

AMAZING SCHOOL STORY | HUMOROUS GREYFRIARS SUPPLEMENT | MODERN PIRATE STORY | All Inside!

The Magnet ²_P



*The Remove's
Remarkable
Recruit!*

The Remove's Remarkable RECRUIT!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

His Master's Voice!

"CUFFY, old chap!"

Cuffy, the new fellow in the Remove, smiled.

Billy Bunter's voice was not only friendly; it was affectionate, almost honeyed.

As usual hearing Bunter at that moment might have supposed that Cuffy, the new fellow in the Remove, was his nearest and dearest pal.

Which would have been quite a mistake. Nobody in the Remove liked Cuffy—Bunter, perhaps, least of all. Bunter was the only fellow in the Remove who was lower down in the scale as a fighting man than the woody new fellow. So Bunter was the only fellow in the Remove whom Cuffy ever kicked. This did not inspire Billy Bunter with affection.

Yet at this moment, as the fat Owl of the Remove blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 1 through his big spectacles, his voice-dust taken on a honey-like sweetness, and an ingratiating grin overcame his fat countenance.

But the reason was not far to seek. Cuffy, strolling at the study table, was unpacking a cake.

It was a large cake. It was stacked with phans. It had marzipan on top. It was such a cake as Bunter often dressed about, but seldom ate.

"I say, old fellow!" cooed Bunter.

"What the deer?" said Cuffy.

Bunter rolled in, and took hold of the boy to chat it.

"Get on the other side first," said Cuffy.

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BY

FRANK RICHARDS

"Oh, really, old chap—" Bunter stied in the doorway. He could not take his eyes and his spectacles off the cake. Its beauties aroma reached him where he stood. It tantalized him. Indeed, with that scrumptious cake so near, yet so far, Bunter was going through some of the tortures of Tantalus of old.

"I say, that's a ripping cake, Cuffy!" he said. "Not so good as the cakes I get from Bunter Court, perhaps, but ripping! I say—"

"Yes, rather!" answered Bunter promptly.

"Then you're looked for a disappointment. You won't get any!" Bunter!

The Snipe strolled, and went on unpacking the cake. As its glazes were further revealed, Billy Bunter's extensive mouth watered.

"I—I say, Cuffy, Quelch wants you!" gasped Bunter. "I—I remember now he told me, as I was coming up to—to tell you to go to his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Cuffy.

"Blamed if I see anything to chuckle at! You'd better not keep Quelch waiting. He gets waxy. I—I'll look after that cake for you while you're gone."

Cuffy took a knife and sliced the cake. Evidently he did not believe that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had sent him that message by Bunter. It was really rather too thin. There

was no doubt that Bunter would have looked after the cake had Cuffy gone down. He would have looked after it, promptly and efficiently.

"Look here, old fellow, why not be pally?" asked Bunter, coming a step further in. "I don't think you're a smashing snipe like all the other fellows, you know. I'm not surprised you can't jell with Winston and Nopert in the study. I never could, really, when I was in the study. They're beauts! I've been going to make friends with you, old chap, ever since—since—"

"Since you saw this cake?" asked Cuffy.

"Oh, really, Cuffy—"

"Get out!"

Billy Bunter did not get out. The cake fascinated him. He could have kicked himself for not having been a bit more civil to Cuffy. After all, civility costs nothing. But, of course, Bunter had not forgotten this.

Miss Judith Coker, who was Cuffy's wealthy aunt, often sent hampers, cakes, and all sorts of good things to her other nephew, Coker of the Fifth Form. But Cuffy assessed rather overlooked in that line.

Now it seemed Aunt Judy had thought him of her younger nephew, and sent him this magnificent cake. Bunter guessed at once that it came from Aunt Judy.

Perhaps it was a sign that the Snipe was ascending in his efforts to get into the old lady's good graces. Anyhow, there it was. Bunter had seen such cakes in Coker's study in the Fifth, but never in the Snipe's before. From the bottom of his fat heart the tick-tocker

of the Remove wished that he had expended a little civility on the Snipe before the cake arrived.

He hoped that it was not too late now. Bunter had a hopeful nature.

Instead of getting out, therefore, he made another step towards the table, the cake driving him like a magnet.

Caffyn had cut off a large slice. Now he turned away, to poke the study fire. His back was to Bunter and the cake.

Bunter breathed hard.

His fat paw came out, irresistibly drawn towards the big slice of cake.

"I—I say, Caffyn!" he gasped.

"Shut up!"

"Is—is this slice for me?"

"No," said Caffyn, over his shoulder.

"Get a slice—"

"Just eat!"

Billy Bunter's eyes glenned through his spectacles. The slice of cake was within his reach. Caffyn, poker in hand, was stirring the fire, his back to Bunter, as if deliberately to give him a chance of snatching that slice, and bolting with it.

Civility, friendliness, "old fellow," and "old chap," were evidently no good, with a snipe like Caffyn. Bunter made up his fat mind.

He grabbed.

And even as his fat fingers grasped the slice of cake, Caffyn whirled round, poker in hand.

Rap!

It landed on Bunter's podgy knuckles. He dropped the slice of cake as if it had suddenly become red-hot. He gave a fearful yell, and jammed his damaged knuckles into his mouth, and sucked them frantically, spluttering.

Caffyn grinned at him.

"Have another!" he asked. "You've only got to touch that cake again. You fat idiot, I was watching you, under my nose, all the time."

"You-or-ur! Oh, you beast!" growled Bunter, as he realized that he had fallen into a trap. "Ow! Just like you, you snipe! Wow! Treacherous beast! Urrrgh!"

Bunter doubled his fat fists. He was tempted to hurl himself at the Snipe, hitting out right and left.

Caffyn lunged with the poker.

It took effect on the best-filled waistcoat at Goggyfria's School. Bunter gave a horrid gurgle, and staggered.

"Gurgh!"

Then he jumped back as the Snipe, grinning, made another lunge. That jump carried him out into the Remove passage, and Caffyn kicked the door shut after him.

In the passage Bunter sucked his knuckles, and breathed wrath and vengeance. The door had not latched, and, as it stood ajar, the fat Owl heard a sound from within Study No. 1—the sound of active jaws at work on luscious cake. He shook a fat fist at the door.

"Beast!" he roared.

"Come in and have some more!" chuckled Caffyn.

"Yah! Who wants your measly old cake?" snorted Bunter.

And he rolled sulkily up the passage.

Then he stopped.

There was a gleam in his little round eyes behind his big, round spectacles. A bright idea had flashed into Bunter's brain. He remembered his weird powers as a ventriloquist.

Bunter's ventriloquist trickery was well known in the Remove. In that year it earned him more likes than his penance, so to speak. But Caffyn, as a new fellow, of course, had no knowledge of it. Bunter, who could do nothing else, could do ventriloquism. He could imitate any man's voice,

Often had he been kicked for doing so. But the Snipe did not know all that.

The fat Owl cleared his podgy throat with a little cough. Then he stepped quietly into the doorway of the next study to Study No. 1. He was grinning now, in spite of his rapped knuckles. The Greying's ventriloquism was just going to begin.

Caffyn, in Study No. 1, was eating cake with great relish. All the more relish because he considered that that magnificent cake from Aunt Judy was rather a score over his cousin in the Fifth. But he was suddenly interrupted.

"Caffyn!" barked a sharp, acid voice.

"Caffyn! Are you in your study, Caffyn?"

The Snipe jumped at the sound of his Form-master's well-known voice. It was Quetch's voice to the last tone, and the slow murmur of the Remove had not the faintest suspicion that it was produced by a fat ventriloquist.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" he stammered, looking round towards the door.

"Caffyn! I sent you a message to come to my study! Follow me to my study at once, Caffyn!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Caffyn.

He was rather surprised that Quetch did not open the door to speak to him. But there was no disregarding that tart command!

Caffyn hastily shoved the cake into the study cupboard, and left Study

Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, is every sort of an ass. But, gee!—when it comes to playing footer, he's the limit!

No. 1, munching his last mouthful as he went.

To his surprise, Mr. Quetch was not visible! He must have gone downstairs very quickly after calling through the study door to Caffyn!

Surprised, irritated, and rather apprehensive of what his Form-master wanted with him, Caffyn hurried to the Remove staircase, and went down!

As his head disappeared below the level of the landing another head was projected from a Remove study!

Billy Bunter grinned.

He had succeeded! There was no doubt about that! His wonderful ventriloquism for once had come in useful. He waited only till Caffyn's footsteps had died away down the stairs. Then he shot across the passage to Study No. 1. He was in that study for about ten seconds.

When he emerged, as swiftly as he had entered, there was a large and luscious cake in his fat hands.

A minute later Billy Bunter was sitting on Lord Mandrover's trunk, in the Remove box-room, eating cake!

Aunt Judy, when she dispatched that magnificent cake to the school, had no doubt hoped that it would give pleasure and satisfaction to the recipient! It did! Billy Bunter enjoyed that cake immensely!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Pinned!

"W'ED beat you—"
 "Bos'ow!"
 "W'ed beat you—"
 "You couldn't!"
 "W'ed beat you," roared Bob Cherry,

"with Coker of the Fifth playing for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 It was said in the heat of the moment, of course.

Bob was excited.

In a cooler moment Bob would not have said, and certainly would not have thought, that any football team could beat anybody, with Coker of the Fifth in its ranks.

If Coker of the Fifth played for a football team that team had only one chance—if Coker of the Fifth got "crooked" in the first minute of the game!

Otherwise that team had no chance!

Bob, of course, knew it! In stating that the Remove could beat Temple & Co. of the Fourth with Coker playing for them, Bob was simply seeking emphasis—making it as emphatic as he could! Just as he might have said, in a hasty moment that he could beat the Fourth standing on his head!

There was a chortle in the Rag.

But Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Greyfriars Fourth, did not chortle. He nodded, slowly and thoughtfully.

"Mean that?" he asked.

"Eh!" said Bob.

"I asked you," said Temple calmly, "if you mean it—or just bragging and gassing like a silly kid?"

Pat like that, what could Bob answer?

"I jolly well do mean it!" he declared.

"Dose, then!" said Temple.

"Wha-at!"
 "D-o-s-e—done!" said Cecil Reginald, spelling out—

And there was another laugh in the Rag—a regular roar, at the look on Bob Cherry's face.

"Caught!" murmured Fry of the Fourth.

"Oh, rather!" grinned Dabney of that Form.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cecil Reginald Temple condescended to smile. Indeed, it was difficult to avoid smiling at the expression gathering on Bob's speaking countenance.

Look before you leap is a good old proverb! Think before you speak is a still wiser maxim.

Bob had spoken without thinking!

And, as Fry said, he was caught!

Either he had to take his wild words back, or stand by them! Neither alternative was agreeable.

There had been rather a hot argument in the Rag. Bob had not exactly lost his temper. But he had got, undeniably, a little excited.

There was games practice going on before tea. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Horace Junnet Ram Singh, and Johnny Bob were on Little Side, with a crowd of other Removes. Bob, of course, had been with them. Very powerful reasons would have been required to make Bob Cherry cut a practice on the football ground.

But an accidental kick on the knee from Bolsover, major, the clumsiest fellow in the Removes, had forced Bob to limp off. It was one of those little accidents that do happen, and Bob was not the fellow to grouse. Having merely mentioned to Bolsover major that he was a barging barge, and a clumsy chump, and a gabbling idiot, Bob limped off the field, and limped back to the changing-room.

Having changed, he limped into the Rag, to wait there for his friends to come in to tea and find a little company in the meantime.

The company he found was that of Temple, Dabney, Fry, and some more

Fourth Formers, gathered round the fire. They were not, like the Remove, at games practice that afternoon.

A light drizzle was falling, which did not worry the hardy Removeites, but had a deterring effect on the dandies of the Fourth.

Temple had told his merry men that they weren't going out mud-collectin', and his loyal followers agreed that they weren't! So they didn't!

Perhaps Bob, as he came in, may have expressed by an involuntary look what he thought of fellows who slacked round a fire, when they might have been mud-collecting? Or perhaps it was simply playfulness that led Temple to chip him. It was always just a little annoying to Temple to remember that his team, though rather older, never could beat the Remove.

Whatever the cause, the talk of the Fourth Form men soon ran on the subject of fellows who got off a practice because they'd had a bit of a tap-nothing to speak of!

All this, of course, was directed at Bob; and it amused Temple & Co. to see his ruddy face grow redder and redder, till it rivalled in hue a freshly boiled beetroot.

After about ten minutes of it Bob Cherry weighed in. He gave, with almost painful directness, and in a rather loud voice, his opinion of Temple & Co. as footballers, as slackers, as fogwasters, as tailor's dummies!

He recalled to their memory the fact that the Remove always walked over them at Soccer. He reminded them that the Remove had once even beaten them with Billy Bunter's goal! He pointed out to them what silly asses and babbling fatheads they were.

And the more excited Bob grew, the calmer Temple grew—for the laudable purpose of pulling his leg and adding to his excitement! Thus it came about that Bob, in towering wrath and scorn, made the rash statement that the Remove could beat the Fourth at Soccer, even with Coker of the Fifth playing for them! For that was the most emphatic way possible of saying that the Fourth were no good at Soccer as all!

After which, Bob was going to shake the dust of the Rag from his feet! But Cecil Reginald Temple, seeing his chance, was not going to let him off so easily! He snapped at the offer—which really was not an offer, but a wild figure of speech! Whatever it was Temple snapped it up!

And that was that! Bob Cherry stood in the midst of a grinning circle of Fourth Form men, all enjoying his discomfiture.

"We mayn't be able to play Soccer!" drawled Cecil Reginald. "Cherry says we can't; as' of course, he knows! They know everythin' in the Remove—asn't a little over! But we'll take you on, Cherry."

"Well—" began Bob slowly.

He broke off. What was he to say? He could not eat his words before a grinning mob of the Fourth! What he had said, he had said!

"We've got a date on Wednesday!" went on Temple. "It will be a bit unusual for a senior man to play in a junior game, but I fancy you'll get Coker all right! There isn't much of a rub on old Coker to play football."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Bob grinned at that! Certainly there was no rub on Coker of the Fifth as a footballer. He had his good qualities. His hampers from Aunt Judy and his study suppers were celebrated in the Fifth.

But not for the gift of all his
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hampers, with Aunt Judith thrown in, would Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, have played him in the Form team. Still less would Wingate of the Sixth have played him for school. Keen footballer as Horace Coker was in that department he ploughed a lonely furrow.

"They'll get him all right!" grinned Fry. "Coker's so keen on Soccer, he would play football for the Third if they'd have him."

"Or the Second!" chuckled Dabney. "I've heard that he got as far as punching Blundell's head the other day for leaving him out of the pick-ups," remarked Kenney. "They'll get Coker all right! He'll jump with both feet to play!"

Bob Cherry was only too sadly sure of it!

He stood dismayed.

"I—I—" he stammered. "Go in' to admit that you've only been gassin' and swankin'!" inquired Cecil Reginald amiably.

"No!" roared Bob.

"Then it's a go!"

"Yes!" said Bob Cherry, through his teeth. "That is if Wharton agrees."

Wharton's football captain in the Remove, as you know.

"Oh, your pal will back you up all right!" grinned Temple. "He won't have you shoun up as a swankin' wind-bag who checks out challenges right and left, and then is afraid to stand by them."

"You cheeky ass—"

"Tell Wharton about it," yawned Temple. "Tell him to make it Wednesday—any date you like, of course; but Wednesday will suit us. And look out for the lakin' of your lives."

"Of course, Coker may refuse—"

said Bob haltingly.

"If he does, we shall know that you've put it so that he had to," said Temple, with a curl of the lip. "If you're going to sneak out of it like that—"

"Who's sneaking out of it!" roared Bob.

"Looks to me as if you are!"

"You cheeky fathead! You fooling frump!" Bob's excitement revived, and he roared. "You frabjous ass! I've beat you with Coker in the game—we could beat you with half a dozen Cokers."

"Pity there ain't half a dozen Cokers here!" sighed Temple. "I'd hold you to that, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Instead of stopping cackling, the Fourth Form men cackled more loudly than ever. They were enjoying this, if Bob wasn't. It was no end of a jest to hold him down to his rash challenge.

Moreover, Temple saw a prospect ahead of beating the Remove, for once. And a victory was a victory, however it came about. So the heroes of the Fourth cackled loud and long.

"You chortling chumps!" hoisted Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry reached out suddenly and grabbed Temple by the collar with one hand, Fry by the neck with the other.

Crack!

It sounded like a pistol-shot as two heads were suddenly brought together with a loud, resounding crack.

Two fearful yells followed.

"Yoooop!"

"Whoooop!"

Temple and Fry left off laughing at once; though the other fellows went on laughing! Bob Cherry sat the two

down on the floor and walked out of the Rag! They sat and rubbed their heads.

"Ow!" said Fry. "I'll jolly well—"
Bob's sorry, still with a very red face, walked down from the House to meet his friends coming up from the football. He had surprising news for them; and he wondered rather uselessly how they were going to take it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Aunt on the Phone!

CAFFYN tapped at the door of his Form-master's study and opened it.

He was rather surprised that he had seen nothing of Mr. Quelch on his way there. Quelch—or, at least, Quelch's voice, had ordered him to follow to the study. Naturally, he had expected to sight the tall, angular figure of the Remove master ahead of him. But he saw nothing of him; and when he arrived at the study he found the door shut. Another surprise awaited him when he stepped in. The study was empty; Mr. Quelch was not there! Caffyn stared angrily round the study.

Where the thump was Quelch? The Remove master had been with the Head since class, he knew. But he could not be with the Head now—as his voice had been heard in the Remove passage!

"Blow the old ass!" murmured Caffyn. "What the dickens does he want me for, I'd like to know."

That was rather an uneasy matter for the Snip. He had a good many delinquencies on his conscience!

He could only conclude that Mr. Quelch, on his way to the study, had stepped into some other study to speak to another boy.

Frost's study, most likely; it was well-known that Mr. Frost, the master of the Fifth, practically laid in wait for other masters to catch them and get them chatting.

If Prout had captured Quelch for a jaw, Caffyn might have a long wait! Anyhow, he had to wait; having been ordered by his master—at least, by his master's voice—to follow him to the study.

He slouched to the window and stood staring out into the quadrangle, where the February dusk was falling.

He had a glimpse of a crowd of fellows coming up from the football field, and of Bob Cherry meeting them as they came. He cowered at them.

The Snip's leathery football and footballer's air, except in compulsory practice he had not touched Soccer ball since coming to Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared from his sight, going into the House. Another figure came into view—that of his burly cousin, Horace Coker of the Fifth Form. On him also the Snip bestowed a scorn.

Coker of the Fifth, though quite unconscious of the fact, was his rival for Miss Judith Coker's money-bags! Coker never gave that a thought; Caffyn thought of little else. That was the difference in their natures.

How was it, Caffyn wondered savagely, that a clever fellow like himself failed to cut out that obtuse fat-head in Aunt Judy's good graces? It was not for want of trying—neither was he particular in his methods. Yet, with all his clever cunning, and all Coker's obtuseness, he had had, no luck!

But the scowl on his face changed into a grin as he saw Coker bearing down on Blundell of the Fifth. He saw Blundell swoop hastily and quicken his pace, heading for the House.

Coker, no doubt, was seizing the chance to urge once more his football claims on the captain of his Form. Blundell had had some, so to speak, and did not want any more.

Blundell disappeared, walking fast; Coker disappeared after him, also going strong.

"Blundell! I say, Blundell!" Coker's powerful voice could be heard in the study, and Quelch had not come in. Really it was too thick, keeping a fellow hanging about like this!

The Snipe crossed to the door at last! If Quelch was jawing with another beak and had forgotten calling him down to the study, he had a right to remind Quelch of his existence.

He left Quelch's study and walked along to Prout's.

Tapping at the door of Mr. Prout's study, he opened it.

"If you please, sir—" he began.

that matter; though Horace always seemed to act as if he had sole proprietary rights!

"That old cat!" breathed Caffyn.

Evidently, Aunt Judy had rung up Greyfriars to speak to Horace's Form-master! Prout was not there to take the call—the Snipe, as it happened, was!

There was no sound of Prout's elephantine footsteps in the passage. The Snipe was safe from interruption.

Caffyn stood, receiver in hand, staring at the instrument. He hardly knew how to act for the moment. He was quite keen to hear what Aunt Judy might have to say to Coker's Form-master about her dear Horace. That would be information from the other side, helpful in his campaign against Coker. But he hesitated to answer, lest she should recognise his voice. Luckily, Miss Coker ran on, without waiting for an answer from Mr. "Sprout."

think that the dear, good, kind boy should be given some reward, and I am going to ask you, Mr. Sprout, whether you would let him have a holiday from the school. I am going to Bournemouth in a few days, and I am sure that dear Horace would be delighted to spend a day at the seaside."

Caffyn suppressed a snarl.

He was sure of it, too!

But he instantly resolved that dear Horace should not get that day at the seaside, if he could possibly put the stopper on.

"I am going on Thursday," resumed Miss Coker. "If it would not be a very, very great deal of trouble to you, Mr. Sprout, might I speak to Horace on the telephone on Wednesday to make the arrangements?"

"Er—"

"Wednesday being a half-holiday, it



As Billy Bunter's fat fingers grasped the slice of cake, Caffyn whirled round, poker in hand. Rap! The poker landed on Bunter's podgy knuckles, and he dropped the slice of cake as if it had suddenly become red hot. "Yow-ow-ow!" he moaned.

He broke off with an angry grunt. Prout was not there, and Quelch was not there. The study was empty.

Caffyn gave a quick glance up and down the passage. Nobody was in sight. He stepped swiftly in and shut the door. Only a few days ago Prout had complained of him to Quelch and got him "six" of the best! The coast being clear, this was a chance for Caffyn to give Prout something back! It would take only a few moments to upset the inkpot over Prout's papers!

Buzzzzzz!

Caffyn jumped almost clear of the floor as the sudden ringing of the telephone bell startled him.

He jumped at the instrument. His one idea was to stop the noise before it drew someone to the study to find him there. He grabbed up the receiver.

"Is that Mr. Sprout?" came a treble voice, and Caffyn jumped again. It was the voice of Miss Judith Coker—Coker's aunt! Caffyn's aunt, too, for

"I am so sorry to bother you, Mr. Sprout—very sorry, indeed! I know that schoolmasters are very, very busy men. Did you speak?"

"Er—" murmured Caffyn into the transmitter.

He thought that he could safely go as far as that. But that was enough for Miss Coker.

"It is about Horace," she went on. "I was so—so glad to hear from you that you are pleased with dear Horace."

Caffyn scowled savagely at the telephone. Miss Coker might have been pleased to hear that, but her nephew Edgar was not!

"I am so glad you told me of his kindness, his thoughtful generosity, to the poor village carrier who lost his horse—or was it a donkey? It was so like dear Horace! Was it not, Mr. Sprout?"

"Er—" murmured Caffyn, as Miss Coker paused.

"It was so—so like dear Horace! I

would not interfere with dear Horace's lessons, Mr. Sprout. Is that not so?"

"Er—"

"If I ring up at half-past three on Wednesday, Mr. Sprout, will it be quite, quite convenient?"

"Er—"

"Did you say 'Yes,' Mr. Sprout?" came Aunt Judy's treble. "I do not hear you very clearly; these dreadful telephones buzz so, especially on long-distance calls. Then I will ring up at half-past three on Wednesday, and you will be so kind as to tell Horace to take my call, dear Mr. Sprout?"

"Er—"

"Thank you so much, Mr. Sprout! You will give my love to Horace, will you not? The dear, dear boy! Good-bye, Mr. Sprout!"

"Er—"

To Caffyn's great relief, Aunt Judy rang off. Evidently the good lady had no doubt that she had been speaking

to Coker's Form-master. Certainly she had received only "Er—" by way of answer, but, naturally, she would have expected to be told if the wrong person received her call. As she was not told, she had no doubt that the right person had received it.

Caffyn jammed the receiver back on the hooks, and stood scowling at it. Then, remembering the risk of being caught in the Fifth Form master's study, he hurriedly crossed to the door and dodged out—without upsetting the ink over Prout's papers, as he had intended. Having taken a call intended for Prout, he did not want to leave any clue in the study.

He went down the passage again to Quelch's study. But the Remove master was not there yet.

As he stood in the doorway, puzzled and angry and undecided, there was a heavy tread, and Mr. Prout came along. He glanced at the Snipe with disfavour.

"If you please, sir, can you tell me where Mr. Quelch is?" asked Caffyn.

"I believe that Mr. Quelch is still with the Head!" answered Prout curtly. "And junior boys are not allowed to loiter about this passage, Caffyn!"

"Mr. Quelch told me to come here, sir, about twenty minutes ago, and I've been waiting for him," answered the Snipe sullenly.

Prout came to a halt, and fixed his eyes on Caffyn.

"Are you here to play some trick, Caffyn?" he boomed. "You have been punished for such things before! Do you venture—"

"I had to come here, sir! Mr. Quelch called me down from the Remove passage—"

"When?" boomed Prout.

"About twenty minutes ago, sir."
"I shall report this," said Prout, "to your Form-master, Caffyn! How dare you make such a statement!"

The Snipe blinked at him.
"But—but it's true, sir—"

"It is not true!" boomed Prout. "I am aware, Caffyn—I happen to be aware—that your Form-master has been with the Head since class, and has not yet left his study."

Caffyn almost fell down in his astonishment.

"But—but—but, sir, he—he called me," he babbled—"in—in the Remove passage—about twenty minutes ago—"

"He did nothing of the kind!" boomed Prout. "Go, Caffyn! I shall mention this to your Form-master, and if any trick has been played in Mr. Quelch's study, he will know to whom to attribute it! Go!"

Prout rolled on. And Caffyn, in a state of utter amazement and bewilderment, departed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Backing Up Bob Cherry!

YOU ass!"
"You duffer!"
"You fathead!"
"You terrific chump!"

Four voices spoke in unison in Study No. 1 in the Remove. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh were all telling Bob Cherry what they thought of him.

Bob sat silent, with a red face. The remarks of his friends were unflattering, but he felt that they were deserved.

He had told them of that rash challenge to Temple of the Fourth, which

Cecil Reginald had so promptly pinned him down upon. Hence their unflattering comments.

Bob could not deny it. He was an ass, a duffer, a fathead, and a chump! A fellow was all that, and more, who fancied for a moment that any team could win a football match with Coker of the Fifth in the ranks.

"You'll have to back out of it!" said Johnny Bull.

"The backfulness out is a sine qua non!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Look here—" mumbled Bob.
"Coker—of all people!" said Frank Nugent. "Why didn't you say old Gosling or Mimble, the gardener? Coker!"

"I was a bit of an ass!" confessed Bob.

"Not a bit!" said Nugent. "A whole one!"

"But those Fourth Form ticks were chipping me, and I got waxy! And—and, of course, I never meant it, only that tick Temple pinned me down."

"You'll have to get unpinned again, then!" growled Johnny Bull. "We're not going to let Temple make out that he can beat us at Soccer! And they'd beat us to a frazzle if we had Coker in—"

Bob made no reply, but he looked at the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton looked worried.
"This Co. never backs out!" he said.
"Hear, hear!" said Bob, in great relief. "After all, we can beat the Fourth any old time, even with Coker playing for us—"

"Rot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"That blithering idiot, barging about like a mad bull!" said Nugent.

"I suppose there's a ghost of a chance," said Harry. "Coker's a pretty dangerous man to his own side. But we might pull it off. Bob's an ass, but we're not letting him down! After all, Form matches are only practice games, and if Temple pulled it off for once—"

"We'd never hear the end of it!" hooted Johnny Bull. "We're not letting that ass make out he can beat us at Soccer!"

"We shall never hear the end of it if we back out!" said Wharton. "Bob's a howling ass, but we've got to stand by him and back him up!"

"After all, Coker may refuse to play for the Remove," said Nugent. "Fifth Form men wouldn't, as a rule. And Coker's got a fearful lot of dignity—he's more Fifth-Formy than any other man in the Fifth."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Catch Coker refusing a chance to figure in a match—any match!" he said.

"He fancies he can play footer, and he's fearfully keen for chances. He came to scrapping with Blundell for leaving him out of the pick-ups. No hope of that."

"Well, Bob ought to be jolly well kicked!" said Johnny Bull. "I'll jolly well kick Temple, anyhow!"

"It's a go, then?" asked Bob.

"You're backing me up?"

"Yes, you old fathead!"

Really, no other decision was possible. The famous Co. always stood together, and backed one another up through thick and thin.

Bob had, to put it plainly, talked out of his hat. But his friends were not going to let him down.

Having called him various things which expressed, frankly, their opinion of his rashness, they agreed to back him up. And that was that.

Tea proceeded in Study No. 1.



**He's
Forgotten
the Match!**

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Generally, since Caffyn had become an inmate of that study, the Famous Five tea'd up in the passage, in Bob's study, or Johnny Bull's. But finding that the Snipe was absent when they came in, they stopped in Study No. 1 for tea. While more or less on speaking terms with the Snipe, they avoided his company as much as they could.

They were hungry, after footer practice, and the supplies vanished rapidly under the general attack. Wharton had brought in a cake from the school shop, to wind up the meal, and, the rest of the good things having been demolished, he proceeded to cut the cake.

It was then that the door opened, and Caffyn came in.

He glanced at the tea-party, sitting round the table, with his usual sneer on his face.

Johnny Bull half-rose, but sat down again. Harry Wharton, with an effort at civility, gave the Snipe a nod. Little as he could like him, he did not like being on scowling terms with a study-mate.

"Had your tea, Caffyn?" he asked.

"No," grunted the Snipe.

"Join us with this cake."

"Thank you for nothing," said the Snipe. "I've got a better cake than that in the cupboard, as I dare say you know. Sprats don't catch whales with me."

Harry Wharton crimsoned with anger. Johnny Bull gave an expressive grunt, and Bob Cherry grinned. That was the Snipe all over.

"You unspeakable worm!" said Harry. "I haven't seen your mouldy cake, and never knew you had one. Go and eat coke!"

"You haven't seen it?" jeered Caffyn.

"No. And don't talk to me."

"You've got a lot of things out of the cupboard; queer that you should be able to do that without seeing a big cake there!" sneered the Snipe.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Nugent.

"You're asking to be kicked, Caffyn."

Wharton compressed his lips, but did not speak to the Snipe again. It was true that in handing things out of the cupboard for tea it was odd that neither he nor Nugent had noticed a cake there—if there was one! Caffyn, evidently, believed that they had, and that they had designs on it.

"Let's get out of this, you men!" said Harry.

"Let's!" agreed Bob.

The Snipe crossed to the study cupboard and opened it. A change came over his face as he looked in. He stared round at the juniors.

"Where's my cake?" he snapped.

"Where you left it, I suppose—if you ever had one," answered the captain of the Remove contemptuously.

"Shut up anyhow!"

Caffyn turned from the cupboard, his eyes glittering. Half an hour ago he had parked that cake in the study cupboard, while he went down to Quelch. Now it was gone.

"Is that my cake you've got there?" he exclaimed shrilly.

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "Do you think we'd snoop your mouldy cake? Look here, Wharton, I'm going to kick him!"

"I left it there," snarled Caffyn. "It's gone! I find you in the study, eating cake—"

"You'll find us in the study, thumping a sneaking snipe, if you don't ring off!" said Bob Cherry in disgust.

Caffyn came to the table and examined the cake. But at the second glance, it was not that rich and rare cake from Aunt Judy. It was quite a good cake, such as Mrs. Mibble supplied at the tuckshop, but by no means

equal to Aunt Judy's special handiwork.

Wharton watched him grimly.

"Well, are you satisfied that this isn't yours?" he asked, as contemptuously amused as angry.

"That's not mine," admitted Caffyn. "But I want to know where mine is. I left it here."

"Did Bunter know?" asked Bob, with a grin.

Caffyn started.

"Oh! Yes. The fat brute butted in and wanted some, and I rapped his knuckles. But—he was gone—"

"Perhaps the gonefulness was not terrific!" suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

Caffyn gritted his teeth. There had been no sign of Bunter in the passage when he left the study to go down to Mr. Quelch's. He realised now, however, that the fat tuck-hunter might have happened again!

"Look here, you fellows," said Caffyn, "I was tricked into going downstairs by some fellow imitating Quelch's voice and calling me. I thought it was Quelch and—"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"I'd have sworn it was his bark, but it couldn't have been, as I found that he was with the Head all the time—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funny, isn't it?" snarled Caffyn. "Well, whoever played that silly trick on me was the fellow who pinched my cake. Has Bunter ever played such tricks?"

"Just a few!" chuckled Nugent. "Bunter's a giddy ventriloquist."

"A ventriloquist?" repeated Caffyn.

"He's been kicked for such tricks dozens of times," said Harry Wharton. "He can imitate anybody's voice. He got up a row once in the Fifth, imitating your cousin Coker's voice and slanging fellows from a study. I've heard that he's ventriloquised with old Prout's voice and given Fifth Form men lines! It's weird how he does it."

"That fat fool!" said Caffyn incredulously.

"Well, if it happened as you say, it must have been Bunter. I've never heard of any other fellow at Greyfriars who can pull off such stunts. If you want your cake you'd better look for Bunter."

"You'll want an X-ray apparatus to spot the cake by this time, though," said Bob Cherry. "If he's had time he's parked it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll smash him!" muttered Caffyn savagely. "Pulling my leg like that and making me kick my heels in Masters' Studies for nearly half an hour—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Caffyn, and he swung out of the study and stamped away, evidently in quest of Bunter.

The Famous Five, grinning, finished their cake. They went along to Study No. 4 to talk football with the Bounder. That prominent member of the Remove eleven had to be told of Bob's rash words, which had to be made good, and his support enlisted.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, when he was told, occupied about five minutes in telling Bob what he thought of him; but he finally agreed to back up, as did the other footballers when they were told.

It was agreed unanimously in the footballing fraternity in the Remove that Bob was the howlingest as ever. But it was also agreed unanimously that he was to be backed up in making good his wild words. From which Bob drew consolation, even nourishing a hope that

the Remove might pull off Wednesday's match, in spite of the strenuous assistance of Coker of the Fifth!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hop It!

BILLY BUNTER rolled into the Rag, some time after tea, and blinked round that apartment rather cautiously through his big spectacles.

He did not want to see Caffyn, if he could help it.

Of course, owing to his masterly strategy and ventriloquism, Caffyn couldn't know that he was the fellow who had snaffled the cake. Bunter was sure of that.

Still, the chap was a suspicious beast! Bunter would have preferred to keep clear of him, if he could, till the affair of the cake had had time to blow over.

Instead of which, he was no sooner in the Rag than Skinner called out:

"Here he is, Caffyn!"

Caffyn was there, with Skinner and Snoop. Most of the Remove were there, and the footballing fellows were discussing Wednesday's game in a group by themselves. Caffyn, who was not in the least interested in Soccer, gave them no ear. He was thinking of Bunter, for whom he had searched in vain for about half an hour. Now he was waiting for him in the Rag, where he was sure to turn up sooner or later.

"Oh, lor'!" gasped the fat Owl of the Remove as he heard Skinner's call, and he executed a prompt, strategic movement to the door.

Skinner cut across, shut the door, and stood with his back to it. He grinned at the dismayed Owl.

"Caffyn wants you, old fat bean!" he chuckled.

"Oh, really, Skinner! I—I've just remembered that I've got some lines for Wingate of the Sixth—"

Bunter broke off with a roar. "Ow! Leggo my neck, you beastly snipe!"

"Where's my cake?" demanded Caffyn, glaring at him.

"Eh? What cake?"

"The one you pinched from my study!" hooted Caffyn.

"I don't know anything about your cake!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows make him leggo!"

"You haven't just eaten a cake?" grinned Bolsover major.

"Oh! No! Haven't tasted one—for weeks!"

"Then those crumbs on your waistcoat belong to a cake you haven't eaten?" further inquired Bolsover.

"Oh!" Bunter dabbed at his well-filled waistcoat. Crumbs galore rolled from it as he dabbed. "I—I mean—"

"You've scooped that cake?" shouted Caffyn.

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I haven't been in the box-room at all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you back me up!" howled Bunter. "Bob, old chap, make him leggo! You can lick Caffyn."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"You fat villain! You've bagged Caffyn's cake! You wouldn't have got away with your putrid ventriloquism if he hadn't been a new fellow! You ought to be jolly well kicked!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I—I never did any ventriloquism!" gasped Bunter. "I never even thought of imitating old Quelch's bark. I—I couldn't! As for telling Caffyn to go down to his

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study, I never even thought of it! Besides, it was only a joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I'll make you pay for that cake!" yelled Caffyn. "It was worth a pound!"

"Oh! That's all right!" gasped Bunter. "I never had the cake, but—I'll pay for it—if you're going to make a fuss. Leggo my collar!"

Caffyn released the fat Owl's collar. "Well, shell out!" he said, extending his hand and speaking rather more amicably.

Aunt Judy's cake was worth, probably, more than a pound; but Caffyn would rather have had a pound note than any cake.

Billy Bunter ran his hands through his pockets. The Removites gathered round him, grinning. They knew their Bunter better than the new junior did—and knew exactly how likely it was that he had a pound about him to hand over for the snaffled cake.

The Owl's fat hands came out of his pockets—empty!

"I—I think I've left all my money in my study!" he stammered. "I—I'll go and fetch it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop him!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"I'll fetch it for you, Bunter!" chuckled Peter Todd. "Just tell me where you left it, old fat man!"

"Oh, really Teddy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the fact is, I—I'm rather short of money to-day, Caffyn!" stutted the fat Owl. "I'll settle up tomorrow. I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I told you fellows I was expecting a postal order—"

"You did!" chuckled Bob. "You did! Lots of times!"

"The lotfulness was terrific!"

"You're for it, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "You know what to expect for snooping tuck. Caffyn is awarded a free kick—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll kick him all round the Rag!" howled Caffyn. "I'll make him pay for the cake, too! I'll go to Quelch about it!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Smithy. "It's a bit thick; but you can't go sneaking to a beak about it—"

"Can't I?" hissed Caffyn. "You'll see. Bunter will pay for that cake, or I'll have him up before Quelch for pilfering—"

"Oh crikey! I—I say, you fellows, I don't want to go to Quelch!" wailed the alarmed Owl. "I say—Bob, old chap, lend me a pound to pay the beast!"

"Tell me where to find one," suggested Bob.

"I say, where's Mauly? Mauly will lend me a pound—"

"Lucky for Mauly he's not here!" grinned Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Caffyn made a jump at the fat Owl and grabbed him again. Bunter roared.

Harry Wharton stepped quickly forward and grasped the Snipe of the Remove by the arm.

"Do you mean it, about going to Quelch?" he asked.

"I mean every word of it!" snarled the Snipe.

"Then you're not going to touch Bunter—"

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"I'm going to kick him round the room for pinching my cake."

"You're not!" said the captain of the Remove coolly. "You can kick him for pinching the cake, if you like—if you'd rather do that than complain to Quelch. You can't have it both ways."

"No fear!" said Bob emphatically. "Play the game, Caffyn!" said Peter Todd. "If you go to Quelch he will see that Bunter pays for the cake; he will stop his allowance for it and whop him into the bargain. That washes it out—you're not going to take it into your own hands as well."

"You'll see whether I am or not!" snarled the Snipe and he spun Bunter round and kicked.

As his foot came up Bob Cherry made a jump and caught the ankle in his hand. The boot stopped just short of Bunter.

Having captured Caffyn's foot, Bob walked down the Rag with it. As he had only one foot left available for service, the Snipe had to hop after him on one leg.

He hopped—and yelled!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hop it, Snipe!"

"The hopfulness is preposterous!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Keep it upfully my esteemed and disgusting Snipe!"

"Will you let go my foot?" raved the Snipe, as Bob marched on, and he hopped frantically after him.

"Not at all, old dear!" answered Bob.

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter. "He, he, he! I say, you fellows, if that beast goes to Quelch, I want you all to come as witnesses that I never had the cake. You wouldn't mind telling Quelch that I was at games practice at the time, would you, Wharton, old chap?"

"Oh, my hat! Yes—just a few!" gasped Wharton.

"Oh, really Wharton! I'd do as much for you, any time!" said Bunter reproachfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let go?" shrieked the Snipe.

"Are you going to kick Bunter?" grinned Bob.

"Yes!" yelled Caffyn.

"Then I'm not letting go."

Bob Cherry walked round the long oak table in the Rag. Caffyn, on one leg, hopped wildly along with him. Yells of laughter greeted the performance on all sides. It was quite entertaining to watch though not so entertaining to perform. The Snipe's hopping leg stumbled and slipped, and he sat down suddenly, with a heavy bump.

Then Bob, chuckling, released him.

"Had enough?" he asked.

"Oh, you rotter!" groaned the Snipe.

"Lots more to come, if you touch Bunter!" said Bob.

And the Snipe, when he picked himself up breathlessly, did not touch Bunter any more. He had had enough of circumnavigating the table in the Rag on one leg.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Sword of Damocles!

QUITE a number of fellows in the Greyfriars Remove, the following day, were worried looks.

Billy Bunter looked the most worried of all!

Harry Wharton & Co. were rather worried about the position Bob Cherry's rashness had landed them in.

Wednesday's match was not an exhilarating prospect to the footballers of the Form.

They had said that they were backing up Bob Cherry—and they were going to back him up—and that was that! But they were rather worried—especially Wharton, who had to approach Coker on the subject.

Bunter's worry was even greater and deeper, though it had nothing whatever to do with football.

It was not Coker, but Coker's cousin Caffyn, who worried Bunter.

Caffyn was going to Quelch about that wretched cake! He had not gone yet; but he had said that he was going, and the Snipe was the fellow to keep a promise of that kind.

Billy Bunter was angry and indignant, but more worried and apprehensive than either.

All this fuss about a cake! Bunter had snooped more cakes than he could remember. Other fellows did not make all this fuss. They would kick the fat raider, or whop him with a fives bat—in extreme cases, they might hold his head under the tap in the Remove passage. But going to the beak about such a thing was quite new. Bunter regarded it as sneaking. He considered it frightfully mean. There was hardly a fellow in the Remove whose tuck the fat Owl had not snaffled at one time or another. Nobody had ever gone to Quelch about it. It was like the Snipe!

Bunter was perfectly prepared to pay for that cake when his long-expected and celebrated postal order came.

Unfortunately the date of its arrival was a little uncertain.

Bunter did not like kickings; but he wished that Caffyn could take it out in kicking like any other fellow.

Quelch, of course, would be frightfully solemn and serious about it. Beaks were such asses. Certainly he would make Bunter pay for the pilfered cake. Probably he would accept Caffyn's estimate of its value. Very likely he would cane Bunter. In fact, he was fairly sure to cane him.

The cake had gone the way of all cakes. The feast was over and done with. After the feast came the reckoning.

That morning Billy Bunter had the longest face in the Remove. When Quelch came in to take his Form, he expected Caffyn to gabble it all out. He gave him a beseeching blink.

But Caffyn said nothing in the Form-room.

In morning break nothing had been said, and Bunter began to wonder if the Snipe was going to let the matter drop. It seemed unlikely, for the Snipe was extremely close in money matters—meaner, and more stingy, than even Fisher T. Fish. Still, it was odd that he was putting it off like this, if he intended to speak to Quelch. Possibly it pleased his cat-like nature to keep the hapless Owl on tenterhooks.

Bunter rolled up to him in break to ascertain how matters stood. He found the Snipe loafing about the quad with his hands in his pockets, and a wrinkle of deep thought in his brow. He did not seem to be thinking of Bunter; but he grinned, a sour grin, as the fat junior came up with a worried and troubled face.

"I say, Caffyn, old chap!" murmured Bunter.

"Cut it out!" said Caffyn. "Look here! I never had that cake!" urged Bunter. "And it wasn't worth a pound, either. I couldn't have eaten a poundworth of cake at one sitting. I don't eat much, as a rule. Besides, I never had it."



"Caffyn!" barked a sharp, acid voice. "I sent you a message to come to my study! Follow me to my study at once, Caffyn!" The Snipe jumped at the sound of his Form-master's well-known voice, little realising that it was produced by Bunter, the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

"You can tell Quelch that."
"I say, you're not really going to Quelch, old fellow?"
"You'll see."

"Oh, you beast!" groaned Bunter. "I wish you were sacked, as you ought to be. I believe the Head would sack you if he knew your game here. I jolly well heard you talking to Sarle, that solicitor chap, about getting Coker into rows with his Aunt Judy, and cutting him out. You're a sneaking snipe, Caffyn. Your cousin never makes a fuss if he happens to lose a cake. Not that I've ever touched his tuck, of course. Look here—"

Caffyn walked away.
"Beast!" roared Bunter. He drifted off dolefully. Evidently he had no mercy to expect from the Snipe. It seemed that the cat-like Caffyn was keeping this hanging over his head, suspended like the sword of Damocles, just to make him squirm. Bunter could not even have the relief of getting it over quickly.

"I say, you fellows!" He rolled up to the Famous Five, who stood in a group, talking, of course, football. "I say—"

"Blow away!" said Bob Cherry. "I say, that beast Caffyn still makes out that I had his cake, you fellows!" groaned Bunter. "I—I shouldn't mind that so much, only he means to go to Quelch. I say, I'd rather pay the rotter, and have done with it. If you fellows lent me four bob each—I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!"

But the Famous Five did walk away, and, like Felix, they kept on walking. Bunter blinked round and spotted the Bounder's grinning face. He rolled over to him.

"I say, Smithy, you've got pots of money!"

"Pots!" agreed Vernon-Smith. "Lend me a quid till my postal order comes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder. "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! What are you cackling at, you silly ass?" yelled Bunter.

"Your little joke," said Smithy. "I didn't mean it as a joke, you fathead!"

"Then you're an unconscious humorist, old fat bean," said the Bounder. "Beast!"

Bunter went in to third school in low spirits. In third school Caffyn had nothing to say to Quelch—apparently he was leaving it till after class. During break the fat Owl had seen nothing of Lord Mauleverer—no doubt because Mauly did not want to see anything of Bunter. But when the Remove was dismissed after third school the fat Owl made sure of Mauly by grabbing his arm as the juniors left the Form-room.

"I say, Mauly—"
"Oh dear!" groaned his lordship. Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Anything the matter, Mauly?" he asked.

"Yaas."
"What is it, old chap?"
"You!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, my postal order never came this morning. I told you I was expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations. Well, it hasn't come. There's nothing to grin at, you ass! It's jolly serious. I say, you're not a mean beast like Smithy, old fellow. You'll lend me a pound till my postal order comes, won't you?"

"No!"
"You're not going to be mean, Mauly?"
"Yaas."

"Look here, old chap! That snipe,

Caffyn, is going to Quelch if I don't pay him a pound for that cake," said Bunter. "Stand by me, old fellow, just this once. I'm not the man to borrow money, as a rule."

"Oh gad!"
"But I don't want a whopping from Quelch!" wailed Bunter.

"Oh dear!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Where's Caffyn? Let's go and see the Snipe."

His softhearted lordship, as usual, gave in. Bunter brightened up wonderfully.

"I knew you'd see me through, old chap," he said. "Come on! Here's the beast!"

Bunter led Mauleverer to Caffyn. The Snipe, with his hands in his pockets, stared at them. Mauleverer did not like speaking to the Snipe; but he made the necessary effort.

"Look here, Caffyn!" he said. "I dare say you've got your own way of lookin' at things; and you're new here. But in the Remove we rather make allowances for Bunter, who can't help bein' a silly ass."

"Oh, really, Mauly—"
"Shut up, Bunter! I admit it's rather thick to have your tuck snoopied, but nobody in the Form thinks you ought to go to the beak about it," went on Lord Mauleverer.

"I'm quite satisfied with my own opinion on the subject—thanks!" drawled the Snipe.

"Then you're really goin' to Quelch?"

"Certainly, I am!"
"Very well. It can be settled by payin' for the cake. I understand that you said in the Rag yesterday that the figure was a pound." Lord Mauleverer slipped his hand into his pocket. "I'll pay the pound, so let it drop."

"You won't!" answered the Snipe coolly.

"Name your own figure, then," said Mauleverer contemptuously.

Caffyn smiled unpleasantly.

"I don't choose to let you pay for the cake," he answered. "I've been thinking over the matter—seriously. I think it's time that this grub-raiding in the Remove was put a stop to. A fellow can't leave a cake or a bag of tarts in his study if Bunter's about. I think our Form-master ought to know."

"Why, you—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "You said yesterday—"

"Yesterday isn't to-day," said the Snipe. "You can keep your pound-note, Mauleverer. I don't want it. You can lend it to Bunter, if you choose, if Quelch orders him to pay for what he's pilfered. But the matter will have to be left to our Form-master to decide."

"Do you mean that you're determined to sneak to Quelch, to get that fat duffer into a row?" asked Mauleverer.

Caffyn shrugged his thin shoulders.

"Oh crickey!" groaned Bunter. "Look here, Caffyn, you rotter! You let Mauly pay you, and let it drop."

"Nothing of the kind."

Lord Mauleverer stared at him blankly. Certainly, if Caffyn reported the matter to Mr. Quelch, he was certain to be paid for his loss, so far as that went. But why he was resolved to get Bunter into a row with his Form-master was rather a mystery. Evidently he had thought the matter over, and for some inexplicable reason had changed his mind. Lord Mauleverer was not likely to guess the tortuous thoughts in the cunning mind of a fellow like Caffyn.

"You won't take the pound?" asked Mauly, at last.

"No, I won't!"

"If you go to Quelch, all the Remove will call it sneakin'."

"Let them!" yawned Caffyn.

Lord Mauleverer turned his back on the new junior, and walked away.

Caffyn laughed, and went out into the quad.

Billy Bunter groaned dismally.

There was no help for him now. The

sword of Damocles was still suspended over his fat head, and he could only wait, in doleful apprehension, for it to fall.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

HARRY WHARTON tapped at the door of Coker's study in the Fifth after class that day.

He did not want to see Coker; but he had to see Coker, and he had called to see him. Having tapped, he opened the door, to be greeted by the sound of the bull-like voice of the fathead of the Fifth.

Coker was talking! Coker generally was!

Neither the tap nor the opening of the door was heeded by Coker, so Wharton had the benefit of hearing the remarks he was addressing emphatically to his study-mates, Potter and Greene.

On the faces of Potter and Greene was an expression of patient resignation. It was their customary expression when Coker was talking.

Coker's face, however, was red and wrathful, and a little excited. His voice woke every echo in the study and a good many along the passage.

"That ass!" Coker was saying.

"That idiot! How the fellows ever came to pick on Blundell as Form captain beats me! An utter idiot! What does he know about football? I punched him the other day for leaving me out of the pick-ups! Did it knock any sense into his silly head?"

Coker snorted.

Punching Blundell's head, evidently, had failed to knock any sense into it.

"And Wingate!" went on Coker. "A Sixth Form man—a prefect—and captain of the school! Head of the games, by gum! Can he pick out a man to play Soccer? I ask you!"

"He's picked me out," remarked Potter.

"Exactly! That only shows what a fool he is!" said Coker. "You're a bit of an ass, Potter, but you're not ass enough to fancy that your football's

anything like mine, I suppose?"

"Hardly!" agreed Potter. "Nothing like yours, Coker!"

"Not a bit of it!" concurred Greene.

"Well, I am glad you can see it," said Coker, who was, of course, deaf and blind to sarcasm. "I wish Wingate could—or Blundell! It's pretty thick when a player of my quality is left even out of the Form pick-ups! And what do you think? I told young Hobson of the Shell that if he wanted a good man, I'd find time to play in a game or two for him. You needn't tell me it would be a come-down for me—I know that! Still, even in a junior team a man can show his quality. But what do you think Hobson said? He said he would remember my offer if they ever played marbles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Coker scornfully.

"You would! I kicked the cheeky young tick, of course, and then a lot of the Shell had the cheek to scrag me—actually banged my head on a tree! Greyfriars is coming to something, I must say! And I can tell you—"

"H'm!"

Harry Wharton considered it time for his unimportant existence to be brought to the lofty notice of Coker of the Fifth. So he coughed.

Coker stared round at him.

"What do you want here, you cheeky fag?" he snapped. "Get out before I boot you along the passage!"

"Are you free on Wednesday, Coker?" asked Harry.

Coker snorted.

"Free or not, do you think I want anything to do with Lower Fourth fags on a half-holiday?" he demanded.

"I've told you to get out!"

"I mean free to play football?" explained the captain of the Remove.

Coker had half-risen, and was looking round for a fives bat. Now he sat down again.

"Football?" he repeated.

"We want you to play for the Remove in a Form match, if you'd be so good!" said Harry.

"Oh!" said Coker.

Potter and Greene grinned. If any Lower Fourth man had asked them the same thing, they would probably have kicked him on the spot. And Coker was, as Nugent had described it, more Fifth-Formy than the rest of the Fifth.

But Coker, as a footballer, was in rather a peculiar position. Frightfully keen on the game, he couldn't play it for toffee. Even at games practice fellows groaned when Coker turned up.

Coker had a hefty kick, which he was liable to land on anything or anybody but the Soccer ball. He had a terrific charge, which was liable to make skittles of the men on his own side. He had a theory that, on the football field, it was up to him to take the game entirely into his own hands. He acted consistently on this theory. For these reasons, and others of a like nature, Coker had had few chances in matches, and looked like never having any more at all.

This, of course, altered the matter for Coker.

It was cheek to ask him, but it was a kind of cheek that Coker, for once, was able to tolerate with patience.

"Oh!" repeated Coker. "Let's see! Wednesday—"

Coker put on a thoughtful air—as if he could not quite remember at the moment how many football skippers were falling over one another to secure his services on Wednesday.

"I mean, of course, if you're not



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playing for the First Eleven!" said Wharton solemnly—which made Potter and Greene turn away their faces to hide their emotions!

"No," said Coker. "That's all right!"

"And if Blundell will let you off playing for the Fifth!" added Wharton, with the same solemnity

"That's all right!" assented Coker. "I've given Blundell chances, and if he doesn't choose to take them, that's his look-out!"

"Then you'll play?" asked Harry.

"Hold on!" said Coker. "Don't jump to conclusions in too great a hurry! I may play! I believe in bucking up fags and helping them on at the game. Still, I'm not sure that a Fifth Form man can figure in a Lower Fourth game! It's a bit undignified!"

"We play rather a good game—for juniors, of course!" said the captain of the Remove meekly.

Coker smiled tolerantly.

"Kick and rush—what?" he said. "Barge here and barge there, and gather up mud! I know!"

Wharton suppressed his feelings. Coker, unconsciously, was describing his own game—certainly not the Remove's.

"What you fags call Soccer," went on Coker, "is not what I should call Soccer, of course!"

"You wouldn't call it Rigger, would you?" asked Wharton, apparently misunderstanding.

"Eh—no! Of course not, you young ass! I mean, I shouldn't call it football at all! It's not my style!"

"No. I know it's not your style, Coker!" admitted Wharton. "Everybody knows you've got a style of your own at football!"

"Oh! You've noticed that?" asked Coker, pleased.

"Could a fellow help noticing it who saw you play at all?" answered Harry. "Yes, I've noticed it. I think everybody has!"

Potter and Greene suppressed a gurgle.

"You're not such a young ass as you look, Wharton!" said Coker. "You seem to know as much about footer as Wingate, at any rate! Not that that's saying much! Look here, dash it all, why shouldn't I give you a leg-up in a game? It may be a bit undignified, considering my position in the school! I don't care! After all, the game's the thing!"

"Then—"

"Sort of whale among the minnows—what?" said Coker good-humouredly.

"What team are you playing?"

"Temple's lot in the Fourth."

"Well, they're booked for a warm time if I play against them!" grinned Coker. "But, look here, fair play's a jewel. You'll have to get Temple to agree. You can't spring a tremendous player on a junior team like this! Unless Temple agrees to it, it can't be done! You must see that."

How Wharton kept serious he never knew. He managed it somehow. He wondered what Coker would have thought and said had he been aware of Cecil Reginald Temple's precise views on the matter. Something probably very emphatic.

"Temple's agreed!" gasped Wharton.

"Oh! You've put it to him already?"

"Yes! Ah! Oh! Exactly! He's quite keen, in fact."

"Young ass!" said Coker. "Does he want to be mopped up? Still, I dare say he feels that he will be able to swank a bit, playing a team with a Fifth Form senior in it! Well, if Temple agrees, it's fair all round, and the Fourth can jolly well take what's coming to them!"

Wharton made no reply to that. He was not, in fact, worried about the Fourth taking what was coming to them. What worried him was what was coming to the Remove, with Coker in the ranks. But that was not a matter to be explained to the great Horace.

"Well, you can call it a go!" said Coker graciously. "Did you say Wednesday? Right! I'll captain your mob on Wednesday! Leave it at that!"

Wharton started a little. He was not quite prepared to leave it at that.

"Oh, I mean—that is—I say, Coker, we're not exactly looking for a new skipper!" he stammered. "We've got a place in the team for you—say, at back—"

"What?"

"You're so jolly good—hem—at back!"

"Quite!" said Coker. "There's no place in the field, I hope, that I couldn't fill with credit! But I'm best at centre-forward! If I play for you, I shall, naturally choose my own place! Put me down at centre-forward."

"But—"

"And I shall skipper the team! You haven't had the cheek to come here and ask me to play under a junior's captaincy, have you?" asked Coker, half-angry, and half-amused.

"Well, yes! You see—"

Coker waved his hand.

"Then wash the whole thing out!" he said. "And get out of my study, before I kick you for your cheek!"

"But—I say—"

"Where's that fives bat, Potter?"

"Better cut, young 'un!" advised Greene.

"Look here, Coker, we're not asking you to captain the team! Will you play for us on Wednesday or not?"

"Oh, here it is!" Coker spotted the fives bat. He leaped up, grasped it, and made a stride towards the captain of the Remove.

Another moment, and the fives bat would have been whacking on Wharton.

With great presence of mind, the junior skipper grabbed up a Latin dictionary from the study table and hurled it just in time.

It caught Coker under the chin.

It was Dr. Smith's Smaller Latin Dictionary that was used in the Greyfriars Fifth. At that moment, Coker had reason to be glad that it was not Dr. Smith's Larger Latin Dictionary!

It crashed with a terrific crash!

Coker went over backwards, as if a cannon-ball had hit him. He sat down with a bump that shook the study.

The fives bat flew from his hand. A fiendish yell from William Greene, as he clapped his hand to his ear, showed where it landed.

Wharton walked out of the study, rather quickly. He did the Fifth Form passage at a good speed. It was evidently useless to stay any longer in Coker's study and might have been painful. So he departed in haste, with the great and glorious news for his friends that Coker refused to play for the Remove.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Making Use of Bunter!

"BUNTER!"
"Beast!"
"Come in—"
"Yah!"

"I've got a jam-roll for tea."

"Eh?"

"Trot in!" said Caffyn.

Billy Bunter came to a halt in the Remove passage and blinked at Edgar Caffyn, standing in the doorway of Study No. 1. His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles in his astonishment.

All through that day the Snipe had been keeping Bunter on tenterhooks. The sword of Damocles was still suspended over the fattest head in the Remove.

The fact that Caffyn had refused to accept the pound-note seemed to banish all doubt that he intended to go to Quelch. Yet he had not gone, so far! It was like him to play cat-and-mouse with a victim. Bunter knew that. And with a whopping hanging over him, the fat Owl wondered dismally how long it was going to last.

This being the state of affairs, Bunter was naturally amazed when the Snipe, smiling as agreeably as he could, asked him to tea in the study!

"I've been waiting for you to come up!" said Caffyn. "Do come in and tea with me, Bunter! I want to talk over that affair with Quelch. I'm not sure I shall go to him after all. I want to discuss it."

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bunter.

He made a step towards the study doorway. Then he paused. He remembered that once Caffyn had asked him into the study for a cake and produced a fives bat instead of a cake! Bunter was wary!

"No larks?" he asked dubiously.

"No! No! Trot in, old chap!"

"Mind, I'll yell for Bob Cherry if you play any tricks!" said Bunter warningly. "The fellows are tea-ing in Study No. 13, and they'll hear me—"

"I tell you it's all right," said Caffyn impatiently.

Billy Bunter decided to risk it. The Famous Five were at tea in Bob Cherry's study within sound of a howl. Bob, there was no doubt, would be prompt to deal with the Snipe, if Bunter yelled for help. And jam-roll was very tempting. Bunter had been considering which study to butt into on the chance of stopping to tea. Certainly he had never even thought of the Snipe's. He was utterly amazed at the Snipe asking him. Still, jam-roll was jam-roll! The fat Owl rolled in and Caffyn shut the door.

Bunter gave him an unquiet blink as he shut it. His mouth was ajar, so to speak, ready for a yell up the passage. But Caffyn's manner remained quiet and friendly.

There was jam-roll on the table; quite a lot of it. Amazing as it was, the thing looked genuine; and Bunter took comfort. After all, if the Snipe was going to be decent for once, Bunter was the fellow to encourage him. Perhaps the fellow realised how rotten it would be to go to Quelch about that cake! Bunter hoped so.

He sat down. Caffyn made the tea and lifted a dish of hot buttered toast from the fender. He seemed to have made some preparations for his distinguished guest.

"Tuck in!" he said.

Bunter hardly needed telling that! He tucked in promptly. There was quite a large stack of toast, but it

disappeared at considerable speed. Billy Bunter's fat face grew shiny and bright.

"I've been asking the fellows something about that ventriloquism of yours since you played that trick on me yesterday!" remarked Caffyn, after a while.

"Oh! The fact is, I didn't—"
"I hear that you're a jolly clever ventriloquist."

"Oh! Yes, rather!" agreed Bunter. "I've heard that you got up a row once between Prout and Monsieur Charpentier by imitating their voices through a door."

"He, he, he!"
"I had no idea of it, of course, till what happened yesterday," said Caffyn. "I think it's fearfully clever, Bunter."

Bunter smirked. He liked this. But it puzzled him. Caffyn had been as thoroughly unpleasant as a fellow well could be. Now he was not only standing Bunter tea in the study, but flattering him as well. It was quite mysterious. Only one thing was clear—the Snipe had some purpose to serve! Even Bunter was not too obtuse to understand that. But he could not make the wildest guess at what purpose the Snipe wanted to serve.

"I'd like to hear you give a sample of what you can do," went on Caffyn. "It's so jolly clever, you know. Wharton said yesterday that you once played a trick on my cousin Horace, imitating his voice. Can you do that?"

"Easily," answered Bunter. "Easy as falling off a form! Of course, some voices aren't easy to imitate—just ordinary voices! But any voice a bit out of the usual—a squeak like yours, frinstance—"

"Th?"
"Or a bellow like Coker's or a fruity toot like old Prout's. I could do it on my head."

"Well, let's hear you imitate my cousin Coker's voice, if you can do it," said Caffyn.

He had hardly finished speaking when a rough, gruff voice hooted from the direction of the door:

"You sneaking little snipe!"
Caffyn jumped, so startled that he upset his tea. It was the voice of Horace Coker of the Fifth—or should have been! For the moment, the Snipe supposed that his burly cousin in the Fifth was barging into the study on the warpath.

The next moment he saw that the door was still closed. Even then he did not realise that Coker was not there.

He grabbed up the poker from the grate.

"Get hold of something, Bunter," he gasped. "If that hulking brute is coming in here—"

"He, he, he!" chortled the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

Caffyn jumped again and stared at him. The door remained shut; there was no sound of anyone outside.

"You don't mean to say—"
ejaculated Caffyn.

"He, he, he!"

Caffyn stepped to the door, opened it, and looked out. Newland and Russell of the Remove could be seen in the passage. There was no one else—no sign of Coker of the Fifth.

He shut the door again, and came back to the table. His eyes were fixed on the fat ventriloquist, with wonder and satisfaction.

"That was you?" he asked.
"He, he, he! Of course it was!" chuckled Bunter. "Did it make you jump?"

"Yes," Caffyn sat down again. "You can do it. I—I thought that was Horace at the door, just going to barge in."

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"He, he, he!"

"Can you do Prout as well as that?"

Bunter grinned. From behind Caffyn as he sat at the table came a deep, fruity, well-known boom.

"Caffyn, what are you suggesting? Upon my word! Am I to understand that you are suggesting to Bunter to imitate a Form-master—a member of Dr. Locke's staff? To hold a member of Dr. Locke's staff up to ridicule, Caffyn? I shall report this to your Form-master!"

Caffyn stared round blankly.

It was Prout's fruity voice to the very life. It was absolutely amazing to hear "Old Pompous" speaking, when Old Pompous was not there.

"Well, my hat!" said Caffyn.

He sat and stared at Bunter. His eyes were glittering. Bunter finished the toast and started on the jam roll.

"You can do it," said Caffyn at last. "You can do it, and no mistake! It beats me!"

"Well, I always was a rather clever chap," remarked Bunter modestly. "It's brains, you know—just brains."

Caffyn made no rejoinder to that. If ventriloquism required brains he did not quite see how Bunter managed it.

"I say, this is jolly good jam roll," remarked Bunter. "Jolly nearly as good as our cook makes at Bunter Court. Any more in the cupboard?"

Caffyn shook his head.

"Well, I'll finish this if you don't want any," said Bunter.

Caffyn did want some, as a matter of fact, but he nodded.

"Go it," he said.

Bunter went it, and the jam roll followed the toast. Happy and sticky, the Owl of the Remove rose from the table.

"Don't go yet," said Caffyn.

"Well, I was thinking of dropping in at Study No. 13," remarked Bunter. "I don't suppose they've finished tea yet—I mean I want to speak to them about the football. They asked Coker to play for them to-morrow—he, he, he!—and he's refused. Went for Wharton when he asked him—with a fives bat! Silly ass, you know; he can't play footer any more than you can!"

"Sit down," said Caffyn.

"Well, you see—"

"About my going to Quelch—"

"Oh!" Bunter sat down. "I say, old chap—"

"I'm not keen on getting you into a row," said Caffyn. "But if your pilfering is reported to Quelch you'll get a whopping. Fellows have been sacked from schools for that sort of thing."

"I never—"

"But one good turn deserves another," said Caffyn. "If I chuck it I lose the cake and the quid Mauleverer offered me, and you get off the licking. I want you to do something for me in return."

Bunter blinked at him. It dawned on his fat intellect now that Caffyn had been playing cat-and-mouse with him all day with this special purpose in view. He wanted something, and he had been getting Bunter into a frame of mind to understand that he had to do what was wanted.

This was clear now. But what Caffyn wanted was still a mystery.

"If you want me to lend you something—" said the puzzled Owl.

"Don't be an ass!"

"I mean you'll have to wait till my postal order comes—"

"Can it! I want you to do some of your ventriloquism. At least, to the extent of imitating voices—on the telephone. It's a lark!" explained Caffyn.

"Oh, that's all right!" Bunter grinned cheerfully. "I'll do it like a shot! I say, I imitated old Quelch's voice on

the phone once and ordered a lot of tuck from Chunkley's Stores. He, he, he!"

"Just a lark!" went on Caffyn, his narrow, sharp eyes on the fatuous face of the fat Owl. "I've found out that Prout is going out to-morrow afternoon—Wednesday—he's going over to Canterbury with Capper, to do the Cathedral. We can get his phone all right."

"Safe as houses, after he's gone!" said Bunter, with a nod. "They'll have to start pretty soon after lunch if they're doing Canterbury."

"Most of the fellows will be out of the House, too, at half-past three; there are two or three football matches on."

"That's so," agreed Bunter. "But—but what sort of a lark, Caffyn?"

The fat ventriloquist was relieved to find that it was only a "lark." Also, he was quite keen to show off his wonderful powers as a ventriloquist to a new fellow.

"Oh, just a talk on the telephone!" said Caffyn. "I'll give you the details to-morrow, when I've thought out the lark. Only, mind, not a word about it in the Remove, or outside! If it comes out that you imitated Prout's voice on the phone it means a Head's flogging. You don't want that."

"No jolly fear!" agreed Bunter promptly.

"Well, then, it's a go!" said Caffyn. "And, look here, we'll have a bit of a spread in the study afterwards—what? I've had a tip from my guardian, Mr. Sarle, and I'm going to blow it. See? I dare say you'll help me order the stuff at the tuckshop."

Bunter gave him an almost affectionate blink.

"My dear chap, rely on me!" he exclaimed. "I'm just the fellow you want. I say, Mrs. Mimble has a fresh lot of doughnuts in to-morrow; she told me so—"

"We'll have a couple of dozen!"

Bunter beamed.

"I say, Caffyn, you're not such a fearful snipe as all the fellows think!" he declared. "I say, I'll be jolly glad to help you in a lark on old Prout if—if you're sure he's going to Canterbury, of course. I say, if you've finished I'll cut along and see if the fellows are still in Study No. 13."

Caffyn nodded, and the fat Owl rolled out of the study. The Snipe shut the door on him, and sat down and lighted a cigarette.

Through the curling smoke of one cigarette after another his eyes gleamed like a rat's. Caffyn was calculating that at long last his chance had come.

It was safe—safe as houses! It was certain—as certain of success as anything could be!

Nobody but Caffyn knew that Aunt Judy would be ringing up on Prout's telephone at half-past three on the morrow. Prout would be twenty miles away, and any fellow could dodge into his study. And there was a fellow, whom Caffyn had under his thumb, who could imitate the voice of Mr. Prout and the bull-tones of Horace Coker! If that talk on the telephone did not knock Horace Coker for ever out of his aunt's good graces, and remove him as a rival from Caffyn's path, then Caffyn was very much out in his calculations. And he did not think that he was!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Gas!

"GAS!"

"Swank!

"Brag!"

Temple, Dabney, and Fry of the Fourth Form made those remarks



"I never had the cake," said Bunter, "but—but I'll pay for it if you're going to make a fuss." He ran his hands through his pockets, but each time they came out empty. "I—I think I've left all my money in my study!" he stammered. "I—I'll go and fetch it!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton & Co.

together the following morning; they made them for the especial benefit of Bob Cherry and his friends.

It was Wednesday, and the Form match was booked for the afternoon. In the Rag the Remove list was posted, and it did not include the name of H. Coker.

Hence the remarks of Temple & Co. They looked for the Famous Five in break specially to make those remarks.

In return they received five separate and distinct glares from Harry Wharton & Co.

"Looking for a set of thick ears all round?" demanded Bob Cherry in a deep and sulphurous voice.

Cecil Reginald Temple shrugged his shoulders and curled his lip. Temple was annoyed and contemptuous; he meant to rub it in.

"We're not lookin' for a shindy, thanks!" he jeered. "You can't sneak out of it by kickin' up a row. Of course, I knew all along that you were only talkin' out of your hat, and I pinned you down just to show you up as the swankin' ass you are."

"Well, I knew it was all gas!" remarked Fry.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Gas or not, we were ready to stand by what Bob said, Temple," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I've asked Coker to play for us this afternoon. He's refused, and that lets us out."

"We can't make him!" said Johnny Bull.

"The makefulness is not an esteemed possibility, my ridiculous Temple."

"And you've tried so hard to get him!" sneered Cecil Reginald. "Think you can pull my leg to that extent? Everybody knows that Coker would jump at the chance of playing in any old match. He'd barge into the fags' games if they'd let him. Gammon!"

The Famous Five looked as they felt—

uncomfortable. They were quite ready to mop up the quad with Temple & Co. if that would have done any good. But that proceeding, though satisfactory in itself, would not have mended the matter.

The fact was that a Remove man, Bob Cherry, had issued a rash challenge which could not be made good. Mopping up Temple & Co. would have made no difference to that uncomfortable fact.

The discomfort of the famous Co. was rather increased by the circumstance that Caffyn was looking on. The Snipe, strolling in the quad in break, had stopped to listen, evidently deriving enjoyment from the little scene.

They gave him expressive looks which did not make him clear. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on and listening, with his usual unpleasant sneer on his face.

"We fixed up this Form match," went on Temple, "because Cherry bragged that you'd play us with Coker in your team. Are you going to do it?"

"Can we take the man by his neck and yank him down to Little Side to play football?" demanded Nugent.

"Coker doesn't need that! The difficulty is to keep him off a football field!" said Fry. "Blundell's had to punch him. I've heard from Hobson that he's tried to barge into a Shell game. Have you asked him?"

"I've said I have!" snapped Wharton.

"Then you put it in a way that got his back up and made him refuse!" said Temple. "And if you call that playing the game, I don't!"

"I rather fancied they'd get out of it by some trick of that sort," remarked Fry.

"Oh, rather!"

"I'm not sure we shall play the match at all now," went on Temple loftily. "We fixed it up to pin Cherry down on

his brag. Now you've sneaked out of it like this—"

"Who's sneaked out of it?" bawled Bob Cherry.

"You have!" answered Temple coolly. "Don't tell me that Coker refused to play in a football match if he was asked civilly. I simply shan't believe you!"

"I'll tell you how it was," said Harry. "I asked Coker, and he claimed to captain the team if he played. That was outside the limit."

Temple grinned involuntarily! He realised that that was just like Coker.

"Bob said we'd play you with Coker in the team, if he'd play," said the captain of the Remove. "But letting him skipper the team is a horse of quite another colour!"

Cecil Reginald gave another shrug.

"It's up to you!" he said. "If Coker won't play without skippering the team you'll have to stand for it, or own up that you're a set of swanking asses! The point is this—if we play you this afternoon, are you playing Coker, or not? Where you put him is your own bizney, not mine! All I want to know is—are you playing Coker in your crowd?"

"Not as skipper!"

"I'm askin' you—are you playin' him at all?"

"No—as he won't play without that!"

"Then own up that that's all gas!" said Temple disdainfully.

Cecil Reginald was angry, as he saw this chance of beating the Remove, for once, slipping away from him.

Temple had been looking forward to that game. He had been looking forward to saying, after it, that he had beaten the Remove, though he had let them have the help of a Fifth Form senior! He was very much annoyed.

"Swank!" said Fry.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "Just silly brag!"

Wharton's eyes glinted. His temper was rising.

"It's not sense," he said. "I thought of playing Coker at back, where he'd do the least damage. But I'd let him butt in where he liked if he'd play. But I can't let him captain the side!"

"We'll call the Remove studies the Gas works after this!" remarked Fry.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Gas!" hooted Temple.

"Brag!" jeered Dabney.

It was really more than the patience of the Remove men could tolerate. They could not help feeling that they were not emerging from the affair with credit, which added to their exasperation. Mopping up Temple & Co. seemed the next item on the programme, so they proceeded to it.

Temple & Co., duly mopped, scattered. But as they departed they yelled back "Gas!"

Caffyn chuckled. He was greatly entertained. Bob Cherry gave him a glare. Bob's customary good temper was failing him a little. He had landed his comrades in an awkward position. He was compelled to eat his own words. All that was bad enough, without malicious cackling from the Snipe.

"You can shut up, at any rate, Caffyn!" he growled.

The Snipe chuckled again.

"We shan't hear the end of this!" he remarked. "You chuck challenges out to other Forms, and when the time comes you back out! You've talked to me a lot about playing the game. Is that what you call playing the game?"

"You're an authority on that, no doubt!" said Harry Wharton contemptuously.

Caffyn sneered.

"Well, if I bragged, I'd make my brag good!" he answered. "I wouldn't sneak out of it as you fellows have done!"

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

Caffyn departed hastily.

Bob Cherry lifted his foot, but he dropped it again. The fact was that the Snipe, for once, had a right to sneer. Rash and hasty words had been uttered and had not been made good.

The Snipe scuttled off, but he looked back and laughed before he went into the House.

The Co. exchanged uncomfortable looks.

"This is simply rotten!" said Bob dismally. "I know it's my fault—you needn't rub that in!"

"The rubfulness will not be terrific, my esteemed Bob. But the rottenfulness is certainly preposterous!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Temple's rather a worm to pin us down like this!" he said slowly. "But let's face it, you men. He's in the

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right. We said we'd play Coker, and if he won't play except as captain of the side, that's not Temple's bizney, as he pointed out. He has a right to say that we've backed out."

"But we can't—" began Johnny Bull.

"Looks to me as if we've got to let Coker have his fatheaded way, or else be chipped to death for gassing!" grunted the captain of the Remove. "Even that cur Caffyn is calling us gasbags now! And what's the good of kicking him if it's the truth?"

"But—"

"No good talking," said Harry. "I'll see that ass Temple again after class, and tell him that we're playing Coker. And if the fathead won't climb down, we must!"

The bell rang for third school. Harry Wharton & Co. were looking much less merry and bright than usual when they went in to class.

Caffyn, noting it, grinned. He was distinctly amused by the awkward position in which the famous Co. had been placed by Bob Cherry's brag. At the same time he was very glad to know that Coker of the Fifth would not be playing football that afternoon.

That afternoon, Coker's voice—or Bunter's imitation thereof—was to be heard on the telephone in Prout's study, and it would not have suited Caffyn for a whole crowd of witnesses to be able to prove that Horace Coker had been nowhere near Prout's study at the time. So everything, from the Snipe's peculiar point of view, was going well—so far as he was aware!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

To Play or Not to Play!

HARRY WHARTON stopped to speak to Coker of the Fifth when the Greyfriars men came out after dinner.

He had made up his mind that if it came to the pinch, he would give way to Coker's preposterous demand, rather than let Bob Cherry down and give Temple & Co. a stick wherewith to beat the Remove.

But he still nourished a hope that even the egregious Horace might be a little more reasonable. After all, his keenness to play in a match—any match—was well known. Would he lose the chance?

Anyhow, the captain of the Remove meant to keep his final concession in reserve till the latest possible moment. There was always time to make that concession, right up to the moment when the kick-off was due.

"I say, Coker, about the football—" He tapped the great Horace on the arm, and Coker came to a halt.

"Oh, made up your mind to it?" he grunted, not very graciously. "Well, I'm not sure that I'm willing to captain your fag side! It's a come-down for a Fifth Form man."

Evidently Coker was taking that final concession for granted! Coker often took things for granted.

"I mean—" said Harry. "What do you mean? Cut it short! I don't like hanging about talking to fags!" said Coker.

Wharton breathed hard. He could almost have punched Bob Cherry at that moment! Bob had landed him in this!

"Look here, Coker, if you'd care to play centre-forward—"

"I should play centre-forward, or nothing!" snapped Coker. "Don't argue about it! You don't seem to understand at all what a leg-up it is for you to get a Fifth Form man in your fag team."

"Well, I'll put you down at centre-forward, if you'll play, Coker!" said the captain of the Remove.

Coker stared at him. "You'll put me down?" he repeated. "It's the skipper's business to make arrangements."

Several fellows had stopped to listen to this interesting dialogue, among them, of course, Caffyn! They all grinned.

"Look here, Coker! Be reasonable," said Harry. "Pick any place you like, and we'll call it a go!"

"You cheeky little tick!" said Coker, with gathering wrath. "You've got the nerve to ask a Fifth Form man to play in your fag fumbling that you call Soccer—and you've got the cheek to ask him to play under you? Is that what you mean?"

"You—you see—"

"Are you asking me to captain your side or not?" demanded Coker.

"No. You see—"

"Then shut up!"

Coker turned his back on the captain of the Remove, and marched out of the House. That was that!

"The cheek of those fags!" said Coker to Potter and Greene, as he joined them in the quad. "It's the limit! I say, where's Blundell? I want to speak to him about the pick-up this afternoon."

Potter and Greene grinned. Both of them were booked for the Fifth Form pick-up that afternoon, but they did not fancy that George Blundell had any use for Coker's services.

"I think he's in the changing-room," said Potter. "But—"

"Well, I'd better see him."

Coker marched off to the changing-room, whence, a few minutes later, voices were heard raised in loud argument—chiefly Coker's. Blundell, as Potter and Greene had foreseen, had no use for Coker that day.

Harry Wharton rejoined his friends, and they walked in the quadrangle, talking it over. Coker had definitely refused to play except as skipper. That was that! Still, it was an hour yet to kick-off.

"Give him time!" said Johnny Bull sagely. "The howling ass has gone to jaw Blundell now—you can hear him about a mile off. Blundell will turn him down, of course!"

"Of course!" agreed Harry.

"Coker won't get a game. And his pals are playing in the pick-up, so he will be left on his own. Think he will want to mooch about all the half-holiday doing nothing, when he might be playing football—what he calls football, at any rate?"

Harry Wharton nodded. That was how he was looking at the problem.

"Depend on it," said Johnny, "if we take no more notice of Coker, he will hike down to the field, and barge in on any terms he can get."

"I'm banking on that!" said Harry. "But if he doesn't, we shall have to climb down at the last minute. I've told Temple, now, that we shall play Coker, according to arrangement, and if he holds out for his own terms, we shall have to give in. But not till the last minute before the whistle—there's always a chance."

To the Famous Five, considering it, it seemed a good chance. They could not "see" Coker hanging about with his hands in his pockets when there was the remotest chance of butting into a football match.

So it was settled at that. Caffyn, lounging in the House doorway, had an amused eye on the Famous Five from a distance. But he was watching to see Prout go out. A little

later he had the satisfaction of seeing the Fifth Form master leave the House with Mr. Capper. They walked down to the gates, on their way to Courtfield to take the train to Canterbury.

The Snipe smiled with satisfaction. It really seemed as if the stars in their courses were backing him up. Nothing could have suited him better than Mr. Prout's long-distance excursion on this special afternoon. Prout was safely off the scene till lock-up. His study and his telephone were at Caffyn's disposal.

Almost everybody that day was playing football, or on the football field. The Sixth had a practice with Mr. Lascelles, the games master. The Fifth were playing in a pick-up. The Remove were playing the Fourth. Nearly all the Fifth were in the pick-up game—excepting Coker. His two pals were in it. Coker would be left on his own. Certainly he would have ample opportunities for telephoning in Prout's study, if he wanted to. No wonder the Snipe smiled.

But he wanted to be sure—quite sure. So he waited and loafed about, while the Remove men went in to change for the Form match.

When they went down to the field, the Snipe watched them go. Most of the Remove went with them to watch the game. Caffyn counted the men who had changed for the match—eleven!

Evidently Coker was not going to play!

Smiling, the Snipe glanced up at Coker's study window. A rugged, frowning face was visible there. Coker, too, was watching the Remove team go down to the field, evidently not in a good temper.

Caffyn went into the House and went up to the Remove passage. It was "all clear" now, and time for him to get going, for in little more than half an hour Aunt Judy's telephone-call had to be taken in Prout's study.

Coker, glaring after the cheeky Removites from his study window, little dreamed of what was in the Snipe's

mind. He had totally forgotten the Snipe's existence. He was thinking solely of football. He did not know what was in the Snipe's mind—but neither did the Snipe know what was in Coker's. Caffyn remained blissfully unaware of the fact that Coker, after glaring for some minutes from his study window, left that study, went downstairs, and headed for the changing-room. Harry Wharton & Co. had, after all, calculated well.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Snipe's Scheme!

BILLY BUNTER slowly and thoughtfully disposed of the last stick of toffee.

Bunter was seated in the arm-chair in Study No. 1.

He was waiting there for Caffyn.

Bunter had no objection to waiting, in a comfortable armchair, before a fire, on

(Continued on next page.)



If in doubt over any Soccer problem, write to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and then watch for his reply in this regular weekly feature.

TIME-KEEPING IN AUSTRALIA!

IN these talks on football it is my object to tell readers things they may not know about the game. As the indirect outcome of these talks I also pick up information from time to time. A letter from an Australian chum in Melbourne gives me some information about time-keeping in football matches out there which I found extremely interesting. I am indebted to David Owler, and pleased to pass on the news contained in the letter.

It refers mainly to the system of time-keeping in Australian football. This game they play in Australia is not quite the same as that which we play in this country, but this fact doesn't affect the time-keeping. I have suggested that the referees in our games at home might be relieved of the responsibility of keeping time, and have pointed out that a referee might be looking at his watch in the closing seconds, and thus miss something which was happening on the field.

In Australia they have an independent time-keeper for each of the big games. He is provided with a loud-sounding bell, which he rings when time is up. He is also responsible for knocking off any time which is wasted owing to stoppages. For instance, when the referee stops the game for a free kick, the official time-keeper stops his watch, and only restarts it when the ball is in play again.

On some of the grounds in Australia, too, the spectators can see exactly how the time is going. Big electric clocks have been fitted, placed where all the spectators can see them. When the official time-keeper allows for wasted time he can stop the clocks by means of a switch. On several of the big football grounds in England they have clocks, but these are not in any

way official time-keepers. Arsenal erected one some time ago which was only marked for three-quarters of the way round the face. The original idea in having this clock made was that it should be started when the game was started, and put back for the commencement of the second half. However, the football authorities stepped in and barred the club from using the clock in this way, and although the clock is still in its place on the Arsenal ground, it is now just an ordinary clock, of which, of course, the referee takes no notice at all.

A POSER!

IN another direction, too, it might be said that we could learn something from Australia. The players who actually score the goals are officially recorded, for all to see, on a board specially designed for that purpose. There is only one ground in England, so far as I know, where the same sort of thing is done. This is the Sheffield Wednesday ground. They have a board there, and when a goal is scored, the number of the player scoring it, as recorded on the programme, is put up on this board.

Although it is true to say that the actual scorer of a goal doesn't matter, there cannot be the slightest doubt that followers of the sport are interested in the net-finders, and often a goal is scored in such a way that the spectators are in doubt concerning the man who put the finishing touch on the effort.

Anyway, we live and learn, and as experience has proved that there are no snags in these ideas in Australia, I don't see why they should not be adopted in our homeland.

A strange question, and one which it is impossible for me to answer, comes from W. A. Woolley. He gives me the names

of three clubs—Aston Villa, Arsenal, and Tottenham Hotspur—and asks me for my opinion as to which of the three teams is the best. A simple way of answering this question would be to say: Look at the League table. But that table only provides evidence for the moment. If I said that Arsenal are the best of the three clubs named, some fan in the Midlands would probably remind me that not long ago Aston Villa beat Arsenal at Highbury. That result might be put forward as argument that Aston Villa are a better team than Arsenal.

Perhaps I can get over the question by saying that in recent years Arsenal have been the most consistent of these three teams in the Cup and League competitions. They have won the championship in the last two seasons; have been in the Cup Final three times since 1927, and once proved victorious. In all their history, the Villa have won the Cup six times, and Tottenham Hotspur have twice been successful.

SPOT KICKS!

ANOTHER reader, A. H. Bowington, recently saw a game in which there was a penalty kick awarded, and the goalkeeper of the side was called upon to take the kick. My friend wants to know if the goalkeeper should be allowed to do this. There is nothing to prevent such a course according to the rules of the game. At one time there were quite a number of goalkeepers who habitually took their team's penalty kick, but this fashion has died out.

I remember when goalkeeper "Tiny" Joyce, who played for Millwall and Tottenham Hotspur—he is now assistant trainer at Millwall—invariably took the penalty kicks awarded to his team. He had his own ideas of how to do it, too. He started running from his end of the field, and did not stop till he had kicked the ball from the spot.

But the speed at which he ran to take the kick was nothing compared to the speed with which he scampered back to his goal if by chance he failed to score.

The risk which is taken by a goalkeeper being the penalty kick artist of his side probably accounts for the fashion having died out.

In reply to C. Howett, of Plymouth, the Notts County colours this season are shirts of chocolate and blue halves, with white knickers. The black-and-white stripe shirts in which they used to play were discarded at the start of the present season.

"LINESMAN."

a winter's afternoon. That, indeed, was Bunter's ideal way of spending a half-holiday. All he needed to keep him quiet was something to eat. Caffyn had told him that there was a packet of toffee in the study and that he could have it. So that was all right.

Bunter finished the toffee with great satisfaction, and stretched his fat limbs comfortably in the armchair.

The "lark," in which the fat Owl's ventriloquism was to come in useful, was booked for that afternoon. Bunter did not yet know what kind of a lark it was; but, assured now that Prout had gone out, he had no objection to raise. He was more than willing to show off his ventriloquism, and Caffyn had promised a spread in the study if the lark came off successfully. That was more than enough for William George Bunter.

Footsteps came up the deserted passage, and Caffyn came into Study No. 1, and shut the door after him. Bunter blinked at the Snipe quite amiably. He was rather revising his opinion of the Snipe. A fellow who admired his ventriloquism so much, and who stood him a packet of toffee, could not be all bad! And there was a spread to come! Really, old Snipey was by no means a bad chap when a fellow came to know him!

"Any more toffee?" was Bunter's first question.

"Lots presently," answered Caffyn.

Bunter preferred jam to-day to jam to-morrow! But there was evidently nothing more to come till after the lark.

"I suppose they've gone down to the footer now?" remarked Bunter. "I say, it will be worth watching if that fat-headed cousin of yours is playing for them, Snipey! He, he, he!"

"He isn't!" said Caffyn.

"Well, I rather thought the fellows wouldn't stand it," said Bunter, with a fat nod. "Too thick altogether! I know I jolly well wouldn't play in the same team with Coker! He's worse than you are at footer, Caffyn."

"Now, about that lark," said Caffyn, seating himself on the edge of the study table, and fixing his sharp eyes on Bunter's fatuous face. "I've been thinking it out. You know my Aunt Judy—"

"That old sketch!" grinned Bunter.

"Look here! If she's coming, I don't want to see her. She poked me in the ribs with her umbrella last time she came—jolly nearly punctured me—"

"She's going to telephone, and I want you to take the call. You'll put on that clever ventriloquism of yours, and make out that it is Prout taking it."

"He, he, he!"

"Speaking as Prout, you'll say you'll send for Coker to take her call."

"Blessed if I can see any lark in that," said Bunter, staring. "Look here! I don't want to have anything to do with Coker. He kicked me only this morning, making out that I knew something about that bag of biscuits he says was in his study. As if I know anything about his mouldy old biscuits!"

"Do listen to a chap!" snapped Caffyn. "Aunt Judy will think that Horace has been sent for, but he won't be."

"Oh! That's all right, then! So long as I don't come anywhere near that hulking fathead—"

"Then you'll turn on your imitation of Coker's voice, and speak to old Judy on the phone—as Coker!"

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter. "I say, what am I to say to her? I'm blessed if I see where the lark comes in."

"It's one on Coker!" explained Caffyn, watching the fat junior intently. "Suppose Horace called her an old cat—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Suppose he told her he was fed up with her—"

"It would make her wild!" grinned Bunter. "I'll bet she wouldn't send him any more of those ripping hampers."

"Well, I shall be there to prompt you," said Caffyn. "I'll think out what you're to say. It will be no end of a— a lark on that rotter, Coker, to make old Judy wild with him."

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter chuckled. His fat mind did not realise how very serious such a lark would be. He remembered chiefly that Coker of the Fifth had kicked him that morning, and would probably kick him again at their next encounter.

Caffyn breathed more freely, with relief. That Bunter was an obtuse duffer, he knew well. But he had wondered whether even the Owl of the Remove was obtuse enough to lend his aid in his rascally scheme.

Apparently there was no limit to Bunter's obtuseness. He grinned all over his fat face.

"Some joke on Coker, what?" smiled Caffyn.

"Yes, rather! I dare say the beast will be sorry for kicking a chap when his next hamper doesn't come!" grinned Bunter. "I never had those biscuits, you know. And there weren't more than two dozen in the bag, either."

"Well, listen to me, and I'll give you an idea of what you're to say to old Judy—speaking as if you were Horace, of course."

"Fire away!" said Bunter.

Caffyn fired away.

Bunter was still grinning. But as he listened to the Snipe, the grin gradually died away from his fat face.

Even through the dense obtuseness of the fat Owl, there penetrated some suspicion of the seriousness of this strange enterprise.

Back into his podgy memory came a recollection of a talk he had heard, between Caffyn and his guardian, the solicitor Sarle.

He shifted uncomfortably in the armchair.

He began to comprehend that this was not exactly a lark, but that it looked rather like a move in the game planned by Caffyn and Sarle—to "cut out" the favourite nephew from Aunt Judy's good graces, and transfer her kind regards—and the prospect of her money-bags—to her other nephew.

Bunter grew more and more uneasy as Caffyn talked.

He heaved his weight out of the armchair at last. Caffyn, reading his expression, slipped from the table.

"I—I think I'll go and have a squirt at the footer, old chap!" stammered Bunter. "I—I think I ought to give the Remove a look-in! You coming, too?"

"Never mind the footer," said Caffyn quietly. "It's a quarter past three now—time we got to Prout's study."

"I—I say, some other beak may spot us going there—"

"We shall have to be careful, of course. But there's really no risk."

"Look here, Caffyn, it—it's no end of a lark, of—of course, but—but I'd rather keep out of it!" said Bunter, driven to plain speaking. "The—the fact is, I can't ventriloquise at all—it's all a mistake—"

"That will do, Bunter!"

"Well, wash it out," said Bunter.

"Certainly, if you like," said Caffyn

smoothly, but with an evil glitter in his narrow eyes. "Are you ready to go to Quelch?"

"Quelch!" stammered Bunter.

"I'm letting you off stealing my cake because you're going to do this for me!" said Caffyn icily. "If you don't, of course I shall go to Quelch about your pilfering, as I said I would."

Bunter blinked at him in dismay.

"Oh, really, Caffyn!" he said feebly.

"It's only a lark," said Caffyn. "That's all it is, as I've told you. It will dish Horace over those hampers—that's all! Nothing more. No harm in it whatever."

"Sure of that?" asked Bunter, very dubiously. He could not help suspecting that there was more harm in it than merely "dishing" Coker over the hampers from Miss Judith. But he did not want to go to Quelch for a whopping! He was willing to be convinced of anything that would save him from getting that whopping from Quelch!

"Of course," said Caffyn, "in fact, I shall explain the whole thing afterwards—without mentioning you, of course. Come on! As soon as we're through, I want you to go down to the school shop for me."

"Oh," said Bunter. His fat mind swayed in doubt.

On one side, was an inevitable whopping from Quelch, over the affair of the snaffled cake. That sword of Damocles was still over his head. On the other side, was the promised spread in the study, after that lark on Coker and his Aunt Judy. Really, the choice was not difficult—for a fellow like Bunter. He loved spreads as much as he loathed whoppings.

"Well, look here," said Bunter, "I'll take your word, Caffyn, that it's only a lark. I suppose you're the best judge of your family affairs. It's your aunt and your cousin, not mine."

"Leave it at that!" assented Caffyn.

"Then it's a go!" said the fat Owl.

"Come on!" said Caffyn.

They left Study No. 1 together, and went down the Remove staircase.

As they approached Masters' Studies, Billy Bunter had a faint hope that some beak might look out of a doorway, making it necessary for them to clear off again. Really he was not keen on this lark.

But no beaks seemed in evidence that fine afternoon. From Mr. Quelch's study, came the click of a typewriter, showing that the Remove master was there. But when Quelch was deep in his literary works on his typewriter, he was blind and deaf to everything else. There was no danger from Quelch.

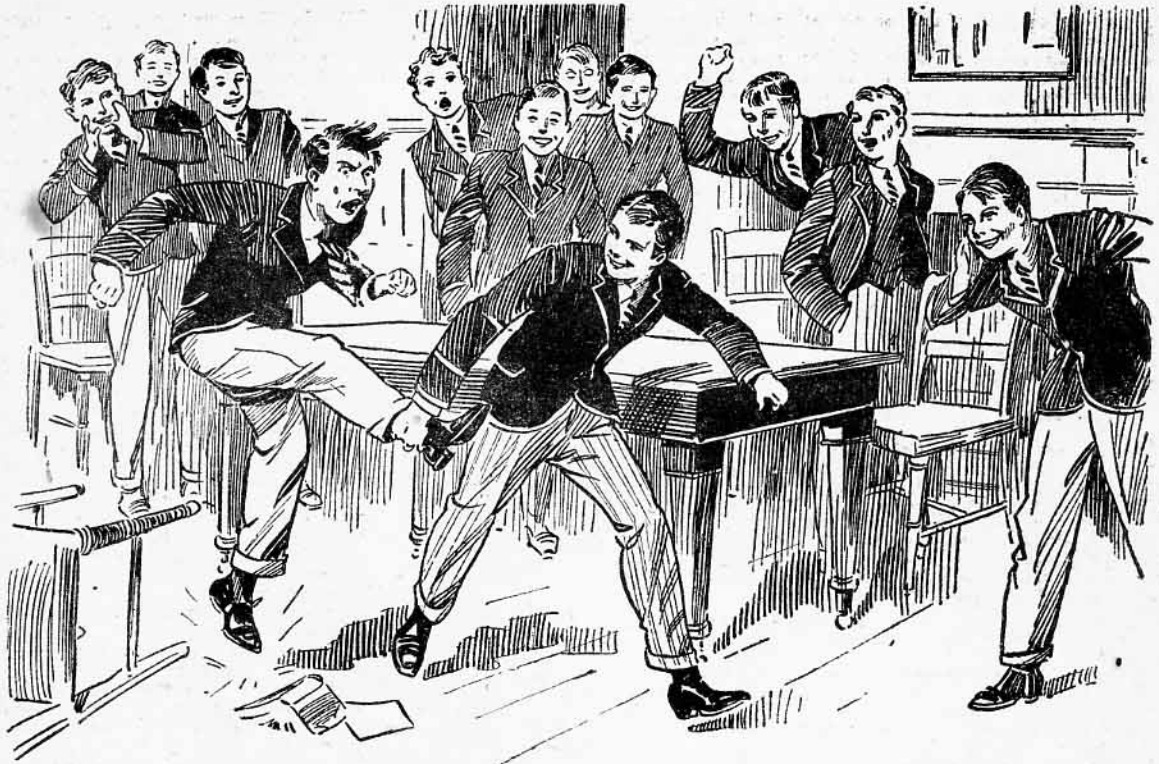
They reached Prout's study. Bunter had a final glimpse of hope that Prout had locked his study door. Beaks sometimes did.

But Prout hadn't!

The door opened to Caffyn's touch: and he stepped quickly in, and beckoned to Bunter to follow. Not in the best of spirits, the Owl of the Remove rolled in after him.

Caffyn closed the door quickly and quietly, and turned the key in the lock. So long as Prout remained out, they were safe now. If, by chance, someone came along to the study, finding the door locked, he would conclude that Prout had locked it. But nobody was likely to come as Prout was well-known to have gone to Canterbury that afternoon. Prout had talked of that excursion for days; anything in connection with himself was, in Prout's belief, a matter of general interest.

Caffyn stood by the telephone, ready to snatch off the receiver at the first buzz



As Caffyn's foot came up, Bob Cherry made a jump and caught the ankle in his hand. Then he walked round the long oak table in the Rag. Caffyn, on one leg, hopped wildly along with him. Yells of laughter greeted the performance on all sides. "Say when you've had enough!" said Bob Cherry.

of the bell. It would not do for anyone else to hear the telephone-bell, and come along to see to it.

The Snipe was breathing hard. Fortune seemed to be playing into his hands, at last! When he had intercepted the call for Mr. Prout, he had only hoped that it might result in preventing Horace Coker from getting that extra holiday at the seaside, that his affectionate Aunt Judy planned for him. But the Snipe's astute brain had been hard at work since then; and from such small beginnings, his present plot had developed. Nothing now, so far as he could see, could prevent the success of the scheme.

Billy Bunter sat in Prout's armchair watching Caffyn uneasily through his big spectacles. Caffyn's hand was on the receiver—and at the first tinkle of the bell he jerked it off. He put it to his ear—then made a sign to Bunter. Reluctantly the fat Owl rolled out of the armchair, and took the receiver from the Snipe's hand.

It was jammed to a fat ear. A treble voice came through.

"Mr. Sprout! Am I talking to Mr. Sprout!"

"Speaking, madam!" answered Bunter, in such a lifelike imitation of Prout's fruity voice, that Prout, had he been there, might have fancied that he had himself spoken.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker, at Centre-Forward!

HARRY WHARTON stood on the junior football ground and looked away towards the distant House.

The Remove footballers stood silent—waiting! Temple, Dabney & Co. were there, and ready—and grinning sarcastically. Hobson of the Shell, who was

going to referee the match, had his whistle in hand. It was time for the Form match to begin—and it was still, so to speak, on the knees of the gods.

Temple, with his hands in the pockets of his elegant footer shorts, lounged over to the captain of the Remove.

"I see that you've got an eleven here, all Remove!" he remarked.

Wharton nodded without speaking.

"You told me Coker was playing!"

"He is!" answered Harry.

"Where is he, then?"

"If he doesn't turn up in a few minutes, I'll send a man to fetch him," answered Wharton. "Don't you worry—you've kept us waiting ten minutes for a match before now, and you can wait a few minutes for us."

"Oh, I don't mind waitin' a few minutes," answered Cecil Reginald, "to give your jolly old recruit time to get here. That's all right—if he's comin'."

"He's coming!" snapped the captain of the Remove.

"All serene, then!" grinned Temple.

And he strolled back to his men, who all grinned also when he gave them the news that Coker certainly was coming.

"We're landed!" said Vernon-Smith, with a grunt. "If you send a man to fetch Coker, Wharton, you'll have to send him word that he skips the team."

"I know."

"That will fetch him, anyhow!" said Johnny Bull. "But wait a bit! He knows kick-off is at three. If the mountain doesn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet has to hike off to the mountain. We shall see Coker yet."

The footballers waited.

Coker had to play. Bob Cherry's brag had to be made good. All the Remove men had agreed on that.

It followed, therefore, that if he

would only play on his own terms, he

had to be allowed to play on his own terms. That also had been agreed to.

But there was still hope!

Coker, believing that his exorbitant demand had been refused, and that he was left out in the cold, would very likely climb down, and, since he could not get what he wanted, would take what he could get.

Not till the latest possible moment would Wharton send him a message that he could captain the side, which was certain to bring him down to the field hot-foot.

Would he come of his own accord, without that?

He would—and did!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Look!"

"Coker!" said Wharton, in great relief.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Coker!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

And there was a general chuckle.

Coker was coming!

He had changed for football. So it was clear that he intended to play. It was not necessary, after all, to make that final concession. Coker, unaware that the concession would have been made at the last moment, had decided to take what he could get.

Coker came tramping on the field, towering over the juniors. There was a grin of relief and satisfaction on every face. Coker it was true, was there; but, at least, he was not there to captain the side! The Remove footballers were thankful for small mercies!

"Playing, Coker?" asked Wharton cheerily.

"Well, I don't see why not," said Coker. "It's not what I call football, the fumbling of you fags, but, dash it all, I'll give you a leg-up!"

"Good man! Right back——"

Coker frowned

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"I play as centre-forward, or not at all," he said briefly.

Wharton suppressed a groan. Coker meant that. He had let fall his claim to captain the side, but that was the utmost of his surrender. He was, at least, going to pick his own place.

"That or nothing," said Coker, in a tone of finality.

It would have been "nothing"—with the addition of a number of football boots clumping on Coker—but for the necessity of making good Bob Cherry's brag. As it stood, it was "that."

"Very well!" said Harry, and there was a prompt rearrangement of the team to make room for Coker in the place where Harry Wharton generally played. A man had to stand out, and Wharton took inside on the left wing.

Hobson of the Shell came up to him. Hobby was looking quite puzzled and perplexed.

"You're not playing Coker?" he asked.

"We are."

"That idiot?" asked the referee.

"That idiot," assented Wharton.

"That howling ass?" asked Hobby.

"That howling ass," agreed Wharton.

"That barging, bungling, blithering bandersnatch?" said Hobby.

"My dear man, if we stop to listen to all the things Coker is we shall never get started."

"Well, you're mad, I suppose!" said Hobson. "Look here, if he charges me I shall knock him over—see?"

"Do!" said Harry, laughing. "And sit on him!"

The sides lined up. In the centre of the Remove front line Coker towered, like a whale among the minnows, as he had expressed it. The Remove men were sturdy enough, but they were juniors, and Coker was big, even for a Fifth Former. The disparity in size was very striking. If size and weight went for anything Coker of the Fifth looked like barging the Fourth Form men off the field, if not off the earth!

But, as the Removites sadly knew, it was his own side that was likely to get most of Coker's barging.

However, they were for it now, and could only hope for the best. Hobson blew the whistle, the ball was kicked off, and that rather remarkable game began.

Coker showed his quality from the very start. Always, on the football ground, Coker regarded the Soccer ball as his own peculiar possession. He did not seem to like any other man touching it at all, or even getting near it. This was not selfish play, as Coker considered it. It was simply the best man doing the work.

Wharton, Hurree Singh, Smithy, and Peter Todd, in the front line, got away with the ball, taking it up the field with quick, short passing that beat the Fourth hollow and left Coker standing. Coker, at centre-forward, was simply a gap in the line.

Had Coker been content to remain a gap in the line, all would have been well.

But was he? He was not. Not Coker!

Coker's brain did not move quickly. But he grasped how matters stood, and saw that these fags were taking the game into their own hands—chucking it away, of course! Coker roared after the forwards like a runaway car. He landed in Harry Wharton's back, sending him spinning headlong. An elbow—Coker had a hefty elbow—disposed of Vernon-Smith. A barging shove relieved Coker of any worry from Toddy. Leaving the forward line for dead, as it were, Coker got the ball and barged on

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with it, and seemed quite surprised when a Fourth Form back hooked it away from him with the greatest of ease and sent it almost as far as the Remove goal with a long kick.

"Oh crums!" groaned right-half R. Cherry.

Bob had rashly declared that the Remove would beat the Fourth, playing Coker. But it did not look a lot like it. The age of miracles was past.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Awful For Aunt Judy!

"DEAR Mr. Sprout—" came Aunt Judy's treble on the telephone in Prout's Study.

"Mr. Prout speaking!"

Caffyn, standing at Billy Bunter's elbow, grinned. But for the fact that Bunter was standing there, under his eyes, speaking into the mouth-piece, he would have believed that it was Prout. Bunter had the fruity voice to the last tone. If the fat Owl of the Remove could do nothing else there was no doubt that he could do this kind of trickery to perfection.

"Will you send for Horace, dear Mr. Sprout? The dear boy will be so delighted by what I have to tell him."

"Certainly, madam! Please hold on."

Bunter put down the receiver.

He blinked at Caffyn.

Aunt Judy, at the other end of the line, waited for Horace to come to the telephone. She had no doubt that she had been speaking to Mr. Prout. She had no doubt that she was going to speak to Coker.

Caffyn breathed hard and deep. He had planned it all with great cunning. His plans were working out perfectly. He had hardly dared to hope that all would go as smoothly as this.

"I say—" breathed Bunter.

Caffyn put his hand over the transmitter lest Miss Coker should catch a sound at the other end.

"Quiet! Let her wait a couple of minutes. I'll whisper to you what you're to say. Give me the receiver."

It was quite a peculiar talk on the telephone that followed. Caffyn held the receiver, but Bunter had a fat ear near it and caught what Aunt Judy was saying. Every time Caffyn whispered instructions he put his hand over the transmitter. Bunter was not given the trouble of thinking out what to say in his part as Horace Coker. All he had to do was to imitate the bull-like voice of Horace—a quite easy task for the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

Not a doubt crossed the mind of Miss Coker that it was Horace—dear Horace—who was speaking, though what her dear Horace had to say came as a surprise and a shock to her. The first remark, in Coker's voice, was:

"What's wanted? Is that old Judy?"

There was a gasp over the wires.

"Horace! My dear Horace—"

"Oh, all right! I know your squeal."

"Horace!"

"Look here, it's pretty thick, bothering a fellow like this. I was talking to some men in the games study when I was dragged away to answer the phone."

"Horace!" came Miss Judy's voice faintly.

"Oh, don't keep on Horacing me, for goodness' sake! Look here, I've got to get back to the fellows. I can't keep them waiting all the afternoon while I'm jawing on the telephone."

"Horace!"

"Prout told me you had something to say to me! Can't you say it, and let a fellow get away?"

"Horace!"

Miss Judith seemed unable to say anything but that! She repeated her nephew's name, in various tones of surprise, amazement, horror.

"Well, what is it? Can't you say? I tell you the fellows are waiting for me."

"Horace!"

"Making a fellow look a fool! They're cackling like anything, at a chap being called away to jabber to an old aunt on the phone."

"Horace!"

"You might be a bit more considerate! A fellow doesn't like being made to look a fool like this! Why couldn't you write instead of telephoning?"

"Horace!"

"For goodness' sake come to the point! I tell you I can't hang on to this putrid telephone much longer. Bothering a fellow like this, on a half-holiday."

"Horace!" almost moaned Miss Judith. "Dear Horace—"

"Well, cut it short."

"Are—are you ill, Horace?"

"Ill! Am I ever ill? What the thump do you mean?"

"Horace! My dear, dear boy!

How can you speak to me so?"

Miss Judith's voice sounded as if she was in tears.

Billy Bunter blinked uneasily at Caffyn. He could not help thinking that the lark had gone far enough.

But there was no compunction in Caffyn's hard heart. He grinned.

"I say—" muttered Bunter.

Caffyn jammed his hand on the mouthpiece.

"Shut up, you fool! Keep it up!"

"But—but I say, she—she sounds as if she's crying—"

"What does that matter, idiot? Get on with it! There she goes again!" whispered Caffyn fiercely. "By gum, I'll make you squirm if you let me down now! I'll get you sacked for stealing!"

"Oh, you beast!"

"Get on with it!"

"Horace!" came the tearful voice. "I never expected this from you. I—I never dreamed that you could speak to me so."

Bunter hesitated to carry on. But a fierce glare from Caffyn decided him. He was terribly afraid of Caffyn at that moment. The fat Owl tried to persuade himself that it was, after all, only a lark, and carried on. The Snipe's whispered instructions were boomed into the telephone in Horace Coker's voice.

"Look here, will you say what you've got to say, and let a fellow get back to his friends?"

"Oh, Horace! Horace!"

"I'm fed-up with this! I'm going to ring off!"

"Oh, Horace! I—I asked your Form-master, Mr. Sprout, to give you an extra day's holiday to-morrow! I—I thought that you would like to come down to see me for the day at Bournemouth—"

"What rot!"

"Horace!"

"I shall see you next hols, I suppose! This isn't a time of year for mooching about at the seaside!"

"Horace!"

"Well, be a bit reasonable! Who wants to tramp about a seaside place in February, with no company but an old lady?"

"Horace!"

"Is that all? Look here, if you ask Prout to give me a holiday, that's all right. But I don't want to come to Bournemouth."

There was a pause. Miss Judith Coker's feelings, hitherto, had been of surprise, shock, and grief. Now she was growing angry—which was rather

natural, in her belief that it was Horace who was saying these rude, ungrateful, unfeeling things.

"Horace!" There came a firm, sharp note in the treble voice which Caffyn was delighted to hear. "I will keep you from your friends only a few moments longer. You shall not waste a day with your old aunt at Bournemouth."

"I should jolly well think not!" "I understand now, as I never understood before, how mistaken I have been in you. My other nephew would never, never speak to me like this. You shall not see me at Bournemouth, Horace."

"All right, then." "Neither shall you ever see me again at all, you bad, hard-hearted, ungrateful boy!" came Miss Judith's voice, trembling with anger. "You will never come to Coker Lodge again! You will never be made to look a fool, as you express it, by a fond old aunt coming to see you at your school, or calling you up on the telephone! Never! I will never, never see you again!"

Snap! Miss Judith Coker had cut off. Caffyn put up the receiver, grinning.

Billy Bunter blinked at him dubiously. "I—I say, that's rather thick, Snipey!" he mumbled. "I—I say, you've got Coker into a fearful row with that old sketch."

"Don't you worry!" grinned Caffyn. "Well, I call it thick!" said Bunter. "Too jolly thick! Mean, rotten trick, if you ask me! Mind, it's all your doing!"

Caffyn laughed. "I—I've a jolly good mind to ring the old bird up and tell her it was all a spoof!" muttered Bunter.

Billy Bunter's conscience was fairly elastic, and could stretch considerably. But it was really worrying him a little now.

The Snipe's narrow eyes gleamed menace at him.

"Do!" he said. "You'll be taken to the Head for pretending to be Prout on the telephone! It means the sack! Do!"

Bunter quaked. It was, in fact, rather late in the day for his fat conscience to wake up! What would happen to him, if this trickery came to the Head's knowledge, would hardly bear thinking of.

"You awful rotter!" muttered the hapless Owl. "You beast, you said it was only going to be a lark, but—"

"Can it!" jeered Caffyn. "Let's get out of this before we're spotted here! I don't want a flogging for playing tricks in a beak's study, if you do."

"I jolly well don't, either! But it was all you—"

"Well, let's get out! Keep it dark, if you don't want to be flogged or sacked!" sneered Caffyn. "Better forget about it, old fat bean! What about that spread in the study? I've got a couple of pounds."

Billy Bunter brightened up. "After all, it was only a lark!" he said.

"Of course it was! Come on!" They left Prout's study, cautiously, unseen. Mr. Quelch's typewriter was still clicking when they tiptoed past his door. Caffyn went back to Study No. 1, in the Remove, to write a letter to Mr. Sarle—containing very pleasing news for that scheming gentleman. Bunter went to the school shop for shopping—on an extensive scale. And the spread in Study No. 1 was so ample, and so appetising, and Bunter enjoyed it so thoroughly that his fat conscience was soon at rest. After all, it was only a lark. It was a lark that was likely to cost Coker of the Fifth very

dear—unless, as so often happens, there turned out to be a weak spot somewhere in a cunning scheme!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Soccer!

"G O it, Coker!" "On the ball!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd was gathering and thickening round the football field, where Remove and Fourth contested. Coker in the ranks of the Remove was the cynosure of all eyes. Fellows who had been watching the Sixth, or the Fifth Form pick-up, came across to give the Remove a look-in—or, rather, to give Coker a look-in. Coker had all the attention! Coker was bringing down the house. Coker was the goods. Fags of the Third and Second came to watch Coker. If Horace liked the spot-light, as certainly he did, he had it now in full measure.

Harry Wharton & Co. had known the kind of man Coker was at football. But even they had never quite realised that he was like this! They had only been observers before. Now they were victims.

It was funny, no doubt, for the on-lookers. It was not funny for the men barged and floored by the hefty Horace.

Two things saved the Remove from utter and crushing defeat. One was the slack and fooling play of Temple & Co. The other was the wonderful skill and watchfulness of Squiff, in the Remove goal. Sampson Quincy Ifley Field was a host in himself—and he needed to be! Even Coker did not charge and barge his own goalkeeper! But in sober fact, the goalie was the only man on the Remove side whom Coker did not charge and barge.

Coker had a happy belief that he was helping the Remove. That was quite an error. But he was helping the Fourth—immensely. Seldom or never had Temple & Co. rained shots on the Remove as they did now.

But Squiff proved equal to all of them. They were frequent, but not difficult to handle—there was more quantity than quality about them. Squiff hopped, skipped, and jumped, kicked and headed and fisted, and kept the pill out of the pillbox. Wonderful to relate, the first half finished without a score for the Fourth.

As for the Remove, they scarcely expected to score. They got the ball away from Temple & Co. easily enough. But it was not so easy to get it away from Coker. Coker was not the man to let a cheeky fag get into his light. A Remove man in Coker's way was in much the same situation as a jay-walker in the way of a lorry. The rules of the

game restricted to some degree, the extent to which Horace assaulted and battered the enemy. But there was no restriction to his assaulting and battering his own side. Well as they knew him, Harry Wharton & Co. had not expected even Coker to charge his own side in the middle of the back. But he did—often! He charged them anywhere and anyhow when they got in the way. And when

Coker kicked, he seldom landed his enormous foot on the ball. A wild yell from some unhappy player would reveal where he landed it.

This kind of football was undoubtedly exciting, in fact, thrilling. The Remove men felt as if they were taking their lives in their hands!

There was one consolation. They could slaughter Coker after the game. But that, of course, depended on Coker not slaughtering them during the game. And really he seemed bent on it.

In the interval Bob Cherry sucked a lemon, rubbed a bruised calf, caressed a numbed elbow, and wished dimly that he had never given utterance to that unfortunate brag. He almost wished that his comrades had not stood by him to see him through. He had expected it to be a fearful game. But this was not merely fearful. It was frightful!

Gasping, panting, damaged, infuriated, the Remove footballers were glad of a rest. Coker seemed freshest of the lot. He had covered more ground than anyone else. He had collected more mud. But Coker was strong and burly and beefy. He had, at least, stamina, if he had no other quality, required in a footballer.

And he was not satisfied. He gave the gasping juniors a disdainful glare.

Although Coker had consented at long last to play without captaining the team, he had assumed authority on the field. He had shouted orders and directions right and left; and was very much irritated to find that they fell on deaf ears.

"Well, you look a winded lot!" grunted Coker. "What's the matter with your leg, Cherry?"

"You kicked it, you born idiot!" said Bob, in a sulphurous voice.

"Don't be cheeky! Is your ankle wonky, Vernon-Smith?"

"Do you think it would be anything else, after getting your hoof on it?" hissed the Bounder.

"What are you wriggling like that for, Todd?"

"You've put my shoulder nearly out of joint!" groaned Peter.

Snort from Coker.

"Never saw such a soft lot!" he said. "Clumsy, too! Great pip, clumsiness isn't the word! The way you barge into a man's way! I've fallen over three or four of you at once, several times."

"Three or four of us are going to fall over you, after the game!" said the Bounder grimly.

"Shut up, Vernon-Smith! Don't talk while I'm talking! Now look here, you kids, this won't do!" said Coker impressively. "I've consented to play for your fag team. Perhaps I was a fool for my pains! But there it is—I've consented to play! We've got to win!"

(Continued on next page.)

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"Win—with you in the team!" gurgled Bob.

"The winfulness will not be terrific!" "You can't let me down like that!"

went on Coker. "I can't have those Fourth Form ticks making out that they've beaten a team that had a Fifth Form man playing in it. I've got my position to consider! We've got to win this match! Play up! Keep your eyes on me! Listen to me, and jump to my orders! None of your fag impudence! Keep out of my way and back up my play as well as you can in your fumbling fag way! Understand?"

It says much for the self-restraint of the Remove footballers that they did not slaughter Horace Coker in the interval instead of sparing him till after the match.

"I'm going all out to win in the second half!" added Coker. "I don't expect much of you! But for goodness' sake do what you can. Try not to disgrace me!"

Hobson blew the whistle.

In the second half Coker, as he had promised, went "all out." In the first half he had resembled a wildly excited hippopotamus. Now he was more like an insane elephant.

The crowd round the field thickened. They cheered Coker! They clapped him! They roared with laughter—especially when Coker charged the referee, apparently in mistake for a player, and Hobson of the Shell hit him in the eye. Coker sat down, and the referee found business elsewhere before he got up again. And the onlookers shrieked:

"Go for him, Coker!"

"Charge him!"

"Barge him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For several minutes Coker forgot Soccer while he was looking for the referee! But the sight of a hot attack on the Fourth Form goal drew him like a magnet. Temple & Co's defence was pierced like cheese, and the ball was about to go in, from Harry Wharton's foot, when Coker arrived, going through the Remove men like the Light Brigade through the Russian gunners at Balaklava. And that goal did not materialise.

The Remove men were keen on Soccer. Often they had wished a game to last longer. Now they wondered if that awful game would ever end.

They still had the comfort of keeping the score-sheet blank. Squiff, in goal, put paid to every shot he received from the enemy. Anyhow, it was going to be a draw. If the Remove could not, as Bob had rashly declared, beat the Fourth with Coker in the ranks, at least they could pull through unbeaten.

And then, in the last five minutes of that thrilling game, fortune smiled on the heroes of the Remove. The Bounder had the ball and was taking it down the field like lightning when Coker barged right at him. And Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Hurree Singh, and Peter Todd, as if all moved at once by the same spring, hurled themselves at Coker, flogged him, and rolled over him. They were just in time. Coker went down with a crash that almost shook Kent. Four juniors crashed on him—and stayed there! And the Bounder, beating the defence with ease, ran in and netted the pill.

Then there was a roar!

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Bounder!"

"Hurrah!" Bob Cherry sat up, on Coker's face, and roared with jubilation. "Good old Smithy! Goal! We've done it! Hurrah!"

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"Goal! Goal!"

"Urrrrgggh!" came from Coker.

"Urrgh! I'll smash you! Wurrgrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!"

It was the only goal in the game. The longed-for whistle went, and the Remove came off victors. Bob Cherry was grinning with glee. His wild words had been made good—quite good! The Remove had beaten the Fourth—playing Coker! But it was not an experiment that anybody wanted to try again!

"One to nil!" snorted Coker. "Pah! If you'd backed me up—if you'd been anything but a crew of cheeky, silly fags, we'd have piled up a dozen at least! Catch me playing for you again! I can jolly well say—yaroooh! Yooop! Whoop! Oh crikey! Yaroooooop!"

The pent-up feelings of the Remove footballers found vent now. Horace Coker hardly knew how he got off the field. He travelled chiefly on his neck. Only twenty football boots landed on him; but they landed often, and felt like two hundred. Coker was still adorning the landscape, horizontal, gurgling for his second wind, when the footballers went into the changing-room.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something to Write Home About!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came up to the Remove passage in a cheery crowd after the game.

It had been a strenuous match, and they were all feeling the effects of Coker. But they rejoiced. Billy Bunter rolled out of Study No. 1 as they came up, looking very shiny and sticky.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "We've beaten them, old fat man!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? Not much in beating Temple's lot!" he said.

"Lots in it, when we were playing Coker!" chuckled Bob. "Why didn't you come down, you fat frowster? It was worth watching!"

"I've been teazing with Caffyn!" said Bunter. "I say, did you play Coker? I thought he refused to play!"

"So he did, but he changed his mind. But we've beaten the Fourth—knocked 'em into a cocked hat!"

Caffyn's thin, startled face looked out of Study No. 1.

"What's that?" exclaimed the Snipe sharply. "Did you say that Coker has been playing football with you?"

"Yes. You ought to have seen him—"

"Is that the truth?" exclaimed Caffyn.

Bob stared at him.

"Is it the truth?" he repeated. "What do you mean? Are you asking me to bang your cheeky head on that door?"

The Famous Five looked blankly at Caffyn. He was so utterly uninterested in football, as a rule, that they could not understand his sudden interest now. Still less could they understand the startled rage and dismay in his foxy face.

The Snipe was, in fact, completely confounded by that unexpected news. But he pulled himself together quickly.

"I—I mean—" he stammered. "I—I thought that Coker refused to play! Why, I heard him refuse!"

"He came round," said Harry Wharton, with a laugh. "I rather fancied he would, at the last minute—and he did!"

Caffyn gritted his teeth.

It was a totally unexpected blow. Coker of the Fifth had not, as he had been assured wandered about on his lonesome own that afternoon, with nothing to prove that he had not been in Prout's study at the telephone. He had been playing football, after all; and twenty-one other footballers, as well as a crowd of onlookers, could prove that he had been nowhere near Prout's study at half-past three! If any of them saw Aunt Judy—

But it was unlikely enough. Aunt Judy had said that she would never come to the school again, and she had meant it.

It was a stroke of ill-luck; but it was, after all, all right!

"What does it matter to you, Caffyn, anyhow?" asked Nugent.

Caffyn shrugged his shoulders. He had quite recovered himself.

"Oh, nothing!" he answered carelessly. "I was surprised, that was all! Nothing to do with me."

"Come on," said Harry Wharton. "Tea in your study, Bob—bit too snoky in there."

And the Famous Five went on up the passage.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a puzzled expression on his dusky face.

"The esteemed and absurd Snipe has something on his atrocious mind," he remarked. "He is terrifically concerned about what his ridiculous relative did this idiotic afternoon."

"Oh, bother him!" said Bob. "I'm ready for tea!"

All the footballers were ready for tea. There was quite a celebration in Study No. 13. Now that the match was over, and won, nobody wanted to kick Bob Cherry for having landed them in such a scrape. Rather, they rejoiced at the glory of such a victory under such a handicap.

And they rejoiced.

So, strange to relate, did Coker!

By what strange mental process Coker arrived at the conclusion that he had won that match for the Remove cannot be said; for Coker's intellect moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. But he did arrive at that conclusion. Coker's only dissatisfaction was that the game had been won by a single goal, when he had intended to pile up at least a dozen or so. Still, that would have come off all right if those clumsy, cheeky, silly fags had not kept on getting into his way! So Coker considered! So he was, on the whole, satisfied.

Potter and Greene, coming along to Coker's study to tea after the Fifth Form pick-up, had to wait for tea till Coker had finished writing a letter, and walked down to the school box and posted it.

They had a glimpse of the letter, and were duly entertained. Caffyn, had he had a glimpse of it, would not have been entertained.

For Coker's letter ran:

"Deer Aunt Judy,—I wish you could have kum down to Greyfriars this afternoon to see me playing football. I've often wanted you to see me in a game, but there's a lot of jellusy about, and a fellow dozent always get the chances he ort. I shood have let you kno, if there had been time; but it was only settled at the last minnit, so, of corse, I coodent.

"It wasn't much of a game, recally, as I was only playing for the Remove. But the youngsters were very keen on it, and I gave them a helping hand. Owing to their rotten play, there was only one gole; still, a wyn is a wyn. I reely wish you



As if moved by the same spring, the Remove footballers hurled themselves at Coker, floored him, and rolled over him, while Vernon-Smith, beating the defence with ease, sped on towards the Upper Fourth goal!

good have been here. You shoold have herd the crowd showing and chearing me—it was 'Coker! Coker!' all the time. You woold almost have thort I was the only fellow on the feeld by the way they showted my name!

"I have some hoaps that Blundell, my Form captain, will have the sense to pick me out for the Form eleven, now that he knoes I've wun a game for the jooiors. In that case, I will let you kno in time, so that you can kum down and watch it. Without boasting I think I can say that it will be werth watching.

"Your affectionate nephew,
"HORACE."

Nobody else in the football match that day woold have said that the game was "werth writing home about." But to Horace Coker, so long denied a chance of displaying his wonderful powers on the football field, it was an event! He knew that his Aunt Judy woold be pleased at his success and share in his satisfaction; and he liked to give the dear old soul pleasure.

But he little dreamed of the effect of that letter on Miss Judith Coker when she received it the following morning. It came rather like a bombshell!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Kybosh!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"The old sketch!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
"What—"

The Greyfriars fellows were coming out in break in the morning—when Aunt Judy happened!

She happened suddenly, and she happened dramatically.

A taxicab drove in at the gates, rushed up to the House, and Miss Judith Coker jumped from it before it had quite stopped. Indeed, had not

Harry Wharton, in the nick of time, rushed forward and caught her, she might have taken a tumble.

Miss Coker, generally the soul of old-fashioned courtesy, did not stay to thank him

She flew into the House.

Her voice was heard calling:

"Where is the headmaster—I must see the headmaster at once—immediately! Oh, be quick—quick!"

Trotter shepherded Miss Coker to the Head's study. Dr. Locke almost bounded as she flew in. She had a letter in one hand. With the other she grabbed at the Head's gown.

"My dear madam," gasped the Head of Greyfriars, "what—what—Upon my soul—pray calm yourself—what—"

"He was playing football—"

"Eh?"

"He cannot have telephoned—"

"What?"

"I have been deceived—deluded—"

"Madam—"

"I thought that it was dear Horace—oh, it sounded so like his dear voice!—but it was not—not—not—"

"Goodness gracious!"

"Deceived—deluded—insulted—"

"Madam—"

"Look! Look at that letter!"

Dr. Locke adjusted his pince-nez and looked at the letter—Coker's letter. Startled as he was by this sudden irruption of Aunt Judy, he smiled as he read it. Coker's spelling woold almost have made a stone image smile.

"Shocking!" said the Head. "For a Fifth Form boy to spell like this is certainly rather shocking. But surely that is not the reason—"

"Playing football!" gasped Aunt Judy.

"Certainly it appears by this letter that Coker was playing football yesterday," assented the Head. "You have no objection, surely, madam? A manly and healthy game—"

"He cannot have telephoned if he was playing football!" shrieked Aunt Judy.

"N-n-no! Probably not! Did you desire him to telephone?"

"Cannot you understand—"

Dr. Locke rubbed his chin.

"I fear that I cannot, so far, madam! Perhaps you will explain!" he suggested. "I rang up Mr. Sprout at half-past three—"

"Mr. Sprout? There is no such— Oh! Mr. Prout! Quite so! Certainly!"

"And someone came to the telephone, but it was not Horace—"

"It could scarcely have been, if Coker was playing football, as this letter indicates!" said the Head. "I am sure you will excuse him, madam—a school-boy playing in a football match could scarcely—"

"Will you not understand? He said he was Horace—"

"Eh?"

"He spoke in Horace's voice—"

"Horace's voice!" repeated the Head quite dizzily. He could not understand how Horace's voice could have been on the telephone while Horace was on the football field. It was only reasonable to suppose that wherever Coker went, Coker's voice, like Mary's little lamb, was sure to go!

"It was a trick—a wretched trick—a jactical proke—"

"A—a—a what?"

"I mean a practical joke—I am so upset—so confused—"

The Head did not need telling that! The fact that Miss Coker was upset and confused leaped to the eye!

"It was not Horace!" gasped Miss Coker. "You can see for yourself, from this dear letter, that the darling boy was playing cricket—I mean, football. The dear, darling boy must have sat down to write to me as soon as the match was over! And I had been thinking him so bad, so cruel, so ungrateful. Oh, can I ever forgive myself! To be so deceived and deluded by a jactical proker—a practical joker— Oh dear!"

The Head began to grasp it. His face grew stern.

"Do you mean, Miss Coker—can you possibly mean—that someone telephoned to you, using Coker's name, and—good gracious—imitating his voice so successfully that you believed that it was Coker speaking?"

"So you understand at last! I thought you would never understand—men are so stupid! My dear, dear

Horace, I misjudged him so cruelly—I was so upset, so insulted—"

By degrees, the Head, with a skill derived from long experience in the management of parents and relations of boys, calmed Miss Coker, and extracted from her a full account of the telephone talk.

His brow was like thunder when he understood it all.

"Madam! The strictest inquiry will be made—and the wretched trickster will be discovered, and expelled from Greyfriars!" said the Head.

"Can I see Horace?"

Dr Locke was only too glad for Miss Judith to see Horace. Very gladly indeed he rang for Trotter to take Aunt Judy to Horace!

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

IN response to many requests here are a few more

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

Where Dead Men Were Buried in Trees! The people of Patani, in Siam, had an unusual way of disposing of their dead. They wrapped them in mats, and cigar-shaped casings. These were afterwards slung between the branches of trees, or placed in the forks of the branches. The aborigines of Australia also practised tree burial.

A Telescope Costing One Million Pounds! The largest and strongest telescope in the world is nearing completion in America. It has cost a million pounds. The grinding of the lens alone will take three years, and the telescope is estimated to make the moon appear as though it were only twenty-five miles away from the earth.

Cities of Gold Beneath the Earth! In Denver City, Colorado, the United States Government is constructing a vast city of vaults, to contain two thousand million pounds' worth of gold! In France, eight hundred million pounds worth of gold is locked in vaults at the bottom of a lake. These vaults could be flooded in a few moments should the need arise.

Almost Incredible Chinese Ivory Carving! In China, wonderful carved balls of ivory can be purchased. Inside each ball is another, smaller, but still as elaborately carved. The balls get smaller and smaller, and can be plainly seen through the holes cut out of the larger ones. As many as twenty-seven balls, all elaborately carved, can be found inside the outer containing ball. Years of most patient work must be devoted to this almost incredible carving.

Here is a piece of information which deserves a longer paragraph:

MAKING USE OF THEIR "MONSTER."

You've heard of the Loch Ness Monster? Well, they have a "monster" in the island of Tahiti, too! It is a giant eel, the length of which nobody knows exactly, although some people claim that it exceeds thirty feet. A traveller, who has just returned from Tahiti, tells me that the Tahitians make use of this monster in the following manner:

A kind of tapioca is made in Tahiti from taro root. The water used in its manufacture must be pure. This giant eel lives in a deep well, and it is from this well that the water is drawn. Strange as it seems, it is the eel which keeps the water pure! The Tahitians, therefore, have discovered THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,409.

a means of making their local "monster" work for its keep!

A SHORT while ago I published some information concerning various surnames. As a result, a number of readers have written to ask me if I can tell them what their surname means. As other readers of the same name may be interested, I am giving herewith a brief list of some of these

SURNAMES AND THEIR MEANINGS.

Fearon: Strange as it seems, this is the French equivalent for Smith. It is sometimes spelled "Fearn."

Hughes: The original bearer of this name might have been named after St. Hugh, whose legend is an extremely ancient one. Another derivation comes from the French name Huguenot, which comes originally from the German Edigenoss, meaning a sworn ally.

Walls: Is a variant of Welsh, Walsh, and Welch, names given to settlers who came from Wales.

Brittain: Together with similar names, such as Britten and Brett, means a settler who came from Brittany.

Brown: Indicates that its original bearer was tanned or bronzed in colour. There are many other names which are indicative of their original bearer. Originally they were a sort of nickname, given to differentiate various men from others. When surnames came into fashion, these names were retained as family names.

DON'T MISS THIS TREAT!

When you have finished reading this grand issue of the MAGNET, take my advice and get a copy of the GEM. In this week's issue our popular author, FRANK RICHARDS, contributes another wonderful complete yarn of Wild West school adventure. Then there is a powerful long story of the St. Jim's chums, and a great St. Frank's tale. Get the GEM to-day and see for yourself what a ripping paper it is.

Well, and what's your opinion of Frank Richards' present series of yarns featuring Edgar Caffyn, the schemer of the Remove? They're real good, aren't they? Look out for another topping fine story next week, entitled:

"THE UNSEEN WITNESS!"

There's been some real excitement at Greyfriars this last week or two, and you can take it from me that there's more to come.

Our grand new serial by Geo. E. Rochester has kicked off in thrilling fashion, as befits one of the greatest adventure tales ever written by this talented author. Watch out for another corking instalment next week, chums. Meanwhile, don't forget to tell your pals about this great masterpiece. Like you, they'll enjoy every line of it.

You'll find heaps of fun in next week's issue of the "Greyfriars Herald": "Linesman," as usual, will be answering more readers' footer queries; while I shall be in the chair again to give you any help and advice that I can.

Till next week, then, cheerio,
YOUR EDITOR.

Harry Wharton & Co. wondered what was up.

So did all Greyfriars.

The fellows were in a buzz when they went in for third School. In the Fifth Coker was given leave from class; he was going to the station with Aunt Judy. In the Remove, Edgar Caffyn sat like one stunned. Something had gone wrong—he did not yet know what. But something had! That was only too clear!

After third school all Greyfriars knew. Masters and prefects were inquiring up and down and round about for the trickster on the telephone. Coker of the Fifth was telling the world in the most powerful voice at Greyfriars. So everybody knew what had happened.

Billy Bunter looked pallid that day! This was the awful outcome of that lark. Caffyn, in terror of the fat Owl letting something out, was in a state of quaking dread. Bob Cherry was glad from the bottom of his heart, of that rash challenge in the Rag, which had led to Coker playing football for the Remove. For that, and that alone, had defeated a cunning and unscrupulous schemer. Had not Coker written home about that match—

Luckily, he had!

Masters and prefects failed to find the offender. But there were plenty of fellows in the Remove who knew rather more than masters and prefects, in this matter. They thought of the Remove ventriloquist and they thought of him at once, when they heard that a voice had been so successfully imitated as to deceive someone who knew it well.

And after class Billy Bunter was arraigned in the Rag.

Bunter's defence was a little complicated. It came chiefly under three heads. In the first place, he hadn't done it! In the second place, it was only a lark! In the third place, it was all Caffyn's doing!

Which was enough for the Remove.

Whether the Head would have found Caffyn guilty, on the unsupported evidence of such a witness as Bunter, might have been doubtful. But the Removites had no doubts! They knew. Bunter was kicked round the Rag. Caffyn fared worse. The ragging that was bestowed on the Snipe was a record in the Greyfriars Remove, which had known a few tremendous raggings. If ever a rascal repented of his rascality the Snipe did when the wrathful Removites had finished with him.

On Saturday, Coker, finding that he was still unaccountably left out of Fifth Form footer, condescended to offer his services to the Remove again. The offer, condescending as it was, was declined, without thanks. There was no further demand for the inestimable services of the Remove's Remarkable Recruit.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next ripping yarn in this exciting series. It is entitled: "THE UNSEEN WITNESS!" and is calculated to hold your interest from the very first line to the last. See that you order your copy EARLY!)



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Nursing a feeling that little has been done for him since the War, Ulverst, the greatest U-Boat commander Germany ever had, decides to wage war against the world. In consequence of this, he seeks out his old chief petty-officer, Wesel, and asks him to turn pirate. Down on his luck, Wesel readily agrees, finding satisfaction in the knowledge that whatever comes his way will be faced in company with the man who has been his leader in many a perilous adventure on the high seas. Little knowing what lies ahead, and promising to refrain from questioning, Wesel boards a private twin-engine amphibian monoplane, piloted by Ulverst. Roaring out over the grey waters of the North Sea, Ulverst makes one halt to refuel his engines from an oil tanker, and then continues his journey until he reaches a Neon Beacon shining above some cliffs rising sheer and stark from the shrouded waters below.

(Now Read On.)

The Designer!

BANKING steeply, Ulverst came about, and, closing down the throttle, pushed forward his control-stick.

Down and down through the fog dropped the monoplane, engines ticking quietly over. Then came a faint jar as the floats touched the water, and a burst of the throttle took the machine surging in towards the foot of the towering cliffs, on the heights of which the Neon beacon still shone golden through the murk.

Rising stiffly in his seat, Ulverst pulled off his flying gloves and turned to Wesel.

"Well, a safe landing, after all, my friend!" he cried triumphantly.

Wesel also rose. Through the cabin windows he could see that they had brought up alongside a smooth, flat jetty of rock, which was crowded with men, strange, phantom figures in the fog.

"Yes, but just, where have we landed?" he demanded, his eyes on Ulverst.

The latter laughed.

"You ask where?" he responded. "Well, I will tell you, for now you have the right to know. This is Ice Rock—the lair of the Sea Spider!"

Wesel stared.

"The Sea Spider?" he repeated blankly.

Stepping forward, Ulverst clapped him on the shoulder.

"You do not understand—eh?" he cried. "Then come, and I will show you. You shall learn my secret, Wesel. And that without a moment's delay. You shall see with your own eyes the strangest craft which ever moved beneath the seas—and the most deadly!"

Turning away, Ulverst opened the cabin door, and, followed by Wesel, swung himself down on to the jetty amongst the heavily muffled men who were already mooring the machine.

Returning their salutations with a brief word and quick nod, he took

Wesel by the arm, and, hurrying him along the jetty, led him up a winding path, hewn, it seemed, out of the very face of the cliff.

The path terminated suddenly in a flat plateau of rock, and, turning sharp right, Ulverst led the way into a small cave, dimly illumined by a hanging electric bulb.

"Follow me!" he rapped, releasing Wesel's arm, and striding forward towards a hole in the floor, down into the depths of which ran an iron ladder.

Swinging himself on to the rungs of the ladder, he commenced to descend. Wesel hesitated a moment; then, with face set, grimly followed.

Down the wet and slippery rungs he went in the wake of Ulverst, descending towards a patch of brilliant light below.

At the foot of the ladder, where Ulverst was waiting, Wesel stepped into a huge and brilliantly lighted subterranean cave, awash to the knees in icy cold water.

"Look!" breathed Ulverst.

Wesel turned, and as he did so his heart missed a beat. For, crouching there in the cave, its smooth and gigantic legs tucked hideously about it, and its mighty glistening bulk extending from wall to wall and lost in the shadows of the rocky ceiling, was an enormous and terrifying sea-beast shaped like some nightmarish spider.

"Ulverst—what is it?" Hoarsely the words came from Wesel's lips.

"It is a creature designed and created by the brains of myself and another," replied Ulverst softly. "It is constructed of steel. It can walk the ocean floor and move in the deepest depths. It can drag down shipping to devour at its leisure. It can make we who own it masters of the seas!"

Wesel stared, conscious of a strange fear at his heart.

"But I do not understand!" he cried hoarsely.

"Do you not?" laughed Ulverst.

"Yet I have just explained."

"But you say it can walk—can drag down shipping—"

"So it can." Ulverst's voice was

harsh and metallic. "I have claimed nothing for it which it cannot do. It is the nearest approach to a living creature ever yet made by man!"

"To a living devil, you mean!" shuddered Wesel, gazing fascinatedly at the great, glistening bulk, and the baleful, glaring eyes of the huge steel monster.

"Ay, devil, if you like!" assented Ulverst. "The only thing she lacks, Wesel, is a soul. And yet"—a strange note crept into his suddenly lowered voice, and his fingers gripped cruelly on Wesel's arm—"there are times when I think that as we fashioned her, rivet by rivet, and plate by plate, there came to her a soul. Wesel, would you call me madman if I say she lives?"

Roughly Wesel wrenched his arm away.

"Ay, that I would!" he cried fiercely. "No man-made thing of steel can ever live! Why do you talk so? Why do you say such things?"

He broke off, averting his head from the squatting monster.

"She is vile—horrible!" he choked. "You should not have shown her to me! I was not prepared! Get me out of here!"

Ulverst stared, then clapped Wesel on the shoulder.

"Why, what is this?" he cried. "Not nerves, old friend?"

With hand thrust forward, Wesel looked at him.

"Ulverst," he said, his voice low and vibrant, "that thing which you have made will be our tomb!"

With an oath Ulverst had him again by the arm.

"Pull yourself together, you fool!" he grated. "What have you become—what have the years done to you that you should talk like an hysterical woman? Get a grip on yourself, man!"

Wearily Wesel passed a shaking hand across his brow; then as Ulverst released him, he grasped the rungs of the iron ladder, and commenced laboriously to ascend.

Following close in his wake, Ulverst

joined him in the small and dimly illuminated cave above.

"You will forgive me, Ulverst," said Wesel dully, "but it was the sight of the thing crouching there which shook me. Ach Himmel! How life-like she looks!"

"Yes, life-like," responded Ulverst, slipping his leather-clad arm through Wesel's, and moving with him towards the cave entrance. "But neither horrible nor vile. She is wonderful—so tractable, so docile. Ah, Wesel, you will come to love her better even than you loved the U-boats!"

"No, never!" said Wesel resolutely. "For the U-boat was an honest craft, fighting in its country's cause. But that—that thing in the cave down there is a beast!"

Ulverst laughed softly. "Yes; a sea beast," he responded. Then, with sudden change of tone, he added: "But come! Let us talk no more of her just now. You are unstrung. It was wrong of me, maybe, to take you down so soon. But I was anxious for you to see her."

Wesel made no reply, and together, treading anxiously because of the fog, he and Ulverst took the downward, winding path which led towards the jetty.

At the foot of the path Ulverst turned sharp left into the impenetrable murk of a narrow, fog-filled gully, and halted in front of a great iron door let into the solid rock.

He fumbled for a moment or two, and then swung open a small wicket door, framed in the large one, and, followed by Wesel, stepped into a large and brilliantly lighted cave.

The place, heated by great, glowing stoves ranged round the vast glistening walls, was reeking with the mingled fumes of liquor and tobacco, and the stench of crowded humanity.

At a trestle-table, which ran across the whole length of the cave, jerscyed and reefer-jacketed men were sprawled, eating, drinking, and smoking, whilst others were seated round the stoves.

At sight of Ulverst a sudden silence fell on the babble of tongues, and many a curious glance followed him and his companion as he strode the length of the cave, and, with Wesel, passed through a heavy curtain at the far end.

As the curtain dropped back into place behind them, Wesel found himself in a narrow and dimly illuminated corridor of solid rock, on either side of which were curtained entrances of small caves.

"These are the private quarters of myself and my officers," said Ulverst, leading the way along the corridor. "The whole island is honeycombed with caves, some of which we use as store-houses for food and ammunition, and others as workshops. One we use as a powerhouse to supply our lighting and to feed the motors of our workshops."

Pausing, Ulverst pulled aside the curtain which shrouded the entrance to a small cave, and, after ushering Wesel across the threshold, stepped in after him.

The cave in which Wesel now found himself was illumined by an electric bulb suspended from the ceiling. The cave was sparsely furnished with a table, a chair, a camp-bed, and, against one wall, a roughly fashioned bookcase.

Seated at the table, poring over a heavy tome open in front of him was a tall, thin elderly man clad in a

loosely fitting and untidy lounge suit, and wearing a black skull cap, from beneath which straggled thin, grey wisps of hair.

At the entry of Ulverst and Wesel he raised his head, disclosing a sharply featured face, wrinkled and strangely bloodless.

It was the eyes of the man which held Wesel—little deep-set eyes they were, with a strange glitter in their depths. Such eyes, indeed, as might have belonged to some hungry bird of prey. In fact, as the man rose from his chair and leaned forward across the table with outstretched hand, there was a vulturous look about the scragginess of him which was accentuated by his great hooked nose.

"So you are here, Ulverst," he said. "They told me you had landed."

"Yes; I have returned, professor," said Ulverst, taking the other's hand in brief, firm clasp. "And I have brought with me an old shipmate."

He turned to Wesel. "Wesel," he said, "I want you to meet Professor Dubowsky. Dubowsky, this is Kaspar Wesel of whom you have heard me speak. He was my chief petty-officer aboard U 500."

"Wesel of the U-boats—eh?" cackled Dubowsky. "Yes, often have I heard Ulverst speak of you. Well, my man, we have a far finer craft here at Ice Rock than any U-boat."

Wesel shrugged his shoulders.

"I have seen it," he said stolidly.

"What!" shrilled Dubowsky. "You have seen her—you have seen my Sea Spider? Ulverst has lost no time. And what do you think of her? Don't stand staring, man! Tell me what you think of her? Is she not wonderful? Is she not magnificent?"

"Yes—yes; she is all that and more!" cut in Ulverst impatiently. "Wesel is enraptured with her!"

He turned again to Wesel. "It was Dubowsky who first conceived the idea of the Sea Spider and designed her," he said. "During the War he was the greatest of all authorities of U-boat construction."

"Yes; and was given a beggarly decoration for my services!" cackled Dubowsky. "But I never designed anything to equal the Sea Spider. It is the child of my brain, and, aided by the practical experience of Ulverst, I have brought it to perfection."

Ulverst flung his flying-gloves and helmet on to the table.

"Well, we are hungry, and we are tired, Dubowsky," he said; "for we have had a long flight. And as there is much which you and I have to discuss, we will eat here."

"Yes, certainly," assented Dubowsky readily.

Crossing to the wall he pulled a cord, which obviously connected with some distant bell, for a few moments later a dark-uniformed orderly pulled aside the curtain and entered the cave.

"Serve supper for two in here," said Ulverst. "And see that quarters are prepared for Herr Wesel."

"Very good, sir!" responded the orderly, and then withdrew.

The quality of the ensuing meal astonished Wesel, for it was a supper which would not have disgraced the menu of any of Berlin's most ultra-exclusive restaurants.

During the progress of the meal Ulverst talked to Dubowsky with a freedom which showed how completely he had decided to take the listening Wesel into his confidence.

He and Dubowsky talked of many things. Dubowsky telling of what had happened on the island during Ulverst's absence, and of necessary work which had been carried out aboard the Sea Spider.

"The Spider is ready for sea, you say?" questioned Ulverst, at length.

"Yes; she is quite ready," answered Dubowsky.

"That is good," said Ulverst; "for we sail the day after to-morrow."

Dubowsky leaned forward in his chair, his thin lips twitching into an anticipatory smile, his deep-set eyes glittering.

"The day after to-morrow—eh?" he repeated. "And where do we sail?"

"Southwards."

"Yes—yes; I know it must be southwards!" snapped Dubowski. "But where?"

"Towards the great sea lanes of the North Atlantic," he answered.

"Oh, how you aggravate me!" shrilled Dubowsky passionately, and Wesel sat amazed at the childish petulance of the outburst. "Why do you not tell me what is in your mind? You do not treat your officers so. You do not hide things from them. Why do you hide things from me?" He beat clenched fists upon the table. "Tell me—tell me—where do we sail?"

Pushing back his chair, Ulverst rose. "We sail to sink the Minneapolis!" he said harshly.

Dubowsky stared.

"The Minneapolis?" he repeated.

"What ship is that?"

"She is a thirty-five thousand tons vessel of the American Green Star Line," replied Ulverst. "She is bound for Cherbourg from New York with five hundred thousand pounds' worth of bullion aboard."

With a cackle of laughter, Dubowsky rubbed his bony hands.

"What a toy it is which I have made for you, Ulverst!" he cried. "For there is no vessel which sails the seas which is not at your mercy. Five hundred thousand pounds of bullion—eh? That will be rich pickings indeed for you. And I? I shall get my reward in seeing my Spider function."

With hands resting on the table, Ulverst looked down at him steadily.

"You are certain that she will function successfully?" he asked quietly. "Remember, this is a thirty-five thousand tons vessel with which we are going to ask her to deal."

Dubowsky leapt to his feet, eyes blazing and face livid.

"How dare you question her like that!" he screamed. "How dare you doubt her! You know she will do anything—everything—she is asked. There is no craft sailing the seas which she cannot destroy. She is invincible—omnipotent—"

"Steady, man—steady!" Ulverst had him by the arm, and his voice was harsh and grating. "Pull yourself together, Dubowsky!"

He shook him as though one might shake a child, and slowly the fury passed from Dubowsky's face, leaving it deathly in its pallor.

"I—I am sorry, Ulverst," he mumbled. "But you should not vex me so. You should not doubt my Spider."

With a gesture which was almost affectionate Ulverst slipped his arm round the other's thin, bent shoulders.

"Never think that I doubt her, Dubowsky," he said quietly. "But on this cruise we are going to ask her to

perform something the very thought of which might well appal the mind. Yet I know she will not fail. There, sit down, old friend!"

Trembling, Dubowsky sank back into his chair, and, his face ashen, sat staring at the floor.

Ulverst turned to Wesel. "Come," he said quietly, "and I will show you your quarters."

When the two had passed beyond the curtain into the dimly illumined corridor beyond, Ulverst gave a significant backward jerk of his head.

"Well?" he said questioningly.

"Mad?" grunted Wesel.

Ulverst, commencing to lead the way along the corridor, nodded.

"Yes, Dubowsky is mad," he said. "But no greater marine engineering genius has ever lived."

He glanced over his shoulder, back along the deserted corridor, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as his fingers closed on Wesel's arm.

"Not yet," he said, "am I as conversant with all the secrets of the Spider as I could wish. But when I am, then you and I will get rid of the doddering old fool!"

Wesel halted, staring. "You mean?" he demanded.

Ulverst eyed him steadily. "What is it you think I mean?" he asked.

"I think," replied Wesel slowly, and never for an instant did his gaze leave that of Ulverst, "that you mean murder!"

Ulverst laughed softly. "Always were you so blunt, my Wesel," he murmured. "Murder is an unpleasant word. Say, rather, an accident will happen."

Wesel squared his shoulders, and, rigid and erect, he stood facing Ulverst, as often in the past he had faced him aboard U 500.

"I will be no party to work such as that," he said resolutely. "Dubowsky, mad though he may be, is a shipmate of ours."

Ulverst laughed and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Honest Wesel, moralist—and pirate?" he cried. "However, we will talk no more of Dubowsky just now. These are your quarters."

He ushered Wesel through a curtained entrance into a small cave, which—like Dubowsky's—was sparsely furnished with a table, chair, and camp-bed.

"Good-night, then, Wesel!" he said, holding out his hand. "Sleep well, for we will have little time for slumber soon!"

Sleep was long in coming to Wesel that night, however. In bewildering panorama the events of the past twenty-four hours passed before him as he lay staring up into the darkness.

The meeting with Ulverst; the long flight northwards to these Arctic seas; and then the Spider in all its horrible, menacing sleekness; and, lastly, the meeting with its mad designer, and Ulverst's talk of murder.

Murder!

Wesel laughed grim inward laughter. Who was he to cavil at murder now that he had committed himself to a life of piracy?

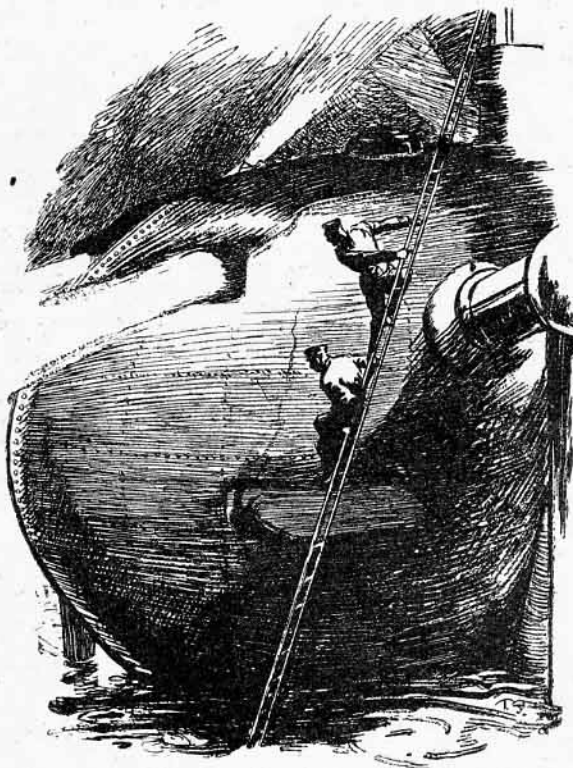
Even yet he did not know just how that piracy was to be carried out. But he and his comrades, under the command of Ulverst, would attack from the under seas. That much was very evident.

The under seas!

Wesel stirred restlessly. What a world of romance and great adventure was conjured up by those words; what a world of tragedy and lost hopes!

As Wesel lay there in the darkness there came to him again the distant boom of thundering surf and flying spume, the gentle murmur of the sea against lonely and rock-bound coasts, and then the peace and tranquillity of the silent depths.

Thus came sleep—troubled and uneasy slumber, peopled by ghosts from out the past, and dominated by that awful sea beast of the present—the Spider!



By means of the long iron ladder Ulverst and Wesel descended to the vast cave below, which was the lair of the Sea Spider!

Inside the Spider!

WESSEL was astir early the following morning; and, on rising, he found that a complete outfit of suitable wearing apparel had been laid out for him.

There was thick, warm underclothing, woollen waistcoats and jerseys, woollen helmets, leather jackets, sea-boots, and two high-necked and gold-braided uniforms of dark blue serge, together with a leather belt, complete with loaded revolver and holster.

With a speculative and appreciative eye Wesel examined this wardrobe. His vague fears and uneasiness of the night before had passed, and he thrilled at the thought of the action which the providing of this outfit heralded.

After shaving, he commenced to dress; and whilst he was thus engaged Ulverst entered the quarters.

"Good-morning, Wesel!" greeted

Ulverst smilingly. "You have everything you require?"

"More than I require, I thank you!" responded Wesel, with heavy jocular. "Never before have I been so well set up with clothing!"

He touched the gold braid on the tunic of the uniform.

"But what does that signify?" he inquired.

"That you are my second in command," replied Ulverst.

Wesel stared.

Up till now it had scarcely ever occurred to him to ask in what capacity he was to sail under Ulverst. When it had occurred to him he had left the question unasked, assuming that he would be sailing under his old rank of petty-officer.

"Do you say," he asked, in slow incredulity, "that I sail as your second in command?"

"Yes," assented Ulverst. Then added quietly: "And I could wish for no finer officer or greater seaman!" Then, noting Wesel's clumsy embarrassment, he went on quickly: "But come! If you are ready, we will breakfast in the ward-room."

The ward-room, Wesel found, was a cave a few yards along the corridor. The furnishings of it were starkly simple, consisting of a trestle table covered with snowy linen, stiff-backed chairs, and a crude bench, which obviously served as a sideboard. The heating of the place was supplied by a stove which glowed red against one wall.

Here, Wesel was introduced to his brother-officers.

Appraisingly, and with direct stare, he took stock of each man as he shook hands with him.

There was First Watch-keeping Officer Branden, stocky of build and rasping of speech; Second Watch-keeping Officer Falze, slim, fair-haired, and wiry; Torpedo-Officer Zutloss, tall, swarthy, and very elegant in his tight-fitting, high-necked blue uniform; Senior Engineer Rahl, well-built and muscular; Second Engineer Stuxberg, youngish, yet seemingly capable enough; and, lastly, the civilian-clad Staff-Surgeon Valendorf, tall, thin, well-groomed, and ascetic of feature.

A goodish lot, thought Wesel, sound and reliable.

As he took covert stock of them again whilst getting on with his breakfast, he marvelled anew that Ulverst should have made him, the unfutured son of a Friesian fisherman, his second in command.

Wesel, stolid and practical, had never been one to indulge in self-analysis. But he did so now, and, being no fool, he saw some faint glimmer of himself as seen through Ulverst's eyes.

Not once aboard the U-boats, in those days when he had known Ulverst as Von Ulm, had he ever failed in his duty, had he ever failed his commander. Always his confidence in himself had been supreme; and the only love that had ever entered his life was love of the sea.

Well, no matter what the future held, no matter what it should be necessary

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for him and these new comrades of his to put their hands to, he would serve Ulverst as faithfully, as loyally, and as well as he had served him in those grey days of War.

Breakfast over, he accompanied Ulverst from the ward-room, and together they passed through the main cave, deserted now save for a few heavily muffled men lounging by the glowing stoves, and passed out into the bitter cold and murk of the Arctic morning.

"I am going to show you over the Spider," said Ulverst.

Together they took the winding, upward path, and came to the small cave which, by means of the long, iron ladder, gave access to the vast cave below, which was the lair of the Spider.

Swinging himself on to the icy-cold rungs, Ulverst quickly descended, followed by Wesel.

Prepared though he now was, Wesel felt a quickening of the pulse as, standing once again in the vast and brilliantly illuminated cave, which was awash knee-high in water, he looked at the great, glistening monster of steel, squatting there with its gigantic legs tucked in about it, and glaring with uninking and baleful eyes.

Wading in the wake of Ulverst, Wesel followed the latter up a curved iron ladder, which terminated on top of the rounded back of the Spider, far up in the shadows.

Here, a great steel hatch lay open, and Wesel followed Ulverst down through it into the control-room, which reeked of oil, grease, and machinery.

"Unlike the U-boats," said Ulverst, as Wesel stood gazing about him at the seemingly endless tangle of pipe-lines, voice-lines, pumps, compasses, gauges, and wheels, "the control-room in this craft is for ard."

He moved forward to two circular windows backed by powerful search-lights.

"These," he said, "are our eyes, for look-out purposes when cruising beneath the surface or walking on the ocean floor."

"What pressure will the glass of those windows stand?" inquired Wesel dubiously.

"Almost as much as will our twelve-inch outer hull of hardened and reinforced steel," replied Ulverst, "and that is, as yet, incalculable. The glass of those windows is a lead potash silicate compounded with quartz and calcium and made under terrific pressure."

He moved on.

"These," he said, halting on the starboard side of the control-room, "are the starboard inspection ports for the ballast tanks which are built in between our inner and outer hull as in the U-boats. Unlike the U-boats, we have centralised and super-rapid-venting gear for the synchronised and simultaneous flooding of all tanks. As you will readily understand, that means we can, when cruising on the surface,

carry out an emergency dive within a few seconds."

Wesel nodded appreciatively. "Over there," went on Ulverst, "are our hydroplane motors. They have an emergency control by the periscope handle."

"A good idea, that!" grunted Wesel. "The main engine-room is here, just aft of the control-room," continued Ulverst, leading the way through a bulkhead door into a low-ceilinged engine-room. "These engines," he indicated gleaming cylinders, cranks, pistons, shafts, and gauges, "drive the eccentric gear which controls the legs, or tentacles, of the Spider. They give us a crawling speed on the ocean floor of five knots, rising to seven knots under full pressure."

He pointed to great, gleaming pumps bolted to heavy bedplates to port and starboard of the engines.

"Those are suction pumps," he said. "I will explain their use in a moment. Let us go up here!"

Ulverst led the way up a short iron ladder into a torpedo-room situated above the engine-room with a vertical torpedo tube in the centre of its steel floor.

"This tube," explained Ulverst, "is our most effective method of attack. Cruising at five fathoms, directly beneath the hull of a liner and holding speed with her, we fire a short-length, high-explosive torpedo upwards, shattering the keel plates of the vessel. Then we rise and fasten our steel tentacles on to the bottom of her hull, the tentacles holding their grip by means of the suction pumps which you saw in the engine-room below."

"But why hold the vessel?" demanded Wesel.

Ulverst laughed.

"Quixotic though it may appear of me," he replied, "particularly after what I said about Dubowsky last night, it is no part of my policy to take unnecessary life. By holding a stricken vessel we can sufficiently retard her sinking to allow her passengers and crew time in which to clear in their boats. When the vessel is finally submerging we release our hold on her and, slipping away from beneath her keel, wait until she has settled on the ocean bed, where we loot her at our leisure."

"Loot her on the ocean bed?" repeated Wesel, staring. "How?"

"By divers, whom we carry," explained Ulverst. "These men make their exit from the Spider via diving chambers situated on the port and starboard sides of the Diesel engine-room." Ulverst pointed to a bulkhead door situated in the afterpart of the torpedo-room.

"In there," he said, "we carry two four-inch guns which can be raised by hydraulic pressure above the deck, should it ever be necessary for us to defend ourselves whilst cruising on the surface. That, I think, is all you need

know at the moment about this part of the Spider."

Descending the iron ladder into the main engine-room, Ulverst led the way through a bulkhead door into the ward-room, then passed on through the seamen's mess into the Diesel engine-room, where dungaree-clad mechanics were working busily on the oil-spattered machinery.

"These Diesel engines," said Ulverst, "develop five thousand horse-power and give us a cruising speed on the surface of twenty-seven knots, rising to thirty-five knots under full pressure. Aft of this engine-room are the electric motors. They give us a cruising speed when submerged, of ten knots, rising to fifteen knots when running at full revolutions."

"That is a good cruising speed!" exclaimed Wesel.

"But that is on her electric motors alone," smiled Ulverst. "We carry compressed air-tubes, tested to a pressure of two hundred atmospheres. By means of these tubes, we can feed air to our Diesel engines and use them when we are submerged. Our submerged cruising speed when using the Diesels is from twenty to twenty-five knots!"

Wesel stared, astounded.

"In the stern of the Spider," went on Ulverst, indicating the aftermost bulkhead door, "is a torpedo-room from which torpedoes can be launched when we are submerged. And that, I think, is all. You have seen the Sea Spider from stem to stern, Wesel, and do you wonder now why Dubowsky and I are so proud of her?"

"Indeed, I do not!" cried Wesel. "She is wonderful!"

"Yes, and even more wonderful, perhaps, than you think," replied Ulverst. "Do you know, with those tentacles of hers she can drag down into the depths, without first hoing her, any vessel up to approximately six thousand tons burden?"

"But where, and how, did you build her?" exclaimed Wesel.

"I will tell you," replied Ulverst. "She was built in separate parts by various Continental engineering firms. Each firm worked strictly to specification and knew nothing of what they were building beyond the fact that they were constructing a certain piece of machinery for private experimental work by a syndicate, of whom I, in some quarters, and Dubowsky in others, professed to be the head. After lunch I will show you our workshops. Like every other beast which is subjected by man to his use, she must be looked after and tended well—this Sea Spider of ours!"

(Boys, whatever you do, don't fail to read the next gripping chapters of this modern pirate story which will appear in next Saturday's MAGNET. You'll vote 'em great!)



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