

School, Adventure, Sporting and Humorous Stories—Inside!

# The MAGNET 2<sup>D</sup>



The Kidnapped Footballer!



# COKER'S FOOTBALL FEVER!



**HARRY WHARTON & CO.  
OF GREYFRIARS IN  
ANOTHER LIVELY  
ADVENTURE.**

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

"Goal!"

"**P**ASS that ball!"  
"What?"  
"This way!" snapped Coker of the Fifth.

"But—"  
"And sharp!" rapped out Coker. Coker was impatient.

Coker of the Fifth never had much patience to waste on juniors—least of all on Harry Wharton & Co., the Famous Five of the Remove, whom he regarded as the cheekiest set of juniors at Greyfriars.

And Coker had a way of regarding himself as one having authority, who said "Do this!" and he doeth it!

But the juniors—with the cheek Coker might really have expected of them—did not pass the ball to Coker.

It was their ball. They were punting it about in break to keep themselves warm. What Coker of the Fifth wanted with their old footer they did not know. But they did not see letting him have it.

"Do you hear?" bawled Coker.

"We're not deaf, old bean!" answered Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We can hear your gentle whisper—I fancy they can hear you as far as Courtfield."

"But the hearfulness is not the obeyfulness, my esteemed idiotic Coker!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I want that ball!" roared Coker.

"You can want!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"If you mean you want to join in a punt-about, Coker—" said Harry Wharton.

"Don't be a cheeky young ass, Wharton!"

Coker of the Fifth was not likely to join in a punt-about with juniors of the Lower Fourth. Such a proceeding would have been miles—indeed, leagues—beneath Coker's Fifth Form dignity.

"Well, what the thump do you want with our ball?" demanded Wharton, puzzled. "You've got a footer of your own if you want one."

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"Not that you know what to do with it!" added Nugent, with a grin.

Coker glared.

"I don't want any cheek! I want that ball—quick!"

Coker strode towards the chums of the Remove. They stopped punting the ball to stare at him—and to gather round their property in defence. Why Coker wanted to borrow that muddy footer was a mystery. There was a handsome match ball in his study if he wanted one. Apparently he wanted one in a great hurry on the spot. Why, was really perplexing.

"Chuck me that ball—quick!" exclaimed Coker. "I can't thrash you with Prout looking on—"

Mr. Prout, Coker's Form master, was taking a walk in the quad at a little distance. In that majestic presence Coker had to restrain his natural desire to mop up the earth with the cheeky juniors who did not obey his commands with promptness and dispatch.

"That's all right, old bean!" said Bob Cherry. "You couldn't thrash a decimal fraction of us, anyhow."

"The thrashfulness would be a boot on the other esteemed leg!" declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Coker breathed hard.

Thrashing the Famous Five, richly as they deserved it, from Coker's point of view, was a task of some difficulty, as Coker had learned by experience—painful experience. That alone would not have stopped him. But he did not want to enter into a wild and whirling "scrap" under the eyes of his Form master. And he had no time to waste; he was in a hurry. So Coker constrained himself to be civil—with an effort.

"Lend me the ball a minute!" he said.

"I only want it a couple of minutes! But look sharp!"

"But what—" asked Wharton.

"I'm going to get Wingate with it!"

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated the Famous Five together.

They fairly blinked at Coker.

George Wingate of the Sixth Form,

Wednesday.

"You—you're going to get Wingate with it!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"That's it!"

"But—but—" babbled Bob.

"You kids know that Wingate has left me out of the First Eleven—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared again.

What was a standing grievance with Coker of the Fifth was a standing joke with the rest of Greyfriars.

Coker saw nothing to cackle at in his observation. Harry Wharton & Co. did. And they cackled.

"I'm going to show him!" Irritated as he was, Coker condescended to explain. "I've offered my services and been refused! I've been refused more than once, as I dare say you know—"

"We do!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"We does!" chuckled Nugent.

"The knowfulness is terrific."

"Wingate says I can't kick a goal!" said Coker grimly. "Well, I'm going to show him that I can! Pass that ball over—quick! I'm going to bung it fairly on his nose from here—and I fancy he will have to own up that I can kick a goal!"

"Oh erikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up cackling and give me that ball!" hooted Coker. "I've told you what I want it for! Now hand it over—quick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Let him have it, you men! Old Wingate's nose won't be damaged an awful lot!"

Harry Wharton tapped the ball to Coker. Coker stopped it clumsily with the biggest foot in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

"Go it, Coker!" chuckled Nugent.

"On the ball!" chortled Bob.

Coker prepared to take the kick.

Harry Wharton & Co. backed away out of danger; there really was no telling what might happen to a footer when Coker kicked it.

Certainly, had they not been well acquainted with Coker's remarkable



powers as a footballer, they would not have handed over that ball to be "bunged" on the nose of the Greyfriars captain.

But Coker as a footballer was weird and wonderful. There was plenty of beef in him, plenty of energy, plenty of pep. But he was quite likely to miss the easiest kick and sit down on the ball. If his kick landed there was no telling in what direction the ball might proceed. Only one thing was certain—it would not proceed in the direction planned by Coker. Any other direction was possible or probable—but not that!

So the chums of the Remove cheerfully relinquished the ball to Coker, and watched him, wondering what would happen, but feeling absolutely assured that the Greyfriars captain's nose was in no peril.

Coker calculated that kick with a careful eye. He gave a little hop, and his foot swept out. How his foot came to miss the footer after that careful calculation Coker did not know; it was one of those things that happened to Horace Coker when he was kicking a ball. It did miss; it swept into the air; and Coker, after reposing stork-like on one leg for about the millionth part of a second, sat down.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo!"

"Do that again, Coker!"

"Fine!"

"Hurrah!"

There were shouts of applause on all sides. Many fellows, as well as the Famous Five, were looking on at Coker's performance.

There was quite a roar as he hit the county of Kent.

Even Mr. Prout glanced towards the spot, with a faint smile dawning on his majestic visage.

Coker scrambled up.

His face was red, his eyes were gleaming. Like the Alpine gentleman in the poem, his brow was set, his eyes beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath. Coker was determined. Still more carefully, this time, he calculated. His kick struck the ball with a bang.

It flew.

Wingate was not four yards away now, and he was looking at Coker and smiling. He did not seem to realise that he was in danger. As a matter of fact, he wasn't.

The ball flew—but it did not fly at Wingate! The kick, miraculously, had caught it fair and square, and it went like a bullet. But the direction it took was a surprise to Coker.

It was a still more startling surprise to Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, who was seven or eight yards distant to Coker's left.

Crash!

"Oooooooooogh!"

Coker jumped.

Every other fellow in the quad yelled.

Right on the majestic visage of Prout, for which it certainly was not intended, the muddy footer crashed.

Prout gurgled and sat down.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker.

"Goal!"

It was a regular roar. Such a roar never greeted Coker of the Fifth when he was playing football—never! Now it greeted him, rousing every echo of the ancient quad of Greyfriars.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Coker! Well kicked, sir! Goal!"

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.**

**A Narrow Escape for Coker!**

"**H**A, ha, ha!"  
"Well kicked, Coker!"  
Harry Wharton & Co. shrieked.

They had wondered where that ball would land. They had kept well behind Coker themselves—though even behind Coker they were not quite safe when he was kicking a ball. Coker, as a footballer, moved in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. They had felt quite sure that Wingate was in no danger—being Coker's objective, he couldn't be in any danger. But they hadn't thought of Prout.

Prout had got it.

Fairly on his majestic countenance it had crashed, up-ending him like an uprooted tree. Prout sat down, and his heels flew into the air. What had happened Prout did not know for some moments. It seemed to him like an earthquake, or two or three earthquakes rolled into one. The footer had been damp and muddy. Much of its mud was now distributed over Mr. Prout's features.

"Oooooooooogh!" gurgled Prout.

Coker gazed at him in horror.

How that ball had come to hit Prout was a mystery to Coker. He had kicked straight at Wingate in front. Prout was almost at right angles, on his left. Yet Prout had got it. How it could

**NEW STYLE FOOTBALL!**

**The first time Coker kicked the ball—he missed it!**

**And the second time he kicked it in the same place!**

have happened was inexplicable. It was one of those weird things that did happen when Horace Coker got loose with a football.

"Good old Coker!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Do it again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You dangerous ass!" roared Wingate of the Sixth. "You—you've knocked Mr. Prout over! Are you mad, Coker?"

"Has he ever been anything else?" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dare you, you howling chump!" exclaimed Wingate. "Do you know what you've done?" He grabbed Coker's arm, and shook him. "Do you understand that you'll be sacked for a trick like that?"

"I—I—I didn't! I—I never——" babbled Coker.

Potter and Greene of the Fifth came running up. They were Coker's chums; but, naturally, they had kept at a distance when they saw Coker with a footer. Now they ran up. What Coker had done this dreadful thing for they could not guess; but they were alarmed for him.

"Coker, old man!" gasped Greene. "What—what did you do it for? What's Prout done?"

"I—I didn't—I—I mean, I never meant——"

"Landed him fairly on the boko," said the wondering Potter. "Goodness knows how you managed to land the ball where you wanted it, Coker—but you've done it! But why——"

"I wasn't—I didn't—I never——"

Wingate ran to Prout to assist him to rise. Half a dozen other fellows gathered round to lend assistance.

Prout was in a dazed state.

Realisation of what had happened was slowly coming to him. It was not an earthquake! It was not a belated air-raid left over from the War! It was a football that had felled him—it lay at his feet, and the wet mud from it streamed on his august countenance. Prout was dazed, Prout was dizzy, and, Prout, as he slowly realised, was growing wrathful.

Wingate, on one side, Gwynne on the other, helped Prout up. Loder and Walker lent a hand. Prout was raised up, standing unsteadily with the aid of the Sixth Form men. Wrath boiled up in Prout's plump breast, and flamed from his muddy face.

"I—I—I have been—been felled!" gasped Prout. "I—I have been knocked over—by a boy in my Form! Good gad!"

Prout had seen Coker with the ball. He had not expected this outcome. From a fellow like Coker, he might have expected almost anything; but he had not expected this. He gasped and gurgled for breath. He mopped mud from his face, and his wrath boiled. He looked as if he was understudying Roderick Dhu, at the time when dark lightnings flashed from Roderick's eye.

"Well, you're for it now, old chap," said Greene. "It's the sack—but I suppose you knew that?"

"Don't be a silly ass, Greene!" gasped Coker. "It was an accident! I never meant——"

"Prout may believe that!" said Greene hopefully. "But it's a bit thick, old man! You see, we all saw you kick the ball right at Prout!"

"A hundred fellows saw you," said Potter. "How you brought it off was a mystery. It wasn't an easy kick, if you come to that. But you did it."

"I didn't!" shrieked Coker. "I never meant——"

"Coker!" Prout came striding towards the hapless member of his Form. His right hand was lifted in denunciation. "Coker, you will come with me to the Head! You will leave this school within the hour! You will be immediately expelled for this assault on your Form master!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker.

"Follow me!" roared Prout.

"But, sir, I didn't—I never—I wasn't——" babbled Coker.

"What?" boomed Prout. "What? Do you venture upon transparent prevarication, Coker? Under my own eyes, I saw you——"

"I—I—I did not—I—I——"

"That's no good, Coker!" said Wingate sharply. "We all saw you! Why, I was looking straight at you when you kicked the ball at Mr. Prout! Don't be an ass, Coker!"

"I didn't!" raved Coker. "I never did! You—you can't believe, sir, that I'd have kicked a footer at my own Form master! I—I'd as soon have kicked it at the Head himself, sir!"

Prout stared.

There was an almost anguished earnestness in Coker's tones. It impressed the Fifth Form master, in spite of the evidence of his own eyes!

"Coker, what do you mean? Are you out of your senses? I saw you kick the ball—though I certainly never dreamed that you had the impudence, the audacity, to kick it at your Form master! I beheld you, sir——"

"Not at you, sir—not at all! I never



meant it for you!" gasped Coker. "I swear, sir—" Coker gasped and gurgled. "It was an accident, sir! I can't imagine how it happened. I was kicking the ball at Wingate, sir—"

Wingate jumped.

"At me?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, rather! I—I never dreamed that it would go anywhere near Mr. Prout! Oh dear!"

"Coker, what you state is impossible! Wingate was directly in front of you—I was at a distance on your left—and—and—"

"Prout doesn't know Coker's form as a footballer!" murmured Bob Cherry, and the Famous Five chuckled.

"I—I—I assure you, sir—" groaned Coker.

"And if your statement is correct," boomed Prout, "for what reason, sir, were you kicking a football at a Sixth Form prefect, the captain of the school, sir?"

"He asked for it!" gasped Coker.

"What? What? Wingate asked you to kick the football at him? Absurd! Wingate, did you ask Coker to kick the football at you?"

"No, sir!" gasped Wingate.

"I mean, it was his fault, sir. I mean, he asked for it—that is to say, it served him jolly well right!" gasped Coker. "Wingate makes out that I can't kick a goal, sir—"

"What?"

"Makes out that I can't play footer, sir!" said Coker indignantly. "Makes out that I'm not a man for the First Eleven, sir! Makes out that I couldn't land a goal to save my life, sir. Well, I was just going to show him, sir, by landing that ball right on his nose, sir! That was why—"

"Good gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an almost hysterical shriek from the crowd of fellows round Coker and Prout.

They had wondered why Coker had scored a goal on his Form master's majestic countenance; such a proceeding being, of course, nothing more or less than an urgent request for the "sack." They had also wondered how Coker had contrived to bring the kick off so neatly. Now they knew!

Wingate burst into a roar. Probably he would not have found the incident amusing had the footer reached its target. But he found it amusing now.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"It was an accident, sir!" said Coker, with almost tearful earnestness. "An awful accident, sir! I—I can't imagine how the ball happened to go in your direction, sir—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's really very odd, sir—very odd indeed, for, you see, I was kicking it in quite another direction—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "This is not a laughing matter! Coker, your statement is absurd—incredible—incredible—"

"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"You will follow me to the Head—"

"Oh crumbs! I assure you, sir, it's true!" wailed Coker.

"It's true, sir!" chimed in Harry Wharton. The Famous Five, at least, were aware of Coker's real intentions, and they kindly weighed in with a word in favour of the dismayed Horace. "We knew, sir—"

"The truthfulness is terrific, sir!"

"We knew, sir!" said Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "Coker borrowed our footer to bung at Wingate, sir. He told us so."

"We wouldn't have let him have it, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,241.

sir, if he could have got it within yards of Wingate," said Frank Nugent. "But we never guessed he would get you with it, sir! Even Coker—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All these fags knew!" gasped Coker. "I told them! I—I was doing it just to prove to Wingate, sir, that I could kick straight—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only it didn't come off, somehow—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you utterly absurd, obtuse, reckless, and insensate boy!" boomed Prout. "I accept your explanation, Coker, as it is supported by the evidence of these juniors. I shall not take you to your headmaster to be expelled from Greyfriars, Coker! I shall make allowances for your abysmal stupidity and clumsiness, Coker. You will take a thousand lines, Coker. And if you ever venture to kick a football in the quadrangle again, I shall cane you!"

With that Prout swept away to the House. He was, in fact, in need of a wash before third school.

He left a crowd behind him yelling hysterically. Coker stared round at a sea of laughing faces.

"Oh, Coker!" gasped Potter.

"Oh, Coker!" gurgled Greene.

"Good old Coker!"

"Coker the goal-getter! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chumps!" said Coker warmly. "There's nothing to cackle at! It was a sheer accident—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't make out why the ball got to Prout—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" said Wingate. "You'll be the death of me yet, Coker! Why don't you leave Soccer alone and play marbles?"

"Or hop-scotch!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, with an angry snort, strode away. His intended demonstration of his powers as a goal-getter had not come off. How and why, Coker did not know; but there was no doubt about the fact.

He could not help feeling that the Greyfriars captain was less likely than ever to put him in the First Eleven after this demonstration of what he could do with his shooting-boots on.

It was annoying to Coker, and he could see nothing whatever to laugh at in what was, after all, simply an unfortunate incident. But the other fellows evidently could.

Coker was followed to the House by a roar of inextinguishable laughter.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Something Like a Stunt!

CARLOW, the new fellow in the Remove, carefully suppressed a smile.

Classes were over, and Carlow, strolling under the old Greyfriars elms, came in sight of Coker of the Fifth.

Coker of the Fifth did not observe him for the moment.

Coker, with his hands driven deep into his pockets and a deep wrinkle corrugating his manly brow, was immersed in thought. He looked like a fellow who had problems on his mind—as indeed he had.

He was not worrying about the lamentable accident to Prout. After all, accidents will happen! He was not

worrying about the thousand lines Prout had given him as a reward; though an imposition of that extent would have worried most fellows a little. But Coker had more important matters than this to think of. Lines could wait—Prout could wait! What couldn't wait was the question of justice being done to the finest footballer ever turned out by Greyfriars School—Horace James Coker.

Coker, as he often told Potter and Greene, was not the fellow to shove himself forward. He was not the man to insist on his claims, obvious as they were. But a man wanted justice! With deep feelings Coker had seen himself left out of school cricket all through the summer; just as if he was not the best cricketer the old school could boast. Now, it was plain, the same injustice, the same careless passing over of a fellow who couldn't really be spared, was to go on through the winter. And though Coker fancied himself as a cricketer, he felt that it was really as a footballer that he shone, like a bright, particular star.

Injustice piled on injustice; like Pelion piled on Ossa! No wonder Coker tramped under the elms with a corrugated brow. No wonder he frowned; no wonder he snorted.

Seemingly, Coker had retired to that quiet spot to think it out. It needed some thinking out, if he was to get into the Greyfriars First Eleven. For it was not only Wingate, the head of the games, who took the view that Coker couldn't play football. With amazing unanimity all the rest of Greyfriars agreed with Wingate. Even if Wingate had come round and recognised Coker's wonderful powers at their true value, he could hardly have played Coker without imminent risk of being lynched by the rest of the team. Undoubtedly it was a problem!

Carlow of the Remove was a new fellow, but he had heard all about Coker—Coker's Soccer being a standing joke. The mere mention of Coker in connection with football was enough to set any table in a roar.

But Carlow was careful not to smile as he glanced at the great Horace. He rather liked Coker, who was a good fellow in his own way. His heart was in the right place, though there was little to be said for his head.

Coker, glancing round, sighted Carlow; and the junior was glad that he had not smiled. Coker gave him a kind nod.

"Hallo, kid! Getting on all right in the Remove?" he asked.

"Yes, thanks, Coker!" answered Carlow.

There was no doubt that Coker was a decent man in his way. Remove fags, as a rule, were miles below Coker's notice, but he generally had a cheery word for Carlow. That was because Carlow was at Greyfriars in rather unusual circumstances.

He had been boot-boy at a boarding-house where Coker had stayed in the summer, and it had, naturally, been a great surprise to Coker when he turned up at the school as a Greyfriars fellow. There were fellows in the Remove, like Skinner and Billy Bunter, who turned up lofty noses at the new junior.

Coker was no snob, and he often took the trouble to go out of his way to speak a kind word to the erstwhile boot-boy of Brighton.

"Bit of a change for you—what?" said Coker.

"Tremendous change!" said Carlow. "Well, you deserved what you've got," said Coker graciously. "From what I hear, you saved a governor of the



school from drowning at the seaside, and he took you up and sent you here out of gratitude."

Carlow nodded.

"There isn't such a lot of gratitude in the world as there might be," said Coker rather bitterly. "I don't get a lot myself."

Carlow had to be careful not to smile again. He could not help wondering what were Coker's claims on the gratitude of humanity.

"Look at the way I keep the fags in order," said Coker. "I look after them a good deal. I've a short way with fags. I save the prefects a lot of trouble. Do they ever thank me? No! I've been asked more than once by a Sixth Form man not to butt in."

"Oh!" said Carlow. It seemed a safe remark.

"And the kids themselves," said Coker. "I've cuffed them, for their own good, lots of times. They're more likely to pile on me in a mob than to feel anything like gratitude."

"Oh!" said Carlow again.

"And look at Wingate," resumed Coker in the same bitter strain. "I've offered him my personal services as a footballer again and again, overlooking a lot of personal and ill-bred remarks. Is he grateful?"

Coker gave Carlow a rather suspicious look. For a moment the junior's features had relaxed. He found it very hard indeed not to smile.

"Not that Wingate's a bad sort," went on Coker tolerantly. "In many ways he's one of the best. He's rather handicapped by being a fool. If he understood my form, he'd play me like a shot. But he doesn't."

Carlow thought of Coker's display of "form" that morning in the quad, and again his face relaxed. Again he was careful to register gravity.

"Look at Potter and Greene," went on Coker. "Time and again I've told them what silly fools they are. Pointed it out to them, you know, for their own good. Do they thank a chap? They do not! Lots of times they've said quite nasty things."

"Oh!" gasped Carlow.

"I'm glad to see that there's such a thing as gratitude in existence," said Coker. "Jolly glad, Carlow! You can cut off," he added.

Carlow cut off.

And he was careful not to laugh till the elms hid him from the sight of Horace Coker.

Coker remained gloomily pacing.

But there was a glimmer in his eyes now, and his manly brow was still more deeply corrugated by the effort of cogitation.

An idea was working in Coker's powerful intellect.

Carlow, quite unknowingly, had put it there. No doubt there was room for it.

Coker stared after the junior thoughtfully. A governor of Greyfriars, out of sheer gratitude for a service rendered, had sent the boy to the school. Gratitude, evidently, was not so dead in the world as Coker, from his own experiences, had been inclined to suppose.

Coker's thoughts were following a new line.

Suppose he had an opportunity of rendering some service—some heroic stunt of some sort—to Wingate of the Sixth? Wingate, in the main, was not a bad chap. If Coker fished him out of the weir, for instance, he would be as grateful as the man Carlow had

would say: "Coker, old man, you've saved my life! Talk about pluck! What can I do for you, Coker?" To which Coker would immediately reply: "Play me in the St. Jim's match."

Coker smiled as he dwelt on these happy possibilities.

But the smile faded from his face. He could not help realising that the chapter of accidents was not likely to befriend him in this way in time for the football match with St. Jim's. It was really expecting too much of Fate.

But Coker's powerful intellect worked further now that he had the idea.

If the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet would have to go to the mountain.



Prout was helped up, standing unsteadily with the aid of the Sixth Form men. "I—I—I have been felled by a football!" gasped the Fifth Form master, wrath boiling up in his plump breast, and flaming from his muddy face. "Sorry, sir!" gurgled Coker. "It was an accident!"

fished out of the sea at Brighton. Coker was sure of it. Gratitude, in that case, might work the oracle. If Coker, for instance, saved Wingate's life at frightful risk, could the Greyfriars captain continue to refuse him a place in the Eleven? He couldn't! Coker felt that he couldn't.

Wingate, certainly, was not likely to fall into the weir, and if he did it was improbable that he would acquaint Coker with his intention in time for the heroic Horace to be on the spot. But suppose a runaway motor-car rushed down on him, and Coker dragged him away to safety just in time? Suppose a mad bull got after him, and Coker weighed in and took the bull by the horns? Lots of things might happen. And if they happened, and Coker happened to be at hand—

It was quite a bright idea. Wingate

"It could be wangled!" said Coker thoughtfully.

Coker had unlimited pluck. Had Wingate been in danger, certainly Coker would have rushed to the rescue. The only trouble was that Wingate was not likely to get himself into danger just to give Coker a chance to establish his claim to gratitude and a place in the team on Wednesday. Surely, in the circumstances, it would be justifiable to "wangle" it?

Tramping under the elms, with a corrugated brow, Horace Coker debated how it could be wangled, and his mind was quite made up when he walked back to the House.

Once Coker got a scheme into his head—a scheme which to Coker seemed a sure winner—wild horses could not drag it from him.



## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

## Let Down!

"**D**ESPERATE diseases—" began Coker.

"Eh?"

"Require desperate remedies," concluded Coker.

Potter and Greene of the Fifth looked at Coker.

"I think Shakespeare said that," went on Coker. "Anyhow, somebody said it, and it's jolly true."

There was an expression of deep thought, mingled with dogged determination, on the rugged face of Horace Coker.

Coker had been silent for some time, thinking. He was not thinking about prep. His books lay unheeded on the study table. More important matters than prep occupied Coker's powerful mind, and he was not bothering about possible trouble with Mr. Prout in the morning.

Potter and Greene, on the other hand, were getting on with it. They did not want trouble with Prout in the Form-room, if Coker did. Titus Livius occupied their minds to the exclusion of other matters. So they had not noticed that Coker was thinking. Besides, they would never have suspected Coker of thinking. It was not in his line at all.

Nevertheless, Coker had been thinking hard. Now, apparently, he was about to communicate to his study-mates and chums the outcome of his unusual mental efforts.

"What are you driving at, old man?" asked Potter resignedly.

It was clear that Coker was going to talk, and that prep would have to wait till he had finished. Potter's hope was to get it over as soon as possible.

"About the football," said Coker. Potter sighed.

Greene groaned.

If there was one subject more than another on which Horace Coker bored his friends to tears it was football. If only he would have kept off football they felt that they could have borne anything else. Unfortunately, it was Coker's favourite topic.

Of late it had been his continuous topic. All Greyfriars had heard and chuckled over Coker's claim to be played in the First Eleven. Potter and Greene, being Coker's study-mates, had naturally heard it oftener than more fortunate fellows. They had long ceased to chuckle over it. It made them groan.

"I've spoken to Wingate again," said Coker, unheeding the signs of distress in the faces of Potter and Greene. "He has definitely refused me a place in the Eleven. I pointed out to him that he couldn't afford to leave out a man like me when St. Jim's come over on Wednesday. And—you'd hardly believe it—he laughed! Just laughed!"

Potter and Greene could quite believe it. It was no wonder that the captain of the school had laughed at a statement which in their opinion was enough to make a cat laugh.

"And he said," went on Coker in a voice thrilling with indignation, "that if Greyfriars ever played St. Jim's at marbles he would put me in the team with pleasure, but not till then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Coker stared. Then he glared. "What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Potter. "I say, we haven't finished prep yet."

"You haven't touched yours, Coker," said Greene.

"Never mind prep now," said Coker. "Blow prep, bother prep! Talk about

Marcus Aurelius fiddling while Constantinople was burning."

"Oh, my hat! Wasn't it Nero and Rome?" gasped Potter.

"No, it wasn't! But never mind that now. I'm not teaching you classical history, but talking football."

"You know as much about the one as about the other," remarked Potter blandly.

"I dare say I do," assented Coker. Sarcasm on Horace Coker was a sheer waste. "I'm pretty good at history, and most other things in class, though Prout can't see it. I believe in cultivating the mind as well as the body. I'm not likely to neglect studies, simply because I'm the best man at games at Greyfriars. Something-or-other sana in what-do-you-call-it sano, you know."

"Mens sana in corpore sano," suggested Potter.

"A healthy mind in a healthy body," said Coker. "That's the idea! I forget the exact words." Coker ruthlessly ignored Potter's suggestion. "But it's something-or-other thingummy in what-do-you-all-it thingumbob. But does Prout put me to the top of the class? He doesn't. He makes out that I'm the most backward fellow in the Fifth. Sheer ignorance, of course, but there it is."

"Um!" said Potter.

"Hem!" said Greene.

"I get injustice all round," continued Coker. "Prout slangs me in class; partly from ignorance, partly, I'm afraid, from jealousy of a fellow who goes rather beyond him."

"Oh!" "And Wingate, who's captain of the school, and head of the games, and trusted to pick out the best men to represent Greyfriars, passes me over in Soccer just as Prout does in class. And the worst of it is that the fellows back him up, just as the Head would back up Prout, if I pointed out to him what an ignoramus the man is."

"It's a shame, old man!" said Potter hypocritically.

Potter would have said anything to stop Coker talking.

But Coker was not stopping.

"I've thought it out," he proceeded, "and made up my mind. I'm going to play in the fixture with St. Jim's on Wednesday. A man will have to be left out to make room for me. I shall advise Wingate to leave you out, Potter."

"M-m-me!" stuttered Potter.

"Yes. You're not much good, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Potter.

"Or Greene," said Coker thoughtfully. "Greene's not the class of man wanted for a game with St. Jim's, as I dare say he knows."

"I don't!" snapped Greene.

"Well, I'm telling you," said Coker. "Football comes before friendship. And I'm bound to tell you fellows that you're simply no good in a match like that on Wednesday."

Potter and Greene breathed hard as they gazed at Coker. This, from Coker, was really too rich. Coker's football was considered, by Coker, the very last thing in scientific Soccer. By the rest of the school it was considered a scream—a real shriek. Potter's eye wandered to the inkpot. Greene's wandered to a ruler.

Coker never knew how narrow an escape he had from the inkpot and the ruler. He went on cheerfully.

"One of you will have to be dropped. (Continued on page 8.)"

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Andrew Wilson, the famous Scottish International, ranks as one of the finest "positional" players of his day.

### Shy and Modest!

**A**NDREW WILSON was born at Morningside, near Glasgow, on February 15th, 1897, so that he is only thirty-four years of age. Perhaps it is because he has been so long famous that a large number of football enthusiasts imagine he is much older.

It was in the winter of 1909 that I first made his acquaintance. I was on a visit to Scotland, and one frosty and fine Saturday afternoon went for a long walk accompanied by a member of the Duke of Hamilton's family. It was on a piece of common-land that we saw a boys' football match in progress.

We stood and enjoyed that game until it was over, having seen a small youngster score some dozen goals and put in such tricky footwork as is seldom seen outside the highest-class teams. We called to the boy, who replied to our inquiries in a shy and modest manner, telling us his name was Andy Wilson, and spluttering out the most awkward speech of thanks when we each gave him half-a-crown, with a promise that when he played for Scotland—as he assuredly would—we'd give him a real good present.

About two years later I met Andy again, and on that occasion he was playing for a junior club called the Cambuslang Rangers. I reminded him of our previous meeting, and of his chances of representing Scotland against England. He was still very modest, and displayed awkwardness when I spoke of his future. Yet only some two years after that, when he was sixteen years of age, I grasped his young hand as he went out into the arena to play for Middlesbrough's First League team.

Twelve months later the Great War broke out, and Andy, giving a wrong age, went out to France. He was very unlucky in the way of wounds, being sent home patched up and returning to the front three times.

To the best of my belief it was during the War that he played in his first International game, for the British Army v. Belgium, but when the War was over he soon made a name for himself throughout the Soccer world.

### Andy All Over!

**I**N 1918 Wilson played for the Heart of Midlothian team, and in the following year he commenced a two-years' engagement with Dunfermline. This was followed by two years in Middlesbrough, and then, in 1923, he came south to Chelsea.

I cannot recall the number of times he has played for Scotland, but I do remember receiving a wire from Douglas Hamilton immediately it was announced that Andy was to earn his first "cap." "What are we to do about Wilson?" was the text of the telegram. "See the match and do him well," was my reply.

I have to record the fact that the great Scotsman refused all our overtures as to a financial present, and in his modest way said: "If you must do something, just gi'e me a wee packet o' cigarettes." That is Andy Wilson all over.

I remember being with him in the dressing-room at the conclusion of one of his best performances for Scotland. He had made the opposing defence look like a lot of school-boys, and had scored, seemingly, when he wanted to. A director of a Scottish club happened to come into the room, and, with ill-bred assurance, commenced to tell Andy how he might have made more of his—Andy's—opportunities during the match.

This was the only occasion when I have witnessed the

slightest display of temper in Wilson's make up. His eye glinted, and then he retorted: "Ay! Let's change places! Ye can play centre-forward for Scotland, an' I'll be the fella who kens nought about fitba'!"

### A Great General!

**A**NDY has made various trips to other lands, and his cleverness has astonished all who have witnessed his exhibitions.

It was in the summer of 1921 that I made a trip to the United States. I was oblivious to the fact that a team of Scottish International footballers had been playing exhibition matches in certain cities of Canada and the States until I went aboard the R.M.S. Celtic, at New York, for Liverpool. As I entered the saloon for my first meal I espied Andy Wilson and his party.

Wilson was the life and soul of the ship—he was loved by everybody. And it was Andy who prevented a sad tragedy when a small boy who had climbed into one of the ship's lifeboats on the top deck nearly fell into the sea. Wilson jumped forward at the risk of his own life and grabbed the youngster by his nether garments as he was falling overboard.

For a number of years Andy Wilson has been the Jack Hobbs of football. A great player, a wonderful general, a man whose popularity is beyond compare. He is still one of the best forwards in the country, and, without the shadow of a doubt, the greatest "general" in the world. To see Andy make openings for others to score, to see that touch of the foot which propels the ball to the toes of the colleague who is in a good position is an education.

I once heard a spectator, who was a follower of the rival team, make all sorts of offensive remarks because Andy was juggling with the ball and making his opponents look very poor players. The Chelsea "fans" took no notice of the rival spectator's unpalatable conversation until he made the mistake of calling out: "And what are you wearing a glove for? Have you got cold hands as well as cold feet?"

He regretted his remark a moment later when one of the onlookers "put him wise," for Andy's left hand was shattered in the War, and that's why he wears a glove.

Andy Wilson has now transferred his services to Queen's Park Rangers, and his experience and generalship should be of great assistance to them.

Many goalkeepers have learned to fear Wilson as one of the greatest marksmen of the day, and the ardent supporters of the Rangers are firmly convinced that their club's goal average will make a noticeable improvement now that Andy is "one of them."

A little while ago, when I was talking to Wilson about his experience, I asked him if he would give me one or two anecdotes, and he laughingly complied.

"It was a terrible cold night, just before the New Year, in a village outside Glasgow," he said, "and a man was awakened by something tapping against his window on the first floor. He got out of bed and shivered as he threw up the sash and put his head out, the east wind blowing snowflakes into the room. 'Hallo!' he cried. 'Wha's there?' 'It's a bitter cold night,' replied a voice in the darkness. 'Will ye gi' me saxpence for a bed?' And then the homeless one beneath was startled to hear: 'Ay, bide a wee, an' I'll come down an' ha'o a look at it.'"

"But that's not a football story," I said to Andy. "No," replied Wilson, with a laugh, "but the man at the window was a famous footballer!"



## COKER'S FOOTBALL FEVER!

(Continued from page 6.)

It doesn't matter which, as you're both duds, you know."

"There's one thing you seem to have forgotten," remarked Potter satirically. "Whether we're duds or not, Wingate wouldn't put you in the team for love or money."

"That's what I'm coming to," explained Coker. "As I remarked before, desperate diseases require desperate remedies. I'm going to make Wingate put me in the team."

"M-m-make him!" gasped Potter. "And how the merry thump are you going to make him?"

"By appealing to his gratitude, and his better feelings generally," said Coker. "That's what I've been thinking out. Suppose I saved Wingate from a terrible danger, between now and Wednesday—"

"My only hat!"

"He would be bound to play up," said Coker. "Wingate's a fool, but he's a good sort. Quite a decent sort of chap in every way, except that he can't judge a man's form at football. Well, I rescue him from peril, and he can't refuse me a place in the team—see?"

Potter and Greene did not seem to see. They stared at Coker, almost in alarm. His remarks seemed to them to indicate that he had taken leave of his senses—such as they were.

"B-b-but," stammered Potter, "d-d-do you think Wingate is going to shove himself into danger, with you standing by, just to give you a chance to rush to the rescue?"

"I'm going to wangle that," explained Coker complacently. "Of course, I couldn't expect it to happen of its own accord. It needs strategy. Well, I'm the fellow for strategy. Suppose two ferocious footpads attacked Wingate—somewhere out of gates? They get him down, and flourish a knife or something over him. I rush to the rescue, and knock them right and left. I rescue Wingate, and common gratitude does the rest. What?"

Coker, evidently pleased with that brilliant strategic idea, paused for the outburst of wonder and admiration that he expected.

But Potter and Greene did not express wonder or admiration. They stared at Coker, stupefied.

"And—and where are you going to pick up the footpads?" gurgled Potter.

"Here."

"Here?" repeated Greene.

"Right here—in this study," said Coker. "That's where you fellows will come in useful. You can't play footer, but, in your humble way, you will help to beat St. Jim's, by helping to get a really good man into the eleven. See? You make up as tramps, and put on masks and things."

"We—we make up as tramps!" said Potter dazedly.

"And—and put on masks and things!" gurgled Greene.

"That's the idea," said Coker, with a nod. "As a pair of ruffianly tramps, you attack Wingate, and give me the chance to rescue him. You mustn't mind if I hit you rather hard. I shall have to make it realistic. In fact, I shall knock you right and left. Now," added Coker briskly, "we'd better arrange the details."

Potter and Greene continued to gaze at him, while they assimilated the great idea. They were to disguise

themselves as tramps, attack the captain of the school, and be knocked right and left by Coker in his role of gallant rescuer. As a reward, one of them was to lose his place in the First Eleven in Coker's favour—if the scheme worked and Wingate's gratitude was equal of the test.

And Coker took their consent for granted. Horace Coker had a way of taking things for granted.

"Not a word outside this study, of course," said Coker. "The thing will have to be kept awfully dark."

"I—I should say so," articulated Potter. "Frightfully dark, I should say. A word of this outside the study and you'd be bunged right off into a lunatic asylum."

"What!" ejaculated Coker.

"We won't say anything about it," said Potter. "We'll forget it. And you'd better forget it, too. Now shut up and let's get on with prep."

"You're backing me up, of course?" asked Coker.

"Yes. We can see ourselves handling the captain of the school, and getting sacked for it," said Greene. "For goodness' sake, shut up, Coker!"

Coker rose to his feet. There was thunder in his brow.

"Are you backing me up in this, or are you not backing me up in this?" he demanded categorically.

"Not!" roared Potter.

"Not, you frabjous ass!" yelled Greene.

"So that's what you call friendship," said Coker. "I point out to you the only way of winning the biggest match of the season, in spite of George Wingate's fatheadedness, and you refuse to back me up. By Jove, I've a jolly good mind to bang your heads together!"

"You silly chump!"

"You footling fathead!"

Potter and Greene generally treated Coker with tact. They were very patient with Coker, as a rule. But there was a limit, and Horace Coker had passed the limit. So Potter and Greene took the opportunity of telling Coker what they had long thought of him.

"That does it!" gasped Coker, and he made a jump at his study-mates, and grasped them.

If ever two fellows deserved to have their heads knocked together, Potter and Greene did, in Coker's opinion. And Coker was the man to do it. He grasped them by their collars, and yanked them away from the study table.

According to Coker's programme, their obstinate heads should have banged together the next moment; but there was a hitch in the programme.

Potter and Greene turned on Coker, and grasped him in turn. Horace Coker found himself suddenly up-ended in two pairs of hands, and his head tapped on the floor of the study.

Bang!

"Yarocogh!" roared Coker.

Bang!

"Whocop!"

Bang!

"Yurrrrrgh!"

It was rather a surprise to Coker to discover that he could not handle Potter and Greene. But he couldn't!

The worms had turned, with a vengeance.

Having banged Coker's head thrice on the study floor, the incensed Fifth-Formers whirled him doorward. The door was dragged open, and Coker, hardly knowing what was happening, went whizzing through.

Crash!

Coker landed in the Fifth Form passage. Potter slammed the study door and turned the key in the lock.

"There!" gasped Potter. "He asked for it!"

"Beggd for it!" gurgled Greene.

"Now he's got it!"

"He has—and no mistake!"

"Whooooooop!" came from the passage, where Coker of the Fifth was sorting himself out.

A minute later Coker, in a boiling state was raging at a locked door. Potter and Greene, in the study, were getting on with their prep.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Awful for Bunter!

**B**ILLY BUNTER started.

Bunter had fancied that he was alone on the bank of the Sark. It was a sudden exclamation, in the well-known voice of Coker of the Fifth, that made him start, and warned him that he was not alone.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Coker.

Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

It was the day following Coker's remarkable performance in the Greyfriars quad, which had not convinced the captain of the school that Coker knew how to kick goals.

After class, Billy Bunter was taking a rather solitary walk; at that time of year there were few who haunted the river.

It was not merely the delights of solitude that Bunter sought. He was a gregarious fellow as a rule. But Billy Bunter was in possession of a large—a very large—chunk of toffee. Carlow, the new fellow in the Remove, could make toffee—and he had made it, and left it in his study to cool. He was not likely to find it there when he went to look for it. Bunter and the toffee were taking a solitary walk together—and the toffee was slowly but surely performing the vanishing trick. Not till it was gone did William George Bunter intend to reappear among his Form-fellows.

Sticky and happy, Bunter rolled along the river-bank, devouring toffee, and he was at some distance from the school when, glancing back, he saw Wingate of the Sixth coming the same way. But Wingate of the Sixth did not matter; he was not likely to have heard of toffee missing from a Remove study; and Bunter rolled on, regardless whether the Sixth Form man overtook him or not. And then he heard that exclamation, in tones of satisfaction, and looked round and beheld Coker of the Fifth close at hand.

Coker also had been seeking solitude; though certainly not on account of any such trivial thing as toffee.

Coker, leaning against a tree by the path, with his hands in his pockets, had been thinking, with a gloomy, corrugated brow—the old problem! Potter and Greene had failed him—let him down with a bump! That masterly scheme, which had seemed to Coker a sure winner, could not be carried out without assistance, and his own familiar friends had refused him assistance.

Since what had happened in the study the previous evening, Coker was hardly on speaking terms with Potter and Greene. They had let him down—and he scorned them and passed them by.

Now, there was quite a bright expression on Coker's face. It seemed as if his powerful brain had achieved, after all, a solution of the problem. Bunter blinked at him. To his surprise, Coker beckoned him to approach.



"Here, kid!" said Coker.

Bunter eyed him warily.

Coker had a short way with fags—which did not encourage Bunter to draw too near.

Coker glanced past him at Wingate. Wingate was still at a good distance, though he was coming up the riverside path at a good rate. In five minutes or so he would be on the spot. Coker's glance returned to Bunter.

"Come here, you fat freak!" he said graciously. "I want you!"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"I don't want to about!" said Coker testily. "Come here, you fat owl!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him suspiciously. Coker did not look warlike; and it was not, after all, Coker's toffee that Bunter had annexed. A week ago he had raided Coker's tuck; but Coker had already kicked him for that. Finally, the Owl of the Remove approached Coker—though still wary, and very much on his guard. Coker's short way with fags was not popular among the fags themselves.

"Well?" asked Bunter.

"Don't guzzle that toffee while you're talking to me," said Coker, with a frown. "Sticky little beast!"

Coker, apparently, wanted something; he had not called Bunter merely for the pleasure of his society. But Coker had no politeness to waste on a sticky fag; very little, indeed, to waste on anybody.

"Look here—"

"Shut up!" said Coker. "No time

for jaw—Wingate will be along in a few minutes. I don't want to lose this chance."

"Eh?"

"Don't jaw! I suppose you can see Wingate coming, you owl?"

"Yes; but what—"

"Dry up!" Coker waved his hand towards the river. "The weir's not very far away—dangerous place here. That's where a Second Form fag nearly got himself drowned the other day."

"I know. It was Nugent's young brother. But what—"

"Cheese it! Dangerous place for any man but a jolly good swimmer," said Coker. "Wingate's a fairly good swimmer, but he wouldn't be much use in the water here—jolly dangerous for any man if there wasn't a first-class swimmer on hand to rescue him."

Billy Bunter blinked blankly at Coker.

His remarks were well-founded, so far as that went; but what he was driving at was a complete mystery to Bunter. The fat junior began to wonder whether Coker had gone off his rocker. It was well known at Greyfriars that he had not far to go.

"Now, you stop here," said Coker. "I want you to help me. See? I'd rather have some fellow with a little

sense; but there's nobody else here, so you will have to do. See?"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Stand by this tree," said Coker. "Listen to me, and do carefully exactly what I tell you. Even a fool like you has sense enough for that!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard.

He did not yet understand what Coker wanted. But it was clear that he wanted something. He was making the request in his own tactful way.

"When Wingate comes along," con-

be barged off the bank into the Sark; and it was possible that he might be drowned, good swimmer as he was.

Bunter fairly gasped.

Coker's deep resentment at being left out of the matches was well known. But nobody had ever supposed that Coker was a revengeful fellow. He was every known kind of an ass; but there was nothing morbid about him. But now—now he was apparently proposing to drown Wingate of the Sixth, with Billy Bunter as an accessory before the fact!

Potter and Greene grasped Coker, up-ended him, and banged his head on the floor of the study. "Yarooogh!" roared Coker. Bang! "Whoooop!" "You'd knock our heads together, would you?" cried Greene. "How d'you like this?"



tinued Coker, "he will pass between you and the water, if you stand here. See?"

"I—I—I see!" stammered Bunter.

There was no doubt about it; but why Coker was pointing out the obvious in this way was perplexing—unless, indeed, he was off his rocker. The Owl of the Remove was beginning to feel quite uneasy; and he was glad that Wingate was in sight. If Coker's brain, never much of a going concern, had given way at last, Bunter did not want to be alone with him in a lonely place.

"When he's just between you and the water," went on Coker, "you rush right at him—"

"I—I—I—whatter?" gasped Bunter.

"And knock him over—"

"Knock him over!" said Bunter dazedly.

"Yes, so that he will go head first into the water. See?"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles.

He had no further doubt now; Coker was mad! It was doubtful whether he had ever been quite sane—judging, for instance, the way he played football! But that he was now as mad as a hatter admitted of no doubt. If Bunter carried out these instructions, it was certain that Wingate of the Sixth would

Bunter backed away from him in sheer terror.

"Here! Don't wander off, you fat dummy!" said Coker, evidently unconscious of Bunter's horrified thoughts. "There's no time to lose—he'll be along in two or three minutes. You've got it clear! Look here, if it works, I'll stand you a spread in my study—anything you like."

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

There were few things that Billy Bunter would not have done for a spread—especially a spread in Coker's study, which was a land flowing with milk and honey. But even Bunter had his limits. Not for all the fleshpots of Egypt would Bunter have taken a hand in the awful crime that Coker was—apparently—suggesting. He backed farther off, and cast a longing blink towards the still distant figure of George Wingate. It was simply awful to be on a lonely path, with a deep river on one side, and a dangerous maniac on the other!

Coker stared at him impatiently.

He had the whole thing out and dried in his own mind. It was, as he had said, ripping! It could not have happened better. Here was Wingate,



coming up the river-path—here was Bunter, who could be bribed with tuck to barge him into the water—and here was Coker, the finest swimmer, as well as the finest footballer, at Greyfriars, ready to dive in to the rescue.

Gratitude would do the rest. Potter and Greene had failed to play up; Coker had been left to his own resources; but his own resources had not failed him. His powerful intellect was equal to the strain—aided by this fortunate conjuncture of circumstances.

Coker did not reflect, for the moment, that Bunter was unaware of his intention of rescuing Wingate—as soon as Wingate was barged into danger. He had no time to explain all that—besides, Coker was not the fellow to explain things to fags. It was for fags to do as Coker told them, taking it for granted that Coker knew best; "Theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why," as it were.

Not that explanation would have helped much. Coker's belief that he was a magnificent swimmer was a belief that Coker had wholly to himself. Whether Wingate could swim in the dangerous reach near the weir might or might not be doubtful; but it was not doubtful that Coker couldn't—had Coker only known. It was not, as Bunter's terrified fat mind supposed, murder that Coker was proposing. It was suicide. Coker, however, was happily unconscious of that.

Billy Bunter backed farther off. He backed and backed—prepared to run if Coker made a single motion towards him. Thrills of terror ran through Bunter's fat limbs. The toffee stuck unheeded in his fat hand. Even toffee had no appeal for Bunter now.

Coker glanced along the path. Wingate was drawing near—and Coker detected a smile on his face. No doubt that smile was called up by the sight of Coker, and the remembrance of Coker's goal of the day before.

Coker's jaw set grimly. The fellow could grin if he liked—he would stop grinning jolly soon. It would not be a grinning matter when he was barged into the river.

But he was not barged in yet. Bunter was backing off to get a start for a run, watching Coker like a cat.

"Now, then, stick yourself here, Bunter!" said Coker. He pointed out the spot where Bunter was to stand. "Keep your eye on Wingate! What are you backing off for, you young ass?"

"Oh crikey!"  
"Come here, you fat little idiot! Mind, if it comes off all right, you get a spread—anything you like. Just barge Wingate in—"

"Oh dear!"  
"And leave the rest to me. Don't let out that I put you up to it, of course—that would spoil the whole thing."

"Oh crumbs!"  
"You young ass, come here! What are you sheering off for?" exclaimed Coker, in exasperation, and he made a stride towards Bunter.

That did it!  
The instant Coker moved, Bunter spun round and took to his heels, with a squeal of terror.

Bunter was seldom swift. But now he fairly flew. The way he went down the river-path looked as if Billy Bunter had a chance for the school 100 yards. Coker stared after him.

"Bunter!" he roared.  
"Ow! Help!" squeaked Bunter.

He raced on.  
"Bunter, you young idiot—" bawled Coker.

"Ow! Oh dear! Oooooogh!"  
Bunter flew on. He passed Wingate, who stared at him.

"Look out!" gasped Bunter.  
"What—"

"He's mad!"  
"That's no news," said Wingate, with a grin. "But what—"

"Run!" gasped Bunter.  
He flew on, leaving Wingate staring after him blankly. Wingate was not likely to run, even if Coker was in a state of perilous insanity. Neither did Wingate suppose that Coker was mad. Madness, after all, required a certain amount of brains to go mad with. Coker hadn't enough.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated the astonished Wingate. "Bunter! You young ass! What's the matter?"

But answer there came none. Bunter, puffing and blowing, tore on frantically, and vanished in the distance.

"My hat!" repeated the Greyfriars captain.

He resumed his walk, and came up with Coker. There was an expression of utter disgust on Coker's face.

The opportunity—the great opportunity, had been lost; owing to Bunter's strange and unaccountable conduct. With nobody to barge Wingate into the river, Coker could not dive to his rescue, and establish that claim on his gratitude that would set matters right in the school games.

Even Coker did not think of barging Wingate into the water himself, and then rescuing him. It was clear, even to Coker's mighty intellect, that you

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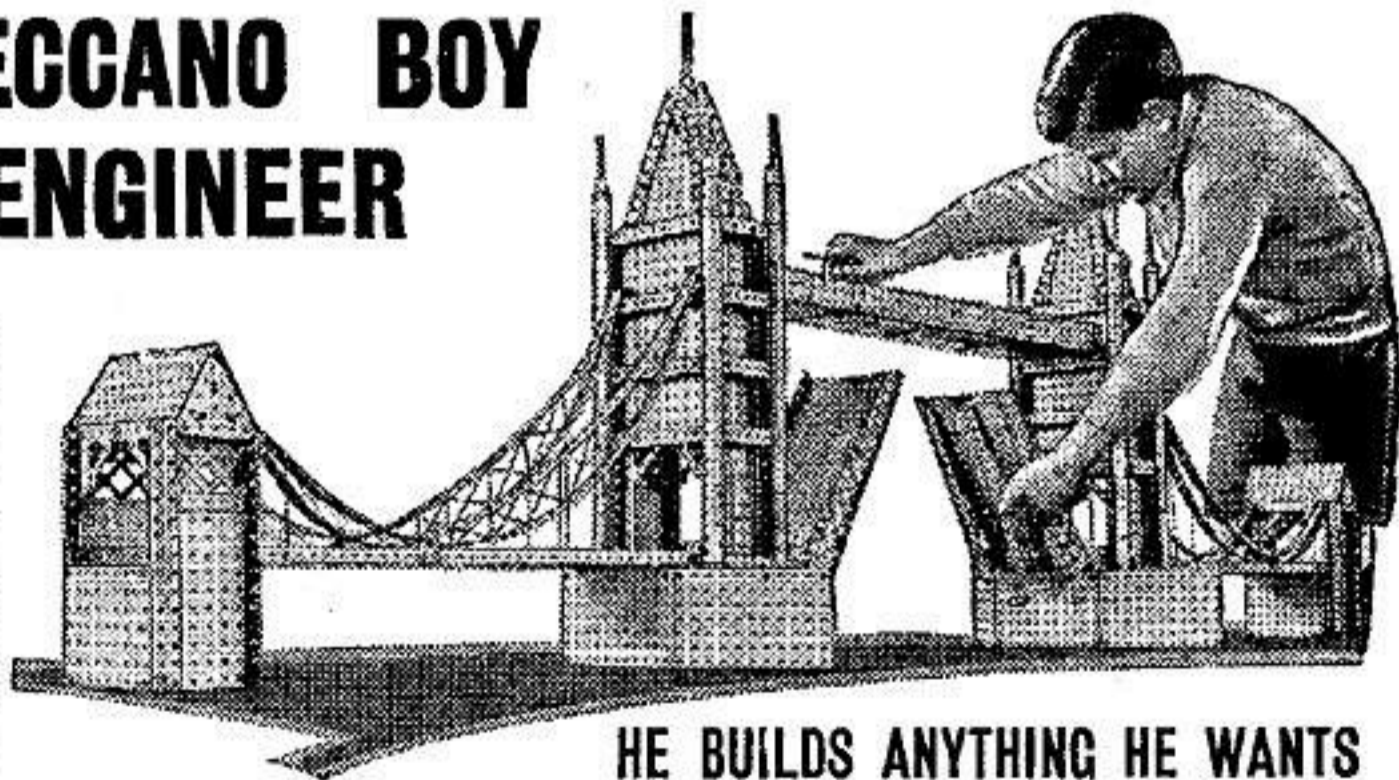
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(DEPT. 35)

OLD SWAN

LIVERPOOL



could not earn a fellow's gratitude by barging him into deep water.

"What on earth's the matter with that kid, Coker?" asked Wingate.

Snort, from Coker.

"He seems frightened at something," said Wingate.

"Oh, rot!"

"Your face, perhaps," remarked Wingate thoughtfully, and he walked on, leaving Coker breathing hard and deep.

The chance had come—and gone. Coker's brilliant idea had not worked yet. He was going to wangle it somehow; but as yet he had not wangled it. After all, there were several more days before the St. Jim's match, and Coker could only hope that another chance would come his way. Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mad!

"I SAY, you fellows!"  
 "What the thump—"  
 "I—I—I say—" gurgled Billy Bunter.

Bunter was still going strong when he arrived at the school gates. His fat little legs fairly twinkled. The toffee, still unheeded, was sticking to his fat paw; Bunter had forgotten it. He puffed and he blew, he panted and he perspired, but he was still running, like Charley's celebrated aunt, when he reached Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quad, and they stared at Bunter. He panted up to them, and then, at last, halted, almost tottering from his unusual exertions. He grabbed hold of Bob Cherry's arm and held on, and leaned on the astonished Bob, gasping for breath.

"Mad bull after you?" asked Bob cheerily.

"Ow! Ow! Grooogh! No! Oh dear!" gurgled Bunter.

"Highcliffe cads?" asked Bob, with a warlike look towards the gates.

"Ow! No! Wow!"

"Just sprinting to bring down your fat?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Wow! No, you ass! Wow!"

"Well, what is the terrific upfulness?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh dear! Is he coming?" gasped Bunter.

"He! Who?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Coker! Oh dear! Ow!"

There was no sign of Coker of the Fifth. Bunter, realising that the lunatic was not in pursuit, calmed down a little. But he still gasped spasmodically. Bunter was rather short of wind, and what little he had he had expended recklessly in his hurried flight.

"Coker after you?" asked Harry. "Does that toffee belong to Coker? Grub-raiding again, you fat villain?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! This toffee isn't Coker's."

"I fancy I know whose it is!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I've heard young Carlow inquiring after some toffee."

"Oh, really, Cherry! This toffee came in a hamper from Bunter Court! I never saw Carlow making it in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't mention it to Carlow." Bunter shoved the sticky toffee into a sticky pocket. "He might fancy it was his, you know, if he's missed some. I haven't been near his study. You can ask Skinner. He saw me coming out."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But, I say, you fellows, look out!

He may be in any minute—Coker, you know. I say, he's mad!"

"Madder than usual?" asked Bob.

"The madfulness, of the esteemed Coker is always a little terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I mean it! He's gone mad—stark, staring, raving mad!" gasped Bunter. "I—I barely escaped with my life!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"He sprang at me like—like a tiger! I—I—I only hope he hasn't murdered Wingate!"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five with one voice.

"He—he wanted me to help him!" gasped Bunter. "Me, you know—help him to drown Wingate—"

"Great pip!"

"He's mad—awfully mad! Dangerous!" panted the Owl of the Remove. "I—I hardly think we shall see Wingate again. I'm pretty sure that Coker's murdered him— Yow-ow! Yaroooh! Leggo!"

Billy Bunter broke off with a gurgling

LIKE A POCKET-KNIFE,  
 CHUM?

Then send me an amusing joke like R. Sparrow, of 16 West End Avenue, Leyton, has done.



"Are these sheets quite clean?" asked the tourist, as he surveyed the bed.  
 "Clean!" cried the landlady, indignantly. "Of course they are. They've just come from the laundry. Feel them—they're still damp!"

howl as Bob Cherry grasped him, backed him up against an elm, and tapped his head there.

"Now, you fat dummy," said Bob, "what do you mean?"

"Yaroooh!"

"What's that about Coker?"

"Yooooop!"

"Are you trying to pull our leg, or what?" demanded Bob.

"Groooooogh!"

"What have you got to say, you fat chump?"

"Gurrrrrrrh!"

Billy Bunter wriggled away, gurgling. "You silly ass!" he gasped. "I—I tell you he's mad, honest Injun! He asked me to help him drown Wingate in the Sark! Because he's left him out of the footer, I suppose. He must be mad, you see. I—I say, you fellows, do you think I'd better go to Quelch, or—the Head, or the police?"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the excited Owl.

Their first impression had been that the fat junior was trying to pull their leg. But Bunter was evidently in

earnest. He blinked towards the gates, with his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles, obviously in terror of seeing Coker come in in a state of dangerous insanity.

"Is the fat idiot off his onion?" asked Nugent, in wonder.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Tell us what's happened, ass!" said Harry Wharton. It was clear that something must have happened.

Bunter gasped out the thrilling tale. The chums of the Remove listened in utter amazement. Several other fellows gathered round to listen also. Bunter's yarns were well known in the Remove. He never could tell a plain, unvarnished tale. Whether he had ever tried to tell the exact truth was not known, but it was known that he had never succeeded. Still, the Remove fellows could see that there was something in this. Stripped of all exaggerations, there was something in it.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, at last. "This beats the band! If there's a word of truth in it—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Coker must have been larking," said Vernon-Smith.

"Not much of a lark to barge a man into deep water!" said Harry Wharton. "That part of the Sark's pretty dangerous, too! That's where your minor tried to get drowned the other day, Frank."

"The young ass jolly well would have been drowned if Carlow hadn't fished him out," said Nugent. "Wingate would be all right, though. He's a jolly good swimmer. But—"

"Can't make it out," said Bob. "Coker's sane enough, except when he's trying to play Soccer. But—"

"If he wanted to barge Wingate into the river for a lark, he could have barged him himself," said Peter Todd. "Why should he ask Bunter to do it? But if he wasn't larking, what on earth was he up to?"

"I say, you fellows, he's mad! I say, I'm jolly well going to keep a safe distance from him. I say—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter gave one startled blink at the burly figure coming in at the gates, and ran for the House.

Coker strode in.

He was frowning, as was natural in a fellow who had lost a golden opportunity through a silly fag behaving in an unaccountable manner. He looked cross, but, so far as the juniors could see, there were no signs of insanity. A crowd of eyes were fixed on the burly Fifth-Former as he strode towards the House.

Coker, becoming aware that he was the centre of attraction, stared round at the group of juniors, frowning still more grimly. He seemed surprised, as well as annoyed, by their interest in him.

He glared at the juniors. They stared at him. His rugged face seemed to draw their fixed gaze like a magnet.

He made a stride towards the group, his eyes gleaming. This sort of thing was cheek, and Coker was not the man to stand cheek from Lower Fourth fellows.

The juniors backed away rather hurriedly.

"I say, you keep off, you know!" ejaculated Skinner.

"You cheeky young sweeps! If you want me to mop up the quad with the lot of you—" exclaimed Coker.

"Look out, you men! If he's mad—"

Coker jumped.  
 "What?" he roared.  
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The juniors backed farther off, still eyeing Coker. He was beginning to look rather excited.

"Dash it all, I don't like the look in his eye!" said Peter Todd. "I—I say, Coker, keep calm, you know!"

"I'll jolly well——"  
"Here, you keep off!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Coker did not keep off. He strode after the juniors as they backed away. Undoubtedly he was getting excited, and in the circumstances excitement on Coker's part was a little alarming. If Coker was mad, nobody wanted to be near him when the fit came on.

The little crowd of juniors melted away before Coker. He gave them a final glare, turned, and stalked into the House.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Lunatic!

**B**LUNDELL, the captain of the Fifth, strolled along the Fifth Form passage and stopped at the door of Coker's study. Blundell found the door half open, and pushed it farther open and looked in. His manner was quite casual—very casual indeed. But there was a very alert look in his eyes.

A startling rumour that was afloat among the juniors had reached Blundell's ears.

How it had started, who had started it, Blundell did not know, but it seemed to be going strong in the Lower School. With his own eyes he had seen Bunter of the Remove dive frantically round a corner at the mere sight of Coker. He had seen three or four fags back away in a passage when Coker came along, eyeing the great Horace uneasily till he had passed. These incidents seemed to confirm the rumour that was afloat in the Lower School, that Coker of the Fifth, never supposed to be quite secure on his rocker, was off it at last.

There was no doubt, at all events, that fellows in the Lower School were telling one another that Coker was mad. They were passing it on as the latest news. A fellow meeting another fellow on the corridor would say: "Heard about Coker? He's mad, you know!" Blundell had heard it several times.

It was all rot, of course. Fellows who saw Coker playing football, might suppose, from his style of play, that he was a little unhinged. If they heard him talking football, they might naturally suppose that his mind, such as it was, was wandering. But fellows who knew Coker knew that he was only an ass—the extreme limit, perhaps, in the asinine line, but still, only an ass.

Still, Blundell thought that he might as well give Coker a look-in and see for himself. That was why he strolled along to Coker's study in a casual sort of way, looking very nonchalant, but with a wary eye open at the same time.

"Hallo, old chap!" said Blundell very affably.

Coker glanced round.

He was alone in the study. Potter and Greene for the present were giving that study a wide berth.

The previous evening they had hurled Horace Coker forth on his neck. There had been many ups and downs in their friendship with Coker, but generally Coker came round all right in the long run. Still, an incident like that of the previous evening was not soon forgotten. Coker made no secret of his intention of "whopping" them if they came to the study. So for the present they left the great Horace alone in his glory.

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Blundell's affable greeting elicited a friendly nod from Coker.

The captain of the Fifth never called Coker "old chap," as a rule. He was, in Coker's opinion, rather a stuck-up ass. He was as obstinately and obtusely determined to keep Coker out of the Fifth Form Eleven as Wingate was to keep him out of school games. He did not agree with Wingate in all matters, but on the subject of Coker as a footballer he saw eye to eye with the captain of the school.

"Come in, old bean!" said Coker quite pleasantly.

If Blundell wanted to be friendly, Coker was quite prepared to be friendly. He really was a friendly sort of fellow. It was easy to get on with Coker if you let him have his own way in everything, listened to his words as to an oracle, and regarded him with unlimited and unflinching admiration. That was all Coker needed to keep him in a good temper. He did not always get it.

Blundell stepped into the study. Coker seemed all right so far, but Blundell left the door open.

There was a spread on the table—one of Coker's lavish spreads. For once, Potter and Greene were not going to help him dispose of it. A bright fire burned in the grate, and Coker had taken a loaf to slice it for making toast. He was looking round for the bread-knife when Blundell came in. He was not in the best of tempers, for as a rule Potter or Greene made the toast in Coker's study. As Coker stood most of the provender it was only fair that his study-mates should make themselves useful; and, to do them justice, they never demurred. They were always ready to unpack Coker's hampers for him, and to save him as much trouble as they could in disposing of the contents.

"Take a pew, old man," said Coker.

"Not had your tea?"

"No," said Blundell.

"Tea with me, then," said Coker.

"Oh, all right!"

Blundell sat down, feeling that tea-ing with Coker would give him a good opportunity to observe whether there was anything in that wild rumour in the Lower School; also the spread on the table was rather tempting.

Coker glanced round him, looked on the bookcase and into the cupboard, and frowned. Apparently he was looking for something he could not see.

"Lost something?" asked Blundell.

"No! I never lose anything, but a fellow never knows where those silly chumps put things. Can you see a big knife?"

"Eh?"

"A rather big bread-knife——"

"A—a—a rather big bread-knife——" repeated Blundell. He had been sitting down only a few seconds, but he rose again rather hastily.

"Yes, I want it——"

"There's a knife on the table—two or three knives——"

"They're no good for me; I want a big knife——" Coker glared round the study. "The silly asses! Where have they put that knife? Potter had it yesterday. The way that fathhead loses things—— Hold on, Blundell! You're not going?"

Blundell was making a strategic movement towards the door.

"That knife must be here somewhere!" exclaimed Coker, greatly irritated. "Where the dickens is it?"

"But one of those small knives——" suggested Blundell, eyeing Coker with growing uneasiness.

"No good for what I'm going to do. I want a big, sharp knife——"

Blundell reached the doorway. He felt that it was judicious to be near an open line of retreat when a fellow who was said to be mad was looking for a big, sharp knife.

Coker, it was true, only wanted the bread-knife to slice the loaf for toast. It was quite a natural use to which to put a bread-knife. It was really what the bread-knife was for. But Blundell was not thinking of toast; he was thinking of the rumour in the House that Coker was mad. Being shut up in a study with a possible lunatic who was handling a big, sharp knife was no joke.

"Oh, here it is!" exclaimed Coker. He sighted the knife lying among some exercises and books on a shelf.

He grabbed it by the handle. The light gleamed on the long, sharp blade. Coker stepped back towards the table—and Blundell stepped back into the doorway. He felt better there.

Coker, knife in hand, stared at him. "Where are you going, Blundell?" he ejaculated.

"I—I think I heard Hilton call——" stammered Blundell.

"I didn't! Come in and sit down."

Coker pointed to the empty chair—with the knife.

Had Blundell remained seated in that chair Coker would have started slicing the loaf for toast with that big, sharp knife according to programme; as it was he stood holding the knife and staring at the captain of the Fifth in surprise and irritation.

Blundell had accepted his invitation to tea, yet he was backing out of the study, and there was a strange—indeed, extraordinary—expression on his face. He seemed oddly uneasy and perturbed.

"Look here, Blundell, come in!" snapped Coker. "I can't make you out. Come and sit down."

He pointed to the chair again—with the knife.

"I—I——" stammered Blundell.

"Come in and sit down. I shan't be keeping you waiting long now I've found the knife."

Blundell backed into the passage. Coker, still more surprised and annoyed, followed him to the door.

"Look here, Blundell——"

"I—I've got to speak to a man!" stammered Blundell, with a wary eye on the knife. "Another time, old chap——"

He backed along the passage, turned, and hurried away, leaving Coker staring after him blankly from the study doorway.

Price of the Fifth came down the passage, and he gave a sort of convulsive start at the sight of Coker in the doorway, knife in hand.

He swerved to the other side of the passage as he passed, keeping his eyes on Coker.

"I say, Price——" called out Coker.

"Look here, you keep off!" gasped Price.

"What?"

Price broke into a run. Coker, in utter amazement, saw him scud down the passage to the games-study, where he ran in, and slammed the door after him.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated the astonished Coker. "What on earth's the matter with them? Have they gone mad—or what? Here, Tomlinson—I say, Tomlinson——"

Tomlinson of the Fifth looked out of his study door.

He stared at Coker—and stared at the knife. Coker, quite forgetful of the knife in his hand, came towards him.

"Did you see that?" he exclaimed.

"That what? That knife?" asked



Tomlinson, with his hand on the study door, ready to slam.

"This knife? What? No! That ass Blundell, and then Price clearing off like that. Have they gone mad—or what? I say—"

Slam!

Tomlinson's door closed as Coker came nearer. To his astonishment, Coker heard the key turn in the lock.

"Are they all mad?" exclaimed the mystified Coker. He thumped at Tomlinson's door. "I say, Tomlinson—"



As Coker put his back to the door the Famous Five armed themselves with the nearest articles to hand. "Look here——" gasped the Fifth-Former. "Keep your distance!" said Nugent threateningly. "You can't help being mad, and we don't want to hurt you!"

"Go away! You go away, Coker!" came Tomlinson's quavering voice from within. "Go away, and—and keep calm."

"K-keep calm!" stuttered Coker. "Who's not calm? What's the matter with you, you silly idiot? Open this door—can't you?"

"No jolly fear!" gasped Tomlinson.

Bang! Thump!

Coker, naturally annoyed at these surprising happenings, thumped angrily on the door.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "What do you mean?"

"Oh crikey!"

Two or three Fifth Form men came down the passage. They stopped quite suddenly at the sight of Coker banging at a door with one hand and holding a long, gleaming knife in the other.

"Look out!" exclaimed Hilton.

Coker stared round.

Instantly the Fifth Form men dashed away up the passage. Coker blinked after them.

"Here, you men——" he shouted. "What——"

But the men were gone.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Coker; and in a state of utter mystification he returned to his study, slammed the door, and started slicing the loaf.

Coker tea'd alone that afternoon.

Coker's study was a land of plenty; and even fellows who did not like Coker often liked to come in to tea. But that afternoon no man in the Fifth would have tea'd with Coker for love or money.

Fellows who had to pass his study tip-toed, and, at a sound from within the study, ran. And when Coker, after tea, came out of the study, fellows who

sighted him from a distance cleared off hurriedly, and doors were heard to slam. Coker, quite unconsciously, was spreading terror as he moved, like Death on a Pale Horse.

### THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

#### Not Dangerous!

"**P**OOOR old Coker!" said Harry Wharton.

"Poor chap!" said Nugent feelingly.

"Mad as a hatter, you know!"

"Awful, isn't it?"

"Poor old Coker—it's come at last!"

"There seems to be no doubt about it," said Bob Cherry. "It looked like it, from what Bunter said——"

"And then the way he glared at us in the quad——"

"And now——"

"Now it's a cert!" said Johnny Bull. "From what I hear, he was after some of the Fifth with a knife——"

"He nearly got Blundell in his study, from what I hear," said Peter Todd. "It seems that Blundell actually went into the study——"

"Silly ass to risk it!" said Skinner.

"Well, I suppose he wanted to make sure. He will have to speak to Prout about it, of course. It's a jolly serious matter—a fellow going right off his rocker."

"The seriousness is terrific!"

"The Fifth are awfully upset about it," said Vernon-Smith. "I hear that Coker was seen fairly raging at a man's door and brandishing a knife——"

"The man had locked himself in his study," said Peter Todd, taking up the tale, "and Coker was trying to get at him with a big knife——"

"Howling like a maniac outside his door, so I hear!" said Russell. "Yelling, you know!"

"They ought to get hold of him before he does some harm," said Johnny Bull. "Dash it all, it's no joke!"

"Might do anything, if he's really mad!" said Skinner. "Somebody ought to go to Prout, or to the Head."

"Well, it looks pretty certain," said Bob. "The fact is, I fancy Coker always had a screw loose. The way he plays football, f'rinstance——"

"I say, you fellows, he's coming!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"What?"

"Oh, I say—look out!"

The crowd in the Remove passage broke up hastily. Billy Bunter bolted into Study No. 7, like a fat rabbit into a burrow, and slammed the door and locked it. The other fellows dispersed rapidly.

A burly form was seen on the Remove staircase. Horace Coker was coming up to the Remove.

No Fifth Form man had any business in the Remove passage. Fifth Form men did not call upon juniors. In ordinary circumstances, the Remove would most likely have collared Coker and rolled him down the stairs, as a hint that he was not wanted in their quarters.

But the circumstances were not ordinary now. All through the House the startling rumour of Coker's insanity was on every tongue. No knife was to be seen about him, it was true—but he had been reported as having brandished a big knife in his own passage, and that report was enough for the juniors. They

(Continued on page 16.)





(Continued from page 13.)

scattered before Coker like a flock of sheep at the coming of a wolf.

The Famous Five hastily retired into Study No. 1. The chums of the Remove had been exceedingly perplexed by what Bunter had told them—but they did not, at first, share Bunter's fixed belief that Coker had gone mad. But what they had heard since confirmed Bunter's view. A fellow who raged at a man's door with a big knife in his hand could scarcely be sane. Such conduct, at least, needed a lot of explaining.

"I—I hope he's not coming here," murmured Nugent. "I—I say, had we better lock the door?"

"We can handle him," said Bob.

"I don't know," Nugent looked dubious. "Lunatics are jolly strong, you know—maniacal strength, and all that—"

"We're not absolutely certain yet—" said Wharton slowly.

"Well, there can't be much doubt. He tried to get Bunter to barge a man into the river—"

"He was after a man with a knife—"

"Oh, my hat! Here he is!"

Coker of the Fifth looked in at the doorway of Study No. 1. Harry Wharton & Co. lined up on the other side of the table, and watched him.

They were relieved to see that there was no sign of unusual excitement in his face. He looked normal—at least, as normal as he ever did. Neither was there any sign of a knife or other weapon.

But they were on their guard. Coker was a hefty fellow, knife or no knife.

The Famous Five had handled him successfully more than once; but that was when he was sane. With a lunatic there was no telling.

Bob Cherry reached behind him and picked up a fives bat. Harry Wharton took hold of the poker, as if to stir the fire; but he kept his eye on Coker, not on the fire. The juniors watched Coker like five cats.

"Oh, here you are!" said Coker, quite genially.

"Yes, old fellow!" said Frank Nugent soothingly.

Coker frowned.

"Not so much of your 'old fellow,'" he said curtly. "I don't like that sort of thing from fags."

This remark was not, perhaps, polite; but it had an effect of relief on the juniors. It was normal—for Coker! If he was mad, he had not, at least, departed from his usual manners and customs.

"Well, do you want anything here, Coker?" asked Wharton.

"Don't be a young ass, Wharton! I shouldn't have come if I didn't!"

"Oh! Well, what—"

"What are you all bunched up in that corner for?" demanded Coker, staring at them. "What are you afraid of?"

"We—we're not afraid—"

"I'm not going to lick you," said Coker reassuringly. "I haven't come here to thrash you, though I dare say

you know that you jolly well deserve it. I've got something to say to you."

He turned to the door and shut it. This proceeding was eyed rather uneasily by the juniors across the table.

"I—I say, what are you shutting the door for, Coker?" asked Nugent. "I—I say, we—we'd rather have the door open, if you don't mind."

"I do mind!" said Coker.

"But—but I say—"

"You needn't say anything, Nugent. I don't want all the fags in the passage to hear," said Coker. "What I've to say is rather private."

Harry Wharton & Co. eyed him.

What Coker of the Fifth could have to say, of a private nature, in a Remove study, was a mystery. It looked to them like the first sign of lunacy coming on.

Bob Cherry's grip tightened on the fives bat—Wharton's on the poker. Johnny Bull drew the inkpot towards him in a careless sort of way.

Certainly, if poor old Coker was no longer in possession of his senses, such as they were, the chums of the Remove did not want to hurt him—far from it! They compassionated him, and sympathised with him. But if he broke out into violence, he had to be stalled off; and in that case the fives bat, the poker, and the inkpot would come into prompt action.

Coker, in his turn, eyed the juniors. There was something about their attitude that puzzled him. They seemed uneasy, unquiet, watchful, wary; in fact, quite jumpy. It was not like them—not like them at all. Even if Coker had come there to whop them, they were not the fellows to be scared. And he had told them that he was not there to whop them.

"You can sit down, you kids," said Coker, taking a seat on the corner of the study table.

"We—we'd rather stand, thanks," said Bob Cherry. "I—I say, Coker, do you—do you feel all right?"

"All right?" Coker stared. "What do you mean, you young ass?"

"I—I mean, you—you don't feel anything coming on?"

"Anything coming on? What the thump do you mean? Have you gone potty, or what?" demanded Coker testily. "It seems to me as if the whole House has gone mad this afternoon."

"M-m-m-mad!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes, mad as hatters, the lot of them, from the way they carry on!" said Coker irritably.

The juniors exchanged glances. It was a well-known thing that mad persons suspected others of being mad.

"I—I say, Coker, keep cool!" murmured Wharton.

"D-d-don't get excited, you know," said Bob. "Excitement may bring it on!"

"What! Bring what on?" demanded Coker.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Nothing! But—but don't get excited, for goodness' sake! Keep as cool as you can!"

"The calmfulness is the proper caper," urged Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The excitement may have terrifically preposterous results, my esteemed Coker!"

"Look here—" roared Coker.

"Keep cool, for goodness' sake—"

"You cheeky young sweeps, if this is meant for check, you'd better cut it out, and sharp!" said Coker, breathing hard. "I came here to speak to you—in fact, I want you to do something for me. I don't want to begin by whopping the lot of you."

The Famous Five grinned. This sounded like the old Coker! If Coker wanted fellows to do something for him

he was as likely as not to whop them to start with. In fact Coker had never shone.

"Well, give it a name, Coker!" said Wharton. "We'll do anything we can, of course, in the circumstances—"

"Eh! What circumstances?"

"Oh, nothing! Go on!"

"Talk sense!" said Coker. "Look here, you are a set of cheeky young sweeps, and I've often had to thrash you, as you know. But I want you to do something—you're the kids to do it. You're plucky, at least, and you can keep a secret—what?"

"I—I suppose so!" said Harry doubtfully.

What secret Coker was going to confide in them, the juniors could not guess; unless he was going to mention that he realised his sad mental state.

"Not a word outside this study!" said Coker impressively. "It would spoil the whole thing, of course. That's understood. I'm trusting you! It's rather a come-down, I admit, for a man in my position in the school to be talking to fags like this! I feel it, as you can guess. But what's a fellow to do? My own pals in the Fifth have let me down! I've got to get some sort of assistance—and it's you measly fags, or nothing!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

This sounded more and more like the old Coker! Coker's way of putting it when he was asking a favour was wholly his own.

"But to come to the point," resumed Coker. "Here it is in a nutshell. You kids have done a lot of amateur theatricals—you're rather good at it, for a set of silly fags. Well, you could easily fix yourselves up in a sort of disguise—false beards, and wigs, and moustaches, and old clothes, and so on. See?"

The Famous Five could only stare. It was easy enough for the chief members of the Remove Dramatic Society to do as Coker indicated. But why Coker wanted them to do it was a deep mystery—unless he was potty.

"Well, that's the idea," said Coker briskly. "That's what I want! You get yourselves up as a set of ruffians, and—"

"Do we?" murmured Nugent.

"And you collar Wingate of the Sixth. I'll fix up time and place—"

The juniors jumped.

"We—we collar Wingate of the Sixth!" stammered Wharton.

"Yes, and get him down, hold him, and knock him about a bit. Better knock him about a bit," said Coker thoughtfully. "It will make it look genuine. He's not to know who you are, of course—that would spoil it all. Besides, it would get you into a fearful row."

"I—I—I rather think it would!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I sort of fancy there would be a trifle of a row if we collared the captain of the school and knocked him about! It—it seems probable."

"The rowfulness would be terrific!"

"That's all right," said Coker. "Being in disguise, you'll be safe enough. You'll have to have a little sense, of course—I mean, you'll have to carry out my directions implicitly, and don't try to think for yourselves, or any rot like that. Do exactly as I tell you, and you'll be all right."

"I can see us doing it!" murmured Bob.

There was no further doubt in the minds of the Famous Five that Coker was as mad as a hatter.

His extraordinary proposition confirmed Billy Bunter's amazing story.



He had tried to get Bunter to barge the captain of the school into the river. Now he was trying to get the Famous Five to commit assault and battery on Wingate. If that was not sheer, stark, staring lunacy, the chums of the Remove did not know what it was.

"Now about the details—" said Coker briskly.

"The—the details—" stammered Wharton.

"Yes; we shall have to fix it up carefully, of course. Can't be too careful in a thing like this!" said Coker. "Hallo! Where are you going?"

Coker was sitting on the table, between the juniors and the door. But now there was no longer a doubt, not the faintest shadow of a doubt, about Coker's insanity, the Famous Five were anxious to get out of the study. They made a strategic movement round the table to reach the door.

"Hold on!" rapped out Coker. "We—we've got to see a—a man—" stammered Bob.

"I've not finished yet." Coker slipped off the table and stepped to the door. He put his back to it.

"Now, you young asses—" "Oh crikey!"

Escape was cut off. The Famous Five backed away rather hurriedly. Wharton's grasp closed convulsively on the poker, Bob Cherry's on the fives bat, Johnny Bull's on the inkpot, Nugent seized a hefty Latin dictionary, Hurree Singh grasped the study clock. They stood in a bunch facing Coker.

He stared at them blankly. "Look here—" He made a step forward.

"Keep off!" yelled Bob Cherry. "You young ass—" "Keep your distance!" gasped Nugent. "We know you can't help being mad, Coker, and we don't want to hurt you. But keep off!"

"What?" shrieked Coker. "Keep off! I'll jolly well brain you—" "Mad!" repeated Coker blankly.

"Who's mad?" "You jolly well are!" exclaimed Wharton. "Keep off! Mind, I've got the poker ready! Keep off, you blessed lunatic!"

Coker stood as if transfixed. "Look out for that knife!" gasped Johnny Bull. "He may have the knife about him! He had it in the Fifth Form passage!"

"Better stun him!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Give him a swipe with that poker, old chap—it's the best way! Stun him—" Coker jumped back.

"The stunfulness is the proper caper! One terrific cosh—" "You mad young idiots!" gasped Coker. "Is this a blessed lunatic asylum, or what? Put down that poker, you young ruffian! Put down that bat, Cherry, or I'll jolly well take it away and whop you with it! What on earth's the matter with you?"

"It's what's the matter with you that matters," said Bob. "Mind, you come a step nearer, and you get it, mad or not!"

"Mad!" gasped Coker. "Blessed if I don't think all the school's mad! First that young ass Bunter—then that fathead Blundell—and Price—and Tomlinson—and now you! What does it all mean? Has all Greyfriars gone off its rocker, or what?"

"Greyfriars hasn't, but you jolly well have!" said Bob. "If you've got that knife—" "Knife!" shrieked Coker. "What knife?"

"You jolly well had a knife when you were after Blundell!" Coker started.

"Blundell! That ass! What do you mean? I had the bread-knife, to cut up the loaf for toast—" "Eh?"

"Only Blundell, for some reason, didn't stop to tea—" "Oh!"

"But what—what—" gasped Coker. Coker looked quite bewildered.

"Look here, you howling ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "If you're not mad, what do you mean? Bunter says you wanted him to barge Wingate into the Sark—" "The young villain! I told him not to tattle—" "You—you own up that you wanted to drown Wingate?" gasped Bob.

"You young idiot! I was going to rescue him, of course. That was the idea! A splendid swimmer like me, you know—" "Oh crikey!"

"It never came off," said Coker. "Owing to that young idiot's fatheadedness, it never came off. That's why I've come to you kids to lend me a hand. You're going to collar Wingate—got up as a set of footpads—and I'm going to rescue him."

"Great pip!" "Can't you see the idea?" snapped Coker.

The juniors gazed at him. They began to realise that Coker was not, after all, mad.

"You bag him, and get him down, and knock him about a bit," said Coker. "I rush to the rescue—" "Oh!"

"Knocking you right and left, and all that—" "Oh!"

"And then it will be all right," explained Coker.

"All right?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Then it will be all right, will it?"

"Yes. After that, Wingate can scarcely refuse me a place in the eleven. There's such a thing as gratitude."

"Oh crumbs!" "That's the idea," said Coker, while the Famous Five gazed at him dumbfounded. "I really got the idea from young Carlow. A man who was grateful to him for saving his life sent him to Greyfriars, you know. That put it into my head. Well, I'm going to make Wingate grateful, and then he will have to do me justice in football matters—see?"

It was out now. "Only not a word," added Coker impressively. "A word about it would spoil the whole thing. Mum's the word!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Coker as if fascinated.

He was not, after all, mad. His amazing conduct was explained now. He was not mad; he was only Coker. Not insane; only the extreme limit in asinine fatheadedness. In fact, Coker all over.

"Rather a neat idea—what?" said Coker, more good-humouredly. He

was evidently pleased with this production of his vast intellectual powers. "Of course, I'd rather the thing was genuine. I'd rather Wingate fell into a weir, or in front of a lorry, or something, and I really rescued him. But things don't happen like that. Well, then, the only thing is to wangle it. The end justifies the means, you know—to get the finest footballer at Greyfriars into the team next Wednesday—" "Oh!"

"It's worth a bit of trouble, and it justifies a harmless deception—see? Of course, I shall explain to Wingate afterwards. Having seen me kick the winning goal against St. Jim's, he will be pleased."

"Oh!" "He will be jolly glad I worked it, of course, from the results," explained Coker. "Otherwise, I shouldn't, of course, think of carrying out this scheme. You see that? It's for the sake of the school."

"Oh!" "You kids understand, of course, what it will mean to the school to have me in the eleven on Wednesday?"

"Oh!" "And now," said Coker, "let's discuss details."

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Turned Down!

"H A, ha, ha!" There was a sudden roar in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

For some moments Harry Wharton & Co. had gazed at Horace Coker, dumbfounded.

They realised that he was not, as they had feared, a lunatic. It had been a natural assumption, in the circumstances; but evidently it was a misunderstanding. He was not mad; he was only the biggest idiot ever.

It had not been a freak of lunacy that made him urge Bunter to barge Wingate into the Sark. He had planned to rescue Wingate; blissfully unconscious of the fact that it was he, Horace Coker, who would have needed rescuing, and needed it badly, had he gone into the river near the weir.

It was not, as they had naturally supposed, owing to mental derangement that he had proposed to them to collar Wingate, disguised as footpads. It was to carry out that scheme of rescue, which was to establish a claim on George Wingate's gratitude, and cause him to reward Coker with a place in the Greyfriars Eleven.

Once in the eleven, of course, matters would be all right—from Coker's point (Continued on next page.)

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of view. He was going to kick the winning goal for Greyfriars, thus proving that he was the right man in the right place; and the end would justify the means.

That he was more likely to kick the ball through his own goal than the other goal, was a thought that did not occur to Coker. That the Greyfriars Eleven would be hopelessly handicapped with Coker barging about in their ranks, Coker was not likely to suspect.

It took some moments for the Famous Five to assimilate this. It was a little surprising, even from Coker.

They had fancied that they knew every kind of ass Coker was. But he had still had this surprise in store for them.

He was not mad; but really, in view of this amazing stunt, there did not seem a lot to choose between Coker's sanity, and any other fellow's insanity.

For a whole minute the juniors gazed at Coker, dumbfounded. Then they yelled:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, perhaps, was not anxious to know what the juniors thought of the big idea. He was far above criticism from fags. But if he wanted to know, that yell of merriment told him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Fan me, somebody! He's not mad, you men! He's only a born idiot!"

"The bornfulness of the esteemed idiot is terrific!"

"Oh, Coker!" gasped Wharton. "Oh, Coker! Ha, ha, ha! You shouldn't do these funny things, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker stared at the juniors. This uproarious merriment took him by surprise. Coker could see no cause for merriment.

"What the thump are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you cheeky young rotters—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want me to whop you?" roared Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's eyes gleamed. The juniors wiped theirs. Really, Coker and his stunts were rather too much for them.

"I've come here," said Coker, "to ask you to lend me a hand. My own pals have let me down. And I've jolly well turned them out of my study for it, too! It's not pleasant to have to ask fags to help a Fifth Form man, but I'm driven to it."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I've thought and thought," said Coker, with dignity, "but there's no other way of making Wingate do me justice. I've put my claims before him often enough. I've pointed out that he simply can't afford to leave out a man like me in a really tough match, like that with St. Jim's. And what use has it been? None. But Wingate, though a fool, is a decent chap. I'll say that for him. There's such a thing as gratitude. When I save him from a gang of footpads, as he supposes—"

"Oh crikey!"

"He will play up. He will be grateful. After that, could he turn me down, same as before? He could not. You see that?"

Coker evidently had it all cut and dried.

"Not that I should think of such a thing, if I didn't know my value in the team," added Coker. "I hope I'm not one of those duds who like to shove

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themselves forward, when they're really no earthly use."

"What a hopeful nature!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you cackle again, I'll jolly well whop the lot of you!" roared Coker.

"Now, then, are you going to lend me a hand, or not? I may as well mention that I'm going to stand a ripping spread in my study to celebrate the victory, after I've helped to beat St. Jim's. You fags can come, if you behave yourselves and don't talk, and keep out of the way."

"Thanks!" gasped Wharton.

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a bit sickening to have to ask fags for help," said Coker gloomily.

"But, as I've said, I'm driven to it. Mind, you're not to put on any airs, or any familiarity, or anything of the sort, because you've been useful to me in your humble way. I'm not the man to stand anything of that kind, I can tell you!"

"Dear old Coker!" said Bob. "You put it so tactfully! You make a fellow sort of yearn to help you out."

"Now, shut up, and don't jaw," said Coker, "and we'll discuss details—or, rather, I'll give you your instructions. All you've got to do is to carry them out without fail."

"Is that all?" gasped Bob.

"That's all!"

"Let's have it clear," said Harry Wharton. "We're to sort out our stage props, and make ourselves up as footpads—"

"Just that—under my direction, of course. Left to yourselves, you would make a muck of it."

"And then we're to collar the captain of the school—and knock him about a bit—"

"Yes, give him a few. It will make it look genuine. Might black his eye, perhaps," said Coker thoughtfully. "The more he gets, the more genuine the thing will look."

"Oh crikey! And when we've knocked Wingate about, and blacked his eye, you rush at us and knock us right and left—"

"Yes. You mustn't mind if I hurt you a bit. We shall have to keep up appearances."

"And all this, so that you can wangle a place in the First Eleven, and make sure that St. Jim's wins on Wednesday?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? Make sure that Greyfriars wins, you young ass," said Coker.

"But you're thinking of playing for Greyfriars, aren't you?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, of course! What do you mean?"

"I mean, how could Greyfriars possibly win, if you played for the school? You'd have to play for St. Jim's to let Greyfriars win."

Coker blinked at the captain of the Remove. His powerful brain was not quick on the uptake, and sarcasm was lost on him.

"You don't seem to understand," he said. "You're rather dense, Wharton. But never mind that. All you fags have got to do, is to do as you're told. Now, about the details—"

"Never mind about the details," said Harry. "I think we've heard enough, Coker. We're not on in this scene."

"Not quite!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "I can't quite see myself blacking old Wingate's eye, and getting sacked for it."

"And we want Greyfriars to win on

Wednesday!" chortled Nugent. "So we really don't want to see you in the team, Coker."

"You see, you can't play footer!" explained Johnny Bull. "You're as big an idiot at that as at everything else, old bean."

"The best thing you can do, Coker," said Wharton, "is to ask your people to take you away from Greyfriars and send you to a home for idiots. I can't guess why they haven't done it already."

Horace Coker listened to these remarks with wrath gathering in his rugged countenance. It was borne in upon his mind that he was not going to get any help in Study No. 1 in carrying out his great stratagem. His pals in the Fifth had let him down, and now these juniors, blind to the honour and distinction of being allowed to help Coker in their humble way, were turning him down likewise!

He breathed hard and deep.

"And now run away and play, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "You've done your funny turn, and you've got the laughs. Now run away, like a good little boy."

Coker did not run away like a good little boy. His wrath boiled over, and he made a jump at the grinning juniors.

The next few minutes in Study No. 1 were wild and whirling.

Coker's intention was to mop up the study with those five cheeky juniors. He had no doubt that he could do it. Many a painful experience had not taught him that he couldn't!

Nevertheless, he couldn't!

For several minutes Coker and the Famous Five were mixed up on the floor, amid rising dust and crashing furniture. Then the door was opened, and a dusty, breathless, and dishevelled Coker rolled out.

"Roll him home!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Groooh! I'll smash you! Yarooooop!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Coker went down the Remove staircase. Whether he went on his head or his heels, he hardly knew. But he went.

He picked himself up on the next landing, in a dizzy state, and glared up at the Famous Five.

"Come back and have some more, Coker!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Coker did not come back and have any more. He shook a furious fist at the Removites, and tramped away down the lower stairs. Coker did not want any more. Coker had had enough.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### A Chapter of Chances!

**G**EORGE Wingate laughed. Horace Coker frowned. Merely the sight of the great Horace evoked that ripple of merriment from the captain of Greyfriars.

Really, it was hard to avoid laughing whenever he saw Coker, or thought of him, or heard him mentioned.

It was several days since that wonderful, that masterly, that top-notch stunt had been hatched in Coker's powerful brain, of bagging a place in the First Eleven by establishing a claim on the football captain's gratitude.

Obviously, such a scheme could not be kept too dark; its success depended entirely on that.

But it had not been kept dark.

Rather, it had been shouted all over Greyfriars.



Harry Wharton & Co. had roared over it, and all the Remove had roared in chorus. Billy Bunter, apprised of the real meaning of Coker's supposed leaning to homicide, cackled and cackled and cackled, and told the story, with incessant cackles, all over the school. Potter and Greene of the Fifth, finding the story common property, added their little bit, causing the Fifth Form games-study to rock with merriment.

Coker had been supposed to be mad!

Had those cheeky fags, Harry Wharton & Co., carried out his instructions, as they ought to have done, all would have been well. Now, all was far from well! The great stunt had to be chucked, and Coker, instead of figuring as a member of the Greyfriars First Eleven, only figured as the fathead of the school—as the fathead par excellence—the fathead complete



Coker watched Wingate swinging along the cliff path, with angry eyes. Then, to his horror, he saw Wingate suddenly stumble. Next second he had slipped over the edge of the cliff!

Now it was admitted that he was not a lunatic! But, as Blundell remarked, he was so jolly near that it made very little difference.

Of course, the story got to the Sixth, and Wingate, at first with amazement, and then with hilarity, learned of the remarkable methods Coker was adopting to get justice as a footballer.

Sixth Form men roared over it in the prefects' room. Wingate laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Coker of the Fifth loved the limelight. But he did not love the limelight he was getting now.

He was the centre of a hilarity that almost made the old school rock to its foundations. The story of Coker's amazing stunt was told up and down the school, under the title of "Coker's Very Latest," till every man at Greyfriars knew it in all its details. From the Sixth to the Second, all Greyfriars howled over it.

Naturally, the stunt was knocked on the head. Even Coker realised that, after all this publicity, it could not be carried out.

It was a blow to him—after the intellectual stress he had gone through in evolving that wonderful wheeze.

He reflected bitterly, that had Potter and Greene backed him up, in the first place, all would have been well. Had that fat idiot, Bunter, played up in the second place, all would have been well,

and unrivalled. That was not in the least how Coker wanted to figure.

He was getting used to fellows grinning and laughing and chuckling when they saw him. Still, it annoyed him.

Now, meeting Wingate of the Sixth on the path over the chalk cliffs, he was just as much annoyed as usual when Wingate laughed.

Wingate had been down to Pegg, and was walking back to the school by way of the cliffs. Coker hadn't been anywhere in particular, and was not going anywhere in particular. He was tramping along the cliff path chiefly because he wanted to keep out of the public eye as much as he could. He was tired of chuckling and chortling and cackling.

So he happened to meet the captain of Greyfriars face to face—and Wingate laughed, and Coker frowned.

He frowned darkly.

He was strongly tempted to march right up to Wingate, demand to know what he was laughing at, and give him something to laugh for.

But the narrow chalk path, between the high cliff on one side, and a sheer drop of sixty feet on the other, was not exactly the place for scrapping. And perhaps even Coker, at the back of his mind, realised that it would be wiser not to punch the captain of the school; much as he deserved it.

He frowned, and came on towards Wingate, still frowning. And then—

then the unexpected happened. It happened like a flash.

Nugent minor, of the Second Form was the unconscious cause. Nugent minor, that afternoon, was rambling over the cliffs, high above the path facing the sea, where the two seniors were meeting face to face. Dicky Nugent did not know they were there—that path was invisible from the top of the cliff. Dicky Nugent did not know that anybody was there—and did not think about the path at all—he was not of a thoughtful nature. Dicky Nugent, standing on top of the cliff, was pelting seagulls with lumps of loose chalk.

His missiles did not get anywhere near the seagulls. But one of them, dropping short, fell on the path that ran along the outer face of the cliff. It was a thousand chances to one against it doing any damage, but it was the thousand-and-first chance that accrued. For that lump of chalk dropped fairly on the head of Wingate of the Sixth as he came swinging along the ledge, and he started and stumbled—and slipped.

Coker knew nothing about the thoughtless fag on the cliff-top. He did not even seek the falling lump of chalk. He did not know what caused the catastrophe.

But he saw the catastrophe.

Under his very eyes, only a dozen feet away from him, George Wingate



stumbled, slipped, and slid over the edge of the cliff-path.

One moment he had been laughing—the next he was slipping into space to certain death.

Coker gave a gasp.

His eyes almost started from his head as he saw the Sixth-Former go. Far above, Dicky Nugent was strolling on his way, out of sight, blissfully unconscious of the harm he had done.

The ledge along the face of the cliff was sheer at its edge. It dropped away like a wall to the beach below. Coker stared in blank horror, as Wingate went over the edge—expecting to hear the echo of a terrible thud far down on the beach.

Then he saw that desperate hands were clutching at the wet, slippery edge. Wingate had grabbed hold. But there was little hold on the wet chalk, and in a few moments he would have slid away helplessly.

Coker bounded forward.

Coker was every kind of an ass. But his pluck was unlimited. He flung himself down on his face, and grasped Wingate's wrists. He was only in time, for the Sixth-Former's fingers were already slipping away.

"Got you!" gasped Coker.

Wingate did not speak—he could not. His face was white. He stared up at Coker.

His whole weight hung on Coker. Coker was a hefty fellow, and his grasp on Wingate's wrists was like that of a steel vice.

But he could no more have pulled the Sixth-Form man up than he could have flown. That was utterly impossible.

He was holding Wingate back from death. That was all he could do.

It was a full minute before Coker realised this. He made an effort to pull the senior up, and found that that effort very nearly dragged him bodily off the ledge.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker.

He dug the toes of his boots into the rough chalk for a hold. He braced himself against the strain. He could not pull Wingate up—and all his strength barely sufficed to prevent Wingate's weight from dragging him over the precipice.

He gazed down at Wingate—Wingate gazed up at him. Both of them realised the terrible truth. Unless Coker let go the strain would drag him over to death. Strong as he was, he could not stand that terrible strain for long.

Wingate's lips moved. He was white as chalk; but he was cool. His voice came in a whisper.

"Save yourself, Coker!"

Coker snorted.

"Likely!" he said.

A sudden thrill ran through him. The chalk was wet and slippery, the weight was dragging him down. He felt himself slipping.

Desperately he resisted the drag. Desperately he held on to the wrists of the fellow hanging below the edge. He set his teeth, his eyes glinting, and his nostrils dilated.

"Save yourself!" breathed Wingate.

Coker did not answer this time. He had no breath to spare. But he held on grimly. Horace Coker, the fathead

of the Fifth, the object of hilarity from end to end of Greyfriars, was a hero in those moments. Death was before him, and he looked it in the face without a tremor.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Up to Wingate!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's that game?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Coker playing the goat—as per usual!" remarked Johnny Bull. "But what the thump he's up to—"

Harry Wharton & Co. could not help being surprised, though really they had almost given up being surprised at anything Horace Coker did.

The Famous Five were sauntering along the cliff-path. On their right rose the higher cliffs, on their left was the drop to the beach, and the wide stretch of sands, and the sea rolling far and wide. The path was a dozen feet wide in places; in other places it narrowed to a mere ledge of two or three feet, where a fellow had to be rather careful.

Ahead of them, as they came along, they saw what was quite a remarkable sight. A burly figure was stretched face downwards, on the edge of the rocky path, with his head over the verge, and his arms hanging over. They could see little more than his back, and his long legs; but they were aware that those long legs were Horace Coker's.

Why Coker was lying there was a mystery. If he was taking a bird's-eye view of the beach below, it was rather risky, and there seemed no reason why he should hang his arms down over the slippery verge. It was quite puzzling.

"The ass!" said Frank Nugent. "He will slip over if he's not jolly careful! This chalk's jolly slippery."

"The slipfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and fatheaded Coker seems to be holding something—"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it," said Harry Wharton. "But what the dickens—"

The juniors, as they drew nearer to the stretched figure of Coker, could discern signs of strain. They could see nothing of what was going on below the irregular edge of the path, but Coker certainly looked as if he was sustaining some weight. They saw him slide an inch or two, and then desperately cramp himself down on the rough chalk and resist the drag to the edge.

"Come on!" exclaimed Wharton. And he broke into a run.

Evidently something was wrong. Coker, they could see, was in danger of going over the edge, though they could not yet see why. The path was perilous, and it was slippery; but the chums of the Remove fairly raced along it, as soon as they realised that Coker was in danger.

"Stick it, Coker!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Coker gave a gasp. Bob's powerful voice came like music to his ears. It meant help—and Coker was at his last gasp.

He had not let go Wingate—he would not let him go. He held on to the Greyfriars captain's wrists, with a grip of steel, sustaining the weight that was slowly but surely dragging him down to death. Wingate could do nothing to help himself—Coker could do nothing to help him, except hold him back from the crash on the beach. And he could not have held him back much longer—and as he would not let go he could

only have gone over with him. And then came Bob's shout.

The juniors raced up.

Coker was slipping—resisting desperately, but slipping. Bob Cherry grasped one of the long legs, Johnny Bull grasped the other, and they held on.

Coker was safe from slipping over now. But the strain on his arms was terrible. Only by a convulsive effort could he keep his grasp on Wingate's wrists.

"Hold on!" gasped Bob.

Harry Wharton crawled to the edge, on his hands and knees, and looked down. He knew now that Coker must be holding someone who had slipped over; but his eyes almost bulged from his head at the sight of the Greyfriars captain's white face staring up.

"Old Wingate!" he gasped.

"Help!" breathed Wingate.

"Hold my legs, Frank!"

Wharton, with Nugent holding his legs, reached both arms down. He grasped Wingate's left hand with one hand, and got a grip on his sleeve with the other. The relief to the gasping Coker was immediate.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was lean over the next moment, Bob Cherry holding his legs, leaving Johnny Bull to keep hold of Coker. The nabob grasped Wingate's right hand and right sleeve. Coker was still keeping the grip on both his wrists.

The Greyfriars captain was a good weight. But to the three of them his weight was not too much.

Not a word was spoken. With set teeth and exerting all their strength the three of them dragged at Wingate, while the three juniors behind pulled on their legs.

Slowly, but steadily, Wingate came up.

His arms came over the rough edge, and he was able to rest his elbows, and relieve the three of most of his weight.

For a few moments they rested to recover from the strain. Then, with a last hefty pull, Wingate came over and landed on the path.

He sank down against the upper cliff, panting.

Coker stood rubbing his arms, which ached with the strain, and chafing his almost numbed fingers. It was a cold day, but the perspiration was rolling down Coker's face. He breathed in spasms.

"Well done, you kids!" said Wingate at last. "Thank goodness you came along!"

"Thank goodness we did!" said Harry Wharton.

"The thankfulness is preposterous!"

"I should have been gone, but for Coker." Wingate spoke in a low voice. "Some ass pitched a stone over the cliff-top, and I got it and lost my footing. Coker got me—"

"Good old Coker!" said Bob.

"Coker, old man," said Wingate, "you're rather an ass, old chap, but you've got tons of pluck. You've saved my life!"

Coker nodded.

"Lucky these fags came along," he remarked. "I hardly think I should have got you up without help, Wingate."

The fags grinned. Coker "hardly" thought he would have got Wingate up without help—when the fact was obvious that but for the assistance of the juniors Coker would have been dragged headlong over the verge. But that was just like Coker.

"Much obliged, you kids!" said Coker. "I was going to whop you for your cheek the other day. Now I won't. You can cut!"

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"Dear old Coker!" said Bob Cherry. And the Famous Five, chuckling, continued their walk along the cliff path.

Wingate rose to his feet.

"Coming along, Coker?" he asked.

He felt very friendly to Coker just then. His manner was very cordial. Coker was an ass—an obstreperous ass—a rather exasperating ass; but pluck, like charity, covered a multitude of sins. After what Coker had done, the fathead of the Fifth was a fellow whom Wingate delighted to honour.

"Right-ho!" said Coker.

They walked back to Greyfriars together.

Both of them were still feeling the effects of the strain, and they walked in silence for some time. And Coker's thoughts were busy.

He had saved Wingate from a terrible danger! What he had tried to "wangle," and had failed to wangle, had happened—amazingly.

Coker was not the fellow, perhaps, to make much of a thing like this. But there it was!

He had done it!

The stars in their courses fought against Sisera; but they really seemed to be backing up Coker of the Fifth!

Where his vast intellectual powers had failed to bring off the stunt, sheer chance had brought it off! Coker had not counted on the chapter of chances; but fortune had proved his friend.

The gates of Greyfriars were in sight, when Coker—having thought it out—broke his long silence.

"I've saved your life, Wingate!"

Wingate made a slight grimace. He was prepared to tell the world that Coker had saved his life. But the remark did not come gracefully from Coker himself. A Greyfriars man was

expected not to blow his own trumpet.

But Coker was above such considerations as this.

"You're grateful, of course!" went on Coker, following his own train of thought, and heedless of the changing expressions on Wingate's face.

"Oh!" said Wingate. "Yes! Quite!"

"You're bound to play up now!" said Coker.

"Eh?"

"I mean, one good turn deserves another. What?"

Wingate stared at him.

"Certainly!" he said. "If the thing ever happens the other way round rely on me to play up, Coker. It's not likely, of course."

"I don't mean that," said Coker. "I mean, about the football."

"The—the what?"

"Football!"

"The—the football!"

It was on the tip of Wingate's tongue to tell Coker, if he must talk, to talk about things he understood. But he refrained—in the circumstances.

"Yes. The St. Jim's match on Wednesday—"

"I—I don't see—"

"I want you to play me," explained Coker calmly.

"My dear chap." Wingate wanted to be as polite as possible to a fellow who had saved his life. "We've been through that already, you know."

"We're going through it again."

"But, you see—"

"As you know," said Coker, with dignity, "I shouldn't claim a place in the team, if I was not worth my salt. It's because I can win the match for Greyfriars that I'm keen on playing. I've pointed out to you before, old man, that you know nothing about a man's

form at Soccer—absolutely nothing! Haven't I?"

Wingate breathed rather hard. It was difficult for the captain of the school, the head of the games, to listen to this sort of stuff patiently. But he felt that he had to be patient with Coker now.

"You think I can't play footer," resumed Coker. "Mind, I don't put it down to mere jealousy, as some fellows would—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You think so, because you're a dud at such things. That's how it is. Put me in, and judge by results!" said Coker. "When you see me kick the winning goal on Wednesday—"

"Like the one you kicked at Prout?"

"Accidents will happen!" said Coker.

"They will—when you get near a footer!" agreed Wingate. "But an accident that won't happen is a win for Greyfriars with you playing, old chap. Forget all about it!"

"That's only your ignorance—"

"Look here—"

"Play me, and see what you will see!" said Coker. "I've saved your life—"

"Look here, Coker—"

"You're bound to play up! I don't see how you can refuse. I shouldn't, in your place. No fellow would."

"Anything else—"

"Nothing else is any good. Nothing else will make certain of a win for Greyfriars on Wednesday!"

Wingate groaned. Obviously, it was useless to argue with Coker. He fancied that he could play footer, and there was an end to it.

"Play me against St. Jim's!" said Coker. "I guarantee results! Leave that to me."

"I can't!"

(Continued on next page.)

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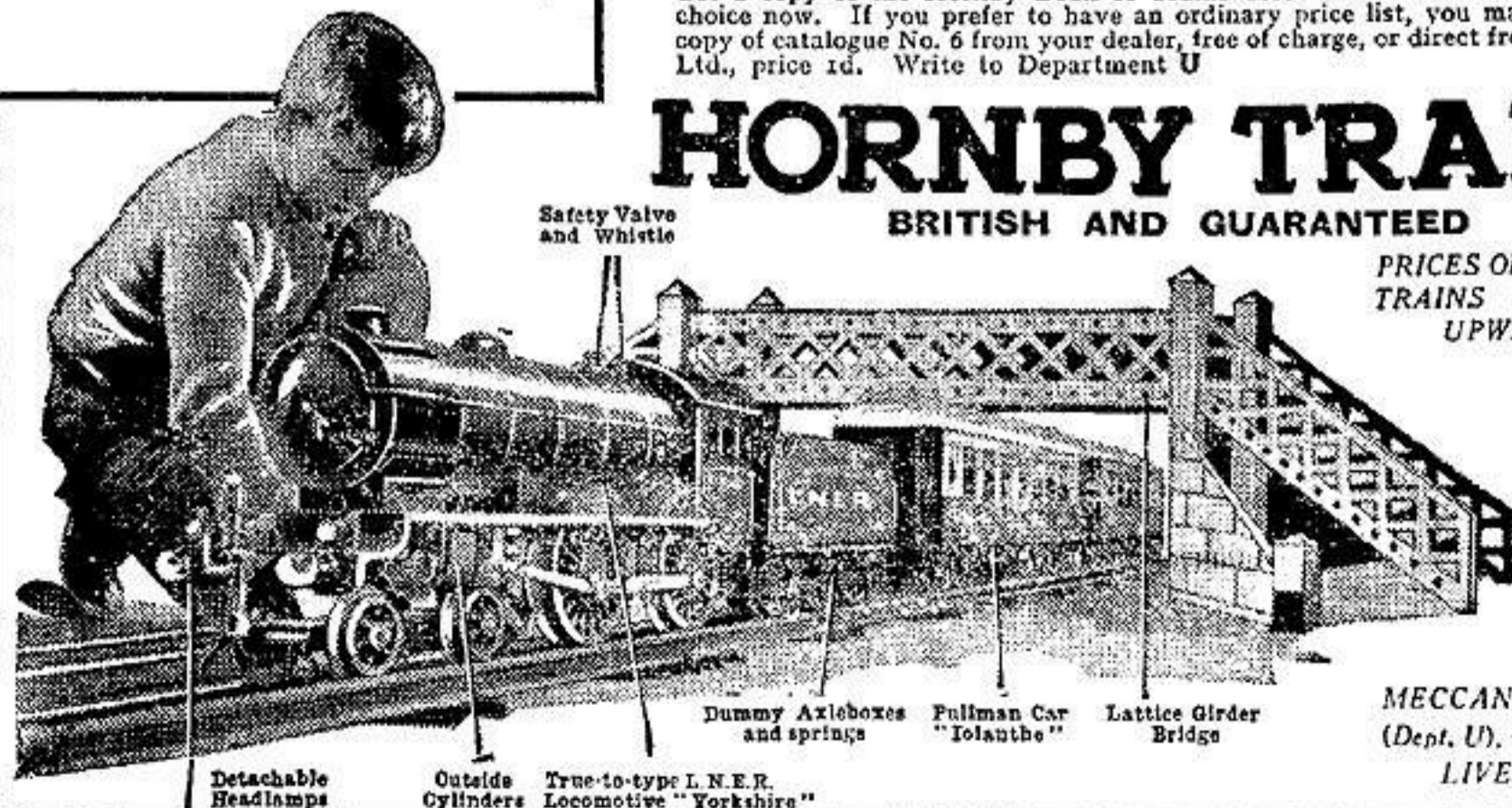
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"I've saved your life. There's such a thing as gratitude. A man sent young Carlow to Greyfriars, out of gratitude, because the kid saved him from getting drowned. That's what put the wheeze into my head. What are you laughing at?"

"W-w-was I laughing?"

"You know that Shakespeare says that an ungrateful serpent is sharper than a toothless child—"

"Does he?" gasped Wingate.

"Something like that, anyhow. Well, I'm relying on your gratitude. Play up! That's that!" said Coker. "You can't refuse!"

"The fellows would lynch me!"

"They'll be jolly glad when they see the result!"

"When they see the result they won't lynch me—they'll boil me in oil!"

"It's up to you," said Coker calmly.

Wingate drew a deep, deep breath. He had been feeling very kindly and friendly towards Coker. Now he looked as if he could have eaten him.

"Look here, Coker," he said quietly. "You've saved my life, and if you put it up to me I can't get out of it. But I think—"

"Never mind what you think," said Coker. "To tell you the truth, you can't think. If you could, you'd be playing me, anyhow."

"I'll play you!" said Wingate curtly.

And with that he left Coker and walked in at the school gates by himself. Coker did not mind that. He was not specially keen on Wingate's company. He had his way at last—at long last—and that was all Coker wanted. He smiled cheerily as he strolled into the quad. Meeting Potter and Greene of the Fifth, whom he had not spoken to for days, Coker broke the ice, with a cheery smile.

"Look for my name in the St. Jim's list, you men!"

"What?"

"I'm down to play on Wednesday!"

"Rot!"

Coker laughed.

"You'll see!" he said cheerily.

And he walked on to the House, leaving Potter and Greene rooted to the quad, staring after him.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Coker Means Business!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

"Rot!"

"Utter rot!"

"Bosh!"

Greyfriars heard the news with amazement; they heard it with incredulity; they heard it with indignation.

Nobody believed it at first.

Coker—Horace Coker—Coker of the Fifth—down to play in one of the toughest matches of the football season! The thing was absurd on the face of it! The wild rumour was regarded at first as a joke, and a feeble joke at that.

But it was no joke! It was no feeble jest! It was not, as the Bounder put in, comedy. It was tragedy!

For in the football list that was put up on the board the name of W. Greene had been scratched out and the name of H. J. Coker had replaced it. The change was made in Wingate's well-known hand. William Greene, of the Fifth, regarded that alteration with feelings too deep for words. But the other fellows found plenty of words to express their feelings.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "Coker was supposed to be mad the other day, but there's no supposing about Wingate. He's mad—mad as a hatter! Dangerous, in fact!"

"Coker! Coker, of all men!" said Harry Wharton. "Why not Bunter, or Dicky Nugent? They're both better than Coker!"

"But what does it mean?" asked a score of fellows.

Nobody could guess what it meant at first—unless Wingate was insane. Wingate had been observed to have a worried look, but he did not look insane. But if he was still in possession of his seven senses, why was he playing Coker of the Fifth at footer?

Then the explanation leaked out.

Wingate had explained to a raging crowd of Sixth Form men—he had to explain. He offered, if they liked, to resign the captaincy. He rather wanted to, in fact. But if he remained captain he had to play Coker. Coker had saved

his life and put it up to him. He knew what an awful thing he was doing—only too well he knew! But there it was. He couldn't get out of it! If they wanted him to resign—

They didn't! They wanted to lynch Coker.

After the truth was known, Coker of the Fifth could not have counted the interviews he had with men of the Sixth, men of his own Form, and even with indignant juniors. Almost every man at Greyfriars made it a point to see Coker and tell him what he thought of him.

"It's mean!" said Greene. "Just mean!"

"Putrid!" said Potter.

"The limit!" said Gwynne of the Sixth. "I never thought you were a rotter as well as a fool, Coker. But you seem more rotter than fool, and that's saying a fearful lot!"

Coker was impervious to it all.

He was rather surprised to find that his conduct was regarded as mean, rotten, and putrid. Certainly, there was nothing mean about Coker.

He was willing to explain. He tried to make the fellows understand his point of view.

If some poor fish of a footballer, some dud who couldn't play Soccer, had done as Coker was doing, then it would have been mean, rotten, putrid—anything you jolly well like to call it.

But when a splendid footballer, a player of remarkable powers, who was left out of games owing to the general crass stupidity of the other fellows in the school, and especially of the football captain—when such a fellow as that did as Coker was doing, then, of course, it was all right.

Being the only way for a magnificent footballer to render eminent services to his school, obviously it was all right—right as rain.

Coker, he admitted, would rather have been played on his form, picked out by his captain as the best material going. But when a football captain was so crass, so blind, so fatheaded as to pass over a man of his quality, what was he to do?

Plainly, he had got into the team by any means that offered, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the side, the sake of the school, and the sake of Soccer generally.

That was how Coker looked at it. It is safe to say that he was the only fellow at Greyfriars who looked at it like that. But Coker did, and Coker, unfortunately, was the one fellow that mattered.

For Wingate had put him up to play, and refused even to think of scratching him, and the only hope of a win in the St. Jim's match was that Coker would resign.

Coker had no idea of resigning.

Coker was in the Eleven, and he was keeping in. He listened to the slanging, the gibing, the sneering, the carping, the wild and whirling words of wrath more in sorrow than in anger. He told the fellows that they would see what they would see.

There was no doubt that they would, so far as that went. But between what Coker thought they were going to see and what they really were going to see when he played for Greyfriars there was a great gulf fixed.

Every footballer in the Upper School was raging. In the Lower School there was great wrath. Senior school matches did not directly concern the juniors. In point of fact, they thought a great deal more of junior school matches. Still, they all took a great pride in the Greyfriars First Eleven. They rejoiced in school victories, and mourned school

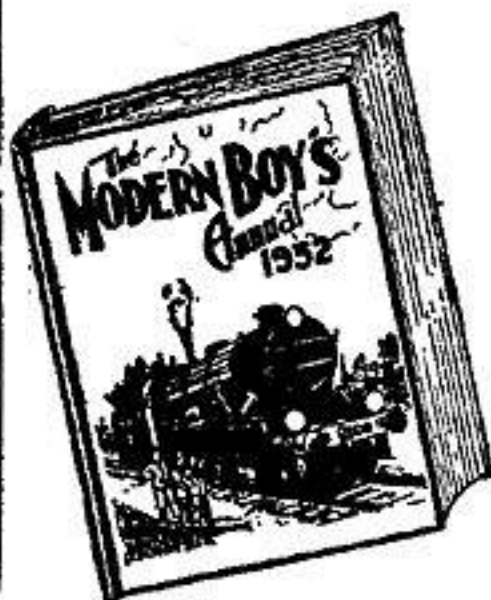


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Exerting all their strength, Wharton, Hurree Singh and Coker dragged at Wingate, while the three other juniors pulled on their legs. Inch by inch Wingate was dragged from a horrible doom!

defeats, and it was plain that there was going to be deep mourning over the St. Jim's fixture.

In their wrath, many fellows declared that Wingate ought to resign if Coker wouldn't. But that was only "hot air." Nobody really would have been willing to lose Wingate, even if a fatheaded sense of chivalry or gratitude, or whatever rot it was, made him feel that he had to give Coker his head in return for saving his life—if he had saved it. Feeling ran higher and higher as Wednesday came round, and Coker was in danger of being mobbed when he walked in the quad.

Blundell and his friends threw him out of the games-study twice, after which Coker decided not to re-enter that apartment till after the St. Jim's match, when, of course, he would be able to enter it with his blushing honours thick upon him. Shell fellows, Fourth-Formers, Remove men, hooted Coker in the quad. Fags of the Third and Second yelled round corners after him.

Even Coker would have felt the force of public opinion, perhaps, had he not been clad in an armour of self-satisfaction stronger than triple steel. There was no doubt that he found it worrying and unpleasant. But he bore it. After all, it was only till he had played on Wednesday. After that these fellows who hissed and hooted him would be carrying him shoulder high and yelling "Good old Coker!" So Coker believed, with a happy belief that nothing could shake.

On Wednesday morning the Famous Five came on Coker, walking in the quad. They glanced at him and noted

the smile of self-satisfaction on his face, and wondered thereat.

Coker gave them a cheery nod.

"Roll up and see the match this afternoon, you kids!" he said.

"We're going to!" said Harry Wharton. "We're going to lend a hand lynching you after the game!"

"The lynchfulness will be terrific, my esteemed idiotic Coker."

Coker frowned.

"Here comes Wingate," said Nugent. "Looks worried, doesn't he?"

The chums of the Remove watched Wingate rather curiously as he met Coker of the Fifth. Coker, turning in lofty scorn from the cheeky Removites, gave Wingate a nod and a grin.

"Looks like fine weather for the game—what?" he said. "It's going to be a ripping afternoon, Wingate."

"Yes; but—" Wingate paused. The worried look intensified on his face.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. They guessed that the Greyfriars captain had it in mind to make a last appeal to Coker to let him off.

"We're going to beat them!" said Coker cheerily. "I should advise a few changes in the team—"

"Never mind that—"

"Well, with my knowledge of the game, I feel bound to offer you my advice, Wingate. You see, a born footballer—"

"Look here, Coker, if—if you'll let me off—"

"I don't understand you, Wingate."

"It's chucking the game away," groaned Wingate. "We have to go all

out to beat Kildaro's lot from St. Jim's. One hopeless dud will make all the difference. Coker, old man, ask me anything else you can name, but let me off this! Be a sport!"

"Exactly what I'm going to be," said Coker calmly. "In spite of misunderstanding, in spite of unfairness, in spite of detraction, in spite of everything, I'm going to play for Greyfriars, and knock St. Jim's into a cocked hat! Rely on me!"

"Old fellow—"

"Rely on me," repeated Coker, and he walked away to end the argument.

And Wingate, looking more worried and dismal than ever, drifted away disconsolate. His last appeal had failed.

"My esteemed chums," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh thoughtfully, "the absurd match is a goner!"

"No doubt about that, Inky," said Bob.

"Unless—"

"Unless what, fathead? There's no unless about it—unless Coker gets run over by a motor-car before three o'clock this afternoon."

"He won't!" said Johnny Bull. "No such luck!"

"Unless," repeated the Nabob of Bhanipur—"unless the excellent and ridiculous Coker should fail to turn up for the game."

"Catch him!" said Harry Wharton.

"But ho might, my esteemed chums—in fact, the mightfulness is terrific!"

"What rot!" said Frank Nugent.

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"Wild horses wouldn't drag Coker away from Big Side this afternoon."

Harry Wharton looked attentively at his dusky chum. There was a glimmer in the nabob's dark eyes that he knew from of old.

"What's the big idea, Inky?" he asked. "Have you got hold of a wheeze for making Coker change his mind? Cough it up, then!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh proceeded to "cough it up." His comrades listened to him at first with blank surprise, and then with a sudden yell of merriment:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bell rang for third school, and the Famous Five went in with the rest of the Remove. They went in smiling. Third lesson dealt with deponent verbs, yet Harry Wharton & Co. smiled all through the lesson, which showed that they had some secret cause of satisfaction that lifted their spirits high above their surroundings.

### THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

#### Taking a Tip from Coker!

"**C**UT off!" said Coker briefly.

Coker was in his study.

Most of the footballers had gathered in the changing-room, but Coker was not in a hurry to present himself there for he had changed in his study.

Now that the St. Jim's match was at hand, now that the biggest fixture of the season was going to be chucked away, the First Eleven men were in an almost dangerous frame of mind. There was a rumour that Blundell and some other fellows had sworn to hold Coker's head under a tap till he agreed to stand out of the match. Feeling was running very high, and it was undoubted that Coker would have been mobbed in the changing-room. So he changed in his study. They couldn't mob him on the football field, anyhow, and, of course, when he began kicking goals, feeling would change—so Coker happily believed.

Coker frowned at five Remove juniors who looked in on him, and told them briefly to cut off.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not cut off. They came into the study.

"I said cut off," remarked Coker.

"Quite!" agreed Wharton. "But we've something to say, Coker. You remember what you were saying in our study the other day?"

"Well?" grunted Coker.

"The end justifies the means, and all that?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"Well, we didn't quite see it at the time; but we've come to see it now," explained Wharton. "When it's a question of winning a big footer match for the school, the end justifies the means, even if the means are a little bit irregular. We're taking it from you, Coker."

"Can't do better than take a tip from Coker," said Bob Cherry. "Isn't he a jolly old oracle?"

"Well, that's all right," said Coker, rather puzzled. "But what—"

"Go it, you men!"

The next move took Coker by surprise.

Five juniors jumped at him as if set in motion by the same spring.

Coker of the Fifth went down on his back on the study floor, with a bump that shook the study.

He roared.

But he roared only once. He had no time for another roar, for a rather

dusty duster was placed over his mouth, and tied round his head.

He struggled.

But with a sturdy fellow holding each arm and each leg in a grip of iron, Coker's struggles did not avail.

He glared.

But the Famous Five were impervious to glares.

Having tied the duster round Coker's mouth to still his melodious voice, Harry Wharton shook out a coil of cord and proceeded to tie Coker's legs to the legs of the study table.

This done, he tied Coker's hands behind him and secured them to one of the opposite legs.

Coker, deprived of the use of his limbs and his voice, glared with a glare that might have excited the envy of the fabled basilisk.

"There, that's all right!" said Wharton. "I think Coker will do now. You'll remember that the end justifies the means, won't you, Coker?"

"Your own words, old bean," said Johnny Bull.

Glare—from Coker.

He had no other way of expressing his feelings. If looks could have slain, the Greyfriars Remove might have lost five of its members on the spot. Fortunately, looks couldn't.

"You're out to win the match to-day for Greyfriars, old chap," said Nugent. "Well, this is the way to do it! Greyfriars will win all right if you don't help."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. retired from the study, leaving Coker still glaring with the ferocity of an untamed Red Indian. Wharton looked the door on the outside and put the key in his pocket.

What Coker's feelings were like, left on his own in the study, the juniors did not know, though they could guess. But they were not worrying about it. They hoped that Coker realised the truth of his own contention—that the end justifies the means—and left it at that.

They strolled down to Big Side with cheery faces.

A crowd was already gathered there. It thickened as the minutes passed. Nearly all Greyfriars had turned up to see the match—to see Coker barging his own side off the ball, charging his fellow-players from behind, and probably kicking the ball through his own goal. But when Wingate and his merry men turned up Coker did not turn up with them.

Wingate was puzzled.

The other fellows entertained a wild hope that Coker, after all, had yielded to the force of public opinion—which had certainly been expressed with great frankness—and was standing out.

"Where's Coker?"

"Anybody seen Coker?"

Nobody had apparently.

Greene of the Fifth gave Wingate a hopeful look.

"Somebody cut off to the House," said Wingate. "You, Potter—tell Coker we're waiting for him."

Wingate would have been gladder than any other man present had Coker failed to appear. But fair play was fair play.

Potter cut off to the House. As Potter would rather have seen Coker hanged, drawn, and quartered than playing in the St. Jim's match it is probable that he did not look for him very keenly or assiduously. Anyhow, he returned alone with the information that Coker was not to be found.

"For goodness' sake, let's get going!" breathed Blundell. "Greene's ready. Ain't you, Greene?"

"What-ho!" said Greene. Greene of the Fifth had changed hurriedly in the mere hope that Coker would not be found.

Wingate drew a deep breath.

His face was bright.

"Well," he said, "I put Coker down to play, as I said I would. If he chooses to stand out, that's his own affair. We can't keep St. Jim's waiting any longer. Get going!"

There was a roar of cheering from the Greyfriars crowd when the footballers went into the field. It was a delighted roar. Coker was not in the Greyfriars ranks. Coker's presence certainly would not have called forth cheering. His absence did.

Where Coker was, why he was standing out, and what it all meant, anyhow, nobody knew or cared. He wasn't there—and that was all that mattered.

It was a great game.

Kildare and his men had come over from St. Jim's in great form. But Wingate & Co. were in great form also; and in their joyful relief at Coker's absence they felt as if they could move mountains.

A slogging first half produced one goal—for Greyfriars. In the second half St. Jim's equalised, but Kildare's goal was swiftly followed by another from Wingate. Hard and fast the game went on, Greyfriars barely keeping their lead to the finish. Several times it was touch and go, and there was no doubt—not the shadow of a doubt—that had Horace Coker been barging about in the Greyfriars ranks the visitors would have beaten them to the wide. But the final whistle went with Greyfriars leading, and there was a roar.

"Greyfriars wins!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "They've won without Coker—but I don't think they'd have won without us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment the Famous Five agreed with Coker more heartily than ever that the end justified the means.

Where was Coker?

The mystery of Horace Coker remained a mystery till after the St. Jim's men were gone.

When, a little later, Potter and Greene went to their study they found the key in the outside of the lock. When they looked into the study they found Coker. When they recovered from their astonishment they released the hapless Horace. And when he was released the voice of Coker was heard all over the House.

His first proceeding was to visit Study No. 1 in the Remove. He found the Remove ready for him; and when he rolled down the stairs Coker's last state was worse than his first. To his surprise, and to his boundless wrath, Coker found that his grievous wrongs were received by all Greyfriars, from Wingate down, with shouts of laughter. Wingate told him, by way of consolation, that he had won the game for Greyfriars—by staying in his study while it was played. Coker did not seem consoled.

For days and days after the St. Jim's match Coker was in a state of fierce warfare with the Famous Five. But those cheerful young gentlemen kept their end up remarkably well, and Coker got tired before they did.

THE END.

(Enjoyed the laugh, chums? Good! Now look forward to next week's topping yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled: "THE BOUNDER'S BLUNDER!" You'll vote Frank Richards is bang in form!)



STOP HERE FOR A BIG THRILL, BOYS!

# OOM, The Terrible!



## HOW THE STORY STARTED.

OOM, THE TERRIBLE, IS A FLYING BANDIT WHO AIMS TO BE MASTER OF THE WORLD. HE HAS KIDNAPPED TOM DARE, A CLEVER INVENTOR, HIS BROTHER RICK, AND TWO CHUMS. RICK IS COMPELLED TO TAKE PART IN A RAID ON A MILLIONAIRE'S HOUSE. HE CONTRIVES TO WARN THE MILLIONAIRE, BUT HIS WARNING IS UNHEEDED. AS A LAST RESOURCE, RICK THEN FIGHTS A BATTLE WITH OOM IN THE AIR, BUT THE YOUNGSTER'S PLANE IS SOON CRIPPLED. MEANWHILE, BACK AT OOM'S HEADQUARTERS, HAM, THE BOYS' NEGRO SERVANT, IS ENDEAVOURING TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF THE BANDIT'S STRONGHOLD WHEN HE SUDDENLY COMES ACROSS A FEROCIOUS LEOPARD, AND A DWARF ARMED WITH POISONOUS DARTS.

and, after a bit of manipulation, opened the door of the safe.

"Snakes an' sar-pints!" he gasped. "Look hyar!"

Inside were stacks and stacks of currency notes of all denominations and countries, from the British bank-note to the American "greenback," whilst piled in orderly array were big jewel cases.

With trembling fingers Ham drew out three or four of these and opened them. "Am I awake, or is I dreamin'?" he gasped. "Golly sakes, dere must be all de jew-holes in de wide worl'! Oh-h-h—oh-h, dis am too big a t'ing fo' muh, bein' jest a no-account, low-down nig-gah. Mass' Tom must sco dem an' dec-cide whaffor to do. If Ah looks at dem too long Ah shall lose my see-sight fo' suah."

Ham gazed with wide-open eyes at the shimmering mass of diamonds, rubies, pearls, some cut and set, others in the rough, sparkling and flashing in the light. He ran the heap through his fingers, awestruck at the splendour of his find. Then, with a great effort, he put them back in their cases and swung the safe door to.

Leaving the room, he then stole across the basin in the shadows, moving like a gigantic shadow himself, dodging the sentries on duty, most of whom were smoking or half asleep. They had been so accustomed to "nothing happening" when Oom and the great plane were away on one of the Flying-Bandit's raids that they did not trouble much about the prisoners, secure in the knowledge that it was impossible for anyone to scale the precipices with which the basin was surrounded, or get out of the stronghold, save by flying.

Tom was awake in a flash as Ham shook his shoulder, and glared up at the glistening, black form of the huge negro in astonishment. He had been putting in a long, and, truth to tell, most interesting day in the great workshops, replete with every modern mechanical contrivance, and he was dog-tired.

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## Ham on the Warpath!

LIFTING the writhing black beast high above his head, Ham brought it down with its back crashing against the high back of its master's chair. There was a hideous snap as the spine was broken, and the supple body became almost instantly rigid, the great white fangs snapping close as the vertebrae broke. Flinging the beast down beside the cage Ham then strode over to the dwarf.

"Come hup, yuh trash!" he cried, and gripping the little man by his scraggy neck, he shook him to and fro. "I hab a good mind to do to yuh what I hab done to de oder beast, 'cos yuh am mo' dangerous. By de powers, but Mister Oom hab got a nice pair ob guardian angels to keep off de bugglars. But dis chil' am hot stuff, an' yo' sure ain't gib him no skeer; no, suh! I'm gwine to hab a look aroun', an' while I do so yo' go in yo' daid frien's sleepin' apartment, see?"

Coolly cutting strips off the little man's white gown, Ham tied his legs and arms securely, adding a gag of linen which would effectually keep Maleze from giving the alarm for some time. Then he pushed the dwarf into the cage and turned his attention to the next job.

He glanced around the room, the principle article in which seemed to be the big roll-top desk at which Oom had been engaged when the Dare boys had interviewed him. Ham guessed that inside this would probably be the receptacle for all the Flying-Bandit's "secrets," such as the negro thought would be of use to his young bosses.

Without further ado he stepped on to

the big chair, and from thence on to the top of the desk. Bringing his heavy iron-like naked foot crashing down on the slats of the patent top, he split them from end to end. A couple more of such crashes and the entire roll-top was a mass of splinters.

A bunch of keys with labels attached caught his eye, and with a snort of joy, he grabbed them.

"Safe!" he read on the disc of one of them. "By golly, Mass' Oom, me don't t'ink dat quite so safe as yuh mebbe reckons. Dis chile am gwino to see an' fin' out; but whar de blazes is dat safe hid himself?"

The panelled walls held no sign of a safe. A big cupboard held nothing but a dusty mass of papers. Ham walked all round the walls tapping, but with no success, until he suddenly realised that the floor rang somewhat hollow under his huge and hard feet. Rolling the edge of the pile carpet back, he knelt down and scanned the stained and polished floorboards.

A slight difference in the staining of one of the boards led him to concentrate upon this, and, after some fumbling, he found that the board moved slightly. Additional pressure, and it turned over, showing a small lock beneath, which gave to the smallest key on the bunch.

There was a sudden whirring sound in the wall, and Ham sprang to his feet, ready for any further hidden perils that the room might hold.

But the whirring came from some hidden mechanism that actuated a wide strip of the apparently solid panelling which slid upwards, revealing the front of a big safe. Ham inserted the key



"Whassup?" he demanded sleepily. "Ham, what the dickens are you doing here?"

Shaking with fright and excitement, Ham blurted out his story in his own curious lingo. But for the deep, blood-stained scars on his ebony legs, Tom might have thought that his henchman had been dreaming. He was out of bed in a twinkling, and, scrambling into some clothes, his brain working rapidly, for he realised that now, perhaps, his chance to get even with Oom was at hand. The two sneaked out of the hut and dodged the sentries successfully. Ham leading the way into the house by the basement entrance he had discovered.

It was only when Tom saw the interior of the "office," the smashed desk, the body of the leopard in one corner, and the tiny form of Maleze, lying in the cage, his eyes glaring helpless rage and defiance that he fully believed the negro's story. Then, when he saw the wonderful collection of jewels, the loot of many a midnight raid, and the wads of notes, he sat down at the desk, and, burying his head in his hands, gave himself up to deep thought.

"This means that we have simply got to make our getaway," he muttered. "If it weren't that old Rick was in that devil's clutches— But there, he'll have to take his chance, and we must trust to Providence that he can keep his end up. It looks as if Ham's burgling was intended to force my hand. I'll accept the omen, and risk everything on a last throw. Hallo!"

Tom had been glancing round the desk, which was covered with documents, and amongst them he saw a thick, black book which seemed to be a kind of diary. He turned the pages over, and found that it held a record of every man in the bandit's gang; the latest entries being details of himself, his brother, and Ham, and Alf Higgs. As he read it his blood boiled, for there in cold-blooded black and white were detailed Oom's plans for his own capture, the use to which he was to be put, and the fact of his devotion to his young brother, which was to be used as a lever to compel him to work for the master criminal's ends.

There was a plan of the stronghold, with details of armament, etc. In one of the drawers he found keys for every apartment in the stronghold, which he put in his pocket. Then he went to another trapdoor in the floor, indicated on the plan, and withdrew four automatic pistols, together with plenty of ammunition for himself and the negro. Next he bade Ham go and get some clothes on whilst he pored over the diary again, absorbing details of those men who were involuntary prisoners, and whom he thought might be induced to join him in his fight against Oom, if necessary.

On Ham's return Tom made up several neat parcels of the more valuable jewels and some of the currency notes. The negro's eyes bolted out of his head at this.

"Mass' Tom, ain't dat stealin'?" quavered the buck nigger.

"No, it's looting," responded Tom, cheerfully. "But Oom's not likely to want 'em again, and they're proof of his little world-wide robberies."

"B-but what'll he say w'en he come back?" stuttered Ham. "Won't him be pow'ful mad?"

"He's not coming back!" was the grim response. "I'm going to put a spoke in Oom's wheel that'll prevent him using that wireless plane that he absolutely depends upon. It's going to be mighty risky for Rick, but I guess he's equal to looking after himself. Anyway, it'll be the beginning of the end for Oom, the Terrible!"

### Staggering News!

**O**NCE more Tom Dare and Ham stole through the shadows towards the group of buildings which contained the great power-house, the heart and lungs of Oom's bandit gang. Without that immense wireless power of which he had made himself master, the Flying-Bandit was useless, inasmuch as his marvellous plane would be unable to fly.

It was characteristic of the man that he had been so sure of the completeness of all his arrangements, so reliant on his own foresight and the strength of his plans, that he had made no provision for possible failure.

Time and again his engineers, or those who were his own satellites, as apart from forced prisoners, had warned him that he should at least have an emergency outfit of petrol engines in case of the failure of power from his stronghold.

Oom, however had laughed them to scorn, and though there had been partial temporary failures, it had only been for very brief periods, and he had been able to keep the great plane safely stationary, with the aid of the Dare Stabiliser Auto-Gyro until the power came on again.

The Flying-Bandit argued, and rightly, in a way that it was worth a certain amount of risk to save the weight and space which would be occupied by petrol driven engines and the necessary fuel for them.

In the wireless plane the room taken up by the engines was miraculously small, and thus he had all the space in the giant plane at his disposal for loot, his own and crew's accommodation, and, if necessary, for prisoners. Also, at times, he would transport a number of his gang for some raid in which he needed more than his ordinary crew, or when he anticipated a certain amount of fighting, for some of that loot at the stronghold had not been procured without loss of life and bloodshed on both sides.

Tom Dare had no idea how many men were in the power house, for his own work had kept him in a small shed at the farther end of the basin, and nosing about other portions of the community was sternly discouraged. Yet he had a good idea of the general layout of the stronghold and knew that Oom's weakness lay in the power-house.

As he gazed up at the roof of the building he saw a bright light streaming out from a skylight on top and heard the familiar sound of radio. He knew that the master bandit was in constant wireless communication with his men at the stronghold, for he had heard him giving orders from the plane, mostly addressed in Spanish to one "Gonzalez," and couched in no uncertain terms of abuse.

"Ham," whispered Tom, "I've got to get into that place, but for certain reasons I don't want to risk giving any alarm. I want to have a look through that skylight. If you hear me whistle run around to the front and stand by to give me help. See? Meantime, give

me a lift on to that roof. You know the old trick."

Hastily he whispered a few more instructions, and then the giant negro stood, slightly bent, with his face to the back wall of the building. Tom took a short run and leapt on to the broad shoulders; then, as a mighty heave came from the negro he sprang upwards with the impetus and was enabled to reach the eaves of the roof with his fingers.

It was an old acrobatic trick he had practised a hundred times in the gym at Titicaca, but never with such a powerful assistant as Ham. Tom hung on, and then, with a slow, concentrated effort, hoisted himself up until he was able to climb on to the roof.

Silently as a cat he crawled over until he could see down through the skylight to the brilliantly lit room below.

A small, sliding window in the skylight was partly open, and to his delight he could hear distinctly what was taking place below.

There was a large receiving and transmitting set, before which sat a swarthy-looking individual in very dandified Spanish rig. The man's fingers were working like lightning, adjusting the various implements, with all of which Tom was perfectly familiar.

From the worried expression on the man's face and the tone he was speaking, it was evident that something had gone wrong, and he was getting well "straffed" whilst working like lightning to set the matter right. The drone of the powerful dynamos from below somewhat drowned his actual words, but Tom heard enough to convince him that Gonzalez was in actual communication with his master from the plane on which Rick was a prisoner.

"Si, senor. There was a disturbance somewhere between here and the lake. Probably an electric storm high up in the Andes. There should be no further trouble and you have now full power. Si, I keep it on that length—"

Tom scurried across the roof on tiptoe and sent a low whistle over the parapet which was answered by Ham from the shadows.

Satisfied that the big fellow was on the look-out, Tom hurried back to his listening-post and once more anxiously listened to the conversation which was being carried on over hundreds of miles of wild mountain and desolate plain. If only he could get an inkling of where the plane was, or some word of his—

His very eagerness was his undoing, for in leaning farther forward to catch a low-toned remark or two he overbalanced, and before he could save himself, was hurtling through the skylight amidst a shower of broken glass.

The young inventor fell full on top of the man at the instrument, knocking him flying and breaking the wires of the headphones. Like a flash Tom had recovered himself and was on the prostrate and very astonished man like a tornado. One lusty upper-cut sent the foreigner down again as he strove, spluttering, to rise, then a crack on the skull, with the butt end of an automatic, completed the k.o.

"By hokey, I've done it now!" said Tom, with a grin.

He jumped for the earphones and hastily joined the wires together again. With the earphones on he next adjusted the switches, and, to his joy, got connection.

Oom's voice came through, fuming in a blend of Spanish and German at the delay in answering. Tom sent a



purposely feeble reply, "jiggeting" the switches about to give the impression of atmospheric due to the electric storm Gonzalez had offered as an excuse for the interference with the power.

"What the deuce is the matter?" raved Oom. "Can't you get that instrument working properly? Listen! Power is failing—"

"By jink, if that's what's worrying you it'll be worse before it's better!" chuckled Tom, then loudly: "Give—present—position—lost—contact—"

Rapidly Oom jerked out a series of numbers which left Tom bewildered until he happened to glance upwards. On a roll above his head was a large-scale map divided into tiny squares, each numbered in red letters. To his astonishment the numbers Oom had given accorded with Lake Titicaca. At the risk of giving himself away he called:

"Give destination, in case power fails again!"

"Thunder and lightning! Donner und blitzen! Gott in himmel! Was there ever such a dolt!" Oom fumed, first in German, then in Spanish. "Diabolo, Gonzalez, wait until I return, and your skin shall suffer for this! Square 302 on map, fool! Lakeside, Silas Merger's house. You know what I have arranged. Caramba! Have lost your memory as well as your senses? Listen! Is that new engineer, Tom Dare, in his room?"

"Si, senor—I believe—" stammered Tom.

"Mako sure, then, and have a guard set over him day and night. He is of vital importance to me. Listen! His brother—what's that you say, fool?—his brother and the little engineer who hid himself on the plane are both dead. What? Si, d-e-a-d! The young fools defied me, and I—"

Tom could hardly hear as Oom detailed what had happened to his brother and his Cockney pal, for the blow deprived him of his senses for the moment. With a mighty effort, however, he pulled himself together, and asked in a listless tone:

"Are you—sure—he—is—dead?"

"Unless he can drop from five thousand feet to the ground without hurting himself he is certainly very dead!" was the sarcastic response. "We were within sight of the San Gomez flying ground—"

Tom Dare slammed down the headphones and buried his face in his hands. Rick dead! Then suddenly he remembered Oom's words, "drop from five thousand feet!" Was it possible that Rick had seized the opportunity, put his angel's wings cloak to the test, and, after all, escaped?

A telephone at his elbow buzzed, interrupting his meditations, and he mechanically picked up the receiver.

"Power-room speaking. There's a bearing heated in number one, sir. Shall I switch off on to two and four? You promised to see to them in case of need, and they have been going very unsteady to-day. I am afraid of them—"

"Si, switch on to zem. I come in a lectle while. Do not bozzaire me ag'in unteel I come. I have hurree to go to ze office. No distur-rb me unteel zen. Comprendra?"

Tom replaced the receiver, and sprang to his feet, a light of great determination in his eyes.

"Oom, I've got you in a cleft stick!" he hissed to himself. "Once in that power-house, and I'll stop you flying again, or die in the attempt. If Rick's dead—oh, but he isn't, something tells me he'll get through!—I'll fight you tooth and nail!"

### Turning the Tables!

**T**HE sound of a stifled groan from under the table roused Tom from his deep thoughts. Gonzalez was stirring!

He lugged the unfortunate Spaniard out and examined him. He was still unconscious, but showed signs of struggling back to life. Tom measured him with his eye. They were much of a build. In a few moments the young inventor had stripped the man of his dandified Spanish clothing and had donned them himself. Behind the door was a long Spanish cloak which would cover him practically from head to heels, whilst the broad-brimmed sombrero would help conceal his face.

There was a coil of old wire, ropes, and cords in one corner of the operator's room, and with these Tom bound the man firmly. Then, inserting a gag into the Spaniard's mouth, he bundled him into a big cupboard in a dark corner of the room.

With an automatic ready to hand in the pocket of the cloak, he descended the stairs to the power-room below, and opened the door a few inches. He could hear, from the different hum of the dynamos that the engineer had shifted from the one with the overheated bearings to the others.

The man looked up from his task for a moment as Tom glanced into the room, and the young inventor waved to him hurriedly, and nodded.

In that glance Tom noted that one of the engineer's assistants was the young Yale student, Terry Page, whom he had spoken to when he was first made prisoner.

With another hurried wave, indicating that he would return, Tom banged the door behind him and darted into the shadows outside. He saw the huge form of Ham pressed against the wall, and gave a low whistle to indicate his presence.

"Geewhillikins, Mass' Tom, am dat yo'?" cried Ham. "I t'ought yo' was one ob de gang, yo' look so diff'rent!"

"Look here, Ham!" said Tom. "We've got to look mighty slippy, work fast, and be on the alert all the time. I want to see if there's a plane in that hangar. If there is, and we can get away at once, we'll do so; but I've got quite a lot to see to first. S'sh!"

Across the other side of the square Tom could see the big hangar, and before it a sentry marching up and down to keep himself warm, a huge, burly brute, whom Tom knew to be a staunch adherent of Oom's, and a sort of sub-lieutenant in the band. His name was Antonio, an Italian gunman from Chicago, of enormous strength and brutal character.

A little way beyond was a small shack which was used as a guard-room, where, doubtless, two or three other men rested awaiting their turn to go on guard.

"Ham, could you creep to the back of the hangar without being seen?"

"Yo' bet I can, sah!" grinned Ham. "Owin' to my colour Ah am ter-ble deeficult to see in de dark, an' de cat ain't got nuthin' on muh w'en it comes to movin' kinder dainty!"

"What I want to do is to get into that hangar without being seen or heard," said Tom. "I want that big chap laid out without raising an alarm. I'm going to walk across to him and get him in conversation. Can you lay him out quietly, if necessary?"

"Suah pop, sah! On'y too happy, sah! Dat dago call me a low down skunk t'oder day, an' I couldn't rec-

taliat. Kin Ah lay him out? Just you watch mah step, boss!"

"Come out of the shadows, then, when I whistle," instructed Tom. "Remember, quiet's the word. I must see that plane in the hangar. If it's another wireless one, my plan's sunk, and I've got to know for certain before we go any further. Carry on!"

He gave Ham time to disappear, then sauntered out into the light, as if coming from the operator's room. He took a cigar from out of Gonzalez's case and lit it. He had seen the Spaniard and the Italian gunman laughing and talking together, and had seen Gonzalez give the other one of the strong cigars from this very case. Tom walked leisurely across the square, as if making for the house, imitating as well as he could Gonzalez's swaggering walk until he got right under the big arc lamp in the centre. Then he waved his hand to Antonio, as a sort of test, and the latter returned the salute indifferently.

Apparently changing his mind, Tom wheeled round and strolled towards the man, taking out the cigar-case again and keeping his head well down. He was timing in his mind how long it would take Ham to get to the back of the hangar by a more roundabout route. Then he caught a glimpse of the negro's huge form slipping between the two buildings.

It was precarious walking towards Antonio, a gunman who would shoot at sight, for Tom had not seen enough of the wireless operator to be certain of being able to imitate his walk and bearing sufficiently to deceive a man who knew him intimately.

Antonio had no suspicions, apparently, for he watched Tom approach, with a grin.

"Hallo, Gonzalez, how you coma? Been talka to do boss, hey? I hear da cracklin' over da roof. How's it go? Okay?"

"Sure, okay!" replied Tom, keeping his head down and sucking at his cigar as if it would not draw, so as to disguise his voice and also hide his face under the brim of the sombrero. "You have see-gar, yess?"

"Aw, yeah, smoka heem later. Changa da guard in haff an hour. Grazie!" He put out a hand like a leg of mutton for the proffered case, glancing under Tom's sombrero as he did so. Then his thick voice rasped:

"Corpo di Bacco! You not Gonzalez! Hola—"

Without a second's hesitation, Tom swung his right for the point of the man's jaw. Coming on top of the surprise at finding that it was not his Spanish friend who had approached him, the burly brute staggered under the blow, and for a space it looked as if he would be knocked out for the count. But that rugged jaw could take more than one blow, and, with a snarl of rage, Antonio made a leap towards his adversary.

Crash!

Tom's left connected on the other side of the man's jaw and stopped his rush, but again he came back. Up ripped the younger man's right full into Antonio's solar plexus, followed by a left hook to the jaw. But that only staggered the burly gunman, who bored in, and would have borne Tom down by sheer weight. Then a huge form stepped out from the shadow of the hangar, two gigantic fists whirled, and, with science behind the punch, caught the Italian at the base of the neck in



the deadly "rabbit punch." Antonio dropped like a stone, without a sound. "Thanks! Ham, you were just in time!" panted Tom. "He was stoned beyond my weight, and I couldn't drop him. Didn't like to use my gun, in case it went off. Tie him up, and we'll shove him in the hangar. They change guard in half an hour. I want to go back to the power-house if this bus is O.K. I hope the guard haven't heard anything?"

Ham lifted the bulky Italian as if he was a sack of flour, and dumped him into the hangar which Tom had unlocked. Then he proceeded to tie the man up tightly and scientifically, gagging him with a lump of oily waste, whilst Tom went across and examined the small two-seater plane.

"My luck's in," said Tom. "A Benton, latest pattern, and petrol driven. Empty some of those tins of petrol in the tank, Ham, and then stand by to get her going directly I come back."

"Trust me!" grinned the negro. Tom crossed to the power-house, and, casting a glance behind him, saw that Ham had donned Antonio's coat and had taken up sentry-go in the Italian's stead.

With his sombrero pulled well down over his face, Tom entered the power-house, with an automatic ready to his hand in his pocket, if necessary. The engineer was bent down over the dynamo, tinkering with the faulty engine, and was about to approach "Gonzalez" when Tom waved him off impatiently, and darted up the stairs two at a time to the operator's room.

Once more he tuned in, and after a while got a call from Oom, frantically calling for more power.

Tom snapped a rapid reply and sat listening to the sounds that came distinctly over the wireless. He could hear the engines of the big plane which he could recognise in a thousand by their steady, placid rhythm. Now, above that steady beat he heard another sound, the brief, staccato coughing of a high-powered, racing engine that told of the presence of

another plane near at hand to Oom's, and such was his knowledge of every type of flier that the young inventor recognised its beat.

"I'm betting that's a De Hay bomber, Tiger," Tom muttered to himself. "Going all out, too. That'll be from — By the powers, if it is Rick! It might be. Anyway, I can help that chap, whoever it is. I'll take a chance. In any case, if Rick's still on Oom's machine, he must take his chance. She won't crash; the stabiliser will keep her up. But I can cut off her power."

Tom re-entered the power-house, and walked directly across to the faulty engine, the engineer looking up as he approached.

"Hello! You been long enough, Gonzalez!" he said surlily. "Somethin' wrong wi' th' wireless phone?"

Tom nodded curtly, and, under the shade of the sombrero, took a glance at the other two men. One was a Spaniard, a squint-eyed, sullen-looking brute whom Tom had seen before; the other was young Terry Page, the promising scientist from Yale.

The lad was very pale, and looked forlorn and downcast as the engineer spat out some orders to him.

"Jump to it, an' git that jacket oiled, cain't yer?" the man shouted. "Think yer still at Yale, yer blinkin' millionaire toff? By heck, I'll be cuttin' off another finger to send to yer dad to hurry up thet ransom if yer don't move a bit quicker!"

Tom saw that the youngster's right hand was bound up in a blood-stained bandage, and that he was evidently in pain, and he guessed that Oom had carried out one of his oft-repeated threats, and hastened a ransom by sending the relatives a reminder in the shape of a grisly relic of the kidnapped.

His blood boiled, and he saw red as the engineer looked up at him, with a smirk, as if seeking his approval for the cruel jest.

The man's expression changed the next moment, however; his jaw dropped, and his face paled, for he was

stooping so low over the engine that he could see under the sombrero.

Once more Tom heard the words: "By heck, but yer not Gonzalez—" As the man's hand whipped towards the hip-pocket of his overalls Tom fired from his pocket, and, with a shriek of pain, the engineer dropped his half-drawn gun and clutched his arm.

The Spaniard was lightning on the draw, and had his "gat" in a shoulder holster. Before he could carry out his intentions, however, young Terry Page, who was between the two, acted swiftly.

Up swept his right foot, and the gat exploded harmlessly in the air as it went flying, whilst the Spaniard reeled against the humming dynamo.

He must have touched an exposed live wire, for, with a ghastly shriek, he collapsed as an intense blue flame leapt out; then he slumped down, an inanimate heap, with scorched and blackened flesh.

Tom glanced at the youngster with gleaming eyes.

"Thanks, Terry!" he snapped. "I take it you're on my side—ch?"

"You bet," retorted the youngster, "if you're against this gang! I'm a prisoner here, same as yourself, under ransom. Look here"—he held up his injured hand—"they hacked off my finger with a jagged, rusty knife, and sent it to dad with a demand for half a million dollars. D'you wonder I'm ready for anything to get square with Oom and his gang of wolves?"

"Good enough!" said Tom. "Switch off those dynamos! In ten minutes we can put paid to Oom's boasted power, for he's helpless without the wireless from here. Take this gun, and if that engineer starts anything, shoot—and shoot to kill! Boy, we're going to get away from here this night, if we have to shoot up the whole durned garrison!"

*(Oom the Terrible is booked for a number one size shock by the look of things. Look out for another feast of thrills in next week's gripping instalment, chums; it's the best yet!)*

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### IF YOU'RE IN NEED OF A FIGHT—

Please oblige by giving the n.o. (nock-out) to the following: C. R. Tompkins (Upper Fourth), H. J. Coker (Fifth), G. Loder (Sixth), C. Pensonby (Highlife), and that best Quetch. I'll stand by and hold your jacket, old chap!—Letters only, "Hoopful," Study No. 7, Remove Passage.

# Quetch's Herald

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

Edited by HARRY WHARTON, F.G.R.

LATEST EXTRA GOOD EDITION

November 28th, 1931.

This space was reserved for the FISH MONEY-LENDING & FINANCE AGENCY, but that company has suddenly gone into liquidation at the request of Mr. Quetch.

## OUR NATURE COLUMN

### PROFESSOR SQUIFF'S LITTLE LEG PULL

Now, gentle reader, I would like to load you up the garden and examine the wonders of Nature which we may see about us. The early winter is the best time to study Nature, as there is practically nothing to study.

If it wasn't for the fog which surrounds us, you would be able to see a lot more fog. The fog, as you know, is created by a creature called the Balli-courous fowl. It makes its nest of beetroots, lettuce, and other vegetables, and it lays its eggs hard-boiled.

When the Balli-courous fowl is attacked by its enemies, it gives forth the curious vapour which we call fog. At the moment it call seem that about three million Balli-courous are being attacked by enemies.

If you look closely on the trunk of the tree you may see a small insect called the Tinwome. But it isn't likely; for these little creatures are totally invisible to the naked eye.

They cannot even be seen with a high-powered microscope. In fact, scientists have not yet found out whether they are there or not.

The Dog Tree is worth examining, if you come across it. It is called the

Vernon-Smith's cheek in colossal. Lines and hickings fall upon the Bounder as thick as a slice of bread-and-butter in Hall; but he still goes about looking for trouble.

His latest escapade absolutely takes the biscuit. In the whole annals of Grey-fraters there has never been a more deliberate bit of "cheek" from any junior. Smithy is trying to twist himself into knots in his study, having received a stiff licking from Quetch; but all the rest of the school is yelling over it.

The thing happened like this:—

This afternoon the Bounder wanted to write a letter to a friend of his in London, and, thinking to be a bit swanky, he wanted to write Quetchy was out, and then slipped into his study and began typing the letter on the Bounder master's typewriter.

While he was going strong, Quetchy came in and barked:—

"Vernon-Smith! How dare you use my typewriter without permission?"

"Sorry, sir," said the Bounder.



News has just come to hand of an astonishing theft from the locker of Mr. Richard Nugent, the well-known cigarette-card collector. Mr. Nugent's collection of cigarette cards was known throughout Greyfriars. He had many priceless and rare examples in his collection—cards which, if not recovered, it will be impossible to replace.

### LATE EXTRA. ASTONISHING THEFT IN THE THIRD

#### WORKS OF ART STOLEN

Have you any idea of the value of the stolen articles? "Impossible!" answered Mr. Nugent. "Some of them were almost priceless. For instance, my splendid example of the 'Britt Oprington'—No. 31 in the 'Farmyard' Series—was worth an immense amount. Mr. George Gatty, a rival collector, was keen to buy it from me, and offered me thirty marbles and a broken gyroscope; but even this enormous price could not secure it!"

"Then there was my 'Flags of All Nations' Series, in perfect condition, for which I was offered a whole tanner by Pageot the Third—and wouldn't it have been a pity?"

"Arrogant!"

"You can't say that," said Mr. Nugent. "I was offered twenty or thirty cigarette-cards which had dropped out of his bulging pockets."

"What steps are you taking to discover the thieves? Have you called in Joland Yard?"

"No," answered Mr. Nugent heartily. "I want those cards back again. Between you and me, I half suspect that Joland Yard are the thieves. Know what they are?"

"I'm now going to see Fishy. If he doesn't pay up those doughnuts in time for tea, can I rely on the Removos to make him shell out?"

"You can't say that," said Mr. Nugent. "I was offered twenty or thirty cigarette-cards which had dropped out of his bulging pockets."

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And we emphasize this with our signature: Dick Penford. (In conjunction with the pretty-renowned Pure Food Committee.)

### SOCIETY GOSSIP

#### News from the Upper Six

A gentleman called at the school yesterday collecting funds for the Lanham Home for Helpless Natives. The Fifth Form unanimously donated Horace Coker.

Bolshevik Major is giving a tea-fight in his study to-night. Bolsheviki will get the tea, and the guests will get the fight.

Peter Todd, Esq., is putting on flesh. If he gets any fatter he may easily be mistaken for a skeleton.

Mr. Cecil Pensonby the famous Highlife blackguard, had a narrow escape from expulsion recently. Only by (10 per cent discount for prompt cash.)

Mr. William Gosling intends to write this story of his life. No doubt the work will be published in about 250 volumes. Mr. Gosling distinctly remembers Julius Caesar.

Mr. William Duntler intends to dispose of a large stock of well-written I.O.U.'s to any body who will take them at their face value. (10 per cent discount for prompt cash.)

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## BEGGING FOR TROUBLE

### Quetch in a Rage

Quetch snorted. "You will write out one hundred times, 'I must not use my Form master's typewriter without permission,' and hand the imposition to me before tea-time," he snapped. "Go!"

Smithy left the study, and Quetch went out for a walk to dodge Prout.

When the master of the Removos returned, Vernon-Smith came up to his study with a sheet of papers in his hand.

"Have you written your imposition, Vernon-Smith?" snapped Mr. Quetch.

"Yes, sir! Here it is!"

Quetchy took the imposition and glared at it—and then he almost jumped clear of the floor. He positively gurgled with rage.

The Bounder had had the impossible nerve to type out that imposition on Quetchy's typewriter. Can you beat that for cheek?

## MRS. MIMBLE TRIES IT ON DOWN WITH DUMPED DOUGHNUTS

### Oh Mrs. Mimble! Aren't you ashamed of yourself for trying to swing stale tuck on the citizens of Greyfriars? Fie on you!

The fact is, readers (gentle or otherwise), Mrs. Mimble has been "trying it on." She thought she could make a little more profit by stocking stale tuck, and she actually thought we wouldn't notice the difference.

She doesn't know the Removos. When a tart slipped out of Johnny Bull's hand and knocked a large hole in the guard, we began to think that the said tart wasn't as fresh as it might have been.

And when the sardines purchased by Wharton tried to climb out of the tin, we felt that something ought to be done about it.

We accordingly set up a Pure Food Committee, under the Chairmanship of Dick Penford, to inquire into the matter of the alleged stale tuck. The Committee has just issued its report, which runs as follows:

**CENTRAL GREYFRIARS CRIMINAL COURT FOOD COMMITTEES FIRST REPORT.**

Acting on instructions to investigate the tuck which was sold for pigs in such, we have duly made a search in old Jessie Mimble's perch, and, as you might expect, our suspicions were correct. For we found the dental floss, as served out by Jiffrars School, was considerably below the standard of a year ago.

(Cont. at top of next column.)

And we emphasize this with our signature: Dick Penford. (In conjunction with the pretty-renowned Pure Food Committee.)

### PATENT LINES' MACHINE

#### Fishy's New Venture

You cannot keep a good man down. The same thing applies to a smart guy. Mr. Fisher T. Fish, of New York, is a smart guy—his always got some weird and wonderful idea for making money.

His latest stunt is automatic machines. A few weeks ago he hired a chocolate machine which he installed under the rose and the Removos status.

This machine has made such a good profit for its owner, that Fishy is building other machines on a different line.

"Chocolate are all right, of course," said Mr. Fish, speaking through his nose to a Greyfriars Herald representative. "But that ain't enough sale for em. I calculate making a fortune on any new machines."

The popularity of hearings—which have so long been the staple diet of the Second Form—is threatened by a sudden movement in favour of haddock.

May we suggest, as a rallying-act, the old Irish song, "Come Back to Herring"?

"How come, Mr. Fish?" "I guess I wrote a stack of imports and sent 'em into the machines, you know."

One Virgil machine, one Caesar machine, and one Euclid machine. Any lines, Shortport Vernon-Smith is a shilling and pull out the drawer."

"Then hast said it, Mr. Fish. Where are you going to install these machines?" "Waal, I guess I did think of asking Quetch's permission to put 'em in the Form-room; but I calculate that it would hardly get by. Better not say anything to Quetch. The guy has no business in the school."

I guess I'll have to put 'em in the dormitory, and if Ball and Field don't like it, they can jump it."

STOP PRESS.—Ball and Field have duly "jumped" it. They jumped the machines into the passage and Fisher T. Fish with them. The dismal clanking noise in the Removos passage is not a ghost rattling chains, it's a Fishy trying to find a site for his Lines' Machines.

ANNOUNCEMENT!

Horbert Vernon-Smith, Esq., has announced his intention, as soon as conditions are favourable, of opening a soda-fountain and hot-drink saloon in one of the box-rooms. He asks us to state that the story of his changing his name to Shortport Vernon-Smith is a malicious invention.

