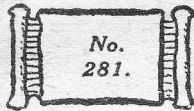


# FATTY WYNN—PROFESSIONAL!

(See inside for a Grand Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.)

# The Penny Popular

Week Ending  
February 23rd, 1918.



No.  
281.

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



## THE BULLY'S INSULT!

(A Dramatic Scene from the Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., contained in this issue!) 23/2/18

# LINLEY'S LUCK!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

*A Magnificent Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Great Expectations.

"TWENTY-FIVE pounds!" said Billy Bunter, rubbing his fat hands with an air of extreme satisfaction. "Twenty-five pounds! It's a lot of money. I wonder what I shall do with it?" Billy Bunter made the remark in Study No. 1 in the Remove at Greyfriars. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent stared at him inquiringly.

"Twenty-five pounds!" said Harry. "Twenty-five pounds!" repeated Nugent. Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles, and settled a little further back in the easy-chair, and stretched out his little fat legs.

"Yes," he said. "It's a lot of money, isn't it? I haven't decided yet whether I shall have a motor-cycle or stand a series of extensive feeds to the Remove. Which would you advise a fellow to do?"

Harry Wharton laughed. "I should advise him to get the twenty-five pounds before deciding," he remarked.

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "Where are you going to get twenty-five pounds from, you young owl?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"  
"I suppose you're expecting a postal-order," Nugent remarked sarcastically. "Is it to be for twenty-five pounds this time?"

"You see—"  
"Perhaps Billy's going to win the Seymour prize," said Wharton, laughing. "That's a money prize for twenty-five pounds, you know, and the award is made to-morrow."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't see why I shouldn't get the prize!"

"I didn't know you'd entered."  
"Well, I have; and, as a matter of fact, it's the Seymour prize I'm thinking of," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I was very careful with my paper, and I haven't the slightest doubt that it will pull off the prize—that is, of course, if the adjudicators play the game. I suppose we can rely on them to do the fair thing?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Well, if you doubt the honour of the adjudicators, Wharton—"

"I don't, you ass; but I doubt whether you'll get the prize. Why, it's a paper on early Roman history and antiquities, and the Fifth are allowed to enter. What sort of a kind of chance have you, you young duffer?"

"I've sent in a jolly good paper."  
"It will be worth seeing, I should think!" grinned Nugent. "I should imagine that the Head will have it framed and hung up in the Form-room, to show people what a chap in the Remove can really do."

"I'm accustomed to jealousy in this study," said Bunter. "I've precious little doubt about getting the prize, if the adjudication is carried out fairly. I know a lot of chaps have entered, but it's brains that a competitor wants in a thing of this kind. I'm rather a dab at Roman history, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"The only thing is," said Bunter, glowering wrathfully at the chums of the Remove. "The prize isn't awarded until to-morrow, and I've run short of money. Would either of you fellows care to advance me a pound off the prize?"

"No takers," said Nugent, with a yawn. "You've got about as much chance of pulling off the prize as you have of discovering the North Pole. Why, Blundell of the Fifth is in for it, I know, as well as Temple and Fry of the Upper Fourth, and a dozen chaps in the Remove! There's Linley—"

"Oh, that factory chap!" said Billy, with a disdainful curl of the lip. "I suppose that blessed scholarship fellow hasn't much chance against a gentleman?"

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"What gentleman?"

"No, of course!"

"You've got jolly curious ideas of what a gentleman is like, Billy. You're not even a gentle worm. Mark Linley is worth fifty of you, and he could walk over you in any sort of an exam."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Harry Wharton crossly. "And if you speak of Linley like that again I'll tweak your ear!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up, Billy!"

"But—"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully. He was always, as he expressed it, getting sat on in this manner, which was very hard on a fellow in his own study. Bunter attributed it all to personal jealousy.

"Well, to change the subject," he remarked, after a pause, "can you chaps lend me anything off that twenty-five quid?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I'm peckish!" said Bunter. "If you would advance a pound, I would stand a feed!"

"Shut up!"

"Ten shillings would do."

Harry Wharton rose and took the fat junior by the shoulder. He jerked him out of the armchair, and twisted him round, and propelled him towards the door.

Billy Bunter wriggled in his grasp.

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"Buzz off!"

"But I—I— Ow!"

Harry Wharton swung him to the door and opened it, and propelled Billy Bunter into the passage. He propelled him along the passage half-way to the stairs, and sat him down upon the linoleum with a bump.

Bunter gave a terrific gasp, like air escaping from a punctured tyre.

"Oo-o-o-oh!"

Harry Wharton grinned and retreated into his study.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Linley Declines.

HARRY WHARTON turned round quickly as the door of his study was kicked open by Bulstrode some little time later.

The captain of the Remove was not on the best of terms with Bulstrode, the bully of the Form; and Bulstrode's sudden entrance, with a crowd at his back, made Harry think for a moment that the visit was a "rag."

He faced the incoming juniors quickly; and Frank Nugent reached for a cricket-bat on the table, which he had just been oiling.

Bulstrode grinned as he noted the instinctive preparations for him.

"It's all right," he said. "We're only coming on bizney."

"The all rightfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur; and Harry was reassured at once as he caught sight of the dusky face of his Indian chum in the crowd.

"Good!" said Wharton. "Come in!"

And the Removites came in.

"We've got an idea," said Bulstrode.

"Only one?" asked Nugent sweetly. "That's not much to go round among so many."

"Oh, rats! Look here," said Bulstrode irritably, as some of his followers indulged in a chuckle at Nugent's remark. "Don't be funny. We've got an idea. We're all in for the Seymour prize, and the result will be declared to-morrow."

"We're aware of that."

"We're all willing to go Co., and share the prize if any chap in the Remove wins

it," explained Bulstrode. "We thought you fellows would like to come in, too."

Wharton and Nugent hesitated. As a matter of fact, they were well known to have an excellent chance, and were generally expected to head the list.

In joining the Co. they would be giving up more than the others. Still, Bulstrode was giving up more than Lacy and the rest.

Wharton did not like the idea. But he was captain of the Remove, and he hated anything that looked like meanness or want of a sportsman spirit.

"What do you say, Frank?" he asked, glancing at his chum.

Nugent nodded.

"I'm willing, if you are."

"Right-ho! I'll come into the Co.," said Wharton. "Of course, if the prize doesn't come to the Remove, it all goes for nothing, Blundell and Bland of the Fifth wouldn't come into it, and it's no good asking the Upper Fourth chaps, either."

Bulstrode shook his head.

"Not a bit. Besides, we don't want so many in the Co.; the prize wouldn't come to much among more of us. There's ten already; that will be just under fifty bob each, if the prize gets into this Form at all. I think it will."

"Good!"

"But what about Linley?" asked Skinner suddenly.

Bulstrode stared at him.

"Linley, what's the matter with Linley?"

"He's in for the prize."

"Linley! Sure?"

"Yes—well, I heard somebody say so."

"Oh, stuff!" said Bulstrode. "That blessed factory chap wouldn't have the check to go in for the Seymour. Besides, what would he do with twenty-five quid if he won it? It's more money than his whole family have ever had since they were brought up in the workhouse, I expect."

Some of the juniors laughed, but all did not. Harry Wharton frowned darkly.

"That's a caddish thing to say, Bulstrode!" he exclaimed.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, don't you begin preaching, Wharton. Anyway, the question is, whether Linley is in for the Seymour, and whether we let him into the Co."

"Better let him in," said Ogilvy. "You see, he's a jolly clever chap, and, as a matter of fact, he's more likely to rope in the prize than most of us."

"Blessed if I like the idea of letting a factory-hand into any Co. I'm in," said the bully of the Remove, with a spiteful glance at Wharton.

"You'd better put it like that to Linley, and there won't be much chance of his coming in," remarked Nugent.

"Better do the sensible thing," urged Skinner. "Linley's got a good chance."

"But is it certain he's in?"

"Yes," said Harry. "I know he is."

Bulstrode grunted discontentedly.

"Greedy cad, then, that's what I say. He's got the Bishop Mowbray Scholarship already, and he might have let the Seymour alone for some other chap."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rot! He had as much right to enter as anybody," said Wharton.

"Well, I dare say he needs the money, or his people do," said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "Still, as he's in it, I suppose we'd better take him into the Co."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Anybody know where he is?"

"Let's look in his study."

"You coming, Wharton?"

Wharton hesitated. He disliked being associated with Bulstrode in anything. The

bully of the Remove had a very unpleasant way of doing things, especially in his dealings with Mark Linley.

At times Bulstrode was decent enough, even to Linley; but whenever he was crossed or provoked, the old gib about the factory-lad was sure to come out.

But Wharton could not very well retreat now. He had joined the Co., and he felt, too, that he could put it to Linley a little more civilly and agreeably than Bulstrode.

"Very well," he said. "I'll come."  
The juniors crowded into the passage, and were soon at the door of the end study in the Remove passage.

Bulstrode opened it without the ceremony of knocking. Mark Linley was sitting at the table busily at work.

The Lancashire lad glanced up as the juniors came in.

"Do you want me?"  
"Yes, if we're not interrupting the Greek," said Bulstrode sarcastically.

"That's all right. I can stop."  
"Good! I hear that you're in for the Seymour prize."

"Yes."  
"You think you are going to get it, I suppose?"

"I hope so," said Mark quietly.  
"Not satisfied with the Mowbray," said Skinner. "Blessed if you're not on the make, and no mistake."

Mark coloured.  
"I suppose I have as much right to enter as anyone," he said. "I need the prize more than you fellows do, too."

Bulstrode laughed rudely.  
"Yes, that's the truth, I've no doubt."

"There are fellows here who have won more than two prizes," went on Mark. "Blundell

very determined. He evidently meant what he said.

Some of the juniors looked at one another sneeringly. Harry Wharton dropped his eyes. He was feeling very uncomfortable. He knew that Linley was a "sportsman," as a rule, and he had always stood up for him. He was disappointed now.

Bulstrode was the first to speak.  
"You won't come into the Co.?" he said.  
Linley shook his head.

"Why not?"  
The Lancashire lad was silent. He did not seem to know quite what to say. Bulstrode's brow grew dark.

"So you want to stand out?" he said.  
"You want to keep your chance all to yourself, and you won't go Co. with the rest of us. And you're the chap who's growled about not being treated as one of ourselves—the chap who wasn't satisfied with being an outsider."

"Jolly rank outsider, I say!" said Skinner.  
"Yes, rather!"

"I suppose you think you've got a better chance than most of us," went on Bulstrode, in his sneering tone. "You think the Seymour is pretty certain to come to you, and you want to keep it."

"No. I don't think I have a better chance than Wharton or Nugent. I think I have less than Wharton, as a matter of fact."

"Then you'd be a gainer by going Co."  
"Yes, but—"

"But you're a greedy cad, and you don't want to risk having to share out the money!" said Bulstrode scornfully.

Mark flushed crimson.  
"It's not that!" he exclaimed. "I—I—"

He broke off.

Very likely I sha'n't win the prize, anyway."  
"You jolly well feel certain about it, or you'd join the Co.," said Bulstrode.

"Nothing of the sort."  
"Then why are you keeping out?"

Linley was silent.  
"Oh, come away!" exclaimed Lacy. "It's no good talking to him. He's got about as much of the sportsman in him as Gosling the porter has. Come away!"

"Well, I suppose you're right."  
Harry Wharton did not speak. He was disappointed. He had not wanted to join the Co. himself, but he had come into it for the sake of "playing the game."

He knew that Mark had made his position in the Form much worse by keeping out. And if he really did win the Seymour prize he was certain to be extremely unpopular.

But Wharton felt that it was no business of his. Linley knew best how to manage his own affairs.

When the Removites had gone, Mark Linley sat for some minutes in troubled thought, and then drew a letter from his pocket.

It was written in a crude, uneducated hand, on common paper, but that hand was very dear to Mark Linley. The letter was from his father.

"Mabel is just the same—no better and no worse. We are hoping for the best."

That was the line that Mark read a dozen times. The face of his young sister rose before him as he read.

A sigh left his lips. He thrust the letter into his pocket, and turned to his work again.

And then for hours he sat there at work, hardly shifting his position, his brain concentrated upon his labour, and his thoughts not allowed to wander to other matters, strive as they would.

NUMBER 11.

**THE "PENNY POPULAR"**

**PORTRAIT GALLERY.**



1

No. 12 NEXT FRIDAY.

**Kerruish, Lumley-Lumley,**

**Buck Finn.**



2

**1. JOE GRIMES**

**2. BERNARD GLYNN**

**3. CLIFTON DANE**



3

of the Fifth won the Nobell and the Dowell, and he's entered for this prize, too."

"Just so," said Harry Wharton. "I've won another prize, too, and entered for this. Bulstrode is talking out of his hat."

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode. "Well, look here, Linley! We've formed a Co. to share the prize if it comes to the Remove. You understand? All the entrants go Co., and take an equal whack if the Seymour comes to the Form at all."

Mark Linley nodded, with a slightly troubled look on his clear, intelligent face.

"I understand."  
"Are you willing to join?"

The Lancashire lad was silent.  
"You get the same chance as we do," said Bulstrode. "It's fair all round. If the prize comes into our Form at all we get about fifty bob each. I suppose you haven't a better chance than another, so you don't risk more."

"No, but—"  
"Don't you think the idea's a good one?"

"Well, yes, but—"  
"Then you join?"

Mark Linley hesitated for a moment—but only for a moment. Then he answered quietly and firmly:

"No!"  
There was a moment of silence in Study No. 13. Mark's face was very troubled, but

"Well?" said Bulstrode.  
"I've nothing more to say."  
"Oh, leave him alone," said Skinner. "He's on the make. I jolly well hope he won't get the Seymour!"

"Same here!"  
"I don't see letting him alone," growled Bulstrode. "If he won't come into the Co. he ought to be made to."

"That's rot!" said Wharton quickly.  
"He's his own master. He can do exactly as he likes in the matter, and he has a right to."

"And you think it's decent of him to keep out of the Co.?"

Wharton was silent. Linley looked at him quickly.

"Do you think I ought to join, Wharton?" he asked.

Harry shifted uncomfortably.  
"I think you ought to do as you like," he replied. "It's a matter for you to settle in your own mind."

"I've got my reasons," said Mark awkwardly. "If—if matters were different I'd be only too willing. But—but under the circumstances—"

"What circumstances?" asked Bulstrode.  
"There's no need to go into it. But I can't join the Co. I'm sorry, if you wanted me to.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**  
**A Tough Encounter.**

**W**HO did that?"  
It was Harry Wharton who uttered the question, in a tone of ringing anger.

He had just come into the common-room, and an inscription chalked in big letters on the looking-glass over the mantelpiece caught his eye at once.

The inscription was large enough for all to run and read, and it was very much to the point.

**"NO FACTORY HANDS WANTED!"**

Wharton's eyes blazed with anger. There were a crowd of Removites in the room, and some of them were laughing, evidently over the notice on the looking-glass.

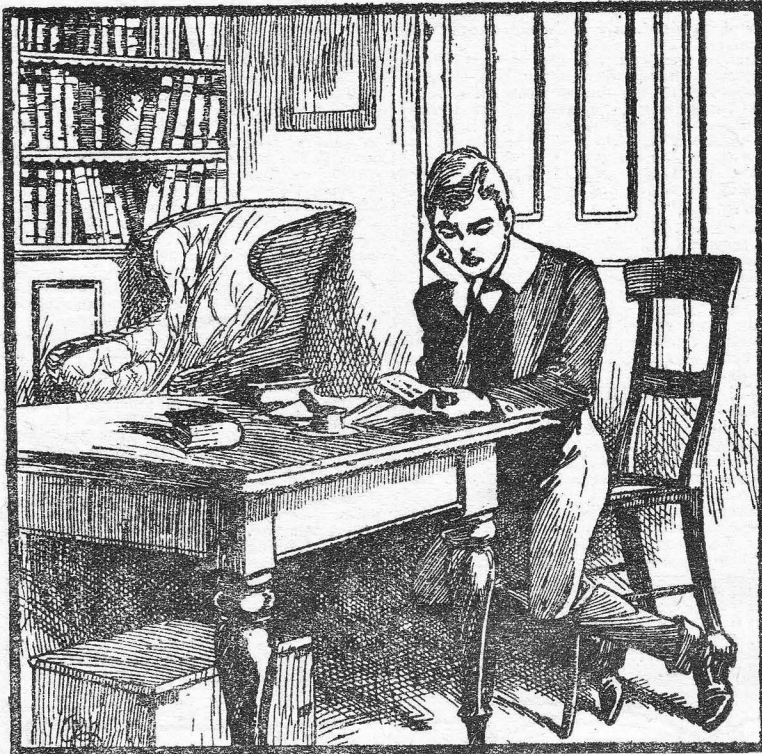
Harry's eyes flashed round upon them.  
"Who did that?"

"Find out!" said Bulstrode.  
"I'm going to! Who did it?"

"Mind your own business!"  
"Was it you?"

Wharton stood directly before Bulstrode, his eyes blazing. The bully of the Remove faced him with his hands in his pockets and a sneer on his face.

"It might have been," he said. "As a  
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"Mabel is just the same—no better and no worse. We are hoping for the best." That was the line Mark Linley read a dozen times.

matter of fact, it wasn't. But I would have done if I had thought of it."

"Cad!"

"Same to you!" said Bulstrode lazily. "I really think, Wharton, that even you might give up the factory chap now. I think he can't prove more clearly than he has done that he is such a rank outsider."

"Hardly!" remarked Snoop.

Wharton turned towards Snoop. The cad of the Remove shrank a little before his glance. Harry's hand fell heavily upon his shoulder.

"Did you chalk that on the glass, Snoop?"

"I—"

"Did you?"

"Mind your own business!" said Snoop savagely. "Bulstrode won't let you bully me, either! I'm going to do as I like, I suppose?"

"Then you did it?"

"Suppose I did?"

"You'll undo it, that's all!" said Wharton grimly. "Take out your handkerchief and wipe that cadish rot off the glass—at once!"

"I won't—I—"

"You will, or you'll put up your fists!"

"Bulstrode!"

The bully of the Remove swaggered forward.

"Let him alone, Wharton."

"Do you stand up for him?"

"Yes!"

"Very well," said Harry, pushing back his cuffs, "we'll settle that, if you like, and then I'll make Snoop clean down the glass."

"I'm ready."

"Then come on."

Bulstrode came on in a fierce attack, and Wharton met him grimly.

He was angry, but his anger did not interfere with his coolness or his judgment. It simply gave an extra energy to his blows.

Bulstrode's hands were swept up, and Wharton's fist came home on his chin, and the Remove bully dropped to the floor as if he had been shot.

The crash of his fall made the floor ring again.

"Oh!" gasped Bulstrode.

He sat up dazedly, nursing his chin, and blinked at Wharton. The captain of the Remove stood quietly, his chest heaving a little, waiting for the burly junior to rise.

Skinner helped Bulstrode to his feet.

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"Go it, old chap!" he said.

Bulstrode's eyes were burning. The heavy blow had shaken him up. But he was savagely determined to keep on.

Snoop quietly slid towards the door. Frank Nugent stepped into his path, and the sneak of the Remove stopped.

"Get back!" said Nugent quietly.

"I want to pass—"

"Get back!"

Snoop looked at him, and obeyed.

"You'll stay here till it's over," said Nugent cheerfully. "You're on in this act, you know, though it isn't your cue yet."

"Look here—"

"Shut up!"

Snoop shut up.

Fellows were pouring into the common-room now, and crowding round Wharton and Bulstrode. The news of the fight had spread as if by magic.

The combatants were already at it again, hammer and tongs.

Bulstrode was fighting desperately, and his huge and heavy fists had come home several times upon Wharton's face. Dark bruises were showing on Harry's skin, and his lip was cut and streaming red.

But Bulstrode received more than he gave. In a few minutes his right eye was closed, and his nose was swelling as if it intended to double in size.

But he kept doggedly on.

"Go it, Bulstrode!"

Wharton smiled bitterly.

The cries of encouragement to the Remove bully came from all sides, and hardly a voice was calling to him. But that, if it influenced him at all, only made him the more determined to lick the bully of the Remove.

Crash!

Bulstrode went down again with a crash that shook the solid floor.

This time he did not rise.

Skinner and Lacy helped him up to a sitting posture, and he blinked dazedly round him. His eyes gleamed at Harry Wharton.

"I'm done!" he said thickly.

Wharton nodded.

"I didn't want to begin," he said, "and I'm glad to finish. Now, Snoop."

"Look here—" began Snoop.

Wharton's hand grasped his shoulder. He was marched towards the grate.

"Now take out your handkerchief, and clean down the glass," said Wharton quietly.

"I won't!"

"You had better!"

Snoop looked round for support. There were glances of sympathy for him, but no one seemed inclined to take up his cause, after the lesson Bulstrode received.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"You are a miserable cad," said Harry. "Linley is worth fifty of you. You wouldn't have dared to chalk that up if he had been here. Clean it off the glass, or else put your fists up!"

Snoop slowly took out his handkerchief. He was quite as big as Wharton; in fact, a little taller as far as that went. But he would as soon have tackled a tiger in the jungle as the Remove captain when he was in an angry mood.

"Oh, all right!" he grunted. "It—it was only a joke."

"You'd better not make any more jokes like that, Snoop. It won't be good for you."

Snoop wetted his handkerchief and rubbed at the glass. Plenty of chalk had been used in putting up the inscription, and the glass was not overclean. Snoop's handkerchief was not in an enviable state when he had finished.

"That will do," said Wharton. "I advise you to keep off the glass in future, Snoop."

Snoop grunted.

Harry Wharton turned away, and met Mark Linley face to face.

The Lancashire lad had just come into the junior common-room, and his expression showed that he had read the inscription on the glass before Snoop had cleaned it off.

"Thank you, Wharton!" he said quietly.

Harry nodded. The other fellows, in a very pointed manner, strolled off and left the two of them standing quite alone.

"Look here, Linley," said Harry abruptly, "I don't want to interfere in your affairs; you know I'm not in the habit of meddling. But why don't you join the Co. over the Seymour prize? The fellows expect it of you."

"I can't!"

"I suppose you know your own business best, and I don't want to urge you," said Harry. "But it's not considered sportsman-like to keep out. It looks as if you're unwilling to take a chance with the rest, or to be chummy. All the other fellows in the Remove have gone Co., and the fellows don't like your standing out."

"I know, and I'm sorry; but it's impossible!"

"Well, I'm sorry," said Harry uncomfortably. "I thought I'd tell you what I was thinking about the matter, that's all. Of course, it's not my business."

"I hope you won't think badly of me. I know the chaps look on it as unsportsman-like. But—" Linley hesitated. "I need the money, Wharton. If I win the prize, I want it. I'm not like the rest of you—I can't afford to share it out. And I need it for a special thing, you understand—something very special."

"Oh, all serene! I suppose you know best. But it's unfortunate."

Mark Linley glanced after Wharton as he walked away. But he did not speak, and he was very silent for the rest of that evening.

To the muttered words intended for his ear, and the endless innuendoes among the Removites, he paid no heed—even if he had heard them. He had other food for thought.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### The Winner.

THE next afternoon the fellows were summoned into Hall to hear the result of the Seymour competition. The juniors poured in with suppressed excitement.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, gave the Remove a superior smile as they marched in. They did not think it likely that the Seymour prize would go to the Lower Fourth.

The Fifth-Formers were of exactly the same opinion as regard the Upper Fourth. Blundell and Bland and their friends were certain the prize was coming to the Fifth.

The Forms assembled in their places. A good many of the Sixth had come in, too, to hear the announcement made.

The Head appeared on the dais, and raised his hand for silence. The buzz of talk in the hall died away.

The juniors listened breathlessly.

Twenty-five pounds was to be awarded during the next few minutes to one of them.

and each competitor hoped that it would be himself.

Mark Linley was standing with the Remove, silent and pale. Harry Wharton glanced at him, and started as he read the tense anxiety in his face.

Linley, though poor, and always careful with his money—the little he had—had never shown any signs of meanness or stinginess. His keenness to win the money prize was a surprise to Harry. Doubtless he needed the money, but—

The Head was speaking.

"You know why you have been called together. It is to hear the result of the competition for the Seymour prize. That prize, founded by an Old Boy of Greyfriars, is awarded once a year to the boy in the Fifth Form or below, who sends in the best paper on Roman history and antiquities. I am happy to say that a larger number than usual have competed for the prize, and that a large proportion of the papers sent in are very creditable—very creditable, indeed."

The Head paused.

The juniors knew that there was bound to be a preamble before the announcement was made, but they wished the Head would "buck up," and come to the point.

Dr. Locke cleared his throat, and went on:

"In all, thirty papers have been sent in. Of these, six are excellent. Two of them are so good that I have had to consider very carefully which to award the prize. These two belong to boys in the Remove."

There was a suppressed cheer from the Remove.

The Fifth-Formers and the Upper Fourth fellows looked at one another in great surprise.

"My only hat!" murmured Temple.

The Remove trembled with eagerness. Whoever had won the prize, if he were in the Co., there was a share for every competitor, and a feed, at least, for every chap there.

"Silence, please!"

The buzz died away. "These papers belong to Mark Linley and Harry Wharton," went on Dr. Locke quietly, "and, as I have said, I have had to consider very carefully between them. I have finally decided to award the prize to Mark Linley."

A deep groan from the Remove interrupted the Head.

Dr. Locke's face flushed with anger. "Silence!" he exclaimed. "How dare you interrupt me!"

There was silence instantly. Mark Linley stood with pale face and beating heart. His eyes were glowing.

"I have decided to award the prize to Mark Linley," went on the Head, with a severe glance towards the Remove. "But as Wharton's paper is so good, and so very nearly equal to Linley's, I shall add a second prize of five pounds, which I shall award to Wharton."

"Hurrah!"

It was a loud and spontaneous cheer from the Remove at that.

Dr. Locke's face relaxed. He allowed the juniors to have their cheer out, and then he resumed.

"I am glad to see that Wharton's success is popular with his Form-fellows. It is a proof that hard study is not incompatible with hard play in the football-field, and in gymnastics generally."

"Good old Wharton!"

"Hurrah!"

"But I am sorry," went on the Head, his voice growing deeper, "to see that the still more creditable success of Mark-Linley does not evoke the same enthusiasm. Linley has won the first prize. He has laboured under many disadvantages not felt by the other competitors, and yet he has succeeded. Every honour is due to Mark Linley. I trust that his Form, composed of many British boys, will recognise his merit, and that no taint of snobbery will prevent them from congratulating him as he deserves."

It was unusual plain speaking for the Head. Some of the Removites looked very uncomfortable, but they shut their lips hard.

"I should be very pleased," said the Head, "to hear a cheer for Linley, as for Wharton."

"Hurrah!"

Half a dozen voices gave that shout. Harry Wharton and his special friends cheering with all their might; but the others shut their lips.

"Linley and Wharton, please step forward!" said the Head.

"If you please, sir—" squeaked a voice.

"Silence, Bunter!"

"But—but I think there's some mistake, sir!"

"What?"

"Yes, sir, I—"

"Stand forward, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter came forward. The fat junior was looking a little uneasy, but at the same time determined. He meant to have justice done.

Dr. Locke fixed a severe glance upon him. "Now, Bunter, what do you mean by stating that there may have been a mistake?" he exclaimed.

"You—you see, sir, I think you said that—that Linley takes the first prize, sir, and Wharton the second!" stammered Bunter.

"That is the case."

"Then I think you must have overlooked a paper, sir."

"What?"

"I—I was entered for the Seymour, sir."

There was a giggle in the Remove, immediately suppressed, as the Head's glance turned in that direction.

"Bunter, I am aware that you were entered for the Seymour prize," said Dr. Locke sternly. "The competition was open to all, so I could not forbid you to enter; but I certainly disapproved of your doing so. You are utterly incapable of sending in a respectable paper on such a subject—if, indeed, on any."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Among the papers sent in," resumed the Head, "there is one that would reflect discredit on a boy in the Second Form. It is a mass of mistakes, incorrect grammar, and slovenliness. That paper bears your name."

"Oh, sir!"

"If it had not borne your name, Bunter, I should have supposed it to be an impudent joke," said Dr. Locke. "But as it did bear your name, I knew that it was the work of the most careless and slovenly boy in the Remove. You may go back to your place."

Billy Bunter went back. Even the Owl of the Remove was crushed at last. The Head's opinion of his historical paper left no doubt on the point that he had not really been overlooked, but had really lost the exam.

A general grin from the Removites greeted him as he wriggled back, but Bunter hardly noticed it. He was thinking of the twenty-five pounds, and of the endless feeds he had already enjoyed in anticipation.

"Wharton and Linley!"

The two winners came forward.

"I congratulate you both," said Dr. Locke.

"Your papers would be a credit to boys in a higher Form, and would not have dis-

graced the Sixth. You have well won the awards, which I now hand to you."

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Bravo, Linley!" shouted Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh, and Tom Brown and Hazeldene joined in. But the rest were silent, save for little Wun Lung, the Chinese, who piped out "Blavo!" with his peculiar accent.

The two juniors thanked the Head quietly, and the school broke up. A crowd of juniors surrounded Wharton as he went out, with the envelope in his hand.

Mark Linley went into the outer hall, his envelope in his hand, and there he drew aside from the others and opened it. His hands were trembling.

It was one of the conditions of the Seymour prize that it should be handed directly to the winner in money, and there were five crisp banknotes in Linley's letter.

Mark Linley had never possessed as much money before—probably had never seen as much at any one time. He rustled the notes in his fingers, with a look of delight.

Bulstrode looked across at him with a sneer.

"Look at the blessed miser!" he said, loud enough for Linley to hear.

Mark Linley flushed crimson, and, trusting the banknotes hastily into his pocket, he turned away. The juniors poured out into the Close. Temple came up to Wharton with a faint grin on his rather handsome face.

"Congratulations!" he said.

"Thanks!" said Harry. "But Linley takes the biscuit."

"Yes, and I'm glad!" said Temple. "I dare say he can do with the tin, and, as I've lost, I'd rather he had it."

"Same here."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, he's gone to gloat over his money!" said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "Blessed if I ever saw such a miser!"

Snoop sniggered.

"He may need it to get new boots and things," he suggested. "His boots are jolly old, and he's wanted new ones all the term. He— Ow!" Leggo my ear, Wharton, you beast! Ow!"

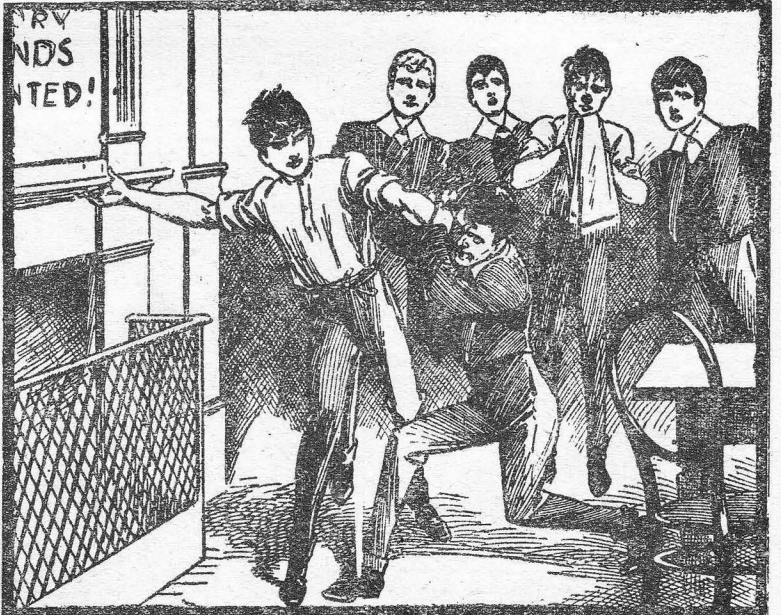
"Shut up, then, you cad!"

"Ow—wow!"

Snoop squirmed away, holding his ear ruefully between finger and thumb, and rubbing it. Wharton's grip on it had been very business-like.

The Removites, instead of going down to the football-ground, were standing about in groups, discussing the award.

The faces of the Co. were mostly dark and



"You are a miserable coward!" cried Harry Wharton. "Linley is worth fifty of you. You wouldn't have dared to chalk that up if he had been here, so now clean it off!"

angry. If Linley had joined the Co. there would have been a substantial little sum for each of them.

They had been willing to take the risk themselves. It was too bad that Linley should have kept out of the Co., and should have been the one to take the prize.

The juniors were annoyed and indignant.

When Mark Linley came out with his cap on a little later, there was a very audible hiss from the group of juniors.

The Lancashire lad flushed, and then his face went pale; but he looked neither to the right nor to the left, but strode on directly to the gates of Greyfriars.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### No Feed!

**M**ARK LINLEY was absent over an hour, and during that time Bulstrode & Co. were not idle. The bitterness of feeling against the Lancashire lad was deepening in the Remove.

The juniors, careless and thoughtless enough for the most part, looked upon the prize Mark had won as simply so much money to be spent.

Linley had refused to come into the company, and so had kept the whole prize when he won it. But that he would "blue" a five-pound note at least in standing a Form feed was a general expectation.

If the Lancashire lad had done so, he might have reinstated himself in the regards of the juniors. But it did not seem to be his intention.

At all events, he had said nothing about it. He had simply gone down to the village immediately after receiving the money, and as yet he had not returned. Bob Cherry, his study-mate, knew no more than the others what he intended to do.

Bob was a jolly and good-natured fellow, not much given to deep thinking. He had been rejoiced to hear that his chum had won the prize.

He naturally expected that a considerable amount of it would be "blued," and, as a matter of fact, he was already making some preparations for a study feed.

Bulstrode looked for Bob Cherry, and found him in his study. Bob was clearing away books and papers off the table, and little Wun Lung was securing the frying-pan.

"Linley come back?" asked Bulstrode.

"Not yet."

"I suppose you're standing a pretty good feed here on the strength of the twenty-five quid?"

"Well, I suppose there will be a bit of a celebration," admitted Bob. "Remove chaps don't win twenty-five pounds every day."

"I suppose the Form are invited?"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then."

Bulstrode scowled.

"Don't think I want to come and feed with a blessed factory-hand!" he exclaimed. "I wouldn't come if I were asked."

"Then what are you grouching about?"

Linley's expected to do the decent thing. It was rotten enough his keeping out of the company. But all the Form will expect a hand in celebrating the prize, of course. Any other fellow would have issued the invitations already."

"Well, that's Linley's business, isn't it?"

"I think it's the business of all of us."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I believe he's gone to the village to order a jolly good feed," said Bob cheerfully. "It's for him to decide whom he asks and whom he doesn't. I can't undertake to do it for him."

Bulstrode grunted and quitted the doorway. Bob Cherry went out a little later, and met Temple, Dabney & Co. in the passage.

"Jolly glad your study-mate has pulled it off, Cherry," said Temple affably. "I'd rather have had it myself—"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"But I congratulate Linley. Where has he disappeared to?"

"He's gone out."

"The Remove don't seem to be very chippy over his success," remarked Fry. "They'd rather somebody else had won."

"Oh, they're a lot of asses!" said Bob contemptuously. "Never mind them!"

"They're saying that Linley hasn't played the game, and that he's acting meanly over the prize," said Fry.

"Rats!" said Bob warmly. "If you say anything of the sort—"

"I didn't say it; the Remove are saying it."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 261.

"Oh, blow the Remove! Look here," said Bob, "Linley has gone to the village to lay in a supply for the feed. You fellows have taken it very decently, and we'd be glad if you came to the celebration."

"Well, we're not in the habit of feeding with Lower Fourth chaps," said Temple loftily; "but on the present occasion—"

"Oh, rather!"

"Rats!" said Bob. "None of your bunkum. You can come to the feed if you like, but no bosh, you know."

Temple grinned.

"All right, we'll come. And thanks!"

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry went his way. He met Hazeldene and Tom Brown. They were talking to Bulstrode, and Bob heard the Remove bully's loud voice as he came by.

"Oh, there's not going to be a feed, or any sort of celebration! You needn't expect anything of the sort from that factory-chap."

"Rats!" broke in Bob Cherry. "There's going to be a stunning feed. Will you two chaps come?"

"What-ho!" said Hazeldene.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Brown. "Glad to be jolly glad that Linley got the prize, too. He's a decent sort, and he deserved it."

"So there's going to be a feed?" said Bulstrode.

"You heard what I said."

The burly Removeite laughed scoffingly.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "I'll believe it when I see it, that's all. And I advise the other fellows to do the same!"

And Bulstrode walked away, leaving Brown and Hazeldene looking rather curiously at Bob Cherry. Bob's face was flushed with anger.

"Don't take any notice of him," he said. "He's wild because he lost, and because Linley won. I don't see why Linley should have joined the company, either, if he don't chose."

"Oh, no! But is it a cert that there's going to be a feed?" asked Hazeldene.

"Of course it is!"

"Oh, all right! But—"

"Isn't my word good enough?" demanded Bob Cherry, who was beginning to get irritated by the dubiety expressed on all sides on the subject.

"Oh, certainly!"

"Then turn up in No. 13 at about half-past four, and you'll find everything ready."

"Good! Rely on us."

Bob Cherry nodded and walked away. He met Micky Desmond and Ogilvy in the passage, and asked them to the feed, and they readily consented.

Two or three more fellows were asked, all willingly agreeing to come, and then they helped Bob Cherry make a collection of crockery and chairs for No. 13.

When that was done Bob began to feel rather anxious about the continued absence of Mark Linley.

He had so taken it for granted that Mark had gone to the village to make big purchases at the tuckshop that no doubt of it crossed his mind.

The only question was, when would the Lancashire lad be back? Bob Cherry looked at his watch several times.

"He must be spending a lot of time selecting the things in the tuckshop, Wun Lung," he remarked.

Wun Lung smiled in his peculiar way.

"What you thinke?"

"I wish I'd gone with him now, to help him carry them."

Wun Lung nodded.

"Might have got them at Mrs. Mimble's, really; only, of course, there's a bigger variety in the village shop, when a chap is standing a really good feed," said Bob thoughtfully. "Mark was quite right to go there."

"Chelly lightee."

"I think I'll stroll down to the gate and meet him. Keep up a decent fire, and have the kettle filled ready, kid."

"Allee lightee."

Bob Cherry left the study. He walked down to the gates of Greyfriars and looked out into the road.

There was no one in sight yet. Bob waited, and whistled to pass away the time. His whistle broke off abruptly as he saw the sturdy form of the Lancashire lad come into sight at last, striding towards the school.

Bob looked a little puzzled as he saw that Linley was carrying nothing. But he concluded that the things were too heavy for a junior to carry, and were being sent.

Mark nodded, with a cheery smile, as he came up to the gate.

"I've been waiting for you, kid," said Bob.

"Yes?" said Mark, a little surprised.

"Where are the things?"

"What things?"

"Being sent on, I suppose?" asked Bob, with a glance down the road in search of Uncle Clegg's little handcart.

Mark Linley looked very puzzled.

"I don't quite catch on," he said. "What's being sent?"

It was Bob Cherry's turn to look puzzled then.

"The grub," he explained.

"The grub!"

"Yes. Haven't you been to the tuckshop, to order the grub for a celebration feed?"

Linley started.

"No," he said.

"No! Where on earth have you been, then?"

"I've been to the post-office."

"Oh!" said Bob.

They walked into the gateway together. There was a very puzzled and uneasy expression upon Bob Cherry's face, and Linley was looking restless and worried, too.

Bob Cherry broke the silence that had fallen between them.

"Then you haven't ordered anything, Mark?"

"No."

"You can get the things at Mrs. Mimble's here; and, after all, it's really better to give the old lady a turn," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "This way!"

"But—"

"There isn't really much time to waste, Linley, if the feed's to come off soon after four," said Bob.

Linley flushed.

"The feed! I don't understand."

"The celebration feed," explained Bob. "It's all right; I've asked the fellows. If you want any more you can soon let them know. The only thing now is to lay in the tommy, and we'll get that done at once. Why don't you come?"

Mark hesitated, the colour deepening in his cheeks.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Sorry! What about?"

"I suppose I'd better be frank. There is not going to be any feed!"

Bob jumped.

"No feed!"

"No."

"But—but—but," Bob stammered helplessly—"but—no feed?"

"I'm sorry. No."

"But—but I've asked the fellows! My only hat!"

And Bob Cherry stared at the flushed face of the Lancashire lad in blank dismay.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Wrathful Guests.

"FAITH, and we're early!"

Micky Desmond came along the Remove passage with Ogilvy, and looked into Study No. 13.

Wun Lung, the Chinese, was there, reading a letter from home—a curious-looking letter in mysterious characters. His ahead eyes turned upon the two juniors as they looked in.

Micky was puzzled. There were no signs of a feed in the study, and Wun Lung was settled comfortably in the armchair, reading his letter.

"Early," said Ogilvy, looking at his watch. "H'm! Still, it's better to be early on these occasions."

"Sure, ye're right. I say, ye heathen, where's Cherry?"

"No savvy."

"Where's Linley?"

"No savvy."

"Where's the feed?"

"No savvy."

The two juniors glared at the Chinese. But for the fact that they had come to a feed in the study, they would probably have dragged him out of the armchair and bumped him on the rug.

"I suppose they haven't got the grub in yet," said Ogilvy. "We'll give them a look in later."

And Ogilvy and Desmond strolled away again. Ogilvy uttered a sudden exclamation as they reached the end of the passage.

"There's Cherry!"

They ran down the stairs to meet Cherry. But when they reached the bottom of the staircase he had gone.

Perhaps Bob was not anxious to meet his expected guests just then. Desmond and Ogilvy looked decidedly puzzled.

In Study No. 13, Wun Lung went on reading his letter cheerfully.

Hazeldene and Tom Brown looked in a few minutes later, and they, too, were surprised to find no trace of a feed—no signs of it excepting the imposing collection of chairs and crockeryware.

"Where's the feed?" asked Hazeldene.  
 "No savvy."  
 "Has Linley come in yet?"  
 "No savvy."  
 "I suppose there is going to be a feed!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"No savvy."  
 And the two inquirers retired. It was time for the feed now, but something had evidently gone wrong with the arrangements.

"We'll give them a little more rope," said Hazeldene.

When the passage was clear, Bob Cherry came along to the study. He entered with a glum face, and his face grew glummer as he saw the heaps of crockery.

In the innocence of his heart, Bob had taken the celebration feed for granted, and had issued invitations with royal generosity. There was likely to be trouble now.

Wun Lung slipped the letter into a pocket in his voluminous garments, and looked up at his English chum.

"Chappee comee askee tea," he remarked. Bob Cherry grunted.

"There's going to be no feed," he said. "Me tinkee—I mean, allee light."

"We shan't want all these things now," said Bob. "Hang it! They'd better be taken back where they belong. I don't know what I'm to say to the fellows. It's past teatime now, and they'll be turning up."

"Velly bad."

"It's rotten! I really don't understand Linley. I've never known him to be stingy before, and it's rotten."

"Velly lotten."

"This study ought to stand a feed, anyway," said Bob Cherry. "I would have rushed off and got some stuff in myself, only I'm stony. I—"

Bob Cherry was interrupted.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were trooping along the passage. They looked in at the open doorway with cheery faces. The usual terms of warfare they were on with the Remove were forgotten now.

Temple had on a nice fancy waistcoat and a new tie, to do proper honour to the occasion. Dabney had brushed his hair, and Fry had put on a clean collar. They meant to keep up the credit of the Upper Fourth.

Bob Cherry gave them a helpless nod.

"Good-evening," he said feebly.

"Good-evening!" said Temple affably. "I hope we're not too early."

"Oh, no; not at all!"

"Or too late," said Fry, glancing round in vain in search of eatables.

"N-n-no!"

"You haven't started yet?"

"No."

"Good!"

"You see—"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"You see—"

"We're willing to be useful if we can," said Temple. "Fry can cook beautifully, and Dab knows how to open bottles and things."

"Oh, rather!"

"You see—see—see," stammered Bob Cherry. "there's been a slight mistake! The feed's off!"

Temple, Dabney & Co. gave a simultaneous jump.

"Off?"

"Yes, I'm sorry—"

"Faith, and what's that?" exclaimed Micky Desmond, coming into the study with Tom Brown and Ogilvy and Hazeldene. "The feed's off!"

"Yes, You see—"

"Ye omadhau! And sure I've refused an invitation to tea in Russell's study because of it!" exclaimed Micky indignantly.

"You see—"

"The feed's off!" exclaimed Ogilvy wrathfully. "Feed's off! I suppose it's a jape; he's got us here like this to make asses of us!"

"Faith, and sure I—"

"You see," said poor Bob, "it's like this. I—"

"I—I!" mimicked Temple. "It's a jape, of course!"

"It's not a jape! You see—"

"Where's Linley? He was standing the feed, wasn't he?"

"No, You see—"

"Faith, and we've been done entirely!"

"Cheeky young spoofer!"

"It's a swindle!"

"Look here, we're jolly well not going to

come here for nothing!" exclaimed Fry.

"Cherry ought to have a lesson!"

"Good egg!"

"Bump him!"

"Here, hold on! You see—"

"Collar the cad!"

"Bump him!"

"Hold on! Help! Ow! Yow!"

Half a dozen pairs of wrathful hands seized Bob Cherry. He struggled desperately, trying at the top of his voice to explain. The disappointed guests bumped him heavily on the floor, and bumped him again.

"Another!" said Temple. "And another!"

"Good!"

"Ow!"

Bump!

Crash!

Bob Cherry crashed against the leg of the table as he struggled, and the table reeled and rocked. The pile of borrowed crockery upon it shot in a stream to the floor.

Crash! Rattle! Bang! Crash—ash!

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's a bill for somebody to pay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The floor was strewn with smashed crockery. Hardly an article had escaped unbroken. The guests trooped out of Study No. 13 laughing loudly. Bob Cherry staggered to his feet, breathless and dusty and dishevelled. He stared in dismay at the heaps of smashed crockery.

"My hat!" he gasped feebly.

Wun Lung chuckled softly. Bob Cherry dropped gasping into a chair, and sat surveying the wreck with feelings too deep for words.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled :  
**"THE FORM AGAINST HIM !"**  
 By FRANK RICHARDS.  
 Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance!

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.**  
**Bulstrode Has It All His Own Way.**

**L**ETTERS just in!"  
 "Any for me?"  
 "And me?"

Mark Linley came into the Hall with an eager look on his face. The afternoon post was in, and the fellows who expected letters were gathered round the letter-rack.

There was an envelope addressed to Mark Linley in a rough handwriting. Bulstrode took it down.

"That is for me!" said Mark quickly.

The Remove bully grinned.

"Oh, yes, I know the fist!" he said.

"Catch!"

He tossed the letter into the air. Linley's eyes flashed for a moment, but he said nothing. He picked up the letter from the floor and opened it, and drew out the rough sheet written in a crabbed hand within.

Standing back against the wall, the Lancashire lad became absorbed in his letter, and oblivious to his surroundings.

Hazeldene came along, and Bulstrode stopped him.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Have you had that celebration feed yet?"

Hazeldene shrugged his shoulders.

"No; it's off!"

Bulstrode burst into a laugh.

"What did I tell you?"

"Really, I don't remember," said Hazeldene.

"I said that Linley never had any intention of standing a feed, and that he was too jolly mean to think of doing anything of the sort," said Bulstrode.

"Well, I suppose he knows his own bizney best."

"Rats! I say that the chap's a rank outsider, and a rotten, stingy Shylock, and I think he ought to be sent to Coventry by the whole Form!"

There was a deep pause.

Bulstrode's words were spoken purposely loudly, for the Lancashire lad to hear. Mark Linley was a quiet and patient fellow enough, but it was never safe to insult him.

always ready to do so if he had a just cause for quarrel. But now he either did not hear or did not heed Bulstrode's insulting words.

"What about sending him to Coventry?" said Bulstrode, growing bolder. "I don't think decent chaps ought to speak to such a cad."

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Snoop. "Mean cad, that's what I say!"

Still Linley gave no sign.

Bulstrode grinned disagreeably. It seemed to him that Linley was pretending to read, in order not to appear to have heard what was said about him.

Where was his pluck?

"A fellow who could win twenty-five pounds in cash and refuse even to stand a study feed to his own chums is a special sort of worm, and I bar him for one!" went on Bulstrode.

"We've stoob the factory, but I'm blessed if I think we ought to stand that!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold your tongue, Bulstrode!" said Harry Wharton, joining the group.

Bulstrode looked at him with a sneer.

"Mind your own business!" he retorted. "I suppose Linley can speak up for himself if he doesn't like my remarks?"

Wharton bit his lip. Truly enough, he had no right to interfere. Mark Linley was big enough to take care of himself if he chose to do so. And if he did not choose—well, it was none of Harry's business.

"Look at him!" said Bulstrode, in his most insulting tone. "Look at the rotter! Standing there pretending to read a blessed letter, because he hasn't the pluck to speak up for himself!"

"Boo!"

"Factory cad!"

Linley made no sign.

Bulstrode stepped towards him and clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder. Mark Linley started, and looked up confusedly.

"What is it—what do you want?"

His voice was strange and husky.

"I suppose you've heard what I said?" asked Bulstrode, surprised by the curious look and tone of the Lancashire lad.

"I—yes—no! Don't bother!"

Bulstrode flushed red.

"Liar!" he said. "You heard, only it suits you to pretend that you didn't! I said you were a cad—a mean cad—and a rank outsider!"

Linley stared at him almost stupidly. Everyone expected his fist to shoot out, and Bulstrode was ready for it. But Mark did not raise his hand.

"Let me alone!" he muttered.

A mocking titter ran round among the juniors. Glances of contempt from all sides fell upon the Lancashire lad—unnoticed. He did not see them.

Bulstrode laughed scornfully.

"So you are going to take that lying down, are you?" he said. "Will nothing stir you? I called you a cad—a mean cad!"

Linley looked at him, and moved away. Bulstrode stared after him in amazement. He could not understand him at all.

The more Linley endured at his hands, the more the Remove bully was determined to provoke him.

Linley had licked him at least twice, and Bulstrode had not forgotten or forgiven it. This was his chance for revenge.

He strode after the Lancashire lad, and grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him back.

"Hold on a minute!" he said sneeringly.

"Let me go!"

"Coward!"

The juniors caught their breath.

Linley stared at Bulstrode for a moment, then wrenched himself free and walked away.

"My hat!" said Bulstrode. "Well, if he likes to go quietly after that, he may! I'm done with him!"

A loud and prolonged hiss from the group of juniors followed Mark Linley. He did not turn his head.

At that moment Mark Linley's cup of sorrow was full to overflowing. He was barred by the Form—shuffled because he would not fall in with their suggestions. If only he could have told them his secret—but he couldn't. It was a secret for him, and him alone. He had wanted the money prize for his sister's sake, but that information could not be imparted to the Removites.

As he walked away, there was a look of grim determination in Linley's face—determination to defy his Form-fellows. Let them do their worst—and still he would not give way. He would fight them all for the sake of his sister!

# HIS FIGHTING COUSIN!

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Early Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Lovell Breaks the News.

**L**OOK where you're going!" Thus Hlooker of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

He had been strolling along the Fourth Form passage when somebody had overtaken him, and, without any warning, cannoned into him and sent him hurtling against the wall.

That somebody was Arthur Edward Lovell. Impoliteness was not a general failing of Lovell's, but the fact remains that on this occasion he was guilty of being most impolite.

He did not stop to apologise, neither did he look round to see exactly what had happened. In fact, Lovell hardly appeared to be conscious of the fact that he had treated Hlooker in a most ungracious manner.

He rushed on, waving a letter in his hand. His face was wreathed in smiles, and there was sufficient evidence to prove that he was excited over something or the other.

Lovell did not pull up until he reached the end study, that famous apartment occupied by the Fistical Four of the Classical side at Rookwood.

Being an occupant of the study, Lovell did not tap on the door. He made a grab at the handle, and hurled his weight upon the door.

Next moment there were sounds of voices raised in bitter anguish in the end study.

"Ow! Yow! My head! Yarooooogh!" "My nose! Grooogh! Yooooop!" Lovell pulled up short, but the sight that met his gaze caused him to roar with laughter.

Jimmy Silver was holding both hands to his head, Raby was dabbing his nose with his handkerchief, whilst Newcome was hopping on one leg.

All the juniors were yelling furiously. The fact was Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome had just been preparing to leave the study when Lovell had made his unceremonious entry.

The result was that the door had come into violent contact with various parts of the juniors' bodies, with disastrous results.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell hilariously. "What the dickens is the matter with you fellows?"

Jimmy Silver gave his chum a wrathful glare.

"You—you silly ass!" he bellowed. "What do you mean by biffing that door against my napper?"

"Sorry, Jimmy!" said Lovell apologetically. "What's the good of being sorry, you bumping idiot?" bared Jimmy Silver. "That won't get rid of the bump on my head!"

"Did it hurt you?" asked Lovell innocently. "Hurt!" shrieked Jimmy Silver. "Let me bang your napper against the door, and—"

But that wouldn't be any good. You can't raise bumps on wood!"

"Look here, Jimmy—" began Lovell. "I reckon we ought to bump the silly ass," proposed Newcome. "We ought to teach him the right way to enter the study."

"What-ho!" agreed Jimmy Silver promptly. "Collar the bouncer!"

Lovell backed away in alarm, and held up his hand for peace.

"Look here, you fellows," he said, "I've got some news for you."

"Hang the news! We're going to bump you!"

Lovell dodged round the other side of the table.

"You silly idiots!" he exclaimed. "Why don't you stop it?"

"We're going to—" "I've told you I'm sorry!" protested Lovell. "I can't say more than that. Besides, I've got some most important news."

"Hang the news!"

"But it's extra special! My cousin—"

"Blow your cousin!"

"But my cousin's coming to Rookwood this afternoon!" explained Lovell enthusiastically.

"You call that good news?"

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"Well, if your cousin is anything like you, he'd better stay away from Rookwood!" he said firmly.

"My cousin is the very image of me!" declared Lovell, with a grin. "We're as much alike as two peas in a pod!"

"What an ugly pair you must make when you're together!" said Jimmy Silver, rather snappily, for the bump on his head was still giving him pain.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Lovell. "You won't be able to do enough for my cousin. You'll go down on your hands and knees—"

"Will I?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver angrily.

"I'm more likely to pull his nose!"

"You wouldn't do anything of the kind. You won't dare—"

"Won't I?" said Jimmy Silver. "You wait until he comes!"

"But he's not coming!"

Jimmy Silver looked up in surprise.

"You silly chump!" he roared. "You said just now that he was coming!"

"I didn't!"

"Why, you said—"

"I said my cousin was coming—"

"Just now you said he wasn't!" snapped Jimmy Silver impatiently.

"I know I did," said Lovell blandly. "You see, my cousin who is coming down this afternoon is a she!"

Jimmy Silver started.

"Why didn't you say so?" he exclaimed sharply.

"You didn't give me a chance," said Lovell. "You jump to conclusions far too quickly, Jimmy Silver. You ought to reason things out a bit before—"

"Oh, cut the cackle and come to the horses!" said Jimmy Silver, whose interest was somewhat aroused now.

"Not having been down to Rookwood before," said Lovell slowly, "my Cousin Hilda thought she would like to pay us a visit."

"Oh, good!"

"She's coming down by the three-thirty train at Coombe this afternoon, and she wants me to meet her and show her the way to the school."

The faces of Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome became wreathed in smiles.

In their eagerness to welcome Cousin Hilda they forgot all about their aches and pains.

"Her wants shall be gratified," said Jimmy Silver, in a dignified manner. "We shall be waiting on the doorstep—I mean, on the platform, for her."

"Oh, rather!"

Raby rubbed his nose ruefully.

"I hope she won't notice my nose," he said.

"She won't be able to help it," said Lovell mildly. "A nose like that would catch anybody's eye."

"It's all your fault!" growled Raby, dabbing his nasal organ. "If you hadn't rushed in like an escaped lunatic my nose would have been all right."

"Impossible!" said Lovell, with a shake of the head. "It was bad enough before the door cannoned against it. I've never seen such a—"

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Look here, Raby—"

"Peace, my infants!" said Jimmy Silver pacifically. "Mustn't argue at a time like this. We've got to meet Cousin Hilda, and give her a ripping welcome."

"Hear, hear!"

"We shall have to get in a good feed."

"Rather!"

"You can do that, Lovell, whilst I go down

to the station," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Newcome can tidy up the study, and Raby can lay the table."

"Rot!" snapped Newcome resentfully.

"Utter rot!" concurred Lovell and Raby.

Jimmy Silver adopted an air of mocked surprise.

"What—" he began.

"You're dead off the mark there, Jimmy, old scout," said Lovell, with emphasis. "We'll all do the shopping, we'll all take a hand in tidying up the study, and we'll all meet my Cousin Hilda."

"But—"

"It's settled, old scout!" exclaimed Lovell. "Let's get down to the tuckshop and do some shopping. We might as well order a trap, too. Can't ask Cousin Hilda to walk all the way to the school."

"No fear!"

With a stride Lovell reached the door, and pulled it open.

He uttered an exclamation as he saw Leggett, the cad of the Modern Fourth, standing in the passage in a bent-up position. Leggett had been listening at the keyhole.

In an instant Lovell had reached out an arm to grasp the cad.

Leggett eluded his clutch, however, and tore down the corridor as fast as his legs would carry him.

"After him!" yelled Lovell, starting in pursuit.

Jimmy Silver and Newcome and Raby joined in the chase at once.

Leggett went down the stairs, three at a time. Lovell endeavoured to negotiate four at one leap, but met with disaster.

He sprawled on the floor at the bottom of the stairs.

Jimmy Silver led the chase, and as he emerged into the quad he noticed that Leggett was making towards the door of the Modern House, at which a crowd of juniors were standing.

Tommy Dodd & Co., the leaders of the Modern juniors, were there, and they formed up at sight of the wrathful Classics.

"Hold him!" shouted Jimmy Silver, as Leggett dodged between the Modern juniors, and took refuge inside the Modern House.

"Back up, Moderns!" ordered Tommy Dodd.

"Prepare to repel Classics!"

Jimmy Silver pulled up short in front of the warlike Moderns.

"Look here, Dobby," he said firmly, "we want that rotter!"

"Better language, Silver, please!" said Tommy Dodd calmly. "If you want teaching that you mustn't call Modern chaps rotters, you've only got to say so."

"The rotter was listening at our keyhole," said Jimmy Silver.

"Shocking behaviour!" said Tommy Dodd, adopting a serious expression. "But now you've laid the complaint, we'll administer the punishment."

"You—you—"

"Classicals have no right to dole out punishment to Moderns," said Tommy Dodd gravely. "A complaint lodged to the right person—"

"You Modern ass!" shrieked Jimmy Silver indignantly. "We're going to bump the rotter!"

"You're welcome to, if you can get by us."

The Fistical Four bestowed savage glances on the Modern juniors.

There were quite eight Moderns standing in a line in front of the doorway.

Jimmy Silver was most anxious to lay his hands on the cad of the Fourth; but he saw at a glance how small his chances were of getting past the human barrier.

With luck, they might be able to meet with success. On the other hand, they would probably receive a severe grubbing, and emerge from the fray with black eyes and swollen noses.

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Respects for their own appearances would have then prevented them from meeting Cousin Hilda. Such a state of affairs could not be permitted to come about. Anything would be better than that.

Jimmy Silver shook his fist at Tommy Dodd, whose face was expanded in a huge grin.

"All right, you Modern bounder," he exclaimed, "we'll have our own back for this! That rotter shall be bumped sooner or later!"

"Ta-ta, Bluebell!" sang out Tommy Dodd. "Mind you don't fall over the step. Sorry you can't stop, and all that!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, turning on his heel. "Can't waste any more time over those bounders!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To the accompaniment of a loud burst of ironical cheering from the Moderns, the Fistical Four wended their way to the tuck-shop, vowing vengeance on the Modern juniors generally, and on Leggett in particular.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.  
Leggett's Artful Game.

LEGGETT did not wait to see the result of the argument between the Fistical Four and Tommy Dodd & Co. He made himself scarce immediately.

The fact was, the cad of the Fourth had a scheme in mind for obtaining his revenge on the Classical chums. He went up to the Modern Fourth dormitory, and turned all the clothes out of his locker. He put his best suit aside, and drew out a new pair of gloves, a clean shirt, collar, and cuffs. Then he selected a new tie, and a pair of bright-looking socks.

Leggett grinned to himself all the while. He really considered his scheme would meet with success, and the thought amused him considerably.

He donned the clothes with great care, and surveyed himself in the glass with an air of satisfaction. At the best of times the cad of the Fourth could not be called nice-looking; but he was certainly doing his best to make himself as presentable as possible.

He left the dormitory, and swaggered down to the gates. He passed several Modern juniors on the way, and they looked at him critically.

They had never known Leggett to look so smart before. For what purpose the cad had dressed himself up in this manner they did not know. More than one junior ventured to ask the reason; but Leggett offered no explanation.

He passed through the gates, and on down the lane in the direction of Coombe. He made straight for the station, and took a ticket for Latcham.

A few minutes later the train came in, and he took a seat in a compartment. Between Coombe and Latcham Leggett smiled several times to himself. More than once an old farmer, sitting in the opposite corner of the compartment, looked at him wonderingly.

But Leggett was hardly conscious of the man's presence. He was thinking of the cunning scheme he was about to put into action—thinking of the method he was going to adopt to get even with the Fistical Four.

With a grinding of brakes, the train pulled up at Latcham Station. Leggett got out, and went over the bridge to the other platform.

"Can you tell me the time of the next train to Coombe?" he asked a rather surly-looking porter.

"Next train," grunted the man—"five past three."

Without thanking the man, Leggett strolled up the platform, swinging his cane backwards and forwards. Suddenly there was a shriek from an engine-whistle, and, to his satisfaction, the cad of the Fourth saw the train advancing round a curve. The train pulled up in the station, and then Leggett did a strange thing. He started from the engine-end of the train, and, walking quickly along, peered into every carriage.

He had looked into half the compartments in the train, but still he did not enter.

"Jump in there!" sang out the guard. Leggett made no attempt to obey the command.

There was a most anxious expression on his face as he moved along towards the end of the train. The train began to move, and still the cad of the Fourth remained on the platform.

"Stand away there!" shouted the guard.

Leggett did not stand away. He made a sudden leap for the footboard, and, dragging open the door of a compartment, he fell right at the feet of a pretty-looking, fair-haired girl.

The girl had been reading a book, and Leggett's unceremonious entry caused her to look up and utter a faint cry. She bent down to lift up the cad of the Fourth.

"I hope you're not hurt!" she said kindly. "Not at all!" said Leggett, brushing himself down. "It was a narrow squeak, though!"

"You might have hurt yourself severely," said the girl, with a smile.

Leggett sat down by the side of the girl, and for a few moments complete silence reigned in the compartment. Leggett shifted his feet uneasily, and glanced first at the window, and then at his fair companion.

Suddenly the latter dropped her book to her side, and looked at Leggett's cap.

"Excuse me," she said quietly, "I presume you are a Rookwood boy?"

Leggett beamed.

"Yes," he replied; "I'm Leggett of the Fourth."

"Then you must know my cousin," said the girl.

"Your cousin?" said Leggett, in mocked surprise.

"Yes, my cousin Arthur—Arthur Lovell."

"Yes, I know him," said Leggett quickly.

"Good gracious!" said the girl in astonishment.

"I'm a pretty good boxer," went on Leggett. "Man to man, I'm a match for any fellow in the Fourth. But Jimmy Silver and his set always set on me together. Naturally, I do not stand a chance against the three of them."

"Of course not."

"Personally, I think it a shame that Arthur should mix with such rotters."

"But surely he is not compelled to?"

Leggett laughed.

"That's where you're wrong, miss," he said. "Those fellows stick to Arthur against his will. He and I would be the best of friends if it wasn't for the other three."

"That is a shame," said the girl stoutly.

"It is," said Leggett. "They treat me disgracefully. I expect that when we get to Coombe they will be all waiting for you on the platform. You watch the way they treat me."

"But surely they would not show their enmity in my presence?"

"You don't know them, miss. They're—Hullo, here we are!"

There was a sudden grinding of brakes, and the train pulled slowly into Coombe Station.

Leggett got out first, and held out his hand.



"Come on!" said Lovell's fighting cousin. "I'm going to hit you!" "N-n-no!" muttered Leggett. "How! Yow!"

"He belongs to the Classical side, you know. I'm a Modern myself. All the best fellows are on the Modern side."

"Indeed?" said the girl.

"Yes," went on Leggett fervently. "I suppose your cousin has often mentioned me in his letters to you?"

"Well, the fact is, my Cousin Arthur rarely writes to me," said the girl. "I can't remember him ever mentioning your name, though. Are you a special friend of his?"

"Oh, rather!" replied Leggett untruthfully. "We're the very best of friends."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"The only thing is," continued the cad of the Fourth, "Arthur's friends treat me rather badly."

"Really?"

"Yes, Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome. You see, being captain of the Form, I'm rather popular with the fellows, and they dislike me because of my popularity."

The girl knitted her brows. Leggett's bragging ways did not appeal to her.

"Surely Arthur does not mix with that type of boy?" she asked.

"He does, I'm sorry to say," said Leggett warmly. "I've done my utmost to get him to break with Silver and his set, but it's no good. Jimmy Silver is an awful bully, and Raby and Newcome aren't much better."

"I'm surprised to hear that."

"Only this morning the three of them set upon me, just because Arthur wanted me to have tea with you this afternoon."

The girl took it in her grasp, and stepped lightly on to the platform.

Next moment the Fistical Four came rushing up, and raised their hats politely.

"Very pleased to see you, Cousin Hilda," said Lovell cheerfully. "Very glad you've come down. I'll introduce you to my friends—Jimmy Silver, Newcome, and Raby."

The three juniors coloured slightly, and stepped forward.

"Welcome to Rookwood, Cousin Hilda," said Jimmy Silver, shaking hands with the girl.

The girl held out her hand, but she said nothing.

Jimmy's open, cheery face had come as a great shock to her.

From Leggett's description, she had expected to meet a far different fellow.

"Come along, Hilda," said Lovell, taking his cousin by the arm. "We've got a trap waiting outside. You'd like to ride to Rookwood, wouldn't you?"

"Very much," replied the girl.

"Come along, then."

The Fistical Four piloted Cousin Hilda to the station exit.

Leggett followed behind, a sheepish expression on his face.

The cad of the Fourth was feeling extremely uncomfortable; nevertheless, he was determined to carry his scheme through to the end.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

## His Just Deserts.

"HERE we are!"  
The Fistical Four drew up beside a smart-looking trap.  
The juniors assisted Cousin Hilda to enter the trap, and they jumped up beside the girl.

Lovell took hold of the reins, and was about to set the trap into motion, when the girl clutched him by the arm.

"I say, Arthur," she said, "you've forgotten your friend."  
"My friend!" exclaimed Lovell, in surprise. "My friends are all here."

"I mean your friend, Master Leggett."  
"Phew!" gasped Lovell, giving the cad of the Fourth a savage glare. "Surely that rotter—I mean—"

Lovell flushed in his confusion.  
"What did you say, Arthur?" inquired Cousin Hilda.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" he said, recovering himself quickly. "I quite forgot about Leggett. Yes, he'd better come up."

Leggett stepped into the trap, and soon they were bowling along the road to Rookwood.

The cad of the Fourth sat between Jimmy Silver and Newcome at the back of the trap.

The Classical chums glared at him savagely. Leggett adopted a very confident air. He knew that Jimmy Silver & Co. would not dare to tackle him in Cousin Hilda's presence.

"By Jove, this is a ripping trap!" remarked the cad of the Fourth. "Don't you think so, Silver?"

Jimmy did not answer. He merely glared. "What do you think, Newcome?"

Newcome's face showed only too plainly what he thought. He did not reply to the cad's question.

"H'm!" muttered Leggett. "It's a topping day for a drive, isn't it, Raby?"

Raby turned his head in the opposite direction. He, too, wanted to have nothing to do with the Modern junior.

Leggett lapsed into silence. He was barred, but he was in no wise disturbed.

His cunning scheme for blackening Jimmy Silver and his chums in the eyes of Cousin Hilda would bear fruit ere long, and that was a source of great satisfaction to the cad of the Fourth.

At length the trap pulled up at the school.

Jimmy Silver got down first, and assisted Cousin Hilda to alight. The others followed suit, and they all walked towards the house.

Leggett refused to take his departure, but Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome kept him in the hall, whilst Lovell and his cousin went upstairs.

As soon as the latter were out of car-shot Jimmy Silver turned on the cad.

"Buzz off, you rotter!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"But—" began Leggett.

"No arguing!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "What do you mean by thrusting your company on Cousin Hilda?"

"I—I—" faltered Leggett.  
"You rotter! We'll settle with you later!" roared Jimmy Silver. "We'll make you sit up when Cousin Hilda has gone!"

Seeing there was no chance for him to carry his scheme any further, Leggett turned on his heel, and made for the Modern side.

Jimmy Silver and his chums raced upstairs, and came up with Lovell and his cousin just as they were entering the end study.

Lovell pushed the door open, and allowed Cousin Hilda to enter first.

The others followed in quickly.

"Here you are, Cousin Hilda," said Jimmy Silver politely. "Take the easy-chair."

The girl sat down, and as she did so she gave Jimmy Silver a critical look.

She was more amazed than ever at Jimmy Silver's extreme politeness. This was a far different Jimmy Silver to the one she had expected to see.

Raby and Newcome, too, seemed to be smitten to see Alex and the decent fellows with her cousin.

"It was very strange."  
"You'd like tea now, wouldn't you, Hilda?" asked Lovell, bringing out a spotlessly clean cloth.

"I should very much."  
"Good! Put the kettle on, Jimmy."

"Right—ho!"  
Jimmy Silver put the kettle on the fire, Lovell and Raby got out the tea-things, whilst Newcome cut the bread-and-butter.

All the while there was a steady flow of conversation, and Cousin Hilda became more and more impressed with her cousin's friends.

Nevertheless, not knowing Leggett's real character, she could not fathom why he had given her such a scathing description of her cousin's friends.

"Tea's ready!" sang out Jimmy Silver, at length. "Here you are, Cousin Hilda. You'd like to sit by the fire, wouldn't you?"

"I should, very much."  
Cousin Hilda sat down, and the juniors all followed suit.

Lovell was handing the bread-and-butter to his cousin, when the girl gave him a questioning look.

"Where's your friend, Arthur?" she asked. "Isn't he coming in to tea?"

"My friend!" ejaculated Lovell. "Who do you mean?"

"Your friend Master Leggett."  
"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Lovell, dumb-founded. "Who the dickens told you he was my friend?"

"I—I thought he was," said the girl. "He told me you were the very best of friends, only—only—"

Cousin Hilda paused.

"Only what?" questioned Lovell.

The girl coloured slightly.

"It isn't fair, Arthur, to allow others to come between you and your best friend," she said softly.

"But—but Leggett is no friend of mine!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Really? But he said—"

"Look here, Hilda," said Lovell, "that fellow has been telling you a lot of lies. If he's told you that he's a friend of mine, he's not been telling you the truth. He's one of the worst fellows at Rookwood."

"But—but I understood he was very popular," remarked Cousin Hilda. "Isn't he the captain of the Form?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Lovell. "No fear! Jimmy Silver's our captain!"

"I am very surprised," said Cousin Hilda, knitting her brows. "Master Leggett seemed to be a very nice boy, but it appears he did not speak the truth."

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver and Co. is entitled:

**"TURNING UP TRUMPS!"**

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT!

"He never does," said Lovell. "He's a thorough cad! We'll make him sit up for this! We'll—"

"No, no, Arthur, you mustn't!" protested Cousin Hilda. "It isn't fair for you all to attack him."

"One of us is quite enough," said Lovell. "Any of us here could tackle a dozen Leggetts."

"Really?" said Cousin Hilda, on whom the truth was now dawning. "But I thought Master Leggett was the best boxer at Rookwood, and that—"

"My word!" exclaimed Lovell indignantly. "Did he tell you that?"

"Well—er—he led me to believe that he was."

"All right!" said Lovell hotly. "We'll settle with the bouncer presently. You can take it from me, Hilda, that anything that cad has told you is all lies."

And that is exactly what Cousin Hilda did.

During tea she was forced to the conclusion that Leggett's description of Jimmy Silver & Co. was an unfair one.

In fact, when tea was over, and she left the study to visit the Head's wife before returning to London, she had taken a great fancy to the chums.

Their open, frank manner made a great impression on her.

No sooner had the girl left the study than Lovell turned to the others.

"Look here," he said. "I've got a wheeze for getting our own back on that rotten cad. Listen!"

Lovell propounded the wheeze to the juniors, and they looked at him praisingly when he concluded.

The next few minutes were busy ones in the end study. The properties of the Rookwood dramatic society were brought to view, and Lovell carefully selected a skirt, a blouse, a wig, and several other articles.

These he commenced to don at a quick rate.

The others lent their assistance, and soon

Lovell was disguised as a girl, and looked the exact counterpart of his Cousin Hilda.

"One of you fellows buzz along and fetch Leggett," he said. "You'd better go, Newcome."

Newcome did not move. He stood gazing at the disguised junior.

"I say, Lovell," he remarked. "Aren't these clothes a bit old-fashioned? Leggett might twig that—"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Lovell impatiently. "He doesn't know anything about fashions. You buzz along, and bring him here before Cousin Hilda returns."

"All right!"  
Newcome went off in search of the cad of the Fourth.

Five minutes later he returned with Leggett. The latter gazed rather sheepishly at the juniors.

But the presence of a girl in the study reassured him.

"So glad you've been able to come round," remarked Lovell, in a high-pitched voice. "Why didn't you come to tea?"

"I—I—I—" faltered Leggett nervously.

"Oh, I understand!" said the disguised junior. "Of course, being captain of the Form, you find your time fully occupied."

"Y-y-yes."

"By the way, we were just discussing boxing. You box, don't you?"

Leggett nodded his head in assent.

"I'm very keen on boxing," said Lovell. "I love it, in fact. I wonder whether you'd mind having the gloves on with me?"

"No—no!" replied Leggett promptly.

"You must—you must! It would be just splendid to have the gloves on with a champion like you!"

"But I c-c-can't fight a girl!" protested Leggett feebly.

"Certainly not. I don't want you to fight. Just a friendly spar will do. I wonder whether there are any gloves about?"

The disguised junior looked round the room, and his eyes lighted on two pairs of boxing-gloves, which had been placed purposely in a corner. "Ah! The very things!"

Leggett turned pale.

The juniors' faces were dead serious, and the cad of the Fourth was in a state of sheer funk.

Lovell slipped on a pair of gloves, and handed the others to Leggett.

"Put them on," he said. "Perhaps one of you boys would lend a hand."

"Oh, rather!" said Newcome eagerly; and he forced the gloves on Leggett's hands.

"Come on," said Lovell. "I'm going to hit you!"

"N-n-no!" muttered Leggett miserably. "I—Ow! Yow!"

Lovell hit out strongly, and Leggett was sent to the ground.

"Don't give in yet," said the disguised junior. "I really haven't started. Let us go on with the sparring!"

Leggett rose slowly to his feet, but another blow caught him between the eyes, and he staggered against the wall.

Lovell smiled.

"Dear me!" he said. "I thought you were a good boxer. You can't fight for nuts! I believe I could box you with one hand."

"I—I—I—" stammered Leggett.

"I am disgusted with you!" the disguised junior turned up his nose. "You told me you were the champion boxer of Rookwood. You're nothing of the kind. You're a funk, and I want to have nothing more to do with you! I think the sooner you leave this room the better."

Leggett slunk out of the study, only too glad to get away.

As soon as he had gone the chums roared with laughter.

"Buck up and get those things off, Lovell!" urged Jimmy Silver. "Cousin Hilda will want to know the why and wherefore if she sees you like that."

"My hat! Won't Leggett be chipped about this?" exclaimed Newcome hilariously.

"He won't dare to hold his head up for months," said Raby.

"No fear!"

"Serves the bouncer right!" said Lovell heatedly. "He told my cousin a lot of lies. I suppose he thought he'd get his revenge on us. But he's failed, and he'll suffer for it!"

And Leggett did suffer for his misdeeds. The news was soon spread amongst the juniors that Lovell's girl cousin had given the cad a good hiding with the gloves, and for a long while afterwards he was treated with nothing but scorn and contempt!

THE END.

A MAGNIFICENT  
LONG COMPLETE  
STORY, DEALING  
WITH THE  
EARLY ADVENTURES  
OF  
TOM MERRY & CO.  
AT ST. JIM'S.

# FATTY WYNN— PROFESSIONAL!

BY  
**MARTIN  
CLIFFORD**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The New House Victory.

"GO it, School House!"  
"Stick it, New House!"  
The football-field at St. Jim's was crowded with excited juniors, watching the match between the junior elevens of the rival Houses. The two sides were evenly matched, and the play waxed fast and furious.

Suddenly Tom Merry received a pass from the wing. He dribbled the ball up the field cleverly, and neatly tricked the New House half-backs. Redfern came rushing towards him, and it looked as though Tom Merry would lose the ball. But he passed, in the nick of time, to Blake.

Blake rushed through. He had almost a clear goal before him, and a roar went up from the spectators. Blake steadied himself, and then shot for goal. The ball left his foot like a stone from a catapult, and whizzed straight for the goal.

But Fatty Wynn was quite prepared. In spite of his bulk he leapt aside nimbly, and fairly flung himself at the oncoming ball. With both fists he punched at it, and it shot out into play.

"Good old Fatty!"  
Blake looked rather glum as he trotted back to his place. He had made certain of a goal there, and he was disappointed at the result. Lawrence of the New House grinned at him genially.

"Is that how you like 'em done?" he chuckled.

"Oh, rats!" growled Blake. "We'll score soon, I'll bet!"

"Not to-day, my son," grinned Lawrence. "Fatty's in fine form. You'll find yourself wiped up before long."

"More rats!" exclaimed Blake crossly. "Don't you be so cocky, Lawrence!"

But Lawrence couldn't wait to say any more. The ball had been passed to him, and he rushed off with it. For five minutes the play was quiet and uninteresting. The ball remained practically in mid-field the whole time. The spectators began to get impatient, for they had gathered round the ropes in considerable numbers.

This match had excited universal interest among the juniors, and even the Third Form had forsaken their own practice match in order to witness the junior elevens.

"Buck up!" roared Wally D'Arcy impatiently. "You're jolly slow!"

"Put some giddy life into the game!" shouted Curly Gibson.

The advice was not heard, but, as though in response, the New House team livened up considerably. Figgins neatly trapped the ball from Arthur Augustus, D'Arcy, and he streaked down the field like a hare, his long legs covering the ground swiftly.

He rushed through the half-backs before they realised the danger, and passed the ball to Owen at exactly the right moment. Owen, without hesitation, steadied himself, and shot for goal.

Lorne was completely baffled, and the ball lodged in the corner of the net.

"Goal!" shrieked the New House juniors.

"Hurrah!"

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The New House portion of the onlookers yelled themselves hoarse, and caps were flung into the air by their excited owners.

The teams lined up again, and the New House boys were elated and eager. Darrel blew his whistle, and the game restarted with a rush.

Before two minutes had passed the School House goal was again in danger, and a corner was secured. Redfern took it, and the ball descended right at the mouth of the goal.

For a moment there was a wild scrummage, in which several juniors were charged over. Then Figgins leapt upwards, and headed the ball into the net.

"Two up for the New House!" exclaimed Pratt delightedly. "My hat, the New House is showing the other chaps what football is! They haven't got a look in!"

The players lined up again amid a roar of enthusiasm from the spectators.

Tom Merry & Co. took their places for the third time, and their faces were long and glum.

"This won't do!" said Tom Merry seriously. "They're two up, and there's still ten minutes to half-time. We shall never be able to hold our heads up again if we don't make a better show than this."

"Well, we're doing our best!" growled Manners.

The whistle blew and the game restarted. The School House juniors were on their mettle now, and they played up magnificently.

Again and again Figgins & Co. forced the play, but they found their opponents to be on the alert.

Whatever else happened, the School House juniors determined that there should be no more goals gained by the New House. So, until half-time, they concentrated all their efforts in defending their citadel.

At last the whistle blew, and a cheer rose on the air.

"Bravo, New House!" roared the juniors. "Oh, well played!"

The second half commenced with a rush. Figgins & Co. were surprised to find that Tom Merry & Co. had bucked up tremendously, and they swept down the field like well-oiled machines.

Every boy was in his correct place, and the ball was passed from one to another with a precision which was surprising. The New House backs were bowled over and defeated, and Tom Merry shot for goal.

It was a splendid effort, and should have materialised. But Fatty Wynn seemed to be absolutely impregnable. He met the ball as though it had been merely punted in, and away it sailed up the field.

"Well saved, Fatty!"

"Hard lines, Merry!"

"Jolly hard lines!"

"That was a ripping shot," said Blake dismally.

"Splendid, deah boy!" agreed D'Arcy. "With Wynn in such wippin' form, howevah, it is weally wathah hopeless twyin' to score."

But, in spite of all their ill-luck, the School House team seemed in no way disheartened. As the second half opened, so it proceeded. Lorne, in the School House goal, found himself obliged to stamp up and down in order to keep warm. The play was practically all in the New House half.

Again and again: the New House defence was broken down, and never had Fatty Wynn found himself so busy. Practically every three or four minutes, the ball came shooting towards the net.

But never before had Wynn been in such wonderful form. Hard shots or simple shots, it made no difference to him. He saved every time, and his agility was something to be marvelled at, considering his bulk.

Such a performance had seldom been witnessed before at St. Jim's, and very soon a crowd of Fifth and Sixth Formers were watching.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, strolled up just as Digby steadied himself to shoot.

The ball left his foot like lightning, shot past Lawrence, and whizzed straight for goal.

"That's a goal, anyhow," said Kildare, to Baker of the Sixth.

"Is it?" said Baker. "By Jove, did you see that?"

Fatty Wynn had flung himself face forward to the corner of the goal. By a sheer miracle—it seemed—he pushed the ball round the post, and it rolled harmlessly aside. It had been a splendid effort—one which many a professional goalkeeper would have failed in.

"That kid's a marvel!" said Kildare thoughtfully. "I shouldn't like any of the juniors to hear me say it, but I'm pretty sure Wynn's better than the First Eleven goalie. For a junior, he's simply a wonder!"

The School House team were by now tired and weary. They had put up a splendid fight, and would, in the ordinary course, have equalised—and perhaps won the game. But, somehow, they could never get the ball into the net.

When the whistle blew, the score still remained two-nil. A tremendous roar rose as the players walked off the field.

"Well," said Figgins, "I must say you bucked up really well, Tom Merry."

"Thanks," said Tom Merry pantingly. "We should have scored again and again if it hadn't been for Fatty. I believe that fat bouncer is a giddy wizard! The way he saved was simply marvellous!"

"Bai Jove, it was wotten!" declared D'Arcy. "Aftah all our efforts, too! I weally think, Figgay, that you ought to with-draw Fatty Wynn from the team."

"Yes, that's very likely, isn't it?" grinned Figgins. "No, Gussy, Fatty Wynn's our giddy mascot, and we couldn't afford to lose him. Why, he's as good as any professional goalkeeper!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Fatty Wynn, coming up, puffing and radiant. "Don't you compare me with a rotten professional, Figgay! They're jolly fine players, but they haven't got any principles. No decent fellow would play football for money."

The rest of the juniors grinned, and proceeded to the pavilion. It was getting dusk now, and a mist was descending over the playing-fields. Fatty Wynn sat for a time regaining his breath. Consequently he was a little behind the others, who had already donned their overcoats and mufflers.

"Well," said Wynn, with satisfaction. "I reckon I've earned my giddy tea! My hat, I'm as hungry as a hunter!"

"That means that we shall have to lay in a special supply of grub," grinned Figgins. "Still, you deserve it, Fatty! Why, you lazy bouncer, ain't you ready?"

"No; my giddy overcoat's over the other side of the field," said Fatty Wynn. "I remember now; I hung it over the fence just before I started the game."

"Well, buzz off and fetch it, you silly ass!" said Kerr, the Scots junior. "You'll catch a giddy cold if you let yourself get cool in those airy togs. We'll rush off to Dame Taggles and lay in a supply of grub."

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn. "I sha'n't be two ticks."

The little crowd of juniors left the pavilion together, and Fatty Wynn parted with them outside. He trotted leisurely across the field to the opposite fence. His overcoat was there, and he quickly donned it.

"My hat!" he murmured to himself. "I feel as if I could eat a couple of blessed teas to-night."

And Fatty Wynn started off across the field at a trot. The lights of the school

gleamed in the distance, for by this time darkness was descending in earnest. All the other juniors had by this time left the playing-fields, and Fatty Wynn found himself alone.

But just as he reached the other side, and was making for the old quad, a dim form loomed up in the dusk. It stood right in Fatty Wynn's path, and the New House junior could see that the figure was that of a man.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Fatty Wynn Changes His Opinion.

FATTY WYNN paused, wondering who the man could be. Then he walked on again, with the intention of going past without speaking. But the man stood in his path, and laid a hand on Fatty Wynn's shoulder.

"You are Wynn, the New House goalkeeper?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, that's me," said Fatty Wynn. "Who—who the dickens do you happen to be?"

The man smiled. He was a big individual, well-dressed, and he was smoking a cigar. Fatty Wynn regarded him with a certain amount of suspicion, for it was unusual for strangers to walk about at St. Jim's. The man's voice was pleasant and refined.

"I am Mr. Charles Cobb, and I am the managing-director of the Bramcourt Rovers Football Club," said the stranger pleasantly. "I think you will admit, Wynn, that I know something about football."

"Oh, you're a giddy professional johnnie!" said Fatty Wynn coldly.

Mr. Cobb smiled. "Precisely!" he said. "I am a football johnnie. I have had the pleasure of witnessing the football match this afternoon, and I was simply amazed at the really remarkable form you displayed. Without exaggerating, Wynn, I really do not think I have seen a finer goalkeeper than you are, either professional or amateur! The way you defended your goal was simply a revelation to me!"

Fatty Wynn melted. His cold look gave place to one of pride. After all, Wynn was very susceptible to praise, and such praise, from such a man, was indeed worth having. Wynn grinned genially, and stepped closer to his companion.

"I'm glad you think that, Mr. Cobb," he said. "I—I don't exactly fancy myself, you know, but I must say I felt in extra good form this afternoon. Of course," he added hastily, "it wasn't anything extra-special!"

"Oh, yes it was—" "I—I mean, I always play the same!" said Fatty Wynn, who thought that Mr. Cobb would think that the afternoon's performance was a flash in the pan. "I've made a study of goalkeeping, you know, and I've played in the First Eleven before now."

"I can quite believe it," said Mr. Cobb. "You are altogether too good to be wasted on a junior eleven. Now, I have been thinking, and I have made up my mind to lay a proposition before you."

Fatty Wynn stared. "A proposition!" he repeated. "What's the idea, sir?"

"Just this, Wynn, my boy," said Mr. Cobb. "The Bramcourt Rovers are a fairly strong team, but for this last week or two they have been losing all along the line. I want to make an alteration as soon as possible. You see, Derring, our star goalkeeper, was rather badly crocked three weeks ago, owing to an argument he had with a motor-car. I regret to say that he was knocked about rather badly, and it will be a month or more before he can play again."

"Hard lines!" said Fatty Wynn. "But what's it got to do with me? After all, he's a rotten professional. And I don't believe in playing footer for—" "Hold on, youngster," interrupted Mr. Cobb, "let me finish! The goalie we have now is, to speak the truth, not much class. Therefore I have hit upon a plan—a plan which may seem wild to you, but which, I am convinced, will be satisfactory. I want you to sign on as a member of the Bramcourt Rovers Football Team."

Fatty Wynn staggered. "Wh-a-a-t!" he gasped in amazement. "I want you to join my team," said Mr. Cobb coolly.

"But—but it's unheard of!" panted Fatty Wynn. "You couldn't have a schoolboy in a professional team! Why, the other players would laugh at me!"

"They could laugh as much as they liked," said the managing-director. "That would make no difference. I want you because you

can play real football, and whatever the other men said would make no difference. Will you do as I suggest—will you sign on?"

Fatty Wynn's brain was in a whirl. It struck him that this man was japing him, but he dismissed the idea after a second's thought. Mr. Cobb was very much in earnest; he was obviously a gentleman, and meant every word he said.

Wynn's dislike for professional football was forgotten. The honour of asking him—junior schoolboy—to play for a big club was very great, and Wynn felt flattered.

"Well?" asked Mr. Cobb, after a few moments. "What do you think of the matter, my boy? Of course, I realise that nothing must be said to your headmaster; but you have Wednesday and Saturday afternoons to yourself, I think?"

"Yes, they're both half-holidays," said Wynn absently.

"Then there will be no difficulty in carrying out my plan," said Mr. Cobb. "Bramcourt is only nine miles from here, and you can easily arrive in time for play. For the next two or three weeks, at least, we are having all home matches on the Saturday afternoons. Do you think you can accept my proposal, my boy?"

"I—I—" stammered Wynn. "I—I—" "The club will pay all your fares, of course," went on Mr. Cobb. "In addition, as managing-director, I am in a position to offer you two pounds a week for your services every Saturday. Possibly you will be required to play on an occasional Wednesday, but not often. I am sorry I cannot pay you more than two pounds a week—"

"Two pounds a week!" gasped Fatty Wynn, with visions of gorgeous feeds floating before his eyes. "My only hat! You ain't serious, sir?"

Mr. Cobb smiled. "I am," he replied quietly. "If you agree to play for the club your salary will be two pounds a week. After seeing you play to-day, I am fully convinced that you will be worth every penny of that sum to the club."

The fat junior stood there in the dusk, wondering if he was dreaming. He simply couldn't believe that the Bramcourt Football Club would pay him two pounds a week for simply playing every Saturday afternoon.

"Two quid a week!" thought Fatty Wynn longingly. "Great Scott, I could have gorgeous feeds every day, and treat Figgy and Kerr like giddy lords! And there's the honour, too. To play for the Bramcourt Rovers would be a terrific feather in my cap!"

Then a thought struck Fatty Wynn, and he almost turned pale. How could he possibly accept this proposal when he had positively said that no decent fellow would play football for money?

True, he had made that statement when there had been no prospect of his being asked to play for money, but it made no difference. Tom Merry & Co. would rag him to death over it.

But two pounds a week! The prospect of it was exceedingly enticing, and after a few moments' thought Fatty Wynn had completely changed his opinions with regard to professional football.

After all, if his services were worth two pounds a week to the club, why shouldn't he accept it? Why should he play for nothing when they were ready and willing to pay him?

He could do the thing on the quiet—go off every Saturday afternoon without telling his chums where he was bound.

After the argument it would be simply impossible to tell them, but because of that there was no reason to refuse Mr. Cobb's proposal. So Fatty Wynn turned to the managing-director with his mind made up.

"Look here, Mr. Cobb," he said eagerly, "this is all straight, isn't it? I mean, you're not swanking me?"

"I assure you, my boy, that I am really in earnest," said Mr. Cobb. "Do you accept?"

"Yes," replied Wynn quickly. "I'll do as you want, Mr. Cobb. I'm jolly glad you think I'm worth having! But, of course, you mustn't let the giddy news get out. If the Head got to know of it he'd be down on me like a shot!"

"I'm quite aware of that, my boy," said the other. "Therefore I shall not mention your name at all. If necessary, you can play

under a nom de plume—such as Tom Smith, or Jim Brown. Then when your name appears in the papers nobody here will realise the truth."

"My hat, that's a ripping idea!" "But all these matters can be settled to-morrow," said Mr. Cobb, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction. "I shall want you, Wynn, to run over to Bramcourt to-morrow afternoon. You will then be taken before the board of directors for purposes of signing on. You understand, of course, that as we shall be paying you two pounds weekly we shall expect you to put in a good deal of practice in your spare time."

"Of course!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'll practise every spare minute I've got!"

"Very well," said Mr. Cobb finally, "there is no necessity for me to remain longer. I happened to be in Rylcombe to-day, and I am extremely glad that I decided to witness this football match. I have found in you, Wynn, a goalkeeper of wonderful ability. In spite of your youth, I am convinced that you will prove yourself equal to playing professional football. And the fact of your being a schoolboy will have the effect of drawing big crowds to our ground, especially if you play up as you have played this afternoon. Good-night, my boy, and be at the clubhouse at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon."

And Mr. Cobb shook hands with the stupefied New House junior, and then disappeared into the misty dusk.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Fatty Wynn Signs On.

MORNING lessons were rather a bore to Fatty Wynn the next day. His mind was filled with thoughts of his new position, and of his forthcoming journey to Bramcourt.

As soon as dinner was over, he hurried across to the New House. He donned his overcoat and gloves, and slipped out into the quad before his chums arrived.

Just as he was passing out of the gates he heard a shout. Figgins was calling him.

But Wynn affected to hear nothing, and hurried down Rylcombe Lane. He had timed himself to reach the station to catch the afternoon train, and he did not want to be kept hanging about so that he would lose it.

"Inquisitive bouders!" he murmured to himself. "Blest if I can understand why Figgy and Kerr are so jolly curious! How the dickens do they know I've got anything on? Anyhow, I sha'n't tell them anything!"

And Fatty Wynn continued his way to the station, feeling elated and contented.

He caught the train nicely, and was soon whirling towards Bramcourt—a large town nine miles distant, in the opposite direction to Wayland. He arrived at his destination with plenty of time to spare, and made his way straight to the football-ground.

He was surprised and pleased to find it quite a palatial affair. It was a new ground, and a large, strongly-built pavilion had been erected. It was more in the nature of a grand-stand, for there were seats enough to accommodate many hundreds of persons.

The entrance was not very imposing, but they seemed magnificent enough to Fatty Wynn. The thought that thousands of people would probably pay their sixpences to come and see him play made the plump junior swell with pride.

He took a stroll round the town, then came back to the football-ground. The clubhouse was part of the pavilion, and he marched up to it confidently. The door stood open, and a man lounged in the entrance.

"Is Mr. Cobb here?" inquired Fatty Wynn coolly.

"Why, yes," said the man. "Bless my soul, you can't be Master Wynn, the club's new goalkeeper?"

Fatty Wynn nodded, and the man stared.

"Well, I'm blown!" he ejaculated blankly. "Anything funny in it?" said Fatty Wynn aggressively.

"No, young 'un; but— Well, if it isn't real surprising!" said the man. "If you'll follow me I'll take you to the board-room. All the directors are here—waiting for your Majesty."

Fatty Wynn did not know it, but the man was one of the Bramcourt team, and he looked upon Wynn's engagement more or less as a joke. But Mr. Cobb was serious enough, and he shook hands heartily with Fatty Wynn as soon as he entered the board-room. There were eight or nine other gentlemen present, and they looked at Fatty Wynn with rather dubious glances.

BUY —

WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES!

"Really, Cobb, the boy is altogether too young to play in our team," protested a middle-aged gentleman, gazing at Fatty Wynn as though he were some queer zoological specimen. "I must raise an objection to—"

"Nonsense, my dear Collins," said Mr. Cobb pleasantly. "If you had seen him play yesterday you would not have made that remark. And, after all, I have only proposed to engage Wynn on trial. If he does not come up to my expectations we can, of course, substitute another man. But I am quite sure Master Wynn will cause you all to open your eyes."

"You give me a chance, sir!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "I don't pride myself on being a specially good goalie, but I can easily knock spots off lots of chaps I've seen between the posts!"

"That's the way to talk, my boy!" smiled Mr. Cobb. "Well, you have had ample time to think over the matter in all its aspects. Are you still agreeable to accepting the position?"

"Rather!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "Nothing I should like better!"

"Very well. All you have to do is to sign this professional registration-form," said Mr. Cobb. "As you are desirous of having your real name withheld, you had, perhaps, better sign simply 'Robert Brown.' After all, it is a mere matter of form, and one name is as good as another."

The form was lying on the table, and Fatty Wynn sat down before it, feeling rather nervous. He took up a pen and signed "Robert Brown" on the line Mr. Cobb pointed out.

Wynn noticed that the form was filled in, and that the club agreed to pay him the sum of two pounds weekly for his services.

"There!" smiled Mr. Cobb. "You are now, to all intents and purposes, the club's new goalkeeper. It only now remains for us to discuss the matter thoroughly, and arrange for you to play your first match on Saturday."

Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed. He had signed on. He was now custodian for the Bramcourt Rovers. It was a position which had never been occupied by a boy since the club's formation.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Ratcliff on the Warpath.

"TWO quid a week!" murmured Fatty Wynn, as he hastened to the station. "My only summer hat! What feeds I can stand in the study! There'll be no need to tell Figgy and Kerr where I've got the tin from. The very fact of my having it ought to make them happy."

He had to wait half an hour for a train, so when he arrived at Rylcombe it was dusk. He hastened up to St. Jim's, wondering what his punishment would be for missing lessons.

The quad was deserted, and he crossed over to the New House. Most of the juniors were having tea, so the passages were empty. Fatty Wynn opened the door of Figgins study, and calmly marched in.

Figgins and Kerr were having tea, and they looked up quickly. When Figgins saw who it was, a frown crossed his brow, and he started to his feet.

"Collar him!" he said quickly.

The pair of them advanced upon Fatty Wynn with warlike looks.

"Hold on, no larks!" said Wynn, in alarm. "I've—"

"You've got to go through it, my son!" said Figgins sulphurously.

And the two juniors grabbed hold of Fatty Wynn, and jammed him against the wall. Figgins kicked the door to with a bang, and Fatty Wynn looked at his two chums with considerable alarm.

"What's the idea?" he said. "What the dickens are you acting the goat like this for, Figgy?"

Figgins snorted.

"Acting the goat!" he said wrathfully. "My hat, you're the chap who's been acting the goat! Where've you been this afternoon? Why weren't you at lessons? What have you been doing? In short, what's the giddy game?"

Fatty Wynn wriggled.

"Do you expect me to answer all those questions at once?" he asked sarcastically.

"You can answer 'em how you like," replied Figgins grimly, "but you're jolly well going to do it! You don't leave this study until you've explained your blessed self!"

"Then I shan't leave the study at all!"

"What!" roared Figgins. "Ain't you going to tell us where you've been?"

"No!"

"You—you bouncer!" gasped Kerr. "Do you mean to say you're going to leave us in the dark? You won't tell us where you've been, and why you missed lessons?"

"Do you think I'm going to tell you when you treat me in this rotten way?" shouted Fatty Wynn. "You didn't give me a giddy chance to explain!"

Figgins and Kerr gazed at one another.

"Let him go!" growled Figgins.

Fatty Wynn was released, and he backed away from his chums, and removed his overcoat. For a moment there was silence in the study, then Figgins went back to the table and sat down.

"So you're not going to take us into your secret?" he asked quietly.

Fatty Wynn looked uncomfortable. While his chums had been angry and warlike, he had been ready to defy them; but now that Figgins had calmed down, he felt that it was not exactly the thing to keep them in the dark.

But there was no help for it. Unless he

"Been in, sir?"

"Don't bandy words with me, sir!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff angrily. "How long is it since you came into the House?"

"Oh, about—about ten minutes, sir," stammered Fatty Wynn.

Mr. Ratcliff smiled unpleasantly.

"Indeed!" he said. "About ten minutes. Very well, Wynn, you will follow me at once to my study. Mr. Lathom has reported to me that you were not at lessons this afternoon. Unless you can offer a very satisfactory explanation of your absence, I shall be compelled to give you a very severe caning."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will come with me, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a relish.

"N-n-now, sir?" faltered Fatty Wynn, gazing longingly at the tea-table.

"This very minute, boy!"

Fatty Wynn crossed the study, and followed the Housemaster out into the passage.

He knew that he was in for a caning, but he was not alarmed. After all, a caning wasn't much, and it would soon be over.

"I don't care a dash!" Wynn thought



"It's Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins excitedly. "Fatty Wynn playing goal for a professional team! But, my hat, I can forgive the fat bouncer anything when I see him playing a game like this!"

told the whole story he could say nothing. So Fatty Wynn made up his mind to keep Figgins and Kerr in the dark. But he thought that they were making a lot of fuss over nothing, and he was rather inclined to be resentful.

"Secret?" he repeated. "What secret?"

"Why, the secret of your missing lessons this afternoon," said Figgins. "You must have had some giddy object in view. You wouldn't have missed lessons just for the fun of it."

"How do you know?"

"How do—"

The door opened abruptly, and Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, stepped into the room. The three juniors looked up quickly, and then all started to their feet. Mr. Ratcliff glared round angrily, and finally his gaze rested upon Fatty Wynn.

"Wynn!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir?" said Fatty Wynn, rather tentatively.

"How long have you been in?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff.

recklessly. "I'm a giddy member of the Bramcourt Rovers now, and I'm not going to back out just because of a caning or two. There's a couple of quid a week to come, and that'll make up for a good many rows with Ratty."

Fatty Wynn considered himself of some importance. To be sought after by the managing-director of a professional club, and engaged to play for the club, was an honour which had never been bestowed upon a schoolboy before.

Wynn, in fact, felt rather regretful that he could not tell his chums about the event.

He entered Mr. Ratcliff's study in a resigned spirit. He had to go through the caning, so he might as well take it cheerfully. But he was determined that he would not reveal a single fact regarding his afternoon's jaunt.

Mr. Ratcliff closed the door, and walked across to his desk. Fatty Wynn watched him as he picked up a cane and swished it through the air with obvious pleasure.

"Vicious beast!" thought Fatty.

Mr. Ratcliff turned to the junior.

"Wynn," he said harshly, "you were not at lessons this afternoon?"

"Wasn't I, sir? I—I mean, yes, sir."

"Why were you not in your class-room, Wynn?"

"Why wasn't I, sir?"

Mr. Ratcliff frowned angrily.

"You heard what I said!" he exclaimed.

"Answer me at once!"

"I—I went out, sir!" stammered Fatty Wynn, rather awed by Mr. Ratcliff's expression.

"Indeed! And where did you go?"

"To—Rylcombe, sir," replied Wynn truthfully.

"For what purpose?" asked Mr. Ratcliff.

"Was it so important that you could not possibly leave it until this evening?"

"I—I—well, sir, I went this afternoon!" said Fatty Wynn lamely.

"And that is all you have to say?"

"Yes, sir."

"In short, you played truant!" said Mr. Ratcliff tartly.

Fatty Wynn flushed.

"I am sorry you have acted in such a manner, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Evidently you are in need of a lesson, and I shall now proceed to teach you that the afternoon is not the correct time for you to go down to Rylcombe, doubtless to gorge yourself in a disgusting manner on sickly pastry at the confectioner's!"

"I didn't have a single crumb, sir!" protested Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"Do not fabricate, Wynn!"

"I'm not, sir; it's the truth!"

"I do not believe you, Wynn!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly. "I am of the opinion that you deliberately went to the village for the purpose of eating, and I shall cane you with greater severity because you have chosen to deny the truth!"

Fatty Wynn felt like bursting out into a protest, but he knew from experience that it would be useless. So he set his lips and resigned himself to his fate.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly.

"I shall give you six strokes, Wynn!"

"Six! My hat, that's pretty stiff, isn't it, sir?" protested Wynn.

Mr. Ratcliff did not answer, but whisked the cane through the air with a swish. Then he stepped forward; and we will draw a veil over the painful scene which followed.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Making Plans.

FATTY WYNN returned to his study rubbing his hands wrathfully. Figgins and Kerr sympathised with him in a kindly manner, but still Fatty did not tell them his secret.

The next Saturday Fatty disappeared directly after dinner, and did not return until late. Figgins and Kerr bombarded him with questions as to the reason for his absence, but Fatty would reveal nothing.

The result was that during the next few days there was a certain feeling of restraint between the Co. which had never existed before.

That feeling would not be removed until Fatty Wynn's secret was revealed.

And Kerr and Figgins meant to discover that secret before many days had passed.

The School House juniors, although curious about Fatty Wynn, soon forgot about the matter in the stress of other everyday affairs.

On the Wednesday afternoon—a half-holiday—a match was played between the two Houses, and although the game ended in a draw, Fatty Wynn played a splendid game, showing the fellows that he was still as enthusiastic as ever.

Thursday was wet and miserable, and after tea the Terrible Three sat in their study reading.

Tom Merry was looking at a local paper, published in Bramcourt, and he looked up at his two chums with an abstracted expression.

"I say!" he exclaimed. "Have you chaps seen this?"

Manners looked up from the "Photograph News."

"Seen what?" he asked.

"This column in the footer page."

"Which column? Explain yourself, ass!" said Manners.

"All right! Keep your blessed wool on!" said Tom Merry. "It's about professional footer—the Bramcourt Rovers."

Monty Lowther looked up.

"Oh, rats!" he said. "Blow professional footer!"

"But, my dear chaps, this is of especial interest!" said Tom Merry. "It's all about Bramcourt's new goalie—a kid named Brown."

The PENNY POPULAR.—No. 281.

"I don't care if he's named Green!" said Manners. "Dry up, you ass!"

"I shan't dry up!" said the captain of the Shell. "I've got an idea, and I want to hear what you think of it. It says in this paper that the new Bramcourt goalie is simply a wonder—a young chap who's never played professional football before. Just listen a minute, and I'll read it out!"

"Oh, go on, then!" growled Manners.

"Get it over!" said Monty Lowther resignedly.

And Tom Merry read aloud the account of "Robert Brown's" marvellous playing. The little article had been written by Mr. Cobb, and he had referred to the new goalkeeper's abilities with glowing terms.

"Sounds all right," said Manners, when Tom Merry had done. "But I'll bet the chap isn't such a good goalie as Fatty Wynn, though he is a New House bouncer."

"But this chap's a professional," said Tom Merry.

"That doesn't matter. Fatty wants some beating."

The Terrible Three did not for a minute connect the new Bramcourt goalkeeper with Fatty Wynn and his mysterious journeys. They were under the impression that Wynn was strongly opposed to professional playing. And the name, Robert Brown, conveyed nothing to them.

"I should like to see that chap," said Tom Merry. "It's the first time I've heard of a kid playing in a professional team, and I should think it would be interesting."

"When's the next match?" asked Manners.

"On Saturday."

"Well, we've got nothing on for Saturday," said Manners. "Suppose we run over to Bramcourt on our bikes and see the match—provided it's fine, of course?"

"That's what I was going to suggest," said Tom Merry.

"Rotten idea!" said Monty Lowther.

"Why is it?"

"Well, we don't want to see any beastly professional match!" said Lowther. "It would be heaps better to get up a scratch match on our own."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "We haven't seen a professional game for months. It would be rather novel. Besides, I wouldn't go, only there's this new goalie. I'm jolly curious to see if he's as good as Fatty Wynn."

"You ass!" exclaimed Lowther. "Do you think a team like Bramcourt Rovers would play him if he wasn't? I expect it's all swank, anyhow. The chap may be eighteen or nineteen."

"Well, I vote we all go and see for ourselves."

"Oh, all right!" said Monty Lowther resignedly. "I'll go."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "Shall we ask anybody else to come?"

"How about Blake and his lot?" asked Manners. "It would be better to make up a party, you know."

"Right-ho!"

The Terrible Three left their study, and made their way to the Fourth Form passage.

They entered Study No. 6, and explained the reason for their visit to Jack Blake & Co.

"We'll come like a shot!" said Jack Blake. "You can rely on us, Tommy. Who else is going?"

"Nobody, that I know of," replied Tom Merry.

"Why shouldn't we ask Figgins & Co.?" said Blake. "Fatty Wynn would be awfully interested in the game—especially as there's a young chap for a goalie. I vote we ask Figgins & Co. to go with us."

Tom Merry rubbed his curly hair.

"Not a bad idea," he said. "All right, we'll run across to the New House and arrange matters. Fatty Wynn seems all right again now, and it would be rather a neat way of keeping an eye on him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Terrible Three took their departure, and emerged into the wet and muddy quad. The rain had stopped, but the night was cold and cheerless.

"My hat," said Manners, with a shiver. "we shan't go if the giddy weather's like this!"

"No fear!" said Lowther.

"I expect it will turn out all right!" exclaimed Tom Merry hopefully. "Anyhow, we'll make all arrangements."

They entered the New House, and burst unceremoniously into Figgins' study.

"Look out!" yelled Kerr, in alarm. "School House rotters!"

"It's all right," grinned Tom Merry, "we're not raiding you!"

"I was just going to yell out for help," said

Figgins suspiciously. "We'd jolly soon crack you down the stairs, you know, if you'd like to undergo the experience."

"We shouldn't thanks!" said Tom Merry. And he laid his plan before Figgins and Kerr. They looked thoughtful for a moment, and then Figgins nodded.

"All right," he said, "we'll go with you."

"Goode," exclaimed Tom Merry. "We'll rout Fatty Wynn out, and see what he says. Where is he, by the way?"

"Oh in the tuckshop, I expect!" said Kerr thoughtfully. "But look here, why should we tell Fatty anything about it at all?"

"Why?" repeated Tom Merry. "Because he'd like to come, of course."

"All the more reason we shouldn't tell him," said Kerr. "Fatty's been jolly secretive lately about his half-holidays, and wouldn't tell us where he's been. Why shouldn't we play the same trick on him, and leave him out of it? He'll realise what it's like then."

"That's not a bad wheeze," said Figgins. "It'll be fit for tat, and it might bring the fat bouncer to his senses. Besides, even if we did ask him, he'd probably say he'd got something else on, and couldn't come. We'll take the bull by the horns, as it were, and do him in the eye."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Fatty would have liked to have seen the match; but he'll be all the better for the lesson. We'll all slip off on our bikes, and leave him in the lurch."

"Good!" said Kerr. "Figgie and I had made up our minds to follow Fatty this Saturday, but this wheeze is better still. We'll—"

The door opened suddenly, and Fatty Wynn appeared. He stared at the visitors.

"Hallo, what are you bouncers doing here?" he inquired.

"Oh, just making arrangements!" said Tom Merry carelessly.

"Arrangements for what?"

"A little outing on Saturday afternoon," said Figgins. "These School House chaps have just suggested it, and Kerr and I have decided to go with 'em."

"Where to?" inquired Fatty.

"Oh, out!" said Figgins, with a wave of his hand.

"Out!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "Out where, you ass?"

"Outside, of course!"

"Ain't you going to tell me, you rotters?" said Fatty Wynn, glaring.

"Certainly not!"

"Well, you're a nice lot of chums—I don't think!" exclaimed Wynn indignantly.

"Arrange to go out, and won't tell a chap where you're going! Perhaps I should like to come with you!"

"Perhaps you would!" said Kerr.

"But you're not coming!" said Figgins grimly. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, my buck, and you can buzz off and eat coke!"

Fatty Wynn glared round wrathfully.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "so that's your beastly temper, is it? Just because I haven't told you where I've been to, you're not going to tell me where you're going!"

"Nothing very outrageous in that, is there?" said Monty Lowther.

"I think it's rotten of you!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "Even if you asked me to go, I jolly well shouldn't now!"

"Well, we're not going to ask you," said Kerr.

"It's just as well!" replied Fatty Wynn. "It happens that I've made arrangements for Saturday myself. You can go where you like, and I'll go where I like. If you think I want to know where the dickens you're going, you're mistaken!"

And Fatty Wynn left the study, and slammed the door behind him.

The juniors looked at one another and grinned.

"That's touched him on the raw!" chuckled Figgins. "Well, it'll be a lesson to him; and perhaps in future he won't be so secretive."

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Tom Merry & Co. Discover the Truth.

CONTRARY to everybody's expectations, Friday was a fine day, although dull; and Saturday dawned bright and cheerful. The sun shone from an almost cloudless sky, and the air was keen and frosty.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Jack Blake, looking out of the dormitory window. "It's simply a ripping day, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I sincerely trust that the weathah

Does not change before the afternoon. It would be simply wotten if it came on to wain immediately aftah mornin' lessons."

"I think we can rely on its being fine, Gussy," said Blake. "It's frosty, and there isn't a giddy cloud to be seen. If it does rain I shall be jolly surprised."

And Blake proved a true prophet. Throughout the morning the sun shone gloriously; and when at last dinner was over the weather was just as amiable as it had been at breakfast-time.

Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., and Figgins and Kerr were all ready. So as soon as dinner was over they mounted their machines and rode off.

The ride to Bramcourt was a fairly easy one, for there were no big hills. The party arrived flushed and breathless, and stored their machines at a cycle-shop.

Then they proceeded towards the football-ground. There was still half an hour before the match commenced, so the juniors turned into a tuckshop, and regaled themselves on pastry and ginger-beer.

After that, feeling comfortable and cheerful, they joined the crowd at the turnstiles, and paid their sixpences. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was for having seats in the grand-stand, but the others unanimously agreed that sixpence was enough to pay to witness a footer match. Besides, they would feel more free-and-easy amongst the crowd.

"Lot of people here," said Tom Merry, as they squashed through.

"Yaas, wathah! Thousands, deah boys!"

The juniors found places, fortunately, immediately against the railings at the corner of the field. It was a fairly good position, and one which was not packed with spectators.

The bulk of the people preferred to congregate opposite the grand-stand.

Owing to the fineness of the day there was a record gate. Perhaps, however, many of the people had been attracted there by the glowing accounts of Fatty Wynn's remarkable playing—accounts which had been circulated throughout the town by those people who had seen the previous matches.

"Ere they are!" roared a man close to the juniors. "Give the Rovers a cheer, boys!"

A stream of players trotted out of the grand-stand, and a roar went up from the big crowd. The juniors could see by the colours that they were the Bramcourt team, and they looked at them interestedly.

Almost the last player to leave the stand was a short, sturdy youngster—none other than Fatty Wynn. He had not the faintest suspicion that his chums were even at that moment looking at him.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the footballers. Their eyes rested on Fatty Wynn's form, but for the moment they did not recognise him. Then Kerr started a little, and craned his neck forward.

"By jingo, doesn't that chap look like——" Figgins uttered a sudden yell.

"My only Aunt Mary Jane," he shouted excitedly, and with amazed eyes, "d-do you s-see who that chap is? Great Scott! Well, I'm blessed! Great pip!"

Arthur Augustus turned to Figgins severely.

"Weally, Figgay," he remonstrated, "pway wemembah that you are in a public place! Whatevah are you yellin' like that for? I see no reason——"

"My only summer chapeau!" roared Tom Merry suddenly.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Whatevah——"

"It's—it's——" stuttered Kerr.

"It's—— Great Scott, it's——" gasped Figgins.

"Fatty Wynn!" panted Tom Merry amazedly. "It's Fatty Wynn! It's Fatty Wynn!"

Arthur Augustus looked astonished.

"Bai Jove, have you all gone off your beastly wockahs——"

Monty Lowther grabbed D'Arcy's arm.

"Can't you see?" he yelled. "That chap on the field is Fatty Wynn! He's playing for Bramcourt! He's the giddy new goal-keeper—the chap who's been doing such great things! My only tile, it's—it's stupendous!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and gazed on to the field.

"Gweat Scott!" he exclaimed. "That fat chap is Fatty Wynn! Bai Jove, whatevah can it mean? Weally, I feel in quite a fuffah, deah boys!"

The juniors gazed at one another in sheer amazement, their faces blank and their eyes expressing their thoughts. The people round about them looked on with amused grins; but Tom Merry and his chums could think of nothing else but this stunning discovery——

they could not take their eyes off the form of Fatty Wynn.

Kerr, the keen Scot, was quite cool, however.

"Of course," he said, "this explains everything. This is where Fatty's been this last week. He's been playing footer for Bramcourt."

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy suddenly, "there goes the whistle, deah boys!"

D'Arcy was right, and the game started the next moment.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### All Serene.

**T**OM MERRY & CO. stood against the railings, closely watching the game between the Bramcourt Rovers and Becton.

The latter team was "hot stuff," and the home players had all their work cut out. The Becton forwards were exceptionally fast, and their trickiness was undoubtedly clever.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, after the first five minutes of play, "this is goin' to be a wippin' game, deah boys! I weally had no ideah that professional footah was so intewestin'. Those Becton fellahs will score jollay soon if Wynn isn't careful!"

"Just look at him!" exclaimed Figgins excitedly. "My hat, Fatty's a ripping goalie! I can forgive the fat bouncer anything when I see him playing a game like this!"

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus. "I've got an ideah! If Wynn loses the match for Bwamcourt we'll wag him to death aftahwards. But if he wins we'll forgive him his wotten sins, and treat him like a hewo!"

"That's not bad, Gussy!" said Kerr. "Fatty's fate rests on his own head!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors watched the game with intense interest. So far Fatty Wynn was still unaware of his chums' presence, and he was playing magnificently.

Time after time Fatty saved with wonderful skill, and time after time he was cheered by the enthusiastic crowd. Then an incident happened which nearly resulted in a goal for Becton.

There was a scuffle between the footballers in the Bramcourt half, and suddenly the ball was shot out of the crowd and sent flying to the corner, where it rolled outside the line.

Fatty Wynn followed the ball's progress keenly.

Then, as he looked, his eyes grew round. For, immediately behind the railings, close against where the ball had rolled, was the little knot of St. Jim's juniors.

In an instant Fatty Wynn recognised Figgins, Kerr, and the others, and his jaw dropped.

"M-my hat!" he ejaculated, in dismay. "Th-they've followed me! They've seen me playing!"

Fatty Wynn remained staring at his chums in consternation, utterly oblivious for the moment of the game. One of the Becton forwards had tried a long shot for goal, and the ball rolled gently towards the net.

The home right-back let the ball roll past him as he saw that it would fall into Fatty Wynn's hands.

But Fatty Wynn was too preoccupied to see the ball at all.

Suddenly a roar went up.

"Great Scott! Look——"

Fatty Wynn came to himself with a start, and gazed round him as though dazed. What he saw made him jerk sideways like a spring. The leather was rolling straight into the net, and was, in fact, almost between the posts.

"Look out!" yelled Nowell, the Bramcourt skipper.

With a gasp Fatty Wynn flung himself sideways, and kicked at the ball. By sheer luck he managed to save it, and it plunged out into play again. But it had been a narrow shave, and the Bramcourt men looked at Fatty Wynn in astonishment.

"I say, you know," exclaimed Nowell, "that was a near thing. You're not feeling ill, are you, Brown?"

"I—I'm all right!" said Fatty Wynn, pulling himself together.

The narrowness of the escape had had the effect of awakening him from his astonishment, and he was soon all attention.

Nevertheless, he could not prevent his thoughts wandering during the slack moments, to the fact of his chums being among the spectators. He realised that he was in for a warm time when the match was over.

All the same, he played a magnificent game. Time after time the visiting team managed to rush through, and Fatty Wynn had all his work cut out. But he was equal to it, and not a single goal was scored against Bramcourt.

By the time the match ended the result was such that the spectators cheered themselves hoarse. Bramcourt Rovers had won by three goals to nil!

The enthusiasm was intense, for everyone knew what a splendid team Becton was. Had it not been for Fatty Wynn's continual efforts the visiting team would have scored again and again.

When Fatty Wynn left the dressing-room he was feeling both elated and nervous.

He walked out of the grounds rather apprehensively, and the very instant he set foot into the roadway he found himself surrounded.

"Fatty, you—deceitful bouncer!"

"You blessed humbug!"

"My hat, you've played a ripping game, Fatty!"

"But you're a bouncer, all the same!"

Fatty Wynn struggled in the grasp of a dozen hands.

He looked round at his chums in astonishment. Instead of being furious with him, they were all looking excited and pleased. They wrung his hands and slapped his back with enthusiasm.

"Ain't—ain't you wild with me?" he exclaimed. "Ain't you going to rag me?"

"Bai Jove, rather not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We were feahfully wild with you at first, but the mannah in which you have defended the Bwamcourt goal is wippin'! We simply cannot be cross with you, deah boy!"

"All the same," said Figgins, "you're a fatheaded chump and a burbling duffer! What do you mean by not letting us into your secret? After all, it was nothing dishonourable."

"Who said it was?" demanded Fatty Wynn, feeling more at ease. "But I—I—— Well, I didn't like to admit to you chaps I was playing professional football after I'd said such a lot of things against it. I thought you'd rag me so much that I couldn't keep it up. That's why I was so careful not to let on."

Figgins laughed.

"You duffer!" he said. "Can't a chap change his opinion? Personally, I think professional football is jolly fine, and I'm glad to see that you've changed, Fatty. Of course, you're drawing a salary?"

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"Rather!" he said. "I've been getting two quid a week!"

"Two quid a week!" ejaculated Figgins blankly. "My hat!"

"And I've got three quid this week!" went on Fatty cheerfully. "The manager was so pleased with this match that he raised my salary. Ripping, isn't it?"

"And—and do you mean to say that you've got three quid for playing that one game?" gasped Herries. "My hat, it's wonderful!"

"It's jolly handy!" grinned Fatty Wynn. "Well, I'm awfully glad you're not going to rag me to death. I'd stand you all a terrific feed, if you like."

Blake turned to the others.

"Do we like, chaps?" he asked.

"We do—we does!" grinned Tom Merry. "But I vote we purchase some tuck out of Fatty's money, take it back to St. Jim's, and have the feed there."

"That's the idea!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "I'm willing to spend a quid or more on grub, you know."

"Good!" said Jack Blake.

The juniors were all in the best of spirits. Figgins and Kerr were relieved to discover the truth of their chums' unaccountable behaviour, and they were quite ready to forgive Fatty Wynn for having kept them in the dark so long.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Trouble in the New House.

**F**IGGINS & CO. were in their study after tea on Monday, and they were just about to commence their prep, when the New House page put his head in at the door. He announced that a gentleman wished to see them.

"A gentleman?" repeated Figgins, puzzled.

"What's he like?"

"He's a tall man, Master Figgins," replied the page. "Shall I bring him up?"

"Perhaps you'd better," replied Figgins doubtfully.

The page departed, and Figgins & Co. looked at one another.

A moment later the door opened and the visitor appeared. It was Derring, the professional footballer whose place Fatty Wynn had taken in the Bramcourt team.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, staring at him. "What do you want?"

"I want to talk to Master—Robert Brown!" said Derring abruptly.

Fatty Wynn started.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm Derring, the Bramcourt goalkeeper," replied the man grimly. "By making a few inquiries I've found out who you are, and I've come here to talk matters over."

Figgins & Co. did not like the man's tone, and they stared at him rather resentfully. He came into the room and closed the door, banging his bowler hat down upon the table.

"You're a junior at this school?" he demanded, glaring.

"Suppose I am?" said Fatty Wynn.

"What's it to do with you?"

"What's it to do with me?" repeated Derring, raising his voice. "I'm the proper Bramcourt goalkeeper, and I'm banged if I'm going to see a confounded young cub like you shove me out of my place! I've come here to have the matter out—to make you promise to give up this fool's game!"

"Oh, have you!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn hotly. "Well, look here, you'd have done better to have come in a less bullying spirit. If you'd asked me properly, I might have considered the matter."

Derring looked round contemptuously.

"Asked you properly?" he sneered. "What do you take me for? Do you think I'm going to ask favours of a young cub like you? I'm going to force you to resign your absurd position! I'm going to make you give up the whole thing! It's my job, and I'm not going to be deliberately done!"

"You scoundrel!" put in Kerr angrily. "It's a lucky thing there aren't many professional footballers of your stamp! If there were they wouldn't be worthy of playing the grand old game!"

"Hear, hear!" said Figgins heatedly. "You'd better hold your insolent tongues!" said Derring furiously. "I didn't come here to listen to your cheek! If Wynn doesn't consent to resign I shall go straight to your headmaster and tell him the facts of the case! And I'll warrant it will end by the young scoundrel getting a birching!"

Fatty Wynn turned pale with wrath.

"Did you call me a young scoundrel?" he asked between his teeth.

"You're worse than that!" shouted Derring recklessly. "You're a thief—a mean, skulking thief! I was earning my living by playing for the Rovers, and you come along and deliberately step into my place while I was laid up! And now you're taking the money which ought to be mine! You're a thief!"

"You bounder!" roared Fatty Wynn hotly. "Chuck him out!" shouted Kerr.

"Pitch him down the stairs!" ejaculated Figgins.

With one accord the three chums threw themselves at the insulting rascal, and before he realised it he was sprawling on his back on the floor.

"Open the door!" panted Figgins.

Derring struggled convulsively.

"You young rascals!" he roared. "If you touch me—"

"Oh, sling him out!" ejaculated Figgins disgustedly.

With one accord the three muscular juniors grasped the man. The next second, in spite of his roars and threats, he was dragged along the passage. Figgins & Co. were thoroughly enraged, and they scarcely cared what they did.

They arrived at the head of the stairs, and Derring roared with fury.

"Let me go," he raved—"let me go!"

Dozens of juniors swarmed out of their studies to see what the commotion was about, and they stared in amazement at the sight of Derring being dragged towards the stairs.

"Great Scott, what's the row?"

"Who is it?"

"What's he done?"

"What's the matter, Figgy?"

But Figgins & Co. were too occupied to attend to the numerous inquiries. In spite of Derring's roaring protests, they toppled him over the head of the stairs.

"Down with him!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Rather!"

With a yell which was heard all over the New House, the footballer shot down the

stairs. With a series of bumps and jars he descended, and Figgins & Co. stood at the top glaring down with furious eyes.

Suddenly a harsh voice made itself heard, and the next moment Mr. Ratcliff hurried into the New House.

"Good heavens, what is the meaning of—"

Then Mr. Ratcliff uttered a fiendish yell. He had walked forward to the foot of the stairs, and he arrived just in time to receive Derring full in his chest.

The impact was considerable, and the next moment the professional footballer and the master of the New House were sprawling headlong on the floor.

### THE NINTH CHAPTER. All's Well that Ends Well!

**M**R. RATCLIFF picked himself up, his brow as black as thunder. Fortunately he had not been hurt much; but his fury had been aroused, and he glared round in a perfect frenzy of rage.

"What is the meaning of this?" he shouted. "Who—who is this man? I am bruised and injured. Good heavens! Such a scene as this is without precedent in the New House!"

"Yes, and it needs be!" snarled Derring, struggling to his feet, and glaring at Mr. Ratcliff. "I'm going to have the law on those scamps! I'm going to show 'em that I'm not going to be treated—"

"How dare you!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "Who are you, sir?"

"Never you mind who I am!" exclaimed Derring aggressively. "If I want to go into details I'll speak to the headmaster, not an under-master like you! You get out of the way before you're hurt!"

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes bulged with anger.

"How dare you?" he bellowed. "Good gracious! I have never been so insulted before! Ah, Figgins, Wynn, and Kerr, do you know anything about this scoundrel?"

Figgins & Co. descended the stairs.

"Yes, sir," replied Fatty Wynn; "we just chucked him downstairs. We didn't—"

Mr. Ratcliff started forward.

"But, my dear sir—"

"Please think a moment, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head. "Is it not wonderful that one of your junior boys should be thought sufficiently clever to play for such a well-known team as Bramcourt? I am proud of you, Wynn; and although the whole thing was irregular, I shall not punish you."

"Th-thank you, sir!" gasped Fatty Wynn in relief.

"Nevertheless, I cannot allow you to play for Bramcourt any more," said the Head. "You yourself realised that it was not exactly the thing for a pupil of St. Jim's to play professional football, and I am afraid that your visits to Bramcourt will have to come to an end."

"But you are not going to punish Wynn?" asked Mr. Ratcliff quickly.

"Certainly not!" replied Dr. Holmes. "I do not blame Wynn in the least. The offer was made to him, and, being an enthusiastic footballer, he naturally consented. I shall write to Mr. Cobb and explain the whole thing."

"And what about me?" demanded Derring, with a triumphant grin.

"I shall mention to Mr. Cobb your disgraceful behaviour," said the Head sternly, "and strongly advise the club to get rid of you! You will leave this house at once, sir—at once!"

"Well, I've done what I came to do, so I'm satisfied," said Derring. "And if you tell any lies to old Cobb—"

The Head rose angrily.

"You impertinent rascal!" he shouted. "Leave me immediately!"

And Derring slunk out of the room, realising that he would have done better to use more polite language towards boys and masters.

Figgins & Co., feeling quite cheerful, went into the House, and were soon engaged in explaining the circumstances to an excited crowd of juniors.

And so Fatty Wynn's little secret came to an end, and he paid no more visits to Bramcourt. His career had been short, but the other juniors often discussed the time when the Falstaff of the New House had been known as Fatty Wynn, professional.

THE END.

Dr Holmes rose to his feet.

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know you were coming, sir, and we're awfully sorry if you're hurt."

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"You threw this man downstairs, Wynn?" he exclaimed harshly.

"Yes, sir."

"You see, sir, he'd insulted us, sir," said Figgins eagerly.

"And we couldn't help ourselves," added Kerr.

"I have never experienced such gross behaviour!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "Whatever this man had said you were entirely in the wrong. You should not have thrown him downstairs; and you will all follow me."

"Follow you, sir!" repeated Figgins.

"Where to?"

"To the headmaster!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I am going to have the matter cleared up! You, my man, had better come as well."

Figgins & Co. followed their Housemaster across the dusky quad, and very soon they stood outside the Head's study.

Without ceremony Mr. Ratcliff opened the door and walked in, Derring following close on his heels. The juniors brought up the rear.

Dr. Holmes looked up from his desk in surprise, and surveyed his visitors over the tops of his glasses.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "What ever is the meaning of this—this invasion, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"I have brought these young rascals to you, sir, in order that you might inquire into a very peculiar affair," said Mr. Ratcliff unpleasantly. "Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the Fourth Form, have thrown this man down the stairs, and he collided with me at the bottom, causing me considerable inconvenience."

Dr Holmes rose to his feet.

"This is very unusual," he said gravely. "I always regarded you three boys as being incapable of any ruffianly act—"

Figgins & Co. bristled.

"It wasn't ruffianly, sir!" protested Figgins. "He insulted us so much that we simply had to hurl him out of the place!"

"Who is he?" asked the Head sternly. "What is he doing at St. Jim's?"

"What am I doing?" exclaimed Derring, bursting out suddenly. "I'm here because I've a right to be here. I'm the goalkeeper of the Bramcourt Rovers. This young fellow—Wynn, his name is—has been taking my place for some weeks in the team, and I'm not going to have any more of it! As the directors of the club have refused to dismiss Wynn, I came to St. Jim's to make him resign!"

The Head looked bewildered.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I—I do not think I understand! Do I understand you to say that Wynn has been playing football for a club?"

"Yes, sir!" put in Fatty Wynn eagerly. "You see, sir—"

"One moment, Wynn; let this man explain," said the Head.

And Derring told the whole facts of the case—how he had had an accident, and how Fatty Wynn had been given a trial with the Rovers. Dr. Holmes looked amazed when he had finished, and Mr. Ratcliff was smiling unpleasantly.

"I think there is only one thing to be done, sir," he suggested. "Since Wynn has acted in such a disgraceful manner, you can do nothing but forbid him to play for this wretched team any more, and send him home for the rest of the term!"

Fatty Wynn gasped.

"My hat!" he exclaimed blankly. "I—I—"

The Head smiled.

"Do not worry, my boy," he said gently. "I think Mr. Ratcliff has taken a rather severe view of the case. It is certainly unusual for a junior of St. Jim's to play in a professional team, but there is nothing disgraceful in it. On the contrary I am rather inclined to think that you are deserving of praise!"

Mr. Ratcliff started forward.

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"And what about me?" demanded Derring, with a triumphant grin.

"I shall mention to Mr. Cobb your disgraceful behaviour," said the Head sternly, "and strongly advise the club to get rid of you! You will leave this house at once, sir—at once!"

"Well, I've done what I came to do, so I'm satisfied," said Derring. "And if you tell any lies to old Cobb—"

The Head rose angrily.

"You impertinent rascal!" he shouted. "Leave me immediately!"

And Derring slunk out of the room, realising that he would have done better to use more polite language towards boys and masters.

Figgins & Co., feeling quite cheerful, went into the House, and were soon engaged in explaining the circumstances to an excited crowd of juniors.

And so Fatty Wynn's little secret came to an end, and he paid no more visits to Bramcourt. His career had been short, but the other juniors often discussed the time when the Falstaff of the New House had been known as Fatty Wynn, professional.

THE END.

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