

THE GREYFRIARS FIFTEEN!

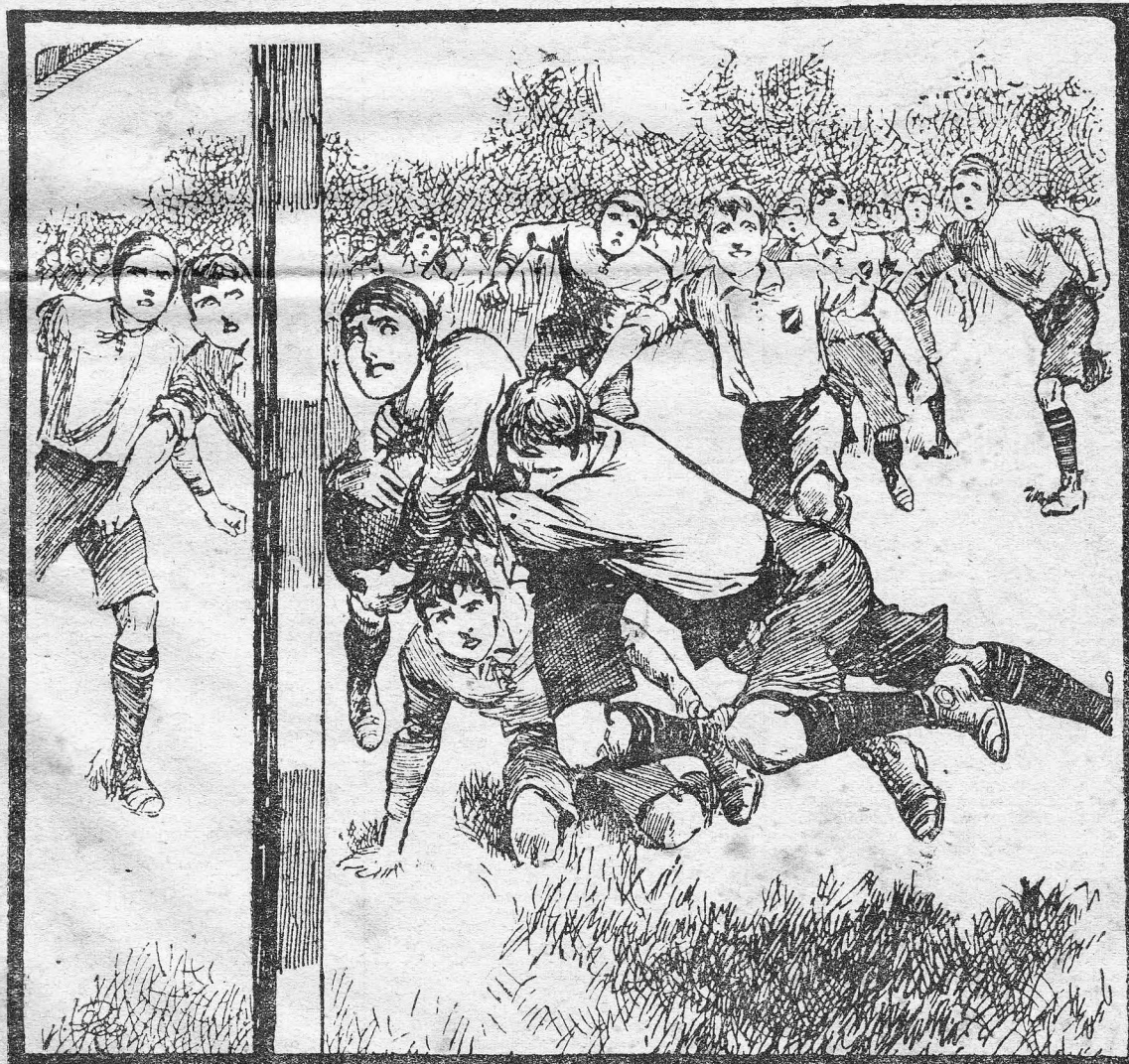
(See inside for the Splendid Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.)

The Penny Popular

Week Ending
February 2nd, 1918.

No.
278.

Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JIMMY SILVER & Co.—TOM MERRY & Co.



WELL TACKLED!

An Exciting Incident from the Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., contained in This Issue. 2/2/18

THE GREYFRIARS FIFTEEN!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story, dealing with the
Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

No Tarts for Bunter.

"RAIN!"
"Rain?"
"Listen to it!"
"Oh, blow!"
"Beastly!"
"Just our luck!"
"Rats!"
"Rotten!"

These remarks, and many more of the same tenor, might have been heard, as a novelist would say, in the Remove dormitory.

The Remove were getting up in response to the clang of the rising-bell, and mingled with the bell's clang came the sound of the drops pattering against the windows.

It was raining!
Just when the Remove wanted to squeeze in every possible moment at practice on the football-field, the rain was distinctly exasperating.

"Rain!" growled Bob Cherry, looking out of the window. "Coming down in bucketsful! It looks as if it's going to last, too!"
"Well, if it lasts over next Saturday, the match with Bolsover will be put off," said Ogilvy.

"My dear chap, it will clear up as fine as you please on Friday, all ready for Bolsover to lick us on Saturday," said Bob Cherry, with a snort.

"Yes; very likely."
"The likefulness is great. The uncertainty of the honourable climate in this esteemed country is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.
"Well, it can't be helped. We shall have to get some practice indoors, that's all."

And certainly that was all that was to be done.
The Removites went down with glum faces. They were anxiously looking forward to the match with Bolsover, for it was to be a Rugby game. The Remove had played very little Rugby, and the wet weather had greatly interfered with their practice.

Wingate of the Sixth nodded to Harry Wharton in the hall.
"This is rough on your footer practice, Wharton," he remarked.

"Yes; can't be helped, I suppose."
"I'll arrange for you to have the gym for a certain time to yourselves this evening, if you like, for such practice as you can get indoors," said Wingate.

"Thanks! You're awfully good!" said Wharton gratefully. "Of course, that would be ripping."

"The rippingfulness would be terrific!"
"Then it's settled."

The rain was still coming down when the boys went into morning classes. They worked to the accompaniment of drops dashing against the panes of the Form-room windows.

When morning lessons were over, the rain was still descending, and the Close was running with water.

A group of juniors gathered in the big doorway and looked out into the Close. The rainfall was a little less heavy, but it was still coming down thickly.

Billy Bunter joined the group at the door.
"I say, Wharton," he said, "can you lend me a bob till to-morrow morning. I have a postal-order coming by the first post, you know."

Harry laughed.
"My dear ass—"
"Oh, really, Wharton! I'm awfully hungry, and I feel I shall sink if I don't have some tarts. Suppose you advance me a bob off my postal-order, and have it back first thing in the morning."

"Rats!"
THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 278.

"If you have any doubts about the postal-order—"

"I jolly well have, Bunter!"
"If you doubt my word, Wharton, this discussion had better cease," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Much better," agreed Wharton.
"Oh, look here, Wharton, you might make it a bob, you know. The postal-order—"

Harry groped in his pockets. He generally ended by conceding what the fat junior asked. Billy Bunter was a merciless and unscrupulous borrower, and he had a way of getting what he wanted.

"I'm short of tin!" growled Wharton.
"You had some yesterday, and some the day before."

"I'm going to settle up to-morrow morning out of my postal-order—"

"Oh, do get off that, for goodness' sake!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I've got fivepence here," said Harry, fishing out the coppers. "You can have it if you like."

Bunter eyed the coppers disdainfully.
"Is that all the tin you've got, Wharton?"

"I've got some more in the study."

"Well, if you'd like to run up and fetch some—"

"I shouldn't!"
"I'll tell you what," said Bunter, with a burst of generosity. "I'd do a lot for a fellow I like. I always would, you know. I'll go up and fetch the money, if you'll tell me just where it is."

"No, you won't!"
"Look here, if you don't want to lend me money, Wharton—"

"You know I don't!" said Wharton bluntly.
"Ahem! I—I mean, I'll take the fivepence, if you like. I don't like to see a fellow acting meanly; but that's your look-out, I suppose, if you choose to do it."

"Oh, here you are!" said Wharton, and he handed the five pennies to Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove grabbed the coins and slipped them into his pocket.

"Oh, thank you, Wharton," he said, and darted across to the tuckshop.

Bunter did not like the rain, but he would have gone through the biggest storm imaginable for the sake of a feed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Upper Fourth's Wheeze!

PROMPTLY at seven o'clock the Greyfriars fifteen turned up in the gym for practice. Most of the Remove turned up, too, to look on, and some of them to help in the practice.

The rain was still descending in heavy drops in the Close, and dashing against the big panes of the gymnasium windows.

Wingate had arranged that the Remove should have the great building for an hour. The other fellows could enter it if they liked; but all the usual paraphernalia had been cleared away, and if other fellows entered, they could only do so to line the walls as spectators.

As the sight of the junior team getting in practice at a new game was not likely to be particularly interesting, Harry Wharton did not expect any spectators outside his own Form. He was surprised, therefore, to see Temple, Dabney & Co. come in.

Temple nodded to him affably.
"We've come to see the show," he remarked. "I've paid money in my time to see things less funny than this will be."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.
"We're just going to look on," said Fry.

"You will excuse us if we smile. It may prove to be an irresistible sight. A smile or two allowed I suppose?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wharton.
Temple, Dabney & Co. allowed themselves the liberty of a smile, and took up their station against the wall of the gym. More of the Upper Fourth followed them in, and took up their station along the same wall, till nearly the whole of the Form was there, all standing in a solemn row.

The Removites exchanged dubious looks.
Some of them felt a little nervous and uneasy at setting to practice under the eyes of the rival Form; others anticipated trouble. Wharton strode over to Dabney and Temple.

"Look here," he exclaimed, "what's the little game? We're here on business, and we don't want any rag this evening!"
Temple looked at him with an expression of great surprise.

"My dear chap, who's talking about a rag?" he exclaimed. "We're here just to look on. We feel interested. We want to see you play the game. We want to learn. We're always willing to learn."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.
"Look here—"

"My dear fellow, that's just what we've come here to do," said Temple blandly.

"We're going to look. We're here to look. As your inky-complexioned friend would remark, the lookfulness will be terrific."

Wharton's brows contracted.

"Well, if there's any rotting, you'll get the order of the boot, and sharp!" he exclaimed.

"We are here for work, not play!"

"My dear fellow, don't get your rag out for nothing. We sha'n't do anything more than smile, and you must admit that the Remove playing football is a just cause for a smile from anybody."

Wharton walked away without replying. He had selected his fifteen, and picked out another fifteen from the Remove for them to play against. It was not to be a match, however, but simply practice, mingled with instruction from Brown, Linley, and Morgan.

The ball was kicked off, and the Removites set to work, passing and tackling and scrummaging.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
It was a loud, staccato laugh from the Upper Fourth.

Harry Wharton glanced round at them. Temple had raised his hand, evidently as a signal, and at that signal the loud laugh of the Upper Fourth had rung out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
It was a sharp staccato laugh, which sounded as if it were delivered by machinery, every fellow enunciating the syllables at the same moment.

Wharton's eyes sparkled with annoyance. He could see that the Upper Fourth must have rehearsed this beforehand. Temple was managing the affair like the conductor of an orchestra.

Harry Wharton ran across to the laughing line in a few minutes.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "Enough of that! Chuck it!"

"Chuck what?" asked Temple. "Are you referring to my watch?"

"I'm referring to your silly cackling."
"Oh, my dear fellow—"

"We don't like it, and we're not going to have it. You may be funny merchants, but we don't want your funning here! Get out!"

"But the gym is free to everybody, and you can't expect a chap to remain quite grave while the Remove are playing football!" expostulated Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.
"Well, I've warned you," said Wharton.

"Thanks, very much!"
"You're not going?"

"No, I think not. We don't often see anything as funny as this, and we're not going

to lose a chance. We're here to enjoy ourselves. My dear chap, if you fellows could see yourselves, you'd always watch yourselves playing football instead of paying to go into a Punch and Judy show."

Wharton returned to his comrades. The play had ceased for a few minutes. The stares and the absurd laughter of the Upper Fourth had quite thrown the players off their form.

Fellows who have played in football matches with the spirit of the crowd against them, and who know the peculiar effect it has on the nerves, will understand how Temple's tactics put the Remove off their form.

"It's a jape," said Harry Wharton, with a grim smile. "They're going to keep it up. They think it's awfully funny."

"Well, so it is, in a way," remarked Nugent. "But we're here for work now, not for fun. They ought to chuck it."

"They're going to chuck it."

"But you said—"

"They think they're going to keep it up, and I think they're going to chuck it," explained Wharton. "Look here. When we recommence playing, I shall knock on the ball towards that wall, where the silly asses are standing in a row."

"Yes; what then?"

"You'll all follow it at top speed, as hard as you can. I'll take care that the ball reaches the wall. Only you won't take any notice of the ball. When you reach the Upper Fourth, you'll tackle them—see—and yank them all over and roll 'em on the floor. They will be taken by surprise, and I think we can give them a bumping that will make them sorry for themselves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

ing, and it was the turn of the Remove to laugh, which they proceeded to do with a right good will.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Getting Rid of Temple & Co.!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" Loud and long laughed the Remove.

It was indeed a comical sight! Temple, Dabney & Co. were sprawling on the floor, yelling and gasping, and half the Remove were sprawling over them.

It was a sudden and complete fall for the Upper Fourth.

Temple tried to struggle to his feet, but Nugent was sitting on his chest, and Bob Cherry was standing on his legs. Temple sank back again.

"Lemme gerrup!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beasts! Get off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites simply yelled. The Upper Fourth-Formers gasped and shrieked and struggled. A few of them succeeded in getting up, but were promptly tackled, and hurled down again, mostly with Removites sitting on them.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Cads! Lemme get up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll—I'll break your necks for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're done for," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You'd better give in, Temple. We'll let you go if you agree to get out of the gym, and not bother us any more."

"Now, then, Temple, are you going?"

"No!"

Spank!

"Ow!"

"Are you going?"

"No—yes! Yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him get up!"

Temple staggered to his feet. His face was crimson and furious. He gave one wrathful glare round at the grinning Removites, and left the gym.

A roar of laughter followed him. The surrender of the great Temple was distinctly amusing to the Removites.

"Now for the esteemed Dabney," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "I will hold him tightly, while the honourable Cherry administers the esteemed spankfulness with his large hand."

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Dabney, in alarm. "I'll go quietly."

And he wriggled in the muscular grip of Tom Brown and Morgan.

"Sure?" asked Bob Cherry politely. "It's no trouble to me to give you a spank or two, if you prefer it."

"I—I'll go, I tell you!"

"Are all you fellows going quietly, or shall I come round to you?" demanded Bob Cherry.

And the Upper Fourth chorused eagerly:

"We'll go quietly!"

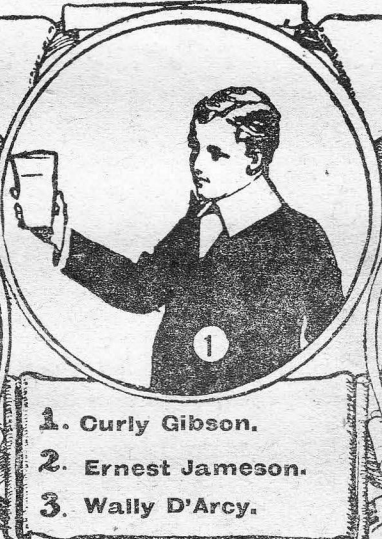
"Very well," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Let them go."

And the Removites got off their prisoners, and allowed the ruffled and defeated Upper Fourth to struggle to their feet and depart in peace.

NUMBER 8.
THE "PENNY POPULAR"
PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 9 NEXT FRIDAY.
Dame Taggles, Cutts,
Knox.



1. Curly Gibson.
2. Ernest Jameson.
3. Wally D'Arcy.

"Now, then, ready!"

The practice recommenced. The juniors passed the ball, and formed a scrum, waiting for the signal from Wharton before acting on the offensive. Meanwhile, Temple was timing the laughter of the Upper Fourth as before.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Every time Temple's hand went up as a signal, that staccato laugh burst forth, with rhythmic regularity. The Removites were smiling now, however, as they thought of the surprise that was preparing for Temple & Co.

Wharton knocked the ball on towards the wall of the gym, where the Upper Fourth had stationed themselves. The Remove dashed after it. The Upper Fourth saw them coming, but suspected nothing. The players had rushed in their direction a dozen times before. But this time the Remove were on the warpath.

They overtook the ball, and passed it, and then they burst like a thunderbolt upon the Upper Fourth.

Before the laughers could realise that the Remove had adopted offensive tactics, the juniors were upon them.

The Upper Fourth, seized by countless hands, went whirling and reeling and bumping on the hard floor amid a babel of wild yells.

In three seconds not a fellow was stand-

"I won't—I won't—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you get out, Temple?"

"No," yelled Temple, "I won't! I'll—"

"Then you'll jolly well be spanked," said Wharton determinedly. "We've only got the gym for an hour, and we're not going to have our time wasted. This jape has gone far enough. Will you get out?"

"No!" shouted Temple, who had quite lost his temper at the failure of his jape, and the ridiculous result of it to himself and his comrades. "No, no!"

"Turn him over and spank him, Bob!"

"What-ho!"

"Don't you dare!" yelled Temple. "I—"

"Spank him!"

Nugent and Hurree Singh rolled Temple over, and held him fast, in spite of his furious struggles. Then Bob Cherry raised his hand, which was not a small size in hands.

"Are you ready, Temple?"

"Don't you dare—"

"Will you go out?"

"No!"

Spank!

Bob Cherry's hand descended with a resounding spank. Temple gave a terrific yell, and struggled wildly. Nugent and Hurree Singh, choking with laughter, held him fast.

In a minute more the Remove had the gym to themselves.

"Good!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It was a funny wheeze of Temple's, but I think that even the Upper Fourth will have to admit that we scored."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"Half our time gone," said Harry. "Never mind. I think Temple & Co. will leave our practice here severely alone in the future. Let's buckle to, now."

And they buckled to.

There was no more trouble from the Upper Fourth, and until eight o'clock the juniors worked hard at the game.

The improvement in their form, visible even in that short time, was great, and it gave Wharton the liveliest hopes of what was to come.

At eight they left off, pretty well satisfied with their progress.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Billy Bunter Gets a Postal-Order.

BOB CHERRY jumped out of bed in the Remove dormitory at the first clang of the rising-bell in the morning. He ran to the window and looked out into the quad, and gave a shout of satisfaction.

"It's all right, you chaps!"

"Eh?"

"No more blessed rain!"

"Good!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, jumping out of bed. "Jolly good!"

He joined Bob at the window and looked out. The Close was dry and fine in the rising sunlight. The rain had completely disappeared over night.

The Remove footballers dressed in cheerful spirits.

There would be a chance now of getting some real practice, and they needed it with Saturday drawing nearer, and the Bolsover match ahead of them.

Most of the fellows got down very quickly, and went out into the Close for a run before breakfast, and joined in the novel practice of carrying the ball instead of passing it by footwork.

Billy Bunter was also up early for once. Sometimes the post came in early at Greyfriars, and Bunter was anxious about the post that morning. Instead of lying in bed till the last possible moment, he jumped up with the others, and commenced his brief ablutions; extremely brief in the cold weather.

The others looked at him in surprise. "Feeling ill, Bunt?" asked Bob Cherry, with friendly solicitude.

Bunter blinked round at him. Bunter had a dab of soap on the centre of his face, and was about to rub it off. That constituted Bunter's morning wash.

"Eh? No," he said, "I'm all right."

"Then what are you getting up for? You might have had another three minutes and a half."

"I want to see if the post is in."

"What does it matter?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Now, draw it mild, Billy. You don't expect us to swallow that you really believe in that postal-order yourself?"

Bunter snorted, and turned back to his washstand. He rubbed the patch of soap off his nose, and rubbed his fat face with a towel till it glowed. His ablutions were finished. Billy always dressed before he washed, perhaps so that he should not be tempted to injure his health by over-washing.

Bob Cherry looked at him curiously.

"I say, Bunter," he exclaimed suddenly, "what would you do if the Head suddenly discovered the reckless way you waste the school soap?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The dirty young brute ought to be bathed by force," growled Bulstrode.

"What-ho!" said Skinner. "Let's wash him now."

Bunter blinked at the two through his

big glasses, and dodged out of the dormitory. Bulstrode and Skinner went downstairs together, talking in low tones, and from their frequent chuckles it might have been surmised that they were planning some mischief.

But the other fellows had no eyes for Skinner and Bulstrode. They were thinking of some Rugby practice before breakfast. Bunter was thinking of his postal-order. He found that the post was not in yet, and grunted discontentedly.

"Blessed if it's any use getting up early in this blessed place!" he said. "I wonder how long that blessed postman is going to be?"

And Bunter took up his position on the steps outside to wait for the postman. Harry Wharton called to him.

"Come and have a run, Billy, and keep yourself warm."

"Do you want me to play in the fifteen?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Then I'm jolly well not going to waste any time in practice," said Bunter. "It's useless for me to try to get on in football, with so much petty jealousy to contend with!"

The postman came along at last, and Bunter trotted to meet him.

"There's a registered letter for me, I think?" he remarked.

"No registered letters this morning, Master Bunter."

"Ahem! As it's a postal-order, very likely the letter's not registered," remarked Bunter.

"I suppose there is one for me?"

"No, sir."

"Oh, dear! I think you must have made a mistake! Why, what is that one in your hand? I can see a capital 'B.'"

"That's for Master Bulstrode."

"Are you quite sure? The names are very much alike."

"Oh, yes!" grinned the postman.

And he went on to the House. Billy Bunter blinked after him discontentedly. He drifted into the House a little later, just before the breakfast-bell, and looked in the rack where the letters were generally placed after delivery. Sure enough, there was the envelope addressed to Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter took it down, and turned it over in his hand. He knew that Bulstrode's people were rich, and that the bully of the Remove was constantly receiving postal-orders.

Bunter was extremely short-sighted, but even he could hardly mistake the word Bulstrode for Bunter. But the desire to take possession of the postal-order inside the letter was strong. The longer he held it in his hand, the more and more he became persuaded that the name on the letter was really intended for Bunter.

"After all, if it's really for Bulstrode, I

can explain to him that it was a mistake," Bunter reflected. "I may as well make sure that it's for him."

Temptation could be resisted no longer. Bunter inserted his fat thumb into the envelope and slit it open.

There was indeed a postal-order in the envelope. It was an order for ten shillings, made payable to Bulstrode.

There was a brief letter with it in a man's hand, evidently from an uncle of Bulstrode's. Bunter read it through—perhaps to make sure that it was for Bulstrode.

He shook his head.

"It really seems that the letter's for Bulstrode," he murmured, "unless the postal-order's got into it by mistake. The postal authorities are always making blunders of some sort. It might be my postal-order. All sorts of mistakes happen in the post-office. As for the name on it, that might be an error. Anyway, if Mrs. Mimble will take it, that will prove that it's for me."

Bunter was about to hurry out to the tuckshop, forgetting that it was not open at that early hour, when the bell rang for breakfast. The Remove came trooping in. Bunter thrust the letter hastily into his pocket.

Bulstrode paused to glance at the rack before he went into the dining-room.

"Nothing for me," he remarked to Skinner. "I was expecting a postal-order this morning."

"Ha, ha! That sounds like Bunter."

Bulstrode grinned.

"Yes, but mine was a real postal-order. It hasn't come, though."

Bunter trembled a little as he followed Bulstrode into the dining-room. That postal-order was reposing in his pocket, and it occurred to him that if it was discovered there, a very ugly word might be used to describe the way he had gained possession of it.

After breakfast came prayers and morning classes, and all the time the postal-order remained in Billy Bunter's pocket.

Immediately the Remove were dismissed after morning school, the fat junior dashed off to the tuckshop.

Mrs. Mimble came out of her little parlour as he rapped on the counter.

Mrs. Mimble had a fixed smile with which she came into her little shop to serve her youthful customers. Only for one customer did that smile fail; and that one customer was William George Bunter.

Bunter would have been Mrs. Mimble's best customer, on a system of unlimited credit, if she had allowed it. But Mrs. Mimble, as Bunter complained, was not businesslike. He had tried to explain that the whole modern financial system was built up on lines of credit, and that if Stock Exchange brokers and bankers and so on demanded cash in all their dealings the whole system would break down.

But Mrs. Mimble was obstinate. She didn't know anything about the Stock Exchange or banking; but she did know that she did not intend to part with any of her goods unless she were paid for them with something more substantial than a vague promise about some date in the next term. Hence the almost perennial smile generally changed into a frown for Billy Bunter.

"Oh, Master Bunter! I didn't know it was you!" said Mrs. Mimble, her manner implying very plainly that if she had known she would not have taken the trouble to answer that imperative rap on the counter.

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble—"

"Do you want anything, Master Bunter?"

"Yes, certainly! I've a postal-order here for ten shillings. I think I mentioned to you that I was expecting one."

"Yes, you did!" said Mrs. Mimble, with a sniff. "I should like to see it."

"Well, it came this morning. I want you to cash it."

"Certainly—if you have it."

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble, I hope you don't doubt my word!"

Mrs. Mimble sniffed. That sniff told a great deal about her private opinion of the veracity of William George Bunter.

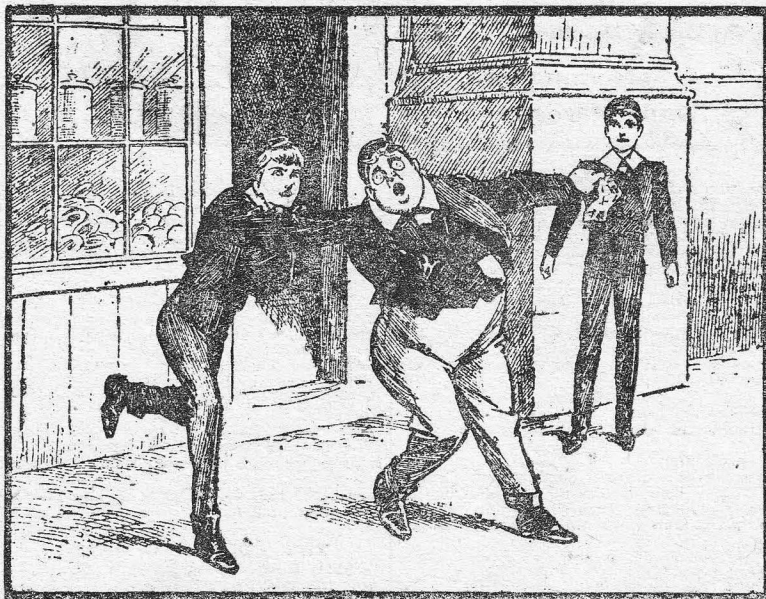
"Well, here's the postal-order!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly; and he drew it out of his pocket, holding it so as to show the amount without letting the name written on the order be seen. "Look at it!"

Mrs. Mimble's expression changed a little.

"But is it really yours, Master Bunter?"

"Oh, Mrs. Mimble!"

"Well, you know, you brought me a five-pound note to change once, and it turned out to be somebody else's," said Mrs. Mimble, with asperity, "and but for the kindness of



"Now," said Bob Cherry, taking a firm grip on the back of Billy Bunter's collar—"now we'll go and look for Bulstrode!"

Master Wharton and his friends I should have lost the money!"

"That was a mistake."

"Yes, and perhaps this is a mistake, Master Bunter!"

"I suppose my name on the postal-order will convince you, Mrs. Mimble?" said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, yes!" said Mrs. Mimble, thawing a little. "Let me see it."

"There you are!"

And Bunter threw the postal-order down upon the counter with the air of a prince.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry is Wrathful.

MRS. MIMBLE thawed still more. It was really a postal-order, and it was really for ten shillings. There was no doubt on those points. She did not see the name very clearly for the moment, but it certainly began with a B. But Mrs. Mimble had learned caution at her time of life. She picked up the postal-order, adjusted her glasses, and read it carefully. Then she put it down on the counter again, and gave Billy Bunter a look that made the fat junior wish himself well outside the shop.

"Master Bunter!"

"Eh? What's the matter?" stammered Billy.

"This postal-order is not yours!"

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble—"

"It is Master Bulstrode's name upon it!"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Mimble! You're short-sighted!" remonstrated Bunter. "You can see the name begins with a B, and the rest is a scrawl."

"It is Master Bulstrode's name!"

"Look here, if you refuse to cash it I can take it to the post-office!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, grabbing the postal-order, half afraid that Mrs. Mimble might keep it to return to Bulstrode. "That means a waste of time. I'm hungry now."

"Did Bulstrode give it to you?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then it is not yours. You have stolen it!"

"Mrs. Mimble!"

"Listen to me, Master Bunter," said the good dame seriously. "I know how silly you are, and I suppose you do not realise what you are doing. You must take that postal-order to Master Bulstrode at once!"

"I suppose I can please myself about that, Mrs. Mimble!" said Bunter haughtily.

"No. If you do not give it to Master Bulstrode I shall speak to the Head. Now, remember, Master Bunter, I shall ask Master Bulstrode the first time I see him whether he has had his postal-order!"

"Of course," said Bunter, changing his ground—"of course, if the postal-order is really Bulstrode's he's welcome to it! I think I will show it to him, and ask him his opinion as to whether it's his name or mine on it."

"You had better!" said Mrs. Mimble significantly.

Billy Bunter left the tuckshop discontentedly. He was very hungry, and it was hard to have ten shillings in his hand and not be able to spend it. The fact that the ten shillings belonged to somebody else was quite a minor point. Billy already looked upon it as his, and that was quite enough for him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, meeting the fat junior outside the tuckshop, and noticing the postal-order still in his hand. "Ye gods! Has the famous postal-order really arrived at last?"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I told you I expected a postal-order this morning—"

"You told me so, certainly," agreed Bob Cherry.

"It's for ten shillings," said Bunter. "If you care to cash it for me you can have the postal-order. It's a long way to the post-office, and Mrs. Mimble won't cash it for me."

"Why not? She cashes the orders for all of us."

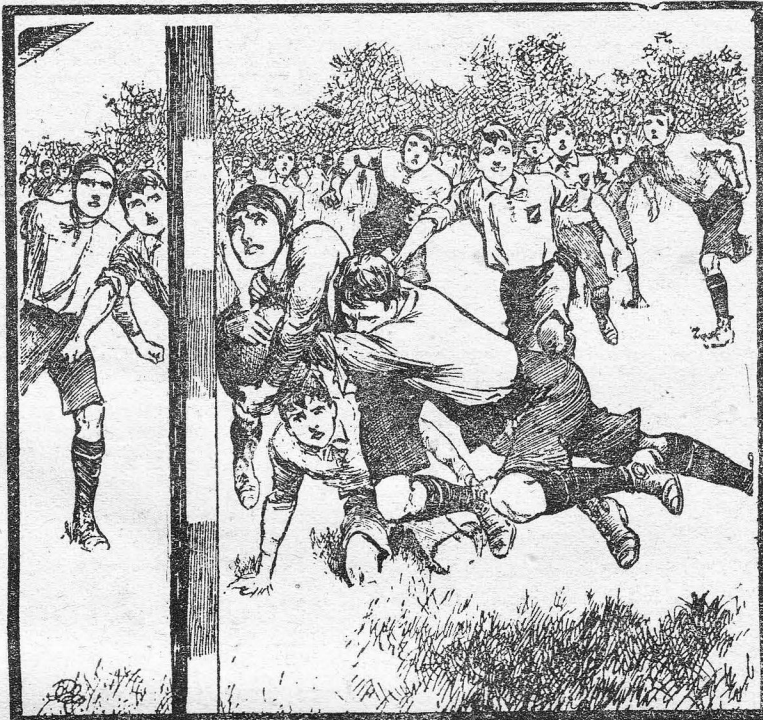
"Oh, she's an obstinate old woman, you know. I suppose it's because I owe her an account," said Bunter, who always said the first thing that came into his head without stopping to reflect whether it was true or not. "If you could cash it for me I should be very much obliged."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I haven't ten shillings, or anything like it," he said. "I could raise three, if that's any good."

"Well, lend me three, then, and I'll return them when I've cashed the postal-order," said Billy Bunter eagerly.

"You jolly well won't! I know you, Bunty,



As Fitzgerald came dashing through with the ball in his hands, the Greyfriars full-back tackled him and brought him down.

you see, and you're not going to scoff my three last bobs in that way. I'll take the postal-order to cash, and give you the other seven bob afterwards."

"Oh, very well! Hand over the bobs."

Bob Cherry groped and fished in his pockets, and brought three shillings to light, and handed them to Bunter. He took the postal-order and glanced at it. Billy Bunter was already re-entering the tuckshop when he felt a grip of iron on his shoulder, and he was swung back with a suddenness that took his breath away.

"O-o-o-o-oh! Really—Cherry! Ow!"

"You young sweep!"

"I—Oh! Ow! Yaroo!"

Bob Cherry, with a face flaming with wrath, shook the fat junior till his teeth rattled. Billy Bunter sagged to and fro in his grip as helplessly as a sack of wheat. He gasped and wriggled and squirmed helplessly.

"You young sweep!" repeated Bob Cherry. "This postal-order isn't yours! It's that five-pound note business over again, I suppose! Give me my three bob!"

"Ow! Oh! Yow!"

"Take that—and that—and that!"

Each "that" was accompanied by a powerful shake. Bob released the fat junior at last, and Billy Bunter staggered against the wall, gasping spasmodically. He blinked at Bob over his glasses, which had slid down his nose.

"Oh! Ow! Groo! Oh, really, Cherry! If—if you had made my glasses fall off they—they would have broken, and you'd have had to pay for them."

"You young thief!"

"Oh, Cherry! I—I—"

"Give me my three bob—sharp!"

"Here you are, you beast! Ow!"

Bob Cherry restored the three shillings to his pocket. Then he flourished the postal-order threateningly in the face of Billy Bunter.

"This belongs to Bulstrode, you fat young beast!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You've stolen it!"

"I—I—I—"

"Take it!"

Bob thrust it into Bunter's fat hand. Billy's fingers closed on it with great relief. He had feared that it was not to be given to him again.

"And now," said Bob Cherry, taking a firm

grip on the back of Bunter's collar—"now we'll go and look for Bulstrode!"

"Oh! Ow! Yow! Yaroo!"

"What are you squeaking about?"

"You—you've got your beastly knuckles jammed in the back of my neck!" gasped Bunter. "Yow! It hurts! Yow!"

"Serve you jolly well right! Come on!"

"Yow! Ow!"

Bob shifted his grip a little, still keeping a tight hold, and marched the fat junior away. Billy Bunter wriggled spasmodically in his powerful grip. There was no escape for the fat junior.

He was marched away from the tuckshop, with the postal-order still in his hand, and Bob's grip on his collar.

Bob Cherry looked round for Bulstrode. Nugent was the first fellow he met, with Hurree Singh, and the two stared at Bob in amazement.

"Oh! Help!" gasped Bunter. "This beast is choking me! Ow!"

"What on earth's the matter, Bob?"

"The matterfulness must be terrific to call up that frownful scowl upon the esteemed brow of the worthy Cherry."

"This fat beast has reached the limit, that's all!" said Bob. "He's trying his best to disgrace our Form! He has stolen a postal-order!"

"What!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He's got a postal-order here belonging to Bulstrode, and he tried to pass it off on me," said Bob Cherry. "I'm looking for Bulstrode. Have you seen him?"

"He's in the gym."

"Good!"

And Bob Cherry marched his prisoner off. Billy Bunter was squirming in a state of extreme apprehension now. He was alarmed as to the view Bulstrode might take of the opening of his letter.

"I—I say, Cherry!" he gasped. "I—I found the postal-order, you know, and—and I—I really meant to return it to Bulstrode, you know."

"Don't tell lies!"

"I—I really did, you know. I—I—"

"That's why you tried to pass it off on me, I suppose!" said Bob, still propelling Bunter forcibly towards the gymnasium.

"You—you see, that—that was only temporary. It was merely taking the postal-order as a loan till my own one came, you

see. Mine is certain to be here by the second post this afternoon, and then I should have settled with Bulstrode. Ow! Don't shake me like that! You might make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'd have to pay for them."

"Come on, you worm!"

"But—but I—I don't want to see Bulstrode just now. I—I've got another engagement, you know. I—I—"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Yes, I dare say you have, but you can put it off for a bit, my pippin. Come into the gym. If you try to hang back I'll roll you in."

Billy Bunter did try to hang back, and Bob Cherry exerted all his strength, and rushed him in at full speed. He rushed him in too quickly to quite see where he was rushing him, and he rushed him right into Bulstrode, who was coming out. Bulstrode gave a roar, and sat down violently, and Billy Bunter sat down opposite him, blinking at him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode is Indignant.

BULSTRODE scrambled to his feet, red with rage.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "What are you up to? What's the little game? What do you mean by it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling ass!"

"Ha, ha! I'm sorry, Bulstrode! Ha, ha, ha! I was just looking for you. Billy Bunter has got something for you, and I was bringing him to see you, as he has another engagement he's anxious to keep."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What's that?" exclaimed Bulstrode, catching sight of the postal-order in Billy Bunter's hand. "Is that my postal-order? I was expecting one this morning, and it didn't come. Has that young thief collared it, as he did Wingate's five?"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"It's yours," said Bob Cherry. "Hand it over to Bulstrode, Billy."

Bunter staggered to his feet. Bulstrode snatched the postal-order from his hand, glanced at it, and then bent a very grim look upon the fat junior.

"How did you get hold of this, Bunter?"

Bunter gasped. He began to understand at last that he had got himself into a serious scrape. Fellows were gathering round, all of them looking grim.

"I—I found it," stammered Bunter.

"You found my postal-order?"

"Ye-e-es!"

"Where?"

"In—in a letter— I—I mean, in the Close."

"Where's the letter?"

Bunter extracted the letter from his pocket, and handed it to Bulstrode. Bulstrode looked through it.

"You young ratter!" he exclaimed. "You opened this letter!"

"I—I—"

"You opened my letter!" roared Bulstrode.

"You see, I—I—"

"And stole my postal-order!"

"I—I— You see, I thought the letter was for me, the names are so much alike," Bunter gasped. "That's how it was. I—I found it wasn't for me when I looked into it, and I was—was bringing it to you."

Bulstrode glared at him suspiciously.

"I don't believe a word of it!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"If you were coming to me, why was Cherry dragging you along?"

"He—he was showing me the way," said Bunter, with an imploring blink at Bob Cherry to bear him out.

"He was showing you along," said Ogilvy. "I saw him!"

"Well, that's—that's his way, you know. He's always doing things like that."

"Is he telling the truth, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry looked uncomfortable. In his first wrath at Bunter's dishonesty, he had rushed the fat junior off to the rightful owner of the postal-order. But he was beginning now to feel a little sorry for the wretched Bunter. Bunter, after all, was too stupid to really realise that he had acted dishonestly.

"Oh, I've nothing to say about the matter at all!" said Bob. "I thought he'd better come to you at once with the postal-order, and I helped him along."

"He was going to keep it!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 278.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"You young thief!"

"If you doubt my honesty, Bulstrode, this discussion had better cease," said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I must say I am surprised at you. All the fellows here know me too well, I hope, to place any faith in such a suggestion. I was coming to you as fast as I could to explain that I had opened the letter by mistake. You know I am a little short-sighted. Of course, I mistook the name for Bunter, as I am expecting a letter."

Bulstrode thrust the letter and the postal-order into his pocket.

"I believe you're lying!" he said. "I've a jolly good mind to go to the Head and give you away for it, you worm!"

"Oh—oh, really, you know—"

"If you ever open any more of my letters by mistake, it will be the last mistake of that kind you'll make at Greyfriars!" growled Bulstrode.

And he walked away.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Rugby Match.

THE weather had changed for the better, and fine, cold days succeeded one another, and every day the Remove spent every available hour of daylight on the football-field.

The days were too short to be any danger

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don, E.C. 4."

of overdoing it, and becoming stale. They played the Rugged game as keenly and enthusiastically as ever they had played Association, and there was no doubt that their form was improving wonderfully.

They were already in good condition; there was no need of training; it was simply a question of mastering the ways of the new game; and with Linley, Brown, and Morgan to help and instruct, they naturally made great progress.

By the time Saturday arrived Harry Wharton was well satisfied, and he looked forward to the Bolsover match with some confidence. Wingate, whom he often consulted, was satisfied, too.

"You're in good form, and you've got a good chance, Wharton," the captain of Greyfriars remarked. "I think you'll give a good account of yourselves, at all events, when you meet Bolsover. You deserve to win."

Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"Thanks, Wingate! We're going to do our very best, at all events, and I suppose nobody can do more than that."

"Have you arranged about a referee?"

"Well, no. We were thinking of—of asking

Wingate laughed.

"Who?"

"You!" said Wharton. "You're the only senior here who has played the Rugged game, and who is good-natured enough to give up an afternoon to the juniors."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Wingate, laughing. "Still, I was thinking I might stand by you. I'll referee with pleasure."

"Thanks awfully! I'll tell the fellows!"

The Remove fifteen were naturally delighted. The fact that Wingate thought they had a chance was inspiring to them, too.

"If Wingate says we've got a chance, we've got one," said Bob Cherry, laying down the

law. "My private opinion is that we shall crawl all over Bolsover."

"Well, we've got a good team, and we can play the game," said Wharton. "We can leave the result to Fortune."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bunter's got a suggestion to make," grinned Bob. "He thinks we should improve our chances by playing him as captain."

"Really, Cherry, I was only going to ask if I should mind the 'feed' which you will have to give the Bolsover chaps after the game."

"Can't be done, Billy," said Wharton. "It's going to be locked up in the study, though, so you won't get a chance at it, and I'm going to ask Stott to keep an eye on you all the time, in case you get up to any of your tricks."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I'm not going to be locked out of my own study, you know."

"Your mistake! You are!" said Harry coolly.

And Bunter grunted discontentedly.

And locked out of the study he was when the Bolsover team arrived at Greyfriars. While Harry Wharton & Co. were welcoming the Bolsover fellows, Bunter hung round the door of the study, and found that it was really locked.

He was debating in his mind whether a hammer, a chisel, or a crowbar would be the best instrument to use on the lock, when Stott and little Wun Lung of the Remove came up, took his arms, and walked him away.

Bunter was so taken by surprise that he allowed himself to be walked half-way downstairs before he began to resist. Then he struggled.

"I—I say, you fellows, what do you mean?" he exclaimed indignantly. "I don't want to go out!"

"You're going to watch the football-match," said Stott.

"I'm not!"

"Oh, yes, you are!" said Stott coolly. "I'm going to, and you'll have to. You're not going to leave me until after the match."

And Billy Bunter, willingly or unwillingly, had to go. Stott and Wun Lung ranged themselves at the ropes to watch the match, and Bunter had to stand between them. And whenever he showed any disposition to get away Stott pinched his arm, and the fat junior had to groan and give in.

Meanwhile the teams were preparing for the match. The Bolsover fellows were shown into their dressing-room, and they soon appeared in the field in their green shirts, looking very fit and well.

But Fitzgerald minor had to admit that Greyfriars looked as fit as Bolsover.

"They're a decent-looking set," he confided to Hilton; "but, of course, they don't play our game. It was like Wharton's cheek to take us on for the return match."

"Yes, rather!" said Hilton.

"We must give 'em a good licking as a hint to keep their conceit within bounds, entirely!" grinned Fitzgerald.

"What-ho!" said Bull.

Wharton won the toss. The teams faced one another in the field, and there was a buzz of expectation from the Greyfriars crowd round the ropes.

The sight of a Rugby match played on the Greyfriars ground was sufficiently unusual to attract most of the Greyfriars fellows to see it. Be it said that very few of them had any expectation of seeing Greyfriars win. But their wishes for the success of the Remove were cordial—even Temple, Dabney & Co. were keen about it.

"Go it, Wharton!" said Temple to his old rival. "I hope you'll pull it off—if you do, you'll hear me yell."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Thanks," said Wharton, with a smile. "We'll do our best—and I really think you may as well get ready to yell!"

The whistle went, and the ball rolled. Then the match began. Bolsover began with smiles on their faces, evidently anticipating an easy task.

And indeed, at the first blush, it looked as if their task would be easy.

Hilton got away with the ball, and ran up the field, and was not brought down till he was within two yards of the home goal-line.

And then, when the whistle went for a scrum, the Bolsover pack, more accustomed to the work, shoved Greyfriars fairly over the line, and scored a try, amid chuckles and grins. And as the try was taken almost in the centre of the line, it was the easiest thing in the world to convert, and the goal was taken by Hilton in easy style.

One goal up for Bolsover—five points within the first five minutes!

It did not look well for Greyfriars. Many of the fellows, remembering the result of the previous match, looked glum.

But Harry Wharton's face never changed. He knew very well that that set-back at the start was simply because his men had not got into their stride yet, and it was not an omen.

When the game was restarted, Greyfriars played a better game. Hilton was sailing away again with the ball, when Wharton, who was playing three-quarter, ran at him and tackled him, and brought him down with a bump.

Hilton tried to pass out to Bull, but failed, falling on the ball, and the whistle went for a scrum.

From the scrum, Bob Cherry, playing half, captured the ball and threw it to Tom Brown, who raced away with it, and passed back to Wharton as Bull brought him down.

Wharton streaked through the Bolsover team like a knife through soft cheese.

Three heavy forwards had flung themselves in his way, but he eluded them, and the halves seemed nowhere.

He had only the full-back to fear, and the full-back he avoided by a sudden swerve that enabled him to just escape the tackle.

The back darted after him, and they ran almost neck and neck to the goal-line close to touch, and within three feet of the line the back's grasp closed upon Wharton.

But with a desperate wrench the captain of the Remove hurled himself over the line, falling heavily—but he touched down, and it was a try!

He rose, gasping and a little dizzy, with a loud cheer ringing in his ears.

"Try! Try!"

"Hurrah!"

And there were Temple, Dabney & Co. waving their caps and cheering like madmen; and the Remove—all who were not in the team—yelling themselves hoarse.

"My hat!" said Hilton. "That chap knows something, anyway!"

"Faith, and he does!" said Fitzgerald. "And it's glad I am intirely! It's goin' to be a better game than I thought, bedad!"

And the Bolsovers, warned by that experience, played harder and more keenly. The try was not converted; but it was three points to Greyfriars, and three points meant much to them, for it showed that they could, at least, score against their adversaries, and that their training and practice for the past week had not been thrown away. And during the remainder of the first half the tussle was hard and obstinate.

Bolsover scored again, Fitzgerald dropping a goal from the twenty-five, making the Bolsover score nine points when the whistle went for half-time.

"Nine to three!" said Hilton, as they walked off. "Good!"

"But it shows they can play," said Fitzgerald. "Sure, and I'm thinkin' we shall have a tussle in the second half."

And Fitzgerald was right.

"We're behind, kids," said Wharton, as he sucked a lemon, "but we've got to pull up in the second half. Mind, we've got to!"

"We'll try," said Hazeldene. "We've more than held our own so far, and that was more than Bolsover expected."

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry. "We—Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

He broke off, and stared towards the ropes. Two charming faces under charming hats

were looking into the field of play. Bob Cherry turned pink as he recognised Marjorie Hazeldene and her friend Clara.

"I didn't know my sister was coming over," said Hazeldene. "Oh, I say, we must play up for the second half, or we shall get chipped at Cliff House!"

"Oh, rather!" And Harry Wharton & Co. went into the field with the determination to do or die in the second half of the match.

Marjorie waved her hand to the juniors, and Wharton halted for a moment near the ropes where the two Cliff House girls stood.

"Awfully good of you to give us a look in," he said. "We're playing a new game."

"Yes. Hazel told me, and I was determined to see it," said Marjorie brightly. "I hope you will win."

"Well, we're going to make a hard fight for it, but, of course, Rugger is new to us, and the Bolsover chaps have played nothing else; but we hope for the best."

"Good luck!" said Marjorie.

And Wharton rejoined his men, and the tussle recommenced.

Bolsover had had the best of the first half, but as soon as the whistle had gone it became clear that they were to have a harder struggle for points in the second half.

Tom Brown scored a try in the first ten minutes, which was successfully converted by Mark Linley, and Greyfriars now counted eight points.

A dropped goal by Morgan brought the points up to twelve, and there was a wild cheer from the Greyfriars crowd.

For Greyfriars were now twelve points to the Bolsover nine—three ahead, and fighting hard to keep there.

"Bedad," said Fitzgerald, "this means work! Wire in!"

The Bolsover men wired in. The play was hard and fast. Scrum followed scrum, and the gruelling game told on all the players, but the fierce attacks of Bolsover did not materialise. The home defence was sound.

At last, as the second half is growing old, comes a desperate combined attempt from Bolsover, and the green shirts come fiercely down the field.

Fitzgerald is through, the ball in his hands, and the Greyfriars full-back tackles him low and brings him down, but the ball is tossed to Hilton close behind, and caught, and Hilton is under the crossbar, over the line, in a twinkling, and the leather is touched down.

Another try to Bolsover. The conversion of such a try is, of course, the easiest thing in the world. It is taken, and the goal counts five points more.

Fourteen points to Bolsover, and twelve to Greyfriars, and five minutes more to play.

Wingate glances at his watch.

There is bated breath round the ground now.

Even if defeated, Greyfriars will not be disgraced; their score is a good one, and they have put up a splendid game. But will they be defeated?

In his heart, Harry Wharton vows that they shall not be!

But minute follows minute, and still the struggle, though fierce, is resultless. But at last comes a break in the game.

From a scrum near the home twenty-five the ball has come out to Nugent, who leaps away with it, is dragged down by a heavy Bolsover forward—but not before he has flung the leather into the arms of Bob Cherry behind.

From Bob Cherry it goes to Tom Brown, and the New Zealander is away with it like a

flash of lightning, his feet seeming scarcely to touch the ground.

Away—away—with Wharton and Linley racing to back him up—away—till Hilton leaps at him like a tiger, and he throws the ball to Linley just behind, and the Lancashire lad rushes on with it, while Tom Brown rolls blindly on the ground under Hilton's tackle.

A shout, swelling to a roar, rises from the Greyfriars crowd. Marjorie and Clara, too, are looking on with sparkling eyes.

Will they get through? Time is very close now. There will be no chance for another attempt.

He—Linley—is down—down! But the ball—where is that? Safe in Wharton's hands—and Wharton is dashing on, while the Lancashire lad disappears under two sprawling Bolsovers.

The clutching hands of a Bolsover half are close on Wharton—they touch—will the tackle hold good?

Another and another foe seem to start up out of the ground before him. He will never get through. It passes like a scene in a dream.

Wharton feels the clutching fingers at his shoulder—a slight swerve saves him—he speeds on—to right and left reel two staggering foes—he is through—through, and speeding down to goal!

Away! Away! Louder swells the roar of excitement—louder, louder—deepening like the roar of the sea! Will he get through? He hands off a charging Bolsover, just escaping him—he swerves further to elude the full-back, the last foe he has to fear.

But the Bolsover full-back is racing to intercept him.

Will he do it? Yes—he bars the way—he is tackling—no, he has missed, and the two of them are running neck and neck for the far corner of the goal-line—neck and neck!

Faster, faster—again a clutch, again an escape as by a miracle—then the full-back rolls on the ground from a desperate hand-off, and Wharton has reached the line—the line—and is over it, and the ball is touched down, and Greyfriars has gained another try, and goal or not, Greyfriars has won the match.

The try is not converted, but nobody cares for that! Greyfriars are fifteen points to fourteen, and they have won the Bolsover match by a single point—but one point is as good as fifty, as far as winning the match is concerned.

Greyfriars has won!

Loud and thrilling swells the roar of cheering, and Wharton, who has scored the winning try, is clutched up by the crowd that surges over the field, and carried round in dizzy triumph—and from his rocky perch on the shoulders of his chums, he looks down at the bright eyes and sweet smile of Marjorie Hazeldene—a charming face, glowing with admiration.

The match was over, and Greyfriars had won.

In the feed that followed Billy Bunter, of course, greatly distinguished himself, and Marjorie and Clara were honoured guests.

The Bolsover fellows took their defeat good-naturedly enough. They left Greyfriars after planning more matches—for that victory had made the Remove quite satisfied with their Rugger, and there were more victories in store for the Greyfriars fifteen!

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Slight Upset!

"TURNED out a lovely afternoon!" remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Ideal for a spin!" agreed Lovell. The Fistical Four were sweeping along the road to the village of Huntsford on their cycles.

It was a keen February afternoon, but the exercise was keeping the youngsters warm, and they were feeling in top-hote condition.

"Think we'll be in time?" asked Newcome, after they had gone on a little farther.

"Expect so," said Jimmy Silver. "I shall be disappointed if we are not. I want to see young Sandiford walk down the street with his V.C., and give him a shout. He's the sort of old boy that Rookwood ought to be proud of."

Raby chuckled.

"I think they are," he said. "Pretty nearly all the school has gone across there."

Huntsford was honouring their own particular V.C. that afternoon, and young Sandiford, the recipient of the much-prized decoration, was an old Rookwood boy.

So it was certainly a red-letter day.

As the Fistical Four turned the next bend the familiar figures of the three Tommies hove in sight ahead. They were not going very quickly, and the Fistical Four saw that it would be an easy matter to overhaul them if they did not make much noise.

They spurred forward, and rapidly diminished the distance, and they were only twenty yards behind them when Tommy Dodd first caught the sound of their wheels, and turned his head.

"Spurt, you fellows!" he cried.

Jimmy Silver & Co. swept on.

Tommy Dodd & Co. responded nobly to the shout of their leader, and their cycles shot forward.

At the same time they sped across the road, so that it would be more difficult for others to pass them before they had gathered speed.

Jimmy Silver rang his bell warningly. Only a few yards separated them now, and the Fistical Four were still gaining.

"Look out!" roared Lovell.

To which Tommy Dodd retorted:

"Yah!"

"We'll run you down!" shouted Jimmy Silver, as he drew in still closer.

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Tommy Doyle.

"Keep spread out, you fellows!"

"You'll be spread out in the ditch in a minute!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "Mind your backs!"

"Rats!"

Jimmy Silver drew in between Tommy Doyle and Tommy Dodd. As he did so he put all his remaining energy into the pedals.

The two Tommies saw what he was doing at that moment, and by a common instinct drew in together, to make it impossible for the leader of the Fistical Four to pass.

But they were just too late. Jimmy Silver shot through the gap, missing their front wheels by a fraction of an inch.

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle were not so fortunate. They had closed a little too much, and the next second their cycles were almost touching.

Tommy Doyle threw out an arm to grip the other, and in doing so upset Tommy Dodd's balance.

He veered sharply to the left, and the two cyclists shot across the road and disappeared into the ditch.

Splash! Bang!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Grooooooh!" howled Tommy Doyle.

Jimmy Silver turned his head and grinned, and eased up as his companions joined him.

"Serves them jolly well right!" said Newcome. "They did it themselves. They were

trying to sandwich you. They wouldn't race fairly."

A chorus of howls came from the wet ditch behind as the two disconsolate Tommies dragged themselves out of the mire.

The Fistical Four turned round to look.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unfortunate cyclists certainly did look rather funny, and even Tommy Cook, who had pulled up when he saw the catastrophe, was laughing at them.

"Don't think they're hurt, are they?" asked Jimmy Silver, still looking back.

"No! 'Course they ain't!" snapped Lovell.

"Why, they're having a row with Tommy Cook!"

Jimmy Silver put on his brake and dismounted, and the others followed suit.

As they looked back along the road they saw that the two Tommies had evidently suffered little hurt from their fall.

They were shaking their fists furiously at the grinning Tommy Cook, and suddenly that worthy turned, and, springing on his bike, started pedalling furiously along the road.

The two muddy figures of his late companions followed him, breathing threats of vengeance.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Fistical Four.

Tommy Cook spurred just as the others came level with him, and managed to escape without any more damage than a sprinkling of mud as the two Moderns sprang at him.

"Pax!" he yelled, as he came abreast of the Fistical Four.

"We shan't hurt you," said Jimmy Silver. "We're kinder than your own pals."

The Fistical Four mounted their cycles and rode on, Tommy Cook keeping with them.

They had wasted enough time, and they did not wish to be late in reaching Huntsford.

"Sandiford!" mused Jimmy Silver, as they sped along the road again, leaving the two muddy and disconsolate figures of the unfortunate Moderns far in the distance. "Isn't Sandiford the name of the inventor Johnny who lives over here?"

Raby nodded.

"He's the father of the chap who's won the V.C.," he said. "Quite a decent old chap; but he can't hold his tongue. He's brought out a wonderful electrical war invention, you know, but he doesn't believe in keeping mum. Everyone was talking about it last time I was over here."

"That's rather silly," said Jimmy Silver. "Anyone might pinch it. Those things are best kept silent."

"Old Sandiford seems to think that he knows best," said Raby. "He always carries a couple of loaded revolvers about with him, and he thinks that is sufficient protection. He's a splendid shot."

"H'm! I suppose that alters things a bit," replied Jimmy Silver. "Still, it's pretty silly to gas about the thing."

"He doesn't worry about that," said Newcome. "We'll probably meet him to-day. If we do, he'll tell us all about it. He believes in advertising the thing, so that the War Office will be influenced, or something like that. Hallo! We're nearly there!"

The straggling little village of Huntsford had just come in sight as the cyclists turned a corner in the road.

As a rule it was a very quiet little place, but to-day the houses were gay with flags, and a band, which was loud if not very musical, was playing a military march, with an abandon which would have turned the composer's hair white with sorrow if he had heard it.

"Go it, ye cripples!" muttered Jimmy, as the cyclists passed, and the village butcher blazed forth discordantly on a cornet which was plainly suffering from internal trouble.

The street was alive with people, and, a few yards further on, the cyclists were compelled to dismount and put their bikes up at a little shop.

Then they joined the crowd on the pavement.

A short time later there was a cheer higher up the street, and the youngsters knew that the hero was being led round the village by the local dignitaries.

Then they raised their own caps and shouted, as Joe Sandiford, a stalwart, blushing young soldier, was carried shoulder high past them, and the brass band rose to the occasion, the result being a discordant blare.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Honouring a Hero!

"HURRAH!"

The Fistical Four joined in the general shout as the hero passed by and acknowledged the ovation with a smart salute.

Then they cheered as the bearers turned and brought the hero back along the street again.

A little further on a presentation in the name of Huntsford was made by the mayor of the district, and several speeches followed, to which Joe Sandiford replied in a few simple words.

Then, amidst more cheering, he was allowed to make his way home, where it was pretty certain that another warm welcome would be awaiting him.

Jimmy Silver & Co. hung about Huntsford for a little while, chatting with various Rookwood fellows whom they met.

But they soon found that things were getting rather slow, and when Raby suggested taking a walk they fell in with the suggestion immediately.

"I spotted rather an inviting path over the fields as we were coming in," said Newcome. "We've plenty of time yet, and there will be a little moon for riding back to-night. Let's see where it leads to."

"Good enough!" said Jimmy Silver. "Lead the giddy way, O guide! We'll follow."

The path across the fields was struck about five minutes later.

It led to a pleasant walk amongst the trees before it came out into further fields bounded by a lane.

"What do we do now?" asked Lovell.

"Go right on, juggins!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "The path goes right over the fields over the other side. You're not tired yet, are you?"

"Of course not!" snapped Lovell. "Come on!"

The Fistical Four crossed the lane, and took to the fields on the other side.

"Someone's been wheeling a barrow along here pretty recently," said Jimmy Silver casually, pointing to a deep rut in the earth. "It's rather strange that anyone should be working here to-day. By the mob in the village I thought they had all taken a half-holiday."

Raby held up his hand warningly.

"Not so much wisdom, Jimmy!" he said warningly. "I spy the enemy ahead."

"Who?"

"The giddy enemy."

"And who is the giddy enemy?" demanded Jimmy Silver impatiently.

"Smythe & Co.," said Raby. "I saw them just now. They're ahead of us, taking this path. They were in the village this afternoon, I know, but I suppose there are too many masters about there for them. I expect they're coming out here for a quiet smoke."

"That's about it," said Newcome. "Look! You can see them now. They seem in a bit of a hurry. They're evidently looking out for some spot where they can enjoy themselves to their own way of thinking."

"Well, let's go and give 'em the usual cure for blagging," said Jimmy Silver, with

the air of one who has a solemn duty to perform. "They'd be rather disappointed if they didn't get it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The figures of Smythe & Co. could still be seen bobbing about as they came into view occasionally.

Suddenly, however, to the amazement of Jimmy Silver & Co., they disappeared. "They've gone now," said Jimmy Silver, when they did not reappear. "I suppose they've found some nice little place for blagging. This is where we roll up, I believe."

The Fistical Four advanced cautiously. When they reached the spot where it seemed that Smythe & Co. had turned from the path, they saw that a track led away at that point in the direction of a clump of trees.

"Must have gone down here," said Jimmy Silver. "And— Hallo, here's the track of my wheelbarrow again!"

"Oh, hang your wheelbarrow!" snapped Raby shortly. "We're not following a blessed barrow, are we?"

Jimmy Silver grinned and said no more. The Fistical Four approached the trees cautiously, and as they drew nearer they heard the voices of the nuts of Rookwood ahead of them.

From the snatches of conversation which they caught it was evident that something was wrong, and they went on a little faster.

A moment later they came in sight of a little glade, in the middle of which stood Smythe, Townsend, Howard, and Topham.

Each held a cigarette in his hand, but not one of them was smoking.

To the amazement of the Fistical Four, the gay Classical blades were holding handkerchiefs to their eyes.

"M-m-my word!" gasped Lovell. "What's the matter with the chumps?"

The Fistical Four gazed upon the scene in amazement.

Smythe & Co. were walking about in the hollow as though they were dazed.

Their cigarettes had been dropped now, and tears were streaming down their faces.

"They've come out here to be sorry for blagging!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Don't they look sorry!"
"My aunt! They do!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four roared with laughter at the sight of the nuts of Rookwood.

What could be the matter with them was an absolute mystery, but they certainly appeared to be all right, except for the fit of crying.

And it was certainly a very funny sight.

"Been having a quiet feed of onions, Smythey?" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Ooooooer!" came from the hollow.

"Seem jolly repentant, don't they?" asked Newcome, with another grin. "I suppose they felt ashamed when they saw Joe Sandiford, and resolved to turn over a new leaf."

"That's about it!"

"I say, Smythey!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Groogh!" retorted the red-eyed leader of the nuts.

"We're jolly glad to see you're going to turn over a new leaf!"

"Ooooooer!"

"But don't cry too much, you know!"

Groan!

The Fistical Four exchanged significant glances.

It was just beginning to strike them that there might be something really wrong with the nuts.

They were staggering about blindly in the hollow, and it was evident that they could not see each other.

"Look here," said Jimmy Silver suddenly.

"There's something the matter with those boulders. Let's go down and see what's up with 'em!"

He ran forward, and descended into the glade, the others following.

"What's the matter, Smythey?" asked Jimmy Silver anxiously, as the nut of the Shell, in a blind, unseeing rush, dashed past him and tripped over a boulder.

"Groogh!" roared Smythe, by way of answer.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his eyes. They seemed to be smarting, and his head was beginning to swim.

He turned, and looked at Lovell. A large tear was running down that worthy's face.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"You're beginning to cry, too!"

"So are you!" retorted Lovell, dabbing his face with a handkerchief. "It's something in the air!"

"What on earth is it?" gasped Raby, who seemed suddenly to become afflicted like the others.

"Dunno!"

And the Fistical Four dabbed the tears silently from their eyes.

Smythe & Co. were blundering about blindly, forgotten for the moment. But a sudden idea struck Jimmy Silver.

He saw that there was evidently something very mysterious happening, and if they were not very careful they would soon be in the same state as the nuts themselves.

"Look here!" he snapped. "There's some gas or something like that hanging about in this hollow. We'd better get these fellows out of it as quickly as possible. My hat! I'm nearly blind!"

Lovell wiped his eyes.

better, and evidently getting over the effects of whatever gas the hollow must have been filled with.

"M-my word!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "That was a pretty rum go. And don't we look a set of jugginses! Weeping like anything over nothing at all!"

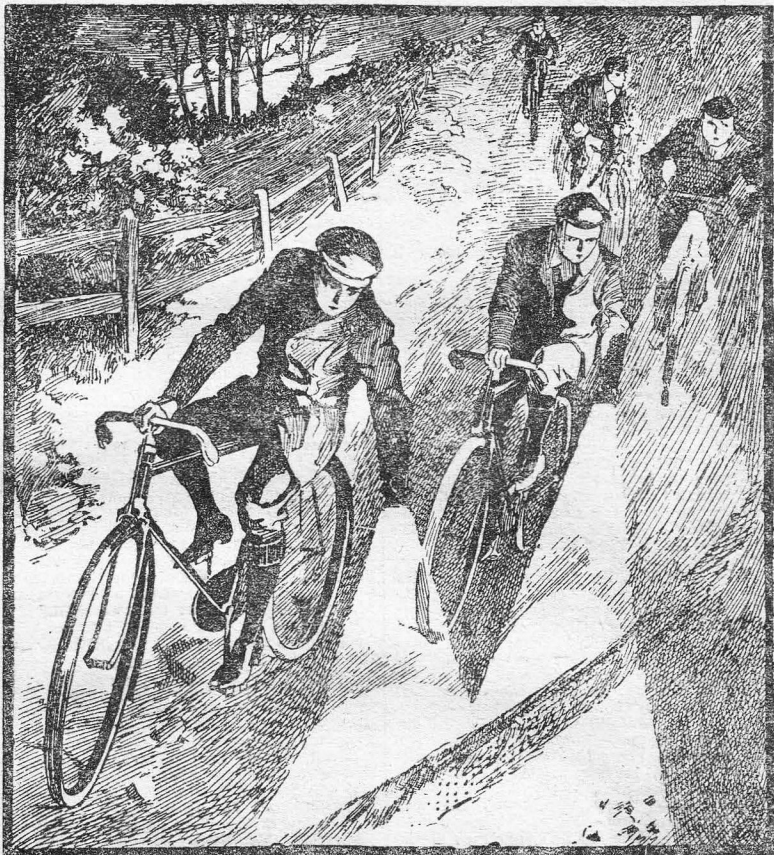
"It was gas!" gasped Lovell. "Lachrymatory gas, or something like that. I've read in the papers that they fill shells with it, and it makes a fellow cry so that they can't see what they are jolly well doing!"

"Wonder how on earth it came to be there?" speculated Raby dazedly. "This is a bit of a mystery, and we ought— Hallo! What's up now?"

He broke off, and pointed through the trees to the fields on the other side.

Two men were running rapidly in their direction, and it was not difficult to recognise in the one dressed in khaki the figure of Joe Sandiford, the V.C. hero.

"Sandiford and his pater!" gasped Jimmy Silver.



Jimmy Silver scanned the road as they went, and in order to make sure that they should not miss any signs, he snatched off his front lamp and flashed it across the road. Lovell followed suit.

"Same here!" he muttered. "It's horrible!"
"Then come on!" snapped Jimmy Silver, seizing Smythe by the arm. "Quickly!"

He ran the leader of the nuts up the sloping side of the glade to the spot where they had stood before and felt no ill-effects of what was evidently causing such trouble in the hollow.

Lovell followed quickly with Howard, and Raby and Newcome were not long after in bringing the blinded Townsend and Topham after them.

Then, for a couple of minutes, the eight fellows stood wiping their eyes frantically.

They were not feeling by any means fit, for their heads were aching, and they felt rather sick.

The Fistical Four recovered first, and were able to look at each other with red, but dry, eyes.

By that time Smythe & Co. were much

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Night Cycle Ride.

NO one spoke for a minute. Then Jimmy Silver voiced his thoughts rather solemnly.

"There must be something very much wrong," he said. "Old Sandiford hasn't left the house since he finished his invention. He's been there on guard, night and day, with his two revolvers. He didn't even come to Huntsford this afternoon to see the giddy celebrations!"

"My hat! Then there must be something serious happening!" said Raby. "I've never seen him running at all before, and now he's stepping out like a blessed hare!"

The youngsters waited while the two figures drew nearer, and crossed to the field so that they would meet them as they passed.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" asked Jimmy

Silver, touching his cap as the two came up.

"Wrong?" gasped old Sandiford, pulling up and wringing his hands. "I should think there is! I've been robbed! My invention has been stolen!"

"Stolen?"

"Yes; this afternoon!" said the inventor. "Taken right under my very nose, and I could not do a thing. I was blinded by some beastly gas! Ugh! I can smell the stuff still! And my invention is—is anywhere now!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged looks. Their worst fears were confirmed.

"I was in the experimental-room," said the inventor, "when a stranger called to see me. He seemed quite friendly, until suddenly I felt that I was beginning to get dizzy and my eyes were watering. When I looked across at him he was holding a sort of mask to his face. I pulled out my pistols, but at the same moment he squirted something at me, and I could not see a thing. When my eyes stopped watering I found that he had gone and my invention had been stolen."

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Joe Sandiford touched his father's arm.

"Come on, dad!" he said urgently. "These youngsters won't know anything about it. We don't want to waste time, you know."

"But what can we do?" demanded the other. "I have telephoned to the police. We cannot say which way he went. He was seen to run in this direction, and that is all."

"How was he carrying the invention, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"In a sack, I hear," said the other in reply.

There was silence for a moment. Then suddenly Jimmy Silver looked up with shining eyes.

"It's certain that the man came along this way, sir," he said quickly. "We've just found a little place amongst the trees which is filled with tear-gas. We all got in it. That seems to indicate that the chap has been along here and spilt some of it."

"Really?" asked Sandiford keenly.

"It's a fact, sir," said Jimmy Silver excitedly. "We wondered how on earth the gas came to be in the hollow at all. But that explains things now. And I'll tell you another curious thing we noticed as we came along from the road. That was the freshly-made track of a wheelbarrow."

"Good gracious!"

Raby gave Jimmy Silver quite a solemn look as he proceeded:

"I noticed it at the time, and remarked that it was rather curious to find anyone working at all to-day. They've all been taking a holiday in your son's honour. It led all the way from the road up to the hollow where we found the tear-gas. It rather looks as though—as though—"

"He had a wheelbarrow in which to put the sack!" snapped Sandiford. "Why, you boys have hit the nail right on the head! Where is this track? Quickly! We may catch the fellow after all!"

Jimmy Silver nodded, and led the way back through the trees.

It was not difficult to find the track of the wheelbarrow; and now, in the light of what they had heard, the youngsters did not fail to note what a heavy impression it had made in the softer earth.

Evidently it had carried something heavy. Sandiford ran along like a man crazed.

The road was reached in record time, and here the search-party found that they had come to something like a standstill.

Search where they would, they could see no more tracks of the wheelbarrow.

It was certain that it had not crossed the fields opposite; and also it was not likely that it had gone up the lane, for there was a steep hill a little further on which would have been almost impossible to negotiate.

"He must have gone down the lane, sir," said Jimmy Silver, when five minutes' close scrutiny of the ground had yielded no result.

"Then I shall follow that way," said old Sandiford. "Come on, Joe! Are you youngsters coming?"

"We'll nip back to Huntsford to get our bikes, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "There's a road from Huntsford that joins this one a little lower down, and we'll meet you along there. Perhaps the bikes will be useful."

"Fetch them by all means!" said old Sandiford, as he broke into a trot again. "See you later."

Jimmy Silver & Co. set off at a run for Huntsford.

None of them spoke until they reached the village and eased up as they proceeded along the crowded pavement.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jimmy suddenly, as they reached the shop. "Here's Tommy Cook, too! Coming for a ride, Tommy?"

"What's the matter?" asked the Modern. Jimmy Silver explained in a few brief words as they got their cycles out of the little shed, and Tommy Cook fired with enthusiasm at once.

"Rather!" he said. "Even if we're late getting back, we'll have a jolly good excuse. And we might catch the jolly burglar fellow. If he's strong enough to carry that heavy sack, he must be a pretty hefty fellow. You'll want all the help you can get."

"Well, light your lamp," said Jimmy Silver, glancing up at the darkening sky. "There's going to be a precious small moon after all, and we shall want the lamps in a minute. It's nearly dark now."

A couple of minutes later the cyclists were off, their lamps lit, and all of them feeling ready for exciting work.

They struck the road which joined the lane along which Sandiford had been proceeding, and whizzed down it at their best speed.

They reached the lane without incident, and, turning to the right, swept on.

Five minutes later they caught up with Sandiford and his soldier son, still running.

"Don't get off, boys!" called the inventor as they came up. "The wheelbarrow has been along here. We've seen the marks in several places. You'll stand a better chance of picking up the thief than we shall."

"Right-ho, sir!"

"Good luck!" shouted Joe Sandiford. And the five cyclists swept on again.

Jimmy Silver led the party. He was scanning the road as they went, and, in order to make sure that they should not miss any signs, he snatched off his front lamp as they went and flashed it across the road.

Lovell, coming next, did the same, and in that way they proceeded.

It was just as they were mounting a steep little hill that Jimmy Silver gave a sudden ejaculation of surprise, and dismounted.

Flashing his light into the ditch, he pointed to what had attracted his attention. It was an old wheelbarrow, the wheel of which lay a little further on. The rusty crank which held the wheel in position had broken, and that was evidently the reason why it had been abandoned.

"This is a bit of luck!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The fellow's jolly well got to carry the sack now! He won't be able to go on at much of a pace, and we ought to catch him pretty easily. Come on!"

The cyclists mounted again, and, topping the rise, descended the other side of the hill.

Jimmy Silver flashed his lamp on each side of him as he free-wheeled down, and at the bottom he saw something which caused his eyes to open wide with astonishment.

In the dust of the road was the mark where something bulky and evidently very heavy had recently been dragged across.

Lovell's lamp lit up the tell-tale mark almost at the same moment, and he and Jimmy Silver dismounted together.

Seeing that something had evidently been discovered, the others followed suit.

"What's the matter, Jimmy?" asked Raby, coming up.

Jimmy pointed silently to the mark across the road, and, with his lamp, indicated where it disappeared through a hole in the hedge.

"Prop your bikes up against the fence, you fellows," he said. "This is where we do a bit of tracking on foot. The fellow's taken to the fields, but he won't be feeling very lively with that load on his back. He was evidently rather overcome, to have to drag it across the road."

The others nodded quickly.

They stood their bikes against the wooden fence which ran along the road, and then followed Silver through the gap in the hedge into the field.

"Put out your lights!" muttered Jimmy Silver warningly, as they crept through the hedge. "There he is—just ahead!"

The lamps went out as though by magic.

For not a hundred yards away, staggering along under the weight of a bulky sack, was the figure of a man.

Jimmy Silver & Co. covered that hundred yards in record time, and before the man could even get any warning they were on him.

The sack was knocked from his shoulders, and he turned, to find himself in the fierce grip of five determined youngsters.

For a minute the man hit out desperately, and, under ordinary circumstances, he might have managed to make good his escape.

But he was fatigued from carrying the sack, and, when he was knocked backwards with a strong right-hander from Jimmy Silver, he fell on the grass and lay still.

"I give in!" he said. "It's a fair cop this time!"

"Bind him up!" snapped Jimmy Silver, who was not taking any chances. "We'll make sure of the scoundrel first. The chap who would pinch a war invention would do any blessed thing!"

The prisoner, however, made no effort to escape while he was being trussed up by the Rookwood fellows, and five minutes later escape was out of the question.

Then, and only then, Jimmy Silver left the party, and, mounting his cycle, rode back to meet old Sandiford and his son.

The inventor was naturally pleased beyond measure to get back the contents of the sack, and it was evident from what he said that he would be more careful in the future.

With the help of the five juniors and his son he carried the sack back along the road until they fell in with a cart, the waggoner of which was only too pleased to do what he could when he recognised old Sandiford and saw the V.C. dangling on his son's tunic.

Jimmy Silver & Co., with Tommy Cook, reached Rookwood an hour later, with all sorts of good wishes still echoing in their ears, and the knowledge that, at any rate, they had made the best of their time. Nor were they likely to forget for some time to come old Sandiford's invention.

THE END.

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of JIMMY SILVER & CO. in
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THE UNWELCOMED GUESTS!

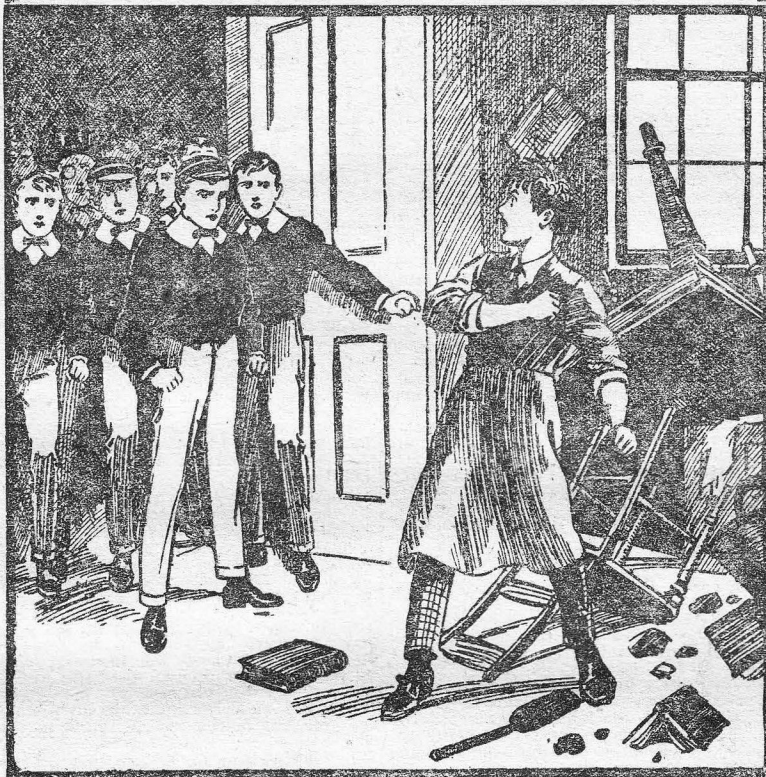
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THE SCHEMER!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story, dealing with the Early Adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"What are you doing here, Higgins?" asked Tom Merry. "I—I—I—" faltered the red-headed boot-boy. "You've been wrecking the study!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn indignantly.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Lesson for Levison.

"Oh, Gussy!"
"Gussy, I'm shocked!"
"Gussy, how could you?"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, adjusted his eyeglass very carefully, and stared at the juniors. D'Arcy was standing in the Fourth Form passage, and he held in his hand a little gold-and-green packet, which he was examining very attentively as the juniors came along.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, were hurrying down the passage, but they stopped at the sight of Arthur Augustus with that suspicious-looking packet in his hand. Three exclamations of shocked surprise were uttered at the same moment.

"Cigarettes?" said Monty Lowther, eyeing the little packet. "Oh, Gussy! Gussy has taken to smoking! Gussy, who has always been our model! Gussy, the glass of fashion and the mirror of form! Oh, Gussy!"
"Shocking!" said Manners. "I'm surprised at Gussy! He knows how we all take example by him. This awful thing is enough to corrupt the whole school!"

And the Terrible Three chimed in together:

"Oh, Gussy!"

"You uttah asses—" began Arthur Augustus.

"Cigarettes!" said Lowther. "Golden Hyacinth—ten a penny. Warranted made from carefully selected sawdust and coffee-grounds. Gussy—"

"You fwoightful ass, Lowthah! If you mean to imply—"

"I'm disgusted with you, Gussy," said Tom Merry solemnly. "Gentlemen and chaps, we're in a hurry to get down to the footer, but we can spare a few minutes to bump Gussy back into the path of virtue."

"You feahful ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am not weelin' wecklessly on the woad to wuin! I picked this up—"

"And now you've got to drop it again," said Tom Merry severely. "You can pick up anything you like, excepting the habit of smoking. That's barred."

"I picked it up," exclaimed D'Arcy. "It belongs to Levison, and I was welectin' whethah I should return it to him or chuck it into the flah."

"Where is Levison?" asked Tom Merry. "I think he has gone up to the box-room. He went in that direction. I should wegard it as my duty to thwow this wubbish into the flah, but I have a great respect for the wights of propahety. It belongs to Levison, you know."

"Are you fellows ever coming?" bawled Jack Blake of the Fourth from the staircase. "Blake, old man, you're wanted. Awfully serious!"

Blake came along the passage from the stairs. He, too, cast a look of great surprise at the packet in D'Arcy's hand.

"We've found Gussy in possession of cigarettes," explained Tom Merry.

"Why, the silly ass—" began Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let me catch you smoking!" said Blake,

in a tone that implied that D'Arcy had really better not let him catch him smoking.

"Weally, deah boy, I should judge the mattah for myself," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I do not smoke, because it is bad form for boys to smoke, and it is vey bad for the wind. I was debatin' in my mind whethah I should thwow this packet into the flah or return it to Levison, and give him a feahful thwashin' for disgwain' the Fourth."

"Oh, it belongs to Levison, does it?" said Blake. "Let's talk to Levison. I'm fed up with his doggish ways."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"Hallo! Here he is!" said Manners.

Levison of the Fourth came along the passage, looking about him as if for something he had lost. He cast a suspicious glance at the chums of the School House. Then he caught sight of the green-and-gold packet in D'Arcy's hand, and uttered an exclamation.

"That belongs to me!"

"You admit it?" demanded Tom Merry.

Levison shrugged his thin shoulders.

"Of course I do! It's mine. What is it to do with you, Tom Merry? You've not been made a prefect that I know of."

"I'm not a prefect," said Tom Merry, "but I'm a decent chap, and I'm up against this kind of rot. If you were in the Shell I should scrag you for it. As you're in the Fourth, I'm willing to lend Blake a hand."

"Yes, rather!" said Lowther. "What shall we do with him? Bumping, or frogs-march, or something with boiling oil in it."

"Look here—" began Levison.

"It would serve him right to make him smoko the rubbish," said Tom Merry. "But we won't be too severe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mind your own business," said Levison. "Give me my packet! I suppose D'Arcy isn't going to steal it?"

D'Arcy reddened.

"You fwoightful wottah! There is your wotten packet!"

And he tossed it to Levison, who caught it—with the end of his nose.

"Ow! You silly idiot!"

"I wufuse to be called a silly idiot!"

"You should break these truths gently to Gussy," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Tom Merry, "it is up to us to take Levison in hand and teach him the error of his ways. Stop him!"

Lowther and Blake caught Levison as he was retreating, and pinioned his arms. The cad of the Fourth struggled angrily.

"Let me go, you beasts!"

"Not just yet," said Lowther agreeably. "If you wriggle like that I shall twist your arm. There, I told you so!"

"You!"

"Bring him into his study."

Levison struggled again, but he was marched into his study. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth, who had the doubtful honour of being Levison's study-mate, was there, and he jumped up in surprise.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" he exclaimed.

"These silly fools are playing the giddy ox as usual!" growled Levison.

"Levison is playing the rotten cad as usual," said Tom Merry. "He's got a packet of cigarettes here, and he is going to burn them, and we're going to watch him."

"I'm not!" roared Levison.

"Your mistake. You are!" said Tom Merry calmly. "There isn't a fire here, so you will have to light one. Buck up!"

"I won't!"

"I give you one minute to start," said Tom Merry ominously.

The juniors had released the cad of the Fourth, but they stood between him and the door, and he had no chance to escape.

Lumley-Lumley grinned, and sat down again. He was not disposed to help his study-mate. Levison glanced at the grim faces round him, and sullenly gathered materials for lighting a fire. Paper and wood were soon blazing in the grate.

"Now shove that packet of cigarettes on the fire!" said Tom Merry.

Levison thrust the packet into the flames, and it flared up. Then he turned upon the juniors with a savage scowl.

"Now get out of my study, confound you!" he exclaimed.

"No hurry!" said Tom Merry. "I fancy that isn't the only packet you've got. Turn out your pockets!"

"I won't!" yelled Levison.

"Turn them out for him, you fellows!"

"What-ho!"

Levison made a wild spring for the door. He was grasped and dragged back, and his pockets were turned out on the floor. Quite an interesting collection came into view—two more packets of cigarettes, and a cigar, and a pink sporting paper, and a list of racing fixtures.

"My only hat!" said Blake. "This is getting thicker and thicker! I wonder what the Head would say if he saw this little lot."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You're going the right way to get sacked, Levison," said Tom Merry. "You can't keep this sort of thing up long without getting bowled out. Shove all that rubbish into the fire, and then we'll bump you. We can't waste all the afternoon over you."

Levison, his face white with fury, piled his precious possessions upon the fire, and sullenly watched them burn away. When they were quite consumed the chums of the School House collared Levison, and he descended on the floor with a bump and a yell. He kicked out furiously, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy yelped as his shin was caught by Levison's heel.

"Ow! Ow! Bai Jove! The beast has kicked me! Ow!"

"Never mind; you're suffering in a good cause!" said Tom Merry.

"That does not diminish the pain. Ow!"

"Give him another bump to teach him not to kick," said Lowther.

Bump!

"And another for his uncle, and one for his aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump! Bump!

Then the juniors streamed out of the study, leaving Levison sitting on the floor, gasping with rage. He staggered up, and scowled at Lumley-Lumley, who was chuckling.

"The rotten beasts! I'll make them sorry for that!" said Levison, between his teeth. Lumley-Lumley only chuckled.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Unexpected Happens.

QUITE a little crowd were gathered on the steps of the School House, an hour or two later, at the time when Blagg, the postman from Rylcombe, usually arrived.

There was a dearth of funds in some of the studies—as will happen sometimes in the best-regulated studies.

The Terrible Three were ready for tea; but tea was not ready for them.

Tom Merry was expecting a remittance from his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and Monty Lowther had some vague hopes that his uncle might have remembered his existence.

If a remittance did not come for somebody, the chums of the Shell would be reduced to looking into some other fellows' study with sweet smiles, till they found somebody at tea, with enough to go round.

Levison of the Fourth came out of the House, and cast an anxious glance into the quad.

"Seen the postman?" he asked.

"Not arrived yet," said Herries. "You expecting a remittance, too?"

"Yes, rather," said Levison loftily. "And a whacking good one, too! I shouldn't wonder if it's twenty quid."

"Twenty rats!" said Herries gruffly.

"Bai Jove! It would be wippin' to have twenty soveretwains at once," said Arthur Augustus. "You will be wollin' in money, deah boy."

Levison snifed.

"I expect to be rolling in money, as a matter of fact," he said. "My father's engaged in a big thing now on the Stock Exchange, and he will most likely be a millionaire next week. It's a jolly sure thing, and he had inside information, and he is simply whacking in the money. Some fellows who have been against me will be jolly civil then, I expect!"

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"You won't find any difference from me, for one!" he said. "And you'll still get bumped if you're found with cigarettes in your pockets!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison sneered.

"You'll change your tune, I expect, when it comes off," he said.

"Oh, rats!"

"Levison's got pals to stand by him, anyway," said Mellish of the Fourth, Levison's study-mate and croney. "And he won't forget

old friends when he's rolling in giddy riches, will you, Levison?"

"No fear!" said Levison. "And I sha'n't forget those who have been rotten to me."

Blake uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"Look here, Levison, nobody here cares twopence whether your pater's a millionaire or not!" he exclaimed. "It won't make any difference to us. We wouldn't touch your money, if you offered it to us by the fistful—and you haven't got it yet, either. You're such a giddy Ananias, that I sha'n't believe in the golden quids, for one, till I've seen them!"

"Wathah not!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll see them jolly soon, then!" he said. "Here comes the postman!"

Blagg, the local postman, had heaved in sight. And there was a general shout from the juniors:

"This way, Blaggy!"

And Blagg grinned, and came towards the School House steps.

Blagg understood that it sometimes happened to juniors to become very anxious for letters from home.

Gore and Cooke of the Shell joined Levison. The news of Levison's expected wealth had spread—Levison had talked a great deal about it.

Levison was not a fellow with many friends—some fellows had expressed wonder that even Mellish and Crooke could stand him.

But human nature is human nature, all the world over, in school and out of school; and Levison as a millionaire's son was likely to be much more popular than he had been of old. Cutts of the Fifth had been seen speaking to him very civilly; a very great honour from Cutts of the Fifth. To Tom Merry & Co. it did not matter anything at all whether Levison was rich or poor. But all fellows are not built the same way.

"Letter for me, Blaggy?" asked Tom Merry.

"And for me, Blagg, deah boy?"

Blagg shook his head.

"Nothing for you this time, Master Merry."

Tom Merry groaned.

"That gives our giddy tea-party the kybosh!" he remarked. "It all depends on Gussy's flyer now. A registered letter for D'Arcy, Blaggy?"

"No, Master Merry."

"Bai Jove! I regard this as weally remarkably careless on the pater's part. I wote to him specially to explain that I should expect a fivev by this post!"

"These paters are so careless!" grinned Lowther. "You can't have been very careful in bringing him up, Gussy. In his tender youth you should have impressed upon him the sin of forgetfulness—"

"Letter for Master Levison?" said Blagg.

Levison grinned as he took the letter. Blagg shouldered his bag. Some of the juniors there gathered round Levison.

"From your pater?" asked Gore.

"Yes," said Levison.

"Oh, good!" said Mellish. "I hope it's twenty; but if it's only ten we'll have a gorgeous celebration—what?"

"What-ho!" said Levison, as he slit the envelope. "And I shall make up a list of the fellows who're going to come to the celebration, and Tom Merry & Co. won't be on the list!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry politely.

Levison's friends hung round him as he unfolded the letter and began to read it. The Fourth-Former's face changed suddenly.

"Hallo, there's nothing in the letter!" said Mellish. "Did your pater forget to put the cash in, Levison?"

Levison did not reply.

His face had gone quite white.

The hand that held the letter trembled. Levison was devouring the page with wild, startled eyes. And the juniors stared at him in amazement. His expression was certainly not that of a fellow who had received news of great success and a liberal remittance. His face told plainly as words could have done that he had received bad news—news that was very bad indeed.

"What's the matter, Levison?" asked Mellish uneasily. "Isn't your pater going to send you any cash after all?"

Tom Merry & Co. were looking at Levison, too. They did not like Levison; but they would have felt sorry for any fellow who looked as Levison looked at that moment. The cad of the Fourth was so white that his face seemed bloodless, and his eyes seemed starting from his head.

"What's the matter, old chap?" said Tom Merry. "Some of your people ill?"

Levison shook his head.

"Bad news, deah boy?" said D'Arcy sympathetically.

"Good heavens!" muttered Levison.

"What is it?" snapped Mellish.

"My pater's ruined!"

"What!"

"The—the speculation hasn't turned out as he expected," said Levison huskily. "He's lost all his money—instead of making a fortune—and—and I'm to go home!"

"Leave St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"Well, my hat! The feed's off, for a cert," said Mellish. And he walked away.

Levison did not look at him. He crumpled the letter in his hand, and went slowly into the School House.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Last of Levison.

LEVISON'S bad luck was soon known all over St. Jim's.

He had been in a fair way to making quite a large number of friends, when it was supposed that his father was about to become a millionaire.

Matters were changed now, with a vengeance.

Percy Mellish declared that he had thought there was something fishy about it all along; and Crooke of the Shell delivered the opinion that Levison had swanked a little too soon. Gore said it was a bad habit to count one's chickens before they were hatched.

Quite unexpectedly, so far as Levison was concerned, he received most sympathy from the fellows who, as he said, had always been against him.

Tom Merry & Co. were not likely to allow hard feelings to reign in their breasts at such a time of misfortune for the cad of the Fourth.

The fellow was a cad, that was undoubted; but he had had cruel luck. St. Jim's would be all the better off without him; but they were sorry for a chap who had to go! His prospects would be ruined—all things were at an end for him. For the rest of that evening Levison seemed stunned.

Mr. Levison had written to the Head by the same post, explaining that his son would have to leave St. Jim's, as he could no longer afford to keep him there. It would be necessary for Levison to work, and to share the fallen fortunes of his family. There was an opening for him to begin in an office, and he could afford to lose no time about it.

Dr. Holmes sent for Levison, and was very kind to him. He did not like the boy—Levison had given the good old doctor more trouble than any other junior in the school. But the Head was kindness itself now, and he said that he hoped matters would soon wear a brighter aspect, and Levison would be able to return to school.

He was to leave in the morning.

Levison left the Head's study after that interview, his hard heart not at all softened by the doctor's kindness and gentleness.

That night the cad of St. Jim's packed his box. Percy Mellish helped him to pack, but Mellish did not waste much sympathy upon him. There was little comfort for Levison in Mellish's company.

As a matter of fact, Mellish was not sorry to see him go. They had been "pals," but Levison had always had the upper hand, and when he was gone, too, there would be more room in the study.

As for Crooke of the Shell, he did not speak to Levison at all. Crooke was the son of a millionaire, who had made his millions in the same Stock Exchange gamble where Levison's father had lost his all.

In a gamble there could not be all winners and no losers—somebody must draw the blanks. Levison's father had drawn a very blank blank, evidently, and Crooke had no use for an acquaintance who had nothing, and was never likely to do anything for him but to borrow money of him.

Levison bestowed a bitter look on the chums of the Fourth when the juniors came up to bed.

"You think you're going to see the last of me, I suppose?" he said.

Blake looked at him.

"I haven't thought much about it," he said. "But, if you're going, I suppose we shall see the last of you."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Well, you're mistaken. I'm not leaving St. Jim's for long; I shall be coming back. You won't get rid of me so easily."

"I don't know that we want to get rid of you," said Digby uncomfortably. "And

I'm sure I hope that your pater's affairs will look up."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Whether they do or not, I shall come back," said Levison. "My father wants me to stick in an office, and earn money to help the home. Help the home! Catch me! If I earn any money, I'm jolly well going to stick to it!"

"Bai Jove, Levison, I should think you'd be jolly glad of a chance to wally woud your patah at a time like this!"

"My pater's served me a pretty rotten turn in sticking me like this," said Levison bitterly. "He can look after himself; I've got to look after myself. And I can tell you fellows that you haven't seen the last of me. I'm not going home!"

"Not going home!" said Blake.
 "Going home—to see faces as long as fiddles, and to hear them all snivelling?" said Levison fiercely. "No fear!"

"If that's the way you look at it, your pater will be better off if you don't go home," said Herries.

"Better off or not, I sha'n't go!"
 "But where will you go, then?" asked Blake.

"That's my business!"
 "Oh, certainly! Only asking out of politeness, you know," Blake explained cheerfully. Levison went to bed, but not to sleep.

Long hours he lay awake that night, while the rest of the Fourth were sleeping the sleep of healthy youth.

When he rose in the morning his face was pale and his eyes burning.

Taggles, the porter, carried his box down. Toby, the School House page, lingered in the hall as Levison came down to take his place in the trap to go to the station.

"Good-bye, Master Levison!" he said. Levison looked at him with a sneer.

"Good-bye's no good," he said. "I'm stony broke now, and there won't be any tip." Toby flushed to his ears.

"I wasn't thinking of a tip, Master Levison!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I wouldn't take it if you offered me, seeing as you are down on your luck, sir. Master Merry wouldn't have thought I was hintin' for a tip."

"Oh, rats!" said Levison.

"The fellow's an utter cad," said Tom Merry, in a low voice, as Levison went out. "He knew very well that Toby wasn't asking for a tip."

"Jolly well rid of him, I think," said Herries.

And Tom Merry had to agree.

But were they rid of Levison? Tom Merry wondered, as he saw Taggles drive the trap away, with Levison and his box in it. Levison was a born schemer, and so long as he gained his ends he was not at all particular as to whether his schemes were right or wrong.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

D'Arcy Chips In.

"MY hat, what a mop!"
 Gordon Gay, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, uttered that exclamation.

It was the day after Levison's departure from St. Jim's, and Gay and Wootton and Frank Monk were sauntering along Rylcombe Lane. They were not doing anything in particular, excepting keeping an eye open for St. Jim's fellows to relieve the monotony with a "rag," if the chance came their way.

And they suddenly caught sight of a fellow turning out of the cross-road from Wayland, and Gordon Gay uttered that disrespectful ejaculation.

Wootton and Monk glanced at the stranger and grinned. He was a lad of about their own age, dressed very shabbily, with a face so dark as to suggest foreign blood.

His hair, however, was of a specially aggressive shade of ginger, and his eyebrows, large and thick, were of the same hue. The effect, along with his swarthy face, was striking.

"What a giddy mop!" said Gordon Gay. "If ginger stands for pluck, that merchant must be a regular paladin!"

Gordon Gay did not intend the stranger to hear his remarks. Careless as he was, he would not willingly have given offence to a stranger. But the boy with the red hair seemed to have unusually keen ears, and, although he was still at a distance, the look on his face showed that he had heard.

He slackened his pace as he came nearer to the Grammar School juniors, and stared at them, with a peculiar glint in his eyes.

"Well, you'll know us again, kid," said Gordon Gay good-humouredly.

"Not if you wash your face," said the red-haired youth.

Wootton major and Monk chuckled, and Gordon Gay turned pink.

"I suppose it is a face," went on the stranger, regarding Gordon Gay attentively. "There is what appears to be a nose, unless it is a strawberry, and a mouth, unless I'm making a mistake, and it's a cup-board."

"Look here," exclaimed Gordon Gay wrathfully, as Wootton and Monk chuckled again, "don't you be so jolly free with your remarks, or you will get a thick ear!"

"Well, you started it," said the red-haired youth. "Why can't you let my hair alone?"

"Well, I wouldn't touch it for anything; I might burn my fingers," said Gay. "I didn't know you could hear what I said. You've got jolly long ears. Still, I admit I oughtn't to have remarked on your ginger top-knot, and I apologise."

"Good thing for you," said the other. "I was just thinking of wiping up the ground with you!"

Gordon Gay looked warlike at once.

"Better wire in, then!" he exclaimed. "I

the right road; keep straight on, and you'll pass the gates of the school."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"
 And the stranger touched his shabby cap and passed on.

Gordon Gay looked after him very curiously.

"That's a jolly queer merchant," he said. "Did you notice how differently he spoke? Quite all right at first, and then dropped into a horrible twang. Some kid who's seen better days, perhaps. Sorry for him, if that's the case. And if any of you fellows see him again, and chip him about his ginger hair, I'll squash you!"

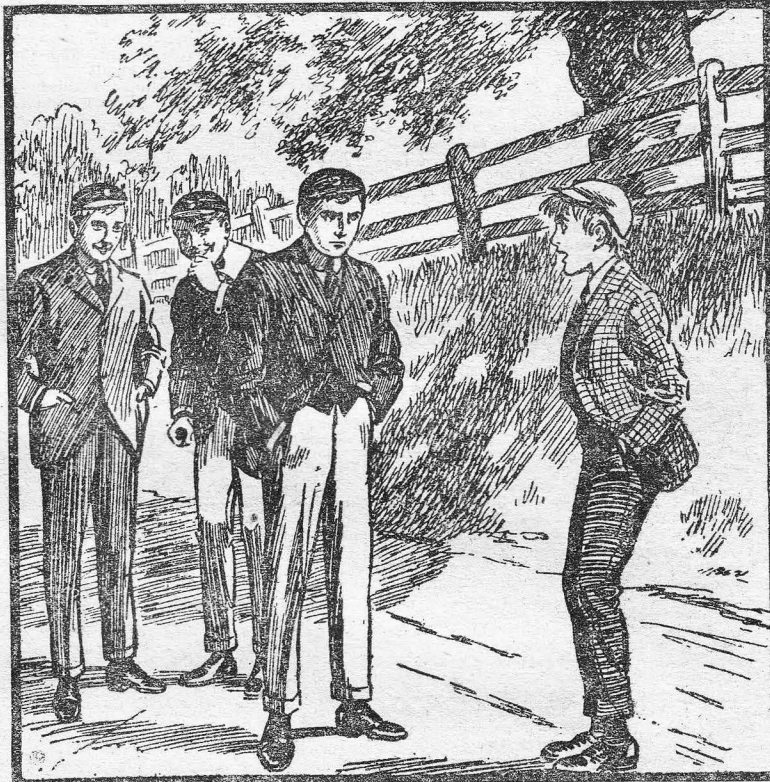
"But we didn't!" exclaimed Wootton. "It was you did it!"

"Oh, rats!" said Gordon Gay. "Don't argue!"

"But you said—"

"Rats! Come into Mother Murphy's and have some ginger-pop, and don't jaw on a warm afternoon!"

And the Grammarians walked on, and soon forgot the existence of the red-haired youth, who was going to St. Jim's to apply for the position of boot-boy there. The red-haired youth walked on, too, in the direc-



The boy with the red hair slackened his pace as he came up with the Grammar School juniors, and he stared at them with a peculiar glint in his eyes. "Well, you'll know us again!" said Gordon Gay good-humouredly. "Not if you wash your face!" said the red-haired youth. Wootton major and Monk chuckled, and Gordon Gay turned pink.

was rude, and I've apologised, and that ends it, but if you're looking for trouble, I'm the very merchant you want."

The stranger backed away a little.

"It's alright," he said. "Don't you worry. Perhaps you young gentlemen could tell me whether I'm on the right road for St. Jim's."

The three Grammarians stared at him. The youth had spoken, in the first place, like one of themselves, and he had suddenly dropped into a Cockney accent that was most pronounced.

"You're going to St. Jim's?" asked Gay, with a curious look at the boy's shabby clothes and patched boots.

"Yes, sir."

"New fellow—eh?"

The stranger grinned.

"New boot-boy," he explained. "Leastways, I'm trying to get the job, and I 'ope as 'ow I shall be able to."

"Oh, I see!" said Gay. "Well, you're on

tion of St. Jim's. Although he had asked the Grammarians the way, he seemed to know it very well. There was a sudden yell as he came in sight of the distant school gates.

"My eye, it's a fire!"

The red-haired youth looked round. He knew that it was another reference to the peculiar colour of his hair. Two St. Jim's fellows had stopped in the lane, and were grinning at him. They were Crooke of the Shell and Mellish of the Fourth.

The red-haired lad started as he saw them, and drew a quick breath. Anyone observing him might have surmised that he had seen the two cads of the School House before.

But the expression on his face was fleeting; it was gone in an instant. A look of stupidity took its place at once.

"Where did you get that mop?" asked Crooke

