

BEST SCHOOL, SPORT, AND ADVENTURE TALES INSIDE!

Week Ending—
December 23rd,
1922.

New
Series.

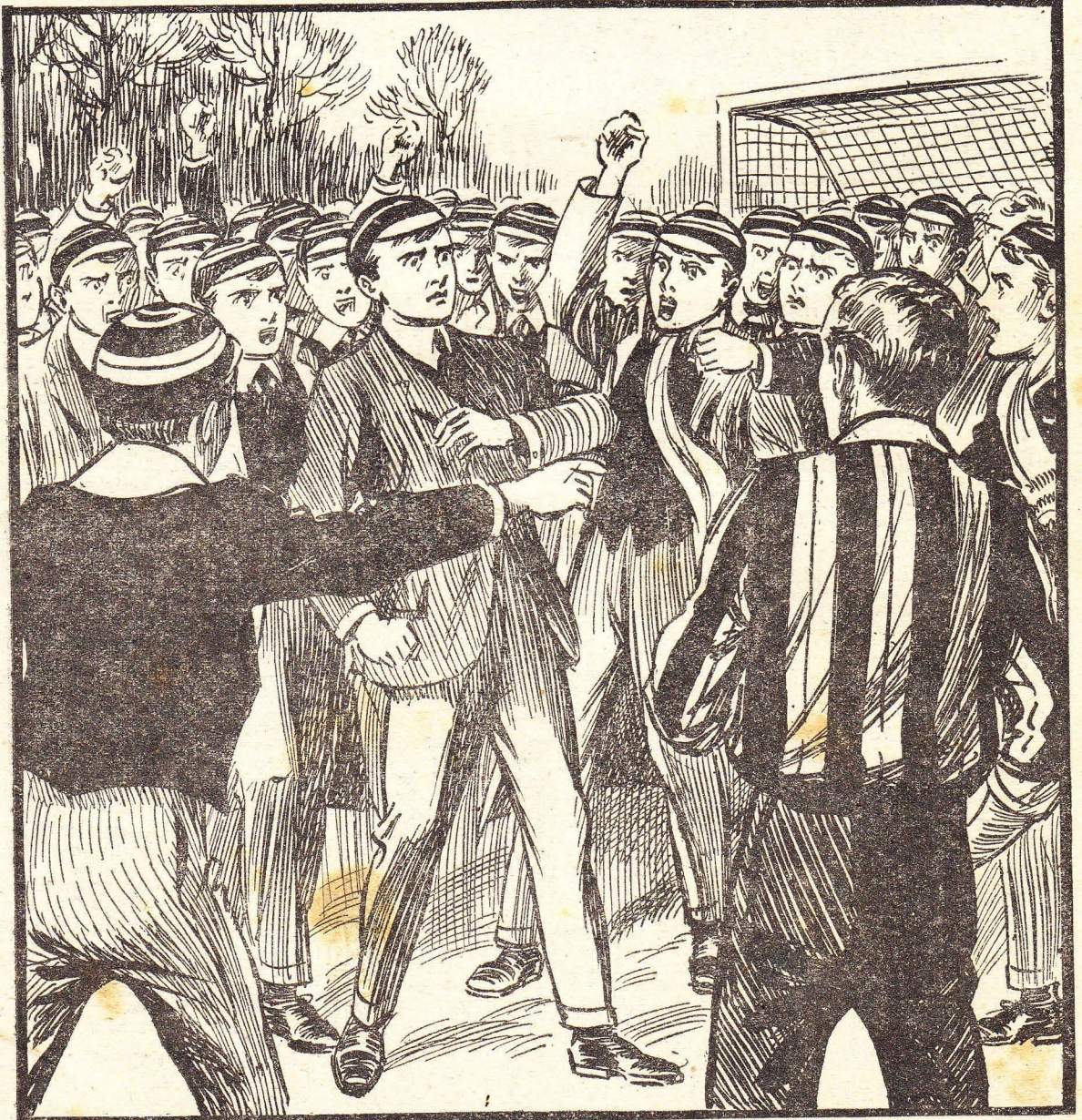
No.
201.

28 Pages.

The POPULAR 2^D

The Story Book for Boys.

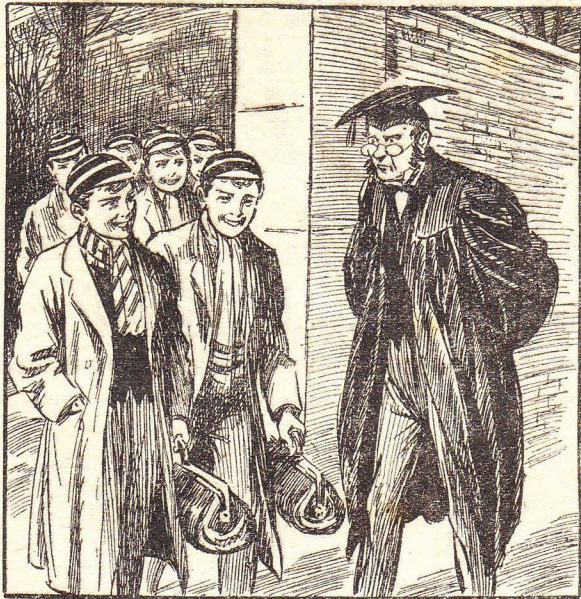
Money Prizes
Every
Week!



NOT WANTED!

The interfering prefect is hustled off the field by the angry spectators!
(An amazing episode from the long, complete tale of St. Jim's inside.)

Mr. Ratcliff is ever on the look-out to catch the Chums of the New House napping. He is sometimes caught himself!



THE TRAIL THAT LED TO NOWHERE!

A Grand Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Forbidden to Play!

"IT'S a bit too thick!"

Fatty Wynn made that remark as he came into the study which he shared with Figgins and Kerr. The Falstaff of the New House was squeezing his hands tightly together—a sure proof that those hands had recently come into painful contact with a cane.

Figgins and Kerr had been waiting tea for their chum. They looked up in surprise.

"What's happened, old man?" asked Figgins.

Fatty Wynn gave a snort. He threw himself into a chair, and it cracked and creaked beneath his weight.

"It's old Ratty, again!" he said. "I can never keep out of his black books. He's just given me three on each paw—the heavy-handed old tyrant!"

"What was it for?" asked Kerr.

"Smiling!"

"What!" gasped Figgins. He knew that Mr. Ratcliff's punishments were sometimes out of all proportion to the offences committed. But three on each hand for smiling! Why, it was simply unheard of.

"I didn't know that smiling was a criminal offence," said Kerr. "They're always telling you to pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag, and smile, smile, smile. But if you get three on each paw every time you do it, it isn't worth the candle."

"What were you smiling at, Fatty?" inquired Figgins.

"At Ratty."

"Oh! That rather alters the case."

It certainly did. For Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the sour, ill-natured Housemaster, was not the sort of person to be smiled at with impunity. A cat may look at a king, it is true; but a junior may not smile at his Housemaster—especially when that Housemaster happens to be an irascible gentleman like Mr. Ratcliff.

"What made you smile at the old beast, Fatty?" asked Kerr.

"He was crossing the quad just now,

and he happened to stop a muddy football with his face."

"My hat!"

"I tried not to smile," said Fatty Wynn, "but, dash it all, how could a fellow help it? There was old Ratty, with his chivvy plastered with mud, prancing about like a cat on hot bricks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Afraid I shouldn't have stopped at smiling," said Figgins. "I should have guffawed outright."

Fatty Wynn poured himself out a cup of tea.

"As I said before, it's a bit too thick!" he remarked. "Three on each paw, just for smiling at a master! It's impossible to look at old Ratty's face, even when it's in a normal state, without smiling. He's such an ugly beast. Looks as if he's just been let loose from a menagerie."

"Shurrup!" muttered Figgins suddenly.

Unseen by Fatty Wynn, who was seated with his back to the doorway, Mr. Ratcliff had appeared on the threshold. Figgins and Kerr saw him, and they did their best to warn Fatty Wynn of the danger. But Fatty quite failed to understand their frantic signals.

"Why should I shut up?" he demanded. "I remarked that Ratty was an ugly beast, and so he is! He'd take the booby prize in any male beauty contest. He's got a face like a—a fruit salad."

"Oh!" gasped Figgins.

"That's fairly done it!" groaned Kerr. It had!

Mr. Ratcliff stood in the doorway, his face working convulsively. For the moment, he had been too taken aback to speak. But he found his voice at last. And when he did speak, it was like the reverberation of thunder.

"Wynn!"

Fatty spun round in his chair. The voice startled him. The vision of Mr. Ratcliff in the doorway startled him still more. He wondered, uneasily, if the Housemaster had overheard his remarks. And he was not left long in doubt.

"Boy!" boomed Mr. Ratcliff. "How

dare you make disrespectful remarks on the subject of my personal appearance!"

"Oh crumbs! I—I'm awfully sorry, sir—"

"Not a word!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "This is the second occasion, within the last hour, that I have had to reprimand you. I am almost inclined to take you before the headmaster, Wynn. However, I will deal with your disgraceful conduct myself. You will be detained in the Form-room for the whole of Wednesday afternoon, and you will write two hundred lines from Virgil."

"Help!" muttered Fatty Wynn, under his breath.

This latest punishment was far more severe than the "three on each paw" which Fatty had been bemoaning.

Wednesday was the day of the Greyfriars match. And Fatty Wynn was the St. Jim's goalie.

Figgins and Kerr looked almost as crestfallen as if they had received the punishment themselves.

"If you please, sir—" began Figgins.

"Be silent, Figgins!"

"Couldn't you make it Saturday afternoon, sir, instead of Wednesday? We happen to be playing Greyfriars on Wednesday, and we can't do without Fatty—I mean, Wynn—in goal."

Mr. Ratcliff frowned. He made use of the immortal reply of Pilate.

"What I have said, I have said. Wynn will be placed under detention for the whole of Wednesday afternoon."

Having pronounced sentence, the Housemaster swept away with rustling gown, leaving blank consternation behind him.

Figgins and Kerr and Fatty Wynn exchanged rueful glances.

"This is a giddy bombshell, and no mistake!" said Figgins. "Oh, Fatty, why didn't you shut up when I told you to?"

"How did I know the old beast was lurking in the doorway?" growled the fat junior. "That's the worst of Ratty. He prowls about on tiptoe, and you can never hear him coming. Just my luck, to be detained when the most important match of the term comes along!"

"We shall never lick Greyfriars without you," said Kerr.

"We should have had a tough job in any case, as the match is being played at Greyfriars," said Figgins. "But without Fatty in goal we haven't a hope."

"It's rotten!" said Fatty Wynn. "It takes a lot to make me lose my appetite, but I've lost it now. I don't want any tea."

"Better go and tell Tom Merry the sorrowful tidings," said Kerr. "He'll have to arrange for another goalie."

Fatty Wynn nodded. He gloomily quitted the study, and went over to the School House.

The Terrible Three were at tea when Fatty came in. They greeted him with cheery grins, but those grins soon vanished when Fatty told them the news.

"Detained!" muttered Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat! We wanted our strongest team in the field, too."

"Well, there it is," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm sorry. It's no use appealing to Ratty to let me off. You know what a merciless old tartar he is. You'll have to get somebody in my place."

"That's easier said than done," said Manners. "There aren't two Fatty Wynns at St. Jim's—more's the pity."

"Thanks for the touching compliment," said Fatty. "But I suggest that Tom Merry plays Hammond. He's a rattling good goalie."

Tom Merry nodded. "I'll play Hammond," he said. "The kid's done some brilliant things at times, but he's not up to your weight, Fatty, and you know it."

"I suppose," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully, "it wouldn't be any use Fatty cutting detention?"

"Couldn't be done," said Fatty Wynn. "Ratty's not likely to give me a loophole. He's bound to come into the Form-room on Wednesday afternoon to make sure I'm there."

"In any case, it wouldn't pay you to cut detention," said Tom Merry. "Ratty would come down like a thousand of bricks afterwards. We must resign ourselves to the situation, and hope that young Hammond plays the game of his life."

Fatty Wynn nodded to the Terrible Three, and walked back to his own House, scowling fiercely as he went, and muttering remarks which would have made Mr. Ratcliff's ears burn, had he been present to hear them.

CHAPTER II.

A Prefect in Pursuit!

"I WONDER," murmured Mr. Ratcliff, "if that boy Wynn has dared to defy my orders?"

It was Wednesday afternoon. A motor charabanc, laden with St. Jim's footballers, had just rumbled away through the quad. Mr. Ratcliff gazed after it from his study window, but it was too far off for him to distinguish its human cargo individually.

"I will go and ascertain if Wynn is in the Form-room," muttered the House-master.

Two minutes later he found himself glancing into an empty Form-room. There was no sign of Fatty Wynn.

An expression of fury came over Mr. Ratcliff's face. He clenched his hands, and glared round the deserted room.

"Ah! It is as I feared!" he exclaimed. "That misguided young rascal has set me at defiance! He possibly hoped that I would forget that I had detained him. He has had the effrontery to ignore my

commands, and go to Greyfriars! I will have him pursued, and brought back with all speed!"

The fuming Housemaster went striding along the passage. He sighted Monteith of the Sixth, and bore down upon him.

"Have you any engagement this afternoon, Monteith?" he asked.

"No, sir," said the prefect. "Nothing important, anyway."

"Then I wish you would do me a service. That reckless young rascal Wynn has deliberately broken detention! He has proceeded to Greyfriars by charabanc with the junior football team. I want you to pursue him, and bring him back to the school. Do not scruple to use force, if necessary."

Monteith readily responded to Mr. Ratcliff's request. The idea of an exciting chase after a defiant junior rather appealed to him. It was a bright, nippy afternoon—just right for violent physical exercise.

"I'll go, sir," said the prefect, at once. "I've only got a push-bicycle, and I don't suppose I shall catch the charabanc. But I'm bound to collar Wynn when he gets to Greyfriars, and I'll bring him back on the next train."

"Excellent!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

 THE
 GREATEST CHRISTMAS
 GIFT BOOK is the
 "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"
 Packed with good things.
 Get it to-day.
 ON SALE EVERYWHERE.

Monteith was a very active sort of fellow, and he lost no time. Within two minutes of his conversation with Mr. Ratcliff he was astride his bicycle, and pedalling away as hard as he could go.

The motor charabanc had had a good five minutes' start, and Monteith saw nothing of it until he reached Wayland. There he found that the charabanc had been held up in the press of traffic.

Just as Monteith came in sight of the vehicle, the policeman on point-duty allowed it to proceed.

Monteith was after it like the wind. Fast and furious pedalling brought him to within twenty yards of the charabanc. He could not see Fatty Wynn on board, but he had no doubt that the other juniors were concealing Fatty from view.

"Stop!" panted the prefect. "Hallo!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Here's our old pal, Monteith. He looks somewhat hot and bothered. What does he want, I wonder?"

"Stop!" repeated Monteith breathlessly. "What's the matter, Monteith?" sang out Tom Merry.

"I want Wynn!" "So do we, but unfortunately we can't have him. He's been detained."

"Don't try to spoof me!" shouted Monteith angrily. "Wynn's with you in that charabanc."

"Rats!" "If you don't ask the driver to stop there will be ructions!"

Tom Merry & Co. declined to call upon the driver to stop. Already they had been delayed in Wayland, and they were anxious to get to Greyfriars.

Monteith was furious. He called upon his reserves of energy, and pedalled harder than ever.

Pop! A jagged stone penetrated the prefect's front tyre, and it went as flat as a pancake.

Monteith gritted his teeth, and dismounted. It was useless to continue the pursuit with a punctured tyre.

But the New House prefect was not the sort of fellow to throw up the sponge of getting to Greyfriars. His bicycle having failed him, he would proceed by train.

Fortunately, there was a station half a mile distant. Monteith made his way in that direction, pushing his machine.

"Rather a nuisance, having to pay my fare to Friardale," reflected the prefect. "Still, with a bit of luck, I shall get it out of Ratcliff afterwards. As for that young rascal Wynn, I'll take him back to the school, even if I have to drag him every inch of the way!"

On reaching the station, Monteith found that he had to wait half an hour for a train. This annoyed him intensely, but there was no help for it.

In the meantime, the prefect gave instructions for his bicycle to be returned by rail to St. Jim's.

The train came in at last, snorting and puffing as if worn out with its exertions.

For reasons of economy, Monteith had taken a third-class ticket. He found himself wedged into a smoking compartment with a number of burly navvies, and the fumes from their clay pipes caused the prefect to choke and splutter. Both the carriage windows were tightly shut, and when Monteith ventured to ask his travelling companions if he might open them, he was told by one navy to go and boil his head, and by another to go and fry his face.

It was a slow and unpleasant journey to Friardale. And Monteith was well-nigh suffocated by the time he reached his destination. He looked quite limp as he staggered out on to the platform.

"Phew! That was like a nightmare!" he gasped, as he took in a deep draught of the fresh, pure air. "I couldn't have stuck it much longer. And now for Greyfriars!"

Monteith chartered the station hack, and was conveyed at a snail's pace to the school.

As the stately old school came in sight, a volley of cheering greeted the prefect's ears.

Monteith glanced at his watch. "The match must have started about half an hour ago," he mused. "It will be nearly half-time when I get to the ground."

The station hack rumbled to a halt in the old Close of Greyfriars.

Monteith had been to the school several times before, and he knew his bearings. He paid the driver, and set out at a long, swinging stride to the football-ground.

"I'll make young Wynn suffer for dragging me right over here!" he muttered.

There was great excitement on the football-field when Monteith arrived. And an enormous crowd flanked the touchline.

"How's the game going?" inquired Monteith of a Greyfriars junior.

"One goal each," was the reply. "Merry scored for St. Jim's in the first."

"The Team That Triumphed!"—a Stunning St. Jim's Tale Next Week!

minute—a surprise goal—and Nugent's just got the equaliser for Greyfriars. Didn't you hear the cheering?"

Monteith nodded, and forced his way through the throng of spectators. When he came within full view of the players he had a great surprise. He had fully expected to see the familiar figure of Fatty Wynn in the St. Jim's goal. Instead of which he saw the slim, lithe form of Hammond of the Fourth.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" muttered Monteith.

For a moment he was nonplussed. But he could not believe that Mr. Ratcliff had sent him on a wild-goose chase.

Fatty Wynn was not playing for St. Jim's. That was obvious. But Monteith had no doubt that Wynn was at Greyfriars—wedged in among the spectators somewhere.

"I think I know what has happened," murmured Monteith. "Merry knew I was tracking Wynn to Greyfriars, and he realised that it wouldn't be wise to play him, as I should probably turn up on the ground. So he played Hammond in Wynn's place, and Wynn's smuggled away among the crowd somewhere. I'm not going back until I've found him. I didn't fag all the way over here on a fruitless errand."

With a grim expression on his face, Monteith strode on to the playing-pitch. "Stop!" he exclaimed, in ringing tones.

Talbot of the Shell, who was bearing down upon the Greyfriars goal with the ball at his toes, stopped short in his stride.

"What the merry dickens—" he ejaculated.

"Stop!" repeated Monteith. "Merry, I want to speak to you!"

Gwynne of Greyfriars, who was refereeing the match, glared at the intruder.

"You've no right to barge in like this!" he said sharply. "If you want to speak to Merry, you can do so at the interval."

"I can't wait," said Monteith briefly. "I want to speak to him at once. It's important."

Tom Merry stepped up to the St. Jim's prefect.

"What's the trouble, Monteith?" he inquired.

Monteith eyed the captain of the Shell grimly.

"I want Wynn!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Search me!" he said cheerfully.

"None of your cheek! I've come here for Wynn, and I'm not going back without him! You know where he is; you know jolly well he's skulking in the crowd somewhere. Go and tell him I'm here, and that he is to return to St. Jim's with me at once!"

"I can't do impossibilities, Monteith," said Tom Merry. "If Wynn isn't here, how can I give him your message?"

"I'm quite satisfied that Wynn is here," said Monteith angrily; "and that you're shielding him!"

"If you doubt my word—" began Tom Merry, with spirit.

"I do!"

"Then I've nothing more to say."

With which remark Tom Merry turned his back on the prefect.

Meanwhile, the game had been suspended, and the crowd had grown mightily impatient. They had been witnessing a delightful exhibition of football, and they were annoyed to see it nipped in the bud.

Hostile shouts were hurled at Monteith.

"Get off the field!"
THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

"You're not wanted here!"
"Buzz off!"

Monteith was too angry to heed such shouts. He strode after Tom Merry, and seized him by the shoulder, and swung him back.

"I insist upon knowing where Wynn is!" he exclaimed. "Tell me at once, or it will go hard with you!"

Tom Merry jerked himself free.

"Wynn isn't here, I tell you!" he said.

"An' you'd better not insinuate that Tom Mewy is lyin'," chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "or we'll wipe up the ground with you!"

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins. "Take Tom Merry's word, Monteith, and buzz off. We want to get on with the game."

Had Monteith been wise, he would have taken Figgins' advice and beaten a retreat. But he was too furious to think of doing that. He genuinely believed that the St. Jim's juniors knew of Fatty Wynn's whereabouts, and were shielding him.

"I'm not going to leave this ground until I get satisfaction!" declared Monteith.

Gwynne, of Greyfriars, shrugged his shoulders, and blew his whistle for the game to proceed. He absolutely ignored Monteith's existence.

Harry Wharton captured the ball, and after tricking a couple of opponents, he sent across a perfect pass to his outside-right. The latter—Vernon-Smith—fired in a terrific shot, which would undoubtedly have scored had not Monteith stood in the way of the ball. It struck the St. Jim's prefect on the chest, and Greyfriars thus lost a gilt-edged chance of taking the lead.

The spectators were simply furious. They had been angry at Monteith's interference with the game, but they were more than angry now. They were almost homicidal. They swarmed on to the field of play, and closed in on Monteith.

The St. Jim's prefect grew quite alarmed.

"Stand back, you young idiots!" he shouted.

But he might as well have addressed the goalpost for all the response he got. He was hemmed in by a furious, seething crowd.

"Collar him!"
"Chuck him off!"

"He prevented a certain goal!"
Gwynne of the Sixth came rushing up.

"Drop that!" he cried sharply. "We want no hooliganism here!"

But Gwynne's voice was drowned in the general uproar. No notice was taken of him, and it was doubtful whether the angry crowd would have taken any notice of the Head himself at that moment.

Monteith was grasped by many hands, and borne to earth. He fought and struggled with all the vigour of which he was capable, but the Greyfriars fellows clung to him like limpets. He was buffed and bumped and punched and pummelled, and finally he was heaved to his feet and frog-marched from the field.

Tom Merry & Co. had not interfered. They didn't see why they should. Monteith had practically accused them of lying, and they didn't feel like going to his rescue after that. Moreover, the St. Jim's prefect had brought the trouble upon himself, by his obstinate attitude.

Monteith was hustled and jostled all the way to the school gates. Then he was sent whirling into the roadway, where he collapsed in a breathless heap.

Having wreaked vengeance upon the interloper, the Greyfriars fellows went back to the football ground, leaving Monteith to sort himself out as best he could.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Surprise for Ratty!

MONTEITH staggered to his feet. He was in a terrible plight. Never in his career had he received such a rough handling. His collar and tie were broken loose; he had shed his waistcoat buttons on the football-field; he had lost his cap; and his face was plastered with mud.

"Confound old Ratcliff for sending me on this wild-goose chase!" he muttered. "Ow! I feel as if I'd been put through a mangle!"

Although he felt fairly certain that Fatty Wynn was at Greyfriars, Monteith did not return to the football-field to look for him. He knew what would happen if he did. He had already been shown the way out by the Greyfriars juniors, and he wanted no repetition of the performance.

Slowly he turned his steps in the direction of the railway-station. Fortunately, he was able to get a much-needed wash and brush up before the train came in.

The journey back to St. Jim's was nothing if not tedious. Monteith reflected that this was the most unhappy afternoon he had ever spent.

Mr. Ratcliff met Monteith on his return.

The Housemaster looked very disappointed on seeing that the prefect was alone.

"Have you not brought that wretched boy back, Monteith?" he exclaimed.

"Doesn't look like it, does it?" growled Monteith disrespectfully.

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

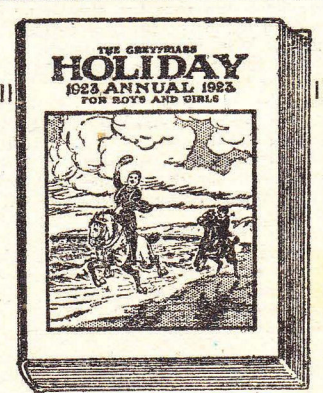
"You appear to forget whom it is you are addressing!" he said sharply.

"Where is Wynn?"

"At Greyfriars, sir, I suppose."

"What! And you have allowed him to remain there, playing football?"

"He wasn't playing, sir," said Monteith. "Young Hammond was keeping goal for St. Jim's. I believe Wynn was smuggled away among the crowd somewhere. I made every effort to find him,



6/- Here you are, boys! The HOLIDAY ANNUAL is the jolliest Christmas present you can have. It is packed with school and adventure stories, pictures, and coloured plates, and you will enjoy every line of it. Just drop the hint that the present you want this year is the HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

Of all Book-sellers and Newsagents.

A Real Corker—the St. Jim's Footballers on the Warpath Again Next Week!

but the crowd resented my interference, and chucked me off the premises."

"Bless my soul! This is outrageous!" stormed Mr. Ratcliff. "It is all the fault of that wretched boy, and it shall all be laid to his charge! On his return, I will take him before the headmaster. I am sorry you have been so roughly handled, Monteith."

The prefect strode away without replying. After his unpleasant experiences he was glad to seek the solace of his study.

Mr. Ratcliff, with growing impatience, awaited the return of the St. Jim's footballers. His wrath was comparable only to that of Jove of old. When Fatty Wynn came in, he meant to move heaven and earth to get him a public flogging.

The angry Housemaster had paced the length of the quadrangle at least twenty times before the footballers arrived.

Tom Merry & Co. came in looking very pleased with themselves. They had not beaten Greyfriars, but they had done the next best thing, and forced an honourable draw. The final score had been 3-3.

Mr. Ratcliff glared at the footballers. He scrutinised them intently in the dusk, but failed to discern Fatty Wynn.

"Boys! Where is Wynn?" he demanded.

"No idea, sir," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"He accompanied you to Greyfriars!"

"Then he must have accompanied us in the spirit, and not in the flesh, sir," said Figgins. "We haven't seen him."

"You are impertinent, Figgins! You are shielding that misguided boy—"

At that moment Mr. Railton bore down upon the group in the school gateway.

"What is all the trouble about?" he inquired.

Mr. Ratcliff eyed his colleague with disfavour.

"I am quite capable of attending to my own affairs, Mr. Railton," he snapped. "But as you seem eager to know the facts, I will acquaint you with them. Wynn, of my House, had the audacity to break detention and go to Greyfriars with these boys."

"Nonsense!"

"What!"

"I repeat—nonsense!" said Mr. Railton. "Wynn has been confined to the Form-room the whole of the afternoon!"

"Impossible!"

"Do you doubt my word, sir?" said Mr. Railton angrily. "I have looked into the Form-room on at least half-a-dozen occasions during the afternoon, and Wynn has been there, working."

Mr. Ratcliff was fairly staggered.

"But I looked into the Form-room early in the afternoon, and there was no sign of Wynn!" he exclaimed.

"That is easily explained," said Mr. Railton. "The boy had merely gone to his study to fetch his Virgil."

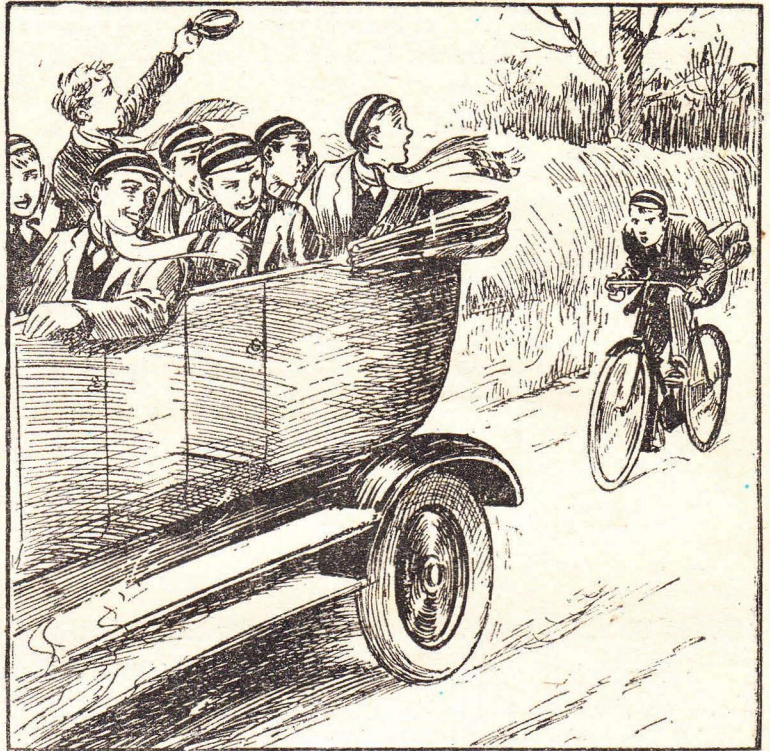
"Oh!"

Mr. Ratcliff grew quite dizzy. He realised that he had been making a terrific fuss about nothing at all. He had been cocksure that Fatty Wynn had gone to Greyfriars with the rest of the footballers. And Fatty had been in the Form-room the whole time! Mr. Ratcliff had worked himself up into a towering passion and nearly broken a blood-vessel, entirely without cause!

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled. Mr. Ratcliff turned upon them fiercely.

"Do not stand there sniggering!" he exclaimed. "Go away at once!"

The juniors obeyed.



A PREFECT IN CHASE! Fast and furious pedalling brought Monteith to within twenty yards of the crowded charabanc. "Stop!" panted the prefect. "Hallo!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Here's our old pal Monteith. What does he want, I wonder?" (See Chapter 2.)

"Is it not time Wynn was released from detention, Mr. Ratcliff?" said Mr. Railton. "He has been in the Form-room nearly six hours!"

"I will go and liberate him," said Mr. Ratcliff sourly.

And he stamped angrily away in the direction of the Form-room.

Fatty Wynn was sitting in the gloaming, toying idly with a penholder.

"You may go, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff curtly.

"About time, too!" muttered Fatty under his breath, as he rose and made for the door.

Mr. Ratcliff stalked away to his study. In the passage he encountered Monteith of the Sixth. The prefect was looking furious.

"Is it correct that Wynn has been here all the time, sir?" said Monteith heatedly.

"I am sorry, Monteith—"

"Your sorrow won't compensate me for all I've gone through!" growled Monteith. "Just look at my face! And my clothes! I've had to suffer all this, and to waste a whole blessed afternoon, without cause! It's perfectly scandalous!"

"Monteith, that is not the way to speak to your Housemaster!"

But Monteith could not have spoken respectfully to Mr. Ratcliff just then, even if the Head himself had been present. He was almost beside himself with rage.

"You owe me for the return fare to Friardale," he said.

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"How dare you, Monteith! How dare you try to extort money from me by false pretences! You went to Greyfriars on your bicycle!"

"The beastly thing broke down the

other side of Wayland," said Monteith, "so I had to go by train. I acted as your messenger, so it's only right that you should pay my fare."

This was the last straw!

Mr. Ratcliff was a niggardly man, and he hated having to part with money. He stubbornly refused to bear the expense of Monteith's expedition, until the prefect threatened to put the matter before the Head. This threat had the desired effect, and Mr. Ratcliff promptly paid up. But it was like having teeth extracted to part with the money.

Fatty Wynn was sympathised with on every side that evening. He had missed one of the best matches of the term, and even a good feed in Tom Merry's study failed to console the Falstaff of the New House.

The following Saturday, however, Fatty Wynn had ample compensation. He travelled with the St. Jim's team to Rookwood, and he put up such a brilliant performance in goal that the Rookwooders failed to score, even on their native heath. Talbot scored for St. Jim's on the stroke of time, and Tom Merry & Co. returned victorious—thanks chiefly to the sterling work of their plump and popular goalie.

If Mr. Ratcliff should detain Fatty Wynn on some future half-holiday, he will make sure that Fatty is actually off the premises before sending a prefect in pursuit!

THE END.

(There will be another topping long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled "The Team That Triumphed!" in next week's fine bumper number.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

Further Adventures of Tom Merry & Co. in the "Gem" Every Week!

Harry Wharton is placed in a very awkward and unpleasant position when he is asked by Mr. Quelch, to "Champion" Percy Esmond, the Funk of the Form!

The Funk's Guardian!

A Stirring, Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co.,
the Chums of Greyfriars, dealing with Percy Esmond, the amazing
New Boy of the Remove.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the Famous Tales of Greyfriars now appearing in The Greatly Enlarged "Magnet" Library.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Little Too Previous!

"FOLLOW your leader," said Bob Cherry.

Bob Cherry was the leader. A little crowd of juniors were collected on the landing at the end of the Remove passage in the School House at Greyfriars.

From the landing to the lower hall, following the curve of the staircase, was a balustrade of polished oak, smooth and slippery as glass; and it was a favourite amusement for some of the more daring of the juniors to slide down it astride without holding.

It was a dangerous pastime, for a momentary loss of nerve would have led to a fall into the hall below; and hence it was forbidden by the powers that were.

But the powers were not visible just now. It was a half-holiday, and nearly everybody was out of doors.

Bob Cherry swung one leg over the banisters, and slid away in a sitting position at a really terrific speed.

He shot off the end of the balustrade into the hall, and landed on his feet with perfect ease.

Harry Wharton was the next, and after him came Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull.

Then Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the Indian junior, swung a slim leg over the banisters—to follow.

But just as he was starting there came a warning call from the juniors standing below.

"Cave!"
But the warning came too late. Hurree Singh was starting, and it was quite impossible for him to stop. He slid away like lightning.

Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, had come out of his study. Perhaps the heavy bumping of boots in the hall, as the juniors landed one after another, had disturbed him. He came towards Harry Wharton & Co. just as Hurree Singh came whizzing down the banisters.

"Look out!" roared Bob Cherry.
"Vat is it? Mon Dieu!"
Crash!

Hurree Singh shot off the banisters, and landed upon Monsieur Charpentier's chest with a terrific impact.

Mossoo was not a big man or a strong man. But if he had been a second Goliath he could hardly have stood that impact without falling.

As it was, he was simply swept off his feet. The unfortunate little Frenchman gave a horrified gasp as he was carried away, and he found himself stretched on his back in
THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

the hall, with Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh rolling helplessly over him.

"Ah, mon Dieu! Vat is zat? Is it vun earthquake?" gasped Monsieur Charpentier.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The sorrowfulness is terrific, honoured sir!" panted Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, as he rolled off the French master.

"Sorry, sir!"
"It was an accident."
"Inky didn't see you!"

The juniors rushed to help Monsieur Charpentier to his feet.

The little Frenchman staggered up, aided by many hands, and stood gasping in a dazed state and blinking round him.

"Vat is it?" he gasped. "Vat has happen? I am smite wiz a fearful concussion. Is it zat ze house shall tumble down viz itself?"

"It was only Inky, sir," said Harry, striving manfully not to laugh. "He didn't see you coming, sir!"

"Helas! I am almost stun. It is zat you have been siding down ze banisters, isn't it?" Monsieur Charpentier exclaimed severely.

"Ye-es, sir!"
"Zat is against ze rules. You have hurt me severely!"

"So sorry, sir!" murmured Nugent.

"It was quite an accident, sir."

"The accidentfulness was terrific, honoured sahib!"

Monsieur Charpentier rubbed his chest ruefully. He was a good-natured little man, but there were limits to his good nature. But the juniors all looked so penitent that the kind little Frenchman melted.

"Zat vich you have done is very reckless," he said. "Y'u shall not do him any more. Mr. Quelch would be very angry if he know. But I zink zat you are sorry, so it is zat I say nozing!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!"
"You are awfully good, Mossoo!"

Monsieur Charpentier staggered away to his study. He had really had a very bad shaking.

"Jolly lucky it wasn't Quelchy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, would certainly not have taken that accident so good temperedly.

"Master Wharton!" Trotter the page came along the passage. "Master Wharton, if you please—"

"Hallo! What's the trouble now?" asked Harry.

"Mr. Quelch wants you in his study, Master Wharton."

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors exchanged looks of dismay.

"He's heard us!" groaned Bob Cherry. "I thought he was out."

"He never is out when he's wanted out!" growled Johnny Bull. "But what does he want only Wharton for? We're all in it."

"Well, one licking's enough," said Harry. "You stay here, and I'll go and get it even."

"No fear!" said Bob promptly. "We'll come, too!"

"But Quelchy only wants me."
"Then he's going to get more than he wants," grinned Frank Nugent. "Come on, you fellows; we'll all face the giddy music together."

"The togetherness is terrific!"

And the Famous Five started in a body for Mr. Quelch's study, rubbing their hands in anticipation.

Harry Wharton knocked at the door. "Come in!" called out the sharp tones of the Remove master.

Wharton opened the door, and the juniors filed in.

Mr. Quelch, who was seated at his table, raised his eyebrows at the sight of the five, and looked surprised.

"I sent for Wharton," he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "But—"

"We're all in it, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"So we thought we ought to come, sir," said Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch looked puzzled.

"I do not quite understand you," he said.

"The matter concerns Wharton alone."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bob immediately. "I was really the chap who started it, sir."

"What!"

"I said 'follow your leader,' sir, and they followed," explained Bob.

"What are you talking about, Cherry?" exclaimed the Form master testily.

It was Bob's turn to look surprised.

"About what you sent for Wharton for, sir. It was just bad luck that Mossoo came along just in time to be bumped over."

"The badness of the luck was terrific, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at them grimly.

"So Monsieur Charpentier has been bumped over?" he asked.

"I—I thought you knew, sir!" stammered Bob Cherry. "You—you sent for Wharton—"

"We—we thought you heard us sliding down," stammered Johnny Bull.

"Indeed! So you have been sliding down the banisters, and you have bumped over Monsieur Charpentier?" said Mr. Quelch, in his most magisterial tone.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Very good! You will take a hundred lines each, and I thank you for informing me of this circumstance, of which I know nothing."

"Oh!"

"I sent for Wharton upon quite another matter. You others may go!"

Forward, the Greyfriars Chums! More About Them Next Week!

"Oh!" murmured the juniors. And they went, feeling very much inclined to kick themselves.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
A Job for Wharton!

HARRY WHARTON remained in the Form master's study. He wondered what Mr. Quelch wanted with him.

Evidently it was not the accident to Monsieur Charpentier which had caused him to be called into the study. He ran hastily over in his mind all his latest delinquencies, wondering which of them had come to the ears of the Remove master. Had Mr. Quelch been informed of the fact that he had put treacle in Loder's Sunday topper, or was it the incident of Coker's "bags" being sewn up, so that he had burst them in trying to put them on that morning?

"Wharton!"
"Yes, sir."
"I wish to speak to you seriously."
"Yes, sir," said Harry, with an inward groan. Mr. Quelch had a most biting tongue when he talked to a fellow seriously; and, upon the whole, Wharton would have preferred a caning.

"The fact is, there is a new boy coming to Greyfriars this afternoon, a boy named Esmond—Percy Esmond. He will be in the Remove."

"Yes, sir," said Harry again. How on earth it concerned him that a boy named Percy Esmond was coming to Greyfriars he could not guess. He waited to be enlightened.

"This boy," resumed Mr. Quelch, "is of a somewhat peculiar nature. His parents are very anxious about him, and the Head has consulted me on the matter, and I have decided to speak to you about it, Wharton. This lad Esmond is of a very timid nature—in fact, from what I hear, I am afraid he is what you boys would call a funk."

"Oh!" said Harry.
"Such a timid lad is likely to find some trouble in a Form like the Lower Fourth—do you not think so?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"My hat! I should say so!" said Wharton involuntarily. "I—I mean, the Remove don't like funks, sir. Greyfriars isn't really the place for them, is it, sir? A funk is jolly certain to be ragged. Is he an invalid, sir?"

"Not at all. I understand that he is quite fit physically."
"If he's able to look after himself, sir, what is he a funk for?"

Mr. Quelch smiled.
"Apparently he is timid by nature, Wharton. His father hopes that at Greyfriars he may be cured of this unhappy failing. I think it quite possible. But it is also possible that a boy who cannot protect himself may be ragged and bullied, and may even have his spirit quite broken. That would be very unfortunate."

"I suppose so, sir."
"That is why I am speaking to you, Wharton. You are a serious lad, and I believe you have a kind heart and a generous nature."

Wharton coloured a little; he felt that his Form master was laying the butter on rather thick. And he was feeling a little apprehensive, too, about the favour Mr. Quelch was going to ask. He began to have a glimmering of what it was.

"Would it be asking too much of you, Wharton, if I requested you to take this unfortunate lad a little in hand at first?"
"So that's it?" murmured Harry, in dismay.

"To look after him a little, and see that he is not bullied, and so forth, for a time?" said Mr. Quelch, his eyes keenly on the junior's face. "There is hardly another boy in my Form of whom I should think of asking such a thing, Wharton."

Wharton felt pretty sure of that.
"I know it will be a trouble to you, and a responsibility," said Mr. Quelch. "But, as head of your Form, you must expect a certain amount of responsibility, and you are not the kind of boy to shirk it."
"I hope not, sir."

"If you would, to a certain extent, take this lad under your protection, and care for him, and give him time to find his feet, so to speak, it would be a good deed, and a great favour to myself."
Wharton was silent.

He wanted to oblige the Form master, and he was sorry for any chap who was unfortunate enough to be a funk. But to have a funk "planted" upon him to look after, to have the responsibility of such an out-

sider on his hands, that was far from being a pleasant prospect. At the same time, it was impossible to refuse what Mr. Quelch asked. A request from a Form master was like an invitation from Royalty—not to be refused.

Mr. Quelch was watching his face keenly. He understood quite easily the thoughts that were passing in the mind of the junior. His experience of boys extended over forty years, and he knew them better than they knew themselves.

"You do not care to do this, Wharton?" he asked.

Wharton flushed.
"Not—not exactly that, sir," he stammered. "But—but I—I don't know—Certainly, sir, I'll do it. I'll do my best."

"It is the duty of the strong to help the weak, Wharton, and of the brave to protect the timid," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, of course, sir!"
"I do not think you will regret it afterwards," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "There is a great satisfaction, Wharton, in feeling that one has done a duty, however unpleasant the duty may have been. That is all, Wharton. Esmond will be here this afternoon. If you could make it convenient to meet him when he comes, and show him some civility, it would be a good beginning."

"Very well, sir."
"Thank you, Wharton. I am much obliged to you."
"Oh, not at all, sir!"

And Harry Wharton left the Form master's study, with a far from cheerful expression of countenance.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Clean Pair of Heels!

THE Co. waited for Harry Wharton in the doorway of the School House. They were a little anxious about their chief.

That afternoon the Remove were playing a Form match with the Shell, and it was close on time for getting on the football-ground.

Harry Wharton was captain of the Remove eleven, and he was wanted in the match, of course. The Shell were two Forms above the Remove in the school; older fellows—in fact, almost seniors. They had the advantage of age, size, and weight, and were a hard team for the Lower Fourth to play. If Wharton happened to be detained, and the Remove deprived of their captain, it might make all the difference between victory and defeat for the junior eleven.

So the Co. looked anxiously at Wharton as he came along, with a slight shade upon his brow.

"Detained?" asked all four together.
Wharton shook his head.
"Oh, good luck!" said Bob Cherry, with a sigh of relief. "I was afraid that you might have to miss the match."

"Which would most likely mean a licking for us," remarked Nugent. "Hobson and his team think they are going to lick us, anyway."

Wharton started a little.
"The match!" he repeated. "Oh, my hat!"

"What's the matter?" asked Bob anxiously. "You're going to play, of course?"

"I can't!"
"Can't play!" exclaimed Bob warmly. "What do you mean? Quelch hasn't detained you!"

"No; it is not detention."
"Then what is it?"
Wharton groaned dismally.
"I've got a job as a dry-nurse."

"A wha-a-at?"
"There's a new kid coming here this afternoon—a freak named Esmond. Quelch wants me to take him under my wing and look after him."

"Oh blow!" exclaimed Bob indignantly. "You can take him under your silly wing after the football match, I suppose?"

"I've promised to meet the beast when he comes, and be civil to him."
"And miss the match?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Well, I shall have to. I can't meet the beast, and look after the beast, if I'm playing footer when the beast arrives!" said Wharton, apparently finding some solace in thus characterising the new boy.

"Well, I call that rotten. Why couldn't Quelch ask somebody else to look after a rotten new kid? Alonzo Todd would do it—

or Bunter. You'd better run back and tell Quelch that, upon second thoughts, you're sorry you can't do anything of the kind."

Wharton grinned.
"I couldn't refuse Quelch. He put it in the form of asking a favour, and talked to me like a Dutch uncle," he said. "But what on earth I'm to do with the new kid is a giddy mystery."

"What does he want looking after for?" asked Bolsover major, who had been standing near, and heard what was said. "Is he ill, or dotty, or what?"

"He's timid."
"Hey?"
"In other words, a funk," said Wharton. "His people are anxious about him, it seems."

Bolsover major burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, they're right to be anxious about a giddy funk who's coming into the Greyfriars Remove. He will be slaughtered!"

"He won't!" said Wharton. "That's what I've got to prevent."

The bully of the Remove sneered.
"So you're going to take him under your protection, and dry-nurse him, and bring him up in the way he should go?" he sneered.

"Well, you'll have all your work cut out. Funk ain't popular here."

"No fear!" chimed in Vernon Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars. "You'd better chuck it up, Wharton, and let the fellow be well ragged to begin with. That may help to knock the nonsense out of him. To oblige you, I'll take a hand in the ragging."

"Thanks; but it won't do! There's to be no ragging!"

"I'll bet you there'll be plenty!" said Bolsover major.

"There'll be trouble for the raggers, then," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I don't like the job Quelch has given me, but I have given him my word, and I'm going to keep it. Now, you chaps, it's time you got down to the ground."

"And you're really standing out?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I must."
Harry Wharton & Co. walked down to the footer-ground. Hobson and his men were already there, punting the ball about. Wharton could not help feeling worried.

Mr. Quelch had not taken into consideration such matters as junior football matches, and he had had no idea that he was seriously interfering with Wharton's business as captain of his Form. There was no help for it, and Harry had to make up his mind to it, and he tried to do it with a good grace.

"Time, you fellows!" called out Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, as the Famous Five came up.

"Ready!" said Wharton. "I want you to captain the team this afternoon, Browney."

"What for?"
"I'm standing out."

Tom Brown looked very concerned.
"I'll skipper the team with pleasure," he said. "But you oughtn't to stand out, Wharton. The Shell are in great form."

"Can't be helped."
"Oh, all right, then!"

And the Remove went without their captain.

Wharton, leaning on the stone pillar of the gateway, looked down the long white road towards the village.

Suddenly he started.

A running figure came in sight—a lad of about his own age, with a silk hat on the back of his head, and his jacket flying in the wind as he ran.

He came on towards the school gates with a terrific burst of speed.

Wharton gazed at him in wonder. The boy was a well-built lad, and the speed he was putting on showed that he was physically fit. Wharton had never seen him before, and he wondered whether this was Percy Esmond, the new "kid" for Greyfriars.

If so, what was he coming to the school at such a rate for? It was not usual for new boys to arrive at Greyfriars tearing along at top-speed, crimson with exertion, and with their hats on the back of their heads.

But the cause of the stranger's haste was soon apparent. Another fellow came in sight round the bend of the road, a dozen yards behind him, and Wharton recognised a Highcliffe cap, and the face of Ponsoby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, underneath it.

A Breathlessly Thrilling School Yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. Next Week!

Ponsonby of Highcliffe was evidently in hot pursuit of the running figure. Wharton stared at them blankly. The boy in advance was bigger than the fellow who was chasing him, and there was no reason at all why he should run from Ponsonby, unless he was a coward. Wharton guessed that this must be the new boy—the unfortunate, timid youth whom he was expected to take under his wing.

His brows contracted as he gazed. There was a keen rivalry between the junior boys of Highcliffe School and Greyfriars, and they seldom met without a row; but in those rows Highcliffe generally came off second best. It was quite a new experience for Ponsonby to chase a Greyfriars fellow. Undoubtedly he had fallen in with the new boy in the village, and discovered that he was coming to Greyfriars, and started ragging him. And the boy had started disgracing the school he was coming to by taking to his heels.

The fugitive came tearing on breathlessly, and he arrived at the school gates still a dozen yards ahead of his pursuer. He paused in the gateway, panting. "Is this Greyfriars?" he jerked out, as he caught sight of Wharton.

"Yes," said Harry curtly. "Thank goodness!" And the boy darted in. Harry Wharton caught him by the shoulder, and swung him round savagely. For the moment he forgot that he had promised to take the new boy under his protection, and he shook him savagely.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed. "My name's Esmond!" gasped the other. "The new kid?" "Yes."

"And what are you running for?" "That chap's after me!" panted Esmond. "Let me go! He'll be here in a tick!" "Why don't you face him, then?" "I—I— Let me go!" shouted Esmond, struggling, as Ponsonby came panting up.

"Oh, don't be afraid!" exclaimed Wharton scornfully. "I'll stop him fast enough!" He released Esmond, and stepped out of the gateway as Ponsonby came up. Ponsonby halted. It was great fun to chase a funk along the road, but it was not so funny to encounter the captain of the Remove, who was famous for his powers as a hard hitter.

"Well, come on, Ponsonby!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "What are you stopping for? You seemed to be in a hurry a moment ago." "Where's that kid?" demanded Ponsonby. "Never mind that kid," said Harry. "If you're looking for trouble, I'm here!" Ponsonby backed away.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said airily. "You've got a precious funk there! Ha, ha, ha! I hope you're proud of him. He's bigger than I am! Who don't he come out?" "I'll come out!" said Wharton angrily.

And he came out, and in another moment he and Ponsonby were "going it" hammer and tongs.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The Funk!

PERCY ESMOND stood in the gateway, looking on. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking quite calm and cool now. At a glance he had seen that Harry Wharton could easily account for the Highcliffe fellow, and that there was no cause for further alarm. So he took matters easily. "Go it!" he called out encouragingly. "Thump him! Thump the rotter! Bravo! He's down! Bravo!"

Ponsonby was on his back in the dust. "Want some more?" asked Wharton, glaring down at him. Wharton was very angry—it angered him to see a Greyfriars fellow running from the enemy, and he was wreaking his anger upon the unfortunate Ponsonby. But for his promise to Mr. Quelch, he would have licked the new boy, too. As he was prevented from doing that by his promise, he let Ponsonby have it all; and after three minutes Ponsonby looked decidedly the worse for wear.

He sat up in the road, and dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. Ponsonby rather prided himself upon the aristocratic shape of his Grecian nose, but at the present it looked anything but Grecian. It had a bulbous look, and it was highly coloured. "Ow!" said Ponsonby. "Yow! Grooh!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

"There's some more if you want any!" said Wharton politely.

Ponsonby did not want any more. He staggered to his feet, and gave the Greyfriars fellow a black look, and limped away. Wharton turned back into the gateway, and looked at Esmond.

"Well done!" said the latter. "You handled him a treat!"

"Why didn't you handle him?" demanded Wharton angrily.

"I was afraid!" "Wha-a-at!" "Afraid!" explained Esmond, with perfect calmness.

Wharton stared at him blankly. It was only too plain that the new boy was a funk; but Harry had expected him to be a little bit ashamed of it, at least, and attempt to make some lame explanation or other. But if Esmond was a funk, he certainly was not a humbug as well. He did not appear to be in the slightest degree ashamed of that little peculiarity of his nature.

"You—you—you're a funk!" said Wharton. "Exactly."

"And—and you're not ashamed of it?" "Why should I be?"

Wharton stared at him. "Why? Well, I should think any fellow would be ashamed of being a funk."

"I don't see why. You wouldn't be ashamed of being lame if you happened to be lame, would you?"

"No; but—"

"Or deaf, if you happened to be deaf?" "Of course not. But—"

"Well, then, what's the good of being ashamed of weak nerves when you can't help it?" said Esmond. "I've got no nerve, and I suppose I was born so, and it's not my fault. I've thought it out quite calmly, and I've reasoned it out that there's nothing to be ashamed of in it. So there you are."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I can't fight, and I don't pretend I can," said Esmond. "I'm not built that way, you see. You can fight, it seems; but I dare say I can do some things you can't do. So it comes to the same thing."

"Well, you are a queer beggar, and no mistake!" exclaimed Wharton, bursting into a laugh.

His anger melted away. It was impossible to be angry with the new boy. After all, if the fellow had no nerve, perhaps it was not his fault. And Esmond was certainly very frank about it.

"Who was that chap, by the way?" Esmond asked.

"Ponsonby—a Highcliffe chap. We generally have rows with the Highcliffe fellows," said Harry.

"Oh, that accounts for it!" said the new boy. "He pounced on me in Friardale, and asked me if I belonged to Greyfriars; and when I said I did he went for me."

"And do you seriously mean to say that you're not ashamed to own it?" exclaimed Wharton, looking at him curiously.

"Not in the least."

"Well, that beats it. How do you think you are going to get on here, if you can't stand up for yourself?" demanded Wharton. Esmond shook his head.

"I really don't know. I shall have to chance it. Do they rag new boys in this school?"

"Yes—if they're funks."

"Oh dear!" said Esmond. "I say, by the way, what's your name?"

"Wharton. I'm captain of the Form you're going into."

"Good!" said Esmond, with satisfaction. "I'll tell you what. I'm a rich chap. Heaps of tin. As much as I want, in fact."

"Well?"

"You seem to be a great fighting-man. You handled that chap a treat. I couldn't help admiring the way you did it. Suppose we chum up?"

"Eh?"

"I'll stand you anything you want—feeds and things, and anything, in fact, and you'll stand by me and fight all my battles," said Esmond. "Is it a go?"

"Great Scott!" "It's a fair offer, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Blessed if I don't think you're a little bit off the top!" exclaimed Harry, in amazement. "Of all the ideas—"

"Well, I think it's a jolly good idea." "I don't," said Harry. "In the first place, I don't want your money. I've got

enough of my own, and if I hadn't I shouldn't want anybody else's. If you weren't a funk, I should punch your head for suggesting such a thing!"

"Sorry!" said Esmond, backing away promptly. "Consider it unsaid."

"But I shall look after you as much as I can, though I don't know about fighting your battles," said Wharton. "My Form master has asked me to do so."

"That's good! Is that why you chipped in just now?"

"Yes. Otherwise I'd have taken you by the back of the neck and forced you to stand up to that Highcliffe rotter!"

"Oh, by Jove, would you?" exclaimed Esmond. "Then I'm much obliged to your Form master. He seems to be quite a brick!"

"I'll give you some good advice," went on Harry. "The best thing you can do is to get over this rotten cowardice!"

"Can't!"

"Have you tried?" "Lots of times," said Esmond ruefully. "But it's no good. I've even tackled chaps on purpose, to see whether I couldn't get over it; but as soon as they came for me I bolted."

"And you've got the nerve to say so?" exclaimed Wharton, in disgust.

"Yes, I've got plenty of that kind of nerve!" said Esmond calmly.

"I'm blessed if I know what kind of life you're going to get in the Remove here," said Wharton. "Why, even Bunter and Snoop will begin to bully you, as soon as they know you are a rotten coward! I'm going to look at the footer now. Will you come along?"

"Certainly!" said Esmond.

And they walked down to the playing-fields together.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
A Pig in Clover!

THE FORM match was still going strong. The score was level, and the first half was not yet over.

The Shell were attacking hotly, but the Remove defence was sound, and the Shell forwards could not get through.

"Same old crowd?" asked Wharton, as he joined the score of fellows looking on. "Yes, one to one," said Skinner of the Remove.

"There goes old Bob!" exclaimed Russell, as Bob Cherry, left-half, raced the ball down the touch-line, and drove it across to the forwards.

Hobson intercepted it, but Vernon-Smith robbed him of it neatly, and ran on for goal, and sent it spinning in amid a roar of cheering.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Bravo, the Bunder!"

"Two for the Remove," said Wharton, with satisfaction. "The Shell are going to get it in the neck this time, after all."

The teams lined up again, and the struggle was renewed. Wharton glanced round at his new companion.

"Do you play footer?" he asked. Esmond shook his head.

"Why not?" demanded Wharton. "Too rough!"

"Oh crumbs! Are you afraid of being pushed?"

"Yes," said Esmond calmly.

"Hallo! Is that the new kid?" exclaimed Bolsover major, bearing down upon them.

"I'm the new boy," said Esmond, looking at him.

"The blessed funk, hey?"

"Yes, I'm a funk."

"Wha-a-at!"

Bolsover major's jaw dropped in his astonishment. He had never expected to hear any fellow admit that he was a funk in that perfectly cool and matter-of-fact manner.

Harry Wharton laughed. "He's not ashamed of it," he said. "Let him alone, Bolsover. You remember what I told you."

Bolsover major snorted. "I don't care twopence what you told me! The rotter ought to be ashamed of himself. What he wants is a good hiding."

Esmond looked alarmed. "I say—" he began.

"And I'm jolly well going to tan his hide to begin with," said Bolsover, in his most bullying tone. "What right has a rotten funk to come here at all. I'd like to know."

"Let him alone!" said Wharton, frowning. "Rats!"

Your Old Favourite, Frank Richards, Proves What a Topping Writer He Is Next Week!

And the bully of the Remove bore down upon Percy Esmond. Wharton's eyes flashed, and he jumped between them, mindful of his promise to Mr. Quelch. But Esmond had already taken to his heels. Whatever else he could not do, he could certainly run. Indeed, it was probable that, owing to his peculiar disposition, he had had plenty of practice in that line.

He darted away towards the School House at top-speed, and Bolsover major stood staring after him almost in stupefaction.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bolsover. "What's he running like that for?"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's afraid."

"Well, I wasn't going to slaughter him! Here, come back, you silly ass! I'm not going to hurt you, you dummy!" roared Bolsover major.

But Esmond did not come back. He disappeared into the School House, and the Remove fellows shouted with laughter. Most of them were anticipating a great deal of fun with that very peculiar new boy.

"Well, that beats the band!" exclaimed Skinner. "Blessed if I've ever seen such a fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll have enough to do if you're going to look after that silly rotter, Wharton!" said Bolsover major, with a chuckle.

Wharton thought so, too.

A fat junior, who had been blinking on at the scene through a big pair of spectacles, rolled away towards the School House. Billy Bunter's eyes were glistening behind his spectacles. Ever since dinner that day Billy Bunter had been making vain attempts to raise a small loan, to be expended in jam tarts at Mrs. Mimbles' tuckshop. But Billy Bunter was too well-known for his efforts to be successful.

Fellows had learned to turn a deaf ear to his assurances that he was expecting a postal-order for a large amount by the next post. New boys were Bunter's special prey. He had a wonderful gift for extracting loans from them, and this particular new boy seemed to Billy Bunter to be really a wind-fall. Bunter was a funk himself, but his funkiness paled into insignificance beside that displayed by Percy Esmond. Bunter saw in prospect a gorgeous feed at the tuckshop, enforced, if necessary, by his fat fist.

He blinked round for the new boy when he reached the School House. Esmond was not to be seen, but Trotter, the page, was crossing the hall, and Bunter called to him.

"Have you seen a new chap come in, Trotter?"

"Yes, Master Bunter."

"Where is he?"

"I've shown him in to Mr. Quelch."

"Oh, all right!"

Billy Bunter took up his stand in the passage near the door of the Remove master's study. There he waited with great patience for the new fellow to come out. After his interview with the Form master was over, he would fall into Bunter's clutches.

Bunter waited patiently. It was some time before the Form master's door opened; then Esmond came out into the passage. Bunter detached himself from the wall.

"Hallo!" he said familiarly.

Esmond looked at him.

"You're Esmond?" said the Owl of the Remove cordially.

"Yes."

"I'm Bunter—of your Form."

"Are you?" said Esmond, running his eye over the fat junior, and apparently not very much impressed by his looks.

"Yes, I am," said Bunter, frowning. "I've been looking for you, Esmond. It's a custom here for new boys to stand a feed when they come. I'll show you the way to the tuckshop, if you like."

"Thanks! I want to see after my box now."

"I think you'd better come to the tuckshop first," said Bunter.

"I think not."

"Did you come to Greyfriars specially to look for a tick ear?" asked the Owl of the Remove menacingly.

Esmond backed away a little. He was six inches taller than the fat, clumsy Owl of the Remove. Physically he was able to hold his own against at least two Bunters, if not three. But he did not seem even to think of trying to do it.

The evident alarm in the new boy's face encouraged Bunter. He had had his doubts at first, and at a sign of resistance he would have beaten a prompt retreat. But

it was only too plain that the new boy was afraid even of the fat, unwieldy Owl of the Remove.

"I—I don't want to quarrel with you, Bunter," Esmond faltered.

"Don't you?" said Bunter, his manner growing more truculent. "Well, you'll jolly soon quarrel with me, whether you want to or not, if you don't do the decent thing. Are you coming to the tuckshop, or are you not?"

"I—I'll come with pleasure," said Esmond weakly.

"This way, then."

Billy Bunter took Esmond's arm, to make sure that his prey did not escape him. He had seen what a wonderful turn of speed the new boy had, and if Esmond had had a chance of taking to his heels, the fat junior would have had no chance of getting near him again. But with Bunter's weight hanging on his arm, Esmond could not run.

Bunter marched him triumphantly out of the School House into the Close, and led him away to the school shop.

There was a sound of loud shouting from the football field. The Shell had scored another goal in the second half, and the score was level again, with only ten minutes more to play. But Bunter did not heed that—he was not thinking of footer. He was thinking of the good things in Mrs. Mimbles' tuckshop.

"Here we are!" said Bunter, as he marched his victim in. "I say, Mrs. Mimbles, this is Esmond, the new kid. He wants to stand a feed—don't you, Esmond?"

"Ye-es," murmured Esmond.

"Order some things, then," said Bunter.

"Buck up! Why don't you ask me what I'd like, Esmond?"

"What would you like, Bunter?" said Esmond.

"Tarts to begin with, and ginger-beer," said Bunter.

"Tarts and ginger-beer, please, ma'am," said Esmond.

And Billy Bunter piled into the tarts, and washed them down with ginger-beer ad lib, with great satisfaction, and the new boy watched him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wharton does his duty!

THERE was a tramping of feet, and quite a little army of fellows marched into the tuckshop.

The football match was over; the teams had drawn. And the fellows who had been watching the match had adjourned to the tuckshop for refreshments to follow.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Here's the new freak!"

Esmond looked at him apprehensively, and then glanced at Bunter. Bunter went on eating tarts.

"Come into a fortune, Bunter?" asked Skinner.

"Esmond's standing a feed," said Bunter. "You can all pile in if you like. It's the new fellow's treat."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Mine's ginger-beer!"

"Mine's lemonade!"

"Mine's tarts!"

"Mine's doughnuts!"

"Mine's cakes!"

Orders poured in on all sides. But Mrs. Mimbles was not in a hurry to execute those orders. She looked inquiringly at Esmond.

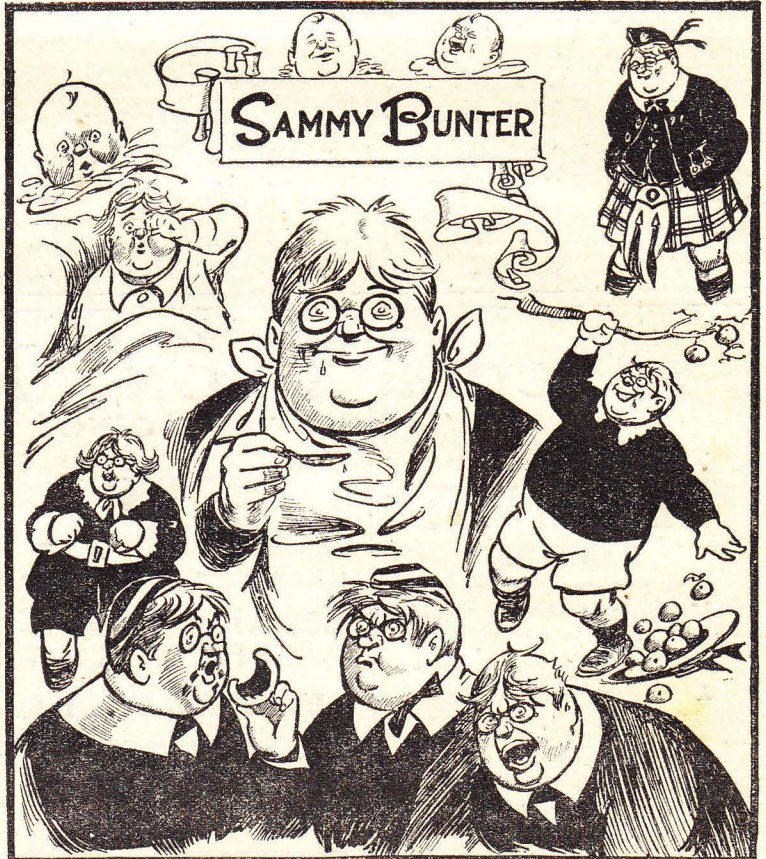
"Look here, that's rather too thick!" exclaimed Esmond. "Draw a line, you know."

"So you're not standing a feed, after all!" demanded Bolsover, contracting his brows into a terrifying frown.

"N-no, I'm not."

"Then I'll stand you some tarts myself—down the back of your neck!" exclaimed Bolsover major; and he grabbed a jam-tart

Stages in the life of a Greyfriars celebrity.
SAMMY BUNTER (The Fat Second-Former.)



Sammy has had his ups and downs, but he's still a fat cheerful fag!

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

The Real Goods, Boys—Next Week's Thriller of the Chums of Greyfriars!

from Billy Bunter's plate, and started for the new boy.

Esmond dodged round Bunter.

"Stop him, Bunter!" he gasped.

Billy Bunter did not move. He would as soon have tackled a wild bull as Bolsover major.

Bolsover chased Esmond round the high stool upon which Billy Bunter was seated, with a tart in one fat hand and a glass of ginger-beer in the other.

"Here, look out!" roared Bunter. "Don't bump me over—yaroo!"

Esmond bumped into him blindly, and the fat junior went flying.

The tart flew in one direction, and found a resting-place on Skinner's neck, and the glass of ginger-beer in another, swamping into Bolsover major's face.

Billy Bunter sprawled on the floor of the tuckshop, and roared.

"Ow!" yelled Skinner, clutching the sticky part of his collar. "Ow! I'll—I'll slaughter you, Bunter—ow!"

"Groo!" gasped Bolsover, blinded by the ginger-beer. "Where is he? I'll smash him—ow!"

"Help!" yelled Bunter. "I'm killed! Yaroh!"

Esmond was making a wild break for the doorway.

But Stott and Snoop collared him together, and dragged him back, struggling. A crowd of laughing fellows surrounded him. There was no escape for the unfortunate funk.

"Ow! Leggo! Let me go!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here he is, Bolsover!"

The bully of the Remove dashed the ginger-beer from his eyes. He was in a state of towering rage by this time. He simply hurled himself upon the new junior.

But at the same moment a voice rang out from the doorway:

"Hands off, Bolsover!"

It was Harry Wharton.

Wharton had remembered his charge—a little late, it is true, having stopped to chat with the footballers after the match. But he had arrived on the scene in time to chip in. Bolsover did not heed his voice. He had grasped Esmond, and the new boy was fairly swung off the floor in his powerful hands.

Wharton rushed in.

He grasped Bolsover major in his turn, and dragged him over, and the bully of the Remove went with a crash to the floor, with Esmond sprawling over him.

Wharton stooped and grasped Esmond, and pulled him to his feet.

"Cut off!" he said curtly.

Esmond did not require bidding a second time. He darted out of the tuckshop, and disappeared.

Then Wharton waited for the bully of the Remove to gain his feet.

Wharton was brave enough, and he was a good boxer, and he was not afraid of the bully of the Remove. But he knew that he

had a hard fight on his hands now. It was not the first time he had tackled Bolsover, and the result was at least doubtful. Bolsover was so big and strong and heavy that all Wharton's skill and pluck were needed to enable him to hold his own against him. And there was evidently going to be a fight. Bolsover major scrambled to his feet, his rugged face red with rage.

"Where's that fellow?" he roared, glaring round.

"He's hooked it!" said Skinner.

Bolsover made a rush to the door, and Wharton jumped into the way, and they came into collision. Then the fight started.

The fellows stood round in a cheering ring.

Mrs. Mimble held up her hands in horror behind her little counter.

"Young gentlemen—oh, young gentlemen!" she exclaimed.

"It's all right, ma'am!" said Hazeldene.

"They'll have to pay for the damage! My hat! There go the bottles!"

Bolsover and Wharton jumped on the counter, and two bottles of sweets went to the floor with a crash.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it!"

"Pile in, Bolsover!"

"Wallop h'm, Wharton!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The shouting and the tramping in the tuckshop could be heard half across the Close. It reached the ears of Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, who was strolling there with Gwynne of the Sixth. The two prefects came into the shop.

They arrived just in time for the two fighting juniors to lurch into them.

Wingate and Gwynne did not waste time in words. Wingate collared Wharton, and Gwynne collared Bolsover major. Then they smote.

"Yaroo!" roared Bolsover. "Leggo! Yah!"

"Chuck it!" gasped Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the two prefects did not "chuck it" till they were tired. Then they released the two red and dishevelled juniors.

Wingate regarded them with a stern frown.

"How dare you fight here!" he exclaimed. "Did you do that damage?"

"I—I suppose we did!" gasped Wharton.

"Then you'll pay for it—half each!" said the captain of Greyfriars. "Pay Mrs. Mimble for those bottles at once!"

"Look here—" began Bolsover.

"You hear me?" said Wingate sharply.

Harry Wharton handed out the money at once, and Bolsover major reluctantly followed suit. Wingate shook his finger at them.

"If there's any more of this you'll hear from me!" he exclaimed; and he walked away with Gwynne.

Bolsover major grunted, and tramped

after him. He had had enough. So had Wharton, for that matter. His nose was swollen and red and streaming with "claret"; his mouth had a sideways look, and one of his eyes was closed.

He limped a little, too, as he left the tuckshop after Bolsover major.

His chums met him as he came into the School House, and there were surprised exclamations from all of them at his appearance.

"What on earth have you been up to?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Been in a dog-fight?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Or wrestling with a motor-car?" asked Nugent.

Wharton gasped.

"I've been fighting Bolsover."

"What for?"

"To stop him raging the new kid!"

"Already!" groaned Bob Cherry. "My hat! Quelch has given you a lovely job, I must say! I can foresee a high old time for you if you're going to chip in every time that fellow is ragged!"

"So can I!" groaned Wharton. "But I've given my word."

"Come down and ask cooky for a beef-steak for your eye, old man," said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "You need one!"

Mr. Quelch met the juniors a moment later. He stopped to stare at the captain of the Remove.

"Goodness gracious, Wharton!" he ejaculated. "What have you been doing?"

"Fighting, sir!" said Harry meekly.

"I can see that!" said the Form master tartly. "Pray whom have you been fighting with, and why? You know that I do not approve—"

Mr. Quelch paused suddenly, apparently a new thought striking him, and he looked very curiously at Wharton. "Has the new boy been getting into trouble already, Wharton?"

"I—I think so, sir."

"Very well; I shall inquire no farther into this matter," said the Remove master.

"You had better do something for your eye as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch walked away.

"He guesses!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Wharton grunted.

"It would be rather thick if he gave me lines, after planting this on me!" he said.

"I didn't ask to have a howling funk to look after, and I don't like it. Br-r-r-r!"

And they proceeded in search of the beef-steak, which Wharton had the pleasure of wearing over his eye for the remainder of that happy half-holiday.

Harry Wharton did not mind it so very much. He wondered how many more beef-steaks he would require whilst he was the Funk's Guardian!

That was the rub!

THE END.

(Another fine story of Harry Wharton and the Funk next Tuesday in the POPULAR.)

WHAT THE COMPANION PAPERS ARE DOING!

THE— **MAGNET** LIBRARY.

A Stunning 20,000 Word long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

A Gripping Long Complete **FERRERS LOCKE** yarn, and many other topping features—

EVERY MONDAY.

THE— **BOYS' FRIEND**—

A BIG BUDGET OF **SCHOOL, SPORT, DETECTIVE** AND **ADVENTURE STORIES**

including a complete story of the famous Chums of Rookwood.

EVERY WEEK

On Sale MONDAY Morning!

THE— **GEM** LIBRARY.

A Splendid Long Complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's.

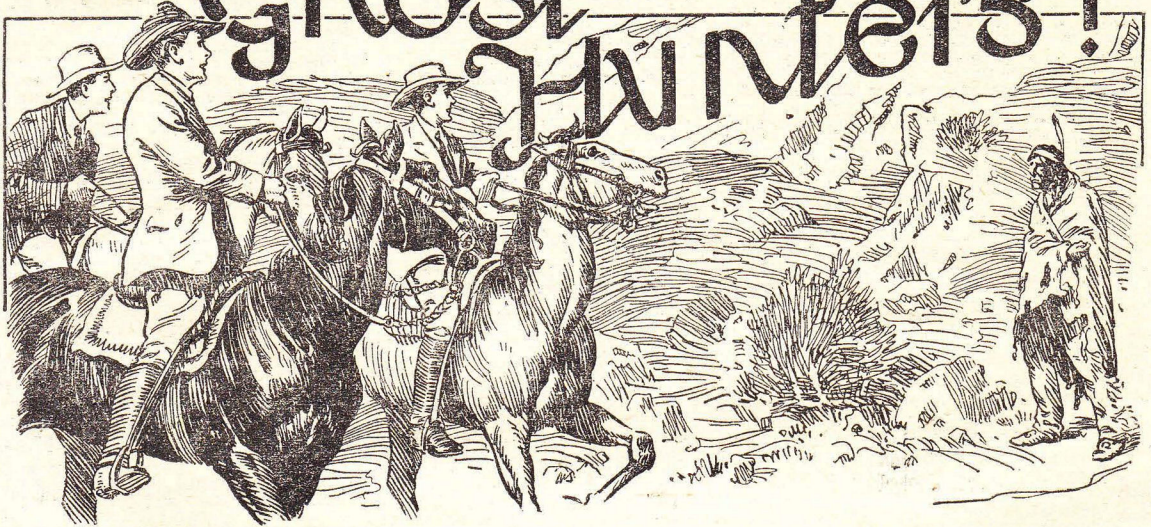
Special Complete Adventure Tale.

Wonderful Serial Story and many other fine features.

ON SALE WEDNESDAY.

The Mysterious Ghost of the old gold mine is laid by the heels at last by the Chums of the Lumber School!

The Ghost Hunters!



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

FRANK RICHARDS

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Catching Gunten!

HERE come the funks!" Frank Richards & Co. looked round quickly.

Frank and his chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc, had just arrived at Cedar Creek School.

As they dismounted from their horses that jeering exclamation fell on their ears.

It was Kern Gunten, the Swiss, who spoke. Gunten was standing in the gateway, grinning, and several other fellows with him were grinning, too.

"How's your cold feet?" chuckled Eben Hacke.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Frank Richards & Co. flushed, and they came towards Gunten with somewhat grim looks.

"Are you calling us funks, Gunten?" asked Bob Lawless.

The Swiss laughed again. "I guess we've heard the yarn," he answered. "We've had it from Chunky Todgers. He's told us how you vamoosed from the ghost in the haunted mine."

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank.

"I—I say—" stammered Chunky Todgers, who was in the crowd at the gate of the lumber school. "I didn't say you were funks! I bolted just the same as you did; and I'm as brave as a lion!"

"As brave as a jack-rabbit!" roared Hacke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a picture it must have been!" chortled Gunten. "I can just fancy it—the wind blew in the old mine, and they thought it was a ghost, and vamoosed the ranch. Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of Cedar Creek were crimson. They were not funks, certainly, but, equally certainly, they had cleared out of the Bailey Bonanza Mine in remarkably quick time when they were exploring the old tunnel the previous evening.

It was evident that their old enemy, Gunten, intended to make the most of that unfortunate occurrence.

"We—we just ran, that's all!" protested Chunky Todgers. "It was awful, you chaps! The ghost was groaning—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And a ghostly finger touched me on the neck—"

"Pile it on!" exclaimed Hacke, doubled up with mirth. "Make it thicker, Chunky. Go it!"

"It's true!" shouted Chunky wrathfully. "That's true enough," said Frank Richards quietly. "I don't believe in ghosts, of course. But there was something jolly queer in the old mine. There was something that touched us in the dark—"

"You brushed against a snag," said Tom Lawrence, laughing.

"It wasn't that. I don't know what it was, unless it was somebody playing ghost in the old mine," said Frank. "It startled us."

"Scared you, you mean!" grinned Gunten.

"Well, perhaps we were a bit scared," confessed Frank. "It was horribly uncanny. But we're jolly well going there again to see what it was, and if you call us funks, Gunten, you'll get into trouble!"

The Swiss shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you call it yourself, then?" he sneered. "You thought something touched you, and you got afraid of the dark, and scuttled. I guess that's cold feet!"

Frank Richards clenched his hand. But Bob Lawless drew his chum back.

"Leave the galoot to me!" he said. "Now, Gunten, my buck, you say we had cold feet because we lit out. Wouldn't you have done it?"

"I'm not a funk!" answered Gunten disdainfully. "I wouldn't run from a sound in the dark!"

"That's what you say," said Bob. "Well, we ran, and we own it—though we're going back, and I reckon we won't run next time. But as you wouldn't run, Gunten, and you're pleased to call us funks, you can explore the old mine this evening yourself, with some of us there to see whether you run or not."

Gunten stared a little.

"I guess I've no time to waste on it!" he answered.

"You mean you're afraid," said Bob contemptuously. "Well, if you're afraid, you can keep your mouth closed about other fellows!"

"Funk!" roared Hacke.

Gunten bit his lip.

"I'm not afraid!" he exclaimed. "But—but—"

"But—but—" chuckled Tom Lawrence. "He's not afraid, but he's full of 'buts.'"

We'll come along and see how brave you are, Gunten."

"It's too much trouble for nothing!" growled Gunten.

"But it isn't for nothing!" struck in Dick Dawson. "You've called these chaps funks, and it's up to you. And if you don't agree I shall—"

"If you don't agree, Gunten, we'll ride you on a rail!" said Bob Lawless determinedly. "You shoot off your mouth too much, my pippin!"

"You bet!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers. "Ride him on a rail, and stick white feathers on him if he won't go!"

"I guess we will!" said Bob.

Gunten backed away a pace.

He had fairly landed himself in his keenness to score over the chums of the lumber school.

He could not refuse the challenge without confessing that he was afraid to venture into the haunted mine.

There were mocking laughs on all sides now.

Bob Lawless had quite succeeded in turning the laugh against the Swiss.

"Funk!" yelled Chunky Todgers. "Yah!"

"Cold feet!" howled Eben Hacke.

"Get a rail, somebody!" chuckled Tom Lawrence.

Gunten drew a quick breath.

"I'll show you whether I'm afraid!" he exclaimed at last. "I'll go! You—you fellows can come and watch me, if you like!"

"Done!" said Vere Beauclerc. "After lessons to-day?"

"Yes!" said Gunten desperately.

"I guess we'll all come," said Lawrence; "and I reckon we'll see Gunten bolting out of the tunnel like a jack-rabbit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The school bell rang, and the Cedar Creek fellows trooped into the school-room. Gunten wore a troubled look during morning lessons.

It had been simply impossible for him to refuse the challenge he had provoked without writing himself down as a coward, not to mention the painful process of being ridden on a rail.

But he was looking forward to his task with considerable apprehension.

But there was no escape for Gunten; the schoolfellows intended to hold him to the compact.

Another Topping Tale of the Chums of the Lumber School Next Week!

Miss Meadows had reason to be severe with Gunten several times that day.

His thoughts wandered from his lessons a good deal.

When lessons were over, and the Cedar Creek School was dismissed, quite a crowd of fellows gathered round the Swiss.

Seven or eight of the Cedar Creek boys mounted to ride to Bailey's Bonanza and see Gunten go through it.

Frank Richards, Bob Lawless, and Vere Beauclerc were in the party, and they kept a sharp watch on Gunten.

They were quite prepared for the Swiss to bolt if he could.

The trail lay past the town of Thompson, where Gunten's home was, and when Thompson came in sight, Gunten drew rein.

"Come on!" chuckled Bob Lawless.

"I—I guess I ought to be getting home," muttered Gunten. "I—I forgot that—there's a lot of truck to be taken to Injun Dick's shack, and I've got to take it."

"Injun Dick still in funds?" said Bob. "He must have struck a bonanza somewhere in the hills. The Apache can wait, Gunten. You're coming with us, now."

"Look here—"

Bob Lawless took hold of Gunten's rein, and led on his horse.

The Swiss scowled savagely, but he gave in, and the party of schoolboys rode on into the foothills.

CHAPTER II.

Gunten Has Enough!

BAILEY'S Bonanza looked dark and gloomy when the bunch of riders stopped in the lonely gulch of the Thompson foothills.

The black tunnel opened in the hillside, yawning dark and grim and extremely uninviting.

"There you are, Gunten!" grinned Chunky Todgers. "Mind you don't run when you feel a touch behind you in the dark."

Gunten shivered.

"I—I guess I forgot to bring a lantern," he muttered.

"I've got one," answered Bob Lawless. Gunten gritted his teeth.

There was no help for it, and he took the lantern, and advanced with slow and hesitating steps towards the opening in the adit.

The schoolboys stood in a group by the horses and watched him.

They were not laughing now, however. There was something so gloomy in the black tunnel and in the evil reputation of the place that it had a sobering effect upon their spirits.

Gunten entered the mouth of the horizontal tunnel, or adit.

The tunnel had been driven deep into the hillside by Bailey, the original owner of the bonanza, the unfortunate miner whose restless phantom was supposed to haunt the old mine-workings.

Through the tunnel and the cross-adits the wind whistled in stormy weather with strange and eerie sounds.

There was doubtless another opening to the mine-workings among the rocky recesses of the hillside.

Gunten hesitated long in the mouth of the tunnel, but he went on at last, his lantern gleaming before him, into the eerie darkness.

"Waal, he's gone in," said Eben Hacke. "I guess I shouldn't specially care about goin' in there alone!"

"I guess Gunten don't care for it," said Bob Lawless.

The schoolboys watched the tunnel with interest, wondering how long Gunten would remain within.

They could see the glimmer of the lantern for some little distance, and then it disappeared.

The wind was keen on the hills, and it swept through the gulch, moaning in the branches of the pines.

As always when the wind was high, there was a moaning in the depths of the tunnel.

Suddenly there was a sound of hurried footsteps.

"Here he comes!" shouted Todgers. Kern Gunten reappeared at the mouth of the tunnel.

His face was white, and his eyes almost starting from his head.

His hands were empty. Evidently he had dropped the lantern.

He was running frantically. He came out of the tunnel at a furious pace.

speed, and ran into the gulch, panting and throbbing.

Frank Richards caught him by the arm, or he would have fallen as he reached the group of schoolboys.

Gunten hung on to him heavily, almost sobbing for breath.

The Cedar Creek fellows looked at him, wondering, and they cast uneasy glances towards the opening of the mine, half-expecting to see some grisly form appear.

But there was nothing.

"What did you see?" exclaimed Chunky Todgers.

"Where's the lantern?" demanded Bob.

"I—I guess I dropped it. It went out." Gunten shuddered. "I—I hear—I heard him! I heard it!"

"You heard the wind in the tunnel," said Lawrence.

"I—I'm going. I wouldn't go in there again for the biggest bonanza in British Columbia!" said Gunten, shivering. "I—I'm going!"

He clambered on his horse as he spoke.

"Who's the fuak now?" chortled Chunky Todgers.

Gunten did not reply to that.

And he cut his horse with the whip and dashed away.

The rest of the party followed him, excepting Frank, Bob, and Beauclerc.

"Sure you won't try it again, Chunky?" called out Bob Lawless.

Chunky Todgers did not reply, and he did not look back.

He had had quite enough of Bill Bailey's Bonanza and Bill Bailey's ghost.

"That jay has dropped my lantern," said Bob. "I've got matches, though, and we can find it, I guess. Look here, it's as plain as Mount Hooker that it was somebody playing the ghost when we came here last night. If the galoot's still there we're going to nail him, and give him a taste of the trail-rope."

"What-ho!" said Frank. "Come on!"

The three chums approached the opening of the tunnel.

From the black depths of the mine came a faint moaning sound.

"It's the wind," said Beauclerc. "That isn't like the howl we heard before."

"We'll chance it, anyway."

Bob Lawless struck a match, and the trio entered the mine.

Keeping close together, they pressed on, Bob striking match after match, and scanning the rough, rocky floor of the tunnel for the lost lantern.

He stumbled on it at last, a dozen yards from the opening.

Gunten had not penetrated far into the tunnel when his fears overcame him.

Frank Richards picked up the lantern, and Bob put the match to the wick.

The chums were glad enough to have the light.

They pressed on to the end of the tunnel, Bob Lawless flashing the light to and fro.

"From the cross-adits came the moaning of the wind, with a strange, eerie sound, which made them shiver in spite of themselves.

But that was all. Their startling experiences of the previous evening were not repeated.

"I guess the ghost has gone on strike," remarked Bob Lawless. "And if it was a practical joker he don't happen to be here now."

"That's it," agreed Frank.

Having explored the main tunnel, the schoolboys retraced their steps and explored the cross-adits in turn.

Two or three of the cross-tunnels they found opened out on the hillside, and they came on daylight several times.

In one of them, however, which ended in a wall of solid rock, Bob Lawless came to a sudden halt, with an exclamation.

He placed the lantern close to the rocky wall, and examined it intently.

There was a yellow gleam from the uneven surface.

"Gold!" he said.

"Bob!"

"Not a bonanza," said Bob, laughing; "but there's gold in paying quantities, I reckon. And it's been worked."

"This mine hasn't been worked for years," said Beauclerc—"not since Bill Bailey drowned himself in the creek."

Bob pointed to the rock.

"That rock's been worked within a few days," he answered. "Somebody has been sneaking in and working it, and getting small quantities of gold—enough to pay his grub-stakes, I reckon. Look at that; you can see it's a fresh cutting."

Frank Richards nodded.

"By gum, it looks like!" he said. "That lets in some light, Bob. Somebody has been working the mine, and playing ghost to keep off outsiders!"

"That's how I figure it out," said Bob.

"I—Hark!"

A low, moaning sound came from the darkness behind, and the chums looked round quickly.

Darkness met their gaze.

"Only—the wind!" muttered Frank.

"That's what scared Gunten," said Bob. "But we're done here. Let's get out. We're coming again, though. We're going to talk to that galoot who gave us a scare yesterday, when we catch him at the game."

The trio left the cross-adits, and followed the main tunnel to the open air.

Bob Lawless extinguished the lantern as they came out into the daylight.

He was looking very thoughtful "as they mounted their horses to ride home.

"The jay that's been working that mine has no right to," he said. "It's claimed by a relation of old Bailey's, and it's up for sale in Thompson now. He ought to be stopped. Anyhow, we're going to give him a lesson about playing ghost and scaring folks!"

CHAPTER III.

Bob Lawless Is Suspicious.

INJUN DICK!"

Bob Lawless uttered that exclamation as the chums of Cedar Creek rode out of the lonely gulch towards the Thompson trail.

Ahead of them, and coming towards them, was a well-known figure, draped in a tattered blanket.

It was Ka-nook-ka, the Apache known in the Thompson Valley as "Injun Dick."

When the chums had last seen him, Injun Dick had been in a state of prosperity.

He had purchased a new blanket and leggings at Gunten's store, and other finery, and the saloon-keepers of Thompson had been kept quite busy by his insatiate demands for the white man's fire-water.

Evidently the white man's fire-water had banished Injun Dick's short-lived prosperity, for the Redskin was once more in his tattered old blanket, which looked as if it might have been picked out of a dust-heap.

He was tramping into the gulch when the schoolboys came upon him, and he lifted his head and stared at them for a moment with a gleam in his black eyes.

"Poor old chap!" muttered Frank Richards, glancing after the tall figure of the Redskin striding on draped in the tattered blanket.

Bob Lawless' brow was knotted in thought.

"By gum!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Hallo!" said Frank. "What's up now?"

"What was that old whisky-skin doing in the gulch?" said Bob.

Frank Richards stared.

"Blessed if I know!" he answered. "What does it matter? Looking for game, perhaps."

"He hadn't a gun with him, Franky. I—I wonder— He wasn't far from Bill Bailey's Bonanza when we met him!"

"I suppose he's not going ghost-hunting?" said Vere Beauclerc, with a smile.

"I guess not! He might be going ghost-playing, if any galoot came along to look at the mine while he's there," said Bob.

"My hat!"

"He's been in great funds, on and off, for some time," said Bob. "It's pretty plain he's made a strike somewhere in the hills. You remember we saw him in Gunten's store one day, splashing out dust. I begin to smell a mouse."

"By Jove!" said Frank Richards, with a deep breath. "You think—"

"Well, I guess it looks jolly likely," said Bob. "Very likely it was he who was scaring us yesterday—dabbing at us in the dark with his paw, the old villain!"

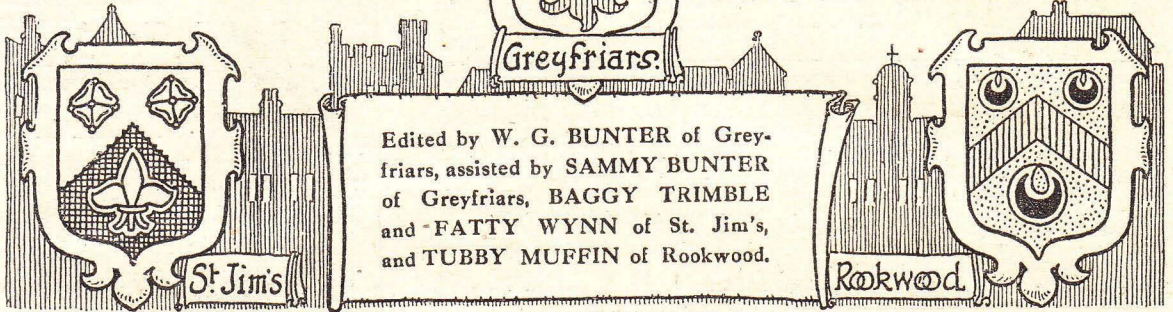
"He must have been laughing in his sleeve when he met us just now, if that's the case," Frank said.

(Continued on page 16.)

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY... PRICE 2¢

Look Out for "THE CEDAR CREEK PLAYERS!"—All About Frank Richards & Co.!

BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY



Edited by W. G. BUNTER of Greyfriars, assisted by SAMMY BUNTER of Greyfriars, BAGGY TRIMBLE and FATTY WYNN of St. Jim's, and TUBBY MUFFIN of Rookwood.

Supplement No. 102.

Week Ending December 23rd, 1922.

EDITORIAL!

An Appeal for Fair Play!

By Billy Bunter.

PLAY UP!

A FOOTBALLING BALLAD.

By Teddy Grace.

(Of Rookwood.)

BIRTHDAY PRESENTS!

By Monty Lowther.

Soldiers, like poets, are borne and not maid.

I have always been a fellow of marshall instinx. When, at the age of four, I marched through my native villidge with a kettledrum perched on my head and furiously beeting a helmet, the rusticks all eggscclaimed, "That boy will become a second Wellington!"

As a matter of fact, I have already fought at Waterloo. I fought to get a seat in a railway-karridge there! Incidentally, I have fought at Victoria and Charing Cross.

Now, what better man is suited for the job of captain of the Remove than me? You all know what a fine fierce fighter I am—and what a fine fierce captain I should make. But I can't get the fellows to agree with me.

Harry Wharton is captain of the Remove, and a pretty mess he is making of it! I don't approve of Wharton's tatticks in the least. He does everything by broot force instead of by strategy. And strategy is very necessary in ruling a Form. Nothing can be done without it.

If Wharton remanes in command, the Remove will be dishd, diddled, and done by the other Forms. We want a millitery genius at the head of affares, and without wishing to blow my own trumpitt in any way, let me state here and now that the only millitery genius in the Remove is ME! I have been fighting my own battles ever since I could toddle, and I am quite capable of fighting the Remove's battles as well.

I suggest that the Remove Government should be made up as follows:

Commander-in-Cheef: W. G. Bunter, V.C. (Very Cute).

First Left Tenant: Fisher T. Fish.
Second Left Tenant: Wun Lung.
Staff Officers: Skinner, Snoop, and Stott.
Drummer boy (borrowed from the Second Form): Sammy Bunter.
Wharton and his pals should belong to the rank and phial. They haven't the brains for anything higher.

I appeal to all the fellows in the Remove to have Wharton kicked out, and me elected in his plaice, right away. Unless this is done, the Remove will be the lowest Form in the school.

There will be a Mass Meeting in the Close on Wednesday afternoon at two o'clock, when Commander-in-cheef Bunter will air his views on the prezzant crysis!

The ball goes bounding over the grass—
Play up, you fellows, play up!
The backs defend, and the forwards pass—

Play up, you fellows, play up!
Into the tussle with heart and soul,
While the shouts and cheers excited roll.
Stick to it, boys, and you'll score a goal!
Play up, you fellows, play up!

What if you're ankle-deep in mud
Play up, you fellows, play up!
The game is fierce, and it fires your blood—

Play up, you fellows, play up!
What if you're weary and stiff and sore?
Cheerfully grin, and come up for more!
Play as you've never played before!
Play up, you fellows, play up!

Into the struggle with might and main—
Play up, you fellows, play up!
Though you have failed, and may fail again,

Play up, you fellows, play up!
What if the goals are hard to get?
What if your schemes are all upset?
Play up with a will, and you'll do it yet!
Play up, you fellows, play up!

A strong attack and a thrilling rush—
Play up, you fellows, play up!
Fighting your way through mud and slush—

Play up, you fellows, play up!
Now for the last great dash of all!
In with the bounding, bouncing ball!
See your opponents citadel fall—
Play up, you fellows, play up!

Here's to the grand old winter game!
Play up, you fellows, play up!
With eyes aglow, and with cheeks aflame,

Play up, you fellows, play up!
Whether the outlook's bright or black,
Never give up, and never get slack,
Follow up keen on victory's track—
Play up, you fellows, play up!

Birthdays are a jolly nuisance. That is the considered opinion of myself, Montague Lowther.

A week before my birthday fell—birthdays always fall, by the way, but they never seem to hurt themselves—I wrote to several of my relations reminding them that I completed my fourteenth year on the following Saturday. (Relations have notoriously short memories, and it is always well to notify them of birthdays in advance.)

I asked Uncle Jack if he would be good enough to send me a wireless set. Not a wireless set of teeth—oh, no! My teeth are perfect. A wireless receiving set was what I was after. I told Uncle Jack to post it in good time for my birthday.

At the same time I wrote to Uncle Herbert, asking if he could see his way clear to send me a football.

My pater's letter was the most important of all. I expressed the hope that he would enable me to celebrate my birthday in a fitting manner by sending me a fiver.

I expected to see the postman come staggering across the quad with a pile of parcels. And my expectations were duly realised.

But when I bore the parcels along to my study, and opened them, I could have wept!

Uncle Jack regretted it was not possible for him to send me a wireless outfit. He sent, instead, a box of paints. And I don't paint!

My Uncle Herbert said he thought an alarm-clock would prove more useful to me than a football. "I enclose one herewith," he wrote. And I possess half a dozen of the beastly things already!

To crown all, my pater, evidently misunderstanding the meaning of the word "fiver," sent me a postal-order for five shillings! So I'm four pounds fifteen shillings out of pocket!

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

SPORTS AND SPORTSMEN!

By George Wingate.
(Captain of Greyfriars.)

AMATEUR FOOTBALL.

It is good to see that well-known amateur teams like the Corinthians are still going strong. Amateur football is keen and clean, and very attractive to watch; and I, for one, should like to see it getting more support from the public. But there is no gainsaying the fact that the professional game is a far more powerful magnet, drawing, as it does, millions of spectators weekly. It would be grand to see the Corinthians carry off the English Cup.

GREAT GAMES AT GREYFRIARS.

Greyfriars First, of which I am proud and pleased to be the skipper, has been well in the limelight lately. Our last six results are as follows:

Opponents.	Home or Away.	Result.	Score.
St. Jim's ...	Home.	Won.	3-2
Courtfield 1st XI ...	Home.	Won.	2-0
Rookwood ...	Away.	Drew.	2-2
Abbotsford ...	Home.	Won.	7-1
St. Jim's ...	Away.	Lost.	1-2
Friardale Athletic ...	Away.	Won.	4-1

GWYNNE IN THE WARS.

The match against Friardale Athletic, played on the village green, proved far too rough and vigorous for the liking of our players. Tom North was "crocked" in the first half, but he was able to resume. Gwynne however, was badly brought down towards the end of the game, and he sustained a twisted ankle, which will keep him out of the eleven for a fortnight.

GRAND GOALKEEPING.

I often find pleasure in acting as referee in a junior fixture, and I had charge of the game between the Greyfriars Remove, and the St. Jim's junior eleven. The Remove won all right, but it was not until midway through the second half that they managed to get the ball past Fatty Wynn. The latter is easily the finest junior goalkeeper I have seen. Some of his saves bordered on the miraculous. Wynn's rotundity of person is certainly no set-back to his goalkeeping. He deserved a medal for the manner in which he held the fort at Greyfriars.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE FIFTH?

The Fifth Form at Greyfriars had a nasty shock last Wednesday. They accepted a challenge to play the Remove, and were defeated by the odd goal in three. At half-time Blundell's men were leading by 1-0, and they seemed to take things too easily in the second half, and to underrate their nippy opponents. Vernon-Smith and Redwing got goals for the Remove, who were naturally elated at having defeated a much higher-Form. Blundell will have to pull up his socks, or the prestige of the Fifth will suffer.

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

FOOTBALL AMONG THE FAGS.

Sir Timothy Topham, the sporting baronet, and a Governor of Greyfriars, has presented the fags with a dozen brand-new footballs. Naturally, there is great rejoicing in the fag kingdom, and Nugent minor is getting up a team which he declares will stagger humanity. The young imp has actually had the audacity to challenge the First Eleven, and his challenge has been hurled back in his teeth!

LOYAL SUPPORTERS.

When Greyfriars First travelled to St. Jim's in order to play the Saints, quite an army of supporters accompanied the team. The railway fare was, naturally, a big consideration, and it says much for the loyalty of our supporters that they didn't care a fig about the expense. I only wish we could have rewarded them by winning the match; but St. Jim's proved too strong for us on their own pitch, and we retired defeated, but not disgraced, the score being 2-1 against us.

IS CYCLING LESS POPULAR?

It would appear so. The secretary of the Greyfriars Cycling Club tells me that only a handful of fellows turned out on the occasion of the last "spin." I asked him if he could account for this falling-off, and he informed me that cycling was becoming a nerve-racking affair, with so many motor-charabancs on the roads, to say nothing of the road hogs, who drive their cars at a reckless pace, with scant regard for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. I think, however, that cycling will come into its own again later on, when the weather, and the conditions of the roads, improve.

A FORTHCOMING ATTRACTION.

Popular Mr. Lascelles, our mathematics master, has been asked to organise a boxing tournament at Greyfriars, and to send invitations to the rival schools, so that they may send representatives. I have no doubt that Greyfriars will keep its end up, and some stirring bouts should be witnessed. The noble art of self-defence is still as popular as ever.

GREYFRIARS HOCKEY.

This game is not enjoying the popularity it deserves. I propose to form a hockey team at Greyfriars, and any members of the Sixth or Fifth who would care to join should hand in their names to me, or to Gwynne, who will act as vice-captain. Members of the Lower Forms are also advised to play hockey occasionally, as a pleasant diversion from football.

**SPECIAL
CHRISTMAS
NUMBER
NEXT WEEK!**

PEEPS INTO THE FUTURE!

By Bob Cherry.

The following announcements will appear in "The Times" somewhere about the year 1972:

LATEST WILLS.

Mr. ALONZO TODD, J.P., of Todd Towers, Blankshire, left estate to the gross value of £220,116 0 0

Mr. Todd directed in his Will that one half of his fortune should go to the Society for Curing Crippled Cannibals in the Congo. Mr. Todd also bequeathed the sum of £100 to his valet, Daniel Dressim; £100 to his butler, Thomas Tray, and £100 to his cook, Ursula Undercut. The remainder of Mr. Todd's estate will be distributed amongst certain charities.

Mr. FISHER TARLETON FISH, the well-known American millionaire, left estate to the total value of £1,102,320 0 0

Mr. Fish bequeathed the whole of this amount to his nephew, C. Mee Spenditt.

MAJOR GENERAL SIR H. WHARTON, D.S.O., who successfully commanded the British Forces in China, left net personalty to the value of £50,288 2 6

General Wharton directed that the sum of £10,000 should be expended in building a school for soldiers' orphans.

MR. HORACE COKER, chief director of the Coker Engineering Co., left estate to the value of £7,220 1 4

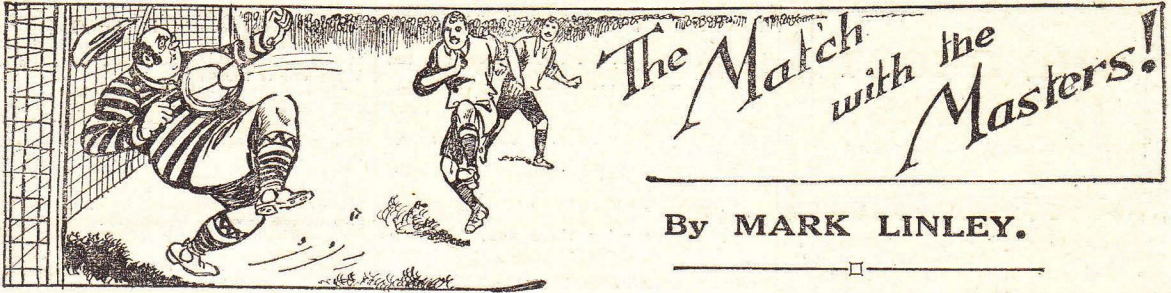
To his son Cuthbert Mr. Coker bequeathed his motor-cycle, and expressed the hope that his son would be as careful a driver as his father had been before him.

Mr. H. VERNON-SMITH, the world-famous shipping magnate, left so vast a fortune that it cannot yet be estimated. Chartered accountants are still busily engaged in reckoning up the assets.

Mr. WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER, of Bunter Court, Bunkumshire, left estate to the gross value of 41d.

Mr. Bunter also left numerous debts, which he generously bequeathed to his younger brother, Samuel. Mr. Bunter was well known as the chef at the Stuffingham Hotel, where he worked for many years, paying week-end visits to Bunter Court.

[Supplement II.]



APPALLING!" said Mr. Prout. "Perfectly appalling!"

He was referring to the defeat of the Greyfriars First Eleven at the hands of Courtfield Crusaders.

Wingate & Co. had put up a very gallant fight against a heavier and more experienced side. But the Crusaders had triumphed by the odd goal in three.

Mr. Prout had been watching the match from the touch-line. He looked at Wingate more in sorrow than in anger, as the school skipper came off.

"Fancy the first Eleven being defeated on its own ground, Wingate!" he said. "As I remarked just now, it is perfectly appalling!"

Wingate gave a grunt.

"We did our best, sir," he said. "If that is what you call your best, Wingate, I should not care to see you at your worst," said Mr. Prout. "Although it is many years since I took an active part in football, I feel certain that I could give a better exhibition than you gave this afternoon."

"Then I wonder you don't get up a team of masters, and challenge us to a match, sir," said Wingate.

He was merely being satirical, and not for one moment did he imagine that Mr. Prout would take him seriously. But the master of the Fifth fairly jumped at the notion.

"I am perfectly willing to raise a team of masters, Wingate, with a view to showing you how football should be played," he said. "My hat!"

Wingate conjured up visions of Mr. Prout dashing about in a football jersey. And he grinned.

"You are laughing, Wingate!" said Mr. Prout. "What have I said to excite your risibility?"

"Ahem! I can hardly picture you as a bustling centre-forward, sir!" said the captain of Greyfriars.

"I have no intention of playing in that position, Wingate. I shall guard the goal. A more agile man, like Mr. Lascelles, must take the centre-forward position."

"Are you really serious about this match, sir?"

"Of course! I will raise an eleven forthwith, and the game will be played on Wednesday afternoon. I am afraid your team will receive a severe thrashing, Wingate. At the same time, by studying our methods you will have an opportunity of learning how football should be played."

"Thank you, sir!" said Wingate ironically. And then he strode away to communicate Mr. Prout's intentions to his chums in the Sixth.

"Prout must be potty!" remarked Gwynne. "Stark, staring mad!" said Hammersley.

"Does he seriously think that a team of masters can lick the First Eleven?" said Tom North.

Wingate nodded.

"We shall have to teach Prout a sharp lesson," he said. "But this match with the masters may not be a walk-over for us. You've got to remember that Mr. Lascelles will be at centre-forward, and he's jolly hot stuff. Mr. Bunter will play, too. He's a topping back!"

"But none of the other masters are any good," said Gwynne. "Faith, an' it will be a screaming farce!"

Meanwhile, Mr. Prout, very much in earnest, went off in quest of recruits for his eleven.

He went first of all to the Head; but Dr. Locke protested that his footballing days were over, and that he had no wish to make

himself a laughing-stock in the eyes of the school.

"If I were ten years younger, Prout," he said, "I might consent to play; but football is too strenuous a game for a man of my years."

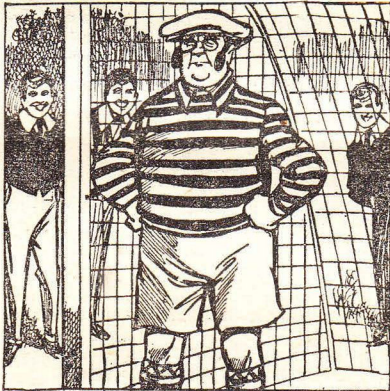
Having failed to secure the Head for his team, Mr. Prout approached Mr. Quelch.

Again he was unlucky.

"I should not dream of participating in a wild rough-and-tumble," said Mr. Quelch. After a great deal of persuasion on Mr. Prout's part, Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, consented to turn out.

Mr. Hacker was by no means a young man, and he was rather dubious at first about playing. But Mr. Prout assured him that if he played at full-back, alongside Mr. Wally Bunter, he would not have much running about to do.

Mr. Bunter and Mr. Lascelles agreed to play, as a matter of course. They were fine footballers. But they told Mr. Prout that it



Mr. Prout's appearance on the field was greeted with roars of laughter from the spectators.

was a mistake to challenge the Greyfriars First Eleven.

"They will run us off our feet, sir!" said Mr. Bunter. "They will be far too speedy and dashing for a team of masters."

"Nonsense, Bunter! Unless they show better form than they showed against Courtfield Crusaders, we shall beat them by a big margin of goals. I feel very confident."

Mr. Prout looked it. He was, in fact, oozing confidence.

Mr. Capper having consented to play, also the brothers Twigg, who had dominion over the fags, only four more masters were required to complete Mr. Prout's eleven.

The French master having declined to turn out, Mr. Prout was obliged to complete his eleven with odds and ends, so to speak. He secured the services of Trotter, the page, and three odd-job men who worked on the school premises. Not one of these men knew anything about football, but this little detail didn't worry Mr. Prout.

When Wednesday afternoon arrived, all roads led to the football ground.

There was great excitement at Greyfriars. It wasn't every day that the First Eleven was seen in conflict with a team of masters.

Mr. Prout's appearance on the field was greeted with roars of laughter.

The master of the Fifth was attired in shorts and football boots, and a sweater which resembled Joseph's celebrated coat of many colours. His hands were encased in

thick woollen gloves, and a cloth cap, several sizes too big, was perched on his head, giving Mr. Prout the appearance of an anarchist.

Mr. Prout placed his men in their proper positions. Only two of them looked footballers, and they were Mr. Lascelles, at centre-forward, and Mr. Wally Bunter, at right-back.

As for the Greyfriars First, they looked very grim and businesslike.

Wingate had not forgotten Mr. Prout's scornful comments of a few days before, and he meant to teach the master of the Fifth a sharp lesson.

The masters won the toss, and decided to kick with the wind. But this didn't help them much, for within a minute the First Eleven had scored.

Pat Gwynne put in a fine solo run, and bore down upon the masters' goal. Mr. Wally Bunter rushed to intercept him, and he would have succeeded had not Mr. Hacker got in the way, and charged his own man off the ball.

Both masters fell heavily, and Gwynne, left in sole possession of the ball, fired in a terrific shot, which struck Mr. Prout full in the chest, and knocked him backwards into the net.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mr. Prout sat up in the goalmouth, with a dazed expression on his face.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "I appear to have been struck by an earthquake!"

Gwynne assisted the Form master to his feet.

"Hope I didn't hurt you, sir!" he muttered.

Mr. Prout glared at the prefect.

"Do not kick the ball so hard next time, Gwynne," he said. "Let it trickle gently towards me, so that I am able to stop it."

"My hat!" gasped Gwynne. He had never heard such a curious request from a goalkeeper in the whole course of his footballing career.

The First Eleven had drawn first blood, and they were soon "at it again."

Mr. Bunter played heroically at back, but he could not stem the repeated rushes of the seniors.

As for Mr. Lascelles, he was an utter failure at centre-forward, for the simple reason that he could get no support from his colleagues. Not a single pass came his way.

Mr. Prout made the discovery that a goalkeeper's lot is not a happy one. Shots were rained upon him from all angles, and he was subjected to a terrific bombardment.

The master of the Fifth was not agile enough to leap at the high shots, or to dive for the low ones. The result was that he was beaten time and again.

At half-time, the First Eleven had a comfortable lead of four goals to nothing; but in the second half they fairly ran riot.

The masters were played to a standstill. Even Mr. Bunter and Mr. Lascelles had been so overworked in the first half that they were utterly exhausted.

Goals came thick and fast, and the game degenerated into a sheer farce.

The final whistle came as a great relief to the masters, who were routed to the tune of thirteen goals to nil.

Mr. Prout was in a state of collapse. He was dazed and stunned by this tragic sequel to his ambitions. He had hoped to defeat the First Eleven with the greatest of ease, but the boot was on the other foot, with a vengeance!

"I—I cannot understand it!" he gasped, as he limped painfully off the field. "All I hope is that a report of this match does not find its way into the 'Greyfriars Herald.'"

THE GHOST HUNTERS!

(Continued from page 12.)

"I guess he was!" growled Bob Lawless. "But I guess we'll make him laugh another way, if we catch him in the mine! The old rascal would be put in the calaboose if it was known that he was lifting gold from Bill Bailey's Bonanza. We won't give him away to the sheriff, but we'll jolly well put a stop to his tricks, if that's the game!" And Bob's chums agreed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Gunten is not Pleased.

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. grinned at the sight of Kern Gunten the next day at the lumber school.

Gunten's adventure in the old mine, and his ignominious flight from the moanings of the wind in the abandoned workings, was the joke of Cedar Creek now.

The Swiss greeted the Co. with a black scowl when they joined him in the playground after morning lessons.

"Don't give me any of your chin-wag!" he exclaimed savagely. "I guess I've had enough of chewing the rag over what happened last night! Cut it out!"

"I wasn't going to rub it in!" said Bob Lawless, laughing. "You bunked, the same as we did, though you had less to bunk for, really. But never mind that. Did you see anything of Injun Dick last evening?"

Gunten started, surprised at the unexpected question.

"Yep," he answered. "He came into the store late last night."

"In funds again?" asked Bob.

"He had a nugget to sell," answered Gunten. "Goodness knows where he got it; but there hasn't been any complaint of robberies on the claims, so I suppose he's made a strike somewhere, and he's keeping it dark. Popper bought the nugget, and Injun Dick loped off to the Red Dog for fire-water. He was picked up in the street this morning, dead broke again, and covered with mud. I guess it's time that Redskin was fired out of the town."

"No reason why he shouldn't stake out a claim if he's made a strike," remarked Bob Lawless.

"I reckon he don't keep enough dust to pay the fee. He goes on a bender the minute he's in funds," said Gunten.

"Or perhaps he's made a strike on somebody else's claim," said Bob.

"Likely enough."

"Hallo, Gunten!" Chunky Todgers came up grinning a fat grin. "Got over it, old scout? I say, you ought to go in for foot-racing! The way you came out of the bonanza tunnel yesterday was a record!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hear that you're not talking so much about funks now," went on Chunky, with great enjoyment.

Gunten gritted his teeth, and made a sudden clutch at Chunky.

The fat youth yelled as Gunten's grip closed on his ear.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! Drag him off, Bob!"

Bob Lawless, laughing, caught Gunten by the shoulders, and spun him away.

The Swiss spun round, and sat on the ground.

He gave the rancher's son a deadly look as he scrambled up.

"Hands off!" said Bob. "You were free enough with your chin-wag yesterday, and now it's our turn!"

Gunten scowled, and strode away.

"Cheeky Jay!" said Chunky indignantly.

"He called me a funk yesterday, the blessed foreign trash!" And Chunky raised his voice, and yelled truculently after the Swiss. "Yah! Funk! Cold feet! Yah!"

Gunten did not look round.

The Swiss had had a good deal of chipping to stand from the Cedar Creek fellows over THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

his unfortunate exhibition at the Bonanza Mine, and his face was sullen and lowering during lessons that day.

His glance, when it rested on Frank Richards & Co. in the school-room, was not pleasant.

He attributed his discomfiture to them, though he might more justly have attributed it to himself.

After lessons he followed the chums into the playground.

"I hear that you're going to the haunted mine again," he said.

"Correct," answered Bob.

"To-day?"

"Yes; we're going there now. Like to come?" grinned Bob.

"Nope!"

Gunten mounted his horse, and rode away at a gallop.

He was out of sight by the time Frank Richards & Co. started up the trail.

The three rode at a leisurely pace, and it was some time later when they entered the gulch in the foothills.

"Here we are for the third time!" said Frank Richards, laughing, as they dismounted and tethered their horses.

"By gum! Gunten came here, after all!" exclaimed Bob.

"Gunten!"

"Look!"

Bob Lawless raised his hand, and pointed.

Far away up the gulch, through an opening of the pine-trees, a rider appeared in sight, riding away at a rapid pace.

Distant as he was, the chums recognised Kern Gunten.

The Swiss had evidently preceded them on the spot, and was riding home by a different route, in order to avoid meeting them on their way.

Only for a minute or two was he in sight. Then the pine-trees hid him again, and he vanished.

"That's jolly queer!" said Frank Richards, in amazement. "What has Gunten been doing here? Not exploring the mine, I'll bet!"

"Jolly queer!" said Beauclerc, equally puzzled.

Bob Lawless shook his head. He gave it up.

"Let's get in," he said.

The lantern was lighted, and the three chums entered the tunnel.

A dozen yards from the opening they came to a sudden halt.

From the blackness ahead a strange white figure loomed up, eerily, uncannily, with waving arms.

For a moment they stared, aghast, at the phantom figure, and then, without stopping to think, they dashed back out of the tunnel.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Ghost Hunters.

G-G-GOOD heavens!" muttered Frank Richards, as he stumbled out of the mine tunnel. "You—you fellows saw that?"

The three exchanged dismayed glances.

Bob Lawless set his lips.

"It's a trick!" he exclaimed fiercely. "A trick, that's all! It's somebody playing ghost—Injun Dick, or somebody else! Come on!"

"You—you're going in again?" muttered Frank.

"Hang it, yes! And I'm going to heave a rock at that chap, and teach him a wrinkle about playing ghost!" exclaimed Bob savagely.

He caught up a chunk of rock from the ground, and turned back to the mine.

Frank and Beauclerc followed his example. Gripping the stones in their hands, they crept into the tunnel again.

From the blackness the white, ghostly figure loomed ahead.

It was eerie, uncanny, and in spite of their belief that it was a trick, the sight made the blood rush to their hearts.

But they did not hesitate.

"Look out, whoever you are!" called out Bob Lawless. "I'm going to heave a rock!"

The ghostly figure did not move.

Bob Lawless kept his word.

His hand went up, and the heavy stone flew through the air.

It struck the ghostly figure, and there was a faint sound.

But the figure did not fall, and there was

no cry, no exclamation. Yet the blow had been a terrible one.

Bob Lawless caught his breath.

No living thing could have received that missile in dead silence, and he knew it. What did it mean?

"Heave your rocks!" he muttered in a strained whisper.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc obeyed, and the two heavy stones whizzed through the air.

Crash! The figure fell, still without a cry.

It lay huddled on the floor of the tunnel, glimmering white in the gloom.

"What—what—what is it?" muttered Beauclerc.

"I'm going to see!" said Bob Lawless, setting his teeth.

Keeping the lantern-light before him, Bob strode on determinedly, his chums at his heels.

They reached the ghostly figure extended on the floor.

"M-m-my hat!" stuttered Frank Richards, as he looked down at it in the lantern-light.

Bob Lawless burst into a breathless laugh.

They could see what the mysterious figure was now—several branches of pine tied together, with a white cloth draped over them.

Three or four boulders had been heaped round the pine branches to keep them in an upright position, and the white cloth, fluttering in the wind, had given the impression of the waving of ghostly arms.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at one another rather sheepishly.

"Gunten, of course!" said Frank.

"You bet!" growled Bob. "That's why he rode here ahead of us, to set up this gold-darned scarecrow to give us a scare!"

"And he succeeded," said Frank, with a rather rueful laugh. "No wonder it didn't yell when it got the stones!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter of the three chums, reassured now, rang along the old rocky tunnel, echoing in the black depths.

It was followed by another sound.

From somewhere in the old workings there came a shrill, ear-piercing cry, as of a tortured spirit.

Bob Lawless jumped.

"You hear that?" he exclaimed. "It's the ghost again at his old tricks. He won't scare us out this time!"

"No fear!" muttered Frank.

Bob Lawless gripped close on the coiled trail-rope he held in one hand.

That trail-rope was for the ghost, if he found him; and there was no doubt that Bob would lay it on well.

Silence followed the cry, save for the moaning of the mountain wind in the hollows of the old adits.

"Come on!" said Bob, through his closed teeth. "It's a trick, and we're going to nail the galoot."

They went on, the lantern-light flashing to and fro as they went.

Again that eerie cry came echoing through the adits, and they rushed in the direction whence it came; but they found only solid rock.

Again and again it came, and each time, as they searched, they were baffled.

"The galoot's dodged in the side adits," muttered Bob. "I guess we're going to find him, if we keep it up all night. He won't play ghost so lively after I've laid this trail-rope round his carcass!"

"Let's look in the adit where we found the new working," muttered Beauclerc.

"Good idea, Cherub!"

Bob Lawless led the way, and they turned into the cross-adit they had explored the previous evening, where the signs had been visible of fresh working at the auriferous rock.

There was a strange scent in the adit, as they progressed, which they recognised in a moment or two.

"Oil!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "There's been oil burning here!"

Bob Lawless chuckled softly.

"Of course! He couldn't work in the dark. He had a lantern, and blew it out when he heard us in the tunnel."

"Ghosts don't want lanterns," said Frank, quite reassured now.

"I guess not!"

They reached the termination of the adit, and Bob uttered an exclamation as he flashed the light on the recent workings.

"I guess that settles it!"
It did indeed settle it.
There were traces of fresh chipping on the rock, and at their feet lay a pick and an extinguished lantern.
The unknown gold-seeker had evidently been at work in the adit when the sounds in the tunnel warned him of the approach of explorers.
Frank Richards picked up the latter article and lighted it.
The wick was still warm.
"I guess that'll be useful to us!" grinned Bob Lawless. "The galoot plays his game well, but he won't convince us, after this, that he's a gold-darned spook."

"Hark!"
Echoing down the adit came the hideous yell of the "ghost."
The schoolboys ran back towards the main tunnel, the light flashing before them.

Whiz, whiz!
Crash!
The lanterns went crashing to the floor, struck out of their hands by whizzing chunks of rock.

The light was instantly extinguished. Darkness descended like a blanket on the three chums in the adit.
"Come on!" shouted Bob. "Ghosts don't heave rocks, I guess!—Come on! We're close on the galoot!"

He rushed on, his chums after him, excited and angry.
There was a howl from Bob Lawless as he stumbled over a loose boulder and rolled on the ground.

"Look out!" he gasped. "He's close! I touched him!"
Frank Richards, groping in the darkness, felt his hands come in contact with a human form, and he grasped it instantly.

"I've got him!" he shouted.
As he spoke, he bore the figure to the ground with a crash, sprawling across him in the darkness.

A wild howl came from underneath him. He did not heed it.
"Lend a hand, Beau!" he shouted. "I've got him!"

"Groogh! Oh! Ah!"
"I'm coming!" panted Beauclere.
"Keep still, you rotter!" shouted Frank, as his prisoner struggled frantically. "I've got you! I—"

"Leggo!"
"Wha-a-a-at?"
"Leggo!" It was Bob Lawless' voice.
"Leggo, you mad gopher! Yow-ow-ow!"

CHAPTER VI.

The Last of the Ghost!

FRANK RICHARDS released his prisoner as suddenly as if he had become red-hot.

Bob Lawless sat up breathlessly.
"Groogh! Oh! You jay, wharrer you up to?" he shrieked.
"Oh, my hat! Was it you, Bob?" gasped Frank.

"You howling jay, whom do you think it was?" spluttered Bob Lawless.
"I—I thought it was the ghost!"
"Groogh! You nearly busted my nose on the ground!" groaned Bob. "Oh, Jerusalem! Ow!"

He staggered to his feet.
"Sorry!" gasped Frank. "You said he was close—"
"So he was—I touched him." Bob set his teeth. "We'll have the rotter yet! He can't dodge us for keeps!"

In the intense darkness the chums groped their way out of the adit into the main tunnel.

Far in the distance, a speck of daylight appeared, at the end of the tunnel, and even as they sighted it, it was blotted out by a dark shadow.

Bob Lawless groped for a stone.
"He's between us and the gulch!" he muttered. "Keep behind me, while I heave a rock! I guess I've got him this time!"
Whiz!

Bob hurled the rock with all his force, aiming low so as to take effect on the legs of the figure in the darkness.

He did not want to injure the man who was playing ghost, exasperated as he was.
A sudden, terrific yell rang through the tunnel.

Bob's missile had got home at last. Bob laughed breathlessly.



THE GHOST! From out of the blackness of the tunnel a white, ghostly figure loomed ahead. Bob Lawless raised the stone above his head. "Look out, whoever you are!" he called out. "I'm going to heave a rock!" The ghostly figure did not move. (See Chapter 6.)

"Come on!" panted Beauclere.
The three chums rushed on down the tunnel.

They were close behind the fugitive as he reached the opening on the hillside.
Bob Lawless, ahead of his chums, caught at a tattered blanket that floated behind the running man.

"Stop!" he shouted. "We've got you, Injun Dick!"
"It's Injun Dick!" exclaimed Frank Richards breathlessly.
"You bet!"

It was the Apache, as they saw when the running man halted and whirled round on them, in the light that streamed into the opening of the adit.

For a moment there was ferocity in the coppery face of the Indian.
Just for an instant Injun Dick was once more Ka-noon-ka, the chief of the Apaches, the savage scalp-hunter of olden days.

But he remembered himself, and the look passed, and his copper features took on their customary stolid expression.
"Young white chief let go Injun's blanket," he said, with dignity.

Bob Lawless released him.
"We've caught you!" he panted. "You've been playing ghost!"
"No can savvy!"

"You've been working the mine, and taking away gold," said Vere Beauclere.
Injun Dick shook his head.
"Injun no can!"
"My only hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards, in astonishment. "Do you mean to say that you're not the man we were chasing in the tunnel?"

"Injun no know tunnel. Injun walk on mountains," said the great Red chief, with dignity. "Injun stop here to rest—Ka-noon-ka, no longer strong young brave. Hear something and run. I have spoken!"

"So you haven't been working the mine?" grinned Bob Lawless. "You haven't got here the nuggets you've been selling at Gunten's store?"

"No can understand."
"I guess the sheriff would soon make you understand, and shove you in the calaboose

to let it sink into your mind," answered Bob Lawless. "This mine is for sale, and you've no right to take an ounce of dust out of it. You know that, you old fibber! You've left your pick in the adit, too, and I guess that could be identified."

Injun Dick started. He had forgotten the pick and lantern left behind in the mine.
"Oh, that hits you, does it?" grinned Bob.

"Injun Dick honest Injun," said the Apache. "Injun Dick make mistake. The young white chief speaks with the speech of truth. Injun Dick take little gold."

"Little or not, it doesn't belong to you!" said Bob. "You've got to drop it, Injun Dick! Do you see this trail-rope? I've got that to lay round the galoot who was playing ghost. Look here, we'll let you off the trail-rope if you'll quit Thompson, and go on your travels till the mine's sold. Is that a trade?"

Injun Dick hesitated, with a wary eye on the trail-rope.
"Is it a trade?" repeated Bob.
The Redskin nodded.

"The words of the young white brave are words of wisdom," he said. "Young brave a bully boy with a glass eye. Injun Dick vamoose the ranch."

"Mind, I shall keep an eye open," said Bob. "If you don't quit, and stay away till after the sale, you'll be juggled! You savvy?"

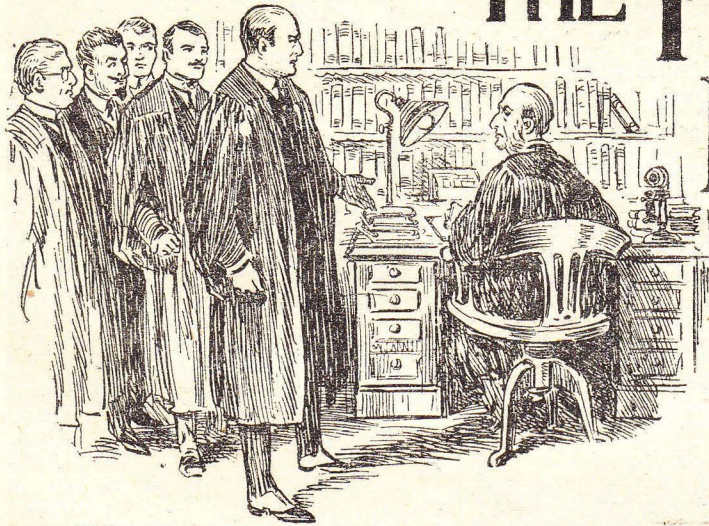
"Injun Dick absquatulate, I guess. No like calaboose," said the noble Red man simply. The Red man held out a horny hand.
"Injun stony. You give Injun dollar—wah?"

"Well, my word!" said Bob Lawless. But he gave the Redskin a dollar; he thought he deserved it for his sublime cheek.
Injun Dick received the gift with great dignity, draped his tattered blanket round him, and stalked away into the gulch.

The chums watched him out of sight, smiling. Injun Dick had paid his last visit to Bill Bailey's Bonanza, and the chums of Cedar Creek had solved the mystery of the haunted mine. THE END.

(Next week's story of Cedar Creek is a real ripper! See the Chat!)

HERE'S A SCHOOL YARN THAT'LL TAKE SOME BEATING! The masters of Rookwood on strike. Read all about the amazing affair below!



THE HEAD DEFIED!

A Fine Long Complete Tale
of Rookwood, dealing with the
amazing Masters' Rebellion.

By
OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Heavy Hand.

"THEY—they're coming!"
There was a tramp of feet in the passage outside the study, and Leggett of the Fourth shivered as he heard it.

Albert Leggett had been moving restlessly about his study, unable to settle down to work or anything else.

His ears had been on the alert, as he moved, for the sound of footsteps.

He knew that they would come. He stood still, breathing hard, as the door handle was turned.

The door did not open.

"Locked!"

It was the voice of Tommy Dodd, the chief of the Modern Fourth, outside.

"Bust it in, bedad!"

"Speak to the rotter first!"

That was the voice of Jimmy Silver, of the Classical Fourth.

Knock!

"Are you there, Leggett?"

Leggett made no reply.

"We know you're there," went on Jimmy Silver's quiet voice. "You can hear me, Leggett. Will you let us in?"

"What do you want?" panted Leggett, breaking silence at last.

"You know what we want. Will you open the door?"

"No!"

"Better!" said Tommy Dodd.

"I won't! Keep out, hang you!" exclaimed Leggett. "I—I'll yell for a prefect if you try to open the door!"

"Go ahead! If you bring Knowles here, he will want to know what the row's about!" answered Tommy Dodd. "Cut off and get the coal-hammer, Cooky! We'll soon have this door open!"

"Right-ho!"

Leggett's hands trembled.

"I—I'll open the door!" he stammered.

"Sharp, then!"

Leggett dragged himself to the door and unlocked it.

The door was thrown open, disclosing a crowd of juniors in the passage.

There were Dodd and Cook and Doyle, the three Tommies of the Modern side; and Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, the Fistical Four Classics.

Both divisions of the Fourth Form at Rookwood were well represented.

The seven juniors came into the study. Leggett backed away round the table, eyeing them uneasily.

Tommy Dodd closed the door and turned the key again. Leggett's sallow face paled as he watched him.

Tommy Doyle had a fives-bat under his arm.

Leggett looked at that bat, and he thought he could guess what it was for.

"THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

"Bether put him on the table," remarked Doyle thoughtfully. "Some of yez hould his paws, and some of yez hould his hoofs!"

"I—I—" stammered Leggett.

The threat to call for help died on his lips.

"You can howl, if you like," said Tommy Dodd, guessing his unspoken thought. "That will mean that the prefects will settle the matter—and we'd jus as soon they did. Rather, in fact!"

Leggett did not speak.

"Put him on the table, bedad!"

"Hold on a minute!" said Jimmy Silver. "We'll speak to him first. Leggett, you've still got a chance to do the decent thing."

No answer.

"You know how the matter stands," said Jimmy quietly, almost persuasively. "Mr. Bootles is dismissed, and has got to leave the school in the morning. He's your Form-master as well as mine, Leggett, and he's always treated us decently—you as well as us. You don't want him to be turned out of Rookwood, Leggett."

"It's nothing to do with me!" muttered Leggett.

"Why, you rotter—" began Lovell hotly. "Shush!" murmured Raby. "Let Jimmy go ahead! We agreed to let Jimmy do the talking first."

He at least had no patience to waste on the cad of the Fourth, that was clear.

"Pile in, Uncle James!" said Newcome, with a grin.

Uncle James piled in.

"It's a lot to do with you, Leggett," Jimmy Silver went on, in the same quiet tone. "You're the cause of the whole trouble."

"I—I—"

"You fixed up a cord in the Head's study for Dr. Chisholm to tumble over. You left my pencil-case there to make out that I had done it. Bootles stood up for me, and wouldn't let the Head flog me, and the Head's dismissed him. It's come out that you played that trick in the Head's study. Well, if the Head knew that, you can see that he would have to admit that Mr. Bootles was right in stopping my flogging. You can see that?"

No answer from Leggett.

"As it stands, the flogging is still hanging over me," said Jimmy. "I'm not worrying about that, though. I could stand that, if that were all. But that's not all. Mr. Bootles is sacked for opposing the Head. He's awfully cut up about leaving Rookwood. You know what the poor old chap was looking like in the Form-room this morning."

"Like a giddy spectre!" said Raby.

"I—I'm sorry for Bootles!" faltered Leggett. "But—but—"

"Then do the decent thing, and make it all right for him."

"I—I can't!"

"You can! The Head would have to admit that Bootles did right, if he knew that I hadn't earned the flogging he was going to give me when Bootles chipped in. He'll know that, if you own up to what you did."

"I can't!"

"Why not?"

"You—you silly fool!" panted Leggett. "Own up to the Head that I fixed up a trap for him, and made him fall over and damage his dashed nose! He would flog me!"

"You won't face the flogging you've asked for, from the Head," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Well, you'll get one from us, quite as bad—if not a bit worse. And that isn't all! You'll get another to-morrow—and another the next day."

"Every day till the end of the term!" said Tommy Dodd, nodding his head.

"Now, you're a business-like chap, Leggett," said Jimmy Silver. "A bit too business-like in some ways for a decent fellow. You can see whether it will pay you to sneak out of one flogging, and bag one for every day of the term in exchange. Think it over."

Leggett gritted his teeth.

"You rotters! I—I'll yell for Knowles or Mr. Manders—"

"Just as you like! Take warning, though, that if the masters are brought in the whole affair comes out," said Jimmy Silver. "You won't be allowed to make out that this is a case of bullying, you rat! If we're called to account for flogging you, we shall have to state our reason. Now you can please yourself about howling for Mr. Manders."

"Howl away, you spalpeen!" said Tommy Doyle. "And sure I'm waitin' for yez to put him on the table!"

Leggett panted as the juniors closed in on him.

He struggled as he was grasped, but the grip of many hands was upon him, and he was swept off his feet.

There was a bump as he was landed on the table.

"Now, then, Doyle!"

Leggett gave a howl.

There was no doubt that the juniors were in deadly earnest.

Leggett's last lingering hope vanished as Tommy Doyle raised the fives-bat.

"Stop!" he howled.

Whack!

The howl came a little too late.

Whack!

"Stop!" shrieked Leggett, struggling in the grasping hands. "I—I—I'll do as you want—I'll own up! Let me go!"

"Hold on, Tommy!"

"Better give him a few more, or he may change his mind."

"Hold on! Leggett, do you mean that?" asked Jimmy Silver sternly. "Mind, if you break your word, you'll get the flogging,

What Happens Now That the Masters of Rookwood Have Gone on Strike? See next week!

disconcerting the little gentleman, who faltered and ceased.

"Well?"
 "The—the fact is, sir, this boy—Leggett—has made a very surprising confession. I have brought him to you—"

"Indeed!"
 "It appears, sir, that Silver, as I supposed, was guiltless of the prank played in this study."

"That matter is closed, Mr. Bootles."
 "I can now produce incontrovertible proof, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Proof, sir, which you cannot refuse to credit."

"Nonsense!"
 "Really, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, colouring.

Dr. Chisholm raised his hand.
 "The matter is closed, Mr. Bootles. I decline to hear one word on the subject! That is all I have to say!"

"Leggett, sir, has confessed—"
 "What?"
 "He has confessed that he was guilty."
 "Oh!"

Mr. Bootles had the advantage at last. Cold and stern as he was, the Head was essentially a just man; he could not have been respected in a school like Rookwood had he been otherwise.

He had been firmly convinced of Jimmy Silver's guilt, though possibly, as Jimmy surmised, the damage to his august nose had—unconsciously—helped to convince him.

There was a short pause, during which Leggett's knees knocked together.
 He felt a strong inclination to bolt from the study as the Head's terrifying glance turned upon him.

"Leggett!" Dr. Chisholm's voice was like the rumble of thunder. "Leggett! You confess—"

"Oh, sir! Yes, sir!" gasped Leggett.
 "You were the author of the outrage in this study?" thundered the Head.

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry—"
 "You fastened a cord in this room for me to stumble over in the dark!"
 Leggett gasped.

"And why have you kept silent so long, Leggett, in order to confess the truth at this late hour?"

"I—I was afraid, sir!" stammered Leggett.
 There was no doubt of the truth of that statement.

At the present moment Albert Leggett was so terrified that his tongue almost clove to his mouth.

"I can well believe that, Leggett," said the Head grimly. "Yes, I can believe that. But you are a Modern boy. How did you obtain admission here without being observed?"

"I—I borrowed the corridor key from Mr. Manders' study, sir."

"Then you had, apparently, planned this outrage very carefully, Leggett? It was not merely a foolish, boyish trick. And how, Leggett, did James Silver's pencil-case come here?"

"I—I dropped it, sir."
 "Boy!"

"By—by accident, sir!" stammered Leggett.
 His voice died away under the Head's grim look.

"Very well!" said Dr. Chisholm. "I shall express my regret to Silver that he was unjustly suspected. You, Leggett, will be soundly flogged. You have acted disrespectfully towards me, and basely towards your schoolfellow. I would expel you from the school, Leggett, but for the fact that this confession is apparently made of your own free will. I shall flog you to-morrow morning, Leggett, most severely. You may go!"
 Leggett limped from the study.

Dr. Chisholm turned back to the papers on his table.

He seemed to have forgotten the presence of Mr. Bootles in his study.

The little Form-master coughed.
 He coughed a second time, but the Head did not look up.

"Dr. Chisholm!" said Mr. Bootles at last, nervously.

At that the doctor raised his head.
 "Well, Mr. Bootles?"
 "It is clear that Silver is innocent now that—"

"Perfectly so."
 "In that case, an act of great injustice would have taken place if he had been flogged, sir."
 "Undoubtedly!"

"I was convinced at the time of his innocence from the evidence before me."
 THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

"You were wrong, Mr. Bootles," said the Head coldly. "It is true that he was guiltless, but the evidence against him was, to my mind, conclusive. A judgment could only be formed on the known facts; and the facts, as then known, pointed to Silver's guilt. I do not blame myself for being deceived."

"But you are glad, sir, that you did not punish Silver unjustly!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles warmly.

"No doubt."
 "You will allow me to point out, sir, that my interference, which you resented at the time—"

"Not only at the time, Mr. Bootles. My feelings on that subject have not changed."

"My interference, at least, sir, prevented an act of harsh injustice. I did my duty as Silver's Form-master."

"I do not see it in that light. However, there is no need to discuss the matter. We hold different opinions. I may mention that I am rather busy at the present moment, Mr. Bootles."

The Fourth Form master drew a deep breath.
 His face was pink; his anger was rising, though he held it in check.

"Am I to understand, sir, that this discovery makes no difference to your decision as regards me?" he asked very quietly.

"None at all, Mr. Bootles. I cannot retain upon the school staff a master who opposes me in public."

THERE MAY STILL BE
 TIME TO GET THE
 "HOLIDAY
 ANNUAL!"

IF YOU GO TO YOUR
 NEWSAGENT'S TO-
 DAY!

"It was by your own act, sir, that the opposition was public. I tried to convince you in private."

The Head made a gesture.
 "Mr. Bootles, I am headmaster of Rookwood School, and I do not brook opposition. Kindly do not reopen the subject."

"Then, sir, you desire me to leave Rookwood to-morrow morning, as arranged?" asked Mr. Bootles, with a tremble in his voice.

"Quite so."
 "I am bound to say, sir, that in this matter you are acting with the same harshness and injustice you displayed towards Silver of the Fourth!" burst out Mr. Bootles indignantly.

The Head's eyes glittered for a moment over his glasses.

"Very well, Mr. Bootles," he said calmly. "You have stated your opinion, and I have noted it. Will you oblige me by closing this interview?"

"Certainly, sir! You shall not have to ask me twice to leave your study!" spluttered the indignant Mr. Bootles.

And he whisked out in a great heat.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
 Friends in Need.

"PHEW!"
 "That doesn't look as if it's all right, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. came into the School House in time to see Mr. Bootles return to his study.

The agitation and distress in the little gentleman's face was visible to them, though Mr. Bootles whisked on without a glance at the juniors.

The door closed on him, and the juniors looked blankly at one another.

"My—my hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.
 Lovell rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"It hasn't worked!" he said. "Bootles wouldn't look like that if it was all right. What the merry dickens does it mean?"

"I'm going to ask Bootles!" said Jimmy determinedly.

He tapped at the Form-master's door, and opened it, and found Mr. Bootles in excited and indignant talk with Mr. Mooney and Mr. Bohun.

Mr. Bootles whisked round at him.
 "Silver! What—what is it? Please do not disturb me now."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Jimmy respectfully.
 "But—but all the fellows are anxious, sir. Would you mind telling us, sir, whether you are staying on at Rookwood, Mr. Bootles?"

"I am leaving in the morning, Silver. Pray go!"
 Mr. Bootles waved his hand impatiently towards the door, and Jimmy Silver got out at once.

The kind and patient temper of the Fourth Form master had evidently suffered from his interview with the Head.

Jimmy Silver rejoined his chums with a gloomy brow.
 "Still sacked?" asked Lovell.

"Yes."
 "Rotten!" said Mornington. "What does it mean? The Head ought to have taken it back."

"We thought he would," said Jimmy.
 "He ought to. He ought to be glad Bootles chipped in, as it turns out. I suppose he's got his back up."

"It's a shame!" growled Lovell.
 "The Head's a crusty old bird!" remarked Mornington. "After all, Bootles stood up to him in Hall, and wouldn't let the fogging go ahead. I suppose it's made him a bit stiff."

Bulkeley of the Sixth came along to the group of juniors, and signed to Jimmy Silver.

"The Head wants to speak to you, Silver. You're to go to his study."

"Yes, Bulkeley."
 Jimmy wondered what the Head wanted as he made his way to the dreaded apartment.

He found Dr. Chisholm cold and grim.
 The Head felt that it was his duty to express regret for his mistake, but it was an unpleasant task, and he was not feeling amiable.

"Silver, I have learned that the author of the outrage in this study was Leggett," he said coldly. "Leggett has confessed, and the matter is now beyond doubt. I am sorry, Silver, that you were suspected. Your sentence is, of course, rescinded. You may go, Silver."

It was the "amende honorable," though far from gracious in tone or manner.

Jimmy Silver hesitated.
 "You may go!" repeated the Head.

"Thank you, sir!" faltered Jimmy. "I'd like you to believe, sir, that I wouldn't have played such a trick on you, sir."

"I believe you, Silver."
 "And—and Mr. Bootles, sir—"

"What!"
 Jimmy jumped at the Head's tone; but he stuck to his guns, and went on courageously:

"Mr. Bootles stood up for me, sir, because he knew—"

"That will do, Silver! You may go!"
 "We shall all be sorry, sir, if Mr. Bootles leaves Rookwood—"

"Leave my study, Silver!"
 That was final.

The Head's glance was straying towards his cane.
 Jimmy Silver controlled his feelings and quitted the study.

He rejoined his chums with a glint in his eyes.
 "What was it—a licking or a merry apology?" asked Mornington.

"Polite regret!" grunted Jimmy. "He could have kept it, for all I care. He jumped on me when I mentioned Bootles. The fact is, kids, the Head is a little bit of a Kaiser. I suppose there's nothing doing. But it's a jolly shame if Bootles goes."

"Rotten!" agreed the Co.

"Something ought to be done!" growled Lovell.

"What can be done?" asked Erroll.

"Blest if I know! It's a shame, though!" There was a good deal of bitterness in the Co., and some of their remarks about the Head that evening were far from respectful.

Somehow, all the fellows had taken it for granted that Leggett's confession would set matters right, and when that had been brought about they expected the clouds to roll by.

Their disappointment was mingled with deep indignation.

But, right or wrong, the Head was monarch of all he surveyed at Rookwood School, and the juniors' only compensation was "slanging" the stiff old gentleman in the privacy of their own studies.

Tubby Muffin looked into the end study while the Fistical Four were engaged in a rather desultory way on prep.

Tubby's fat face was full of excitement. "There's something on, you chaps!" he announced.

"Oh, rats!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "But there is, you know!" said Tubby. "There's a Masters' Session going on, and this ain't the regular night, you know!"

"Blow the masters!" said Lovell irreverently. "Blow the masters, and bother their silly sessions!"

"But it's about Bootles!" shrieked Tubby Muffin, determined to make an impression. Jimmy Silver looked up quickly.

"About Bootles!" he repeated. "How do you know?"

"I heard Mooney say so to Wiggins!" announced Tubby triumphantly. "There's going to be a protest!"

"A protest?" exclaimed Raby.

"That's it—a masters' protest!" said Tubby excitedly. "They're going to pitch it to the Head, you know. They're not going to let him sack Bootles, now it's come out that Bootles was in the right all the time. I heard Mooney say it was Huinish!"

"My hat!"

"And Wiggins was snorting like anything—like a—a—war-horse!" pursued Tubby. "He said to Mooney that it was a time for the staff to stand shoulder to shoulder to get justice for a colleague—his very words! What's a colleague, Jimmy?"

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver. "After all, they're right! The Head's in the wrong, and they all know it, and they oughtn't to let Bootles be sacked. If he were a plumber or a bricklayer, his union wouldn't let him be sacked for nothing. They'd call a strike. Jolly good idea to protest, though I don't think it will do any good."

"Wiggins was going to say something," continued Tubby. "But just then Mooney saw me, and the beast cuffed me—just as if he thought I was listening, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby rubbed his fat ear. "You wouldn't cackle if you'd got it!" he snapped. "I say Mooney is a beast, but I'm glad he's standing up for old Bootles! What do you think the Head will say, Jimmy?"

"Goodness knows!"

Under such exciting circumstances, prep was evidently out of the question, and the Fistical Four "chucked it" unanimously.

They went downstairs, where they found a good many of the Classical Fourth and some of the Third and the Shell gathered in a big window recess near the door of the Masters' Room.

The news had spread.

Probably the gentlemen of the staff were quite unaware that the subject of their weighty deliberations was known outside the sacred apartment where they were met in council.

But it was well enough known, partly owing to Tubby Muffin's long ears, and partly to the portentous looks of the staff themselves.

"They're goin' at it like anythin'!" remarked Smythe of the Shell. "If you listen, you can hear Bootles' pipe and old Mooney's deep bass. Looks like a merry indignation meetin'."

"Blowin' off steam!" said Townsend sagely. "They won't dare to face the Head! Two to one they don't. Smythey—in quietlets!"

Adolphus Smythe shook his head.

"Not takin' any, dear boy. It would be givin' a quiet away!"

"Hallo! Here they come!" exclaimed Lovell suddenly.

The door of the Masters' Room opened.

In stately procession came forth the staff; almost all the masters of Rookwood School, with grave and serious faces.

There was a scudding of the juniors at once.

But from corners and recesses they watched in breathless excitement, and the excitement reached almost fever pitch when it was seen that the staff marched directly to the Head's study.

"You'd have lost your quids, Towny!" gasped Topham. "They're goin' to beard the merry old lion in his den!"

"Good egg!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

At a distance the juniors watched and waited with a thrill of excitement such as had not been known in Rookwood School for many a day.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Turned Down!

DR. CHISHOLM raised his eyebrows. The Head had returned to his study after dinner to attend to some business in connection with replacing Mr. Bootles.

He was deep in papers now, with a rather less severe expression on his face than of late.

The staff marched in under a steady stare from the Head, and there was a general remark of:

"H'm!"

The Head's brows went up till they really looked as if they were trying to climb over his bald forehead.

"To what," said Dr. Chisholm, in a voice that seemed to cut like a razor—"to what, gentlemen, do I owe this unexpected and extraordinary visit?"

The master of the Fifth pulled himself together.

"Dr. Chisholm—" he began. "H'm!"

"Well, Mr. Greely?"

"We, the staff of Rookwood, sir, have just met in Masters' Session," said Mr. Greely.

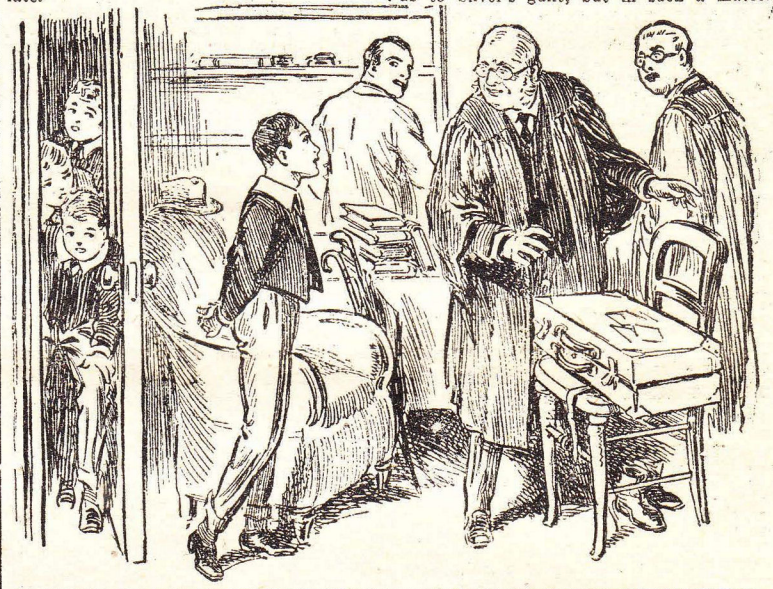
"Indeed? I was not aware that this was the evening for the Masters' Session!"

"The matter discussed at this meeting, Dr. Chisholm, is the dismissal of our colleague, Mr. Bootles."

Dr. Chisholm's face hardened.

"Indeed?" he said.

"H'm! When Mr. Bootles opposed your authority, sir, in the matter of the flogging of Silver of the Fourth, his action was condemned by the staff!" said Mr. Greely. "I may say that I shared Mr. Bootles' doubts as to Silver's guilt, but in such a matter



LEGGETT THE CONFESSOR! "I've a confession to make, sir," gasped Leggett. "Dear me, whatever have you done, Leggett?" said Mr. Bootles in surprise. "I—I—I played that trick in the Head's study sir," gasped the cad of the Fourth. (See Chapter 2.)

A good dinner had doubtless had an ameliorating effect upon the old gentleman. But he raised his eyebrows very expressively when, after a tap at the door, the school staff presented themselves.

Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, led the way.

Mr. Greely was a stout, rather imposing gentleman, with a ruddy face and short breath.

After Mr. Greely came Mr. Mooney, the master of the Shell, and Mr. Bohun of the Third.

Then came Mr. Wiggins of the Second Form, and Mr. Bull, familiarly known as "Maths."

Monsieur Monceau, the French master, brought up the rear in a state of great agitation, but with resolution in his little, bearded face.

With Mossoo walked Mr. Flinders, the German master—Rookwood's German master being no longer a native of Germany.

It was nearly the whole staff.

Mr. Bootles had discreetly remained in the Masters' Room, there to await the outcome of the deputation.

Mr. Manders, the senior master on the Modern side, had declined to take part in the proceedings.

Mr. Manders had, in fact, sought to keep Mr. Flinders, also a Modern master, out of the affair, but unavailingly.

I felt it my duty to be silent, and bow to the decision of the gentleman placed in authority here by the governing body—yourself, sir!"

"Very right and proper!" assented the Head.

"Certain circumstances have since transpired," said Mr. Greely ponderously. "It appears that Mr. Bootles not only believed in the innocence of Silver, but was quite certain on the point. The discovery of the real culprit places that beyond a doubt."

"Undoubtedly!" murmured Mr. Mooney. "Mr. Bootles' intervention saved you, sir, from inflicting an undeserved punishment. We, the staff, certainly supposed that when this came to light, you, sir, would decide to overlook any irregularity in Mr. Bootles' procedure."

"For which he would express regret," said Mr. Mooney.

"Sincere regret!" murmured Mr. Wiggins. "And that the matter would be suffered to fall into oblivion. H'm!" said Mr. Greely. "To our surprise, sir, we find that Mr. Bootles is still under the order to leave Rookwood."

"To our amazement!" murmured Mr. Bull. "We have discussed the matter in Masters' Session, sir, in all its bearings," pursued the master of the Fifth. "We feel it our duty,

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

sir, as Mr. Bootles' colleagues, to make an appeal to you. In the name of the whole staff, sir, we beg you to reconsider your decision with regard to Mr. Bootles!"

"Which will be taken, sir, as an act of grace, and fully appreciated by the whole staff!" said Mr. Bohun.

"Oui, oui! Mon Dieu, mais oui!" murmured Monsieur Monceau.

Dr. Chisholm looked quietly and calmly at the somewhat flustered group of gentlemen before him.

"Is that all?" he asked, as the staff fell silent.

"H'm! Yes. I—I think that is all, Dr. Chisholm," said Mr. Greely, rather taken aback.

"Very well, gentlemen: I will answer you. I regret, exceedingly, that it is not possible for me to reconsider my decision with regard to Mr. Bootles," said the Head icily.

"Sir!"
"I have considered the matter very carefully, and have come to the conclusion that, after an act of open insubordination, Mr. Bootles cannot remain at Rookwood. I said I am sorry, and I repeat it. Gentlemen, the matter closes here."

"An act of injustice to one is an act of injustice to all!" said Mr. Greely. "It is our duty to support our colleague, sir, at this crisis. Therefore, sir, we protest!"

The Head's lips were hard set now.

"You protest?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir; most emphatically."

"Very well," said the Head, with grim urbanity. "You protest, and I will duly make note of your protest. I regret that it cannot influence me to alter my decision with regard to Mr. Bootles. And now, gentlemen, I am compelled to remind you that my time is of value."

The unhappy deputation looked at one another.

Monsieur Monceau made a strategic movement towards the door. He backed out, and Mr. Flinders nearly backed into him.

But Mr. Greely maintained his firmness.

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"Well, Mr. Greely?"

"The matter does not end here, sir!"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Greely; it does end here. Will you have the goodness to close the door after you?"

Slam!

The staff retired.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Strike of the Masters.

LIKE a giddy gang of moulting wild-fowl! That was how Mornington of the Fourth described it.

Perhaps it was not quite so bad as that, but assuredly the departure of the staff was nothing in the nature of a triumphant procession.

They were all looking very pink and very

flushed as they whisked away from the Head's study.

They did not disperse to their own quarters and give the matter up, as the Head undoubtedly expected them to do.

They returned to the Masters' Room in a great heat.

The door closed on them, but juniors, gathering outside from near and far, heard an excited murmur of voices going on within.

Apparently the staff were still on the war-path.

"I propose, gentlemen, that the whole staff relinquish its duties until the Head is pleased to come to reason!" came in Mr. Greely's booming tones.

"But—but—this was Mr. Bull's voice—"

"but that—that is a strike, Mr. Greely!"

"And why," boomed Mr. Greely—"why, sir, should not we, because we happen to belong to the professional class—the intelligentsia, in fact—why should not we exercise the privilege, sir, that is exercised by workmen and others in similar circumstances? Have we no rights? Have we no dignity? Are we, sir, slaves to be trodden upon?"

"Here, come away, you chaps!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"I—I—I didn't mean to hear what they were saying."

"Can't help it when the bounders are shouting, can we?" said Mornington.

"Let's get further off, for goodness' sake!"

The juniors moved off, though sorely against the grain; they were feverishly anxious to know what was being decided at that unprecedented Masters' Session.

But they could not descend to listening, curious as they were to know the outcome; and they stepped out of the range of voices, only a distant murmur coming to their ears from the Masters' Room.

Tubby Muffin was the only fellow who wanted to linger, and Lovell kindly took him by one fat ear to persuade him to go with the rest.

The door of the Masters' Room was suddenly thrown open.

"Here they come again!" said Mornington, dodging into a window recess. "Keep out of sight; Greely looks rabid."

"On the giddy war-path, and no mistake," chuckled Conroy. "I wonder whether the Head will ring for the sergeant to chuck them out?"

There was a subdued chortle.

Matters were getting quite thrilling now.

The door of the Masters' Room was left open, and Jimmy Silver, after the staff had gone, caught a glimpse of Mr. Bootles there.

The little gentleman was walking to and fro, in a state of great agitation.

"Come on, Jimmy!" breathed Lovell.

At a safe distance, but with keen and eager eyes, a little army of juniors followed on the track of the staff to the Head's study.

Before Mr. Greely & Co. reached that apartment, however, the door opened, and the Head came out.

In the broad corridor, under the electric lights, the Head met the returning procession, in full career, as it were.

He halted.

The staff halted, too, little Monsieur Monceau making a hapless attempt to screen himself behind the broad shoulders of Mr. Bohun.

"There's the Head!" murmured Conroy.

"Keep back, you chaps! If he spots us there'll be earthquakes!"

"Quiet!"

The staff clustered together in the corridor, flustered and confused; the Head as cold, calm, and stately as ever.

"Well, gentlemen," said Dr. Chisholm, in a tone of icy surprise, "were you coming to my study?"

"We—we were, sir!" gasped Mr. Greely.

"Not, I hope, to reopen the matter of—"

"Yes, sir! Most decidedly, sir!"

"Then I regret that I cannot listen to you!" said Dr. Chisholm.

Mr. Greely drew a gasping breath.

In the Masters' Room he had been the boldest of all, and he had brought his colleagues to his way of thinking.

But somehow his boldness seemed to ooze out at his finger-tips in the presence of the Head.

But there was no retreat now, and he took his courage in both hands, so to speak.

"Dr. Chisholm! You must listen!"

"What?"

"I repeat, sir, that you must listen to what we have to say!" said Mr. Greely. "In protest against the unjust dismissal of Mr. Bootles, sir, the whole staff begs to place its resignation in your hands."

"Mr. Greely!"

There was no doubt that the Head, for once, was taken aback.

He set his glasses straight, and blinked at his mutinous staff.

"That is our decision, sir!" said Mr. Greely more boldly. "An act of injustice to one is an act of injustice to all. We have agreed to support Mr. Bootles, sir, to the utmost limit of our power."

"Is it possible?" The Head almost gasped. "Is it possible, Mr. Greely, that the staff of Rookwood School contemplates a strike, like discontented hands in a factory?"

"It is not only possible, sir, but it is the fact," retorted Mr. Greely. "We decline, sir, to decline absolutely to carry on our duties here until Mr. Bootles has been reinstated."

"I refuse to reinstate Mr. Bootles."

"Very well, sir; so long as that is your resolve, you will remain the Head of a school without masters."

Mr. Greely turned to his colleagues.

"Come, gentlemen!"

And the staff walked away, leaving the Head standing in the corridor, dumbfounded.

"Yaroooh!"

Again the dignity of Mr. Greely's departure was impaired, this time by his walking into Tubby Muffin, who dodged away too late.

"What—what! Boy! You—ah!—you—yes young rascal!"

Cuff, cuff, cuff!

"Yoooop!"

Tubby Muffin fled, yelling.

Mr. Greely stalked on with his colleagues, and they disappeared.

Dr. Chisholm glanced along the corridor, and caught a glimpse of vanishing feet.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not want to interview the Head just then, and they bolted for the Fourth Form quarters.

In the Fourth Form passage there was an excited crowd, discussing the unprecedented state of affairs that had come to pass at Rookwood.

A strike of the masters!

It was unheard-of!

When Bulkeley of the Sixth came to shepherd the Classical Fourth off to their dormitory he found them still breathlessly discussing the subject.

The discussion went on long after lights out in the Fourth Form dormitory.

What would happen on the morrow in a school without masters was unknown, almost unimaginable, and intensely interesting.

"How on earth will it end?" said Jimmy Silver.

There was no answer to that question.

The juniors could only wait for the morrow—and for their first experience of a school with the masters on strike!

THE END.

(Next week's grand long, complete Rookwood story is entitled, "The Strike of the Masters!" Don't miss it!)

BEST Boys' Books on the Market!

THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.
Fourpence Per Volume.

- No. 645.—**THE FAR, FAR NORTH.**
A striking yarn of two boys' adventures in the Klondike. By MARTIN SHAW.
- No. 646.—**SCOTLAND'S PRIDE.**
A magnificent story of the footer field. By VESRY DEANE.
- No. 647.—**THE MINERS' ELEVEN.**
A splendid tale of football and adventure. By WALTER EDWARDS.
- No. 648.—**KING OF THE HALLS.**
A grand story of the trials of a boy cyclist. By ANDREW and GEOFFREY GRAY.

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.
Fourpence Per Volume.

- No. 263.—**THE CASE OF THE TRADE SECRET.**
A story of Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Pedro at home and abroad. By the author of "The Case of the Bogus Laird," etc.
- No. 264.—**THE WHITE REFUGEES; or, THE CASE OF THE CROOKS' COLONY.**
A tale of thrilling adventure and of ver detective work, introducing "Dr. Ferraro," etc.
- No. 265.—**ON THE BED OF THE OCEAN.**
A wonderful story of stirring adventure on land and sea. By the Author of "Fingerprints of Fate," etc., etc.
- No. 266.—**LADY SHARLOW'S SECRET.**
A detective-adventure story with a strong human plot. By the Author of "The Brigand's Secret," "Lost in Cambodia," etc., etc.

Now On Sale! Buy Your Copies TO-DAY!

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

No Masters at Rookwood! Who Will Take Their Places, and What Will Happen Then?

THE RESULTS OF
"MANCHESTER UNITED"
 and
"SHEFFIELD UNITED"
COMPETITIONS.

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

E. NELSON,
 29, Ley Street,
 Ilford, Essex.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided between the following two competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

R. Coverer, 41, Nuggett Street, Oldham.
 Charles H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Howarth Street Sunderland.

The ten prizes of 5s. each have been awarded to the following ten competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

J. Allison, 2, Forth Street, Chopwell, co. Durham; Tommy Loynd, 17, Clementina Terrace, Carlisle; Arthur Shaw, 61, Ponty-

pridd Road, Porth, Glam; William Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; John Diver, 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E. 9; Stanley C Davies, 37, Manor Road, Liscard, Cheshire; Robert Carpenter, 5, Strickland Street, Elswick, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Teddy Ogden, 41, Nuggett Street, Oldham; S. Ogden, 41, Nuggett Street, Oldham; Frances H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland.

SOLUTION.
 Manchester United Football Club started, like numerous other first-class clubs, in a small way. It was originated in connection with the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, and was for a long time known as Newton Heath. The name of William Meredith will always be associated with this celebrated football team.

"SHEFFIELD UNITED."

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

ALFRED CARR,
 70 Bargate,
 Boston, Lincs.

whose solution contained one error.
 The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided between the following two competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

Mrs. A. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan.

Eileen Shord, 68, Temple Sheen Road, East Sheen, S.W. 14.

The ten prizes of 5s. each have been divided among the following nineteen competitors, whose solutions contained three errors each:

Mrs. L. Kernick, 62, Ivor Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham; W. Boyd Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan, A. Mills, 8, White Cross Road, Herford; Robert Given, 17, Beith Road, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Scotland; Dorothy Moore, 146, Vine Place, Rochdale; S. White, 28, Albert Road, Aldershot, Hants; Alice Taylor, 53 Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield; Norman Weatherby, 89, Wade Street, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent; Miss M. O. Aitken, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Stanley Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; G. Arnold, 27, Delorme Street, Fulham, Kent; Frank Seton, 311, Cromwell Road, Peterborough; Roland C. Flower, 16, Skelbrook Street, Earsfield, S.W. 18; Luke Warburton, 331, Hulton Lane, Bolton, Lancs; William J. Leng, 7, Travis Street, Barry Dock, Glam; Cecil Crouch, Opposite James, Upwell, Wisbech; Ernest Roberts, 1, Grange Villas, Ellesmere, Salop; James Gibb, Bridge Street, Catrine, Ayrshire.

SOLUTION

Sheffield United Football Club has had a particularly bright career. From its beginning as a club in 1889, the play has been well over the average, and several dozens of fine performances have been given. The United has had more distinguished players on its books than probably any other football club.

DO YOU WANT SOME POCKET MONEY?

A Splendid Opportunity for Readers of the "Popular"! Just solve the picture puzzle below and send in your solution—you may win a topping prize!

A GRAND ONE-WEEK FOOTBALL COMPETITION
FIRST PRIZE £5 0 0: Second Prize £2 10 0:
TEN PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS EACH.

What You Have to Do!

Here is a simple Footer Competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Tottenham Hotspur" Competition, POPULAR Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4., so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28th, 1922.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Gem," "Magnet," and "Boys' Friend," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

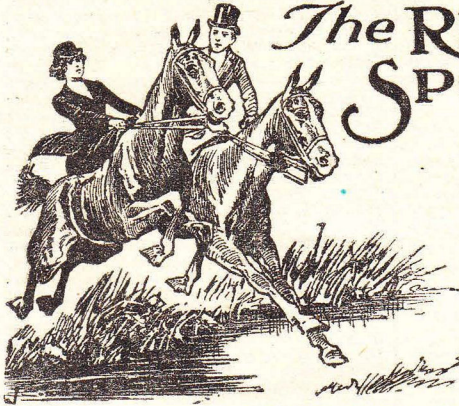
I enter "Tottenham Hotspur" Competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name

Address

P.

AMAZING DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR STIRRING SPORTING SERIAL!
The Fight for a big fortune—who will win?



The RIVAL SPORTSMEN!

A Gripping New
Sporting Serial,
dealing with an
amazing struggle
for a great fortune.

By VICTOR NELSON.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

By the terms of the late Sir Charles Lestrade's will, Harry Lestrade and his cousin, Austin Courtney, must fight for the possession of the Lestrade fortune on the field of sport. The one who distinguishes himself most becomes owner of a vast amount of wealth. Harry Lestrade receives the first opportunity to distinguish himself in a local football match, and he is "signed on" to play for the Wessex Wanderers permanently.

Several other sporting events, in which both the cousins compete, are won by young Harry Lestrade. Furious at his non-success, Courtney tries underhand methods of getting Harry out of the struggle.

In the fourth round of the English Cup, Courtney's team, Romford Rovers,

is drawn to meet the Wanderers. Courtney arranges with a reserve, Jem Newbold, who is up against Harry, to administer drugs to his team at half-time.

The dastardly scheme is carried out, and when the two teams commence the play again, three of the Wanderers fall down unconscious. But in spite of this catastrophe, Codling, the captain of the Wanderers, decides to continue the match, playing short.

After a stern struggle the Wanderers defeat their opponents. In the dressing-room, after the match, Tony Waggs discovers that Newbold is responsible for the drugging, and there is a fight between the two men before the other players.

(Now read on.)

The Conspiracy.

WITH his lips cut and bleeding, and one of his eyes fast beginning to close, Jem Newbold contrived to rally as he neared the wall. For the second time he rushed at Waggs, and, breaking through his guard, delivered a crashing left to the chin that caused the trainer to lose his balance and fall to one knee.

He would have struck down savagely at Tony before he could rise, had not Harry Lestrade leapt forward, seized his arm, and dragged him back.

"Fair play's a jewel!" the boy said quietly. Newbold turned upon him with a snarl of rage, and would probably have struck out at Harry, but he had no time. Tony was up once more, and Newbold had to guard himself as the trainer leapt at him.

Back against the wall Tony drove him. Then he lashed out and caught Newbold over the heart, causing him to draw a sobbing breath and sag forward. Tony's left came up, quick as lightning, in an uppercut that fairly lifted Newbold into the air, ere he fell to the floor in a crumpled heap.

He remained where he had fallen, groaning.

Austin Courtney's hireling had received at least a portion of his deserts.

Harry Lestrade came soaring over the last of the schooling jumps on his Grand National candidate, Tearing Haste II.

It was four days after the Cuptie, and, with rather less than three weeks now remaining to the big race at Aintree, Harry had given the racer a more than usually rousing gallop this morning.

Specs, who had been standing with Williams, the trainer, waved his cap and gravely said "Hurrah!" three times as his chum brought Tearing Haste past in a rattling finish. But in spite of Specs' foolery he was really and genuinely enthusiastic for no horse could have been going better in his training, and Specs shared

THE POPULAR—No. 205.

Williams' opinion that Tearing Haste II. held an excellent chance of winning at Liverpool.

The sporting papers still ignored Harry Lestrade's mount to a great extent, and he still figured with the little noticed outsiders in the ante-post betting, whilst every day saw Austin Courtney's animal, Fast and Free, being heavily backed, until it almost looked as though he might start favourite.

From Newmarket it was reported that Fast and Free was as fit as a horse could be, and that he would strip trained to the hour on Grand National day. But such reports did not dishearten Harry and his friends. They knew what Tearing Haste was capable of, and were convinced that whatever happened, he would give Fast and Free a good race.

Harry came cantering back and dismounted, and Williams and some waiting stable-boys took charge of the thoroughbred, to reclothe him and take him back to the stables, where he would be rubbed down. After a chat with Williams, with whom they walked back towards the castle, Harry and Specs went in search of breakfast.

They took the meal in a room looking out on to the drive, and sat talking for a while after they had finished it. Then Specs suddenly sprang to his feet and peered in his short-sighted way out of the window.

"Hallo! Here's your jolly old cousin, old thing!" he announced, "I wonder what he wants here—unless it is that he feels a sudden cousinly love for you, and wants to embrace you—what?"

Specs was right.

Austin Courtney was making his way up the drive, and his expression was glum. Apart from his team's defeat in the Cuptie being still fresh in his mind, and rankling badly, he had heard in a roundabout way how well his cousin's horse, Tearing Haste II, was going in his gallops, and he feared Harry might again lower his colours in the Grand National—always supposing he could not be stopped.

Courtney was becoming far too desperate to have the slightest scruple now.

"He would far rather shoot me, I expect," Harry Lestrade laughed, in reply to his chum. "I hope he does not come barging in here. After what happened in the Isle of Man, I feel more like kicking him than being polite."

But Austin Courtney did enter the room after he had been admitted to the castle. He nodded curtly to Harry, ignoring Specs, and showed his cousin a typewritten letter he drew from his pocket.

"I suppose you are agreeable to what this film company propose, cousin?" he asked coldly. "I expect you have also had a letter from Mr. Charteris, your late father's solicitor."

Harry nodded, after glancing at the letter.

"I have no objection at all—the old place is no good as it is, and might as well be demolished," he answered, just as coldly. "You can agree to the arrangement for me as well as yourself, if you are seeing Mr. Charteris."

Austin Courtney nodded in his turn and quitted the room, and Harry turned to Specs.

"We shall have an opportunity of seeing some film actors and actresses at work within the next few hours, I expect," he said. "You know that old house just beyond the park that used to be our home farm before the new one was built? Well, a film company, who have been given permission to take some pictures, showing outside scenes near the castle, have noticed the old farmhouse, seen it is ruined, and want to blow it sky-high."

"For a thrill in their giddy film, I suppose?" Specs asked; and Harry gave a gesture of assent.

"Yes. The hero of the film is bound and gagged by the villains and left in the ruined house. Several kegs of gunpowder are emptied on one of the lower floors and a slow fuse lit."

"Of course, the hero apparently gets out the moment before the place is blown up, though that is easily faked. He will be taken, struggling through an upper window and then rolling down the grassy bank on which the house stands. Some hours, probably, afterwards, the house will be blown skywards with the camera-man taking the picture of the explosion from a safe distance. Then the two pictures will be joined up, so that it looks as though the giddy bust-up came just as the hero got out. The letter my cousin had was from Mr. Charteris, poor old dad's lawyer. As one or other of us is to be sole heir to everything here, Mr. Charteris has had to ask the permission of us both before he could agree to what the film company wanted."

It was that afternoon that the stock company of the London & Provincial Film Syndicate made its appearance, with its producer and camera-man. The actors and actresses were quickly made up for their parts, their faces looking grotesque under their coats of yellow paint and with their blackened lips.

Specs and Harry watched them make several pictures in the vicinity of the castle. Then, Mr. Charteris, having given the necessary sanction to the producer, a move was made to the ruined farmhouse beyond the private park. For the privilege of blowing this to atoms, and thus providing a thrilling scene in their film, the company was paying one hundred pounds.

Austin Courtney, who had been hanging about the castle during the day, approached and stood at some little distance behind Harry and Specs, as preparations were made to take the picture.

It struck Courtney that the company would get their money's worth, as he watched. The villains in the film attacked the young fellow who played the hero, and, binding and gagging him, carried him into the ruined farmhouse, with the camera-man merrily winding the handle of his machine and the producer bawling instructions.

There was a slight rest. Then the villains were photographed as they carried in kegs that looked as though they might contain gunpowder, but which, on this occasion, were in reality empty. The scoundrels of the piece lit a fuse supposed to be connected with the explosive and decamped, and afterwards the hero was seen, still bound, at one of the upper windows.

Through this he squirmed, after breaking away the glass and rotting framework with his shoulder. At the risk of a broken limb, he fell to the ground some fourteen

The Finest Sporting Tale Ever Published! Are You Reading It?

feet below, and rolled with apparently desperate haste down the slope on which the old house stood.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the producer, as he signed for the camera-man to stop "taking." "It's going to make a tophole picture. You boys and girls had better get ready to come along to the inn in the village. I've arranged for tea there."

Whilst the actors and actresses were removing their paint, anxious to avoid contact with his cousin, Austin Courtney walked off and left the grounds of the castle. He had garaged his car at the inn in the village the film producer had mentioned, and, as he made his way there, Courtney's eyes were narrowed evilly, and his look was very thoughtful. If only a plan that was beginning to form in his mind could be made possible, his cousin would have no chance of beating him in the Grand National!

"They are evidently not going to blow the place up until to-morrow morning, when the light is certain to keep all right," he muttered once to himself during his walk. "I wonder if it could be managed? If the secret passage I have read of does exist, and I could find it—"

He broke off, his face curiously white, and beads of perspiration pearing his forehead. Impatiently he drew his handkerchief across his brow. Then, as he swung round a corner into the High Street, he pulled up with an exclamation of surprise.

Jem Newbold stood before him, a very unfriendly expression on his heavy face.

"I heard you had been in the village and left your car at the inn, and I've been waiting for you, Mr. Courtney," he said grimly. "A pretty mess I've got into through taking your money and trying to crook your cousin's team."

As Courtney raised his eyebrows, Newbold quickly told him all that had happened after the Cuptie.

"I'm before the F.A. to-morrow, and it's next to certain I'll be suspended for life," he said, in conclusion. "You have got to see me righted over this, or, by heavens, I'll tell the whole truth, and see that you stand beside me at an adjourned hearing before the Football Control Board!"

Austin Courtney saw that he was in grim earnest, and, piloting him to the inn, did his best to pacify him. Newbold seemed to lay all his richly-deserved troubles at the door of Harry Lestrade, and, quick to realise this, Courtney saw that it would be possible again to use him as an ally.

Whilst they were talking together in the passage-way of the inn, with much noisy laughter and chaffing of each other, the stock company of the London & Provincial Film Syndicate entered, with their camera-man and producer; and suddenly Courtney clutched at Newbold's arm to warn him to be silent.

"Don't forget, Tom, I'll want you at the farmhouse sharp at eight o'clock," the producer was saying to the camera-man as they passed into a room where tea had been laid for them.

"What's up?" Newbold asked, in a surprised undertone; and, as he replied, Courtney placed his lips close to his ear.

"I wanted to hear what he was saying," he whispered. "Here is your chance, my friend, to be even with my cousin. If you have the nerve to help me, I can tell you how we can leave him, bound, gagged, and helpless, in a ruined house that is going to be blown to smithereens at eight o'clock to-morrow morning!"

The Secret Passage.—Helpless in the Doomed House.

JEM NEWBOLD took a step backwards, looking with something approaching horror into the white and working face of Austin Courtney.

He glanced towards the room into which the film company had gone. Someone had shut the door, and the voices of the actors and actresses were now no more than a confused murmur.

"What do you mean?" asked Jem Newbold, in a low, steady tone.

"This," Courtney returned, and there was a fiendish look in his eyes. "You saw those people who just passed into the room. They are the members of a film company who have been taking moving-pictures at the castle. To-morrow, at eight o'clock, for purposes of the film they are engaged in making,

they propose to blow skyhigh with gun-powder, an old and ruined farmhouse on the Lestrade estates. As I said, I believe I have a means by which we could leave my cousin in the house so that he is blown to atoms with it."

"But—but it would be murder!" Jem Newbold gasped hoarsely.

"It would be revenge for you, and would mean that he would no longer stand in my path in the big contest between us," Austin Courtney answered, shrugging his shoulders. "And I would make it worth your while to help me, Newbold. When I come into my uncle's money and estates, I would settle on you a thousand a year, so that you were provided for for life."

Jem Newbold hesitated, wavering between fear of the law and his lust for vengeance upon Harry.

"I have no regard for the cub himself," he said at length. "But supposing anything went wrong, and it was brought home to us?"

"How could it be?" Courtney demanded impatiently. "Even if it were realised afterwards that he had been in the place when it was blown up, who would dream that we left him there? It would be thought he had not known, or made a mistake in the time that the house was to be destroyed; had gone in to look at the film company's preparations, and—well, that a most regrettable accident had happened. Still, if you are squeamish and want to throw away a sure twenty pounds a week for life, say so and we'll think no more about it."

Again Newbold fell silent. His face was almost as evil now as that of Courtney, and gradually the mingled fear and doubt that had been in his eyes died away.

"I'm with you," he said huskily, holding out his hand. "Heavens, don't I owe the whelp something for what is sure to happen to me at the F.A.'s headquarters to-morrow!"

His expression held a curious mixture of hate and greed as he spoke. Courtney gripped his hand, and the two scoundrels sealed their dastardly bargain in a drink,

over which they discussed the details of their plan in lowered voices.

Finally, Courtney nodded to his confederate preparatory to leaving the inn.

"Don't forget—the side door in the north wing of the castle at midnight," he whispered. "I'll be waiting to let you in."

Jem Newbold nodded back, and Austin Courtney took his departure. He had, of course, changed the plans he had originally had of returning to Newmarket that night, and, leaving his car at the inn, he retraced his steps towards Lestrade Castle.

He told the butler that his car had broken down and that he would be remaining until the morning, and asked that his room should be made ready for him. After this, Courtney went to the old, oak-panelled library, the walls of which were lined almost from floor to ceiling with volumes.

Some were very old books indeed, and Courtney searched until he found one in black-letter dating back to the seventeenth century, which had always interested and fascinated him in the days of his boyhood. It dealt with the ancient history of Lestrade Castle.

He turned the age-yellowed pages until he came to a chapter dealing with happenings in the old house during the reign of James II, King of Great Britain and Ireland from 1685 to 1688.

The Lestrade, who then lived with his family in the old pile—his name had been Sir Rodger—had been a close personal friend of the king and had loyally stood by him, when, after the arrest of the seven bishops, James had become so unpopular, and even his Army had turned against him.

The chapter told of this and more. It related how Sir Rodger Lestrade had invited James to take refuge with him, shortly before the latter had fled to France; of how James, who feared assassination, had availed himself of the invitation. And then it recounted how Sir Rodger Lestrade had invented a secret means of escape for the king, to be used in the event of his being menaced by his enemies.



Jem Newbold contrived to rally as he neared the wall. For the second time he rushed at the trainer, and, breaking through his guard, delivered a crashing left to the chin that caused Tony to lose his balance and fall on one knee. (See page 24.)

Employing trustworthy workmen, the master of Lestrade Castle had had a secret passage built in the thickness of the walls of the building, and this, the book said, had been connected with a subterranean tunnel leading to "another and smaller house beyond the park."

At the end of the chapter was a cryptical line of the old-fashioned black-letter, which Courtney had often thought held the secret of the whereabouts of the secret exit from the castle, though he had never been able to fathom it.

"Study well the monarch's eyes."

the line of Old English ran; and Courtney stared at it now with knitted brows.

"Another and smaller house beyond the park!" he muttered. "That surely must refer to the old farmhouse our friends the cinema people are going to blow up in the morning. But what the dickens does 'Study well the monarch's eyes' mean? I believe I am right in thinking it is a clue to the whereabouts of the secret passage, but I'll be hanged if it is a very clear one."

He arose from the deep chair in which he had been seated. Returning the book to its shelf, he began to pace the long, gloomy room, his chin sunk upon his breast and his brow puckered in thought.

"If only I could find the passage! The success of our plan rests in my doing that," he murmured to himself. "Study well the monarch's eyes! Is it just so much gibberish or— By Jove! I believe I have it!"

Suddenly he had remembered that there was an oil painting of James II. in the picture gallery. Was it that the mystic line in the book referred to the portrait? Courtney wondered.

He lost no time in putting his theory to the test.

Leaving the library and making his way through a network of dark, oak-panelled corridors, the young man entered the picture gallery, fitted in these days with electric light.

He switched the lights on, but they left the corner of the long room where hung the painting of the seventeenth-century King in comparative gloom, and the eyes of the portrait seemed curiously life-like as Courtney stood looking up at them.

He raised his hand and touched one of the eyes. Nothing happened, and Courtney stifled an ejaculation of disappointment. Almost immediately, however, it struck him to press upon both eyes simultaneously.

The result brought a low cry of triumph from his lips.

No sooner had his forefinger and thumb put pressure upon the painted pupils of the portrait than there came a grinding sound, followed by a low rumbling, and that portion of the oak panelling to which the picture was affixed swung round upon a pivot, leaving revealed a black cavity, whence came a gust of foul, damp-smelling air.

It was the entrance to the secret passage! Courtney peered into it, and saw that a narrow flight of dusty steps led downwards through the thickness of the wall.

He again touched the painted eyes of the picture, and, as he had expected, it swung back into place, leaving no trace of the cavity behind it.

Courtney went to the room he had been accustomed to occupy when living in the castle. He obtained an electric torch and returned to the picture gallery.

Once again he touched the eyes and set in motion the movable portion of the wall. On this occasion he stepped into the dark space beyond, and, with the light of his torch flashing before him descended the steps. He was gone for perhaps twenty minutes, and when he returned his expression was exultant.

"Now, it only remains to wait for midnight and Jem Newbold!" he muttered under his breath, as he closed the secret exit.

The young man returned to the library, and when the butler made his way there at about ten o'clock, he found Courtney seated before the fire, apparently deep in a book.

The rogue who might yet become master of Lestrade Castle refused the old servant's suggestion to bring him supper, but the butler little dreamed that there was murder in his heart, for his manner was quite cool and collected.

When the servant had taken his departure, Austin Courtney threw aside his book, laid back in his chair, and lit a cigarette.

Before he had come to the castle early that day he had been desperate, wracking his brain for some means to check his cousin in

the great sporting contest between them, so that he might forge ahead and win his uncle's vast fortune of half a million. But now he felt there was no longer need to worry.

Courtney presently went to his room, and there he waited.

Eleven o'clock came, half-past, and the hands began to creep towards midnight. His accomplice, Newbold, was almost due to arrive, and Austin Courtney removed his boots and donned a pair of bed-room slippers in which he calculated his movements would be noiseless.

Two minutes to twelve!

Austin Courtney crept to the door of his bed-room, softly opened it, and stole out into the corridor. Tensely he listened, and heaved a sigh of relief. Everyone else was apparently in bed and asleep, as he had hoped and counted upon. The old house was as silent as the grave.

Down the stairs crept Harry Lestrade's cousin, and he noiselessly made his way to the side door at which he had arranged for Newbold to wait. When he opened it, he found the rascally footballer standing without in the moonlight.

Newbold slipped quietly in and joined him, and Austin Courtney closed and re-bolted the door.

"Follow me and don't make a sound!" he hissed in his accomplice's ear. "We'll go straight to his room and get him. Have you brought the ropes and the gag?"

"Sure! I've a knotted handkerchief in my pocket and some lengths of stiffish cord round my waist!" Newbold breathed back. "He's certain to be asleep by this time, I suppose?"

"Certain to be!" Courtney confirmed. "I have found the secret passage I told you I thought existed and we'll get him to the old farm-house without a soul being the wiser."

With Newbold following him with cat-like tread, Austin Courtney stole back up the staircase and led the way into the corridor in which Harry Lestrade's bed room was situated. Outside the door of the room adjoining it, Courtney stood for a moment, listening intently. Specs slept therein, but a distinct snore that floated to the scoundrel's ears convinced him that Harry's short-sighted friend was sound asleep.

"Ready!" he whispered to Newbold. Softly Austin Courtney turned the handle of Harry's door and tiptoed into the room. Newbold was at his heels, and he paused to re-close the door behind him.

Courtney suddenly flashed the light of his electric-torch towards the bed. It played for just a moment on the sleeping figure lying there, then was extinguished. Next instant, both Newbold and Courtney had flung themselves upon Harry, and whilst Courtney held him down, Newbold lost no time in gagging him.

Harry Lestrade struggled desperately, and, just after his hands had been tied behind his back, he contrived to plant his foot in the chest of Courtney, sending him staggering back. A chair was overturned with a crash. But it was only a minute or so later that the boy's ankles had been lashed together, so that he was quite helpless, and Courtney told himself that the slight noise that had been made had not been sufficient to wake anyone.

He little dreamed that in this he was wrong, and that in the next room Harry's chum, Specs, was sitting up in bed, with his head raised in a listening attitude, conscious that something had awakened him with a start.

Specs quietly left his bed, adjusted his great spectacles, which had been lying on a chair by its side, and put on a pair of bed-room slippers. Then he crept to the door of his room.

He opened it an inch or so and looked out into the corridor, which was faintly illuminated by the moonlight that streamed in at a window at its far end. He heard a cautious movement in the next room—Harry's—and waited.

He only with difficulty suppressed a cry as, a second or two later, he watched two dark figures emerge, carrying another clad in pyjamas between them. Specs caught in his breath and stood transfixed. He knew that the form in night attire was Harry's, and saw that he was both bound and gagged.

(A further long instalment of our amazing sporting serial included in next week's bumper programme of tales.)

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR YOUR PAL!



GET HIM A COPY OF THIS FAMOUS STORY BOOK.

➤ Crammed full of Wonderful Tales of School, Sport, and Adventure.

➤ SUPERB COLOURED PLATES.

➤ NOW ON SALE AT ALL BOOKSTALLS AND NEWSAGENTS.

➤ Price Six Shillings.

THE POPULAR.—No. 205.

What Happens in the Deserted House beyond the Lestrade Castle? See next week!

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: The Editor, The "Popular," The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

WORTHY OF THE SEASON.

Next week's issue of the POPULAR will be the Christmas Number, and I am dead certain there will be no disappointment whatever about the topping fare provided. The programme I am offering is one of the most interesting, sensational, and comprehensive the old POP has ever given.

THE SIGNOR WHARTON.

You can call Harry Wharton that this time. Next week the gallant leader of the Remove has a special turn. He has been placed in a difficult position, and he rises to his new duties in the most worthy style imaginable. Not that H. W. was over eager to be placed over a newcomer to Greyfriars in the role of guide, philosopher, and friend. But the popular skipper always has these odd jobs. Some quaint fellow is tacked on to the Remove captain. It is not an easy business to see a funk through his troubles. Harry Wharton shoulders his responsibilities in grand fashion, though not keen as mustard about guardianship.

Next week's tale of Greyfriars is entitled:

"FORCED TO FIGHT!"

IN THE BACKWOODS.

The POPULAR Christmas Number will contain a thoroughly representative yarn of the lumber region of tin townships and big forests. Here the beaver skips round airily and nobody shouts his name at him. Next week's story of Frank Richards in the wilds, Bob Lawless, and the other bright spirits of

Thompson Valley, is a corker. It is called "The Cedar Creek Players!" You can guess what the brilliant company is up to—theatricals, and a merry time of it they have.

THE SCHOOL WITHOUT MASTERS.

There is a limit beyond which masters cannot go. As you know, there has been big trouble looming at Rookwood. It comes to a pitch next week in "The Strike of the Masters!" Dr. Chisholm's troubles have never been quite so numerous as now. The revered Head, like all men, makes mistakes at times, and owing to the strangest set of circumstances we find the dignified doctor faced with one of the biggest dilemmas of his life.

TOM MERRY & Co.

The St. Jim's tale next week is "The Team That Triumphed!" The history of footer at St. Jim's is marked by the usual ebb and flow, the up and down, of the game. If you cast your mind back to past yarns you will find that Tom Merry has been victimised by slackers, and the eccentricities of chaps who think they can play the game, when as a matter of fact they know as much about it—and no more—as the average Objibbeway savage knows of trigonometry. In next week's story we find the old dogged-as-does-it spirit of St. Jim's at work. There are difficulties, of course, but triumphs aren't worth a wag of a bear's tail unless preceded by handicapping disadvantages.

OF NELSON AND THE SPORTS.

Our old friend, Victor Nelson, romps in with a trenchant instalment of his serial, "The Rival Sportsmen," next week. Victor, like his celebrated namesake who founded Trafalgar Square, sees opportunities, and is on to them like a bird.

VERY HIGHLY COMMENDED.

Now for the supplement. "Billy

Bunter's Weekly" fairly rises to the Christmas season like dough. It is the best yet. It doesn't matter a row of beans that Bunter's spelling is weak. There are higher things than base orthography. Legions of famous folk could not spell for toffee. The late Mr. Shakespeare had a whimsical habit of spelling his name differently at times and seasons. Confusing for the bank clerks, but no matter. I am only saying this just as defence for the gossip going round about Bunter. Bunter is above the mingy requirements of grammar.

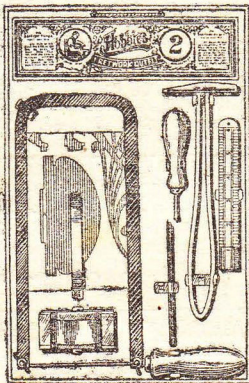
BUNTER'S BUMPER NUMBER.

Now, in the coming prize supplement of Bunter's Very Own Weekly you will find the rich, rare spirit of the porpoise exemplified in matchless fashion. Bunter may be a porpoise, but he does not spell wrong on porpoise. It is simply that he flutters above ignominious regulations. He cannot be bothered with trivialities. In his special Christmas supplement he performs an amazing flight into the happy realms of unlimited tuck, and much festivity.

THE CHRISTMAS NOTE.

Bunter has had his worries, but the way he has waggled himself back into the editorial chair after his stupendous African stunts, is remarkable. There is nothing but the best Christmas fare in this grand supplement; the Owl saw to that part. Bunter had the most serious confabs with his staff. Baggy Trimble had to sing small. Jimmy Silver was, as usual, requisitioned; Dick Russell is all there; so are the rest of the old favourites. You will find this feature a gay and lively business with a roar in every line. Don't miss it, whatever you do. It will add much to the merriment and general happiness of this splendid Christmas-time.

Your Editor.



This Outfit only Costs 5/6

Just think of the money it will earn for you!

Many happy hours can be spent with this fine Fretwork Outfit. You can make real articles to use; not toys that you get tired of or take to pieces. All sorts of things can be

turned out, and these you can easily sell at a profit. Hobbies, Ltd. have every tool you require, and give a free design each week with their journal "Hobbies." Price 2d. every Wednesday.

A New Catalogue

A fine 184-page Catalogue of 15 different pastimes, containing 1,000 illustrations, and a free Coal Cabinet Design will be sent for 1/- post free.

Other Outfits

If you prefer a better Outfit you can obtain one up to 60/-—real good. Write for illustrated lists if you are interested.

Write to **HOBBIES, Ltd.** (Dept. 34), **DEREHAM,**
or call at a Branch or Agent in your own town.

AN IDEAL XMAS GIFT

THE "EXCELSIOR" MICROSCOPE.

A high-grade instrument at the price of a toy. Magnifies 2,000 x. Indispensable for the teaching of Chemistry, Botany, and Zoology, and for the examination of Household Foodstuffs, showing mites in cheese as large as beetles and Animalcules swimming in water, etc.

- No. 1. Beautifully finished in plain brass, 2/9 post free.
 - No. 2. Nickel-plated Mountings and Standards, 5/- " "
 - No. 3. Fitted with Super Lens, Handsome, Heavy Stand, etc., Superior finish 7/6 " "
- Cheapest House in the Trade for Films, Cinemas, Mechanical Models, Toys, etc. Trade supplied.

Send to-day for Catalogue from actual manufacturers—

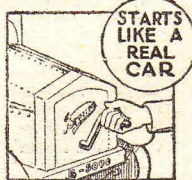
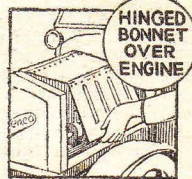
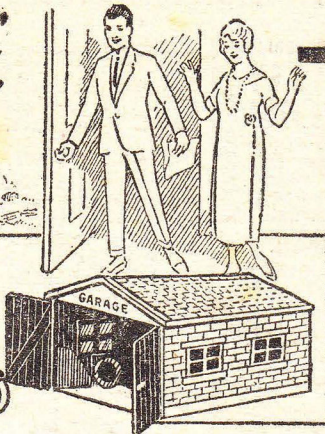
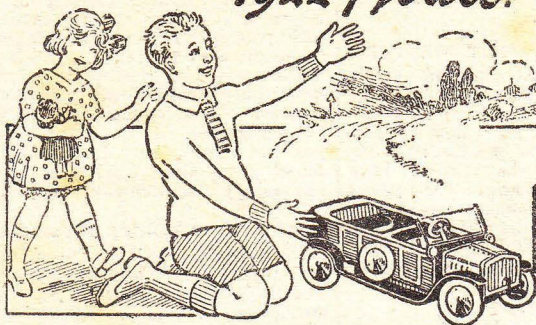
H. USHER & CO., 5, DEVONSHIRE STREET, HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.

FUN FOR ALL.—Ventriloquist's Voice Instrument. Invisible, Astonishes, Mystifies, Imitate Birds, Beasts, etc. 6d. each; 4 for 1/- (Vent. Treatise incld.).—Ideal Co., Clevedon, Som.

WIRELESS SETS.—The Simplest, Best, and Cheapest Sets and Parts for the Beginner. Illustrated Catalogue Free.—Desk B, DEAN TRADING CO., 94, Drayton Avenue, West Ealing, W.13.

When Answering Advertisements
Please Mention This Paper.

"Hello! It's a Brenco 1922 Model."



The ROLLS-ROYCE of TOYLAND.

Here is an All-British Toy which gives delight to every young Briton of the age when he seeks amusement and knowledge. The Brenco Car is a never-ending source of pleasure and instruction. The boy who possesses a Brenco is as proud and happy as any Owner-driver in the Kingdom. Why buy an ordinary tin toy? You want a model of a car like those you see on the road. There is nothing lacking by which a Boy can learn the first rudiments of motoring mechanics. The Brenco Car, both in appearance and build, is the only true model toy Motor-car obtainable. Read the specification, and see for yourself how like a real car is this wonderful toy.

SPECIFICATION.

Chassis strongly built of heavy sheet metal. Power unit under bonnet, actuated by crank handle. Transmission by propeller-shaft driving direct on to back axle by gear and pinion. Direct steering, controlled by steering wheel. Brake controlled from driving position. Body of beautifully enamelled sheet metal finished Blue, Red, or Grey. Instrument board correctly finished. Adjustable wind screen. Plated bonnet hinged to open correctly. Five plated wheels detachable at hub. Five rubber detachable tyres. Spare wheel carried on running-board. Garage of enamelled sheet metal with double doors. With each Car and Garage is supplied a Spanner and Driving licence. All parts are interchangeable. Price list with car.

For **17/6** (this ideal gift of Car and Garage will be at once sent, within 24 hour of receipt of order, packed in special packing for safe transit, and carriage paid.)

SATISFACTION OR MONEY REFUNDED.

NOTE! The Car is 11 ins. long, 5 ins. wide, 4 ins. high, and Garage 12 ins. by 5 ins. by 5 ins. Send your order with remittance crossed Lloyds Bank without delay.

The Trade are invited to write for Wholesale Terms.

The NEW BRENCO MANUFACTURING CO. (Dept. 9), 59 to 67, Gt. Jackson Street, MANCHESTER.

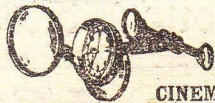
25-Shot AUTOMATIC PEA PISTOL

Well finished model. Price 2/6



17-Shot SMALLER PATTERN

Price 1/3



NOVELTY OPERA

CLASS 10 different uses.

Beautifully finished in Ivoryine. Price 1/6

CINEMAS 6/9 each.

STEAM LOCOMOTIVES 10/6 each.

4-Volt ELECTRIC MOTORS 3/6 each.

Xmas catalogue of toys, models, etc. 3d. post free.

GRACE & CO, 81, Wood Street, Cheapside, E.C. 2.

YOURS for 1!

This handsome full-sized Gent's Lever Watch sent upon receipt of 1-. After approval send 1/- more, the balance may then be paid by 6 monthly instalments of 2/- each. Guaranteed 5 years. Chain offered free with every watch. Cash returned in full if dissatisfied. Send 1/- now to Simpson's Ltd. (Dept. 2) 94, Queen Rd., Brighton, Sussex

CHAIN FREE.

NERVOUS, SHY, BLUSHING Do YOU lack Self-Confidence? Do YOU Blush, Start, Tremble, Grow Confused when spoken to? Feel Nervous, Timid, Shy in Company? Write at once for free particulars of simple permanent home cure in 7 days. **U.J.D., 12, All Saints Road, St. Anne's-on-Sea.**

HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS.—Machines from 7/6; with Take-up, from 25. Large Stock of Films. Sample Film, 1/-. Post Free. Lists Free.—Desk B, DEAN CINEMA CO., 34, Drayton Avenue, West Ealing, W.13.

DROP us a card for our Illustrated List of Sporting Goods, which will be sent free.—**FRANK CLARKE, Crown Works, 6, Whittall Street, Birmingham.**

20 MINT PICTORIAL STAMPS Free to applicants for Blue Label Approvals, enclosing postage. Mention Gift 503. B. L. COREY, Wave Crest, Whitstable, Kent.

BLUSHING.—Famous Doctor's recipe for this most distressing complaint, 6d. Never fails. Testimonials daily.—MR. P. GEORGE, Fairhaven, Clevedon, Somerset.

FREE FUN! Our Funny Novelty, causing roars of laughter, FREE to all sending 1/- for 70 Cute Conjuring Tricks, 12 Jolly Joke Tricks, 6 Catchy Coin Tricks, 5 Cunning Card Tricks, 5 Mystifying Magic Tricks, 250 Riddles, 18 Games, 10 Funny Readings, 6 Funny Recitations, 21 Monologues, 75 Toasts, 52 Wealth Secrets, Easy Ventrilocum Secret, and 1,001 Stupendous Attractions. Thousands delighted! Great Fun!—C. HUGHES, 15, Wood St., Edgbaston, Birmingham.

DON'T BE BULLIED!—Learn the Wonderful Japanese Art of Self-Defence without Weapons. For small boys and men (also women). Send NOW Four Penny Stamps for Splendid ILLUSTRATED SAMPLE LESSONS, or 3/6 for Large Portion of Course.—Dept. P.R., SCHOOL OF JUJITSU, 31, Golden Sq., Regent St., London, W.1. Personal Tuition also given.

CINEMA FILMS, MACHINES, SPOOLS, SCREENS, SLIDES, etc. Everything stocked for the Amateur. 50-foot Sample Film, 1/3, post free. 100-foot, 2/3, post free. Stamp for Illustrated Lists. **TYSON & MARSHALL (Dept. A), 89, Castle Boulevard, Nottingham.**

STOP STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C. 1.**

CUT THIS OUT

"The Popular." PEN COUPON. Value 2d.

Send 7 of these coupons with only 2/9 direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4. You will receive by return a Splendid British Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6 (Fine, Medium, or Broad Nib). If only 1 coupon is sent, the price is 3/9, 2d. being allowed for each extra coupon up to 6. (Pocket Clip, 4d.) Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. Special New Offer—Your own name in gilt letters on either pen for 1/- extra. **Lever Self-Filling Model, with Safety Cap, 2/- extra.**

Printed and published every Tuesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland, 1s. per annum; 6s. 6d. for six months. Abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. (Canada). Saturday, December 23rd, 1922. **ON**

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, UNION JACK SERIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C. 4.