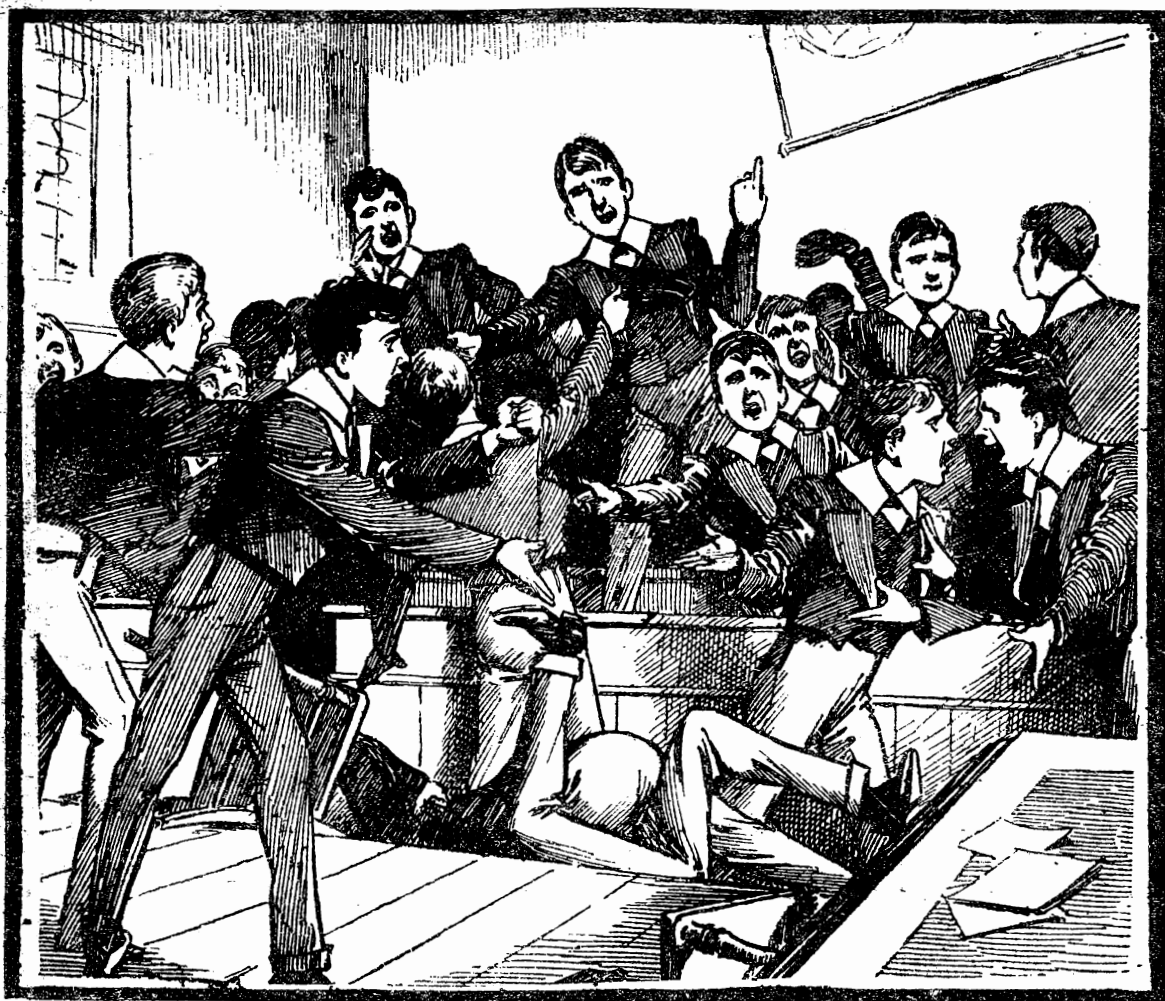


THE ALL-SCHOOL-STORY PAPER!

The **Penny Popular**

No.
242.

Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JIMMY SILVER & Co.—TOM MERRY & Co.



RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!

(An Amusing Incident from the Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co.,
contained in this Issue.)

A Magnificent
Long Complete
Story, dealing
with the
Early Adventures
of
Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's.

IN ANOTHER'S POWER!

By
Martin
Clifford.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Tom Merry Makes a Discovery.

"WE shall have to hustle!" Monty Lowther remarked. The Terrible Three had been to Rylcombe for the purpose of ordering a new cricket-bat.

Unfortunately, the matter had taken time; and as the chums of the Shell came down the village street they found that the shadows were lengthening, and the lights were already on in some of the shops in the old High Street. Then, a little later, they remembered that they had to be within gates by dark.

"All serene!" said Tom Merry. "We can take the cut through the wood, and along the towing-path, and run for it."

"Hallo! 'Ware Grammar cada!"

Half a dozen juniors in mortar-board caps had come out of the tuckshop, just in time to meet the Terrible Three. They were Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, and they had stayed unusually late in Mrs. Murphy's little establishment. But as soon as they caught sight of the St. Jim's fellows they forgot all about locking-up at the Grammar School. They spread out on the pavement to intercept the Saints, grinning cheerfully.

"Good-evening, my sons!" said Gordon Gay. "What have you come here for—thick ears or fat noses?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry. "We've got to get in. Buzz off!"

"Well, we've got to get in, too," remarked Frank Monk. "But we've got time to bump you first. Take it in turns and get it over."

And the Grammarians, chuckling, advanced upon the Terrible Three.

The St. Jim's fellows backed away.

"Better cut for it," said Manners, in a whisper. "If we have a row now we shall be in late, and that will mean lines. Besides, Kildare expects us."

"Separate, then, and cut," said Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

"We'll see you another time, Gay, and give you a licking," said Tom Merry. "We're in a hurry now. Ta-ta!"

And the chums of the Shell darted away.

"After them?" shouted Jack Wootton.

"After which?" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Tom Merry; never mind the others. I've got a bag of jam-tarts here, and we'll anoint him and send him home jammey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And three or four of the Grammarians dashed after Tom Merry.

The hero of the Shell ran down a side street, and into a lane, and then into the footpath in the wood. In the wood he looked back, and caught sight of Gay and Monk and Wootton hot on the track.

Tom Merry grinned cheerfully. He had no doubt of being able to get away.

But as he ran on again Gay gave a

shrill whistle, and Tom Merry knew that that meant that there were other fellows from the Grammar School near at hand. The whistle was answered from the wood.

Tom Merry halted again in dismay. "My hat! The whole family's on the scene!" he muttered.

It did not take him long to decide what to do. The noise he made brushing through the thickets was guiding the Grammarians. Tom Merry dropped on his hands and knees, and crawled into the thickets. He crept along as silently as he could in the direction of the river, till he could see the towing-path and the gleaming river beyond. Then he stopped, and lay close.

The shouts of the Grammarians rang close at hand.

He heard the pursuers go crashing by within a dozen yards of him, and then there were more shouts and whistles.

The junior grinned silently.

So long as he remained still, the Grammarians had very little chance of finding him, in the growing dusk and the thickness of the wood.

There was a shout close at hand, and he recognised Gordon Gay's voice.

"Have you found him?"

"No!" hallooed back another voice.

"Some of you watch the footpath, and I'll go ahead and see that he doesn't cut off towards St. Jim's."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry lay close.

The dusk was deepening, and he knew that he could not now be back at St. Jim's before dusk, whatever speed he made. As he had missed locking-up in any case, he was in no hurry. He remained where he was, stretched under the thick cover of the bushes by the edge of the towing-path. The Grammarians were welcome to search for him as long as they liked; they were not likely to find him.

The whistles became fainter in the distance. But Tom Merry did not stir; he guessed that there were still some of the Grammarians on the footpath, waiting quietly in the hope that he would show himself. And his retreat in the direction of St. Jim's was cut off till the Grammarians gave up the quest.

Five minutes more passed, and then there was a sound of footsteps on the towing-path, and a murmur of voices. Tom Merry fancied for a moment that it was a party of the Grammarians, but a strong smell of tobacco undeceived him. Two men came from the direction of the old mill, and one of them sat down upon a log within two yards of the concealed junior. The smell of his cigar came strongly to Tom Merry's nostrils, and almost made him cough.

As soon as the men commenced talking, Tom Merry recognised them at once. One was Levy, a noted book-maker, and the other was Mr. Joliffe, the landlord of the Green Man.

In the distance in the wood Tom Merry could hear Gordon Gay's whistle.

But it did not seem to disturb Mr. Levy and his companion. Mr. Joliffe leaned against a tree, and pulled at his pipe.

"I don't see it," he said. "I tell you, I don't see it!"

"It's as safe as houses!" was Mr. Levy's reply.

"Loamshire are bound to lose," said Mr. Joliffe. "I tell you I've seen them at practice, and they never were in such weak form. And St. Jim's have got a team that could beat a good many counties."

"I know that."

"Then what do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Joliffe angrily. "Look here, Levy, it's not good enough! You've been very mysterious about all this, but I don't see anything in it. The county will be beaten, and yet you're giving me the county as a sure snip. If I put my money on Loamshire, I shall lose it."

Tom Merry made a movement of repugnance. He knew that the two rascals were discussing bets on the forthcoming Loamshire-St. Jim's match, and he did not want to lie there and hear about it. But it was not quite possible for him to retreat now. If he left his refuge it would only be to fall into the hands of Gordon Gay & Co.

"The county will win!" said Mr. Levy. "Look here, Joliffe, I owe you fifty quid. I know it, and it ain't convenient to settle just now. I've been 'ard hit. But I'm putting you on to a thing that may be worth a couple of hundred to you. You've only got to book bets on Loamshire, and the thing's done."

"Loamshire will lose, I tell you! Everybody's putting money on St. Jim's since it got out what form they were in."

"I know that."

"Then what do you mean?" said Mr. Joliffe savagely.

"I mean what I say. St. Jim's look like winning now—but they will lose."

"Why should they lose?"

"Because they've been got at," said Mr. Levy, sinking his voice, but not so low that Tom Merry could not hear every word.

The junior of St. Jim's started.

Mr. Joliffe seemed as surprised as Tom Merry felt. He took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Got at?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Impossible!"

"It ain't impossible—it's true!" grinned Mr. Levy. "I tell you there's one of them that I can do just as I like with. He's under my thumb, and I'm goin' to make it worth his while to lose the match, too!"

"Straight?" asked Mr. Joliffe.

"Straight as a die! You can look at my betting-book if you like. You'll see that I'm in it right up to the neck."

"Who's the fellow?"

Mr. Levy chuckled.

"That's my secret," he said. "Don't you ask me any questions, and I won't tell you any lies. But you can look at

the book I've made on the match, and then you'll see that I stand to lose a cool thousand if St. Jim's win. You know what that would mean for me."

"The kybosh," said Mr. Joliffe.
"Exactly; the kybosh. And I ain't getting it in the neck like that if I can 'elp it. And I can 'elp it! One of 'em—one of their best—is going to give the match away. He's going to lose his wicket in both innings. He's going to bowl to give Loamshire runs, and he's a bowler they depend on. You can guess the rest."

Mr. Joliffe drew a deep breath.
"Then it's a dead cert?" he asked.
"Safe as houses! You take my tip. And it's agreed, if you clear a cool hundred over my tip, you wipe off the fifty I owe you. That's fair?"

"Fair enough," said Mr. Joliffe. "I'll have to look at your book first, though, to make sure it's straight business."

"Come along to my quarters, and I'll show it to you."

The two men moved away.
Tom Merry lay still.
He was feeling almost stunned.

It seemed to him almost like a dream. But he could not doubt the earnestness of the bookmaker. He had said that he had one of the St. Jim's team under his thumb, and that he had made it worth that player's while to lose the match for the school.

It seemed horrible—impossible! For a St. Jim's fellow to sell a match—and the most important match of the season—seemed unbelievable.

But it was so.
Mr. Levy had made a "book" on the match, and he would be ruined if St. Jim's won. That was clear, and it was clear that he meant what he said—that he had arranged for St. Jim's to lose the match. A St. Jim's fellow—one of the First Eleven—had been found base enough to sell the match.

"Good heavens!" murmured Tom Merry.

The junior felt unable to move. He could only lie there and think it out, almost overcome with horror and disgust at the black treachery he had discovered by accident.

Which of the eleven was it?
Not Kildare, not Darrel—that would be impossible! Rushden, Baker—Monteith! Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, was in the First Eleven, and Tom Merry did not like him. Monteith had many unpleasant ways. But he would surely be incapable of treachery like this! Langton—Was it Langton?

Tom Merry shivered.
He rose at last from his cover. All sounds of the Grammarians had died away. They must have returned to their school by this time. Tom Merry hardly thought of them as he left his cover in the thickets. He was thinking of this discovery that he had made, and of what he ought to do.

What should he do?
He could not remain silent, and leave the match to be sold by the unknown traitor. But if he told Kildare what he had heard, was the captain of St. Jim's likely to listen to him? Kildare would laugh to scorn the mere suggestion that a St. Jim's fellow could be found base enough to sell the county match.

Besides, even if he believed, what was he to do, when Tom Merry could give no hint as to the identity of the traitor?

The match had to be played, and the whole eleven could not be "sacked" on suspicion.

His mind in a whirl, Tom Merry tramped back to St. Jim's. When he reached the school, he had made up his mind. He would consult Kildare,

and chance whether the captain of St. Jim's laughed at the matter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Kildare's Opinion.

KILDARE was in his study, hard at work, when Tom Merry knocked at the door. Kildare was a hard worker, at lessons as well as on the cricket-field.

He rapped out "Come in!" without looking up from his table. Tom Merry entered the study, and closed the door behind him.

The captain of St. Jim's went on writing, and Tom Merry coughed. Kildare looked up.

"Hallo! What do you want?" he demanded. "I'm busy!"

"I want to speak to you, Kildare."
"Buck up, then!"

"It—it's rather important," said Tom

"It's nonsense—utter nonsense!" said Kildare sharply. "I know every chap in the eleven, and there isn't one who is capable of doing anything of the sort. If this is some silly prejudice against one of the New House players—"

"It isn't that, Kildare."
"Then it's a School House senior you are accusing?"

"No, not exactly."
Kildare stared at him with knitted brows.

It must be either a School House or a New House fellow," he said. "What is his name, anyway? Who is it?"

"I—I don't know."

"What!" Kildare rose angrily to his feet. "You don't know! You tell me that some member of my team is going to give the match away, and you don't know who it is? Have you come here to be funny?"



"Loamshire will win!" came the tones of the bookmaker, addressing his rascally associate, "There's one of the school team I can do just as I like with—he's under my thumb, and I'm goin' to make it worth his while to lose the match!" "Good heavens!" muttered Tom Merry, almost stunned by the discovery he had made. A St. Jim's fellow—one of the first eleven—had been found base enough to sell the most important match of the season!

Merry, with a very troubled look. "It's about the Loamshire match, Kildare. There's danger that the match may be given away."

Kildare started.
"The match given away?" he repeated blankly.
"Yes."

The St. Jim's captain frowned darkly.
"Do you mean to say that you accuse a member of the St. Jim's First Eleven of intending to give the match away?" he exclaimed, in mingled anger and amazement.

"Yes, Kildare. Don't get waxy," said Tom Merry hastily. "It isn't a nice thing to have to say, and I've only come to tell you so that you can look out."

"Nonsense!"
"I tell you—"

"I wish you'd listen to me," said Tom Merry. "It wasn't pleasant for me to come here and tell you this. But I know it for a fact. Somebody in the team has been got at by a bookmaker."

"A bookmaker?"
"Yes; a rotter who's been betting on the match!"

"I know there's a lot of betting on the match going on in Wayland," said Kildare. "The blackguards will bet on anything. But to say that a bookmaker could get at a member of the St. Jim's team is to talk pure nonsense! You ought to have more sense. How do you know anything about it, anyway?"

"I heard the man say so!"
"You heard the bookmaker say he had got at a member of the team?"

"Yes!"
 "And how did you come to hear him say so?" demanded Kildare sharply. "I suppose he wouldn't say such a thing in your presence?"

"He didn't see me."
 Kildare's lip curled.
 "Do you mean to say that you were listening?"

Tom Merry flushed crimson.
 "I didn't mean to listen—" he began.

"But you managed it all the same," said Kildare sarcastically; "and you heard this precious rascal bragging that he had got at a member of our team. It was brag, and nothing else. You really ought to have had too much sense to believe anything of the sort."

"But—but the way he put it—"
 "I don't care how he put it. It wasn't true, and couldn't be true. Very likely he knew that you were listening, and was pulling your leg."

Tom Merry shook his head.
 "That's impossible; he couldn't see me."

"You ought not to have listened, in any case," said Kildare curtly.

"I couldn't help it; they came along while I—"

"H'm! Well, my opinion is that he knew you were there all the time, and jawed at you to make a fool of you," said Kildare. "And he seems to have succeeded, too. I've no time to waste listening to this rubbish! You can get out!"

"Then you won't—"
 "I won't take any notice of this nonsense, if that is what you mean," said Kildare. "For goodness' sake get the nonsense out of your head, and buzz off! When you've thought over it, you'll realise that you've been made a fool of."

"But I tell you—"
 "You've told me more than enough. You'll take a hundred lines for running down the Sixth!" said Kildare harshly.
 "That's what you want. I've a jolly good mind to cane you, too!"

"But I say, Kildare—"
 "If you say another word I'll lick you!"

Tom Merry looked at the St. Jim's angry face, and he realised that it was useless to persist. He turned to the door.

"And look here," exclaimed Kildare, "don't jaw this rot over the school! If I hear a word of it, mind you, I shall know whom to trace it to, and I'll see that you have a record licking for starting such a silly scandal. Now get out!"

Tom Merry left the study without another word, and closed the door.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Under Suspicion!

TOM MERRY thought over the matter a great deal on the following day. After school, the First Eleven went down to cricket practice, and half the school went to watch them.

The coming county match filled St. Jim's with growing excitement. The good prospect of the school beating a county team delighted every fellow in the old college, from the captain down to the youngest fag.

And as Tom Merry stood watching the

First Eleven playing a scratch team of Fifth and Sixth fellows, he had to acknowledge that Kildare's men were in wonderful form.

All of them seemed to be at their best; and even without the latest recruit to the eleven, they would have had a sporting chance against the county.

But with Langton in their ranks, not a fellow at St. Jim's doubted that they would give Loamshire the "kybosh."

Langton was certainly marvellous. His batting was first-class, and he could keep his wicket up against Kildare's bowling; but it was with the ball that he excelled. There were many famous county bowlers who could have taught Langton nothing in handling the leather.

The crowd round the ropes cheered Langton again and again as he bowled, with a scope and variety of bowling that gave the batsmen no rest.

"He's ripping!" said Figgins of the Fourth. "Simply ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "Did you see him bring down the sticks for Wushden? I couldn't have done that!"

To which Jack Blake sarcastically replied:

"Go hon!"
 Tom Merry watched Langton thoughtfully.

Was he the fellow Mr. Levy had been speaking of in his talk with Joliffe?

If it was Langton who was to betray the team, certainly he was the fellow who could do it most easily and completely.

He had only to fail in the bowling that was wanted of him, and he could find a thousand excuses for being off colour on the day of the match.

And if he did not bowl as St. Jim's expected, the school would be beaten.

There was no doubt upon that point. Eric Kildare had always been the mainstay of the team, but even his batting was not so important as Langton's bowling.

Was it Langton?
 As he looked at the Sixth-Former, keen and flushed, and evidently enjoying the cricket practice, and the shouts of applause, Tom Merry could hardly think so.

Langton had been reckless once, but even in his recklessness, he had never been an utter cad—he had never done anything so base as betraying fellows who depended upon him.

But if it was not Langton, who was it?

Was it possible that the bookmaker had been deceiving Joliffe, or deceiving himself, and that Kildare's opinion was correct—that it was all nonsense, and not worth thinking about for a moment?

Tom Merry almost began to believe so.

At all events, there was nothing the captain of the Shell could do, excepting to keep his eyes open, especially on the day of the match.

Langton was looking keen and well, so long as the practice lasted. But when the dusk fell, and the cricketers came off the field, Langton's cheeriness seemed to drop from his face like a mask.

Kildare clapped him on the shoulder as they walked back to the School House in the gathering shadows.

"You bowled splendidly," said Kildare heartily.

"Blessed if I knew I was getting such a treasure when I picked you out, Langton, old man. Bowl like that to-morrow, and the county will get the licking of their lives."

Langton nodded.

"Keep yourself fit, too," said Darrel. "If you should go off colour, we should be dished. We're depending on you, Langton. And I've noticed you looking worried lately. You ought to shove everything out of your mind excepting cricket."

"Yes, yes," said Langton absently.
 "We all rely on you," said Rushden.
 "I wish you wouldn't!" said Langton almost irritably.

"Why?" asked Kildare, in surprise.
 "Well, I might lose my nerve, you know. I've never played such a big team as Loamshire County before. I don't want to feel too much responsibility on my shoulders."

Kildare laughed good-humouredly.
 "Oh, that will be all right!" he said.
 "You won't suffer from stage-fright. Come into my room to tea, Langton?"

"Thanks, no. I think I'll have a stroll before tea."

"Right-ho!"

Langton stopped outside the School House when the others went in. He strolled under the old elms with his hands in his pockets, his brow dark and frowning under his cricket cap. All the light had gone from his face now, and he was worried and miserable.

The clock in the old tower struck.
 He started.

It was half-past seven.
 With a white face, and his heart wildly beating, Langton hurried towards the school gates. The Terrible Three were there.

It had occurred to Tom Merry that if Mr. Levy was right, and there was a member of the team in his pay, that member might have to see the bookmaker before the match came off. There would be no time on the morrow, for the stumps would be pitched very early for a one-day match.

And so Tom Merry had determined to keep his eye on Langton that Friday. The chums of the Shell saw Langton as he hurried down to the gate, and they could not help noting the white, scared expression upon his face, in spite of the dusk.

"Looks as if he's seen a ghost," murmured Manners.

Tom Merry felt a sudden conviction.
 "That's the man!" he said.

And Monty Lowther nodded.

Langton came down to the gates, but they were closed for the night. As a prefect, Langton had a key to the side gate, and he felt in his pocket for it. The Terrible Three came over towards him.

"Going out, Langton?" said Monty Lowther genially.

"Yes," muttered Langton.

"Like us to walk with you?"
 "No, hang you!"

"Lonely walking along all alone, unless you're going to meet somebody?" suggested Monty Lowther.

Langton turned upon him with a startled expression.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed angrily. "Hold your tongue!"

He went out and locked the gate behind him. The Terrible Three exchanged significant glances.

"Well, what do you fellows think?" said Tom Merry, in a low voice.

"Looks to me as if we've found the man!"

"And to me, too!"

"Chap would be almost justified in following the boulder and seeing where he's going," Monty Lowther remarked tentatively.

Tom Merry shook his head.
 "I don't quite like that idea, Monty, old man."

"Well, I don't either, for that."



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matter," said Monty Lowther; "and I dare say he would give us the slip, too. But if he's the man, he's going to see Levy—to arrange about selling the county match to-morrow."
 "Rotter!" muttered Manners.
 "We've got no proof," said Tom Merry quietly; "but we'll watch him to-morrow when the teams are playing, and if he fails St. Jim's—"
 "What then?"
 "We may be able to stop him," said Tom Merry.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Mr. Linton is Surprised.

SATURDAY morning dawned clear and bright. Saturday was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, but on such an important occasion as a match with a county team the Head was more than willing to stretch a point.
 The day had therefore been made a whole holiday for members of the First Eleven, and the county match would begin early in the morning, while the rest of St. Jim's were grinding away in the Form-rooms.
 It was an arrangement that suited the cricketers very well, but the juniors did not feel satisfied. A whole holiday for

"You will take fifty lines for inattention, Merry."
 "Ye-es, sir."
 A few minutes later there were loud sounds in the quadrangle. A brake had arrived, and the juniors knew that meant the arrival of the county team. There was a general movement of interest in the Shell Form-room.
 "The Loamshire men!" murmured Manners.
 "Like to give 'em a cheer," muttered Tom Merry.
 "Not here!" grinned Lowther.
 "Rotten that we can't have a squint at them," said Kangaroo.
 Tom Merry glanced cautiously towards Mr. Linton. The master of the Shell had turned his back to the class, and was chalking on the blackboard. He was likely to be engaged for some minutes.
 Tom Merry determined to risk it. He rose silently from his place, and stood upon his form, and then stepped upon his desk. From this coign of vantage he could look through the Form-room windows into the quadrangle.
 His view was chiefly of the branches of elms, but he could see the brake rolling in from the gates, laden with the cricketers of Loamshire county.
 Monty Lowther jumped up, and joined him on the desk, and Manners followed his example, and then Kangaroo and Gore and Thompson mounted. Mr.

Mr. Linton found his voice at last. "BOYS!"
 He thundered out the word.
 The Shell fellows jumped, and Thompson, startled by the sudden roar, lost his footing on the sloping desk, and slid down and bumped on the form, and then rolled to the floor among the desks and lay there gasping.
 "Ow!" gasped Thompson. "Yaroooh!"
 "Boys!" shouted Mr. Linton. "What—what does this mean?"
 The Shell fellows swung round to look at their Form-master.
 "Oh!"
 "Get down at once!" roared Mr. Linton. "How dare you play such a trick in the class-room! How dare you!"
 "Oh, sir!"
 The Shell fellows jumped off the desks and sat down, looking very sheepish and crimson. Mr. Linton was red with anger.
 "This is—is extraordinary!" he exclaimed. "It is disgraceful! I have never beheld such an absurd trick before! I shall detain the whole class for an hour after dinner."
 The Shell sat dismayed.
 "Oh, sir!" gasped Tom Merry. "We—we're sorry, sir. We—we didn't mean— You see, sir, the county cricketers have just arrived, and we—we wanted to see them, sir, and—and—"

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the whole school would have suited them better.
 The Terrible Three went very reluctantly into their Form-room, but they did not venture to ask Mr. Linton, their Form-master, for a morning off. Mr. Linton was not the kind of master to be asked little favours of that kind.
 But the Shell were very keen about the county match, and Tom Merry was especially worried. For he wanted to watch Langton's progress in the game, and learn from it whether the great St. Jim's bowler was the fellow who had arranged with Mr. Levy to sell the match.
 What he would do if he found Langton betraying his side Tom Merry did not know, but he was determined to do something. He would not see St. Jim's betrayed without saying a word.
 Mr. Linton's eyes were on Tom Merry's thoughtful face several times, and he frowned. He spoke to the captain of the Shell without obtaining an answer, and then he frowned more darkly.
 "Merry!" he rapped out.
 Tom Merry started out of a brown study.
 "Ye-es, sir?" he stammered.
 "Why did you not answer me?"
 "D-didn't I, sir?"
 "You did not!"
 "I'm sorry, sir."

Linton, deep in the problem he was inscribing upon the blackboard, heard nothing, and did not turn his head.
 One by one the rest of the Shell fellows stood up on the desks to look through the windows and see the county cricketers arrive.
 "They look a ripping set!" whispered Lowther.
 "Splendid!"
 "But we shall beat them."
 "Oh, yes; rather!"
 "There's old Kildare, shaking hands with Dalton, the Loamshire skipper."
 "Good old Kildare!"
 "Langton's with him—he looks seedy."
 "Oh, Langton's all right—he'll surprise the Loamshire chaps when their sticks go down! Good old Langton!"
 Mr. Linton turned round from the blackboard.
 He started.
 The whole of his class, instead of sitting in their places like good little boys, were standing on top of their desks with their backs turned to him, looking out of the Form-room windows.
 Mr. Linton stared blankly at them for some moments, too astounded to speak.
 He passed his hand over his eyes, as if doubtful whether his vision had deceived him. Certainly such an extraordinary sight had never been seen in a Form-room at St. Jim's before.

"Oh!" said Mr. Linton, understanding. "In that case, if this was not meant for impertinence—"
 "Oh, no, sir!"
 "Very well, I shall excuse you the detention," said Mr. Linton, revealing himself, somewhat to the surprise of the Shell, as not destitute of human feelings. "You will take fifty lines each, which may be done to-night. Now give me your attention, please!"
 And the Shell gave Mr. Linton their attention. The mere thought of being detained that afternoon, when the county match was on, made them feel cold all over. Mr. Linton had never had such an attentive class as he had that morning.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
The County Match.

GLAD enough were the juniors of St. Jim's when the welcome word of dismissal came at last. The Form-room doors opened, and crowds of juniors came streaming out into the passages. The Terrible Three made a break instantly for the cricket-field, with a crowd of other fellows at their heels, and it was a race to the ground. They wanted to know which side was batting, and how the score ran.
 St. Jim's had won the toss and gone in.
 THE PENNY POPULAR—No. 242.

to bat first. The St. Jim's first innings was just ended, when Tom Merry & Co. arrived upon the scene.

"Ninety for the innings," said Monty Lowther, consulting the score. "My hat! I thought Kildare would do better than that."

"It's not bad against a county team," said Manners.

"It's not a winning score, anyway."

"Well, no."

"What was Langton's figure?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

He soon knew.

Langton had been clean bowled by Dalton, the county captain, and his score had been a big round nought—the famous duck's egg.

Tom Merry's face darkened as he learned that.

Langton had lost his wicket for nothing—had he done so on purpose? Certainly, the duck's egg might have happened to anybody. There was another batsman who had failed to score—Hodson, of the Fifth. Langton had done no worse than Hodson. But in his case it was grimly suspicious.

Tom Merry looked at Langton as he stood in the group of senior cricketers.

Langton was very quiet and subdued.

There was none of the cheeriness about him that was to be observed in the rest of the team.

The other cricketers did not seem to notice it; but it was only too plain to Tom Merry that Langton had a weight on his mind.

Langton was the man.

Tom Merry felt more certain than ever about it. Langton was the traitor upon whom Mr. Levy counted for success in his betting operations. Langton was the player whom the bookmaker had "squared" to lose the match. And he had begun by throwing away a wicket for his side.

The crowd cheered as the St. Jim's men went on to field. They looked a very handsome and very fit set of fellows, too. Kildare tossed the ball to Langton for the first over, against Dalton, the Loamshire captain.

There was a buzz of expectation among the Saints.

They expected great things of Langton, and they had no doubt that the champion bowler of St. Jim's would open the eyes of the Loamshire men, in the very first over.

But they were disappointed.

Langton opened the over with very mediocre bowling. It was neither good nor bad, but quite ordinary—so ordinary that, as Monty Lowther remarked, it was extra ordinary.

Dalton had heard of the great bowler of St. Jim's, and he had been looking for trouble. But he did not find any. He knocked away the first two balls with ease, and let himself go at the third. The ball sailed away to the boundary, and there was no need for the batsmen to run.

"Four!" granted Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

He looked hard at Langton. The Sixth-Former was pale, composed, and seemed to be holding himself hard in hand. Tom Merry could guess that he was labouring under some secret emotion. If he had resolved to sell his side, it could not be pleasant to him to do it, and Tom Merry guessed that he must be suffering inwardly.

Kildare cast an anxious glance at Langton.

"Go it, old fellow," he called out.

Langton flushed.

He sent down the fourth ball of the over with a vim, and Dalton's wicket had

a narrow escape. The Loamshire captain just saved it, and there were no runs. The St. Jim's crowd gave a cheer. Langton was waking up to his work.

Tom Merry looked round the field at that moment, and saw to his amazement that Mr. Levy was amongst the crowd.

He saw the bookmaker's eyes gleam, and his jaws close like a vice. As well as if Mr. Levy had told him, Tom Merry knew that the bookmaker was there to see Langton betray his side, and that he was following the fluctuations of the game with anxious interest.

"The hound!" muttered Tom Merry. Langton finished the over without event.

The field crossed over, leaving Dalton still at his wicket. Darrel took the ball for the second over, against Scott, a Loamshire batsman with a reputation for slogging. Scott knocked the leather all over the field, and the Saints had a great deal of leather-hunting. And the runs went up on the board.

Langton bowled the third over. The tameness of it astonished St. Jim's. The over gave Loamshire 8 runs, and cost them nothing in wickets.

Kildare looked amazed.

He had depended on Langton for brilliant bowling and falling wickets, and here was his champion delivering mediocre bowling that could have been equalled by a dozen fellows in the Fifth Form. Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth, could have done better, and every fellow on the ground knew it.

When the field crossed over again, Kildare spoke to Langton.

"You haven't gone into it yet, Langton," he said anxiously.

"I don't seem to feel quite up to it," Langton confessed. "It's the first time I've played against a county team, you know."

"That's all very well, I know. But if you could only bowl as you've bowled at the nets, you'd give them the kybosh."

"I'll try, Kildare."

"For goodness' sake, do," said the captain of St. Jim's. "We can't equal them in batting, as you know; we can't expect to. If you don't take wickets, they will walk over us. We are all relying on you, Langton."

Langton coloured.

"Well, I'll do my best," he said.

He spoke as if he meant it. But if he did his best, his best was very poor. For not a single wicket fell to his bowling. Runs piled upon it, and that was all. Darrel and Monteith both accounted for wickets, and Kildare caught out a batsman. But when the time came to stop play for lunch, only those three wickets had been lost, and the county team had scored 50 runs for them.

A feeling of deep disappointment settled over the St. Jim's crowd. 50 for three wickets!

If that kind of thing continued, the match was over, bar shouting. Langton, the champion bowler—Langton, the sheet-anchor of the School Eleven, had failed them. Whether he was not in form—or whatever the reason might be—Langton had failed his side.

"He may buck up after lunch," Darrel remarked hopefully to Kildare.

Kildare nodded without replying.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

"Play the Game!"

"Langton!"

The Sixth-Former was standing by himself, leaning against the wall of the cricket pavilion, after lunch. Langton preferred to be alone just then. He had withdrawn from the other fellows while they were still lurching with the county cricketers.

Tom Merry had had his dinner in the School House, looking very thoughtful and worried all the time, and as soon as it was over, he had looked for Langton. He was glad to find him alone. He had something to say to Langton which it was not advisable for anybody else to hear.

Langton started and looked round, as Tom Merry spoke his name.

"What do you want, kid?" he asked.

"I want to speak to you."

"Well?"

"I want to make an appeal to you," said Tom Merry quietly. "I've been watching your bowling."

Langton smiled faintly.

"I suppose the fellows are disappointed?" he said.

"Yes."

"Well, it's hard cheese, but it can't be helped."

"Perhaps it can be helped," said Tom Merry quietly. "Look here, Langton, this won't do. St. Jim's can't be beaten this way. You can't give the match away to the county."

Langton started violently.

If he had had a clear conscience, it would hardly have been safe for a junior to speak to him in that way. Any other Sixth-Former would have replied in such words, not verbally, but with a heavy hand. But Langton's conscience was not clear. The only thought that flashed into his mind now was that he had been found out.

"Wh-what do you mean?" he stammered.

"I mean what I say. You are giving the match away, and I want you to stop it."

Langton's face was like chalk.

"You dare to suspect me—" he began.

"I don't suspect—I know," interrupted Tom Merry crisply. "I know what Simeon Levy is here watching the match for. I know he's fixed it with you to sell the match."

If Tom Merry had had any doubts before as to the correctness of his conclusions, he could have had none now. Langton's face was ghastly. He staggered back against the pavilion wall, and held on to it with his hands to keep himself from falling. He stared at Tom Merry with wide-open, hunted eyes.

"How—how do you know anything about it?" he panted.

"Because I heard Levy telling Joliffe so the other day."

"Oh!"

"He said that he had squared a player in the St. Jim's eleven to give the match away," said Tom Merry. "You're that player!"

Langton groaned.

"I didn't mean to say a word," said Tom Merry, feeling a sentiment of compassion for the wretched senior, in spite of himself. "If you had decided at the last minute to do the decent thing, and play up for St. Jim's, I shouldn't have spoken a word. I know you're a decent chap, Langton, and I don't know what hold that villain has over you. But think, man. Suppose you kept on, and did this, what would you feel like afterwards? You'd never be able to look a decent fellow in the face again."

The wretched Sixth-Former groaned again.

"You've got to defy that scoundrel," said Tom Merry. "Play up for St. Jim's, and show him that you don't care for him."

"You don't understand."

"I understand this much—that it's dirty and cowardly and blackguardly to sell a cricket match, and that you can't do it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with flashing eyes.

"Have—have you told anybody else about this?" asked Langton, almost in a whisper.

"Five of us know."

"And—"

"We sha'n't say a word if you play up for the school," said Tom Merry. "We sha'n't disgrace you, or disgrace St. Jim's by letting it out—that is, if you play up! But if you keep on as you've started, you'll get it in the neck! That's plain English!"

"You don't understand," muttered Langton. "I'm in that man's power—he can get me expelled from the school if he chooses."

"Do you mean that you owe him money?"

"No, no; it isn't that!"

"He's offered you money to do this?"

"Yes; but I've refused it."

"Then why are you doing it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"He can ruin me by going to the Head."

"But how—if you kept your word to the Head and haven't had any dealings with him since that last affair?"

"He's got letters from me," groaned Langton. "Innocent enough, but—but you see, I wrote to send him money I owed him, to get rid of him. But he's going to use those letters to make out that I've been betting with him, up to a few days ago. Do you see? He's got me under his thumb. He's only got to go the Head and show those letters, and I'm done for."

"And he's asked you to throw this match away—that's his price for letting you off?"

"Yes!" groaned Langton.

Tom Merry's brow was very stern.

"And you consented?"

"No, no!"

"But you're doing it!"

Langton shifted restlessly.

"I—I don't know what to do. I tell you he can ruin me. I asked Kildare to leave me out of the team, but it was no good. If St. Jim's beat the county, I'm ruined!"

"Better to be ruined honourably than to save yourself by acting like a dirty cad and traitor," said Tom Merry scornfully.

"That's easy enough to say," muttered Langton.

"It is easy enough to do, if you make up your mind to it. Look here, suppose you do as this villain wants, how can you stay here afterwards? I shall tell the fellows what you're doing. You can't expect me to become a party to your dirty treachery. The whole school will know you've played the traitor, and you'll be hooted out of St. Jim's. That will be as bad as being sacked by the Head."

"You—you won't do it?"

"Won't I?" Tom Merry's eyes blazed. "Do you think I'm going to stand by and see you betray the school, and let us all down and disgrace us, and not say a word? If you don't promise me now to play up, and keep your word, the whole school will know the truth before the Loamshire innings is over."

"Oh! What shall I do?" groaned Langton.

"I'm sorry," said Tom Merry, more gently. "But you've got to play the game! No one ever did any good by being a cur and a traitor! Play the game!"

Langton was silent.

The tense pallor in his face showed how bitter a struggle was going on in his breast.

"Leave me alone," said Langton huskily. "Leave me alone now—I've got to think it out."

"Play the game, then, and I sha'n't mention the subject to you again."

"Yes, yes; but go!"

And Tom Merry went.

Langton was left alone—left to fight out the battle with himself, and to choose which of the paths he would follow—the two paths of honour and dishonour, both of which, seemingly, would lead to the same goal—his own ruin!

What would he do?

Even when the time came for the resumption of the Loamshire innings, the wretched Sixth-Former had not yet decided.

But as Darrel handed him the ball to open the bowling, and his fingers closed round the red sphere of leather, a sudden resolve came to Langton.

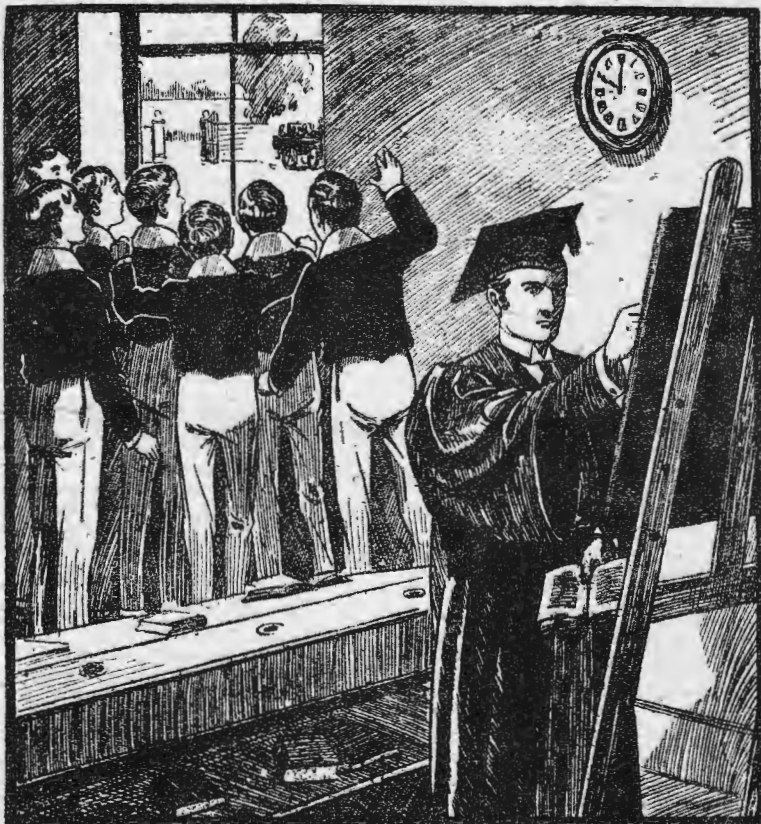
It was the resolve to follow Tom Merry's counsel, and play the game! And with that resolve came a sudden

Langton had been playing into his hands, and the St. Jim's match was booked as a loss. The bookmaker, indeed, had thought of leaving the ground to get his lunch, and he only waited to see the batting recommence.

He looked on with fat satisfaction as Langton bowled an over. The over was unbroken by a single run, but it led to nothing. Langton was not in form.

Mr. Levy grinned, and walked off the field, feeling that he could safely leave his dupe and victim to wreck the St. Jim's prospects. He had only to return later to make sure that the school had been beaten—in fact, to witness their defeat, and to be in at the death, as he expressed it to himself. But the sporting tout would not have sauntered away so contentedly if he had known what was to follow his departure.

Tom Merry looked on grimly. Darrel



Mr. Linton, deep in the problem he was inscribing upon the blackboard, heard nothing, and did not turn his head. One by one the Shell fellows stood up, so that they could look through the windows to see the county cricketers arrive.

sense of peace and rest. There was grim determination in Langton's heart as he went on, with the eyes of all the St. Jim's crowd bent anxiously upon him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Well Bowled!"

DALTON, the Loamshire captain, was still batting after the lunch interval. He had lost three partners himself, but he was still going strong. There was great confidence in his manner as he faced Langton's bowling again.

Tom Merry & Co. looked on with anxious eyes.

There was another spectator who watched Langton keenly, but without much anxiety now. It was Mr. Levy.

The bookmaker was quite at his ease.

took the second over, and the Loamshire batsman scored five runs for it. Then Langton bowled again, and again there was nothing to record.

Three more overs were bowled by Langton. He took no wickets. But it was noted that not a single run was taken off his bowling, and the confidence of the Saints in their great bowler began to revive.

"You watch him!" said Lefevre of the Fifth confidently. "That's what I say! You watch him and you'll see things."

And Lefevre proved a prophet.

Langton took the ball again against Dalton's wicket. The Loamshire captain faced the bowling with care. He was beginning to see that Langton was dangerous; but how dangerous he did not yet realise.

Langton took a little run. His face was somewhat flushed now, his eyes were gleaming, and his lips were tightly set. He was in the mood to do great things; he had succeeded at last in banishing every thought from his mind but the thought of duty. He was going to "play the game."

The ball came down, and Dalton swiped at it. But the willow never found the leather. The bat whistled in empty air. And then there was a crash.

And then came a roar from all St. Jim's: "Out!"

There wasn't much doubt about it. Dalton's middle stump was lying on its back, and the balls were on the ground.

The Loamshire captain gazed down at his wrecked wicket for a moment, as if disinclined to believe the evidence of his eyes. The surprise in his face brought a chuckle from the spectators who were near enough to see.

"Well bowled, Langton!"

"Bravo, St. Jim's!"

Dalton strolled off to the pavilion with his bat under his arm. Another man came out to take his place. He faced Langton's bowling, and he was very careful. But he was a little too careful. At all events, he failed to block the ball, and his leg stump was whisked out of the ground.

And St. Jim's roared:

"Well bowled!"

"Two down for Langton!" roared Kangaroo. "This is going to be the hat-trick! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah, Langton!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwvah!"

Loamshire sent another man in. The late batsman warned him to be on the look-out for a ball which looked simple to start with, but broke in a mysterious way from nowhere in particular.

The new man tried to bear that somewhat puzzling warning in mind, but it did him no good; for the next ball broke in from a new quarter and slid under his waving bat as if it were alive, and the next instant the balls were on the ground.

St. Jim's yelled:

"The hat-trick!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hip-hip! Good old Langton!"

Kildare's eyes danced. While the defeated batsman was going out Kildare rushed up to Langton and thumped him on the back.

"Good for you!" he shouted. "Oh, this is gorgeous! Keep it up, Langy, old man!"

Langton laughed.

"I don't know about keeping it up," he said. "But I'll do my best."

"Oh, pile in! I thought you'd gone to sleep; but you're waking up now, and no mistake! Give 'em jip!" said Kildare jubilantly.

For a moment before Langton's eyes, the evil face of the bookmaker seemed to swim, and a pang went to his heart. He was playing the game—but at what a price!

Then he drove the thought from his mind. It was for the sake of his side—the side that trusted him and relied upon him! What a coward he had been!

But that was all over! St. Jim's should win, if he could bring it about—and he could! He felt that he could! It seemed as if the scales had fallen from his eyes! After a long struggle in darkness he had reached the light! That was how it seemed to him. And he was in a mood to conquer!

St. Jim's watched him keenly, delightedly, as the next batsman took up his stand. Was the hat-trick to be outdone? Were there more painful surprises in store for the Loamshire men? They hoped so—and they watched.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 242.

Crash!

A flying wicket, and a roar from the school:

"How's that?"

"Four giddy wickets!"

"Well bowled! Oh, well bowled, sir!"

It seemed as if the Saints would go mad with joy. They roared and yelled and howled and tossed up their caps, not caring whether they ever came down again.

The Loamshire men were looking very serious now. They wondered where the school had dug up this demon bowler, as Dalton expressed it.

Matters were looking serious for Loamshire now; for they had lost four wickets for no runs, and their total was now seven wickets for less than 60.

The over finished without the fall of another wicket, and Loamshire breathed again.

But they were not done with Langton yet.

Ten minutes later he took another wicket; and a few minutes after that Kildare caught a man out off Langton's bowling.

Then the word passed round:

"Last man in!"

St. Jim's were jubilant.

"Last man in—and they've got only 65 to their credit!" grinned Figgins of the Fourth. "My sons, we're going to beat the county!"

St. Jim's was a winning team.

Both St. Jim's and Loamshire watched the finish eagerly.

The end came suddenly—a man caught out by Darrel—and the innings ended for 65 for Loamshire. And the Saints had scored 90 in their first innings! No wonder the crowd were jubilant—no wonder they roared!

Kildare linked arms with Langton as they walked off the field at the finish of the Loamshire first innings.

Kildare could have hugged him. The value of Langton to the team was more than ever apparent now. His failure at first had plunged St. Jim's into despair; his bucking-up had raised the hopes of the school sky-high.

Langton was the hero of the hour, and fellows pressed forward to clap him on the shoulder and congratulate him.

Langton took it all very quietly.

For at the back of his mind—though he strove hard not to think of it—was all the time the haunting knowledge that he was playing for the success of St. Jim's, and for his own ruin! But that knowledge, though it might torture him, could no longer make him act the coward and the traitor. The die was cast!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Side.

WHEN Mr. Levy came sauntering back upon the cricket-ground of St. Jim's, the second innings of the school was well under way. Mr. Levy read the score casually—five wickets down for 40. St. Jim's was enjoying a fairly average innings.

Mr. Levy was a little surprised. It was yet early in the afternoon, and he had fancied that the Loamshire innings would still be going on. But no doubt Loamshire had declared! That was his first thought.

When he discovered the facts, Mr. Levy had a most unpleasant shock.

Loamshire had not declared—Loamshire had been dismissed for 65 runs!

Loamshire had been 15 runs behind St. Jim's on the first innings.

The bookmaker could scarcely credit it at first.

"The bowling must have bucked up a lot," he remarked to a bystander.

"It did," grinned the spectator. "Langton of St. Jim's beat the hat-trick

—he took four wickets at a run, and one afterwards."

Mr. Levy ground his yellow teeth! His dupe and victim seemed to have developed a will of his own.

Had he determined to defy the bookmaker for the sake of his side, then? It looked like it.

Mr. Levy longed for a chance to say a word to Langton. But there was no chance. Langton was at the wicket; he had just gone in.

Mr. Levy got as close to Langton's wicket as he could, and tried to catch the player's eye.

Unfortunately he succeeded. Langton happened to glance round—or perhaps some instinct warned him of the evil eye that was bent upon him.

He met Mr. Levy's glance—he read the spite and malice and savage threatening in it—and he started, and changed colour. He turned his attention to the bowling a moment too late—the ball crashed into the wicket.

"Out!"

It was another duck's egg for Langton! His bowling had been wonderful, but in batting he had achieved the "pair of spectacles" so dreaded by cricketers. Kildare went in to take his place at the wicket.

Langton stood leaning against the pavilion, unnoticed in the throng, as every eye was turned upon the field of play.

The fat bookmaker came over towards him. Mr. Levy's features were working with rage and malice.

"What do you mean by it?" the fat bookmaker muttered, in a voice thick and trembling with rage. "What have you been doing?"

Langton met his eyes.

"Playing the game," he replied firmly.

Levy gave a savage, scoffing laugh.

"You ain't been playin' your own game," he said. "Do you know what this means? If you bowl like that again, the county will lose."

"I'm going to help beat them if I can."

"And what about your arrangements with me?"

"I made no arrangement with you," said Langton desperately. "I promised you nothing. I told you all along that I couldn't do what you wanted."

"You started doing it."

"I know I did—like a coward and a villain," said the Sixth-Former passionately. "Well, I've stopped it; I'll risk everything rather than betray my team! Is that plain enough for you?"

Mr. Levy clenched his fat hands till the blood seemed about to start from the stubby finger-tips.

"Take care!" he muttered. "You'd better take care, Mister Langton. You know what this means to me—and you know what it'll mean to you."

"I don't care!"

"I'll ruin you, you fool!" hissed the bookmaker. "I'll—"

"Here he is!"

It was a shout from Tom Merry. Five juniors had detached themselves from the crowd that eagerly watched Kildare's batting—Tom Merry and Lowther and Manners and Blake and D'Arcy.

"Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah! Collar the wathah, deah boys!"

Simone Levy started back.

"And off," he said fiercely—"and off! I— Oh!"

The five juniors ran right at him. Mr. Levy's silk hat went flying, and the fat bookmaker rolled on the ground under the sprawling juniors. They were up in a moment, with the sporting tout struggling like a fat worm in their

grasp. But his struggles were of little avail against Tom Merry & Co.

"Yank him along!"
 "Kick him out!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Ow!" gasped Mr. Levy. "Elp! Ow!"

He was rushed along in the grasp of the juniors towards the school gates. They intended to hurl the bookmaker off the precincts of St. Jim's, taking the law—and the bookmaker—into their own hands.

He was marched out of the school gates at top speed, and dumped down in the dust in the middle of the road. He sat there dazedly, his collar torn out, and his coat split up the back, and his hair wildly ruffled.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"
 Tom Merry shook a warning finger at him.

"Now you buzz off!" he said impressively. "Don't you dare to show your nose on our ground again, or we'll duck you in the fountain next time."

And the juniors turned away, leaving Mr. Levy sitting in the dusty road, and saying things.

The bookmaker staggered to his feet, pumping in breath—and dust! But he did not venture to return to the St. Jim's cricket-ground.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Out of the Depths!

ALL down for a hundred was the result of the St. Jim's second innings. Then came an interval for refreshments, and both sides took a well-earned rest.

The county team had come to St. Jim's expecting to have to declare first innings—but as it happened, they hadn't had to do anything of the kind—and it was considerably doubtful whether their second innings would pull the game out of the fire for them.

All really depended upon one man—upon whether Langton's bowling remained up to the mark. St. Jim's had no doubt about it—and the whole school was joyously anticipating a victory over the county.

After tea, when the county went in to bat for the second time, the crowd was more numerous than ever, and the stately form of the Head of St. Jim's could be seen outside the pavilion.

The Head had been a keen cricketer in his youth, and he was keenly interested in the historic battle between St. Jim's and Loamshire County. And there was another matter he was interested in, too. He had called Tom Merry to him, and was observed to be speaking earnestly with the hero of the Shell.

But when fellows asked Tom Merry afterwards what he had been talking about, Tom Merry seemed to develop a sudden attack of deafness, and the curious inquirers were unsatisfied.

But, as a matter of fact, the St. Jim's fellows had little attention for anything but the finish of that exciting match with the county.

One name was on every lip—that of Langton! Langton's bowling was the theme of endless and enthusiastic comment.

"Well bowled, Langton!"
 The roar rang out again and again. Langton was playing up wonderfully. He seemed to have cast every consideration from his mind but one—that of winning the match for his side. And he was doing it.

The St. Jim's crowd roared as the hat-trick was repeated, and three helpless Loamshire batsmen went home. And then came a batsman caught and bowled by Langton, and the crowd roared again.

Long after that match St. Jim's fellows

loved to relate how Langton of the Sixth had made hay of the county batting, and how astounded the Loamshire men had looked at the summary dismissal of their best bats.

Seven down for 50—that was a score of which Loamshire could not be proud, but which made the Saints yell with delight.

Dalton, the tower of strength on the county side, had been dismissed for 8 runs. And it was Langton who dismissed him.

"Langton! Langton!"
 "Bravo!"

If ever a cricketer was a hero in the eyes of his schoolfellows, Langton was at that moment. His "pair of spectacles" in the St. Jim's innings were forgotten. That was nothing—less than nothing. The Saints only thought of the way he was taking wickets. And he seemed tireless. Fellows who had remarked that he seemed out of sorts and out of condition at the beginning of the match, observed now that he was all life and all fire.

"Can you do another over?" Kildare asked him, laughing, as the announcement ran round that the county were last man in.

Langton laughed.
 "A dozen if you like!" he said.
 "I think one will be enough!" grinned Kildare.

And it was. For in that over the deadly bowler took a wicket first ball, and the match—the great match between St. Jim's and the Loamshire County—was over! Loamshire were all down in their second innings for 82; total, 167 for Loamshire, and 190 for St. Jim's. St. Jim's had beaten the county by 23 runs! Beaten the county!

No wonder the field was swarmed as the last wicket fell; no wonder Langton was caught up by wildly-enthusiastic fellows and carried off the field in triumph!

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"
 "Good old Langton!"
 "Bwavo!"
 "Hurrah!"

They bore him back to the School House, and set him down there—flushed, excited, joyous. But when he had retired to his study, the hero of St. Jim's was changed. The flush died out of his face, the excitement died from his eyes. It was over now—he had won for St. Jim's—and now he had to pay the penalty. He had risked everything for the sake of his side—and now was the time to face the music.

Langton did not join in the celebrations which followed the victory of the school over the county. He pleaded fatigue, and stayed in his study. He felt like a condemned prisoner in a cell.

The only question was, when would the blow fall? Mr. Levy would know that the county had lost very soon after the conclusion of the match. He would have to fly, for he could not meet his engagements. Would he come to St. Jim's first,

or would he write to the Head, with his lying accusations and his lying proofs? Probably he would write. In that case it might be hours before the blow fell.

Langton felt that he could not endure the suspense—he was tempted to rush to the Head's study, and tell him everything—and yet a faint hope that the bookmaker might have held his hand lingered in the unhappy lad's heart.

Darkness had long fallen. Langton paced his study in the gloom, with misery in his breast. How long would that racking suspense last? There came a knock at the door.

Langton started, and stopped his feverish pacing. He guessed that it was someone who had come to summon him to the Head's presence.

"Come in!" he called out, in a straking voice.

The door opened.
 "Why are you in the dark?"
 Langton trembled. It was the Head's voice. It was Dr. Holmes who had come to his study.

He struck a match and lighted the gas, but he hardly dared to look at the Head. Dr. Holmes' glance rested upon the senior's white, tortured face.

"Langton," he said, "I have something to say to you. I have received a letter, accusing you, and enclosing what the writer declares to be proofs that you have had betting transactions with him up to last week, in spite of your promise to me. What have you to say?"

"I expected it, sir," said Langton dully. "It's no good telling you the man is lying. You won't believe me."

The Head's look was kind and compassionate.

"On the contrary, Langton," he said quietly, "I shall not doubt your word. I have learned some things this afternoon from Merry of the Shell. Is it correct that this man, Levy, tried to induce you to betray the county match?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you refused?"
 "I gave in at first, but afterwards—I—I couldn't do it!" muttered Langton. "Kildare says I've won the match for the school. That's enough for me. I can face the rest; anyway, I've done the decent thing. If you believe that man—"

"I do not believe him," said the Head. "I think you have been very careless, and very foolish, Langton. I believe nothing more. Your conduct, in defying this man and doing your duty convinces me that you have been guilty of nothing worse than that. I believe that you have kept your promise to me—I believe it because you have played the game to-day!"

Langton staggered. The relief was too much.

"Oh, sir!" he gasped. It was all he could utter.

"This letter that I have received, I shall burn, and take no other notice of it, Langton," said the Head. "Let me warn you in future to be careful to have no dealings, even of the most innocent nature, with bad characters—that is all. I have no doubts of you, Langton; you never stood higher in my opinion than at the present moment. Look to the future, my boy, and forget the past—and shake off its influence. That is all, my dear lad!"

Langton sank into a chair. The Head was gone.

The Sixth-Former's face dropped in his hands, and the tears rolled down his cheeks—tears of relief and thankfulness. He was saved—and he was saved because he had played the game that day, and done his duty for the sake of the side.

THE END.

Next Friday's Long Complete Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. is entitled:

"UNDER LEVISON'S THUMB!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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A Grand
Long Complete
Story, dealing
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Early Adventures
of
Jimmy Silver & Co.

THE ROOKWOOD WHEELERS!

By
Owen
Conquest

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Cycle Run.

IT was Wednesday, a half-holiday at Rookwood, and one of the finest and sunniest of May afternoons. The Fistical Four had come out after dinner, and were bending their steps in the direction of the bicycle-shed.

The four juniors looked very fit and trim in Norfolk jackets and knickers. They entered the cycle-shed, and found that it was not unoccupied.

Three Modern youths were engaged in getting their bicycles out. They were Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle.

"Hallo, here they are again!" said Jimmy Silver. "Going for a run, Dadd?"

"Yes," said Tommy Dodd, looking round. "I'd like to take you chaps along, but we're going over Starke Hill, and, of course, you couldn't manage that!"

"I guess we could give you points and beat you there, Duddy," said Jimmy.

"We're going over the hill ourselves."

"You'll have to walk your machines up, I imagine."

"No fear!"

"Come on, kids! We shall be able to look back from the top of the hill and see these kids crawling up and pushing their machines," said Tommy Dodd.

"Rather!"

And the Moderns wheeled their bicycles out of the shed.

Jimmy Silver gave a wrathful snort.

"The cheek some youngsters have is amazing!" he said. "We'll make things hum on the road, I reckon, and pass those cheeky rotters! Get the jiggers out!"

"Oh, I remember now, I had a puncture!" said Raby.

"Well, you are an ass, Raby! Now we want to start in a hurry, you remember you've got a puncture!" said Jimmy, in disgust.

"Well, I—"

"Yank the jigger out, and let's look at it, for goodness' sake!"

Raby's machine was soon turned over, and Jimmy Silver, who was a great hand at mending anything, soon had the puncture located and repaired. But the Fistical Four were ten minutes behind the Moderns when they wheeled their bicycles across the quad. Jimmy Silver looked down the road for the Moderns, but they were not in sight.

"They're slogging up the hill by this time," said Lovell. "I'll wager a lot that we shall see them wheeling their machines!"

"I reckon so!"

"Yes, and if they look back, they'll see us wheeling ours," grinned Raby.

"Oh, we're going to ride up!" said Newcome. "Don't funk it, Raby!"

"Oh, I'll stick it out as long as you do! I've got a change gear on my machine, anyway, and I'll last you out!"

The chums rode at a good pace along the lane. That was easy enough going.

but when they turned into the road over Starke Hill, it was another matter.

The road—or, rather, lane—was steep and dusty. It ran under the shadowy branches of trees, bordered on either side by a thick wood, and the shade was very pleasant in the hot May sun. But the way was steep, and running steeper.

Raby soon changed to his lowest gear, and his feet went flying round. Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome slogged on, at a crawling pace, jamming down their pedals fiercely to keep the machines going at all.

Raby had a far easier time of it on his low gear, but he was getting fagged, too.

Suddenly, at a bend in the lane, a long, straight stretch came into view before the young cyclists, and they had a view of the road for a quarter of a mile in advance.

Raby gave a yell.

"Look there!"

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome looked and grunted.

Ahead on the long, white, dusty lane three figures could be seen, walking, and laboriously pushing their machines up the steep road.

"There they are!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "Wheeling their bikes, by jingo!"

"The rotters!" gasped Lovell. "Been wheeling them for the last half-hour, too, I expect, while we've been slogging on the machines!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Raby. "They're getting on about as fast as we are, too!"

"I guess it would be rather ripping to pass them on the machines," said Jimmy Silver. "It would make them look small."

"Can't do it!" gasped Lovell. "I'm off!"

And he plunged off his machine into the grass by the roadside, and sank down there in a sitting posture, his legs shaking from over-exertion.

"I'm off, too!" exclaimed Raby, dismounting, and leaning on his machine in an exhausted state.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"I'm going on for the credit of the Fistical Four!"

"You can't do it!"

"Well, I'm going to try."

And Jimmy Silver rode on determinedly, his teeth set and his nostrils dilated. But even the grim determination of Jimmy Silver could not effect an impossibility.

A dozen yards further on there was a sharp rise in the ground, and the machine simply refused to take it.

Jimmy Silver made a gallant effort, but his fagged legs could not send the pedals round, and the machine reeled over, and the leader of the Fistical Four went down in a heap into the grass under the trees.

Lovell jumped up and ran to him.

"Hurt, old chap?"

"No!" gasped Jimmy Silver, sitting up in the grass. "No; only a shake. I reckon I bit off a little more than I could chew that time, old man."

Lovell laughed.

"I reckon you did, sonny."

Jimmy rose, and rubbed his legs. He stood his machine up and took a grip on the centre of the handlebar.

"Come on!" he said. "After all, we needn't mind walking the jiggers, if those rotters are doing the same. They won't have the grin of us!"

"Right-ho!" said Lovell cheerily. "Get moving!"

And the Fistical Four wheeled the machines up the steep slope. From the brow of the hill the Moderns looked back. They waved their hands, showing that they saw the Fistical Four wheeling their bicycles, and the echo of a distant laugh floated down the hill. Then the Modern chums disappeared.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Reckless Riders.

"HERE we are at last!" gasped Lovell, as the last slope was left behind, and the chums stood with their machines on the summit of the white road over the hill.

"Now for a glorious free-wheel!"

"Let's get our breath back first," said Raby. "Can you see 'em, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver shaded his eyes with his hand and looked down the steep slope of the lane. The Moderns were not in sight. There was a bend of the lane a hundred yards ahead, and the view was shut off.

"They're not in sight. I reckon they've got over a lot of ground on the free-wheel. Most fellows shove their brakes on on this slope."

"Oh, well, if we don't, we may overtake the bouncers!"

"Yes," said Newcome, "with our necks broken!"

"But I wouldn't think of trifles when it's a question of getting over the Moderns," said Raby reproachfully.

"Ha, ha! You see, I've got only one neck, and it's got to last me seventy years or so," said Lovell. "I'm going to take care of it."

"I say, what's that fearful row?" said Jimmy Silver, bending his head to listen.

"It's a bicycle-bells, and somebody shouting. It's down the road. Can those bouncers have got into any trouble?"

"If they have, we're the chaps to help them out of it!" exclaimed Raby.

"Come on!"

And he jumped upon his machine. Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome were not long in following suit. They might be the deadly rivals of the Modern chums within the walls of Rookwood; but if they were in trouble, the Fistical Four were ready to stand by them shoulder to shoulder, like true schoolfellows.

"Brakes on!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"We're in a hurry!"

"Brakes on, fathead, till you get round the corner!"

"Oh, very well! Anything for a quiet life!"

With their brakes on, the four juniors went down the slope, free-wheeling at a

good pace. Without the brakes they would have flown. They passed the bend, and Jimmy Silver uttered a warning shout, and jammed his brake on harder.

"Look out!"

A curious scene was presented to the view of the startled cyclists. The Moderns were in sight again, and so were other objects. The road was thick with a drove of sheep and cattle, evidently being driven down the lane to turn into the road to Coombe, the market town.

Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle, had come down the slope free-wheeling without their brakes on, and, passing the bend, they had run right into the drove.

It was a reckless thing to do; but the Moderns, like many other reckless cyclists, had calculated upon the country road being clear. The drove of cattle came as a surprise to them, and undoubtedly they came as a surprise to the cattle.

Before they knew what was happening, Dodd, Cook, and Doyle were in the midst of the startled animals. The shepherd in charge of them waved his hands frantically and shouted, but that did no good at all. The Modern juniors would gladly have got out of the drove, but it was impossible.

From the higher slope the Fistical Four looked on with interest.

"Shows what comes of being reckless," said Lovell sagely. "I wonder how Dodd will get out of that?"

"Blessed if I see how we're to help them! No good getting into that crush."

"Not much!"

"It's rough on Dodd."

"He doesn't look as if he were enjoying himself, either."

The Moderns were certainly not enjoying themselves. They were jammed up among the moving cattle, and it was impossible to dismount, and almost equally impossible to keep the machines going.

Tommy Dodd had taken a wild grip upon the rough neck of a bullock, and was being towed along, and Cook and Doyle were sprawling half on their machines and half on the backs of the sheep jammed up close to them in the narrow road.

"My hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "This is rough!"

"Absolutely!" gurgled the others.

"Can't you get out of the road?"

"No, I can't!"

"I shall go under this beast if I let go of him; and he's—he's—Ow! Help!"

The bullock appeared to have grown tired of towing Tommy Dodd along. He was shaking his head angrily and rearing, and the leader of the Modern chums was compelled to let go. His machine reeled over away from the bullock, and Tommy Dodd plumped down upon the backs of the sheep.

There was a wild baa-baaing and scrambling of the frightened sheep, and Tommy Dodd and his machine disappeared from view in the midst of the woolly backs.

Jimmy Silver uttered an exclamation. "I reckon we shall have to chip in somehow, kids!"

"That's just what I was thinking!" exclaimed Raby, jumping on his machine again. "Come on!"

"Come back—"

But the excited lad was gone, free-wheeling down the hill at express speed, forgetful of his brakes.

"Come back, you ass!" roared Newcome.

"Stop, Raby—stop!"

But Raby was already crashing into the drove. His machine rolled over, and

Raby rolled over, too, and disappeared among the sheep.

"Come on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

He slid his machine against a tree, and dashed down the lane, and Lovell and Newcome did the same and followed him. They overtook the slow-moving drove, and plunged among the sheep.

Raby was seized and dragged out, looking very dusty and dishevelled. His machine had been tramped over by the rearward sheep.

"What's happened? I—"

"You've acted the giddy goat!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "Come on, and let's see if we can fish these other idiots out!"

Cook and Doyle had, by this time, succeeded in dragging themselves and their machines to the side of the lane into the shelter of the trees.

Tommy Dodd's machine was lying in

"Lot of good you did!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"We've saved your life—"

"Rats!"

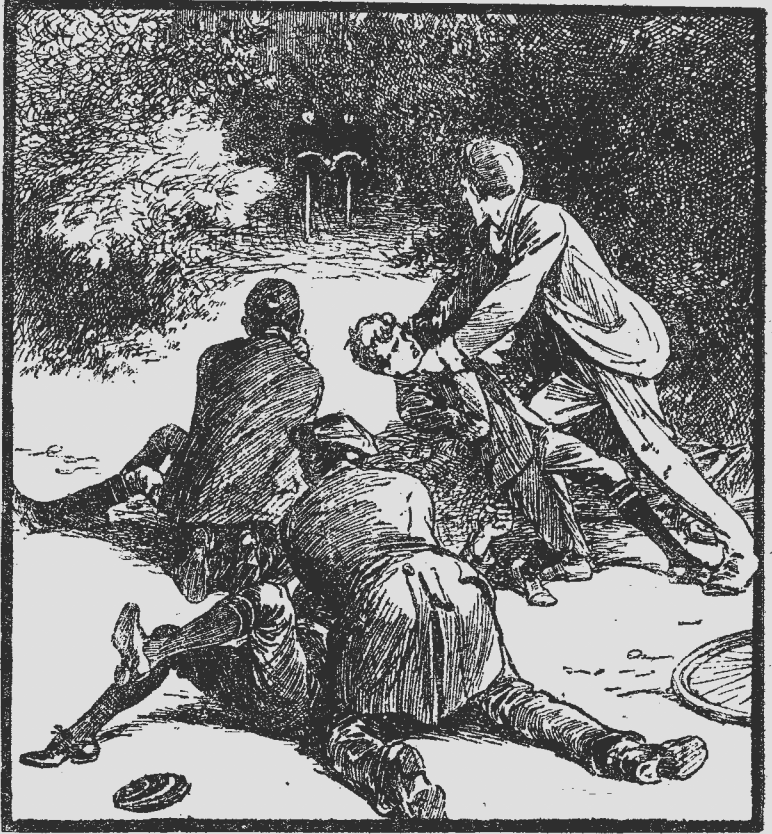
"Ha, ha! Well, it was worth the trouble to see those silly cuckoos stuck among the sheep!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Another Catastrophe for the Moderns.

THE damage to the machines was fortunately slight. A great deal of time had been lost, otherwise neither cyclists nor cycles were much the worse for their adventure.

By the time Jimmy Silver calculated the drove of cattle would have turned off into the road leading to Coombe, the machines were ready, and in the golden



There was a sudden buzz of bicycle bells in the dusk. Ting, ting, ting! Jimmy Silver, with a terrible effort, tore the clutching hands from his throat. "Help! Help!" he yelled.

the road, passed over by the cattle, and Tommy Dodd, who seemed to have quite lost his presence of mind, was clinging round the neck of an old sheep, who was making frantic, but vain, efforts to shake him off.

Jimmy Silver grasped him by the shoulder and shook him.

The sheep tore its head loose, and ambled away after the moving flock, and the shepherd, swearing in a broad country dialect, shook his fists at the Rookwood juniors and strode on wrathfully.

Tommy Dodd sat up and gasped.

"My hat! I—I—"

The Fistical Four chuckled.

"You see what comes of being reckless, you young asses!" said Lovell.

"Lucky we were here to look after you!"

glow of the May afternoon the young wheelers prepared to mount.

The Moderns threw themselves upon their machines, and went down the steep lane at a rush; evidently not taught caution by their late experience.

Raby jumped on his bicycle to follow at top speed, but Jimmy Silver caught him by the shoulder, and the starting cycle described a half-circle as he swung the junior round.

"What are you doing?" roared Raby.

"You're not going to ride without the brake on?"

"Well, the others are doing it!"

"Let 'em! They'll be braking their necks, but when they're doing it, we don't want to pile on top of them!"

"But I—"

"Rats!—Cheese it! Lovell, mount

on the other side of him, and we'll ride holding. I tell you, I won't have him breaking his neck."

"But, Jimmy—"

"Shut up!"

"But—"

"Rats!"

The reckless junior's protests were in vain. Jimmy Silver and Lovell mounted one on either side of him, and, holding with a single hand, held on to Raby's shoulders with the other.

Newcome rode behind.

They kept their hub brakes gently on so as to moderate the speed of the descent; and it was impossible for Raby to run away from them, even if he rode without the brake.

Raby grumbled, but Jimmy Silver was firm. Had he been alone he might have taken the slope without the brake, for he was keen-eyed, cool, and plucky enough; but, like many a cyclist, he felt more anxious about other fellows' necks than about his own, and he felt it his duty to set the example of caution. Besides, if the Moderns came to grief in the road ahead, it would never do to swoop down upon them at top speed. Such a contingency might easily prove fatal.

The speed of the four was very fast, all the same. They went down the hill road with a rush, with the wind singing in their ears, and the trees flitting by as if by the windows of an express train. The speed was enough to satisfy anybody except Raby.

Ahead of them the sloping road ran straight for a mile or more. Far ahead they could see Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle, whizzing along at an alarming rate, and getting smaller in the distance every moment.

"They'll have the laugh of us at the bottom of the hill!" grumbled Raby.

"If they get there," said Jimmy Silver. "Suppose a cart should pull out of one of the side tracks now, just ahead of them."

"Well, they'd have to turn the machines into the bank."

"And buckle them up into scrap-iron."

"True! But there's no cart in sight, and—"

"Oh, rats! We're going like an express now."

"Hallo! Look there!" shouted Lovell.

"I said so!"

Catastrophe had overtaken the racing cyclists ahead; or, to speak more correctly, it had met them. Exactly what happened the following Fistical Four could not see, but Jimmy Silver guessed that some animal had skipped across the lane in front of the whirling wheels, possibly a rabbit or a stoat, and, though it escaped the wheels itself, it was enough to throw the whizzing cyclists off their balance.

Tommy Cook gave a start, and his machine turned a little towards Tommy Dodd's in the flurry of the moment, and Dodd only avoided a collision by turning his machine into the bank. There was a deep ditch in this spot, overgrown with thick fern, and half full of water.

It was, perhaps, fortunate for Tommy Dodd, but it was not pleasant. His machine went headlong into the ditch, and curled up in the mud and fern, and Tommy Dodd was flung with a sounding splash into the water, and disappeared entirely for the moment. His face came up again smothered with mud and slime.

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle, naturally startled and confused by the mishap, forgot themselves for a moment, staring after their leader; and that moment was enough. Their machines

dashed into each other and then into the ditch, and they splashed off into the water.

Splash!

"Gerr-o-oooh!"

Three muddy and drenched faces looked out of the ditch. Four cyclists, riding abreast, came dashing gaily by. The Fistical Four could see that the Moderns were not hurt, and their alarm had vanished, and their alarm had vanished as they rode past.

Jimmy Silver let go for a moment of his machine to wave his cap, keeping his other hand on Raby's shoulder.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" sang out Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Fistical Four were past.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

[The Fistical Four in Danger.]

"HA, ha, ha!" The Fistical Four laughed loud and long at the remembrance of the ridiculous spectacle of the Modern juniors' muddy faces looking at them from the ditch as they rode by. They laughed again and again at the recollection of it as they dashed on down the slope of the hill.

The bottom of the hill was reached at last, and the pace slackened; but for a great distance along the level road they were able to free-wheel on the impetus gained in the long run downhill.

"I think we'll stop and have some tea soon," Jimmy Silver remarked. "I feel a little peckish. So long as we get into Rookwood by calling-over we shall be all right."

"Good!" said Lovell. "We've got our lamps with us, so it doesn't matter if we're out after dusk."

"Here's a place," said Jimmy Silver presently, pointing towards a pretty little inn looking out from a group of trees with a stretch of grass and benches in front of it. "I know this place, and you can get a good feed here at a moderate figure."

"It's just the place for us, then," said Raby; "but I hope the feed won't be moderate."

It was one of the wayside inns which, since the wonderful growth of cycling and motoring, had almost lost its old character, and had become a place of temperate refreshment—places common enough on the English cycling roads.

The Rookwood juniors dismounted and leaned their machines up against a tree in a group, and were soon seated at one of the long tables under the trees.

And indeed a more enjoyable repast could hardly have been partaken of by the hungry cyclists, under the shade of the big trees in the golden afternoon of May.

The juniors were in no hurry, and they rested there a while before taking the road to Rookwood. Jimmy Silver had just risen to settle the bill, when a bicycle-bell rang on the road, and three extremely soiled-looking riders came in sight. Raby burst into a roar.

"There's the Moderns!"

"My hat!" said Newcome. "They look as if they had had a day out! I say, Dodd—good-afternoon! And have you used any soap lately?"

"Oh, rats!" growled Tommy Dodd, and he jumped off his machine. "Come in here, you chaps, and let's get a wash!"

"Well, you need it, I reckon!" commented Jimmy Silver. "Don't stay here talking to these three tramps, kids! Let's get on the wheel!"

They paid their bill, and departed. The Modern juniors had gone indoors for a much-needed wash before having their tea. The Fistical Four were in a high good humour as they mounted their machines and rode away in the setting sun.

They had had a good time, and they had had a better ride than their rivals, and they were satisfied. They followed the road round by the ancient Priory towards Rookwood School.

After the substantial meal they had eaten at the little inn none of the four felt really inclined for scorching. They rode on at a moderate pace.

Half an hour passed, but Jimmy Silver, looking back, could not see the Moderns in sight. But the dusk was gathering now over the landscape, and the lane was dim to the view. Jimmy Silver looked at his watch.

"It's not lighting-up time yet," he remarked. "It's safer, though, as a matter of fact, with the trees so thick over the lane and shutting out the light."

"Well, we may as well light up," said Raby, dismounting.

The other three dismounted, too. Lovell drew out a box of matches and lighted the four lamps in turn. The trees, arching over the narrow lane, made the spot very dark, though the sky was yet rosy with the last rays of the sun.

Lovell threw down the stump of the match and closed his lamp with a snap. Four burly figures loomed up in the gloom at the same moment.

"Hallo!" said a rough voice, and a foul smell of strong liquor accompanied the voice.

The chums drew instinctively closer together.

Four burly, rough-looking tramps had appeared out of the shadows. They had apparently been resting and eating under the wayside trees, for one of them held a hunk of cheese in his hand, and another an open knife. They stood in the path of the young cyclists, blinking in the light.

"Hallo!" repeated the rough fellow who had spoken.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver civilly. "Just lighting up, you see. Let us pass, will you?"

The man exchanged glances with his companions.

"Are you in a 'urry?" he said, with an inflection of mockery in his voice which did not escape the ears of the juniors.

Lovell quietly detached the pump from his bicycle. He thought he might need a weapon soon. In that lonely road, at that hour, the boys were at the mercy of the tramps.

"Yes, we are rather in a hurry," said Jimmy Silver. "You're in the way."

The man did not move.

"You're in the way, Nailer!" said one of the others, with a coarse laugh.

"Why don't you get out of the way, Nailer!"

Nailer chuckled.

"Please stand aside," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

"Can't you help a poor man with a few coppers?" said Nailer.

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

The request was a veiled threat, and he knew it. The tramps had evidently made up their minds to profit by the loneliness of the place and the hour, and if it came to a fight the four boys were at a hopeless disadvantage. It might be wiser to propitiate the ruffians if possible.

"If a couple of shillings would be of any use to you—" began Jimmy Silver. Nailer chuckled again.

"I think a couple of pounds would be

nearer the mark. What do you think, Ginger?"

"You're right, Nailer!"

"What do you think, Bunker?"

"You're right, Nailer!"

"And you, Nobbler?"

"You're right!"

"You see," said Nailer, turning to the boys again, "you can go for a couple of pounds, otherwise we shall have to borrow your bicycles for a time—to be returned, of course, right side up with care, when we've done with them."

And the four ruffians chuckled in chorus.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"We haven't so much money about us," he said—"not anything like it. But if we had, we shouldn't hand it over to you."

"You're right, Jimmy!" said Raby and Newcome together.

"Rather!" said Lovell.

"Oh, we ain't pertickler," said Nailer. "If ye hain't the money, we'll put up with your tickers and tie-pins, and so forth."

"You won't fouch them!"

The ruffian's manner changed. He made a step towards the junior, his brow dark and threatening.

"Now then," he rapped out savagely, "are you going to hand over your watches?"

"Not likely."

"No fear, you scoundrel!"

"Then we'll take them."

"Stand back!"

"Bah!"

The four ruffians sprang forward. They expected to knock the boys over in a moment without an effort. But they were surprised and disappointed.

Each of the juniors had grasped his cycle-pump, and they were ready for action. They had let go the machines, and stood shoulder to shoulder.

As the tramps sprang at them they struck out fiercely. Nailer reeled back with a savage oath as Jimmy Silver's pump crashed into his face. Ginger, Nobbler, and Bunker each received a fierce blow; but they came on in spite of it, muttering curses.

Lovell was seized in a powerful grip and borne to the ground.

Raby, struggling furiously, was hurled down by Ginger, and a heavy knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down. Newcome was sent flying backwards by a heavy blow.

Jimmy Silver, however, had followed up his attack. His pump, bent by the first blow, crashed again across the forehead of Nailer, and the ruffian reeled and fell on one knee.

The pump descended again; but Nailer dodged it, and sprang upon the boy. Jimmy Silver was grasped in

muscular hands, and, in spite of his fierce resistance, he was borne to the ground, and Nailer's knee was planted on him. Nailer's savage hands were at his throat.

The ruffian was red with rage, savage with pain.

"Now I'll teach you, you whelp!"

Jimmy Silver struggled fiercely. The ruffian was gripping him by the throat as if to throttle him. There was no telling what he might do in his fury, and Jimmy Silver fought as if for his life.

But the boy was powerless against the man. Lights danced before Jimmy Silver's eyes. The savage face glaring down at him seemed to double in size before his failing vision, and the ruffian's eyes to burn with a demonic light.

There was a sudden buzz of bicycle-bells in the dusk.

Ting, ting, ting!

Jimmy Silver, with a terrible effort, tore the clutching hands from his throat, and shrieked for help.

"Help! Help!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Moderns to the Rescue.

"COME on, kids!"

It was Tommy Dodd's voice, and never had it sounded so welcome to the ears of the

Fistful Four.

"Help!"

"We're coming!"

The Moderns had jumped instantly from their machines, leaving them to fall where they would. To dash into the fray, dealing sledge-hammer blows among the tramps, did not take the juniors a second.

Nailer reeled off Jimmy Silver as Tommy Dodd's clenched fist came like a hammer under his ear, and he rolled gasping in the road.

Tommy Cook hammered at Ginger, and then Tommy Dodd sprang at Bunker, while Tommy Doyle went for Nobbler; and the rascals were dragged off their victims in next to no time.

Lovell, Newcome and Raby staggered to their feet. Jimmy Silver lay gasping for breath in the road.

"Sock it to 'em!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

And he rushed at Ginger again.

The rascal did not stay for him. He broke into a run, and disappeared into the gloom down the lane. Tommy Cook and Lovell sprang at Bunker, who proved true to his name, and "bunked" promptly.

"They're gone!"

"Here's one of 'em!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle, jumping on Nailer as he was rising clumsily, and pinning him down again. "Collar the beast!"

The juniors piled on Nailer, and he was crushed down, in spite of his struggles, and nearly suffocated into the bargain.

Jimmy Silver staggered up. His throat had been bruised by the ruffian's savage fingers, and he was gasping painfully for breath.

"Hold that brute! Don't let him get away!"

"We've got the scoundrel!" exclaimed Raby, "and he can't get away while I've got my knees on his chest and my fingers twisted into his necktie."

"Don't choke him, Raby!" gasped Lovell.

"Ow! Leggo! Ow!"

Jimmy Silver looked grimly down upon the ruffian, wriggling in the grip of six sturdy juniors, and utterly unable to escape. The leader of the Fistful Four looked thoughtful.

"We can't carry him on our bikes to the police-station," he remarked. "We shall have to let him go. But he ought to have a lesson first. Roll him over into the ditch. There's a foot of water and about two feet of mud, I reckon, so he will have a regular treat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The grinning juniors bundled the struggling ruffian over and over, through the grass to the edge of the deep ditch, and there rolled him in. He sank almost out of sight in the ooze, gasping and cursing furiously. A elod of earth planted in his mouth cut short his flow of language, however, and the laughing juniors returned to their machines.

"Thanks, awfully, Doddy!" said Jimmy Silver, patting the leader of the Moderns on the shoulder. "You came up in the nick of time. That beast had nearly choked me!"

"We were almost tiding over you when we heard you yell out," grinned Tommy Dodd. "Jolly glad we caught you up in time to be of use! Feel inclined for a race to Rookwood?"

"Hardly. I am going to take it easy."

"Oh, all right. So will we. Let's keep together to the school."

"Right you are!" said Jimmy Silver. "And when we get to Rookwood, we'll have tea together in the end study, if you chaps will come. We've got a good feed there, and we'll be glad to have you."

"I rather fancy we will come!" chuckled Tommy Dodd.

"Rather!" chorused the other two.

And the tea, as Tommy Dodd said, was rippin'—first-rate in both quality and quantity, and it was done full justice to by the Rookwood Wheelers.

THE END.

Another Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled

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THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Cricket Election.

THE Remove-room presented a lively scene. It usually did, but, as a matter of fact, on the present occasion it was a little livelier than usual. The whole Form—or nearly the whole of it—had met to discuss an important matter which was now occupying the attention of the Remove.

In the junior eleven, during the football season, it had been very generally and sorely felt that the Remove had not really had a "look in."

The captaincy had been in the upper of the two Forms that supplied the team; Temple had been captain, and Dabney his right-hand man. And although the chums of the Upper Fourth were not accused of favouritism, it was certain that they had a leaning—really natural enough on their part—towards members of their own Form.

They regarded the Removites as cheeky kids who had to be kept in their place. If too many Removites were admitted to the team, they would want to be running the show, and so on.

Undeniably good players like Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Bulstrode could not be kept out. But only the very best were taken into the fold of the Junior Eleven.

And the Remove sorely and angrily maintained that a good many Removites who had not the ghost of a chance of getting into the junior team were far and away better players than some of the Upper Fourth fellows who swaggered about in the caps of the Junior Eleven.

It was a point upon which the two Forms could not be expected to agree, and they did not agree. The suggestion of an independent Remove eleven had been made and had met with general approval on the part of the Removites.

There was a buzz in the Remove-room as the chums of Study No. 1 entered in a body.

"Here they come!" Bulstrode looked towards the newcomers with a scowl upon his brow. Before Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry came to Greyfriars he had been cock of the Remove, and his word had been law in the Form-room. Now things were changed. Bulstrode was little better than a bully, at the best, and the Form had found new leaders. Harry Wharton had lived down the unpopularity his temper had at first excited, and was now looked upon as the head of the Form.

"Here they are!" said Skinner. "You're late, you bouncers!" "Sorry!" said Harry Wharton. "The question is," said Bulstrode, "about electing a Remove captain."

"Hear, hear!" said Hazeldene. "Let's get out a list of the candidates, and then let's have a show of hands. That's the businesslike way to proceed."

"Good for Vaseline!"

"Go it, then!"

"The first question is, how many candidates? Every chap who thinks he's qualified to shine as cricket captain of the Remove is hereby requested to get up on his hind legs and say so," said Hazeldene.

"Well, I'm one," said Bulstrode, coming forward with a rather aggressive glare; "I'm a candidate, and chance it." "I'm another!" said Bob Cherry, stepping towards him. "And Harry Wharton's another."

"Stand up and show yourself, Wharton."

"Here I am!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, ring off, Bunter!"

"Look here, I'm going to speak! I'm a candidate!"

"What!"

Bunter blinked defiantly at the amazed Removites.

"I'm a candidate!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Chairman, I insist upon a show of hands for me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I don't bat as well as Cherry, perhaps, but you should see me bowl!"

"Yes; I'd like to see you—through a telescope!" said Nugent. "I shouldn't like to be within reach of the ball."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Who proposes Bunter?" demanded Bob Cherry, in a businesslike tone.

"There was no reply. Nobody seemed anxious to propose the Owl of the Remove for cricket captain. Bunter blinked round him indignantly.

"I propose myself!" he exclaimed. "I insist that that's in order."

"Oh, very well," said the chairman, grinning. "Bunter proposes himself. Any seconder?"

Another chilling silence.

"I second myself," said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Bunter seconds himself. Hands up for Bunter!"

A fat hand went up—and then another. The first belonged to Billy Bunter—and so did the second. The fat junior stood with both hands in the air, but no other hand went up.

"How's that?" grinned Nugent.

"Out!"

"I say, you fellows, you don't know what you're missing, you know. As cricket captain, I should raise an extra subscription, and stand a ripping feed on the occasion of every match."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, you're at liberty to make silly asses of yourselves if you like."

"Ring off, Bunter. You're dead in this act."

"Any more applicants? Now, then!"

There were no more coming on—Bulstrode, Wharton, and Cherry were the only candidates.

"Good!" said Skinner. "Now we'd better proceed to the election."

"Right-ho!" said Nugent. "Hands up for—"

"Oh, rats, let's proceed in order!" said Skinner. "You have to appoint tellers first, as there's such a crowd of voters. Then I think the candidates ought to make a speech."

"Only one between them?"

"Ass! A speech each."

"Very well, let them make a speech each," said Nugent resignedly.

"You hear, you chaps? You're expected to make a each peach—I mean a speech peach each—that is—"

"Oh, shut up, and let them talk!"

"You first, Bulstrode, as the oldest and ugliest," said Bob Cherry.

Bulstrode gave the facetious Bob a far from amiable look.

"I haven't much to say," he began.

"Well, that's a jolly good thing, anyway," said Nugent.

"Shut up!"

"Order!"

"Get on, Bulstrode!"

"I haven't much to say. I think I ought to be captain, not only because my cricket's the best in the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha!"

"But because I'm the oldest fellow in the Form."

"And ugliest," said Bob Cherry, sotto voce.

"Shut up, Cherry!" said Skinner.

"Keep these painful truths for a more fitting occasion. Get on with the washing, Bulstrode."

"I'll punch that rotter Cherry's head!"

"I don't think!" laughed Bob.

"Oh, don't you!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"We'll see about that."

Bulstrode strode forward, and threw his whole weight upon Bob Cherry. The next moment the two fell to the floor, and commenced to pommel away at one another for all they were worth.

The rest of the Removites continued to argue amongst themselves, and very soon pandemonium reigned in the Remove-room.

Bob Cherry and Bulstrode went at it hammer-and-tongs, and it is quite possible that injury might have been done had not Harry Wharton pulled the two apart.

"Stop this row!" he said. "We want to get on with the election."

"I'll smash him!" roared Bulstrode.

"I'll slaughter him!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, shut up!" said Skinner. "You can settle your disagreements afterwards. Now, Bulstrode, have you any more reasons why you think you ought to be captain of the Remove?"

"Yes, I have!"

"Well, get finished, then. We shall have to turn out the gas here in another couple of hours, you know."

"I'm the oldest fellow in the Form, and was captain of the Remove till those rotten outsiders shoved themselves in. I ought to be cricket captain. That's all."

"About enough, too," remarked Russel.

"The enoughfulness is terrific," said

the nabob; "Bulstrode has made an esteemed and honourable, rotten speech—"

"Oh, cheese it, Inky!"

"Next man in—I mean, next speech, and for goodness' sake buck up! I don't see why the Remove should stand here like a lot of patient little lambs to be jawed at," said Hazeldene.

"Well, stop jawing, then," said Skinner. "Your jaw next, Cherry."

"I haven't much to say—"

"H'm! The candidates tie on that point," said Russell.

"I haven't much to say—"

"There's nothing original about that remark, Cherry, and you needn't trouble to keep on repeating it."

"I haven't much—"

"You haven't much sense, I think," said Skinner. "For goodness' sake come to the point, and give us a rest!"

"If you are looking for a thick car, Skinny—"

"Cherry's finished. Next man in!"

"I haven't finished. I haven't started yet—"

"Well, you ought to have. We've heard enough, anyway. Now—"

"Look here, I'm going on, so dry up! I haven't much to say. Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I haven't much to say, but here it is—I play better cricket than Bulstrode, and I'm not half so conceited as that bounder is—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I think I should make a better cricket captain. I'd do my best, anyway, and you wouldn't find me spoiling my mind by smoking cheap cigarettes on the sly, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's one for you, Bulstrode!"

"That's how I stand," said Bob Cherry. "I think I should make a pretty good skipper. You can elect me or not, as you like. That's about all."

"Then for goodness' sake shut up!" said Hazeldene. "Come and jaw, Wharton, if you want your turn!"

"I don't particularly want—"

"Oh, come and get it over!"

"I haven't much to say—"

"My hat! They're all in the same boat! The rotters haven't much to say, and they're taking up the whole evening to say it."

"I am putting up as candidate for cricket captain of the Remove—"

"We know that already—"

"Because I think I should fill the post pretty well, better than Bulstrode, anyway. A cricket captain who smokes cheap cigarettes is no good, and Bulstrode does."

"Mind your own beastly business!" snapped Bulstrode.

"It is my business when you want to take the lead in the Form cricket!" retorted Harry Wharton. "The first duty of a cricket captain, I suppose, is to keep himself fit. You don't do that. About Cherry I've nothing to say—I've no doubt he'd make as good a captain as I should, if not in one way, then in another—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I don't want to brag about my cricket, but I believe I play a pretty good game, and you've seen me play for yourselves, anyway. If you elect me, I'll be as good a skipper as I know how, and I'll make it a point to get the eleven into first-class form and lick the Upper Fourth."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's about all!"

"Good!" said Skinner, when the cheers had died away. "Now put it to the vote. Cherry's my candidate, but

give every man a chance. Hands up for Bulstrode!"

About a dozen hands went up. Bulstrode looked round with a scowl. Even those who voted for him were mostly the smaller Removites, who did not venture to back up his rivals with the bully's eye upon them. It was perfectly clear that the one-time cock of the Remove had no chance. There were enough against him to give the other two candidates each a majority over his party.

"That settles Bulstrode!" said Skinner. "It's between Cherry and Wharton. Bulstrode, old chap, you're dead in this act!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode; and he swung out of the room with a scowl.

"Now for the others," said Skinner. "His lordship is offended, but I dare say some of us will manage to survive it. Hands up—"

"Wait a bit!" said Harry Wharton,

settle the question on our cricket form. We can get up a scratch match tomorrow afternoon between two Remove elevens, with Bob Cherry on one side as skipper, and myself on the other. The skipper who makes the best show to be elected captain of the Remove team."

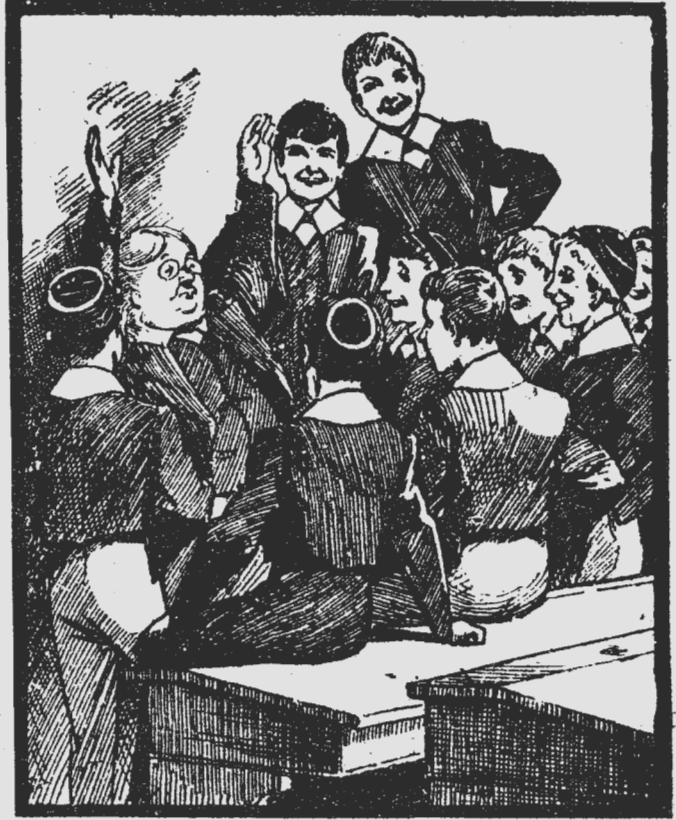
There was a cheer at once.

The suggestion just "jumped" with the ideas of the Remove, and it was evident that it would be unanimously adopted. The contest, too, promised some excitement for the Removites. Bob Cherry slapped Harry Wharton on the back.

"Good for you, Harry! I'm agreeable!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Suggestion's adopted unanimously!" said Skinner. "The election's suspended for the present; Bulstrode's knocked out, and Cherry and Wharton are going to settle the question on the cricket-pitch. Gentlemen of the Remove,



"Hands up for Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry. A fat hand went up—and then another. The first belonged to Bunter—so did the second, but no other hand went up.

interposing. "I don't want a show of hands against Bob Cherry."

"Are you withdrawing, then?"

"No, not exactly that, either. I've got a suggestion to make—"

"Oh, get it over, then, for goodness' sake!"

"Go it, old fellow! said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "You shut up, Skinny! You want to do all the talking. Give a chap a chance!"

"Oh, if that's all I get for backing you up, Cherry—"

"Cheese it! Go ahead, Wharton. I don't want a show of hands against a pal, and if there's any other way—"

"This is my idea," said Harry Wharton. "It's between Cherry and myself, that's admitted. My idea is to

this meeting is now over, and I'm off to my study for some tea!"

And the meeting of the Remove broke up.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Captain of the Remove.

THE next day the talk of the Remove was of the coming test-match. The two candidates were to captain rival elevens, and they were busy selecting their teams.

There were plenty of good cricketers in the Greyfriars Remove, and it was not hard to find a twenty-two capable of putting up a good game. In Harry's team, distinguished by red-barred caps,
THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 242.

Hurree Singh played, while Nugent entered the ranks of Bob Cherry's eleven.

When the time came to pitch the stumps, the Remove crowded down to the cricket ground, and they were surprised and gratified by the general interest Greyfriars appeared to take in the match.

Wingate was there, to look on, with several of the Sixth and Fifth, and the Remove, of course, was there to the last fellow. Even Billy Bunter had come down to blink through his big glasses and cheer.

It was a glorious afternoon, sunny and quite dry, and ideal weather for the grand old game. There was a cheer from the crowd when Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry tossed for choice of innings.

Bob Cherry looked very fit, with his long limbs and well-set head, and his blue-striped cap stuck on the back of his thick, curly hair. Harry Wharton, too, was in fine form—handsome, athletic, quiet-looking, but very determined.

Bob Cherry won the toss, and elected to bat first. A single-innings match had been agreed upon; for there was no time for a full match to be played in an afternoon.

Harry put Hurree Janset Ram Singh on to bowl against Bob Cherry, who opened the innings with Nugent. The over gave Bob Cherry seven, and he finished at the other end of the pitch, so that he still had the bowling. Harry Wharton took the ball from the Indian rhabob, and went on to bowl.

"Go it, Wharton!" came an encouraging shout.

"Play up now, Cherry!" Harry Wharton bowled. Bob Cherry played the ball, and it dropped on the crease as dead as a doornail. Again and again he simply stopped the ball, and then at the fourth he snicked it away through the slips for two.

Bob still had the bowling, and he was looking very serious. Harry's bowling was of a quality seldom met with in a junior form, and Bob Cherry realised it.

Down came the ball again. It looked a rather easy thing this time, and Bob Cherry swiped at it for a boundary; but that boundary didn't come off. The ball curled in under his bat in a curious way, and there was a clatter—and his balls were on the ground.

"How's that?" roared the Remove. And the umpire's laconic "Out!" was hardly needed.

Bob Cherry made a good-natured grimace, and carried out his bat for a

total of nine. He grinned at Harry Wharton as he passed him.

"Well done!" he said. And Harry smiled back.

There was nothing like malice in Bob Cherry's sunny nature, and he showed no annoyance, though he had gone in hoping to make at least twenty or twenty-five.

Next man in stopped Harry's last ball, and then Skinner bowled. The Blue Caps batted pretty well for a time, totting up a fair average of runs. But when Nugent, the best batsman after Bob, went on, Harry took the ball again. He did not exactly like bowling against his chum; but there is no friendship in cricket. He went on to bowl, and did his level best.

The first ball of the over was stopped dead on the crease, as in Bob Cherry's case. The second ball found a resting-place among the "timber," and Nugent stared dismally down at a wrecked wicket.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wingate. "That kid Wharton bowls like a county crack! He will be a credit to Greyfriars yet—though one wouldn't have thought it when he first came here."

Nugent tucked his hat under his arm and walked away.

"What price duck's eggs?" called out Bulstrode.

"Well, you ought to know," said Nugent cheerfully.

"Yes, that is extremely trueful!" Hurree Singh exclaimed. "The honourable Bulstrode is a cricketful dealer in the esteemed eggs of the duck."

"Next man in!"

The next man in looked out very carefully for the third ball of Harry Wharton's over. But his care availed him little, for the ball came down like lightning and scattered his bails before he knew what was happening.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Next man in!"

The disconsolate batsman vacated the wicket, and Russell went in. Russell's wicket joined the great majority a few moments later. There was a roar of delight from the spectators.

"Well bowled!"

"The hat-trick!"

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton ceased bowling with that over. He did not wish to take too much of the game for himself, and he had done enough to show his quality. The innings petered out for a total of forty-four runs; not at all bad, under the circumstances.

Wingate tapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder when the field came off.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Keep that up, my boy. We shall see you in the First Eleven of Greyfriars one of these days."

The first innings was over earlier than anyone had expected; a result due more to Harry Wharton's bowling than to anything else. If he batted as well as he had bowled, there was not much doubt as to whom the Remove would select as cricket captain for the season.

Harry opened his innings with Hurree Singh and Skinner. Bob Cherry and Nugent, with the ball, made short work of them, and they both retired within a few minutes of one another with a total of 9 to their credit. Then Trevor was bowled for 2 by Bulstrode, and Hazel-dene's wicket was the next to fall, for 1.

Four down for 12 was the figure when Harry Wharton went on to bat, with Santley at the other end.

There was a general movement of interest now. Most of the spectators present had seen Harry Wharton bat before, but practice was very different from a test match upon which a cricket captaincy depended.

How he would shape at the wicket on this occasion was an interesting problem, and all the Greyfriars' fellows present were interested.

He faced Bob Cherry's bowling with perfect coolness, and though the first over proved a maiden, it showed that Wharton knew how to keep his end up.

Santley's wicket fell to Nugent's bowling, and then Bob Cherry bowled to Harry Wharton again. And now Harry let himself go. It did not matter what kind of ball Bob sent down, they all seemed the same to the batsman. Fast and slow, lob and yorker, he hit them all over the field.

The Blue Caps had enough leather-hunting during that single over to last them a considerable time, and at the end of it Harry Wharton, with 17 runs to his credit, still had the bowling, and looked as fresh as a daisy.

"By Jove!" said Wingate.

And the Remove were cheering. And even Dabney, Temple & Co. could not quite forbear a cheer to the splendid batting of their rival.

And Harry was still batting well. His side were seven down for 40, and he was still going strong. Another wicket down, and a new man in. But now Harry had the bowling again, and he proceeded to make hay of it.

A 3, and then another wicket down. Nine down for 43!

Last man in, and 2 runs wanted to win! Harry was batting again. Down

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came the ball from Bob Cherry, as dangerous a one as he could make it.

Harry Wharton stepped out to it and swiped.

The merry click of bat and ball was followed by the flight of the leather—away, away, where the eye strained in vain to follow it.

There was a roar. It was a boundary, and the game was won—well won, and Harry Wharton not out!

"Well hit!"
"Hurrah!"

The level green swarmed with fellows. Harry Wharton was rushed off the field in the midst of an excited crowd. Wingate slapped him on the back, and the Remove cheered him to the echo. It was the hour of triumph for Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry was the first to shake hands with him.

"You've won, old fellow!" he remarked, as they went in to change out of their flannels at last. "It was a complete do, and I don't complain. You're far and away the better cricketer of the two."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry.

"I mean it; you're captain."

"The Form will have to decide that."

"Oh, they won't take long about that!" said Bob Cherry, laughing.

And Bob Cherry was right. At the meeting in the Remove-room after the match, every member of the Lower Fourth Cricket Club turned up, and there was no doubt whatever as to what the general verdict would be.

Harry Wharton's name was on every lip. The splendid quality of his cricket had banished the last vestige of the old prejudice against him.

Nugent stood up and proposed Harry Wharton in the midst of ringing cheers. His voice was hardly heard for the cheering, and when he called for a show of hands, almost every right hand in the room went up.

Then somebody called for a show of hands for Bob Cherry. The number that went up was so few that Bob's backers did not trouble to ask for a count to be made. The majority for Harry Wharton was overwhelming.

Nugent jumped up again.

"Wharton has it!" he shouted.

"Hear hear!"

"And anybody who has anything to say against it, let him now shut up, and for ever hold his peace," concluded Nugent, rather vaguely.

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton was looking rather red. He was elected captain almost unanimously, but it was his chum who had been left out.

"I say, chaps—"

"Speech—speech!"

"Silence for the captain!"

"I say, I'm awfully pleased and honoured—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But, upon second thoughts—"

"Hallo!"

"As a matter of fact," went on Harry, "I'd rather Bob Cherry were elected captain—he'll make a better one than I shall; and besides—"

"Rats!"

"I tell you I'd rather; Bob Cherry is the man!"

"Leave it to Cherry!" exclaimed Skinner. "Now, then, Cherry-ripe, what have you got to say? Do you accept Wharton's offer?"

"No," exclaimed Bob Cherry emphatically, "I don't!"

"But—" began Harry.

"Nuff said, old chap! I know what you mean, and I appreciate it, but you're the man for Remove captain, and if we had an election over again I'd vote for you. It's settled. You're captain. Three cheers for the cricket captain of the Remove!"

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

The cheers were given with a will, till the Remove-room rang again. And as Hurree Singh said afterwards, the cheerfulness was terrific.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter's Misfortunes.

THE next day Harry Wharton selected twenty-two Removeites for a trial match, leaving himself out. Bob Cherry captained one eleven and Nugent the other. Bob Cherry's side batted first, and Harry had made him a present of Billy Bunter.

Bob opened the innings with Billy. The fat junior swaggered to the wicket with a very important air, and took up his position. Nugent put Hazeldene on to bowl against Bunter's wicket.

Hazeldene was a moderately good bowler. He would not have had much effect upon Harry Wharton, but Billy Bunter was an easy prey.

The fieldsmen looked on, grinning, as he went to the pitch, and the waiting batsmen watched the proceedings with great interest.

Billy Bunter blinked at them, and blinked at the bowler.

"Over!"

The ball came down. There was a fiendish yell from Billy Bunter. His bat clumped down on one leg, and the fat junior hopped on one leg, clasping the other with both hands, and executing a savage dance that would have excited the envy of a dervish.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, ow, wow!"

"How's that?" yelled Hazeldene.

"Out," said Wharton—"leg-before-wicket!"

"Ow, ow, wow!"

"Get off the earth, Bunter!"

Bunter left off nursing his leg at last, and lowered it gingerly to the ground. It had received a shock, but it was not hurt so much, after all. The fat junior blinked at the cricket captain with almost speechless indignation.

"Did you say 'Out,' Wharton?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Well, of all the cheek! I wasn't ready."

"You heard me call 'Over!'"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I suppose I might be allowed a minute to get ready. If you're going to be so particular, I'll be more careful next time, though."

"There's not going to be any next time."

"I say, Wharton, that was only a trial ball, anyway."

Wharton burst into a laugh, and signed to Hazeldene to bowl again.

"I'll give you another chance, Bunter."

"Right-ho! I'll show you something like batting this time."

Hazeldene grinned as he grasped the ball again. Billy Bunter took up his

position, and was careful this time not to place his legs before. He was so careful, that he kept well away from the wicket, and to the onlookers it appeared very doubtful whether his bat would interfere in any way with the ball. Still, that was the batsman's business.

Down came the ball, and Bunter swiped at it. His bat struck something—it was the bails from the wicket. But the shortsighted junior was not aware of that. He knew he had hit something, and he ran. The ball whipped his middle stump out of the ground, and laid it beside the bails, but that was nothing to Bunter.

He ran.

A roar of laughter rose on all sides. Mingled with it came a sound of clapping hands and a girlish:

"Bravo!"

The Greyfriars fellows looked round in surprise. Half a dozen girls were standing by the ropes looking on, and evidently in great admiration of Bunter's exploit.

They were recognised at once. Hazeldene's sister Marjorie was there, with her friends, Clara and Alice, and three others.

They belonged to Cliff House, the new girls' school that had been opened the previous week near Greyfriars. The best of relations were established at present between Greyfriars and Cliff House.

The Remove had all been invited to a party at Cliff House, and had there made acquaintance with Miss Penelope Primrose's pupils, and they had become very good friends.

Billy Bunter heard the handclapping. He saw the Cliff House girls as he ran, and their applause elated him. The other juniors simply shrieked.

Miss Marjorie & Co. thought they knew something about cricket, and, to show their knowledge, they were cheering Billy Bunter, who had knocked his own bails off, and was out, but, like Charley's Aunt, was still running.

"Bravo!" trilled Marjorie.

"Well hit!" exclaimed Clara.

"Good man!" cried Alice.

"Hurrah!" chorused the rest.

Bob Cherry put his hands to his sides and roared.

"Why don't you run, Cherry, you ass?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! You're out!"

"Out?"

"Can't you see your wicket's down?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Two or three fieldsmen took Billy Bunter by the shoulders, and gently but firmly marched him off the field. The fat junior went off disconsolately. He could not quite understand yet what had happened to his wicket, and he was rather inclined to think that there was some japing about it.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh went on in Bunter's place. The nabob was a good batsman, and Hazeldene's bowling made no impression upon him; and at the change of ends Nugent in vain bowled to Bob Cherry.

Wun Lung was in Nugent's team, and he had been put to field in the slips. No one supposed for a moment that he would be of any use, and to that fact Bob Cherry attributed what happened.

He had cut away a ball, and was running, when there was a roar from the crowd:

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

The diminutive figure of the Chinese had fairly leaped into the air, and the leather clicked into the palm of his hand.

Bob Cherry stopped short, and stared at the Celestial in amazement.

Wun Lung grinned genially. The ball

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went up from his hand skyward, and came down straight as a plumbline to his palm again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "How's that?"

"Out!"

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Who'd have thought it?"

There was a fresh sound of hand-clapping from the girls.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Marjorie. "Well bowled!"

"Well bowled, indeed!" trilled the rest.

And the juniors shrieked. The batsman had been caught out, and to hear the bowler thus cheered was distinctly diverting. It had been a difficult catch, and nothing was due to the bowler—in fact, most of the fellows set it down to a fluke on the part of Wun Lung.

But Wharton thought differently. He recalled the little Chinese's wonderful skill in every variety of gymnastics, and the almost uncanny facility he showed in every kind of juggling. That curious skill was probably proving useful to him in fielding.

He could catch a ball under almost any circumstances, and it occurred to Wharton that Wun Lung would be a dangerous man in the field. He determined to watch the little Chinese carefully. The Remove eleven would have enough good batsmen, and bowlers, too, and a strong fieldman would be a great acquisition.

And Wun Lung showed that it was no fluke.

Two batsmen in succession were caught out in the same over, and it was the little Chinese who accounted for both of them.

The Removites, surprised as they were by the unexpected development on the part of the little Celestial, cheered him heartily; and the Cliff House girls cordially joined in the cheering, though the object of it on their part was the latest batsman who had been sent back to the pavilion. But a little mistake of that kind did not matter.

Third man out closed the play for the time, as it was nearly time for dinner. The trial match was to be resumed afterwards, at the point where it had left off. Harry Wharton guessed that the Cliff House girls had had some object in coming over, besides that of watching the play, and he was right.

As the cricketers came off the field, raising their caps very politely to Marjorie & Co., Hazeldene's sister exchanged a glance with her friends, and all the girls assumed expressions of gravity and importance. It was evident that something unusual was coming.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Cricket Challenge.

"SO glad to see you over here," said Harry. "It's awfully jolly for the schools to be so close together, isn't it? You're interested in cricket?"

Marjorie smiled loftily.

"Of course! We play cricket!"

Harry Wharton almost gasped. Remembering the points in the game which had earned the applause of Marjorie & Co., he could not help wondering what kind of cricket they played at Cliff House.

"My goodness!" said Clara. "Why, of course we play cricket! Marjorie is a lovely batsman—I mean batswoman."

"I'm sure of that," said Wharton, feeling that he was speaking the strict truth, for he had no doubt that Marjorie was lovely at the wicket in at least one sense of the word.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "I

—I should awfully like to see you chaps—I mean you girls—play cricket."

Nugent went off into a sudden shriek, and Bob Cherry glared at him. Nugent tried to turn his laugh into a cough, and nearly choked in the process.

"That's just what we want," said Marjorie triumphantly.

"Oh, we'll come! It will be—be awfully interesting."

"Ah, you don't understand yet. You don't know what we've come over for," said Marjorie. And all the girls smiled.

"To pay us a visit, I suppose," said Hazeldene.

Marjorie shook her head.

"Yes, of course; but something else as well. You'll never guess, so I may as well tell you. We've brought over a challenge."

"A—a—a which?"

"A challenge. Who is your cricket captain—I don't mean of the school, but of the Remove. Of course," said Marjorie gravely, "we couldn't play a senior team. The Sixth Form would beat us easily."

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, certainly. Wharton's cricket captain."

"And Nugent's secretary."

"Then you're the persons I want to see," said Marjorie. "I'm the cricket captain of Cliff House, and Clara is secretary of the Cliff House Cricket Club."

"My—my hat!"

"All these girls are playing members," said Marjorie, with a wave of the hand.

"And—and we are in—ripping form." She stole a glance at Wharton, as if to see whether that was the correct term, and as he did not smile, she concluded that it was.

"We're in ripping form this season, and we can make things—things—things—Oh, dear, I can't remember the word!"

"Hum!" said Clara.

"Yes, that's it. We can make things hum. There is no other girl's school near Cliff House, so we can't fix up any matches with girls—and, besides," went on Marjorie confidentially, "girls, as a rule, don't play cricket well. They don't know much about the game. And, of course, we don't want to waste our time fooling with a lot of—of—of—"

"Butterfingers," said Clara.

"With a lot of butterfingers," went on Marjorie. "We would much rather play a boys' team, and have a real match worth fighting for. So we've come to challenge you. Of course, it's only fair to warn you that we've made a close study of the game—Goodness me, are you ill, Nugent?"

"N-n-n-n-n," gasped Nugent, "only—only a sudden spasm. It's all right."

"We've made a close study of the game," resumed Marjorie, looking a little suspiciously at Nugent, "and we're in—in grand form. If you like to decline the challenge till you've got into better form, we don't mind."

"Not at all," said Clara.

"In fact," said Alice brightly, "we want you to be in your very best form, so as to make the match worth playing."

"Exactly," said Marjorie. "Now, do you accept, or would you rather put it off till you are in better form?"

Harry Wharton looked helplessly at Nugent. He would not have wounded the feelings of the girl cricketers for untold gold. But—but to play a match—in the sight of all grinning Greyfriars—

"Let me see," he remarked thoughtfully, at last. "I shall have to consult the secretary about a vacant date."

"My goodness!" said Clara, "I forgot that! Of course, all our dates are open, as we haven't fixed up any match yet."

"Yes, we could meet you any half-holiday," assented Marjorie. "I do hope all your dates aren't full up already, like those at Redclyffe."

"Redclyffe?" said Nugent inquiringly.

"Yes, I wrote a challenge to Redclyffe School, and their secretary replied in a most polite note, and told us how dreadfully sorry they were that all their dates were full," said Marjorie innocently.

Nugent seemed to be in danger of another spasm. Bob Cherry made a curious sound in his throat, as if he were on the point of choking.

Wharton turned a little red. He would gladly enough have replied that all the Remove dates were full, but that would not have been quite correct. And, absurd as a cricket match with Cliff House would be, he could not tell Marjorie an untruth, though he could not help suspecting that the Redclyffe secretary had stretched a point.

"Let me see," said Wharton reflectively. "We have Saturday afternoon this week. But—"

"That will suit us beautifully."

"Of course," said Marjorie, "if you think you're not up to our form, and you don't want to discourage your men by beginning the season with a defeat, don't mind saying so. We shan't mind."

"It isn't exactly that—"

"I hope," said Marjorie, with a trace of lofty scorn in her voice, "I hope that you have no objection to playing a girls' team. I suppose you don't think it wrong for girls to play cricket?"

"Certainly not. It's right—very right. It's a ripping game, and it's bound to do everybody good that plays it, of course. Girls ought to play it as much as boys, if they feel inclined to," said Wharton emphatically.

"Yes, rather," said Nugent, "especially when they make a close study of the game, and get into grand form."

Marjorie looked at him, but his face was quite grave, almost solemn.

"Well, what do you say?" she asked, looking at Wharton again. "Do you accept the challenge?"

"I don't know about the state of the ground for a serious match."

"Oh, we should like to play you on our ground," said Miss Marjorie sweetly. "We have a beautiful ground, where we practice ourselves. We haven't played a match on it yet with anybody."

There was only one answer Harry Wharton could make, without transgressing the unwritten laws of courtesy.

"We'll come, and thanks."

"Very good," said Marjorie delightedly. "Mind, we are going to beat you, so you know what to expect."

"We'll give you a tussle."

"Yes, that's just what we want you to do, so that if we beat you, it will show that girls can beat boys at their own game in a serious match," explained Marjorie. "Now we must run away, or Miss Penelope will miss us at dinner. Good-bye!"

And Marjorie & Co. departed, leaving the Removites looking at one another rather blankly.

"Well, we're in for it now, and no mistake," murmured Bob Cherry. "I shall be glad enough to pay another visit to Cliff House, but—"

"But to play a cricket match—"

"It will be funny."

"Well, I'm jolly glad it won't be here, for all Greyfriars to look-on and cackle," said Harry Wharton ruefully. "We must make the best of it."

And that was evidently the only thing to do. The challenge had been accepted, and the match was to be played.

The Removites went into dinner.

Directly afterwards the trial match was continued. It was a keen game, and in the end Bob Cherry's side won by 6 runs. Then Wharton embarked upon the task of selecting the team to meet the Cliff House eleven.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Match.

BILLY BUNTER pleaded hard to be included in the team to meet the Cliff House. The hospitality of Cliff House appealed to him more than the cricket.

As some of the juniors were not keen on joining a team that was to play an opera-bouffe match, Bunter was allowed to have his way.

A weak Remove team would give the girls a chance, and make it a little less of a walk-over.

So when the time came for the visit to Cliff House, Bunter proudly donned his flannels, which were strained almost to bursting-point when he was crammed inside them.

The story of the girl's challenge had gone the rounds of Greyfriars, and the fellows all took a deep interest in the matter.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, had announced their intention of seeing the match, if they had to climb on the cliff that overlooked the gardens of the school. And most of the Remove who could not accompany the team declared similar intentions.

There was even a possibility that seniors would come along to look on; the general impression being that the match would be a farce from beginning to end.

Judging from the knowledge Marjorie & Co. had displayed of the noble game of cricket, Harry Wharton could not help thinking so himself.

The cricketers walked over to Cliff House in the sunny May afternoon.

"It will be fun, anyway!" Frank Nugent remarked, as they came in sight of the gates. "We shall have a good snigger all round!"

"Well, keep as serious as possible," said Wharton, wrinkling his brows a little. "I shouldn't like the girls to think we were laughing at them."

"Oh, no, of course not! But—Blessed if I know how I shall keep from grinning, though!"

"I feel that the grinfulness will be terrific, my worthy chums!"

"Here we are!"

They entered at the open gates of Cliff House. The playing-field of the girls was very smooth and green, and, besides the painted wooden pavilion, a tent was erected for the accommodation of the Greyfriars cricketers.

Marjorie & Co. received the visiting team with all the gravity due to the occasion. It had been agreed that it was to be a single-innings match, as there would otherwise be no time to play it out. How long the girls' innings would last, however, if the Greyfriars bowlers put forth their strength, might have been calculated in seconds.

"Glad to see you, dear boys!" said Marjorie, with quite a cricket manner, as she shook hands with the Remove captain. "Ripping weather for the match!"

"Yes, isn't it!" said Harry, smiling. "We're going to give you a tussle, you know."

"We'll try to keep our end up," said Wharton gravely, and giving Nugent a severe glance out of the corner of his eye, just in time to avert an explosion.

The boys looked over the Cliff House team with interest. Eleven charming girls, looking very healthy and bright. Marjorie was captain of the team, and

Alice and Clara were her right-hand men—or, rather, right-hand women.

Marjorie tossed for choice of innings, and lost, and the Remove batted first.

"My goodness!" said Clara. "Hadn't we better bat first, Marjorie?"

"We've lost the toss, dear."

"What difference does that make?"

"It's all one," said Wharton quickly.

"We shall be very glad if you would bat first. In—in fact, we'd prefer it."

Marjorie shook her head decidedly.

"Certainly not; we're going to play the game. I hope you are not going to be like many horrid boys, Harry—giving us advantages simply because we are girls. We want to win this game on our form."

"Ha, ha— I mean, of course. We'll bat, then."

"Oh, very good!" said Clara. "But I don't see why we shouldn't bat first, all the same!"

So the Remove opened their innings.

Wharton sent in Bunter and Wun Lung for a start. If the girls could bowl at all, those wickets ought to fall,

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I—I mean, no. It's all right. Go ahead!"

Miss Clara looked puzzled and a little dissatisfied, but she went ahead. The next ball missed Wung Lung—he took good care that it should—and it bumped along the ground towards Bunter's wicket.

There was no danger to the wicket—except from Bunter, but he swiped blindly, and knocked his stumps down. "How's that?" called out Miss Clara triumphantly.

"Faith, and it's out!" said Micky Desmond, who was umpiring.

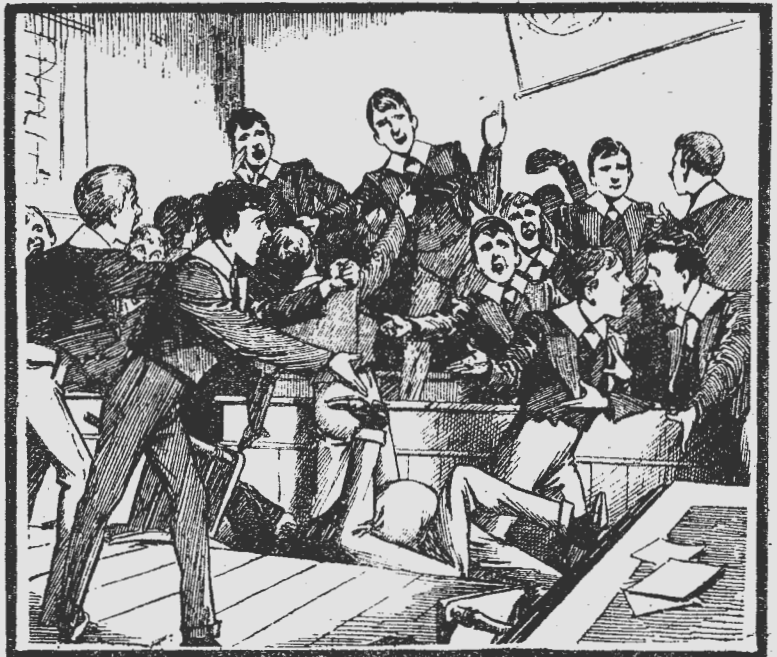
"Hurrah!" shouted the pupils of Cliff House, who were gathered round in an interested crowd. "Bravo, Clara!"

"Well bowled, old chap!"

Nugent, who was almost suffocating with suppressed emotion, went in in Bunter's place.

Miss Clara bowled against him, and the ball flew into the crowd, and there was a general shrieking and scattering.

The rest of the over resulted in nothing



Bob Cherry and Bulstrode pummelled away at one another on the floor. The rest of the Removes continued to argue among themselves, and very soon pandemonium reigned in the Remove-room.

and encourage them a little. Miss Clara was sent on to bowl against Bunter's wicket.

Miss Clara's idea of bowling seemed to be a little mixed. She retired a little distance from the crease, and took a run forward, and let fly with the ball.

Unluckily, it quitted her hand at the wrong moment, and clumped with a fearful shock on the shoulder of Wun Lung, who was standing away from the wicket to give her room.

The unfortunate Chinese gave a fearful yell, and hopped in the air.

Miss Clara looked round in surprise.

"Where is the ball?"

A fieldswoman tossed it back to her. Wun Lung rubbed his shoulder. Clara looked at the poor Chinese indignantly.

"I suppose that is one to us?" she said.

Wun Lung stared, as well he might.

"No savvy, nussy," he murmured.

"Isn't that one to us?" Miss Clara called out to Wharton. "Wasn't it leg before wicket, or something?"

more serious than that, but Miss Clara showed no desire to cross over.

"Why can't I go on bowling from this end?" she asked.

"It's against the rules, dear," said Marjorie.

"My goodness! Does it matter?"

The Removes laughed, and Miss Marjorie assumed a severe expression.

"Of course," she said, with an air of great knowledge, "if you bowled again from this end you would be off-side!"

This explanation, which sent the juniors almost into convulsions, quite satisfied Miss Clara, and she crossed to the other end. She still retained the ball, and when the umpire delicately hinted that it should be handed to someone else, she looked at him in innocent surprise.

"Why shouldn't I bowl again, if I like?"

"Faith, and there's no reason at all!" said Micky Desmond, who was too true an Irishman ever to contradict a lady.

"Bowl by all means, alanna!"

And no one said nay.

So Miss Clara bowled again, and continued to do so for several overs. She was evidently the crack bowler of the Cliff House team, and on several occasions the ball went within a yard or two of the wicket.

It seldom came near enough to the batsmen for them to hit it, but on one or two occasions Nugent knocked it away, and the batsmen ran.

A hard hit sent it to boundary at last, and the whole field shrieked and rushed in pursuit.

Nugent and Wun Lung ran, and ran, and then dropped into a leisurely walk, and promenaded gently between the wickets.

Meanwhile, the girls hunted for the ball.

It was four or five minutes before it turned up, but only five runs had been registered. The batsmen were laughing too much to run.

The ball came in at last.

Whether the fieldswomen deemed it the correct thing to aim at the batsman, or not, we cannot say; but the ball caught Nugent on the chest, and he sat down with a bump on the turf.

"Oh!" he gasped.

The wicketkeepers picked up the ball and knocked his bails down.

"How's that?" shrieked half a dozen triumphant voices.

"Out!" said Micky Desmond promptly. Nugent staggered to his feet.

"Here, I say!" he exclaimed.

"Now, play the game!" said Miss Clara, shaking a finger at him. "You're out!"

"Oh, my hat! All right, I'm out!"

And Nugent carried out his bat. Harry Wharton took his place.

The bowler was changed now, and Miss Alice took the leather.

She made a little run and came very close to Harry's wicket as she delivered the ball against Wun Lung. Her skirt brushed the bails from Harry's wicket, and she gave a little crow of satisfaction. Apparently she did not regard it as being of much importance which wicket she took.

"How's that, umpire?" she called out.

"Out!" said Micky Desmond.

"What!" roared Wharton.

"Out!"

"You utter duffer—"

"Faith, and it's out, Wharton, darling.

Who's umpiring this game?"

"You are, but—"

"Sure, and I'm not going to contradict a lady, at all, at all! You're out!"

Wharton laughed, and carried out his bat. After that, the innings closed very fast. The bowlers had learned that whenever they cried "How's that?" the umpire would respond "Out!" and, of course, they took full advantage of that fact.

The Greyfriars wickets were soon all down for a total of 7 runs, and the Cliff House team rejoiced exceedingly.

Now came the time for the Cliff House innings.

The Greyfriars innings had been finished so quickly that Miss Hazeldene rather regretted it was a single-innings match. However, she did not propose an alteration.

After all, if the juniors were beaten, they were beaten, and that was the main point. And Cliff House wanted only 7 runs to tie; 8 to win, and, considering their success, so far, victory seemed certain.

Marjorie and Clara were opening the innings for Cliff House, and Clara received the first over from Nugent.

She swiped at the ball as if she were attempting to describe a circle with the bat, but the ground got in the way, and the willow jarred and dropped from her hands. The ball whipped the middle stump out of the ground.

"How's that?" sang out Nugent.

"Not out!"

"Eh—what?"

"Not out!" said Micky Desmond obstinately. "A lady's never out first ball of the over."

"Oh, chuck that ball over here!"

Nugent bowled again. Marvellous to relate, Miss Clara struck the ball with the bat, and it went straight into the hands of Wun Lung. The Chinese grinned as he held up the captured ball.

"How's that?"

"Faith, and I'm afraid it's out!"

"Nonsense!" said Miss Clara. "I should have taken several runs if that person had not stopped the ball. I don't know whether you call this cricket. I regard it as persecution, so there!"

Harry Wharton gasped for breath, and made a sign to the fieldsmen not to stop any more balls. After that the batting went on more briskly. Miss Clara and Miss Marjorie took runs, and the fieldsmen sauntered up in a leisurely manner with the ball after they had taken them.

At last Bob Cherry, by sheer force of

habit, sent the ball into the sticks from the long field, and Marjorie was out.

She took her defeat smilingly enough.

Miss Alice joined Clara at the wickets, and between them they did the rest of the batting for that remarkable innings.

At 7 runs the crowd of Cliff House pupils set up a great cheer. It was echoed by a crowd of Greyfriars fellows, who were looking over the wall and admiring that wonderful cricket match. The Cliff House side wanted only 1 run to win, and they had nine wickets to fall. It looked like a certainty.

As a matter of fact, Wharton and Nugent could have taken every wicket without another run being scored, if they had liked; but that would probably not have finished the match, for Miss Clara at least was by no means inclined to admit that she was out when her wicket was down.

And as the juniors knew of no other way of getting a batsman out, they would have found it a very hard matter indeed to win that match. But they were contented to lose it. Not that they actually threw it away. That would not have been sportsmanlike. But they allowed the Cliff House team to play their own kind of cricket, and cheerfully assented to every novelty in the way of rules; and, upon the whole, they enjoyed the game.

The winning run was taken by Miss Clara, who was out several times, according to old-fashioned rules, but still batting away merrily, and all Cliff House set up a shout of victory, and even the Removites, like the Tuscans of old, could scarce forbear a cheer.

And after the match boy and girl cricketers fraternised in a cheerful tea on the lawn, presided over by Miss Penelope Primrose, and the Greyfriars fellows had a very pleasant time indeed.

And when the time came to say good-bye, the Cliff House cricketers saw their visitors off as far as the corner of the road, and they parted with much cordiality.

"I hope we shall play some more matches, and give you your revenge, you know," said Marjorie. "I like cricket ever so much better than tennis, and it is so gratifying to win the match on our form."

And it was not until the Cliff House girls were quite out of hearing that sundry mysterious cachinnations were allowed to escape the Greyfriars cricketers.

THE END.

BETWEEN OURSELVES.

A Weekly Chat between The Editor and His Readers.

FOR NEXT FRIDAY.

Next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR will contain three magnificent long complete stories, every one of which is up to the usual high standard of merit.

The first tale is that dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., and it is entitled:

"THE RIVALS OF GREYFRIARS!"

The rivals of Greyfriars are, of course, the Cliff House girls. Wingate sends a letter to the head-mistress of Cliff House, informing her that a certain por-

tion of the river is on Greyfriars ground, and requesting her not to infringe the Greyfriars' rights.

Miss Primrose refuses to respond to Wingate's request, and when next Harry Wharton & Co. meet their girl chums, they are given the cut direct. You will read with much interest how Harry Wharton & Co. adopted a wheeze for insisting upon the observance of their rights, and how everything came right in the end, and the friendship was renewed with Marjorie and her friends.

The second long complete yarn is that introducing Tom Merry & Co., the chums of St. Jim's. The title of this tale is:

"UNDER LEVISON'S THUMB!"

In this story Levison's cunning is very much to the fore. He professes friendship towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and, believing the cad of St. Jim's to be perfectly sincere, Gussy allows him to give him assistance in a Greek examination, for which he has entered.

Levison is a splendid Greek scholar, and D'Arcy greatly values the help he

gives him, Blake & Co. warn Arthur Augustus against the cad, but Gussy refuses to think ill of Levison. However, he receives a great surprise when the cad reveals himself in his true colours, and realises that he is under Levison's thumb. You will like this story, and will vote it quite one of Martin Clifford's best.

The third story in our next issue is that dealing with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. It is entitled:

"THE ROOKWOOD SPORTS!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. hit upon the idea of holding a sports' day. Needless to say, Tommy Dodd & Co. feel like kicking themselves for not having thought of the notion. They refuse to support the venture, but, after a while, when it is made plain to them that if they enter for the sports, and win most of the events, they will score off the Classics, they hand in their names. Which side comes out on top you will learn when you read this ripping yarn.

YOUR EDITOR.