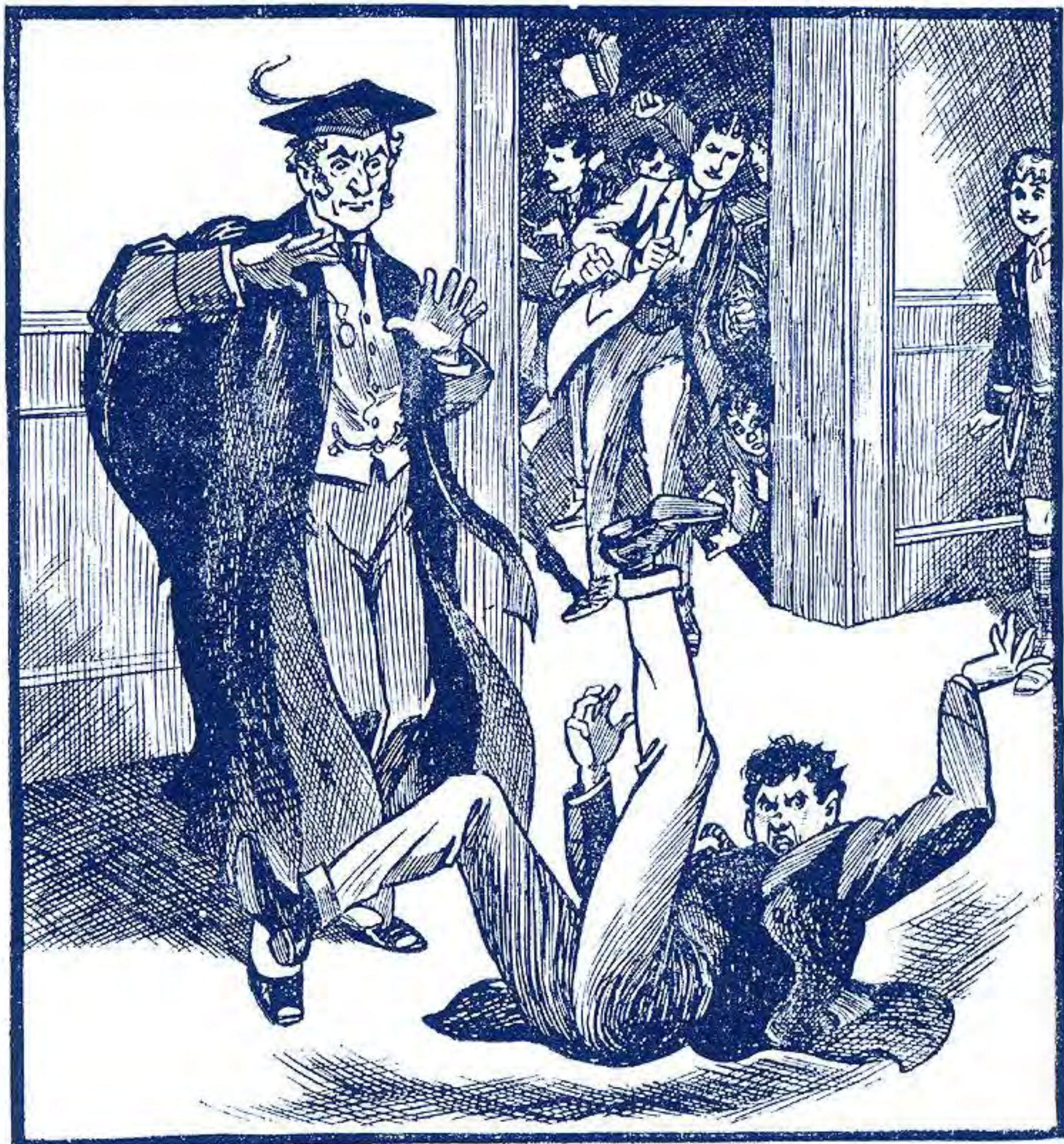


THE FIGHTING FIFTH!



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AT THE FEET OF THE HEAD!

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THE FIGHTING FIFTH!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Coker Plays!

"SMITH major! Anybody seen Smith major?"

The tone of Blundell, skipper of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, was distinctly exasperated.

Blundell strode furiously along the passageway.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way; and there was no man.

The leader of the Fifth was in his footer togs, and a brand-new football reposed under his arm.

In half an hour the Fifth were due to play the Remove—always a good game, despite Wharton & Co.'s lack of size and weight.

Blundell had tried to parade his team after dinner, and nine of them had answered the roll-call. That made ten, including himself. And Smith major was the eleventh man.

"The silly ass!" muttered Blundell. "He must have seen his name down on the list. It was on the notice-board, for all the world to see. By Jove! I'll jolly well—"

The cheerful voice of Bland suddenly boomed along the passageway.

"What's the trouble, old man? Swallowed your tooth-stoppings?"

Blundell looked savage.

"It's that ass Smith major!" he growled. "He was saying last night how ripping it would be to lick those Remove fags to a frazzle. And now he's turned it up—left us absolutely in the cart!"

"It's not his fault, poor chap," said Bland. "He's in the sanny, queer. Ate something that didn't agree with him."

"That makes it worse!" said Blundell. "Why couldn't the fellow postpone his beastly orgy until after the match? Now I've got to find a sub, and that's no easy matter. Everybody in the Form, barring those who are down to play, has sheered off into Courtfield, to see 'Brewster's Millions' at the cinema."

"Everybody, did you say?"

Blundell nodded.

"You're wrong, O king! There's Coker!"

The mere mention of Coker's name was to Blundell like a red rag to a bull. He snorted.

"Don't try to make bad worse!" he said. "You know what would happen if we played Coker. The Remove, cheerfully aided by the ineffable Horace, would win hands down! My dear chap, I wouldn't play Coker unless I was at the end of my tether!"

"Well, you are," said Bland simply.

Blundell puckered his brows in thought.

"I could play ten men," he remarked.

"You could, but it wouldn't look well. We don't want the Remove kids to think we can't rake together a full team."

"And we don't want 'em to think we're so desperate that we've got to put a freak like Coker in the field!" retorted Blundell.

There were footsteps in the passageway. The rest of the team, impatient for the fray, trooped up.

Coker was with them, attired for the fray. He had evidently taken time by the forelock, and concluded that he would be called upon to play. Which was just like Coker!

"Look here, you champion ass!" roared Blundell. "Who in thunder told you you could play?"

Coker glared.

"I didn't suppose anybody would question my right to play. As a leading member of the Form—"

"Rats!"

"And a player of distinctly high-class—"

"Help!"

"I consider I'm entitled to a permanent place in the team!" concluded Coker.

"And I consider you've cheek enough for fifty!" snapped Blundell. "I suppose the skipper of the side has no voice in the matter at all? He's a mere looker-on in Vienna—what?"

"Look here—" began Coker.

"Oh, dry up!" growled Bland. "Let's get on with the washing. The safest thing to do is to let Coker play, Blundell. He'll worry you into an untimely grave if you don't. Besides, I've heard that his style's improved."

"Yes, let him play!" urged half a dozen voices.

Had it been a big match the Fifth-Formers would never have dreamed of agreeing to Coker's inclusion. But with the Remove as their opponents they considered there would be no great harm in letting Coker charge about the field in his inimitable style. If he got too awful they could just bowl him over and sit on him.

Blundell hesitated. It went very much against the grain for him to act against his better judgment; but the others didn't seem to mind the idea of Coker playing, and, if Bland's statement counted for anything, Coker's style had improved. Blundell didn't want to cause a split in the side just prior to the match. Rather than risk a disturbance of that kind it would be as well to give Coker a place. Besides, Harry Wharton & Co. were already coming along the passageway, inquiring the cause of the delay.

Blundell gave in.

"You can play, Coker, as the fellows seem to wish it!" he growled. "But for goodness' sake keep as far away from the ball as possible! If you start scoring goals against your own side I—I shall get desperate!"

Coker was about to put in his oar again when Potter and Greene seized him in a firm grasp and marched him down to Little Side. Coker would have orated about his own footballing abilities until Doomsday if his chums had allowed him to. But, as Potter pointed out, life was far too short.

Harry Wharton & Co., as they trooped on to the field in the wake of the Fifth-Formers, chuckled hugely.

"We're in for a gay old time," said Bob Cherry. "Our team of twelve will wipe the Fifth off the face of the earth!"

"Team of twelve!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bob nodded.

"Coker's playing," he said briefly. "And if Coker be for us, who can be against us?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, an' we'll make rings round 'em!" grinned Micky Desmond, who had been given a place in the half-back line.

The Remove had every reason to be elated. Football was a serious business when they were playing against fellows who, by reason of their superior weight and strength, ought to be able to pulverise them; but with Coker figuring in the ranks of the opposition a certain Charlie Chaplin element was infused into the game.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "The girls are here!"

Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevelyn, Phyllis Howell, and Philippa Derwent, of Cliff House, smiled gaily at the Greyfriars chums. They had cycled over unexpectedly, and Harry Wharton & Co. hailed their presence with delight.

So did Coker. Not that Coker was in love just now. On his part it was simply a desire to swank—to show these girls what a dashing footballer he could be—and, what was more, to make the Removes look small in the eyes of the chums of Cliff House.

Coker swaggered across the field, and came to a halt in front of the trio.

"Good-afternoon!" he said. "Come to see the Remove led like lambs to the slaughter—what?"

Marjorie and Phyllis and Flap smiled. Clara Trevelyn giggled outright.

"You think it can't be done?" said Coker. "Just you wait! I've got my shooting-boots on this afternoon!"

"You'll need them, I'm thinking," said Phyllis Howell. Phyllis was no mean judge of athletic ability.

"Are you the—er—captain of the team?" asked Miss Clara demurely.

"Ahem! No—not exactly. Of course, I ought to be, on present form. But a fellow doesn't get time for all these giddy offices, you know. What with running theatrical shows, and all that sort of thing, life's pretty crowded. So I'm content that Blundell should hold the reins as far as football's concerned."

Happily, Blundell was out of earshot at that moment, or his reluctance to play Coker would have developed into a resolution.

"Of course," said Coker, standing with legs akimbo and arms crossed, like a modern edition of Napoleon. "there's an art in football, like everything else. Watch the game closely, and you'll see what I mean. Some fellows will charge about the field like mad bulls, and hinder instead of help. They've got no polish—no finesse."

"Finesse is good!" murmured Phyllis Howell softly.

"It's science that counts in football," Coker went on—"science, combined with dash. Keep your eyes glued on me, and you'll get a glimpse of real football!"

"I'm sure we shall!" said Marjorie. "But—I say! You won't be too hard on the Remove, will you? Let them down lightly!"

Coker smiled magnanimously.

"If it's a question of chivalry towards the weaker side, Miss Marjorie," he said, "you can rely on me to do the decent thing. Once we've got into double figures, we shall draw in our fangs. No need to pile on the agony!"

"You'd better be going," said Marjory hastily. She saw that her chum Clara was on the verge of convulsions at the idea of the Fifth getting into double figures; and the Cliff House girls didn't wish to appear impolite to Coker, who couldn't really help it.

Coker saw that the teams were lining up, and went to take up his position on the field. Exactly what that position was to be nobody seemed to know.

"I'll help you on the wing, old man," said Coker to Blundell.

"Not on your life!" said Blundell promptly.

"All right; keep your wool on! I'll play on the other wing, then."

"If you do," said Bland warningly, "there'll be a dead Coker lying about the field! We don't mind you playing, Coker, so long as you leave us alone. Playing on the wing with you means being robbed of the ball every blessed time!"

"Come on!" roared the stentorian voice of Bob Cherry. "Are you bounders going to stand jawing all the afternoon? Pull up your socks!"

So Coker, who seemed to be regarded by his fellow-players as quite a supernumerary, took up his position between the forwards and the halves. It was evidently his intention to attack and defend alternately, and to have as big a finger in the pie as possible.

Gwynne of the Sixth, who was referee, blew his whistle for the game to commence.

And the next moment the fun was in full swing.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Last Straw!

IN the first minute Blundell broke away. His long legs took him over the ground in a flash, and he foiled the Remove half, pulling up short a dozen yards from goal.

"Pass!" shouted Hilton, who was playing centre-forward for the Fifth.

Blundell promptly passed. Hilton was a promising player, who made few mistakes in front of goal.

But, just as Hilton was about to fasten on to the ball, a burly figure crashed into him with a terrific impact and sent him sprawling. It was Coker.

"Oh, you—you prize maniac!" spluttered Hilton, sitting up dazedly. "Leave the ball alone!"

But Coker, like Mr. Britling, believed in seeing it through. He kicked the ball with almost savage violence, and away it soared, up and up, far over the crossbar.

"Bravo, the kite-balloon section!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove had had a narrow escape. Had Hilton been left in possession of the ball he would have scored. That was certain, for Hazeldene had left his goal. But Coker, chipping in at the crucial moment, had saved the situation for Harry Wharton & Co.

Blundell said nothing. He could not trust himself to speak. But the rest of the Fifth-Formers were not slow to tell Coker what they thought of him.

"These little miscalculations are bound to happen," explained Coker in an aside to the girls of Cliff House. "Wait till I get my eye in!"

"In a sling, d'you mean?" inquired Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The game was resumed at a hot pace.

Hilton and Blundell were again to the fore with a clever bout of passing; and once more Coker got in the way. On this occasion he deprived Blundell of the ball just as the latter was about to shoot, and passed it to Johnny Bull, who promptly sent it to the other end of the field.

"Now, Remove!"

"Right through with it!"

Vernon-Smith, who had gained possession, made no mistake. He drove the leather hard and true into the net, and scored, despite the goalie's effort to save.

"Goal!"

"Just by way of encouragement, you know," explained Coker, addressing the Cliff House girls. "It's not good form to take advantage of fags."

"Wouldn't it be better to pile up the double figures first, and give them a few goals afterwards?" inquired Flap innocently. "It would certainly be safer."

"Oh, don't you worry about the result!" said Coker, with a smile.

"We've got 'em in the hollow of our hand."

"They are going on," said Miss Clara warningly.

"Great Scott, yes! I mustn't leave 'em in the lurch!"

As a matter of fact, the Fifth would have been only too glad if Coker had left them in the lurch. On the run of the play they should have been leading now. Thanks to Coker, the boot was on the other foot.

Bitterly did Blundell regret having yielded so easily to the other fellows. And bitterly did the other fellows regret having suggested that it would do no harm to include Coker. It was clear to all concerned that the Fifth would have put up a far better performance with only ten men.

But the die was cast now.

The Remove added two goals in the next five minutes, mainly through Coker's interference with the work of his own backs. And the humiliation of the Fifth was all the more crushing by reason of the fact that the Cliff House girls were among the spectators.

Just before half-time Blundell raced through, and, with a fine solo effort, lessened the margin. The interval arrived with the Remove leading by 3 goals to 1.

"I wish you fellows would give me a free hand," grumbled Coker, as the Fifth trooped to the dressing-room. "You're always getting in my way."

"Br-r-r!" growled Blundell.

"Some chaps," continued Coker pointedly, "don't seem to know the difference between a football and a maiden over!"

"It's Blundell's fault," said Hilton.

"He must have been potty to play a pudding-headed idiot like you!"

"Somebody said Coker's style had improved!" growled Blundell.

"More fool you to swallow such a yarn!"

"Look here!"

"I'm ~~lying~~ to," said Hilton, "but it hurts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's the skipper of this team?" roared Blundell.

"You are, worse luck! But your innings'll jolly soon come to a full stop, I can tell you, if you go on doing these sort of things! If we get whacked to-day, we shall demand a new skipper!"

A hot retort rose to Blundell's lips, but he checked it as Gwynne blew his whistle for the game to be resumed.

The second half was something between a tragedy and a farce. It was a tragedy to the Fifth, and a farce to the almost hysterical Remove, who, loyally aided by Coker, piled on goals galore. The Fifth

had simply gone to pieces. Rage—and Coker—upset everyone's play.

First Wharton scored, then Nugent, and then Vernon-Smith netted his third goal of the match. After that the halves saw no reason why they should remain out in the cold, so Peter Todd and Bob Cherry each added to the score. Then Micky Desmond sent the ball to Coker, who promptly planted it into the net for him.

"Nine to one!" chuckled Tom Brown.

"Did you ever?"

"No, never!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Coker's helped to score at least six!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blundell's brow was black as thunder. He could scarcely keep himself in hand.

His fury against Coker knew no bounds. Even the great Horace himself began to suspect that something was wrong. The Cliff House girls, though they tried heroically to bottle up their merriment, were giggling. And, dense though he was in many ways, Coker knew the why and wherefore of those giggles.

Bad temper began to assert itself among the Fifth-Formers. Some abused Blundell when they should have been racing goalwards; others had to concentrate on keeping clear of Coker.

"We must stop 'em from getting into double figures, anyway!" muttered Blundell, between his set teeth. "Work together, you fellows, and if Coker gets in the way, just barge over him!"

A moment later Blundell found himself with a glorious opening. All hope of saving the game was gone; but he could at least make the result less disastrous to the Fifth.

He shot, and at that precise instant Coker got between Blundell and the goal, and he caught the full force of the ball in the chest. Then Johnny Bull ran up and cleared, amid a perfect storm of laughter.

Blundell clenched his fists, and advanced towards Coker. But, perhaps because the Cliff House girls were present, he deemed it prudent not to resort to assault. He turned on his heel and strode off the field.

The Fifth-Formers were flabbergasted. They called to Blundell to come back. Gwynne, pausing with the whistle in his hand, called also.

But Blundell paid no heed. White with passion, he quickened his pace, and finally disappeared into the school building.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Hilton.

"If that's not the absolute giddy limit! The skipper of a side—the skipper, mark you—the very man who ought to be in at the death—leaves his team in the lurch twenty minutes from time!"

"It's certainly a bit thick," said Greene. "Shall we go and fetch him back, Gwynne?"

"No," said the Sixth-Former tersely.

"Play on!"

But the Fifth could do little under such heavy discouragement. They had shot their bolt. Towards the close Hurreo Singh headed another goal for the Remove, who trotted cheerfully off the field, victors by 10 goals to 1.

As for Coker, he had an uncomfortable feeling that everything was not for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

His conversation with the Cliff House girls rose vividly in his mind.

How could he face them after this appalling fiasco?

They were still laughing—he could see them out of the corner of his eye—and Coker decided on getting back to the School House as quickly and as quietly as possible.

He felt that, somehow, he had not shown to advantage—that things had not panned out as he had intended to—in

short, that he had made a fool of himself! It was not usual for Coker to perceive that. But, once in a way, he had his moments of self-distrust.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Hilton's Challenge!

THERE'S going to be the dickens to pay for this!"

Thus Hilton of the Fifth, as the members of the beaten eleven were changing in the dressing-room.

Cedric Hilton was a fellow who had been content hitherto to jog along at Greyfriars and occupy a quiet corner. He was sound at sports, and sound in class, but had never sought the limelight. He shared a study with Tomlinson major, and a friendship had sprung up between them. Neither had yet taken a leading part in the feuds and frictions of the Fifth.

Now, however, things were changed.

Blundell's action in walking off the field seemed to signify that he had washed his hands of the team. True, it was Coker who had provoked him to such a step; at the same time, the other fellows felt snubbed and annoyed at his action. They felt like sheep without a shepherd, and Hilton found himself unconsciously taking the leadership. There seemed to be no lack of fellows to rally round him, either.

"When a fellow turns tail on his side," continued Hilton, "something ought to be done about it. With a fellow like Coker it's understandable. He's a conceited idiot, with the hide of a hippopotamus, and just about as clumsy. But in Blundell's case it's different. Blundell's the fellow we should look to for leadership. Great pip! Just imagine an officer leading his men over the top, and then suddenly doing a bunk because the pace got too hot!"

"It's rotten!" agreed several voices. "Blundell's an outsider!"

"Rats! He's a white man!" said Bland, who knew how to stand by a chum in need. "Coker got on his nerves so much that he simply had to walk off. If he'd stayed, there'd have been an ugly scrap, and fighting in front of girls is rotten bad form."

"A fat lot Blundell cared about that!" said Tomlinson major, with a sniff. "He deserted a sinking ship, that's all about it. And if we put up with it we shall be the scorn of the school!"

"Shure, an' it's stirrin' times we're livin' in!" murmured Fitzgerald.

The discomfited team proceeded in a solid body to the School House. Many chuckles followed them as they went, and their faces flushed up. This humiliation only increased their desire to get to grips with Blundell.

The captain of the Fifth was in his study, still attired in his footer-togs. He was poking furiously at a sulky fire, which showed no signs of blazing up.

"Here he is!"

"Here's the bounder who left us to scramble through that rotten fag-end of a game!"

Blundell turned round irritably.

"I wish you wouldn't start shouting the place down!" he said. "Sheer off!"

"Rats!"

Blundell turned red.

"I'm not in the mood for your foolery!" he said. "If you don't buzz off I shall let drive at some of you! You've only come here to rag me; and I warn you in advance that I'm not having any!"

Hilton strode to the fore. The light of battle was in his eyes.

"You can't slide out of it that way,"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 529.

he said. "We want to know what you mean by walking off the field and leaving us to face the music? Call yourself a sportsman? Precious fine skipper you are—I don't think!"

"Hold on!" said Blundell warningly. His self-control was fast slipping away from him.

"I won't hold on," said Hilton grimly, "until you've either explained your action or taken a licking!"

"W-w-what!"

"Getting deaf in your old age? You've got the alternative of apologising or being knocked down!"

Blundell gasped, as well he might. He was the finest fighting-man in the Fifth; and when challenges came his way—which wasn't often—they never came from fellows of Hilton's retiring disposition.

Blundell glanced round at the group of angry faces, and saw that this was no leg-pulling stunt. The Fifth were out for scalps; and he realised that he was on rather thin ice. His office as captain of the Form and of the eleven hung in the balance. It was up to him to exterminate this Hilton nuisance without delay.

"I'll tackle you when and where you like!" he said.

"Good! Then we'll have it out in the gym at once."

"I'm your second, old man!" said Tomlinson major.

"And I'm yours, Blundell!" said Bland, with equal promptness. "That fellow wants putting in his place!"

Blundell accompanied his chum to the gym with a grim expression on his usually good-natured face. The rest of the fellows, who were being reinforced each moment, followed.

"Feeling seems to be pretty strong against me," observed Blundell.

"So it is, old chap," said Bland. "You'll have to smash Hilton to a pulp, or your job as skipper of the Form will be threatened. Go all out, and give him a jolly good pasting!"

"I'll try," said Blundell simply. "And I—I say! You're a brick to stand by me like this!"

"Rats! Poor sort of pal I should be if I slunk off directly things went a bit wrong," said Bland. "Here we are! Off with your coat, and show 'em what sort of stuff you're made of! Teach him the lesson of his little life!"

"That," said Hilton, who overheard the last remark, "is precisely what I intend to do to Blundell! Twig?"

Bland helped Blundell on with his gloves, and chuckled.

"We'll see!" he said.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

When Greek Meets Greek!

ISAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter burst into Study No. 1 like a whirlwind. He was, as usual, the bearer of tidings.

The Famous Five were at tea, and their faces glowed with pleasure and satisfaction. They were recounting the events of the afternoon when Billy Bunter appeared; and they still went on talking, as if unaware of his presence.

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter, in tones which a town-crier might have envied.

"Of course," said Harry Wharton, "it was Coker's fault from the beginning. If he hadn't played, the game would have been a close thing. As it was—"

"I say, you fellows!"

Bunter roared to the full extent of his lungs. It was impossible for the Famous Five to go on ignoring him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "War over, Bunter?"

"No; it's just going to begin!"

Hilton's challenged Blundell to a scrap, and they've just gone along to the gym."

"Gammon!"

"It's a fact. There's the very dickens of a bust-up in the Fifth. You never saw anything like it. Blundell looks as mad as mad!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances. It was quite possible that Bunter, though he exaggerated the crisis a little, was telling the truth for once.

"We'd better go along, and pick up little pieces of Hilton afterwards," said Johnny Bull. "Blundell will simply walk round him!"

"He will reduce him pulpfully," agreed Hurree Singh.

"Hilton's appearing in a new role," said Frank Nugent. "Never heard of him as a fighting-man before. Thought he was one of those tame 'uns who couldn't say 'Bo!' to a goose."

Harry Wharton & Co. went along to the gym. They were joined en route by Vernon-Smith and Linley and Penfold, and Morgan and Micky Desmond. A public scrap between two Fifth-Formers was a rarity; and, because it was a rarity, it was worth seeing.

Gwynne, who had performed the thankless task of referee earlier in the afternoon, was now general stage-manager for the combatants. He forced back the surging crowd, and refused to set the ball rolling until everybody had settled down in orderly fashion.

Then, when silence reigned in the gym, the senior's voice rang out:

"Seconds out of the ring! Time!"

The next moment Blundell and Hilton were hammering at each other like fury.

Round one was fierce, and full of thrills. When it was over, and the boxers threw themselves upon the knees of their respective seconds, both were very much the worse for wear. Blundell's fist had found its billet on his opponent's nose; and Hilton had given Blundell's jaw a rare jolt.

"This is a real scrap!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Nothing to choose between the beggars so far. Didn't think Hilton could hold a candle to Blundell."

"A dark horse," said Vernon-Smith. "It's never safe to despise a fellow's boxing qualities before you've seen him in the ring."

"Time!" said Gwynne.

Blundell led off this time, and succeeded in forcing his opponent into a corner.

The captain of the Fifth was annoyed and impatient at the opposition Hilton had been putting up. He had supposed that it would be an easy matter to lick the fellow who had been daring enough to challenge him; but now he discovered that Hilton knew as much about the noble art as he did. And the discovery was rather a painful one.

Blundell, therefore, went all out. He hoped to force the issue in the second round, and bring Hilton to his knees.

But his hopes were like the house built upon sand.

Hilton showed an unlimited capacity for taking punishment. He stopped at least half a dozen of Blundell's smashing straight lefts, but, though staggered, he was undaunted. And between times he managed to let Blundell know he was still there.

"So far, so good!" murmured Tomlinson major, as he sponged Hilton's heated face. "You're putting up a rare show, old man, and taking the hard knocks like a Spartan. Think you can hold out?"

"Dunno! I'll try, anyway!" said Hilton, with a faint grin.

The third and fourth rounds were fought out at the same fierce pace; and when the combatants came up to scratch

for the fifth round Gwynne looked alarmed.

Ought he to stop the fight? Blundell could scarcely stand; Hilton was little better. One was in danger of losing a position; one had hopes of winning one; and both were desperate.

"Sure, I think I ought to stop the fight!" said Gwynne. "It's after getting rather too thick!"

"Rats!" said Hilton and Blundell together.

"Rats!" echoed the crowd. "Let 'em go ahead, Gwynne!"

The Sixth-Former gave in, though he made a mental resolve that if the fight didn't end in this round he would abandon it.

Blundell did most of the attacking, but his blows had lost their sting, and Hilton waited his opportunity.

It soon came.

Blundell landed out with his left, and Hilton, side-stepping, shot out his left in turn. It was a fine blow, straight from the shoulder. Blundell took it on the point of the chin, and went down like a log, with all the fight knocked out of him.

"Buck up, old man!" urged Bland, in agonised tones. He hated the idea of his chum being beaten.

The captain of the Fifth tried heroically to rise, but his legs failed him, and down he went again on his back. And this time he stayed down.

Gwynne counted out the defeated boxer amid a great uproar.

"Hilton wins!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This is staggering, if you like!"

"It's no more than he deserves," said Vernon-Smith. "Did you notice what sort of a show he put up, even after he was so badly knocked about that he could hardly see? That's the spirit! Hilton ought to be put up for the captaincy now, and win. Blundell's not a bad sort, but he's stale. If Hilton took on his job, the Fifth would keep their end up a lot better. Hope he'll follow up his advantage."

Hilton meant to. Having scored a boundary, so to speak, in the first over, he told himself that he wouldn't rest until the merry game was won.

The cheers which greeted his victory fell like music on the ears of Cedric Hilton. And as he scanned the friendly faces around him he was aware that he was rapidly gaining supporters, and that within a week or so he might easily hope to be captain of the Fifth.

It was not mean jealousy that moved him. Hilton's ambition went with sportsmanship.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Standing by Blundell!

GEORGE BLUNDELL sat in the armchair in his study and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

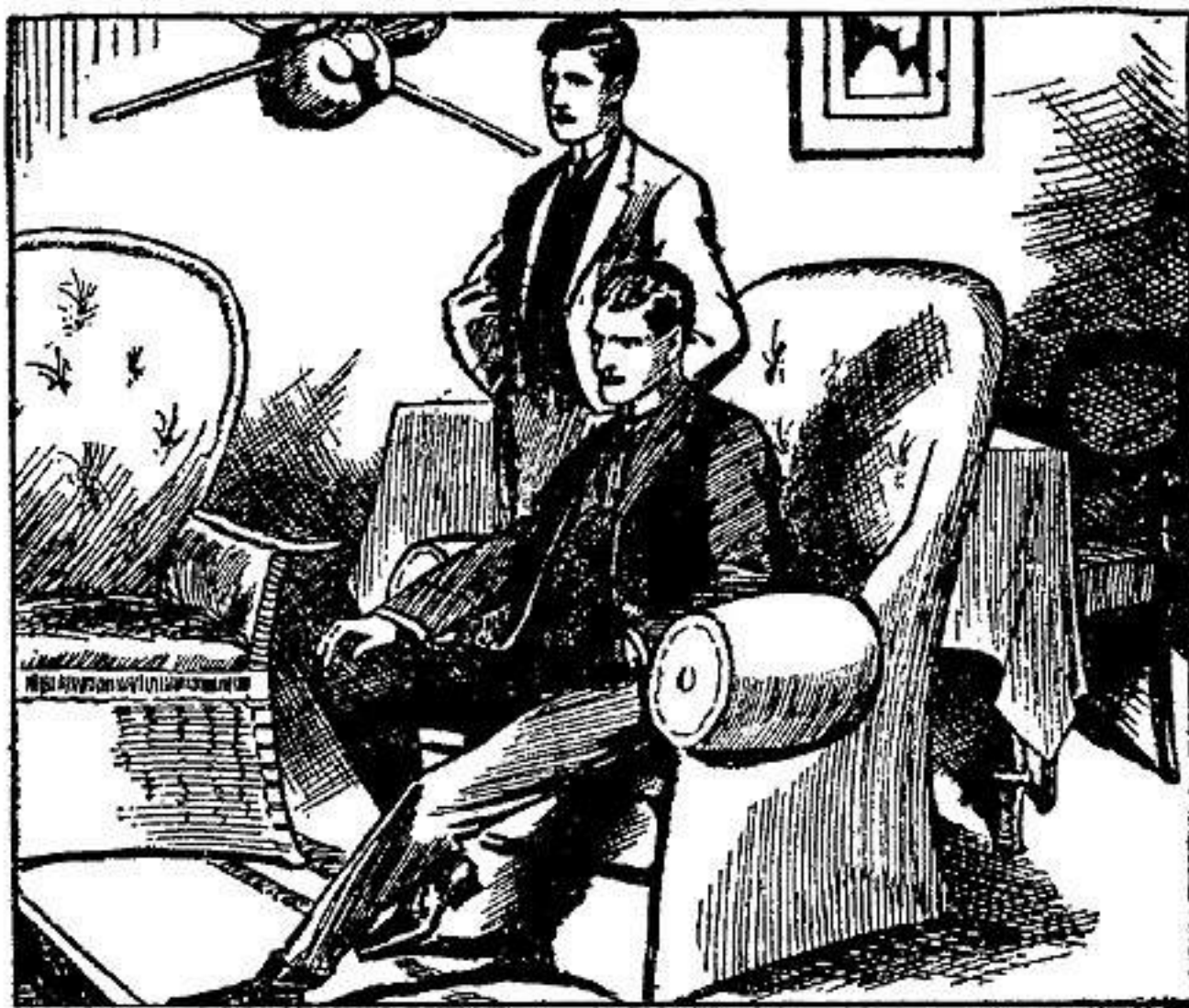
Standing behind him, with his hand on the skipper's shoulder, was Bland.

Both had been silent for quite a long time.

The events of the afternoon had turned the Fifth Form topsy-turvy. Hitherto, Blundell's right to rule had never seriously been questioned. True, Coker was in the habit of shouting from the house-tops that he would make a better skipper than Blundell any day; but Coker's claims were only laughed at, even by his own chums.

But this new and startling opposition from Hilton was different.

Hilton had fully justified the old saying that still waters run deep. He had been content to keep out of the limelight. But now he had proved himself to be almost equal to Blundell's weight as a



When a chum counts! (See Chapter 5.)

fighting-man—almost, because if Blundell had realised at the outset what he was up against he would have put up a better show, and probably have won.

"How are you feeling, old man?" asked Bland, at length.

Blundell grunted. "I feel as if all the punch had been knocked out of me," he said. "Something like old Wolsey must have felt when he came a cropper. And I keep wondering what's going to happen next."

"Things are happening already," said Bland grimly. "Haven't you heard?"

"Don't talk in riddles, man!" Blundell was feeling sore and irritable. "Get it off your chest!"

"The other fellows have come back from the cinema, and heard all about that rotten freak of a match."

"Well?"

"And Hilton & Co. piled on the agony about your leaving 'em in the lurch. Result is they're holding a meeting to elect another skipper!"

Blundell leapt to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"Why didn't you tell me this before? Electing a new skipper, are they? And the present skipper isn't even invited to the meeting! By Jove! I'll shake their ideas of fair play up a bit!"

Blundell sprang to the door, and hurried along to the Fifth-Form Common-room. Bland, looking troubled and uneasy, but determined to back up his chum to the end, followed.

When Blundell marched into the senior Common-room, he found a mass meeting of the Fifth in progress, with Tomlinson major in the chair.

The meeting was roused to a pitch of the highest enthusiasm—so much so that nobody heeded Blundell's entry.

"Gentlemen," Tomlinson major was saying, "the King is dead! Long live the King! In other words, Blundell's got the boot; long live Hilton!"

Blundell stood as if turned to stone.

What did this mean? Surely Hilton had not leapt into public favour so quickly as to be elected captain of football in his stead?

But it was so, as Tomlinson major's next words proved.

"We'll have no nonsense in the team after this! Every man must pull together, shoulder to shoulder, to win the war—I mean, to lick our opponents. And if Blundell's not jolly careful he won't even get a place in the team!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!"

"Hilton for ever!"

Then followed a pause, as Blundell's presence in the room became known.

Some of the fellows looked at each other uneasily. For the first time it occurred to them that to hold a meeting and elect another football captain behind Blundell's back was playing it rather low.

Blundell himself broke the silence.

"What does this mean?" he demanded angrily.

Tomlinson major, who up till now had been a dashing and fearless chairman, was thrown off his balance. He evaded Blundell's eye.

But Hilton was equal to the occasion.

"It means," he said, "that the fellows have elected me as captain of footer in your place. You've had a long innings, and we're sick of licking after licking. This is where you take a back seat!"

"You cad! You've lost no time in getting to work, I can see. It might fit in with your ideas of fair play to barge in like this when my back's turned; but, to my mind, it's a rotten, low-down game. Still, as you seem to have been unanimously elected, I can't contest the point. Are you satisfied now?"

"Not yet," grinned Hilton. "I'm out for the captaincy of the Form as well."

"What?"

"Fact," said Hilton. "I believe in going the whole hog. And if I don't make a better skipper than you I'll eat my hat!"

"Hope it chokes you!" said Blundell. "By the way, you're rather hot at blowing your own trumpet, aren't you?"

"Never be backward in coming forward," said Hilton. "That's going to be my golden rule in future. And I don't think," added Hilton, glancing round the room, "that I'm without supporters."

"No jolly fear!"

"We're backing you up, old man!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 529.

said Tomlinson major, regaining his courage.

"Through thick and thin!" said Price.

"I s'pose you know you can't be appointed skipper of the Form without an election, Hilton?" said Blundell, standing his ground resolutely, and playing his last card.

"That's so. We'll have a giddy election; but, by the way the wind's blowing, you haven't a dog's chance."

"Don't be too sure," interposed Bland. "I'm backing up Blundell; and I'm not the only one, either!"

There was a murmur of applause from that corner of the room in which Coker, Potter, and Greene were seated.

Coker's first idea had been to put up for the captaincy himself. He would have had the support of Potter and Greene, and possibly others. And Coker had always fancied himself as captain of the Fifth.

But when he saw Blundell driven to the wall, when he saw the present skipper's popularity crumbling away, all Coker's natural sympathy for the underdog was roused. He began to look upon Hilton as an upstart—a fellow who had made a five-minute reputation, and was taking advantage of his luck in having beaten Blundell with the gloves.

So Coker, who, despite his failings, was every inch a sportsman, determined to do his level best to back up Blundell. And Potter and Greene agreed with Coker.

Blundell felt rather backed. The footer captaincy had been taken out of his hands; but the captaincy of the Form was a tougher proposition for Hilton. He would have to fight tooth and nail before he could bring off such a sensational coup.

"I'll leave you to it, Hilton," said Blundell. "If I'm beaten fairly and squarely when the election comes off, I sha'n't whine. But I don't think I shall be beaten. You've got the pull on me now, I admit; but when all this silly fuss about the match to-day is over some of the fellows will be sorry they took you to their bosoms so quickly. That's all!"

The captain of the Fifth turned on his heel and swung out of the room. Bland linked his arm in that of his chum, and they proceeded to their study.

"I seem to be slightly unpopular," said Blundell bitterly. "A month ago the Form backed me up to a man. Now they're fed-up with me, and want a change. Well, let 'em have it—if they can. I hope it'll do 'em good!"

"Keep your pecker up, old man," said Bland. "The worst hasn't happened yet. Hilton's going pretty strong just now, but it won't last. Wait till the next match comes off, and we get licked again. The mob will howl for you to come back."

Blundell passed on into the study. This was his dark hour—a time when such friendship as Bland's meant a great deal to him. It wasn't a habit of Blundell's to indulge in sentimental talk; but as he gripped Bland's hand at that moment his chum knew that Blundell appreciated keenly his loyalty and comradeship.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton & Co. Take a Hand!

THE storm which was brewing in the Fifth had not escaped the observation of Harry Wharton & Co., who, by their walk-over win on the football-field, were largely responsible for the crisis.

The Famous Five didn't go out of their way to meddle in the business. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 529.

But they couldn't help being interested in what was going on.

"I don't know what you fellows think about this election bizney," said Harry Wharton. "but I'm all in favour of Blundell romping home. Hilton's all right, I dare say, but Blundell's better. Besides, it's not playing the game to kick a chap out of the captaincy just because the Form's struck a bad patch."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "Blundell's the man. He's got more brains than the rest of the Fifth put together. All the same, I reckon he'll come a cropper at this election."

"The cropperfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "The vote-fulsness for the esteemed Hilton will also be terrific!"

"Can't we back Blundell up in some way?" suggested Johnny Bull. "Why not make this week's 'Herald' a sort of Election Number? It'll be a bit of fun, even if it doesn't carry much weight."

"Good wheeze!" said Nugent. "I'll do a stirring election article."

"If it's going to be as stirring as your serial about the poor bounders who were marooned on a desert island for umpteen months, and then gobbled up by savages, you'd better give it a miss, Franky," said Bob Cherry.

"Rats! I can tell a story as well as anyone——"

"Barring Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

"Cut the cackle!" said Wharton.

"Are we, or are we not, going to have this Election Number? If we are, we'd better pile in, or they'll have the blessed election before we've got the copy ready for press."

The others nodded assent, and a few moments later scratching of nibs and rumpling of hair began in Study No. 1. Many hands made light work, and before Wingate looked in to say it was bedtime the copy was complete.

Wharton had written a leader; Frank Nugent had used a dozen sheets of foolscap in describing what a jolly decent fellow Blundell was; Bob Cherry had written up a report of an imaginary election, resulting in Blundell getting all the votes in the Form bar one—Tomlinson major's. Squiff had been called in to draw a vivid cartoon of Hilton standing over Tomlinson major and threatening him with a paper-knife if he refused to vote for him. Squiff was no great shakes as an artist, but everybody agreed that the sketch was a masterpiece.

Johnny Bull's contribution to the issue was a very blunt poem, in which some lines overlapped the others by a matter of yards; but Dick Russell, who shone as a youthful Kipling, undertook to lick Johnny's effort into shape.

Blundell's praises were sung after this manner:

"Who claims the vote of every chap?
Who stands supreme in sport or scrap?
Who, at election-time, goes nap?
Why, Blundell!"

That was the first verse. The following lines were in similar vein, and the last verse fairly hit the nail on the head:

"Ring out the new—ring in the old!
With a fresh skipper you'd be sold!
The chap who's worth his weight in gold
Is Blundell!"

Hurree Singh's share in the production was to blot his chums' manuscript, and act as a receptacle for the bad pen-nibs they hurled at him.

The following afternoon was a half-holiday, and Harry Wharton cycled to the printers' with the copy, and urged them to get a move on.

Meanwhile, the storm in the Fifth, instead of abating, had increased in

violence. Blundell and Hilton were no longer rivals, but foes.

The canvassing was going strong. Bland, anxious to leave no stone unturned to keep Blundell in office, made about a dozen speeches daily. Sometimes he addressed an almost empty room, and his eloquence was wasted on the desert air, so to speak; but he stuck manfully to his guns.

The Fifth were divided into three camps. The first group, headed by Tomlinson major, were backing Hilton up all along the line; the second group consisted of those who were still loyal to Blundell, or who, at any rate, were willing to give him one more chance; and the third group—and this group gave more trouble than the other two put together—preferred to be neutral. They refused to commit themselves one way or the other. And the leader of this latter group was Fitzgerald.

Such a warlike atmosphere had never been known in the Fifth before. Fellows who had always been mild and law-abiding were ready and willing to punch each other on the nose at the slightest provocation. Relations were decidedly strained between the Blundellites and the Hiltonians, and it would not have taken much to bring about a terrific upheaval in the ranks of the Fifth.

And the upheaval came about sooner than many people had expected.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Makes Mischief!

WHEN the Special Election Number of the "Greyfriars Herald" appeared, several copies found their way into the Fifth Form studies.

The backers of Blundell chuckled immensely, and the followers of Hilton were furious.

The cartoon of Hilton in the act of stabbing Tomlinson major with a paper-knife provoked a great deal of indignation amongst the Hiltonians, but what rankled most of all was the poem.

Instead of the verses praising Blundell, another set of verses appeared, condemning Hilton with delightful vigour and frankness:

"Who apes the manners of a duke,
And merits every chap's rebuke?
Who licked old Blundell by a fluke?
Why, Hilton!"

"Who plays the cad through thick and thin?
An expert, too, at barging in.
Who hits below the belt to win?
Why, Hilton!"

There was more of it, but the outrageous slander of these first two verses had such a startling effect upon Hilton & Co. that they could not trust themselves to read more.

"Oh, the young cads!" said Hilton passionately. "This is beyond a joke. The editor of this rotten rag is going through the mill!"

"I should jolly well think so!" said Tomlinson major. "Why, it—it's the absolute giddy limit! They're accusing you of foul play, old man!"

"Shame!" echoed Price.

Hilton crumpled the offending paper up in his hand, and strode away in the direction of the Remove passage. His chums followed him.

Skinner, the cad of the Remove, met the indignant band of Fifth-Formers on the staircase.

"Something gone wrong with the works?" he asked.

Hilton glared.

"Some of the young rascals in your Form have been slandering me!" he said

fiercely. "I mean to make 'em eat their words!"

Skinner looked concerned.

"Are you referring to that poem about you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then I'll tell you who wrote it, so long as you don't give me away."

There was a roar from the Fifth-Formers.

"Who was the cad?"

"Out with it—sharp!"

Skinner hesitated.

"It—it was Blundell," he said, after a pause.

"What!"

Hilton seized the end of the Remove by the shoulders and shook him.

He found it difficult to credit Skinner's statement.

Blundell was up against him. Blundell had been licked and humiliated by him, but Blundell was a white man. He was straight as a die.

"Do you realise what you're saying, you worm?" hissed Hilton, shaking Skinner till his teeth rattled.

"Ow! Leggo! It—it's a fact, I tell you. I heard Blundell spouting out the poem to Bland in his study."

"My hat!" said Tomlinson major. "That's a bit thick, if you like!"

Skinner went further.

"Not only that," he said, "but I know Blundell bribed Wharton & Co. to publish the verses. He told 'em he'd stand a respectable feed if they put 'em in."

The Fifth-Formers were flabbergasted. There was such an air of quiet confidence about Skinner as he related his story that they were finally prepared to believe it.

"Of course," said Price, "Blundell's right up against you, Hilton, and I s'pose he thought all was fair in love and war—and elections."

"I didn't think he'd go so far as this," said Hilton. "Blessed if I'm going to take this lying down, either!"

"Look here, old man," said Tomlinson major, "just you leave it to us. We'll go and beard Blundell in his giddy den, and wipe up the floor with him, if necessary."

"Yes, rather!"

And Hilton's followers marched off in a solid body to Blundell's study.

Skinner watched them go with a crafty chuckle.

He congratulated himself that he had made the split in the Fifth wider than ever. With his love of making mischief, he himself had written the verses abusing Hilton, and had cycled down to the printers' a few minutes after Harry Wharton, with instructions that Johnny Bull's poem should be cut out and his own substituted. And now he had represented to Hilton that Blundell had written the poem. It was a dastardly trick, and one which was bound to lead to much misunderstanding in the Fifth. But Skinner was not destined to go unpunished.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Head's Decree!

"O H, father, I hear the sound of guns!"

Thus Bob Cherry, as he and his comrades trooped in from footer practice.

From afar off came sounds of strife. Judging by the bumping and banging that was going on, it seemed that Greyfriars was the centre of attack by hostile aircraft.

Biff! Thud! Bump!

"Seems to be a war on somewhere," said Frank Nugent. "Might as well go along and see what's doing. It may be necessary for us to take a hand."

"True, O king!" said Johnny Bull. "Listen! If you ask me, those giddy

thunderbolts are being dropped in Blundell's study."

"Buck up," said Harry Wharton, "or we may be too late to see the slaughter."

The Famous Five sped along to the Fifth Form passage. The nearer they got the more terrific grew the uproar.

When they reached Blundell's study, the door of which was wide open, Harry Wharton & Co. stopped short in amazement.

Inside the room, fighting like tigers, was a whole host of Fifth-Formers.

Furniture was flying in all directions. Wailings and lamentations arose from half a dozen fellows on the floor, as they were trampled upon by other fighters who had not yet thrown up the sponge.

Standing with his back to the wall, with his coat off, and with the true warrior look on his face, was George Blundell. He was hitting out left and right, timing his blows with splendid accuracy.

Beside him, also hitting out vigorously, despite the fact that one of his eyes was closed and his nose badly swollen, was Bland. He and his leader were doing their best to give the Hiltonians an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Harry Wharton sprang forward.

"Stop it, you idiots!" he shouted.

"Have you all gone potty?"

Tomlinson major swung his big fists through the air.

"Keep clear!" he said warningly.

"But—but there'll be an unholy row about this! Supposing Prout comes along?"

"Blow Prout!"

And Tomlinson major dashed into the fray once more.

Harry Wharton turned to his chums.

"This is past a joke!" he said.

"These fellows have got to the battle, murder, and sudden death stage."

"What's it all about?" gasped Nugent.

"The election, I s'pose."

"Well, they're going it pretty strong. I'm wondering how it's all going to end."

The end came with startling suddenness. There was the rustle of a gown in the passage, and before the juniors had time to warn the infuriated Fifth-Formers, the Head of Greyfriars came on the scene.

Dr. Locke reached the open doorway just as Tomlinson major, propelled by Blundell's fist, came reeling out into the passage.

Unable to check his headlong career, the Fifth-Former crashed to the floor at the Head's feet.

"Cave!" shouted somebody.

Instantly the din subsided, and the Head gazed sternly at the scene of destruction and chaos before him.

Blundell's study was in an appalling mess. Fragments of furniture were littered about the floor; broken crockery was everywhere; and the combatants were in a terrible condition. Some of them had lost their collars and ties; others looked as if they had been wrestling with a lawn-mower.

For some moments the Head was speechless. When he found his voice he did not mince his words.

"This is utterly disgraceful! Who is responsible? What is the meaning of it all?"

Silence. The Fifth-Formers regarded each other and the Head uneasily.

"Ah!" said the Head, his eyes roving round the battered throng. "So you, Blundell, are a participator in this outrage! And you are captain of the Form! Explain yourself!"

"I couldn't prevent it, sir," said Blundell quietly.

The Head frowned.

"Your notions of law and order are not in keeping with your position," he

said. "I cannot and will not tolerate this sort of thing. You will cease to be captain of the Form from this moment!"

Blundell drew himself up stiffly.

"Very well, sir!"

A murmur of surprise ran round the group of Fifth-Formers. They had expected the Head to be angry; but that he would resort to such extreme measures they had not thought likely.

The election was washed out now, in view of this dramatic development. The Head had turned Blundell out of office; and he would doubtless choose Blundell's successor.

"That is all," said Dr. Locke. "But I warn you that if these disturbances are repeated I shall punish the entire Form. I shall speak to Mr. Prout about this disgraceful scene."

The Head rustled away, leaving utter bewilderment and consternation behind him.

"The fat's in the fire now, with a vengeance!" said Bob Cherry. "What ever were you silly asses scrapping about?"

Tomlinson major turned fiercely upon the speaker.

"You kids are responsible for what's happened," he said. "You printed some verses in your rotten rag—a vile slander against old Hilton!"

"Excuse me," said Harry Wharton warmly, "we did nothing of the sort! Somebody—we don't know who—must have wangled those verses in after I'd left the copy at the printers'. I wish we knew who it was. There'd be short shrift for the cad!"

"You didn't intend them to appear?" asked Price.

"Of course not! Johnny Bull had written some verses about Blundell, and some rank outsider managed to get these substituted for 'em."

"But—but Skinner said——"

"What did Skinner say?"

"He told us that Blundell had written this attack on Hilton, and bribed you to print it."

There was a roar from the Famous Five. They understood clearly now what had happened.

"Come on!" said Nugent. "We'll make Skinner sit up for this! Of all the mean tricks, this prances off with the bun!"

The juniors lost no time in tackling Skinner. They found him in the quad, chuckling with Bolsover major over the current issue of the "Herald."

The cad of the Remove looked up as the Famous Five approached.

"Nice weather for the time of year," he remarked.

"You cad!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by putting those beastly verses in the paper?"

Skinner looked very uncomfortable. He had not anticipated that Nemesis would be so swiftly on his track.

But Bolsover major was with him, and he felt confident that Bolsover would back him up.

"My poem was an improvement on the original," he said. "It was straight from the shoulder. I don't believe in buttering people up, like you did Blundell. So I just cut those sickly verses out and put in the real thing."

"Sickly verses!" spluttered Johnny Bull, almost speechless with fury.

"Why, you—you——"

"Bump him!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"Bump the cad!"

Skinner sprang back in alarm as a general move was made in his direction. He appealed to Bolsover.

"Ain't you going to help me keep my end up?" he muttered.

Bolsover thrust his hands into his pockets.

"No jolly fear!" she said. "It's up to

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 529.

you to fight your own battles, Skinny. That poem was a bit too thick!"

"Draw it mild! I know you're only rotting, old chap! You—you'll back me up, won't you?"

"Not on your life!"

Skinner looked wildly around, but there was no way of escape open to him. He simply had to face the music.

"You traitor!" he hissed in Bolsover's ear. "Why don't you do the decent thing? Why don't you—Owl Yarooooop!"

With one accord the Famous Five seized the cad of the Remove, and bumped him down on to the flagstones.

Skinner emitted a terrified howl.

"Let up! Don't you dare—"

But the Famous Five did dare. They bumped him again, and yet again, until he lay helplessly on the ground, making a noise like a deflated tyre, and bitterly regretting that he had ever gone out of his way to slander Hilton.

Harry Wharton & Co., slightly mollified, went along to Study No. 1. But although they had bumped Skinner, they had not saved Blundell, whose reign as captain of the Fifth was over.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Vaulting Ambition!

"COME in!" Cedric Hilton paused in the passage outside the Head's study, and carefully adjusted his necktie.

He wondered vaguely why the Head had sent for him, and he was conscious of a feeling of trepidation.

Did Dr. Locke suppose that he had been mixed up in the recent brawl in Blundell's study? Or had some garbled story reached the Head's ears to the effect that Hilton was responsible for the present upheaval in the Fifth?

But whatever it might be, Hilton was no weakling. He squared his shoulders, and marched into the study.

"Ah, Hilton!"

The Head's tone was reassuring.

"As you are doubtless aware, Hilton," said Dr. Locke, "I have removed Blundell from his position as captain of the Form. I now appoint you to fill the breach. You will consider yourself on probation for a period of one month, and if at the end of that time you have proven yourself capable, you will be confirmed in your appointment."

Hilton could not repress the triumphant smile which rose to his lips.

He had won!

He had reached the zenith of his ambition now, and his only regret was that the thing had been so ridiculously easy. There had been no election, no fight against odds; he had just dropped into the position without exertion of any sort.

Well, he would wake things up, now that he was monarch of all he surveyed! He would make the slackers cease from slacking, and the weary have no rest. He would show the others that he wasn't the quiet, easy-going fellow they took him for. Yes, by Jove! He would—

The Head's voice broke in upon Hilton's meditations.

"I shall be absent from Greyfriars for a few days; but Mr. Prout has full authority to make any changes he may think necessary. Is that clear?"

"Quite, sir!" said Hilton.

"Very well. I have nothing more to say, except that I rely on you to try and keep order."

"I'll do my best, sir."

Hilton walked away in high feather. Tomlinson major met him in the Close.

"You look as if you've been to the

hanging of the Kaiser!" he said. "What's happened?"

"I'll ask you," said Hilton, "to remove your hands from your pockets when you're talking to me. Behold your skipper!"

"What!"

"Henceforth, Tommy, my lamb, I rule the roost. And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark," as Byron says."

"It wasn't Byron, fathead! It was Shakespeare!"

"Same thing! Come along to the study, old man! I shall want your sage counsel and advice."

"All serene!"

As they proceeded along the Fifth Form passage, sounds of revelry could be heard proceeding from Coker's study. Evidently there was a spread in progress.

Study feeds were the exception, rather than the rule, in war-time; but Coker's Aunt Judith had opened her heart—and her purse—and Coker felt it was up to him to improve the shining hour.

Earlier in the afternoon the great Horace had cycled into Courtfield; Potter had gone to Friardale, and Greene to Wapshot; and between them they had secured quite a respectable pile of tuck, to say nothing of two bottles of orange wine.

"Hark at the beggars!" said Hilton. "Who ever would imagine there was a war on? I must put my foot down here, Tommy lad!"

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So saying, the new skipper threw open the door of Coker's study.

He entered at an unfortunate moment. Coker was on his feet, raising a brimming glass of orange wine to his lips.

"Here's to old Blundell, and a happy issue out of all his afflictions!" he was saying.

Hilton advanced into the study.

"Leave old Blundell out of it for a jiffy," he said, "and listen to me. What d'you mean by holding this disgusting orgy? Don't you get enough to eat in the ordinary way, without doing this sort of thing? I won't have fellows in my Form making beasts of themselves in war-time, you know!"

Coker spilled half the contents of his glass down his coat in his amazement.

"Well, of all the cheek!" he gasped. "Get out of this study, before we pitch you out!"

"Careful!" said Hilton warningly. "Form captains aren't spoken to in that way!"

"But—but you're not a giddy Form captain!" blurted out Potter.

"That, my son, is where you make a mistake! I've just been appointed by the Head!"

The faces of Coker & Co. fell considerably. Their championship of Blundell had been in vain, and great was their disappointment.

"Look here!" said Hilton. "Now that I'm skipper, I'm going to stand no nonsense. The fellow who tries to cross me

will find he's woke up the wrong passenger. You can go ahead with this feed, but it's the last of its kind that I shall let you have! Keep your festivities till the war's over, and then you can stuff yourselves at all hours, if you like. But while I'm skipper of this rag-time Form I'm going to put my foot down on gormandising!"

"Why, you—you—" stuttered Coker.

"That's enough! Don't let loose a string of fancy names, or you'll find yourself on the carpet. I'm not disposed to stand any cheek from boot-faced, pudding-head idiots like you, who ought to be in the Third instead of the Fifth!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" chuckled Tomlinson major.

Coker, Potter, and Greene looked at each other uncertainly. They were too astonished to reply to Hilton's outburst. They had lost all desire to carry on with the feed. Their appetites failed them completely.

"Of course, I shall have to be firm with these fellows," said Hilton, as he and Tomlinson major went along to their study. "Once I let 'em get cut of hand I'm done for—fired out—finished. I must make 'em understand that my word's law!"

The captain of the Fifth sat down at the table and started to write. Tomlinson regarded him curiously.

"What are you doing?" he inquired.

"Drawing up rules and regulations that will have to be observed. One of 'em provides that any fellow caught feeding his face in his study between meal-times is going to be dropped on pretty heavily!"

"But—but you can't stop fellows from scoffing tuck!" protested Tomlinson.

"That's exactly what I am going to do, dear boy. It's the only patriotic course. I've heard from a cousin of mine in London that people have stood in a solid queue from the Strand to Shepherd's Bush waiting for meat. And if that's the case, there's going to be no overfeeding here. No, sir! I'm all out to stop that sort of thing!"

Tomlinson stared at his leader aghast. It struck him that Hilton, for a beginner, was rather high-handed in his methods. Moreover, he didn't consider that the captain of a Form had the right to regulate the food supply of that Form.

But Tomlinson deemed it prudent not to question the point.

So Hilton went ahead with his self-imposed task, until, in his neat, round handwriting, he had covered a foolscap sheet.

This done, he turned to his study-mate with a smile.

"This'll tickle 'em up!" he said.

And it did!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Iron Hand!

"WELL, of all the cheek!" declared Bland. "This is the giddy limit!"

"It's certainly a bit thick," said Blundell. "The skipper of a Form has his powers, but he can't go so far as this."

The two Fifth-Formers were standing before the notice-board, surveying the announcement which Hilton had posted up.

"NOTICE!"

"The following rules and regulations will, in future, be strictly observed by the Fifth Form:

"1. No fellow shall proceed out of gates without first obtaining a pass from the captain of the Form.

2. No fellow shall hold a study feed without first consulting the captain of the Form.

3. No fellow shall remain in his study after bed-time without getting permission from the captain of the Form.

4. No fellow shall arrange a concert, meeting, footer match, boxing match, excursion, pantomime, picnic, etc., etc., without reference to the captain of the Form.

5. In the event of any breach of these rules, severe disciplinary action will be taken.

"(Signed) CEDRIC HILTON.
"Captain, Fifth Form."

Blundell and Bland did not stand alone in their opinion that Hilton's high-handed action was past the limit.

What right had the captain of a Form to forbid study feeds? What right had he to interfere with a fellow's leisure? If a chap wanted to bike over to Courtfield, or stay up swotting in his study for half an hour after bed-time, was it likely that he would humble himself to ask Hilton for leave?

The Fifth were furious.

Even Hilton's own champions—barring Tomlinson major and a few others—deeply resented his methods. They had looked forward to having a fairly easy time under his rule. That was mainly why they would have plumped for him had the election taken place.

But tyranny of this sort was not to be borne. Even the fags were not exposed to such absurd restrictions.

A few of the fellows were of the opinion that Hilton was gently pulling their legs. But these few were swiftly disillusioned.

Fitzgerald was the first victim.

It was a habit of Fitzgerald's to cycle into Courtfield once a week and refresh himself at the bun-shop.

The food at Greyfriars, although excellent in quality, was rather restricted in quantity; and Fitzgerald felt that one real good bust-up per week was quite in order. He always declared that after he had fortified himself for the ensuing week he was game to tackle anything or anybody. That weekly spread of ham and eggs, cake, and coffee made a new man of him.

So Fitzgerald, as he cycled gaily into Courtfield, felt at peace with all the world.

He had seen Hilton's announcement on the notice-board, and had snapped his fingers at it. Fitzgerald was Irish, and feared no man. A thousand Hiltons wouldn't have prevented him from carrying out his heart's desire.

Fitzgerald dismounted in the old High Street, and, making his machine secure against the kerb, strode into the shop.

The girl behind the counter smiled at him.

"Same as usual?" she queried.

"Shure! An' see that the coffee's nice and strong this time, me darlint! Last time it was so weak that it couldn't stand up in the pot."

Fitzgerald passed on into the parlour. Then he gave a start of mild surprise.

Seated at one of the tables, evidently doing himself very well indeed, was Hilton.

"Cheerio, old son!" said Fitzgerald.

Hilton smiled grimly.

"See the door?" he said.

"Shure!"

"Then put yourself on the other side of it!"

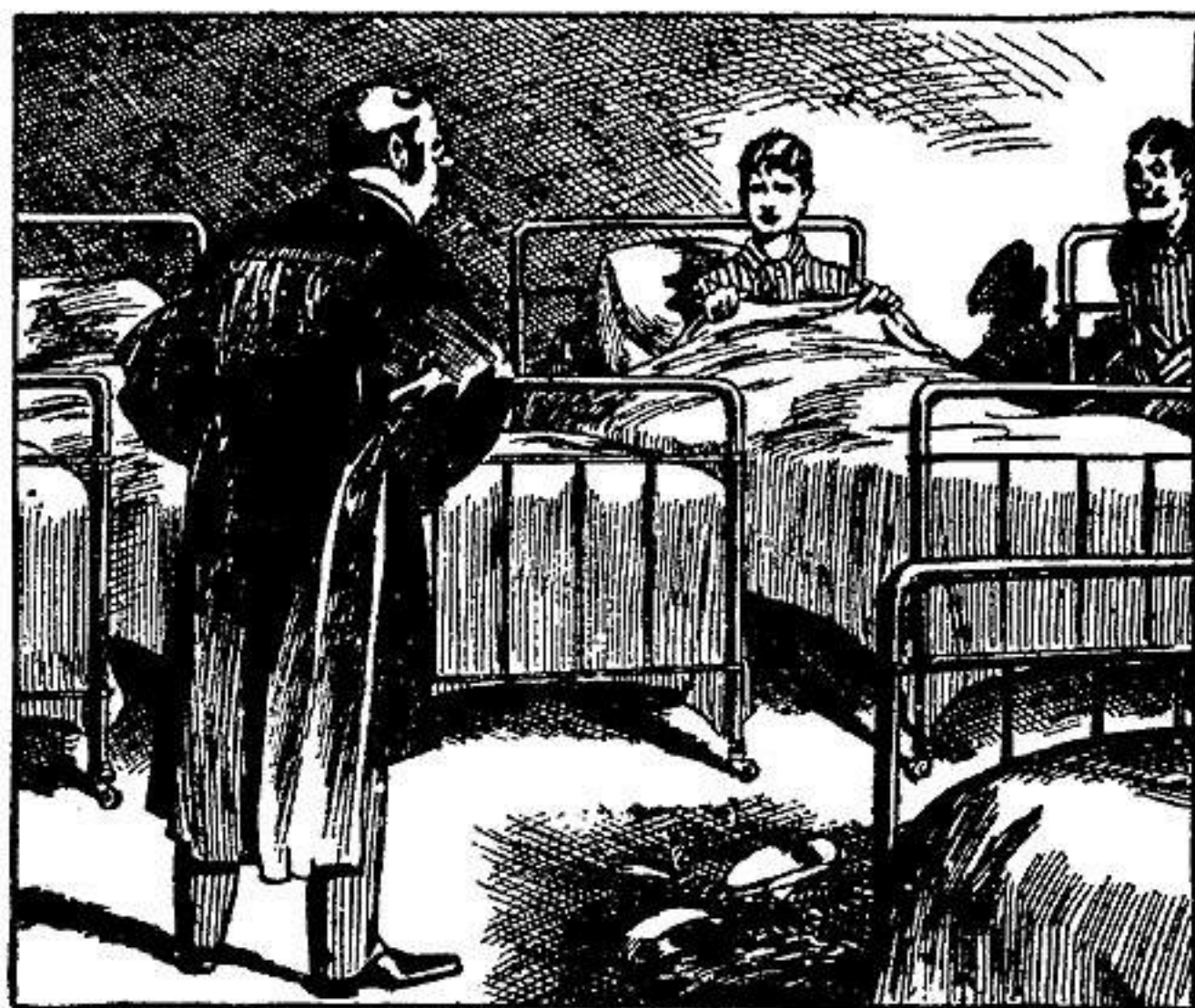
Fitzgerald flashed angrily.

"Faith, an' if I thought it was serious ye were—" he began.

"I am serious," said Hilton. "Very much so. You are disobeying an order, my son."

"You're not the proprietor of this place!"

"No; but I can stop a fellow from making a beast of himself. If you don't



Mr. Prout in the Fifth dormitory! (See Chapter 12.)

get enough to eat at Greyfriars you know your remedy. Lodge a complaint about it."

Fitzgerald clenched his fists. His hot Irish blood was at boiling-point.

"Makin' a beast of meself, begorrah!" he exclaimed. "I like that! Why, look at you!"

And he pointed to the rapidly diminishing pile of cakes.

"Don't do as I do; do as I tell you to do," said Hilton coolly.

"Rats! I'm not after takin' orders from a beastly upstart!"

Things were warming up.

At that moment the girl came in with a laden tray. She glanced in concern at the stormy faces of her two customers.

"You can take that away, missie," said Hilton, waving his hand towards the tray. "It won't be wanted."

"It jolly well will!" said Fitzgerald warmly.

The girl paused uncertainly. She was in the difficult position of having to offend one of her two customers.

Hilton settled the matter. He rose to his feet, and placed a firm grip on Fitzgerald's shoulder.

"This way, my little man," he said, forcing him out of the shop.

"Faith, an' I'll—I'll—"

"Shush! We can't have a brawl here."

Fitzgerald, though blazing with passion, was a gentleman, and would not fight in the presence of a girl. He submitted to being forced out by Hilton, and, mounting his machine, rode back to Greyfriars.

But if Hilton thought that was the end of the matter he was very much mistaken.

Fitzgerald could not rest under the burning insult he had received. He told himself, as he scorched savagely along, that he could not shake hands with a smiling world until Hilton had fallen from his high estate. Fitzgerald was all out for liberty and freedom. He loathed anything in the nature of Prussianism or tyranny.

"The wild mob's million feet
Shall kick you from your seat!"

he muttered; and the poet's words

seemed to convey to him a new and fuller meaning.

Fitzgerald knew that he was not alone in his disgust with Hilton's methods. He knew that the majority of the Fifth-Formers now bitterly regretted Blundell's downfall. The unfortunate football-match with the Remove was a thing of the past, and the feeling of resentment against Blundell had changed into one of sympathy.

The Irish Fifth-Former was not the fellow to let the grass grow under his feet. Having decided that Hilton must go, he proceeded to expedite the manner of his going.

And thus it came about that, before bed-time that evening, each member of the Fifth—with the exception of Hilton and Tomlinson major—received a private note, worded as follows:

"NOTICE!

"As a protest against Hilton's Hunnish conduct, it has been resolved to make his position as captain of the Form intolerable.

"Each recipient of this note will therefore remain in bed after rising-bell to-morrow morning, cut chapel and brekker, and refuse to carry on with the school routine until Hilton has been removed from the captaincy.

"These arrangements are to be kept a strict secret."

"Shure, an' if that doesn't wind up Hilton's innings as skipper," said Fitzgerald, "I'll never look anybody in the face again, bejabbers!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Up Against It!

CLANG, clang, clang!

The unwelcome notes of the rising-bell rang out on the air.

Greyfriars resembled a busy hive of bees—with the exception of the Fifth Form.

Fitzgerald's daring plan worked like a charm.

Everybody in the dormitory, with the exception of Hilton and Tomlinson major, turned a deaf ear to the warning notes of the bell. Some were really asleep;

others pretended to be; and yet others emitted stifled chuckles from beneath the bedclothes.

Hilton jumped out of bed briskly, and heralded the dawning of a new day with a merry heart. But his merry-heartedness would have slumped quickly had he known what was afoot.

The fact that the other fellows were not bestirring themselves didn't worry Hilton. The Fifth seldom emulated the skylark, or even that rather lazier bird, the sparrow. However nice it was to get up in the morning, it was nicer to stay in bed.

The last note of the rising-bell died ominously away. Hilton was half-way through his toilet by this time.

As he towelled himself vigorously, he reviewed the events which had happened following upon his appointment to the captaincy.

He had come to loggerheads with many fellows in the Form. They didn't approve of his methods, and they had told him so openly and fearlessly.

But he had the whip-hand of them. Yes, rather! Coker could croak; Potter could protest; Greene could growl; Fitzgerald could fume. But he held the reins. He would bring them into line, by Jove!

"Penny for 'em!" said Tomlinson major, as Hilton hung up his towel with an abstracted air.

"I was thinking——"

"What, at this time of the morning, old man? You might wait till the sun gets up a bit!"

"I was thinking that the fellows aren't taking kindly to my reforms. Some of the little dears seem to have their backs up. But we'll soon see who's master. If they won't be led, they'll be driven!"

"That's the spirit!" said Tomlinson.

"For instance," Hilton went on, "I'm not going to allow this sort of thing."

And he pointed to the rows of occupied beds.

"Look at 'em!" he said. "Just look at the sleeping beauties! They think they can reduce slacking to a fine art. My hat! Wait till I get fairly on the war-path! Some of 'em will have to buck up!"

The minutes ticked by. Still no one stirred. Hilton looked grim.

"Shake a leg, there!" he shouted. "D'you hear? Blundell! Coker! Fitzgerald! Wake up, you giddy Rip Van Winkles! Rising-bell's gone twenty minutes ago!"

There was no response. Gradually it dawned upon Hilton that this was part and parcel of a prearranged plot.

"Look here!" he exclaimed, flushing angrily. "What's the little game?"

A loud snore from Coker was the only answer.

"I'm not standing any rot! D'you think I'm going to let the whole precious Form defy me?"

A louder snore came from Coker.

"Hand me that sponge, Tomlinson," said Hilton. "Dip it in water first. That's the idea! Now we'll see if anything can't be done."

The nearest bed to Hilton was Fitzgerald's. He moved towards it, brandishing the dripping sponge aloft.

But before he had time to bring it into play Fitzgerald's fist shot out, and the captain of the Fifth reeled back, and crashed against his own bed.

Fitzgerald's action gave Hilton the key to the temper of the Fifth at that crisis. He saw that he was up against it—that it was war to the knife, and that it would require a very strong hand to tackle the situation firmly and decisively.

Hilton's face was white, and his hands were tightly clenched.

"I give you five minutes," he said,

addressing the malcontents. "If you're not out of bed at the end of that time there'll be the very dickens to pay!"

And then Hilton went on with his toilet.

Up from the Close came the ringing shouts of Harry Wharton & Co. as they punted a football in the keen morning air. Everybody at Greyfriars was up and doing—everybody save the Fifth-Formers.

Hilton gave his necktie a savage jerk.

"One more minute!" he said grimly. "I'd advise you, for your own sakes, not to carry this game any further."

The last minute of grace expired.

Hilton found himself still baffled, and as he stood there, meeting Tomlinson major's uneasy glance, he felt rather a fool.

What was to be done?

He could not make a round of the dormitory, and eject the fellows one by one from their beds. If he tried it on they would combine forces against him. Hilton was very far from being a funk, but he saw the futility of such a proceeding.

The bell started to ring for chapel, and still the Fifth-Formers did not budge.

Hilton sat down on his bed to think out a solution of the difficulty.

It would be of no use to try and bring the rebels to reason by means of honeyed words.

How would Blundell have dealt with such a situation? Hilton wondered. And then he was forced to admit that had Blundell been captain the situation would never have arisen.

Of course, he could go to Mr. Prout. Mr. Prout was not only at the head of the Fifth, but also of the school, in the temporary absence of the Head.

But Hilton shrank from such a proceeding. Mr. Prout had resented the change of captains in his Form. He had grown used to Blundell, and was not the sort of man to adapt himself readily to drastic changes.

And, besides, to go to Mr. Prout would be to admit that he himself was powerless to cope with the situation, and a fellow who cannot influence others has no right to be captain of a Form.

Hilton saw now that his methods had been quite off-side. He had not gone the right way to inspire the confidence and respect of his Form-fellows. Prussianism will accomplish a good deal, but in the long run it doesn't pay. It was the last straw that broke the camel's back, and Hilton had applied the last straw.

He rose from his bed, and paced restlessly up and down the dormitory.

Coker continued to snore, and Potter and Greene joined in. They seemed to be having a sort of three-cornered contest.

"You'll get tired of this little game before long," said Hilton. "It can't last. Before the morning's very far advanced you'll be hungry, and then you'll have to chuck up the sponge!"

A smothered chuckle followed Hilton's remark. He was blissfully unaware of the fact that every fellow had his day's rations under his pillow.

It was time for morning lessons to commence.

Hilton could picture Mr. Prout tearing his hair, and performing all manner of weird antics.

"Look here," he burst out, "why don't you play the game?"

And then he stopped short abruptly, as it dawned upon him that perhaps he was the one who hadn't played the game.

Tomlinson major stood before the fireplace, looking sheepish.

Hilton realised, with a sort of disgust, what a feeble reed Tomlinson was to lean upon. The fellow was his friend, and yet, when a crisis came, he had no

counsel or advice to offer. He just stood there and goggled like a country yokel.

And then a sudden inspiration came to Hilton.

He would make the Form a sporting offer. He would undertake to fight the best man among them, on the condition that if he won the rebellion should at once cease. He knew that the Fifth would be sportsmen enough to jump at his suggestion.

But before he could put it into words the door of the dormitory was suddenly thrown open and someone rushed furiously in.

It was Mr. Prout!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Peace with Honour!

MR. PROUT had spent a wild five minutes addressing an empty Form-room.

Not being a man of quick perception, he had failed to notice the absence of his pupils from chapel. And as he had breakfasted in his own room, and not in Hall, he was still in ignorance of their truancy until it was time for morning lessons to commence.

When he swept into the deserted Form-room, it occurred to Mr. Prout that either he was dreaming or that his watch had played him false.

But no! The Form-room clock tallied with his own time. It was nine o'clock to the minute.

What ever had happened to the Fifth?

Mr. Prout waited, spluttering and fuming, until five minutes past the hour. Then he rustled away to the Fifth Form dormitory.

When he saw the entire Form—with the exception of Hilton and Tomlinson major—calmly reposing in bed, Mr. Prout's wrath was like a consuming fire. He executed a sort of war-dance in the doorway.

"This is outrageous—positively outrageous! Hilton!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I want an explanation, this very instant, of your non-attendance at chapel, breakfast, and lessons!"

Hilton hesitated.

"It would have looked rather peculiar, sir, for Tomlinson and me to attend on our own," he said.

"But these other boys——"

"They seem to be giving things a miss, sir."

"And why, pray?"

"You'd better ask them, sir!"

Mr. Prout grew red in the face.

"You are impertinent!" he rapped out.

"I will deal with you later. Coker!"

The great Horace wriggled into a sitting posture.

"Yes, sir?"

"Perhaps you, Coker, will enlighten me as to the reason for this unparalleled defiance of the school routine?"

"We're showing our disapproval of the new captain's methods, sir," said Coker. He hated saying it, because it savoured of sneaking. Yet he knew that Mr. Prout would not rest until he had been given a true explanation.

"You object to Hilton?" queried Mr. Prout.

"Not exactly, sir. Matter of fact, he was all right until he came into the limelight. But now that he's captain of the Form he seems to think we don't count, and that he can lord it over us as much as he likes. And we're not standing it, sir."

"Rather not!"

"Faith, an' Coker's right, entirely!" said Fitzgerald. "We're sorry, sir, but we're not budging from this dormitory until we get fair play!"

Mr. Prout turned to the captain of the Fifth.

"You hear them, Hilton? You, and you alone, are responsible for this reprehensible scene. It appears that you have misused your authority. Are you prepared to resign your position as captain of the Form?"

"No, I'm not, sir!" said Hilton doggedly.

Mr. Prout looked worried.

"But do you not realise that you are unpopular—that the atmosphere of this Form under your rule is one of constant strife?"

"That's all the more reason why I should stick to my guns, sir!"

Mr. Prout grunted.

"Do I understand that you boys are determined to persist in this—this unseemly conduct?" he said.

"Yes, sir—that is to say, until we get a new skipper," said Coker.

"Hear, hear!" came in a chorus from the rest of the beds.

Mr. Prout was in a quandary.

The Head was away, and it was to the Head that he usually took troubles of this sort.

He turned on his heel and left the dormitory. Mr. Quelch, he reflected, would possibly rise to the occasion, and suggest a way out.

But when he swept into the Remove class-room, the master of the Fifth found Mr. Quelch in a very uncompromising mood.

"Really, my dear Prout, I cannot be called upon to remedy the deplorable state of affairs existing in your Form," said the Remove-master. "If, as you say, your pupils have refused to carry on with the regular school routine, it is your business to tackle the situation. If I may venture an opinion, it was a great mistake to allow things to come to such an unfortunate climax."

"But, Quelch—"

"I wish," said Mr. Quelch sharply, "you would not worry me with your affairs at such an inopportune time. I am endeavouring to steer my pupils through a course of Euclid, and interruption of any sort is unwelcome."

Mr. Prout checked the hot retort which rose to his lips, and went along to the Sixth Form-room. The Sixth, in the absence of the Head, were working on their own.

"Ah, Wingate!" said Mr. Prout. "I should like a word with you."

Wingate smiled faintly. He could guess what was coming.

"There is an—ahem!—a disturbance in my Form at the present moment. The boys refuse to leave their beds. Would you be good enough to go up to the dormitory and remonstrate with them? You may possibly be able to bring them to reason."

"I'll have a shot, sir," said Wingate good-humouredly.

But the captain of Greyfriars found the Fifth firm and unyielding. They were quite polite to him, but none the less resolute.

Wingate returned to the Sixth Form-room, and reported to Mr. Prout that there was nothing doing.

"Upon my word, this is most annoying!" said Mr. Prout. "What do you suggest should be done, Wingate?"

The captain of Greyfriars shrugged his shoulders.

"They seem to have a genuine grievance, sir," he said. "In their present mood they're not to be reasoned with."

"We will wait," said Mr. Prout. "Doubtless, when they have grown weary of their present inaction, and become both hungry and thirsty, they will be more amenable to persuasion."

But the morning passed, and the Fifth showed no sign of surrender.

Had Mr. Prout paid another visit to

the dormitory, he would have found his charges in full and complete enjoyment of ham-and-tongue, sardines, and apple-tart.

Mr. Prout retired to his study after dinner, and puffed a cigar, at the same time seeking a solution to the appalling tangle.

He smoked a second cigar, and then a third; but the solution seemed to be very backward in coming forward.

Mr. Prout rose impatiently to his feet, and paced out into the Close.

Walking up and down, with his hands thrust moodily into his pockets, was Hilton. Mr. Prout hailed him.

"Have you succeeded in quelling this disgraceful disturbance, Hilton?"

"No, sir."

"Have you tried?"

"Every way I could think of, sir."

Mr. Prout snorted.

"You have got the Form into a fine pickle, Hilton!"

"I, sir?"

"Yes. Under your captaincy things have gone from bad to worse. Unless you can come to me with a favourable report by seven o'clock this evening, I shall exert the authority granted me by Dr. Locke and remove you from the captaincy."

"Very well, sir," said Hilton resignedly.

The afternoon merged into evening, and the Fifth were still going strong.

Hilton had addressed the rebels a dozen times, and had waxed eloquent on each occasion; but the Fifth were adamant.

Finally, after one of the most tensely exciting days Greyfriars had known, Mr. Prout donned the black cap, as it were, and announced to the Fifth Form that Hilton was no longer captain.

"I have wired to Dr. Locke," said Mr. Prout, "and he has approved of my restoring Blundell to the captaincy."

"Hurrah!"

The Fifth leapt from their beds with one accord.

They had won the day. And even those who had done their best to kick Blundell out of office were now only too glad to welcome him back.

Mr. Prout, in his relief at the rebellion being over, quite forgot to inflict any sort of punishment upon the delinquents.

"Well, this is the end of a perfect day!" said Blundell. "May I look to you fellows to back me up in future?"

"All along the line, old sport!"

"Thanks!"

Hilton, who was present, stepped forward and held out his hand.

"I give it up!" he said. "Things haven't panned out as I intended them to, but I'm not going to whine. And among your supporters, Blundell, you can include me—if you'll recognise me as such, anyway."

Blundell shook Hilton's proffered hand warmly.

Whatever Hilton might have done to offend the Fifth, he certainly proved to them now that he could accept defeat like a sportsman.

Hilton's brief reign as captain of the Fifth was over, and he would retire into the oblivion from which he had emerged. It was failure, and failure is an ugly word to an ambitious youth; but there were doubtless other worlds for Cedric Hilton to conquer.

And none were more enthusiastic than Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove when they learned that harmony had once more been restored to the Fighting Fifth!

(Don't miss "TOM REDWING'S CHANCE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"TOM REDWING'S CHANCE!"

By Frank Richards.

I told you that I thought we were not likely to lose sight of Tom Redwing, alias Leonard Clavering, altogether. When we last saw him he was leaving Greyfriars with regret. The play had been played out; Sir Hilton Popper knew that the boy whose tuition at Greyfriars he had been paying for was not his real ward. He had grudged the money thus spent to Leonard Clavering, and he did not even think of helping Redwing.

Not that the sailor's son, in his honest pride, would have accepted anything from the disagreeable old baronet. He would not even consent to stay at the school by the bounty of Mr. Vernon-Smith, though he had saved Herbert Vernon-Smith's life, and the Bounder's father would have been only too glad to make himself responsible for him.

But his going meant a wrench, and, of course, he will be only too glad to come back if he can come without feeling that he is a burden on anyone, or the object of charity.

Next week you will read how a scheme to get him back was devised, and how he was visited in his old quarters at Hawkscliff by several Greyfriars fellows.

RAISING THE PRICE.

The notice in last week's number will have prepared you for the necessity of paying three-halfpence for this issue.

I don't think there will be many grumblers, for my readers all know how much the price of everything has gone up owing to the war, and they will understand that the cost of producing a paper like the MAGNET must have been greatly increased.

Anyway, it cannot be helped, and I have full faith that my loyal readers will accept the inevitable in the right spirit.

There may be more difficulty in getting the paper, unless you give your newsagent an order in advance for it. But I think most of you have already done this.

A POEM THAT HELPS.

I quoted a week or two ago a couple of lines from an American poem that has always seemed to me one of the very best things of its kind ever written. It may not be a great poem, but in its fine, strong, plucky sentiment it comes nearest of anything I know to Mr. Kipling's "If," which undoubtedly is great poetry.

Here are the American verses:

HOW DID YOU DIE?

By E. Vance Cooke.

Did you tackle that trouble that came your way

With a resolute heart and cheerful?

Or hide your face from the light of day

With a craven soul and fearful?

Oh, a trouble's a ton or a trouble's an ounce,

Or a trouble is what you make it.

And it isn't the fact that you're hurt that counts,

But only—how did you take it?

You are beaten to earth? Well, well, what's that?

Come up with a smiling face!

It's nothing against you to fall down flat,

But to lie there—that's disgrace!

The harder you're thrown, why, the higher you bounce;

Be proud of your blackened eye!

It isn't the fact that you're licked that counts,

It's—how did you fight, and why?

And though you be done to the death, what then?

If you battled the best you could,

If you played your part in the world of men,

Why, the Critic will call it good.

Death comes with a crawl or comes with a pounce,

And whether he's slow or spry,

It isn't the fact that you're dead that counts,

But only—how did you die?

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 529.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 65.—Sir JAMES VIVIAN, Bart.

BART., of course, stands for "baronet." Most people know this, though the contraction, like "Esq.," often puzzles foreigners. But some don't know, as we have evidence, so it seems just as well to make it plain here.

Others cannot understand why, being a titled personage, Sir Jimmy is not rich. But all titled people are not wealthy. Fortunately for the rest of us, who have to pay taxes, pensions do not necessarily go with titles. In the old days land always used to go with them; but land could be sold or gambled away, and in a good many cases that happened.

Anyway, the father of Sir Jimmy came a cropper. I have no information to the effect that he was wickeder than most other people, though the writers of the cheap kind of novel are fond of making their villains baronets. No doubt "Wicked Sir Dare" was a baronet. He might have been a mere knight; but knights in novels are usually well-meaning and good-hearted, though usually rather uneducated.

So, as Sir Jimmy's father had done in the family cash, Sir Jimmy himself was dragged up—brought up is hardly the right phrase—in Carker's Rents.

That was scarcely a good preparatory school for Greyfriars, whither the boy was sent by Sir Reginald Brooke, Mauly's guardian and Jimmy's relative, after being found.

In Carker's Rents a knife is used to convey jam to the mouth, and jam is taken from the pot with one's own knife, which also serves to carve the family butter, and for other purposes. Greyfriars is not used to that sort of thing. Perhaps it is mainly a matter of habit; but it is a fact that people who have not been brought up to dislike it dislike it very much indeed. It makes them shudder.

Sir Jimmy's speech was of the street streety, too. But he did not want to offend others either by that or by his lack of table manners. Carker's Rents had not driven the cheerfulness or the willingness to oblige out of Sir Jimmy. He came in the guise of a very rough diamond indeed; but he had the capacity for taking polish, and he could look at things from the point of view of others. Even at the outset, rough, mannerless, coarse, doubtfully honest, he was essentially the superior of such fellows as Skinner and Snoop.

These two, and, of course, Bunter and Fish, were ready to toady to him when they heard of his coming. A relative of Mauleverer's, and a real baronet, ought to prove a great acquisition to the Remove, and a small gold-mine to the spongers!

Well, on the face of it, Vivian was no particular credit to the Form, and most certainly there was nothing in the shape of a gold-mine about him. He admitted that his allowance of pocket-money was small, and that for what he had he was indebted to Sir Reginald Brooke. When the cads learned that they found his untutored speech and coarse manners quite unbearable.

Bunter actually started in by standing him a feed! Bunter got nothing out of it. Skinner was so disappointed that he taunted good-natured Sir Jimmy beyond endurance, and the youthful baronet went for him. Then Skinner tried for revenge, Snoop aiding and abetting. They tried to get Vivian convicted of drunkenness. But the youngster had not come from Carker's Rents quite so simple and innocent as to be easily taken in. He saw through and defeated the scheme, allowing the schemers to go so far that a Form ragging was their portion—as decreed. But Mauly would not have it so. Mauly does not care for fighting; but Vivian was his kinsman, and he saw it as his duty to thrash Skinner and Snoop. Which was done.

It would not be the truth to say that Mauly and Piet Delarey wanted Sir Jimmy in No. 12. But it was the natural place for him. Both began by making the best of him, and soon found themselves genuinely liking the cheery wail. He, in turn, is devoted to them both, but more especially to Delarey.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 529.

as has been shown in a recent story, "Loyal Sir Jimmy."

With their friendly help Sir Jimmy improved quickly. He is as sharp as a needle, and it had not taken much coaching to bring him up to the Remove scholastic standard, though, naturally, he was a bit behind in some subjects. He soon learned decent manners and different speech. Now and then he lapses into the old lingo, perhaps, but that is only when he gets excited; and no one seeing him now would imagine that but a little time ago he regarded a fork as a superfluous article and soap as a disagreeable thing.

Mr. Quelch was taken aback by him at first. But the Remove master knows how to make allowances, and, on the whole, he has not had a great deal of trouble with Vivian.

Sir Jimmy was very nearly the cause of a fight between Bob Cherry and Piet Delarey. It was fixed up, and Delarey escaped from the detention-room to meet Bob. But it never came off. The South African junior had suspected Bob of bullying; Bob, on the other hand, had suspected Sir Jimmy of a mean trick. Both were wrong, and explanations set matters right.

The youngster from Carker's Rents came near getting into heavy trouble through an



act of good-nature in connection with one Sealy Bill, whom he had known in the old days. He was actually, though quite innocently, in custody of stolen property. It came out through Bunter, though there was no credit due to Bunter for the way in which it came out. And the disclosure cleared Paul Tyrrell, the no'er-do-weel cousin of Bob Cherry, who was at last trying hard to run straight, of a very serious charge.

Trouble also arose through another visitor from the slums—one who came to see his old pal Jimmy without any notion of the sort of place Greyfriars is. Harry Wharton & Co., who have liked Sir Jimmy from the first, helped Mauly out, and went to tea with the Spadger in No. 1. The visitor was, on the whole, rather worse than Sir Jimmy had been when he first turned up, for no one had taken the trouble to wash and clothe the Spadger. Then Skinner tried on another of his foul tricks. But the Bounder, whom Skinner had imagined an accomplice, had only come into the scheme to overturn it, and again the cad of the Remove was foiled.

Sir Jimmy has settled down at Greyfriars all right now. It may happen that again some message of the past may come to him; but if it were not for that he might almost forget that he had ever been a denizen of Carker's Rents. He can hold his own in the Form in most ways. Certainly his tongue is ready enough, and so are his fists. In class and on the playing-fields he is all there. And the decent fellows like him, while some few have for him a feeling much stronger than mere liking.

Sir Jimmy is all right!

NOTICES.

Leagues, Correspondence, Etc.

New members wanted for Kingston Amateur Stamp Exchange Club.—G. R. Tadman, 16, Ruskin Street, Anlaby Road, Hull.
By E. Powell, 2, Goldwire Lane, Overmonnow, Monmouth—with boy readers in British Empire.

By John Robson, 308, Rectory Road, Gateshead-on-Tyne—with boy readers.

By Miss Phyllis Marshall, 28, Oak Street, Leicester—with girl readers—13-14—in U.K.

By L. Bangs, 20, Chiswell Road, Grandpost, Oxford—with readers interested in stamp-collecting.

By Harry R. Rance, 15, Bulton Lane, Sheffield—with boy reader—15—interested in drawing.

By Miss F. Busby, 5, York Street, Beddington Corner, Hackbridge, Surrey—with girl readers.

By Miss M. Gadd, 18, Sorrento Road, Sutton, Surrey—with girl readers.

By Arnold F. Hodge, 66, Rugby Road, Leamington Spa—with readers in U.K. interested in photography.

By Miss Dorothy Inger, Burne Street, Heanor—with girl readers—15-16—in Colonies.

By R. V. Devine, P.O. Box 89, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa—with readers anywhere.

By A. Ben, P.P. Box 35, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa—with readers anywhere, about anything.

By Wm. Kemp, P.O. Box 119, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa—with readers anywhere.

By Harry Sugarman, 15, Walton Buildings, Shoreditch, E.C. 1—with any boy reader keen on going on stage, and who can play ragtime on piano.

By Sidney Medcalf, Oakville, Salt Hill, Slough—with Colonial readers about eleven interested in stamp-collecting.

By Thos. Waters, 19, Sheepcote Lane, Battersea, S.W. 11—with boy messenger in London, aged fourteen. Object, forming club for messengers.

Back Numbers, Etc., Wanted.

By Miss E. Moore, c/o Northover, 36, Duke Street, London, W. 1—"Gem," Nos. 324-337, 351, 352, 353, 358, 359, 361, 362, 363, 364, and 375-378. Double price offered.

By C. Piggott, 17, Preston Street, New Lenton, Nottingham—Christmas Number of "Gem," 1915—clean.

By W. J. Pullen, 10, Euston Mews, St. Mark's Road, W. 11—"Gem" and MAGNET, Nos. 1-40—state lowest price.

By Miss L. M. Train, 20, Oakwood Gardens, Seven Kings—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," Talbot stories, and Nos. 446, 463, 470, 478, 489, 493, 495, and 497 of "Gem."

By W. A. Grey, 8, Claraville, Felpham, Bognor—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "Postal-Order Conspiracy," "Bunter's Day Out," "Bunter the Boxer," "Bunter the Blade," "Fishy's Fag Agency," "Yankoo Schoolboy"—please write first.

By John Pritchard, 20, Dorset Road, Tue Brook, Liverpool—MAGNETS and "Union Jacks" for 1914-15—state price.

By C. L. Miller, 56, Capril Road, Addiscombe, Croydon—"The Fellow Who Won," "Return of the Prodigal," "Self-Condemed," "Skinner's Scheme," "House-master's Homecoming"—2d. each offered.

By F. Peel, Red House, Timil, near Penrith—"Through Thick and Thin," "Tom Merry's Midnight Raid," and "Gem," No. 1.

By Stanley Turner, 139, Lincoln Street, Balne Lane, Wakefield—old numbers of "Gem" and MAGNET, especially "Dormitory Secret"—2s. 6d. per dozen offered.

By S. Birkenhead, 40, Church Street, Davenham, near Northwich—"Tom Merry's Fix," "Search for Tom Merry," "Tom Merry's Resolve," "Mr. Merry," "Tom Merry's Return," "Billy Bunter's Reformation," "Bunter's Bust-Up," "Surprising the School," "Honour Bright," "Swell of the Circus."

By Miss Connie Birkenhead, Constitutional Club, Church Street, Davenham, near Northwich—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Shunned by His Form," "Postal-Order Conspiracy," "Shadow on the School," "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays."

By Harold J. Taylor, 36, St. George's Road, Ramsgate—aged 15—pair of good black calf-shaped leggings—not buttons—please state price.

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

THE HOLLOW IN THE HILLS.

A Story of the Boy Scouts.

By DICK BROOKE.

I

"COME along here, Dave!" said Jack Bridges, leader of the Hound Patrol, of Penton. "No; I don't mean the rest of you—only Dave!"

David Harris, patrol corporal, crawled to his leader's side.

Together they lay, careful not to show themselves, peering over the lip of that hollow in the Downs.

It was a very lonely place. For miles to every quarter the hills rose around it. For the most part, the hills were a wilderness of gorse clumps, with here and there a few wild-raspberry canes. Sheep were pastured there at times; but there was no cultivated land up here—only on the lower slopes.

Now and then a passing shepherd might gaze down into the hollow. But few other people ever came out here. Penton, whence the Scouts under Bridges' leadership hailed, was fully twelve miles away.

The boys of the Hound Patrol had never been there before, though they had explored most of the country round about, as good Scouts do. The day was the first Saturday of August over three years ago, just before war was declared, and when as yet the possibility of it was only just coming to be understood.

A hot sun blazed in the heavens, and the Hounds were both hungry and thirsty after their journey. They had bicycles with them; but they had not been able to ride more than three or four miles out of the twelve. It would be different going back.

They spread their lunch on the sloping bank which formed the lip of the hollow towards the south. The slope here was outwards. Inside was a descent all but sheer.

On the other side of the hollow, which was of rough, oblong shape, there was an inner slope, rising gradually, and easy enough to scramble up. The bottom of the hollow was nearly flat, and there were but few gorse bushes in its area of about four hundred yards by a hundred or so.

It was not at all the sort of place in which one would have expected to see anyone. Yet two men were there, and that was why Jack Bridges had called to Dave, and why they lay watching, themselves unseen.

"Looks like motorists," said Dave. "See the goggles on the tall chap's cap?"

"Rum place for motorists to be in," Jack answered. "But I know there is an old road of sorts from Winton-on-Sea to Blenching that runs over the Downs not far from here. Used to be a coaching road, they say, so I dare say it may be possible for a motor, now."

"Can't make out what they're doing," said Dave.

"Because they aren't. They've done it, I guess, if they had really anything to do here."

"Now I can see," Dave said, grinning. "They're going to have a drink. That was hardly what they came all this way for, though."

"Their car can't be very far off," said Jack thoughtfully. "Dave, old son, I'd rather like to go and have a look at it. I don't a bit know why, but I feel suspicious."

"Cut along, then!" said Dave. "I watch here, I suppose?"

"Tight-ho!"

Jack slid down the slope to where the rest of the patrol were. All wanted their lunch; but they had loyally waited for their comrades. And, of course, they wanted to know, too, what there might be in the hollow.

"Come along, Jim; and you, Evan!" said Jack. "Enemies about, and we must find out where their motor-car is."

"How do you know they've got a car?" asked Evan Dowling, the youngest member of the patrol.

"Never mind that. Come along!"

"What about lunch?" asked Jim Hebblewhite.

"Oh, they're sure to wait while we have

that!" answered Jack, with a touch of sarcasm.

"All serene! No need to be funny!"

So off went the three, without stopping even for a drink.

They stole from clump to clump of gorse, making in the general direction of the old coaching-road, but keeping always pretty well under cover.

And quite suddenly they came upon the road. It was grass-grown, and until you were upon it scarcely to be distinguished from the grassy tracts through which it ran. But once upon it you could trace its course for quite a long way, and see it run like a ribbon of lighter hue through the other grass.

Here, for a short distance, it was sunk within banks; and in the sunken part stood a big and powerful motor-car.

Over the edge of the bank they gazed down upon it.

Then something about it struck Jim, who had a really wonderful memory for certain things.

"That identification-mark's all wrong," he said.

"How?" asked Jack.

"It's bogus! There isn't any 'GZ' among the marks used!"

"A policeman might drop on to them, you know, Jim," said Evan. "I shouldn't think they would risk that."

"I don't reckon there's anybody in England who knows all the motor marks, and the counties they belong to, and all that, except me," said Jim, not in brag, but like one stating a fact.

A sharp bark struck upon their ears. It was the patrol call.

Something threatening. Jack looked round. He could not see any of his comrades, though it was pretty certain some of them were within eyeshot had they come out of cover.

But the two men he had seen in the hollow were within twenty yards of where the trio lay.

"Lie still!" whispered Jack. He thought they were concealed by the bushes in their rear.

But Evan's legs showed.

Someone laid rough hands on those legs.

"Come out of it!" said an angry voice.

There was no help for it. Evan was pulled out most uncomfortably, dragged on his face through the prickly gorse; and Jack and Jim followed.

"Boy Scouts—eh? What are you spying after, you young scoundrels?" demanded the shorter man.

He spoke English quite well, but with a foreign accent, Jack noted.

"Who says we are spying at all?" Jim demanded.

The answer he got was a brutal blow.

"Nein, nein!" said the taller man. "Not so, Fritz!"

Fritz made answer to that in a language that none of the boys knew, though Jack was pretty sure from its gutturalness that it was German.

Then he struck Jim again. The presence of the boys seemed to have annoyed him greatly.

"Stop that!" said Jack sharply, and put himself in front of Jim.

"And will you make me stop it?" sneered Fritz.

Jack put his whistle to his lips, and blew a call.

Immediately four more boys in Scout garb appeared—from much closer at hand than might have been expected. When he had seen the two men leave the hollow Dave had brought the rest up nearer, and it was he whose call had given notice of the foreigners' approach.

Fritz gave Jack a savage push that sent him sprawling, then rolling down the bank into the sunken way.

His assailant plunged after him. The taller man, with less haste, followed.

Jack lay at the bottom of the bank. His head had struck a stone, and for the moment he was half stunned. Fritz picked him up roughly, and thrust him into the bottom of the car.

Then he gave a few twirls to the crank, and the engine began to hum.

The two men jumped in. Jim and Evan, not knowing what to do, stood watching from the top till the moment for action had passed. Dave and the rest came up too late.

But Dave sprang down the bank with the activity of a wild goat, and grabbed at the back of the car just as it moved away.

For a moment he held on. Then the tall man gave him a vicious blow on the knuckles, and he was forced to let go.

He sprawled backwards on the grassy road.

The car sped on. It bumped a bit; but its pace was far too great for any runner to have any chance of keeping up with it.

II.

"WHAT'S to be done?" asked Bob Thorne.

Dave picked himself up.

"The question is, what will they do with Jack?" said little Evan, his eyes round with fear and wonder.

"We—I mean, I—Evan ain't old enough—ought to have gone for them," Jim said shamefacedly.

"Oh, I don't know! You hadn't much time to think. Don't worry, Jim," answered Dave.

"Will they kill him, do you think, Dave?"

"Great Scott, no, Evan! My notion is that they mean to take him along with them for a few miles, and then drop him—as a sort of punishment, you know. They were savage with us for being here. We shall have to follow them, of course, to meet old Jack, though there don't seem much chance of finding out what the rotters were after."

They went back with all speed for their bikes.

The old coaching-road was rough and bumpy enough; but it was possible to ride along it at quite a fair pace. Dave wheeled Jack's bike alongside.

But the old coaching-road was left behind, and the rolling downland, too; and the road they found themselves upon was hard and smooth and of tarmac; and still they saw nothing of Jack.

Then they came to cross-roads. Dave examined the dust with all care. But too many cars had passed for any track to give him a clue.

"It may be one of these roads," he said. "And if we take one we may miss Jack, coming back along another, altogether. We've brought our grub along, luckily. If we sit down here and have it we can't miss him if he comes."

"I—I ain't sure that I care much about any grub, not till I know what's happened to Jack," said Evan, with a catch in his voice.

He was a good rider, and he had kept up well with the rest, all older than himself by two years or so. But it was only natural that he should be more afraid than they of some mischance to his patrol-leader.

"It's all right, Evan, old chap," said a voice from behind them, and Jack's face looked over a hedge. "I wasn't going to say anything till you'd fairly started on the grub; but it didn't seem fair, with Evan worrying. Thanks for bringing my bike along, Dave!"

"How did you escape?"

"Did the rotters put you down?"

"Did you find out anything?"

There were lots of other questions besides these—far too many for Jack to try to answer them all at once.

He jumped over the hedge.

"Give me some sandwiches," he said. "I've had a swig at my bottle, so I'm not thirsty. But I want something more to take the taste of German leg out of my mouth!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 529,

"German leg?" gasped Evan.

"No, I'll tell the truth—I didn't bite. Hanged! I wouldn't have done, though, if I hadn't had a pin with me! They stuck me under the seat, and I couldn't move unless the bouncer in front of me shifted his legs. So I jabbed a pin into him—jolly hard, too! And he jumped up, squalling out. And I rolled out. 'T was the only way, and the car wasn't going at any great pace. But it was a bit of a bit up, landing."

"Didn't they come after you?" asked Jim.

"No. There was a farmer driving past, and he pulled up, looking above a bit suspicious. And they drove on, and he shouted things at them, and shook his whip. He gave me a lift to a village about half a mile from here, and I felt jolly sure you chaps would follow up, so I struck out for the Downs. The farmer told me this way would take me into the old road."

"Jolly good, Jack!" said Dave.

"Not a bit of it. Now, it was all right of you fellows to get on the track and stick to it so well."

"Couldn't he off it," said Bob Thorne.

"Now, what are we going to do? Go back to the hollow, and see if we can find out anything? I'll bet there's something fishy up there; they wouldn't have been so waxy else. Gave themselves away by that. What do you say, Dave?"

"Better go back by road now," said Dave. "We're near Harting, I know. It's a twenty-mile ride, and that's enough for most of us. To go back over the hills means less distance, perhaps, but a much harder ride. It would be better to visit the hollow again on Monday, when we've got plenty of time. Holidays now, you know, Jack."

"I think you're right, Dave. I say, let's make for Winton, and have a bathe in the sea before we go back. I can do with it, that's a fact."

So for Winton they made. But they did not visit the hollow in the hills on the Monday.

III.

FOR that was the August Bank Holiday, when all Britain waited, holding its breath, as it were, to know whether war was to be Britain's lot.

And then came the news of the base German attack upon little Belgium; and the trumpets brayed, and Britain sprang to arms. The Huns had not weighed us up aright! They had thought us as selfish, as base, as lost to honour as themselves. And we were not—that was all. We had a trust to keep, and we kept it. Nothing to brag about, really. What else was there for us to do, being what we were? Yet it was the right thing; and a nation may feel some pride in striking at once for the right, heedless of all besides.

The Boy Scouts everywhere fell into line at once. And they have stayed in line, doing good service to the nation through all this time of trial.

The Hound Patrol of Penton was busy enough. There was work to be done, inland and on the coast, by fellows who had learned to keep eyes and ears open, mouths shut, brains active; and Boy Scouts learn those lessons.

Jack Bridges and his comrades did not forget the hollow in the hills; but they had no time to visit it, and they thought little about it.

Until stories began to be told of strange discoveries. Until talk of Zeppelins coming over to devastate England began. Spies everywhere—concrete gun-bases found hidden in France and Belgium—the same things told of in our own country.

Then it was but natural that the minds of the Hound Patrol should turn with renewed interest to that hot Saturday, and the two foreigners who had visited the lonely hollow in the hills.

Even now they had no very definite notions. Something out of the ordinary way had taken those two men there, they felt sure. But what? It was difficult even to guess. The place was so remote. And yet—so ran the thoughts of Jack Bridges—was not its very remoteness a thing that made it more likely to be a safe spot for the landing of a hostile aeroplane or airship, to replenish stores, perhaps? Among the rumours were many of such places, and some of them must be true, Jack thought.

"We might report it to the Chief Con-

stable," said Dave. "Though, I'll admit, there is not very much to report."

"Nothing, really," said Jack. "They might have been just ordinary motorists, with nasty tempers and no notion of fair play. And as for spying on them—well, I suppose chaps who don't like the Boy Scouts might call it that."

"All the same, you believe there's something in it, Jack?" said Randal Booth.

"I do, old chap," replied Jack. "But the Chief Constable won't. He laughs at anything that don't fit in with his notions."

"Let's go to-morrow," said Bob Thorne. "There isn't anything very special on then."

"Right-ho! And we'll take spades, I guess. I rather think there may be some digging to do."

But Jack would not tell them why he thought digging would be needed, and only Dave guessed.

They mustered in full force for the expedition.

It was a wild, windy morning in November, very different from the day when they had first seen the hollow in the hills. Their way was mainly uphill, and in the teeth of the wind.

No one grumbled; but there came a time when the work was too hard for some of them. First Randal Booth had to drop behind, and then Bob Thorne; after a bit little Evan Dowling and Charley West found themselves far behind the other three, who plainly supposed that they also had given up the task.

"I'm done," said Charley. "If I got there I'd never get back. It's too much for a kid like you, Evan, that's a sure thing. Better turn with me."

"Shall you mind going back alone if I don't?" Evan asked.

"Oh, of course I sha'n't! But—"

"Then I shall keep on, Charley. I feel fit enough, and I know the way all serene."

"Right-ho! You're a well-plucked 'un, I must say, young Dowling! Don't lose yourself!"

Evan pressed on alone. But he was still a long way from the hollow when the three ahead—Jack Bridges, David Harris, and Jim Hebblewhite—reached it.

They left their bikes by the sloping bank to the south, and, carrying their spades, went round to the other side to get down.

But they were more than a bit puzzled where to start when they got down. There seemed nothing to serve as a guide.

"If only we'd been here ten minutes earlier that day!" said Jack.

"Yes; you'd have seen what they were up to then, perhaps," replied Jim.

"No use worrying about might-have-beens," said Dave. "We must look for some sign of digging. If anything's stored here, it must be buried. There aren't any caves to hide it in."

Yard by yard they examined the turf in the neighbourhood of where the Germans had been when Jack sighted them. And at last they found some slight indications of disturbance.

It was very slight. Untrained eyes might have missed it. A patch of turf that showed of a different hue from the rest—that was all.

Hardly had they struck spades into the soil when Jack gave the alarm.

Glancing round, he had seen two men coming down the slope, and had recognised them on the instant.

"Better bolt!" he said. "Make for the end nearest. We ought to be able to scramble up there."

He spoke quite coolly, though he saw that the taller German had pulled out a revolver. And as he ran he kept behind Jim—but not behind Dave, for Dave would not go ahead of him.

A bullet whistled past Jack's ear.

"We shall have to dodge, Dave," he said. They ran in zigzags, keeping well apart.

The Germans shouted. More bullets zipped viciously through the air.

"I'm hit!" gasped Dave.

He fell. The other two heard, and stopped. When the Germans came up Jack and Jim were standing by their prostrate chum.

So Evan saw them from above, reaching the edge of the hollow nearly spent. But new life came into him as he saw—fresh strength to do what one youngster might do.

He kept cool. That is a lesson a good Boy Scout learns, and Evan was a good one.

Those two men were cycling to-day, he felt sure, not motoring. Both wore knickers and stockings.

No help was to be had within miles of him. What should he do?

His comrades were helpless before those revolvers, and any attempt he might make to rescue them would be sheer folly.

They would not kill the three, he thought. If they meant to, he was utterly powerless to stop it. But there was one thing that it seemed to him he might do—help to bring about the capture of those two foreign scoundrels!

He had it! Render their machines unrideable!

There was no fear on his own account in Evan as he crept round the edge of the hollow, careful not to show his head, to the other side. But every now and then he could not keep himself from looking down, for there was a great fear in his heart for Jack and Dave and Jim.

He breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that the Germans were tying them up. That did not look like the worst.

Slash, slash! He had found the two machines, and his sharp knife made short work of the tyres. He removed nuts, and threw them into the gorse. Tool-bags were also removed and cast away. The Germans would have to be clever mechanics if they could make those bikes rideable.

He would not look into the hollow again until he had quite finished—and there still remained something to be done. He hid his chums' bikes—hid them so that anyone might have searched in vain for hours to find them.

Then he glanced down. Jack and Dave and Jim were tied up now. They lay side by side on the turf. Dave lay very still, and Evan fancied he could see blood on his face.

He waited for no more. Into the saddle he scrambled, and pedalled hard, bumping and jolting over the rough downland turf. He had forgotten all about his fatigue.

His plans were made. Penton was too far away. The nearest place where help might be obtained, whence more might be requisitioned by telephone or telegram, was certainly the village near which they had come upon Jack again in August.

So he cut across to the old coaching-road. The force of the wind out here on the hill-top was so great that it was all he could do to keep his seat and pedal on. But there was a big heart in his slim, small body, and he held to his task.

On and on and on! Sometimes his legs seemed failing, and often there was a blurred mist before his eyes. But that may have come from a thought of poor old Dave's face, with the stain of blood upon it.

The village at last! And, as luck would have it, someone ready to listen and to believe.

"You're a Boy Scout. That's good enough for me, though your tale might seem a trifle steep to some folk," said the big farmer-man.

And he did the thing that needed to be done, and made Evan rest.

The Civil Guard was turned out. It was the days of Civil Guards, before the Volunteers were yet organised, and when Special Constables were only beginning to be. Within half an hour twenty or thirty men who knew the hills were starting, some of them armed; and the Chief Constable and the military authorities had been communicated with.

The farmer himself, on horseback, with Evan behind him, and a couple of other horsemen by his side, rode straight for the hollow.

The two Germans had gone, of course. But the three boys were all there, fast bound, and Dave unconscious.

The short fellow—Fritz—was captured just as dusk fell. But it was not till much lat that the tall man was made prisoner. He had stumbled, sprained an ankle, and was lying helpless three or four miles from the hollow.

They were naturalised Englishmen, but both still as German as any Hun in Hunland. In the town in which they lived—fifty miles or more inland—no one had ever even suspected them of not being loyal Britons—on a paper warranty—it seemed!

But they had been helping to play the Kaiser's foul game. The false identification-marks which Jim had noted had been used to evade inquiry. Their visits to the hollow were designed to prepare a sort of enemy

aeroplane base within a short distance of the coast. A considerable store of petrol was found buried, also a box containing supplies of tinned meat and other provisions, with a number of bombs.

The three boys might have been released had they given their word of honour to keep the secret. They would not give it—not even when threatened with death—and so they were left there to what might have been a

lingering death for all those two scoundrels knew.

To prison went those two, of course. Watch was kept by the lonely hollow for Hun aeroplane or Zeppelin; but they never came. Great was the disappointment of four Boy Scouts, who were allowed to share that watch by favour of the officer commanding, that this should be so. But in later days they all saw a Zeppelin fall blazing to earth

—the sight of their lives! And there is not much doubt that what they did was a preventative. It could not have been for nothing that those preparations were made in the hollow in the hills!

Evan is almost as proud of the special Wolf Badge that was awarded him as Dave is of a small scar on his temple where the Hun bullet grazed him. But neither brags! THE END.

THE GREYFRIARS CELEBRITY!

By RICHARD RAKE.

I.

"MY hat!" said Harry Wharton. "My giddy aunt!" remarked Johnny Bull. "My only sainted Sam!" observed Bob Cherry.

The other two members of the Famous Five—Nugent and Hurree Singh—passed equally lucid expressions of amazement.

"To think," went on Bob Cherry faintly, leaning up against the tuckshop door for support—"to think that the day would dawn when I should see with my own eyes Bunter—William George Bunter—pass this noble pile without a call, without even a glance! I never saw something like it any more!"

"He's got something on. He's a deep dog, you know," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "He's in a jolly old hurry, too. Now, where is he off to so soon after dinner, I wonder? It can't be to the waxwork show in Friardale. It would take more than a waxwork show to make Bunter give the tuckshop the go-by. So the question is, where is Bunter going, and what's his little game?"

"I give it up," said Nugent. "But, all the same, it is our bounden duty to interest ourselves in Bunter's welfare. And as we are going to the waxworks, why not catch him up? Perchance some stray word let fall as we journey by the way will help us to elucidate the mystery. Who knows?"

"Good idea!" grinned Cherry. "We will! But we'll have to buck up if we want to catch him. Look how the fat beggar's barging along—like a—like a lugger in a storm!" "Or a runaway steam-roller going downhill," suggested Wharton. "But why not give him a shout? Now then, all together!" "Bunter! Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove would have been very deaf indeed if he had not heard that shout.

Apparently he heard it right enough, for he turned a fat, red face to the Five. But he did not stop. Instead he rolled along ahead faster, if anything, than before.

"That settles it!" observed Bob Cherry. "The fat fraud's got something on. It's not often Bunter is run after; but he's going to be for once. Come on!"

Putting on a sprint, the Famous Five soon began to overtake the fat youth in front.

Bunter looked round again. Then he settled their suspicion that he had "something on" without a doubt by breaking into a sprint also, and his short, fat legs began to twinkle.

Bunter's sprints were usually like the proverbial donkey's gallop—short and sweet. This one was no exception to the rule. But it ended in a surprise for the juniors.

Bunter, puffing and panting like a broken-winded cab-horse, had disappeared round a bend in the road only a few yards in front.

But the Famous Five turned the corner, to find the stretch of road ahead completely deserted. Bunter had mysteriously vanished. From the fact that the gates of a farmyard close by were open the juniors came to the obvious conclusion that Bunter would be found there. Which was, to quote Herlock Holmes, "quite an elementary deduction."

"We'll soon have the fat boulder out of that!" gasped Cherry. "We'll teach him—" "Help—oh, help!"

"It's Bunter!" grinned Cherry. "Hear his sweet, tinkling voice? He's wandered into a pigsty, and is falling out with his relations, I bet!"

"Help! Help!" "Buck up!" said Harry Wharton. "The voice came from the cowshed!"

As one man the Famous Five dashed across the muddy farmyard and through the open doorway of a dilapidated old shed. They rapidly realised their unfortunate mistake, however, when the door was banged behind them. And a well-known triumphant chuckle

outside told them that Bunter's ventriloquism had once again scored.

"Well, I'm dashed!" gasped Cherry. "Dished, diddled, and done! And by that fat specimen, too! All right, Bunter!" went on Cherry, raising his voice. "We'll break your fat neck for you for this! You wait!"

"He, he, he!" sniggered Billy Bunter from outside. "Thought you'd catch me, did you? Think yourselves mighty clever, don't you?"

"Let us out, there's a good chap!" said Cherry, in a nice, kind voice. "We'll not forget you if you do—eh, you chaps?"

"We won't!" said the rest fervently.

Perhaps Bunter thought them a little too fervent, for he only chuckled again. Then they heard him hurrying away.

"Never mind!" said Harry Wharton. "Scores of our chaps will be going to the waxworks. If you hear any of them passing, give a shout. We'll settle accounts with little Willie Bunter when we meet him again, fellow-prisoners."

It was lucky for the Famous Five that it was Wednesday afternoon, and that lots of the fellows were going to the waxworks in Friardale. For Bunter would never have dared to let them out himself. As it was, it was fully an hour after the triumphant Bunter had gone before they did manage to attract the attention of a passer-by.

Fortunately, Mark Linley heard the row, and came to investigate.

"Well, I'm blessed!" laughed Linley, when he heard the yarn. "Fancy letting that fat rotter spoof you! Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" echoed Cherry, savagely. "Blessed if I can see what there is to cackle at, Marky! You can take my word for it that Bunter won't see anything funny in it, either, the minute we meet him again!"

That was the unanimous opinion of the Famous Five just then. But, as it happened, though they were to meet Bunter sooner than they expected, they did not immediately carry out these intentions.

"Here we are!" said Harry Wharton, when they reached Friardale. "Here's the blessed waxwork show! Don't look much of a show from outside, anyway!"

The show was being held in a shop recently vacated by a shoemaker, who had had to close down on being called up. It was a dark, dingy shop at any time, and it certainly wasn't much of a place in which to hold a waxwork show that had appeared before all the crowned heads of Europe. What interested our chaps most was a notice hanging outside, round which a swarm of fellows had gathered.

"My hat!" said Wharton. "Listen you chaps! 'Special attraction for one week only. Figure of well-known Greyfriars celebrity, acquired at great expense!' Who the dickens will it be? Old Gosling, or the Head himself? Come on! We must see this!"

Wharton paid his money at the door and entered, followed by the others. The shop was long, and dimly lit. All round it, behind ropes, were ranged the wax figures—quite a decent collection, too!

Wharton led the way along the row of exhibits.

But Cherry, too anxious to see the Greyfriars celebrity to bother about Royalty and such small beer, hurried to the far end of the shop, where quite a lot of Greyfriars chaps had assembled round one of the figures—evidently the Greyfriars celebrity.

They seemed highly amused. Cherry also was when he spotted the figure.

"Bunter!" he yelled, in amazement. "Ha, ha, ha! Well, I'm jiggered! Look here, you chaps!"

They looked, gasped, and then they also yelled. The wax figure before them was indeed Billy Bunter of Greyfriars to the life. Save for the waxlike pallor of the face and

hands, and for the fact that the figure wore huge dark-blue spectacles, they would have sworn it was indeed Bunter in the flesh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Cherry. "What price the Greyfriars celebrity? I should call him the Greyfriars notoriety! Oh, my sainted Sam! If Bunter could only see this! But I say, professor!" sang out Cherry, turning to Professor Chumhead, who was keeping a wary eye on the juniors. "The figure's in the wrong place, you know!"

"Why, what's wrong with it?" growled the "professor," whose outstanding features were a red nose and a blue chin. "What are yer getting at, young feller?"

"'Cause it ought to be in the Chamber of Horrors!" grinned Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Everyone jumped. The protesting voice was Bunter's. And it undoubtedly came from the waxwork figure.

"Well, I'm blessed! Did the thing speak?" gasped Cherry. "This looks fishy! Shouldn't wonder—"

Cherry stopped. The showman's back was turned, and, taking a pin from the lapel of his coat, he ducked under the rope-rail and rammed it into the calf of the figure's leg.

But nothing happened. The figure did not move the fraction of an inch.

"It's a wax figure right enough!" laughed Harry Wharton. "And a jolly good one, too! But that certainly was Bunter's voice. I bet he's not far away, either, and that voice was another bit of his giddy ventriloquism."

But Cherry was not convinced. He remembered Bunter's human bon-constrictor stunt at the circus, and he wondered.

"Half a mo, you chaps!" he said aloud, as Wharton and the others were turning away. "We'll make the figure look more at home and realistic for the professor."

Taking one of Mrs. Mumble's special jam-tarts from a paper bag in his pocket, Cherry dodged under the rope again, and shoved it into the figure's outstretched hand.

"There!" he whispered softly, rejoining his chums. "If it is Bunter, he'll never jolly well resist the temptation to scoff that tart. We'll give him five minutes. Well, I'm jiggered! It's gone already!"

The attention of the Famous Five had not been off Bunter for three seconds. The figure still stood motionless in an Ajax-defying-the-lightning attitude. But the tart had vanished!

"That settles it!" muttered Cherry. "It's Bunter right enough! But don't let the fat spoofer see we've spotted him. Let's stroll round a bit, and then clear out. I've got an idea how to pay the young boulder out for that cowshed affair. Besides, he ought to be taught better than to make a public exhibition of himself like this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five couldn't help laughing. But they followed Cherry's suggestion. After a visit to the Chamber of Horrors, Cherry led the way into the street.

II.

"HALLO! Highcliffe cads!" hissed Harry Wharton.

It was half an hour later. The Famous Five had made a round of shopping-calls in the village, and were now returning, with bulging pockets, to Professor Chumhead's waxwork show. Before they reached the shop, however, four figures in Highcliffe School caps came bundling out, and scurried away up the street. From the fact that the professor came to the door and shook his fist after the departing youths, it was plain that they had been kicked out.

"Ponsonby, Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson!" said Wharton grimly. "Now, what in thunder have they been up to?"

"Hope they haven't spotted Bunter," said (Continued on page 16.)

THE GREYFRIARS CELEBRITY!

(Continued from page 15.)

Cherry, "and messed up our little game! Eh, what?"

But Cherry's fears were groundless. They paid at the door again, and entered the show, to find Bunter still intact, though, to a close observer, the fat face of the waxwork figure twitched visibly as the Famous Five strolled in.

"Now, look 'ere, young fellers," said the showman threateningly, "if yer be'aves yer-sel's and keeps outside that there rope, yer can stay as long as yer likes. But start 'andling of them waxworks, and out yer goes!"

With that the professor took his place again at the door.

Quite unconcernedly the Famous Five inspected each figure in turn—Nelson, Wellington, Lloyd George, and so on, until they reached Bunter. Then they stopped in a row, and gazed earnestly at the fat form for fully two minutes.

Even to a waxwork figure it must have been most disconcerting.

It was Johnny Bull who broke the painful silence.

"Wonderful!" he gasped admiringly. "The nearest approach to that fat prize porker of ours at Greyfriars I've ever seen. Look at the dainty, graceful figure—like a bursting beer-barrel! Look at the nobly-shaped head—like an overgrown turnip! And the face—like a railway smash! But the blue spectacles—well, I don't like 'em! Do you fellows?"

"Nunno! Not a bit!" said Cherry, putting his hand in his pocket. "Now, I wonder if I could knock 'em off from here with this rotten egg? Here goes!"

Whiz! Splish!

The waxwork figure broke into spasmodic life as the egg squelched full in the open mouth. And there was no doubt that the yell was not a bit of ventriloquism this time, but Bunter's own voice:

"Yarough! Wow! Oh, dear! Phew! Yow! Oh, Cherry, you beast! Oh, help!"

That wasn't all Bunter said, for the egg was followed swiftly by another, then a couple of over-ripe tomatoes, a kipper, and finally an enormous onion that struck Bunter's chest with a thump, knocking the fat youth off the pedestal and rolling him on the floor.

Then Professor Chumphead came rushing up. Laughing uproariously, the Famous Five dodged the angry showman and bolted for the door, with the showman in hot pursuit. He didn't follow them far up the street, however, but returned, and found Bunter picking himself up, moaning and groaning like a German band.

"What's the meaning of it? What happened? And what yer doing now?" demanded the professor.

Bunter didn't answer. He had turned up his trousers-legs, and was unrolling lengths of thick cloth which, could Bob Cherry have seen them, would have explained to him why his pin-jab at Bunter's calf didn't act. Then Bunter began to rub the mixture of egg and chalk off his face.

"I've finished!" he groaned at length. "No more blessed waxworks for me! Oh, dear! Oh, those beasts have killed me! Oh, dear! The howling rotters!"

Professor Chumphead's face lengthened with disappointment. It was plain from his expression that the Greyfriars celebrity had been for him a financial success.

"What! D'yer mean yer not going to keep to yer contract?" he growled wrathfully.

"Not me! I've had enough!" gasped Bunter miserably. "Give me the five bob you owe me for to-day, and let me get out! Hang the blessed waxworks!"

The professor argued without avail. Bunter was adamant.

"All right, then! Please yerself!" growled the disappointed showman. "Ere's yer five bob! Yer don't deserve it, though, letting me down like this! I'll 'ave to put old Napoleon back in yer place!"

Still grumbling, the professor went to the far end of the room. He reappeared, carrying a bulky waxwork figure covered with a sheet, and placed the figure on Bunter's vacant pedestal.

But before he had time to remove the sheet a startling thing happened. Into the shop dashed four youths wearing the Highcliffe caps. The amazed showman was

howled over like a ninepin. Bunter they evidently did not see when they entered. And that worthy made jolly certain they didn't afterwards.

Hidden behind Queen Elizabeth, the fat youth chuckled as Ponsonby & Co. grabbed Napoleon, and, carrying him out of the shop, dropped him on a handcart outside. It was, perhaps, the first time in history that Napoleon had been kidnapped.

By the time the professor had collected his senses the handcart was bowling down the street. With a howl of fury, the showman dashed from the shop and went in hot pursuit.

Bunter, still chuckling, followed at his leisure.

"Hey! Stop 'em! Stop, thief!" yelled the furious showman.

It is amazing to see how quickly a crowd can gather, even in such a sleepy little village as Friardale. Almost before Ponsonby & Co. had reached the end of the street Professor Chumphead had been joined by a miscellaneous crowd of men, women, children, and dogs, all chasing Pon & Co.

The Famous Five dashed out of the village confectioner's, where they were having some light refreshments, as the crowd, all yelling "Stop, thief!" streamed past.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Wharton. "Quick, you chaps! After 'em! They've collared poor old Bunter!"

There were plenty of Greyfriars fellows about, and we quickly outstripped the rabble. Ponsonby & Co. were beginning to feel sorry for themselves. They had hoped to get to Highcliffe with their waxwork prize, and certainly never expected this. But they had to carry on now they had started.

Then Wharton gave a shout. In front of Ponsonby & Co. appeared the imposing figure of P.-c. Tozer, with outstretched arms.

But the outstretched arms of the law didn't stop Ponsonby & Co. The handcart took P.-c. Tozer in the chest and bowled him over. Then the procession passed triumphantly over him.

But the race didn't last much longer. Just outside the village a farmer's cart was drawn full across the road. Ponsonby & Co. came across it suddenly. They tried to pull up. But too late! Unable to stop, they tried to turn the handcart round. Then—

Crash!

The handcart struck the railings at the side of the road. Then came a dismal splash as the waxwork figure shot off the handcart and disappeared into the depths of an evil-smelling duckpond on the other side of the fence.

Then the Highcliffe fellows turned to bolt. But Greyfriars was upon them.

"Quick!" gasped Wharton. "Collar the cads! We'll attend to Bunter!"

The duckpond didn't look at all inviting, and not one of the Famous Five looked as if he fancied the idea of attending to Bunter in its slimy depths. But the figure in the sheet had sunk at once. And they couldn't let Bunter drown.

In less than two seconds the Famous Five had waded into the muddy, green liquid.

Next moment a cheer went up as the sheeted figure was hauled up from the deep mud and lowered tenderly on the bank.

Then Wharton ripped the sheet off.

"What the— Who the— Well, I'm blessed! It's not Bunter after all!" yelled Wharton, in amazement. "We've been spoofed! Where is Bunter?"

A throaty chuckle came from the road behind them. Wharton & Co. wheeled round. Standing there, with hands deep in his trousers-pockets and a broad grin stretching from ear to ear, was W. G. Bunter.

But the Famous Five didn't go for him—not then. They were too relieved at finding out their mistake.

Ponsonby & Co. had now grasped the point of the joke, and, though in the grip of Greyfriars, they laughed uproariously.

"What 'price the brave rescue from the duckpond?" yelled Ponsonby. "Don't they look waxy now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Wharton & Co. didn't laugh. Nor did Ponsonby a minute later.

"In with the rotters!" roared Wharton. "Let them have a taste of the duckpond!"

Ponsonby & Co. sang a different tune as, one by one, they swung through the air and descended with a dismal splash into the depths of the duckpond. Their own mothers wouldn't have known them through the thick mud and slimy festoons of green weed when they crawled out a moment later.

But their troubles hadn't finished then, for at that moment P.-c. Tozer and Professor

Chumphead, with a crowd of excited Friardaleites, came puffing up.

And the last the Famous Five saw of Pon & Co. was their being escorted back to Friardale by the bobby. Whether they settled matters satisfactorily by paying for the ruined figure of Napoleon Wharton & Co. never found out. It didn't matter much.

They were wet, and badly wanted a bath and change of clothing. They also badly wanted to meet a fellow named Bunter—otherwise the Greyfriars Celebrity.

THE END.

THE COMIC COLUMN!

By Monty Lowther.

IF the threatened shortage of bowler-hats comes along, the want will certainly be felt.

The queue trouble is growing. In Rylcombe there have been margarine queues and butter queues. Now I hear that at the Green Man there are billiard cues.

The carpenters are the best off. They cannot get a square tea, but they are well supplied with T-squares.

A politician says that we ought to be represented by men who have a stake in the country. That is all very well. But we should like to know first whether they have it on meatless days.

Governments are much the same everywhere. In Russia they used to be governed by the knout; in Prussia they are governed by the stick; and on the Congo they are governed by an ebony ruler.

A pessimistic writer sighs for the happy pre-war days, when the streets were swept clear of mud and we had plenty of margarine. This does not make me feel that I want any margarine!

We hear of a famous author—initials F. R.—who gave up sugar when the shortage first set in. But we don't think this a hardship. For to be Frank is to be candid; and to be candied is to be sweet enough without sugar!

During the last air-raid there was a great deal of mist. We hope there was also a great deal of hit!

We hear that W. G. Bunter wants Greyfriars School to be removed from the East Coast on account of the air-raids. We sincerely hope that W. G. Bunter will not "go West!"

A chap who went to Italy for the vac says that even business buildings in that country often have the most picturesque surroundings, and it is not uncommon to see even a bank in the midst of trees and blossoms. But this is not quite unknown in England. I know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows.

A great admiral recently told us that Germany was practically beaten, and a correspondent asks us how he knows what state Germany is in. Perfectly simple! It's because he's been to sea. See?

A new man in the cricket eleven the other day was nervous in a House match, and his skipper told him he must be bold. And he was howled! And even then his skipper wasn't satisfied.

Home-grown flour and imported flour, and, in fact, all flours, are now controlled. We are informed, however, that this order does not apply to the flowers that bloom in the spring.

**Look Out for Tom Redwing
Next Week!**

**Are you reading the Sports'
Yarns in the "GEM"?**