



An unusual story of Greyfriars School,
specially written for "The Holiday Annual"

By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Painful for Parkinson!

PARKINSON, of the Remove, groaned.
He couldn't help it!

He just groaned.

There were plenty of fellows on Little Side at Greyfriars; but nobody heeded Parkinson. Their eyes were fixed on the football field, where Harry Wharton & Co. were going through a final practice—the match with Rookwood School being due on the morrow.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in great form.

They needed to be, to play Rookwood. And they were. And Remove fellows crowded on Little Side to cheer them.

Parkinson did not cheer.

As already stated, he groaned.

Had anyone heeded Parkinson, that one might have wondered why he groaned. But nobody ever heeded Parkinson.

Harry Wharton had just put in the pill, with a really wonderful kick, and the Remove fellows, glad to see their captain in such form, gave him an enthusiastic yell.

Parkinson contributed a dismal groan.

It was not that Parkinson was not keen on footer, and not keen to see his side win when Rookwood came along. He was keen on both. He was glad to see that the Remove eleven looked like a winning team—glad to see that Harry Wharton was great at centre-forward, that Bob Cherry was a mighty man in the half-way line, and Squiff a tower of strength in goal. There was no envy in Parkinson's heart.

He was as keen on soccer as any fellow in the Remove. He would have given a term's pocket-money to have performed the kick Wharton had just performed—and a year of his life to have been selected for the Rookwood match.

Like so many hapless mortals in this imperfect universe, Parkinson had fixed his hopes on the unattainable.

Heart and soul, he was a footballer. But his body did not, so to speak, play up. The spirit was more than willing, but the flesh was decidedly weak.

He was rather new to Greyfriars; but since he had arrived at the old school, no fellow had been more regular and assiduous at games practice. He did not play at it; he worked at it. If assiduity, keenness, enthusiasm, concentration of mind on a single object, could have made him a footballer, the trick would have been done. Unfortunately, they couldn't.

Some fellows are born clumsy. Parkinson was one of them.

It was something, for Parkinson, if his foot actually touched the leather when he kicked at it. But if he did, the leather never went in the desired direction. It might go in any other direction—but never in the one planned by Parkinson.

His football added to the gaiety of existence in the Remove. Nothing else came of it. Indeed, since Parkinson had arrived, fellows said that Coker of the Fifth was no longer the biggest ass at Greyfriars, so far as football was concerned.

It was hard cheese! If Parkinson had not cared so much for the game, it would not have mattered. But he did care for it, passionately. There was nothing—simply nothing—he would not have given, to become a good footballer. And he could not even become a bad one. He was no footballer at all.

Had the treasures of Golconda been in his possession, he would have handed them over, cheerfully, without a second thought, in exchange for a place in the Remove eleven.

That is why he groaned as he watched the cheery Removites at football. If only he could have done these things——! If only he could have seen his name in the list posted up in the Rag!

But he couldn't!

Between Parkinson and the Remove eleven there was a great gulf fixed—never to be bridged.

There were many things that Parkinson could do. His construe was the best in the Remove, and generally called forth commendation from Mr. Quelch, his form-master. His French was as good as Monsieur Charpentier's own. At German he was a whale. Remove fellows almost shuddered to see him reading German as if it were English. Mathematics to him were a trifle light as air. That he would always be a wonderful man in class, that he would be mentioned with pride to visitors to the school, that he would gather prizes like leaves in Vallambrosa, that he would bag a Balliol scholarship—all these things were assured, and did not comfort Parkinson in the least. He had set his mind on other things—which were unattainable.

Therefore Parkinson groaned, as he watched the Remove footballers, and the groan came from the bottom of Parkinson's heart.

He drove his hands deep into his pockets at last, and tramped away. It was useless to watch what he could never hope to share—it was like the tortures of Tantalus—just as his slogging and games practice was like the unavailing labour of Sisypheus!

He tramped away moodily to the House, and loafed about with his hands in his pockets doleful and gloomy.

Presently the Remove footballers came tramping into the changing-room, merry and bright, with a buzz of cheery voices. Parkinson hung about the changing-room. It was a general gathering-place for the football fraternity, and therefore Parkinson liked it. Sometimes he ventured a remark, as a contribution to the "football-jaw" that went on in the changing-room. His remarks were always received with merriment. Parkinson and football really were like oil and water, and could never mix.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry slapped Parkinson on the shoulder with a mighty slap that made Parkinson stagger. "Cheer up, old bean."

"Ow!" gasped Parkinson.

He rubbed his shoulder.

"What's the merry trouble, old man?" asked Bob. Bob never could tolerate a gloomy face. His own was always bright.

"Oh! Nothing!" groaned Parkinson.



"There is something you can do for me," said Parkinson. "Play me in the Rockwood match to-morrow!" The fellows in the changing room burst into a roar of laughter. "Play you! Oh, my hat! Play you—ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter I.)

"Got a pain?"

"No."

"You look as if you were going to your own funeral, old chap."

"I almost wish I were!" mumbled Parkinson dismally.

"My hat! That sounds no end jolly," said Harry Wharton, staring at him. "Is anything the matter?"

"Yes."

"Give it a name, old scout," said Frank Nugent cheerily.

"Go it!" said Johnny Bull encouragingly.

"Confide the terrific trouble to our esteemed selves, my excellent and ridiculous Parkinson," urged Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

All the Famous Five were sympathetic. They liked Parkinson—he was a nobody, but he was a good-natured and inoffensive no-

body. Besides, it would have been ungrateful not to like him. His football furnished them with a good deal of merriment.

"Anything a chap can do?" asked Harry Wharton. He was really concerned by the dismal woe in Parkinson's long face.

"Well, yes. You could."

"I!" exclaimed the captain of the Removet.

"Yes—only you."

"Well, my hat! Give it a name, then," said Harry Wharton. "I'll do anything I can. What can I do?"

Parkinson gasped.

"Play me in the Rockwood match to-morrow."

Harry Wharton jumped.

Then he stared.

Then he burst into a roar, which was echoed from end to end of the changing room.

"Play you! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nobody wanted to hurt Parkinson's feelings. Everybody liked old Parkinson, and laughed at him genially. But the idea of Parkinson in the Rookwood match was too much for them. They yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Fan me, somebody!" murmured Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry, old man," gasped Harry Wharton.

"Sorry! But you shouldn't be so funny, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Parkinson eyed the Remove footballers gloomily. It was not a laughing matter from his point of view. Certainly, he had not expected the captain of the Remove to accede to his extraordinary request. But this irresistible outburst of mirth dejected him. It seemed like the final funeral knell of the hopes he had still nourished.

He turned and walked out of the changing-room. A roar of laughter followed him.

Parkinson turned in the doorway.

"Look here——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can chortle!" hooted Parkinson desperately. "But I'm going to pull it off yet, somehow. I'm going to be a footballer, and some day you'll be jolly glad to get me to play for the Remove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is Parky's funny day!" gasped Peter Todd. "Go it, Parky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Parkinson walked away with the merriment of the Remove footballers ringing in his ears.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Man in the Grey Coat.

Parkinson went slowly up the Remove staircase, and slowly along the Remove passage to his study.

He entered the study and slammed the door.

The winter dusk was falling thick, and Parkinson put on the light and threw himself into the armchair before the fire, which was burning low.

It was unusually quiet in the Remove passage. Most of the fellows were downstairs in the Rag, most of them discussing football and the Rookwood match. Nobody was thinking of Parkinson, that was certain. The hapless fellow, whose football ambitions were a source of woe to himself and of merriment to others, did not linger in the memory of the Removites. He had been laughed at and forgotten.

He stretched out his feet to the fire, and relieved his feelings with another groan, which echoed eerily in the study.

He was feeling fed up—fed up to the very chin! On the table beside him were his books—some of them books that would have made the Remove fellows' heads ache simply to look at them. Parkinson glanced at them with loathing.

Why was it that he could do all the things he didn't want to, and couldn't do the one thing he did want to do?

It seemed unfair.

All Mr. Quelch's commendations in the form-room he would have exchanged for one cheer on the football field. Just once to hear the Remove fellows yell: "Well played, Parkinson!"

But it could never be. He was a trier. He had tried hard! Nothing had come of it—nothing ever could come of it! Everything was possible excepting the one thing he wanted. That was barred.

He tired of dismal reflections at last, and stretched out his hand for a book. He was not in a humour for study. He picked up a book to read, and opened it idly.

It was a book in German, and would have been hard enough study for any other fellow in the Remove. But it was light reading to Parkinson. As it happened, it was the old tale of Chamisso, the story of Peter Schlemihl, the shadowless man.

Reading was a great resource to Parkinson. Reading, he could forget his worries and his troubles, more or less.

And it was an interesting story, a German romance written in the days when Germans were romantic, and had not yet developed Hunnishness.

Parkinson found himself quite interested in poor Peter, and the dark and mysterious



"Ink is useless to me," said the Man in the Grey Coat. "My bonds are signed in another fluid—blood!" "Oh!" gasped Parkinson. (See Chapter 3).

Man in the Grey Coat, who offered Peter the treasures of the earth in return for signing away his soul.

Of course, it was a fabulous tale: no demon ever did walk the earth in the guise of a man in a grey coat, seeking the souls of poor sinners.

Nevertheless, it was a good story; and Parkinson found himself keenly interested in the trials and struggles of Peter Schlemihl, persecuted by the Man in Grey, with his mysterious parchment, and his pen dipped in blood, and his offers of untold treasures in return for Peter's signature.

He dropped the book on his knee at last, and sat staring at the fire.

Parkinson was an imaginative fellow: he could imagine it all.

Peter Schlemihl had been right in refusing to sign the deadly parchment, and bargain

away his soul for the treasures of the earth. But the offer of the gratification of every desire must have been a powerful temptation.

Parkinson found himself wondering and supposing and imagining.

Suppose, for instance, it was not a fable, and the Man in the Grey Coat really walked the earth, like a lion seeking whom he might devour. Suppose he put in an appearance at Greyfriars, and offered Parkinson, not the treasures of the earth, but great distinction as a footballer—a place in the eleven; that would have been Parkinson's weak spot—his Achilles' heel where he might have been touched.

Suppose—

Parkinson allowed his fancy to roam.

Suppose—only suppose—it had been possible, and that the Man in Grey had appeared

at his elbow, parchment and pen in hand, with his insinuating address, offering Parkinson his heart's desire, in return for that trifle of a signature?

What would Parkinson have replied?

Really, he wondered.

To become, at one jump, a wonderful footballer; to be chosen amid wild acclaim to play for Greyfriars; to kick goals right and left, and be borne off the field on the shoulders of a hurrahing crowd. His heart beat fast at the bare thought of it, and his eyes flashed. That would be worth something—worth a lot of risk.

Really, had the Man in Grey had a real existence, and had he appeared in Parkinson's study at that moment, the Remove fellow could hardly have answered for himself! He was not at all sure that he would have imitated Peter Schlemihl's firmness in rejecting the insinuating offers of the Man in the Grey Coat. He would have wished to do so, of course. But could he have done so?

He was not at all sure.

He stared at the glimmering fire, allowing his fancy to play with such weird thoughts. Perhaps it was fortunate for Parkinson that the story was only a fable, and that such things were not possible. And yet—

How silent it was in the Remove passage. Generally that passage was rather noisy—in fact, very noisy! It was very silent now. Parkinson could hear no sound, and he was growing drowsy, and the fire was a red blur before his eyes. If it had been possible—if the Man in the Grey Coat had appeared at his elbow—what would he have done? He wondered and wondered.

Suddenly he gave a start.

The light was on in the study—the room should have been fully illuminated. But it was growing dusky—the light seemed to be burning dim and blue.

And suddenly Parkinson became conscious of the fact that he was no longer alone in the study.

It was not his study mate, Trevor, who had come in, he knew that. Trevor always came in noisily, with a bang of the door: and Parkinson had not even heard the door open. He did not even hear a footfall. Yet he knew

—he was strangely and acutely aware—that there was someone beside himself in the room.

He felt a slight shudder run through him.

He had been wishing—yes, actually wishing—that the Man in the Grey Coat would appear to him, and offer him the fulfilment of his ambition at the price of a word written on a parchment. Was it possible? Could such things be true? Had the mysterious Man in Grey, conscious of his unspoken wish, glided into his presence from the realm of shadows?

It was impossible, of course—absurd! Parkinson tried to laugh. But he found that he could not laugh—he could not speak. He was thrilling from head to foot, with a strange terror, in that mysterious and eerie presence which he realised now was in the room.

In the bluish shadow that now filled the study he was conscious of a form before his eyes. A shabby, elderly man, dressed in an old grey coat, stood in Parkinson's study.

Parkinson trembled from head to foot.

It was true, then! It was possible! It was not a fable! He rubbed his eyes with shaking fingers, and looked again. It was no deception. The Man in the Grey Coat stood before him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Sign!

"GOOD-EVENING, Master Parkinson."

The strange visitor bowed politely to Parkinson of the Lower Fourth, over the old grey hat he held in his hand.

His voice was thin and reedy, very civil in tone; indeed respectful, deferential.

Parkinson was not much accustomed to deference, and he could not help being rather pleased.

There was something in the quiet, matter-of-fact greeting, too, that had a reassuring effect.

After all, this could not be the man in grey who had so sorely tempted Peter Schlemihl. He looked like anything but a demon in disguise. An old clothes merchant of the shabby-genteel variety would have been a better description.

The old codger had wandered into Greyfriars somehow, and got into Parkinson's

study—no doubt he was going to ask where he was, or the way out. That was a more probable explanation than that he was the Enemy of Mankind seeking to entrap Parkinson into an unholy compact.

Parkinson was reassured. His hair no longer rose on his scalp, but he was conscious of a feeling of disappointment, too. For if it had been the Man in Grey of Chamisso's romance, he could have had the fulfilment of his ambition for the asking, at a price, it was true; but was there, after all, any price he was not prepared to pay for a football triumph?

"Oh, good-evening," answered Parkinson, in an off-hand manner. "How the deuce did you get in here, old 'un?"

"Did you not call me?"

Parkinson started again.

Had his unspoken wish been regarded as a call? Was his first surmise correct, then, and was this the tempting demon?

Surely it was impossible!

But everything seemed so strange now, so odd and eerie, in that peculiar bluish light that pervaded the room, that Parkinson felt that really he would have been astonished at nothing.

"Look here, who are you?" he demanded sharply.

The elderly man smiled.

"Your friend in need," he answered.

"If you deal in old clothes," said Parkinson, "you've come in at the wrong door. Better cut."

Once more he started.

"I—I say, what's that in your hand?"

"Merely a parchment."

"A—a—a parchment!" murmured Parkinson, and his heart beat very fast.

"That is all."

"And—and that in your other hand?"

The elderly man had laid his old hat on the table.

"Merely a pen."

"A—a—a pen!" Again a thrill of superstitious fear ran through Parkinson. "Parchment—and a pen!" He tried to be humorous, to hide his terror. "Any ink about?"

"Ink would be useless to me," said the Man in the Grey Coat. "My bonds are signed in another fluid."

"In—in—in what?" breathed Parkinson. The reply came in a whisper.

"Blood!"

"Oh!" panted Parkinson.

It was true, then! It was the tempting demon come there to tempt him to his undoing. To offer him—what?

Or was it a trick—some jape of that fool Wibley, for example—Wibley dressed up like the horrible magician in the story of Schlemihl? Was it? Well, that was soon put to the test.

Parkinson glided his hand behind him and gripped a cushion.

Whiz!

The cushion flew straight at the thin, sallow face of the Man in the Grey Coat.

For a second the meagre features were blotted out from sight. The cushion whizzed on, crashed against the study wall, and dropped to the floor. The Man in the Grey Coat stood where he had stood, unmoved. The whizzing cushion had passed right through him.

Parkinson's hair rose again.

He had no further doubts now. His visitant was a visitant from another world; he was not of the earth, earthly.

That was clear.

"Do you guess now whom I am, Master Parkinson?" asked the Man in the Grey Coat, with a pale, meagre smile.

"Yes," said Parkinson hoarsely.

"Have you anything to ask me?"

Parkinson drew a deep, deep breath.

"What can you offer me?" he asked.

Already he was dallying with the tempter and the temptation.

But there was something reassuring, almost ridiculously so, in this thin, meagre, elderly man, with his shabby old grey coat. His manner, too, was so deferential and insinuating that it was hard to feel alarm. If, indeed, he were a phantom, he seemed at least a very harmless and propitiatory one—one who need not inspire dread.

"Anything you ask."

"Do you know what I want?"

"I know, and your wish shall be granted," said the Man in the Grey Coat. "Your ambition shall be realised. To-morrow——"



With all his strength, Parkinson flung the cushion at the thin, sallow face of the Man in the Grey Coat—and the whizzing cushion appeared to pass right through him! (See Chapter 3.)

"To-morrow!" breathed Parkinson.

"Your name shall appear in the Rookwood list."

"Honest Injun?" gasped Parkinson.

"You will play in the match. You will kick more goals than have ever been kicked in a football match before."

"Oh, draw it mild," said Parkinson. "I can't kick goals! I told the fellows that some day they'd be glad to play me. It was all swank. I can't kick goals! I can hardly kick a cat—if I wanted to."

"You shall count your goals by the dozen, if you choose," said the Man in the Grey Coat, calmly.

"But—but——"

"I will give you your heart's desire. A

score never equalled before in the Association game——"

"Oh!" breathed Parkinson.

"Thundering cheers for Parkinson——"

"Ah!"

"A triumphant procession from the field—shoulder-high——"

Parkinson's eyes danced.

It was the glorious vision of which he had often dreamed. Often he had dreamed it, but never dreamed that it would ever materialise. But now—the power was in this grey-coated man's hands. He was going to use it on his—Parkinson's—behalf! For the moment, the ambitious junior forgot that there would be a price to pay for all this. Human beings do not deal with demons for

nothing. But he forgot that circumstance, in his dazzling vision of glory.

"Shall it be so?" asked the Man in the Grey Coat, in his insinuating voice. "Say the word, Master Parkinson! What I promise I can perform."

"Done!" gasped Parkinson, without even stopping to think. He was not going to part with that glorious vision if he could help it.

"Very good!" The thin hand came forward with the parchment in it. "Merely as a business precaution—I am a business-like man—let us make a written note of it. You sign here."

Parkinson shrank back.

He had forgotten, but he remembered now. And a sudden glitter that came into the dull eyes of the man in grey startled him.

"I—I can't!" he stammered.

"Why not?" asked the old man smoothly.

"I—I—I know who you are, you know," said Parkinson, shrinking. "You're an awfully bad hat, you know. I—I say, do you notice a smell of sulphur?"

"Not at all."

"Seems to me I notice it," said Parkinson uneasily, "and—and I don't like the look in your eye. I—I think we'll call it off, and—and you'd better go."

The Man in the Grey Coat laughed.

"Your heart's desire, Master Parkinson—in return for scratching your initials on this piece of parchment? Is it much to ask?"

"Well, no—but—"

"Merely a record of the transaction," urged the man in grey, his eyes shining again for a second.

"Is—is—is that all?"

"That is all! Your initials—and to-morrow you play football for your school amid wild cheers—"

"Gimme the pen."

The pen was in Parkinson's fingers as he spoke. It seemed to leap there of its own accord, as if by magic.

"Where's the ink?"

Parkinson looked round, but could not see his own ink-pot. All seemed so strange in his study now, almost uncanny. In the bluish shadows there were flickers as of tiny flames, and there was a distinct smell of sulphur.

"Your arm——" It was a murmur from the Man in the Grey Coat. "A slight prick will be enough—it will not hurt you—"

"Oh, I remember—ink won't do—" Parkinson hesitated a second. It is well said that he who hesitates is lost. So it was with Parkinson.

Visions of the morrow's amazing triumph danced before his dazzled brain. The fellows who had laughed at him in the changing-room. What would they say, when his score against Rookwood ran up to a total never before known in the Association game! He jabbed the pen-nib into his arm, and the point came away reddened. A moment more, and he had scratched his initials on the parchment, in crimson, and the thing was done.

Crash!

Was it a thunderclap!

It seemed to Parkinson that it was the loudest thunderclap he had ever heard. It shook the study, and echoed with deafening sound. For a second all was dark.

Then the room cleared—the shadows, the blue light and the flickering flame-points, were gone—the light burned as usual, in Parkinson's study in the Remove passage; he looked round, and all was normal. There was the fire, dying low; there were his books—there was "Peter Schlemihl" on his knee—he was alone: the Man in the Grey Coat had vanished. Had it all been a dream?

The study door opened, and Trevor of the Remove came in.

He looked at Parkinson, and sniffed. Then he looked round the study and sniffed again.

"What the thump have you been burning here?" he demanded.

"Burning?" repeated Parkinson, with a guilty start.

"Yes! You taking up chemistry?" asked Trevor.

"N-n-no."

"If you do, you'll jolly well have to change into another study," said Trevor, "but if you haven't, what have you been up to? Making fireworks?"

"N-n-no."

"Well, somebody's been burning sulphur here, I know that! It's jolly thick," said

Trevor, indignantly, and he went out of the study and slammed the door.

Parkinson was left alone again, but with a beating heart. It was true, then—he knew it was true; Trevor had noticed the smell of sulphur left behind by his unearthly visitor. Parkinson trembled. What had he done?

But it was too late to think of that. What he had done, he had done, and it was irrevocable now. He hardly knew whether he regretted it. And then he thought of the intoxicating triumph of the morrow, and knew that he did not regret it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Amazing

“PARKINSON!”

“Impossible!”

“Bosh!”

“I say, you fellows, it’s too thick!”

“There it is, though!”

There it was!

In Harry Wharton’s handwriting, in the football list posted on the door of the Rag, appeared the name of Albert Parkinson.

It was Wednesday morning, in the break between second and third lessons. At breakfast-time Parkinson’s name had not been there; the list had been complete. Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, had seen his name there, down to play at inside-right. Every fellow in the Remove, from the Bounder himself to Parkinson, had seen his name there.

Now it was gone.

In the place of Smith’s name, the name of Albert Parkinson was written, in the well-known “fist” of the captain of the Remove.

Vernon-Smith stared at it, scarcely able to believe his eyes. Had he been dropped for any other fellow, it would not have incensed the Bounder so much. But to be dropped for Parkinson—Parkinson!—that was the limit! It was, as Bolsover major remarked, the very outside edge!

“Is Wharton potty?” asked Tom Brown, in wonder.

“Potty isn’t the word, if he plays Parkinson,” said Squiff. “He’s a dangerous lunatic—nothing more or less.”

“It’s a joke—a giddy jape!”

“It must be!”

“Let’s ask Wharton what he means.

There was a rush to seek the captain of the Remove. He was strolling in the quadrangle with—Parkinson!

Parkinson, who was nobody in particular—less than nobody when it came to football—was walking arm-in-arm with the captain of the form, and holding his head very high.

They were talking football!

“Beat them!” Wharton was saying. “My dear chap, we shall beat Rookwood all right—now we’ve got you!”

Parkinson smiled. The effect of those words on the Removites as they came crowding up was remarkable.

“Hallo, anything up, you fellows?” asked Wharton.

“I should jolly well say so!” gasped Bob Cherry. “Football matches ain’t a proper subject for japing, Harry.”

“Who’s been japing?”

“You have—unless you are really thinking of playing Parkinson—”

“I’m not thinking of it—I’ve decided on it,” said Wharton warmly. “I’m not likely to leave out the best man at Greyfriars.”

“The—the—the what?”

“That ass—”

“That chump—”

“That frabjous fozzler—”

The Remove fellows simply spluttered. They gazed at Wharton, and they gazed at Parkinson. What did it all mean?

“Oh, cut it out!” said the captain of the Remove. “Sorry to drop you at the last minute like this, Smithy, old man—but football’s football, and a better man having turned up—”

“A—a—a better man!” stuttered the Bounder.

“That’s how it is, old scout.”

“Who’s the better man?” yelled the Bounder.

“Parkinson!”

“Pi-pip-Parkinson! Oh, my hat!”

“You’re not serious?” hawled Bob Cherry.

“Sober as a judge, old chap!” said the captain of the Remove, raising his eyebrows. “Why?”

“Why!” gasped Bob. “He asks why?”

"The whyfulness is terrific!" stuttered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Don't you know he's a frumpious fozzler?" shrieked Johnny Bull. "Only yesterday you said so yourself."

"Yesterday isn't to-day, old man."

"Gracious pip! Has Parkinson suddenly turned into a wonderful footballer overnight?"

Wharton paused. He seemed for the moment, a little perplexed himself. He had to admit that his comrades had a right to be surprised. Yet he was quite sure of his own firm belief in Parkinson.

"What's made you change your mind about the idiot?" bawled Bob Cherry.

Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Blessed if I can quite explain that," he said frankly. "It flashed into my mind quite suddenly that Parkinson was the man!"

"Let it flash out again, then," growled Squiff, "and the sooner the better."

"Parkinson's the man, I tell you," said Wharton warmly. "Don't I know anything about footer? Have I ever let you down? Did you ever know me play a dud in a School match?"

"Well, no; but you're starting now."

"Rats!"

"Parkinson's no good!" roared the Bounder.

"Leave me out for any other fellow you like—but not Parkinson! Not that bumbler!"

"Parkinson plays. He's going to win for us."

"Are you potty?"

"Wandering in your mind?"

Parkinson merely smiled. He knew how it was that the idea of playing him had flashed into Wharton's brain. He wondered whether

Wharton had noticed a smell of sulphur at the time.

"Look here, you chaps!" said Parkinson, and his old timid manner was quite gone; he spoke with cool and easy assurance.

"I'm the man you want—"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Ring off!"

"I'll prove it to you," said Parkinson



The astounded juniors found Parkinson strolling arm in arm with the Captain of the Remove. "Yes, Parkinson is playing against Rookwood this afternoon," Wharton said in answer to their startled queries. (See Chapter 4.)

coolly. "Like to see me take a kick, to show what I can do? Chuck that ball over here, Temple."

Temple & Co. of the Fourth were punting a ball about. It was not like Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth Form, to obey the careless behest of a Remove fellow. But something seemed to impel him to obey, and he

punted the ball across to Parkinson without a word.

Parkinson stopped it with his foot. Instead of missing it by a yard or two, as the fellows naturally expected, he stopped it.

"Now, look here," he said to the staring and glaring Removites, "I'll show you a kick! See me send this ball over the clock-tower."

"Oh, don't be an ass!", said Bob Cherry.

"Fathead!"

"Piffler!"

The clock tower was sixty or seventy feet high. It stood a good three hundred yards from the spot where the excited juniors had surrounded Parkinson and the captain of the Remove. It was, of course, an impossible kick. But Parkinson seemed prepared to take it.

"Oh, don't play the goat," said Johnny Bull.

"Think I can't do it?" smiled Parkinson.

"I know you can't, ass! You'd know it too, if you weren't nine-tenths potty and one-tenth idiot."

"If I don't do it," said Parkinson, "I stand out of the Rookwood match this afternoon."

"Oh, good!"

"We'll keep you to that!"

"Go it, Parky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Parkinson lounged to the ball, and kicked in a careless sort of way. The juniors expected the leather to glide a few feet and stop in any direction but that of the clock tower. Amazing to relate, the ball rose true as a die, and flew—and flew—and flew—till it was difficult to follow it with the eye. Right over the clock tower it flew, and vanished.

The whole crowd gasped.

There was silence—a long silence! There was something uncanny about this—something most decidedly queer! Parkinson smiled genially.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"What did I tell you fellows?" grinned Wharton. "Isn't Parkinson the man—isn't he a rod in pickle for Rookwood?"

There was no answer. The crowd broke up in silent amazement; and no voice was raised again on the subject of Parkinson's inclusion.

(Continued on page 79.)



Parkinson kicked in a careless sort of way, and the ball rose true as a die. Right over the clock tower it flew, and vanished! The whole crowd gasped! (See Chapter 4.)

About dinner time, Temple of the Fourth came in, with the football—he said that he had picked it up a quarter of a mile away. Comment was superfluous. Unless there was black magic in it, Parkinson was the most wonderful kick that ever kicked a footer. When Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, arrived at Greyfriars that afternoon to play the Remove, Parkinson went down to Little Side with Harry Wharton & Co., as a matter of course. And all the Removites who were not in the eleven rolled down after them, to see the game—above all, to see Parkinson play! Fellows of other forms, who had seen or heard of that amazing lift over the clock tower, came along too—even Wingate of the Sixth came, to stare at Parkinson. There was an unprecedented gathering on Little Side that afternoon for the Rookwood match.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

The Rookwood Match

JIMMY SILVER & Co., of Rookwood School, looked in fine fettle.

Rookwood always sent out good footballers, either senior or junior, and Jimmy Silver and his men were accustomed to giving a good account of themselves.

The Rookwood match, indeed, was one of the biggest of the Greyfriars junior fixtures, equalling the St. Jim's and Highcliffe matches in importance. To be picked out to play against Rookwood was a great distinction.

That was one reason why Parkinson had been so terribly keen on it. After he had played Rookwood—successfully—nobody would possibly be able to say that he was not a footballer.

And he was going to play successfully. There was no doubt on that point. The

Man in the Grey Coat had taken care of that. Black magic or white magic, any old magic, Parkinson didn't care now. He was reckless of everything but football fame.

The mere sight of the pink-and-white of the Rookwooders had an inspiring effect on him: like—as the poet puts it, “the impatient steed of war, who sniffs the battle from afar!”

That day the pink-and-white of Rookwood was destined to go down hopelessly before the blue-and-white of Greyfriars. On that point there was no doubt—no possible probable shadow of doubt, no probable doubt whatever. For the power of the Man in the Grey Coat was unbounded—that day Parkinson was to be a terrific footballer, and to kick as many goals as he liked—and he was certain to like to kick a good many.

Jimmy Silver & Co., if they had only known it, hadn't an earthly—not the ghost of an earthly.

Not knowing it, however, they looked very merry and bright, and seemed to think that they were going to win.

Parkinson, as a matter of fact, was going to win. Harry Wharton & Co., for once, were going to be simply passengers in their own team. It was an amazing, a thrilling thought to Parkinson. As for the price he had to pay for all this, he tried not to think of it, and he succeeded fairly well.

The remembrance of the crimson signature on the parchment gave him a sort of cold feeling down his spine. But he drove away that remembrance. He was going to win for Greyfriars, at his favourite game, amid wild and exuberant applause; it was going to be a case of Eclipse first and the rest nowhere. That was a compensation.

He looked over the Rookwooders, and was glad to see that they looked a good crowd. The better they were, the more distinction would he gain by beating them. He did not want to beat “duds.” But that was all right; there were no duds in Jimmy Silver's eleven. Every man in it was quite equal to his business.

Harry Wharton greeted the Rookwood skipper cheerily. It was a fine, clear, cold afternoon, ideal weather for football. Everybody concerned seemed to be anticipating the game in great spirits.

Even the Remove players had given up bewailing the fact that Parkinson was in their ranks. That astonishing kick over the clock-tower had convinced them, while it staggered them. A fellow who could do that could do anything.

Parkinson, obviously, was a dark horse. He had "come out" suddenly and unexpectedly. But he had come out.

"You haven't met Parkinson, I think," Wharton remarked, as he chatted with Jimmy Silver and his friends. "New man here, and I don't mind telling you he's a rod in pickle for you."

Jimmy Silver shook hands with Parkinson, and smiled.

"Our inside-right," said Wharton. "Wonderful man! I really think I ought to tell you that much."

"Thanks," smiled Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell, of Rookwood, grinned. Mornington closed one eye at Erroll, and Conroy and Tommy Dodd and other fellows smiled.

The fact was, Parkinson did not look like a wonderful footballer.

His person was weedy, and in football rig it looked scantier and weedier than ever. His forehead was imposing, certainly. His powerful brain almost bulged with Greek, and German, and mathematics. But these acquirements, of course, did not show on the outside. Moreover, even if they had been visible to the eye, they would not have been of much use in Soccer.

On his looks, Parkinson would not have been taken for a man great at games. The Rookwooders almost thought that Wharton was pulling their leg, as he gave them that good-natured warning to look out for Parkinson. Still, as he was in the Greyfriars team, he had to be taken more or less seriously.

Parkinson noticed the smiles of the Rookwooders, and smiled himself.

Before very long they would be doing anything but smiling. He was well aware of that.

Jimmy Silver won the toss, and gave Greyfriars the kick-off. As the footballers went to their places, Arthur Edward Lovell murmured to Jimmy Silver:

"They must be short of men here to play that."

Lovell actually alluded to Parkinson as "that."

Jimmy grinned.

"He doesn't impress me," he agreed.

"Looks as if he would break, if he were pushed," remarked Mornington. "There's Smithy standing out. Wharton's left him out to play that—that—that—I don't know what to call him."

"It's odd," said Jimmy.

"Beats me!" assented Lovell.

"We shall be a man ahead in this game," observed Tommy Dodd. "I'll touch that chap with my little finger, to begin with, and crumple him up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Parkinson, in the Remove ranks, somehow seemed to hear all this. All his senses were strangely acute that day, doubtless owing to the unearthly influence of the Man in the Grey Coat.

He grinned cheerily.

"There's a surprise in store for those Rookwood chaps," he remarked to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his neighbour on the right.

The dusky junior eyed him dubiously.

"Let us hope that the surprisefulness will be terrific," he said.

"You can bet your socks on that!" said Parkinson.

He glanced round the field.

The crowd outside the ropes was thick, and growing thicker. All the Remove were present, even Lord Mauleverer had come along, and Billy Bunter had resisted the fascinations of the tuck-shop. Even Skinner & Co. were, for once, keenly interested in football.

Head and shoulders over the crowd, Parkinson saw Wingate of the Sixth, and captain of the school. He knew that Wingate's eyes were upon him. And there were Coker and Potter and Greene and many more of the Fifth; and Hobson and his friends of the Shell, and Temple, Dabney & Co., and a whole crowd of the Fourth.

Seldom, or never, had a junior match at Greyfriars had so distinguished and numerous an audience.

And they were all interested in Parkinson.

Elation swelled in his breast. He seemed to be treading on air. It was worth something to experience this. Whether it was worth the price he had to pay, Parkinson had ceased to consider. He gave himself up wholly to the joy of the hour.

Gwynne of the Sixth was acting as referee. The sides lined up, and Gwynne blew the whistle.

The ball rolled.

And then began the greatest game ever played at Greyfriars—a game that exceeded the wildest anticipations of every fellow present.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Parkinson astonishes the Natives.

"On the ball!" "Play up, Greyfriars!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. got away very quickly. Pink and white came up the field in great style.

Squiff, in goal, was besieged.

But Johnny Bull and Mark Linley, at back, got the ball away, and a hefty kick from Johnny sent it to midfield.

Then came Parkinson's chance.

He was after the ball, and fellows who stared at him did not even see his feet touch the ground, so amazing was his pace.

Tommy Dodd, inside right of the Rookwood team, had declared that he would touch "that" with his little finger and crumple him up. Parkinson, in his lightning rush, came across from the Greyfriars right wing, and Tommy Dodd, falling back to defend, came in contact with him.

Tommy Dodd of Rookwood had met many a charge in his time. But never had he encountered a charge like this.

He had never been charged by a five-ton lorry in full career. Had he been, this would have reminded him of it.

Without even knowing how it had happened, or what had happened, in fact, Tommy

Dodd found himself lying on the ground six yards from Parkinson.

Parkinson was on the ball.

He was taking it up the field on his lonesome own.

The rest of the Greyfriars forwards were nowhere. The Rookwood backs closed in to stop Parkinson.

They were Tommy Doyle and Towle, of the Rookwood Fourth. Humanly speaking, they would have stopped Parkinson. Both of them were bigger and heavier than Parkinson, and

they were right in his path. That this weedy fellow could deal with both of them at once seemed impossible. They even grinned, as he came right at them with amazing speed. Rawson in goal behind them grinned, too. Rawson did not think that he would be wanted, but he was ready in case of need.

It was the unexpected, the undreamt-of, that happened.

Right and left reeled Doyle and Towle, as Parkinson came spinning through. They sprawled, and Rawson jumped, as the leather whizzed in.



"This is Parkinson," said Wharton as he introduced him to the Rookwood Captain. "He's a really wonderful inside-right." (See Chapter 5.)

Rawson's hand actually touched the leather. But, as if endowed with volition of its own the ball wound away from his clutching fingers, and landed in the net.

"Goal!"

It was a wild yell from the Greyfriars crowd; a yell of amazement and wonder and glee.

"Goal! Parkinson! Parkinson! Well kicked, sir!"

"Goal! Goal!"

"Good old Parkinson!"

Parkinson breathed deep with joy and pride. It was the dream come true; it was all he had ever hoped for, realised at last. Parkinson, the goal-getter, was wildly cheered on the Greyfriars ground. His name was shouted far and wide.

"Parkinson! Parkinson!"

"Goal! Goal!"

"Oh, good man!"

"Well kicked, Parkinson!"

Rawson of Rookwood, with an extraordinary expression on his face, tossed out the ball.

He could scarcely believe it. But it had happened. Jimmy Silver gazed at Parkinson; Arthur Edward Lovell blinked at him. All the Rookwooders exchanged surprised glances.

What sort of a fellow was this, who scattered Rookwooders like chaff before the wind, and kicked impossible goals in this style? Evidently they had not been right to judge by appearances.

Harry Wharton clapped Parkinson on the shoulder, as they walked back to the centre of the field.

"Keep that up, old man!" he said.

Parkinson smiled.

"I will!" he said.

And he did!

Rookwood kicked off, and tried to get going. But before they knew where they were, so to speak, Parkinson had robbed them of the ball, and was taking it home to the visitors' goal. Halves could not touch him, backs crumpled up before him, Rawson though he performed almost like an acrobat, could not reach the ball that bounded in.

"Goal!"

The Greyfriars crowd had scarcely recovered

breath after yelling for the first goal. Now they had to yell for the second.

Two minutes later they had to yell for the third. To do justice to Parkinson, they needed their second wind.

Wingate of the Sixth stared at Parkinson, and turned to Loder, who stood by him in the crowd.

"That's a man for the First Eleven!" he said.

"A Remove fag!" ejaculated Loder.

"Fag or not, he's the best kick at goal I've ever seen, and he plays for Greyfriars in the next match!" said Wingate.

Joy irradiated the face of Parkinson. Somehow, distant as he was, he heard it all. His ambition had been to play for his Form. Now, already, he was picked to play for the Greyfriars First Eleven—on his merits! His cup of joy was full.

The game went on. The Greyfriars crowd grew hoarse with shouting and cheering, goal after goal.

Harry Wharton, Hurree Singh, and other fellows who were usually depended upon to score, seemed nowhere.

It was Parkinson's game.

Goal after goal, and every one from Parkinson! Gwynne was almost staggering with astonishment, when he blew the whistle for the interval.

"Fifteen to nil!" he murmured to himself. "Is this a giddy dream? Fifteen goals to nil! Oh, my hat!"

Really, it seemed like a dream, even to Parkinson.

In the interval, his comrades surrounded him, wildly enthusiastic. They congratulated him, they smacked him on the back. Parkinson was the hero of the hour.

Was this the same fellow who had been laughed at in the changing room—the fellow whose desire to play in the Rookwood match had sent the Remove fellows into roars of laughter? He did not feel like the same fellow. Deeply did Parkinson drink of the intoxicating cup of triumph, in these happy moments.

"You fellows grumbled when I put Parkinson in!" grinned Wharton. "What do you say now?"

"It was a stroke of genius, old chap!" said Bob Cherry.

"It was great!"

"The greatfulness was terrific."

"Feeling a bit tired, Parky old man?" asked the captain of the Remove.

Parkinson laughed.

"Tired? No fear!"

And indeed, Parkinson was as fresh as paint. So were the rest of the team, for that matter, but that was not surprising, for they really had had very little to do. But Parkinson had exerted himself all the time; yet he showed no sign of fatigue. It was one more of the wonders of that wonderful day.

"Feel up to taking a few more goals, what?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather. As many as you like."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Make it up to fifty!" chuckled Squiff.

"Done!"

"Touch wood!" grinned Bob.

"My dear chap, leave it to me!" said Parkinson, serenely.

And when the whistle blew, and the Remove fellows went back into the field, they really were quite prepared to see Parkinson make the total up to half a hundred. After what had happened, nothing from Parkinson would have surprised them.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

Hero of the Hour

"GOAL!"

The first minute of the second half had elapsed. And the sixteenth goal was on record.

"Goal! Parkinson!"

"Oh, good man!"

"Bravo, Parkinson!"

Dismay had fallen upon Rookwood. Jimmy Silver, whose favourite maxim was "Keep smiling," forgot to smile.

Really it seemed futile to play up against form like this. It was not that Rookwood were playing badly—not at all. They were at the top of their form—every Rookwooder there was playing the game of his life.

But it was useless. Tottenham Hotspur or Aston Villa could not have played Parkinson that day. Corinthians would have gone down before him like corn before the sickle. Unless there was magic in it, it was past understanding. But there it was: there was Parkinson, fresh as paint, showing no sign of fatigue after his terrific exertions, scoring away at the rate almost of a goal to two minutes.

Goal after goal; till the mounting total was



Parkinson sent the Rookwood backs flying, then he sent the ball humming beyond the goalie's clutching fingers into the net. He had scored in the first minute! (See Chapter 6.)

dazzling—goals at soccer mounting up like runs at cricket!

The Greyfriars fellows were hoarse and busky with cheering. But after a time, the cheering died down.

Something strange, something uncanny, struck the watching, breathless crowd, as they gazed at the lightning figure of Parkinson—here, there, and everywhere, playing the game



Amidst the plaudits of the cheering crowd Parkinson was borne off the field on the shoulders of the Greyfriars team. "Bravo, Parkinson! Good old Parkinson!" they yelled. (See Chapter 7.)

Skinner caught the general enthusiasm and yelled. Wingate of the Sixth forced a way through the hurrahing mob, and shook hands with Parkinson, in sight of all Greyfriars.

"First eleven match on Saturday—you'll be wanted, Parkinson," said the captain of Greyfriars.

That was the climax!

A Remove fellow in the First Eleven—and that Remove fellow Parkinson! It was a day of miracles.

"Hurrah! Parkinson! Parkinson! Bravo!"

Breathless, giddy, elated, dizzy with happiness, Parkinson was set down at last.

And after that there were celebrations—a feast of the gods in the Rag, crammed with enthusiastic admirers of Parkinson;

Parkinson's health drunk in lemonade and ginger beer and ginger wine, with almost unending cheers for Parkinson. The cheers were still ringing in Parkinson's burning ears when he got away at last and went to his study, his cup of happiness full to the very brim.

And then——!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Very Lucky for Parkinson

PARKINSON shuddered.

"I know you're there!" he said in a low voice.

There had been no sound in the study; but Parkinson knew that the Man in the Grey Coat had come for him.

The light was burning with that strange bluish shadow, making the whole room strange, eerie, uncanny, and in the atmosphere was that faint smell of sulphur that Parkinson remembered. No sound; but he felt the presence—the dread presence of the Man in the Grey Coat, who had given him his heart's desire, and had now returned to demand the price.

Vague, shadowy, the figure of the man in grey loomed up before Parkinson's eyes, in the eerie shadows of the room. It grew in distinctness; it stood defined, clear. But the Man in the Grey Coat was no longer humble, deferential, insinuating. His pallid face was wrinkled in a hideous, triumphant grin; his eyes burned like heated bronze, and seemed to scorch Parkinson; his lip was curled in a sardonic sneer.

Parkinson sat and trembled.

What had he done? He had had his triumph, he had enjoyed it to the full—to the very dregs he had drunk the cup of success. After the feast, the reckoning—and the reckoning had come.

"Slave!"

Parkinson started.

But it was true; the crimson signature on the fatal parchment had made him the slave of this mocking fiend.

"Slave! Rise and follow your master!"

Parkinson panted.

"Not yet! Not yet!"

An invisible power seemed dragging at the unhappy Parkinson. He clung in desperation to the arms of the chair.

"Where?" he breathed.

Again the demon laughed. Flame flashed from his eyes; his breath on Parkinson's cheek was scorching, like the breath of a furnace.

"Follow!"

A hand, of which the clutching fingers, that looked like talons, were outlined in flickering flames, grasped at Parkinson. Wildly, desperately he clung to the chair—he shouted, he shrieked—he fought madly—he struggled with frantic strength—

* * *

"Ow! You silly ass!"

"What's the matter with him?"

"Potty, I should think!"

"Nightmare!"

"The silly owl went to sleep with his silly head hanging down——"

"Wake up, you clump!"

"Parkinson, you ass——!"

Parkinson stared round him wildly. The bluish light had vanished, the strange shadows were gone; the study had its normal aspect, and the Man in the Grey Coat had disappeared. Trevor, his study-mate, was grasping him—half a dozen other Remove fellows were in the room, or staring in at the doorway. Parkinson panted and gasped, and stared at them wildly.

"Has he gone?"

"Has who gone?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He—him—that man in the grey coat——!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's still dreaming!" said Bob Cherry.

"Dreaming!" gasped Parkinson.

Wharton laughed.

"You went to sleep in your chair, old chap, and you seem to have had a corker of a nightmare. Trevor was quite scared when he came in and found you struggling and groaning, and called us——"

"Made us jump, too," said Nugent.

"What on earth were you dreaming about, Parkinson?"

"Dreaming!" repeated Parkinson.

Trevor picked up a book that had fallen to the fender, and had been scorched by the fire, and was still smoking. It was "Peter Schlemihl."

"German!" sniffed Trevor. "Enough to make a fellow dream giddy nightmares."

"Did you see him?" gasped Parkinson.

"See whom?"

"Him! The demon——"

"Oh, my hat! This seems to have been some nightmare!" said Bob Cherry. "It's all right, Parky, you've only been dreaming! Were you reading about jolly old demons when you went to sleep?"

"Yes—I—I——" Parkinson tried to pull himself together. His brain was still in a whirl. "You—you didn't see him——?"



Parkinson trembled as he gazed into the leering, sardonic features of the Man in the Grey Coat. He clung in terror to the arm of his chair, then fought with a mad desperation as the man's talon-like fingers came out to grip him. (See Chapter 8.)

"Ha. ha! No! You're not quite awake yet! Shouldn't go to sleep with your head hanging down."

Parkinson rubbed his eyes. Apparently he had been asleep—in fact, it was clear that he had been asleep. Had he only dreamed the presence of the Man in the Grey Coat? Was he not, after all, to pay the terrible price of his amazing success at soccer? His head grew lighter at the thought, but he still felt strange and confused.

"Then he wasn't here—I—I see—" he stammered. "It's all right, you fellows. I dare say I got a bit excited over the match, and—and—"

"Eh! What match?"

"The Rookwood match, of course."

The juniors stared at him, quite strangely, and exchanged glances. Parkinson forced a laugh.

"It's all right! Don't worry! I'm a bit dizzy—we rather kept it up in the Rag, you know, after the game—"

"Eh?"

"You won't think twice about playing me in the next fixture, Wharton, what?" smiled Parkinson.

"Twice!" said Wharton. "More than twice, I fancy, Parkinson. The next fixture is the Rookwood match to-morrow, and you've already done your funny turn by asking to be played in it. Don't make the same joke twice."

Parkinson stared at him blankly. He looked round the study at a circle of wondering faces. Slowly, but surely, as the mists of sleep cleared away, he comprehended. He had not only dreamed that the Man in the Grey Coat had come for him. He had dreamed the whole thing. The Man in the Grey Coat had no existence outside the pages of "Peter Schlemihl," and he never had appeared to Parkinson in the study—he never had offered him the fatal parchment to sign—Parkinson had not, after all, sold himself to the evil one to realise his heart's desire. The Rookwood match had not yet been played—and when it was played Parkinson of the Remove had no earthly chance of playing in it.

"Oh!" said Parkinson.

He understood now! His face crimsoned.

"I say, are you ill, Parky?" asked Bob Cherry. "You seem jolly queer!"

Parkinson stammered.

"I—I—I've been dreaming—an awful dream!" he gasped. "I—I—dreamt I'd played in the Rookwood match——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And—and scored fifty goals——"

"Great Scott!"

"And—and"—Parkinson's voice trembled—"and—and it was—was only a dream, and—and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fifty goals! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove fellows cleared out of Parkinson's study, roaring with laughter. Parkinson was left alone again. He picked up "Peter Schlemihl," and hurled the volume

across the study with a crash. He looked at the clock—it was scarcely an hour since the fellows had been laughing at him in the changing-room. In dreamland events move swiftly.

In the mists and shadows of sleep, he had enjoyed his triumph; waking, he was never likely to experience anything of the kind. Bitter disappointment was his first feeling. But reflection followed, and as he remembered the Man in the Grey Coat, the burning eyes, the demoniac voice, he shuddered. If it had been real——

Luckily for Parkinson it had not been real.

The following day Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, arrived at Greyfriars for the football match.

Harry Wharton & Co. played them, and played them hard.

It was a good game, and Greyfriars remained the victors by three goals to two.

Parkinson watched the game with a strange

expression on his face. Nobody noticed it, however—nobody ever did notice Parkinson. He was thinking of the visionary game in which he had scored such amazing—visionary—triumphs. This game was a good game, but nothing like that—not to be compared with that!

Parkinson was not in it—Parkinson was an unregarded spectator. Football triumphs were not for him; but not for him, either, was the iron clutch of the Man in the Grey Coat. And upon the whole he was satisfied that the whole thing, from beginning to end, had been a nightmare, was—and he realised it—lucky for Parkinson!



"What's the matter with you, you silly chump?" demanded Trevor, as he forced the struggling Parkinson back into his chair. (See Chapter 8.)