

**HUNDREDS OF FOOTBALLS FOR SCORING "GOALS"!
KICK OFF TO-DAY!**

The **GEM** **2^D**

**THE
WINNING
GOAL!**

*Read the grand
yarn of sport
and school ad-
venture—starring
the St. Jim's
chums—inside.*



ANOTHER GREAT OPPORTUNITY!

500 FREE FOOTBALLS



LOOK! GREAT NEWS! The October "Footer-Stamps" competition starts this week, and *you* should start with it, because the number of Free Footballs to be won this month has been increased to FIVE HUNDRED!

"Footer-Stamps" are being given every week in the GEM and other papers—they're just pictures of six different actions on the football field, and as in previous months, the object of this great competition stamp game is to score as many "goals" as possible by the end of October for this month's prizes.

TO SCORE A "GOAL," you must collect a complete set of six stamps (they're numbered 1 to 6), made up of the following movements: **KICK-OFF—DRIBBLE—TACKLE—HEADER—SHOT—GOAL.** (Note that the "goal" stamp by itself does NOT count as a goal; you must get a set of the stamps 1 to 6 each time.)

The more stamps you collect the more "goals" you can score, and there are ten more stamps this week to start you off for this month's competition—five below, and five more on page 35. Cut them out—there's one "goal" among them straight away, and the other stamps may fit in with some you had already, or you can swap them with pals, and so on!—then keep your collection until you get some more goal-scoring stamps in next week's issue. If you have any odd stamps left over from the two previous competitions they can be included, too.

If you want to score some other quick "goals," remember that "Footer-Stamps" are also appearing in such famous papers as "MODERN BOY" and "MAGNET" each week. There are more "goals" waiting in those papers this very week.

"Footer-Stamps" are being collected all over the country—see that you're in it. 500 Footballs are going to be awarded in the October competition to the readers scoring the highest number of "goals" with "Footer-Stamps" for the month, so don't send any stamps yet; wait until we tell you how and where at the end of the month. There's nothing to pay, remember. Other rules are on Page 35.

FIVE "FOOTER-STAMPS" HERE—FIVE MORE ON PAGE 35!



THEY THOUGHT HE WAS NO FOOTBALLER—BUT ERNEST LEVISON
SHOWED ST. JIM'S HOW TO SCORE GOALS!

The RYLCOMBE RECRUIT!



Tom Merry & Co. looked at the Rylcombe footballers with interest as they came marching into the field. "Now we shall see that remarkable new forward," said Arthur Augustus. Eight—nine—ten players appeared—and then the St. Jim's juniors stared in astonishment. For the eleventh man was Levison of the Fourth!

CHAPTER 1.

Levison Astonishes the Natives!

"LEVISON!"

"Great Scott!"

"Wherefore this thushness?"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther uttered these exclamations in a sort of chorus.

The Terrible Three were surprised.

All the other fellows on the junior football ground at St. Jim's chuckled. They were surprised, too, and amused.

There was cause for surprise.

Tom Merry & Co. had gone down to footer practice. The match with the Grammar School was due shortly, and Tom Merry was keeping his men hard at work.

All the members of St. Jim's junior eleven were there and a score of other fellows, all keen on the game, when Levison of the Fourth arrived.

Levison never honoured the football ground with his presence

if he could help it. There was a certain amount of compulsory practice he could not escape, but he was very fertile in excuses for getting out of it. Sometimes he suffered from an imaginary sprain, sometimes he was seedy, sometimes he coolly cut the practice and risked it.

It was rare to see him in footer rig, and when he couldn't avoid it he generally looked sullen and impatient, and cleared off at the earliest possible moment.

And now he had turned up of his own accord to footer practice!

He was in footer shirt and shorts, with a coat on, when he came down from the School House, evidently ready for business.

There was a slight flush in Levison's sallow face. He knew that his unusual proceeding would excite remark.

And it did!

"Wherefore—oh, wherefore this thushness?" said Monty
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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The St. Jim's junior eleven regard the match with Rylcombe village as an easy victory—but they reckon without the Rylcombe recruit!

Lowther. "What on earth are you doing in those togs, Levison?"

"Not going to play footer?" ejaculated Manners. "Is it a joke?" asked Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! It must be some feahfully deep joke of Levison's!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth. "Pway explain, deah boy! This joke is weally wathah too deep for me!"

Levison's face set in a sullen scowl.

"I've come down to footer practice!" he said angrily.

"Hold me, somebody!" murmured Blake. "I feel that I'm going to faint!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has Kildare been after you?" asked Tom Merry.

"No!" said Levison, scowling.

"Railton dropped on you at last?"

"No!"

"Then what the deuce are you here for?" asked the captain of the Shell, in surprise. "Is this some weird joke?"

"Pulling our leg somehow," said Manners, puzzled. "You might explain where the joke comes in, Levison."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's too deep for us," said Figgins of the New House. "Now, what is the merry joke, Levison?" Levison's brow grew darker and darker as he looked at the grinning faces of the footballers.

"It's not a joke!" he said savagely. "I'm going to take up footer this season."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly asses?" demanded Levison angrily.

"Ha, ha, ha! Your little joke!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Don't be so funny, you know!" urged Manners. "Wild horses wouldn't drag you on the footer field if you could sneak out of it! You'll tell us next you've given up smoking!"

"I have given up smoking," said Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now tell us another!"

"If you don't want me here I can clear off!" exclaimed Levison angrily.

"If you mean business you're welcome, Levison," said Tom Merry quickly. "But, really, it is rather surprising, you know. You can't expect us to get used to it all at once."

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"Pile in, Levison!" grinned Figgins. "I want to see you play footer. I suppose you know the difference between a goal and a goalpost—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Levison's taking up the game it's up to us to help him," said Lowther gravely. "I think we ought to coach Levison a bit."

"Keep your coaching till I ask for it!" growled Levison. "I could play your head off any day, if I chose to take the trouble!"

"My dear chap, I'm a ripping coach, and I'm going to help you. Now, in the first place, footer is a game. Got that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a game played with a ball," continued Monty Lowther, with the air of an instructor. "The ball is kicked by means of the pedal extremities, otherwise known as the feet."

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The wooden erection at each end of the field

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is called a goal. The person who mucks about in goal is called a goalkeeper."

"You silly ass!" roared Levison.

"Football is played by a team. The teams consist of eleven persons."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eleven, mind—not ten or thirteen!" said Lowther. "First of all, fix that number in your memory. Got that? Eleven!"

"You silly cuckoo!"

"The game is started by means of a kick-off. The ball is kicked off by being projected from a boot—a football boot."

"Look here——"

"If the ball is kicked over the touchline it is in touch. Got that?"

Levison's face was a study. His neglect of the great winter game had not left him in such a state of hopeless ignorance as the humorist of the Shell chose to assume. As a matter of fact, Levison, when he chose, could play both footer and cricket in a very creditable way, and a little sticking to practice would have turned him into a first-class player for a junior. But Monty Lowther never let slip an opportunity for exercising his peculiar gift of humour.

Levison drove his hands deep into his coat pockets.

"I might have expected this kind of thing!" he said, between his teeth. "There isn't a chap here who hasn't been down on me for slacking and leaving footer alone, and when I come down to practice I get this! Go and eat coke, the lot of you! Hang footer, and hang you!"

And Levison turned round, and strode savagely off the field.

"Hold on, Levison!" called out Tom Merry. "Don't be an ass! You're more than welcome here!"

Levison strode straight on, without turning his head.

"Gentlemen, the little comedy is now over!" said Monty Lowther. "Let's get on with the washing!"

"I suppose Levison was only pullin' our leg," remarked Arthur Augustus. "He couldn't weally mean to take up footah."

"More likely wanted a chance to give someone a kick on the sly!" growled Herries. "That's more in his line! I know him! He kicked me once in practice, and called it an accident, after I had hammered him for worrying Towser!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wemembah that!"

"Give a chap his due," said Talbot of the Shell. "Levison has been a good bit different in many ways since his minor came to St. Jim's. I think he was in earnest myself."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries gruffly. "My dog Towser can't stand Levison! He knows him!"

"Well, if Towser's given his verdict, there's nothing more to be said," remarked Monty Lowther gravely. "Still, I must say I agree with Towser in this case. Levison can go and eat coke. Let's get on with the practice."

"Still, he ought to be encouraged if he's in earnest," observed Talbot.

"Rats! He was only spoofing!"

And the juniors piled into footer practice and forgot all about Levison of the Fourth.

The black sheep's new and surprising departure had been nipped in the bud with a vengeance.

CHAPTER 2.

Grimes is Surprised!

"CHEEKY cad!" grunted Mellish of the Fourth.

"Confounded cheek!" agreed Crooke, the ornament of the Shell.

"Well, it does take the cake!" remarked Racke.

The three indignant youths were lounging on the football ground, looking on idly at the practice—without thinking of taking part in it, however.

Crooke & Co. did not care for footer, and they were only lounging there to kill time.

Like most incurable slackers, they had a good deal of time to kill. And their indignation was moved at the sight of Grimes, the grocer's boy, from Rylcombe.

Grimes had evidently been delivering goods at the back door, for he had an empty basket on his arm. But the sight of the footballers at a distance had drawn Grimes to the spot.

Grimes was a keen footballer, and he was skipper of the village team—which sometimes played St. Jim's.

Lofty minds like Crooke's and Mellish's never could understand why Tom Merry chose to play the grocer-boy's eleven. They sneered when Grimes brought his team to St. Jim's, and sneered when Tom Merry led his men down to the village green to play Grimes & Co.

The sight of the grocer's boy, with his basket, looking on at the footer was really too much for Crooke & Co.

They bristled with indignation.

"It's too thick!" said Racke. "The low brute ought to be kicked out!"

"Let's kick him out!" suggested Mellish. "We can handle him—three of us!"

"Some of those rotters would chip in!" growled Crooke.

"They're pretty busy."

"Come on!" said Racke. "We'll chivvy the cad, anyway."

And the three black sheep of St. Jim's bore down on Grimes.

Tom Merry & Co. were making a hot attack, and the New House defence was being severely tested, and Grimes had set down his basket in his keenness as he watched.

"Bray-vo!" sang out Grimes. "Bray-vo!"

"What are you cackling for, you cad?" asked Crooke.

Grimes turned round.

"What the dooce are you doin' here?" asked Racke.

"No 'arm, I 'ope," said Grimes.

"Oh, get out!"

Two or three fags of the Third were looking on at the footer, and they looked round as Crooke & Co. started on Grimes. They were Wally D'Arcy, Joe Frayne, and Levison minor—the new boy in the Third.

"Let Grimes alone, you rotters!" called out Wally. "Why shouldn't he be here if he likes?"

"Thank you, Master D'Arcy!" said Grimes. "I'm doin' no 'arm; only lookin' on."

"Well, you're going to clear off, and take your blessed basket with you!" sneered Crooke. "Now then, sharp's the word, unless you want a thick ear!"

Grimes looked warlike for a moment. He could have knocked Crooke flying, and Racke after him, without much difficulty; but a row with St. Jim's fellows on the St. Jim's ground would have caused

Grimes trouble with Mr. Sands, his employer, as the cads of the School House were well aware.

Grimes picked up his basket quietly.

"Don't go, Grimes!" exclaimed Levison minor.

"Let him alone, Crooke, you cad!"

"You shut up!" growled Crooke.

"Dot him in the eye, Grimey!" advised Wally.

"I'll hold your basket, old son!"

Grimes only grinned and turned away. But his meekness did not disarm Crooke & Co.; it encouraged them.

They followed Grimes as he made his way slowly back to the side gate.

"Now then, quicker!" said Crooke in a bullying tone. "We're going to see you off the premises. Your sort aren't wanted here!"

"Shove the basket over his head!" grinned Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

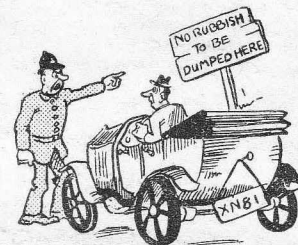
Grimes jumped away.

"Ands off!" he said. "I'm goin'!"

"Collar him!" grinned Crooke.

Crooke and Racke collared Grimes, and Mellish seized his empty basket and wrenched it away from him.

Grimes resisted, but he did not hit out. He



"Can't you read what it says on that board?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 62, Cornwall Road, Littlehampton, Sussex.

had Mr. Sands' wrath to think of if he knocked down a St. Jim's fellow.

There was a patter of feet, and Frank Levison came running up.

"Let him alone, you cads!" he exclaimed.

The little fag's face was flushed, and his eyes were gleaming. He grabbed at the basket, snatched it from Mellish, and smote the Fourth Former with it, knocking him backwards.

"Yow-ow!" roared Mellish, as he went down in a heap.

"Now let Grimes go!" exclaimed Levison minor, advancing upon Crooke and Racke, flourishing the basket.

"Why, you cheeky whelp, I'll smash you!" shouted Crooke.

The two ragers released Grimes and rushed at the fag.

"Hold on!"

Levison major came up quickly.

Crooke and Racke paused.

"You'd better take that young cad away if you don't want him smashed!" growled Racke.

Levison laughed.

"If there's going to be any smashing, I'm going to have a hand in it," he remarked. "Why can't you let Grimes alone?"

"Because we don't choose!"

"Why, you rotter," panted Mellish, "you were chivvying Grimes yourself only the other day!"

"Oh, let him alone!" said Levison.

"Well, we won't let him alone!" yelled Crooke. "We'll smash his blessed basket over his head!" Levison stepped quickly to Grimes' side; he put up his hands coolly.

Grimes blinked at him in blank astonishment. "Come on!" said Levison cheerfully. "Don't you take a hand, Grimey! Those cads would get a complaint sent to your gov'nor if you hit them. Franky, you can look after Mellish."

"What-ho!" chuckled the fag.

"I'm going to look after Crooke and Racke," said Levison. "Come on! You don't seem to be in a hurry."

"What are you chipping in for, you cad?" growled Racke.

"Sheer cussedness!" grinned Levison. "I'm spoiling for a fight! Come on!"

"Oh, hang you!"

Racke thrust his hands into his pockets and strode away, followed by Crooke.

Mellish picked himself up and followed. It was not a fight the cads of the School House were looking for.

Levison grinned sarcastically.

"Come on, Grimey!" he said. "I'll see you out."

"Thank you, Master Levison!" said the astounded Grimes.

He took his basket from Frank and followed Levison. They went down to the side gate, and Levison passed out with the grocer's boy.

"Going back to Rylcombe?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Do you mind if I walk part of the way with you?"

"Not at all, Master Levison!" gasped Grimes, wondering whether he was dreaming. If Tom Merry, or Figgins, or D'Arcy had interfered between him and the raggers Grimes would not have been surprised. But Levison!

"Then I'll come," said Levison cheerfully.

He sauntered down the road with the grocer's boy.

"You're playing St. Jim's soon at footer, I believe?" he remarked.

"Yes; week after next, Master Levison!"

"Getting lots of practice?"

"Well, all we can," said Grimes. "Of course, we don't 'ave so much time for it as your fellows. Now the evenings are drawin' in, too, it makes a difference. But we generally get an hour on the green after work."

"I suppose you're in great form?"

Grimes grinned.

"Pretty good form for us," he said. "Pilcher's a terror, and Ned Wilson is rippin' in goal. Of course, we're not up to St. Jim's, but we're goin' to give St. Jim's a tussle."

"You practise in the evening?" said Levison.

"Yes; and Thursday afternoons, as the shops are closed."

"Would you mind if I came down this evening and joined you?"

Grimes almost dropped his basket in astonishment.

"Joined us?" he repeated.

"Yes; for a bit of practice."

"I—I suppose you're joking?" said Grimes, in wonder. "You can get all the practice you want at St. Jim's, I suppose?"

"I don't choose to practise there," said Levison, his brows darkening. "But I want to get some footer. Of course, I don't want to force myself on you."

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"Not at all, Master Levison. You'd be welcome!" said Grimes. "I didn't know as you played footer much."

"I'm taking it up."

"Oh, I see! You come if you want to," said Grimes.

"Right-ho!" said Levison. "What time do you begin?"

"About seven."

"I'll be there."

Levison returned to St. Jim's, while Grimes went on towards Rylcombe in a dazed frame of mind. He had suffered a good deal of petty persecution from some of the St. Jim's fellows of Crooke's kind, and Ernest Levison had been among them. A change seemed to have come over Levison, and Grimes could not understand it. But he was a good-natured fellow, and did not bear malice; and if Levison had a fancy for taking footer practice with the village team, Grimes would not refuse him.

CHAPTER 3.

Gussy Means Well!

"LEVISON!"

No reply.

"Levison!"

Mr. Railton repeated the name more loudly.

The School House master was taking the roll-call.

Levison of the Fourth did not answer to his name.

Levison mimer, from the ranks of the Third, looked round anxiously.

"Levison!" said Mr. Railton, for the third time.

There was no answer, and the Housemaster marked down Levison major as absent.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the Fourth streamed out of the hall. "Levison will get into a wow! Wailton looked quite waxy!"

"Serve him right!" said Herries, with a grunt. "Why can't he tear himself away from the Green Man in time for roll-call?"

"Gweat Scott! Is Levison in the Gween Man, Hewwies?"

"I dare say he is."

"Shouldn't wonder," remarked Jack Blake.

"Silly ass to be late for call-over, anyway! Railton has an eye on him."

"Pewwaps he's not at the Gween Man at all," suggested Arthur Augustus gently. "As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I have wemarked that Levison has been a vewy gweat deal more decent this term. He has quawwelled with that awful boundah Wacke—"

"Wouldn't Racke lend him any more money?" growled Herries.

"Bai Jove! That might have been the weason, of course."

"Very likely!" grinned Digby.

"And he seems to be on wathah bad terms with Mellish."

"Rogues fall out sometimes," remarked Jack Blake.

"Yaas, that's twue. But, weally, I have thought several times that Levison is gwowin' a bit more decent. He was goin' to play footah to-day—"

"Gammon!"

"I have been thinkin' it ovah, deah boys, and on reflection I wathah think Levison meant business."

"Bow-wow!"

"I do not weward that as an intelligent wemark,



As Crooke & Co. were ragging Grimes, Frank Levison came racing up. "Let him alone, you cads!" he exclaimed; and he grabbed the basket from Mellish and smote the Fourth Former with it, knocking him backwards.

Hewwies! Aftah all, Levison always had his good points."

"Blessed if I ever saw any of them!"

"Suppose Levison has seen the ewwah of his ways, and is goin' to turn ovah a new leaf?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for wibald laughtah. If Levison is turnin' ovah a new leaf, he ought to be encouragee."

"Well, encourage him!" yawned Blake. "Bestow some of the delights of your merry conversation on him, Gussy."

"I was thinkin' of doin' so," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Jolly good idea!" said Blake heartily.

Arthur Augustus looked pleased.

"You think it is wathah a good ideah to talk to Levison a bit, deah boy, and show him that we are willin' to encourage him?"

"Certainly! It will give us a rest in the study," explained Blake.

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

Arthur Augustus walked away with his noble nose in the air, and Blake & Co. went chuckling to their study.

The swell of St. Jim's did not follow them. He posted himself in the doorway of the School House, looking out into the dusky quadrangle.

A sudden slap on the shoulder made him jump,

and he turned round to see the Terrible Three smiling at him.

"You wuff ass, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his shoulder. "You have wumpled my jacket!"

"What are you hanging about for, instead of doing your prep?" demanded the captain of the Shell severely. "Can't have this slacking in the Fourth Form."

"I'm not slackin'!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I'm waitin' for Levison to come in."

"Pal of yours?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Certainly not!"

"You're waiting for him because he isn't your pal?" asked Manners.

"Not exactly, Mannahs. I am goin' to speak to Levison, howevah, in a fwiendly way."

"What on earth for?"

"I don't mind tellin' you chaps. In fact, I hope you will follow my example," said Arthur Augustus benignly. "I have been wathah intewested in Levison lately. It may be wathah wemarkable, but I have an impression that Levison is turnin' ovah a new leaf."

"Whattin' a new which?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Turnin' ovah a new leaf," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Suppose he has made up his mind to be decent—"

"My hat! He would have a lot of leeway to make up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, he ought to be encouraged. I am goin' to encourage him!"

The Terrible Three chuckled. Arthur Augustus was quite serious, but the Shell fellows were not serious at all. They deemed it extremely unlikely that the most hardened young rascal in the school was turning over a new leaf, and they doubted greatly whether Gussy's noble encouragement would be any use to Levison.

"I do not see any reason for mewwiment," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wegard this as a duty—wathah a painful one, as I weally cannot stand Levison at any pwice. But if he is dwoppin' his wotten ways, and turnin' ovah a new leaf, I have wresolved to encourage him."

"By shedding upon him the light of your countenance?" asked Lowther.

"That is a widiculous way of puttin' it, Lowthah! I am goin' to speak to him in a fwriendly way!"

"And join him in a little smoke?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And trot down to the Green Man with him for a game of billiards with his cheery old pal Lodgey?"

"You widiculous ass!"

"I don't know whether we can allow this," said Tom Merry gravely. "Suppose, instead of reforming Levison, you fell into his naughty ways?"

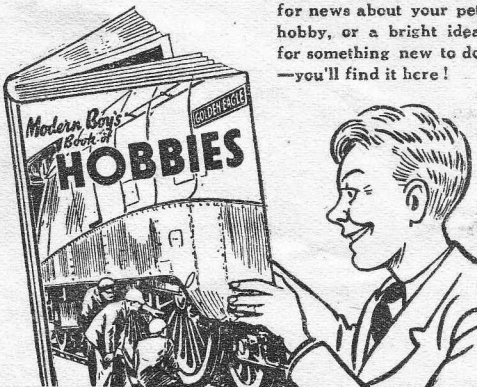
"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"The experiment might work out the wrong way, you know," said Tom, with a shake of the head. "What would Study No. 6 say if its ornament came home with the milk in the morning?"

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"You ass!"

"Squiffy!" said Lowther solemnly.

"Smelling of spirits," said Manners, with equal solemnity.

"If you wegard me as capable of smellin' of spiwits, you feahful asses—"

"We can't let you run the risk. I feel that we've got a duty to do, too—a painful duty," said Tom Merry. "Take one of his ears, Lowther, and I'll take the other, and we'll lead him out of the way of temptation."

"You uttah asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "If you are lookin' for a feahful thwashin'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Here's Levison! Pway don't give me any more of your wot, you duffahs!"

And Arthur Augustus turned to meet Ernest Levison, who was coming up the steps of the School House, looking tired and breathless.

CHAPTER 4.

Discouraging!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked rather curiously at Levison.

They had little enough to do with the black sheep of the Fourth; they were in a different Form, and their ways were very different from his.

They had hardly a single taste in common with Levison, and their occupations were quite dissimilar. But now that D'Arcy mentioned it, they realised that during the past week or two Levison of the Fourth had not been quite the same as of old.

They could not help noticing his attachment for his minor, and they had noticed that Frank Levison of the Third was a thoroughly decent little chap. It was possible that he had a good influence over his brother, and that might have made a difference to Levison.

Certainly he was no longer on speaking terms with Racke of the Shell, the wealthy youth who rolled in money. It was common knowledge among the juniors that Levison won a good deal of money from Racke at cards, but that horn of plenty had certainly run dry since their quarrel. They knew, too, that Levison spent a good deal of time helping his minor with his lessons, to keep him in the good graces of his very exacting Form-master.

But Levison turning over a new leaf was a trifle too steep; and it was rather remarkable that he should begin by missing call-over—a serious matter.

Levison caught their eyes fixed on him, and scowled. He had not forgotten the chipping on the footer ground that afternoon.

He was passing on, when Arthur Augustus joined him, with a very genial smile.

"In a huwwy, Levison, deah boy?" he asked.

Levison stared at him.

"I've got to report to Railton," he said. "I missed call-over."

"That was wathah weckless, Levison."

"Go hon!"

"Howevah, I twust you were not at the Gween Man?"

"You silly ass!"

"Eh?"

"You frabjous dummy!"

Levison walked on, going to Mr. Railton's study, leaving the swell of the School House rooted to the floor.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. There was a chuckle from the Terrible Three. "Well, how is it panning out?" asked Lowther. "How does Levison take his encouragement?" "He seems to misundahstand," said Arthur Augustus slowly. "Howevrah, I shall not allow myself to be webuffed. I wegard this as a duty—a watahah disagweeable duty, pewwaps, but still a duty!"

And Arthur Augustus went down the passage and leaned gracefully against the wall near the Housemaster's study to wait for Levison once more. The Terrible Three chuckled and went out into the quad for their evening trot.

Mr. Railton's door opened in a few minutes, and Levison of the Fourth came out.

Arthur Augustus detached himself from the wall.

"Licked, deah boy?" he asked sympathetically. Levison grinned sarcastically.

"Sorry to disappoint you—no!"

"I'm not disappointed, Levison," said Arthur Augustus gently. "I am vevy pleased. Lines, I suppose?"

"No, not lines, either."
"Bai Jove! Has Wailton let you off aftah missin' call-ovah?"

"He has," said Levison.

"I am vevy glad to heah it, deah boy!"

Levison stared at him.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"The—the mattah?"

"Yes. Have you gone potty, or are you trying to pull my leg?"

"Weally, Levison—"

"In either case, you can go and eat coke!"

said Levison; and he went down the passage.

Arthur Augustus seemed to swallow something with difficulty. Levison was certainly not an easy fellow to encourage on the path of virtue, even if he was following it, which was still doubtful.

But Arthur Augustus was a stickler. He followed Levison down the passage, nobly choking his feelings down, and assuming a genial and friendly smile.

"Don't huwwy, deah boy!"

"What do you want?" asked Levison, stopping and looking at him.

"Nothin'!"

"Then what are you stopping me for?"

"Weally, Levison—"

"I've not had my tea yet, and I've got my prep to do when you've done playing the giddy ox!"

"Haven't you had your tea?"

"I think I've just said so."

"Bai Jove! Howevrah—"

"I'm going to have it now," said Levison.

"I'll come with you, deah boy."

"Eh? I haven't asked you to tea—that I know of. I know I'm jolly well not going to!"

Again Arthur Augustus seemed to be swallowing something he felt it difficult to get down; but he stuck to his guns.

Levison's manner was decidedly uncompromising; but as he was quite in ignorance of Gussy's benevolent intentions towards him, he could be excused for supposing that Arthur Augustus was pulling his leg. Probably he would not have felt grateful for those benevolent intentions if he had known of them.

"I've had my tea, Levison."

"Then you don't want any of mine."

"Certainly not! I was thinkin' of sittin'

with you while you have tea, you know, as your studymates are not there now."

"Thanks! I'm afraid it would take my appetite away," said Levison.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, quite forgetting for the moment his benevolent intentions.

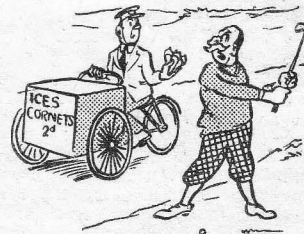
Levison grinned and went upstairs.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard for some moments.

He was tempted to follow Levison and bestow upon him a record licking, and leave the encouragement over for another time. But he calmed down, and mounted the stairs after the junior, his intentions still benevolent.

Levison was getting his tea in his study, when Arthur Augustus' eyeglass gleamed in at the door.

Lumley-Lumley, Trimble, and Mellish, who shared the study with Levison, had long since



"I said 'fore,' not 'four'!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Christie, 42, Willingdon Road, Eastbourne, Sussex.

had their tea, and gone down. Levison was very late.

He stared at the swell of St. Jim's as D'Arcy's eyeglass and genial smile dawned upon him from the doorway.

"Hallo! You again!" snapped Levison.

"Yaas, deah boy! Can I help you?"

"Eh?"

"Can I fwy the washahs for you, Levison?"

"Let that bacon alone!" growled Levison.

"That fat beast Trimble has scoffed nearly the lot, and you're not going to spoil the rest!"

"I am watahah a dab at cookin' washahs—"

"Oh, dry up!"

Levison scoured out the frying-pan with a page of Trimble's Latin grammar, and tossed the sole remaining rasher in the pan, and stuck it on the half-dead fire.

Arthur Augustus, determined not to accept a rebuff, sat on the corner of the table and watched him. His elegant jacket draped over the butter, but the swell of St. Jim's did not notice that for the moment. There was a strong scent of frying bacon in the study, and Levison mumbled and grumbled as he raked the dying embers under the pan.

"You seem watahah tired, Levison," remarked D'Arcy.

"I am tired," said Levison tartly.

"What have you been doing, deah boy?"

"Find out!"

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"Takin' a long walk in the countwy, pewwaps?" he suggested.

"Perhaps," said Levison sourly.

"Wippin' countwy wound St. Jim's, isn't it?"

"Oh rats!"

"Ahem!"

Levison turned round from the fire, scowling. "What the thunder do you want here?" he exclaimed. "Have you gone off your silly rocker?"

"N-no!"

"Then what are you talking such howling rot for?"

"Do you chawactewise my wemarks as wot; Levison?" said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Blinking rot!" said Levison.

"Ahem! You seem to have come home in wathah a wuffed tempah. Levison. Pewwaps exahcise does not agwee with you, owin' to your slackin' wound and smokin', and so on."

"Go and eat coke!"

"The fact is, Levison, I am vevy glad to see you takin' up healthy exahcise, instead of slacking' wound like a smoky wottah," said Arthur Augustus affably.

"No business of yours, that I can see."

"Yaas, wathah! I am goin' to encourage you."

Levison almost dropped the frying-pan.

"You're going to what?" he ejaculated.

"Encourage you, old chap," said Arthur Augustus benevolently. "It appeahs to me, Levison, that you are turnin' ovah a new leaf. Are you turnin' ovah a new leaf?"

"You silly ass—"

"Ahem! I have wemarked, Levison, that evah since your minah came, you have not been such a weally unspeakable wottah, as usual. My ideah is that you ought to be encouraged, and I want you to undahstand that if you are goin' to be decent, I am goin' to back you up. I know what a feahfully uphill stwuggle it will be for a fellow of your sort, you know," explained Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus did not expect gratitude from Levison. But certainly he did not expect the glare that Levison turned on him.

Somehow or other, much to his surprise, his remarks seemed to be making Levison angry.

"I twust you will stick to it, Levison," rattled on Arthur Augustus, determined not to notice the unaccountable ill-humour. "It will come wathah hard at first, but in time it will be easiah. It weally cannot be a pleasuah to you to be a disgwace to your House as you have always been, and to have fellows ashamed of the fact that you belong to St. Jim's. I twust all that is goin' to be thwown behind, Levison."

"Are you going out of this study, or are you waiting to be kicked out?" roared Levison.

"Bai Jove!"

Levison advanced on Arthur Augustus with the frying-pan held out, evidently intending to smite him with it, reckless of what happened to his last rasher.

The swell of St. Jim's slipped nimbly from the table.

"Weally, Levison, there is nothin' to be watty about. My intentions are quite friendly—in fact, encouwagin'. Gweat Scott, I am smothahed with buttah! Oh cwumbs!"

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Levison. "You've been sitting in my butter, and it's all I have!"

"Counfound your buttah!" yelled Arthur Augustus, losing his noble temper at last. "I am smothahed with gwease! Look at my jacket! Keep that fwying-pan away, you howwid beast! Yawoooh!"

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Arthur Augustus fairly fled from the study, with the frying-pan only an inch behind him.

He did not halt in the passage. Arthur Augustus feared no foe personally, but he feared bacon fat on his elegant clobber. The butter was bad enough.

But he stopped as he reached the head of the stairs, for there he met the Terrible Three coming in, and they threw their arms round him and caught him.

"Hallo! Looking for Levison to encourage him?" grinned Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus gasped.

"Oh deah! The howwid beast had a fwyin'-pan—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at, you asses!"

"Have you been encouraging Levison?" chortled Lowther.

"I wegard Levison as a wascal, and I wefuse to speak a single word to him in any circs what-evah!" snapped Arthur Augustus.

And he stalked away to Study No. 6, very wrathful.

"Doesn't seem to have been a success," said Manners; and the Terrible Three chortled on the way to their study.

Arthur Augustus entered Study No. 6 with a heightened colour.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were at their prep, but they suspended their prep to look at their noble chum, with grinning inquiry.

"How have you been getting on with Levison?" asked Blake.

"Wats!"

"Have you been encouraging him in turning over a new leaf?"

"I do not believe the uttah wottah is capable of turnin' ovah a new leaf. I wegard him as a wank outsiders. The disgustin' wottah was goin' to put bacon gwease ovah my clobber. I think it is vevy pwob that he has been to the Gween Man this evenin', aftah all."

"Because of the bacon grease?" asked Blake.

"I don't see the connection."

"Oh wats!"

"Are you going on encouraging Levison?"

"If you persist in discussin' that uttah wottah, Blake, I shall wetiah fwwm the study!"

Blake chuckled and resumed his prep.

Arthur Augustus, after a struggle with the butter on his jacket and trousers, sat down to work in a less equable temper than usual. The result of his attempt to encourage Levison in turning over a new leaf had severely ruffled the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

CHAPTER 5.

Suspected!

TOM MERRY looked for Levison of the Fourth the next day after lessons.

Tom had been thinking over the incident on the footer ground, and he wondered whether there was anything in Arthur Augustus' theory that the rotter of the School House was turning over a new leaf.

It was unlikely, but it was possible, and if Levison really had thought of playing the game, Tom felt that his reception at footer practice had been a little hard on him.

And as the good-natured captain of the Shell did not want to be hard on anybody, he looked for Levison to set the matter right.

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

Believe this or not: Police entering a house in Rylcombe were astounded to find a burglar sitting by the wireless set, listening to the weather report. Waiting to see if the coast was clear?

A reader writes to say he has a suspicion that half of my column is merely a leg-pull. Why, what ever is the matter with the other half?

Skimpole states that glass is not really a solid, but a rather hard fluid. Does he expect us to swallow that?

Hear'd at the Wayland Empire: "It's easy to be a lion tamer," said the black-faced comedian; "all you have to do is convince the lion you aren't afraid of him." "I couldn't be so deceitful!" replied his companion.

The human body is made of 378 constituents, says a scientist. According to Reilly, all of them hurt at once after he had received a caning from Knox.

News: Rubber is now being used as a flooring for nurseries. Great stuff for bouncing babies!

Zoo report: "Some of the conger eels have been at the Zoo since 1925. One has grown four feet." Misdirected energy!

He found Leviscn in the quad with his coat on, going down to the gates.

"Going out?" asked Tom.

"Yes!" snapped Levison.

"Not coming down to footer practice?"

"Have you some more brilliant humour to work off on me?" asked Levison sarcastically.

"Thanks, I'm fed-up!"

"No," said Tom; "you mustn't mind a joke or two, Levison. You took us rather by surprise, you know. It was a bit of a new departure for you; but if you're really serious about taking up footer I'm glad to see it, and I'd help you any way I could."

"Thanks! I'll ask for your help when I want it."

"Oh, don't be a ratty ass!" said Tom. "You're welcome on Little Side. You've as much right there as anyone else, come to that."

"Has that just occurred to you?"

"Well, if you're determined to keep your back up, I'm done," said Tom. "I don't see any sense in being sulky myself."

"Well, I can't come, even if I wanted to," said Levison. "I've got an engagement."

There is an art, says Gussy, in pulling up one's trousers when sitting down." In B.B.C. language, a technical hitch.

Complaint from Baggy Trimble: He says that on the top floor of a London store it took him ten minutes to find the lift. And, naturally, that got him down!

Quickly, now: What's the diff. between a Scotsman and a canoe? One of them tips.

Yes, there are two ways of looking at every question. Your Form-master's and the wrong one.

Definition: A snob is a chap who is delighted when a duke accidentally steps on his toe.

Try this: The matron sent for a plumber to mend a burst overhead pipe. The plumber looked at it, and then said: "Can I have a chair?" "I've a step-ladder here," replied the matron; "won't that do better?" "No, I only want a chair at present," said the plumber. "This job has got to be thought out."

A politician tells us that any ill-feeling that used to exist between England and France has entirely disappeared. The Channel must have calmed down a lot lately!

"Bandits' Car Turns Somersault." When thieves fall out, eh?

Third-Form Flash: "If I cut this piece of meat in two, what shall I have?" asked Mr. Selby. "Halves, sir," replied Jameson. "And if I cut those in half again, what shall I have?" "Quarters, sir," replied Jameson. "And if I cut those pieces in half again?" queried Mr. Selby. "Mince-meat, sir," replied Jameson, after a pause.

Cheerio, chaps!

"Outside the school?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's not my business," said Tom, and he shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

Levison laughed.

But Tom Merry turned back and joined Levison again as he went out of the gates.

"It isn't my business, as I said," began Tom, "and I don't want to preach to you; but wouldn't it be a bit more sensible, Levison, to come down to the footer, and chuck up your engagement outside the gates? You've got the makings of a first-rate player in you if you choose to keep yourself fit. You'd get into the House team in the long run if you'd stick to practice."

Levison looked at him curiously.

"You'd put me in the House team?" he asked.

"Yes, if you were good enough to be included, you know. It might come to that later in the season."

"A smoky blackguard in the House team!" grinned Levison. "What would all the Good Little Georgies say?"

"Well," said Tom, after a pause, "if I played

you I should expect you to chuck smoking, of course. It's a player's duty to keep himself fit."

"Well, I shouldn't."

"H'm! But that's far off, anyway," said Tom good-naturedly. "At present it's only a question of practice. Why not take it up?"

"And give Lowther another chance of being funny? He can be funny without my assistance," sneered Levison. "And you'd never put me in the team, either. The fellows wouldn't let you. There's a set against me."

"Oh, that's all rot!"

"As for footer, I could play the heads off half your team if I chose," said Levison coolly. "Talbot's a better man than I am, and perhaps yourself and Figgins. I could make rings round the rest."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, come down now and play up," he said.

"I've got an engagement."

Tom hesitated.

"Look here, Levison, if it's that man Lodgey, in Rylcombe, you'd better be careful. The prefects have got on to it that a St. Jim's fellow has been to see him—more than once. Kildare spoke to me about it. I fancy he was thinking of Racke."

"And you told him to look in the Fourth?" suggested Levison.

"I told him nothing," said Tom Merry quietly. "I shouldn't be likely to tell him anything. I'm giving you the tip that it's dangerous just now. I won't say anything about its being rotten."

"No, don't!" said Levison. "Talbot's the only chap whose sermons I ever listen to. He doesn't rub it in too often. Well, I'm going down to Rylcombe, and if you see Kildare or Darrell smelling round, you can tell them."

And with a grin Levison walked out of the gates.

Tom Merry looked after him for a moment with a clouded brow; then, dismissing the matter from his mind, he went down to the football ground.

He had done all he could, and there was nothing more to do.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, took roll-call that evening, and when he called Levison's name there was no reply, as on the evening before.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "Levison's rather overdoing it!"

Mr. Lathom blinked over his glasses at the Fourth.

"Is not Levison present?" he asked.

No answer.

"Do you know where Levison is, Blake? I understand that he was absent from calling-over yesterday."

"No, sir," said Blake. "I haven't seen him."

The big door opened, and a breathless junior came in. It was Levison, and his red cheeks and panting breath told that he had been running.

He hurried to his place in the Fourth.

"My name called?" he whispered to Mellish.

"Yes. You're marked down," grinned Mellish.

But Mr. Lathom's eye was on the newcomer.

"You are late, Levison!" he said.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Did you miss calling-over yesterday?"

"Yes, sir. I explained to Mr. Railton."

"Very good. Why are you late this evening?"

"I've been out, sir."

"No doubt. But where have you been?"

There was a hush among the juniors. Most of

them took it as a matter of course that Levison had been somewhere that he could not explain to the Form-master. They wondered if the time had come for the black sheep to be lagged at last.

"In Rylcombe, sir," said Levison calmly.

"Indeed! What were you doing in Rylcombe?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. He felt a little concerned for Levison, little as he liked him.

Mr. Lathom was the reverse of an inquisitive master—indeed, generally he did not see what was going on under his nose. It was pretty plain that he had some motive for questioning Levison of the Fourth.

There could be only one motive—that Levison was under suspicion. Possibly some clue had transpired as to the identity of the St. Jim's junior who was on pally terms with Mr. Lodgey at the Green Man.

The juniors, however, could not help feeling some admiration for Levison's nerve. He faced the questioning master without flinching.

"I happened to stop on the village green, sir," he said calmly.

"Indeed! Was there some unusual attraction on the green, Levison, to cause you to forget calling-over?"

"The village chaps were playing footer, sir."

"Was that why you stayed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, my only summer bonnet!" murmured Blake, quite overcome. He had expected Levison to lie, but this seemed to him a real corker.

"You are very keenly interested in football, then, Levison?" asked Mr. Lathom, his spectacles gleaming at the junior.

"Yes, sir," said Levison, an answer that made the Fourth gasp.

"I have never observed, Levison, that you were fond of games. More than once authority has had to be exerted to compel you to attend practice on the playing fields."

"I'm going to take up footer this season, sir."

"I am glad to hear it, Levison! I am somewhat surprised, however, that you should find a game among the village boys so interesting."

"They've got a new player in the village team, sir," explained Levison. "Quite a ripping forward—a chap who plays centre-forward better than any chap of his age at this school."

"Oh!" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"You will kindly remain, Levison, after I have called the roll," said Mr. Lathom.

"Certainly, sir," said Levison cheerfully.

The master of the Fourth finished the roll, and the St. Jim's fellows left the Hall, Levison remaining behind with the Form-master.

Mr. Lathom beckoned to the black sheep to approach.

"Levison, I hope you have told me the truth," said the little Form-master, not unkindly.

"I hope so, sir," said Levison, with a touch of impertinence.

Mr. Lathom frowned.

"I have not infrequently found you out in veravication, Levison. Otherwise I should not think of doubting the word of a boy in my Form. But the story you have told me is very odd."

"Indeed, sir."

"You made the same explanation to Mr. Railton last evening. Mr. Railton told me so."

"Yes, sir."

"On both occasions, Levison, you were delayed

by the fact that you stayed on the village green because the village team was at practice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yet you have never shown any keenness for outdoor games, to my knowledge."

"I told you, sir, that I'm taking up footer this season."

"Quite so—quite so! If your unpunctuality was caused by so very harmless a reason, Levison, I should be sorry to misjudge you. I am sorry to say, however, that your reputation is not very good, and that you are under a somewhat serious suspicion."

"I hope not, sir."

"It appears to be established that some boy belonging to this school has been seen at a low haunt in this neighbourhood," said Mr. Lathom. "It is a matter that affects the good name of the school, as it is very serious."

"I hope the fellow will be found out, sir, for the sake of the school," said Levison calmly. "He ought to be expelled, in my opinion."

"I have little doubt that he will be expelled if discovered," said the Form-master dryly.

"That will be all the better for the school, sir."

Mr. Lathom coughed. Whether Levison was innocent, or whether he was the coolest and most impertinent young rascal at St. Jim's was a

question to which the Form-master was unable to find an answer.

"Your interest in football is rather sudden, Levison. May I inquire what caused you to take up the game so—ahem!—abruptly, and to display this sudden interest in the village football?"

"It's because my minor's come to St. Jim's, sir," said Levison meekly. "I feel that, as his elder brother, it's up to me to set him a good example, sir, and help to bring him up in the way he should go."

Mr. Lathom coughed again, quite violently. He could hardly doubt that Levison's reply was intended for impertinence; yet Levison spoke so meekly and seriously that it was difficult to find fault with him.

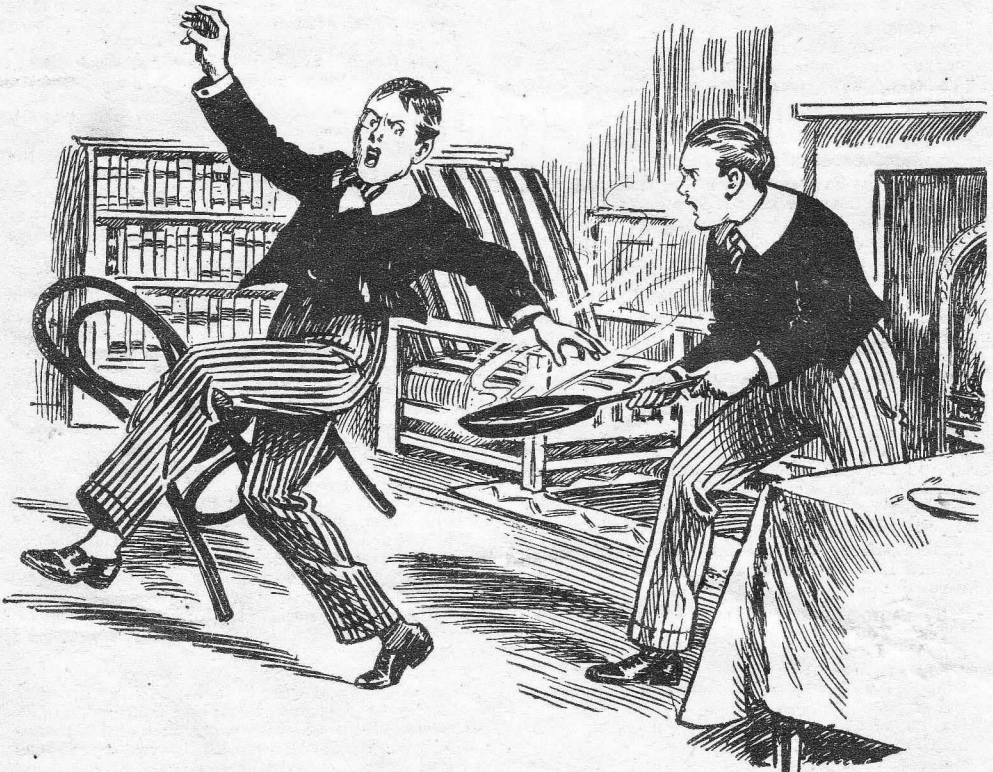
"You may go, Levison," said the Form-master abruptly.

"Thank you, sir. Is there nothing else you would like to ask me, sir?" said Levison demurely.

"Nothing! You may go!"

Levison went.

Mr. Lathom shook his head very seriously. He was not satisfied with Levison, and he had an uncomfortable feeling that the young rascal had been pulling his leg all through the interview. Which was not at all gratifying to so extremely dignified a person as a Form-master!



"Confound your buttah!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "I am smothahed with gwease! Keep that fwyn'-pan away, you howwid beast! Yawwooh!" Gussy fairly fled as Levison advanced upon him with the frying-pan.

CHAPTER 6.

Gussy Takes the Bun!

MANY eyes were turned upon Levison of the Fourth when he came into the Common-room.

The black sheep had succeeded in making himself an object of general interest and discussion, which was not at all disagreeable to him.

Levison loved the limelight, and he would rather have been noted for his rascally qualities than not noted at all.

Monty Lowther came towards him, feeling in his pocket as he did so.

"Got off with Lathom, dear boy?" he asked.

"Yes, thanks."

"Not licked, or lined, or jawed?"

"Yes, jawed," said Levison coolly. "Still, I pulled the old fossil's leg, so that made up for the jawing."

"Bai Jove! It is wathah diswepctful to allude to your Form-mastah as an old fossil, Levison," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Go hon!"

"You got out of it all right, then?" said Blake.

"Quite all right—thanks for your kind inquiry!"

"But surely Lathom didn't swallow your yarn?" ejaculated Herries.

"I'm not sure," said Levison. "But he had to give me the benefit of the doubt."

"I suppose he couldn't prove it was lies," remarked Herries thoughtfully. "He doesn't know you as well as we do."

"Exactly. That was where his difficulty came in."

"But that cock won't fight twice," chuckled Crooke of the Shell. "You'll have to think of a better whopper next time, Levison."

"When I'm hard-up for a lie, I'll ask you, Crooke. You'll never be hard-up for one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "the presentation is about to take place. Levison, your schoolfellows feel that it is up to them to bestow upon you some mark of distinction as a token of their admiration for your very unusual power of lying, otherwise rolling out whoppers, and for your remarkable neck. There isn't a fellow at St. Jim's with so much neck—that's admitted on all hands!"

"Hear, hear!"

Lowther's hand came out of his pocket. It held a bun. It was a somewhat old bun, considerably stale, and for that reason cost only the moderate sum of one halfpenny at the school shop.

The humorist of the Shell considered that his little joke was fully worthy of that moderate sum.

"Take it, dear boy!" he said, placing it in the astonished Levison's hand, amid a roar of laughter from the juniors.

"What in the thunder—" began Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you giving me that rubbish for, you silly ass?"

"It's a bun," explained Lowther. "You've earned it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous idiot—"

"Gentlemen, I put it to the meeting whether Levison doesn't take the bun?" said Monty Lowther.

"Hear, hear!"

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"He does—he do!" chuckled Julian of the Fourth. "Stick to it, Levison!"

"He takes the whole bunshop when it comes to lying!" grinned Reilly. "Sure, you've fairly earned it, Levison, me boy!"

Levison's face was dark with anger. He was far from appreciating Monty Lowther's exquisite humour.

The stale bun crackled in his fingers as he clenched them upon it.

Monty Lowther stepped back, with a smile of satisfaction, quite satisfied with the effect of his little presentation.

"You cheeky rotter!" said Levison, between his teeth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, don't be watty, deah boy!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard it as vewy funny!"

"Take the joke, you know!" said Gore, with a chuckle. "You've taken the bun!"

Levison strode to the door, his thin lips set. Near the door he turned suddenly, and his hand came up with the bun in it.

Whiz!

"Look out, Lowther!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

But Monty Lowther was looking out. He had quite expected that. Lowther's humour was not exhausted yet. He was standing close to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and as the hard bun whizzed through the air he caught hold of the swell of St. Jim's, and drew the surprised and unresisting Gussy in front of him.

Crack!

There was a fiendish yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as the stale bun cracked on his aristocratic nose.

"Yawoooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison, grinning now, walked out of the Common-room.

Arthur Augustus put his hand to his nose.

"Yawoooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. "Gussy takes the bun!"

"Gwoogh! Lowthah, you feahful wottah—"

"Hallo!" said Lowther, in surprise. "What's the matter?"

"You feahful beast! You delibewately dwew me in the way of that wotten bun, and my nose is feahfully hurt!"

"Well, isn't it a D'Arcy's place to be in the front in a time of danger?" demanded Lowther. "I suppose you're not afraid to face the fire? You don't expect a common mortal to shove himself in front of a D'Arcy, do you?"

"You uttah ass—"

"I'm only going by what you've said yourself," said Lowther. "What are you grumbling about?"

"I wegard you as a pwactical-jokin' beast, Lowthah, and I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin' unless you immediately apologise!" roared Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther reflected.

"Will an apology set the matter right?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Good! I apologise!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "Any old thing! I beg you to let the serene light of your countenance shine once more, with its accustomed effulgence, upon your devoted slave!"

"You uttah ass! I do not wegard that as a pwopah apology! Howevah, as you have expwessed wegwet, I will ovahlook the occu-wence!"



**Detective Kerr
Investigates**

No. II.

**THE
MESSAGE
IN CODE!**

THE mysterious message found by Mr. Ratcliff, master of the New House, in the Fourth Form dormitory, which read:

"MUGHTIWHTABSYTTRALLIF.—G. F.," caused him considerable thought till, transposing the order of the letters, he read: "FILL RATTY'S BATH WITH GUM.—G. F." Convinced that he had stumbled upon a secret plot, Mr. Ratcliff sent for the only boy in the New House with the initials, "G. F."—George Figgins. Figgins denied all knowledge of the slip of paper, or the message, but Mr. Ratcliff refused to accept his word. "Detective" Kerr, on behalf of his chum, lost no time in investigating:

KERR: The way out of this, Eggy, is to discover who had a grudge against you. Whoever wrote that message had no intention of playing any jape on Mr. Ratcliff. He meant to incriminate you by signing it "G. F."

FIGGINS: I see. But, whoever it was, he was too jolly careful to write it—it's typed. So all we have to do is find out whose typewriter it was.

KERR: N. G. The unknown used Ratty's own machine, whilst Ratty was out of the way, naturally.

FIGGINS: Looks as if we're stymied.

KERR: Not yet. The message was typed on a sheet torn from a shorthand notebook. I noticed there was a line of signs—the letter "p" in shorthand—in pencil along the top. Now, who have you had trouble with lately?

FIGGINS: I had a bit of a dust-up with Grundy yesterday in the quad.

KERR: Anybody else?

"I breathe again!" said Lowther. Arthur Augustus sniffed and turned away, and Monty Lowther stooped and picked up the bun. Whiz!

"Yow-ooooop!" yelled Arthur Augustus, as the bun crashed on the back of his elegant jacket. "Wha-a-at was that?"

"The bun!" said Lowther. "You uttah wuffian!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to thwash you this time! I wefuse to be the victim of your wotten twicks!"

And the swell of St. Jim's pushed back his spotted cuffs and advanced upon Lowther. The humorist of the Shell backed away.

"Hold on!" he ejaculated. "I apologise!"

"What!"

"I apologise!" said Lowther. "From one gentleman to another, an apology sets anything right. I've heard you say so."

FIGGINS: Oh, Clampe wanted a place in the House team, as an uncle of his is visiting St. Jim's next half. I told Clampe that when he stopped being a smoky, seedy slacker, I'd think about it.

KERR: That's something to go on. I'll see you later, Figgy.

KERR: Hallo, Grundy! You're still in the commercial class, aren't you?

GRUNDY: Yes. I ought to be top, but I'm told my shorthand is the worst ever. Mere personal jealousy on the part of Linton.

KERR: All the same, you often have to re-write your exercises, don't you?

GRUNDY: Oh, occasionally! I had to stay behind after classes and do a lot of consonant signs yesterday—hundreds of "p's" and "k's" and "g's."

KERR: As a favour, Grundy, could I see your shorthand notebook?

GRUNDY: Here it is. What's in your mind, Kerr?

KERR: Only sixty pages. Should be sixty-four. There's a double sheet missing, Grundy.

GRUNDY: Is there? 'Fraid I can't tell you anything about that, Kerr. I might have torn it out for some reason. I forget.

KERR: Oh, Clampe! You sit next to Grundy in shorthand class, don't you?

CLAMPE: I do—yes. What of it?

KERR: Bit of a duffer at shorthand, isn't he?

CLAMPE: Terrible! Always getting his exercises back to re-write. He had one only yesterday, I remember. A lot of "p's" and "k's," and so on.

KERR: What did Grundy do with his notebook when he had re-written all those signs?

CLAMPE: Shoved it in his desk, of course, and locked it.

KERR: Grundy always locks his desk, naturally?

CLAMPE: I don't know. He did that time. I expect he always does.

KERR: By the way, you haven't been in trouble in shorthand class yourself lately, Clampe, have you?

CLAMPE: No, thank goodness; and I don't want to be. But then, there's no need for the master to give me imputs. I'm fairly well placed.

KERR: You are? Well, we'll see about that!

(How has Clampe given himself away? Turn to page 33 for the solution.)

Arthur Augustus paused. "Vewy well; if you apologise the mattah is dwopped," he said.

"Hear, hear!" Arthur Augustus walked away.

The cheerful Lowther fielded the bun—which was showing signs of wear and tear by this time—and it whizzed through the air again.

This time it caught Arthur Augustus on his noble ear, and he spun round, with a yell of wrath.

"You feahful wottah! Are you playin' your wotten twicks again?" he shouted. "Bai Jove, I will wipe up the floor with you, Monty Lowthah!" Lowther held up his hand.

"Stop!"

"I wefuse to stop—"

"But I apologise—"

"What?"

"I apologise!" said Lowther calmly, while the juniors yelled with laughter. "From one gentleman to another—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think you are goin' to make a cockshy of me all the evenin' with that wotten bun?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Certainly!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"But I'm going to apologise every time," explained Monty Lowther. "That sets the matter right."

Arthur Augustus' face was a study.

"If you thwow that bun at me again, Lowthah, I—"

"Yes, I'm going to!" said Lowther, with a nod.

"I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Not if I apologise, surely?" exclaimed Lowther, in surprise.

"Yaas, you wottah!"

Lowther shook his head sadly.

"Blake, I should advise you to keep an eye on Gussy," he said. "His manners are failing. If this goes on, Gussy will no longer be the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the House. Gussy, I'm shocked at you! In the circumstances, I decline to throw the bun at you any more, as your manners are not to be depended on! You shock me, Gussy!"

And Lowther, with a sad shake of the head, walked away to do his prep.

Arthur Augustus turned a very pink face upon the yelling juniors.

"I fail to see anythin' to laugh at," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wepeat that I see nothin' whatevah to cackle at, you uttah asses!"

But the other fellows evidently did, for they persisted in cackling.

CHAPTER 7.

The Grammarian Match!

"THAT cad here again!" growled Crooke. It was Saturday afternoon, and Gordon Gay & Co. had arrived from the Grammar School.

The match had started, and there was a good crowd round Little Side to watch it.

Crooke & Co. came lounging down, in the charitable hope of seeing Tom Merry's team beaten by the Grammarians.

And among the fellows who stood watching the kick-off was Grimes. Hence Crooke's remark.

Grimes had been delivering goods at the school, and here he was. But he was not alone. Levison of the Fourth and Lumley-Lumley had joined him. And Crooke & Co. had to content themselves with sneering from a distance.

Levison had joined Grimes at the kitchen door, and walked with him to the football ground, and Lumley-Lumley joined them there.

Lumley-Lumley was surprised, and he showed it. He had been very friendly at one time with Grimes, and had had a scrap with Levison for chivvying him. He was astounded to see the two on such good terms.

Levison noted his astonishment, and grinned.

"Hallo! You two getting pally?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"Why not?" said Levison.

Grimes grinned.

"No reason why not, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley.

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Lumley. "Glad to see it, in fact. Got time to see the match, Grimey?"

"Mr. Sands said I could stay, if there was no objection, sir," said Grimes. "I don't often get a chance of watchin' a match."

"Good old Sands! I'll never say anything more to him for putting sand in the sugar, I guess!" said Lumley-Lumley. "And you come over here to play next Saturday, Grimey. How's your team getting on?"

"Fust-rate!" said Grimes.

"Going to beat us next Saturday?"

"I 'ope so, Master Lumley."

"Good for you!" said Lumley-Lumley, chuckling.

"Grimes has got a new player," said Levison.

"He thinks a lot of him—don't you, Grimey?"

"I do, Master Levison," grinned Grimes.

"Yes, I guess I heard you tell Lathom so!" said Lumley-Lumley, looking curiously at Levison. "The new forward you were interested in when you missed call-over the other night."

"That's the chap," said Levison.

"Then you were telling Lathom the truth?" ejaculated Lumley-Lumley in astonishment.

"As near as I ever get, you know," said Levison, shrugging his shoulders. "It's true that Grimes has a new forward in the village team, and I'm rather interested in his play. I'm generally there when that chap plays."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grimes.

Lumley-Lumley looked quite puzzled.

"I guess I don't quite see the joke," he remarked. "If you want to see some good footer, you can see it here, without watching Grimey's new forward. I guess he's not above St. Jim's form!"

"I think he is," said Levison calmly.

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, that's my opinion. I believe Grimey's new forward could beat any player in our junior eleven, excepting Talbot, or Figgins, or Tom Merry."

"I guess you're offside," said Lumley-Lumley. "Shall we see the wonderful new man next Saturday, Grimey?"

"I 'ope so, Master Lumley."

"He's going to play against our team?"

"Yes!" grinned Grimes.

For the life of him Lumley-Lumley could not see why Grimes was grinning.

"That looks like a goal," Levison remarked, as there was a hot attack on the Grammarian citadel. "Pass, you fathead, Blake—pass, you duffer! There it goes! Now, Talbot! Hurrah!"

The ball went in.

"Goal!" roared the St. Jim's crowd.

"Goal!" yelled Levison. "Hurrah!"

Lumley-Lumley simply blinked at him.

"I guess you're mighty keen on footer all of a sudden," he remarked.

"Not so jolly sudden," said Levison. "I told you a couple of weeks ago I was going to take up footer."

"You're a long time setting about it, then. You haven't been near the footer ground from that day to this."

"Oh, everything takes time!" said Levison carelessly, while Grimes chuckled. "Perhaps I shall open some of your eyes one of these days."

"Perhaps you will," said Lumley-Lumley dryly.

"But I guess you won't!"

The game was going hot and strong now. The Grammarians were fighting hard to equalise, but it was not till close on time that Gordon Gay succeeded in putting the ball in.

The Grammarian goal was followed by a sharp attack from Tom Merry & Co., and the St. Jim's forwards—Talbot, Figgins, Tom Merry, Blake and D'Arcy—seemed to swarm round the visitors' goal. But a goal did not materialise, and the whistle went for half-time.

"Fumblers!" said Levison, in a voice loud enough for the St. Jim's footballers to hear as they came away.

Tom Merry looked round.

"Hallo, you here, Levison? What the dickens are you doing on a football ground?"

"Passin' impertinent remarks, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You are not the person to pass remarks on a fellow's play, Levison. I wegard it as wotten cheek!"

Levison laughed.

"Of course, I don't know anything about the game," he remarked. "It's even necessary for Lowther to tell me that there's eleven players in the team, and that the game's played with a ball. But I know enough to know that that last attack ought to have resulted in a goal!"

"You cheeky ass!" said Blake.

"You awfully cheeky wottah!"

"And you fumbled it, Blake," said Levison deliberately.

"What?" yelled Blake.

Criticism of his play from a fellow who played the game would not have exasperated Jack Blake so much. But hostile criticism from a slacker and a shirker like Levison of the Fourth was rather too thick.

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry angrily. "You don't know whether a chap fumbles or not, at any rate!"

"You agree with me," said Levison coolly. "You know Blake fumbled. You know he ought to have passed out to D'Arcy, instead of centring, and D'Arcy was ready, only the pass didn't come."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, taken aback.

It was true enough, but the incident had been so quick, passing like a flash, that only a keen eye would have noted it.

Tom Merry looked at Levison in astonishment. He had noted it, of course, though he had not intended to mention it to Blake, who was only too keenly conscious of his mistake the instant it had been made.

"If you know so much about footer, it's a pity you don't play the game!" said Tom tartly.

"I know enough to know when a silly ass misses a certain goal with his muddling," grinned Levison.

Jack Blake's face was scarlet.

"You cheeky cad!" he said between his teeth.

"And you know I'm right, Blake," said Levison. Blake nodded at once.

"Yes, you're right, I know that; I ought to have let D'Arcy have the ball, and I knew it a second too late. But you don't know anything about it, you cheeky gasbag! I suppose Lumley-Lumley or Grimes pointed it out to you."

"I guess not," said Lumley-Lumley. "I didn't notice it—it was a bit too quick for me."

"Same here!" said Grimes at once. "I thought Master Merry would get the ball when Blake centred it."

"And Figgins got it, as a cow with half an eye could have seen if a cow with half an eye had been in Blake's place," said Levison mockingly.

"If D'Arcy had got the ball, he had a clear run in, with the Grammarians' backs tumbling over Tom Merry and Blake and one another, and Carboy out of goal!"

"Bai Jove! That's wight enough! Don't mind



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:

REGINALD TALBOT.

REGINALD TALBOT of the Shell was deep in a detective novel when I interrupted him to ask on what day he was born. Some fellows, like Gore, my other study-mate, might have been rather short-tempered, but Talbot showed no impatience. "So I'm the next victim on your list, Skimmy?" he inquired, with a smile. "Well, if you can tell what is likely to happen to me by making a few calculations based on my birth date, you ought to turn out a better detective even than old Kerr!"

Talbot, I discovered, comes under the sign of Aquarius, the Waterman (January 20th to February 18th inclusive), being ruled by the distant planet Neptune. I see him clearly as one upon whom the gods will smile, making up in great measure for the darkness which enshrouded his early years. Talbot has struggled much against long odds, but he is fated to overcome all obstacles and ascend to a position of power. He is well fitted for honour, possessing great mental abilities and exercising a firm control over his conduct.

"I can't! Every well disagree with you," said Talbot, when he had heard my delineation. "You're quite right about the darkness of my early years. I hope that's all over now, though—and I'm certainly looking forward to taking my place in the sun, if things go right. By the way, what are the chances of my scoring a goal against Rookwood in the next match, Skimpole—do you know?" That I couldn't tell Talbot, but personally, I should not be surprised to see him make a hundred goals—or should it be runs?

that uttah wottah, Blake. I wegard his remarks as uttably impertinent, though he happens to be wight!"

"Oh, I don't mind him!" said Blake, though his lips were set. "He knows what he's talking about. Blessed if I know how he picked up so much knowledge of the game at the Green Man!"

"Oh, that isn't all I know!" said Levison coolly. "I could give Tom Merry a tip or two as well as Blake."

"Oh, could you?" said Tom, nettled.

"Yes. You let Gay pass out the ball to Wootton major on the wing a few minutes before. You thought he was going to pass to Mont Blong; but I could see he wasn't," said Levison. "Gay was fooling you, and you fell into his trap. I shouldn't have fallen into it."

"You bragging rotter!" began Lowther.

"He's right," said Tom. "Gay did take me in, and then they got up the field with the ball. But how Levison spotted it, beats me!"

"You mean to say he's right?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Yes, he's right enough!"

"Well, my hat!"

"As a matter of fact, you've all fumbled, excepting Kangaroo and Talbot," said Levison, with insolent coolness. "Talbot lost three distinct chances in about ten minutes. Once through Figgins failing to pass out; once through Lowther sending the ball wide; and once through Redfern letting the ball go into touch."

"Oh, my hat!" said Talbot.

The voices of Redfern, Lowther, and Figgins were heard in chorus:

"Is that so, Talbot?"

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Talbot of the Shell looked rather uncomfortable.

"Well, I—I thought so," he said. "Only my opinion, of course. Levison must have been watching like a hawk."

"As for you, Reilly—"

"Sure, is it a thick ear ye want?" asked Reilly of the Fourth gruffly. "Because, if ye don't, ye needn't give me any tips, Levison."

The footballers moved on, having had quite enough of Levison and his criticism—well-founded as it was, as they had to acknowledge. They would not have minded the criticism much from anybody else; but from the slacker, shirker, and black sheep, it came as rather a bitter pill.

Lumley-Lumley stared at Levison in blank astonishment.

"I guess you know a bit of the game, after all," he remarked. "Where did you pick it up? Not on this footer ground."

Levison laughed, and did not reply.

In the second half the struggle was keen, but a goal came to Talbot near the finish, and St. Jim's ended two to one. When the footballers came off the field, Tom Merry paused to speak to Levison of the Fourth.

"Any more criticisms?" he asked.

"Oh, a little!" said Levison carelessly. "That goal was a corker, I admit that. Talbot can play. But if your front line had passed the ball with more judgment, you could have had another."

"Two or three, perhaps, if you'd been in the front line?" suggested Tom, with heavy sarcasm.

"One, at least," said Levison coolly.

Tom Merry snorted. Just as Levison's remarks were, Tom Merry felt a strong inclination to pull his nose. It pleased Levison's peculiar nature to put the junior skipper's back up in this way.

Tom turned to Grimes.

"We shall see you here next Saturday, Grimey," he remarked.

"Yes, Master Tom!"

"And you want to look out, too!" chimed in Lumley-Lumley. "Grimes has got a new forward, who is going to stagger humanity."

"Good!" said Tom, laughing. "Is that so, Grimey?"

"Jolly good man, anyway, and chance it!" said Grimes. "You'll be surprised when you see him, Master Tom."

"Well, we'll be glad to see him, anyway," said Tom; "and we'll give a wriggle or two before he puts the extinguisher on us, I hope. Ta-ta, Grimey!"

When Grimes left, Levison of the Fourth went with him. And that evening, Levison was back just in time for calling-over, darting into Hall barely in time to answer "adsum!" to his name when Mr. Railton called it.

Mr. Railton gave him a glance, but made no remark. But after call-over the School House master ordered Levison to follow him to his study. For fifteen minutes the black sheep of the Fourth remained with Mr. Railton, and when he emerged he was smiling cheerfully. But as to where he had been that evening, and what he had told Mr. Railton, Levison made no explanation to anyone.

CHAPTER 8.

Grimes' New Man!

LEVISON of the Fourth came out of the School House after dinner on the following Saturday.

The Terrible Three were chatting in the door—

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way, killing time till the footer match was due.

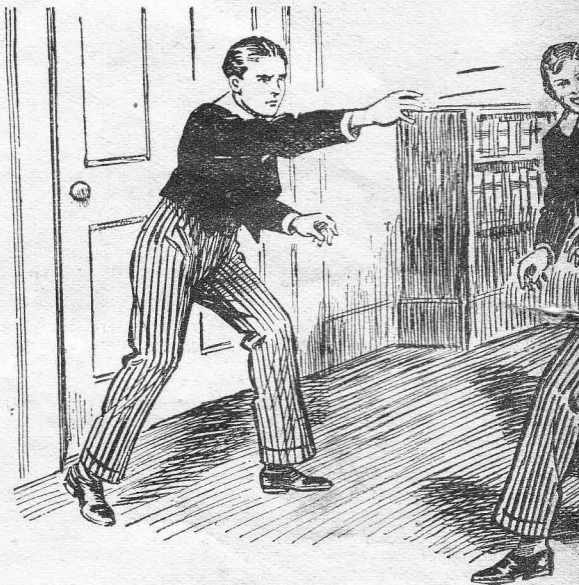
That afternoon Tom Merry's team was playing the village eleven—a match which did not loom very large in the eyes of the St. Jim's junior footballers.

In the nature of things, Grimes' eleven could not be up to the form of the fellows who had so much more time to give to the game, and the juniors were accustomed to beating them.

There had been some talk about Grimes' statement that he had a new forward in his team who was a wonderful player.

The St. Jim's juniors grinned over it rather indulgently. Grimes' wonderful new man was perhaps a great player to the eyes of the village footballers; but they decided he would probably prove very small beer indeed on the St. Jim's ground.

Monty Lowther hailed Levison as he passed.



Whiz! The stale bun flew from Levison's hand straight at He drew the surprised Gussy in front of him. Crack! The aristocr

The humorist of the Shell could not avoid being humorous, in season and out of season.

"Aren't you going to honour us with your presence this afternoon, Levison?" he asked reproachfully. "We were looking forward to having some more tips from you on playing the game, you know."

"I dare say I could give you some," said Levison.

"You could give us some more wotten cheek, you mean?" said Arthur Augustus, who was adorning the stone balustrade with his elegant person. "I regard all your remarks on the subject as impertinent, Levison."

"I suppose you're going to mop up the village, as usual, this afternoon?" said Levison sarcastically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose so," said Tom Merry. "They play a good game, but they're not quite up to St. Jim's form. You know that."

"Their new man is!"

"I shall be glad to see him," said Tom, with a smile. "Grimey seems to think a lot of him. You've seen him play?"

Levison nodded.

"Well, you do know something about the game," said Tom. "You can't play it, but you seem to be able to judge play pretty well. What do you really think of Grimes' new man?"

"First-class!"

"Better than the rest?"

"Heaps!"

"Quite a danger to us—what?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Well, I think he will open your eyes a bit,"



Monty Lowther. But the humorist of the Shell was ready. He was a fiendish yell as the hard bun cracked on D'Arcy's big nose.

said Levison. "If you fumble as you did last Saturday, Lowther, you won't be much use against him."

"You cheeky ass!"

"Well, you asked me. By the way, Tom Merry, you generally give your dud players a chance in the village match."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't know about dud players," he said. "But every chap is entitled to a chance sooner or later, and second-rate men are good enough for that match. No need to spring Kangaroo or Talbot or Figgins on them."

"Would you like a tip from me?"

"Not particularly; but you can go ahead."

"Well, don't take too many risks with your team. That new villager has been helping Grimes coach his eleven, and he knows the game

inside out. If you put in a weak team, you'll be licked hands down."

And Levison went down the steps without waiting for a reply.

Tom Merry looked rather thoughtful.

"The cheeky ass!" growled Lowther.

"Well, I don't know," said Tom. "Levison is an unpleasant beast, and he puts everything as unpleasantly as he can; but there's no denying that he can judge a fellow's play. If Grimes has got a surprise-packet in store for us, we don't want to be taken off our guard."

"It wouldn't be like Levison to give you a tip if it was any use to you," said Manners.

"I don't know; he seemed sincere enough. After all, he may care whether his school's beaten or not."

"Lot he cares!" sniffed Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! I had an impression that Levison was turnin' ovah a new leaf, but I feah that there is nothin' in it," remarked Arthur Augustus. "He has been goin' it more than evah the last week, in fact—he disappeared evwy day aftah lessons, and wushes in just in time for call-ovah."

"Blessed if I know why the prefects don't nail him!" grunted Lowther. "He seems to have pulled the wool fairly over Railton's eyes, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I think I'll take his tip, all the same," said Tom Merry, after some thought. "Talbot is going over to Abbotsford, but I'll tell Figgins and Kangaroo they'd better play, after all."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, it's hardly worth the twouble. I shall be there, you know," observed Arthur Augustus reassuringly.

"That's why I've got to be jolly careful," said Tom Merry.

And he walked away before Gussy could digest the true inwardness of that remark.

Levison had gone down to the gates. Croke and Mellish met him in the quad and stopped him.

"Going out?" Croke asked.

"Yes."

"Racke's got a little party on this afternoon—"

"Hang Racke!"

"Well, I know you had some trouble with him over your minor," said Croke. "But Racke's willing to look over it if you are."

"I'm not," said Levison grimly.

"Dash it all, you did jolly well out of Racke when you were friendly with him," said Mellish. "Don't be an ass, Levison! Have you got anything special on this afternoon?"

"I have!"

"Lodgey and billiards?" sneered Croke.

"No," said Levison quietly; "not Lodgey and billiards this afternoon."

"What is it, then?"

"I'm going to be here for the match."

"Eh? What match?"

"They play Grimes' team this afternoon, you know."

"You're going to waste the afternoon on that, when Racke asks you to a jolly party?" ejaculated Croke.

"Exactly."

Levison walked out of the gates, leaving Mellish and Croke staring.

"What in thunder is the game he is playing?" exclaimed Croke, puzzled and angry. "He doesn't care twopence for footer, and as for

watching the village duffers play—I suppose he's gone potty!"

"There's something on," said Mellish—"something he wants to keep us out of! He's cleared off nearly every day regularly for two weeks now, but he doesn't go to the Green Man. I've asked Lodgey, and he hasn't seen him for a fortnight. He's rusty about it, too. He's got something on that he's keeping us out of, the rotter! I should have thought he'd have jumped at the chance of making it up with Racke."

Racke's merry little party set out that afternoon without Levison of the Fourth.

Levison had disappeared—as he had fallen into the habit of disappearing of late. But his tip to Tom Merry had borne fruit, and the junior captain was more careful in the selection of his team than he usually was for the Rylcombe match.

Talbot of the Shell was absent, and Tom put Julian of the Fourth in his place, otherwise the eleven remained the same that had played the Grammarians a week before.

The kick-off was timed for three o'clock, and before three Tom Merry & Co. were on the ground punting a ball about while they waited for Grimes & Co.

The Rylcombe footballers could not afford the luxury of a coach, and they walked to St. Jim's.

As three o'clock drew near, Tom Merry sighted them coming in at the gates—Grimes and Pilcher and Craggs and Wilson and the rest.

"Here they are!" called out Tom Merry.

He went to meet the Rylcombe team as they came down to the ground.

He stared a little as he saw Levison of the Fourth with Grimes.

"Here you are, Grimey!" said Tom cheerily. "We're quite keen to see that tremendous new man of yours!"

Grimes chuckled.

"He's 'ere, Master Merry!"

"So you're going to see the match after all, Levison?"

"Oh, yes! I'm not going to miss it," said Levison carelessly. "I promised Grimes I'd be present—didn't I, Grimey?"

"You did!" grinned Grimes.

"In fact, I wouldn't miss it for worlds!" said Levison, while some of the Rylcombe footballers grinned.

Tom Merry could not quite see why.

He led the visitors to their dressing-room.

Several friends had come along with the village eleven, and Tom wondered which was the wonderful new forward.

Grimes did not point him out, however, and the whole party went into the dressing-room.

Tom Merry rejoined his men in the field.

Some fellows were gathering round the ropes—not much of a crowd for the village match. Among them was Levison minor of the Third, and Wally bore down on him while the team were waiting for the Rylcombe men to come out.

"Oh, here you are!" said D'Arcy minor. "I've been looking for you, young Levison. Slacking about like your major—what—instead of coming down to practice?"

"No practice for me this afternoon," said Frank.

"You blessed slacker——"

"I'm going to see the match."

"Blow the match!" said Wally. "Nothing in that—only the village kids, and they haven't an earthly!"

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Levison minor smiled.

"I think they've got an earthly," he said. "Grimes has got a new forward—a jolly good man!"

"Oh rot! You come with me!"

"You stay with me," said Frank. "You'll be surprised when you see the chap, and he'll be worth watching, too. I tell you he's a corker!"

"You know him?" asked Wally, a little impressed at last.

"As well as I know my own brother!"

"That's jolly queer! I didn't know you had pals in the village!" said Wally, in surprise.

"Well, I'll stay and have a look at him, and if you've been rotting, I'll jolly well punch your nose, young Levison!"

"Here they come!" chirruped Frank.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at the Rylcombe footballers as they came marching into the field, Grimes at their head.

"Now we shall see that remarkable new forward!" smiled Arthur Augustus.

Grimes, Craggs, Pilcher, Wilson, and the rest came on. Eight—nine—ten—and then—the St. Jim's juniors rubbed their eyes.

They wondered for the moment whether they were dreaming.

For the eleventh man was Levison of the Fourth!

He was in football rig, in the Rylcombe colours. It was evident that he was going to play with the village team.

There was a mocking grin on his face as he met the astounded stares of the St. Jim's fellows.

"Levison!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Is Levison playing for you, Grimey?" asked Blake, in wonder.

Grimes nodded.

"Yes," he said. "No objection, Master Merry?"

"None at all," said Tom, with a smile. "But if you're short of a player we could have lent you a better man."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Has your new man failed you, after all?" asked Tom, glancing over the village team, and recognising ten familiar faces there.

"No," chuckled Grimes; "not at all——"

"But I don't see him here," said Tom, puzzled.

"Yes, you do—Master Levison!"

"Eh?"

Grimes chuckled again, and Levison of the Fourth grinned.

The truth was dawning upon Tom Merry & Co. now.

"Levison!" ejaculated Tom. "He—he——"

Grimes nodded.

"He's our new man!"

CHAPTER 9.

Levison's Game!

"LEVISON!"

"My only hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Levison a footballer! Levison your new man!"

"Gammon!"

Tom Merry & Co. were utterly astounded. They had wondered a little about the new man in whom Grimes placed so much confidence. But that the new man was a St. Jim's fellow they had naturally never dreamed.

And Levison of the Fourth! Why Grimes should have confidence in him as a player passed their understanding.

Certainly Levison had lately revealed that he had a good knowledge of the game, so far as judging a player went. But as a player himself!

The black sheep of the Fourth grinned, evidently gratified by the sensation he had caused.

"Well, this beats the band!" said Tom Merry at last. "So you've really taken up footer, Levison?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Levison coolly.

"And you're beginning by playing against your own school!" said Blake.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Did you want me to play for St. Jim's?" he asked sarcastically.

"No jolly fear!"

"Well, if you didn't want me here, you can't complain if I join a team outside the school."

"They're welcome to you!" said Blake tartly.

"Grimes is an ass to play a slacker who hasn't touched a football since the season started!"

"Oh, I've been steadily at practice, you know!" said Levison airily.

"Bai Jove, I have nevah seen you at practice, Levison!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"You can't see a mile and a quarter, even with the aid of your eyeglass!" said Levison. "I've been at practice nearly every day with Grimes' men."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"So that's where you were!" exclaimed Blake.

"Exactly!"

"I see now," said Tom Merry slowly. "That's why Railton let you off when you were late for calling-over last week?"

"That's it!" chuckled Levison. "Of course, as I'm such a truthful chap, he had to get my explanation confirmed by Grimey. I explained to him that I had been chivvied off the footer ground here, and had to take up practice outside the school."

"Well, that wasn't quite the case," said Tom.

"Bai Jove! You fellows see that I was wight all along!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Eh? You didn't know what Levison was up to!"

"I pointed out that he was turnin' ovah a new leaf!" said Arthur Augustus triumphantly. "I was quite sure about it, and I am glad now that I encouraged him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Suppose we get on with the game?" suggested Levison.

"Ready!" said Tom.

"You don't mind me playing Master Levison?" Grimes asked, as the footballers went into the middle of the field. "He said you wouldn't mind."

"Not at all," said Tom cheerily. "But I don't quite see your object. Levison isn't much of a player."

"Toppin', Master Merry!"

"A fortnight's practice must have worked wonders, then!" said Tom, laughing. "Topping or not, you're welcome to him!"

The teams lined up, the kick-off falling to Grimes.

Levison was playing inside-right for the Rylcombe team, and the St. Jim's fellows noticed that he looked very fit as he lined up with the rest.

In football colours, with alert eyes and springy limbs, he looked very little like the slacking, smoking, shady cad of the Fourth they knew so well.

(Continued on next page.)

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A change, indeed, had come over Ernest Levison.

Frank Levison was watching the new player with great delight.

Wally was lost in astonishment. He understood now the fag's keen interest in Grimes' new forward.

"You knew that all along, you young beggar!" grunted Wally.

Frank nodded and grinned.

"Yes, Ernie told me; but I had to keep it dark. They're going to see now that Ernie can play footer."

"More likely to let his side down," said Wally. "He can't play!"

"You'll see," said Frank, with serene confidence.

The Rylcombers had followed up the kick-off with an attack; but they were soon stopped, and the home forwards got away in great style. But they did not go through the villagers like a knife through cheese, as they had expected. Grimes & Co. were playing up remarkably well.

The village team seemed to have pulled together, and improved generally, as if it had had the benefit of coaching from someone who knew good class footer inside out. Was it Levison?

The mere idea of a team being pulled together like that by the slacker of St. Jim's was astounding. Evidently there was more in Levison than met the eye.

The St. Jim's attack was stopped, and the game swayed to midfield, neither side getting a chance for some time.

There was a buzz round the field when a Rylcombe player was seen to get away suddenly with the ball, and speed down on goal.

It was Levison of the Fourth.

"Go it, Ernie!" shrieked Levison minor ecstatically.

Ernie was going it.

Of the Rylcombe forwards, only Grimes was up with him. Levison seemed to wind through the school halves, and, as Herries and Reilly, the backs, closed in on him, he sent the ball to Grimes in the nick of time.

Grimes drove it in first time, and Fatty Wynn, in goal, was beaten to the wide.

Perhaps Wynn's amazement at seeing such an attack from Levison was something to do with it, and certainly Fatty never looked for so swift and clean a pass to Grimes from Levison. Anyway, the ball was in the net, and the crowd gasped:

"Goal!"

"Goal!" shrieked Frank, clapping his hands. "What do you say now, Wally, you fathead?"

Wally whistled.

"My only Aunt Jane! Your major can play footer! That was his goal right enough! He made Grimey a present of it! It beats me!"

Tom Merry looked rather queerly at Levison as Fatty pitched the ball out.

Levison was surprising him.

The sides lined up again, and the Saints—considerably to their own surprise—made it a point to mark Levison very carefully after that. It was only too clear that he was the most dangerous man in the village team.

The news that a St. Jim's fellow was playing against St. Jim's, and that it was Levison of the Fourth, had spread. Fellows chuckled at the news, and wondered why Grimes was such an

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ass to play him. But Levison's play altered their opinion very considerably.

Levison of the Fourth was playing against St. Jim's, and he was playing a great game. And at that news the juniors thronged down to the ground in great numbers, and with keen interest.

The village match was seldom honoured by a crowd; but by the time the first half was over, the numbers on the ground were as great as on the occasion of the Greyfriars, or Rookwood match. And all eyes were on Levison.

The village goal was the only one taken in the first half. The interval found Grimes & Co. one up, much to their satisfaction.

A big crowd looked keenly when Tom Merry kicked off for the second half.

"I guess this takes the cake!" Lumley-Lumley remarked. "Levison's been bragging about Grimes' new man, and it was himself all the time. Just like Levison! But the queer thing is that he is a good man—one of the best! Who'd have thought that Levison could play footer like that?"

"Who'd have thought he'd have taken the trouble?" sneered Crooke. "I thought he was having a good time, sneaking away from the school every day as he did, and he was only playing football with village kids. Silly ass!"

"You wouldn't, would you?" grinned Lumley-Lumley. "Not in your line. There he goes again! Bravo!"

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

Levison looked like getting through again; but Kangaroo, at centre-half, robbed him of the ball just in time, and sent it up the field.

The St. Jim's forwards swept down, and there was a hot attack on the village goal.

Wilson fisted out the ball as it came in from Tom Merry's foot; but Figgins' head met it and drove it right back, and the goalkeeper was beaten.

There was a yell from the St. Jim's crowd as the leather went into the net.

"Goal!"

Tom Merry & Co. were relieved as well as pleased; for there was only about ten minutes of the second half still to go, and they had only just succeeded in equalising.

Both sides looked a little breathless as they lined up after the goal.

The game had been a gruelling one.

The struggle went on, hard and fast. Time was getting close. The referee glanced at his watch once or twice, and the score was still equal, and Tom Merry & Co. were fully held.

The Saints made a final tremendous effort, determined that the game should not end in a draw. With quick, short passing, they brought the ball fairly up to goal, and Wilson was called upon to defend again. He saved twice, and then Pileher drove the ball out to the eager forwards, and Grimes captured it and raced it away.

The Saints were after him like wolves as he went down the field, but Grimes was swift. He rushed on till Kangaroo met him and charged him off the ball.

Monty Lowther tried to kick clear, but the Rylcombe inside-right robbed him of the ball and ran it on.

Reilly rushed forward to tackle, but Levison wound round him very cleverly.

Herries was speeding down on him, and Levison had less than a second to deal with the

(Continued on page 36.)

THE SCHOOLBOY AUTHOR!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

It causes a big surprise at Cedar Creek School when Kern Gunten wins the first prize in a story competition. But as Frank Richards discovers, there is more in Gunten's success than meets the eye!

Bob's Idea!

"WHAT the dickens—" ejaculated Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards looked up, his cheeks colouring a little.

It was near time for afternoon lessons at Cedar Creek School, and Bob Lawless had come along the creek, looking for his English cousin. He found Frank Richards seated upon a log under the trees, with a big exercise-book open on his knees. There was a pencil in his hand and a thoughtful frown on his youthful brow.

The open page of the exercise-book was covered with writing. Frank Richards had been very busy when his chum came along. Bob looked at him and at the closely written sheet in astonishment.

"What's the game?" he asked. "Miss Meadows given you a chapter to write out, or something?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then what the dickens are you scribbling at that rate for?" asked Bob, quite mystified. "Why, there's pages and pages of it. I've been hunting for you—I couldn't guess where you'd got to. And here you've been scribbling all the time. Anything wrong with your roof?"

Frank laughed, his cheeks very pink.

"No, you duffer!"

"Then what does it mean?"

Frank did not answer, but his colour deepened. He looked like a fellow who had been caught in a fault.

"Not writing to your popper?" grinned Bob. "Life's too short for a letter that length, I should think."

"Oh, no! Look here, Bob, I—I don't mind telling you," stammered Frank, quite crimson now. "But don't jaw about it. The fellows will cackle."

"Go ahead!"

"I—I've been writing a story."

Bob Lawless jumped.

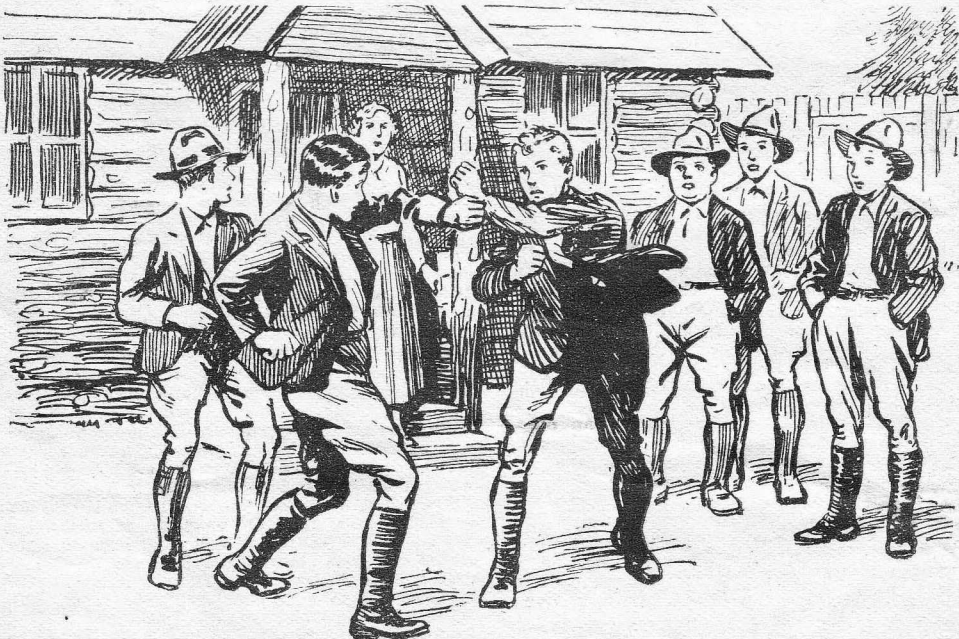
"A story?" he shouted. "Great jumping Jerusalem! I never knew you were a thumping author. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Bob—"

"I must tell the chaps this—they'll enjoy it!" roared Bob.

"Keep it dark!" exclaimed Frank. "Look here, Bob, I don't want to be cackled at."

Bob chuckled merrily.



"You'll answer for calling me a liar, you cad!" exclaimed Frank Richards, and he hit out. Gunten put up his hands to save the blow from landing on his nose. "Richards! Gunten!" The voice of Miss Meadows interrupted further proceedings.

"All serene—I won't jaw!" he said. "But it beats me. When did you begin this game?"

"Well, I've always scribbled," said Frank, rather shyly. "I used to do stuff for the school magazine, when I was at school in England. And—and I've written a lot of yarns, too—and I've chucked them away when they were finished. Sort of built that way, you know."

"Mind if I read it?" asked Bob. "I don't undertake to read the lot. That's a big order. But let's see what it's like."

"All right!"

Bob Lawless took the exercise-book and sat down on the log beside his cousin. Frank Richards stared at the shining creek, his cheeks still red. Like most youthful authors, he was a little self-conscious about his literary attempts.

There was a slight rustle in the thickets behind the fallen log where the cousins sat, but they did not observe it. A sallow face, with narrow, cunning eyes, looked out at the two cousins from the screen of foliage.

It was the face of Kern Gunten, the son of the Swiss storekeeper at Thompson, and the black sheep of the lumber school. Gunten had a "deck" of cards in his hand. He had retired to that secluded spot to practise with the cards, to perfect himself in the cardsharping trick of dealing from the bottom of the pack. That was not an occupation he wished the other fellows to see him engaged in.

The voices of the two cousins had reached him, and his curiosity was aroused. After that glance through the foliage, he drew his head back out of sight, but made no sound to reveal his presence.

The fact that Frank had asked Bob to keep it dark was quite enough to make the cad of Cedar Creek determined to hear all that was said. Gunten had no scruples on matters of that kind.

There was silence under the trees.

Bob Lawless had intended to read a page or two, but he found, somewhat to his surprise, that Frank's "scribble" interested him, and he turned page after page.

The "yarn" Frank had written was a description of some of his own experiences; the voyage across the Atlantic and up the St. Lawrence River, and across Canada on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Bob did not cease reading till he came to the last page Frank had written. Then he gave a whistle.

"By gum, Frank!"

Frank Richards looked at him.

"Rotten?" he asked.

"No, ripping," said Bob. "Blessed if I ever thought you could scribble like this! You'll be a terrific author some day, Franky."

"I wonder!" said Frank.

That was the boy's secret ambition, though he had confided it to no one so far.

"Bet you!" said Bob. "Why, this is tip-top. I couldn't do it for any price. Look here, Franky, I've got an idea. Have you ever been in print?"

"Only in the school rag at home."

"Why not have a shot for it?" asked Bob.

"There's a literary competition going on in the 'Fraser Advertiser,' and there's a prize of twenty dollars for the best short story. The popper takes in the paper, you know. I look at it sometimes. Look here, Franky, you have a shot for that twenty dollars!"

Frank Richards shook his head.

"It wouldn't do, Bob. Not good enough."

"Rats!" said Bob promptly. "I'm a good

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judge of a story. I tell you, you'd very likely rope in the prize. It won't hurt you to try, anyway. I'm jolly well going to make you. I'll keep you at it every day till you've done a yarn and sent it along."

"I—I say, if you think——"

"I guess I don't think—I know!" said Bob. "You're going in for that prize, and I reckon you'll rope it in—just a few! Hallo! There's the blessed bell!"

Clang, clang!

It was the bell from the log schoolhouse calling the Cedar Creek boys and girls to lessons again.

Frank and Bob rose from the log and walked away through the trees towards the school. As they disappeared, Kern Gunten stepped out from the thickets. The Swiss looked after the cousins with a sneering smile.

"How clever we are!" he murmured. "Perhaps we shall win the prize—perhaps! But we shall see!"

And Gunten hurried on towards the school.

Rivals!

BOB LAWLESS kept his word. Having discovered the literary gift of his English cousin, he was determined to keep Frank up to the mark, and see him make something of it.

Frank Richards was ambitious in a way, but his ambition was mingled with a good deal of modesty, and made him very doubtful about trying his chances.

Bob refused to admit any doubts. He explained to Frank several times that it would only cost a few cents to send his manuscript in to the paper at Fraser City, and that if it came back "Declined with thanks!" it wouldn't hurt him. While if it was successful, twenty dollars was a handsome sum of money to win.

"I'll do it," Frank said, at last. "But if I bag the prize, Bob, we'll go halves. You'll have earned it as much as I."

Bob laughed.

"All serene! I guess I shall deserve a whack in it for making you work. That's not an easy job."

And Frank set to work. He read the "Fraser Advertiser," looking out the terms of the literary competition carefully.

The benignant editor of the "Advertiser" was desirous of encouraging local talent. Anyone residing in British Columbia, of any age up to twenty-one, was eligible for the competition. The winning story bagged the prize; others that were good were to have honourable mention.

Frank Richards hoped that he would get an honourable mention, though when he said so to Bob, Bob asked him how he was to go halves in it.

At the ranch, except on half-holidays, there was little time for scribbling. The cousins had a long ride home every evening, and then there was supper and a chat, and early to bed.

Frank's writing was mostly done at the school, in the interval between morning and afternoon lessons, and sometimes for an hour or so when school was over, before starting home.

Meanwhile the matter was kept dark. But it was destined to come out.

One morning when the cousins arrived early at school, they found Kern Gunten in the school playground, with a crowd of fellows round him and a paper in his hand.

"I guess I'm going in for it," said Gunten, his

eyes glimmering for a moment at the cousins as they came up. "Why not? Every galoot has a chance."

"You can't write!" sniffed Eben Hacke.

"I guess I can try."

"Blessed if I don't, too!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers.

"Same here!" said Lawrence, laughing. "Let's all try! The poor old editor will be sorry he spoke when he gets the lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, fair play!" exclaimed Gunten, still looking at the cousins out of the corners of his narrow eyes. "It's my idea and I've told you fellows. It isn't fair to go in and compete with me, you know! You wouldn't have known anything about it if I hadn't told you."

"What rot!" said Hacke. "The thing's open to everybody in British Columbia. I guess I could go in if I liked. I'm an American, but it says residents in British Columbia, and I guess I fill the bill."

"Fair play!" repeated Gunten doggedly. "If any fellow in this school goes in for it, it's taking an unfair advantage, as I've told you all about it."

Chunky Todgers sniffed.

"That's mean," he said. "Still, if you put it like that, keep the blessed competition to yourself, and go and chop chips!"

Frank Richards stepped forward. As Gunten was claiming the literary competition all for himself, as the discoverer, so to speak, it was best to speak out at once and avoid a misunderstanding.

"That's the 'Fraser Advertiser' competition you're speaking of, Gunten?" asked Frank.

"I guess so. I came across this week's number in popper's store," explained Gunten. "I thought at once of having a shot for the prize. You agree with me that the fellows here oughtn't to try to cut me out, after I've told them about it?"

"I don't know about that," said Frank. "The competition's open to everybody. But as a matter of fact, I'm entering myself, and I began my story last week."

Gunten sneered.

"You never heard of the thing till this morning."

Frank's eyes gleamed.

"I tell you I knew of it last week!" he said.

"Bob showed me the paper at the ranch, and persuaded me to enter for it."

"I guess that's so!" chimed in Bob.

"Oh, pile it on!" said Gunten contemptuously. "I've just let on about it and you're trying to cut me out. That's your game."

"I guess you might leave it to Gunten if he spotted the thing first, Richards!" said Hacke.

"But I tell you I was working for it three or four days ago!" exclaimed Frank Richards hotly. "Bob knows."

Gunten shrugged his shoulders.

"And what have you been keeping it dark for?" he sneered. "Afraid of letting another galoot hear of it?"

"Nothing of the kind!" Frank exclaimed. "I was keeping it dark because I don't expect to get the prize, and I didn't want to be cackled at. That's all. I never even thought about any other fellow wanting to enter. I've certainly no objection to the whole school taking it up."

"Go in and win, the lot of you!" grinned Bob Lawless. "I back old Frank against the crowd."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Gunten coolly. "It's my idea and Frank Richards is bagging it, and I call it unfair."

Frank clenched his hands. The Swiss backed away promptly. He had had trouble with Frank once, and he did not want any more. His nose had suffered too much.

"Keep your wool on!" he exclaimed. "You'll admit yourself that it looks suspicious, I suppose. You never let on a word about it till you heard me speaking now."

"There was no need to mention it."

"Well, I guess—"

"You've as good as called me a liar," said Frank Richards, his face very angry. "You'll take that back, Gunten, or put up your hands!"

"I guess I'm sticking to what I said."

"Then you'll answer for it, you cad!"

Gunten quickly put up his hands to save a blow landing on his nose. The Cedar Creek fellows gathered round in a ring.

But the voice of Miss Meadows, the school-mistress, was heard.

"Richards! Gunten!"

The two dropped their hands at once.

"Ye-es, ma'am!" stammered Frank.

Miss Meadows gave them a severe glance.

"Go into the school-room at once."

"Yes, ma'am!"

It was not yet time for morning lessons, and the two had the big school-room to themselves. Frank sat down at his desk without another look at Gunten. But the Swiss came towards him.

"Richards!"

"Do you want to begin again here?" exclaimed Frank fiercely. "I'll give you what you've been asking for after lessons, you rotter!"

"Never mind that," said Gunten quietly. "Perhaps I was a bit hasty, but you'll admit that it looked suspicious."

"Only to a suspicious cad!" said Frank grimly.

Gunten bit his lip. But his tone was civil as he went on:

"Let that pass. You say you were writing stuff for this competition last week. If that's so, it proves what you said, and I take back what I told you. Show me the stuff and prove it."

Frank hesitated.

He was not in the least inclined to show his literary efforts to the Swiss, whom he disliked intensely. But there was a certain amount of reasonableness in Gunten's request.

Frank took the exercise-book out of his desk.

The work was done in the book, to be copied out later on foolscap. His order for foolscap had already been sent to Gunten's store at Thompson. It was not an article for which there was much demand in the Thompson valley.

He handed the book to the Swiss.

"There it is!"

"Thanks!"

Gunten opened the book and ran his eye over the contents. He grinned as he read. Frank had written the story of the Mexican rustler who had lately been run down in that section by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It was quite an interesting story, too, and it was entitled "On the Trail."

Frank had expected the Swiss to hand him back the book when he had glanced at the pages covered with writing—a sufficient proof of Frank's statements.

But the Swiss was reading it steadily.

Frank watched him restively.

"Look here, that will do, Gunten!" he exclaimed at last. "You don't want to read the whole thing, I suppose?"

Gunten handed him back the book.

"Right you are!" he said.

"If you want any further proof you can find out that last Saturday I sent an order to your father's store for a quire of foolscap," said Frank satirically.

As a matter of fact, Gunten was well aware of that already. He made no reply, however, as the school came trooping in at that moment. The Swiss went to his place, and morning lessons commenced.

Gunten's Luck!

"HERE'S the post wagon, Franky!"

It was Saturday afternoon. Saturday was a free day, and Frank Richards had spent most of it in his room at the Lawless Ranch, with pen and ink and foolscap.

The story was finished, the foolscap had come from the store, and all Frank had to do was to make a "fair copy," wrap it up carefully, and dispatch it by post to the offices of the paper in Fraser City.

As a rule, Bob and Frank helped in the ranch work on Saturdays, but that morning Frank had been busy with his pen. By the time the post wagon called the parcel for the "Fraser Advertiser" was ready, tied up and sealed, and addressed.

Frank came downstairs as Bob called, with the parcel in his hand.

The post wagon had stopped on the trail outside. It was driven by Kern Gunten. The storekeeper at Thompson was also postmaster, and on Saturdays his son made the round of the farms and ranches with the post wagon.

"Letters?" called Gunten.

"Here you are!"

Among the letters was Frank's manuscript for Fraser. Gunten tossed it carelessly into the sack with the rest.

"Your stuff going to-day, Gunten?" asked Bob Lawless.

"It's gone in," said Gunten. "I sent my yarn along on Thursday. I guess I shall get a polite 'No.' So-long!"

The Swiss cracked his whip and drove away.

"Well, the deed is deeded, Franky!" grinned Bob Lawless, clapping his cousin on the shoulder. "Behold the blushing author!"

"Oh rats!" said Frank, laughing. "I don't suppose there's a chance for a moment of the twenty dollars coming this way."

"I fancy you'll beat Gunten's story, anyway."

And the chums dismissed the matter, and went along to join the "hands" and help in splitting logs for the winter.

Meanwhile, the post wagon rattled away down the trail. Gunten drove at a good pace, his next destination being Simpson's farm. The wagon entered upon a stretch of the trail through the timber, and there, under the overhanging trees, Kern Gunten drew his horse to a halt.

He stood up in the wagon, looking about him with sharp, cautious eyes. The spot was very solitary; there was no sound or movement in the timber save from a stray gopher in the under-bush.

After a cautious survey, Gunten knelt in the wagon and opened the letter sack. He dived his hand into it, and it came out again with Frank Richards' neat little parcel in it.

Again Gunten cast a quick, guilty glance round him; then for nearly a quarter of an hour he was

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busy. After that time he rose and looked, with a somewhat pale face, round at the trees; but the trail through the timber was as solitary as ever.

Gunten closed the post sack and resumed his place at the reins, and drove on at a rattling speed to make up for lost time.

His face was still a little pale, but it wore a malicious smile of satisfaction for all its pallor.

On Monday morning the chums rode to the lumber school as usual, and they found Vere Beauclerc there. Beauclerc had been away from school for a week as a result of his boxing encounter with the Dakota Kid, in Thompson. His chums were glad to see him again.

"Feeling chirpy—what?" asked Bob, greeting him with a tremendous slap on the shoulder.

Beauclerc jumped

"Oh, you ass! Yes, I'm all right now!"

"Still got a mouse under your eye," said Frank Richards, smiling.

"What about your literary works, Frank?" asked Beauclerc.

Beauclerc knew all about it, Frank having ridden over to the shack on the creek to see him a few days before.

"It's gone," said Frank cheerily. "Only one other chap here is competing—Gunten. But I expect there's about a hundred others from different parts."

"When is it settled?" asked Beauclerc.

"Next week's number gives the decision, and the winning yarn comes out in print the following week," said Frank.

"And we're going to see 'On the Trail,' by Frank Richards," said Bob Lawless. "We've been entertaining a great author unawares, you know."

"Fathead!" said Frank, laughing.

Bob Lawless seemed a good deal keener about the result than Frank himself. He showed much more anxiety to see the latest issue of the "Fraser Advertiser." That publication did not reach the Thompson valley till the following Sunday, and the eager Bob had to wait impatiently.

But on Sunday, when Billy Cook, the foreman, went to Thompson, he brought back the paper with him.

Dinner was over at the ranch. Beauclerc had been there to dinner, and the three chums were strolling by the ranch-house when Billy Cook came home. They bore down on him at once for the paper, and it was duly sorted out and handed over.

The chums of Cedar Creek retired to a quiet spot under the trees to look at it.

"Here we are!" said Bob, turning over the leaves of the paper. "'Results of the Literary Competition.' Oh, great thunder and jumping snakes!"

Bob stared at the paper in blank astonishment and dismay.

"What is it, Bob?" asked Frank. "Who got the prize?"

"Gunten!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Gunten!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Bob. "Gunten—that fathead! Listen to this. The editor's potty, of course.

"The prize of twenty dollars is awarded to Master Kern Gunten, of Thompson, for his excellent story, 'Running Down a Rogue.' We compliment Master Gunten not only on the literary excellence of his story, but upon his very

clear calligraphy and the neatness of the manuscript. The story will be published next week."

"Oh, my hat!" said Beauclerc.

"Fancy Gunten!" said Frank. "I shouldn't have thought he could do it. He must have done his manuscript jolly carefully. Miss Meadows has slanged him lots of times for his scrawl at school."

"It beats me," said Bob. "Neatness, you know—and Gunten! The most slovenly guy at Cedar Creek. It beats me hollow!"

"Any honourable mentions?" asked Frank.

"Yes; about fifty."

"You'll find Frank there, surely," said Beauclerc.

"I'll soon see."

Bob scanned the page, but the name of Frank Richards did not appear. There were "honourable mentions" for over forty competitors, but among them Frank had no place.

"Rotten!" said Bob. "The editor's a silly ass, of course."

"A champion ass!" said Beauclerc. "Better luck next time, Frank."

Frank smiled rather constrainedly.

"The editor's all right," he said. "The first rule of the game is not to swear at the referee, you know. The man knows his business and I don't. I don't think there will be a next time."

"Rats! You'll be scribbling again in a day or two; you can't help it," said Bob.

And on that point, at least, Bob Lawless was right.

Dark Suspicions!

"CONGRATULATIONS, Gunten!" Frank Richards spoke quite heartily when he met the Swiss at the lumber school on Monday. He did not like Kern Gunten, and he made no secret of it, but he was glad of his success in the competition.

Gunten gave him rather a peculiar grin.

"Yes, I guess I've been rather lucky," he said.

"I never really thought I should pull it off. You had no luck, Richards?"

"None!" said Frank ruefully.

"Hard cheese!" said Gunten. "Still, it's something for the prize to come to Cedar Creek at all, isn't it? There was a lot trailing it from all parts."

"Yes, it's one up for Cedar Creek," said Bob Lawless. "Blessed if I don't read that story when it comes out."

"Oh, it's hardly worth it," said Gunten.

"We shall read it, of course," said Frank Richards. "We get the paper on the ranch, anyhow, next Sunday."

Gunten nodded and they went in to school.

There were a good many congratulations for Gunten at the log school. Most of the fellows were surprised at Gunten's luck, for he was not a fellow one would have suspected of literary gifts. But they were glad Cedar Creek had scored.

Many of them were looking forward with keen curiosity to see the paper when the winning story appeared.

There were always two copies of the "Fraser Advertiser" in the district, one at the Lawless ranch, and the other at Gunten's store in the Thompson. Both, of course, came through the post at Gunten's.

On the following Sunday morning when Billy Cook came back from Thompson with the letters, Frank and Bob ran him down at once.

"Got the 'Fraser Advertiser'?" said Bob.

The ranchman shook his head.

"Tain't come."

"Oh, blow!"

"We'll ask Gunten to let us see his," said Frank. And on Monday they did. Eben Hacke and Dawson had already read the story, it appeared, having visited Gunten on Sunday. But Gunten, somewhat to the surprise of the fellows, had not brought the paper to school with him.

"Well, bring it to-morrow," said Bob Lawless. "Hang it all, we want to see the work of the Cedar Creek author!"

"You're jolly flattering," said Gunten, with a smile. "But it can't be done. I've sent the paper to my uncle in Toronto."

Frank Richards gave Gunten a quick look.

"You've got another copy?" he asked.

"No."

"You don't want to keep a copy of your first thing in print?"

"Oh, my uncle will send it back some time!"



"Please, sergeant, where is the gun-cotton? There's a button off my tunic."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Martin, 61, Potter's way, Sheriff Hill, Gateshead 9.

said Gunten carelessly. "Anyway, I've got the prize, and that's the chief thing."

"Got the cash?" asked Bob.

"Yes. Look!" Gunten held up a twenty dollar bill.

"Bravo!"

Frank Richards was very thoughtful as he trotted home with Bob that evening. He asked Mr. Lawless whether the "Advertiser" had come. It had not.

But Frank Richards was still thoughtful.

The next time Billy Cook went to Thompson he took a letter from Frank to the post, addressed to the "Advertiser" office at Fraser, with a stamp enclosed for a copy of the paper.

Bob regarded his cousin rather curiously as Cook took the letter away.

"You're awfully keen about Gunten's prize story," he said.

"Not only that," said Frank. "I'm specially keen to see whether this new copy of the 'Advertiser' gets lost like the other."

"It won't," said Bob, with a stare. "Why should it?"

"Well, I'm not satisfied," said Frank slowly. "You know Gunten—always swanking and bragging about something. Yet he doesn't want the school to see his prize story. He's sent away the only copy he had. Everybody expected him to bring it to school and show it round."

"Dawson saw it at Gunten's place."

"Yes, and Dawson's told me it's a yarn about the Mounties running down a Mexican rustler."

"Same idea as your own yarn, then? Of course, Gunten knew all about that Mexican galoot," said Bob. "Queer he should have picked on it for his yarn."

"Very queer," said Frank, "when you remember he won't let us see his copy of the story, and that the copy coming to us by post has been lost. And the post passes through Gunten's store."

"Frank!"

"The editor complimented the prizewinner on his good writing and neatness. We know Gunten is a scrawly writer and slovenly," said Frank. "And my manuscript was given to him in the post wagon, wasn't it? He had it in his hands that day for hours."

"Frank!" exclaimed Bob breathlessly. "You don't think—"

"No," said Frank, "I don't, but I don't feel satisfied. It's too odd Gunten sending his copy away before we could see it, and our copy being lost in Gunten's post-office. But I'm going to see that story in print!"

"By gum!" said Bob. "Well, we shall see it when the 'Advertiser' comes along—the one you have written for. It will come Sunday with the regular number."

"That will settle it," said Frank.

Both the cousins were looking forward eagerly to Sunday now.

On Sunday morning, Billy Cook came along with letters and papers from the post at Thompson. There was the current number of the "Fraser Advertiser," addressed to Mr. Lawless. But the back number, which should have been addressed to Frank Richards, was not there!

It had not arrived.

"By gum!" said Bob breathlessly, looking at his chum with startled eyes. "That back number's got lost in the post like the other, Frank."

"And Gunten has the run of the post-office at Thompson," said Frank, with a curl of the lip. "Now, Bob, how has that paper disappeared?"

"It does look fishy," said Bob. "The other paper has come along all right—only the paper with the prizewinner's story in it has disappeared—twice! It's too thick. Blessed if it doesn't look as if Gunten opened your manuscript and read it, and thought it was good enough for a winner, and borrowed it. Why, the galoot may never have written a story himself at all—just bagged yours and sent it in in his name!"

"We're going to know for certain," said Frank Richards grimly. "Not much good writing for another copy of the 'Advertiser'—it has to come through Gunten's post-office, and Gunten sorts the letters for his father. Where can we get it, Bob? We can't go to Fraser."

Bob rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Nowhere nearer than Kamloops," he said. "That's a long day's ride there and back."

"Feel up to a day's ride?" asked Frank.

"You bet!"

"Then let's go!"

And ten minutes later, having obtained Mr. Lawless' permission, the cousins started on their day's ride for the town on the distant railway line. It was long past their usual bed-time when the chums, tired, and with tired horses, arrived at the ranch again, and they went directly to bed. But they were up at the usual hour in the morning to start for school.

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Frank Richards Wins!

FRANK RICHARDS and Bob Lawless were a little restive during morning lessons at Cedar Creek that day. They were glad when the school was dismissed by Miss Meadows. As the Cedar Creek fellows crowded out of the school-room, Bob Lawless called out:

"Meeting in the old corral! Roll up!"

"What's up?" asked Kern Gunten.

"I guess you'll see when you get there," said Bob. "It's a jolly important meeting. Come on, Cherub!"

In a state of surprise the Cedar Creek fellows gathered in the old corral. Frank, Bob, and Beauclerc came in together. They kept their eyes on Gunten to make sure that he came.

"Waal, what's this all about?" demanded Eben Hacke.

"Frank Richards has something to say," said Bob. "Go it, Franky!"

Frank stepped on a log and addressed the surprised meeting.

"Gentlemen of Cedar Creek—"

"Cut it short!" said Gunten.

"Cut the cackle and come to the hosses!" suggested Hacke.

"Gentlemen," said Frank, unmoved, "I've got something to tell you. You are aware that I sent a story to the 'Fraser Advertiser' competition. It was called 'On the Trail,' and was a description of the Mounties running down that Mexican rustler. My story was handed to Gunten for the post when he collected at the ranch."

Gunten started violently.

"What are you driving at?" he exclaimed.

"This," said Frank, cool as ice. "While my parcel was in your hands you opened it, wrote a new title on the story, wrote a letter to go with it in your name instead of mine, and sent in my manuscript as yours!"

Gunten staggered.

"Gammon!" said Eben Hacke.

"Oh gum, what a yarn!" said Chunky Todgers. "Don't pile it on, Franky! Blessed if you oughtn't to be a novelist!"

"What does Gunten say?" said Frank coolly.

Gunten pulled himself together.

"It's a lie!" he shouted.

"All serene! We don't believe it," said Hacke. "It's too thin. What on earth are you spinning that yarn for, Richards?"

"It's true," said Frank.

"It's false!" yelled Gunten. "I know nobody here will believe you. It's a lie, and I know the reason. The hound is jealous of my getting the prize. I'm not going to stay here and listen to this."

Gunten swung away, but Bob Lawless' grasp on his shoulder swung him back.

"Keep him there, Bob," said Frank quietly.

"I'm going to prove it now, you fellows, so that you'll know Gunten in his true colours."

"It's a lie!" panted Gunten.

"Mr. Lawless' copy of the 'Advertiser' containing that story was lost in the post," said Frank. "The post is sorted by Gunten at his father's store. I wrote specially for another copy, and that was lost in the post, too."

"By gum!" said Dawson.

"Yesterday," continued Frank, "I rode down to Kamloops with Bob and bought a copy. I've got it here. The prize story is in it, and that story is the one I wrote and handed to Gunten in the post wagon. It went to the office in Gunten's name, and Gunten has received the prize. He's



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going to hand that prize to me, and own up before the whole school!"

"Prove it!" yelled Gunten, white to the lips now.

"I'm going to prove it. Look at this exercise-book, you fellows—there's the story as I wrote it first. I copied it out later on foolscap. Bob saw me writing this at the time, on and off, and can witness. Compare it with the prize story in the paper."

The exercise-book, closely written, and much-interlined and corrected, passed from hand to hand among the schoolboys, along with the "Fraser Advertiser."

"By gum!" said Chunky Todgers. "It looks a clear case."

"Jerusalem, it does!" assented Hacke. "What have you got to say, Gunten, you coyote?" Gunten breathed hard.

"It's a lie—a lie from beginning to end. Frank Richards has written that exercise-book out since he's seen my story in print."

"Oh!"

"That's possible, you know," said Hacke. "It's one chap's word against another's."

A smile hovered over Frank's lips. He had not finished yet.

"Very well," he said. "Gunten says the winning manuscript was his, and I say it was mine. We can settle it by getting the manuscript from the 'Fraser Advertiser.' If it's written in my hand—"

"By gum, that will settle it!" said Lawrence.

All eyes were on Kern Gunten. He was quite pale now.

"You can't get the manuscript!" he panted.

"I can, and will!" said Frank. "That means making the affair public, of course. I shall ask Mr. Lawless to send a man to Fraser City with a letter of explanation, showing the editor that there has been a swindle. If the police take up the matter that will only hurt the swindler. If what I say is right, it will come out that Gunten tampers with letters in the post office, and he can answer for it to the law. I'm giving him the chance of owning up before the school. If he doesn't own up and hand over the money he's stolen from me—that's what it amounts to—the matter goes through to the finish."

"Let it go through, anyhow!" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

Gunten licked his dry lips.

(Continued on page 36.)

JACK DRAKE HITS BACK AT THE BUCKS OF THE BENBOW, THE FRIENDS WHO HAVE SHUNNED HIM!



In a few minutes Daubeny's study was a wreck, and the bucks were sprawling breathlessly among the wreckage. Drake's glance gleamed scornfully round the study. "That will do for a beginning!" he said.

Daub's Eleven!

"**D**RAKE'S left out!" Jack Drake heard that remark as he came along to the notice-board with his chum Rodney. Round the notice-board, fastened on the mainmast of the Benbow, a crowd of juniors had gathered.

There was an item of unusual interest among the notices that afternoon—the list of players in the St. Winifred's football eleven. On the morrow St. Winny's were meeting Highcliffe on the home ground, and many fellows had waited eagerly to see Daubeny of the Shell pin the paper up on the board.

"Same old family," said Raik of the Fourth. "But Drake isn't in the family circle as usual. Well, he couldn't expect it, considering."

"Why not?" asked Estcourt.

"Hasn't he rowed with Daubeny?"

"That's got nothing to do with football."

Raik grinned.

"It's got a lot to do with it according to Daub," he answered. "I bet you that Drake doesn't play for St. Winny's again so long as Daub is junior skipper."

"Then it's rotten!" said Estcourt, with a frown.

"Go hon!"

"Worse than that!" said Tuckey Toodles. "I'm left out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I always am left out, you know," said Toodles. "I call it rotten. It doesn't matter so much about Drake. I—I say, Drake old chap, I didn't see

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Captain and Slacker!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

you. I was just saying how rotten it was for Daub to leave you out of the team."

Jack Drake pushed the grubby junior aside and stood looking at the notice, reading it down with a frown on his brow. It had not occurred to him, so far, that his quarrel with Vernon Daubeny would make any difference to football arrangements.

He had all the more reason to feel secure, because he knew that he was needed in the team if St. Winny's was to have any chance. Vernon Daubeny was not an ideal football skipper. Nobody who was not on friendly terms with Daub had a chance of figuring in the junior eleven. And as Daub's friends were far from being keen players, the eleven suffered in consequence.

Even while Jack Drake had "gone the pace" with the bucks of St. Winifred's he had been a first-class footballer and a tower of strength in Daubeny's team—and even one really good man

Having fallen out with Vernon Daubeny, Jack Drake finds that he is excluded from the junior football eleven. But Jack has a rod in pickle for the indolent captain of St. Winifred's!

meant a great deal to a slack eleven. Now the lofty Daub had parted with his one really good man.

"Precious lot, aren't they?" grunted Sawyer major as Drake read down the list. "It will be a show to-morrow and no mistake!"

"Another licking for St. Winny's," remarked Tuckey Toodles.

"Highcliffe aren't much class at footer, though," observed Conway.

"They've improved," said Estcourt. "They will walk all over that crowd of duds to-morrow."

"What do you think, Drake?"

Jack Drake's eyes were gleaming. He might have guessed it, knowing Vernon Daubeny as he did. Still, it came as a shock to him to find that his name was not in the list as of old.

The list ran: V. Daubeny, Torrence, Egan, Upham, Truro, Fenwick, Chetwynd, Chilcot, Seely, Vane, Dudley. Seven were of the Shell, four of the Fourth Form. And all of them were members, more or less prominent, of the elegant society of the bucks of St. Winifred's.

"Drake doesn't seem to like it," murmured Pierce Raik, with a wink at the other fellows.

Jack Drake knitted his brows.

"It's simply rotten!" he said. "I could make up a team of the Third that would beat that lot."

"It's the same old family, with one exception," sneered Raik. "You used not to grumble when your name was in the list."

Drake flushed and turned away without replying. He was quite aware that he had been much too easy-going when he was a chum of Vernon Daubeny's. But as a matter of fact, he had often urged the claims of better players upon Daubeny even at that time.

Rodney joined Drake as the latter left the buzzing group round the notice-board.

"I suppose Daubeny is monarch of all he surveys in these matters?" Rodney remarked.

"He's junior captain."

"And his word is law?"

"In a way, yes."

"I shouldn't take him for much of a footballer from his looks," said the new junior.

"He isn't," said Drake shortly. "He can play, in his way."

"And the rest?"

"Daub's the best of the lot."

"Oh, my hat!"

Drake made an angry gesture.

"I never thought of being left out of the footer," he said. "Of course, I might have expected it, not being on speaking terms with Daub now. I suppose he's cad enough for anything."

"Then the match to-morrow is a goner for certain?"

"Quite certain."

"It seems awful rot, then!" said Rodney. "Daubeny ought to be given the order of the boot, if that's his way. How did he come to be junior captain?"

"Well, Daub has a lot of influence—he's popular in his way. No end of money, too," said Drake. "Still, I suppose the footer doesn't matter much to me personally. I've got to slog this term, and I may as well let it go."

"No fear!" said Rodney promptly. "You'll swot much better if you get some healthy exercise. You've got to stick to the footer. I've been looking forward to some footer here, too. Daubeny hasn't even condescended to ask me whether I play. What about making a move and getting Daubeny shifted out of the captaincy, and a better man put in?"

Drake stared at him.

"Not much good," he said. "Daub's pretty firmly fixed. I don't suppose it would work. But even Daub must want to win matches, if he can, if only for swank. It's possible that he thinks I wouldn't play owing to our row. I wonder—perhaps I ought to speak to him. Let's go and see Daub."

And the two juniors repaired to the Shell quarters.

Trouble!

DAUBENY & CO. were at tea. There was quite a little party gathered in Daub's study. Besides Daubeny, Torrence, and Egan, to whom the study belonged, there were several Shell members of the eleven—Chilcot, Seely, and Upham.

Jack Drake tapped at the door and threw it open, and he and Rodney remained in the doorway, looking in. Six pairs of eyes were turned inquiringly and superciliously on them.

Dick Rodney was in any case an "outsider," in the lofty view of the bucks. And since Drake's fall from fortune, all the knutty society had followed Daub's lead in giving him the "marble eye."

Vernon Daubeny extracted an eyeglass from his waistcoat pocket, jammed it into his eye, and surveyed his two visitors with the supercilious survey that often made fellows want to punch Daub's head.

"Hallo! I don't remember askin' you fellows here," he remarked. "Shut the door after you, will you?"

"I've come to speak about the football," said Drake.

"Nothin' to speak about, dear boy."

"I've just seen the list."

"It was put up for the fags to read," said Daubeny, and his friends smiled.

"My name isn't there."

"Quite so."

"That means that I'm left out?"

"Did you work that out in your head?" asked Daubeny admiringly; and his friends chuckled.

"I want to know what it means," said Drake. "We're not friends now, Daubeny, but I'm ready to play football for St. Winny's, if I'm wanted."

"As it happens, you're not wanted."

"Hardly," murmured Egan.

"Why not?" asked Drake, keeping his temper.

"Not good enough," said Daubeny coolly. "I rather blame myself for playin' you before. I was too good-natured. But it's really impossible to put you in again. A skipper is bound to think of his team."

And this time Daubeny's friends roared.

"Then you haven't left me out because you thought I had my back up and wouldn't play?" asked Drake.

"Not at all."

"And it isn't because I kicked you out of my study the other day?" continued Drake.

Daubeny turned red, and Rodney laughed. This time the bucks did not laugh, however.

"I've had enough of this dashed insolence, Drake," said Daubeny savagely. "Clear out of my study!"

"Not till I've finished," said Drake, his eyes gleaming.

Daubeny rose to his feet.

"If you don't go you'll be put," he said.

"Go ahead!" answered Drake.

Rodney drew a little closer to his chum and pushed back his cuffs. All the bucks were on their feet now. There was a pause.

"Have you come here to kick up a shindy?" asked Egan at last.

"I've come to speak to Daub about the footer," said Drake.

"Well, I've made up my mind, and I'm not goin' to play you, or any of your shabby friends, either," said Daubeny. "You may as well clear."

"Oh, quite!" grinned Egan.

"Not good enough for a team of slacking duds!" exclaimed Drake. "Not so good as Egan, who's turned his back on an opponent because he was afraid of a charge!"

"It's a lie!" shouted Egan.

"Not so good as Torrence, who never keeps his wind for more than half an hour!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Torrence uneasily.

"Not so good as Seely, who fouled a man deliberately in the last match, and gave away a penalty against us!"

Seeley shrugged his shoulders.

"Not so good as Chilcot, who lets every ball pass him in goal!"

"Not every one," said Chilcot coolly. "I believe I stopped a ball once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that's the scratch crew I'm not good enough to play in!" exclaimed Drake. "You're lying, Daubeny, and you know you're lying! You're leaving out the only man who ever played a decent game."

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" yawned Daubeny.

"Swank!" grinned Egan.

"Not much swank in calling myself the best man in a crew like you lot," answered Drake scornfully. "If I wasn't that, I wouldn't undertake to play in a Third Form team. Highcliffe will walk all over you to-morrow, and you know it!"

"Is that all?"

"No, it isn't all I shan't stand this."

"What are you going to do, then?" sneered Daubeny.

"I'm going to shift you out of the captaincy!"

"By gad!"

It was Rodney's suggestion, and until that moment it had not been a definite thought in Jack Drake's mind. But the insolence of the bucks' great chief was too much for him, and he had committed himself now. He meant what he said.

"Go ahead with the shiftin'," said Daubeny, with a laugh. "You're welcome, if you can do it. If it comes to an election, I'll give you and your shabby pal twopence each for your votes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the bucks.

"And now get out!" continued Daubeny. "You're funny, Drake, but you're not really amusing. Wander off!"

Jack Drake drew a deep breath.

"Back me up, Rodney!" he muttered.

"Certainly! What are you going to do?"

"Mop up the study!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was two against six, but the two had between them a good deal more nerve than the six. To the surprise and wrath of the bucks, the two Fourth Formers made a rush.

In a second the study table was upended, and a shower of crockery and tuck swooped over, crashing. And in a second more Seeley and Upham, who were nearest, were hurled sprawling in the ruins.

"Kick them out!" roared Daubeny.

"Back up!" shrieked Egan.

But Egan was trying to get behind Torrence, and Torrence was trying to get behind Daubeny, which placed them at a disadvantage. Chilcot stood up to Rodney for a moment, and was laid on his back with a rapid uppercut. Daubeny fairly hurled himself upon Jack Drake, and was met with left and right.

There was a wild trampling and scuffling and yelling in Daubeny's study—generally a scene of aristocratic calm.

Daubeny was on the floor, and Torrence followed him, and Egan dodged into a corner behind an armchair. The two Fourth Formers stood victoriously in the midst of the wreck.

It was such an experience as the bucks of St. Winifred's had never been through before.

And it dawned upon Vernon Daubeny, as he sprawled breathlessly amongst the cracked cups and saucers and jams and cakes, that he had

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been guilty of a tactical error in making an enemy of Drake of the Fourth. There was a danger that a new leader might arise in the Lower School, and that Daubeny's reign would come to an end.

Drake's glance gleamed scornfully round the wrecked study.

"That will do for a beginning," he said.

"Come on, Rodney!"

The two juniors left the study without a hand being raised to stop them. Vernon Daubeny staggered to his feet, feeling his nose tenderly with his hand, as if to ascertain whether it was still there.

"Ow! Oh gad!" he gasped. "The—the ruffians! The hooligans! Ow!"

"Ow, my eye!" moaned Seeley.

"Let's get after them and smash them!" roared Chilcot.

Chilcot started for the door; but there were no followers, and when Chilcot found himself alone in the passage, he decided to go to his own study instead of Drake's.

Not Quite a Success!

"WHAT'S it all about?"

"Like Drake's cheek to call a meeting! Who's Drake?"

"Awful nerve!" said Raik.

"I shan't go!" grunted Vane.

"Same here," said Dudley.

"I shall go," said Estcourt. "Give Drake a chance. It's up against Daubeny, I think."

"Daub's all right."

"That's a matter of opinion," remarked Estcourt, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I'm going, anyhow."

There was a new notice on the board, in Jack Drake's hand. It was to call a junior meeting in the Common-room amidships.

Certainly Jack Drake, as a "common-or-garden" member of the Fourth Form, had no authority to call meetings. Still, it was indisputable that Drake could put a notice on the board if he liked, and that fellows could turn up in the Common-room at half-past six if they chose. And most of the Fourth Form did choose.

At six-thirty, in fact, nearly all the Fourth, and some of the Shell and Third, were gathered in the Common-room to hear what Drake had to say—some of them prepared to support him whatever he said; others equally ready to oppose him, irrespective of the views he propounded.

Daubeny & Co. were conspicuous by their absence, but some of the bucks who belonged to the Fourth Form came in.

Drake and Rodney and Tuckey Toodles were first in the field. Tuckey Toodles constituted himself chairman of the meeting, in the firm belief that he was bound to have a hand in the proceedings, and that the proceedings wouldn't be much use without that.

Tuckey had arranged a rostrum—a hassock upon a chair—from which the speaker was to address the meeting. He had sorted out a Union Jack and stuck it up behind the rostrum. Tuckey surveyed these arrangements with pride.

"Looks quite rejerkly—what?" he said to his studymates. Probably Tuckey meant *recherche*, though it was equally probable that he was not quite clear what *recherche* meant.

"Topping!" said Rodney. "The fellows are turning up all right, Drake."

"We've come to see the gas turned on," said Raik. "What the thump is that rag for?"

"That flag," corrected Tuckey Toodles, "is the sign of liberty. We're out for liberty, aren't we, Drake, old boy?"

"Is it going to be a speech or a song and dance?" asked Raik.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's an address to the Lower School," said Drake.

"And you're doing the chinwag?"

"Yes."

"Cut it short, then."

Jack Drake glanced over the crowd that was swarming into the room. Unofficial as the meeting was, it was evident that it would be pretty well attended.

"Time!" murmured Rodney.

Jack Drake mounted the rostrum.

"Gentlemen—" he began.

"Hear, hear!" bawled Tuckey Toodles, by way of encouragement.

"Shut up, Tuckey, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Tuckey Toodles, in surprise and wrath. "I was only backing you up."

"Well, give us a rest. Gentlemen, this meeting has been called—"

"We can guess that much," remarked Raik.

"Order!"

"Yes, order!" bawled Tuckey Toodles. "Shut up, Raik! Shall I eject him from the meeting, Drake?"

"Be quiet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that's what you call grateful to a chap who's backing you up, Drake—Ow! Leggo my ear, Rodney, you beast! I'm quiet, ain't I?"

"Gentlemen," resumed the orator, when Tuckey Toodles had been suppressed, "you have all seen the notice on the board—the footer list for tomorrow's match. Now, I'm the last chap in the world to heckle a football skipper on account of his selection of the players—"

"Excepting when he leaves you out!" put in Raik.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But that list is rather too thick," went on Drake, unheeding. "Is there a man in that list who can play footer?"

"Lots!" retorted Chetwynd, who was in the list. "What about me?"

"You can play marbles—"

"What?"

"Or banker. You can't play footer."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Chetwynd.

"What price me?" demanded Fenwick.

"Just the same—nix, and dear at that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To come to the point," resumed Drake. "St. Winny's can't afford to throw away matches to please Daubeny. I think the captain of the school ought to chip in, but Lovelace hasn't. I suggest an official meeting of all members of the junior club, and the sack for Daubeny. St. Winny's wants a new junior skipper. That's my view."

"And a pretty rotten one!" sniffed Chetwynd.

"Bravo, Drake!"

"Bosh!"

"Rats!"

Opinions evidently differed. Drake, from his elevated position, surveyed the meeting. It was pretty clear that Daubney of the Shell had a good many supporters there, in spite of his shortcomings, and he had a good many supporters who were not there.

Rodney's brow clouded a little.

Much as St. Winny's needed a new junior captain, the task of providing one was plainly not going to be easy or simple.

"Is that all you've got to say?" inquired Pierce Raik.

"That's the gist of it," said Drake, rather discouraged. "I've said what I think. I'm willing to hear other fellows' opinions."

"Then I'll give you mine," said Raik, jumping on the chair. "Gentlemen of St. Winifred's—"

"Cheese it!"

"Go it, Raik!"

Raik went it.

"Gentlemen, you have just listened to the honourable member opposite."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should like to ask the honourable member one question. How is it that he has suddenly discovered that Daubeny's team is no good the minute he is left out of it? Why didn't he make that discovery before?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter. Drake stepped down from his rostrum. The cad of the Fourth had put his finger on the weakest spot in the position of the reformer.

"Drake voted for Daub at the last election," pursued Pierce Raik victoriously. "Why did he, if Daub wasn't any good?"

"Echo answers why?" grinned Chetwynd.

"Yah!" roared Tuckey Toodles. "Daub's put you up to this, Raik. I saw you in his study. He was giving you bobs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Raik was spending them in the canteen!" howled Sawyer major. "Raik would say anything for half-a-crown."

"I—I—I say—" stammered Raik, quite taken aback.

But a roar of derision drowned his voice, and someone kicked his chair away, and Pierce Raik came with a yell to the floor.

"Let a chap speak!" Sawyer minor of the Third Form clambered on the table. "Gentlemen, chaps and fellows—"

"Shut up!"

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: From the fact that a sheet from a shorthand notebook had been used to type the message on, it was clear that there would most likely be a double sheet missing from somebody's notebook. Grundy's notebook was minus a double sheet—taken out of the middle, leaving no trace, unless the pages were counted—which threw suspicion on Grundy. Added to this was the row of "p" signs on the top of the type-written sheet, proving it to have been part of Grundy's re-written exercise. But Grundy had to stay behind after classes; and Clampe, who had no reason for remaining, admitted he knew Grundy had put his notebook away in his desk, and, according to Clampe, locked it. How did Clampe know so much, unless he had been on the watch to take the double page out himself when Grundy had gone? Confronted with my evidence, Clampe admitted having gone to Grundy's desk—unlocked—after Grundy had left. Mr. Rateliff will now deal with Clampe—and Figgins is cleared.

"Knock that fag over!"
 "Give a chap a chance!" yelled Sawyer minor.
 "I back up Drake. We want a new skipper. What we want is a skipper from the Third, and if you fellows will vote for me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Here, you come down!" said Sawyer major, jerking his minor by the ankle, and the hero of the Third disappeared. There was a sound of brotherly scrapping for the next few minutes.

The meeting broke up in confusion.

A Warning to Daub & Co.

"THAT chicken won't fight!"
 Jack Drake made that remark as he entered Study No. 8 with Rodney for prep.

"They don't seem so tired of Daub as we are," said Tuckey Toodles. "All the same, St. Winny's is going to be licked to-morrow. It wouldn't matter so much if it were only a senior match; but—"

Drake laughed as he pulled out his books. "I don't know," said Dick Rodney thoughtfully. "Daub's got a strong party, but even his backers must want the school to win matches. It's a pity you ever backed him up, Drake; that's where the shoe pinches. It does look a little as if—as if—"

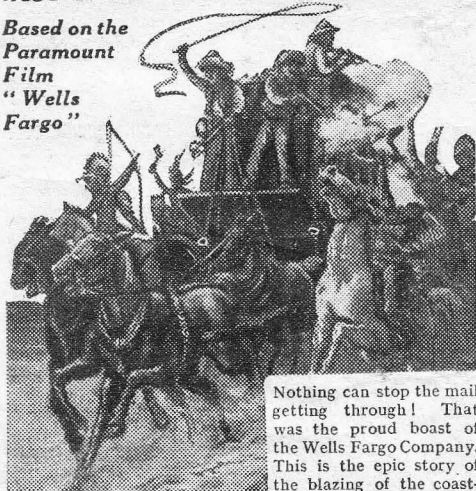
"As if I were simply wild at being left out?" said Drake rather grimly.

"Well, yes. It isn't so, but it does look like that."

"Raik made the most of that, of course. I dare say Daub put him up to it, as Tuckey said," Drake shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I've got to think

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of work first, anyhow, and the footer will have to go. Not much good calling for a new election after what's happened."

Rodney wrinkled his brows.

"After the Highcliffe match is chucked away, the fellows may think differently," he said.

"It's rotten to see matches chucked away!" growled Drake. "Still, I've got an idea. It's got to be rubbed into the fellows that Daubeny ought to be sacked. After prep we'll call the fellows who support us into this study. I've got an idea to suggest. Let's get that dashed prep done first."

The chums of No. 8 settled down to work.

For a time there was silence in the study, but prep was over at last, and then Tuckey Toodles was dispatched with messages.

For the next quarter of an hour Fourth Formers were dropping into Study No. 8.

Newson, Sawyer major, Norman, Conway, Furly, Estcourt, Rawlings, and two or three others arrived. Some of them glanced round the study and seemed a little disappointed. Possibly they had expected refreshments.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Sawyer major. "What's on?"

"I think you fellows are backing me up?" said Drake.

"Hear, hear!"

"There isn't a chap in this study, excepting Toodles, who couldn't play a better game of footer than any of Daubeny's crowd!" went on Drake.

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Toodles.

"Shut up, Toodles!"

"Well, are we going to ask Daub to hand the match over to us?" inquired Norman, with a grin.

"Daub's got the footer in his hands," said Drake.

"That's against the rules in Soccer," said Sawyer major solemnly.

"Oh, don't be a funny ass! Daub has the junior games in his hands, and he's running them to please himself and his pals. It's the business of every St. Winny's chap to see that the school isn't disgraced on the playing fields. Now, we can't prevent Daubeny from leading a team of duds into the field to-morrow against Highcliffe—"

"That's so."

"But we can jolly well rag them if they disgrace St. Winfred's!" exclaimed Drake, his eyes sparkling. "They've chosen to play for the school, and it's up to them not to slack through the game."

"They'll slack all the same," grunted Sawyer major. "They don't care much whether we win, so long as they swank around as the junior eleven. Football comes second with Daub & Co."

"Exactly. If they play their hardest, and don't slack and funk, they might pull it off."

"They'll both slack and funk," said Estcourt. "They always do."

"Yes, rather."

"Well, I thought of a way of bucking them up," said Drake. "I don't mind being left out if Daub can put in a winning team. It's up to us to help him make it a winning team."

"How?" demanded several voices.

"By promising them the ragging of their lives if they don't beat Highcliffe."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Phew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the idea!" said Jack Drake coolly. "We'll draw up a notice to pin on Daub's list on the board. They'll read it, and know what to

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RULES: 500 Footballs will be awarded in the October contest to the readers declaring and sending in the largest number of "goals" scored with "Footer-Stamps." The Editor may extend or amend the prize list in case of too many ties, and no reader may win more than one prize in "Footer-Stamps."

Each "goal" must consist of a set of "Footer-Stamps" Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive. All claims for prizes to be made on the proper coupon (to be given later). No allowance made for any coupon or stamps mutilated or lost or delayed in the post or otherwise. No correspondence! No one connected with this paper may enter, and the Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout.

(N.B. "Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: "MAGNET," "MODERN BOY," "BOY'S CINEMA," "DETECTIVE WEEKLY," "TRIUMPH," "WILD WEST WEEKLY," "THRILLER," "SPORTS BUDGET," and "CHAMPION.")

OVERSEAS READERS! You pals who are far away—you're in this great scheme also, and special awards will be given for the best scores from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you as well, of course!

expect. We'll make them a promise and we'll keep our word.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Hands up in favour of the programme?" said Rodney, laughing.

Every hand in the study went up.

Jack Drake's idea was rather remarkable, but there was no doubt that the footballers of the Fourth were in favour of it.

"Good!" said Drake. "Let's get on to the notice then, and we'll all sign it, and Daubeny & Co. will know that we mean business."

"Hear, hear!"

And Jack Drake & Co. set to work upon the document which was to cause great surprise, and considerable dismay, among the bucks of St. Winifred's.

The next morning as Vernon Daubeny strolled along the main deck before breakfast, he became aware that he was the object of very considerable attention. He was accustomed to that, certainly—Daub had always been a great man in the Lower School, and even seniors were often very polite and civil to the great Daub. But the chief of the bucks was a little perplexed by the attention he was receiving now. There was amusement in the glances that were cast towards him.

"What's up among the fellows?" he said to Egan.

"Somethin'—blessed if I know what!" answered Egan.

"Some joke on!" yawned Torrence.

Seeley of the Shell came along with a grin on his face.

"Seen the notice, Danb?" he asked.

"What notice?"

"It's pinned on the footer list."

"Oh!"

Daubeny & Co. strolled round the mainmast to look at the board. Then Daubeny stared.

A sheet of paper was pinned half over the junior football list, and a good many fellows were staring at it and grinning. The paper was in the handwriting of Jack Drake of the Fourth Form, but

the numerous signatures that were appended to it were written by their various owners. And the notice ran:

"NOTICE! OFFICIAL!

This afternoon the Highcliffe match is to be played by a team of hopeless duds.

Warning is hereby given to those duds that they are expected to play up and beat Highcliffe. Slacking and funking are barred.

Whereas the above-mentioned duds cannot be relied upon to play the game, they are hereby warned that if they throw away this match—as usual—they will be drastically and thoroughly ragged by the undersigned:

- J. DRAKE
- R. RODNEY
- F. ESTCOURT
- T. SAWYER Major
- F. NORMAN
- L. RAWLINGS
- H. NEWSON
- H. CONWAY
- F. FURLY
- T. CROFT
- N. HOOKE
- RUPERT DE VERE TOODLES."

Daubeny drew a deep breath.

"Rotten check!" he said.

He jerked down the paper, crumpled it, and threw it into the Chadway. Then he walked away, with a lofty nose, but pink in his cheeks.

Five minutes later there was another paper on the board, bearing precisely the same inscription. It remained there, and St. Winifred's chuckled over it loud and long. And there were unusual heart-searchings among the elegant youths who were booked to meet Highcliffe on the football ground that afternoon.

(Next week: "THE SLACKERS' ELEVEN!")

THE RYLCOMBE RECRUIT!

(Continued from page 22.)

leather; but less than a second, as it happened, was enough for Grimes' new man.

The ball shot from his foot like a pip from an orange. Fatty Wynn, between the sticks, jumped into the air to save, but the ball just eluded the tips of his outstretched fingers and shot into the net.

"Goal!"

"Well scored, sir! Goal! Goal!"

Goal it was, and the village were two to one, and two minutes later the whistle went and the match was over.

Rylcombe Village had won by two goals to one, and they grinned with breathless satisfaction as they walked off.

"Your game, Levison!" said Grimes, clapping his new recruit on the shoulder; and Levison chuckled.

"Bai Jove, yaas, it was Levison's game!" said

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wathah lucky for Gwimes that Levison has turned ovah a new leaf."

When Grimes & Co. departed after the match, Grimes' recruit remained behind.

Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder as they walked back after seeing Grimes & Co. off.

"You'll go down as a reserve for the House team, Levison," he said, "and I don't see why you shouldn't play for St. Jim's."

Levison smiled in his sarcastic way.

"You think I'm good enough?"

"You've proved that you're good enough," said Tom. "And if you'll take a tip from me you'll stick to the game and stop playing the giddy ox."

"I'm going to," said Levison. "If you mean to give me a chance in the footer, you won't have anything to complain of."

"Done!" said Tom Merry.

Grimes & Co. had scored an unaccustomed victory; but it was not wholly a defeat for St. Jim's for, as a certain junior of the Third was never tired of pointing out, it had been due to Levison, the Rylcombe recruit.

(Next Wednesday: "THE TOFF'S ENEMY!")

THE SCHOOLBOY AUTHOR!

(Continued from page 29.)

"I—I only meant it as a joke really," he muttered. "I—I never knew your story would win the prize, of—of course. It was just a chance. I—I—"

"Do you own up that you stole my manuscript and sent it to the office in your name?" demanded Frank.

"Yes," panted Gunten.

"You sneaking coyote!" shouted Eben-Haeke. "Hand Richards his twenty dollars, you mug-wump, and then we'll duck you."

"I—I—"

"Shell out, you thief!"

With a trembling hand Gunten passed a twenty-

dollar bill to Frank Richards. It was the prize he had so nearly succeeded in "bagging."

Then there was a rush of the indignant Cedar Creek fellows. Gunten, struggling and yelling, was collared and rushed down to the creek, and there was a mighty splash in the water.

The wretched trickster crawled out, drenched and dripping, and took to his heels. Gunten did not show up in school that afternoon.

"You ought to make him write to the paper and own up, and have your name put in, Franky," said Bob Lawless, as the chums walked back to the school.

Frank laughed and shook his head.

"Can't be did! I don't want him scragged for meddling with the post. He's owned up and he's shown up, and that will do. And here's the merry twenty dollars! Halves, Bob!"

"And here's the merry author of Cedar Creek!" chuckled Bob. "Three cheers for the schoolboy author! Hurrah!"

(Next week: "WANTED BY THE MOUNTIES!")

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