

JAZZ MUSIC AT GREYFRIARS!

No. 975. Vol. XXX.—Week Ending October 23rd, 1926.

The Magnet 2^d

Library

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MONDAY.



BOB CHERRY FINDS "SWOTTING" NEXT DOOR TO IMPOSSIBLE!

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TO & FROM YOUR EDITOR

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed: The Editor, THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THE SUPPLEMENT!

I AM now in a position to give my chums the result of the "poll" in connection with the MAGNET Supplement. The consensus of opinion shows that a return of the Dicky Nugent "shockers" is earnestly desired; that the Footer Supplement should be given a rest, and that Mr. Richards' yarns should be increased in length. I thank you fellows for being so sporty as to send me these helpful letters and postcards; the response to my request was very encouraging. You will be pleased to learn, therefore, that I am negotiating for some extra-special Dicky Nugent shockers; that I have persuaded Mr. Richards to lengthen his stories. And the Footer Supplement, of course, will drop out. On special occasions, such as the Cup Final, for instance, I will endeavour to run in some footer news as topical as can possibly be managed, in view of the fact that we go to press so much in advance. Just keep a sharp lookout for next week's Chat, for in my next heart-to-heart talk with you I shall be able to let on when the first of these popular Dicky Nugent shockers will appear.

THAT GIRL CHUM!

You have noticed, I am dead sure, that heaps of difficulties which one worries about dissolve into thin air when they are actually faced. I think this is what an "Old Reader" will find if he will only let matters take their own course. These are the facts: my chum knows a girl whose mother is a close friend of his mother, and he likes to think of the girl as a pal. Why not? I can see from the thoughtful note he has dropped me to let me know his perplexities that my correspondent is one of the nervy sort. I counsel him to wash all that out and take a cheerio view of what has all the appearance of being a right-down pleasant friendship, than which nothing better.

TELLING FORTUNES!

A reader wants to know if I encourage the practice of telling fortunes. Frankly I don't, as so many of these so-called fortune-tellers only gull their victims with fictitious tales of gold and travel and good luck. These, of course, delight the victims, and sometimes give them swelled heads. On the other hand, "unlucky" fortunes of trouble, misery to come, etc.—very seldom told, by the way—often have the effect of spoiling a chap's life. He often takes these things to heart and becomes obsessed with them, to the detriment of everything he undertakes thereafter, for he thinks he is doomed to what the fortune-teller has told him, no matter what he does. The practice of fortune-telling, to my mind, is an unhealthy one. Give it a miss, my chum, and make your own fortune. The dominant qualities required are grit, honesty, energy, and an understanding of the next chap. These will help you on the way far better than the flowery words of flattery that fall from the lips of fortune-tellers.

For Next Monday!

"THE ISHMAEL OF THE FORM!"

By Frank Richards.

You know, of course, in advance that Bob Cherry is the central figure in this coming story, for you have just read, or are about to read, anyway, the first yarn in the promised Bob Cherry series. You'll enjoy every word of next week's grand tale, chums.

"THE BOY WITH THE MILLION-POUND SECRET!"

There's another fine instalment of this ripping serial on the programme for next week. Mind you read it.

THE FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT!

And there will be a topping 4-page Supplement devoted to our popular winter game. In it Clem Stephenson, the famous captain of Huddersfield, has something to say on where footer players are "made." Make sure of your copy of the MAGNET, chums, by ordering it in advance. Saves disappointment, you know. Chin, chial!

YOUR EDITOR.

SURPRISING THE SCHOOL! When Bob Cherry starts to mug up Latin and Greek in his leisure moments in preference to playing footer, his chums consider it is high time for the skies to drop! But there's no bunkum about Bob's intentions; right well does he justify the nickname of—



A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars, featuring Bob Cherry in a new light.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Something New!

"BOB!" Bob Cherry did not answer. Certainly he heard, for the door of No. 13 Study was wide open and Harry Wharton's voice floated clearly along the Remove passage.

But, like the celebrated gladiator of old, he heard it but he heeded not.

Bob was sitting in the study arm-chair, with his long legs stretched out, and his feet resting on the table. There was a letter in his hands, and Bob Cherry was reading it, with a lugubrious expression on his rugged face.

Generally Bob Cherry's face was the sunniest at Greyfriars. Almost always he was in the most exuberant spirits.

Now his face was clouded, and he looked as if most of the troubles in the universe had descended in a heap upon his youthful shoulders.

"Bob!" the captain of the Remove shouted again.

Bob Cherry looked up from his letter then.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he called out. But his voice had not the usual cheery ring. And he did not rise from the chair.

Footsteps came along the Remove passage, and Harry Wharton looked into No. 13 Study.

"Oh! You're here!" he said.

"Yes."

"Aren't you ready?"

"Ready?" repeated Bob vaguely.

Wharton stared at him.

"Why, you haven't even changed!" he exclaimed.

"Changed?" repeated Bob.

"Have you forgotten all about the practice?"

"Forgotten?"

Bob's thoughts seemed to be wandering a little.

"My hat! Are you under-studying a parrot?" asked the captain of the

Remove. "Can't you do anything but repeat my words like a giddy echo?"

"Eh? Oh! Yes."

"Well, are you going to get a move on?" demanded Wharton. "We've only got half an hour for practice before class, and it's the Highcliffe match to-morrow. What's the matter with you? Blessed if I expected to find you frowsting in a study like Bunter or Skinner."

Bob Cherry coloured.

"I'm not frowsting," he said gruffly.

"You look like it, anyhow. Getting lazy in your old age?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"I've been reading a letter from home," said Bob.

"Finished it?"

"Well, yes."

"Put it away, then, and come on."

Bob did not move.

Harry Wharton was turning away, but seeing that Bob did not stir from the armchair he turned back.

"Look here, Bob, are you coming? We want you in the practice, you know. You're playing at Highcliffe to-morrow. I suppose you're fit?"

"Fit as a fiddle," said Bob, "but—"

"Then come on."

"I think I'll cut the practice this time," said Bob, colouring. "I shall be all right to-morrow, you know."

Wharton stared at him.

"Cut the practice?" he ejaculated.

"I—I think so."

"What on earth for?"

"Well, I—I'd rather. We have Latin prose this afternoon with Mr. Quelch, you know," said Bob.

"I know! What's that got to do with football?"

"Nothing. But—you know what my Latin prose is like," said Bob Cherry dismally. "I'm thinking of putting in a little swotting before class, and perhaps I shall please Quelch a bit more than usual."

"You—swotting!" yelled Wharton.

Bob crimsoned.

"I know it's not in my line," he said.

"I should jolly well say not; and you're not, as a rule, very keen on pleasing Quelch. Your construe is a little better than Bunter's—a very little bit. And you've never cared, that I know of."

"I—I suppose I haven't," said Bob. "But I ought to have, you know. The fact is, Harry, we—we come to Greyfriars to learn."

"It's taken you rather a long time to think that out, hasn't it?" said the captain of the Remove, with a laugh.

"Well, perhaps it has," said Bob. "But I've thought it out, anyway. This letter has helped me."

"Oh!" Wharton's look became more serious. "Ragging from home?"

"Something like that."

"Wharton!" came Johnny Bull's voice along the Remove passage. "Are you coming? Waiting for you."

"The waitfulness is terrific," chimed in the voice of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Cut off, Harry," said Bob Cherry. "You can do without me this once. I really want to put in a bit of a grind."

"What rot! There are times for all things," said Wharton. "This is a time for footer practice."

"Yes—but—"

"Come on, then."

Bob Cherry half-rose, and sat down again. He wanted to get out to the footer—he wanted it very much. The clear, cold day—the fresh open air—called to him almost irresistibly. But he shook his head.

"The fact is, Harry, my pater's waxy," he said. "Mr. Quelch sent him a pretty rotten report last term. I—I suppose I haven't made the progress I ought to have made. The pater thinks I'm giving too much time to games, and too little to studies. I daresay he's right. He's talking about coming down to see me at the school—heart-to-heart talk, you know. He wants to see me

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get on in class—he says, or as good as says, that there will be trouble if I don't get a better report from Mr. Quelch this term. I—I've got to buck up."

"But—"

"Nothing like striking the iron while it's hot," said Bob. "I'm making a beginning to-day. I'm going to grind at Latin till class, and surprise old Quelch in the Form-room—if I can. Don't you worry about the match at Highcliffe to-morrow—I'm at the top of my form, in footer at least, and we shall beat Highcliffe."

"Are you coming, Wharton?" called out Frank Nugent.

"Oh, all right, if you mean it, Bob," said the captain of the Remove. "I think you're rather an ass; but go it."

And Harry Wharton scudded along the Remove passage to join his friends, and hurry down to the football ground.

Bob was left alone in the study.

He gave a dismal grunt and read through once more the letter from his father.

There was no doubt that Major Cherry was dissatisfied with his son's progress at Greyfriars.

He said so, and he said so plainly. There was a military directness in the old soldier's way of expressing himself which left no doubt whatever on the subject.

That bad report from Mr. Quelch had evidently produced a very considerable effect on Bob's father.

And there was a hint in the major's letter that if Bob did not show better results at an early date, his removal from Greyfriars was under contemplation.

That was a dismaying possibility to Bob.

He read the letter through once more, and then, with a deep sigh, he rose from the armchair and sorted out his books.

He had nearly half an hour before class, and in that time he could put in a little "swotting," and prepare himself for meeting the onslaught of Mr. Quelch in the Remove Form-room.

But swotting and Bob Cherry were strangers hitherto. He had made up his mind, but his movements were slow. The spirit was willing but the flesh was weak.

It took Bob an extraordinary long time to sort out his books. When he was ready, he sat down at the table and dipped his pen in the ink.

Then it occurred to him that he could see the junior football-ground from his study window, and he thought that he might spare just one minute to see how the fellows were getting on in the practice.

He stepped to the window and looked out.

In the distance, Harry Wharton & Co. were going strong, urging the flying ball, and evidently enjoying themselves in the keen weather.

Bob stood at the window watching them for a very long time. Indeed, when he remembered that he had stayed in the study to "swot," and turned away from the window, he found that ten minutes had elapsed.

"Oh dear!" murmured Bob.

He sat down at the table again.

A fat face and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in at the door. Billy Bunter blinked at Bob in surprise.

"Ain't you at the footer?" he ejaculated.

"Can't you see I'm not, fatty?" grunted Bob.

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"He, he, he! Frowsting in the study!" chuckled Bunter.

"You fat idiot—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I'm swotting at Latin, you fat frog!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly.

Bunter fairly jumped.

Certainly it would have been a surprise to find an energetic youth like Robert Cherry "frowsting" in the study while the other fellows were at footer. But, really, it was a great surprise to find him swotting.

"Swotting—you!" gasped Bunter.

"Yes. Get out! You're interrupting me."

"Oh, my hat! He, he, he!"

"Shut the door after you!" growled Bob.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "You swotting! He, he, he!" Bunter yelled along the passage: "I say, you fellows, Cherry's swotting! He, he, he!"

"Get out!" roared Bob.

He jumped up, and Billy Bunter vanished from the doorway. Bob slammed the door after him, and returned to the table with a ruffled brow. He could hear a sound of laughter in the Remove passage. Bunter was spreading the amazing news that Bob Cherry was "swotting."

"Oh dear!" groaned Bob.

He sat at the table, just about to begin. Through the open window floated a yell from the football-ground.

"Goal! Well kicked, Wharton!"

Bob stepped to the window again. The Remove eleven were playing a scratch team picked out of the Form, for practice. Bob's place in the half-way line had been filled by Redwing for the occasion. Bob stared away towards Little Side with his heart in his eyes, so to speak.

But he tore himself away from the window at last, and returned to the table. He made up his mind to begin.

Clang, clang!

It was the bell for classes.

"Oh, my hat!"

The football practice broke up, and the fellows rushed off the field, with five minutes to change for class. Bob Cherry sat and stared at his books and his blank foolscap. It was not much use to begin "swotting" with only a few minutes at his disposal. Bob gave a dismal grunt, and rose from the table again, and left the study, and headed for the changing-room where the footballers were.

Bob Cherry's "swotting" was over for that day.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bob Surprises the Natives!

"NOT so much row!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

The fellows who were playing passage football stopped, in sheer astonishment, and stared at Bob Cherry.

It was time for evening prep in the Remove.

Every fellow in the Fourth Form at Greyfriars ought to have been in his study, carefully and thoughtfully labouring over the section of the *Æneid* that Mr. Quelch had selected for the morning's lesson.

But in the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars, as in other places, fellows did not always do exactly as they ought.

Six or seven fellows, at least, were barging about the passage with an old footer, and making plenty of din.

Really, it was not unusual. What was unusual was for Bob Cherry to

put his head out of his study and call for order.

That was very unusual indeed.

The passage footballers simply blinked at him. Bob was not a quiet youth himself. Often and often had he barged up and down the Remove passage in indoor football, though that little game was strictly against House rules, and much frowned upon by Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, and all other masters, as well as the prefects.

Indeed, Bob Cherry seldom even spoke without waking a few echoes. He had a powerful voice, which, according to some fellows, would have made Stentor of old turn green with envy. The ancient Stentor had a voice as loud as that of fifty, and the Bounder had declared that Bob, in his own line, could give old Stentor fifty in a hundred and beat him hollow. And Bob had feet that were not small, and could always be heard coming; and if he opened a study door he almost made the study rock.

He was the very last fellow at Greyfriars to be expected to object to noise—and, indeed, he made as much as any two other fellows. Yet there he was, looking out of his study window with a ruffled brow, calling on the fellows to be quiet.

They stared at him. In their astonishment they ceased the game.

"Is that a joke?" asked Bolsover major at last.

"No. Not so much row!" said Bob.

"If it isn't a joke, what do you mean?" inquired Russell.

"I mean what I say," grunted Bob. "How's a fellow to do his prep when you duffers are kicking up such a frightful shindy?"

"Are you doing prep?" asked Ogilvy.

"Of course I am, ass! Isn't it time for prep?"

"Quite; but we haven't started yet," said Ogilvy, laughing. "Leave it till we do, and come and barge this footer about with us."

"I'm working."

"Turning over a new leaf—what?" grinned Bolsover major. "Well, turn it over on your lonesome, old bean. We're not turning over any new leaves just now. Shove that ball this way, you men."

"Is Cherry taking to swotting?" asked Peter Todd. "I heard from Bunter that he was swotting this afternoon, but I put it down as Bunter's rot."

"He can swot if he likes, but he can't dictate to us," growled Bolsover major. "Send that ball along."

"Oh, give a man a chance, if he wants to work," said Peter good-naturedly; and he went into Study No. 7, by way of setting a good example. Russell and Ogilvy, equally good-natured, followed the good example. But the other fellows did not seem to see it.

Stott sent the ball bounding along the passage, and Bolsover major kicked. It bounced from a door, and there was a rush of five or six fellows after it. Hazeldene slipped, and Bolsover major sprawled over him, and two or three more sprawled over Bolsover, and the din was terrific. It was nothing at all unusual in the Remove passage, well-known to be the noisiest passage at Greyfriars, but indubitably it was terrific.

"Yaroo! Gerroff!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"On the ball!"

Bob Cherry knitted his brows. That evening he had determined to slog at



The ball bounced from a door, and there was a rush of five or six fellows after it. Hazeldene slipped, and Bolsover major sprawled over him, while two or three more fellows sprawled over Bolsover. "Yaroooh!" "Oh, my hat!" "On the ball!" In spite of the terrific din outside his study Bob Cherry knitted his brows, determined to slog at prep. (See Chapter 2.)

prep—fairly slog at it. But for his father's letter, it was extremely probable that he would have taken part in barging the ball along the passage.

Anything in the rough-and-tumble line had an almost irresistible appeal for Bob Cherry. But he wanted to work now; or rather, he was determined to work though he did not want to. And with that terrific din going on it was difficult. Mark Linley managed it somehow—he was working quietly and sedulously in No. 13 in spite of the din. Bob wondered how he did it. But Bob had a sense of justice; he could not expect all the Remove to change their manners and customs just when he was changing his. He realised that, and went back into his study and closed the door, leaving Bolsover major & Co. to barge up and down the passage without further interference.

He dropped into his chair at the table, jolting the table and causing Hurree Janset Ram Singh to drop a couple of blots. The Nabob of Bhanipur gave him a mild smile. Mark Linley looked up from his work with a rather puzzled grin.

"Got a headache or anything, Bob?" he asked.

"Eh? I never have a headache."

"Then what's the matter with a little noise in the passage?" asked Mark. "You've never minded it before—in fact, you generally join in it."

"I want to work."

"At prep?"

"Of course!"

"The workfulness at the esteemed prep is the proper caper," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh gravely. "But is it not the new departure for the esteemed and ridiculous Cherry?"

"Perhaps it is," grunted Bob. "But I've got to grind I tell you. My pater's ragging me for my report last term."

"The sympathise is great!" said the dusky junior.

Crash! Bang!

The door of No. 13 Study shook and rattled as a football collided with it. Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation.

"That's cheek!" he exclaimed. "Somebody's barging that footer on the door on purpose just because I asked them to be quiet."

Crash, crash! Bump!

Bob sprang to his feet.

"Easy does it, Bob," murmured Mark Linley. "Don't begin ragging the chaps. They'll have to chuck it in a few minutes, anyhow, for prep."

Bob sat down again.

Crash! Bang! Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was obvious that a concentrated attack was being made on the door of No. 13, as a return for Bob's expostulation. Mark Linley sat back in his chair. He could work under most conditions, but there were limits. So long as that "rag" lasted he had to chuck prep.

Bump! Crash!

"Look here, I'm not standing this!" howled Bob. "It's too thick." And he jumped up again and dragged the door open, just as two or three of the barge footballers crashed against it.

They rolled headlong into the study as the door opened so suddenly. Wibley and Hazeldene rolled at Bob's feet.

Bob stooped, grasped them by the collars as they rolled, and brought their heads together with a sounding concussion.

Crack!

"Ow!" yelled Hazel.

"Whoop!" roared Wibley.

"Now chuck it, you noisy ruffians," panted Bob, rolling them out into the Remove passage.

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" roared Bolsover major. "Leave them alone!

We'll do just as we jolly well like, see?" And Bolsover major grasped Bob by the collar and jerked him away from Hazel and Wibley.

"Leggo!" roared Bob.

Bang!

Bob's head came against the door-jamb. He turned on Bolsover major the next second, hitting out. The bully of the Remove backed across the passage under a shower of hefty blows. Bob's temper was roused now, and his blue eyes were glinting as he drove Bolsover major back. But Bolsover put up a hefty fight. He was bigger and heavier than Bob, though not quite equal to him in the fistical line. The other fellows crowded round.

"Go it, Bolsover!"

"Pile in!"

Fellows came out of the studies up and down the passage. A scrap between two such champions as Bolsover major and Bob Cherry was well worth watching; and it seemed that prep in the Remove passage was likely to be considerably neglected that evening.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Trouble in the Remove!

HARRY WHARTON paused in his work in No. 1 Study and frowned. Frank Nugent glanced at him across the study table and smiled.

"They're going it this evening," he remarked.

"It's a bit too thick," said the captain of the Remove. "A bit of a row doesn't matter but this is a bit too thick. We shall have the prefects up here soon, at this rate."

"Oh, they'll chuck it soon," said Frank.

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The door of No. 1 Study opened, and Billy Bunter grinned in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut that door," growled Wharton. "There's noise enough with it shut."

"But I say, you fellows, it's a fight!" announced Bunter. "Bolsover major and Bob Cherry—"

"Oh!"

Wharton and Nugent jumped up at once and scudded out of the study. If there was a fight going on, with their chum engaged in it, they wanted to be on the scene. Prep, in the circumstances, was a lesser consideration, and could wait.

Half the Remove were in the passage, crowding up the farther end, where Bob Cherry and Percy Bolsover were going strong.

"What's the row about?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, calling to Johnny Bull, who had come out of No. 14 with Squiff.

"Oh, Bolsover asking for trouble as usual, I suppose," answered Johnny.

"Getting it, too," observed Squiff, as there was a crash in the passage and Percy Bolsover went down on his back.

Bolsover major lay and panted.

Bob Cherry was panting, too. Hefty fighting-man as Bob was, Bolsover major gave him plenty of hard work.

Bolsover major was up again in a moment. But Harry Wharton ran between the combatants.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, get away!" growled Bolsover major. But, as a matter of fact, the burly Removeite was not sorry to have the way barred by the captain of the Form. He would not have given in; but it was rather a relief to be stopped.

"You'll have Quelchy up here soon," said Harry. "What the thump is this scrap about?"

Bob Cherry dabbed his nose. It was streaming red.

"It was a rag, and I got fed-up," he growled.

"Only a row in the passage," said Hazeldene. "We've had a shindy in the passage before without all this fuss."

Harry Wharton frowned.

"Look here, Bolsover—"

"Eh?" Bolsover major glared.

"What the thump do you mean?" demanded Harry Wharton hotly. "You're not the fellow to make a fuss about a row in the passage, considering the row you make yourself at times. Like your cheek, I think."

Bolsover major glared at him.

"You silly ass! Who was making a fuss about a row in the passage?"

"Hazel said—"

"It was Cherry making the fuss!" hooted Hazeldene.

"Wha-a-at?"

"You got it wrong, Wharton," chuckled Squiff.

Wharton reddened with annoyance.

"Mean to say that it was Bob making a fuss about a noise in the passage?" he exclaimed.

"That's it," grunted Bolsover major. "Just for once he wants to be quiet, so every other fellow in the Remove has got to go about on tiptoe—I don't think."

Bob Cherry looked a little sheepish.

Wharton's misapprehension was a natural one; on hearing that Bob had been mixed up in a "fuss" about a shindy in the passage, he had naturally supposed that Bob had been helping to make the shindy.

"The fact is—" stammered Bob.

"Hang it all, Bob!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Do you really

mean to say you were ragging Bolsover because he was kicking up a row in the passage?"

"It was too thick!" said Bob. "How's a fellow to get his prep done with noisy asses ragging at his study door?"

"I've often asked the same question when you've been barging a footer up and down the passage," exclaimed Harry.

"It's a case of the pot and the kettle," grinned Peter Todd. "Imagine Bob complaining of a row in the passage, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dash it all, it's the limit!" said Johnny Bull. "I thought Bolsover was to blame, of course. Bob, old man, what's the matter with you?"

"I say, you fellows, Cherry's taking to swotting—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cherry grousing about a shindy in the passage!" chuckled Skinner. "Satan rebuking sin, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry's face was crimson.

It was, as he realised, a sudden and startling change in his own manners and customs. But for that letter from his father, he would probably have been the noisiest of the crowd barging the footer. Nevertheless, it was not pleasant to be judged in the wrong by his own chums.

"So Cherry's taking to swotting, and we've all got to sit down like lambs," said the Bounder. "Why, only yesterday Cherry was using my study door for a goal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You weren't working, Smithy," stammered Bob.

"If I had been it wouldn't have made much difference," said Vernon-Smith.

Bob's rugged face grew redder.

"Well, if I've been unreasonable I'm sorry," he said. "But there's a limit, all the same."

"There's a limit!" said Skinner. "Cherry can see it now. He never could see it before. We live and learn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you shut up, Skinner!" growled Bob.

"To hear is to obey, of course," said Skinner, with mock meekness. "Any more orders for the Remove, sir? May we breathe?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do!" roared Bolsover major belligerently. "I'm going to barge that footer up the passage as long as I jolly well like! See? And if you don't like it, Cherry, you can lump it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on!" roared Bolsover major.

And the football rolled again. Bob Cherry's face darkened; but Hurrec Janset Ram Singh laid a dusky hand on his arm and drew him into the study.

"The sweet reasonableness is the proper caper, my esteemed chum," murmured Inky. "Bear it grinfully till they get fed-upfully."

Bob banged the door of the study shut.

In the Remove passage the uproar went on unchecked. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent went back to their study, the captain of the Remove frowning. He felt that he had been made to look rather a fool, and he did not like it. In the circumstances he did not feel called upon to interfere with Bolsover major; and, indeed it would have been difficult to stop the rag in the Remove passage, for a whole mob of the juniors had joined in it by way of a jest on Bob Cherry. As Skinner expressed it, Bob seemed to think it was a case of "when father says turn we all turn." And the Remove fellows rather naturally desired

to show Bob that that was not the case.

But the uproar was not likely to last much longer; it reached far beyond the limits of the Remove quarters. Five minutes later Wingate of the Sixth came up the Remove staircase with a cane in his hand.

There was a shout at once as the captain of Greyfriars was seen.

"Cave!"

"Prefect!"

And there was a rush to escape.

Wingate of the Sixth did not waste time in words. He laid on the cane on all the shoulders and backs that came within his reach, and in a marvellously short space of time the Remove passage was cleared and reduced to order and silence. Wingate picked up the footer and walked away with it—that footer was confiscated. Silence reigned when the captain of the school was gone, save in some of the studies where juniors who had caught the hefty swipes of the ash-plant grumbled and mumbled.

In Study No. 13 Bob Cherry had peace and quiet at last for his prep. But he worked with a clouded face, and stopped every now and then to dab his nose with his handkerchief.

Swotting was not in Bob's line at all, and his first essay in that direction was being made under difficulties. He seemed to have set himself a rather thorny path to tread.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Bob!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"No room!"

"But I say—"

"Buzz!"

It was the following afternoon, and the Remove footballers had crowded into the brake that was to take them over to Highcliffe School. A good many other fellows had crowded in with Harry Wharton & Co., and the brake was full—not to say overflowing—when Billy Bunter rolled up.

"Bob Cherry!" roared Bunter.

"Nothing doing, old fat bean!" grinned Bob from the crowded brake. "No room for a giddy elephant!"

"You silly ass!" snorted Bunter. "Do you think I want to come over and see you fizzle at footer? You're wanted!"

"Gammon!"

"I tell you you're wanted!" howled Bunter. "Quelchy has sent me to tell you, you silly ass!"

The brake was about to start. Harry Wharton glanced down at the Owl of the Remove.

"Is that straight, Bunter? If you delay us for nothing we'll burst you, you fat duffer!"

Bunter sniffed.

"That's the message!" he snapped. "Somebody's called for Cherry on Mr. Quelch's telephone, and Quelch told me to call him. He's to take the call. I don't care a button whether he takes it or not! Go and eat coke!"

And Bunter turned up his fat little nose at the footballers and rolled back into the House.

Bob Cherry looked glum.

"Rotten, at the last minute like this!" he said. "Blessed if I know who can be ringing me up on Quelch's phone! But if Quelch says I'm to take the call, I suppose I'd better."

He rose from his seat in the brake.

"We'll wait," said Harry Wharton.

"Right-ho! It can't keep me a few minutes."

Bob jumped out of the brake and went into the House. He tapped at the door of Mr. Quelch's study and entered.

"Bunter says, sir—"

The Remove master glanced at him rather severely.

"You have been a long time, Cherry; I doubt whether your father is still holding the line," he said.

"My father?" exclaimed Bob.

"Take the receiver!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Bob crossed to the telephone and picked up the receiver.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

There was no reply. Apparently the major had rung off.

"There is no answer, Cherry?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir."

Bob hung up the receiver.

"Your father rang me up and asked for permission to speak to you, Cherry," said the Remove master. "No doubt he has tired of waiting, or has been cut off. You should have come immediately."

Bob Cherry breathed hard, and mentally promised Bunter a kick. No doubt the Owl of the Remove had taken his time in delivering Mr. Quelch's message.

"Probably Major Cherry will ring up again," said Mr. Quelch. "You had better wait."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"You may wait in the corridor,"

"Go and tell Wharton that I've got to wait for a call," said Bob. "Tell him to start, and I'll follow on my bike."

"Oh, all right!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving Bob waiting outside the Remove master's study. Bunter did not hurry himself. His movements were always leisurely when he was engaged upon his own business, and he was not likely to hurry himself on any other fellow's business.

Harry Wharton & Co. were growing impatient in the waiting brake. The Owl of the Remove rolled up to the brake with a grin on his fat face.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Where's Bob Cherry?" called out the captain of the Remove.

"Kicking his heels in Masters' Corridor," grinned Bunter. "He says you can get off without him."

"What?"

"He's going to follow on his bike, when he's finished," said Bunter, with a grin. "He's waiting for a call."

"What rot!" said the Bounder.

"Well, that's what he says," answered Bunter; and he rolled back into the House again.

Harry Wharton frowned.

"We'd better start," he said. "Bob

The Remove master, busy marking papers, had probably forgotten the matter. Ten minutes having elapsed, Bob began to debate whether he had better wait any longer. Having missed him on the phone, it looked as if the major had given it up. On the other hand, he might have supposed that Bob had not been able to come to the phone immediately—as indeed had been the case—and might intend to ring again a little later.

Bob was perhaps a little thoughtless in some ways, but he was a respectful and affectionate son, and he would not have willingly been wanting in respect to his father. He debated the matter in his mind, but he felt that he could not go. But the time was getting close. He would have to put on speed, on his bike, to overtake the footballers before they reached Highcliffe. Really, it was a very disturbing state of affairs. If he was delayed much longer, the match at Highcliffe would have to be played without him; and in that case, word would have to be sent to Wharton that he was not coming.

That was easy enough. Any Remove fellow would have cut off on a bike to carry the message. But Bob, naturally, did not want to stand out of the match

"HALLO, HALLO, HALLO! IS YOUR NAME HERE?"

RESULT OF "BOUNDARIES" COMPETITION No. 10.

The First Prize of £2-2-0 for the best "last line" sent in has been awarded to:
E. G. Green, 52, Belsize Lane, Hampstead, London, N.W. 3.

for the following:

When we watch from pavilion or tent,
The hitting of Chapman of Kent,
We are bound to admire,
His force and his "fire"
"As on 'Boundaries' (like me) he is 'Bent.'"

The six prizes of 10/6 each have been awarded to the following:

Master S. Allan, 14, Canonbury Road, Islington, N. 1; H. Briden, 53, Durants Road, Ponder's End, London, N.; W. Deffman, 288, Southbury Road, Enfield, Middlesex; C. E. King, 17, Huntley Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport; C. G. Wood, 73a, Marshall Street, Folkestone, Kent; H. Young, 16, Heathville Road, Crouch Hill, London, N. 19.

added Mr. Quelch, turning again to the papers on his table. "If you hear the telephone-bell ring you may come in again."

"But, sir—"

"That will do, Cherry. Close the door after you."

Bob Cherry left the study, and closed the door. He stood in the passage with a troubled wrinkle in his brow.

If his father wished to speak to him, he did not, of course, want to miss the call. It was an awkward situation. A fat face and a pair of big spectacles appeared in the offing, and Billy Bunter blinked curiously at Bob. Doubtless the Owl of the Remove was curious on the subject of that telephone call. As it was no business of Bunter's he naturally took an inquisitive interest in the matter. Telephone calls for Lower Fourth fellows were extremely uncommon.

"What's up, old chap?" asked Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Somebody ill at home?" asked Bunter agreeably. "Your pater run over, or something?"

"You silly ass!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

can catch us up on his bike. It's beastly awkward, at the last moment like this. Anyhow, we'd better get off. We can't be late at Highcliffe."

And the brake rolled away.

Meanwhile, Bob Cherry waited, impatiently enough, in Masters' Corridor. The minutes dragged by, and no ring came from the Remove master's study.

His impatience grew as he waited.

He was feeling uneasy, too. It was very much out of the common for Major Cherry to telephone to his son at the school, and Bob wondered whether it meant that something was wrong at home. He wondered, too, whether it meant that his father's letter was to be followed up by a heart-to-heart talk on the telephone. If so, the major could hardly have chosen a more awkward time for his lecture; though doubtless, knowing that Wednesday was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, he supposed that his son was at leisure that afternoon. He was not likely to be aware that that special Wednesday was the date of one of the most important of the Remove football fixtures.

Minute followed minute, and still there was no ring from Mr. Quelch's telephone-bell.

if he could help it. The Highcliffe fixture was always a struggle, and Bob was wanted in the game, apart from his own keen desire to play football that afternoon.

Buzzzzzzzzzz!

The buzzing of the telephone-bell in Mr. Quelch's study came as an immense relief to the worried junior.

He made a bound to Mr. Quelch's door, and hardly stopped to knock before he entered.

Mr. Quelch was standing at the telephone already.

"Yes? Major Cherry? Very good. Your son is here! Cherry, your father is speaking; take the receiver."

"Thank you, sir."

Bob Cherry took the receiver, and Mr. Quelch sat down to his papers again, with a slightly grim expression on his face. Major Cherry was a gentleman whom the Remove master respected; but he did not like being interrupted, all the same. The major had apologised very politely for the trouble he was giving. Nevertheless, the interruption was an unpleasant fact.

"Is that you, dad?"

"Yes, Bob. I rang you up some

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time ago, but it seems that you were unable to take the call."

"I'm sorry, dad. I—"

"Well, well, it does not matter," said the major. "I am speaking from Lantham, Bob."

"You're at Lantham?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes. I am coming to the school this afternoon, and I stopped at Lantham for lunch, as I had some business here. I have to see you, Bob; I have to talk to you very seriously."

"Oh!"

"As it is a half-holiday, you will be at leisure. You are not, I hope, detained this afternoon?"

"No, dad. But—"

"I am glad of that," said the major dryly. "After the reports I have received of you, I should not be surprised to hear that you were under detention."

"But—"

"However, as you are free for the afternoon, come to Friardale Station to meet me," continued the major. "I am catching my train in a few minutes, and shall be at Friardale at three o'clock."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"I hope you will be pleased to see your father, although you certainly have not pleased me lately, Robert."

"Of—of course, father."

"I am glad of that," said the major grimly. "Your voice did not, I think, sound pleased."

"I—I—"

"There is no need to say more, Robert. I shall expect you at Friardale Station at three."

"I— Are you there, father?"

There was no reply. Major Cherry had rung off. Bob put up the receiver and trod quietly from the study, Mr. Quelch not even looking up from his papers as he went.

Bob's rugged face was clouded as he left the study. Football that afternoon was obviously "off." Kick-off at Highcliffe was at three, and at that time Bob had to be at Friardale to meet his father's train from Lantham. Even had he been able to explain to the major, Bob could hardly have told his father that he wanted to go out for the afternoon, when the major was coming down especially to see him. He had to cut the Highcliffe match, and the only question now was, to send word to his captain before he started for Friardale Station.

Bob hurried out of the House, to look for some Remove fellow to take the message after the brake. By that time the Remove footballers would have arrived at Highcliffe, or very nearly; Bob had had to wait a considerable time for the second telephone call. He had no time to bike over to Highcliffe himself, Friardale being in the opposite direction. But it was easy to send a message to reach Wharton before the kick-off, and that was all that Bob could do. Fortunately, plenty of Remove fellows had gone over with the team; there was no danger of the Greyfriars eleven having to play a man short.

Bob looked round quickly in the quad. Bolsover major was loafing about with his hands in his pockets, occasionally rubbing a half-closed eye—a relic of the fight in the Remove passage the previous evening. He gave Bob a dark look. Bolsover was feeling rather painful effects of that scrap in the Remove passage, and of a swipe he had received from Wingate's cane; and also he was annoyed at being—as usual—left out of the Remove eleven. Altogether, Percy Bolsover was not in

a pleasant or obliging temper that afternoon, and he scowled when Bob called to him.

"Bolsover! Will you cut across to Highcliffe—"

"No, I won't."

"I can't go after the team, and Wharton's expecting me," said Bob.

"I've got to miss the game—"

"No bizney of mine."

"Look here, Bolsover—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Bolsover major drove his hands deep into his pockets, and loafed away. He was not going to be made use of, as he regarded it. Bob, who was responsible for his half-closed eye, and Wharton, who had left him out of the Remove eleven, had no claim on him, in his opinion.

Bob compressed his lips.

In such circumstances, he would have taken any amount of trouble to oblige friend or foe. But Bolsover major was built on different lines.

Unfortunately, a crowd of the Remove had gone over with the team; there were few fellows to be seen about, Skinner and Snoop and Stott were going down to the gates; but it was useless to ask them. Billy Bunter was there, blinking inquisitively at Bob through his big spectacles, and Bob was about to turn to him, when Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, came out of the House. Bob turned to Temple.

"You chaps, I'm kept away from the match at Highcliffe," he said, "will one of you cut across on a bike and tell Wharton I can't come?"

Cecil Reginald Temple surveyed him with a lofty look.

"Joking?" he inquired.

"Of course not!" snapped Bob.

"I think you must be," said Temple airily. "You can't seriously suppose that Upper Fourth fellows will run about on messages for Lower Fourth fags."

"Oh, rather!" grinned Dabney.

Bob Cherry breathed hard. Cecil Reginald Temple's swank came in very awkwardly just then.

"Look here, they kick off at three," he said.

"Who do?" asked Temple blandly.

"The Remove."

"What are they playing?"

"Eh? Football, of course."

"Not marbles?" asked Temple.

"You silly owl!" roared Bob.

"Marbles would be nearer the Remove mark," said Temple. "I believe I've heard that you Lower-Fourth kids have the cheek to fix up outside matches. Awful neck!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Can't expect us to take any notice of your fag games, you know," said Temple. "Come on, you fellows; can't hang about here talking to fags."

And Temple, Dabney & Co. marched on, grinning.

Bob Cherry clenched his hands hard. He was greatly tempted to rush at Temple, Dabney & Co., and knock them right and left, and smash Cecil Reginald's handsome silk hat over his cheeky head. But there was no time for a row with the Fourth.

Bob turned round to Bunter—his last resource. The fat junior was grinning at him.

"Bunter! I want you to cut across to Highcliffe—I must send a message to Wharton before the match."

"My bike's out of order," said Bunter cheerfully. "There's two punctures—and you never mended them for me, Cherry, though I asked you."

"You can take my bike."

"Too big for me," said Bunter,

shaking his head. "You've got such thundering long legs, you know."

"I'll put the saddle down for you."

"The fact is, Cherry I'm not keen on a bike ride this afternoon," said Bunter. "I'm an obliging chap, of course, but—"

"Come on."

"You refused to cash a postal-order for me yesterday," said Bunter morosely. "After that, I call it a cheek to ask favours of a chap."

Bob Cherry breathed hard and deep.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. Bob was quivering with impatience; but William George Bunter was not aware that there was any pressure of hurry. Football matches did not count for very much in William George's fat estimation.

"Still, I'll go," said Bunter generously. "You lend me your bike, and get it ready for me. By the way, can you lend me half-a-crown?"

"You fat rotter—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Come on!" snapped Bob, and he grabbed the Owl of the Remove by the shoulders, and fairly dragged him away to the bike-shed.

"Ow! I'm coming, ain't I?" howled Bunter. "Stop yanking at a chap, you beast. You'll make my specs fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them, I can tell you. Look here, Cherry, I'm expecting a postal-order—as I told you yesterday—"

"Buck up!"

"Ow!" Bunter rolled breathlessly into the bike-shed, and Bob took his machine from the stand, and set rapidly about lowering the saddle to suit Bunter's little fat legs. "I say, Bob, I'll oblige you, old chap, of course. I'd do anything for a pal like you, you know. But about that postal-order—"

"Cheese it!"

"If you can't lend me a bob, you can't expect me to go scudding about on a bike to oblige you, Cherry," said Bunter, with dignity. "One good turn deserves another, you know."

"Fathead! I'll lend you a bob."

"Right-ho, old chap!" said Bunter, quite affectionately. "Thanks! I'll get after them—top speed—you know how I ride, old fellow."

And Bunter started, on Bob Cherry's machine, on the Courtfield road, heading for Highcliffe; and Bob turned his clouded face in the opposite direction, for Friardale, to meet his father's train.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Footballers at Highcliffe!

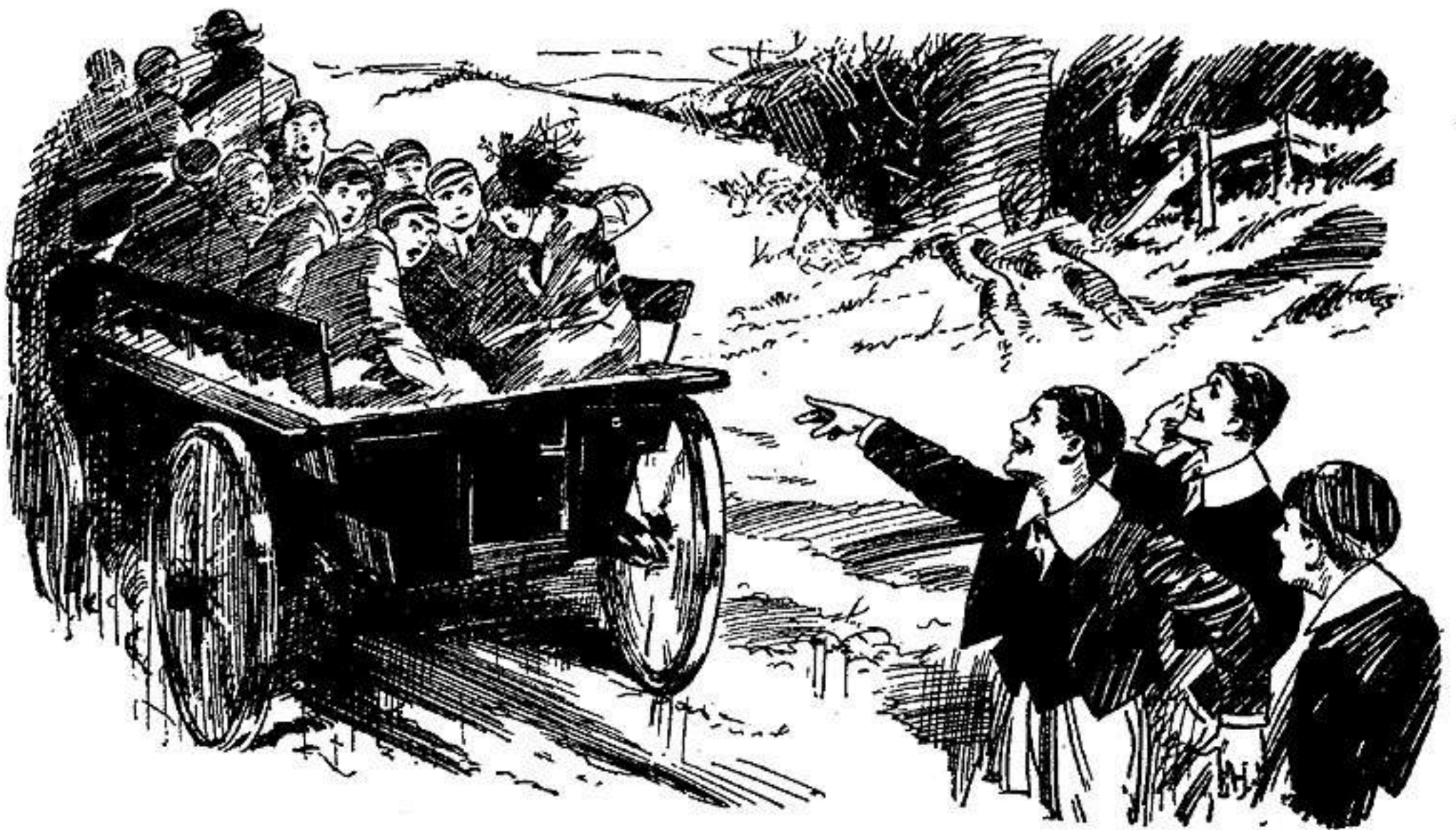
"GREYFRIARS cads!" Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, made that remark, loud enough for Harry Wharton & Co. to hear, as they arrived.

The footballers in the brake did not heed.

They had come over to Highcliffe to play the junior eleven, captained by Frank Courtenay, and they were not desirous of trouble with their old enemies, Pon & Co.

Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson stood in an elegant group, airing themselves and their expensive clothes, as it were; obviously not thinking of football that afternoon. There were few, if any, members of the nutty crowd at Highcliffe worthy of a place in the junior eleven, had their ambition lain in that direction—which it did not. Pon & Co. contented themselves with loafing, and sneering at fellows who slogged at games.

"Greyfriars bounders!" said Gadsby, following Pon's polite lead.



As the Greyfriars brake rolled on, Ponsonby plucked up a turf from the roadside, and whizzed it into the crowded vehicle. Crash! "Oh!" roared Johnny Bull. The heavy turf landed on Johnny Bull's features, and almost knocked him over. There was a cackle of laughter from Pon & Co. "Ha, ha, ha!" "Goal!" chuckled Gadsby. (See Chapter 5.)

And Monson looked over the crowd in the brake, and shrugged his shoulders, and remarked loudly:

"What a crew!"

Harry Wharton did not look at the Highcliffe nuts, and his followers, taking their cue from him, appeared deaf. They particularly did not want a row with Highcliffe fellows, when they had come over to Highcliffe to play football.

Ponsonby, however, was quite keen on trouble. He was almost as much up against his own junior captain, Courtenay, as against the Greyfriars fellows. He would have liked to see trouble occur every time Harry Wharton & Co. visited Highcliffe.

So as the Greyfriars brake rolled on, Ponsonby picked up a turf from the roadside and whizzed it into the crowded vehicle.

Crash!

"Oh!" roared Johnny Bull.

The heavy turf landed on Johnny Bull's features and almost knocked him over.

There was a cackle of laughter from Pon & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!" chuckled Gadsby.

Johnny Bull, with a flaming face, groped for the turf and grasped it. He sent it whizzing back at Ponsonby, a remarkably quick and accurate return which the dandy of Highcliffe did not seem to be expecting. At all events, it took him by surprise. The turf fairly crashed into Pon's handsome face, and sent him spinning backwards.

He sat down by the roadside with a bump.

"Ow, ow, ow!" gasped Ponsonby.

There was a roar of laughter from the brake. It was the turn of the Greyfriars men to cackle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ponsonby leaped to his feet, his face muddy, and black with rage, his eyes glittering. But the brake was rolling on. And after a step or two in furious pursuit Ponsonby stopped.

"Well hit, Johnny!" chuckled Nugent.

"The hitfulness was terrific," chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I've a jolly good mind to get down and mop up the road with the cheeky cads!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, enough's as good as a feast," said Harry Wharton. "It's rather awkward rowing with the cads when we come over here to play footer."

"Lot Pon cares about that!"

"Well, we care, if Pon doesn't," said Harry. "Give it a miss, old man. Here we are."

And the Greyfriars fellows clambered down at the gates of Highcliffe, where Courtenay and the Caterpillar were waiting for them. Frank Courtenay's face was a little dark. He had seen the incident down the road. But he made no remark on it, and he greeted the Greyfriars footballers cheerily and cordially.

Harry Wharton cast a last glance back along the road, half expecting to see Bob Cherry in sight. But there was no sign of Bob.

As kick-off was not till three, and the visitors were in good time, it did not matter. Bob was a speedy man on a jigger, and the captain of the Remove had no doubt that he would arrive in time for the game.

But by the time the juniors were ready Bob had not arrived, and Harry Wharton was feeling a little disturbed. On a bike Bob could have beaten the pace of the brake, and there was no reason why he should not have arrived, so far as Wharton could see.

"Why the thump doesn't Cherry come?" asked Vernon-Smith. "It's only a few minutes to three now."

"Are we going to keep Highcliffe waiting for him?" said Peter Todd.

"We'll give him till three, at any rate," said Harry. "Can't imagine why he doesn't come."

"I suppose he's not going at his new stunt of swotting and forgotten all about the match?" remarked the Bounder sarcastically.

"What rot!"

"Well, why the thump doesn't he come, then?" snapped Smithy. "Highcliffe are waitin' for us."

"I'll speak to Courtenay."

The Highcliffe junior captain was more than amenable. He was quite willing to wait.

"As long as you like," he said cheerily. And the Highcliffe men began punting a ball about to keep themselves warm.

"Can't be more than a few minutes," said Harry. "I really can't understand Cherry being late. He's generally keen."

"It's all right, anyhow," said Courtenay.

And Wharton nodded and rejoined his men. They waited impatiently for Bob to appear as the minutes ticked away. Courtenay and his men were very civil and obliging, but it was not the thing to keep the home team waiting in this fashion. And Bob's absence really was inexplicable. If he had not left Greyfriars before the brake arrived at Highcliffe, he had now had time to bike over and join his comrades. Yet there was no sign of him.

A number of Highcliffians had gathered about the ground to see the match, and among them were the Removites who had come over with the team. They stared at the idle footballers, wondering why the game did not start. Harry Wharton's brow was knitted. He was utterly mystified by Bob's failure to appear or to send a message. If anything had happened to keep Bob away, it was easy enough to let his captain know.

"Look here, Wharton. How long are we goin' to hang about, coolin' our heels?" demanded the Bounder at last.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"Bob can't be coming," said Johnny Bull. "Something's happened to stop him. That telephone call, perhaps."

"He could let us know," said Harry.

"Yes. It's jolly odd."

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"It's queer," remarked Nugent. "Bob knows that he's wanted in the match. I can't get on to it. Any fellow would have biked over to tell us if he couldn't come."

"Redwing's on the ground," said Vernon-Smith. "Redwing can play half."

The Bounder was always ready to put in a word for his chum.

Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"We want Bob Cherry," he said.

"Highcliffe are in great form, and we've got to go all out to beat them. We want Bob at half."

"Redwing's here, and Bob Cherry isn't," grunted the Bounder.

"We really can't keep Highcliffe waiting much longer, Wharton," said Squiff, the Remove goalkeeper.

"I know. But—"

"Bob Cherry's let us down," growled the Bounder. "He's not coming, and he hasn't even taken the trouble to tell us so. Are we goin' to kick our heels here all the afternoon? If we don't start soon we sha'n't be finished before dark."

The captain of the Remove breathed hard. He was intensely irritated and annoyed, and the Bounder's gibes added to his annoyance. It was not like Bob to let his friends down, but really it looked as if that was precisely what he had done.

"We'll give him five minutes," said Harry at last. "You can tell Redwing he may be wanted, Smithy."

"Good!"

"Bob meant to come," said Johnny Bull. "We've got his things with us. Something's happened to stop him."

"Then why doesn't he send word?" said Harry.

"Goodness knows."

Smithy cut away to speak to Redwing. Tom Redwing was there, and keen enough to play, if it came to that, and he was sure to put up a good and steady game. But he was not a mighty half-back like Bob Cherry, and in a close struggle that difference of quality might make all the difference.

Harry Wharton looked at his watch, hoping against hope that at the last moment Bob would arrive. But the minutes ticked rapidly away and there was no sign of Bob Cherry.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Highcliffe Rag!

BILLY BUNTER pedalled away on the Courtfield road, on his way to Highcliffe, at a leisurely pace. It was not like Bunter to exert himself, but as it happened there was plenty of time. Had nothing happened to Bunter on his way he would have been in ample time to deliver Bob's message to the captain of the Remove. But something was destined to happen to William George Bunter, and it happened in the shape of Ponsonby. The Owl of the Remove was pedalling away by the road across Courtfield Common, when the Highcliffe nuts spotted him.

Ponsonby stared along the road at the approaching cyclist and grinned.

"Greyfriars cad!" remarked Gadsby.

"It's Bunter," said Ponsonby. "Going over to see the match, I suppose. Looks as if he's goin' to Highcliffe. I don't know what you men think, but it strikes me that Bunter would have been safer in the brake with the rest of the gang if he wanted to show up at Highcliffe this afternoon."

Gadsby and Monson grinned.

They did not need telling that Ponsonby was contemplating a "rag" on the Owl of Greyfriars. A fat and helpless fellow

like Bunter was exactly Ponsonby's mark, when he was looking for trouble.

Ponsonby & Co. had walked out that afternoon, idle and unoccupied as usual. They had not cared either to play football or to watch football, and they intended later in the afternoon to drop into some obscure resort where they could play billiards and smoke cigarettes, and feel themselves sporting men of the world. In the meantime, they were prepared to amuse themselves by being unpleasant to anybody who was unable to thrash them. They had found entertainment in upsetting a grocer's boy's basket of goods, they had thrown stones at a horse grazing on the common and set the unfortunate animal off at a gallop; and now Bunter came along just in time to provide them with a little more entertainment.

So they lined up in the road, grinning, to wait for the fat cyclist to come up.

The short-sighted Owl of the Remove saw them, but did not recognise them till he was quite close at hand.

Then he slowed down in alarm.

The looks of Ponsonby & Co. were a plain indication that they meant mischief; and Bunter was not a fighting-man. He slowed down on the bicycle, blinking through his big spectacles at the three grinning Highcliffians in the road. He knew that he was booked for a ragging if they stopped him; and Bunter knew what a Highcliffe ragging was like, and did not want any. From sheer funk he made a desperate resolve, and suddenly he put on speed and came fairly charging at the Highcliffians. He counted on the Highcliffe fellows jumping out of the way to avoid being run down.

"Stop!" shouted Ponsonby, holding up his hand.

Bunter did not stop; he charged on.

"Stop that fat fool!"

Bunter pedalled on recklessly, and the Highcliffians, getting out of the way of the bike, grabbed at him as he flew past.

The bicycle whirled round, and Bunter came off in a sprawling heap. He threw his arms round Ponsonby's neck and dragged down the dandy of Highcliffe in his fall. Ponsonby yelled as he went down into the road, with the fat Owl of Greyfriars clinging to him. Gadsby yelled as he received a crash on the shin from a bike pedal. And Monson gave a howl as the bike crashed on him in falling, giving him a hard knock on the knee, and transferring a quantity of mud to his elegant trousers.

"Ow, wow, wow! Help!" roared Bunter.

Ponsonby shoved the fat junior savagely off and staggered to his feet. Bunter rolled in the road roaring.

"You fat idiot!" howled Ponsonby.

"Ow, wow! Help!"

"Ow! My shin!" groaned Gadsby.

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"My knee's crooked!" said Monson, almost tearfully. "Confound the fat fool! Why didn't you stop when we told you, you fat dummy?"

And Monson, using his uninjured leg, gave William George Bunter a kick in the ribs.

"Yarooooh!"

"Shove that bike into the ditch!" said Ponsonby savagely.

Bunter sat up.

"I say, you fellows! That's Bob Cherry's bike—"

"All the better; shove it in," said Ponsonby. "We'd shove in Bob Cherry, too, if he were here."

Crash! Splash! Bob Cherry's bicycle went headlong into the ditch, and

splashed in water and mud. It was a reckless act of hooliganism, and quite in keeping with the manners and customs of Ponsonby & Co.; who, with all their elegant ways, were little better than ruffians at heart.

"Now for Bunter!" said Ponsonby, with a gleam in his eyes.

"I—I say, you fellows, chuck it!" squeaked Bunter in alarm. "I say, I'm taking a message to Highcliffe."

"Rats!"

"Honest injun!" gasped Bunter. "I've got a message for Wharton—he's expecting Bob Cherry to play in the match, and Bob can't come, and—"

"Is he?" grinned Ponsonby. "Then he can go on expectin', my fat pippin. I hardly think you'll get through with that message."

"Hardly!" grinned Gadsby.

"Not quite!" chuckled Monson.

Bunter scrambled to his feet, and set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, blinking at the Highcliffians in great alarm. The fate of Bob Cherry's bike did not worry him unduly; indeed, he realised how fortunate it was that it wasn't his own bike. Neither was he deeply troubled by the prospect of being unable to deliver Bob's message; if it couldn't be helped, it couldn't be helped, and there was an end. What worried Bunter was what was going to happen to his own precious person. That was a really important matter, and it worried him very much.

He blinked uneasily at the Highcliffians, and backed away as he blinked; and they followed him up as he backed. All three of the young rascals had been hurt in the collision with the bicycle; and Bunter had to pay for the damages, as it were.

"Shove him in after the bike!" suggested Gadsby.

"Good egg!" said Monson.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"We're goin' past Greyfriars," said Ponsonby. "We'll dribble him back to his school."

"Oh, good!"

"Yarooooh!"

"Off you go, Bunter."

"I—I say— Yooooop!" roared Bunter, as Ponsonby kicked.

The Owl of the Remove started at a run.

He had no idea of getting to Highcliffe now; it was impossible, even if he had attempted it. But Bunter did not even think about it; he was only thinking now of saving his fat skin. He started for Greyfriars at a run; and after him ran Ponsonby & Co.

Bunter was not much of a sprinter; but with three fellows behind him kicking in turn, he put on his best speed. His little fat legs fairly twinkled as he ran. But he could not out-distance the enemy; and Ponsonby & Co. easily kept pace, fairly dribbling the fat junior along the road.

It was an awful experience for Bunter.

He ran his hardest, letting out a dismal yelp every time a boot landed on him, and one landed every minute or so. Cold as the day was, the perspiration streamed down Bunter's fat face.

"Ow, ow! Wow! Help! Yooooop!"

It was a lonely road over the common, and there was no help for Bunter. He ran, and hopped, and jumped, and yelled, dribbling along the road by the Highcliffe raggars.

It was not till Greyfriars was in sight that Ponsonby & Co. paused—not caring to venture too near the school, where more dangerous customers than Bunter were likely to be found. But they paused a little too late.



The bicycle whirled round, and Billy Bunter came off, in a sprawling heap. He threw his arm round Ponsonby's neck, and dragged down the dandy of Highcliffe in his fall. Pon yelled as he went crashing down, with the fat Owl of Greyfriars atop of him. Gadsby yelled, as he received a crash on the shin from a bike pedal, while Monson howled as the bike crashed on him in falling. (See Chapter 6.)

As Bunter rolled on, perspiring and yelling, with the three Highcliffians still kicking in turn, three Greyfriars fellows appeared from a lane by the edge of the common. They were Temple, Dabney, and Fry, of the Greyfriars Fourth. They stared at the peculiar scene for a moment grinning. Then Temple called to his comrades.

"Highcliffe cads ragging a Greyfriars man! Sock into them!"

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

And Temple, Dabney & Co. rushed in.

Billy Bunter, hardly knowing that he was rescued, rolled on towards Greyfriars still howling. He rolled in breathless and perspiring at the school gates. In the meantime, Ponsonby & Co. were having the time of their lives. At Greyfriars Temple, Dabney & Co. were not considered first-class fighting-men; but they were leagues too good for the knuts of Highcliffe. Pon and Gadsby and Monson were knocked right and left; and in a couple of minutes they were fleeing back the way they had come—fervently wishing that they had not dribbled Bunter quite so far.

"Dribble them!" shouted Temple, as the Highcliffians ran.

"Oh, rather!"

And Ponsonby & Co. had the pleasure—or otherwise—of taking their turn at being dribbled along the road; till they scattered on the common, fleeing for their lives, and escaped.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Stern Parent!

BOB CHERRY tramped along the lane to Friardale at a good rate. His face was clouded when he started to walk, but it had cleared by the time he reached the

village station. A quick walk in the keen fresh air, with the wind blowing from the sea, was enough to restore Bob's good-humour. He was disappointed at missing the football-match; but there was the consolation that the Remove captain had plenty of men to choose from to replace him; and Bob did not doubt that Wharton would get his message in plenty of time to make his arrangements. So he dismissed the matter from his mind, and tramped on to Friardale, his spirits rising as he tramped.

Only the prospect of the meeting with his father made him rather thoughtful. The major was not satisfied with him, and Bob was too affectionate and dutiful a son not to feel troubled by that knowledge. He wondered ruefully whether he might have got a better record the previous term if he had tried harder. His record in games had been good enough, and Major Cherry had been pleased enough in that line. Still, life was not all games. Cricket and football and fives had their place, but they were not everything. And in the scholastic line Bob was only too well aware that he was not brilliant. His Form master, Mr. Quelch, left him in no doubt on that point, if he would have doubted it otherwise.

"Swotting" did not appeal to Bob in the least, and the one or two attempts he had made since receiving his father's letter had not been very successful. But he was resolved to "swot," if that would please his father. It might mean giving football the go-by, to some extent; and Bob had been very keenly anticipating the matches that season. But he did not attempt to blink the fact that his Form master was justified in giving him a very poor report, so far as class work was concerned; and Bob resolved to pull

up his socks, as it were, and grind. He only regretted that he had not come to this good resolution before the major's "grouse," instead of afterwards.

He reached the station in good time, and went on the platform to see the major's train come in.

The train arrived from Lantham, and Major Cherry stepped out. Bob cut across the platform to greet him.

"Here you are, dad!"

The bronzed gentleman shook hands with his son, but his manner was not so cheery and cordial as it was wont to be.

Bob's heart sank a little.

His father was more displeased with him than he had supposed; he saw that at a glance.

"I am glad to see you, Robert," said the major.

And he walked down the platform with his son.

Bob's cheery face had clouded again.

His father never called him "Robert" except when he was displeased, and his displeasure made him formal. And those occasions were rare.

Bob walked out of the station with his father in silence. Not a word was spoken as they traversed the old High Street of Friardale. Bob's spirits sank lower and lower till they seemed to have reached zero.

In the road to Greyfriars, however, the major spoke again.

"You are looking well, Robert."

"I'm feeling well, father."

Bob generally called the major "dad," but he made it "father" now, to suit the major's "Robert." There was constraint on both sides.

"I'm glad of that," said Major Cherry. "Physical fitness comes first; it is worth everything else."

"Oh!" said Bob, rather surprised by that remark, in the circumstances.

He fully agreed with it, but he had not expected it from the major.

"It comes first, but it is not the beginning and end of all things," said the major, rather severely. "I would rather see my son healthy and fit, than see him take a Balliol scholarship—much rather. But a lad can be fit and good at games without neglecting all other considerations."

"Oh, yes!" said Bob.

"Mr. Quelch seems to think you little better than a dunce."

"Does he?" murmured Bob.

"He thinks you careless, also."

"Oh!"

"Physical fitness comes first, as I said; but it does not seem to have occurred to you, Robert, that the mind should be cultivated, also," said the major. "Mens sana in corpore sano—what?"

Bob suppressed a grin.

The major, in a hard and busy life, had forgotten most of his "book-learning," and Bob was quite sure that had the major himself been in Mr. Quelch's Form, the Remove master would have considered him a dunce. But the old gentleman liked to air a few Latin tags that lingered in his memory from his schooldays. Bob knew that the major could not read Livy; indeed, he doubted whether Major Cherry could have construed Virgil. He would not have been really surprised to see the old gentleman in difficulties with Cæsar, or even Eutropius. Bob wondered why he was expected to grind at the acquisition of classical knowledge which in the course of time he would forget, as his father had forgotten. But the "Old Boys" were always like that.

"Construe!" snapped the major suddenly.

"Eh?"

Major Cherry stopped, and fixed his eyes on his astonished son.

"Can't you construe a simple sentence?" he demanded.

"Oh, my hat—yes!" gasped Bob. "Sammy Bunter of the Second Form could construe that, father."

"Well, I'm waiting."

"Mens sana in corpore sano—a healthy mind in a healthy body," said Bob, trying hard not to grin.

"Good!" said the major.

And he looked much more cordial as he walked on again, doubtless pleased with his own memory of his classical attainments, and quite unaware that Bob—dunce as Mr. Quelch called him—could have played his head off, so to speak, in Latin.

Father and son arrived at Greyfriars, and the major went to see the Head, leaving Bob waiting for him in the quad. After that, Major Cherry called on Mr. Quelch; and he was quite twenty minutes with the Remove master, and when he rejoined his son he was frowning.

"Will you come up to the study, father?" asked Bob.

"No. I have little more time to spend here," said the major.

"I—I hoped you'd stay to tea," murmured Bob.

"I have a train to catch," said the major briefly.

Bob was silent.

It was clear that the interview with Mr. Quelch had revived the major's displeasure with his son. Bob was not surprised at that. He did not expect Mr. Quelch to be really pleased with his performance in class.

Major Cherry sat down on an oaken

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bench, under the elms in the quad, and signed to his son to sit beside him.

Bob sat down in dismal spirits. He realised that he was "for it."

"Where are your friends this afternoon?" asked the major.

"Playing footer at Higheliffe," said Bob.

"You are not in your Form eleven, then?"

"Not this time."

"Does that mean that you are slacking at games as well as in class?" asked the major grimly.

Bob coloured with indignation.

"I had to stand out because—"

"Oh! Because I telephoned?"

"Yes. Otherwise I should have been playing," said Bob.

The major was silent for a moment.

"I see. That was why you were sorry to hear that I was coming to see you this afternoon?" he said.

Bob did not answer. His father was in an unusual mood, and seemed bent on "catching him" both ways, as it were. If he did not want to play footer he was a slacker; if he did want to play footer he was wanting in affection as a son! With an old gentleman in such a mood as that it was futile and injudicious to argue, so Bob wisely said nothing.

"I have discussed you with your Form master," said the major, after a lengthy pause. "He is far from pleased with you."

"Isn't he?" murmured Bob.

"He gave you a very bad report at the end of last term, as you know."

Poor Bob knew it only too well.

"According to what he tells me, your report this term is not likely to be any better than last, on present prospects."

Bob was aware of that, also.

"There must be a change," said the major abruptly. "I have said, and I mean, that physical fitness is the first consideration. But you must remember that you have a mind as well as a body. You know that I am not a rich man, Robert."

"Yes, father."

"You know that some day you will have to take your place in the world; you have no prospect of living perpetually in idleness—like Lord Mauleverer, for instance, or Vernon-Smith, of your Form?"

"I don't want to," said Bob, colouring.

"Well, when the time comes to fend for yourself it will not be of much use to tell a prospective employer that you can knock up a hundred runs at cricket, or kick goals at football."

"I suppose not," assented Bob.

He wondered inwardly whether it would be of much use to tell a prospective employer that he could construe Virgil and read Titus Livius in the original. But he did not venture to say so.

Moreover, the argument would not have been quite just, for he construed Virgil rather badly, and so far could not read Livy at all!

"I should not like to see you giving up games and crocking yourself in an attempt to win a Balliol scholarship," went on the major. "I do not expect that of you, Robert."

Robert suppressed a shudder at the bare idea.

"But I have a right to expect my son

to acquire common knowledge," said the major. "Do you agree with me?"

"Oh, yes!" gasped Bob.

"You may think—as many people think—that classical knowledge will not be of much use in later life," went on the major. "You are unlikely to become a Form master or headmaster in a school—"

"Oh, my hat!" Bob ejaculated involuntarily. He really thought it very unlikely indeed himself.

"Neither are you likely to become a tutor, even if I cared for you to follow that profession," said the major. "Nevertheless, classical knowledge has its value, though you may not realise it. The Greyfriars curriculum is like that of all public schools—many years behind the times. But you may depend on it; my boy, that the fellow who is careless and backward at his school work, whatever it may be, will be careless and backward in the more serious work that follows after school life is over. If you studied Cherokee, or Hindustani, instead of Latin, you ought to try to master Cherokee, or Hindustani; whatever your work may be, you ought to try to do it well. It may not be the best work that could be selected for you; but you will not improve matters by being idle and slovenly."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"Do you see that?"

"Yes, I see it, father," said Bob; "and—and I'd already made up my mind to tackle it a bit harder."

"I am glad to hear it. Now, Robert, you will never be a keen scholar like your friend Mark Linley. You will never, probably, have a natural taste for the classics such as I have observed in the nephew of my old friend Colonel Wharton. But you can be efficient if you choose. Any fellow who is not an absolute fool can make a decent figure in his class if he choose. You are not an absolute fool, I hope?"

"I—I hope not!" stammered Bob.

"Very well, then; I expect you to take your work seriously," said the major. "As a proof of it, I want you to put in for the Head's Latin prize this term."

Bob almost shuddered.

"The prize is open to all boys under the Fifth," said the major. "You will have many competitors; and there is no reason why you should not beat them if you work hard enough. I shall not, however, condemn you if you fail to win the prize. But I shall be informed how many marks you obtain for your paper, and if you are anywhere near the bottom of the list you may expect me to be seriously angry."

Bob was dismally silent.

In his mind's eye he could see a succession of football matches going on without him while he was slogging at Latin in his study with a wet towel round his hapless head.

It was not an inspiring prospect.

"Well?" rapped out the major.

"I shall do as you wish, of course, father," said Bob. "I'll put my name down to-day."

"I have already requested Mr. Quelch to put your name down!" said the major grimly.

"Oh!"

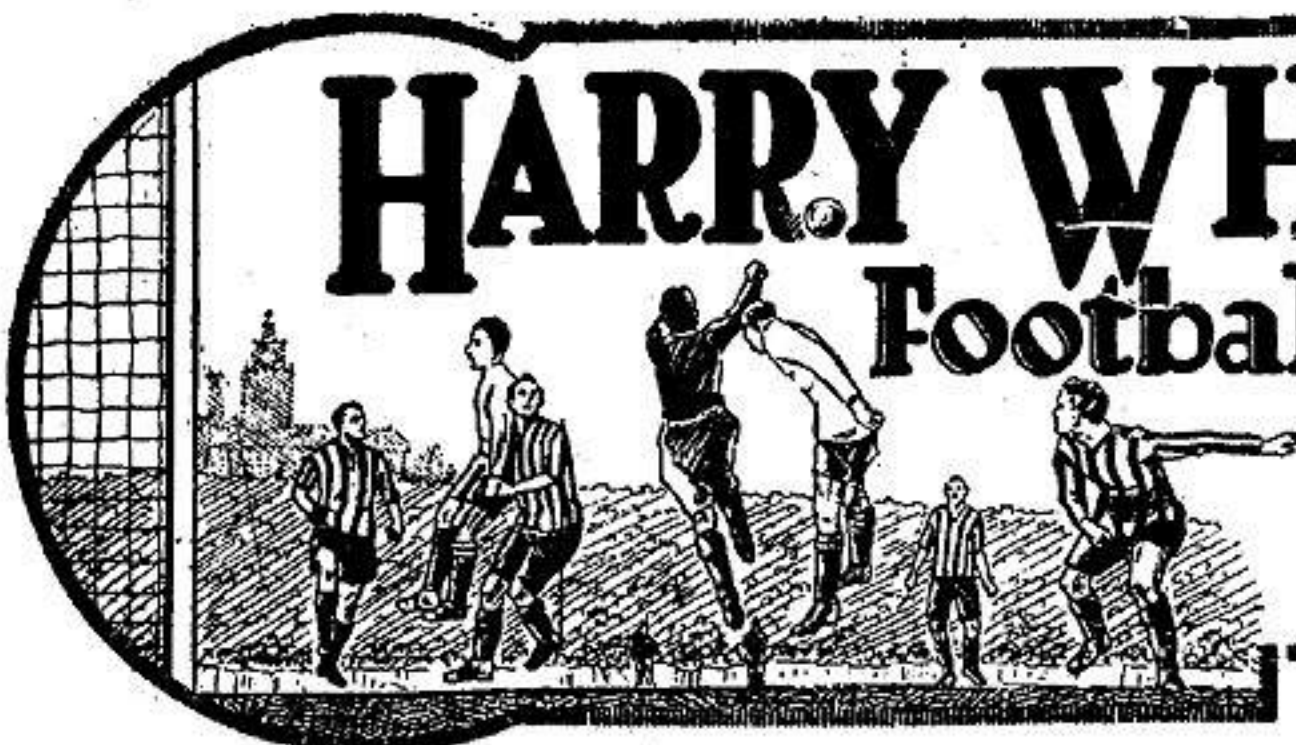
"Mr. Quelch is extremely kind and considerate in the matter," said Major Cherry. "You must be well aware that a Form master here has very little leisure; but he is prepared, as he tells me, to give up some of his leisure in assisting you to make up for lost time. If you desire extra tuition Mr. Quelch is prepared to receive a request from you."

(Continued on page 17.)

ANSWERS
Every Saturday—PRICE 2s

HARRY WHARTON'S

Football Supplement



No trouble or expense has been spared to make this supplement interesting and informative. In it all phases of football will be discussed by writers chosen from the foremost football authorities in the land. Readers may, therefore, rely upon the facts, figures, etc., mentioned from week to week in this supplement as being authentic. HARRY WHARTON, Editor.

No. 8. Vol. 3 (New Series).

Week Ending October 23rd, 1926.

Do You Know?



THAT there is an unusual association between the forward lines of Huddersfield Town and Preston North End in that they contain two sets of brothers? Alec Jackson and William Devlin being members of the champions' attack, and William Jackson and Thomas Devlin appearing in the Preston forward line.

That Durham City have no official trainer, and that practically the whole of the players of the team do their training in the evenings near to their own homes, and also that they have a reputation for being as well trained as the men of any club in the country?

That Burnley's goalkeeper, Somerville, used to go to school with Gallacher, the centre-forward of Newcastle United? The pair have since been in opposition in football matches several times.

That Bury have a free stand at their ground at Gigg Lane, which is unique in the respect that it is the only stand exclusively for the use of boys under the age of fourteen? There is no one at the entrance to see that persons over fourteen years old get in, but the boys make it so hot for any intruders that they don't remain long.

That there is one First Division club which has on its staff three players who regularly arrive at the ground in their own cars for the day's training?

That this season is the first in which Fulham have won their opening home Second Division game since pre-War days?

That G. Briggs, who is leading the Birmingham attack in such fine style this season, is one of the smallest centre-forwards taking part in League football? He only stands 5 ft. 5 ins., and weighs 10 st. 12 lb., but he makes up for this by reason of his dash and clever ball control.

That the most goals ever scored in a season in the First Division was West Bromwich Albion's 104 in 1919-20? The fewest was Darwen's 26, in 1891-92? Liverpool's 106 goals in the Second Division in 1895-6 has never since been equalled, although the Anfielders took part in only 30 schedule games against 42 by clubs in seasons of more recent date.

FIFTY TIMES CAPPED!

THIS week England and Ireland meet to commence the series of real International matches for the present season, and it is specially interesting, therefore, to refer to some wonderful International records. One can never think of any International match without at the same time thinking of Billy Meredith, the Welsh outside-right, who established a record which may never be broken—that of playing for the country of his birth fifty-one times.

Seeing that only three International games are played by any one country in each season, it will be obvious that Meredith's record was spread over many years, and, as a matter of fact, he played for Wales when he was well on towards fifty. After he had played his fiftieth game for the Principality he was presented with a handsome silver centrepiece by the Welsh F.A., and Meredith has told me that of all his football possessions this is the one of which he is most proud.

OLD STAGERS.

Robert Crompton, who used to play at full-back for Blackburn Rovers, and who is now a director of that club, played for England more times than any other player—thirty-four—in all, while Scotland's record is held by Bobby Walker, who played for his country in twenty-nine International games.

Strange things have happened in regard to International players from time to time. Probably you know that the only qualification is birth; that is, a player can only play for the country in which he was born. But this rule has been broken by accident on more than one occasion. There was the case of Bob Evans, an outside-left, who used to play for Sheffield United. I don't know whether the Welsh selectors considered, because he was called Evans, that he must have been born in their country. Anyway, he played ten times for Wales before somebody discovered that he was born in England, and thereafter he played in seven matches for England.

HALF AN INTERNATIONAL.

There is one case of a player who can really be said to be only half an International. This is Dai Davies, who used to keep goal for Bolton Wanderers. In a match between England and Wales in 1908 L. R. Roose was the Welsh goalkeeper. In the first half of the game, however, this player was badly injured, and after the interval Dai Davies, who happened to be on the ground, kept goal for Wales. Whether he got half an International cap for playing in half a game I have never heard.

One would not expect Wales, with its strictly limited number of clubs, as compared with England and Scotland, to carry off the International championship, but the Principality has done this on three occasions. In the season of 1923-4 Wales beat England, Scotland, and Ireland, and in doing so only forfeited one goal—a very remarkable record. It was gained, too, by calling upon only twelve players, ten men playing in each of the three games, and these received a special reward.

In the old days men who played for England used to get ten pounds per match. Now they get six pounds per game.

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Popular "Billy" Meredith, who played for his country fifty-one times.

Play Up the Magpies!

Curious Names of Football Clubs and How They Got Them.

A ROUSING battle-cry from the spectators has probably inspired many a football team to put forth an effort which has brought victory to the club. And lucky the side which has a nickname which makes a good battle-cry. A team which is egged on by the call "Play up, the Lions!" ought to do great things. The name certainly suggests that they could "eat" their opponents. The nickname, Lions, was given to the Millwall club because somebody had an original idea that their ground should be called the Den. What more appropriate than the Lions should play in the Den?

TWO OF A KIND.

There are two teams which are known as the Magpies—Notts County and Newcastle United—but Nottingham has the prior claim to the title. In these days, however, it is Newcastle who are mostly referred to as the Magpies. They were given the name because of their black-and-white shirts. Magpies are black and white, as any student of natural history doubtless knows, and a cartoonist connected with a Newcastle player invariably draws a magpie when he wants to drive home a point about Newcastle, whose other name is the Geordies.

One of the quaintest and most obscure nicknames is that which is given to the Bury club. They are called the Shakers; The why and wherefore of the name goes a long way back. In the old days a supporter of Bury was in the habit of calling on the players to

"shake" their opponents. His example was copied by other supporters of the club, and thus gradually Bury became known as the Shakers.

TRADE OR CALLING.

There are plenty of pet names for football clubs which indicate some peculiarity or some trade of the town in which they play. Bolton Wanderers, for instance, are called the Trotters, because trotters provide a favourite food for the people of the town. The Wednesday, of Sheffield, are known as the Blades, a name which hints at the cutlery which is manufactured in the town; and Everton's pet title of the Toffees arises from the fact that there is a brand of sweet, which you have doubtless sampled, which is called Everton toffee. Grimsby Town are the Fishermen; Southend, the Shrimpers; Luton Town, the Hatters; Northampton Town, the Cobblers; and so on. If you cannot understand why Southampton should be called the Saints, the answer to the question is that originally the name of the club was Southampton St. Mary's, and it was in those days they got the name which has stuck to the club ever since.

"COME ON, THE IRON!"

Another battle-cry which is apt to mystify the people who don't know is the one which can sometimes be heard on the ground of the West Ham club: "Come on, the Iron!" This cry is a reminder that before West Ham got into League football the title of the club was

Thames Ironworks, and it was in an ironworks that the club had its beginning.

Another mystery name is that which is so often given to West Bromwich Albion—the Throstles. If you live in the Midlands or the North of England you will know well enough that throstle is another word for thrush. Now, when West Bromwich were quite a small football club, with a ground surrounded by trees and hedges instead of big stands, they played in a district in which the thrush was a particularly prominent bird. So the ground was named the Hawthorns, and the pet name of Throstles was given to the team. Derby County are known as Rams, because Derbyshire is a great sheep-rearing county, and on the coat-of-arms of the town of Derby there is a picture of a ram.



F. HUDSPETH (Newcastle United.)

This Week's Big Games!

Thrilling Tussles for
the week-end.
By OLD PRO.

A MONG the big games of this week there is the Wednesday match between England and Ireland, to be played on the ground of the Liverpool club. England are expected to win this time, but Ireland have more than once sprung a surprise, and the time has certainly gone when the chosen of England could regard their game against the best of Ireland as a picnic. Twice in the course of these contests has England scored

THIRTEEN GOALS IN ONE MATCH, and it must have been very disappointing to the representatives of the Emerald Isle to lose by thirteen to nothing the first time they ever played England at Soccer. But though they may have been disappointed, the Irish were not dismayed, and they have kept on struggling, and three times out of forty games Ireland has managed to win, while on six occasions the result has been a draw. It is particularly appropriate that the game between England and Ireland should be played on the Liverpool ground, for some of the finest Irish footballers of all time have played for Liverpool. In this connection one must not forget Elisha Scott, the famous goalkeeper, who has often saved Ireland from defeat.

Turning from this mid-week International to the big games of this Saturday.

day, there are some matches down for decision which look

SPECIALLY ATTRACTIVE.

Doubtless the biggest crowd of the day will assemble on the ground of the Aston Villa club, for they meet their near rivals from West Bromwich. Right down the line of football history these two teams have engaged in memorable struggles. How far this history goes back will be realised when I mention that the Villa and the Albion played in a Cup Final at Kennington Oval—where Surrey now play cricket—in 1887. On two other occasions they have met in the Final tie. The Villa have won twice and the Albion once. The "Throstles" success in a Final over their neighbours was in 1892, and it is told that they owed their success almost entirely to the fact that for some reason or other the Villa goalkeeper of that day got a bad attack of nerves and let a couple of "soft ones" beat him.

The two clubs have often met in the Cup apart from the Final ties mentioned, and, strangely enough, they have clashed in each of the last three seasons. In 1924-5 two great contests were played before the Albion

JUST SCRAMBLED HOME

at Villa Park, after a drawn game at West Bromwich, and Tommy Magee, the

energetic little half-back of the Albion, told me that he had never played two harder or fairer contests.

The meeting of Newcastle United and Blackburn Rovers recalls a strange experience in the games between these two clubs just over a year ago. The Rovers had started the season badly, and had not won a match when they went to Newcastle. For the game at St. James' Park they made an important team alteration, putting Harper, who had not previously been considered good enough in that season, at centre-forward. Harper proceeded to show that he was good enough by scoring five goals, and Newcastle were beaten by seven goals to one. Needless to say, Harper was never left out of the Blackburn team after that, and before the end of last season he played for England against Scotland.

During Derby County's spell in the Second Division they have not had to visit the Spurs in search of League points, but now that they are back in the top class they will pay a visit to White Hart Lane this week-end. And there are a lot of people who will remember

WHAT A SHOCK

the Derby team gave the Spurs and their supporters in the Fourth Round of the Cup in 1923. Everybody expected the Spurs to get to the Final again, and that Derby County would prove easy victims. But to everybody's consternation, Derby won by a goal to nothing, and, what is more, they fully deserved their success.

IT is not easy to lay down hard and fast rules in regard to policy on the football field. Indeed, it would be rank foolishness to make any attempt to do so. The team which is most likely to come out on top in any season is one which, in the first place, has skilful players, and, in the second place, has what might be called an elastic policy, which can be adapted to the needs of each game. It's a funny sport, this football; the sort of thing about which the players are continually making up their minds on definite lines, only to have their conclusions shattered by something which happens in a match almost immediately after they have arrived at their decision. That is a part of the charm of football, that each game calls for different methods, and that the style which does well against one set of opponents won't work the following week when the opposition is different.

NO FAITH IN THE ATTACK.

Although, then, we must always be careful to guard against laying down hard and fast rules, I think there are one or two general observations which may safely be made concerning what can best be described as "safety first" tactics. There cannot be the slightest doubt that some teams play as though their first object in life was to prevent the other fellows from scoring goals. These teams may think they are not too good in attack, but, being strong in defence, they more or less rely on the defence pulling them through, and even go out of their way to give the defence additional help. For it is perfectly true that no team can lose a football match unless the other fellows score at least one goal; but on the other hand, I must say that I am no lover of "safety first" tactics. Rather do I believe that a much better slogan is: "Attack is the best defence."

SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND.

The changes in the offside rule last season seemed to have the effect of converting several clubs to the idea that the forwards must not have quite the same amount of support as they had been accustomed to get, and that the defence must be given additional help. There were teams we played against in Scotland which seemed to have this idea, and I was told by one of my many football friends in England that many clubs south of the Border appeared to have adopted "safety first" tactics.

A THIRD FULL-BACK.

When I was in England for the last International match I took the opportunity to talk to several Englishmen and some Anglo-Scots about football in England. More than one of them told me that what they considered English football had suffered from was too many centre-half-backs who had, by their play, really ceased to be half-backs at all, and had become centre full-backs. I was further informed that one of the most promising young centre-half-backs in England had largely spoilt his game by staying behind through match after match to help the defence. This idea of the centre-half as a third full-back, with which so many clubs tinkered last season is the plainest indication that they had adopted "safety first" tactics; that their main idea was not to get goals, but to prevent the other fellows from getting them.

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL.

I know, of course, that the change in the offside rule has made it easier for centre-forwards to stay well up the field

"Safety First" a Good Slogan?

By

John Hutton

The Famous Aberdeen and Scotland Defender.

Relying too much on the defence gives your opponents time to find their feet.

without being continually stopped for off-side, but I do not agree that these advanced centre-forwards should be given the almost undivided attention of opposing centre-half-backs. As I see it, you won't have a good team without a real centre-half, because unless you have a real centre-half your forwards are not getting the support to which they are justly entitled. The centre-half must come back to help the defence when his side is hard pressed, but he should also, in my view, go up in support of his own forwards when they are on the aggressive.

THRUSTING AWAY AN ADVANTAGE

The way I look at it is this: If your side keeps up the attack there is little or no danger of your side losing in a match. The other chaps can't score if the ball is kept in their half of the field. Or, to revert to a former phrase which I used—attack is the best defence. It is no unusual thing in football to see a side which has had a lead of two goals being beaten before the end of the game. It would be going too far to say that every match which runs on these lines is the outcome of the team which has

decides, by its play, to rely on defence for the rest of the match. Such tactics give the other fellows a chance to find their feet; they pull themselves together and then proceed to play better football than they would have done if the other side had kept pegging them to the defensive. In the years of war we used to talk a lot about one side or other having gained the initiative. Now, football is very like war, and once you have got on top it is worth while putting every ounce into attack in order to keep there. The team which is attacking is dictating the policy—there can't be any two opinions on that.

TOO MANY COOKS.

Especially are clubs inclined, however, to try the "safety first" business in Cup-ties. A team which, perhaps, did not really expect to win gets the lead, but instead of playing to increase it and to make the most of the worries of their opponents, they concentrate on defence, with disastrous results. After all, if a side has a good defence why not rely on the members of that defence to do their own work? It isn't always a help to full-backs to have the half-backs, and perhaps a couple of forwards, as well, falling back into goal. It may be a hindrance.

A GOALKEEPER'S YARNS.

Talking of his most dangerous opponents, Dick Pym, the Bolton Wanderers goalkeeper said: "I am reminded of the terrors of the unknown by my experience against Hughie Gallacher last season at Newcastle. His activities on that occasion caused me to put him on my 'danger' list. I hope I shall never again have to meet him in similar mood, and in similar circumstances.

"There was a heavy mist over the ground at St. James' Park on that Saturday afternoon. At times it was so thick that I could scarcely see the other goal, and the figures of the players came towards me like ghosts. The prize ghost was Gallacher.

"Four times in the course of that match he came tearing into position to drive the ball hard past me into the net. The onlookers, who could not see a great deal of the football, began to sing, 'Oh, Mr. Gallacher!' after he had scored three. I did not see the funny side of it, and if at any time now one of our players thinks he would like to annoy me, he just starts to sing, 'Oh, Mr. Gallacher!'

"Incidentally, I never think of that experience without being reminded of the story of a lad who, in an emergency, was pressed to keep goal for a junior side. In the first half-hour of the game this lad allowed six shots to beat him. One of the full-backs said to him: 'Why don't you stop 'em?' 'Stop 'em,' replied the novice, 'why, what's the net for?'

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An Impression of JOHN HUTTON, by Jimmy Beed, of the 'Spurs.

gained the lead adopting the "safety first" idea. But it is quite certain that many teams have thrown away their advantage by falling back after getting on top. The time to go on scoring goals in any game is when you have started to score goals, because a couple notched against any defence is apt to get them worried and flurried into making mistakes.

HOW TO KEEP THEM OUT.

Suppose, however, that, after having got a lead of a couple of goals, a team

GOAL KICKS!

It is often said that there are so many good goalkeepers about that one or two can always be signed on cheaply. What most of us want at the moment, however, is not so much a cheap goalkeeper as a cheap coalkeeper.

Burnley started the new season in great style. In fact, after their narrow escape from relegation at the end of last season they may be said to have turned over a new leaf. This should not surprise us, for they have a player named Page.

"Call yourself a full-back?" said the manager, after having watched a youngster on trial. "You are much more of a drawback!"

There is a general tendency to put referees on the retired list when they reach forty years of age. This scarcely gives the experienced whistle-wielders what might be called a fifty-fifty chance.

Billy Gillespie, of Sheffield United, says that he would rather lose the ball

than kick it wildly anywhere. But surely to kick the ball wildly anywhere is the surest way of losing it?

The peculiar rites of the English language can even be illustrated in football. Read this quickly, and see if you can make sense of it. I understand that the players of the Reading Football Club have been doing a lot of reading about the history of the side since Reading got into the Second Division.

Notts County should do very well indeed this season, because they are "Streets" ahead of any other club, so far as their goalkeeper is concerned.

A certain Scottish footballer was asked to take on the captaincy of the side, but, much to the surprise of the manager, he flatly refused the job. "You see, it's like this," said the Scot. "I might not stay with you a whole season."

Have you noticed in football that the team which fails to stay can also be said to stay to fail?

Here is a story which you can please yourself about believing: A certain

referee from Aberdeen went on to the football ground to control a match. Looking up at the stand, he noticed that there was a clock there. He immediately stopped his watch!

There is a director of Preston North End who always has pressed beef for lunch when his team is playing away from home, because, so he says, they are always lucky when he does so. Evidently his motto is: "'Bully' for bully beef."

The Spurs have in their reserve team a player named Barnet, and there is also a town named Barnet which is some miles away from Tottenham. Hence this little amusing passage between two spectators at a recent match, when the outside-left made a very bad pass. "Fancy a kick like that being meant for Barnet," said Spectator No. 1. "Yes," replied Spectator No. 2, "the ball went much nearer Chingford than Barnet."

Jack Hill, the Burnley captain, has a gentlemen's outfitters' shop, and he recently supplied the whole Burnley team with ties. A little later in the season we shall be able to refer to this neckwear as Cupties.

TRICKS of the TRADE!

A series of articles, showing how the experts do their job.

This week: **THE REF.**

IN one respect the referee is different from the player. He does not give his whole time to the job. The players of the big games get enough money per week to do away with the necessity for any other work, but the referee gets only three guineas for a big match, plus his out-of-pocket expenses, of course. That, however, is no reason why the man who wields the whistle should not learn the tricks of the trade, and there are indeed a lot of tricks to be learnt, because the referee has also to know the tricks of the players.

The first essential of a referee is to earn the respect of the players whom he is called upon to control. The referee who hopes to be successful must somehow get the reputation for dispensing justice on the football field.

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR,

and, if any of my young readers are tempted to become referees in later years, I want you always to remember this bit of advice: make the players feel that you are going to rule.

One of the most successful referees for many years past was Mr. Jack Howcroft, who has just retired at the age of fifty. He was so fully respected that I have heard him cheered when he has come out of his dressing-room to control a match as loudly as the players themselves. Not many referees have had that experience, and therefore it is worth while to inquire into the secrets of his success; into the tricks by which he made himself a master of the referee trade.

Did Howcroft get to the top of the referee tree because he never made a mistake in the course of the matches he controlled—because he never gave a side a goal in error? Of course he didn't.

Football spectators are sensible people, and they realise that the referee who

NEVER MADE A MISTAKE

doesn't exist. Howcroft made as many mistakes as the average referee, but he had a way with him which made you wonder whether you were right. When



JACK HOWCROFT,
one of our most successful referees.

he saw anything happen on the football field he gave his decision quickly, and, having given it, he made it plain to everybody concerned that he would stand no argument about it. Consequently the players didn't argue with him, and thus he made his job ever so much easier.

It was the same in regard to doubtful tactics. The players knew before they started a game that Howcroft wouldn't stand any nonsense, and as a rule they didn't try the nonsense stuff. In the course of thirty years' refereeing Howcroft sent off four players, I believe, or at the rate of one in seven seasons. That wasn't because he was weak; it was because he was strong that the necessity for sending players off so seldom arose.

He had a way of

NIPPING TROUBLE IN THE BUD

too, and in this connection I may repeat a story which was told to me, not by Howcroft, but by a young player. This young player was taking part in a match of which Howcroft had control. He was an exceedingly clever player, too, the sort that could make an opponent look silly. In this particular match the player seemed to be striving to make a veteran full-back so foolish that the crowd were laughing at the defender. Of course, the full-back didn't like it—no full-back likes to be made to look a fool in the eyes of thousands of people.

Sensing that there would be real trouble if this sort of thing went on, Howcroft stepped quietly up to the young player, and said: "Look here, my lad, there is no necessity to make that full-back look a fool by beating him three or four times in one attack. If I were you I should stop it. If you don't stop it the probability is that you will finish this match in the nearest hospital, and I shall have to order the full-back off the field for sending you there."

It might be said that Howcroft was exceeding the strict duty of a referee in giving a young player advice. But the referee was avoiding trouble for himself. There is scarcely a footballer who won't listen to a bit of quiet advice, just as there is scarcely one who is not upset if he is obviously preached at by the referee in the middle of the field. In a word, the referee who hopes to succeed wants, first of all, tact. And on top of that he wants some more tact.



(Continued from page 12.)

"That's very kind of him!" groaned Bob.

"The prospect does not seem to please you."

"I—I'll do my best."

"If you do your best I shall ask no more," said the major. He looked at his watch and rose. "You may walk with me to the station if you like, Bob."

"Yes, dad."

It was "Bob" and "dad" again—that was something. Bob's resolve to do his best seemed to have placated the dissatisfied parent, and he was very kind and cordial on the walk to the station. Bob's clouded face cleared again; but he was well aware, at the same time, that there was an iron hand in the velvet glove. The major was trusting him to play up; and if he did not play up, as he had promised, the vials of wrath would be poured out on his devoted head. The major had said nothing about taking him away from Greyfriars, but Bob understood that that largely depended on the "show" he made in the examination for the Latin prize.

Major Cherry shook hands very cordially with his son from the carriage window when he got into his train.

"Play up, Bob!" he said kindly. "I rely upon you. You've given me your word, and I know you'll keep it. I'm proud of your record in the school games, but I want you to prove that you can do something as well as play games."

"I'll try my hardest, dad!" said Bob earnestly.

And he meant it.

He walked back from the station in an unusually thoughtful mood. He had given his father his word, and he meant to keep his word. But he realised very clearly that there was an uphill road before him—though he certainly did not realise how very hard and uphill that road was going to be!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Highcliffe Match!

"TWENTY minutes past!" said the Bounder sarcastically.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"Tell Redwing we shall want him," he said.

"Right!"

There was no sign of the arrival of Bob Cherry on the football-ground at Highcliffe, and Wharton was forced to make up his mind to play without the best half-back Greyfriars had ever turned out.

He was deeply irritated.

Bob was wanted in the game—wanted badly—but if he couldn't come he couldn't. But in that case he could have sent word, and not kept the footballers hanging about, keeping the home team waiting for nothing. It did not occur to Wharton that Bob had sent a message, which had not reached its destination; he knew nothing of the proceedings of Ponsonby & Co. on Courtfield common. Besides, what could have turned up at the last minute to keep the half-back away if he chose to come? His

absence was intensely annoying; all the more because it was unexplained. But it was useless to think about it, and Harry Wharton went into the field with his men, Tom Redwing filling Bob's place at left-half.

The game began, and from the whistle it was hard and fast. Courtenay and his men were in great form; even the Caterpillar, known as a slacker at games and most other things, showed no sign of slackness, but played up in wonderful style.

It was obvious from the start that the Highcliffe men were at their best, the whole team pulling together well, and every man a trier; and that Greyfriars wanted to put up their very best game to keep their end up. That made Bob's absence all the more exasperating; he was a tower of strength in the half-way line—when he was there. Tom Redwing played up well in his place; but no one—not even Tom himself—fancied that he was anything like Bob Cherry's form. The teams were so evenly matched that even a trifle might have turned the scale, and the loss of Bob Cherry was more than a trifle.

The first goal, however, came to Greyfriars, Smithy putting the ball in for the Remove. Close on half-time, Highcliffe attacked hotly, and there was a struggle before the visitors' goal—and when it cleared Tom Brown was seen limping. The Greyfriars centre-half had had a bad knock on the knee.

The New Zealand junior played on, but only by an effort of will; he was not of much use till half-time. The work of the halves had to be done by Peter Todd and Redwing, and Bob was missed more than ever; though Johnny Bull and Mark Linley at back played a great game. But close on half-time the Highcliffe forwards came through, and Courtenay put in a kick that beat Squiff in goal.

"We're holdin' them," remarked the Bounder, as he sucked a lemon in the interval. "But they're in great form to-day."

"Tip-top form," said Johnny Bull. "I wish Bob were here."

"Redwing's doing well," said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, quite! But—"

"Well, Bob isn't here, and it can't be helped," remarked Peter Todd. "How's your knee, Browney?"

Tom Brown made a grimace.

"A silly chump jammed his heel on it," he said. "I've got a bruise as big as an egg."

"Can you go on?" asked Wharton.

The centre-half grinned.

"I'm going on whether I can or not," he answered. "It's all right, Wharton, I'll pull through somehow. We'll beat them."

"The beatfulness will be terrific, my esteemed chums," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But it is a ridiculous pity that the excellent Bob could not join us."

"Oh, rot!" said Smithy. "Football isn't a one-man game. We shall manage all right without Cherry."

"My esteemed Smithy—"

"Fudge!" said the Bounder.

Tom Redwing coloured uncomfortably. His chum was rather given to pushing his claims in season and out of season; but Redwing was quite well aware himself that he was little more than a stopgap.

"Time!" said Harry Wharton abruptly.

The footballers went back into the field.

In the second half there was some hard play, and the onlookers were soon

aware that Highcliffe were doing most of the attacking. Again and again the Greyfriars men broke away, but they seemed always to be stopped before anything came of it; and always the home players were ready to follow up with a hot attack. Squiff, in goal, was given harder work than he was accustomed to in his citadel; at times the shots seemed fairly to rain on him. And Wharton reluctantly realised that he had to think more about defence than attack—which was not his usual system.

Tom Brown was making heroic efforts to keep his end up; but he was limping all through, and his face was a little white. Redwing was playing well, but he was not up to the Highcliffe form. But for Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, in goal, the score would have gone high against the visitors; but the Australian junior saved and saved, again and again, till it seemed that his citadel was really impregnable to attack.

The second half wore away, with no score on either side; and towards the finish the Greyfriars forwards got going in great style, and Harry Wharton had a chance. But by ill-luck the ball struck the cross-bar, and rebounded into the field of play; and the Highcliffe defence was too keen to give Wharton another chance. The leather was cleared away to midfield, and the rush of the game went after it; and then the play was all in the visitors' half.

As the last minutes ticked away Courtenay and his men drove the attack harder and harder, and Wharton had to pack his goal and defend, realising that all he could hope for now was a draw. But even a draw was denied to the Removites who had come over to Highcliffe to win.

A rush of the Highcliffe forwards came through the defence; Tom Brown's damaged knee failed him, and he crumpled up, and Redwing was nowhere, as it seemed; and the ball whizzed in on Squiff, and was fisted out again, only to meet the Caterpillar's head, and to be headed back into the net before Squiff knew that it was coming. And the Highcliffe crowd roared:

"Goal!"

Rupert de Courcy rubbed his head and grinned.

"Good man, Caterpillar!" said Courtenay.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Highcliffe wins! Goal!"

"Five minutes to go!" said the Bounder, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Not our game!"

The Bounder was right. Both teams were pretty thoroughly gruelled by this time, and the last minutes flickered away with "nothing doing." The footballers came off the field, with Highcliffe winners by two goals to one.

The Greyfriars fellows knew how to lose a game, as well as how to win one, and they took their beating cheerfully.

But Harry Wharton's brow was a little clouded when he mounted into the brake for the return to Greyfriars.

"After all, we can't always win, Harry!" Frank Nugent remarked.

"I know that, Frank. But I suppose we don't want to go about collecting up lickings if we can help it," said the captain of the Remove rather tartly.

Nugent laughed.

"No; but Highcliffe won on their merits," he said. "They played a splendid game."

"Quite up to our form," said Johnny Bull.

"Nothing to choose between the two

teams," said Mark Linley. "Courtenay has done wonders with them."

"I know," said Harry. "But just a little more weight on our side would have done it. It can't be helped, of course; and it's no good grousing over a defeat. But if Bob had been there I feel certain the result would have been different."

"Well, he couldn't come, or he would have come," said Nugent amicably.

"If he couldn't come, he could have sent word."

"That wouldn't have made any difference to the team," said Peter Todd. "You'd have played Redwing in his place, anyhow; it would only have meant that we shouldn't have kept Highcliffe waiting."

"Exactly," said the Bounder. "But it's a temptation to find fault with somebody after bagging a licking."

Wharton flushed.

"It's not that!" he said. "It's not that, and you know it, Smithy. If Bob had a good reason for not coming—"

"Of course he had," said Nugent. "The goodfulness of the reason must have been terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Wharton made no rejoinder: he did not want to appear to be criticising his absent chum, but, at the same time, he had a feeling that Bob had let the team down, and he was feeling dissatisfied. The footballers were not in their usual cheery mood after a match, as the brake rolled home to Greyfriars.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Misunderstood!

"O H, dear!"

Bob Cherry made that remark involuntarily as he sat down in Study No. 13.

Having seen his father off to the station, Bob had walked back to the school, debating in his mind whether he should cut across to Highcliffe to see the finish of the football match.

But the match was certain to be nearly over by now, if not quite, by the time he could get to Highcliffe; moreover, he had lent his bike to Bunter. And Bob felt that, in the absence of his friends, it was a good opportunity to begin his new game of "swotting." The Remove passage was quite deserted; it

was quiet enough now—too quiet, in fact, for Bob's tastes. Bob was a gregarious youth, and he was never likely to understand the charms which sages are said to have seen in the face of solitude.

The quietude of the Remove passage had a dismal effect on him; but he knew that if he was going to keep his word to his father, the sooner he started the better; and there was no time like the present. So he gave up the idea of meeting the Remove footballers on their way home from Highcliffe, and went to his study to "swot."

He sorted out his books and sat down at his study table, and concentrated his attention upon Latin grammar.

If he was going to have a chance at the Head's Latin prize, there was no doubt that he had a good deal of leeway to make up; and the sooner he made it up the better.

He would have been glad enough to please his father by gaining the prize; but he had little hope of that. But at least he could make a good show by a good show of hard work; and on that he knew depended whether he remained at Greyfriars or not. He was never likely to be great in classics; but he could work hard if he liked, and convince his father that he was not wasting his time at the school. If he got anywhere near the top of the list, it would satisfy the major, satisfy his Form-master, and save himself from unpleasant possibilities. And that depended on sticking to his work; and Bob resolved to stick to it.

It was not pleasant; and he was only too conscious that much of his difficulty was due to wasted opportunities. But Bob was a stickler, and having made up his mind, he did not falter.

He worked hard and steadily, and concentrated his mind upon his work. He forgot other matters, even the football match in which he ought to have played, until a tramp of feet and a buzz of voices in the Remove passage apprised him that the footballers had returned.

The study door opened, and Mark Linley and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came in together.

They stared at Bob.

Both of them had wondered, like the other fellows, what had kept Bob away from Highcliffe; but certainly they had not supposed that it was his new wheeze of "swotting." But finding him shut up in the study with his books, that was now their natural conclusion.

"You're here!" exclaimed Mark.

"Eh? Yes," said Bob. "Where should I be?"

"Swotting?"

"Yes."

"Oh," said Mark, and he said no more.

"My esteemed Bob—!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"How did it go?" asked Bob.

"The excellent and ridiculous Highcliffians beat us by two esteemed goals to one," said the nabob.

"Rotten luck!" said Bob.

He turned to his books again. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh eyed him rather curiously. Johnny Bull came tramping along the passage and he looked in at No. 13.

"Seen anything of Bob, Inky?" he asked. "Oh, here he is! My only hat! Swotting, are you?" Johnny stared at Bob Cherry.

"Well, why not?" asked Bob, rather nettled. "I suppose a fellow can put in a little work sometimes, can't he?"

"There's a time for all things," said Johnny Bull, "and if you want to swot,

you might choose a better time, I think."

"What the thump do you mean?"

"I mean that it's not the thing to let us down over a football match, because you've got a new stunt in your silly head," said Johnny Bull warmly.

"You silly ass! I—"

"He's here," Johnny Bull called along the passage. "Cherry's here, and he's swotting. Too busy to play footer to-day."

Harry Wharton came along to the study doorway. He looked in, and his face was very grim.

"So that's it?" he said.

"I don't understand you," said Bob, restively. "What the thump are you driving at, anyhow? Is there any law against a fellow mugging up his lessons if he chooses?"

"Not at all; but if you want to swot on the date of a fixture, you might at least say so," said the captain of the Remove. "We've been beaten at Highcliffe, and it was touch and go all the time—we needn't have been beaten if you'd played for the Remove."

"I'm sorry. But I couldn't come—"

"And couldn't even say so!" snapped Wharton. "We hung about for twenty minutes, keeping the Highcliffe men waiting, thinking that you would turn up. If it was only this that was keeping you, you could have come. And, anyhow, you could have let us know."

"I did let you know—at least, I sent a message—"

"I never had any message, if you did."

Bob's face flushed.

"If!" he repeated. "What the thump do you mean, Wharton?"

"I mean what I say—I never had any message from you, and I kept Highcliffe waiting twenty minutes, and we've been licked because you let us down," said the captain of the Remove. "If you want to take up swotting instead of football, you're your own master; but we shall have to make some changes in the Remove eleven in that case. A man who can't be depended on is not much use."

"I tell you—" roared Bob.

"Oh, there's no need to talk—we've been licked," growled the captain of the Remove. "I fancied something must have happened to keep you away—and it turns out that you're mugging up Latin. Quelchy has licked you and lined you, for not mugging it up in the Form-room, when you ought to have been mugging it. If you're so jolly keen on swotting all of a sudden, there's plenty of time for it without letting us down in a fixture. We've come home beaten—"

"You can't win every match; and a good sportsman ought to know how to take a beating," growled Bob.

Wharton crimsoned.

"We ought to have won—and we could have won!" he snapped. "I can jolly well tell you—"

"My esteemed Wharton—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The captain of the Remove checked himself.

"Well, it's no good rowing," he said. "Let it drop!"

And he turned away from the study doorway.

Bob Cherry sat at the table, his pen still in his hand, and his Latin books before him, staring blankly at the doorway. His rugged face was red with anger. Obviously, his friends knew nothing of his father's visit to the school that day: Bunter's message could not have been delivered. Still, they ought to have known that he had not

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let them down willingly; they might at least have asked.

It was unusual for Bob Cherry to feel angry and resentful; but his breast was full of angry resentment now. In point of fact, Bob's cheery nature was a little under a cloud at present; the talk with his father had worried him, the prospect of swotting for the Latin prize worried him still more; and an hour shut up in the study, mugging up Latin, had worried him most of all. For all that to be followed by the misapprehension and misjudgment on the part of his friends, was really too "thick," and Bob felt, like the prophet of old, that he did well to be angry.

"My esteemed Bob—" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, pacifically, "we are going to tea in Wharton's study—"

"I'm not!" growled Bob.

"My excellent and ludicrous—"

"Haven't I let the team down?" said Bob bitterly. "Haven't I stayed here enjoying myself at Latin, when I ought to have been playing football? Give us a rest, Inky; I can't work while you jaw, you know!"

"But—" murmured the nabob.

"Oh, can it!" said Bob gruffly, and he turned to his work again.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh left the study. Mark Linley looked rather oddly at Bob. He hardly knew his cheery study-mate in this kind of mood.

"What about tea, Bob?" he asked.

"You generally tea in the Hall," granted Bob.

"Yes, but if you're tea-ing in the study, I'll tea with you, old man," said Mark cheerily.

"You needn't," growled Bob. "You don't want to tea with a fellow who's let the team down and got them a beating."

Mark Linley looked at him steadily.

"I dare say you've got your reasons, Bob," he said, "but this swotting is rather a sudden thing, you know, and you can't expect fellows to be pleased at your cutting a school fixture for it, all of a sudden, and without a word of warning."

"So you think that's why I cut the fixture?" snapped Bob. "Well, think so if you like, and be blowed to you. Shut the door after you."

"But—"

"Oh, give us a rest!"

Mark Linley left the study quietly and went down to Hall to tea. Bob Cherry was left alone—to swot! He did not look very cheerful about it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Not Popular!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh, hook it!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hook it!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The hookfulness is the proper caper, and the soonerfulness the quickerfulness," said Hurree Singh.

Nobody in No. 1 Study seemed to have much civility to waste on William George Bunter when he butted into that celebrated apartment. Even the good-natured Nugent gave him a glum look.

Harry Wharton & Co. were at tea, but it was not a joyful meal. There was very considerable dissatisfaction in No. 1 Study.

In fact, for once the Remove footballers had returned home after a match in a mood of general discontent.

The beating, in itself, was little; no team could win matches all the time, and there was no disgrace in being



Billy Bunter ran his hardest, letting out a dismal yelp every time a boot landed on him. "Ow! Ow! Wow! Help! Yoooop!" It was a lonely road over the common, and there was no help for Bunter. He ran, and hopped, and jumped, and yelled, dribbled along the road by the Highcliffe ragers—Ponsonby & Co. (See Chapter 6.)

defeated by a good set of players like Courtenay's men at Highcliffe. But the thing had been so near that if the Remove eleven had pulled full weight, so to speak, the defeat would almost certainly have been a victory. And it was Bob Cherry's defection that had made the difference.

If any important reason had kept him away it could not be helped; but if it was this new stunt of "swotting," then his friends felt that they had reason to be deeply irritated. Mark Linley contrived to swot harder than any other fellow at Greyfriars without letting the eleven down on days when he was wanted to play. And Bob, while cutting the game out, had apparently not even cared to send word that he had changed his mind about playing.

Other members of the team were dissatisfied, as well as Harry Wharton and his chums. Tom Redwing was only too conscious that he had not filled Bob's place very adequately, and it troubled him; and the Bounder, who had pushed Redwing's claims so persistently, was annoyed by the result. Tom Brown was dolorous about being crooked just when Bob's absence had required him to play his very best, and Peter Todd was morose about the way the half-back line

had shown up in the match. Even Squiff was dissatisfied; he had done wonderfully well in goal, but he had not even been able to save the game.

As the news spread through the Remove passage that Bob Cherry had cut the game in order to swot, all the disappointment and wrath of the footballers concentrated on poor Bob's head.

"Swotting" wasn't popular, anyhow. Skinner had discovered that Bob's name was down for the Head's Latin prize, and the news caused mockery and laughter in the Remove passage. Skinner pointed out that Bob's name hadn't been in the list yesterday. It had only just appeared there. Apparently Bob had asked his Form master that very afternoon to include him among the candidates. The idea of Bob winning anything, off the playing-fields, made Remove fellows chuckle. The Head's Latin prize was, according to Skinner, as far beyond his reach as the head-mastership of Greyfriars itself. And what did he want it for? If Bob wanted to take up remarkable new manners and customs like this, all of a sudden, the Removites considered that he might at least have done so on a more suitable occasion.

Bob had always been popular in the
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Remove, but just then, for a time, at least, he was the most unpopular fellow in the whole of the Lower School.

Even his own close chums were deeply annoyed with him, and fellows who were not chummy with Bob made remarks about him that were frequent, and painful, and free.

"He's been in to see Quelchy," Bolsover major told a crowd of fellows in the Remove passage. "He came out of Quelchy's study and asked me to get over to Highcliffe to tell Wharton he wasn't coming. Catch me, you know! I suppose he'd asked Quelchy then to put his name down for the Latin prize. What a reason for cutting a football match!"

"Well, you might have cut across and told us, all the same," said Peter Todd. "It would have saved hanging about twenty minutes."

"Rubbish! Why couldn't he come himself?"

"No reason why he couldn't, I suppose," agreed Peter. "If he was going to swot he could have cut across to Highcliffe first."

"Fancy Cherry swotting!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton heard those remarks as he went into Study No. 1 to tea, and they drew a frown to his brow.

Tea in Study No. 1 was not a very cheery meal, in the circumstances.

True, if Bob Cherry had come along and explained, the air would have been cleared at once. But Bob did not come. He was deeply incensed at being so carelessly misunderstood, as he regarded it, and he would not say a word to set the matter right. Let the fellows find out for themselves, or let them keep on their silly mistake, was his bitter reflection as he settled down again to Latin grammar.

So when Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 1 he found four fellows there who had no politeness to waste upon him, and the Owl of the Remove was told to "hook it" without ceremony.

Billy Bunter did not immediately "hook it." He had something to say. He had not rolled in merely for the sake of the loaves and fishes, as it were. So he blinked at the four glum juniors and recommenced:

"I say, you fellows, about Cherry——"

"Hook it, I tell you!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"But Bob Cherry——"

"Bother Bob Cherry!"

"His bike, you know——"

"Bother his bike!"

"He lent me his bike," said Bunter, "and——"

"And something's happened to it—what?" grinned Johnny Bull. "More fool he to lend it to you. Cut off!"

"Well, it's rather rotten to leave his bike in the ditch by Courtfield Common," said Bunter. "I thought you fellows might like to go out and get it, you know."

"Think again, then," said Harry Wharton. "If Cherry was ass enough to lend you his bike and you've landed it in a ditch it's his look out. Go and tell him, not us."

"Well, I think he might be waxy," said Bunter cautiously. "Of course, it wasn't my fault. I couldn't tackle three rotters at once, could I? Two of them were as much as I could handle, and there were three. But Bob would very likely cut up rusty when he finds that his bike's in the ditch by Courtfield Common, and he might kick a chap without stopping to ask questions. So——"

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"You don't want to be kicked?" asked Wharton.

"Eh? No."

"Then travel—sharp!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

The captain of the Remove jumped up, and Billy Bunter hurriedly backed out of the study and slammed the door. Harry Wharton & Co. went on with their tea. They were in no mood to be bothered by Bunter, though, had they known it, Bunter could have given them information that would have enlightened them considerably. But they were not aware of that.

"I say, it's rather rotten about Bob's bike, though," said Frank Nugent, when Bunter was gone.

Grunt, from Johnny Bull.

"He shouldn't have lent it to Bunter. Anyhow, he can look after it himself," he said. "I suppose we're not fagging out after it, after a football match, because he's too busy swotting."

"No jolly fear!" said Wharton.

"There's a thumping row going on in the passage," remarked Nugent, as a series of bumps and crashes rang along outside.

Bump! Crash!

A tin whistle and a motor-horn added to the din. Harry Wharton opened the door of Study No. 1 and looked out. A crowd of Remove fellows had gathered further along the passage, and they were grinning as they produced as much noise as could be extracted from a couple of fives bats crashing on oaken doors, a motor-horn, a tin whistle, a poker, and a couple of saucepan-lids. And the noise that could be extracted from those instruments was very considerable.

"What's that thumping row about?" shouted Wharton.

Bolsover major looked round.

"We're helping Cherry!" he said.

"What?"

"Bob Cherry's swotting in his study!" chuckled Ogilvy. "We're giving him a little assistance."

"You'd better chuck it," said Harry.

"Rats!" roared Bolsover major. "If a fellow lets down the team to swot, he's going to know what we think of him. Go it, you fellows!"

Crash! Bang! Screech! Bump! Hoot!

Evidently, it was a sort of indignation meeting on the part of the Remove fellows. Equally evidently it was quite impossible for Bob to keep on working, with that terrific din going on outside his study. As it was not near time for prep yet, nobody but Bob was attempting to work in the Remove studies; and Bob's attempt was quite hopeless, in the presence of this demonstration on the part of the Remove.

Wharton looked on undecided. As captain of the form, it was up to him to put a stop to the shindy; and had Bolsover & Co. been ragging anybody else, he would have done so at once. But Bob's new stunt of "swotting" irritated him, at the moment, as much as it irritated the rest.

As he stood undecided, the door of Study No. 13 opened, and Bob Cherry came out.

There was a pause in the uproar.

All the fellows expected Bob to "wade in" with his fists; but Bob did nothing of the kind. His rugged face was flushed, and his eyes glinted; but he had not come out of his study with hostile intentions.

He walked through the crowd of fellows towards the stairs. Apparently he had given up "swotting" for the present.

Outside Study No. 1 he passed Wharton.

He did not speak to his chum; and he did not look very chummy just then, any more than did the captain of the Remove.

As he went on to the stairs, Billy Bunter caught at his sleeve.

"I say, Cherry——"

Bob shook off the fat hand, and tramped away down the stairs. A chortle from Bolsover & Co. followed him.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

BILLY BUNTER blinked after Bob's disappearing form.

Bunter was a little worried.

So far as he personally was concerned, it did not matter what became of Bob Cherry's bicycle. But he was aware that Bob himself would regard the matter in quite a different light. The bicycle really could not remain out in the ditch by Courtfield Common all night; not that the bike itself mattered, but what might happen to Bunter in consequence mattered very considerably.

"Well, if he won't listen to a chap, I can't help it, can I?" said Bunter, addressing the Remove passage generally. "If he doesn't want his bike fetched in, it's his own look-out."

"You fat ass!" said Wharton. "If you've really landed a fellow's bike in a ditch, you'd better go and get it in, before the gates are locked."

"Well, I can't walk a mile," said Bunter, "and a mile back, too. The jigger won't be in a state for riding. It's up to you, Wharton, only you're so selfish."

"Fathead!"

"Has Bob been idiot enough to lend you his bike, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd. "He might have known what to expect."

"Well, he didn't exactly lend it to me," said Bunter. "It was to oblige him, you know, that I had it, and to oblige Wharton."

Harry Wharton, who was going back into his study, turned again, and stared at Bunter.

"What d'you mean, you fat duffer? What has it to do with me?" he demanded.

"Well, I was coming over to Highcliffe with Bob's message, you know—and——"

"What?" exclaimed Harry.

"Eh! Don't yell at a fellow," said Bunter peevishly. "Blessed if I know why I do these kind, obliging things, meeting with rotten ingratitude all round, as I do."

"Bob Cherry said that he sent me a message, before the match," snapped the captain of the Remove. "I never had it! Do you mean to say that he sent you, and that you never gave me the message, you fat dummy?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! How could I get over to Highcliffe, when those cads collared me, and shoved the bike into the ditch, and chased me back to Greyfriars?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"Eh! Who did?"

"Ponsonby and his gang, of course. I couldn't handle the three of them," said Bunter warmly. "I knocked Ponsonby spinning, and gave Gaddy more than he wanted—but——"

"So Bob did send a message after all?" said Peter Todd.

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. It was clear now that Bob Cherry had sent the message before the football match; on that point he was exonerated, at least. Only Bunter had failed to deliver the message.

"You fat idiot!" growled the captain of the Remove. "I hope Ponsonby kicked you!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"Well if there were three of the cads Bunter couldn't have handled them," said Johnny Bull, who had come out of the study with Nugent and Hurree Singh. "Not that he tried to, of course."

"Oh, really, Bull—"
"Well, what was the message, that you never delivered, Bunter?" demanded the captain of the Remove acidly

"Only that Cherry couldn't come over for the match, because his father had telephoned that he was coming down to Greyfriars this afternoon—"

"Eh?"
"What?"
"His father?"
Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove.

"Yes, the old major, you know. What are you shouting at a fellow for? You make me jump! Ow! Leggo!"
Wharton grasped the Owl of the Remove by the shoulder, and shook him.

"You fat duffer—"
"Yarocogh!"
"Did Bob's father come to the school this afternoon, you dummy? I never knew anything about it."

"Wow! Leggo!"
"Answer me, you dummy!"
"Yow-ow! Of course, he did!" howled Bunter. "I saw the old merchant jawing Cherry in the quad afterwards. Ow! Leggo!"

"Oh!" said Harry.
He released the fat junior, and Bunter backed away, blinking at him in great indignation.

"This is jolly well the last time that I ever do anything to oblige you fellows!" hooted Bunter. "I got a ragging from Ponsonby and his gang, and that beast Cherry is sure to cut up rusty over his bike being damaged—and I did it all out of good-nature, and not because Cherry lent me a bob—"

"Oh, roll away!" snapped Wharton.
"Yah!"
Billy Bunter rolled away.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another. That unexpected information from the Owl of the Remove put quite a different complexion on the matter.

"I say, this is rather rotten," said Nugent, colouring with vexation, "it seems that Bob was kept away by his father coming to see him."

"Not for a swotting stunt, after all," said Johnny Bull. "I say, we seem rather to have jumped to conclusions."
"The jumpfulness was terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Wharton bit his lip.
He could not blink the fact that he had been hasty—very hasty indeed. Certainly, all the other fellows had shared in the error. Knowing nothing of Major Cherry's visit to the school, and finding Bob, on their return, swotting in his study, they had jumped to a hasty conclusion—and they had been wrong. That could not be denied.

"Bob could have told us!" said Wharton, at last.

"Did we give him much time to explain?" asked Johnny Bull, in his slow, reflective way.

Wharton coloured. He was well aware that Bob had been misjudged and condemned before he had had time to open his mouth.

"It's rotten," said Peter Todd. "Bob certainly couldn't have come over to Highcliffe when his pater was coming specially to Greyfriars to see him. And

he did all he could; he sent a fellow on a bike to tell us. It wasn't his fault that Bunter never delivered the message."

"You fellows seem to have jumped to conclusions pretty quickly, and about your own chum, too," said Bolsover major. "You might have given the chap a chance to speak."

"Yes, you might, really, you know!" grinned Skinner.
Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"It's your fault, Bolsover. If you'd brought Bob's message, as he asked you, it would have been all right. Ponsonby wouldn't have handled you as he did Bunter."

"Well, I never knew," said Bolsover major, rather shamefaced. "Cherry never said anything to me about his pater coming. He simply said that he wanted me to cut across to Highcliffe, and—and—"

"And you didn't wait to hear what he had to say, I suppose?"
"Well, perhaps I didn't," growled Bolsover major. "All the same, you might have given him a chance to explain. We've all been down on the chap for nothing, and it's chiefly your fault, Wharton."

"Mine?" exclaimed Harry.
"Yes, yours!" snorted Bolsover. "You're too jolly high and mighty—jumping on a chap, and your own pal, too, without giving him a chance to speak!"

And Bolsover major stamped away to his study.
The ragers in the passage dispersed, most of them looking rather sheepish.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. "I'm going after Bob's bike," he said. "Where's that fat idiot Bunter? He must come and tell me where to find it."

Bunter was rooted out of Study No. 7, loudly complaining. He did not, as he explained at length, want a mile's walk to the place where the bike had

been left; neither did he want a mile's walk back. But what Bunter wanted, or did not want, did not seem to matter. The fat junior was marched off, and Harry Wharton & Co. walked him out of gates with them. Gosling, the porter, called to them.

"Don't you forget lock-up."
The juniors hurried along the Court-field road. They had to take their chance of lines for being late for lock-up.

Bunter grumbled and grouched incessantly as they tramped along to the common. But the spot where Ponsonby & Co. had pitched the bike into the ditch was reached at last, and after some search it was found and hooked out, in a rather shocking state.

In the thickening dusk the juniors wheeled the muddy bike back to Greyfriars.

As they had expected, they found the school gates locked. Gosling, with a crusty grin, took down their names as he let them in.

"Lines all round for us!" said Johnny Bull, as they wheeled the bike away to the bike-shed.

"I say, you fellows—"
"Bunter ought to have fetched the bike long ago," said Harry. "He ought to be kicked for leaving it there."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"The kickfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I shall get lines, and I think you fellows ought to do the lines," said Bunter. "If you've got any decency at all, you'll do the lines for me, after making me late for lock-up—Yarocogh!"
Johnny Bull's boot interrupted Bunter's remarks, and the fat junior roared and fled.
Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to the House in rather a troubled mood. They looked round for Bob Cherry, but he was not to be seen. They had



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missed call-over, and they had the pleasure—or otherwise—of being called to Mr. Quelch's study, and given a hundred lines each. The lines, however, did not matter very much. What troubled them was the disagreement with their chum, in which, by this time, they all realised very clearly that they had been to blame.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Rift in the Lute!

BOB CHERRY came up the Remove passage with a rather grim expression on his rugged face. It was time for prep, and Bob had come in after a tramp in the dusky quad by himself. Bolsover major looked out of his study, and called to him.

"Sorry, Cherry!"

Bob glanced round.

"What does that mean, if it means anything?" he asked.

"Well, I never knew your pater was coming down to-day, or I'd have taken your message over to Highcliffe," said Bolsover major. "It seems that Bunter was stopped by some Highcliffe cads, and never got through with it. And—and we ragged you, thinking you had let down the football team for your silly swotting; and now it turns out—"

"Did you think so?" growled Bob. "I hardly believe you can think at all, Bolsover."

Bolsover major reddened.

"Well, all the fellows were saying so—your own friends especially," he said angrily. "I heard Wharton ragging you for it; and what was a fellow to think?"

"Anything—with a brain like yours!" grunted Bob.

"Well, I've said I'm sorry, and if that doesn't satisfy you, you can go and eat coke!" retorted Bolsover major.

And he went into his study and slammed the door.

Bob Cherry tramped along the passage. Peter Todd called out to him.

"I say, Cherry—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bob.

And he walked on without hearing what Peter had to say. Peter shrugged his shoulders.

Bob tramped into Study No. 13, where he found Mark Linley and little, Wun Lung beginning prep. Mark coloured as his study-mate came in.

"It seems that there was rather a mistake, Bob," he said amicably.

"Have you found that out, too?" asked Bob satirically.

"Yes," said Mark quietly. "I'm sorry!"

"You thought I'd let the team down without even a word of warning and for no particular reason?" said Bob sarcastically.

"Well, you see—"

"Yes, I see," snapped Bob. "Let it drop. I'm fed-up with it."

Mark looked at him.

"I'll let it drop till you're in a better temper, Bob, at least," he said.

Bob Cherry grunted and sat down at the table. Hurree Jamset Singh, who belonged to Study No. 13, was not yet there, but Bob did not appear to note his absence.

Prep went on in No. 13 in an uncomfortable silence.

Bob Cherry was very far from being in his usual sunny temper. It was not like him to nurse a grievance, but for once Bob was a prey to resentment and irritation. He had been deeply disturbed by his father's dissatisfaction with him and the difference it had made to his prospects for the term. He was going to keep his word to his father, and the task was likely to be heavy and unpleasant. At such a time he needed encouragement and sympathy from his friends; instead of which he had received hasty misjudgment and condemnation.

It was not, perhaps, to be expected that even so good-natured a fellow as Bob would be in a forgiving mood all at once.

And prep was troublesome, especially in his worried and troubled mood. Bob had never swotted at prep before—which was one reason why so much trouble had descended upon him so suddenly. He was determined to do well now and to put up a good construe in class the next morning. But it was hard work and unwelcome work. And Bob was accustomed to getting a little assistance from his study-mates in prep, which really was not a good thing for him in the long run, but which made the task easier at the time. Now he was working alone.

There was a tramp of feet in the Remove passage presently, and the door of Study No. 13 opened, and Bob looked up with a very unusual irritation. His task was hard enough without interruptions.

Harry Wharton & Co. appeared in the doorway.

The Co. could hardly have come along at a more inauspicious moment.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came into the study; the other three fellows remained in the doorway.

"We've got your bike in, Bob," said Nugent.

"My bike?"

"Didn't you know that Ponsonby pitched it into a ditch?"

"No."

"Well, he did, and we've fetched it in," said Johnny Bull.

"You needn't have troubled," said Bob dryly.

"Bunter's told us that you sent him over to Highcliffe this afternoon with a message, though he never got there," said Wharton.

Bob's lips curled.

"Good! So you believe now that I sent a message?" he said. "You can take Bunter's word, though mine wasn't good enough. Thanks!"

Wharton breathed rather hard.

"We seem to have made rather a mistake, Bob," he said. "We never knew anything about your father coming here to-day."

"You'd have known if you'd asked me why I didn't come over to Highcliffe."

"I—I suppose so. But—"

"Well, you know now—if it matters," said Bob. "No need to talk about it that I can see. And I'm working."

"My esteemed Bob!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"If you fellows have finished, I'll get on," said Bob, with grim politeness. "I'm swotting, you know—a new stunt of mine. I'm rather keen on it. Not keen enough to make me let the team down in a football match, as you supposed; still, rather keen, and I've no time to waste. Would you mind shutting the door after you?"

"If you're going to take it like that—" began Wharton.

"Look here, Bob—" said Johnny Bull.

The Co. looked at him for a few moments, but Bob did not look up. And then Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, and Nugent walked away in silence. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a rather distressed expression on his dusky face, drew a chair to the table and sat down.

"My esteemed Bob—" he said amicably.

Bob looked at him.

"I'm swotting," he said. "If you're going to jaw, Inky, I shall have to work in some other study. Chuck it, will you?"

"The jawfulness will not be terrific," said the nabob. And he did not say another word.

When prep was over Bob Cherry went down to the Rag by himself.

When his friends came into the Rag later, Bob was apparently deep in a book—a school book—and he did not look up. Skinner of the Remove exchanged a wink with Snoop as Harry Wharton & Co. glanced at Bob, failed to catch his eye, and walked on past him without speaking to him. There was a rift in the lute, trouble in the happy circle of the Famous Five, now that it contained a swot, and Skinner, at least, found entertainment in it.

THE END.

(Bob Cherry apparently has little time for his chums now. With his nose to the grindstone he plods on—determined to please his father at all costs! Look out for the next grand yarn in this fine series, chums, entitled: "THE ISHMAEL OF THE FORM!" by Frank Richards. It's a corker!)

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By
DAVID GOODWIN.



A Night Attack!

"WHY, yes, I understand it," said Dan, examining the paper. "I reckon I could make the stuff myself, following up these figures here, and given time enough to do it. But I couldn't remember a quarter of it."

"Well, now you've seen it, here goes," said Tommy, and striking a match he tore the leaves out and burnt the recipe, rubbing away the ashes between his hands. "We'll take no chances. I'll give you the details of the job bit by bit as we go along. Light that Bunsen burner over there, an' give me the glass scales out of that case."

They set to work. It was a long job. As Dan said, stuff like Comberite couldn't be made by stirring up a few chemicals in a teacup. Everything had to be gone over with the greatest care, and tested step by step. For if Tommy made a mistake anywhere, it was likely to cost them their lives.

There is no need to set down here everything they did. It would be a long story, and it wouldn't be fair to the holders of the secret of Comberite, which is now the most powerful explosive in the world. But Dan and Tommy, who were trained to chemical work, found it quite interesting and fascinating. They stuck to it for several hours, hardly noticing how the time went, and when night fell the job was only half-done. Tommy, however, was jubilant, for it had gone well.

"We're right on the mark!" he said, locking up the shed. "Let it rest for the night—I'm dead sleepy, too. 'Tain't safe to go on by lamplight. Bet you a dollar we finish the job and click by dinner-time to-morrow."

They attacked the provisions again, and after a slap-up meal Tommy went and fished for flounders in the creek while the twilight fell, for he said he wanted a bit of sport to wash the smell of the chemicals out of his head; and Dan, who had brought a gun, went up the creek to Plover's Ooze, where the wild ducks came every evening to feed, and shot a couple of fat mallard and a teal. Then they went to the bungalow and turned in, but they made a sailor's watch of it. Each slept for four hours in turn while the other sat up with the gun loaded, in case any midnight visitors happened to come scouting round. They were taking no chances while Comberite was under way.

The night passed quietly, and the day broke fresh and fine over Curlew Island. They had a swim in the creek, and after a breakfast of piping hot fried flounders and coffee and ham, they got to work again like bees in clover.

By two o'clock in the afternoon the job was all but done. They had made very little of the stuff; as much as would fill a teacup. But it was enough for a test, and it was as easy to make a lot as a little. Too much at first would have been deadly dangerous.

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

TOMMY COMBER, sentenced to three years' detention aboard the reformatory ship *Bellerophon* for being concerned in the murder of his uncle,

JOSEPH COMBER, a clever chemist, inventor of a powerful high explosive named Comberite,

CHUFFER FOSS, Tommy's cousin, a ne'er-do-well, whose false evidence at the trial did much to prejudice the innocent Tommy's chances of acquittal.

DR. SHANE O'HARA, a skilful surgeon, who shelters the fugitive from the *Bellerophon*, and fakes his features so that Tommy's own pal,

DAN BENNETT, doesn't recognise him until Tommy makes known his identity.

MERTON HAYNES, a friend of O'Hara's,

In return for the service O'Hara has rendered him, Tommy—who knows the secret of Comberite—is asked to make this valuable explosive for the doctor and his friend, Tommy himself to take a third share in the partnership. Tommy agrees to the proposal. He meets Dan—who, incidentally, thinks O'Hara and his friend a pair of rogues—and asks him to join him in preparing Comberite on Curlew Island, which formerly belonged to Joseph Comber. Dan jumps at the chance.

Prior to his leaving for the island, Tommy discovers that he is being shadowed by a stranger whom he nicknames "Baldy." This man finds Tommy too slippery for him, and is himself shadowed to a restaurant in the West End. Here Baldy meets a John Carfax whom he tries to drug. The youngster at once gives Carfax warning, and then slips out of the restaurant unnoticed.

To his surprise, however, on reaching Curlew Island, Tommy runs up against Carfax again. The two are conversing, when suddenly a bullet whizzes past Tom's face. Who the sniper is Tommy can't fathom. No sooner has Carfax left than Dan arrives. He relates a thrilling encounter he has had with O'Hara and Haynes in which he almost lost his life—evidently O'Hara and Haynes are not the friends they profess to be!

Later, Tommy devotes his mind to the great secret of Comberite which he hopes will give him power over all his enemies. Writing out the formula he hands it to Dan.

"There's the secret of Comberite," he says. "See if you can understand what I have written down."

(Now read on.)

Dan found himself looking with wonder and awe at a little mess of damp grey powder in a metal dish.

"Gosh!" he said. "Is that Comberite? It looks like nothing but a fistful of wet ashes. But it's the goods! I could do a giddy war-dance round it! We've clicked in twenty-four hours' work!"

But Tommy was looking uneasy and rather gloomy. He knew more about Comberite than Dan. He had worked at it with Uncle Joe.

"Dan," he said, "I ain't sure! I fancy I've made a bloomer somewhere. Those last tests didn't work out quite right. We can't tell if it's O.K., anyway, until it gets dry."

"Well, let's dry it, then."

"Let the sun dry it," said Tommy, and damping the stuff a little more, he carried the metal dish nearly a quarter of a mile away, to the centre of the island, and piling some stones and earth round it, set it in the full warmth of the sunlight. Then he took Dan's arm and hurried back to the bungalow.

"What have you got the wind-up for?" protested Dan. "Hang it, we needn't be all this way off. The stuff can't go off by itself, and if it did that little pinch couldn't hurt!"

"Can't it?" said Tommy. "I've been copped like this before. It ought to be quite safe when it's dry. But if I've made a muck of it—"

Boom!

There was a sudden, shattering crash, way over in the centre of the island, a column of smoke and flame shot high into the air, like the blast from a cannon, and a great shower of earth and dust was flung skyward.

"That's torn it!" said Tommy.

Dan gave a whoop of triumph, and ran excitedly across the marsh to the scene of the explosion. There was a hole torn in the ground big enough to bury a small cart, and the grass for a hundred yards around was blackened and scorched.

"Well, if that's Comberite, it's a giddy terror!" exclaimed Dan. "Gorgeous! There wasn't three ounces of it, an' look at the way it's ripped the place up."

"Rotten!" said Tommy bitterly. "Absolutely rotten!"

"Eh? But why?"

"Can't you see? The amount of stuff there was there ought to have

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done ten times as much damage. It's pretty thick, but nothing to what it ought to have been. We've bungled it badly somehow."

Dan scratched his head.

"There's no doubt about that," he said. "It's good stuff to commit suicide with, an' that's all. If the giddy stuff has to go off on its own as soon as it gets dry, it's no more use to anybody than a sick headache!"

"That's because we've mucked it. It did something like this once in the early days when nunks was workin' it out, and it would have killed him, but for a bit of luck. But he got it right afterwards, and made it as safe as a lump of sugar—so that you couldn't explode it except with a special kind of fuse. See what I mean? I've slipped up somewhere, in the makin' of it."

"Then your giddy memory isn't as good as you thought it was," said Dan. "Or else I did something wrong when I was helping you. I hope it wasn't me. We've got to find out what's the matter and put it right."

"And the sooner the better," said Tommy, leading the way back to the sheds rather despondently. "Only hope we can do it, that's all."

"Since the stuff's a failure, I wish it hadn't gone off and made all that row," said Dan. "It advertises our job too much for my liking."

"Oh, I don't think that matters!" said Tommy. "You can make all the row you like on Curlew Island, nobody would hear it or take any notice. That's why O'Hara chose the place. I don't care a button about anything if I can only get the stuff right; then we can snap our fingers at the lot of 'em. Trot out those bottles again."

They went over the whole job very carefully and worked it out on paper. Tommy's anxiety was intense. He was afraid he was going to fail after all. He wrote out the whole recipe this time. They took two hours searching for the supposed mistake. Then Tommy gave a yelp of delight and punched his pal in the chest.

"Here it is!" he cried. "Look here, Dan."

They went over the paper together.

"You've hit it, kid!" said Dan. "We're bound to get it this time. It was partly my fault. And look here! This strontium powder that we've been using in the mixture isn't pure, for I've been testing it. It's dud stuff, and that's what made the Comberite weak—if you can call it weak!"

"So it is," said Tommy thoughtfully. "And O'Hara got that stuff, too. I wonder if he did it on purpose! Well, I can purify it myself, and that'll make the next batch all right. All the same, I wish we had some pure strontium from London, to make a big lot with. You can only get it in London."

"Well, shall I buzz up the river and get it—I'll be back by morning," said Dan. "And look here—I might look up Carfax while I'm about it and find what giddy game he's playing."

"Fine idea—shove it along!" said Tommy. "I'll go ahead making the stuff, and I'll have it ready when you come back; I'll make enough to go on with, and we'll have real Comberite this time. I can carry on without you till to-morrow. Off you go; the flood-tide's running an' you'll carry it right up to London Bridge."

In ten minutes Dan was in the motor-boat, and starting up his engine. But at the last moment he hesitated.

"I'm blowed if I like leavin' you here all alone on this game," he said, "in

case anybody turns up. There ought to be two to keep watch!"

"Oh, I'll be all right!" said Tommy confidently. "Nobody'll come, an' if they did, they'd get nothing. I've burnt the recipe again. I won't need it. Trust me to look after myself. I've done it before. And I've got your gun."

"Well, keep a sharp look-out!" said Dan, and, with a wave of his hand, he steered out into the creek. "I'll be down here with the morning tide."

As soon as he was alone Tommy stowed away a good meal, and took a rest; but he could not let the chemicals alone. Nothing seemed to matter now except the making of Comberite. He tested and purified some of the strontium, and when he had got it to his satisfaction, he set to work and made a small quantity of fresh Comberite, correcting the mistake he thought he had made.

It did not take him nearly as long as before; he had got the hang of it now. By sunset he had made four ounces of it; enough to blow up a fortress, if he had got it right.

"And I bet it is right this time!" he said. "And safe, too. We'll test it in the morning when Dan comes; and if he brings the new stuff, we can make as much as we want."

Comberite was not stuff to monkey with in the dark. He wetted the grey powder thoroughly, and locked it up in the smallest shed, which was well away from the others.

"Gee! My head!" he muttered, as he put the key in his pocket and left the place. The smell of the chemicals had given him a fat head, and made him drowsy and slightly sick, so that he did not feel like having any supper. He got his gun, and walked down to the jetty, to blow the fumes out of his brain.

There was a fresh south-west wind blowing, and the day was dying in a fiery sunset in the west, towards London. It promised to be a very dark night until the moon rose.

When he got back to the bungalow he was so drowsy and heavy that he could hardly keep his eyes open. All the same, he decided not to sleep in his old bed-room. There were no shutters to the four windows of the house, but he got some screws and screwed up the window-sashes. Then he locked the front door on the inside, dragged a mattress up to it, and lay down on this behind the door, with the double gun loaded in the crook of his arm. He was a light sleeper, and knew that he could always wake at the slightest noise.

But he was slumbering as soon as his head rested on his arm, and the fumes of the chemicals, which he had been playing with for two days, had filled him up, and acted on him like a drug. Tommy's mouth was open, and he was snoring; a thing which, as a rule, he never did.

The night wind whistled round the house, but he did not hear it.

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and over the windy marshes of Curlew Island three dark forms came stealing, so dim that they looked nothing more than shadows. They were moving from the sea-wall towards the bungalow.

They were men, not shadows; men wearing silent rubber boots. All three of them were masked, and one held a long-barrelled revolver in his fist. They came together, silently as ghosts, under the parlour-window of the bungalow, and listened.

"Sure to be here," whispered a voice. "And alone," was the reply. "The

other went off in the motor-boat. Door's fast. Try the window."

"Bolted. Screwed up, too, I think," whispered the first man. "Got the cutter? Must do it quietly. The boy's got a gun."

His companion produced a square of thick brown paper, smeared it deftly with sticky black treacle, and pressed it upon the window-pane. Evidently he knew how to break through a window silently; he was a man who had the tricks of the trade at his finger-tips. With a glazier's diamond he slowly and carefully cut a circle of the pane, pressing it gently, and, with skilful movements of his hands, brought away the round of glass sticking to the paper, making only the faintest cracking noise.

There was now a useful hole through the window; he could get his hand inside, and, by means of the cutting diamond and more sticky paper, it took him only a minute or so to remove the rest of the glass from the sash, leaving plenty of space to climb through.

"Good for you!" whispered the man behind him. "He'll be in the bed-room. Get in and make sure of him. I'll follow you." He turned to the third man, who held the pistol. "You wait outside the door."

Already the man who had cut the window had climbed through into the parlour as noiselessly as a cat, and the second one followed him. They seemed to be familiar with the interior of the bungalow, for they tiptoed into the bedroom which Tommy usually occupied, and halted. The bed was empty. One of them flashed an electric torch over it.

"Not here," whispered his companion; "but I can hear somebody snoring like a loud-speaker not far off. Take a look round, and go quiet."

They went out into the passage, followed the sound of the snores, and came upon Tommy lying in front of the hall door, wrapped in heavy slobber, one hand clasped round his gun.

As the torch flashed upon his face Tommy stirred, and opened his eyes, blinking dazedly. Then he gave a yell, and was in the very act of heaving himself to his feet, when both men hurled themselves upon him and flattened him back on the floor.

The gun went off, and blew a hole through the bottom of the door. There was a fierce struggle. Tommy got one foot free, and lashed out; a squeal of pain came from somebody. But he was hopelessly overpowered from the start. He could not fight two men in the dark. In a few moments they had got him down upon his face, one of them knelt on the small of his back, while the other held the torch.

"Tie him up! Get him good and tight. Feet and hands—make sure of him!"

Tommy's arms were hauled behind his back, and his wrists were knotted together with a piece of rough box-cord. Then his ankles were bound still more securely.

"Hallo!" cried a muffled voice outside. "Got him?"

"Yes!" said Tommy's captors.

"He darned nearly got me. There's a hole blown through the door. Get his gun out of the way, and let me in."

The door was unlocked and opened. The man with the pistol, who had been on guard outside, stepped over Tommy's body. Then the three of them turned him over on his back and took a good look at him by the light of the pocket-torch.

For a moment or two they said nothing. Tommy could not see much of them, except that they wore masks. He



"Your life is worth far more than mine," said the tall man. "You might perhaps buy it. Do you notice that the tide is rising? It's already up to your chin. In five minutes it will be over your head—and you will be a supper for the crabs!" Tommy shuddered, for the cold of the clinging ooze was paralysing him. (See page 27.)

had an idea that he knew the voice of one of them, but was not sure. Inwardly he was raging, sick with himself at having been taken unawares and captured, when he had thought that he was safe.

"Excellent," said the tallest of the three men, with deep satisfaction. "We can now proceed to business. You are alone here, I think, young fellow?"

"I was alone," replied Tommy, "until you three sneak-thieves broke in here. I see your boss isn't with you!"

The tall man turned to the owner of the pistol.

"See if there's a fire in the parlour," he said quietly; "if there isn't, light one. And set a poker in between the bars, and get it hot as quick as you can."

There was no fire, but one was ready laid, and Tommy soon heard the crackle of burning firewood. The tall man stooped over him.

"You have got something that we want," he said. "We cannot wait for it, so we mean to have it quick."

"Do you?" retorted Tommy. "Guess again. You're some of that dirty dog O'Hara's lot, aren't you?"

"You are not here to ask questions; what you are going to do is to answer them," said the tall man, with an unpleasant laugh. "It is no concern of yours who we may be."

"I suppose that's so," said Tommy. "For all I can tell, a certain bald-faced buzzard that I socked under the chin the other day may be among you. I shouldn't wonder. I don't know who you are, except that you talk like a Chinaman and you smell like a nigger."

The other captor gave vent to an oath, and drove his boot twice heavily into Tommy's ribs. But the tall man stopped him.

"No need for that," he said gently. "We can do much better than that. Now, my lad, you are making a certain powder here on this island, and you have been successful."

"What do you know about my success?" muttered Tommy. "You're fooling yourself, that's all!"

"I know, because we were watching this afternoon, when the explosion occurred, and we have examined the place on the marsh. It is excellent—very good indeed. A dynamite bomb would not have made a tenth as much havoc. But I think it might be better. You will give us the secret of that powder exactly as it was worked out by the late Joseph Comber!"

"Shall I?"

"Yes, you will," said the man, leaning towards him and speaking very softly. "You may think you will not, but when we get to work on you, you will. And listen, my lad. I am a trained chemical expert. I shall know at once if there is anything wrong or false in what you give me. And if you have failed, I shall not. We shall prove it and test it for ourselves. Now, then, quick! Will you give it us, or shall we take it?"

Tommy hesitated, but only for a moment.

"Have I got to give you this and get nothing?" he said sullenly.

"If the stuff's right, you'll get what we choose to give you! If you hang back, we'll twist the life out of you, and we'll have what we want!"

"I can't do anything against the three of you," said Tommy, still more sullenly. "What's the good? You're right—I've made the stuff. But—but it isn't here."

"Where is it?"

"In—in the small shed over there," said Tommy; and he added, with a gulp: "The key's in my pocket."

Both the men sprang upon him and searched him for the key, with impatient fingers. They found it.

"The stuff—Comberite—it's in a metal mortar on the shelf. And it's wetted. There's some papers there, too," said Tommy; and, with a sob, he turned his face away and rolled over.

"Come on!" said the tall man to his companions, springing up. "We'll see if this is right. We're on it, I think. The kid's tied fast. Shove a gag in his mouth and make sure of him!"

A rolled-up handkerchief was

crammed into Tommy's mouth as he lay. The men were leaving nothing to chance. They ran across the marsh to the small shed, taking Tommy's gun with them.

Tommy made a violent effort to spit out the gag. He found it impossible. He was beside himself with wrath and humiliation.

He had hoped, though hardly expected, that they would leave him alone for a few minutes. It was a chance worth playing for. They would find the powder. And there were a few papers, with figures and sums on them, but useless for solving the secret. As for the powder itself, the tall man might be a clever chemist, but Tommy knew that the cleverest chemist on earth couldn't analyse Comberite and find out exactly how it was made. His uncle had assured him of that long ago.

They would come back; and it was plain enough that to get that secret they meant to torture him. That was what the fire was for. Tommy had pluck, but he was only human. He did not suppose he could stand torture. Men of that sort stick at nothing when they have a million of money to make by it.

A faint hope had shot through his brain that the stuff might explode when they got busy with it—as it did in the afternoon. If only it would, and wipe the cruel brutes out!

But he couldn't depend on that; he thought he had made the stuff safe. And he was twisting and tugging at the cord that bound his wrists. It was badly knotted; the men who had bound him were certainly not sailors. But it was good enough to hold him—he couldn't get it loose unless he had a few hours to do it in. They would be back in as many minutes.

And yet, the moment they were fairly out of sight, Tommy rolled himself through the open door, bound as he was. He could not rise; he could do nothing but wriggle and roll, but he did it.

There had been a thought in his mind all the time the three ruffians had been talking to him. Tommy had a memory

that never forgot anything. He remembered that there was a boot-scraper fixed in the step of the bungalow's porch. He also remembered that the back of the boot-scraper was broken, and had been for more than a year.

The broken half had a rough edge of sharp iron!

Tommy rolled himself round painfully on the step, with his back against the scraper, and heaved himself into a sitting position. He contrived to feel for the sharp edge with his wrists that were bound behind him, and, getting the cord against it, sawed up and down with a quick movement of his arms.

All he did at first was to skin his wrists. He got a cut on the hand and felt the blood trickling. But he set his teeth, and getting the cord well against the edge, sawed with all his might. It felt as if it might take a week. But the box-cord was rough and soft; it was wrapped round three times and knotted. If a sailor had tied it he would never have got loose. But only a single knot held it, and when a single turn of the cord was cut through, he felt the whole lot give and stretch. A long wrench, and his hands were free.

With a sob of relief, his fingers flew to his vest pocket, where he had a little penknife. He heard the men's voices—they were coming back. He whipped out the blade and slashed the cord free from his ankles, and sprang to his feet.

There was a shout of anger and alarm from the three men. They came dashing after him as Tommy turned and sprinted for his life.

"Fire, you fool—fire!" yelled a voice. "Bring him down!"

There was a sharp click. It was the empty right barrel of Tommy's gun. Then there was a roar and a red flash of flame as the left barrel belched its load.

Between Fire and Water!

JUST as he heard the click of the gun, Tommy flung himself bodily on his face, sliding along the grass; it was at that moment that the second barrel fired, and he heard the charge of shot whistling over him.

"Got him!" yelled the pursuers, running forward to grab him. They thought the shot had bowled Tommy

over. But he bounced up from the ground, like a coiled watch-spring, and, turning sharp to the left, ran with all his might for the sheds.

They came after him with shouts of baffled fury. They had no more cartridges for Tommy's gun. A charge of shot would have brought him down with certainty if it had hit him. But there was a rapid cracking report as the foremost pursuer, running ahead of the others, shot at him with the revolver.

"Don't kill him, you fool!" panted a voice. "If you kill him we're done. Fire low—take him alive!"

Tommy heard the song of the bullets zipping past. It was an unpleasant sound, but he didn't mind it nearly as much as the gun. It was twenty to one against their getting him with a pistol in the dark while he was running and twisting like a hare. He was a good runner, and he reached the sheds first, dodging round them out of sight.

He had a vague idea of getting hold of the powder. But that was no good. He couldn't do anything with it, even if it was still there. He might have locked himself into the shed and stood a siege. But that wouldn't do either. They would soon have him out of it. His own chance now was in flight, and the chief hope was to get a good start, and throw them off the track.

He doubled round the sheds, jumped a ditch, and after a swift glance behind him, Tommy set off across the marshes at full speed. The men lost sight of him till he was well away; he could hear them shouting with anger and consternation. But they could make a pretty good guess at the direction he had taken, and they separated and spread out.

One of them got a glimpse of him and yelled a loud view-hallo to the others. They were coming on fast now. But Tommy knew the island, and they did not. They were delayed by the wide dykes of water. Tommy knew where the plank-ways were, bridging the dykes. Presently he came out into the open where there was no water, nothing but rough pasture and long grass.

Two of the men had lost him, but one of them stuck to him like glue. He was a fast runner and he began to gain rapidly. Tommy ducked behind a low mound, and crouched in the long grass

just beside the remains of a rotten, tumble-down fence. He knew that if he couldn't shake this man off he was done.

The pursuer came up, panting and staring about him anxiously. There was a chance he might push on, thinking Tommy had gone ahead. But he was coming nearer. Tommy pulled up an old, loosened fence-post, and gripping it in both hands, crouched flat. He meant to make a last bid for liberty. If they caught him he was done for.

The man was quartering to and fro, searching for the lost fugitive, and came within a yard. Suddenly he saw Tommy and darted at him, with a shout of triumph; Tommy rose on one knee and swung the fence-post round.

The post hit the man neatly on the side of the head, and he went down at full length as if he had been poleaxed. If he knew anything about it at all, which is doubtful, he must have wondered what hit him. He just lay there like a log, stunned, and Tommy flung down the pole and bolted back towards the sea-wall. He didn't stop to waste any sympathy on the man he had knocked out. People who tie their prisoners up and light fires in the middle of the night must not complain if they get hurt. Tommy did not know which it was, but it did not seem to be the man with the pistol.

His one idea was to get to the jetty now and escape in the boat. It would be madness to try and fight the other two. Every moment that he was on the island he was in peril of his life.

But as he ran, he became aware that the sheltering darkness was no longer going to help him. It was getting lighter every moment, for the moon was now rising in the clear, windy sky, low over the sea-wall behind him.

And he saw the other two men ahead to his left, and realised that he was cut off from the jetty and the boat.

They saw him at the same moment. Tommy turned sharp to the right and headed north, towards the creek higher up. The hunters were after him again, in full cry. It was no use letting them chase him round the island. He had a fair start, and if he swam the narrow creek in time, he might get right away; even if they followed they would never catch him among the salt-marshes and copses of the mainland.

A glance back showed him the two remaining men a couple of hundred yards behind, and going for all they were worth. It was going to be a close thing. He dashed up over the embankment and saw the creek shining in the moonlight below him, three parts full with the rising tide. He plunged in and swam with all his might.

It was a very short swim, luckily. The creek at that point was deep but narrow—so narrow that it was hardly thirty yards across—a mere stone's throw. If it had been any farther he could never have got out of range of the pursuers in time; but once over it, he was off Curlew Island, and he would be away before they could get down to where the boat was, and pull across.

Tommy's clothes weighed him down as the water filled them, but in a score of strokes he was over and felt the stones and oyster shells grate under his boots as he grounded on the opposite side. There was a wide mud flat to be crossed before he got on to the solid bank, for the tide wasn't right up yet.

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He splashed clear of the water and made for the bank.

He had not gone two steps before he found he had made a terrible mistake.

Tommy had been, in too much of a hurry to pick his crossing. He had made for the nearest place. The first step took him right into the mud up to his thighs. He struggled, floundered, and sank deeper. In a few seconds he was in up to his armpits.

"Great Powers!" he thought, with sudden terror. "I'm in the Plover's Ooze!"

It was the worst place anywhere round Curlew Island. Here were the half-liquid stretches of slob where the wild ducks came to feed at night. They wouldn't bear anything much heavier than a duck, though they looked solid enough, and they were a quarter of a mile in length, up and down the creek. Tommy called it Plover's Ooze; the marshmen knew it by the name of Rotten Islet. It might just as well have been called the Death-trap.

He struggled frantically, but only sank deeper. He was nearly up to his neck now. A small, green crab, running sideways across the ooze, stopped as if startled at seeing a boy's head sticking up through the mud, and stared at him with its two goggle eyes that stuck up on their stalks. It held up its pincers like a boxer putting his fists up, and slowly backed away from him.

Tommy groaned. The rising tide was creeping up over the mud, like a silver veil in the moonlight, and gently flowed round his neck. He looked round him in despair.

There was a rush of feet and the sound of voices calling excitedly. The two men who had been chasing him appeared suddenly on the top of the bank opposite, which Tommy had just left. They stared round them, and the next moment they caught sight of him. One of them was the old ruffian who had helped bind Tommy in the hall. He looked at the boy and began to laugh. An ugly, chuckling laugh.

"We've got him!" he said. "Here—come on!"

The other man joined him, panting from his run. They both sat down on the bank, just opposite Tommy, and looked at him across the narrow strip of water.

"This will do us nicely!" said the tall man. "Nothing could be better. Put up your pistol, Jim. There's no need of it."

The moonlight shone on his dark, grinning face.

"Can you get out of that, my lad?" he asked.

"No!" gurgled Tommy.

"No. You cannot get out. You are quite right. What do you think your life is worth?"

"As much as yours," said Tommy, shuddering, for the cold of the ooze was paralysing him.

"It is worth far more than mine," said the tall man. "You might perhaps buy it. I don't care whether you do or not. But do you notice that the tide is rising? It is already up to your chin. In five minutes it will be over your head—and you will be supper for the crabs."

The Last Shot!

IT seemed to Tommy that the whole thing was some horrible nightmare. He saw the two men sitting opposite him, and he could feel the salt water creeping around his chin. He knew that they had told him the truth, and that he was within five minutes, or less, of death.

"All right!" he said hoarsely. "You can sit there and see me done in, I suppose! What good'll that do you?"

"No good at all, as far as making a profit is concerned," said the tall man calmly. "But it will be a satisfaction, my lad. You have given us a lot of trouble."

"What do you want?"

"You know very well what we want. We want the receipt for Comberite Powder."

"D'you suppose I can give it you, up to my neck here in the mud?"

The leader of the two men took out a cigarette and lit it coolly.

"Yes," he said. "I know that you can. You can make the powder; and so you must know exactly how it is made. You've got it in your head; that's quite plain to me. I'm a chemist, and I am not a fool. You know the different things that have to be used, and the proportions they have to be used in; and the figures and all the rest of it. Say your piece, my lad; give us your little recitation. My friend here will take it down."

"You think I'll do that, do you?"

"You are such an obstinate young whelp," replied the man, "that probably you think you can refuse. All right. In that case you have nothing to do but drown. We shall stay here while you do it."

"Anyway, you won't have killed me!" said Tommy through his teeth. "It was my own fault for getting into this beastly mess. I—I'd rather die than

give in to you, you ugly, sneering swab! If I've got to die you'll never get the secret. It dies with me, an' it'll be wiped out."

The tall man nodded.

"Quite true," he said. "And the time is going fast. If we cannot get it we cannot, that's all. We would much sooner you were done in, my boy, than that anybody else should have that secret."

"Then that's that!" said Tommy, trying to keep his voice steady. A ripple of water washed over his mouth. "You still think I'm a fool. If I gave you the secret you'd laugh at me an' let me drown!"

"No, we should not. We should get you out of that, and keep you till we'd proved that what you'd given us was the right goods. We've got to make sure. The two of us can pull you out easily enough," said the man calmly. "But there are only two minutes left; it is already almost too late. You prefer death? You will think better of it when the seawater is choking you. Only we cannot save you then. Have it your own way."

Tommy gurgled. But he said nothing. A blind terror had seized him, but it was passing now. He felt a sort of stupor; it didn't seem to matter any longer what happened to him. He was staring across the creek at the tall man's face, lit up by the moonlight. It wasn't O'Hara, nor Baldy. Who was he? Tommy felt sure he had seen him somewhere. Still, it hardly mattered now who he was.

He had said he would rather die than give in. But it was impossible to let himself drown like a trapped rat. The water had covered all the mud now, and was rising round his face. He felt as if he could scream aloud.

There was no sound but the rush of the wind over the marshes and the mournful cry of curlews away down towards the river. He felt the sting of the salt water touching his nostrils as the ripples rose higher, and he leaned his head back to get his breath. Soon the tide would be over his head.

He set his teeth and waited. It seemed like an age—a lifetime. As if in a dream he heard the two men laugh.

The tide seemed slower than the hands of a clock. Why didn't it rise and finish him? Why didn't the end come quickly?

It was not nearly high-water yet. The tide would rise for another half-hour or more. Yet there didn't seem to be any current in the creek. The water was slack and stationary, like a pond.

(Continued overleaf.)

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Then he felt it gently begin to run again.

The water was lapping round his mouth and chin. And then it was below his chin, the ripples slapping underneath it!

Tommy gave a faint gasp. The water was falling! The current had begun to run—but it was running down the creek, not up.

He was saved from the tide!

It was as if the hand of Providence had come between and bidden the waters fall—as the waters of the Red Sea had fallen to let the Israelites pass through when Pharaoh's hosts were in pursuit.

That is how it seemed to Tommy. And he was right.

The hand of Providence was in the south-west wind, which was now blowing with the force of a gale.

At the mouth of the Thames the north-west wind piles up the tide and makes it rise two feet higher than it ought. And a south-wester does just the opposite. A south-wester keeps the tide down two feet lower than its proper height. Tommy was saved from drowning.

A flood of triumph and thankfulness rose in his heart.

The two men had not yet seen what was happening. Then one exclaimed, with an oath:

"The water's falling! Look! The mud is uncovering! He'll be high and dry soon!"

Tommy laughed aloud.

"Where's your Comberite Powder now?" he said.

The leader sat up and stared at the water.

"I'll have it yet!" he said quietly, glaring across at Tommy. "I'll have it, or I will kill you with my own hand!"

"Not you!" said Tommy. "You may try. But you won't do it!"

"You have uncommon courage for a boy. You are not afraid," said the leader grimly. "But that isn't going to save you now."

Tommy laughed again.

"Afraid?" he said. "You sneering fool, I was afraid. I was scared blind! But something told me not to give in to you—and, thank goodness, I'd just faith enough! That's why I didn't drown! You're a thief and a brute, an' you've the will to murder me. But you can't do it!"

"Give me your pistol!" said the leader to his companion; and the long-barrelled revolver was handed to him.

"Now," he said to Tommy, "I will show you your mistake! I will have your secret, or you will die. I shall fire three shots—just three, and the last will kill you. But, first, you will see that I do not miss.

"Turn your head a little; you will see an oyster-shell lying on the mud which is uncovering; it is not a yard away from your face. You see it? The moonlight is a little difficult to shoot by, but watch!"

He crooked his left arm and levelled the barrel of the revolver across it, taking aim.

Flash! Crack!

The bullet smashed the oyster-shell to pieces and spattered the mud over Tommy's face. It was very clever aiming at that range—a deadly shot.

"The next bullet," said the leader slowly and deliberately, "will hit you in the right shoulder. But it will not kill. There will then be an interval of one minute. If you do not speak the second bullet will be for your left shoulder. Again a minute, and the third I shall put through your head. The secret will die with you. Well, let it die, for I shall be content that no one else can ever have it. Now will you speak?"

Tommy shut his lips tight. He saw that the man meant what he said. He was not bluffing. The very blood in Tommy's heart was chilled, and he tried to speak. But no sound came from him.

The man levelled his pistol, a hard, cruel glint in his eye.

Flash! Thud!

It was not the pistol that spoke. It fell from the man's hand.

(Tommy Comber was petrified with astonishment. What it all meant, and why had stepped in at the crucial moment was a mystery to him. Be sure you read the follow-on of this thrilling serial in next week's MAGNET, chums!)

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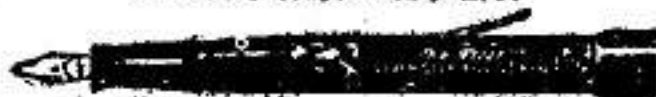
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