

GRAND SCHOOL & "FOOTER" TALES IN THIS ISSUE!

The **GEM** **LIBRARY** **1** ^{1D}/₂

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"RENTON OF THE ROVERS!"
A Tale of the Footer Field.

"FALLEN AMONG FOES!"
A Story of Tom Merry & Co.

"SLAVE ISLAND!"
A Thrilling Adventure Yarn.



LEVISON'S WINNING GOAL FOR THE "SAINTS"!

(An Exciting Incident from our Grand Long, Complete School Tale inside.)

ARE YOU ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES THIS WEEK?



My Readers' Own Corner
A Page of Interesting Paragraphs
Contributed by "GEM" Readers. Conducted by *Your Editor.*

NOTE.—Half-a-crown will be awarded to the sender of every paragraph published on this page.

UNPUNISHED CRIMES.

Killing time. Shooting the chutes. Hanging pictures. Running over a new song. Smothering a laugh. Murdering the English language.—F. H. Carl Reinke, 59, Stanley Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

ABOUT YOUR NOSE.

There are no less than fourteen proverbs relating to the nose. They are as follows: He cannot see beyond his nose. Follow your nose. An inch is a good deal on a man's nose. He would bite his nose off to spite his face. He has a nose of noses. As plain as the nose on your face. To hold one's nose to the grindstone. To lead one by the nose. To put one's nose out of joint. To have a good nose for a poor man's sow. To thrust one's nose into other people's business. A nose that can smell a rat. Every man's nose will not make a shoeing-horn. To pay through the nose.—George Tristram, 174, Oswald Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester.

PRODIGIOUS.

As we refer to an oak when an oak-tree is meant, so the Americans use the word locust when they indicate the locust-tree. This circumstance gave rise to an amusing mistake. A Frenchman was translating an American book, and read that a traveller secured his horse to a "locust" outside an inn. The Frenchman used the word "sauterelle" (grasshopper), and, as a consequence, the readers found that in America these insects were large enough, and easy-tempered enough, to serve as tether-posts for horses.—N. Cleary, 84, Carlisle Street, Splott, Cardiff.

THE CRICKET MATCH.

The match was between two villages, and the captain of one team was a man short, so a country yokel (the only spectator) was asked to fill the place. "But I don't know how to play," he said. "It is quite easy," replied the captain. "One of the fellows at the other end to you will throw a ball at you, and you have to hit it hard with your bat." The yokel said he would do his best. Wickets fell, and he went in at last. "Now," said the captain, "don't forget what I told you." The new-comer

assumed a position remotely resembling a batsman awaiting a bowl. Down came the ball. The countryman hit out with all his strength, and, by good luck, hit it past the fieldman. He stood staring vacantly. "Run!" screamed the captain. The yokel looked down the pitch, and saw a man racing down towards him, swinging his bat, and with a scream of terror he turned and fled.—Victor L. Smoker, P.T.A., 39, Shoe Lane, E.C. 4.

QUITE CORRECT.

"I say, Sambo, where did you git de shirt-studs?" "In de shop, to be sure!" "Yah, you just told me you had no money." "Dat's right." "How did you git dem, den?" "Well, I saw on a card in de window, 'Collar Studs,' so I went in and collared dem!"—T. C. Alexander, Bexley, 23, Suffolk Avenue, Southampton.

GOTHENBURG.

Gothenburg is fascinating. There is no other word for it. The street scene is full of animation—the old women, with their white head-dresses, driving their quaint little carts to market, the horses, looking so fine and spirited, minus blinkers; and the appearance of the houses with their picturesque alignments. The canals run alongside many of the streets, and the two age-old fortresses command the town. There is plenty of colour, for most folks wear the effective national costume, while the trams, which are bright blue, assist to enliven matters. The trams have trailers. Gothenburg is noted for its botanical gardens, likewise the Slotsskogen, where numerous interesting animals can be seen.—D. Carlson, Moss Cliffe, Selcroft Road, Purley, Surrey.

THOSE PEARS.

Father was on the war-path, when he came across Willie in a corner of the garden. "Willie," he demanded, "have you eaten any of those pears I left in the cupboard?" "Dad," replied Willie, "I have not touched one." William senior eyed William junior wrathfully. "Then how is that I find these three cores in your bed-room, and there is only one pear in the cupboard?" "Father," said Willie, calculating the

distance to the gate, "I cannot tell a lie. That's the one I did not touch."—E. Davis, 83, Dennetts Road, New Cross, S.E. 14.

THE RULE OF THE ROAD.

The rule of the road is a paradox quite. If, when driving, or riding, along, You keep to the left, you are sure to go right; If you keep to the right you'll be wrong. Arthur Sapwell, 25, Smedley Street, Clapham, S.W. 4.

THE SCARLET SNAKE.

To harmonise her creatures with their surroundings is not Nature's only idea when she desires to protect them from their enemies, or to enable them to capture their prey.

It is a quite a common device with her so to colour a perfectly harmless creature that it looks like a dangerous one. The scarlet snake of South America is a case in point. Perfectly harmless, he has got himself up so like the dangerous coral snake that his natural enemies are afraid to interfere with him. It is not, indeed, wise to take any chances if you have the least shadow of a doubt whether you are confronted with a coral snake or only a scarlet snake. Only by a careful examination of the head can you tell the one from the other, the coral snake's head being more round and slightly larger than that of the scarlet snake.—A. F. Payne, 27, Addington Square, Camberwell, S.E. 5.

A FINE OLD PROVERB.

A GEM in the hand is worth two at the newsagent's. That's my motto. My sister likes reading the stories, although she is twenty-four. The Companion Papers are quite worth their weight in gold. I read the "Magnet" first; but I wish I had started earlier with the GEM. It was this way. One day I had two "Magnets" and one GEM in the cupboard, and the fire was burning brightly. I read the "Magnets" first, and then started the GEM, and I felt pretty mad when I found I had come to the last page and there was no more.—C. E. Lucas, 61, Francis Avenue, Southsea.

Contributions are invited from readers of the "GEM" for publication on this page. Anything will do, so long as it is interesting, short, and concise—a good joke, a description of a holiday, a bright idea for increasing the popularity of the "Gem," a good anecdote. "Pars" should not be more than three hundred words long—the shorter the better. They can be sent in on a postcard. Address all contributions to The Editor, The "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and mark them "Readers' Own Corner."

RENTON OF THE ROVERS!



A Magnificent New Football Serial. By PAUL MASTERS.

Read This First.

JIMMY RENTON is a keen footballer and an excellent player, and on leaving St. Clive's, he joins the staff of the "Burchester Times," where he forms a friendship with

BILLY DESMOND, a cheery, high-spirited fellow of his own age. Jimmy also incurs the enmity of

LUKE RAYNER, a detestable cad, who is envious of Jimmy's footballing ability, and succeeds in bringing about his dismissal from the staff of the paper.

Jimmy Renton tramps the country in quest of fresh employment, and after many grim adventures, he is joined by Billy Desmond, who tells him that the "Burchester Times" has ceased publication. Billy has a useful sum of money in his possession, and he generously undertakes to assist his chum in getting an engagement as a professional player in League football.

Jimmy is given a trial with Bourne Athletic. He is not an immediate success, but he is invited to practise regularly on the club's ground.

(Now read on.)

"The Belle of Belmont."

IT was fairly late in the evening when they returned from their tour.

They found the landlord seated by a roaring fire in the cosy parlour. His face was aglow, not only with the

heat, but with the excitement under which he was labouring. He had been perusing an evening paper, and it was obvious that he had come across something of a startling nature.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Billy Desmond. "Wherefore that excited visage, mine host? Has Timbuctoo declared war on the Solomon Islands?"

The landlord looked up from the paper.

"She's missin', young gents!" he exclaimed dramatically.

"Eh? Who's missing?"

"The Belle of Belmont."

"You speak in riddles, man!" said Billy Desmond. "Who the merry dickens is the Belle of Belmont?"

"Why, young Madge Trevor, of course! She's the darter—the only darter—of a big landowner at Belmont. They call her the belle because she's the prettiest damsel in the county."

"How fearfully romantic, by Jove! What's happened to the blushing maiden?"

"She's been carried off by gipsies," said the landlord.

And he handed the evening paper to Billy Desmond, who spread it out on the parlour table. Jimmy Renton glanced at it over his shoulder.

The paragraph which had thrown the worthy landlord into such a flutter of excitement ran as follows:

"Much excitement and consternation

is being felt in the town of Belmont, owing to the sudden disappearance of Miss Madge Trevor, the charming fifteen-year-old daughter of Mr. Hartley Trevor, J.P., a prominent landowner and a director of the Belmont Rovers Football Club.

"It is believed that the girl was abducted by gipsies, who are alleged to have conveyed their captive to the King's Forest. The police have so far been unsuccessful in their efforts to strike the trail.

"The kidnapping of Miss Trevor is said to be an act of revenge, prompted by Mr. Trevor having expelled the gipsies from an encampment which they had pitched on his private property.

"Up to the time of going to press no news has come to hand concerning the missing girl."

"Sounds like a chunk out of a penny novelette," remarked Billy Desmond.

"Wonder if the gipsies are really hiding Miss Trevor in the King's Forest?" said Jimmy Renton.

"Don't know. May be mere supposition on the part of the journalist who concocted that paragraph."

"It's a remarkable affair, young gents," said the landlord—"werry remarkable!"

Billy Desmond yawned.

"I'm too tired to get excited about THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 665.

it," he said. "Dare say the police will soon get on the track of the merry kidnappers. Meanwhile, put me in my little bed, as the song says."

"You'll have supper first, sir?"

"Just a snack. And then I'll get Jimmy to carry me upstairs."

"You jolly well won't!" said Jimmy Renton, laughing.

The two chums sat down to supper, after which they retired to the upper regions. They were soon sound asleep after their long day in the open air; and the kidnapping of Madge Trevor was an incident which had passed completely out of their minds. They had not supposed that the episode would have any bearing upon themselves.

Had they but known it, however, Jimmy Renton and Billy Desmond were shortly to become important actors in the drama!

Knights of the Road!

NEXT day, in accordance with programme, Jimmy Renton and his chum set out for Bourne, where Jimmy had agreed to put in a further spell of practice.

Jimmy rode, as usual, in the sidecar, and Billy-Desmond was at the helm, so to speak.

"I ought to put up a much better show than I did the other day," remarked Jimmy, as they sped along.

Billy Desmond nodded as he bent over the handlebars.

"You're twice the fellow you were!" he declared. "When I found you, you looked like a starving scarecrow. But since we've been at the Forest Arms we've lived on the fat of the land. Result—you're putting on flesh at an almost alarming rate. The general public will soon be alluding to you as 'Tabby,' or 'Pudding-face.'"

"Dry up, you ass!" said Jimmy Renton, laughing. "I've got a long way to go before I can compete with the Fat Boy of Peckham. By the way, I wish you'd reduce the speed a bit going through the forest. You're making me feel quite nervous!"

"Bah! Likewise tush! We're merely going at a modest thirty miles an hour—almost at a snail's pace, one might say."

Nevertheless, Billy Desmond slowed up a little, and refrained from racing along as if he were on a record-breaking expedition.

The speed was slackened still more when they reached the town of Bourne, and the motor-cycle crawled slowly through the busy streets, until it came to the Bourne Athletic football-ground.

The two chums were recognised at once by the attendant who was seated in the sentry-box close to the turnstiles.

With a respectful "Good-afternoon, young gents!" the man let them in, and on their way to the stand they encountered Mr. Robinson, the director who had taken such a kindly interest in Jimmy Renton.

"Feeling in better trim to-day?" Mr. Robinson asked of Jimmy.

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Glad to hear it, my boy! Buck up! The rest of the players are already in the dressing-room."

Jimmy hurried away, and a few moments later he sprinted on to the field with the others.

Although it was merely a practice match, and no League points were at stake, the men took the game seriously. They were aware that Mr. Robinson, and other directors of the club, were looking on, and that those players who showed the best form would play for the first team on Saturday. The others would

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have to be content with places in the reserve eleven.

Jimmy Renton's display put all previous efforts in the shade. He could do nothing wrong. His inside-left kept him well supplied with passes, and in the first ten minutes of the game Jimmy scored twice.

Billy Desmond looked on with sparkling eyes.

"This is Jimmy Renton at his best!" he remarked to Mr. Robinson.

"He's certainly putting up a very fine show," said the director. "But I want to see whether he will last out—whether he possesses the necessary stamina for League football. One frequently comes across forwards who play with rare dash during the first half-hour or so, and then go all to pieces."

But Jimmy Renton showed no sign of going to pieces. His display in the second half was even better than his display in the first.

It was a high-scoring match. The side on which Jimmy played proved victorious by six goals to four; and Jimmy had found the net three times. And, apart from the actual goal-scoring, he had done many brilliant things.

Mr. Robinson shook Jimmy by the hand as he came off.

"Capital, my boy—capital!" he said cordially. "I'm glad I decided to persevere with you. It wouldn't have been fair to judge you by your performance the other day. With more practice—practice makes perfect, you know—you'll develop into a really class player."

Jimmy's cheeks glowed.

"Do you think I shall be able to get an engagement with Bourne Athletic, sir?" he asked.

"That is a tall order, my boy. We have over fifty players on our books, and I don't quite see how we could fit you in."

Then, noting the look of disappointment on Jimmy Renton's face, Mr. Robinson added:

"But if you continue to play like you played this afternoon, I shall make a point of recommending you to some other club that is in need of players."

"Thanks, awfully, sir!"

And Jimmy returned to the dressing-room to change.

"Comrade James," said Billy Desmond, as the two chums set out on their homeward journey, "you're already on the way to fame and fortune. A few weeks hence, and your name will be a household word. Football enthusiasts will rave about you!"

"I dare say they will!" replied Jimmy, laughing, "though not in the sense you mean!"

"When I'm chief reporter on the 'Daily Sportsman,'" said Billy Desmond, "I shall come and watch you play every Saturday! And I shall keep your name well before the public eye. Jimmy Renton's dazzling display on the wing" will be a phrase that'll be constantly cropping up in the pages of the 'Daily Sportsman.' And when you play for England—"

Jimmy Renton chuckled, and proceeded to parody an old song:

"When I play for England,

I'll be in the Upper Ten;

When I play for England,

When, when, when, when, when!"

"In all seriousness," said Billy Desmond, "I consider you'll blossom forth into a giddy International one of these days. I only wish I had half your football genius, Jimmy!"

"And I only wish I had half your optimism!" said Jimmy Renton.

They were speeding along one of the narrow roads that ran through the King's Forest.

Dusk was descending; but Billy Desmond, with his usual disregard for the law, had not troubled to light up.

"Hold on, Billy!" muttered Jimmy Renton, craning forward in the sidecar. "There's something ahead of us."

"A caravan, dear boy. Seems to be taking up all the road, too!"

And he sounded his horn.

The caravan did not budge, and Billy Desmond was obliged to slow up, and proceed at a snail's pace in the rear of the vehicle.

Suddenly Jimmy Renton gave a start.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

At one of the curtained windows at the back of the caravan, the pale, terrified face of a young girl had appeared. Jimmy Renton saw it, and Billy Desmond followed his chum's gaze. Then the face suddenly disappeared, and a gipsy woman came into view.

"Rather curious!" murmured Billy Desmond. "That must have been a gipsy girl at the window."

"And a jolly pretty girl, too!" said Jimmy Renton.

"Wish that beastly caravan would let us get past!" said Billy.

And he sounded his horn more violently than ever.

A big, bronzed Romany was seated on the back steps of the caravan, smoking a short black pipe. He called out lazily to the driver, who swerved slowly to one side, taking his time about it.

"There's just room for us to get by now," said Jimmy Renton. "Full speed ahead, Billy!"

Billy Desmond steered the motor-cycle past, and the caravan was soon left far behind.

The two chums had proceeded about half a mile when Jimmy Renton suddenly shot bolt upright in the sidecar.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed, his voice quivering with excitement.

Billy Desmond slowed up, and he stared at his chum in astonishment.

"What the thump—" he began.

"That girl whose face we saw—" began Jimmy.

"Well?"

"It must have been Madge Trevor!"

"Eh?"

"Don't you remember reading about her in the paper? She's the girl who was kidnapped by gipsies!"

"Great Scott!"

The machine came to a complete standstill, and the two chums exchanged startled glances.

"I'd clean forgotten all about that kidnapping stunt!" said Billy Desmond breathlessly.

"Same here, until this moment. I'm convinced, Billy, that that was Madge Trevor! Otherwise, why should she seem scared out of her wits?"

"Pon my soul, I believe you're right, Jimmy! What are we going to do about it?"

"Turn back, of course!"

"All serene, dear boy. To tell the truth, I rather fancy myself as a rescuer of beauty in distress. But we've got a job on—the very dickens of a job! Did you notice that Romany who was perched on the back steps? He looked a fighter, every inch of him. And the driver, too. I bet he's got a Joe Beckett punch. And there may be others inside the caravan. There's certainly a gipsy woman."

"Even if there are a dozen gipsies with Joe Beckett punches, we must turn back!" said Jimmy Renton resolutely.

"We can't leave that kid at the mercy of those scoundrels. And if we rode on, and informed the police, we should probably be too late. There are heaps of

side turnings, and the caravan might disappear down any one of them."

"True, O King," said Billy Desmond. "This job has got to be tackled by our two selves. It's a jolly stiff proposition. But we'll manage it somehow!"

And Billy reversed his machine, and set off to intercept the caravan.

"Are you in fighting trim, Jimmy?" he inquired.

"Yes, rather!"

"Same here. I'm simply spoiling for a scrap. But we shall need plenty of luck as well as slogging ability, if we're to be successful in rescuing Madge Trevor."

Jimmy Renton nodded.

"Let's hope our luck will be in," he said.

When they sighted the caravan again they found that it was stationary.

The burly gipsy who was seated on the back steps was in the act of raising a bottle to his lips.

Billy Desmond slowed up and dismounted, and Jimmy Renton sprang out of the sidecar.

"You can leave that wine-bibbing merchant to me," said Billy. "I'll tackle him, while you see to the girl. If you're able to get her away, bundle her into the sidecar, and sheer off. Don't wait for me."

The burly Romany on the steps of the caravan was so engrossed in consuming the contents of the bottle that he had failed to notice the return of the motorcycle.

As Billy Desmond sprang towards him, however, the man suddenly scented danger. With a muttered imprecation, he lowered the bottle, and jumped to his feet.

Billy Desmond did not stand on ceremony. He knew that the Romany would be more than a match for him in fistic encounter, so he promptly wrenched the bottle from the man's grasp, and wielded it as if it were an Indian club.

Crash!

The bottle descended on to the gipsy's head.

The victim's knees sagged under him, and he went down in a huddled heap, completely dazed.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Renton was very active. He threw open the door at the back of the caravan, and dashed inside.

The girl whose face he had seen at the window was standing close to the door. Without pausing to ask any questions, Jimmy Renton seized her, lifted her bodily in his arms, and sprang clear. He was just in time to evade a savage blow which was aimed at him by a swarthy-faced gipsy woman—the woman he had seen before.

Jimmy hastened to the sidecar with his burden.

The girl had fainted, but he scarcely noticed the fact. He placed her limp form in the sidecar, and then, glancing back over his shoulder, he saw that Billy Desmond was engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand fight with the driver of the caravan—a man with the stature and strength of a Goliath.

This was the first time that Jimmy had ever seen his chum fight, and he was amazed and delighted at the plucky show that Billy Desmond was putting up.

In size and strength Billy was no match for his opponent. But he fought like a tiger.

"Stick to him, old man!" sang out Jimmy. "I'm coming!"

And he rushed up to render assistance. The fight which followed was a grim and gruelling one.

Billy Desmond was nearly at the end of his tether, and Jimmy Renton had to bear the brunt of the encounter.

Jimmy had been in the front rank of

boxers at his old school—St. Clive's—and the lessons he had learnt there stood him in good stead now.

It was a case of science versus brute strength. And science won—though not before Jimmy Renton had taken heavy punishment.

Summoning all his strength, Jimmy shot out his left, straight from the shoulder.

The gipsy took the blow fairly between the eyes, and he rolled over on top of his companion—the man whom Billy Desmond had felled with the bottle.

He was not beaten yet. He had plenty of fight left in him. But he had no chance to renew the tussle.

Jimmy Renton made a dash for the motor-cycle. He set the engine going, and the next instant the machine leapt forward. And as it did so, Billy Desmond scrambled on to the carrier at the back.

"Let her rip, Jimmy!" he panted.

And Jimmy Renton, who had often criticised his chum's furious driving, went off at such a breakneck speed that one would have imagined he was on the motor-track at Brooklands.

On they sped through the heart of the forest, leaving the caravan and the kidnappers far behind.

Both Jimmy Renton and Billy Desmond bore marks of that fierce affray with the gipsies, and they were likely to bear those marks for some days to come.

But they had the satisfaction of knowing that the struggle had not been in vain.

Madge Trevor was safe!

Billy Desmond's Request.

"I SAY!" remarked Billy Desmond suddenly, as they slowed up outside the Forest Arms. "Supposing we've made a mistake, Jimmy? Supposing this isn't the girl who was kidnapped?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Jimmy Renton, in dismay. "But—but it must be!"

"She may be the daughter of one of the gipsies," said Billy. "Some gipsy girls are awfully pretty, you know."

"I lifted her out of the caravan without asking any questions," said Jimmy. "And if she turns out not to be Madge Trevor, then we're kidnappers ourselves!"

"Precisely what I was thinking, dear boy. We'd better prepare to come up for trial at the next Assizes. Hallo! She's coming round!"

The girl opened her eyes. For a moment she looked frightened and bewildered; and then, recognising her rescuers, she smiled.

Her smile made her look almost bewitching. Jimmy Renton reflected, as he glanced at her, that he had never seen such a stunning girl. And Billy Desmond, who was not easily moved by the attractions of the other sex, was thoroughly impressed now.

"Feeling better, missy?" he asked.

The girl gave a pout.

"Wish you wouldn't address me as if I were five years old!" she said. "I'm fifteen!"

"What a ripe old age!" murmured Billy. "Where's your bathchair and your crutches?"

That humorous question provoked another smile.

"I say," said Jimmy Renton anxiously, "are you Madge Trevor?"

"That is my name."

"Oh, good! We were afraid we'd rescued the wrong girl. Let me help you out of the sidecar!"

"I don't want any help, thanks!"

"But you're weak and exhausted——"

"Fiddlesticks! I'm as right as ninepence now!"

And, to prove her statement, the girl jumped nimbly out of the sidecar.

"How long had you been a prisoner in the hands of the Romanies, Miss Trevor?" inquired Billy Desmond.

"Nearly forty-eight hours. And it seemed like forty-eight months!"

"Feeling hungry?"

"I'm simply famished!"

"This way, then!"

And the two chums escorted the girl into the private parlour of the inn.

The landlord, when he heard that Madge Trevor had been rescued from the gipsies, was overcome with emotion. So much so, that he was totally incapable of preparing the meal, and this duty had to be handed over to his daughter, a plump, rosy-cheeked girl of seventeen.

"By the way," said Madge, smiling across the table at her two rescuers, "I don't know your names yet."

"The gentleman on my right," said Billy Desmond, giving his chum a playful dig in the ribs, "is Jimmy Renton, a budding International!"

Madge looked puzzled.

"International?" she queried.

"Yes; a hot-stuff footballer, you know. He'll be kicking goals for England soon. It's quite on the cards that he'll be appointed skipper of the English team; and he'll be a man of weight and influence then. When Jimmy Renton says turn, they'll all turn!"

"Ass!" said Jimmy, laughing.

"And what is your name?" asked Madge, turning to Billy.

"William Michael Terence Fitzpatrick Desmond—commonly called Billy."

"You are Irish?"

"On my mother's side. On my father's side I'm a Bolshevik."

Madge laughed. It was a merry laugh, and it echoed pleasantly through the old-fashioned parlour.

There was a tap on the door, and the landlord's daughter appeared.

"The steak-and-kidney pudding is ready," she announced.

"Good! And so are we!" said Billy.

"And there's cheese to follow, sir."

"Right you are! Ask it to step inside!"

The meal proved to be a most enjoyable one, especially to Madge Trevor, whose enforced fast had given her a very keen appetite.

The steak-and-kidney pudding was followed by the cheese—which did not arrive on foot, as Billy Desmond had suggested, but was brought in on a dish. Whilst Billy Desmond was engaged in carving it—the cheese, not the dish—Madge Trevor leaned over and spoke to him.

"Honestly, I'm awfully grateful to you for rescuing me," she said.

"Please, teacher, it wasn't me," said Billy. "It's Jimmy Renton you've got to thank. It was he who hauled you out of the caravan, and tossed you gently into the sidecar. I was merely a looker-on in Vienna."

"You did the bulk of the fighting, anyway!" said Jimmy Renton warmly.

Madge Trevor extended a slim white hand to Jimmy Renton.

"Thank you ever so much!" she murmured.

Then she proffered her hand to Billy Desmond, who looked very disappointed.

"I'd much prefer a kiss on the brow!" he said.

But Madge declined. And Billy was obliged to content himself with a hand-shake.

(Another instalment of this grand football serial next week.)

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"Hurrah!" "Here they come!" A loud cheer broke forth as Tom Merry led his team on to the field of play.

FALLEN AMONG FOES!

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

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. The Stranger Within the Gates!

"GOAL!" It was not a shout; it was a roar—a roar that must have been heard all over St. Jim's. A football match was in progress between School House and New House; and Tom Merry had just scored for his side.

It was a very curious sort of match, to say the least of it. It was being played in the quadrangle, and there were about thirty a side.

One of the "goals" was the door of the porter's lodge; the other the door of the tuckshop.

Fatty Wynn of the New House had been valiantly defending his citadel, and he could not be blamed for the shot which beat him. The ball had crashed against the overhanging projection of the door, well out of his reach.

"First blood to us!" chortled Monty Lowther. "That's the stuff to give 'em, as Shakespeare remarks!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I considah, howevah, that Tom Mewwy was vewy selfish to take the ball thwough on his own. There were about twenty-five of us waitin' for a pass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Dry up, Gussy!" growled the captain of the Shell. "It wouldn't have been any use giving you a pass. You'd only have muffed it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" The ball was set in motion again from the centre of the quad, and the players closed up in a sort of Rugby scrum.

There was no referee, and the game did not appear to be governed by any fixed laws. Thus, when Grundy of the Shell seized Figgins round the middle and bore him to the ground, no word of protest arose—except from the victim—who threatened Grundy with all sorts of pains and penalties if he didn't relax his hold.

Meanwhile, the ball rolled away to the feet of Harry Noble, who promptly picked it up and charged with lowered head through a throng of New House players.

"Tackle him!" "Bowl him over!" "Don't let him get within shooting distance!"

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen were waiting for Harry Noble as he came on. They hurled themselves upon him as one

man, and Noble went down. In falling, however, he managed to push the ball away, and it was pounced upon by Talbot, who went away like a hare.

"Pass, deah boy!" panted Arthur Augustus.

Talbot lobbed the leather across—for he was being hard pressed by Kerr—and Arthur Augustus showed the New House players a clean pair of heels. He streaked away in the direction of the gate-porter's lodge, at the door of which Fatty Wynn was bobbing up and down like a buoy in a rough sea.

"Shoot, Gussy!" The swell of St. Jim's obeyed. He had no time to steady himself, for the New House fellows were pursuing him like a pack of wolves. Gussy's shot was, therefore, erratic.

Instead of travelling hard and true in the direction of the door of the porter's lodge, the ball shot off at a tangent towards the school gateway.

The footballers followed the flight of the ball with startled expressions on their faces. For a tall, well-dressed man was in the act of entering the gateway, and he was right in the line of fire, so to speak. He swerved hastily to one side, but he was too late. The ball smote him with great violence on the chin, and he sat down suddenly in a puddle. The shining silk "topper" he had been wearing went careering into space.

Arthur Augustus stood rooted to the ground, dismayed by what he had done. "Oh cwumbs!" he ejaculated.

The stranger rose slowly to his feet. He looked very angry—which was not altogether surprising in the circumstances—but, in reality, he was not nearly so angry as he looked.

The St. Jim's juniors had never seen the man before. By his appearance, he might have been a professional man—a doctor or a lawyer. He seemed to be something of an athlete, too, and he could not have been more than thirty years of age. He glanced reproachfully at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I shouldn't have thought a kid like you would be able to get so much power behind a shot," he remarked.

The swell of St. Jim's, having recovered somewhat from his stupefaction, hurried forward.

"I am extwemely sowwy, sir!" he said. "Fwightfully sowwy, bai Jove! It was a pure accident, deah boy—I mean, deah sir!"

"You mean to say that my face wasn't your objective?"

"Nunno!" stammered Arthur Augustus. "I—I twied to score a goal."

"And where's the goal, pray?"

Arthur Augustus pointed to the door of the porter's lodge, before which stood Fatty Wynn, gurgling with merriment.

"Then I cannot congratulate you on your sense of direction," said the stranger. "Strong kicking is useless unless it is combined with accuracy."

The man spoke as if he were an authority on football, and the St. Jim's juniors glanced at him curiously.

Tom Merry retrieved the stranger's "topper," and handed it back to him.

"I'm sorry this should have happened, sir!" he said.

"So am I. It will necessitate a change of clothing, and I haven't brought an extra suit with me. Still, I expect Dr. Holmes or Mr. Railton will be able to accommodate me. What's your name, might I ask?"

"Merry."

"Indeed! Mine's Bright. Pity we're not in the music-hall profession. We should be billed as 'Merry and Bright.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The stranger evidently possessed a sense of humour. At the same time, the juniors scarcely expected him to overlook what had occurred.

"You are keen on football, my lads?" said Mr. Bright, surveying the crowd of juniors.

"Yes, rather!"

"It's meat and drink to us, sir," said Monty Lowther. "Of course, you mustn't imagine that we're all clumsy asses, like Gussy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah!" protested the swell of St. Jim's. "But for the pwesence of Mr. Bwight, I should be compelled to wemove my coat an' administrah a painful thwashin'!"

"Mercy!" pleaded Lowther.

"Since when," inquired Mr. Bright, "has the quadrangle been set apart for use as a football-ground?"

"Ahem! We've got a proper ground, of course, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Then why not use it?"

"Because it'll be dark in half an hour, and there was no time for a real match."

"So you arranged an impromptu one?" Tom Merry nodded.

"And is it usual to play thirty-a-side?"

"No, sir; but, then, everybody was keen on a game. There's a big rivalry between School House and New House, and nobody wanted to be left out."

"H'm! It was just the same in my day," murmured Mr. Bright.

And, after asking a few more questions, he passed on. The juniors watched him disappear in the direction of the Head's study.

"Seems a decent sort of cove," murmured Manners.

"He's decent enough," said Tom Merry. "But I'm afraid he'll make things warm for Gussy."

"Wonder who the merchant is?" mused Jack Blake.

"Don't know him from Adam! But he's evidently a pal of the Head's."

"And he's bound to tell the Head what sort of a reception he got," said Figgins. "You bet!"

"I should advise you to barricade your bags with a blotting-pad, Gussy!" said Harry Noble.

"Why, deah boy?"

"Why? Because you're booked for a first-rate licking, of course!"

"Wats!"

"Let's get on with the game," urged Redfern. "Might as well make the most of the remaining bit of daylight."

So the ball was set in motion once more, and Mr. Bright was temporarily forgotten.

After a brief interval, however, Toby, the page, appeared on the scene.

"Which the 'Ead wants to see you, Master Merry," he announced.

"Any idea what he wants to see me for?" asked Tom.

Toby shook his head.

"There's a tall gent in the study with 'im," he said.

Tom Merry looked glum.

"That means that Mr. Bright—whoever he is—has made a complaint," he said.

"Well, you can't altogether blame the merchant," said Monty Lowther. "After all, it isn't very pleasant to be greeted by a muddy footer when you visit a school."

Tom Merry walked away, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried after him.

"I don't see why you should stand the wacket, deah boy," he said. "It was entirely my fault, as I shall explain to the Head."

"Keep off the grass, you duffer!" said Tom Merry. "Better a licking for one than a licking for two!"

But Arthur Augustus insisted upon accompanying the captain of the Shell to the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes looked up in surprise as the two juniors entered.

"What does this mean?" he asked. "I sent for Merry only."

"I assuah you that Tom Mewwy was in no way to blame, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"What!"

"It was I who struck Mr. Bwight with the footah, sir. Tom Mewwy was merely a lookah-on in Vienna."

The Head looked utterly bewildered.

"I wuined Mr. Bwight's bags, an' I'm faxhfully sowwy," continued Arthur Augustus. "But it was quite an accident, sir, an' Tom Mewwy had nothin' whatevah to do with it."

The Head's bewilderment grew.

"I quite fail to understand your meaning, D'Arcy!" he said.

It was Gussy's turn to look bewildered.

"But—but hasn't Mr. Bwight made a complaint to you, sir?" he stuttered.

"Certainly not!"

"Oh ewumbs!"

"Am I to understand, D'Arcy, that you struck Mr. Bright with a football?"

"Yaas, sir. I am afraid my sense of direction was wathah faulty—"

"It was nothing, sir—nothing at all,"

interposed Mr. Bright. "D'Arcy was very unwise to refer to the subject."

As for the swell of St. Jim's, he was fervently wishing that he had kept his tongue in his check.

"I trust you apologised to Mr. Bright, D'Arcy?" said the Head.

"Certainly, sir! As one gentleman to another, I expressed my regret at what had happened."

The Head nodded his approval.

"I will now explain why I sent for you, Merry," he said. "You may remain, D'Arcy. This gentleman—Mr. Shirley Bright—is an old boy. He is, moreover, a very keen sportsman, and edits a journal known as 'The Athlete.'"

Both Tom Merry and D'Arcy looked very interested, and they wondered what the Head was leading up to.

"Mr. Bright is particularly interested in public school football," continued Dr. Holmes. "So much so that he has generously decided to award a silver cup to the best junior team in this and the neighbouring counties."

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled, and Arthur Augustus exclaimed involuntarily:

"How wippin', bai Jove!"

"Mr. Bright has interviewed the headmasters of seven other schools," the Head went on, "and they have one and all given their sanction to the scheme. You are captain of the junior eleven here, Merry, and I am giving you this information in good time, so that you may be well prepared for the forthcoming tournament. I need hardly add that I wish you every success!"

"And I also," said Mr. Bright, shaking Tom Merry by the hand. "Nothing would delight me more than to see St. Jim's win the cup. It is no easy task that lies before you, but I feel sure you will do your best."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Wely on us, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"A further announcement on this subject will be made in due course, my boys," said the Head. "You may go!"

And as the two juniors quitted the Head's study, they felt as if they were walking on air.

CHAPTER 2.

Ready for the Fray!

"LOOKED?" inquired a dozen voices, as Tom Merry came into the quadrangle with the swell of St. Jim's.

"No."

"Didn't the Bright bird report Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"No. But, of course, Gussy put his foot in it, as usual."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"However, the Head was awfully decent," continued Tom Merry. "It wasn't about Gussy's mad kick that he sent for me."

"Then what—"

"Mr. Bright happens to be the editor of 'The Athlete,'" explained Tom, "and he's going to award a silver cup to the best junior footer team hereabouts."

"Oh, good!"

"Ripping!"

"Thwee cheeahs for Mr. Bwight, an' let 'em wip, deah boys!" sang out Arthur Augustus.

The cheers were given with right good will, and the excitement amongst the juniors of both houses was intense. Full details of the competition had not yet been made known to them, but they knew that the forthcoming tournament would be of a thrilling and exciting nature.

"Which are the schools that we shall

be up against, Tommy?" asked Jack Blake.

"Can't say. But you can bet that Greyfriars and Rookwood will be in the swim."

"We shall have to go into strict training," observed George Alfred Grundy.

"Eh? How will that affect you?"

Grundy glared at the captain of the Shell.

"I suppose I shall be playing?" he said.

"There's something wrong with your supposer, then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Tom Merry," spluttered Grundy, "if you want to bag that silver cup, you can't afford to let this personal jealousy continue. As skipper of the team it's up to you to select the best men, and the best men only."

"Quite!" said Tom Merry. "That's why I should never dream of selecting you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared round at the group of grinning faces.

"You fellows have all seen my dazzling form on the wing—" he began.

"Since when," inquired Figgins, "have you been an airman, Grundy?"

"Ever since he's had those ears," explained Monty Lowther. "Regular flappers, aren't they?"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Grundy.

"If ever we have occasion to play a blind school, or a home for incurables, I'll include you in the team with pleasure, Grundy," said Tom Merry.

"But this is a serious business, and if there's any comic relief wanted, Lowther can supply it. You can keep off the grass!"

George Alfred Grundy strode away in high dudgeon. He was a great footballer—a second edition of the famous Steve Bloomer, in his own opinion. And he could not understand why Tom Merry repeatedly ignored his claims to a place in the junior team.

When Grundy had gone a selection committee was formed for the purpose of choosing the team.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins formed the committee, and they adjourned to the study of the first-named in order to draw up the list.

"First of all," said Figgins, "I beg to propose Fatty Wynn as goalie, myself as right-back, and Kerr as left-back."

"Rather a strong New House element about that," said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "Still, I'll admit it's a jolly good defence. Now, what about the halves?"

"Redfern's a rattling good centre-half," said Figgins.

"Another New House boulder!" grunted Jack Blake. "We can't do without Reddy, though. Put him down, Tommy."

So Redfern's name went down.

Monty Lowther was selected to fill the right-half position, and the choice of a left-half lay between Manners and Levison major. Tom Merry plumped for Manners, and Jack Blake for Levison, while Figgins remained neutral.

"We'll settle that question later," said the captain of the Shell. "Now, what about the forwards?"

A very excellent forward line was eventually chosen. Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were the wingers, and the inside men were Talbot, Tom Merry, and Harry Noble.

Figgins was not altogether pleased to find that there were seven School House fellows in the side, and only four New House players. But even Figgins had to admit that the team was a very strong

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one, capable of holding its own with the best junior teams for miles around.

"Now we'll solve this left-half conundrum," said Tom Merry. "Which is it to be—Manners or Levison?"

"Manners is a jolly good photographer," said Jack Blake. "But when it comes to footer, give me Levison every time!"

"You're bound to say that, being a Fourth-Former," said Tom Merry. "Personally, I think old Manners' has come on by leaps and bounds this season. He's well worth his place."

At that moment Levison of the Fourth came into the Common-room. He strolled up to the members of the selection committee with an anxious expression on his face.

A great change was manifested in Ernest Levison. He looked a couple of years older than he really was. He had lately passed through a series of grim adventures. He had fronted danger and death in strange places, and his terrible experiences had left their mark on him. They had helped, moreover, to mould and strengthen his character. He was more quiet, more subdued, than the Levison of old, and he was now one of the best and straightest fellows in his Form.

"What hopes of a place in the eleven?" he asked.

"We can't decide whether to play you or Manners at left-half," said Tom Merry.

"Well, I don't want to influence your decision in any way, but you'll never bag that silver cup unless you count me in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think we'll collect all the fellows together, and put it to the vote," said Tom Merry. "That seems the fairest way."

"Buck up, then!" said Levison. "I don't want to be kept in a state of harrowing suspense."

Half an hour later the whole of the Shell and the Fourth were congregated in the junior Common-room.

Tom Merry explained the situation to them, and ballot-papers were issued.

Levison looked on anxiously whilst the voting took place. He was keenly desirous of getting a place in the team, for his sister Doris was shortly coming to St. Jim's, as the guest of the Head's wife, and the girl would naturally be disappointed to find that her brother was not considered good enough for the eleven.

When all the papers had been filled in, Tom Merry asked Kildare of the Sixth if he would be good enough to scrutinise them.

The captain of St. Jim's willingly consented, and a hush fell upon the Common-room as soon as he reckoned up the votes.

"Manners has it," he announced at length, "by the majority of two votes."

"Hurrah!"

"Rough luck, Levison!" said Jack Blake sympathetically.

"I'll put you down as first reserve," said Tom Merry.

"That means nothing," said Levison.

"It means that if one of the players gets crocked, or develops an attack of whooping-cough, you'll be called upon to fill the breach," said Monty Lowther.

"Some hopes!" grunted Levison.

"You'll be able to travel with the team wherever we go," said Tom Merry. "And that'll be better than stewing in a Form-room."

And with this crumb of consolation Levison had to be content.

That evening the names of the selected players were posted on the notice-board, with Levison's name added as a reserve.

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Nothing more was seen of Mr. Shirley Bright. He evidently spent one night only at St. Jim's, and then returned to his duties in Fleet Street. But the juniors had no doubt that they would see him again when the great contest for his silver cup was in full swing.

Next morning a further announcement appeared on the school notice-board—an announcement which threw St. Jim's into a flutter of excitement. It was nothing less than the "draw" for the first round of the football tournament.

"NOTICE.

The draw in connection with the football tournament promoted by Mr. Shirley Bright, an old boy of this school, has resulted as follows:

St. James' College v. Greyfriars School.

Rylcombe Grammar School v. Rookwood School.

Courtfield County Council School v. St. Winifred's.

Highcliffe School v. Claremont School.

Matches to be played on the grounds of the first-named teams.

The first series of games will be played off on Saturday next.

(Signed) RICHARD HOLMES,
Headmaster.

Tom Merry & Co. were jubilant when they read that announcement.

"Saints versus Friars!" said Manners joyously.

"An' on our own g'round, too, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We ought to make wings wound Hawwy Wharton's eleven!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Greyfriars are a hot side, don't forget," said Tom Merry. "It doesn't do to be too-optimistic."

"But ground advantage means a great deal," said Jack Blake. "It's worth a goal to us, anyway."

"Between now and Saturday," said Tom Merry, "we'll have to put in as much practice as we can. And then we'll be ready for the fray."

During the days that followed, the football fever had St. Jim's in its grip.

Tom Merry & Co. spent all their spare time—and a good deal that was not spare—on the football-field. And if it was correct that practice made perfect, then the St. Jim's junior eleven had nothing to fear. And they looked forward with growing excitement, and with increased confidence, to their forthcoming tussle with the Friars.

CHAPTER 3.

A Moonlight Adventure!

ON the Friday afternoon Tom Merry & Co. had a pleasant surprise.

A motor char-a-banc swung through the gateway of St. Jim's, with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, on board.

The visiting eleven had not been expected till the Saturday, and Tom Merry & Co. went forward eagerly to greet them as they clambered down from the vehicle.

The Friars had brought the strongest side that they could muster. The Famous Five of the Remove were there, together with Vernon-Smith, Mark Linley, Peter Todd, Tom Brown, Squiff, and Bulstrode.

"Wherefore this thushness?" inquired Monty Lowther. "We weren't expecting you fellows till to-morrow."

"We've arrived a day in advance, so that we shouldn't be handicapped by having to play footer after a tiring journey," explained Harry Wharton.

"Where are you putting-up to-night?" asked Tom Merry.

"Here, of course! If there's any difficulty about accommodation, we'll sleep in the coal-cellar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You must be hungwy, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"This way to the tuckshop. I had a fivah fivom my patah this mornin', an' I shall esteem it a favah if you fellahs will help me to spend it!"

The Greyfriars juniors needed no second bidding. They adjourned to the tuckshop with Arthur Augustus and his chums, and Dame Taggles did a roaring trade.

Kildare of the Sixth came into the tuckshop whilst the feed was in progress. He nodded cheerfully to Harry Wharton & Co.

"Arrangements have been made for six of you kids to sleep in the sanny, and the other five in the Shell dormitory," he said.

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "The Shell dorm for me, every time! You might see that my shaving-water's sent up to me at seven o'clock, Kildare!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare smiled, and quitted the tuckshop, and a fierce argument ensued amongst the Greyfriars fellows as to who should sleep in the sanatorium, and who should occupy the vacant beds in the Shell dormitory.

It was eventually decided that the Famous Five should sleep in the dormitory, and the remainder in the sanny.

The evening passed very pleasantly.

Little was said concerning the great match that was to take place on the morrow. Both teams were quietly confident.

Ground advantage would not mean so much to St. Jim's now, for the Friars would be just as fresh as their opponents. Moreover, they would have an opportunity of practising on the St. Jim's ground next morning.

When bed-time came, the Famous Five accompanied Tom Merry & Co. to the Shell dormitory. They were looking very excited, and the St. Jim's fellows attributed their excitement to the forthcoming match.

But this surmise was only partially correct.

The fact of the matter was, the Greyfriars juniors had planned to turn out at midnight, and to join forces in the school quadrangle.

It was a glorious moonlight night—almost as light as day, in fact—and the Friars had arranged to put in an hour's practice on the football-ground.

The novelty of the scheme appealed to them immensely—though perhaps they would have been wiser to get a good night's rest in order to be perfectly fit the following afternoon.

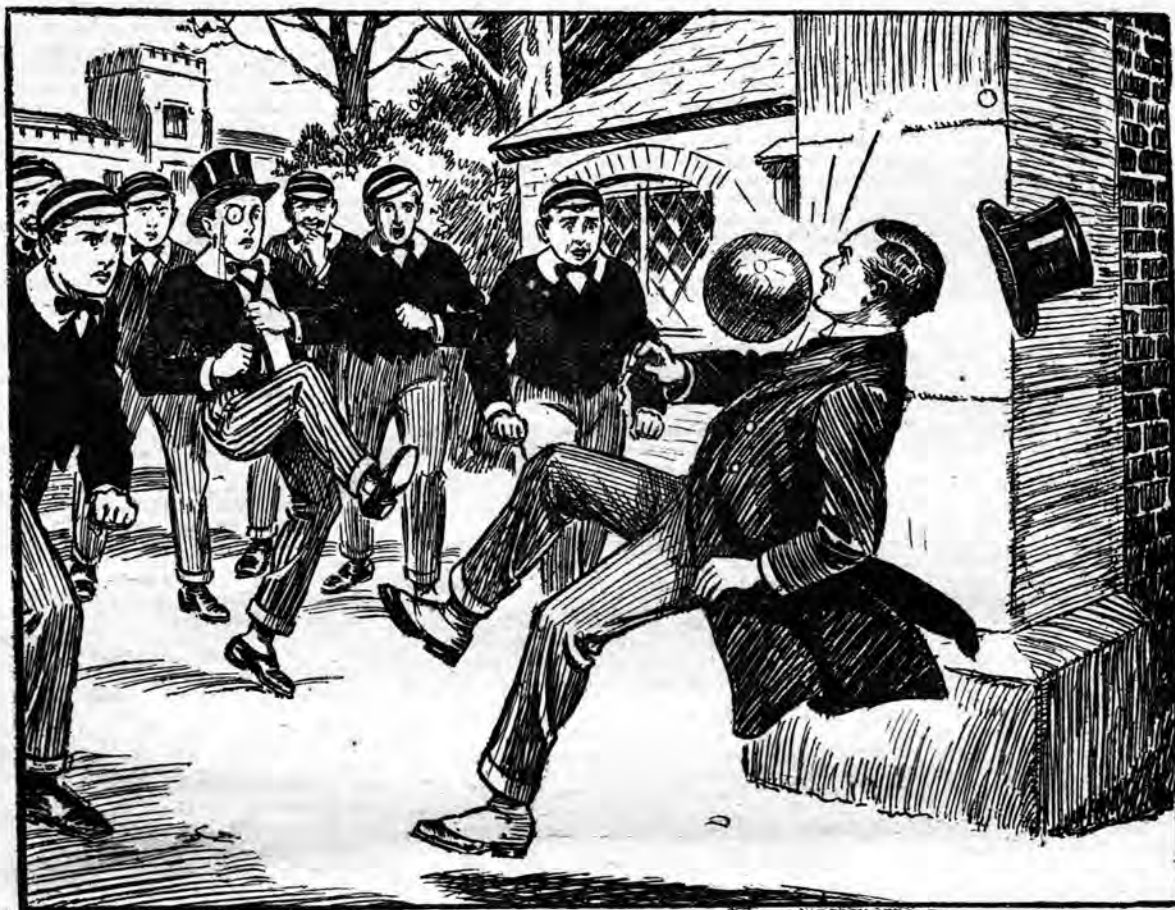
Not a word was said to the St. Jim's fellows concerning this venture. And when the midnight chimes sounded from the old clock-tower, Harry Wharton & Co. slipped quietly out of bed and got into football garb.

In spite of the fact that Bob Cherry made a noise like a miniature earthquake in putting on his football-boots, none of the Shell fellows were aroused.

"This way, kids!" whispered Harry Wharton.

And he quitted the dormitory, and stole down the stairs, with his chums at his heels.

The geography of St. Jim's was not unknown to the Greyfriars juniors. They found their way to the box-room window, and clambered through into the moonlit quadrangle.



"Shoot!" Like a shot from a gun, the ball left Gussey's foot and caught the newcomer, who had just entered the gates, full in the face, sending him staggering backwards into a puddle. The shining silk topper he had been wearing went careering into space. (See page 6.)

For a moment they paused and listened. All was hushed and silent. "We've worked the oracle all serene!" muttered Frank Nugent.

"It's jolly cold!" growled Johnny Bull, stamping his feet on the flagstones. "Wish Smithy and the others would buck up!"

After a brief interval six figures came into view.

"Here they are!" said Harry Wharton. Vernon-Smith's party drew nearer, and joined Harry Wharton & Co. outside the box-room window.

"Did you find it very difficult to break out of sanny, you fellows?" asked Nugent.

"No; it was as easy as falling off a form," said Peter Todd. "The reason we're a few minutes late is that Squiff went bang off to sleep, and it wasn't until we squeezed a wet sponge over his chivvy that the silly ass woke up!"

"Well, now that we're all here, we might as well get to business," said Harry Wharton. "Follow your leader!"

Five minutes later the Greyfriars eleven were out on the football-ground.

Bob Cherry sprinted into the pavilion, and emerged a moment later with a brand-new football.

"That's the stuff to impartfully give 'em!" said Hurree Singh, in his weird English. "We will now get on with the esteemed washing."

The midnight footballers were frozen almost to the marrow by the biting wind which blew across the ground. But it

was only a matter of moments before they succeeded in restoring their circulation.

Bulstrode, the custodian of the team, planted himself in the goal-mouth, and his school-fellows bombarded him with shots.

The thudding of the ball echoed over the frosty playing-fields, and the juniors fervently hoped that it would not be heard by anybody in the school building. If any of the authorities knew that they had broken out at this hour of night, the Head of Greyfriars would be informed, and punishment would follow. And Harry Wharton & Co. didn't want anything of that sort to happen.

When Bulstrode grew weary of fishing out the leather, Bob Cherry took a turn in goal.

The moon's radiance enabled the footballers to see clearly.

Shot after shot was rained in upon Cherry, and Harry Wharton's face glowed with satisfaction.

"We shall be in great trim for tomorrow," he said.

"Yes, rather!"

"If we can pulverise St. Jim's on their own ground it will be something to write home about," said Tom Brown.

"We mustn't let 'em know that we got up in the middle of the night to practise," said Squiff.

"No, mum's the word!"

Boom!

"One o'clock," said Peter Todd.

"Time we chucked it, I think. We must get at least six hours' sleep, or we sha'n't be fit for the match!"

The ball was restored to the pavilion,

and the footballers made their way towards the school building.

Vernon-Smith, who was leading, suddenly wheeled round and held up his hand.

"Stop!" he muttered thickly.

"Anything wrong, Smithy?" inquired Harry Wharton from the rear.

"There's somebody clambering over the school wall!"

"My hat!"

The juniors halted, and drew back into the shadows.

They had just reached the quadrangle, and from where they stood they could clearly discern the figure of a man in the act of scaling the wall.

The man's face was turned away from them, but when he dropped down into the quadrangle, they could see that he was tall and powerfully built.

Harry Wharton & Co.'s first thought was that it was Knox of the Sixth returning from a nocturnal excursion to the village. But that thought was instantly dismissed when they caught sight of the fellow's face. For he had a moustache.

The hearts of the watchers beat quickly.

What could be the motives of this mysterious marauder in entering the precincts of St. Jim's at one o'clock in the morning?

"A giddy burglar!" murmured Bob Cherry.

And he expressed the thoughts of the others. For if the man's motives were honorable, why did he glance furtively

around him, and steal on tiptoe towards the building?

It was to the box-room window that he made his way. Harry Wharton & Co. followed him with their eyes, and saw him raise the lower sash.

"After him!" muttered Wharton.

The Greyfriars juniors obeyed on the instant. They reached the unknown marauder just as he was clambering through the window.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull gripped the fellow by the ankles, and dragged him back into the quad.

The man landed heavily on the flagstones, and lay for a moment as if stunned. Then, with startling suddenness, he leapt to his feet, and with a muttered imprecation he hurled himself at the juniors.

Left and right, right and left, the fellow's fists shot out. And at least four of the juniors went down like corn before the reaper.

But numbers soon told. The would-be burglar had no possible chance of escape. He certainly succeeded in fighting his way through the throng of footballers, and making a dash for liberty, but before he had covered half a dozen yards he was seized, and borne to the ground.

"Hang you!" he snarled fiercely. "Lemme alone! Faith, an' if ye don't you'll be sorry for it, entirely!"

The captive was pinned to the ground by the united weight of Harry Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and Frank Nugent. The juniors regarded him curiously.

"We want to know who you are, and what you mean by breaking into St. Jim's at this time of night," said Wharton.

"Shure, an' it's a pal of Mr. Railton's I am!" panted the prisoner.

"Pals of Housemasters don't usually enter the school by means of the box-room window!" said Vernon-Smith.

"The doors were all locked, an' it was the only way I could get in. I want to see Mr. Railton on a werry important subject!"

"Then we'll knock him up, and let him know you're here," said Tom Brown.

"No, no!"

The man's alarm at this suggestion clearly showed that he was no friend of Mr. Railton's.

"It doesn't require a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that you're a burglar," said Bob Cherry. "What shall we do with him, kids—hand him over to the tender mercies of Railton, or march him to the nearest lock-up?"

"Well, he hasn't actually committed a burglary, you know," said Squiff.

"True. But he's a suspicious character, and he would be charged with breaking and entering."

"And battery and assault!" growled Peter Todd, caressing his injured jaw.

"I think we'll give him a jolly good bumping and let him go," said Harry Wharton. For he reflected that if the man was handed over to the authorities, inquiries of an awkward nature would follow, and the moonlight footballers would be called over the coals.

Harry Wharton's suggestion caught on, and the marauder was soundly bumped. Three times he was dumped down on the flagstones with an impact which shook every bone in his body. He emitted several yelps of anguish, but he was careful not to make himself heard by anybody inside the building.

"Now you can buzz off!" said Wharton grimly. "And remember this. If we see you hanging about this district again, you'll get it where the chicken got the chopper!"

The man muttered something unintelligible.

telligible in reply, and limped away in the direction of the school wall.

The Greyfriars juniors watched him until he was out of sight. Then they separated, the Famous Five returning to the Shell dormitory, and the others to the sanatorium.

Although they had been away over an hour, their absence had not been discovered by the St. Jim's fellows. They had agreed to say no word to Tom Merry & Co. concerning their skirmish with the Irishman; neither did they intend to make it known that they had played football by moonlight. They fell asleep in a very short space of time, to dream of the morrow and of victory.

Whether those dreams would be realised or not remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 4.

The Famous Five to the Rescue.

ST. JIM'S was agog with excitement next morning.

Owing to the importance of the occasion a whole holiday had been granted by the Head.

Harry Wharton & Co. were none the worse for their nightly escapade. As for the St. Jim's juniors, they were in high spirits.

Breakfast over, Talbot of the Shell wheeled his bicycle down to the school gates. As he did so, he saw Marie Rivers, the school nurse, coming towards him.

Talbot noticed that his girl chum was looking unusually perturbed.

"Good-morning, Marie," he said. "Is—is anything wrong?"

"Yes. Where are you going?"

"To the village to get my footer boots. They were left at the cobbler's for repair."

"Must you go?"

"Of course!"

"Then I warn you to be careful—very careful!"

Talbot looked astonished.

"What—Great Scott! What is there to fear, Marie?"

The girl caught the junior by the arm. "I intended to tell you last night, but I couldn't find you," she said.

"Pat Donovan is in the neighbourhood!"

Talbot gave a start.

"Surely not!" he exclaimed.

"He is! I saw him myself only last night, though he didn't see me."

Talbot looked grave.

In the days when Jim Dawlish's gang of cracksmen had flourished, Pat Donovan had been Dawlish's right-hand man.

If it were correct that he was hanging about the district, he would have some sinister motive in his mind. But Talbot could hardly believe that the scoundrel was anywhere near.

"You must have been mistaken, Marie," he said, at length.

"No. It was Donovan that I saw."

"You're sure it wasn't his double?"

"Certain. It was Donovan himself."

"But the gang must have been disbanded after—after what happened to Jim Dawlish!"

Marie shook her head.

"I can't bring myself to believe that Dawlish is dead," she said.

"But he fell from the parapet of the lighthouse on that awful night when he wrestled with your father, Marie. He must have been food for fishes long ago."

"It's my belief that he was picked up by a passing vessel," said Marie.

"But there was no vessel near at the time."

"Well, he may have managed to scramble ashore."

"There was a terrific storm raging," said Talbot. "He'd have been dashed to pieces in such a sea!"

But Marie Rivers was unconvinced.

"I feel certain that he escaped with his life," she said. "And, even supposing he was drowned, it doesn't follow that the gang was broken up. Donovan would have stepped into Dawlish's shoes, and taken the leadership."

"But why should he be hanging around here?"

"For the sole purpose of doing us harm."

"But he knows jolly well that neither of us would join his scoundrelly gang."

"That would not prevent him revenging himself on us. He hates us like poison. You see, we were the means of his being clapped into prison."

"Well, I'll keep my eyes open," said Talbot. "It's broad daylight, so there's very little risk."

"Don't forget that Donovan will probably be armed," said Marie.

Talbot laughed. He and Marie had been immune so long from the attentions of the gang of cracksmen that he imagined they were now perfectly safe, and that no harm could befall them.

"You will be very careful?" said Marie anxiously, as Talbot mounted his machine.

"Trust me!" was the reply.

And the junior rode away.

As he sped along the frosty road all thought of danger was banished from his mind. It seemed incredible that Pat Donovan should be in the neighbourhood, with the intention of causing him an injury.

Light of heart, the St. Jim's junior sped on his way. The healthy exercise brought a glow to his cheeks, and he was looking forward eagerly to the match with Greyfriars. So elated was he that he felt like bursting into song.

Midway to the village, however, he came to an abrupt halt.

The road at this part was under repair, and Talbot had been riding carelessly. A sharp piece of flint pierced his front tyre, and there was an ominous "pop."

The sudden incision caused the wind to rush out of the tyre, and the junior was obliged to dismount.

"Punctured!" he ejaculated. "It's my own fault! I ought to have looked where I was going!"

Talbot resolved to mend the puncture there and then. He did not remain in the roadway and run the risk of being chaffed by passers-by; but he pushed his machine into an adjoining meadow.

He opened the saddle-bag, and took out his repair outfit. Then he turned the bicycle upside-down on the frosty grass. He was in the act of taking off the outer cover, when he heard a stealthy footstep behind him.

Talbot turned swiftly. And then, before he could fully realise what was happening, he was seized round the middle, lifted bodily in the air, and then hurled to the ground.

Dazed and badly shaken, the junior struggled into a sitting posture. And, looking up, he saw Pat Donovan bending over him.

"Well met, Toff!" said the scoundrel, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction.

"You rotter! Then Marie was right when she said you were hanging around! What do you want with me?"

"You're comin' with me to the gang's headquarters!" was the reply.

"Then the gang is still in existence?"

"Shure! We're still alive an' kickin', Toff!"

"Dawlish is still alive?"

Donovan nodded.

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Talbot. "Dawlish was drowned at sea."

The Irishman laughed.

"Some cracksmen are like cats, Toff. They've got nine lives. An' I can assure ye that Jim Dawlish is still goin' strong."



"A giddy burglar!" murmured Bob Cherry. The mysterious stranger glanced furtively around him, and stole on tiptoe towards the box-room window, "After him!" muttered Wharton. The juniors obeyed instantly. They reached the unknown marauder just as he was clambering through the window. (see page 10.)

My orders are to take you to him right away."

"Why?"

Donovan shrugged his shoulders.

"Faith, an' I haven't the foggiest notion what the chief intends to do with ye!" he said.

"And you think I shall be mug enough to allow myself to be kidnapped," said Talbot.

"You can't help yourself, Toff!"

For a moment there was silence. Talbot was getting his breath, and biding his opportunity. And presently that opportunity came.

Pat Donovan looked round, to make certain there was nobody in sight. And as he did so Talbot sprang to his feet, and rushed upon the scoundrel.

There was a short, sharp struggle.

The St. Jim's junior was no match for his powerful adversary. Besides, he had been badly shaken by his fall. He hit out fiercely, but his blows glanced off Donovan like water off a duck's back.

And presently Talbot's senses seemed to swim, and he knew that he was being overpowered.

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"

The cry rang out over the frosty fields. "I'll soon give ye somethin' to still that tongue o' yours!" muttered Donovan savagely.

And he whipped something out of his pocket—something which appeared to be a damp cloth. A nauseating odour came to Talbot's nostrils.

"Chloroform!" he thought. "I must hold out somehow!"

And he fought on with the strength of desperation.

But Donovan was master of the situation, and again Talbot felt himself weakening.

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"

For the second time the cry rang out. And then Talbot's heart gave a bound, for a responsive shout greeted his ears.

"Hang on, Talbot! We're coming!"

But it was not a party of St. Jim's fellows who came opportunely to the rescue. It was the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove.

Harry Wharton had suggested a cross-country run after breakfast, as part of the training for the football match. And the juniors had been speeding over the meadows when Talbot's cry for help came to their ears.

They at once hastened in the direction from which the sound came, and, to their amazement, they saw Talbot engaged in an unequal struggle with the man whom they had caught in the act of breaking into St. Jim's during the night!

Donovan heard the patter of approaching feet, and he spun round. Then he took to his heels, but before he could reach the roadway the Famous Five were upon him. They hurled him to the ground without ceremony, and promptly sat on him.

"Got you, my beauty!" panted Bob Cherry. "I didn't think we should meet again so soon!"

An inarticulate murmur came from Pat Donovan. Owing to circumstances over which he had no control, he was unable to speak.

Talbot, looking very pale and shaken, staggered up to the Greyfriars juniors.

"Thanks ever so much, you fellows!" he said gratefully.

"That's all right!" said Harry Wharton. "We're only too pleased to have been able to chip in at the right moment. Do you know this merchant?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"He belongs to a gang of cracksmen."

"Thought as much," said Johnny Bull.

"He tried to break into St. Jim's last night."

"My hat! How do you know?"

"We caught him in the act," said Bob Cherry. "And we jolly soon sent him packing!"

"We ejected him on the neckful portion of his anatomy!" said Hurree Singh.

Talbot wondered what the Greyfriars fellows had been doing out of bed in the night. But he reflected that it was no business of his, so asked no questions.

"Why was the rotter attacking you, old man?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He says he had orders to take me to the gang's headquarters."

"What on earth for?"

"I dare say they thought they could induce me to join them," said Talbot bitterly.

Harry Wharton frowned.

"I think we ought to hand the fellow over to the police, don't you?" he said.

"If he's allowed to be at large, you'll be in constant danger."

Another inarticulate murmur of protest came from Pat Donovan.

But Harry Wharton was in earnest. And as Talbot made no objection,

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Wharton repaired the punctured tyre, and, borrowing Talbot's bicycle, he rode away to summon P.C. Crump from Rylcombe.

Mr. Crump was not best pleased at being dragged to accompany Wharton to the meadow in which the prisoner was being guarded.

The portly constable did not seem to think it necessary to take a pair of handcuffs with him. And when Wharton drew his attention to the omission, he laughed.

"Which I'm more'n a match for any man!" he said boastfully. "Sides, I've got me truncheon 'andy, so I can soon keep 'im quiet if 'e attempts to get out of 'and!"

In due course Mr. Crump arrived at the meadow, where he at once arrested Pat Donovan "in the name of the lor."

To the surprise of the juniors, the scoundrel offered no resistance. He walked submissively away by the constable's side, until at length prisoner and escort were lost to view.

"That fellow won't worry you again, Talbot," said Frank Nugent.

"Hope not!" said Talbot.

But it was apparent, from the tone in which he spoke, that he had his doubts.

After further conversation, Talbot proceeded to the village for his football boots. And the Famous Five continued their cross-country run.

CHAPTER 5. A Thrilling Tussle!

"HERE they come!"
"Here are the boys!"
"Give 'em a cheer!"
"Hurrah!"

Scenes of the wildest animation prevailed as Tom Merry led his team on to the field of play.

Little Side was crowded. Fellows were standing four deep round the ropes, and a large contingent of Greyfriars supporters had come over to see the match.

Two miles away, Rylcombe Grammar School were taking the field against Bookwood. And on that same afternoon Courtfield County Council School were at home to St. Winifred's, while Highcliffe were opposed to Claremont.

But nobody at St. Jim's was thinking of these matches just then. Everybody's thoughts were concentrated on the match with Greyfriars.

Tom Merry & Co. looked very fit and confident.

The team was at full strength.

Monty Lowther's prediction that one of the players might be crocked, or called away, or stricken down with whooping-cough had not been fulfilled, and Ernest Levison was obliged to play the part of spectator.

Talbot had recovered from the effects of his skirmish with Pat Donovan, and he was feeling in great form. The fact that Marie Rivers was looking on made him eager to put up a good show.

Presently a fresh burst of cheering arose, as Harry Wharton & Co. sprinted on to the field in their blue jerseys and white knickers.

"Play up, the Friars!"

"On the ball!"

"Let's hear from you, Wharton!"

The Greyfriars supporters were not nearly so numerous as the St. Jim's partisans, but they took good care to make themselves heard.

Tom Merry and Harry Wharton met in the centre of the field and shook hands. Then the former spun a coin.

"It's a head," said Wharton.

"Guess again, old sport! Britannia's on top. We'll kick with the wind."

Kildare of the Sixth was the referee. He blew his whistle, and the teams lined up.

Some delay was caused owing to the

fact that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's bootlace had come untied. And the swell of St. Jim's took his time about lacing it up again.

The crowd waxed sarcastic.

"Don't hurry, Gussy!"

"There's bags of time!"

"Next Christmas will do!"

Arthur Augustus flushed crimson. But the refractory bootlace was adjusted at last to his satisfaction, and he took his place on the right wing.

Then the game started.

To say that the opening was sensational, was to put it mildly.

Tom Merry gained possession of the ball, and swung it across to the left wing, where Jack Blake pounced upon it and raced away like a hare. The Greyfriars right-half loomed up to intercept him, but Blake swerved cleverly and rushed on.

The rest of the St. Jim's forwards were well up the field, and out of the corner of his eye Blake saw that Tom Merry was standing unmarked near the goal-mouth. So he deftly lobbed the leather across, and Tom Merry drove it into the net with terrific force. Bulstrode, in goal, had no chance whatever to save.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Tommy!"

"First blood to St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

The applause was deafening.

That first-minute goal delighted the St. Jim's supporters beyond measure, and cheer after cheer hailed Tom Merry's achievement.

As for Tom himself, his hand was seized and shaken like a pump-handle by the other members of the St. Jim's eleven.

"Great, Tommy, great!" chortled Monty Lowther.

"It was Blake's goal, not mine!" said Tom modestly.

"Well played, both!" said Talbot. "We've made a jolly good start, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Greyfriars fellows seemed not one whit dismayed as they lined up again. They were hoping to bring the scores level before the game was much older.

The game continued to be fought out at a tremendous pace.

There was plenty of good, honest shoulder-charging, and more than one player measured his length on the frosty ground. But the hard knocks were taken in a sportsmanlike spirit, and the play, although vigorous at times, was always perfectly clean and free from suspicion.

Both teams were striving manfully—Greyfriars to equalise, and St. Jim's to add to their lead.

But that sensational first-minute goal proved to be the only one in the first half. Once Talbot had come near to adding another, and at the other end Frank Nugent had missed by inches. But the interval came with St. Jim's leading by one to nil.

"So far, so good!" panted Tom Merry. "We haven't a great deal in hand, but we're leading, and that's the main thing."

"The pace was rather warm!" gasped Manners, mopping his heated brow.

"It'll be warmer still in the second half, I'm thinking," said Jack Blake.

Talbot stood apart from his school-fellows. He was chatting with Marie Rivers. This was the first opportunity he had had of speaking with her since she had warned him to beware of Pat Donovan.

"You were right about Donovan, Marie," he said.

Marie gave a start.

"You have seen him?"

"Yes."

"And where is he now?"

"At the police-station—unless Crump has let him slip through his fingers."

And then Talbot recounted what had taken place that morning—how he had been the victim of a surprise attack, and how Harry Wharton & Co. had come to the rescue in the nick of time.

"You had a narrow squeak," said Marie, with a shiver. "Do you think Donovan is safe under lock and key?"

"Let's hope so," replied Talbot. "But I must be off now. The whistle's gone for the resumption."

"Do you think St. Jim's will win?" asked Marie.

"We shall have all our work cut out," was Talbot's answer, as he hurried to his place on the field.

The second half opened quietly, but the pace soon became warmer, and Harry Wharton, after a fine individual effort, struck the crossbar with a terrific drive, which caused the woodwork to quiver.

And then Greyfriars set up a strong attack, but Fatty Wynn, in the St. Jim's goal, proved an effective stumbling-block. Time and again he saved the situation, some of his saves bordering on the miraculous.

Try as they would the Friars could not get through. They forced innumerable corners; they rained in shots from all angles; but Fatty Wynn was there every time. As Vernon-Smith remarked: "Fatty's display was enough to break a forward's heart."

After Greyfriars had put in a long spell of attacking, St. Jim's came into the picture.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy broke away on the wing, and, after a great run, he deftly touched the ball to Talbot, who drew Bulstrode out of goal and then calmly steered the ball between the posts.

"Goal!"

"Well played, Talbot!"

Talbot's face lighted up with pleasure as he heard the applause and saw his girl chum clapping enthusiastically.

It seemed as if St. Jim's had the issue in safe keeping now.

But football is a curious game—a game of strange fluctuations and staggering surprises. And within a minute of the scoring of Talbot's goal, Greyfriars had reduced the margin.

It happened in this way.

From the kick-off, Harry Wharton & Co. swept down the field, and Figgins, in attempting to stem the rush, had the misfortune to handle the ball in the penalty area.

The referee pointed to the penalty-mark, and Bob Cherry was entrusted with the kick.

Bob made no mistake. He placed the ball in the top right-hand corner of the net, well out of Fatty Wynn's reach. No goalie in the country could have saved that penalty.

Of course, this success put fresh heart into the Friars. They attacked with great dash, and the opposing defence was sorely tried.

Figgins and Kerr, at back, worked like Trojans. But there was no holding the Greyfriars forwards. They came on again and again, and their supporters, on the touchline, were cheering and gesticulating frantically.

"Greyfriars! Greyfriars!"

"Stick it, you fellows!"

"You'll make a draw of it yet!"

But the time was ebbing fast. Only a few more minutes remained for play, and—thanks to Fatty Wynn's display in goal—the Saints managed to cling to their lead.

Harry Wharton & Co. were tremendously anxious to force a draw. If they succeeded in doing so, it would mean a replay on their own ground. And on

their native heath they felt sure they could account for the St. Jim's fellows.

So they attacked fiercely in the closing stages. A great shot from Vernon-Smith was tipped over the bar, and a moment later Hurree Singh brought Fatty Wynn to his knees with a fast, low drive.

Greyfriars did everything but score. And in the very last minute of the game they forced a corner.

Vernon-Smith took the kick; and although a tense murmur of excitement arose from the crowd, he was perfectly cool and self-possessed. He was a past-master in the art of taking corner-kicks, and this one was a real beauty.

The ball dropped just in front of the goal. And it dropped on to the waiting head of Mark Linley.

With a quick jerk of his head the Lancashire lad deflected the ball into the net. Fatty Wynn clutched at it, but he was the fraction of a second too late.

"Goal!"

Even as the shout went up, Kildare blew his whistle for the cessation of hostilities.

The Friars had saved the game. And even their opponents had to admit that they were good value for a draw. At one time they had been two goals in arrears, but they had played up so strongly that they had wiped off the deficit, and the match would now have to be replayed on the Greyfriars ground.

The result—a draw of two goals each—came as a big disappointment to the crowd of St. Jim's supporters, who had confidently expected their heroes to win.

But the onlookers were sportsmen, and they did not forget to cheer the plucky Greyfriars team.

Harry Wharton & Co. had arranged to return to their own school immediately after the match.

"We shall meet again soon," said Wharton, as he shook hands with Tom Merry.

Tom nodded.

"On your own ground, of course?"

"Yes."

"And you'll find us tough nuts to crack on our own pitch," added Bob Cherry.

"We don't mind that," said Monty Lowther. "You see, we're expert nut-crackers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars fellows went away feeling very pleased with themselves. After all, it was a splendid achievement to have forced a draw with the strong St. Jim's eleven, and Harry Wharton & Co. confidently thought that they would win the replay.

Needless to state, Tom Merry & Co. thought differently.

CHAPTER 6.

In the Hands of the Enemy!

QUITE a merry party sat down to tea in Tom Merry's study after the match.

The St. Jim's juniors had hoped to celebrate a victory, but their hopes had not been realised. They consoled themselves, however, with the reflection that a drawn game was better than a defeat.

During tea, Redfern of the New House looked in.

"I've just got through on the 'phone to Rylcombe Grammar School, to inquire the result of their match with Rookwood," he said.

"And how did the game go?" asked Tom Merry eagerly.

"The Grammarians were routed. Gordon Gay told me that two of his men were clobbered in the first half, and after that the Rookwood forwards did pretty much as they liked. The result was a win for Rookwood by five to one."

"My hat!"

"And what about the other matches in the tournament?" asked Talbot.

"I rang up Courtfield County Council School," said Redfern, "and heard that they licked St. Winifred's by a goal to nil. And Highcliffe beat Claremont by the same margin."

"That means that Courtfield and Highcliffe are still in the swim," said Tom Merry. "We may have to meet one or the other in the next round."

"Unless we're drawn against Rookwood," said Manners.

"In which case we shall have a jolly stiff hurdle to negotiate," said Jack Blake. "Jimmy Silver & Co. are hot stuff."

Levison major, who was one of the members of the tea-party, gave a laugh.

"You fellows are taking a great deal for granted," he said. "Before you talk of meeting Rookwood, you've got to put the kybosh on Greyfriars. And that won't be easy. They're practically unbeatable on their own pitch."

"You're a pessimist, Levison," said Monty Lowther. "And we've a short way with pessimists. The last one who aired his views in this study was taken away on the ambulance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You chaps strike me as being too cocksure about beating Greyfriars," said Levison.

"Better be cocksure than hopeless!" said Tom Merry.

"Am I to travel to Greyfriars with the team?"

"Of course! You're first reserve—our only reserve, in fact!"

"What's the use of that? I sha'n't get so much as a smell of the ball!"

"You never know your luck," said Monty Lowther. "Before the replay comes off half the regular team may be in the sunny."

Tom Merry glared at his chum.

"You were talking just now about pessimists," he said. "You're the pessimist! And if you don't dry up we'll either turn you into an optimist or a human doornat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther promptly subsided, and the meal proceeded.

Levison, for the most part, sat moody and silent. He was conscious of bitter disappointment. His sister Doris had arrived at St. Jim's—she was having tea with the Head's wife at that moment—and she had expressed her intention of going over to Greyfriars to see the replayed match.

Levison badly wanted to play—to give Doris a glimpse of his footballing capabilities; but it seemed as if the chance would be denied him. The members of Tom Merry's eleven were very fit, and there was no one on the injured list.

When the day of the replay dawned the position was still the same.

Levison was half inclined not to travel with the team—it seemed that his presence would be unnecessary—but Tom brought pressure to bear, and Levison accompanied the eleven to the railway station.

A crowd of St. Jim's supporters, including Levison's sister, were going over to Greyfriars; but they were travelling by a later train.

The footballers reached the station just as the train rumbled in.

The carriages were crowded; the platform was crowded. Everybody seemed to be travelling, or intending to travel.

"Get in where you can, you fellows!" said Tom Merry.

In the commotion that followed, Talbot found himself detached from the rest of

the party. He sprinted along the platform till he reached the front part of the train, hoping to find room in one of the carriages near the engine. Presently he thrust his head into one of the compartments.

"Any room in here?" he asked breathlessly.

"Yes, 'op in, young shaver!" said a man in a loud check suit.

The speaker had a pack of playing-cards on his knee, and, judging by his appearance, he was a bookmaker, on his way to the Courtfield Steeplechase. With him in the carriage were several men of the same type.

Talbot promptly jumped into the carriage, and squeezed himself into a corner seat.

Scarcely had he done so, when a tall, powerfully-built man scrambled into the carriage. The train was on the move when he entered, but he did not appear at all ruffled. Apparently he was used to boarding trains whilst they were in motion.

Talbot glanced curiously at the newcomer. He was dressed in a sober suit of black, was bearded, and wore glasses. He might have been a doctor or a school-master.

There was no seat available, and the bearded man gripped the edge of the rack to steady himself.

Presently he caught sight of Talbot, and he uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Ah, so I have found you at last!"

Talbot looked utterly bewildered. He didn't know the man from Adam.

The other occupants of the carriage, who had started on a game of cards, looked up with interest and curiosity.

"Dramatic meetin' between father an' son, arter a long lapse of years!" murmured the man in the loud check suit. "Very touchin', ain't it?"

"You are wrong, my friend," said the bearded man. "This young rascal is not my son."

"Then wot—"

"He is an errant pupil of mine, who has run away from school."

"My eye!"

Talbot stared at the bearded man in amazement.

"You—you must be potty!" he exclaimed. "I've never seen you before in my life!"

"Come, come!" said the other. "It is no use your trying to brazen things out. You cannot deny that you ran away from school last night, and that I am your headmaster."

Talbot laughed scornfully.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" he said. "Strikes me you're a suitable candidate for an asylum!"

An angry gleam came into the eyes of the bearded stranger.

"We will alight at the next station," he said grimly, "and I will take you back to your school."

Talbot was convinced by this time that the man was a lunatic.

"Dry up, for goodness' sake!" he said. "You're talking out of your hat, and you know it!"

The man's grasp descended upon Talbot's collar, and the junior was hauled out of his seat.

"Faith, an' I'll teach ye to insult me like that!"

Talbot gave a violent start.

In his anger the man had relapsed into his Irish brogue, and Talbot now realised that it was Pat Donohy, in disguise!

The junior tried to wrench himself away from the man's grasp—tried to get to the communication-cord; but the Irishman held him in a vice-like grip.

The train began to slow up, and Talbot knew that it was nearing Wayland Junction.

"Better go quiet, kid!" advised the man in the loud check suit. "Mr. Schoolmaster will make matters warm for you if you don't."

"This man's no schoolmaster!" exclaimed Talbot. "He's a crackman—a law-breaker! He's wanted by the police!"

At this there was a laugh of incredulity from the other occupants of the carriage. It was only too obvious that no one believed the junior's statement.

"You've run away from school, young shaver," said the man in the check suit, "an' the best thing you can do, as I said before, is to go back quiet with yer 'cadmaster."

"I'm not a runaway!" panted Talbot wildly. "I'm a St. Jim's fellow, and I'm on my way to Greyfriars to play in a fooler match. My friends are on this train, and they'll bear out what I say. As for this fellow, he's no more a headmaster than you are! He's a crackman, I tell you—"

Talbot got no further.

The train had jolted to a standstill, and Pat Donovan, maintaining his grip with one hand, opened the carriage door with the other.

Talbot struggled fiercely. But Donovan was master of the situation. He jumped down on to the platform, dragging the junior after him.

"This way, Toff!" he muttered grimly.

Talbot tried to cry out in order to attract the attention of Tom Merry & Co. But a hand was clapped over his mouth, and the next moment both Talbot and his captor were swallowed up in the crowd.

As the junior was being hustled to the exit, he managed to attract the attention of the stationmaster.

The railway official spoke sharply to Donovan.

"What are you doing with that kid?"

"I am about to take him back to the school from which he has absconded," was the reply.

The stationmaster grinned. He saw no reason to doubt the veracity of Donovan's statement.

"He—he's a kidnapper!" Talbot managed to splutter.

The stationmaster shrugged his shoulders and turned away. He was satisfied that Donovan was a schoolmaster, and that he was dealing with a refractory pupil, so he did not interfere.

Outside the station exit a taxi-cab was waiting.

Pat Donovan exchanged a signal with the driver, and Talbot was hustled into the vehicle.

The junior struggled with all his strength, but he was no match for a giant like Donovan.

"You hound!" he panted. "You shall suffer for this!"

The kidnapper laughed lightly, and a moment later he was seated beside Talbot in the taxi, which bounded forward, and was soon speeding towards the open country beyond Wayland.

Talbot gritted his teeth with rage and impotence.

He realised that he was powerless—that he was at the complete mercy of this precious scoundrel. And he reflected bitterly that the match at Greyfriars would have to proceed without him.

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CHAPTER 7.

Levison's Opportunity!

"TALBOT!"

"Where's the silly duffer got to?"

"Anybody seen him?"

The St. Jim's footballers had alighted at Friardale Station. They scanned the platform for a sight of Talbot, but he was not to be seen.

Jack Blake made a megaphone of his hands.

"Talbot!" he roared. And his voice boomed along the platform.

But there was no response.

The train moved on, and Talbot had not been seen to alight.

"The silly chump!" growled Figgins.

"He's gone to sleep in the train, I expect!"

"In that case, dear boy, he might not wake up till the twain reaches London," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We'd better 'phone through to the stationmaster at the next station, an' get him to look out for Talbot, an' wouse him."

"That seems about the best plan," said Tom Merry.

Accordingly, he rang up the stationmaster at the next station, and told him that he would probably find a St. Jim's junior fast asleep in one of the carriages. If so, would he kindly rouse him, and request him to come on to Greyfriars with all speed?

The stationmaster consented to do this, and Tom Merry said he would wait at the telephone for an answer.

After an interval of about ten minutes the bell rang.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, speaking into the transmitter.

"I've searched the train from end to end," said the stationmaster rather gruffly—for he probably suspected that a practical joke was being practised upon him—"but there's no sign of a St. Jim's junior."

"You are quite sure?" said Tom Merry.

"Quite!"

"My hat! That's jolly queer!"

After further conversation the captain of the Shell hung up the receiver.

"What luck?" asked Manners.

"No luck at all. The stationmaster vows that Talbot isn't on the train."

"Bai Jove, that is vewy wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus. "I distinctly memembah seein' Talbot board the twain at Wylcombe. He got into one of the cawriages close to the engine."

"It's a giddy mystery, and no mistake!" said Dick Redfern. "But we can't hang about here. It'll be bad form to keep the Greyfriars fellows waiting."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Where's Levison?" he inquired.

"Hope he hasn't vanished off the face of the earth as well!"

But Levison was there, and he came forward with an eager light in his eyes.

"You'll have to take Talbot's place at inside-right," said Tom Merry.

"All serene!"

Greatly perplexed by reason of Talbot's mysterious disappearance, the footballers set out on foot for Greyfriars.

They had not proceeded very far when they were met by Harry Wharton & Co.

"Here we are again!" sang out Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Wherefore those worried brows, you fellows?"

"One of our fellows has vanished into thin air," said Tom Merry.

"Eh? Who's that?"

"Talbot."

"What's happened to him? Did he miss the train?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No. We can't make it out. He

caught the train all right, with the rest of us, but he didn't get out at this end."

"P'raps he had a nap and went past the station," suggested Frank Nugent.

Tom Merry shook his head, and he repeated the message that had been given to him by the stationmaster at the station further on.

"Seems a very queer business," said Harry Wharton. "It's rough on you, too. Talbot's one of your best players. Got anybody to take his place?"

"Yes—Levison. Afraid he's not up to Talbot's weight, though."

Levison overheard that remark, and he set his lips tightly together. His opportunity had come at last, and he meant to prove that he was capable of putting up just as good a show as Talbot.

The rival teams joined forces, and walked up to the school.

There was a brief interval before the match was due to start, and Tom Merry & Co. fervently hoped that Talbot would turn up. But the minutes passed, and he failed to appear.

Scenes of the wildest excitement and enthusiasm prevailed at Greyfriars.

The famous Kentish school was every bit as keen as St. Jim's on winning Mr. Shirley Bright's silver cup. They were confident of victory, and, bearing in mind the great fight their team had put up at St. Jim's, they had reason to be.

Little Side was thronged with spectators.

The nobility and gentry—in other words, the Head and the masters—had turned out for the occasion, and several of the girl pupils from Cliff House had come over to watch the match.

The weather was dull and cloudy, and a storm threatened. But nobody seemed to mind. Besides, the veranda of the pavilion afforded ample shelter.

At the appointed time the referee blew his whistle, and all hope of Talbot arriving in time for the match was gone.

Harry Wharton won the toss, and he set the Saints to face a strong wind.

There was a roar from the touchline as the ball was set in motion.

"Play up, Greyfriars!"

"On the ball!"

"No more drawn games!"

"Make it a win outright this time!"

Then there came another roar—less loud, but none the less enthusiastic—of "Play up, Saints!"

The St. Jim's supporters, including Levison's sister, had arrived on the ground. They were somewhat staggered to observe that Levison was playing in place of Talbot, but there was no time to ask what it meant, for the game was in progress.

Greyfriars seemed to dominate the situation from the outset. Their forwards were showing irresistible form. Right from the kick-off they swept down the field in line, and after five minutes' play Harry Wharton sent the ball crashing past Fatty Wynn into the net. But the whistle had gone a second previously for off-side, and St. Jim's were saved.

But the Fjars were not to be denied. They continued to go great guns, and the opposing defence was given a grueling time.

Fatty Wynn kept a fine goal, as usual, and Figgins, at full-back, did the work of three men. He received splendid assistance from Kerr, and somehow the fierce rushes of the Greyfriars forwards were staved.

Very little was seen of the St. Jim's forwards. The half-backs had fallen back to assist the defence; consequently, the forwards had to make their own openings, and this was not easy, for the wind,

which had now risen to a gale, beat right into their faces.

"I am afraid," remarked Doris Levison to her younger brother, "that St. Jim's will be beaten."

But Levison minor was an optimist. "They'll get going in the second half," he said. "They'll have the wind in their favour then, and we shall see some fireworks!"

"Ernest doesn't seem to be doing much," said Doris.

"Give him a chance! He hasn't been able to get so much as a smell of the ball yet. But he'll make things hum presently!"

Despite the fact that they were "all over" their opponents, the Greyfriars players failed to score. On the run of the play they should have been several goals to the good at half-time. But when the whistle sounded for the interval the score-sheet was blank.

The players were very glad of the respite, particularly the St. Jim's defenders, who had been working like Trojans.

Heavy drops of rain began to fall, and the spectators stampeded towards the pavilion for shelter.

"They'll play on, of course!" said Doris Levison.

"Yes, rather!" answered Levison minor. "A drop of rain won't make any difference."

Brother and sister were joined a moment later by Marie Rivers. There was an expression of alarm on Marie's face.

"Do you happen to know why Talbot isn't playing?" she asked.

Doris Levison shook her head.

"I haven't the faintest notion," she replied. "He may be feeling off-colour. Anyway, my brother is taking his place. I expect Talbot's looking on."

"He isn't on the ground."

"Have you looked?"

"Everywhere!"

"P'raps he didn't come," suggested Frank Levison.

"He did," said Marie. "I saw him leave St. Jim's with the rest of the players."

"Tom Merry may know where he is," said Doris. "Why not ask him?"

The captain of the Shell was standing out in the open, looking up at the lowering sky. He turned quickly as Marie Rivers called to him.

"Where is Talbot, Tom?"

"I'd give anything to know, Miss Marie."

Marie looked startled.

"Did he not travel with the team?"

"Yes, but we saw nothing of him at Friardale. The only conclusion I can come to is that he got out at one of the intermediate stations."

"But why should he do that?"

"Give it up!" said Tom Merry. "The whole thing's a puzzle, and we sha'n't know what happened until Talbot turns up to explain."

Marie Rivers turned away. Her face was very pale. She saw Pat Donovan's handiwork in this. By some ruse, the Irishman must have got Talbot into his clutches.

But Marie said nothing to Tom Merry of her suspicions. She knew that Tom would need to centre all his thoughts on the second half of that highly important match with Greyfriars.

CHAPTER 8. The Winning Goal!

"WAININ' cats an' dogs, bai Jove!"

Thus spoke Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the two teams lined up for the resumption.

The rain pelted down, but the wind had not abated. However, the Saints would have the wind in their favour now—a fact for which they were duly thankful.

The first half had yielded no goals, and the prophets were already predicting a goalless draw. But they were wrong, as prophets not infrequently are.

On the slippery ground the players found it difficult to control the ball.

There were many amusing scenes, and a great laugh went up when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slid for about six yards, and then sat down violently in a puddle.

The St. Jim's players, however, adapted themselves to the conditions better than their opponents. And at last something was seen of their forwards.

Tom Merry broke away, and headed for goal. Peter Todd, the Greyfriars centre-half, came forward to tackle him; but he slipped and fell, and Tom raced on with the ball.

"Pass, Tommy!" panted Blake.

The captain of the Shell got rid of the ball just as Johnny Bull was about to charge him, and a moment later Jack Blake found himself with only the goalie to beat.

Bulstrode came out of his goal, and made a dive for the leather. He got it, too, but he failed to hold the greasy ball, and as it dropped from his hands Jack Blake drove it into the yawning net.

"Goal!"

After being overrun all through the first half, St. Jim's had managed to score. Their supporters were jubilant, and Levison minor was dancing a jig in his delight.

But the triumph of the Saints was short-lived.

The Friars played up desperately in the teeth of the gale, and they managed to force a corner.

Vernon-Smith took the kick with his customary accuracy, and for some time the ball was bobbing up and down in front of the St. Jim's goal.

It was a tense moment, and the on-lookers were breathless with excitement.

Presently Bob Cherry gained possession of the ball, and he lobbed it over the heads of a group of players into the net.

Fatty Wynn's vision had been obstructed, and he had no possible chance to save.

"Goal!"

The scores were level. And now came the tug-of-war.

Players, referee, and linesmen were soaked to the skin. But nobody seemed to heed the elements.

The exchanges were fast and thrilling, and when Dick Redfern tried a long shot from twenty yards' range, it looked as if the Greyfriars goalie would be caught napping.

But Bulstrode was all there. He leapt at the ball, and punched it clear.

After this, Greyfriars had a spell of attacking. But they found Fatty Wynn quite safe. On numerous occasions the Falstaff of the New House saved the situation when the backs were hopelessly beaten.

With ten minutes to go, the excitement reached fever-heat.

Levison, who had been playing a storming game at inside-right, and who had proved himself a worthy substitute for Talbot, secured the ball from a throw-in, and threaded his way through a group of opponents.

"Shoot, Ernie!" cried Levison minor excitedly.

And Levison shot. But Bulstrode flung himself at the ball as it came rushing in, and he just managed to turn it round the post.

It was a magnificent save, and the

Greyfriars goalie was applauded to the echo.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took the corner-kick which followed.

The ball skidded along the slippery turf, and three fellows rushed at it simultaneously. They were Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Ernest Levison.

And Levison got there first!

His boot met the ball fairly and squarely, and it whizzed into the net with such velocity that a portion of the net-work was broken!

"Goal!"

Levison would never forget the scene which followed. He was surrounded by his exuberant fellow-players, who seemed likely to tear him limb from limb in their excitement.

And Levison minor, forgetful of everything, save that his brother had scored the winning goal, rushed on to the field of play, and poured his congratulations into his major's ears.

"Cut off, kid!" said Tom Merry.

"The game's not won yet!"

But it was.

In the last few minutes the Friars made desperate efforts to equalise. But their attacks were beaten off. And when the final whistle rang out, they bade good-bye to their chances of winning the cup.

But they were sportsmen, every man-jack of them. And Harry Wharton was the first to shake Tom Merry by the hand and congratulate him.

"It was a great game!" he said. "You just pulled through by the skin of your teeth, but that winning goal was a beauty!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "You fellows will stay to tea, of course?"

The invitation was accepted. And after they had changed their soaking garments, the rival elevens met together in the junior Common-room, where a first-rate repast had been prepared.

The hero of the hour was, of course, Levison of the Fourth. He had stepped into Talbot's shoes, and he had covered himself with glory. And his schoolfellows were quick to show their appreciation of his splendid display.

When Tom Merry & Co. returned to St. Jim's they bore their blushing honours thick upon them.

But there was one thing which took the gilt off the gingerbread, so to speak, and cast a shadow over their happiness.

Where was Talbot?

Had he fallen among foes? Was he in danger? What had been the cause of his mysterious disappearance?

Over and over again the juniors asked themselves these questions, and the train sped on through the gathering dusk.

"It's just possible, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that we shall find Talbot waitin' for us when we get back to St. Jim's."

This hope, however, was shattered when the footballers reached their destination.

Talbot had not returned to the school, and there was no news of him.

The evening wore on, but the absentee failed to put in an appearance.

When bed-time came, Kildare of the Sixth informed Mr. Raiton that Talbot was missing, and a search-party of seniors was sent out to scour the countryside. But they returned empty-handed. Talbot of the Shell was in the hands of the enemy. And his chums at St. Jim's were anxiously wondering how long an interval would elapse before they saw him again!

THE END.

(Another grand story of Talbot and the Chums of St. Jim's next week.)

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 665.



The Editor's Chat.



Note:—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Attractions for Next Wednesday.

The next grand long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. will be entitled,

"FOR FREEDOM AND THE CUP!"

By Martin Clifford.

and will contain a thrilling narrative of the St. Jim's Junior Eleven's stubborn fight for the Bright Silver Football Cup, and of Talbot's bid for freedom from the old manor by the sea, where he had been held prisoner in the hands of that notorious criminal, Jim Dawlish. Levison plays an important part in helping Tom Merry's eleven to find a place in the final of the tournament. Altogether,

"FOR FREEDOM AND THE CUP!"

will be a really splendid yarn.

Our two splendid serials,

"RENTON OF THE ROVERS!"

By Paul Masters.

and

"SLAVE ISLAND!"

By Matthew Ironside.

are the best of their kind. Fine football and adventure yarns respectively, full of original interest and excitement.

That popular feature,

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER"

with many half-crowns awarded to my chums each week, is retained, and a contribution under the title of

"THE EDITORIAL CHAT"

A NATURALIST.

I want to draw attention to S. G. Finch's Rambler-Naturalists' Field Club, 30, Priory Road, East Ham. More members are wanted. Of course, there are a great number of naturalists who are busy this season, and we do not hear much about their doings. I only wish we did. But a Field Club does excellent work. If you take a scientific interest in the life of the country, you derive any amount of benefit from the merest ramble out of town. The more you know of botany, entomology, conchology, and the other learned subjects, the more you want to know.

A BUDGET OF LETTERS.

Sometimes letters of complaint seem on the unfair side. The writers have asked for certain things to be done, and are annoyed because their wishes have not been complied with. For instance, it was suggested to me that Ernest Levison might be reformed, just so as to bring him more into the limelight—a notion which seems to show that the correspondent felt bad actions brought publicity and the good ones nothing so desirable. Which is the wrong way of looking at matters, take it how you like.

MORE ABOUT EVERYBODY.

Now, a hard-worked author sits down to write a yarn that will please his readers. Say it is a bright, sunshiny morning, and that there has been some nice rain over night to freshen up the world and make it smile. The author feels he has a good idea, and he turns out a tale of the best, with a little group of characters figuring in a plot which grips. But the writer cannot bring in everybody. There would be so much crowding that you would never have a chance of seeing what was happening. I want to keep as many of the popular favourites as possible in view, but it stands to reason that some must drop out—for a time, anyway. Then we will have further instalments of the Gallery as time goes on.

ADVICE.

But have you noticed how unpopular advice is? Why it should be so nobody knows, but it is so, and there you are! Some fellows simply hate advice, good or bad. They know better than the adviser. Naturally they do. Everybody knows best—even the chap who has come to grief. One rather admires the individual who sticks to his opinion come weal or woe. There is something strong about him, although he may be one of those middle-headed arrangements who always take hold of the stick by the wrong end. Anyhow, he is more appealing than the smooth talker who protests that such and such an opinion has made him what he is—I mean the wight who never had a notion of his own, and who is for ever running himself down.

HABITS.

A celebrated writer, Walter Pater, spoke very badly of habits. He held that habits put an end to ambition and attainment. The idea can be exaggerated, like most other ideas. The habit of smoking, or doing some smart Indian club drill of a morning, will not hamper you if your constitution is equal to the strain. But some folks are afraid of breaking away from routine. They live by schedule, as it were—breakfast at the same hour, and so forth, and if they did not round off the day in the same way they have always done, they would be at a loose end.

THE FIXED IDEA.

What is to be admired is that quality of grim concentration which some fellows show. I met a young friend the other day. He is out for journalism, and is putting every ounce of energy into the business. He will win through. He is piling up knowledge, buying books, searching for a lot of curious information, and with it all he displays quite a respectable sense of proportion, without which sense a journalist can shut up shop, and take service in a fried-fish emporium, or some other useful business.

THE HANDY MAN.

He is not always a sailor, though the gallant tar has first honours. I was thinking just then of my chum who has hitched his waggon to a lamppost for the time being, and is on the look-out for a convenient star. He has the enthusiasm of journalism. I can see him later on going through some of those magic times in the newspaper world, when the office of the paper is humming, the leader-writer is writing for dear life, and each second from midnight is fraught with brilliant possibilities. Those are the moments worth living for—when what you have to write is wanted, and the knowledge is there.

CLIQUE.

Well, perhaps it is hardly fair to call them that, but in every school, as in other departments of the world, there are these divisions. Rookwood, for example, has many little bands of allies—notably the Giddy Goats, under Adolphus Marmaduke Smythe, while at St. Winifred's, Vernon Daubeny, with Torrence and Egan, lead the "Young Bucks." So it is with the other schools, in and out of fiction. Look at Highcliffe, with its famous Ponsonby crowd.

A CHEERY LETTER.

Miss Stella Walker, 55, Hirst Street, Arncliffe, Sydney, N.S.W., tells me she has been a constant reader of the Companion Papers for the last four years. She can hardly wait from one week to another, so anxious is she to get the new numbers. She wants to see New South Wales girls in the stories. "Complaining correspondents," she says, "get on my pulse." My correspondent would like to hear from another girl reader, age 14—16.

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Synopsis of First Chapters.

JASPER STANDISH plans to have his revenge on his enemy, RICHARD HARMER, by kidnapping his son DICK and transporting him to SLAVE ISLAND. He makes a bargain with the owner, HANS MEPPLE, to this effect, and the Dutchman succeeds in carrying off Dick Harmer to the strange island where he is made a slave. Here Dick meets Elaine, a charming little slave.

CAPTAIN DIRK KENTISH, R.N.R., a retired sea captain, is employed by Dick's father to search for him. The captain visits Chinatown to recruit a crew to sail with him on his strange quest. He meets some old friends.

When Standish returns home he discovers Elaine, whom he had, whilst on the island, taken rather a fancy to, is none other than his long-lost daughter, who had been missing for many years.

(Now go on with the story.)

Preparations for a Voyage!

On the fourth day after his startling discovery, Jasper Standish travelled to Sheerness, off which his yacht was anchored, and, on the fifth, the vessel set sail for Thursday Island, though not a man aboard save her owner had the least idea of the reason for the voyage.

Standish had decided that there was no other course to take but to wait on the island for Meppel, though it would probably be nearly a year before the Dutchman once more paid it a visit.

And whilst Standish in his yacht was leaving the white cliffs of Old England behind him, another was preparing to start upon an expedition to find Slave island, if—and it was a big "if"—such a thing were humanly possible.

That man was Captain Dirk Kentish, R.N.R., the sturdy skipper who had intended to spend the rest of his days in his little cottage in Devonshire, but found himself hipped and unhappy without excitement and adventure.

Already his vessel—a double-funnelled tramp-steamers, called the Albatross—was in readiness for taking to sea save for the addition of a first-mate.

The sturdy little skipper had wondered if he could not sell his ship just prior to his interview with Mr. Richard Harmer. Now he was more than glad that he had not. It would be good to stand once again upon her deck, bound on a mission that offered to be both hazardous and difficult.

On the evening of the day on which Standish's yacht had set sail for Thurs-

day Island, Captain Kentish was in Lime-house.

He had got together during the day the last of the crew he meant to take with him on his search for the lost island of the Harmers', having come east in the hope of finding certain men who had sailed under him in the past.

He had taken this trouble as he had known there was no questioning their pluck and loyalty in times of peril, and, although he had quite expected to find most of them at sea, in that direction he had been pleasantly surprised.

He had had six men in his mind, and had actually found four of them in their usual riverside haunts, and looking for a ship. They had been only too ready to sign on for the Albatross' voyage to the Pacific. A sailor worth his salt who had once sailed under the dare-devil little skipper's command could not fail to admire and respect him, even if his temper was villainous at times, and his contempt for danger apt to be disconcerting.

He told them when and where to join the ship, and went to find his prospective first-mate.

A long, strong, and black cigar protruding from between his bearded lips, Captain Kentish swaggered through some of the worst slums to be found in Lime-house, until he arrived at a marine-store near the river.

He strode into the shop, and rapped upon the counter with his knuckles.

The door behind the counter opened, and out into the shop shuffled a listless-looking man with a shock of red hair, and a square, unshaven jaw that reminded one of that of a bulldog. As soon as his twinkling blue eyes fell upon the skipper a remarkable change came over him. All his lifelessness vanished, and, with a whoop of delight, he vaulted over the counter, and seized the captain's hand.

"Shure, an' is it yourself, cap'n!" he shouted, in a rich Irish brogue. "Be-jabers, Oi'm so plazed ter see you Oi could sing fer joy!"

"Heaven forbid!" the skipper grinned hastily. "If you want to keep me happy, Pat, for the love of Mike don't exercise that voice of yours! It's like a rusty saw going through knotchy wood!"

"Faith! An' you said once that Oi ought to be with Carl Rosa, though Oi've heard since that he's dead!"

"That's what I meant!" the skipper retorted subtly. "Now; see here, you wrote to me a few days ago, saying this business you've bought since we both left

the sea isn't paying, and that, unless I could loan you some money, you'd have to let it go at a sacrifice."

The Irishman flushed uncomfortably. "Oi thought, as you have plenty, you wouldn't mind obligin' an old friend, cap'n," he murmured. "Fifty pounds will—"

"I'll lend you a hundred willingly!" Captain Kentish interrupted. "But first I would like to know if you might feel inclined to sell at the sacrifice you spoke of and take to the seas again, as first-mate on the old Albatross, as in the past?"

"Phwhat!" The Irishman fairly shouted the word. "You don't mane you're goin' to sea again?" he cried.

"I do!" Captain Kentish assured him, neatly twisting his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other with a flick of his tongue, and sending out a blue spiral of smoke. "Does Patrick O'Hara come with me?"

"Patrick O'Hara does, shure!" that worthy declared, shooting out his hand. "But phwhat's in the wind, cap'n?"

They gripped, these two staunch ship-mates, and quickly the stocky little skipper related the story told him by Dick Harmer's father, and repeated his determination to do his utmost to find the mysterious, uncharted island.

"How soon, Pat," he asked, "can you get this business off your hands?"

"To-night—first thing to-morrow morning at the latest, cap'n. Though, by the powers, Oi'd shut ut up, an' leave ut ter rot rather than miss comin' with you!" the Irishman responded.

"Right!" jerked the skipper. "Then join the ship in two days. She's lying in Salcombe Harbour—a queer place to start a voyage of this sort from, but I had her sent there when I settled down near there, and I thought I was going to be content to spend the rest of my life in growing roses."

He grinned.

"Well, I'm mightily pleased, Pat. But you know that!"

Again they gripped, then, declining the offer of refreshment in the shop parlour, the skipper took his departure.

There was a little smile hovering about his lips as he stepped into the dark street outside. He had spoken the truth when he had said that he was pleased at O'Hara's decision to sign on for the voyage.

The Irishman had sailed as first-mate with him for many years, and Kentish knew that, if he searched the United

Kingdom from one end to the other, he could not hope to find a better ally and comrade to support him in his adventure.

O'Hara had a nerve of steel in times of danger, and—well, somehow, Captain Kentish had a premonition that the trip was going to bring its desperate moments and tight corners, though only the future could prove whether or no his instinct was right.

Ugly little groups of evil-faced, foreign-looking men eyed the captain furtively as he wended his way through the narrow streets and alleys in the neighbourhood of O'Hara's shop. But, cigar in mouth, and hands in the pockets of his reefer jacket, the skipper swaggered along unconcernedly, treating their glances with a supreme contempt.

He had not travelled the world and seen some of its worst corners without having learned how to take care of himself, and a few East End hooligans and aliens were not likely to intimidate him. He could fight like a wild cat when it came to a rough and tumble, and had anyone here risked molesting him, they would have discovered the fact to their cost.

The captain wanted to reach the Commercial Road, and took the direction he knew was the most direct. The streets and byways grew in aspect worse rather than better, and were all ill-lighted.

The inhabitants were essentially night-birds, and the kind that did not appreciate illumination. The street lamps were mostly broken and useless, and had become so by design.

Swarms of ragged, ill-fed children played and screamed at each other in the garbage-littered gutters, splashing about in the puddles left by a recent shower of rain. Slatternly women gossiped or quarrelled together on the doorsteps of the tumble-down houses, and outside the numerous public-houses, to be found at the corner of almost every street of any size, lounged men who looked as though they had never done an honest day's work in their lives.

Captain Dirk Kentish had seen all these scenes of squalor and misery many times before, and paid little attention to them; but, suddenly, as he was passing one of the brilliantly-lighted public-houses, he started and took interest in a man who was just emerging.

The skipper dropped quickly in the rear, knowing that if the fellow saw him he would recognise him, and not wishing for that to happen just yet. And in this he had a reason.

The man was a tall, powerfully-built Italian, with a sallow, unhealthy skin, deep-set, shifty eyes, and a cruel, thin-lipped mouth that was only partially hidden by his ragged, black moustache.

The captain knew him as the keeper of an opium-den and gambling-house, named Guiseppe Gaglietto. He knew him also for one of the worst criminals in the whole of the East End.

A few years ago he and Captain Kentish had crossed swords, and, although the skipper had come out top-dog, as was usual with him, he still had a knife-scar to remember the Italian by—the mark of a blow that would have ended his life had its force not been broken by the blade first piercing a stout leather cigar-case that had been in his breast-pocket.

One of the skipper's crew had gone to Gaglietto's opium-den, more out of curiosity to see such a place rather than to try the pipe. He had been so knocked

about that he had been very near to death, and his money—almost the whole of his pay for a long voyage—had been taken from him before he was carried to a near-by alley and left lying there unconscious.

As soon as he had been able to tell his story, Captain Kentish, O'Hara, and some half-dozen members of the crew had made a raid on the Italian's den and demanded the return of the sailor's money.

It was not forthcoming at once, but Captain Kentish had thrashed it out of Gaglietto with a stout though pliable walking-cane he had carried with him for the purpose. It was then he received the stab; for there had been a fierce fight with the Italian and his several hirelings ere Captain Kentish's companions could contrive to keep the others back whilst the skipper dealt with their principal.

The skipper went after the Italian. Kentish had sharp eyes, and almost as soon as he had recognised Gaglietto he had become convinced that the foreigner was dogging the footsteps of a seafaring-looking man who had left the public-house a moment before him.

The captain felt instinctively that, supposing Gaglietto was following the other as he thought, it was for no good end.

Strictly speaking, it was nothing to Kentish, for the Italian's quarry was a total stranger to him. Nevertheless, he was not the kind of individual to see treachery and villainy enacted under his very eyes without making an effort to prevent it, and, apart from the common sympathy one follower of the sea must feel for another, Kentish meant to watch what was to happen.

His time was his own, and anything that might lead to an adventure always appealed to him. Thus, he kept in the shadows, and stole after Gaglietto and the man in front through street after street, little dreaming as he did so that he was almost within speaking distance of the one man in the whole of London who could give him a clue as to the whereabouts of Slave Island.

Fate was taking a hand in the game and working, if indirectly, on behalf of the vanished son of Richard Harmer. For the man whom the Italian crook was following—there was not the least doubt now that Gaglietto was dogging his footsteps—was none other than the ex-convict who had first acquainted Jasper Standish with the existence of the island—Peter Van Lardent.

The Death Trap.

NEARLY three hours had passed, and Captain Kentish was in the Chinese quarter, making his way down an evil-smelling street which led to the opium-den run by Gaglietto.

The skipper had kept Van Lardent and the Italian in view, and in a bar, shortly before the public-houses closed for the night, he had seen the Italian approach the Dutchman and enter into conversation with him.

By this time, Peter Van Lardent had taken far too much liquor, and was in the mood to be jovial and well-disposed towards anyone who addressed him.

He had in his pocket the bulk of the thousand pounds given him by Jasper Standish in consideration of telling him of Slave Island and how to get into communication with its owner, Hans Meppel; for, almost as soon as the latter's vessel had brought Standish and Van Lardent back to England, the Dutch sailor had signed on for a short voyage

aboard a brigantine bound for Brindisi. He had only just returned, and had thus had no opportunity of spending until now.

When he had commenced to get rid of his reward, he had flung it about with a lavishness that had attracted the attention of Guiseppe Gaglietto. That was how the Italian came to be shadowing Van Lardent when Captain Kentish glimpsed him.

Gaglietto had chanced to be in a bar when Van Lardent pulled out a handful of banknotes, and the Italian had made up his mind then and there that before the night was out the money on the Dutchman—or, at least, the bulk of it—should be transferred to him.

He had found matters even easier than he had anticipated. After getting into conversation with Van Lardent, he had suggested with a wink that, when the houses closed, they should go to a place where drink could still be had in secret, and the sailor had been too fuddled to be even wary.

With an entire lack of suspicion, he had agreed, and the watching Captain Kentish had seen the two disappear into the street he knew led to Gaglietto's den, which told him plainly enough what was to happen.

At first, Captain Kentish wondered if he should inform the police and endeavour to send a body of men there to raid the place. Then he reasoned that he had not real proof, sure though he was in his own mind that Gaglietto intended to rob the Dutch sailor, and finally he decided that it was long odds against the police taking action. Immediately he determined to play a lone hand.

The little skipper did not know the meaning of fear, and, if he hesitated at all, it was merely to make sure that a revolver he had slipped into his hip-pocket before coming east was still in its place.

The street was in the heart of the Chinese neighbourhood, and might have been situated in one of the poorer districts of China rather than London.

On the facias of the shops and cafes the names of the occupiers appeared in weird Chinese characters, and from one of the latter floated the plaintive whine of a Chinese fiddle, accompanied by cackal voices. In the windows, and over the doors, of the eating-houses hung many-coloured paper lanterns, and the few people the skipper passed were all Chinamen in more or less native costume.

Captain Kentish neared the end of the street, which was a cul-de-sac, ending in a high wall of a yard belonging to a condemned and disused factory.

The skipper was as good an actor as he was a seaman, and now he lurches uncertainly as he walked, and, if anyone chanced to watch his approach, they would have been ready to vow he was intoxicated.

He had no doubt that he would encounter the same Chinaman who had guarded the entrance of the den at the time when he had gone there and thrashed Gaglietto, which would mean that he would be refused admittance. He would have to get away quickly and try the plan he had had of bringing the police to the place if that happened.

Gaglietto's house was the last on the left-hand side of the street, and lay in deep shadows by reason of the towering wall beside it. The Italian did not advertise the fact that he was the proprietor of the den, and the Chinaman who ran and managed it for him was

usually taken to be the owner. Indeed, his name, "Looy Wu," was displayed in both Chinese and English characters over the doorway.

There was nothing else—nothing to say whom he was or his calling; but that was not necessary. The den had been too long established not to be known to all the poor slaves of the pipe who resided or came to the neighbourhood, and was sure of a regular and remunerative patronage.

Captain Kentish wondered if the sign it was necessary to give had been changed since last he was here. He hesitated for a moment as he reached the dark portals of the house, then risked it, giving two sharp raps with his

knuckles upon the door, then kicking it slowly five times more.

Almost instantly a small trap in one of the panels was raised, and an evil, yellow face peered out at him.

"Whatee you want?" its owner—an aged Chinese—asked in pidgin-English.

"To come in—whatcher think?" the captain hiccupped. "I wantee pipee, yellow mug—same as I've had here before!"

The square of wood was slammed down, and the skipper, again his old alert self, listened with all his nerves strung up to concert-pitch with excitement.

Ah, the bolts were being drawn and the key turned. Obviously, the man,

who was not the same Chinaman who had been here a few years back, was satisfied and going to admit him.

The door opened, and Captain Kentish, again assuming the manner of a drunken man, fell rather than stepped over the threshold and into the semi-gloom.

"Allee lemembel the way?" the Chinaman inquired softly.

"Yes," the captain rejoined; for he had a retentive memory, and recalled that the room where gambling went on lay at the top of the staircase facing him, and that the opium-den was beyond that.

(Another instalment of this grand adventure serial in next week's issue of the GEM. Look out for it!)

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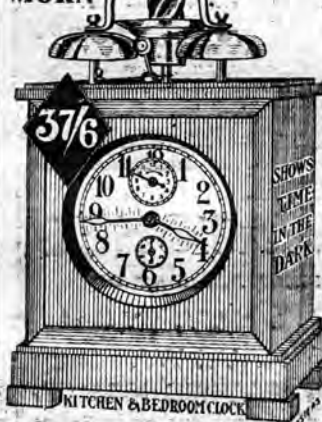
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