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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Coker's Stunning Idea!

"I'll make it a cup!" said Coker.
Coker, of the Fifth, was sitting at the table in his study, at tea. The tea-table was well spread—Coker's table always was. That was one reason why Potter and Greene were satisfied to be his study-mates. Coker stood the feeds, and Potter and Greene stood Coker.
Coker had been sitting in deep thought for some minutes, toying idly with a banana. As a rule, Coker did the fullest justice to a feed, but on the present occasion Coker of the Fifth appeared to have something on his mind. He was not given to thoughtfulness, but now he was astonishingly thoughtful. Potter and Greene did not mind. They were quite contented to finish the cake and the tarts while Coker wrestled with his mental problem, whatever it was.
Coker had been gazing absently out of the study window what time he jabbed his fork absent-mindedly into the banana. Coker's study window had a view of the Close and the playing-fields. On the junior football-ground, the Remove were finishing a match with the Upper Fourth. A loud roar from a crowd of juniors announced the fact that Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, had captured a goal. Coker did not even hear it.

"Blessed row those kids make!" said Potter. Coker did not reply. He did not seem to hear the remark. His brows were wrinkled in thought. When he broke the silence at last, it was with that unexpected observation:

"I'll make it a cup!"
Potter and Greene looked at him inquiringly. They had been wondering what made Coker so thoughtful and silent. He was more given to talking than to thinking on most occasions.

"A cup?" said Potter.
Coker nodded.
"A cup!" he repeated. "I think that's the idea. I've thought it out, and I really think I can't do better than make it a cup!"

Potter winked at Greene with the eye that was furthest from Coker. His expression indicated that he entertained grave doubts about Coker's sanity. Certainly Horace Coker's cryptic remark required some explaining.

"A—a cup!" said Greene.
"That's it!"
"You're going to make it a cup?" said Potter, staring at the banana Coker had been unconsciously dissecting with his fork. "And how the dickens are you going to make a banana into a cup?"

"Who's talking about bananas, fathhead?"
"Well, what are you going to make a cup, then?" asked Potter.

"My idea is to encourage the fellows, you know," Coker explained. "Even those cheeky young beggars in the Remove—they ought to be encouraged."

"Don't need much encouraging, that I can see," said Greene. "They're too cheeky to live now."
"And the Fourth, too," said Coker. "They want bucking up. They let the Remove beat them every time. The cup will buck them up!"

"Depends on what's in the cup, I suppose," said Greene puzzled. "What kind of a cup are you talking about—a tea-cup, or claret-cup, or what?"

"Ass! A silver cup!"
Potter and Greene exchanged surreptitious glances. There was no doubt whatever about it now. Coker was off his rocker at last! In their opinion, he had been very near it for a long time. Now it had come.

"It would make rather a stir in the school, I think," said Coker. "A silver cup offered as a prize by a Fifth-Former—what?"

"I suppose it would," said Potter. "Never heard of such a thing before."

"It's up to me to encourage sports in the school, being a good all-round sportsman myself," Coker observed. "Blundell won't let me into the Form eleven. That's the Form's loss. I shouldn't have let the Sixth walk over us in the last Form match if I'd been in the team."

"No; they'd have run over us instead!" murmured Potter.

"Eh! What's that?"
"You're quite right, Coker, old man!" said Potter affably. "Everybody knows how you play footer. If Blundell would only play in the Fifth-Form team, the fellows would have something to stare at. We're all agreed about that."

"Quite so," said Coker. "I don't brag about my footer, or my cricket either, but you chaps know how I play."

"We do!" agreed Potter.
"We does!" murmured Greene.

"Well, that's my idea!" resumed Coker. "Blundell's an ass, but he's captain of the Fifth, and there you are! I don't get a chance. All the same, I think it's up to a good all-round sportsman, who happens to have plenty of tin, to encourage sport in the school. A silver cup worth, say, fifteen or twenty quid—"

"Wha-a-at!"
"That would be worth competing for—eh?"
"I should jolly well say so!" said Potter, gazing at Coker with wide-open eyes. "If I had fifteen or twenty quid, I could find a better use for it than that!"

"My Aunt Judith will find the money," said Coker. "She'd be only too glad to see me taking my proper position in the school—as leader and patron of the sports. My aunt's very fond of me."

"Yes; queer, ain't it?" said Potter involuntarily.
"What!"
"I—I mean, of course she is!" said Potter hastily. "I don't see how she could help being. She looked as pleased as Punch when she was watching you play footer the other day. She doesn't know anything about the game, and so she was awfully proud of you. I—I mean, although she doesn't know anything about the game—"

"The Coker Cup would make rather a sensation," said Coker. "The Coker Football Cup, you know! Open to everybody in the school to compete. Anybody who likes, and who can get the chaps to follow him, can make up an eleven, and have a shot at it."

"It will make a sensation if it's worth fifteen quid!" said Potter. "I dare say the fellows would rather have the quids, though."

"Rats! It's the honour of the thing, of course. They're at liberty to sell the cup if they win it—if they haven't souls above filthy lucre!" said Coker disdainfully. "I'll make up an eleven myself. You fellows can play for me."

"Oh!"
"You see, if my eleven beats all the other teams in the competition, I think it will make it pretty clear that I can't be left out of the Form eleven any longer—indeed, that I must be put into the School First!"

"If!" murmured Potter.
"So you're going to compete for your own cup?" said Greene, with a grin.

"Why not?"
"Oh, all right! Only—"

"I've seen a very handsome cup in the silversmith's at Courtfield that will do a treat!" said Coker. "I'll write to my aunt to-day, and get it settled. Then I'll make the announcement of the competition. I shall have to draw up the rules about the ties, and so forth. You chaps can help me. In fact, you two fellows can do all the work, and I'll take the direction into my hands."

"What a ripping idea!" said Potter, adding under his breath: "I don't think!"

"It will be a leg-up for the Fifth, too," said Coker. "Tain't often that a Fifth-Form chap offers a valuable silver cup as a prize in a competition open to all the school. Of course, I'm not thinking of getting into the limelight, and making the fellows talk about me."

"No?" said Potter, in surprise.
"No!" roared Coker. "Look here, Potter, you silly ass—"

"All serene!" said Potter amicably. "Then what are you going to do it for?"

"To encourage the school generally to be keen on sports; and also to do my duty as an all-round, thorough-going sportsman!" said Coker loftily. "I can afford it—at least, my Aunt Judy can—so why shouldn't I offer the cup?"

"My dear chap, you're simply brimming over with ripping ideas!" said Potter. "It will make a sensation in the school, I can assure you of that. Even the Sixth wouldn't object to winning a fifteen-quid silver cup."

"As a matter of fact, I expect my team will win it," said Coker. "I shall be very careful in selecting my team. As far as possible, every chap must be up to my own style in footer. Of course, it's no good expecting impossibilities. But I shall be very careful. You chaps can depend on places in the team."

"Ahem! Thanks!"
"If we win the cup ourselves, I shall stand a really stunning feed in this study to celebrate it."

"Play for you with pleasure, Coker!" said Greene, with sudden enthusiasm. "I think it's a regular ripping idea—quite a corker!"

"Then you can help me draw up the rules," said Coker. "The prize will be awarded to the winning team after all the ties have been played; and, unless I'm mistaken, the cup won't go very far from this study. But every chap's going to have a chance—from the Sixth down to the fags. Now we'll draw up the rules of the competition, and you chaps can make yourselves useful."

It was rather unfortunate that at that moment Potter and Greene remembered, all of a sudden, pressing engagements that could not possibly be put off.

Coker snorted as they retreated from the study. But Coker

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Bunter planted the handsome silver cup on the table, in the midst of the torn packing paper. "Well, my only aunt!" said Peter Todd. "Coker must have been burgling in Courtfield and not buying grub at all. It's certainly valuable, but what we want just now is grub, not cups! Fancy us raiding this!" (See Chapter 3.)

had made up his mind, and when Coker had made up his mind his resolution was like unto the laws of the Medes and Persians. And, with a blotting-pad resting on a crumby tablecloth and his elbow reposing in a jammy plate, Coker proceeded to draw up the rules for the great competition that was to startle all Greyfriars—the competition for the Coker Cup.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Many Raiders!

"IF you fellows would care for a ripping feed——"
Thus Billy Bunter!

The Famous Five of the Remove had been turning out their pockets with dolorous looks. It was near teatime, and footer practice had given them a good appetite. But the funds were low. Harry Wharton was the proud possessor of a threepenny-piece, Frank Nugent of a penny, and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull had raised three-halfpence between them. Even Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, was in an unusual state of stoniness. Accidents will happen in the best-regulated junior studies—and Harry Wharton & Co. were up against it.

"Fivepence-ha'penny!" Bob Cherry remarked. "Not much to stand a tea for five growing youths with good

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MONDAY—

"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"

appetites—at least, I can answer for one good appetite—mine."

"And that threepenny-bit is rather doubtful," Wharton confessed. "Mrs. Mimbles has refused it once."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I say, you fellows, if you'd like a ripping feed——"

"Buzz off!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You blessed amateur Tantalus! What's the good of talking about feeds when we're stony?"

Billy Bunter did not buzz off. He stood his ground, and blinked at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"But I mean it," he said. "I can put you on to a really stunning feed if——"

"If we cash your postal-order in advance!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Same old tale! Same old swindle! Get out!"

"Tain't a postal-order this time——"

"One of your titled relations sent you quids by special messenger?" asked Frank Nugent sarcastically.

"It's Coker!"

"Coker!" said Harry Wharton, in surprise. "Coker has been standing you a loan?"

"Not a loan; he's standing a feed."

"I suppose he hasn't asked us?"

The juniors chuckled. Coker of the Fifth was not likely

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to ask the heroes of the Lower Fourth to one of his celebrated study brews.

"My idea is that we should ask ourselves," Billy Bunter explained. "Coker's gone over to Courtfield to fetch the stuff. It's going to be a tremendous feed, and I don't see why we shouldn't rope it in. We're up against the Fifth, and we're going to raid their blessed feed if we can, I suppose. Coker raided one of our feeds once, and they wolfed it in his study."

"I know they did," said Wharton. "We'll raid Coker's feed fast enough if we get a chance. But it's not so jolly easy raiding the Fifth Form passage. The Fifth are too many for us."

"Tain't the idea at all. Why not lay for Coker as he comes back from Courtfield?" asked Billy Bunter eagerly. "He's gone over on his bike to get the stuff. It's dusk already, and we could lay for him quite easily, and have the parcel off him before he could say Pontius Pilate!"

"Good egg! If he's got the stuff on him. But why should Coker go over to Courtfield for supplies, instead of getting them at the school shop?" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, you can get better stuff at Courtfield if you've got the money to spend," said Bunter. "Coker's got plenty of money. He had a letter from his Aunt Judith this morning. I happened to see it—"

"Huh!"

"And I heard Coker tell Potter that it was in answer to one he had written to her, and that it was all right. Must have been a big tip, of course. I'm pretty certain that I saw Coker take banknotes out of the letter. Anyway, it was registered."

"Lots of things you see, don't you?" sniffed Johnny Bull. "Did it ever occur to you to keep your blinkers fixed on your own business, by any chance?"

"Now Coker's gone buzzing off to Courtfield," resumed Bunter, heedless of Bull's question. "I heard him tell Greene that he'd be back in an hour, and that he would bring it with him on his bike. That must be the grub, of course. And I heard Greene say to Potter that it would be a tremendous surprise for the fellows."

"Gentlemen," said Johnny Bull, "I vote that we bump Bunter for eavesdropping, and spying, and playing the rotten worm generally, and then lay for Coker, and raid the feed!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ow! I say, you fellows, chuck it!" roared Bunter indignantly. "I say—Yah!"

Bump! bump!

The Famous Five walked away grinning, leaving Billy Bunter sitting on the floor, gasping, in a state of fury too deep for words.

Justice having been done on Bunter, the chums of the Remove felt that they were entitled to raid Coker of the Fifth.

And they proceeded to "lay for" that great man in the November dusk in the Close.

There had been many a rub between Coker and the juniors, and Coker was fair game. The lordly Coker assumed more airs than a prefect, and he wasn't a prefect at all—only a common or garden Fifth-Former. Coker believed that kids ought to be kept in their places, and he generously undertook the task of keeping them there, which led to all kinds of trouble—chiefly trouble for Coker.

"This is really corn in Egypt!" Bob Cherry remarked, as the five juniors lurked with watchful eyes about the gate. "It was very thoughtful of Coker to stand this feed just at a time when we are stony."

"The thoughtfulness of the esteemed Coker was truly terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Hallo! hallo! hallo! Here he comes!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

A bike lamp gleamed through the dusk, and Coker came in sight. He wheeled his machine in at the gates. There was a large parcel fastened on the handle-bars, and the eyes of the juniors were fastened upon that parcel immediately. They could imagine what it contained. Coker's feeds were well known, and justly celebrated.

"Wait till he gets round to the bike-shed," murmured Wharton, "then rush him."

"Yes, rather!"

Coker, unconscious or careless of the lurking forms in the dusk, wheeled his machine away round the School House. The juniors followed like Red Indians on the war-trail. Coker reached the bike-shed, and there he carefully detached the large parcel from the handle-bars of his machine and deposited it with extreme care on the ground while he wheeled the bike in.

"Might be full of giddy gold by the way he handles it," murmured Bob Cherry. "Kind of Coker to give us a chance like this. Come on!"

The juniors dashed forward. In a moment Bob Cherry

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had caught up the parcel, and they were in swift retreat. Horace Coker appeared in the doorway of the bike-shed, his face transfigured with wrath.

"You young sweeps! Bring that back!" he roared. "Ta-ta!" called out Bob Cherry. "Au revoir! Auf wiedersehen! Good-bye! See you again! Go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the raiders vanished in the dusk.

"I say, this is jolly heavy!" Bob panted as they ran on. "Must have jars of jam in it, I should think, by the weight."

"Stop, you young villains!"

"Hallo! hallo! hallo! Coker's after us! Some fellows are never satisfied. You chaps stop him while I get this to the study."

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry dashed on. The Co. lingered behind, and waited for Coker. The Fifth-Former came tearing along round the corner of the building, and ran right into the arms of the four juniors.

"Got you!" yelled Coker. "I—I—I'll— Yaroo!"

That was a little mistake of Coker's. He had not got them—they had got him!

He was whirled off his feet in the grasp of four pairs of hands, and he came down on the ground with a bump.

They rolled him over, gasping for breath, jammed his cap down the back of his neck, and jerked off his collar and tie, and left him.

Coker sat up, panting.

The raiders were gone. They ran gleefully into the house, and up the stairs to the Remove passage. They rushed into No. 1 Study, and stumbled over a fellow who was gasping on the floor. It was Bob Cherry.

"Hallo! What the dickens—"

"Where's the grub?"

"Gone!" groaned Bob Cherry, sitting up and rubbing his head. "Ow! Yow!"

"Why, you ass—"

"What the dickens—"

"Those rotters from No. 7 were here!" groaned Bob. "They were waiting in the study in the dark. That fat beast Bunter must have put them up to it. Both the Todds, and Dutton, and Bunter—they piled on me! Ow! They've got the plunder!"

"After them!" roared Johnny Bull. "We're not going to have the trouble of committing highway robbery for nothing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob staggered up, gasping. He had put up a good fight for the plunder, and had been somewhat roughly handled by the rival study. The Famous Five rushed along the Remove passage to No. 7, and thundered at the door. It was locked.

"Open this door!" shouted Wharton.

"Go away, little boy!" came back the voice of Peter Todd.

"You've got our loot!"

"It's our loot now!" chuckled Peter Todd. "We're sticking to it!"

Bang, bang bang!

"I say, you fellows, you'd better clear off!" called out Billy Bunter. "If I come out to you, you'll get hurt!"

"You—you—you—"

"Run away and play!" said Peter Todd, through the keyhole. "We're just going to open our parcel!"

"It's our parcel, you villain!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! Buzz off!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Look out!" ejaculated Nugent. "Here comes Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth had come upstairs, and he had brought reinforcements. Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald of the Fifth were with him. The Fifth-Formers did not waste time in words. They rushed upon the juniors and smote them hip and thigh, and the Famous Five were knocked right and left by the rush of the four big seniors. Then Coker clamoured at the door of No. 7. He understood what had happened, and he had to deal with Peter Todd now instead of Harry Wharton & Co.

"You've got my parcel, Todd!" Coker yelled through the keyhole.

"My parcel!" replied Peter Todd.

"Give it to me!"

"When will you have it?" inquired Todd cheerfully.

"Now, or when you can get it?"

"If you don't hand it out," said Coker sulphurously, "we'll smash the door first, and you afterwards."

"Both difficult jobs," said Peter calmly. "But pile in!"

Bang, bang, bang!

But Harry Wharton & Co. had not been idle. It took them but a few seconds to spread the alarm of an invasion of the Remove quarters by the Fifth. From all the Remove studies the juniors poured out to repel boarders, so to speak.

Like the evil spirit of old, who was expelled from his habitation and came back with seven devils worse than himself, the Famous Five returned to the charge with nearly all the Remove to back them up.

They rushed at Coker & Co., and simply swept them down the passage by force of numbers. The Fifth-Formers struggled helplessly in the tide of juniors—they had no chance against such odds—and in a minute or less they were rolling down the stairs, followed by derisive yells from the Remove.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Eatable!

PETER TODD, in No. 7 Study, listened to the din in the passage with a grin upon his face. His study-mates were grinning, too.

Coker's big parcel reposed on the study table.

The Funny Four—as the Remove sometimes called the chums of No. 7—gathered round it. Funds were low in No. 7, and that capture was a gift from the gods, so to speak, that the quartette could fully appreciate.

"I say, you fellows, let's get it open!" said Bunter eagerly.

Alonzo Todd looked a little thoughtful.

"My dear friends," he remarked, "I am not quite sure that my Uncle Benjamin would approve of the way we came into possession of this parcel—"

"Oh, blow Uncle Benjamin!" said Bunter. "Anybody got a knife? It's corded up as if it was a giddy treasure!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"Shurrup, Lonzy!" said Peter Todd. "Give Uncle Ben a rest. This is where we spoil the Egyptians. Cut the string, Dutton!"

"Eh?" said Dutton. Tom Dutton was deaf.

"Have you got a knife?" demanded Peter.

Dutton stared at him.

"Of course not, you silly ass. What a question to ask! I'm not fifteen yet."

"Well, ass, what has your age got to do with it?" snorted Peter. "I suppose you can have a knife whether you're fifteen or fifty."

"I really don't like jokes of that sort, Peter. You know perfectly well that I'm not married—"

"What!" yelled Peter.

"You know I've not got a wife—"

"Wife!" howled Peter. "Knife, fathead; not wife! You've got a pocket-knife!"

"I tell you I don't like such jokes!" shouted Dutton.

"And if you say I've got a dotty wife again, I'll dot you on the nose."

Peter did not reply to that; explaining to Dutton was a sure way of making confusion worse confounded. He looked about the study for a knife, and cut the cord on the parcel.

"Why, it's in a box!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Rats!" said Dutton promptly. "Coker wouldn't have biked down to Courtfield to buy socks. Besides, he couldn't have filled a big parcel like that with socks!"

"Oh, dry up!" groaned Peter. "You make me tired."

Peter dragged the paper wrappings off the box and opened it. The box was locked, but Peter opened it by the simple process of inserting the knife between the lid and the box, and jerking it hard. The knife broke, and the lock snapped, and the lid came up. Inside was tissue-paper packing.

The juniors stared at it in surprise.

"My hat!" said Peter. "This is the queerest way of packing grub that I've ever head of!"

Thump, thump, thump!

The enemy were at the door again. Harry Wharton's voice came through the keyhole:

"You rotters! We've settled Coker, and if you don't hand out that parcel we'll settle you!"

"Bow-wow!" said Peter.

"Are you going to open this door?"

"Not this evening!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"I—I say, you fellows, this is a swindle!" gasped Bunter, who was dragging the paper packing out of the box. "This isn't grub at all!"

"What!"

"Look!" snorted Bunter.

"My only hat! It's silver!"

"A silver cup!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors gazed at it amazedly. It was a big, handsome silver cup, of a really striking design, fashioned on the lines of the famous Football Cup. It was certainly valuable; but it was not exactly what No. 7 Study wanted just then.

Bunter planted it on the table in the midst of the torn packing paper.

"Well, my only aunt!" said Peter Todd. "Coker must have been burgling in Courtfield, and not buying grub at all!"

"Must be worth pounds!" said Tom Dutton.
"Ten or twenty quidlets!" said Peter Todd. "How on earth did Coker get hold of it? He will have the police looking for it."

"I suppose he has purchased it, my dear Peter," said Alonzo mildly.

"What for?"

"It is indeed extraordinary!"

"I—I say, you fellows!" murmured Bunter, blinking round at the amazed juniors. "That cup would pawn for a good sum. We're entitled to pawn it and spend the cash in grub—then it will be just the same as if we'd raided the grub from Coker, won't it? I—I say, you ass—ow—leggo—yow!"

Peter Todd had grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and was proceeding to shake him like a particularly fat rat.

"Ow—ow! Leggo! If you make my glasses fall off—ow—"

"You dishonest, fat beast!" said Peter, staccato, with a shake at every word. "Keep your paws from picking and stealing. I hope Coker came by this thing honestly; in any case, it's going to be returned to him."

"Ow! Oh, really—"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Are you going to let us in, you beastly burglars!" came a roar from the passage.

"Oh, you can come in now!" growled Peter. "You're welcome to eat what's in that parcel—you'll want good teeth, that's all!"

He unlocked the door, and the Famous Five swarmed in. They were prepared for war; but at the sight of the silver cup they stopped in astonishment.

Peter Todd waved his hand towards the cup.

"You can have it!" he said.

"My hat! Is—is that what was in Coker's parcel?" gasped Wharton.

"That's it!"

"A blessed sports cup!" grunted Bob Cherry. "That fat idiot Bunter told us Coker was going to Courtfield to fetch grub for a feed!"

"I—I thought he was—"

"Scat! Coker can have that blessed rubbish!" growled Wharton. "Come on, you chaps—we shall have to look further for tea!"

"Here, you can take this rotten thing away!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "We don't want it!"

"And we don't, either!" grinned Wharton. "You've raided it, and now you can take it back to Coker. Go and chop chips!"

And the disappointed five crowded out of the study, leaving Coker's Cup on the table, gleaming in the lamplight.

"I—I say, you fellows, we'd better get it down to Lazarus's in Courtfield, and pop it!" urged Bunter. "Todd, you beast, keep your paws to yourself! Ow!"

"We've got this rotten thing planted on us now!" growled Todd. "Coker will bring a prefect up here if he doesn't get it back. Somebody's got to take it to Coker!"

"I'm jolly well not going to!" sniffed Bunter. "Coker will be ratty!"

"Will you take this cup to Coker, Dutton?" bawled Peter.

"Certainly not! It's not ours, and we've no right to take it to a pawnbroker!"

"To Coker—Coker—COKER!" yelled Peter.

"Oh, Coker! No, I won't! I'm not looking for a whopping!"

"Alonzo can take it!" said Bunter.

"Alonzo can't!" said Peter promptly. "Alonzo's not looking for a licking, either. You can take it, Bunter. You're the cause of all the trouble, with your blessed spying and listening. Take that cup to Coker's study!"

"I won't!" roared Bunter.

Peter Todd picked up a ruler.

"Would you mind repeating that remark, Bunter mine?" he asked, with elaborate poise.

"I—I mean, I'll be very pleased to take it, Toddy, old man!"

"That's better. Buzz off!"

Billy Bunter sulkily jammed the cup and the packing into the box again, and jammed the lid down. He left the study with the box under his arm. But as he went down the passage, a cunning gleam came into his little round eyes. He did not take the direction of the Fifth-Form passage, but descended the stairs—his ultimate destination being Mr. Lazarus's shop in Courtfield. But Bunter did not reach Mr. Lazarus's shop in Courtfield—he did not get any further than the second landing. For there Coker and Pottor and Greeno pounced upon him, and the prize was wrenched away.

"Got it!" gasped Coker. "Now bump that fat scoundrel."
 "I say, hold on!" roared Bunter. "I—I was just bringing it back to you, Coker!"
 "Yes; we know all about that!" grinned Coker. "If you kept straight on the way you were going, you'd have twenty-four thousand miles to go to get to my study. Bump him!"
 "Help! Oh! Rescue! Yaroooh!"
 Bump!
 And Coker & Co. bore off the cup in triumph, leaving Billy Bunter gasping on the floor.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Coker's Notice!

COKER had said that his cup would make a sensation at Greyfriars. He was right. It did.

Within half an hour of those excursions and alarms in the Remove passage, all the school had heard of Coker's cup.

Coker was, as all the fellows said, a queer beggar in some respects. He had plenty of money, and was lavish with it. Fellows had admired his motor-bike, though they did not admire the way Coker handled it. Coker was never in want of a handsome new football, though, as everybody knew, he didn't know what to do with it when he had it. But of all ways of getting rid of money, the purchase of a big silver cup seemed the dottiest. On that point Greyfriars agreed.

What on earth Coker of the Fifth could want with a silver cup was a mystery. It was rather expensive for a study ornament, and besides, it was no use having a cup unless you had won it somehow—buying it was no use. And although it certainly was a cup, it was quite useless for drinking purposes.

Coker's intentions were not yet known. He had impressed upon Potter and Greene to keep the secret, and they had kept it. Nothing was to be known until the list of rules was finished and published for all Greyfriars to read.

Meanwhile, the fellows wondered and puzzled about that cup.

Coker had no objection to the limelight; and the discovery that he had spent fifteen pounds on a silver cup gave him limelight enough.

Fellows came to his study from all quarters to stare at it, and ask Coker what on earth it was for, and whether he was qualifying for Colney Hatch.

To all of which questions Coker replied, with calmness and superiority:

"Wait and see!"
 Greyfriars had to wait and see—there was nothing else to be done, since Horace Coker declined to enlighten them.

Even the great men of the Sixth yielded to curiosity on the subject. Even Wingate, the captain of the school, looked into Coker's study to see the cup.

"Where on earth did you dig that up, Coker?" Wingate asked.

"I bought it!" said Coker.
 "What for?"
 "Fifteen quid!"

"I don't mean that," said Wingate laughing. "I mean, what is it for? What are you going to do with it?"

And then Coker made once more his oracular reply:
 "Wait and see!"

And even Wingate of the Sixth had to depart from the study unsatisfied. Coker & Co. were busy at the study table, drawing up the finished set of rules for the competition. The announcement was to be made that evening—and Coker chuckled at the thought of the astonishment that would fall upon Greyfriars.

Potter and Greene helped draw up the rules; but Coker wrote them out himself, in his big, sprawling hand—and with his original ideas in the matter of spelling.

A fellow can't do everything, as Coker himself said; and Coker had struggled up from the First Form at Greyfriars to the Fifth, without mastering the mysteries of English orthography. Bob Cherry said he didn't even know how many k's there were in cat, but that was an exaggeration. In all his examinations, Coker had what he described in his letters home as a ruff time. Still, Coker was satisfied himself, and, after all, that was the principal consideration—for Coker, at least.

"Head the paper 'The Coker Cup'!" said Greene. "Cup is spelt with a C, not a K."

"I know that," said Coker. "You let my spelling alone. I could spell your head off, anyway."

"You've spelt offered 'o-f-e-r-e-d'!" grunted Greene.

"Oh, that was only a hasty draft," said Coker airily. "I knew it was spelt with a ph!" And he changed it to "ophered."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.
 "THE GEM" LIBRARY,
 Every Wednesday.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Greene.
 "What's the matter now?" demanded Coker.
 "It's spelt with a double F!" shrieked Greene.
 "Of course it is," said Coker. "I was going to put a double F, only you interrupted me. Let's get on with the washing, and not so much jaw."
 "Yes, pile in!" said Potter. "It's tea-time."
 "Blow tea-time!" said Coker. "Now, listen to this—or, rather, look over my shoulder as I write, and give me your opinion."

"Certainly, old chap!"
 Coker wrote rapidly.
 "This Hansom Silver Cup is offered by Horace Coker, Esq., of the Fifth-Form, to be competed for by all Greyfriars fellows, under the following conditions: What do you think of that, you fellows?"

"I think I should put two I's in following," said Greene.
 "That was an oversight!"

"And handsome is spelt with a D and an E."
 "Stuff!" said Coker decidedly. "I'm afraid you've been pretty careless in your spelling, Greeney. I've got a book here called 'The Mysterious Murder in the Hansom Cab,' and you can see it in print, if you like."

"Oh, my hat!" said Greene. "That's a different word. A hansom cab is h-a-n-s-o-m, but a handsome silver cup is another thing."

"I know it's another thing," said Coker. "I'm not likely to mistake a cab for a football cup, I suppose?"

"I mean, you can't call a cup hansom, like a cab—"

"Isn't it handsome?" demanded Coker. "I think it's a very handsome cup myself. I know I gave fifteen quid for it."

"I mean one is hansom, and the other's handsome—"

"There's only one."
 "I'm speaking of the adjectives, not the cup, fathead!"

"If you call me a fathead, Greeney, there will be some thick ears served out over this business," said Coker darkly.

"Let me write it out, then!" said Greene.
 Coker shook his head.

"That wouldn't do!"
 "Why wouldn't it?"

"I couldn't trust to your spelling. We don't want the fags cackling over this, and saying that we can't spell in the Fifth."

Greene glared.
 "You—you frabjous ass—"

"That thick ear's ready for you, if you don't shut up!" said Coker. "Now I'll get on with the notice, if you'll shut up for a bit. The following conditions: The cup shall be competed for—"

"Only one E in competed," said Greene. "I mean, in the middle syllable."

"Stuff! The cup shall be competed for on the football field," Coker wrote on. "Any number of elevens may be formed to compete for the Coker Cup, and the ties will be arranged by Horace Coker, Esq. All Greyfriars, from the First-Form to the sixth, will be—"

Coker paused. "How many Y's in eligible, Potter?"

"None at all!" howled Greene.
 "Oh, don't be funny! Is it elyigible, or ellygyble?"

"I'd put only one L, if I were you!" murmured Potter.

"Right! Will be elyigible," Coker wrote on. "Horace Coker's eleven will compete on fair terms with all the rest. The winning team in the final tie will be presented with the Hansom Silver Cup.—Signed, Horace Coker."

"There!" said Coker. "I think that will knock them!"

"I think it will," said Greene, "especially the spelling."

"What's wrong with the spelling?" demanded Coker.
 "What's right, do you mean?" asked Greene. "You've got one or two words spelt right."

"Look here—"

"I tell you that handsome and hansom are two different words—"

"Better go back to the Remove or the Third, and learn to spell!" said Coker disdainfully. "I saw you spell team with an A the other day, instead of double E!"

"It is spelt with an A!" yelled Green.
 "By you, perhaps," snorted Coker. "You cheese it—you don't know how to spell. I don't say I'm a past-master of it, but I know easy words like that. I wouldn't claim to take first prize at a spelling-bee, but when I know a thing, I do know it. Now I'll copy this out and stick it up in the hall."

"My hat!"
 Coker frowned ferociously at Greene, and proceeded to make a fair copy of the document.

When it was finished he added a footnote.

"Any other rule that may be required will be made to suit the circumstances by the undersigned, Horace Coker."



"Goodness gracious!" cried Alonzo Todd. "My dear Peter—my dear Dutton—my dear Fish—oh dear!" "Not so many dears! Untie us!" shouted Peter's voice from the mass of blackened and sticky juniors. (See Chapter 11.)

"There, I think that will do," said Coker. "I fancy that will make 'em stare."

And Coker proudly bore off the document, to be pinned on the notice board in the Lower Hall. And Coker was quite right once again—it did make them stare.

There was a shout as Coker was seen pinning the paper on the board. The fellows guessed that it had something to do with the silver cup. And there was a crowd round in a moment, of fellows of all forms, to read Coker's notice. And they stared—there was no doubt whatever about that!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Coker in All His Glory!

OF all the notices that had ever appeared upon the school board at Greyfriars, certainly not one had been quite so remarkable as this. Coker's handwriting alone was striking, his spelling was more striking still, and the offer of the silver cup was astounding. The fellows read, and re-read, and re-re-read. It was the sensation of the term. The finished article, as Coker had pinned it up on the notice-board, read:

"NOTICE! "THE COKER CUP!"

"This Hansom Silver Cup is offered by Horace Coker, Esq., of the Fifth Form, to be competed for by all Greyfriars fellows under the following conditions:
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"

"The Cup shall be competed for on the football field.

"Any number of elevens may be formed to compete for the Coker Cup, and the ties will be arranged by Horace Coker, Esq. All Greyfriars, from the First Form to the Sixth, will be eligible.

"Horace Coker's team will compete on fair terms with all the rest. The winning team in the final tie will be presented with the Hansom Silver Cup.

"(Signed) HORACE COKER, Vth Form.

"P.S.—Any other rule that may be required will be made to suit the circumstances by the undersigned Horace Coker."

Even Coker's orthography faded into significance before the fact that he was offering a silver cup, which it had leaked out, had cost him fifteen pounds, to be competed for by football elevens from all forms.

It was simply gorgeous of old Coker.

It did not matter whether the cup was handsome or hansom, and whether it was competed for or competed for. There it was, a silver cup worth fifteen solid quids—and the fellows agreed that Horace Coker, Esq. had deserved well of his country.

"Why, it's simply ripping," said Bob Cherry. "That's a very handsome cup, and will look really nobby standing on the bookcase in No. 13 study."

"Ahem!" said Wharton. "In No. 1 study, you mean."

"No. 14," remarked Johnny Bull casually.

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early!

"You mean to say No. 2, of course," said Tom Brown pleasantly.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"If the Remove win it, we'd better keep it in the Rag or the Common-room," he remarked; "or else stick it in all the studies turn and turn about."

"I say, you fellows, of course it will have to belong to No. 7," Billy Bunter remarked. "I don't believe in having football cups knocking about, though. It's a temptation to burglars, and what's the good of it, anyway, to look at? My idea is that the cup should be sold, and the proceeds divided. Upon those conditions I'm willing to play in the eleven competing for the cup."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The rest of the eleven wouldn't be willing, on those conditions or any other conditions," grinned Tom Brown. "I say, Wharton, we're going to enter the Remove eleven, of course?"

"Of course," said Harry.

"And who is going to play in it?" demanded Bolsover major, a little disagreeably. "I fancy we all want a hand in winning that cup."

"Well, if Coker will agree to play an eleven consisting of about thirty chaps, we'll all have a hand in it," said Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Room for two elevens in the Remove," said Skinner. "If you leave me out of your team, Wharton, I shall have a whack of making up another."

"Not a bad idea," said Wharton cheerfully. "But I'm going to make up the best possible team for the Form—and a scratch team won't have a chance against it. I suggest that the cup, if won, belongs, not to the team, but to the whole form—that will make the matter fair all round."

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, suppose we sell it and stand a stunning feed to the whole form!" said Billy Bunter. "On those conditions I'm willing to—"

"Shut up!"

"I don't know about belonging to the form instead of the team," said Bolsover major. "If I won it I'd rather keep it!"

"Well, you can dig up a second eleven if you like," said Wharton.

"I think I shall," said Bolsover defiantly. "After all, you haven't got all the best players in the Form team. And if my eleven wins the cup, we freeze to it."

"And if the Form eleven wins it, it belongs to the whole Form!" said Harry quietly.

"Hear, hear!" chorused the Removites.

"By Jove!" said Temple, captain of the Fourth, to his friends, as they grouped before Coker's startling notice. "I think we may as well rope that in, you kids."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

And Temple, Dabney & Co. decided at once to rope in Coker's Cup. The same decision was come to by Hobson of the Shell; and there was an animated discussion immediately among the Shell fellows. And the fags were not to be left out. Bolsover minor, Paget, and Tubb, of the Third Form, were to be seen eagerly discussing the formation of a winning team; and further along a group of Second Form fags could be seen, and Nugent minor was laying down the law to them on the same subject.

Coker of the Fifth came striding through the crowd, the cynosure of all eyes. There was a cheer for him from the enthusiastic juniors.

"Bravo, Coker!"

Coker had a pencil in his hand, and he added another postscript to the notice.

"P.P.S.—The Cup is now on view in Horace Coker's study."

"Bravo!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Coker, old man, give us a speech!"

There was a shout of: "Speech! Speech!"

Coker was nothing loth.

"Certainly," he said; "as a matter of fact, there are a few remarks I should like to make."

"Gentlemen, I have the honour and pleasure of offering this cup for competition among the footballers of Greyfriars—"

"Hear, hear!"

"It cost fifteen quid—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Bravo!"

"And I think it's a handsome cup. I'm going to make up an eleven in the Fifth to compete for it, and I expect to win it. But every team will have an equal chance. To the victor, the giddy spoils."

"Good old Coker!"

"I think it's up to me to encourage games in this school," said Coker, "as a first-class all-round sportsman, though I say it—I think it's up to me!"

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THE GEM LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Hurray!"

"Some fellows think I can't play footer—think I'm not good enough to go into the first eleven—"

"No!"

"Impossible!"

"Do they really, Coker?"

"Shame!"

"They do!" said Coker firmly. "But when I've raised a team that whips every other team in Greyfriars, they may alter their opinion."

"When, when, when, when!" sang Bob Cherry softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope the Sixth will compete for the cup!" went on Coker. "I hope I shall beat them. A team picked out of the Fifth might find it hard to beat the First Eleven. But on the whole it depends mainly on the skipper. Well, I shall skipper my own team."

"That will settle it," remarked Temple of the Fourth.

"The settlefulness will be terrific," Hurree Singh observed. "The playfulness of the august Coker will be worth to witness."

"That's all!" said Coker. "Go in and win! Best team gets the cup—a really handsome cup, which I've mentioned cost fifteen quid."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo, Coker!"

And Coker walked off amid cheers.

The famous cup being now on view in Coker's study, crowds of fellows trooped off to see it and admire it, and calculate how much of fifteen quid it would fetch if re-sold. Vernon-Smith of the Remove took the opportunity of making a slight alteration in Coker's notice by way of improving the spelling, so that it read a little differently:

"THE KOKER KUP!"

When Coker came back to add another footnote to the notice he found the alteration, and cast a wrathful glance round him.

"Who did that?" he demanded.

There was no reply, excepting by way of chuckles, and Coker laboriously changed the K's into C's again, and then added his footnote.

"N.B.—All entries for the Coker Cup Competition must be handed in to Horace Coker, Esq., in his study, by Saturday afternoon. The ties will be played out on half-holidays the following week, if possible."

But as soon as Coker was gone, Vernon-Smith's pencil was at work again, so that for all who read the notice the heading still ran:

"THE KOKER KUP!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Has No Luck!

THE Greyfriars fellows simply "rose" to Coker's idea. At all times during the football season the great winter game occupied a great deal of their time and their thoughts, but never had they been so keen as now.

A competition open to all the school naturally interested everybody, and from the top to the bottom of Greyfriars there was a keen desire to "rope in" the Coker Cup.

Even the high and mighty Sixth thought they might consider it.

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, laughed at the idea of playing the First Eleven against a team captained by Horace Coker. But Courtney and other fellows pointed out that the cup was the Cup, and it was worth collaring. And there was no doubt that the First Eleven, composed of the best players in the Fifth and Sixth Forms, could beat all competitors in the school. Why not collar the cup?

"But by the terms of the competition, we shall have to play all comers," said Wingate. "Suppose we're drawn in a tie with the First Form—the Babes?"

"Well, we should beat them!" grinned Courtney.

"It would be ridiculous!"

"But the cup's worth getting."

"Fifteen quid!" said Loder, of the Sixth. "We could sell it, too, to help the club funds, if we wanted to. We could do with some new nets and things."

"Oh, we wouldn't sell it!" said Wingate. "I hardly think it would be fair of us to compete. It would be simply a walk-over for us."

"All the better for us!" said Walker.

"Coker's going round in the Fifth picking up players," grinned Blundell, the captain of that Form, and a member of the First Eleven. "He's promised a stunning feed if his team wins the cup, and the same if it doesn't. Everybody in the Fifth who likes a good feed will play for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we'll think it over," said Wingate. "We have to send in our entry by Saturday. I don't like the idea of chancing being drawn to play the First or Second Form."

But most of the members of the First Eleven had cast a covetous eye on the cup, and as it seemed so easy to collar it, they urged Wingate to enter the First Eleven for the competition, and the Greyfriars captain gave way at last.

He dropped into Coker's study the day after the notice had been put up. Coker was talking football with Potter and Greene, and Fitzgerald—three members of the new Coker team. He nodded quite carelessly to Wingate. Coker was a great man in these days, filling very much the public eye in the school; and in his own eyes, at least, he was quite as important a personage as Wingate.

"I want you to enter the First Eleven in the competition, Coker," said Wingate, half laughing.

"Right-ho!" said Coker. "I'm drawing for the ties on Saturday, when all names are in. By the way, I've got Potter and Greene in my team; you won't want them for yours?"

"Oh, I dare say I can fill their places!" said Wingate. Potter and Greene generally played for the First Eleven.

"Good!" said Coker. "You've got the whole of the Sixth to choose from. I should like to handle Blundell in my lot, too, but he would want to captain my team, and that, of course, would be absurd. You can keep Blundell."

"Thanks!" said Wingate. "Let's know when the tie's drawn. Of course, we shall have to fix in the matches when we've got time—we can't interfere with the regular fixtures."

"Yes; that's understood," said Coker. "All skippers of elevens are to be in my study on Saturday evening to attend the draw."

"Good enough!"

And Wingate departed. Coker looked round at his companions with a grin of satisfaction.

"That settles it," he remarked. "The First Eleven's erred, and we shall beat them. I feel quite sure that we shall beat them."

"Ahem!" said Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald. They had their doubts.

Most of the Forms at Greyfriars had agreed to play the Form Eleven, the cup to belong to the Form represented, if won. But in the Remove it was not so arranged. There was a good deal of rivalry in that Form, and from the first it was decided that the Remove would produce two elevens.

Harry Wharton, as captain of the Form, had the task of selecting the Remove Eleven, and he selected it with great care. Bolsover major was making the attempt to select another eleven, but he found that recruits did not roll in. When he made a round of the Remove looking for players, the result was not encouraging. The best men, of course, were in the Form team, and the others were quite ready to compete against them, but not under the leadership of Bolsover major.

He called in at No. 7 Study when the Funny Four were having tea, in the hope of capturing Peter Todd. Peter Todd was a splendid player, in great contrast to his cousin Alonzo, who hardly knew a football from a goal-post. But Peter Todd had his own ideas on the subject. Peter Todd was ambitious to make No. 7 Study top study in the Remove, and he was quite ready to lead a team in opposition to Harry Wharton & Co., but he was not at all willing to back up Bolsover major. His opinion of Bolsover major was that he was an ass, and he was cheerfully ready to state that opinion.

"I'm making a list here," said Bolsover major amicably, as Peter Todd looked up from his toast and poached eggs. "I've got Skinner's name down, and Stott, and Trevor, and Snoop. Can I put yours down, Todd? I should like Dutton's, too—he's a good forward."

"What's the list for?" asked Peter.

"For my eleven."

"Oh! You're going to play Snoop—at footer?"

"Well, not if I can get a better man," confessed Bolsover major. "I must work with what materials I can get. Of course, Wharton's got the best men in the Form team. I know you play for the Form team now, but it's open to you to do as you like. Will you play for me?"

"Thanks—no!"

"You're playing for Wharton, then?"

"No fear!"

"Do you mean that you are not playing at all—in the Cup competition?" exclaimed Bolsover, in surprise.

"Not that, either."

"Then what do you mean, you silly ass?" exclaimed Bolsover, beginning to be exasperated.

"I'm captaining the No. 7 Study team!" Peter Todd explained calmly. "We're going to rope in the cup on our own."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover scornfully. "I can see a team roping in the cup, with Bunter and Alonzo in it."

"Oh, really, Bolsover!"

"I sha'n't play Bunter or Alonzo, if I can get a team without them," said Peter. "But there is going to be a Todd team of some sort."

"I say, Todd, I shall insist upon playing, of course!" said Bunter. "I want the cup to come to this study, you know."

"Shurrup!" said Peter.

"Look here, there's not enough fellows in the Remove to make up three teams!" Bolsover major exclaimed.

"Exactly. There will be only two teams—the Form team, under Wharton; and the Todd team—led by yours truly."

"Then where do I come in?" demanded Bolsover warmly. "You can come into my team as back, if you like."

"Rats!"

"Then you don't come in at all!"

"Look here, Todd—"

"Shut the door after you!" said Todd calmly.

And Bolsover major—after considering whether he would hammer Peter Todd on the spot, and deciding that he had better not—retired from the study, and slammed the door.

With a disturbed brow, the burly Removite made his way to Vernon-Smith's study. In Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, lay his chief hope. Vernon-Smith had always been up against Harry Wharton, and surely he would not let pass this opportunity of capturing the cup from his old enemy. It was true that of late feeling had been better between the old rivals, and Vernon-Smith was a member of the Form Eleven. But Bolsover major did not believe that a leopard could change his spots, as he put it.

He found the Bouncer smoking a cigarette in his study—one of the Bouncer's little ways which he had not given up, although in many respects he had turned over a new leaf of late. The Bouncer nodded to him through a little cloud of blue smoke.

"I suppose you're taking part in this Cup competition, Smithy?" Bolsover major asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"Will you play for my team?"

"Excuse me!"

"Look here," said Bolsover; "I'm up against No. 1 Study, and they're jolly well not going to have the Coker Cup. If you like to join my eleven, you shall be captain. I'll hand it over to you."

"Well, that's a good offer," said the Bouncer thoughtfully. It was evident that he was tempted.

"You don't like No. 1 Study any more than I do," pursued Bolsover major eagerly. "Look here, this is a splendid chance of giving them the kybosh. You're top player in the Form—quite as good as Wharton any day, and better than the rest. Pile in, and get the cup away from them."

The Bouncer shook his head slowly.

"Can't be done!" he said at last. "Wharton's dropped the old trouble there was between us, and put me into the Form Eleven. I can't go back on him."

"You used to be jolly particular!" sneered Bolsover.

Vernon-Smith flushed a little.

"Well, perhaps so; but I mean what I say. Wharton's ask me to play for him, and I've said I will, and I'm going to keep my word."

"Oh, rats!" growled Bolsover.

And he swung angrily out of the study. Without Vernon-Smith or Peter Todd he knew that his team would not amount to much. He had already tried several members of the Form eleven, without success. Bolsover major thought it over, and finally returned to No. 7 study. Peter Todd greeted him with a cheerful smile.

"Made up that eleven yet?" he asked.

Bolsover major snorted.

"Smithy's sticking to Wharton," he said, with a growl. "I was counting on him, but he's going to play for the Form team."

"Oh, rotten," said Peter. "I was hoping to get him in the Todd eleven."

"There isn't room in the Remove for three teams," said Bolsover major reluctantly. "If you won't play for me, Todd—"

"Can't be did!"

"Then I'll play for you!"

ANSWERS

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NEXT MONDAY—

"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"

"Good egg! If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, then Mahomet must hop along to the giddy mountain," said Peter Todd. "I'll put your name down—right back! Done!"

And Peter Todd wrote Bolsover major's name down. The Bolsover eleven had ended in smoke; but the Todd eleven showed every signs of going strong; and Peter Todd had made up his mind that the Coker Cup was to find its final resting-place in Study No. 7!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Draw for the First Round!

QUITE a little crowd gathered in Horace Coker's study on Saturday evening.

It was the time for the draw for the first round of the cup.

Coker was in great form.

The draw for the first round in any competition for any football cup did not seem to Coker quite so important as the draw that was to take place in his study that evening.

Captains of elevens were to be present to represent their teams, and their names were to be written on slips of paper, put into a bag and drawn by chance.

Thus it was quite possible that the First Eleven, composed almost wholly of the great men of the Sixth, would be drawn to play against the Second or Third.

That alone would be delightful, from the point of view of everybody outside the Sixth.

To see Wingate and Courtney and Loder and the rest playing football with "kids" like Tubb or Nugent minor, would be a source of never-ending delight to the juniors.

Most of the fellows—excepting the Sixth—hoped that the First Eleven would be so drawn.

Many of the intended elevens had not been completed yet. Todd's team was still in a very unfinished state. Coker's own eleven was not quite complete. But the date of the draw was not to be postponed. If any team failed to fulfil its engagement on the date of the tie, the match would be awarded to the other team. So the amateur football captains were in a state of considerable uneasiness.

Wingate of the Sixth, half-regretting that he had allowed himself to be drawn into the cup competition, turned up in the study first of all. He found Horace Coker sitting at his table with the handsome football cup before him, and a bag and slips of paper all ready. Coker nodded coolly to him.

The proviso in the notice, that Coker could at any time make a new rule to suit the "circumstances," had already been taken advantage of. A new rule had been added excluding the "Babes" of the First Form. Coker felt that his competition was in danger of being made ridiculous if little chaps in knickerbockers took part in it. Indeed, he was thinking of adding another rule, excluding the Second Form; but that was a more serious matter. Nugent minor and Gatty and Myers, in the Second Form, had made up their minds to win the cup. Nugent minor had indeed gone so far as to visit the silversmith in Courtfield, and ask him how much cash down he was prepared to pay for the cup if sold to him. Visions of tremendous feeds in the Form-room floated before the minds of the fags, and if Coker added a new rule excluding them, there was certain to be trouble.

"I hope you won't draw us against the Babes, Coker," said Wingate.

"Babes are out of it," Coker explained.

"Oh, don't the First Form want to take part?" asked the captain of Greyfriars, considerably relieved by the news.

Coker chuckled.

"Yes, they want to, right enough," he said. "Jones minimus was here just now raising objections. I booted him out, so that's all right."

"I understood that the competition was open to all Greyfriars."

"That's so; but the donor of the cup has the power to make new rules as required at any time," Coker explained. "I've made a new rule."

"Oh, I see. How many teams will be in the competition, then?"

"Eight!" said Coker.

"My hat! Eight football teams in one giddy school!" said Wingate, laughing. "Well, it shows keenness, anyway."

"There's the First Eleven, and my eleven picked out of the Fifth—that's two," said Coker. "Then the Fourth, the Shell, and the Third and Second are playing a team each. The Remove have entered two elevens. That makes eight in all. There will be four ties in the first round."

Hobson of the Shell walked into the study. He nodded to Coker in an off-hand way.

"I'm on time!" he remarked.

"Take a chair," said Coker.

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"I hear the Babes are shut out of it," said Hobson. "Jones minimus has been kicking up a row about it."

"Jones minimus can go and eat coke."

"Oh, I agree with you; why not bar off the Second, too?" asked Hobson. "I've been talking it over with Hoskins and Knoggs in my Form. We don't like the idea of chancing being drawn to play against toffee-suckers in the Second."

"The First Eleven are taking the same risk," said Coker. "But I've been thinking of it. If I wiped out the Second, that would leave an odd number of teams to play out the ties. Besides, they're keen little beggars, and it's only fair to give them a chance."

"Well, I don't think so—"

"What you think doesn't matter very much in this competition," said Coker affably. "It's what I think that matters."

"Look here—"

"Order!" said Potter and Greene together.

Hobson snorted and relapsed into silence.

Temple of the Fourth came into the study. He was the captain of the Fourth Form Eleven.

Harry Wharton and Peter Todd, the rival Remove captains, followed him in. Then came Tubb of the Third, and Nugent minor of the Second.

"We're all here," remarked Dick Nugent, with an affable nod to Wingate—the great and awe-inspiring captain of the school, at whose frown fags were wont to tremble. But on this occasion they met on a footing of equality, of course, as rival captains attending the draw for the first round of the cup.

Wingate turned pink, and replied to Nugent minor's nod with a glare.

"Feeling chippy, George, old man?" asked Dicky.

"You cheeky young sweep!" said Wingate.

"Order!" said Coker. "Good manners are insisted on in this study."

"What?"

"I can't have football captains ragging one another in the draw," said Coker loftily. Coker was not at all displeased to take the upper hand of George Wingate, as a matter of fact. "Keep order, please!"

Wingate seemed to gulp something down. He mentally resolved to give Courtney and the rest a piece of his mind for urging him into this position. Even the handsome football cup gleaming on the table did not reconcile him to being talked to on familiar terms by an inky-fingered young scamp of the Second Form.

"Wingate feels a bit nervous, perhaps," Peter Todd remarked. "I suppose the First Eleven really hasn't much chance for the cup."

"Not if we can help it!" said Temple.

"Oh, get on with the draw, and get it over!" growled Wingate.

"The committee will take its time," said Coker, with dignity, "and the committee will thank you not to interrupt."

"Look here—"

"Order!" said Potter, rapping on the table with the ruler.

"Here are the slips, Coker, old man!"

"Right-ho!" said Coker. "Now I'll write the names of the eight skippers on the slips, and put them in the bag. They'll be drawn out by Greene."

"Go ahead!" said all the junior captains.

Coker scrawled the names on the eight slips, and blotted them, and dropped them into the bag, which was very thoroughly shaken up.

Then Greene rose to do his duty.

Greene, with due solemnity, thrust his hand into the bag, and drew out the first slip, and held it up to view. It bore the name of Temple.

"That's me!" said Temple.

Then the second slip came to light, and showed the name of Tubb. Tubb of the Third grinned, and Temple made a grimace.

"So we're playing the kids," he sniffed.

"The kids will jolly well wipe up the ground with you, and don't you forget it," said Tubb warmly.

"Order!"

Greene drew out two more slips; bearing respectively the names of Harry Wharton and Horace Coker. Coker gave Wharton a gracious nod.

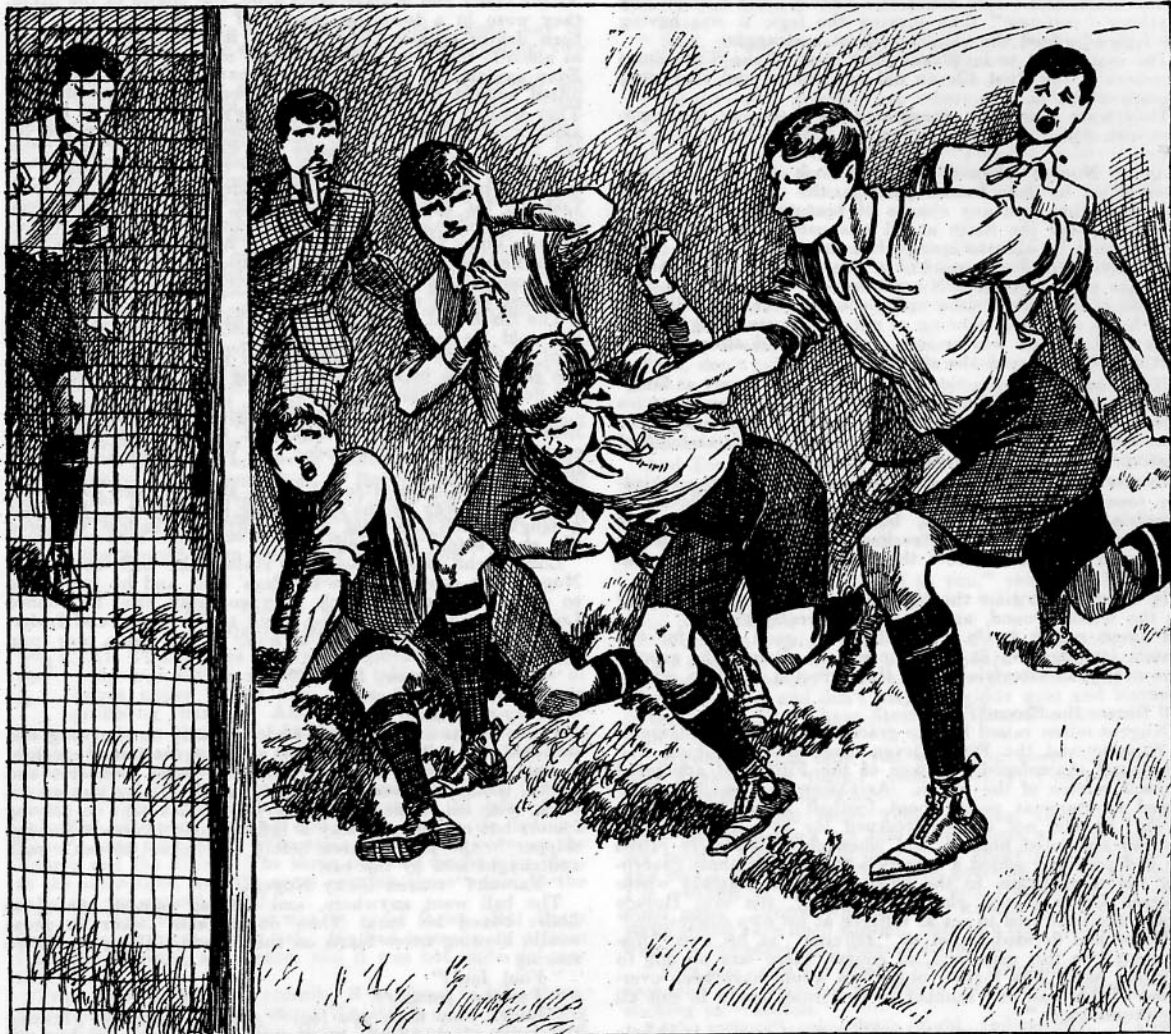
"Sorry for you, kid," he said.

"No need for sorrow," said Wharton cheerfully. "Keep it. You'll want it all for yourself when you play us!"

"Order!"

The next two slips bore the names of Peter Todd and Hobson. Todd's eleven was to play the Shell, and Hobson grinned. He had no doubt whatever about being able to beat the Remove at any time, and Todd's team, of course, would only be the second best in the Remove. The regular Remove team would be playing under Wharton's lead.

Wingate's face was a study now. Only two slips remained



The fag forwards were nowhere to be seen, and Dicky Nugent ran for goal. Loder was on his track, with his hands clenched, evidently not bent on playing footer, but giving Dicky a hiding. He overtook the fag skipper in the penalty area before the School eleven's goal, and caught him by the ear. Down rushed the referee in great wrath, blowing fierce blasts on the whistle. "Foul! Foul!" roared the crowd. (See Chapter 8.)

in the bag, so it was clear whom the First Eleven would have to play. What he had dreaded, and what the juniors had gleefully hoped for, had come to pass—the First Eleven, the great Panjandrums of the Sixth Form—were drawn to play the Second Form in the round.

Everybody in the study grinned, with the exception of George Wingate, as the slips came to light. Nugent minor chuckled.

"You'll have to pull up your socks, Wingate, old man!" he remarked patronisingly.

"The draw's over," said Coker, as Wingate left the study, shutting the door rather hard behind him. "The ties will have to be played off as soon as possible, and then the draw for the second round will take place. I'll put the notice on the board now."

Ten minutes later all Greyfriars were reading the result of the draw pinned up, in Coker's sprawling hand, on the notice-board in the hall.

"Result of the draw in the First Round in the Coker Cup Competition:

First Eleven v. Second Form.
Coker's Eleven v. Wharton's Eleven.
Fourth-Form Eleven v. Third Form
Shell Eleven v. Todd's Eleven."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"

"First Eleven versus Second Form!" chortled the Greyfriars fellows, as they read the notice. "Oh, my hat! Oh, my aunt! Oh, crumbs!"

And every fellow at Greyfriars resolved to see that tie played out at any cost.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

David and Goliath!

HORACE COKER would have liked to see all the ties played out on the same day—the Wednesday half-holiday following the draw. But that was impossible, as the existing fixtures would have had to be interfered with. The First Eleven had a vacancy that day, and the Second were quite willing to meet them, so the tie between the big fishes and the small fry was fixed for Wednesday. But the other ties had to be left till later. This quite agreed with the wishes of the fellows, who all wanted to see the match between Wingate's team and Nugent minor's.

The Sixth-Formers who had been keenest about "collaring" that handsome silver cup, felt somewhat dubious when they found that they were drawn to play the fags.

They felt that the dignity of the Sixth would suffer; and, as Walker said, wasn't the Sixth Form the giddy Palladium of a public school, and didn't it behove the Sixth to keep its precious dignity unimpaired?

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But it was now too late to retreat.

For if either team scratched, the match would be awarded to the other, and would count as a victory; and if there was anything "rotten" than playing the fags, it was having the fags adjudged the victors without a struggle.

The match had to be played; but most of the Sixth-Form members of the First Eleven did not like it, and they were grumpy about it.

They were especially exasperated by observing the keenness with which the whole school was looking forward to the match.

As for Nugent minor & Co., they took it quite seriously. Deep down in their hearts, perhaps, the young rascals did not think they had any chance of beating the Sixth. But simply to play the Sixth at all was great glory for them. They would be able to speak of it in their holidays—"We were playing the Sixth, you know," or, "That time I charged Wingate of the Sixth." Nugent minor, Gatty, Myers, and the rest of the Second were in high feather over it. Whether they had a chance of winning or not, they were going to play their hardest; and win or lose, nothing could alter the fact that they had played the mighty Sixth!

Never had footer practice been followed so keenly at Greyfriars as during the following days. Harry Wharton kept his eleven hard at it. He had high hopes of getting into the final round with the First Eleven, and even a faint hope of beating Wingate and carrying off the cup.

On Wednesday afternoon the Remove were playing a visiting team from another school, and the Second Eleven of Greyfriars was playing out, but everybody who was not called upon to play in the various matches gathered round the senior ground to watch the tie—First Eleven v. Second Form.

It was the first time the fags had had a chance of playing on the senior ground, and they were greatly elated.

Nugent minor & Co. came down in good time for the match, looking very fit and determined. Round the ground was nearly all Greyfriars, and they greeted the fags with a cheer.

"Bravo, the Second!"

Nugent minor raised his cap gracefully in acknowledgment. Wingate and the First Eleven came down, looking irritated and shamefaced. Coker of the Fifth had appointed himself referee of the match. As Coker was popularly supposed to know as much about football as he knew about flying, he was not exactly yearned for as a referee. But he had appointed himself, and when objections were raised he had promptly added a new rule to the conditions governing the competition, to the effect: "In all matches where Horace Coker is not playing personally, the said Horace Coker is empowered to act as referee at his own discretion."

Coker had decided to act as "referee" at his own "discretion" in this case, and, of course, there was no one to say him nay. Any further objections would have been overruled—Coker had any number of new rules ready to suit all "circumstances."

Coker came on the field in Norfolk jacket and whistle complete, and a very business-like air.

"Ready?" he demanded.

"Yes," growled Wingate.

"Quite ready!" said Nugent minor cheerily. "Don't look downhearted, Wingate. You've got a chance, at all events!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young sweep!" muttered Wingate.

"I've told my chaps not to charge you too roughly," said Dicky Nugent audaciously. "We're going to win by good play, not by hooliganism!"

The fellows chuckled at the idea of the diminutive fags charging the mighty men of the Sixth roughly. The smallest player in the School Eleven towered head and shoulders above the biggest of the fags.

Nugent minor tossed for choice of ends with Wingate, and lost.

"Which end?" asked Dicky.

"Whichever you like, and be hanged!" said Wingate.

"But it's your choice!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Order!" said the referee sternly. "I cannot allow unparliamentary language on the football-field, and if there is any repetition of it, I shall have to request you to retire, Wingate!"

"What!"

"I suppose you know the powers and duties of a referee," said Coker firmly. "As you have declined to make the choice of ends, I award the choice to Nugent minor."

"Wingate can kick off—against the wind," said Dicky Nugent promptly.

And the elevens lined up.

Wingate kicked off, and the match started. There was a

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chuckle round the field as it began. Wingate was not in a good humour, and even good-natured Courtney looked glum. As for Loder and Walker and Carne, the bullies of the Sixth, they were in a towering rage. If the School eleven had been drawn against Coker's team, it would not have been so absurd—they often played Form matches with the Fifth. Even against the Shell they could have stood it. But to be pitted against the fags of the Second was too humiliating. They wanted the Coker Cup, but they didn't want to furnish amusement for all Greyfriars. They blamed Wingate for not forcing Coker to arrange the draw to suit them, but Wingate's influence would not have been strong enough for that. Horace Coker had most decidedly a will of his own. Loder & Co. had had no doubt that Coker could have been coerced into making any arrangements they chose—but they did not know Coker. Wingate had not tried to coerce him, but if he had tried he would have failed. Coker was running that competition according to the views of one person only, and that person was Horace Coker.

The Sixth had to play, and they had to win, and Wingate had told his men what he wanted. They were to score a goal at once to ensure victory, and then to lounge through the rest of the match, simply taking care that the fags did not get the ball through.

It was a simple enough programme; and if all the First Eleven had been like Wingate it would have been easy enough to realise. But Loder and Walker and Carne were too ratty for that.

The First Eleven attacked hotly, and the fags, of course, were swept away by the rush of the big seniors. There was a laugh round the field as the little footballers scattered like chaff before the wind.

Loder, who was inside-right, rushed the ball on. Dicky Nugent was centre-half on the fags' side, and he jumped in to defend. More by luck than anything else, he robbed Loder of the ball, and passed it out to the wing—and Loder, with an angry scowl, rushed at him. There was a roar from the spectators.

"No bullying now, Loder!"

"Where's the referee?"

"Play the game!"

Those shouts only irritated Loder. Gatty on the wing had captured the ball and run it on, and Nugent minor received a pass from him. The fag forwards were nowhere, and Dicky, though he was half, ran for goal. Loder was on his track, with his hands clenched, evidently not bent on playing footer, but on giving Dicky a licking. He overtook the fag skipper in the penalty area before the School eleven's goal, and caught him by the ear.

"Yaroo!" roared Dicky Nugent.

The ball went anywhere, and the fag captain roared as Loder boxed his ears. Then down came Coker in great wrath, blowing fierce blasts on the whistle. The crowd were roaring:

"Foul, foul!"

"Penalty, penalty!"

"Loder, stop that, you fool!" shouted Wingate, grasping the bully of the Sixth by the arm and dragging him off Nugent minor.

"Boo-hoo!" roared Dicky Nugent. "Referee! Where's Coker? I claim a penalty kick!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Penalty! Penalty!" roared the crowd.

"A penalty kick is awarded!" said Coker, with dignity.

"Oh, rats!" said Loder.

"And if you cheek the referee again, I'll order you off the field, Loder," said Coker angrily.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Wingate, send that man off the field!" said Coker sternly. "Get off, Loder!" said the captain of Greyfriars. "If you haven't sense enough to keep your temper, you're better off the field than on it!"

Loder swung angrily off the ground, followed by hisses from the crowd. The first eleven had to finish the match a man short—not that it could make any difference to the ultimate result, of course; but it gave the fags a breathing chance. Nugent minor himself prepared to take the penalty kick—the footballers standing round watching him hungrily. Well enough the fags knew that it was the only possible chance they had of getting a goal in that match—and they owed it to Gerald Loder's bad temper. Nugent minor did not mean to miss that chance—and he was right in front of goal—and as he was at liberty to take the penalty kick unhindered, there was no reason why he should not score.

Whiz!

The kick was taken—and taken well! There was a roar from the crowd—a roar of delight.

"GOAL!"

The leather was in the net!

"Goal! Goal! Hurray!"

"First blood to the fags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were roars of cheers and laughter. The fags had taken the first goal in the match with the School Eleven—David had beaten Goliath in the first round at least.

Wingate compressed his lips as the teams walked back to the centre of the field.

"For goodness' sake don't play the giddy goat, any of you!" he said. "We've got to bother about taking two goals now to win!"

Loder's bad conduct was not repeated—the Sixth did not mean to give the fags a chance of scoring again. They attacked hotly once more, and the ball was put into the fags' goal twice in the next seven minutes. After that, the seniors contented themselves with defending their goal. It did not require very much defence against their diminutive opponents. The first half ended with the seniors two to one.

In the second half, Nugent minor & Co. made desperate attacks. The seniors disdained to attack—they had a winning margin, and they were satisfied with it. The fags kept up the attack with great spirit, right up to the finish. Coker blew the whistle at last—and Nugent minor & Co. had hardly enough wind left to crawl off the field, so pumped were they with their exertions.

But the crowd cheered them loudly. One goal to two was a good score for the fags of the Second Form, playing against the giants of the School Eleven. And Dicky Nugent & Co. were very well satisfied with themselves.

In the Second Form-room, afterwards, the fags celebrated the match in great style.

"They've licked us, and we're pushed out of the competition," Dicky Nugent remarked. "But we've scored a goal against the School Eleven—and they can't get out of that! We've placed the first team, and taken first goal in the match—and we won't let them forget about it, either."

And the Second-Form-room rang with cheers.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Players Wanted!

PETER TODD wore a very thoughtful look. He was sitting at his study table, with a sheet of impot paper before him, upon which he had been scribbling names. Alonzo and Dutton and Billy Bunter were in the study, finishing their tea. Bunter was trying to extract a little more jam from a jar that had already been cleaned out; and Peter Todd was trying to extract from his brain a list of possible players for his eleven. Todd's tie with Hobson was to be played on Saturday afternoon, at the same time as the tie between Coker's team and Harry Wharton's, and the tie between the Fourth and the Third. The three matches would take place at the same time, and the same evening—there would be the draw for the second round.

Harry Wharton's eleven was in great form. But Peter Todd was not quite happy yet. He had to make up a team from the leavings, as it were, and it was not quite an easy task.

True, he had plenty of recruits, if he chose to take them. Every Remove fellow left out of Wharton's team was willing to play for Peter Todd. But Peter Todd was not so satisfied with the recruits as they were with themselves.

"Blessed if I know how I'm going to fix up this giddy eleven," grunted Peter. "Why can't you play footer, Lonzy, you ass?"

"My dear Peter, I am sure I am willing to do my best," said Alonzo Todd mildly. "It is true that I do not know very much about the game of football, but I should play with the best intentions in the world."

"You can't score goals with good intentions," growled Peter Todd. "Blow your intentions—what we want is the Coker Cup. Why can't you play footer, Bunter, you fat clump?"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly over the jam-jar.

"Jolly few players at Greyfriars better than me," he said. "I'm kept out of the matches by jealousy, that's all. Give me a chance, and see what I can do. In fact, I shall insist upon playing in the tie! I want to see the Coker Cup in this study. The silversmith would give twelve pounds back for it."

"The cup's not going to be sold," said Peter Todd; "we're not giddy hucksters. The cup is going to be presented to the Remove Form, with the compliments of Study No. 7."

Bunter glared.

"You—you utter ass! Do you mean to say you're going to take the trouble to play for that cup and then give it away?"

"Present it to the Form, you mean—what could we do with it better?" demanded Peter.

"Sell it for twelve quid—"

"Br-r-r!"

"And have enough cash to stand us splendid feeds for

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ONE PENNY.

the rest of the term!" exclaimed Bunter excitedly. "Why, I think you must be off your rocker, Peter Todd."

"Rats!"

"Well, if that cup's going to be given away, I jolly well refuse to play in the tie!" bawled Bunter.

Peter Todd chuckled.

"All the same, whether you refuse or not," he remarked. "You're not going to play in the tie. No room for porpoises in my team. But I'm blessed if I know how I'm going to make up a team to beat Wharton. I've got Bolsover major at back—he's good enough, though he's not so good as Wharton's backs. Dutton will be all right in the front line—lucky we've got Dutton."

"Eh?" said Dutton.

"I shall make you inside-right, Dutton!"

"Rats!" said Dutton. "What on earth are you talking about? How can you make my inside fight?"

"Ow! You're going to play inside-right in my team!" howled Peter.

"What is there to scream about?"

"Oh, don't talk any more! Have mercy!" groaned Peter Todd.

"My name's not Percy," said Tom Dutton, puzzled. "Blessed if I know what you want to call me Percy for. Bolsover's name is Percy."

And Tom Dutton went on with his tea, shaking his head as if quite puzzled, and a little alarmed for the state of Peter's reason.

"Fish has offered to play," Peter went on, thoughtfully. "I suppose he can play half—after a fashion—but he's such an ass—"

"I guess I'm much obliged to you," remarked Fisher T. Fish, looking in at the study door. "I guess I could play your head off any time!"

"Well, I'm putting you in," said Peter Todd calmly, not at all disconcerted by the Yankee junior having overheard his uncomplimentary remark. "For goodness' sake try to play in the tie, and don't play the giddy goat and leave us in the lurch. You'll have Stott and Skinner in the same line with you."

"I guess I shall show you something about the way we play football over there!" said Fisher T. Fish confidently. "You watch me, that's all!"

"Br-r-r!" said Peter Todd. "Now, Ogilvy's a good man—but Wharton's got him in his team as centre-half in my place. Morgan will do for my other back—he'll play, and he's a good man. Treluce in goal—he will be all right. I'm weakest in forwards—myself and Dutton are the only good ones. Trevor will do—and Russell is really good—Rake would have been ripping, only he's left—just my luck—where is the other man coming from, eh?"

"Pity you can't get Smithy!" Fish remarked. "I kinder reckoned he'd play for you like a bird, but he seems to be sticking to Wharton."

"It's rotten!" said Peter Todd, indignantly. "I was counting on Smithy, you know—he was always up against Wharton, and it's horribly inconsiderate of him to bury the hatchet just at this time. I really think that Smithy will have to be reasoned with. With Smithy in my team, I'll undertake to beat the Form eleven—"

"Well, with me, too, you might do it," Fisher T. Fish remarked thoughtfully. "I guess I want our gang to pull it off. It will show those jays that they don't know everything about footer. Why not talk to Smithy?"

"I've talked to him," said Peter Todd dismally.

"What does he say?"

"Told me to go and eat coke!"

"H'm! Why not tackle him again? Suppose we nip him in his study, and make him promise to play for us?" suggested Fisher T. Fish. "He'll keep his word. We can lay into him with a ruler until he promises."

Peter Todd grinned.

"Not a bad wheeze, but—as he's agreed to play for Wharton—"

"But he hasn't promised," said Fish. "It's only arranged as a matter of course. If he promises to play for us—"

"Me, you mean," said Peter pleasantly.

"Us!" said Fisher T. Fish firmly. "If he promises to play for us he'll be bound to do it, and there you are!"

Peter Todd jumped up briskly.

"We'll do it!" he exclaimed. "Shakespeare says—"

"Oh, blow Shakespeare!" said Fisher T. Fish disrespectfully.

"Shakespeare says," roared Peter Todd—"Shakespeare says, 'Desperate remedies require desperate diseases'—I mean, 'Desperate diseases require desperate remedies.' And our eleven is in a desperate state, and no mistake. I con-

sider we've got a claim on Smithy, and we're going to enforce that claim!"

"I guess we'd better hump ourselves and do it, if you've done jawing!" suggested Fisher T. Fish.

And the two juniors left the study, followed by Tom Dutton, at a sign from Peter Todd.

Dutton did not know what was "on," and Peter could not tell him without risk of telling the whole of the Remove at the same time; but he loyally followed his leader.

He had great faith in Peter Todd. As a rule, Peter contrived to "get there," as Fish would have described it. But in dealing with the Bounder, and endeavouring to coerce that difficult customer, Peter Todd had a task on that was quite probable to prove a little above his weight.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Methods of Barbarism!

VERNON-SMITH slipped a copy of a sporting paper into the drawer of his table as there came a knock at his study door.

"Come in!" he said calmly. Three juniors marched in. They were Peter Todd, Fisher T. Fish, and Tom Dutton—the chief members of the rival eleven in the Remove. Peter Todd carefully closed the door behind him, and turned the key in the lock. The Bounder watched that proceeding with considerable surprise.

"What's the little game?" he exclaimed. "If this is a ragg—"

He picked up a round ebony ruler from the table. Peter Todd waved his hand in sign of peace.

"Not at all, my son. We've simply come here for a heart-to-heart talk."

"I wish you'd chosen some other time, then," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm rather busy at the present moment."

"The gee-gees can wait," said Peter Todd imperturbably; "likewise the cigarettes."

"Oh, rats! What do you want?"

"About the tie for the Coker Cup," Peter explained. "I've made up a fair-to-middling eleven in the Remove, but I want a really good man in the front line to back me up."

"Go and find him, then!"

"I've come here to find him."

"Sorry! I'm playing in the Form eleven. Wharton's depending on me."

"That's what I'm going to talk to you about. You haven't actually promised Wharton to play for him?" Todd asked.

"There wasn't any need. Wharton asked me if I should be playing, and I said that I should be, that's all."

"That doesn't amount to a promise," said Peter promptly. "You could change your mind if you liked."

"But I don't like."

"I want to persuade you. I was counting on you for my team from the start. I don't think you ought to leave me in the lurch in this way," said Peter Todd, shaking his head, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Oh, rats!" said the Bounder. "I'm on good terms with Wharton now, and as long as he wants me to play for the Form I shall play!"

"That's where it comes in. You've always been up against Wharton, and you turn over a giddy new leaf at the most inconvenient moment," said Peter Todd, in an aggrieved tone. "Of course, I'm glad to see the kon and the lamb getting on well together. 'Let dogs delight to bark and bite,' etc. But when you're turning over these new leaves you should consider other people a bit. I was counting on you!"

"Sorry!"

"So, upon the whole, I think you'd better tell Wharton you're sorry, and tell me that you'll play in my eleven!" said Peter Todd agreeably.

"Rats!"

"I'm willing to talk to you for any length of time—to point out to you that this is what you really ought to do—"

"But I'm not willing," said the Bounder. "I'm fed up. If you want me to do a favour, will you get on the other side of that door, and take the other two freaks with you?"

"I guess—"

"Not yet," said Peter. "I don't mind telling you, Smithy, that we're not leaving this study until you've agreed to play for the Todd eleven."

"Oh, buzz off!"

"Looking upon it as your duty to back me up, I shall not hesitate at the most drastic methods," said Peter warningly.

"Clear off!"

"Gentlemen," said Peter Todd, looking at his companions, "you will admit that I have tried all the powers of persuasive eloquence—"

"Oh, not so much gas!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Now is the time to resort to sterner measures," said Peter Todd. "We have a right to the services of Smithy. He has no right to start turning over new leaves at a moment like this. Smithy is going to play for us!"

"Oh, stuff!" said Tom Dutton. "We can afford to pay for ourselves! But what is there to pay for?"

"Play for us!" roared Peter. "Now, Smithy, you'll admit that I've talked to you like a Dutch uncle and a gramophone rolled into one. Are you going to play for my team?"

"No, ass!"

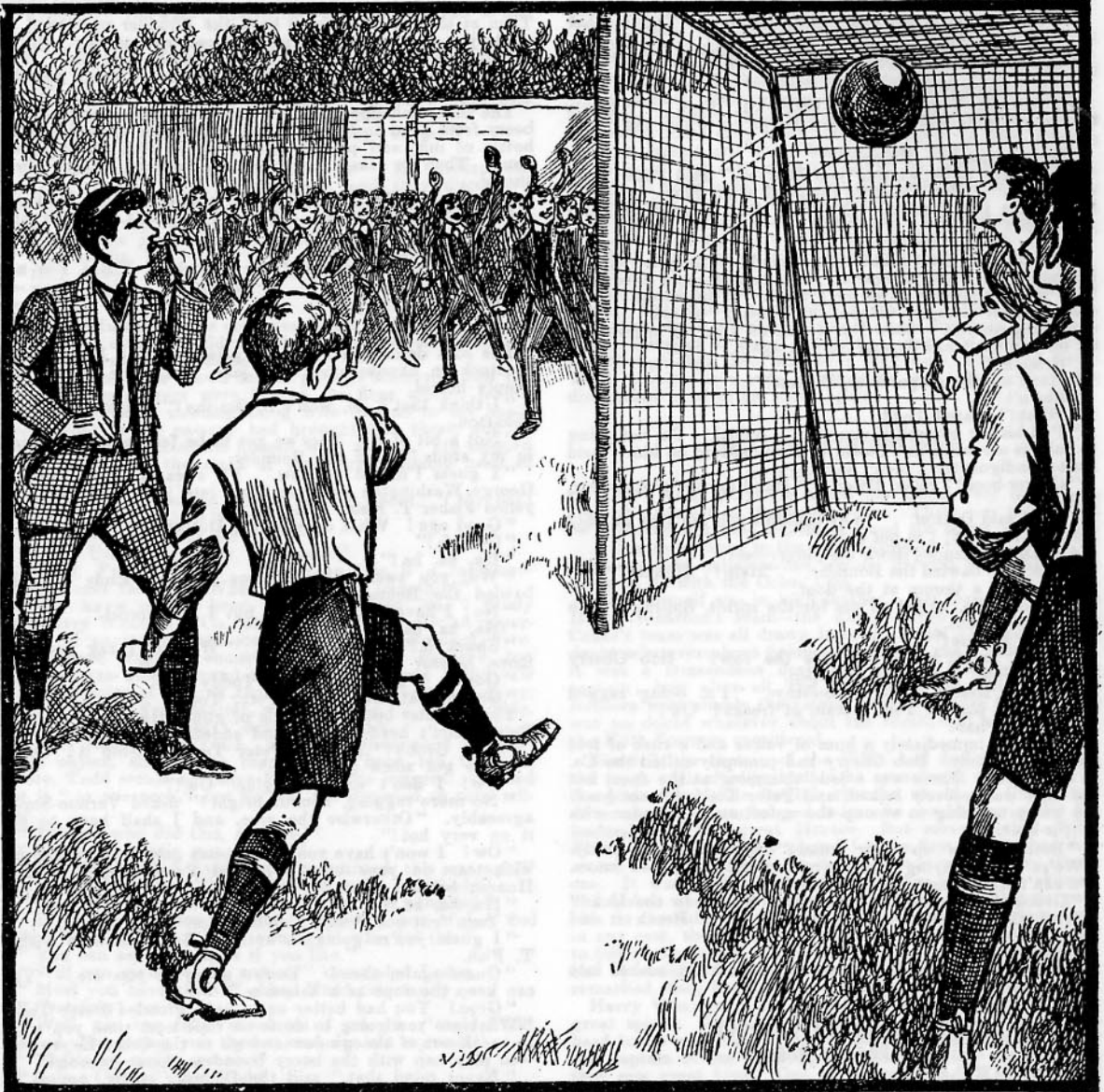
"I'll let you take any place you choose."

"Keep 'em!"

GOOD TURNS—No. 17.



Two MAGNET readers, while out scouting, come across a motor cyclist who has met with a bad spill. They at once render first aid by binding up the wounded man's cuts, and then revive him by giving him refreshment from their water-bottles—thus doing a real good turn to a man in distress!



Nugent minor did not mean to miss that chance, and as the ball flew through the air with a whiz there was a roar from the crowd—a roar of delight. "Goal! Goal! First blood to the fags! Hurray!" (See Chapter 8.)

"Very well," sighed Peter. "I fear that my Uncle Benjamin would be shocked at the measures I'm going to take; but, fortunately, he is not here. Collar him!"

"Hands off!" shouted the Bounder, raising the ruler. "If you start any ragging here, you'll get hurt, I promise you!"

"My dear Smithy—"

"I tell you I— Yah!"

Peter Todd, with a quick movement, dodged under the Bounder's arm, and the next moment the ruler rattled on the floor. Then Peter and the Bounder closed in a hard grip, and reeled to and fro, struggling. Tom Dutton and Fisher T. Fish lent a hand, and Vernon-Smith came down with a bump. He collapsed upon the study carpet on his back, and Peter Todd sat on his chest and smiled down at him.

"You silly ass!" roared the Bounder. "Gerroff! I won't play for your rotten team! I wouldn't be found dead among your eleven freaks! Gerroff!"

"I guess we'll argue it out with you," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Now, are we going to boil him in oil or saw his ears off?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

"You silly ass—"

"Persuasion should be soft and sweet," said Peter Todd. "We'll begin with jam. Give me that jar of jam. Fishy, and then hold his hands!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish grasped the Bounder's wrists, and drew them above his head. Then Peter Todd ladled out the jam. The Bounder struggled wildly, gazing up in horror at the sticky compound that was about to descend on him.

"If you jam me—" he began sulphurously.

"Are you playing for my team?"

"No!" shrieked the Bounder.

"Sorry; then you get the jam!"

Flop!

"Groo-hooh! Yooh! Yah!"

"I guess that'll bring him round," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "Rub it into his ears and his topknot. Don't spare the jam; it's not ours!"

"I say, what are you up to, you know?" asked Tom Dutton, who was watching the proceedings in a state of great astonishment.

"Making Smithy come to terms," explained Peter. "He's got to play in the tie."

"Not while he's down," said Dutton, shaking his head. "Let him get up, and then I will!"

"Eh? You'll what?"

"Give him one in the eye," said Dutton. "That's what you said, isn't it?"

"Br-r-r! Now, Smithy, are you going to play for me in the tie?"

"No!" yelled Smithy.

"More jam, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish. "There's bottles of ginger-beer you can begin on when the jam's gone!"

"Groo—groogh! Groooh!"

"I'm sorry to be wasting jam like this," said Peter Todd regretfully. "But it's all for the good of the cause. You've had all the jam, Smithy. Now I'll pour ginger-beer down your neck!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"It's all your own fault. You shouldn't have buried the hatchet at the wrong moment. Last month you'd have been keen to play against Wharton's team. You mustn't make these sudden changes without considering others. I was depending on you. Now I'm sitting on you. I'm going to sit on you till I can depend on you again. See?"

"Groooh!"

"Hand me the ginger-beer, Dutton!"

"Sha'n't!"

"What!" roared Todd.

"Pull his ear yourself if you want it pulled. I'm not going to pull his ear while he's down, with you sitting on him!" said Dutton indignantly.

"Ginger-beer!" yelled Peter. "Hand me the ginger-beer, fathead!"

"Oh!" said Dutton. "Why couldn't you say that at first? No need to shout; I'm not deaf."

And Dutton handed down the ginger-beer.

"Rescue!" bawled the Bounder. "Help! Rescue!"

There was a thump at the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time for the sprint, Smithy!" Bob Cherry called out.

"Ow! Rescue!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" Bob Cherry tried the door, but it did not open.

"Help! Rescue!" yelled Smithy. "I'm being ragged to make me play in Todd's team of freaks! Ow!"

"Oh, my hat!"

There was immediately a buzz of voices and a rush of feet outside the study. Bob Cherry had promptly called the Co. to the rescue. There was a loud thumping at the door, but the door was securely locked, and Peter Todd did not heed. He was proceeding to swamp the unfortunate Bounder with ginger-beer.

"Better make up your mind!" he murmured softly. "We're really paying you a great compliment, you know. We can't do without you, really, Smithy."

"Groooh! Rescue! Grooogh! Smash in the lock!" howled the Bounder. "I'll pay for it! Break it in! Rescue!"

Crash!

The door flew open, and Harry Wharton & Co. rushed into the study.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. The Ragers Ragged!

"COLLAR them!"

"Sock it to them!" Peter Todd jumped up in a hurry. He put up his hands, but in a second he went rolling over, with Bob Cherry clinging to him. Fisher T. Fish made a spring for the door, and sprang into the arms of Johnny Bull, who grasped him and held him fast. Tom Dutton resisted valiantly, but he was seized and borne to the floor, and Nugent sat on him. The tables had been turned very suddenly.

Vernon-Smith staggered to his feet, streaming with ginger-beer and jam. The rescuers burst into a roar as they looked at him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It won't be a laughing matter for these rotters!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "Hold 'em! I've got some more jam, and plenty of ginger-beer!"

"Good egg!"

"I guess I don't want any of your jam, Smithy!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish in alarm. "I kinder reckon this was really only a joke, you know."

"And the joke isn't over yet," said the Bounder coolly.

"Oh, pile in!" said Peter Todd resignedly. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, I suppose. I'll tackle you again another time."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"I'll make you tired of tackling me!" grinned the Bounder. "I've got a rope here, you fellows. Rope them together first."

The prisoners struggled in vain. The rope was knotted round their limbs, and they were tied together in a bunch. Then as they stood back to back the Bounder proceeded to waste jam and ginger-beer in the most reckless way. Harry Wharton & Co. did not feel called upon to stop him. The state the Bounder was in justified retaliation, though perhaps Smithy carried retaliation a little bit too far.

The three unhappy prisoners were soon jammy and ginger-beery from head to foot. Then the Bounder opened a large bottle of ink, and poured it over them with an impartial hand. Then he raked soot from the chimney into the fire-shovel.

"I—I guess I've had enough!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I say, Smithy, let up, old man! I won't rag you any more."

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"I don't think you will," he remarked. "But I'm not done yet."

"Grooogh!"

"Ow, ow!"

"Yow!"

The soot descended upon the prisoners in a black cloud. It stuck in chunks upon the jam, and their aspect was simply horrid.

"I think that'll do, won't it, Smithy?" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Not a bit of it! They've got to be fed up with ragging in my study!" said the Bounder.

"I guess I'm fed up now. I'll swear by the bones of George Washington never to come into your study again!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "Let up!"

"Good egg! What do you say, Dutton?"

"Groooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you swear not to come into my study again?" bawled the Bounder.

"No; I haven't got a pain, but I feel horrid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it!" roared Dutton. "We won't rag you any more, honour bright!"

"Good! What do you say, Toddy?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Peter Todd.

The Bounder opened a bottle of gum. He gently anointed Peter Todd's head with it, and added more soot.

"Oh! Groooh!" groaned Peter Todd. "Stop it! Ow!"

"I've got some glue here."

"Ow! I don't want any glue. Ow!"

"No more ragging, honour bright?" asked Vernon-Smith agreeably. "Otherwise the glue, and I shall have to put it on very hot!"

"Ow! I won't have you in my team now if you asked me with tears in your eyes!" howled Peter Todd. "Ow! Honour bright! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn 'em out!" said the Bounder.

"I guess you're going to untie us first!" howled Fisher T. Fish.

"Guess again, then! You're going as you are! You can keep the rope as a keepsake."

"Groo! You had better untie us!" growled Peter Todd. "What are you going to do for a rope next time you want to sneak out of the window and go to the Cross Keys—ow! —to play nap with the beery bounders there—groooh!"

"Never mind that," said the Bounder coolly, not at all disconcerted by the allusion to his "doggish" little ways. "I'll chance that. Get out!"

"We can't walk with our legs tied together!" howled Fisher T. Fish.

"You can roll!"

"I guess I'm not going to roll!"

"I guess you are!"

And the Bounder gave the tied-up trio a shove, and they rolled out of the study on the floor of the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, jumping Jerusalem!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "This beats it; this fairly puts the lid on! Todd, you jay, if you bring me on any of your ragging jobs again I'll take you into a corner and scalp you! Ow!"

There was a rear of laughter in the passage from the fellows who had been brought out of their studies by the noise. The sight of three juniors tied in a heap together, rolling helplessly on the floor, struck the Removites as funny.

"Let me loose!" yelled Peter Todd. "Bunter, you ass, come and untie me!"

"No fear!" said Billy Bunter. "You're too sooty! You're too sticky to touch! Hee, hee, hee!"

"Bolsover, old man—"

"You'll have to get a wash before I touch you!" chuckled Bolsover major.

"I say, Bulstrode, old fellow——"
"You can say Bulstrode old fellow as often as you like," grinned Bulstrode, "but I'm not going to touch you. You're not nice to touch."
"Sure and ye're not exactly tasty, Toddy darring!" said Micky Desmond.

"Desmond, you ass, unfasten me, and I'll play you in my team!"
"Sure I'll play in the team if you like, but I'm not touching you!" grinned Micky.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Get along!" said the Bounder. "I can't have you sprawling outside my study!"

"Yaroo! I guess we can't get along, you jay!"
"Then I'll help you!"

The Bounder helped—with his feet. He kicked the unhappy raggars with great vigour, and they discovered that they could roll along the passage. They rolled, leaving a trail of jam and soot and ink and gum behind them on the linoleum. The juniors were rocking with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"
"Roll away, Toddy!"
"Well dribbled, Smithy!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The rollfulness of the esteemed Todd is terrific!"
"Cave!" came a sudden yell from the direction of the stairs. "Here-comes Loder!"

In an instant the crowd in the passage scattered, and the three tied-up raggars were left on the floor alone. Loder, the prefect, came striding along with a cane in his hand. The uproar in the passage had brought him there, and he had thoughtfully provided himself with a cane. He stopped in amazement at the sight of the unrecognisable heap of juniors on the floor.

"What the dickens is that?" gasped Loder. "My hat! Who is it? What is it?"

"Oh! Ow! I guess it's me!"
"Ow! Untie us, Loder, old man!"
"Todd, Fish, Dutton! I suppose this is a ragging—what?" said Loder. "Who tied you up like this?"

Loder knew of the keen rivalry between No. 7 Study and Harry Wharton & Co., and he thought he saw an opportunity of paying off old scores against the Famous Five. There were raggings enough in the unruly Remove, but this one was quite beyond the usual limit, and Loder saw his opportunity of making capital out of it. Such a ragging, reported to the Form-master, would get the Co. into trouble.

"Who did this, Todd?" demanded Loder.
"Eh?" said Peter Todd. He quite understood the prefect's object, and if the ragging had been ten times as severe, Todd would not have betrayed the raggars. He had got it "in the neck," but he was not disposed to turn tell-tale.

"Tell me who did this, at once!"
"Won't you untie me, Loder?"
"No, not until I know who committed this outrage!" said Loder loftily. "They will have to be punished!"

"Oh, that's all right! We don't want 'em punished."
"It isn't a question of what you want, but of law and order," said Loder. "I ask you again who did this."

"You can ask fifty times if you like."
"Will you give me the names?" demanded Loder.
"Must you have them?" asked Todd reluctantly.

"Certainly; yes."
"Well, you can take 'em down if you like," said Todd.
"Mind, I'm giving you these names against my will."

"That's all right; go on!"
"Julius Cæsar!" said Todd.
"What!"

"And George Washington!"
"Eh!"
"And Lord Kitchener!"

"You young ass!" roared Loder. "What do you mean? I'm asking you for the names."
"I'm giving you names," said Peter Todd. "Famous names. Have you got those down?"

"Will you give me the names——"
"Certainly! Pontius Pilate and William Tell——"
"Todd!"

"And Marc Antony and Joan of Arc——"
Swish! Swish! Swish! Loder was fed up with Todd's humorous list of names. He laid on the cane with great heartiness, and Todd and Fish and Dutton roared. Then Loder walked off, leaving the three unhappy heroes still tied up and rolling on the floor. They rolled as far as No. 7 Study, where Alonzo Todd was deep in his favourite volume——

"The Story of a Potato." The sight of three blackened and sticky juniors rolling in at the doorway startled Alonzo from a deeply interesting chapter, and he jumped up with a loud cry.

"Goodness gracious! My dear Peter—my dear Dutton—my dear Fish—— Oh, dear!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

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

"Not so many dears, and untie us!" howled Peter.
"But what has happened, my dear Peter?"
"Can't you see what's happened?" shrieked Peter. "This has happened! Untie us!"

"Oh, dear! If Uncle Benjamin could see you now——"
"Will you untie us? Get a knife and cut this rope!"
"Certainly, my dear Peter! But really, I am shocked——"

"You can be shocked afterwards, fathead! Get us loose!"
And Alonzo, looking very much distressed, freed the unfortunate raggars, who had been so badly ragged. When they were loose they stood up and gasped. Fisher T. Fish shook a jammy and sooty fist at Peter Todd.

"I guess I'm fed up with this!" he roared. "I'm not playing in your freak team, do you hear? I'm off!"
And Fisher T. Fish stamped away.

"I—I say, I feel horrid, you know!" groaned Dutton.
"Let's go and get a wash!" snorted Peter Todd.
"Bosh! If you say I'm talking bosh——"

"B-r-r-r-r!"
Peter Todd stamped out of the study, followed by his deaf chum. They had a great deal of cleaning to do. And when they came down afterwards, newly swept and garnished, they found all the Remove chuckling over the story. Loud laughter greeted them wherever they went, and even Peter Todd, though as a rule irrepresible, was glad to hide his diminished head in his study again.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

No Cup For Coker!

SATURDAY afternoon found the school very excited on the subject of the football ties. Three ties were to be played out that afternoon; and six teams were glorying in advance in the anticipation of victory.

Six youthful skippers had already decided what they were going to do with the Coker Cup.

Coker himself was in high feather. His team had to meet Harry Wharton's team—the Form eleven of the Remove. Coker's team was all drawn from the Fifth, and they had no doubt whatever about being able to beat the "kids." True, it was a tremendous drawback having Horace Coker as captain; but, after all, the Fifth were the Fifth, and the Remove were simply the Lower Fourth—simply fags. There was no doubt whatever about the result. At all events, so the Fifth-Formers considered.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, had declined to play in the team. His dignity had to be considered, and he said in the plainest possible English that he would see Coker, and an army of Cokers, hanged before he would play under the leadership of the great Horace. But several other Fifth-Formers who habitually played for the first eleven, had consented to play for Coker, so the team was really a very strong one. It was a sine qua non that Coker should be skipper, and Coker was quite deaf to gentle hints his followers gave him on the subject. But the Fifth felt sure of victory, and, in any case, there was a tremendous spread in Coker's study to follow the match. Coker might not be able to play footer, but at standing a feed he was unequalled, and, as Potter remarked, they had to take the bad with the good.

Harry Wharton & Co. came down to the footer ground in great spirits. They knew that they were going to have a hard tussle with the Fifth, but they had high hopes. Coker was captain of the opposing team, and in that circumstance they saw great hope. One of the masters—Mr. Flynn—had kindly consented to referee that match. The juniors were on the ground first, Coker & Co. strolling down a little late. Coker nodded affably and condescendingly to the Remove captain.

"In great form—eh?" he said, with a smile.
"Top-notch!" said Wharton cheerfully. "Right up to the mark. I'm really sorry you haven't got an earthly for your own cup, Coker."

Coker laughed.
"Well, we'll see," he said good-humouredly.
"The see-fulsness will be terrific," Hurree Singh remarked.

"But the honourable and esteemed Coker will not have an unearthly look in!"

It was a keen, sharp November afternoon, just the weather for football. Further on in the playing-fields Todd's eleven was turning out with the Shell, and Temple, Dabney & Co. were preparing to face the heroes of the Third.

Todd had succeeded in making up his eleven, but it was not exactly as he would have liked it. His heroic efforts to get the Bounder into his team had failed, and Fisher T. Fish had resigned in disgust. Fish was not much loss, but the Bounder was a very serious loss, and Todd had his doubts about the result. But he kept up an aspect of great

cheerfulness to encourage his side, and from his looks no one would have supposed that there was the slightest difficulty in beating the Shell.

Interest was divided among the matches, but a good number of fellows had assembled to watch Harry Wharton & Co.. It was a very interesting question whether Horace Coker would succeed in the first round for his own cup. Certainly nobody but Coker would have thought of offering a cup and competing for it himself. But Horace Coker was nothing if not original.

Coker won the toss, and chose his goal, and Wharton kicked off against a keen wind from the sea. Most of the Remove fellows who were not in the Form eleven were playing for Peter Todd, but the rest gathered to look on. Billy Bunter could be seen, with a bag of tarts clutched in one fat hand, and with the other laying down the law on the subject of football to Fisher T. Fish, and Lord Mauleverer and little Wun Lung, the Chinese. What Billy Bunter did not know about footer apparently was not worth knowing, and he predicted with a sad shake of the head that the Form had no chance in that match. There was one thing needful, it appeared, to give the Remove a chance against the Fifth, and that was Bunter as centre-forward. Without that the Form hadn't a look-in, and Bunter confided to the other fellows that it was really all over bar shouting. Considering their deplorable prospects—from the Bunter point of view—the Remove team looked very cheery and confident.

In spite of the wind in their teeth, Harry Wharton & Co. led off with a brilliant attack, and Coker & Co. had plenty to do to defend their territory.

Fitzgerald, in goal, saved, however, and the attack was swept back at last, and for some time the tussle swayed about midfield.

Then the Fifth Form forwards got a chance, and swept down to the Remove goal with the wind behind them. Bulstrode, in goal, was on the watch, but he was not wanted. Johnny Bull and Tom Brown, the New Zealander, at back, cleared, and sent the leather out to the forwards again. Wharton captured it and rushed it on and drove it out to the right wing as he was charged over, and then the Bounder made one of his brilliant rushes with the ball at his feet.

Away went the game for the Fifth Form goal, and the onlookers cheered loudly.

"Go it, Smithy! Put her through!"

Vernon-Smith's rush was baffled, but the Fifth had to give a corner, and the kick was taken by Harry Wharton, and materialised. It was the first goal of the match, and it was one up for the Remove.

"Bravo!" shouted Lord Mauleverer, clapping his aristocratic hands. "Ripping, my dear fellow! Begad, that was splendid!"

"Passable!" said Bunter. "But you should see me take the ball down the field. It wouldn't have been a corner."

"I guess it wouldn't!" agreed Fisher T. Fish.

"I mean I should have scored!"

"Rats!" said Lord Mauleverer. "First blood to the Remove, anyway. The Bounder is playing up well. We shall beat the Fifth!"

"Coker hasn't had a chance yet!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "Wait till Coker gets going. It will be a sight for sore eyes!"

"Begad! He's going now! Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

Horace Coker was going at last!

He charged one of his own forwards off the ball, miskicked, and dropped it fairly at the feet of Harry Wharton, who rushed it on and slammed it into the net before Fitzgerald had left off laughing.

"Goal, begad! Hurray!"

"Goal! Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That ended the first half. In the interval Coker spoke to his men very seriously, what time he sucked a lemon.

"You fellows will have to back me up a bit better," he remarked. "I can captain a team, but I can't win a footer-match all on my lonesome. Play up in the second half, for goodness' sake, or those blessed kids will lick us."

"You want to win?" asked Potter, whose temper had suffered a little by being charged off the ball by his own captain, and who felt that Coker's remarks now were really insult added to injury.

"Of course I do, fathead!" said Coker.

"Then suppose you take a rest?" said Potter tartly.

"You could go and sit down behind the goalposts, you know, and watch us—and then we should have a chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!" said Greene heartily. "Do that, Coker, old man, and we'll undertake to lick the fags hollow!"

Coker glared.

"This isn't a time to be funny!" he exclaimed. "Look THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

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Every Wednesday.

here; I expect you to buck up. Let's have something like real football in the second half."

"There goes the whistle, bedad!" said Fitzgerald. "Come on!"

The teams lined up for the second half.

The Fifth had the wind in their faces after the change of ends, and they found the Remove as keen as mustard. They had tacitly agreed not to take any notice of Coker, but to play without their skipper's skippering—and that was undoubtedly an advantage. But a team working on such lines did not have a chance of holding an eleven that worked together with a combination like clockwork. Harry Wharton's team worked as one man, playing into one another's hands with wonderful precision, and led by a captain in whom they had the completest confidence.

The Fifth, by sheer weight and strength, gained some advantages. They succeeded in putting the ball in once, but they could not equalise. Coker succeeded in getting into the way with wonderful persistence, and blocked the only chance Potter had of scoring. Then came a hot attack from the Remove to finish with, and the Fifth packed their goal and defended, and they were still defending when the whistle went.

Coker's face was a study then.

"Licked!" he murmured, as if he could hardly believe the appalling fact. "Licked—by the kids! My hat!"

"Licked hollow!" snorted Potter. "Well, you would skipper the team! We tried to reason with you, but it was no good!"

"No good at all!" said Greene. "You must admit, Coker, that we did our best to get you not to skipper the team."

"You silly asses!" roared Coker. "If I hadn't skippered the team, they'd have had a dozen goals instead of two. What was wanted was some players with a little gumption to back me up—and that was what we hadn't got!"

And Coker swung off the field in a state of great exasperation.

But Coker was a sportsman after all; and he gave Harry Wharton a cheerful grin as the Remove came sauntering off the ground.

"Well, you've won the tie," he said. "It would have been a bit different if I'd had a team that could back me up—but there you are—you've won—and you'll be in the second round for the cup! Good luck to you!"

"Thanks, old son!" said Wharton. "We'll do our best to win it—I expect the final will be between us and the Sixth! You're a sport!"

And the Remove trooped over very well satisfied with themselves.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Makes a New Rule!

COKER was out of the competition for his own cup now—beaten in the first tie.

But he bore it with great fortitude.

He attributed the defeat to his team, and the members of the team were unanimous in attributing it to Coker; so they had to agree to differ on that point.

But all the fellows agreed that Coker took it very well, and the munificent donor of the Handsome Silver Cup was very popular.

The results of the three matches were posted up in the hall together. The Remove had beaten Coker's team, the Fourth had beaten the Third, and Peter Todd's eleven had beaten the Shell team. Hobson of the Shell was looking very glum. He had never dreamed that Todd, with a scratch eleven from the Lower Fourth, would have a chance against him; but Todd had played up like an International. He would not have been able to beat the Fifth, but he had beaten the Shell, and he was still in the running.

The teams in the competition for the Coker Cup were reduced to four by the playing of the ties—and four skippers assembled in Coker's study that evening to attend the draw for the second round.

Wingate of the Sixth looked a little better humoured this time. There was no longer danger of being drawn to play a team of Second-Form fags. Temple of the Fourth was swanking considerably. He had just beaten the Third by a margin of one goal to none, and he seemed to be feeling very proud of the achievement. He bestowed condescending nods upon Todd and Wharton when they came in.

"You kids have had a lot of luck to scrape into the second round," Temple remarked.

"Yes, and we'll see that you don't scrape into the third, Temple, old man," said Peter Todd. "I hope you'll be drawn against us!"

Temple laughed.

"My dear kid, we should walk all over you!" he said.

"If we're drawn against the Sixth, we shall put up a good fight."

"Look out, Wingate!" grinned Peter Todd. "This is going to be more dangerous for you than playing the Second. Temple's on the warpath!"

"You shut up, you cheeky fag!" said Temple loftily. "Really, Coker, you should keep these fags in order in your study!"

"I'll keep you in order, if you don't dry up!" said Coker. "Look here—"

"Shut up! Got the names written, Greeney?"

"Here they are!" said Greene.

"Put 'em in a bag!"

The four slips were placed in the bag. Three of the rival skippers, at least, were very eager for the result. Wingate did not care which team he played of the other three—but the other skippers were anxious to know whether they were to be pitted against the Sixth. It was pretty certain, of course, that Wingate and his eleven would be in the final—and, reasonably speaking, the utmost the others could hope for was to lick one another and survive for the final, there to be licked by Wingate.

Temple's name came out bracketed with Wingate's. To the Fourth-Form had fallen the match with the Sixth in the second round—and the two Remove teams were pitted against one another.

Temple looked a little blue. If he had been drawn against Todd or Wharton, he could have hoped to get into the final. But even Temple, with all his excellent opinion of himself, had not much hope of beating Wingate and the School Eleven.

"The ties will be played on Wednesday, and the final on Saturday!" said Coker.

"Right-ho!" said the skippers, and they retired from the study.

Temple walked away looking very serious. Peter Todd grinned cheerfully at Wharton as they went down the passage together.

"So it's Remove against Remove!" said Peter. "We've beaten the Shell, so we ought to be able to lick you."

Wharton laughed.

"We've beaten the Fifth, so we ought to be able to beat you," he remarked.

"Well, we'll see," said Peter Todd. "You've got the best team, I admit—but my team's got the best skipper—what?"

"Rats!"

And the rival skippers parted on the best of terms.

In Coker's study, the great Horace was looking a little thoughtful. Potter and Greene were eating their supper—the remains of the big feed that followed the football match. Coker was apparently thinking something out—and after a time he took out his pocket-book, upon a page of which were written the rules governing the competition, and began to scribble.

"It's a bit hard on the Fourth to have to face the Sixth in a match," he remarked.

"Oh, they expect to be licked, of course!" said Potter.

"But it isn't really a Form-match," Coker remarked.

"Temple's open to take in recruits from any Form in Greyfriars."

"I think I can see the seniors simply breaking their necks to play for a Fourth-Form skipper," said Greene, with a sniff.

"Well, it would be only kind," said Coker. "I don't see why I shouldn't do the kids a good turn!"

"You!" ejaculated Potter.

"Yes, why not?" said Coker warmly. "I don't want to deprive them of the cup, of course. That wouldn't be playing the game. But I think I might pile in and help them win it."

"Put that to Temple and see what he says," grinned Potter.

Coker frowned.

"I don't suppose Temple would refuse my help!" he remarked.

"I rather think he would."

"He couldn't!" said Coker.

"Why couldn't he?"

"Because there's a rule in the competition that Horace Coker, Esquire, is entitled to play in any team entered for the cup!"

"I haven't seen that rule."

"I've just made it," said Coker calmly. "You know the right was reserved for the donor of the cup to make any new rule as required to suit all circumstances. I think the new rule's necessary, and I've made it. I'm going to help the Fourth to play the Sixth on Wednesday. I'll go and tell Temple so."

And Coker left the study. Potter and Greene chuckled. They could guess in what spirit the captain of the Fourth would receive Coker's kind offer of assistance.

Coker found Temple, Dabney, and Fry in their study, busy

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

with supper. The heroes of the Fourth greeted Coker very civilly. The munificent donation of a Handsome Silver Football Cup had made Coker popular.

"Hallo, Coker! Have some chestnuts," said Temple.

"They're good!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Thanks!" said Coker, sitting on the table and knocking half a dozen books to the floor as he did so. "I suppose you kids don't think you've got much chance of pulling off your tie with the Sixth."

"Oh, you never know!" said Temple. "Football's a jolly uncertain game. Some of the Sixth may get crooked. We may have a stroke of luck. You never can tell."

"But suppose you got a chance of playing a really first-class, all-round player—a fellow right at the top-water mark?" said Coker.

"A senior, do you mean?" asked Temple curiously.

"Yes."

"Oh, we'd jump at it!" said Temple eagerly. "Who's the man?"

"I'm the man!" said Coker.

The enthusiasm disappeared from Temple's face.

"You're the man!" he repeated.

"Yes, I!"

"But you said a first-class player!" said Temple, in wonder; and Dabney and Fry grinned. Coker frowned.

"I'm going to play for you," said Coker.

Temple shook his head.

"Sorry, Coker, but the team's full up. I couldn't ask a chap to stand out to make room for you. Otherwise, of course, I'd jump at the chance—ahem!"

"You haven't any choice in the matter," said Coker calmly.

"What?"

"It's a new rule that I have to play in any team I choose, if that team's entered for the Football Cup."

"That rule wasn't in the conditions," said Temple beligerently.

"It's in the conditions now. I've just made it!"

"Then you can just unmake it," said Temple. "We haven't got much chance against the Sixth as it is, and we're jolly well not going to chuck away what chance we have got by playing you!"

"Rather not!" said Fry emphatically. "You can play for the Sixth, if you like. That will make the match a bit more even."

"Now, I don't want any of your cheek," said Coker, lifting a warning finger. "I'm going to play for the Fourth in the second tie, and don't you forget it."

"Rats!"

"Otherwise I shall scratch you out of the competition," said Coker.

"You can't!" yelled Temple furiously.

"You'll see. Remember, I'm in the team. I'm doing this out of kindness—and to show Wingate that there's a player he really wants in the First Eleven, only he doesn't know it. That's all!" said Coker. "You ought to be grateful!"

Temple, Dabney & Co. did not look grateful as Coker left the study. Indeed, they looked the very reverse of grateful.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker For the First!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" Bob Cherry asked the question as he encountered Temple of the Fourth. Temple was red with rage as he stalked along the passage. He glared at Bob as if he could eat him.

"It's Coker!" he spluttered.

"Why, what's Coker done?" asked Bob, in surprise. "Coker's a great sport. It isn't every silly ass in the Fifth who's willing to give away a handsome silver cup—I mean cup!"

"He's made a new rule that he's to play in our eleven!" howled Temple.

"Oh, my hat!"

"And he's going to scratch us out of the competition if we refuse!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I'm going to Wingate about it. We're not going to stand it!" roared Temple. "I'll jolly well show Coker whether he can chisel us out of our chance for the cup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you ass. It's a swindle."

"Well, Coker reserved the right to make new rules to suit all circumstances—circumstances with a 'K.'" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You'll have to play him Ha, ha, ha!"

What a stroke of luck that he hasn't offered to play for us! But never mind, Temple, old man, you were bound to be beaten anyway, you know!"

That consolation did not seem to comfort Temple of the Fourth very much. He snorted, and strode away to Wingate's study. The captain of Greyfriars looked in surprise at the Fourth-Former's furious face.

"Hallo! What are you bursting into my study like a cyclone for?" he demanded. "Are you looking for a licking?"

"I want fair play!" howled Temple.

"What's the matter?"

Temple poured out the tale of his wrongs. Wingate chuckled as he listened, and Courtney and Walker, who were in the study, chuckled, too. It was just like Coker.

"We're not going to stand it," Temple wound up. "We haven't got much chance of beating the Sixth, anyway—"

"Go hon!" murmured Wingate.

"And we're not going to have Coker mucking up our bit of a chance. Blow his new rules. And we're not going to be scratched, either, now we've taken the trouble to win one match in his rotten competition!"

"I'm afraid Coker's within his rights," said Wingate. "He reserved the right to make all the new rules he chose, and this is one of 'em. You agreed to that."

"Yes, but it's a swindle!"

"I'll talk to Coker!" said Wingate. "Tell him I want to see him!"

"Good!" said Temple. "Anyway, we'd rather be scratched than play him." And Temple left the study, leaving the Sixth-Formers grinning.

"Just like Coker!" Courtney remarked. "He must have a finger in the pie, you know. It won't be any good arguing with him; he's as obstinate as a mule."

"I think I know how to deal with him!" said Wingate, smiling.

Coker entered the study a few minutes later. He nodded coolly to the great men of the Sixth.

"I understand you want to see me about the Cup-ties," he said. "Buck up, will you, my time's rather valuable?"

Wingate restrained the things he wanted to say in reply to that, and spoke politely. He explained to Coker that the Fourth really didn't appreciate his kind offer to play for them, and suggested that Coker should withdraw it. Horace Coker shook his head promptly and immediately.

"No fear! The kids don't know what's good for them; I'm really being kind to them. And I'm going to show you chaps in the Sixth what it is to have me playing against you. When you've experienced that, you mayn't be so set on barring me out of the First Eleven."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Walker.

"Well, we shall see what we shall see!" said Coker defiantly. And that certainly was undeniable.

"Ahem!" said Wingate. "It's a bit rough on the Fourth, don't you think so?"

"No, I don't!"

"I mean, you must concede a point——"

"Stuff!"

"Oh, sling him out on his neck!" growled Walker.

Horace Coker sniffed.

"I'd like to see somebody sling me out on my neck," he remarked. "My neck's quite ready, if anybody wants to try."

Walker half rose, but George Wingate signed to him to hold off. It was necessary to deal with Horace Coker tactfully.

"It's rather unfortunate your wanting to play for the Fourth, Coker," he remarked.

"I don't see why."

"Because I want you to play for the First Eleven."

Coker jumped, and Walker and Courtney looked at Wingate as if doubting whether he had not taken leave of his senses.

"Oh, now you're talking!" said Coker. "Of course, if I'm asked to take my proper place as a member of Greyfriars First, I shall not be able to play for the fags. That's a horse of quite another colour."

"Then I'll put your name down?" asked Wingate.

"Certainly!"

"Done!" said the Greyfriars captain.

And Coker quitted the study with a grin of satisfaction upon his face. As the door closed behind him, Walker and Courtney burst out simultaneously:

"Wingate, you ass——"

"Wingate, you chump——"

The captain of Greyfriars raised his hand.

"It's all right!" he said.

"All right!" howled Walker. "Playing that howling

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chump in the First Eleven. Are you quite off your silly rocker?"

"It doesn't matter," said Wingate. "I suppose the Fourth couldn't beat us if we played half a dozen Cokers. It will be a kindness to Temple & Co., and it won't hurt us. We can win the match easily enough, although Coker helps us."

Courtney burst into a laugh.

"Well, that's true enough," he said.

"But that silly ass will go around swanking that he's in the School Eleven!" growled Walker. "And he plays footer like—like a magpie. He let the Remove kids beat him this afternoon. But I suppose you're going to have your way!"

"Yes," said Wingate, laughing, "I suppose so."

Horace Coker called in at Temple's study soon afterwards. He nodded affably to the glowering Fourth-Formers. All the politeness had gone from the manner of Temple, Dabney & Co. But the smiles returned to their faces as Coker explained.

"Sorry I sha'n't be able to play for you kids after all!" he said.

"Oh!" said Temple. "Thanks! I mean, I'm sorry—ahem!"

"You see, I shall be playing for the First Eleven!" Coker explained airily.

The Fourth-Formers jumped.

"Playing for the First Eleven?" said Temple faintly.

"Exactly."

"Has—has Wingate asked you?"

"Of course he has!"

"Is he dotty?" asked Fry.

Coker did not reply to that impertinent question. He quitted the study and slammed the door after him. The juniors gazed at one another in wonder.

"Well, this takes the giddy biscuit!" Fry remarked.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Temple chuckled gleefully.

"It's old Wingate!" he said. "He's done this to get us out of a hole! He thinks he will be able to beat us all the same. But we've got a chance now, my infants! We've got a giddy chance if he plays Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Within a quarter of an hour all Greyfriars knew that Coker was to play for the First Eleven in the next cup-tie. And all Greyfriars gasped at the news. The only person who saw nothing to be astonished at was Horace Coker himself. To Coker it simply seemed as if Wingate had come to his senses at last, while to the rest of the school it seemed equally indisputable that Wingate had taken leave of them.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Cup-ties!

ON Wednesday the interest in the Cup-ties was very keen. The First Eleven-Fourth Form match was regarded as a certainty in advance for the Sixth, in spite of the assistance they were to receive from Horace Coker; but there was more doubt about the Remove match. Peter Todd had been keeping his eleven hard at practice, and he was by no means without hope of beating his Form captain and the Form team.

It was, as Bob Cherry remarked, a sight for gods and men and little fishes to see Horace Coker come down with the First Eleven.

Coker felt that he was in his right place at last.

His merit had been acknowledged.

No one but Coker was unaware of the reason why Wingate was playing him. But Coker could not, or would not, see it.

He was quite convinced that his right place was in the First Eleven—and now he was in the First Eleven, and that was all there was about it. And Coker carried his head exceedingly high that afternoon.

He rather regretted that the match was merely with the Fourth. He would have preferred it to be one of the toughest matches of the season, so that he would have had an opportunity of showing what he really could do.

But at all events, he was in the First Eleven, and he intended to prove, by his play, that Wingate couldn't possibly afford to leave him out of it on future occasions.

Wingate had his own ideas about that.

The Fourth, only too glad to see Horace Coker in the opposing ranks, lined up more hopefully than was otherwise to have been expected.

There were far more spectators for that match than for the inter-Remove match. Everybody wanted to see how Horace Coker comported himself in the ranks of the School Eleven.

While Wharton's and Todd's teams were struggling for victory, nearly everybody else in Greyfriars was on the senior ground, watching the Sixth—and Coker—playing the Fourth.

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"Play like the very deuce!" Temple said to his men at the start. "You know how Coker gave away his own match to the Remove. There's no reason why he shouldn't give this one away to us. And think of beating the Sixth!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.
And the glorious prospect of beating the Sixth spurred on the Fourth to great efforts. But it was not to be.

The juniors played up well, and Coker, as was expected, played into their hands most faithfully. He charged his own side with blind fury, and on three distinct occasions he prevented a certain goal. But the Fourth could not get through, and the only satisfaction they had was that the first half ended with a blank sheet—thanks to Coker.

In the interval Coker shook his head at the senior players, more in sorrow than in anger.

"This is too rotten!" he said. "We shall have the whole school grinning at us if we don't beat the fags, you fellows!"

Walker glared at him.
"You charged me off the ball!" he said sulphurously.

"You mean you blundered in my way when I was making a really ripping run for the ball," said Coker.

"You ass! You fathead—"

"You tripped me up when I had a dead certain kick!" said Valance.

Coker sniffed.
"You mean you sprawled over my feet. I can't keep my feet out of the way of every clumsy duffer who's looking for something to sprawl over."

"Why, you silly chump! You frabjous ass—"

"Order!" said Wingate, laughing. "We shall beat the

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were ready to walk over the juniors. Temple, Dabney & Co. looked a little blue when they saw the change. They knew that it was all up with them.

For the second half, Coker had the pleasure of stamping about in goal, and flapping his arms on his chest, to keep himself warm.

There was nothing else for him to do.

The seniors scored three goals in a quarter of an hour, and then lounged about the field, only taking enough trouble to keep the Fourth from getting through and putting Coker's abilities as a goalkeeper to the test.

The whistle went with the seniors three goals to nil.

Temple, Dabney & Co. walked off the field, with their chance of the Coker Cup melted into thin air. Some of the spectators, with a humorous spirit, gave Coker a cheer as he came off. As Potter remarked to Greene, Coker had really won the match for the Sixth by staying in goal, and he deserved a cheer. But Coker did not see that. He took the cheer quite seriously, and raised his cap in acknowledgment, whereat the crowd hilariously chuckled and cheered again.

The Remove match had started later than the other, and was not over yet. Coker's feats having come to an end, most of the spectators streamed off to see how the juniors were getting on.

In the Remove match there were ten minutes yet to go,

THE

DRUDGE'S CHANCE!

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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fags, and that's enough. Coker, I'm going to put you in goal for the second half."

"Well, I'm a pretty good goalkeeper," said Coker modestly, "but I'm better in the front line. Better keep me forward!"

Wingate shook his head.
"No. You're going into goal."

"I shall be less dangerous there," said Coker.

"That's what I want—I mean—ahem!"

"Look here!" said Coker. "We haven't scored any goals yet, Wingate, and you're thinking of putting your best man in goal!"

"Nothing of the kind! I'm thinking of putting you there."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Coker crossly. "This is football, you know, and football isn't fun."

"It is sometimes," said Walker—"when a howling duffer plays, for instance."

"Time!" said Wingate. "You go into goal, Coker!"

"But, I say—"

"I think I'm skipper!" Wingate suggested.

"Br-r-r-r!" said Coker. And he went sulkily into goal. There was no doubt that, as he had said, he was less dangerous there—to his own side, at all events.

The seniors were glad enough to have him out of their way. The Fourth were not likely to get near enough to the Sixth Form goal for Coker's services as a goalkeeper to be required. Without Coker in their ranks the Sixth

and Harry Wharton's team were one up, the score being two to one.

Peter Todd was playing up like a giant, and if all the team had been like Peter, Harry Wharton and the Form team would have had an exceedingly difficult task to win.

But Peter's followers, though they did their best, were not up to the form required, and, strive as he would, Todd could not equalise.

Just before the whistle went, Bob Cherry slammed the ball in once more, and the score was three to one.

A few minutes later came the whistle.

"Three to one!" chuckled Vernon-Smith, as the teams walked off, breathing hard after their exertions. "What price Study No. 7 now?"

"Twopence-halfpenny!" remarked Bob Cherry. "And dear at that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd grunted.
"Well, we're out of the running," he said. "Can't be helped. My team was only the leavings of the Form, and you can't make a silk purse out of a pig's ear."

Wharton clapped the rival skipper on the back.

"Never mind, Toddy! You've still got a chance to help win the cup!"

"How's that?" asked Peter.

"We shall be playing in the final with the Sixth, and you can play for us. We want you in the Form team for the final."

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NEXT MONDAY—

"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"

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Peter Todd's face lighted up.

"Good egg!" he said heartily. "Right you are!"

"We shall be a jolly strong team with Todd," Bob Cherry remarked. "We shall have a good sporting chance of collar-ing the Cup—especially if Wingate plays Coker again. We'd better get up a petition to Wingate to play Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker joined the Removites as they came off the field.

"So it's between you and the Sixth for the final?" he said. "We've beaten the Fourth, of course. I expect I shall be playing for the Sixth in the final, Wharton."

"I hope you will be," said Wharton heartily.

"Yes; rather!" chorused the juniors, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh declared that the rutherfordness was terrific.

Coker looked pleased. It was evident that these juniors could see that he was in his right place in the School Eleven.

"Thanks," he said. "Some of the Sixth don't want me in the team, though."

"You don't say so!"

"You surprise us terrifically, my esteemed Coker."

"They don't know a good thing when they see it, or they'd seize it when they know it," said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"If I should be left out of the First Eleven, I'll play for you kids," said Coker generously.

"Will you?" murmured the Removites.

"Yes, I mean it," said Coker. "Of course, if I win the cup for you, you'll have it; I don't make any claim on the cup. My team was licked, and that finishes that. But I'll win it for you if I can—honour bright."

"You're too good, Coker," said Bob Cherry; "we're not going to take advantage of you goodness. It wouldn't be cricket. You play for the First, and leave us to worry along somehow. We'll do our best."

"You could make a new rule that you're bound to play for the First Eleven!" Vernon-Smith suggested. "It's open to you to make any rule you please, you know. And your proper place is in the First Eleven—we all say that!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Make a new rule about it, Coker, and stick it up on the notice-board."

"By Jove!" said Coker. "So I will!"

And he did!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Final!

THE Cup final was the one topic of conversation at Greyfriars as it drew near.

Especially in the Sixth and in the Lower Fourth.

For, amazing as it would have seemed in the earlier stages of the Coker Cup Competition, the Remove had a chance of carrying off the cup against the big guns of the Sixth!

Just a chance!

Harry Wharton & Co. had beaten the Fifth; the Fifth being aided by Coker. There was a chance that they would beat the Sixth; aided by Coker. For the Remove eleven were at their toppest form, trained to perfection, and the only weak spot in the team had been strengthened by putting in Peter Todd. They were prepared to wage the great battle of their lives, and with Coker defending the Sixth Form goal, it was only a question of getting through forwards, halves, and backs, the goalkeeper would not be able to stop the clumsiest kick. And if Coker was played forward, he could be depended upon to hamper the movements of the other forwards; if he was played at half it would be a flaw in the defence; wherever he was played, in fact, he would be dangerous to his friends and useful to his opponents.

And Coker had to be played!

George Wingate had given the matter a considerable amount of thought. Under ordinary circumstances, of course, the Lower Fourth, hard and keen as they were, would not have had a chance against the mighty men of the Sixth. But they had certainly beaten the Fifth, and Wingate was naturally averse to running the slightest risk of defeat at the hands of a junior form. He knew the glorious uncertainty of the great game of football; that a goal might be snatched by luck and pluck, and the other side might not be able to equalise; there were always possibilities of anything happening! And Wingate determined that in that match, considering what remarkably hot stuff the Removites were, he wouldn't have a flaw in his armour, a hole in the rampart, a breach in the defence; in other words, that he wouldn't have Coker.

If Coker insisted upon playing for the Remove, on being dropped out of the First Eleven, that was the Remove's bad luck; Wingate couldn't help it. He couldn't be expected to court defeat for the sake of being good-natured to the

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youngsters. It was different in the Fourth Form match; Temple, Dabney & Co. had had no chance anyway. But the Remove were a remarkable set of enterprising youths when it came to football, and for their age and size they were a deadly, dangerous team for anybody to tackle. Wingate wisely determined to run no risks, and he told Coker so, at the risk of Coker worrying the Remove by playing for them. That couldn't be helped.

Then came a surprise for Wingate.

Horace Coker did not snort with anger and disgust, and carry off his valuable person and his valuable services to the Remove. Nothing of the sort. He shook his head coolly and said:

"Can't be did!"

"Can't be did!" repeated Wingate, in surprise. "What do you mean? I've said that upon the whole I shall have to leave you out of the First Eleven on Saturday."

"And I've said that it can't be did!"

Wingate raised his eyebrows.

"Do you mean to say I've got to play you whether I want to or not?" he demanded, with a growing tone of wrath in his voice.

"Exactly!" said Coker. "It's a rule in the Cup Competition that Horace Coker, Esquire, plays in any match for any team he may select. Skippers not keeping the conditions are excluded—scratched—and the tie awarded to their opponents."

"That's not a rule—"

"Look!"

Coker held out an open pocket-book, and Wingate read there, in Coker's scrawling hand:

"Rule XI.—And the undersined Horace Coker, Esquire, shall be at liberty to play in any or all matches in the Cup Competition, at his own discrethun. And the skipper objecting to the same will be scratched."

Wingate knitted his brows.

"When was this rule made?" he demanded.

"Wednesday afternoon."

"Too late—it ought to have been in the original conditions."

Coker shook his head again.

"Not at all. Look here—Rule IV.—" And the undersined Horace Coker, Esquire, reserves the right to make any fresh rule that may be required to suit all circumstances."

Wingate breathed hard through his nose. There was no doubt that Coker was within his rights, according to the rules of the Cup Competition. He had reserved the right to make new rules, and he was making new rules; that was all there was about it. Wingate had either to play him in the First Eleven in the Cup Final, or else have his team scratched—which meant the award of the Coker Cup to the Remove.

"Look here, Coker," said Wingate. "This is rot, you know."

"I don't know."

"You can't play for toffee."

"That may be your opinion. All the Remove think that my place is in the First Eleven, and those kids know something about football, too."

Wingate grunted. He could easily understand why the Remove were anxious to have Coker in the First Eleven; it was their one chance for the cup!

"I can't play you, really, Coker," he said. "It would be too rotten if the kids managed to snatch a match somehow from the First Eleven."

"Then you'll be scratched," said Coker.

Wingate paused. He didn't want that. He had played two troublesome and absurd matches for the cup, and it would be too bad to have the cup awarded to the Remove for a walk-over.

Whatever might be his reasons for scratching, the Remove—and most of the school, perhaps—would take the view that the First Eleven funk'd the match. And the Sixth wanted that cup. Having entered for it, their prestige would suffer very considerably if they didn't win it.

After all, Wingate reflected, he could stick Coker in goal again, and take care that the Remove never got near enough to test him. So long as the defence was sound, Coker would be out of harm's way in goal.

"Well, play and be blowed!" was Wingate's final decision, after a great deal of thought. And Horace Coker grinned triumphantly and walked out of the study.

All Greyfriars soon knew that Wingate had had to give in, and that Horace Coker was to be in the First Eleven on that historic occasion.

They looked forward to the match gleefully.

The Remove were such remarkably hot-stuff for a junior team, that there was really no telling what might happen.

They were keeping in hard training, and they had reached what was really a pitch of perfection in combination. Their

short passing was a picture. It was really worth while watching them, to see the way they brought the leather down the field. When Saturday came the Remove players were at the top of their form, and as keen as mustard.

"Put in everything you know!" said Harry Wharton. "We've got to win this match though the skies fall. We've simply got to do it."

"The goalfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a grin on his dusky face. "If we beat the Sixth it will break the esteemed record."

"And we shall be able to chortle at them for ever and ever," chuckled Bob Cherry. "We've simply got to do it. It's only a question of getting through; once we're near the giddy chicken-run, Coker won't keep us out."

"No fear!"

Nearly all Greyfriars gathered round the field for the sight of the final. The Head of Greyfriars had consented to officiate at presenting the handsome silver cup to the winning team. It would be quite an imposing ceremony. And the Remove meant to be in the limelight at that ceremony if they could.

Mr. Flynn was referee. He smiled a little at the sight of the keen, eager Removees as they came marching on the ground. Very fit and keen they looked, but somewhat diminutive in comparison with the big seniors. Ends were tossed for, and Coker walked into the senior goal. Coker was not very satisfied with that position. He felt that his abilities were entitled to display in a wider sphere. But Wingate had put his foot down there, and Coker had not ventured to make a new rule constituting himself centre-forward.

With the sharp ring of the whistle, the match began hotly. Wingate and his men meant to keep the juniors penned up in their half, and escape all risk of Coker having to save. It had been easy enough with the Fourth. But it was not quite so easy with the Remove. The Remove players were as hard to bottle up as quicksilver.

For ten minutes the play was all in the junior half, and then the Bounder escaped with the ball—and Wharton was through, keeping pace with him in a dash down the field.

Walker charged the Bounder over, but not before he had passed to Wharton in centre, and the Remove skipper bore the leather onwards.

And the senior players found that, in point of speed at least, the Remove skipper was quite on a level with them.

The backs grinned as they closed in to stop Wharton; they grinned at the idea of the junior passing them. But he wound round them with surprising ease, and left them astonished. And the crowd gave a gasp as they realised that Harry Wharton had only the goalkeeper left to beat.

The seniors were tearing after him! He hadn't more than a second for the kick—it was necessarily hasty, and in most matches would have been saved with ease, but Coker was not quite up to it. Coker grabbed at the place where the leather was hit, and it shot over his shoulder into the net.

Then there was a roar that made the welkin ring.

"Goal!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wingate.

"Goal! Goal! Bravo, Wharton!"

"Hurrah!"

Wingate looked at Coker as if he could eat him, as the goalkeeper tossed the leather out.

Coker sniffed. Evidently he had a very poor opinion of the senior defence, and did not regard Wingate & Co. as being up to his form.

When the game re-started, the seniors were more careful. Wingate did not throw a chance away. One of the backs kept well back all the time, ready to drop into the chicken-run if necessary and save. There was no telling when the Remove forwards might break through with a sudden, brilliant dash. For half an hour the seniors hammered away at the junior goal. Bulstrode was called upon to save again and again. But Bulstrode was in great form, and he was not found wanting. And Johnny Bull and Tom Brown were great hands at clearing; and the halves and forwards were watchful for every chance. Again and again Harry Wharton & Co. broke away, but were driven back again.

But always the Remove defence was sound, and Bulstrode was ready to save. Peter Todd, at centre-half, was performing miracles. He helped the defence, or fed the forwards, or did whatever was required of him—and did it wonderfully well. Loder and Walker and Carne, as their tempers began to suffer, began to indulge in somewhat rough play, but the referee soon stopped that, and Wingate was down on it at once. And the crowd roared their opinion of such tactics.



"Play the game, you hooligans!"

"Foul charge!"

"Penalty!"

And Loder & Co. had to restrain themselves. The game had to be decided by sheer good play, not by brute force; that was soon made clear. And hammer away as the seniors might, they could not break the junior defence.

When Mr. Flynn put the whistle to his lips, the score was unchanged—one goal to nil—and the seniors almost rubbed their eyes over it. It was amazing, incredible—but true. The Remove were ahead of them on the first half of that famous match.

Wingate and his men looked very grim as they lined up for the second half. Of course this had to end, they were all decided about that. The youngsters had to be walked over. But the walking-over was a difficult process. For a quarter of an hour the struggle went on without result, the juniors penned up in their territory, but defending with great skill and success. Harry Wharton was quite satisfied with the score as it stood, and he was content to defend. But the leather came through at last. Wingate put in a shot that Bulstrode could not save, and the score was one to one. And then, as misfortunes never come singly, within five minutes there was a goal by Courtney. And the Sixth were two to one.

Desperate measures were required now, and the Remove were ready for them. It was useless to defend with that score against them. It was better to be beaten fighting, as Bob Cherry remarked.

And the Remove forwards broke away in a determined rush, and by luck and pluck they won through, and came sweeping down on the senior goal. The Sixth rushed in to defend—the ball was on the right wing—Wharton passed out to Nugent as he was bowled over, Nugent let the Bounder have it as he fell under Loder's rush, and the Bounder fairly whirled round the backs, rushed in, and kicked. But Carne dropped back in time and headed off the ball. But then Harry Wharton was on the spot; the ball met his head, and came back into the net like the pip from an orange. Coker did not even know it was coming till it was there. And the crowd roared for the goal!

Two goals to two, and ten minutes more to play! Hard and fast now, and chiefly in the Remove half. And Bulstrode was kept busy between the sticks. But Tom Brown cleared out to Feter Todd, and Peter sent the ball away to mid-field, where the forwards had their chance again. The excitement was breathless as the game swept away to the Sixth Form goal.

Would the juniors have it? There was a chance! The struggle was keen before the senior goal. Vernon-Smith captured the ball and ran in. The backs were upon him!

And then came Coker's master-stroke. Coker wasn't satisfied with the backs. They had let the enemy through twice; and this time Coker intended to see that they didn't let him through. Coker sallied forth from his goal to help, and to show those backs what defence should really be like. He stumbled over one of them, and the other stumbled over him. And Vernon-Smith whirled past them, with an empty goal before him.

There was a roar of laughter and cheers as the leather went in, with nobody to stop it.

"Goal! Goal! Hurrah! Ha, ha, ha! Goal! Good old Coker! Hurrah!"

Peep!

It was the whistle.

The match was over. The final was played, and the Remove had won. George Wingate gave Coker a slaughterous look, and walked off with feelings too deep for words. Coker, like a true sportsman, clapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder.

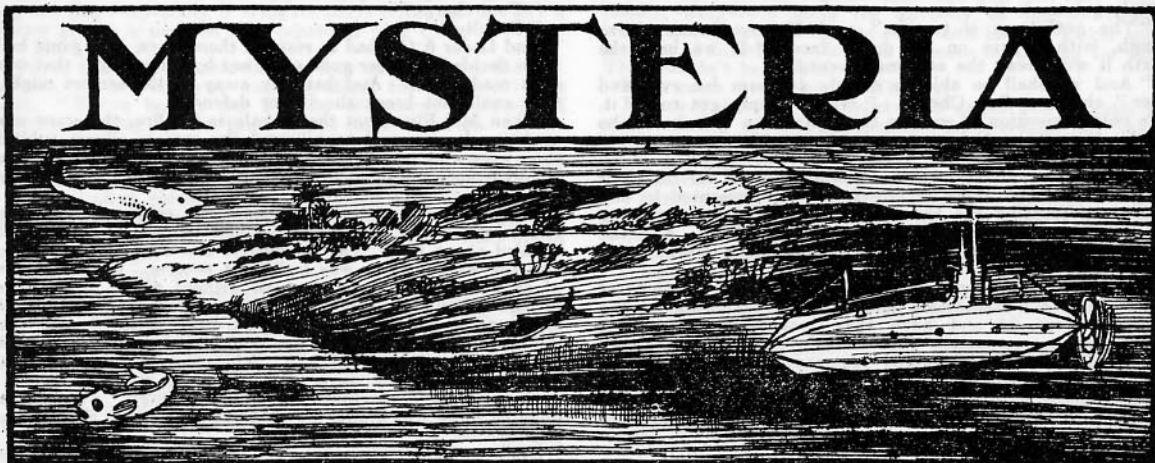
"You capture the Cup!" he said heartily. "I don't think it would have turned out like this if I'd been in the front line. But you've won, and I congratulate you."

Wharton grinned breathlessly.

"Thanks, Coker; you're a sport! We've won the Cup; and we really owe it to you! Thanks!"

And there was quite an impressive scene when, in the presence of all Greyfriars, the Head presented Harry Wharton, on behalf of the Remove, with the Cup they had won—and in the Remove there were great rejoicings over the conquest of the Coker Cup!

Our Grand New Serial Story!



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'-shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island by swimming, under cover of the fog. Subsequently, Ferrers Lord leads a night expedition on to the island, and succeeds in recapturing the launch. By dint of his unparalleled ingenuity and hard work, Hal Honour, the engineer, succeeds in repairing the Lord of the Deep sufficiently to allow her to leave her dangerous situation in the island harbour. As they are steaming along one day the bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. "There is no doubt that the island floats," observes the millionaire, quietly.

(Now go on with the story.)

Ferrers Lord Proves Mysteria is a Floating Island.

As far as they could see, the island was a veritable jungle of rank vegetation—snaky creepers, distorted bushes, and hideous trees, all clammy, glassy, and repulsive. Everywhere the colour was the same—a sickly, transparent grey. The shore was low, and the waves beat against it with a low, moaning sound. There were hills further in, covered with the same ghastly growth. A strange, overpowering scent drifted towards them—the smell of decaying weeds.

As Barry had said, this ghostly place might well be the home of the spectres of those claimed as victims by the cruel, remorseless sea. Here and there patches of white mist flitted above the weird growth, like uneasy ghosts vainly seeking for rest.

They gazed at the loathsome sight in strange fascination, expecting it to vanish. It was too unreal—too unearthly. The fog still hid its southern end, and it was gathering again.

"Faith, is it the two oies of me that's after tellin' me loies, or is the thing there?" growled the Irishman. "Oi've seed some strange things sin' Oi was a two-fat-hoigh gossoon, makin' mud-poles at Ballybunion, but, bedad, this is the cloimax! Is it there, Ben, or am Oi still aslape? Tell me quick, yez ould rascal, is it there?"

"I'm waitin' for somebody to tell me that, souse me!" said the bo'sun slowly. "This 'ere is a caution, and some extry!"

No one else spoke just then. They had found Mysteria, but no triumphant cheers welcomed the moment of success. The strange island awed them with its sheer uncanniness.

Hal Honour took the pipe from his bearded lips and shrugged his shoulders.

"An abominable place!" he said.

"Well, I wouldn't select it as a site for my future home out of choice, Hal," said Ching-Lung. "I know lots of prettier places. One thing is as plain as the snub-nose on the blubber-biter's face—that island is a diver as well as a swimmer. Those beastly plants and creepers don't belong to the upper world, but to the realms beneath the sea. But

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

how does it work the diving trick? There's a riddle for you. Is it alive? I've read in story-books of whales as big as islands. What's the answer?"

Ferrers Lord leaned against the glass, gazing at Mysteria, with one thin hand shading his eyes. What was the mystery of Mysteria the mysterious? The vegetation that grew so densely was certainly not the vegetation that could flourish under the honest rays of the tropical sun. It belonged to other realms of water and dimness—to realms that lay fathoms deep in the eternal silence and gloom of the ocean.

What power had raised this vast mass to the surface of the sea, and what power submerged it? Did it only float at certain seasons and under certain conditions? Here were problems to be solved, and, like an old war-horse scenting battle, the millionaire chafed to begin, chafed to hurl himself into the fray.

"Nots likes him, Chingy. Bad 'nough nasty places," said Gan-Waga, with a shudder. "Smells like graveyards, Chingy."

"Did you expect it to smell like fried steak and onions, Eskimoses?" said Ching-Lung. "Did I tell you it was a nice place, hunk? Not a bit, I didn't. It's a shockingly nasty place, and it's a lot better at the bottom of the sea than at the top. Ugh! Tell you what, Lord, old man, you ought to dynamite it, and blow it to bits."

"It would take a few hundred tons of dynamite to effect that," put in Thurston. "The brute makes me feel quite creepy! Do you notice what a queer sound the waves make against it? It might be as hollow as a drum. Pough! How sickly!"

A current of warm, moist air, pungent with the heavy odour of rotting seaweeds, drove into their faces.

"Not likes him, Chingy," repeated the Eskimo—"not likes 'Steria. Him bad 'nough nastinesses. Likes candles lots morer."

"Didn't the engravings on the narwhal's tooth say something about dreadful monsters?" asked Rupert.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Ferrers Lord gave a quick nod. There was a puzzled look on his face—a look seldom seen there.

"It strikes me you couldn't strike a better spot for horrid monsters to hang out," said Ching-Lung, with a laugh. "We shall be able to hunt the terrificosome bookeybooodle bird, and chase the glutinous snarkeybingbang to its muddy lair. The grim glassoficus will wag his fourteen tails, and the slimy snigsnag—oh, fearsome reptile!—will gnash his molars at the midnight hour. Then we shall track the bloated bogsnatch, and chivvy the festive fluffsngg with grejus squeals, and there—"

"Oh, shut up, for mercy's sake!" protested Rupert.

"My dear impatient youth," said Ching-Lung, "I was not wasting the jewels of my conversation upon you. I was merely giving my esteemed and respected companion, Mr. Ganus Wagtail, an idea of the glorious sport we shall or shall not enjoy on that charming island. I hope the floor is thick, or we may fall through and get our feet wet when we're chivvying the festive fluffsngg. You were rude to interrupt me. Gan, how would you like to hear the slimy snigsnag gnash his molars at midnight?"

Gan-Waga was not listening. His big, round eyes were fixed upon Mysteria in dread and wonder. In shreds and ragged patches the mist rolled over her. Ferrers Lord pulled down a lever and grasped the wheel, and the submarine began to move again.

"Close the door."

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried Prout, in his big, bull-like tones. "Shut it is, sir!"

The water went roaring into the tanks, and the light faded out as the Lord of the Deep swiftly sank beneath the tumbling waves.

"The fate of your box of cigars hangs in the balance now, Rupert," said Ferrers Lord. "Will you hedge?"

"Not for the sake of the cigars, old fellow. The bet may stand. I still have a very sporting chance, I think. What are you going to do?"

Ferrers Lord glanced at the instrument that was a mystery to everyone except himself—an instrument that accurately registered the depth of water when the vessel was submerged. The searchlight, at a gesture from him, sent a shaft of bright silver shooting through the gloomy water. Then the propellers worked more quickly.

"All clear?"

"All clear, so far, sir," answered the eagle-eyed steersman.

Ferrers Lord's marvellous shell of steel, monarch of the realms that lie beneath the bosom of the earth's illimitable wastes of ocean, churned her way on, as strong and unconquerable as the man whose brain had given her birth. The millionaire took out his watch, and compared it with the chronometer that hung in gymbals over his head.

"You have still time to hedge, Rupert," he said, smiling.

"I decline to hedge over a miserable box of cigars," said Thurston.

"Then you lose."

They heard the rush of the outgoing water. The submarine was rising, and the searchlight went out. Ferrers Lord uttered a quiet laugh as the greenish light began to creep in through the glazed conning-tower.

"Look!" he cried, pointing over his shoulder. "Are you satisfied now?"

The Lord of the Deep leapt into the sparkling sunshine. Mysteria, still with the spectral mist clinging to her like a winding-sheet, lay behind them. The submarine had passed clean under her. Mysteria was a floating island; the fact was plain.

"I am perfectly satisfied, old man," said Thurston. "Mysteria exists and Mysteria floats. I apologise for all my scepticism, and sing small. All I want now is to find out why she exists, and why she floats. What are we going to do? Do you think we can land?"

"Not in this sea," said Ching-Lung. "There's too much of a splash, and there doesn't seem to be a scrap of shelter. Let's hang about and watch her. I wonder if the uncanny brute will dodge us, after all?"

"I nots likes him, Chingy," broke in Gan-Waga dismally. "I had 'nough horribles places. I hates dats places, Chingy!"

In their hearts they echoed the Eskimo's words. The horrible, fever-smitten creek, with its pestilential stench, from which they had rescued the two miserable pearl-hunters, was a paradise compared with this eerie land. Prout put his head out, and gave a tremendous sneeze.

"By hokey," he roared, "give me the smellin'-salts, Ben! I never could abear the perfume of lavender!"

Then they all laughed, but not heartily, until Barry O'Rooney took the pipe from his mouth and remarked:

"There was an ould oisle called Mysteria,

Wid a smell that gave sailors hysteria;

So to save their poor loives,

For the sake of their woives,

The captain prescribed lots of beeria!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"

Barry's impromptu verse broke the spell. There was a shriek of laughter.

"Uncork the foaming flagon, and let the beer froth high!" grinned Ching-Lung. "You deserve it, after that. Free beer in the galley, boys, and drink the health of Mysteria, which has earned you the beeria!"

Another laugh and a cheer followed. The blushing poet was pounded on the back until it ached, and the men trooped below to interview Herr Schwartz, who presided over the wine-cellar, and they toasted Barry right royally.

The Millionaire Explains His Theories.

With the approach of night the excitement increased rather than subsided. A double watch was kept. The elusiveness of the extraordinary island was so miraculous that no one amongst the crew would have been astonished had the Island of Mystery, so aptly named, floated out of the sea and sailed away into the sky.

Ears were even more useful than eyes. As long as the odd, hollow boom continued, they were sure that Mysteria was playing no pranks.

Dinner was served in the ordinary way in the saloon, but there was an unaccustomed want of appetite displayed, though the chef's curried lobster was a work of art.

"Even the great and only Harold Honour, the man of iron and of ice, has caught the contagion," said Ching-Lung, as the engineer pushed away his plate. "He's got the Mysteria fever as bad as anybody. Nothing that spoils your appetite is any good, whether it's beer, 'baccy, or too much toffee, so Mysteria can't be much good. Have some more asparagus and butter, Eskimoses?"

"Nots wants no morer, Chingy. Hads butterful enough," said Gan-Waga, sighing.

"What! No more asparagus and lovely melted butter? Put out your tongue, and let me feel your pulse. You must be suffering from a double-barrelled attack of the jim-jams, Wagtail. Cheer up, my child, and never say die! You know what I promised, don't you? You shall hear the slimy snigsnag gnash his molars at midnight's dreadful hour, and chase the floppy and glutinous snarkeybingbang to his muddy lair. Wait—oh, wait until you spot the glutinous snarkeybingbang! That'll give you an appetite, my fat fairy—an appetite for running. You'll never stop till you've worn your feet down to stumps, you may take my word for it. He's got a face as pretty as a nightmare, and eyes in all his tails. Oh, he's a pretty pet, Gan!"

Ferrers Lord snipped a cigar, and lighted it at the silver smoking-lamp.

"Kindly spare us any more of your absurd nonsense, please, Ching!" he said, smiling. "We have heard enough about your glutinous snarkeybingbang and your other happily-named monsters. Have a cigar?"

"Are they the ones you won from Thurston?"

"Yes."

"No, thanks! I know his nine-for-a-bob and a case to hold 'em chucked in," said Ching-Lung. "'Mysterias' wouldn't be a bad name for 'em. Soon you'll see the luscious cabbage coming through the dye."

"The beast! They cost seven guineas a box of a hundred," said Thurston.

"They saw you coming before you got round the corner, Ru," said Prince Ching-Lung of Kwai-hal, "and promptly tumbled to the joyous fact that they had found a juggins. To please you, I'll try one of your sudden-deaths and wilful murders," he added, selecting one of the excellent Havanas. "I suppose you had to sign the poison-book before they let you take 'em away?"

A terrific explosion followed the moment Ching-Lung put a match to the tip of the cigar. A heavy hand fell upon his collar, and Hal Honour gently but firmly escorted him to the door and thrust him out.

"You clear as well, Gan," said Thurston. "A nursery is just what you two want. Clear out!"

Gan-Waga followed the prince with alacrity. A moment later Thurston reached over for a cigar, but the box was perfectly empty.

"The rascal has taken the whole lot!" he exclaimed.

At that moment Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga, with many blissful chuckles, were dividing the spoils in the billiard-room.

"Bit neat—eh, Eskimoses?" said Ching-Lung. "What's the half of ninety-seven, big brains?"

"Not knows him, Chingy. Whats was him, hunk?" asked the Eskimo, with beaming face.

"Forty-eight and a little halft, it ought to be; but I've not been to school for several minutes. Forty-six—seven—eight. That's your little lot of the plunder. Seven guineas a box, did it? Ha, ha, ha! I'm glad we took 'em away

from them, for I hate to see children smoking. It might have made 'em ill, wouldn't it? Why are you crying so bitterly, my child?"

Gan grinned all over his corpulent countenance as he hid his share of the loot behind the bookcase.

"Yo' de best pals goin', my Chingy! Yo' butterfuls, good 'nough pals," he merrily gurgled. "Ho, ho, ho, hoo! I smokes twos at onces. Ha, ha, ha-aa-ah! Yo' loveliness pals, my Chingy! Dats was a grands pinch. Oho, oho! Hah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!"

Ferrers Lord did not move from the table. The Lord of the Deep rocked and tumbled a little, although the sea was rapidly subsiding. The night was warm, and the ports were wide open on the lee-side, the weather-screens keeping out the water.

"What is your impression of Mysteria, Rupert?" asked the millionaire.

"Anything but a favourable one."

"And yours, Honour?"

"Pernicious!" answered the laconic engineer.

"Well, we must agree to differ," said Ferrers Lord. "I cannot, to be honest, pretend to claim that I consider our phantom isle a rose-garden or a paradise. But it has its glorious compensations. How the wisecracks will gape and glare when they hear of our wonderful discovery! We have found Mysteria, and we must explore Mysteria."

"H'm!" grunted Rupert Thurston. "I'd prefer a walk along Piccadilly. It would be cheerful if, in the midst of our exploration, the island took it into its head to make a bee-line for the bottom of the sea. What do you think, oh silent one?"

Hal Honour nodded and smiled. "Theories?" he questioned.

"Why Mysteria floats." The millionaire stirred his coffee. "I have several theories, but I shrink from laying them before two gentlemen of such superb intellect. No, I'm not trying to be sarcastic, Rupert."

"Anyone who accuses me of possessing intellect is my foe for life, old man."

"Shall I be brutal, then, and deny that you own any intellect at all?" said the millionaire. "My dear Rupert, you are certainly not a shining genius. I could not be so fond of you if you were. There is only one Thurston, and

we want you just as you are. Don't blush. Honour is laughing at you!"

"Let him laugh!" chuckled Thurston. "There are too many brains aboard this ship as it is. I've lost one bet to-day, but I'd still like to wager that, if it came to a matter of sheer hard-headedness, Ching-Lung would beat you both in an easy canter. No more talking about intellect, please. Let us return to our muttuns—in other words, to your theories."

"I have seen several floating islands," said Ferrers Lord, "but they were not islands in the true sense. We met one, I remember, some seven hundred leagues out from the east coast of South America. It was a mile long, and a good half mile wide—a tangled mass of timber, creepers, and vegetable-mould. No doubt it was the accumulation of many years, and had formed in a backwater of one of those vast rivers, until a flood had come and torn it free. There were several monkeys and alligators on it. But what its fate was I never learned."

"The storms would break it up eventually, I suppose?" said Thurston.

"I suppose so. A floating island is no rarity, and they are formed under conditions that any child could explain and understand. I am referring, mind you, to islands of the type I mentioned—as a rule, the offspring waifs of the mighty forest-rivers. But Mysteria is of another type altogether, and yet, to use a paradox, it is of exactly a similar type."

Honour moved, as if about to say something, but merely flicked the ash from his cigar.

"There are salt-water forests as well as fresh-water forests," went on the millionaire, "as you have both seen for yourselves. I think we grant the fact that Mysteria is not perpetually floating, that she rises and descends periodically like a monstrous submarine. We must grant that, for an island of such proportions if constantly afloat—especially so extraordinary an island—could not have escaped observation otherwise."

"We allow the point," said Rupert Thurston. "Fire ahead, old man! We must allow it, Hal; it's only reasonable."

The engineer nodded his agreement, for the point was obviously beyond dispute.

"And now for theories," said Ferrers Lord. "If we only knew whether the appearance or disappearance of Mysteria were regular, we should have to look about to discover some natural law to account for the phenomena. From the scanty knowledge I have been able to gather—more rumour than anything else—the island is never seen except during periods of volcanic disturbance."

"Ah!" said Rupert. "I'm beginning to see daylight!"

"Good!" said the engineer, rising. "Excellent!"

Hal Honour laughed, and went out. He had heard quite enough.

"Now," said Ferrers Lord, "I told you just now you were not a genius, Rupert, but I fancy you can elaborate my theory. Let me hear you do it, not forgetting that I do not claim it to be a correct one. I may be wrong."

"I bow to your decree," laughed the young Britisher. "It is a most ingenious and feasible theory indeed, old chap, and does you credit. Mysteria, then, is a portion of a submarine forest. It is not the common or garden island, composed of rock, sand, and soil, but a vast collection of submarine vegetation. Provided that an eruption is sufficiently violent, Mysteria, shaken from her moorings, rises to the surface."

"Precisely."

"But what the deuce of spades makes her go down again?"

"Ah, you do not see things so clearly as Harold Honour," said Ferrers Lord. "But the reason seems very simple. I examined the vegetation very closely to-day. Most of it consists of tubular and bladder-shaped plants, which stand erect in the water, absorbing either oxygen or hydrogen to make themselves buoyant. Mysteria is as light as a cork, but she grows heavier and heavier, for the action of the sun slowly dries up these natural buoys, and turns them into what is known as vegetable-ivory—a substance both hard and heavy. Then, after her holiday in the upper air, Mysteria goes back to her dim watery realm, to grow another crop of that uncanny verdure. Some time she will go down never to return, for the accumulations of vegetable-ivory will be too heavy for any growth to live. And that is the end of the theorising and the story."

"Bravo!" cried Thurston. "It all sounds perfection."

Many mysteries turn out, on close inspection, to be anything at all but mysteries. Here was an explanation for



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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 300.
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the puzzling vagaries of the disappearing island so probable and so utterly simple that Thurston was almost disappointed. It dissipated the whole romance of supernaturalism that, like the mist, had enshrouded mysterious Mysteria. The island was a phantom no longer. With one touch of his wand, Ferrers Lord had divested it of all its ghostly trappings. Mysteria obeyed the ordinary law in the ordinary mechanical way. When it was lighter than water it floated; when it was heavier it sank.

"You've knocked all the romance out of the show, Lord, with your beastly theories," said Thurston. "It spoils the whole thing to get to the bottom of it in your cut-and-dried fashion."

"I have an idea you will find a good deal of romance left," said Ferrers Lord quietly. "Shall we finish our cigars on deck? The sea sounds fairly calm, and I think we shall be able to stroll about without getting a wetting."

The sky was darkly overcast, and it was difficult to make out the island. They leaned on the rail.

"I wonder how far she goes in her travels?" said Thurston.

"No vast distance. This is one of the deadliest parts of the Pacific as far as currents are concerned, and she is far too heavy and cumbersome for the wind to have much effect."

"But how is it we saw her in so many different places?" "Did we see her?" said the millionaire. "Was it Mysteria, or Mysteria's shadow? Listen!"

A sound like the report of a gun came from the hidden island. It was followed by a long, incessant rattle that resembled distant rifle-firing.

"Only the shrivelled weeds cracking," explained the millionaire, "which is something more in favour of my theory. Well, Mistress Mysteria, unless something unforeseen occurs to stop me, I shall have the honour of visiting you to-morrow. You smell unpleasant, and look unpleasant, but we hope to find you interesting, all the same."

(There will be another long instalment of this splendid serial story next Monday.)

GRAND NEW FEATURE.—No. 3.

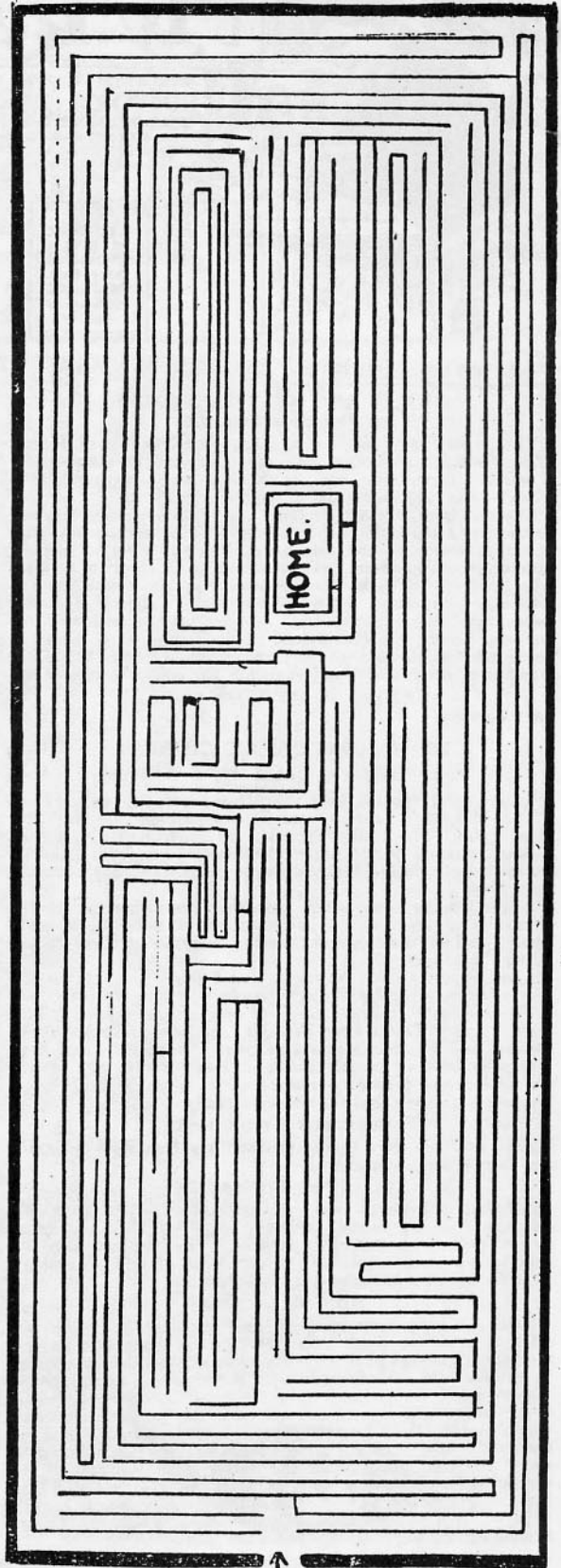
**Our Winter Evening
Problem Corner.**




On the opposite column there is another little problem for my ingenious chums. What they have to do on entering the maze is to find the shortest way into the enclosed space marked "Home," starting from the opening at the foot of the maze where the artist has drawn an arrow. My chums are recommended to trace their way in lightly with a sharp pencil point. To get plenty of fun out of this game, a party of readers should arrange a competition amongst themselves and see who takes the shortest time in getting to "Home."

This is how last week's picture-puzzle should look when properly pieced together.

**No. 4 PROBLEM
NEXT MONDAY.**





My Readers' Page

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The Editor is always pleased to hear from his Chums, at home or abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:**"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"**By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

This is another magnificent, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with the unceremonious arrival of a new boy from India, and the mystery which surrounds him when he has taken his place in the Remove Form.

Cholmondeley, the Anglo-Indian, having been shipwrecked on the way from India, believes himself to be the sole survivor of the catastrophe—and this belief does not seem to disturb him much. The arrival at Greyfriars of a German seaman who proves to have been saved also from the wreck, puts a different complexion upon "Chummy's" affairs, and his subsequent strange behaviour arouses intense interest and curiosity among the Removites. Bob Cherry, as is his way, sticks up for his new chum through thick and thin, but whether or not his faith is justified in the end, will appear in

"CAST UP BY THE SEA!"

next Monday.

TO MY OVERSEAS CHUMS!**Your Editor's Great New Scheme.**

I have long realised that the great popularity enjoyed by "The Magnet" Library and its companion papers "The Gem" and "The Penny Popular" in our Colonies, is due in a large measure to the personal efforts of my loyal Colonial chums in introducing their favourite journals to their friends out there.

A great many new readers have thus been obtained by my chums, who have done this simply out of goodwill towards their friend and Editor, and from the desire to let their friends into a "real good thing."

I am pleased to say, however, that I have now contrived a new scheme, whereby Colonial readers, willing to introduce "The Magnet" Library and its companion papers, "The Gem" and "The Penny Popular," to their friends in the District, will be able, without any extra trouble, to add substantially to their weekly income. I can assure any of my Colonial chums taking advantage of my special offer, that I mean to take care that they receive really

Generous Treatment.

I shall not only give them an absolutely free start by sending them a large number of

Free Copies,

but I shall put money into their pockets as well. By taking advantage of my special scheme, any "live" and enterprising Colonial boy or girl reader of "The Magnet" Library can, in his spare time, with a minimum of trouble and no capital outlay, make a very nice, independent

Annual Income.

Some of my chums may possibly consider this generous offer of mine too good to be true, and hesitate to take immediate advantage of it. I will only ask these hesitating ones to consider for a moment, firstly the standing of the paper which makes this offer, and of the huge and world-famous firm which backs it up; and secondly, of the great discredit which would attach to this paper—discredit which would be absolutely fatal from a business point of view—if it failed to carry out its pledges to the letter. A reputation for scrupulously fair dealing, such as, I am thankful to say, "The Magnet" Library and its companion papers have always enjoyed, is a paper's most valuable asset, which the Editor is most careful to preserve, come what may.

A Special Department

has been appointed to deal with this great new scheme, which is, of course, only open to Colonials who are genuine "Magnet" readers. My chums abroad who wish to enlist my aid to bring about a substantial addition to their weekly pocket-money, or earnings, should write at once for full particulars of my grand new scheme, addressing their letters to:

Export Department,
 "The Magnet" Library,
 The Fleetway House,
 Farringdon St.,
 London, E.C.

England.

HOW TO SUCCEED AS A CLERK.—No. 3.**(Special Article.)****Efficiency Attained by Work After Office Hours.**

Little in this life is gained without effort, and effort well directed. Success in billiards is no use to a tea-merchant, and ability to spot the winner is oftener than not the high road to disaster. It would be impossible to lay down any hard and fast lines as to how to spend the hours outside the office in such a way as to be useful from the point of view we have taken. A bank clerk should work for the examinations of the Bankers' Institute.

A young friend of mine who entered the statistical department of the London County Council, was advised by the head of his office to read for a degree in Law at the University of London. This advice was given on the second day after the youth entered the service. He had already been picked out as one of those who do not mind devoting their leisure hours to making themselves efficient.

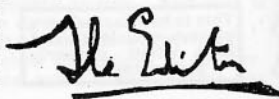
The Merchant's Clerk.

The merchant's clerk has less need of such definite specialisation, but surely there is the world of foreign languages that is worth exploring, and there are other studies, such as commercial geography and correspondence, that we have already mentioned, besides economics, commercial law, and the law of transport. The problem with the brain-worker, as with the athlete, is how to keep fit. The brain rusts like the muscles, and the man with an enfeebled thinking apparatus will not manage a bank or run a big railway. The present manager of the Great Western Railway began at the bottom of the ladder. We may be sure he did not climb by means of the thumb-marked pack clerks spend their time over morning and evening as they go up to London from the suburbs. Perhaps you know shorthand, and rather pride yourself on your accomplishment in this art, but can you write shorthand as applied to the foreign languages in which your business is perhaps transacted? Probably not; that is your chance for improvement in this subject. Do you know the duties of the Consuls abroad, the value of the foreign currencies in most frequent use, and a thousand other details of that kind? I know it is the business of someone else in the office, but if you want to make strides it is your business to know everybody's business round about you.

On the big railways they train what are known as Superior Apprentices. The young men learn to send signals, to issue tickets at the booking-office, and to write reports on every conceivable subject connected with railway management. In after-life one goes to the goods department, and another to the audit office. But they first fit themselves to do anything, and their example may well be taken as a general guide to the young clerk anywhere.

And, finally, the most successful man is often the one with the broadest views. Hence, it will be well for you to have some hobby or study totally unconnected with your immediate affairs, to keep you from getting too groovy.

(A New Series of Special Articles, entitled "Life as a Wireless Operator," will begin on this page next week.)



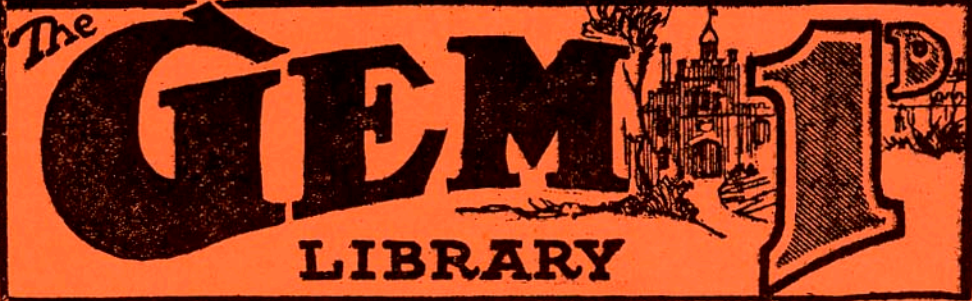
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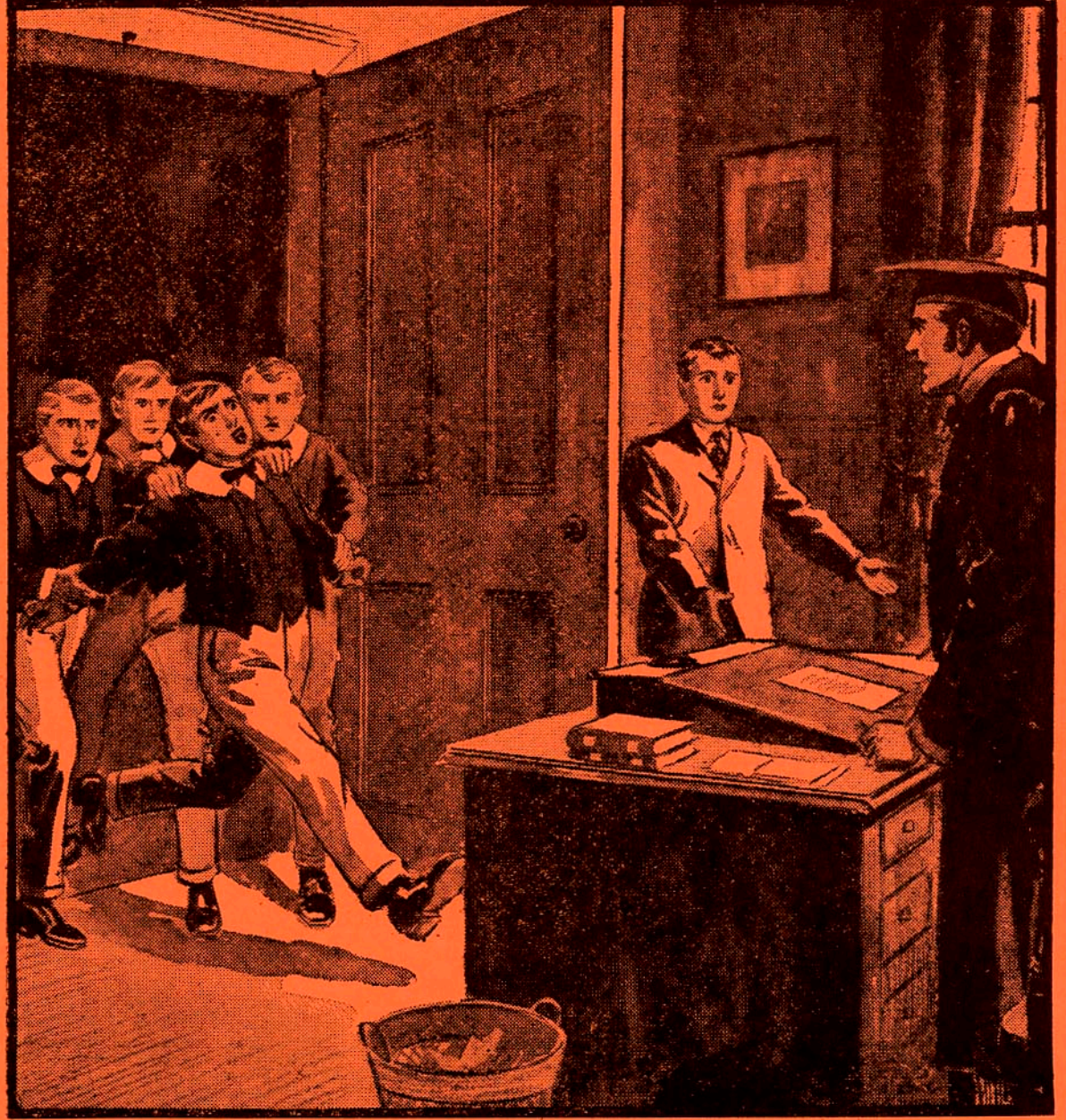
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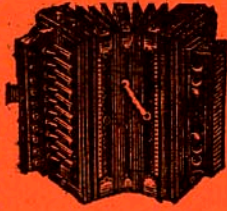
There was a sound of scuffling and bumping in the passage, and then the door was thrown open and four juniors came whirling in. Mr. Railton's brow became like a thunder-cloud. "Merry Manners! Lowther! How dare you! How dare you scuffle into my study in this unseemly manner!"

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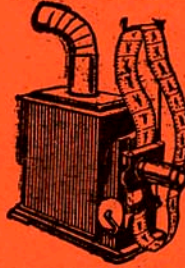
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