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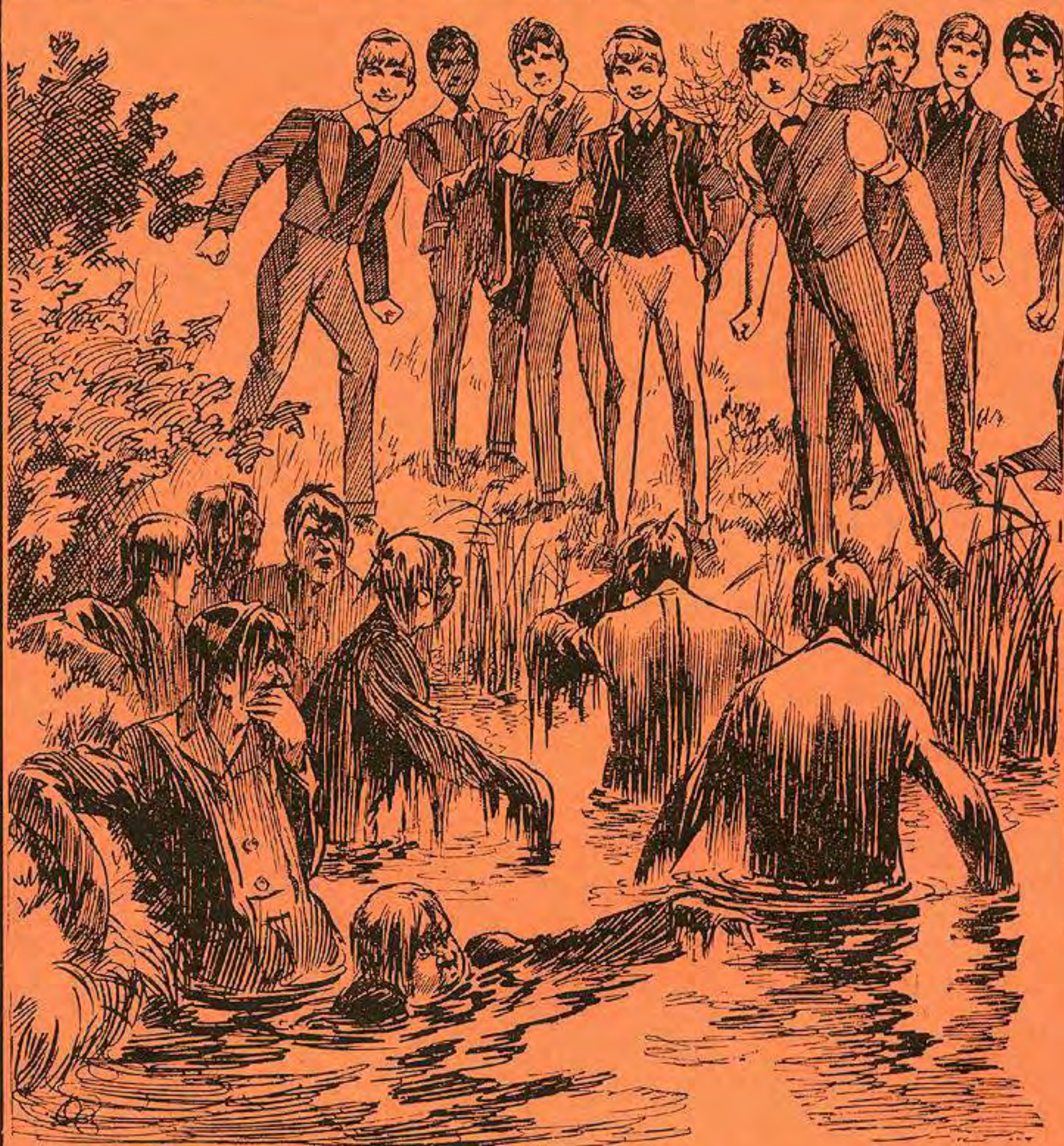
The **Magnet** 1st Library



No. 138 |

Grand, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

| Vol. 5.



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Harry Wharton's 'Pro'



**A Splendid,
Long, Complete School
Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. and
Alonzo Todd at Greyfriars.**

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Alonzo Gets in the Way.

BOB CHERRY stopped at the door of No. 1 Study in the Remove passage, and kicked it open. Bob Cherry wore a cheerful and jolly look, which showed that he was in high spirits. When Bob was in high spirits, he generally signalled the same by being boisterous; hence the informal manner in which he announced his arrival to the occupants of No. 1 Study.

The door flew open with a bang, and there was a yell within the room.

"Ow!"

A fat junior had been standing with his back to the door, and it had caught him fairly as it flew open.

He fell upon his hands and knees on the carpet, and there was a roar of laughter from three other fellows in the study—Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gasped.

"Ow! Yow! What was that? Yow!"

Bob Cherry stared into the study. The sight of Billy Bunter on his hands and knees seemed to surprise him very much.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "Have you lost something, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What is it—a threepenny-bit?"

"Ow!"

"Can I help you look for it?"

Bunter scrambled up. He put his big spectacles straight, and blinked indignantly at Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really—"

"The door knocked against something when I opened it," said Bob Cherry, looking round. "What was it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "It was Bunter!"

"Oh, Bunter! What a curious thing it is that Bunter's always in the way!" said Bob.

"Oh, really—"

"Oh, don't apologise, Bunter, there's no harm done, as it happens," said Bob magnanimously. "Don't mention it!"

"Oh, really—"

"Let the matter drop! I looked in to ask you fellows if you were coming?" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, that depends," said Harry Wharton with a smile. "Where?"

"To Braye!"

"Braye? Why, that's twenty miles away!"

"All right for a bike run!"

"Better have the feed nearer to Greyfriars," said Billy Bunter. "Then I could come. I should be willing to do the cooking—"

"Feed! Who's talking about a feed?"

"Why, what are you going to Braye for, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha! There's a football match on."

Bunter looked deeply disgusted.

"Do you mean to say you're going twenty miles to see a football match?" he exclaimed contemptuously.

"Yes, rather!"

Bunter snorted.

"Well, you jolly well won't catch me coming, that's all," said Bunter.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"As it happens, I didn't come here to ask you," he said.

"Are you fellows coming? We have time to ride over to Braye before the match begins, and we can go into the bob sears. It's a League match, and we don't often get a chance of seeing a League footer match."

The chums of the Remove looked keen at once.

They were all footballers, of course, and very keen on the grand old game, and, as Bob Cherry said, they very seldom had a chance to see real professional football.

To visit a League match was about as big a treat as could be devised for the juniors.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "That's a good idea. Who's playing?"

"The 'Spurs!'"

The chums gave a yell.

"The 'Spurs!'"

"Yes."

"My hat! I'm going if I have to crawl on my hands and knees!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The crawlfulness will be terrific!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur, equally excited.

"What—ho!" said Wharton.

"Tottenham Hotspur against Loomshire United," said Bob Cherry, grinning as he saw the effect of his announcement upon the chums of No. 1 Study. "Mark's coming with me, and Tom Brown, too. You fellows ought to come!"

"Oh, we're coming, rather!"

"You bet!"

"That young chap who's been making a name lately is playing for Loomshire United," said Bob. "You remember—the papers said he would turn out a second Steve Bloomer. Chap named Neville!"

"I've heard of him—Jack Neville!"

"That's it. I want to see him play."

"Good! What a ripping treat! We'll all come. Jolly glad you mentioned it, Bob," said Harry Wharton gratefully.

"Come on, then," said Bob Cherry. "The sooner we start the better. The ground's sure to be crowded!"

"What—ho!"

The chums of the Remove hurried downstairs with Bob Cherry. Mark Linley and Tom Brown were already waiting in the passage.

They lost no time in getting to the bicycle-shed. Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, was there getting his machine out. He looked round at the Removites as they came in.

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"Cycling to-day?" he asked.

"Yes; going to Braye to see the League match."

"Oh, good. So am I."

"Right—ho; we'll go together, then."

They wheeled out the machines. Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of Greyfriars, met them as they pushed the bicycles down towards the gates, and he stopped and blinked at them.

"You are going out, Wharton?" he asked.

"Well, I'm not pushing this bike along for exercise only," said Harry with a smile. "I'm in rather a hurry, too, Todd."

"Ah, I wanted to speak to you!"

Alonzo Todd had halted directly in the path of the bicycles. He did not seem to realise that he was causing delay. The juniors had to stop.

"Some other time, Toddy," said Harry Wharton.

"It is rather important. My Uncle Benjamin always told me not to put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day, you know."

"Good old Benny!" said Bob Cherry. "Give him a rest till we come back, Toddy. Then we'll hear all about him."

"Buzz off, Toddy!"

"My dear Wharton! I have an idea. I want you to help me. It is an idea for doing good, and surely you will not let the opportunity pass you!"

"I wish you'd let us pass you," said Nugent. "That's more important. Do you want to be wheeled over, Toddy?"

"My dear Nugent—"

"Good-bye!"

"But—"

"Jump out of the way, Toddy!"

"But—"

"Clear the track!" roared Bob Cherry.

"However—"

The juniors wheeled their bicycles on. They wheeled on in a group, and as Alonzo still blocked the way, the machines wheeled right into him. He backed away from the bicycles hastily, but they followed him up.

"My dear fellows—" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sight of Alonzo backing away, and the bunch of cycles following him up, made the juniors roar with laughter.

Alonzo backed and backed, getting more bewildered at every step, until he stumbled and sat down.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Alonzo.

The juniors walked on, laughing, and wheeled their machines over him, and the tyres left dusty lines on his attire.

He sat up when they had passed him, very dazed and dusty, and blinked after them as they wheeled the bikes out of the gateway.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Alonzo.

He staggered to his feet.

"Oh, dear, I am quite dusty! But I must really speak to Wharton! He mustn't let this opportunity of doing good slip! Wharton!"

Alonzo ran after the cyclists. But they had mounted outside the school gates; and as he reached the road, he saw them disappearing in a cloud of dust.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Row on the Road.

THE chums of the Remove laughed heartily as they pedalled down the road towards Friardale. Alonzo Todd had added considerably to the gaiety of existence since he had come to Greyfriars. Alonzo was always trying to be useful and obliging, and ever on the search for opportunities of doing good. Which was very nice of Alonzo. The unfortunate thing was, that he was generally very unlucky in his efforts, and his attempts to oblige frequently led to trouble. It was not Alonzo's fault; it was his misfortune.

"Good old Alonzo!" said Bob Cherry, chuckling. "I wonder what his wheeze was. We shall get it sprung on us when we get back!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Which way are we going?" asked Nugent. "We can go the Courtfield Road, or take the short cut by Highcliffe."

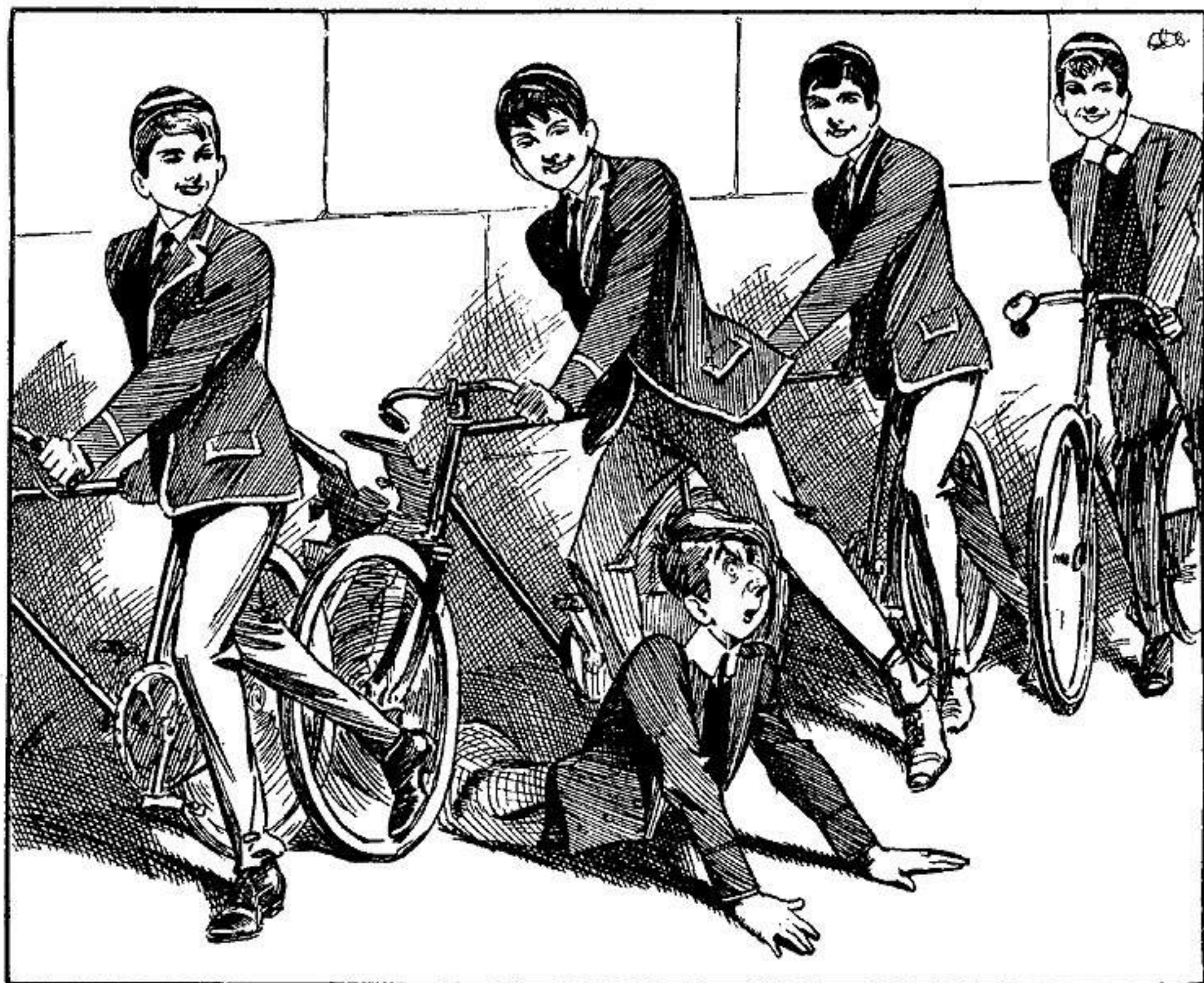
"Short cut," said Harry Wharton decidedly. "It saves more than a mile, and we've got enough distance to cover."

"That's so."

"The road's rough part of the way, but we can stand it."

"May see something of the Highcliffe chaps," Bulstrode remarked.

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"Oh, dear!" gasped Alonzo Todd, as the juniors wheeled their machines over him, and the tyres left dusty lines on his attire. (See Page 2.)

"Well, there are enough of us to make them willing to leave us alone."

"Oh, yes, that's all right!"

The group of cyclists swept on through the village of Friar-dale, and then took the short cut over the moorland to Highcliffe.

Highcliffe School was in some ways the rival of Greyfriars, and there had been many a rub between them.

The Highcliffe fellows were greatly given to putting on side, and swank was a thing that Harry Wharton & Co. weren't likely to stand from anybody.

Highcliffe fancied themselves at footer, and in a rash moment they had undertaken to meet the Greyfriars Remove.

Greyfriars Remove had beaten them hollow, and it was a defeat all the more deserved because the Highcliffe fellows swanked and boasted instead of playing the game.

There had been considerable bad feeling between the schools since.

That fellows who couldn't stand up on the footer field should swagger about as if the earth belonged to them was rather too much for the patience of Harry Wharton & Co.

And the Highcliffe fellows weren't above taking advantages, too, that the Greyfriars juniors did not regard as "cricket."

More than once some of the Remove fellows had been roughly handled by the Highcliffians when the latter had long odds on their side, and that was just the sort of thing to get the Remove's back up.

In passing Highcliffe School on their way to the football—
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ground at Braye the chums ran the risk of falling in with Ponsonby & Co.

But, as Harry Wharton remarked, there were enough of them to take care of themselves if they did meet the Highcliffians.

They dashed on at full speed over the bumpy ground, and soon came out into the white high road that ran past the gates of Highcliffe College.

Nugent uttered an exclamation.

"Look there!"

The Greyfriars juniors looked. A group of cyclists could be seen just in front of the college gates, and they were starting in the same direction that Harry Wharton & Co. were following, so they had their backs to the chums.

But Harry Wharton recognised them.

There were Vavasour and Ponsonby, and Merton and Gadsby, and three more of the Fourth Form of Highcliffe.

They were in Norfolk jackets and knickers, dressed very smartly, and their bicycles were clean and gleaming, in the pink of good condition. Ponsonby & Co. were always up to the mark.

There were seven of the Highcliffians, which was exactly the number of the Greyfriars fellows. Harry Wharton & Co. kept straight on without a pause. They swept past the gates of Highcliffe, which Ponsonby & Co. had just left, and rapidly gained on the smart cyclists ahead.

Bob Cherry rang his bell furiously.

Ponsonby looked quickly round.

The Highcliffe fellows were spread out over the road, filling it up right across, and there was no room for the Greyfriars

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juniors to pass, but perhaps there was no need for Bob to ring quite so loudly.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Ponsonby. "Greyfriars cads!"

He spoke the words loud enough for Harry Wharton & Co. to hear.

"Nice, polite chap, ain't he?" Nugent remarked.

"Ponsonby's the junior captain of Highcliffe now, I hear. Nice boy—I don't think!"

"Clear the road!" shouted Bob.

"Rats!" shouted back Vavasour.

"We want to get past."

"Bosh!"

"We're going to Braye for the footer match," said Harry Wharton pacifically. "Let's get by, there's good chaps! We want to be in time."

"Oh, that's where we're going!"

"Phew!" said Bob Cherry. "Not much in your line, I should think."

"Shut up, Bob. Well, let's get on, Ponsonby."

"No hurry," said Ponsonby, signing to his followers to keep the road blocked. "You can follow in the footsteps of your betters, you know."

"Hear, hear!" said the Highcliffe fellows.

Harry Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Look here, you fellows can be late for the match if you like," he exclaimed angrily, "but we're not going to be! Make room!"

"Rats!"

"We'll jolly well ride into you if you don't!"

"Go ahead!"

The Highcliffe party remained strung out across the road. It was impossible for the Greyfriars fellows to pass without danger of collisions, or, rather, a certainty. But the juniors were not likely to follow contentedly behind Highcliffe for the next ten miles or so.

That was hardly to be thought of.

"We're going past!" said Harry Wharton.

"What-ho!"

"The what-hofulness is terrific!"

"If they won't give us room we'll make room, if we smash up every blessed jigger on the road!" said Wharton.

"Good egg!"

"Come on, then!"

Harry Wharton never failed to take the lead when there was anything like danger to be encountered. He pedalled on at top speed, and drew closer and closer to the cyclists ahead. Ponsonby looked round, and his expression changed a little. He had not thought that the pursuers would have the nerve to really charge them, but he could see now that the Greyfriars party meant grim business.

Harry Wharton & Co. swept on in a body.

If the collision came there was no doubt that somebody would be hurt, and that it would be bad for the machines.

But Ponsonby, though he could hurl defiance at the enemy while he thought they would weaken, had not nerve enough to come up to the scratch.

As soon as the Highcliffe captain saw that Harry Wharton & Co. were really charging he changed his mind.

The Highcliffe fellows instinctively quickened pace to avoid the crash, and the Greyfriars cyclists swept close on behind them. At every second the Highcliffians expected to feel the Greyfriars wheels crashing into their back tyres. Their nerves were on the jump with the expectation.

"Better let 'em pass!" muttered Vavasour.

Ponsonby nodded.

"Close in!" he said quickly.

The Highcliffe riders drew towards the left of the road.

They were barely in time.

Harry Wharton shot by them, missing Ponsonby but by a few inches, and his comrades streamed after him at whizzing speed.

The Highcliffe cyclists had escaped the collision, but in their hurry they were not able to escape running into one another.

Ponsonby's pedals caught in Vavasour's, and the two cycles went reeling, and the two riders came heavily to the ground.

As they were leading, their fall threw the rest of the party into inextricable confusion.

As Harry Wharton & Co. swept on there was crash after clatter, clatter after crash, among the Highcliffe cyclists.

Harry Wharton looked over his shoulder.

Half the Highcliffe party were down, and the others were reeling about on their cycles as if they had lost control of their machines. The whole party was in wreck and confusion. The Greyfriars juniors sent back a yell of laughter as they rode on.

"So much for Highcliffe!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Greyfriars cyclists dashed on, and soon lost sight and sound of their defeated rivals of the road.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On the Football Ground.

THE Loamshire ground was already pretty well packed when the chums of the Greyfriars Remove arrived.

Harry Wharton & Co. had put up their bicycles near the football-ground, and then walked down to the gates, finding themselves in the midst of a stream of people following the same direction.

The match between Loamshire United and Tottenham Hotspur had evidently aroused the greatest interest in the town.

People were coming from far and near to see it, and, indeed, the chums heard that there were special trains running, bringing spectators from all quarters for the great League match.

Tottenham admirers had come down with the team, and Loamshire backers were turning up in thousands, and a big public not particularly attached to either Loamshire or Tottenham, but fond of good footer, rolled up in great force.

The great enclosures were filling fast.

The chums of Greyfriars contented themselves with shilling places, and poured in, in the midst of a trampling, excited, good-tempered crowd.

All sorts and conditions of fellows were there—workmen, clerks and business men, who had finished work, lads who had the Saturday afternoon to themselves, crowds of fellows who had no opportunity of playing themselves, but were glad, nevertheless, of a chance of seeing a good game.

The juniors kept together in a bunch, and found pretty good places.

Harry Wharton looked out for the Highcliffe fellows after they were in their places.

He could see nothing of Ponsonby & Co.

"Oh, they'll go in the grand-stand, of course," said Nugent. "It wouldn't be Ponsonby if he didn't swank."

"The swankfulness of the honourable Ponsonby is terrific!" Hurree Singh remarked. "We shall not see him here."

"All the better!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

Wharton looked at his watch.

"A quarter of an hour to the kick-off," he remarked.

"And they're still coming in."

"Yes, rather!"

"There will be twenty thousand here at least," Tom Brown remarked, with a glance over the sea of bobbing heads.

"Or thirty," said Bob Cherry.

"I've seen sixty thousand at a match," said Nugent. "It was a Hotspur match, too, on the ground at Tottenham. Chap was nearly crushed to death in the crowd. Hallo! Look there!"

"What is it?"

"Highcliffe cad!"

Nugent pointed out a Highcliffe cap. They saw several others round it. Ponsonby & Co. had arrived after all, and were coming into the same place. But they were much further back.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Here we are again!"

Ponsonby tiptoed and looked over the heads of the crowd.

"Oh, there you are, you outsiders!" he remarked.

"Yes, rather ahead of you," grinned Bob Cherry. "It looks to me as if you're the outsiders this journey."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll jolly soon be there!" said Ponsonby.

"I don't see how you'll manage it."

"You will see!"

And the Highcliffe fellows, in a solid wedge, forced their way through the crowd to get to the front.

There was a roar of protest immediately.

Fellows who had come earlier were not likely to be pushed

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out of their places by later comers, and Ponsonby's attempt was as rash and reckless as it was unjustifiable.

"Who are you a-shoving?"

"Stand back!"

"Order!"

"Keep back there!"

"You chaps looking for trouble?"

"Push 'em back!"

"Kick 'em out!"

"Make room!" exclaimed Ponsonby arrogantly.

The crowd simply yelled at him.

The Highcliffe fellows had never been to a League match before, and in their absurd arrogance they expected the workmen and other fellows round them to make room for them, simply because they were well-dressed, and had a high opinion of themselves.

They did not know a football crowd.

The crowd were too astonished at first to hurt them, but the shoving of the Highcliffians left no doubt as to their intentions, and then there was wrath.

"Kick 'em out!" rose a yell.

"Shove away!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Bounders!"

"Kick 'em out!"

There was a wild uproar round the Highcliffe fellows. Harry Wharton & Co. were not near enough to them to interfere. Wharton looked anxiously.

"The silly, swanking asses!" he exclaimed. "They'll get hurt."

"Let 'em!" said Bob Cherry carelessly. "If they can't play the game, let 'em take what they get."

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"My hat!" said Bulstrode. "They'll be trampled on if they don't get out. The mad fools, to think they could bully a crowd like this."

"It was a bit thick, and no mistake."

"Kick 'em out!" rose the roar.

Ponsonby & Co. soon lost their nerve in the uproar their insolence had excited. They ceased to shove, and would have been only too contented if the crowd had ceased to shove, too. But they had roused a spirit it was not easy to quell.

"All right!" exclaimed Ponsonby, who had turned quite pale. "Stop it! It's all right. We'll stick here."

"Don't shove, please!" exclaimed Vavasour.

A burst of rude laughter answered them.

"Kick 'em out!" rose the cry again.

And Ponsonby & Co. were shoved back.

It was impossible for order to be restored, unless the crowd chose to keep order. The police on the ground could not have touched them—in fact, all the police in the county could not have governed a good-sized football crowd, if that crowd had taken it into its head to be "ugly."

Ponsonby & Co. realised their blunder, and were only anxious to get out of it as soon as possible.

"Let's get out," whispered Ponsonby hurriedly.

"Yes, rather, we can't stay here among these dirty cads!" said Vavasour.

"Dirty cads—eh?" exclaimed a big, stalwart railway man, who was standing beside Vavasour. "Take that, you puppy!"

And he smote the Highcliffe fellow on the face with his open hand.

It was not a blow—the railwayman could have killed him with a blow. It was just a smack, which Vavasour certainly deserved for his insolent speech. The Highcliffe fellow recoiled, his face going deadly white, then raised his hand to strike back—and dropped it again.

"Let's get out!" he muttered thickly.

The Highcliffe fellows retreated towards the entrance.

It was not easy, with a stream of incoming people, but they shoved, and were shoved, and, in a somewhat dishevelled condition, reached the turnstile again.

There they escaped from the crowd. Having had enough of the shilling crowd, they made their way to a more expensive part of the ground.

Harry Wharton & Co. had lost sight of them earlier. The chums of Greyfriars were a little anxious as to what might have happened to them, but the cessation of the uproar showed that they had gone.

"Jolly good riddance," said Bob Cherry. "The cheek of the cads in thinking they were entitled to other chaps' places, gets my back up."

"The upfulness of my honourable back is also terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "If they miss the match it will serve them rightfully."

"Close on time now," remarked Linley.

The people were still coming in, and the crowd was being packed more densely.

But it was close on time now for the players to appear in the field.

There was a cheer as a stream of fellows in red shirts and white knickers came into the field.

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"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

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ONE
PENNY.

They were the Loamshire men.

A minute later came a stream of white shirts and blue knickers.

"The 'Spurs!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

And the Greyfriars chums gave a cheer for the gallant lads from Tottenham.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The 'Spurs' Match.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR won the toss, and chose a goal. As the teams lined up, the chums of Greyfriars looked them over with keen eyes. Both teams were in fine form. But the Greyfriars' fellows singled out one of the forwards on the Loamshire side—the young professional, Jack Neville.

In him they took a special interest.

He was a native of the village of Friardale, near which Greyfriars lay, and well-known in the neighbourhood of the school. Some of the Greyfriars juniors had met him before he played for Loamshire. He was quite a lad, not more than nineteen, but he was well built and well developed, and looked quite up to the form of any fellow on the ground there, and the equal even of the Tottenham giants, like Joyce and Coquet. He had a handsome, frank face, close-cropped fair hair, and steady eyes like steel.

"There he is," said Harry Wharton, with a nod. "He's playing inside right."

"Yes, by George, I know him again!" said Bulstrode. "I've seen him doing gardening near Friardale, when I was a kid in the Second Form."

"That's nothing against him."

"I didn't say it was," said Bulstrode, though his tone was not wholly pleasant. "It's a change for him. He's getting the maximum wage now."

"He looks a very decent chap," said Mark Linley.

"He is a decent chap," replied Harry. "I've heard about him. He's a wonderful forward, too, and we're going to have a treat."

The people were still coming in as the whistle went for play.

There was not likely to be a single available space left unoccupied for the match between Loamshire and the 'Spurs.

Harry Wharton ran over the 'Spurs with his eye.

He had seen them play before, and knew most of the men by sight.

He ran some of them over by name for the information of his companions.

"That's Joyce in goal," he said. "The six-footer chap. The other six-footer at back is Coquet. I don't know the other back."

"I do," said Bob Cherry. "I've seen him play at Reading. It's Wilkes."

"Good. The halves are Darnell, Birnie, and Steel. I know Middlemiss and Minter among the forwards."

Nugent looked at the programme.

"The others are Humphreys, Gosnell, and Wilson," he said.

"Good."

"A fine team."

"Yes, rather."

"But Loamshire's quite up to their form, I think," said Mark Linley.

"Oh, yes, rather!"

"There they go!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

The game had started.

Loamshire led off with an attack, which was quickly repulsed by the 'Spurs, and some play in midfield followed, and then a determined attack by the visitors.

The 'Spurs bore everything before them, amid cheers from the crowd.

"Go it, 'Spurs!"

"Hurrah!"

"On the ball!"

"Play up, Loamshire!" rose the cry. "Look out, Neville."

Right down to the Loamshire goal surged the players and the ball. But the home goalie was a safe man.

The ball popped twice at him, and was cleared coolly, and the second time a back sent it away, and the forwards had a chance.

"Look out!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Neville's on the ball."

It was the first time the young inside right had had a chance of showing his quality.

He was "on the ball" in the twinkling of an eye, as soon as his chance came, and he had it up the field at lightning speed.

The Tottenham halves could not touch him, and as the backs rushed in, he dodged Coquet, and passed just in time to elude Wilkes.

He might have tried a shot for goal on his own, with a very good chance of success, but he chose to centre and make a sure thing of it.

From the centre it shot into goal before Joyce had a chance to stop it.

There was a wild roar.

The ball was in the net.

"Goal!"

"Loamshire's goal!"

"Hurray!"

"Hip-pip!"

It was first blood to Loamshire.

"Good old Neville," said Nugent. "That was ripping good play. Lots of chaps would have been hungry for goals, and sent the ball in themselves."

Wharton nodded.

"Yes, it's really his goal, though the centre took it."

"The crowd can see it."

That was true enough. The crowd cheered Neville loudly. The teams lined up again, and the game was resumed.

The play was keen and snappy all through, and the Greyfriars chums watched it with almost breathless interest.

Upon the whole, Tottenham Hotspur outclassed Loamshire, as was seen in many a detail of the play; but Loamshire had one man who was equal to anything the 'Spurs could show.

That was the young "pro," Jack Neville.

Neville was a host in himself.

More than once he threw himself into the defence when the backs failed to stand the Tottenham charges, and when he had a chance as forward, he never lost it.

Twice in the first half the young professional put the ball into the net, and all through his play was consistently cool and steady and unselfish.

When the whistle went for the interval, however, Tottenham had scored four goals to three of Loamshire.

The scoring had been pretty fast, but every goal was well earned; there had not been a fluke from the start.

The juniors eagerly discussed the play during the interval. "I fancy Tottenham will pull it off," Bob Cherry remarked. "They're stronger than the home team. But Neville almost makes things equal."

"The 'Spurs are in splendid form."

"They always are."

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton. "I'd like to play in a match like this. It's something like footer."

"What-ho!"

"I wonder if those Highcliffe chaps are on the ground," said Nugent, looking round. "Have you seen them?"

"Not a sight of them."

"I shouldn't wonder if they've missed the match," said Tom Brown. "Serve them jolly well right if they have!"

"The servefulness would be terrific!"

"But they haven't," said Bulstrode. "I can see Ponsonby and Vavasour, and I fancy the others will be with them. They're up there in the stand. Look through my field-glasses."

Nugent looked through the glasses.

They brought the Highcliffe fellows, far off as they were, very close, and there was no doubt about it. Ponsonby & Co. were there.

"Well, let's hope it will do them good," said Nugent. "The way they play footer is enough to make an angel weep!"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"I've heard something about an intention of the Highcliffe chaps to challenge us again," Harry Wharton remarked thoughtfully.

The juniors laughed.

"It would be another walk over," said Nugent. "I don't know that we ought to waste time playing them."

"Well, another licking might do them good. I heard that they had a new player who was a regular marvel. I expect it's only gas, though."

"Most likely."

"As a matter of fact, I imagine that Ponsonby & Co. haven't come here for sport," said Nugent. "I know jolly well that Ponsonby bets on footer games; I've heard him say so. Most likely they've got money on one of the sides here—the 'Spurs, most likely."

"Rotten!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they are again!"

The players came on.

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The game was resumed. Tottenham Hotspur pressed the home side very hard. But the defence was sound, and the 'Spurs, brilliant as their attack was, failed to score.

Ponsonby & Co. were watching the play with as much keenness as the Greyfriars fellows, and with much more anxiety.

"Looks to me as if Loamshire's going to get licked," Ponsonby remarked to his comrades, with a glum look.

Vavasour nodded.

"Yes. Rotten!"

"That chap Neville isn't such a wonder as they say."

"No; confound him!"

"You've put a lot on Loamshire, Pon?" asked Gadsby.

"Well, not a lot," said Ponsonby. "I've a couple of pounds on the game. But that's enough to make me want them to win."

"I've put a fiver on with Banks the bookie," said Vavasour gloomily.

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll never see your fiver."

"I suppose not."

"Hang it!" said Merton. "I think we've been swindled. That chap Neville was supposed to be a regular Bloomer, and to be able to win matches on his own. Why the dickens doesn't he score?"

"Oh, he can't score!"

"Hang him!"

"Hang them all!" said Vavasour. "My fiver's gone. The 'Spurs will win easily."

"Blow the 'Spurs!"

"Blow the lot of them!"

"Oh, dash it all, old man, never mind!" said Merton, who happened to have no bet pending. "Take it like a sport!"

"Oh, cheese that! You've got nothing on."

"I've got a five bobber," remarked Howard. "I don't care if it goes! What have you got on?" he asked, turning to Tunstall, the sixth Highcliffian.

Tunstall grinned.

"A quid."

"You'll lose it."

"Oh, no, I sha'n't lose it."

"My dear chap, you'll lose it. The home team's beaten already."

"My quid's on the 'Spurs!"

"Oh!"

"Rotten!" said Vavasour. "I wish my fiver were."

They watched the game gloomily. Tunstall was in high feather; he had obtained two to one against the 'Spurs, and he stood to win two sovereigns. But for the others the pleasure of the day's outing was marred. Vavasour and Ponsonby, at least, had bet more than they could afford to lose, and they did not like the prospect. Whenever betting enters into any sport, the real pleasure and health of it are gone, as the Highcliffe fellows were finding out on this occasion. And it is to be hoped that those who are seeking to introduce the evils of gambling into the grand old winter game will never succeed in reducing it to the level that horse-racing—once a great sport—has reached.

The Highcliffe fellows watched with a feverish desire that the home team would pull out ahead, and they watched Neville very keenly. But it was not a patriotic desire to see their own men win that they felt. They were thinking of their miserable money.

And their desire was not to be gratified.

Neville scored another goal for Loamshire, and made the scores level, and Loamshire hopes rose—only to be dashed to the ground.

For the 'Spurs made a combined effort now, and the home players were simply swept away before the boys from Tottenham.

Twice the ball was slammed into the net, and only the cessation of play prevented the 'Spurs from still further mauling their opponents.

The whistle rang out, and the match was over, Tottenham Hotspur the victors by six goals to four.

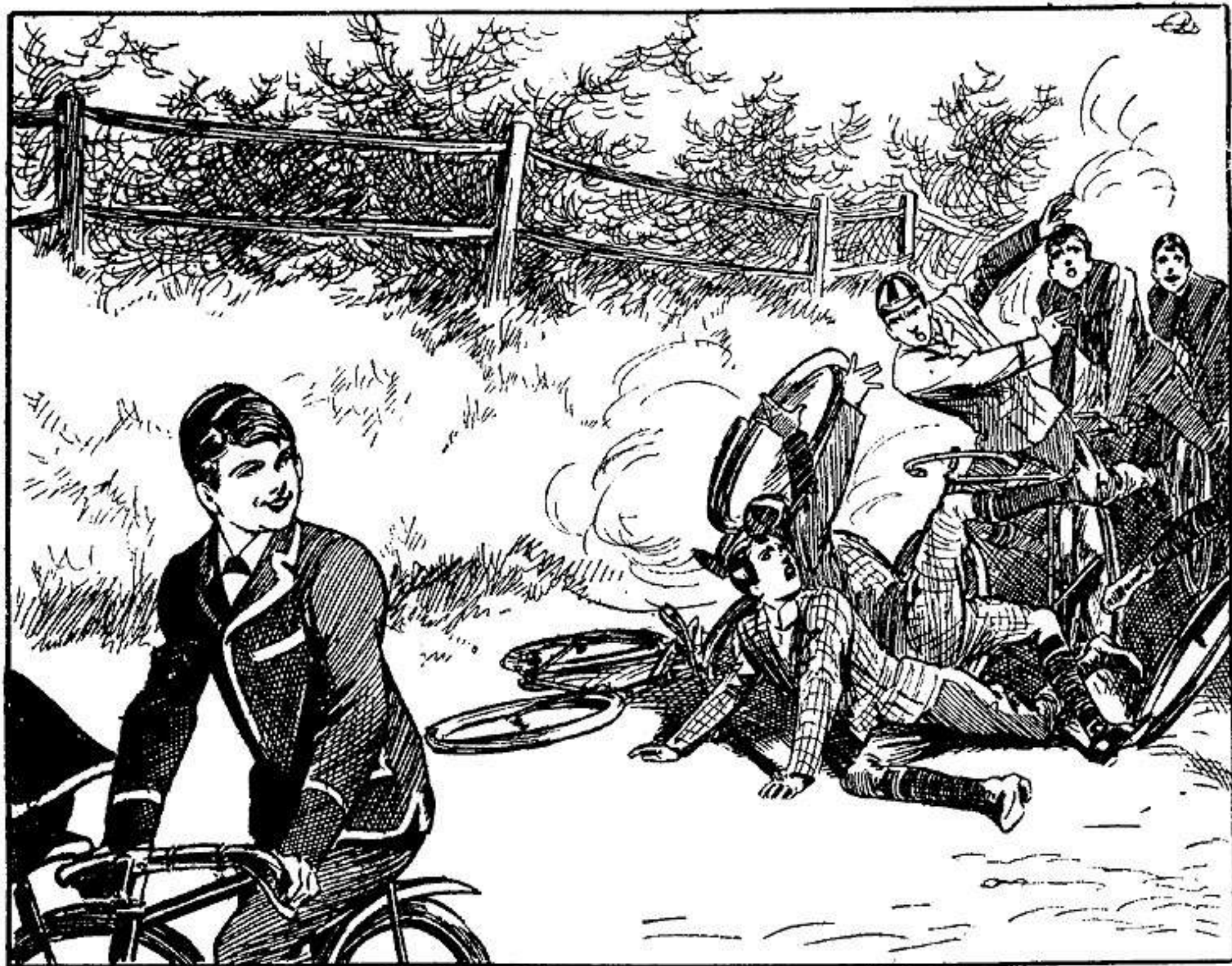
The game had been a fine and well-played one from start to finish, and the 'Spurs had won because they were the stronger team.

But the Loamshire men had done well—very well, and one among them, at least, head and shoulders above the rest, was equal to the best of the 'Spurs.

That one was Jack Neville.

And as the players went off the ground, Neville was

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Half the Highcliffe party were down, and the others were reeling about on their cycles. The whole party was in wreck and confusion. "So much for Highcliffe!" chuckled Bob Cherry, riding on. (See page 4.)

cheered by name by many of the Loamshire supporters, disappointed as they were by the result of the match.

Ponsonby and Vavasour, in their bitterness, hissed the player, to the astonishment and rage of the people round them, for which they were promptly hustled, and were glad to escape from the ground with their clothes considerably rumpled and themselves breathless and furious.

The Highcliffe fellows left the ground in the worst possible temper with themselves and with everybody and everything in the place.

They were just in the humour for a row, to wreak their rage upon somebody, it mattered little whom, and in that mood they fell in with Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, who had become separated from their comrades in the cram at the gates of the football ground.

The juniors were pushed together by the crowd, and Ponsonby at once noted that the two Greyfriars fellows were alone, and that their comrades were not in sight.

His eyes glinted.

"Greyfriars cads!" he exclaimed. "Now give them something for their cheek! Sock it to them!"

And the Highcliffe fellows, whose ideas of honour did not include fair play, rushed at the chums of the Remove, and were round them in a moment.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Jack Neville takes a Hand.

HARRY WHARTON and Bob Cherry sprang shoulder to shoulder at once.

Ponsonby & Co. evidently had no idea whatever of "playing the game," and having found the two chums alone, they meant to pay off old scores. Ponsonby and his

friends had had a bad time at the League match, and they wanted to make somebody smart for it.

"Look out, Bob!"

"I'm looking out!" said Bob Cherry serenely, as he put up his big fists. "Come on, you Highcliffe bounders, if you're looking for a prize set of thick ears and enlarged proboscises!"

The Highcliffe fellows came on.

In a moment they were attacking the two Greyfriars chums hotly, but they did not rush them off their feet by force of numbers, as they had expected.

Wharton and Bob Cherry hit out straight from the shoulder, and Ponsonby dropped on the ground as if he had been shot, while Vavasour fell across him. Then Merton and Gadsby went down.

The other three closed with the Greyfriars two, and they struggled fiercely.

At the same time Harry was shouting to his chums, who, he knew, were not far away.

"Greyfriars! Rescue!"

Ponsonby and Vavasour staggered up. They were hurt, and they were furious. They hurled themselves upon Wharton and Cherry again, and as the two juniors were hotly engaged with the others, the Highcliffe leaders had it all their own way then.

Harry and Bob went down, with three or four of the Highcliffians upon them, and they began to get decidedly the worst of it.

"Squash 'em!" said Ponsonby, rubbing his nose, which was streaming red. "Squash 'em! Rub 'em in the mud."

"Here, fair play, you know!" exclaimed a clear, pleasant voice. "Fair play's a jewel! Not four to one, please!"

And a handsome, stalwart young man pushed among the

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Highcliffe fellows, knocking them to right and left with shoves of his strong hands.

"Here, keep off!" shouted Ponsonby angrily.

"Fair play, then!"

"You cad—"

"Better language, please!"

"It's Neville!" exclaimed Vavasour. "That football bouncer!"

The "football bouncer" took Vavasour by the collar, lifted him off his feet, and gently dropped him upon the ground.

The Highcliffe fellows promptly retreated now.

Harry and Bob scrambled up.

They were very dishevelled, and somewhat hurt. The Highcliffe fellows eyed them savagely, and moved away, evidently not inclined to push the matter further in the presence of the new-comer.

Harry looked quickly at the rescuer.

He recognised the handsome young footballer of the Loamshire team, though Jack Neville looked very different in ordinary clothes.

"Thank you!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bob. "The rotters had us down, and they're never heard of fair play. You came just at the right time. It was awfully good of you to put your oar in like that."

The young man laughed.

"Not at all," he said. "I couldn't see a crowd set on two without interfering."

"You're Mr. Neville, aren't you?" asked Harry.

"I'm Jack Neville, of Loamshire United."

"We've just seen you play," said Harry.

"Seen us licked," said Neville, with a smile.

"You weren't licked," said Bob. "If the others had been like you, even the 'Spurs would have had a bad time of it."

"Thank you!" said Jack Neville, laughing.

He shook hands with the boys, and went on his way.

"Jolly decent chap," said Bob.

Wharton nodded.

"I knew he was," he said. "But we've seen it for ourselves now. We should have had a bad time if he hadn't chipped in."

"We haven't had a good one as it is," said Bob, ruefully rubbing his nose. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here are those bounders!"

The rest of the party came up.

"We've been looking for you," said Mark Linley.

"The lookfulness was terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Have my worthy chums been engaging in fightful encounters? My worthy friend Wharton's nose seems to be imitating the esteemed strawberry."

Wharton laughed.

"We got into a row with the Highcliffe fellows," he said.

"We had them all on to us at once, and we were having a rough time, when Neville interfered. He got rid of them. I hope we shall meet them again while we're all together."

"By George, I hope so!" said Tom Brown.

But the Highcliffe fellows were not to be seen now.

The football match was over, but the Greyfriars chums were not in a hurry to leave the place. They did not often come so far from the school, and they decided to have a look round, get their tea, and then cycle home to Greyfriars in the dusk of the evening.

They strolled round Braye, and got their tea at a little inn outside the town, and it was not till the sun was setting that they reclaimed their bicycles, and mounted them for the homeward journey.

They had seen nothing of the Highcliffe fellows since that encounter outside the football ground.

It was probable that Ponsonby & Co. had already started for home.

As the chums of Greyfriars reached the crest of a high ascent on the homeward road, Harry Wharton looked ahead in the glimmer of the sunset, and caught sight of a bunch of cyclists far ahead—dots in the distance.

He knew them at once.

"There they are!" he exclaimed.

"The Highcliffe rotters?"

"Yes."

Bob Cherry snapped his teeth.

"It would be a good idea to catch up with them, and get a little of our own back," he exclaimed. "They won't be so jolly ready to go for us when we're equal numbers."

"Well, we'll pass them, anyway," said Harry. "I don't think we'll begin a row, though; but if they do—"

"Then we'll squash 'em."

"Just so."

"The squashfulness will be terrific."

The Greyfriars cyclists dashed on.

The road was growing duskier, and now long lines of trees cast an additional shadow over it.

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Suddenly Wharton held up his hand.

"Did you hear that?" he exclaimed.

"No. What was it?"

"Listen."

The juniors free-wheeled and listened. From the dusky distance ahead came a loud cry:

"Help!"

"Phew!" said Bob Cherry.

"Somebody in trouble."

"Perhaps the Highcliffe bounders. They wouldn't make much of a show if they fell in with a few tramps."

"Whoever it is, we're going to help them," said Harry.

"Right-ho!"

"The rightfulness is terrific."

"Come on, then! Put your beef into it!"

And the Greyfriars chums, leaning down over their handle bars, scorched on at top-speed in the thickening dusk.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Cowardly Attack.

PONSONBY & Co. had left Braye in the worst of humours.

All but one of them had lost money on the football match, and they attributed their loss to Jack Neville, whose reputation had caused them to back Loamshire against their redoubtable visitors.

They had had an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance upon Harry Wharton, when that same obnoxious Jack Neville had interfered, and the Highcliffian ears were still ringing from the hearty cuffs he had dealt them.

Ponsonby & Co. would have given a great deal for a chance to get level with the young footballer; and, as it happened, fortune was destined to grant their wish.

They had left Braye some little time before the Greyfriars juniors, but they did not make so much speed on the road. They talked in gloomy strain as they rode on—Ponsonby and Vavasour wondering where money was to come from to make up for their losses.

"It's all the fault of that rotten pro. Neville!" Ponsonby declared. "I wish I had a chance to make him sit up!"

"I jolly well wish I had, too!" growled Vavasour. "The hound had the confounded cheek to biff me on the ear!"

"Cheeky beast!"

"Rotter!"

"Blessed if I know what things are coming to when a footballing chap lays his filthy hands on a public school fellow!" said Vavasour.

"Let's get a chance at him, that's all!" said Gadsby.

"Oh, rather!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Vavasour suddenly.

"What's the matter, Vav?"

"Look there!"

Vavasour released a handle-bar, and pointed ahead. A stalwart, supple figure was striding along the country road, and although the boys could only see the back of it, they recognised it at once.

"Neville!"

"Jack Neville, by Jove!"

"The cad himself!"

Ponsonby chuckled.

"He's going our way, of course," he exclaimed. "You know he's a Friardale chap, and his people live there now. He's going to pay them a visit. I suppose he's too poor to take a railway-ticket, and he's walking—or perhaps he got a lift part of the way."

"Poverty-stricken cad!" said Merton.

"Anyway, here he is!"

"And here we are!" said Gadsby significantly. "This is a chance to settle accounts with the rotten outsider!"

"What-ho!"

Vavasour grinned approval.

"I think we're all of one mind about that," he said. "He's lost us money, and he had the cheek to interfere between us and Wharton, and to lay his low hands on us! I rather think we're going to make him squirm for it now we've got the chance."

"You bet!"

"Of course, we can't fight such a chap," said Vavasour loftily. "It would be a disgrace to stand up to a fellow of his class."

"Oh, quite impossible, dear boy!"

"Out of the question."

"Besides," said Gadsby, "he's bigger than any one of us, and he'd knock any one of us into a cocked hat. There can't be any question of a fight, unless we arranged it with two to one."

"There can't be any question of a fight under any circumstances," said Ponsonby. "We've got our dignity to consider."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Merton.

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The Highcliffe fellows all agreed on that. In their hearts, they knew perfectly well that they were going to commit a mean and cowardly action, but it was better to keep up appearances, even to themselves.

"We'll collar him and rag him," said Ponsonby. "That's the idea."

"Good egg!"

"Don't give him a chance, either—just pile on him at once, and have him down, and we'll put him through it."

"That's the game."

The Highcliffe fellows rode on, rapidly overtaking the young footballer.

They did not ring their bells, and the tyres made little noise on the road, so they were quite close before Neville was aware of it.

In fact, it was not till the group of cyclists were only three or four yards behind that a slight sound caught his ears, and he turned his head.

He stepped quickly aside as he saw the riders.

But they did not mean to pass.

Seven to one as they were, the Highcliffe fellows did not want to give Jack Neville a stand-up fight—they were eager to take any advantage they could.

Ponsonby rode straight at him, and before the surprised young man could get out of the way, the front wheel of the bicycle dashed into him.

Neville staggered, and the cyclist fell, but Ponsonby jumped clear of the machine. The next instant Vavasour crashed into Neville.

The Loamshire footballer fell to the ground.

He sprang up the next moment, but as he did so Vavasour and Ponsonby fastened upon him like a couple of cats.

He was borne to the ground, with the two Highcliffe fellows sprawling over him. It would not have taken the stalwart footballer long to get rid of them, but the others were scrambling off their machines now, and they fell upon Neville in a body.

"Pile on him!" roared Ponsonby.

"What-ho!"

"Down with the cad!"

"You cowards!" gasped Jack Neville, struggling under the weight of the crowd of Highcliffe juniors. "You cowards!"

"Down with him!"

"Help!" shouted Jack.

Ponsonby laughed.

"You can yell for help if you like," he said. "There's no one likely to hear, I think. We've got him!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Keep him tight!"

"What-ho!"

"Now, then, Neville—"

"You cowards!"

"Oh, we'll soon stop your tongue!" said Ponsonby, with an evil glitter in his eyes. "Yank him over here to the ditch, my sons!"

"Good egg! Duck him!"

"That's the idea—clothes and all! He's as poor as a blind beggar, and I dare say it's the only suit of clothes he's got!" said Ponsonby brutally. "In with him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Neville struggled hard.

Although not exactly so poor as Ponsonby averred, it meant something to him if his clothes were spoiled. But the humiliation of being ducked by a gang of schoolboys was worse than that.

He fought hard.

But they had hold of him, and there were so many of them. He could not get either arm free for a blow. The odds were too great.

He was dragged and hustled towards the ditch. In the faint hope that there might be someone on the lonely road to aid him, Jack Neville shouted again:

"Help!"

Buzzuzuz!

Ting-ting-ting!

It was a buzz of bicycle-bells that answered, and out of the gloom of the road swept up a bunch of cyclists.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

One Good Turn Deserves Another.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. had arrived.

The Greyfriars juniors, as they dashed up at top speed, caught sight of the struggling group in the faint light, and had some idea of how matters stood. They saw that the Highcliffe fellows were the assailants, and that they were all piling upon one adversary, in what seemed to be the Highcliffe way. Who their victim was the chums did not know, and they did not care, but they meant to see fair play.

They sprang from their machines, which went reeling anywhere, and rushed into the fray.

The Highcliffe fellows hardly knew they were coming before they were there.

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Right and left the footballer's assailants reeled under doughty blows from the Greyfriars juniors.

Numbers were equal now, and the Greyfriars fellows showed at once that they were made of better stuff.

The Highcliffians let go Neville to defend themselves; but their defence did not avail them much, man to man.

Ponsonby was knocked headlong into the ditch, and Gadsby after him, with tremendous splashes, and then Vavasour, in Bob Cherry's clutch, was dragged shrieking to the water's edge, and flung bodily in.

Four other Highcliffians put up a feeble defence against the vigorous onslaught of the rescuers.

It did not last long.

Two of them were promptly knocked into the ditch, knocking back those who were trying to scramble out.

Tunstall made a rush for his bicycle, but was collared with his leg over it before he could push off, and Tom Brown and Bob Cherry pushed him, bicycle and all, into the stagnant water by the roadside.

"In with them!" roared Bob Cherry. "Duck the lot!"

"Hurrah!"

"The duckfulness is terrific."

One after another the Highcliffians went in.

In a few minutes seven furious fellows were standing up to their waists in muddy water, yelling out threats.

The Greyfriars juniors replied only with loud laughter.

"Don't you try to get out, that's all," said Bob Cherry, wagging a warning forefinger at the frenzied Highcliffians.

"That's your place, and you're going to stay in it."

"We shall c-c-catch c-cold," mumbled Merton.

"Well you were going to duck this chap, and he might have caught cold," said Nugent. "You can take your chance."

"We'll smash you for this!" roared Ponsonby.

"Very well; come out and start the smashing," said Harry Wharton.

But that offer was declined.

Jack Neville had risen to his feet, and was dusting down his clothes. The Greyfriars juniors did not need his assistance. The Highcliffians being disposed of, Harry Wharton turned to the young man he and his comrades had rescued.

"Mr Neville!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

Neville smiled.

"Yes," he said. "You have soon returned the little favour I did you, lad."

"One good turn deserves another," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Jolly glad we came along just now."

"It was lucky for me," said Jack Neville. "Those young cads were going to duck me in the ditch. They were too many for me. They are the same fellows, I think, who were attacking you outside the football ground in Braye."

"The same lot," said Harry Wharton. "They're from Highcliffe School—a set of rotten, swanking cads. But they've got what they deserve this time."

Neville smiled as he looked at the Highcliffians, floundering in the muddy waters of the ditch. They certainly looked very unhappy, and they dared not attempt to scramble ashore while the Greyfriars juniors remained on the spot.

"I don't know how to thank you," said Jack Neville, "but I'm very much obliged. If you ever think of anything I can do for you, you've only to say it, and you'll see that I'll do it."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Harry. "You've repaid this beforehand, you know. You're going our way?"

Neville nodded.

"Yes, I'm walking to Manor Farm, here, and I'm getting a lift from there in a market cart to Friardale."

"Is the farm near here?"

"Half a mile further on."

"We'll walk that distance."

"Thanks—though I don't think those young scoundrels have any more fight left in them," Neville remarked, with a scornful glance at the shivering, dripping Highcliffians.

"No, they don't look like it."

"We're going, Ponsonby," said Bulstrode. "You can get out. If you want some more like this, you can come to Greyfriars for it."

And the Greyfriars juniors wheeled their bicycles down the road, walking with Neville. They chatted very pleasantly on the road, till the Manor Farm was reached.

There they shook hands for good-bye.

"Don't forget what I said," said Jack Neville, on parting. "I'm always to be found on a Friday afternoon at my mother's cottage in Friardale, if you should want to see me."

And they parted.

Harry Wharton & Co. remounted their machines, and rode on to the school.

"Awfully decent chap, Neville," Bob Cherry remarked.

"I think we'll call and see him some Friday afternoon—eh?"

"Good egg!"

"Might pick up some points of footer from him, too," said Nugent. "It would be ripping to have him come to Greyfriars, and stand him tea in the study."

"Good again!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll do it, if he'll come."

"Oh, I think he'll come!"

The cyclists saw no more of Ponsonby & Co. They reached Greyfriars without any further adventure on the road. The Highcliffe party were far behind.

Billy Bunter was waiting at the door of the School House.

He blinked at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles as they came in.

"Well?" he said.

"Well?" repeated Harry Wharton, cheerfully. "Got a good supper ready?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I suppose you know I've had tea in Hall, because you were out, and there wasn't any grub in the study?"

"Awful! Did you cause a famine in Hall?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really——"

"He's growing thin," said Tom Brown sympathetically. "He's fading away before our eyes. Poor old Bunter!"

Bunter blinked at the New Zealand junior.

"I suppose you've had a treat at Braye," he said.

"Yes, rather! It was a splendid footer match."

"I don't mean that," said Bunter, peevishly. "I suppose you had a feed while you were there? What did you get?"

Bob Cherry dropped his hand upon Bunter's shoulder.

"We met the Highcliffe fellows, and we got something from them," he remarked. "Would you like to have a taste of it, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter eagerly. "Yes, I think you might have brought home some for me. What was it you got, Cherry?"

"A punch on the nose?"

"Eh?"

"There's your share, Bunter."

And Bob Cherry solemnly punched Bunter's nose, and walked on.

The fat junior sat down with great suddenness upon a seat in the hall, and blinked after Bob Cherry in amazement.

"Oh, really——" he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Brown. "Would you like to have some of what I got, Bunter?"

"W-w-what did you get, Brownie?"

"A thick ear."

"I—I say, you know, I'd rather not. I say, you fellows, I'm hungry, and——"

But the fellows walked on laughing, leaving Billy Bunter hungry.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Challenge.

TWO or three days after the 'Spurs' match with Loamshire, as Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton stood at the gates of Greyfriars looking down the road, the latter uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Highcliffe cads!"

Two fellows were coming up the road in a handsome dogcart. It was a Highcliffe way to do things in style.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Coming here, I wonder?" he said.

"Looks like it."

Ponsonby and Vavasour were in the dogcart. Vavasour was driving.

They brought the horse to a stop just opposite the Greyfriars gates, and there they met the glances of the Remove chums. They did not dismount.

"We came here to see you," said Ponsonby.

"Well, we're here," said Bob Cherry cheerfully, "as large as life, and twice as natural."

Ponsonby frowned. Perhaps he did not consider Bob's manner quite respectful enough to suit his lofty dignity.

"Look here," he said, "as you're here, it will save us the trouble of coming in, and we don't want to come into your show, anyway."

"I'm sure we don't want you to, either," said Wharton.

"Both parties suited," grinned Bob Cherry. "Mind that gee-gee doesn't run away with you, Vavvy."

"Mind your own business!" snapped Vavasour.

"Though I have no doubt you could do some running, too," said Bob, "you Highcliffe chaps are great chiefs when it comes to running."

"We didn't come here to jaw," said Ponsonby. "If you like to listen to me, Wharton, we'll say what we came for."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Harry carelessly.

"We're bringing you a challenge."

"Oh! Walking or running match?" asked Bob.

Ponsonby scowled.

"Football match," he said.

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Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Pon must have his little joke," he remarked. "Now, look here, Pon, don't you be too funny, you know."

"Look here——"

"You mean marbles, of course."

"I mean football," exclaimed Ponsonby savagely, "and if you're afraid to meet us——"

"Oh, rats!" interrupted Harry Wharton. "We've met you before, and licked you hollow, and we could do the same again."

"Do it, then."

"But it's all rot," said Harry. "You fellows can't play footer for toffee. You just fumble at the game. It's not worth a decent team's while to play you. I don't want to be unpleasant, but that's how the matter stands."

"That's plain English," said Bob Cherry. "Without mentioning that it's no great catch to play rotten cads who pile on a chap seven to one."

"In a word, you're afraid to meet us, now you hear that our team's improved in form?" said Vavasour, with a sneer. Wharton flushed.

"We're not afraid to meet anybody," he said. "We'll meet you, if you can put a decent team into the field. But——"

"We'll guarantee to lick you."

"I don't see how you can do that," said Harry, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"We're willing to put money on it."

"Money!" said Harry, with a stare.

"Solid money," said Vavasour. "We're willing to lay you odds that we pull off the match, and place the money in independent hands, with your stakes."

"Well, you worm," said Bob Cherry, "do you think we're rotters enough to bet on a footer match?"

Ponsonby sneered.

"Of course, you're too good for that," he said.

"Not too good," said Harry Wharton, "too decent, that's all. To say nothing of the fact that we should be flogged or expelled if we were found out, and that we don't care to have any unpleasant secrets to keep. You can keep your money in your trousers' pocket, my son; but we'll meet your team, if you can put a team into the field that a fag's eleven wouldn't be ashamed to play."

"We can lick you."

"I don't suppose so."

"Are you willing to try—that's the point?" said Ponsonby. "If you are, we'll arrange the details now."

"Well, we should have to know the date," said Harry.

"Most of our dates are booked up now. We have next Saturday afternoon, if that would do for you. We had a match on with Lindrop, but it's fallen through, owing to illness in their team. We could meet you then if you liked."

"I don't know whether that would suit us."

"Well, it's the only date we've got open," said Harry concisely. "For five or six weeks to come, at all events."

"Oh, very well; I dare say we could make it Saturday."

"Very well."

"Which ground do you prefer?" asked Ponsonby. "We don't care. We're quite willing to bring our team over here, or the other way round, just as you like."

"We have arranged a home match that afternoon," said Harry. "I don't see that it matters."

"But I do," said Bob Cherry. "Let them come here. I've heard about chaps being ragged after licking Highcliffe on their own ground."

The Highcliffe fellows flushed.

"It's a lie!" said Vavasour hotly.

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"It may be one," he said, "but from what we saw of your methods the other day at Braye, I should say it wasn't."

"We'll come over here if you like," said Ponsonby, changing the subject.

"That's settled, then," said Harry.

"What time for the kick-off?"

"Say three."

"Good!" Ponsonby made a note in his pocket-book. "Kick-off at three. Oh, by the way, I mentioned we've been making some improvements in our team."

"You needed 'em," said Bob.

Ponsonby took no notice of that remark. He looked straight at Harry Wharton.

"I suppose you've no objections to our playing fellows from outside Highcliffe," he said.

"Not at all."

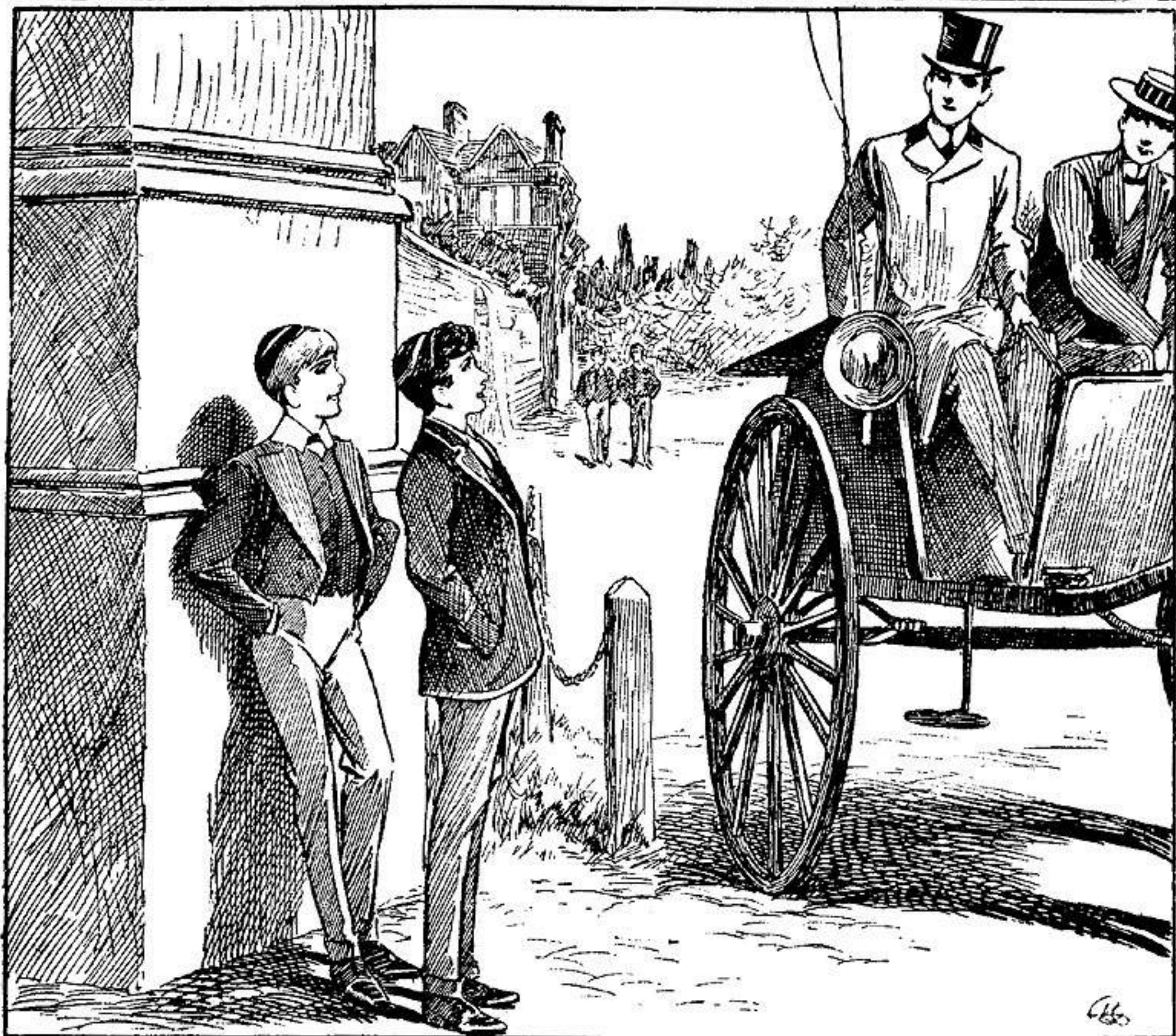
"Some of our fellows are on the sick list, and some are chucking footer," said Ponsonby. "We may call on two or three outsiders."

"Just as you like."

"Of course, they're fellows connected with Highcliffe," explained Ponsonby. "They're really fellows who've been to the school and left."

"Oh, that's all right!"

**A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS**



"We came here to see you," said Ponsonby, bringing the horse to a stop just opposite the Greyfriars gates.
"Well, we're here," said Bob Cherry, cheerfully, "as large as life and twice as natural." (See page 10.)

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry.

"Good!" said Ponsonby. "I just wanted to make the point clear, so that you couldn't say after we'd licked you that you weren't prepared for it."

Wharton coloured.

"We shouldn't be likely to say that, anyway," he replied. "I think you must be pretty mean to think so, Ponsonby. Still, it's just as well, as you say, to mention any little point, and have it agreed to. Of course, it's the same for both sides. We can play any fellow from outside the school if we like. Not that we shall want to."

"No seniors, though," said Ponsonby quickly. "It's understood that nobody belonging to any Form above the Fourth at either school shall play."

Wharton laughed.

"Well, we shouldn't be likely to spring a Sixth-Former on you," he said. "That's understood, of course."

"Right you are, then. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

Vavasour drove on. The whole talk had taken place with the Highcliffe fellows still in the dogcart.

The vehicle disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust.

Wharton and Bob Cherry looked at one another.

"What the dickens does that mean?" said Harry.

Bob shook his head.

"Don't ask me," he said. "It's a puzzle. They can't play footer for toffee. They're all swank, and they can't touch us. A Third Form team of Greyfriars could walk all over the best they've got in the Fourth."

"I know it, but—"

"If they'd insisted on having the match on their ground, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 138.

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"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

I'd have thought it was a trick to get us over there so that they could rag us," said Bob thoughtfully. "But they've agreed to play here, so it can't be that."

"They can't hope to win," said Harry thoughtfully.

"Not much!"

"Then what is the little game?"

"Blessed if I can make it out."

The chums of the Remove strolled in, thinking it over. They met Tom Brown and Nugent and Hurree Singh, and talked it over with them. All the juniors were surprised.

It was not conceit that made the Greyfriars fellows fancy their chance. They knew that the Highcliffians were all swank, and that they were far too great at slacking to make any figure at footer. As Bob Cherry had declared, a team from the Third Form at Greyfriars could have beaten Ponsonby & Co., on their usual form.

"Perhaps they've been slogging away at practice like mad," Nugent suggested, after some consideration. "They may be in form now."

"That lot of slackers slog at practice!" said Tom Brown.

"Well, I know it's not likely."

"Not a bit of it!"

"Then why have they challenged us?" said Harry. "And I must say that both Ponsonby and Vavasour looked as if they thought they had a soft thing in hand."

"I give it up," said Nugent.

And all the chums had to give it up. They simply could not make out what little game Ponsonby & Co. had in mind. But upon one point Harry Wharton was certain—there was some "little game." There was more in the Highcliffe challenge than met the eye.

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo Has a Duty to Perform.

ALONZO TODD came into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage with a thoughtful expression upon his simple, good-natured face. Harry Wharton & Co. were there. It was Wednesday, the day after the visit of the Highcliffians, and the Remove chums had met in No. 1 Study to have a discussion on the subject. The more Harry Wharton thought about the matter, the more he suspected that Ponsonby & Co. had some unpleasant surprise in store for the Greyfriars Remove. What it was he could not guess, but he felt that it was to come.

"They're not coming over here to be licked, and to make themselves look asses before all Greyfriars," Harry said, in his clear-headed way. "There's something on."

"But what?" said Mark Nugent.

"I don't know."

"I simply can't get at it," said Bob Cherry.

"But you think they've got something up their sleeve?" asked Harry.

"Well, yes."

"Same here," said Nugent.

"The sameness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The cadfulness of the esteemed Highcliffie rotters is great."

"But what's the game?" said Tom Brown.

And all replied at once:

"Give it up."

"I don't see what it can be," Harry Wharton confessed.

"But they have some trick in store for us, I know that, and we'd better be on our guard. Though how they can hope to score over us in any way I don't know."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Toddy! What do you want?"

Todd looked in.

"I have an idea," he remarked. "I have been trying to get an opportunity of speaking to you fellows for some time, and really——"

"You've really got an idea?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Go and bury it, then, old chap."

"My dear Cherry——"

"And stay by its grave," said Nugent.

Todd smiled patiently. He could stand any amount of chipping, but the worst thing about him was that it never made him "ring off."

"I was going to mention it to you the day you went to Braye," he remarked. "Perhaps you would care to hear it now. It is a scheme for doing good. My Uncle Benjamin——"

Bob Cherry groaned. When Todd's Uncle Benjamin came on the scene, it was a sure sign that the Duffer of Greyfriars did not mean to leave off.

"Give Ben a rest," implored Nugent.

But Alonzo went on, unheeding.

"My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to do good, and to remonstrate with persons who acted badly, and endeavour to point out to them the error of their ways. I recently made an attempt to inculcate in the poorer youth of Friardale some conception of the higher life——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows——"

"And a ghastly mess you made of it," grinned Tom Brown. "I should think you'd had enough of it, Toddy, really."

"Not at all. My Uncle Benjamin——"

There was a general groan.

"My Uncle Benjamin," went on Todd, firmly—"my respected Uncle Benjamin always told me never to give in. Always to stick to a thing—that was the chief precept of Uncle Benjamin."

"Well, you're sticking to that," grunted Bob Cherry.

"Now," said Alonzo, "you know that the Highcliffie fellows are awful rotters, and they have lately been worse than ever."

"That's so."

"The so-fulness is terrific."

"Well, I was thinking that it was my duty to visit Highcliffie——"

"Visit Highcliffie!" shrieked the juniors.

"Yes; and point out to Ponsonby & Co. the error of their ways."

"My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, they are growing more and more caddish and unpleasant," said Alonzo. "Who knows but what they may actually develop into criminals for want of a word in season? Can I, consistently with my duty and a due observation of the valuable precepts of my Uncle Benjamin, elude the responsibility of speaking that word in season?"

"How does he do it?" said Nugent admiringly. "Do you

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eat dictionaries at tea-time, Toddy, or have you got a gramophone attachment somewhere in your larynx?"

"My dear Nugent——"

"Blessed if I know where he digs up his language," Bob Cherry remarked. "But his language is better than his ideas. His ideas are rotten."

"Extremely rotten," agreed Nugent.

"My dear fellows, I was thinking that perhaps you might care to help me in this mission," said Todd, with a beaming smile.

"Yes, I can see us doing it—I don't think!"

"If you come over to Highcliffie with me, and help me explain the error of their ways to these unfortunate and benighted youths——"

"They'd eat us!" roared Bob.

"Oh, no. My Uncle Benjamin says that a soft answer turns away wrath, and I should be careful to address them with great politeness. I should mention first that I simply wanted, as a friend, to rescue them from the dangers of their cowardice and general caddishness may culminate in."

The juniors roared.

"Well, if you're as polite as that, I don't see why they should get ratty at all," Bob Cherry observed.

"Exactly. I should be so sorry if I annoyed them in any way, and I shall be very careful in the selection of the words I use."

"Look here, Todd, don't be an ass," said Harry Wharton. "Don't go. They'll only rag you baldheaded."

"That would not deter me, Wharton. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me never to let danger scare me from the path of duty."

"Rats!"

"My dear fellow, I——"

"Chain him up, somebody," said Bob Cherry. "His people ought to have him muzzled. Todd, old son, go and lock yourself up in the box-room."

"If you fellows don't care to come with me——"

"No fear!"

"Then I shall go alone."

"Don't be an ass, Todd."

Todd smiled benignantly, and quitted the study. The chums of the Remove stared at one another when he was gone. Bob Cherry tapped his forehead gently.

"Poor old Toddy!" he remarked. "I suppose he's rocky. It's an acute case of Uncle-Benjaminitis, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think he'll really go?" said Tom Brown.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"They'll scrag him!"

"Of course they will. I don't see how he's to be stopped, though," said Harry. "If we stopped him now, he'd get off another time."

"The chump!"

Harry crossed to the window. He glanced out, and looked in the direction of the gates, and uttered an exclamation.

"There he goes!"

"Who—Todd?"

"Yes."

The juniors crowded to the window, and looked out. There, sure enough, was Alonzo Todd, with his hat on, in the Close, walking towards the gates. He disappeared from sight in a minute more.

"The ass!" said Harry Wharton. "I hope he won't get hurt. Well, it's time for us to get down to the footer."

The chums of the Remove went down to the footer. But, except while the game was claiming their attention, they could not help wondering how Alonzo Todd was faring at Highcliffie.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Into the Lion's Den.

PON! Vav! You fellows! Come here, quick!"

It was Gadsby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffie, who called out excitedly, as he stood in the gateway of Highcliffie School, and waved his hand to the fellows in the quadrangle at some distance from him.

Ponsonby and Vavasour looked round lazily.

"What's the matter, dear boy?" said Vavasour, with a drawl. "It's too warm to hurry. Too warm for anything."

"Just so," agreed Ponsonby. "You can tell us about it, Gad."

"You asses!" cried Gadsby. "It's a Greyfriars chap!"

"What?"

ANSWERS

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"And he's coming here."

"Oh!"

That information was quite enough to banish the affected languor of the Highcliffe fellows.

Ponsonby and Vavasour and Merton hurried down to the gate.

They looked out into the road, and saw a somewhat weedy youth coming along, with an unmistakable Greyfriars cap, and a shuffling walk that was not much like Greyfriars.

"Don't know him," said Ponsonby.

"Not from Adam!" agreed Merton.

"Well, it's a Greyfriars chap, and he's coming here," said Gadsby. "The question is, is it pure cheek, or—"

"Well?"

"Or have they smelt a rat, and sent a messenger to tell us the match on Saturday is off?" said Gadsby.

And at that the others whistled.

"I hope not," said Ponsonby, at last. "It would be rotten, when we've taken all the trouble. Do you think they would cry off, even if they found out?"

"I jolly well know I would."

"Yes, but you know how punctilious Wharton is. Having accepted a challenge, he would feel himself bound to stand by it—and they can't say, too, that we didn't give them fair warning that we might be playing outsiders."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think Wharton's going to stick," said Vavasour.

"Yes, I think so, too."

"But what does this chap want, then?"

"We'll see soon enough; he's nearly here. If he's a messenger from Wharton to tell us the match is off, he must be a champion ass to come."

"We'll rag him baldheaded."

"What-ho!"

The Highcliffe juniors stood with grim looks, watching the advance of Alonzo Todd—for, of course, the newcomer was the Duffer of Greyfriars.

Ponsonby & Co. did not feel pleasant.

They had laid a scheme with great skill and forethought for the discomfiture of the Greyfriars footballers, and hitherto everything had gone swimmingly, and it would be too bad if there were a hitch at the last moment—so the Highcliffe fellows considered, at all events. That their precious scheme was a piece of the sharpest of sharp practice did not matter to them in the least.

Quite unconscious of the thoughts in the minds of the Highcliffe fellows, Alonzo Todd came on. He was thinking about anything but football. He regarded the late conduct of the Highcliffe fellows as very mean and low-down, and he felt that he ought to point out to them the error of their ways on the lines laid down by his excellent Uncle Benjamin.

He looked up suddenly, to find himself face to face with the Highcliffe fellows, who were staring at him in concert.

Alonzo halted, and blinked at them.

"Hallo!" said Ponsonby.

"Good-afternoon!" said Todd, in his most affable manner. "I came here specially to see you, Ponsonby—you and the others here."

"Oh! Why?"

"I have something very special to say to you."

The Highcliffe fellows exchanged glances. This certainly looked as if the Duffer of Greyfriars had a message from Wharton.

"Oh, very well!" said Ponsonby. "Come in!"

"Oh, certainly!"

It was a case of the spider and the fly, and if Alonzo Todd had been a fly, he would not have walked into the spider's parlour without a suspicion. He walked into Highcliffe now in the midst of the juniors.

They closed round him as he entered.

"You've got a message for me—eh?" asked Ponsonby, as they escorted Todd into the house, and took him to the Fourth Form-room—deserted on the half-holiday save by themselves. If they wanted to rag Todd, that was a very secure place for doing so.

"A kind of message," said Todd.

"Good! We'll be glad to hear it."

"I hope you will," said Todd dubiously. "In the first place, I want it understood that though I may use rough words, it is my intention to be polite."

"Certainly," said Ponsonby affably.

"I have no wish to hurt your feelings; yet I must speak of your conduct in the terms it merits, or else there would be no use in my coming here."

"My hat!"

"Well, let's have the message," said Gadsby.

Todd was in the Form-room now, and Merton had closed the door, and was lounging with his back against it.

Alonzo was in the trap.

But as yet he suspected nothing. His face was beaming with trust and good-nature.

"Now about the message," said Ponsonby. "Is it from Wharton?"

"I may say that Wharton thinks the same as I do in the matter."

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EVERY
TUESDAY

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ONE
PENNY.

"Oh, he does, does he?"

"Yes, but he did not consider it advisable to come over here and speak out as I intend to do."

"Perhaps it wasn't advisable for you," suggested Vavasour.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have my duty to perform," said Todd. "I think I ought to point out to you the error of your ways. There is no reason why you should not be decent and honourable fellows, if you made some slight effort in that direction."

The Highcliffians stared. This was new and startling language to them.

"You're awfully good," said Vavasour. "I must say you're awfully good. Shall we make a slight effort, you fellows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that all you've come to tell us?" asked Ponsonby.

"I wish to point out to you the error of your ways."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!"

"You have acted meanly—caddishly——"

"Oh!"

"You have taken a mean advantage of Wharton——"

"Phew!" said Gadsby. "They know all about the Old Boys, then."

"Shut up, you ass!"

"But——"

"I don't know what you mean by 'Old Boys,'" said Todd. "But certainly you must admit that you have acted meanly and rottenly."

"Do you mean about the footer match?" asked Ponsonby, making the others a sign to be silent.

Alonzo stared.

"Footer match!" he repeated.

"Yes, the match on Saturday."

"I did not know that you had a match on Saturday, or I had forgotten," said Todd. "Such trivial matters do not occupy my thoughts."

"It's all right," said Ponsonby.

"But what has the fool come over for, then?" asked Merton.

"Ha, ha! I don't know."

"I came to point out to you the error of your ways," explained Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin——"

"His Uncle Benjamin! Ha, ha, ha!"

"My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me," said Todd solemnly, "that when I saw a fellow going to the dogs, I should speak a warning word in time. Now, all you fellows are going to the dogs."

"My only Aunt Jemima!"

"Go it!"

"I am here to reason with you, to point out to you——"

"I don't think we'll be reasoned with, thank you," said Ponsonby. "The chap has come over to cheek us, you chaps. What shall we do with him?"

"Rag him!"

"Snatch him bald-headed."

"Sock it to him."

"Good egg!" said Ponsonby. "We'll teach him a lesson about coming over here and cheeking us in our own quarters. Collar him!"

"My dear fellows——" protested Todd.

But the dear fellows took no notice of his protest. In a moment he was seized by the Highcliffe juniors, and was a helpless prisoner in their hands.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo is Socked.

"HOLD the cad!"

"We've got him!"

"My hat! We'll put him up to a wrinkle about coming over here and slanging us in our giddy Form-room!"

"What-ho!"

"Really my dear fellows," gasped Todd. "You are quite mistaken. I did not intend to slang you. My intention was to be useful to you, in pointing out the error of your ways. I wanted to be obliging."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"I dislike being bumped very much. I——"

"Hold on!" said Ponsonby. "Better than that, we'll fix him up and send him back to Greyfriars as a curiosity!"

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you have no objections to your eyebrows being shaved off, have you?" asked Ponsonby seriously.

"M-m-my eyebrows?"

"Yes, your beautiful eyebrows!"

"M-my beautiful eyebrows," stammered Todd, parrot-like. He had a curious way of repeating words when he was startled and confused.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Highcliffians.

"Then we'll shave your head bare, too," said Ponsonby, cocking his head on one side and looking at Todd attentively. "I really think that will improve your appearance."

"M-m-my appearance?"

"What about cutting his ears off?" asked Gadsby.

"M-my ears?"

"And putting a ring through his nose."

"M-my nose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, of all the shrieking duffers," roared Ponsonby. "He thinks you mean it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mean it?"

"It's a blessed parrot, and not a human being at all," said Gadsby, chuckling.

"Parrot!"

"Listen to him! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you haven't got a gramophone record tucked away in there, have you?" asked Vavasour, inserting his finger into Todd's collar, and pinching his neck.

"Ow! Gramophone record!"

"Go it, parrot!"

"Parrot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, bring him to the grate, and let's get to work," said Ponsonby. "We won't shave off his eyebrows; it would mean trouble. We'll give him a sooty shower first!"

"Hear, hear!"

"My dear fellows—"

"Shut up, you Greyfriars cad!"

"B-b-but—"

"Don't you like soot?"

"Soot!"

"There he goes again! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bring him along!"

"Here goes!"

The Highcliffe juniors dragged Todd along to the Form-room fireplace. It was a wide, open one, with a very wide and open chimney. There was no fire. Todd was pushed over the grate, so that his head came directly below the opening of the chimney.

"Now then," said Ponsonby. "Get a fishing rod, that's the thing!"

"Good egg!"

"Fishing-rod!" murmured Alonzo.

Gadsby brought a fishing-rod, and opened it to its full length inside the chimney. Then he raked it about.

The result was a thick shower of soot, brought down directly upon Alonzo Todd's devoted head.

The Duffer of Greyfriars yelled and squirmed.

But his yells soon ceased, for the clouds of soot choked his mouth, and his voice died away in murmurs and gasps.

He was jerked away from the grate in a few minutes, and Gadsby ceased to stir in the chimney with the fishing-rod.

A roar of laughter from the juniors greeted Todd's appearance.

He was as black as the ace of spades.

He stood a pillar of darkness, his features indistinguishable under the mass of soot gathered on them, his hair a black mass, his collar as black as his boots, and his jacket and waistcoat in a terrible condition.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Highcliffians.

A number of juniors had come into the Form-room, on the scent of fun, and there was quite a crowd gathered there now.

They simply shrieked at Alonzo.

Certainly he looked funny enough to excuse any amount of laughter; but he did not feel funny in the least.

"I—I—I—" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am c-c-c-ch ch-cooked!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You horrid ruffians—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Ponsonby, with tears in his eyes.

"This is too rich! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! Yoo! Hoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"I—I think this is very wrong and ruffianly," said Todd, gasping through the soot, and blowing out little clouds of it. "You are very rotten cads to pile on me in this manner. Groo!"

"Point out the error of our ways, my son," said Vavasour kindly.

"Go it, Sooty!"

"Pile it on, Snowball!"

"I regard you all as cads," said Todd. "I consider you cowardly. You are beastly ruffians. Yow! Groo! Ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am sorry now that I came to Highcliffe at all," said Todd. "I realise now that it is useless to point out to such unpleasant and rotten bounders the error of their rascally ways."

"Go it!"

"Let him talk," said Gadsby, considerately. "Let him jaw! It's only fair. He shall have the talking, and we'll have the doing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I consider you disreputable and rotten brutes, and I wish I had you over at Greyfriars!" said Todd wrathfully—for even Todd could get wrathful if he was sufficiently provoked.

"I should be very glad to face any of you in the gym., with or without gloves!"

"Go it!"

"I will meet any chap here, and lick him," said Todd.

"I am not very much of a fighting man, having always regarded violence as a thing to be deprecated, but I shall waive my rule on this occasion, if one of you has the pluck to stand up to me without the assistance of others."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Doesn't he talk beautifully?" said Merton. "He ought to be a missionary. What a flow of language!"

"I despise you all from the bottom of my heart," said Todd. "I am only too sorry to realise that no words of mine can call you to a sense of your low caddishness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now—" went on Todd.

Ponsonby interrupted him.

"Now," he remarked, "we've had enough jaw, and we'll get down to bizney. Collar him!"

But the order was not obeyed.

Nobody wanted to collar Todd. He was too sooty. The Highcliffe fellows looked at him, and held back.

"Collar him!" repeated Ponsonby. "We're going to give him the frog's march round the Form-room!"

"You can jolly well collar him yourself," grinned Tunstall.

"I'm not going to soil my hands on the black bounder!"

"Not much!" agreed Merton.

"No fear, Pon!"

"Oh, hang it all," said Ponsonby, "we haven't finished with him yet, have we? This isn't half enough for his cheek in coming here and slanging us."

"Quite so!" agreed Ponsonby. "But I'm not going to touch the black beast. He's in too filthy a state for my fingers."

"Well, we'll kick him out," said Ponsonby, after some reflection. "He won't hurt our boots, I suppose?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time for the kick-off," grinned Gadsby.

The juniors lined up behind Alonzo. He knew what was coming, and he made a break for the door.

He got it open. At the same time half a dozen boots took effect, and Todd flew out into the passage head-first, and sprawled there at full length.

"Kick him out!" shouted Ponsonby.

"Hurray!"

"Kick away!"

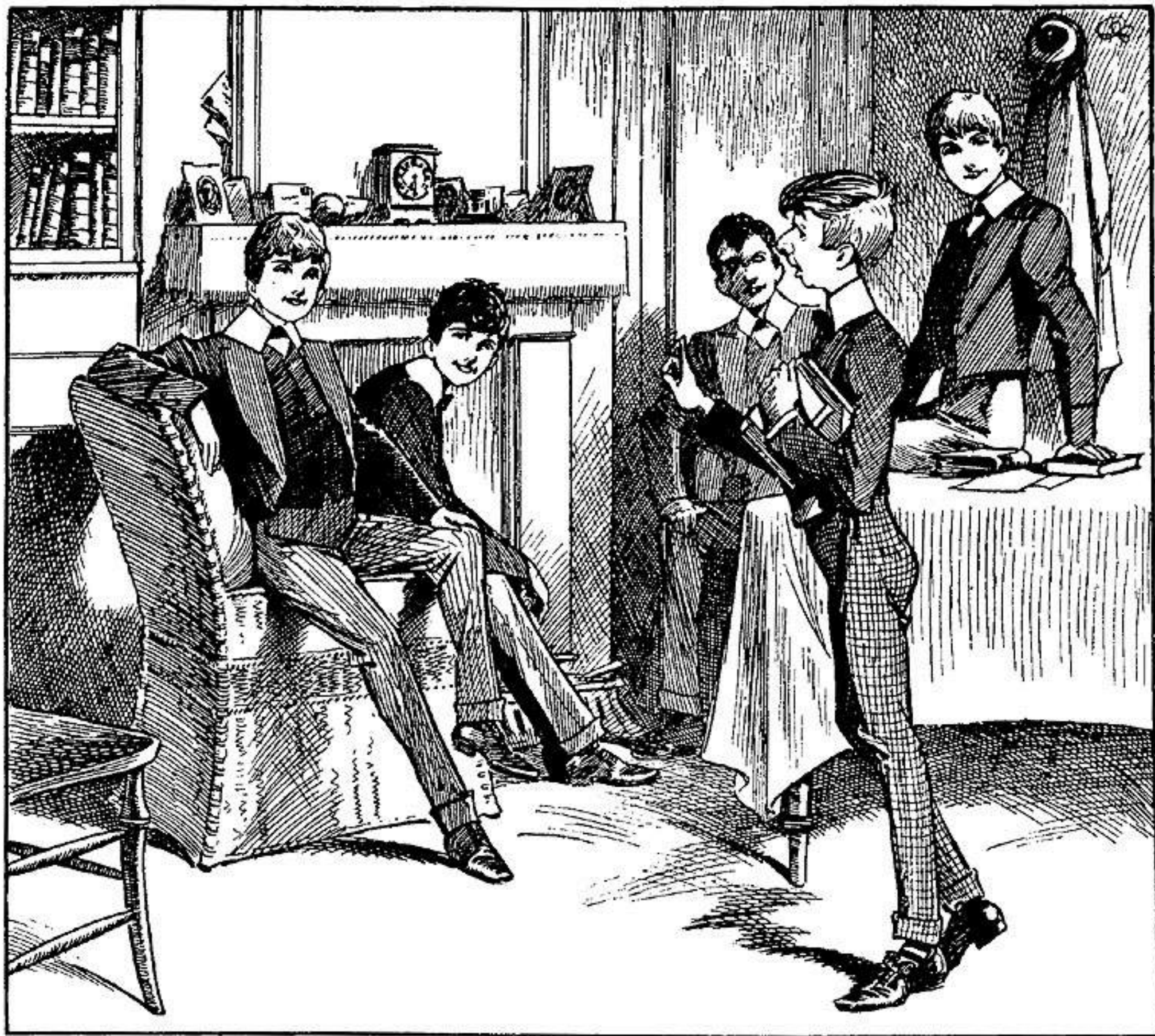
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo Todd leaped to his feet and ran, and after him ran the Highcliffe juniors, kicking away for all they were worth. Todd escaped from the house, and he crossed the quadrangle to the gates in record time, the Highcliffe juniors still close behind, active and kicking.



"Just the
book for
Charley!"





"I was going to mention the idea to you the day you went to Braye," said Todd. "It is a scheme for doing good. My Uncle Benjamin——" Bob Cherry groaned. "Give Ben a rest," he implored. (See page 12.)

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Not Nice for Alonzo.

ALONZO TODD was not a great runner. He had never shown himself upon the cinder-path at Greyfriars; but if he had been on the cinder-path now, he would have covered himself with glory. His break across the Highcliffe quadrangle was really splendid.

He ran and gasped, and gasped and ran. He outdistanced Ponsonby & Co.; but fresh juniors from all parts of the quad. joined in the chase, and Alonzo was never without a kick or two to help him along.

Who he was, under the coating of black, could not be seen—who or what he was; but he was something running, and that was enough for the Highcliffe fellows.

He had a very warm few minutes getting to the gates, and he ran out into the high road amid a roar of laughter and a confused shower of kicks.

He staggered across the road, and brought up against a tree, to which he clung in sheer breathlessness.

Ponsonby & Co. had stopped in the gateway, almost as breathless as Todd, expending what breath they had left in yells of laughter.

Todd blinked back at them through perspiration and soot.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors of Highcliffe.

"Oh! You rotters! I regard this conduct as utterly reprehensible!" gasped Todd, who would have gasped out a word of four syllables with his last breath.

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"Oh!" murmured Vavasour. "You reprehensible bounders!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is simply a malignant persecution!" said Todd.

"Malignant's good, too!" sobbed Gadeby. "Go it!"

Todd did not go it.

He realised that words were wasted upon the unrepentant Highcliffe fellows, and he went down the road instead.

The Highcliffians yelled themselves hoarse as they watched him go.

For a fellow to walk along the public road as black as the acc of spades was a new thing, and they wondered what adventures the Duffer of Greyfriars might encounter before he reached the school.

Alonzo was not thinking of that at present. He was only thinking of the discomfort of his present situation, and he felt nothing but a keen desire to get to Greyfriars and clean himself of the clinging soot.

It was a long walk back to his own school, and Todd was already fatigued, but he stepped out bravely.

A quarter of a mile from Highcliffe he had his first warning that his appearance was not exactly the usual thing for a public promenade.

He met an old lady carrying market baskets full of fruit, and as she saw him she stopped dead, staring at him with wide eyes.

Todd looked at her. He saw that she was frightened, and he hurried towards her and raised his cap to reassure her.

"Pardon me, madam—" he began.

He got no further.

The old woman dropped her baskets with a wild shriek, and ran into the nearest field, screaming for help at the top of her voice.

Todd stood transfixed with dismay. He had not expected to have that effect upon any member of the gentle sex.

"Dear me!" he murmured.

The old woman was still shrieking. A deeper and harsher voice behind a hedge was heard, demanding what was the matter.

"I'm so sorry!" called out Todd. "I—"

The Duffer of Greyfriars was interrupted. A burly youth, with a pitchfork in his hands, came through the gap in the hedge. He uttered a cry of angry astonishment at the sight of Todd, and charged at him with pitchfork down.

Even Alonzo did not stop to argue then.

That pitchfork did not look as if it would be comfortable at closer quarters.

Alonzo dashed away at top speed.

The youth pursued him for a dozen yards or more, but the sight of the pitchfork had lent Alonzo wings, as it were, and he covered the ground at a wonderful rate.

He did not stop for nearly half a mile, and when he ventured to look back at last the youth and the pitchfork had disappeared.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Alonzo. "Oh, dear! This is terrible! I shall have a most uncomfortable walk back to Greyfriars—I am sure of that. It was really very reprehensible and inconsiderate of the Highcliffe fellows."

Todd reflected for a few moments, and then he walked up to the door of a farmhouse to ask permission to wash himself there.

The door was opened by a buxom lady.

She gave Todd one look, and then slammed the door in his face, and he heard the sound of bolts and bars being placed in position.

"Go away!" came a quavering voice through the keyhole. "Go away, or I'll set the dog on you."

Todd stood petrified.

"Help!" shrieked a voice within.

"My dear madam," cried Todd, "I assure you—"

"Go away!"

"I am a schoolboy, and I only want—"

"Help!"

"To wash myself—"

"Murder!"

"I have been treated in a reprehensible manner—"

"Help! Murder! Robbers!"

Todd gave it up.

He returned to the high road, and tramped along desperately, looking for a brook wherein he might remove the traces of his rough handling at Highcliffe.

He found one at last, and washed his face in it, but there was so much soot in his hair and in his clothes that it was quite impossible to get clean without soap and without spending a very considerable time upon the operation.

Todd removed the worst of it, but when he finished fresh streams of black came down from his wet hair, and his face was piebald instead of black.

He hurried on to Greyfriars with wet hair and face, his complexion now a pleasing variety of black smudges and stripes.

People who passed on the road stared at him, and some of them ran, and some of them yelled or threw stones at him, and Todd quickened his pace, and reached Greyfriars at last in a breathless trot.

But there his troubles were not over.

As he tramped breathlessly in at the gates Gosling, the porter, presented himself in his path and stopped him.

"Hout of that!" said Gosling.

Todd halted, and panted.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"Houtside!"

"But—"

"Nigger minstrels ain't allowed to give hentertainments in these 'ere grounds," said Gosling loftily. "Houtside, you wagrant!"

Todd flushed under the soot.

"Really, my dear fellow—" he began.

"Don't you call me a dear feller, you wagrant!" said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere: Hout you go, or I chucks you hout! That's it!"

"I tell you—"

"You tell me nothin'!" said Gosling. "Houtside!"

"I belong—"

"Har you going?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Todd angrily. "I am not going! You are labouring under a most absurd mistake. I assure you—"

"Houtside!"

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"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

"Pray listen to me, Gosling, and—"

"Ho!" said the porter. "You know my name, do yer?"

"Of course I do, and you know mine, and—"

"I don't," said Gosling, "and don't want to! Hout you go, and if you ain't houtside that gate in two seconds I chucks you hout! That's fair warning."

"I tell you—"

Gosling grasped the junior by the shoulders, considerably blackening his hands in so doing, and swung him towards the gate.

"Houtside, you wagrant!" he growled.

"Help!" shouted Todd, catching sight of Harry Wharton & Co. in the Close. "Wharton! Cherry! Help! Gosling is drunk, I think!"

"Drunk!" said Gosling. "Drunk, ham I? You wagrant—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, running up with Harry. "Who's that?"

"It's a blessed wagrant—"

"I'm Todd!"

"Todd!" yelled the two juniors.

"Yes. I have been treated in a reprehensible manner by the fellows at Highcliffe."

Wharton and Cherry went off into a roar.

"Todd! Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd blinked at them through damp soot. Gosling released him in sheer astonishment.

"There's nothing to laugh at," said Todd.

But the juniors thought there was. They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My word!" said Gosling. "My word!"

He looked at his sooty hands, and growled, and took himself off. Todd looked at the two juniors, who were almost in convulsions.

"Really, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have been treated—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As you are determined not to take the subject seriously, I will not pursue it," said Todd, with a touch of dignity, and he walked off. He left the chums of the Remove shrieking.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last.

TODD dodged into the School House and reached the dormitory, where for the next hour he was busily engaged in cleaning himself. He was not alone during the process. The Remove turned up in great force to watch him. The story of Alonzo's mission to Highcliffe, and his state on his return, tickled the Lower Fourth very highly, and they wanted to see Alonzo and hear all about it. They saw Alonzo—they watched him scrubbing the soot out of his hair with great interest. It was long before he was restored to anything like a normal state, and then he was breathless with his exertions. Meanwhile, the juniors had showered questions upon him, but Todd had been too busy to answer them.

He sat on his bed at last, and gasped.

"All right, now?" grinned Bulstrode. "Now, tell us exactly how it was, Toddy."

"Go ahead, Todd!"

And Todd told how it was.

The juniors greeted the recital with shrieks of laughter, which seemed to the Duffer of Greyfriars uncalled for, and very much out of place.

The dormitory rang with merriment.

"Oh, Toddy, Toddy!" said Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes, at last. "You'll be the death of me some day! I know you will!"

"My dear Cherry—"

"The deathfulness will be terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "The comicalfulness of the esteemed Todd is great!"

"It did not seem at all comical to me," said Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Highcliffe fellows are simply ruffians, and it is quite useless to attempt to point out to them the errors of their ways," said Todd, "although, upon reflection, I think there may have been some misapprehension on their part, as they imagined, in the first place, that I had come over about the footer match."

"The footer match?" said Wharton.

"Yes. When I explained that I regarded their conduct as rotten and mean, they seemed to think I was speaking of a footer match, which I believe they have arranged with you for Saturday."

The chums of the Remove exchanged a quick glance.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know— Is it possible Todd has hit on anything?"

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

"They may have thought he came over to say the match was off," Nugent remarked.

Alonzo nodded.

"Now I think of it, I think that is quite correct," he said. "But I soon assured them on that point, however. I did not understand the reference to the Old Boys, but they thought—"

"Old Boys?"

"Yes. When I said their conduct was rotten and mean, they asked me if I had come about the footer match, and if I knew about the Old Boys," said Todd, with an effort to remember. "I did not quite understand, and I was very much puzzled, in fact. Perhaps you fellows know what they meant?"

The expression of Harry Wharton's face showed that he did.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated.

"What do you think, Harry?" Nugent asked.

"The same as you, I believe," said Harry. "It was a case of guilty conscience—they believed we had tumbled to their rotten game, and sent Todd over to tell them that the match was off."

"Yes, but—"

"What was the little game?" asked Mark Linley.

"Don't you see? You remember that Ponsonby made a point that outsiders could be played in the Highcliffe team if he liked."

"Oh, yes!"

"And he mentioned that they were fellows who had been to Highcliffe, but had left," pursued Wharton.

"They were his words," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, don't you see? He's going to play Old Boys—that is, grown up men," said Wharton excitedly. "I don't know how many. But that's the dodge, I'll bet my head. Old Boys! They would be fellows who'd been to Highcliffe and left."

"My hat!"

"Ponsonby gave us the impression—and meant to give us the impression—that he was playing fellows who'd been in the junior forms, but had left—as fellows might."

"That's it," said Nugent.

"Whereas really he's playing men—Old Boys—fellows who've been through the Sixth Form and left the school."

"Phew!"

"Then we're done in for the match!" said Tom Brown.

"Hang it!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "If he's playing a low down game like that, why can't we meet him on his own ground? We could get some of the Sixth to play. If we explained to Wingate how we'd been tricked, Wingate himself might play."

Wharton shook his head.

"We've agreed to play no seniors on either side," he said.

"But—"

"Ponsonby made a point of it, and I agreed."

"But Old Boys have been seniors—"

"Have been, yes—but aren't now. Of course, it's a trick," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "A rotten trick, just about worthy of Ponsonby and Vavasour and his set."

The juniors stared at one another blankly.

They had little doubt but that Harry Wharton had hit upon the true explanation.

The term Old Boys, as the Highcliffe fellow had used it, could bear no other construction. They had imagined that the Greyfriars fellows wanted the match off because they had found out about the Old Boys. There was no other meaning to be given to the matter.

Yet it seemed such a mean trick that it was hard to believe even the Highcliffe "cads" guilty of it.

"It's a rotten thing," said Tom Brown, at last. "But it fits all the circumstances so well, that I think it must be right."

"We knew there was something on," Bob Cherry remarked.

"The knowfulness was terrific."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"We knew that the Highcliffe rotters didn't intend a fair game, and that they had some trick up their sleeve for us," he said. "I was convinced of that all along, though I admit I couldn't work out what it was. But I only wanted a hint to get down to the trick; and I think we've got it now."

"Not much doubt about that."

"The question is, what's to be done?" said Bulstrode.

"We can't play them, I suppose, if that's really the case," said Nugent doubtfully. "But to cut the match without proof—and, after all, we have no proof—"

"Can't be did!" said Tom Brown.

Wharton shook his head.

"No, we can't cut the match, you fellows. Ponsonby and Vavasour would deny for ever after that they had had any intention of playing Old Boys. We couldn't prove that they had, of course, and it would remain at that—that we agreed to play a footer match with them, and cut it late

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WEEK:

"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

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in the day because we were afraid. That's how it would look, in plain English."

"Rotten!"

"Yes, rotten enough."

"But we could cut it at the last moment, as soon as they arrive on the ground with their blessed Old Boys," suggested Bulstrode.

Wharton nodded.

"That could be done, certainly, but it's not a nice thing to do, cutting a match at the last moment. We can't say that Ponsonby didn't warn us. We have his own words, and they bear this construction. People will say it was our own fault if we didn't see it. Ponsonby can claim that it was understood, and that we can play Old Boys too if we like. We haven't any available, or we might. Anyway, we don't want to cut the match if it can be helped. I don't like the idea of concealing our knowledge till the last moment, and then suddenly springing it upon them."

"But—"

"We must play them, I think."

"With two or three grown-up men in the team, perhaps," said Bulstrode, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"We've time yet," said Harry. "We'll put our heads together over it. We may be able to raise two or three Old Boys, and spring them on Ponsonby & Co. on Saturday."

The juniors laughed.

"My hat! That would be ripping!" said Nugent. "I can imagine Pon's face when he sees them. But we must make certain first that they mean to play us that trick. We know it; but we have no proof, and—"

"We'll get proof."

"How?"

"If they're playing Old Boys, they'll have them down for practice, I should think. They must be fellows who are staying in the neighbourhood, don't you think? Old Boys wouldn't come a great distance to help juniors play a rotten trick. I imagine that the fellows are staying round here somewhere, and that's what put it into Ponsonby's head to dish us like this."

"Very likely."

"Well, they'll do some practice together, to get working, and if they do, we shall be able to see them," said Harry. "It's easy enough to see the Highcliffe football ground from the road, and it's not a long cycle ride. We can keep our eyes open to-day and to-morrow—do a little scouting, you know—and if we see grown-ups at practice with the juniors over there, that will settle it."

"Right you are!"

"And if we prove they're planning this trick—" said Bulstrode.

"Then we shall have to do some hard thinking, and beat them somehow," said Harry.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Old Boys!

"BLESSED if I quite like it!" growled Harry Wharton. It was the following day. Three cyclists had wheeled their machines into a field, and leaving them at the foot of a tree, had climbed the tree, and were now ensconced on one of the topmost branches.

That high branch gave a clear view over the school wall of Highcliffe, and allowed an uninterrupted view of the Highcliffe football ground.

It was after school, and the football ground was crowded with seniors and juniors at practice.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent were the three fellows in the tree, and they looked keenly in the direction of the junior football ground.

Wharton was looking discontented.

"I'm blessed if I like it," he repeated. "It's like spying on the rotters, and that's coming too much down to their level."

"Can't be helped," said Bob Cherry. "It's their fault, anyway. They're playing a caddish trick, and we're bound to get down to the facts."

"Oh, hang it all, it's scouting, that's all," Nugent remarked.

"I'd rather walk straight up to the ground. But that wouldn't do any good. If they've got Old Boys for the team, they'll keep them dark when they know we're about."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look there!"

In the distance Ponsonby could be seen, walking down to the junior football ground, in company with Vavasour and Gadsby, and three grown-up fellows, the youngest of whom was certainly not less than twenty.

The six were laughing and talking together.

Two of the men bore a very close resemblance to Ponsonby and Gadsby, and it was easy to guess that they were relations, cousins or elder brothers.

"There are the Old Boys!" said Nugent.

"Looks like it."

"Oh, it's certain."

It certainly seemed so. The six were all in football garb, and they joined a number of other juniors on the ground.

The chums of Greyfriars watched.

Two elevens were formed up, evidently for a practice match, and the three Old Boys were included in Ponsonby's team.

The opposing eleven was composed partly of seniors, so there was no doubt that Ponsonby regarded the three Old Boys as giving a great deal of strength to his team.

The three watchers in the tree saw the two elevens line up, and the match commence. They were playing out a full match. Ponsonby evidently meant to get his men into fighting trim for the match with Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton sat on the branch, and looked at his chums.

"Not much doubt about it now," he remarked.

"Not much."

"Ponsonby has three Old Boys in the practice. He can't be doing that for nothing. He means to play them against us on Saturday."

"That's it."

"Three grown-up men," said Harry, wrinkling his brows. "However badly they play, they'll knock us out by mere age and weight, I should think."

"We'll give them a tussle."

"We sha'n't have an earthly," said Nugent. "Ponsonby will have the pleasure of licking us at last."

"Unless we scratch," said Bob.

"H'm!"

"The cads!" said Wharton, with a curl of the lips. "Those three fellows know that they are going to be played against juniors, to take a rotten advantage. If they had anything of the sportsman about them, they'd decline to be used in that way."

"Oh, Highcliffe fellows are all the same, Old Boys or not," said Nugent. "Cads from the Sixth down to the Second!"

"I believe you're right."

"Anyway, these fellows mean business, caddish or not," said Bob Cherry. "The question is, how we're to beat them. I suppose we can take it as certain now?"

Harry Wharton smiled grimly.

"We'll soon see."

"How do you mean?"

"Those fellows may be there for a little harmless practice. If that's the case, they won't mind us seeing them. If they're meaning a caddish trick on Saturday they'll get out of sight if we come. We'll go to Highcliffe and see Ponsonby, and see what those three fellows do."

"Good egg!"

"That will settle it."

"Come on, then."

The Greyfriars chums descended the tree, and wheeled their bicycles out into the road. They remounted, and rode on to the gates of Highcliffe.

The gates were open, and they dismounted there and wheeled their machines in. As they did so, a Highcliffe fag who was leaning against the gatepost scuttled off at top speed in the direction of the footer ground.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Did you see that?"

Wharton's lip curled.

"Yes; he's gone to give the alarm."

"Then they had a watch kept here?"

"Looks like it. That fag was here to warn Ponsonby in time if any Greyfriars chap should happen to come along. They knew one of us might look in, about the match."

"Let's follow him."

Leaving their bicycles at the porter's lodge, the chums walked towards the footer ground. When they arrived in sight of it, there was no sign to be seen of the three Old Boys.

The fag had evidently given the alarm.

The match was still in progress, but the three men had disappeared, and their places had been taken by three juniors. Ponsonby & Co. were playing on, not for practice, but to keep up appearances. What the Greyfriars chums had seen from the tree-top was, of course, not known to them.

The three Greyfriars juniors stopped and looked on at the play.

Ponsonby waved his hand to them from the field, in a pause of the game.

"Sorry can't speak to you now!" he called out.

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"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

"Oh, it's all right!" called back Harry. "We just looked in."

"Like to watch the match?"

"Just for a few minutes; we've got to get on."

The Highcliffians played on.

The Greyfriars chums watched them for a few minutes, and then strolled away. They took back their machines, and rode down the high road. The Highcliffe fag who had given the alarm of their arrival watched them from the gate till they disappeared down the road.

"That makes it pretty clear," said Bob Cherry. "The Old Boys scuttled out of sight as soon as they knew we were coming."

"Clear enough."

"We'll have another look from the tree," said Harry.

"Yes; it will make assurance doubly sure."

The juniors put their machines into the field and climbed the tree, after making sure that they could not be observed from the direction of Highcliffe. They had not been gone a quarter of an hour, but the Old Boys were already at practice again with Ponsonby & Co.

From the branch, the three juniors could see them plainly. The match was going on as if it had never been interrupted by the unexpected appearance of Harry Wharton & Co. There could be no further possible doubt of the intentions of Ponsonby and Vavasour. The three Old Boys were to be included in the Highcliffe team for Saturday; and, unless Greyfriars scratched the match, it looked very much as if they were booked for a certain licking.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Invitation to Tea.

HARRY WHARTON wore a troubled look the next day. He had been trying to think of a way out of the scrape in which the Remove footballers found themselves, but a solution of the difficulty did not come to him. The only feasible plan seemed to be to wait till the Highcliffians arrived upon the ground on Saturday, when they would have to declare their intention of playing the Old Boys, and then to scratch the match, when Ponsonby's game had been made manifest. But the Greyfriars fellows were averse to that course for many reasons. But to play such a side as Ponsonby had formed, and to be licked in consequence, was not a pleasant prospect.

"If they lick us, it will be a licking," said Bob Cherry gloomily. "They won't mention the Old Boys when they're talking about the victory. A licking's a licking, you know; and though I don't mind a licking from a good team, a licking from a gang of worms like the Highcliffe chaps would be—"

"Awful!" said Nugent.

"The awfulness would be terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a gloomy face. "We must think of a plan."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"There's nothing except scratching."

"The rottenfuzziness of the esteemed position is great."

"I confess I don't see a way out of it," said Harry Wharton. "But don't give in; we may get up a scheme for beating Ponsonby & Co. yet."

But though the chums of the Remove thought over it till Bob Cherry declared that it had given him a headache, the scheme did not turn up.

The following day was Friday, and after school Harry Wharton remembered the promised visit to Jack Neville. He tapped Nugent on the arm coming out of school.

"What price a run down to Friardale to Neville's?" he asked. "He said he was in the village every Friday afternoon, you know."

"Good!" said Frank, with a nod. "We might bring him over to tea in the study."

"Good egg, if he'll come!"

"What's that, you chaps?" asked Billy Bunter, who had caught a few words. "What is it? I'll come to tea with pleasure, if you're speaking about me."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But we weren't speaking about you, Billy."

"Never mind; I'll come all the same," said Billy Bunter, blinking at Wharton through his big spectacles.

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Look here, we're going to ask somebody to tea," said Harry. "You can come if you like, but—"

Bunter's fat face beamed with satisfaction.

"It's all right, Wharton. I'll come. You needn't press me."

"I wasn't going to press you, fathead."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

"Oh, really——"
"I jolly well believe he'd burst if he were pressed, too," Nugent remarked.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"
"Look here, you can get tea while we're gone," said Harry Wharton. "We'll raise the tin among us, and——"
"And leave it with me, and I'll do the shopping," said Bunter. "Good enough! You can rely on me."
"No fear! We'll leave the tin with Inky, and he can do the shopping. You can do the cooking, and if you take a single snack before we come back, we'll leave instructions with Inky to scalp you."

"Oh, really——"
"Now cheese it!"
And Bunter glared wrathfully and cheesed it. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh willingly undertook the charge of the shopping, and under his directions Billy Bunter—who was really a great hand at cooking—was very useful; but it is pretty certain that but for the watchful eye of the nabob, little of the provisions would have escaped the fat junior.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent left Greyfriars, and strolled down towards the village. On the road they sighted two cyclists, who stopped. They were Ponsonby and Vavasour of Highcliffe.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Ponsonby. "We were coming over to see you."

"Yes?" said Harry.
"It's about the footer match?"
"Yes?"

"We've had a challenge from Topham," explained Ponsonby. "They want to play us to-morrow, but we couldn't fix it, as we were engaged to you. I suppose nothing's likely to happen to put our match off with you?"
Wharton was silent.

"If you chaps want to cry off, now's the time," said Vavasour.

Harry flushed angrily.
"We don't want to cry off!" he exclaimed.
"It's settled for to-morrow, then?" said Ponsonby.
"Certainly."
"Mind, I have your word."
"Of course."
"Honour bright?"
"Honour!"
"That's good enough," said Ponsonby.
Harry looked steadily at him.
"Why should you think there was any doubt about the match coming off?" he asked. "Why should you fancy that we might want to get out of it?"
"Oh, we're in such good form ourselves, you know."
"Nothing else?"
"What else should there be?" said Ponsonby affably. "By Jove!" he added, looking at his watch. "We must get back!"

And the two Highcliffians jumped on their machines and rode away.

Wharton and Nugent stood looking after them until they were out of sight, and then glanced at one another.

"What does that mean?" Frank asked.
Wharton laughed scornfully.
"It means that they were feeling uneasy, in case we should have smelt a rat, and meant to out the match at the last moment, after they had given themselves away by showing up at Greyfriars with the three Old Boys, Frank."

"Just what we thought of doing."
"Exactly."
"And now——"
"Now we can't."
Frank pursed his lips.
"It was rather rash promising the cads, Harry."
Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I had to do that, or scratch the match. If I scratched it, they'd hold that we had cried off, and deny the story of the three Old Boys. We settled that before. I had to promise; they had us in a cleft stick, Frank."

Nugent nodded gloomily.
"I suppose you're right, Harry. But it seems to me that they've got us in a cleft stick, anyway."

To that Harry made no reply.
The two juniors walked on into Friardale, and found the cottage of old Mrs. Neville. A handsome young fellow was outside, engaged in instructing a chubby lad of nine in the art of dribbling a football.

It was Jack Neville.
The young professional turned round with a smile as he saw the two juniors from Greyfriars.

"We've come to see you, you see," Frank Nugent remarked.

"You're very welcome," said Neville. "I was just giving my young brother a lesson. Come right in."

"Will you come up to Greyfriars?"
Neville looked at them.

"Greyfriars!" he said.
"Yes. Look here, we want you to come to tea in our

study, if you will," said Harry Wharton. "We'll try to make you comfortable, and all the fellows will be glad to see you, Mr. Neville."

Jack Neville coloured a little, and looked very grave.
"You're very good," he said. "But——"
"But you're otherwise engaged?" said Harry, with a smile.

"Oh, no! I'd like to come, only——"
"Only what?"
"I'm a professional footballer," said Neville calmly. "Have you the permission of your masters to ask me to the school?"

Harry flushed.
"Oh, you surely don't think there could be any objection on that score?"

"I don't know."
"I think you're a chap any fellow might be proud to know," said Harry. "As a matter of fact, I have mentioned your name to Mr. Quelch, our Form-master, and he spoke very highly of you."

Jack laughed.
"Very well, Master Wharton, I'll come, with pleasure."
"Soon as you like, then."
"I'll just tell my mother that I shall be away an hour or so."

Neville stepped into the cottage, and joined the juniors five minutes later. They walked back to Greyfriars together, chatting pleasantly the whole of the way, and the subject of their chat was the subject that most keenly interested all three of them—the grand old game of football.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER. Broken Eggs†

"POACHED eggs!" said Billy Bunter. "Two dozen! Good! Ham—that's all right! I say, Inky, I could do some cutlets beautifully on this fire."

The Nabob of Bhanipur shook his head.
"No cutlets are wanted, my worthy Bunterful friend."

"But——"
"Is it all finished?"
"Yes, it's all nearly ready. They're not in yet."

"I saw them come in at the gates," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who was at the study window. "They will be here in a minute."

"I could do——"
"It is all right. Now shut up!"
"But I say——"

"If the Honourable Bunter puts that cake into his esteemed mouth, I shall smite him with violence upon his respected nose."

Billy Bunter hastily laid down the cake.
"Oh, really, Inky——"
The door opened.

"Here they are, my worthy chum. No; it is the esteemed Todd."

Alonzo Todd looked into the study.
"I hear you have a tea-party on here," he remarked.

"Wharton's bringing in somebody to tea. Can I help?"
"No, you can't," said Bunter. "Clear!"
"My dear Bunter——"
"Buzz off!"

"I thought I might make myself useful," said Todd, looking at the nabob. "My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to make myself useful. I do not want to come to tea, Bunter; I am having tea with Bulstrode this evening."

But——
"The goodness of my honourable friend is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh. "But the esteemed Bunter has done everything."

"You can lift this dish of eggs to the table," said Bunter.
"Oh, certainly!"

Alonzo Todd seized the dish of eggs on the fender.
Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent brought the young Loamshire footballer into the study at the same moment.

"Here we are!" announced Nugent.
"The herefulness is terrific. I——"
"And here's Neville. We've got him."

Neville shook hands with the nabob. Todd looked at him over the dish of poached eggs he was holding in both hands.
"Dear me! Is that Mr. Neville?" he asked.

"Yes, as large as life."
"I should be very happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Neville," said Alonzo, holding the dish of eggs with his left hand—a wonderful balancing trick—and extending his right to Jack Neville. "I have heard a great deal about you, and admired you very much."

"Thank you!" said Jack, laughing and shaking his hand.

"Yes, indeed. I— Oh, dear!"

The balancing trick was not a success. As Todd was speaking, the dish of eggs slipped forward, and the contents were shot fairly into Jack Neville's waistcoat.

The young footballer uttered a startled exclamation.

"Oh!"

The dish went with a crash to the floor.

"My word!" shouted Bunter. "The eggs—two dozen—ruined! Lost! Oh, you frabjous fathead!"

"Shut up, Bunter!" growled Harry Wharton, whose concern was all for his guest.

Jack Neville stood, the picture of dismay, with poached eggs streaming down his waistcoat and dripping upon his trousers and upon the carpet.

"I'm so sorry!" gasped Alonzo.

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You frabjous chump!"

"My dear fellows—"

"Oh, scat!"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Neville," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "We shall have to get you a change, and get Trotter to clean your things. I'm sorry."

Neville smiled.

"Oh, it's all right; it was an accident!" he said. "But I admit I shall be glad to get this waistcoat off."

He had it off very quickly.

It was taken away for Trotter to clean, and Jack Neville buttoned his jacket, and declared that he was all right. He rubbed off the stains on his trousers. Todd had stood looking on, in great contrition.

"I am a most unfortunate person," he remarked. "I really only desired to be useful. I trust you credit that, Wharton."

Wharton grinned.

"Oh, yes! But you might give a chap a wide berth when you're trying to be useful, Toddy. Run away and play."

"I'm so sorry."

"It's all right," said Neville.

"What about the eggs?" exclaimed Bunter wrathfully. "We can't have only ham for tea. Look here, if you get some eggs quick, I'll poach them in a jiffy. The fire's lovely, and it won't take me long."

"I'll go," exclaimed Todd eagerly. "I insist upon being allowed to pay for the eggs. I will run down to the tuckshop at once and get them."

"All right."

Todd dashed out of the study at once. He hurried to the tuckshop, purchased the eggs, and brought them back in a bag, hurrying along at top speed.

Meanwhile, Wharton and his friends made Jack Neville as comfortable as they could in the study. The tea was brewed, and Nugent suggested ham and tea as a first course, which was agreed to, as all were hungry.

But Todd was not long getting the eggs.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps in the passage.

"There he comes!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with a laugh.

Bunter ran to the door, and opened it.

Todd dashed in.

"Here you are," he exclaimed, holding out the bag of eggs before him.

And at that precise moment his foot slipped in his haste. He fell forward, and the bag of eggs was launched fairly upon Bunter's fat countenance. The eggs smashed there!

There was a wild roar from Bunter.

Todd recovered his balance, and Billy Bunter sat down. His face and clothes were streaming with broken eggs.

"Oh," gasped Todd, "I'm so sorry!"

The chums roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gurgled Bunter. "I'm ch-ch-choked! Oh, you frabjous ass! Yow! Oh, kill him, somebody! Yah! Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. Why don't you kick that dangerous idiot out of the study?"

"I'm so sorry—"

"Yah! Where's the poker?"

"My dear Bunter—"

"I'll 'dear Bunter' you!"

Billy Bunter, knocking the broken eggs from his eyes, and with his eggy spectacles clinging to his nose, scrambled towards the grate for the poker. Even Alonzo Todd had tact enough not to remain.

"I'll go, I think," he exclaimed. "I'm so sorry—"

Bunter swung round with the poker.

"Now, you utter ass—"

Alonzo retreated, and slammed the door. Bunter glared through the broken, streaming eggs, at the yelling juniors.

"You chumps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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NEXT
WEEK:

"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

"You silly asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All the eggs wasted again!" grinned Nugent. "But it's Bunter wasted them this time. You ought really to be more careful, Bunter."

"You chump—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go and clean yourself, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "You shall have a feed at the tuckshop when you're clean. Buzz off!"

And Bunter, comforted by that pledge and taking a chunk of cake in his hand to console himself during the cleaning process, left the study.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Jack Neville Makes a Suggestion.

BOB CHERRY and Mark Linley came in to join the tea-party in No. 1 Study, and perhaps upon the whole the juniors weren't sorry that Billy Bunter was unavoidably detained elsewhere. Although the eggs had so persistently come to grief, there was ample for the meal, and a good deal over, of other kinds of provisions. Jack Neville showed himself very cheery and very easy to please. He evidently enjoyed the fun of having tea in the study with the juniors, and his good-humour would have made the little party a success in any case.

"Well, it's ripping to have you here, Mr. Neville," said Bob Cherry. "I'd rather have you opposite me at tea than at football. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

Jack Neville laughed.

"I should like to see you lads play footer some time," he remarked. "They say in the village that you play very good footer here."

"We do our best," said Harry modestly. "Nothing like what you're accustomed to with League clubs, of course, but we put up a pretty good game. Our first eleven here is ripping, and the Remove eleven—that's our team—isn't so bad. We have a match on Saturday—to-morrow—but of course you're playing somewhere then?"

Neville shook his head.

"No, I'm not playing to-morrow," he said. "I was in two matches this week—mid-week matches—and they're giving me a rest to-morrow and trying a new forward in my place."

Wharton's face lighted up.

"Then you could see our match if you cared to waste your time looking at junior football," he said.

"I shouldn't look on it as waste of time," said Neville, "and I should like to see it. Are you playing at home?"

"Yes."

"Good! I am staying in Friardale over to-morrow, and it would fit in well. I should like to see the match."

"Good! Then come over; we'll be jolly glad to see you," said Harry. "We're playing Highcliffe, you know—you saw some of their fellows the other day."

Neville's brow clouded for a moment.

"Those fellows I had trouble with on the road?" he asked.

"Yes. They're not a nice set, I know, but one meets all sorts of fellows at footer," said Harry. "We jolly well ducked them for their rotten game, and they have taken that lying down, and are more civil than ever now. As a matter of fact, they're playing a rotten trick on us, and you'll most likely see us licked if you come over."

Neville looked interested.

"How is that?" he asked.

Harry Wharton explained. The young professional listened with a curious expression to the recital.

"My hat!" he exclaimed, at last. "I've heard of some pretty rotten tricks in my time, but never anything quite so mean as that."

"I know it's rotten."

"Rotten isn't the word!" said Neville warmly. "Why don't you cut the match—scratch it off, and refuse to play with them?"

"They'd make out we were afraid. They intend to spring the Old Boys on us at the very last moment, you see, and if the match were scratched by us they'd pretend they never intended anything of the sort. They're not very strong on the truth, you know, at Highcliffe. They only want to score, and they don't mind how they do it."

The Loamshire forward nodded.

"I understand. That's the kind of fellows I should have taken them for."

"And now we've promised not to scratch the match," said Harry.

"Then you're booked for it?"

"Quite."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

Neville ran his fingers through his curly hair. He was evidently thinking things out, and taking a great interest in the difficulties which beset the junior footballers of Greyfriars.

"Couldn't you raise objections to grown-ups playing as soon as they come on the field?" he asked.

Wharton shook his head.

"No; they've provided for that. We've agreed. Ponsonby made a point of being allowed to play fellows who had been at Highcliffe and left. Of course, we thought he meant juniors. When it comes out, of course he'll claim that he meant the Old Boys all along."

"Couldn't you get recruits from the Upper Forms here?"

"Seniors are barred."

"But these Highcliffe Old Boys have been seniors," Jack Neville remarked.

Wharton laughed ruefully.

"Yes, but they're not so now, you see. Of course, it's a trick; we've been had."

"You have, by George!"

"We've thought of getting down some Old Boys to play for us," said Nugent, "but we can't fix it in the time, you see; and, besides, there wouldn't be time for us to practice together if they did come down."

"It looks to me as if we're done," said Bob Cherry. "The only thing is, that the Highcliffe chaps are such rotten players that even the Old Boys mayn't be up to very much, and we may lick them after all."

Neville looked serious.

"Three grown-up men," he remarked. "They mayn't be very good players, but they have speed and weight on their side. You have no chance."

"You don't think so?"

"Not if you play a junior team against a team with three men in it. You can't expect to have a chance."

"I suppose not," said Harry ruefully. "We're going to do our best, of course. We shall put up a good fight."

Neville nodded thoughtfully.

"And hope for the best," Bob Cherry remarked.

The young professional seemed to be deep in thought.

There came a sparkle into his eyes, as if an amusing thought had occurred to him, and the juniors looked at him curiously. Neville came out of his brown study, and looked up, with a slight laugh.

"Perhaps I could make a suggestion to help you," he remarked.

"I jolly well wish you could," said Harry. "I was hoping when I mentioned the matter that you might be able to give us some advice."

"I think I can."

"Go ahead!"

"This is how the matter stands. You are bound to play the match out now, and you can't put in any seniors, and you can't raise any Old Boys on the spot to strengthen your team?"

"That's it."

"But there's no rule against playing any chap you like—it's not necessary for him to belong to Greyfriars?"

"Oh, no! Ponsonby is playing three fellows who don't belong to Highcliffe."

"You could play anybody you liked, then, except a senior of Greyfriars?"

"Certainly."

"Good!" said Jack, with much satisfaction.

Wharton looked puzzled.

"I don't quite see where the 'good' comes in," he remarked. "We could play anybody if there were anybody to play. But there isn't."

"The isn'tfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, yes, there is."

"You know somebody?" exclaimed two or three of the juniors at once eagerly.

Neville nodded.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Wharton. "What is he—a good footer player? Forward, back, or what?"

"Forward."

"Well, we can make room for him in the front line easily enough," said Harry. "You could go into the halves, Bob."

"Right-ho!" said Bob Cherry.

"And he's a good player?" asked Mark Linley.

Neville laughed.

"He's considered so."

"You've seen him play, of course?"

"You lads have seen him yourselves."

"We have?" exclaimed Harry, in surprise. "Who is it, then? Where have we seen him play?"

"At Braye."

"Braye! You don't mean in the 'Spurs match last Saturday?"

"Yes, I do."

"My hat! A Loamshire man?"

"Yes."

Harry started.

"You don't mean——" he exclaimed breathlessly, and broke off short.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"Yes, I do," said Neville, with a nod. "If you care to play me——"

"You!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"I'll play for you with pleasure."

There was a moment's silence of astonishment in the study. Then Bob Cherry gave a wild roar.

"Hurrah!"

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER The New Recruit.

"HURRAH!"

The chums of the Remove simply yelled.

"Hip-pip! Hurrah!"

"Splendid!"

"Ripping!"

"Gorgeous!"

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath.

"I never thought of it, you know—never thought of anything of the sort; and I shouldn't have had the cheek to ask you, anyway. You'll really play for us, Mr. Neville?"

Jack nodded, with a smile.

"With pleasure, as I said."

"But—but it's splendid!"

"I suppose I shall strengthen the team a bit," smiled Jack. "Of course, I'm only one, and the Highcliffe fellows have three men——"

Wharton laughed.

"Their three men together wouldn't be a patch on you," he said. "You could make rings round all three of them. Why, you are a first-class League player—you could beat the Highcliffe team alone, without us to help you."

"I don't know about that, but I'll do my best for you."

"Oh, it's all over, bar shouting," said Bob Cherry. "That settles it. I say, it's awfully, awfully decent of you, Mr. Neville."

"Not at all. I owe the Highcliffe fellows a little account, too, and that will be a sportsmanlike way of paying it off, licking them on the footer field."

"Quite right!"

"Mind, not a word outside the study, you fellows!" exclaimed Harry Wharton warningly. "If Ponsonby heard a whisper of our having a League player in the team he'd cry off at once, and we should lose the chance of licking him and his precious Old Boys."

"What-ho!"

"It's a dead secret until the kick-off to-morrow."

"The deadfulness of the secret will be terrific!"

The juniors burst into a laugh. They could picture the look on Ponsonby's and Vavasour's faces when the stalwart young professional footballer was seen in the ranks of Greyfriars.

Jack Neville laughed, too.

He was of a kind and good-humoured nature, but the cowardly attack the Highcliffe fellows had made on him had roused his indignation, and he was not sorry for the opportunity of inflicting a little punishment upon them.

"It's a splendid idea!" said Harry Wharton. "Would you like a look at the footer now, Mr. Neville, as we've done tea? We might get a few minutes practice together—not enough to attract notice."

"Certainly."

They left the study. Billy Bunter, newly swept and garnished, so to speak, was just coming down the passage, and he yelled after the juniors.

"I say, you fellows, I haven't had my tea. I say——"

"Here you are, Billy."

Wharton extracted a five-shilling piece from his pocket. He had had a good tip from his uncle that day, and in his present state of satisfaction he was willing to feed Billy Bunter up to the chin.

"Catch!" he said.

He tossed the coin, and Billy Bunter caught it—with his nose. He gave a yell.

"Yow! Oh, really, Wharton——" Then he saw what it was. "Oh, thanks! I say, that's a five-bobber."

"You can have it, Billy."

"Good! Shall I put this down to the old account, Wharton, or will you have it out of my postal-order to-morrow?"

"Whichever you like, Billy," said Harry, laughing. He had exactly as much faith in that old, old account being paid as he had in the arrival of the expected postal-order.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'd rather you said, Wharton," he remarked, a little peevishly. "I am expecting a postal-order by the first post to-morrow morning."

"Oh, all right; that will do!"

"You'll have it back out of the postal-order?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Well, as you're going to have it out of the postal-order," said Bunter thoughtfully, "I think—h'm—don't go away

while I'm talking, Wharton. It's rude. Look here, the postal-order will be for ten shillings. Would you care to give me another five now, and have the whole order when it comes?"

"No," said Harry promptly.

"Oh, really, Wharton! You see, I'm rather short of ready money just now, and there's been some delay in that postal-order coming. If you cared to make up the whole ten bob, and take the postal-order in the morning——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Well, look here, give me another four now, and take the ten in the morning," said Bunter. "You'll be a bob in that way."

"You're too generous, Bunter," said Wharton, with a shake of the head.

"I know I am," said Bunter, "that was always my fault; I was always too generous. I get taken advantage of. But I don't care. I'm going to keep it up. A fellow with a generous nature can't change, if he wants to, you know. Now, am I to have that other four bob, Wharton?"

"No fear!"

"But really—— I say, you fellows, don't you walk away while I'm talking. I say, look here, now——"

Bunter's voice trailed away. The fellows were walking away at a speed Bunter could not equal with his fat little legs. The fat junior blinked after them, and then blinked at the big coin in his hand, and toddled away towards the tuckshop. If Harry had hoped to touch a better chord in Bunter's nature by the present of five shillings, he had failed. Bunter had not the slightest appreciation for the loan—he was only annoyed because he had been unable to extract a further sum from the donor.

The juniors reached the football ground. Wharton carried his match ball under his arm, and on the junior ground they had a little practice together. It was still light enough to kick the ball about a little.

Fellows gathered round curiously when they heard that Jack Neville, the young professional footballer of Loamshire was on the Remove ground.

Even Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, the high and mighty of the Sixth Form, came to look on, with a good many more of the Sixth. There was no doubt that Jack Neville was a wonderful footballer. In his ordinary clothes, he could make rings round anybody whoever played on the Greyfriars ground, and Wingate and Courtney cheered loudly as they saw some of his play.

The chums of Greyfriars walked home with Neville afterwards.

They parted outside the little cottage in Friardale.

"Mind, to-morrow at two, at the school," said Harry Wharton, as he shook hands with the Loamshire winger.

"Right you are, I won't fail. I'm only too glad that I'm free to play for you to-morrow," said Jack Neville. "It will be fun."

"Fun for us, if not for Highcliffe," grinned Bob Cherry. "I only want to see Ponsonby's face when he sees you in the Greyfriars colours, that's all. It would be worth a month's pocket-money. Ha, ha, ha!"

And they parted on the best of terms.

The chums walked back to the school in high good humour. That Jack Neville would prove, in himself, much more than a match for the three Old Boys of Highcliffe, they had not the slightest doubt. They had seen him distinguish himself against the famous 'Spurs, and the Highcliffe Old Boys, of course, were not in the same street with the Hotspurs.

There was no doubt in their minds that Highcliffe, after their mean device by which they hoped to take an unfair advantage would be licked all along the line, and at that prospect the chums of the Remove naturally rejoiced.

When they reached Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton was asked if he had thought of a "dodge" yet for getting over the Highcliffians, he replied that he had, or, rather, that somebody else had thought of it, and it was all settled.

There was a yell of inquiry at once to know what it was.

But the captain of the Remove shook his head.

"It's a secret at present," he remarked.

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Of course, we're entitled to know it. Now, what is it—the Remove has a right to know?"

"Out with it, Wharton!"

"Get it off your giddy chest."

"It's a secret for the present," Harry Wharton repeated calmly. "You'll all know to-morrow; but you can trust me, I suppose. If a breath of it got out, Highcliffe would scratch the match; we don't want that. It's safer not to tell anybody the secret. It won't be a secret to-morrow."

"Oh, all right!" said Ogilvy. "You think we shall beat Highcliffe, then?"

"I know we shall."

"Blessed if I see how," growled Bulstrode.

"You'll see to-morrow."

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"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

"Oh, it's all serene!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "So long as we beat Highcliffe, that's all there is about it. You can keep the secret."

And Harry Wharton did keep it. Some of the Remove grumbled, but that did not make any difference. Harry knew what was best to be done, and he did it, and Bulstrode had to content himself with grumbling.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Surprise.

WHETHER or not the secret might have leaked out as far as Highcliffe, if it had been generally known at Greyfriars, Harry Wharton meant to be on the safe side, and he remained there. Not a word was spoken of the new recruit to the Remove eleven, and the fellow who was to stand out to make room for him was the only one to whom the fact was confided, under a promise of secrecy. That was only fair. Save for that fellow, Russell, and for those who had been to tea in Harry Wharton's study, the secret remained a secret.

There was much speculation, of course, in the Remove. The juniors wondered what the "dodge" could possibly be.

That Ponsonby was playing three Old Boys was very well known to all the Lower School now, and unless Wharton's "dodge" turned out to be a success, there was no doubt that the Remove would get a most inglorious licking.

Curiosity was intense, and questions endless; the former remained unsatisfied, the latter unanswered. The Famous Four kept their own counsel.

After morning school the next day, when the juniors were making preparations for the football match, the secret was still a secret.

Even when Jack Neville arrived at Greyfriars, it was supposed that he only came to be a "looker-on in Vienna," as Temple, who was great on Shakespeare, put it. No one connected him with the secret "dodge," no one, that is, who was not already in the secret.

Long before the time fixed for the kick-off the ground was crowded. Many seniors turned up, as well as the juniors.

Jack Neville stood with the juniors in a long coat and a hat, and no one even knew that he was in football garb.

Harry Wharton waited anxiously for the arrival of the Highcliffians.

Now that he had such a rod in pickle for them, he was afraid that something might happen to prevent the match after all, and save the visitors from the big licking he intended to give them.

But that was not to be.

Ponsonby & Co., anticipating complete victory, and the success of their precious scheme, were not likely to miss the match.

There was a shout at last that the Highcliffe brake was coming.

A little later the Highcliffe party arrived on the ground.

Ponsonby, Gadsby, Merton, Tunstall, Vavasour, and the rest, with three young men, the youngest of whom was well over twenty, composed the party.

Harry Wharton met them politely enough.

As he did not yet know, officially, of Ponsonby's intention to play the Old Boys, he affected to regard them as lookers-on who had come to see the match.

"Hallo, here you are!" he exclaimed. "You're just on time, Ponsonby. But where are the rest of your team?"

Ponsonby grinned.

"My team are all here," he said.

"You haven't eleven fellows?"

"My dear chap, where are your eyes?" said Vavasour.

"There are twelve of us in all. Count again."

"You see," said Ponsonby, "we had your permission, you remember, to play Old Boys, and here they are."

"Oh!"

"Let me introduce you to Gadsby major, and Vavasour major, and Young," said Ponsonby, "Old Boys of Highcliffe, you know."

The three men bowed. They were suppressing their laughter. They evidently had what the juniors always called the Highcliffe sense of honour, and saw nothing mean in this trick upon the Greyfriars fellows.

"Glad to see you," said Harry Wharton, sincerely enough. He was glad to see the Highcliffe team there, to be thoroughly licked with the aid of the "pro."

"Of course, you remember my mentioning the matter to you about our playing Old Boys," said Ponsonby, a little puzzled by Harry's way of taking the matter.

He had expected surprise, remonstrance, and indignation. He saw nothing of these things. Harry Wharton acted as if it was the commonest thing in the world to spring three grown-up men upon a rival team in a junior match.

"I don't remember your putting it exactly like that," said Harry.

"Yes, you remember—"

"You said fellows who had been to Highcliffe and left."

"Well, these chaps have been to Highcliffe and left."

Wharton laughed.

"Oh, it's all right, I don't object! We shall be very happy to play the Old Boys, and wish you had more of them."

"Why, you bounder," broke out Vavasour, "you don't mean to say that you think you've got a chance."

"Shut up, Vav!" said Ponsonby.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I think we've got a chance," he said. "In fact, I think we've got a jolly good one."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, unable to restrain his mirth. Bob was always a little demonstrative when there was a good joke going.

The Highcliffians looked at Bob in surprise. So far as they could see, the joke was up against Greyfriars, and there was no occasion for Bob to be merry. But they did not know all yet.

"Playing your usual team?" asked Ponsonby.

"Yes, with one exception."

Ponsonby made a hasty gesture.

"No seniors," he exclaimed, "seniors are barred. That was the agreement."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Harry Wharton sweetly.

"We're keeping exactly to the agreement. That's all serene. The chap we're playing is an outsider—a chap who doesn't belong to the school at all."

Ponsonby looked a little uneasy.

Some of the Remove fellows looked puzzled now, they did not know what Harry Wharton was driving at.

"Not an Old Boy?" asked Gadsby.

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, a fellow from Friardale, I suppose?" asked Ponsonby in relief.

"Just so."

"All right."

"You've seen him before, so I needn't introduce him," said Harry Wharton, making a sign to Jack Neville. "Here he is."

Neville saluted the Highcliffe fellows gravely.

Ponsonby staggered back.

"Neville!" he exclaimed.

"Jack Neville, the professional!" cried Vavasour.

"The pro!"

"My hat!"

There was a roar of laughter from the Removes. They knew all now—they understood Harry Wharton's dodge at last.

Jack Neville was playing for Greyfriars!

That was the secret.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors simply roared.

The faces of the Highcliffians were amusing to look at. Ponsonby's jaw had dropped, and he was staring at Neville like a fish out of water. Vavasour was silent. He was utterly taken aback.

"My hat!" said Gadsby.

The three Old Boys looked puzzled. They did not know Jack Neville, and did not yet realise the significance of his playing for Greyfriars.

"Well, let's get to bizney," suggested Gadsby major.

"Certainly," said Wharton. "We're ready."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Ponsonby. "I object!"

Wharton looked him in the eyes.

"You object to what?" he asked.

"To—to your playing Neville. He—he doesn't belong to Greyfriars."

"Your Old Boys don't belong to Highcliffe."

Ponsonby was stopped for the moment. But he went on.

"He's older—"

"He's younger than any of your Old Boys."

"He's a league player," said Vavasour.

"I suppose your Old Boys would be league players if they could," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, he's—he's a professional!" exclaimed Ponsonby. "We can't play against a professional. It wouldn't do."

"He's not a professional in this match, and gate money is not taken," said Harry Wharton serenely. "He's an amateur this afternoon, playing in a friendly match. You can't get out of it that way, Ponsonby."

"Get out of it! What do you mean?" exclaimed Ponsonby furiously.

"I mean what I say," replied Harry Wharton, looking at him steadily. "If you want plain English, I'll give it to you. You played a low-down trick on us, and you've been beaten at your own game. You tried to catch us napping, and you've been caught napping yourself. We knew all about your three Old Boys, and we've got Neville to back us up. Leave them out, and Mr. Neville will remain a

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spectator. Play them, and we play our man. You can't squirm out of it any way. Cut the match if you like, and let all the world know that you came here to play a mean game, and ran away because there was a chance of your getting the worst of it."

Ponsonby's face went white as he listened. Certainly it was very plain English that Wharton was giving him.

"Oh hang it!" exclaimed Gadsby major. "We're not going to run away now we've come, Pon. Play, of course!"

All the Highcliffians realised that there was nothing else to be done. But their high hopes had sunk; their gorgeous anticipations were gone. They lined up for the match with as much of their habitual swank as they could muster, but inwardly they were in fear and trembling.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Licking.

THE Highcliffe anticipations, which, from being so rosy had suddenly become so gloomy, were fully realised. The Highcliffe fellows knew how the game would go as soon as they had kicked off.

The ball once rolling, the game was fast from the start. The Greyfriars forwards attacked, and kept attacking.

The Highcliffians were not up to Greyfriars form. They were an older team, but they were a team of slackers; they did not have half the practice or exercise necessary to keep them in good form. With their grown-up allies, certainly, they would have wiped up the ground with the juniors but for the Greyfriars new recruit.

That altered everything.

Jack Neville was much more than a match for the three Old Boys singly. Backed up by the Remove eleven, he was invincible.

For the Highcliffe Old Boys, powerful as they would have been against a junior team, were nowhere against one of the finest forwards known to league football.

Neville had a turn of speed, a keen and quick eye, a sure kick, that were miles ahead of anything the Highcliffe Old Boys had ever come in contact with.

In the first three minutes of the game Jack had kicked the first goal, leaving the Highcliffe team fairly standing.

A shout of cheering and laughter rang round the field.

Fellows were gathering from far and near to see the match. Word had gone forth that Jack Neville, the famous Leamshire forward was playing on the Remove ground. Fellows abandoned everything to come and see him. The Sixth Form even postponed a match of their own to come and watch Neville.

He was worth watching, too.

Against such a team as the 'Spurs he had done well—very well. Against such a team as the Highcliffians he was like Gulliver among the Lilliputians.

He simply made rings round them, as Bob Cherry delightedly remarked.

Through the first half the ball was hardly ever in the home ground. The Highcliffe fellows bucked up sometimes, the Old Boys making desperate efforts to retrieve, but it was all in vain.

Fate was against them. Justice had overtaken them, and was not to be eluded.

Neville scored four goals, and then, from sheer mercy, he gave the Highcliffians a bit of a rest. But the laughing Removes didn't. They went on scoring, and a goal from Harry Wharton was followed by one from Bob Cherry, and another from Frank Nugent, and just on half-time, Mark Linley put in one more.

Eight goals to nil was the score at the interval.

The nil was not likely to be altered, either, Bob Cherry declared as he grinned and sucked a lemon.

"Oh, it's great!" said Nugent—"simply great!"

"The greatfulness is terrific!" purred the Nabob of Bhanipur, with good humour and satisfaction beaming from his dusky face. "The thankfulness to our worthy and esteemed friend Neville is great."

"Yes, rather."

Jack Neville laughed.

"Oh, it's all right," he said. "This is the best fun I've ever had. I never saw chaps play footer as those fellows do, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whistle went, and the teams lined up for the second half. It had been a gruelling half, and the Highcliffians came on panting still. Even the Old Boys were looking rather sickly, and it was easy to guess that they wished themselves well out of the affair. But they could not get out till the finish now.

What the finish would be like was not doubtful. The only

question was, by what ridiculous margin of goals would the Highcliffe fellows be beaten?

Nine—ten—eleven—twelve!

Twelve goals to nil!

Every fellow at Greyfriars was crammed round the Remove ground now, and the masters were seen watching from their study windows. There was a rumour that even the Head was looking on. If he was, he must have found it amusing. It was very funny to all but the Highcliffians. But they felt like the victim in the fable—what was sport to the others was death to them. But they had brought it upon themselves—and fellows who had got themselves into a scrape by mingled meanness and swank, did not deserve much sympathy.

They did not get much. The Greyfriars crowd simply roared with laughter as the goals piled up. The whole thing had become a joke.

Ponsonby desperately packed his goal, giving up attacking. But that served him little. Two more goals were added, and but for the whistle going to mark the close of time, there was no reason, as Bob Cherry remarked, why Jack Neville

should not have made his century—a remark that was greeted with great hilarity.

The sound of the final whistle was sweeter than the sweetest music to the ears of the Highcliffians. The play stopped, with Greyfriars fourteen goals to nil, and the teams went off, or, rather, we should say, Greyfriars went off, and Highcliffe crawled off. The Highcliffe players were utterly done. They simply crawled off the field with bowed heads and knocking knees.

Glad enough were Ponsonby & Co. to crawl into their brake—declining the hospitality of Greyfriars—and get away. They left Greyfriars roaring with laughter behind them, and that afternoon the juniors could not make enough of Jack Neville. There was a great tea-party in the Remove Form-room after the match, and the guest of honour, it need hardly be said, was Harry Wharton's Pro.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled: "Alonzo's Little Game," by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, is engaged by a nameless client to look after the safety of a girl named Violet Castleton, who is going on a pleasure voyage on board the s.s. Princess Ida. Several deaths have occurred on board during recent voyages of this vessel, and Dare's client suspects foul play. The young detective ships as a steward, and his friend, Professor MacAndrew, comes on board at Marseilles. Between them they soon discover that the ship's doctor, with a scoundrel named Merivale, are plotting to kill Miss Castleton by poison. The lives of the detective and his friend are more than once attempted by the two criminals, but the former are still alive to inform the police at Malta, in the presence of Captain Dundas of the Princess Ida, of all that they have discovered. "Was it not terribly risky to give the scoundrels a free hand for so long?" cries Captain Dundas, in horror. (Now go on with the Story.)

Stanley Dare's Coup—The Final Scene.

"We were watching them closely, captain," replied Dare; "and I can assure you that they by no means had so free a hand as they imagined. You see, my object was to obtain absolute proofs of their criminal acts and intentions, so that they would have no loophole of escape. Had I denounced them on mere suspicion, I might have spoilt this particular scheme of their villainy, but it is very doubtful if I could have got a conviction, and they would have been certain to have commenced operations again in some new form."

"By the way," pursued the captain, "I must cable to the owners in London, if you have not already done so."

A queer smile passed over Stanley Dare's face.

"There is a question which I have for a long time wished to ask you with reference to the owners of the Princess Ida," he said. "Messrs. Vardon, Traill, & Co., I think they call themselves?"

"That is the name of the firm."

"Well, have you ever seen either Mr. Vardon or Mr. Traill since you have been connected with the firm?" asked Dare.

"Never," replied the captain. "I obtained command of the Princess Ida two years ago, but the person with whom I have always done business from first to last is Mr. Abrahams at the City office. He is the owners' representative."

"Ah, by this time I expect he is having an unpleasant interview with a Scotland Yard detective, if he is not already lodged in a police-cell."

"What! Old Abrahams?"

"No one else. It may surprise you to learn that the real owners of the ship are Merivale and Vallery, and probably Abrahams is the Co. Messrs. Vardon & Traill have no existence!"

Old Captain Dundas was so amazed at this statement that he could only gasp out:

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"To think that there is such villainy in the world! I couldn't have believed it—I couldn't have believed it!"

After a brief conversation with a police-inspector, who was now in charge of the case officially, Dare, the Professor, and Captain Dundas, drove down to the landing-place, and while the two former engaged a shore-boat, the captain went off to the ship in his gig.

Dare and MacAndrew did not go at once on board the Princess Ida, but hung off about a cable's length astern, waiting for the captain to give the signal that had been agreed upon between them.

They had not long to wait. A flag was hoisted up to the signal yardarm, and then lowered again. The boat was rowed alongside, and the young detective stepped briskly on board the steamer, followed in a more leisurely manner by Professor MacAndrew.

"Merivale is still on shore," said the captain to Dare; "and Vallery is having breakfast in the saloon."

"Late for breakfast!" commented Dare.

"He did not get on board until five o'clock this morning," replied the captain, "and has not long been up."

"A guilty conscience doesn't seem to affect his appetite, or his slumbers," observed MacAndrew drily.

"Will you slip down into the saloon, captain," said Dare, "and hold Vallery in conversation for about a quarter of an hour, if possible?"

"Certainly!" replied the captain. "Although I shall not find it an easy task to treat him with civility."

He stumped away aft, and as soon as he had disappeared down the companion-way, Dare whispered to the professor:

"Come along, Mac. Now is our time!"

Vallery's cabin door was locked, but Dare had provided himself with a skeleton-key, and had it open in a couple of seconds. There was an inner door leading to the surgery. This was not fastened, and they passed through.

"In that cabinet," pursued Dare; "a green bottle—cut glass!"

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

The door of the cabinet had to be forced open, but that could not be avoided. The green bottle was there. MacAndrew took it from the shelf, and held it up to the light. It was half-full of a thick liquid.

"Phantom Death!" muttered the professor. "An appropriate name!"

"I leave that in your charge, Mac," said Dare. "We must wait until Merivale comes on board, and then for the coup!"

They quitted the cabin, locking the door again after them, after which they kept out of sight until it was time to take part in the final scene.

By half-past one the majority of the passengers were back on board, and it was expected that the ship would sail at two o'clock. A number of them were in the saloon, Merivale and Dr. Vallery among them.

The latter appeared to be more boisterously genial than ever.

"We are nearly all on board again now," he was saying; "but I don't see our friend Professor MacAndrew. He will lose his passage, if he doesn't take care. I wonder what can have become of him?"

"Very guid of ye, doctor, tae tak' such an interest in my welfare; but ye heedna worry about me! I'm here, safe and sound!"

Vallery swung round, and at the sight of the professor he grew deathly pale. Beads of perspiration broke out upon his face. He essayed to speak, but no words came from between his parched lips.

But Merivale was made of sterner stuff than his associate. After the first look of startled surprise, a dangerous gleam shone in his eyes. He moved quietly towards the door.

"Let no one pass. Guard every door!"

The voice was Stanley Dare's. He stepped into the saloon, and the eyes of all the passengers were turned upon him.

"This is Mr. Stanley Dare," explained MacAndrew, "the famous young detective."

At the sight of him, Vallery dropped into a chair and groaned as one who admits that hope is gone. But Merivale's hand was stealing with a furtive motion to a side-pocket, and the young detective, divining his intention, acted promptly.

"Seize that man," he cried, "and disarm him!"

At the words half a dozen Maltese policemen, headed by an inspector, rushed into the saloon, and before Barton Merivale could get at his revolver, he was seized and handcuffed. At the same moment Dr. Vallery was made a prisoner.

"I arrest you, Barton Merivale, and you, Dr. Vallery, on three separate charges of attempted murder!" exclaimed the inspector. "And I warn you that anything which you say may be taken down and used in evidence against you!"

Vallery raised his head and glared at the young detective.

"You have beaten us," he hissed; "but had I known sooner that it was you we had to deal with, there would have been a different ending to this affair!"

The terrible snakelike glitter in Merivale's eyes sent a shiver through more than one person there present. So far he had not uttered a word. Now he spoke.

"You will find it far easier to make an accusation," he sneered, "than to prove it!"

"Every link in the chain is complete," replied Dare; "the last being the bottle of poison, to which Vallery gave the name of Phantom Death!"

At the sensational trial which followed in due course, Merivale and Vallery were convicted, and sentenced to penal servitude for the terms of their natural lives. Abrahams was sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude.

Dare's anonymous client, who had started him on the trail of the murder syndicate, proved to be a gentleman of high position and considerable wealth, who, having lost all those who were dear to him, led a wandering and restless life in order to try and find forgetfulness for his sorrow. He had been a sincere and devoted friend of Violet Castleton's mother, and now he watched over the girl's welfare with almost parental care.

It was at this gentleman's house on the evening after their return to England, that Dare gave a sketch of his adventures to an interested audience, in which were included Violet Castleton and the professor.

"Barton Merivale's share in the fiendish enterprise, which might have assumed tremendous proportions," said Dare, in concluding his narrative, "was, as a rule, to mix in society and make the first insidious advances to likely clients with relatives whom they wished to 'get rid of.' Merivale, we know, kept his connection with the ship a strict secret, and, indeed, Abrahams was the only one who appeared openly in the matter, and that simply as the owners' representative. The final part of the diabolical work was carried out by Vallery."

"But for your skill and bravery, Mr. Dare," exclaimed Violet Castleton, casting a glance of admiration and gratitude at the young detective, "I should not now be living!"

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"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME."

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The Setting of a Baffling Case for Stanley Dare—The Quarrel—Alone in London—The Letter—Elmwood Grange—A Terrible Discovery—Arrested.

"You have heard what I said!" exclaimed Jasper Marlowe angrily. "I forbid you to hold any further communication with Ruth Palgrave. You have been seen in her society many times of late, and this sort of philandering which will end in what young fools call 'falling in love,' must come to an end."

"Ruth Palgrave is a lady," replied Geoffrey Winfield "and as modest as she is beautiful."

"I am quite aware of that!" snapped Jasper Marlowe.

"Then, sir, what is your objection to my spending an occasional hour in her society?" demanded the young man.

"That is enough!" cried Jasper Marlowe, his hard, stern features growing harder and more severe. "When I say that you are to do a thing, you must do it! Still, I will tell you the reason of my objection to her. Years ago her father did me an injury which I shall never forget nor forgive while life lasts. I hate him! I hate all who bear his name! Sooner than see you mated to his daughter, I would banish you from my house and let you starve in the streets. Now you know my reasons, you can sit down and write to her, saying that for the future you and she had better be strangers."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," replied Geoffrey Winfield quietly but firmly.

They were fateful words, and although neither the old man nor the young one could possibly have guessed it, were fraught indirectly with terrible consequences. For a few moments after they were spoken, a deathlike silence fell upon the room. Jasper Marlowe, the master of Elmwood Grange, a hard, passionate man, who could brook no contradiction, no interference with any plan which it was his desire should be carried out, faced his young companion with such a look of fury blazing in his eyes that Geoffrey Winfield shrank away from him.

"You brat!" he hissed. "Will you defy me? I am your guardian. I have given you shelter under my roof, fed you, educated you, clothed you, ever since the death of your parents in India, ten years ago. You were left a penniless orphan, and for the sake of your father, who was my friend, I brought you up. And this is your gratitude. You forget the debt you owe me—you forget the obedience which is due from you to me."

"I do not forget it, sir," replied Geoffrey, his handsome, manly face flushing at the words which had been flung at him. "And you mistake if you think that I am not grateful for all the kindness you have shown me. I am deeply grateful, sir. But I am no longer a child. In this matter—"

"In this matter you will obey me," interrupted Jasper Marlowe coldly, "or take the consequences."

Geoffrey Winfield's eyes flashed indignantly when he thought of the girl for whom he had a far warmer feeling than mere friendship being referred to in such a manner, but he kept his temper with an effort.

"I cannot understand, sir," he said, "that an act committed by Miss Palgrave's father before she was born, should affect the friendship existing between Ruth and myself."

"Oh, you don't, eh?" sneered Jasper Marlowe, his passion once more getting the better of his judgment. "Well, listen. I had meant to make you my heir, leave all my property to you, but unless your acquaintance with this girl ceases from this day, I will turn you out of my house. You shall face the world a penniless outcast. Do you hear? A beggar! Now, for the last time, will you do as I order you?"

"I am sorry, sir," replied Geoffrey, still quietly, but firmly, "but I cannot."

"Then go!" thundered Marlowe, snatching up a riding-whip from the table, and in his blind and unreasoning fury making a savage cut at the young fellow.

"Quit my house at once, and never dare to cross the threshold again! The clothes that you stand up in I will make you a present of, but you shall take nothing else. You have no claim to anything else. Go, and starve!"

His face was distorted with passion; his eyes glared menacingly. With outstretched hand he pointed to the door.

Geoffrey Winfield looked at him for a moment as though he could not believe that the words he had heard were spoken in earnest. Then, without another word, he turned and quitted the room, passed through the great hall of the old house, and out through the open door into the grounds.

The gardener lived at the lodge, and he touched his cap respectfully as Geoffrey passed, but the latter was hardly conscious of his presence. His brain was in a whirl, for he was scarcely yet able to realise that from this moment he was a homeless wanderer—another one added to the great army who had to fight the world in the hard struggle for existence.

As he walked rapidly along the road in the direction of the railway-station, the gardener looked after him and shook his head wonderingly.

"What can be wrong with Master Geoffrey?" he muttered. "It's the first time he's ever passed me without a cheery word, if it was only 'good-morning,' or 'good-afternoon.' But he didn't seem to see me, although he might ha' touched me if he'd put out his hand. And there was a queer look in his eyes, and his face was pale. I can't make it out. It's queer—very queer indeed."

Having thus communed with himself, the gardener turned back into the lodge and sat down again to his interrupted tea.

Meanwhile Geoffrey Winfield had strode down the road with only one definite thought in his head—that he should get right away from the neighbourhood at once. He could write afterwards to Ruth Palgrave to tell her what had happened, but he decided not to see her—at least, not on that day. It might even happen that he would never see her again; and thus, in an indirect manner, his guardian would bring about what he had desired after all, for as a penniless outcast, Geoffrey felt that he no longer had the right to claim friendship with a beautiful girl in Ruth Palgrave's position.

With many confused thoughts seething his brain, Geoffrey at length reached the little country station of Saintbury. He had about two pounds in his pocket, and as he paused in front of the booking-office window, he remembered that he had not yet decided where to go.

A couple of farmers standing near him were talking of going up to "Lunnon," and it seemed to the young fellow that London was the best place for him. He would now have to earn his own living, and in the great city there would be a better chance of obtaining employment than elsewhere.

This, at least, was his idea, but he had yet to learn by bitter experience what a mistaken idea it was. Hitherto his visits to London had been brief and pleasant holidays, when he had money to spend on enjoyment, and saw only the bright side of the gay city. He had yet to see the sordid, the evil, the poverty-stricken side where, daily, men and women, who would willingly lead an honest, clean-living life, had to succumb to the awful pressure of hunger, want, and temptation.

He booked to London, and arrived at London Bridge terminus from the little Sussex village two hours later. It was then eight o'clock in the evening, a drizzling rain was falling, and the clocks striking the hour sounded mournfully through the night, as though they were tolling the knell to all his hopes and happiness.

The railway fare had taken seven shillings from his slender stock of money, and it behoved him to be careful of the remainder. Where to go for cheap and respectable lodgings he had not the slightest idea, so in his dilemma he applied for information on the point from a policeman.

The officer of the law glanced at him curiously, for Geoffrey Winfield was well dressed, and had the appearance of a smart young country squire. However, a London policeman is not easily surprised, no matter what may come under his notice, and this particular one was able to give Geoffrey the information he required.

He directed him to a house in the Southwark Bridge Road, where the landlady took in lodgers at a reasonable rate, and thither the young fellow took his way. His companions at supper that night were men of the artisan class, some in employment, and some not. From them he learnt the unpleasant truth, that a man who has not a trade or calling of some description at his fingers' ends, has a very small chance of obtaining work in London, unless he likes to turn to that refuge of the destitute—carry a sandwich-board!

Three weeks had passed, and Geoffrey Winfield was still without any regular employment. He had answered innumerable advertisements, and interviewed several employers of labour, but his lack of experience went against him in every case. A young man who had lived an idle life until he was twenty, without having made any attempt until then to earn his livelihood, was not the sort of person required. Employers looked at him askance. He may have met with misfortune, but it was far more likely, they reflected, that he was a ne'er-do-well, who had been forced to leave home by reason of some wrong-doing.

True, Geoffrey had obtained three days' work during a pressure of business at a riverside warehouse, and but for the money earned on that occasion, he would have been obliged to quit his lodgings days ago, for the landlady gave no credit.

"Them as can't pay," she used to make clear to every fresh lodger, "as to go. It wouldn't be fair to the others to let 'em stop. My charges is reasonable, but I couldn't keep 'em down to that level if I 'ad any bad debts."

This seemed reasonable enough, and the lodgers acquiesced.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"ALONZO'S LITTLE GAME"

in that arrangement, which, indeed, they had to, whether they liked it or not.

On the evening of his twenty-first day in this lodging-house, Geoffrey returned after a long and unsuccessful search for employment and with only a shilling now left in the world, when the landlady handed him a letter bearing the Saintbury postmark.

"Ope there's some good news in it," said the woman, as she noticed Geoffrey's look of surprise when he took the missive from her.

"Thank you, Mrs. Brown," replied he, as he went up to his bed-room to read the letter, having no intention of satisfying her curiosity as to what its contents might be.

The letter was from his guardian, and ran as follows:

"Dear Geoffrey,—I am sorry that we should have quarrelled. I have no relatives—no one but you in the world. Come back to the Grange to-morrow, some time after eight in the evening, as I shall be out all day, and let us talk this matter over again.

JASPER MARLOWE.

"P.S.—I enclose a postal-order for ten shillings to pay your fare, as you may be short of money."

The letter was written in his guardian's usual abrupt style, and it was in his handwriting, otherwise he could hardly have believed that he would be the first to make advances towards a reconciliation.

It did not strike him as strange that Jasper Marlowe should know his present address, for he had written to Ruth Palgrave, from whom his guardian might have obtained it, though that seemed scarcely probable; and he had also sent it to the gardener, in order that any letters which came for him to the Grange might be forwarded.

Geoffrey did not reply to the letter, for it was now late, and it would not be delivered at Elmwood Grange until eleven o'clock on the following morning, after his guardian had gone out for the day.

The postal-order, he noticed, bore the Horsham postmark—a fact which surprised him somewhat, as it was a town which Jasper Marlowe seldom visited. In an absentminded way he scrawled down the number of the order on the top of the letter. It was 775,321.

The next morning and afternoon went by slowly enough, and he was glad when he found himself in the six o'clock down train, which was timed to reach Saintbury at 7.45 p.m.

He sincerely hoped that he could become reconciled to his guardian, quite apart from any consideration of possible benefit in the future; for Jasper Marlowe had stood in the place of a father to him, and, despite his harsh and passionate nature, Geoffrey had really a very strong affection for him.

It was a few minutes after eight o'clock when Geoffrey Winfield walked down the well-remembered drive which led from the lodge gates to the front end of the house. On reaching the portico, he found the front door standing wide open, but as it was a mild autumn evening, he thought nothing of this fact.

No servants were visible, but this again did not surprise him. Jasper Marlowe was eccentric, and would only allow two to sleep on the premises—an old housekeeper, slightly deaf, and a man who combined the duties of butler and valet. The gardener lived at the lodge, and the other three servants lived at their homes in the village, usually quitting the Grange at seven o'clock every evening, unless there was some special reason for their remaining.

Geoffrey had noticed as he came along the drive that there was a light in the library window; and, supposing that his uncle was there, he ascended the stairs, without troubling to ring for either of the servants, and knocked at the door. There was no response.

He knocked again. Still there was no reply; so he opened the door and stepped into the room. There was a reading-lamp upon the table, and an armchair was pushed slightly back, as it would be naturally on a person rising from the seat.

With a quick glance Geoffrey took in these signs of the recent occupation of the room; and then his eyes fell upon the form of a man lying at full length on the floor at the further side of the table. It was Jasper Marlowe, and the light falling on his face showed it to be ghastly white and drawn, while the tightly-clenched lips were of an ashen-grey colour.

With an exclamation of dismay, Geoffrey ran forward and knelt by his guardian's side, calling him by name, and asking what had happened—though forgetting in his excitement that no answer could be given by one who was unconscious.

But was it only a temporary unconsciousness? He examined his features more closely. He felt his pulse; he placed his hand over his heart. Then the terrible truth forced itself upon him. He staggered to his feet with a cry of horror. There could be no doubt of the fact—his guardian was dead!

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

Rushing across the room to the fireplace, he rang a loud peal on the bell to summon either the housekeeper or Baxter, the valet-butler. But hardly had he done so when the lamp, which was now behind him, was suddenly extinguished, and a man's arm was holding him in a vice-like grip.

He struggled fiercely, and endeavoured to call out; but something hard was pressed against his nostrils, a faint, peculiar odour permeated the room, and in a few seconds he became unconscious.

A dark figure bent over him for a moment as he dropped limply on to the floor; then another dark form appeared, though hardly visible in the gloom. Each moved with the silence of phantoms.

Then suddenly a loud cry for help rang out on the silence of the night, followed by a blood-curdling shriek that was heard right away at the lodge-gates. Then silence fell again, to be broken presently by the tramp of hurrying feet along the gravel drive, and the sound of men's voices calling out, and asking the question which none could answer:

"What has happened? What has happened?"

Fully an hour elapsed before Geoffrey regained consciousness; and then, with a dazed and bewildered look, he struggled to his feet and gazed about him. As yet he could only recall in the vaguest manner what had happened. He was still in the library, which was half-filled with men, some of them strangers. On a couch a rug was covered over something that lay there motionless and silent. The outline suggested a human body. Then he remembered.

A police-inspector stepped slowly across the room and touched him on the shoulder.

"Geoffrey Winfield," he said, "I arrest you for the wilful murder of Mr. Jasper Marlowe!"

"Arrest me!" gasped Geoffrey, gazing at the police-officer, in horror and amazement. "And for the murder of my guardian! Oh, you are making a terrible mistake! When I entered the library I found him lying on the floor—dead even then, I have reason to believe. I rang the bell to give the alarm, when the light was suddenly extinguished, an unseen assailant flung himself upon me, and from that moment I remembered no more until I recovered consciousness just now."

The inspector shook his head gravely.

"I wish it was possible to believe your story," he said; "but we can't go against facts. Here are the evidences of your struggle—Mr. Marlowe's cry for help, which was heard at the lodge; the bruise on your forehead, where he struck you down, probably in his death-agony; a ring of yours found on the floor by Mr. Marlowe's side; and, lastly, these, which were found in your pocket."

He held up three Bank of England notes for ten pounds each, which it was known had been received by Jasper Marlowe that very morning from one of his tenants.

"I know nothing about the notes," began Geoffrey; but before he could enter into any explanation the inspector interrupted him again.

"You had better not make any further statements now," he said. "And it is my duty to warn you that anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence against you at your trial."

He glanced at a constable, who took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and snapped them on Geoffrey's wrists. Then the innocent victim of what looked like a foul conspiracy was marched away a prisoner, and in ignominy, from the house which for so long had been his home.

About three o'clock on the following afternoon, Stanley Dare, the famous boy-detective, was seated in his office, when there was a knock at the door, and in answer to his shout "Come in!" a young and very pretty girl entered.

Dare sprang to his feet and handed her a chair. He noticed that her face was pale and anxious-looking, and her eyes were grief-laden and troubled.

"My name is Ruth Palgrave," she began at once. "I have come up from Saintbury to ask your advice and assistance—"

"On behalf of Mr. Geoffrey Winfield?" said Dare, interrupting her.

The girl looked at him in surprise, and flushed slightly.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Yes," she replied. "But how could you have possibly guessed that?"

"Pardon me," returned Dare, "I never make guesses. A detective who wishes to maintain his reputation must not indulge in guesswork. I have read in the evening papers just now—some of them come out in London at eleven o'clock in the morning, by the way—of the supposed murder of Jasper Marlowe at Elmwood Grange last night. It states that Geoffrey Winfield has been arrested on a charge of having committed the crime; and, judging from the facts as set forth in the papers, the evidence is very strong against him."

"But I am certain that he is innocent!" exclaimed the girl warmly. "Geoffrey would not, could not, commit such an awful crime. You have had cases before now, Mr. Dare, where an innocent man has been falsely accused!"

"I have," said Dare. "Of course, in this case, I am only—at present—able to go on what I have read in the papers. Possibly you may be able to give me some further information, which has not yet been made public. And, pardon me—" Dare hesitated, then went on. "You will understand I am not asking out of mere idle curiosity, but because it may be necessary that I should know. Are you engaged to be married to Mr. Geoffrey Winfield?"

Ruth Palgrave blushed and shook her head.

"We are not engaged," she replied. "I—that is—we are great friends. I respect and admire Geoffrey—Mr. Winfield, I mean—very much; and I would do anything in the world to assist him in his trouble. I have money of my own, which I can use as I think best, so that your fees—"

"We need not bother about the question of fees now, Miss Palgrave," interrupted Dare. "But if you don't mind, I should like you to give me all the information you possess that has any bearing on the case."

Ruth Palgrave immediately gave him an account of Geoffrey's quarrel with his guardian, and the reason of it, together with the particulars of Geoffrey's life in London—so far as she knew them, the receipt of the letter, his return, and the subsequent terrible events in the library of Elmwood Grange.

"The actual cause of Mr. Marlowe's death appears to be a mystery," she concluded, "for no marks of violence have been found upon him. But, strangely enough, Geoffrey does bear marks of violence—at least, one mark. There is a bruise on his forehead which he cannot account for, as he has no recollection of having received a blow; but there was a heavy stick lying on the floor between them, and the police theory is that Mr. Marlowe struck him in self-defence, and then fell down dead immediately afterwards."

"As there are no marks of violence on Jasper Marlowe's body," said Dare, "death may have been due to heart disease. The excitement of a struggle—"

"But there was no struggle," interposed Ruth Palgrave, with decision. "And the doctor says that Mr. Marlowe was in a perfectly healthy condition, for he examined him about a month ago, when he effected an insurance on his life."

"That is very important," said Dare, "but unfortunately it would go against Winfield rather than in his favour. You have nothing more to tell me, Miss Palgrave?"

"I believe I have told you everything," replied the girl. Stanley Dare opened a time-table.

"The next train to Saintbury is at ten minutes to five," he said. "I will pack a portmanteau, and then we will take a cab over to London Bridge Station."

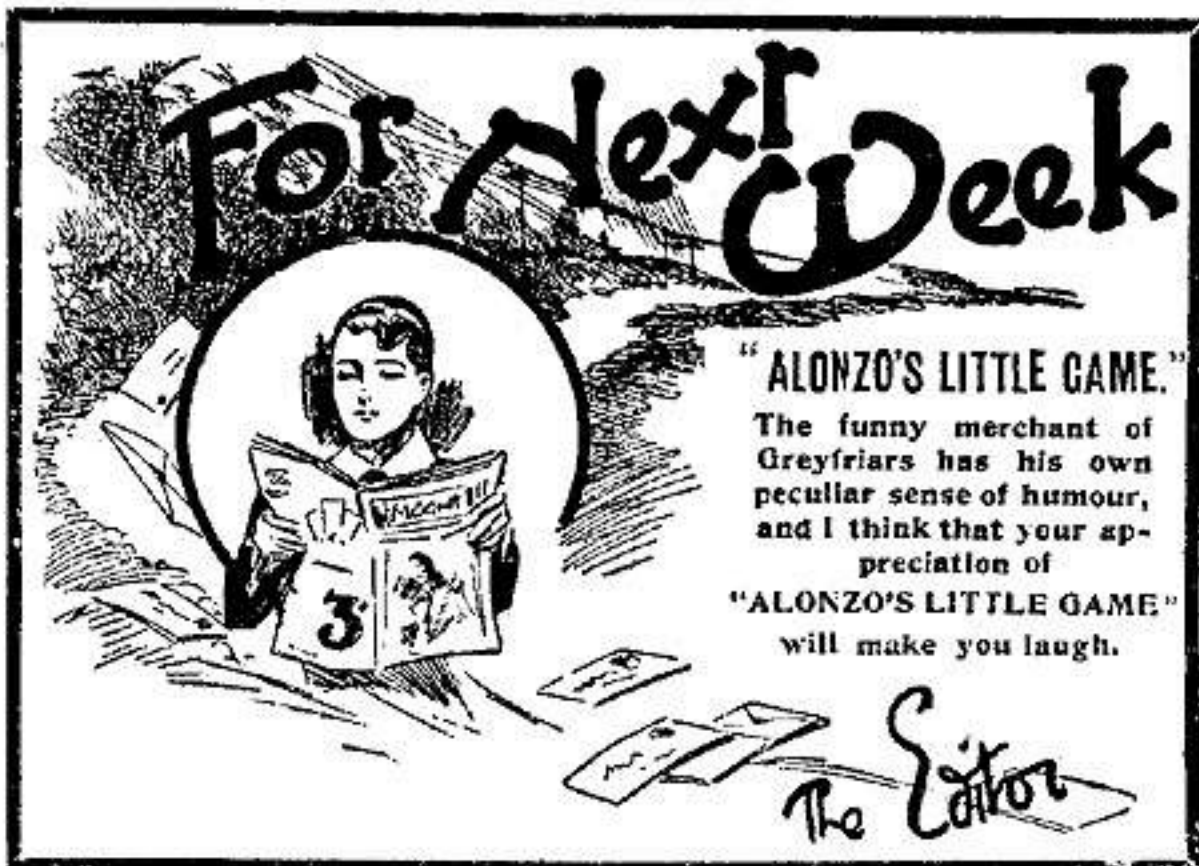
"You will take up the case, then, Mr. Dare?" exclaimed Ruth Palgrave.

"Undoubtedly!" replied the young detective. "There is an element of mystery about it that has aroused my interest. If Mr. Winfield is innocent, Miss Palgrave, he is the victim of as villainous a scheme as ever mortal man was entangled in—concocted, too, by masters of the darkest branches of crime."

(Another instalment of this splendid Detective story next Tuesday.

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A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS



First Grand Instalment.**BOB REDDING'S
SCHOOLDAYS.***A Rousing Tale of School Life.***By HENRY ST. JOHN.****THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

In which Mr. Squash begins as he means to go on, and makes a peaceful expedition, which ends with a bull and a battle.

"FOIRE—foire! Wake up, will ye? Ye'll be burned in yer beds, all av ye! Wake up!"

It was the first morning of the new term, and Master Peter Hogan, awakened for the first time in his life by the clang of the rising-bell, sprang out of bed in a state of great excitement.

"It's foire, Oi till ye!" he shouted, as he caught his foot under the loose carpet, and went spinning across the room, and alighted with some force on Bob Redding's bed.

It is doubtful if any of the St. Basil's boys had ever been known before to make such good time in getting out of bed.

"Fire! Where's the fire?" demanded Megson.

"Don't smell anything burning," said Courtfield, sniffing the air.

"Who told you there was a fire?" asked Redding.

Hogan, the cause of the excitement, was dashing about the room, hustling on his clothes.

"'Twas the bell—the foire-bell! It woke me up from my slape!" he cried.

"The bell?"

"Idiot!" said Courtfield.

"Ass! Dolt! Pig!" chorused everybody.

Hogan looked round in bewilderment.

"Phwat's the matter?" he asked.

"The matter is that there isn't anything the matter," replied Redding. "That bell isn't a fire-alarm, you donkey! It's the getting-up bell."

"Oi don't think Oi understand."

"I told you it was the getting-up bell—the bell to get up with."

"Phwat is it you want to get up with a bell for?" asked Hogan innocently.

"Because—because— Oh, go and eat coke! Don't bother me!" said Redding angrily.

Hogan sat on the edge of his bed, scratching his head.

He was a big, loosely-made sort of boy, with a flaming head of red hair, and a flat, good-humoured, freckled face.

He had only come down to St. Basil's the previous evening, and it was not to be expected that he would know much about its ways and customs.

Hogan was only one of the several changes that had come to St. Basil's this term.

"Foulger's House" was "Foulger's House" no longer. That master had left St. Basil's for ever.

There was a new master to take his place. He came early in the afternoon. The doctor brought him over to the House, and introduced him.

Mr. Jopling—for so he was called—was a very big man, with a very soft, low voice, and a gentle manner. He shook hands warmly with every boy in the House, and said he was sure that they were all going to be very good friends, and that he hoped that they had come back to school with their minds made up to apply themselves to their studies with diligence.

In spite of his gentle, persuasive manner, Mr. Jopling soon proved that he meant to put up with no nonsense. It was Megson who put him to the test, and it was Megson who suffered.

It was the evening prep., and Mr. Jopling was sitting with his long legs crossed, and his hands folded placidly in front of him, when suddenly something whizzed by within an inch of his nose.

Then something hit the wall just behind Mr. Jopling's chair, and he got up slowly, and, adjusting his eye-glasses, examined the object carefully.

"A piece of paper, or some similar substance, that has been considerably masticated," he remarked to himself, in an audible tone of voice.

Then he faced round to the class.

"My friends," he said, sweetly and smoothly, "which among you propelled that missile?"

Silence followed, as a matter of course: but Mr. Jopling was not to be daunted.

"My eyesight is not good," he said, "but it rarely deceives me. That small boy, the last but three on the second form, will be kind enough to stand up."

Megson stood up, looking the picture of misery.

"You threw a piece of paper just now, Megson," went on Mr. Jopling sweetly.

Megson mumbled something in an undertone.

"Do you consider it gentlemanly to throw pieces of masticated blotting-paper?" asked Mr. Jopling.

Still no reply from Megson.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Jopling sadly, "that your manners have been somewhat neglected, and it will be my earnest endeavour to improve them. Megson, my friend, you will write out for me: 'It is ungentlemanly to throw masticated blotting-paper at all times, and most especially during hours that should be devoted entirely to study.' You will make a note of that sentence, Megson, if you please; and, as I should like to impress it on your memory, I shall be glad if you will write it out five hundred times, and let me have it after school the day after to-morrow." "I like," said Mr. Jopling, smiling sweetly, "to begin as I propose to go on."

"What did I tell you?" asked Redding that night in bed.

"He's a holy terror!" said Megson. "I was never so disappointed in anyone in all my life!"

"No; he took you a bit by surprise—fairly squashed you—eh?" said Courtfield.

"I think that is rather a good name for him," said Redding thoughtfully. "He does seem to squash you. First he squashes you with his politeness and his long words, and then he gives you an imposition which fairly flattens you out."

And so in this way Mr. Jopling got the name of "Squash," which stuck to him all the time he remained at St. Basil's.

Mr. Squash had a hobby. He was a red-hot entomologist. He had brought a great case with him to St. Basil's, and one day he asked Redding if he would like to come in and see his collection.

The case contained a great number of shallow drawers, and each draw was filled with all sorts and descriptions of butterflies and moths.

"I have heard," said Mr. Squash, "that this part of the country is very rich in lepidoptera."

"Very," said Redding, who hadn't the faintest idea what lepidoptera might be.

Mr. Squash rubbed his hands.

"We will take a little excursion. Let me see. To-morrow will be Wednesday. To-morrow afternoon you and I will go on a little excursion, and you will show me all the best spots you know."

"Of course!" said Redding.

"Possibly one might secure specimens of the *smereinthus populi*, the *bombyx quercus*, and the *crataegi*?" asked Mr. Squash.

"Any amount!" said Redding. "They are all over the place!"

"Goodness only knows what he was driving at!" he said to Courtfield afterwards. "He asked me if there were many leopards about these parts, and he seemed quite pleased when I told him there were lots."

"I wonder if bulls would suit him as well?" said Courtfield thoughtfully.

"I see that Farmer Jackson has stuck up a notice in his field, 'Beware of the bull!'" said Redding.

"I don't mind if I come, too. I've seen that bull. He is a great black beast, and directly he sees anything he rushes at it. I think it ought to suit Squash as well as any leopard."

So early the following afternoon the three set out, Mr. Squash carrying a green gauze butterfly-net in one hand, and a specimen-case, in which to place his captives, in the other.

When they got into the lane that led to Jackson's farm, Mr. Squash started in pursuit of a butterfly, which, after leading him a dance for about a quarter of an hour, at last evaded him, and got safely away.

"It was a very fine specimen of the rare chocolate tip," said Mr. Squash, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "I am greatly disappointed."

Mr. Squash's chase had brought them to the field, and in the excitement the notice-board with the warning about the bull had quite escaped his notice.

"I have seen many of those chocolate drops in this field," said Redding.

"Tips!" corrected Mr. Squash. "But, indeed, have you seen some in this field?" he continued, mounting on to the top of the gate. "Then I must indeed try my luck!" he said, climbing down on the other side.

"I am afraid that it is trespassing!" said Courtfield.

(Continued on Page IV. of Cover.)



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BOB REDDING'S SCHOOLDAYS (*Continued from page 28.*)

"Nonsense! I shall do no harm," said Mr. Squash. "But if you are at all nervous, you may both wait here." They took advantage of Mr. Squash's offer, and sat themselves down on the gate to watch and wait.

There was no sign of the bull anywhere, and it was not long before Mr. Squash had started in pursuit of another butterfly that he had disturbed.

They were admiring the way he was prancing along over the ground, making ineffectual grabs with his net at the butterfly, when suddenly, from behind a tree which stood in the centre of the field, something big and black, with four legs and a pair of ugly, white horns, rose.

It was the bull, which had probably been taking a quiet nap in the shade until it had been disturbed by Mr. Squash.

Mr. Squash, intent upon the capture of the butterfly, saw nothing, and dreamed not of danger, and each step he took carried him farther and farther away from the gate.

"Better give him a shout!" said Redding.

"Better hold your row!" said Courtfield. "If you begin yelling now, it will send the bull after him in a twinkling. Let 'em alone!"

For some time the bull stood eyeing the antics of Mr. Squash, with an expression of astonishment on its face.

"I say," whispered Redding, "I believe the beast is going to charge! The moment you see it start, you give a yell. It will distract its attention, and warn Squash at the same time. There he goes, now!"

As he spoke the bull put down its head, and started in a bee-line for Mr. Squash.

"Hi, hi, hi!" screamed the two boys in chorus.

Mr. Squash had just succeeded in catching the butterfly, when his attention was attracted by the shouting. The next moment he saw the cause of the excitement, and he cast a hasty glance round him for some place of safety.

"Run for the tree!" screamed Redding, pointing to the tree which stood in the centre of the field.

It was the only possible place of refuge within easy distance of the spot where Mr. Squash stood, and in a moment he saw that his only hope lay in reaching the tree.

Mr. Squash had long legs, and, fortunately for him, they covered the ground at a good rate. Yet he had nothing to spare, for when he reached the foot of the tree he could hear the thud of the bull's hoofs on the ground, and almost fancied he could feel the animal's hot breath on his back.

The tree was an ancient oak, the lower branches of which were not so high from the ground but that Mr. Squash, who was a tall man, could reach them by making a spring.

He did make a spring. Under the circumstances, it came very naturally to him, and, by great good fortune, he succeeded in catching hold of the branch at the first attempt.

Then, with a supreme effort, he pulled himself up, just as the bull reached the spot where a moment before he had stood.

The bull was annoyed at finding his victim gone, and he showed his annoyance by pawing the ground and lashing his sides with his tail, and filling the air with hoarse bellowings.

"Shoo!" said Mr. Squash, from the tree, trying to intimidate the brute with his butterfly-net. "Shoo!"

The bull did not move. It stood looking up with its wicked little red eyes, and Mr. Squash sat looking down.

"Nasty cow!" said Mr. Squash. "Go away!"

And he jabbed the bull between the eyes with the handle of his net. In order to jab the bull, Mr. Squash was obliged to lean forward a little. It would have been better if he had sat still, for all of a sudden an ominous crack resounded, and the next moment down came the entire branch, and Mr. Squash with it.

How he got there, Mr. Squash did not know, and he could never remember afterwards, but before he had entirely recovered possession of his senses he found himself astride the bull's back, clutching the brute's two horns for dear life. He must have fallen from the tree straight down on to the top of the bull.

However, there he was, and there was the bull, trying to get rid of Mr. Squash.

First it reared up on its hind-legs and pawed the air with its forefeet; then, with a suddenness which took Mr. Squash's breath away, it reversed its position, and waved its hind-legs in the air.

This see-saw business went on for some little time; and then, suddenly coming to the conclusion that it would never get rid of its enemy that way, the bull put its head down between its legs, and tore off across the field at a rate of about fifty miles an hour, Mr. Squash holding on for all he was worth.

"Help!" screamed Mr. Squash. "Help, or I shall die!"

Courtfield and Redding, sitting on the gate, clung to one another in terror at the sight.

"What's to be done?" cried Courtfield.

"Run and fetch Jackson!" replied Redding.

Redding and Courtfield ran all the way to the farmhouse, and found Farmer Jackson cleaning out his pigsties.

"Please—please come at once!" they panted. "There's a gentleman being killed by your bull!"

"Eh? A gentleman what?" asked the farmer, looking up with a scowl. "In my field?"

"Yes."

"What's he a-doing in my field, then?"

"Being killed by your bull!" said Redding.

"All right!" said Mr. Jackson cheerfully. "You'll have to give evidence at the cor'ner's inquest, I suppose."

"Aren't you coming to rescue him?" asked Redding.

"What for? He isn't nothing to me! Besides, he should leave my bull alone. Ain't I gone to the expense of putting up a notice?"

But, in spite of his words, Mr. Jackson slowly pulled himself together, and got out of a pigstye; then he called one of his men, and told him to get a pole and a rope, which were presently brought; and then, very leisurely and comfortably, they sauntered round to the field.

Long before this the bull had run himself to a standstill.

"Why, bust my braces," said Mr. Jackson, "if the feller isn't a-sittin' on him!"

"Help," shouted Mr. Squash feebly—"help!"

Mr. Jackson took the pole, and Jim the rope, and they advanced on the bull cautiously. But he showed no fight—he was too completely done up even to bellow—and Jim just slipped the cord over his head, while Mr. Jackson prodded Mr. Squash in the ribs with the pole.

"Get off, won't you? What do you mean by riding my bull? Do you think I go to the expense of keeping bulls for strangers to ride on?" asked Mr. Jackson angrily.

Mr. Squash slipped down to the ground.

"I presume," he said, "you do not imagine that I was riding that cow for pleasure?"

"Cow? That's a bull! And I ain't a-going to have none of your circus tricks around here, mister, I can tell you!"

"Well, my good man, you ought not to keep such a ferocious animal!"

"Ho! And I s'pose I have got to come and ask you what I am to keep—eh? Oh, yes Mr. Impertinence, I'll ask you! Do you know, I have a good mind—a precious good mind—to give you a wallop for riding that there bull!"

Mr. Squash laid his butterfly-net on the ground.

"Indeed!" he said, in a gentle voice of mild surprise.

"Yes," said Jackson. "I've a good mind to knock you into the middle of next week, I have!"

And he clenched his brawny fist, and put it under Mr. Squash's nose.

"I abhor fighting!" said Mr. Squash. "It is fit only for the brute beasts, and ought never to be indulged in by rational beings. To me, there is nothing more disgusting than a display of personal strength. It fills me with aversion and loathing. But, really, unless you take your fist away, Mr.—Mr.— I do not know your name."

"My name is Jackson, and this field is mine, and that bull is mine, and this fist"—and here Mr. Jackson waggled his fist threateningly—"is mine, too, and I have a precious good mind to give you a taste of what for! See here, don't you ever come into this field again, or—"

"If you threaten me like this," said Mr. Squash, "I shall be forced reluctantly to chastise you!"

Mr. Jackson laughed. His laugh was not unlike the bellowing of his own bull. He was the strong man of the neighbourhood. There wasn't a man in the place who dared to stand up to him, and, in his scorn and contempt, he actually touched Mr. Squash's nose with his fist.

Then, all of a sudden, a transformation seemed to take place. Mr. Squash's loosely-built figure seemed to become more compact. He braced himself up, threw his shoulders back, and then, like a flash of lightning, his left arm darted out straight from the shoulder, and he planted a resounding blow neatly between Mr. Jackson's eyes.

Mr. Jackson was staggered. The blow would have knocked an ordinary man flat, and it very nearly succeeded in taking Mr. Jackson off his legs.

For a moment he seemed dazed, and then, suddenly collecting himself, he uttered a short, hoarse roar, and hurled himself on his adversary.

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