

The Old Boys' DINNER.



FRANK NUGENT.



Frank Nugent, a prominent member of the Famous Five at Greyfriars School, gives his impressions of the Old Boys' Dinner as it may be twenty-seven years hence.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Back to Greyfriars.

IT was my birthday. I was exactly forty-two, and as I drove my little two-seater car to my office, I stroked my moustache and thought I looked younger every year. I was chairman of Nugent & Co., the big merchants. I reached my office, and rang for my clerk to produce the letters, accounts, and other correspondence.

"Good-morning, sir," he said as he came in.

"Good-morning, Smith," I nodded. "By the way, it's my birthday to-day. I'm exactly forty-two."

"Congratulations, sir. You look younger than ever."

"Ha, ha! Is there anything interesting in the post to-day, Smith?"

The clerk sorted through the letters and took out a small gilt-edged card.

"Yes, rather, sir! Here's an invitation

to an Old Boys' Dinner at Greyfriars School in Kent."

"Oh! That's where I went to school! Bless my soul, I haven't seen Greyfriars for about twenty-five years! Fancy meeting all the fellows again," I went on dreamily. "I wonder if they'll be altered at all? When is this dinner?"

"Three days before Christmas, sir," said my clerk. "The school will have broken up for the holidays, so the Old Boys will have the place to themselves."

"Ripping!" I said, unconsciously using a word that I had not uttered since I left school. "Send a note saying I shall be attending the dinner."

"Yes, sir."

So three days before Christmas I sorted out a spotless top-hat and seated myself in a first-class carriage of the express to Friardale. I thought for a few moments I should have the carriage to myself, but soon the door opened, and a sprucely-attired Army officer

entered the compartment and sat opposite me.

Something in his face struck me as familiar, and after a time I spoke to him.

"Major Harry Wharton, surely?" I said.

The major started.

"What—what?" he ejaculated. "Is that—is that Mr. Frank Nugent?"

"Your humble servant, major."

We shook hands heartily, and the major slapped me on the back.

"By Gad!" he exclaimed. "It's like old times to see you again, Nugent."

"My dear major, I——"

"Don't be a young ass," grinned Major Wharton. "For goodness' sake, call me Harry as we used to do in Study No. One."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, then, Harry, are you going to the Old Boys' Dinner?"

"Yes, rather! I've been in India for years, and I'm looking forward to seeing the Remove passage again. By the way, Frank, we shall have a distinguished guest with us. I refer to the Nabob of Bhanipur. His Highness travelled to England on the same boat as myself."

We stared at each other, and grinned.

"I wonder if we shall dare to refer to His Highness as Inky?" I chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha! I think not!"

The guard's whistle blew, and just as we were moving off the door was flung open and a tall, bony gentleman with an umbrella and gold-rimmed spectacles flew into the carriage like a rocket. He tripped over the major's feet and sat down on the floor.

"Yarooooh!" gasped the tall man, involuntarily.

"Good Gad!" ejaculated the major. "Who is this?"

"My dear Harry," I said, "you have nearly extinguished one of the leading lights of the Law Courts. I recognise this gentleman from photographs in the newspapers. If I am not mistaken, it is Sir Peter Todd, K.C."

"You silly ass!" roared Sir Peter Todd, K.C., picking himself up. "What did you trip me up for, you footling chump?"

"You—you——" gasped the major.

"What did you dive into the carriage like that, for?"

"Look here, Wharton——"

"Look here, Toddy——"

"Peace, my infants!" I said, butting in. "Don't begin scrapping at this season of goodwill. We don't want to show up at the Old Boys' Dinner with a set of thick ears and black eyes between us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When Toddy had pulled himself together, we started to swop yarns and exchange experiences; and so interested were we that it seemed only a matter of moments before the train steamed into Friardale Station.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Famous Five Again.

"I SAY, you fellows!"

That was the first sound that greeted us upon arrival at Friardale. For a moment we fancied we were boys again, so pleasant was that old-time remark.

A fat face with an enormous pair of spectacles blinked in at the window. It belonged to a huge man, who was wearing an overcoat that seemed about the size of a large tent. Never before or since have I seen a fatter person.

"Bunter!" gasped the major.

"Great pip! He's grown fatter than ever!"

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Are you going to the Old Boys' Dinner, Bunter?" I asked.

"Catch me missing it!" sniffed Bunter. "I'm going to eat enough to make up for the last six months. I say, you fellows, I've had an awful time," he said pathetically.

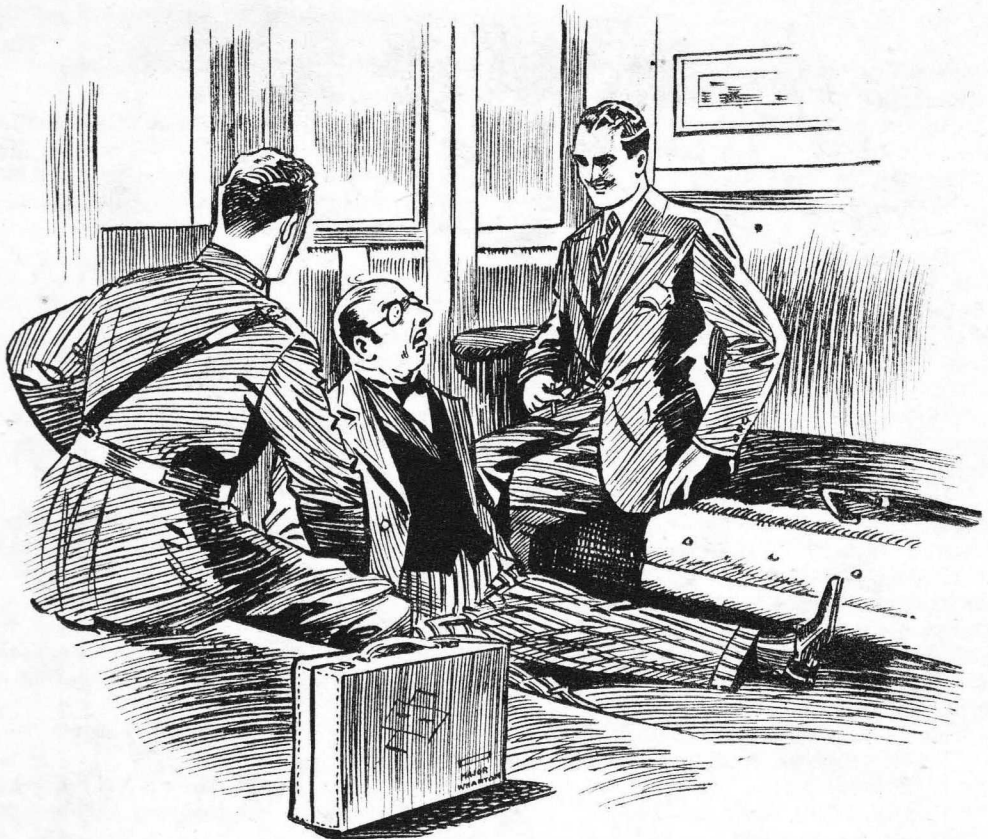
"What do you mean, fatty? Haven't you had enough to eat?" asked Sir Peter Todd, getting out of the carriage.

"Nunno! I've just come out of chokey, you know——"

"Wha-at?"

"Yes. Horrid, ain't it? And they give you dry bread and thin gruel and water. Think of that, you know. Dry bread!"

"You fat sinner!" roared Wharton. "Why were you sent to chokey?"



A tall, bony gentleman tripped over Major Wharton's feet and sat down on the carriage floor. "Yaroooh!" he gasped involuntarily.

"For nothing. Nothing at all," answered Bunter, blinking at us pathetically.

"Nothing?"

"No. I'm on the Stock Exchange, you know, and some beast made a fuss about some duplicated shares which were fraudulently issued. Just as if I had anything to do with it," argued Bunter. "Why, I'm as innocent as—as a dove, you know. I wouldn't have dreamed of doing anything of the kind. Besides, there were only a few of them, anyway. And I was careful, too—you know how careful I am. I didn't think anybody would find out. Not that I did it, of course. I wouldn't think of it. Besides, I wasn't there."

"You podgy villain!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Come on, you men," grinned Peter Todd. "We can't waste all our time on gaol-birds. Let's get a taxi outside to take us to Greyfriars."

"What-ho!"

We moved towards the station exit.

"I say you fellows——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Beast! Look here, this is rather important. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, you know——"

"Great Scott!"

"I should have been pleased to stand a taxi to the school, but, as it happens, I'm rather short of cash. So you fellows can pay me back by standing me a taxi."

"You fat frog!"

"Dash it all, Toddy, if you're going to be mean, I'll stand the taxi. There!"

"But would the taxi stand you?" asked Peter, with a shake of the head. "My idea is that it wouldn't. You had better hire a special van."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"Oh, let him roll in," laughed Major Wharton. "You can crowd in with us, old barrel."

We crammed into a taxi outside the station. When the driver saw Bunter he rubbed his eyes and charged us double the fare on the spot. He said that it would take a year's wear off his engine to tow Bunter to the school.

"Don't crowd me, you beasts!" grumbled Bunter, by way of gratitude, as we sped onwards to the school. "This isn't my style of travelling, you know. If I had known, I would have telephoned Bunter Court and had the Rolls Royce sent along."

"Phew! Is Bunter Court still in existence?" I grinned.

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Toddy. "Only it's usually called Pentonville Gaol."

"Yah!" snapped Bunter. "If you had been where I have, Toddy, you'd be even more of a bony freak than you are now."

"What?"

"They absolutely starve you in prison, you know. Look at me! I'm as thin as a lath."

"My only hat!"

The taxi drew up at the gates of Greyfriars, and we all peered out excitedly to get a first glimpse of the old school. There it was! To our eyes it looked exactly as it had looked five-and-twenty years before. The old tower with the ivy; the clock with the gilt figures; the quadrangle—even the bicycle shed was the same.

"Everything's exactly as we left it," murmured the major, with a lump in his throat. "I say, you know; I feel about fifteen years old. If I saw Quelchy now, I should feel quite terrified."

I was feeling exactly the same. The old school had made me feel like a boy again, and if Wingate or Gwynne had appeared, I should

never have dreamed of speaking to them as man to man. I should have said: "Yes, Wingate," and "No, Wingate," in the way I used to when a fag.

"Everything's the same; but everything has altered," said Sir Peter Todd. "The masters are all different; the scholars are all different—there's not a person here who was the same as when we were boys."

"Wot I says is this 'ere—wot are you young rips doing there?"

We jumped as a crusty, crotchety old porter came out of his lodge. He had a bunch of keys in his hand, and a suspicious-looking bottle was sticking out of his pocket.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton. "It's old Gosling. He'll be here as long as Greyfriars stands. Gossy will never die."

"Look 'ere, Master Wharton—"

"How old are you now, Gossy?" asked Sir Peter. "Two hundred and forty, ain't it?"

"Which it's nothing of the kind, Master Todd. I've just turned ninety."

"Wharton! Nugent! Todd! How dare you stand in the gateway and impede my progress?"

We stared in astonishment at an old, white-bearded man who had just arrived at the gates. For a moment we didn't recognise him. We looked at his hands, hair, face and beard—then we caught sight of a pair of gimlet eyes, and we knew him at once.

"Quelchy!"

"Phew!"

He hobbled in through the gates with the aid of a stick, and glared irritably at us.

"You will each take a hundred lines for loitering about at the gates," he snapped.

"Oh, crumbs! Yes, sir," I murmured, feeling just like a boy again.

Quelchy hobbled away, muttering things in his beard. We stared at each other, and then jumped out of the way as a magnificent Rolls Royce slid into the drive. Inside the car were three black gentlemen and one "paleface." One of the coloured gentlemen was evidently a big potentate, for the other two were his attendants. The car stopped, and the two attendants sprang down, opened the door and bowed low.



“Wharton! Nugent! Todd! How dare you stand in the gateway and impede my progress?” We stared in astonishment at the old, white-bearded man.

“It’s His Highness!” murmured Major Wharton. “I don’t know who the white man is.”

“Greetings, sahibs!” said His Highness gravely.

“It’s Inky!” sniggered Bunter. “It’s that black beast Hurree Singh. Hallo, Inky, old chap. We meet again, old fellow.”

“The meet-againfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter.”

“He, he, he! Haven’t you learned English yet, Inky?”

“Shut up, Bunter!”

Then the white man descended from the car and grinned.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” he said cheerfully.

“How are you, old beans?”

“Great jumping Jupiter! It’s Bob Cherry!” we gasped, and rushed forward to shake his hand.

“Glad to see you,” laughed Bob gleefully. “I met old Inky at the Hotel Magnificent this morning, and he offered me a lift down here in his car.”

“Good old Inky!”

“I’ve just come back from Africa,” Bob told us. “Been hunting lions and rhinos. I saw a gorilla in the jungle who was the very image of Bunter. In fact, I addressed him as Bunter until I saw him eat. Then I knew it wasn’t our old porpoise. The gorilla was a fool to Bunter in the eating line.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Beast!”

Bob gave a sudden start.

"Why, there it is!" he said. "The gorilla, I mean."

"You—you——" roared Bunter. "This is me."

"Oh, sorry! I thought——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" we shrieked, greatly enjoying the expression on Bunter's speaking features.

At that moment we were interrupted by a few more arrivals for the dinner. There was Mr. Vernon-Smith, the business magnate, in a large motor-car; the Earl Mauleverer in a ditto, ditto; Battling Bolsover, the heavy-weight champion of the world; Oliver Kippis, the celebrated conjurer and magician from Maskelynes; and last, but not least, Captain Bull, R.N., who commanded the great ironclad, *H.M.S. Drake*. The captain was in great spirits, and after punching Bunter's nose for having boned a cake belonging to him twenty-five years previously—these naval men always have long memories—he linked arms with us, and the Famous Five marched arm-in-arm to Big Hall, as we had done so many times in the past.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Coker Does the Trick!

THE dinner was first-rate. It was a glorious spread—in fact, even Bunter was satisfied.

But, of course, what interested us most was to see again all the old faces we had known years before. Some of them were not entire strangers to me. Sir William Wibley, the famous actor, for instance. I had seen Wib several times when I visited the theatre. Once I saw him as Hamlet and another time as Mark Antony. But I had not spoken to him until I met him at the dinner. He told me he had received a letter from Mr. Desmond, his old study-mate, who was in Ireland, and unable to be present at the feast.

There were a number of vacant places, of course. Mr. Fisher T. Fish, the great American fish-paste king, was in the land of his birth. Fishy didn't "see" coming right over to England for a "gosh-darned" feed. Tom Brown, likewise, had returned to New Zealand, and many thousands of miles of

water now lay between us and Browney. Mr. Sampson Field—"Squiff," in other words—by good luck happened to be in England for Christmas, before going back to Australia, so he was present. He told us that he would be coming over again in a year or two as a member of the Australian Test Team.

We were all very glad to see our old friends; but we weren't so glad to renew the acquaintance of the masters. Quelchy was very stern. He "lined" Bunter for talking at table, gave Mr. Vernon-Smith a week's detention for lighting a cigar, and when Bob Cherry slapped him on the back and asked him how he was, Quelchy turned purple, and went in search of a cane.

As it happened, Sir Mark Linley—the famous doctor of Harley Street—was present, and he told Bob that he was Quelchy's doctor. Quelchy had a very weak heart, and if he was made angry, he was liable to talk himself into a dangerous condition. Mark said that Quelchy must be given his head—he must not be opposed at all.

"But, dash it all!" howled Bob Cherry. "Do you mean that I've got to let the old bird cane me?"

"Certainly!" said Sir Mark Linley. "It won't hurt you. If you resist him, I won't answer for the consequences. Quelchy might go off at any moment."

Just then Quelchy came stalking back with a cane under his arm—having found one in a master's study. He gave Bob a scorching look.

"Cherry!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"What—what? How dare you utter those ridiculous ejaculations in my presence, Cherry? Bend over!"

"Wha-at?" gasped Bob, turning crimson.

"BEND OVER!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar from about fifty of the fellows who had gathered round. They seemed to be enjoying the scene.

Poor Bob, with his face as red as a beetroot, stooped slightly; and Quelchy flourished the cane in his old manner.

Whack! Whack! Whack! WHACK!

"Whooooop!" roared Bob fiendishly.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

A tall, stoutly-built man with a face like a sack of coke strolled forward and patted Quelchy on the shoulder.

“That’s the style, Quelch!” he said patronisingly. “Always keep the fags in their proper place. That’s my motto! Now give that cheeky young scoundrel Wharton a good dose. I’ll back you up, old bean.”

“Go easy, Coker, you ass!” he murmured. “You mustn’t get Quelchy’s rag out. His health won’t stand it!”

“Great pip!”

“You must let him do whatever he likes. If you make him wild, you might cause him a fatal stroke.”

“My only aunt!”

Quelchy seemed to be recovering. His



Wingate took a mighty shot and the ball took Bunter on the nose. “Yaroooh!” he yelled as he sat down on the goal-line.

Quelch jumped.

“Coker!” he thundered. “You forget yourself, sir. I shall report your conduct to Mr. Prout.”

“Go hon!” grinned Coker, patting Quelchy’s head.

I thought Quelchy was going to explode, judging from his expression. I can only describe it as tremendous.

Mark Linley jumped forward in alarm.

eyes gleamed at Coker like points of fire.

“Coker! Man!” he stuttered. “You have had the temerity to pat my head and address me as ‘old bean.’ Have you lost your senses, Coker?”

“Nunno!”

“Then I can only imagine that your conduct is the result of sheer, unparalleled impertinence. You will follow me to Doctor Locke, Coker. I shall request him to punish you.”

Coker looked dazed.

"Well, mum-my hat!" he stuttered. "Is the old bird potty?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Coker, follow me!"

Quelchy stalked away, his beard bristling with wrath. Coker, after a dazed look at the shrieking crowd of spectators, trailed after him. They vanished into the house, leaving us on the verge of having fits.

"I say, Wharton," said Captain Johnny Bull a little while later, "what about getting up a footer eleven and challenging Sir Cecil Temple's gang?"

"Good wheeze!" said Wharton.

"We'll mop up the ground with the Upper Fourth, as we used to in the old days."

"Hear, hear!"

"Half a minute, though," put in Bob Cherry. "What about togs?"

"Oh, bother the togs! We'll play as we are."

"Phew!"

We looked down at our spotless clothes and thin shoes, and we didn't like the idea a little bit. But after Wharton had lectured us all on being slackers and shirkers, we grinned feebly at each other and joined up. Then we went along the Remove passage, looking for volunteers.

"What about a game of footer, Smithy?" asked Wharton, as Mr. Vernon-Smithrove was in sight. "We're getting up an eleven to play Temple's gang. Are you game to play in your bee-yewtiful lounge suit?"

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Oh, I'll play," he said. "Plenty more suits at home."

Batting Bolsover was our next recruit. Dick Rake, Sir Peter Todd, and Squiff also volunteered. Mr. Harold Skinner was asked, but he waved us away in languid fashion. Bob Cherry was inclined to roll Skinner down the stairs; but we carefully held him back.

We had got ten men, and couldn't find an eleventh. Tom Redwing could not stay. Dick Penfold had friends with him and couldn't manage it. Hazeldene was escorting his sister Marjorie, and didn't feel inclined to dirty his spotless clothes.

Finally, however, we found one Remove

man who was willing to join up. It was William George Bunter, and the Owl found himself playing for the Remove as goalkeeper. Bob Cherry argued that Bunter would merely have to stand in the goal and there wouldn't be room for the ball to get past him.

Then we went to look for Sir Cecil Temple. The great Temple was chatting languidly with one or two ornaments of Society as we arrived. He was dressed in faultless attire, with white spats and a topper.

When we put the matter to him he eyed us in horror.

"Play football!" he stuttered. "My dear fags, roll away. Your company fatigues me, you know."

"You silly ass!"

"If you don't mind my mentioning it," said Temple, "I much prefer you fags to keep your distance. Thanks awfully!"

Bob Cherry drew back his boot, and before we could prevent him, he had landed it on Cecil Reginald Temple's spotless trousers.

"Oooooooooop!"

Sir Cecil gave a wild yell as he plunged forward. His top-hat sailed merrily into a puddle near by, and fell with a splash. Leaving him spread-eagled on the ground, we went in search of Hobson.

Hobson merely sniggered when we asked him to get up a football team to play us. Blundell thought it a good idea; but said he couldn't be troubled to get a team together.

"Well, the silly asses!" said Bob in disgust. "There's not one of them willing to play us."

"Afraid they'll get licked," snorted Johnny Bull.

A new voice broke into the discussion.

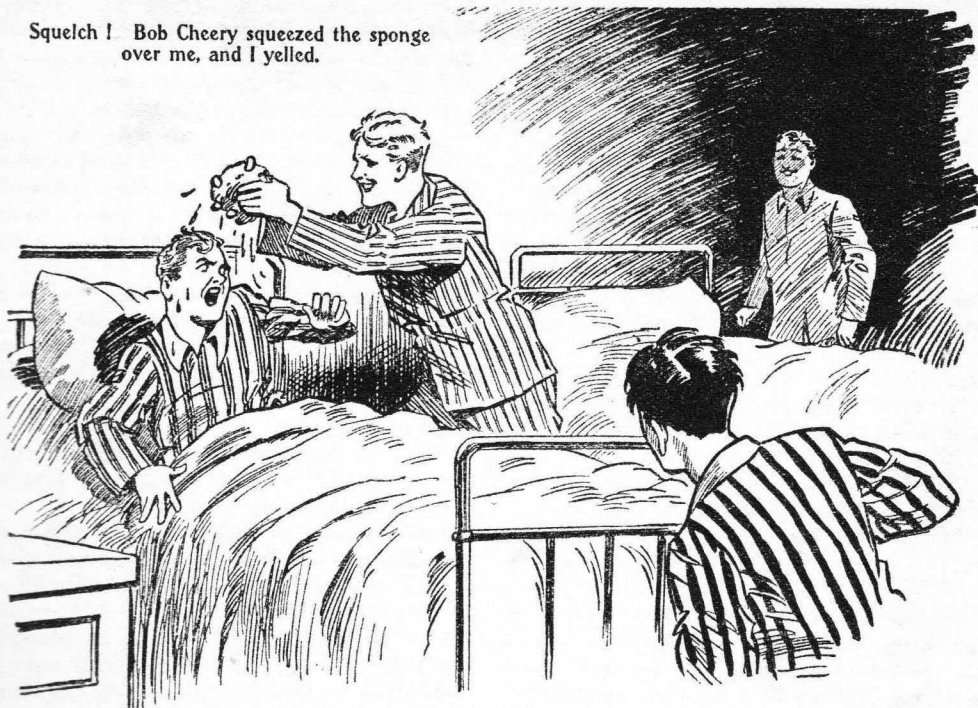
"Out of the way, you fags!" it said briskly, and we perceived Coker striding towards us. "Coker!" chortled Bob Cherry. "He'll raise a team. Let Coker do it."

"Good egg!"

We put the matter to Coker. The ex-Fifth-Former stroked his chin.

"Not a bad idea for a fag," he nodded. "All right, leave it to me. I'll raise a team to play you, and we'll wipe the earth up with you. Get down to the footer field. My team will be along in a few minutes."

Squelch ! Bob Cheery squeezed the sponge over me, and I yelled.



He strode away thoughtfully. Bob chuckled.

"The same fatheaded old Coker," he remarked. "Come on, you fellows. Let's punt a ball about."

"I bet Coker doesn't rake up a team," I said.

"Oh, he'll find somebody. Leave it to Coker."

And, sure enough, in about ten minutes a small procession wended its way to the football ground, with Coker in the vanguard, smirking in a pleased fashion.

Major Wharton whistled when he saw them. "By Gad, Wingate and Gwynne," he observed. "And Blundell, Bland, and Tomlinson."

"Phew! And there's Fry of the Fourth, and Larry Lascelles——"

"Great Christopher! And Hoskins, Stewart, and Churchill of the Shell."

We stared at each other blankly.

"This means a terrific licking for us," I said glumly.

"The lickfulness is terrific," nodded His Highness.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Cheer up!" he said. "You've forgotten Coker. He's playing for them, and that's as good as several goals to us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker strolled loftily across the field.

"Is your fag team ready, Wharton?" he asked.

"Waiting," snapped Wharton.

The two captains tossed, and Coker had the satisfaction of winning. The teams lined up, and we noticed that spectators were arriving from far and near to see the most extraordinary match ever played on the Greyfriars football field. There were twenty-two of us, each dressed in different styles. Major Wharton was in army uniform, Captain Bull was in "navy blue," and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sported a violent mauve cummerbund across his middle.

Wharton kicked off amid cheers from the crowd, and he swung the ball out to Vernon-

Smith on the wing. But Smithy had lost the speed of his earlier days, and he soon surrendered the ball to Blundell, who passed it to Wingate, who punted it on to Larry Lascelles. Coker's side came down the field like a hurricane, and, in spite of neat tackling by Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry, they swarmed about the Remove goal.

Wingate took a mighty shot. The ball sailed for goal like a bullet out of a gun. Bunter tried in vain to get out of its way. He could not move quickly enough.

Bump!

"Yarooooh!"

The ball took Bunter on the nose, and the fat custodian sat down on his own goal-line.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well saved, fatty!"

Bob kicked the ball up the field, and I managed to dribble Hoskins and pass to Inky. The game now went down to the other goal—where Coker was playing at back. The Remove forwards came down the field in a line; but just when we were nearing goal, Squiff slipped and the ball travelled to Coker. The mighty Horace James Coker had a short way with footballs. With a tremendous kick he booted it far over his own goal-line.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Corner!"

Wingate came rushing up.

"You—you—you—" he panted. "There was plenty of time to clear the ball. Why must you give away a corner, you hopeless chump?"

"That's enough!" snapped Coker. "You get up to centre-forward's position, George Wingate. I'm captain of this side."

Smothering his feelings with an effort, Wingate turned away. At the same moment Hurree Singh sent in his corner kick. It was a beautiful corner. The ball curved gently into the goalmouth, dropping right on Wharton's head. But before the major could reach it, Coker jumped up and headed the ball past Stewart into the goal.

"Goal!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Coker's scored a goal against his own side."

Wingate looked so dangerous that Coker

retreated hastily. Almost bursting with wrath, the ex-captain of Greyfriars centred the ball and kicked off.

Coker's side now kept the game in the Remove goalmouth. The next ten minutes seemed like a nightmare to Bunter. Balls seemed to be hitting him from every angle. In vain he dodged and yelled. Like so many cannon-balls, hard footballs crashed upon his podgy person, and great was the crashing thereof.

But the ball did not go into the goal. That, at any rate, was so much to the good of our side.

The score stood at 1—0 until the last minute of the first half—then Wingate equalised. Bunter had run away—literally. He was streaking for his life towards the school. Wingate had merely to put the ball into the open goal.

There was no scoring in the second half until the referee was on the point of blowing his whistle for time. Then something happened! Words almost fail to describe it; it was so funny.

The Remove were attacking, but Blundell, shouldering Coker aside, cleared the ball. Squiff took a long shot. It was really hopeless—for Stewart in goal had the ball covered all the way. But just when he was about to save it, Coker rushed up.

What did Coker do? Did he stand aside and let Stewart field the ball? Did he head the ball back towards the half-way line? Did he even try to kick it?

Coker did none of these things. They did not occur to his mighty brain. Coker caught the ball. He caught it neatly in his arms, and booted it back up the field. Of course, the referee awarded us a penalty kick on the spot. Bob Cherry was almost laughing too much to take the kick; but he managed to send the leather past Stewart, and the Remove had won 2—1, thanks to Coker.

Wingate and the other players made a bee-line for the misguided Horace Coker. They grasped him, up-ended him, and rolled him in the mud. We could hear furious yells proceeding from the unseen Coker. He was going through it.

"Yarooogh! Ow-ow-ow!" came the howl of Coker's voice from the midst of the enraged members of his team. "Yow-ow! Lemme gerrup! I'll smash you!"

But Coker was not allowed to get up. Struggling, roaring and wriggling, he was, nevertheless, helpless in the grasp of Wingate & Co.

Nature, who had been rather mean with Coker in the matter of brains, had endowed him with an over-abundance of bulldog determination and plenty of physical strength. But these qualities availed him nothing now in the grasp of Wingate & Co. And the hapless Coker was bumped and rolled in the mud, and as he bumped and rolled he roared.

"Come on, you fellows," grinned Bob Cherry, "let's rescue the hopeless ass! He'll be murdered in a minute!"

We ran forward to rescue the freak of the Fifth. Wingate and Gwynne tried to stop us. I felt Gwynne's fist crashing into my face, and then I gave a furious yell—and awoke!

I sat up dazedly.

Bob Cherry was holding a sponge, dripping with water, above my devoted head.

"Rising bell, old bean," he said cheerfully. "Are you going to get up or do you want this sponge?"

"Where's Coker?" I asked breathlessly. "Did we rescue him?"

"Coker!" exclaimed Bob. "Why, he's in the Fifth-Form dormitory, isn't he?"

"And Major Wharton and His Highness?" I went on, looking around blankly. "Are they all right?"

"I think you must be a little bit potty, old chap," Bob said soothingly. "I know a certain cure for that. Here you are."

Squelch!

He squeezed the sponge, and a freezing flood trickled down my pyjamas. I leaped out of bed with a yell. Then I knew it was all a dream. I was not forty-two; I was fifteen. I was not a City merchant; I was a Remove man, who would be lined if he wasn't downstairs in time for Chapel.

So I shook myself hurriedly, and began to dress.

