fiendish yells from the Fifth-Former. (See Chapter 14.)

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. The Upper Hand!

"HE, he, he!" Billy Bunter burst into a prolonged chuckle. Bunter considered it funny. Three dusty, dilapidated youths, with their wrists tied, came staggering into the footpath from the thick wood.

They were Coker, Potter, and Greene, of the Fifth. Billy Bunter had ventured back as far as the footpath. The thought of the red-bearded ruffian whom he had so narrowly escaped still threw him into a flutter; but the thought of the picnic drew him on. Somewhere in the wood, he was convinced, Harry Wharton & Co. were picnicking, and Bunter was getting dangerously hungry. He had taken his courage in both hands at last, and ventured back, with both eyes and his spectacles keenly on the look-out for the dangerous ruffian, Bill Filey.

Bill Filey did not heave in sight, but Coker & Co. did, and Bunter greeted them with an unfeeling cackle. They struck him as amusing.

"He, he, he! My hat! Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Bunter, keeping at a safe distance, however, from Coker & Co. Their hands were tied, but their feet were not, and Bunter knew of old the weight of Horace Coker's boots.

Horace Coker gave him a glare. "You cackling fat toad—"

"He, he, he!" "Do you want me to kick you from here to Greyfriars?" roared Coker.

"He, he, he!" Coker made an infuriated rush at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter skipped away, still cackling. Coker's foot caught in a root, and he stumbled. He could not save himself, with his

hands tied, and he rolled over in the grass with a heavy bump and a loud roar. "He, he, he!" yelled Bunter.

Coker struggled into a sitting position.

"You fat beast!"

"He, he, he!"

"I'll smash you!"

"You don't look like it at present," grinned Bunter. "Yah! You kicked me out of your study yesterday, you beast! I'll jolly well kick you now! He, he, he!"

"Why, you fat, cheeky rotter—yaroooooh!" roared Coker.

It was Billy Bunter's turn.

He dodged behind Coker, and planted his boot upon the great Horace's august person with all his force behind it.

Coker rolled in the grass again, roaring.

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

It looked funny to them. But the fun was quite lost on Coker. To be kicked by Billy Bunter was the very last drop in his cup of bitterness. Kicked—by Bunter! After that, it was time for the skies to fall.

"Groooh!" gasped Coker, struggling up wildly, and with great difficulty. "I'll pulverise you—I'll spifficate you! Groooh!"

"He, he, he!"

"I say, Bunter, cut us loose, there's a good chap!" said Potter.

Billy Bunter closed one eye at him.

"No jolly fear!" he replied.

"I'll lend you a bob if you do," said Greene desperately.

"I won't lend me a thick ear, you mean," grinned Bunter.

"I'm not taking any, thanks!"

"Two bob, you fat beast!"

"Two rats!" said Bunter.

"Come and cut me loose, and I'll smash you, you fat worm!" bellowed Coker.

"He, he, he!"

That advantageous offer had no effect on the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter was master of the situation. Bunter had wrongs to avenge. It was a new experience to him to be able to knock Fifth-Formers about. He rather enjoyed it. Bunter's idea was to make hay while the sun was shining.

He dodged behind Potter and Greene, and those two youths wriggled away in great alarm.

"Don't you touch me!" yelled Potter.

"Keep off!" shrieked Greene.

"You've cuffed me often enough," said Bunter. "You were laughing when Coker kicked me along the passage yesterday."

"No, I wasn't! I—I was laughing at Coker."

"I—I felt really that Coker was a ruffian, Bunter. I—I was against it all the time. Yaroooooh!"

Bunter got in a kick at last, and Greene staggered. He spun round, launching out with his boots at Bunter right and left, left and right.

But the fat junior dodged easily, and Greene caught his foot in a root and tumbled over.

"Keep him off, Potter!" he gasped.

Bunter circled round Potter, who faced round ready to kick when he approached.

Coker made a rush at the fat junior, and Bunter dodged

round a tree, and gave Coker a shove from behind that sent him staggering into a bush. Coker collapsed there, and Bunter's fat hand smote him hard.

Spank!

"Yow-ow!"

Bunter's eyes were gleaming now with the light of battle. Foes with their hands tied were just in Bunter's line.

He circled round Potter, and Potter circled round, too, desperately, watching him with burning eyes, till he caught his foot against Greene and stumbled.

Then Bunter rushed in.

A violent shove sent Potter sprawling across Greene. The three Fifth-Formers were all sprawling in the grass now, at the mercy of the Owl of the Remove. They struggled to rise, but it was not easy with their hands tied, and with Bunter attacking.

The Owl of the Remove had many wrongs to avenge.

He paid off the whole lot now—with interest.

He tweaked Coker's ears, he spanked Potter, he rubbed Greene's nose in the roots. The three seniors squirmed and roared and wriggled and yelled. But they had simply no chance without the use of their hands.

Bunter was monarch of all he surveyed.

He did not leave off tormenting the unhappy conscript-hunters until he was out of breath with his exertions.

Then he paused at last, panting, and grinning gleefully.

"How do you like it yourselves?" he asked.

"Grooooh!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Yah!"

"Are you sorry you kicked me yesterday, Coker?"

"You fat rotter, I'll kick you over the school when I get loose!" bawled the enraged Horace.

Spank! Spank! Spank! Whack! Thump!

"Are you sorry now, Coker?"

"Yow-wooooo!"

Kick! Kick! Kick!

"Yaroooh! Leave off! I'm sorry!" yelled Coker.

"Are you sorry, you rotters, that you were laughing when Coker kicked me yesterday?" panted Bunter.

"Yes, yes, yes!" shouted Potter.

"Awfully sorry!" gasped Greene.

"Then I'll let you off," said Bunter magnanimously. "Mind, don't let it occur again, or I shall have to take you in hand! I don't stand any cheek from the Fifth, I can tell you!"

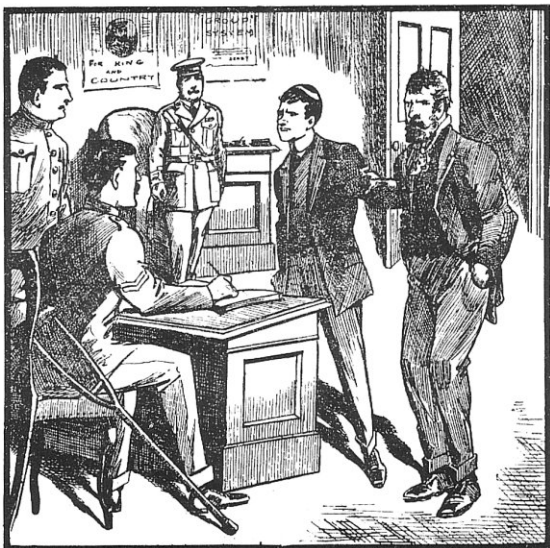
Bunter rolled away up the footpath, leaving the three Fifth-Formers sprawling and gasping for breath.

"I—I—I'll squash him!" panted Coker. "I—I—I'll squash him like a beetle! I—I—I—"

"Serve you right, all you've got!" roared Potter furiously. "I've got it, too, that's the worst of it! You got us into this!"

"Oh, shut up, you ass!"

"Oh, dear!" moaned Greene. "I'm aching all over!"



Coker's raised tone had drawn the attention of the stout officer at the further desk, and he rose, and came striding forward. "What is it?" he exclaimed. (See Chapter 12.)

Bunter will tell the whole school he's licked us! Oh, dear! What precious asses we shall look!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The unhappy conscript-hunters struggled to their feet at last, panting, and breathless, and dishevelled.

Wearily they tramped away.

They were in hopes of falling in with somebody who would release them. The thought of returning to Greyfriars in their present state was appalling. They could imagine the howl of laughter that would greet them.

"Here's somebody!" gasped Coker at last. "Young Smith of the Remove! I'll make him loosen us, or smash him!"

"How are you going to smash him with your hands tied?" hooted Potter. "Be civil to him, you silly ass!"

Vernon-Smith was sauntering along the path. He stopped to regard the Fifth-Formers, with a grin.

"Hallo! Been through it?" he asked.

"Let us loose, Smithy," said Greene appealingly.

"Did you find Bill Filey?"

"Oh, dear! Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us loose, you cackling young villain!" bellowed Coker. Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"What a nice, polite way you have of asking a favour, Coker," he remarked. "That was what I always admired about you."

"Will you loosen our hands?" shrieked Coker.

The Boulder shook his head.

"Oh, no! I'm not going to spoil a good joke! Good-bye!"

"You young scoundrel——"

"I say, Smithy——"

"Look here, be a good chap——"  
 "Ta-ta!" said the Bounder, and he walked on into the woods, laughing.

Coker & Co. glared after him, glared at one another, and resumed their weary tramp with feelings worse than Hunnish. It was really a very exciting day out for Coker.

### THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Picnickers!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Bunter was in luck.

His search had been crowned with success at last. In a glade of the wood, under the trees, a number of fellows were seated in the grass, with a big lunch-basket open in their midst.

They were disposing of the contents of that lunch-basket in great spirits.

Several bags and bundles lay in the grass, carefully fastened up. They contained the outward semblance of Bill Filey & Co., Harry Wharton and his comrades being now in their own clothes and their own complexions.

The juniors were enjoying their picnic.

Coker & Co. having been disposed of, the "hooligans" had changed back into their own proper persons in the depths of the wood. While the Fifth-Formers were limping woefully home, the Removites enjoyed the lunch.

Billy Bunter came on them suddenly, after a long and weary quest. But his fat face brightened up as he rolled into the glade.

The Famous Five were there, and Vernon-Smith, and Dick Rake, and Wibley, and Kipps, and Micky Desmond. With so many hungry juniors to do justice to the lunch-basket, even Coker's ample supplies were vanishing at record speed.

"I say, you fellows, I've come, you see," said Bunter. "I knew you didn't really want to leave your old pal out."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Blessed if Bunter isn't like a bloodhound on the track of a feed!" said Bob Cherry. "Lucky he didn't arrive sooner! Begin on this egg, Bunter."

"Thank you, Bob, old chap!"

Bunter sat down, and accepted the egg in the egg-cup which Bob Cherry handed to him.

"I say, you fellows, I've had an awfully exciting time!" said Bunter, blinking at the picnicers. "I've been thrashing those Fifth-Form chaps——"

"You've been whatting?" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"I felt that I'd had too much of their cheek," said Bunter. "I'm fed up with Coker. So I've thrashed him."

"My hat!"

"I've thrashed Potter and Greene, too," said Bunter. "I thought I'd make a clean sweep of it, and teach those Fifth-Form rotters their place, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I fairly made 'em beg for mercy," said Bunter.

"Lucky for your hands were tied, then," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, really, Wharton! How—how did you know their hands were tied?" said Bunter, somewhat taken aback.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sniffed, and plunged a spoon into the egg. The egg-shell crumpled up. Bunter blinked at it in surprise. It was empty.

"Like your egg?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "It isn't an egg—it's only shell."

"Go on!"

Billy Bunter blinked angrily at the humorous Bob. The egg so kindly pressed upon him was an empty shell reversed in the egg-cup.

"Gimme another egg, you rotter!"

"All gone!" chuckled Bob. "Lots of shells left, if you'd like to take your choice. You can have the lot if you like."

"I'll have some of the sandwiches, then."

"All gone!" grinned Nugent.

"Look here, isn't there a cake?"

"There was!" said Wharton. "But the cake is in the past tense."

"You—you spoofing beasts!" howled Bunter. "Isn't there anything left?"

"Well, yes, there's something," said the Bounder.

"Can I have it?"

"Certainly."

"Hand it over, then."

Vernon-Smith picked up the lunch-basket and handed it to Bunter. The fat junior blinked at it.

"What's that?"

"That's what's left," said the Bounder cheerfully. "Go it! It will be rather interesting to see you scoff the basket."

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### THE TENTH CHAPTER. Another Chance for Horace!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I must say this is rotten," said Bunter.

"I'm frightfully hungry. Fighting always makes me hungry. I had a fearful fight with an awful ruffian this afternoon."

"Did you?" said Wibley, with interest. "What was he like?"

"A big, red-bearded, red-haired chap, standing over six feet high," said Bunter impressively.

Wibley jumped.

"How high?" he yelled.

"Six feet—in fact, I should say nearer six feet six," said Bunter. "He had a heavy cudgel, and he attacked me like a wild beast. It was Bill Filey, that chap Coker's looking for."

"Quite six feet high?" grinned Wibley.

"More than six feet, and a face like—like a Hun," said Bunter.

"You silly ass!" said Wibley wrathfully, as his companions laughed. "What was the matter with his face?"

"Horribly ugly and ferocious," said Bunter, little dreaming that the red-bearded ruffian was the cheerful Wibley himself.

"Eyes like—like carbuncles——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nose like a horse's, or like a dog's muzzle," said Bunter, "and a voice like a rasp. A perfectly hideous beast, I can tell you!"

"You silly chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He came rushing at me, and demanded my money or my life," said Bunter. "If I'd lost my nerve at that moment, I should have been murdered. But I stood up to him——"

"You stood up to him?" ejaculated Wibley.

"Yes, rather! With one blow——"

"My hat!"

"One blow straight from the shoulder, I levelled him in the grass——"

"Great Scott!"

"Then I walked calmly away," said Bunter. "He didn't want any more. That one fearful blow had been enough for him."

The Removites roared.

"Blessed if I see what you're cackling at," said Bunter, puzzled and angry. "You weren't there, anyway!"

"Weren't we?" murmured Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The thoroughness was terrific," grinned Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. "But the sublime courage of Bunter was amazing. The funfulness was also great."

"D-d-d-did you see me?" stuttered Bunter.

"Ha, ha! We did!"

"You rotters, not to come and help me when that ruffian was nearly murdering me!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly.

"Blessed lot of funks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, am I going to have anything to eat?" demanded Bunter, changing the subject. "I suppose you haven't brought me all this way for nothing?"

"Brought you?" said Wharton.

"Yes. After pressing me to come to this picnic, I think you might give a chap something to eat," said Bunter indignantly.

"Blessed if I ever saw such greedy rotters! Fancy finishing up everything before I got here!"

"We didn't expect the honour of your company!" chuckled Bob. "The only thing I can give you is a thick ear, Bunter. You're welcome to that. Say when!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Bunter can carry the basket home," said Nugent. "We've had the grub, and Bunter can have the basket! That's a fair division."

The picnicers rose from the grass. Billy Bunter declined the offer of the basket. He rolled away disconsolate and indignant. His afternoon out had been almost as big a failure as Coker's. Harry Wharton & Co., however, took their way homeward in great spirits. They felt that their afternoon's excursion had been a success.

### THE TENTH CHAPTER.

#### Another Chance for Horace!

THINGS were not looking cheerful to the great Coker. He stood in the doorway with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a frown upon his brow.

The conscript-bunters had reached Greyfriars at last, having been met in the lane, and released at last by Police-constable Tozer of Friardale.

Mr. Tozer had kindly untied them, and had passed many severe remarks upon their untidy appearance, and had grinned over their account of an attack in the wood by a party of ruffianly hooligans.

The constable knew perfectly well that there was no such gang of hooligans in the neighbourhood, so it was natural that

he should conclude that Coker & Co. were seeking to "pull his leg."

The fact that the three Fifth-Formers had their hands tied he attributed to some lack of the Greyfriars fellows, knowing from of old what extremely larkly persons were to be found there, especially in the Remove Form.

"Don't you tell me, Master Coker!" was Mr. Tozer's reply. "You can't take me in, Master Coker! Too old a bird to be caught by chaff, Master Coker! Haw, haw!"

"But I tell you we were set upon!" howled Coker.

"Haw, haw!" said Mr. Tozer.

"By a dozen awful ruffians—"

"Haw, haw!"

"They stole our lunch-basket—"

"Haw, haw!"

"And tied our hands—"

"Haw, haw!"

"One of them was Bill Filey, a chap who's dodging conscription," said Potter.

"Haw, haw!"

Mr. Tozer waddled away, still guffawing. "Haw, haw!" was not at all a satisfactory reply to Coker & Co.'s complaints. As for starting on the track of that imaginary gang of hooligans, Mr. Tozer did not dream of it.

But even then Coker's troubles were not over.

The three man-hunters wrangled and raged all the way to Greyfriars, and from words they came to blows at last; and Coker had the pleasure—or otherwise—of scrapping with his two enraged comrades.

It was a scrap which Hurree Singh would have described, justly, as terrific.

At present Coker wasn't on speaking terms with Potter and Greene.

Potter was bathing his eye in the dormitory. Greene was nursing his nose in the study.

Coker, showing many signs of damage, was staring out gloomily into the dusky Close, feeling that things hadn't gone as well as they ought to have gone, and that there was little encouragement for a really ardent patriot who was prepared to mind everybody's business as well as his own.

Coker felt that he hadn't had the success he deserved.

Had things gone successfully, Bill Filey would have been marched into the fourfold Recruiting-office with Coker's grip on his neck, and would have been booked for the trenches, where, he liked it or not—so Coker thought, at all events. What the recruiting-office would have said when his recruit turned out to be Wibley, of the Remove, would probably have surprised Coker. Fortunately, he had escaped that painful surprise, by his failure to capture Bill Filey.

"It's rotten!" Coker said to himself. "If those duffers had backed me up better, and—if things had gone differently, it would have been—been different. But I'll have that ruffian, all the same!"

Horace Coker was a stickler.

He was feeling at the present moment as if he could have undertaken to track William Filey to the very ends of the earth. He would cheerfully have set aside all lessons for the purpose of devoting himself wholly to the task of handing out that iniquitous Filey to the military authorities. It did not even occur to Coker that the military authorities were perhaps capable of getting on with their own business without his assistance. Coker, in fact, had rather a poor opinion of them. Coker knew three or four ways of finishing the war in splendid style, and in quite a short time—if only he had been at the head of affairs. Unfortunately he wasn't!

A party of juniors came in cheerily, and they all nodded genially to the morose Coker. Harry Wharton came towards him, carrying an empty lunch-basket.

Coker stared at it. He recognised his own property.

"This yours, Coker?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. Where did you get it?"

"In the wood," said Wharton.

"Have you seen that scoundrel?"

"Which? Do you mean Potter, or Greene?"

"I mean that villain Bill Filey!" growled Coker. "He robbed me of this basket. I suppose those hooligans have scuffed the grub?"

"I shouldn't wonder," assented Wharton. "This basket was handed to me by a red-bearded, rough-looking chap—"

"That's the man!"

"He gave me a message for you."

"The cheeky bound! Did he? What was the message?"

"He said you were a meddling, silly ass—"

"Look here—"

"And he's coming to see you."

"To see me!" gasped Coker.

"Yes."

"Here!" exclaimed Coker.

Wharton nodded.

"Yes, he's coming to see you at Greyfriars. He thinks you are a cheeky, meddling, silly ass, and he's coming to teach you manners."

Coker breathed hard.

"Let him jolly well come!" he exclaimed. "I'll be jolly

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glad to see him. I'll make him sit up! I'll yank him off to the recruiting-office before he knows what's what. When is he coming?"

"To-morrow, after lessons."

Coker rubbed his hands.

"Good! That's a stroke of luck. I'll tell Potter and Greene. We'll be all ready to collar him. I'll teach him to dodge conscription!"

Coker brightened up wonderfully.

Harry Wharton & Co. went up to the Remove passage—Wharton having faithfully delivered Wibley's message—though Coker, of course, did not dream that the message was from the humorous Wibley.

"Good old Coker!" said Bob Cherry. "Isn't he a stickler? He'll have Bill Filey yet—if Bill doesn't have him!"

"By the way, I wonder whether there is such a person as Bill Filey?" Nugent remarked thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dare say there is," said Wharton, laughing. "Some chap who's been rejected, very likely. Coker wouldn't think of that. But so long as he's on Bill Filey's track, it's up to the Remove to keep him supplied with Bill Fileys. But look here, Wib, it may turn out serious to play that game at Greyfriars."

Wibley chuckled.

"That's the cream of the joke," he said. "Why shouldn't Coker collar me, and take me to the recruiting-office? As I'm only fifteen, they can't conscript me, anyway. It will be lovely to watch Coker's face when I take Bill Filey's beard and whiskers off in the recruiting-office."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll keep it up as long as Coker does," chuckled Johnny Bull. "In the long run, he may learn to mind his own business. You never know."

"Not likely!"

"The esteemed Coker is too Cokerish," said Hurree Singh. "He will never mindfully attend to his own esteemed affairs. It will be interesting to hear the remarks of the esteemed recruiting-office."

The merry Removees yelled at the prospect. If Coker had heard them, even Coker might have suspected something at last.

But Coker didn't! Coker was busy. He hurried to his study to speak to his chums. Potter had joined Greene there, his eye looking a little better for the bathing he had bestowed upon it.

Coker, in his delight at the prospect of capturing the elusive Filey, felt that he could afford to be magnanimous, and forgive his erring chums. He beamed upon them. Potter and Greene did not beam. They scowled.

"I've got something to tell you chaps," said Coker cordially. "It's all right at last."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Bosh!"

"That villain Filey's sent me a message. He's coming here to-morrow!"

"Rot!"

"I tell you he's coming to kick up a row, I suppose. Well, we're going to be on the watch for him, and collar him!"

"Rats!"

"I suppose you're going to back me up, to hand over that conscription-dodger to the authorities?" roared Coker.

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Potter—"

"I'm fed up with Bill Filey, and fed up with you!" howled Potter. "Go and eat coke, and mind your own business, you silly ass!"

"I tell you—"

"I hope he'll come!" said Greene. "I hope he'll give you the biggest hiding of your life, you crass idiot! I know I'll hold his jacket for you if he does!"

"Why, you rotter—"

"Get out!" yelled Potter. "I'm fed up with you! Look at my eye!"

"Look at my nose!" hooted Greene.

"I'll give you another to match it if you don't look out!" exclaimed Coker, his wrath rising.

"Will you?" said Greene, jumping up. "Kick him out, Potter!"

"Good egg!"

The two exasperated Fifth-Formers rushed at their great leader, Coker, to his astonishment and rage, was seized and hurled into the passage.

He sat there for some moments, too astounded to move.

"Mum-mum my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Clear off, you fathead!" shouted Potter. "We'll come and kick you along the passage if you don't! We're fed up with you!"

"Fed up to the chin!" said Greene.

Coker staggered up. He did not clear off. He charged into the study like a wild bull.

But the worms had turned, with a vengeance now. Potter and Greene had suffered many wrongs and many injuries. They avenged them all now at one fell swoop. They closed with Coker, and even the great Horace's celebrated four-point-seven punch did not avail him.

He went down with a crash, Potter and Greene sprawling over him.

Struggling furiously, he was yanked to the door, and bundled into the passage in a heap, and his whilom chums rolled him down the passage to the stairs, still struggling, and rolled him down.

Then they returned to the study, feeling soloed. Horace Coker brought up on the first landing, and sat there for some minutes, in a dazed state.

"My hat!" he gasped. "Chucked out—chucked out of my own study! And I was going to forgive them, too, and look over everything! Great Scott!"

And Coker remained in a state of astonishment and indignation which it was not easy to recover from.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Coker's Capture!

**M**R. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, observed the next day in class that many of his Form were in remarkably high spirits.

Even in class there was a great deal of smiling, and whispered remarks and chuckles were exchanged among the Removees.

It was evident that there was something on.

Mr. Quelch, who did not approve of anything being on during lessons, distributed lines with a liberal hand, also a few raps with the pointer, and succeeded in reducing the Remove to a more fitting state of gravity.

The Remove were glad when lessons were over for the day. They came out in the afternoon in great spirits, notwithstanding lines and raps with the pointer.

Wibley of the Remove hurried to his study at once.

Within ten minutes he was to be seen leaving the gates with a big bag in his hand, and a cheerful grin on his face.

He went alone.

Shortly afterwards Coker of the Fifth might have been seen—and, as a matter of fact, was seen—striding down to the gates.

At the gates Horace Coker took up his stand.

There he stood watching for the arrival of Bill Filey. Potter and Greene had declined—with emphasis—to help him in his enterprise. They had told him they didn't care a twopenny rap whether Bill Filey was conscripted or not, but that they would give a term's pocket-money to see Coker himself conscripted any day.

But Coker was not deterred.

He had no doubt that he was a match for Bill Filey. He was going to do his best, anyway. He remembered that Filey, though a truculent ruffian, was not a big fellow at all—not nearly so big as Coker, in fact. Coker was sure that he could handle him.

And Coker wisely decided to handle him outside the gates of the school if possible. It was barely possible that the Head might not approve of Coker's chipping into matters that did not concern him, however ardently patriotic his motives might be.

Coker's only doubt was that Bill Filey might think better of it, and not come to Greyfriars at all.

But he hoped fervently that the ruffian would come.

That day Coker had cycled down to Friardale to hire a trap. The trap was now waiting in the road.

That trap was to convey Bill Filey to the recruiting-office at Courtfield—when captured.

It only remained for Coker to capture him!

He watched the road anxiously. Harry Wharton & Co. came down to the gates, with half the Remove at their heels.

Coker turned a frowning look upon them.

"What do you fags want?" he demanded.

"We want to see you capture Filey," explained Wharton.

"If he licks you, we want to see you licked."

"The wantfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Coker!"

"We'll lend a hand if you like," said Squiff.

"I don't want any help from fags," said Coker loftily,

"and I don't want you hanging about here."

"Go on!"

"So clear off, or I'll jolly soon clear you!"

"Go ahead!" said Bob Cherry.

"Let the clearfulness be terrific, august Coker!"

Coker glared, but he decided not to clear off the juniors.

He was to clear off half the Remove with his own right arm was too big a puzzle.

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NEXT MONDAY—

"THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!"

He turned his back on the Removees and watched the road again.

The juniors watched it, too, with as much interest as Coker. It was time for the disguised Wibley to appear.

Coker uttered a sudden exclamation.

"By gum, here he is!"

Bill Filey had appeared in sight. Coker knew him at once; he knew the sandy beard, the sandy whiskers, the red complexion, the bushy eyebrows, the old bowler-hat, and the shabby velvetene.

The juniors exchanged a joyous grin. Not one of them would have recognised Wibley of the Remove had they met him by chance in that guise. Save for his stature, he looked a poaching ruffian to the life.

The ruffian came slouching up to the gates, and Coker stepped out to meet him. Bill Filey came to a halt, and stared at Coker.

"So you're 'ere!" he said.

"And I've got you!" grinned Coker. "None of your rotten gang to help you now, you ruffian!"

"I come 'ere to give you a 'iding," said Bill Filey.

"Come on and do it, before I take you to be conscripted," said Coker, putting up his hands.

Bill Filey backed away. Wibley had no desire whatever to sample Coker's punching powers at close quarters.

"Look 'ere, you leave a pore cove alone!" he said.

"Put up your hands!" hooted Coker.

"I ain't going to do nothin' of the sort. I'll go away peaceable," said Bill Filey.

"You jolly well won't go away at all," said Coker, grasping him by the shoulder. "Now, are you coming quietly, or shall I hammer you first?"

"This 'ere is rather 'ard on a honest man," said Filey.

"Speak to 'im and ask 'im to let me off, you young gen'lemen!"

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry. "Coker's doing his duty. At least, he's doing somebody's duty. Coker's always ready to do anybody's duty for him."

"Are you coming?" roared Coker.

"Elp me, young gents!" whined Bill Filey. "I don't want to be conscripted. I'm puffy willing for anybody else to go."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" said Coker sternly. "Why, if every chap were like you, Bill Filey, the war would have come to an end, and a precious state of things that would be! You ungrateful villain, if we ran short of men the politicians would have to raise the military age and go themselves! I wonder you're not ashamed to look anybody in the face. I'm ashamed of you! I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking, anyway. Come on!"

Bill Filey cast a piteous look towards the juniors, but they only grinned heartlessly, and the conscript was marched away to the trap, with Coker's grip on his shoulder.

"Get in!" commanded Coker.

"Look 'ere—"

"You've got to learn to obey orders. You'll have plenty of orders to obey soon," grinned Coker. "In you get!"

Bill Filey sighed, and stepped into the trap. Coker followed him in, keeping a tight grip on his arm. Filey's submissiveness surprised him—considering with what truculent intentions the ruffian had paid him that visit. He was suspicious, and he did not mean to give the unfortunate Bill a chance to dodge.

"Drive to Courtfield," said Coker, to the driver.

"Yesir!"

"Straight to the recruiting-office."

"Yesir!"

"Look 'ere—" began Bill Filey feebly.

"Shut up!" said Coker autocratically.

The conscript shut up obediently. The driver gathered up his reins and drove away for Courtfield.

There was a whir of bicycles in the road behind.

Coker looked back, frowning.

Harry Wharton & Co. and a good dozen of the Remove were following the trap on their bicycles, evidently with the object of being in at the death.

"Cheeky fags!" growled Coker. "Back up, driver!"

"Yesir!"

And the trap bowed on, with the grinning Removees following in its wake.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Not Accepted!

**H**ERE we are!"

The trap drove up in great style to the recruiting-office in Courtfield High Street.

Bill Filey had sat silent and unresisting in the trap, apparently sunk in deepest dejection.

Coker was jubilant.

Not a single attempt had his victim made to escape. Coker could not help wondering at it. The man had fairly walked into his hands and yielded unresistingly. It was a stroke of luck that the conscript-hunter of Greyfriars could never have hoped for. Coker had expected that Filey would attempt, at least, to jump out and bolt, and he had kept a tight grip on him during the drive. But Filey was as tame as a lamb.

Coker jumped up as the trap stopped. "That's the place, sir," said the driver, looking curiously at Horace Coker and his prisoner.

"I know it," said Coker. "Get down, Filey."

"You won't let me off, sir?" mumbled Filey.

"Certainly not!"

"Oh, crickey!"

"Come, get a move on!" said Coker sharply. "I've wasted enough time on you, my man. You'll be grateful to me for this some day. It'll be nice for you to remember that you were compelled to do your duty when your grandchildren ask you what you did in the Great War. Come on!"

Bill Filey groaned deeply, and stepped out of the trap, Horace Coker still holding him by the arm.

A smiling crowd of cyclists dismounted round the trap, greatly to Coker's annoyance. The great Horace felt that the grinning faces of the Removites were quite out of place. Their merry chuckles marred the solemnity of the proceedings. But there was no help for that; Harry Wharton & Co. were there, and they would not have moved off for a dozen Cokers.

"Come on!" said Horace, and he marched his man across the pavement to the doorway of the recruiting-office.

That doorway stood wide open. Red posters still announced to the inhabitants of Courtfield that their King and Country needed them, and there was the wide-open door to welcome them all in.

Coker marched in with his captive, and the juniors gathered about the doorway to watch.

They were very quiet and orderly, however.

They did not desire a big man in khaki to come out inquiring what they wanted.

The recruiting-office had once been a shop. It was a large apartment, almost empty, save for a long desk across the room, like a counter, at which a couple of men in khaki were sitting, wounded heroes home from the war, still making themselves useful.

At a little desk at the back of the room was the recruiting-officer himself, a very stout and imposing gentleman.

He did not deign to look up, but one of the privates at the counter asked Coker what he wanted, looking very curiously at the schoolboy and at the red-bearded, sorrowful Mr. Filey.

"Good-afternoon!" said Coker cheerily. "I've looked in to give you a helping hand with your business here."

"Hey?"

"I'd like to speak to the recruiting-officer."

"State your business, please!"

The private spoke quite sharply. Possibly he had something else to do that afternoon, which did not give him time to indulge in chummy conversation with Horace Coker.

Coker frowned.

He did not quite like the private's tone. Coker was a great believer in military discipline—for others. Applied to himself, he did not find it so admirable.

"My business is with your officer, my man," he said sharply. "I'm not wasting any time on you!"

The two men in khaki looked at one another. But for the fact that they were on duty, they would probably have taken Horace Coker by the neck and dropped him outside.

But Coker's raised tone had drawn the attention of the stout officer at the further desk, and he raised his head and looked round.

The sight of Coker gripping the arm of his prisoner seemed to excite his curiosity. He rose, and came striding forward.

"What is it?" he exclaimed.

"Are you the recruiting-officer, sir?" asked Coker, quite indignantly.

Coker wasn't a fellow to be overawed, by any means.

"Yes. What do you want here? You're too young to enlist."

"Enlist! I haven't come here to enlist," gasped Coker. "I'm not a blessed conscript. I've brought you this man. He's a dodger."

"A—a what?"

"A conscription dodger," said Coker. "He ought to have been collared long ago, but the authorities have been careless."

The officer gave him a glare.

Then, taking no further notice of Coker, he fixed a pair of steely eyes upon the red-bearded hooligan.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"He's Bill Filey," said Coker, without waiting for Wibley to reply. "He's about twenty-eight. He's dodged conscription."

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EVERY  
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ONE  
PENNY.

"Is that true, my man?"

"Not liable to conscription, sir," said Mr. Filey.

"What an awful crammer!" exclaimed Coker indignantly.

"I heard his own pals talking about it."

"Silence!"

"What!"

"Silence!" snapped the officer. "Hold your tongue, boy."

Coker gasped.

"Hold my tut-tut-tongue!" he stammered. "Do you know whom you're talking to?"

"If you speak again, I will have you removed," said the officer. "This is no place for impudent schoolboys!"

Coker stared at him speechlessly.

He felt as if his head was turning round. Was this the gratitude he was to receive for roping in that conscription dodger? A hearty grip of the hand, and some hearty words of praise, were what Coker had expected. But it was clear that he was not going to receive anything of the kind. The recruiting-officer was not likely to give him any hearty grip, unless it was on his ear or his collar.

"Now, my man, answer up!" said the officer to Mr. Filey, not unkindly. "How old are you?"

"Fifteen, sir."

"What! What is your name?"

"Wibley, sir."

"Wibley!" stuttered Coker.

"Is this some joke?" exclaimed the officer, frowning.

"Who are you?"

"I'm in the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars School, sir."

Wibley stroked his beard, and it came off. The officer stared, and Coker jumped almost clear of the floor. The gentleman in khaki fixed his eyes grimly on the humorous Wib.

"Will you tell me what this means?" he asked quietly.

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," said Wibley, taking off his moustache in a careless way. "Better ask Coker. He brought me here."

"Wibley!" breathed Coker. "You young villain! I—I thought it was Bill Filey, sir, the conscription-dodger. The young beast has taken me in!"

"May I go, sir?" asked Wibley calmly. "I'm too young to be a blabberer!"

"I'm only fifteen. You can have a go at me in another three years!"

And Wibley cheerfully walked out of the recruiting-office. Coker stood rooted to the floor.

He was overcome.

If the supposed Bill Filey had turned out to be the Kaiser, or Lord Kitchener himself, Coker could hardly have been more astonished.

He stood with his mouth open and his eyes staring, like a newly-landed fish.

The steely eyes of the annoyed officer were fixed on him.

"Well?" said that gentleman, in a grinding voice.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Oh, my hat! It—it was a jape. I—I've been taken in!"

"You belong to Greyfriars School, I understand?"

"Yes," gasped Coker.

"Very well. I shall send a complaint to your headmaster. Now leave this place at once, or I shall have you removed!"

The officer went back to his desk.

Horace Coker simply staggered towards the door. He went out into the street like a fellow in a dream.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Poor Old Coker!

"H A, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker!"

Horace Coker looked round him dazedly.

The juniors were howling with laughter.

Wibley had replaced his beard and moustaches, and looked his old character again.

"No luck, Coker?" grinned Squiff. "Hard cheese, old man! Have another look for Bill Filey, if Wib won't do."

The trap-driver looked round.

"Bill Filey!" he exclaimed.

Evidently the driver from the Friardale Arms knew the redoubtable William.

"Coker's looking for Bill Filey!" said Bob Cherry. "He wants to conscript him. If you can tell him where to find Bill Filey, Coker will be grateful—won't you, Coker? Coker's awfully keen about it."

"You young rotters!" roared Coker, advancing furiously upon the juniors. "You've done this on purpose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You made me think that young villain was Bill Filey, the conscription-dodger. I'll have Filey yet, I can tell you! And I'll thrash you all round—"

"Come on!" said Bob invitingly.

"The thrashfulness will be terrific, but the boot will be on the other leg, my esteemed Coker," purred Hurree Singh.

"Pile in, Coker!"

Coker did pile in.

He realised now completely how the Removites had taken him in, and how sublime an idiot he looked.

Coker never counted odds, which was sometimes bad for Coker. It was very bad for him this time.

He rushed at the Removites, breathing vengeance.

They closed on him like a swarm of bees. Coker didn't have time to deliver even one of his famous four-point-seven punches.

He was whirled off his feet in the grasp of a crowd of hands, and pitched into the road, where he lay gasping.

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped on their machines and pealed away, laughing, Wibley mounting behind Bob Cherry.

Coker sat up and gasped for breath.

"Oh, dear! The young villains! I'll pulverise them! I'll—I'll—"

Coker scrambled to his feet, to find that the young villains were gone.

He clambered dispiritedly into the trap, and the grinning driver drove him home to Greyfriars, a sadder, if not a wiser, Coker.

But the Removites arrived there first.

Wibley dodged into the woodshed to remove his disguise, which was not exactly suited to the School Close. By the time Coker had arrived the news had spread, and half Greyfriars had gathered to chuckle over the story, and to greet the crestfallen Horace when he came in.

Horace Coker jumped out of the trap, which drove on to Friaridale, the driver emitting spasmodic chuckles. Evidently he saw some humour in the situation which was invisible to Coker.

The great man of the Fifth strode in at the gates. A yell of laughter greeted him. Coker's keen determination to hunt down the conscription-dodger had already been talked of. Its ludicrous ending struck the Greyfriars fellows as the joke of the season.

Coker stared glumly and angrily at the yelling juniors. He could not see for his part what there was to laugh at.

But the Greyfriars fellows did. They could see Coker! And they roared.

"Poor old Coker!" chirruped Temple of the Fourth. "Wouldn't they take Wibley as a recruit, after all your trouble!"

"Oh, Coker, you'll be the death of us yet!" howled Blundell of the Fifth. "You take the cake—you do really!"

"I've been taken in!" snorted Coker. "Those cheeky fags—"

"That's what you were born for, intirely!" chuckled Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" roared Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker gave it up. He strode on savagely, and disappeared into the School House, leaving the crowd rocking with laughter.

Coker went directly to his study. He was glad to get out of sight of Greyfriars for a time.

Potter and Greene were there, and they had evidently heard the news. They were grinning broadly.

"All serene?" asked Potter.

"Bagged him all right!" asked Greene.

"No," said Coker, with a snort. "That—that fellow wasn't Bill Filey at all! It turned out to be young Wibley of the Removite, got up, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly owls!" roared the exasperated Coker. "I suppose it wasn't my fault! He was got up exactly like the real Filey!"

"How do you know?" chortled Potter. "You've never seen Filey!"

"I've got his description, you ass, haven't I?"

"Ha, ha! Where did you get it?"

Coker started.

"My hat! Do—do you think that young villain Cherry was spoofing me with that description?"

"Of course he was, you ass. They've had it all cut-and-dried from the beginning. Of course, you couldn't see it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'll skin him!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I've been taken in from the start!"

"You have. Ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you owls! I'm jolly well not going to give in! I shall have to get a new description of Filey somehow—"

"I dare say some of the Removite kids will make up one for you!" chuckled Greene.

"Oh, shut up, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, will you stop cackling like a set of barnyard fowls, you silly asses!" bellowed Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker made a rush for his bat, in the corner of the study. Potter and Greene fled, howling with laughter.

Coker remained alone with his thoughts—not agreeable ones. Fitzgerald of the Fifth looked in, grinning.

"Faith, I hear you've been out conscripting, Coker!" he said. "Any catches?"

"Oh, get out, you ass!"

"What did they say to you at the recruiting-office, intirely?"

Instead of replying to that question, Coker charged at the questioner with brandished bat, and Fitzgerald slammed the door and fled.

Coker did not enjoy himself that evening.

When he ventured out of his study, he was greeted with smiles and chuckles on all sides, and inquiries as to how he was getting on with his conscripting.

By the time he went to the dormitory Coker was quite fed-up. He was a stickler, but there were limits. He made up his mind—reluctantly—to have nothing more to do with Bill Filey.

But, as it happened, it was for Coker to propose, and for William Filey to dispose.

Horace Coker was destined to discover that he had not yet done with Mr. Filey!

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**H**ARRY WHARTON & Co. were still feeling very cheery the next day over Coker's unfortunate adventure at the recruiting-office. They wondered whether Horace was still "going it," and were fully prepared to lend him their humorous assistance if he was.

They expected trouble with Coker that day, but the Fifth-Former gave the Remove a wider berth.

He had had enough of trouble with them—for the time, at least.

He was anxious for the matter to be forgotten, too, as soon as possible. It was not likely to be forgotten just yet, however. All Greyfriars made merry over Coker's conscript.

And there was more to come, though the unfortunate Horace was not aware of it.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quadrangle after lessons that day, when raised voices from the direction of the gates caught their attention.

A burly, rough-looking man, in a red-spotted handkerchief, was arguing with Gosling, the porter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Looks as if Gosling wants help. Come and lend a hand!"

The juniors ran down to the gates.

"You can't come in 'ere!" said Gosling. "I don't care whether you want to see Master Coker or whether you don't! Your sort ain't coming in!"

The burly man shook a big and not over-clean fist at Gosling.

"I'm coming in!" he roared. "Gerrou of the way! I'm going to see that there Coker! I'll Coker 'im! I'll teach 'im to call me a conscription-dodger!"

Bob Cherry gave a shout.

"Holy smoke! That must be Filey!"

"The real Filey!" chuckled Tom Brown.

"Is your name Bill Filey?" exclaimed Wharton.

"That's my name!" roared the burly visitor. "Bill Filey's my name, and ain't ashamed of it, neither! Rejected from the recruiting office I was, three times over, on account of a gammy foot. And that there young rip goes about saying as I've dodged it, and I'm a shirker, by gosh! I'll shirk him! Lemme get 'old of 'im, that's all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Filey!"

"My hat! Coker's put his foot in it this time!" gasped Bob. "Poor old Filey isn't a dodger at all! Just like Coker!"

"Just like him!" chuckled Nugent. "The chap ought to be allowed to come in and see Coker!"

"Let him come in, Gosling," said Vernon-Smith. "Coker wants to see this chap. In fact, he's been looking for him!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere—" began Gosling. "'Ere, 'ands off!"

Mr. Filey's patience was exhausted. He took Gosling by the shoulders, and spun him out of the way.

Gosling sat down on the step of his lodge, quite winded.

"Oh, my 'at!" gasped Gosling.

Bill Filey—the genuine Bill Filey—strode on towards the House, with the crowd of delighted juniors round him.

Mr. Filey was naturally indignant. His pal the trap-driver had doubtless given him information. For a man who had tried unsuccessfully three times to enlist to be called a shirker and conscription-dodger was a little too much.

Mr. Filey was overflowing with indignation—also with rum, as a matter of fact. He was not a very sober gentleman.

Coker had meant well, and it was really a pity that he had not made a little surer of his facts before starting on the track of Mr. Filey.

Vengeance, in the shape of William himself, was now on the track of the self-constituted conscript-hunter.

"Rotten shame to call him names, when he's done his best!" said Johnny Bull. "I'd advise him to give Coker an awful hiding!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's just what I'm a-going to do," said Mr. Filey, producing a thick strap from his pocket. "I'm goin' to lay this 'ere round 'im! I'll teach him to call an honest man names!"

"Bravo!"

"This way, Filey!"

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was in the doorway, and he looked in surprise and horror at the truculent Mr. Filey.

"Who are you?" he said faintly. "What do you want here, my man?"

"Which my name's Bill Filey, and I'm looking for a young rip named Coker, or Choker, or suthin', and I want to know where he is!"

"Bless my soul! I must really say—Oh, dear!"

Mr. Prout was pushed aside quite unceremoniously, and

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Mr. Filey strode heavily into the hall. There his voice was raised, like unto the bellow of a bull of Bashan.

"Where's Coker? Where's that young rip? He's been a-lookin' for me. Well, 'ere I am—Bill Filey, that's me!"

"Coker! Where's Coker? You're wanted, Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry.

Potter of the Fifth rushed into Coker's study, brimming with excitement.

"Coker! Coker!"

Coker jumped up.

"What's the matter?"

"Filey's come!" gasped Potter. "Bill Filey—the real Filey! He's down in the hall, yelling for you!"

"By Jove! I won't leave him yelling long!" exclaimed Coker, with a warlike look.

"Look out; he's a big, strong chap. He's after slaughter,"

"Rats! I'll collar him if he's the real Filey!"

"He says—"

"Never mind what he says. I'm after him."

Coker dashed out of the study, and rushed downstairs. Mr. Filey's stentorian voice boomed up to him.

"Where is he? Where's the young rip? Where's the young 'ound wot wants Bill Filey? 'Ere's Bill Filey!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Prout. "What a scene! Goodness gracious! Someone—someone put this dreadful person out! Where is Wingate? Bless my soul!"

Coker, undaunted, strode up to the obstreperous visitor.

"Are you Bill Filey?" he demanded.

The burly man glared at him.

"I'm Bill Filey!"

"Then your place is in the Army!" said Coker. "If you're the right man at last, I'll jolly well take you there, too!"

"You're Coker—wot?"

"Yes, I'm Coker, and I'm after you. Blundell—Potter—Fitz—lend me a hand with this conscription-dodger! Yarrooh!"

Mr. Filey rushed at Coker.

He grasped him by the shoulders, and pinned him against the wall. Big and strong as Coker was, he was no match for the burly Bill.

"Yarrooh! Leggo!" yelled Coker, struggling in vain in Mr. Filey's herculean grip. "I say—help me— Yarrooh!"

"Dodger, am I?" bellowed Mr. Filey.

"Yes, you are and I'm going to stop your dodging!" retorted Coker undauntedly.

"What is all this?"

Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, sailed upon the scene with a thunderous brow. But Mr. Filey, fortified with rum, was not daunted. He banged Coker's head on the wall, and elicited a yell from Coker. And he glared at the Head.

"I'm Bill Filey!" he roared.

"Man, what are you doing here?"

"Coker, knows!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"This young varmint—"

"Tell the fellows to collar him, sir!" panted Coker. "He's a conscription-dodger. I've been hunting him down to hand him over to the authorities, sir—"

"What right have you to do anything of the sort, Coker?" snapped the Head.

"Why, I—I—I—" stammered Coker.

"What business was it of yours at all?"

"Well, sir, I—I—"

"How dare you interfere with the man? Mr. Filey, kindly release that boy, and retire. If he has treated you with impertinence, he shall be punished!"

"He's a conscription-dodger!" shouted Coker. "If some of the fellows will lend me a hand, I'll take him to the recruiting-office!"

"Dodger, am I?" shrieked Mr. Filey, banging Coker's head on the wall again.

"Yarrooh!"

"Three times 'ave I been and tried, and each time they've turned me down!" roared Mr. Filey. "Three mortal times, and I can't get in! And this 'ere young rip calls me a dodger!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "I—I didn't know that—"

"You know it now, you cheeky young rascal!" hooted Mr. Filey. "An' started fellows torkin' about me in the village—callin' me a dodger, wot! I brought a strap 'ere for you!"

"Mr. Filey," gasped the Head, "pray calm yourself! Coker shall be punished for his folly. Coker, I have already received a complaint concerning you from the recruiting-officer at Courtfield, for a foolish and untimely joke. Coker, I shall certainly—"

"Yow-ow! Help!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Mr. Filey had twisted Coker round, and was making rapid play with the leather strap.

The strap curled round Coker with a loud sound as of the beating of carpet. The sounds that proceeded from Horace Coker were still louder.

"Yaroooh! Draggimoff! Help!"

"Goodness gracious! Mr. Filey, I insist—"

"Dodger, am I?" roared Mr. Filey. "Three times ave I tried! Take that, and that, and that, and that—"

"Yehooooop!"

Coker tore himself loose from the enraged William, and tore up the stairs. Mr. Filey, not yet satisfied, rushed in pursuit.

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors. They were sorry for Coker, but really Coker had asked for it. And the scene was unparalleled. Never had such a scene been enacted within the historic walls of Greyfriars—with the reverend Head looking on, too!

Dr. Locke looked dazed. He really did not know how to deal with Mr. Filey.

"Mr. Quelch! Mr. Prout! Wingate! Courtney! Loder!" he stuttered. "Pray—pray seize that man! I fear he is intoxicated— Bless my soul!"

"Dodger, am I?" Mr. Filey's voice was heard from above as he chased Coker along the passages. "I'll give yer dodger!"

"Yaroooh! Help!"

Whack! Whack! Bump!

"Help!"

"Rescue!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We can't have Coker killed. We shouldn't have anything to laugh at next term. Rescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head feebly.

A swarm of fellows rushed up the staircase. Coker had dodged Mr. Filey in the upper passages, knowing the topography better than Bill. He came scudding back towards the stairs.

"Lemme pass!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hop it, Coker!"

"Put it on!"

Coker raced down the stairs, three at a time. After him came the still infuriated Mr. Filey, flourishing the strap. Coker had had painful acquaintance with that strap, and he was not eager for more. Even the great Coker, who never counted his foes, was running for his life. Mr. Filey and his strap were a little too much even for Horace Coker.

"Stop him!" shouted Wingate, running at Mr. Filey.

Bill Filey shoved the captain of Greyfriars aside, and bolted into the Close after Coker.

Coker ran desperately, with Bill Filey, raging, on his track.

"Stop them!" shrieked the Head.

"Rescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate and three or four prefects rushed after Mr. Filey. He caught Coker under the elms, and the strap was rising and falling, to an accompaniment of fiendish yells from the Fifth-Former.

"Dodger, am I? Shirker, am I? Take that, and that— 'Ere, 'ands off, young gents! I don't want to 'urt you, but this 'ere young rip—"

Wingate and the rest grasped Mr. Filey, and dragged him away from Coker. Coker sat in the grass and roared.

"Yow-wow-wow-wow!"

"Outside, please, Mr. Filey!" said Wingate, half-laughing. "Well, p'raps he's 'ad enough," said Mr. Filey, quite peaceably. "I put it to you, young gents. Kin a man do more'n offer 'isself three times. Then callin' me a dodger—"

"—in!"

"Well, he's sorry for it by this time," said Wingate.

"Good-afternoon!"

Mr. Filey grinned, and allowed himself to be conducted out of gates. Gosling promptly shut the gates after him, and locked them.

Dr. Locke stood on the steps, his brow like thunder, and looked into the quad. He was glad enough to see the terrible Mr. Filey depart. But his wrath against the unhappy amateur conscript-hunter was great.

"Coker!" he gasped. "Bring Coker to me!"

"You're wanted, Coker, old man," said Bob Cherry.

Coker staggered to his feet.

"O-wow! Yow! I'm hurt! Oh, dear! I'll leave the blessed authorities to manage their own conscripts after this! Wov-wow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker!" rapped out the Head.

"Here, sir," said Coker feebly.

The Head fixed his eyes upon him.

"You utterly absurd and stupid boy! This disgraceful scene has happened entirely by your fault! You have caused this by your stupidity and your extraordinary meddlesomeness. If you were not already severely thrashed, Coker, I would flog you!"

"Flog me!" stuttered Coker. "Fuf-fuf-flog me! My hat!"

"You will take a thousand lines, and you will be kept in for four half-holidays!" thundered the Head. "If anything of this kind should occur again, I shall flog you! Do you hear?"

"Oh, dear!"

The Head swept away majestically, leaving Coker blinking. So far as Coker could see, he hadn't been to blame. Perhaps he had erred a little from excess of zeal. But that was all. But the Head evidently took a different view.

"Thousand lines—four half-holidays!" gasped Coker.

"Well, that beats it! Lot of encouragement to a fellow to be patriotic and back up the War Office! I'm done with 'em, by gum! If there were ten thousand conscripts all staying quite comfy at home, I wouldn't yank one of 'em to the recruiting-office after this! Not one, by gum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Ow! Wow!" said Coker. "That beast's strap hurt— Wo-wow! What are you silly chumps cackling at? There's nothing funny in this! Yow-wow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker limped indoors, leaving the "chumps" still cackling as if they would never stop. It was a long time before Greyfriars ceased to cackle over the story of Coker's Conscript!

THE END.

Do not miss "THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!" next Monday's Grand Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)

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## The First Instalments Told How

DICK DAUNT and DUDLEY DREW, two chums, discover a letter in a bottle which they have extracted from the body of a shark.

They are informed by its contents that a certain MATTHEW SNELL is marooned on an unnamed island in the Keys, and he offers a substantial reward to any persons effecting his rescue.

On going to the island, however, they are unable to find Mr. Snell.

EZRA CRAY, a moonshiner, and his scoundrelly colleagues then visit the island, and, finding that it contains gold, attempt to kill the two chums.

Having previously hidden their boat, Dick and Dudley seek refuge in a cave.

Leaving the cave in search of food, they are captured by the gang, but eventually succeed in escaping.

They are being hunted down by the gang, when Dudley suggests they should go back the way they came.

"You're crazy, man!" Dick answers. "It'll take us right past Cray's camp again."

(Now go on with the story.)

## An Awkward Situation.

"Maybe it will," said Dudley. "But where's the harm? Most all Cray's folk are over in the other direction. There must be two looking after the schooner, and two more busy with the niggers. I guess there won't be many left to form another search-party."

"By Jove, I believe you are right! The only thing I don't quite see is where you want to make for."

"Right over to the south side—our old quarters. We shall be a damned sight safer there than anywhere else."

Dick nodded.

"That's not a bad notion. We can spend the night in the spring cave."

"And be sure of a drink of water for supper, anyhow," smiled back Dudley.

Dick had no doubt in his mind that Dudley was right. There was far more cover near Rocky Beach. Besides, they knew the ground better. And then there was always fresh water in the Spring Cave. Grub, of course, was an awkward question. They could only hope to get hold of another gopher, or perhaps some crabs or oysters.

The smoke was blowing thickly above them, and under its cover they ran rapidly in a south-westerly direction, until they reached the woods below the gorge. Here they were able to slack a bit, and take things down more easily.

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"We shall have to look out as we get near the mouth of the creek," said Dick presently. "As likely as not we shall meet Cray and his little lot on their way back."

"I guess not," Dudley answered. "We've come too quick for that. They'll be plunging around in the scrub at the east end of the island for the next hour or more."

He was right. Reaching the edge of the palmetto-scrub above Rocky Bay, they reconnoitred carefully before venturing into the open, but saw nothing of Cray or his men. They climbed the big heap of the landslide on the west side of the bay, and by the time they reached the Spring Cave were only too thankful for a long drink of the ice-cold water from the little rock cup.

Dudley went to the mouth of the cave, and dropped down upon a rock. Dick perched himself on another.

"This is all very well," said the latter. "But what does it lead to?"

"Sleep, anyhow," replied Dudley, with a smile. "We're safe enough here, and, in spite of my nap, I can do with a night's rest."

"Must say I should like something to eat first," grumbled Dick. "Sleep's all very well, but it don't fill one's tummy."

"That's true, Dick," Dudley answered more gravely. "I'll allow the grub problem is a mighty awkward one. I was kind of wondering if we went and hunted among the rocks in our old cave, whether we might dig out a tin or two of meat."

Dick sat up straight.

"That's quite on the cards," he said. "Anyhow, it's good enough to try. What do you think? Shall we try it now?"

"Better wait a while, I guess," Dudley answered thoughtfully. "There's still nearly two hours' daylight. Let's stop here an hour, then if we don't see anything of Cray's push, we'll go on and have a dig."

Dick agreed that this was a good notion. In an hour Cray would either sweep round to the beach, or he and his followers would probably have returned home for supper, and left the rounding-up of the fugitives for another day.

They lay back comfortably, and took it easy while the shadows lengthened; then, when the sun was not more than half an hour high, crept out and reconnoitred carefully. There was not a sign of anything moving, so they started for the old cave.

The tide was coming in, and when they got down to the beach beyond the slide, there was only just room to walk between the water and the cliff.

The cave which they had abandoned in such a hurry was a pitiable sight. Cray's infernal machine had wrecked it most thoroughly. The whole roof was down, and the interior one

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mass of piled-up boulders. They stood and surveyed it with aching hearts.

"Then don't look. Come in and dig," retorted Dick.

It was precious hard work, shifting the masses of broken rock, and their hands grew sore, and their backs ached after half an hour of it.

Dudley straightened himself slowly and painfully.

"I don't reckon we'll ever get to the bottom of this," he observed mournfully. "It's no sort of use."

And just then Dick gave a cry of delight.

"No use, you say! What price this?"

As he spoke he lifted triumphantly a squarish, red-labelled object. It was a tin of corned-beef.

"Dudley for you, Dick!" exclaimed Dudley, and reached across to take it from Dick's hand.

The movement saved his life. At that very moment a shot rang out, and a bullet flattened on the side of the cave in a line with the point where Dudley's head had been one second before.

Without an instant's hesitation, Dick hurled the tin which he had just found at the man who had fired. So quick was he that it reached its mark before the would-be murderer could pull trigger a second time, and Rufe Finn—for it was he—went over like a poleaxed bullock, with his blunt nose flattened to his face, and most of his front teeth adrift.

Dudley wheeled just in time to see the nigger go down.

"Good man, Dick! Gee, it'll be some time before he eats beef, or anything else for that matter!"

"Take his rifle!" snapped Dick. "Don't waste time. The rest aren't far off."

He snatched up his own rifle, and stepping quickly to the mouth of the cave, cautiously looked out.

Crack! Crack! came two shots almost simultaneously. Dick sprang back. His eyes were bright with the light of battle.

"The whole outfit are coming across the cliff face," he said quickly. "What shall we do—fight or hook it?"

"Clear out," answered Dudley instantly. "We can't hold this place. We must reach the ravine if we can. We ought to be able to hold them up there."

"Keep low, Dick," he added. "For any sake, keep low. If you're hit we're done in!"

The ruins of the old breastwork which they had built to defend their cave just after the coming of Cray & Co. lay thick on the narrow platform outside, and gave cover enough, so long as they kept well down.

The moment they were outside, rifles began to talk again, but they flung themselves flat, and crawled on hands and knees in among the boulders until they were round the bulge of the cliff. Then they both sprang upright, and were off along the ledges towards the mouth of the ravine.

"Don't break your neck, Dudley!" panted Dick, as Dudley took a risky leap from one point of rock to another. "They don't know the ledges as we do. They won't be within range again for five minutes."

"Yes, but we've got to get cover of some sort. What do you want to do—hide in the ravine?"

"Yes, go right up it, and into the scrub beyond. We can dodge them there. Palmetto won't burn, so they can't smoke us out."

As he spoke, Dick turned up-hill, and began to climb quickly towards the funnel-like mouth of the ravine. Dudley came close after.

They had nearly reached their goal, when from above a fresh shot rang out, and a bullet struck a rock within a yard of Dick, and ricocheted with a vicious ping.

Dudley gasped with dismay.

"Then, by thunder, they've got us!" he exclaimed. "They've got us covered!"

For a moment the two crouched low behind a projecting ledge. They were absolutely at their wits' ends. A more hopeless plight could hardly be imagined. They could not go back, for Cray and his followers cut off their retreat. They could not go up, for the man posted on the bank of the ravine could pick them off at his pleasure. Beyond—that is, to the west—the beach was already covered with the rising tide, and as for the cliffs, they were absolutely perpendicular. They were, literally, between the devil and the deep sea.

#### The Swim.

Again the man by the ravine pulled the trigger, and the report of his rifle echoed along the face of the rugged cliffs.

Dick and Dudley were safe for the moment beneath their ledge. It was plain that the second shot was a signal to Cray.

It was instantly answered.

"Where be they, Degan?" came Cray's croak from some distance back.

"Jest underneath me," shouted back Degan. "They can't get away. You kin take your time."

"Can't get away!" echoed Dick in a fierce whisper. "Dudley, it's the sea for us."

Dudley glanced down at the blue water heaving gently at the base of the cliff. He shivered. Small blame to him, either! Dick knew the reason of his hesitation.

"Sharks or not, it's better than falling into Cray's hands again," he said gravely. "And if we can once get round the Point we may do 'em yet."

Dudley set his teeth.

"Go ahead! I'm game!" he said briefly.

The ledge they were on ran shelving downwards to within a few feet of the water. And so long as they were on it they were entirely hidden from Degan. From Cray, too, until he was very much nearer than he was at present.

Once their resolution was taken, the two wasted no time in carrying out their plan. They scuttled down the ledge like two rabbits, and came to its end not their own height above the sea.

"Leave the rifles," whispered Dick. "We can't swim with them."

As he spoke he thrust his into a crack in the rocks. Dudley did the same. Then Dick let himself down from the ledge and hung by his hands.

"Softly!" he said. "Don't make a splash. They can't see us, and we'll be a hundred yards off before they know what's become of us."

Dudley nodded. Dick dropped quietly into the sea, and waited for his chum; and Dudley, with splendid pluck, followed him.

The water was calm, and quite warm, and the two swam along side by side, keeping as close under the cliff-foot as they could. As he swam Dick kept a sharp look-out in all directions. But there was no sign of sharks, or of the even more dreaded barracuda.

The splash of the slow swells breaking on the cliff drowned other sounds, and they could no longer hear their pursuers' voices. Striking out steadily, they were soon opposite to the narrow mouth of Hidden Bay.

Dick glanced at Dudley. Dudley was not nearly so strong a swimmer as himself.

"Can you keep going?" he asked anxiously.

"I guess so," was the quiet reply.

"We could dodge into Hidden Bay if you liked."

"No use. We couldn't get out again."

"Maybe we could after dark."

Dudley shook his head.

"Guess I'd rather swim in the daylight," he answered grimly.

It was at this moment that a shout rang out, loud enough to be heard even above the slow boom of the surf.

"They've spotted us!" muttered Dick. "Look out for lead!"

Apparently, however, the man who had spotted them was in some place from which he could not shoot, and the two had gained nearly fifty yards more before the crack of a rifle woke the echoes along the cliff-face.

"Didn't hear that bullet," observed Dudley, quickening his stroke.

"The range is pretty long. We've got a fine start. Don't hurry, old man. There's a long stretch before we round the Point."

"And a longer stretch before we can make any sort of a landing," he thought, but did not say so. As a matter of fact, he had not the faintest idea where they would be able to land, even if they were lucky enough to escape the bullets of their enemies.

Two rifles rang out simultaneously, and a little jet of spray leaped from a wave-top to Dick's right. It was no use ducking or dodging. They must just keep straight on, and trust to luck that they would not be hit. There was this much in their favour—that the range was now over three hundred yards, and that two heads bobbing among the waves at such a distance need mighty good marksmanship to make sure of.

Next came a regular volley, and bullets pitted the water all around.

"Rotten shooting!" said Dick, with a grim chuckle. "We've got the tide with us, and next thing they know we'll be out of their range altogether."

He was right. A rapid current swirled along the base of the cliff, and was more than doubling their ordinary swimming pace.

"Gee, but that was close!" gasped Dudley, as a bullet clipped past his ear and struck the water not twelve inches in front of his nose.

It was a chance shot, for after that, although the firing went on for some minutes, nothing else came near enough to be dangerous. And every minute the Point showed nearer.

(Continued on page 111 of Cover.)

## THE GOLDEN KEY.

(Continued from page 20.)

"Keep close in," advised Dick—"as close as you can, Dudley."

As he spoke he turned slightly to the left, meaning to skirt the Point as closely as possible.

The moment he turned he began to feel the pull of the current. The tide was in some way turned outwards from the curve of the cliff. He had to fight hard to keep close in.

He glanced at Dudley, and saw that, in spite of his efforts, he was being drawn gradually further out from the cliff.

"Guess it's too strong for me!" panted the latter.

Instantly Dick struck out and came alongside Dudley.

"Hang on to me," he said quietly. "We'll make it all right."

At first Dudley objected; but Dick insisted, and the other yielded. Dick, wisely, did not try to haul his friend right back across the current, but swam obliquely, keeping as near the shore as he could, without exhausting himself.

This was just as well, for when they did reach the Point they found themselves in a swirl of contending currents. The water was rough, too, and, into the bargain, Dudley was tiring. It was all that Dick could do to fight their way out of the turmoil.

But he did it at last, and they found themselves in calm water, well round the Point, and out of sight or reach of their enemies. Dick raised himself in the water, and took a look along the shore. His heart sank. So far as he could see, the cliff swept on without a visible break of any kind. There was no bay, no beach—not even an isolated rock to which they might cling and rest themselves.

Dudley was watching him. He saw the look on Dick's face, and realised what it meant.

"Don't look healthy—eh, Dick?" he asked.

"To be quite honest, it doesn't," allowed Dick. "I can't see a landing-place. All the same, one can't see much from sea level. It's quite on the cards there may be some opening, and not far off, either. Anyhow, we're safe from Cray, and there don't seem to be any sharks about, so we can just take it easy."

"You lie on your back, Dudley," he added—"lie on your back and float. I can tow you along."

Dudley obeyed, and in this way they travelled slowly for about two hundred yards in a north-westerly direction along the base of the cliff. But search as he might, Dick could see no possible landing-place, and he began to realise that he himself was getting badly fagged. He paused again, and trod water.

A swell lifted him slightly, and he had a glimpse of a long, smooth rock—a sort of spur running out into the sea from the base of the cliff. It was a long way off, and it looked terribly steep; yet, such as it was, it was the only possible chance in sight for making a landing.

He pointed it out to Dudley.

"Come on!" he said cheerfully. "If we can make it, we ought to be able to climb out."

"All right," Dudley answered. His voice was very weak and hoarse, and Dick was frightened to notice how blue-white his lips were.

They started again, Dick towing Dudley as before. But Dick himself was so tired that they took a long time in reaching the spur. The nearer they got to it, the lower Dick's hopes sank. The spur was quite smooth, with no handhold or foothold of any sort, and far too steep to climb upon. He looked to him as if their last chance was gone. For himself, he did not feel as if he could swim another hundred yards. His legs and arms felt heavy, and all his muscles numb.

One of the long, slow swells that came softly in from the open sea broke upon the spur, and as the blue water washed upon it there came a curious, low, booming sound.

"It might almost be hollow," thought Dick vaguely, as he paddled slowly in towards it.

"It is!" he cried suddenly.

"It is what?" asked Dudley hoarsely.

"Hollow," answered Dick, in sudden excitement. "There's a hole in it—a hole in the rock-spur, just above water level. That last swell broke into it and made that queer, booming noise."

### One Mystery Solved.

"A hole—a cave mouth, do you mean?" demanded Dudley, sharing Dick's excitement. Gee, but you're right! I can see it myself now."

"Can you keep yourself up a minute, old man?" asked Dudley anxiously. "It's going to be a bit of a job to reach it."

"You bet!" Dudley answered briefly.

They were now quite close under the spur. The hole,

which was not more than a yard across, was in the very face of the curious spur, which stuck out from the main cliff like a buttress. On the face of it it seemed a most useless sort of refuge, for the water was already breaking into it, and at high tide it would be completely submerged.

But it was a case of "any port in a storm." Neither of them could keep afloat much longer. If they could gain even a few minutes' rest, it might be possible to go on again and reach some other landing place.

Dick swam as near as he dared to the lower end of the buttress, then waited for the next swell. As it lifted him he struck out hard. He felt himself flung forward against hard rock, with a force that almost knocked the breath out of his body. The water broke over his head, blinding and confusing him; and as the wave dropped back his groping fingers found a ledge, and grasped it desperately.

It was the lower rim of the opening, and in a moment he was standing upright on the ledge.

"Now then, Dudley! Quick, before the next swell comes!" Stopping down, he managed to grasp Dudley's outstretched hand, and, using all his strength, dragged him safely up alongside.

"That's good!" he gasped. "Now, hang on tight. There's another swell coming."

It came washing up to their waists, and tugging at them so strongly that Dick realised that the next one would probably carry them clean off their hardy-gained perch.

"We must get inside. It's our only chance," he said, with sharp decision.

"Out of the frying-pan into the fire, I guess," remarked Dudley; "or perhaps I should say, out of the waves into the water." But all the same he followed Dick without a moment's hesitation.

Inside, the opening was very like one of those huge pipes which carry the water supply of big towns. It was about the same size, almost as round, and almost as smooth. But it was not by any means straight. Indeed, the angle at which it ran upwards, combined with its steepness, made it anything but easy to crawl up it.

Yet they had to, and quickly, too. Both were painfully aware that if caught by the next swell before they were beyond its reach, they would be licked out as swiftly and easily as a fly is licked down by the swift-darting tongue of a toad.

A hollow roar, a dash of spray, and Dudley, forcing his way up into the unknown gloom above, felt the water washing to his knees. He jammed his elbows against the two sides of the rock pipe, and held on like grim death.

The wave fell back, and he heard Dick's voice anxiously inquiring if he was safe.

"Still here," panted Dudley, "but I reckon we'll have to go a bit higher before we can call ourselves real safe."

"You're right. The tide's got some feet to rise still. Come on. It's not so steep above, and the air's quite good. Want a hand?"

"I guess not. I'm good for a bit yet."

Dick climbed on. Dudley could not see him, but he followed upwards through the darkness. As Dick had said, the slope was not quite so steep above, and by the time the next swell came booming after them they were well above its upward rush.

"Here's a flattish bit," came Dick's voice. "I vote we rest a while."

"Seconded and carried unanimously," replied Dudley. "To tell the honest truth, I haven't often wanted a rest quite so badly."

"Or grub either," returned Dick soberly. "It's a long time since we finished the gopher."

"We sha'n't even find a gopher in this drain-pipe," said Dudley. "He paused a moment or two, then spoke again in a more serious tone. "Say, Dick, do you reckon we'll ever get out of this?"

"Get out of it? Of course we'll get out of it!" returned Dick quite sharply. "See here, Dudley, because you're fagged out there's no need to chuck up the sponge. Once the tide's fallen again I'll go down, and swim along till I find some landing-place. Then I'll come back for you."

Dudley did not answer. Dick realised that for once his chum had come pretty near to the end of his tether.

"Buck up, old chap!" he said persuasively. "We've been in just as bad places before, and got out. Anyhow, we're better off than we were twenty-four hours ago. Then we were Cray's slaves. Now, at any rate, we're free."

"Yes, we're free," said Dudley—"free to sit here and starve in the dark, free to take to the water and be snapped up by sharks, free—if we can ever get ashore—to be shot down by Cray's men."

Dick said no more. It was clear that Dudley was beyond comfort for the present. He sat still, shivering slightly in the strong draught which blew down from somewhere above.

Boom! A long-drawn swish. A shower of salt spray broke over them.

Dick sprang up.

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

## THE GOLDEN KEY.

(Continued from previous page.)

"Come on, Dudley! The tide hasn't turned yet. We've got to get a bit higher."

"What's the use?" asked Dudley in a dull voice.

Dick reached down and caught hold of him.

"Come on!" he said, and though he spoke quietly enough Dudley obeyed.

They scrambled on up the curious passage, slipping and sliding as they went, and often in danger of falling back. The rock which they crawled over was all smooth. Not a sharp corner anywhere. Dick realised that it was all water-worn. At times the waves must certainly come right up to it. He began to wonder uneasily if they would be able to climb high enough to escape the reach of the surf at full tide. Every wave which broke below sent a gust of sound up the tunnel, followed by a blast of air.

But between times the down-draught was strong, showing clearly that the tunnel, like the spring cave, had some connection with the upper air.

For perhaps five minutes they climbed steadily, then Dick's fingers, groping for a hold, found a broad ledge. He scrambled up, and discovered a flat surface.

"Where are you, Dick?" came Dudley's voice from below.

"Don't know; but I've found standing room, anyhow. Here, take my hand!" He reached down and helped Dudley up.

"Struck a kind of cave, haven't we?" said Dudley, groping about.

"Seems like it," Dick answered. "I think I'll use just one match to see where we are."

In spite of the long swim, Dick's matches, carefully preserved in the little cork bottle, were still dry. He struck one, and, shielding it from the draught with his hat, looked round.

It was, as Dudley had said, a cave—a very small one; in fact, a mere bulge in the long, bottle-necked tube up which they had crawled. They could see the tube itself, both above and below, with sides almost as smooth as though the dark-coloured rock composing them had been polished.

The match burned Dick's fingers, and he dropped it. "We shall be all right here for the present, Dudley," he said. "The best thing we can do is to perch ourselves, and wait until the tide falls."

Dudley hesitated. He hated the darkness and chill of the place. He would like to have climbed higher, and chanced finding a way out. But he had the sense to know that both he and Dick were very near the end of their tether, and that rest was what they needed most of all.

"I guess we had," he said reluctantly, and dropped down beside Dick, with his back against the wall of the little rock chamber.

They were too tired even to talk, and in spite of their wet clothes, their hunger, and the chill of the darksome place, both dozed off. They were roused by a deep hoating roar, resembling that of a steam siren, and both leaped up in a violent hurry.

"Great Scott, what was that?" exclaimed Dudley, grasping Dick's arm with a force that proved how badly he was startled.

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial story next Monday. The only way you can make quite certain of securing a copy of the MAGNET is to order in advance.)

## THE PRIDE OF THE RING!

The Conclusion of our Grand Serial Story dealing with the Noble Art of Self-defence.  
By MARK LINLEY.

### The Conquering Hero.

Neddy Welsh shot out his hand and pulled Bob Sullivan back.

"Don't!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to see this thing through, and no one shall stop me! I've stuck it for three rounds, and I'll stick it out for three hundred if necessary!"

The drill-instructor sighed, and sent his man up for the fourth venture. It was not an atom of use remonstrating with Neddy Welsh. When once he had made up his mind to anything, his will was as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

The spectators were beginning to yawn, but they sat bolt upright the next moment, for Bob Cherry and Neddy Welsh went for each other like tigers. It was neck or nothing now. The very atmosphere seemed to be on fire as the combatants ducked and plunged and punched, each seeking to down the other at the first opportunity.

"Break away, there!" said the referee.

The boxers obeyed, and it was seen that the Earlingham fellow's face was positively gashed by this time.

"He's going to faint!" muttered Dolly Gray. "Whatever's come over poor old Neddy?"

But the next instant the speaker let out a wild whoop of delight. Neddy Welsh suddenly leapt at his adversary, shooting out his right as he did so. Up went Bob Cherry's guard, but he was too late. The blow took him full on the forehead, and he reeled backwards.

"Follow up with your left!" almost screamed Dolly Gray.

But Neddy's left hung limply at his side. Instead, he went ahead with his right again. It swept through the air in a delightful upper-cut, and Bob Cherry fell like a log. Neddy Welsh stood swaying over him, on the verge of collapse himself.

"One—two—three—four—" began the referee.

"Buck up, Bob!" came in an agonised shout from Harry Warton.

"Five—six—seven—"

The Greysfriars champion struggled into a sitting posture, but he got no further. No one knew better than himself that he was beaten—whacked to the wide!

"Eight," went on the referee relentlessly—"nine—TEN! Gentlemen, Neddy Welsh wins!"

No sooner were the words out of the official's mouth than Neddy fell back against the ropes in a dead faint.

The cheering was hushed at the sight, and grave concern

showed itself on every face. Bob Sullivan dashed into the ring, and threw some water into the face of the fallen junior, who speedily recovered.

Then Bob Sullivan suddenly dived down and made a hasty examination.

"Gentlemen," he said, with just a suspicion of huskiness in his voice, "Neddy Welsh has fought right through the final with a sprained wrist!"

A murmur of amazed admiration ran round the building.

"I thought as much," said Dolly Gray. "I couldn't for the life of me understand why he never brought his left into play. Oh, Neddy, Neddy, you're a ripping, stunning, eighteen-carat, gilt-edged brick! Come on, you fellows!"

And the Earlingham juniors sprang into the ring, and carried their curly-headed hero in triumph to the dressing-room, where Bob Sullivan deftly bandaged up the injured wrist.

"Neddy, you old duffer," said Dolly Gray, half laughing and half sobbing, "why couldn't you tell us you had a gammy wrist?"

"Because," said Neddy, "Bob Sullivan wouldn't have let me enter the final, and I should have missed what I regard as the greatest achievement of my life!"

Kenrick ran out to the post-office and despatched a wire to Earlingham, transmitting the glorious news. Consequently there was quite a guard of honour waiting for Neddy Welsh on his return that evening.

Congratulations were showered upon the plucky junior boxer from all sides. Even Barker & Co., bullies, cads, and rank outsiders though they were, shared in the general demonstration. The Head, beaming with delight at the high honour which had befallen his school, granted all the boys a whole day's holiday on the morrow.

But best of all, in Neddy Welsh's opinion, were the blushing congratulations of Molly Penn, who told the captain of the Fourth, without flattery, that he was a perfect jewel.

"The way you have shaken this sleepy old school up is marvellous," said Molly. "You have worked wonders since you came here, and we are all very, very proud of you."

And then she gave Neddy's sound hand a tight little squeeze, and flitted away like a magic princess in a fairy-tale.

And Earlingham School will continue to strive and thrive so long as it is blessed with the genial presence of popular Neddy Welsh, known to all his chums and comrades as the Pride of the Ring!

THE END.