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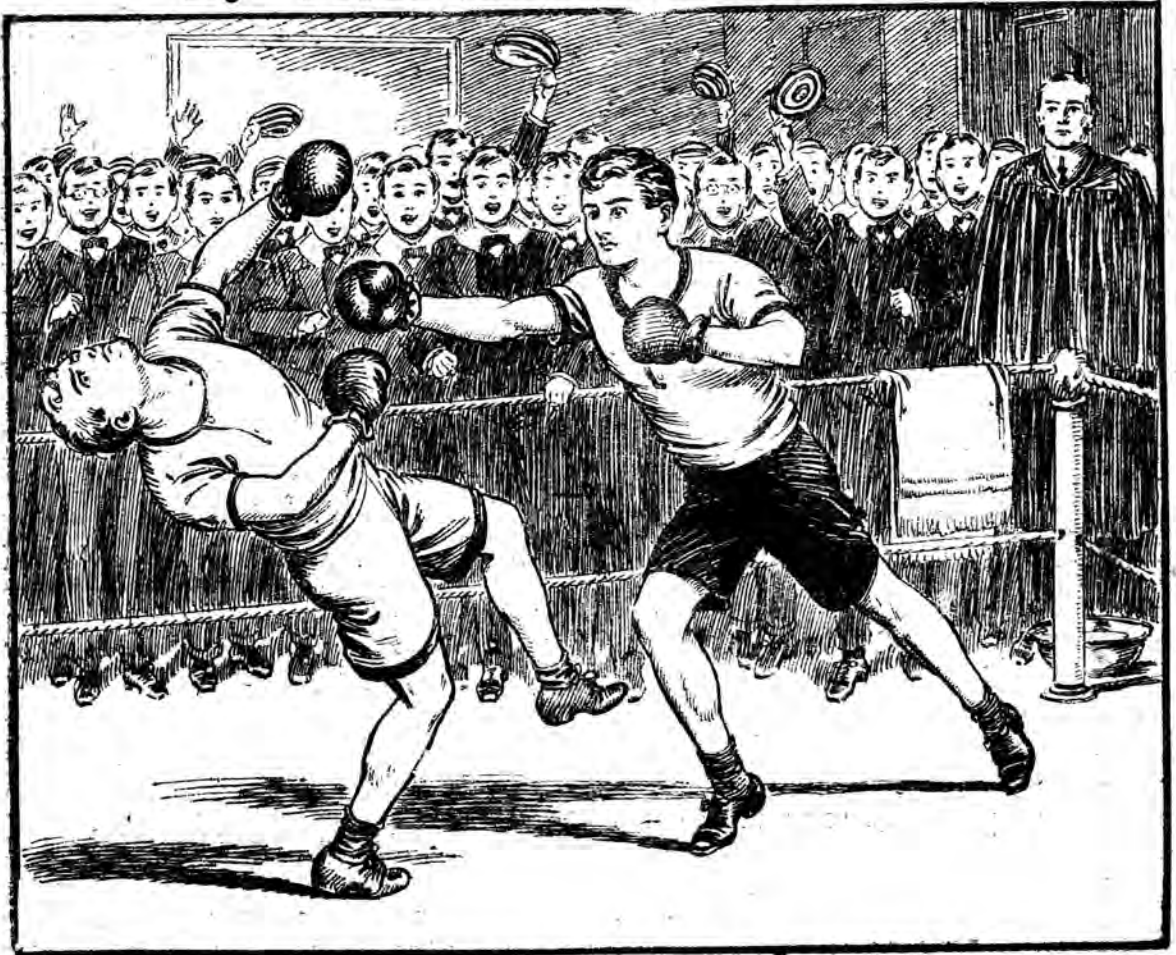
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THE GREAT SPORTS TOURNAMENT

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



For an instant Bob Cherry dropped his guard, and in that second Tom Merry saw his opportunity. Dashing in quickly, he delivered a delightful uppercut—the best blow of the day. The Greyfriars fellow went to the floor with a crash. (See Chapter 12.)

CHAPTER 1. Every Inch a Hero!

"IT'S up to us!"

Tom Merry, the genial, good-natured skipper of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, uttered the words with an air of finality. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who sat at the festive board next to him, adjusted his celebrated monocle, and exclaimed, in solemn tones:

"I quite agree with you, Mewwy, deah boy!"

"Something's got to be done," Tom Merry went on. "We mustn't let the grass grow under our giddy feet, or it's good-bye to the prestige of St. Jim's for ever!"

The time has come when every single man should cheerfully render his services in the common cause."

"I read something of that sort in the newspaper yesterday," remarked Monty Lowther suspiciously. Tom Merry coloured.

"Ahem! You must be mistaken, Monty, old man! Anyhow, this is the position. St. Jim's is top-dog in all manner of sports—what?"

"Rather!"

"And yet when we had the tournament for Lord Eastwood's Cup a few months ago, Greyfriars romped home, and we were beaten to a frazzle!"

Next Wednesday:

"REDFERN'S BARRING-OUT!" AND "COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS!"

No. 402. (New Series.) Vol. 6.

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"Greyfriars wouldn't do it again!" said Manners grimly. "Of course, last time they trounced us it was by a ghastly fluke."

"Oh, of course!"

"These things will happen," said Manners philosophically. "In a footer match the best team very often loses, and the same applies to other sports."

"That's so," said Tom Merry. "If we could only persuade Greyfriars and Higheliffe and Rookwood to line up for another tussle, we should easily demonstrate the fact that St. Jim's is streets ahead of any other school."

"Hear, hear!"

The St. Jim's juniors were feeling particularly jubilant on that crisp, cheery afternoon in early December. They had just encountered the Grammarians on the football-field, and had routed Gordon Gay & Co. to the tune of four goals to one. This in itself was sufficient to make them follow the example of the very late lamented Alexander, and sigh for fresh worlds to conquer.

The victorious eleven, with one or two other distinguished persons, such as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, had assembled in Tom Merry's study after the match for a royal repast, and when the merry clash of knife and fork had died away the great subject of a sports carnival had been mooted.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Tom Merry, warming to his subject, "is it agreed that St. Jim's can produce better runners, jumpers, boxers, marksmen, oarsmen, and footballers than any other scholastic institution?"

"Yes!"

"Wathah!"

"And yet we haven't proved it. Greyfriars bagged Lord Eastwood's Cup, and it's theirs till next July, but that needn't prevent us from meeting them again. It doesn't matter very much if we're not fighting for another trophy. It's the honour and glory we're out for."

"Hear, hear!"

"There's just one drawback," said the practical Talbot. "To have another sports week it's necessary to get the Head's permission."

"Oh!"

The juniors looked grave. In their wild enthusiasm to wipe up the ground with Greyfriars, and make rings round Rookwood and Higheliffe, they had quite overlooked the fact that it might not be possible to secure a week's freedom. The winter vacation, too, was only just at an end, and the juniors had actually stolen the holiday after the Head had forbidden it. Thanks to a particularly gallant exploit on the part of Figgins & Co., there had been no painful consequences; but, all the same, Dr. Holmes was not likely to fall on Tom Merry's neck and bestow upon the St. Jim's juniors another week of immunity from Form work.

"Oh, hang!" said Tom Merry. "I didn't think of that. What rotten luck!"

"Putrid!" agreed Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "I'm afraid we must cry the thing off. Hallo! What's all the giddy rumpus about?"

A sound of loud cheering from the quadrangle floated in at the window of the study. The cheer was repeated, louder and heartier than before, and Figgins and Redfern, who were seated nearest the window, craned their heads out to see what was going on.

"My hat!" exclaimed Figgins. "The chaps have gone potty, I believe! They're waving flags, and shouting and singing, and old Herries is blowing his cornet for all he's worth!"

"Bai Jove, how amazin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pewwaps it's a gweat Bwitish victowy, deah boys!"

"Let's go down and see what's happening," said Redfern. "Gussy may have hit the right nail on the head for once!"

"Weally, Wedfern—"

The juniors hurried from the study, and trooped down to the quad, leaving Patty Wynn to devour the many tempting delicacies which still remained untouched.

"What's up?" asked Tom Merry, interrupting Noble of the Shell while the latter was in the midst of an Australian war-dance.

"Haven't you heard? Old Mason's won the D.S.O.!"

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He's the first St. Jim's old boy to get it! Hooray! Hip, hip, hip—"

"Hooray!" chorused Tom Merry & Co.

They were delighted at such a gratifying piece of news. Everybody at St. Jim's knew Dick Mason; everybody remembered the last match he had taken part in before leaving the school to join the Loamshire Regiment, and the magnificent century he had compiled on that never-to-be-forgotten occasion. And now Dick Mason had covered himself and his old school with glory by winning the coveted D.S.O.

The scene in the old quadrangle baffled description. Fellows shouted and cheered and stampeded, and the masters and prefects made no effort to quell the uproar. Indeed, Kildare, who was Mason's special chum, had quite thrown aside the dignity which becomes a captain of the school, and was as excited as the youngest fag. Mr. Railton, too, was beside himself with joy.

Presently the word went round that the school was to assemble in Big Hall. Still cheering lustily, the fellows flocked in, and after a few minutes Dr. Holmes appeared, his kindly face wreathed in smiles.

"Boys," he exclaimed, when the din had subsided sufficiently for his words to be audible, "this is indeed a red-letter day for us here. Lieutenant Mason's father, who is a personal friend of mine, has informed me of the honour which has befallen his youngest son. After the war, when we erect a scroll of honour in memory of those old boys who have distinguished themselves on the field of battle, the name of Richard Vernon Mason will head the list."

"Hooray!"

"But the matter shall not rest there. I have resolved to commemorate the glad event by granting the whole school a week's holiday, commencing on Monday next."

If the cheering had been loud before, it was deafening now. The old rafters rang again and again. Prefects and juniors and fags fairly let themselves go.

As for Tom Merry & Co., those cheerful youths were in the seventh heaven of delight. The difficult problem of obtaining a week for the sports was solved now, thanks to Lieutenant Mason. The fates had indeed been kind, and the hearts of the St. Jim's juniors rejoiced with an exceeding joy.

"The school will now dismiss," said the Head.

And the fellows filed out of Big Hall, on the best of terms with each other. House rivalries were banished now. The time had come—as it often came—when it was necessary for School House and New House to stand shoulder to shoulder, and strive for victory together. There was no glistening silver cup to be fought for, not even a bronze medal. But what did it matter, so long as the honour of St. Jim's were kept untarnished and the school's best traditions upheld? A grim struggle lay before Tom Merry & Co., but their determination to do great deeds on the field of play never wavered. They echoed in their minds the ringing words of the poet:

"For though the dust that's part of us
To dust again be gone;
Yet here shall be the heart of us—
The school we handed on!"

CHAPTER 2.

Throwing Down the Gauntlet!

"THAT'S finished!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a sigh of satisfaction, as he blotted a sheet of notepaper in his study.

The noisy throng of juniors who surged round him became noisier than ever.

"Get it off your chest, old son!" said Monty Lowther. And Tom Merry proceeded to read the missive aloud, as follows:

"St. James' School,
Rylcombe, Sussex.

Dear Wharton,—You remember the time when you collared Lord Eastwood's Cup? Well, we've been feeling it acutely ever since at St. Jim's. Not that we begrudge you your good fortune. You won the thing

fairly and squarely, and the Sports proved so successful that everybody here wants an encore.

We hereby challenge you and your chums to another series of contests, when we will try our utmost to reverse the position and lower your colours!

You will be interested to know that one of our old boys has just gained the D.C.M., and the jolly old Head has let us off lessons for a week, starting on Monday. It's ripping!

How on earth you can contrive to bag the same week, so that we can hold the Sports, is beyond comprehension at present; but we know you're a chap who can wangle things, and if you want to keep up your glorious record we know you will move heaven and earth to do so—even if it means taking French leave. Anxiously awaiting your reply.

I remain, your sincere chum,
TOM MERRY.

"That's all right!" said Manners. "If that doesn't fetch him, I'll eat my hat—with Gussy's topper thrown in!"

"Weally, Mannahs!" protested Arthur Augustus feebly.

"Goodness only knows how Rookwood and Highcliffe are going to get the week off!" said Tom Merry. "But it's no good meeting trouble half-way! If they can't manage it, we must meet the Friars alone. After all, so long as we can beat Wharton and his merry men, nothing else matters!"

The others nodded. Tom Merry went out to post his letter, and the fellows retired to their dormitories shortly afterwards, at peace with all the world.

Harry Wharton's reply was not long in coming. It arrived by the afternoon post on the following day, and ran as follows:

"Greyfriars School,
Friardale, Kent.

Dear Merry,—Many thanks for your letter!

St. Jim's is not the only school which brings forth heroes, old scout, for only yesterday Lieutenant Larry Lascelles, formerly mathematics master at Greyfriars, was honoured with the D.S.O. Of course, we are all off our heads with excitement and delight, and Dr. Locke has given us a week's holiday also! Shake!

With regard to the proposed Sports, we have held a meeting on the subject, and shall have much pleasure in wiping up the ground with you in the same manner as before.

Frank Courtenay, of Highcliffe, biked over just now, and says he thinks there will be no difficulty in getting the time off so far as Highcliffe is concerned. I have written to Jimmy Silver at Rookwood, and told him that he really must join us somehow, even at the expense of kidnapping all the masters!

I suggest that the Sports Week should be divided up as follows:

MONDAY	...	Running Races.
TUESDAY	...	Preliminary Football Matches
WEDNESDAY	...	Boatrace (Morning)
		Shooting Match (Afternoon)
THURSDAY	...	Swimming Contests (Morning)
		Boxing Contests (Afternoon)
FRIDAY	...	Football Final
SATURDAY	...	Marathon Race

Let those who fancy they can lay the stalwarts of Greyfriars in the dust at their feet prepare to meet their doom!

Yours very sincerely,
HARRY WHARTON."

"What luck!" exclaimed Tom Merry, after he had read the epistle to his chums. "This means that practically three schools are certain to come in. And as for St. Jim's meeting its doom, the only reply to that is contained in the ancient and classic monosyllable, 'Rats!'"

"Blessed cheek, I call it!" growled Manners. "We shall have to make 'em eat their words later on! After we've romped home in the footer, and the boxing, and the shooting—"

"There won't be much of Greyfriars left!" laughed Talbot.

"Exactly!"

The Terrible Three, with Talbot and Jack Blake and D'Arcy, had retired to Tom Merry's study to discuss their plan of campaign.

"I agree with the fixture list Wharton's made out," said Tom. "It can't be improved upon. I'll get to work now and make out the teams and the crews, and all the rest of it."

"I expect that ass Grundy will want to put his oar in, as usual," said Jack Blake. "He knows what's on."

Tom Merry smiled grimly. He had had more than one skirmish in the past with Grundy of the Shell, and that enterprising young gentleman had nearly always come an ignominious cropper.

There was a thunderous knocking at the door, and the next moment a sturdy, determined-looking individual entered, and scowled at the assembly.

"Talk of angels!" said Monty Lowther. "Sit down, Grundy, old chap, and keep the company amused with bright and elevating conversation!"

Grundy sat down. Unfortunately, the shining silk topper belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was reposing on the chair. There was a terrible rending sound, and a yell from the swell of the Fourth.

"Good'gwacious! My toppah! Gwunday, you clumsay bwute! It's wuined—iwetwievably wuined!"

Grundy rose leisurely to his feet and surveyed the wreckage. His face was a study. The rest of the juniors—excepting D'Arcy—burst into wild shrieks of uncontrollable laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Gussy's topper, you mean!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Grundy, my son, I never knew until this day that you were such hot stuff at making pancakes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Alfred Grundy gaped like a country yokel at his work of destruction; but before he could open his mouth to speak Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was upon him, sweeping his elegant fists through the air like a cyclone.

"You feahful wottah!" panted the swell of St. Jim's.

"Take that—and that!"

Grundy took them. One was a doughty blow on his somewhat prominent nose, which caused the claret to flow freely, the other was a well-aimed shot in the ribs which doubled the unfortunate Shell fellow up.

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther solemnly, "the entertainment is now at an end. There's no second house! We will now proceed to gather up the pieces!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am sincerely sowwy if I have caused you any injuwy, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, surveying the gasping Grundy with a look of distress. "But I couldn't stand idly by an' see my best toppah wuined, you know!"

"Ow! I'm punctured!" groaned Grundy. "You dangerous lunatic! Couldn't you see it was an accident?"

"In that case, my conduct in stwikin' you was wegwet-able," said Arthur Augustus, with becoming dignity.

"You wait!" snorted Grundy. "Wait till I feel a little chirpier. I'll make shavings of you!"

"Sorry; but this study was never meant to be a carpenter's shop," said Monty Lowther blandly. "Besides, we haven't got time to gather up stray portions of peer!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

"What did you come to see us about, Grundy?" asked Tom Merry.

Grundy rose to his feet at this question. There was a warlike gleam in his eyes.

"It's about the sports," he said. "I've heard that next week's going to be devoted to another tussle with Greyfriars and the rest. And I suppose you're selecting the same teams and that as before?"

"More or less."

"In other words, you're still determined to bar a great sportsman like me from taking part?"

"Oh, no! Not at all. You can go ahead this time, if you think you can raise teams that'll beat ours. We sha'n't attempt to stop you."

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"REDFERN'S BARRING OUT!"

"What the merry dickens—" began Jack Blake wrathfully.

Tom Merry silenced him with a gesture.

"You can get on the warpath as soon as you like, Grundy," he said. "And I give you my word, as skipper of the Shell, that no one'll interfere with you or your arrangements."

Grundy could scarcely believe his great good fortune. He passed out from the study like a fellow in a dream. He had expected to be greeted with cold disdain and ejected "on his neck"; instead of which, Tom Merry had cheerfully given way to him, and he—the great Grundy—was in a position to lead St. Jim's to victory!

He espied Wilkins and Gunn, his two study-mates, coming down the corridor, and, throwing an arm round the neck of each of them, waltzed them away delightedly, at the same time pouring into their ears the joyful news.

CHAPTER 3. Not Wanted!

"YOU fathead!"

"Oh, you burbling chump!"

"What in thunder d'ye mean by it?"

"Explain yourself, Tom Mewwy, you cwass idiot, will you?"

Manners and Lowther and Blake and D'Arcy swung round upon the captain of the Shell with fury in their faces. They could not understand his present line of conduct. Instead of inviting them to rally round and hurl Grundy neck-and-crop from the study, he had actually told George Alfred to go ahead!

There was only one explanation—Tom Merry must be stark, staring mad! Talbot alone of those present failed to show any excitement.

"It's all serene!" laughed Tom. "Nothing to go into hysterics about."

"But—but you're going to let that prize coon get up teams of his own to take part in the sports?" demanded Jack Blake.

"Certainly!"

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

"Weally, Mewwy, I considah you are entiahly lackin' in tact and judgment!" said D'Arcy severely. "Pewwaps this is your idea of a joke? I can usually see through these things. You mean Gwunday to get up a footah team, and nothin' else, thinkin' it won't mattah if we lose one event?"

"Not at all," replied Tom Merry. "Grundy can get up a footer eleven, and a rowing crew, and a shooting team, and everything."

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Poor old Tommy! There's a file loose somewhere. What on earth do you think we're going to do, old chap—take a back seat?"

Tom Merry grinned.

"We shall compete as well," he said.

"As well! How can two lots of fellows enter, you duffer?"

"It's easily done," explained Tom Merry. "Listen, and I will a tale unfold. We'll get our teams together—the real thing, you know—and Grundy can go ahead as well. He wants his sport, and he shall have it. There's bound to be a crew of discontented fellows at the other schools—Skinner & Co. of Greyfriars, for instance—chaps who don't know a footer from a maiden over. That'll give us four talented sets of chaps, and four lots of duds. The real goods can play the real goods—the duds can play the duds. Twigg?"

"Oh!"

Jack Blake and the others understood now, and they shrieked with laughter. While Tom Merry & Co. were playing football against Harry Wharton & Co., for example, Grundy & Co. would be entertaining fellows like Billy Bunter, the fat, unwieldy junior of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. It was really a most excellent scheme, and proved that there was method in Tom Merry's madness.

"What a lark!" chorried Monty Lowther. "It'll be the joke of the season! There'll be Skinner & Co. of Greyfriars, that swanker Smythe and his set of Rookwood,

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and Ponsonby & Co. of Higheliffe. They can all enter the arena against each other, while we—our little selves—take on the real thing."

"That's it!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Manners. "There'll be two lots of sports, really, then—the false and the true."

"And the twine will triumph, especially as I shall be competin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with conviction.

Tom Merry eyed the swell of St. Jim's wrathfully.

"Don't you start referring to Grundy's men as true, or there'll be a dead D'Arcy lying about the study!" he said. Arthur Augustus looked astonished.

"Bai Jove! You quite misapprehend my meanin', Tom Mewwy! I was not wewewwin' to Gwunday & Co. at all. I meant the weal team, you know."

"But you said you'd be playin'!"

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"Well, you'll be on Grundy's side, of course," said Tom Merry relentlessly. "We don't want a blue-blooded aristocrat in our modest circle."

"Eh?"

"You keep off the grass! You're a Grundyite."

"Tom Mewwy!" The swell of the Fourth pushed back his cuffs with a warlike air. "Do you mean to insinuate that I'm not good enough to be included in the wecognised teams?"

"Bullseye first time!" said Tom cheerfully.

"Gweat Scott! I must administah a most feahful thwashin' for those words! Put up your hands, Mewwy, you uttah wottah!"

Jack Blake stepped forward, and held the indignant Gussy forcibly back.

"Pax, my infant!" he exclaimed. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath!"

"Welease me, Blake! I have been insulted—gwoosly insulted!"

"And a peer of the realm can never stand that!" said Talbot solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake retained his grip on his excited study-mate until the latter had cooled down somewhat.

"Now, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy, after Jack Blake had released him. "Pway weturn me civil answahs to my civil questions. It is scandalous that I should be left out of the different events, and have to take my stand with such a burblin' chump as Gwunday! In the first place, there are no fellahs who can play a bettah game of footah than myself—"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"And who can van bettah than I can?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's.

"No one—when the New House fellows are on the trail!" grinned Manners.

"Weally, Manuahs! As I have wemayked many times befoah, your name is not a twue cwtewion of your nature."

"Go hon!"

"And who can beat me at wiffe-shootin'?" pursued Arthur Augustus, addressing himself to Tom Merry.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Tom Merry. "Now you've asked me! Who can shoot better than Gussy, Talbot, old man?"

"Oh, just a few fellows," replied Talbot. "Yourself, and Manners, and Lowther, and Blake; likewise Digby, Herries, Glyn, Dane, Noble, Reilly, Kerr, Redferin, Piggins, Wynn, Grundy—"

"Gwunday?" shrieked the swell of St. Jim's.

"Certainly! And Crooke, and Mellish, and Levison, and Skimpole—"

The speaker got no further. The enraged D'Arcy, without stopping to weigh the consequences, literally hurled himself on Talbot. The Shell fellow calmly stepped aside, and Gussy's fist echoed with a sounding crack against the wall of the study.

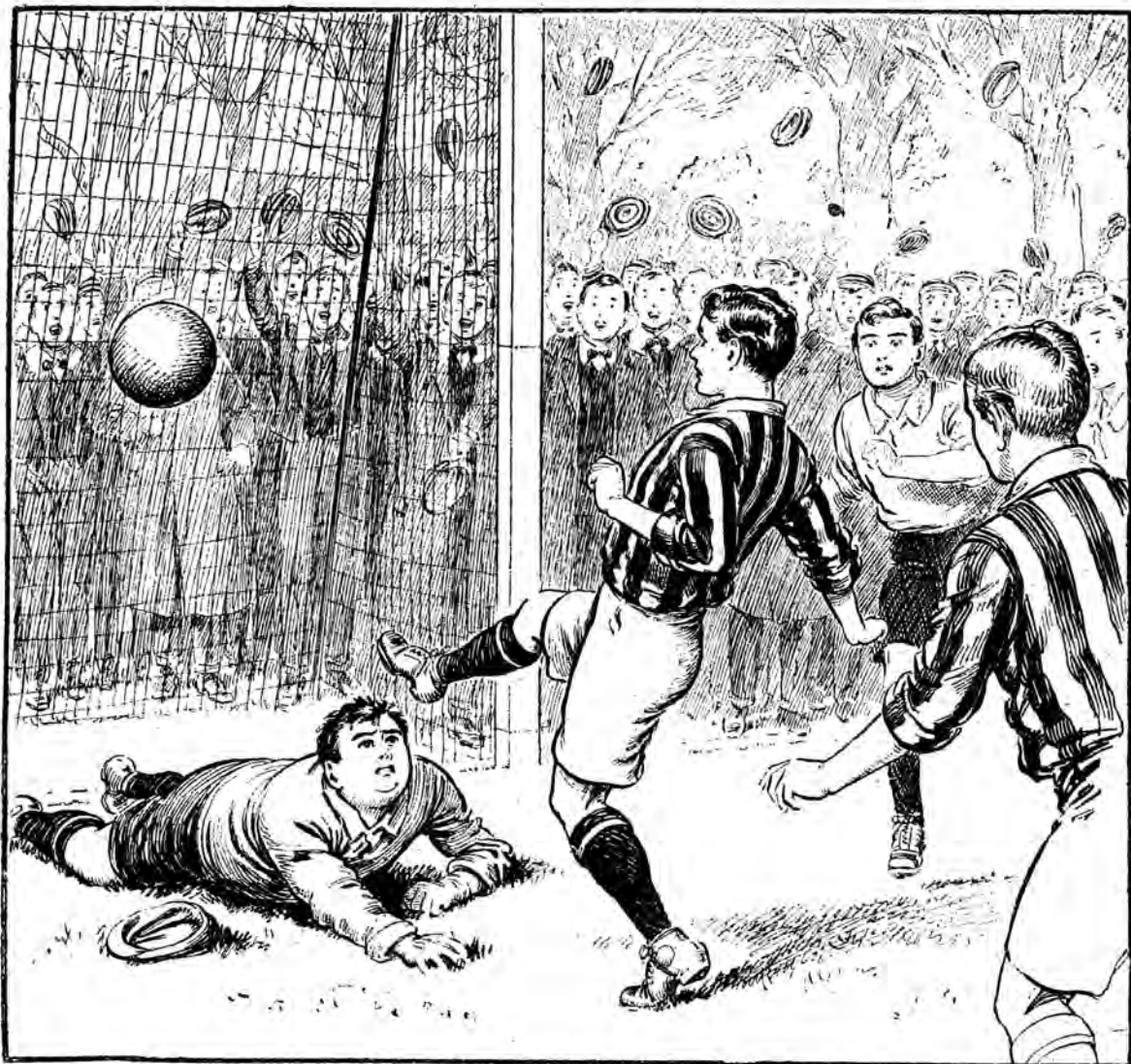
"Yawoooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh what a rank ass I was to leave my camera in the dark-room!" said Manners, in tones of regret. "What a sensational snap it would have made—Gussy knocking the wall down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy plunged recklessly into the throng of laughing



Five minutes from time, Fatty Wynn was in difficulties with a low drive of Frank Nugent's, and Wharton, rushing in, sent the leather home. "Level!" roared the crowd. (See Chapter 13.)

juniors, with the fixed intention of wiping them off the face of the earth. But somehow or other that intention quite failed. He was seized by several hands and hustled towards the door.

"Ow! Yow! Unhand me, you wottahs! Blake, I am surprised that you do not stand by a chap in your own studay! Ow! Leggo, you fealful beasts!"

"All together!" sang out Monty Lowther.

Five separate and distinct boots met together on the retreating person of D'Arcy, and he went whirling out into the passage.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" said Tom Merry, waving his hand.

Arthur Augustus picked himself up ruefully, and felt himself all over. Then he swung round upon the grinning juniors in the doorway.

"Bai Jove, I won't assist you in any diwection aftah this gwoss ill-tweatment!" he yelled. "I shall offah my services to my fwient Gwunday!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his aristocratic face looking very determined, and his clothes rumpled and soiled, stamped furiously away down the passage.

CHAPTER 4.

The False and the True!

THE TELEGRAM for Master Merry! The juniors had just been released from afternoon school, when Toby, the page, made that announcement. He had met the telegraph-messenger in the quad, and brought the familiar envelope along to the Form-room.

Tom Merry took out the wire, and a grin overspread his face.

"Good news?" asked Talbot.

"Rather! It's from Jimmy Silver!"

And the captain of the Shell read out the missive:

"Dr. Chisholm consented to week's holiday for Rookwooders. Hope to give you your first series of lickings on Monday.
SILVER."

"Swank seems to be a pretty cheap commodity these days!" observed Monty Lowther. "Greyfriars are certain of winning, and I expect the Highcliffians are, too. Jimmy Silver & Co. look upon the issue as being a dead cert for them, and we're absolutely cocksure. That's four winners. I suppose we're all going to make a dead-heat of it?"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"REDFERN'S BARRING OUT!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Alfred Grundy thrust his way forward. He smiled superior," as a novelist might say.

"You fellows can go and eat coke!" he said loftily. "Your tin-pot teams and crews are going to be put through it abso-blessed-lutely! It's chaps like me who are going to uphold the high traditions of this school!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you muddle-headed 'enas! You'll worship me when the sports are over. Don't they, Wilky?"

"Ra-ther!" said Wilkins emphatically.

"Well, there's not much glory in beating chaps like Bunter and Adolphus Smythe, that I can see," said Tom Merry.

"Don't you make too sure," said Grundy. "I've heard that Bunter's a beefy, hefty sort of fellow, and a first-class athlete."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Smythe's a dark horse, too. He can rise to the occasion when he likes. Then there'll be Ponsonby & Co. Everybody knows what they are."

"A set of cads!" said Manners drily.

Grundy shrugged his shoulders.

"Anyway, we've got sterner stuff to tackle than you," he said. "While you're vainly trying to walk round little puny chaps like Wharton, we shall be up against giants."

"Oh, come away, for goodness' sake!" urged Tom Merry. "Grundy makes me ill! Let's go and draw up the footer team and all the rest."

"Good egg!"

And the chums of the Shell marched off to the Terrible Three's study. Grundy and his faithful followers went off on a similar mission.

After tea a sheet of closely-packed foolscap appeared on the notice-board in the neat, clear handwriting of Tom Merry. It ran as follows:

"THE GREAT SPORTS MEETING!"

It is now definitely decided to hold the above, most of the contests to take place at St. Jim's. Appended are full particulars of the week's sport, competitors, etc.

RUNNING RACES.

Open to all decent fellows. Names to be handed in to Tom Merry in his study before Saturday evening.

FOOTBALL.

The following eleven will represent St. Jim's: Goal, Wynn; backs, Figgins and Kerr; half-backs, Lowther, Redfern, and Julian; forwards, Talbot, Noble, Merry, Blake, and Koumi Rao.

Reserves: Manners, Herries, and Brooke.

BOAT-RACE.

The St. Jim's crew will be: Talbot (stroke), Merry, Blake, Figgins, Noble, Redfern, Lowther, and Kerr. Cox: J. Frayne, Third Form.

SWIMMING RACES.

Open to all who care to enter, provided their reputation as good sportsmen is thoroughly sound. The team for the relay race will be: Merry, Figgins, Talbot, and Redfern.

BOXING.

St. Jim's representative: Tom Merry.

MARATHON RACE.

Open to all on the terms aforementioned.

NOTE.—Every fellow is expected to play the game cleanly and fairly right to the bitter end.

LONG LIVE THE SAINTS!

(Signed) TOM MERRY."

Shortly afterwards another announcement appeared side by side with the above in the sprawling, illiterate "fist" of George Alfred Grundy. As a call to arms it was almost unique:

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 403.

NO. 3. "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1/2 OUT TO-DAY. DO NOT FAIL TO GET A COPY!

RALLIE ROWND!

GRUNDY'S GRATE EFOROT TO REFORM ST. JIM'S!

Whereas sum silly asses whose names it is souper-flewous to menchun have been foolfish enuff to suppose that they can win the sports off their own batt, and whereas this is all so much tommy-rot, the foloeing chaps are determined to save St. Jim's from an untymely fate by entering into compytishun with the other scools:

(Here followed many signatures of Grundy and his brethren.)

We are going to show the world that we are top-dogge at footer, rowing, shuting, and all other games.

The team for the footer match will be:

Gole, Gunn; bax (not yet choasen); 1-bax, Mellish, Levison, and Crooke; forewords, Wilkins, Blenkinsop, Grundy, Gunn, and D'Arcy.

Those who intend to compeet for the other events should hand in there names, either to George Alfred Grundy in person or to George Wilkins, Esq., his private sekkertary. (Signed) GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY.

The feloe who will reform St. Jim's."

The juniors who perused this extraordinary document fairly yelled with laughter. The whole thing was too farcical for words. Monty Lowther threw himself down on the floor of the hall and kicked up his heels in a paroxysm of merriment.

"What are bax?" gurgled Manners.

"And forewords?" howled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy himself came up to the board. He glanced scornfully at Tom Merry's notice.

"My hat," he exclaimed, "some chaps ought to start their education over again! What awful spelling!"

"What!" shrieked the juniors.

"Why, my great-grandmother, who never saw the inside of a school in her life, could spell better than that!" continued Grundy, in tones of withering contempt. "Fancy spelling 'forward' without an 'e'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And 'fellow' with a 'w'!" said Grundy. "It's the absolute giddy limit!"

"Why, you ass!" roared Tom Merry. "Of course, there's a 'w'! You ought to be in a home for incurables!"

"I won't argue with you," said Grundy loftily. "Some chaps were born dense. They can't help it. It's their misfortune, not their fault. I always try to make allowances."

"You—you—" stuttered Tom Merry. "Oh, bump him!"

And Grundy was duly bumped—not once, not twice, but three times. Tom Merry & Co. left him sprawling on the floor of the hall, with his collar and tie streaming loose, and the most dire threats proceeding from his mouth. But those threats were wasted on the desert air. The members of the "true" brigade went off to the gym to get themselves fit, and the leader of the "false" picked himself up and limped slowly and painfully away to obtain a much-needed "wash-and-brush-up."

CHAPTER 5.

Sportsmen All!

MONDAY morning dawned bright and clear—an ideal day for exercising youthful muscle on the playing-fields.

Tom Merry & Co. turned out in response to the rising-bell in great spirits. They were feeling decidedly fit, and ready to wipe up the ground with all comers.

Harry Wharton & Co. were the first to arrive on the scene. They put in an appearance shortly after breakfast. With them came Skinner & Co., who were to encounter Grundy and his merry men. Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove, was there, together with Billy Bunter, little Wun Lung the Chinese, and others wd.

known to the St. Jim's fellows, and the excitement at the old school was at fever heat.

As ten o'clock boomed out from the old tower, Jimmy Silver & Co., the gay young sparks of Rookwood, arrived on foot from the station, and after them came Adolphus Smythe & Co. the "nuts" of Rookwood. Even Grundy & Co., rank duffers though they were, were not likely to find Smythe and his sporting friends very hard nuts to crack.

"We're only waiting for the Highcliffe chaps now," said Tom Merry. "Wonder if they've managed to get the week?"

"I think so," said Harry Wharton. "Trust old Courtenay and the Caterpillar for that! They'd cut off their right hands sooner than miss all the fun!"

Harry Wharton was right. Half an hour later a loaded brake came clattering in at the gates, and Frank Courtenay, the genial, good-looking leader of Highcliffe, descended with his followers. Ponsonby & Co., the notorious "blades" of Highcliffe, brought up the rear in another brake.

"Well, you've come," said Tom Merry, shaking hands cordially with Frank Courtenay. "How did you work the giddy oracle?"

"Oh, I got the Caterpillar to intercede for us to the Head. He's a diplomat is the Caterpillar, and jolly soon brought the old man round."

Tom Merry gazed at the elegant De Courcy in surprise. "You're a marvel, if you can twist headmasters round your little finger like that!" he exclaimed.

The Caterpillar beamed with pleasure.

"Pile it on!" he said. "I love bein' flattered! It reminds me of the days when I was rocked in the domestic cradle, and great celebrities came along to admire my flaxen locks. I soon brought old Voysey to reason, begad! He demurred a bit at first, but I pointed out to him the necessity of the risin' generation gettin' plenty of wholesome sport, and learnin' how to shoot straight. I told him that half the crime in the country was caused through people not bein' able to kick runs and hit goals."

"What!"

"I dare say I've got it a bit mixed," yawned the Caterpillar. "Never could get the hang of things properly, you know. Of course, I meant to say shoot wickets and swipe goals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, we managed to get the week off," laughed Courtenay, "and that's all that matters. Ponsonby and his set have come over at the invitation of one of your fellows—Bundy, or something, I think his name is."

"Grundy's the chap," explained Tom Merry. "He's the last word in tame lunacy. Usually we make him keep off the grass when we have any sports, but this time we're going to give him his head. He can play marbles with Ponsonby & Co. while we're indulging in real sport."

"Splendid!" exclaimed the Caterpillar. "Quite a stunnin' wheeze, begad! Now I suppose we must get to bizney. Are we all here?"

"Yes," said Monty Lowther. "The whole giddy family's complete now. The four genuine parties and the four freak concerns. Between intervals of hard work we shall be given some rare entertainment, seeing chaps like Bunter squeeze through the ladder in the obstacle race."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You leave our fat friend alone!" said Bob Cherry, of the Greyfriars Remove. "He's a splendid all-round sportsman, kept out of the first team by personal jealousy—eh, Bunter, old man?"

"That's so," said Bunter. "Perhaps after my brilliant performances this week you'll come to realise my sterling worth, and give honour where honour is due. Some of you St. Jim's fellows may have noticed my form."

Monty Lowther nodded.

"We can't help noticing it," he said solemnly; "it's so slender!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared at the humorous Lowther, and then rolled away, his little round eyes gleaming with wrath behind his spectacles.

At eleven o'clock all was in readiness for the sports to commence. The ground had been partitioned off by a rope for the occasion. On one side the real events were to take place, and on the other Messrs. Bunter, Adolphus Smythe, Grundy & Co. were to provide the onlookers with a feast of harmless entertainment.

Mr. Railton and Kildare officiated in the case of the genuine competitors, and Mulvaney major, who, being a son of the Emerald Isle, loved a joke, willingly consented to look after the comedians.

Quite a number of visitors had arrived on the scene. Marie Rivers and Cousin Ethel, bound together in bonds of closest friendship, sat in the pavilion and chatted gaily to each other, and Dr. Holmes and most of the masters had assembled to puff at a peaceful pipe and view the proceedings afar off.

The only master who had absented himself was Mr. Ratcliff, the sour, ill-tempered disciplinarian of the New House. But that was not to be wondered at. Mr. Ratcliff had a rooted aversion to all kinds of sport. He quite overlooked the fact that all work and no play made Jack a dull boy, and had wandered off towards Wayland, doubtless in the hope that he would catch some weedy youth smoking in a secluded barn.

The hundred yards was the first item, and a fine set of fellows stepped up for the tussle. There were eight of them altogether—two from each school.

Crack!

Mr. Railton fired the pistol, and, like arrows from a quiver, the runners shot off the mark.

A hasty pattering of feet, a flashing of white forms, the shouting of many voices, and the great race was over.

There was a moment of breathless suspense. Two fellows—Talbot of St. Jim's and Jimmy Silver of Rookwood—seemed to have breasted the outstretched tape together. Who had won?

Mr. Railton's deep voice, thundering through the megaphone, proclaimed the glad news.

"Talbot wins!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Talbot!"

Tom Merry's face flushed with pleasure as he thumped his chum on the back. Tom himself had finished fourth, but he didn't care a straw so long as a St. Jim's fellow had proved successful.

"Ripping, old son!" he exclaimed. "We've got off the mark well, and no mistake! That's six points for us!"

It had been decided by the officials to award six points to the winner of each race. There were no points for the runners-up, so competition grew very keen indeed. It was a case of first home or nothing at all.

Marie Rivers favoured Talbot with a delighted smile from the pavilion, and the sight of her radiant face spurred him on to fresh efforts. He was as elusive as any eel in the obstacle race, and put up a great fight, but just before the finish Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe put on a spirited spurt, and secured the honours.

Then a mighty roar went up—a roar of uncontrollable merriment, and everyone's eyes were turned to that part of the field where the freaks were performing. The hundred yards race had been duly run, but there had been a terrific dispute as to who had won. Ponsonby reached the tape first, but he was accused by the others of fouling. Billy Bunter, who had managed by a miracle to come in second, was denied the race on the grounds that he had rolled instead of run! At last Mulvaney major had declared the event void, and now the obstacle race was in progress.

It was, indeed, a sight for gods and men and little fishes. There were many obstacles to be overcome, but the stiffest of all—in Billy Bunter's opinion, at any rate—was the ladder through which the contestants had to wriggle. The Owl of the Remove managed to get his head between two of the rungs, and then his plump shoulders; but the rest of his stout person obstinately refused to follow. The result was that Billy Bunter was trapped as in a vice. He could not advance—he could not retreat. His wild howls of anguish, coupled with the sight of his fat little legs thrashing the air, made the spectators go into hysterics.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"REDFERN'S BARRING OUT!"

"Poor old Buntly!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "You seem to be a fixture. Shall I saw you off at the middle? Then your head and shoulders can go on and win!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Meanwhile, the other competitors, who had fared better than the hapless Bunter, had forged ahead, and Wun Lung, the agile Chinese of Greyfriars, won the race hands down.

By this time Billy Bunter was uttering such terrified howls that some of the seniors were compelled to dash forward and extricate him from his precarious predicament. Kildare and Rushden each took hold of one of Bunter's arms, and heaved. Inch by inch the terrified Owl of the Remove slid through, and at last he flopped on to the turf and gave vent to agonising groans.

"Ow! I'm dying! My back's broken, and I've got lockjaw! Cherry! Wharton! Where are you? Look here! I forgive all the personal jealousy you've directed against me in the past. Good-bye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anybody got a pin?" asked Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter sat up with amazing alacrity.

"I—I think I can pull myself together a bit," he said hurriedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leaving Bunter to adjust his broken back and to recover from his imaginary lockjaw, Harry Wharton & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. returned to their part of the field, followed by the Highcliffians and Rookwooders.

The high jump was the next event. It was splendidly contested, and the honours eventually went to Figgins, of the New House, who cleared a leap of exactly five feet. A magnificent achievement, indeed, considering that the best effort made for the Duffers was by Adolphus Smythe, who managed 3ft. 6in. only!

Then came the long jump, which was won by the long-limbed Bob Cherry, this being the initial success for the Friars.

Thus far, Rookwood were the only school who remained pointless, but they got off the mark in capital style in the next event—the hurdle race—Jimmy Silver scoring a well-balanced victory.

Mr. Railton had left out such items as the sack race and the egg-and-spoon race, regarding them, and rightly so, as things to be won more by luck than by genuine skill. But Grundy & Co. had included them, and when the hurdle race was over the attention of the crowd was diverted to the duffers' area once more.

The sack race evoked roars of merriment. The sight of Bunter in a sack was alone sufficient to tickle the sides of the onlookers; and even the venerable Dr. Holmes was coughing violently in the pavilion, while the masters could not control their mirth for love or money.

Mulvaney major gave the command, and simultaneously the masses of struggling, shuffling humanity encased in sacks started forward.

There were many casualties at the commencement. Billy Bunter came to earth with a sickening thud, and Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn tumbled over each other in an ungainly heap.

Ponsonby & Co. and Adolphus Smythe & Co. had not competed in this event. It was far beneath the dignity of such lordly aristocrats to wriggle along in a common or garden sack. The contest was confined, therefore, to St. Jim's and Greyfriars.

The fallen heroes picked themselves up, and waddled on again, only to tumble down as before. Little Wun Lung went merrily on his way, and looked every inch a winner, but just as he was nearing the tape he turned a complete somersault, and lay as still as a dormouse.

"Come on, Bunter!" roared the crowd. "Now's your chance! Put your beef into it!"

Billy Bunter made a frantic effort. Like Dorando in the never-to-be-forgotten Marathon Race at the Olympic Games, he fell, but struggled manfully on again. The perspiration was streaming from his fat face, the sack which covered him seemed likely to burst like a balloon at a moment's notice, and pursuers were close behind him. On and on he toiled, puffing and blowing like a very old bellows.

"Go it, Buntly!" urged Bob Cherry. "On the ball! Get home first, and half my kingdom is thine!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn were going at a great rate. Wun Lung, although not badly hurt, was considerably dazed by his fall, and made no effort to rise.

Grundy shot past Bunter, but over-reached himself, and crashed to earth. Unfortunately, he fell right in the path of the oncoming Wilkins, and the latter shot over his prostrate form, alighting in a heap on the other side.

But Gunn, swerving to one side, dodged the fate of his friend and study-mate. He was soon on a level with Bunter, but the tape was almost reached now. With a last desperate spurt, and with his features contorted to an almost ghastly extent, Billy Bunter fairly hurled himself home, beating the St. Jim's fellow by inches. The crowd cheered the fat junior till they were husky.

The egg-and-spoon race followed, and created considerable amusement. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy proved an easy winner; and then the happy, genial throng of sportsmen, good, bad, and indifferent, trooped off to the dining-hall, where lunch awaited them. And, needless to say, full justice was done to the cold fowl and other courses by William George Bunter, winner of the sack race!

CHAPTER 6.

The Valiant Saints!

"YOU'RE simply great!"

Marie Rivers and Cousin Ethel uttered the words together—not to the same person, however. Marie was addressing her boy chum, Reginald Talbot, who had won the hundred yards in such a spirited fashion; and Cousin Ethel was praising Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had bagged the honours in the egg-and-spoon race.

"Thank you, Marie!" said Talbot quietly.

"The same applies to you, dear gal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his face aglow with pleasure. "I do not wish to make dispawagin' remarks about Talbot's victory, in compawison with my own, but you must admit I wan quite well, with that beastly egg thwateenin' to jump out of the spoon ewery minute."

"You did remarkably well," smiled Cousin Ethel innocently. "You and your comrades are providing us with quite a lot of amusement, Arthur. It acts as a sort of relief to the really good races, you know."

"Weally!" said the swell of St. Jim's feebly. "I fail to compwehend your meanin', Ethel."

"Oh, never mind! Come along and give us some more entertainment. It's splendid!"

The first event on the resumption was the quarter-mile, which called for a good deal of stamina and endurance. There were many competitors, the course being once round the ground.

It was a race of thrills. Tom Merry was the first runner to break away, and close on his heels came Harry Wharton and Talbot.

Half-way round the track Tom Merry retained his lead; but on nearing home Wharton forged ahead, beating his rival by a bare yard.

"Anybody ever heard of a school called Highcliffe?" asked the Caterpillar, when the cheering attendant upon the last race had subsided. "Once upon a time I heard of such a place, but it seems to have shut up shop, begad! When are we goin' to astonish the natives and win somethin'?"

"Now!" said Frank Courtenay, with a grin. "No one in Christendom can throw a cricket-ball farther than Bob Wilkinson—can they, Bob?"

"That's stretchin' it a bit," said the fellow addressed. "All the same, I'm going to try my level best."

"Good man! Go in and win!"

And Bob Wilkinson won. He contributed a throw of 90 yards, Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars being second with 88. Wilkins, who won the self-same event for Grundy & Co., could only manage 56!

"The half-mile next!" announced Mr. Railton.

There was a buzz of excitement from those in the pavilion and around the ropes. The real business had begun now, with a vengeance.

Twice round the field, and going at top speed, was

enough to tax the endurance of the hardest competitor. Only those fellows who felt confident that their wind would hold good dared participate in such a venture.

Half-way through, Figgins of the New House was enjoying a magnificent lead. He was a splendid runner, and in great form. Linley of Greyfriars and Tommy Dodd of Rookwood sped hot-foot in his wake, and gained appreciably. But Figgy's lead was too good to be lost. He kept going gamely, and breasted the tape several yards to the fore of the two who had challenged him. Mark Linley and Tommy Dodd made a dead-heat of it for second place.

"Teams for the tug-of-war, line up!" shouted Kildare.

The faces of the Greyfriars fellows were glum as they took their places at the rope. In previous sports they had enjoyed the assistance of William George Bunter, who was indeed a valuable acquisition in a tug-of-war contest.

The Friars were drawn against the Saints, who had the services of Fatty Wynn, and although the tussle was keen throughout, Tom Merry & Co. brought off the honours by winning two pulls against one by the opposition.

Highcliffe, piling in valiantly, hauled Jimmy Silver & Co. over the fatal line twice in succession. Thus they were destined to meet Tom Merry & Co. in the final pull.

The enthusiasm was intense as the two teams, after a brief respite, took up the rope. The St. Jim's fellows looked stout and sturdy; the Highcliffians slim but wiry.

At Kildare's command, the long line of athletes was suddenly transformed into a tugging, straining, heaving heap of humanity.

"Highcliffe! Highcliffe!" shouted the loyal supporters of Frank Courtenay & Co. "Stick to it! Come on, all together!"

The Highcliffians responded to the call cheerfully. They pulled for all they were worth, and the St. Jim's vanguard began to waver.

Fatty Wynn clung tenaciously to the end of the rope, but even the Falstaff of the New House was not immovable. Gradually, inch by inch, he and his comrades were forced to give way, until at last the situation was relieved by a loud shout of "Over! Oh, well played, you chaps!"

Highcliffe had won the first pull!

"Come on!" urged Tom Merry, setting his teeth tightly together. "Never say die! Put your beef into it this time, kids!"

The second pull was strenuously contested, and, after a dour struggle, the Saints were successful.

"Final pull to decide!" said Kildare.

"Go it, the Saints!"

"On the ball, Highcliffe!"

"Merry! Merry!"

"Courtenay! Courtenay for ever!"

The enthusiasm was at fever-heat as the teams made ready for the final pull. Which would bag the honours?

St. Jim's started off well. They managed to shift their opponents a few feet, and everything boded well for their success; but suddenly the Highcliffians fairly let themselves go, and lay back on the rope, tugging for dear life. Even De Courcy, slacker and dandy as he was, as a rule, was like a renewed being. He exerted himself as if he had been suddenly electrified.

Tom Merry and his comrades felt victory slipping from their grasp. Tom called to the others to rally, and they managed to pull up short, the perspiration standing out on their foreheads in heavy beads. But Frank Courtenay & Co. were not to be denied. They were clinging to the rope like limpets, pulling with the vigour of giants.

The St. Jim's fellows, looking on, danced about like cats on hot bricks.

"Pull, you fellows, pull!" they shouted frantically. "You're not whacked yet! Merry! Talbot! Wynn! Pull like the very dickens!"

The fellows addressed set to work manfully to regain their lost ground. It was difficult, almost impossible, for them to achieve their object, but at last the Highcliffians began to tire.

"Now's your chance!" yelled the onlookers excitedly. "Heave-ho!"

inch by inch St. Jim's pulled their opponents forward. Fatty Wynn, at the end of the rope, piled in like a Trojan. He planted his heels firmly in the ground, and utterly refused to budge.

"Faith, an' it's a broth of a boy ye are, entirely!" exclaimed Reilly. "Keep it up!"

And Fatty Wynn did. Try they never so strenuously, the Highcliffians could not dislodge him. He gave the impression that he could remain where he was until Doomsday.

The Saints were on top now, and a thrill of satisfaction passed through their breasts. They were winning—winning gloriously!

"One! two! three!" panted Tom Merry.

And as the last word left his lips, his comrades put all their strength into that grim final struggle. One mighty, unwavering pull, and Frank Courtenay and his plucky followers, who had been game to the last, came sprawling over the line—exhausted, baffled, and beaten!

Kildare raised his hand.

"The Saints win!" he said briefly.

And the cheering which followed was sufficient in volume to awaken the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

Just as the tug-of-war ended, a similar contest was commenced in the other part of the field. Greyfriars proved easy victors, Billy Bunter standing firm and fast, and defying all comers. Then one of the stiffest events of the day—the mile—was announced.

The race furnished a tremendous surprise. After the first lap, Tom Merry led; at the end of the second lap he had relinquished his lead to Harry Wharton; and towards the end the Greyfriars fellow, who looked an easy winner, was overhauled by Jimmy Silver, who, speeding along with the fleetness of a hare, reached the tape a good first.

"Good old Rookwood!" roared Tommy Dodd, clumping his rival on the back. "Pile up the giddy points! Classics and Moderns stand together in this act."

"Well, you needn't puncture a chap!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Let's come over and watch the freaks!"

Grundy & Co.'s last event was the half-mile. Hardly any of them was capable of running a solid mile, and, at Ponsonby's suggestion, the distance had been reduced. The race was run at a snail's pace, and the victor proved to be Grundy himself.

"This has been a great day for St. Jim's!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "We've got twenty-four points to our credit so far, and Grundy's lot are licking the other schools. Who are we drawn against in the footer to-morrow?"

"Highcliffe," said Tom Merry. "And if we can't put the kybosh on Highcliffe, I'll give up playing footer and start keeping rabbits!"

Thus ended the first day of the sports. Early as it was in the proceedings, the Saints had established themselves in a strong position. Whether they would retain it, and eventually win the coveted laurels, or whether their lead would slip away, never to be recovered, remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 7.

Two Great Games.

TWELVE points were awarded to the winners of the football contest, and the members of the four schools were keenness itself. St. Jim's, on their own ground, were to meet Highcliffe, and Greyfriars were to journey down to Rookwood to knock the stuffing out of Jimmy Silver & Co., or die in the attempt.

The record crowd was at St. Jim's, of course. Highcliffe were very rare visitors to the old school, but they had won the reputation of being a very game and determined side, and all were anxious to see what sort of a fight they would put up against the redoubtable Tom Merry & Co.

Kildare was referee, and when he blew a shrill blast on his whistle for the teams to line up, there was a roar from the touch-line.

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

"Pile 'em on, Merry!"

Tom Merry spun the coin, and Frank Courtenay

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guessed—rightly. He elected to kick with the wind, and Highclife were the first to attack.

The Caterpillar, on the wing, was responsible for a sparkling run, which he terminated by sending across a neat pass to the centre. Courtenay got his head to it, and the ball went whizzing in, only to be forcibly ejected by the hard fist of Fatty Wynn.

Then St. Jim's rallied, and Jack Blake, after a brief scrimmage with Benson at back, sent in a scorching shot, which Smithson saved.

Warming to their work, the Saints kept up a heavy and persistent pressure, and Tom Merry opened the score for them at length with a delightful drive.

"Goal!"

The crowd cheered Tom Merry to the echo, and his fellow-players thumped him on the back with such vigour and heartiness that he was obliged to yell for mercy.

The game continued fast and exciting up to the interval. Both goals had narrow escapes, but the score was not added to. Tom Merry & Co. retired to the dressing-room with a lead of one clear goal.

"Not so bad!" murmured Monty Lowther, as he sipped a cup of Bovril, steaming hot, which Marie Rivers had thoughtfully provided. "Highclife are pretty hot stuff, though. That Caterpillar chap wants a lot of watching, confound him!"

"I think we shall pull it off!" said Tom Merry. "Their defence is a bit shaky, and that's where we've got the whip-hand. Figgy and Kerr are safe as houses at back, and Fatty Wynn can keep goal almost as good as he can gorge. Look at him!"

The Falstaff of the New House, his plump face like unto a full moon, was regaling himself with a huge stack of ham-and-beef sandwiches. Fatty always argued that one's appetite was doubled, if not trebled, in winter, and he was pitching into those sandwiches with the avidity of a full-fledged cannibal. His comrades had to literally wrench him away in order to renew the combat.

The second half opened at a brisk pace, and the Caterpillar again came into the picture. He defied all opposition, and passed swiftly to Frank Courtenay, who beat Fatty Wynn with a fast, low drive into the far corner of the net.

"Level, bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was standing with Cousin Ethel on the touch-line. "Those Highclife boundaks are hard nuts to creak, and I have vewy gwaive doubts as to the ability of Tom Mewwy & Co. to do it. Now, if I had been playin', deah gal, all this would have been changed. I was to have played for Gwunday's team this afternoon, on the othah field, but welinqushed my position to Buck Finn, in ordah to witness this game. I hardly think it was worth it, now!"

"Really!" said Cousin Ethel, with a slight smile.

"Yaas. If I were playin', St. Jim's would be leadin' now by at least three goals. As it is, they will be whacked to the wide!"

"I don't know so much!" retorted Ethel Cleveland, her eyes riveted upon the game. "They are waking up. Oh, well played, Figgins!"

Figgins had cleverly robbed an opposing forward of the ball, and booted it hard and clean up the field, where it fell at the feet of Talbot. The latter pounced upon it almost fiercely, and after a clever run, sent in a high, rising shot, which Smithson quite failed to reach.

"Goal!"

The St. Jim's players lined up once again, satisfaction writ largely on their faces. But they were soon to relapse into their former grimness, for the Caterpillar found the net a moment later with a really great shot, which baffled even the utmost resources of Fatty Wynn.

After this, the game developed into a ding-dong struggle, with little to choose between the teams. The Highclife defence was not of a very high order, but the St. Jim's players had all their work cut out to frustrate attacks, and, in consequence, were not able to get within shooting range very often.

"Looks like a wotten dwaw!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in tones of disgust. "If only Tom Mewwy had shown a little tact and judgment, and given

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me a chance of showin' what I could do, those Highclife fellahs would be lookin' vewy small by now."

"I do hope we can bring it off!" said Cousin Ethel. She had grown so attached to St. Jim's that she felt perfectly justified in saying "we." "Oh, I say! What horrid luck!"

Harry Noble, the Australian junior, had shot hard and fast for goal, but the ball skimmed the cross-bar, much to the dismay of the majority of the spectators.

Time was flying fast now, and the chances of a definite result being arrived at seemed remote. But the Saints struggled on valiantly, and exerted all their strength during the few remaining minutes.

The five forwards swept down the field, and before their fierce attack the Highclife defence completely broke down. Jack Blake shot, and Smithson just managed to punch clear; and then, just as Kildare's lips were on the whistle, Redfern dashed up from the half-back line, and sent in a magnificent volley, which Smithson could scarcely see, much less save. Then the whistle rang out, leaving St. Jim's victors in that hard-fought fight.

The scene that followed was an animated one. Scores and scores of spectators, their faces radiant with delight, swarmed on to the ground, and, seizing Redfern and his comrades, lifted them shoulder-high, and bore them off in a state of ecstasy to the dressing-room.

"Wonder who we've got to meet in the final?" mused Monty Lowther.

"The Friars, I expect," replied Tom Merry. "They ought to pull through against Rookwood, even though they're in the enemy's country. Wharton & Co. will be back before long, and then we shall get a first-hand description."

"Aren't they going back to Greyfriars to-night?" asked Manners.

"No fear! The Head's given 'em permission to stay here for the night. Then they'll be fit for the boat-race in the morning."

"That's news!" said Jack Blake. "Where are they going to sleep? In the gym, or in the coalhole?"

"Neither. Half in the Shell dormitory, half in your little dooshouse."

"The Fourth Form dormitory's a jolly sight better than your high-windowed prison, and chance it!" said Jack Blake warmly.

"All right, my little man; keep your wool on! Life's too short to quarrel."

Later on in the day, Harry Wharton & Co. returned from Rookwood, tired, but cheery. Their very looks seemed to betoken victory.

"How did things go?" asked Tom Merry.

"Rookwood won," said Bob Cherry, making a grimace as he dumped his bag down in the hall.

"What?"

The captain of the Shell looked astounded.

"You must be wandering in your mind!" he said, "Rookwood won, you say?"

"That's so."

"My only aunt!"

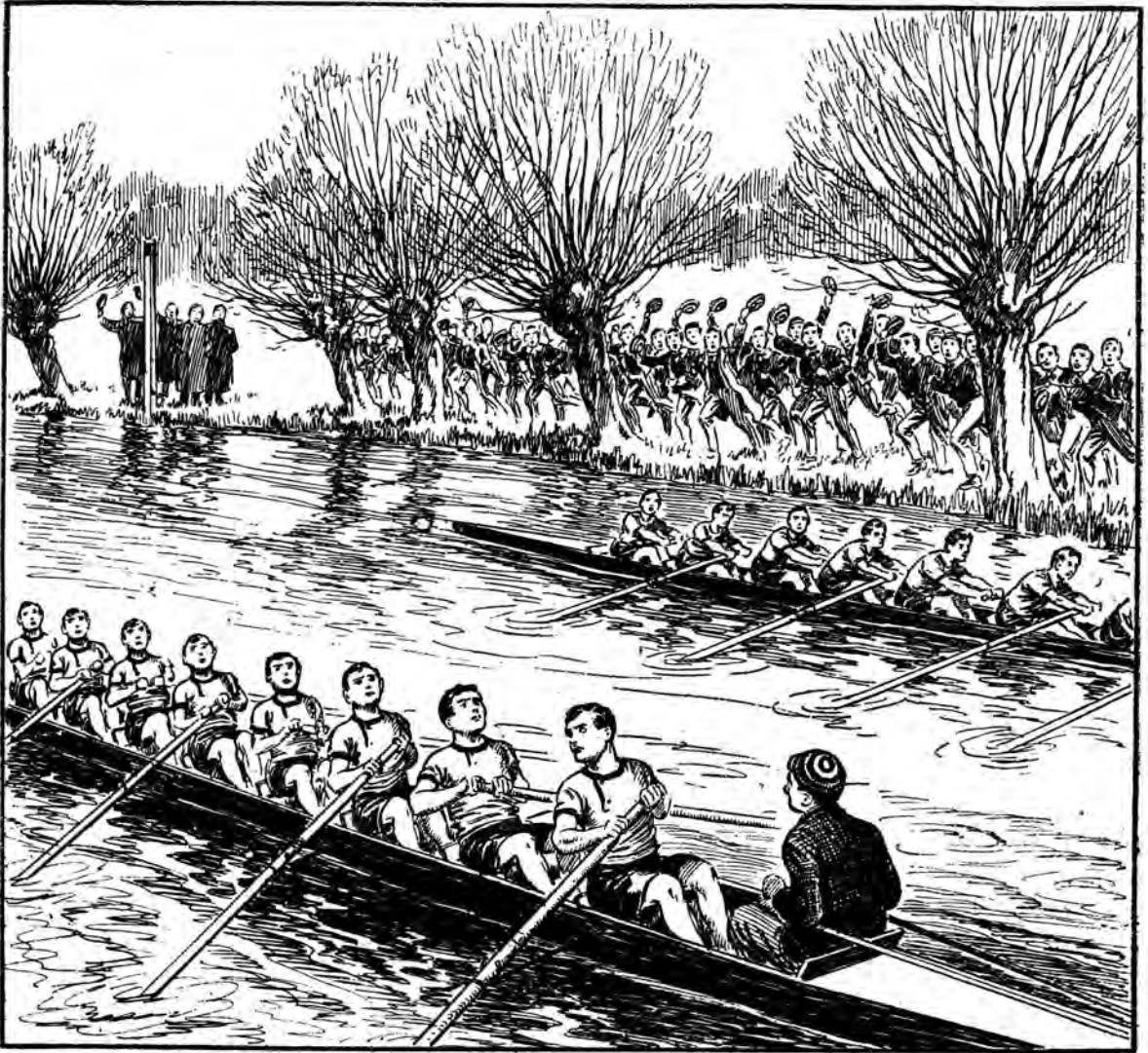
"And Greyfriars three!" concluded Bob Cherry triumphantly.

Then the St. Jim's fellows understood. Bob Cherry had been pulling their leg. He really meant that Greyfriars had scored three goals, and Rookwood one, which was a very different thing from Rookwood winning the match.

As the merry party partook of tea, full particulars of the game with Rookwood were forthcoming. Harry Wharton described the encounter with modest eloquence.

"We won the toss, and Vernon-Smith put on the first goal in ten minutes," he said. "After that it was a frightfully hard game, with Rookwood straining every nerve to equalise. Johnny Bull and Tom Brown were defending stubbornly up to the interval, and Jimmy Silver's lot weren't allowed to break through the lines. So we led—although we didn't altogether deserve it—by one clear goal at half-time.

"The second half was contested at a jolly hot pace, and although both goals had jolly narrow escapes, nobody scored till five minutes from time, when Dick Penfold sent across such a lovely pass that I ought to have been



Nearer and nearer hovered the post, at which a crowd of fellows stood, waiting to witness the finish. "Keep-it-up!" panted Frank Courtenay, over his shoulder. "Never say die! We're nearly home!" (See Chapter 9.)

shot if I couldn't take advantage of it. I banged it through, and then, to drive the victory home, Frank Nugent scored with a ripping screw shot. Jimmy Silver & Co. put on a goal in the last minute, but were whacked on their native heath."

"And so we're to meet you in the final on Friday?" asked Tom Merry.

"That's it; and we hope to squash you to a pulp!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The captain of the Shell burst into a chuckle.

"We shall see what we shall see," he said sagely, and then resumed his attack on the buttered toast.

CHAPTER 8.

Billy Bunter's Brain-wave!

HARRY WHARTON and his immediate chums slept that night in the Shell and Fourth Form dormitories respectively, and a spare room adjoining the sanatorium had been prepared for Harold Skinner, Billy Bunter, and the rest of the Freaks' Brigade.

Bunter seemed to be unusually cheerful as he went up to bed. Whether his good humour was due to the fact that he had pulled Skinner & Co. to victory in the tug-of-war, or whether it was because he had succeeded in

raising a small loan from the generous Gussy, no one could tell.

"Wherefore that radiant dial, porpoise?" asked Bolsover.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"You know how easily we licked Smythe & Co. at footer this afternoon?" he said.

"Small thanks to you!" growled Bolsover. "We should have whacked 'em by unlimited goals if you hadn't been playing. You were charging your own men off the ball most of the time. I admit you scored one goal, but that was against us, instead of for us. We had to fight like Trojans to pull the game out of the fire in the second half."

"Oh, really, you know," said Bunter peevishly, "I can only conclude that it's personal jealousy on your part which makes you talk like that, Bolsover. You know very well, in your heart, that I was the star player on the field this afternoon. All the girls were fairly in love with my performance."

"Drop that," said Hazeldene indignantly, "unless you want us to play coconut shies, with you as the coconut!"

"Anyway," pursued Bunter, "we've got into the final with Grundy & Co., and that's all that matters. We're playing 'em here, at St. Jim's, on Friday."

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"Tell us something we don't know, fathead!" grunted Skinner.

"Well, I've got a jolly good wheeze," chuckled Bunter. "It'll draw crowds and crowds of people to see the match. The ground will simply swarm with them, until there's not even standing-room."

"What the merry dickens—" began Skinner.

"Explain yourself, ass!" roared Bolsover.

"This is the idea," said Bunter. "You remember I left my footer togs at Greyfriars, and had to play this afternoon in my everyday clothes?"

"And a pretty guy you looked, rolling about the field like a barrel!" sniffed Trevor.

"Well, I asked that chap Wynn if he could lend me some togs, but he refused, like the ungenerous beast he is. But I sha'n't play in Etons on Friday."

"No fear! I'll see to that!" said Skinner warmly.

"And the jerseys and knickers I've got at Greyfriars aren't a very good fit," Bunter went on. "I bought 'em over two years ago, and they seem to have shrunk. The jersey only comes down to my waist."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So I'm determined to get a new outfit."

"With whose money?" grinned Stott.

"Ahem! I've just been doing a bit of thinking," said Bunter. "It would be a ripping idea if I were to write to some big London firm, and ask 'em to let me have some togs which would advertise their goods. They'd cost me nothing, and I should be doing the firm a jolly good turn. Of course, I would impress upon them what a magnificent player I was, so that they could give me a boom in the newspapers. In that way we should get a tremendous crowd down to see the match."

"My hat!"

The juniors were thunderstruck. Bunter's cheek was simply colossal. In his arrogant pride, the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove genuinely imagined that he was a great footballer, the equal almost of Steve Bloomer.

"Why, you—your frabjous dummy!" yelled Bolsover.

Then he stopped short, as Skinner drew him aside.

"Let the silly duffer go ahead!" muttered the ead of the Remove. "It'll be an awful lark!"

Bolsover nodded.

"I say, it's a stunning wheeze, Bunt, old man!" he exclaimed. "I couldn't have thought of a better one myself!"

Bunter fairly purred with pleasure.

"I'll write to the people to-night," he said, "and scoot down and post the letter so that it catches the last post. Anybody got any paper?"

With a grin, Snoop tore out a sheet from an empty exercise-book, and handed it to the Owl of the Remove. Skinner provided a pencil, and Bunter, with much puffing and gasping, for he was not a literary man, went about his work, the rest of the fellows assisting him in spelling most of the words.

The letter was written in a few minutes, and Skinner picked it up, and read it aloud to the convulsed juniors. It ran as follows:

"To Messrs. Dobbin & Co.,
Dealers in Dogs' Food.

Dear Sirs,—I feel confident that my fame as a footballer has spread to the metropolis. My prowess is a byword in Kent and Sussex, and I have been congratulated by many of the leading players—amateur and professional—on my wonderful ability. The charm of my play is that I can take up any position on the field, from goalkeeper to centre-forward, and prove a marvellous success.

I am always pleased to give deserving firms a leg-up, and shall be obliged if you will supply, by return of post, a jersey and a pair of knickers. The sizes are enclosed herewith. You will no doubt be greatly struck to observe what a hefty, powerful fellow I really am.

It will be necessary, of course, for a huge crowd to assemble in order to see your advertisement, so you will be well advised to announce the match in the newspapers. I shall be playing for a well-known team called Greyfriars, the game to take place at St. James' School, Rylcombe, Sussex, on Friday next at 2 p.m. precisely.

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I await your reply with the keenest interest.—Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER (age 15)."

The fellows who sat on their beds and heard this epistle read out, in Skinner's mock-elocuent style, were hard put to it to restrain their laughter. The thought of a long queue of eager people, anxious to witness the weird and wonderful evolutions of Billy Bunter on the football-field, was nothing if not farcical.

And Bunter himself was not the only fellow who would open the eyes of the community. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese, and Lord Mauleverer, the Remove's champion slacker, to say nothing of Fisher T. Fish, were bound to play football in a manner which would move the gods to tears.

Some of the fellows, such as Bolsover and Trevor and Hazeldene, were really good players—hence the recent victory over Adolphus Smythe & Co. Skinner and Stott were just passable, and were quite prepared to play in such a thrilling match as next Friday's tussle was bound to be. It would be a scream from start to finish, and the astonishment of the crowd on witnessing the antics of Billy Bunter would be worth walking from John o' Groats to Land's End to see.

"That's all right!" said Skinner, looking as solemn as an owl. "Right on the mark! They're bound to send down some togs with 'Dobbin's Porridge for Pining Puppies' stamped all over 'em! And what a gate we shall get! It'll put the other final in the shade entirely!"

"Anybody got a stamp?" asked Bunter.

Bolsover and Snoop each unearthed a halfpenny stamp from their pocket-books, and Billy Bunter scuttled off down the stairs to post his letter. And after his retreating figure came a loud and uncontrollable roar of mirth, though Bunter did not hear it:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 9.

The Race on the Ryll.

WEDNESDAY morning dawned clear and cloudless. The conditions were ideal for a boat-race, and by eleven o'clock the rival crews were all assembled on the banks of the shining Ryll.

Tom Merry & Co. looked calm and confident, as did the Friars and the Highcliffians; but Jimmy Silver & Co. gave one the impression that they were just a little tired. They were beginning to feel that the game was not worth the candle. Although they had exerted themselves to the utmost since the sports week opened, they had only two minor wins to their credit, and such a sorry state of affairs was enough to take the stuffing out of anybody.

"We must go all out for the honours now!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "I'm afraid we're out of the running unless we can win the boat-race."

"That's so," said Lovell gloomily. "But we've got a stiff hill to climb. These other fellows learned to row almost as soon as they could speak, but Rookwood's never claimed to be a rowing school. Still, we'll put our backs into it, and if we perish, we perish!"

Spectators stood in swarms on the bank, all anxious to see how their particular school fared. The supporters of the Saints were wildly optimistic. Tom Merry & Co. had got off the mark so well that they looked likely winners all along the line. There seemed to be none to say them nay.

The four crews rowed out from the boathouse into mid-stream, to the accompaniment of a deafening burst of cheers.

"Go it, Saints!"

"Greyfriars for ever!"

"Now, then, Highcliffe!"

Only a faint cheer greeted the Rookwooders. Their fellows lived farthest away from the scene of the struggle, and only a few were present. But the determination of Jimmy Silver & Co. to row the race of their lives never wavered.

Craek!

Mr. Railton fired the pistol, and the four boats leapt off the mark as one. The next moment they were skim-

ming along right merrily, the harmonious splashing of the oars and the athletic figures of the juniors forming a fine sight.

Rookwood and Greyfriars were the first to drop behind, but it was obvious that each of them were holding considerable energy in reserve.

When half the course had been completed, Highcliffe were leading. St. Jim's, hot favourites for the event, had found the pace too much for them. They slowed down perceptibly, and at the same time the Rookwood boat crept ahead in little jerks. The Friars were last, but they, too, were rowing strongly.

On and on flashed the four crews, straining every nerve to reach the coveted goal first. Frank Courtenay & Co. were keeping time better than any of the others. Since Lord Eastwood's sports were held they had been indulging in regular practice on the River Sark, and that practice stood them in good stead now.

The last bend in the river was passed, and now only a hundred yards remained to be traversed. Tom Merry & Co., exhausted by the many stern struggles of the preceding days, dropped right behind, and Highcliffe still enjoyed their lead.

But Greyfriars and Rookwood were going great guns, and the crowd on the bank was tense with excitement. Would the gallant Highcliffians be overhauled in time? And, if so, by whom?

Nearer and nearer hovered the post, at which several prefects stood, waiting to witness the finish.

"Keep—it—up!" panted Frank Courtenay, over his shoulder. "Never say die! We're nearly home!"

Paget, the Greyfriars cox, urged his men on, but Harry Wharton & Co. were almost played out. The Rookwood boat surged ahead, and everyone watched it with fascinated eyes.

"Rookwood! Rookwood!"

The progress of Jimmy Silver & Co. received due recognition at last. Even the St. Jim's fellows, although their own heroes were out of the running, sent up a rousing cheer.

Like a lightning-flash the Rookwood and Highcliffe boats shot past the winning-post, with Greyfriars in close attendance. Who had won?

Kildare proclaimed the result through his megaphone.

"A dead-heat," he exclaimed, "between Highcliffe and Rookwood!"

"Hooray!"

The members of the victorious crews rowed to the bank, and were hauled out of their boats in a state of fatigue. But the hearts of the Rookwooders were light. They had not been beaten, after all. A division of the spoils was decided upon, so that Jimmy Silver & Co. and Frank Courtenay & Co. each had six points to their credit.

"Ow!" gasped the Caterpillar. "How frightfully exhausting, begad! It's worse than playin' cricket on a midsummer day! I'm achin' all over!"

"Same here," said Frank Courtenay; "but we've shared the honours, so it was well worth it. We're second now. St. Jim's has got 24 points, Rookwood and our little selves 18, and Greyfriars only 12. Poor old Friars!"

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry lugubriously. "We're trying our level best, but it seems that we're out of form this week. Let's hope we shall do something brilliant on the ride-range this afternoon."

"Hallo! What's all the rumpus about?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith suddenly. "It sounds like Babel let loose!"

The attention of the juniors was diverted to the starting-place, where an extraordinary scene was being enacted. Grundy & Co. and the rest of the freak crews had rowed out to commence their race.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Bob Cherry, dashing along the bank with his chums. "Where's the Greyfriars boat?"

"There!" panted Wharton. "Oh, my hat! What a collection!"

Billy Bunter alone took up a quarter of the boat, which seemed in imminent danger of foundering owing to the fat junior's weight.

Skinner was shouting his instructions, but no one obeyed him. Bunter splashed the water idly with his

oar, drenching his comrades completely; and the rest of the crew rowed exactly as they pleased, with scant regard for the laws of oarsmanship.

Somehow or other the boat was manoeuvred to the starting-place, where Grundy & Co., Adolphus Smythe & Co. and Ponsonby & Co. were ready.

Mr. Railton, smiling broadly, cracked his pistol, and the four boats lurched forward.

A chapter of accidents followed. Wun Lung was responsible for the steering of the Greyfriars crew, and, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, he directed the boat in such a way that it spun towards Grundy & Co., who had forged a little way ahead.

"Look out!" yelled Grundy, in alarm. "Keep off the grass, you duffers!"

But the words were uttered too late. With a grinding crash, the two boats collided, and the St. Jim's crew almost capsized, while the fellows in the Greyfriars boat felt that they were booked for a severe ducking.

Almost doubled up with laughter, Monteith of the New House staggered to the side of the river with a long boat-hook.

"Come out of that, you silly young rascals!" he gurgled. "D'you all want to be drenched to the skin?"

And, despite the shrill protests of George Alfred Grundy and his brethren, the prefect thrust out the boat-hook and drew each of the boats into safety in turn.

"But the wace!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping for his eyeglass, which was conspicuous by its absence. "We should have won hands down, Monteith, you uttah wottah!"

"Nonsense, D'Arcy!"

"It's a shame!" hooted the swell of St. Jim's. "I can only conclude that you have been bwibed to do this by that bwute Ponsonby. I considah—"

Monteith wasted no more time in words. He hauled the frantic junior on to dry land, amid roars of laughter from the assembled multitude.

Meanwhile, Ponsonby & Co. and Adolphus Smythe & Co. went ahead. Each of them rowed at a snail's-pace, and not a moment passed without some inexperienced oarsman "catching a crab"; but the race was over at last, and the "nuts" of Highcliffe scraped home with a length to spare.

There was an ironical cheer from the assembly, and then a general move was made towards the school, where lunch was to be held prior to the great shooting match, which was to take place on the Rylcombe rifle-range.

CHAPTER 10.

The Friars Wake Up!

C RACK, crack!

Tom Merry and Harry Wharton, laying on the mat side by side, spurted merrily away with their rifles. They were the first to fire for their respective schools, and an enthusiastic crowd packed the range.

The conditions were of the simplest. Eight competitors from each school had to fire five rounds of ammunition apiece, and the team scoring the highest aggregate was to be awarded twelve points.

"Stick it, Harry!" said Bob Cherry boisterously, as he scanned the target through a pair of powerful field-glasses—the property of Squiff of the Remove. "We seem to be playing a losing game, somehow; but we'll struggle on to the bitter end!"

Wharton nodded, and put in his fifth and last shot. He took careful aim, and pressed the trigger.

"A bull, by Jove!" sang out Bob Cherry. "Right in the centre! Good man!"

Tom Merry finished his shots, and the targets were brought up to Mr. Railton, who subjected them to a careful scrutiny.

"The shooting is very good indeed!" he exclaimed. "Were the war to last a few years longer, I should feel sorry for the Kaiser's legions, if they had to contend against marksmanship of this sort! Merry and Wharton have each scored 23 out of a possible 25."

"Bravo!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"REDFERN'S BARRING OUT!"



"One-two-three!" panted Tom Merry; and as the last word left his lips his comrades plucky Highcliffians, or die. Mr. t

Bob Cherry and Figgins were the next two to fire. Their shooting fell short of that put up by their predecessors, but it was very good, nevertheless.

Then the rest of the Friars and Saints got down in turn, until all had fired. The scores were added together by Mr. Railton amid a breathless silence.

There was a look of serene confidence on the dusky face of Hurree Singh, who had been the last to fire. He had done exceedingly well, and he knew it.

"Final scores," announced Mr. Railton. "St. Jim's: Merry, 23; Figgins, 20; Talbot, 21; Blake, 19; Manners, 19; Redfern, 20; Kerr, 18; and Lowther, 16. Total, 156."

"Well played, Saints!"

Mr. Railton smiled grimly. For once in a way Tom Merry & Co. had not done so well as they seemed to anticipate.

"Greyfriars," he continued. "Wharton, 23; Cherry, 20; Bull, 18; Vernon-Smith, 22; Linley, 20; Nugent, 21; Field, 19; and Hurree Singh, 23. Total, 166."

"Hurrah!"

"Ten points ahead, by Jove!"

"Played, Inky!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur purred with pleasure. He had not seen much of the limelight hitherto, but he was having his share of it now with a vengeance. With Wharton and Merry, he had been responsible for the highest individual score attained so far.

There were Highcliff and Rookwood to be taken into account yet, however. If either of those two famous public schools scored over 166, it was all up with Greyfriars; and anxiety was plainly stamped upon the faces of Harry Wharton & Co. as Jimmy Silver and Frank Courtenay made ready to fire.

But the Friars need have had no qualms, for the marksmanship of their rivals was poor. They did not shine at shooting, despite the fact that Rookwood had bagged the honours in the fight for Lord Eastwood's Cup. When the two teams had finished, Mr. Railton

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read out the scores. Highcliff had compiled 130, and Rookwood 144.

"Now we can retire from the scene of our triumph victorious, happy and glorious!" said Bob Cherry. "We've picked up a few points at last. That puts us level with St. Jim's. We're doing famously!"

Several brakes were in waiting outside the range to convey the juniors back to St. Jim's. The hour was early, and so a grand concert was arranged with which to wind up the day. Then the Rookwooders and Highcliffians, who were to stay for the night, went off to their sleeping-quarters.

THE GREYFRIARS

No. 3 Out



FRANK NUGENT,
Art Editor.



H. VERNON SMITH,
Sports Editor.



HARRY WHARTON,
Editor.

Edited by Harry Wharton & Co. & the
THE MOST NOVEL PAPER FOR BOYS
DON'T FAIL TO BUY YOUR



...omrades put all their strength into that grim final struggle. They meant to conquer the ... die in the attempt! (See Chapter 6.)

At nine o'clock Grundy & Co. and the rest of the freaks, put in an appearance. They, too, had held a shooting contest on the range at Wayland, and St. Jim's had triumphed. After the match, Adolphus Smythe, in order to show that he was rolling in money, had treated the whole of the community to seats at the Wayland Cinema.

So far as the freak teams were concerned, St. Jim's were easily ahead. Ponsonby & Co. and Skinner & Co. came next, with the same number of points; and Adolphus Smythe and his lazy followers had hardly amassed half-a-dozen points between them. The football

final was to be played on the Friday afternoon, and Greyfriars entertained high hopes of licking Grundy & Co. into a cocked hat.

A letter awaited Billy Bunter on his arrival at St. Jim's, and he took it up to the bed-room with him, the rest of the fellows becoming deeply interested. Had Messrs. Dobbin & Co. agreed to the fat junior's presumptuous request, or had they written to "tell him off"?

Billy Bunter slit open the envelope with an air of great importance, and his little round eyes positively gleamed with delight behind his spectacles as he glanced at the first lines of the letter.

"Get it off your chest!" said Bolsover impatiently.

And Bunter proceeded to read the epistle aloud, as follows:

"My Dear Sir,—I acknowledge with much pleasure your generous offer to advertise the firm of which I have the honour to be senior partner.

You will receive, by the first post in the morning, a jersey and a pair of knickers of the stipulated size. They had to be specially made, the dimensions being so unusual, and due attention is drawn on them to the merits of our goods.

I enclose a newspaper cutting from the 'Daily Snip,' which sets forth your high qualities as a footballer, and sincerely hope that it will be instrumental in drawing a huge crowd to St. James' College on the day of the match. I myself hope to be among the spectators.—Believe me to be, yours very faithfully,

DANIEL DOBBIN,
For Dobbin & Co."

"Ripping!" exclaimed Skinner. "They've played up well, and no mistake! Where's the advertisement?"

Bunter took a printed paragraph from the envelope, and declaimed its contents.

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Out To-day.



HARRY WHARTON,
Editor.



BOB CHERRY,
Fighting Editor.



MARK LINLEY,
Sub-Editor.

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"A FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD PRODIGY!"

A WORD ON WILLIAM BUNTER, THE BEST BOY FOOTBALLER IN THE WORLD!

Some remarkable instances of footballing talent in young people have come to our notice lately, but nothing can equal the wonderful prowess of William George Bunter, the juvenile "star" of the Southern Counties. Although he has seen only fifteen summers, we understand that Master Bunter knows all that there is to be known about the grand old English game, and he has been highly complimented by the leading amateur and professional players of our time.

There must be many thousands who have not yet been lucky enough to have an opportunity of watching this youthful Bloomer at work, so for their benefit we would point out that Master Bunter is taking part in a great match on Friday next, the 11th instant. The contest will take place at St. James' College, Rylcombe, Sussex, and those who intend to be there are reminded to change at Wayland Junction.

We feel sure that Master Bunter will once again in his young and brilliant career be the idol of an admiring crowd."

"My hat!" gasped Bolsover. "My only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at that I can see!" said Bunter indignantly. "Things have worked out jolly well!"

But Bolsover's sense of humour was tickled, and he lay on his bed and roared, as did the other occupants of the room.

"Where's the joke, you laughing hyenas?" demanded Bunter.

But no one enlightened the Owl of the Remove. The fellows laughed until they could laugh no more at the prospect of the "fifteen-year-old prodigy" performing before an admiring crowd on the Friday, and at last Billy Bunter gave it up, and turned in with a grunt. A few minutes later he was safe in the arms of Morpheus, dreaming, doubtless, of the fine figure he would cut in his dog's-food jersey during the forthcoming tussle with Grundy & Co.

CHAPTER 11.

The Swimming Sports.

ON Thursday morning the swimming contests were enacted, under the judicial eye of Mr. Railton. There were heated baths in Wayland, and half a dozen brakes bore off the merry crowd of competitors and spectators at the appointed time.

The first event, a straightforward race of six lengths, attracted eight competitors. It was won in splendid style by Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe.

Then came the picking up plates contest, at which Fatty Wynn, humorously referred to by Lowther as the "cr-nymph" of St. Jim's, excelled. The Falstaff of the W House came up from the bottom of the bath with

a goodly haul of plates, and was unbeaten by any other competitor. His total of twenty-four held good, and six more points were thus added to the little store now possessed by the Saints.

The swimming-in-clothes contest was a gruelling affair, and it needed a fellow of great muscular power to plough his way through the water in full outfit. After a stern tussle the honours fell to Johnny Bull of Greyfriars.

Following upon this came the pyjamas-and-candle race, which evoked roars of laughter. One length of the bath had to be traversed, and the swimmer had to bear a lighted candle successfully to the other end, a thing easier spoken of than done. The slim and elegant Caterpillar swam as smoothly as anybody, and reached his goal with the light still flickering, many good swimmers being forced to return to the starting-place to have their candles rekindled.

Talbot—as graceful a diver as ever breathed—easily won the high-diving contest; and then four juniors from each school prepared to take part in the team race.

As the respective captains stood ready at the end of the bath, the air was rent with shouting and cheering. Mr. Railton blew the whistle, and simultaneously four fellows plunged into the water as one.

Tom Merry and Harry Wharton swam strongly, and Frank Courtenay and Jimmy Silver, exhausted by previous struggles, fell behind. Wharton was the first to complete the two lengths, then Bob Cherry plunged in, and things looked extremely rosy for Greyfriars.

Tommy Dodd, Rookwood's second man, flashed through the water at an astonishing pace, and so tremendous was the spurt he put on that it was obvious that either Greyfriars or Rookwood would win the twelve points.

The third swimmer for the Friars was Hurree Singh, who possessed a fine side-stroke. He sped through the water in spirited style, and gave Newcome, the Rookwooders' third man, a hard fight for it.

St. Jim's and Highcliffe were out of the reckoning now, but their swimmers kept going strongly, meaning to fight to the bitter finish.

Vernon-Smith was the last fellow on the Greyfriars side; Lovell the last of the Rookwooders. There was a stupendous shout as they plunged in practically together.

"Go it, Bounder!"

"Rookwood! Rookwood for ever!" yelled Tommy Todd, racing along the side of the bath with a blanket drawn over his dripping limbs. "Come on, Lovell! Put the pace on, old scout! It's twelve points for us if you win!"

Sorely did the Hampshire school need those twelve points. So far they had amassed a sum total of eighteen, while St. Jim's had gained double that number. An increase of another dozen, and Rookwood would still possess a sporting chance of wearing the victor's crown.

Lovell swam for all he was worth. Had he not done so the race would have been all over bar shouting, for Vernon-Smith was, with the possible exception of Harry Wharton, the finest swimmer in the Greyfriars Remove. The crowd could not but admire him as his long arms shot out, cleaving the water like a knife.

At the end of the first length the Bounder had established a slight lead. He turned swiftly, with Lovell in close attendance, and then the last stage of that great tussle was at hand.

The excitement in the audience was colossal. The result would materially affect the chances of all the schools concerned. If Rookwood lost, their bolt would be shot, for they could never hope to make up the leeway sufficiently in the few remaining events. If Greyfriars lost, the chances of St. Jim's and Highcliffe would be vastly improved.

Consequently, the only fellows who backed up Vernon-Smith were his own schoolmates. The rest of the assembly cheered Lovell on with all the force of their lungs.

Half the remaining distance was accomplished, and still the Bounder led. He seemed too swift, too meteoric, for human power to overhaul and beat him. With his eyes fixed straight ahead on his goal, and his long, relentless arms keeping splendid time, he looked a certain winner.

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But Lovell gritted his teeth, and fairly hurled himself through the water in the Bounder's wake. A great swimmer was Lovell, and the spectators were constrained to cheer him to the echo as he toiled on doggedly, desperately.

The end was almost reached now, and with a superhuman effort the Rookwood fellow went ahead. Vernon-Smith swung his left arm through the water, and clasped the friendly rope, but Lovell had been a shade too quick for him. He had touched the fraction of a second earlier, and Rookwood had won the team race.

A perfect pandemonium ensued. Lovell was hauled out of the water by his exuberant chums, who fairly hugged him in their delight. Then the last race of all—the individual swimming championship of fifteen lengths—was announced, the winner to receive twelve points.

Only six swimmers lined up for the event. St. Jim's sent in Tom Merry and Talbot; Wharton and Nugent swam for Greyfriars; while Frank Courtenay and Jimmy Silver completed the number of entrants.

The reason for the comparatively small muster was obvious. Fifteen lengths of a bath at top speed requires no small knowledge of the great pastime of swimming. Only a thoroughly sound and well-seasoned athlete could possibly hope to win the laurels, and most of the fellows, realising the immense superiority of swimmers of the Talbot type, wisely decided to keep off the grass.

The whistle went, and the next moment the six sportsmen were speeding along side by side, each of them bent on crowning the swimming contests by winning the greatest race of all.

At the end of six lengths Harry Wharton was enjoying a magnificent lead, being quite eight yards to the good of Talbot, who was next. Jimmy Silver and Frank Nugent, who each employed the same graceful breast-stroke, were not far behind.

Wharton's lead held good when the tenth length had been completed, and then a strange and startling thing happened. The Greyfriars skipper was seized with a sudden attack of cramp, and had no recourse but to retire from the race.

It was a bitter pill for the Friars to have to swallow, but they took it like sportsmen.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Bob Cherry, as he led his chum away to the dressing-room. "You looked a winner, every inch, and if it wasn't for that beastly cramp—"

"Oh, never mind!" said Wharton, with a wry smile.

And the juniors went into the dressing-room, where Wharton warmed himself before a cheerful gas-stove.

A few minutes later a mighty shout arose—a thrilling, long-drawn-out shout of "Friars! Friars!"

The eyes of Wharton and Bob Cherry met instinctively, and they rushed out of the dressing-room.

An amazing scene met their gaze. The fourteenth length was being contested, and—wonder of wonders!—Frank Nugent was leading.

There could be no doubt about it. The fair-haired, fresh-complexioned Greyfriars junior had overhauled Talbot of St. Jim's, and was swimming with supreme courage. He had seen Wharton leave the bath, and knew that the honour and glory of Greyfriars rested in his hands, and although he possessed a terrible feeling of fatigue, he kept gamely on, and commenced the final length before any of the other swimmers.

"Oh, Franky! Franky!" yelled Bob Cherry, in an ecstasy. "Stick to it, old man! You're winning—winning!"

His face pale as death, his breath coming and going in short, spasmodic gasps, Frank Nugent toiled on. Talbot had a little more in him. His constitution, roughened and toughened by the storm and stress of his past life, admirably fitted him for such a gruelling race as this. He swam on strongly, and the Greyfriars fellows who were watching gave a groan as they noticed how rapidly the distance between the two swimmers was decreasing.

But Nugent swam on with the frenzy of despair. Straight ahead of him lay the welcome rope; and behind that gleamed the anxious faces of the other four members of the Famous Five. Bracing himself up for the last desperate effort, Nugent swept onwards with long, swift strokes. He heard the heavy breathing of the

St. Jim's fellow in the rear, but his courage never faltered. One mighty sweep of his right arm, and his fingers closed in a grateful grip on the outstretched rope.

Frank Nugent had won the championship by a bare yard!

The cheering was deafening, and the faces of the Greyfriars partisans were radiant and serene. After a shaky start, they had put on a gigantic number of points, and were now leading in the great sports tournament. And Frank Nugent of the Remove was hailed in triumph as the hero of the hour.

CHAPTER 12.

Merry v. Cherry!

"SECONDS out of the ring!"

A hush fell upon the crowded assembly in the old gymnasium at St. Jim's.

"Time!"

Tom Merry and Frank Courtenay, looking spick and span in their knickers and vests, stepped briskly into the boxing-ring. They had been drawn first in the great contest.

The air was rent with cheering on behalf of the St. Jim's champion, while the Highcliffe supporters, though few in number, took care to make themselves heard.

"Good old Courtenay! Pile in, old man!"

Frank Courtenay suited the action to the word. He sailed in with alacrity at Mr. Railton's sharp command, and planted his right and left in quick succession on Tom Merry's face and body.

The Shell fellow, momentarily thrown off his balance, staggered back, and the Highcliffian fairly peppered him with blows.

"Played, begad!" came the Caterpillar's cool, admiring voice. "Stick to him, Franky!"

Courtenay pressed his man hotly, and dealt some severe body-blows, which gave Tom Merry a good shaking up.

But Tom was not thin-skinned. He could stand a good deal of punishment, and was still on his feet at the end of the first round.

"Time!" said Mr. Railton.

"This is rotten, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther glumly, as he swept his towel through the air, and bent down to examine his chum's heated and battered face. "Surely you can lick anything that Highcliffe can put into the ring?"

"There's plenty of time yet!" muttered Tom. "Things will begin to happen in the second round."

Tom Merry spoke truly. He got his man in the open next time, and admirably atoned for his poor display previously. It was now Courtenay's turn to take some hard knocks, and he took them, a genial smile of good sportsmanship hovering about his face the while.

"That's a lot better!" said Monty Lowther approvingly, as he sat his man on his knee for the second time. "You seem to have got the whip-hand of him now. Keep it up!"

Some very even fighting followed. If there were a slight superiority between the combatants it was on Tom Merry's side. Some heavy blows were exchanged, and both fellows were breathing hard when Mr. Railton called "time."

In the next round Tom Merry soon began to gain the mastery. He had been devoting much of his spare time lately to sparring in the gym. with Jack Blake, and the wisdom of his action made itself apparent now. He smote Frank Courtenay repeatedly, and with great vigour, and just before the end of the round, got home with a straight drive which caught Courtenay on the mark and stretched him prone.

"One—two—three," began Mr. Railton.

"Up you get, Franky!" urged the Caterpillar. "You're not licked yet, you know!"

"Four—five—six—"

Still the Highcliffian did not rise.

"Seven—eight—nine—"

Tom Merry stood ready for his opponent, but he need not have troubled. That last blow had ended Courtenay's chances completely. He was a very game and

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determined fighter, but that straight left of Tom Merry's had spelt a knock-out.

"Ten!"

Frank Courtenay staggered to his feet, only to sink back again, overcome. He was beaten fairly and squarely.

"Merry wins!" said Mr. Railton.

And the cheer which greeted the announcement could be heard all over St. Jim's.

"The next bout," said the referee, "is between James Silver of Rookwood and Robert Cherry of Greyfriars."

"Hurray!"

James Silver and Robert Cherry, smiling and serene, stepped into the ring. They were the centre of an admiring crowd, the Greyfriars fellow sturdy and confident, the Rookwooder slim, but resolute.

"Seconds out of the ring! Time!"

The combatants shook hands, and the next moment they were fighting like tigers. Bob Cherry's blows were well timed, but only a few found their mark, for Jimmy Silver was as elusive as any eel. He ducked and side-stepped with wonderful speed, and now and again his fists would dart out in a lightning flash, to get home on Bob Cherry's chest and ribs.

The first round ended with honours easy, but those who knew the stability and endurance of Bob Cherry predicted that he would emerge triumphant. And they were right.

In the second round the Greyfriars fellow succeeded in dealing out some very fierce drives, and Jimmy Silver staggered to his corner a few minutes later with a wry face and an irresistible longing to throw up the sponge. In the third round that longing became more acute.

Bob Cherry kept his ground admirably, and easily checked the few feeble rushes of his opponent. Then he suddenly sailed in, and a terrific right-hander felled the Rookwooder like an ox.

Mr. Railton solemnly counted Jimmy Silver out, and then the audience cheered Bob Cherry to the echo. This was what most of them had been longing for during many months—to see Tom Merry and Bob Cherry brought together in the boxing-ring for the second time in history.

The previous bout between the two juniors had been stubbornly contested, and Bob Cherry had scored a well-balanced win in the eighth round. But the St. Jim's fellows had always maintained that their champion was a trifle off colour at the time, and with an indescribable longing they looked forward to the contest about to take place, hoping against hope that Tom Merry would retrieve the defeat he had previously sustained, and win back his lost laurels. The Friars, on the other hand, were particularly anxious that Bob Cherry should give them an encore of his former display, and thus prove himself, beyond a shadow of doubt, the best junior boxer in the Southern Counties.

There was an interval of a quarter of an hour before the final commenced, to allow Bob Cherry to recover from the effects of his tussle with Jimmy Silver. Then Mr. Railton issued the command, and the two rivals stepped into the ring and grasped each other cordially by the hand.

"Here's to a good scrap, and may the best man win!" murmured Bob Cherry.

His opponent nodded cheerfully, and then, as the fatal word "Time!" was rapped out, the two juniors rushed at

each other as if they meant to end the affair in half a minute.

The pace which was kept up in the first round was too hot to last, and both boers were glad to get a little breathing-space when the three minutes had expired.

"Keep a cool head, Tommy!" muttered Monty Lowther. "This isn't a slogging competition. Science counts for everything in this act."

"Time!"

The second round was a repetition of the first. Tom Merry would willingly have followed out his second's advice, and boxed more coolly, but Bob Cherry gave him no chance to do so. He was at his opponent all the time, and Tom Merry either had to face his fierce onslaught or retreat; and a St. Jim's fellow never retreated.

In the third round, Tom Merry had more openings, and he took full advantage of them. There was a wild whoop of delight from his chums as he broke through Bob Cherry's guard, and got in a telling blow on the chin; and a still louder shout went up, when, at the end of the round, he felled Cherry with a straight left.

Harry Wharton looked anxious as he sponged his chum's face.

"Do you think you can stick it out, Bob, old man?" he murmured.

Bob Cherry grinned breathlessly.

"I'm game!" he said. "Tommy's a tough nut to crack; but I've cracked him before, so why shouldn't history repeat itself?"

Wharton said nothing. He had more than a vague notion that Bob Cherry was already treading the path of defeat, though he would not have voiced his forebodings for the world.

"Time!"

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Polish him off, old scout!"

But Bob Cherry had no intention of being "polished off" just yet. He stuck to his guns manfully, and was responsible for a delightful bout of in-fighting. The claret was soon streaming profusely from the St. Jim's fellow's nose, and he was thankful when the interval came for alterations and repairs, as Monty Lowther humorously put it.

Round 5 ended in Bob Cherry's favour, likewise Round 6; but after that Tom Merry seemed to spring into new life. He patted his opponent's face vigorously, and for the second time in that memorable encounter Bob Cherry found himself felled.

The seventh and eighth rounds were fought out desperately; but the knock-out refused to come, and it looked very much as if the participants would go the whole of the ten rounds, and that a win on points would be the inevitable issue.

Round 9 was a thrill from start to finish. Bob Cherry summoned all his remaining strength half-way through, and a heavy, well-directed blow on the mark sent Tom Merry staggering into the ropes. The St. Jim's fellows gave a dismal groan, which changed to a mighty cheer as their hero rallied, and warded off Bob Cherry's persistent attacks.

Towards the end of the round, Tom Merry seemed likely to effect a knock-out, after all. A sharp rap on the nose made Bob Cherry's eyes water, and he blinked uncertainly. This gave Tom a chance to force the fighting, but Mr. Railton called "Time!" at the critical moment, and the captain of the Shell was obliged to postpone his attack until the next, and last, round.

How the fellows cheered as the two sturdy schoolboys stepped into the ring for the last time! Clamorous yells of "Cherry!" and "Merry!" fairly rent the air.

The Greyfriars junior fought doggedly, although he was feeling dead-beat. Pluck and endurance were the qualities uppermost in Bob Cherry's character, and he meant to see his fight through to the finish.

Tom Merry battled on like one in a dream. If he wanted to win, he must win quickly, for, in the event of no knock-out, the verdict would probably be in favour of Bob Cherry, who had shown up so well in the earlier stages of the contest.

And then there was his previous defeat to be avenged! He must act at once—swiftly and surely!

For an instant Bob Cherry dropped his guard, and in that second the St. Jim's fellow saw his opportunity.

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Dashing in, he delivered a straight drive on to his opponent's chest, and, before Cherry could recover, got in a wonderful uppercut—the best blow of the day. Bob Cherry went to the floor with a crash.

Mr. Railton began to count slowly—much too slowly it seemed to the Saints who were looking on. He reached eight when Bob Cherry staggered to his feet.

"Good old Bob!" came in ringing tones from Harry Wharton. "That's ripping! Stick it out!"

But Bob was whacked, and he knew it. He was incapable of keeping his feet, much less of facing the lashing fists of his opponent once more. He sank back again to the floor, exhausted and beaten!

"Merry wins," said the referee quietly, and the scene which followed beggared description. Fellows simply swarmed into the ring from all sides, and Tom Merry, the victor of that never-to-be-forgotten tussle, found himself hoisted in the air, and borne in triumph from the gymnasium to the nearest bath-room.

Bob Cherry looked up almost appealingly into Harry Wharton's face.

"You—you're not mad with me because I lost?" he muttered. "I played up to him as well as I could, but he was one too many for me!"

"Mad with you?" echoed Wharton. "Why, you giddy cherub, you fought like a brick! No other fellow could have gone through such a gruelling affair as this was! You lost, but you lost honourably!"

Bob Cherry nodded gratefully, and rose to his feet. Friars and Saints, Rookwooders and Highcliffians gave him a rousing cheer, and the sound brought a mist to Bob's eyes. He cherished that cheer more deeply than he could say in that hour of defeat.

Thus Tom Merry of St. Jim's won back his lost laurels, and a long, long time was likely to elapse ere that great fight between two equally great sportsmen faded into oblivion.

CHAPTER 13.

Playing to Win!

THE strenuous excitement of the last few hours was relieved in the evening by the boxing contests which took place among the Freaks. They had held no swimming contests, for the very good reason that hardly any of them could swim!

Bolsover major, of Greyfriars, met Grundy, of St. Jim's, in the boxing final. They were two hefty fellows, with great slogging powers, so that the affair was more in the nature of a prize-fight than anything else.

Grundy was a mighty hitter, but he met his match in Bolsover, the untamed bully of the Greyfriars Remove. Hard knocks were the order of the day, and both combatants were badly battered; but in the sixth round Bolsover managed to get in a fierce knock-out blow, and the great Grundy was forced to confess that the boys of Greyfriars knew how to use their fists. To his credit be it said, that hardly any of Bolsover's schoolmates could have accomplished such a performance, save, perhaps, Cherry, Wharton, and Russell.

The great gathering of schoolboys trooped up to bed tired, but serenely happy. Especially did this apply to the Saints, who, by virtue of Tom Merry's fine win in the boxing-ring, had now placed themselves in a splendid position, with 48 points to their credit.

Only two more items remained for decision, but they were very important items. On the morrow the great football final against the Friars would be played; and on the following day the Marathon race was to be held.

Anything might happen in the latter, for the winner received 24 points. It was, therefore, quite possible for Highcliffe or Rookwood, now 18 points behind, to win the Sports Tournament. The second man home in the Marathon was awarded 10 points, so it was pretty obvious that if either of the schools secured both first and second places, that particular school would bag the prime honours.

The occupants of the Shell dormitory were early astir when Friday morning dawned. They wanted to see what manner of day it was, and were more than delighted with the cloudless sky and the clear, frosty atmosphere.

The kick-off was timed for eleven o'clock, and the match would be over in time for dinner, giving the combatants

the whole of the afternoon and evening to enjoy a rest, that they might be fit for the great Marathon race on the morrow. In the afternoon the Freaks' Final was to be held.

Tom Merry & Co. put in an hour's hard practice after breakfast, but the Greyfriars fellows rested. They had played so often together, and were feeling so fit, that they did not deem practice necessary at the moment.

Every yard of the touch-line was crowded long before eleven, the spectators standing in solid rows, for everyone made it his business to be present at the final.

Rushden of the Sixth was referee, and sharp to the time he blew his whistle for the rival elevens to line up.

Tom Merry spun a coin, and Wharton won the toss. There was no wind, so that Greyfriars derived but small benefit from this circumstance.

Then the whistle went for the game to start, and, as the ball was kicked-off, a mighty, resounding roar went up.

"Play up, Saints!"

"On the ball, Friars!"

There was a sensational opening. The right wing of St. Jim's became remarkably active, and Koumi Rao, the Indian junior, was responsible for a sparkling run. He centred to Tom Merry in the nick of time, and Tom crashed the ball past Bulstrode in hurricane fashion.

"Goal!"

Fellows raved, and shouted, and stamped, and caps were thrown high in the air, the owners quite regardless of losing them in their wild excitement. St. Jim's had scored—scored in the first minute!

Flushed with their success, the fine forward line of the Saints swooped down again upon the Greyfriars citadel. Johnny Bull and Tom Brown, at back, put up a stubborn defence; but the latter was speedily forced to concede a corner.

Talbot took the kick, and lobbed the ball neatly on to the waiting head of Jack Blake, who seldom made a mistake when presented with an opening such as this. He met the ball fairly and squarely with his head, and it whizzed in, eluding Bulstrode's frantic clutch by inches.

"Two up!" roared the crowd. "Hurrah! Bravo, Blake!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked grim as Bulstrode tossed out the leather. This state of affairs was ghastly in the extreme, and it looked as if they would be beaten by unlimited goals.

Wharton kicked off, and Frank Nugent raced through, but was pulled up for off-side. Nothing daunted, however, the Friars warmed to their work, and, after a hot bombardment, Fatty Wynn was beaten by a furious drive from Vernou-Smith.

"Good old Bouncer!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That was ripping, old man! Keep it up! We'll show 'em that there's life in the old dog yet!"

But, although Greyfriars had the best of the argument up to the interval, they failed to equalise. The whistle went for half-time, and the Saints sprinted into the dressing-room, hugely satisfied with their lead.

Harry Wharton & Co. were quite cheerful as they talked things over among themselves. They knew that they did not deserve to be behind on the run of the play, and resolved to set a terrific pace in the second half.

As the two teams lined up again, under Rushden's watchful eye, there was a roar from the touch-line:

"Keep it up, Saints! Good old Merry! Good old Talbot! You're winning!"

Shortly after the resumption, the enthusiasm of the crowd was justified. Koumi Rao, who was a perfect wizard on the wing, dispossessed Peter Todd of the ball, and raced towards goal.

"Centre!" panted Tom Merry, who had sprinted hard to the goal-mouth.

The Indian junior obeyed; but before Tom Merry could drive the leather home the burly Johnny Bull put in a terrific charge, which sent him sprawling to the turf. But Harry Noble rushed in, and, getting the full force of his foot to the ball, sent it past Bulstrode in a manner which made the Greyfriars goalie think of fireworks.

"Goal!"

"Three up, by Jove!"

"Advance, Australia!"

It really seemed as if the Friars had shot their bolt—to the inexperienced eye, at any rate. But those who had been following the game closely knew better. They were aware that Greyfriars possessed a pack of forwards who were by no means a dead letter, and that the half-back line had been holding considerable energy in reserve.

Bob Cherry initiated the next great forward movement for his school. He drove the leather across to Mark Linley, who promptly put Penfold in possession. The inside-left was challenged by Figgins, but deftly dodged round him, and then sent in a scorching shot, which rendered Fatty Wynn, good goalie though he was, quite helpless.

"Well played, Pen!" exclaimed Wharton jubilantly. "That was great. Shake!"

And Penfold, smiling and breathless, gripped his skipper's hand.

"Now for the giddy equaliser!" said Bob Cherry.

But the "giddy equaliser" was a long time in coming. Play was confined to mid-field for the next twenty minutes, and now only a quarter of an hour remained before the final whistle. It looked as if the plucky Greyfriars eleven were doomed.

Harry Wharton led a spirited attack upon the St. Jim's goal, and Fatty Wynn had the busiest time of his life. He was for ever fisting out shots, which whizzed in with great vigour from the feet of the opposing forwards. Five minutes from time he was in difficulties with a low drive of Frank Nugent's, and Wharton, rushing in, drove the leather home.

"Level!"

The crowd looked on almost in awe as Fatty Wynn ruefully fished out the sphere from the net. After being two goals to the bad, the plucky Friars had made up the leeway, and the score was now three all!

And Greyfriars had not finished yet. They were determined not to risk a replay. It was now or never!

"Pile in!" muttered Wharton, between his set teeth.

And then followed another great attack on the part of the boys in blue and white. It was no easy matter for them to take the ball down the field, for their progress was hotly disputed at every inch of the way. But, combining splendidly, they kept on—firm, resolute, and courageous.

During the hot bombardment which followed, Figgins was unfortunate enough to handle. Luckily, the incident occurred just outside the fateful penalty area, and a free-kick was awarded the Friars. Mark Linley took it. He shot through a forest of legs, and Frank Nugent, fastening on to the ball like a tiger, scored a magnificent goal just as Rushden's whistle rang out.

The Friars had won—won by four goals to three!

Tom Merry was the first to congratulate Harry Wharton & Co. on their well-merited success.

"When we led 3—1, we thought it was all over bar shouting!" he said. "But you've proved that a game's not lost till it's won. Well played!"

And the Greyfriars fellows trooped off the field in the seventh heaven of delight, after one of the most gruelling football contests in schoolboy history!

CHAPTER 14.

The Fifteen-year-old Prodigy!

"MY only aunt!"

"What in thunder is it?"

"The wild man from Borneo!"

These, and similar exclamations, greeted the sudden appearance of Billy Bunter in the quadrangle after dinner. For the first time, the fat junior had donned the special football outfit sent to him by Mr. Daniel Dobbin.

Billy Bunter indeed presented a singular appearance. His knickers were of a vivid yellow colour, and the jersey was an eye-opener. Once seen, it would never be forgotten.

On the breast, a striking picture of a small bull-dog was displayed, and over it had been stitched, in flaring red letters: "Our Prize Puppy!"

On Bunter's back appeared the words: "Always Deal at Dobbin's!"

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Tom Merry & Co., who had strolled out into the quad, gazed at the fat footballer in amazement.

"Our Prize Puppy!" quoted Monty Lowther.

"Well, I'm jiggered! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the rest of the juniors.

Billy Bunter paused on his way, and snorted.

"Instead of spending your time in idiotic laughter," he said loftily, "you chaps would be well advised to come along and watch some real football!"

"As played by prize puppies!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks for the tip, Bunt," said Tom Merry. "We've booked our seats in advance. We wouldn't miss this afternoon's match for worlds!"

"Not for dozens of hemispheres!" chuckled Manners. Then he broke off suddenly, as a violent clanging came from the direction of the school gates.

"Hallo! What's all this?"

The juniors sped towards the gates. Outside, waiting for admission, was a crowd of people, numbering at least a hundred. The London train had just come in, apparently, for some of them carried handbags.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Is this an invasion in force, or what?"

There were, among that clamorous crowd, old men and middle-aged men, and quite a score of fellows in khaki. Why they should suddenly present themselves for admission at the gates of St. Jim's was a mystery.

"Hi, there!" exclaimed a peppery old gentleman, poking his stick through the bars of the gate and rapping sharply on the flagstones. "Let us in, young shavers!"

Taggles hobbled slowly out of his lodge, a bunch of keys rattling in his horny palm. He almost fell down as he noted the long queue of people outside.

"Porter!" thundered the old gent with the heavy walking-stick. "How dare you keep guests waiting outside all this time, sir? I regard you as an utter fool!"

"Fool yourself!" retorted Taggles. "Wot d'ye want 'ere, any'ow? The asylum's over at Abbotsford."

"What! What!"

"You 'eard wot I sed," Taggles went on, unmoved. "This hain't no place for sich himbeciles has you. Take yerself 'orf, an' look sharp about it, or I shall set the dorg on yer!"

The old gentleman's face grew an art shade in purple. He looked as if he were on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

Luckily, a young corporal intervened at that moment, and hastened to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"We've come to see the football match," he explained.

"I understand that Master Bunter, the greatest boy footballer in the world, is on view this afternoon."

"Great jumping crackers!"

Tom Merry & Co. wondered if they had heard aright. Surely this tremendous and ever-increasing crowd could not have foregathered with the object of witnessing the antics of such a hopeless freak as Billy Bunter!

But Bunter himself confirmed the fact.

"That's quite right," he said, in lofty tones. "Let 'em in at once, Taggles! They've come down from London to see some good sport."

The old gentleman outside the gate eyed the fat junior with considerable disfavour.

"You are Master Bunter, described by the newspapers as the finest juvenile exponent of football in the Southern Counties?"

"That's me!" replied Bunter, almost bursting through his jersey as he swelled with visible pride.

"Hum! Well, appearances are deceptive, I must say! You seem to me to be an incompetent booby, enveloped in rolls of fat!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

Mr. Railton, who had caught sight of the crowd from his study window, hastened towards the gates.

"Who—what—" he stammered. "What is the meaning of this?"

The corporal, catching sight of the Distinguished Conduct Medal which the Housemaster wore, saluted him respectfully.

"We've come to see the great football match, sir," he explained; "but the porter seems to be chary about letting us in."

"The—the great football match?" stuttered Mr. Railton. "Has it been advertised, then?"

"Yes, in the 'Daily Snip.'"

"Ahem! I really had no knowledge of the affair whatsoever. Since you have undertaken such a long railway journey, however, it would be most inhospitable to send you away disappointed. Taggles, unlock the gates at once! Merry! Manners! Lowther! Conduct these gentlemen to the football-ground!"

"Certainly, sir!"

And the vast assembly made its way to Little Side, where all was in readiness for the match.

Mulvaney major had been appointed referee, but, under the circumstances, he had discreetly made himself scarce. It was quite on the cards that the two freak teams would be slaughtered by the incensed crowd; and the referee would not be exempt from that painful proceeding.

The game was a perfect farce. Billy Bunter, with his usual conceit, endeavoured to monopolise the play at the outset. He secured the ball, and waddled along with it—unfortunately towards his own goal. Bolsover, at full-back, promptly saved the situation by sending Bunter sprawling and then sitting on him.

The schoolboy portion of the crowd shrieked with laughter; but from the Londoners, who had travelled such a long distance to see the fifteen-year-old prodigy, came a yell of rage.

Five minutes later Billy Bunter came into the picture again. He took a mighty kick in the wrong direction, and there was a roar from Hazeldene as the ball crashed past him into the net. Grundy & Co. were one up—thanks to Bunter!

Lord Mauleverer, the slacker of Greyfriars, was leaning against the goalpost, his eyelids closed, and his thoughts far away from the scene of tumult around him. Wun Lung was performing acrobatic feats on the grass; and Fisher T. Fish was sprawling on his back, chuckling over an American comic paper, and quite oblivious to the fact that he was supposed to be taking part in an important football match.

At last the crowd could stand it no longer. Tired and travel-stained, they had come to St. Jim's hoping to witness a thrilling game, not a ludicrous farce. A threatening move was made towards the players, and Mr. Daniel Dobbin himself led the way, calling to the others to charge.

The game was rudely interrupted; and it was certain that there would be no more football that day. Skinner & Co., who had fondly hoped to enjoy the joke, quite failed to see, now, where the joke came in. They were flogged to the ground by the indignant crowd, and walking-sticks and military canes were lashed about their legs until they howled for mercy.

Both elevens had to take their gruel; and when it was all over they crawled off the field, feeling as if life were not worth living.

Doubtless the angry multitude would have proceeded to further deeds of riot by smashing the school windows, and so forth; but Mr. Railton succeeded in pacifying them after a time, and invited them all to retire to the dining-hall, where a tremendous spread had been laid for them. After tea, a grand concert was held, which restored Mr. Dobbin and the rest to a state of great good-humour; and the Housemaster insisted on refunding every single railway-fare from the School Games Fund.

But many, many months would elapse ere the scene on that memorable and exciting afternoon faded from the memory of William George Bunter, the fifteen-year-old prodigy!

CHAPTER 15.

The Final Surprise!

THE great sports tournament had almost drawn to a close. It was Friday afternoon, and the old, ivy-mounted walls of St. Jim's were crowded with fellows, waiting to witness the finish of the Marathon race.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"REDFERN'S BARRING OUT!"

Over two hours before, fifty-six runners had started out from the school gates, and at any moment the first batch of competitors might appear in sight, straining every nerve to reach their goal.

Every school had a splendid chance of success. The points, up to that time, were distributed as follows:

Greyfriars, 54; St. Jim's, 48; and Highcliffe and Rookwood, 30. The Friars' spirited rally in the football final accounted for their lead.

"I'd give a term's pocket-money to see one of our fellows come in first!" sighed Monty Lowther, who was not taking part in the race. "But they're up against some jolly hot stuff!"

"Listen!" said Manners suddenly.

Far away in the distance came the unmistakable hoot of a horn. The first runner was nearing home.

"Who is it, dear boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy excitedly.

"Goodness alone knows!" said Lowther. "He hardly seems to be moving, whoever the Johnny is. Looks done to death!"

Mr. Railton brought his field-glasses into play, and uttered a sharp exclamation.

"It is a St. Jim's boy!" he said delightedly. "I can plainly discern the school colours!"

"Huwway!"

There was a hush for a few moments, then a glad cry burst from the lips of Marie Rivers.

"It's Talbot!" she exclaimed. "Oh, how splendid!"

As the runner drew closer, the juniors could see that Marie was correct. But there was no frenzied cheer—no mighty outburst of applause; for the figure which had appeared into view was not running. As Monty Lowther had predicted, Talbot was dead beat, and was merely staggering along the road, his face pale as a sheet.

The sight went right to the hearts of those looking on, and the shouts which had been on three hundred lips were never uttered.

Then a bicycle flashed round the bend in the road, and Kildare, who had accompanied the competitors over the route, sped up to the exhausted Shell fellow, and said something to him in a low tone. A moment later Talbot seemed to summon together the little strength remaining to him. He urged himself forward, and at the same instant other runners hove into view. They were Harry Wharton of Greyfriars and Jimmy Silver of Rookwood.

Both were in a state of collapse, but they at least gave the impression that they could finish the course; whereas Talbot, after a forced burst of a few yards, sank to the ground.

He lay prone for a moment, his breath coming and going in great gasps. Then, on hearing the patter of feet behind him, he roused himself with a mighty effort, and staggered on again.

The crowd could remain silent no longer.

"Talbot, Talbot!" they roared. "Stick it out! Only a dozen yards now!"

Only a dozen yards, true; but Wharton and Silver were making swift progress, despite their fatigue. It seemed inevitable that Talbot's colours would be lowered.

But at the critical moment the St. Jim's fellow rallied. Wharton, with a supreme spurt, drew abreast of him, but he toiled on gamely. There was a craning of heads to witness the end, and suddenly the tape went fluttering down. Who had won?

A moment's intolerable suspense, and then Mr. Railton's hand went up.

"Talbot wins!"

But the boy in question never heard. He had fallen to the ground in a dead faint.

"Water this way!" came a brisk, familiar voice; and the presence of Lieutenant Mason, the old boy who had been instrumental in gaining for St. Jim's a week's holiday, was observed for the first time.

Monty Lowther dashed into the porter's lodge, to return a moment later with a jug of water. The young officer tended to the prostrate runner, who came round in record time.

"How did it go?" he gasped, in a low, strained voice.

"You won," said Dick Mason. "Won gloriously; by

(Concluded on page 25, col. ii.)

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOL DAYS



A Magnificent Serial Story dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and their Girl Chum. Specially published at the earnest request of readers of the "Gem" Library.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Previous Instalments told how:—

ETHEL CLEVELAND, a pretty English girl, and cousin to ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the swell of St. Jim's, goes to St. Freda's School to continue her education.

Upon arrival, she is kindly received by MISS PENFOLD, the principal.

DOLORES PELHAM, a handsome dark girl, being in disgrace at the school, is very unhappy. Ethel, however, is sympathetic towards her, and tries to be friendly.

ENID CRAVEN, a sneak, who is largely responsible for Dolores' unhappy position at the school, is urgently in need of money with which to settle a dress bill.

Dolores attempts to run away from the school in the middle of the night, and is brought back, against her will, by Ethel.

(Now go on with the story.)

Gone!

"Ethel!"

"Ethel!"

Cousin Ethel opened her eyes.

A ray of light danced in them, and she sat up in bed, for the moment trying in vain to recall where she was.

The cubicle, the grey wall of the passage that ran past the end of it, the laughing voices close at hand, seemed like part of a dream for the moment.

But Dolly Carew was shaking her, and Dolly's cheery, laughing face recalled her to recollection of her surroundings.

"Dolly!" ejaculated Ethel.

Dolly laughed merrily.

"Don't you hear the bell?" she exclaimed.

Ethel could indeed hear it.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The sound of the bell came clearly enough through the keen, fresh morning air. The morning was bright and sunny, and the sunlight streamed in at the windows at the end of the dormitory.

"That's the rising-bell," explained Dolly. "It's seven o'clock. The corporal is ringing it."

"The corporal!"

"Corporal Brick—he's the school porter," explained Dolly. "He's always bad-tempered at getting up early; that's why he's making the bell go so loudly."

Cousin Ethel laughed. Her eyes were still a little heavy. She had had much less sleep than she needed the previous night. But she always woke up in a cheerful temper.

"Time to get up," continued Dolly. "Don't be a slacker, you know. I want you to come out for a run before breakfast."

"Yes. Is Dolores up?" asked Ethel, thinking at once of the Spanish girl, with a feeling of remorse for not having watched further into the night.

"Yes, she's up and out already."

Cousin Ethel felt a great sense of relief. Dolores had not carried out her wild scheme, then; she had not run away from St. Freda's.

Ethel was soon up and dressed, and she went downstairs with the cheerful Dolly and a crowd of laughing girls. Milly Pratt slipped an arm through hers as she came out into the Close with Dolly Carew.

"Shall we go and say good-morning to Mrs. Phipps?" asked Milly affably.

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"No," said Dolly decidedly. "We're going for a run. I suppose you've forgotten your purse as usual—eh?"

"My dear Dolly—"

"Rats!" said Dolly cheerfully. "Come on, Ethel!"

And she rushed Ethel away before Milly Pratt could raise any further objection. Ethel laughed; she knew well enough what saying good-morning to Mrs. Phipps meant.

Milly Pratt looked after them and sighed. Milly paid a visit to Mrs. Phipps' little cottage whenever she was in funds, or whenever she could induce another girl to share funds with her. Milly was Mrs. Phipps' best customer—excepting in one respect, that she did not always settle the little accounts she was always ready to run up. But for that, no face at St. Freda's would have been more welcome to Mrs. Phipps.

Ethel looked round the Close for Dolores, but did not see her.

"Dolores must have been up early," she remarked.

"Oh, yes!" said Dolly carelessly. "She was up before any of us. Her bed was empty when I woke."

Ethel started.

"Then you haven't seen her this morning?"

"No."

"Has anyone else?"

Ethel asked the question quickly, breathlessly, and Dolly looked at her in surprise.

"I don't know," she said. "What does it matter?"

Ethel was alarmed.

Where was Dolores?

Had the wilful girl carried out her mad scheme after all? Had she risen a second time while Ethel slept, and left the precincts of St. Freda's?

"What is the matter, Ethel?" exclaimed Dolly, growing alarmed from Ethel's expression.

"I want to find Dolores."

"Why?"

"I am afraid something may have happened," faltered Ethel.

"Good gracious! What?"

"Let us look for her," said Ethel evasively.

"Certainly!"

They looked for Dolores.

But the Spanish girl was not to be found.

In the gardens, in the gymnasium, in the class-rooms, and the passages they looked for her; but the dark face and the deep black eyes were not to be seen.

Dolly questioned all the girls whom they met, but no one seemed to have seen anything of Dolores.

Ethel's face grew more and more anxious.

The conviction was forcing itself upon her mind that the Spanish girl was gone. She reproached herself bitterly for having slept.

While she had slumbered, Dolores had carried out her plan. What would become of her? Where was she now?

A little old man, with grey hair and beard and a wooden leg, was standing by the school wall near the gate, and Dolly led her friend towards him. She explained that it was Corporal Brick, who, with his wife, inhabited the lodge. He was an old soldier, and had lost the missing leg in South Africa. When he was in a talkative mood—which was often—he would tell them thrilling stories of the yeldt and the karroo, and of desperate tussles with enemies whom he generally alluded to as "them Boers"—probably meaning the Boers.

NO. 3. "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1/2^d. OUT TO-DAY. DO NOT FAIL TO GET A COPY!

The corporal was standing looking at the wall, which was covered thickly with great masses of ivy.

He was scratching the rim of grey hair that surrounded his bald head.

He turned and looked at the two girls.

"Mornin', Miss Dolly," he said. "Mornin', miss!"

"Good-morning, corporal! What is the matter?" asked Dolly.

The corporal pointed to the ivy.

"Look there, Miss Dolly!"

Dolly Carew looked.

"Well?" she said.

"Well," said the corporal, "don't you see it's broke down, Miss Dolly? Look 'ere—and 'ere! Somebody's been climbin' hover that hivy!"

Dolly gave a little cry. Cousin Ethel changed colour. It was a confirmation of her worst fears.

An active girl like Dolores could easily climb over the low wall by the aid of the ivy. And the tearing of some of the tendrils from the wall remained as a trace of her climb.

Ethel did not speak. She felt that it would be better for her to say nothing.

"A burglar!" exclaimed Dolly.

The corporal scratched his scanty hair again.

"Maybe," he said. "Somebody's been hover that wall, that's sartin."

"Perhaps it was the cat," Dolly suggested.

Corporal Brick gave her a pitying look.

"Which the cats have been hover that wall hoften enough, Miss Dolly, without pullin' down any of the hivy," he said. "Somebody's climbed hover that wall."

"Last night?"

"Sartin. It wasn't done when I made my rounds last night. I learned to keep watch, miss, and take my rounds reg'lar, when I was fightin' them Boers—"

"But who could it have been?" interrupted Dolly Carew, who had no curiosity to hear about the Boers just then, but was much more interested in the identity of the unknown who had clambered over the ivy in the night.

The corporal shook his head.

"I dunno, Miss Dolly," he replied; "but it's my dooty to go and report to Miss Penfold. It may 'ave been a thief, and I'll ask Miss Penfold if there's anything missin'."

And the wooden-legged veteran stumped away towards the house.

Dolly Carew turned to Ethel with shining eyes.

"Isn't it exciting?" she exclaimed. "There must have been a burglar or somebody come over the wall while we were all asleep last night."

Ethel did not reply.

"Yes; it's curious," added Dolly.

"What is curious?"

"Corporal Brick's dog is always loose of a night, and he would surely bark if a stranger came in. The corporal did not hear him bark, I suppose. It's odd."

Ethel nodded. She thought she knew why the corporal's dog had not barked. The dog knew Dolores, of course.

The two girls returned slowly to the house. The bell was ringing for breakfast. Ethel cast one glance round the crowded room as she came in, in the hope of seeing Dolores Pelham there. But she was disappointed. Dolores was not to be seen.

Miss Penfold's Announcement.

Breakfast at St. Freda's was usually a quiet and sedate meal, but upon this particular morning there was a great deal of suppressed excitement in the room.

The girls spoke in whispers, or cast significant glances.

Something had happened.

They knew that, though they did not know precisely what it was.

Ethel had expected Dolores' absence to be remarked upon at once, but it was hardly mentioned. The general impression was that Dolores was taking her breakfast alone in the punishment-room.

Ethel knew differently, and Dolly Carew suspected now, infected by Ethel's uneasiness. But the others neither knew nor cared.

But that something had happened they knew.

In the first place, Corporal Brick's uneasiness with regard to the broken ivy had been seen and remarked upon. It was known that he had gone to Miss Penfold to ask her if anything was missing from the house.

The principal of St. Freda's had gone to her room, doubtless to see if the money in her desk there was safe.

"Miss Penfold keeps money in her desk," Milly Pratt confided to Ethel, in a whisper. "You see, she does her accounts on a regular day every week, and the day before the money is sent from the bank in Elmhurst."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"How do you know?" she said.

"Oh, I know most things that go on!" said Milly. "There are very few things that go on without my knowing about them."

"Milly is our Peeping Tom," explained Dolly Carew.

"Oh, Dolly!"

"And that's how she knows," said Dolly coolly. "She could tell you what Miss Braye's father was, and how much money Miss Tyrrell has in the bank, and what Miss Penfold's nephew is going to be when he grows up, and—"

"Oh, my dear Dolly—"

"She knows everything except her lessons," concluded Dolly.

"Well, I keep my eyes open," said Milly Pratt. "I don't believe in going about with one's eyes closed. If anybody wanted to break into the school, last night was the time, while Miss Penfold's money was in her desk. It will be paid away to-day."

"I am sure there has been no robbery," said Ethel.

"I don't see how you can be sure; but I hope not, of course. Poor Miss Penfold could not afford to lose the money," said Milly. "But it would be awfully exciting, wouldn't it?"

Ethel laughed.

"I would rather be without excitement of that sort," she said.

"So would I," said Belle Hilton. "I should never dare to close my eyes again if there had been a burglary in the house."

"Rats!" said Dolly cheerfully.

"Oh, Dolly!"

"Please do not talk so much at the table!" said Miss Tyrrell gently.

And the buzz of conversation died away.

Miss Penfold did not make her appearance at breakfast.

After breakfast the girls had some little time free before morning prayers, which were usually followed immediately by morning classes.

During the interval they gathered in groups, and discussed the happenings—or the supposed happenings—of the night, with bated breath.

Milly Pratt inclined to the theory of a burglary, and indeed she was fully convinced by this time that a man in a black mask, and armed with a revolver, had burgled his way into St. Freda's the previous night. Milly Pratt had a vivid imagination, which she never suffered to rust for want of exercise.

When the school was assembled for prayers, Miss Penfold was still not present. This was more extraordinary still, as Miss Penfold always read the prayers.

The girls trooped into the big school-room in great excitement.

Miss Penfold was not there.

Her pupils were taken by Miss Tyrrell.

Dolly Carew screwed up her courage to ask Miss Tyrrell if Miss Penfold was well. Miss Tyrrell nodded.

"She is quite well," she replied; "but she will not take her class this morning."

"I—I hope nothing is wrong?" ventured Dolly.

"We shall see," replied Miss Tyrrell.

And that mysterious answer confirmed the impression of the girls that something was wrong, and very wrong.

Dolores did not appear in class.

But as all believed that she was in the punishment-room, her absence was not even remarked upon.

It was at eleven o'clock, when the pupils of St. Freda's left for a short recess in the morning lessons, that Miss Penfold made her appearance.

Dolores is Missing.

Miss Penfold came into the school-room in her hat and walking-dress, showing that she had been out that morning, which accounted for no one having caught a glimpse of her.

But it was her face that the pupils looked at.

Miss Penfold was usually so grave and calm and self-possessed that any emotion in her face was certain to attract attention.

And now she was evidently labouring under a deep emotion.

A thrill ran through the school.

They felt that there was to be an explanation of the strange mystery at last. They were to learn what had happened in the night.

Miss Penfold stood at her high desk, and made a sign for silence. Every eye was fixed upon her.

"I have a very strange and painful announcement to make, my dear girls," she said. "You are aware that your fellow—"

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pupil, Dolores Pelham, has been in disgrace lately. Last night she left St. Freda's."

There was a general gasp.

"Left St. Freda's!" murmured Dolly Carew, aghast.

"Run away!"

"Oh!"

"Run away!"

"Good gracious!"

"My hat!" said the slangy Dolly. "She's bolted!"

Ethel did not speak. She was watching Miss Penfold's white, worn face.

"I have been making inquiries all the morning," said Miss Penfold. "There is no doubt that the foolish girl took the earliest train for London, and I have wired there. She will be stopped, and brought back here, and will arrive this afternoon. That is all."

And Miss Penfold left the school-room.

The girls poured out into the Close amid a babel of tongues.

Dolores' action had taken all by surprise.

"Bolted!" said Dolly. "I never expected that."

"Oh, you never know what to expect of Dolores!" said Belle Hilton. "Fancy her running away at night! I should be afraid to."

"Oh, you're afraid of anything!" said Dolly scornfully. "I shouldn't be afraid to run away if I wanted to. But I shouldn't want to."

"She must have waited a long time for the train," Milly Pratt remarked. "How hungry she must have been!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dolly Carew drew Cousin Ethel aside.

"Did you know?" she asked.

"I suspected."

"It was curious—we didn't! Dolores is a queer girl!" said Dolly. "But I am sorry for her. It was silly of her to think that she could get away. Of course, Miss Penfold would do everything to get her caught and brought back at once, to save a scandal. The silly girl! She had no chance of getting away."

"Thank goodness!" said Ethel fervently. "What would have happened to her if she had escaped?"

"I suppose she didn't think of that. Dolores is so hot-headed. I say, Enid, where are you going?" exclaimed

Dolly, breaking off, as Enid Craven came down in the direction of the school gates.

Enid was looking very white.

"I'm going to the village," she said. "I have to see about my new hat."

"Always seeing about something new, aren't you?" said Dolly, laughing. "Have you settled with Mrs. Scruton about that dress yet?"

Enid flushed.

"She is going to wait," she said.

"You paid her the half-sovereign?"

"Yes."

"And she agreed to wait for the rest?"

"Yes!" said Enid impatiently. "I've told you so! Don't you believe me?"

"Yes," said Dolly, in surprise. "Why shouldn't I believe you? How strange you are this morning, Enid! Didn't you sleep well last night?"

"I never woke up once."

"You look awfully seedy."

"Nonsense!" said Enid brusquely.

And she hurried out of the gates.

Dolly glanced after her curiously, and shook her head.

"She looks cut up about something, doesn't she?" Dolly remarked.

"She may be worried about Dolores," Ethel suggested.

Dolly Carew laughed.

"Not likely! She didn't like Dolores; she was always down on her."

"That may make her all the sorrier now that poor Dolores is in trouble. It would some people," said Ethel.

"H'm—yes! But I don't think Enid is one of those people. Poor old Dolores! I suppose she will be expelled now?"

Ethel started.

"Expelled!"

"Yes, nothing else; after trying to run away from school. Why, it might have got the school into the papers! I really don't believe Miss Penfold would ever have got over it if it had."

Ethel's brow was clouded. She thought it very probable that Dolores would be expelled from St. Freda's, when she came to think of it, and her heart ached for the wayward girl.

Dolores' Return.

The St. Freda's girls looked forward anxiously for the return of Dolores Pelham. Miss Penfold had spoken so assuredly that they had not the least doubt that her statement was correct, and that her runaway would arrive that afternoon.

Doubtless the police had been communicated with, and probably they had been ready for poor Dolores to alight when the train stopped in London. At all events, the girls had not the slightest doubt that Dolores would be brought back in the afternoon, as Miss Penfold had declared. And they were right.

It was near the end of the afternoon lessons, in which the girls took so little interest—as was natural under the circumstances—that the teachers were less even-tempered than usual.

The suppressed excitement did not make for calm work. As four o'clock struck, leaving only another half-hour of school work, the excitement was keen. Nothing had been seen of Dolores yet.

But a few minutes after the hour the sound of wheels was heard in the Close.

A thrill ran through the classes.

"It's Dolores!" murmured Dolly Carew.

"I know that rumble," whispered Milly Pratt. "It's the hack from the village."

Ethel smiled. But Milly was right—it was the village hack. The open door of the big school-room gave a view upon the hall, and as the great door was opened, every neck was turned, every eye was upon that part of the hall that could be seen from the school-room, and teachers and lessons were for the moment totally forgotten.

Two figures had entered—one that of a burly police-officer, the other that of a slim, pale girl in a cloak; and at the sight of her there was a murmur:

"Dolores!"

It was Dolores!

Miss Tyrrell closed the door upon the hall, but it was in vain to attempt to reduce the girls to attention again.

Buzzes of talk would break out again and again, and at last the school was dismissed, a few minutes early, to the equal relief of mistresses and pupils.

Meanwhile, Dolores had gone to Miss Penfold's room. The police-officer who had brought her to St. Freda was



HARRY TATE

I can't make this little old motor go, but I shall go jolly strong on the

FRONT PAGE

of this Wednesday's

MERRY and BRIGHT

What a laugh for a ½d.

How's your father?

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 408.

NO. 3. "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1/2D. OUT TO-DAY. DO NOT FAIL TO GET A COPY!

provided with refreshment, and departed just as the girls poured out of the big school-room.

They watched him with awed and interested eyes as he strode majestically across the Close and disappeared.

"Brought back by a policeman!" said Milly Pratt. "How awful! It was like being arrested! Terrible!"

"Perhaps Dolores was arrested," said Enid Craven.

Dolly stared at her.

"Why should Dolores be arrested?" she asked.

Enid turned away without replying.

Cousin Ethel would gladly have seen Dolores. But the girl was shut up in Miss Penfold's room with the principal of St. Freda's.

Little did the girls dream of what was passing. In that room Dolores was sitting bolt upright upon a chair, her hands clasped in her lap, when Miss Penfold entered. The headmistress's face was hard as granite; but Dolores did not look at her. Her own face was hard with defiance. She had been recaptured, but not conquered.

Dolores did not rise.

Miss Penfold stopped, and looked fixedly at the Spanish girl.

"Dolores!" she said quietly.

Half unwillingly Dolores rose to her feet. She meant to be defiant, but there was something in Miss Penfold's manner that impelled respect.

Her eyes met Miss Penfold's steadily enough, however.

"I am sorry for this, Dolores," said Miss Penfold quietly. "I should never have believed it of you. I could hardly credit it when I found it was the case. In spite of all your faults, I should never have deemed you capable of this."

Dolores' eyes flashed.

"I hate St. Freda's!" she said, in a low, firm voice. "I detest the place—and the people. I will not stay here. You have had me brought back, but I will not stay. If my people will not take me away, I will run away again!"

"There will be no necessity for that," said Miss Penfold quietly. "You will not be allowed to remain at St. Freda's now, whether you wish or not. There is no place for you in this school."

Dolores' lip curled.

"I am glad of it."

"You are glad to be expelled?"

Dolores winced.

"No, no—not that! But I want to go. I do not like the place. Nobody likes me here—nobody understands me, or wants to!"

"I have tried to understand you, Dolores. But I confess that I have failed. I regarded you as proud and headstrong and wilful, but never as—what you are!"

"What I am! What do you mean, Miss Penfold? I know you think it is wrong of me to do as I have done, but I don't think it wicked!" exclaimed Dolores passionately. "Girls and boys have run away from school before!"

"I was not speaking of your leaving St. Freda's, though that was very, very wrong!"

"Then what—"

Miss Penfold made an impatient gesture.

"Why will you affect ignorance, Dolores? Brick called my attention to the broken ivy on the school wall this morning, and asked me to see if there was anything missing in the house, as he feared that burglars had been here."

"And I was missing."

"Yes, you were missing, Dolores—and something else."

"Something else!"

Dolores' dark eyes were wide open now.

Miss Penfold made a weary gesture.

"Dolores, why will you prevaricate? You know what was missing."

"I do not."

"Nonsense! As soon as Brick made his statement, I remembered the money I had left in my desk, and I went there to see whether it was safe."

A strange paleness crept into Dolores' olive cheeks. She looked fixedly at the principal of St. Freda's.

"The—money!" she faltered.

"Yes."

"But—but what has that to do with me?"

"It was taken—it went during the night," said Miss Penfold. "St. Freda's certainly was not entered from our side. Dolores, why do you not confess the truth?"

Dolores burst into a dry sob.

"I am telling the truth. I did not take it. I did not know it was missing. Oh, believe me!"

Miss Penfold shook her head.

"I cannot believe you," she said.

(Another long instalment of this splendid school story next Wednesday. Order your copy early.)

NEXT
WEDNESDAY

"REDFERN'S BARRING OUT!"

THE GREAT SPORTS TOURNAMENT!

(Continued from page 21.)

Jove! Now, then, three cheers for Talbot! Hip, hip, hip—

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

And as Reginald Talbot, supported on one side by Lieutenant Mason, and on the other by Marie Rivers, passed through the old quad and into the school building, he felt that in all the intricacies of his chequered career he had never experienced such a moment of thrilling, intense delight as this!

St. Jim's was alive with joy and rapture that evening, and the whole of that vast multitude of sportsmen put in their appearance in Big Hall, where speeches were made, and toasts honoured.

But the greatest surprise of all was to come, when Lieutenant Mason ascended the dais, and made a neat little speech.

"Dr. Holmes wrote and told me, earlier in the week, of the inauguration of the Sports," he said, "so, having secured a brief furlough, I made it my business to purchase a silver cup, to be presented to the winning school. The fact of that school having proved to be my own lends additional lustre to my happiness. I now call upon Tom Merry, captain of the Shell, to come forward and receive the cup, with my heartfelt congratulations, and best wishes for a jolly future."

The old rafters rang again and again as the blushing hero took the cup into his possession. Harry Wharton & Co., Jimmy Silver & Co., and Frank Courtenay & Co., though defeated and disappointed, took their reverses like the splendid sportsmen they were, and their voices blended in one of the greatest demonstrations of enthusiasm ever witnessed at the old school.

After the cup had been presented, and duly installed in the Terrible Three's study, a great concert took place to wind up the week. The captains of the rival teams were each compelled to give a song. Billy Bunter kept the audience in roars of laughter with his wonderful ventriloquism, and Wun Lung amazed everybody with his brilliant conjuring performances.

Then Kildare rose, and rendered, in his rich, resounding voice, the school anthem, the fellows all standing to join in the chorus.

"Let not a stain on thy banner fair,

Thy lustre and good name fade!

Strong in the right, shine forth in might,

Which nought in the world can shade!

Long may thou flourish to guide the youth,

Thy love in our hearts shall rule.

With thanks we rejoice, and with clarion voice

Sing 'God bless St. James's School'!"

As the famous old song was echoed and re-echoed by hundreds of youthful voices, Dr. Holmes glanced at the young lieutenant, who sat by his side, but left unsaid the words about to be uttered. Tears were trickling down the cheeks of the fellow who, but a few short weeks before, had won the Distinguished Conduct Medal—for Valour!

Many farewells were exchanged, and there were many warm handshakes, as the four rival sets of sportsmen parted in the dusky quadrangle. St. Jim's had triumphed right gloriously; but no one begrudged them their victory. As Bob Cherry remarked, it would have been a sin and a shame had the Saints lost after Talbot's heroic display in the Marathon.

Satisfaction and good-humour prevailed on every side, and the juniors spoke in glowing terms of the next great athletic gathering, which would take place in July for Lord Eastwood's Cup, of which Greyfriars were the present holders.

And so happily ended "The Great Sports Tournament!"

THE END.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 408.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

THE RIGHT MAN IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

Jones was one of those individuals who are constantly going the rounds of the recruiting offices endeavouring to obtain a blue rejection form.

At last he plucked up sufficient courage to sign on, and was brought before the doctor to be examined.

"I have very sleepless nights," he informed the medico, in the hope that that worthy would declare him medically unfit for service.

"Ah," said the doctor, "then you are specially fitted for sentry duty 'somewhere in France.'—Sent in by A. W. Anderson, Forest Gate, Essex.

"HE WHO LAUGHS LAST—"

The students at a certain college, wishing to have a joke at their master's expense, altered a notice on the blackboard which read, "Mr. Brown will attend his classes at three o'clock," by rubbing out the first letter in "classes," so that the notice then read: "Mr. Brown will attend his lasses at three o'clock."

When Mr. Brown entered the class-room he looked at the notice, and then, without comment, rubbed out another letter from the same word, so that it became "asses."—Sent in by Donald Carter, Islington, N.

A LIGHTNING CURE.

"Well," said the doctor as he entered the sick-room where Harry, aged thirteen, was lying in bed groaning at regular intervals, "what is the trouble?"

"Pain in my side," murmured the boy fretfully.

"Any pain in the head?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is the right hand stiff?"

"A little."

"How about the right foot?"

"That's stiff, too."

The doctor turned to the boy's mother, gave her a cautious nod, and said:

"Well, he's pretty ill. Let me see, to-day is Saturday, isn't it? I'll—"

"Is it Saturday?" broke in the patient. "I thought it was Friday."

Half an hour later he got up, saying that he felt better.

His mother packed him off to school at once.

It was Friday, after all!

Sent in by Bert Cooper, Stoke-on-Trent.

USEFUL ADVICE.

An Irishman, on joining the Colours, started to sign his name with his right hand, and then, changing the pen over to his left hand, finished the signature with that.

"So you can write with either hand, Pat?" remarked the sergeant.

"Yes, sorr," replied Pat. "When I was a bboy, my father always said to me:

'Pat, learn to cut yer finger-nails with your left hand, for some day you might lose your right hand.'—Sent in by Miss A. Harding, South Shields.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 408.

WASTED KNOWLEDGE.

Tomkins is one of those persons who are always trying to improve the minds of their neighbours.

Seeing a man, apparently a country fellow, sitting on a gate and regarding the telegraph wires, Tomkins approached him.

"Watching the wires, eh?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Waiting to see a message go by, eh?"

The man smiled broadly, and said:

"Yes."

Then Tomkins started to tell him all about the electric current, pointing out that the messages were invisible. Finally he asked what the man's work was.

"Me and my mate yonder are telegraph workers," was the reply, "and we're putting up new wires."—Sent in by C. Blake, Hammersmith, W.

THE CUSTOMER'S DIRGE.

Little drops of water

Poured into the milk,

Gives the milkman's daughter

Lovely gowns of silk.

Little grains of sugar

Mingled with the sand,

Makes the grocer's assets

Swell to beat the band.

Little bowls of custard,

Humble though they seem,

Help enrich the fellow

Selling "pure" ice-cream.

Little rocks and boulders,

Little lumps of slate,

Make the coalman's fortune

Something fierce and great.

—Sent in by T. Butterworth, Blackburn.

HEARD OVER THE TELEPHONE.

"Which switch is the switch, miss, for Ipswich?"

It's the Ipswich switch which I require.

Which switch switches Ipswich with this switch?

You've switched my switch on the wrong wire.

"You've switched me on

Northwich for Ipswich,

So now, to prevent

further hitch,

If you'll tell me which

switch is Northwich,

and which switch

is Ipswich, I'll know

which is which."

—Sent in by Miss A. Huggett,

W. Croydon.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes.

If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.

A CLEAN ANSWER.

Mother (reprovingly): "Why don't you look in the mirror to see if your face is quite clean after you have washed, like I do?"

Bobbie: "I don't need to. I can tell by the towel."—Sent in by A. Lyon, Islington, N.

No. 3. "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1^d. OUT TO-DAY. DO NOT FAIL TO GET A COPY!

10,000 BEAUTY GIFTS

Every Lady to Test the Wonderful New "Astine"
Vanishing Cream **FREE.**

The Most Simple and Speedy Way to Secure a
Beautiful Complexion, White Hands and Arms.

NO toilet success has equalled that attending the introduction of the delightful new "Astine" Vanishing Cream, supplies of which splendid tonic beautifier of the skin are offered free to those who post the coupon below.

Apply "Astine" Vanishing Cream to the complexion, and you will at once notice a delightful improvement, and, most wonderful of all, the Cream itself leaves no trace whatever of its being used.

It just vanishes at once—in fact, is entirely absorbed by the skin-tissues, leaving only its splendid results apparent.

In the same way that "Astine" Vanishing Cream gives to the face the delicate bloom of health, so rough hands are made smooth and white.

BEAUTIFUL ACTRESSES

say "Delightful."

It will be readily understood that in the world of beautiful actresses "Astine" Vanishing Cream has been acclaimed as marvellous. Amongst those who have expressed their delight at the introduction of this new toilet specific may be mentioned Miss Ellaline Terriss, Miss Elise Craven, Miss Ethel Levey, Miss Yvonne Arnaud, Miss Phyllis Bedelle, Miss Elsie Janis, etc., and, as everyone knows, none are more critical and more careful of their personal appearance than those to whom beauty is such an important asset.

Mr. Edwards, the discoverer of "Astine," will send to every lady reader who fills in and posts the form below.

- 1.—A free sample of "Astine" Vanishing Cream to make your "skin perfect" and to keep your complexion in an always clear and beautiful condition.
- 2.—A specially drawn-up course of six home Lessons in "Beauty Drill," showing you how to easily overcome any imperfections.
- 3.—Full details of how you may share in a great distribution of £10,000 Profit-Sharing Gifts.

TRY THIS "ROAD TO BEAUTY" FREE.

Until you have accepted the free gift so generously offered here, you cannot appreciate how simple a matter it is to cultivate greater beauty.

"Astine" Vanishing Cream is free from the remotest trace of grease, or any of those elements which make some toilet creams so harmful and objectionable to use. "Astine" is a real vanishing cream—penetrating the pores of the skin, so that its beautifying work is both thorough and lasting.

COMPLEXION TROUBLES OVERCOME.

"Astine" Vanishing Cream will prove an inseparable Toilet-Table Companion. It is invaluable in all cases of

Dull, lifeless complexion.
Wrinkles and lines.
Crow's Feet.
Puffiness.
Spots and Blemishes.
Blackheads.
Roughness of skin and all forms of skin and complexion trouble.

Rough or red hands.

Simply fill in and post the form below, together with rd. stamp for postage, and the magnificent free Beauty Gift will be sent to you by return. "Astine" Vanishing Cream is supplied by all chemists, etc., in jars at 1s and 2s. 6d., or direct post free on remittance from Edwards' "Harlene" Co., 20-26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.

POST THIS BEAUTY GIFT FORM TO-DAY.

To EDWARDS' HARLENE Co.,
20-26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.
Dear Sirs,—Please send me your Threefold "Astine" Beauty Gift as described above. I enclose 1d. stamp for postage.

Name

Address

GEM, Dec. 4th, 1913.



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON E.C.
OUR THREE COMPANION PAPERS!
"THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY CHUCKLES."
— LIBRARY — — POPULAR — — 1/2 —
EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY

For Next Wednesday:

"REDFERN'S BARRING-OUT."

By Martin Clifford.

No British boy or girl could wish for finer entertainment than that provided by next week's grand, long, complete story of St. Jim's. For a long time Mr. Ratcliff has been making things intolerable in the New House, and when he cuts down the food supply, making war-time economy an excuse for so doing, there is open rebellion among Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co., who, of course, stand shoulder to shoulder for the common cause. Redfern assumes the leadership, and at his instigation fifty fellows take part in a handsome spread at Wayland, directing that the bill shall be sent in to Mr. Ratcliff. Things reach a crisis when Reddy and his comrades refuse to be punished for their offence, and the obnoxious Ratty is thrown neck and crop out of his own House. It is not until the stately presence of Dr. Holmes intervenes that

"REDFERN'S BARRING-OUT"

is checked, and harmony returns once more to the old school.

RALLY ROUND, READERS ALL!

"SCHOOL AND SPORT!"

On sale this Friday!

Those who have clamoured for countless weeks for a new threepenny book story of the chums of St. Jim's will have their long-felt desires gratified on Friday, when

THE "BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. LIBRARY, No. 319,

will appear, entitled —

"SCHOOL AND SPORT,"

and written by Frank Richards, in collaboration with Martin Clifford.

The story, which is eighty thousand words in length, is admirably illustrated by means of

SIX SPLENDID PLATES,

showing the respective football elevens of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, Rookwood, Highcliffe, Rylecombe Grammar School, and Courtfield County Council School.

As to the nature of the tale, which was written jointly by the famous "Gem" and "Magnet" authors, I may say that it deals almost entirely with sport, and introduces not only the characters mentioned, but Marie Rivers, Cousin Ethel, Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevelyn, and a new girl heroine named Phyllis Howell. There is a gathering of all the clans, so to speak, and a great sports' week is held.

All Gemites will rejoice to learn that a whole chapter is taken up by the description of a superb boxing contest, viz.:

TOM MERRY VERSUS BOB CHERRY,

who met once before under such dramatic circumstances. Then there will be a boat-race, swimming contests, tug-of-war, running races, a shooting match, some really absorbing football matches, and a Marathon race, all of which will thrill the reader as he or she has never been thrilled before.

"School and Sport" will be instantly recognised by the grand cover, which is the work of Mr. R. J. Macdonald, the "Gem" Library's special artist, and which depicts

FIVE SMILING SPORTSMEN

seated on the school wall, three in Etons and two in their blazers and knickers.

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS FAR AND WIDE!

Now, boys and girls, I am going to ask you to do me a special favour, and I feel sure I shall not ask in vain. I want you all, not only to purchase a copy of this magnificent book for yourselves, but to put forward your very best endeavours and persuade your friends to buy a copy. Messrs. Clifford and Richards have worked like Trojans to produce what is the greatest sporting story ever written, and I know you would not like them to feel that their efforts have been fruitless. I want you, in short, to do a real service to your Editor and friend by seeing that "School and Sport" sells abundantly, as it deserves to do. And don't forget to write and tell me what you think of the story directly you have read it.

NUMBER THREE—AND STILL GOING STRONG!

The issue of the "Greyfriars Herald" now on sale surpasses even its predecessors, which have been universally acclaimed as "just the thing for British boys and girls." The principal items on a super-excellent programme are as follows:

"EDITORIAL CHAT."

By Harry Wharton.

"THE PRIDE OF THE RING."

A Magnificent New Boxing Serial. By Mark Linley.

"THE BOUND OF THE HASKERVILLES."

A Thrilling Complete Story, dealing with the exploits of Herlock Sholmes, detective, and his friend, Dr. Jotson. By Peter Todd.

"LETTERS TO THE EDITOR."

In which many persons, distinguished and otherwise, air their views on passing events.

"SHOTS AT GOAL."

A column of Football Comments conducted by H. Vernon-Smith.

"THE ROLICKING REVELS OF BUBBLE AND SQUEAK."

Being a page of Screamingly Funny Pictures. By Frank Nugent.

THE WEEKLY CARTOON.

Drawn by Johnny Bull.

"SKORND BY THE SKOOL."

A Most Amusing Serial Story. By Dicky Nugent, of the Third Form.

"THE TERRIFIC MISTAKEFULNESS."

An Amazing Story, written in the best Oriental language. By Hurree Singh.

AN ALPHABETICAL RHYME,

which runs throughout the paper.

"PLAYING A PART!"

A Splendid and Laughable Complete Story, dealing with the adventures of Billy Bunter at a fancy-dress ball.

By Dick Rake.

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

THE GREATEST BOYS' BOOK OF THE YEAR



The St. Jim's Football XI.

SCHOOL & SPORT!



Rylcombe Grammar School Football XI.



Greyfriars School Football XI.

A Magnificent New
80,000-word Long,
Complete School Tale
of Greyfriars, St.
Jim's, Rookwood,
Highcliffe, Courtfield
County Council
School, & Rylcombe
Grammar School.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.



Rookwood School Football XI.

OUT
ON
FRIDAY!



Courtfield Council School Football XI.



Highcliffe School Football XI.

NUMBER 319 "THE BOYS' FRIEND"
THREEPENNY COMPLETE LIBRARY

"HOW I WOULD REFORM GREYFRIARS."
An Interview with Horace Coker, Esq., of the Fifth Form.

BY THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD" SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE.

This bumper list of attractions can be obtained for only one halfpenny of all newsgagents. Get a copy at once!
There will also be a

MAGNIFICENT COMPETITION, OPEN TO ALL.

in which cash prizes and marvellous hampers of tuck are awarded.

Rally round, Gemites, and if you wish to see "Tom Merry's Weekly" on the market, give the "Greyfriars Herald" your firm and unwavering support by buying as many copies as you possibly can and distributing them to your chums.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL. Cads Who Sneer at the "Gem."

The following precious individuals have written to me in the course of the past month or so, running down this paper as being much too goody-goody for their liking, and lauding up trash of the "Jack the Ripper" variety:

A. G. Livingstone, A. Hill (Macclesfield); Henry Merton (Halifax); Albert V. Smith (Wolverhampton); J. N. Dixon (Macclesfield); E. Goodyer and C. Smith (Bristol); Arthur Lonsdale (Leeds); J. Murdoch, J. Smith and J. Brown, T. Harris and confederates, Jacob Livenstein (Belfast); and Harold Crumpton, J. Barber, T. Higgs, Otto Schneider, and E. Adeock (Wednesbury).

In no case do my amiable correspondents give their full addresses, which is a pity. A reader named Charles Drew has suggested that I should write a good straight letter to boys of the Malpas breed; but poor, guileless Charles seems to overlook the fact that these outsiders never, under any consideration, divulge their addresses. Some of the letters received were really unavowry, particularly that hailing from the Wednesbury quintette. By the way, I should advise Harold Crumpton, J. Barber, T. Higgs, and E. Adeock to rid themselves of the companionship of a German. British boys cannot tolerate Schneiders, and it will go hard with these Wednesbury wasters if they are smoked out from their pernicious dwelling-houses. How they can chum up with a subject of William the Kaiser passes my comprehension entirely.

As to the other cads whose names are printed above, I am content, as before, to leave them to the scant mercies of my loyal readers. There are some splendid amateur detectives about, so these fellows who hurl obscene abuse at the "Gem" had better be very, very careful, or they will find they have roused up a hornet's nest.

ANOTHER FRIDAY ATTRACTION!

Grand Christmas Double Number of "Chuckles."

Quite a sound and seasonable pennyworth is the magnificent Christmas Double Number of our bright little companion paper, "Chuckles." All the latest jokes and wheezes are set forth, and the issue contains a grand, long, complete school story, entitled

"TRUE TO HIS COLOURS."

By Prosper Howard.

and introducing the juniors of St. Jim's.

The really happy boy will be the boy who spends an evening by the blazing fire, in the company of "Chuckles," the biggest, best, and brightest comic paper in the whole wide world.

FICTION FOR OUR FIGHTING MEN.

Quartermaster-Sergeant Cave Renews His Appeal.

The following gratifying and interesting letter has reached me from Company Quartermaster-Sergeant Cave, whose appeal for spare copies of the companion papers was published in the "Gem" Library a few weeks back:

"Dear Editor,—I take this opportunity of thanking you for inserting my appeal in the "Gem." In three days I received over a hundred "Gems," "Magnets," etc., which speaks well for the patriotism of your readers.

"A good number of parcels were accompanied by nicely worded letters, to which I replied wherever possible. Many of your readers, however, preferred to remain anonymous, and through you I should like to thank them for their kindness and generosity.

"I personally distributed the books along the fire and support trenches, and in the dug-outs, and everywhere they were received with delight.

"Meanwhile, I renew my appeal, and for the benefit of those readers who did not see my first letter, I again append my address:

"Company Quartermaster-Sergeant A. C. Cave,
"C" Company, 7th Leicester Regiment,
"British Expeditionary Force, France."
"Yours faithfully,
"A. C. CAVE."

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Miss L. Badoock, 45, Esslemont Road, Southsea, has kindly offered to supply Olive C. (Five Ways) with a copy of "The Boy Without a Name" on hearing from her.

B. P. (Eccles).—You should apply to the Admiralty, Whitehall, London, S.W.

W. McN. (Cleghere).—There is no Exchange of the kind you state in connection with the "Gem" Library.

Nellie McK. (Sydney).—You will doubtless have seen the information you want in our Christmas Double Number supplement. The storyettes you submitted were not quite up to standard. Try again!

R. L. D. and A. P. T. (Corwall).—Many thanks for your enthusiastic letter!

"Three Gemites" (Trafalgar).—See reply to Nellie McK., printed above.

"Mack" (Platt Bridge).—I have many times pointed out that the discontinued publication of my photograph on the Chat Page was a matter over which I had no control.

"Johnny Bull" (Birmingham).—Thanks, Johnny, for your nice letter. Your suggestion has been passed on to Mr. Clifford, and I believe something on those lines is going to be done shortly. I am afraid I cannot obtain badges for love or money, and Gemites will have to possess their souls in patience until after the war.

J. Scott and A. Roberts (Liverpool) have called on J. McM., one of the grumblers in that city, but have failed to bring him to reason. Indeed, J. McM. is rather proud of himself because his name appeared in our Roll of Dishonour. I should advise him to be careful, or his pride may come an undignified cropper. J. Scott and A. Roberts may be long suffering fellows, but I cannot answer for some of their townsmen, who might possibly allow their tempers to gain the whip-hand of them. If this is the case, I feel heartily sorry for J. McM., and hope he does not become permanently bed-ridden.

J. F. (Waterloo).—The answer to your query is in the negative.

Raymond (Bridlington).—Thanks for your cheery letter. Send your spare copies along to Quartermaster-Sergeant Cave, whose full address appears in this issue. I am very grateful to you for obtaining new readers. You're just the sort of fellow we want.

Louise W. and Violet S. (Brighton).—Very many thanks for your letter and loyalty.

"Hope Bank" (Old Trafford).—That's right; I'm glad to see somebody is getting on the track of L. Pinn, the Manchester slanderer. From what I know of my chums in that town, this cad will be given a warm time, and, indeed, will hardly have a Pinn to stand on when they have finished with him. I quite agree with your remarks about the undesirable aliens.

H. R. Palmer (Brixton Hill).—A little more "push and go" with the "Greyfriars Herald," and "Tom Merry's Weekly" will soon make its appearance. Best wishes.

Len C. (Forest Gate).—I do not think it necessary to run an Anti-German League in connection with this paper. All Gemites should enrol themselves at once in the League controlled by the "Boys' Friend." They will be more than delighted with the grand certificate of membership. The information you require concerning the characters is contained in the special supplement published with our Christmas Double Number.

"Gem Patriot" (Port Talbot).—Back up the "Greyfriars Herald," my boy, and "Tom Merry's Weekly" won't be long. Gordon Gay & Co. are introduced in the "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library story, entitled "School and Sport," which is on sale throughout the kingdom this Friday. The King's surname is indisputably Wettin.

"Canadian Reader" (Manitoba).—Many thanks for your cheery letter from across the sea. I hope you and your chums are regular readers of the "Greyfriars Herald," and that you will obtain a copy of "School and Sport," the great new threepenny book story.

Yours Editor