

1,155 WEEKS OLD—AND STILL A FAVOURITE!

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The MAGNET

EVERY SATURDAY.

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COKER WALKS THE PLANK!

(Read the amazing school story of the Greyfriars chums inside.)



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

EVER heard of the "Sicilian Vespers?" It has nothing to do with "vespers" at all, but is just a pleasant name which was given to a bloodthirsty massacre which happened during what are called

"THE GOOD OLD DAYS!"

They had a habit of calling murders and assassinations by high-sounding names in the year 1282, when these took place! The French, at that time, were in possession of Sicily, which they had captured about sixteen years previously. Now places like Sicily are noted for secret societies and conspiracies, and on March 30th the Sicilian conspirators, who had already laid their plans, decided to give their conquerors "what for!"

They started off with a little argument in Palermo, and a young Sicilian promptly stabbed a Frenchman. His pals then took a hand in the game and before long a couple of hundred Frenchmen had been murdered. Then the Sicilians decided to let themselves go, with the result that every French person on the island—there were about eight thousand of them—was murdered! And we still find people longing for "the good old days!"

Of course, the most famous anniversary which falls this week comes on Tuesday, which is

ALL FOOL'S DAY.

I expect most of my readers will be abroad early endeavouring to make their chums into "April Fools!" Thank goodness I shall be safely out of reach of those readers who occasionally try to pull my leg—and I hereby warn Dicky Nugent that if he comes anywhere near my office on Tuesday, he will be met by a large size in boots!

By the way, French boys don't use the term "April Fool." They say "Poisson d'Avril," which means "April Fish!" Poor old Fisher T.! Talking about Fish, next Saturday is a date which should appeal to a citizen of the "Yewnted" States, because it was on April 5th, 1917, that America declared war.

I'LL leave my diary alone for a while, and we'll chuckle in unison at this limerick, which earns a pocket wallet for W. Willis, of 53, Battersea Rise, Clapham Junction, S.W.11.

A fellow named Bunter, with glee,
Once ate twenty doughnuts for tea.
When told he'd explode.
"Oh, go and be blowed!
That's a snack!" replied W. G.

A Glasgow chum asks me this week if I can tell him the

NON-STOP RUN RECORD

for railways. Up to date the London,

Midland and Scottish Railway holds this record. Last year they ran a train from Glenbrigg, near Glasgow, to Euston Station London. This is a distance of 395½ miles and was completed in seven hours and fifty-eight minutes. The same train included a cinema car, which gave three performances during the run.

DIRT-TRACK RACING

is with us again, and Harry Trafford, of Grimsby, wants me to tell him who is the champion dirt-track racer. This is a hard question to answer, because when an attempt was made to discover this last year it was found that the best riders were too fully engaged to compete in an individual rider's championship. But experts hold that Buster Frogley, Colin Watson, Ivor Creek and Jack Parker are the best riders in southern England, while Arthur Franklin, A. W. Jervis, Frank Varey, Billy Dallison and Skid Skinner are the most consistently successful in the north. Of the overseas riders, the honours go to Frank Arthur and Vic Huxley, both of whom are Australians.

A good dirt-track rider can earn up to £100 per week—which is not surprising when you know that sometimes as many as 30,000 people pay to attend an evening's dirt-track racing!

HAVE you got yours yet? Your penknife, I mean! If not, see if you can cap this yarn which comes from James Miley, of 10, Reuben Street, Dolphin's Barn, Dublin. There's a penknife for you if you can.



Master: "I see Brown is absent this morning. Does anyone know where he is?"

Jones: "He's in hospital, sir."

Master: "In hospital! Dear me, what is the matter

with him?"

Jones: "Well, sir, we had a competition to see who could lean farthest out of the dormitory window—and Brown won!"



Soccer "fans" will be looking forward to the special sporting fixture at Wembley this coming Saturday, when England meets Scotland. If Scotland "pull it off" it will be a feather in their cap—for they won last year—and the year before! In fact, since 1925 England have only won once! Will they manage it this year—or will Scotland retain the honours?

WHAT DO "TALKIES" COST?

is the question which Michael Lawton, of Warwick, asks me. To install the American equipment costs anything from

£1,710 to £3,600 according to the seating accommodation. But at the present time there are about twenty different English systems available, at much lower cost, and, as additional improvements take place, it is certain that the cost of installing "Talkies" will be greatly reduced. In fact, I am informed it will not be long before "Talkies" are so cheap that it will be possible for us to have them in our own homes, and to take our own talking films!

A regular reader, of Chingford, tells me he thinks that Harry Wharton and Co. would look better if they appeared in Eton jackets, as they used to do. But don't you think that Eton jackets are a little old-fashioned? Greyfriars School is nothing if not up-to-date, and therefore the boys of the Remove are allowed to wear lounge suits. What do my other readers think about this?

There's just room for a few RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

before I turn to next week's programme.

Who was the richest man in the world? (D. F. H., of Warrington)—Andrew Carnegie, who, in 1901, retired from business with the useful little sum of £100,000,000. If this had been invested at only 5 per cent, it would have brought him in close on a hundred thousand pounds per week!

Who made the first aeroplane flight? (Arnold Carlton, of Plymouth)—The world's first controlled flight in a power-driven aeroplane was made by Orville Wright in 1903. He flew 850 feet, and was 58 seconds in the air.

Has this country ever had a "Foreign Legion"? (F. Kirby, of Nottingham)—Yes. A Foreign Legion was formed in 1854, and 3,500 soldiers, most of whom were Swiss or Germans, were recruited. The Legion, however, was disbanded two years later.

Who were the "Peep-o'-day Boys"? (F. G., of Halifax)—Insurgents in Ireland who used to visit their antagonists' houses and search for arms at dawn—hence their name!

Now let's see what the Black Book says! First of all there's a rattling fine Greyfriars yarn for you next week, in

"WHO HACKED HACKER?"

By Frank Richards.

Like all your favourite author's yarns, it will hold you enthralled from the first line to the last.

There will, of course, be another long instalment of

"For the Glory of France!"

which is chock full of exciting incidents and thrills galore. Thanks for all your enthusiastic letters telling me how much you appreciate this grand serial.

Did you like the yarn dealing with Mediaeval Greyfriars by Dick Penfold? Of course you did. Therefore, you'll be pleased to know that there will be another in next week's issue.

Look out also for our clever rhymesters' effort and "Old Ref's" usual chin-wag.

Your Editor.

Send along your Joke or your Greyfriars Eimerick—or both—and win our useful prizes of leather pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives. All efforts to be sent to: c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).



DUFFER AND HERO!

By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Vials of Wrath I

"SEEN Coker?" Potter and Greene of the Fifth asked that question simultaneously.

Harry Wharton grinned.

Potter and Greene were the pals of Coker of the Fifth. They were Horace Coker's very special friends. They shared his study in the Fifth; they shared the hampers that came from his Aunt Judy, they shared the delights of his conversation. They never, or hardly ever, told Coker what they thought of him.

But now—

Potter had a fives bat in his hand. Greene had a thick round ruler. Both of them wore ferocious expressions. Wrath, implacable wrath, was depicted on their countenances. The sun of that March day had gone down; and it had gone down on the wrath of Potter and Greene.

They were fresh back from Rookwood with the football team—the team in which they had been booked to play; and in which they would have played but for the extraordinary proceedings of their pal Coker.

Palliness seemed to be forgotten now. They were looking for Coker, but not with pally intentions. Far from it.

"Seen him, kid?" snapped Potter.

"Yes, I saw him when I came in," said Harry. "But—"

"Where is he?"

"Haven't seen him for an hour."

"Young ass! Come on, Greeney!"

"The fathead must be somewhere!" said Greene.

"He's keeping out of the way!" said Potter bitterly. "He knows what to expect! Come on—we've got to find him!"

The two Fifth-Formers marched off. Up and down and round about Greyfriars they were inquiring for Coker of the Fifth.

Coker, apparently, was not to be found.

Generally Coker was prominent. He did not resemble in the least the flower that was born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air. His rugged features were generally on view, his voice was louder and more frequent than any other at Greyfriars. Nobody could remember a time when

Yes, Coker's a prize duffer, but he's got the pluck of a lion. What's wrong with Coker?

"NOTHING—HE'S ALL RIGHT!"

there was too little to be seen and heard of Coker. As a rule, there was too much to be seen and heard of him—much too much. But now he was not to be found.

Most of the fellows thought they knew why.

The First Eleven had come back from Rookwood breathing vengeance on Coker. It was, perhaps, natural that Horace should be a little coy, in the circumstances. For once, it was probable that the limelight did not appeal to him.

Potter and Greene had looked in the study, and found him not. They had

looked in the games study; but Coker was not there. They had drawn the Form-room and the passages, and drawn them blank. Bent on slaying Coker, their wrath did not diminish as they pursued the search. Rather it intensified. Like wine, it improved with keeping. Now they were almost at boiling-point. Up and down and round about they hunted him; but in vain. Coker seemed uncommonly shy.

"Bunter!"

Potter bawled to the Owl of the Remove as he sighted him near the door of the rag.

If anybody knew where Coker was it would be Bunter. Billy Bunter knew everything that did not concern him.

Bunter blinked at the two Fifth Form men through his big spectacles, and grinned.

"Looking for Coker?" he asked.

"Yes. Seen him?"

"Yes, rather," said Bunter.

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good!" said Potter. He took a grip on the handle of the fives-bat.

"Where is he, Bunter?"

Bunter grinned more widely.

"He's in—"

Bunter paused.

"In where?"

"In his skin," said Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

This was a joke!

Billy Bunter's sense of humour, perhaps, was not highly developed. But he could make jokes sometimes. This was one of his jokes!

Potter and Greene stared at him. Then they glared.

Bunter, perhaps, expected them to laugh.

They did not laugh.

The joke, perhaps, was not a brilliant one. But had it been as brilliant as a bright particular star, it would not have appealed to Potter and Greene. They were in no mood for jokes.

They glared at Bunter.

"You fat idiot!" howled Potter.

"You burbling fathead!" hissed Greene.

"Take that—"

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"And that—"
The lives hat and the ruler smote together. They rose and fell in unison, like two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.

There was a fearful yell from Billy Bunter.

"Whoooooop!"
Potter and Greene marched on. Bunter was left yelling, his sense of humour utterly damped.

"Where's Coker?"
"Seen Coker?"
"Where's that fathead hiding himself?"

"Where's that rotter skulking?"
"Anybody seen Coker?"

Quite a number of fellows were following Potter and Greene. It was quite a procession. Harry Wharton & Co. and a considerable number of the Remove joined up. Fourth Form men and Shell fellows gathered. Even some fags of the Third and Second showed a desire not to miss the fun.

Most of them were grinning. This fierce hunt for Coker by his two best pals struck the Greyfriars fellows as comic.

"Oh, where and Oh, where can he be?" sang Bob Cherry.

"The wherefulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Gentle shepherd, tell me where!" sighed Skinner.

"Coker — Coker — Cokey — Coke!" roared Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, what's all this?" exclaimed Wingate of the Sixth, coming suddenly on the rather uproarious procession.

The captain of Greyfriars stared at Potter and Greene and their numerous following.

"We're looking for Coker!" growled Potter.

"Oh!"

"We're going to smash him into small pieces!" said Greene.

"Oh!"

"Seen him, Wingate?"

Wingate smiled.

"Not yet! You can leave him to me; he's going to be dealt with by the games' committee."

Potter snorted. Greene sniffed.

"The games' committee can deal with what we leave of him," said Potter.

"It won't be much," said Greene.

And they marched on, implacable. But Wingate stood in the way of their followers, and waved a commanding hand.

"You fags clear off!" he said. "Nuff of this—clear off! If any of you want six—"

The procession faded away. Nobody

wanted "six." Reluctantly, the juniors gave it up; and Potter and Greene were left alone to continue the search for Coker.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Declined without Thanks!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"My hat!"

"Coker!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared. The Famous Five had gone up the Remove passage, after Wingate had dispersed the procession. They were wondering where Horace Coker could be. Certainly they had not supposed for a moment, and Potter and Greene had not supposed, that he was in the junior quarters.

But there he was—in Study No. 1 in the Remove, occupying the armchair, with his long legs stretched out in comfort.

He glanced up, and gave the astonished Removites a nod.

"You can come in!" he said.

"Well, as it's our own study, I rather think we may!" remarked Frank Nugent. And he came in with Wharton and Bob Cherry. Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh stood in the doorway and looked at Coker.

The surprise in their looks seemed to perplex Coker. He stared at them.

"What are you blinking at?" he inquired.

"So you're here!" said Bob.

"Hiding in a Remove study!" said Johnny Bull.

"Hiding?" repeated Coker blankly.

"Who's hiding? What do you mean, you young ass?"

It dawned upon the Removites that Coker was not in hiding. Certainly there was no trace of alarm or uneasiness about him.

"Did you know Potter and Greene were back from Rookwood?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Are they?"

"You didn't know they were looking for you?"

"Eh? No!"

"Well, they are!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "They're rooting all over the House for you."

"Are they?" said Coker. "What's up? Do they want to see me for anything special?"

"D-d-d-do they?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ye-e-es, I—I rather think they do, Coker! In fact, I'm certain they do!"

"What do they want, then?"

"I've an idea that they want to slaughter you, and strew the hungry churchyard with your bones, old bean."

"Don't be a young ass, Cherry," Coker frowned. "I came here to see you, Wharton! I've got something to say to you. I've been waiting."

Coker made that statement in an accusing tone. Evidently he did not like to be kept waiting by a mere junior.

"Well, I didn't know you were here, Coker," said the captain of the Remove mildly. "What do you want?"

"Scragging I should think," remarked Johnny Bull. "After what you've done to-day, Coker—"

"Don't be a cheeky young ass, Bull! I've been waiting here, and I've no more time to waste. My time's valuable!" added Coker severely.

The juniors regarded Coker with interest. They were amazed to see him so cool, so unconcerned, so normal. Apparently, he was unaware that a terrific storm was gathering to burst on his devoted head. Apparently he had not

envisaged the consequences of his remarkable proceedings that way. Apparently he was satisfied with those proceedings, and expected other fellows to be equally satisfied. It really was surprising, even in Coker.

"I suppose you know," went on Coker, addressing Wharton "that the match at Rookwood to-day was one of the last big senior fixtures of the season?"

"Quite!"

"I was kept out of that match!" said Coker.

"Oh!"

"I did everything a man could do," said Coker. "You know that! Wingate refused to put me in the eleven. He ignored my claims, as he's ignored them all through the season. I took the matter into my own hands. I don't know if they've told you about it; but it's no secret. I went with the team to Rookwood, and stranded Potter and Greene at Canterbury on the way. That left Wingate a man short, and, naturally, I supposed that, being a man short, he would have sense enough to put jealousy and envy aside, and play me."

"Oh!"

"Well, he didn't!" said Coker bitterly. "You'd hardly believe that a football captain would carry personal feelings so far, at the risk of throwing away matches; but Wingate would actually have preferred to play a man short, rather than play me!"

"Oh!"

"Of course, I never foresaw that!" said Coker.

"You wouldn't!" agreed Bob.

"How was a fellow to foresee that the captain of the school, short of a man, would persist in leaving out the finest footballer at Greyfriars?" said Coker argumentatively.

"Oh, my hat!"

"If I'd played," said Coker, "the Rookwood men would have opened their eyes!"

"They would!" said Nugent.

"The openfulness of their esteemed eyes would have been terrific, my excellent and ridiculous Coker!"

"It was rather unfortunate," said Coker, "that you kids went on a joy-ride to-day, and got to Rookwood. It was very unfortunate that you happened to be there, Wharton."

"Was it?" said Harry, with a smile. "I don't think Wingate thinks so, Coker."

"Wingate's a fool!"

"Oh!"

"When he picked on you to play," said Coker, "I couldn't believe my eyes! Playing a Lower Fourth junior in a First Eleven match! It was the absolute limit, even for a fool like Wingate!"

"Oh!"

"I don't blame you for jumping at it," said Coker kindly. "Of course, being a silly, conceited young ass, you jumped at the chance!"

"Thanks!"

"You silly owl!" roared Johnny Bull. "Wharton kicked the winning goal, and beat Rookwood!"

"I've heard about that," said Coker. "Must have been a very remarkable fluke—very remarkable indeed!"

"It was the best goal in the game!" hooted Bob Cherry.

"I shouldn't be surprised—the whole team were duds," said Coker. "A lot of fumbling asses, and I dare say Wharton was no worse than the rest. Still, I'm glad Greyfriars pulled it off. I expected, of course, to hear that we'd been beaten by about a dozen goals."

"As we should have been if Wingate

GOOD NEWS FOR STAMP ENTHUSIASTS!

Boys all over the British Isles are delighted with the news that Messrs. Carreras Ltd. are now enclosing Colonial and Foreign Stamps in all packets of their famous "Turf" Cigarettes.

Geography can become a fascinating subject for old or young when the interest is piqued by a strange stamp. What country is it from? Where is that country? Would one care to live there? These and a hundred other questions are provoked by that small scrap of printed paper.

There are so many angles to the hobby of stamp-collecting that it is no wonder so many find it an all-absorbing pastime.

had been idiot enough to let you butt into the team!" said Johnny Bull.

"I don't want any cheek, Bull!" Coker gave Johnny a glare, and turned to Wharton again. "I'm done with the First Eleven now! I'm done with Wingate! After this, I shall not make any attempt to help the First Eleven win matches. I'm a patient fellow but my patience is exhausted. I shall give 'em the go-by."

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" said Bob.

"Let 'em stew in their own juice," said Coker, with a wave of the hand. "I'm fed-up with them, and done with

Form man to join in Remove games," said Coker. "You needn't point that out—I know it! But what's a fellow to do, barred from senior games by a mixture of jealousy, envy, and crass stupidity? I've no choice."

"Oh, scissors!"
"Fellows may jeer, seeing me play footer with a mob of fags," said Coker. "Well, let 'em jeer! I'm quite aware that it means a loss of prestige—you needn't rub that in. I can stand it! I'm going to stand it! Besides, with my knowledge of the game—"

"Your whatter?"
"My knowledge of the game, my

them. Well, that's what I've decided!"

"That—that's what you've decided, is it?" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"Yes." Coker rose from the arm-chair. "I thought I'd mention it to you. Don't flatter yourselves," added Coker. "I'm simply making use of you. I want you to get that clear! In your humble way, you're going to be useful to me, for a time. When I've done with you, I shall drop you like hot bricks; and while I'm among you, I want you to understand that I want no cheeky familiarity—nothing of that kind. I hope I make myself clear."



Coker leapt at his study-mates like a tiger, and the next moment the three seniors were inextricably mixed up, staggering and scrambling and tottering to and fro, knocking furniture right and left.

them. Besides, the fixtures are over, except for a Form match or so. Anyhow, I shouldn't take any notice of them. I took matters into my own hands to-day, and but for Wingate's crass stupidity, we should have had a record win. That's all over now. I've got very different intentions for what's left of the football season."

Wharton gazed at him. He could not help wondering why Coker of the Fifth had come to a Remove study to say all this. Generally, Coker regarded the Remove as negligible microbes, unworthy of his lofty notice.

"I'm not giving up footer," explained Coker. "In fact, I'm going in for it more than ever! I'm going to show the school that they've got a good man. I can't do that in senior matches—they won't let me. There's only one resource. I'm going to play in junior games."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"For kids," said Coker condescendingly, "you fags play a good game—quite a good game."

"Thanks!"

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

"Of course, it's frightfully undignified, if you come to that, for a Fifth

perfect mastery of the game, I may say, I shall pull your fag team together, and make something of it. In the matches, you kids won't really have much to do. Practically speaking, I shall play the whole game—you'll have nothing to do, but to keep your eyes on me, jump to my orders, and back my play."

"Oh!"
"Is that all?" gasped Bob.

"That's all! I know it will be like a whale among the minnows," said Coker. "Like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, and all that. I don't care. Good play is good play; and even in your rotten fag team, I shall be able to show what I can do. Before long, probably, the games' committee will see how the matter stands, and over-rule Wingate—they may make him see sense. If I'm approached in a respectful way, I may overlook the way they've treated me. I'm not sure yet; but I may. For the sake of the school, you know."

"Oh!"
"It's rather unfortunate that the big fixtures are over, if it turns out like that," said Coker. "Still, there's a few games left, and we want to win

"You do!" assented Wharton. "Are you finished, Coker?"

"Yes, that's about all."

"Then it's my turn to make myself clear," said Harry. "I won't chuck you out of this study on your neck—"

"Eh?"

"Though you deserve it for your cheek. You're not going to play footer with the Remove! We'd just as soon have a wild elephant barging about on Little Side—"

"Sooner!" said Johnny Bull.

"Much sooner!" said Nugent, with a nod.

"You see, you can't play footer!" explained Wharton. "Even if you could, we shouldn't want a fathead like you, Coker! But you can't! You play footer like a potty hippopotamus—"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Like a mad megatherium—"

"Look here—"

"Like a maniacal mastodon—"

"You cheeky little sweep—"

"So your kind offer is declined, without thanks," said the captain of the Remove. "If we ever catch you on

Little Side, we'll scrag you. Now it's time for you to travel, Coker."

The expression on Horace Coker's speaking countenance had been growing more and more infuriated while he listened to Wharton. Now his wrath boiled over. He made a jump at the captain of the Remove.

But the juniors were ready for him. They had been watching Coker, in expectation of an outbreak. As Coker jumped at Wharton, the whole Co. jumped at Coker.

Bump!
Coker smote the floor of Study No. 1 with a crash. He roared as he established contact.

The next moment Coker was rolling out of the study doorway. He roared as he rolled.

Exactly what was happening to him, Coker hardly knew. It seemed like earthquakes and explosions and volcanic eruptions. He never knew how he reached the Remove staircase. But he knew that he reached it, for he went rolling down, bumping from stair to stair, and letting out a fendish howl at every bump.

"After him!" roared Johnny Bull.
"Mop up the stairs with him!" shouted Bob Cherry.

Bump, bump, bump! went Coker descending.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Rot! He wants more!"
"Hold on—leave the rest for Potter and Greene!"

"Oh! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, relenting, left the rest for Potter and Greene. They felt that Coker had a hectic time before him that evening, anyhow. And they had given him enough to go on with.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Walloping Coker!

"THE rotter!"
"The outsider!"
It was a sort of chorus in the Fifth Form study. Potter and Greene kept it up in turns.

They had ceased searching for Coker. Coker was not to be found. They had hopes, however, that he would return to the study sooner or later. The fives bat and the ruler lay on the table ready for him. Anyhow, he had to turn up at bed time; and in the Fifth Form dormitory, he could be slain as he deserved. It was irritating to have to leave it till then; Potter and Greene not only wanted vengeance, but they wanted it bad, and they wanted it quick.

"The absolute blighter!" said Potter.
"The pie-faced, piffing, footling freak!" said Greene.

Their vocabulary seemed inexhaustible.

Other fellows were wrathful with Coker. What he had done that day was unpardonable, though he did not seem to realise it himself. Wingate and the games committee were certain to take up the matter, and deal with Coker faithfully. Every fellow at Greyfriars was down on him—even in the Second and the Third the matter was discussed, and the fags declared that Coker ought to be made an example of. But perhaps it was natural that Potter and Greene should feel most exasperated of all.

Coker, in his wonderful scheme for driving Wingate into playing him in a First Eleven match, had caused the team to arrive at Rookwood two men short. Potter and Greene were the two men.

A reserve had been on hand to take one place; Coker had booked the other for himself. It was quite a masterly scheme. Coker, to carry it out, had had to strand two men, somehow, on the way to Rookwood. He had stranded Potter and Greene. Never suspecting for a moment that Coker was capable of such artful dodgery, they had fallen helpless victims to his deep duplicity.

Fortunately, the match had been won after all. That was all very well, so far as it went. The Remove were glorying in the fact that a Remove man had been called upon to help the First Eleven out of a scrape. But it was little comfort to Potter and Greene. They did not always play in First Eleven matches; they had been going to do great things at Rookwood: instead of which, they had spent the afternoon crawling across country in slow trains, while the other fellows were playing football. They had arrived at Rookwood just as the game finished. They had returned to Greyfriars with the team, at boiling point. Every footballer at Greyfriars was wild with Coker; but Potter and Greene were not merely wild—they were hopping mad.

"The burbling bandersnatch!" said Potter.

"The jabbering jabberwock!" said Greene.

"The pudding-headed piffler—"
"The shrieking idiot—"

They were at it again; strophe and antistrophe, as it were. In the midst of it, the study door opened, and Horace Coker came in.

Potter and Greene fell suddenly silent. Their eyes were fixed on the burly form and rugged face of Horace Coker, with a perfectly wolfish expression. Coker, all unknowing, was understudying Daniel, when that ancient hero walked into the lions' den.

Potter and Greene had believed that Coker was skulking, hiding away from vengeance. That, certainly, was not like Coker; but they had had no doubt of it. Now they doubted; for Coker came in just as usual, and gave them a nod, evidently not in a state of alarm. He looked a little ruffled, but that was no doubt due to his recent experiences in the Remove passage.

"I hear you men have been looking for me!" remarked Coker, as he threw himself into a chair.

"Oh!" gasped Potter "You've heard that, have you?"

"Yes, a fag told me."
"Well, we've found you now!" said Greene, in a hissing voice.

"Yes, what is it?" asked Coker.

"You can't guess!" said Potter, with withering sarcasm.

"No!" Coker looked at them. Even Coker, not much given to observation, observed that his friends were in a rather unusual state of mind; that there was rather a tense atmosphere in the study. He smiled. "You fellows haven't got your backs up, have you?"

"Oh! Not at all!" gasped Potter.
"Not a bit! Not the slightest!"

"I dare say you feel a bit sore about it," said Coker reflectively, as if the idea had just occurred to him. "But you see, it was up to me! I couldn't foresee that Wingate would be such a benighted fool as to leave me out of the team at Rookwood, after I had carefully planned to leave him a man short so that he would have no choice in the matter. Had I foreseen that, of course, I should have let you fellows go on with the rest. You might as well have fumbled about with the other duds, as it turned out."

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"Oh!" gasped Greene. "That's all you've got to say?"

"Well, it's not a matter of any consequence, is it?" remarked Coker.

"Isn't it?" stammered Potter.

"No! Let it drop," said Coker. "No need to discuss it any further. I dare say you'll realise, when you think it over, that I couldn't have done anything else in the circumstances. What on earth are you two fellows going to do with that bat and that ruler?"

"Guess!" said Potter, with bitter satire.

Coker was enlightened the next moment.

Potter and Greene hurled themselves upon him and up-ended him with his chair.

Coker, greatly surprised, landed on the floor with a crash.

"Oh!" roared Coker.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Potter and Greene seemed to be under the impression that they were beating a carpet.

"Why—what—yarooogh! Have you gone potty?" roared Coker, in amazement and wrath, as the swipes of the fives bat and ruler showered on him.

"Give it him!" gasped Potter.

"Smash him!" howled Greene.

"Wallop him!"

"Bang him!"

"Yarooogh! Oh, my hat!" roared Coker. "Leave off—leggo—oh crikey! Oh, my only aunt! Yoooop!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Potter and Greene were warming to the work. There was solace in this! But however much satisfaction Potter and Greene derived from it, naturally it was not satisfactory to Coker. There was an irreconcilable difference in the point of view.

Coker wriggled and roared and struggled and squirmed, and got away at last and scrambled to his feet.

His face was crimson with fury.

"After him!" yelled Potter.

"Don't let him get away!" hissed Greene.

But Coker was not thinking of getting away. It was quite a mistake on the part of his friends to suppose that Coker was the fellow to dodge vengeance. Coker was the fellow to meet it half-way.

They rushed at Coker, expecting him to make a break from the study. Instead of which, Coker leaped at them like a tiger.

The scene that followed in the Fifth Form study was Homeric. Never had any Greyfriars study witnessed so wild and whirling a combat.

Three fellows, inextricably mixed up, staggered and scrambled and tottered to and fro.

They gasped and panted and trampled and yelle. They rolled over, they scrambled up; they knocked the furniture right and left. The table crashed into the fender—the chairs went east and west, north and south. Books and papers, ink and inkpot, strewed the floor, and were wildly trampled on.

Coker was a hefty fellow. Many times, in moments of irritation, Coker had told his friends that he had a jolly good mind to take the pair of them and wallop them. But in point of fact, Coker, hefty as he was, was hardly a match for the two of them.

But if the other two had rather the advantage, there was no doubt that Coker was a tough handful.

He was strong, he was snowy, he was dogged, he had unlimited pluck and determination. And he was in a towering rage. His own familiar friends had turned on him—why, was not clear to Coker. But they had done it, and Coker

was wild with wrath. So, far from desiring to dodge the unequal combat, Coker was keen on it. He threw himself into it with his whole heart. And if he got punishment, as certainly he did, he handed out plenty of the same, and handed it out hard.

Five minutes—five wild minutes—elapsed, and Coker was still going strong. Potter and Greene were weakening a little. Potter's nose streamed crimson. Greene's chin felt as if it had been pushed through the back of his head. When Coker got in a drive, it was some drive! Gasping for breath, Potter and Greene relaxed their efforts of slaughtering Coker.

But Coker did not stop for breath.

He rushed at them.

There was no pause for Potter and Greene, no rounds in that terrific fight. Coker wanted more.

The old proverb declared that "dogged does it." And dogged did it! Potter and Greene, feeling as if they had been through a mangle, backed away from Coker's hefty attack.

Vengeance was all very well, but vengeance on these lines was being bought at a rather high price. Potter had a horrid doubt whether his nose would

HOW'S THIS FOR A CLEVER GREYFRIARS LIMERICK?

Miss V. Cundy, of Little Thorns, Church Road, Shoeburyness, Essex, gets one of this week's pocket wallets for sending in the following winning effort:

There's a fellow whom I fain
would bring
To the centre of my Hero
ring,
He's as dusky as night,
But, by gum!—he can
fight!
His name's Hurree Jamsat
Ram Singh.

Now then, you fellows, don't let the girls beat you. Get busy and win one of these useful prizes.

ever come straight again. Greene felt that he would have to carry his jaw in a sling for the rest of the term. Coker had a ravaged and mangled look, but he was still keen. He followed up the worms that had turned, as they backed, and they backed as far as the door.

Then, in sheer desperation, they hurled themselves on Coker again.

They wrestled and struggled, putting all their remaining beef into it, and Coker went down.

They fell on him.

They had a just dread of what would happen if Coker got up again. So they kept him down.

A series of loud bangs resounded in the study, caused by Coker's head coming in contact with the floor. Wild roars emanated from Coker.

"Oh! Ow! Whooh! Hoooh!"

"That'll do!" gasped Potter.

"That'll do!" agreed Greene.

They left Coker for dead, as it were. Jumping up, they left the study—rather hastily. Coker lay wriggling breathlessly, too far gone to renew the combat for the moment. That moment was enough for Potter and Greene.

They retired hastily from the spot.

They had thrashed Coker. They had left him winded and done! It was a Pyrrhic victory, more costly to the victors than to the vanquished. Potter and Greene felt complete wrecks as

they tottered away down the Fifth Form passage.

Coker sat up at last. He sat up, and gasped, and gasped, and gasped. Finally he staggered to his feet.

"My hat!" gasped Coker. "I'll smash 'em! I'll pulverise 'em! Cheeky rotters! Turning on a fellow like that! I'll mop up the House with 'em!"

He dragged open the door and glared into the passage.

But Potter and Greene were gone.

And Coker, on second thoughts, felt rather too pulverised to carry on. He did not pursue his faithless friends who had turned on him so unaccountably. He had a lot of casualties to attend to, and he proceeded to attend to them.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Called on the Carpet!

THE following day, there was one question that all the Greyfriars fellows were asking one another.

That question was, what was going to happen to Coker?

Judging by his looks, things had been happening to him already. There were many signs of damage about Coker. And Potter and Greene had evidently been through the fray.

But the official decision of the powers was not yet known. No doubt Wingate and the other great men were a little puzzled to know how to deal with Coker.

His offence was deep, unexpiable, unprecedented! It was not a thing that could possibly be passed over.

But the fact that it was unprecedented made it difficult to deal with. There was no precedent to follow.

Never, in the history of Soccer at Greyfriars, had such a thing happened, as a fellow deliberately, with malice aforethought, intervening in so important a matter as a First Eleven match, and preventing members of the eleven from turning up for a game.

It was absolutely unheard of.

In Coker's case there were, perhaps, extenuating circumstances. It was well known that Coker was a howling ass. Had any other fellow done what Coker had done, he would have been set down, of course, as a rank rotter and outsider—a fellow that nobody would care to touch with a pair of tongs. But Coker's case was different.

Coker's wonderful intellect moved on original lines. He had not been conscious of anything in the nature of wrong-doing. Absolutely fatuous obtuseness was what was the matter with Coker. There are fools and fools; but Coker was the fool absolute! He was the kind of fool that, though you bray him in a mortar, yet will not his folly depart from him. He had to be punished, he had to be warned for the future. The chopper had to come down, hard and heavy. But in the peculiar circumstances, the matter presented difficulties.

Some fellows thought that Wingate would place the matter before the Head, and that Coker would be sacked. But it was generally felt that such a course would be hard on a benighted ass. A beating by the games committee was suggested by others, but it was felt that that would not meet the case. Coker had had a prefects' beating, without deriving any good from it that could be observed.

But something had to be done! Something, assuredly, was going to happen to Coker; and the fellows discussed with breathless interest what it was going to be.

Wingate seemed in no hurry to act.

Coker was seen, in break that morning, strolling in the quad, looking rather damaged, but otherwise at ease.

Coker was the only fellow at Greyfriars who did not realise that something was bound to happen to him.

Amazing as it seemed, Coker did not realise the extent, or the dire iniquity, of his transgression.

Potter and Greene were avoiding him, relations were strained in Coker's study now. And whether they still thirsted for vengeance or not, they did not want another Pyrrhic victory.

Coker, apparently, considered the matter at an end. He was soon to learn, however, that it was only at its beginning.

It was after class that day that Wingate of the Sixth looked for Coker. Plenty of fellows had their eyes open, and the meeting was watched with deep interest.

"Coker!" said the Greyfriars captain. Coker stared at him.

"Want anything?" he asked.

"You!" said Wingate. "Step into the prefects' room at half-past five, will you?"

"What for?" asked Coker.

"The games committee will be there."

"Thanks; I don't want to see the games committee."

"They want to see you!" explained Wingate.

Then Coker's manner changed.

"Oh! If you mean that they're picking me out for a game—"

"Eh?" ejaculated Wingate.

"I'm not sure I shall play!" said Coker loftily. "I've been treated badly. You know that. The big fixtures are all over. I don't know that I'm keen to play in any little hole-and-corner game at the end of the season."

Wingate blinked at him.

"You had your chance to play me at Rookwood yesterday," said Coker. "You missed it! I'm not at all sure that I'm prepared to play, and you can tell the games committee so, from me."

"My only Aunt Matilda!" said Wingate dazedly; while every other fellow within hearing chortled.

Coker glanced round. He did not, personally, see anything to chortle at.

"You don't catch my meaning, Coker," said Wingate, explaining laboriously. "You're called on the carpet to answer for what you did yesterday—keeping two First Eleven men away from a match."

"Oh!" said Coker indifferently. "Are you going to make a fuss about that, Wingate?"

"Yes! Quite."

"More fool you!" said Coker.

"Well, don't forget to turn up," said the Greyfriars captain.

"I'll give you a look in if I have time," said Coker.

"You'd better find time, I think. Otherwise a couple of prefects will walk you there."

"I'd like to see 'em do it!" said Coker disdainfully.

"Very well, you'll see them do it if you don't turn up sharp at half-past five," said Wingate.

"Oh, I don't mind turning up," said Coker carelessly. "I've done nothing that I don't mind telling all Greyfriars! If the fellows think I'm to blame in any way, I don't mind pointing out to them what silly fools they are."

Wingate made no answer to that. He gave Coker a nod and walked away. Coker shrugged his shoulders. Evidently

he was not looking forward to the meeting with anything like alarm.

"Put some exercise books in your bags, Coker!" called out Skinner of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker disdained to heed.

Towards five-thirty, excitement in the House was growing intense. When Coker was seen sauntering carelessly towards the prefects' room, the news spread like wildfire. Half Greyfriars followed Coker.

Not only the members of the games committee, but nearly all the Sixth and the Fifth were gathered in the prefects' room. It was an occasion of unusual importance and solemnity. Round the doorway, juniors crowded and swarmed.

To their surprise, the door was not closed. Generally, such small fry as Lower boys were excluded from the stately proceedings in that august apartment.

But on the present occasion, Wingate doubtless felt that it was a matter that concerned the whole school. To the surprise and delight of the juniors, they were admitted to the proceedings.

A number of them were allowed to enter the room, the rest crowded round the doorway, the door standing wide open. A painful squeak was heard from Billy Bunter, squashed between Bolsover major of the Remove, and Hobson of the Shell.

"I say, you fellows! Ow! Give a fellow room!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"Silence there, you fags!" called out Loder of the Sixth.

"Wow!"

"Silence!"

Silence was restored. Coker, standing before his judges, adopted a careless and slightly scornful attitude, rather like Ajax in his celebrated lightning-defying act. If any fellow had expected to see Coker looking nervous or uneasy, that fellow was disappointed. Cheerful self-satisfaction clothed Horace Coker like a garment.

"Well, I'm here!" said Coker.

"You're here," agreed Wingate, "and now—"

"Cut it short."

"What?"

"Cut it short," said Coker. "My time's rather of value! I'm not a Sixth Form prefect, you know."

"Saro!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Fancy Coker handing out sarc."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" bawled Loder.

And there was silence once more, and the proceedings proceeded.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Sent to Coventry!

It was an impressive scene.

It would have been considerably more impressive, however, had Coker taken it in a more subdued and respectful spirit.

As it was, Coker had a careless, lounging air, and an expression of good-humoured boredom on his face, and this rather detracted from the impressiveness.

"You're brought before the games committee, Coker—" began Wingate.

"I know that."

"Don't interrupt!" said Loder.

"Rats to you!" said Coker cheerfully.

There was a faint giggle among the junior section of the audience, promptly suppressed.

"Check won't do you any good here,

Coker," said the Greyfriars captain sternly. "You're brought before the games committee—"

"We've had that," said Coker.

Wingate breathed hard.

"To take your punishment for what you did yesterday I needn't go into details."

"Not unless you're keen on wagging your chin," said Coker. "But don't mind me. I've listened to fool talk before, and can again."

"What you did was rotten, mean, un-sportsmanlike—outside the limit in every possible way," resumed Wingate. "But I suppose you know that."

"No fear," said Coker.

"You're asked if you've got anything to say in your defence. If you have, get it off your chest at once."

"Well," said Coker thoughtfully, "I won't say that the games committee ought to thank me; they know that. I tried to get the best footballer at Greyfriars in the First Eleven, in spite of carping jealousy, and mean envy, and crass stupidity. I failed. But I did my best. I think I'm entitled to thanks—that's all."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the spectators.

They really could not help it, solemn as the occasion was.

"Silence!"

"Order!"

"Is that all, Coker?" asked Wingate, when the audience had been reduced once more to silence.

"That's about all," said Coker, with a yawn. "No good talking sense to a Sixth Form lot. I know that. Why should I waste my breath?"

"Very well. We've discussed the matter, and decided what's going to be done with you," said the captain of Greyfriars. "You're here to take your sentence."

Coker gave another yawn.

"Thrashing you," said Wingate, "would hardly meet the case. And you've been thrashed already, and it's not knocked any sense into your silly head. If you were anything but a born idiot I'd report the matter to the Head, and leave it to him. As it stands, you—"

"Cut it short," said Coker.

"As it stands, you are sentenced to be sent to Coventry by the whole school," said Wingate.

Coker laughed.

"For the rest of this term," said the Greyfriars captain. "Whether you're let off next term depends. But for the rest of this term you're in Coventry, and you'll be cut by every man in the school."

"Dear me!" said Coker.

The sentence evidently made no impression at all on Horace Coker. It seemed to amuse him.

Coker's powerful brain was not quick on the uptake. It was likely to take some time for him to realise all that that sentence portended.

"That," continued Wingate quietly, "is why Lower boys have been admitted to this meeting. I want them all to hear. The order applies to the whole school, juniors as well as seniors."

"I'm likely to want to talk to juniors," said Coker, with a sniff of contempt. "As for the seniors, I've heard them all talk, and I've only heard them talk rot. I shall be glad of a rest."

Wingate glanced at the swarm of juniors.

"Take notice, all of you," he said. "Coker, from the moment he leaves this room, is in Coventry, and no Greyfriars man is to speak to him under any circumstances whatever, or on any pretext. No man is to answer him if he

speaks. Coker is to be cut dead for the rest of the term. Any senior man breaking this rule will be sent to Coventry himself. Any junior breaking it will be given six with an ashplant."

"Oh!"
The Greyfriars captain turned to Coker again.

"You can go, Coker."
"Sure you're finished?" yawned Coker.

"Yes. Cut!"
"I'll tell you what I think of you before I go," said Coker. "You're a silly fathead, Wingate."

"Get out!"
"The other fellows here are a lot of silly owls. They fumble at footer, and can't play the game for toffee. All they can do is to hang together to keep a really good man out of the matches."
"There's the door!"

"I don't want to be personal," went on Coker, "but I'm bound to say that I despise the lot of you. A lot of duds! A lot of rabbits! I never did think much of the Sixth. I've often said so. Well, now I think less of them than ever."

"Are you going?"
"Not till I've finished. I think that—"

"Take him out!" said Wingate.

"If any man here lays a finger on me, I can only say— Yaroooh! Loggo! You cheeky rotters! Oh, my hat!"

Three or four Sixth Form men laid hands on Coker, and whisked him to the door. In the doorway Walker of the Sixth planted a rather heavy boot on Coker's trousers.

Coker flew.
He arrived in the passage on his hands and knees.

"What ho, she bumps!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Up jumped Coker. He whirled round. He charged back at the doorway of the prefects' room like a bull.

How many hands were laid on Coker then, he never knew. They seemed innumerable.

Whatever the number, they were too many for Coker.

Uplifted in those innumerable hands, Coker was frog-marched along the passage, yelling, and bumped down at the end of it in a breathless, spluttering heap.

There he was left.
He sat up, in a circle of grinning faces. He glared round at the circle. He gained his feet, and made one stride in the direction of the prefects' room. The crowd opened to let him through. But Coker did not take advantage of the opening. Second thoughts, proverbially the best, prevailed. He turned and tramped away.

"Don't you want any more, Coker?" called out Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Rats to you! Don't you want any more, Coker?" yelled Skinner.

"Skinner!" It was Loder's voice. Skinner looked round.

"Yes, Loder."
"You were speaking to Coker?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Skinner. "I—I—"

"Bend over!"
"I—I say, Loder—" gasped Skinner, in dismay.

"Bend over!"

The hapless Skinner obeyed. Six were administered on the spot, and Skinner crawled away, groaning.

Nobody sympathised much with Skinner; it was not the thing to jeer a man who was down on his luck. But the "six" was a warning, to all whom it might concern, that the sentence on

Thud! Like a battering-ram Coker's large foot thudded on Fitzgerald's trousers and sent him pitching forward!



Coker was intended to be drastically enforced. The crowd dispersed.

"Poor old Coker!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, he asked for it," said Harry Wharton. "He hasn't brains enough to understand it. But what he did was a dirty trick."

"That's so, but— Poor old Coker! He's so jolly fond of wagging his jolly old chin," said Bob. "My belief is that after a day or two in Coventry Coker will burst."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And many fellows were quite curious to see what the effect of the sentence would be on Coker. So far, Coker took it lightly. But after a few days of it— It was really interesting to speculate what might happen.

And though speculation was rife in the whole school, and the curiosity of the fellows aroused, from the inky Second to the lordly Sixth, the way Coker actually took the sentence did not come as a surprise, for Coker's ways, like those of an ass, were well known to everybody.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Cutting Coker!

"GOT over it?"
Horace Coker asked that question in a playfully sarcastic tone, when Potter and Greene came into the study for prep that evening.

Coker seemed to be in a good humour. Coker never remembered offences for long. Seldom did he let the sun go down on his wrath. He was quite a placable fellow when he was given his head. And in that study Coker always had been given his head.

Last evening he had scrapped with Potter and Greene. All three of them still bore outward and visible signs of the scrap. Potter and Greene felt sore,

but they were pleased with the reflection that they had given Coker the thrashing he deserved.

Coker, on the other hand, felt that, having thrashed Potter and Greene, he could afford to look over the incident. Anyhow, he wasn't the fellow to nurse grudges. His friends had foolishly resented what Coker regarded as a necessary and masterly bit of strategy. He had thrashed them, and that was all there was about it. Now he was prepared to let the thing drop and resume friendly relations on the old footing.

But to his playfully sarcastic query as to whether they had got over it Potter and Greene returned no reply.

They exchanged a rather uncomfortable glance, but did not look at Coker or make any remark.

"Not got over it?" queried Coker.

No answer. Potter and Greene began to sort out their books. Coker eyed them, puzzled.

"Lost your tongues?" he asked.

Apparently Potter and Greene had!

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At all events, they did not use them. In dead silence they proceeded with scribbling out their books.

"Now, look here," said Coker, in a gently argumentative voice, as of a kind uncle addressing unthinking youth. "We've had a row! You fellows got your backs up for nothing. You scrapped with me, and I licked the pair of you. Well, it's over. You've acted rather badly; but I'm ready to look over it. If you think over the matter I've no doubt you'll see, in the long run, that I was right all along. Anyhow, don't sulk and scowl."

Silence.

"If you're going to keep up a grudge over that scrap, I can only say that I'm surprised at you," said Coker. "Dash it all, we've had rows before!"

He paused, like Brutus, for a reply. But he had no better luck than Brutus. There was no reply.

Coker eyed his study-mates with increasing surprise and some signs of gathering wrath.

"Well, if you're going to sulk like a pair of sneaking little fags, sulk, and be blowed to you!" he said. "But, look here, I'm not going to have sulking in this study—see?"

If Potter and Greene saw, they did not say so. They said nothing.

"I'm willing to be friendly," said Coker.

No reply.

"If you're not, you'd better get out of my study."

Potter opened his lips. Perhaps he was going to remark that it was his study as well as Coker's—a fact that Coker was prone at times to overlook. But he closed his lips again, with the remark unuttered.

"Well, that's that!" said Coker. "See?"

Potter and Greene looked at one another, but did not look at Coker. A hint of a grin dawned on their faces. That was all.

Coker watched them as they prepared for work, more and more surprised. He could not understand their attitude.

"If I hurt you," he said, at last, "I'm sorry! You're no match for me—the pair of you, of course. I dare say I got a bit excited—my friends turning on me like that for nothing! Your nose does look a bit of a cough-drop. Potter. Your whole chivvy seems to have had a bad side-slip, Greeney! Well, you'll get over it! After all, you fellows got in a whack or two. I don't mind admitting that I had my hands full with you—almost full. If I've damaged you a lot, I'm sorry. There!" said Coker magnanimously.

Still there was no answer.

"Can't you speak?" hooted Coker.

Whether they could or not, they didn't!

"Dumb?" roared Coker.

They seemed dumb.

"Or only silly?" went on Coker.

Potter began to search in a dictionary for a word. Greene jammed a new nib into his pen. Both of them appeared to be ignorant of the fact that Horace Coker was in the study at all.

Coker began to breathe hard. A spot of crimson glowed in either of his cheeks. Coker's wrath was rising.

"I'm getting fed-up with this!" he said. "I'd like to know what you mean by it. Sitting there like a pair of moulting owls, and never saying a word! What do you mean?"

Neither Potter nor Greene told Coker what they meant. They left him to guess.

Slowly understanding filtered into

Coker's powerful brain. He gave quite a start as he realised how matters stood.

"My hat!" breathed Coker.

He stared at Potter and Greene.

"Mean to say you're taking any notice of that foolery Wingate was talking in the prefects' room?" he demanded.

Silence seemed to give consent.

"My hat!" repeated Coker. "Mean to say that you, or anybody else, is taking that piffle seriously? You piffing chumps! Wingate was only talking out of the back of his head! I took no notice of him! I certainly did not expect anybody to take any notice! Look here, let's have this out. That fool Wingate says I'm sent to Coventry! Mean to say that you're backing him up?"

Again Coker paused for a reply.

Again he paused in vain.

"So that's it?" said Coker, in a deep and sulphurous voice. "My own friends are joining up against me?"

Evidently that was it!

Coker rose to his feet. He was wrathful; but he was calm. Lofty dignity was Coker's cue now.

"Well," he said, "let it go at that! You don't want to speak—what? Well, it will be a rest for me! But I'm not having this sort of thing in my own study!" Coker crossed to the door and threw it wide open. "Get out!"

Potter and Greene looked a little startled. They exchanged glances, and their glances were rather uneasy.

If Coker cut up rusty, to the extent of the laying on of hands, the two of them could handle him. But they did not want to handle Coker. He was so very awkward to handle. They had handled him the evening before, and they still felt the stress and strain of it. Like Pyrrhus of old, they felt that another such victory and they would be undone.

"Get out!" repeated Coker.

"Look here—" began Potter.

"Oh! You can speak now?" sneered Coker.

"We're not getting out of our own study!" said Greene warmly. "You're in Coventry, Coker! Shut up!"

"I'm waiting for you to get out!" said Coker politely. "If you want me to handle you again, I'm ready!"

There was no answer, and no movement. Coker waited a moment or two, and then he came over to the table and dropped his hands on George Potter's shoulders. Potter was twirled out of his chair.

"Back up, Greeney!" he gasped.

Greene backed up promptly.

But—

The fact was that Coker was ready—more than ready—for another terrific scrap, and Potter and Greene weren't. For one thing, they had their work to do, and were rather more particular about it than Coker was. It was no good telling Mr. Prout in the morning that they'd done no prep, having spent the evening scrapping with Coker. It was clear that if they were going to send Coker to Coventry, it couldn't be done in the same study with Coker. Life would have become too hectic.

"That's for your nose, Potter!"

"Yooop!"

"That's for your eye, Greeney!"

"Yaroooh!"

Potter and Greene backed to the door. They rallied there, rather desperately; but Coker came on with a rush; and they side-stepped into the passage.

"You—you—you rotter!" gasped Potter. "Think you're turning us out of our own study?"

"Come in, if you like!" said Coker invitingly.

He squared up to the doorway, and

the prospect was not attractive. Potter and Greene did not come in.

"Look here, we want our books—" gasped Greene.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

Coker collected up the books from the table and began to shy them at Potter and Greene in the passage. His hapless friends dodged the missiles as best they could.

"Now cut!" jeered Coker. "You can come back when you're ready to be civil. Not before!"

And he slammed the door on them.

Potter and Greene exchanged an eloquent glance, gathered up their books, and progressed farther along the passage. They worked in other studies that evening.

Coker, left alone in his glory, laughed contemptuously.

He toyed with his work; and waited for Potter and Greene to come back and be civil. He had no doubt that they would come. Fellows might have their backs up over nothing. They might be influenced by the piffle talked by a fool, when that fool was captain of the school. On the other hand, fellows privileged to enjoy Coker's friendship, could hardly abandon that boon and blessing, unless they were hopelessly insane. Obviously—to Coker—Potter and Greene would soon think better of it, and come back to the study and be civil.

But they didn't!

Coker, left alone in his glory, remained alone in his glory. It really began to look, even to Coker, as if that sentence of Coventry, which he had treated so lightly, was not such a light matter after all.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Cuts Up Rusty!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. smiled.

Coker, of the Fifth, was the cause of the smile.

It was the following morning, and the chums of the Remove were walking in the quad before first school.

Coker, also, was walking in the quad. There was a deep wrinkle in Coker's rugged brow, an unusually thoughtful expression on his countenance.

Tomlinson and Fitzgerald of the Fifth came along the path by the elms, meeting Coker almost face to face.

Coker stopped.

As he stopped directly in the path of the two Fifth Form men, they had to stop, too.

"Oh! Here you are!" said Coker.

Tomlinson looked uncomfortable. Fitzgerald grinned. Neither of them made any rejoinder.

The Famous Five of the Remove looked on with interest. Horace Coker's proceedings always had a certain amount of interest for other fellows. Generally his proceedings added to the gaiety of existence at Greyfriars.

"I said good-night to you in the dorm last night, Fitz!" said Coker. "You didn't answer! Were you asleep?"

Instead of replying, Terence Fitzgerald walked round Coker on one side, while Tomlinson walked round him on the other.

Coker turned round.

"So you're keeping that up?" he bawled.

Tomlinson and Fitzgerald walked on in silence. It was only too plain that they were keeping it up.

"Watch Coker, you men!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He's just going to explode!"

(Continued on page 12.)

INSIDE INFORMATION



By
The "OLD
REF."

This sporting feature has caught on with a vengeance, and "Old Ref." is already asking for a rise. But that's just his fun. He's really only too delighted to pass on his Soccer wisdom to MAGNET readers—for "Old Ref's" a MAGNET reader himself!

IN my post-bag this week there is a letter with a query which reminds me of the slack way into which we often fall in discussing rules and regulations relating to football. The writer of this letter has noticed that more than one big football team has recently signed on new players. "I thought," says my correspondent that there was a rule barring all transfers after March 16th, in each season, but apparently such is not the case. Can you tell me what the rule is?"

Actually, there never has been a rule on the books of the Football League barring transfers after March 16th in each season. But because of certain restrictions which come into force each season on that date we have got into the habit of saying that transfers are not allowed after March 16th.

Now, as a matter of fact the big League clubs are just as free to arrange for the transfer of players between the middle of March and the end of the football season as at any other period. The difference is this and I now give the official wording: "All transfers and registrations after March 16th in each season shall only be sanctioned and received subject to such limitations and restrictions as the Management Committee shall decide."

HAVING given you the official wording, I can now explain what that wording means and how it is carried into effect. The League Management Committee does not say no to any transfers after March 16th, which are in accord with the rules in other directions. But the Management Committee take unto themselves the right to say whether such transferred players shall, or shall not, play in matches for League points after that date.

The rule, in practice, works on these lines. If a club with a chance of winning honours—a championship or promotion—or a club in danger of relegation, signs on a new man after March 16th, he is not allowed to play for his new club during such time as they keep in the running for honours or are in danger of relegation.

But the restrictions do not stop there. *If a club in a safe position in the League signs on a new player after March 16th, that club is not allowed to play him in any match against teams in the running for honours or in danger of relegation.*

This, of course, is only fair, as a new man played in a "safe" team might help his new team to defeat a side badly in need of points. So you see the "limitations and restrictions" to which transfers made after March 16th are subject.

And you can take it from me that the League Management Committee, having such a rule on their books do not allow it to be winked at. Three years or so ago Stockport County signed on Joe Smith—who twice captained Bolton Wanderers—on March 16th. They sent the papers through for registration by the League Management Committee but as it happened they were not received in time. Thinking that they would have been so received, Stockport County included Smith in their side for a League match. The Management Committee came down on

them like a load of bricks, deducted two points from their total and in addition fined the club for playing a man in respect of whom permission had not been received.

I DO not think many people have a quarrel with the March 16th rule, because it became obvious some time ago that some such regulation was necessary. In the olden days Middlesbrough signed on two great forwards—Alf Common and Steve Bloomer—very near the end of the season with a view to these players helping the club in the last match or two of the season to avoid relegation.

There was also an occasion later—and this led to the rule being put on the books—when, about a fortnight or so from the end of the season, Chelsea signed on about half a team to help them to dodge the fate which threatened. Thus, briefly, we may say that the March 16th rule was put on the books to prevent the rich clubs securing honours or saving themselves from the drop at the expense of poor clubs which could not afford to buy new players.

But although I have no quarrel with the principle of the March 16th rule, it is my solid conviction that this "closing date" for unrestricted transfers is much too late in the season. I am all for bringing it forward, at least to the end of December and, being something of an idealist, I would even go the whole hog and say that no transfers should be allowed during the playing season. Let the managers build up their teams during the summer, not gamble with a minimum number of players in the certain knowledge that if things begin to go wrong they can, during the campaign, spend any amount of money on new men.

Of course the reply of people to whom I put this suggestion is that it would work harshly against certain clubs which were badly hit owing to injuries. Perhaps it would in certain cases. Remember this, however, that there is a cup rule exactly of the sort which I would apply to League football. *No player is allowed to play for more than one club in any one season in the Cup competition no matter how obscure the club for which he originally stayed.*

That rule is not regarded as harsh in the Cup. Then why not apply it to the League competition, and out out this scramble for players which only emphasises the power of the purse?

NOW let me answer a query concerning penalty kicks: N. E., of Stoke-on-Trent, cites the case of a boy who took a penalty kick. He sent the ball against the cross-bar, whence it came back to him. He kicked the ball again and sent it into the net. Was it a goal?

The answer is "No."

When a penalty kick is taken the player taking it cannot have more than one kick of the ball without some other player touching it meantime.

The cross-bar is no a player and therefore in the circumstances given the boy should have been penalised for playing the ball twice. Actually, I can tell you that this is often used as a catch question and frequently the reply as to why the goal should not be allowed is that the player kicking the ball a second time is offside. That isn't it at all.

DUFFER AND HERO!

(Continued from page 10.)

"The explodofulness is going to be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Coker stood gazing after the two Fifth Form men, wrath and indignation growing in his face. Obviously, he was on the verge of explosion.

"Can't you answer a man, you fat-heads?" he bawled.

Tomlinson and Fitzgerald did not even turn their heads.

As a matter of fact, they would have done well to turn their heads. For Coker, red with wrath, was rushing after them. An attack in the rear was about to take place.

Thud!

Coker had a large foot; a heavy foot. It felt like a battering-ram as it thudded on Fitzgerald's trousers.

Fitzgerald gave a fearful howl, and pitched forward.

The next instant, before Tomlinson could turn, Coker's boot was planted upon him likewise.

Thomas Tomlinson joined Fitzgerald on the cold, unsympathetic earth. Two voices were raised in unison and fury.

"There!" gasped Coker. "Take that! And for two pins, I'd take you by the necks and knock your silly heads together."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on.

If this was the spirit in which Coker was going to take his sentence of Coventry, it was certain that he had an exciting career before him at Greyfriars.

Tomlinson and Fitzgerald scrambled up. They were gasping with fury. A score of fellows had witnessed Coker's action, and they were all smiling audibly. Their smiles further exasperated the two Fifth Form men. They turned on Coker and collared him.

Horace Coker, probably, had supposed that he could kick Fifth Form men with impunity. But Coker was not given to considering consequences. He acted first, and thought afterwards—when he thought at all, which was not often.

But the consequences, considered or unconsidered, were there! Coker went whirling in the enraged grasp of Tomlinson and Fitzgerald. His head banged on the trunk of an elm.

Bang!

"Whoop!"

"They'll damage that tree!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

Coker, of course, put up a gallant resistance. There was at least one thing to be said for Horace James Coker; his pluck never failed him.

But if Coker was not quite equal to Potter and Greene, he was still more unequal to Tomlinson and Fitzgerald. They were all over Coker! He whirled and rolled in their grasp, resisting gallantly, but in vain. Thrice they banged his head on the elm.

Coker's head was hard. But the elm was harder. Frightful yells pealed from Coker.

"There!" gasped Fitzgerald.

"There!" gasped Tomlinson.

And they left him.

They walked away rather awkwardly; still feeling the effects of Coker's hefty kicking. Coker sprawled on the ground under the elm, in a gasping and dazed and dizzy state.

"Ow, ow, ow! Wow! My napper! Ow! Wow!" articulated Coker, sitting up and feeling his head, as if to ascer-

tain whether it was still there. "Oh, my head! Oh, my hat! Wow!"

From sheer kindness of heart, two of the juniors ran forward and helped Coker to his feet. He was in need of help. Tomlinson and Fitzgerald had handled him not wisely, but too well.

Wharton took one arm, and Bob Cherry the other, and they set the great Horace on his feet. He leaned on the elm and blinked at them.

"Ow!" he said. "Wow! I'll smash 'em! I'll pulverise 'em! I'll make 'em cringe! Ow! my napper! Wow! Two to one, you know! I'll give 'em two to one! Wow!"

Harry Wharton opened his lips to speak; then, remembering that Coker was in Coventry, closed them again, and stepped back.

"Pick up my hat, kid!" snapped Coker.

Bob Cherry gave him his hat.

"Ow! I'll smash 'em!" said Coker. "Making out that I'm sent to Coventry, you know! Me, you know! I'll give 'em Coventry! What?"

It dawned on Coker that the juniors were not speaking. As a rule Coker hardly noticed whether a fellow spoke or not; he was quite able to do all the talking that was required on any occasion. But he was getting watchful and suspicious now.

"Oh! Can't you speak?" he snapped. "Mean to say you're joining in this game—you cheeky fags?"

Wharton and Bob, smiling, moved back to their friends.

"You hear me?" roared Coker. "You cheeky fags have the neck to take up this game? What? Why, I'll spicicate you!"

Coker was hurt. He was feeling bad. But the bare idea of fags of the Lower Fourth having the "neck" to send him to Coventry, had the effect on Coker of a red rag on a bull. He made a rush after the two juniors, and grabbed Wharton by the collar.

"Now, then, you chee' y little beast!" roared Coker. "Now, I'm going to thrash you till you speak, see?"

Wharton did not speak. Neither did his friends. They silently laid five pairs of hands on Coker, swept him off his feet, and distributed him in the quad.

Then they walked off the scene.

Coker got up again—this time without assistance. He glared after the chunks of the Remove, and made a stride in their direction. Then he paused. It was dawning even on Coker's mighty brain that he could not thrash every fellow in the school, that in a contest, Coker v. Greyfriars, the odds would be too heavy.

Instead, therefore, of pursuing the Famous Five, Coker limped away towards the House. Outside the House, Wingate and Sykes of the Fifth were standing in conversation. Certainly they saw Coker, but they did not seem to see him. Coker glared at them in passing, but he might as well have glared at a stone wall. Then he stopped.

"You-think this is jolly clever, I suppose, Wingate?" he snorted.

"Lascelles has promised to referee the game——" Wingate went on saying to Sykes.

"Think I'm going to stand it?" bawled Coker.

Wingate and Sykes moved off a few paces. Coker followed them up.

"Think you're going to get away with this, you silly fathead?" he bawled.

"Why, for two pins I'd mop up the quad with you."

Wingate and Sykes moved off again. Again Coker followed them up.

"You silly, fatheaded, piffing

chump!" he resumed. "You cheeky, footling fathead! You——"

Coker was interrupted.

Wingate and Sykes did not move away again. They moved towards Coker swiftly. They grasped him, and Coker, for the third time that morning, smote the surface of the globe, hard. And that was not all. Wingate had his official ashplant with him. Coker, sprawling face down, was in a favourable position for punishment.

Whack! whack! whack!

"Ow! Oh! Yarooop!" roared Coker.

Wingate tucked the ashplant under his arm, and walked away with Sykes. Coker scrambled up amid yells of laughter from all quarters.

His face was a study in scarlet.

"Why, I—I—I'll——" he gasped.

But whatever it was Coker thought of doing, he did not do it. It was borne in upon his mind that he was up against irresistible forces. He glared after Wingate; glared round at laughing faces, and went into the House, still glaring.

And when he passed Potter and Greene, and they took no more notice of him than if he had been a fly, he did not fall on Potter and Greene and smite them hip and thigh. Coker was in Coventry, and he was beginning to learn that he could not punch his way out of that undesirable abode.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Awful!

"H E, HE, HE!"

Billy Bunter emitted that unamused cachinnation.

It was called forth by the sight of Coker of the Fifth, and the expression on Coker's face.

Days had passed.

They had been dismal days for Coker. He had taken his sentence of Coventry lightly, in fact amusedly, when it was promulgated. He was not taking it lightly now.

He found it awful.

For two or three days, he had borne it fairly well. He drew comfort from the reflection that he was in the right, that he was standing up against injustice and misunderstanding. His sense of dignity came to his aid. If the fellows chose not to speak to him, well, then, let them jolly well keep mum, and be blowed to them! That was his view.

But after a very short time, he found dignity a cold and rather dismal companion in his solitude.

Dignity was all very well. But a fellow couldn't live in the midst of a crowded school like Robinson Crusoe on his island. It was growing irksome, painful, oppressive.

Coker never would have admitted that he was fond of talking. He prided himself on being one of those strong, silent characters. A fellow of few words, but those words right to the point. Brief and businesslike, not one of your chatters or tattlers. But the actual fact was, that Coker's voice—not otherwise musical—was music in his own ears. He never tired of it, being the only fellow at Greyfriars who didn't.

Nearly a week of enforced silence had passed, and Coker had almost forgotten the sound of that voice he loved so well.

He had laughed at his sentence when it was passed, but he was not in a laughing mood now.

He was feeling, like Cain of old, that his punishment was greater than he could bear.

The amount of unuttered conversation, now bottled up in Coker, was almost incalculable. Indeed, there really seemed



As Bunter made a leap for the doorway, oranges and apples shot from his stuffed pockets. "Why, you—you—you——" gasped Coker.

a danger, as Bob Cherry had feared, that he might burst.

There had been several outbreaks of temper on Coker's part. He had had a few fights on his hands.

But it booted not, as a poet would say.

He could not punch his way out of Coventry.

And he had collected so many damages, in the course of his strenuous combats, that even Coker, hoity as he was, tough as he was, had grown fed up with expressing his indignation in that manner. He had had two prefects' beatings for walloping cheeky fags—their cheek consisting in carrying out Wingate's orders, and not speaking to Coker when he honoured them by addressing them. He had had another beating for punching Loder of the Sixth. And Coker was fed up with it. Since then he had, so to speak, used no other. It was obviously not good enough.

But it was awful, and growing awfuller!

Seldom had Horace Coker and silence been found together. Only in the still, small hours of the night, had his voice been at rest, and Potter and Greene were of opinion that he talked in his sleep. Now he and silence were inseparable companions.

It was not only silence that afflicted Coker. Coker was a gregarious animal. He liked company. His own company,

he was convinced, was the best company going. But he was not satisfied with it himself.

Some fellows, in such an unfortunate position, would have found occupation for leisure hours, if not solace, in study. Coker might have taken this opportunity of making up for a lot of lost time. But he had never had any weakness for study. If he got through class somehow or anyhow, that was good enough for Coker. He was weak in maths, but had no desire to be stronger. His construe almost made Prout tear his hair in the Form-room, but Coker did not desire to improve it; neither had he any regard for Prout's scanty locks. Study, as a resource, was useless to him.

He drew comfort, for a little while, from the reflection that Potter and Greene, at least, were bound to come round. Having enjoyed the inestimable blessing of Coker's friendship, how could they conceivably throw away that priceless jewel?

Alas! Little as Coker suspected it, Potter and Greene were fairly revelling in the cessation of Coker's conversation.

They missed Coker in many ways. Coker's study was a land flowing with milk and honey, and at tea-time, specially, Potter and Greene felt what might be described as a draught. Aunt Judy's ample hampers were as ample as ever, and Potter and Greene, of course, could not share the hampers of a fellow

to whom they no longer spoke. Also it was rather awkward to have to work in other fellows' studies, their own being uninhabitable now with Coker there. But it was so agreeable, so very agreeable, not to have to listen to Coker's chin-wag, that Potter and Greene bore all these drawbacks with fortitude.

That hope soon failed Coker. His former friends, instead of coming round, seemed to be forgetting that they had ever known him.

Coker even began to be glad of classes; when Prout spoke to him in class, though it was generally in a tired or a sardonic tone, and always to find fault, at least he was spoken to. Once or twice he had, greatly to Mr. Prout's surprise, dropped into his Form master's study, to ask some question about Livy. Coker hated Titus Livius with deadly hatred; he had heard, quite without enthusiasm, of the rumoured discovery of the lost books of Livy; though he would have been interested to hear that the books in existence had been hopelessly lost. But even Prout on Livy was better than nothing; it was, at least, the sound of a human voice.

Prout began to have hopes of Coker. This unexpected interest in a classical author, this new spirit of inquiry, seemed to indicate that the most backward pupil in Prout's Form was improving at last!

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,155.

HAL SMILES

AND
HIS MAGIC RING!



THIS WEEK:
CAYNINGHAM
GOES WEST!

A few seconds before, Cayningham had been a grey pile of ancient monastic buildings. Now, owing to the magic of Hal Smiles' ring, it's a ranch-house situated on a rolling stretch of prairie, housing fully-blown cowboys!—Eureka!

I.

The Wish!

"SMILES!"

No answer.
Mr. Crossley, the master of the Fourth at Cayningham, frowned. He was addressing Hal Smiles, the boy with the magic wishing-ring. Smiles, like everyone else in the Fourth just then, was supposed to be concentrating on English History. But suppositions had gone wrong in his case. The kind of history he was concentrating on was concerned with a country thousands of miles from Old England—a country where handsome, fearless cowboys engaged in fearsome warfare with bloodthirsty Indians and treacherous Mexicans. Hal Smiles, as a matter of fact, was reading with rapt attention the latest number of the "Western Blood" Library.

"Smiles!" roared Mr. Crossley.

"Oh! Yes, sir?"

Hal came round with a sudden start. "I asked you a question!" thundered Mr. Crossley.

"Yes, sir. The answer's 1066!" said Hal Smiles, optimistically hoping that Mr. Crossley's question had related to the date of the Conqueror's landing. "Is that right?"

For a moment there was a gasp from the Fourth. That gasp was followed by a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Crossley furiously. He glowered at the boy with the magic ring. "So you think the answer is 1066, do you? Are you aware, Smiles, of the exact nature of my question?"

"I—I—"

"Then I will tell you. The question I asked was: How many wives had Henry VIII? Do you still consider, Smiles, that the number one thousand and sixty-six forms an appropriate answer?" demanded the Fourth Form master sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, sir," pursued Mr. Crossley, "you were paying no attention whatever to the lesson. As this is not the first occasion I have had to complain

of inattention on your part, I do not propose to punish you myself—"

"Thank you, sir!"

"Instead I will take you to the Head. Follow me!"

"Oh!"

Having no option in the matter, Hal Smiles followed.

Dr. Lamme, the headmaster of Cayningham College, was a short, stout gentleman with a cheery manner. The more "lickings" he administered the cheerier he became. On the rare occasions when he felt called upon to give some unfortunate junior a public swishing it was hard to keep him from roaring with laughter.

"Trouble, Crossley?" he chuckled as Mr. Crossley led the way into his study.

"Yes, sir. This wretched boy has been neglecting his lessons again, and—"

Dr. Lamme smiled happily.

"Well, well, Crossley, no need to go into details. Take it all as read. Will a dozen of the best meet the case?"

"I leave that to your superior judgment, sir."

"Thank you, Crossley! Hold out your hand, Smiles!"

Smiles obeyed.

A dozen of the best followed—six on each hand. By the time the little ceremony was over both he and the Head were yelling—the one with pain and the other with laughter.

"That will do, I think!" remarked Dr. Lamme, wiping the tears from his eyes. "Be more attentive—ha, ha, ha!—in future. You may go."

And that was that!

After morning lessons Hal Smiles and his particular chum, Fred Larking, strolled off together for a walk round the playing-fields, discussing Form masters and headmasters in terms that were far from complimentary.

Hal was wearing his magic wishing-ring, the wearer of which obtained each day the first wish he happened to express. It so happened that Hal had not uttered a wish that morning. In point of fact, he had temporarily forgotten all about it for the ring had not been in his possession long enough for him to appreciate it fully.

From discussing schoolmasters and their little ways, Hal and his chum went

on to discuss the heroes of the "Western Blood" Library—those heroes of the wide, open spaces where men were men and schoolmasters, presumably, had no place in the scheme of things.

"I wish Cayningham was a ranch in the Wild West!" exclaimed Hal Smiles suddenly.

II.

Wild and Woolly!

BANG! Hal Smiles' wish had been fulfilled.

The first intimation our heroes received was the feeling that something was happening to their clobber. Then they looked down at themselves and looked at each other and jumped.

"It's happened!" shrieked Fred Larking.

"Oh, my hat! I'd forgotten the magic ring!" gasped Hal Smiles. "Just look at us!"

They looked and roared. For instead of being dressed in the sober school garb they had been wearing a moment before, they were now attired in the gorgeous habiliments of fully-blown cowboys! From the crowns of their Stetson hats to the toes of their spurred boots the transformation was complete.

"And—and look at the school!" stammered Fred Larking.

Hal Smiles rubbed his eyes.

A few seconds before Cayningham had been a grey pile of ancient monastic buildings. Now it was a low-built ranch-house! Everything had changed. The playing-fields had become a rolling stretch of prairie land, the quadrangle was a corral, in which cattle moved about entirely at their ease. Groups of boys whom they recognised as school-fellows were hurrying about, excitedly taking stock of their new surroundings and their new garments. Apparently everybody at Cayningham was similarly affected.

It was amazing! But seeing was believing; it couldn't be denied that Hal Smiles' involuntary wish had been completely fulfilled!

Hardly able to control their laughter, Hal and Fred walked back towards the ranch-house.

As they approached it two elderly cowboys came staggering down the veranda, their faces white with fear.

"The Head!" roared Hal Smiles. "It's the Head and Mr. Crossley!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Say, you guys, what's all this mean, huh?" came a shout from Dr. Lamme. "I guess— Oh, dear! What am I saying? Even my speech is affected!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I kinder reckon I got the rats—I mean, surely I am suffering from hallucinations" almost wept Mr. Crossley. "What does all this mean? Say, boss— I mean, Dr. Lamme—"

"Ha ha, ha"

The Head, after staring about him dazedly for a few seconds, seemed to recover himself again.

"I guess you're a't wrong, pard!" he said, frowning at the master of the Fourth. "I ain't no doctor—not me, siree! I sorter had a notion I was myself jest now, but I reckon I was dreamin' I'r plain Bill Lamme reely—owner of Cayningham Ranch!"

"Oh dear—I mean, waal, I swear!" gasped Mr. Crossley, who seemed to be struggling between two languages. "Say, boss what's the orders?"

"You jest get busy an' rope that steer that's moseyed outer the corral—you hyer me?" shouted the owner of Cayningham Ranch.

"Why, surely boss!" groaned Mr Crossley

A dazed crowd of brightly-attired cowboys gathered round the veranda to watch Mr Crossley rope the escaping steer.

The master of the Fourth unslung the lariat that was hanging from his belt and made a rush at the steer.

"Whoopee!" yelled Mr. Crossley.

"Go it sir!" roared Hal Smiles. Mr. Crossley "went" it!

So did the steer.

One look from his reddish eyes was apparently enough to convince that animal that Mr. Crossley was a novice at steer-roping. Mr. Steer snorted and pawed the ground, then lowered his big head and bounded towards the master of the Fourth!

Mr Crossley let out a yell.

"Yow-ow! The beast's coming for me! Lemme gerraway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The onlookers roared. They simply couldn't help it. The sight of Mr. Crossley in the rig-out of a cowboy was enough to make a cat laugh, without anything else. But the sight of Mr. Crossley in cowboy's garb breaking cinder-track records in his frantic efforts to escape a furious steer, was enough to bring a smile to the face of a graven image.

The inevitable happened. As he sprinted, Mr. Crossley suddenly felt something violent and painful snite him in the rear. Another instant, and the master of the Fourth was sailing through the air towards the veranda of the ranch-house.

If he had landed on the wooden floor of the veranda, Mr Crossley would doubtless have hurt himself rather severely. Fortunately, there was something in the way to break his fall—in the shape of Rancher Lamme, ex-headmaster of Cayningham College!

Dr. Lamme, like the rest, had been roaring with laughter. When the flying steer-roper

caught him broadside on, he continued to roar though on a somewhat different note.

Crash!

"Yow—ooooooooo!"

"Well caught, sir!" yelled Hal Smiles. "Ha, ha ha!"

The ex-schoolmaster-ranchmen rolled round the veranda in a sort of catherine-wheel, clasped in what appeared to be a most affectionate embrace.

Some of the cowboys took a step forward to go to their assistance. But before they could do so there came a cry that sent a thrill through every heart.

"Injuns!"

"Redskins, by Jove!" shouted Fred Larking. Look at 'em, Hal!"

The injunction was unnecessary. Every eye was already turned towards the rolling prairies that stretched away into the distance.

For, riding towards the ranch at a furious gallop, was what looked like an entire tribe of howling Redskins in full war-paint!

The savages were armed to the teeth. Gleaming rifles were brandished aloft in their dusky arms, while a bowie-knife and a tomahawk hung by every side. As they came nearer, the fascinated spectators heard their wild war-cries.

"Ai-ai-ai-ai!"

"Quick! We must make a fight of it!" shouted Hal Smiles. "Back to the house and take cover everybody!"

There was a rush for the veranda, and a wild scramble for the guns which were found to be hanging in the main hall of the ranch-house. Hal Smiles and Fred Larking were among the first to seize weapons and take the lead. But, even as they came out on the veranda again, the Redskins were leaping off their fiery steeds in front of the ranch-house.

It was a hopeless battle. For a few minutes, the air echoed with the sharp crack of rifle-fire, and one or two of the enemy fell, wounded by the defenders' fire. But for one that fell, a score rushed, yelling on to the veranda and into the house, and very quickly the fighting had become the hand-to-hand

variety, and the boys were being overcome and disarmed by the dozen.

It was soon over, then. The triumphant savages herded their prisoners towards the corral and tied them up half a dozen at a time to the fencing. Then the chief of the tribe advanced towards Dr. Lamme, who had been tied to a special stake apart from the rest.

"Ho, paleface chief! Redskin, he beat um paleface dogs!" he shouted.

"I—I—" stuttered Dr. Lamme, then he dried up, unable to say another word on account of the chattering of his teeth!

The chief of the Indian tribe regarded him with scorn.

"Huh! Paleface afraid! To-morrow at dawn he feel more fear!"

"W-w-what are you going to do to-morrow, then?" quavered Dr. Lamme.

The savage's answer sent a shudder of horror through the captives, and drew a howl of fear from the Head and Mr. Crossley.

"To-morrow, at dawn, we torture all the palefaces till they die!"

III
Unsolved!

"WELL, this is a go!" Fred Larking made that remark next morning as he woke from a doze.

Dawn was breaking over the Western plains, and a hopeless dawn indeed it seemed for the palefaces of Cayningham Ranch, late Cayningham College.

It had been most uncomfortable night for them. Trussed up as they were, they found it impossible to move a limb, even when the cattle in the corral gored them, which they occasionally did. And, of course, added to their discomforts was the disconcerting knowledge that they were all to be tortured to death in the morning, which made things twice as bad.

At the first sign of dawn there came an agonised yell from Dr. Lamme.

"Ow! Rescue, somebody! Don't let

(Continued on page 28.)



For a few minutes the air echoed with the sharp crack of rifle fire as Hal Smiles and Fred Larking led the attack against the savages.



(Continued from page 13.)

But this resource was a desperate one, and Coker availed himself of it very little. Prout on Livy might be better than dead silence, but there was not much in it!

Horace Coker walked out of the House on a Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at Greyfriars, with a clouded brow and a doleful eye.

Coker had tons of money; and there were lots of pleasant ways of spending a half-holiday, even if he was not wanted in matches, and looked on with disparaging eyes even at games practice. He could, if he liked, phone for a car for a joy-ride. He could book seats at any entertainment that was permitted to Greyfriars men. He could stand a spread of unlimited extent. But to enjoy these things he needed company. And there was no company.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, and grinned. Some fellows felt rather sorry for Coker; he was such an ass, and was so dismally down on his luck. But Bunter had no sympathy to spare. Bunter found him amusing.

Potter and Greene were coming down the path, directly towards Coker. Coker did not stop; but he slackened pace. He was giving his old friends a chance to break the ice if they liked.

They did not like. They passed Coker, unregarding. His eyes gleamed as they passed; but Coker had learned, by this time, that assault and battery were no way out of his trouble. They passed him unknicked and unpunched.

The cloud settled more darkly over his rugged brow.

"He, he, he!" Coker glanced round. Billy Bunter cachinnated—at the same time backing, prudently, a little farther away.

Coker's eyes glinted. It had come to this—that he was cackled at! Cackled at openly, in open quad, by a fat fag!

He made a stride towards the Owl of the Remove. He had learned to control his indignation and wrath! But they were liable to break out of control at any moment. They broke out now.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter; and he fled. Three or four Sixth Form prefects were at a little distance. Billy Bunter sagely scuttled in that direction.

The prefects glanced round. Coker stopped. Walker of the Sixth was already slipping his ashplant into his hand. Coker turned and walked away. From a safe distance an unmusical cachinnation followed him:

"Ho, he, he!" Coker tramped on his way. Under the elms he came in sight of Hobson of the Shell.

He paused. Hobson had been his friend in the Shell, before Coker got

his remove. Since then, Hobby had been his deadly foe. Coker, once in the Fifth, was of the Fifth Form, Fifth-Formy, so to speak. He treated Hobson with the lofty contempt of a senior for a mere junior. Hobson had resented it hotly; to Coker's scornful amusement. Now it came somehow into Coker's mind that he had, perhaps, been rather hard on Hobby.

The fellow was a cheeky fag, of course; he had had the extraordinary impudence to fancy that Coker would continue to know him after passing up into the Fifth. Still, he hadn't been a bad kid, in his way. Coker did not acknowledge to himself that, in his forlorn state, he was prepared to descend into the Lower School for the company that was denied him in the Upper. In a gracious and condescending mood he approached Hobson of the Shell.

"Hallo, Hobby!" he said genially. Hobson of the Shell stared at him blankly.

"Nice afternoon for a walk, what?" said Coker.

Hobson still stared. Possibly Hobson felt that the time had come for him to take the upper hand, and get a little of his own back, as it were. Anyhow, he stared at Coker as if he were staring through space.

"Coming out?" asked Coker desperately.

Hobson of the Shell walked away. "I was speaking to you, Hobby!" said Coker, breathing hard.

James Hobson, like Felix, kept on walking.

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared Coker.

Hobson, still apparently unaware of Coker's existence, joined a group of Shell men. He seemed to have lost his voice while he was with Coker. Now he found it. What he said to the Shell fellows seemed to entertain them; for they all looked towards Coker and laughed.

Coker was very near to running amuck at that moment. With great self-restraint, however, he turned away and mouched down to the gates on his lonely own.

Fisher T. Fish, of the Remove, was rooting about in the gateway, with a worried look. Fisher T. Fish had been counting his money that afternoon, and found that he was a halfpenny short. This discovery, naturally appalling to any citizen of the United States, worried Fishy dreadfully; and he had been rooting all over Greyfriars for that halfpenny. Somewhere he had inadvertently dropped that ha'penny. Greyfriars was large, and a halfpenny was small; so Fishy had all his work cut out to find his lost wealth. But he had to find it. A halfpenny was a cent in real money; and Fishy could not contemplate such a loss without deep and painful emotion.

"Hallo! Lost something?" asked Coker genially.

Fisher T. Fish looked up. "I'll help you find it, kid!" said Coker kindly. "What have you lost?"

"I guess—" began Fishy.

Then he stopped. Coker was in Coventry; and there were plenty of fellows in sight. Speaking to Coker meant six from a prefect's ashplant. Fisher T. Fish closed his mouth again.

"Well, what have you lost?" asked Coker.

Coker actually wanted to hear Fisher T. Fish's nasal tones. He could not

help feeling that he had reached the limit.

But even Fishy's nasal squeak was not for Coker. Fisher T. Fish turned away in silence. Bent half double, he resumed his search for the lost half-penny.

It was the last straw! And perhaps Fishy's attitude tempted Coker. He made a stride and let out his boot.

"Whoop!" roared Fishy, as he rolled over. "Great snakes! Jerusalem crickets! Yow-woooop!"

Coker walked out of gates, feeling a little better.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Pig in Clover!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Br-r-r-r!" "I say—" "Roll off!" "Beast! I mean, dear old chaps—" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you fellows, it's rather important," said Billy Bunter. "I say, Coker's gone out."

"What about it, fathhead?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I mean, now he's gone out there'll be nobody in his study. Potter and Greene don't go there now."

"Well, ass?" "Of course, he may come in any minute," said Bunter. "He's just mouching around, you know, because nobody will speak to him."

"Poor old Coker!" said Bob Cherry.

"The poorfulness of the esteemed old Coker is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, what about this afternoon?" asked Frank Nugent, resuming the discussion that Bunter had interrupted. "We haven't got to start for an hour yet, and so—"

"I say, you fellows, where are you going?"

"Echo answers where," said Bob. "Going to tea somewhere?" asked Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his big spectacles.

"Bow-wow! Run away and play!" "Oh, really, Cherry! If you think I was thinking of coming along with you to tea—"

"Roll away, barrel!" "That wasn't what I came to speak to you fellows about, anyhow," said Bunter. "About Coker—"

"Oh, bless Coker!" said Harry Wharton.

"But he's gone out—"

"What the thump does it matter whether he's gone out or gone in?" demanded Johnny Bull impatiently. "What are you driving at, fathhead?"

"I mean, a fellow could walk into his study as easy as anything!" explained Bunter. "Nobody there, you know. And the hamper—"

"What hamper?"

"You fellows never notice anything!" said Bunter disdainfully. "Coker's had a hamper from his aunt. Being in Coventry, and on his own, he hasn't spread the stuff all over the Fifth as usual. See?"

"Blessed if I see!" said Harry.

"You're rather dense. We're all down on Coker, ain't we?" said Bunter. "He played a rotten trick on the First Eleven last week. Frightfully unsportsmanlike, and all that. He's been sent to Coventry for it. In my opinion that's not enough. I think we ought to

show him what we think of him—see? We raid that hamper—”

“My only hat! We’re to show Coker what we think of him by bagging his tuck!” ejaculated Bob Cherry.

“Exactly! Rather a good wheeze—what?” said Bunter.

“You fat villain!”

“Oh, really, Cherry—”

“Let Coker’s hamper alone, you frab-jous cormorant,” said Harry Wharton. “And buzz off!”

“I say, you fellows, I’ll keep watch in the passage, in case Coker comes back,” urged Bunter. “There’s precious little risk. And if Coker makes a fuss about it afterwards, it will be all right. The prefects won’t take any notice of him, in the circumstances, see, as he’s in Coventry. I can tell you, this is a chance not to be lost.”

“Fathead!”

Harry Wharton & Co. strolled away. “I say, you fellows—”

The Famous Five strolled on. Excellent as that chance was of annexing the contents of Aunt Judy’s hamper, the chums of the Remove did not seem keen on availing themselves of it.

“Beasts!” roared Bunter.

But the juniors were deaf to the voice of the charmer. They walked out of the House, leaving William George to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Billy Bunter grunted with annoyance.

Really, it was annoying. Coker’s study, always a land flowing with milk and honey, was now, as it were, overflowing with milk and honey, as Coker had not been whacking out his supplies with his usual lavish hand. Coker had gone out, and, as it was a half-holiday, he might stay out of gates a long time. A grub raid, therefore, was indicated; but Bunter had a little shyness about undertaking it himself. More than once he had been kicked out of Coker’s study, and he had a painful recollection of the weight of Coker’s boot. The beast might stay out; on the other hand, the beast might come in. The risk, perhaps, was not great, but Bunter had a natural desire that some other fellow should take it.

The Famous Five, however, were not taking any. No doubt they were down on Coker for his unsportsmanlike proceedings, but not to the extent of annexing his tuck.

Billy Bunter remained in doubt for some time. At last he rolled in the direction of the Fifth Form passage.

Like the monkey in the story he wanted to find somebody to pull his chestnuts out of the fire. But if there was no catspaw to be had, it was up to Bunter. He felt that it would be a

sin and a shame to miss that glorious opportunity.

Bunter was in luck. On that fine spring afternoon the Fifth Form passage was deserted. Bunter blinked cautiously along the passage through his big spectacles. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way. And there was no man. He rolled along the passage to Coker’s study.

He whipped into the study and closed the door.

He blinked round for the hamper. There it was, lying in a corner of the study. The lid was unfastened, but the hamper had not been unpacked. Poor old Coker, with no one to share his good things, had not bothered yet about unpacking it. Bunter was more than willing to save him the trouble.

His little round eyes gleamed as he dropped on his fat knees beside the hamper, and started. There were good things in that hamper—excellent things. Coker’s Aunt Judy knew what her dear Horace liked. And what Coker liked was good stuff, and plenty of it. So Miss Coker had sent him good stuff, and plenty of it, little dreaming what small pleasure it gave her dear Horace in the present afflicting circumstances.

Still, it gave Bunter pleasure, and that was something. Miss Coker might, or might not, have been delighted to see the pleasure it gave Billy Bunter.

The fat junior’s intention was to annex as much as he could carry, and scud to his own study in the Remove passage, to devour his prey in safety and at leisure.

That was his intention, but, like many intentions in this world, it was not carried out.

With such luscious things under his eyes and his fat hands, Bunter simply could not resist the temptation to take a snack in passing.

He took snack after snack.

It was several hours since dinner. Bunter had had nothing since that meal, except some toffee he had found in Bob Cherry’s study, and some biscuits he had discovered on Ogilvy’s desk. So he was naturally hungry—ravenous, in fact. He could not carry away in one trip all that he wanted from that hamper, and a return visit to the study would have been too risky. It was more prudent to stack it away inside. In that way Bunter could carry a remarkably extensive cargo. A few snacks—substantial snacks—and then he could depart with his pockets full, also. That seemed to Bunter a good idea, for the more unwilling he was to leave his plunder, the more probable it seemed to him that Coker, having gone out of gates, would stay out for some time.

Bunter’s jaws worked rapidly. His fat face beamed with a beautiful smile. This was something like.

Ample as were the contents of that hamper, they vanished rapidly. A cold chicken went down almost like an oyster. A pie followed it, and drove it home. A pudding followed the pie a little more slowly. Still more slowly a cake followed the pudding. But they all went. And after them went biscuits, and chocolates, and a few apples.

By that time the keen edge of Bunter’s appetite was worn off. He felt that he could halt. So, stuffing a banana into his mouth so as not to waste time, he proceeded to cram his pockets with apples, oranges, biscuits, doughnuts—all sorts of things, as many as he could cram in. Ample as the supply had been, very little remained in the hamper now. But little as it was, Bunter did not like to leave it. “Waste not, want not,” was Bunter’s maxim in such matters. It needed only a few more minutes to clear out what remained in the hamper, and dispose of it internally. Bunter put in those few more minutes, and then closed the lid on an empty hamper with a sigh of satisfaction.

Then he crossed to the door. And at the same moment the door opened, and Horace Coker walked into the study.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Diplomatic!

HORACE COKER was looking gluttony as he came in.

He had taken a little walk abroad, and passed a good many Greyfriars men in the course of his perambulations, everyone of whom had cut him dead.

In the quad, when he came in, several fags had sniggered as he passed; but poor Coker felt too dispirited to chase them, and cick them as they deserved. In the House he had passed Blundell of the Fifth, newly out of “sanny,” and asked him how he was. Blundell had not told him how he was; he had just walked off without a word. With a glum face Horace had come up to his study.

In all Greyfriars there was not a soul to speak a word to. He was alone amid a crowd. Coker had once been rather irritated by having a young brother in the Sixth Form. It impaired his lofty dignity to have a young brother in a higher Form. But he wished now that Reggie Coker had not left. The brainy Reggie had over-done study, and had had to go away for his health. Even

(Continued on next page.)

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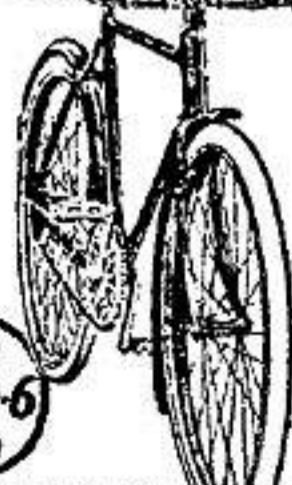
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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS :: PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER ::

Reggie would have been a resource at the present time, had he been there. But he was not there. Coker was beginning to understand what Robinson Crusoe must have felt like. He was beginning to feel that he would have treated a fag of the Second Form with the most gracious civility, for the sake of a talk with somebody.

And so, when he walked into his study, and nearly walked into Billy Bunter, Coker did not act as he would have acted a week or two before. A week or two before he would have slung Bunter to the door and kicked him out, without stopping to ask what he was there for. Instead of which he now said:

"Hallo!"

Bunter, overcome with terror, had almost stopped breathing. Now he breathed again.

If he could only get past Coker—

The lid of the hamper was closed, and concealed its state of emptiness. Coker had not glanced at it. If he could only get out before Coker discovered—

"I—I say, Coker—" he gasped.

Coker was in Coventry; but Bunter could not afford to bother about that now. While Coker was between him and the door, Bunter had to be careful.

"Hallo!" repeated Coker. "What do you want here, Bunter?"

"I—I—I came to—to speak to you, old chap."

Coker frowned for a moment. "Old chap" from a Removite was derogatory to his dignity.

But he unbent his brows the next moment. He remembered! He could not afford to take up the lofty attitude of old. He would have stood "old chap" from the smallest and inkiest fag at Greyfriars, for the sake of hearing a human voice.

"Squat down, kid!" he said, waving his hand to the armchair.

"I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"That's all right—tak' a pew."

It was an unprecedented honour for Coker to ask a fag to sit down in his study. Obviously, he was a changed Coker.

But Bunter was not desirous of being so honoured. All he desired was to get safe out of the study.

But Coker was between him and the door, and Coker, plainly, did not mean him to go. There was no help for it. Bunter sat down taking almost agonised care that oranges and apples did not roll from his over-laden pockets as he did so.

Coker sat on a corner of the table, and regarded Bunter kindly. Unfortunately, he was still between Bunter and the door.

"You've something you want to say to me, kid?" asked Coker, more genial than ever. Once more the music he loved, the music of his own voice, was sounding in his delighted ears.

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Go ahead!"

"The—the fact is, I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"Yes, kid."

"I—I came here to—to speak to you!" gasped Bunter. "I—I felt bound to tell you, Coker, that I think the fellows are treating you badly. I—I wanted you to know that I'm not in it. I said to Wharton only this afternoon, that if you spoke to me, old bean, I'd answer you like—like a friend. I suggested that they should come to the study with me. They refused. But I mean to be friendly, old chap."

Coker smiled.

In other circumstances he would cer-

tainly have kicked Bunter for presuming to offer him friendship.

But circumstances alter cases.

It was a case of any port in a storm! Besides, the fact that Bunter had come round, even so negligible and insignificant a nobody as Bunter of the Remove, seemed to indicate a break in the dreary horizon. It was a sign, Coker considered, that "Coventry" was breaking down—the first sign of getting back to normal.

So Coker smiled quite pleasantly.

"I'm sure you mean well, kid," he said graciously. "You're a cheeky little sweep, but I'm sure you mean well. I've no doubt the fellows will come round in time. Not that I care, you know!"

"Oh! Don't you?" said Bunter.

"Not in the least. I can do without Greyfriars more easily than Greyfriars can do without me!" said Coker loftily.

"Oh!"

"As you're here, you can stay a bit, and have a little chat," said Coker kindly. "Don't move! I've got a hamper here—"

"Eh?"

"I know what you are, Bunter," said Coker, with a cheery grin. "You can

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There sure ain't no green in my eye!"

Now what about it, you other fellows? Utilising your spare moments compiling Greyfriars limericks. Somebody's got to win these prizes. Why shouldn't it be YOU?

always do with a cake, what? I'll get you a cake out of that hamper. Don't move!"

Bunter felt his heart stand still.

"I—I say, don't!" he gasped.

"What?"

"I—I mean, I'm not hungry!" gasped Bunter. "I—I couldn't eat that cake to—to save my life, Coker!"

Coker stared at him in astonishment. This statement, from Billy Bunter, was really extraordinary.

As a matter of fact, it was the truth. Bunter could not possibly eat the cake—having eaten it already.

"Not ill, are you?" asked the astonished Coker.

"Nunno! But—"

"I'll get the cake—" Coker slipped from the table.

"Pi-pip-please, don't!" stammered Bunter. "I—I'd really rather not, Coker! I—I came here to—to speak to you, old chap! I—I shou!n't like you to think that I—I wanted anything."

"Well, my hat!" said Coker.

His opinion of Bunter rose considerably. Evidently Bunter had come there

in a perfectly disinterested way. He was not after the loaves and fishes. He could not have prove' his disinterestedness more than by actually refusing tuck.

"Well," said Coker, "you're not the greedy little beast I've always thought you, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"All the same, I'll get out the cake," said Coker. "I can do with a slice myself, after my walk. You'll have some, too, Bunter?"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter quaked.

As soon as Coker lifted the lid of that hamper—

"I—I say, Coker—" gasped Bunter.

"All serene. Don't move, kid! I'll get that cake in a jiffy," said Coker.

He crossed over to the hamper, and bent to raise the lid.

He had told Bunter not to move. But Bunter did move. He moved with unaccustomed swiftness.

He jumped out of the armchair as if it had suddenly become red-hot. He made a wild leap for the door.

At the same moment Coker threw up the hamper-lid.

He stared blankly into an empty interior—empty, save for some crumpled paper bags and scattered crumbs.

"My hat!" ejaculated Coker.

He spun round, with a face of fury. He knew now why Bunter had come to the study.

Bunter was leaping through the doorway. From his stuffed pockets oranges and apples shot as he leaped.

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Coker.

He leaped after Bunter.

Fear lent Bunter wings. He was out of the study in a twinkling, and his fat little legs fairly flashed as he did the Fifth Form passage in record time.

"Stop!" roared Coker.

Bunter was not likely to stop!

He ran for his fat life, with Coker's heavy tread thundering in pursuit. He made for the Remove passage, and reached it, beating Coker by a short head. There were several Remove men in the passage, and they did not see Bunter till he arrived. There was a collision and a roar.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Wow!"

"You fat freak!" roared Bolsover major. "What the thump—"

"Ow! Help! Yaroooh!"

"Coker!" yelled Tom Brown, as the Fifth-Former came careering round the corner. "Fifth Form cad!"

"Coker!" shouted Vernon-Smith. "Collar him!"

"I say, you fellows: Help! Yaroooh! Oh crikey!"

William George Bunter landed on all fours in the Remove passage, panting and gasping.

"Look here—" panted Coker.

But the Remove men did not heed. They collared Coker, and up ended him, and rolled him out of the passage.

"I tell you—" roared Coker.

"Shut up!" grinned Bolsover major. "You're in Coventry! Trundle him home, you men."

"I tell you—"

"Go it!"

"You cheeky young sweeps—"

"Give him beans!"

A crowd of Remove men joined up, and Coker was rolled home to the Fifth Form passage. Billy Bunter, breathless, limped into Study No. 7 and collapsed into the armchair. He was still palpitating over his narrow scape; but he drew considerable comfort from the frightful yells of Horace Coker as he was rolled home.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Run for your lives!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five juniors broke into a run. "I say—" roared Billy Bunter.

He glared after the five figures that vanished out of the school gateway, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

He rolled in pursuit.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been about to start for Cliff House, when Bunter spotted them. They were booked for tea with Marjorie & Co. at Cliff House School. Bunter was not aware of it; though he had a strong suspicion that the Co. were going to tea somewhere. The chums of the Remove had left themselves plenty of time for a leisurely walk to Cliff House. But they started in a great hurry when Bunter appeared in the offing.

Bob Cherry glanced back in Friardale Lane, and grinned.

"He's after us!" he remarked.

"Let's take him for a walk!" suggested Johnny Bull. "We've got lots of time to go a mile round."

"Good egg!"

The chums of the Remove slackened pace. Bunter, puffing and blowing behind, began to gain on them.

It might have been supposed that William George Bunter, after his enormous feed in Coker's study, would not have cared much to go to tea at Cliff House or anywhere else. But that could only have been supposed by a fellow who did not know Bunter.

A couple of hours had elapsed, since the Owl of the Remove had transferred the contents of Coker's hamper to his own capacious inside. Bunter was not exactly hungry again yet. But he was getting that way. Certainly he had no idea of missing tea, at tea-time. An extra meal between meals did not make Bunter desire to miss the regular ones, by any means. But he had another motive for bestowing his company on the Famous Five that afternoon. He could not help feeling that it would be judicious to keep out of Coker's way for a time. Coker had been really unpleasant about that incident in his study, and it was only wise to give him time to cool down.

Bunter rolled on, puffing and blowing, and came within hailing distance of the five juniors.

"I say, you fellows, stop for me!" he howled. "I'm coming!"

The Famous Five accelerated again.

"Stop, you beasts!" howled Bunter.

The grinning five trotted on. Bunter puffed and blew in the rear. Five minutes of that were enough for Bunter. He dropped into a walk, and spluttered for breath.

Then—as if to tempt him to keep on the pursuit—the Famous Five slackened again, and strolled on at an easy walk.

Bunter—about to abandon the pursuit in despair—was encouraged, and he rolled on.

Harry Wharton & Co. turned into a footpath in Friardale Wood. During the next half hour, Bunter had quite an exciting and interesting time. Again and again he almost overtook

the quintet. But every time he nearly reached them, they put on speed and distanced him again. It dawned on Bunter's fat brain at last that this was a practical joke. The March day was sunny, but it was not warm; but Bunter was crimson and perspiring at the end of half an hour.

"Oh, you rotters!" he gasped. "You awful beasts! I say, you fellows, stop for a chap! Rotters! I say, old beans! Beasts!"

The Owl of the Remove halted at last, and mopped his damp brow. Had he been aware of the Co.'s precise destination, he would have abandoned the chase, and made a short cut for that destination. Unfortunately, he was not aware of it. But he felt that it couldn't be Cliff House, for the Co. were heading in almost the opposite direction from that establishment.

Five smiling faces looked back at Bunter.

"Put it on, fatty!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Yah! Beast!"

"Roll on, barrel!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Oh dear!" Bunter panted for breath. Although he was getting ready for another meal, his last meal was, as a matter of fact, rather telling on him.

He did not roll on. He leaned on a tree and struggled for wind. The Famous Five waved their hands to him, and walked on, in a very leisurely way, really tempting pursuit. Bunter blinked wrathfully after them, and

"Yaroooh!" gurgled Bunter. "Leave off hitting me, you rotter!" "Well, get on, then!" roared Coker. Helped by Coker's punching, the fat Removeite made a desperate effort to clamber up the branch.



shook a fat fist. He was not to be taken in again.

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared in the wood at last. And as Billy Bunter was now dropped, they followed a roundabout course to Pegg Lane, which led them to Cliff House School—minus Bunter.

Bunter remained leaning on a tree for quite a long time. His second wind was long in coming.

When he moved at last, he was still breathing spasmodically, and his pace emulated the slow and stately progress of a snail.

He was more than a mile from Greyfriars; he had lost the Famous Five, and could not guess whither they were bound; and unless he got back to Greyfriars soon, he would be late for tea in Hall. The thought of missing tea made Bunter feel quite hungry.

He followed a footpath that led to the little stream that intersected the wood, and which was crossed by a plank bridge. That was the shortest cut back to Friardale Lane. He crawled along the footpath, and the little stream—a feeder of the Sark—came in sight.

The March rains had swollen the stream, and it flowed level with the plank bridge. The broad plank was, however, quite safe for a passenger, firmly planted on stones on either side of the stream.

Bunter was about to step on it, when he suddenly halted, with a squeak of dismay.

From the opposite direction, a well-

known figure was approaching the stream.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "That beast Coker—"

He drew his fat foot back from the plank. He stood blinking in dismay at Coker of the Fifth.

Coker, for the moment, did not observe Bunter. He was walking along with his hands in his pockets, a gloomy frown on his brow and his eyes on the ground.

The hapless Horace was taking another solitary walk. He had to get through the half-holiday somehow.

He was in a dolorous mood.

When a Fifth Form man was willing to chat with a Remove fag, and bribe him with cake to talk, it showed that he was in desperate straits. And even that resource had failed Coker; even Bunter had not been available for conversation; he had only butted into Coker's study to raid his hamper. Coker was feeling more than ever like Cain, that his punishment was greater than he could bear. He was even beginning to doubt whether he was, after all, so completely and utterly in the right as he had supposed; wondering whether the fellows who were down on him had, after all, some just cause of complaint! This showed that Coker had been doing some thinking!

He looked up as he reached the stream and spotted a fat figure, a fat face, and a gleaming pair of spectacles, on the other side.

He glared.

"Oh! You!" he ejaculated.

"I—I say, Coker—" gasped Bunter.

Coker gave him a sour grin. He had been rolled home by the Removites, when he pursued Bunter to the Remove passage. But there was nobody to roll him here.

He made an inviting gesture to the fat junior.

"Come across!" he said.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I—I say, are you going to be a beast?" he gasped.

"I'm going to give you a jolly good licking, if that's what you mean," answered Coker.

"I—I say, I never touched that hamper!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"It—it was the cat! Mrs. Kebble's cat, you know! I—I saw it in your study."

If Bunter expected that statement to be believed, he was disappointed. Coker opened his pocket-knife, and cut a switch from the thicket.

Bunter did not need to ask him what he was going to do with that switch. He guessed quite easily.

"I—I say, Coker, old chap—"

"Are you coming across?"

"Nunno!"

"Then I'll come over for you!"

"I—I say, Coker, old chap. I—I'll speak to you if you like!" gasped Bunter. "I—I ain't sending you to Coventry, you know. I—I like you, old chap."

Coker put a foot on the plank.

"I say, don't come across, old fellow!" squeaked Bunter. "That plank ain't safe! It won't bear your weight, old chap!"

"Won't it?" grinned Coker.

"Nunno! You—you'll get drowned, you know—"

"I'll chance it!" chuckled Coker. He stepped on the plank.

Bunter cast a wild blink round him. The way was open for escape—several ways! But Bunter, after his pursuit of the Famous Five, hadn't a run left in him. He felt that he could not have run a score of yards to save his fat life.

"I—I say, Coker—"

"I'm coming!" grinned Coker.

"Look here, you beast, you go back, or I'll upset the plank and pitch you in!" howled Bunter desperately.

It was the only way!

Bunter stooped over the end of the plank and grasped it in his fat hands.

Coker halted, nearly half-way across.

"Leave that plank alone!" he roared, in alarm.

"Go back, you beast!" yelled Bunter.

"I'll jolly well pitch you in if you come any nearer."

The Owl of the Remove was desperate now. He grabbed the plank with both hands, and strove to jerk the end from its resting place on the stones embedded in the bank. But the plank was heavy

and well set. And Coker's weight was on it.

"Let go that plank!" roared Coker.

"Shan't!" gasped Bunter.

"I'll pulverise you—"

"Go back then, you beast!"

Coker was not the fellow to go back. The plank trembled under Bunter's frantic tug. Coker did not go back, but he hesitated. The little woodland stream, shallow in the summer, was now swollen by the spring rains, and ran hard and fast on its way to join the river. In the middle, it was over Coker's depth, and a fall into the water was dangerous.

"You'd better go back!" panted Bunter. "You'll be jolly well drowned—you know you can't swim!"

That did it!

Among the many things on which Coker prided himself, was swimming. About Coker's swimming, as about everything else that Coker did, there was a difference of opinion at Greyfriars. Coker's belief was that he was like a cork in the water. Other fellows thought he was more like a stone. Coker swam, perhaps, a little better than he played football. But that was not saying a lot.

"Can't swim!" repeated Coker. "Why, you—you—you—" Words failed Coker.

He strode along the plank with the switch firmly grasped in his hand. Bunter had raided his hamper, but that was nothing compared to telling Coker that he could not swim. With gleaming eyes, Horace Coker strode on.

Bunter gave a squeak of terror, and made a herculean effort. He dragged wildly at the plank.

It stirred a little—but only a little. Coker wobbled dangerously, and then, by a miracle it seemed, regained his balance. He rushed on. One more terrific effort Bunter made—and over-balanced. There was a shrill squeak, a splash, and a gurgle, and Billy Bunter disappeared into the water.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Coker!

HORACE COKER stood on the plank and stared.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

A fat face reappeared in the rushing water.

"Yurrrgggh!"

That was Billy Bunter's only remark. Two fat hands were thrown up, with the natural consequence that the fat face immediately vanished again.

Coker for the moment stood spell-bound.

Bunter of course, could swim, after a fashion. Every Greyfriars man had to learn to swim. But swimming in a bathing-suit in a swimming-pool, was very different from trying to swim with one's clothes on, in a rushing stream. Billy Bunter was quite helpless, even had he not been too terrified to put in practice what little he knew.

Coker gazed in horror.

Under his eyes, the fat junior was being swept away; and if he was swept out into the Sark—

It was only for a moment that Coker stood as if bound by a spell. Then Coker plunged in.

He went in with a mighty plunge that carried him after Bunter, down the current. And more by luck than anything else, his grasp closed on the struggling Owl.

Instantly Bunter grabbed him.

He did not think—he was past

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thinking—he acted on instinct. Two fat hands grabbed Coker.

"Groooogh!" gurgled Coker, as his mouth filled with water.

He struck out manfully.

Fellows who had seen Coker's exploits as a swimmer, would have been surprised now to see him keeping afloat. But he did keep afloat, by a series of miracles.

But keeping afloat was the utmost Coker could do. He could not fight the swift current that was rushing him towards the river. He could not get a chance of getting ashore.

The swift water rushed him away with Bunter.

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Coker.

Bunter's head bobbed up.

"Ooooh!" he squeaked. "Help! Joon! Grrrrgug-gug!" His head bobbed down again.

Coker struggled desperately.

Something smote him across the face. Instinctively he clutched at it. It was a long branch trailing down to the water. Coker held on. There was no need for him to hold Bunter, Bunter was holding him, clinging to him like a limpet. Coker's hands grasped the trailing bough, and he held on for dear life.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

"Urrrrgh!" spluttered Bunter. His head was safe out of the water now.

"Ow! Groooogh! Help! Gemme ashore, you beast! Gemme out of the water, you rotter! Ooooh!"

"Hold on!" gurgled Coker.

There was no need to tell Bunter to hold on. His fingers were digging into Coker's neck.

"Keep cool!" said Coker.

"Groooogh! Beast! Ooooh!"

Coker was cool enough. With all his faults—and their name was legion—Coker had boundless pluck. Had he been a good swimmer, all would have been well. Unfortunately, Coker's wonderful powers as a swimmer existed only in Coker's imagination. The things Coker believed that he could do were numberless, but the things he actually could do were much more easily enumerated.

Crack!

The sagging branch gave a loud crack, as the current tore at Coker and Bunter.

"My hat! It's going!" gasped Coker.

"Groooogh!"

"Catch hold——"

"Yooooogh!"

"Catch hold of the branch, you fat fool!" hissed Coker. "Can't you understand? It will hold one of us!"

"Urrrrrrgh!"

Bunter seemed to grasp it at last. He shifted one hand from Coker's neck to the branch, then the other. Coker relieved of his weight, swam more easily, and took his own weight off the sagging branch, holding the end of it to save himself from being swept away.

"Now climb, fatty!" he said breathlessly. "Climb, you blithering blitherer! Clamber up, you burbling fathead! Can't you get it into your thick skull, you hopeless idiot? Do you want to be drowned, you footling frump?"

Coker was not polite. But it really was no time for polished courtesy. Bunter, babbling with funk, was a helpless burden on his hands. He clung on to the branch squealing with terror.

"Will you climb up, you potty porpoise?" gasped Coker. "I'll jolly well hammer you if you don't!"

"Yaroooh!" gurgled Bunter, as Coker suited the action to the word. "Grooh! Ooooh! Beast! Leave off hitting me, you rotter! Gurgh!"

Perhaps the punching helped Bunter

to collect his fat wits. He made a resperate effort to clamber up the branch.

Coker helped him from below, with shoves and punches—more punches than shoves.

Somehow—he never knew how—Bunter clambered on the branch, which creaked and cracked under his weight.

He clung to it frantically, and spluttered for breath.

"Get on!" shrieked Coker. Holding the end of the branch where it dipped in the water, Coker was keeping his weight off it; but every moment he was nearly torn from his hold by the current. "Get on! Groooogh!" He gurgled as his mouth filled with water. "Ooooh! Gug-gug! Get along it, you fat idiot—do you hear?"

"Groooogh!"

"Buck up!" shrieked Coker.

Bunter crawled along the branch at last. Gasping and squirming and palpitating, he crawled and clambered and struggled along, till he reached the tree, and slithered down the trunk to firm land.

Then Coker essayed to clamber on the branch in his turn.

It had borne Bunter's weight, and the fat junior was safe ashore. But as Coker dragged himself up the cracking sounded more loudly and sharply.

"Oh, crumbs! It's going!" gasped Coker.

It went!

In an instant Coker was torn away by the rushing current, with a fragment of the branch in his hand.

He whirled away down the middle of the stream, and was lost to the sight of the fat junior on the bank.

The next few moments were wild and whirling for Coker of the Fifth! His wonderful powers as a swimmer, in which he still had unbounded faith, seemed to fail him somehow. The rushing current seemed to do what it liked with Coker.

The broad Sark was before his eyes, and he was being rushed out to the river, still struggling frantically. It was a twirl of the current that swept him into a bunch of weeping willows at the junction of the stream with the river. Coker clutched at the willows and held on for dear life. The current raced past him, and for some minutes he just held on, trying to recover his strength and his breath.

Then, with an effort, he dragged himself through the willows and sprawled on the bank, and collapsed in the grass, and for a long, long time Coker lay there, gasping and gasping as if he would never leave off gasping.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

What's Happened to Coker?

MR. QUEICH stared. So did Mr. Prout. The two Form masters were chatting in the gateway when a strange, weird, dragged figure came limping up.

It was Billy Bunter; but for a moment Mr. Quelch hardly recognised that ornament of his Form.

Bunter was in a parlous plight. His hat was gone; his hair was wet and tousled. He was drenched from head to foot; he squelched water from his boots, and left a damp trail behind him. His fat face was sickly in hue and daubed with mud. Never had such a deplorable-looking object presented itself at the gates of Greyfriars.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Prout.

"Bunter—is that Bunter?"

"Groooogh!"

"What has happened, Bunter?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,155.

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

I suggested to our clever rhymester that he should choose a junior with musical talent for his subject this week, and he's plumped solidly for Hoskins of the Shell.—Ed.



A PUCKERED brow, long hair unkempt,
A sight that's quite pathetic,
And all this, in a vain attempt
To seem a great aesthetic.
Of course, this chap you know quite well,
Who to great heights aspires—
It's only Hoskins of the Shell,
The "Wag"-ner of Greyfriars!

Sonatas, fugues, and preludes are
The joy of his existence;
But often, when he goes too far,
His chums, with firm insistence,
Come round to him and tell him "flat"
That if he doesn't end-o,
With "sharp" surprise he'll notice that
He soon will be "morendo."

Of course, to give the chap his due,
He's really good at playing—
He knows an instrument or two,
That goes without much saying!
But if he'd shut himself alone,
And "Bach" in close seclusion,
He wouldn't cause the grouse and groan,
And other chaps' confusion.

"Oh, go to Mars!" his chums advise,
When needing peace and quiet,
And anger gleams within their eyes,
Which presages a riot.
His pal, poor Hobson of the Shell,
Is quite a noble fellow—
He stands the strain of "listener" well,
While others rave and bellow.

Hoskins lives for music, but
Forgets that chaps around him
Just long to lock him in a hut,
With naught but water round him.
They cannot stand continual strain
Of Victory march or dirges—
And, oh, it gives poor Hoskins pain
When Liszt in rag-time merges.

But never mind, we'll raise a shout,
With pep that's well "marcato."
And all his praises bellow out,
In accents quite "staccato;"
For Hoskins, doubtless, will one day
Attain where he aspires—
And we shall all be proud to say,
"We know him—at Greyfriars!"

"Ooooooh!"
 "The boy has been in the water!" said Mr. Prout.

"Evidently!" said Mr. Quelch dryly.
 "Bunter, what—?"
 "Ow! Oooooh! I'm drowned—"

"What?"
 "I mean, nearly drowned! Grooooooh! Oh dear! Ooooooh!" groaned Bunter.

"I—I've been in the water, sir—in the wood—ooooooh! I shall catch cold! I'm dying! Ow!"

"You should be more careful, Bunter! You are a careless and foolish boy! Come with me!"

Mr. Quelch marched Bunter in, and hurried him to the House. Many eyes turned on Billy Bunter as he dragged drearily across the quad.

Mr. Quelch was a practical gentleman. He was angry with Bunter for coming in in such a state; and it was quite probable that he would cane him later for having fallen into the water.

But at the present moment Bunter required care, and the Remove master hurried him to the dormitory, ordered him to strip and turn in, and hastened away to enlist the services of the House-dame.

In a short time Bunter was rolled in blankets, with a hot-water bottle at his feet, and feeling considerably better.

Mr. Quelch came back to the dormitory.

"How do you feel now, Bunter?" he asked.

"Hungry, sir!"
 "Pooh! Pooh! You are not catching cold?"

"I—I think not, sir! But I'm awfully hungry—"

"You had better remain in bed for a time, and I will have something sent to you," said the Remove master. "Later you can explain to me how this accident happened."

Something was sent to Bunter. He sat up in bed and devoured it, and felt better still.

But Mr. Quelch evidently did not know how hungry Bunter was. The something that was sent up to the dormitory was barely enough for two ordinary fellows.

Bunter was feeling better, but he was still hungry. It had taken him a long time to crawl home to Greyfriars; and it was long, long past tea-time. Bunter was famished.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
 Bob Cherry's cheerful face looked in at the door. Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Beast! I've been nearly drowned!"
 "We've just heard that you came in looking like a drowned rat," answered Bob. "We're just back, old fat bean. Of course, we've come up to see you at once."

"Our anxiousness for the esteemed and absurd Bunter was terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I'm frightfully hungry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I've been jolly nearly drowned, and I'm as empty as a drum!" said Bunter indignantly. "Look here, get me something to eat! I've missed my tea!"

"Awful!" said Harry Wharton.
 "The awfulness is preposterous!"

"Oh, really, you fellows, I think you might be sympathetic! I'm simply ravenous; and that beast Quelch is going to lick me for falling into the water; I could see it in his eye! As if it was my fault, you know."

"Well, you were a silly owl to fall into the water," said Nugent. "But how did you get out again?"

"It was that beast Coker's fault. I

lost my hat in the water. I jolly nearly lost my spectacles. I say, you fellows, if you've got any toffee about you—"

"Coker?" said Johnny Bull. "You've been rowing with Coker?"

"Yes, the rotter! Still, I won't call him names now," added Bunter charitably. "I suppose he's drowned."

"What?" roared the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Well, I suppose he must be," said Bunter. "It was his fault I fell in; but he came in after me, you know; and after I got ashore he was swept away towards the river. I don't see how he could have got out—a rotten swimmer like Coker."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed blankly at Bunter.

He blinked at them.
 "I say, you fellows! I'm frightfully hungry—"

"You benighted chump!" gasped Wharton. "What do you mean—?"

"I mean I'm famished—"

"What do you mean about Coker, you bubbling fathead? What's happened to Coker, you fozzling frump!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

The captain of the Remove grasped Bunter by a fat ear.

"Yooooooogh! Leggo!"

"What's happened to Coker?" roared Wharton.

Under the persuasion applied to his ear, Bunter forgot, for the moment, that he was hungry. He spluttered out the story of his wild adventures that afternoon.

The juniors regarded him with consternation. Bunter rubbed his ear and snorted.

"Great pip!" said Bob Cherry.

"Coker can't swim for toffee—if he was washed away into the Sark—"

"Oh, I dare say he got out," said Bunter. "Anyhow, it was all his fault. I say, you fellows, if you don't get me something to eat, I shall have to get up, you know, and I'm really ill—"

"Have you told Quelch about Coker?" snapped Wharton.

"Eh? No."

"Why didn't you?"

"I forgot."

"Forgot!" yelled Wharton.

"You—you see I was hungry. I've had nothing to eat since—"

"You benighted chump!" roared Wharton.

"I wish you wouldn't roar at a fellow, Wharton—it makes me jump. Of course, I forgot—draggling home like that, all wet and worn out, and hungry, and—"

"Kill him!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I'll cut down and tell Quelch," said Harry. "Coker may be all right—but it looks—"

The Famous Five hurried to the door. Billy Bunter blinked after them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows," he yelled.

But the fellows did not heed. They rushed out of the dormitory, to carry the startling news to their Form master. Bunter blinked after their vanishing forms in almost speechless indignation. For some reason—inexplicable to Bunter—those beasts were deeply concerned about Coker, and forgot all about a much more important person. Bunter was sorry, of course, if Coker was drowned; still, he was hungry.

But they were gone, and Bunter decided not to be ill, but to get up and go in search of provender. The other fellows could worry about Coker if they liked. William George Bunter had plenty of occupation in worrying about W. G. Bunter.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alas!

"COKER!"

No answer.
 Hacker was taking call-over.

Except some of the Sixth-Form prefects, who had the lofty privilege of cutting call-over if it seemed good to them to do so, all the Greyfriars men were in Hall—with one further exception.

Coker of the Fifth was that exception.

Hacker called the name in vain. He repeated it, but the usual "adsum" was not forthcoming. The master of the Shell marked Coker absent.

There was a sort of hush on the assembled school. Faces in the Fifth Form were grave, the juniors were unusually subdued. Hacker had never seen the school so orderly and quiet at call-over.

As a matter of fact, almost all the fellows present had heard about Coker's misadventure by this time. It was nearly an hour since Billy Bunter had draggled in. Bunter had had to tell his story a dozen times at least, and even upon Bunter's fatuous mind, some sense of the seriousness of the matter had become impressed.

For Coker had not come in!

As Bunter had reached the school nearly an hour ago, there was, of course, ample time for Coker to have come in, if he had escaped from the water.

The natural inference seemed to be that he hadn't escaped.

Mr. Quelch, having heard what Wharton had to tell him, had immediately questioned Bunter, and then hurried to Mr. Prout, Coker's Form master. Mr. Prout, disturbed and uneasy, had walked forth to look for Coker, taking with him three prefects to help in the search. It was barely a mile to the plank bridge over the woodland stream—less than a furlong from that spot to the Sark. But the searchers had not returned. Apparently they were still looking for Coker.

In silence the school went out after call-over.

Every face was grave.

Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, looked worried and remorseful. Coker had, after all, been their friend. He had played them a scurvy trick, and they had been justly wrathful; but after all, as Potter said to Greene, it wasn't as if Coker had sense enough to know what he was doing. It wasn't. Greene said to Potter, as if Coker had the brains of a bunny rabbit.

Only that day, Potter and Greene had wondered, slightly, whether the sentence of "Coventry" was being a little overdone. It is true that it was the arrival of Aunt Judy's hamper that caused the doubt to arise in their minds.

Still, there it was, and they were glad to remember now that they had thought of letting Coker off, before this dreadful news reached them.

"Poor old Coker!" said Potter sorrowfully. "He couldn't help being a born fool!"

"Poor old Coker!" said Greene. "He couldn't help being a prize idiot!"

"He was a decent chap in his way," said Potter, and it gave him quite a "turn," to find himself using the past tense.

"He meant well!" said Greene.

"If—if he comes back all right, there won't be any more Coventry!" said Potter fervently.

"No fear!" said Greene.

"But—" Potter shook his head.

"But—" said Greene shaking his head.

Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout were chatting in the gateway when a strange figure, drenched from head to foot and squelching water from his boots, came limping up. "Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter—is that Bunter?"



"You see, he couldn't swim!" said Potter, almost tearfully. "He fancied he could swim! But he couldn't!"

"Not for toffee!" said Greene. "Pluck, if you like!" said Potter. "A fellow who swims like a brickbat, going in for a fellow, you know—"

"Heaps of pluck," said Greene. "If he'd only had a little sense to—"

"Ah!" said Potter. "If!"

On that point, all the Greyfriars fellows found themselves in agreement. Coker's pluck was extolled on all sides. Coker, had he been there, would not have felt flattered, perhaps, for it was because he was such a rotten swimmer that the fellows admired his pluck so much.

There were scores of fellows at Greyfriars who could have gone in, where Coker had gone in, without much danger. But then, they were swimmers. Coker wasn't!

Coker's keen desire to play football for the school, when he couldn't play footer for toffee, evoked only merriment. But his going into deep, swift water when he couldn't swim for toffee, was quite another matter. His own estimate of his powers was a mistake in either case, but in the latter case there was a display of pluck, and of generosity, that told in Coker's favour. Certainly it was a generous action on Coker's part, as well as a plucky one, a fellow who had been sent to Coventry, running such risks to rescue one of the fellows who had sent him there!

"It seems that that little beast,

Bunter, had been cheeking old Coker, or something," said Potter. Coker was "old Coker" again now. "From what he says, Coker was going to wallop him, when he pitched, and Coker jumped in after him. And he helped Bunter out, you know, and couldn't get out himself. Look here, let's go and kick Bunter."

"It's all we can do now," agreed Greene.

So they went and kicked Bunter. From this they drew some solace, feeling that it would have pleased Coker. It afforded no satisfaction whatever to Bunter.

The shades of night were falling fast, when Mr. Prout came back with the prefects. Every man gathered round to see them come in, and there was a hush as it was seen that they came without Coker.

Prout was looking deeply distressed. Only that morning, exasperated by Coker's "con," he had told Coker, at some length, what he thought of his intellect and his abilities. He wished now that he had not been quite so eloquent.

Prout went in to see the Head.

The prefects who had helped him to search for Coker, being questioned, could only say that they had rooted up and down both banks of the woodland stream as far as the Sark without finding any trace of the missing Fifth-Former. They had found nobody who had seen anything of him.

"Of course, he hadn't a chance," said

Wingate soubrely. "A rotten swimmer like Coker—"

"Once out in the river he was done for!" said Sykes.

"Might have been picked up by a boat," hazarded Potter. "It's been a fine day; a lot of boats on the Sark—"

"Then he would have come in before this!" said Fitzgerald.

"He's had heaps of time!" said Greene.

"Well, you never know, with Coker!" remarked Price of the Fifth. "He's such an ass—"

"Oh, draw it mild, Price!"

"Cheese it!"

"Well, he is!" said Price.

"Rubbish!"

"We needn't give up hope, by any means," said Wingate. "But—"

The Greyfriars captain glanced round. "Coker, whatever's happened to him, has done a jolly plucky thing. For such a swimmer as Coker to jump into deep water for a fellow was uncommonly plucky. If he's all right—and we all hope he is—Coventry is off."

"If only he'd come in safe and sound I'd let him jaw my head off!" said Potter sadly.

"I'd let him jaw me blind and silly!" said Greene. "The poor old chap was so jolly fond of wagging his chin, you know! It was a bit thick at times, but I'd be glad now even to hear him talking football!"

"Yes, even that!" said Potter.

After which nothing remained to be said.

In the Remove faces were as grave as everywhere else. Fellows remembered a lot in Coker's favour. It was rumoured that the Head was going to request the police to drag the river in the morning. Fellows still hoped that Coker would come in.

But after nightfall it seemed less and less likely. For if he was all right, why hadn't he come in long ago? Even Coker, though admittedly a prize ass, couldn't be deliberately leaving the school in this state of suspense.

Skinner expressed doubts as to whether Coker was drowned, on the grounds that a fellow born to be hanged cannot be drowned. But it was no time for Skinner's piquant humour. Skinner's head was banged on a study door by several indignant fellows, after which he was not funny on this serious subject any more.

"Poor old Coker!" said Bob Cherry, for the fiftieth time. "And only last week we were rolling him down the Remove staircase—"

"Well, he asked for it!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"I know. But—"

"The askfulness was terrific," observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the regretfulness is now preposterous."

"Only this afternoon," said Bolsover major, "we chased him out of this passage when he was after Bunter. I wish now I'd let him wallop Bunter."

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

The Removites dispersed rather dismally to their studies for prep. They only toyed with prep; they felt that, in the circumstances, Quelch couldn't be very exacting in the morning. On those grounds, some of the fellows did not start prep at all—among them William George Bunter. Thus it was that Bunter was the first fellow with the news.

The door of Study No. 1 was suddenly burst open, as Wharton and Nugent were working in a very desultory way, and Bunter's fat face was inserted into the study.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Wharton gruffly.

"But I say—"

"Scat!"

"Coker—" yelled Bunter.

"What—"

"He's come in!"

"Oh, my hat!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker All Over!

"COKER!"

"Old Coker!"

"Coker—great pip!"

Coker had come in!

Evidently Coker had not been drowned! It was not a grisly spectre revisiting the glimpses of the moon. It was Coker—Coker, as large as life, and twice as natural.

Just Coker!

He seemed surprised by his reception. Fellows swarmed on all sides to see him. Potter thumped him on the back. Greene dug him in the ribs. Wingate called out, "Hallo, Coker, old man!" Fellows swarmed round Coker, and everybody seemed glad to see him. Coker stared at them blankly, suspecting a rag of some sort.

"Here you are, old bean!" gasped Potter.

"Safe as houses!" trilled Greene.

"Hurrah!"

"Glad to see you, Coker—"

"How do you feel, old chap—"

"All serene; what?"

"Why didn't you come in before?"

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"We've been frightfully anxious—"

"Coker, old man—"

"Coker, old bean—"

Coker blinked. He had walked out of Greyfriars that afternoon, a fellow in Coventry, lonely and lorn. Not one of all this crowd of fellows would speak a word to him then. Now they all seemed to want to speak to him at once. Coker glared.

"Look here, if this is a rag—" he snorted.

"A—rag?" stuttered Potter.

"Well, what's the game, then?" demanded Coker. "Only a few hours ago you were making out that I was in Coventry—"

"That's all off now," said Wingate.

"You're let out of Coventry, old chap!" said Blundell.

"Sentence rescinded—for valour, you know!" grinned Fitzgerald.

"Blessed if I can make you out!" said Coker testily. "If the Coventry is off, all right! Not that I want to speak to such a set of asses! You've never talked sense, that I know of; and I don't expect you to begin now. Look here, what's all this shindy about?"

"See, the conquering hero comes!" roared Bob Cherry from the stairs.

"Good old Coker!"

"Hurrah!"

"The hurrahfulness is terrific!"

Coker looked more and more astonished. He seemed quite at a loss to know the meaning of this ovation.

"Look here, you blinking chumps—" began Coker rather excitedly. "What the thump—"

"Coker!" Mr. Prout came on the scene. "Coker! It is really you, Coker?"

"Eh? Yes, sir!" said Coker.

"I am glad to see you safe, Coker!"

"Eh? Of course I'm safe!" said the puzzled Coker. "I haven't been in any danger, that I know of."

"What—what? According to Bunter's statement, you jumped into the water to rescue him—"

"Oh, that!" said Coker. "Yes, that's so, sir. I got him out all right."

"Deep water—" said Prout.

"Yes, it was over my depth," said Coker. "That didn't matter much to a swimmer like me."

"Eh, what? Oh! I am glad to see you safe, Coker. But as you are safe, why did you not return to the school before? Why have you left us in this state of anxiety—of suspense?" boomed Prout. "We have all been very anxious on your account, Coker."

"Have you?" said Coker. "Blessed if I knew anything about it! I'm sorry I had to cut call-over, sir; but I really couldn't help it. You see, I was soaked with water, and I went to the wood-cutter's cottage on the Sark to dry my clothes. They were a jolly long time drying; that's why I wasn't able to get back before."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Prout.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wingate.

"Coker! Did it not occur to you to send a message—to relieve our anxiety?" boomed Prout.

Coker looked bewildered.

"Nunno, sir. Fellows have been late for call-over before, without all this fuss."

"Upon my word! Were you unaware, Coker, of the state of anxiety, of suspense, of—of deep anxiety—"

"What was there to be anxious about, sir?"

"Eh—what? After Bunter had related what had occurred, and you did not come in, Coker, cannot you understand that we were anxious?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said Prout.

There was a giggle on the staircase,

where the Removites most did congregate.

"I can't make this out," said Coker. "I suppose Bunter told what had happened? But what about it? I suppose the silly ass never made out that I was in any danger, did he?"

"Were you not in danger, Coker?"

"Certainly not, sir! It was nothing to me. Of course, if a fellow couldn't swim like a fish, it would have been different—"

"What—what?"

"But it was nothing to a swimmer like me," said Coker. "I could have done it on my head."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar.

"Dear me," said Prout. Prout was a solemn and majestic gentleman; but even Prout was grinning. "Well, well! I am glad to see you safe, Coker. And I fear that your danger was greater than you supposed. Well, well!"

And Prout was still grinning as he rolled back to his study.

Coker looked round on a sea of grinning faces.

"I can't make this out," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Making out that a fellow—a swimmer like me—was in danger, just jumping into the water," said Coker disdainfully. "I dare say you'd have been in danger, Potter, or you, Greene, but you know how I swim."

"We do!" gasped Potter.

"We does!" gurgled Greene.

"I'm not the fellow to brag," said Coker, "but I can say that I swim as well as I play football."

"Oh crikey!"

"I don't say I wouldn't have gone in for Bunter, if there had been danger," said Coker. "I would have, of course—any man here would have. But as it happened there was no danger. A swimmer like me is as safe in the water as on shore."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker, old man," said Wingate, laughing. "You've done a plucky thing without knowing it. I'm blessed if I know how you got out alive; but I'm jolly glad you did!"

And the Greyfriars captain chuckled as he walked away.

Coker stared after him, frowning.

"Cheek!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come up to the study, old bean," said Potter, slipping his arm through Coker's. "You'll want some supper."

Potter's thoughts had reverted to Aunt Judy's hamper.

"Come on, old fellow," said Greene, whose thoughts had taken the same direction as Potter's.

Coker was walked away by his friends—his newly-restored pals—leaving a chortling crowd behind him.

"Good old Coker!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Jevver see such an ass? Jevver hear or dream of one?"

"Never," said Harry Wharton, wiping his eyes.

"Hardly ever," chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Many sounds of merriment followed Coker to his study. Potter and Greene followed him in. Coker was feeling rather annoyed. But the cloud cleared off his face. It was pleasant, after all, to be on the old friendly terms again with his old friends, and to know that Coventry was no more. This was the first time since sentence had been passed on him that Potter and Greene had come into the study. Coker was really glad to see them there. He was ready to uncork a vast amount of bottled conversation.

"Well," said Coker, as he stretched

(Continued on page 28.)

For the Glory of France!

by Geo. E. Rochester



(Introduction on page 26.)

The Mission!

WITHIN the hour Bolke was holding an interrogation of prisoners, and what he learned was just another stark and tragic drama of the Legion.

Ali bu Sadi, the chosen of Allah and the leader of this widespread revolt, at the head of an immense force of five thousand picked fighting Arabs, had swept down a week beforehand on the garrison of eight hundred men.

The devoted eight hundred had put up a magnificent resistance against these hopeless and overwhelming odds, but the inevitable end had come, and those who had not been killed in the fight had died horribly by mutilation and torture. Then Ali bu Sadi had passed on, leaving behind him the force of five hundred Arabs which Bolke's gallant company had met and defeated that evening.

Paul and Desmond acted as escort to the final prisoner whom Bolke questioned. The wretched Arab, scared half out of his wits by the snarling devil who confronted him across the table, was prepared to tell all he knew.

"Then Ali bu Sadi took no prisoners?" rasped Bolke.

"No, not one!" replied the Arab quaveringly. Then, as an afterthought, he added, with whining eagerness: "But he had prisoners with him."

Instantly Bolke was all attention. "What prisoners?" he snarled. "You say he took none!"

"These prisoners were English," explained the Arab—"two men, a woman, and a young girl!"

Bolke leant forward across the table. "The names of these English people, you dog?" he demanded harshly.

The Arab spread out shaking hands in pleading gesture.

"I do not know," he replied hesitatingly. "One, I think—it was Warren."

There were two men in the room who were startled by that news. One was Paul, whose fingers tightened convulsively on his rifle; the other was Bolke, who launched himself to his feet, crashing clenched fist to the table.

"Who do you say, you dog?" he roared. "Warren—Sir Guy Warren?"

"Yes, yes!" babbled the prisoner; "that is the name. I know it now."

Breathing heavily, Bolke subsided into his chair. As for Paul, he was staring at the sergeant-major, astonished by the man's extraordinary outburst.

Not one chance in a thousand have the two Legionnaires of getting through the Arab lines alive. But orders are orders. . . . At midnight the two picked men set out on their perilous mission to bring help to the beleaguered garrison!

Why should Sergeant-Major Bolke be so visibly affected by the news of the capture of Sir Guy Warren?

Bolke alone could have answered that question. And he was wondering just how this unfortunate and unlooked-for development would affect his thousand pounds.

If Sir Guy Warren was a prisoner in the hands of the tigerish Ali bu Sadi, then Bolke would not give a sou for his—Warren's—life. It would matter little now to Sir Guy Warren whether Paul Blake lived or died. And it mattered less to Bolke, if he was not going to draw Warren's thousand pounds.

He addressed himself to the prisoner: "This English party is alive, you say?" he demanded.

The man nodded. "Yes," he gulped. "They are being kept as hostages."

Bolke was silent. Here was a ray of hope. Ali bu Sadi's quarrel was with the French. Not wishing to antagonise mighty Britain, it was quite possible that he would, as this cowering wretch had just said, treat the Warren party purely as hostages.

Of course, one never knew what a treacherous rat like Ali bu Sadi would do; but, still, there was a slight hope that Warren would emerge alive.

Dismissing the prisoner and his escort, Bolke rose to his feet. With hands clasped behind his back he paced the floor, brow wrinkled in scowling thought.

He was not thinking of his private feud with Blake, nor was he thinking of those whom he knew were only waiting an opportunity of waylaying him with murderous intent. His thoughts were of his duty to his company and France.

It was impossible to hold Zukra with the force he now commanded; he must be reinforced without delay. Two hundred miles northwards across the desert lay the large fort of Kesh-el-Kabar, under the command of Captain Lestrangle.

If he could get word through to Lestrangle help would be sent to him at once. He must get through.

But how? Northwards the desert would be swarming with hostile and warlike tribes. Death, swift and sudden or slow and ghastly by torture, would lurk behind every ridge and sandhill. What man of his company could attempt that journey of deadly peril with any hope of success?"

Lemarne! Yes, if any man could do it, it was Lemarne. Bolke sent for him.

"Lemarne," he said, when the grim-faced Legionnaire was standing rigid before him, "we must be reinforced at the very earliest moment. You realise that?"

"Yes."

"Before the dawn," continued Bolke, "you will leave here and endeavour to get word through to Captain Lestrangle at Kesh-el-Kabar."

"Very good, mon sergent!" replied Lemarne stiffly.

"You realise," went on Bolke, "that you have not one chance in a thousand of getting through alive?"

"Yes, I realise that."

With a strange, tense scrutiny, Bolke's little eyes dwelt on the stern face of Lemarne.

"Listen to me, mon vieux," he said, and his tones were less harsh than Lemarne had ever heard them. "I wish to ask you a question. Is your hatred greater than your sense of duty?"

Steadily Lemarne returned his gaze.

"You mean?" he questioned.

"I mean this," responded Bolke. "There were more than Kalgar and Stulz concerned in the attack on me. Who those men were I do not know. But they wished me to die. And die I will if you fail to reach Lestrangle at Kesh-el-Kabar."

He leaned forward across the table.

"When you go out into the desert, Lemarne," he went on vibrantly, "the road of escape and desertion will lie open for you towards the west. But remember this. It is not to save my life nor the lives of my company that I am sending you. It is so that the flag of France may continue to wave above this desert outpost which has been bought and held by the blood of our countrymen! Do you understand?"

"Yes," answered Lemarne, in low tones, "I understand!"

Bolke rose, and did a thing of which none who knew him would have thought him capable. He held out his hand.

"That you will do your best I know, Legionnaire," he said. "I wish you good fortune!"

Lemarne hesitated, staring at the outstretched hand of the man whom he had sworn a solemn vow to kill. Then, raising his eyes to Bolke's, he thrust out his own brown hand and took the other's in firm clasp.

"I will not fail you," he said. "But it will be better if I take a companion. Then if one of us goes under the other may live to carry on."

Bolke resumed his seat.

"Name your man," he said briskly.

"I will take le Legionnaire Paul Blake," replied Lemarne. "He is young and fit, and well suited for the task."

Bolke nodded his assent.

"Blake goes with you," he agreed.

The Robber Camp!

THAT night, under cover of darkness, Paul and Lemarne left Zukra on their perilous mission. They were in Arab garb, and were mounted on two swift-riding camels selected from those which had been captured with the taking of the village.

They carried with them their Lebel rifles, a store of food and water, and beneath their dirty white robes each wore an ammunition belt with full pouches.

Lemarne could speak the desert patois fluently. During the long weeks of training at Sidi-bel-Abbes, Paul, keen to make good in the ranks of the Legion, had studied Arabic, and now he blossomed the foresight which had prompted him to do so.

Till dawn, man and boy pushed their mounts steadily on towards the north.

It was about an hour after the sun had swung up above the desert rim that, topping a rise, they saw ahead the camp fire of a small party of Arabs.

"Keep going," counselled Lemarne grimly. "They've sighted us!"

He and Paul kept on towards the dozen or so low camelhair tents of the encampment which were flanked by a small camel enclosure.

"Touaregs!" grunted Lemarne, as a tall gaunt Arab, with a long-barrelled gun in his hands, stepped out into their path.

The Arab was supported by a score of unkempt and ragged followers.

"Salaam!" he greeted, eyeing Paul and Lemarne coldly, and barring their way with upraised hand. "Whence journey ye?"

"We journey from Zukra!" replied Lemarne. Seven days ago the Chosen One of Allah wrested it from the blue-coated infidel dogs, and we carry word of Allah's beneficence to the chiefs of the Senussi."

"Such tidings travel faster than you!" growled the Arab suspiciously. "Four days have passed since first I learned that Zukra had fallen!"

"And is it strange that you should have learned the news, O one of little wit," sneered Lemarne, "camped as you are almost within the very shadow of the walls of Zukra?"

"Ah, yes," intoned the other, "there is that. It may well be that the news has not yet reached the chiefs of Senussi. But you look weary, my brothers. Will you not dismount and rest awhile?"

"No," answered Lemarne, "we will push on!"

The Arab smiled, although there was nothing of mirth in his shifty eyes which were taking stock of the Lebel rifles and the splendidly-groomed camels.

"Nay," he said softly, "I insist that you dismount. It will never be said that I, Telama, refused food and rest to riders of our Lord, Ali bu Sadi, the Chosen of Allah!"

But Lemarne had already drawn his own conclusions as to who and what this Telama and his followers were—a marauding band of desert robbers, owing allegiance to none but themselves.

"How dare you oppose your miserable will to ours?" he roared. "Out of our way, you dogs, or we will ride you down!"

INTRODUCTION.

To save Guy Warren, his scapegrace cousin, from expulsion on a charge of theft, Paul Blake, Fifth-Former of Greystones, takes the blame on his own shoulders by running away from school. Fired by its promise of adventure, he joins the Foreign Legion, and is sent to the desert fort of Sidi-bel-Abbes, where he forms friendships with Charles Desmond, once captain of Greystones, and Esterharn, a former officer in the French Army. Warren, meanwhile, has inherited the title and fortunes of his father, and is touring Africa with his sister June. In Sidi he arranges with the villainous Sergeant-Major Bolke that Paul, the fellow who holds his guilty secret, shall be killed—somehow. Some days later a strong force of the Legion, including Paul, Desmond and Esterharn, is sent into the desert to quell a serious Arab rising. In a desperate fight against a horde of fanatical tribesmen, a third of the expedition is lost, and the rest push on to the desolate fort of Zukra. There, only the wariness of Bolke saves his company from being slaughtered to a man, for the Arabs have captured the fort and are waiting in ambush for their enemies. With wonderful coolness and superb courage, the sergeant-major leads his men to the attack, and after a terrible hand-to-hand struggle, the Legion wins through. But of the thousand men who set out from Sidi-bel-Abbes, less than three hundred remain alive.

(Now read on.)

He signalled to Paul, and, swerving their camels they goaded the fleet-footed brutes into action. Telama leapt back, screaming an order to his followers.

Muskets were whipped to shoulders and there came a ragged crash of firing. The range was too short to allow of a miss. Paul's camel lurched drunkenly, almost unshipping the boy. Heroically it staggered on a few paces then collapsed to the sand. Paul was thrown clear, but rose unhurt.

Lemarne was down, lying ominously still with arms outspread and his face resting in the sand. Throwing himself full length behind his dead camel, Paul cuddled the butt of the Lebel rifle into his cheek and let the swooping Arabs have the full contents of the magazine right into the midst of them.

Every bullet went home, then the hammer clicked harmlessly. Springing to his feet, Paul gripped his rifle by the barrel and swung a skull-smashing blow at a snarling white-robed demon who was leaping in to seize him. The butt crashed against the Arab's skull with sickening force and the man went down as though poleaxed.

"Take him alive!" screamed Telama.

Next moment Paul was borne back and went down before a concerted rush. He struggled desperately, but rough hands gripped him and held him fast. He was dragged to his feet and marched back to the encampment in the midst of his captors.

A fine ending this, he reflected bitterly, to the mission on which he and Lemarne were engaged. But what puzzled him was why the murderous attack by Telama had ever been launched at all.

Lemarne, it seemed, had been only temporarily knocked out by a bullet which had seared his scalp. With Paul, he was marched in front of Telama and proceeded to unburden himself in fluent Arabic.

"You dog!" he blazed passionately. "You will pay with your miserable life for this unprovoked attack on riders of the Chosen One of Allah!"

Telama smiled bleakly, stroking his filthy, straggling beard with dirty claw-like hand.

"Say you so?" he murmured.

"Yes, you thieving jackal!" thundered Lemarne. "It was our rifles you sought and our camels. Well, you will learn the reward of such temerity when you are pegged out, face uppermost on the burning sand. Grim indeed will be the vengeance of our mighty lord, Ali bu Sadi!"

"Say you so?" repeated Telama unconcernedly.

Lemarne looked at him sharply. There was something here which he could not understand. And then came enlightenment. For, with a finger like a talon, Telama beckoned forward one of his band.

"You see this man?" he said to Lemarne.

"I see him!" answered the Legionnaire.

"He tells a strange story," continued Telama softly. "It was the hour of dawn when he rode into this encampment of mine. Know you from whence he came?"

Paul stiffened, sudden unnerving suspicion in his mind.

"He is—unless he is the son of a base-born liar—from Zukra," went on Telama smilingly. "At sunset yesterday, blood ran deep in the streets of that deserted village; and it was Arab blood!"

He paused. Then thrusting out his head like some gaunt and evil bird of prey, he continued with a deadly suaveness:

"And when these aged eyes of mine look close upon you, I find a doubt in my heart that you are of true Arab blood. Indeed, were you to swear it by the beard of the prophet, I should still doubt that you are of our people!"

Then suddenly his self-control went by the board in a paroxysm of unbridled fury. Lifting scraggy arms above his head, and with eyes blazing, he screamed:

"I see through your guise, you infidel dogs! I know you for what you are, you thrice-accursed soldiers of the Legion of France!"

Prisoners!

THERE was triumph in the blazing eyes of this desert robber, as snarlingly he repeated:

"I know thee for what thou art, thou cursed spies of Legionnaires!"

Lemarne laughed harshly.

"Dost thou?" he retorted. Then, with rising passion: "Thou art mad, thou verminous jackal! And when news of this interference with us, his riders, comes to the ears of Ali bu Sadi then thou art like to lose thy eyelids and ears—"

"Rest thy tongue," shrilled Telama, "lest I have it torn out by the roots! It is to Ali bu Sadi that I take thee!"

He rapped out an order, and, in spite of their struggles, Paul and Lemarne were securely bound hand and foot. The ammunition pouches which they wore beneath their robes were taken and handed over to the triumphant Telama.

"Say ye now," he snarled, "that ye be not Legionnaires?"

"We do," returned Lemarne steadily. "Neither belts nor Lebel rifles prove anything, thou stupid one! They can be had to-day in Zukra for the asking. Is not the village in Arab hands?"

Telama swung on the man who had ridden in at dawn from Zukra.

Indicating him with skinny forefinger, he screeched:

"There stands one who says different! The village has fallen again to the cursed infidels. He says so, and I believe it!"

"Wilt answer me this?" demanded Lemarne. "Thou believest him and not us—why?"

Telama grinned.

Stroking his dirty, straggling beard, he allowed his amused eyes to dwell for a moment on Lemarne. Then softly he answered:

"I believe him because he is my brother! Blood does not lie to blood!"

Lemarne shrugged his shoulders, his firm lips curving into a grim smile. He was beaten and he knew it.

"You win, cochon," he said. "Had I known he was your brother I would not have troubled to deny the truth of his words."

"Then ye are Legionnaires?" snarled Telama in venomous triumph. "I knew it when first ye rode up. By the beard of the Prophet, I swear I knew it! Ah, ye dogs, but Ali bu Sadi will know well how to deal with such cursed infidels as ye!"

He paused, then added gloatingly:

"Yes, and will know how to reward me for delivering ye into his hands!"

Within the hour camp had been struck, and, mounted on their camels, the band headed westwards, their prisoners in their midst. At the head

of the cavalcade rode Telama, proud in the possession of Paul's Lebel rifle. This indeed promised to be a blessed day for the robber leader. Could any start have been more propitious? With the dawn he had captured two cursed spies, one swift-riding camel, two perfectly good Lebel rifles, complete with ammunition, and had met his brother who, by the magnanimity of Allah, had been allowed to escape from the shambles of Zukra.

What was to come? Reward and favours from the all-powerful Ali bu Sadi who would indeed be grateful for the capture of these two infidel dogs who doubtless carried information well worth the knowing.

So throughout that day, in high good humour, Telama led his band across the desert, heading for the camp of Ali bu Sadi, situated two days' march distant.

Lemarne, jolting and swaying in his bonds on the back of a mangy camel, scarce once lifted his head from his chest. His face was drawn and haggard, and ugly with dried and sand-encrusted blood from the scalp wound which had sent him from his camel during the attack by Telama's jackals.

As for Paul, during the long hours of that weary day, he dwelt again in his mind on the grim chain of circumstances which, commencing at Greystones on the first night of term, was finding its ending in the French Sahara.

He knew full well that neither he nor Lemarne would receive any mercy from Ali bu Sadi. He knew, moreover, of the terrible tortures and mutilations which were inflicted on captured soldiers of the Legion by the Arabs. He had seen the photographs, horrible and nauseating, which had hung in the barracks at Sidi-bel-Abbes as a warning to deserters of what they might expect should they fall into Arab hands.

But most strange of all was the thought that in the camp of Ali bu Sadi was the boy whom he had last seen that fateful night at Greystones; Guy Warren who, to shield himself, had sent Paul Blake out into the world with a ruined and dishonoured name.

It might be that they would meet. Paul hoped not. Even at this eleventh hour he had nothing whatsoever to say to Guy Warren.

It was after the sun had sunk beyond the distant horizon of undulating sand, and when the desert night was swiftly coming on, that Telama made camp.

Dull, hopeless, seemingly with all the heart knocked out of him, Lemarne suffered himself to be thrust into one of the low, stinking camelhair tents. Food, in the form of bread, a handful of dates, and water, were provided for him and Paul. Their hands were unloosened whilst they ate. But so determined was Telama that the infidel dogs should not escape that he mounted a guard of six armed and watchful men over them until, the meal ended, their hands were again lashed behind their backs.

Still plunged in the same hopeless apathy, Lemarne rolled over face downwards on the verminous blanket which served as a ground sheet, and, as far as Paul could see, dropped off to sleep.

An hour passed, and nothing broke the intense stillness except the low-toned conversation of the two guards squatting at the entrance to the tent, their long-barrelled muskets between their knees.

Suddenly a tall, gaunt form loomed up in front of them, and a voice said harshly:

"Bring the infidels to the tent of Telama!"

A Grim Prospect!

TELAMA'S tent was larger than the others, and was illuminated by the flickering flame of a crude oil lamp. Having eaten, he was squatting on the floor, picking at his stained and broken teeth, with a filthy and uncut fingernail.

"Wast asleep, dogs?" he inquired, when Paul and Lemarne had been roused and brought before him. "Ah, no; I think sleep will come slow to thy eyes this night!"

Lemarne laughed mirthlessly.

"If you have brought us here to ask that," he retorted, "it would have been kinder to have inquired of our guards. I was asleep!"

Telama chuckled.

"This I will say," he observed softly. "Dogs, and sons of misbegotten dogs, ye of the Legion may be, but ye do not lack for courage."

Lemarne inclined his head.

"Such flattery," he said grimly, "comes ill from lips such as yours, and makes one wonder at its object!"

Telama leaned forward, stroking his untidy grey beard with shaking, claw-like hand.

"Nay," he said, his glittering, deep-set eyes on Lemarne, "it is no flattery I voice, but only truth. And wo of the desert would not have the thrice-accursed Legion other than courageous. For when soldiers of it, such as thee, fall into our hands we find a rich and pretty sport in the breaking of nerve as well as body!"

He paused a moment then resumed: "Before our tribal differences were forgotten, and we united under the leadership of Ali bu Sadi, the chosen one of Allah, we found sport of a sort in torturing any who, dwelling on the Plain of the Shott or in the country of the Beni Guil, had the misfortune to fall into our hands. But they were cowering, whimpering curs not worth the heating of an iron, or the sharpening of a knife."

"I agree," said Lemarne pleasantly. "But there is a tribe of belly-crawling jackals, more cowardly even than those whom you have named."

"Say ye so?" murmured Telama. "Then name that tribe."

"The Touaregs!" responded Lemarne bluntly.

Telama, a Touareg born and bred, leapt to his feet. With clutching, talon-like hands upraised, and face convulsed with fury, he glared at Lemarne.

"By the teeth of Allah!" he screamed. "But say those words again, thou foul-mouthed dog, and I will choke them in your cursed lying throat!"

With that he spat in the face of the Legionnaire.

Lemarne nodded coolly.

"Yes," he responded. "That would be a deed well worthy of a Touareg. But had I only one hand free, then thou wouldst be crawling upon thy stomach, snivelling for the mercy which thy people never show."

"Thy tongue will be the better for a cutting," snarled Telama. "And the cutting of it will be the least misfortune which will fall to thee when thou hast been handed over to Ali bu Sadi."

Death by inches—a horrible end that would daunt the stoutest heart—faces Paul Blake and his comrade. Look out, chums, for a bumper feast of thrills in next week's gripping instalment.

