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Harry Wharton & Co.
and Alonzo Todd.



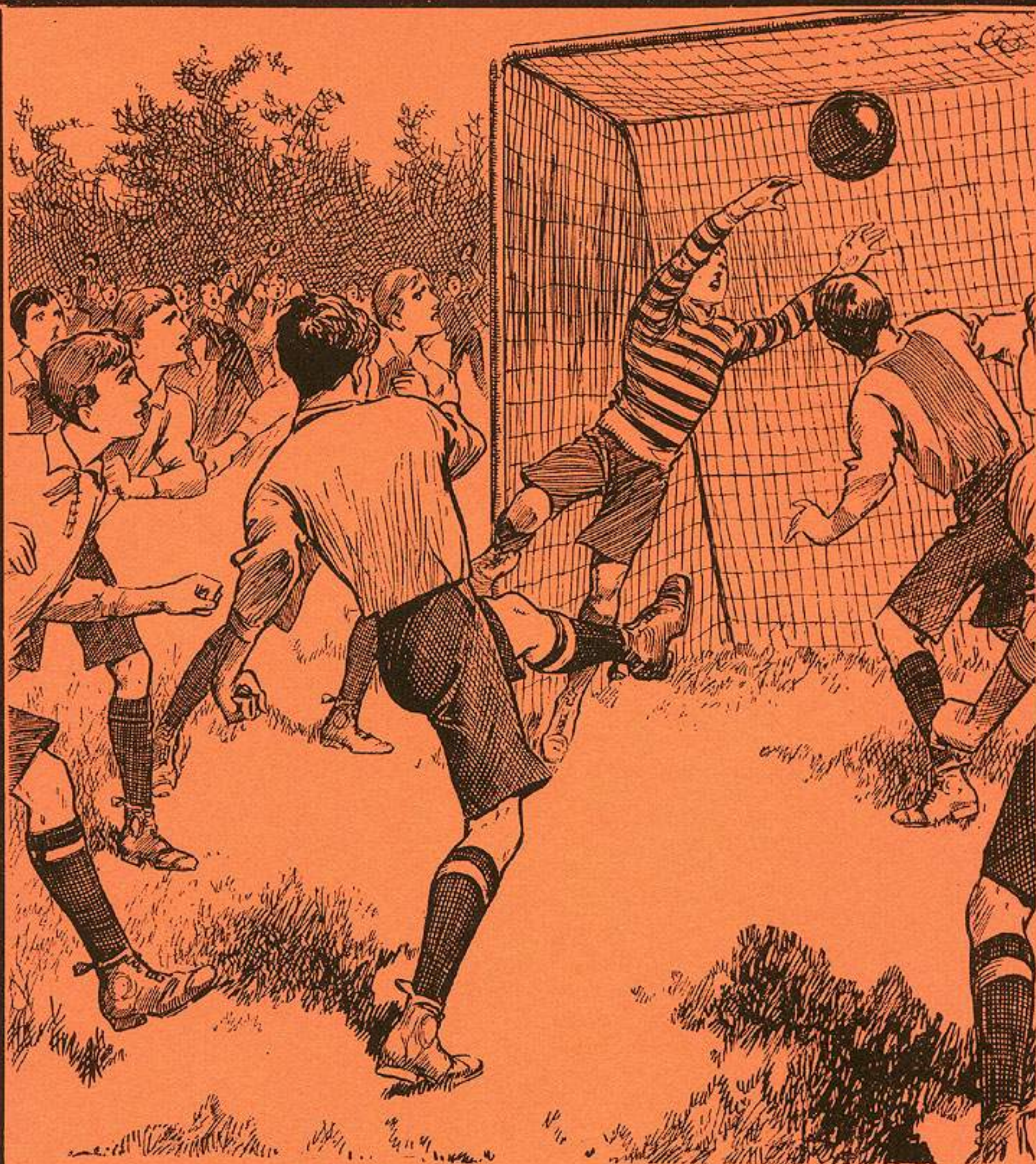
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Captain Bob Cherry

A Splendid, Long, Complete
School Tale of
the Juniors of Greyfriars.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Change of Front.

"WHERE'S Wharton?"

"Anybody seen Wharton?"

"I say, you fellows——"

Bob Cherry grasped Billy Bunter by the shoulder and interrupted him. The fat Removite had come up to the group of excited juniors in the hall, without expecting such a vigorous reception. He gasped and wriggled in the grip of Bob Cherry, which was more muscular than Bob himself was aware of.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Bunter——"

"I—I haven't been in your study!" roared Billy Bunter. "If the jam tarts are gone, it must have been somebody else!"

"What?"

"I haven't taken them. I shouldn't wonder if it was Mark Linley——"

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Linley.

"I—I mean, I shouldn't wonder if it was Wun Iang, that young Chinese sweep," said Bunter, blinking nervously at Linley through his big spectacles. "I haven't touched them!"

"You young bounder——"

"I didn't even know there were any tarts there!" yelled the unhappy Bunter, as Bob Cherry shook him.

"Then how are you chattering about them now?" demanded Bob, with another shake.

"Well, you see, I—I—Ow! Don't you shake me like that! You may make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

Shake, shake!

"Yow—yow! I haven't touched the tarts—"

"I wasn't going to ask you about the tarts, you young burglar," said Bob Cherry, desisting at last, out of breath.

"Well, I didn't have the ham, either. I—"

"The ham, too!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "You young porpoise! Have you cleared out the whole blessed cupboard?"

"I tell you I haven't touched—"

"Oh, never mind the grub now!" said Frank Nugent. "Let's get back to business."

"Oh, yes," said Bob Cherry. "I wasn't going to ask you about the grub, you young sweep. I didn't even know it was gone. Have you seen Wharton? That's what I was going to ask you."

"Oh!"

"Well, have you seen him?"

"He's gone out, I think," said Bunter. "I was going to ask you fellows if you had seen him. He owes me two bob, and I wanted it. I'm hungry, you see, and I want a bit of a feed. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and—"

"Oh, choose it!" said Nugent. "And what do you mean by saying that Harry Wharton owes you money, you awful young fibber?"

"Well, there's two bob due to me," said Bunter. "He doesn't exactly owe it to me, but—but he was going to lend it to me, you see. It practically amounts to the same thing. As he's gone out, perhaps you fellows might like to lend me—Ow! Ow!"

Bob Cherry kindly lent Bunter his boot, and the fat junior rolled along the passage. Bob frowned thoughtfully.

"Where the dickens is Wharton?" he exclaimed.

"He's not in his study," said Ogilvy, coming downstairs. "I've looked."

"He's not in the gym," said Linley.

"I suppose he's gone out," said Bob. "That's odd, too, as I believe he knew that we wanted to speak to him."

"Rotten!" said Elliott.

"Perhaps he wants to avoid the interview," said Nugent, with a grin.

"He's jolly well not going to!" exclaimed Bob warmly. "It's a jolly important matter, and it's got to be settled."

"Especially with the Ramblers' match coming off on Saturday," said Ogilvy.

"Yes, that's what makes it important. Look here, we'll wait for Wharton as he comes in," said Bob Cherry. "We'll meet him in a body, and put it to him straight."

"Good egg!"

"That's the talk!"

"The talkfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, in his remarkable English.

"Let's get up a blessed deputation of the whole Form, then," said Ogilvy. "Wharton's gone off on his dignity, but if the whole Form asks him to think it over, I should think that would satisfy him."

"Perhaps!" said Skinner, with a sneer. "But he wants a lot of kow-towing, I think."

Frank Nugent turned on the speaker like a flash.

"You jolly well shut up!" he exclaimed. "You were one of the cads who helped to make Harry resign his position of football captain in the Remove. Now we want him back again, it's only natural he shouldn't jump at it. He was turned out—asked to resign—and now in a couple of days the Form changes its mind. Do you think Wharton's going to be hung up on a nail, ready for us to take down whenever we want him?"

"Rather not!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, rats!" said Skinner. "I think we've had enough of his blessed dignity, anyway."

"We've had enough of your jaw!" said Bob Cherry bluntly. "That sort of talk will get you a thick ear, Skinny, I warn you!"

Skinner sneered, and walked away with his hands in his pockets. He was not one of the admirers of Harry Wharton.

But most of the Remove Form at Greyfriars agreed with Frank Nugent, who was Wharton's best chum, and with Bob Cherry.

In a fit of disappointment and disgust after being licked in the first match of the football season, they had given Wharton what Bob elegantly called the order of the boot.

The football captain had been asked by a majority of the Form to resign.

His own close friends, such as Nugent and Cherry and

Hurree Singh and Tom Brown and Mark Linley, and some others, had stood by him.

But a big majority of the Form had called for his resignation; and Wharton had resigned instantly, adding the unexpected intimation that he wouldn't stand for election again.

The Remove didn't want that.

Having parted with their football captain, for no fault of his own, as soon as their anger and disappointment were over, they were sorry.

The second match of the season, and a tough one, loomed ahead.

If anything could enable a Remove eleven to beat the Ramblers on the football field, it was the leadership of Harry Wharton.

That leadership was lacking now.

Hints had been dropped to Wharton that if he cared to resume his old place, things could go on as before, and nothing would be said.

To these hints Harry was deaf.

He had taken up a certain position, and he meant to stick to it; and his pride—a little too strong, perhaps—was bitterly up in arms at the thought of being thrown aside in a fit of anger, and picked up again when the fit had passed.

The Remove had chosen to sack him; let them stick by what they had done. That was his view of the matter.

Hence Bob Cherry's idea of the whole Form asking Wharton to reconsider his decision; and a crowd of juniors, keen footballers, had gathered round Bob for the purpose of putting it plainly to Wharton.

Just as they were prepared to spring it upon him, Harry disappeared.

He had gone out, whether to avoid the interview or not was unknown; but it was very exasperating to the Removites.

"Never mind," said Bob Cherry. "Get all the fellows together, and we'll meet Wharton as he comes in."

"Good egg!"

"Bulstrode! I say, Bulstrode!" called out Ogilvy, as the burly Removite came downstairs.

Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, paused. As he had been chiefly instrumental in bringing the trouble about in the first place, he was not likely to make an effort to mend it.

"Well, what's the row?" he asked.

"We're waiting for Wharton—"

"Well?"

"We're going to ask him to change his mind."

Bulstrode sneered angrily.

"You mean that you've changed your minds, and that you're going crawling round Wharton begging his pardon!" he exclaimed contemptuously.

Some of the Removites looked uncomfortable.

"Nothing of the sort," said Bob Cherry hotly. "The fellows know they've made asses of themselves, and they're going to own up, that's all."

"Rubbish!"

"Who's going to captain us in the match on Saturday, if Wharton doesn't?" demanded Frank Nugent.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"I dare say a captain could be found in the Remove," he replied.

"Blessed if I know where you'll find him, then," said Bob Cherry. "Give us his name, old man."

"I could do it."

"You could what?"

"Captain the Remove against the Ramblers," said Bulstrode angrily, and with a flush in his cheeks.

"Oh, don't be funny, you know!"

"Funny!" roared Bulstrode.

"Yes. I suppose you're joking."

Bulstrode's brows contracted.

"I could captain the team quite as well as Harry Wharton," he said. "A nice show he made in the last match, didn't he?"

"The team didn't back him up," said Nugent.

"Rats!"

"And you were the worst of the lot," added Bob Cherry. "You were trying to muck up the game all the time, for a dig at Wharton."

"It's a lie!" said Bulstrode fiercely.

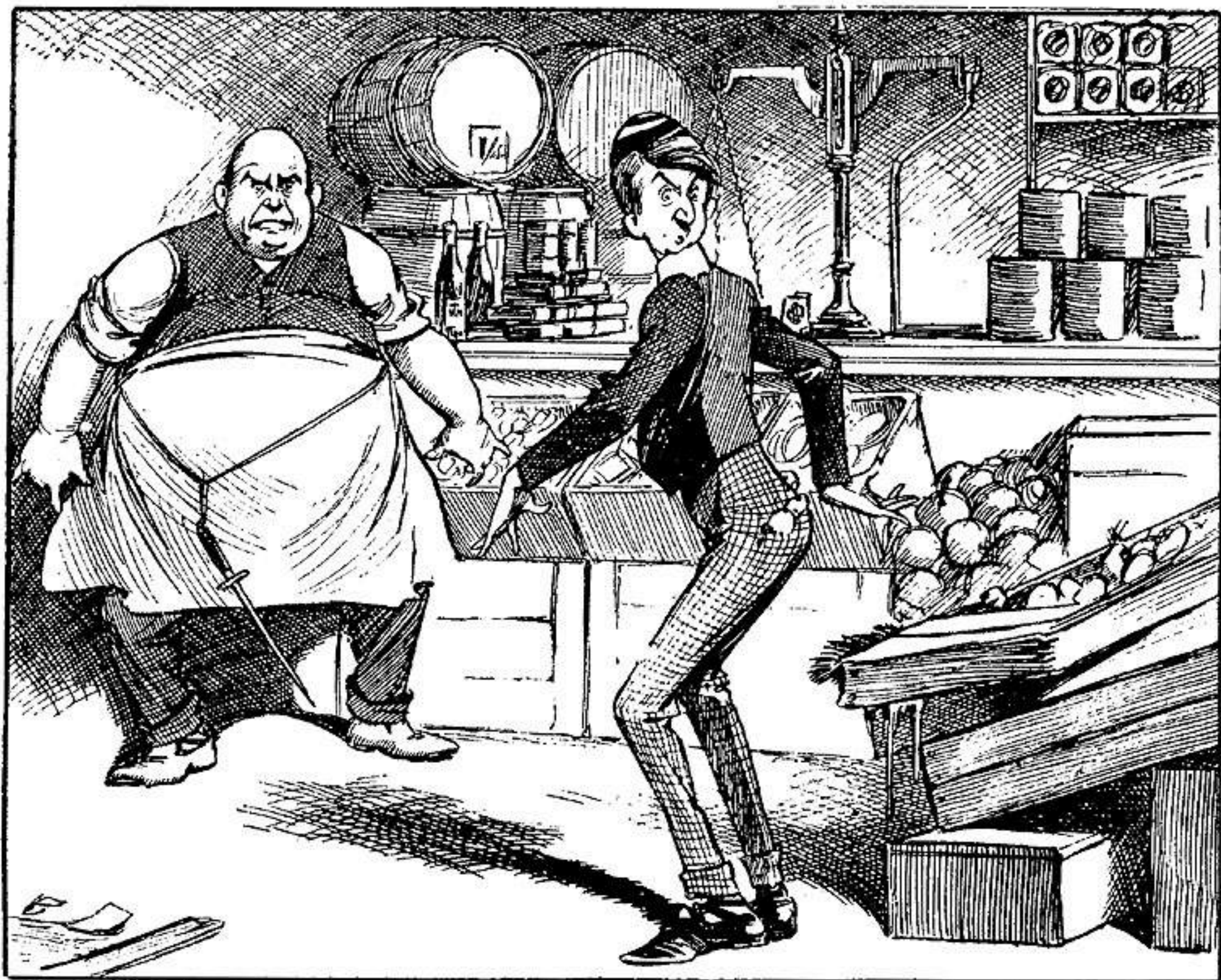
"It's the truth, and you know it," said Bob Cherry coolly. "Anyway, I fancy the Remove doesn't want you for captain."

"No fear!"

"Rather not!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

There was no doubt about the sincerity of those replies. The cloud deepened and darkened on Bulstrode's face.



"Dear me! I think I must have sat in some eggs," said Todd, trying to turn himself round so that he could see his back. "Will you tell me if there is a stain on my clothes behind?" (See page 16.)

He had hoped much from the fall of Harry Wharton. But that fall did not seem likely to "pan out" in his favour as he had hoped.

"Well, do as you like, and be hanged to you!" he exclaimed. "I'm not going to be one to ask Wharton to come back, that's all."

"Go and eat coke, then!" retorted Bob Cherry. "Most of the Form will ask him."

"Sneaks, I say."

"You can say what you like; it won't make much difference. Here, you fellows, come and get to the door, and be ready for Wharton."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

The doorway was blocked up with excited Removites. The whole Form was almost unanimous in the desire to get Wharton to come back as football captain.

Bulstrode looked on at the scene with a scowl.

"Lot of rot!" he muttered to Skinner. "What a fuss they make over that chap Wharton."

Skinner nodded.

"They do!" he assented.

"We don't want him as footer captain. It's rotten that the fellows won't give me a chance," said Bulstrode. "I was captain of the Form before Wharton came."

"The Upper Fourth used to walk over us pretty well in those days," Skinner remarked.

Skinner had a way of saying unpleasant things to friends as well as foes.

Bulstrode clenched his hand.

"If you're looking for a thick ear—" he began savagely.

Skinner retreated a pace.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 135.

NEXT
WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

"Don't get ratty," he said. "It's a fact, you know. But that's ancient history. I think you've got a good chance now."

"The fellows are all going to sneak round Wharton and ask him to take up the captaincy again," said Bulstrode between his teeth.

"He won't do it."

"Bah! He won't let a chance like that pass him," said Bulstrode scornfully.

Skinner shook his head.

"You mark my words," he replied, "Wharton will refuse. He's too fond of his precious dignity to climb down like that. He'll let the Remov crawl as much as they like, but he won't climb down. He means business every time. That's the sort of obstinate pig he is."

Bulstrode looked very thoughtful.

"He said he wouldn't stand for re-election," he remarked.

"I thought that was only gas, of course."

"Wharton never breaks his word."

"If he keeps it in this case—"

"He will keep it."

"Then there will be a new election, without Wharton as a candidate," said Bulstrode, with an eager look in his eyes.

"Exactly."

"And a fellow will stand a chance?"

"You'll stand a chance," said Skinner. "Bob Cherry or Nugent will put up, but they haven't the hold Wharton has on the Form, though they're more popular, too, in a way. You've got a good chance, if you play your cards well."

Bulstrode set his lips.

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

"I'll do that," he said. "I'll stand by those who back me up, too. You catch on? You can let the fellows know it, too."

"Right you are!"

"But if Wharton comes round——"

"He won't!" said Skinner confidently. "I tell you I know him. He's no more likely to come round than the clock tower is."

"I wish I could be sure of that."

"You soon will be," said Skinner, pointing towards the door. "Listen to that!"

There was a shout from the crowd of juniors.

"He's coming!"

"Here he is!"

"Like a blessed conquering hero," muttered Bulstrode savagely. "I can't see that he's done anything for such a fuss to be made about him."

"Here he comes!"

"Stand ready!" said Bob Cherry. "I'm going to do the talking. You fellows can all back me up."

"Hear, hear!"

Bulstrode and Skinner hurried to join the crowd, to see what effect the reception would have upon the late football captain of the Remove.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Marjorie Gives Advice.

"MARJORIE!"

Harry Wharton jumped off his bicycle at the gate of Cliff House School. A girl was just entering the gate, and she turned her head as her name was called.

She smiled and nodded to the Greyfriars junior, and stopped.

"Harry! I didn't expect to see you here."

Marjorie Hazeldene was carrying a package, and had evidently been shopping in the village. Wharton wheeled up his bicycle, and leaned it against the fence.

"I came over to see you," he said.

"Thank you!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"I want some advice."

Marjorie became grave.

"Yes, Harry?"

"Can you spare me a few minutes?"

"My time is not very valuable," smiled Marjorie. "I have been fetching some things for Miss Primrose, and she will not miss me for a few minutes, at all events. But what is it, Harry?" she added quickly, glancing at the junior's clouded face. "You are in trouble of some sort?"

"Not exactly trouble, Marjorie, but——"

"Something is wrong?"

"Not exactly wrong, but——"

"But there is a but," said Marjorie. "Tell me about it. It is very kind of you to come to me for advice."

"Very soft of me, perhaps, you think," said Harry, colouring a little. "I know some fellows would think it rot to ask a girl for advice. But you're so jolly sensible."

"It's very nice of you to think so," said Marjorie demurely. "Come into the garden, and tell me what it is."

They sat on a bench under the wistaria, and Marjorie looked at Harry with her clear, frank gaze. There was a very sincere friendship between these two—the friendship of a sweet, kind girl and a fine, honourable lad.

Wharton hesitated.

"I'm blessed if I quite know how to tell you, either," he began. "You won't think me a silly ass, will you?"

"I won't promise," said Marjorie.

Wharton laughed ruefully.

"Well, you see, I was forced into the position," he said. "I had no choice about the matter. Now the fellows think I am standing on my dignity. It really isn't that, though it does look like it. But—but a chap must stand up for himself to a certain extent, mustn't he?"

"Certainly!"

"You know we were licked in the first football match of the season. The Upper Fourth simply walked over us," said Harry, knitting his brows.

"Yes, I heard."

"There was a chap in the team who was playing up against me all the time. It sounds rotten, but I believe he wanted to lose the match, to get me into trouble with the fellows."

Marjorie nodded. Harry would not mention Bulstrode's name, but the girl had a pretty correct notion to whom he was alluding.

"Other fellows thought so as well as myself," said Harry hastily. "I don't want you to think me suspicious, but there it is. Well, we were rottenly licked, and the chaps put all the blame on the captain. You know how it is in football," he added, a little bitterly. "It's not all honey to

be skipper of a team. When you win, it's one chap's kicking, or another chap's passing, or a third chap's speed that won the game; but when you lose, it's the skipper's fault."

Marjorie smiled.

"Well, we lost, and the whole Form took it badly. The Upper Fourth have been crowing about it enough, goodness knows. It's enough to make the fellows wild, especially as they had been doing some crowing themselves before the match, and the licking took them down a good many pegs. The long and the short of it was, that the majority of the Form asked me to resign."

"That was very unjust."

"It got my back up," said Harry. "I told them I'd resign if they liked, but that I wouldn't stand for re-election, and that any change they made would be for good. They made me resign."

"Then you will not be football captain this season?"

"I intended not. I made up my mind that one of the other fellows would be elected to the place, and I meant to back him up all I could, of course. I want Greyfriars to win matches. But the fellows have come round. They've been hinting that they want me to take the captaincy again, and now some of them are getting up a sort of demonstration of the whole Form, or nearly all of it, to ask me to change my mind."

"That is very complimentary to you."

"I suppose it is, in a way; but can I go back on what I've said? That's what I want your opinion about, Marjorie," said Harry. "I've said I wouldn't take the place again. And besides, they want me for a big match on Saturday. If we lose, there may be last Saturday's scene all over again—fellows discontented, grumbling at me, and I may be asked to resign again. If I come round so easily they won't have much respect for me, and they'll think they can pick me up or throw me down as they like."

Marjorie looked very thoughtful.

"Don't mistake me, though," went on Harry, rather hurriedly. "Some of the fellows think I'm proud and stiff-necked; but it's not that. I'd climb down if I thought it was any good. I don't want to look sulky about it. But I was kicked out, and they're not entitled to ask me to come back, are they?"

"Certainly not. The question is, whether you could afford to overlook the injury, and act as though nothing had happened."

"I don't like the idea. I hate——" Harry coloured.

"Well, I hate eating humble pie, and that's the truth."

"Yes," said Marjorie gently; "but that isn't the point. The question is, what is right for you to do, Harry."

"You're right, Marjorie," Harry said at once. "You always are. But is it right to give in in this way? If they can make me come and go at a word, they'll think I want the place so much that I'm willing to put up with anything."

"That is possible."

"And if we lost the next match, and they sacked me again——" said Harry, flushing.

"It would be bitter."

"It would. Am I called upon to place myself in such a position?"

Marjorie was silent for some time.

"No," she said at last.

Wharton's face lighted up.

"You think so, Marjorie?"

"I think it would do more harm than good to surrender too easily," she said. "When they turned you out, I suppose they thought there was another possible captain."

"I suppose so."

"Let them try him. If he succeeds they won't need you. If he fails, you can take up your old position without loss of dignity."

"Well, that's true."

"Doesn't that settle it?"

"Yes," said Harry slowly. "The only thing is, you won't think me conceited?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, most of the fellows think I'm the chap to skipper them in the Ramblers' match on Saturday. They think they'll win with me, and perhaps lose without."

"It is very likely, too. But that ought not to influence you."

"I want Greyfriars to win."

"You've got to consider the matter for the whole season," said Marjorie. "If you begin without any discipline, in this way, not one defeat, but a good many will be the result. Don't you think so?"

Wharton nodded.

"I'm sure of it."

"Then I advise you to stand firm. The boys may think you are sulking, but it cannot be helped. After what they have done they have no right to expect you to come round too easily," said Marjorie, with a ring of indignation in

her voice. "But for the sake of the Remove itself, I think you should let them see what another captain can do before you resume your old position."

"I thought exactly the same myself, Marjorie. I'm so glad you think so," said Harry. "Only I was bothered at the idea of Greyfriars losing to the Ramblers, and about the fellows thinking me proud and sulky. I shall do this."

"I think it is right," said Marjorie. "I hope it is. I am sure this will cause less trouble than any other course you could take."

Harry rose.

"Thank you, Marjorie!" he said simply.

The girl shook hands with him, and he remounted his machine and rode slowly back towards Greyfriars. He had been pretty clear as to his course before, but he was very glad to have Marjorie's counsel. He was firm now in his resolve, and if the Remove misjudged him he could not help it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wharton Declines.

"HERE he is!"
"Wharton!"
"Now, then—"
"Steady!"

Harry Wharton had put up his bicycle, and was walking towards the School House, when the shout fell upon his ears. He started a little.

The doorway was packed with juniors, evidently waiting for him.

A slight expression of annoyance passed over Wharton's face. He knew that some public demonstration was intended, but he had not expected anything on this scale. Nearly the whole of the Lower Fourth Form was crowded in the doorway or on the steps outside.

"Here's Wharton!"

"Faith, and here he is!"

"The herefulness is terrific!"

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton turned crimson as he walked up the steps. "Yes, here I am!" he exclaimed. "What's all this rot about? What do you want?"

"Rot—oh?" said Elliott.

"Yes, rot!"

"Shut up, Elliott," said Bob Cherry. "I'm the talker on this occasion. Wharton—"

"Let me come in."

"Certainly; but we want to speak to you."

"You can speak to me in the study."

"No room there for the whole Form."

"Well, I suppose the whole Form doesn't want to talk at once?" asked Wharton, in a tone of sarcasm.

"Just where you're wrong," said Bob cheerfully. "We've all got something to say."

"Hear, hear!"

"Better not make such a giddy row in the hall, or you'll have a master out to see what's the matter," said Wharton.

"Something in that," grinned Tom Brown. "Shut up, you chaps!"

"The shut-upfulness is terrific!"

"Now then, what is it?" asked Harry.

"The whole Form have deputed me—"

"Hear, hear!"

"To tell you that we want you for football captain—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And to ask you to take up the position."

"Hurrah!"

"You've changed your minds suddenly," said Harry.

"It's only last Saturday you kicked me out."

"Not exactly kicked you out," remonstrated Ogilvy.

"Well, asked me to resign, if you like it better that way."

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NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

EVERY
TUESDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

I resigned, and told you that I wouldn't stand for re-election."

"We know how much that was worth," said Bulstrode with a sneer.

Wharton's eyes flashed at him.

"I shall keep my word," he said.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, don't mind Bulstrode," said Bob Cherry hastily. "Bulstrode's a pig. Ninety-nine hogs and Bulstrode make a hundred hogs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I don't care for what Bulstrode says!" replied Harry. "He lost the match with the Upper Fourth, as a matter of fact, only the Form jumped on me for it."

"Look here—" began Bulstrode. But a dozen voices interrupted him.

"Shut up, Bulstrode!"

"Ring off!"

"Take a back seat!"

"Back pedal, old man!"

Bulstrode tried to make his voice heard in vain. He was pushed away, and forced to hang on the edge of the crowd, without interfering in what was going forward. It was a bad omen for Bulstrode, considering his hopes of success in an election for football captain.

"Now that boulder's gone, we can talk," said Nugent.

"Yes," said Bob Cherry. "Now, Wharton all the Form didn't ask you to resign. There were a few who stuck to you all along."

"It was decent of them," said Harry.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lacy. "Then the rest of the Form weren't decent, I suppose?"

"They jolly well weren't," said Harry coolly. "They acted caddishly. The only excuse for you all is that you were a set of thoughtless duffers, and were led away by a rotter—that's Bulstrode. You treated me rottenly."

"But they want to make up for it now," said Nugent.

"We're sorry," said Ogilvy.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Suppose we get another licking from the Ramblers?" he said. "How will it be then? Another case of 'Please resign!'"

"Well, no—"

"Very likely," said Skinner. "I wouldn't take it on again, if I were Wharton."

"I don't mean to."

"You shut up, Skinner!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "Look here, Harry, the fellows who asked you to get out, are asking you to get in again. I don't see that you can want more than that. The place of footer captain for the season is open to you. Will you take it?"

"No, thanks!"

"You don't want it?"

"Yes, I want it; but I can't say things one day, and eat my words the next. I've said I won't stand for re-election—at all events, until another captain has been tried."

"Oh!"

"Get another football skipper, and give him a chance. Bulstrode and a lot more make out that I hang on to the captaincy when better players are going begging—"

"Of course, that's all rot!"

"I've heard a lot of it, all the same. I dare say it will surprise Bulstrode very much, but I stuck to the cricket captaincy all the summer because I thought it would be good for the Remove. I've been kicked out of the football captaincy. I stay out. If the Form tries another skipper, and he succeeds, I sha'n't be wanted. If he fails, I'm willing to stand for re-election, if the fellows still want me. That's my last word on the subject."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Then you refuse the offer of captaining the Remove on Saturday?"

"I must."

"Look here, we sha'n't win with another skipper."

"I hope you will. If I am played in the team, I shall do my level best, and I'll back up any captain you choose—even Bulstrode."

"We're sure of that," said Morgan.

"It jolly well won't be Bulstrode," said Nugent. "He's caused trouble enough already. I wish you'd think better of it, Harry."

"Look here," said Wharton bluntly. "It's very well of you fellows, but take the rest of the Form. Put it that we lose on Saturday. Then we shall have it all over again. It's the skipper's fault; kick him out. I don't want to be proud about it, but I've got more feelings than a worm. I can't consent to be chucked about like a cricket ball. Try another captain before you ask me."

And he strode on, the Removites letting him pass now.

The juniors were silent.

Few of them had believed that Wharton would hold out like this when practically the whole Form asked him to reconsider his determination, and few of them were inclined to do justice to his motives for holding out.

"Well, I suppose it's his own bizney," said Bob Cherry awkwardly.

"I suppose so," assented Nugent.

"Rot!" exclaimed Stott angrily. "It's his blessed sulky temper, that's what it is. We've had some specimens of it before."

And there was a growl from the juniors. They felt very sore at the cool and blunt refusal Wharton had given to their concerted request.

"Stott's right!"

"It's his sulks again."

"We've all got to kow-tow to the great panjamdrum, or he won't be good enough to skipper us."

"Rats to him!"

"Well, we don't want him, anyway."

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bob Cherry. "We do want him, but we can't have him; and we'd better think of the next best thing. That's an election for football captain, and the sooner it comes off the better."

"Right-ho!" said Nugent. "May as well have it at once—in the Form-room this evening. That will give the new skipper time to lick the team into shape a bit before Saturday."

"Good! You hear, you fellows! The election in the Form-room this evening—say at eight," said Bob Cherry.

To that suggestion there was a general assent, and the crowd broke up, with very mingled feelings on the subject of Wharton's refusal to accede to the general request.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo Wishes to be Useful.

ALONZO TODD stood in the Remove passage, in an attitude of deep thoughtfulness, with a frown of the same upon his face. Alonzo Todd, famous all over Greyfriars as the "Duffer," was evidently thinking things out. He was so deep in reflection that fellows passed and repassed him in the passage without his seeing them. Bob Cherry came along with Mark Linley at last, heading for No. 13 Study. Both of them had parcels in their hands, showing that they had been visiting Mrs. Mumble's little tuckshop behind the elms, in preparation for tea. Alonzo Todd stared unseeingly at the two juniors; and Bob Cherry gave him a slap on the shoulder that brought him out of his reverie with a jump.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob.

"Oh!"

"Thinking—eh?"

"Ye-es!" gasped Todd. "You—you startled me. You smote me with considerable violence, Cherry. It caused a sudden shock to the nerves."

"Go hon!"

"A sudden shock to the nerves is bad," said Alonzo Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin always cautioned me to avoid it. I regard this way of suddenly bestowing demonstrative greetings as decidedly reprehensible."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"He's been swallowing another dictionary," he remarked.

"I trust I make my meaning lucid, Cherry."

"Clear as mud," said Bob. "The fact is, you know, that I was afraid you might be in a trance, and getting fixed like that, and so I woke you up."

Alonzo's face cleared.

"In that case, Cherry, I freely excuse your somewhat rough and disturbing action. I am not, however, subject to trances."

Bob Cherry roared. Alonzo had a way of taking the most absurd statements seriously; and had apparently never heard of a joke.

"I see no cause for laughter," said Alonzo. "I was just thinking out a most important subject when you interrupted me. I hear that since Wharton's resignation, there is no football captain for the Remove Football Club."

"That's so. Have you thought of a way out of the difficulty?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

Todd nodded.

"Just so!" he said. "How very odd that you should guess it."

Bob Cherry stared.

"Joking, eh?" he asked.

"Certainly not. My Uncle Benjamin warned me never to joke on serious subjects, and I regard this as a serious subject. It seems that Wharton was a very excellent football skipper, and the Remove are sorry for having made him resign."

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"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF"

"You've got that down right, Toddy."

"He refuses to come round."

"He does," said Bob Cherry. "He do."

"And it is necessary to have another football captain in his place?"

"Exactly."

"I hear that several fellows may put up for election——"

"Most likely."

"And it is doubtful who may become skipper."

"Quite so."

"Well, if the Form care to consider it, I have a suggestion to make."

"This is getting interesting," said Bob Cherry. "Go ahead!"

"I am thinking of offering my services as football captain," said Alonzo modestly.

Bob Cherry fell against the wall.

"You're what?"

"Thinking of offering my services as football captain," said Alonzo, beaming. "You see, if the Remove care to accept me, it will save all the trouble of an election. I want to be obliging. It was a thing my Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me very seriously, to be as obliging as possible."

Bob Cherry moaned.

"He wants to be obliging," he murmured. "He's never played footer, but he's willing to oblige as footer captain. My hat! Hold me up, Marky!"

Mark Linley laughed.

"It's very obliging of Todd," he said.

"And I can see the fellows jumping to accept the offer," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Do you really think so?" asked Todd eagerly. "I'm so glad. After what some of the fellows said, you know, I had some doubts as to whether my play was quite up to form for a Remove match."

"Some doubts!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Not many, I suppose?"

"You think I shall be accepted as football captain?"

"Better ask the Remove," grinned Bob Cherry. "Put it to the Form. If they let an offer like that pass them, I can only say there's something rotten in the state of Denmark."

"I shall certainly make the offer," said Todd. "I will first, however, make sure that Wharton does not really want the position. I should not like him to think that I was cutting the ground from under his feet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry staggered on down the passage, gasping with merriment. The idea of Alonzo Todd as a footballer at all was excruciating. His first footer practice had made the Remove yell themselves hoarse. But as footer captain—the thing was too rich for words.

Bob Cherry could only gasp.

Alonzo Todd looked after the chums of No. 13, somewhat surprised by their merriment. As he had said, the question of football captain was a serious matter, and he did not see any reason for laughter.

He stepped to No. 1 Study and tapped at the door, and entered. Harry Wharton and Nugent and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh were there, having tea. Billy Bunter was finishing the toast at the grate.

The chums of the Remove looked up at Todd.

"Hallo, Toddy!" said Wharton cheerily. "Coming to tea?"

Bunter gave a grunt.

"There's not much jam, Wharton."

"Shut up, Billy!"

"There's not much cheese."

"Dry up!"

"There's not over much milk."

Nugent reached out with his foot and gave the fat junior a prod with his boot. Billy Bunter rolled over the hearth-rug.

"Oh, really——" he gasped.

"Shut up, then!"

"Look here, Nugent——"

"Cheese it!" roared Nugent.

Bunter granted and relapsed into silence, attending to the toast with a deeply injured expression upon his fat face.

"I haven't come to tea," explained Todd. "It's about the football captaincy, Wharton."

"Eh? I don't quite understand."

"You have resigned——"

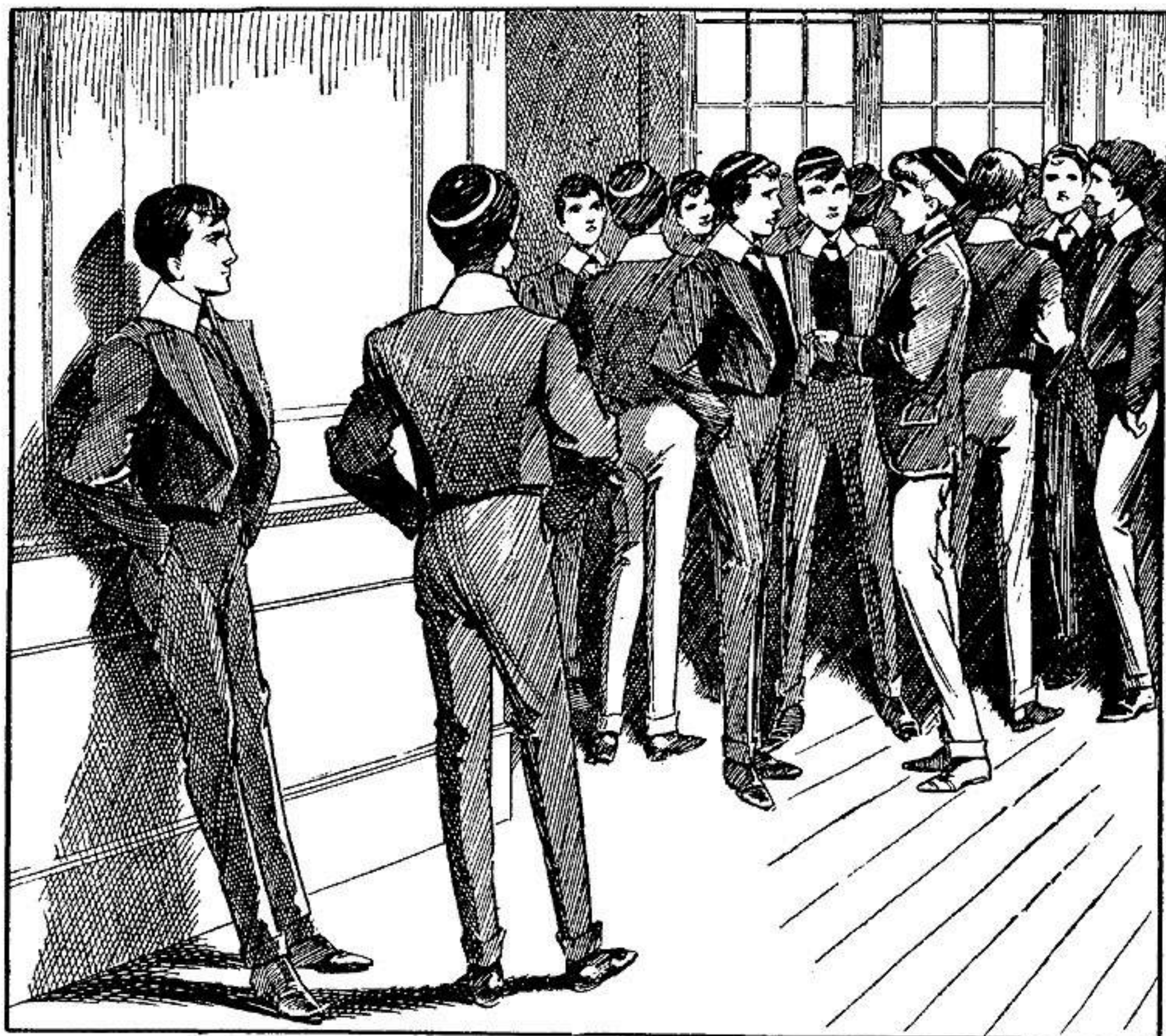
"Yes, yes!"

"The question is, whether you want the place again," said Todd. "If you are hanging back to put your value up, as Skinner thinks——"

Harry Wharton's face became grim.

"Oh, Skinner thinks that, does he?" he said.

"Yes. I trust I am not letting out any secrets," said Alonzo. "Skinner did not say it was a secret. He thinks



"Oh, don't mind Bulstrode," said Bob Cherry, as the bully started speaking. "Ninety-nine hogs and Bulstrode make one hundred hogs!" (See page 5.)

you are hanging back to put your value up, and mean to take the position all the time."

Harry flushed.

"You can tell Skinner that I'd like him to say that in my hearing," he remarked.

"Certainly; I will give him your message," said Todd.

"I am glad to be obliging. But is Skinner's view correct?"

"No, it isn't."

"You are not hanging back simply for the purpose of—"

"No."

"Enhancing your value in the eyes of the Form."

"No!" roared Harry.

Nugent and Hurree Singh chuckled. The innocent Todd did not seem to have any idea that he was saying unpleasant things.

"Very well, then," said Todd. "I may take it that you are serious, and that you decline to take the position?"

"Yes, ass."

"In that case, you have no objection to another fellow filling it?"

"Certainly not."

"That is all I wanted to know," said Todd, with a beaming smile. "I did not wish to feel that I was taking any unfair advantage of you."

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"Of me?"

"Just so."

"How? In what way? I don't understand."

"I am going to offer myself to the Remove as football captain."

"Football captain!" stuttered Wharton.

"Just so."

The three chums stared at him blankly for a moment and then burst into a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo looked at them in surprise.

"Dear me!" he said. "What is the joke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Romovites. And a fat chuckle came even from Billy Bunter.

"I trust you do not disapprove of my idea of offering myself as a candidate," said Alonzo.

"Ha, ha! No. Go ahead!"

"I certainly shall go ahead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo Todd quitted No. 1 Study with very strong doubts as to the sanity of Harry Wharton & Co. He left the chums wiping their eyes.

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Candidates.

"MY only hat!" murmured Nugent, when the Duffer of Greyfriars was gone. "I think Todd gets richer and richer. Football captain! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors laughed again.

"Well, it's rich, and no mistake," said Harry. "I wonder who will get the place, by the way? You ought to put up, Frank—you or Bob."

"Bob's going to, I think," said Nugent. "I shall back him up."

"And I, too."

"The backfulness will be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I wish you'd think over it again, though, Harry," said Nugent.

Wharton shook his head.

"No good going over that," he said. "That's settled."

Frank Nugent nodded.

"Very well; then the only thing is to back up Bob."

"That's it."

"I say, you fellows—" said Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums over the big round of toast he was consuming.

"Oh, cheese it, Bunter!"

"I've got a suggestion to make."

"Rats!"

"Oh, really—"

"Well, what is it?" asked Harry. "Fire away!"

"That ass Todd won't get a look-in. Look here, if you chaps like to back me up—"

"Back you up?"

"Yes. I should have a chance of getting in."

"Getting in?" said Harry, in perplexity.

"Yes, as footer captain. You see—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Billy Bunter peevishly. "You fellows know how I play footer."

"Ha, ha! We do."

"The knowfulness is terrific."

"Oh, really, you know! I know I've been kept in the background by jealousy in my own study," said Billy Bunter warmly. "Fellows I had a right to expect assistance from have failed to back me up. My play's all right."

"The play's the thing," as Shakespeare remarks," Nugent observed.

"I've never had a chance," said Bunter. "A fellow told me once that there are professional footballers, in League teams, who don't play the game as I do."

"A good many, I should say, or they wouldn't get their wages," said Harry, with a laugh.

"Oh, really—"

"Oh, you stick to the grub department, and don't try to be as funny as Todd, Bunter," said Nugent. "Have some more toast, and chuck it."

"But—"

"Dry up!"

"But I tell you—"

"Oh, ring off!"

Billy Bunter grunted and plunged into the toast again. There was always consolation there. Bunter had always nourished great hopes of shining in athletics, but these hopes seemed never likely to become anything more. The Remove simply refused to take Bunter's athletics seriously.

The chums of the Remove finished their tea and went down. Bunter remained in the study. There was more toast and more jam, and Bunter was not likely to leave while there was anything left of either.

Most of the Remove were going down, or had gone. The time was drawing near for the meeting in the Form-room.

Almost the whole Form meant to turn up for that.

There was likely to be more than one candidate, and all the fellows meant to be there to back up the candidate they fancied.

Every paying member of the Remove Football Club had a vote, and there were few who did not mean to have a voice in the matter.

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley were in the passage when Harry Wharton came down. Mark was speaking very earnestly, and Bob was listening with an undecided expression upon his face.

Mark turned quickly towards the chums of the Remove.

"I want you to back me up," he exclaimed.

"You?" said Nugent. "Are you putting up, then?"

The Lancashire lad laughed.

"Oh, no! I'm trying to make Bob understand that he's the only possible captain of the Remove, after Wharton."

"Oh, I see!"

"The seefulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"We shall all backfully support the esteemed Bob."

"What-ho!" said Nugent heartily.

"That's all very well," said Bob Cherry. "I wish you'd

think better of it, Harry, and take on the job again. Think of the Ramblers on Saturday."

"It can't be done, Bob."

"You're determined?"

"Quite."

"Well, I suppose somebody must be captain?" said Bob Cherry, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "Bulstrode is putting up, of course? I don't suppose the Remove will have him, if there's a decent candidate. Somebody ought to oppose Bulstrode."

"You ought," said Nugent.

"What about yourself?" demanded Bob Cherry. "I suppose you're as good a captain as I am."

"Better," said Nugent, laughing; "but I waive my claim."

"Long may you waive!" said Tom Brown, joining them.

"Of course, Bob Cherry's going to be captain."

"Well, what do you say, Wharton?"

"Stand for the post, by all means."

"Very well. I suppose I can skipper the team as well as the next chap," said Bob Cherry. "I don't know how many of the fellows will back me up."

"Most of them, I think," said Harry Wharton. "We shall, and all who we can influence, anyway. Bulstrode won't have nearly so many votes."

"That's pretty certain," said Mark Linley. "What other candidates are there?"

"Todd."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And perhaps Bunter."

"Bunter! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't think Bob need be afraid of Todd or Bunter," grinned Nugent. "Bulstrode's the only danger, and I don't think he's a big one. Who's going to propose Cherry?"

"You," said Harry, "and Linley can second him. I'd better keep off the grass; some of the fellows won't back up Cherry any the more because I do, in their present humour."

The chums of the Remove entered the Form-room in a body.

Alonzo Todd came up to them with a beaming smile.

"I trust I can depend upon your support?" he exclaimed.

"That's according," said Bob Cherry. "Of course, if you're without any visible means of support, you can always depend on me for a threepenny-bit, to save you from being run in."

"That is not my meaning at all," said Alonzo. "I mean your support in the forthcoming election."

"Well, as I'm a candidate myself, I don't think I shall back you up to any extent," said Bob Cherry.

Alonzo's face fell.

"You are a candidate?"

"Yes, rather!"

"But—but then I shall be opposing you."

"Looks like it."

"I'm so sorry," said Todd. "I would certainly withdraw my candidature, but I feel that I owe a duty to the Form. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed me to make myself useful to my Form-fellows, if I could."

"Good old Benny!"

"You see, my Uncle Benjamin—"

Bob Cherry looked round.

"No, I don't," he said.

"You see—"

"Not here, is he?"

"Here? Certainly not!"

"Then how can I see him?" asked Bob.

"I did not mean that. I meant—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't interrupt me, Bunter, please. My Uncle Benjamin has often pointed out that it is decidedly rude to interrupt people."

"Blow your Uncle Benjamin! I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows were gone. Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully after them, and then turned his big spectacles upon Todd.

"You ass!" he exclaimed. "You belong to the Form Football Club, don't you?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Then are you going to vote for me?"

"For you?"

"Yes; for football captain."

"But I am putting up."

"Oh, come off! You can't play footer," said Bunter. "I'm a jolly good player, and equal to anything in the Form eleven."

"Ah! You have played for the Remove?"

ANSWERS

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"Well, no. I've been kept in the shade by jealousy in my own study," explained Bunter. "If I got in as football captain, I'd show the fellows things. What?"

"I'm so sorry——"

"You can vote for me, if you like——"

"I'm so sorry——"

"Bunter! Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

Alonzo drifted off as Bulstrode drew the fat junior aside. Billy Bunter blinked rather apprehensively at the Form bully. He knew that Bulstrode was a candidate for the captaincy, and he was nervous. It would be like Bulstrode to give him a licking for opposing him, absurd as his candidature was. But Bulstrode was all smiles now.

"Hungry, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes, rather" said Bunter immediately. "We had a measly tea. I'm treated pretty badly by the fellows in my study, as you know. I never get enough to eat."

"Hard cheese!" said Bulstrode sympathetically.

"Yes, it's rotten. You see, I've got a delicate constitution, too, which I can only keep up by taking constant nourishment."

"Every chap who votes for me comes to the tuckshop after the election, and orders what he likes," said Bulstrode carelessly.

Bunter's eyes glistened.

"I say, that's all right, Bulstrode. I—I almost wish I weren't putting up for the captaincy myself."

Bulstrode stared.

"You! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"On second thoughts, I don't suppose I shall get a majority," said Bunter. "I'm not backed up by the fellows in my study. I believe they're going to back up another chap against me. That's what they call chummy. Order anything I like, did you say?"

"Up to a couple of bob, anyway."

"Good! I don't know that I care about being football captain, after all. Footer's a ghastly fag," said Bunter reflectively.

"Well, if you vote for me——"

"Anything up to half-a-crown—eh?" said Bunter.

"Well, yes, anything up to half-a-crown."

"I'm your man!" said Bunter. "Not on account of the feed, of course. I should scorn to have motives of that sort. But I feel that you are the proper person to be captain of the Remove, and I feel I ought to vote for you."

"Good egg!" said Bulstrode, who did not care a rap for Bunter's motives so long as he obtained his vote.

"Immediately after the election, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, as soon as the result's declared."

"And order anything up to three shillings?"

"Half-a-crown."

"I thought you said three shillings."

"Well, three shillings, then," said Bulstrode.

"I'm your man."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. The New Football Captain.

EIGHT o'clock had struck from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, and the Form-room was crowded with juniors. Nearly every fellow who had a vote was there, and the Removites who did not belong to the Form Football Club had come, too, to look on. It was a burning question for the Greyfriars Remove, who should captain the Lower Fourth for the coming football season. Harry Wharton being out of it, it was an open question who should be captain. Bulstrode was not without his qualifications; and he had a good many friends, and he had gained some supporters, too, in the same way that he had gained Billy Bunter, though he gained less greedy voters more cheaply. Tom Brown or Mark Linley or Frank Nugent would have been sure of a good following, but they were quite willing to have their claims passed over when Bob Cherry put up. By joining forces, they hoped to bring Cherry in, and give Bulstrode a wholesale defeat, while any rivalry between them would probably have thrown the affair into Bulstrode's hands.

As soon as the voters were all, or nearly all in, the Form-room door was closed, and the juniors came down to business.

Frank Nugent stood on a form to address the meeting. Bulstrode stood on another form, to address the meeting at the same time.

"Gentlemen of the Remove——"

"Now, then, you chaps——"

"Shut up, Bulstrode!"

"Shut up, Nugent!"

"Order!" shouted Ogilvy.

"Gentlemen——"

"Gentlemen——"

"Better take it in turns," said Tom Brown. "Can't get on at that rate."

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ONE
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"I'm quite agreeable," said Bulstrode. "I'll take first turn."

"Rats!" said Nugent promptly.

"Look here, Nugent——"

"Look here, Bulstrode——"

"You fathead!"

"You chump!"

"Order! Order!"

"Oh, shut up, some of you, bedad!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "Sure, and you don't give me a chance to propose my candidate entirely."

"Your candidate, Micky?"

"Faith, and I'm proposing Todd!"

"Todd! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes," said Alonzo modestly. "Desmond has kindly consented to propose me, and I trust one of you will second me."

"Todd! My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great Scott!"

The merriment produced by the news of Todd's candidature cleared the air a little. It was perfectly clear, of course, that Micky Desmond was only proposing the Duffer of Greyfriars from a spirit of mischief, a solemn jape upon the unconscious Todd.

Alonzo was not likely to see that. His leg might be pulled to any extent without his being the wiser.

"Look here, take the speechifiers in alphabetical order," suggested Ogilvy. "Bulstrode, Desmond, and Nugent."

"Hear, hear!"

Bulstrode jumped on the form again.

"Very well," he exclaimed. "I've only a few words to say. The Remove is without a football captain, the late skipper having been given the order of the boot for incapacity——"

"Hear, hear!" said Snoop.

But a general groan drowned Snoop's "Hear, hear!"

Bulstrode's ungenerous and ill-natured reference to Wharton had not done his cause any good. The Remove bully was keen enough to see that.

"Anyway, the place is open," he went on quickly. "I'm open to take it. I think I could captain the Remove, and put up a good show against the Ramblers."

"As good as you did last Saturday?" sniffed Nugent.

"We had a rotten captain then."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!"

"Take it back."

"That's all," said Bulstrode. "I'm up for the post. Skinner proposes me, and that's all I've got to say."

"Enough, too!" remarked Tom Brown.

"Next man in," said Ogilvy. "Desmond, are you jawing for Todd, or is he going to do his own jawing like Bulstrode?"

"I'm jawing," said Micky, getting on a form. "Gentlemen of the Remove, I beg to propose Alonzo Todd as captain of the football eleven. You all know Alonzo!"

"We do! Ha, ha, ha!"

"He has been called Alonzo the Great——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some of you have seen him play footer, and those who haven't have missed something they wouldn't have forgotten in a hurry, begorra!"

"Quite true! Ha, ha!"

"Then roll up and vote for Alonzo, if you want a footer captain such as was never seen at Greyfriars or any other public school before or since," said Micky Desmond. And the Irish junior stepped down from the form amid cheers and laughter.

Nugent jumped up.

"Hold on," said Ogilvy. "Who's seconding Todd?"

There was no reply. Apparently no one was seconding the Duffer of Greyfriars.

Nugent grinned, and went on:

"Fellows, we've lost the best footer captain we've had, and I beg to propose the next best chap in his place. My candidate's Bob Cherry."

"Hear, hear!"

"You all know Cherry. He hasn't been called Cherry the Great, but you know him. He's decent all through; plays first-class footer, kicks as straight as an angel, and can dribble a ball through the Upper Fourth from end to end."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I second Cherry," said Mark Linley. "The Remove doesn't want a better footer captain."

"Bravo!"

It was evident that Bob Cherry was the popular candidate.

"Now then," said Frank Nugent. "I call for a show of hands for my man."

"Bravo, Cherry!"

"Hands up for Bob Cherry!"

A forest of hands went up. Two juniors had been told off to do the counting, and they counted, and compared notes.

"Twenty-six votes for Cherry," said Nugent, with a grin.

There was a thundering hurrah.

Bulstrode's face was black with chagrin.

"If every other voter voted for him, there would not be enough to turn the scale in his favour now.

But he called for a show of hands, hoping against hope.

A considerable number of hands went up, and his hopes rose for a moment. But the counting dashed them again.

"Fifteen!"

"My only hat!" murmured Skinner. "Rotten!"

Bulstrode ground his teeth.

"It's their dodge in putting Cherry up, and combining to back him," he muttered. "If Nugent had put up as well, or Linley—"

"They're too deep for that."

"Hang them!"

"Bob Cherry is elected," began Nugent. But the voice of Alonzo Todd was heard.

"Pray excuse me—"

"Don't interrupt—"

"I'm so sorry, but I'm a candidate, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I trust I am within my rights in calling for a show of hands," said Alonzo Todd. "I do not wish to ask for more than I am entitled to, of course. I wish neither to claim more than my right, nor to be satisfied with less. My Uncle Benjamin has always impressed that upon me as a most excellent line of conduct."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Ben!"

"My dear fellows—"

"Hands up for Todd!" shouted Ogilvy.

Not a hand went up. Even Micky Desmond kept his hands in his pockets. As a matter of fact, he had already voted for Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove, as Alonzo blinked round in surprise.

"Do you vote for yourself, Toddy?" demanded Ogilvy.

"Is that allowed?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, if you like."

"Very well, I vote for myself," said Todd, putting his hand up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd's hand was the only one up. Nugent declared the result formally.

"Cherry, twenty-six votes; Bulstrode, fifteen; and Todd, one," he said. "Bob Cherry is football captain."

"Hurrah!"

"Hip-pip!"

Todd was still keeping his hand in the air. He appeared very much surprised.

"Is the election over?" he asked, blinking round.

"Ha, ha! Yes. You can call your fist home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd dropped his hand.

"And Cherry is elected?"

"He is," said Nugent. "He are!"

The Duffer hesitated a moment, and then walked over to Bob Cherry, who was surrounded by a crowd of congratulating juniors.

"I trust you will accept my congratulations, Cherry," he said. "I'm sorry I have not been elected, because I sincerely desired to be useful to the Form; but I congratulate you all the same."

"Thanks, Toddy," grinned Cherry. "If you only want to be useful, you can be more useful by not playing footer than by playing it, so that's all right."

"My dear Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Bob!" shouted Nugent. "Three cheers for Bob Cherry—Captain Bob Cherry!"

And they were given with a will.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Captain Bob Cherry.

CAPTAIN BOB CHERRY sat in his study, with a deep wrinkle upon his usually smooth brow, a cloud upon the face that was usually sunny.

Bob Cherry had been football captain for twenty-four hours.

In that time he had discovered that it was not all lavender, to use a slangy expression, to hold the post of football captain in the Greyfriars Remove.

Wharton had held it, and he had done well. But Wharton, though good-natured enough, knew when to be as hard as iron. Bob Cherry was made of different stuff.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

Bob Cherry was as good-natured as Wharton—most of the fellows said more so. He was genial and kind-hearted to a fault. And the grim firmness that had made Harry Wharton respected, and sometimes disliked, was lacking in Bob.

Bob was brave as a lion, and he had a temper. When Bob was in a rage, he could be very angry, and nobody cared to provoke him so far, as a rule. But in friendly and sociable moments he couldn't be hard.

A splendid footballer, and always in fit condition, he was just the fellow to play well in the Form eleven, and back up his captain and comrades whole-heartedly, without a selfish thought for himself.

But the position of captain was different.

Bob had now the task of selecting the players, deciding who should play for the Form, and who shouldn't.

Wharton could be as hard as steel. He would play a man who could help the side to win, in a tough match, and no other. In easier matches he would give weaker players a chance, of course, but always keeping one object in view—that the Remove had to win if it could possibly be done.

But Wharton, adhering firmly to his own opinion, had gained a reputation for pride and obstinacy; though if he had been yielding, the same fellows who thought him proud and obstinate would probably have been the first to blame him for the disaster that would have inevitably followed.

Bob Cherry was different.

When a chap thought he could play footer, and was convinced that he was the very man to play for the Form against the Ramblers, Bob hated to undeceive him. He preferred to take the chap at his own valuation, and try to think that he was right.

There was a keen competition among the Removites, of course, as to who should play on Saturday in the first match of any importance in the football season. Fellows who distinguished themselves in this match were pretty certain of their caps for some time to come, probably for the whole season.

Every fellow who could play footer, and a good many fellows who couldn't, urged their claims upon Captain Bob Cherry. They had not the resolute Wharton to deal with now, and every fellow felt his hopes rise at the prospect of dealing with the more amenable Bob Cherry.

Hence the deeply corrugated frown upon the brow of the new captain, as he sat in his study that evening and coned over a paper scribbled in pencil.

Mark Linley was in the study, too, at work; but he frequently raised his eyes from his work, and glanced at Cherry. He was ready to talk as soon as Bob was ready; but for a long time Bob Cherry was silent.

He broke the silence at last.

"Busy, Marky?" he asked, with a rather apologetic look at his chum. The Lancashire lad laid down his pen at once.

"Not at all," he said.

"I'm in a bit of a fix, Marky."

Mark Linley smiled slightly.

"I thought you were Bob."

"Oh, you thought so, did you?" said Bob, a little taken aback. "What made you think so, Marky?"

"I'm afraid the fellows have been getting at you a little over the footer."

"Oh, you noticed that?"

"Yes," said Mark.

"Well, that's how it is," said Bob Cherry, after a pause. "It's not the easiest thing in the world to captain a football team."

"I know it isn't," said Mark quietly. "I was captain of our fifteen, home—we played Rugger there—and I know."

Bob Cherry looked rueful.

"You see, it's rotten to tell a chap he can't play for toffee, when he's wrapped up in his playing," he said. "And then, there are lots of chaps who play well at times, and not at other times—some who can get into form if they like, and some who can't. Now, there's Bulstrode. He would be a first-rate footballer if he liked, but he wouldn't take the trouble to win league matches—and he's too unreliable. I've been firm about Bulstrode."

"I should think so, after the trick he played Wharton in the Upper Fourth match!" exclaimed Mark indignantly.

"But there are other fellows—and they put it to you in a way that makes it horridly unpleasant to jump on them," said Bob. "Of course, I haven't promised them places in the team. But—"

"But you've given them encouragement, as they say of the young ladies in the novels," said Mark, with a smile.

"Well, they may have taken it that way."

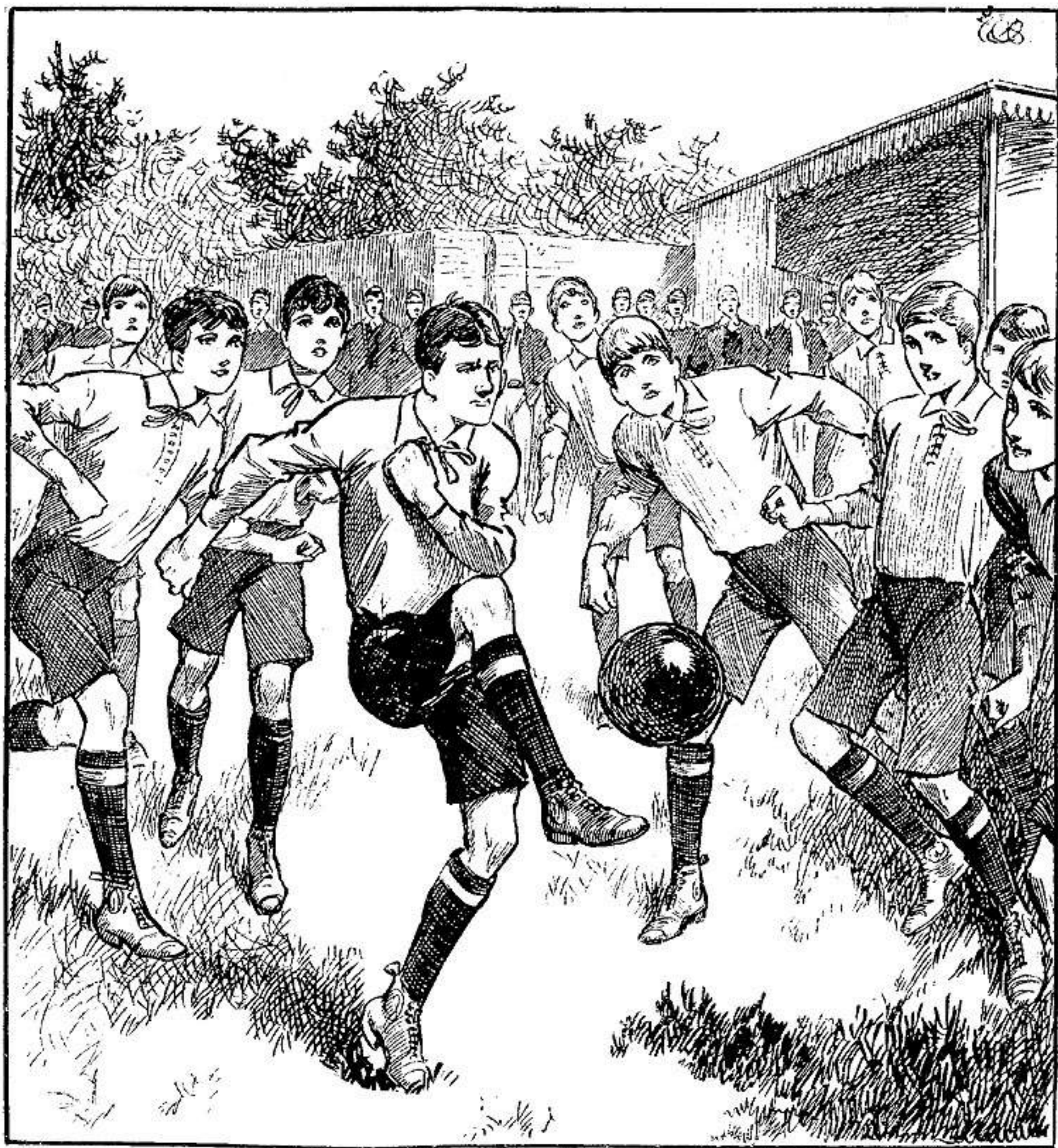
"And you'll have about fifteen or sixteen fellows, all wanting to play in the Remove eleven on Saturday."

"That's about the size of it."

"And you haven't chosen yet?"

"No."

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



The Ramblers, although they managed to beat the forwards, could not beat the half-back, Vernon-Smith. Again and again he cleared, and drew from the crowd cheer upon cheer. (See Page 22.)

"Let's make out a list," said Mark, taking up his pen. "If you settle on the eleven, you can be firm with the other chaps. Give me the names and I'll write them down."
"Good. I must be in myself, I suppose, as skipper—"
"Well, yes, that's usual!" grinned Mark.
"Then there's Wharton, Nugent, and Inky—"
"Wharton, Nugent, and Inky," said Mark, writing the names down.
"Yourself, Tom Brown, and Ogilvy—"
"Linley, Brown, Ogilvy."
"I suppose I'd better put Morgan in."
"Morgan!" said Mark, writing the name down. "What about Desmond?"
"Yes, Desmond, certainly."
"That's nine. Who's going to play centre-half?"
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NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

"Bulstrode, if he would behave himself—"
"But he won't! Who else?"
"I haven't decided. You can put in Elliott for the other forward. About the centre-half, I don't know yet."
There was a kick at the door, and Bulstrode came in. He glanced at the two juniors at the table, and noted the list.
"Making up the team?" he asked.
"Yes," said Bob shortly.
"My name's down, I suppose?"
"Nothing of the sort."
Bulstrode frowned.
"You're not leaving me out?"
"That's what I am doing," said Bob Cherry—"that's it, exactly. You've got it, first chop!"
"Look here—"

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"No time for argument. We're busy."

"I suppose that factory fellow has advised you to leave me out," said Bulstrode, with a venomous glance at Mark Linley. "What are you going to do for a centre-half?"

"I haven't decided yet."

"Is there a better centre-half in the Remove than myself?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Bob. "I jolly well know there isn't a worse. A fellow who can't be depended upon to back up his own skipper isn't the fellow to play in any team I'm captain of."

Bulstrode flushed crimson.

"Who says I wouldn't back up my skipper?"

"You didn't back up Harry Wharton in the Upper Fourth match. I'm not going to have the Ramblers match mucked up in the same way."

"I did my best."

"Bosh!"

"You can't take my word?"

"No fear."

An extremely ugly look came over Bulstrode's face.

"You won't play me, then?" he asked.

"No!"

Bob Cherry might be too yielding and good-natured in most of his dealings with ambitious footballers, but he was firm enough now, and the "No!" came out sharply. Bob hated meanness or trickery of any sort, and he was never slow to testify his opinion of it; and a fellow who played a mean trick had little politeness to expect from Bob Cherry.

Bulstrode's eyes glinted.

"Not on any terms?" he asked.

"No."

"Not if I promise——"

"I couldn't trust you."

Bulstrode clenched his hands.

"I may have played the giddy goat once," he said, "but you must admit that Wharton is enough to put a saint's back up."

"I don't admit anything of the sort. I don't want you in my team—or in my study for that matter," said Bob Cherry bluntly.

"Blessed beggar on horseback, and no mistake!" sneered Bulstrode.

"Put it as you like; you don't play in the team."

"You'll be lucky if you're fit to play yourself," said Bulstrode, between his teeth. "I have a jolly good mind to trade in now and wipe up the floor with you."

"No, you won't," said Mark Linley.

"Is he going to hide behind you?" sneered Bulstrode.

Bob Cherry jumped up with a crimson face. Mark jumped up, too, and pushed him back, almost angrily.

"Don't be a fathead, Bob!" he exclaimed. "Are you going to have the Ramblers match mucked up, just to please that cad?"

"Cad—eh?" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"Yes," said Mark, with flashing eyes. "That's the word!"

"Perhaps you would like to try again with me?" said the Remove bully, turning fiercely on the Lancashire lad.

"Any time you like after Saturday," said Mark.

"Suppose I say now—and insist on it?"

Mark met his eyes firmly.

"I won't fight you till after the match, and Bob sha'n't, either," he said. "You won't get the better of us with a trick like that. You'll get out of this study, and sharp!"

"I——"

"After the Ramblers match, all the fighting you want," said Mark quietly. "Now, out you go, or you'll be chucked out!"

"Who'll chuck me out?" demanded Bulstrode fiercely.

"Both of us!"

"Two to one—eh?" said the Remove bully, with a sneer.

"Yes—till after the match. One to one then—and as long and as often as you want," said Mark. "Now, kindly step out, before we throw you out. You came here to kick up a row, but if you make us go for you, you won't find it pleasant."

"I don't stir a step."

"You'll jolly soon get stirred, then."

Mark Linley and Bob Cherry advanced upon the Remove bully together.

Bulstrode stood his ground. He had heaps of pluck, and a dogged, obstinate temper. The two juniors collared him.

Bob Cherry reeled back from a sounding thump on the chest. But then Mark's grasp was on the bully of the Remove.

They struggled fiercely.

"Lend a hand, Bob!" panted Mark.

Bob was to the fore again in a twinkling. He grasped Bulstrode by the shoulders. Powerful as the burly Remove

bully was, he was not strong enough to resist them.

They struggled fiercely.

"Lend a hand, Bob!" panted Mark.

Bob was to the fore again in a twinkling. He grasped Bulstrode by the shoulders. Powerful as the burly Remove

bully was, he was not strong enough to resist them. He was swung to the door between the two, and sent whirling into the passage.

He crashed down with a heavy bump upon the linoleum.

"You'd better stay there," said Mark, breathing a little quickly.

Bulstrode staggered up. He gave the two juniors in the doorway of the study a furious look; but Linley's advice was too good not to be taken. The Remove bully gritted his teeth, and strode away down the passage.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Todd Obliges.

BOB CHERRY gasped a little as he returned into his study. Mark Linley sat down at the table again and took up his pen. The new captain of the Remove football club grinned a little ruefully.

"Well, Bulstrode's gone," he remarked. "But we haven't got a centre-half."

There was a knock at the door.

"Here's an offer, no doubt," said Mark, with a smile.

Alonzo Todd came in.

He nodded and smiled benignly to the two chums, and glanced at the football list as Bulstrode had done.

"I just met Bulstrode in the passage," he said.

"Yes?" said Bob Cherry.

"He was quite annoyed about something. I asked him what made his jacket so dusty, and offered to dust it for him, and he pushed by me quite rudely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought it very odd of Bulstrode," said Alonzo. "However, I did not come here to talk about Bulstrode. It is about the football. I hear that you are making up the team for the Ramblers match on Saturday."

"Yes."

"I should be quite willing to play."

"Go hon!"

"Yes," said Todd, with a beaming smile. "Although defeated in the election for football captain, I hope you do not think that I bear any malice. I am quite willing to play in the team and back you up."

"Thanks awfully!"

"Not at all. It is simply loyalty to the Form," said Todd.

"My Uncle Benjamin always told me to be loyal."

"Good old Benny!"

"What places in the team remain unfilled?" asked Todd.

"I am not at all particular as to the part I take!"

"Ever kept goal?" asked Bob, with a grin.

"No; but I should be perfectly willing to do so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Cherry——"

"But perhaps you'd be better in the front line," suggested Bob. "Have you ever been forward?"

"Oh, no!" said Alonzo. "I hope you do not suspect me of that."

"Eh?"

"My Uncle Benjamin was always most particular about that."

"About what?"

"He always condemned forwardness of any sort. I trust I have never been forward in my life. My Uncle Benjamin would not like it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, and Mark joined in.

Alonzo gazed at them in mild surprise.

"My dear fellows——"

"I meant forward in the team," roared Bob. "Forward, you ass! Don't you know what a forward is? Chap in the front line."

"Oh, I see! No, I have not played there, but I am willing to try."

"Ha, ha! Ever played back?"

"No. Is it a game?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a position, ass, on the footer field."

"I have not played in any particular place so far," said Todd modestly. "I have practised kicking the football, with some success."

"And so you're specially fitted for footer captain," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Well, if I were playing a match for the cinematographs, I'd shove you in like a shot. As I'm not, I shall have to leave you out, Todd."

"Are all the places filled?"

"All but one—centre-half."

"I should be willing to play centre-half. I do not know what it is, but I would do my very best."

"Go hon!"

"Oh, certainly. I would. My Uncle Benjamin says that if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well."

Bob Cherry wiped his eyes.

"Todd, old man, you're too rich!" he murmured. "Go

away before I get a fit of apoplexy. It isn't fair to spring yourself on a chap suddenly."

"My dear Cherry—"

Bob Cherry waved his hand to the door.

"Good-bye, Todd!"

"But—"

"Buzz off, old fellow!"

"But—"

"Allez-vous-en!" roared Bob Cherry. "Clear out!"

"But I have not finished what I came to say."

Bob Cherry cast a wild glance towards a ruler.

"You see," said Todd, "it's my wish to be obliging. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed that upon me very much. I want to be of service to the Remove, and I want to be of service to you personally, Cherry, because I like you. Now, I think you really ought to give me a place in the Remove eleven."

"Buzz off!"

"If I can do anything to oblige—"

Bob Cherry started.

"You want to oblige me, Todd?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, certainly!"

"You'd really like to do so?"

"Very much indeed."

"Then will you go—but no," said Bob, checking himself.

"It's asking too much."

"Not at all," said Alonzo eagerly. "I should be only too glad to oblige you, Cherry, either by playing football or in any other way. My Uncle Benjamin—"

"Then look here, Todd, will you go to the village—"

"To Friardale?"

"Yes. Go into the post-office, and ask them if they have any letters for me."

"Oh, certainly!"

"If they haven't, ask them again, and insist upon making sure," said Bob. "You know what a careless ass Mr. Coots is. Just mean business, you know."

"Oh, certainly!"

"Could you go at once?"

"Immediately."

"Good! Thanks awfully."

"Not at all, Cherry. I am very glad to have an opportunity of obliging you."

"Then don't lose any time, old chap," said Bob Cherry.

"The post-office closes early, you know."

"I will use the greatest possible despatch."

And Alonzo Todd quitted the study, and hurried away. Bob Cherry burst into a roar of laughter, Mark Linley looking at him curiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

He rose and crossed to the window. From the study window he could see Alonzo Todd leave the house, and hurry across the Close towards the gates. Todd was in a great hurry evidently. His cap was on the side of his head, and his jacket flew in the wind as he rushed down to the gates.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob, again.

"Where's the joke?" asked Mark.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is Todd gone?"

Bob turned away from the window with streaming eyes.

"Yes; he's just buzzed down to the gates."

"But—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, going off into a fresh roar. "Ha, ha, ha! My only Aunt Eliza. Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—"

"Well, he said he wanted to be obliging, didn't he?"

"Look here, have you any letters coming to the Friardale post-office?" demanded Mark, a light breaking in on him.

"Are you expecting any letters there, Bob?"

"Letters there! Certainly not. Why should I have my letters addressed to the village post-office?"

"But you've sent Todd—"

"He wanted to be obliging. Ha, ha, ha!"

Mark grinned.

"It's a bit rough on poor old Todd," he remarked.

"Not at all. He wouldn't go, and it was the only way of getting rid of him. He was going to take root in this blessed study," said Bob Cherry. "He'll be quiet for some time now. Now we can talk in peace—"

"Can we?" said Mark, with a smile.

As Bob spoke, two fellows came in at the door—Lacy and Trevor of the Remove. They started on Bob Cherry at once.

"I hear you're not playing Bulstrode at centre-half?"

"No, I'm not."

"Got anybody else yet?"

"Not yet."

"I'll take the place, if you like," said Lacy and Trevor together, so concordantly that the two voices sounded as one. Bob Cherry groaned.

"My hat! More joys of a football captain!"

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NEXT

WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Combative Candidates!

LACY frowned at Trevor, and Trevor looked daggers at Lacy. It was evident that neither had a very high opinion of the other as a centre-half.

"Better chuck that rot, Lacy," said Trevor.

"Oh, talk sense, or don't talk at all!" retorted Lacy. "You're about as suited to play centre-half against the Ramblers as—as Todd!"

"Look here—"

"I don't want to brag," said Lacy, "but you know I can make rings round you, any day in the week."

"You mayn't want to brag, but you're doing it," said Trevor. "Of course, Cherry won't take any notice of your babble. He's a sensible chap."

"I know he's a sensible chap, and that's why he's going to play me at centre-half on Saturday."

"Rats!"

"What do you think, Cherry?"

"I think you're a pair of asses!" said Bob.

"I don't mind a joke, and you're half right, anyway," said Trevor.

"Just half right," agreed Lacy. "I came in here with an ass. Now, Cherry, you've seen me play centre-half. Was it good?"

"Yes, pretty good."

"But you've seen me play, too!" roared Trevor. "Wasn't I good?"

"Pretty good."

"A pretty pair!" murmured Mark Linley.

"Very well," said Trevor. "You admit, of course, that I was a cut above Lacy. I have a really great reliance on your judgment, Cherry."

"Well, you see—"

"Cherry's judgment is all right," said Lacy. "Cherry knows a good thing when he sees it. Cherry knows that I'm the centre-half for the Remove team."

"Well, you see—"

"Now, look here, Cherry—"

"Look here, Cherry—"

"Shut up, Lacy!"

"Do ring off, Trevor!"

"Can't you stop talking rot, when it's such a serious matter as making up an eleven for the first big match of the season?"

"Oh, go and eat coke! Look here, Cherry—"

"Don't you interrupt me, Lacy—"

"I'll interrupt you as often as I like. I'm not going to have you worrying Cherry with your silly claims."

"What about your own? Your footer would make a monkey weep!"

"I haven't seen you weeping."

"If you want a thick ear—"

"I want all you can give me."

"Then I'll jolly well—"

"Yah!"

"Take that!"

Then they closed.

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley got round to the other side of the table and watched them. They did not interfere. As a matter of fact, Bob had no intention whatever of playing either Trevor or Lacy as centre-half in the Remove team, but it was useless to attempt to explain that to the two excited juniors.

They struggled and wrestled and staggered about the study.

"Take that, you ass!"

"Take that, you fathead!"

"You cheeky chump! You, centre-half! Why, you're more suitable for an Aunt Sally!"

"You, centre-half! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

"Ass!"

Pommel, pommel, pommel! Punch, punch, punch! Tramp, tramp, tramp! Crash!

The table went rocking and jumping as the combatants reeled against it. Bob Cherry gave a shout.

"Stop that, you asses! You're wrecking the study! Stop!"

But Lacy and Trevor did not stop. Their blood was up now, and the study was their battle-ground. They did not stop. Tramp, tramp! Crash!

"Stop! Lay hold of them, Marky."

"What-ho!"

Bob and Mark seized the two excited juniors, and dragged them apart. They looked very ruffled and dishevelled. Red was streaming from Lacy's nose, and one of Trevor's eyes had a darkening circle round it. Their hair was wildly ruffled, and their collars and ties torn out.

"Lemme get at him!" roared Lacy, struggling in the grasp of Bob Cherry.

"Keep quiet!"

"Hands off!" yelled Trevor. "I want to get at him!"

"Chuck it!"

"Leggo!"

"Lemme go!"

"Rats!" said Bob coolly. "What are you rowing about? Neither of you is going to play centre-half on Saturday."

"What!"

"You heard what I said."

Lacy and Trevor looked at one another. Their mutual rage died away—or, rather, it found a new direction, for it turned upon Bob Cherry.

"Neither of us?" echoed Lacy.

"Just so!"

"Neither of us?" said Trevor.

"Yes, neither!"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

"Here, draw it mild! Get out of the study! You can go and have that fight out in the box-room if you like."

"You frabjous ass!" roared Trevor. "Here, lend a hand, Lacy, and bump him!"

"What-ho!" said Lacy promptly.

"Hold on!" gasped Bob Cherry, as the two angry juniors fastened upon him like a pair of cats. "Chuck it! I—Oh! Ow!"

He was rolled over on the floor of the study in a twinkling.

There the two enraged centre-halves proceeded to bump him.

"Help!" roared Bob. "Rescue!"

Mark Linley was already rushing to his aid.

He caught both Trevor and Lacy by their collars, and swung them away from Bob, and then, with another swing, he sent them whirling through the doorway together.

Bob jumped up.

"By George, I'll give 'em socks!" he exclaimed wrathfully.

Mark caught him by the arm.

"It's all right, Bob!" he exclaimed, laughing. "They're giving each other socks!"

Lacy had fallen across Trevor in the passage, sprawling over him, and Lacy was no light weight. Trevor was hurt. As the easiest means of getting Lacy off he began hitting out as hard as he could.

Lacy caught one on the chest and one on the chin, and howled with pain. He was not slow to return the compliment in kind. Pommelling and clutching and gasping, the two juniors rolled on the linoleum in desperate conflict.

Bob Cherry burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it!"

The two juniors separated and staggered up at last. They eyed each other fiercely, and closed in combat again, and staggered down the passage pommelling away at top speed. It was at that moment that Billy Bunter's luck brought him blinking along the passage. He walked right into Lacy and Trevor.

"Oh, really—" he exclaimed.

The two combatants staggered upon him and fell, and both of them caught hold of Billy Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped the fat junior.

He was dragged down, and Lacy and Trevor sprawled upon him, and nearly every ounce of breath was knocked out of Bunter's body.

He gasped feebly.

"Help! Help! Ow!"

Lacy and Trevor scrambled up. They tacitly ceased their own combat, and, taking hold of Bunter, bumped him on the linoleum, and then strode away, exchanging glances of defiance, but both satisfied with the pommelling they had had. Bunter groaned.

"Ow! Help! I'm nearly expiring! Ow!"

He opened his eyes and blinked up at Bob Cherry and Linley, who had come along to look at him.

"Nearly dead!" said Bob cheerfully.

"Ow!"

"Like some jam-tarts, Bunter?"

Billy was on his feet in a twinkling.

"Oh, yes, Cherry! Where are they?"

"In the tuckshop," said Bob Cherry. "You can have all you can pay for."

"Oh, really, Cherry—" Bunter blinked reproachfully at the burly junior. "Look here! I was coming to talk to you—"

"Then I'm much obliged to Lacy and Trevor for stopping you."

"Oh, really! I hear that you're not playing Bulstrode as centre-half, and I was going to offer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"You don't often get an offer from a centre-half like me, Bob Cherry. I—"

"Quite right, old chap! And I'm not going to accept this offer!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Come on, Marky. There'll be a whole procession of them to the study, and the sooner we get out the better."

And Bob Cherry and Mark went downstairs laughing, leaving Billy Bunter gasping and blinking in the Remove passage.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Many Offers.

"CHERRY!"

"Here's Cherry!"

"Cherry, old man—"

"I want to speak to you particularly—"

"I say, Cherry—"

"If you've got a minute to spare—"

"It's about the football, you know—"

"Faith, and sure I—"

"Cherry! Cherry!"

Bob Cherry put his fingers to his ears.

"Oh, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "Don't all speak at once—or, rather, don't speak at all. That's much better. Speech is silver, silence is golden. Cheese it!"

"Look here—"

"About the footer—"

"You want a centre-forward—"

"And a centre-half—"

"I say, Cherry—"

"Shut up!" roared the unhappy captain of the football team, backing away. "My hat! Who'd be a footer skipper? I'll sell the job for twopence!"

"Look here!" said Russell. "You want me, don't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, then—"

"Only there's no room in the team."

"No room!" shouted Russell, exasperated. "Why, I explained to you for half an hour this afternoon that you couldn't possibly do without me!"

"Yes, I know, but—"

"You said you'd noticed that my passing was good."

"Well, so I had," said Bob; "but I meant your passing the jam at tea, you know. I wasn't thinking about the footer."

Russell's face became almost purple with indignation, and the rest of the juniors laughed. A football captain is like the acknowledged wit—he has only to say "pass the salt" to set the table in a roar.

"Faith, and ye're a funny merchant, entirely!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "Russell can pass the jam, and he can pass the tuckshop—I've seen him do it—but he can't pass a ball for toffee!"

"Look here, you Tipperary duffer—"

"Sure, and ye want me, Cherry darling!" said Micky eloquently.

"Yes, I'm playing you, Micky."

"Hurroo!" roared Micky Desmond. "Faith, and it's an illigant captain we've got, darlings! Didn't I tell yez ye could depend on Bob Cherry's judgment?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll want me at centre-forward, I suppose?" Morgan remarked.

"No, I don't—"

"Why, you as good as told me I was to play—"

"I meant—"

"Didn't you say I couldn't be left out of the front line?" roared Morgan. "If you're being funny with me—"

"I meant—"

"He meant the front line of spectators," said Skinner. "Wasn't that what you meant, Cherry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, you were being funny, eh?" said Morgan grimly. "You funny merchant! You don't want me as centre-forward, after what you said?"

"No, but—"

"Then there's for your nose, look you!"

Bob Cherry staggered back as Morgan punched his nose. The Welsh lad was very wrathful. Bob, in his good-nature, had allowed many of the fellows to entertain hopes that could not be fulfilled, but to Morgan he had given what amounted to a promise.

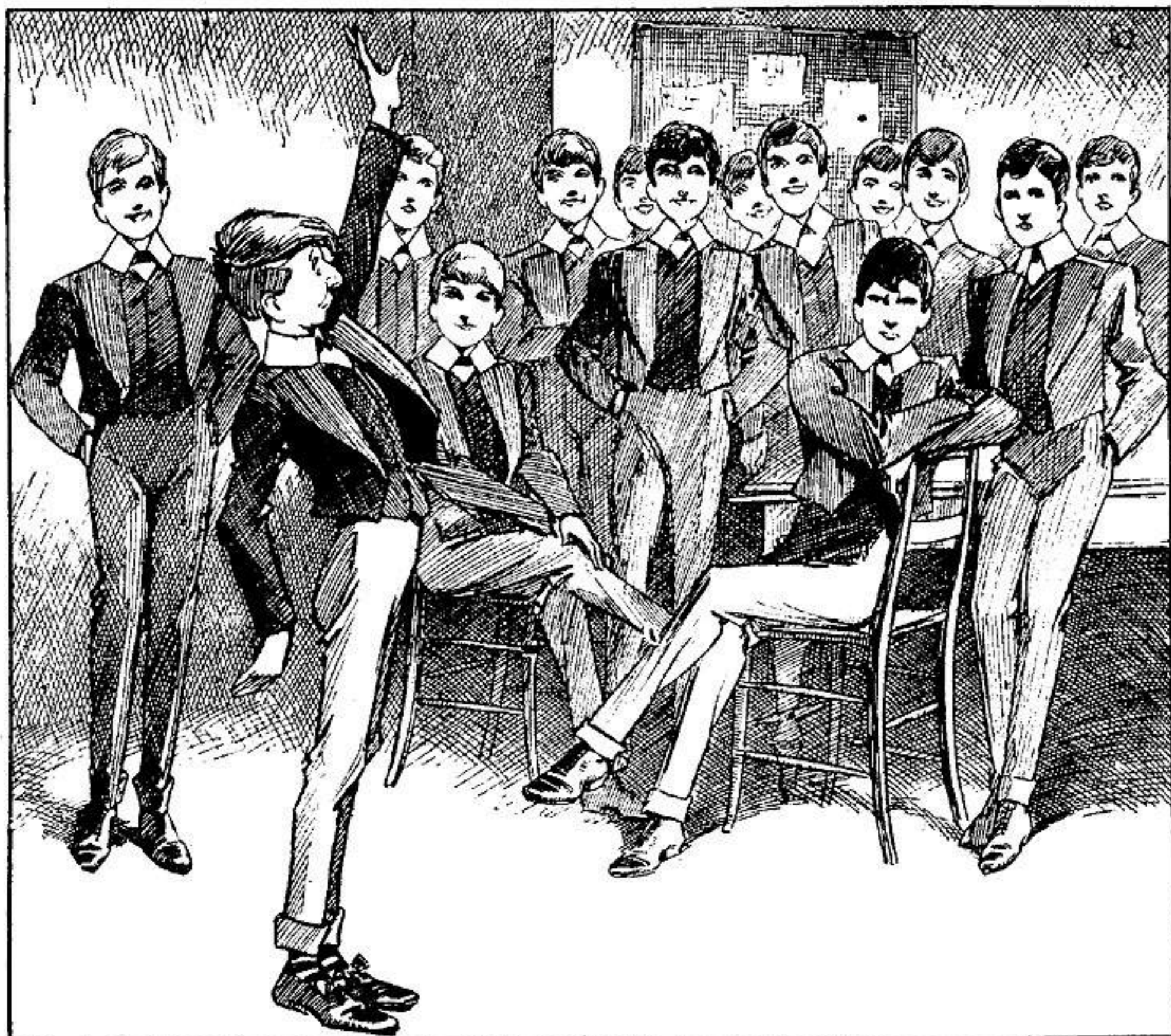
"You ass!" he roared. "I meant—"

"Take that!"

Bob Cherry hit out in his turn, and Morgan rolled among innumerable feet.

"Serve him right!" said Smith minor. "You'd better play me, Cherry, and—"

"I'm going to play Morgan!" gasped Bob Cherry.



Todd still held his hand in the air, and he seemed surprised when the juniors cheered the new footer captain. "Is the election over?" he asked blinking at the grinning juniors who were standing round him. (See page 10.)

"What?" gasped Morgan, as he staggered up. "Why, you said—"

"I said I didn't want you as centre-forward, you chump! You're inside-right."

"Oh!" said Morgan.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed ass!" said Bob Cherry, rubbing his nose. "Look here, the next chap who goes for his captain gets left out of the team! That's final!"

"Morgan's all right at inside-right," said Ogilvy. "I suppose you want me at centre-forward, Cherry?"

"No, I don't!"

"If you're going to leave me out—"

"You're inside-left."

"Oh, good!"

"Who's centre-forward, then?" roared half a dozen voices.

"Wharton!"

"Wharton! You're playing Wharton?"

"Of course I am, you duffers!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Do you think I'm going to leave out the best footballer in the Remove because I've got his place as skipper? Wharton's going to play centre forward, as usual. I jolly well wish he was captain of the team again, too!"

"Who's your centre-half?" asked Hazeldene

"Not settled yet."

"I suppose I'm keeping goal?"

"I suppose you're not," said Bob.

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Hazeldene coloured.

"You're not leaving me out, Bob Cherry?"

"Yes, I am. You're not in form. You've been off colour ever since your holiday in Switzerland," said Bob Cherry. "You chum up too much with Vernon-Smith, you know. I'm not going to play a chap who can't keep himself fit."

Hazeldene bit his lip.

"Wharton would have played me," he said.

"Not on your present form."

"By Jove!" murmured Bulstrode to Skinner, on the edge of the Remove crowd. "That's decent of Cherry! You know how much he thinks of Marjorie Hazeldene—and now he's left her brother out. He'll have Hazel's knife into him for this."

"I'm sorry, Hazel, but you can't go in," said Bob Cherry. "It's your own fault. I'm putting in Brown to keep goal."

"Good!" said the New Zealand junior. "Goal or half, it's all the same to me. Anything you like, old chap. I think I can keep goal."

"I know you can, or you wouldn't go in," said Bob Cherry. "The place goes to the chap who fills it best, Hazel. I'm sorry."

"Oh, all right!" said Hazeldene sulkily. "I suppose you know your own business best. It's not what I expected, that's all." And thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, Hazeldene walked away.

Bob Cherry looked worried for a moment. He had special reasons for not wanting to get on bad terms with Marjorie's

brother. But it couldn't be helped. He couldn't risk losing the match to please a fellow who preferred slacking at practice.

"Any places still empty?" Elliott asked.

"Yes, centre-half."

"Plenty of offers," said Stott. "I'll take it on myself."

"No, you won't, Stott."

"You as good as promised me a place," said Treluce.

"No, I didn't. I said I hoped you would be satisfied."

"Well, what does that mean, then?"

"And you said you hoped it would be all right for me!" exclaimed Johnson.

"Well, I—I hope it will," said Bob feebly.

"And what about me?" exclaimed Berry. "Didn't you say that you hadn't seen a chap pass like I do for a long time?"

"Well, I hadn't, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what about me?"

"And me?"

"You said——"

"You led me to expect——"

"You plainly said——"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I can't play you all! How many fellows do you want to put in the field against the Ramblers on Saturday? Do you think I'm going to play an early Victorian side of forty or fifty?"

"You ass!"

"You clump!"

"You fathead!"

"You captain a team!" shouted a dozen derisive voices.

"Why, you couldn't skipper a team of white rabbits!"

"Yah!"

"Go home!"

"Get your hair cut!"

"Boo!"

Bob Cherry beat a retreat from the storm. He took refuge in the common-room, gasping and almost bewildered. Harry Wharton was there, and Bob gave him a most lugubrious look.

"Blessed if I know what anyone wants to be footer captain for," he grunted. "I don't wonder that you chucked the job, Wharton. I shall chuck it, I think, when we're once safe over the Ramblers' match. It's rotten."

"You'll get used to it," said Wharton, with a smile.

Bob shook his head.

"You only want to be firm, you know."

"I don't know how you managed the bounders, but I can't," said Bob Cherry. "If I tell a chap his footer's no good, I make an enemy for life—if I say the least polite thing about it, he twists it into a promise that he shall have a place in the team to play the Ramblers."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's always the same," he remarked. "Ten chaps think you've a wonderful gift of selection, and the others all set you down as a crass idiot. It's human nature."

"There's too much human nature in the Greyfriars Remove," growled Bob Cherry.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot.

ALONZO TODD rushed breathlessly into the post-office at Friardale. The post-office, grocer's-shop, provision stores, and Italian warehouseman's was closing. The post-office department and the rest of the establishment all closed together, and Todd was only just in time to catch Mr. Coots. His perspiring face showed how he had hurried from the school. He rushed into the shop as Mr. Coots's boy was putting up the last of the shutters.

Mr. Coots was behind the counter, and he looked round with a frown as Todd came dashing in. Mr. Coots had had talks with Todd before, and had found the Duffer of Greyfriars extremely exasperating. But that was Postmaster Coots. Grocer Coots was a different man. He was willing to sell bacon, if not to send telegrams, on the very stroke of closing time. It was the same with Italian-Warehouseman Coots. He would have sold paraffin and bundles of wood while postage-stamps were unobtainable for love or money. The post-master portion of Mr. Coots was annoyed at the sight of Todd tearing into the shop, but the grocer part of him was glad to see a belated customer, so he looked at Todd and asked him what he wanted.

"Dear me!" gasped Alonzo. "I was afraid I should find you closed!" And gasping for breath, he sat down upon a box.

"Look hout!" roared Mr. Coots.

But the warning was too late for Alonzo.

The junior had sat down upon a flimsy egg-box, and the thin wood went straight through under his weight, and there was a terrible crashing inside.

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Alonzo jumped up as if he had sat upon a red-hot stove.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped.

Mr. Coots's face was a study in scarlet.

"You've broken them heggs!" he roared.

"I'm so sorry."

"You—you—you——"

"I am really so sorry, Mr. Coots. I would pay for those eggs which I have unfortunately destroyed if I had any money."

"You'll pay for them now!" roared the grocer.

"I'm so sorry, but that would be impossible, as I have no money. I am indeed sorry for this very unfortunate occurrence. However, if you had these boxes made stronger, it would not have occurred. What do you think?"

Mr. Coots did not say what he thought. He could not do so without using language which would have shocked Alonzo very much.

"However," said Alonzo, "I came here to ask for some letters."

"For what?"

"Some letters."

"There ain't any letters for you," said Mr. Coots, "but there's a little bill, and if you don't pay it I'll send up to the school. Them heggs cost money."

"I'm so sorry. I cannot say more than that, really," said Alonzo reproachfully. "My Uncle Benjamin says that, when an injury is irreparable, the only thing to do is to express sincere sorrow for the annoyance inadvertently caused. I have done so, and I really consider that you should be satisfied."

Mr. Coots snorted.

"However, that is not my business here," said Alonzo. "I have called for some letters."

"There ain't any."

"My dear sir——"

"No letters for name of Todd——"

"But the letters are not for myself," explained Todd; "they are for my friend Robert Cherry, and he asked me to call for them."

"There ain't any for Robert Cherry."

"But——"

"You get hout before you do any more damage," said Mr. Coots. "I'll send the bill for them heggs up to the school."

"My dear fellow——"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mr. Coots's boy, entering the shop after putting up the last of the shutters outside.

Alonzo looked at him. The boy was looking at Alonzo's trousers, which had been deeply stained with broken eggs as he sat in the egg-box. Yolk of egg was streaming down them behind, though Alonzo was not yet aware of the fact.

"Dear me!" said Alonzo. "What a rude boy!"

"He, he, he!"

"Good-evening, Master Todd," said Mr. Coots. "I'll send that bill on."

"But the letters——"

"There ain't any!" roared Mr. Coots.

"There must be some mistake. Bob Cherry told me to insist," said Todd firmly. "You have not yet looked, Mr. Coots."

"I know there ain't any."

"Please look, to make sure."

Mr. Coots glared at the junior, and then made a pretence of looking for the letters. Then he again declared that there weren't any.

Todd looked very puzzled.

"It is very odd," he said. "Bob Cherry told me to insist upon having them. It is very odd indeed if they have not arrived. Don't you think so, sir?"

"Will you get houter my shop?" asked Mr. Coots, with impatience.

"Certainly. But don't you think——"

"Good-evening!"

"About the letters——"

"Will you go, and let my boy shut the door?" roared Mr. Coots.

"Dear me! I am sorry to be the cause of any delay," said Todd, "especially as the lad is probably tired after his day's work, and wants to go home. I suppose he is overworked, like most grocer's boys, Mr. Coots?"

Mr. Coots could not be expected to agree cordially with that statement. He glared at Alonzo instead of replying, and came round from behind the counter.

Todd made a move towards the door. He did not understand why Mr. Coots was angry, but there was no doubting the fact that he was angry.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Alonzo, suddenly becoming aware of a little pool of egg-yolk close to the spot where he had been standing. "Dear me! I think I must have sat in the eggs!" He twisted round to try and get a view of his back, but with difficulty. He blinked in his trusting manner at Mr. Coots.

"Will you tell me if my clothes are stained behind?" he asked Mr. Coots smiling grimly.

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Turn round," he said.

"Oh, certainly!"

Alonzo Todd turned round.

Then Mr. Coots's foot rose, and a heavy boot smote Alonzo, and he was swept fairly through the doorway upon the pavement outside.

He fell upon his hands and knees there, very much surprised.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped.

He scrambled up, aching considerably, and looked round. The shop-door was closed now, and he heard the chain being put up within.

"Dear me!" gasped Alonzo. "I fear that Mr. Coots is not quite right in his head. I have suspected it before. How very odd of him! I suppose I must return to Greyfriars without the letters."

And Alonzo, with a very considerable ache to keep him company, trotted off towards Greyfriars to report his ill-success to Bob Cherry.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Offer.

"MY hat!"

"What's he been up to?"

"Where have you been, Toddy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of laughing juniors surrounded Alonzo Todd as he came breathlessly into the junior common-room at Greyfriars. Todd was looking a little out of order. The yolk of eggs was drying on his clothes in yellow streaks, and a great deal of the dust of the lane clung to it.

"Ah, I have had a slight accident!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is really not a laughing matter," explained Todd. "I sat down upon a box in Mr. Coots's shop to rest. Unfortunately, the lid gave way, being of somewhat flimsy construction, and I sat in the eggs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. Coots is going to send a bill in to the school for them, which is very odd of him, as I told him that I had no money to pay for them. However, he seems to me to be a very obstinate and bad-tempered man. I am sorry I was not able to bring your letters, Cherry."

Bob Cherry stared.

"My letters?"

"Yes. Mr. Coots assured me that there were none."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

Alonzo blinked at him.

"I am glad to see you take it so cheerfully, Cherry," he said. "I was afraid you would be disappointed, as you seemed to expect the letters."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Cherry receiving letters at the post-office—eh? What's the little game? Getting mixed up in the racing—eh?"

"No, ass! I haven't received any letters."

"They hadn't come," explained Todd.

"And they weren't coming, chump!" said Bob Cherry. "I wasn't expecting any. I didn't tell you I was. I simply asked you to go down to the post-office, and ask for them."

Todd looked at him in bewilderment.

"But if you weren't expecting any—"

"Certainly not."

"Then why did you ask me to go?"

"So that you could bother Mr. Coots instead of bothering me," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "I was getting fed up."

"My dear Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"This is very rotten!" said Alonzo. "I have wasted my time, and my Uncle Benjamin always cautioned me very much not to waste my time. I must remark that I regard it as inconsiderate of you, Cherry. I will now resume the subject that was interrupted when you asked me to hurry off to the post-office. I—"

"No, you won't," shouted Bob Cherry.

"But I—"

"Ring off!"

"I think I ought to play centre-quarter—"

"Centre which?"

"Quarter," said Alonzo. "I forget whether it is quarter or half; but it is all the same, and is of no consequence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am willing to take that position, or any other," said Todd. "I shall play my very hardest. I trust you will play me, Cherry."

"My hat!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Why don't somebody suffocate him? Todd, old man, I'll play you as full-back-three-quarter-wicket-keeper next time we play—er—hockey. That's the best I can promise."

"Oh, very well!" said Todd, with a beaming smile. "I accept your offer, Cherry, and I will put in a lot of practice at once, as soon as I can find someone to instruct me in the duties of full-back-three-quarter-wicket-keeper."

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NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

EVERY
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

The Removites roared. Todd blinked at them reproachfully.

"You have not seen me play yet," he said.

"My hat!" said Nugent. "I shall be glad to see you play as full-back-three-quarter-wicket-keeper. Why not try centre-forward-cover-slip-third-man?"

"I should be perfectly willing to do so, or to take any other position," said Alonzo. "I only want to be obliging."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo Todd, wondering what the juniors found to laugh at so much, went away to change his clothes and to spend some hours in cleaning those he took off. It was a long task for Alonzo; but it relieved his Form-fellows of the little favours he liked doing them when he had time, so no one was sorry but Alonzo.

Meanwhile, Bob Cherry had not yet decided upon his centre-half. There were several fellows who seemed to have equally good claims, and Bob had not made up his mind. He did not like to go directly ahead, as Harry Wharton would have done, having a sensitive regard for people's feelings; but as it was already Friday, there was little time to cut to waste, as the Ramblers match was due on the afternoon of the morrow.

Bob was thinking it over by the window of the common-room, when Vernon-Smith joined him. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was not on the best of terms with Bob Cherry or any of his friends, but there was an unusually cordial expression upon his face now.

Bob looked at him grimly.

"I want to speak to you," said the Bounder.

Bob's reply was terse and uncomplimentary.

"Go ahead!"

"I hear you're still a man short for the footer team to-morrow."

Bob stared. Vernon-Smith, the slacker, the Bounder, the blackguard of the Lower School, had shown little or no interest in sports before. Was it possible that Bob, in his new capacity of football captain, was to be bothered by Vernon-Smith as well as all the rest of the Remove?

"Yes, centre-half," said Bob at last.

"How would you like to play me?"

"You!"

Vernon-Smith nodded coolly.

"No, I shouldn't," said Bob. "You're not fit, for one thing; you're a rotten Bounder, for another; and you don't play footer, either."

"I can play."

"I'll believe that when I see it," said Bob Cherry scornfully.

"You can see it as soon as you like," said Vernon-Smith, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I had a coach, and he put me up to all of it, and I can play if I choose. I'd like to play in the match to-morrow."

Bob Cherry laughed involuntarily.

"I dare say you would," he said. "So would the rest of the Remove. But there are plenty of fellows who'll fill the place pretty well. You can't play."

"You can give me a trial to-morrow morning before brekker, and see."

Bob made an impatient gesture.

"I suppose you're joking?" he exclaimed. "You're not a sportsman. You don't care a rap for footer, either. I've heard you say so."

"Quite true," said the Bounder, with a nod.

"Well, don't play the giddy goat, then," said Bob, "and don't bother me when I'm trying to think things out."

The Bounder's eyes glinted.

"Then you won't give me a chance?" he said.

"No, no, no! Get out!"

"I particularly want to play to-morrow," said Vernon-Smith, sticking to his point. "I've a reason. I don't care for footer, as a rule, but I want to play in the Ramblers' match. If you like to give me a trial to-morrow morning, I'll stand or fall by your opinion of what I can do."

Bob was exasperated. It was too bad to be bothered by the worst slacker in the Remove talking to him in this style.

"Will you buzz off?" he exclaimed.

"Look here—"

"Oh, get out!"

The Bounder cast a glance round. No one was near them. He lowered his voice.

"Look here, Cherry," he whispered, and he drew a crisp and rustling slip of paper from his pocket, "look at that!"

Bob looked at it. It was a five-pound note.

"Well?" he said blankly.

"You see what it is?"

"Yes; a fiver."

"That's yours if I play in the Ramblers' match to-morrow," said Vernon-Smith, under his breath. "I can afford it, and I want to play."

Bob Cherry sat stunned for a moment. That even the

Bounder of Greyfriars should offer him money for the privilege of playing in the Form eleven was incredible. He could not believe it now. But the Bounder was in earnest. He sat with his eyes on Bob Cherry's face, intently watching him.

Bob realised it at last. A hot red flush came up over his face. He rose to his feet; his grasp fell upon the Bounder's collar, and Vernon-Smith was jerked up.

"Let go, you hound!" gasped the Bounder.

Bob Cherry did not let go. He swung the Bounder to the door of the common-room, and, with a swing of his powerful arms sent him rolling into the passage. There was a roar of voices at once.

"What's up?"

"What's the matter?"

Bob Cherry gritted his teeth.

"Ask him!" he said coldly, pointing to the sprawling Bounder.

And a dozen eager voices did ask, but the Bounder did not reply. He gave Bob Cherry one bitter look, and scrambled to his feet and walked away.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Short Way with Croakers.

THE next morning the Ramblers' match was the one topic of interest in the Greyfriars Remove.

It would have been a topic of keen interest in any case, but with Captain Bob Cherry at the head of affairs it possessed a peculiar interest for the juniors.

If Harry Wharton had been in his old place of football captain, and the Remove had backed him up as hard as they could, still the match would have been a tough one.

With Bob Cherry making his first essay as skipper, the result was still more doubtful. Some of the juniors made long faces about it already. The Remove had been licked by the Upper Fourth in the first match of the season. They would be licked by the Ramblers in the second. It looked like being a rotten season for them.

Bob Cherry had a short way with the croakers. When a fellow expressed his doubts in Bob's presence, Bob replied in the plainest of plain English.

"We simply haven't a chance," Bulstrode remarked at his washstand that morning, addressing nobody in particular.

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry.

Bulstrode turned round towards him.

"Shut up or not, it's the truth," he said. "The Ramblers will walk all over us."

"Because we're not playing you at centre-half, I suppose?" Bob asked sarcastically.

"Not only that; but because we've got such a ripping captain, who can't say 'Bo' to a goose, or 'No' to a mug," said Bulstrode.

"So Cherry's playing mugs, is he?" demanded Mickey Desmond, with a warlike look.

"A whole collection of 'em," said Bulstrode coolly.

"Faith, and I—"

"Shut up, Bulstrode!"

"Don't croak!"

"Well, I say Greyfriars has no chance."

"If you think so, keep it to yourself, and don't be a blessed Jonah!" blazed out Bob Cherry. "What you want is a hiding."

"I'm ready for any you can give me."

Bob Cherry rushed straight at Bulstrode.

His temper was up.

The Remove bully wanted nothing better. A mill with Cherry on the morning of the match suited his plans admirably. After he had finished with him, as he had previously remarked to Skinner, Bob Cherry would be more fitted to captain a hospital ward than a football team.

But it was not to be.

Mark Linley caught hold of Bob Cherry and stopped him, and at the same moment Tom Brown and Harry Wharton grasped Bulstrode and swung him away.

"Let go, confound you!" shouted Bulstrode.

"Let me get at him!" roared Bob.

"Chuck it," said Harry Wharton quietly. "Don't be an ass, Bob!"

"I tell you—"

"As for you, Bulstrode, if you lay a finger on Cherry, you'll be ragged till you don't know where you are," said Harry sternly. "We know your game—you're not going to spoil Cherry's form for the match."

"I didn't mean—"

"Yes, you did."

"I tell you—"

"Shame!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Only if that dummy croaks in my hearing, I'll go for him!"

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NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

"I'll say what I like!" said Bulstrode.

"No, you won't," said Tom Brown. "Shut up. What do you want to discourage the chaps for—better chaps than yourself?"

"Rats!"

"Well, hold your tongue."

"Rot! Greyfriars is going to lose, and, considering how football matters are managed in the Remove, a jolly good thing, too!" said Bulstrode sulkily.

"Bump him!"

"Let go—"

"Bump him!"

Three or four pairs of hands caught hold of Bulstrode. The burly Removeite was not used to this sort of thing, but he had to stand it now.

He was bumped, and bumped again.

Gasping for breath, he rolled on the floor of the dormitory. He sat up, dazed, and stared at his assailants.

"By George! I'll—"

"You'll keep quiet, or you'll get worse," said Tom Brown.

"Hang you! I—"

"Oh, shut up!"

There were angry faces round Bulstrode now, and he saw that he was in a hopeless minority. He forced a laugh, and turned back to his washstand.

There was no more of Bulstrode's croaking for some time. Many of the fellows believed he was right, but they felt that it was rotten to say so. There was no need to cry before the milk was spilt, anyway, as Ogilvy remarked.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Wharton Advises.

VERNON-SMITH gave Bob Cherry a very peculiar look as they sat down to breakfast that Saturday morning. If Bob had noticed him, he would have seen that the Bounder was doubtful about whether he should approach the subject of the previous evening again. But Bob was not looking at the Bounder.

He had more important things to think of.

He had not yet decided who was to play centre-half in the Remove eleven, and he did not know what to decide.

Bob was keenly feeling his limitations as football captain. He had a feeling that Harry Wharton would have settled the question of the centre-half the day before at the latest.

But conflicting claims, and doubts of his own, made Bob hesitate.

He wanted to put the best man in—but the best man was Bulstrode, and he was disloyal. He could not be played. There were three or four fellows Bob found it difficult to decide among, and all had shown up very well on trial.

Bob determined at last to ask Wharton's advice.

He had been chary about doing so, for it seemed to him something like asking Wharton to assume some of his old responsibility, without the honour of being captain; but he came to it at last.

He touched Harry on the arm as they left the dining-room.

"Got any advice to give away?" he asked.

Wharton smiled.

"Heaps!" he said. "If you want any, Bob, you know I'm only too glad to give it, though I didn't want to force it on you."

Bob looked relieved.

"Right! I haven't a centre-half yet."

"I know!"

"Bulstrode won't do—you wouldn't advise me to give him a chance—"

"Of wrecking the team?" said Harry. "Not likely!"

"I'm glad you agree with me there. There's young Smith, and Percival, and Northcott, but—"

"You're not satisfied with any of them?"

"No. The only thing I can think of is to put in Brown as centre-half, and play Hazeldene, after all, in goal. What do you think of that?"

Wharton nodded.

"Not a bad arrangement."

"Well, what do you think?" asked Bob. "It's your advice I want. Hallo, hallo, hallo! What do you want?" he asked, as the Bounder came up to them in the Close.

Vernon-Smith gave him a dark look.

"I want to play in the eleven this afternoon."

"Oh, ring off!"

"I appeal to Wharton—"

"No good appealing to me," said Harry, with a laugh.

"I'm not footer captain any more. It rests with Cherry."

"I mean, I appeal to your commonsense. I'm entitled to a trial. If you like to see what I can do, you can see whether I'm fitted to play centre-half or not."

Wharton looked at him curiously.

He had not thought of Herbert Vernon-Smith as a footballer before; the Bounder had shown tastes very different from those of the athletes of the Lower School. But when he came to think of it, he remembered having heard of the Bounder's professional coach, and what he was supposed to be able to do if he chose.

"So you think you're a half?" he asked.

"I'm a good half."

"You've played?"

"Many times."

"We've seen nothing of it here."

"I don't care for football," said the Bounder coolly.

"But you want to play to-day?"

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Why?"

"That's my business," said the Bounder calmly. "I want to play—and if I'm fit to play, you ought to play me—especially as you can't find a centre-half for love or money!"

Bob Cherry gave a scoffing laugh.

"We've had a lot of rot from you," he said. "But I never expected to hear you begin to talk footer. Why don't you ring off?"

"Then you won't give me a chance?"

"Rats!"

"Wharton—"

Harry made the Bounder a sign to be silent. There was a thoughtful expression upon his face.

"You asked me to advise you, Bob?" he said.

"Yes, certainly."

"You meant it, of course?"

"Of course."

"Then I advise you to give Smith a trial."

Bob Cherry stared.

"Give him a trial?"

"Exactly."

"But he can't play footer."

"He says he can."

"It's only gas."

"Well, it won't take much trouble to give him a trial."

"Waste of time," said Bob Cherry decidedly.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Very well, Bob; that's my advice, but, of course, you're not bound to take it."

"Oh, rats, I'll take it!" said Bob Cherry. "May as well give him a trial, if you think so; but, of course, it's all gas."

"We've got nearly half an hour before prayers," said Harry. "Call up the whole team, and play them together against a scratch eleven. I'll bring up the fellows. The practice won't do any harm."

"Right you are."

Bob Cherry turned away. Vernon-Smith looked quickly at Harry.

"Thank you," he said.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"No need to thank me," he replied. "I'm as keen for Greyfriars to win as anybody. If you can play, I'd put you in, if I were captain, if you were fifty times the bounder you are!"

Vernon-Smith laughed as he walked away. He evidently had confidence in himself, and he felt that he had gained his point. Hazeldene met him as he went down to the junior football-ground.

"I think it will be all right," Hazeldene announced.

Vernon-Smith gave him an inquiring look.

"I mean, about my playing," said Hazeldene. "Cherry can't find a centre-half—and if he puts Brown there, he'll have me to keep goal. He'll have no choice about the matter. I'm glad of it, as Marjorie's coming over to see the match."

The Bounder grinned.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Sorry! Why?"

"Bob Cherry's found a centre-half."

Hazeldene's expression changed.

"Who's he found?"

"Myself."

"You!" shouted Hazeldene.

"Why not?"

"You play football!"

"Certainly!"

"Oh, rats! You can play poker, and play euchre, and play the giddy goat," said Hazeldene. "You can't play footer!"

"You'll see."

"You don't mean to say that he's giving you a trial?" exclaimed Hazeldene, following Vernon-Smith to the football-ground, where a great many juniors were converging.

The Bounder nodded.

"But it's all rot."

"Thank you!"

"Look here, is this what you call being a friend?" demanded Hazeldene angrily. "You ought to stand by me, not sneak in yourself in this way!"

"Every man for himself," said the Bounder, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I'm going to play centre-half."

"It's rotten! I expected— Look here, what are you

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going to play for?" demanded Hazeldene savagely. "You hate footer?"

"As a rule, yes."

"Then why are you going to play this afternoon?"

"For a change, I suppose."

Hazeldene drew a deep breath.

"Well, I think it's a rotten trick," he exclaimed; "and if you treat me like this, I don't want to have anything to do with you."

"Until the next time you are hard up," said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer.

Hazeldene flushed crimson, and walked away. Bob Cherry's voice was heard now calling to the Bounder and Vernon-Smith hastened to join him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith, Centre-Half.

THE news that Vernon-Smith was to be given a trial as centre-half in the Form team made the Remove gasp.

Vernon-Smith, the black sheep of the Form, the fellow who broke more school rules than any other three, and broke them in a more reprehensible manner—the blackguard and pub-haunter—he was taking up footer.

That was surprising enough.

But that Bob Cherry was giving him a trial for the Form eleven—that he had a chance of playing for the Remove—that was more surprising still.

The Remove wondered; and as the news spread, they flocked to the ground to see what the new recruit would shape like.

They found the eleven at practice.

Harry Wharton called up a number of fellows for a scratch team, and they took the field against the Remove eleven.

In the latter, Vernon-Smith took the place of centre-half.

It was easy enough practice to the team, for their scratch opponents were nowhere near their form.

But the contest was hard enough to show up the form of the players, and to allow Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton to judge of the form of the new recruit.

They watched Vernon-Smith and wondered.

Certainly the Bounder played well.

He had a turn of speed they had never suspected him of, a quickness of eye and of action invaluable in a half—and his passing was as clean as a whistle.

Bob Cherry grew more and more amazed, and Harry Wharton more and more pleased. When the play had gone on for a quarter of an hour, it stopped. Harry Wharton clapped Bob Cherry on the shoulder.

"There's your centre-half, old man!" he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Good egg!" he said.

"You're satisfied?" asked Harry, with a smile.

"Quite."

The Bounder, looking a little hot, but fit enough, came up to them. There was a slightly mocking expression in his eyes. He knew that he had done well.

"Well?" he asked.

"You'll do," said Bob Cherry tersely.

"You're going to play me this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Good!" said the Bounder.

The two chums looked after him as he walked away. They were puzzled. That the Bounder did not like football was no secret.

"What on earth can be his object in playing?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, wrinkling his brows in perplexity. "I don't get on to it at all."

"Blessed if I do, either."

"I suppose he wants to show off for some reason. I suppose that's the only motive a chap like Smithy could have. But—"

Wharton uttered an exclamation.

"It's Marjorie, of course."

"Marjorie!"

"Yes. You know, she's coming over with Clara to see the match. That's why the Bounder wants to play."

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"My hat!" he said. "I believe you're right. Fancy the Bounder! Well, I suppose it's a little bit decent of him to care what a nice girl like Marjorie thinks of him."

"I suppose so," said Wharton, laughing. "Anyway, there's no harm in it; and if he helps us to win for Greyfriars, that's all we want."

"What-ho!"

There was little doubt that Wharton's explanation of the mystery was the correct one. The Bounder had shown on more than one occasion a curious regard for Marjorie's opinion.

It was curious; but it was a decent trait in his character, and the chums thought a little the better of him for it.

That Vernon-Smith was to play centre-half in the Ramblers' match was announced to the Remove at once, and it was received with mingled feelings.

Each of the fellows who wanted to play centre-half came to Cherry to speak to him about it, and at intervals during the morning Bob had a very uncomfortable time.

He hated saying no to anybody; and to refuse a fellow he liked, for the sake of playing a fellow he disliked intensely, was hard.

It would not have happened but for Wharton certainly; but Bob felt grateful to Harry for his aid on that occasion. He felt that in the way things had gone, Harry had proved himself the proper person to captain the team; but for him, there would have been no reliable centre-half.

Pleasant or not, Bob had to reply plainly to the rejected candidates, and he left them all with the firm conviction that he was a fool.

But upon the whole, no one could deny that Vernon-Smith was the fellow who ought to have the place. He had proved that he was fit for it. Whether he was reliable enough to stick to footer, and make himself useful in other matches, was another question. Sufficient for the day was the football match thereof, Bob Cherry thought. If they got safely through the Ramblers' match, the future could take care of itself.

After morning lessons that Saturday, the Remove footballers made themselves ready for the match. The Ramblers were expected to arrive at three o'clock.

"You're going over to fetch Marjorie, I suppose, Hazel?" Harry Wharton remarked to Hazeldene, after dinner.

Hazeldene looked sulky.

"I suppose so," he said; "Marjorie wants to see the match. She wanted to see me play."

"I'm sorry, old fellow."

"I don't see why Bob couldn't have put me in. It wasn't friendly to leave me out, anyway."

"Can't afford to think of friendship in footer, Hazel."

"Oh, rats!"

"Bob's responsible for everybody he puts in, and——"

"You'd have put me in."

Wharton shook his head.

"I'm afraid I shouldn't, on your present form, Hazel," he replied frankly. "If you don't think it worth while to keep up practice, how can you expect to be played in the Form eleven?"

Hazeldene sneered.

"Does Vernon-Smith keep up practice?"

"Well, no——"

"But you're playing him."

"Well, he's fit—he wouldn't be played if he were not. You're not fit, Hazel; you're not so strong and hard as the Bouncer, and you can't keep fit unless you try to. A couple of those rotten cigarettes do you more harm than three or four cigars would do him. He happens to be the right chap in the right place, and Bob is right in playing him—I advised it."

"Well, it's rotten."

"I'm sorry you think so. I don't see what else Bob could have done."

Hazeldene bit his lip, and went for his bicycle. His face was very sulky as he rode away towards Cliff House.

Hazeldene knew how much the chums of the Remove thought of his sister Marjorie, and how great was Marjorie's influence over them. Hazeldene was naturally weak in character; and he had certainly counted upon his relationship with Marjorie to weigh in the matter. Marjorie would be disappointed if he did not play, and he had expected that to count for much with the chums of the Remove.

It did, as a matter of fact; but not to the extent of making Bob Cherry play a fellow who had not taken the trouble to keep himself in form.

Marjorie and Clara were ready when Hazeldene arrived at Cliff House. They were standing by their bicycles at the garden gate, waiting for him.

Marjorie noticed at once the cloud on her brother's brow.

"Anything wrong, Hazel?" she asked hastily.

"No," he grunted.

"We shall have to hurry, if you're going to play," said Miss Clara, looking at her watch.

Hazeldene flushed.

"I'm not going to play," he said.

"Not!" exclaimed Marjorie, in surprise.

"No."

"I thought you were keeping goal for the Remove."

"So did I," said Hazeldene bitterly; "but Bob Cherry's decided not. He thinks Brown will keep goal better."

Marjorie looked distressed.

"I hope you've not been quarrelling with Bob, Hazel," she said.

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"Oh, no; I've been sacked in a perfectly friendly manner!" said her brother, with a sneer. "Cherry thinks I'm no good, and he's told me so, that's all."

"I'm sorry."

"I suppose you want to see the match?" said Hazeldene hesitatingly, thinking to himself that he would more than get his own back in the disappointment of the chums of the Remove if Marjorie did not appear that afternoon on the Remove ground. "You wouldn't like a spin instead. It's a glorious day for a ride."

"We promised Harry," said his sister.

"Yes, but——"

"And we're going," said Miss Clara, in her determined way.

Hazeldene looked sulky.

"Do you want to go, Marjorie?" he asked directly.

Marjorie looked distressed.

"They would be disappointed, and we promised them," she said. "I think we had better go, Hazel."

"Oh, all right, if you think more of those fellows than of your own brother!" said Hazel sulkily.

"It's not that. But——"

"Oh, I don't care; let's go!"

Miss Clara compressed her lips a little as she mounted her machine, and they remained compressed as she rode towards Greyfriars. Marjorie was looking distressed, as she did when her brother was wayward and unreasonable. Miss Clara was thinking that if Hazeldene were her brother instead of Marjorie's, she would box his ears soundly.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Ramblers' Match.

HARRY WHARTON ran to meet the cyclists as they came up to the gates of Greyfriars. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were close behind him. They greeted the girls warmly, and for the moment did not notice the sulky, dark face of Hazeldene.

"So glad you've come," exclaimed Harry. "Let me take your machine, Marjorie."

They walked to the ground together.

The Ramblers had not yet arrived, but there was a big crowd of Greyfriars juniors round the football ground.

The girls were conducted to the comfortable seats that had been arranged for them, Hazeldene slipping away unobserved.

Marjorie glanced round for her brother, but did not see him. Harry caught the expression on her face, and understood it. He said nothing, only wondering if Marjorie was offended at Hazel's being left out of the team. Bob Cherry understood, too, and, as usual with Bob, he blundered into words at once.

"I'm sorry about Hazel's not being in the team," he said.

Marjorie nodded.

"You see, he wasn't fit," exclaimed Bob, going very red. "If he had been fit I'd have played him like a shot."

"Yes?"

"Because I knew you'd be disappointed," Bob blundered on.

Marjorie smiled.

"You surely wouldn't think of me, in such a matter as selecting players for the football team," she said.

Bob looked relieved.

"Exactly," he agreed; "I wouldn't."

Miss Clara buried her mouth in her handkerchief to conceal a laugh, which she did not wholly conceal. Bob Cherry had a way of saying things better left unsaid when he was flurried. When he saw that Miss Clara was amused he hurried on from bad to worse, in his usual way.

"I wouldn't think of you at all," he said, reddening still more, "but——"

Wharton tapped him on the shoulder.

"Here are the Ramblers, Bob," he said.

The brake had arrived with the visiting team in it.

"Good," said Bob. "But you understand, Marjorie——"

"Perfectly."

"I wanted to play Hazel, only—he was no good, and——"

"Exactly."

"Better leave it alone," whispered Wharton, as he hurried Bob Cherry away towards the new arrivals. "Marjorie understands better than you can explain."

Bob Cherry gasped a little.

"Yes, I—I suppose so," he said. "I suppose it's all right. She doesn't mind, does she, Wharton?"

"Well, a little, perhaps; that's only natural."

Bob Cherry paused.

"I—I wonder whether I could play Hazel after all?" he

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murmured. "After all, he used to keep goal jolly well. I wonder if Brown would mind if—if—"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"What's that, Bob? Making changes in the team ten minutes before kick-off?"

"Well, you see—"

"I don't see," said Harry Wharton decidedly. "I don't see, Bob. Brown's better at goal, much better than Hazel."

"Yes, but if—if he wouldn't mind—"

"It's not a question whether he minds. It's a question of what's good for the team," said Harry sharply.

"Yes, I know, but—but I hate disappointing Marjorie."

"My dear chap—"

"Suppose after all I put Brown at centre-half, and Hazeldene in goal, and left the Bounder out. After all, he's a rotten bounder—"

"Don't be an ass, Bob."

"But—"

"Leave the team as it is. You'd only offend Marjorie if she thought you'd played her brother to please her, against your better judgment."

"You really think so?"

"I'm certain of it."

"Well, in—in that case I'd better let things alone."

"Much better."

Bob Cherry wiped a bead of perspiration from his brow.

"I've had enough of captaining the eleven," he said.

"I'll see this match through, and resign as soon as it's over."

"Bob—"

"I mean it. I'm not built for a footer skipper. I can back anybody up all the time, but Nature didn't mean me to lead."

Wharton nodded. He felt that Bob was right. He was far too easy and good-natured for the post he had taken on, in such a keen and unruly Form as the Greyfriars Remove.

The chums greeted the Ramblers—a fine-looking team, older and heavier than the Remove eleven. There was something in the manner of the Ramblers which hinted that they expected an easy victory at Greyfriars, though they were too polite to say anything of the sort. The Ramblers were a town team, and came from Courtfield, and their captain—Darrell—was a clerk in the post-office there. The Ramblers had a good reputation as a junior team, and the Greyfriars Remove were very anxious to take them down if possible.

The look of the Ramblers showed very plainly that they did not expect to be taken down at Greyfriars.

Bulstrode came lounging down to the field some minutes before the kick-off. The Remove bully was looking sulky and ill-tempered.

He felt very keenly his exclusion from the match, especially in favour of a fellow like Vernon-Smith. It is probable that in his heart Bulstrode wished that the Remove would get a defeat.

Skinner joined him.

"Bob Cherry seems to have started as captain on the principle of making as much dissatisfaction as possible," Skinner remarked. "He's left you out, and Hazeldene out, and a good many fellows who thought they ought to be in."

Bulstrode nodded with a grunt.

"I suppose I had to expect it," he said.

"There's another fellow left out who thinks that he ought to play," said Skinner, with a grin.

"Who's that?"

"Todd."

Bulstrode grinned too.

"But it's all right," said Skinner. "I'm going to be a good friend to Alonzo."

"How do you mean?"

Skinner took a fragment of paper from his pocket and scribbled on it in pencil.

Bulstrode watched him curiously.

"Dear Todd,—Get into your things quick. I shall want you. Hurry.—R. C."

Skinner folded up the note.

"You're going to send that to Todd?"

"Exactly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be fun. He's in his study now, mugging up Latin," said Skinner. "I'll send a fag with this."

He called to a diminutive fag of the Second Form.

"Take this to Todd, will you, Myers," he said. "He's in his study."

"Oh, all right!" said Myers.

He hurried off with the note.

Skinner grinned in anticipation. That the Duffer of Greyfriars would take the note seriously, as if it came from Bob Cherry, he had not the slightest doubt. Alonzo Todd never suspected that his leg was being pulled until the process was very far advanced.

That he would bolt into his football things, and come tearing down to the ground, was certain, as soon as he received the note by Myers.

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The two young rascals grinned and waited. Bob Cherry and Darrell were tossing for choice of goal.

The kick-off fell to Greyfriars. The ball was placed, and the footballers were ready, when a hurrying figure came bounding from the direction of the school.

Skinner chuckled.

"There he is!"

It was Alonzo Todd.

He was in football garb, and he had a coat on over it but the coat was fluttering wildly behind him in the breeze for in his hurry he had omitted to put his arms in the sleeves.

"My hat!" exclaimed Stott. "Look at that!"

"Here comes the Duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd paused a second to throw his coat down, and then bolted upon the field of play, and rushed up to Bob Cherry.

"Here I am!" he exclaimed.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo Is Ready.

"WHAT!"

"Ass!"

"Get off the ground!"

"Get off the earth!"

"Buzz away!"

The footballers yelled those things at Todd, who stood gasping breathlessly. He simply gasped in return, and blinked at them.

"I'm here!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I can see you're here," said Bob Cherry. "Now get somewhere else, before I kick you off the field."

"My dear Cherry—"

"You're stopping the game!" roared Bob.

"But—"

"Who on earth's this?" exclaimed Darrell, with a glance at the weedy Todd, with his angular limbs and ill-fitting garb. "What does he want?"

"A thick ear, I should think," said Nugent.

"The thickfulness of the esteemed ear should be terrific."

"I've come—"

"Yes, now go."

"But—"

"Get off!"

"Clear out!" roared Bob Cherry, shaking the Duffer by the shoulders. "Don't you understand plain English? Clear out!"

"But—"

"We're going to play footer, you ass."

"Footer, you ass," stammered the Duffer, repeating words in the parrot-like way he had when he was confused.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get off the field."

"Off the field!"

"Clear out!"

"Out!"

"My hat, I shall pulverise him soon!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with him. Why can't he understand?"

"Understand?"

"Will you get out of the way?"

"The way?"

The Ramblers were all laughing now. Some of the Removites were, and some were furious.

Bob Cherry was one of the latter. It was no time now for the curious freaks of the Duffer of Greyfriars.

Bob shook him.

"Go back!" he said.

"Back?"

"Yes. You're stopping the game."

"The game?"

"Kick him out!" howled the juniors.

"But—but you sent for me!" howled the Duffer at last, recovering his wits a little.

"What! Sent for you?"

"Here's your note!"

"My note!" said Bob Cherry dazedly.

"Yes, look!"

Todd held up the note.

"You champion ass!" growled Bob Cherry. "That's not my writing!"

"Oh!"

"It's Skinner's, as a matter of fact. You've been japed. Get off the ground."

"I consider it mighty unfeeling of Skinner," said Todd.

"It is a rotten joke. Are you quite sure you don't want me, Cherry?"

"Yes, ass. Buzz off!"

"I am quite willing to play——"

"Go away!"

"I should be very glad to make myself useful in any way. My Uncle Benjamin——"

"Will you go?" gasped Bob Cherry. "The eleven's full up. You're awfully valuable, but we can't play you. Now go."

"Perhaps you could play twelve men?" suggested Todd.

"Eh?"

"I presume the number of a football team is not fixed? It is not like the laws of the Medes and Persians, I suppose?" said Alonzo. "Suppose you play a side of twelve?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Darrell.

Todd blinked at him.

"I see no cause for laughter in that suggestion," he said. "I regard it as an eminently practical one. I think that, as my Uncle Benjamin says——"

What Uncle Benjamin had said was lost to the Remove footballers, for a couple of juniors seized Todd and bore him violently off the field.

He was dropped in the grass outside the field of play, very much astonished and considerably indignant.

Then the ball was kicked off, and play began.

Alonzo Todd sat up in the grass.

"Dear me!" he said. "I am quite breathless, and I feel very rumpled. I have been treated very rudely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd blinked at the juniors. He blinked at Marjorie and Clara, who were sitting near him. Then he staggered to his feet.

"Sit down!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Eh?"

"We can't see through you!"

"Oh! I am sorry to incommode you in any way," said Todd.

"Well, get aside, then!"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Then why don't you do it?" roared Stott.

"My dear Stott——"

Several feet urged Todd out of the line of vision before he could get any further, and he disappeared.

The match was fairly started now.

Ramblers and Removites were playing up well, and the contest was fast and hot from the very beginning.

A thick crowd round the ground watched the play with keen interest. Alonzo Todd was as interested as anybody, as soon as he had recovered his breath. He found himself near Skinner, and he asked Skinner questions, to all of which Skinner replied in the most obliging way.

"What is Cherry kicking the ball in that peculiar way for, first with one foot and then with the other?" Todd asked.

"Oh, that's to make it soft," said Skinner.

"Make it soft!"

"Yes. I suppose you know that a football gets harder and harder the longer you use it," said Skinner solemnly. "By the time the first half is over, it will be like a solid chunk of iron!"

"Dear me! I did not know that."

"If you get near the ball in the interval, and try to dig a darning needle into it, you'll find that the needle won't go in," said the unveracious Skinner. "It's a most remarkable thing, and has attracted great notice in--in scientific circles. A chap wrote to the--the 'Lancet' about it."

"Did he really?"

"Yes. You should certainly try that experiment with the darning needle. It's a very interesting one," said Skinner.

"I shall certainly do so. What you have said interests me very much," said Todd.

"Better still to use a bradawl—it's stronger," said Skinner.

"You can borrow one of Gosling, the porter."

"Oh, certainly!"

"You give a sudden, sharp jab at the footer with it, and the awl will glance off like—like anything!"

"How very odd!"

"Only don't tell any of the fellows what you are going to do. Let it come as a surprise to them," said Skinner.

"Oh, certainly!"

And Alonzo Todd went away to borrow the awl, and Skinner and Bulstrode chuckled.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Going Strong!

THE first half of the Ramblers' match fought on. Bob Cherry's team played up wonderfully well, but they had all their work cut out to keep level with the visitors.

Harry Wharton played as keenly as if he had been still captain of the Remove team. In fact, during the play, more than once he forgot that he was not captain, and the

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team forgot it, too, and they looked more to him for leadership than to Bob Cherry. And Bob was very well content to have it so.

As for Vernon-Smith, there was no doubt that he was playing up finely. Even the fellows who considered they ought to have had the place, had to admit that the Bounder was proving himself worthy of his selection.

Vernon-Smith certainly had one fault, and that a serious one. He was a selfish player. He was more inclined to take risky shots at goal than to feed his forwards.

But, as it happened, one of his shots at goal "came off," and the Bounder earned a cheer from the crowd, the first cheer that had ever been given for him at Greyfriars.

Wharton frowned a little.

The shot had materialised, certainly, but it was one that ought never to have been made; and the principle was the thing that needed to be observed in football as well as in everything else.

Bob Cherry was pleased, however, and it was not for Wharton to say anything.

Vernon-Smith caught Wharton's look, and grinned. He did not mean to pay any attention to Wharton's opinion. Wharton was not captain.

The play went on.

Vernon-Smith's goal was the only one taken by the home side so far, and the first half was drawing to its end.

The Ramblers had scored once, and so honours were easy so far.

Then luck came to Harry Wharton.

A fine, combined attack of the Greyfriars forwards ended in a well-shot goal from the foot of Harry Wharton, and the crowd cheered loudly.

"Goal! Goal!"

Darrell's face set grimly. He was determined to equalise before the whistle went, and he muttered a few words to the Ramblers as they went back to the centre of the field.

Then the Ramblers made a big effort.

They pressed the home team hard, and succeeded in beating the forwards; but they found a tower of strength at centre-half.

Vernon-Smith showed up well.

There was one minute of terrific play, in which most of the brunt fell upon the Bounder of Greyfriars. Tom Brown was ready in goal, feeling that he would be needed. But he was mistaken. The thick press broke up as the ball was cleared, going away to midfield from the Bounder's foot.

The forwards were on it in a flash, and rushing it on.

The crowd cheered heartily.

All of them could see that the Bounder had done well, and the cheer was all the more hearty because such play was so unlooked-for on the part of the Bounder.

The Ramblers rallied, and the ball came back, but they did not succeed in getting it into Tom Brown's citadel, and the whistle went for the interval with the score still two to one.

Greyfriars was ahead on the first half!

The players crowded off, the Removites very well satisfied with themselves, and the Ramblers determined to make up lost ground in the second half.

Todd came blinking up as the warm and perspiring footballers were rubbing themselves down or sucking lemons.

"Where is the ball?" he asked.

Todd had his hand in his pocket. The sharp awl, borrowed of Gosling, was in his hand. He was going to try that interesting experiment Skinner had suggested to him.

"The ball!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Cherry."

"What ball? This is a football match, not a ball," said Tom Brown. "Are you going to ask me for the last waltz?"

"My dear Brown——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want to see the ball," said Todd mildly. "Skinner has told me something very interesting about the state of a football after the first half of a match, and I want to see for myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you can see the ball, I suppose," said Bob Cherry. "Here you are!"

The fellows all looked at Todd with interest as he took the football in his hand. What Skinner had told him they did not know, but they had no doubt that it was something wonderful, which no one but the Duffer of Greyfriars could have believed.

Todd blinked at the ball.

"Dear me! It seems soft enough," he said.

"Soft!" said Nugent.

"Yes. I expected it to be hard."

"Hard!"

"Yes, certainly! However, I will try the experiment."

Alonzo Todd drew the awl from his pocket, and slashed at the footer. Bob Cherry gave a wild yell.

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"You ass! Stop!"

"Stop it!"

But it was too late.

The keen edge of the awl was right through the leather, and the business career of that football was over.

Todd stared at it in amazement.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Skinner was quite wrong."

"What!"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"What have you done that for?"

"Skinner told me that——"

"You frabjous ass! You've ruined the ball!"

"I'm so sorry! Skinner said——"

"Oh, kick him out! You'll have to pay for that ball, Todd."

"Dear me! I should be very pleased to do so, if I had any money. Unfortunately, I have none. However——"

"Kick him out!"

"My dear fellows——"

"Out you go!"

Alonzo Todd was kicked out. It was the least they could do. He was left in a very breathless state on the grass, gasping.

"Hallo!" said Skinner, looking down at him. "Have you tried that experiment yet?"

Todd blinked up at him reproachfully.

"Yes, I have tried it, Skinner, and you were quite mistaken."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The awl penetrated the ball immediately. It was quite soft. They say I have ruined the footer. I certainly did not intend to do so. It was a very unpleasant occurrence altogether, especially as I was treated with some violence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see any cause for laughter. I have a considerable ache in all my bones. My Uncle Benjamin——"

"Try the experiment again," suggested Skinner. "They'll have another ball for the second half. When the game's over get near the ball, and try another jab. You'll see then——"

"My dear Skinner, I decline to do anything of the sort. I have been treated with violence already, and if anything should go wrong with the experiment I am afraid the fellows would be very angry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd staggered to his feet. The second half of the match was commencing, but it had no interest now for the Duffer of Greyfriars.

"Upon the whole, I think I will retire," he said. "I think I had better rub my limbs with embrocation. Perhaps you would like to come and rub them for me, Skinner?"

"Awfully, I don't think!" said Skinner.

"Or you, Bulstrode——"

"Rats!" said Bulstrode.

"How very odd! I am always willing to be obliging," said Alonzo mildly. "My Uncle Benjamin says that one should always be obliging. I really think——"

But Bulstrode and Skinner did not listen to what Alonzo Todd really thought. They turned to watch the game, and the Duffer of Greyfriars ambled off towards the house in search of embrocation.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Well Won.

BOB CHERRY and his team looked very businesslike as they lined up for the second half. They were one goal ahead of the Ramblers, but they realised that they had been lucky.

The real struggle was yet to come.

The Ramblers put all they had into the tussle of the second half.

They were good men and true, and they played up well, and again and again their heavy charges brought them right up to the Greyfriars goal.

But the Remove team were hard to beat.

Vernon-Smith, at centre-half, showed himself in fine form either in attack or in defence, and Tom Brown in goal was almost invulnerable.

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But the fight was hard and hot, and the crowd looked on with intense interest, ready for any development.

Marjorie and Clara watched with all their eyes.

Marjorie would have been glad to see her brother in goal, but she realised very clearly that he would not have been so strong there as the New Zealand junior, and she did not blame Bob Cherry. And even Hazeldene, as he watched the game, grew less discontented, as it was borne in upon him that he could never have stood up to the fierce attacks that were made upon the Remove goal.

Tom Brown was doing wonderfully well. Some of the team were showing signs of the gruelling they had had, but not so the goalkeeper. He was as fresh as paint.

The game had been a hard one all through, and both sides showed signs of wear and tear.

Through the whirl of the varying play one thing was clear to most of the spectators—that without Vernon-Smith the Greyfriars defence would have been broken up a dozen times, and without Harry Wharton the forwards would not have worked together anything like so well.

Bob Cherry realised it as clearly as anybody.

Wharton himself as a forward, and Wharton's selection as centre-half, were winning the game.

Winning it they certainly were, for the Ramblers, in spite of their greatest efforts, were failing to score.

Again and again they strove their hardest, but the Remove defence baffled them, and only once did they succeed in penetrating to the home goal.

Then, for a few minutes only, the score was level.

It was only a brief glimpse of hope to the Ramblers.

Wharton scored within a few minutes, and Greyfriars were three to two, and then Bob Cherry slammed the ball into the net.

Greyfriars were too far ahead to be touched now.

The Ramblers fought on, but they had not changed the score by the time the blast of the whistle put an end to the struggle.

The players went off the ground with the Remove score at four and that of the visitors at two.

Greyfriars Remove had beaten the Ramblers.

There was a roar of cheering to greet them as they came off the ground.

The winning team were surrounded by a crowd of congratulating fellows, slapping them on the shoulders in high glee.

The victory over the Ramblers was an earnest of what the football season had in store for them.

The victory had been won under the lead of Captain Bob Cherry. But with the victory the captainship of Bob Cherry ceased to exist.

Bob Cherry put it plainly to the fellows as they crowded round.

"We're through with the Ramblers," he said. "Wharton won the game—Wharton and the chap he advised me to put in, against my own judgment. Wharton's captain of the Remove eleven. You can have it or not, but I'm done. I resign."

"Oh, rot!" said Ogilvy.

"I mean it—I resign."

All eyes were turned on Wharton then. He coloured, and hesitated. He had said that he would not take on the captaincy again till another captain had been tried. That had been done.

The junior hesitated, and caught Marjorie's eye in the crowd. His glance asked the girl what she thought, and Marjorie nodded.

That decided Wharton.

"All right," he said. "If the Form wants me I'll captain the team. I'm not going to stand for election, but if the Remove say they want me I'm ready."

There was not much doubt what the Remove would say. They did say they wanted Wharton, and without any more being said the former captain of the Remove slipped into his old place. Captain Bob Cherry had won his first and his last victory.

THE END.

NEXT TUESDAY.

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF!"

A Splendid, Long, Complete School-Football Story of Harry Wharton & Co.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, is investigating a murder case, where a seaman named Fleming has been killed for the sake of a pocket-book evidently of great value, of which he was the bearer. Dare and his friend, Professor MacAndrew, accidentally discover the rightful owner of the pocket-book in Ethel Selwyn, a girl whom the professor had befriended. At the same time they are aware that a man named Gilbert is in quest of the pocket-book also. Dare learns that a Chinese half-caste, called Peters, on board a yacht bound for the Canaries, has the pocket-book, so he and the professor give chase in a tug chartered from Gibraltar. They overtake the yacht, deserted, and on fire. They return to London, where Dare traces Gilbert, whom he now suspects of having the pocket-book, to a coffee-shop near Kennington Road. The young detective takes a room there, and then writes the Scotsman a detailed account of all that had taken place, since they last met. (Now go on with the Story).

The Contents of the Pocket-Book—Strange Instructions—Jamaica Cottage.

The last thing that Stanley Dare did before returning to the coffee-shop was to purchase a small amount of chloroform from a chemist whom he knew.

"It seems that the bed-room of a coffee-shop is again to be the scene of my attempt to secure the pocket-book," he mused.

"A different coffee-shop certainly, and a different man to contend with. A more dangerous man, perhaps, than the half-caste; but I have an advantage now which I did not possess before." He laughed lightly. "I shall be able to qualify as an expert burglar before I have done with this case," he added. "Already I feel almost like one."

He retired to his room shortly after ten o'clock. At eleven o'clock he heard Martin Gilbert enter the room next but one to him; but he allowed two hours more to elapse before he made any attempt to carry out the plan which was in his mind.

The house was in silence and darkness. Everyone in the place was in bed, except himself, and he hoped that everyone was also asleep.

The door of the room occupied by Martin Gilbert was locked, as he expected it would be; but the lock was quite an ordinary one. In five minutes he had the door open, and was inside the room.

At the instant Martin Gilbert stirred slightly, and sat bolt upright in bed. The blind had not been drawn down, and a faint light from the street-lamps came in through the window.

"Who are you?" demanded Gilbert fiercely. "And what do you want in this room?"

"I want to have a few words with you, Martin Gilbert," answered Dare, who remained perfectly cool and self-possessed. "Hush! Don't make a noise! Don't attempt to raise an alarm, or you will be the person to suffer, not me!"

"What is your game?" snarled Gilbert. "You seem to know me, but I don't want to know you. If you think—"

"I think you would be wiser if you kept silent," interrupted Dare. "A man who has deliberately planned to rob a fatherless girl, as you have done—Ah, would you?"

Gilbert had suddenly dived his hand under his pillow, and when he withdrew it he had a revolver in his grasp. The young detective leaped upon him, and pinned his right arm down so that he could not use the weapon.

Then there ensued a short, furious, but noiseless struggle. Dare had soaked a pad with the chloroform which he had purchased, and had it handy. Presently he had the opportunity of using it. Gilbert's limbs relaxed, and he lay quiet. The drug had done its work. He was unconscious.

"It was the only possible way," Dare said to himself, "of dealing with a fellow of his stamp. He will not recover for an hour at least. That ought to give me ample time."

As a matter of fact, a far shorter period of time was all that he needed. The pocket-book was under the pillow, close to where the revolver had been. With a low exclamation of triumph, Dare secured it.

"At last!" he murmured.

He crossed the room to the door. On the threshold he paused, and glanced back at the motionless figure on the bed.

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"You will not be likely to raise any alarm when you come to your senses, my friend," he said, "for you will understand why this visit was paid, though you may not be able to guess who your visitor was."

He closed the bed-room door and crept quietly down the stairs. Ten minutes later he was outside the house.

The amangement of the landlord of the coffeeshop was great when, on the following morning, he found an envelope on his desk containing a sovereign and a pencilled note. He spelled through the letter with some difficulty, for he had not had the benefit of the Board-school education which he affected to despise.

"I have had to take my departure," it ran, "somewhat earlier than I or you had expected. The enclosed sovereign will pay my bill and a bit over, though it may not allay your curiosity. But remember that a 'Still tongue makes a wise head.' You will never find out who I am unless I call in one day and tell you myself; so don't bother your head on the subject."

But the stout landlord of the coffeeshop has not taken the very excellent advice contained in the last paragraph of the note. He is continually "bothering his head" with vain guesses as to who his strange and generous lodger can be, but up to the present he has not solved the riddle.

"I'm thinking that Martin Gilbert will know it was you who paid him that unwelcome vecsit. Hech, laddie! Hoo simply even the maist astute of villains can sometimes be trapped!"

"The simplest methods are often the most effective," replied Stanley Dare to the professor's remarks. "But, so far as knowing or guessing that I was his assailant last night, I am not sure that Gilbert will hit upon the truth. He has more reason to suspect the half-caste, for he has no idea that I am following up the case on behalf of Ethel Selwyn. And during that brief struggle in the uncertain light he could not possibly have formed any idea of my height or build. My face was, of course, disguised."

This conversation was taking place in the breakfast-room of Professor MacAndrew's house at Chelsea, whither Dare had gone direct, arriving several hours before his letter. It was not yet daylight. They were having coffee and biscuits as they discussed the situation in all its bearings.

The pocket-book lay on the table between them. Dare had opened it, but, to their surprise, it contained nothing but a scrap of paper, with the following message written upon it:

"To my dear daughter Ethel,—This is my only legacy to you. Press the eye of the cat. I have not strength to write more.—R. SELWYN."

The professor had read the words on this scrap of paper over half a dozen times. His brows knitted. He was decidedly puzzled, as was Stanley Dare also.

"Press the eye of the cat," muttered the professor for the sixth time. "Noo, laddie, ye canna ca' that direction a very illuminating one. What cut will we press the eye of, for instance? And what guid could it dae? I'm minding that it might dae a muckle sight o' harm if it was a live cat whose eye ye pressed."

"I agree with you there," laughed the young detective. "The direction, so far as we can make out at present, seems to be absolutely meaningless. Yet we must not suppose that

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Captain Selwyn, while on his death-bed, would despatch a meaningless message to his only child."

"His mind may have been wandering," suggested the professor.

Stanley Dare shook his head.

"Would Fleming, the murdered seaman, have guarded this book as carefully as he did had he believed that Captain Selwyn was not in his right mind when he gave it into his charge?" he said. "I cannot think it possible."

"Eh, laddie, I had maist forgotten!" exclaimed MacAndrew suddenly. "We can soon hae a licht on the subject."

"How?"

"Why, by asking Ethel Selwyn if she can explain the meaning of the direction. The message is intended for her, so maybe she can explain it. She is staying here in the care o' my housekeeper, a guid auld soul, who looks after her weel."

He had jumped to his feet, and was going towards the door.

"What are you going to do?" called out Dare. "Surely you are not going to have Miss Selwyn roused up at this hour of the morning to ask her that question? It is only just four o'clock."

"Guid sakes, my brain's wandering, I think!" said the professor. "I'd forgotten it was so early. We maun wait until breakfast-time."

"Of course," assented Dare. "And in the meantime I will have three hours' sleep. I am feeling a bit drowsy."

Breakfast was at eight o'clock, and Ethel Selwyn, looking sweet and fresh and charming, now presided at Professor MacAndrew's breakfast-table.

It was not until the meal was over that the Scotsman—who had his peculiar little fads—handed the pocket-book to the girl.

"It contains your puir father's last message," he said, "but naething else. My young freend Dare has been successful, as I tauld you he would be. Read the words on the bit of paper, lassie, and presently we'll come back and ask ye if ye ken their meaning."

He glanced at Stanley Dare, and they quitted the room together, knowing that the girl would prefer to be alone when she had that last brief message from her beloved father in her hands.

For he was very thoughtful and tender-hearted for those who deserved and needed sympathy and consideration, was the Scotch professor, whom many people thought to be hard and stern, and almost devoid of feeling.

When he and Dare returned to the breakfast-room half an hour later they could see that the girl had been crying. Her eyes were red, and there were traces of tears still on her cheeks. MacAndrew crossed over to where she was seated, and took one of her hands in his.

"Now, lassie," he said gently, "if you feel equal to talking to us we're just wanting a wee bit o' information. It is important that we should obtain it somehow—important for your sake, ye ken."

"I will gladly give you all the information that it is in my power to give," replied Ethel Selwyn; "but I am afraid that it won't amount to much."

"You have read the words on the bit of paper," pursued MacAndrew. "Noo, do you ken what is meant by the direction, 'Press the eye of the cat'?"

"I can't understand it," the girl confessed. "It can't, of course, refer to a living cat, and we had no— Oh, I had almost forgotten! It may refer to that, although it hardly seems probable."

"Refer tae what?" asked the professor. "Think, lassie. What may not seem probable tae you might seem likely enough tae us."

"In the cottage where we used to live when my poor father was in England," replied the girl, "there was an old mahogany bureau in the sitting-room. It was rather fantastically carved, and among other carvings I remember that there was one of a cat. It was on the upper part of the bureau. Unless the direction refers to that carved animal I'm afraid I can't help you to a solution."

"I believe you have helped us to a solution, Miss Selwyn," cried Dare. "Where is this article of furniture now? Does it still belong to you?"

"Oh, no! The cottage and all the furniture was sold. The person who bought it lets it furnished."

"Where is it situated?"

"About a mile out from Newhaven," answered Ethel Selwyn. "It is named Jamaica Cottage."

"Do you happen to know whether it is occupied at present?"

"No, I do not; but I can give you the name and address of the person to whom it now belongs."

"Then if you will do that," said Dare, "I will go down to Newhaven this morning, and by hook or by crook I will get a sight of that bureau."

"And press the eye of the cat," said the professor.

"I shall not omit to do that, you may be sure," replied Stanley Dare, "even if I have to break into the house like

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a burglar to do so. I am getting quite proficient in that art."

Ethel Selwyn wrote down the name and address of the present owner of the cottage. They were: "Mrs. Bryce, the Laurels, High Street, Newhaven."

Armed with this, Stanley Dare made ready for the journey, but he had to go to his rooms first to change his clothes. He no longer needed a disguise.

"I'll meet ye at Victoria Station," said MacAndrew.

"You mean to come down with me, then?" replied Dare.

"D'ye think I'm going tae miss the final scene of this queer drama?" rejoined the professor. "We hae come tae the last act, and it may be a stirring one."

"I was thinking so myself."

"Ye see," continued MacAndrew, "there can be nae doot that Martin Gilbert found oot by some means or other that the pocket-book contained Captain Selwyn's legacy to his daughter, and, villain that he is, he would not scruple to rob an orphan. The words on the scrap o' paper cover up a secret that as yet neither you nor I, nor Miss Selwyn, have fathomed; but the mon Gilbert has fathomed it. He wanted the eluc, that was all, and he was ready tae commit murder tae gain it."

"He has committed murder," said Dare; "and, knowing his character, I should say that the motive is money—a large amount of money."

"Or its equivalent. We maun hasten, laddie. If we should be too late—"

Dare had snatched up a timetable.

"The next train for Newhaven," he cried, "is not until 12.30. We must have a special. Drive down to the station, and arrange about one at once, Mac. He may have the start of us."

"Martin Gilbert?"

"Yes. I will join you by the time the train is ready."

Both Professor MacAndrew and Dare were well known to the railway officials, and a special train, consisting of an engine, guard's van, and one carriage, was got ready in a remarkably short space of time. It was exactly a quarter-past eleven when it steamed out of Victoria Station, and, with a clear line, it made the journey of fifty-six miles in the record time of fifty minutes.

The engine-driver, stoker, and guard, were liberally "tipped" for this satisfactory piece of work, and then Dare and the professor made for the Laurels.

Mrs. Bryce proved to be a sour-visaged, snappish dame, who informed them that Jamaica Cottage was to be let furnished, but that a gentleman had called that morning respecting it.

"He told me that he was an old friend of Captain Selwyn, the former owner," concluded Mrs. Bryce, "so I let him have the key to look over the place. If you will call here again in about an hour's time, I shall be able to tell you whether he has decided to take it."

"Thank ye!" said MacAndrew. "Guid-morning!"

They hurried off without troubling to ask any more questions of the sour-visaged lady, and as soon as they were clear of the town they set off at a run along the road.

"There it is!" cried Dare.

The professor had not the breath to reply. He had not done much running of late, and a "fast half-milo" took it out of him somewhat.

The cottage was a pretty, ivy-clad residence within sight of the sea, but they did not then pay any heed to its beauties. The front door was closed, but not locked, and Dare opened it quietly.

"Swiftly and silently," he whispered to the professor. These were their watchwords.

MacAndrew nodded as he followed Dare into the passage. Then he closed and bolted the door behind them. Ethel Selwyn had told them which room the bureau was in when she last occupied the cottage, and there was no reason to suppose that any of the heavy articles of furniture had been moved from their original positions.

They made their way to this room, and so noiseless were their movements that a nervous bird would scarcely have been disturbed by them.

The room door was open. This may have been a measure of extreme caution on the part of the man who was ahead of them. He had left it open in order that he might more easily hear anyone approaching. With anyone else it might have been regarded as sheer carelessness, but it was hard to suppose that Martin Gilbert would be careless.

Stanley Dare entered the room first. On the soft carpet his footsteps made no sound. He came to a halt just inside the door, raising his hand warningly. The professor moved noiselessly up to his side.

The sitting-room, an apartment of moderate size, was furnished plainly but comfortably. At the further side of the room from where they were standing, in a recess by

the window, was the old-fashioned bureau, which was the only thing in the house which possessed any interest for them.

The only inanimate thing, that is, But there was an animate object which riveted their attention, even to the exclusion of the bureau, for the time being.

It was a man who was standing with his back to them. He was the man whom they expected to find in the cottage—Martin Gilbert.

As they stood there gazing at him, he in turn stood gazing at the carving of the cat, which was right over the centre of the bookcase that stood on top of the bureau. It was really a well-executed carving, the domestic animal being represented as lying down, with its front paws tucked under its chest.

Being in profile, it, of course, had only one eye visible to the spectator. Dare noted the fact instantly, and the direction which had once seemed so strange was clear enough now.

"Press the eye of the cat."

Martin Gilbert spoke the words aloud at that moment, with an expression of the most intense satisfaction. He was gloating over the mere thought of the fortune which he firmly believed, lay just within his grasp.

"Anyone is welcome to the pocket-book now," he muttered. "The words on the scrap of paper are all that I wanted. Well, here goes!"

He reached up his hand, and pressed his forefinger hard upon the cat's eye. There was a soft "click," and the portion of the woodwork of which the body of the cat was composed, swung open on invisible hinges, revealing a fair-sized recess.

With a cry of triumph, Martin Gilbert drew out a big leather case, with a brass fastening.

"At last!" he exclaimed. "Mine at last!"

"No, not yours, Martin Gilbert."

It was Stanley Dare who had spoken, and on hearing his voice Gilbert swung round sharply.

"You!" he cried, dropping the case. "You!"

"And my friend Professor MacAndrew," added Dare, in his customary cheerful tones. "We are here on behalf of Captain Selwyn's daughter, Miss Ethel Selwyn, and I must trouble you to hand over to our charge that leather case which you have in your possession, and which is her property."

"So that is your game, eh?" he snarled, grabbing the case again. "You first act for me, and then, having gained all the information that you require, you start on your own hand. Of course, you don't expect me to believe that you are here on behalf of Miss Selwyn, or that you would give her this case and its contents if once you got possession of it?"

"Do you intend to give it to her?" asked Dare.

"No," replied Gilbert boldly. "It is my property, and I intend to keep it."

"You might have saved yourself that lie," returned the young detective. "Although I suppose that a lie, more or less, is not of much consequence to a man who has so many crimes to his account."

"Crimes!"

"I have said so. Among others—murder!"

"You dare to accuse me of—"

"The murder of Harper Custance? Yes. I accuse you of that crime, for I boarded the yacht Amazon before she was utterly destroyed by fire. I need not tell you what I saw upon her deck."

Gilbert reeled back as though he had been struck. For a moment the coolness and self-possession of that hardened villain deserted him. But he soon recovered himself, and, with a savage oath, snatched a revolver from his pocket.

Yet he did not raise it. His eyes became suddenly fixed upon the door with a startled gaze, as a man might stare at the appearance of a person whom he believed to be dead.

Stanley Dare stepped back against the wall, taking up a position whence he could command every part of the room, and then he looked towards the door. A man was standing on the threshold.

It was Peters, the half-caste!

Martin Gilbert—The End of the Case.

"The murder of Harper Custance!" echoed the half-caste. "You are right, Mr. Dare; this man is guilty of that crime. There is no love lost between you and me"—he was addressing his words to the young detective, though he kept his eyes fixed all the time on Martin Gilbert—"but I am not remembering that now. So far as I can understand, all that you require is that leather case. Take it, and leave Martin Gilbert and I alone to settle our dispute."

"I have no dispute with you!" cried Gilbert sullenly.

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"Perhaps 'dispute' is the wrong word to use," said Peters. "I make mistakes sometimes in the English language. It is not my native tongue."

"Why are you here?" demanded MacAndrew.

"For vengeance!" replied the half-caste. "That man"—he pointed again to Gilbert—"killed my master, Mr. Harper Custance, the one person in the world for whom I had any affection. 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life!' That is the old law—the only law which I have consistently obeyed throughout my career."

"I can well believe it," said the professor. "But ye'll no be putting that law intae practice here. Martin Gilbert will answer for his crimes before a judge and jury, as you also will have to answer for yours."

"Not at your bidding."

Suddenly a knife gleamed in the half-caste's hand. He made a spring forward.

"Look out, Dare!" yelled the professor.

But the young detective had already made a bound across the room to intercept the man. He had gripped him by the shoulder, when of a sudden there was a ringing report, and Stanley Dare felt something sear his arm like red-hot iron against it.

The bullet had wounded him slightly, causing him to release his hold of Peters. It was Gilbert who had fired. He had aimed at the half-caste, but missed him by an inch, and Dare was the sufferer.

This act proved to be Martin Gilbert's undoing. The miss was fatal. Many a time has a man's life depended on the accuracy of his aim, and this was to be one more instance added to the list.

No sooner had Dare's grip on him relaxed than the half-caste, who was lithe and supple as a panther, made a bound clean over a chair, and right on to the man whom he had sworn to kill.

The professor tried to interfere, but he was too late.

A frightful shriek of agony and despair broke from Martin Gilbert's lips. The one shriek, then he became silent, and remained silent evermore.

The half-caste rose to his feet.

"You have killed him!" gasped MacAndrew, in accents of horror.

"Yes, I have killed him," replied the other calmly. "For what other purpose have I been tracking him ever since I heard of my master's death?"

Stanley Dare closed the door of the room and stood before it. He was only able to use his left arm now, for the bullet wound on his right was bleeding freely. The hasty bandage which he had made with his handkerchief only served to partially stop the flow of blood.

"This is the second murder which you have committed within my knowledge," he said sternly. "John Fleming, the seaman, was the first. It will be my duty to detain you until the police can be summoned."

The half-caste laughed scornfully.

"The police don't often come this way," he said. "Jamaica Cottage stands in a lonely position, for there is no other house within half a mile of it. Few people pass it. I have ascertained all that. Do you mean, then, to wait here until a policeman comes within hail? You will be tired of waiting."

Dare drew a pair of light but very strong handcuffs from his pocket, and tossed them over to MacAndrew.

"I have only my left hand," he said, "but I can shoot straight with it. I will keep him covered—"

"Fools! Keep clear of me! I am desperate!"

The professor had moved towards him, but the half-caste, who was unmatched in cunning, instead of trying to avoid him, sprang to his side, so that he was shielded by the Scotsman's body in case Dare should use his revolver.

There was a brief, sharp struggle, the crash of splintering glass, and then, as MacAndrew staggered back, the half-caste jumped through the window, raced across the garden, and in a few seconds had disappeared.

"Are you hurt, Mac?" cried Dare.

"No, laddie," was the reply. "But the deil has the strength of twa men; I couldna hauld him."

"He mustn't escape!" exclaimed Dare. "Hang it, if I could only— But I feel so dizzy I can't do anything."

"Stay where ye are, laddie."

The professor had pulled himself together, and, climbing out through the window, was soon hot in pursuit of the murderer.

Stanley Dare sank down on to a couch. He was faint through loss of blood. But after a while the faintness passed off, and he crossed the room to where Martin Gilbert was lying motionless on the floor.

His hands were clenched, his lips pressed tightly together, and his solitary eye staring upward with a look still in it of malignity and hate and fear.

"Who shall say that the fate which has overtaken him is not well deserved?" muttered the young detective. "A

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

murderer himself, he has met his death at the hands of another murderer."

For two hours Dare remained alone in the cottage with the dead man. It was an unpleasant experience, although he was well used to gruesome sights, and the presence of death was by no means unfamiliar to him. Then, to his relief, he heard footsteps on the gravel path outside, and Professor MacAndrew shortly afterwards entered the room.

"Well, Mac, what news?" asked Dare.

"Mon, I've had mair rinning the morn than I've done for the last twelve months," replied MacAndrew, as he sank into a chair. "The fellow had a guid start o' me, and I couldna keep him in sicht lang, but he made the mistake of heading for the beach instead of gaeing inland. I got the help of a coastguard and a young fisherman, telling them what had happened, and they joined me in the chase."

"Is he captured?"

"Ay, ay, he's safe enough the noo," continued the Scotsman. "They ran him to earth away beyond Seaford. But he fought like a fiend tae the very last, giving the coastguard an unco' nasty dig wi' his knife. But the young fisherman—a brawny sea-dog he was—just swung his arm round once, and gave the half-caste sic a clout under the lug that he went doon like a pole-ax'd bullock. By the time that he recovered the handcuffs were on him. He is in Newhaven police-station now."

"Will they send an ambulance for this?"

Dare pointed to the inanimate form of Martin Gilbert.

"They should be here soon," answered MacAndrew.

"Listen, noo! This will be them!"

There was the tramp of feet and the sound of wheels, and an inspector and two constables entered the room. There were the usual questions asked and statements taken down; but, of course, Stanley Dare's name was well known to the inspector, so a lot of the usual red-tape formality was dispensed with.

"It's a queer ending to the whole business," said the professor, when he and Dare were once more left alone. "It commenced wi' a tragedy, and it has ended wi' one. It would be as weel"—he paused, and laid his hand upon the big leather case—"tae open this thing," he went on, "before we hand it owre tae the lassie. Who kens what it contains?"

"I believe that Gilbert knew," said Dare; "but now there is no one alive that knows, until we learn the secret."

"Then we will learn it now."

The case, when opened, was found to contain a considerable quantity of precious stones—diamonds, rubies, and pearls—and some gold ornaments of curious workmanship, evidently collected by Captain Selwyn during his visits to different parts of the world.

"They must be worth at least thirty thousand pounds," said Dare, as he closed the case. "A big stake to play for."

"Yon jewels are stained wi' blood," said the Scotsman, who had a strain of superstition in him, like many of his countrymen. "They'll carry nae luck wi' them. We maun persuade the lassie tae sell them."

Twenty-four hours later, Stanley Dare, Ethel Selwyn, and Professor MacAndrew were once more seated at breakfast. The girl had just heard the story of the final act of the drama, and her eyes, when not suffused with tears, were wide with astonishment.

"If ye'll tak' my advice, lassie," MacAndrew was saying, "ye'll sell these jewels, and invest the money that they fetch. Ye'll hae a settled income then."

"I will do whatever you advise," replied the girl. "You have both been so kind and good to me that the possession of money seems of no account beside the fact that I have gained two such friends."

It may be mentioned here that the jewels and other valuables when sold realised no less a sum than thirty-two thousand pounds, which, when invested in good securities, brought Ethel Selwyn in an income of fifteen hundred a year.

"I want to ask you a favour, professor," said Ethel Selwyn, breaking the silence after a long pause, "although I have received so many favours at your hands that I ought to be ashamed to ask another."

"It is granted before it is asked, lassie."

"It is that you will allow me to be a daughter to you. I, who have no father now—"

"There's naething ye could have asked, lassie," said the professor, in a gentle voice, "that would give me greater pleasure. Many years ago—Weel, weel, why talk of the past? It canna return. It's sad work tae talk of what might have been, yet the thought comes tae me that if all things had happened as I had wished, I might now have had a daughter about your age."

His hand was resting on the girl's shoulder, and in his eyes there was a far-away look, as memories of the past came up before his mind—sacred memories, not to be disturbed.

Stanley Dare rose, and stole softly from the room.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 135.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

EVERY
TUESDAY.

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ONE
PENNY.

A Nameless Client—"There is a Mystery"—Suspicious— The Owners of the Princess Ida.

"For the present," said the queer client, "I desire to be anonymous. If you wish to refer to me in your books, give me a number. You may learn my name by the time you have brought the case to a conclusion, or you may not. It will depend greatly on whether you succeed or fail. In any case, my name is of no consequence, as I shall not be a principal actor in—well, let us say, in this drama."

"I hope I shall succeed," observed Stanley Dare.

"I hope so, too," replied the nameless client, "if only for your own sake; for your failure will probably mean that your career has been suddenly ended by a violent death. I want you to clearly understand that, if my suspicions are correct, you will be running a considerable amount of danger in making your investigations. So if, under those circumstances, you prefer not to undertake—"

"Mon alive," broke in Professor MacAndrew, "ye canna hae heard muckle o' Stanley Dare if ye think that the prospect of danger would deter him. He cares little about cases whaur there is nae risk. It is the saut o' life tae him."

The client, with the bronzed and wrinkled face and iron-grey hair, carefully snipped the end from a cigar.

"You have no objection to my smoking, I suppose? Thank you." He lit the cigar, and puffed away in silence for about thirty seconds. Then he continued the conversation. "I have heard a great deal of Mr. Dare," he said, "but whether danger has a charm for him or not, I wish him to understand clearly the risks he may have to run. But I have not yet given you a detailed statement of the facts so far as I know them."

"I am anxious to hear them," said Dare, producing his notebook and pencil.

"Ten days ago," pursued the nameless client, "I returned to England from a cruise in the West Indies on board the steamship Princess Ida. She is a large and luxurious passenger steamer, fitted out by her owners purely for what are termed 'yachting cruises,' which means practically that she carries no cargo, and is not run continuously on any special route."

"Several shipping companies run one steamer on these so-called yachting cruises," said Dare. "There is an advertisement in to-day's 'Mail' about the Princess Ida. She is to sail in a week's time on a cruise in the Mediterranean."

"Exactly!" replied the client. "Passengers pay sixty guineas for the month's cruise, and it is pointed out in the advertisement that it is an exceptional opportunity for invalids to whom a sea voyage has been recommended, and so on. You know the usual style. Well, as I stated before, I was one of the passengers on the last cruise, which was to the West Indies. During the voyage two of the passengers died, and were buried at sea. You will note that point, Mr. Dare. They were buried at sea."

"That is quite usual, unless the ship is due in some port within four-and-twenty hours," said Dare.

"Just so. Everything, of course, was quite regular," continued the nameless client. "The obvious advantage of burial at sea is that the body cannot be exhumed for examination in case of a suspicion of foul play."

"Do you suggest that there was foul play in the case of the two passengers who died during the voyage?" asked the young detective.

"I do suggest it!"

"And you wish me to—"

"I wish you to find out whether my suspicions are correct, but particularly to keep watch over a young lady passenger who is making the Mediterranean trip for the benefit of her health. In order to do that, you will have to join the Princess Ida in some capacity. The lady's name is Violet Castleton. I have known her for some years, and I take a great interest in her, because—because she reminds me of a daughter that I lost. Watch over her, guard her, Mr. Dare, as you would your own sister. I believe she is in deadly peril."

"If that is the case, sir, why not lay the matter before her relatives?"

"For two reasons. Her only relative—an uncle—I verily believe desires her death. At the age of twenty-one Violet Castleton inherits a large fortune, but in the event of her death before coming of age, the whole of her money goes to Saul Bierce—this is, her uncle. You see now why it is impossible for me to make any representations to him. And in any case, he would not listen to anything I have to say, for we are by no means on friendly terms with each other."

"It is a very grave charge to bring against anyone," said Dare.

"I know it is," replied the other; "but I can't forget that the girl has no desire to make the voyage. She would much sooner remain in England. But Saul Bierce insists upon her

going, for the sake of her health. For the sake of her money, he should have said, which he is longing to gain possession of—the scoundrel!"

"Have you anything in the shape of proofs that such is his scheme—a diabolical one, if your suspicions are correct?" queried Dare.

"Nothing more than what I have told you," was the reply. "It is for you to find the proofs if you will undertake the case. I feel morally certain that he is plotting against Violet Castleton's life, and yet I am powerless to stretch out a hand to save her except in this way of engaging a clever detective to guard her, and bring the guilty scoundrels who are earning blood-money to justice!"

"Her uncle does not accompany her on the voyage, I understand?" said Dare.

"No. He remains on shore, where no suspicions can reach him. No doubt he will pay a very high sum for the murder—there is no other name for it—to be carried out slowly and surely on board the ship."

"I will undertake the case," replied Dare; "because if this young lady is really in peril, there must be such a vast network of fiendish villainy spread by some masters in the art of crime as the world at large can little dream of. With this case, if there is foundation for your suspicions, we are only on the fringe of it. If I can penetrate to the centre—But, there, I must not allow the thoughts of possible success and fame in the future to blind me to the realities of the present. I shall endeavour to obtain a berth on board the Princess Ida as a steward, but, failing that, I shall have to go as a passenger."

The nameless client took out a fat pocket-book from an inner pocket and counted out twenty ten-pound notes.

"Here are two hundred pounds," he said, "for expenses. If you want more later on, I will give you an address of a banker who will supply you with what you require. Spare no expense. I would sacrifice a fortune rather than a hair of Violet Castleton's head should be injured!"

"Ay, ay!" put in MacAndrew. "It's a queer business, I'm thinking. There's a mystery about the Princess Ida that will tax a' oor courage and skill tae clear up."

"Do you intend to assist, professor?" asked the client, in surprise.

"I'm thinking a sea voyage will dae me guid," replied MacAndrew. "The Princess Ida calls at Marseilles, I see, an' I'll just join her there. But I'll purchase my ticket in London, for I'd like to hae an interview wi' the owners. What dae they call themselves—Messrs. Vardon, Traill & Co."

Dare's client rose to take his leave.

"I shall see you again before the ship sails," he said. "And don't forget these facts—two passengers died on that vessel last voyage, and one on the previous voyage—all apparently from natural causes, and all were buried at sea. But I have found out that in two of the cases the nearest relatives to the deceased had very excellent reasons—from their point of view—for having in one case a cousin and in the other a nephew removed. And in the third case I have no doubt there were equally good reasons for putting out of the way an individual who was not likely to die quickly enough in the natural order of things to please those who would benefit by his death."

With these words the queer client passed out of the room and closed the door quietly behind him.

The stewards of the Princess Ida were either engaged at the docks by the purser or at the City office of the company, which was in Fenchurch Street, and after a short deliberation Stanley Dare decided to make his application for a berth at the office.

There were several reasons why this was the better course, but the principal one, from his point of view, was the fact that at the office he might chance to see a member of the "firm" that owned the steamer about which there had gathered so dark a cloud of mystery.

At about seven o'clock on the following morning, therefore, the young detective found himself standing on the steps of a rather dingy building which, once a private house, was now let out in suites of offices.

A brass plate on one of the door-posts bore the inscription:

"VARDON, TRAILL & CO.,

Shipowners.

West-End Office, 71A, Regent Street, W."

"The West End branch is evidently where the passenger booking is done," mused Stanley Dare, "while this place is where the business connected with the ship is carried on. Not a very inviting sort of entrance."

It certainly was not. The house was old, the passage dark and musty-smelling, and the staircase up which he made his way none too clean.

The offices were on the second floor, and consisted only of two rooms.

On the door of the back room was painted the word "Private," and on the door of the front room were the words "General office."

Dare entered the general office, and as he pushed open the door almost ran into the arms of a shabbily-dressed man who was coming out.

"I beg your pardon!" ejaculated Dare, and was about to pass on, under the impression that if this man was a clerk there would certainly be others in the room to whom he could state his business, when the shabby individual laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Who do you wish to see?" he demanded.

Dare explained the nature of his business.

"The stewards are usually engaged at the docks," pursued the clerk; "but now you are here, you had better wait and see Mr. Abrahams, for I know that some changes are being made in the stewards' department."

"Who is Mr. Abrahams?" asked Dare.

"The manager of the City office," was the reply. "He is one of the partners in the firm into the bargain, so if you make a good impression on him you are pretty certain to be engaged."

Dare thanked the clerk for this friendly hint, and took his seat on a chair, to await the arrival of the manager.

"He won't be long," said the clerk, and left him there in the empty office.

"They take matters easily here," thought Dare, "or else the staff of clerks is limited to one, but as the Princess Ida doesn't take cargo, and the passenger business is done at the West-End office, I suppose that one is sufficient."

The room in which he was seated was furnished with an ink-splashed desk, a couple of stools, and a couple of chairs. Some maps, the plans of a steamer's cabin—stained and dirty—and a framed lithograph picture of a fine-looking steamer, which proved to be the Princess Ida, hung upon the walls, and beyond the ordinary business books and ledgers that was all that was in the office.

Dare had been seated in the room, waiting for the appearance of the manager, for about ten minutes, when he suddenly experienced the unpleasant sensation that he was being watched by some unseen person. He darted a keen glance round the room, and even went over to the window, although, as it was on the second storey, and above the main thoroughfare—it was not likely that any person could be looking in through it, but could see no sign of anyone.

Then, as he turned round again, some strange attraction drew his eyes to the plan of the steamer's cabin hanging on the wall at the opposite end of the room.

The plan was slightly torn in two places, and through these slits he distinctly saw a pair of keen, steely eyes regarding him with a fixed stare. As they met his they vanished, and before he could make a closer examination of the plan he heard a shuffling footstep on the landing, and the next minute the office door was opened.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling story next Tuesday.)



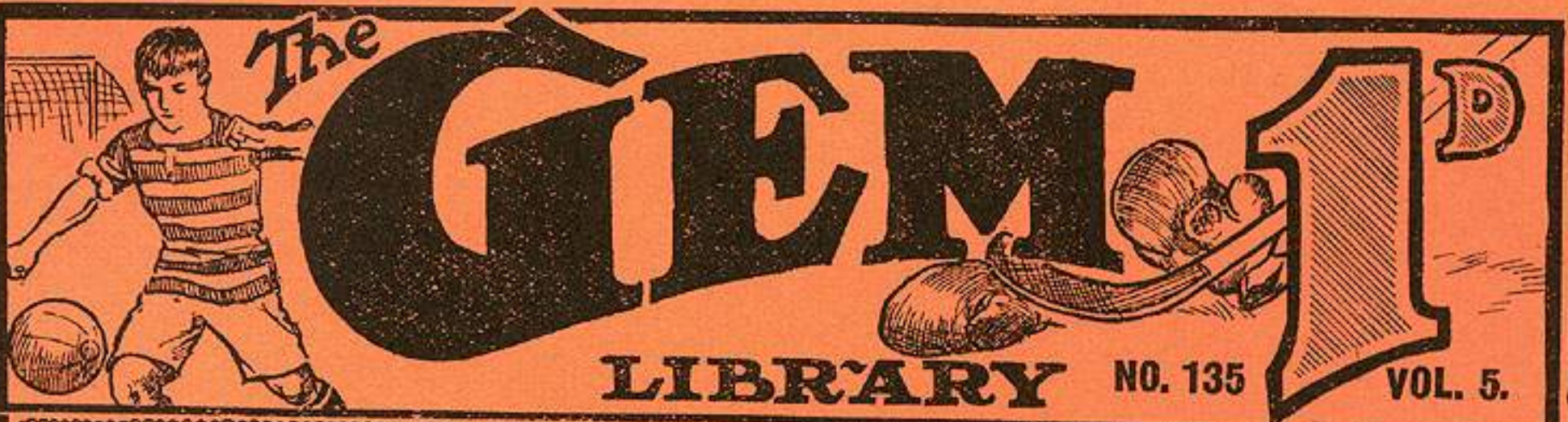
For Next Week

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF."

A most funny tale, is our next! Billy, the bouncer, the boy without a sense of humour, without any trait greater than his own admiration for himself, decides to take up football. He does—with surprising results.

The Editor

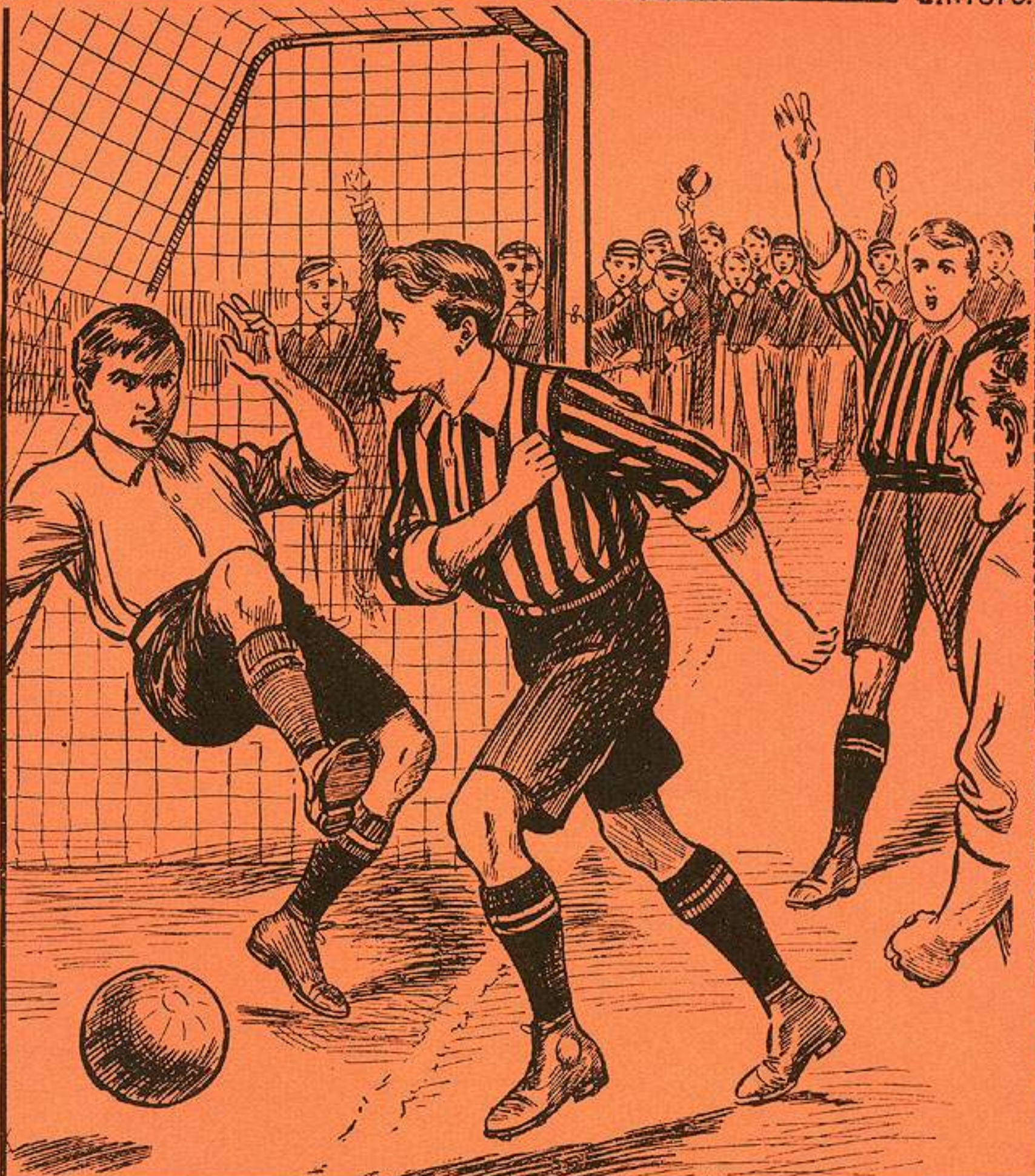
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