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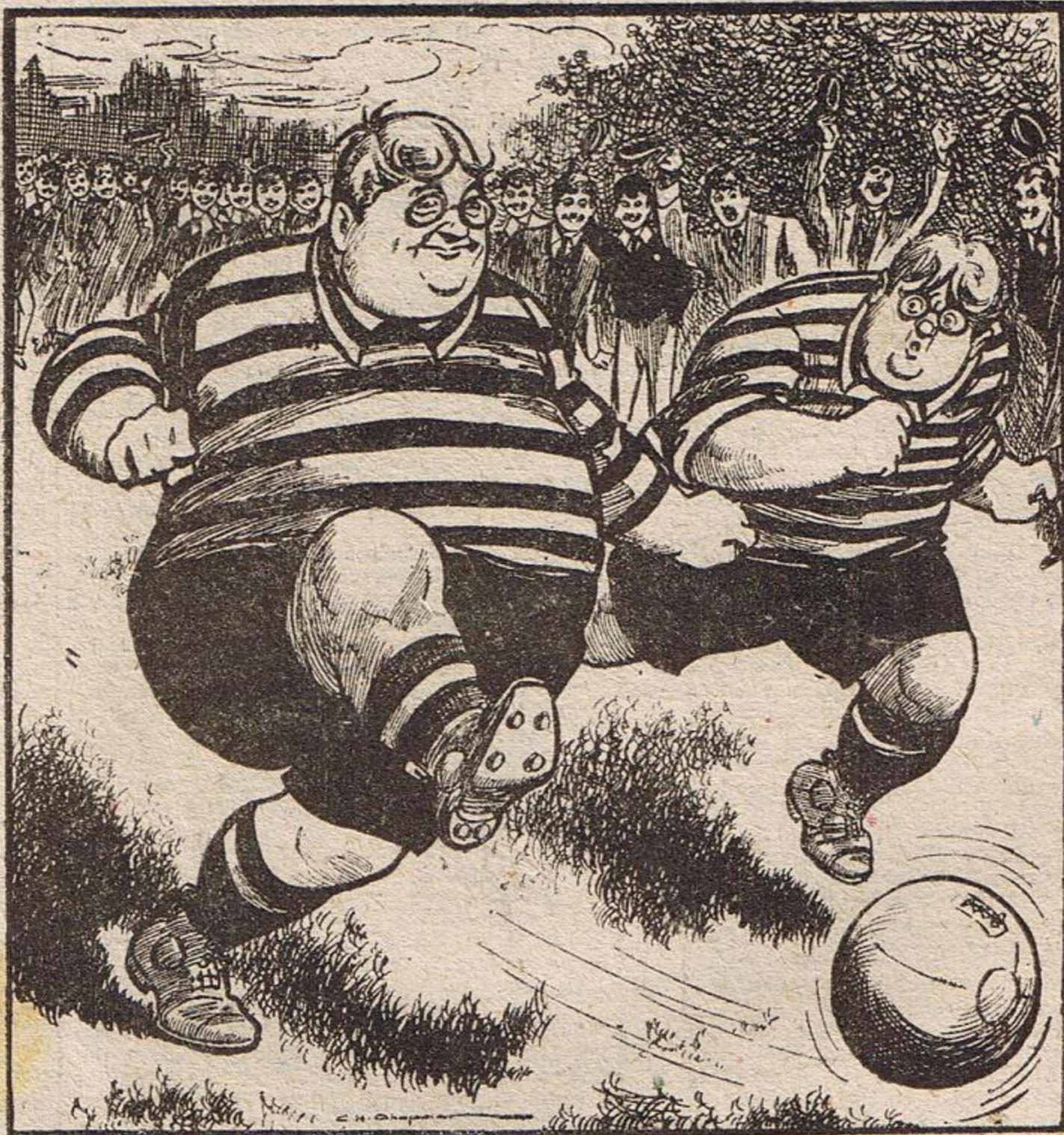
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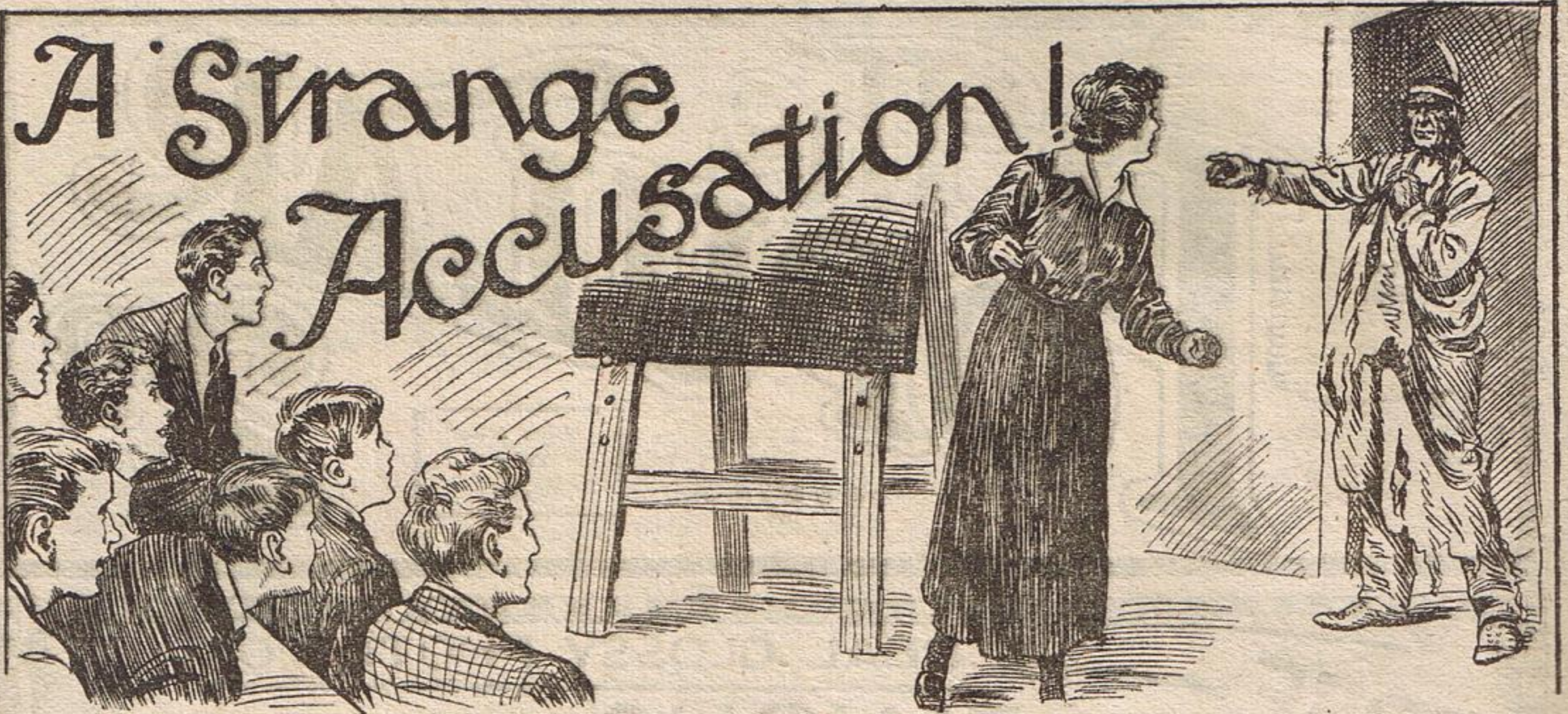
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READ
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A Splendid Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Schooldays in the Backwoods of Canada of

FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the Famous School Tales of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Message.

"FRANKY!" called out Chunky Todgers, as Frank Richards & Co. rode up to the gate of Cedar Creek School. "Hallo, fatty!" answered Frank Richards cheerily.

"There's a galoot here waiting to see you." Frank jumped off his pony. "Chap to see me?" he asked, in surprise. Chunky Todgers grinned and nodded. "Yep! It's Injun Dick, from Thompson, and he's got a note for you." "Blessed if I know whom it can be from, then," said Frank. "I don't know anybody at Thompson to send me notes. Take my pony, Bob, old chap."

"Right you are!" said Bob Lawless. Frank Richards walked towards the lumber schoolhouse, while Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc put the horses in the corral. Frank was surprised and puzzled.

He knew Injun Dick, the Redskin loafer of Thompson, who was often employed to carry messages; but it was a puzzle who could have sent the Redskin over to Cedar Creek School with a letter for him.

He found the Apache sitting outside the porch, basking in the morning sunshine, his tattered blanket draped round him.

Injun Dick rose to his feet as Frank came up.

"You've got a note for me?" asked Frank. "You bet! Paleface give red chief letter for young white chief," answered Injun Dick. "You give Injun Dick twenty-five cents."

"Let's see the letter first," said Frank, smiling. "It may not be worth it."

Injun Dick fumbled among his rags, and produced a decidedly soiled envelope.

Scrawled on the outside was "Mister Frank Richards, Cedar Creek Skool."

The handwriting was rough and stubby, and quite unknown to Frank Richards.

Frank Richards found a quarter in his pocket, and tossed it to the Redskin.

He had no doubt that Injun Dick had been paid for bringing the letter; he was not likely to bring it on the chance of a tip at the end.

But Injun Dick had been a great chief once, in the far-away land of Arizona, and Frank had some compassion for the fallen warrior.

The Apache grabbed the quarter, draped his tattered blanket round him, and stalked away with great dignity.

Frank Richards opened the soiled envelope.

There was a rough sheet of paper folded within; not notepaper, however, but evidently part of the paper wrapping of a whisky bottle.

Upon it a message was scribbled in pencil. Frank read it, and jumped.

He read it again, staring blankly at the rough scrawl, and then he rubbed his eyes.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated, in blank astonishment.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Bob Lawless, joining him with Beauclerc. "Somebody sent in a little bill?"

"Nunno."

"By gum!" chimed in Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy. "You getting bills from the Red Dog saloon, Richards? Better not let Miss Meadows see it."

Frank gave the Swiss an angry glance.

The Red Dog, in Thompson, was a decidedly malodorous establishment, which was very carefully avoided by the respectable citizens of Thompson.

Any Cedar Creek fellow who had visited the place would certainly have had the vials of wrath poured out upon him, if discovered by the schoolmistress.

"Nothing of the sort, Gunten, as you know jolly well!" exclaimed Frank.

"Well, you looked knocked into a heap," grinned Gunten. "Fellows here don't often get letters from the Red Dog."

"Oh, rats!"

Frank Richards walked away with his chums, leaving Gunten looking after him very curiously.

"You fellows had better read this," said Frank, stopping in the playground. "I'm blessed if I can make head or tail of it. Some chap off his rocker, I should think."

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc read the letter together, and whistled.

It ran:

"Deer Mister Richards,—You ain't come yar like you promised. This yar won't do, and so I tell you plane. If you'd ruther I come to your skool and see the missus, you can bet your sox that I'll come. Now, no pesky nonsense! You come yar this evening, or thar'll be trubble.

"Yours trooly,
"FOUR KINGS."

"Great jumping gophers!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "What does that mean, Franky?"

"That's what I want to know, Bob."

"Who's Four Kings?" asked Beauclerc.

"Ask me another."

"You don't know him?"

"No. Never heard of the name, if it is a

name," said Frank Richards. "I suppose it's a name, or a nickname."

"Four kings is a hand at poker," said Bob Lawless. "It's the nickname of some chap, of course. Some loafer at the Red Dog, I suppose, as he's sent Injun Dick with this letter. He wants you to go to the Red Dog and see him."

Frank Richards knitted his brows.

"The man must be mad," he said. "If my name wasn't written here, I should think the Indian had given me a letter intended for somebody else. Gunten's much more likely to know people at the Red Dog."

"I guess that's so."

"But here's the name. What on earth can it all mean?" exclaimed Frank Richards, in utter perplexity.

"The man's mistaken somebody else for you, I should think," remarked Vere Beauclerc. "That's the only explanation. Any way, you're not going."

"No fear!"

Frank Richards & Co. turned back to the lumber school, and went in with the rest of the Cedar Creek crowd for morning lessons.

The letter from Four Kings was left in the playground, torn into a dozen pieces and scattered on the wind.

But Frank was thinking a good deal about it during the day.

The incident was quite inexplicable.

He did not know Four Kings, but it was clear that the man knew him, or believed that he knew him, and expected him at the Red Dog that evening.

Frank Richards, of course, had not the slightest intention of going there.

But he wondered what steps Four Kings would take, if he did not go.

If the man carried out his threat of visiting the lumber school there would be a scene, and Frank wondered what would come of it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Four Kings Means Business.

"MAYBE there'll be a visitor for you, Franky," grinned Bob Lawless, as the chums of Cedar Creek trotted up to the lumber school on the following morning.

"I wonder!" said Frank.

Frank Richards was feeling just a little excited as he arrived at the lumber school.

He glanced round quickly as he entered the gates.

But there was no stranger in sight.

If Four Kings intended to carry out his threat he had not done so yet, at all events.

There was a group of fellows inside the

gates, engaged in an animated discussion, and Frank Richards & Co. joined them.

"Anything on?" asked Bob Lawless. "I guess there's somethin' on in Thompson," said Eben Hacke. "It's that claim-robber agin."

"Haven't they caught him yet?" "Nope."

"What's that?" asked Frank Richards. "It's been going on for two or three weeks, from what I hear," explained Hacke. "Some galoot goes moseying round the claims on the creek at night, lifting the dust from the cradles. I guess there'll be shooting if the boys spot him!"

"It's a dirty trick!" said Tom Lawrence. "The miners can't be watching their claims all night. When the pay-dirt's left in the cradles overnight, there's a chance for the claim-robber. One of the Red Dog gang, very likely. They've called in Sheriff Henderson, but he hasn't found the man."

"Injun Dick, very likely," remarked Kern Gunten. "He's the sort of galoot that would rob a claim, or anything else."

Frank Richards frowned. "It's not quite fair to say it's Injun Dick, if there isn't any evidence on the subject," he said.

Gunten grinned. "Sorry! I forgot he was a friend of yours!" he answered.

And there was a laugh from the Cedar Creek fellows.

"Bosh!" said Frank. "He's not a friend of mine; but I don't see why a theft should be put down to him. There are a good many fellows in Thompson who might be doing it."

"Some galoot who's had hard luck at poker, and wants to raise the wind, perhaps, Gunten," said Bob Lawless, with a grin.

Gunten flushed crimson. He was about to make an angry reply, but he turned away instead, and left the group.

Bob looked after him rather curiously. Gunten's gambling propensities were well-known, and Bob had been making a playful allusion to them, but without any serious intention.

He had no thought for a moment of connecting Kern Gunten with the mysterious claim-robber.

But the startled flush of the Swiss struck him very strangely.

"My word!" murmured Bob, as he left the group of schoolboys with his chums. "It isn't possible that Gunten—"

He paused. "Impossible!" said Beauclerc hastily.

"He seemed struck all of a heap with what I said, and I was only joking," said Bob; "and he seems jolly keen to give the impression that it's the Redskin who moseys round at night lifting pay-dust from the claims. But I guess even Gunten would draw the line at that."

"I should hope so," said Frank Richards.

"Your visitor isn't here this morning, Franky. Looks as if Four Kings is going to neglect you, after all," said Bob, laughing.

"Well, I'm rather glad," said Frank. "We don't want a scene here, though I suppose if the man came he would see that he's made a mistake."

Frank dismissed the matter from his mind as he went in to lessons.

But before morning lessons were over at Cedar Creek there came an interruption.

A coppery face and a tattered blanket appeared in the open doorway of the school-room.

"Injun Dick!" murmured Bob Lawless. Miss Meadows looked round sharply.

"Please go away at once!" she exclaimed. "You have no business here!"

"Injun bring letter," explained the Redskin, ducking his head to the schoolmistress.

"A letter for me?" asked Miss Meadows.

"Letter for young white chief," answered Injun Dick, pointing a grubby forefinger at Frank Richards.

"You must not come here during lesson-time," said Miss Meadows severely. "You must leave the letter on the table in the passage."

"Injun want answer."

"Then you must wait."

"All O.K., missy!" said Injun Dick. "Injun wait, you bet! Indian Dick bully boy with a glass eye. Thirsty."

Miss Meadows took no notice of that strong hint, but turned back to her class.

Injun Dick gave her a sorrowful look, and stepped out of the doorway, and sat down on the bench in the porch to wait.

The lesson went on. A good many glances were turned upon

Frank Richards, who sat with a slightly flushed face.

This was the second time Injun Dick had brought him a letter, and the fact was enough to excite curiosity.

Frank did not need telling whom the letter was from, and he was feeling puzzled and angry.

Injun Dick was leaning back on the bench, his head resting on the wall of the porch, snoring.

It was probable that the Apache had already sampled the tanglefoot at the Red Dog that day, early as it was.

Bob Lawless shook him by the shoulder, and the Indian awoke.

"You've got a letter for me," said Frank, rather gruffly.

"Co-rect!" answered Injun Dick, dividing the word in the middle, in the slangy way of the mining-camps.

"Hand it over, then."

Injun Dick handed over the letter, and his brown hand remained extended.

"You give Injun twenty-five cents," he suggested.

Frank Richards did not heed. He had no more quarters to bestow upon the fallen chief of the Apaches.

He stepped out of the porch with the letter, and opened it hastily. Injun Dick followed him out.

"You give Injun answer," he said.

"Wait a minute!"

"Injun wait. All O.K.! Injun Dick bully rook!" said the Red man.

Frank Richards read the letter, and passed

**THIS IS THE
PAPER THAT
NEVER
LETS YOU DOWN!**

it to Bob and Beauclerc, his face dark with anger.

"That galoot again?" asked Bob.

"Yes; read it!"

The two schoolboys read the letter with keen interest, and its contents made them open their eyes. It was as surprising as the former missive:

"Dear Mister Richards,—You ain't come and you ain't wrote. Wort sort of a game do you call this yar? You better not furgit it! I'm waiting for you at seven o'clock today at the Red Dog, expectting you arter skool. If you don't come, you watch out for me and bad trouble. FOUR KINGS.

"Note beney.—The barer of this yar will bring me your anser."

"Mysteriouser and mysteriouser," grinned Bob Lawless. "Franky, old scout, this is some old pal you've forgotten."

Frank's eyes gleamed.

"I don't know the man, and I don't want to!" he said. "But there's going to be a stopper put on his writing to me!"

He turned to the Indian, who was waiting in stolid silence.

"Who gave you this letter, Injun Dick?" he asked.

"Mister Four Kings."

"Who is he?"

"Bully boy with a tin ear," answered the Red man.

"What does he mean, Bob?"

Bob Lawless laughed.

"That's Western lingo, my innocent bird," he replied. "It only means a first-chop galoot—a real sport. I dare say Injun Dick's idea of a bully boy is a bit different from ours, though."

"You come?" asked the Indian.

Frank Richards hesitated.

"You won't go, Frank, surely?" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc.

"Well," said Frank slowly, "I'm fed-up with getting letters from the man. If I seek him, perhaps he'll see that he's making a mistake. And, anyway, I can tell him to chuck it. Suppose we ride over there after lessons? The fact is, I'd like to know what claim the man thinks he has on me. It looks to me as if somebody's been using my name in some way."

"Well, it won't do any harm to see him, I suppose," said Bob thoughtfully.

Beauclerc nodded. He was a little curious, too. The matter was so strange and inexplicable that all three of the chums were curious to know who Four Kings was, and what he wanted.

"I'm coming, Injun Dick," said Frank, making up his mind. "Tell Four Kings that I'm coming at seven, and my friends with me."

"You bet!"

"That's all," said Frank.

"Injun thirsty!"

"There's the creek," said Bob Lawless, jerking his thumb towards it.

Injun Dick gave him a reproachful look, and stalked away.

Gunten joined the three chums.

"Do you mind if I give you a tip, Richards?" he said, in quite a friendly way. "Miss Meadows has been keeping an eye on you."

"I don't see why!" answered Frank tartly.

"Well, of course, she knows that Injun Dick hangs out at the Red Dog," said Gunten. "It's a bit queer for a fellow here to be receiving letters from that rotten caboose. Of course, you know your own business best, but if I were you, I'd keep it a bit dark."

Frank Richards flushed with anger.

"I'm not receiving letters from the Red Dog!" he exclaimed hotly. "I don't know a soul there! I've been written to twice by a man I've never even heard of before, and that's all."

Gunten whistled.

"That's a queer yarn," he said. "I don't think Miss Meadows would swallow that. If you've been on a bender, and got mixed up with the Red Dog crowd, it would be only wise to keep it dark. That's my advice."

"Keep your advice till I ask for it, then!" exclaimed Frank angrily. "You know perfectly well that I've done nothing of the sort!"

"I guess I'm only going by what it looks like," answered Gunten, with a shrug of the shoulders. And he walked away.

Frank Richards breathed hard.

"You fellows can see that this man Four Kings has got to be bottled up," he said. "At this rate, I shall have all the fellows thinking that I've been playing faro at the Red Dog."

"We'll bottle him up!" said Bob Lawless cheerily. "Keep your wool on, Franky. We'll take a trail-ropo, and lay it round the galoot if you like!"

Frank Richards laughed, and the matter dropped.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Nice for Frank.

FRANK RICHARDS could not help observing that day that there was a good deal of curiosity in the lumber school on the subject of Injun Dick's visits.

Perhaps Gunten had been spreading his own peculiar view of the matter. It was very probable that Frank's old enemy was not letting this opportunity pass him by.

After lessons, Chunky Todgers rolled up to the chums as they were going to the corral for their horses.

Chunky's fat face wore a very serious expression—an expression that was quite owl-like in its solemnity.

"Going home, Richards?" he asked.

"Not now," answered Frank.

"Look here, I wouldn't do it if I were you, Franky," said Todgers.

"Eh? You wouldn't do what?"

"You won't get any good at the Red Dog," said Chunky, wagging his head sagely. "Go straight home, old fellow, and let it slide."

Frank Richards gave him an angry look,

but Chunky's evident concern for him disarmed him.

Chunky was intending to give him a friendly warning.

"You ass!" exclaimed Frank, half-amused and half-vexed. "What do you think I am going to do, then?"

"Well, folks go to the Red Dog to play faro, I believe," answered Chunky. "I guess I've heard that old Boss-Eye runs a faro-table there."

"Who's old Boss-Eye, you duffer?"

"The galoot that keeps the place," answered Chunky. "Don't you know him?"

"Of course I don't!" roared Frank.

"Yet you're going there!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Don't do it, old chap!" urged Chunky.

"Oh, dry up, and don't be a silly young ass!" exclaimed Frank Richards irritably.

"Well, I reckon I've only spoken to you as a friend," said Chunky, in an injured tone. "Gunten says—"

"Bother Gunten!"

Frank Richards' brows were knitted as he led his pony out to the trail.

It was evidently high time that Four Kings and his correspondence were nipped in the bud, if Frank did not want to earn a reputation as shady as Kern Gunten's.

Frank was silent as he rode up the Thompson trail with his chums.

The whole affair mystified and worried him, and he was very anxious to have an explanation with his unknown correspondent.

Gunten and Keller, who lived at Thompson, rode up the trail after the three chums, and kept them in sight all the way to the town.

They rode into Thompson close on the track of Frank Richards & Co., and watched them in the street as the trio stopped outside the Red Dog saloon.

Frank Richards & Co. had no eyes for the two Swiss; they were not thinking just then of their two prying schoolfellows.

They dismounted outside the Red Dog, where Injun Dick was leaning up against a post, draped in his blanket.

The Redskin was half-asleep, but his black eyes opened alertly as the three riders dismounted.

"Injun hold hoss!" he ejaculated. "You put your dust on Injun Dick! Bully boy with a glass eye, you bet! Wah!"

And the Apache took the reins of the three horses, while the schoolboys went into the saloon.

A man with a red face and squinting eyes was behind the bar, serving two or three cattlemen with drinks.

This was evidently the gentleman who bore the descriptive appellation of "Boss-Eye."

The habitues of the Red Dog glanced curiously at the schoolboys, whose faces were rather red as they came up to the bar.

Boss-Eye looked at them, appearing to be looking out of the window, owing to his affliction.

"What's yours, gents?" he asked.

"We don't want anything, thanks!" said Frank Richards hastily. "We've called to see someone here—a man named Four Kings. Do you know him?"

"You'll find him in the parlour," said Boss-Eye; and he turned away to serve another customer.

The Red Dog did not look as if it possessed such a thing as a parlour, but the schoolboys discerned a door at the farther end of the bar-room, and they passed through it into an apartment which was evidently the parlour.

It was a small room, with a dirty window overlooking a yard piled with logs, and an atmosphere of stale spirits and smoke.

The room had only one occupant—a man in rough garb and red shirt, with a Stetson hat on the back of his head.

As he was the only person there, they guessed that he was Four Kings, and they looked at him with some interest.

He was not a pleasant man to look at.

His clothing showed that he was not well off in this world's goods; and there were signs that even soap-and-water were beyond his means—or, at least, beyond his inclinations.

There were several scars on his stubby face, and one of his ears was partly gone, probably "chewed" in some bar-room brawl.

He was smoking a black pipe and sipping from a tumbler of whisky-and-water when the schoolboys entered.

THE POPULAR.—No. 209.

He returned their glance with interest.

Frank Richards came up to the rough table at which the man was sitting, his chums following him.

"Are you Four Kings?" he asked directly.

"I guess I'm that same galoot," drawled the man with the bitten ear.

"Then you're the man who wrote to me at Cedar Creek School! I'm Frank Richards!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Accusation.

FOUR KINGS rose to his feet as Frank Richards gave his name, his glance resting very keenly on the school-boy of Cedar Creek.

"Ho! You're young Richards, are you?" he said.

"Yes. You've written to me twice," said Frank. "I've come here—"

"I reckoned you'd have hoss-sense enough to come hyer," said Four Kings. "You'd have done wiser to come yesterday, 'cording to your promise, my antelope. I ain't a galoot to be played with, and don't you furgit it!"

"I've come here to ask you what the dickens you mean by it!" exclaimed Frank hotly. "What do you mean by saying that I promised to come here? I've never even seen you before!"

Four Kings grinned.

"Come off!" he answered. "I guess we know one another pretty well, Mister Frank Richards. But what have you brought these hyer fellows along for? They ain't no business here."

"They've come with me to see what it means," said Frank. "I want to know what fool-game you're playing!"

"You ain't keeping it secret, then?"

"Keeping what secret?"

"That business that I know about."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Frank hotly. "I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about!"

Four Kings stared at him.

The man was evidently as surprised as Frank himself.

Amazing as it was, it was clear that he believed there was a secret between Frank Richards and himself.

"Suppose you explain, Mr. Four Kings," suggested Bob Lawless. "You can go ahead. Frank hasn't any secrets from his pals."

"There's a mistake somewhere," said Beauclerc quietly.

"I guess there ain't nary mistake," said Four Kings. "I s'pose Frank Richards is Frank Richards, ain't he? But you take my advice, Mr. Richards, and don't let these pilgrims into it. I know that young feller—he's the son of Rancher Lawless, and he ain't the galoot to know about it. You take my word."

Frank Richards almost gasped with astonishment.

"Bob Lawless is my cousin, and Rancher Lawless is my uncle!" he exclaimed.

"Oh! Then I reckon you'd better keep your gum-game dark from your uncle," said Four Kings. "From what I've heered of Rancher Lawless he's the man to give you thunder if he knowed about it."

"I've never done anything that I'm afraid to let my uncle know," said Frank disdainfully. "You seem to be making some fat-headed mistake. Perhaps you've mistaken me for somebody else."

Four Kings chuckled.

"Oh, that's the game, is it?" he exclaimed. "You're goin' to deny it? I calculate that rooster won't fight, my young buck."

"Deny what?" shouted Frank.

"Waal, if you will have it afore these two, I don't mind," said Four Kings, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You owe me fifty dollars. Where's the money?"

"Fifty dollars?"

"Co-rect!"

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Frank. "What do I owe you fifty dollars for?"

"For not taking you to the sheriff the night I spotted you down by the creek," answered Four Kings.

Frank Richards stared at the man, dumb-founded.

"The—the—the night you spotted me down by the creek!" he stuttered.

"I guess so."

"I didn't know you'd been down to the creek at night, Franky," said Bob Lawless in wonder.

"I haven't!"

"Look here, Four Kings, what do you mean?" demanded Bob. "Get out a plain yarn!"

"I guess I'll do that. I spotted Mister Frank Richards down on the creek on Monday night," answered Four Kings. "I'd have took him to the sheriff instanter, but he begged off, and promised to come hyer with fifty dollars. He never did come, so I sent a letter by Injun Dick. That's the hull story."

"I think you must be out of your mind!" said Frank. "I certainly wasn't anywhere near the creek on Monday night. You know that I was in bed at the ranch, Bob."

"I guess so," assented Bob.

"But suppose I was down by the creek, why should you take me to the sheriff?" continued Frank. "I suppose I've a right to go along the creek if I like."

"Co-rect!" grinned Four Kings. "But I guess you haven't a right to lift the dust out of the miners' cradles, sonny."

"What!" yelled Frank.

"Lift the dust!" shouted Bob Lawless.

The man with the bitten ear nodded coolly.

"I guess that was the game," he answered.

"I reckon I was moseying along the creek when I heard him shifting the cradles. I reckoned at once what he was doing, and I collared him in the dark. I'd heard a good bit about the claim-robber, and I got my hands on him, spry."

"You dare to accuse me of being the claim-robber?" shouted Frank Richards, hardly believing his ears.

"I guess so."

"You lying hound!"

Four Kings' eyes glittered.

"Not so much of your chinwag," he said. "I ain't the galoot to be called names, pardner. Stow it! I've shot a man for less than that!"

"Hold on," said Vere Beauclerc in his quiet voice. "There's a mistake here, Frank. Keep cool. You say you collared Frank Richards by the creek, Four Kings?"

"Yep."

"In the dark?"

"Co-rect. There wasn't a moon on Monday. I guess that's why he was monkeying there."

"And the fellow you collared gave you Frank Richards' name?"

"Yep, his own name; and he told me he belonged to Cedar Creek," grinned Four Kings. "He begged me to let him off, because of the disgrace. Well, I'm not a bad cove, and I let him off, he promising to call hyer and bring me fifty dollars. One good turn deserves another, I guess. Fifty dollars is the figure, and I'm waiting for it."

The rascal was evidently speaking the truth, so far as he knew it. But what he knew was not quite the truth.

"It's plain enough, Frank," said Beauclerc. "This man found some fellow robbing the claims, and it was some fellow who knows you, for he gave your name."

"I suppose that's it," said Frank slowly.

"That's it, plain enough," said Bob Lawless. "Must have been a Cedar Creek chap, I should say, to have your name so pat."

Four Kings laughed derisively.

"Is that the yarn you're going to spin, Mister Richards?" he jeered. "That cock won't fight, and so I tell yer! I let you off for fifty dollars, and you told me you could raise the money easy the next day. Wot's the good of telling lies? I'm waiting for that fifty!"

Frank Richards gave the man a look of utter contempt.

"On your own showing you are acting like a scoundrel," he said. "If you found a fellow robbing the claims, you ought to have informed the sheriff at once. You were willing to let off a thief for a bribe. Well, you've made a mistake. The fellow you collared was not me, and he gave you my name to get clear himself. If you hadn't been a fool, you wouldn't have expected him to give his right name."

"I guess that's enough chinwag. I'm waiting for the spondulicks," said Four Kings.

"You won't get a cent out of me!" answered Frank contemptuously. "Go and tell your yarn to whom you like; I don't mind. Come on, you fellows, let's get out of this! That fellow makes me sick!"

The three schoolboys turned to the door.

For a moment Four Kings stood still, his brutal face inflamed with rage, enraged more by the schoolboy's scorn than by the loss of the unexpected reward.

Then he made a sudden spring, and placed himself between the chums of Cedar Creek and the doorway.

"I guess you don't go without ponying up," he said between his teeth. "I let you off, Mister Richards, for fifty dollars, and now you come hyer with a lying tale. It ain't good enough, I guess. Hand over the durocks, or you're booked for bad trouble!"

"Get out of the way!" shouted Bob Lawless. "I guess not!"

"Then we'll jolly soon shift you!" The chums of Cedar Creek advanced on the man.

Four Kings' hand went to his belt, and came up again with a weapon in it.

The schoolboys started back at the sight of the revolver.

At that moment they realised their recklessness in having entered the Red Dog at all.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Injun Dick Takes a Hand.

FRANK RICHARDS & Co. stood, breathing hard, facing the ruffian.

Four Kings' eyes gleamed at them savagely over the six-shooter.

"I guess you'll pony up!" he said between his teeth.

"Don't be a fool, man!" said Bob Lawless, as calmly as he could.

"I mean business!" said Four Kings grimly. "I let the galoot off for fifty dollars on his word. I'm going to finger them spondulicks, or I'll know the reason why!"

"I tell you it was not I you found at the creek!" exclaimed Frank.

"I reckon that's a lie!"

"Will you let us pass?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Not till Mister Richards ponies up," said Four Kings. "And if he don't pony up right smart, this hyer shooting-iron will begin to talk. I ain't the galoot to be swindled, I tell you! Pony up!"

Frank Richards clenched his hands hard.

Whether the ruffian would carry out his threat he did not feel at all sure; but he realised that he and his comrades were shut up in the roughest den in the frontier town at the mercy of the rascal.

It was not much use calling for help, for the men in the bar-room were the Red Dog crowd, hand-in-glove with Four Kings—rascals of the same kidney.

"You'll hand over them dollars now," continued Four Kings; "and arter that you'll hand over more, if I ask for them, and don't you forget it!"

"If you rob us here we shall go directly to the sheriff," said Bob.

"I guess I'll come, too, and tell him where to look for the claim-robber," said Four Kings.

"You won't get a cent out of us!" said Frank Richards. "And you can't frighten us with your pistol, either! You may as well put it away!"

He spoke with assurance, but he did not feel so assured within.

Four Kings had been drinking, and he was in an ugly mood. His disappointment had roused all the evil in his brutal nature.

The three schoolboys kept their eyes tensely on the levelled revolver.

The ruffian's finger was on the trigger, and with so much of the fiery Red Dog whisky inside him, it was quite possible that the pistol might go off, under his clumsy finger, without his intending it.

"I ain't waiting long," said Four Kings, with a savage scowl. "I'm going to count three, Mister Richards, and if you ain't ponied up then, I'm goin' out for your ear. You won't look quite so handsome with a ear missin'! That's your funeral! Pay up and look pleasant!"

Frank Richards shivered a little.

The ruffian's hand was far from steady, and it was more than possible that a bullet intended for his ear might go through his head.

"One!" snarled Four Kings.

Frank Richards & Co. exchanged a look.

They were calculating the chances of making a rush.

But the peril was terrible, for it was pretty certain that the revolver would explode in the struggle.

"Two!" said Four Kings.

His eyes gleamed savagely over the six-shooter.



AT THE POINT OF THE GUN! Frank Richards & Co. stood, breathing hard, facing the ruffian. Four Kings' eyes gleamed at them savagely over the revolver. "I guess you'll pony up!" he said. "I'm going to finger them spondulicks or I'll know the reason why!" (See Chapter 5.)

That he intended to carry out his threat was evident.

At that moment a shadow loomed up in the doorway behind the ruffian.

Four Kings, with his back to the doorway, did not see it.

Frank Richards drew a quick breath.

Behind the ruffian, Injun Dick, the Apache, looked into the room, with a faint surprise showing for once in his stolid face.

Frank's eyes met those of the Apache over Four Kings' shoulder.

The Indian nodded silently.

With the stealthy tread of a panther he came into the doorway, close up behind the ruffian.

The word "three" was on Four Kings' lips when a dusky hand was thrust over his shoulder, and his wrist was grasped in a clutch of iron.

The fire-water had not deprived the fallen chief of his strength.

Four Kings gave a yell of surprise and pain as his wrist was enclosed in that iron grip and forced upward.

Crack!

The revolver exploded, the bullet whizzing up to the smoke-stained plank ceiling.

The Redskin's left arm was thrown round Four Kings' neck, and the ruffian was dragged backwards to the floor.

The next moment the Indian's knee was on his chest, and the revolver, wrenched away from his hand, was looking its owner in the face.

Four Kings dodged his head frantically.

"Let up!" he yelled. "Let up, Injun! That shooter may go off. Let up, I say! I guess I pass, pardner!"

"Bad paleface!" said Injun Dick, in his guttural tones. "No shoot. Great white chief Henderson come with rope, you bet."

"Let up!" groaned Four Kings. "I ain't no hog; I know when I've had enough. I pass in this hyer deal. Let up!"

"Young palefaces vamoose the ranch," said Injun Dick, glancing round at the schoolboys. "Bad place for young palefaces. You light out. Wah!"

"Good man!" said Bob Lawless. "You

come along, Injun Dick. Let that trash alone. He won't do any damage now."

The Indian nodded, and released Four Kings.

Injun Dick made a threatening motion with the weapon, and Four Kings dodged down behind the table with a howl.

The Apache motioned to the boys to quit the room, and followed them out, Four Kings' revolver disappearing among his rags as he did so.

Glad enough were Frank Richards & Co. to get into the street again.

"We were silly asses to go there!" muttered Frank Richards. "Thank you, Injun Dick! You've done us a jolly good turn, old chap!"

"Injun good Injun!" said the Apache. "Bully boy with a glass eye, you bet. You give Injun dollar. I have spoken."

Frank Richards laughed, and felt in his pocket. He had a five-dollar bill there, and he placed it in the Redskin's coppery hand.

Injun Dick's black eyes snapped as he saw it, and without another word he made a beeline for the saloon doorway.

Frank Richards & Co. mounted their horses and rode away. They breathed more freely when they were well clear of the Red Dog.

"I guess we're well out of that, Franky," said Bob Lawless. "That Injun is the real white article, and no mistake. I guess you'd have left an ear there but for him. But"—

Bob paused—"I say, Frank, that galoot Four Kings believes right enough that you were the pilgrim he collared robbing the claims on Monday night. We won't let it go at this. We shall hear from him again, I guess."

"At the school," said Beauclerc, with a nod.

Frank Richards' eyes gleamed.

"Let him come to Cedar Creek!" he exclaimed. "We can deal with him there—and I'll be glad of the chance!"

And that chance was soon to come!

THE END

(You must not miss the next exciting story of Frank Richards & Co., entitled, "The Gold Thief!" It's a real thriller!)

THE POPULAR.—No. 209.

BUNTER'S "PAL" IS WANTED! *Diniwayo, the famous black footballer, is expected to play for Greyfriars*
—Billy Bunter said he would, for did not he arrange it? He arranged something else, too!



Another splendid story of Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton & Co., the famous Chums of Greyfriars School. By the world's favourite author, **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Bunter is Wanted!

IT was Bob Cherry who hit upon the great notion. One of the most important football fixtures of the season was to be played on Saturday between Greyfriars First Eleven and Redclyffe, and consternation reigned in Greyfriars when it became known that five of the First Eleven had met with a skating accident which had ended in their being thrown into the icy-cold water. Still greater was the consternation when the five unfortunates developed colds which would keep them out of the great match. Wingate, captain of games and of Greyfriars, was at his wits end. He did not know what to do. The Removites—especially the Famous Five—considered it was up to them to find a way out for "old Wingate." It was Bob Cherry who thought of it. "Diniwayo!" he exclaimed suddenly. Harry Wharton started. His face cleared. "My hat! The black footballer! But—but I don't think he would play for us!" he said. "Not for us; but he will for Bunter!" said Bob Cherry eagerly. "He's Bunter's pal, you know!" The Famous Five looked very thoughtful. A week before they had been to Crawley to see a first-class footer match, in which the famous black footballer, Diniwayo, had taken part. He was a wonderful player—a man in a thousand million, as Johnny Bull remarked. Billy Bunter had claimed Diniwayo as a pal, and, in point of fact, he had entered the Crawley dressing-room after the match to find "my old pal, Diniwayo." "Redclyffe are going to play a County League amateur—twenty years old, is it!" remarked Frank Nugent. "Why shouldn't we play old Dini-what's-his-name?" "Let's ask Wingate!" said Harry Wharton abruptly. The Famous Five repaired at once to the study occupied by the popular captain of Greyfriars, George Wingate, to whom they explained their idea. Wingate's worried frown lifted a little as the juniors' idea was explained to him, and he looked very thoughtful as he stroked his chin in a dubious manner. "If it could be fixed—" he said. "Let's try, then." "Try, by all means," said Wingate. "If you could work it, it would be a thing I'd

never forget. Let me know. You'll find me in my study." "Right-ho!" said Wharton joyfully. Wingate nodded, and went to the School House. The juniors exchanged glances of satisfaction. "Now we've got to see Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "Bunter's got to get the darkey to come, that's all." "He seems to be very obstinate about not wanting him to come here," Nugent remarked. "We'll give him something to stop all that. Either he's got to get Diniwayo for the eleven or we'll scalp him. Anybody know where he is?" "Let's look in the tuckshop." That was the most likely place to find Bunter, and there they found him. Billy Bunter was engaged in earnest discussion with Mrs. Mimble. Bunter was explaining with all the eloquence at his command that, as he was expecting a postal-order very shortly, it was clearly Mrs. Mimble's duty to supply him with tuck on "tick." Mrs. Mimble did not seem to see it in that light, however. She had heard of Bunter's expected postal-order before. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" Bunter blinked round dismally at the chums of the Remove. "I say, you fellows, I'm stony-broke! I've been disappointed about a postal-order—" "Same old postal-order!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "I suppose you couldn't lend me—" "Look here, Bunter," said Wharton, "you shall have as much tuck as you can swallow—and that's a big order—if you'll do one thing. We want Diniwayo to come and play for the First Eleven next Wednesday!" Bunter's jaw dropped. "Diniwayo?" he murmured. "Yes. We've spoken to Wingate about it, and he'd jump with joy to have him. Crawley United are not playing next Wednesday, so the chap will be at liberty." "He—he wouldn't play in a schoolboy match!" "Rats! Greyfriars First Eleven is a jolly good team, and nobody need be ashamed of playing for it," said Wharton. "You can ask him, anyway." "I—I'm afraid I couldn't; he wouldn't do it—" "You've said a dozen times that he'd do anything for you." "Well, ye-es; but—" "You've got to ask him. It's a question of saving the match for Greyfriars," said Harry. "Redclyffe have got a County League man to spring on us. We should go one better with

the black centre-forward, and beat them hollow. He's worth half a dozen of the Redclyffe men, anyway. We must have him!" "I—I—" "Now, look here, Bunter! If you get that chap to play for Greyfriars, we'll club together and stand you all you can eat on Wednesday. We'll make a regular subscription of it!" Bunter's eyes glistened. The prospect of an unlimited feed dazzled him; but he seemed to be inwardly uneasy. "If you could let me have something now—" he began. Wharton shook his head. "No fear! Nothing at all till Diniwayo arrives on Wednesday. We know what a spoofer you are!" "If you can't trust me, Wharton—" "You know we can't," said Wharton, without ceremony. "Don't be an ass. Now, what objection have you got to asking Diniwayo to play for the First? You've said a lot of times that he's a good-natured chap, and would do anything for you. If that's the truth, he'll come over here on Wednesday and play for the First!" "But a—a member of a professional side—" "He's an amateur." "Ye-es; but I—I can't really do it!" "You've got to!" "Eh?" "Do you think we're going to lose the only chance of beating Redclyffe because you are a silly, obstinate ass?" growled Johnny Bull. "You've got to work it!" "I—I—I—" "If you don't," said Harry Wharton grimly, "we shall take it you've been lying, as we suspected at first, and that you spoofed Mauleverer the other day, somehow. We know you're as full of tricks as a monkey when you're trying to bolster up your precious whoppers!" "Oh, really, you know—" "And if you let us down like this you'll be warmed for it. Do you want to have a Form ragging?" demanded Wharton angrily. "I tell you plainly, if you don't get Diniwayo to play for Greyfriars on Wednesday we'll rag you till you wish you'd never been born! You'll be bumped, ducked, walloped, inked, treacled, and then sent to Coventry!" "You can take your choice," said Bob Cherry. "If you've been spoofing us, you'll suffer for it! Get Diniwayo to play on Wednesday, and you shall order your own feed, to any extent you like. But if you don't, you'll get such a ragging that you'll never get over it—and we'll begin now!"

Snoop Plays a Really Rotten Trick on Blundell! See Next Week's Story!

"Collar him!" said Johnny Bull. "He's been lying—he can't do it! Yank him along to the fountain for a start!"

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter.

"Well?"

"I—I'll ask him!" said Bunter, with chattering teeth. "Of—of course, I can't answer for it that—that he'll come."

"Can't you? Then we'll come with you when you ask him—we'll all go together, and explain to him!" said Wharton.

Bunter almost staggered.

"We can easily find out where he lives in Crawley," said Harry. "We'll go to him as your pals—"

"You—you can't!" shrieked Bunter. "I—I won't have it—"

"You can't stop it!"

"I—I'll ask him myself—"

"Very well; but if he doesn't come, we'll go to him," said Harry Wharton grimly. "And mind, if he agrees to come, he's to agree to come here an hour before the match on Wednesday, so as to make sure. If he isn't here at two o'clock on Wednesday we'll send him a wire."

"A—A wire? You don't know where he— he lives!"

"We'll find that out before Wednesday!"

"I—I say, you know, he's my friend, not yours—"

"We're going to know whether you've been spoofing or not. By George, if you've taken us in, and we have to tell Wingate it's no go, we'll make you sorry for it!"

Bunter drew a deep breath.

"I—I'll ask him!" he said. "I—I'll undertake that he shall come—only—he will want his expenses."

"Expenses! Rats!"

"I know him better than you do. I can get him to come, but he will have to have his expenses!"

The juniors exchanged glances.

"Well, we don't know him," said Wharton slowly. "That may be the case. We should be quite willing to stand the exes if he'd come!"

"It would be a couple of guineas!"

"That's all right!"

"And—and I should have to take it to him when I ask him."

Bob Cherry growled angrily.

"You won't get any money out of us in advance, you cad!"

"Then it's all off!" said Bunter.

"Wait a bit!" said Wharton reflectively.

"We'll give him every chance, you fellows. If we hand you the two guineas, Bunter, will you undertake that the chap comes on Wednesday, an hour before the match, without fail?"

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"Very well; and if he fails us, we shall know you were spoofing—and you understand that you'll be held responsible for swindling us. We shall explain to Wingate that you've had the money, and Wingate will jolly soon make you fork it out again. Mind, if necessary, your people will be written to about it."

Bunter moistened his dry lips.

"It will be all right," he said.

"Right—ho! We'll trust you so far. When will you go?"

"I'll cycle over to Crawley to-day."

"Good! We'll raise the tin, then!"

Harry Wharton & Co. left the tuckshop. Billy Bunter remained, with a thoughtful frown on his face. He was not thinking of Mrs. Mibble's jam-tarts now; he had something much more serious and troublesome to think of.

"I don't like trusting that fat rotter," said Johnny Bull, with a shake of the head, as they crossed the Close.

"Well, we must trust him, so far—we want to get the black chap if we can," said Harry. "It's worth risking the two quid, and Wingate would be jolly glad to stand it out of the funds of the footer club, if necessary. But I think we might raise it ourselves—a couple of bob each in the Remove would do it. I'd put five bob, anyway, and Mauly could be depended on for half a quid. It's worth it. Wingate didn't say much, but I could see that he was hoping, and I don't want to disappoint him if it can be helped. We can raise the two guineas easily enough, and we'll give Bunter a chance."

The two guineas offered no great difficulty. Lord Mauleverer, as soon as he heard of it, insisted upon standing a guinea—he would gladly have contributed the whole sum, but that the Co. would not allow. Seven or eight fellows made up another guinea among them, and an hour later Billy Bunter, with

the two guineas in his pocket, mounted Harry Wharton's bicycle, and pedalled away from the gates of Greyfriars.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Good News for Wingate!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. waited with keen anxiety for the return of the fat Removite.

Bunter was unreliable, so utter a "spoof" in every way, that it was impossible to trust him an inch. If it had been any other fellow, they would have been quite easy in their minds. No other fellow could have been suspected of telling a tremendous "whopper," and bolstering it up with tricks and dodges to such an extent; but with William George Bunter it was quite possible, and, indeed, likely. And yet, surely this was too big a "spoof" even for Bunter. They wondered, and they waited anxiously. When the fat junior returned at last, the Co. met him eagerly at the door.

Billy Bunter had recovered from the uneasiness that had been only too apparent in his manner before he started. There was no trace of disquietude about him now. He grinned at the juniors as he saw their anxious faces.

"It's all right!" he announced.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"He's coming?"

"Yes."

"An hour before the match, mind?" said Harry distrustfully.

"He'll be here at two sharp on Wednesday afternoon," said Bunter. "He's coming by the train from Crawley that gets into Friar-dale at half-past one!"

"And it's quite certain?" said Bob Cherry.

"Quite certain. You can tell Wingate."

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"Mind," said Wharton, with a lingering, uneasy doubt, "this is serious, Bunter. If the man doesn't turn up at two o'clock on Wednesday, you'll have Wingate to deal with, as well as us!"

"I tell you it's a dead cert! I've arranged it all!" said Bunter.

"Then that's settled!"

And Harry Wharton & Co., their last doubts dissipated, proceeded to Wingate's study with the good news. They took Billy Bunter with them. He was quite willing to go—and his readiness to face the captain of Greyfriars was looked upon as a last proof that it was all right.

Wingate gave them a quick glance as they came in. He had been thinking about the matter ever since Wharton had mentioned it to him, and, although he was a fellow of few words, it was not difficult to see how he had built upon that chance.

"It's all serene, Wingate," said Harry Wharton at once. "Tell him, Bunter."

Billy Bunter gave an important cough.

"All right, Wingate. I've asked Diniwayo to come, and he's consented, as a favour to me. We're quite old pals, you know. He'd do anything for me!"

Wingate gave him a sharp look. He did not, of course, know the fat junior so well as his Form-fellows knew him, but he knew enough of him to regard him with feelings far from cordial or trustful.

"I suppose I can rely on that?" he asked.

"Oh, certainly! He will be here before two on Wednesday."

"And he's going to play for the First?"

"Yes."

"Of course, you understand what you'll get if this is one of your idiotic tricks," said Wingate. "You can't spoof the captain of the school as if he were a junior. You understand that, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter looked injured and indignant. "Really, Wingate, I don't think that's very grateful, considering that I've secured a first-class player for Greyfriars—"

"If you've done that, you'll find me grateful enough," said Wingate quietly. "It's a thing I shall never forget, whether we beat Redclyffe or not. I only want to be sure."

"Well, you can be sure. If the chap doesn't arrive at two o'clock on Wednesday, you can lick me!"

"I should certainly do that, and it would be a licking you wouldn't get over in a hurry!" said Wingate.

"To say nothing of the ragging he'd get from us!" said Wharton.

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, if that's the way you take it—"

"I believe you," said Wingate. "I can't think you'd dare to spoof me; and I don't see why you should play the school such a dirty trick, either. I'm sorry, Bunter, and I'm very much obliged to you."

"That's all right!" said Bunter loftily. "Only too glad to do you a good turn, Wingate!"

And Bunter seemed an inch taller as he quitted the captain's study with the juniors.

"I think you fellows might stand me something to eat, after that awful long ride," he said. "I'm simply fagged to death, and as hungry as a hunter."

"Come along!" said Harry Wharton cordially. "Now it's all right—why, it's all right! I'm sorry I was suspicious, but it was really your own fault—you were such an awful spoofer always. Come on, and order what you like!"

Billy Bunter was not likely to need bidding twice. He distinguished himself in the tuckshop that evening, and he could hardly walk when he left it. But the juniors would have fed him till he overflowed if he liked.

The way matters were turning out made them rejoice, and for once they were as friendly as could be towards the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter, indeed, was the hero of the hour, and he enjoyed it exceedingly. The fact that the famous centre-forward was willing to play for Greyfriars, to oblige Bunter, was convincing; it seemed to show that, as this especial yarn had been so thoroughly substantiated, there might be something in Bunter's other yarns, that had always been scoffed at unmercifully.

And the fat junior, finding himself a person of credit, "spread" himself in great style. For once, his stories of his titled relations and his great acquaintances were listened to with patience and even with a certain amount of credence.

If one tale had been proved to be true, the other might be true, or partly true; and Bunter had the novel and pleasant experience of seeing himself regarded as a person of unusual consequence.

The fat junior loved the limelight, all the more because he never got very much of it, and during the next day or two he had a really good time.

On Monday a letter arrived for Bunter with the Crawley postmark, and he announced that it was from Diniwayo. It was addressed in the same hand as a previous letter he had received.

Harry Wharton & Co. felt a momentary uneasiness, at the thought that the letter might contain some excuse from the black footballer. But Bunter soon relieved their doubts by showing them the letter. It ran:

"Dear Billy.—Just a line to tell you that it's all right for Wednesday. I haven't been in top form lately, but I shall do my best for Greyfriars. We play Sheffield Wednesday next Saturday, and I hope I shall see you over here to see the match.—Your old pal, DINIWAYO."

"All right—hey?" said Bunter.

"Topping!" said Harry Wharton.

"He says he's not in top form," said Peter Todd thoughtfully. "I hope that doesn't mean that he's not going to play a good game."

"Well, I can't answer for that," said Bunter. "I've got him to play, and that's all I could do."

"Oh, it will be all right!" said Wharton.

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"He's not going to play against Newcastle United or Manchester. In his worst form, he'd make rings round the Redclyffe chaps."

"Yes, rather!"

"Good old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry, clapping the fat junior on the back. "I take back half the names I've called you at various times. You deserve the other half!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The last possible doubt had vanished. When Wednesday dawned, the hopes of Greyfriars were high. During morning lessons little was thought about by nearly all the Greyfriars fellows but the great match of the afternoon, and there was some little trouble with the masters in consequence.

After school the fellows poured out of the Form-rooms in great spirits. All thoughts were upon the greatest match of the season—for Greyfriars, that is.

And the fellows chuckled gleefully at the thought of the surprise packet that was waiting for the Redclyffians when they arrived full of anticipations of victory. With a centre-forward like Diniwayo, the Greyfriars First fully expected to sweep the Redclyffians before them like chaff—the best men of Redclyffe, including their capture from the County League, would be, in comparison with Diniwayo, like dwarfs against a giant.

Wingate's face was bright and cheery, and every fellow, down to the smallest and kindest fag, shared the satisfaction of the captain of Greyfriars.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Spoofer!

LONG before two o'clock that Wednesday afternoon a crowd of fellows were waiting outside the gates of Greyfriars to welcome the black footballer.

Harry Wharton & Co. were the first, and other fellows crowded out, till the road was quite black with expectant juniors.

The famous Crawley centre-forward had quite an ovation waiting for him.

Now that the time for his arrival was close at hand. Harry Wharton was feeling a slight doubt. It was still possible that Bunter had been "spoofering," and the mere possibility was enough to worry the captain of the Remove.

Wingate had no doubts, but he did not know Bunter as the juniors did. Wharton was very glad that he had insisted that the Crawley man should arrive an hour before the time of the kick-off. If anything went wrong, and he did not come, that would allow Wingate time to make some new arrangement to meet the case.

But Wharton's new uneasiness was soon set at rest.

It still wanted ten minutes to two when the station hack was seen on the long white road, and there was a shout from the Greyfriars fellows.

"Here he comes!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush to meet the hack, and it was surrounded. A black face looked out, between a cap pulled low down and a big coloured muffler.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Welcome to Greyfriars!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, begad, my dear fellow!"

"The welcomefulness is terrific!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Diniwayo!"

The black man in the hack grinned.

"Here I am!" he said. "Good time—eh?"

"Lots of time," said Harry Wharton cheerfully. "It was jolly good of you to come!"

"Not at all; dat is a pleasure to me!"

"Hurrah!"

"Wingate's waiting for you," said Wharton. "He'll be jolly glad to see you, too. I was afraid something might happen—"

"Come on, Dinny!" said Billy Bunter, linking arms with the black young man, as he descended from the hack.

"Make room there, you fellows! Don't crowd round my old pal Diniwayo! Come on, old fellow!"

And Bunter, with tremendous importance, walked in at the gates of Greyfriars, with his fat arm linked in that of the coloured gentleman. The Greyfriars fellows crowded in after them. The driver of the hack gave a sort of yelp:

"I sye, young gents, I ain't been paid!"

"Diniwayo's forgotten," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "Never mind; we'll settle it. Don't remind him unless he thinks of it."

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"Leave it to me," said Lord Mauleverer. "Certainly!" grinned Bob, who had just felt in his pockets and found only threepence there. "Pile in, Mauly!"

And Lord Mauleverer paid the driver, who drove away in great satisfaction, the school-boy millionaire having given him a half-sovereign and turned away without thinking of change.

An enthusiastic crowd followed Bunter and his friend into the Close.

All Greyfriars wanted to see the black footballer. Billy Bunter was one of the most important personages at Greyfriars at that moment. There he was, with the black man—living proof that Bunter had told the truth for once. There he was, and there was the great centre-forward who was to win victory for Greyfriars.

Loud cheers greeted the coloured gentleman on all sides.

Wingate came up to meet him, and shook hands with him warmly.

"I don't know how to thank you for this, Mr. Diniwayo," he said.

The black man grinned.

"Dat is quite a pleasure," he said. "I dink I ask you to lend me some dings to play in. I did not wish to play in de Crawley colours."

"Quite right," said Wingate. "I fancy my things will about fit you; and, of course, we want you in the Greyfriars colours. I'll get you a set of togs in the dressing-room."

"Dank you!"

"You've come a long way from Crawley," added Wingate. "Have you had your lunch?"

"I lunched early, dank you; but I could eat a sandwich."

"We'll offer you something better than a sandwich," said Wingate. "I thought of it, and I've got something rather decent in my study, if you'll come with me."

"Dank you!" said the coloured gentleman again.

And he walked in with Wingate, leaving an excited crowd in the Close. A dozen fellows clapped Billy Bunter on the back.

"Good old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "This makes up for all your rotten tricks. We are going to beat Redclyffe to-day."

"I told you you could rely on me!" said Bunter loftily.

"So you did, and we were a set of giddy doubting Thomases!" said Johnny Bull, even he being convinced at last. "I'll say I'm sorry!"

"Sorry, too!" said Wharton.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Oh, don't mench!" said Bunter airily. "I say, you fellows, I didn't get much dinner, and if you like to come into the tuck-shop—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begad, come along, my dear fellow!" said Lord Mauleverer, taking Bunter by his fat arm; and the Owl of the Remove went along with alacrity.

"Oh, isn't it jolly ripping!" Bob Cherry exclaimed enthusiastically. "I could hug that fat bouncer!"

"And the darkey, too," said Tom Brown. "Rotten fuss to make about a nigger!"

sniffed Fisher T. Fish.

There was a howl at once.

"Bump him!"

"Hyer, I say— I guess— Yarooop! Leggo! Oh, jumping Jehoshaphat!"

Bump, bump, bump! Fisher T. Fish tore himself away, and fled. Crowds of fellows waited for the black footballer to come out of the house with Wingate. He came out at last, and there was a ringing cheer.

"Chair him to the footer-field!" shouted Coker of the Fifth.

The cry was taken up at once.

"Good egg!"

"Hurrah!"

"Shoulder high!" shouted Bob Cherry. A rush was made for the coloured gentleman.

He looked alarmed for a moment.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter? What—"

"It's all right," said Wingate, laughing. "You're a giddy idol here, you know. Most of the fellows have seen you play, and they admire you no end. They want to chair you to the footer-ground. You don't mind?"

"N-no; but—"

The coloured gentleman had no time to say more. The enthusiastic crowd were round him, and he was hoisted up in the powerful

arms of Coker of the Fifth and Hobson of the Shell, other fellows struggling round to lend a hand.

Shoulder-high, his black face gleaming over the swaying crowd, he was rushed off to the footer-ground in the midst of the shouting juniors.

Wingate and his team followed, equally delighted, though less demonstrative than the youngsters.

Right on the footer-ground the crowd bore their hero, and then they marched him round the ground shoulder-high amid ringing cheers. Anyone might have been pleased by such an enthusiastic ovation; but, somehow or other, the black footballer did not look happy. Once or twice his hand went up to his head as if to feel whether his cap was still there. In their enthusiasm the Greyfriars fellows were shaking him up a little; but such a hard nut as the Crawley centre-forward could not be supposed to mind that.

"Round again!" shouted Bob Cherry. "I—I say, let me down, will you?" gasped the coloured gentleman.

"Hold on!" shouted Coker, as several fellows bumped into him. "Don't shove me over!"

Hobson stumbled, and all the black man's weight was, for a moment, thrown on Coker of the Fifth. Coker staggered, and the Crawley man rolled off his shoulder, and disappeared in the crowd.

"Clumsy ass!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Make room there!"

"Don't tumble over Diniwayo!"

A dozen fellows were pressing forward to help the black footballer to his feet. He had fallen to the ground, and in their eagerness to help him the Greyfriars fellows almost stumbled over him.

A dozen hands dragged him up, and he gained his feet, gasping.

"Awfully sorry!" exclaimed Wharton. "That ass Coker—"

Then he stopped.

The words seemed frozen on his lips. For the black man, now that he was on his feet, presented a strangely different aspect.

In that roll on the ground his cap had fallen off, and his woolly hair had become disarranged.

And it was disarranged in the most startling manner.

It was down over one ear, and on the other side of his head appeared an entirely different kind of hair, closely-cropped brown hair that could certainly never have grown on a negro's head.

The crowd gazed on him dumbfounded. The shouting died away. The Greyfriars fellows seemed stricken dumb. It was too incredible to be believed for a moment, though they saw it with their own eyes.

But the fact was evident.

The black man before them was not a black man at all. He was a white man in disguise. The woolly covering on his head was a skilfully-arranged wig, and in his tumble it had been displaced, giving away the cheat.

It did not need much guessing to divine that his black complexion was a skilfully-applied dye. His European cast of features was accounted for now, accounted for with a vengeance.

He was not a black man at all! He was not Diniwayo!

And the Greyfriars fellows gasped as the truth forced itself on their minds.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Stroke of Luck.

WHO—who are you?" Wharton gasped out the words.

The man stood transfixed. His hand had gone up to his head, and as he felt the wig out of place he realised that the cheat was discovered.

He did not reply to Wharton's question. With a sudden rush, he broke through the crowd and fled. Whether he was a footballer or not, certainly he had a good turn of speed. Probably terror lent him wings.

He could not doubt how the Greyfriars fellows would repay his trick, now that they knew it, and realised the extent of the disappointment he had brought upon them.

So astounded were the crowd that not a hand was raised to stop him as he ran. It

took some moments to recover from the shock of surprise.

"Oh, that villain Bunter!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Bunter!"

"Yes. Don't you see, he's spoofed us, after all! It's not Diniwayo. He's got somebody to get himself up as a nigger—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's some clever rotter! It was a clever disguise. Oh, fatheads that we are!" howled Bob Cherry in despair. "Don't you remember? Bunter's cousin at Crawley. He's a chap who goes in for amateur theatricals."

"Oh crumbs!"

"The rotter!"

"The spoofer!"

"The swindler!"

Wingate came dashing up in excitement. He had seen the black footballer making a wild break for the school gates, with the wig dangling over one ear.

"What does this mean?" he shouted. "What—"

Wharton groaned.

"It's a swindle, Wingate! I'm awfully sorry we've let you in for this. Bunter's spoofed us! That chap's not a nigger at all."

"Wha-a-at!"

"I think he's Bunter's cousin from Crawley. Anyway, he's a swindler got up as a nigger to take us in. Goodness knows how he'd have played if you'd played him against the Red-clyffe lot!"

"After him!" yelled Coker of the Fifth. "Don't let him get away! We'll smash him! We'll slaughter him, and Bunter afterwards!"

"Yes, after him!"

The whole crowd broke away in a yelling throng in pursuit of the pseudo negro. The black man had already reached the school gates, and he dashed out of them as the crowd started in pursuit. Wingate was left with a black, grim face. His high hopes had been suddenly dashed to the ground, and he was left too disappointed and miserable even to feel angry for the moment.

Harry Wharton & Co. ran their hardest for the gates. They wanted very much to get hold of Bunter's accomplice in that swindle. Bunter himself they could deal with afterwards.

But the rascal knew what would happen to him if the deceived juniors collared him at that moment. He was running as if for his life.

The Removites came dashing out of the gateway with a whoop, but the road was empty. The fugitive had disappeared. They glared round in search of him.

"He's taken to the wood!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

"Hold on!" roared Coker. "Look there!"

He pointed down the road.

A black man had come into sight, coming directly towards them. That the swindler would have the nerve to come back was amazing, and the excited juniors did not pause to think how curious it was. They made a wild rush for the black man, and were round him in a moment.

"Collar him!"

"Bring him in!"

"Take him back to Wingate!"

The black man struggled furiously in the grasp of the Greyfriars fellows. He hit out, too, fiercely enough; and as he was a powerful fellow, half a dozen of the juniors rolled in the road before he was secured. But they were too many for him. He was swept off his feet, and in the grasp of a dozen pairs of hands, he was rushed towards the gates.

"Let me go!" he shouted. "Are you mad? What does this mean? Let me go!"

"We've got you, you swindler!"

"Come on! You can tell Wingate who you are!"

"I am Diniwayo! I—"

"My hat, he's going to try to brazen it out!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "All right. We'll give him a chance. Bring him along."

Still struggling furiously in the grasp of the enraged Greyfriars fellows, but unable to release himself, the black man was rushed into the gateway, and across the Close towards the football-ground.

The word passed round at once that the swindler was caught, and all Greyfriars crowded round as he was whirled away towards the football-ground. One of the fellows had picked up the woolly wig, dropped by the impostor in his flight, and he followed the crowd with it.

"We've got him, Wingate!" shouted Nugent.

"And I've got his giddy wig!" howled Tubb of the Third.

"Here he is, Wingate!"

The black man was bumped down at the feet of the captain of Greyfriars. He scrambled up, his black face working with fury.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed in a choking voice. "How dare you? Do you dare to handle me like this because I am black? I—I—I—"

Wingate's brows contracted.

"You scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "Your black would soon wash off, I expect. How dare you play such a trick on us?"

The black man looked bewildered.

"Trick! What trick?"

"Don't play the fool with me!" said Wingate savagely. "You came here passing yourself off as Diniwayo, the Crawley centre-forward!"

"I am Diniwayo!"

"What!"

"And I did not come here. I was dragged here by these young rascals, who all seem to be mad!" shouted the black man. "I ask you what it means?"

Wingate stared at him blankly.

"You—you say you are Diniwayo!"

"I am Diniwayo! I—"

"Liar!" roared Bob Cherry. "Why, you're as big a liar as Bunter! It was Bunter put you up to coming here and spoofing us."

"Bunter! Bunter! Who is Bunter?"

"You—you don't know Bunter? Why, you must be dotty! You can't take us in like that! You're found out, and now you're going to have the ragging of your life."

"You're a swindler!" said Wingate sternly. "You're not Diniwayo. You're not a negro at all!"

"What, I—I—I—"

"I've got his wig here!" howled Tubb of the Third, shoving his way forward through the crowd. "Look here!"

And Tubb held up the wig for inspection.

Then there was a roar of surprise. The black man's hat had been knocked off, and his head was exposed to view, and his head was covered with thick woolly hair!

Wingate glanced from the detached woolly wig in Tubb's hand to the woolly hair of the black man before him, and felt as if his head were turning round.

"He—he's got his hair on!" he stammered. "Great Scott!"

"But here's his wig!" howled the amazed Tubb. "I picked it up where he dropped it when he bolted."

Wingate gasped.

"You've got the wrong man!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Great Scott!"

Coker of the Fifth took hold of the black man's woolly hair and gave it a jerk. There was a yell of pain from the owner of the hair, but it did not come off. Evidently it was not a wig this time. He turned fiercely upon Coker, who stared at him open-mouthed.

"It—it—it's real!" stuttered Coker.

"He's a real nig!"

"But—but what—"

"You've made a mistake!" said Wingate severely. "The real man's got away. This chap happened to be coming along, and you collared him without stopping to think, I suppose."

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob Cherry. "I—I suppose that's it! How were we to know? There ain't such a jolly crowd of nigs in these parts, you know. I didn't know there were any at all, and when we saw him—"

"We—we collared him!" said Coker. "I—I say, I'm sorry. This isn't the chap we were after at all."

"I say, sir, we're awfully sorry!"

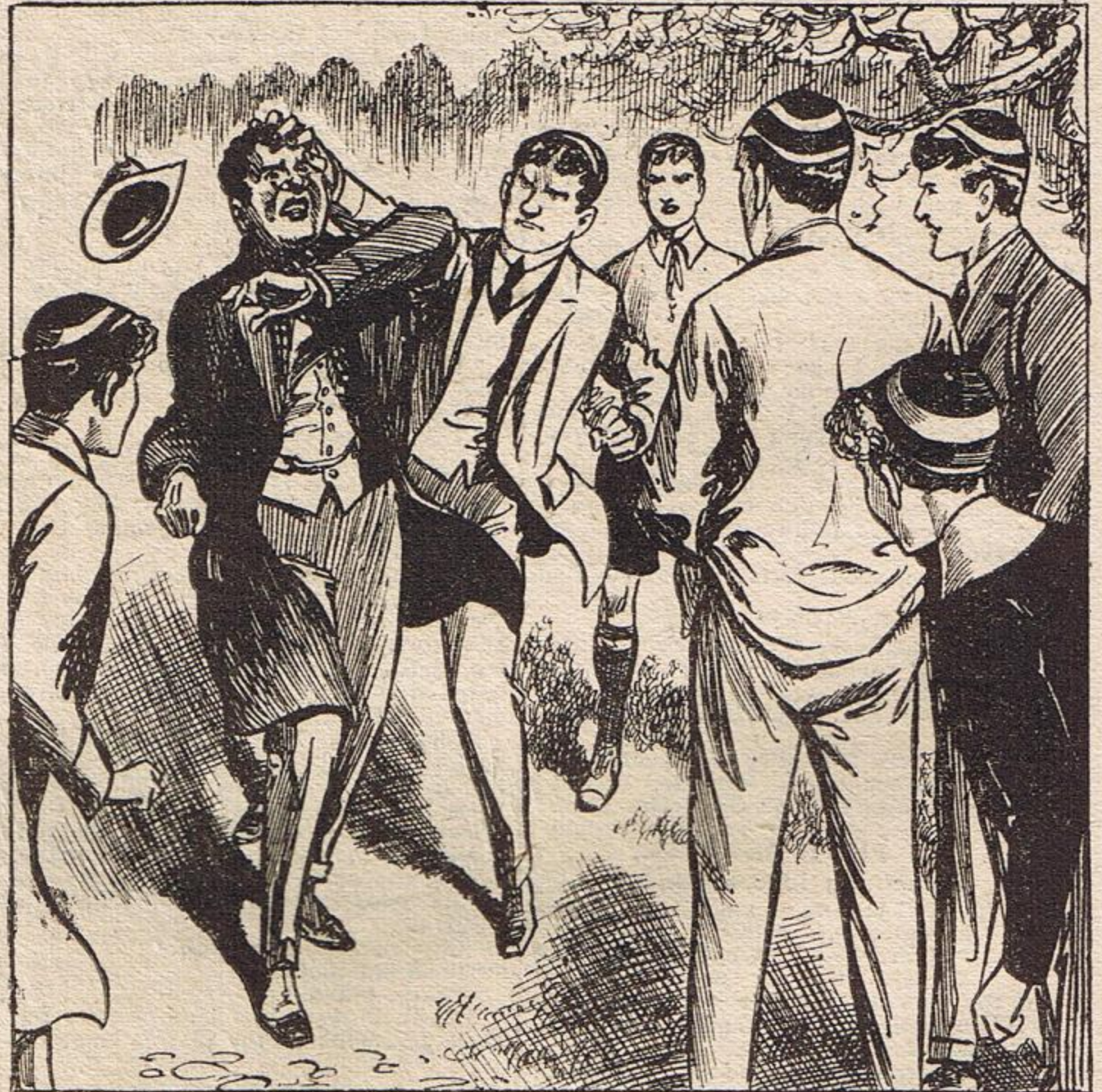
"It was all a mistake."

"We took you for somebody else."

"We apologise!"

The anger faded out of the black man's face. He understood now that he had been seized in mistake for somebody else, and the Greyfriars fellows were evidently sincere in their apologies.

"I'm sorry this has happened, sir," said Wingate courteously. "Perhaps you'll excuse these young asses if I tell you what's happened. A fellow calling himself Diniwayo, and got up as a dark—as a coloured man, came here offering to play in a match for us to-day. It turned out that he was a



NOT THE SPOOFER! Coker, of the Fifth, took hold of the black man's woolly hair and gave it a jerk. There was a yell of pain from the owner of the hair—but it did not come off. "It—it—it's real!" stuttered Coker. "We've got the wrong man!" (See Chapter 4.)

white man, and playing a rotten jape on us. You can guess how disappointed we all were, after expecting a chap like Diniwayo, to find out that we had been taken in. The rascal has just bolted, and the fellows were after him when they came on you."

The black man grinned.
"It is all right," he said good-humouredly. "I was very angry. I thought they must all be mad. I was taking a walk in the country. I had no idea anything was going to happen, when they suddenly rushed on me."

"We were silly asses, and no mistake," said Wharton. "We're all sorry."

"It is all right. But do you tell me that this impostor you speak of came here in my name of Diniwayo?"

"You are Diniwayo himself?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Yes, certainly."

The Greyfriars fellows gazed at the famous centre-forward with wide-open eyes. This was the great man himself, the genuine article at last. And certainly the strongly-built, active, alert black man looked more like a footballer than the fellow who had been chased, wigless, from the school gates.

"It's the real Diniwayo," said Coker. "My hat, what a giddy coincidence! I hope you'll forgive us, sir; we didn't know."

Diniwayo nodded and smiled.

"It's all right," he said. "Now I understand. But will you tell me why did you want Diniwayo to play for you this afternoon?"

Wingate made an involuntary grimace.

"We're in a hole," he said. "We've got a big match on this afternoon—the most important match of the season to us—and our team's gone to pieces. I've got seven men clobbered, and I had to fill their places the best I could. You can bet I was jolly glad when I thought I had a chance of playing a man like the Crawley centre-forward."

"Then you are disappointed?"

"I should say so! But it can't be helped."

"Perhaps it can," suggested Diniwayo, smiling. "I quite understand the position; and you wanted Diniwayo very much?"

"Very much indeed!"

"Well, Diniwayo is here!"

Wingate started.

"You—you don't mean to say—" he gasped. Then he paused. The black gentleman's meaning was clear, but it seemed too good to be true.

Diniwayo nodded.

"I've nothing to do this afternoon," he said. "I was taking a walk, but I should not object to a little footer practice. I'll play for you with pleasure, if you like, if you can lend me some things."

"Oh, my hat, you're a brick!" exclaimed Wingate joyfully. "After the way those young idiots have handled you, too!"

Diniwayo laughed.

"Oh, that's nothing! It was all a mistake. And I'm pretty tough; they haven't hurt me. Would you like me to play?"

"Would I?" grinned Wingate. "Well, just a little bit. I don't know how to thank you. It's too jolly good to be true!"

"It's settled, then. I'll play."

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry. "Hip-hip-hurrah! Good old Diniwayo!"

"Bravo!"

There was a shout from the direction of the gates.

"Here come Redclyffe!"

The Redclyffe brake had arrived.

"Come on!" exclaimed Wingate. "I'll get you fitted out with some of my things in a jiffy. My only hat! But this is luck—real luck!"

And the black footballer disappeared into the dressing-room with Wingate, followed by a ringing cheer from all Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Win!

GREYFRIARS turned out as one man to watch that match.

With one exception—that of William George Bunter, Bunter, from the tuckshop, had seen the flight of the discovered impostor—and Bunter had made himself very scarce. But no one missed Bunter, or thought of him, just then.

They had Diniwayo after all—by wonderful luck they had secured the genuine Crawley centre-forward, and they gave no thought to Billy Bunter or his spoofing.

The crowd was thick round the ropes as the teams came on to the field.

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Redclyffe were astonished. Their feelings were not exactly pleasant when they saw the black face gleaming in the centre of the Greyfriars front line.

But Campbell was a true sportsman, and he never thought of raising any objection—not that it would have been regarded, if he had. In Campbell's team there was a County League player, and that fully gave Wingate the right to play the Crawley centre-forward if he liked. And he liked!

But Campbell, who had come over to Greyfriars with an unusually strong team, and the intention of wiping Wingate and his men off the face of the earth, realised that the match was not going to be the walk-over he had anticipated.

Diniwayo, the black centre-forward, was a host in himself—and all the Redclyffians acknowledged that they would have all their work cut out if they were going to win that match.

It fell to Redclyffe to kick off. The ball rolled, and the match started. There was a shout all round the ground.

"Go it, Diniwayo!"

"On the ball!"

And Diniwayo "went it." He fully realised the great expectations of the Greyfriars crowd.

Even in the match with the Spurs, he had not shown better form.

Not that it was a "one-man" game by any means. Diniwayo backed up the team as much as they backed him up.

Wingate had given him the centre of the front line, and placed himself at centre-half. He would have been quite willing to let Diniwayo captain the side, but that the black footballer would not consent to. He was playing as one of Wingate's eleven, and that was all.

But what a player he was! His pace was terrific, his passing a miracle of sureness, his shooting deadly and unerring.

When he sent the leather in, the Redclyffe goalie, good as he was, had little chance of saving.

Redclyffe put up a good fight, and their general excellence counter-balanced, to a certain extent, the immense superiority of the Greyfriars centre-forward.

But from the start there was no doubt which team had the advantage.

In the first half, Redclyffe got through once; but there were three goals to the credit of Greyfriars, two of them from the foot of Diniwayo.

"Isn't it ripping?" chuckled Bob Cherry, as the players ceased for the interval.

"Doesn't he kick like an—like an angel?"

"I've never seen an angel kick," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But, by Jove, he does kick rippingly! And his pace!"

"Greased lightning!" grinned Nugent.

"The greasefulness of the lightning is terrific!"

"What jolly good luck to get him after all!"

"Gorgeous!"

"Yaas, begad!"

"By Jove! After this, I think we won't slaughter Bunter, after all," said Bob Cherry.

"He ought to be boiled in oil—but, after all, it was through Bunter's spoofing that we got Diniwayo!"

"Here they come! Go it, Greyfriars!"

The teams lined up for the second half. The first half had been gruelling, and some of the players were showing signs of it. But the black centre-forward was as fresh as a daisy—a black daisy, as Bob Cherry remarked, with a chuckle.

Redclyffe did their best—but the tide was against them. Once more the visitors got through—but only once. And three more goals fell to Greyfriars; the last on the very stroke of time, when Diniwayo charged the goalkeeper in with the ball in his hands.

Then the whistle went.

"Six goals to two!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

"Greyfriars wins! Hurrah!"

"Good old Diniwayo!"

"Bravo, bravo!"

And there were thunderous cheers for the black footballer as the players came off.

Greyfriars had won the great match. Redclyffe went bootless home—and all Greyfriars rejoiced.

Needless to say, a tremendous ovation was given to Diniwayo, and when he left

Greyfriars half the school marched down to the station with him, and cheered his train as it went out.

When Billy Bunter came in—late—in a state of mortal terror, expecting to be hanged, drawn, and quartered—he met with the surprise of his life. His wretched spoofing had turned out so well that the Greyfriars fellows had decided to forgive him. But they made remarks to him that would have pierced the skin of a rhinoceros.

Bunter did not mind them—he was only too glad to get off without the tremendous ragging he had expected, and fully deserved. Indeed, before many days had passed, Billy Bunter might have been heard talking in his usual strain, and claiming the whole and entire credit of the victory Greyfriars had won by the aid of the Black Footballer!

THE END.

LIVERPOOL COMPETITION RESULT.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

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The second prize of £2 10s. and the ten prizes of 5s. each have been added together and divided among the following thirteen competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

Percy Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; James Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; Maud Brooks, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; A. M. Duffin, 67, West Banks, Sleaford; Frances H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland; Mrs. A. F. Climie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Ronald Pagan, 14, Firwood Grove, Bolton, Lancs; Edwin Jesty, 2, Douglas Street, Birkenhead; John James, Bull Hotel, Rochester, Kent; W. Newbery, Needles Golf Club, Alum Bay, I. of W.; William Dounes, 45, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, near Stourbridge; Henry Sidwell, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; Norman Willis, Whelford, Leckhampton, Cheltenham Spa.

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CARDEW TO THE RESCUE!
Schools, Challenge Cup—then the St. Jim's team is attacked by illness! But Cardew is "all there!"

St. Jim's and Greyfriars draw in the Second Round of the Public Schools, Challenge Cup—then the St. Jim's team is attacked by illness! But Cardew is "all there!"



THE FELLOW WHO DARED!

A topping, long, complete story of the Famous Chums
of St. Jim's School.

By

Martin Clifford

(Author of the famous tales of St. Jim's in the "Gem.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Rivals in Sport!

"THE message will be through in a minute!"

Tom Merry pressed a telephone receiver to his ear as he spoke. Tom was in the public telephone box at Wayland, and Manners and Lowther stood in the offing, so to speak, waiting breathlessly for news.

Tom Merry had rung up the secretary of the Public Schools Football Association to know how St. Jim's had fared in the draw for the second round of the Cup contest.

The fight for the Public Schools' Cup was one of the biggest events of the year.

St. Jim's had come through the first round with flying colours. They had defeated Wellesley College, on the latter's ground, by three goals to one. That was no mean achievement, for the Wellesley boys were fine footballers.

A couple of weeks had elapsed since that great event. And now came the all-important question: against whom had the Saints been drawn in Round Two?

Monty Lowther nudged Manners excitedly. Tom Merry was speaking.

"Hallo! Is that the secretary? Merry, of St. Jim's, at this end. Would you be good enough to tell me who we're drawn against—What's that? Greyfriars? Gee-whiz! Do you really mean that?"

"Of course!" came the reply over the wires.

Tom Merry's cheeks fairly glowed with delight.

"Which team came out of the hat first?" he asked.

"St. Jim's!"

"Then the match will be played on our own ground?"

"Precisely!"

"Thanks, ever so much!" said Tom.

He replaced the receiver on its hooks, and joined his chums.

"We've heard the joyful tidings!" said Monty Lowther. "Drawn against Greyfriars in the second round, by Jove!"

"How jolly ripping!" said Manners.

"Let's waltz gaily back to St. Jim's, and tell our little playmates all about it!" chortled Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry became serious for a moment.

"It's ripping to be drawn against our old rivals!" he said. "But we mustn't lose sight of the fact that we're up against a very stiff proposition. You know what the 'Friars are. They simply walked through the first round, against Abbesside."

"But they're not going to walk through the second!" said Manners. "They've got to play on our ground, don't forget, and they'll find it a big handicap!"

"That's true enough!"

The Terrible Three walked back to St. Jim's in high spirits. Nothing could have pleased them more than to be drawn against their time-honoured rivals of Greyfriars.

That it would be a great match was certain. That Greyfriars would bring over their strongest team, and play like giants, was equally certain.

There was great excitement at St. Jim's when the news was made known. And all the fellows were counting the hours till Saturday afternoon.

The interval of waiting was an anxious one for Tom Merry. He feared that certain players might get crocked.

But the skipper's fears were groundless. The St. Jim's players showed a clean bill of health when Saturday came. They were as fit as fiddles, and Monty Lowther described them as "war-horses snorting for the fray."

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived after dinner. They were given a rousing reception, and they looked very bright and cheerful. The fact that they were playing away from home did not seem to worry them in the least.

"Here's to a good game!" said Tom Merry, as he shook hands with Harry Wharton. "You've brought your strongest team over, I see!"

"Yes, rather! You see, we've got designs on that Public Schools' Cup."

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Bob Cherry. "We mean to win it, or perish in the attempt!"

"Then I'm afraid," said Monty Lowther, with a grin, "you'll have the painful experience of perishing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After the Greyfriars fellows had rested

awhile, the rival elevens made their way to the football ground.

The crowd round the ropes was something like a record.

Junior matches were, as a rule, witnessed by juniors only. But this was a Cuptie, and St. Jim's had turned out in full force to see it. Lofty seniors and dwarfish fags stood side by side, waiting impatiently for the kick-off.

The referee was a gentleman who had come down specially from London. As the old clock in the tower chimed the hour of two he called the teams together.

Tom Merry and Harry Wharton shook hands formally, in the centre of the field.

The St. Jim's skipper won the toss.

"I always do win it when there's no advantage to be gained by it," said Tom Merry ruefully.

"Let's kick with the sun at our backs, Tommy," said Monty Lowther.

"Dashed if I can see any sun!" said Tom Merry, surveying the heavens.

"It's struggling to break through the clouds, and it will simply blaze down in a few minutes," said the optimistic Lowther. "Then the Greyfriars fellows will have it in their faces, and they'll be all at sea."

Tom Merry followed his chum's advice, and he was glad he did so. For just as the ball was kicked off the sun came out gloriously, shining full into the faces of the Greyfriars players.

Harry Wharton kicked off amid a deafening burst of cheering. It was as if the Tower of Babel had been suddenly transferred to the St. Jim's football ground.

"Play up, the Saints!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

There was very nearly a goal in the first minute.

Dick Redfern, the St. Jim's centre-half, robbed Frank Nugent of the ball; and instead of passing it to his forwards, as everybody expected him to do, he fired in a long shot from the halfway line.

The Greyfriars goalie was not prepared for anything like this, and his fellow players had to shout to him.

"Look out, Bulstrode!"

"Come out to it!"

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Another Stirring Story of Footer at St. Jim's Next Tuesday!

Fortunately, Bulstrode obeyed. He intercepted the ball in the nick of time, or it would have bounced over his head into the net.

There was a rousing cheer for Redfern.

Bulstrode punted the ball well up the field. And now the Greyfriars forwards took up the running. But they were hampered by the strong sun. Wharton tried to pass to the fleet-footed Vernon-Smith, but he misjudged the distance, and Figgins easily cleared.

Then St. Jim's applied heavy pressure. Their forwards were in fine form. The right wing, consisting of Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, was a continuous source of danger. And Talbot and Levison worked well together on the left. Tom Merry, in the centre, played his usual brilliant game, but he was too closely watched by the Greyfriars halves to do much damage. Peter Todd might have been Tom's shadow, by the way he stuck to him.

Play became very one-sided. After a time the 'Friars were penned in their own half. But the three B's, in their defence—Bulstrode, Bull, and Brown—saved them from disaster time after time. Johnny Bull's mighty kicks, and Tom Brown's fearless tackling formed the greatest features of the match, so far. And when St. Jim's forwards did manage to get through and test Bulstrode, they found him very safe.

"Tommy, lad," said Monty Lowther, during a brief lull in the game, "when are you going to kick a goal?"

"As soon as they let me!" panted Tom Merry, with a laugh. "We're having nearly all the play, but, by Jove, we're up against a cast-iron defence!"

"Can't you ask Johnny Bull and Tom

Brown to look the other way while you run through and score?" suggested Monty.

"Ha, ha! I'm afraid they wouldn't do that if I offered them a thousand pounds apiece!" chuckled Tom. "Look out! Ball's coming this way!"

The Saints tried all they knew to open the scoring. But all their efforts proved fruitless. Once, however, Talbot nearly did the trick. He beat three men in succession, and fired in a terrific shot. The ball crashed against the crossbar, and came away with a patch of white on it.

The spectators were still cheering this magnificent effort, when the whistle sounded for half-time.

The players badly needed a respite, for they had thrown themselves unsparingly into the struggle.

"Nothin' doin' yet, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But I fancy we've got the measuah of them!"

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Blake. "Their defence is bound to crumble up, sooner or later."

When the game was resumed, the sun had disappeared, so that the conditions were equal for both sides.

"Come along, the Saints!" boomed the stentorian voice of a Sixth-Former.

"None of your goalless draws! We want a goal!"

"And we won't be happy till we get it!" squeaked a small fag.

St. Jim's attacked at once. They swooped down upon the Greyfriars goal, and fairly bombarded it.

Persistence and determination are qualities which are always rewarded in the long run. And St. Jim's got their reward after twenty minutes' incessant attacking.

Levison forced a corner-kick on the left.

He placed the ball splendidly, for Tom Merry to head it past Bulstrode.

The Greyfriars goalie scarcely saw the ball, so swiftly did it shoot past him.

"Goal!"

"They've scored at last!"

"At long last!"

"Hurrah!"

The St. Jim's supporters were dancing with delight. Caps went whirling in the air, and the din was sufficient to awaken the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

That goal seemed to have a magical effect upon the Greyfriars team. Some elevens would promptly have lost heart on being a goal down. But the 'Friars were made of sterner stuff than this. They had been outplayed and outpointed all through the game, but they woke up at last.

Vernon-Smith raced away, and nobody could catch him. His turn of speed was amazing. Redfern and Figgins raced towards him, but he was past them like a flash. He took the ball almost to the corner-flag before he centred.

And what a centre!

The ball came towards Harry Wharton in such a way that he was able to take it in his stride.

Without any dilly-dallying, Wharton shot.

This was the first time Fatty Wynn had been really extended. He flung himself at full length, and was just able to divert the ball round the post.

"Oh, well saved, sir!"

"Bravo, Fatty, boy!"

The corner-kick which followed spelt danger to St. Jim's. But after a wild melee in the goalmouth Kerr managed to kick clear. And the Saints' supporters breathed again.

St. Jim's were hard put to it to keep their goal lead. There was no holding the fleet-footed 'Friars now. They had found their true form now, and their play was positively dazzling.

But time was flying fast, and the 'Friars could not get the ball past Fatty Wynn. They bombarded him with shots of every description, but the Welsh junior, cool as a cucumber, dealt with them all.

With two minutes to go St. Jim's broke away on the right, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sent across a perfect pass, breast-high.

Tom Merry could have breasted the ball into the net with ease. But in the excitement of the moment he handled it. Such a slip was pardonable in Cup-tie football, when nerves are at their highest tension.

The referee blew his whistle for a free-kick. Johnny Bull took the kick, and sent the ball far up the field. Bob Cherry fastened on to it like a terrier. He beat Lowther and Kerr in quick succession, and then tapped the ball forward to Frank Nugent.

Nugent had a clear opening, and he made no mistake. His deadly ground shot was such as no goalie could have stopped. The ball, like a live thing, rushed past Fatty Wynn into the net.

"Goal!"

The 'Friars had equalised in the last minute! And the spectators, like good sportsmen, cheered them to the echo. Only the 'Friars themselves knew how hard they had had to work for that equaliser.

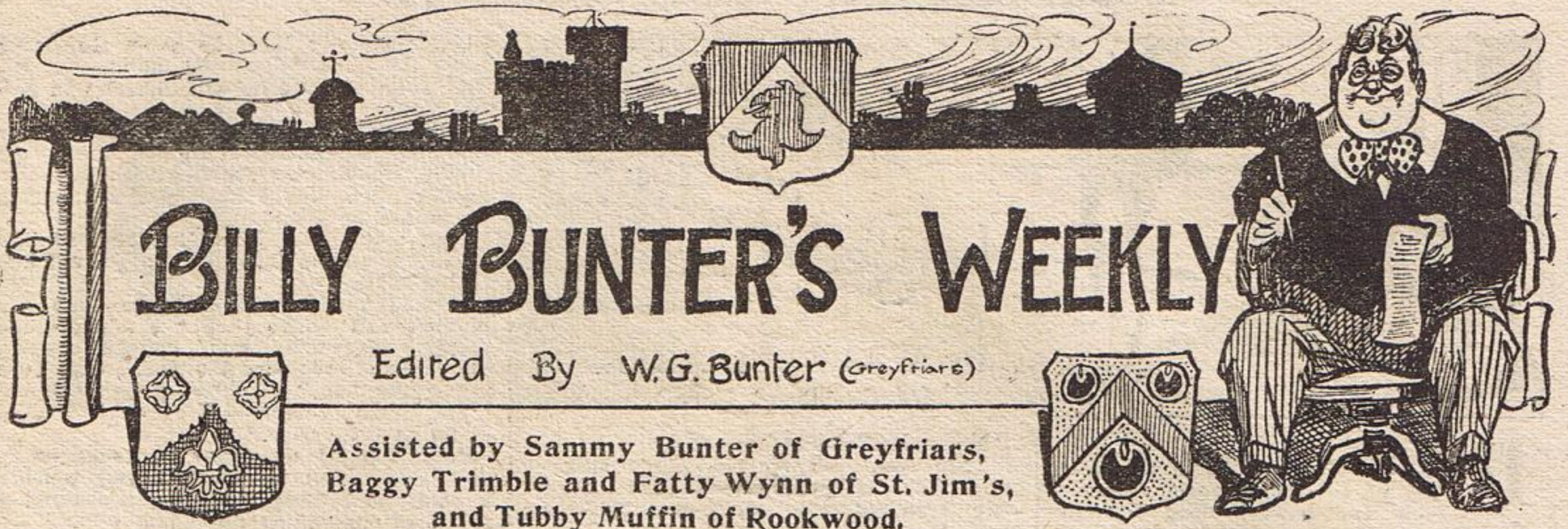
The referee blew his whistle loudly, to signify that time was up. Then he beckoned to Tom Merry and Harry Wharton.

"Strictly speaking, I should order

(Continued on page 17.)



NO ADMITTANCE THIS WAY! The Greyfriars' forwards bombarded Fatty Wynn desperately, with shots of every description. But the Welsh junior, cool as a cucumber, dealt with them all. (See Chapter 2.)



BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY

Edited By W.G. Bunter (Greyfriars)

Assisted by Sammy Bunter of Greyfriars, Baggy Trimble and Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's, and Tubby Muffin of Rookwood.

Supplement No. 106.

Week Ending January 20th, 1923.

A PETITION TO THE HEAD!

Drawn up and presented by
George Tubb.

(Of the Third Form at Greyfriars.)

To Dockter the Reverend Mr. Locke, Esq., Headmaster of Greyfriars.

Sir,—I pay you my humble respects, and beg that you will cast your opticks over this my humble petition.

Sir, I have been fagging for Loder of the Sixth for some time, and he has made my life a mizzery.

Loder is a bully and a broot and a beest and a braggart. These are strong terms, sir, but they are foolly justified.

My latest greevances against Loder are as follows:

- (1) He flogged me with an ashplant for burning his toast.
- (2) He threatened to ring my neck for not waking him up in the morning.
- (3) He lammed me with a fives bat for pouring skalding tea down the back of his neck.
- (4) He through me up to the sealing for fun, and I came down with a crash and nearly broke my collar-bone.
- (5) He gave me a weak's notiss, and just as I was dancing with joy, the beest went and kanselled it!
- (6) He struck me on the nasal piano with his klenched fist.

Sir, in view of all these serkumstances there is only one thing to be done.

Loder must go! We cannot bough our necks to his tirrorany any longer.

I am only a humble fag, and you are a great personage, but I know you will not turn a deaf ear to this appeal.

Sack Loder from the offis of prefect, and forbid him the luxury of having a fag, and all will be well.

Hopping this petition will find you in a good mood, and that you will not cane me for bringing it to your studdy. I am, sir,

Your humble obedient servant,

GEORGE TUBB.

EDITORIAL!



My Dear Readers,—It is nearly time, as the referee said when he looked at his watch, that the fags of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood had a number all to themselves.

I put this proposal to my miner, Sammy, and he hartily approved of the idear. So here we are with our Special Fags' Number, which is bound to make a big hit and score a bool's eye!

The only thing in this issew that has been written by a grown-up person is this Editorial! Some fellows may skoff and sneer at the idear of me being grown up; but the fact remanes that I have long since arrived at years of discretion. I may be only fifteen years of age, as the crow flies, but I am an old man in wisdom and eggspereience.

You will notiss that my miner, Sammy, has written a komplete story for this issew. Other kontributors are Dicky Nugent—who has blossomed forth into poetry—George Tubb, Wally D'Arcy, Levison miner, Algy Silver, and Lovell miner.

I do not claim that the stories and artikles in this number reach a high littery standard. What can you eggspet from a set of fags? Whereas my own eddication is komplete, theirs has only just begun. They have learnt that c-a-t spells dog, and that d-o-g spells cat; and that is the be-all and end-all of their learning. So I must ask you to make allowances, dear readers, for their eggstream youth and ignerence.

Other Special Numbers will be coming along shortly. The store of idears in my mity brane is far from being eggshasted.

The fame of my wunderful Weekly kontinews to spread; and thousands of British boys are chanting my praises, and singing for my bennyfit the well-known chorus: "Freeze a jolly good fellow!"

Yours sinseerly,
BILLY BUNTER.

THE FRIVVERLUS FAG!

By Dicky Nugent.

How doth the little busy fag
Improve each shining hour?
By reading penny noveletts
In some seklooded bower.

Or else he lays his master's tea,
And smashes all the crocks,
Until that master cries in wrath:
"Your ears I'll soundly bocks!"

Or he will fix a booby-trap
Upon the studdy door;
And the poor prefect, drenched with ink,
Kollapses to the floor!

Sumtimes the little busy fag
On errands will be sent;
You send him fourth at Christmas-time,
He won't be back till Lent!

Each night he makes his master's bed,
And grins a naughty grin,
Mixing the clothes in such a way
The prefect can't get in!

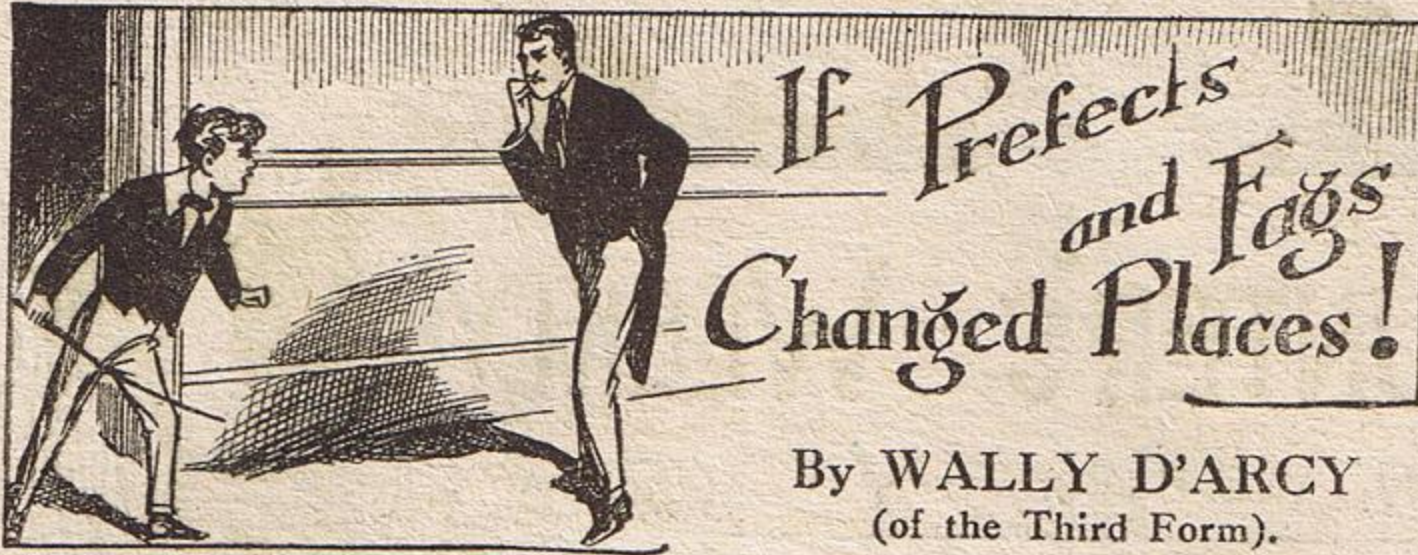
Each morn he wakes his master up:
("Call me, you imp, at seven!")
But when the fag comes on the seen
It's twenty to eleven!

The fag is full of munkey-trix,
And bubbling o'er with glee;
He larfs and sings from morn till night,
A jolly japer he!

How doth the little busy fag
Improve each shining minnit?
He's given lots of work to do,
But the raskal won't begin it!

WHAT THE WORLD
SAYS:—"Billy Bunter's
Weekly' is the Best Cure
for the Dumps."—W.G.B.

THE POPULAR.—No. 209.



By **WALLY D'ARCY**
(of the Third Form).

FAG!" Curly Gibson stood in the doorway of the Third Form Common-room and bawled along the corridor. There was an ashplant in his hand and a frown on his brow.

Knox of the Sixth heard the cry, and he darted away like a frightened rabbit. But Curly Gibson spotted him.

"Hi! Fag!" he yelled. "Come here at once!"

Very reluctantly the lanky Knox obeyed his lord and master. He came slinking towards Curly Gibson.

"Why didn't you obey me the first time?" demanded Curly.

"Sorry, Gibson!" faltered Knox. "I—I'm a trifle deaf, you know."

Swish!

Curly's ashplant sang through the air, and Knox received a stinging cut.

"Go into the Common-room at once!" commanded Curly.

The senior obeyed. Curly Gibson followed him into the room, brandishing the ashplant in a dangerous manner.

"I've got a job for you, Knox," he said. "I'm giving a feed to the whole Form in celebration of my birthday."

"Is it your birthday, Gibson?" asked Knox respectfully. "Permit me, as your humble and devoted slave, to wish you many happy returns of the day."

"Cut it out!" said Curly sharply. "You know you don't mean it. Now, look here. I want you to go to the tuckshop for me. Bring me a couple of cakes—one currant and one seed—five bobs' worth of assorted pastries, six tins of sardines, two loaves of brown bread, two loaves of currant ditto, a York ham, a tin of condensed milk, half a pound of tea, and a pound of butter. Got that?"

"Not quite."

"Then you should Pelmanise!" snapped Curly. "You're getting very slack, Knox." He repeated his orders, and this time Knox memorised them.

"Buzz off!" said Curly Gibson. "And don't be more than five minutes!"

Knox sped away to the tuckshop. Kildare met him in the quad.



Knox dropped the tray of crockery.

"I say, Knox. I want a word with you," he began.

"Sorry!" panted Knox. "Can't stop!"

"But I want to speak to you about the senior chess tournament."

"I really can't stop, Kildare. I'm fagging for Gibson!"

So saying, Knox sped on his way.

A few minutes later he came staggering across the quad, laden with purchases. His arms were full, and he had difficulty in getting along.

"Oh dear! I'm fed-up with fagging for Gibson!" he groaned. "He's a brute and a bully, and he's far too free with that ashplant of his. Bet I shall get a lamming now, for being late!"

Knox was right. When he staggered into the Common-room Curly Gibson greeted him with a snarl.

"I told you not to be more than five minutes, and you've been five minutes and a fraction of a second!" he said sternly. "Put those things on the table, and then touch your toes."

"Oh, really, Gibson—"

"Do as I tell you!"

Knox dumped his paper packages on to the table. Then he stooped and touched his toes, and Curly Gibson administered a couple of cuts which made him yelp.

"You've got to learn to be swift in my service!" panted Curly. "I don't allow slacking. Lay the table, put the kettle on, and make yourself generally useful!"

Knox peeled off his coat and got busy. For a couple of hours he kept on the go.

The Third-Formers arrived in force and the banquet began. The feasters made Knox wait upon them hand-and-foot.

In his frantic haste, Knox dropped a laden tray with a loud clatter.

"You clumsy idiot!" growled Curly Gibson. "Just look what you've done! You've smashed my wonderful tea-service! It cost me fifteen shillings, and now you'll have to buy another!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Instead of paying you your five shillings at the end of the week, I shall ask you to give me ten!" said Curly.

When the feast was over, Knox had to do all the washing-up single-handed. After which he had to black Curly Gibson's boots and press him a suit of clothes ready for the morrow.

Finally, Knox had to put his fag-master to bed and tuck him in, and prepare a couple of hot-water bottles—one for Curly's chest and one for his feet.

"Mind you call me sharp at seven in the morning!" said Curly Gibson.

"Very well, Gibson."

"If you're a fraction of a second late I shall lam you! Now you can cut off to bed. Good-night, and pleasant dreams!"

"Good-night, Gibson!"

Worn out with his exertions, Knox tottered away.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!

A GRAND (NON-SMOKING) CONCERT

will be held in the Fags' Common room on Saturday evening next, at 8 o'clock sharp.

ALGY SILVER'S "SUNBEAMS"

will warble their way through the following attractive programme.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Opening Chorus ... The Company.
"SIX MERRY FAGS ARE WE!"</p> <p>2. Song ... Jones Minimus.
"SOMEWHERE A VOICE IS CALLING!"</p> <p>3. Song ... Lovell Minor.
"FAG, FAG, FAG, AND BE CONTENTED!"</p> <p>4. Short Sketch ... The Company.
"FAGGING FOR CARTHEW!"</p> <p>5. Special Turn ...
PERCY PIPKIN will perform his wonderful feat of being tied up in knots by a member of the audience, and then bursting himself free at a given signal.</p> <p>6. Song ... Algy Silver.
"KEEP THE SAUSAGES BURNING!"</p> <p>7. Song ... Mornington Minor.
"A MINOR'S DREAM OF HOME!"</p> | <p>8. Recitation ... James Wegg.
"I'LL NEVER, NEVER FAG ANY MORE!"</p> <p>9. Song ... Frank Tracey.
"IT'S A LONG WAY TO KIPPER-ARY!"</p> <p>10. Song ... Lovell Minor.
"THAT OLD-FASHIONED BROTHER OF MINE!"</p> <p>11. Recitation ... Bertie de Vere.
"RIGHT ON OUR FLANK THE PREFECT'S CANE CAME DOWN!"</p> <p>12. Final Chorus ... The Company.
"UNFURL THE FAG OF ENGLAND!"</p> |
|---|---|

PRICES OF ADMISSION.

Standing Room	6d.
Sitting Room	1s. 0d.
Bed-Sitting Room	1s. 6d.
Full Board and Lodging	2s. 0d.

Roll up in your thousands—and bring your wives and families with you! This is absolutely the Greatest Concert of modern times.

COME AND HEAR US! : : COME AND CHEER US!

NOTE! Any attempt to rush the doors will result in a free fight.



The Story of Sam Skellington!

Speshully written for "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

By SAMMY BUNTER.

(Sub-Editor.)

I.

A PLUMP boy in speckles came waddling up the hill leading to Stintham Towers, the famus publick school in Hopshire.

He was a boy of about ten summers, and nine-and-a-half winters. On his head he wore a pear of shining patent lether shooze, and a glossy silk toppér adorned his feet. (Then he ought to have gone back home to his mother, to be properly dressed!—Ed.)

Our hero's name was Sam Skellington. He was the son and hair of Sir Scragge Skellington, Bart., of Skellington Hall, Boneshire.

Sam was a very decent little fellow. But his father was a mizzerable skinflint, and on sending his son to Stintham Towers he had not supplied him with any pocket-munney. The rezzult was, that our hero could not afford to charter the station hack up to the school, and he had to cover the distance on foot.

It was a broying hot day in January, and Sam felt the heat sumthing cool. The inspiration streammed down his plump cheeks as he waddled up the hill.

Sam's mind was full of 4-bodings. The first was, what would Stintham Towers be like? The second was, what sort of a re-sep-tion would he get? The third was, would the grub be good and plentiful? And the fourth was, would there be a good square meel waiting for him on his arrival?

After what seemed an eternity, Sam reached the school.

He had the shock of his life when he entered the presinks.

There was a crowd of fellows in the quadrangle, and instead of being plump, healthy schoolboys, they were skinny, scraggy spessimens of yewmannity.

"Why," cried Sam, "they look as sick and sorry as that poor fellow SMIKE, that Dickens told us about in his story of Dotheboys Hall!"

Two of the fellows approached him. They seemed so week that they could hardly walk. So week, in fact, that you'd think they had not fed for a fortnite. Never in a munth of Sundays had Sam seen such spessimens.

"Are you a new kid?" asked one of the boys.

"Yes," said Sam.

"Poor beggar!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Bekawse we pity you from our harts. You will have a terribul time at this plaice. We never get a sollid meel."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Yes, crumbs—that's about all we get!" said the other boy bitterly. "We've had nothing to eat to-da; eggsept a basin of broth."

Sam looked alarmed. He was a mity eater, and he didn't like the sound of this at all.

"I say, you fellows," he said, in tremmulus toans, "is there a meel ready for me?"

At this, there was a roar of larfter.

"My dear old podge," said the boy who had first spoken, "you won't get anything to eat till brekker to-morrow morning."

"But I'm simply ravvernus!"

"So are we."

"And I've got no munney to spend at the tuckshopp," said Sam, almost in tears.

"All the same if you had," replide his kompanion. "There's no tuckshopp to spend it at."

"No tuckshopp!" gasped Sam. "What have I come to, a publick school, or a de-formatory?"

"Neither. This is an inhuman hole, where they practiss slow starvation upon their pupils."

Sam Skellington could control himself no longer. He burst into a torrent of tears.

"I want to go back to mammy!" he sobbed plaintiffly.

Just then, the headmaster of Stintham Towers appeared on the seen. He was a lean, caddaverus-looking man, with a face like a hatchet. His name was Dr. N. O. Grubb.

"Are you the new boy?" he asked, baring down upon Sam.

"Yessir," snivelled our hero.

"What are you crying for?"

"Please sir, I'm hungry!"

The Head frowned.

"When did you have your last meel?"

"I had a sandwidge at the railway buffay when I arrived, sir; but it only wetted my appetite."

"You are a greedy, glutternus young raskal!" said the Head sternly. "I do not allow greed in this establishment. I do not pamper my pupils. You will reseeve a good

mizzerable basin of grool. It was thin grool, too. Sam tasted it, and dropped his spoon with a clatter.

"Ow! It's like fizzick!" he groaned.

"Better lap it up," said the boy next to him. "You won't get anything else till four o'clock this afternoon."

"What shall I get then?"

"A dog biskit."

Sam Skellington cried allowed in his angwish.

"Oh, why did they send me here? It's a hateful hole! Wish I'd been sent to Greyfriars or St. Jim's, instead of to Stintham Towers! I simply can't take my grool."

But Sam had to take it, under pennaity of six strokes with the cane.

"He's not Abel to take his grool, so he'll have to have the Cain!" wispered the joaker of the Form.

Sam, however, swallowed the horrible kon-coction to the best of his debility.

How he got through the morning he never knew. He was simply pining for a meel.

When four o'clock came, he was served out with the customary dog biskit.

This was the last stror!

Our hero felt that he could stand it no longer. He wasn't going to take this sort of thing lying down. He would make sum-body sit up!

But when Sam went to the Head with a petition for better food, both as to quantity and quality, he was roodly reseeved, and given a joly good birching.

Sam crawled away from the Head's study with a fixed ressolve in his mind.

He would run away!

An hour later, we find our hero jog, jog, jogging along the highway. He was litterally starving. But anything, he refleckted, was better than remaining at Stintham Towers.

Mile afer mile, ferlong after ferlong, inch after inch, Sam Skellington tramped along. And all the time he grew hungrier and hungrier.

Yesterday he had wayed twelve stoan. To-day, he wayed only eight. And he was losing at leest a pound with every step he took.

Did he starve to death by the roadside, dear readers? Did he beg his way frootlessly from door to door, and at last kollapse in a huddled heap?

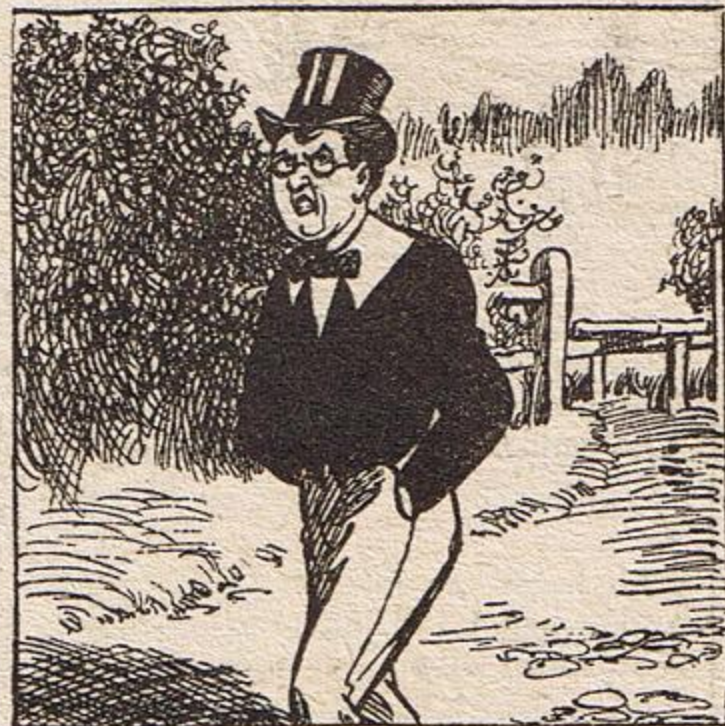
No, no! Sammy Bunter does not end his stories on a note o' mizzery. He always tacks on a joyful climacks.

After tramping ten days and ten nights, without any new-trition or sustenance, our hero reched the city of London. He wandered about the streets of the mity city for some time, and at last fortune favored him. He got a job in a resterong. His job was to help the sheff. And Sam did this very effectively, by eating everything he could lay his hands on!

None of the patrons of the resterong could tackle the sheff's cooking. So there was always plenty for Sam Skellington to tuck away.

At the time of writing, he turns the scale at sixteen stoan, and you won't find a fatter or a fitter fellow in the hole of London!

THE END.



Our hero, Sam Skellington.

breakfast to-morrow morning. Meenwhile, you must possess your sole in patience."

"Wish it was a Dover sole!" mermered Sam, blinking at the Head through his tears.

"Be silent, you glutternus boy! You look horribly fat and overfed. What do you way?"

"Twelve stoan, sir," said Sam.

"Bless my sole! We shall have to see if we can reduce your wate. A boy of your age ought to be light as a fether. Before you have been very long at Stintham Towers, I hope to reduce your wate from twelve stoan to six."

With this cheery messidge ringing in his ears, Sam Skellington turned on his heal, and entered the school bilding.

II.

SAM SKELLINGTON awoke next morning with a heavy hart and a light stum-mack. He was so faint and fammished with hunger that he hardly had the strength to put his close on.

"What time's breakfast?" he asked faintly.

"Gong's going now," said one of the boys. Sam cheered up a little.

"A good square meel at last!" he mut-tered.

But when he stepped into the dining hall, a few minnits later, his hart sank.

Each boy had been served out with a

Supplement III.

Another Complete Story in Next Week's Special Supplement. Don't Miss It!

THE POPULAR.—No. 209.

He Who Reads the "Weekly" Regularly Laughs the Best!

FOOTBALL AMONG THE FAGS!

By Levison Minor.
(Of St. Jim's.)

St. Jim's football is going strong just lately. The Public Schools' Challenge Cup, for which the Saints are making such a bold bid, is the chief topic of the day. St. Jim's have a long, long way to go before they can hope to reach the final; but if luck and pluck count for anything, why, they'll surely get there!

Unfortunately, there is an epidemic of 'flu at the school, and lots of fine footballers have fallen victims to it, including my major Ernest. So the Saints will only have a shadow of a team to meet Greyfriars in the second round. But the weakened eleven will give a jolly good account of itself, you see!

Football is booming among the fags. We've got a very nice little team in the Third, under the captaincy of Wally D'Arcy. Last Saturday we played the Second Form, and fairly ran them off their feet. You never saw such a game! We were only a goal up at half-time, but in the second half our forwards did what they liked, and ran out winners by seven goals to nil. Some victory!

Wally D'Arcy got three of the goals off his own bat—or should I say boot? Curly Gibson bagged a couple, and Jameson and Joe Fayne got the others. Kildare, who refereed the match, congratulated us on our performance, and said that with a little more weight we should be able to hold our own with the best. Praise from the St. Jim's skipper is praise indeed!

On Wednesday we are playing the Third Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, and they will have to be on their best behaviour if they hope to win, or even draw. The Grammarians have a nippy little team, but I fancy we shall make them bite the dust.

There was an unpleasant incident in one of our recent matches. Piggott was sent off the field for tripping an opponent. We held an inquiry into it afterwards, with the result that Piggott has been stood down for the rest of the season. And serve him jolly well right, say all the good sportsmen! We have no room in our eleven for fellows who cannot play the game.

Any St. Jim's supporters who care to come and cheer us on in our away matches will be supplied—absolutely free—with rattles, tin-whistles, mouth-organs, combs and tissue-paper, and other means of making melody! We shall expect a record crowd at the Grammar School on Wednesday—and enough din to awaken the Seven Sleepers!

THE POPULAR.—No. 209.

A TRIBUTE TO MY FAG!

*A Poem Cardew should have written
but didn't.*

By Lovell Minor.



Who wakes me up at seven o'clock
With a discreet and gentle knock,
So as to save a sudden shock?

My Fag!

Who sets my study fire alight,
And makes the place look clean and
bright

By "piling in" with all his might?

My Fag!

Who cleans my shoes in splendid style,
And hums a merry tune the while?
Who smiles a sweet, angelic smile?

My Fag!

Who helps me lace my footer boots,
And, when I call him, never scoots?
Who never steals, or raids, or loots?

My Fag!

Who never dares to call me "Mark"?
Or send me sprawling after dark:
Who is a lively little spark?

My Fag!

Who never, never makes me wild,
Or hot and wrathful, mad and riled?
Who is a charming little child?

My Fag!

Who makes my life one grand, sweet
song,

And never thinks to do me wrong?
Who works for me both late and long?

My Fag!

Who makes it his untiring aim
To do his best, and play the game?
Who revels in his master's fame?

My Fag!

From whom would I be loth to part
For fear that it might break my heart?
I'll tell you now (don't give a start!)

My Fag!

WHAT IS A FAG WORTH?

By Algy Silver.

Leader of the Fag Tribe at Rookwood

Of course, it depends on the fag. Some fags are worth their weight in gold; others are absolutely worthless, and their fag-masters never tire of telling them so.

But we will take the case of the average fag. He is an industrious fellow, and he deserves more pence than kicks. Usually, however, it's a case of all kicks and no pence!

Personally, I don't think fagging ought to be allowed, unless there is a guarantee that the fag shall be decently treated. Why should we work our fingers to the bone for brutal prefects who don't appreciate it?

I have gone very carefully into this matter, and have come to the following conclusions:

To begin with, a fag's working day ought never to exceed half an hour. Slavery in any shape or form should be put down with an iron hand.

A fag should call his master in the morning—this usually takes about twenty minutes. He should also clean his master's boots. This takes five minutes. And later in the day he should lay his master's tea. This is another five-minute job.

That is how the half-hour should be apportioned. And no "overtime" should be inflicted upon a fag, unless he is well paid for it.

Now comes the question of wages.

If it is true that the labourer is worthy of his hire, then the fag ought to be much better paid than he is at present. The wages given at present are a disgrace to our public schools.

Everywhere you find prefects who call themselves good sportsmen and lovers of justice and fair play. Yet their idea of justice seems to be to give their fag two-pence a week for services rendered.

Could anything be more unfair?

I know several fags at Rookwood who work for nothing! Is it not monstrous, dear readers? Fancy slaving all the week for some burly senior, and receiving nothing but lammings and lickings for your pains!

A few fags are a trifle more fortunate. They receive half-a-crown a week.

But I don't regard even half-a-crown as being by any means a fair wage.

To my way of thinking, a fag should be paid at the rate of a shilling an hour. Overtime, two shillings an hour. This would put a stopper to overtime. It would also make a fag's wages three-and-sixpence per week, assuming that he works half an hour each day.

There is nothing far-fetched about this suggestion. It ought to be put into practice right away.

Some seniors might complain that they can't afford three-and-sixpence a week. Very well, then. Let them remain fagless.

If you engage a domestic servant, you have to pay her a fair wage. Then why ignore the claims of a fag? He is just as useful as many domestic servants, and more useful than most.

[Supplement IV.]

A Long, Hearty Laugh in Every Line in Next Week's "Weekly"!

THE FELLOW WHO DARED!

(Continued from page 12.)

extra time to be played," he said. "But the light is bad, and I do not feel justified in doing so. The match will have to be replayed on Wednesday, at Greyfriars."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton.

But Tom Merry looked a trifle glum. He well knew that the 'Friars on their native heath were practically unbeatable. However, he mastered his disappointment, and turned to Harry Wharton with a smile.

"We shall meet again!" he said cheerfully.

And Harry Wharton, as he shook hands with his old rival, laughed confidently.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Game at Greyfriars!

"WONDER how it's gone, dear boy?" drawled Cardew of the Fourth.

"I'm simply dying to hear," said his friend Clive. "But I'm afraid our fellows haven't a hope. There's a rumour that Greyfriars were two goals up at half-time."

"Rumour," said Cardew, "is a lyin' jade."

"But the message came through on the phone," said Clive. "I don't think there can be any doubt about it."

"Well, we must wait till Bernard Glyn turns up, an' then we shall see what we shall see—or, rather, hear what we shall hear."

It was Wednesday afternoon. Dusk was falling, and an icy deluge of sleet was descending from the leaden skies.

The replayed match between Greyfriars and St. Jim's was over by this time.

Cardew and Clive were standing in the gateway of St. Jim's, indifferent to wind and weather, and thirsting for information as to how the match had gone.

The two chums had not been able to go over to Greyfriars to witness the tussle. But lots of St. Jim's fellows had gone, and one or them—Bernard Glyn—was expected back in record time.

One of Glyn's cousins, who was staying at Glyn House, possessed a motor-cycle, and he had taken Glyn over to Greyfriars in the side-car.

At any moment Bernard Glyn would arrive at St. Jim's with tidings. Whether those tidings would be good or ill remained to be seen. But it was feared that Tom Merry & Co. had come a cropper on the Greyfriars pitch, especially as Kildare of the Sixth was said to have received a telephone message from Greyfriars to the effect that the 'Friars were leading 2-0 at half-time.

The dusk deepened, and the sleet came down faster than ever. But Cardew and Clive waited on. They were loyal supporters of the St. Jim's junior eleven, for which they sometimes played themselves when vacancies arose.

Cardew kept glancing at the luminous watch on his wrist.

"Can't understand what's happened to Glyn," he said. "He told us he'd be back by five o'clock, and it's nearly half-past."

"Listen!" said Clive.

The whirring of a motor-cycle became audible.

Moved by the same impulse, Cardew and Clive ran out into the roadway.

"That you, Glyn?" yelled Clive, as the motor-cycle drew nearer.

"Yes," came the reply.

The machine slowed up, and Bernard Glyn tumbled out of the side-car. His face, illuminated by the lamp over the school gates, was inscrutable. It was quite impossible to deduce from his expression whether St. Jim's had won, lost, or drawn.

Glyn bade his cousin good-night, and the motor-cycle leapt ahead into the gloom.

"Well?" said Cardew breathlessly.

"Well?" echoed Clive.

Glyn's reply was non-committal.

"It was a great game!" he said.

"Yes, but, dash it all, who won?" howled Cardew.

"Nobody!"

"What?"

"It ended all square," said Glyn. "They played extra time, too. That's what makes me so late."

The three juniors entered the quadrangle together.

"Tell us all about the match," said Clive eagerly.

"All serene," said Glyn. "I'm no hand at describing heroic tussles. It would need a Mark Antony to do justice to it. But I'll do my best. I'll kick off by saying that it was, without exception, the finest game of footer I've ever seen in my life! You've no idea what a Spartan struggle it was. If I live to be a hundred I sha'n't see another game like that. You fellows will kick yourselves for not having been able to come."

"Go on!" said Clive, his cheeks aglow.

"Well! to begin with, Tom Merry lost the toss, and our fellows had to face a terrific wind. The 'Friars got going right from the kick-off. They played glorious football! You wouldn't think it was the same team that came over here on Wednesday and was outplayed. On their own pitch they are positive gluttons for goals!

"Fatty Wynn was called into action in the first minute, and after that the 'Friars gave him no peace. It was a sort of duel between the Greyfriars forwards and Fatty. The rest of our fellows weren't in the picture at all.

"Of course, old Fatty brought the house down with his wonderful saves. Once he ran out and took the ball from Wharton's toes, and saved a certain score.

"But he was beaten at last. No goalie under the sun could have survived such a bombardment for long. Hurree Singh scored for the 'Friars with a lovely cross shot.

"Two minutes later our backs were so hard pressed that Figgins turned the ball into his own goal. It was a ghastly piece of bad luck. Even the Greyfriars fellows shouted out words of sympathy to poor old Figgy. He felt it jolly keenly, I can tell you.

"You'd have thought the 'Friars would have rested on their oars, so to speak, after getting a couple of goals, wouldn't you? But not they! They were soon swarming round Fatty Wynn again, attacking as fiercely as ever. The crowd—the Greyfriars section of it, anyway—were in the seventh heaven of delight.

"How we kept our goal intact until half-time I don't know. But we did! Figgins and Kerr put their beef into it, and charged down shot after shot. And Fatty Wynn was like a wizard. With fist and boot he defended that merry goal until I wanted to run and hug him! He was great—yes, great!

"Only once during the whole of that gruelling first half did our fellows manage

to break away. Levison broke clean through on the left, and he sent in a scorching shot, but the ball just skimmed the crossbar. So at half-time the 'Friars were leading 2-0."

"Then rumour wasn't a lyin' jade on this occasion, after all!" murmured Cardew.

The juniors had entered the school building by this time. They went along to Glyn's study, and Glyn took up his narrative.

"The second half," he said, "was one long thrill from start to finish. Play was fast and sparkling. Our fellows had the wind behind them now, and they began to take command of the game.

"There was a goal almost at once. Gussy got it. And before the 'Friars had recovered from the shock, Tom Merry went tearing through the opposition and brought the scores level.

"After this, the ball travelled from end to end at such a rate that it was difficult to follow it.

"I don't know where we should have been if it hadn't been for Dick Redfern, at centre-half. Time and again Reddy dropped back to help Figgins and Kerr out of difficulties. Once, when Fatty Wynn had left his goal and was sprawling on the ground, Wharton sent in a deadly shot, but Reddy headed out from under the very bar!

"And so it went on—thrill after thrill, incident after incident. There wasn't a sound from the spectators; they stood spellbound. I know it must sound awfully dramatic to you fellows, but I'm simply telling you what actually happened.

"Five minutes from 'Time!' there was a glorious mix-up in our goalmouth, and one of the Greyfriars fellows—I think it was Mark Linley—scrambled the ball into the net.

"We thought it was all up for the Saints; but just before the end we were awarded a free-kick for a foul throw-in.

"Monty Lowther took the kick. He was a long way from the goal, but he sent in one of those high, dropping shots that are the curse of a goalie's existence. Bulstrode tried to get to it—I think he actually tipped it with his fingers—but it went into the top corner of the net. So the game ended in a draw of three goals apiece.

"The referee ordered extra time to be played; and my heart sunk into my boots, I can tell you. For I could see that our fellows were played to a standstill. The game had been played at a fast pace all through, and they were whacked—physically whacked, I mean.

"Still, the 'Friars weren't much fresher. And the extra time had to be played, so it was no use complaining.

"Well, the teams played ten minutes each way. In the first ten, nothing was scored. In the last stage of all, Vernon-Smith got a wonderful goal for Greyfriars. He tricked man after man; and then he drew Fatty Wynn out of his goal and banged the ball into the net.

"I said to my cousin, 'It's all over now, bar shouting. Let's clear off.' And we were actually about to leave the ground, when the St. Jim's forwards put on a last desperate spurt. Tom Merry sent in a hard drive, and the ball hit one of the uprights. Talbot got it from the rebound, and bashed it past Bulstrode.

"Then the end came—a draw of four goals apiece.

"Don't ask me to describe the scene that followed. It beggars description!

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"There never was such a game in the history of the two schools; I'm convinced of that."

Bernard Glyn paused after his long recital. Cardew and Clive looked at him with shining eyes.

"This is a great day for St. Jim's!" said Clive.

"We must welcome the conquerin' heroes home," said Cardew.

"Yes, rather!"

"That's two drawn games," said Bernard Glyn, "and the teams have got to meet again on Saturday—on neutral ground, this time. I expect the match will be played at Rookwood. They've got to keep hammering at each other until one of them is knocked out."

"So long as St. Jim's are the knockers-out, and not the knocked-out, everythin' in the garden will be lovely!" said Ralph Reckness Cardew.

And the other two cordially agreed with him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Cardew's Chance!

TOM MERRY & Co. got a tremendous ovation on their return from Greyfriars.

If they had won the match outright, they could hardly have been made so much fuss of.

The St. Jim's footballers were very tired, but correspondingly happy. They lived to fight another day.

On Saturday, if all went well, they would face the 'Friars for the third time in succession, on the Rookwood ground.

But all did not go well.

Next day, as fate would have it, there was an outbreak of influenza in the School House.

The epidemic started amongst the fags, but it swiftly spread to the higher Forms.

Tom Merry fell an early victim. And Manners and Lowther caught the infection as a matter of course.

The "sanny" was soon packed almost to overflowing, and the matron and Marie Rivers, the school nurse, had their hands full.

On Thursday there were thirty cases, including the Terrible Three. And by Friday there were four more members of the eleven down with 'flu. After that, the epidemic died down.

But the mischief had been done.

The only fellows in the St. Jim's junior eleven who were not on the sick list were Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern. Fortunately the New House had not been affected.

But what about Saturday's match? That was the question everybody was asking.

The Cuptie would have to be played at the stipulated time. It could not possibly be cancelled or postponed, as would have been the case with a friendly match.

Epidemic, or no epidemic, St. Jim's would have to send some sort of a team to Rookwood to meet the Greyfriars eleven.

But where was the team coming from? And who would skipper it?

Late on Friday evening, Cardew of the Fourth went round to the sanny to see Tom Merry.

Cardew was one of the lucky ones who

had escaped the 'flu. He was tempting providence in going round to see Tom Merry; but it had to be done.

Tom was propped up on his pillows, looking decidedly unhappy.

"I'm sorry for you, dear man," said Cardew. "If I could change places with you, an' transfer your dose of 'flu to myself, I'd willingly do so. But that, of course, is 'utahly imposs.' as Gussy would say. Now, about to-morrow's match—"

"Don't!" groaned Tom Merry.

"But we've got to arrange somethin'—an' at dashed short notice, too! We must take a team of sorts over to Rookwood. Far better than cryin' off, an' lettin' the honours go to Greyfriars."

"That's true," said Tom Merry.

"Our defence," said Cardew, "is still intact. This beastly 'flu gave the New House a miss. Figgy, Kerr, Wynn, an' Redfern will, therefore, be certain starters. I'm prepared to find seven other players, includin' myself, an' to skipper the side. I expect you think this is awful nerve on my part; but something's got to be done, an' quickly. I've spoken to the four New House fellows, an' not one of them is anxious to skipper a scratch side. But I'm quite game to take it on. I always like an uphill fight against odds. What do you say, Merry?"

Tom Merry's reply consisted of two words.

"Go ahead!" he said.

Cardew nodded cheerfully.

"All serene," he said. "I can get together a team that will give Greyfriars a jolly good run for their money. There are several good players who have dodged the sick list. Clive, Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, Dick Brooke, Dick Roylance and Koumi Rao. I'm goin' right ahead. Au revoir, dear man! Fight this 'flu an' get fit as fast as you can. I must fade away now."

That evening he visited the fellows whose names he had put before Tom Merry, and told them that they had been selected to play against Greyfriars on the morrow.

Everybody seemed to regard Ralph Reckness Cardew as a sort of super-optimist.

What possible chance would a scratch team have against the formidable Greyfriars eleven? Might as well set a team of Lilliputians to play a team of Gullivers.

However, the die had been cast, and Cardew plunged into his task with an eagerness and zeal which did him credit. The very magnitude of that task only increased Cardew's determination to fight tooth and nail for the honour of St. Jim's.

Some fellows laughed at Cardew; some openly sneered. Some said it was very sporting of him, but, of course, he hadn't a dog's chance. And so forth.

And Ralph Reckness, deaf to the clamour which went on around him, marshalled his men for the great fight.

On the morrow, 'Friars and Saints would face each other for the third time in the second round of the competition for the Public Schools' Cup.

What would be the outcome of that unequal struggle remained to be seen. Certain it was that Cardew and his merry men would put up the fight of their lives!

THE END.

(Look out for another topping St. Jim's tale of school and footer next week.)

STAND



AND DELIVER!

By THE FAMOUS DAVID GOODWIN.

THE GREATEST

The finest yarn David Goodwin ever wrote! That's what will be said of the grand new serial in the POPULAR. It is all that and more. The story takes you back into the grand old fighting-days when Dick Turpin was on the roads. It is a breathless, splendidly written tale. It conjures up the smartness and pluck and the chivalry and grit of the highwayman who had friends up and down the country, and who in his way was a king—king of the road, a loyal comrade, an implacable enemy, and such a fighter as England had not seen since the days of Robin Hood. You will be entranced by this story of dash and vim, sword-play and hairbreadth escape. Turpin stands out as a hero. He was the aristocrat of the highway. Small wonder young Dick Neville stood by him through thick and thin! But read the yarn. You will be amazed, and then carried away by the splendour and the colour of it, the glimpse of the ancient castles of Old England, and the brilliant scenes in palace and cottage. Dick Turpin was the friend of the poor, and we can welcome this magnificent yarn of his exploits, his escapes, his breakneck rides, and the courage which never failed him in the darkest hours of his life.

STILL THEY COME! New masters are far more common than new boys at Rookwood just now. The latest arrival, who comes to take charge of the Fourth Form, is quite a mysterious person.

THE MYSTERY MASTER!

BY

OWEN CONQUEST.



WHO IS MR. EGERTON?

A long, complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Looking for Trouble!

LOOK out! There's Bootles!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell. Jimmy Silver & Co. paused. There were eight Rookwood juniors in the party coming cheerily along the old High Street of Coombe towards the railway-station.

Jimmy Silver had a football under his arm, but as Mr. Bootles was sighted Jimmy slipped the footer behind him to keep it out of sight.

Mr. Bootles, the dismissed master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, was pacing slowly along, with a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow.

He was apparently taking a "constitutional" after his lunch at the Coombe Arms.

"Poor old Bootles!" murmured Raby. "He looks worried!"

"He hasn't had the pleasure of taking us in class for a long time!" grinned Mornington. "He misses us, of course!"

"Hallo! He's seen us!" said Newcome. Mr. Bootles glanced up, and spotted the party of juniors.

Jimmy Silver & Co. raised their caps respectfully, Jimmy keeping the footer behind him with his left hand.

For some reason best known to himself the captain of the Fourth did not want Mr. Bootles to see that footer.

Mr. Bootles returned the salutation of the juniors gravely.

He coloured a little as he did so.

The position of a "sacked" master was not pleasant, though the Fourth-Formers of Rookwood were careful to treat him with even more than usual respect.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles, blinking at the juniors over his spectacles. "I'm very pleased to see you, my boys. I—I hope you are progressing satisfactorily with your new master?"

"Not at all, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Dear me! I am sorry to hear that, Silver."

"In fact, he's gone, sir!"

"Bless my sou!"

"He's been gone some days, and there's a new man coming this afternoon, sir," explained Jimmy Silver. "We—we're going to the station to meet him."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Bootles. "That is a mark of attention that will doubtless be very gratifying to your new master, Silver!"

"Ahem!" murmured Jimmy.

There was a chuckle from somewhere, and Mr. Bootles glanced round.

He did not see anything in his remark to excite risibility among his former pupils.

The juniors became grave again at once.

Jimmy Silver kept the football very carefully out of view.

"We don't want a new master, sir," said Lovell. "We want you to come back to Rookwood, sir."

"Yes, rather sir!" chorused the juniors. Mr. Bootles smiled rather sadly.

"I am afraid that is impossible, my dear boys. But I am very glad that you have not forgotten me."

And, with a kind nod, Mr. Bootles passed on.

"Lucky he didn't spot the footer!" remarked Conroy. "Bootles would have been down on giving the new master a reception he's going to get."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on cheerily to the station.

The chums of the Fourth had learned that the new Form master was expected that afternoon, and they had come along to the station to meet him; but it was pretty certain that this mark of attention would not be so gratifying to the new master as Mr. Bootles supposed.

There had been a council of war in the Fourth Form at Rookwood School, and it was agreed on all hands that Mr. Egerton, the new master was not to be allowed to find life worth living so long as he occupied the dismissed master's place.

The Fourth Form wanted their own Form master back, and as the Head would not see reason on the subject, the cheery juniors had decided to take their own measures.

Hence their presence at the station that afternoon, and the football under Jimmy Silver's arm!

While they waited for the train the juniors entertained themselves by punting the footer about, and as there were a good many puddles, the leather was soon in an exceedingly muddy state.

They were, in fact, getting it ready for the new master.

"Train's in!" said Lovell suddenly.

"Keep your eye on the door!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Rookwooders waited.

In a few minutes a gentleman stepped out of the station doorway and looked along the village street.

All eyes in the party were fixed upon him at once.

He was a young man, rather good-looking, with very keen eyes; and, in spite of the juniors' prejudice against Mr. Bootles' successor, they could not help liking his looks.

"I say, is that the man?" whispered Lovell. "We don't want to rag the wrong chap, Jimmy."

"Ask him!" answered Jimmy.

"Oh, I say—"

"Go and ask him," said Jimmy Silver.

"If he's the man take your cap off—and we'll take that as a signal."

"All right!"

Arthur Edward Lovell moved towards the

station doorway, where the young man was standing looking out.

"Excuse me, sir," said Lovell, with elaborate politeness. "Might I inquire if you are Mr. Egerton, the new master for Rookwood?"

The young man glanced at him.

"Quite right, my boy!" he answered.

Lovell raised his cap.

Mr. Egerton probably took that for a polite salute, but Jimmy Silver & Co took it as a signal.

Jimmy had the muddy footer at his feet, and almost as soon as the cap had left Lovell's head he kicked.

Whiz!

Jimmy Silver was an unerring shot, and the footer rose and whizzed at the new master like a bullet to its target.

The juniors watched breathlessly—to see the "accident."

But the accident did not happen.

Mr. Egerton was not looking for anything of the kind, certainly, but he seemed to be a particularly sharp gentleman.

He made a quick movement, and the footer whizzed by a foot from his ear and crashed into the vestibule of the station.

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"My hat!" murmured Raby. "Call that a shot, Jimmy?"

Mr. Egerton glanced at the group of juniors.

Lovell ran into the station for the footer, and dribbled it out.

The new master strode towards Jimmy Silver & Co., and Lovell, who was now behind him, took aim with the footer.

It had been intended for the new master's features, but the back of his head was the next best thing in Lovell's opinion.

Whiz!

Arthur Edward Lovell put his beef into that kick.

But the new master seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, for as the football whizzed forward he made a step aside, and the leather whizzed past him like a bullet.

Crash!

"Yaroooh!" roared Jimmy Silver.

And the captain of the Fourth sat down—in a puddle—as the muddy football smote him forcibly on the chin.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not as Expected!

YOOOP!" "Oh, crumbs!" gasped Lovell. "Yaroooh!" Groogh! Gugggg!" "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

Mr. Egerton stared down at Jimmy Silver, whose face was smothered with mud, and almost unrecognisable.

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Jimmy Silver & Co.—the Best-Loved Schoolboys—to the Fore Next Week!

A smile lurked round the new master's mouth.

"Ow, ow, ow!" mumbled Jimmy Silver, dabbling furiously at the mud on his face. "You ass, Lovell! Yow! You chump! Oh! Ah!"

"Dead shot!" chuckled Mornington. "You've got your shooting-boots on to-day, Lovell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Do you boys belong to Rookwood School?" inquired Mr. Egerton.

"Ye-es, sir!"
"Yow-ow-ow!"
"What Form are you in?"
"Fourth, sir!" said Raby, rather rebelliously.

"Then I am your Form master!" said the young man. "And I will ask you to explain what this means."

Jimmy Silver scrambled up, dabbling at his face with his handkerchief.

The handkerchief was very quickly a limp rag.

Jimmy blinked at Mr. Egerton. The new master was not much like the other new masters the Fourth had experienced lately.

They had been a "scratch" lot, as Lovell expressed it; but Mr. Egerton was evidently made of different stuff.

"What does this mean?" repeated the new Form master.

"Eh?" stammered Jimmy.
"I suppose it is what you would call a rag," said Mr. Egerton. "Upon my word! Boy, let that football alone!"

Conroy, the Australian, who had nerve enough for a whole regiment, had back-heeled the football away to a favourable position, and was about to kick.

He did not heed the new master's injunction.

Whiz!
Mr. Egerton put up his hand quickly, and the football dropped at his feet.

Then, to the blank amazement of the juniors, he kicked it, and it shot back at Conroy like a bullet.

Before Conroy knew it was coming, it had crashed on his chin, and he went spinning. Bump!

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Jimmy Silver. The new master burst into a hearty laugh.

"You should not play tricks like this, especially on a master, my boys," he said. "Neither should you play with a football in the street. I will overlook this occurrence, but it must not occur again!"

And with that the new master strode away down the village street with a springy stride.

Conroy sat up and gasped. And the chums of the Fourth looked at one another, Jimmy Silver still dabbling his face.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy, with a deep breath. "That chap isn't quite what I expected to see."

"He's a bit of a corker!" grinned Newcome. "This rag doesn't seem to have been a howling success."

"Ow! No!"
"He can't be a bad sort," remarked Van Ryn. "It's a bit thick footballing a new master, when you come to think of it; and pretty nearly any man would report us to the Head for it."

"Oh dear!" gasped Conroy. "Fancy the beast slamming the ball at a chap's chivvy, like a blessed fag! Ow!"

"Sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander!" chuckled Lovell. "I say, I rather like that chap. He's a sportsman!"

"Pick up that footer," said Jimmy Silver disconsolately. "This has been a frost, and no mistake. We shall have all our work out out, if we're going to make that merchant tired of Rookwood."

And the juniors followed the new master down the street—without any further intention of footballing him.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lovell suddenly. "Bootles—he's running right into Bootles!"

The new master was striding past the Coombe Arms, when Mr. Bootles, having completed his peregrinations, arrived at that building from the opposite direction.

The two gentlemen came face to face—the old and the new masters of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co. saw Mr. Bootles stop suddenly, his eyes fixed upon the young man.

"He knows he's the new master!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"The POPULAR.—No. 209.

mured Jimmy. "He can't be going to slang him, can he?"

"Hardly!" grinned Lovell. Mr. Egerton had stopped, too—he had no choice, for Mr. Bootles had halted directly in his path.

"Cyril Egerton!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, in tones of surprise, which reached the ears of the Fourth-Formers.

Mr. Egerton looked at him. "You seem to know my name, sir!" he answered.

"Bootles knows him!" murmured Raby. "That's jolly queer! Can't be a friend of Bootles taking his job."
"Bootles don't look friendly."
"He doesn't, for a fact."

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on, curiously interested in that meeting between the two masters.

Mr. Egerton's handsome face had grown sombre in expression.

It was pretty clear that he knew Mr. Bootles by sight, at least, and that the meeting was both unexpected and disagreeable to him.

"Certainly I know your name, Cyril Egerton!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles warmly. "I am not likely to forget!"

"You have the advantage of me."

"Indeed! Perhaps you have forgotten me!" said Mr. Bootles, with a touch of sarcasm.

"If I have ever met you, sir, I have certainly forgotten you," answered Mr. Egerton. "I must ask you to excuse me, as I am rather pressed for time."

And, avoiding Mr. Bootles, he strode on, leaving the Form master blinking after him.

There will be
**ANOTHER
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"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. Then his glance fell upon Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Silver!"
"Yes, sir?" said Jimmy.

"Is it possible," asked Mr. Bootles, "that that—ahem!—gentleman is the man?"

"That's the man, sir," said Jimmy, in wonder. "He's the new master of the Fourth, sir."

"Scandalous!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Wha-a-at?"

"Surely the Head cannot be aware—However, no matter."

Mr. Bootles broke off hastily, and went into the inn, his manner quite agitated.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on, in great astonishment.

"Bootles don't like the new man!" grinned Newcome.

"He can't be expected to like a man who's bagged his job," remarked Mornington. "But he seems to have something against Egerton, too. Egerton looks a good sort, so far as I can see."

"Bootles is a bit prejudiced, very likely," said Jimmy Silver. "This man Egerton is more likely to keep the job than the other men who came. It looks like a freeze-out for poor old Bootles this time. Unless—unless we get rid of the man."

The juniors walked on in silence. The plan for "getting rid" of the new master, for Mr. Bootles' sake, was all cut and dried; but Jimmy Silver & Co. were feeling doubtful about it now.

For it was pretty plain that Mr. Egerton

would not be an easy customer to tackle; and more than that, the juniors were feeling a liking for him already, and they did not feel satisfied with the scheme that had been so carefully laid.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The New Master!**

BULKELEY of the Sixth had been taking charge of the Fourth Form for some days, in the absence of a master; but when the Fourth assembled for lessons they found the new Form master installed.

The Fourth-Formers took their places. Mr. Egerton glanced over the class, and beckoned to Jimmy Silver to come to his desk.

Jimmy came out before the class, with a rather grim expression.

If he was to be called over the coals for the affair at the station, he was quite ready for trouble.

"Your name, my boy?" he asked.
"Jimmy Silver, sir."

"You are head boy of this Form, I think?"
"Yes, sir."

"You were the leader, I presume, in the rag this afternoon?"
"Ahem!"

"You may speak frankly, Silver. The matter is closed, and it is not my intention to revive it."

"Oh!" said Jimmy, rather taken aback. "Yes, sir; I was the leader."

"It is not a custom at Rookwood, I presume, to greet a new master by kicking a muddy football at him?"

"Ahem! No, sir."
"Then why did you make an exception in my favour?" asked Mr. Egerton. "I am rather curious to know, that is all."

"We want our own Form master back," said Jimmy Silver bluntly.

"Who is that?"
"Mr. Bootles, the gentleman you met in Coombe, sir, who spoke to you."

Mr. Egerton frowned.
"You asked me, sir," said Jimmy, thinking that the new master was displeased with his candour.

"Yes—yes, quite so, Silver. I desire you to be frank. So Mr. Bootles was your master formerly?"

"Yes, sir."
"Did he resign his position here?"

"Oh!" said Jimmy, a little dismayed. The projected campaign against the new master seemed more dubious than ever. Mr. Egerton, apparently, did not know that he was in the position of a blackleg. "No, sir; he did not resign. He was dismissed by the Head."

"Am I to understand, Silver, that you juniors take it upon yourselves to criticise your headmaster's action in dismissing him?"

exclaimed Mr. Egerton sternly.
"Yes," answered Jimmy fearlessly, "we do. If you wish to know how the matter stands—"

"That is what I am asking you."

"Very well, sir. Mr. Bootles interfered with the Head, to prevent a chap being flogged unjustly. He was dismissed for it. It came out afterwards that the chap concerned was innocent. Everybody thought then that the Head ought to have reinstated Mr. Bootles. All the masters thought so. But the Head wouldn't, and all the staff went on strike."

"On strike!" ejaculated Mr. Egerton.

"Yes. And they're all on strike now," said Jimmy. "They refused to keep on unless justice was done to Mr. Bootles. There are new masters in the school now. The old masters are all putting-up in Coombe—on strike."

"Well, upon my word! That is a very extraordinary state of affairs. So that is why Mr. Bootles is still in the neighbourhood?"

"Yes, sir."
"But doubtless he will go—"

"I don't think so, sir. The masters don't mean to go, I believe," said Jimmy. "Some of the fellows think they're going to get the governors of the school to take the matter up. I don't know."

Mr. Egerton compressed his lips slightly. "Then Mr. Bootles, your former master, is likely to remain near the school for some time?" he asked.

"I think so."
"H'm! And the rag this afternoon was

intended to show your new master that you did not want him, I suppose?"

Jimmy coloured. "We—we feel bound to stand by Mr. Bootles, sir," he answered. "He was a good sort to us, and he got the sack. I—I mean he was dismissed for standing up for justice to a Fourth-Former."

"I quite understand your feelings," said Mr. Egerton quietly. "Now, Silver, and the rest"—Mr. Egerton glanced over the attentive class—"I shall say no more about what occurred at the station. I excuse you fully. I shall not find fault with you for loyalty to your former master. But I am now master of the Fourth Form."

Jimmy Silver was silent. "I knew nothing of the state of affairs here when I accepted the appointment," went on Mr. Egerton. "I came here in the ordinary course, to take up my duties in the vacancy created by the departure of the former master. I sincerely hope that you boys will not entertain any prejudice against me on that account. I desire to be on good terms with my Form. I shall certainly exact respect and obedience, but I desire very strongly that there shall be

By the time afternoon classes were over there was no doubt that the new master was growing popular.

And Jimmy Silver's intended campaign was "indefinitely postponed."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER Mr. Bootles Insists!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. came cheerily out of the Form-room after lessons. Jimmy was looking rather thoughtful as he strolled out into the quadrangle with his chums.

Lovell grinned a little. "What price the merry warpath?" he asked. "What about raising the new man's scalp, Jimmy?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Jimmy Silver frankly. "We're sticking to Bootles, of course. But—but Mr. Egerton seems quite innocent in the matter, and he's a good sort."

"A real brick!" said Raby. "It doesn't seem quite fair to be down on him when he's done nothing," said Jimmy. "He didn't even know Bootles had been sacked when he came. I—I suppose he's entitled to fair play, and—well, the long and

But Tubby Muffin's news was well founded. The little gentleman turned from the road into the old gateway, and old Mack looked out of his lodge with a stare of surprise.

Mr. Bootles coloured as he caught the porter's surprised glance, and hurried on into the quad.

The Fistical Four capped him respectfully, but they kept at a distance, mindful of Mr. Egerton's instructions on the subject of communicating with their former master.

Mr. Bootles whisked on towards the House in a great hurry.

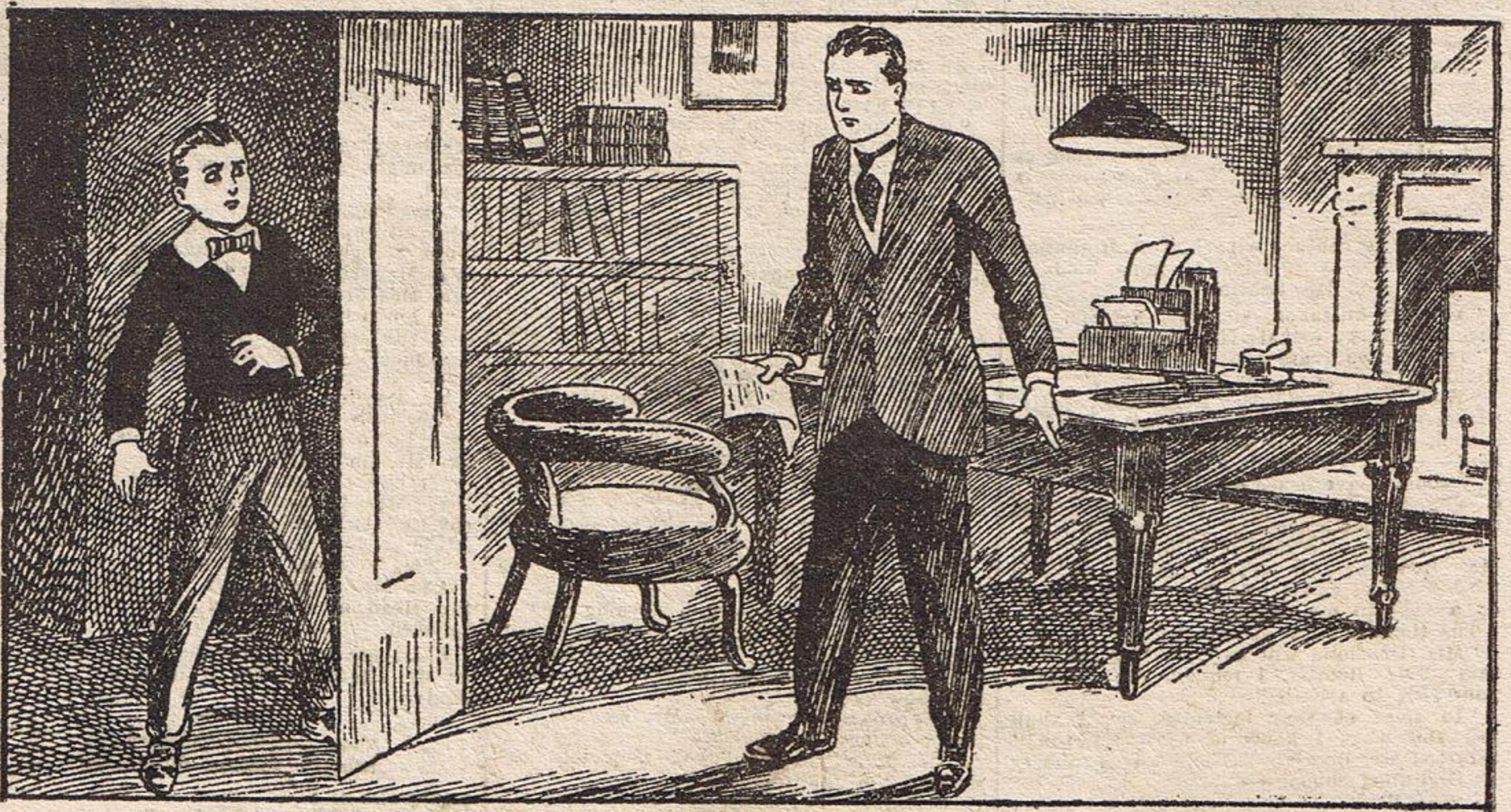
"I wonder what Bootles wants here?" said Raby. "The Head can't have sent for him—when the new master's just come, too!"

"Blest if I can catch on!" said Jimmy Silver. "He's gone in!"

Mr. Bootles had disappeared into the House.

The Fistical Four walked on, much puzzled. Tupper, the page, took Mr. Bootles' name in to the Head, even Tupper indulging in a stare as he saw Mr. Bootles.

The little gentleman waited in the hall, in a state of self-conscious discomfort.



CORNERED IN THE MASTER'S STUDY! For some seconds there was silence in the study, and Mornington hoped that he had been mistaken. Then the new master spoke. "You can come out!" That made it clear that the game was up. (See chapter 7.)

good feeling on both sides. This is only fair-play, as I am sure you will see."

Some of the Fourth murmured approval. "I must ask you," continued Mr. Egerton, "to hold no communication with your former master. You may, of course, salute him if you come in contact with him—that is your duty—but I must forbid you to hold any communication with him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "If this command should be disobeyed I shall request the Head to place Coombe permanently out of bounds for the Form!" said Mr. Egerton. "But I prefer very much to make it an amicable arrangement. You must accept my decision as just. Now, my boys, I hope we shall be good friends, and we must try to work together in a cordial spirit. You may go to your place, Silver."

Jimmy Silver returned to his seat. Lessons began in the Fourth Form room. The juniors found their new Form master firm enough, but invariably kind, and quite well up to his work.

And there was a general feeling in the Fourth that it was only fair play to give the man a chance. Mr. Egerton had not appealed to them in vain.

Possibly he wanted to be popular in his Form; but if that were so it was surely not a blameworthy ambition.

the short of it is, I don't think we ought to rag him."

"Just what I was thinking," said Newcome.

The Fistical Four were in agreement on that point, and their opinion was pretty generally shared in the Fourth.

If the new master had been a bully, or an unpleasant character, the juniors would have felt justified in going ahead with the campaign; but under the present circumstances they lacked the justification.

"I say, Jimmy"—Tubby Muffin rolled up to the Fistical Four in the quad—"what do you think?"

"I think you're a fat duffer, old scout," answered Jimmy.

"What do you think's happened, I mean?" said Tubby. "Bootles is coming! Fancy that!"

"Bootles!" exclaimed the four juniors, with one voice.

Tubby Muffin grinned. "I've just spotted him at the gates," he said. "He's coming in."

"My hat!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. turned in the direction of the gates.

A visit to Rookwood by the dismissed master was the last thing they expected to happen.

He was quite aware that he was being curiously observed on all sides.

Tupper came back at last. "Mr. Bootles, sir—" stammered Tupper.

"Yes, yes, Tupper?"

"Which the 'ead says he cannot see you sir!" blurted out Tupper.

Mr. Bootles compressed his lips. "Thank you, Tupper!" he said quietly.

And, instead of leaving the House, Mr. Bootles walked on down the corridor leading to the Head's study.

"Oh, my heye!" murmured the astonished Tupper.

Evidently Mr. Bootles meant to see the Head, in spite of that gentleman's distinct prohibition.

Tupper disappeared below stairs, washing his hands of the matter.

Mr. Bootles tapped at the door of the Head's study and opened it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER A Man with a Past!

D R. CHISHOLM rose to his feet. He did not bow to his visitor.

He greeted him with a cold, stely stare, as if attempting to rival the freezing glance of the fabled basilisk.

the question. That was before you spoke to us in the Form room, of course."

Mr. Egerton gave him a searching glance. But it was easy for him to see that the captain of the Fourth was speaking the truth, and his brow cleared.

"Very well, Silver, I accept your word," he said. "But remember that my order holds good for the future. Mr. Bootles has constituted himself into my enemy for some reason—"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"I am sorry to say, Silver, that that is the case; and Mr. Bootles has called upon the Head and attempted to prejudice him against me. Fortunately, Dr. Chisholm refused to pay any attention to his insinuations. In these circumstances, you can see how very improper it would be for Rookwood boys to hold any communication with Mr. Bootles."

"Ye-es, sir," said Jimmy slowly.

"That is all, Silver. You may go!"

The cane on the table remained unused.

Jimmy Silver quitted the study with a rather worried look on his face.

"Well?" said Lovell, Raby, and Newcome with one voice, as they met him at the end of the passage. "Licked?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"I say, it's rather rotten," he said. "Mr. Egerton says that Bootles has been here slanging him to the Head. I shouldn't have thought Mr. Bootles would do a thing like that."

"I dare say the poor old chap's ratty," said Newcome.

"Well, that isn't really an excuse."

"I've been looking for you fellows."

Valentine Mornington came along. "What about the campaign, Jimmy Silver?"

"That's off for the present, at least," said Jimmy.

"I don't see it," said Morny. "What about sticking to Bootles, and backing him up, and all that?"

"Bootles seems to be backing himself up, from what we've just heard," said Lovell dryly. "Not in a way I admire, either."

"How's that?" asked Mornington.

Jimmy Silver explained, and Morny listened with a thoughtful brow.

He shook his head when the captain of the Fourth had finished.

"I don't agree with you," he said. "Why was Egerton so jolly anxious not to let Bootles know that he was at Rookwood?"

"Look here, Morny—"

"'Nuff said!" answered Mornington. "Let's agree to differ. I like the new man well enough, personally, but I'm not going to see him permanently berthed in Bootles' place, if I can stop it somehow."

"Well, you can't!"

"I'm goin' to try!"

And Mornington walked away whistling, leaving Jimmy Silver with knitted brow.

"Cheeky ass!" grunted Lovell.

"Well, he can go ahead," said Jimmy.

"It's hard on Bootles, I know, and I'm not deserting him, if it comes to that; but I can't make up my mind to be down on a decent man who's done nothing. Let Morny do as he likes, and we'll—well, we'll be guided by circumstances."

To which the Co. assented.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER,

A Startling Discovery!

"Oh, gad!" Mornington of the Fourth uttered that exclamation below his breath.

He was standing in the Form master's study, about half an hour after his talk with Jimmy Silver & Co.

Mr. Egerton was at tea in the Head's house, as Morny had learned, and the cheery Morny had slipped into the study with the intention of "ragging" the room thoroughly in the master's absence.

That was to be the beginning of the campaign against the new master.

Morny was looking round the study, preparatory to beginning the rag, when there were footsteps in the passage outside, and he paused to listen.

There was a sound of bumping, and Morny guessed at once what that meant.

The new master's trunk had arrived, and it was being conveyed to the study.

"What rotten luck! Oh, gad!" muttered Mornington.

Bump! came again from the passage.

Mornington cast a hurried look round for a hiding-place.

He did not want old Mack or the sergeant to see him in the room, and it was possible that Mr. Egerton was coming with his trunk.

There was a screen standing in front of the alcove beside the fireplace, and the junior slipped behind it, drawing it back a little so as to completely hide the alcove.

He had barely finished, when the door

(Continued on page 26.)

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WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

By the terms of the late Sir Charles Lestrade's will, Harry Lestrade and his cousin, Austin Courtney, must fight for the possession of the Lestrade fortune on the field of sport. The one who distinguishes himself most becomes owner of a vast amount of wealth. Harry Lestrade receives the first opportunity to distinguish himself in a local football match, and he is "signed on" to play for the Wessex Wanderers permanently. Several other sporting events, in which both the cousins compete, are won by young Harry Lestrade. Furious at his non-success, Courtney tries underhand methods of getting Harry out of the struggle. In the fourth round of the English Cup, Courtney's team, Romford Rovers, is drawn to meet the Wanderers. Courtney arranges with a reserve, Jem New-

bold, who is up against Harry, to administer drugs to his team at half-time. The dastardly scheme is carried out, and when the two teams commence the play again, three of the Wanderers fall down unconscious. But in spite of this catastrophe, Codling, the captain of the Wanderers, decides to continue the match, playing short. After a stern struggle the Wanderers defeat their opponents. Later Tony Wagg discovers that Newbold is responsible for the drugging, and Newbold is turned out of the club. On Tearing Haste Harry wins the Grand National. Courtney is so furious that he meets Newbold, and they are talking together when Tony Wagg sees them. He dashes into a theatrical shop and asks for a disguise.

(Now read on.)

ON THE TRACK!

THE assistant looked rather doubtful at first, probably believing Tony to be some criminal anxious to escape justice. But a generous tip the football-trainer slipped into his hand, as he urged him to "look slick!" caused him to decide that, after all, it was no business of his, and he conducted the ex-boxer into a private room.

When Tony left the shop, he appeared to be a venerable-looking old gentleman of between sixty and sixty-five. A silvery wig hid his own crisp hair, and his skin appeared to be deeply lined and wrinkled. Blue-tinted spectacles concealed his eyes, and a neat white beard and moustache adorned the lower part of his battered countenance.

Even his clothes were changed. His suit of tweeds had been replaced by a black morning coat and vest and highly-respectable striped trousers. He had left a substantial deposit upon his outfit, and the assistant had spared no pains to make the change in him complete.

And he had worked on Tony with the hand of a master. The metamorphosis in him left nothing to be desired. He was as unlike the stalwart athlete who had entered the establishment half an hour before as could well be imagined.

Tony chuckled, as he caught sight of his reflection in a mirror outside a hairdresser's. "I could sit and have a meal with you at the same table and you'd not guess who I really was in a month of Sundays, my dear Courtney," he thought. "If you get up to any monkey tricks as I think you will, you'll find yourself caught red-handed this time and in the hands of the police before you can say 'knife'!"

Harry Lestrade, in company with Marjorie and her father and the footballers, caught the mid-day train from Lime Street on the following day, and the long journey to Euston was commenced.

Once or twice Harry was a little silent and

thoughtful. He had received a telegram from Tony Wagg just prior to his dinner of celebration being served on the preceding evening, stating that urgent business had called Tony back to Wessex.

Harry wondered what this "urgent business" could have been. Somehow, he did not quite credit that it was the true explanation of the trainer's absence, for he could not forget how Tony had disappeared on the racecourse, and he was puzzled.

The boy would have been even more mystified as to the trainer's objects, however, could he have been aware that in the very next carriage to the reserved compartment in which he sat with the Randalls, Tony was coolly seated in a corner, a wig, a false moustache and beard, and a pair of tinted spectacles causing him to look quite a different person from his usual happy self.

Austin Courtney and Newbold were also on the train and that was the reason of Tony's presence. He had watched outside Courtney's hotel on the previous night until well past midnight, snatched a few hours sleep, and been at his post again early in the morning.

When Courtney and Newbold, who appeared to have been staying with him, left for the station, the "venerable old gentleman" had followed close upon their heels, and when they had boarded the train, he had climbed into a compartment only a short distance away from theirs.

On reaching Euston, taxis carried Harry and his friends across London. In another cab, Courtney and Newbold followed, and in yet another their "shadow" trailed them.

In separate carriages, the party, the two rogues, and the watcher travelled down to Wessex, where, on leaving the station, Harry took leave of his team-mates and then entered a car that had been waiting for Sir Travers and Marjorie.

By this time darkness had fallen and a full moon hung in a cloudless sky. Paying no heed to the white-haired old man who came slowly out of the station after them, Austin Courtney and Newbold watched Harry and his friends drive away and

exchanged meaning glances. On foot, they set out in the direction of Sir Travers Randall's residence.

The old man—or rather Tony Wagg—waited only long enough for them to get a safe distance ahead, then he, in his turn, went after them.

The home of Sir Travers Randall lay in a deep hollow beyond a stretch of moorland, which the moon made almost as light as day. The railway line took a turn in this direction, and, two hundred yards away, ran parallel with Sir Travers' grounds. It intersected a recognised footpath, and at this point was a level crossing, reached by the usual partially-enclosed swing gates.

A little distance down the line were some sidings and the yard and buildings of a sawmill. There were many tall clumps of gorse near the mansion's drive gates, where the shadows lay black and deep.

When Tony Wagg passed over the brow of the decline, it was just in time to see two dark figures, which, he was sure, belonged to Courtney and Newbold, pass behind one of these clusters of gorse. As they did not reappear though Tony halted and watched for some moments, the football trainer guessed that the two scoundrels were crouching behind the cover meaning to attack Harry Lestrade when he left the house of his friends.

Tony Wagg began to move down the steep, grass-covered slope at a smart pace, his intention being himself to creep in amongst the gorse and hide, so that he should be near to go to the boy's aid, should it be necessary. But, suddenly, disaster overtook him.

Tony put his foot in a rabbit's hole and, as he pitched forward heavily on his face, he badly wrenched his ankle.

He rolled for some few yards down the decline. Then, as he clutched at the grass, stayed his progress and attempted to regain his feet, it was only to sink down again with a stifled groan of pain. His ankle was hopelessly sprained and he could not put his weight upon it.

Harry Lestrade had taken a belated tea with the Randalls. He emerged from the drive gates of Sir Travers' house and crossed the road running before them at the moment of the trainer's accident. Unsuspectingly the boy walked towards the clump of gorse where Courtney and Newbold waited to ambush him.

As he crouched on the hillside, his face contorted with agony, Tony Wagg looked towards the house and saw him. He opened his lips to cry out a warning, but he was too late.

Two dark forms sprang out upon the boy and a sandbag wielded by one of them whirled up and descended upon Harry's temple, sending him down like a log.

He lay where he had fallen, stunned and motionless, at the mercy of his enemies!

The disguised Tony Wagg scrambled once again to his feet. He tried to hobble down the grassy moorland hill, but took no more than a few steps.

His injured ankle gave way under him, and he pitched on his hands and knees. Clenching his teeth, he somehow choked back the groan the excruciating agony had brought into his throat.

Once more he tried to walk; once more he collapsed and lay, sprawling, upon the damp grass. It was useless. To make his way down the hill on foot was out of the question.

What were the two scoundrels contemplating doing with Harry?

Tony Wagg crouched on the hillside watching Austin Courtney and Jem Newbold as, between them, they picked up the boy's limp figure and carried it towards the railway lines.

A thrill of horror shot through the football trainer's breast. He knew that within the next quarter of an hour an express bound for the coast would thunder over the metals, and at first he thought that the intention of Harry's enemies was to lay him in its path.

But as Tony continued to watch he saw the two scoundrels bear the unconscious form of the lad through the gate leading on to the level crossing and right across to the farther side of the track. Then, with Harry still swinging between them, Courtney and Newbold stumbled with him towards the sidings and the sawmill a short distance down the line.

What devilry had they planned to indulge in there?
 Tony Wagg began to crawl down the steep slope on hands and knees. In his present condition he would be no match for Courtney and Newbold, though in normal times he would have stood up to a dozen men, if necessary. But, at least, he would make a fight against them for the life of the boy, supposing the two rogues intended taking it, as he felt almost sure they did.

Again, the presence of a witness to their intended villainy might deter them. At all costs, he must somehow come up with them. He crawled down to the level ground below. Then he got upon his feet—or, at least, upon his one good foot—and began to hop towards the building across the line.

Meanwhile, Austin Courtney and Jem Newbold had carried Harry Lestrade into the deep shadow cast by the wall surrounding the yard of the sawmill.

"Go and reconnoitre," Courtney whispered to the disgraced footballer. "The men will not have knocked off until quite recently, for I know the mill has been working at high pressure on a big contract of late, and the hands have put in overtime night after night. Make sure they have all gone, and, if you can get in, see if there is still sufficient steam to work the machinery."

Newbold nodded and left him.

The ex-footballer crept to the tall gates that opened into the yard. He tried them and found them either locked or bolted. He gave a spring and clutched at their top.

In another moment he was astride them, and he dropped lightly into the yard. He found that the gates were secured by a couple of stout bolts. Someone had shot them into their sockets and then probably left by passing through the adjoining offices.

Newbold drew the bolts and opened one of the gates a few inches, leaving it ajar so that he should have a ready means of escape in case of surprise.

But all proved to be dark in the mill when he crept to one of the windows and peered through. He muffled his fist in the thick scarf he had been wearing and broke a pane of glass. Slipping through his hand, he released the fastening of the window, then raised it.

Newbold climbed into the darkness beyond. Next moment he was spraying the light of an electric pocket torch about him. His eyes fell upon that for which he had been looking—the mill's great circular steam saw.

The suspended football player stepped up to the machine, in which a long, thick plank had been left, ready to be sawn in halves when work was restarted on the following Monday morning.

He drew back a lever and the saw began slowly to revolve. It was none too quickly, for steam was dying down; yet there was sufficient power remaining to draw the plank into the machine, and for the cruel teeth of the saw to begin to hiss through it.

Newbold gave an evil chuckle. He was a man of fierce passions, and the mingled triumph and hatred in his eyes caused him to look almost fiendish. He stopped the machine and then returned to the window.

He climbed through, returned across the yard, and rejoined Courtney, who stood over the limp figure of Harry, whom he had thrown unceremoniously upon the ground.

"It's all right—your plan's possible," he said. "There's enough power to cut through a plank that's been left in the machine. When he is found on Monday, it will be thought he got monkeying with the machinery, and that a terrible accident has happened. Let's get it over quickly now," he added, shuddering in spite of himself.

They picked up Harry and carried him into the yard and across to the window Newbold had opened.

The latter clambered through, and Courtney helped him to drag the boy in after him. Then Harry Lestrade's cousin followed, his face white and his hands trembling at the thought of the terrible deed they contemplated.

They lifted the boy, and, feeling their way between the benches, took him to the steam saw and laid him prone on the plank.

Newbold flashed the light of his torch upon their victim. Still quite unconscious, Harry lay with his head towards the saw, his face dead white, his eyes fast closed.

"You young hound, you have cheated me out of half a million of money, but it shall do you no good!" Courtney hissed, as he clenched his fist and struck the senseless lad in the face. "You are not going to live to enjoy as much as a sovereign of it!"

For just a breathing space the scoundrel hesitated. Then, his hand went unsteady to the lever and closed upon it. He drew it back. The saw began to revolve and, as the board was cut through like so much cheese the unconscious Harry was drawn nearer and nearer the hissing and deadly teeth.

It seemed that his fate was sealed.

"Let's get out of this!" Newbold said hoarsely, his nerve suddenly entirely forsaking him. But Courtney, who had taken the torch from his hand, stood gloating over his handiwork, a light of something very like insanity in his eyes.

Hiss-s-s-s!

Round and round flew the saw, gathering speed, and nearer and nearer Harry was borne to an awful death. Then Newbold uttered a gasp of consternation as he heard an exclamation of horror from the open window at his back.

He spun round, to see an individual who looked like an old man clambering through. In panic Newbold rushed towards him, jerking from his pocket and swinging up the sandbag he had used to fell Harry Lestrade.

The newcomer dropped to the concrete floor of the mill, standing upon one leg and swaying uncertainly. He caught the force of the vicious blow Newbold aimed at him on a hastily-crooked arm. Then, his other hand, bunched hard, flew to the point of the ex-footballer's chin and sent him prone upon his back.

"Quick, Briggs! There's murder being done!" the newcomer—who was, of course, the disguised Tony—cried, an instant before Courtney hurled himself at him and sent him down.

(Continued on page 28.)

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THE MYSTERY MASTER!

(Continued from page 23.)

opened, and old Mack and Sergeant Kettle came in, bearing a heavy trunk between them.

The trunk was bumped down on the floor. "Eavy, ain't it?" gasped old Mack. "Wot?"

"You're right," said the sergeant.

"Books, I s'pose," said Mack. "Leastways, he said it was to come into this 'ere study, not upstairs. Wot does a man want with all them books, hey?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Mr. Kettle. "No use for 'em myself, I know that."

"And p'r'aps our gentleman wouldn't want such a blessed lot if he 'ad the carrying of 'em about!" said old Mack darkly. "Ahem! Ah! Hum! Hem! I—I didn't see you, sir!"

Mr. Egerton stepped into the study.

His face was bland, however; he did not seem to have heard the old porter's remarks.

"Thank you," he said. "Did you find it heavy? I have rather a number of books."

"Eavy is the word, sir," mumbled old Mack.

But his brow cleared as the new master dropped a half-crown into his hand, and the sergeant smiled as he received a similar coin.

As they went down the passage they compared notes, and decided that Mr. Egerton was a gentleman!

Mornington had been grinning behind the screen, but he ceased to grin as he heard Mr. Egerton's voice.

He remained very quiet, hoping that the new master would leave the study; but apparently Mr. Egerton had finished his tea with the Head and Mrs. Chisholm, and had come to stay.

The prospect of remaining behind the screen while Mr. Egerton unpacked his books was rather a dismaying one.

The hidden junior heard the Form master cross to the door when Mack and Kettle were gone, and close it.

To his surprise, he heard a click, and knew that Mr. Egerton had locked the door.

Why the new master should lock himself in the study with his trunk was a mystery to Mornington, and his curiosity was aroused.

His eyes scanned the screen in front of him, and found a small slit in the material—it was not a new screen, by any means.

Morny had just applied his eye to the slit, when Mr. Egerton came towards the screen.

The junior's heart thumped.

For a moment he thought that his presence there was discovered.

But Mr. Egerton passed the screen, towards the window.

He drew the blinds and turned on the light.

Then Morny heard him unlock the trunk. There was a sound of unpacking, and of books being laid on the floor, and Morny put his eye to the slit again.

Mr. Egerton was unpacking his trunk methodically.

He lifted out a writing-case and laid it on the study table.

Then he carefully relocked the trunk.

Morny hoped that he was finished now, and would leave. But instead of that, Mr. Egerton drew a chair to the table and sat down.

He opened the writing-case, and selected notepaper from the interior, and Morny, watching through the screen in wonder, saw him examining it, as if in search of some special kind of paper.

The Form master muttered something, as if he had found what he wanted, and the junior's wondering eyes noted that the sheet of paper he held in his hand bore an engraved heading.

It was in the full light, and Mornington was easily able to read the heading: "Highwood Collegiate School."

There was more, in smaller type, which Morny could not discern.

Mr. Egerton laid the sheet on the table, and took up a pen.

THE POPULAR.—No. 209.

He began to write slowly, but not upon the Highwood paper, though he had sorted it out so carefully.

He was writing upon blank sheets slowly, as if composing a letter very carefully as he went along.

Mornington groaned inwardly.

His brief curiosity had evaporated, and he was not in the least interested in the master's proceedings. Neither had he any desire to play the spy.

The junior would have given a good deal to be safe out of the study.

If the man would only go—

But Mr. Egerton showed no sign of going. He wrote sheet after sheet, and Mornington suppressed his yawns.

"I think that will do!"

Morny started as the unconscious Form master made that remark aloud, and a slight laugh followed it.

He glanced through the slit again.

To his blank amazement, Mr. Egerton had taken the Highwood School notepaper, and laid it very carefully on the blotter before him.

He proceeded to copy out the last sheet he had written, upon the Highwood paper!

That action was so utterly astounding that Morny could only blink, wondering if he saw aright.

Why should a man at Rookwood School write upon Highwood School notepaper, after carefully composing first what he intended to write?

There could be only one explanation—that he was writing a letter which was to appear to come from Highwood.

What it could possibly mean was a mystery to Mornington.

There was dead silence in the study as Mr. Egerton wrote the letter, and read it over after it was written.

He laid it aside, and carefully collected the other sheets he had written, crumpled them, and put them into the fire, stirring the fire till they were all consumed.

Mornington was a good deal more than suspicious now.

All those sheets had evidently been rough drafts, and he had carefully destroyed them.

Only the letter on the Highwood paper remained.

Mr. Egerton examined it carefully, with Morny's amazed eye on him, and folded it, crumpled it a little, and rubbed it on the blotter.

Morny did not need telling that this was to take the newness off it, and give it the appearance of an old letter.

Then the master slipped it into his pocket.

He stood then, as if in deep thought, and Mornington saw his face in the light.

It was pale, and there were deep lines in it.

He moved at last, and went to the door and unlocked it.

He came back and reached up to the light, and then suddenly paused.

Mornington's heart stood still.

The master's eyes had turned upon the screen, with a glitter in them that told Mornington that he was discovered.

Morny drew his head back from the slit.

He knew he could not have been seen; but doubtless he had made some slight sound; his breathing, perhaps, which he had been suppressing, had been incautious for a moment.

For some seconds there was silence, and Mornington hoped that he had been mistaken.

Then the new master spoke quietly.

"You can come out!"

That made it clear that the game was up, and Mornington quietly pushed the screen aside, and stepped out of the alcove.

He faced the Form master calmly, but with a beating heart.

"Mornington, I think" said Mr. Egerton, scanning him.

"What are you doing here?"

"I was behind the screen," said Morny.

"I know that. Why did you come here? The truth, mind!"

"I came to rag the study," said Mornington, as coolly as he could.

"I see. A renewal of what occurred this afternoon at the station in Coombe," said Mr. Egerton.

"Yes."

"And you have been hiding there while I was unpacking my trunk, and writing a letter?"

"Yes."

The master's eyes were searching his face, as if they would read his very soul.

Morny returned his gaze calmly, though his heart was throbbing.

He did not mean to let Mr. Egerton suspect that he had seen, and noted, the Highwood School paper.

He looked as unconscious as he could.

"I have overlooked what happened in Coombe to-day," said Mr. Egerton. "I can make allowances for foolish boys, and their attachment to a former master. But anything further of that kind, Mornington, will not be allowed, and I shall punish you very severely for entering my study without permission."

Mornington breathed hard.

He knew as well as if he had been told that the new master dreaded that he had observed something, though he dared not question him, lest by so doing he should betray himself.

And he knew, too, that a bitter punishment was coming, not because he had intended to "rag" the study, but because the new master had a secret, and feared prying eyes. Mr. Egerton picked up a cane.

"Hold out your hand, Mornington!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

The cuts were terrible ones, and Mornington, tough as he was, grew quite pale.

As the master signed to him to hold out his hand again after the fourth cut, the junior put his hands behind him.

"Hold out your hand, Mornington!" said the new master harshly.

"I've had enough!" said Morny, between his teeth.

"Will you obey me?"

"No."

The next moment he was grasped by the collar, and the cane lashed on his shoulders.

The junior struggled and kicked and shouted, but the cane lashed again and again.

The master was almost breathless when he threw open the door, and tossed the quivering junior into the corridor.

"Now go!" he said grimly.

Mornington tottered away.

"Morny!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, aghast, coming quickly up the passage.

Morny's wild yells had reached many ears. Mr. Egerton stepped out of the study.

"Boys!" he said, and the startled juniors looked at him. "Mornington entered my study for what he calls a rag. I have punished him. Any boy in my Form who follows his example will be dealt with in the same way."

And Mr. Egerton strode away to the Head's study.

Jimmy Silver took Mornington's arm.

Morny was white as chalk, and quivering with pain.

He did not speak as a dozen juniors crowded with him up the staircase to his study in the Fourth.

Erroll uttered a sharp exclamation as he came in.

"Morny! What—"

Mornington threw himself into a chair, gasping.

"He's had it bad, and no mistake!" said Lovell. "But, really, Morny— Dash it all, the man couldn't be expected to stand having his study ragged."

"I've had it bad," said Mornington, between his teeth, "not because of a rag, but because that man's got a secret, and he was afraid I'd found it out."

"Morny, old chap—" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Mornington turned his face away, and the juniors left the study.

Later, when Jimmy Silver & Co. went down after prep, they met Mr. Egerton in the corridor, and he stopped to speak and smile pleasantly.

Jimmy Silver shook his head as he went into the Common-room.

Morny and Mr. Bootles could say what they chose, but Jimmy Silver could not believe that the master of the Fourth was a man with a dubious past!

THE END.

(Mornington has discovered the new master's secret. What will happen now? See next week's topping tale of Rookwood.)

How Long Will Mr. Egerton's Dark Past Remain a Secret?

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: The Editor, The "Popular," The Fleetway
House, Farringdon St., London, E.C. 4.

"THE REWARD OF VALOUR."

There is one thing to be said about the new story of Greyfriars in next week's "Pop." It was just like Sidney James Snoop. The mean actions of Snoop have often caused big trouble at Greyfriars. So it is again. The yarn shows how Blundell won a prize of one pound in a competition. Snoop intercepts the letter which apprises Blundell of his good fortune, and alters the figure to make it appear the Fifth-Former has netted no less a sum than £100. You cannot blame Blundell for feeling pleased; he has long been wanting a motor-bike, and with all that hard cash coming, as he thinks, he brooks no delay, but just buys one. When the truth comes out, Blundell finds himself in a quandary. Acting on the impulse of the moment, he borrows money from the school sports' fund to meet the debt he has run into, thanks to Snoop. The position is a bad one, and Blundell is hard hit. He is a fine fellow, as we all know, and there never has been any question of the soundness of his principles. On this occasion, however, Blundell is placed in an extremely awkward position. The wind-up is dramatic. Blundell, while out on his motor-bike, is instrumental in saving someone's life, and this new friend comes to the aid of the Fifth-Form skipper in handsome style.

LIVELY TIMES AT CEDAR CREEK.

Look out for a rattling story of Frank Richards & Co. in the backwoods next week. "The Gold Thief" is the goods! Of course, the thief gets the goods in the first place, and, worse still, he leaves behind a train of ugly circumstances which lead to the linking of Frank Richards' name with an audacious bit of pillage. That, however, is speedily cleared up, and Frank Richards and his chums soon get on the tracks of the wrongdoer. The new yarn is worthy of the topping series.

ROOKWOOD RUCTIONS.

Mornington makes a very curious discovery at Rookwood. As you know, Rookwood is in a ferment with the strike of the masters. There is something "fishy" about the new Form master. This is where Mornington comes in. Next week's story, "Form Master and Thief," presents an amazing situation, and Mornington's capture in the dead of night when churchyards yawn, will be read about with keen interest.

A GREAT MATCH.

"The Match that Made History" is an extra special yarn of St. Jim's. Plenty of vim in it, and another good impression of Cardew. Cardew comes in at the right time; and in the fight for the Public Schools' Challenge Cup, St. Jim's win. It is a terrific struggle. The part played by Ralph Reckness Cardew is noteworthy. Cardew gets himself talked about and with reason. This is a story to make any football player sit up.

OUR SUPPLEMENT.

Bunter can blow his own trumpet—and does—but there are times and reasons when he is amply justified in doing so. Take the Supplement, namely, "Bunter's Weekly" for next Tuesday. It is the schoolboy-tradesmen number. A smart idea this. I am not going to say that the porpoise knows all there is to know concerning the higher branches of trade. But he does know something about tuckshop management. If you doubt this statement, just ask Mrs. Jessie Mumble about it. Bunter hit on a first-class stunt this time. Trade has a rare fascination. It is more captivating still when Bunter takes to handling the subject. The coming Supplement is one of the most amusing issues we have ever had. Don't miss it, whatever you do.

MORE LAURELS FOR VICTOR.

I am referring to Victor Nelson. He won't mind. You never met anybody yet who resented laurels. In his serial, "Rival Sportsmen," this famous author has still further astonishing episodes to narrate. He can a tale unfold, and, as we reach the culmination, the tale gets better than ever.

THE BIG EVENT.

This, of course, is the coming serial. You will be in a position to form some accurate ideas of this splendid treat in a week or so. It is enough to point out now that the new story is the grandest highwayman serial ever written. It is the work of Mr. David Goodwin, and the title is "Stand and Deliver."

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U.J.E., 1923.

"The Rival Sportsmen!"

(Continued from page 25.)

To the consternation of Austin Courtney, he saw that a second figure was outlined in the open window. Metal buttons glistened in the gloom, then a beam of light from a lantern was shot into the mill.

Tony Wagg had fallen in with the local constable, a man named Briggs, when he had hopped to the vicinity of the road near the house of Sir Travers Randall, and, telling him something of the dark doings he believed to be going on in the mill, he had brought the policeman with him to investigate.

Into the mill Briggs swung himself, dropping his lantern and whipping out his truncheon. The mill was plunged in darkness, but not before Tony Wagg had seen that Harry Lestrade's head was within a foot of the formidable saw.

Whilst the constable grappled with Courtney, Tony dragged himself across the floor. Blindly, sick with horror, he groped for the figure of Harry Lestrade, as, gripping at the framework of the machine, he hauled himself to his feet.

His fingers touched Harry's face. Tony clutched at him, and dragged him from off the board. Both fell to the floor as Tony's crooked ankle gave way under him. The football trainer knew a terrible suspense. Had he been in time? he wondered, as he fumbled at Harry's head.

He drew a breath of intense relief. The boy was uninjured, though it must have been a close shave. Leaving him on the floor, Tony crawled towards where Briggs struggled with the lad's would-be murderer, but it was only to be hurled flat as Courtney contrived to strike the policeman heavily in the mouth, and sent him toppling over him.

Before Briggs could pick himself up, Courtney had clambered through the window and dropped into the yard.

Constable Briggs scrambled up, and almost flung himself through the window after him. But Courtney, terror-stricken now, had dashed across the yard, and was through

the gates. When Briggs followed, he found Courtney on the railway track, and the thunder of an approaching train rang in the constable's ears.

Headlights were close at hand on the down line. It was the express for the coast approaching.

Courtney saw the lights, and hesitated near the down metals. Briggs made a dash towards him, shouting to him to "look-out." But Courtney seemed to think he could get across before the express thundered over the metals, and he sprang on to them.

He caught his foot against a sleeper and sprawled on his hands and knees. The express, not a hundred yards distant now, and travelling at sixty miles an hour, was rushing towards him, and he uttered a whimper of fear as he struggled up.

The Escapes of Courtney!

AUSTIN COURTNEY saw the coastal express thundering down upon him as he flung a horrified glance to one side. He gathered himself together and made a wild spring for safety.

To Constable Briggs it looked as though he must have been just too late.

The policeman believed that, even as his body had been in the air and leaving the track, the engine had struck him.

With the perspiration glistening on his brow, Constable Briggs waited whilst the express clattered and rattled by. He expected to see Austin Courtney's body lying crumpled and mangled beside the permanent-way. But what he did see brought a gasp of amazement from his lips.

Courtney was rushing away into the shadows on the opposite side of the track.

He was apparently uninjured, and it was clear that, narrow shave though it had been, he had contrived just to jump out of the path of the onrushing locomotive.

Briggs would have gone after him without delay, but at that moment he heard the sounds of running feet at his back.

He spun round on his heels. He had dropped his truncheon in the mill, but he did not hesitate, as he found Newbold dashing in his direction.

The disgraced footballer had failed to realise his presence until now.

With an oath, Newbold made to swerve and dodge the constable. The latter, however, sprang for him, and the two men grappled and went down in a huddled, scrambling heap between the down metals.

Newbold was panting hard.

Prior to leaving the saw-mill he had engaged in a desperate fight with the disguised Tony Wagg.

It will be remembered that the latter had been sent to the ground when Austin Courtney had struck Briggs and sent him sprawling over the trainer's crawling figure.

Briggs had gone after Courtney when Harry Lestrade's cousin had scrambled through the window, as we already know.

Recovering from the smashing blow to the point given him by Tony, Newbold had attempted to follow, only to have his ankle grabbed by Tony and to be dragged back.

He had fallen, and Tony and he had fought like tigers, rolling over and over locked in each other's arms. Luck had been with Newbold in the end, however.

Tony Wagg's temple had come into contact with one of the legs of a bench, and he had been stunned and temporarily put out of action.

Newbold had been quick to take advantage of the fact.

He had fallen rather than climbed through the window, terrified at the possibility of a charge of attempted murder being brought against him, and he had rushed in the direction of the track—almost to collide with Briggs.

Their fingers clawing for a hold on one another's wind-pipes, the suspended player and the plucky policeman fought madly for the mastery.

Briggs contrived to dash his clenched fist again and again into Newbold's face as he rolled the ex-footballer beneath him. But Newbold was no weakling, and, shaking off the effects of the heavy blows, he struck back with all his strength, dazing the constable, for he caught him fully between the eyes.

(There will be another long instalment of our amazing sporting serial next week.)



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