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EVERY BOY'S AND YOUNG MAN'S
STORY AND HOBBY PAPER.

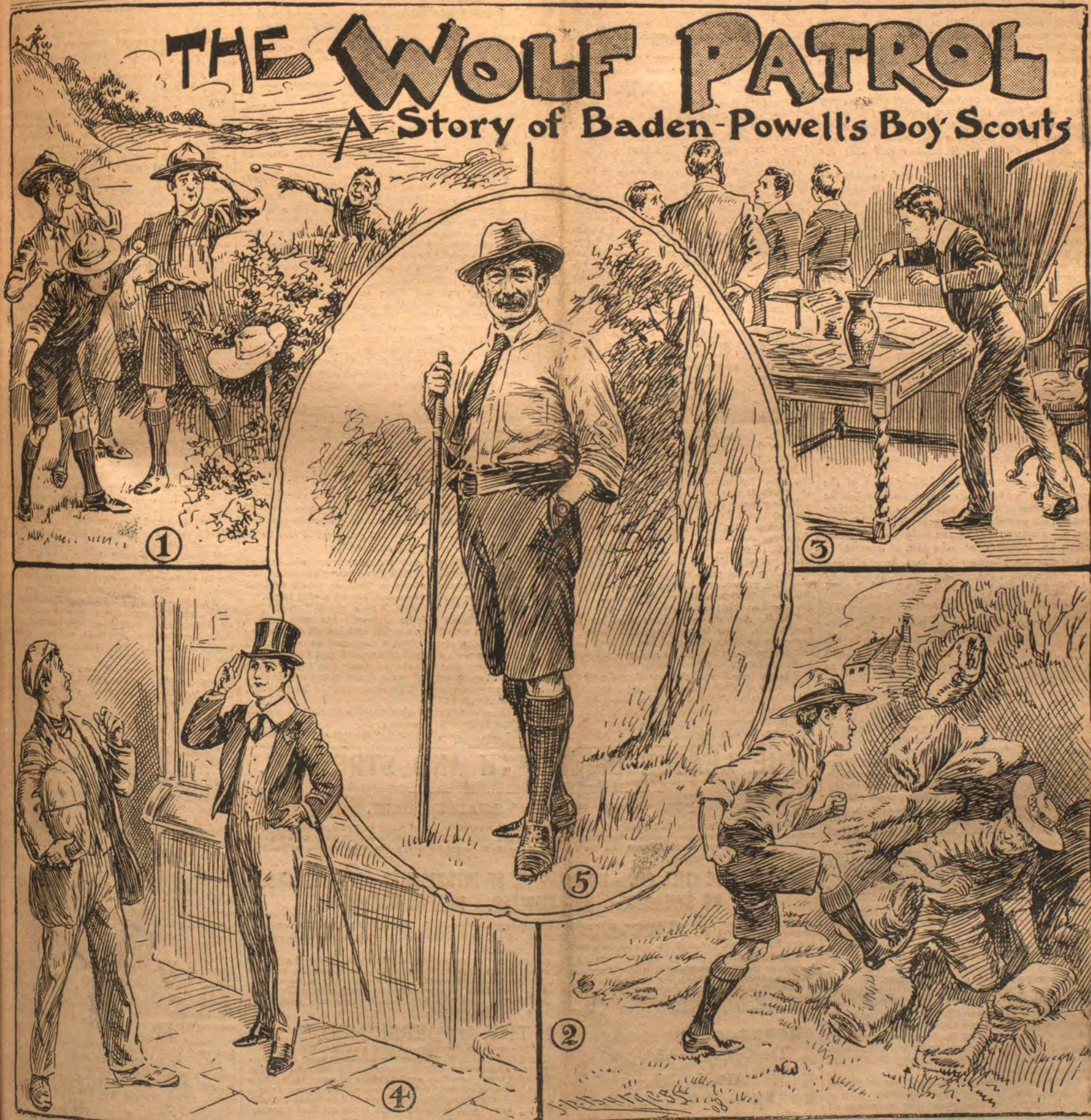
No. 249, Vol. V.

EVERY WEDNESDAY—ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING APRIL 25, 1908.

THE WOLF PATROL

A Story of Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts

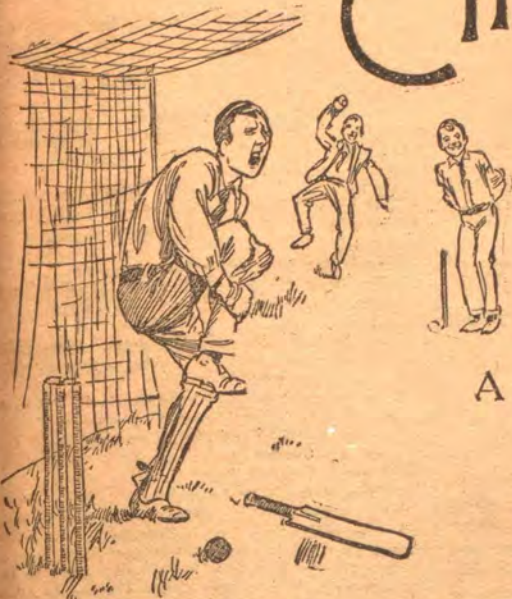


(1) No Chippy was there; only his old hat cleverly arranged on a stick. And while they stared there came a swift fusillade of balls from an ambush. (2) Billy gave the stack a kick, and it collapsed, and revealed Chippy. (3) The party in the study kept their backs to the writing-table. Within five minutes the eight votes were in the vase. (4) Chippy was taken utterly aback, for Dick stepped forward and gave him the full salute. (5) Lieut.-General Baden-Powell in the uniform of the Boy Scouts. (From a photograph by Halftones, Ltd.).

Cliveden's Opening Match

A Grand, Complete Tale of Cricket and School Life.

By CHARLES HAMILTON.



The 1st Chapter.

A Question of Precedence.

LINCOLN G. POINDEXTER, of the Fourth Form at Cliveden, stood before the notice-board in the hall, reading a paper pinned up there, with an extremely thoughtful expression upon his keen face.

There was nothing especially remarkable about that notice. It had been up a couple of days, and all Cliveden had read it and commented upon it. There seemed to be no particular reason why Lincoln G. Poindexter, the American chum at Cliveden, should be so interested in it. But interested in it he certainly was.

The notice ran as follows, in the rather sprawling hand of Trevelyan, of the Sixth, the captain of Cliveden School:

CRICKET NOTICE!

"The opening match of the season, Cliveden v. Redclyffe, will take place on Saturday, the 17th inst. The following will play for Cliveden."

Then followed a list of the Cliveden First Eleven.

"Ahem!" said Lincoln G. Poindexter, aloud. The next moment he staggered as he received a sounding slap on the shoulder. He almost lost his balance, but a slap from another hand, on the other shoulder, set him right again. He turned round wrathfully.

"What the—?" Then he grinned as he recognised his two chums, Neville and Flynn.

"Hullo! You startled me."

"Faith, and we thought you were goin' into a trance or something," grinned Micky Flynn.

"Sure we've been watchin' ye for two or three minutes, intirely, and ye've been reading that same notice over and over again. Phwat's the little game? Is it learnin' it by heart ye are?"

"Oh, he was day-dreaming," said Neville.

"Thought we had better shake you up out of it, Puntpusher. There's nothing in that notice you haven't read a dozen times."

"I guess—"

"Don't start guessing now, Puntddodger. It's tea-time, and sure it's an illigant tay we've got in the study—"

"Blow the tea!"

"My dear kid," said Dick Neville, "it will be cold enough by this time without blowing it. We've been looking for you. Why didn't you come up to the study?"

"I've been thinking—"

"Sure and the spalpeen is always starting somethin' new."

"Better come and have some tea after it, Punt," said Dick Neville anxiously. "You know how dangerous it is to have a sudden change in this spring weather."

"Oh, don't rot!" said Poindexter, still looking serious. "I've been thinking."

"Well, come and have tea."

"You see that notice on the board?"

"I've seen it about a million times—or a dozen, at least, anyway."

"You see what Trevelyan says—the opening match of the season will be played on Saturday."

Neville and Flynn stared at the American chum in utter amazement. They could not make him out, or imagine in the least what was troubling him.

"Sure and we see it," said Flynn. "What's the matter wid it? Why shouldn't the First Eleven play the opening match of the season on Saturday, or any other day they like? It doesn't matter to us. We're not in the First Eleven. We're not likely to be asked to play, Puntddodger."

And Micky Flynn grinned. Truly there was not much likelihood of a junior being asked to play in the First Eleven, which was formed, of course, wholly of seniors, including the great cricketers of the Sixth Form, and a few lucky members from the Upper Fifth. The Lower School had nothing to do with First Eleven matches, except to look on and cheer—which, to do them justice, they usually did with their whole hearts.

Poindexter grinned too.

"I wasn't thinking of that, Micky. But—" "The tea's getting cold," Dick Neville remarked. "You can tell us all about it after tea."

"Look here, I've been thinking—" "Oh, let him run on, Dicky darling. He's been thinking, and it's upset him a little. Go on, Puntbaster. Where do you feel the pain?" "You'll feel a pain somewhere soon if you don't stop rotting, you Irish ass!" exclaimed Poindexter. "Can't you be serious for a minute? I've been thinking—"

"You see, he can't get over it, Dick. We must deal gently with him."

"About this cheeky notice," said Poindexter, pointing to the paper on the board.

The chums stared at him.

"Cheeky! How do you make that out?"

"Doesn't it seem to you that the Sixth Form take altogether too much upon themselves in this school?" Poindexter demanded. "Where do we come in?"

"I don't quite follow."

"The First Eleven are playing Redclyffe on Saturday—but what price the Fourth Form Eleven? It's like their cheek to gas about the opening match of the season, as if there weren't any cricketers in Cliveden except the Sixth. The fact is, the seniors in this school don't attach sufficient importance to the junior cricket club."

Micky Flynn giggled.

"Awful!" he exclaimed. "Now you come to speak of it, Puntbaster, I've noticed that the Sixth don't treat us with proper respect. They wag us. What I want to know is, why shouldn't we wag the Sixth?"

"Good," said Dick Neville, grinning. "And why shouldn't the First Eleven be chosen from the Fourth Form Cricket Club?"

"Faith, and sure—"

"Oh, cheese it!" grunted Poindexter. "If you don't care about standing up for the honour of the Lower School—"

"Sure and I'd rather sit down for my tea," said Micky Flynn. "But anythin' for a quiet life. What do you want us to do? Take this notice down and tell the Sixth they really must not do it."

"I guess not. My idea is to see that the Fourth Form Cricket Club takes a properly prominent place in the school."

"Good. We'll challenge the Sixth to a cricket match."

"Oh, shut up! They're gassing about the opening match of the season, as if cricket had never been heard of at Cliveden outside the Sixth and Fifth. Why shouldn't the Fourth Form play the opening match of the season?"

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in this school. This is a wheeze worthy of the Cliveden Combine. We'll do it."

"Faith, and when the Old Firm get to hear of it—"

"We may have to take Pankhurst and Price into the thing," said Poindexter thoughtfully.

"In a matter of this kind the whole Fourth would have to stand together. Of course, it will want thinking out—"

"Meanwhile, the tay's getting cold."

"True enough. Tea's all ready, Puntddodger; the table laid and the tea made, and—"

"I guess we'll go and have tea," said Poindexter. "Come along."

And the Cliveden Combine went upstairs to their study. The door was closed, and Dick Neville looked rather surprised as he turned the handle.

"We left the door open," he remarked. "Who—hallo! My only hat!"

He threw the door open, and the Combine stared into the study in wrath and amazement.

The 2nd Chapter.

Uninvited Guests.

N O. 4 study was not unoccupied. Two youths were seated at the well spread tea-table, and they appeared to be enjoying themselves.

They were two red-headed juniors of the Fourth Form, and it did not need a second glance to show the Combine that the unexpected occupants of the study were Pankhurst and Price, their deadly rivals for the leadership of the Lower School.

"My hat!" exclaimed Neville.

"Faith and begorra!" ejaculated Micky Flynn.

And Poindexter stared in silent wrath.

Pankhurst and Price were having—and had had—a good time. The tea-table had been well spread, but it was half cleared now. The more solid portions of the meal had vanished, and the



Perhaps there was an element of luck in it, but certainly the ball that Pankhurst sent down was rather a tricky one, and at all events it escaped Burke's mighty swipe, and sent the balls flying. There was a roar from Cliveden: "How's that?"

Old Firm were finishing with tarts and cream puffs.

Pankhurst looked up with perfect coolness as the Combine appeared in the doorway.

"Hullo!" he said.

"You—you—you—"

"We were passing," explained Pankhurst. "The door was open, and we saw this feed all ready—"

"You—you—you—"

"And as you weren't here, we thought you had got it ready for us," said Pankhurst. "We were pretty sharp set when we came in from cricket practice."

"Quite so!" chuckled Price.

"So we stepped in and buckled to."

"Quite so."

"We've had a good feed," said Pankhurst, rising to his feet and keeping a wary eye all the time upon the wrathful Combine. "We're much obliged."

"Awfully obliged," said Price.

"It's been a regular ripping feed, hasn't it, Pricey?"

"Yes, rather, Panky."

"We're greatly obliged, aren't we?"

"We are."

"We'll look in again another time, if you leave good things like this for us here," said Pankhurst. "We take it kindly of you."

"You—you—you—"

"It was thoughtful," said Pankhurst. "It was nice of you, too, not to have any of Poindexter's paternal tinned beef on the table. That might have taken our appetite away."

"Quite so."

The Cliveden Combine looked at one another. They came further into the study and closed the door. Poindexter looked it and put the key in his pocket. The Old Firm watched this proceeding with perfect equanimity, apparently untroubled by the fact that the odds were against them.

"About time we were shifting, I think," Pankhurst remarked.

"Quite so."

"I guess you won't go out so easily as you got in," Poindexter observed. "Collar the cheeky rotters, kids!"

The Combine made a forward move. Pankhurst stooped quickly and drew the poker from the bars of the grate. The end of it was red-hot, and the chief of the Old Firm made it whistle through the air. The Combine jumped back hurriedly.

Pankhurst grinned over the red-hot poker.

"Are you coming on?" he asked pleasantly.

"You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha! I thought there might be some mistake, and this ripping tea might not be intended for us, so I had the poker all ready," said Pankhurst. "But you needn't mind it, you know. You can come on."

"Put that poker down!"

"Ahem! I think I will retain it for the present. It's time we left this study, I think. Will you unlock that door, Puntbaster?"

"I guess not."

"Faith and sure, I—"

"Come on, Pricey! Now, Puntddodger, you must really unlock the door. If the end of this poker comes in contact with you, it will scorch your clothes, to say nothing of your arse. Are you going to unlock that door?"

Poindexter recoiled as Pankhurst made a playful pass at him with the hot poker. The red was dying out of the tip, but it was still very hot. The American chum looked helplessly at his companions. Pankhurst was following him round the study, and he brought him to bay against the tea-table.

Neville and Flynn made a forward movement, but the poker whiskered round, and they jumped away again. Price was nearly choking with laughter.

"Will you open the door, Puntddodger?"

"You—you beast! Keep that rotten poker away!"

"I am afraid it will come in contact—"

"Ow! Keep it away! I'll—I'll unlock the door if you like!"

"Now, that's what I call kind, Puntbaster! Don't you consider it really kind of Pointplunger, Pricey?"

"Quite so!" giggled Price.

"Faith, and sure I—"

"Buck up, Puntddodger! We can't stay here all night, you know, Pankbanger! Now, are you going to open that door, Pinchpoker?"

Poindexter opened the door.

"Get out, you rotters!"

"Thank you! We'll return you the poker later. We're really obliged for the tea. Ta-ta!"

And the Old Firm marched triumphantly out.

The 3rd Chapter.

Trouble on the Cricket-Field.

THE Cliveden Combine looked at the cleared tea-table, and then at one another, with feelings almost too deep for words.

"I guess we're done this time!" Poindexter remarked, at last.

"Clean done!" said Dick Neville.

"Faith, and it's all through Poindexter thinkin'!" said Micky Flynn. "Why couldn't ye lave it to a more suitable occasion intirely, Puntddodger?"

"Never mind," said Poindexter, more cheerfully. "It's only a feed, anyway, and the idea we're going to work is ripping, and it will take the shine out of the Old Firm."

The Combine set to work to prepare another tea. The Old Firm had cleared off all that was best, but the remnants were sufficient to provide the chums of the Fourth with a meal. And as they discussed the tea, they discussed Poindexter's new idea at the same time.

"The more I think of it, the more ripping it seems!" Poindexter observed. "We're allowed

CLIVENEN'S OPENING MATCH.

(Continued from the previous page.)

to put up our cricket notices on the board, the same as the Sixth. If we can get up a big match—

"But the Sixth Form match takes place on Saturday—"

"What's the matter with our getting up one for Wednesday afternoon?"

"Faith, and it's a good wheeze intirely! But who shall we play? A Form match would be no good. You couldn't call a Form match the opening match of the season."

"I guess not. It will have to be a match with an outside team, and as good a one as we can fix up."

"Well, we haven't any fixture for so early a date!" remarked Neville, "and, as to-day's Monday, there's not much time."

"Time enough, if we set our wits to work."

"Whom shall we play, then?"

"Redclyffe Juniors."

"My hat! The First Eleven is playing Redclyffe First—"

"Exactly, and we'll play Redclyffe Juniors. I know I can fix it up with Burke, their skipper. That will take the shine out of the Sixth Form pesky opening match, I guess!"

"But, I say, we shall have to beat them," said Neville, dubiously. "Redclyffe Juniors are a jolly strong team, and we shall have all our work cut out to lick them; and a licking on our own ground would make our opening match look rather silly."

"Of course we must beat them!"

"We shall want Panky and Price in the team."

"They'll be jolly glad to play, but we won't mention it yet. This is an affair of our own, and it's got to be understood all round that the Combine have got it up."

"That's right!"

"I'll get over to Redclyffe, on my bike, this very day," said Poindexter. "It's jolly good weather for cycling, and I shall have time to cut over there and back before locking up. If Burke agrees to a match on Wednesday, that will make it all right. If not, we shall have to look further; but I think he will agree."

"Sure, and he's a broth of a boy, and I know he'll be willin'," said Micky Flynn. "You will be able to fix up the match all right."

"I guess so. Then, when it's fixed up, we put up our announcement on the board to the effect that the opening match of the season will take place on Wednesday afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that doesn't take the wind out of the Sixth Form sails, I'll give you my head for a punching-ball. I guess I'll be off now. You kids can go down to the nets and get some practice while the light lasts."

"Faith, and that's a good idea!"

The Combine left the house, and Poindexter hurried away to the bicycle-shed. In a few minutes he was wheeling his machine down to the gates, while Neville and Flynn went down to the junior cricket-pitch.

"Hullo, where's Puntodger off to?" exclaimed Pankhurst.

"Going somewhere to mind his own business I expect," said Dick blandly.

Pankhurst grinned.

"If he's going to the tuck-shop for grub to stand us another feed—"

"I'll stand you a thick ear if you don't shut up!"

"Ha, ha, ha! We're much obliged, ain't we, Pricey?"

"Quite so," said Price.

"If you're looking for trouble, Panky—"

"I'm looking for all the trouble you can give me, Neville!"

"Then I'll jolly soon—"

"Here, you kids, I want some of you! Come and tag for me over here!" broke in an unpleasant voice.

The juniors, stopped in the midst of the argument which was growing very warm, looked round. It was Grahame, the prefect, who spoke. Grahame had his bat under his arm, and was evidently going down to practice.

Grahame, the most unpopular prefect at Cliveden, was especially "down" upon the heroes of the Fourth, Combine and Old Firm alike. They were too plucky and independent to suit the bully of the Sixth. He delighted to give them as much trouble as he could, and whenever he had an opportunity he fagged them on the cricket-field. None of the juniors minded fagging at bowling or fielding for Trevelyan, or any decent fellow in the Sixth. But it was different with Grahame. He would pick a moment when they particularly desired to be doing something else, and he would take twice as many fags as he really needed.

"Oh, I say, Grahame, we were just going to get in some practice at the wicket," said Neville.

"Faith and sure, we—"

"You'll do as I tell you!" said Grahame, with a scowl. "I want three or four of you. Come along, you four! I sha'n't keep you more than a quarter of an hour."

As there was certainly not more than a quarter of an hour left of sufficient light for cricket practice, this was cold comfort to the juniors, especially to Neville and Flynn, who wanted to wield the willow and get into form for the expected match on Wednesday afternoon.

"But I say, Grahame," said Pankhurst, "if you don't mind—"

"Are you coming?"

The juniors were furious, but there was no help for it. They followed Grahame to the Sixth Form side.

"Never mind! We'll give him a hot time," said Pankhurst in a whisper. "When I've

bowled to him for a bit I expect he'll get tired of it."

Grahame took his place at the wicket, and tossed a ball to Pankhurst.

"Now, then!"

Pankhurst gripped the round red ball, and went on to bowl with a determined expression upon his face. Price and Neville and Flynn stood round to field the ball. The juniors were expecting fun; it was clear that Panky had some scheme in his mind for discomfiting the bully.

Pankhurst took a great deal of trouble with that ball. He made a little run, and his hand went up—and then came down again. Then he made another run and repeated the same performance. Still the ball did not come. Grahame gritted his teeth.

"Are you going to bowl, or shall I come to you?" he roared.

"Are you in a hurry, Grahame?" asked Pankhurst innocently.

"I'll show you soon, you young rascal!"

"Well, here goes then!"

At the third essay the ball left Pankhurst's hand, and flew; but it proved to be a wide, so wide that it was useless for Grahame to move. Wides have their value in a match, but they are of no earthly use in practice, and Grahame had a strong suspicion that this was an intentional wide.

"Do you want me to come to you, Pankhurst?"

"Certainly not!"

"You did that on purpose."

"Yes, you told me to bowl, you know."

Grahame snarled. He did not feel inclined to run the length of the pitch to kick Pankhurst, especially as the junior was evidently prepared to dodge and run. Dick Neville was hunting for the ball, which he had allowed to pass him, and apparently he found it a lengthy task. It was two or three minutes before he picked up the ball, far beyond the wicket, and returned it overhand to Pankhurst. He returned it with a whizz, and the ball passed so close to Grahame's head that the prefect gave a nervous jump, and turned red.

"You young hound!"

"Sorry, Grahame," said Neville penitently. "I didn't know you were so nervous of a cricket ball, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Micky Flynn.

Grahame glared at them. But they were careful to keep out of his reach. Pankhurst had caught the ball on the bound, and was preparing to bowl again.

"Look out, Panky!" shouted Flynn. "Don't be so sudden with it, or sure ye'll frighten Grahame entirely."

Grahame made a savage dash towards the Irish junior, crossing the crease to get at him. At the same moment Pankhurst bowled, and the ball came with a sounding crack on Grahame's leg. The prefect gave a howl of anguish.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Out!" yelled Pankhurst. "Leg before wicket!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"No, not ow, ow, ow!" said Neville. "Out, out, out! That's the word."

"Ow, my leg's broken! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He can't go on batting if his leg's broken, so sure we've finished here," said Micky Flynn. "I'm off!"

"Come back, you young rascal!"

"But faith, and if ye're leg's broken—"

"I'll—I'll make you smart for that, Pankhurst!" groaned Grahame, rubbing his injured leg.

"How was it my fault?" demanded Pankhurst indignantly. "How can I help it if you get leg before wicket? If it were a match you would be out."

"Ow! I'll—"

"Anything the matter here?" asked Trevelyan, coming up. The captain of Cliveden looked curiously at Grahame as the prefect stood rubbing his leg.

"That young scoundrel threw the ball at me," snapped Grahame.

The Cliveden captain gave Pankhurst a stern glance.

"Is that true, Pankhurst?"

"You doubt my word, of course," sneered the bully of the Sixth.

"I certainly prefer to hear what Pankhurst has to say about it," replied Trevelyan coldly.

"Did you throw the ball at Grahame?"

"No, I didn't," said Pankhurst promptly.

"He was leg before wicket."

"You bowled at the wicket?"

"Certainly," said Pankhurst, truthfully enough.

"You hear that, Grahame? You judged too hastily, as you always do."

"I don't want you to preach to me, Trevelyan."

"You want some embrocation on your leg," said the Cliveden captain drily. "You had better go and get it, Grahame, and don't say any more."

The prefect walked sullenly away.

"Now, you youngsters, why don't you go and get a bit of practice on Little Side while the light lasts?" said Trevelyan.

"Jolly glad to," said Neville at once. "Thank you, Trevelyan. Come on, kids."

And the juniors were soon gaily batting and bowling on their own side of the ground.

The 4th Chapter.

Redclyffe Accepts.

BUTTER, the porter—generally known at Cliveden as Rags—clanged the gates

to and turned the ponderous key. Dusk was thickening over Cliveden, and the hour had boomed out from the clocktower. It was time to close the gates, and so Rags was justified in disregarding the frantic ringing of a bicycle bell up the road, which announced that a cyclist was returning to the school about half a minute too late to get in.

Poindexter sprang off his bicycle as the key was turned. The next moment he was shaking at the bars of the gate.

"Rags! I say, Rags!"

The porter looked at him sourly. He had had his rubs with the Cliveden Combine—and he had generally got the worst of them.

"Hullo, there!"

"I say, open the gate, Rags."

"Likely!" said Rags.

"I've been over to Redclyffe," said Poindexter persuasively. "I'm only a few seconds late, so don't be a cad, Rags."

"The gates," said Rags, "is closed according to horders."

"Yes, but a matter of a few seconds—"

"Horders, Master Poindexter, is horders."

"You old fraud!" exclaimed Poindexter. "A lot you care for orders! The orders are for the school porter to keep sober. How much notice do you take of that?"

Rags smiled grimly.

"If I hopen the gates after locking hup," he said, "anybody as comes in goes up to the 'Ead! Such is horders."

"You rotten fraud!"

"Anythin' more polite to say afore I goes?" asked Rags sarcastically.

"I guess so. Open the gate, old chap."

"He, he, he!"

"There's a good fellow! You know how I like you, Rags!"

"He, he, he! I'm an old fraud, and a good fellow, and an old chap! He, he, he!"

Poindexter muttered something.

"Look here, Rags!"

"It's time I was goin'," said Rags. "Anybody as comes in after horders has to ring up the porter and go hup to the 'Ead. Such is the horders I receives."

"But look here."

"I must be haff."

"But look at that shilling you've dropped, Rags."

Rags turned back quickly.

"Shilling! Where?"

"There it is," said Poindexter, pointing to the

ground just outside the gate. There, sure enough, glimmered a shilling in the dusk. Rags grinned.

"I don't remember droppin' that shillin'," said Poindexter. "Still, I suppose it must be mine. Poindexter?"

"I guess not. If you want that shilling you will have to open the gate."

"Against horders!"

"Then you'll lose your shilling."

Rags shook his head.

"I couldn't take the trouble of hopenin' the gate for to pick up a shillin'," he remarked.

"If I had dropped half-a-crown I might."

"You horrid old extortioner."

"Who's an extortioner? I'm only openin' the gate for to hopen the gate and pick up that's all."

Poindexter bent down for a moment.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise. "Come to look at it—it is a half-crown Rags."

Rags looked through the bars. Certainly it was a half-crown that glimmered now in the dusk. The porter grinned.

"I'm a poor man," he remarked. "I can't afford to lose a half-crown. I suppose I must hopen the gate to get it, if you won't 'and it through the bars."

"I guess I won't."

"Then it can't be helped."

Rags unlocked the gates again, and stepped out to pick up the half-crown. Lincoln Poindexter quickly wheeled his bicycle in, and was gone in the dusk before Rags had picked up the half-crown. The porter grinned as he re-locked the gates. It was a half-crown easily earned, and the porter had the satisfaction of feeling that he had "done" the keenest junior at Cliveden College.

Poindexter put up his bicycle, and hurried to No. 4 study.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Neville, looking up at his preparation. "I was beginning to think you would be late for locking-up."

"I was late, about thirty seconds," grumbled Poindexter, "and that old fraud Rags made cost me half-a-crown to get in without a key."

"Phew!"

"Might have been detained for Wednesday afternoon," said the American chum; "but we'll make Rags sit up for some time."

"Good! But what news from Redclyffe?"

"First-rate, I guess."

"They're going to play us?"

"Yes. Burke had a practice match on for Wednesday afternoon, but he willingly agreed to come and play Cliveden Juniors instead."

"Hurrah! Then the match is a fixture!"

"I guess so."

"Faith, and it's a janius ye are, Puntodger! Let's draw up the notice and stick it on the board at wanst."

"We'll draw it up after calling-over," said Poindexter. "We'll stick it on the board as late as possible to-night, so that it will draw Cliveden all at once in the morning. It'll make a bit of a sensation, I guess."

"Faith, and it's right ye are."

"Good!" said Dick Neville. "My word this will take the Sixth down a peg or two. Word the notice carefully, so as to make it perfectly clear that that match on Wednesday afternoon is the opening match of the season."

"I guess so."

And the Cliveden Combine chuckled gleefully.

The 5th Chapter.

A Rival Announcement!

WHAT on earth is all that crowd in the notice-board for?"

It was Pankhurst of the Fourth who spoke. He was coming downstairs on the Tuesday morning, and the first thing that caught his gaze was a crowd in front of the school notice-board in the hall.

Price shook his head.

"Blessed if I know, Panky."

"Seems to be an excitement on of some sort," remarked Gatty. "I say, Poindexter, do you know what's the matter?"

"Suppose you look at the notice-board and see?" suggested Poindexter.

"Faith, and that's a good idea intirely!"

"So it is," said Green; "I'm going to have a look."

And the juniors joined and increased the crowd in the hall. Trevelyan, the captain of Cliveden, came striding along the passage, and stopped in amazement at the sight of the notice-board.

"Hullo, what's the matter here?" exclaimed the big, athletic Sixth-Former.

Grahame, the prefect, turned from the notice-board and glanced at him.

"Better look!" he sneered. "Some of the cheek of those pets of yours."

"Pets of mine! What are you talking about?"

"Look at the notice, that's all."

Way was made for the captain of Cliveden. He walked up to the board, and his expression of astonishment intensified as he read the notice posted up there, by the side of the First Form announcement.

It was in the handwriting of Lincoln Poindexter, and it ran as follows:

"CRICKET NOTICE!
The opening match of the season, Cliveden Juniors v. Redclyffe Juniors, will take place on Wednesday, the 14th inst. The following is a list of the eleven, as in play for Cliveden."

Then followed a list of the eleven, as in play for Cliveden. At the bottom of the list was a footnote:

"N.B.—This is the real opening match of the season. None others genuine."
"(Signed) LINCOLN G. POINDEXTER"

YOUR EDITOR STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THIS BOOK TO AMBITIOUS BOYS.

A BOOK THAT WILL MAKE YOUR FORTUNE!

TELLS YOU
THE
BEST WAY
FOR YOU
TO
EARN YOUR
LIVING.

Every Way
of
Earning a
Living. . .

By ALFRED BARNARD
With an introduction by
HAMILTON EDWARDS

6D.
NET

BUY IT TO-DAY!

Tells You the
Best Way
TO BEGIN
In
Every Trade,
Profession,
or Calling
At Home and
Abroad.

Travelyan gave a whistle, and then burst into a loud laugh.

Grahame gave him a vicious look.

"So you think that's a laughing matter, do you, Travelyan?" he asked.

"Ha! ha! Yes, rather!"

"The confounded cheek—"

"Oh, the youngsters in that study are always up to something, Grahame."

"It's a parody of the Sixth Form notice."

"I don't see that it matters."

"It shows an utter want of respect for the Sixth."

"Oh, I don't know. I believe those youngsters respect all the Sixth who deserve respect," said Travelyan blandly.

Grahame gritted his teeth.

"Then you mean to say that you are going to pass over this cheek of theirs? You're going to take it lying down?"

"I am certainly not going to make myself ridiculous by taking any notice of it," said Travelyan quietly.

"I suppose you'll take that paper off the board!"

"Certainly not. The juniors have the right to put their cricket notices on the notice-board. Why should I interfere with them? If they are really playing a match with Redclyffe Juniors on Wednesday, they have every right to announce the fact in the usual way."

"They are calling it the opening match of the season."

Travelyan laughed.

"Well, so it is, if it's played on Wednesday, and ours doesn't come off till Saturday."

"Oh, if you're going to take it in that spirit—"

"It's the right spirit, I think, Grahame. The Sixth would look utterly ridiculous if they entered into a dispute concerning precedence with the Fourth Form. Let the notice remain where it is. As for the opening match of the season, as they call it, so long as they play up and give a good game, I shall be satisfied."

And Travelyan walked away, laughing.

"Good old Trev!" exclaimed Pankhurst.

"I say, that's a really ripping idea, though. Where did you bone it from, Poindexter?"

"I guess I didn't bone it from anywhere, Panky. I thought of it all on my lonesome. I reckoned the Sixth were putting on too much side."

"Hear, hear!" said Gatty.

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Price. "The first eleven fill up a little too much of the public eye, that's a fact, and better men are looked over."

"Ha, ha! Still, there's something in it," observed Pankhurst. "Of course you want me to captain the Cliveden side against the Redclyffe lot?"

"I guess we don't want anything of the sort, Panky. You can play, if you like."

"Now, don't be an unreasonable ass, Poindexter. I don't mind your being conceited at other times, but it's a question of the honour of Cliveden Junior Cricket Club now, and you ought to be willing to allow the best man to become captain."

"I guess I'm quite willing to allow that. Dick Neville's captain of this cricket club, and he takes the bun this time."

"I'm really sorry to see you throwing away your chances like this, Puntodger," said Pankhurst, in a tone of mingled remonstrance and regret.

"Ha, ha! We don't mind, I guess."

"I suppose I had better play," said Pankhurst thoughtfully. "It's playing under difficulties, with one of you fellows for cricket captain, but for the honour of the Form, I suppose we ought to do all we can to pull the game out of the fire."

"Quite so," said Price.

"So long as you don't shove it into the fire we shall be satisfied," said Poindexter. "But seriously, we want you to play, of course. You see, I've put your names down in the list of the eleven."

"Good!" said Pankhurst cordially. "We'll play, and we'll help to walk over the Redclyffe lot. But I hear they're a tough crowd."

"They are; but I guess we shall be tougher."

"Quite so."

The juniors trooped into the dining-hall to breakfast. Silence was supposed to be observed during the meals—at least at the junior tables—but there was a suppressed buzz all the time.

Poindexter's idea had caught on. The thought of playing the opening match of the season, and relegating the Sixth Form match to the second place, was distinctly pleasing to the juniors of Cliveden.

Some of them were rather uneasy as to how the Sixth would take it. If the top-Formers had made a row on the subject, there might have been warfare; for though the Fourth could not, of course, openly resist the Sixth, they could make themselves very troublesome. As a matter of fact, there were several seniors who were inclined, like Grahame, to look for trouble; but they realised after a little reflection that they would come out of such a contest decidedly second best.

The Wednesday match might have been forbidden, the notice might have been removed from the board, but the Sixth would then have Form, and a more absurd position could hardly be imagined.

Travelyan's good humour and good sense carried the day. The Sixth took no notice, and the juniors went on their way rejoicing.

The notice remained on the board, for all the world to read, and most of the masters came to have a look at it and smile over it. Even Dr. Hayne, the Head of Cliveden, came to the hall and laughed heartily.

Poindexter had scored a success this time,

and it could not be denied, even by Pankhurst and Price, that the Old Firm had been cast into the shade.

"Never mind, Priccey," Pankhurst remarked that evening. "Puntpusher has scored by this new wheeze; but we'll score in the match on Wednesday afternoon. We'll put up the game of our lives, and leave the Combine in the shade. That's our programme."

"Quite so," said Price.

The Combine were also exchanging views on the same subject.

"We've got the pull over those red-headed bounders now, you see," said Lincoln G. Poindexter. "What we've got to do is to keep it. We shall manage that by playing the game of our lives on Wednesday afternoon, and leaving Panky and Price out in the cold. That's our little game."

"Righto!" said Neville heartily. "That's what we'll do, too."

"Faith, Puntpusher, and it's a janius ye are," said Micky Flynn.

The 6th Chapter.

The Opening Match of the Season.

NEEDLESS to say, the Combine were very careful about the cricket practice that day. Every leisure moment of the juniors was spent on the cricket pitch. It was no sinecure to have a place in the Fourth Form eleven. Neville, the cricket captain, was a task-master whom there was no escaping. Poindexter and Flynn backed him up well. And so did the Old Firm, for that matter. Rivals they might be in the Fourth Form at Cliveden, but when it was a question of upholding the school colours against outsiders, they were at one.

The Combine and the Old Firm were the backbone of the team. But the other six members were good men and true, and they practised so assiduously that when the time came for the match, they were in the finest possible form.

The juniors anxiously watched the symptoms of the weather.

If it had turned out a rainy day on Wednesday the whole scheme would have been wrecked, as that was the only half holiday before Saturday, when the Sixth Form match with Redclyffe Juniors was to take place. If the junior match did not take place on Wednesday, it would not be the "opening match" of the season.

The anxiety of the juniors will therefore be easily understood. But it was without foundation, as it proved. The weather was glorious, and remained so. Wednesday dawned a clear, bright, dry April day, and the junior cricketers gleefully greeted the sun.

Poindexter was first up in the Fourth Form dormitory, and he gave a crowd of satisfaction as he glanced out of one of the high windows into the Close.

"First-rate weather," he exclaimed. "First-rate, ripping, non-skidding cricketers' weather, by Jingo! Up with you, kids, and we'll get in some practice before school."

And the Fourth Form eleven turned out without waiting for the rising-bell. They trooped downstairs, and at the door encountered Travelyan also an early riser, just going out for a trot round the Close. The captain of Cliveden greeted them with a stare of amazement.

"Hallo! What are you kids doing up before rising-bell?" he exclaimed. "Anything wrong in the Fourth Form dormitory—a fire, or something of that sort?"

"I guess not," said Poindexter. "We're going to get in some early practice at the nets, that's all."

"Good idea, though rather unusual with you—"

"You see, we've got a big match on," explained Poindexter, with perfect coolness. "The opening match of the season, you know, with Redclyffe Juniors, this afternoon."

Travelyan laughed heartily.

"Well, go on, you young rascals," he said. "And mind you beat Redclyffe, that's all."

"Oh, I guess we'll do that," said the Chicago chum confidently.

And the Fourth Form eleven were soon busy on the pitch.

They were really creditable young cricketers, and in excellent form. Neville and Poindexter were the best batsmen of the team, and Pankhurst was far and away the champion bowler. It would require a good man on the Redclyffe side to stand up long against his bowling, as Poindexter told him with a hearty slap on the shoulder.

Morning school seemed like a dreary farce to the young cricketers.

Lines fell pretty thickly for inattention in class, but they did not care. They were thinking of the level green, the sunny sky, the white flannels, and the cheerful click of bat and ball.

School was over at last.

Poindexter and Neville hurried down to Little Side to look at the pitch. The American chum had expended half a crown in the form of a tip to ensure the pitch being carefully rolled, and he had every reason to be satisfied with it now. It was in a condition as perfect as could be looked for.

"Ripping!" said Neville.

"I guess so," agreed his chum. "Lemme see—stumps are pitched at two o'clock. Let's buck up over dinner and get ready for the Redclyffe fellows."

The Cliveden juniors were quite ready for the Redclyffe fellows when the latter arrived in a brake from their school, with a flag flying, and Burke discoursing sweet music on a mouth-organ.

They were a fine-looking set of lads from Redclyffe, and Burke, their skipper, was a powerfully-built Upper Fourth fellow, with broad shoulders and a determined face.

The Cliveden fellows greeted the brake with a hearty cheer, and Poindexter shook hands heartily with Burke.

The stumps had been pitched, and all was ready for the match, and a crowd was collecting round the ropes, growing thicker every minute.

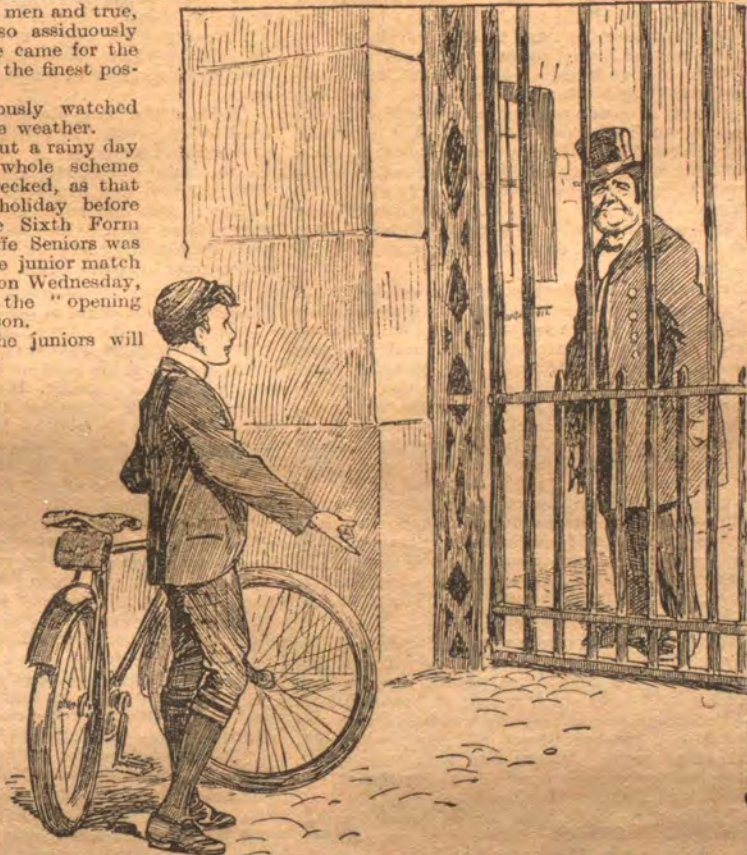
Poindexter nudged Dick Neville as he saw Travelyan come down and take up his stand to look on, with a good-humoured smile on his face.

"Good old Travelyan!" said Dick Neville. "He doesn't mind the Sixth being shoved into second place, you see. Grahame would have made trouble if he could."

"I guess so. We'll give Trev. a jolly good game to watch, anyway, and show that we're worthy to play the opening game of the season for Cliveden."

"Yes, rather."

Burke won the toss, and elected to bat first. There was a cheer from the crowd as eleven figures in spotless white issued from the dressing-



Rags looked through the bars. Certainly it was a half-crown that glimmered now in the road. The porter grinned. "I am a poor man," he remarked. "I can't afford to lose a half-crown. I suppose I must hopen the gate to get it, if you won't 'and it in through the bars."

tent, and took up their positions in the field. Neville and his men were looking very fit.

Burke and a thick-set slogging looking fellow opened the innings for Redclyffe. Dick Neville tossed the ball to Pankhurst.

"Give us a good start, Panky," he said.

Pankhurst nodded.

"I'll do my level best, Neville."

And Pankhurst went on to bowl against Burke's wicket.

Burke was a fine batsman, and his men expected great things of him; but he did not have much chance of showing what he could do, in that innings.

Perhaps there was an element of luck in it, but certainly the ball that Panky sent down was rather a tricky one, and, at all events, it escaped Burke's mighty swipe, and sent the bails flying.

There was a roar from Cliveden.

"How's that?"

And the umpire grinned.

"Out!"

Burke made a grimace, but he bore it well. He carried out his bat for a duck's egg, and another fellow took his place.

The Redclyffe batsmen showed themselves very wary of Pankhurst.

They hardly attempted to run while he had the ball, contenting themselves with stopping the leather, and keeping their wickets up.

The score for Redclyffe, in spite of the disastrous beginning, went steadily up at a fairly average rate.

The innings lasted a little over an hour, and the total taken by the Redclyffe batsmen was 34.

"Good!" said Poindexter, as the last wicket fell to a ball from Micky Flynn. "All down for thirty-four! We've got to do better than that. Buck up, Cliveden!"

The 7th Chapter.

Well Won!

AND Cliveden did buck up!

The Cliveden innings opened with Poindexter and Neville, and there was a general movement of interest as Burke went on to bowl.

He bowled against Poindexter's wicket, and the first three balls the American chum contented himself with stopping dead on the crease.

Then he began to hit out.

A boundary, and then another boundary, and then a three, showed the quality of the Chicago chum's batting, and the air rang with Cliveden cheers.

It was in vain that the Redclyffe bowlers plied him with every variety of bowling.

Poindexter stood it all, and Neville, at the other wicket, kept his end up in equally fine style.

The partnership lasted half an hour, and was productive of thirty-two runs for Cliveden, and then Poindexter was caught out at slip by a Redclyffe fellow, greatly to the relief of the Redclyffians.

Deafening cheers followed Poindexter as he carried out his bat.

The Cliveden total for one wicket down was only two runs short of the Redclyffe score for a whole innings, so the home crowd had reason to be satisfied.

But it was soon seen that the rest of the batting was not up to the form of Poindexter's. When Neville's wicket went down the score stood at forty, and then the home wickets fell faster.

Burke had been able to make little impression upon Poindexter, but he did great execution among the "tail" of the Cliveden team, performing the hat trick later on, amid loud cheers.

But in spite of all the efforts of the Redclyffians, the Cliveden score, with such a good start, crept up higher and higher.

And when Poindexter announced last man in, the score stood at eighty.

Last man in retired from Burke's bowling with a duck's egg to his credit, so the score was still eighty at the close of the Cliveden innings.

But the juniors had reason to be satisfied.

They had more than doubled the score of the visitors, and unless the Redclyffians did better in their second innings than in their first, the home team would win with an innings to spare.

"Hallo, there's first man in, and it's Burke again," said Poindexter. "Get into the field, kids, and mind you play up like county cricketers."

"What-ho!"

And the Cliveden eleven streamed out into the field again. Burke opened the Redclyffe second innings with a very determined cast of countenance. He had evidently made up his mind that Pankhurst's bowling should not touch his wicket this time, and he was successful. Two wickets fell in the first ten minutes to Pankhurst's bowling, but Burke's was not one of them. He was making the running, and piling up the score at a rate delightful to the Redclyffians, but rather alarming to the home side, who wanted to win by an innings.

But Burke's time was coming. Poindexter was fielding at point, and on the look-out for chances. Burke had knocked off twenty-four off his own bat, when there was a sudden "pat" a moment after the ball had left his bat—and then the leather flew into the air from the hand of Poindexter, to be caught again in his palm as it came down straight as a die.

And there was a roar from Cliveden throats.

"Well caught!"

And Burke carried out his bat. His was the sixth Redclyffe wicket down, for a total of thirty-five. Next man in knocked off eight, before he was caught out at mid-wicket by Price. Seven down for forty-three.

Neville tossed the ball to Pankhurst again.

"Go on and knock 'em, kid."

And Pankhurst grinned, and went on. And he did "knock 'em!" He took his little run, and sent down the ball, and there was a clatter of falling bails.

"Out!"

Next man in looked out very carefully for Pankhurst. But his looking out did not do him much good. The ball came down like an arrow from a bow, and the middle stump was whipped out of the ground before the unlucky batsman knew what was happening.

"Well bowled!"

"Last man in."

Last man in came in looking nervous, as well he might. And he had good reason—for the next ball laid his off stump on its back, and there was a roar.

"The hat trick! Hurrah!"

"Good old Panky!"

Redclyffe were all down for forty-three, and Cliveden Juniors had won the match by an innings and three runs.

The minute after the wicket had fallen, the field was black with a crowd of yelling juniors, and Pankhurst was carried off in triumph. Other hands caught up Poindexter, and the two were borne shoulder-high round the old Close of Cliveden. Loud rang the shouts, and as loud as any was the genial cheer of Travelyan.

It was a great day! Redclyffe had put up a good match, but they had been beaten by finer cricket, and Cliveden was jubilant. The opening match of the season had been, as Poindexter described it, a howling success.

They made much of the Redclyffe fellows, and the visitors went off at last in their brake satisfied with Cliveden hospitality, if not with the result of the match; and at Cliveden the juniors kept up the celebration all the evening. It had been a glorious victory, and it had brought forward the Fourth Form, as the Combine remarked, into a proper prominence in the school. And it was a long, long time ere the juniors ceased to chuckle gleefully over Cliveden's Opening Match!

THE END.

(Another Cliveden tale next week.)