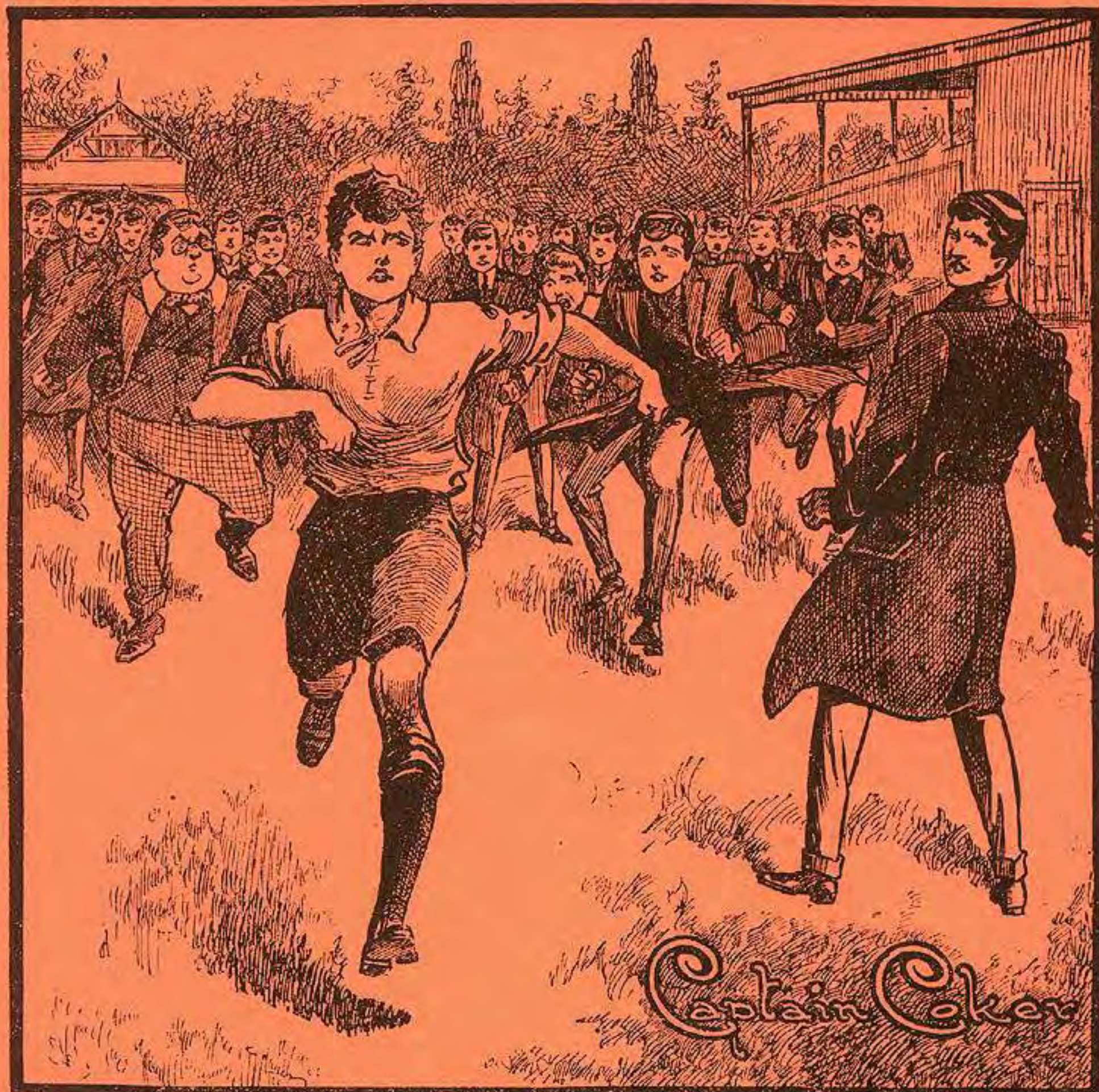


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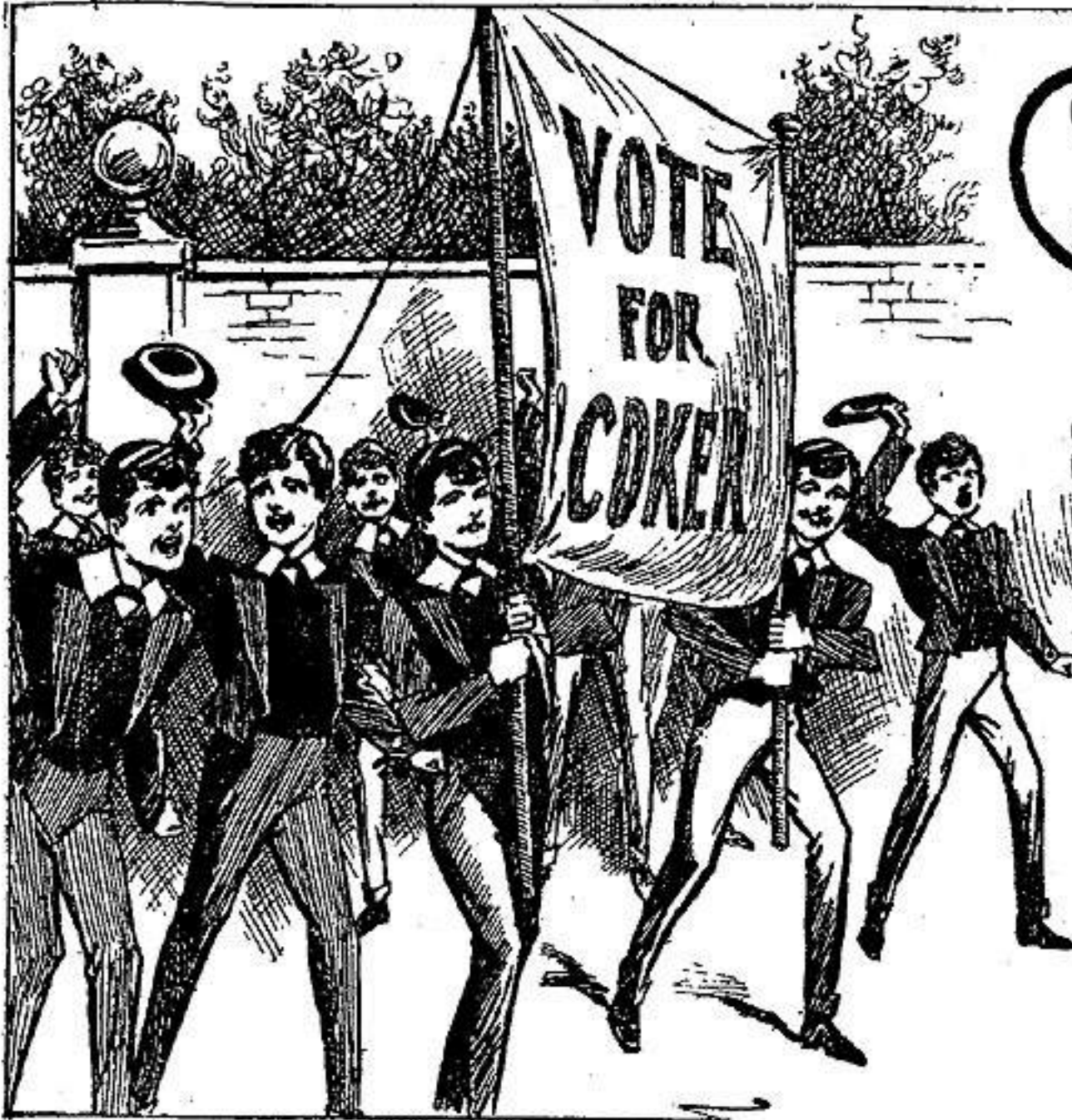
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Captain Coker!

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By
Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Why Not Coker?

"WHY not?" Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, at Greyfriars, asked that question quite suddenly. Coker was in his study, with his chums Potter and Greene of the Fifth. They were having tea; at all events, Potter and Greene were having tea. Coker had been for some time plunged in deep meditation—a very unusual thing for Coker—and he was neglected the spread; a still more unusual thing. He came out of his reverie with a jump, as it were, and propounded his question so suddenly that Potter and Greene jumped too. "Why not?" "Eh?" said Potter. "What?" said Greene. Coker looked at him fixedly across the tea-table. "Why not?" he repeated. "Blessed if I know!" said Potter, helping himself to shrimps. "I don't know what you're talking about! But why not? Certainly, if you like. Why don't you try the shrimps? I can tell you they're prime."

"Ripping!" said Greene. "Try 'em, Coker." "Why not?" repeated Coker. "No reason why not, especially as they're your shrimps," said Potter. "I wasn't talking about shrimps," said Coker disdainfully. "I've been thinking—" "You shouldn't start these things at tea-time," said Potter, with a shake of the head. "You are letting your tea get cold." "Blow the tea!" "Well, that would only make it colder," said Potter innocently. Coker grunted. "Look here, you chaps, I've got an idea—a really, ripping, stunning idea, and you fellows have got to back me up. You know how matters stand now at Greyfriars—there isn't a captain of the school, and the election for a new skipper comes off to-morrow." "Yes, we know that," said Potter. "Pass the ham-sandwiches, Greene." "Wingate's resigned from the captaincy, under pressure from the Head," continued Coker. "I was rather sorry for Wingate, but as the Head found him fighting with a giddy

perfect in the open quad., there was nothing else for it. He's resigned, and he's not standing for re-election."

"Ancient history," said Greene. "Pass the teapot, if you're done with it."

Coker passed the teapot absently, allowing a stream of tea to escape from the spout into Potter's plate. It was evident that Horace Coker was very much taken up with his new ripping and stunning idea, whatever it was, and had no attention to bestow upon trifles. But Potter had, and Potter gave a yell.

"Look out, you ass, you're swamping my sandwiches!"

"Sorry!" said Coker. "Never mind—"

"Never mind?" said Potter sulphurously. "They're the last of the sandwiches, you fathead!"

"Well, never mind—"

"You—you ass!"

"Loder, the prefect, has put up for captain," resumed Coker. "Most of the fellows expected that Wingate's chum, Courtney of the Sixth, would put up—but he hasn't. So far, Loder is the only giddy candidate."

"Blow Loder!" said Potter, pitching his drenched sandwiches into the fire, and looking round the table for fresh provender.

"Certainly, blow Loder!" said Coker. "I think you'll agree with me that Loder isn't the right chap to be skipper of a school like Greyfriars. He isn't exactly what you'd call one of the best."

"No fear!" said Greene. "He keeps the juniors in their places, and is very much down on the Remove; but I don't know any other qualities he's got."

"He's not the chap we want as captain," said Coker positively.

"We're going to have him, whether we want him or not," said Potter, starting on the jam-tarts. "Nobody else in the Sixth has a chance against him, excepting Courtney; and Courtney won't stand."

"Nobody else in the Sixth," repeated Coker. "Quite so. It looks like being a walk-over for Loder at present."

"It will be a walk-over."

"Perhaps not. Look here!" said Coker impressively. "The captain of Greyfriars has always been one of the Sixth, from time immemorial. But I don't see why there shouldn't be a change. Why shouldn't there be a candidate from the Fifth?"

Greene stared, and Potter whistled.

"The fifth!" said Potter. "My hat! The captain has always been a Sixth-Former. That's like the giddy laws of the Medes and Persians."

"But it's only a custom, not a law," argued Coker. "My idea is, that it's time there was a change. A Fifth-Former could run the show quite as well, and in fact better. Why not?"

"Why not?" chuckled Potter. "Only it couldn't be did. The Sixth would be against it to a man."

"Let 'em!" said Coker. "Let 'em rip! Who cares for the Sixth?"

"Eh?"

"In the captain's election every vote counts. Well, the Sixth are the fewest in number of any Form in the school, naturally; and a fag's vote is as good as a prefect's vote. In an election of this kind, the Sixth ain't of so much importance as the Second Form."

"Well, that's so, in a way, too."

"Let the Sixth go and chop chips!" said Coker. "If a Fifth Form candidate could get the votes he becomes skipper, and—and there you are!"

"If?" murmured Greene.

"You're thinking of Blundell, our Form captain, I suppose?" said Potter thoughtfully. "Well, I don't deny that Blundell might make a good captain of the school. He's some sort of an ass, but he's a good chap and a good footballer."

Coker snorted.

"I wasn't thinking of Blundell."

"Who, then? Bland?"

"Certainly not! He wouldn't be any good."

"Fitzgerald, then?" said Potter, who either could not or would not understand. "Well, Fitz is a good sort, but—"

"Blow Fitz! Why shouldn't a chap out of this study stand?" demanded Coker warmly.

"This study! Oh!"

"Why not?"

"I'm sure you're very kind, Coker," said Potter agreeably. "But I don't know that I'm quite up to the job."

"You! I know you're not. I wasn't thinking of you."

"Oh, old Greene, then? What do you think, Greeney?"

"Who's talking about Greene?" roared Coker.

"Why, you were," said Potter innocently.

Coker glared.

"What's the matter with me?" he demanded.

"You?"

"Yes, me!"

"Oh!" said Potter. "You're joking, of course?"

"I'm not joking!" said Coker ferociously. "Why shouldn't I make as good as captain of the school as any other chap, eh?"

"Ahem!"

"Well, what do you think?" demanded Coker.

"Ahem! This—this is so sudden, you know," muttered Potter.

"What do you think, Greene?"

"I think these tarts are ripping!"

"About my being captain, I mean, you duffer?" roared Coker.

"Oh, about that?" said Greene.

"Yes, about that, fathead!"

"Well, I—I think—"

"Well?"

"Ahem! If you can get the votes, it—it's all right," said Greene. "But—but I rather think you won't get 'em, Coker, old man!"

"I suppose you two fellows are going to vote for me?" demanded Coker.

Potter and Greene exchanged doubtful glances.

"I—I suppose so," said Potter slowly.

"Ye-e-es," said Greene. "But two votes won't get you in, you know."

Horace Coker grunted.

"If I'm elected, I shall stand a first-class feed to all my voters," he said. "I'm going to write to my Aunt Judith for an extra big tip for the occasion. She would be very pleased to see me captain of the school. Of course, I'm quite up to the position. What is wanted is a good footballer, a good cricketer, a good all-round athlete, and a fellow with some tact and common-sense."

"Ah! But where are you going to find him?" said Potter, with a shake of the head.

"Here, you silly ass!" roared Coker.

"Oh!" said Potter. "I see! Right!"

"The fellows ought to jump at the chance," said Coker, frowning. "Lots of the juniors will vote for me, simply as a whack at Loder. You fellows will talk the Fifth round, and make them rally round me."

"Oh!" said Potter.

"I shall expect you to do a lot of canvassing and electioneering," said Coker. "This is a time for a chap's friends to stand by him. I'm not going to put up for captain out of personal conceit."

"No?" said Potter, in surprise.

"No!" roared Coker. "I'm acting from a sense of—of duty, because I think I shall make a jolly good captain of the school—better than Loder of the Sixth, anyway."

"Oh, I see!"

"Now, are you going to back me up?"

"Oh, ye-es!" said Potter. "Pass the dough-nuts."

"I'll go and see some of the fellows about it," said Coker, rising. "There's no time to be lost, as the election's to-morrow. I think we shall put a spoke in Loder's wheel that will surprise him."

And Coker left the study. Potter and Greene looked at one another, and burst into a chuckle. The chuckle developed into a roar of laughter. They were roaring when the door reopened, and Coker glanced in. He frowned darkly, and the roar of laughter died away quite suddenly.

"Well," said Coker grimly, "what's the joke?"

"The j-j-joke?" stammered Potter, taken aback.

"Yes. What were you cackling at?"

"C-c-cackling?"

"Yes!" roared Coker. "What is it?"

"Oh, we—we were thinking what a surprise it will be for— for Loder!" explained Potter. "He will be knocked into a— a cocked hat, you know! Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker stared at them suspiciously, and went out, slamming the door. Potter and Greene chuckled again mirthfully, but this time in a more subdued manner.

M

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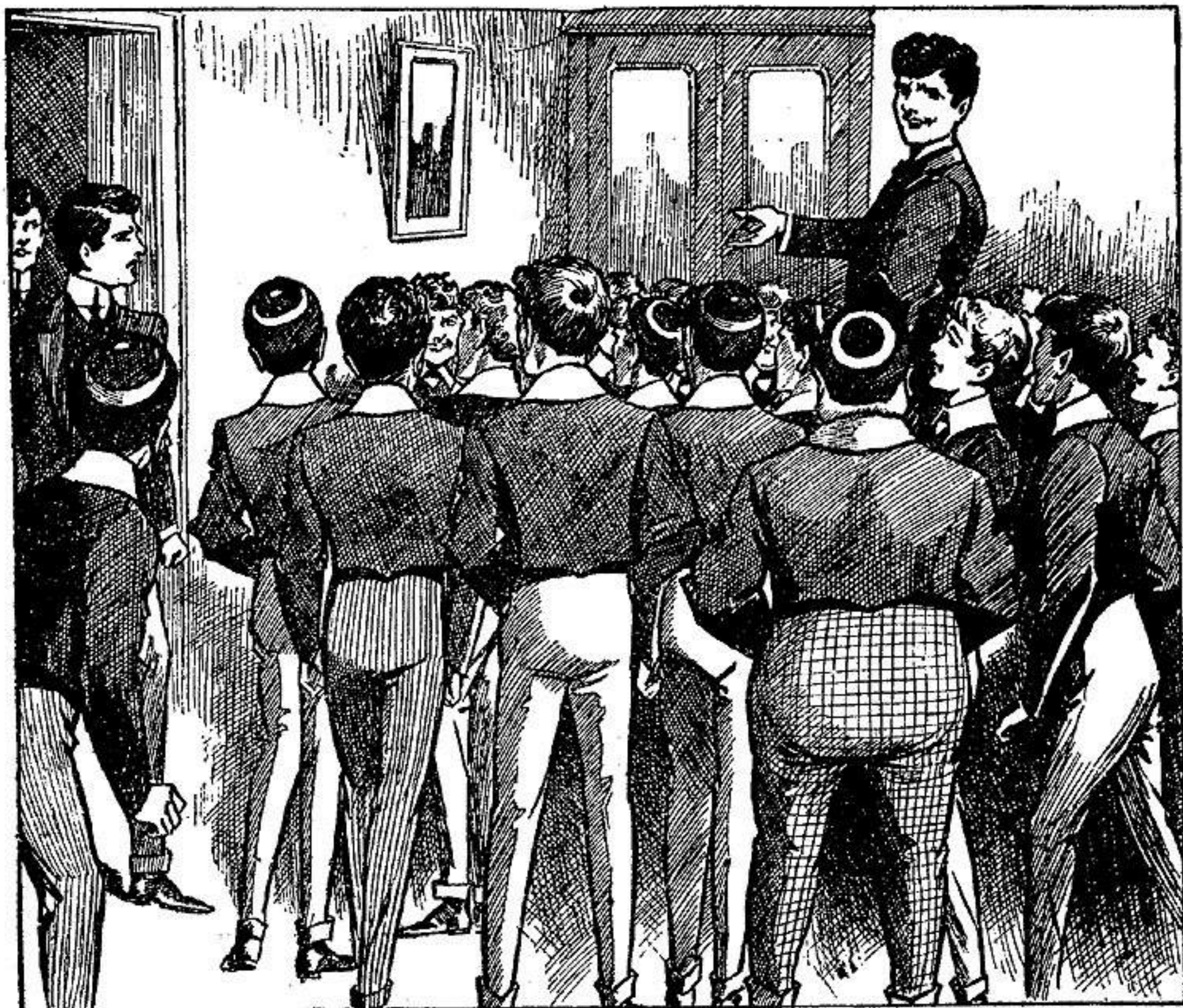
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"Now," said Coker, "Is the time to rally round the People's Candidate! I'm going to stand for—for—Tariff Trade and Free Reform——" "Ha, ha, ha!" "I mean, I'm going to stand——" The door opened, and Coker was interrupted. Loder of the Sixth strode into the study, followed by Carne. The committee all turned to look at the Sixth Former! (See Chapter 7.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton & Co. Take the Lead.

"ARE we all here?"

Harry Wharton asked the question in the junior Common-room.

Quite a crowd of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—had gathered there.

The Famous Five—Wharton and Bob Cherry, and Nugent and Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—were the leaders, as they generally were of anything that went on in the Remove Form.

But more than half the Form had gathered round them in the Common-room—Mark Linley, and Tom Brown, the New Zealander, and Bulstrode, and Russell, and Ogilvy, and Penfold, and Banthorpe, and Newland, and Morgan, and several more fellows.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, glanced over the crowd of juniors, whose deadly, earnest looks showed that something unusual was under way.

"All here, I think," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "All that matter, anyway."

"Half the giddy Form, anyway," said Frank Nugent. "Enough of us to crowd out the senior room. Lead on, Macduff!"

"March!" said Johnny Bull. And the Nabob of Bhani-pur, the dusky Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, remarked that the marchfulness would be terrific.

"Mind, you know what's on," said Harry Wharton im-

pressively. "We're going to represent the Lower School, the Remove being the most important junior Form——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Faith, and it's right ye are, Wharton darling," said Micky Desmond. "Though ye won't get the Upper Fourth and the Shell to believe it."

"Well, come on," said Wharton. "Courtney's in the prefects' room now, and we shall catch him. Follow your leader!"

"Loder may be there, too!" suggested Tom Brown.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"That doesn't matter. He can't stop us; and he can have the benefit of hearing what the Remove thinks of him!"

"Good egg!"

"March!" said the captain of the Remove.

And the Removites marched. They made their way in compact order towards the prefects' room, an apartment reserved for the use of the Sixth. Hobson and Hoskins, of the Shell, met them in the passage, and stared at them.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Hobson. "What's on?"

"Deputation of the Lower School to Courtney," explained Harry Wharton. "You can come, too, if you like, to represent the Shell."

Hobson grinned.

"Going to the prefects' room?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Loder's there?"

"Blow Loder!"

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"Well, we won't come, thanks!" grinned Hobson. "You'll go out on your necks, I expect. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go and eat coke, then."

And the Removites marched on, pushing the Shell fellows out of the way. Hobson and Hoskins sat on the linoleum when they had passed, and gasped. The Removites marched steadily on to the prefects' room, and Wharton knocked at the door, and opened it.

The prefects' room was a large apartment, with windows looking out on the Close. There were half a dozen of the Sixth there. Wingate, the late captain of Greyfriars, was seated by a window, chatting with Courtney. Loder, the prefect, was talking to Carne and Walker, his chums, and his chief backers in the contest for the captaincy of Greyfriars. Wingate and Loder were elaborately unconscious of each other's presence in the room. They were not upon speaking terms.

There was a cloud upon George Wingate's face; but Loder was looking very cheerful. The prefect was very nearly at the goal of his ambition. The contest between him and Wingate had been a bitter one. Loder had caused a split in the Sixth, and he had provoked Wingate to a personal encounter—which the Head had witnessed. For the captain of the school to be found fighting in the Close like a Third Form fag was quite beyond the "limit," and the Head had promptly suggested to Wingate the propriety of resigning. Wingate had resigned, and announced that he did not intend to stand for re-election. So far, Gerald Loder was the only candidate for the captaincy, and it looked as if it would be a walk-over for the plotting prefect. Loder regarded it in that light; and he was already, as some of the fellows remarked with disgust, putting on as much side as if he were already captain. Loder had played his cards well. He had made it appear that the fight was the fault of Wingate, and although the Head had degraded him from his post of prefect, he had reinstated him the following week. Wingate, no longer the captain of the school, was not even a prefect now. But Wingate's popularity with the Lower School, at least, was undiminished, and the juniors still persisted in treating him with the respect due to their captain.

It was upon the subject of the captaincy that Wingate and Courtney were speaking when Harry Wharton & Co. presented themselves in the prefects' room. It was Wingate's wish that his old chum should stand for election; but Courtney had steadily refused to do so. He would not take his chum's place; and, as he said bluntly, if the fellows did not like to keep a good skipper when they had one, they could go and eat coke. If they preferred Loder, let them have Loder, and be hanged. That was Courtney's reply to all the fellows who suggested that he should stand.

"It's not too late yet, Courtney, old man," Wingate was saying, in a low voice. "A candidate can come forward right up to the time of the election. I wish you'd stand."

Courtney shook his head.

"I'm not going to, Wingate. The fellows turned you out—half the Sixth and the Fifth backed up Loder in his rotten game—and the rest let 'em do it! If they want Loder, let them have him. They'll soon be sorry for their bargain."

"That's what I'm thinking of," said Wingate, with a sigh. "What will become of the School eleven with Loder as skipper?"

"Well, they're choosing him themselves."

"The team will go to rot," said Wingate. "We sha'n't have a win in footer matches for the rest of the season."

"That's their look-out! The long and the short of it is, old man, that I'm not going to take your place; and that's settled."

"Ahem!"

The two seniors looked round as they heard that respectful cough. They stared at the little army of Removites that had marched into the room, and halted by them. Loder, the prefect, glanced across at the crowd, and frowned. Loder had a way of being very much "down" on juniors generally; and he was upon the point of ordering Harry Wharton & Co. out of the room—the apartment sacred to prefects, where no member of the Lower School had a right to set his foot. But he refrained. So close upon the election, it was Loder's policy to be less offensive than usual, even to fellows he specially disliked—and there never was any love lost between Loder and the Famous Five. At the last moment some rival candidate might start up, and then every vote might tell. So Gerald Loder restrained the bullying words that rose to his tongue, and went on talking to Carne and Walker, but with one eye upon the junior deputation.

"Hallo!" said Wingate. "What do you kids want here?"

The Removites coughed a little. They did not exactly like being characterised as "kids," even by old Wingate.

"Ahem!" said Harry Wharton.

"H'm!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Have you got a cold?" asked Courtney.

"Nunno!"

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"Then what are you coughing for?"

Harry Wharton turned pink.

"Ahem!"

"I think you must have a cold," said Courtney seriously.

"Better go to the matron, and ask her to give you something for it."

"Ahem!"

"Try gargling," suggested Courtney.

Some of the Removites chuckled.

"Ahem!" said Harry Wharton. "The fact is—is—is——"

"Faith, and you'd better have it to me, Wharton darling——"

"Shut up, Desmond!"

"Sure, and I think——"

"Order!" said Bob Cherry.

"I guess——" began Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry. "This isn't a guessing competition. Pile in, Wharton!"

"Ahem!"

"Go ahead!"

Courtney pointed to the door.

"Do you kids see that doorway?" he asked.

"Ye-es."

"Well, get the other side of it, and close the door after you!"

The juniors looked at one another with rather sickly smiles. The deputation was not prospering.

"Oh, pile in, for goodness' sake, Wharton!" said several voices.

Wharton plunged into the subject.

"Look here, Courtney, we're a deputation representing the Lower School of Greyfriars; and we've come to ask you to put up for election."

And the deputation, with one voice, chimed in:

"Hear, hear!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Courtney Declines.

L ODER'S brow darkened as he heard, and he made a step towards the junior deputation. But the Removites were not looking at Loder. Their eyes were fixed anxiously upon Courtney. They waited for his answer.

"Of course, it's rotten old Wingate not being captain," Harry Wharton went on, as Courtney did not speak. "But if we can't have him, we want the second best; and that's you, Courtney!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific!"

"Thank you very much," said Courtney, with a grin.

"I am very flattered by your good opinion."

"Not at all," said Wharton. "We want you to stand for skipper. You can depend on nearly every chap in the Lower School to vote for you. We don't want Loder."

"Never!" chorussed the deputation.

"We want a decent chap," said Bob Cherry, apparently unconscious of the fact that Loder was near at hand, and could hear every word. "Loder won't fill the bill!"

"No! No!"

"Not Loder at any price!"

"We want you, Courtney!"

"Sorry!" said Courtney politely. "It's very flattering to be sought after like this, but I'm not to be had."

"Well, you see——"

"This isn't a time for false modesty, you know," urged Frank Nugent. "Greyfriars is going to the dogs. It'll be gone soon. Now's the time for a good man and true to come forward and prevent the captaincy from falling into the hands of a rank outsider!"

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"Hear, hear!"
 "Nugent!" roared Loder.
 Frank Nugent looked round, and apparently saw the angry prefect for the first time.
 "Hallo, Loder!" he said affably. "Did you speak to me?"
 "Yes, I did!" said Loder savagely. "I'll break your cheeky neck!"
 "Why, what have I done?" asked Frank innocently.
 "You know what you called me, you impudent young sweep!"
 "Oh, I didn't know you'd recognise the description so easily, you know," said Frank. "I didn't mention names."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Even the seniors grinned. Loder was red with anger. He clenched his fists as he came towards the deputation.
 "Get out of here!" he said angrily.
 "But we're talking to Courtney!"
 "Juniors are not admitted to the prefects' room. Get out!"
 "Right-ho! But wait till we've finished!"
 "Clear off, I tell you!"
 "Let them alone for a minute," broke in Wingate.
 "They're not doing any harm. Now, you kids, get done, and buzz off."
 Loder glared at the late captain of Greyfriars.
 "You mind your own business, Wingate!" he snapped.
 "You're not a prefect. I am a prefect, and I'm giving orders here, not you!"
 Wingate set his teeth.
 "You've no right in this room yourself, for that matter," pursued Loder. "This is the prefects' room, and outsiders are not admitted as a rule!"
 Wingate rose to his feet.
 Loder made a step backward, under the impression that the late captain of Greyfriars was about to advance upon him. But Wingate did not take any notice of the prefect. He crossed to the door without a word, and left the prefects' room.
 Loder gave a chuckle. He had never expected George Wingate to take it as quietly as that. Courtney turned upon him with his eyes blazing.
 "You cad!" he exclaimed. "You unspeakable cad!"
 "Oh, draw it mild," said Loder.
 "If I'd been Wingate, I'd have wiped up the floor with you!" shouted Courtney. "Ordering Wingate out of the prefects' room—my hat!"
 "Well, he's not a prefect," said Carne.
 "You're as big a cad as Loder!"
 Carne bit his lip.
 "If you're looking for a journey out on your neck—" he began.
 Courtney pushed back his cuffs.
 "I'm ready for it," he said.
 But the bullies of the Sixth hung back. They did not want trouble with Courtney; and the deputation of juniors had made a sudden movement, with the evident intention of joining in, if the popular prefect were attacked by unfair odds.
 "Oh, go and eat cake!" said Carne, after a pause. "There's been enough rowing and ragging in the Sixth lately."
 "There'll be some more if you chaps don't mind your P's and Q's," said Courtney. "Blessed if I haven't more than half a mind to put up for captain after all, if only to keep you rotten outsiders in order."
 Loder knitted his brows. If Courtney stood for the election, Loder knew that he would have a fight to win. Courtney would be a dangerous opponent. The juniors would flock to vote for him; partly on his own merits, partly because he was a chum of old Wingate's, but chiefly for the purpose of keeping him—Loder—out of the captaincy. For all the Lower School knew that it would be a bad day for them when the worst bully of Greyfriars became captain of the school.
 Courtney saw the look upon Loder's face, and his lip curled.
 "Blessed if I haven't a mind to do it," he repeated. And from a crowd of Removites came a chorus:
 "Do!"
 "Stick to it, Courtney," said Harry Wharton. "We want you. The whole giddy school wants you for skipper, if they can't have Wingate."
 "Play up, Courtney!"
 "Stand for the skipper!"
 "We'll elect you!"
 "We'll vote for you to the last man!"
 "Faith, and you'll simply romp home intirely, Courtney, old man!"
 But Courtney shook his head.
 "No, kids," he said, "I can't do it. I've sworn a swear that I won't take old Wingate's place, and I'm sticking to that." And Gerald Loder drew in a deep breath of relief.
 "But you must!" said Bob Cherry. "You simply must, Courtney. There's no other candidate to stand up against Loder."

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NEXT
MONDAY:

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Can't be helped."
 "The blessed coll. will go to the dogs, begad, if Loder gets in," said Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove. "It's up to you, Courtney, my dear fellow."
 And the deputation chimed in:
 "It's up to you, Courtney!"
 Courtney shook his head again.
 "What I've said, I've said," he remarked.
 "But what about the school?" urged Wharton.
 "The school chose to turn Wingate out," said Courtney steadily. "Yes, I know he resigned—but it was after a crowd of the fellows turned against him. And I'm not going to take his place."
 "But—but I say, Courtney—" "Courtney, old man—" "Look here, Courtney, darling—" "Begad, you know—" "My worthy, and esteemed and ludicrous Courtney—" "Play up, you know—" "You've got your answer, you cheeky brats," growled Loder. "Now clear out of the prefects' room! I'm fed up with you!"
 "Well, I'm fed up with you, for that matter," said Bob Cherry. "Fed up to the chin, Loder. But I'm standing you!"
 Loder made a threatening gesture; and the juniors lined up round Bob Cherry. They looked dangerous; and Loder, prefect as he was, stood back. The deputation from the Remove were in a mood to wipe up the floor of the prefects' room with him, and he could see it. And any punishment inflicted afterwards upon the fags would not undo any damage that he sustained.
 Courtney moved towards the door to follow Wingate. The Removites clustered round him in expostulation.
 "Courtney, old man, say yes!"
 "We want you!"
 "Play up for the school, you know!"
 "It's settled," said Courtney, shortly. "Buzz off!"
 And Courtney strode away.
 The Removites looked at one another in dismay.
 "He means it," said Bob Cherry, dismally. "He won't stand for skipper. It's rotten!"
 "The rottenfulness is terrific!"
 "Nothing but Loder!" growled Harry Wharton. "Not even a rival candidate! All we can do is to keep from voting, and let Loder get in. Oh, rats!"
 "And many of 'em!" groaned Nugent.
 "Well, you're finished here," said Loder, with a sneer. "You can clear off."
 "Oh, go and chop chips," said Russell.
 "Give Loder a groan before we go!" said Johnny Bull.
 "Good egg!"
 And the juniors gave a deep, deep groan. Then they walked away, leaving the prefect with his face dark with rage.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Latest!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Oh, scat!" said Harry Wharton, angrily.
 The Famous Five had gathered in No. 1 study in the Remove passage, to discuss the parlous state of affairs, and tea and toast at the same time.
 It was agreed upon all hands that affairs at Greyfriars were in a serious condition.
 If Gerald Loder, the cad of the Sixth, the worst bully at Greyfriars, and the leader of the fast set in the school, won the election as captain, the whole school would go to the giddy bow-wows, as Bob Cherry expressed it.
 There was no doubt about that; from No. 1 Study's point of view, at all events.
 Considering the really desperate state of affairs, masters and seniors went on their way with wonderful calm.
 It appeared to be only in No. 1 Study in the Remove that the full seriousness of the situation was realised.
 And perhaps No. 1 Study's personal and special dislike for Loder made them take a somewhat exaggerated view of the matter.
 Be that as it may, all the fellows in the study agreed, without a dissentient voice, that Greyfriars had never been so far gone on the road to ruin before, and that the good old school was in imminent danger of drifting helplessly into the maws of the aforesaid bow-wows.
 Hence they were in no mood to be bothered by Bunter, and when Billy Bunter blinked into the study through his big spectacles, and nodded to them, there was a general impatient exclamation of:
 "Scat!"

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

But Bunter did not "scat."
He rolled into the study, with all the importance of a bearer of great tidings.
"I say, you fellows——"
"Get out!" roared Bob Cherry. "We're discussing the state of affairs, and we don't want to be jawed at by a silly ass!"
"Yes, but I say——"
"We don't want to cash a postal-order in advance, and we don't believe that you're going to receive one by the next post!" bawled Johnny Bull.
"Oh, really, Bull——"
"We're not standing a feed; and if we were, we shouldn't want you to come to it," said Harry Wharton.
"Oh, really, Wharton——"
"Buzz off!"
"But I say, you fellows——"
"There's nothing to eat!" yelled Nugent. "Clear out! We're busy!"
"But I've got——"
"Buzz!"
"——news——"
"Slide!"
"I've heard it from a Fifth Form fellow——"
"Scoot!"
"They say he's going to put up a notice——"
"Eh?"
"A notice on the board in the Hall——"
"What?"
"About it, and——"
"Who is?" demanded Wharton.
"Coker, of course. And——"
"Blow Coker!"
"Yes, but I tell you——"
Bob Cherry picked up a cricket-stump. Billy Bunter made a strategic movement round the table. His fat face was quite crimson with excitement, and the great desire to tell his startling news, whatever it was; but the chums of the Remove were not in a mood to listen to the "gas" of the Owl. It was a case, as it frequently was, of "too much Bunter."
Dick Rake of the Remove dashed down the Remove passage, and dashed into the study with such suddenness that he rushed into Bunter without seeing him, and the fat junior went whirling.
Bump!
"Ow!" roared Bunter.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Rake staggered back breathless.
"Oh, you ass!"
"Grooh!"
"What did you get in the way for, you fathead?"
"Ow! I'm hurt!"
"I—I say, you chaps!" gasped Rake, turning to the chums of the Remove. "Have you heard?"
"We heard you biff Bunter over, if that's what you mean," said Harry Wharton.
"I mean about Coker!"
"Coker! What has Coker been doing?"
"It isn't what he's been doing, but what he's going to do," chuckled Rake. "Proving himself the champion ass of Greyfriars, as usual, of course."
"That's no news."
"But—but it's jolly interesting, all the same. He——"
"I say, you fellows, that was what I was going to tell you," said Billy Bunter, in an injured tone, as he struggled to his feet. "I say, Blake——"
"Shut up," said Rake. "You're interrupting me."
"Oh, really——"
"Courtney's refused to stand, even after the deputation from the Remove," went on Rake. "What was wanted was another candidate——"
Wharton shook his head.
"None of the Sixth will stand," he said. "It's recognised to be between Courtney and Loder, and if Courtney won't stand it's a walk-over for Loder—the rotter!"
"Yes, but there's another candidate now!" yelled Rake, excitedly.
The Removites jumped.
"Another candidate?"
"Yes."
"But—but the Sixth——"
"He's not in the Sixth!"
"Not in the Sixth!" said Harry Wharton, in amazement. "But the captain of Greyfriars is always selected from the Sixth Form."
"Time there was a change," said Rake, with a chuckle. "I know it's a bit startling; but there you are. There's no law against it."
"That's what I was going to tell you fellows," said Billy Bunter. "I——"
"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

"But I was going to say——"
"Dry up; we want to hear Rake's news, you ass!"
"But it's not Rake's news, it's my news!" howled Billy Bunter. "I tell you I was going to tell you——"
"Ring off!"
"Look here, you rotters, I tell you——"
Bob Cherry grasped the fat junior, and plumped him down in the armchair, and sat upon him. Billy Bunter gave a gasp, like air escaping from a punctured tyre, and was silent.
"Now go on, Rakey," said Harry Wharton. "What's the news? Who's the other candidate—a Fifth-Form chap?"
"Yes, rather!" chuckled Rake.
"Name?" chorussed the juniors.
"Coker!"
There was a yell.
"Coker!"
"Yes!" roared Rake. "Coker! Coker the Great! Horace the One and Only! The biggest ass at Greyfriars! The champion duffer of the Fifth! The worst footballer that ever was, and the rottenest cricketer that ever will be! Coker! Ha, ha, ha!"
"My hat!"
"Great Scott!"
"Holy smoke!"
"The holy smokefulness is terrific!"
"It—it can't be true!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Why, the giddy bootboy would make a better captain than Coker! It can't be—it's imposs.!"
"It's true!"
"Captain of Greyfriars—Coker! Captain of Colney Hatch!" roared Bob Cherry.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Well, if this is Coker's latest, it takes the bun!" gasped Frank Nugent. "It takes the cake—it prances off with the whole giddy biscuit factory!"
"It does—it do!" murmured Johnny Bull.
"Grooh!" came a suffocated voice from underneath Bob Cherry, in the armchair. "Grooh! Gerrup! Gerrup, Cherry, you beast! You're chook-chook-chocking me!"
"Chook-chook-choke quietly, then, and don't bother!"
"Grooo-o-o-o-oh!"
"Blessed if this doesn't put the lid on!" said Frank Nugent. "I knew Coker was nearly every kind of an ass, but I never expected this! The cheek!"
"The nerve!" said Bob Cherry. "The—yow-ow-ow-oh!"
He leaped into the air with a fiendish yell. Billy Bunter straightened up in the armchair, and put his spectacles straight upon his fat little nose, and blinked furiously at him. Bob Cherry roared.
"Yaroo! Oh! Yowp!"
"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.
"Yow! I'm bitten! Yawp!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Serve you jo-jo-jolly well right!" shrieked Bunter. "You were squ-squ-squashing me, you beast! Yow-ow!"
"I'll—I'll——" Bob Cherry made a spring for the cricket-stump, and Billy Bunter made a spring for the door. His footsteps died away down the passage.
"Cheese it, Bob!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I say, this is stunning news! It's really serious, Rake! You're not gammoning?"
"Honest Injun!" said Rake.
Wharton looked round at his chums.
"I suppose it's agreed here that Coker is the biggest ass in Greyfriars?" he remarked.
"Yes, rather!"
"And the howlingest duffer!"
"Hear, hear!"
"And the outside limit in everything——"
"What-ho!"
"But there's one thing to be said for him—he's not Loder!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"And if we've got the choice between a howling duffer and a rotten cad for captain of the school, I'll vote for the duffer!"
"Same here!"
"Good!"
"The goodness is terrific!"
"Then," said Harry Wharton, "if Coker's really got the astounding cheek to put up for captain, and a better man doesn't come forward, this Co. backs up Coker."
And the Co. replied with one voice:
"We do—we do!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rally!

QUITE a crowd had gathered round the notice-board in the Hall.
The news of "Coker's latest," as the fellows termed it, had spread like wildfire through Greyfriars.
The Sixth heard it with amazement and scorn.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.



Loder glared at the late Captain of Greyfriars. "You've no right in this room, Wingate!" he snapped. "You're not a prefect! I am a prefect, and I'm giving orders here, not you!" Wingate rose to his feet. (See Chapter 8.)

That a Fifth-Former should venture to put up for the captaincy when a Sixth-Former was ready to take on the job seemed to them to be altogether outside the fitness of things; and, indeed, something in the nature of the end of all things.

The Sixth declined to believe the rumour at first.

The Fifth were staggered.

The Lower School chuckled.

But when it was known that Horace Coker of the Fifth had put up a notice on the board, in his own sprawling and almost illegible hand, the whole school crowded to read it, and to find confirmation of the astounding rumour.

Round the notice-board the crowd was very thick as the Famous Five came down to join it, and to elbow their way towards the notice.

Temple of the Upper Fourth was reading it out with many chuckles, for the benefit of those who were not near enough to see.

There was a chorus of interruptions as he read.

"Then it's true!"

"Coker—captain! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker! Oh, my only sainted Sam!"

"Begad, it's the giddy limit, my dear fellows!"

"Faith, and it takes the cake!"

"The cheek of it!"

"The nerve!"

"Good old Coker—always playing the giddy goat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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NEXT
MONDAY

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

Harry Wharton & Co. pushed their way towards the notice-board. There was a howl of expostulation from fellows they displaced.

"Here! Whom are you shoving?" demanded Hobson of the Shell warmly.

"You!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully, and there was a chuckle as Hobson disappeared among the forest of legs.

"Here's the giddy notice!" said Vernon-Smith of the R.-move. "It's in Coker's fist, and Coker's spelling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was the notice, sure enough. There was no doubt about it. Coker's "fist" would have been known anywhere, and Coker's spelling would have been known anywhere else, as Bolsover major humorously remarked. The notice ran:

"NOTICE!

"RALLY! RALLY! RALLY!"

"The undersigned Horace Coker has the honor of standing fourth as candidate for the Post of Captain of Greyfriars, in the place of the late lamented Wingate.

"There being only one other candidate, who is no good, the above-mentioned Horace Coker hopes that the electors of Greyfriars will rally round and return him with a bumping majority.

"Vote for Coker and Reform!"

"Vote for Coker and Playing the Game!"

"Vote for Coker! (Signed) HORACE J. COKER.

"P.S.—Rally! Rally! Rally!"

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's quite right about the other candidates being no good. But Coker's understated the case. He should have mentioned that neither candidate is any good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The late lamented Wingate," said Nugent, with a chuckle.

"Poor old Wingate! I didn't know he had pegged out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's up to us to rally!" grinned Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well not going to vote for Coker!" growled Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "We don't want a Fifth-Form fathead for skipper!"

"Faith! And what's that?" exclaimed Fitzgerald of the Fifth wrathfully.

"Ahem! I didn't see you there, Fitzgerald!"

"Sure I think you didn't," said Fitzgerald, grinning.

"Kids, the best thing you can do is to rally round Coker. Of course, Coker's an ass—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But an ass is better than a cad, any day."

"Hear, hear!"

"Who says Coker?" shouted Fitzgerald.

There was a roar from the juniors:

"Coker!"

Loder of the Sixth came striding down the passage. He had heard the news, too, and his face was dark and scowling. He drove his way through the crowd, heedless of the loud remonstrances of the juniors, and reached the board, and stared angrily at the notice in the original handwriting and orthography of Horace J. Coker.

"What's this silly rot?" he demanded.

"That isn't silly rot!" said Fitzgerald. "That's the notice of the second candidate."

Loder growled.

"Nobody outside the Sixth is allowed to stand for captain," he said.

"That's not the law!" roared a dozen junior voices. "Coker can stand if he likes, and we're going to support him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Coker!"

It was marvellous to see how Horace Coker had leaped into popularity all of a sudden. As an alternative to the obnoxious Loder, he was precious in the eyes of the Lower School. His candidature was indeed "une chose pour rire," as Nugent remarked in his best Lower-Fourth French; but if Coker got in Loder would have to stay out, and that was what the juniors wanted. If it was to be a choice of evils, they chose the lesser evil, and the lesser evil undoubtedly was Horace J. Coker.

Loder put his hand up to the board and dragged at the notice to tear it down. There was a roar of protest.

"Let it alone!"

"Hands off!"

"Stop him!"

"Faith! And ye've no right to do that!" said Fitzgerald.

"Hould on!"

"Let that paper alone!" shouted Potter and Greene of the Fifth together. Potter and Greene had laughed as much as anybody, at first, at the idea of Horace Coker becoming captain of Greyfriars. But they had laughed and come round, like the rest. It was flattering to them to have a fellow in their Form captain of Greyfriars, if it came to pass, and as Coker's special chums, they would be irradiated by the reflection of his glory. And they did not like Loder. If the long reign of the Sixth was over, the end of it would be welcome to most of the Fifth. After all, why shouldn't a Fifth-Former be captain of Greyfriars? Echo, as Potter said, answered why? Though, according to the ordinary laws of acoustics, it should have answered "Greyfriars." And Potter and Greene, and several more Fifth-Formers, joined in the loud protest at Loder's high-handed proceeding. It looked as if there would be a rush as Loder tore the notice down.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, and Mr. Prout, of the Fifth Form, came along the passage together as the din was at its height.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "What is all this dreadful noise about? My boys, you must be quieter."

"He's tearing the notice down—Coker's notice!" shouted Potter.

"We appeal to you, sir," said Greene. "Ain't a Fifth-Former a right to shove a notice on the board if he wants to?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Prout.

"Most decidedly," said Mr. Quelch.

"Put it back, Loder!"

"Make him put it back!"

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Ahem! Do I understand, Loder, that you have removed a notice from the board, placed there by a member of my Form?" said Mr. Prout solemnly.

Loder was pale with rage.

"It's a rotten jape, sir," he said. "Coker's pretending that he's going to stand for captain of Greyfriars at the election to-morrow."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch.

"It's not a jape!" roared Fitzgerald. "It's not a jape intirely! Coker's the rival candidate, sir, and he's going to give Loder the kybosh at the election!"

And the juniors roared:

"Good old Coker!"

"Of course, sir, a Fifth-Former is not allowed to stand," said Loder.

Mr. Prout coughed.

"Indeed, Loder, I do not know of any law of the school to that effect," he said drily. "I believe, on the other hand, that any senior boy is allowed to offer himself as a candidate."

"It always belongs to the Sixth, sir."

"That has certainly been the custom," said Mr. Prout.

"But there is nothing in the laws of the school to prevent a Fifth-Former from offering himself for the suffrages of his schoolfellows. Coker is acting quite within his rights; and I must really request you, Loder, to replace his paper on the board. You have no right whatever to remove it."

"Put it back, Loder!"

"Yah!"

Loder, quite white with fury, pinned the paper on the board again, and strode away through the crowd, silent and furious.

"Thank you, sir," said Potter. "We knew we could depend on you to see fair play, sir."

"Certainly, Potter. I hope you will always be able to depend upon me for that," said Mr. Prout graciously.

And the two masters walked away. They exchanged a glance and a smile.

"It is a little—er—unusual, is it not?" murmured Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Prout nodded.

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch. But really, knowing the two boys as I do, I am inclined to think that Coker, although not the brightest boy at Greyfriars, would make a better captain for the school than Gerald Loder."

"And I am inclined to agree with you," said Mr. Quelch heartily.

And Loder, to his rage and dismay, found that that was the impression of most of the fellows—and the fellows had votes in the election! Loder, in his study, thought over the matter with grinding teeth. Wingate had lost the captaincy; Courtney would not stand; but it was not to be a walk-over for the cad of the Sixth after all. The unexpected had happened. There was another candidate, about the last fellow at Greyfriars whom anybody would have thought of as a candidate—a fellow whose candidature came near turning the whole election into a joke—but—unkindest cut of all—it looked as if he would get in; indeed, as if he would romp home with a bumping majority! And Loder, in a state of fury, prepared for the electioneering, the canvassing for votes, the persuading and bribing and enjoining, which until then he had considered would not be necessary.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Committee!

THAT night there was only one subject talked of in Greyfriars—the candidature of Horace Coker for the captaincy of the school.

Fellows laughed over it, and chuckled over it, and made a standing joke of it; but they made up their minds to vote for Coker all the same.

Coker was an ass, most of the Greyfriars fellows considered. The things he could not do were unnumbered. He had an excellent opinion of himself, and nobody but Coker had ever been able to see any grounds for it. He was somewhat overbearing with junior boys; and the Sixth considered him lacking in proper respect towards their high and mighty Form. Yet, with all his drawbacks, Coker was a popular fellow to a great extent. He was big and strong, and as plucky as a bulldog, and he had plenty of money and spent it very liberally—qualities which appealed to many. And although he was not, intellectually, an ornament to the

ANSWERS

school, he had a certain amount of plain common-sense, and a grim determination which carried him far when he had made up his mind about a thing. He was very far from being an ideal captain for Greyfriars; but fellows who knew Loder well greatly preferred Coker. Of course, the Sixth would disdain to vote for a fellow in a lower Form. But, numerically, the Sixth were the weakest Form in the school; and at an election for school captain every vote counted—a fag's vote was as good as a prefect's. And in fags' votes Coker was certain to be strong. Sixth-Formers could stand Loder. But fags who had been fagged, and had had their ears pulled and their arms twisted by the bully of the Sixth, were not likely to vote for their tyrant. If there had been no rival candidate, it would have been a walk-over for Loder; but a great number of the fellows, who otherwise would not have voted at all, made up their minds at once to vote for anybody who offered, rather than let Loder get in. Coker was the only alternative, and so they resolved to vote for Coker. Coker's cause was going strong.

And the Fifth Form candidate was not idle. He had formed an election committee in his study; and in the formation of it he showed a great deal more sense than the fellows had expected of him. For he did not make up the committee of Fifth-Formers only. Potter and Greene represented the Fifth on Coker's committee. But Coker sent fags with messages to No. 1 Study in the Remove, and to Hobson of the Shell, and to Temple & Co. of the Upper Fourth, asking them to come along and discuss the campaign. When the committee met in Coker's study that evening, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent represented the Remove, and there were two Shell fellows, and two of the Fourth Form. It was, as Coker put it rather neatly, the school against Loder; and by bringing members of the Lower Forms upon the committee he did much to bring the juniors round to his side. To have a hand in giving Loder a fall was very attractive to the youngsters.

When the committee foregathered in Horace Coker's study they found that the table was simply groaning under good things. Refreshments had been provided, and Coker had provided them on a liberal scale. Coker had plenty of money, and he was spending it like water. It was already known that if Coker got in as captain, he was going to stand a most tremendous feed to the whole school, with utterly unlimited tuck, and that alone brought round many waverers. Coker received the committee in state. He waved his hand towards the table.

"Help yourselves," he said hospitably. "Talking's dry work, and there's lemonade and ginger-beer, and coffee and tea. You'll like those sandwiches; and the jam tarts are really good."

"Hear, hear!" said Hobson of the Shell. "Coker, old man, you oughtn't to be captain of Greyfriars—"

"Eh?"

"You ought to be Head!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You're a nut, Coker, my boy," said Dabney, of the Fourth. "Simply a k'nut!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Coker's our man!" said Frank Nugent, grinning over a huge jam tart. "Coker's the man for my money! Bravo, Coker!"

"Gentlemen——" said Coker.

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, these marks of your appreciation are very gratifying to me," said Coker, with a fine flow of language that surprised his hearers. "In the present state of political parties—I—I mean the present state of the school——"

There was a chuckle. It was pretty clear that Coker had borrowed a speech from some newspaper report, and was getting mixed. But, as Nugent remarked in an undertone, the tarts were good if the speech wasn't. So they all said "Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your support. I look to you to back me up and bring me in with triumph at the top of the poll!"

"Fairly up the pole!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I stand for justice and reform and—and—and so on," said Coker.

"Hear, hear!"

"Now is the time to rally round the——"

"Jam tarts!" said Temple.

"What?"

"Oh, sorry! Did I interrupt you? I was only asking Dab to pass the jam tarts."

"Now's the time to rally round the people's candidate," said Coker. "I'm going to stand for—for Tariff Trade, and Free Reform——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, I'm going to stand——"

The door opened, and Coker was interrupted. Loder of the Sixth strode into the study, with a dark brow, followed by Carne. The committee all turned to look at Loder. Horace Coker fixed him with a basilisk eye.

"Hallo! What do you want?" he demanded.

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NEXT MONDAY.

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

EVERY MONDAY,

The "Magnet" LIBRARY.

ONE PENNY.

"He's come to announce that he resigns his candidature," suggested Wharton.

"Oh, good! If that's the case, Loder——"

"It isn't the case!" roared Loder. "I've come to have a talk with you, Coker. Turn those cheeky fags out of the study, so that we can talk——"

"If you are alluding to the election committee," said Coker loftily, "I decline to accede to your request, Loder. Those gentlemen are lending me their valuable assistance in the election, and I must beg of you to address them with respect, or leave my study."

"Good old Coker!"

Loder gritted his teeth.

"I don't want to talk before a crowd of fags——"

"Well, you needn't talk at all," suggested Potter. "You're not exactly what I call entertaining as a conversationalist, Loder."

"Not at all," said Greene.

"Not in the least!" said Nugent.

"Will you listen to me, Coker?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Coker.

"Then turn these kids out."

"I decline to listen to anything from you excepting in the presence of the election committee," said Coker, with dignity.

"Hear, hear!"

"Very well," said Loder, between his teeth. "Look here, Coker, this won't do."

"What won't do?" asked Coker.

"This foolery," said the prefect angrily.

"What foolery?"

"You know what I mean!" roared Loder. "This putting yourself up as candidate for captain. You know jolly well that the captain of Greyfriars has to be in the Sixth Form."

"Well, I shall be in the Sixth Form some day," said Coker cheerfully. "I've got a minor there already, you know."

"You're not in the Sixth now, and that prevents you from standing for the election."

Coker grinned.

"It doesn't seem to," he remarked. "I'm standing, anyway."

"You can't become captain of the school."

"That's according to the voting, of course."

"It's not according to the voting. The Sixth won't stand it."

"I fancy the Sixth will have to stand it, if I get elected," said Coker cheerfully. "The Sixth will have to stand that, and a good many other things, if I get in. I'm not at all satisfied with the way the Sixth have been running things. I shall make some changes. I'm the reform candidate, you know."

"You—you silly ass!" hissed Loder.

"Order!"

"I've come here to talk sense to you——"

"Then why don't you begin?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder clenched his hands. It was as much as he could do to keep his temper in check. Coker was perfectly cool.

"You know the whole thing's ridiculous!" he said. "You know a Fifth-Form chap can't be captain of Greyfriars, especially a fellow who's known to be the biggest fool in the whole school."

"That's for the electors——"

"The school can't stand the champion ass as captain," said Carne. "Why don't you own up that it was all a joke, Coker, and withdraw your name, like a sensible chap?"

"It's not a joke, and I'm not going to withdraw my name," said Coker calmly. "I'm going in for the election, and I fancy I shall pull it off."

"What-ho!" said the committee emphatically.

"If you should be elected, the election won't be allowed to stand," said Loder, trying to speak calmly. "The Sixth won't put up with it."

"Blow the Sixth!"

"What!" yelled Loder and Carne together.

"Getting deaf?" asked Coker pleasantly. "I said blow the Sixth; but if you're hard of hearing, I'll repeat the remark for your benefit. Blow the Sixth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Sixth can go and eat coke!" said Coker coolly. "I don't care twopence for the Sixth! When it comes to voting, the Third Form is twice as good as the Sixth. I don't care which way the Sixth vote, so long as the juniors vote for me."

"You—you—you——"

"And they won't vote for a rotten bully like you, Loder!" said Frank Nugent. "They've got too many old scores against you."

"Yes, rather!"

"I came here," said Loder thickly, "to ask you civilly to give up this foolery and take your name off the board."

"All serene; you can ask."

"Are you going to do it?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then," said Loder, setting his teeth, "if you persist in setting yourself up against the Sixth, I'll give you the hiding of your life!"

"Go hon!" said Coker, measuring his adversary with his eye. "I fancy I could put up a pretty good fight, even against a Sixth-Former, Loder; and I shall jolly well try if you begin any bu-kum! Gentlemen, I call you all to witness that the rival candidate has uttered threats of personal violence!"

"We all heard him!" said Nugent.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Gentlemen," said Coker, sitting down in the armchair, "I leave it to the committee to decide how to deal with this person."

The committee exchanged glances. Loder made one stride towards Coker; but he had time for only one. The next moment the election committee had piled upon him, and Loder went out of the study in a whirl. There was a sound of a loud bump in the passage, and a gasping exclamation.

"Now send Carne after him!" said Harry Wharton.

But Carne was already gone.

Loder sat up in the passage, gasping. Harry Wharton closed the study door, and the committee settled down to business, which seemed to consist principally in demolishing the piles of good things provided by Coker's hospitality. Loder did not return. He had had enough just then of the methods of Coker's election committee.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Vote For Coker!"

THE next day there was a great deal of excitement at Greyfriars.

The election had been expected to be a very quiet affair; but the unexpected candidature of Horace Coker of the Fifth had changed all that.

Loder & Co. were electioneering; and Coker and his friends were canvassing for votes most assiduously.

And Coker's committee did yeoman service.

Harry Wharton & Co. gathered in promises to support Coker from nearly all the members of the Remove. Hobson was equally busy with the Shell; and Temple, Dabney & Co. with the Upper Fourth. And the Third and the Second were not neglected. The juniors had had their rubs with Coker—many of them—but all that was forgotten now in the keen desire to keep Loder out of the captaincy.

The Sixth, of course, were for Loder almost to a man. But it looked as if Coker would have a very big majority in the Lower School.

The fellows thought a great deal more of the election than of their lessons that day; and lines fell in the Form-rooms as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa.

But the juniors did not mind the lines.

They were going to keep Loder out, they were going to avenge their popular skipper, by defeating the ambition of his rival; and that would have consoled them for any number of lines.

There was a half-holiday that afternoon, and after lessons the candidates spent most of their time in scouting for votes.

The election was to take place at five o'clock in the lecture-hall, when two masters were to be present to count the votes, and make sure that everything was fair and square and above-board, as Bob Cherry put it.

Loder had lost his confident look by this time.

That matters were going against him was apparent to the most careless eye; and Loder turned the matter over in his mind, and discussed it with his friends, again and again, in the hope of finding some method of defeating the ambitious Fifth-Former. Loder would not have hesitated at any means; but the means seemed to be lacking. He had at first taken up the position that a Fifth-Former couldn't be a candidate; but he had found that position untenable. Then he had tried to reason with Coker, and he still had an ache in his bones as a result of his visit to Coker's study, and his rough handling by the election committee.

What to do now he simply did not know. He called his friends to council in his study in the afternoon, and they discussed the matter, but without much hope.

"Might appeal to the Head!" Walker suggested. "The Head can't approve of a chap in a Lower Form becoming captain of the school."

"But there's no rule on the subject," said Carne; "and

the Head can't go into a corner and make a law, like that chap in the Gilbert and Sullivan play."

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Loder, as a roar came from the Close.

The seniors hurried to the study window.

Outside, in the winter sunshine, there was a huge crowd, mostly juniors. Four or five members of the Remove were supporting a huge banner, upon which the words were traced in gigantic letters:

"Vote for Coker!"

It was an election procession, marching round the Close, and it was followed by half Greyfriars, cheering and yelling.

Loder scowled as he looked out.

"Coker's got the fags on his side!" he remarked.

"Little rotters!" growled Carne. "After all, we can lick them if they vote for Coker. I've explained to my fag that I'll make his life a burden if Coker gets in."

"Same here," said Phipps.

The procession halted under Loder's study window. The processionists had caught sight of the prefect standing at the window with knitted brows.

"Halt!" roared Bob Cherry.

The banner swayed under the study window. Harry Wharton held up his hand.

"Gentlemen and electors of Greyfriars—" he shouted.

"Hear, hear!"

"Who's our candidate?"

There was a roar.

"Coker!"

"Vote for Coker!"

"Hurrah!"

"Who's going to win the election?"

"Coker!"

"Who's going to get the giddy kybosh?"

"Loder!"

"Groans for Loder!" bawled Johnny Bull.

There was a deep, deep groan.

"Cheers for Coker!"

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Hurrah!"

"March!"

And the procession marched on, leaving Loder at his window gritting his teeth, and clenching his hands with rage.

The prefect turned round to his companions with a bitter smile.

"You see how it's going!" he said.

"Looks bad for our side!" said Walker dolorously. "Queer how those young rats stand by Coker. They never got on well with Coker at all."

"Better than with Loder," said Valence.

"Well—yes."

"You might have been a bit more tactful with the kids, come to think of it, Loder," said Walker, apparently essaying the task of Job's comforter.

Loder grunted.

"Not much good jawing like that now!" he snapped.

"How was I to know that Coker would have the cheek to put up for captain? It's never been heard of before. The Head ought to come down on him. Blessed if I don't ask the Head about it, and see!"

"Well, it wouldn't do any harm."

Loder nodded, and quitted the study. He had not much hope that Dr. Locke would interfere, but it was a chance. He tapped at the door of the Head's study, and Dr. Locke's deep voice bade him come in.

Dr. Locke had evidently heard the roar from the Close. He gave the prefect a somewhat peculiar glance as he entered the study.

"Well, what is it, Loder?" he asked.

"I should like to speak to you about the election, sir," said Loder.

"Very well—go on."

"You are aware, sir, that a Fifth-Former has set himself up as a candidate—"

"Yes. Coker of the Fifth, I think," said the Head.

"Yes, sir. Of course, it's impossible for a Fifth-Former to captain the school; the Sixth would never submit to it."

"Ahem!" said the Head slowly.

"It will lead to a great deal of trouble, sir, I am assured. Besides, the captain of Greyfriars is also captain of the footer eleven—and Coker is no footballer."

"H'm!"

"I thought, sir, that you might speak to Coker on the subject, and point out to him that it was an improper proceeding on his part to stand for election."

"H'm!"

"The Sixth seem to expect you to take some action in the matter, sir," Loder hinted.

"Indeed?"

"It may save a lot of trouble, as, of course, Coker will



"Wah!" growled the Red Indian. "What seeks the white dog in the lodges of the Sioux?" "Weally, Monk——" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Scalp the white dog!" interrupted Carboy. "Scalp the topper, at any rate!" "Weally, you ass——" (For this incident see the grand long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, entitled "AT GRIPS WITH THE GRAMMARIANS," by Martin Clifford, which is contained in this week's issue of our popular companion paper, "The Gem" Library. Out on Wednesday. Price One Penny.)

never be allowed to act as captain. The Sixth wouldn't put up with it."

"The fact is, Loder," said the Head, with a pause, "I do not wholly approve of Coker's candidature; but there is nothing whatever against Coker, and I do not feel entitled to interfere. Coker is an honest and straightforward lad, and if the majority of the boys choose him as captain, I should hardly be justified in negating their choice."

Loder knitted his brows.

"They don't really want him as captain, sir," he said quickly.

"Indeed? Then there is no danger of his being elected, and no need for my interposition, in any case," said the Head drily.

"I mean, sir, that they are only going to vote for Coker in order to keep me out of the captaincy," said Loder. "It's a case of personal spite, and nothing else. Nobody believes

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that Coker will make a good captain of Greyfriars. The very fellows who are going to vote for him laugh at the idea."

Dr. Locke coughed.

"You mean to say, Loder, that you are personally so unpopular that the boys are willing to vote for anyone, however unsuitable, rather than have you for their captain?"

Loder bit his lip. He had certainly not meant to say that; but that was what his words amounted to; and that was, indeed, the precise state of the case.

"No. I—I didn't mean that, either, sir," he stammered.

"That is the only construction to be placed upon your words, Loder. If the school is very much against you becoming captain, Loder, I could scarcely interfere to help you in the matter. As a matter of fact, although I am not quite satisfied with Coker as a candidate, I am not quite satisfied with you, either!"

"Dr. Locke!"

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

"I mean that, Loder. I have always made it a rule not to interfere, if I can help it, with the choice of the boys in this matter. But I do not wholly approve of your standing for election. I asked Wingate to resign, because he was so injudicious as to bring disgrace upon the position by fighting with a prefect in the open quad. Wingate's conduct was very wrong, and he resigned at my request. But you, Loder, were the prefect he was fighting with, and you were very nearly as much to blame!"

"I have explained——"

Dr. Locke nodded.

"Yes; you have satisfied me that Wingate was the aggressor. But it takes two to make a quarrel, after all, Loder. For this reason I do not look upon your candidature wholly with approval. I shall not, however, interfere with you. But certainly, on the other hand, I cannot interfere with Coker. The election must follow its usual course, and the choice of the majority will hold good."

Loder could not speak for a moment. If he had uttered the words that were upon his tongue, he would have been expelled from Greyfriars upon the spot. He bowed his head to hide the expression upon his face.

"That is all I can say, Loder," said the Head.

"Very well, sir," gasped out Loder.

And he left the study.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Fisher T. Fish Is Humorous.

THE election had been fixed for five o'clock, but before four had sounded from the old clock-tower of Greyfriars the lecture-hall was crowded.

The candidates were not present yet, but the electors were swarming in.

The Remove marched in under Harry Wharton's special supervision. The Co. looked after their flock very sharply, and fellows were routed out of all corners to turn up and vote. Billy Bunter was dragged out of the tuck-shop by main force, and Lord Mauleverer, who had retired to his study for a nap, was brought down to the lecture-hall upon the shoulders of three or four Removites.

Mark Linley, the scholarship junior, was working away at deep problems in mathematics in his study, when Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull came in, and scattered his books far and wide, and marched him off, heedless of expostulation.

The Remove were there almost to a man at a very early hour, and practically all the Remove meant to vote for Coker. Vernon-Smith and Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove, and Snoop meant to vote for Loder, but the great majority of the Form plumped for the Fifth-form candidate.

Hobson, of the Shell, had his voters well in hand, too. Hobson had been Coker's chum when the latter was in the Shell, and since Coker's remove into the Fifth they had been generally upon fighting terms. Coker was too Fifth-Form for Hobson's taste, as Hobson described it. But even that was forgotten now. Hobson would have voted for Gosling, the porter, or Trotter, the page, rather than have seen Loder of the Sixth captain of Greyfriars.

Temple, Dabney & Co. came in soon after four, with a crowd of the Fourth Form, and he had impressed upon Nugent minor the necessity of rallying the Second for the great fight. And Dicky Nugent had done his duty well. He had promised thick ears and swollen noses galore to any Second-Former who should vote for Loder, but the Second Form did not need urging. Most of them had been fagged by Loder; many of them had been licked by him; all of them wanted to get even with him. It was the same with the Third. In the Third Form, Bolsover minor was a Loderite, not from conviction, but to please his major, but he was almost alone. The Third intended to plump for Coker.

Harry Wharton, as he listened to the babel of voices in the lecture-hall, smiled with satisfaction. The Cokerites outnumbered the Loderites, so far, by at least three to one. The Sixth had not yet appeared, but their voices would certainly not suffice to turn the scale. As for the Fifth, most of them were for their Form-fellow Coker, and some had decided not to vote at all. But there was not a fellow in the Fifth who would give his vote against Coker.

"My hat!" Harry Wharton exclaimed, as a quarter to five chimed out. "We shall simply sweep the board, my infants! Three to one, I think!"

"The threefulness to one will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It will be a terrific come-down for the esteemed and disgusting Loder!"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry, with great satisfaction. "Mind, you kids, when Prout says hands up for Loder, put up your paws! Keep your eyes open!"

"I guess——"

"Vote for Coker!" roared Johnny Bull, as Loder came

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into the room with a number of Sixth-Formers, all looking extremely sedate and dignified.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I haven't decided how I'm going to vote!" said Fisher T. Fish.

There was a buzz round the American junior at once, and glares of indignation from innumerable fags.

"You haven't decided?" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Nope."

"I'll 'nope' you! You're going to vote like the rest of us!"

"I guess——"

"Isn't Coker the juniors' candidate?" demanded Harry Wharton wrathfully.

"Yep."

"Isn't it up to every decent chap to vote against Loder?"

"Yep."

"Well, then, that settles it. You're going to vote the same way that we do," said Bulstrode.

"I guess I haven't decided——"

"Then we'll decide you," said Morgan. "We'll bump you till you make up your mind, look you, whatever!"

"Hold on, I guess——"

"Oh, collar the silly ass, and argue it out with him," said Bob Cherry. "Nothing like a bumping on a hard floor to make a chap see sense."

"More likely to make him see stars," grinned Newland.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "I—I mean leggo! When I say I haven't decided how to vote, I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean; it's what we mean that matters," said Nugent. "Bump the silly ass till he makes up his mind—if he's got one."

"Stop that!" shouted Vernon-Smith, thinking that he perceived a recruit for his side, in the Yankee schoolboy. "No bullying voters! Let Fishy alone, or I'll call a prefect."

"Shut your head, Smithy!"

"Ring off!"

"Clear out!"

"I'm jolly well not going to shut my head, or clear out!" exclaimed the Bounder of Greyfriars, striding forward. "If Fishy hasn't made up his mind how he's going to vote, he's going to choose for himself."

"Buzz off!"

"Rats!"

"Oh, bump him, too!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"Hear, hear!"

"Loder!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

Loder of the Sixth, looked round. Vernon-Smith was standing his ground in the midst of the excited juniors, and he waved his hand to Loder.

"Stop that row, you youngsters," called out Courtney.

"Loder! They're ragging one of our voters!" bawled the Bounder.

Loder started.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, coming over towards the group of juniors. "Who's ragging my voters?"

"Fishy hasn't made up his mind how he's going to vote," panted the Bounder, "and they're going to bump him and make him vote for Coker."

"Are they?" said Loder. "I'll jolly soon stop that. You young ruffians——"

"Oh, draw it mild," said Nugent.

"Let that kid alone immediately."

Loder's voice was harsh and bullying, and the Removites felt very little inclined to obey. But there was no help for it, and the hands that had grasped Fisher T. Fish released him immediately.

The American junior gasped for breath, and put his collar straight. There was a grin upon his thin face, and a twinkle in his deep-set eyes.

"Now, then, Fish, my man," said Loder, with unaccustomed geniality. "You're going to vote for me, eh?"

"Nope."

"What?" said Loder.

"I said 'nope.' Don't you understand English?" asked Fisher T. Fish, calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Nope isn't English."

"I guess it's good American then," said Fisher T. Fish.

"When I say nope, I mean nope, not yep. I guess——"

"You said you hadn't made up your mind how to vote, you rotter!" yelled the Bounder.

"I guess I haven't, either."

"Well, make up your mind to vote for me," said Loder.

"I guess not. You see, you Britishers are born without a sense of humour," said Fisher T. Fish, in an injured tone. "I meant that I hadn't decided how I was going to vote—whether I'd hold up my right hand or my left—see? I'd decided whom I was going to vote for, of course."

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It was a joke."

"No, it wasn't; it was American humour!" grinned Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder scowled angrily at the Yankee schoolboy, and at the Bouncer. The Bouncer was biting his lip. He had been deceived by Fisher T. Fish's ill-timed humour, and he was very much inclined to "go for" Fisher T. Fish on the spot. But now that he had declared his intentions, Fish had plenty of friends round him.

"You stupid young cub, Fish," said Loder, "I've a good mind to knock your silly head off. If you start any more of your jokes—"

"I guess—"

"Oh, shut up!" And Loder boxed Fisher T. Fish's ears, and turned away. There was a roar of indignation from Fisher T. Fish, and another from his Form-fellows. Somebody put out a foot, and Loder tripped over it as he strode away, and measured his length upon the floor of the lecture-hall.

Fisher T. Fish rubbed his ear.

"The rotter!" he roared. "The beastly guy! I guess—"

Loder sprang up and clenched his fists. But Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout entered the lecture-hall at that moment, and the enraged prefect controlled himself, and walked away. The Yankee junior grunted as he rubbed his ears.

"Serve you jolly well right," grinned Bob Cherry. "You shouldn't spring American humour on chaps without warning. You can't expect 'em to stand it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess—"

But Fisher T. Fish's remarks were interrupted by the entrance of Horace Coker. The Fifth Form candidate came in, accompanied by Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald of his Form; and there was a roar of cheering from his backers. The juniors cheered, and roared, and stamped, and clapped their hands, till the lecture-hall rang with deafening sound.

"Hurrah for Coker!"

"Vote for Coker!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Three cheers for Captain Coker!"

"Hip, hip, hooray!"

Coker looked very gratified. The cheers were more against Loder than in favour of Coker, as a matter of fact; but Coker took his sudden popularity as entirely genuine, and the meed due to his own personal merits. He bowed graciously in response, several times, on all sides, as he made his way towards the upper end of the lecture-hall.

Loder's face was pale with rage and chagrin. For the volume of cheering told him how the voting would go, and his hopes of realising his ambition, and becoming captain of Greyfriars, sank to zero.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

The Election.

MR. PROUT held up his hand for silence, and the cheering died away at last.

Five o'clock rang out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars.

"The election will now take place," said Mr. Prout. "Close the doors. All who are not present when the counting begins will be excluded."

Coker's committee looked satisfied enough.

They had whipped in their voters very carefully, and there was hardly a man absent from their ranks. Fellows who were doubtful had not troubled to come in; and some of the Sixth had not taken the trouble to turn up in time. A few voters on both sides were missing; but probably more on Loder's side than on Coker's.

Loder cast an anxious glance over the crowded hall.

"A few minutes' grace might be allowed for late comers, sir," he suggested, seeing that several of the Sixth were absent.

Mr. Prout nodded.

"Very well," he said. "We will wait five minutes before closing the doors."

"Quite so," said Mr. Quelch.

Came of the Sixth hurriedly left the lecture-hall and scouted for late voters. Bob Cherry rushed out on the same errand. Just as the five minutes elapsed, Came came back with four or five seniors, and Bob Cherry reappeared, dragging in Sammy Bunter of the Second, and Paget of the Third, by their collars. Then the door was closed, and the key was turned. All who were outside the hall after that had to remain outside.

"We are now ready," said Mr. Prout.

Walker, of the Sixth, stood up to propose his friend Loder as captain of the school, and to appeal to the suffrages of the voters there present. The nomination was seconded by Valence.

"There being no other Sixth Form candidate," added Valence, "I move that Loder be declared Captain of Greyfriars."

There was a roar of denial at once.

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"A SON OF THE SEA!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"What price the Fifth?"

"Coker's our man!"

"What price Coker?"

"I am afraid the electors will not agree to that proposition, Valence," said Mr. Prout drily. "Do you wish for a show of hands, Loder?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Loder, setting his teeth.

"Very well. Boys"—Mr. Prout's voice rose above the buzz—"all who are in favour of Gerald Loder kindly lift their hands!"

Hands went up on all sides, and Loder's hopes rose for a moment. There were a good many, after all, and if the rest did not all intend to vote, there was a chance for him yet.

"You cad, Smithy!" yelled Bob Cherry suddenly. "Not both hands!"

"Yah! Fair play!"

The Bouncer coloured, and lowered one of his hands.

Mr. Prout counted the elevated hands, and Mr. Quelch recounted them, in order to make assurance doubly sure.

Then the announcement was made, after the two Form-masters had compared notes and found the result to agree.

"Forty-eight!"

There was a loud buzz in the lecture-hall.

"We shall beat that, two to one at least," said Harry Wharton, with satisfaction.

"Three to one, more likely," said Bob Cherry.

"The threefulness will be terrific!"

Coker's face was wreathed in smiles. His last doubt, if he had had one, had vanished. The total of forty-eight would be easy to beat. The Middle School alone would beat it, without the fags. And the fags were numerous, and enthusiastic.

"Very good!" said Mr. Prout. "Those who are in favour of Coker will now put up their hands."

A forest of hands went up.

Loder glanced over the crowd, and gritted his teeth. At a glance it could be seen that his men were outnumbered. Even fags who had been threatened with dire punishment if they failed to vote for Loder were putting up their hands for Coker, feeling strong in numbers, and in the protection of Coker if he became captain.

Nugent minor of the Second, who was Loder's own fag, had his hand up, almost under the eyes of the prefect. Loder gave him a look that spoke volumes; but he could not speak in any other way, just then, before the masters. Intimidation of voters could not be carried out in the public eye.

"Count! Count!" yelled the Cokerites.

The Form-masters counted.

Loder, with perhaps a faint hope in spite of the evidence of his eyes, waited in deep anxiety for the result.

But there was no anxiety now among the Cokerites. They were jubilant. Fellows were standing on tiptoe, or on seats, counting themselves, and the chums of the Removs succeeded in making various totals—but all their totals, however varied, came to more than a hundred. It was evident that the enemy were greatly outnumbered, and that the result was certain.

The Form-masters counted slowly and steadily. The numbering was finished at last, and there was a hush as they finished, and compared their totals.

"Now for the fireworks!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Watch Loder's chivvy!"

And the juniors grinned.

The totals having been found to be correct, Mr. Prout made the announcement. The fellows stood in deep silence to hear.

"Votes in favour of Coker, one hundred and twenty!"

The silence was broken by a tremendous roar. Mr. Prout's voice was not heard, as he went on to declare that Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, was duly elected captain of Greyfriars. The fellows did not want to hear any more—they only wanted to hear themselves—and they did—and they might have been heard outside the walls of the old school as they cheered.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Three cheers for the captain of Greyfriars!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And a crowd of enthusiastic Cokerites rushed at their candidate, and seized him, and lifted him on their shoulders, and bore him in triumph round and round the big hall.

Loder, his face dark with passion, strode to the door without a word, and disappeared, and most of his backers followed him. The Form-masters left the hall, perhaps fearing for the safety of their ear-drums.

But the Cokerites were in no hurry to go.

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the
Ohums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

Coker was carried thrice round the hall in triumphal procession, and then allowed to stand upon his feet on the dais, in a breathless and ruffled condition, but overflowing with satisfaction.

"Speech!" roared Potter.

"Speech, Coker!"

"Silence for the captain of Greyfriars!"

"Hear, hear!"

Coker cleared his throat, and tried to put his tie straight.

"Fellows and gentlemen——"

"Hear, hear!"

"But I won't address you as gentlemen; I know you so well——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker!" murmured Nugent. "He never opens his mouth without putting his foot in it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chums and pals generally——" said Coker.

"Bravo!"

"You've elected me captain of Greyfriars. It's the first time a Fifth Form chap has been captain of the school—let's hope it won't be the last!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The late lamented Wingate was a jolly good captain, and I'm going to follow in his footsteps and see if I can do as well!"

"Follow in your father's footsteps!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Bravo, Coker!"

"Anyway, we've kept an awful outsider from becoming captain of Greyfriars," said Coker. "I don't want to say anything against the rival candidate. I wouldn't think of running him down in any way. But you'll all admit that a rottener, beastlier, more crawling sort of a bounder——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that isn't running a chap down, I think I'd prefer to be run down myself," grinned Harry Wharton.

"If my respected rival had got in, Greyfriars would have gone to the dogs," said Coker. "I'm going to save it from the bow-wows if I can!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Chap can't do more than his best," said Coker. "I'm going to do my best. If any chap thinks he knows better than I do, I'm willing to meet him in the gym, with or without gloves. I can't say fairer than that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo!"

"And that's all I've got to say!" concluded Coker.

"Quite enough too!" remarked Vernon-Smith.

But the Bounder's voice was drowned in the roar of cheering. And Coker was shouldered again, and carried in triumph to his own study, and then at last the din of the election died away. Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, was captain of Greyfriars; and, now that it was all over and couldn't be helped, the Cokerites wondered how it would turn out!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Captain.

GERALD LODER stamped to and fro in his study, his face pale with rage and chagrin, and envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness running riot in his breast.

He had had his throw of the dice, and he had lost.

He had plotted against George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, he had brought about a split in the Sixth, he had caused Wingate to become disgraced in the eyes of the doctor, he had driven Wingate from the post of captain!

And all for nothing!

The prize he had worked for and schemed for had been snatched from his grasp at the last moment, and by an utterly unexpected adversary.

Wingate had fallen from his high estate; and Loder, instead of taking his place, had failed utterly—ridiculously. He had succeeded only in placing a Fifth-Former over himself. Of the two, he would have preferred Wingate as captain. But there would be no getting rid of Coker now. Coker might be all varieties of an ass; but he had great sticking powers. He was captain of Greyfriars now, and, in consequence, captain of the First Eleven, and head of the games. Loder would simply not have a look in, in any way. Coker was very much up against the Sixth Form. The Sixth Form disdained Coker; and Coker would repay all that with interest now that the power was in his hands. And the Sixth were pretty certain to "round" on Loder as the cause of all the troubles that would accrue to them until they could get rid of their new captain. In all the Sixth there was only one fellow who approved of Coker's election, and that was Coker minor, the clever youngster who was in the top Form, although younger than his major in the Fifth. But Reggie Coker counted for nothing in the top Form; as a body, the Sixth were against Horace Coker, and, so far as they were concerned, the new captain would have a hard row to hoe.

Not that Coker cared. Coker had plenty of good qualities, but modesty and a distrust of his powers could not be counted among them. Coker was perfectly satisfied with himself, and he did not care twopence whether the Sixth were satisfied with him or not.

Loder's friends dropped into his study one by one to consult with him about it. They wanted to know what could be done; but there was nothing to be done. Walker proposed to lick the fags who had voted for Coker, and that proposal was agreed to nem. con. But though that might satisfy their vengeance, it would not unseat the new captain. They had got him now, and they had to stand him, as Phipps remarked.

"You've made a ghastly mess of it, and, no mistake Loder!" said Walker, in his role of Job's comforter.

Loder snarled.

"How was I to foresee this?" he demanded.

"Chaps ought to foresee things, when they upset things," said Phipps, vaguely.

"Greyfriars won't stand it," said Valence.

"Greyfriars will have to stand it," said Carne. "Coker's captain, and he means business."

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"Give him another dozen, as he won't obey my orders!" said Captain Coker to the fags. Swish! Swish! Swish! "Oh!" roared Loder. "Stop it, you young scoundrels! I'll do anything you like!" (See Chapter 11.)

"Of course, he'll take the advice of the Sixth in running things," Valence said.

"Of course he won't," growled Carne. "I can see Coker taking advice from anybody—I don't think. The First Eleven are playing Lantham on Saturday; and Coker will have the making up of the team."

"Oh, my hat!"

"His supporters will expect to be played in it," said Loder. "He'll make up a team of the Fifth and Fourth, very likely, and make us look a set of idiots."

"That's what we are, I think," said Valence. "Blessed if I don't wish we'd been satisfied with Wingate while we had him!"

"Lot of good saying that now."

"Coker mayn't be such an ass," said Valence, after a pause. "Suppose we see him and point out things to him—"

"And get kicked out of his study."

"Well, the whole position's rotten, and no mistake."

"All Loder's fault!" remarked Walker.

Loder turned on him with a glare.

"How was it my fault?" he bellowed.

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"Well, you got Wingate out."

"Wingate resigned!"

"That's all very well; but we all know why he resigned. You planted a fight on him, when you knew that the Head was bound to see it."

"You backed me up in doing it."

"Well, you were leader," said Walker. "I didn't know you were going to lead us into this frightful mess. We shall be grinned to death over this."

"We'd better see Coker, and talk it over with him," said Valence. "If we point out that the Sixth won't stand any nonsense, I dare say he'll see reason. Suppose we tell him that unless he is guided by the advice of a Sixth Form committee, we all refuse to play in the First Eleven under his lead?"

"Well, that might have some effect," said Phipps.

"Let's go and strike the iron while it's hot," said Smith major.

"No blessed good," growled Loder. "You may as well let him alone."

Valence shook his head.

"As a matter of fact, Loder, old man, I'm not much

inclined to follow your advice any more," he said. "You've got us all into a hole, and we shall have to get out of it the best way we can without you!"

And Valence and the rest left the study, leaving Loder alone.

The prefect made a gesture of rage.

He was quite left out now; his influence over his followers had gone. He had, as they said plainly, made a ghastly mess of things, and put the Sixth into a hole there was no apparent escape from. They did not want any more of his advice after that.

Loder remained a few minutes alone, thinking, with sullen, moody brow. Then he took up a cane, and quitted the study. He made his way to the Second Form-room. Nugent minor, his fag, had voted against him, and it would be some satisfaction to make Dicky Nugent smart for it.

The Second Form-room was in an uproar. The fags had voted for Coker almost to a man, or rather, to a fag; and they were celebrating their victory. The feed Coker had promised to his supporters was handed out with great liberality. Every fellow was given permission to order what he liked at the school shop—the bill to go to Coker; and the fags had taken full advantage of their new captain's generosity. There was a feast toward in the Second Form-room. Sammy Bunter—Bunter minor—had his fat face wreathed in smiles. Dicky Nugent, and Gatty and Myers, were in their glory, roasting expensive rashers at the Form-room fire. There were jam-tarts, and jam on the desks, and cakes and doughnuts galore, and the popping of corks was incessant. The fags were too busy to see the Form-room door open. Loder strode into the room, and stood looking upon the festive scene with a grim and savage look, his hand closing tighter upon the cane. Dicky Nugent was the first to spot him.

"Ware Loder!" he muttered; and the festive fags stood upon the defensive at once.

Loder strode towards Dicky Nugent. Dicky promptly placed a desk between himself and his fag-master.

"Come here, you young cad!" said Loder, between his teeth.

"What for?" asked Dicky cautiously.

"I'm going to lick you," roared Loder.

"Tain't in the game to lick a chap for voting against you," said Dicky, defiantly. "Coker won't allow it."

Loder smiled grimly.

"I'm not going to lick you for voting against me, but for not cleaning the crockery in my study!" he said.

"What a whopper!" said Dicky. He made a sign to Gatty, who scuttled out of the Form-room. "Look here, Loder," went on Nugent minor, "if you bully me, I shall appeal to Coker. Coker has promised that there's going to be no more bullying."

"Will you come here?" roared Loder.

"No fear!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"You can let me alone," said Dicky. "I'll ask Coker not to let me fag for you any more, either. He can work it, as captain of Greyfriars. You let me alone."

Loder made a rush at the fag. Dicky dodged among the desks, and Loder pursued him, and ran him down at last. His grasp closed upon Dicky Nugent's collar, and then the cane rose and fell. Dicky roared.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Help!"

The door was flung open, and Gatty rushed in.

"Here's Coker!" he yelled.

Coker of the Fifth followed Gatty into the room.

"Rescue!" bawled Dicky. "He's licking me because I voted for you, Coker!"

"Let that fag alone, Loder!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Loder.

Coker turned red.

"Do you understand that I'm captain of Greyfriars?" he demanded.

"Rats!"

"Will you let that fag go?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly well make you!" said Coker.

And he rushed at Loder, and grasped him. Loder let go Dicky Nugent, to grapple with his enemy, and they struggled furiously. Nugent minor yelled to his comrades.

"Buck up, you fellows!" he yelled. "Stand by your captain!"

"What-ho!"

An army of fags descended upon Loder like an avalanche, and he was wrenched away from Coker. He rolled over on the floor, and seven or eight fags sat upon him and kept him there. Coker gasped.

"That's right!" he said. "Hold him! You stand by your skipper, kids, and your skipper will stand by you."

"Hurrah!"

"Lemme gerrup!" spluttered Loder.

Coker looked down at him with a grin.

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
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"I'm captain of Greyfriars now," he remarked. "You don't seem to understand it, but I'm going to drive it into your head somehow. Are you going to toe the line?"

"No!" roared Loder.

"The captain of Greyfriars has power to take away any fag from any senior who is guilty of bullying," said Coker. "I've looked up the rules, you see. Nugent minor, I order you not to fag for Loder any more."

"What-ho!" chuckled Nugent minor.

"No member of this Form is to fag for Loder until further notice," said Coker, loftily. "In case of any bullying by Loder, I order you to report at once to me."

"Yes, rather."

"If Loder enters this Form-room again, you are empowered to collar him, and pitch him out on his neck," said Coker.

"Bravo!"

"Are you going to obey orders, Loder?"

"No!" yelled the infuriated prefect. "I'll smash you. Lemme gerrup."

"Then you're going to have a lesson," said Coker, calmly.

"Nugent minor, take that cane and lay into him. Give him a dozen across the shoulders."

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Nugent minor.

"Don't you dare—" began Loder, gasping.

But he was cut short. The fags rolled him over on his face, and held him down by weight of numbers, leaving only a clear space for the cane. Dicky Nugent wielded the cane with a willing hand. He had many old scores to pay off—his arms had been pinched, and his wrists had been twisted, and his ears had been boxed—and now his tyrant was at his mercy; and Dicky Nugent did not believe in sparing the rod and spoiling the prefect!

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Loder roared and struggled.

The Form-room door was open, and the prefect's wild yells soon brought a crowd of spectators to the spot.

"What on earth's happening?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, one of the first to arrive. "Is it a giddy earthquake?"

"It's Loder!" said Coker. "He refuses to obey the orders of his captain, and he's having his first lesson."

"My hat!"

"Go it, Dicky!" yelled Frank Nugent.

"I'm jolly well going it," panted Dicky.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Lash! Lash! Lash!

"Yaroo!" bellowed Loder. "Ow! Oh! Hellup! Yah! Yawp!"

"That's a dozen," panted Dicky, at last. "Shall I give him some more, Coker? I don't mind a bit. I'm not at all tired."

"I expect Loder is!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you had enough, Loder?" asked Coker politely.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Are you going to obey your captain's orders?"

"Ow! No! Oh!"

"Give him another dozen!" said Coker.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Oh!" roared Loder. "Yow! Stop it, you young fiend! I—I'll do anything you like. I—"

"You'll obey orders?"

"Ow—yow—yes!"

"Good! You can let him get up, kids."

The fags reluctantly allowed their victim to go. Loder scrambled to his feet, very red and dusty and dishevelled. His face was convulsed with rage, but the fight was taken out of him. He glared furiously at Coker, and rushed from the room.

"If he comes in here again you've only got to call me, kids," said Coker, as he went to the door.

"Bravo, Coker!"

"Good old Coker!"

And in the Second Form, at all events, there was no dissatisfaction with the new captain of Greyfriars.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Nonsense.

HORACE COKER returned to his study in the Fifth Form passage, feeling that he had deserved well of his country. He had shown, to Loder's conviction, if not to his satisfaction, that he did not mean to stand any nonsense, and that he was captain of Greyfriars in fact as well as in name.

There were four or five Sixth-Formers waiting for him in his study. Coker grinned as he entered, and found Carne, and Walker, and Phipps, and Valence waiting for him. He nodded to the seniors in a very careless way.

"We've been waiting for you," said Carne, tartly.

"Yes," said Coker, "I dare say! Busy, you know. Duties as captain of the school started already, you know."

"Oh," said Carne.

"Had to keep a prefect in order," explained Coker.

"Oh!" said Carne again; while the other seniors glared at Horace Coker as if they would eat him.

"What prefect was it?" asked Valence.

"Loder! He was bullying the fags for voting for me!"

Carne's jaw set grimly.

"And you interfered?" he said.

"You bet!"

"And are you going to interfere between us and our fags, may I inquire?" said Carne, in a sulphurous tone.

"Certainly, if necessary!" replied Coker. "As captain of Greyfriars, I sha'n't allow any bullying of the fags. I shall keep them in their place myself. I have taken Loder's fag away—"

"Taken him away!"

"Exactly. Loder will not be allowed to have a fag unless he learns to treat him decently," said Coker.

"M-m-y hat!"

"It will be the same with the rest of the Sixth, if there's any more ragging the juniors over the election," added Coker.

"Do you think the Sixth are going to stand it?" roared Carne.

Coker nodded calmly.

"I think they'll have to," he replied.

"Then you're jolly well mistaken! For two pins we'd take you up now and wipe up the study carpet with you!"

"I advise you to treat your captain with respect," said Coker. "Mind, I'm not standing any nonsense! If I have any cheek from you, you'll get a hiding all round!"

"A w-w-w-what?"

"A hiding!" said Coker. "I've made the Second-Form fags lick Loder—a dozen strokes with a cane."

EVERY
MONDAY.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Yes."

"Good!" said Coker. "Now we can start clear. If you have anything to say to me, as captain of Greyfriars, I'm willing to hear it. Go ahead!"

"If you're to be recognised as captain," said Carne, with an effort, "you'll have to—I mean, you'll be expected to take counsel with the Sixth, and run the show according to Sixth-Form ideas."

"Oh, I shall be expected to do that, shall I?" said Coker truculently.

"Yes, certainly!" said all the Sixth-Formers together.

"Well, the fellows who expect that, will be disappointed, that's all," said Coker. "I'm going to run the show according to my own ideas, and nobody else's."

"But the Sixth will expect—"

"Blow the Sixth!"

"What!" yelled the seniors.

"Blow the Sixth!" repeated Coker calmly. "I don't care a brass button for the Sixth! The Sixth put on too many airs, in my opinion. You ain't really such a set of giddy panjandrums as you think yourselves."

"Look here, Coker, if you don't want the Sixth to ignore you, and decline to take any hand in school matters at all—"

"But that's just what I do want," said Coker calmly.

"Oh!"

"I shall expect you to obey orders, that's all."

"Obey orders—your orders?"

"Exactly!"

"You'll be disappointed, then," said Carne grimly. "And

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"You—you cheeky villain!"

"And if I have any rot from you I'll call in a crowd of the Fifth, and give you a walloping all round!" said Coker.

"Mind, they'll be jolly glad to wallop you, now that they can do so by orders of the captain of the school. You fellows have swanked a lot, and this is where you climb down."

The Sixth-Formers looked at one another helplessly. There was no doubt that force was on Coker's side, if he chose to exert his authority as captain of the school. And it was pretty evident that he would choose.

Carne calmed himself with an effort. He was realising that it was not of much use to quarrel with Horace Coker.

"Look here, Coker," he said, "we'd better have this thing out. You've been elected captain of Greyfriars, as far as that goes—"

"It goes all the way," said Coker. "I am captain of Greyfriars, ain't I?"

"Well—yes, in a way—"

"Am I captain of Greyfriars, or am I not?"

"Well, not properly speaking—"

"Then I've got nothing to say to you," said Coker, with a wave of his hand towards the door. "Get out!"

"What!"

"I decline to hold any communication with any fellow who doesn't recognise me as being captain of Greyfriars, with full powers."

"Look here—"

"Get out!"

"I tell you—"

"Are you going to get out, or shall I call in some of the Fifth to chuck you out on your necks?" asked Coker politely.

Carne contained himself with an effort.

"Well, perhaps I was a—little hasty," he said. "Of course, you have been—er—elected captain, and—"

"And I am captain?"

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NEXT
MONDAY.

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

I for one withdraw from the senior football club, and refuse to play in the First Eleven so long as you are captain!"

"Same here!" said the rest of the Sixth-Formers.

Coker laughed.

"You jolly well won't have a chance to play in the First Eleven," he said. "I'm only going to play two of the Sixth—Wingate and Courtney. They're good men, and if they like to play I shall put them in. The rest will be made up from the Fifth."

"You—you—you fathead!" gasped Carne.

"You idiot!" roared Phipps.

"You chump!"

"You cheeky duffer! The First Eleven will be licked out of its boots!"

"We'll see about that!" said Coker. "We're playing Laniham on Saturday, and I've sketched out a team already to meet them. I think we shall lick them. Anyway, we can't do worse than the Sixth has been doing lately. What's your record been for the last four matches, not to go any further back? Since you started ragging Wingate and mucking up the team, we've been beaten all along the line. It's up to the Fifth to retrieve the honour of Greyfriars. That's what we're going to do."

The Sixth-Formers stood speechless. They were strongly inclined to seize hold of Horace Coker, there and then, and bump him hard upon the floor. But a crowd of Fifth-Form fellows had gathered round the doorway of the study now, and were looking in with grinning faces. The odds were on the side of Coker & Co. if it came to a row; and Coker had already shown that he did not in the least regard the persons of the mighty Sixth as sacred.

"Hear, hear!" said Potter, from the doorway. "Coker, old man, you're a giddy orator, and you beat Brutus out of his socks."

"Yes, rather!" said Greene. "Good old Coker!"

"Faith, and give it to them, my boy!" said Fitzgerald.

Coker nodded.

"I mean to. I'm not standing any rot from the Sixth, I can tell you. You chaps had better buzz off now I've explained—nothing more to be said that I know of. Just remember that I'm going to rule the roost now that I'm captain, and that I'm not going to stand any nonsense from the Sixth. Now travel!"

And Carne and Company travelled.

There was nothing more to be said, and they retired from Coker's study with dark faces and angry mutterings. The chuckles of the Fifth-Formers followed them.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Means Business.

THE next day Greyfriars woke up to find that Coker was captain of the school. Some of the fellows wondered whether it wasn't a dream after all. But it wasn't. Coker was captain, and Coker was showing that he meant to be really captain. The scene in the Second Form-Room had become the talk of Greyfriars; and the juniors, at least, rejoiced over the punishment of Loder. Loder was in a fagless state now; Nugent minor had been only too glad to claim his liberty. And the other seniors, who had intended to pour out the vials of their wrath upon the rebellious fags who had voted for Coker, decided to postpone that ceremony till a more suitable time. It was evident that Coker was not to be trifled with, and nobody in the Sixth wanted to go through Loder's experiences.

The juniors had elected Coker; and, like most constituents, they considered that they had a claim upon the candidate they had elected. It was an open secret that Coker would not give many places in the First Eleven to the Sixth. And fellows in the Shell and the Fourth and the Remove smiled at the idea of an eleven made up of the Fifth. If Coker wanted good players, Coker would have to apply to the junior Forms—and there were at least fifty juniors who considered themselves entitled to places in the eleven. Hadn't they elected Coker, and wasn't he bound to recognise their loyal support?

After morning lessons that day, Hobson of the Shell stopped to speak to Coker when the Forms came out. Coker eyed him in rather a distant manner. Coker the captain was a more dignified personage than Coker of the Fifth.

"Cokey, old man—" said Hobson familiarly.

"Hallo!" said Coker abruptly.

"I suppose you're thinking out the eleven for the Lantham match now?" Hobson remarked, in an affable manner.

"I've thought it out," said Coker grimly.

"Any Shell fellows in it?" asked Hobson carelessly.

Coker looked astonished.

"Shell fellows!" he repeated. "Did you say Shell fellows?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

Hobson stared at him.

"What are you cackling at?" he asked.

"Your little joke," explained Coker.

Potter and Greene loyally chuckled. They always chuckled when Coker was funny; and their chuckles were readier than ever now that he was captain of the school.

Hobson turned red.

"I wasn't joking," he said.

"Oh!" said Coker. "I thought you were. My mistake."

"I asked you if there were any Shell fellows in the eleven?" bawled Hobson.

"Weren't we speaking of the First Eleven?" asked Coker blandly. "If you mean the junior eleven, I don't know anything about that, not being a junior. Of course, I take an interest in junior football, as captain of the school and Head of the games. If you're in doubt at any time, come to me and I'll give you some tips."

Hobson snorted.

"Tips about footer!" he said. "Yes, a fat lot of use your tips about footer would be, when you don't know a goal-keeper from a goal-post."

Potter and Greene chuckled again, and Coker stared at them.

"What are you cackinnating about?" he demanded crossly.

"Sorry!" said Potter. "Ahem—"

Coker wagged his forefinger at Hobson.

"You buzz off!" he said.

"I want to know how many places you're giving the Shell in the First Eleven?" shouted Hobson.

"None; if you want to know," said Coker. "It would be a new departure playing you kids in the First, I should say."

"New departure playing the biggest idiot in Greyfriars!" said Hobson warmly. "But I suppose you're going to play yourself?"

"Look here!"

"Didn't we elect you?" exclaimed Hobson. "Do you think we elected you to lose First Eleven matches?"

"If you're looking for a prize thick ear," said Coker darkly, "you're going just the right way to get it! You elected me because I was the best candidate—"

"Rats!"

"Well, you elected me, any way; and I'm captain of Greyfriars. I'm not going to give my supporters places in the First Eleven. That would be bribery and corruption!" said Coker, with a great deal of dignity.

And Coker walked on, leaving Hobson speechless with indignation.

The Famous Five of the Remove met Coker in the Close. They all had their sweetest smiles ready, and they treated Coker with a deference he was very unaccustomed to receiving from the Remove.

"Three cheers for the captain!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

Coker smiled.

"Made up the First Eleven yet for the Lantham match, Coker?" Nugent asked, in an off-hand sort of way.

"Yes," said Coker.

"Any of our names down?"

"Oh, don't be funny," said Coker. "Wingate played a Remove fag in the First Eleven once, and lost the match. I'm not likely to play the giddy goat like that."

The sweet smiles faded from the faces of the Co.

"Ahem! But you're looking for good players, you know," said Harry Wharton.

"No, I'm not; I've found 'em."

"Where have you found 'em?"

"In the Fifth."

"But there ain't any in the Fifth!" said Johnny Bull innocently.

Coker frowned majestically.

"None of your little jokes," he said. "Remember that I'm captain of the school, young Bull. I'm much obliged to you for electing me, but I'm not going to stand any nonsense from a junior Form; not so much as Wingate stood, as a matter of fact."

"Why, you cheeky ass—" began Wharton warmly.

"But I say—"

"Clear off!" said Coker.

"Nonsense!"

Coker walked on majestically.

The Removites exchanged dismayed glances.

"My only respected Aunt Matilda Ann!" said Bob Cherry, with a whistle. "Coker is more Coker than ever now, it seems to me."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Nugent.

"Ripping captain for this school—I don't think!" growled Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I suppose he can't be blamed for acting as captain, when he's been elected captain," he remarked. "But—ahem!—I'm afraid we've been and gone and done it this time, you fellows!"

And the chums of the Remove admitted that they had!

A little later Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth were seen talking to Coker. They left him with decidedly angry faces, and it was easy to guess what the talk had been about. There were no places in the First Eleven for Fourth-Formers.

After school that day, Coker dropped into Wingate's study in the Sixth Form passage. The late captain of Greyfriars was there with Courtney. Both of them looked curiously at Coker as he came in. Coker nodded condescendingly.

"I've put both your names down," he remarked.

"What for?" asked Wingate.

"First Eleven match on Saturday."

"Who's captaining the team?"

"Not much doubt about that, I should say," replied Coker. "Isn't the First Eleven always captained by the captain of the school? I am, of course."

"Oh, you are!" said Courtney.

"Yes. I'm going to play you as inside-right, Wingate, and Courtney as outside-left. I'm centre-forward myself."

Wingate shook his head.

"Sorry, Coker; but I can't play!"

"Same here!" added Courtney.

Coker looked warlike.

"Why can't you play?" he demanded. "You're the only fellows in the Sixth I've asked to play, and I want you."

"I'm sorry," said Wingate.

"Not that I want you particularly," said Coker independently. "I can fill up the places easily enough. But why can't you play?"

"I'd rather not tell you."

"Rot! I want to know."

"Well, because the match will be a farce, if you captain the

team," said Wingate calmly. "You can't play roofer for toffee. You couldn't captain a team of fags in the Third Form. Greyfriars will be licked, and I don't want to help." Coker turned red.

"We'll jolly well see," he exclaimed.

"If you asked me to skipper the team, and gave me a free hand in selecting the eleven, I'd do it—for the sake of the school," said Wingate. "But I shouldn't play you, Coker."

"Why, you—you—"

"So you'd better leave me out," concluded Wingate.

"I jolly well will leave you out," exclaimed Coker, "and Courtney too! There won't be any of the Sixth in the team at all!"

And Loder left the study and slammed the door after him. Wingate and Courtney exchanged a grin.

"There will be a frightful muck-up for Greyfriars on Saturday," said Wingate. "Lantham are hot stuff, and the best team we could get together wouldn't find it easy to hold them. Coker's team will be played with; and there's no use in our making ourselves look asses along with the rest. If there was a ghost of a chance, I'd play, for the sake of the school; but there isn't."

"Not an earthly!" agreed Courtney. "My hat! I wonder how this will end?"

Wingate shrugged his shoulders.

"It's pretty rough on all the fellows," said Courtney.

"The fellows brought it on themselves."

"That's so; and it's better than having Loder as captain, anyway. I'm pretty certain that Loder himself would be glad to see you captain of Greyfriars again by this time."

Wingate laughed.

"I shouldn't wonder!" he said.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Loder Is Not Popular.

A CROWD gathered round the notice-board in Hall the next day to see the list for the Lantham match, posted up by Horace Coker, the captain of Greyfriars. Seniors and juniors read it with equal interest.

As a rule, First Eleven matches did not interest the juniors so much as their own fixtures; but this was an exception. Of the crowd that read the notice, at least fifty considered that they should, by rights, have been in the team. If a Fifth-Former could be captain of the First Eleven, a Fourth-Former or a Removeite could play in it—why not? Horace Coker did not look at it in that light, however; and it must be admitted that his most enthusiastic backers at the election had already begun to put on sackcloth and ashes.

The list was complete, and it contained names of Fifth-Formers, and no others. It read:

Greene; Fitzgerald, Browne; Tate, Lane, Bland; Blundell, Potter, Coker, Thompson, Pride—all fellows in the Fifth Form of Greyfriars.

The juniors grunted as they read it; the Sixth-Formers sneered.

It was known that Wingate and Courtney had declined to play, and that no other members of the Sixth had been given a chance.

"Well, I think that's a rotten list," Temple, of the Fourth, observed. "In all that lot there ain't more than four players—and Coker isn't one of them."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Nice prospect for Greyfriars!" grunted Hobson, of the Shell. "Not even a couple of Shell chaps to give the team a backbone!"

"More likely to give the team the pip!" said Bob Cherry.

"What was wanted was six or seven of the Remove—"

"Oh, rot!"

"Might have put in a few of the Fourth," growled Temple. "What the dooce did we elect Coker for? That's what I want to know."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"That's what we all want to know, I think," he remarked.

"It's not a First Eleven, it's a Form team," said Harry Wharton; "and it isn't up to the usual Fifth Form team, either, because Coker's in it."

"Somebody ought to remonstrate with Coker," said Nugent.

"Lot of good that would do. There never was such an ass—"

"Such a chump—"

"Such a duffer—"

"Such a fathead!"

"And that's the blithering idiot you've elected to be skipper of Greyfriars!" said Vernon-Smith unpleasantly. "Don't you think Loder would have been a bit better than that—eh?"

"No," said Wharton. "Coker's a duffer, but Loder's a rotter, and that's worse. Coker for my money, if we must have one of them."

"We shall look a precious set of idiots on Saturday when

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NEXT MONDAY:

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

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ONE PENNY.

the Lantham lot walk over our first eleven!" sneered the Bouncer.

"Faith, and that's thrue for ye!" said Micky Desmond. "It wouldn't be so bad if Coker let Blundell captain the team. But he won't!"

"No fear!"

"That wouldn't be Coker!"

Blundell of the Fifth was thinking about that, too. Blundell was a good player, and he was captain of the Fifth Form team, and he did not see why he should not captain a First Eleven. He certainly would have made a better captain than Coker. He resolved to tackle the cheerful Horace upon the subject.

He found Coker in his study, having tea with Potter and Greene. Coker nodded to him pleasantly.

"Seen the list?" he asked.

"Er—yes," said Blundell.

"I've got your name down," said Coker graciously.

"I see you have. I—I suppose you're going to ask me to captain the team?" Blundell suggested.

Coker's face became frigid at once.

"I don't see what could have put that idea into your head," he remarked.

"Well, you—you see—"

"I'm captaining the First Eleven, of course, as captain of Greyfriars."

"Lantham are a tough lot," hinted Blundell.

"Yes, I know that; I'm going to make you fellows play up," said Coker cheerfully. "No slacking, you know; I shall keep you at it."

Blundell breathed hard.

"Some of the fellows think you would do better to ask me to captain the team," he said. "I—I'm more used to it than you are, you know." Blundell thought it more judicious not to mention his opinion of Coker's abilities as a player and captain.

"Some of the fellows are asses, don't you think so?" said Coker pleasantly.

"Then you—you mean to captain the team?"

"Of course I do."

"What do you think, Potter and Greene?" demanded Blundell, looking at Coker's study-mates.

Potter and Greene looked uncomfortable.

"Well, I—I think you might leave it to Blundell, Cokey," said Potter.

"M'yes!" said Greene. "Perhaps it would be better, Coker."

"Rot!" said Coker politely.

"Look here, Coker—" began the captain of the Fifth wrathfully.

"I said rot, and I mean rot!" said Coker.

"Then I jolly well resign from the team!" roared Blundell. "I'm not going to make a silly ass of myself before the Lantham chaps!"

"Right-ho!" said Coker, undisturbed. "I'll put Sutton in, instead of you. As a matter of fact, Blundell, I only put your name down because I didn't really like to pass you over. I'm not wholly satisfied with you!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Your passing is a bit wild," said Coker, with a shake of the head; "and really, you know, you want to shoot a bit straighter!"

Blundell seemed about to suffocate. To be lectured on his play by the worst footballer in Greyfriars was the limit.

"I'll tell you what," said Coker. "I'm very busy now, with my duties as captain of the school; but when I get time I'll take you through the game a bit, and give you some coaching!"

Then Blundell exploded.

"Coaching!" he roared. "Coaching! You'll coach me! You ass! You—you jabberwock! You coach me, when you want coaching yourself, if you were going to play in an eleven from a girls' school! Oh, my hat! You fathead! You burbling jabberwock! Hold me, somebody."

Coker pointed to the door.

"Travel!" he said.

"The team will be the laughing-stock of the school!" roared Blundell. "I wouldn't play in it for my weight in gold."

"You won't play in it now, that's a cert.," said Coker.

"Buzz off!"

"You ass—"

"Oh, get out!"

"You fathead! My hat! It's all Loder's fault, the chump, for getting Wingate out of it! I'll go and say something to Loder."

And Blundell of the Fifth rushed away to Loder's study. He found the prefect looking very glum. Loder was alone, and not cheerful. Other fellows besides Blundell had thought it their duty to say things to him. His closest friends had

turned upon him, now that they fully realised what a ghastly mess he had brought them into. Whatever faults they had had to find with Wingate, they would have given whole terms of pocket-money to see him captain of Greyfriars again. The Sixth ignored and neglected. Rebellious fags checking the seniors unchecked. The Sixth left out of the first eleven, and seeing Greyfriars hopelessly licked, with the prospect of seeing the licking repeated at every match for the rest of the season. It was indeed a long and heavy indictment against Loder! The fellows were exasperated with Coker; but then, Coker was an ass, and could only be expected to be asinine, as Valence remarked. Loder ought to have known better. Why couldn't he let well alone? The veriest "rotter" in the Sixth had some feeling for the reputation of the school on the footer field; and that reputation would be in rags and tatters now. Greyfriars would be a standing joke among all the elevens they played—and it was all Loder's fault. Even Carne and Walker, who had backed Loder up all along the line, agreed that it was his fault. Loder, in fact, had just had a very unpleasant interview with them, in which high words had been exchanged on both sides; and he was still feeling sore and savage, when Blundell of the Fifth burst into the study.

"You ass!" roared Blundell, by way of opening.

Loder glared at him.

"What's the matter now?" he demanded. "Have you gone off your silly rocker?"

"Coker insists upon captaining the Eleven, and I've resigned," roared Blundell. "He's going to play the biggest idiot he can find in the Fifth, in my place."

"Well, I can't help it," growled Loder.

"It was all your fault."

"Oh, shut up. I've had that from Carne, and Walker, and Phipps, and the whole dashed family!" said Loder.

"Serve you right. You ought to be scragged," said Blundell. "Why couldn't you let Wingate alone? He was a good captain enough, though he had his faults. You put us up to grousing because he didn't play enough of the Fifth in the First Eleven—"

"You've got enough of the Fifth in it now," said Loder, with a sour smile.

"Yes; and the Fifth are going to be made ridiculous, and the whole school ridiculous, by that idiot Coker—and it's all your fault! I'd rather see a First Eleven playing without a single Fifth-Former in it!"

"Well, it's no good jawing me—"

"We'll do something more than jaw you, you fathead!" howled Blundell. "If we cut up a rotten show on Saturday—and we shall—we'll scrag you. I'll get all the Fifth and the Sixth to unite to put you through it, you ass. You'll be tarred and feathered by the seniors—so look out."

And Blundell stamped out of the study, and slammed the door behind him.

Loder gave a sort of groan.

Never had an unhappy plotter been so overwhelmed by the results of his plotting. Instead of becoming captain of the school, he had become the most unpopular fellow in Greyfriars; and if the election had been held over again, he would certainly not have polled a single vote, if his opponent had been a fag in the Third Form. Loder was not given to repenting of his bad actions; but he repented now. The trouble was, that there seemed to be no way of undoing the mischief he had done. And Blundell meant what he said—if not actually tarred and feathered, Loder was certain to be ragged by the seniors after Lantham had walked over the Greyfriars First.

Loder thought it out, and took a desperate resolution. He made his way to the Head's study, and found Dr. Locke alone. The Doctor glanced in some surprise at the prefect's worried face.

"Is anything the matter, Loder?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Loder. "I—I want to speak to you about the—the captaincy, sir. You know that Coker of the Fifth has been elected captain of the school. He's messing everything up, and—and—"

The Head's face hardened.

"I have already told you, Loder, that I cannot interfere in that matter," he said. "The boys made their own choice, and must abide by it."

"I—I think I ought to tell you something, sir," said Loder, desperately. "You—you asked Wingate to resign because of that fight with me?"

"That is true."

"You—you supposed that it was all Wingate's fault?"

"You led me to suppose so, and you made out your case," said the Head, sharply. "And as Wingate had no defence to make—"

"Well, it wasn't Wingate's fault, sir," mumbled Loder.

"What?"

"I—I was quite as much to blame as he was, sir. It—it's

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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been weighing on my mind since, and I feel bound to tell you frankly."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir. I—I'm afraid that—that in the heat of the moment I didn't make myself quite clear, sir, and—and if I threw too much of the blame upon Wingate, I—I'm sorry," stammered Loder.

The Head fixed him with a cold glance.

"Am I to understand, Loder, that you exonerate Wingate from blame, and take the blame upon your own shoulders?"

"Ye-e-es, sir," said the prefect desperately.

There was a pause.

"I hardly know what to answer, Loder. You have certainly deceived me; but as you come to me to confess it, I am willing to believe that you did not intend to do so. But do you see that you have caused me to act with injustice towards Wingate?"

"I am very sorry, sir. That—that's why I came here, sir, because—because it struck me in that light," said Loder, lying with the ease that comes of long practice. "But it will be all right, sir, if—if you reinstate Wingate—"

Dr. Locke shook his head.

"I cannot repair an injustice by committing another, Loder," he said. "That would be unjust to Coker, who has given no cause for complaint."

"He's messing everything up, sir."

"That is the business of the boys who elected him. If, after a term serious complaints are made, I might interfere; but it is not to be expected that I shall interfere to depose a captain of the school who was elected only two days ago. If Coker should choose to resign, I would reinstate Wingate at once, without an election. I certainly should not allow you to put up for an election again, Loder, after what you have told me."

"I don't ask it, sir; but—but you might turn Coker out—"

"It is a very serious position," said the Head. "However, I will think it over. What you have told me certainly lets new light on the matter, and I may think fit to order a fresh election, between Coker and Wingate. I will speak to Wingate about it, and I will make known my decision to-morrow."

"But, sir, to-night—"

"I must have time to consider, Loder. You may go," said the Head, coldly.

And Loder went.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Distinguishes Himself.

THE next day was Saturday—the day of the Lantham match.

Greyfriars was looking forward to the match with far from pleasant feelings.

Coker was the only fellow in the school who felt anything like confidence. Even the members of his eleven were not very hopeful. Each of them, certainly, had the fullest confidence in his own powers as a footballer. But with a duffer like Coker for captain—there was the rub!

"Bad enough having him in the team," Potter confided to Greene. "But to have him for skipper—oh, ye gods!"

"I suppose we shall be licked," said Greene. "But it's no good talking to Coker. I talked to him this morning—"

"And what did he say?"

"Offered to hand me a thick ear if I didn't shut up."

Potter sniffed.

"He offered me a black eye when I gave him a hint," he said. "He's past reasoning with. I've a jolly good mind to resign from the team."

"Then he'd put in a bigger duffer, if he could find one!" Potter glared.

"What do you mean, you ass?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Greene. "I mean—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Many members of the Fifth had talked to Coker, and many had given him broad hints.

Coker was deaf to talking to, and he was blind to the broadest hints. Horace Coker had marked out the path he meant to follow, and he was following it. As they thought of the coming match, the fellows who had elected him began to think that even Loder might possibly have been a better alternative.

After dinner the Greyfriars fellows began to throng round the footer ground. They did not expect to see what might be called a game; but there was a painful interest in seeing Greyfriars receive the biggest licking in the school record.

Coker came down to the ground with the team, and a chorus greeted him. It was not a flattering chorus. The enthusiasm even of the youngest fags for their new captain had vanished. Even Nugent minor was heard to declare

that he would rather fag for Loder again than see the school in such a ghastly mess.

"Here comes Coker!"

"Why don't you ask Wingate to captain the team, Coker?"

"Why don't you ask a fag?"

"Half-time score—hundred goals to nil!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glanced round serenely.

"You just wait a bit, you chaps!" he said. "You'll see what you will see! You take my word for it!"

"Well, there's no doubt about that," said Frank Nugent.

"But what we shall see is the biggest walloping Greyfriars has ever had."

"Resign, Coker!" roared a score of voices.

"Rats!" said Coker. "Why, only a day or two ago you were cheering me like thunder! Set of silly asses, I call you!"

"And he's quite right," said Bob Cherry. "That's what we are—silly asses! But it's all Courtney's fault for not standing for captain! We'd have elected him!"

"It's all Loder's fault for not letting well alone," growled Blundell of the Fifth. "And Loder's jolly well going to pay for it, too."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Here come the Lantham chaps."

The Lantham team had arrived in their brake.

Coker greeted the visiting team with great dignity. Drake, the Lantham skipper, looked surprised as he shook hands with Coker. He knew the Greyfriars fellows pretty well, and he had seen Coker play.

"Where's Wingate?" he asked.

"Not playing."

"Crooked?"

"No, he's not skipper now," Coker explained.

"Who's skipper, then?"

"I am!"

Drake jumped.

"You?"

"Yes," said Coker emphatically. "I'm captain of Greyfriars now, and I'm captaining the eleven. What are you sniggering at?"

The Lantham skipper gasped.

"Was I sniggering? Excuse me! All—all right."

"We're ready!" snapped Coker.

There was a grim silence on the crowd of spectators when the teams turned out into the field.

The Lantham team were a good set. Most of them were powerful fellows, considerably bigger than the Greyfriars Fifth-Formers who opposed them. The best team Greyfriars could have put into the field would have found it hard to play them. And Coker's eleven was not even the best the Fifth could have provided. Not that a good team would have made much difference with Coker playing centre-forward and giving orders. Coker's only idea of football was kick and rush; and other qualities are required in a football skipper.

Coker won the toss, and the teams lined up, and Lantham kicked off.

"Now look out for fireworks!" said Bob Cherry; and Hurree Janset Singh declared that the fireworkfulness would be terrific.

And indeed the fireworks were not long in coming.

Lantham began with a rush that carried them right through the home half, and in three minutes they were hotly attacking goal.

Greene, in goal, did very well; but he was bewildered by the rain of shots, and he soon let a ball pass him.

There was a groan round the field.

"Goal!"

Bob Cherry looked at his watch.

"Five minutes!" he remarked. "At the same rate, Lantham will finish up with fourteen goals to nil."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't a giddy laughing matter!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Lantham will go away grinning at us—and we shall deserve it."

"The grinfulness will be terrific."

The teams returned to the centre of the field. The Lantham men had gone through the Greyfriars side something like a knife through butter; and they were smiling as they lined up. Coker was looking very grim. He meant his team to do better than that, and he meant to set them a brilliant example.

And he did.

Greyfriars succeeded in getting into the enemy's territory

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after kick-off. Coker rushed for the ball, and trapped it, and rushed for goal. There was a shout round the field, but Coker did not heed it.

"Chuck it!"

"Stop, you ass!"

"Don't play the giddy goat!"

Coker would not have understood the shouts if he had listened to them; but he didn't listen. He rushed the ball goalward, and kicked. The Lantham goalie was standing with his hands in the pockets of his football shorts, and grinning. He did not take his hands out of his pockets. He could have stopped Coker's shot with perfect ease; but he did not. The ball whizzed into the net.

Coker panted, and glanced round at the sea of faces. He had done well—he had set his team an example—and he waited for a stunning burst of cheering.

But he waited in vain; the cheering didn't come. Instead of the cheering, there came, to the astonishment of Coker, such cries as these:

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Chump!"

"Duffer!"

"Frabjous ass!"

"It's a goal, you idiots!" roared Coker. "Don't you know a goal when you see one?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Off-side, you chump!"

"Off-side, you burbling duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" growled Coker.

The teams were laughing, the referee was chuckling. The crowd roared. Coker's face went crimson. He had been so palpably off-side when he captured the ball and rushed for goal that the Lanthamites had not taken the trouble to stop him, and the goalie had not bothered to save, certain that the goal would be disallowed.

"I—I say, was that off-side?" stammered Coker, turning an appealing glance upon Mr. Topp, the mathematics master, who was refereeing the match.

"Of course it was, Coker. The goal does not count."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker! Why don't you play marbles?"

"Why don't you play hop-scotch, and leave footer alone?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's face was like unto a newly-boiled beetroot when play was resumed. His own team were growling and chip-

ping him unmercifully, and the Lantham men were laughing so much that they nearly allowed Greyfriars to score a goal. But not quite. The goalie saved, and the play went away to the home end. Greene failed once more, and the ball went in. Five minutes later it went in again; three minutes, and another goal.

"Four up!" said Frank Nugent. "I say, you chaps, shall we duck him in the fountain after the match?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The duckfulness ought to be terrific."

Just before the whistle went for half-time, Coker distinguished himself again. He charged a Lantham man off the ball, and the whistle rang out. Coker had charged blindly in the penalty area—result, one more goal for Lantham. Then came half-time, with the visitors five up.

During the interval Coker mopped himself with a towel, and had the pleasure of listening to the comments his followers passed upon his play and his leadership. They discussed what ought to be done with Coker with a charming disregard for his feelings as he heard them. Greene thought a flogging would do, Potter suggested ducking in the fountain, Fitzgerald tar and feathers, while some of the fellows considered that nothing short of boiling in oil would meet the case.

Coker was not feeling happy as he led his men into battle for the second half.

It began to dawn upon him that it was not all honey to be captain of an exacting team, and far from pleasant to be chief on a losing side, especially when the side attributed defeat to his captainship.

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Coker played up hard in the second half. He succeeded in getting off-side for a record number of times, and he presented Lantham with a couple more penalty goals. If he got in a player's way at a critical moment, it was sure to be a Greyfriars player; and if he trapped a pass, it was certain to be a pass he ought to have let alone.

Yells of derision and shouts of laughter greeted all Coker's efforts, and he began to be glad when the game drew towards a close.

Lantham had scored nine goals in all, and they were not troubling to score any more. They were laughing too much. Even if the desperate efforts of the Greyfriars team might have had some effect, Coker was sure to render them ineffective with his terrible aid; and the team gave it up in despair at last, and took no notice of their captain. When Mr. Topp blew the whistle at last, and the Lantham men trooped off with a total of nine goals to nil in their favour, the Greyfriars followed them with drooping heads.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Exit Captain Coker.

"COLLAR him!"
"Jump on him!"
"Pile on him!"
"Squash him!"

Horace Coker came off the field looking, as Bob Cherry put it, much less Coker than usual. He gave a startled jump as the loud and vengeful shouts burst upon his ears, and he saw the crowd closing round him.

"Here! Hands off!" he gasped.

"Collar him!"

"Don't let him get away!"

"Slaughter him!"

Coker made a rush to get through the avengers. He burst through the crowd, and dashed for the School House, with the mob of them racing at his heels. The fellows were wildly excited; they wanted to get hold of Captain Coker, and they wanted it badly. Coker wanted just as badly, or still more badly, to get away from them.

He fled at top-speed towards the School House, with the wild mob raging at his heels.

"Stop him!"

"Collar him!"

"Duck him!"

"Squash him and slaughter him!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker. "Oh, my aunt! Oh, crumbs and jiminy!"

He dashed into the House.

"After him!"

And the avenging mob poured in. Coker was grasped in the doorway, and he rolled on the floor. Over him rolled the avengers.

"Ow!" bellowed Coker. "Ow! Help! Rescue! Yow!"

"Give him goals!"

"Give him nine goals to nil!"

"Bump him!"

"Slaughter him!"

And really it did look for a moment as if the unfortunate captain of Greyfriars would be slaughtered.

Fortunately, Mr. Prout hurried out of his study in time.

"Goodness gracious, my boys!" he exclaimed. "What ever is the matter? What is that wriggling underneath you?"

"Ow!" came a muffled groan from Coker. "It's me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me! Let Coker get up at once."

The avengers reluctantly released their victim. Coker sat up, in tatters, with a blazing face and dishevelled hair, and gasping for breath.

"What ever does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"It means that we're fed up with Coker, sir!" yelled a score of voices.

"Yah!" said Coker.

"Resign!"

"Yah! Rats! I won't!"

"Jump on him!"

"Slaughter him!"

"Order!" rapped out Mr. Prout. "I shall cane any boy who touches Coker! Order! There is a notice on the board that you have not seen, I think—and if you are not satisfied with Coker as your captain—"

There was a rush to the notice-board at once.

And as the fellows saw the notice, there was a cheer. Coker, in alarm, staggered to the board, and gasped as he read. The notice was in the Head's handwriting.

"NOTICE TO THE SCHOOL!"

"It having come to light that George Wingate, the late captain of Greyfriars, was asked to resign his post under a misapprehension on my part, I have decided to cancel the late election. A fresh election will be held in the lecture-hall this evening at six o'clock, and George Wingate, at my request, is a candidate.

(Signed),

"H. LOCKE (Headmaster)."

The Greyfriars fellows read the notice, and simply gasped with joy. Horace Coker did not gasp with joy. He frowned. There was a roar.

"Hurray for the Head!"

"Good old Wingate!"

"How are you going to vote, old man?" demanded Bob Cherry, giving Harry Wharton a terrific thump on the back.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well," said Coker, "I'm blessed if I care! It isn't much catch being captain of Greyfriars, when I come to think of it. You're not satisfied when you get a first-class footballer to captain you, so I don't know really what you want."

"First-class rats! Go and eat coke!"

"This has come just in time to save your life, Coker," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Gentlemen, under the happy circumstances of the case, I vote that we spare Coker's life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Coker, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "I've a jolly good mind to resign; still, as I think perhaps there are enough sensible chaps to know a good captain when they see one, I shall put up for election again. All the fellows who want me for captain can roll up at six o'clock!"

"There won't be much rolling, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Gentlemen!" said Hobson of the Shell. "Every chap is free to vote for whom he likes, and any chap who votes for Coker will be jumped on, squashed, and spifficated!"

"Hear, hear!"

Horace Coker was allowed to totter away—as Wharton said, his life was spared. A yell of laughter followed him as he went up to the Fifth-Form dormitory to change. He required a change.

When the clock-tower rolled out the hour of six the lecture-hall was crammed.

Wingate of the Sixth was there with Courtney, and the late captain of Greyfriars was looking very genial. Exactly how much he owed to Loder's late repentance he did not know; but he was willing to believe that the prefect was sorry for the harm he had done. At all events, there he was, ready to stand for election; and there wasn't much doubt which way the election would go.

Coker of the Fifth came in, newly brushed and tidy, and looking very determined. He meant to put the matter to the test, anyway. If a majority of the fellows wanted him for captain, there he was, ready to stand the test of the election.

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A good-humoured laugh greeted Coker. The fellows did not feel angry with him now; in the relief at the prospect of getting their old captain back again they could forgive Coker; and, after all, he had saved them from Loder. A few loyal fellows even gave Coker a cheer.

Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch, as before, conducted the election. Coker and Wingate were announced as the candidates, and a show of hands was called for.

"Hands up for George Wingate!"

A forest of hands ascended in the air. Even Walker and Carmo and the rest of Loder's satellites put their hands up. Even Vernon-Smith raised his hand. The Form-masters smiled as they counted.

The result was announced amid a general smile.

"Two hundred votes for Wingate!"

Horace Coker's face lengthened. There was a cheer.

"Bravo, Wingate!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hands up for Coker!"

A single hand went up. It was the hand of Coker minor of the Sixth, the younger brother of the great Coker. Horace Coker gave his minor an affectionate grin, and then laughed.

"Two hundred votes for Wingate, and one vote for Horace Coker!" announced Mr. Prout. "George Wingate is duly elected captain of Greyfriars."

Then there was a roar.

The excited crowd gave Wingate three times three, and one over. Then there was another cheer as Coker came forward and shook hands with Wingate.

"You've got it, Wingate," he said. "And—and I shouldn't wonder if the chaps are right after all. Anyway, I'm fed up with being captain, and you're welcome."

EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

"Thanks!" said Wingate.

"Give old Coker a cheer!" shouted Bob Cherry. "He's a good sort of an ass, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Coker!"

Then, with another ringing cheer for Wingate, the meeting broke up.

George Wingate was captain of Greyfriars once more, and his position was more secure than ever; as Nugent remarked, the fellows were likely to think twice before they risked having a captain like Coker again. It was likely to be a long time before Greyfriars forgot the brief but eventful reign of Captain Coker!

THE END.

DON'T MISS
HARRY WHARTON
In our Splendid New Companion Paper,
THE PENNY POPULAR
Now on Sale Everywhere.

❖ TALES TO TELL. ❖

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE.

A great racket arose in the children's bed-room.

Mother opened the door.

"What's the matter?" she inquired. "What are you crying for?"

"Please, mother," whimpered one of the children, "Charlie wants half the bed!"

"Well, you are a greedy, selfish boy!" exclaimed mother.

"Let him have it at once, and you take the other half."

"Yes, mother; but I can't," boo-hooed Bobby, "'cos Charlie will have his half out of the middle, and make me sleep on both sides of him!"

SPARING THE WORM.

Walter's mother had made a point of teaching him always to be kind to animals, so he was always careful not to tread on snakes, or to kick big, fierce-looking dogs.

"Oh, mother," he exclaimed one day, "I'm sure you'll like the little girl who's moved in next door. She's such a nice little girl, and so kind to animals."

"She looks a nice little girl," said Walter's ma, "and I think I shall like her. But how is she kind to animals?"

"Well," explained Walter, "we had some chestnuts just now, and she found a worm in one, and she didn't eat it!"

ICKLE PETTUMS, THEN!

Visitor: "Can your baby talk at all yet?"

Mamma: "Yes, indeed! Baby, say 'mamma.'"

Baby: "Oogle-googie!"

Mamma: "Now say 'papa.'"

Baby: "Oogle-googie!"

Mamma: "Now say, 'How do you do?' to the lady."

Baby: "Oogle-googie!"

Mamma: "B'ess its ickle heart! It tan talk mos' as dood as mamma tan!"

[Sub-editorial Note.—"Ough!"]

TRADE SECRETS.

Tommy, son of the local grocer, was being examined at school.

"Where does cutlery come from?"

"Sheffield, sir!"

"Good! Where does lace come from?"

"Brussels, sir!"

"Good again! And now, where does coffee come from?"

The boy blushed and hung his head.

"I ain't allowed to tell you that, sir!"

"Why not?"

"Please, sir, it's a secret of the business!"

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NEXT MONDAY:

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

WHY DID THE HARE PRING?

By name Bill Brown, he was a Londoner born and bred, but he sallied forth into the country in search of work. In due time he met a farmer, and into his sympathetic ear poured forth his request for a job.

"All right," said the man of acres; "just round up those sheep, and get 'em all into that fold. When you've done that I'll find you another job."

Two or three hours later a weary, tattered form presented itself at the farmer's door. It was the Londoner, wet with perspiration and weak from exhaustion.

"You've been a mighty long time!" thundered the farmer. "What have you been doing?"

"You come and see, sir," requested Bill Brown.

The farmer did as he was told, and duly appeared at the fold. Looking over the high, close fence, he noticed a hare penned up among the sheep, and asked the reason.

"What, that little 'un?" asked Bill. "Why, he's the beggar who gave me all the trouble!"

AN ALTERED GAME.

Farmer Sowter was one of those old chaps who liked the game of football, but never found time to see a match. But one afternoon he made up his mind to see his village play the Bruisall Wanderers. The match proved a most exciting one. The play was swift and keen. No one minded a kick—not even the referee.

"Lor, it were a game!" declared the farmer to a friend. "I never seed anything like it! But, dear me, 'ow the game 'as changed since I was a boy!"

"How's that, Sowter?"

"In my time, the game was to kick the ball all over the field," replied the farmer; "now, the players kick the referee instead."

RUGGER WOULD HAVE SUITED THEM.

The wild beasts gnashed their teeth and roared; the gladiators shouted hoarsely; the whole arena ran with the blood of men and beasts.

In the amphitheatre the Roman populace clamoured tumultuously.

"More—more death!" they shrieked in a frenzy, turning their thumbs down with a delightful unanimity.

The emperor, on his throne above, heard their cry, and in his wish to please his subjects sent for the royal wise man and seer.

"Augur," he said, "thou hearest the clamouring of the people. They are mad with an unsated lust for slaughter. Canst thou devise aught to satisfy them?"

The wizard pondered deeply, and then replied:

"Alas, no, sire! Would that"—and he raised his eyes imploringly—"Rugby football were known to-day!"

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

OUR THRILLING SERIAL STORY. START THIS WEEK!

TWICE ROUND THE GLOBE!



Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.

THE STORY OF THE
GREAT MAN-HUNT
BY SIDNEY DREW



Prince Ching-Lung, adventurer, conjurer, and ventriloquist.



Nathan Gore, jewel collector and multi-millionaire, Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN."

Whilst crossing the Atlantic on his way to England—where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," is to be put up for auction—Nathan Gore, the American millionaire and jewel-collector, receives a message from his agent in London to say that the diamond has been bought by his hated rival, Ferrers Lord, who is the owner and inventor of the wonderful submarine, the Lord of the Deep.

Nathan Gore swears he will obtain possession of the diamond, and on the night of his arrival in London he goes to his rival's house, and, taking the stone, leaves in its place the message: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst! I defy you! The stone is mine!—Nathan Gore." The millionaire accepts the challenge, and a few hours after the robbery the chase is started. For five months, accompanied by his two friends, Ching-Lung, a Chinese prince, and Rupert Thurston, he pursues Nathan Gore, travelling once round the world, but never being able to overtake him. At last he hears that Gore has bought an island in the South Seas, and is fortifying it. Ferrers Lord follows the mad millionaire to the place in his submarine, and, on arrival, divides his forces into two parts, leaving Rupert Thurston with Prout and most of the crew on board the Lord of the Deep, and taking with him Ching-Lung and one or two men on the launch, which the Lord of the Deep carries stored away. This vessel is wrecked, and the crew are stranded on Goreland—Nathan Gore's island—and are eventually sighted by a cruiser belonging to the American millionaire. They are rescued by Rupert Thurston, in the Lord of the Deep, just in time to save them from being captured by Nathan Gore. Ferrers Lord learns, through tapping the cable, that the mad millionaire has complained to the Government of America, and that the United States are sending out two cruisers, while England is sending out a vessel to investigate matters. Ching-Lung hears, soon afterwards, that a princess of his own country has taken his province, Kwai Hal, for her own use, and he determines, as soon as the war with Gore is over, to return to China. Ferrers Lord makes preparations for a sham attack on his own storeship, which is flying the Goreland colours in full view of five warships. Splendidly steered, the submarine comes up with the steamer, which is swinging helplessly, and Ferrers Lord shouts his order: "Boarders! Boarders!" Ching-Lung, who is in charge of this division, leads the fight. "Charge!" he roars.

(Now go on with the story.)

After the Battle.

In the bluish glare of the flares the fight began. Revolvers flashed harmlessly, and deadly blows, that never took effect, were struck. The din was hideous. Twice the attackers reeled back, only to advance again in stronger numbers. They were irresistible.

They poured about the steamer, covering her decks with "slain." Maddock, Joe, and a dozen others got the hawser fast in the very thick of the fighting. The ironclads, all their searchlights focussed on the two vessels, churned along, manœuvring to hem them in.

"Full speed ahead!"

Ferrers Lord sprang upon the bridge. More flares were lighted. The tall, masked figure in the dress-suit stood out clear in the glow, and every dead body was visible. He waved his revolver defiantly. The millionaire did not wish to be used as a target for rifle-bullets, and therefore he had the manacled captain of the captured steamer beside him. The hawser grew taut. Down below, the safety-valve weights were fairly dancing with the pressure of steam, and the furnaces were fairly choked with fuel until they roared again.

"Full speed ahead!"

The panting engines were ready. Gallantly the steamer strove to help the submarine which had her in tow. Groups of pretended prisoners were hustled on deck to check any risk of the ironclad's fire. They were gaining. The Lord of the Deep began to move at a pace, even with her heavy

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

burden, that would have made a fast torpedo-boat destroyer blow up its boilers in sheer wrath and dismay.

"Out lights!" thundered Ferrers Lord.

They rushed into a dense wall of mist and vanished. The lights of the pursuers were hidden, nor were they seen again.

"Be jabbers," said Barry, tossing a lifebuoy overboard, "we moight as will lave thim gentlemen in the tin sarspins"—Barry referred to the ironclads—"our visitin'-cards to tell thim we called. Good-boi—good-boi! Owin' to an engagement to play football wid a team of blind men Oi must lave ye!"

"Gie us a bit o' poetry on the glorious vic'ry," said Maddock. "Blowed if it ain't worth it!"

"Ship up, Barry!" said Ching-Lung.

Barry coughed, and gazed at the glowing bowl of his pipe for inspiration, then he said:

"Loud barked the pom-pom o'er the bay,

And the pirut laughed, 'Ha, ha!'

Sez he, 'D'ye see, whin Oi've finished wid ye,

Ye'll wished ye'd stopped home wid mamma.'

Thin we sayzed the ship wid a hop and a skip.

For yez niver can catch us aslape;

Yez'll git up afore the milkman, boys,

To catch howld of the Lord of the Deep."

Barry received a salvo of applause for this brilliant effort. Then it was discovered that Maddock had fainted.

"Dashed if your poetry ain't more deadly than lyddite!" said Joe. "Awake, Ben, awake, and tell us yer ain't turned up your tootsies!"

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Let me tickles haire," said Gan-Waga. "I should love to tickles haire."

"I'll give him some ody-Cologne," remarked Joe, placing the mouthpiece of a megaphone to the bo's'un's lips, and tilting something out of a flask into the bell-shaped end. Whatever it was, Ben took it like a lamb to the last drop. Then he sat up and smiled in the light of the match Ching-Lung had struck.

"Feel me moustache, and tell me if me-heart is beatin'," growled Maddock.

Gan accepted the invitation, and seized Benjamin's flowing beard with both hands. Benjamin howled so abominably that Ching-Lung bonneted him with a pail, and they left him in the scuppers.

They were all laughing. On the bridge Rupert, Ferrers Lord, and the steamer's captain were laughing; on deck captors and captured were laughing; below, stokers and engineers were laughing.

"You've spoilt it, for one thing, sir, I fear," said the fat little skipper. "They'll let drive at you next time in good earnest."

"They must see me first, Jeffron," said Ferrers Lord. "You must get off to Sydney as fast as you can—I mean, as slowly as you can, as soon as you are safe. Then, if the crash comes, and I am accused of sinking you, we shall be able to smile. I did not tell you, Rupert," he added, "that Gore has paid a deposit on this boat, and that she will become his property after her voyage to Sydney."

"If ever she gets there!" chuckled the captain.

"And why won't she get there?"

"My dear fellow," said Ferrers Lord, "I have no intention of scuttling her, and so absolutely robbing the man. Not at all. He will get his ship, but not for some time. She is running guns, you see. She has to call at a certain port, and there is a little revolution going on there. If she is seized—"

"Which is—ha, ha, ha!—rather probable, Mr. Thurston," chuckled the fat, red-faced captain.

"She will be detained. When the revolution is over, the ordinary prize-courts will decide the matter. Gore will be fined, I suppose, and his ship will be handed over on payment of the fine."

"But I thought they could confiscate any vessel carrying contraband of war."

"My dear Ru, you do not think. The ship will fly the Stars and Stripes. A word from the United States Government when the struggle is ended, and Gore will have his ship again. I would not rob him. It is simply a matter of delay in delivery."

"You are a miracle!" muttered Thurston.

The lights of the forts had faded out. The pace began to slacken. Out of the seething foam ahead the outline of the submarine slowly took shape. The electric-lamps in the wheel-house were switched on, and they saw the hazy figure of the steersman Prout. The millionaire pointed to him.

"As fine a lad as ever trod deck, Jeffron!" he said. And his praise was as rare as a February swallow.

"The best of the best, old chap!" said Rupert.

"And the ugliest," remarked the voice of Ching-Lung, "though I don't deny the rest. He's sweet and nice enough in the dark, but he's horrid to look at, with that polished top-knot and flame-coloured whiskers. Behold! I found 'em in the purser's-room. Of course, I don't know what's in them, so I came to ask. Hair-oil, isn't it?"

Ching-Lung flourished two bottles of champagne, placed them in Rupert's hand, made a snatch at something in the air, and revealed four glasses.

"I wonder if it blows so hard in the chart-house?" he grinned. "Should we go thither and pertwig?"

"I think we deserve a drink," said Rupert. "Killing men, and piracy in general, makes one thirsty."

"Lead on!" said Ching-Lung.

They entered the chart-house. Glass clinked against glass.

"To the champion of all—our little bit of scrap-iron!" said Ching-Lung. "To the Lord of the Deep!"

"To the Lord of the Deep!"

The vessels were motionless. The door of the wheel-house opened, and men stood ready to cast off the wire cable. Prout saw the seductive scene that was being acted above.

"By hokey," he said, "that makes one thirsty!"

"Thin dhrink, purty craytur—dhrink!" growled a voice from the chains. And Barry let go with a pail of water.

There was a succession of loud reports and flashes as the enraged Prout drew his revolver and fired upwards at the hidden foe. Prout's big revolver was only loaded with blanks, but a hard cardboard wad found Barry's nose, and, holding his tingling organ of smell tightly, the Irishman skated about the deck like some frisky two-year-old.

On The Submarine Again.

To approach the swimming-bath was a proceeding that involved considerable bodily danger. One or two bold spirits who scorned peril had done so. They had got hurt. Streams of ink came through the keyhole, and heavy and hard objects were hurled at them through the open light above the door.

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NEXT
MONDAY:

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

EVERY
MONDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Something dark and mysterious was happening within. The noise of hammers and saws was heard constantly, and articles of furniture, planks, and other items were hurried about by certain gentlemen, who refused to divulge a word of their deep and dreadful secret. When approached by the curious and questioned, they made one gentle, polite answer, and only one:

"Go and eat coke!"

It was generally supposed that more theatricals were in preparation, and, mindful of the ending of that last play, the crew swore to go in oilskins and lifebelts. When dinner-time arrived, Yard-of-Tape bore in a mighty covered dish, and Prout removed the cover with a flourish, displaying a glorious beef-steak pudding.

"Whoosh!" said Barry. "Is ut a daisy? Does ut make your mouth aquificate?—which same is Latin for wather. Luk at ut's luvly, slake, shoiny skin. Ut's a dhrame of swateness all over!"

"Oh, do tickle haire, Tommy—do tickle haire!" said Gan-Waga.

"By hokey, I'll do that!" said Prout. "Mossoo Yard-of-Tape, I reckon this is what you'd call a chef d'uvver"—chef d'ouvre—"in that dear Paree of yourn-hay?"

"A-r-r-r, zat is so!" said the cook. "But I haf zem made much bettaire. She is beautiful, she is charmanite, and ze meat I haf put in haire is grand! Ah, yes, mong poys, I am ze great cook of ze univairse!"

"Oh, do tickles ze gravy of haire!" lisped Gan.

"Gosh!" put in Joe, leaning forward. "She's got a pig-tail!" He pointed to a piece of string on the top of the pudding.

"By hokey, it's a whisker, as I live!" said Prout. "I'll yank it out by the roots, or take rat-poison for me corns!"

"Get a tight hold," advised Joe.

"As tight as wax," said Prout, wrapping the string round his finger and giving it a jerk. "It's death or victory this go!"

There was a loud bang. The next moment Prout was standing on his chair holding up a large piece of red bunting, on which appeared in white letters the words:

"THE BIGGEST, BEST, AND BRIGHTEST BULL-
FIGHT WILL TAKE PLACE AT EIGHT!"

Ten Thousand Thrills for Nix!

Come and Let the Thrilling Thrillers Thrill Thee!"

The bunting had come from a bottle artfully concealed in the heart of the pudding. The men clapped and cheered. Joe, Prout, Barry, Gan, and Maddock left them to their dinner, having already dined themselves. Shortly before eight the door of the swimming-bath opened, and the audience crowded in.

A circular fence surrounded the bull-ring, which had been strewn with sawdust. Various printed notices warned the spectators against pulling the bull's tail or tickling him. At the far end of the arena was a short covered way, with closed doors. The crew took their places round the barrier, and cheered lustily as the orchestra—which consisted of a concertina, a bugle, and a musical-box—entered. Rupert, as president, mounted a raised box, and the bugle sounded.

At once the door opened, and out marched the bull-fighters, led by Prout. Their Spanish costumes were remarkable, and their calves had been padded in such a way that each man appeared to have a couple of cocoanuts inside his stockings. They were armed with mops, hatchets, pickaxes, and revolvers, and a Gatling-gun was towed behind the procession. As they bowed low before the president, a hideous, blood-curdling bellow came from the depths of the covered way, and the bugle rang out again.

There was a tremendous cheer. Two mounted men rode forth on fiery steeds. The steeds were very restive steeds, and they immediately unhorsed their riders, and commenced to kick and plunge, and to stand on their heads. Five times the dauntless cavaleros climbed into their saddles, only to be unhorsed. Then a couple of nosebags were procured, and all was peace.

"Ta-ta-tara-tara!" blared the bugle.

A fat and gorgeous figure strode into the arena—a figure resplendent in white, crimson, and gold. It was the torero himself, the torador, the slayer of bulls. He waddled forward, and even the president bowed to him.

"Hail, Senor Gan-Wagero—hail!"

"Thanks you mucho!" answered the torador. "When fighto beginso I shall tickleo haire mucho!"

"Is he a savageo bullo, senor?" asked the president.

"He is a red-hoto, senor," answered the king of the ring.

"Hark! Hearo hows him squeako!"

"Moo-oo-co-ooo!" bellowed the hidden bull.

"Helpo, helpo!" shrieked several voices. "He will breako loose!"

"Puto some salto on haires tailo—quikko!" roared the toreador.

"Here he comes!" shouted Rupert.

Out dashed the infuriated bull. It was a small animal, jet black in colour, and horns quite six feet in length. A salmon-tin was attached to its tail, and two jets of smoke poured from its nostrils. It pawed the sawdust and roared terrifically. It was easy to guess that Ching-Lung was inside the skin, and the grinning men prepared to enjoy themselves. Once more the bugle sounded, and the two horsemen rode forth.

The bull sat down on his haunches and bellowed as they carefully ambled towards him.

"Geo-hupo, horso!" cried one rider.

He urged his steed close up behind the bull, and smote with his mop.

The bull took no notice. The second horseman did likewise, and they smote together. Still the bull took no notice. They hammered and beat until, wearied out, their blows became feebler and feebler. Then, utterly exhausted, they fell from their horses, and were carried away by their comrades.

There was something wrong with the bull. He would not fight. The toreador examined him through a telescope from a safe distance.

"We musto tickles hairo!" he said.

They threw barrow-loads of dummy bricks, brushes, and mops at the bull, and hit him every time. They flaunted red flags in his face, and jabbed him with swords. They discharged revolvers, and even fired the Gatling under his nose, but fight he would not.

The spectators began to hoot and boo. At length they put a halter round his neck, and led him back into his den.

"Senors," said Rupert, rising, "do not be impatient. We have another bull ready!"

They screamed with laughter. Amid a deafening bellow the second bull charged into the arena. It was about fifteen inches high, and was mounted on four pneumatic-tyred wheels—a little motor in itself. It whizzed round at a great pace, and, regulated by some self-steering gear, darted and dodged about like a live animal.

The bull-fighters sprang to the attack, and the fun began. Three men and a horse were down in a second. They hit each other a good many times, but they never hit the bull. In the height of the excitement the first bull broke loose and flung himself into the fray.

They stemmed his frightful charges with their mops time after time, but the other bull was so busy that they were compelled to be alert. It was the most vicious little beast imaginable. A lucky blow upset it, and bowled it over. It lay on its back, its wheels buzzing, and the gallant picadors, cavalleros, and toreadors prepared to end the combat. Bull No. 1 had assumed a hose-pipe tail, and it was risky to get within reach of it. Those who did so yelled, for it was working like a flail.

Senor Gan-Waga did not flinch. Slowly he raised his flashing steel and marked the spot for the thrust.

"I amo goings to ticklo hairo mucho!" he said. "Give hairo a puncho behind, Senor Rooneyo!"

"Bedado, Oi willo!" remarked the senor, aiming a kick at the bull.

Thump came the hosepipe tail across Barry's ribs.

"Faitho, he's broke my liver-pado!" moaned Barry.

"Kill—kill, senor!" cried the president.

Finding that his sword was not sharp, Gan-Waga stropped it on the bull's tail, and stood in readiness for the charge. The bull lowered its left horn and coughed. The cough blew Gan down, but he got up bravely.

"Charrge, yiz ould brute!" growled Barry. "D'yez mano to kape us waitingo allo nighto? Charrge—charrge! Here, come alongo and pusho!"

They got behind the bull and pushed.

"Dico!" said Gan.

"Helpo!" howled Prout. "Oh—oh! He-helpo!"

From the tip of each horn gushed a liquid stream of a blackish colour. Gan received his share in the face. Prout got his quantum in the neck. They rolled across the sawdust. Scattering the others with a few slaps of his tail, the bull turned a complete somersault, alighted on his hind legs, and bounded out.

Pay, Pay, Pay.

When the applause was over, the black-faced chief limped up to the presidential seat.

"Silence!" cried Rupert.

"Senors," said Gan, "do bull-fightso is overso. We haves notso kills de bullso. He is too savages. He wills stands in the dooro, and if you cans pulls him outso in one minutes you shalls alls haves cigarso."

"Can we go together, blubberbiter?" asked several voices.

"You canso. I tellst you whens."

A good many of the men hung back. The bull stood in the doorway, and they were rather shy of it. Gan marshalled the volunteers at the end of the ring, and drew a line in the sawdust.

"There yez are, my sportsmin!" said Barry. "Sazo the wild baste and dhrag him over the loine, and yez win the cigars. Wait for the wurrd."

They waited. Behind the scenes Prout had screwed a nozzle on to the bull's tail.

"Wan—two——" said Barry.

"Three!" yelled Gan. "Oh, do tickles hairo!"

The men charged, with a cheer. Prout turned on the water. It hissed out of the bull's horns at high pressure. The attackers staggered. Those behind pushed them on. They yelled, and howled, and struggled. Some of them bolted, but the bolder spirits faced up to the guns. They fell upon the bull. His horns came off, and the pipe parted. The full rush from the nozzle struck Prout in the very centre of the back, and actually washed him away. Ching-Lung was tugged over the line and rolled in the sticky sawdust.

The rest of the bull-fighters had not expected this, or they would have fled.

"Kill 'em; Drench 'em! Soak 'em!" yelled one of the crew.

It was like putting a spark to gunpowder. The actors were pounced upon and rushed up to the gushing nozzle. Like so many barrels, they were rolled under the torrent, and pelted with balls of the wet sawdust. Somebody turned out the lights, and a voice sobbed:

"Oh, whoy—wohy did Oi iver become a bull-fighter, whin Oi cud have been in t' gintle pig thrade wid my Uncle Dennis, of Ballybunion?"

"Oh, whoy did you tickles hairo? It was cruel to tickles hairo!" added the sweet tones of Gan-Waga.

And Prout added, from the darkness:

"By hokey! Lower a boat! I'm swimmin' for me life, and I've been under nineteen times! My whiskers! Lower a boat!"

In the morning, at breakfast, Ching-Lung rubbed his nose. There was a piece of paper beside his plate. It was a bill:

To 42 uniforms, at £3 10s..... £147 0 0

He handed it to Thurston and smiled.

"Rather costly, old chap," he said.

"M'yes," said Ching-Lung ruefully. "It was unfortunate. The water wouldn't have done so much damage, but that sawdust was vilo. Why did the beggars put their best togs on? I couldn't see properly, and that brute Prout never told me. The beast, to let me in like this!"

Ching-Lung wrote out the cheque, with another sigh.

"It seems a shame to get the worst of it, and then have to pay," he added. "Better luck next time, I hope. Prout wants murdering!"

"Hold on!" said Rupert. "Don't stick your cheque-book away. I want a new dress-suit out of you. I got some of the spray."

"How much?"

"Only about seven guineas' worth," said Thurston. "My togs were spoiled."

"Harpy!" grinned Ching-Lung. "Well, take your money! Anybody else? Next, please! I'll never be a bull-fighter again! Bang goes over one hundred and fifty pounds at one fell swoop! Give me some coffee, before I faint."

(A long instalment of this thrilling and amusing story next Monday, when it will be related how Ferrers Lord brought back the Lord of the Deep to England again.)

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My Readers' Page

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The Editor
is always
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his Chums,
at home or
abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

By Frank Richards.

The latest new boy to arrive at Greyfriars proves to be a lad of unusual character and very pronounced tastes. The manner of his arrival, too, is as romantic as it is exciting, and Harry Wharton & Co., in accommodating him temporarily in their study, look forward to a lively time. And they are not disappointed!

Con Fitzpatrick's ways are decidedly original for a Greyfriars junior, and he proves himself in every way so much

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

that the headmaster and everybody else at Greyfriars have to admit themselves incapable of keeping the worthy Con under control at all, and the inimitable Irish junior at last has his own way.

A grand story is this one of ours for next Monday, which will be of absorbing interest for every British boy or girl.

EIGHT CASH PRIZES WON.

I have pleasure in announcing this week the result of the "Friends' Opinions" Competition, which has been running in connection with Nos. 13, 14, and 15 of our companion paper, the "Penny Popular." Needless to say, I had great difficulty in selecting the winners from the avalanche of post-cards which descended upon this office, bearing a most varied and interesting assortment of "Non-Readers' Opinions," but the task was gradually narrowed down by a process of careful judging, until the eight prize-winners were at length decided.

The sum of Ten Shillings has therefore been sent to each of the following readers:

Thomas Jordan, 76, Horseferry Road, Westminster; C. Kelly, 36, Hunter Street, Liverpool; C. Ayres, 5, Avenue Terrace, Cavendish Road, Merton, Surrey; Albert Webster, Lumb Farm, Triangle, near Halifax, Yorkshire.

The four prizes of Five Shillings each have been sent to the following readers:

H. Winter, 9a, Wells Terrace, Finsbury Park, London, N.; Ernest Levi, 59, St. Kilda's Road, Stoke Newington, London, N.; H. Shubrook, 64, Covert Road, Tooting, S.W.; Henry Hayes, Meadow Cottage, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton.

The Colonial section of this competition, for which additional Cash Prizes are offered, is still open.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

A. E. P. (Battersea).—There will be an article shortly on the subject in "The Magnet" Library.

A SPECIAL NOTE.

Of late many readers have written very nice and interesting letters to me, containing very useful criticisms and suggestions, which I have duly noted. I should like very much to be able to acknowledge each letter separately, but time and space preclude this, so I must content myself with this brief acknowledgment. Will the following readers, and all others who have written to me, accept my very best

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 263.

NEXT
MONDAY:

"A SON OF THE SEA!"

thanks for their letters: W. D. Harding (Malta), "An Australian Reader," L. V. S., R. W. P. (Western Australia), D. S. John (Swansea), R. Smedley (Derbyshire), Miss E. Vernon (Islington), "Nugent" (Pendleton), "Nora" (Walsstead), G. Samways (Southsea), B. R. (Glasgow), "Constant Girl Reader" (Clacton), J. A. S. (Byker), "Staunch Reader" (Willesden), A. A. (Portsmouth), Miss D. Inman (Birmingham), P. K. (Newcastle), "Union Jack" (Leicester).

A POPULAR BRANCH OF THE SERVICE.

Another portion of the Royal Navy which is open to receive boys is

The Royal Marines.

Although they are really soldiers, their services combine both naval and military work, and a boy who likes military life, and who also has a liking for the life of a sailor, can get both by joining the force known as "The Royal Marines." Of the whole number of men belonging to this regiment, two-thirds see service on board ship, whilst the other are "put up" in ordinary barracks, in the divisions given below.

Provided their record of character is good, boys and young men, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, can join the corps if they succeed in passing the rather strict medical examination. Each recruit must be strong, vigorous, and healthy, and free from bodily infirmity. Each must also be able to read and write passably well.

The Royal Marines consists of Artillery and Light Infantry, and the standards for these are as follows:

ROYAL MARINE ARTILLERY:

Age 17—18: Height, 5ft. 7in.
Chest, 34½in.

Age 18—19: Height, 5ft. 7½in.
Chest, 35in.

ROYAL MARINE LIGHT INFANTRY:

Age 17—18: Height, 5ft. 5in.
Chest 33in.

Age 18—19: Height, 5ft. 5½in.
Chest, 33½in.

These standards vary occasionally, though not to any great extent. However, they can easily be verified by application to the Adjutant, R.M. Artillery, Portsmouth. On first enlisting, the recruit has to serve from six to ten months at Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth, if he has joined the Artillery; while if he belongs to the Infantry he has to serve at the Depot, Chatham.

Eastney Barracks is the shore home of the Artillery, to which the Marine always returns after a service afloat. The Depot is usually that of the Infantry.

On completion of the above course, the recruit goes under a course of gun-drill and field-training. At the end of this time (which is usually just over a year from date of entry), the Marine is ready for sea service, and, as a rule, is drafted to one of his Majesty's ships, either abroad or at home. The service abroad lasts two years, after which the men return to barracks until they are again required for service.

One part of this corps which seems to be very popular is

The Royal Marine Band,

which boys over the age of fifteen are allowed to join. Sometimes, if the candidate shows exceptional musical ability, he may be accepted for service at the age of fourteen. The term of enlistment is twelve years, counting from the age of eighteen. On first entry all candidates have to go to the Naval School of Music at Eastney, and at the age of eighteen they begin service abroad. The wages for this division are: For a boy, on entry, 4s. 8d. per week; on attaining the rank of musician (which is usually when the recruit is about eighteen), 9s. 11d. per week.

If readers require further information on this subject, they can apply to The Commandant, Royal Naval School of Music, Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth.

THE EDITOR.

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY SPLENDID COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

ANOTHER ATTRACTIVE "MAGNET" STORY.



1. "I was doing a little bit of sky-scouting in the Nulli Never-Say-Die, and taking one or two mental snapshots of the enemy's camp and forts, when they opened fire."



2. "But what did I care! It made me smile to hear the shells pattering on to the overproof Magnet."



3. "And when that same Magnet was stuck all over with shells like a hedgehog, I just picked 'em off and dropped 'em down, and that 'ere camp had nothing more to say in reply."

A SEVERE BLOW FOR THE DIOKY BIRD.



1. "I could do with some of those eggs for lunch," thought Sproutz, the explorer, as he spotted the nest of the Wamagooga bird. "But how to get them? That is the question."



2. "Ah, happy thought! I'll just blow up the hollow tree with my little bellows, like this; and unless I'm very much mistaken, I shall be outside a merry omelette before long."



3. And things happened exactly as he expected. The moral of this pretty story is—never be without a pair of bellows in your bag if you're in the middle of a desert.

The MAGNET LIBRARY MOVING-PICTURE WHEEL.

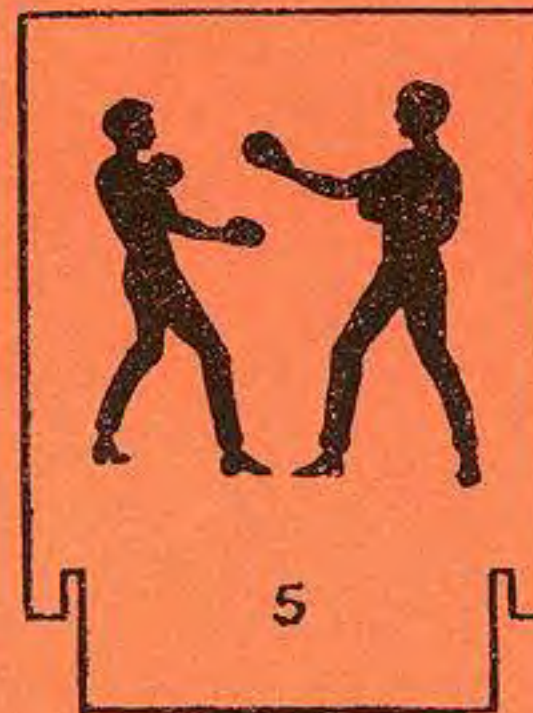
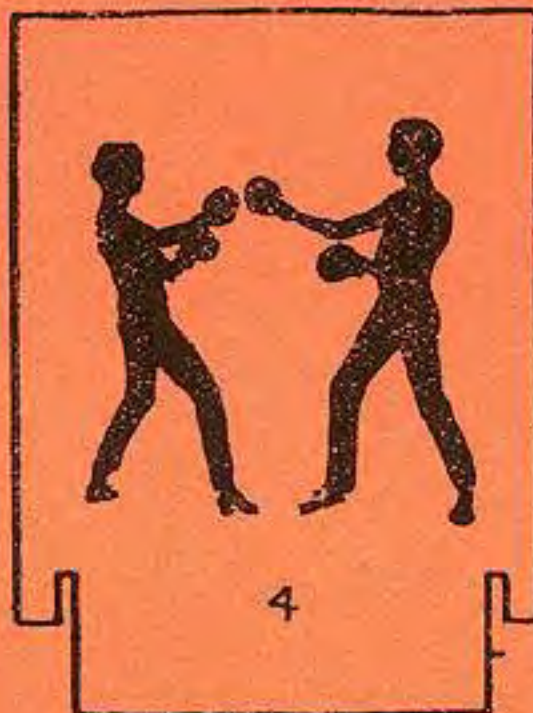
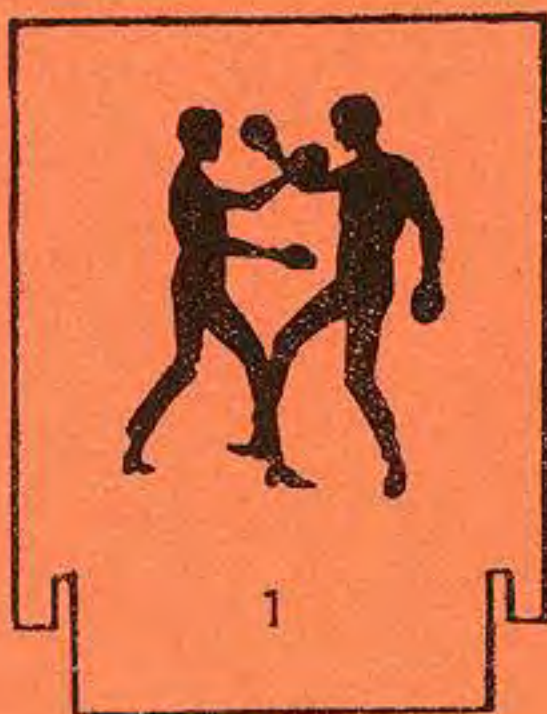
Splendid Mechanical Novelty Constructed in a few Moments.

HOW TO MAKE THE BOXERS FIGHT.

Paste the whole set of diagrams on to a piece of cardboard. When dry, first cut out the two black wheels, and very carefully cut the slots round the edges.

Pierce the centres with a smooth stick (a pencil serves the purpose well) and fit on the eight pictures one after the other as numbered. It will now somewhat resemble a waterwheel.

Turn sharply between the fingers and you will see a lifelike boxing bout.

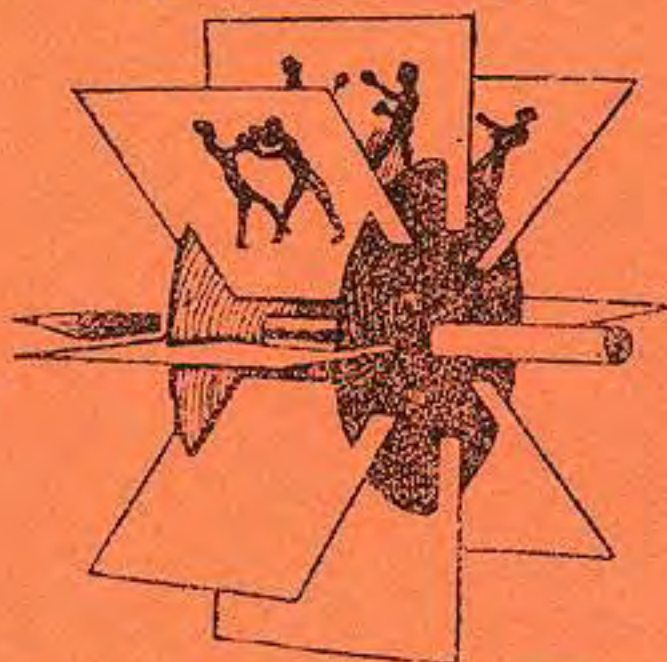


THERE WILL BE ANOTHER SET OF PICTURES GIVEN NEXT MONDAY.

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LEFT SIDE



How The Magnet Moving-Picture Wheel should look when made up.



RIGHT SIDE

THE PLAIN-SPOKEN LODGER!



The Lady: "I am sorry to say, sir, that the coffee is exhausted."

Lodger: "I am not surprised, it has been very weak lately. In fact, yesterday morning it was so weak it could hardly crawl out of the pot."

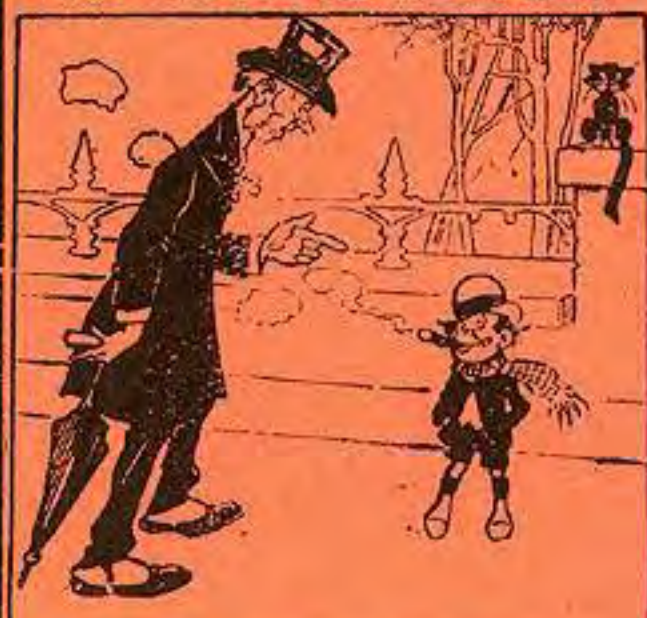
EASILY EXPLAINED!



She: "What I admire about Mr. Wilson is he always keeps his word."

He: "Yes, because no one will take it."

NOT THE END HE HAD IN VIEW.



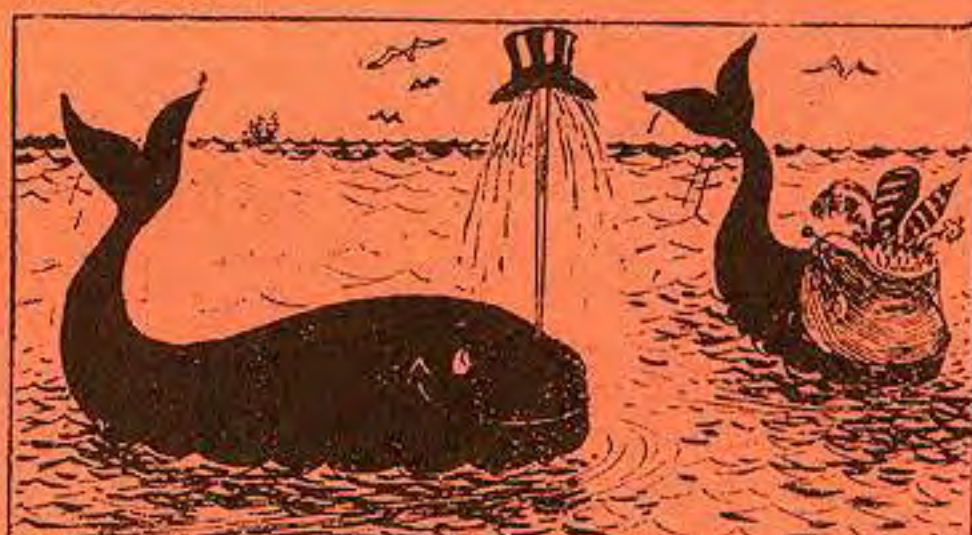
Uncle Baggs: "Here, my boy, throw away that disgusting cigar at once!"

The Boy: "Yes, an' you'll pick it up and smoke it! No fear! If you'll just follow me I'll give you the end."

HIGH LIFE IN WHALE LAND.



1. "By Jove!" said Willy Whale, "here's the beautiful Miss Sperma coming along. How in the world can I lift my hat?"

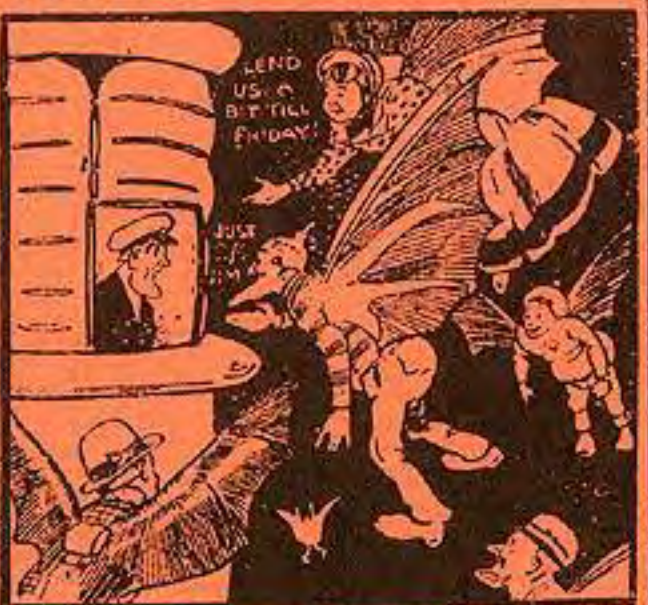


2. Just then he thought of his spout, and up went his three-and-ninepenny in grand style.

A FLIGHTY FAMILY!



1. In the old days the lighthouse-keeper used to complain of moths fluttering round the lights.



2. Now he complains of his relations coming on pay-day to borrow money. It's hard luck on the poor chap!

IT ALSO "SPOKE" FOR ITSELF!

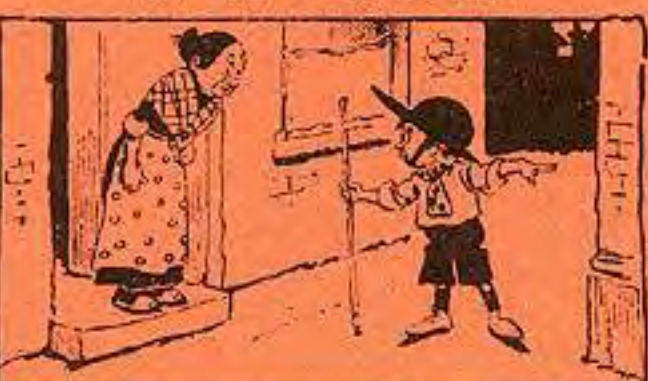


"Are you sure this is cheese, my dear?"
"Yes, John. I got it out of the mouse-trap myself!"

UP TO THE MARK.



1. "It's a good job," said Sammy, the scout, "that I've spotted old Hardnail coming for ma's rent. Prepare for action!"



2. "Quick, ma!" shouted Sammy. "Here's the landlord coming for the rent. Bunk indoors while I put this notice up."



3. And when the landlord saw that notice he was greatly surprised. "Ha, ha!" said Sammy, "that's done it! We scouts are certainly up to the mark!"